

Media release  
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## The Basel Artists' Group Kreis 48

July 29, 2023–January 28, 2024, Kunstmuseum Basel | Hauptbau  
Curators: Josef Helfenstein, Jasper Warzecha

On occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of Kreis 48, the Kunstmuseum Basel mounts the first major retrospective exhibition of the Basel artists' group's output. Max Kämpf was its leading figure, and so his influence and works are the display's mainstay. A second focus is on Valery Heussler and her distinctive personal interpretation of the Surrealist idiom. Heussler's oeuvre has been rediscovered in recent years by audiences in her native Switzerland; the Kunstmuseum Basel has consistently featured her works in its collection presentations for some time.

Most of the ca. 40 paintings and sculptures on view are drawn from the museum's own holdings. Loans from Kunstcredit Basel-Stadt round out the selection. The exhibition also sheds light on the group's context, showing how Kreis 48 can be understood as a product of the dynamic developments in the city's arts scene at the time.

One room is reserved for the Basel "gray painters," a collective label for Max Kämpf, Karl Glatt, and others who had attracted notice with their dark-toned paintings before 1948. Another gallery showcases works by the now better-known Gruppe 33—an association founded in 1933 by artists who were united by their antifascist intentions, including Walter Bodmer, Paul Camenisch, and Rudolf Maeglin.

Kreis 48 is inconceivable without Gruppe 33. The heterogeneous artists' group, which explicitly did not pursue a specific artistic program, was founded primarily as a rising generation's vehicle of emancipation from more established elders: the founding member Hans Weidmann would later recall that "forming our group was an act of defiance against those who enjoyed official recognition"—the members of Group 33 as well as the Gesellschaft Schweizerischer Maler und Bildhauer (Society of Swiss Painters and Sculptors, GSMBA), whose ranks included illustrious artists like Cuno Amiet.

The early works of Kreis 48's members from the 1930s suggest young artists who are in some instances still searching for their own paths; works from the 1950s and 1960s, by

contrast, indicate the careers they went on to build. The group—which became a registered association in 1950—was never officially disbanded.

### **Kreis 48**

Henri Barth (gen. Bodin) (1907–1958), Jean-François Comment (1919–2002), Romolo Esposito (1913–1991), Karl Glatt (1912–2003), Max Kämpf (1912–1982), Theo Lauritzen (1911–1989), Alex Maier (1917–2005), Peter Moilliet (1921–2016), Julie Schätzle (1903–1996), Gustav Stettler (1913–2005), Paul Stöckli (1906–1991), and Hans Weidmann (1918–1997) were the group's founding members. Valery Heussler (1920–2007), Robert Lienhard (1919–1989), Johann Anton Rebholz (1914–2000), and Hanni Salathé (1926–2012) joined a few years later.

(With the exhibitions of Barth, Esposito, Lauritzen, Lienhard, and Stettler, all artists are represented by works in the exhibition.)

### **Imagery and information on the exhibition**

[www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media](http://www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media)

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