

# 20 Years Antenne romande

PAUL-ANDRÉ JACCARD

In 2008, the Antenne romande, the satellite office of the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) in the Romandie, celebrated its twentieth year of existence. Looking back, Paul-André Jaccard, who has been in charge there since the beginning, recaptures its success story.



Since autumn 2008, the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) has positioned itself as an Institute for Advanced Study. Revitalising the corporate design, the new 'SIK-ISEA' logo-type makes the close relationship between the head office in Zurich (SIK) and its branch office in the Romandie (ISEA = *Institut suisse pour l'étude de l'art*) apparent, an explicit testimony to the fact that the Antenne romande is an integral part of the Institute and its national and international identity.

At the same time, the University of Lausanne (UNIL) has signalled that it would like to renew its existing agreement with SIK-ISEA. In particular, the Humanities Faculty envisions extensive synergies in collaboration between the art history department and SIK-ISEA.

SIK-ISEA has expanded its fields of activity. In the context of the Research Promotion Programme, two guest professors have been engaged and four PhD positions announced. Meanwhile, the total employee count is 61 (the equivalent of 45 full-time positions). In Lausanne, the five-member staff of the Antenne romande is occupied with a variety of tasks, which are pursued autonomously to a certain extent and partly in close collaboration with other staff members in Zurich. In spring 2008, the Antenne romande celebrated its twentieth anniversary, reason enough to take stock of its development here.

## Brief History

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Institute had to withstand a critical financial phase. Eventually, through its recognition as an independent research institute by the Swiss Federal Council – under the terms of the Act for the Promotion of Higher Education, which led to the Institute being included under the purview of the Research Act in 1992 – the Institute was able to overcome its crisis. The Institute was thereby bound to further establish itself nationally and expand its field of activity to the Romandie and, in particular, to the universities of Western Switzerland. Indeed, this aim had been part of the Institute’s strategy earlier on. In 1980 already, the then Managing Director of the Institute, Hans A. Lüthy, stated that a ‘satellite office in the Romandie’ was indispensable (*Gazette de Lausanne*, 10–11 May 1980). On account of the National Cultural Heritage Protection Ordinance that came into effect in 1984, SIK-ISEA began to duplicate its photo archive and – instead of putting it into storage – made it available to the research community in the Romandie.

The Institute contacted the University of Lausanne, which, at that time, was moving in stages from the city centre to the campus in Dorigny. Thanks to the unremitting engagement of Philippe Junod, the then professor of art history, the first agreement was reached in 1982 between the UNIL Rector’s Office (Professor Dr. André Delessert) and SIK-ISEA. Hans-Jörg Heusser, today Managing Director of the Institute, strengthened the project team and intensified the already existing programme on the ‘Documentation Centre for Contemporary Swiss Art’, which was planned to accommodate the increased exchange of knowledge and information with Western Switzerland. In July 1985, the contract between the University of Lausanne and the Institute was finally ratified. The UNIL provided space and infrastructure, while SIK-ISEA assumed responsibility for the employment and salaries of the research staff.

A requirement of this agreement was to make this cooperation known to the public in French-speaking Switzerland. Lectures were held in Geneva, Lausanne, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Sion and La-Chaux-de-Fonds, and the steering committee, whose numbers were constantly increasing through the support of Madame Maryse Bory, were invited to Zurich. The author of this report was contracted as the first employee of the Antenne romande. In November 1987, the Antenne romande was able to move into the newly provided building of the Humanities Faculty (BFSH 2), which would be referred to later as the ‘Anthropole’: two offices and two archive spaces were occupied, which today accommodate workstations for five staff members.

The festive opening of the Antenne romande took place on 22 April 1988 in Lausanne. To duly celebrate the occasion, six Western-Swiss artists, each representing a different canton, were invited to create an onsite, temporary artistic intervention or installation. When leaving the auditorium of the UNIL, where the opening ceremonies took place, the large number of visitors attending the event were able to see the travelling documentary exhibition *Aspects de l’Art Suisse 1880–1980*, which was subsequently featured in no less than twenty cities of the six Western cantons, thereby making numerous new encounters and contacts possible.

## Documentation

An urgent aim was to make the entire photo archive of the Institute accessible to the Western-Swiss community. To this end, two new staff members were successively hired in order to process over 60,000 documents, an effort that was completed in 1992. Since then, researchers and other interested users have regularly consulted the photographic archive, which is continuously being enhanced through the addition of new photos. Today, the photography holdings have been digitised and can be consulted in our offices via the internal SIK-ISEA database.

One of our most important activities, in parallel to the tasks in Zurich, lies in the documentation of artwork in Western Switzerland: this entails surveying the most important daily newspapers of that region and compiling information concerning exhibitions as well as galleries and artists. The first results of this work were integrated into the *Künstlerverzeichnis der Schweiz 1980–1990* [Swiss Artists Index 1980–1990], which was initially released in 1991.

In order to extend this lexicographical core function, in 1994 the Institute started the development of the *Biografisches Lexikon der Schweizer Kunst (BLSK)* [Biographical Lexicon of Swiss Art]. Our contributed share of Western-Swiss artists constituted approx. 20% of the total entries, and we assigned one staff member, who determined the artists to be distinguished through a more extensive contribution, to commission specialists to write biographical articles and be responsible for editing these texts. More than 140 Western-Swiss authors contributed to this work that was published in 1998, which also substantially increased the amount of contacts in our scientific network.

But a lexicon like the *BLSK* is never finished. Today, it can be consulted online at [www.sikart.ch](http://www.sikart.ch) and is updated daily through the database. Naturally, the Antenne romande is also involved in this large project and, thanks to the employment of a staff member, has assumed responsibility for the assignment and editing of the articles, the completion of data and the entry of illustrations.

### Translation, Editing, Circulation

Since opening, the Antenne romande has assumed a challenging task in the area of translation and editing. In so doing, it has played an important role in making publications and exhibitions that deserve national circulation well-known in Western Switzerland. This was the case with the *Ferdinand Hodler. Max Schmidheiny Collection* exhibition that took place in the Kartause Ittingen and in Vevey in 1989 and 1990, as well as with the *1900: Symbolismus und Jugendstil in der Schweizer Malerei* exhibition [1990: Symbolism and Art Nouveau in Swiss Painting] that was shown in 2000 and 2001 in Solothurn, Bellinzona and Sion.

For the book series entitled *Museen der Schweiz* [Swiss Museums], which was launched in 1991 through an initiative of the Paribas Switzerland Bank (issued today by the BNP Paribas Switzerland Foundation and SIK-ISEA), and which meanwhile includes 21 volumes, we have delivered the translations and are responsible for editing the French versions. We were anxious to ensure that Western-Swiss museums also be allowed to play a role in this impressive series: in this respect, nine museums from the Romandie have been represented in the series to date.

The same can be said for the *Kataloge Schweizer Museen und Sammlungen* series [Catalogues of Swiss Museums and Collections]: since opening, the Antenne romande has translated three volumes of this series into French, resulting in its broad circulation, which the participating institutions greatly appreciate. This was also the case with *Junge Schweizer Kunst 1960–1990. Sammlung der Gotthard Bank* [Young Swiss Art 1960–1990. The Gotthard Bank Collection] (1992); *Innovation und Tradition. Die Kunstsammlung der Mobiliar* [Innovation and Tradition. The Art Collection of Mobiliar] (2001); and *Schweizer Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts. Die Sammlung der National Versicherung* [Swiss Art of the 20th Century. The Collection of the Nationale Suisse Insurance Co. (formerly known as the Schweizerischen National-Versicherungsgesellschaft)], (2005).

The German-speaking part of Switzerland is known for its art collectors. When, in the course of the festivities celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Switzerland as a Confederation, SIK-ISEA was contracted to explore and represent the essence of the Swiss collection, we



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were also able to render a variety of contributions on a number of important Western-Swiss collectors. In *Die Kunst zu sammeln. Schweizer Kunstsammlungen seit 1848* [The Art of Collecting. Swiss Art Collections since 1848], which was published in 1998, at least twelve articles were devoted to these collectors.

The aim of our numerous colloquia and other joint projects was to extend the horizon and to integrate Western-Swiss art historians in research projects and publications which had originated in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. In this respect, six authors from the Romandie have demonstrated their point of view in *Horizonte. Beiträge zu Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* [Horizons. Contributions to Art and the Scientific Study of Art], (2001); five more were represented with texts in *Klassizismen und Kosmopolitismus* [Classicism and Cosmopolitanism], (2004); and four Western-Swiss authors were involved in the fundamental work *Das Kunstschaffen in der Schweiz 1848–2006* [Art Production in Switzerland 1848–2006], (2006), whose much anticipated French translation unfortunately has not (yet) been realised.

### Director of Publication Projects

The Antenne romande also manages specific autonomous enterprises including both research and publication projects. Serving in this function, the Antenne romande is a truly unique place in Western Switzerland where authors experience competent support, attentive proof-reading of manuscripts, organisation of photography campaigns and procuring of the necessary means for financing the publication of their works – all of which takes place over a time frame of up to five years. As a scientific issuer, we can look back with quite some pride upon the impressive catalogues raisonnés that we have realized, including *Charles Gleyre. Life and Work*, a two-volume work co-issued with Princeton University Press (1996); the work catalogue on *Auguste de Niederhäusern-Rodo* (2001); and *Félix Vallotton. L'œuvre peint*, which was released in three volumes in 2005. The publication of the catalogue of the complete works of James Pradier is planned for 2009.

### Director of Research Projects and Partnerships

The Antenne romande maintains close contacts with Western-Swiss universities, whereby naturally its contact with the University of Lausanne is especially close. This collaboration is less apparent for the general public than the publication activities mentioned above, but it is no less fruitful and is the subject of great interest. For the researcher community at the UNIL, significant privileges of the collaboration with the Antenne romande include direct access to the photo archive, the artists' and institutions' portfolios and the Antenne romande archive. Especially appreciated is the scientific advisory assistance offered by the Antenne romande in relation to seminars and particularly for *Lizentiat* dissertations. Approximately a dozen *Lizentiat* dissertations have been instigated, supported and also professionally supervised by the Antenne romande in past years. In 1994, this scientific exchange reached a high point during a period when the author of this article was giving lectures and leading seminars at the UNIL, half of which were devoted to Swiss art.

Beyond this exchange, the 'Catalogue des collections du Musée des beaux-arts de La Chaux-de-Fonds' (2007) was produced through the collaboration of the Antenne romande with the Universities of Lausanne, Geneva and Neuchâtel. This venture involved over fifty students of the universities mentioned above. At the same time, another research project was developed in cooperation with the University of Neuchâtel (Professor Dr. Pascal Griener), which is supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Entitled 'La formation des artistes suisses à l'École des beaux-arts de Paris, 1793–1863' [The Education of Swiss Artists at the Paris *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, 1793–1863], the project enabled the staggered employment

of five PhD candidates from the Universities of Lausanne, Neuchâtel and Bern. This productive collaboration with the University of Neuchâtel has been recently carried on further through a new research project that is also being supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation and is concerned with the topic ‘Léopold Robert. Correspondance d’artistes’ [Artist’s correspondence].

Together with Western-Swiss universities and, in particular, with the University of Lausanne, we intend to revive the practice of offering series of lectures, an undertaking that was often mutually organised in the initial years of the Antenne romande, and to also mutually create international colloquia. One of these will be concerned with the topic ‘Marché de l’art en Suisse’ and will take place in the upcoming autumn in collaboration with the UNIL Department of Art History. In association with this event, students will be offered internship positions, and researchers and PhD candidates from SIK-ISEA-led projects in Zurich and Lausanne will also be involved.

### **Antenne romande Staff (1988–2008)**

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