

The M+ Sigg Collection

At the core of the M+ vision lies the ambition to build a preeminent collection of 20th and 21st century visual culture, encompassing art, design, architecture and moving image from Hong Kong, China, and expanding through Asia and the rest of the world. The collection will form the backbone of the museum, being constantly in dialogue with its temporary exhibitions and educational mandate. It will provide historical references to help inform contemporary practices while at the same time offering fertile ground for continuous reinterpretation and reevaluation as the museum evolves over future generations.

The collection is being shaped by a number of strategies defined by geography, disciplinary and cross-disciplinary boundaries, and a multiplicity of historical and contemporary narratives, all intermingling within the complexity of visual culture. Each poses its own challenges, but from day one, it was clear that one major hurdle would be how to chronicle, elucidate and build upon, through our collection, the rapid and extraordinary development of contemporary art in the opening up of China in the post-cultural revolution era. Many early works in this area were no longer available, or simply no longer existed. And those that did had become very expensive, sometimes prohibitively so. Building a museum collection from scratch has never been easy. But with the globalization of art, and the market for it, the challenge has become more difficult than ever.

That being said, students of the history of the leading museums of the world, be it New York's Museum of Modern Art or Guggenheim, or the Tate in London, soon find that their collections invariably started with one or several early donations. Later, gaps would be filled in, and new stories and perspectives would be added; but these first donations formed the foundations around which their collections further developed. A natural first step for M+ was to open discussions with a number of collectors whose interests might be aligned with ours. In the field of contemporary Chinese art, we were fortunate to come in contact with Dr. Uli Sigg.

Dr Sigg had over a couple of decades, and with great consequence, assembled a collection that better than any other reflected the development of contemporary Chinese art from the late 1970's up until today. This was intentional. With an eye towards documenting what he presciently saw as being one of the great cultural stories of his time, Dr Sigg built his collection as a museum might, focusing more on the historical moment than his personal taste. Consequently, his became the most well documented and widely presented, examined and exhibited collection of Chinese contemporary art anywhere, with works drawn from it shown in important institutions around the world. And so it is that 12 June 2012 will forever mark an extraordinarily important milestone in the history of M+. On this day, the museum received its founding collection through a donation from Dr Sigg of 1,463 works by 325 contemporary Chinese artists, in addition to which the museum purchased another 47 works. In one stroke, Hong Kong's fledgling museum became the world's leading institution for contemporary Chinese art, more than five years before the planned opening of its building.

The M+ Sigg Collection will always be the cornerstone of the museum's displays of Chinese contemporary art from the end of the 1970's to the early 2010's. But around it, our collection will grow

with art from Hong Kong – a natural core for the collection - as well as further works from mainland China, Asia and other parts of the world. Our geographic and chronological scope will expand along with our disciplinary breadth as we incorporate materials from design, architecture and, not least, moving image, adding to the complexity and vitality of the stories that can be told.

When the museum opens in late 2017, the collection is expected to have grown exponentially through acquisitions, but hopefully also further donations, widening not only our perspective as a museum for visual culture, but also our understanding of Chinese contemporary art. While incomparable in its depth and breadth, the M+ Sigg collection, like any collection, can only represent part of the intricacy of contemporary Chinese art, and M+ will be contributing further research and vantage points into this extraordinary field and period. During the first three years after the opening of the museum in 2017 though, the M+ Sigg collection will be presented in isolation, separate from the rest of the M+ collection. This will be done not only to honor the exceptional vision, passion and generosity of Dr Sigg, but first and foremost, it will be done for the benefit of the public, who will be given a chance to experience this unique gift to the people of Hong Kong in almost its entirety.

From 2021 onwards, the M+ Sigg collection will blend in with the rest of the M+ collection, just as the founding collections of the world's other great museums do.

It is with great pleasure that we make the inventory of this generous gift, celebrated all over the world as one of the most important events in the world of art in recent years, available to the public. Within the coming year, we hope to upgrade the rudimentary format of this list with better images, search functions and educational materials. But for now, it is with honor and gratitude that we invite you to begin to enjoy the richness of the M+ Sigg Collection.

Lars Nittve

Executive Director, M+