

Press Release

The promotion, maintenance, and presentation of Germany's cultural heritage and the acquisition of important artworks and other cultural assets: for 29 years now, this has been central to the work of Germany's Kulturstiftung der Länder, the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States.

Saving Kafka's letters to his favourite sister Ottla from being strewn across the globe at the very last second, coordinating the many years of restitution negotiations with aristocratic families to maintain entire exhibitions in castle museums, forming broad coalitions to finance the acquisition of the legendary American diaries of Alexander von Humboldt or to purchase Guelph goblets from Yves St. Laurent's art collection at auction: this is the obligation and pleasure of the work of the Kulturstiftung der Länder, whose expert specialists exhibit great patience in handling the acquisition of art and cultural assets for public collections and have shown the necessary delicacy in advising in complex situations over many years. Founded as a so-called "acquisition community" of the German federal states for important art purchases in 1987, since beginning work in 1988 the foundation has dedicated itself to many tasks of preservation, conservation, and education in relation to the German cultural heritage.

The focus of the foundation's work has always been placed on the cultural heritage in its historical context. As Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen, Secretary General of the Kulturstiftung der Länder emphasizes, "For us, artworks are especially important that manifest an awareness of a joint cultural heritage, the historically contingent belonging of a society. That is the preservation of identity, the foundation of legitimacy. Significant works of art can offer visible presence of that. While many might feel the appeal of a Dürer, Holbein, or Song of the Nibelungs, things become more complicated when it comes to artworks of rather regional significance. But these works in particular require our support. This is why I like to speak of a patrimony of regions, that's much more fitting for a federal republic like Germany."

Supporting Acquisitions

From sarcophagi to Silicate: to date, German museums, libraries, and archives have been able to purchase 1,060 artworks, collections, archives, manuscripts, and other precious cultural goods with the support of Kulturstiftung der Länder. Around 170 million euros were spent by the German federal states themselves; with the support of numerous public and private co-sponsors, works of a combined value of around 640 million euros were acquired. From the ancient Marsyas Sarcophagus to archaeological sensations like the Garmertinger Princely Hoard, from medieval treasures like the Quedlinburg Cathedral Treasure or the oldest known manuscript of the Song of the Nibelungs, painted masterpieces by Hans Holbein the Elder, Peter Paul Rubens, Edvard Munch, Wassily Kandinsky or Ernst Ludwig Kirchner to precious relics of literary history like Franz Kafka's manuscript for

The Trial, Thomas Mann's postcards, and the bequests and estates of Bertolt Brecht, Christa Wolf, and Siegfried Lenz; manuscripts like Beethoven's Diabelli Variations or the archives of the music publisher Schott, or valuable pieces of furniture from the Roentgen workshop or the desk of Frederick the Great to contemporary highlights like Martin Kippenberger's painting The Friendly Communist or Gerhard Richter's series Silicate, an expansive panorama of Germany art and cultural history and beyond.

Exhibition Funding

Kulturstiftung der Länder encourages museums to make their own collection the starting point of new acquisitions or a presentation: numerous of the exhibitions funded by the foundation since 2009 have been dedicated to museums rediscovering of their own collections, which often contain surprises. To do justice to the cultural diversity of Germany's regions, the foundation has above all funded exhibitions with a regional anchoring and at the same time international importance. The Baden-Württemberg exhibition "Hans Holbein d. Ä.: Die Graue Passion in ihrer Zeit" (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 2010) met with much acclaim, as did the exhibitions "Der Naumburger Meister – Bildhauer und Architekt im Europa der Kathedralen" in Saxony-Anhalt and "Bernini – Erfinder des Barocken Rom" (Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, 2014). For several years now Kulturstiftung der Länder together with Kulturstiftung des Bundes has been funding outstanding exhibitions of a trans-regional nature, as for example the retrospective "Alibis – Sigmar Polke" (Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2015) and the cultural history exhibition "Homosexualität_en" (Schwules Museum and Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin 2015).

Restoration Funding, "Art in Storage"

Bursting fossils, crumbling altars, or daguerreotypes afflicted with glass disease: these are only three examples of a variety of important cultural products that are threatened with destruction in museum storage. In the framework of the collaborative project "Kunst auf Lager" ("Art in Storage"), since 2014 Kulturstiftung der Länder has been supporting public museums in bringing otherwise un-exhibitible, fragile treasures of our cultural heritage back to the light of day through careful restoration. With various programmes of the fourteen participating cultural institutions, the collaborative project "Art in Storage" supports museums over the short and long term that need to modernize their depots in an appropriate fashion, to make them accessible and to conserve and restore individual artworks and cultural assets.

For many museums cannot do justice to all the objects that they house: they lack the staff, the time, and the financial means to explore their extensive collections and to restore valuable objects for presentation. The joint project initiated by Kulturstiftung der Länder and the Hermann Reemtsma Stiftung helps art museums and museums of culture, history, natural science or technology with these important tasks. The programme "Art in Storage" is thus not focused on popular large-scale events or spectacular new acquisitions, but often forgotten objects in museum basements. To explore the contents of museum holdings, to

research and secure them has often been a neglected aspect of culture assets protection. The project would thus like to sensitize politics and society to save these threatened hidden cultural treasures and to recall the importance of these collections as joint cultural memory.

Kinder zum Olymp! – The Foundation’s Educational Initiative

To date, around 300,000 schoolchildren have shown their enthusiasm for literature, music, dance, theatre, or fine art in around 7,800 competition projects of the educational initiative Kinder zum Olymp! (Children to Olympus!). Until 2014, the foundation awarded outstanding cooperation between schools and cultural institutions with the coveted prize of “Schulen kooperieren mit Kultur” (Schools Cooperate with Cultural Institutions), supported for over ten years by Deutsche Bank Stiftung. In 2015, the competition began with a new concept to honour sustainable cooperation programmes between schools and cultural institutions and artists. With the educational initiative Kinder zum Olymp! (Children to Olympus!), begun in the fall of 2003, the foundation would like to better anchor aesthetic education in the everyday lives and curricula of schools. The congresses held by the educational initiative in Leipzig in 2004, in Hamburg in 2005, in Saarbrücken in 2007, in Munich in 2009, in Dessau in 2011, in Hannover in 2013, and in Freiburg in 2015 have responded to the immense demand for information and exchange on the subject of cultural education. Teachers, artists, representatives of cultural institutions and associations, but also cultural policymakers discuss future of a cultural education better anchored in school curricula.

The Range of Issues around Lost Cultural Goods

Since Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen took office in 2004, the work of the foundation has been focused on several crucial cultural policy initiatives. For example in 2008, Pfeiffer-Poensgen initiated the urgently necessary, fundamental research of the holdings of German museums, libraries, and archives for wartime loot from the Nazi period. Until the establishment of the Berlin Arbeitsstelle für Provenienzforschung (AfP) as part of the Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste in 2015, the AfP awarded 12 million euros for 170 research projects. With the funds provided by the foundation for the AfP—1.7 million euros—and the additional funds for the individual project supporters—7.7 million—thanks to the AfP projects a total of 21.4 million euros flowed into the decentralized search for Nazi plunder in 126 German collections. Numerous restitutions to the heirs of dispossessed collectors could be carried out due to the research results. The Kulturstiftung has stood by institutions—and will continue to do so—in the legal acquisition of the objects after restitution.

The German-Russian Museum Dialogue

Since 2005, the foundation has also directed its attention to researching the losses of German and Russian museums, libraries and archives during and after the Second World War: a controversial subject of cultural policy, but one for which significant funds could be raised from foundations and donors. Hundreds of thousands of works from German collections

were carried away by Russian brigades. What paths did the artworks take, and where can they be found today? Urgent questions for the researchers of the German-Russian Museum Dialogue, which, bracketing the discussion of the issue of return, engage in an intense exchange with colleagues in the Russian museums and evaluate newly accessible documents like uncovered transportation lists of Soviet troops. With the primary goal of “clarification and free access to the artworks,” for example the first exhibition projects were initiated. On the other hand: what was confiscated by Nazi troops from Soviet institutions, what losses did the rich Russian collections suffer from destruction, theft, and removal during the war? A German-Russian research team from 2012 to 2014 used international archives with the help of Volkswagen Stiftung, also studying the private notes of German soldiers to follow the traces of art theft in order to establish more clarity on the extent of the losses and the fate of these precious, lost cultural assets.

Additional Areas of Interest

Maintaining Written Cultural Documents

Virchow’s dissection notes, precious choral books in Naumburg, or Hannah Höch’s address book would be gnawed away by pests or mould and fall apart if the foundation, commissioned by the states together with Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media Monika Grütters, had not given these treasures, sometimes hidden deep in archives and libraries, the necessary attention. Since 2011, 150 model projects of the Koordinierungsstelle für die Erhaltung des schriftlichen Kulturguts (Coordination Office for the Maintenance of Written Cultural Goods) have been funded with a total of ca. 2 million euros, with the maintenance of the written treasures in numerous German archives as its goal. But further funding will be necessary to counteract the complex damage to the valuable manuscripts and archival materials.

Deutscher Theaterpreis, “Der Faust”

The German theatre landscape is unique around the world. Since 2006, Kulturstiftung der Länder together with the Deutscher Bühnenverein and the Akademie für Darstellende Künste has been awarding the Deutscher Theaterpreis “Der Faust,” to honour the diversity and quality of German theatre and to support it. Prizes are offered in categories like best director, best acting performance, best costume/set design, best choreography and life work.

The following organizations receive institutional support from Kulturstiftung der Länder:

- Zentrum Bundesrepublik Deutschland des Internationalen Theaterinstituts e. V., Berlin
- Sektion Bundesrepublik Deutschland der internationalen Gesellschaft der bildenden Künste e. V., Berlin
- Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Darmstadt
- Deutscher Übersetzerfonds e. V., Berlin
- Deutscher Musikrat, Bonn
- Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, Berlin

Der Freundeskreis der Kulturstiftung der Länder

Since 1999, Freundeskreis and the Junge Freundeskreis der Kulturstiftung der Länder with a total of around 300 members support numerous restoration projects at museums, libraries, and archives. For the further education of young museum workers in East Germany, the Freundeskreis has been awarding travel stipends to the international art fair TEFAF in Maastricht since 2002. Since 2010, the Junge Freundeskreis has been granting five travel fellowships annually for trainees at Art Basel.

Arsprototo: The Foundation Magazine

In 2004, the desire arose to present the variety of valuable art and cultural treasures from pre-historical times to the present in a publication instead of an annual report. Kulturstiftung der Länder thus developed their magazine Arsprototo, and the first issue was published in May 2005.

In extensive articles and reports rooted in art history, but written in an interesting and reader-friendly style, the magazine has reported since then four times a year on saving artworks, large-scale restorations of threatened art treasures, issues of cultural policy, and the most beautiful cultural landscapes in Germany. The focus of the publication has always been to raise awareness among a larger audience for the German cultural heritage with its art and cultural treasures and to encourage private and institutional engagement for its maintenance. The magazine thus focuses on the rescue of significant artworks and cultural goods, valuable books or the securing of important manuscripts for museums, libraries, and archives in Germany. The calls for donations have helped to finance restorations in various museums, libraries, and archives all across Germany. Today, the magazine, which is free of charge, has 15,000 subscribers.

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