

# Daimler Art Collection

Private / Corporate II

Works from the Daimler Art Collection

and the Ileana Sonnabend Collection: a dialogue

Daimler Contemporary, Berlin

September 3 – November 23, 2003

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Foreword

It all began in the early 1930s with a water-color by Henri Matisse that the young Ileana, the daughter of a Romanian family of industrialists, requested from her husband, the Trieste banker Leo Castelli, instead of a diamond ring for her wedding. In her early New York years—the couple emigrated there in 1941—more Classical Modern and Abstract Expressionist works were added, but these were later disposed of. The story of the Sonnabend Collection, in its present form one of the most important private collections in the world, can be said to start in 1957, in the New York studio of the Jasper Johns, who was 27 at the time, and still completely unknown, where the enthusiastic young art fan bought one of the Figures. Ileana Sonnabend's collection grew with the gallery that she and Castelli opened in New York in 1957, and then later—with her second husband, Michael Sonnabend—with the Galerie Sonnabend in Paris, opened in 1962. The Sonnabends launched their New York branch in 1970 and ran the Paris business until 1980. The New York Sonnabend Gallery moved from Soho to Chelsea in 2000.

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Since 1962 with her Paris gallery, Ileana Sonnabend became an ambassador for American art in Europe, then later prepared the way for the most important European approaches in America. But she does not just have a new dimension of the Europe–America art dialogue to her credit, she was also able, through her unerring sense of quality and the greatest possible stubbornness to promote American and European post-war Modernism in their own countries as well, and to make them successful on the market. Ileana Sonnabend acquired pioneering works in her collection—centered around Pop Art, Minimal Art, Arte Povera, then the Neue Wilde, photographic concepts and the American Neo-Conceptualists of the 1980s. Many works stayed with her because she showed artists early in their careers, and was unable to sell their work at first.

For the second part of our ‘Private/Corporate’ exhibition series we have restricted ourselves to a small selection of 13 artists’ names, focusing on sculptural, conceptual and minimalist development lines, from the astonishing wealth of the Sonnabend collection as shown in European museums in the 1990s. In last year’s cooperation with Paul Maenz the individual works struck up a visual dialogue, but this year we have juxtaposed collection profiles. The works from the Sonnabend Collection are in the main gallery, bringing Morris and Nauman, Pondick and McCracken, Koons and Becher together: an intellectual and compellingly fascinating profile of Ileana Sonnabend as a human being and a collector.

The second part of the exhibition is devoted to some new acquisitions by the Daimler Art Collection. We have deliberately avoided a retrospective look at the collection, instead taking up Ileana Sonnabend’s passion for ‘polemic contemporaneity’ in art. Chronologically, the new acquisitions start with new works by Franz Erhard Walther (b. 1939) and Silke Radenhausen (b. 1937), artists whose conceptual work started to develop in the 1960s and 1970s respectively. Radenhausen responds to Walther’s strictly minimalistic, body- and language-centered three-dimensional arguments with a more sensual and ornamental approach. Georg Herold’s (b. 1947) work derives from the deconstructions of the late 1970s, which were as analytical as they were anarchic. His showcase-sculpture, flanked by a more recent photographic work, provides a concrete example of the curved space of Einstein’s theory of relativity. Eva-Maria Reiner’s (b. 1960) sculptural approach relates to Walther’s and Radenhausen’s pictorial concepts, but charges them with impulses with something of the nature of existential vivisection. Three individually very different positions in Minimal and Concept Art are represented by the names Mathieu Mercier (b. 1970), Andreas Reiter Raabe (b. 1960) and Pietro Sanguineti (b. 1965). While Sanguineti’s video installation *private*

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*property* analytically intensifies the conditions and backgrounds of our 'Private/Corporate' exhibition, Mercier and Reiter Raabe run through the vocabulary of the abstract avant-garde in the border area between design and ready-made.

With the spectrum displayed here, from Robert Morris and Franz Erhard Walther to Clay Ketter and Mathieu Mercier we have tried to provide a horizon of artistic positions that—entirely in the spirit of Ileana Sonnabend—“is polemical, controversial, and asks a lot of questions”. The exhibition is also a tribute to the Ileana Sonnabend’s ingenious and courageous passion for contemporary art. My thanks go to her and to Antonio Homem, the director of the New York Sonnabend Gallery, for co-operating so openly and generously.

(from the publication: 'Works from the Daimler Art Collection and the Ileana Sonnabend Collection: a dialogue', Stuttgart/Berlin 2003, pp. 2-3. You can purchase this book online.)

**Daimler Contemporary**

**Haus Huth Alte Potsdamer Str. 5 10785 Berlin**

**daily 11 am - 6 pm**

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