

No. 4 / March 2019, Cologne  
#artcologne

## Christian Kaspar Schwarm awarded the ART COLOGNE Prize 2019

**The founder of "Independent Collectors," a community for collectors of contemporary art**

**Online platform today networks nearly 7,000 collectors from 100 countries**

Koelnmesse and the Bundesverband Deutscher Galerien und Kunsthändler (German association of galleries and art dealers) are very pleased to announce Christian Kaspar Schwarm, the founder of "Independent Collectors," as the recipient of the ART COLOGNE Prize 2019.

With the ART COLOGNE Prize, a personality is being honored this year who has been successful in networking an international community of collectors of contemporary art. Together with a few partners, Christian Kaspar Schwarm founded the Independent Collectors online platform in 2008 in Berlin. It has continued to develop since then and is available at no charge to all those interested in art. Schwarm represents nearly 7,000 international collectors from more than 100 countries, who, with their passion, are indispensable for a vital art scene.

The son of a Rhineland mother and a Bavarian father, who ran a trading agency for food together in Ulm, was born in 1972, several years after the legendary Hochschule für Gestaltung (Ulm school of design) there was forced to close. The innovative climate the former Bauhaus artists left behind in the city following their exile was defining for Christian Kaspar Schwarm, who decided in 1992 in favor of studying social sciences. Today he mainly works as a self-employed and creative strategy consultant on the future orientation of medium-sized and large companies.

The spark for Christian Kaspar Schwarm was a visit to the spectacular "Sensation" exhibition in 1997 in the London Royal Academy. It catapulted the Young British Artists into the public spotlight and initiated a debate on the importance of private collectors in the art business that continues to the present day. As a "positive shock experience," the show triggered intensive engagement with contemporary art in Schwarm, with visits to exhibitions, discussions with artists and many lectures.

The encounter with the photographer, collector and curator Wilhelm Schürmann in 2007 had an enduring impact. He encouraged Schwarm to shape the art collection he had just begun in a "radically personal" way. Schürmann also supported him in the both innovative and ambitious idea of bringing a virtual, global forum for collectors of contemporary art to life. A platform for discourse, for information and for the exchanging of experiences - not a "trophy show." Independent Collectors



ART COLOGNE  
11.04. - 14.04.2019  
www.artcologne.com

Your contact:  
Christine Hackmann  
Tel.  
+49 221 821-2288  
Fax  
+49 221 821-3544  
e-mail  
c.hackmann@koelnmesse.de

Koelnmesse GmbH  
Messeplatz 1  
50679 Köln  
P.O. Box 21 07 60  
50532 Köln  
Germany  
Tel. +49 221 821-0  
Fax +49 221 821-2574  
www.koelnmesse.com

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started in June 2008 with the most varied members: from international top collectors to enthusiasts who had just begun integrating art into their daily lives.

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"The picture of the collector as a competition-oriented and mysterious lone wolf is antiquated," says Schwarm. The initial concept of a protected online community, accessible only for registered collector members, has over time become increasingly open, and is today freely accessible. Schwarm in the meantime sees the future task of his platform in "becoming the extremely lively archive for the diverse activities of the best private art collections of the world." Commercial interests shouldn't disrupt the long term character of this important task. Schwarm hits the nail on the head:

"Independent Collectors was, is, and remains free for all art enthusiasts. Neither do we sell collectors any works, nor art dealers any data. We have no hidden agenda, only the shared, but always individual passion for art." The platform powered by idealism is today a treasure chest of excellent photographs, texts and interviews, and provides insight into private art collections, including those of such houses and spaces that usually otherwise keep their doors closed.

The first "BMW Art Guide by Independent Collectors" appeared in 2012 in cooperation with the Bavarian car maker from the Hatje Cantz publishing house. The extremely useful print directory lists and describes the world's most important, publicly accessible art collections. The fifth, updated, and expanded edition of the Art Guide appeared recently, with information on a total of 270 locations in 45 countries and 196 cities.

Despite his affinity for new media, Christian Kaspar Schwarm has a nearly obsessive relationship with the printed book. The first objects he collected were artist books. In 2015, he founded a very personal project with "8 Books A Year," which surprised his international subscribers with eight non-fiction books over a period of twelve months. The volumes reflect Schwarm's broad spectrum of interests and sometimes have special editions. With the help of an architect, he transformed his Berlin office into a library, in which work and research is carried out with both digital and printed content in a self-explanatory manner.

In the context of the "Young Collections" project, Christian Kaspar Schwarm was invited in 2017 by the Weserburg Museum in Bremen to exhibit his collection. Under the title "The Vague Space," works and installations across media by international artists could be seen here who, as unorthodox sociopolitical thinkers, perform a balancing act with a sensual and impressive formal language. Schwarm, who is active in the realm beyond current hype, was primarily concerned with getting to the bottom of the motivation, the formation, and the effect of individual collecting in itself with regard to the exhibition concept. At the side of the artist, he doesn't conceive of himself merely as a buyer, but instead as a companion that wants to be challenged in terms of content.

Christian Kaspar Schwarm is an original, curious, intellectually flexible, and politically interested collector - with a social conscience. For around two years now he has carried out voluntary work on the board of the Berlin-based Karuna e.V. association, which strives for a "future for children and youth in need" in 15

facilities.

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Prominent art collectors have been distinguished with the ART COLOGNE Prize for exceptional merits in art mediation several times. Their common denominator has always been to establish a public for personal perspectives on contemporary art through a variety of activities. These collectors have included Charlotte Zander (1997), Ingvild Goetz (2001), Frieder Burda (2002), Harald Falckenberg (2009), and Julia Stoschek (2018), all of whom have received the prize endowed with €10,000 to date.

The award ceremony for this year's ART COLOGNE Prize will take place on April 11, 2019 in the Historic Town Hall in Cologne. Wilhelm Schürmann will give the laudatory speech for Christian Kaspar Schwarm.

#### Biographical milestones of Christian Kaspar Schwarm

1972 Born in Ulm.

1992 Studies in political science, political economy, and sociology in Stuttgart

1996 Founding of an online agency

2002 Founding of a communications agency with a cultural focus

2005 Commencement of collecting activity

2007 Encounter with Wilhelm Schürmann

2008 Founding of the Independent Collectors online platform

2012 The first "BMW Art Guide by Independent Collectors" appears

2015 Founding of a strategy consultancy and start of "8 Books A Year"

2017 Exhibition of the Schwarm collection entitled "The Vague Space" in the Weserburg in Bremen

2018 Independent Collectors becomes completely public

Christian Kaspar Schwarm lives and works in Berlin.

Foto: <http://koelnmesse.onlinemedianet.de/download?guid=294FDF15-78A4-5FA1-B5EA-0334D407C4D7>

More information:

<https://independent-collectors.com/>

<http://www.artcologne.de/>

<https://www.bvdg.de/>

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Your contact:

Christine Hackmann  
Communications Manager

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Koelnmesse GmbH  
Messeplatz 1  
50679 Cologne  
Germany  
Tel.: +49 221 821 2288  
Fax: +49 221 821 3544  
E-Mail: [c.hackmann@koelnmesse.de](mailto:c.hackmann@koelnmesse.de)  
[www.koelnmesse.com](http://www.koelnmesse.com)

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