

Salle 5

The center room of the exhibition features a salon-style hanging of small-scale drawings and paintings from the Jungo collection.

Portrait of the Collector as a Swiss Banker

Portrait d'un ami, Jean-Paul Jungo

Curated by Rémy Zaugg

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland

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Portrait d'un ami, Jean-Paul Jungo

by Rémy Zaugg in collaboration with Jean-Paul Jungo

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Elizabeth Brunazzi

Born in modest circumstances in the town of Morges just outside Geneva, Jean-Paul Jungo did not have access to an advanced education. As a young man he went to work in Swiss banking and over time he prospered. Instead of using the process of collecting art and rare books to enrich himself still further, he developed the habit of collecting to create an alternative mode of existence. According to French artist and curator Rémy Zaugg, the collection assembled by Jungo and recently exhibited for the first time at the sumptuous Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne is one of the most important collections of contemporary art and literary first editions in private hands in French-speaking Switzerland.

In a catalogue interview with Zaugg, Jungo describes how collecting art became a way of creating his own present — a relationship with his own time and culture — on a daily basis. The process of collecting as Jungo has engaged in it over the past thirty years is an intellectual and cultural adventure; an education in the broadest sense; the autodidactic formation of a mind and sensibility over the lifetime of an individual; and a communion with the life of art itself.

I first met Jean-Paul Jungo in the company of New York abstract constructivist painter Don Hazlitt, for whom I acted as an interpreter with the French-speaking collector. The large Morges apartment overlooking Lake Léman where Hazlitt and I visited Jungo in 1998 had been turned over entirely to exhibition of Jungo's extensive collection. Even the spacious bathroom had been taken over for exhibition of a number of paintings and pieces of sculpture.



Don Hazlitt

Torn Sky, 1998

oil on canvas, 17" x 21.5"

I was struck by the graceful inquisitiveness of Jungo. This was no self-important, self-congratulatory man of wealth who wished merely to be confirmed in his choices and complimented on his collection. He was genuinely interested in a dialogue with Hazlitt, one of the American artists he had collected over a period of twenty years; and he wanted to hear our response to the general collection. As Jungo also describes in his interview with Zaugg, the collection is devoted almost entirely to living artists with whom, in many instances, Jungo has sought and developed personal friendships and "dialogues." Some of the artists he has collected, although not necessarily well-known when he discovered them, have become internationally celebrated, such as Americans Richard Tuttle and Pat Steir.

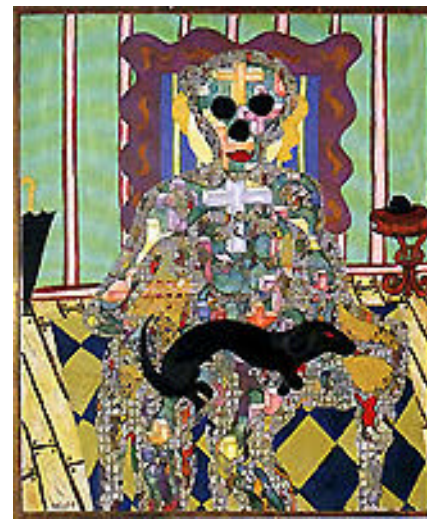
Jungo's taste is strongly organized around expressionist styles that range from art naïf and art brut to various versions of abstraction. He has a penchant for sensual and erotic themes and unashamedly champions "narrative" in painting. The result is an intriguingly personal collection full of unpredictable twists and rich in surprises. Certainly, it is not a collection as easy to categorize as, for example, that of Americans Dorothy and Herbert Vogel, now housed in the National Gallery in Washington DC. The Vogels collected primarily minimalist and conceptual art among living artists during approximately the same time period covered by the Jungo collection. Like Jungo, the Vogels made discovery of and friendship with unknown artists a mainspring of assembling a serious, extensive collection over a sustained period. Stylistically, however, the two collections are complementary: minimalist and conceptual styles are conspicuously absent from Jungo's collection and interests.



Elizabeth Brunazzi & Jean-Paul Jungo

The author with collector Jean-Paul Jungo at his Morges residence in May, 1998.

When I visited in 1998, one entire room in Jungo's apartment was devoted to Swiss-born Paris writer/painter Pierre Klossowski, who specializes in erotic themes. Jungo has maintained a strong friendship with the erotic painter over a number of years; the representation of his works within the larger collection is extensive. The Klossowski room in the Morges apartment impressed me as the "secret room" of both Jungo's imagination and his collection. Jungo tells an anecdote (*Portrait d'un ami, Jean-Paul Jungo* 34-35) about his first purchase of a Klossowski drawing in the artist's Paris studio in 1974. The story has it that Klossowski warned the banker that Swiss customs officials would most likely confiscate the work as "*une oeuvre licencieuse.*" While Jungo made it back to Morges with the painting in tow, and without any intervention by Swiss customs, Klossowski's provocative warning undoubtedly added to the pleasure of taking such a drawing back to Switzerland. Klossowski's persistent interest as a writer and intellectual in the writings of Sade and Nietzsche is translated in his paintings as the depiction of a "perverse" eroticism between men and women (sometimes accompanied by geese) in a style that parodies eighteenth-century French classicism devoted to pastoral and rural delights. They are at once humorous, mysterious, provocative, and simply odd.



William Nelson Copley
Outer Focus, 1957
huile sur toile, 73 x 60cm



Pierre Klossowski
De natura rerum, 1973
crayons de couleur sur papier, 169 x 139cm

It was then doubly surprising and amusing to see the erotic paintings of Klossowski filling a large room in the Lausanne museum that, replicating the arrangement of Jungo's home in Morges (he has since moved to Geneva) functioned as the "back room" of the exhibition. Jungo states that he has been attracted to Klossowski for the courage with which the artist "transgresses numerous taboos and dares to affirm his perversity" while remaining a man "of great delicacy" (*Portrait* 35). But finally, says Jungo, "one must not confuse the man with the work." Nor the collector with his collection. While Klossowski is possibly the most representative artist of Jungo's collection and interests, the assemblage remains extraordinarily varied.

The interview with artist, friend, and curator Rémy Zaugg that introduces the luxurious tome prepared for the exhibition catalogue is also representative of Jungo's search for a continuing dialogue, an "infinite conversation" with both art and artists. One of the most moving exchanges in that conversation preserves a moment when Zaugg asks Jungo if the collection is a "trace of his existence" akin to the "slime left behind by a snail" (30). Jungo understandably balks at this sticky metaphor and rises to the occasion of the Frenchman's provocation by stating that, in essence, with his death, his passing, the most important aspect of the collection as daily process, as a way of living, will be effaced. The collection thus becomes at once a trace that is left and a trace that is eliminated.

This exchange both recalls and confirms Jungo's evocation of the importance in his life and thinking of friends Max Schoendorff, Georges Goldfayn, and Camille Bryen, all of whom were close to the movement of surrealism and to André Breton's idea of "objective chance" (*le hasard objectif* 12). Jungo's description of some of the pre-war work of Bryen might easily stand as another metaphor (better than the snail-slime one) of the Jungo collection — the living adventure of a gifted autodidact in search of the artistic languages of his own time: "In Paris, he put sheets of paper under the wheels of trams and exhibited the imprints of these traces" (27).



Pierre Klossowski
Portrait de la femme de l'artiste tapant à la machine, 1956
mine de plomb sur papier, 98 x 63cm

All references to the catalogue have been translated from French into English by the author.