



The Generali Foundation was founded in 1988 as a non-profit art association supported by the Generali Group, Austria. Its purpose is to support contemporary visual art. The building created for the foundation in 1995 is renowned for its architecture, which reflects a modernist formal language; it is excellently suited to provide for dynamic resonances between the architecture and the Generali Foundation's exhibition program, which is oriented toward conceptual art in a wider sense. With an uncompromising exhibition program and a singular collection—and these in a field that is generally thought to involve great risks—the founding director, Sabine Breitwieser, succeeded in establishing the Foundation, in relatively few years from 1989 on, as an institution not only of local importance but of high international standing. That a cultural institution supported by an insurance corporation would focus on quality and substance instead of having a constant eye on quotas is highly uncommon, as is the museum itself, which was erected on a positively unspectacular site, a former industrial area.

The institution, with all its departments and activities, is exclusively financed from private funds. Its members are the Generali Holding Vienna AG, Generali Versicherung AG, and Generali Rückversicherung AG companies.

In the beginning of 2008, the BAWAG Foundation joined the Generali Foundation in using the building on Wiedner Hauptstrasse for its artistic operations. It continued to act autonomously in all artistic matters and under its own director. For economic reasons, a shared company, Foundationsquartier GmbH, was created that provided space and infrastructure to both institutions. This new situation also entailed a change in the Generali Foundation's leadership: Sabine Folie has been its new director since February 2008. The two-year cooperation agreement between the Generali Foundation and the BAWAG Foundation has expired as scheduled at the end of 2009. In 2010, the Generali Foundation will have exclusive use of the exhibition space in the building at Wiedner Hauptstraße 15.

Exhibitions and publications

The Generali Foundation holds two or three exhibitions annually; as in the past, these will preferably be its own productions and accompanied by relevant events such as lectures, performances, or film presentations. The exhibition program is created in close association with the work on the collection, i.e., exhibitions are conceived, wherever possible, with a view to the collection's expansion and development. Exhibitions are accompanied by publications; in the last few years, a number of the latter have become standard works. We prioritize in-depth research, and hence the endeavor to contribute to the historiography of art, over a mere documentation of the exhibitions.

The collection

The ongoing creation of a collection of contemporary art of international standing and the thorough critical development and documentation of the holdings are essential to the Generali Foundation's concerns. Among its central achievements and future goals are the

conservation and, where necessary, the restoration of important holdings of historic objects. The works in the collection range back as far as the late 1950s; conceptual tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s are at its core, as well as present-day artists whose orientation is conceptual/performative. The collection assigns special importance to photography, film, video, and installation art, as well as the borderlines between architecture and design. The concept of sculpture as reflected in the collection is to be understood as an extended one: in its aesthetic dimension, immanent to art, as much as in its conceptual sense, as an investigation of a social space that is subject to ongoing redefinition.

Reference room: archive | library | media library

One especially important aspect of the collection is the archive (of writings and images), which is accessible to the public through the Generali Foundation's reference room, as are the extensive library (ca. 12,000 journals, books, and periodicals) and the video collection (ca. 500 works). This facility allows its users to perform not only general research into the history and theory of contemporary art, but also academic work on the exhibitions' themes and the artists and works of the collection.

Internet

In 1995, the Generali Foundation was one of the first institutions of art in Austria to go online; the homepage was unveiled in conjunction with the opening of the building. The website is intended as an efficient, compact, and clearly laid-out source of services and information and as an archive.

Research and preservation as well as the documentation, presentation, and educational communication of works of contemporary art are important aspects of the Generali Foundation's work, as can be seen in its Internet presentation, which permits insights into the steadily growing archive.

The website is the result of a successful collaboration with Rosebud, Inc., Generali IT, and Generali Marketing/e-commerce. In the spring of 2004, the second step of its realization was accomplished: the website was linked to the Generali Foundation's database, enabling the user to retrieve information from the library and collection over the web.

Contemporary architecture in a historical setting

The Generali Foundation is centrally located on the area formerly occupied by Habig Milliners, close to the Secession, the Albertina, and the Museums Quarter. The building, which firmly cleaves to a formal language of contemporary architecture, contains about 1,000 sq m (10,000 sq ft) of exhibition space, which can be lighted through skylights or artificially. The basement floors house a repository for the collection as well as workshops. The administrative offices and the reference room are located on the upper floors. The architecture was designed by Christian Jabornegg/András Pálffy, whose subsequent commissions include the architectural planning of Documenta X, Kassel.