

INTERVIEW

HEINER
WEMHÖNER

COLLECTOR

**When did you start collecting art - especially photography.**

It is really hard to remember. I think I slowly started to get interested in art in the late 80s. In those years, I spent a lot of time in Italy. A friend living there took me to some galleries and I acquired my first works there, though mainly paintings.

In the mid 90s, sculptures were added, but photography was still far away for me at that time. I remember a dinner with Jürgen Klauke that must have been at the end of the 90s - I was fascinated by his photographs - but I still couldn't imagine buying them. Through more classic photos, mainly in black and white from Peter Lindbergh to Herb Ritts to Robert Mapplethorpe, I consciously turned to the contemporary.

However, it was in China that I started to develop a deeper bond with photography. Today, photography comprises the largest part of my collection.

Do you have a special focus in your photo collection?

There is neither a concept nor a specific theme. Mostly, I buy spontaneously and I'm intuitively guided by personal references. As soon as I find something that moves me or is in my mind a long time, I become curious and I try to purchase it whenever it meets my budget. I have tried all these years as a collector to only include works in my collection that I like. My taste is also my focus.

But of course there are certain themes and ideas and styles that recur. Over the years photography became more and more important, and what I never would have imagined a few years ago is how the collection now can also count video works and video installations among its assets.

At the moment we are working on a book about landscape. Photography will also be very present there. Another important focus of the collection is China and this is also reflected in the medium of photography.

How do you become aware of young artists and which photographer should be observed in the next few years?

I read a lot: Books, magazines (especially art magazines) and newspapers. I also visit fairs, galleries and museum exhibitions. Of course, I also talk a lot with other people and importantly - I meet the artists. These are the situations or settings where I like to discover new positions.

I always like to follow my gut feeling. I follow what I love, what touches me and what stirs my emotions. I really have fun when I go hunting myself. If something interests me, I strike. No matter whether the work comes from a young artist or from an old one, whether from someone "hot" or somebody unknown (yet?!). In my opinion, Julian Charrière will develop to be one of the most important performers of his generation. He is one of my favorites.

Wouldn't it be nice to make parts of your enormous art collection accessible to the public?

Of course art wants to be recognized. That is what I firmly believe. And art shall have the right to be recognized. Therefore, it is very important for me to open my collection (or parts of it) to the public and not to keep it private. Art should not be locked up in storage.

In the past I have always attached great importance to lending works of the collection to museums, to present them in publications or even to organizing exhibitions ourselves.

And now after 3 years of searching - I'm really happy that I have finally found the right venue in Berlin that can serve as a home for the Wemhöner Collection. And I am very much looking forward to sharing my passion for art with the people.

Why do you choose Berlin for your collection?

There are several reasons for this. Berlin has become a kind of second home for me for some time now. Even though I can only spend a few days a month there. But Berlin is the biggest city in Germany and the most international one. If something happens when it comes to art, it's there. And over the years I've met a lot of wonderful people, artists, gallerists, curators or other collectors who live in Berlin or whom you can meet there. Even some artist friends of mine from London are thinking about moving to the German capital because of Brexit for example. Right now, Berlin is the place to be in Europe.