

PRESS RELEASE

ART COLOGNE Prize 2026 awarded to the Bronner Family

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Koelnmesse and the Bundesverband Deutscher Galerien und Kunsthändler (German association of galleries and art dealers) are very pleased to announce the Düsseldorf-based Bronner family of collectors as this year's ART COLOGNE Prize winners. This recognition honours their commitment – cultivated over three generations – to collecting, promoting and making art accessible to the public. Through donations and loans to museums, as well as the Philara Collection, which is open to the public, the family has provided lasting impetus to the arts and cultural landscape.

For the first time since 2010, when the Grässlin family was awarded the ART COLOGNE Prize, several generations will once again be distinguished this year for their special contributions revolving around art education: Anat and Gil Bronner, their parents Cary and Dan as well as the children or grandchildren Philip and Lara. The latter provide the name of "Philara", a unique cultural institution in Düsseldorf founded by their father Gil in 2016.

Collectors who step out of the private sphere and actively help shape the art scene do this, in comparison with the public sector, in a very individual way against the background of their personal biography. Already the grandparents, Dan and Cary, were active as art collectors, initiated a foundation and thus laid the foundation for Philara.

Born in 1931 in the present-day Czech Republic, Dan Bronner survived National Socialism as a youth and worked successfully as an architect in Düsseldorf since the start of the 1960s. Together with his wife Cary, he was active for decades as a patron and donor of the Kunstpalast Düsseldorf. Especially the Graphic Collection profited from generous donations, including around 120 sheets by George Grosz from the Weimar era. The Kunstpalast Düsseldorf has honoured the couple by name since 2015 with the Dan-und-Cary-Bronner-Saal. Dan Bronner passed away in the spring of 2023.

His son Gil grew up with the enthusiasm for art of his parents, but studied business

management. He worked for a long time in Canada and was a project developer for real estate. He was drawn to Leipzig in the mid-1990s, where he and his wife Anat dived into the scene revolving around the Leipzig School. Bronner's previously more sporadic acquisition of art increasingly took shape in the Saxon music and publishing city. Art also played a growing role in his professional life. This because the real estate specialist was never only interested in mere renovation, but rather in urban design. Lost places, vacancies and wasteland should become living places. Thus, studio buildings and cultural spaces arose where he was involved – also in his birthplace of Düsseldorf, where he had returned with his wife at the turn of the millennium. There, at the southern edge of the city, their in the meantime considerably expanded art collection found its home from 2006 to 2016 in the correspondingly redesigned halls of a former Leitz factory.

The discovery of a former glass factory in the middle of the Düsseldorf neighbourhood of Flingern ultimately led to the unique manifestation of Philara. The industrial architecture ensemble was fully converted for museum operations – warehouse, administration, rooftop patio, café and exhibition rooms: several cabinets and up to 9-metre-tall halls in an area of 1,700 m² provide optimal prerequisites for both the classic hanging of artworks and for expansive installations. Here, the Bronners could fulfil the wish for a permanent presence of their collection.

Accessibility and communication are paramount for Philara. The principle of the donation is also noticeable in the concept of pay what you wish. Visitors may but need not pay admission for the extensive exhibitions. The parents gave artworks to museums, the son gave the city an open, living space for cultural and social encounters.

Gil Bronner and his family allow visitors to participate at many levels in their art cosmos, which links international high culture with the local art scene. Concerts, parties, theatre and other events sometimes take place in the backyard and in the "Bulle" bistro. Philara is found in Flingern, a former working class neighbourhood. There, in the Birkenstraße, the exhibition building is surrounded by galleries and creative hubs.

The legendary Kunstakademie Düsseldorf also plays a big role. This because the relationship of the Bronners with the academy has always been intensive; new acquisitions of the collection not uncommonly originate from there – both from the important instructors and from young artists, with which the family in some cases enjoys decades-long friendships. The family also continues its support for the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf. Gil Bronner has been chairman of the Friends of the Kunstpalast Association and a member of the Board of Trustees since 2017.

For their ideally curated exhibitions, the Philara Collection can draw upon phenomenal holdings of around 2,000 artworks. In addition to solo presentations of well-known artists like Boris Mikhailov, Alicja Kwade or Thomas Grünfeld, first exhibitions are also shown, for example, of the Argentinian artist Mercedes Azpilicueta. There is cooperation with other collections, for example, with the Berlin Miettinen Collection, or group shows like *"Breathing Water, Drinking Air"*, which examine essential themes, like here with the resources air and water. In *"Mirrors and Windows"*, the focus in 2021 was on the 100th

anniversary of the admission of women to the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf with works of former and current woman professors. The history of the product originally created at the location has also already been the theme of an exhibition: under the title *"Melting Sands – Glass in Contemporary Art"*, the use and philosophy of the both everyday and always fascinating material of glass was examined in detail.

There is no common theme running through Gil und Anat Bronner's art collection. Their idea of art is not programmatic, it is not a monologue. It is polyphonic and vital, colourful and surprising, sensual and stimulating – and always of the highest quality. Painting, sculpture, installations, few video works, much photography, drawings and graphic works: the heart of the collector pulses for works on paper, in his own words.

One can currently acquire a strong impression of the enormous variety of the Philara Collection. In the *"House of Balagan"* exhibition, which recently opened for the 10th anniversary, a cross-section of more than 100 selected works by more than 80 artists can be seen – acquired by three generations of collectors. These include artworks by Rita Ackermann, Art & Language, Eduardo Chillida, Nicole Eisenman, Silvie Fleury, George Grosz, Tarik Kiswanson, Sarah Morris, Charlotte Posenenske, Rosemarie Trockel, Michael Sailstorfer, Katharina Sieverding, Matthias Weischer, Thomas Zipp, to name only a round dozen of the artists. The extraordinary exhibition runs until 14 February 2027.

The Bronner family is among a group of people who have put together idiosyncratic collections with great passion and have made these accessible to the public. These are personalities that provide considerable financial means for the preservation of artworks, for the operation of their exhibition spaces or for other forms of art education.

These collectors include Charlotte Zandert† (1997), Ingvild Goetz (2001), Frieder Burda† (2002), Harald Falckenberg† (2009), Julia Stoschek (2018), Christian Kaspar Schwarm (2019), Wilhelm Schürmann (2020/21) as well as Karen and Christian Boros (2024), all of whom have also received the €10,000 ART COLOGNE Prize for art education in past years.

The ART COLOGNE Prize will be presented on 6 November 2026, traditionally in the Historic Town Hall in Cologne. The laudatory speech for the Bronner family will be given by Karla Zerressen from the Langen Foundation in Neuss.

ART COLOGNE opens on Thursday, 5 November 2026 with a preview for invited guests and the opening reception from 4.00 pm. This will be followed by the public viewing days from 6 to 8 November 2026.

FOTO: The Bronner family © Susanne Diesner, Düsseldorf 2026
f.l.t.r.: Anat, Philip, Lara and Gil Bronner



More information:

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