

# Collection Ruth and Frieder Ryser

Over a period of forty years, Frieder Ryser and his wife Ruth amassed a collection, dedicated entirely to reverse painting on glass, of over 1,000 objects. It encompasses not only pictures, but also objects decorated using this technique (furniture, jewellery, glass vessels), making the collection unique of its kind. The oldest works date to the start of the 12th century, and they stretch down the years to the 19th century, with a particular emphasis on pieces from the Mannerist and Baroque periods. Virtually all the centres of production are represented, from Switzerland to China, and from India to America. By making expert choices, the Ryser family assembled a study collection that illustrates the rich variety of techniques and styles employed over the centuries. Some 250 of the most interesting and important of these works have been put on display for the general public in the Vitromusée.

Frieder Ryser (1920–2005), a water engineer, made a thorough study of reverse painting on glass and started to publish on the subject in 1985. He analysed and defined the technical aspects of reverse painting on glass and moreover formulated a readily comprehensible terminology with which to record his findings. His observations have formed the basis of numerous research projects, and various museums (for example, the Corning Museum of Glass) have been able to mount important exhibitions based on the loan of works from the Ryser Collection. In 2002, Frieder Ryser was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) for his contributions to and support of research into reverse painting on glass.

By analyzing the materials used in reverse painting and pictorial techniques, and by studying archival and genealogical sources, Frieder Ryser was able to demonstrate the links between reverse painting on glass and other forms of artistic expression at the time of the art's first flourishing in Europe, and in Switzerland in particular.

Following many years of collaboration, Frieder Ryser bequeathed to the Vitrocentre the whole collection of reverse paintings, as well as his library, archives, and funding for further work. This gave the impetus, in 2006, to extend and redesign the two organisations housed in Romont Castle, which have since then continued to enrich their collections thanks to donations and acquisitions, pursuing the research objectives of both Frieder Ryser and the Vitrocentre.

Since the end of 2017 several examples of Reverse painting on glass are published online on the database [vitrosearch](#). Further pieces will complete this first choice of artworks in the following years.

### **Team**

Elisa Ambrosio (from 2014)

Yves Jolidon (until 2016)

### **Publication**

Jolidon, Y. (2012). Die Hinterglasmalerei-Sammlung Ruth und Frieder Ryser des Vitrocentre Romont. In T. Ayers, B. Kurmann-Schwarz, C. Lautier & H. Scholz (ed.). Les collections de vitraux et leur histoire : actes du 25e Colloque international du Corpus Vitrearum à Saint-Pétersbourg, Musée de l'Ermitage, 2010. (p. 193–204). Berne, Switzerland: P. Lang