

Press release

Zurich, 27 September 2012

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'Paul Gauguin. The Prints'

From 28 September 2012 to 20 January 2013, the Kunsthhaus Zürich will be exhibiting over 50 prints by the French painter Paul Gauguin. This richly varied and innovative collection of graphic works by the founding father of modern painting is largely unknown. The prints are of supreme quality and the utmost rarity.

Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) is one of the most famous painters of the early modern era, yet it is impossible to comprehend him as an artist without an appreciation of his graphic output. Gauguin's woodcuts and zincographs (lithographs on zinc plates rather than stone) broke new ground artistically and tell us much about the character of the man who created them.

TRAVELS TO BRITTANY AND THE SOUTH SEAS

A first, important series of prints in black on bright yellow paper was created in 1889. Known as the Volpini suite, they draw on the artistic accomplishments of his time spent in Brittany and on Martinique, and already reflect his increasing fascination with exotic, far-away places. The initial high point of Gauguin's graphic production came during and after his first journey to the South Seas in 1891 and 1892, with the complex Noa Noa series – one of the most fascinating creations of modern art.

A MIRROR OF A RESTLESS SOUL

Gauguin's graphic production grew during his lengthy periods of illness, and in 1895, when he returned to Tahiti, it became the focal point of his artistic creation. An examination of the woodcuts shows Gauguin's art to be as radical as it is sensitive, and reveals the drama of a complex personality wrestling with doubts, longings and fears. Here, everyday life, exotic myths, Catholic faith and fear of ancestors and demons combine in a heady mix that demands to be explored in greater detail. Gauguin's prints are a mirror in which an eternally questioning artist sees himself, seeks affirmation, experiences both failure and success.

ENIGMATIC DEPTH AND STRANGE INTENSITY OF COLOUR

An initial examination of the prints appears to confirm the cliché of the 'wild' artist: for in these works, Gauguin operated outside the conventions of commercial graphic art. He printed many of them himself. Since he had not mastered the highly specialized techniques involved, they seem clumsy at first

glance. Where a number of plates cut and coloured in different ways were printed one over the other, the contours begin to blur; yet in so doing they give rise to a particular and enigmatic sense of depth and a strange intensity of colour. There are countless variations, because Gauguin experimented incessantly with paper, paint and printing technique; to this day, versions are still emerging of which researchers had previously been unaware. Each piece is a one-off; it stands in its own right and is unique.

Opportunities to study these works are equally rare. There are no plans to exhibit them anywhere else in Europe in the foreseeable future

PUBLICATION

A linen-bound catalogue (Prestel Verlag, 160 pages, 150 illustrations) with contributions by exhibition curator Tobia Bezzola and Elizabeth Prelinger (Professor at Georgetown University, Washington DC) was published to accompany the exhibition. German and English editions are available in the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 39.- and in bookshops (ISBN: 978-3-7913-5243-5).

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

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

Sat, Sun, Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs, Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m. Public holidays: 26 December, 1/2 January 2013: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Closed 24/25/31 December.

Admission: CHF 18 / CHF 12 concessions / 14 per head for groups of 20 or more. Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge. Combined ticket including the collection and the exhibition 'The New Kunsthaus' CHF 25 / CHF 18 concessions / CHF 20 for groups of 20 or more.

Public guided tours: Fridays, 6 p.m. – 7 p.m., Places limited. Registration required. Private guided tours by arrangement.

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.kunsthaus.ch > Information > Press.

For further information, contact:

Kunsthaus Zürich, Kristin Steiner

kristin.steiner@kunsthaus.ch, tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 13