

Media release

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**Van Gogh, Hodler and a Cabriolet
The Collector and Pioneer Gertrud Dübi-Müller**

September 19, 2026–February 7, 2027, Kunstmuseum Basel | Neubau

Curator: Géraldine Meyer

She was one of Switzerland's foremost art collectors, a passionate photographer, driver of motorcars, and mountaineer, and she sat for Ferdinand Hodler and other artists: in *Van Gogh, Hodler and a Cabriolet*, the Kunstmuseum Basel presents the first extensive exhibition dedicated to Gertrud Dübi-Müller (Solothurn, 1888–Solothurn, 1980). Around eighty works by renowned artists from her international collection, arresting photographs, and previously unpublished documents shed light on Dübi-Müller's life and illustrate her influential role in the history of art and culture in unprecedented breadth.

Gertrud Dübi-Müller was first exposed to art at a young age when she took painting lessons from the Swiss artist Cuno Amiet (1868–1961). Having lost her parents when she was a child, she was financially independent early on. Barely of age, she bought Vincent van Gogh's *Portrait of Charles-Elzéard Trabuc* (1889), the cornerstone of what would grow into a singular collection of modern art, with works by Paul Cezanne (1839–1906), Giovanni Giacometti (1868–1933), Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918), Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), and Henri Matisse (1869–1954).

The collector struck up friendships with numerous artists including Alice Bailly (1872–1938), Giacometti, and Hodler. "Better to drive more slowly all the way to Paris than to go fast and crash and burn. I won't be around to keep reminding you to take it easy," Hodler wrote in a letter to her. The painter, whose friendship was especially dear to her, immortalized her in seventeen portraits; among the works she modeled for is the large-format painting *View into Infinity* (1913/14–1916), which is in the Kunstmuseum Basel's collection.

Dübi-Müller's photo camera recorded not only the lives of her artist friends but also her own adventures, including rides on dirigibles and travels throughout Europe and to North Africa. Driving a car of the Swiss brand Piccard-Pictet, likely the first such vehicle

in the canton of Solothurn, she often visited capitals of the European arts scene such as Berlin, Paris, Rome, and Vienna and crisscrossed the Swiss Alps. Her accomplishments as a mountaineer, including an ascent of the Matterhorn, underscore her extraordinary determination and independence for a woman of her time and set her apart as a remarkable personality whose life and dedication to the arts remain an inspiration today.

A full century ago, Wilhelm Barth (1869–1934), who served as director of Kunsthalle Basel from 1909 until 1934, was keen to showcase the collection that Dübi-Müller had built with her brother Josef Müller (1887–1977) in an exhibition in Basel; he approached them several times, but his plans never came to fruition. At long last, the Kunstmuseum now hosts the first comprehensive presentation in Basel, underscoring that Dübi-Müller deserves a place of honor in the history not just of her home canton but of Switzerland and beyond as a prominent figure behind the scenes of European modernism.

The exhibition *Van Gogh, Hodler and a Cabriolet. The Collector and Pioneer Gertrud Dübi-Müller* gathers outstanding works by international artists including Paul Cezanne, Gustav Klimt, and Vincent van Gogh as well as eminent Swiss artists like Cuno Amiet, Alice Bailly, Giovanni Giacometti, and Ferdinand Hodler. In addition to the treasures now at the Kunstmuseum Solothurn, it features works from other Swiss museums and from private lenders that were formerly in Dübi-Müller's collection. Photographs taken by the collector herself and others, previously unpublished letters, and hand-painted postcards that artists and creative professionals sent Dübi-Müller provide intimate insight into her network.

In 1964, Dübi-Müller and her husband founded the Dübi-Müller foundation to preserve their collection as it stood at the time and share the one hundred and ninety works with the public. Josef Müller founded the Josef Müller Foundation, with fifty-five works, in 1969. Both foundations and their holdings were subsequently integrated into the Kunstmuseum Solothurn, which still houses the core of Gertrud Dübi-Müller's collection today.

The exhibition was produced in close collaboration with the Kunstmuseum Solothurn. It is rounded out by numerous loans from Fotostiftung Schweiz, which manages Dübi-Müller's photographic estate.

Publication

A catalogue, with contributions by Caroline Arni, Gabriela Christen, Bice Curiger, Anneke Lubkowitz, Géraldine Meyer, Peter Pfrunder, Nina Schweizer, Lara Eva Seeliger, Katrin Steffen, and Oliver Wick, is released in conjunction with the exhibition.

This publication frames new perspectives on Gertrud Dübi-Müller's life and work as an art collector, networker, patron of Swiss and French modern art, photographer, and mountaineer. Focusing on the years before her marriage to the Solothurn lawyer Otto Dübi (1885–1966), the essays paint a portrait of an independent woman who resolutely seized her freedoms and actively helped shape the art of her time. They also demonstrate how unusual and courageous Dübi-Müller's activities were in the context of her era and the constraints it imposed on women's rights and choices.

The catalogue is published in separate German and English editions. In addition to the scholarly essays, it features a selection of large-format illustrations: key works from the collection as well as previously uncatalogued photographs from her estate at Fotostiftung Schweiz.

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