

Press release
Zurich, 31 May 2012

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'Riotous Baroque.'

From 1 June to 2 September 2012 the Kunsthhaus Zürich presents the thematic exhibition 'Riotous Baroque. From Cattelan to Zurbarán. Manifestations of Precarious Vitality.' Curated by Bice Curiger, it brings together some 100 works of art from the 17th century and the present day.

Even before her appointment as Director of the 2011 Venice Biennale, Bice Curiger was working on a concept for an exhibition that would place contemporary paintings, sculptures, films and installations opposite art from the 17th century. The presentation at the Kunsthhaus Zürich focuses on the 'riotous' aspect, as Curiger investigates the vitality, existentiality and proximity to life that is a recurring theme of literature on the Baroque. The exhibition therefore sets out to extricate the concept of the Baroque from the history of style. In so doing, it breaks with myriad clichés: here, the Baroque is not about pomp, ornament and gold, but rather 'manifestations of precarious vitality' – vitality lost, projected, lived, rediscovered and 'threatened'; a vitality in which death is omnipresent.

NOT A 'NEO-BAROQUE' STYLE

The juxtaposition of Old Masters and contemporary art harbours temptations that the curator studiously avoids. Curiger eschews trite analogies, formal comparisons, contrasts of motifs or the invocation of purportedly 'eternal values.' Her selection does not set out to proclaim a 'neo-Baroque style.' These are artists to whom the customary 'Baroque' label cannot be attached: Maurizio Cattelan, Robert Crumb, Nathalie Djurberg, Urs Fischer, Tobias Madison, Paul McCarthy, Boris Mikhailov, Marilyn Minter, Albert Oehlen, Cindy Sherman, Juergen Teller, Diana Thater, Ryan Trecartin, Oscar Tuazon, all of whom are showing new or recent works in the exhibition.

WORKS ON LOAN FROM LONDON, VIENNA AND MADRID

The 17th-century works selected are ones that, to this day, speak to the viewer with a conspicuous directness. They have been loaned by prestigious museums such as the Prado in Madrid, the National Gallery in London, and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna; there are also some surprising items from private collections. The emphasis is on the Dutch, Italian and Spanish masters: Pieter Aertsen and Monsù Desiderio, Dirck van Baburen, Adriaen Brouwer, Gerrit van Honthorst, Alessandro Magnasco, Bartolomeo Passerotti,

José de Ribera, Jan Steen, Abraham Teniers, David Teniers the Younger, Simon Vouet, Jusepe de Ribera, Francisco de Zurbarán and many others.

CONTEMPORARY ART ASKS NEW QUESTIONS OF OLD MASTERS

This encounter between Baroque art and selected works by contemporary artists is based most closely on a montage technique influenced by film. It is designed to enable the two realities, with all their differences and affinities, to cross-fertilize, permeate each other and invite us to view them in new ways. Old Masters are not randomly mixed in with contemporary art. Each period is given space to develop. Yet at the same time, the contemporary works can be relied upon to throw up new questions for the historical works to answer. Indeed it is this approach, which also challenges the routine conventions of Old Master presentations, that gives Bice Curiger – who freely admits that she is not a 'Baroque specialist' – her reason to tackle such a project. And, as usual with her exhibitions, she does not approach history as a progression from past to present, but rather looks back on it from a contemporary perspective, exploring the coarseness, earthiness, religiosity and sensuality, the grotesque, burlesque and virile – a spectrum of sub-topics that she dramatizes through the grouping of the works on display.

The Museo Guggenheim Bilbao has responded enthusiastically to the presentation, and will be showing the Kunsthaus exhibition itself in 2013. The Kunsthaus will be lending some items from its own Baroque collection to the show in Spain.

ART EDUCATION, PUBLICATION, CINEMA, DISCUSSION

The art education service of the Kunsthaus has prepared a summer programme on 'Riotous Baroque,' with workshops, guided tours and excursions aimed at all generations.

The exhibition catalogue (178 pages, 200 illustrations) is published in English and German by Snoeck Verlag, Cologne, and is available from the Kunsthaus shop, price CHF 45. In addition to illustrations of the works on display in the exhibition and reference views, it includes contributions by Bice Curiger, Raoul Vaneigem, Elfriede Jelinek and Eileen Myles, as well as a round-table discussion between Nike Bätzner, Michael Glasmeier, Tristan Weddigen and Victoria von Flemming. An extensive glossary will help readers appreciate the place of 'riotous Baroque' in art history.

The Filmpodium and the Kunsthaus Zürich have put together a riotously Baroque, full-length evening cinema programme. Pieces by Matthew Barney and Derek Jarman complement the video and film works in the exhibition – including 'Heidi' by Paul McCarthy & Mike Kelley and Marilyn Minter's 'Playpen.' At 6.30 p.m. on 1 June, video artist Diana Thater (*1962) and the photographer and painter Marilyn Minter (*1948) will be talking about the background to their

work in the context of the exhibition. The discussion will take place in English, and will be introduced and chaired by Bice Curiger.
Much more information about the exhibition and the accompanying programme can be found on the dedicated website at www.kunsthhaus.ch.

Supported by Swiss Re – Partner for contemporary art
and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Zurigo.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthhaus.ch.

Open: Sat, Sun, Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs, Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m.

Admission including audioguide (E/D/F): CHF 20 / CHF 15 concessions, per head for groups of 20 or more. Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge.

Public guided tours: Sundays 11 a.m., Wednesdays 6 p.m. Private guided tours on a preferred date by arrangement: +41 (0)44 253 84 84 (Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–midday)

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: sales points in Switzerland: Rives, Balexert, Lausanne, Fribourg, Pathé Kino Basel, www.fnac.ch; France: Carrefour, Géant, Magasins U, 0 892 68 36 22 (EUR 0.34/min), www.fnac.com; Belgium: www.fnac.be.

NOTE TO MEDIA

Illustrations are available at www.kunsthhaus.ch > Information > Press.

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