

MASI Lugano

Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

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Paul Klee

The Sylvie and Jorge Helft collection

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Sylvie and Jorge Helft

Jorge Helft was born in Paris in 1934 in a family of antiquarians dedicated to French decorative arts of the 18th century. When the Nazis invaded France his family escaped to New York where he went to school from 1940 to '47. At that time his family moved to Buenos Aires in Argentina.

After working in textiles and for 18 years in the international grain export business he retired to dedicate his efforts full-time to art, opera and music.

He has been an art collector since his teen years. Starting with Argentinian contemporary art, his collection developed to international art.

Upon retiring he created the Fundación San Telmo a non-profit multidisciplinary foundation, which he directed over 14 years organizing over 1000 cultural events including 97 exhibitions, 683 chamber music concerts, 25 conferences (including Jorge Luís Borges) and cultural programs for children from 6 to 12 years of age. The foundation had a choir, a study group for contemporary vocal music and a piano, violin, cello trio which performed all over the world. It also organized many workshops and master classes headed by famous musicians from all over the world.

For 8 years Jorge was Director of Fundación Antorchas and Lampadia Stiftung, the largest non-profit foundation that ever existed in Argentina with branches in Brazil and Chile.

When his Fundación San Telmo was obliged to close due to hyperinflation, he dedicated his efforts towards argentinian art, always on a non-for-profit basis. He opened an art space so that argentinian contemporary art could be seen together with art from Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, USA and Europe.

At different times, he was a member of the International Council of MoMA, Tate Modern and more recently MACA, the new museum near Punta del Este in Uruguay. He was founding member of Fundación Teatro Colón Buenos Aires and Fundación Música y Tecnología, which organized many performances of contemporary music from Europe, North and South America

He has created or been an advisor to 159 exhibitions including Rodin, Bourdelle, Masterpieces of French photography at his foundation; Duchamp and Christo & Jeanne- Claude at Fundación Proa in

Buenos Aires; Picasso at the National Museum in Montevideo and Christo at MACA. He also organized a travelling exhibition of Borges manuscripts in eight U.S. universities.

Sylvie Robert, to whom Jorge has been married since 2002, is a musician. Most of her career has been as a singer. She has performed in many European cities, in New York and other U.S. locations, as well as in Brazil, Uruguay and often in Buenos Aires. Various composers have dedicated works to her. She has created choirs at the Alliance Française in Buenos Aires and presently teaches interpretation of contemporary works at the university in Montevideo. She also teaches singing privately. She is an accomplished pianist and conductor. They both edited a high quality portfolio with 16 drawings of angels (1939) by Paul Klee.