

Artis—Naples

*Home of The Baker Museum
and the Naples Philharmonic*

The Olga Hirshhorn Collection

September 6, 2016 – July 23, 2017

This exhibition is an acknowledgment of Olga Hirshhorn's legacy and a celebration of the collection she has left to Artis—Naples, The Baker Museum for this community to enjoy. Through a representative selection, the exhibition examines recurring themes in Hirshhorn's collection, including the friendships she and her husband, Joseph, maintained with prominent artists as well as her eclectic collecting practice.

Consisting of more than 400 works created by some of the foremost modern European and American artists such as Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning, Georgia O'Keeffe, Alexander Calder, Larry Rivers and Josef Albers, among others, *The Olga Hirshhorn Collection* reflects her diverse interests and tastes as a collector. Throughout the exhibition, pre-Columbian, African and Asian objects attest to Olga's passion for travel and non-western arts and culture. An active and passionate collector in her own right, Olga Hirshhorn was born in Connecticut to an immigrant Ukrainian family. She married her high school English teacher at age 18 and shortly thereafter was running her own employment agency. She devoted herself to her three sons and to growing her business to support her family. After a number of years, her life changed. In 1961 Joe Hirshhorn, a Latvian entrepreneur and art collector, called her agency looking to hire a chauffeur. After many phone conversations, Joe invited her to visit his newly purchased mansion in Greenwich, Connecticut. They became friends and later married.

Over the years, Joe Hirshhorn acquired a large number of works of art, which in 1974 became the founding collection of the Smithsonian Institution's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. Together, Joe and Olga Hirshhorn established close friendships with towering figures in the history of modern art. They were close friends with Picasso and his wife Jacqueline, whom they visited in France, spent time with Willem de Kooning in his studio and often visited Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico. Olga Hirshhorn typically bought or received as gifts works of art directly from these and other important artists. She developed close, personal relationships with them, which she maintained through correspondence, frequent visits and the acquisition of works of art. Works by Picasso signed "*Pour Olga, Son Ami Picasso*" (For Olga from her friend Picasso) and de Kooning's drawings inscribed "*To Olga, Love Bill*" show the intimate connection between artist and collector, one that fostered the acquisition of multiple works for Olga Hirshhorn's collection.

For more than 40 years Olga Hirshhorn was a supporter of the arts in Southwest Florida; she was a generous contributor to The Baker Museum, served on the board of the museum's auxiliary group, Friends of Art, and was integral in the early stages of the Naples Art Association. Olga Hirshhorn also served on the Artis—Naples Museum board committee. *The Olga Hirshhorn Collection* attests to the museum's continual expansion of its permanent collection with significant works of high caliber and diversity. Significant pieces on loan from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. complement the works on view.

This exhibition is organized by Artis—Naples, The Baker Museum.

Baker Gallery I

A Collection of My Own

Soon after she married Joseph Hirshhorn, Olga began her own journey through the art world. Visiting galleries, artist studios and museums with Joe opened up a new world to her—one she would seize quickly and unequivocally. Determined to become a collector, Olga made her first art acquisition in the 1960s. She bought a work by abstract artist Josef Albers with whom the Hirshhorns became close friends. They often visited Albers and his wife, Anni, at their home in New Haven and they would in turn visit the Hirshhorns in Greenwich. It was no surprise that Olga's second purchase was also an Albers. Olga's collecting vision developed quickly; her interest in avant-garde, modern and contemporary art informed her choices throughout the years. She wanted her collection to reflect her interests: "I have a collection of my own. About four or five years after we were married, I decided to buy my own piece of art.... I wanted that experience."

Several works by Albers and contemporary artists Ed Ruscha, Kara Walker and Larry Zox on view here show the stylistic connections to forerunners of abstraction, such as Vaclav Vytlacil and Morgan Russell.

Mi propia colección

Poco después de casarse con Joseph Hirshhorn, Olga se introdujo de forma personal en el mundo del arte. Las visitas que compartió con su marido a galerías, estudios de artistas y museos le descubrieron un mundo nuevo que llegaría a dominar muy pronto. Decidida a convertirse en coleccionista, Olga adquirió su primera obra de arte en la década de 1960: compró un cuadro al artista abstracto Josef Albers, de quien ella y su marido eran buenos amigos. Ambos solían frecuentar la casa del artista en New Haven, de igual forma que Albers y su esposa, Anni, pasaban tiempo en la suya de Greenwich. No sorprende saber que la segunda compra de Olga fuera otro Albers. A partir de entonces, Olga desarrollaría un sentido especial para el coleccionismo. Su interés en el trabajo de artistas de vanguardia, modernos y contemporáneos moldearía su gusto y preferencias: "Tengo una colección propia. Cuatro o cinco años después de casarnos, decidí comprar mi propia obra de arte.... Quería tener esa experiencia".

Algunos de los trabajos de Albers y de los artistas contemporáneos Ed Ruscha, Kara Walker y Larry Zox, expuestos aquí, muestran las conexiones estilísticas con precursores de la abstracción como Vaclav Vytlacil y Morgan Russell.

Baker Gallery II

To Olga, Love Bill

Olga's friendships with important figures in the history of modern art contributed to shaping her collection. Works of art were much more than objects to her: They attest to the meaningful relationships she built with artists over the years. Olga was particularly fond of Willem de Kooning, whom she and her husband, Joe, visited many times in his studio in Long Island. De Kooning, a major Abstract Expressionist artist known for his expressive and colorful gestural style, welcomed the Hirshhorns' friendship and patronage.

A selection of works by de Kooning on view in this gallery illustrates his special friendship with Olga. Drawings and paintings inscribed "To Olga, Love Bill," show a personal connection between artist and collector. In a 2007 interview, Olga reminisced about how she received these precious works: "When I would visit him, he would have all these little paintings on the floor around him. I would pick one up and he would say, 'Do you want this?' And I'd say 'yes.' So he'd sign it 'To Olga, with love.' And I have many things signed that way from Bill."

Para Olga, con amor, Bill

La amistad de Olga con figuras destacadas del mundo del arte moderno contribuyó a dar forma a su colección. Las obras de arte eran mucho más que objetos para ella: hoy continúan dando cuenta de la gran amistad que mantuvo con artistas a lo largo de los años. De Kooning, a quien Olga visitaba frecuentemente con su marido Joe en el estudio del artista en Long Island, era especial para ella. Representante destacado del expresionismo abstracto, conocido por su estilo expresivo, colorista y gestual, De Kooning aceptó de buen grado la amistad y mecenazgo del matrimonio.

La selección de trabajos de De Kooning expuestos en esta sala evidencia su especial amistad con Olga. Dedicatorias como "Para Olga, con amor, Bill" muestran la conexión personal que existió entre el artista y la coleccionista. En una entrevista que concedió en 2007, Olga recordó como recibía estos trabajos tan especiales: "En mis visitas, [De Kooning] solía tener todos estos cuadros pequeños en el suelo, a su alrededor. Si yo cogía uno entonces me decía '¿Quieres este?' Y yo le decía 'Sí'. Entonces él lo firmaba poniendo 'Para Olga, con amor'. Y tengo muchas cosas firmadas así por Bill".

Frey Gallery

Art is Personal

Olga's collecting practice was driven by her passion for modern art. She was drawn to avant-garde artists whose work defined the course of 20th century art. Her recognition that art is personal and provocative speaks to a modern sensibility. The works on display in this gallery attest to these values by challenging traditional notions of beauty and art making. Examples by Surrealist artist and photographer Man Ray, whom Olga and her husband, Joe, visited several times in Paris, depict dream-like subjects. The colorful renditions by French modernist Fernand Léger do not conform to the mere imitation of nature, while Abraham Walkowitz's exquisite portraits evince the changing aesthetic in the first decades of the century.

For Olga, art was always personal: "My definition of art? Well, art is personal.... I feel art is something that does create an emotion, whether it's an emotion having to do with offensiveness, puzzlement or love, interest, any of those things. With it, you've created something. I think that's important. I've looked at a piece of art, and I've been repulsed by it. I have learned that the artists are constantly searching and creating. They stimulate you.... You are forced to look, think and wonder what the artist is trying to do."

El arte es personal

La pasión de Olga por el arte moderno dirigió su práctica coleccionista. Le atrajeron numerosos artistas de vanguardia cuyo trabajo marcó el curso del arte a lo largo del siglo XX. Su idea de que el arte era personal y provocativo pone de relieve su sensibilidad moderna. Los trabajos que se muestran en esta galería evidencian estos valores al confrontar su contenido nociones tradicionales de belleza y arte. Las fotografías del artista surrealista Man Ray, a quien Olga y su marido Joe visitaron varias veces en París, representan temas oníricos. Los cuadros del pintor moderno francés Fernand Léger divergen de las meras imitaciones de la naturaleza, mientras que los excepcionales retratos de Abraham Walkowitz se hacen eco de la ruptura que el arte experimentó en las primeras décadas del siglo pasado.

Para Olga el arte era siempre personal: "¿Mi definición de arte? Bueno, el arte es personal.... Creo que el arte es algo que suscita emoción, sea una emoción debida a una ofensa, perplejidad o amor, interés, cualquiera de estas cosas. Esa emoción ha de crear algo. Para mí esto es importante. He visto obras de arte que me han hecho sentir repulsión. También he aprendido que los artistas están constantemente buscando y creando. Te estimulan.... Te fuerzan a mirar, pensar y adivinar lo que están intentando hacer."

Corddry Gallery II (left)

First Impressions

Playfulness and humor were important to Olga; her collection reflects her joyous attitude and optimism. Throughout her life, she enjoyed meeting new people. Particularly during her art collecting years, Olga developed lasting friendships with artists and collectors, which she cultivated for years. She compared the impact of meeting someone for the first time with the effect art can create: "There is an impact that it has upon you. It's usually your first impression. When you meet people, you often have an immediate reaction as to how you feel towards them. I think art is the same way."

On display in this gallery are colorful works by Alexander Calder and Joan Miró and a set of collages by Jimmy Ernst, which portray Olga and her husband, Joe, in a lighthearted way. Objects from various cultures show Olga's diverse interests. Also included here is a flower painting by Georgia O'Keeffe, whom Olga considered a very close friend: "I knew her during the late '60s and 1970s.... When you were with her, you knew you were with one of the most interesting people you ever met. She was a feminist; she had a lot to say, and she had very

strong opinions about things. We would stay with her. The other artists, we would visit with them. We didn't stay overnight. We stayed with Georgia O'Keeffe in her house in New Mexico. It was more intimate. We had long walks in the desert with her and marvelous conversations after dinner."

Primeras Impresiones

El juego y el humor eran importantes para Olga: la colección que amasó refleja su jovialidad y optimismo. A lo largo de su vida, disfrutó conociendo a gente nueva. Durante los años que se dedicó a coleccionar, Olga cosechó amistades duraderas con artistas y coleccionistas. Solía comparar la sensación de conocer a alguien por primera vez con el efecto que el arte le provocaba: "Se produce un choque que se te antepone. Es normalmente tu primera impresión. Cuando conoces a alguien, a menudo experimentas una reacción inmediata sobre cómo te sientes hacia su persona. Con el arte pasa lo mismo".

En esta galería están expuestas obras coloristas de Alexander Calder y Joan Miró, así como un conjunto de collages de Jimmy Ernst en los que el artista retrata a Olga y a su marido con tono jocoso. Objetos de diversa procedencia ilustran el rango de intereses de la coleccionista. En la sala se incluye también un cuadro de Georgia O'Keeffe, a quien Olga consideraba una amiga cercana: "Tuve contacto con ella a finales de los años 60 y durante los 70. Cuando estabas con ella, sabías que era una de las personas más interesantes que puedes conocer. Era una feminista, tenía mucho que decir, y tenía opiniones muy firmes sobre algunas cosas. Nos quedábamos en su casa. En el caso de otros artistas solo les visitábamos. No nos quedábamos con ellos. Nos alojábamos con Georgia O' Keeffe en su casa de Nuevo México. Era más íntimo. Dábamnos paseos largos por el desierto con ella y teníamos conversaciones maravillosas después de cenar".

Martin Gallery

We Became Good Friends

Joe and Olga met Picasso in 1967 in the South of France. Their friend Edward Steichen, a prominent photographer and curator at New York's Museum of Modern Art, introduced the couple to the Spanish artist. Despite language limitations, the Hirshhorns quickly became close friends with Picasso and his wife Jacqueline. Their house in Cap d'Antibes was only a few minutes away from Picasso's, and they spent time together during the summers. Several works on display here were gifts Olga received from Picasso, such as a portrait of his wife Jacqueline whom she was very fond of. In a 1976 interview, Olga reminisced: "I have pieces that I think are more important than other pieces, like a Picasso ceramic that he gave me, an original Picasso 'Jacqueline.' I have lots of drawings that he gave me." The connection with Picasso and Jacqueline was especially meaningful to Olga. When asked what it was like to have met him, she replied: "I've lots of things that he's given us, lots of things. He was very interesting to see, and we became good friends."

Nos hicimos buenos amigos

En 1967, Joe y Olga visitaron a Picasso en el sur de Francia. Su amigo Edward Steichen, fotógrafo y comisario en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York, presentó el matrimonio al artista español. A pesar de las limitaciones idiomáticas, los Hirshhorn se convirtieron rápidamente en amigos cercanos a Picasso y Jacqueline. Su casa en Cap d'Antibes, a pocos minutos de la de Picasso, les permitió pasar tiempo con el artista durante los veranos. Varias de las obras expuestas en esta galería son regalos que Olga recibió de Picasso. Tal es el caso del retrato de su esposa Jacqueline, buena amiga de Olga. En una entrevista que ésta concedió en 1976, señaló a propósito de algunas de sus obras favoritas: "Tengo algunas que creo que son más importantes que otras, como una cerámica original que Picasso me dio titulada 'Jaqueline'. Tengo muchos dibujos que me regaló". La conexión con Picasso y Jacqueline fue significativa para Olga. Al preguntársele cómo había sido conocerle, respondió: "Tengo muchas cosas que nos regaló, muchas cosas. Verle era muy especial. Y nos hicimos buenos amigos".