

Press release

30 July 2015

Important collection of rings now at the National Museum Zurich

One of the world's largest and most significant collections of rings has been bequeathed to the Swiss National Museum. The collection was established by Alice and Louis Koch. The museum is currently showing 300 selected items from the collection, illustrating the history of finger rings over a period of 4,000 years. This is a uniquely diverse collection which serves as a valuable historical reference.

The vast collection of Alice and Louis Koch, which comprises over 2,500 rings, is now on permanent loan to the Swiss National Museum. It represents the long history of finger rings, beginning in ancient Egypt, up through ancient Rome, the Middle Ages and Modernity including the 21st century. For the first time ever, an exclusive selection of items from the collection will be on exhibit at the National Museum Zurich. The exhibition features an ancient Roman gold ring depicting the portrait of the wife of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, as well as a ring made by the renowned French Art Nouveau jewellery designer René Lalique, and modern rings created by masters such as Bernhard Schobinger of Zurich, Salome Lippuner, who was born in the canton of Valais, and the Basel designer Johanna Dahm.

History behind the Alice and Louis Koch collection

By 1912, Alice and Louis Koch had amassed the major part of their collection of nearly 2,000 historical finger rings. Louis Koch was the youngest brother of Robert Koch, court jeweller and founder of a jewellery company bearing his name in Frankfurt am Main. Louis Koch and his wife, Alice, belonged to a circle of cultivated Jewish collectors and patrons of the arts who contributed greatly to cultural life in Frankfurt up until 1933. Drawing on their family and business connections, from 1933 onwards the younger Koch generation was able to build a new home in Basel, Switzerland, as conditions in pre-World War II Germany deteriorated. As a token of the family's gratitude, the current owner of the collection has bequeathed the collection to Switzerland, i.e. the Swiss National Museum, in the form of a permanent loan which will later convert to a gift. A foundation was established (the Alice and Louis Koch Foundation), and the collection was expanded by over 500 rings created by contemporary, internationally renowned jewellery designers. The

collection in its entirety impressively portrays this area of jewellery-making, from its earliest beginnings right up to the present day.

Please direct enquiries to:

Hanspeter Lanz, Curator of Precious Metals and Jewellery, Swiss National Museum
+41 (58) 466 65 13 | hanspeter.lanz@snm.admin.ch

Juliette Wyler, Media & PR, Swiss National Museum
+41 (0)58 466 65 49 | juliette.wyler@snm.admin.ch