

The Kunstmuseum Basel

The Kunstmuseum Basel ranks among the most renowned institutions of its kind in Europe and beyond. Its world-famous collection, the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, now encompasses around 4.000 paintings, sculptures, installations, and videos as well as 300.000 drawings and prints from eight centuries. Its historic nucleus is the Amerbach Cabinet, the art collection built by Basilius Amerbach, a prominent citizen of Basel. It was purchased by the city and the university in 1661 and displayed to the public starting in 1671, arguably making it the world's oldest municipal art collection.

The Kunstmuseum Basel's treasures include some of the finest art of the Renaissance in the Upper Rhine Valley such as the world's largest collection of works by the Holbein family as well as masterpieces by Konrad Witz, Martin Schongauer, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Matthias Grünewald, and others. Another highlight is nineteenth-century art, where the museum has sizable ensemble of paintings by Arnold Böcklin and Ferdinand Hodler as well as outstanding works by Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Vincent van Gogh. The museum's division of twentieth-century art focuses on Cubism (Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Fernand Léger), German Expressionism (Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Franz Marc, Paul Modersohn-Becker, Paul Klee, Oskar Kokoschka), Abstract Expressionism (Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still, Franz Kline) and American art after 1960 (Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Frank Stella, Donald Judd, Cy Twombly). Important ensembles of works from recent decades by artists including Joseph Beuys, Gerhard Richter, On Kawara, Louise Lawler, Simon Starling, Olafur Eliasson, Rosemarie Trockel, Pierre Huyghe, and Gabriel Orozco round out the collection.

Over the centuries, the steady growth of the collection and the desire to present it in keeping with evolving standards necessitated several relocations within Basel. Finally, in 1936, the museum's treasures found a permanent home in the present-day Hauptbau on St. Alban-Graben. The first major enlargement came in 1980, when the Museum für Gegenwartskunst— one of the world's first dedicated museums of contemporary art, it is now known as Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart—opened its doors on St. Alban-Rheinweg. 2016, a third venue was added: the Neubau has risen across the street from the Hauptbau, to which it is connected by an underground passageway. It accommodates special exhibitions as well as presentations of art from the collections.