



W E S E R B U R G

PRESS INFORMATION

Museum of
Modern Art

The Museum in the River

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Dietrich Reusche
Press Relations Officer

Teerhof 20
28199 Bremen
Germany

Fon +49 (0)421 59839-70
Fax +49 (0)421 505247

presse@weserburg.de
www.weserburg.de

The Museum in the River

The Weserburg, Bremen's museum of modern art—one of the largest museums in Germany with an international reputation—is located in the middle of the Weser River in the heart of the Hanseatic city. The institution does not only consider itself in the middle of the river geographically: constantly alternating presentations of works from famous private collections as well as special exhibitions show the dynamic development of modern art from the sixties to the present. A supporting program consisting of weekly guided tours, concerts, lectures, performances, discussions with artists, and film screenings make the Weserburg one of the liveliest places in town.

The First Collector's Museum in Europe

The idea for a collector's museum, an institution in which the collector is not only the lender but a committed mediator of modern art, was implemented for the first time in Europe in Bremen. A concept that clearly sets the Weserburg apart from traditional art museums. Various focuses have been selected from several German collections that provide insight in to the world of art that is as personal as it is diverse. The private collector's individual passion for art is combined with the scholarly eye of the museum in the special atmosphere of this historic building. In an impressive tour, visitors do not follow a path alongside art-historical developments, rather they follow dialogues between the individual works of art. The appeal lies in the interaction between the individual private collections. When strolling through the exhibition spaces, the juxtaposition and coexistence of different collection concepts under one roof enables experiencing contemporary art from ever new, in part surprising angles of vision.

From Coffee to Art

The old warehouses of the Weserburg can look back at an eventful history. Before art took up residence in the building, it housed a tobacco factory and later the Schilling coffee roasting facility. In 1893, the cigarette factory Ad. Hagens & Co. purchased the packing houses nos. 20a–d, which were built on the Teerhof by the C. Poppe company, and in 1897 built the so-called Hagensburg. The architect Johann Rippe was in charge of construction, and the building constituted the spectacular completion of the development of the Teerhof before World War II. The two neo-Gothic gate towers in particular loosened the monotony of the rows of packing houses and were an eye-catcher when viewed from the Kaiserbrücke (now the Bürgermeister-Smidt-Brücke).



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In 1923, the coffee roasting facility Gebrüder Schilling (Schilling Brothers) bought the building complex, where they henceforth imported, roasted, and shipped coffee. The name Hagensburg was changed to Weserburg. The buildings on the Teerhof were badly damaged in World War II. In 1944, following the 159th air raid, most of them lay in ruin—the Weserburg was almost completely destroyed. The building was reconstructed in 1949, and Schilling recommenced operations. In 1973, the company with a fifty-year tradition in the coffee business closed its doors and sold the Weserburg to the Municipality of Bremen.

In the ensuing years, the cultural scene seized the building. Artists set up studios, and the Mockstheater and the Städtische Galerie found new space. The building accommodated a total of more than twenty cultural and social facilities. The GAK—Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst (Society for Contemporary Art), founded in 1980, was also housed here. During one of their exhibitions—the presentation of works by Edward Kienholz from the Onnasch Collection—the idea was born to establish a collector's museum for Bremen. It was a number of years, however, before it could be implemented.

The Bridge to the Future

On November 14, 1988, the decision was passed by the Citizenship of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen Municipality to found the New Museum Weserburg Bremen. The founding members were the City of Bremen, the Kunstverein in Bremen, as well as the collectors Hans Grothe, Anna and Gerhard Lenz, Reinhard Onnasch, and Hartmut Ackermeier. Architect Wolfram Dahms drew up the plans for the conversion of the building complex.

On September 6, 1991, the New Museum Weserburg Bremen opened its doors under the directorship of Thomas Deecke. The museum was an absolute novelty in Europe. It was the first time that the concept of a collector's museum has been implemented in which the permanent exhibition consisted exclusively of works from private lenders. Thomas Deecke's extraordinary commitment was pivotal in the long-term securing of several outstanding collections from both Germany and abroad. Works of contemporary art have since been presented in numerous exhibitions and collection presentations on 6,000 square meters of exhibition space. We can look back on successful exhibitions such as *Die Kunst und das schöne Ding* (1995), *Picasso, Guston, Miró, De Kooning* (1997), or *Fondation Maeght: Südliche Kunst unter nordischen Himmel* (2003). In addition, many of the exhibitions developed by curators from the Weserburg have been taken over by well-known museums. The exhibition *Minimal Maximal* (1999), for example, toured via Spain all the way to Japan and Korea.

Carsten Ahrens has been director of the museum since November 1, 2005. Under his leadership, with solo exhibitions of works by Jörg Immendorff (2007) and Helmut Newton (2008), the Weserburg has opened up to a broader public. And in the future as well, the museum will pursue the goal of attracting an interested public for itself and for Bremen by showing ambitious collection presentations, theme exhibitions, and retrospectives of the important artists of our time.

On January 1, 2007, the museum was renamed Weserburg | Museum of Modern Art.