

Call for Papers: Private Collections in the SBZ and GDR

Conference of the Institute of Art History of the University of Bonn in cooperation with the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz

The history of private collecting in the Soviet Occupation Zone and in the German Democratic Republic is, apart from a few individual case studies, largely unwritten, as the scholars [Thomas Rudert](#) and [Gilbert Lupfer](#) wrote in 2016.

Almost ten years later, little has changed. But with the increasing attention to the SBZ/GDR as a "context of injustice" in which cultural assets were brought into circulation, and with the increasing number of research projects dealing with state intervention in these movements, it is time to attempt a more detailed analysis of private collections in these contexts.

To what extent was it possible to preserve or build up private collections in the SBZ and the GDR? How were these collections brought together and what became of them? What connections existed between private and public/museum collections in these contexts? What resources are available today for researching these private collections and how can this help us in provenance research with regard to the SBZ, the GDR and earlier contexts of injustice? What does the history of these collections tell us about the specific context of the SBZ/GDR from 1945 to 1990?

By private collections, we mean any collections of cultural assets, including works of fine art (painting, sculpture and works on paper), but also objects of applied art and design that were built up from private funds.

We welcome suggestions from scholars and museum professionals at every stage of their careers for 20-minute talks on the following topics:

- Case Studies on Pre-War Private Collections and Their Fate in the SBZ/GDR
- Case Studies on New Collections Built Up in the SBZ /GDR
- Gallery and sales networks that allowed collections to be built
- Networks of private collectors around artists in the GDR
- Presentation of private collections
- Private Collections and Connections to Academia
- The fate of private collections in the SBZ /GDR, including:
 - State confiscation and subsequent sales
 - Gifts, including to state institutions in East Germany and beyond
- The fates of SBZ/GDR private collections after 1990

The conference will take place on 17 and 18 September 2026 at the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz–Kunstsammlungen am Theaterplatz.

Submissions must be sent by 5 p.m. German time on Friday, November 28, 2025, by e-mail with the subject "Private Collecting SBZ/GDR " to the organisers Jun.-Prof. Dr. Lucy Wasensteiner (University of Bonn), Dr. Anne-Kathrin Hinz (University of Bonn) and Marie Winter (Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Carlfriedrich Claus Archive), via BonnChemnitz2026@uni-bonn.de. Please summarize in one PDF file (in German or English):

- Presentation title (working title if applicable) and an abstract (max. 300 words) for a 20-minute presentation
- Current CV (max. 250 words)

Subsidies are currently being applied for to cover travel and accommodation costs. A publication of the accepted contributions is planned.



III.: Lothar Sack, *Sammeln – aber was?*
Tips für Sammler und solche, die es werden wollen, published by Zentralhaus-Publikation mit Unterstützung des Kulturfonds der DDR, Leipzig 1986 (cover)