

Büchel has studied the basic principles of the museum's collection policy on selected works that were purchased during the early days of the museum. The museum's collection, which now consists of more than 2000 works, is the result of more than fifty years of active collecting by a number of parties: the Museum of Fine Arts (from 1957 to 1975), the Society for the Museum of Contemporary Art (from 1957 to the present) and the Museum of Contemporary Art, now known as S.M.A.K. (as from 1975).

This year, the museum is celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Society for the Museum of Contemporary Art, which is now called the Friends of S.M.A.K. and was one of the driving forces behind the genesis of the museum. The formation of a collection was one of the Society's core activities from the very beginning.

In his speech at the S.M.A.K. collection's first exhibition, the curator Henry Lecube framed it eloquently: "The collection is unique in its kind. It has nothing to hide and no secrets and is not beholden to anyone except its founders." Nowadays, the collection provides a cross-section of key moments in the development of contemporary art. In addition to leading art movements of the second half of the 20th century, it represents numerous artists who have become points of reference in contemporary art around the world.

For *From the Collection | Verlust der Mitte*, Christoph Büchel selected works by Cobra artists and members of the Young Belgian Painting group, from the Pop Art period, Conceptual Art and Minimal Art, and by Joseph Beuys, Marcel Broodthaers and Panamarenko, three key artists in the S.M.A.K. collection. The exhibition's title, *Verlust der Mitte*, is taken from a 1958 work by Asger Jorn – also among the works shown – that refers to a widely discussed 1948 culture-philosophical publication of the same title by the art historian and former NSDAP member Hans Sedlmayr.

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