

PRESS RELEASE

On April 27, the MAMCO will welcome Pablo Picasso's *Buste de mousquetaire*, painted in 1968 and acquired in 2017 by the online community QoQa.ch. The 40,000 shares of 50 CHF required for the acquisition of this painting, estimated at over 2 million CHF, all found takers in ... 48 hours, thus marking the first acquisition of an important work of modern art by an online community.

While this acquisition process differs from those used in museums, both in terms of method and temporality, it still brings to mind an historical Swiss precedent. 50 years ago, the City of Basel suggested to its inhabitants to increase, by referendum, the amount of their taxes, in order to acquire two canvases by the very same Picasso. When the "yes" won, the painter, quite moved by the attitude of the population, made a gift of several others "to the young people of Basel" (this episode is currently the subject of an exhibition at the Kunstmuseum in Basel). Although *Buste de mousquetaire* has been acquired thanks to a "popular initiative," it wasn't via a referendum that thousands of people decided to become owners of this work, but rather, as a sign of the times, through a "click." Whereas the 1967 referendum in Basel highlighted the exemplary efficacy of direct democracy, the acquisition of this canvas by the QoQa community bears witness to the growing power of social networks, and the extreme speed they induce.

This perspective is exciting in more than one way. First, it incites thought about how to bring new forms of digital media into the museums' world. Secondly, it allows MAMCO to welcome as visitors the thousands of owners of the work. The display of this painting thus provides the museum

with the opportunity to initiate, through this partnership, an original experience in the development of publics through digital engagement.

Pascal Meyer, Founder and Director of QoQa, stands up for the social dimension of this operation, which allows a large number of individuals to own parts of the kind of work traditionally accessible only to people or institutions with large financial means. But the exhibition of this canvas at MAMCO also alludes to the origins of the museum as a public institution. It was at the end of the 18th century that the transformation of museums occurred: from being private, for an aristocratic or royal use, they became public, open to all, and destined to the education of as many people as possible. Museums, as places in which social and political changes can be made manifest, have ever since been accompanying the surge to fight against all forms of social determinism. In this historic continuity, and by becoming associated with an online community, MAMCO is affirming its commitment to all publics and its vocation to be both an experimental and a popular place.

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