

Wemhöner's living room

by [Friday Mickel](#) on April 16, 2014



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Last December, I had the pleasure to be invited to visit the German businessman and art collector Heiner Wemhöner and his collection in the small town of Herford, just outside of Hanover. I had coordinated with his assistant, so I was surprised to see the 63-year-old waiting for me at the train station.

He took me first to his home, a modest, traditional German abode that housed an unbelievable treasure trove of contemporary art. His living room alone held one of the world's leading contemporary photography collections, not to mention key pieces in Asian art and sculpture. He took me around his yard to see additional works and then on to his office complex.

After two hours of nonstop touring, I asked how much of his collection we had actually seen. "About 10 percent," he replied.

Wemhöner has been building up his collection since the late 1990s, based on a strong foundation of natural interest and curiosity about art. There is no curator pre-buying works for him, and every one of his 600-plus pieces tells a story. A few years ago, Wemhöner and his son joined forces with the Kerber Verlag to produce a catalogue of a general overview of the collection. Next followed catalogues focusing on the Asian art 'department', then photography and, last autumn, sculpture.

Currently Berliners can catch a glimpse of Wemhöner's collection in a special exhibition at Osram Höfe featuring 90 works from 28 key contemporary European, American and Asian artists, from Marina Abramovic to Yin Xiuzhen. This small selection from an unfathomably massive collection is not just a spectrum of some of the most important contemporary art pieces. Rather, each is a glimpse into the personal dialogue and the life experience of one modest man.

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