

Cultural hotspot Kreis 1

(Text by Susanna Koeberle)

David Chipperfield's new extension and the relocation of several galleries to the immediate surroundings of the Kunsthaus Zurich provide an opportunity to take a closer look at the cultural significance of this district. The history of Zurich's culture is closely linked to Kreis 1.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Kreis 1 was the hub of cultural life in Zurich. The very first art institutions in the Limmat-City were established in this district. In the 1910s, for example, the first galleries offering modern art and international trade were established in Zurich. These included the Kunstsalon Wolfsberg (1911), the Kunstsalon Bollag (1912) and the galleries of Albin Neupert (1913) and Gottfried Tanner (1913). Auctions were also held at the Salon Bollag. The French art dealer Toni Aktuaryus opened a gallery on Pelikanstrasse in 1924, whose clients included the collector Emil Bührle. Aktuaryus and Bollag were thus among the pioneers in the field.

In 1910 the Kunsthaus was opened, which to this day holds one of the largest art collections in Switzerland. Karl Moser's building on Heimplatz underwent several extensions over the years, most recently in 2021 by the architect David Chipperfield.

In February 1916, in the middle of the First World War, the Cabaret Voltaire was founded on Spiegelgasse. The group of exiles called themselves Dada and brought considerable unrest to tranquil Zurich with their events. The Dadaists heralded a radical questioning of social and artistic ideas. The economic crisis at the end of the 1920s led to upheavals in the art trade, which was then becoming increasingly international. Before and during the Second World War, many Jewish cultural workers (including collectors) found refuge in Zurich. Although their scope for action was limited, they were important for Zurich's cultural life. The director of the Schauspielhaus at the time, Ferdinand Rieser, accepted many immigrants into the ensemble. District 1 can certainly be considered a stronghold of an anti-fascist attitude in Switzerland. The Oprecht bookshop bears witness to this too; owner Emil Oprecht was also a publisher and published literature by immigrants. Various meeting places for creative artists contributed to the creative humus of Kreis 1 as well, such as the Café Odeon (opened in 1911), the Restaurant Kronenhalle (taken over in 1924 by Hulda and Gottlieb Zumsteg) or the Café Select (1935). The fact that some regulars of these establishments lived in the area underlines the cultural importance of the Bellevue neighborhood.

In 1950, the "Städtische Kunstammer" was opened in the Haus zum Strauhof. This was followed in the late 1950s by the opening of various art galleries in the centre of Zurich, which were also dedicated to contemporary art. Founded in 1959, **Gallery Ziegler** was one of the pioneers of the scene; it later moved to the fourth floor of the Schauspielhaus building. Renée and Maurice Ziegler run the gallery together with two of their children. The Annemarie Verna Gallery, whose origins also lie in Kreis 1, is also still active today. Not far away, the Charles Lienhard Gallery (1959) was domiciled. The Gimpel & Hannover Gallery, run by Anne Rotzler, was active from 1962 to 1984, while the art historian Bruno Bischofberger first opened his doors in Pelikanstrasse in 1963. After that, the enterprising art dealer and collector changed locations several times. It is thanks to his intensive relationship with representatives of Pop Art - such as Andy Warhol - that this art movement found its way to Zurich. The early pioneers brought contemporary international art to Switzerland for the first time. In 1970, the Paris-based Galerie Maeght became the first foreign gallery to open in Zurich. It was later renamed Lelong.

The 1968 movement with its student protests culminated in 1980 in the demands of Zurich's youth for more freedom for alternative forms of culture. Two groundbreaking exhibitions, both held in the Strauhof, stand for this newly burgeoning creativity and energy: "Frauen sehen Frauen" (1975) and "Saus und Braus. City Art" (1980). They lived from a free approach to artistic forms of expression such as music and were also strongly supported by female positions. This young art scene shaped a new cultural awakening. With the founding of the "Helmhaus" in 1988, the city government also offered a platform to younger local artists. However, this scene initially showed little interest in the professionalisation of an established art context such as a gallery. This changed with the emergence of a new generation of gallery owners.

In the early 1990s, various cultural institutions as well as artists' studios were located in the Schoeller area in Zurich's industrial quarter. An important role in establishing the new gallery scene was played by the opening of the nearby Löwenbräu in 1996, which marked an important career step for many galleries still active today. Eva Presenhuber, for example, began working there as a gallerist.

Like **Peter Kilchmann**, who opened his gallery at the Schoeller Areal in 1992 and later also moved to the Löwenbräu, **Eva Presenhuber** decided to move back to Kreis 1 in the wake of the imminent opening of the Kunsthaus extension. Victor Gisler believed early on in a location in the centre of the Limmatstadt; his gallery **Mai 36** has resided on Rämistrasse since 1996. Gisler is now all the more pleased about the immigration of other protagonists of the gallery scene. **Fabian & Claude Walther** and **Lange Pult** were among the first galleries to move from the industrial quarter to the city centre. In the course of the Kunsthaus expansion, **Maria Bernheim** also settled on Rämistrasse. As a newcomer, **Fabian Lang** moved to Kreis 1 even before that, in 2019, with his newly founded gallery; not far away, **Galerie Rumbler** opened in 2021. Tobias Mueller Modern Art and Galerie Bernhard have established themselves on Waldmannstrasse. Like the latter, **Sommer Salon Zurich** is not located on the ground floor, but on an upper floor. In spring 2021, **Larkin Erdmann** also moved into the rooms on the upper floor of the former Jecklin building on Heimplatz. The latest addition to this quarter will be in autumn 2022, when **Galerie Tschudi** from Zuoz opens its second location in Zurich.

A joint appearance of the Kreis 1 galleries creates a new art cluster, which means further consolidation for Zurich as an art destination. Thanks to the initiative of a few gallerists, "Zurich 1" was launched in autumn 2022 - a community of galleries in Zurich's Kreis 1 around the new Kunsthaus, all within walking distance. The newly founded association invites visitors to discover the lively gallery district. A gallery map and a website provide information about current exhibitions. In addition, joint opening weekends are planned.