

**Press release
Zurich, 9 June 2011**

Kunsthaus Zürich presents 'Franz Gertsch. Seasons. Works 1983 to 2011'

From 10 June to 18 September 2011 the Kunsthaus Zürich is staging a retrospective featuring round 30 large-format paintings and woodcuts by Franz Gertsch – one of Switzerland's leading contemporary artists. The exhibition, entitled 'Seasons', brings together in the large exhibition gallery his realistic works from the period between 1983 and 2011, culminating in his recently completed 'Four Seasons Cycle'.

Franz Gertsch (*1930) is one of the most important Swiss artists of the present day. He rose to international fame in the 1970s with his hyper-realist paintings, and works from this period have fetched top prices at recent auctions. Yet his outstanding reputation stems equally from his woodcuts, unique both technically and in format. The opening of the current exhibition coincides with the completion of his masterful 'Four Seasons Cycle', which runs like a thread through the presentation. The show, however, goes far beyond Gertsch's latest work to offer a retrospective of his production since 1983. The round 30 pieces selected by curator Tobia Bezzola working together with Gertsch are displayed to full effect in the large exhibition gallery of the Kunsthaus: a prologue is followed by 'Autumn', 'Winter', 'Spring' and 'Summer', each shown in a separate room with its own atmospheric ambiance. The four seasons images are juxtaposed with all the paintings created since the 1980s as well as the woodcuts – nature and landscape studies as well as portraits of women.

'SPRING' – MORE THAN A YEAR'S WORK

'Spring' (2011) completes the 'Four Seasons Cycle' which began with 'Autumn' (finished in 2008) and continued with 'Summer' and 'Winter', both from 2009. Gertsch worked on 'Spring' for up to five hours a day, yet sometimes covered a surface of no more than 20 x 25 cm. It took him fully 16 months to complete the 3.25 x 4.80-metre canvas. 'It was a constant process of observation and densification', as art historian Jean-Christophe Ammann writes in the accompanying publication. Gertsch lovingly fills his models with life, viewing the experience as an act of creation. The autonomous density of the parts – as Ammann writes – is breathtaking.

PHOTOGRAPHIC MODELS AND FINE MATERIALS

The catalogue and audioguide offer further insights into the artist's work and are also an aid to its interpretation: the naturalistic seasons, for example, were not painted in the open air, a few metres behind the artist's house where the botanical originals on which they are based are to be found, but rather in the studio, using photographs as models. From a distance the images may appear naturalistic; yet many observers will be surprised, on examining them in detail, to discover an almost impressionistic technique in play.

Gertsch relishes the challenge, both visual and conceptual. Although he works from photographs, his pictures follow their own internal logic in their quest for absolute harmony of all elements. His watchword is purity of material: from the paints themselves, often comprised of minerals such as lapis lazuli, azurite and malachite, to bonding agents, canvas and handmade Japanese paper, all is carefully selected with an eye to the project in question. For their part, Gertsch's woodcuts may fairly be called one of a kind. With heretofore unknown precision of execution – in both engraving and printing – and in monumental formats that push the edge of the envelope (literally) when it comes to papermaking, Gertsch has lent a traditional medium new dimensions.

A SWISS ARTIST WITH AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

Born in 1930 at Möringen in the canton of Bern, Franz Gertsch achieved his international breakthrough at 'documenta 5' in Kassel in 1972. Since then he has produced a rich variety of paintings and graphic works and has shown at the Venice Biennales in 1999 and 2003. The last 15 years have seen exhibitions in Berlin, Munich, Paris, Vienna, Nagoya and New York. Gertsch has also received the coveted 'Kaiserring' Award for Modern Art from the city of Goslar, and was granted an Honorary Citizenship by the Christian Albrecht University in Kiel in 2005.

DISCUSSION, GUIDED TOURS, PUBLICATION, FILM

The catalogue (Kerber-Verlag, 112 pages, 30 illustrations, available in German and English) contains contributions by Jean-Christophe Ammann, Tobia Bezzola, Harald Kunde, Guido de Werd and Klaus Albrecht Schröder and can be purchased from the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 47.

There will be a discussion on the art of Franz Gertsch as part of the 'Meet the Artist Day' at the Zurich Festival. On 25 June at 1 p.m. art historian Jean-Christophe Ammann will be joined by Philip Ursprung (Professor of the History of Art and Architecture at the gta Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture, ETH Zurich) in the Restaurant Metropol, Zurich. Admission free.

Public guided tours of the exhibition: Sundays at 11 a.m., Wednesdays at 6 p.m. (CHF 6). Private guided tours can be booked now by calling 044 253 84 84.

Franz Gertsch is normally reluctant to be observed while he is working, but in 2009 he allowed the camera to record him creating 'Winter'. The eight-minute piece, filmed in his studio by Maria Gertsch-Meer and edited by Renate Gertsch, was completed in 2011 and is being shown in the film room of the Kunsthaus Zürich during exhibition opening hours.

Supported by Swiss Re – Partner for contemporary art.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich.

Open: Sat, Sun, Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs, Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see www.kunsthhaus.ch.

Admission including audioguide (in English, German and French) free of charge for visitors 16 and younger. Adults CHF 18 / 12 (concessions) / CHF 14 per head for groups of 20 or more. Registration required for schools and groups.

Advance sales: SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on travel and admission: at stations and by phoning Rail Service: 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/min. by ground line), www.sbb.ch. Magasins Fnac: www.fnac.ch.

NOTE TO MEDIA

To download visual material go to: www.kunsthhaus.ch > Information > Press.

For further information, contact:

Kristin Steiner, kristin.steiner@kunsthhaus.ch, Tel. 044 253 84 13