

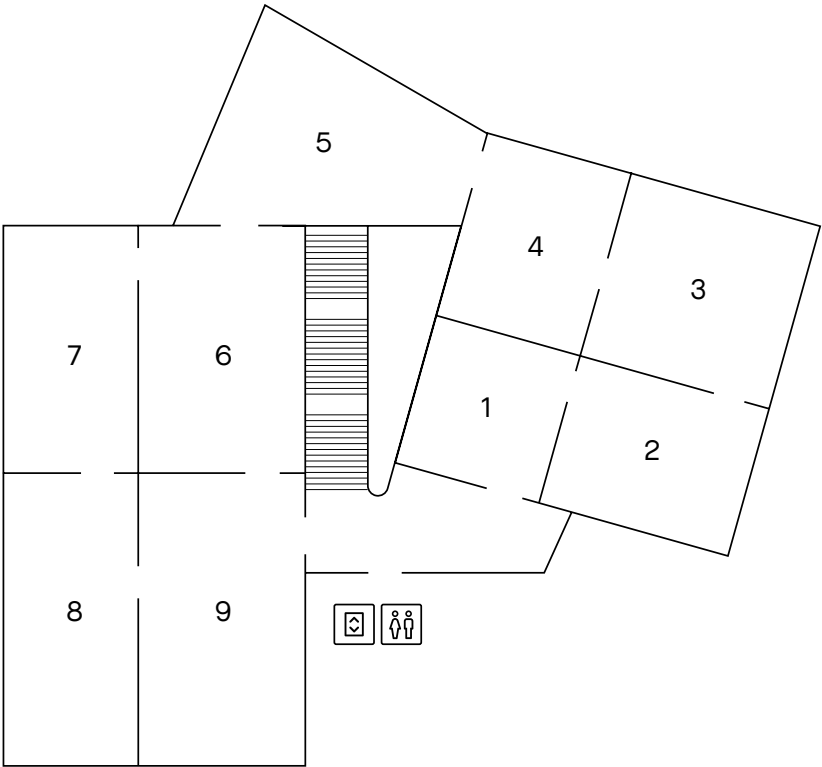
VAN GOGH, HODLER,
AND A CABRIOLET

*THE COLLECTOR
AND PIONEER
GERTRUD DÜBI-MÜLLER*



EN

NEUBAU 2ND FLOOR
ROOMS 1-9



Gertrud Dübi-Müller (1888–1980) ranks among the most defining Swiss art collectors of the twentieth century. Orphaned at an early age, she grew up in Solothurn with her siblings Emma (1875–1920), Marguerite (1884–1958), and Josef (1887–1977). At the age of twenty, she came into her inheritance—and wasted no time in making use of her financial independence. She championed controversial contemporary artists and became one of the earliest collectors of French modernism in Switzerland.

Motoring in her own cabriolet, Dübi-Müller traveled to Alpine passes, studios, and Europe's art centers. She maintained friendships with creative minds including Cuno Amiet (1868–1961), Alice Bailly (1872–1938), Giovanni Giacometti (1868–1933), and Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918). Her collection united works by Swiss artists with pieces by Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), and other protagonists of modernism.

By the time she married Otto Dübi (1885–1966) in 1921, Dübi-Müller had assembled the treasures that made up the cornerstone of her collection, and so the exhibition focuses on her early years. The great majority of the works are now owned by the Dübi-Müller Foundation and preserved at the Kunstmuseum Solothurn. The presentation combines the chief works of these holdings with others that have not been transferred to the foundation, as well as works collected by her brother Josef Müller. Pictures from Dübi-Müller's photographic estate, which is now at Fotostiftung Schweiz, offer visitors an opportunity to see the life and times of the Solothurn collector, patron, and photographer through her own eyes.

THE INCEPTION OF A PASSION

Gertrud Müller, as she was called until her wedding to Otto Dübi, grew up in Solothurn's Schanzmühle estate as the youngest of four children. Her father, Josef Adolf Müller (1834–1894), was a cofounder of Sphinxwerke, a factory for precision components for the watchmaking industry. Her mother, Anna Müller-Haiber (1851–1888), died shortly after Gertrud's birth; after their father's death six years later, the siblings were raised by guardians. Financially secure, they became independent at an early age.

Their interest in art was kindled by a neighbor, the industrialist and collector Oscar Miller (1862–1934). At his home, Gertrud and her brother Josef encountered works by contemporary Swiss artists including Cuno Amiet and rising international stars like Pablo Picasso (1881–1973).

Dübi-Müller's first acquisitions, in 1907, were two watercolors by Giovanni Giacometti. That same year, her brother Josef purchased a portrait of a girl by Amiet. Soon enough, all four Müller siblings were passionate art collectors.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

Bildnis Gertrud Müller (Portrait of Gertrud Müller), 1911

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

"Hodler is surely going to want to paint you!" Josef Müller wrote to his twenty-three-year-old sister, intuiting that Ferdinand Hodler would portray her.

Hodler selected the pink satin dress from among the garments Gertrud Dübi-Müller had brought along and completed the elegant portrait in fourteen days. For centuries, the prestigious full-length portrait had been reserved for prominent figures—the fact that Hodler, in 1911, chose this format for a young woman from Solothurn was a statement in itself.

The painting caused a stir: it was presented at the Kunsthaus Zürich as soon as November 1911 and then went to Neuchâtel and Berlin. Dübi-Müller wrote to her brother from the German capital: "It was

widely reproduced in the press in connection with the Secession exhibition here, where it was the only Hodler on display.”

GIOVANNI GIACOMETTI (1868–1933)

***Roticcio*, ca. 1907**

Watercolor on paper

Privatsammlung

This work on paper was Gertrud Dübi-Müller’s very first art purchase. In 1907—she was about to turn nineteen—she and her brother Josef visited Giovanni Giacometti in the village of Stampa in the Grisons and bought two watercolors directly from the artist, including *Roticcio*. The Val Bregaglia was where Giacometti was born and grew up, and the hamlet of Roticcio was a familiar motif for him. In 1907, he visited the memorial exhibition in Paris honoring Paul Cezanne, who had died the previous year. The liberal, planar treatment of the wintry mountain landscape and the luminous colors suggest how profoundly he was impressed by what he saw.

Next to it hangs the *Portrait of Frieda Schöni* by Cuno Amiet, Josef Müller’s debut acquisition, also made in 1907. Two siblings, two first pictures, the genesis of two collections.

CUNO AMIET (1868–1961)

***Bretonin unter Bäumen* (Breton Woman under the Trees), 1893**

Oil on cardboard

Privatbesitz

This painting hung in the villa of Oscar Miller, the neighbor who introduced Gertrud Dübi-Müller to art and inspired her to take up collecting. It illustrates what kind of paintings captivated him: not ones that pleased the eye but ones that signaled a new beginning.

Cuno Amiet had spent over a year in Brittany among the students of the French painter Paul Gauguin (1848–1903). It was there that he discovered Vincent van Gogh, whose pulsating brushstrokes can be felt here: figure, ground, and trees merge in a flow of ochre and green—only the woman’s head, in dark blue, stands out.

Van Gogh was also a kind of gateway for Dübi-Müller: her first painting was a work by the Dutch artist. What she had seen in Miller’s villa and discussed with her friend and painting teacher Amiet had paved the way for this purchase.

PABLO PICASSO (1881–1973)

Portrait de Fernande Olivier (Portrait of Fernande Olivier), 1906

Oil on canvas

Collection privée, Suisse

Besides paintings by Cuno Amiet, Giovanni Giacometti, and Ferdinand Hodler, the industrialist Oscar Miller also purchased this early work by Pablo Picasso.

For Gertrud and Josef Müller, who grew up on the nearby Schanzmühle estate, Miller was more than just a neighbor. At his villa, known as Schnabelweide, they encountered paintings and artists, and it was here that their passion for collecting was kindled. Josef Müller acquired the painting from Miller—and so the Picasso made its way from Schnabelweide to Schanzmühle.

The portrait shows Picasso's partner, Fernande Olivier (1881–1966), in profile—spare lines on an earthy ochre background. It dates from Picasso's Rose Period, the phase in his œuvre in which warm hues predominated, before his shift to geometric abstraction.

ROOM 2

A COLLECTION BORN OF FRIENDSHIP

Gertrud Dübi-Müller's decisions to buy particular works were often grounded in her friendships. The painter Cuno Amiet, a fellow native of Solothurn with whom she took painting lessons beginning in 1904, became a lifelong friend. He painted her portrait and gave her a work of art on her birthday every year; she purchased paintings from all periods of his œuvre and supported him financially. Their correspondence bears witness to the bond between them.

A similar bond formed between her and Giovanni Giacometti. She drove her cabriolet to the village of Stampa in the Grisons, where she took photographs of his family and bought his art. Amiet and Giacometti, painters who were born the same year, were engaged in an ongoing creative dialogue in which Dübi-Müller participated as a friend, model, and collector.

Comparatively little attention has been paid to her friendship with the Genevan painter Alice Bailly, whom she supported by buying her work.

During a stay in Berlin in 1913, Dübi-Müller was introduced to the German artist Max Liebermann (1847–1935) and acquired several of his works, some directly from him.

ALICE MARIE LOUISE BAILLY (1872–1938)

***Dans la chapelle* (In the Chapel), 1912**

Oil on canvas

Kunst Museum Winterthur, Ankauf 1970

Alice Bailly, a native of Geneva, lived in Paris, moved in the circles of artists like Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979), Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), and Marie Laurencin (1883–1956)—and, like many women artists of her time, struggled to gain recognition and earn a living.

When Bailly had her first solo exhibition in Geneva in 1913, Gertrud Dübi-Müller purchased the painting *Dans la chapelle*, soon followed by two more paintings by the artist and a so-called *tableau-laine*—a picture made with needle and wool. None of the four works by Bailly later entered the Dübi-Müller Foundation at the Kunstmuseum Solothurn.

In their correspondence, Bailly expressed her appreciation for Dübi-Müller's independence of mind. For the young woman from Solothurn, collecting was also an act of solidarity with her artist friends.

GIOVANNI GIACOMETTI (1868–1933)

***Auf der Laube* (On the Balcony), ca. 1910**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

The painting shows Annetta Giacometti (1871–1964), the artist's wife, among bright nasturtiums and trailing carnations on the balcony of her home in Stampa in the Grisons. Gertrud Dübi-Müller purchased the work in 1911. She knew the setting well: she had visited the family in Stampa in 1907 and 1911 and photographed Giovanni Giacometti, his wife, and their four children Alberto (1901–1966), Diego (1902–1985), Ottilia (1904–1937), and Bruno (1907–2012).

The photographs next to the painting show how closely collecting

and personal interaction were intertwined for Dübi-Müller: she bought art from her friends—and captured them with her camera.

CUNO AMIET (1868–1961)

***Bretonin* (Breton Woman), 1892**

Oil on fabric

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Cuno Amiet gave this painting to Gertrud Dübi-Müller in 1910. She had provided financial assistance when he built himself a home and studio in the Oberaargau hamlet of Oschwand, and he subsequently made a habit of giving her a work of art every year on her birthday. The *Breton Woman* dates from Amiet's time in Pont-Aven in western France. The woman's head and upper body, depicted in lost profile, take up almost the entire painting: blue on ochre, bold fields of color. It is a work from the period when Amiet was shaking off the constraints of academic painting.

Dübi-Müller's niece Monique Barbier-Mueller (1929–2019) recalled how, as a child, she would stop in front of this painting at the Schanzmühle estate in Solothurn “to greet a young Breton woman from the painter's Pont-Aven period.”

CUNO AMIET (1868–1961)

***Kirschbäumchen* (Cherry Tree), 1899**

Tempera on fabric

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

In Pont-Aven in Brittany, Cuno Amiet, taking inspiration from the paintings of Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh, developed a style characterized by luminous colors and impasto brushwork. After returning to Switzerland, he looked to the artists Ferdinand Hodler and Giovanni Segantini (1858–1899) for guidance—his colors became more muted, his brushwork calmer.

The young tree at the center of the painting, the silent figures on the path, the dull green: everything serves to evoke a sense of stillness. The *Cherry Tree* dates from a brief phase of quietude; beginning in 1903, Amiet returned to bolder colors in works such as *The Yellow Hill*. The simplified color fields and the asymmetrical composition are also reminiscent of Japanese color woodblock prints, which he had been studying since his stay in Pont-Aven.

CUNO AMIET (1868–1961)

***Apfelbaum (Apple Tree)*, 1907**

Oil on canvas

**Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Schenkung Frau Monique Barbier-Mueller
in Erinnerung an ihren Vater Josef Müller, 1977**

When Josef Müller saw this painting in 1908 at the Zurich home of the collector Richard Kisling (1862–1917), he wrote to his sister Gertrud: “I liked the orchard, the apple trees like balloons with fiery-red apples and blue trunks, a great deal.”

The fruit harvest was a theme to which Cuno Amiet returned time and again. Dübi-Müller had known the hamlet of Oschwand in the Oberaargau, where he had his studio, since her teenage years. She would take the morning train there for her painting lessons—the beginning of a lifelong friendship. In 1908, she supported Amiet with an interest-free loan for the construction of his studio home, where she paid him regular visits. The gardens there, her niece Monique Barbier-Mueller later wrote, resembled “explosions of brilliant yellow, fiery red, and deep purple.”

MAX LIEBERMANN (1847–1935)

***Gartenterrasse in Wannsee (Garden Terrace in Wannsee)*, 1916**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

During a visit to Berlin in 1913, Gertrud Dübi-Müller was introduced to the German painter Max Liebermann. She visited him at his home and was impressed—both by him and by his private collection. As she wrote to her brother Josef in America, “Liebermann is a very self-assured, smart fellow, and he has magnificent paintings: fifteen Manets, five Degases, including one that is splendid.”

In 1916, she purchased three of his works—two directly from the artist, among them the *Hunter with His Pack* on view next to this painting; she bought *Garden Terrace in Wannsee* through Galerie Caspari in Munich. Liebermann had moved into his country house in Wannsee outside Berlin in 1910 and had been painting views of the garden ever since. The years of the First World War (1914–1918) kept him in Berlin—the garden provided him with vegetables and motifs.

A VISUAL DIALOGUE AMONG FRIENDS

Ferdinand Hodler and Gertrud Dübi-Müller struck up an artistic conversation that continued for several years. Beginning in 1911, the painter, who was thirty-five years her senior, portrayed her in seventeen paintings and numerous studies. Modeling for him in the studio and the garden, she also captured him in photographs that show him at work and as a trusted friend.

The visual dialogue between artist and collector attests to an encounter among equals. Dübi-Müller was a photographer and his partner in the exchange of creative inspiration. Hodler and she portrayed each other. Her self-assured posture in the *Portrait of Gertrud Müller among Greenery* (1916) demonstrates that this was a meeting of two independent minds.

Through Hodler, Dübi-Müller was also introduced, in 1908, to the Swiss artist Albert Trachsel (1863–1929), from whom she acquired several works.

The Swiss painter Hans Berger (1882–1977) became a lifelong friend to her and her siblings. The first work by him entered her collection in 1911, with many more to follow.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

***Selbstbildnis* (Self-Portrait), 1914**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Ferdinand Hodler painted Gertrud Dübi-Müller seventeen times. Her collection also included one of his self-portraits, which she had purchased directly from the artist in December 1914. In her card catalog, she noted: “Self-Portrait, Grindelwald, 1914.” Hodler is wearing a painter’s smock, with the stiff collar open—one imagines him at his easel, absorbed in his art. His face is tanned, likely by the mountain sun.

Self-portraiture runs through Hodler’s entire oeuvre: he created around fifty such paintings from 1872 until shortly before his death in 1918. The works on this wall reveal an ongoing alternation of gazes: he portrays her, she photographs him—and in Dübi-Müller’s collection, his likenesses of her are united with his self-portrait.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

***Bildnis Gertrud Müller im Grünen* (Portrait of Gertrud Müller among Greenery), 1916**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

On two occasions, Ferdinand Hodler asked Gertrud Dübi-Müller if he could paint her in his garden in Geneva. In 1915, he wrote: “The garden looks quite lovely; all that is missing in it is you.” This painting dates from the following year.

Slightly off-center, she stands in front of two small trees. White blouse, navy-blue dress, a confident and relaxed posture—it is one of the most graceful portraits Hodler ever created.

What makes the garden portraits special is that Dübi-Müller returns the artist’s gaze not only as a model but also as a photographer. While he painted, she took photographs or staged herself and him. One shot shows Hodler on a chaise longue, his straw hat pulled down over his face, with Dübi-Müller beside him playing the accordion. The garden is a place of intimacy unencumbered by the obligations of representation.

HANS BERGER (1882–1977)

***Provence: Pinien und Felsen* (Provence: Pine Trees and Rocks), 1910**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Gertrud Dübi-Müller and her brother Josef met the Swiss painter Hans Berger through Ferdinand Hodler. Both were thrilled by Berger’s first exhibition at the Musée Rath in Geneva in 1911 and purchased several works. This painting was created less than a year earlier—in Provence, France, where Berger experienced a creative breakthrough in 1910. Vibrant complementary hues, impasto, vigorous brushstrokes: Provence dissolves into pure color. Rocks, pine trees, and the sky are given equal importance.

The friendship lasted a lifetime. Dübi-Müller and her siblings were among Berger’s most loyal collectors. The photos next to the painting show the painter at work and in the Oberaargau hamlet of Oschwand with Cuno Amiet—two artists from Dübi-Müller’s closest circle of friends.

ALBERT TRACHSEL (1863–1929)

***L'île des arbres en fleurs (Paysage de rêve) (Island of the Flowering Trees [Dream Landscape])*, ca. 1912/13**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Gertrud Dübi-Müller met the Swiss painter Albert Trachsel through Ferdinand Hodler and acquired several of his works early on. In 1914, he wrote to her: “I was very pleased to see that you liked my painting—not everyone understands my art.”

The picture shows a Symbolist dreamscape that the artist painted repeatedly between 1905 and 1914: a luminous mountain, delicate spectral colors, a pictorial space halfway between vision and observation of nature. Trachsel's work went largely unappreciated during his lifetime. Dübi-Müller bought it anyway—and in 1929 loaned the paintings in her collection to Kunsthalle Bern for the first major Trachsel retrospective.

VAN GOGH AND FRENCH MODERNISM

In 1908—she was twenty years old—Gertrud Dübi-Müller acquired her first painting: a work by the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh. A bold choice and an expensive one, the expressive *Portrait de Charles-Elzéard Trabuc* (1889), chief warden of the psychiatric asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, marks the beginning of her lifelong passion for collecting.

Van Gogh became the lodestar of her circle of friends. Among Cuno Amiet, Giovanni Giacometti, her brother Josef and her, they called it “Van-Goghing”: they visited exhibitions and studied works by painting copies. Dübi-Müller lent her Van Gogh to Amiet so he could ponder it at length, and Giacometti, too, saw it in his friend’s studio. In 1907, the two artists portrayed the collector in an amiable contest of their skills.

The French artist Paul Cezanne’s œuvre similarly emerged as a benchmark. Dübi-Müller and her brother competed to purchase the better works. *Trois crânes sur un tapis d’Orient* (1904), which she bought in 1912, ranks among Cezanne’s preeminent late works.

VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853–1890)

Portrait de Charles-Elzéard Trabuc (Portrait of Charles-Elzéard Trabuc), 1889
Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Gertrud Dübi-Müller was barely twenty years old when she purchased this painting at Galerie Miethke in Vienna in 1908. She initially flirted with the idea of buying a “Wheat Field” by Vincent van Gogh but then decided on this portrait.

Charles-Elzéard Trabuc (1830–1896) was the chief warden of the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole psychiatric asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, where Van Gogh stayed in 1889. Behind the man’s stern features, the painter saw magnanimity and warmth—and painted him with an intensity that avant-garde artists would not achieve until decades later.

Although it is the only Van Gogh on display here, it features in the exhibition's title. That is because, for Dübi-Müller and her circle of friends—Cuno Amiet, Giovanni Giacometti, and her brother Josef—it became a lodestar. They spoke of “Van-Goghing.”

GIOVANNI GIACOMETTI (1868–1933)

***Giovanin de Vöja*, ca. 1908**

Oil on canvas

Bündner Kunstmuseum, Geschenk in memoriam Erica Peters-Schmidt, 2022

The two artist friends Cuno Amiet and Giovanni Giacometti made a careful study of the paintings of Vincent van Gogh. In 1908, Gertrud Dübi-Müller lent her Van Gogh to Amiet for scrutiny. As the story is told in the family, she also drove it in her cabriolet to the Grisons to let Giacometti see it. Created that same year, Giacometti's portrait of *Giovanin de Vöja* (ca.1908) is informed by the composition, painting style, and alert gaze of Van Gogh's portrait of Trabuc.

Similarly, the swirling, dynamic brushstrokes in his painting *Cherry Trees in Blossom* attest to the admired Dutch painter's influence. Amiet's technique in his luminous *Chrysanthemums* likewise speaks to his intense engagement with Van Gogh.

CUNO AMIET (1868–1961)

***Der violette Hut (Bildnis Gertrud Müller)* (The Violet Hat [Portrait of Gertrud Müller]), 1907**

Oil on fabric

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Cuno Amiet and Giovanni Giacometti painted the nineteen-year-old Gertrud Dübi-Müller in the same year, and both portraits feature her wearing the same hat. The painters engaged in a friendly contest—and in doing so caused quite a sensation.

Amiet had recently visited the Van Gogh exhibition at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris: his vigorous brushwork bears witness to this encounter, while the heavy contour lines are reminiscent of Cloisonnism, a style characterized by luminous colors and black lines. Giacometti, who was influenced by the painter Giovanni Segantini, employs textured dabs of paint.

Ferdinand Hodler saw the paintings and felt that he was being challenged. His full-length portrait of Dübi-Müller, with which the exhibition opens, was his response to these two works.

PAUL CEZANNE (1839–1906)

***Trois crânes sur un tapis d'Orient* (Three Skulls on an Oriental Carpet), 1904**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

In 1912, Gertrud Dübi-Müller had the French art dealer Ambroise Vollard (1866–1939) send a painting by Paul Cezanne to Solothurn for her consideration. Josef Müller had purchased a Cezanne at auction in Paris a year earlier. Dübi-Müller anxiously awaited the painting's arrival, perking up "whenever a wagon rattled by," as she wrote to her brother. After examining it, she concluded: "It is truly fine, and I think I want to keep it." Josef congratulated her and called the painting "perhaps Cézanne's most accomplished work." Cezanne painted the picture with the utmost care: the French painter Émile Bernard (1868–1941) saw it on his easel in 1904 and thought it was finished—yet the artist kept working on it, modifying shapes and colors until the picture looked exactly the way he wanted it to.

GERTRUD DÜBI-MÜLLER (1888–1980)

1888

Gertrud Müller is born in Solothurn on April 29, the youngest of four siblings (Emma, Marguerite, and Josef). Her mother, Anna Müller-Haiber, dies soon after her birth.

1894

Her father, Josef Adolf Müller, a cofounder of the screw works Sphinxwerke Müller & Cie. AG in Solothurn, dies. The orphans inherit a considerable fortune. Spending time at the home of their neighbor, the collector and industrialist Oscar Miller, they first encounter contemporary art.

1900

In the early years of the twentieth century, Swiss women cannot open a bank account or pursue a career without their husbands' permission. Universities have enrolled women since 1867, but few avail themselves of this opportunity.

1902

At the opening of the Municipal Museum of Solothurn (now known as Kunstmuseum Solothurn), she is introduced to the artists Ferdinand Hodler and Cuno Amiet.



Gertrud Müller with her "Pic-Pic" car, undated,
Familienarchiv Barbier-Mueller, Genf

1904

She starts taking painting lessons with Amiet in his studio in the hamlet of Oshwand in the Oberaargau.

1907

Amiet and his friend Giovanni Giacometti paint competing portraits of Müller.

1908

She turns twenty, then the age of legal majority. In Vienna, she purchases Vincent van Gogh's *Portrait de Charles-*

Elzéard Trabuc (1889), the first painting for her collection.

1911

She buys her first automobile, a Piccard-Pictet, and takes driving lessons in Geneva, where Hodler paints the first of what will eventually be seventeen portraits of her.

1914–1918

During the First World War, Müller photographs soldiers guarding Switzerland's borders and landscapes.

1916

By this year, she has largely assembled the core of her collection.

1918

She photographs Hodler in Geneva the day before his death and again laid out on his bed after his death on May 19.

1921

She marries the lawyer Otto Dübi, the director of her parents' factory. From now on she signs as Gertrud Dübi-Müller. Living in her family home, the Schanzmühle estate in Solothurn, they keep buying art together. She continues to manage her own assets.

1929

The Great Depression forces collectors in Switzerland as elsewhere to sell works.

1932–1942

As a member of the municipal art committee in Solothurn, Dübi-Müller champions purchases of contemporary art.

1937

A passionate mountaineer since her teenage years, she scales the Matterhorn.

1939–1945

During the Second World War, Switzerland remains isolated.

1941

She and Otto Dübi move into their new home on



Otto and Gertrud Dübi-Müller, Solothurn, undated, Familienarchiv Barbier-Mueller, Genf

Fegetzallee in Solothurn, where her artist friends always find an open door.

1964

She and her husband establish the Dübi-Müller Foundation. In 1981, a hundred and ninety works from their private collection enter the holdings of the Kunstmuseum Solothurn.

1971

Swiss women are granted the right to vote and stand for elections on the federal level—Dübi-Müller is eighty-two.

1974

The Kunsthaus Zürich displays three photographs by her in the exhibition *Photography in Switzerland, 1840 until Today*. She is the only woman of her generation in the show.

1980

Starting January 1, the Swiss Alpine Club SAC officially admits women members.

1980

Dübi-Müller dies in Solothurn on January 20 at the age of ninety-one.



Gertrud Müller in a gas balloon, undated, Familienarchiv Barbier-Mueller, Genf

GERTRUD DÜBI-MÜLLER (1888–1980)
3D projection of selected stereo photographs
Gertrud Dübi-Müller-Archiv, Fotostiftung Schweiz

Gertrud Dübi-Müller took up photography at a young age; she had her first camera when she was fourteen or sixteen. Her sister, Marguerite Kottmann-Müller, and she learned to take pictures together. She developed her photographs in her own darkroom and worked with various cameras.

Stereophotography was her great passion. A twin-lens camera exposes two negatives on a glass plate 65 millimeters apart, the average distance between the eyes. When viewed in a stereoscope, the two images fuse to simulate spatial depth.

The projection showcases forty-five photographs covering the themes of the art world, social life, Alpine sports, and border guards. The glass plates come from Dübi-Müller's photographic estate at Fotostiftung Schweiz, which digitized and prepared them for 3D projection.

The captions can be found
in the Image Archive Online
of Fotostiftung Schweiz:



Gertrud Dübi-Müller's Gramophone
Familienarchiv Barbier-Mueller, Genf

Like her enterprising father Josef Adolf Müller before her, Gertrud Dübi-Müller embraced innovation. Besides her great passion for art and photography, she was interested in motorcars, went on rides in dirigibles and hot air balloons, flew over the Alps, and enjoyed sporting activities including mountaineering, ice skating, horseback riding, skiing, and dancing. The artist Ferdinand Hodler invited her to dance evenings in the Swiss mountain resort of Grindelwald. She kept her brother Josef up to date on the latest fashionable dances, such as the tango and the Boston—the siblings shipped their gramophone back and forth between Geneva and Solothurn.



Gertrud Müller as a student in Cuno Amiet's studio, Oschwand, 1907,
Familienarchiv Barbier-Mueller, Genf

GERTRUD DÜBI-MÜLLER (1888–1980)

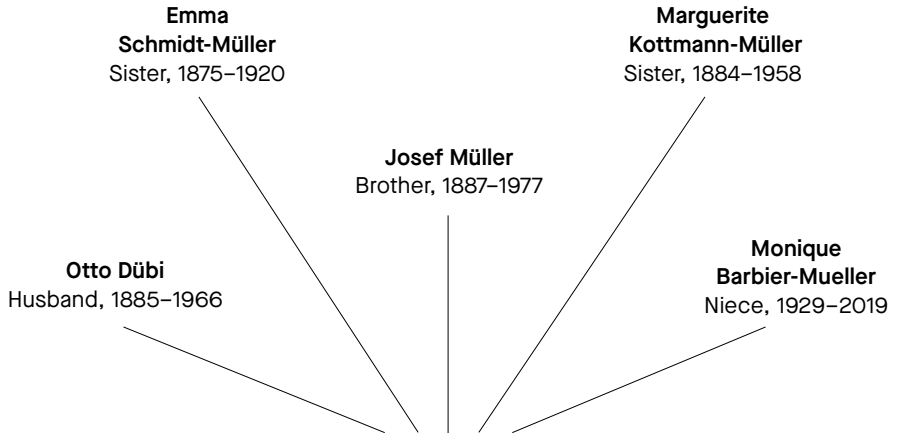
***Landschaft* (Landscape), undated**

Oil on cardboard

Collection privée, Suisse

Like her older siblings, Gertrud Dübi-Müller took painting lessons with the Solothurn artist Cuno Amiet in 1904 and again in 1906–07. Unlike her brother Josef, she never aspired to a career as an artist in her own right. However, the lessons and the exchanges of ideas with the painter, who became a friend, sharpened her eye for contemporary art in Switzerland and beyond, especially in France.

FAMILY



GERTRUD DÜBI-MÜLLER

1888–1980

Cuno Amiet
Painter, 1868–1961

Oscar Miller
Collector, 1862–1934

Giovanni Giacometti
Painter, 1868–1933

Ferdinand Hodler
Painter, 1853–1918

Hans Berger
Painter, 1882–1977

Alice Bailly
Painter, 1872–1938

Albert Trachsel
Painter, 1863–1929

FRIENDS

MOUNTAIN AIR

Gertrud Dübi-Müller was a collector, photographer, and passionate mountaineer. The Alps were a salient theme in her collection, with landscapes by Ferdinand Hodler and Cuno Amiet. What her painter friends captured on canvas—panoramas, snow-covered slopes, clouds—Dübi-Müller documented with her camera. Challenging climbs were still the domain of men. Many of her photographs show them standing before monumental backdrops—but she herself, behind the camera, did not miss out on the athletic and aesthetic experience of reaching the summits.

Postcards and letters record stays at Swiss grand hotels: elegant social gatherings, evenings in ballrooms, and celebrations, as well as experiences in nature and feats of mountaineering with her friends. Dübi-Müller drove Hodler to remote sights in her car, kept him company as he “landscaped,” and went ski touring with Cuno and Anna Amiet (1874–1953). Other athletic passions they shared included ice skating, sledding, and bobsledding.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

***Genfersee von Caux aus* (Lake Geneva, Seen from Caux), 1917**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Gertrud Dübi-Müller saw Ferdinand Hodler’s motifs with her own eyes. She drove him to his landscape painting spots in her cabriolet, photographed him as he worked, and was closely involved in his work. The Swiss health resort village of Caux perches on a steep slope above Montreux, overlooking Lake Geneva from a height of 2,600 feet. In the summer of 1917, Hodler rented a cottage there and painted tirelessly. The view across the vast expanse of the lake, the low horizon, the light: everything urged simplification. That summer, he said it felt as though he were standing at the edge of the earth, freely communing with the universe—from now on he would paint only “paysages planétaires” (“planetary landscapes”).

Dübi-Müller purchased the painting in December 1917 directly from the artist.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

***Steigende Nebel am Wetterhorn* (Rising Fog on the Wetterhorn), 1908**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Gertrud Dübi-Müller often drove Ferdinand Hodler to the mountains so that he could “landscape,” as he called it.

This picture was painted in 1908 on the Schynige Platte, a mountaintop in the Bernese Oberland located about 6,900 feet above the Lauterbrunnen Valley. It was there that Hodler—Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau arrayed before him—painted his first views of peaks. In this instance, he chose a dramatic motif: fog rises from the valleys, threatening to shroud the ridges. The summit of the Wetterhorn appears for a brief instant in the background. Mountains in shades of blue, clouds in warm white: Hodler captures a fleeting moment.

Dübi-Müller’s photographs depict the same world that Hodler records on canvas: rock, glaciers, snow—and the vastness that draws them both.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

***Eiger, Mönch und Jungfrau im Mondschein* (Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau in Moonlight), 1908**

Oil on canvas

Collection privée, Suisse

Gertrud Dübi-Müller’s brother Josef bought this painting in 1909 immediately after the opening of a Hodler exhibition—a spontaneous purchase in a moment of enthusiasm. It was one of his first Hodlers.

Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau: Dübi-Müller knew this region firsthand. She went on hikes in the Bernese Alps, scaled towering peaks, and photographed glaciers and steep slopes.

Ferdinand Hodler painted the same mountains in 1908 from a vantage point near the mountaintop railway station on the Schynige Platte in the Bernese Oberland. During the same stay, he also created the painting *Rising Fog on the Wetterhorn* (1908), which entered Dübi-Müller’s collection in 1910. In this instance, Hodler captured a different phenomenon: the sheen of the moon obscured by clouds and the peaks at night.

CUNO AMIET (1868–1961)

***Der gelbe Hügel* (The Yellow Hill), 1903**

Tempera on fabric

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

A radiantly yellow hill against a blue sky, surrounded by blossoming fruit trees: Cuno Amiet simplifies the shapes and makes the color fields glow. He had studied Japanese color woodblock prints early in his career—their influence is palpable here. As early as 1905, members of the artists' group Die Brücke, who were jettisoning academic convention and expressing their immediate sensibilities in their works, saw the painting in Dresden. It prompted them to offer Amiet, whom they cherished as a representative of modern French art, membership in their association, the only Swiss artist so honored.

Gertrud Dübi-Müller purchased the painting in 1948—forty-five years after it was created. It had waited a long time for a buyer: the palette was considered too daring. Today, *The Yellow Hill* is recognized as a key work of Swiss modernism.

TRAVELS AND CORRESPONDENCE

The Müller siblings maintained a tight bond. Gertrud Dübi-Müller was especially close to her brother Josef, who was just a year older.

The two pursued different paths. Josef Müller was drawn to far-away places—he spent extended periods of time in Paris and in the U.S. Dübi-Müller, meanwhile, toured Switzerland and the neighboring countries in her cabriolet. She refused to visit her brother in America: unaccompanied female travelers faced onerous restrictions.

Her brother reported to her on art auctions, meetings with artists and collectors, and emerging movements in art. She kept him up to date on acquisitions, requests to borrow items from their collections, and local goings-on.

The two siblings built complementary collections, purchasing works by the same artists—such as the Frenchman Henri Matisse—in pairs. Josef was an early buyer of abstract art, including works by the French painter Fernand Léger (1881–1955). Dübi-Müller consulted with him, lent him money—and managed both collections in Solothurn.

FERNAND LÉGER (1881–1955)

***Composition abstraite (Abstract Composition)*, 1925**

Oil on canvas

Collection privée, Genève

Where Georges Braque (1882–1963) and Pablo Picasso still left objects recognizable, Fernand Léger went a step further. Diagonal stripes, a luminous red oval, geometric fragments: the painting depicts a world in which the motif has completely vanished in favor of form, contrast, and rhythm.

Josef Müller acquired several works by Léger. In dialogue with her brother, Gertrud Dübi-Müller also turned her attention to the contemporary Paris art scene: she purchased works by Braque, Juan Gris (1887–1927), and Picasso. However, she did not follow her

brother's embrace of pure abstraction—instead, she made distinctive choices of her own: in Alice Bailly, she supported an avant-garde Swiss artist whom Josef Müller never included in his collection.

GEORGES BRAQUE (1882–1963)

***Le Journal (Guéridon)* (The Newspaper [Guéridon]), ca. 1913**

Oil on wood

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Josef Müller-Stiftung

Josef Müller discovered the art of Cubism in private collections in Paris and the showrooms of art dealers. He wrote about it in long letters to his sister Gertrud, and his enthusiasm proved contagious. *Le Journal* depicts a guéridon—a small round table—with a newspaper. The French painter Georges Braque breaks the object down into facets, tilts the perspective, lets surface and depth coincide. Only the word “JOURNAL” remains legible, a snippet of reality within the fragmented pictorial space.

In 1913, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso worked side by side in Paris. Their artistic exchange propelled the evolution of Cubism into a visual language that, rather than depicting reality, reassembles it from surfaces, patterns, and materials.

GEORGES BRAQUE (1882–1963)

***Verre, plat de fruits, banane* (Glass, Fruit Platter, Banana), 1925**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

In Paris, Josef Müller discovered the art of the French painter Georges Braque. His sister, too, added Braque to her collection: Gertrud Dübi-Müller purchased this still life along with the work by the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso on view next to it.

The painting exemplifies Braque's style of the mid-1920s: the fruit bowl, glass, and tablecloth seem flat—the perspective remains malleable while color makes a comeback and the geometric rigidity of Cubism has grown more limber. The influence of Paul Cézanne's œuvre, which Braque was beginning to study again at the time, is palpable.

HENRI MATISSE (1869–1954)

***Laurette à la tasse de café* (Laurette with a Cup of Coffee), ca. 1917**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Gertrud Dübi-Müller and Josef Müller discovered Henri Matisse together—and acquired complementary selections of his work. In 1917, the Lausanne gallery owner Paul Vallotton (1864–1936) offered three Matisse paintings to the two siblings. Dübi-Müller chose *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1914). In 1919, she added *Laurette à la tasse de café*, then titled “Odalisque”—a painting that her brother thought very beautiful but could not afford.

Laurette was the name of Matisse’s favorite model in 1916–17; her last name is lost to history. The black-haired Italian woman posed for over forty of his paintings. This one shows her in a close-up, her chin resting between her hands, with a cup of coffee on a small Moroccan table by her side.

ROOM 8

ART IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Life and art remained closely intertwined for Gertrud Dübi-Müller. At the Schanzmühle estate in Solothurn, works of art graced not only the formal rooms but also the bedrooms.

A bedroom was where Ferdinand Hodler’s painting *Love* (1907/08), originally conceived as a tripartite composition, hung. The erotic courtship unfolded across depictions of three couples—shortly after completing the work, however, Hodler separated the central couple from the overall composition. The risqué depiction drew fierce criticism in 1909. Josef Müller acquired both paintings that same year, while Gertrud Dübi-Müller purchased two studies for the work. Photographs show the pictures above the two siblings’ beds. The Austrian painter Gustav Klimt’s *Goldfish (To My Critics)* (1901/02), which Otto Dübi gave to Gertrud Müller as an engagement present, likewise hung in the bedroom. Intimate subjects were fit for private settings. After their wedding in 1921, she continued to buy art, now with her husband, and hosted her artist friends in their home.

GUSTAV KLIMT (1862–1918)

***Goldfische (An meine Kritiker)* (Goldfish [To My Critics]), 1901/02**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Otto Dübi, a lawyer from Solothurn, purchased this painting in 1919 from Galerie Arnot in Vienna—presumably as an engagement gift for Gertrud Müller. He informed the seller that the recipient was “someone who is well-versed in painting”; only a masterpiece would do. The painting is a deliberate provocation. The Austrian artist Gustav Klimt gave it the subtitle “To My Critics”—in response to the public outrage over his candid paintings for the new University of Vienna, which the press and members of parliament had denounced as scandalous.

The woman in the foreground turns her bare buttocks to the beholder. Dübi-Müller hung the painting in her bedroom. Intimate matters belonged in a private setting.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

***Die Liebe* (Love), 1907/08**

Oil on canvas

Collection privée, Suisse

In the winter of 1907–08, Ferdinand Hodler worked on *Love*. The original version featured three reclining nude couples: yearning, lovemaking, rest. Sometime before March 1909, he cut the painting apart, extracted the central pair, and combined the two lateral couples in a new composition. That month, Hodler presented the two-part *Love* at the Künstlerhaus in Zurich. It caused a stir and provoked protests. Josef Müller, undeterred, acquired both parts and hung them in his bedroom.

Gertrud Dübi-Müller had a study for the central couple, which hung in her own bedroom. Her brother Josef called it her “hot-water bottle.” In 1922, she acquired another study from the Swiss collector Willy Russ-Young (1877–1959); as he wrote to her, its “somewhat delicate subject matter” did not sit well with those around him.

FÉLIX VALLOTTON (1865–1925)

***Poivrons rouges (Red Peppers)*, 1915**

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Five bell peppers on a small marble table before a turquoise wall: the artist Félix Vallotton, a native of Lausanne, renders his motifs with almost photorealistic precision—note the highlights on the peppers and the shadows on the marble surface. Many of Vallotton's paintings captivate viewers with a baffling hint of mystery. In this instance, the deep red hue of the knife blade introduces an almost surreal element.

Josef Müller acquired the painting in 1924. He knew Vallotton very well: the artist's brother was the gallery owner Paul Vallotton, through whom the siblings purchased numerous works. The painting eventually found its way into Gertrud Dübi-Müller's collection.

ROOM 9

DEATH AND VIEW INTO INFINITY

From a young age, Gertrud Dübi-Müller was no stranger to death—she was orphaned and suffered grievous early losses with the deaths of her sister Emma Schmidt-Müller in 1920 and her friend Ferdinand Hodler.

Among Hodler's most haunting bodies of work are the paintings showing his dying lover, Valentine Godé-Darel (1873–1915). Dübi-Müller also owned one version. In 1918, Hodler's health took a rapid turn for the worse. She photographed him the day before his death—and laid out after his passing, just as he had once portrayed Godé-Darel.

The dialogue between artist and collector is reflected in the painting *View into Infinity* (1913–1916): Hodler worked for six years on various versions of the work, including the monumental painting now in the main building of the Kunstmuseum Basel. Dübi-Müller was his model for the figure on the far right; the photographs she took of him as he worked offer insight into his creative process even today—and transmit a sense of their friendship, which bore witness to and nurtured the genesis of art.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

Bildnis der kranken Valentine Godé-Darel (Portrait of the Sick Valentine Godé-Darel), 1914

Oil on canvas

Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Dübi-Müller-Stiftung

Valentine Godé-Darel was Ferdinand Hodler's lover and the mother of his daughter Paulette (1913–1999). Beginning in late 1913, Hodler grappled unsparingly with her illness from cancer and her dying in a series of over a hundred drawings and eighteen paintings. He had previously documented the death of his former lover Augustine Dupin (1852–1909) in a similar manner.

Gertrud Dübi-Müller acquired the portraits of the deceased Dupin and the ailing Godé-Darel directly from the artist. She photographed Hodler as he went for a last walk the day before his death, and again on May 19, 1918, laid out after his passing—much as he had painted his partners as they lay dying, she bid him farewell with her own final portrait.

FERDINAND HODLER (1853–1918)

Blick ins Unendliche (View into Infinity), 1913–16

Oil on canvas

Kunst Museum Winterthur, Schenkung des Galeriesvereins, 1923

In 1910, the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft commissioned Ferdinand Hodler to create a monumental painting for the stairwell of the new Kunsthhaus in Zurich. He wrestled with the composition for years, producing hundreds of sketches and working on multiple versions simultaneously. This work, known as the Winterthur version, dates from 1916. The first, monumental Basel version (15 by 29 feet) now hangs in the stairwell of the Kunstmuseum Basel's Hauptbau.

Five women dressed in blue perform the subtle movement of a quarter-turn to the right. Hodler conceived the painting as a work of Christian religious art—he also called it “View into Eternity.” Gertrud Dübi-Müller served as his model: she is the figure on the far right. As he was painting, she photographed him. She as model and photographer, he as painter and model—another encounter on equal terms.

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