

A collection that takes a stand

The Generali Foundation's collection consists of currently ca. 2,100 works by 180 international artists. In contradistinction to the goal of many public collections of offering a well-rounded overview, this collection, which is exclusively financed from private funds, is distinguished by an emphasis on individual artistic positions in conjunction with specific thematic issues.

Some of the works in the collection range back as far as the 1950s and 1960s. The "agents" of this post-avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s, which must be understood in historical terms, here encounter younger artists; they are re-visited and re-positioned as pioneers of current practices and artistic procedures.

The collection places its main emphasis on conceptual tendencies in the avant-gardes of the 1960s and 1970s as well as conceptual and performative aspects in the art of the present; on the borderlines between art, architecture, and design; and on artistic positions they analyze and critically interrogate the role of the media and social mechanisms. The early engagement of sculpture corresponds to the contemporary conception of art as social space. Photography, film, video, and installation, and more generally media that permit a process-oriented approach, are accorded special stature in the collection. The latter reflects on the consequences of modernism and its reception in post-modernism and Second Modernism (including works that engage issues of architecture, design, and urbanism) as well as phenomena and theories of cultural studies and aesthetics. This includes the evolution of visual culture in times of changing media and discourses such as post-colonialism or feminism.

The Generali Foundation purposely collected in areas that have often been too difficult for many museums. This enabled it to establish a collection with a distinct profile that, in some aspects, lays a secure foundation of holdings on which further research will be based. At the same time, many of the collection's works are already canonical representatives of recent art history. The collection gives special attention to works by artists who, though having created seminal contributions to contemporary art, are not (yet) represented in museums to a degree that would reflect their significance.

Research, conservation, documentation, and production

The Generali Foundation invokes the classical mission of the museum—research and the conservation, documentation, and pedagogical communication of works of art—a mission that is generally accorded less and less importance; some sections of its collection come close to encompassing a complete corpus, and thus approach the status of an archive. One important instrument in the development of the collection and the archive, then, are the exhibitions, which enable the Generali Foundation to undertake extensive research and to examine and present artists and themes that have, in many cases, not met with the

appreciation they deserve. In this context, the considerable amount of work the Generali Foundation puts into its publications is also of great importance.

The Generali Foundation has undertaken the scholarly examination and restoration of a number of important corpora, including the graphic work and films of Gordon Matta-Clark, the *Expanded Cinema* corpus of VALIE EXPORT, and Walter Pichler's series of *Prototypes* from the 1960s, as well as a body of early Austrian and Central Eastern European video work. A number of works have been produced specifically for the collection. The most well-known example is Dan Graham's *New Design for Showing Videos* (1995), a movable video-viewing architecture, which he developed for the Generali Foundation's video collection. Harun Farocki's video installation *Ich glaubte Gefangene zu sehen* (2000) and *Rural Studio: The Butterfly House* by Marjetica Potrč are two well-known more recent examples of such co-production.

In parallel with these activities, the Foundation has systematically created an archive that includes a considerable number of rare books, ephemera, and documents from estates, as well as a library around the collection; like the extensive video collection, they are accessible to the public through the Generali Foundation's reference room. The collection is not on permanent display; it is shown in regular intervals during our own exhibitions as well as through loans to international institutions. In 2005, the collection went on tour and was on view at the Haus der Kunst, Munich, the Nederlands fotomuseum, TENT, and Witte de With, Rotterdam, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb; this tour continued in 2007 with a show at the Austrian Cultural Forum, New York.