

Press release
Zurich, 7 February 2013

Kunsthaus Zürich presents 'Chagall. Modern Master.'

From 8 February to 12 May 2013 the Kunsthaus Zürich is staging an exhibition featuring some 90 paintings and works on paper by Marc Chagall (1887–1985). Chagall is one of the best known and most popular artists of the 20th century. His images of Russian village life, floating figures, flying cows and roosters are world-famous. Now the Kunsthaus Zürich is dispelling some of the clichés on which his belated fame is based and recognizing his contribution to the avant garde. The exhibition is also open on Mondays and offers an audioguide specially designed for families with children.

THE EARLY CHAGALL: PARIS, BERLIN, VITEBSK

The exhibition focuses on the years from 1911 to 1922 – a formative period in Chagall's artistic career. It covers his sojourn in Paris before the First World War, his trip to Berlin and his exhibition there in 1914 at the Galerie Der Sturm, as well as the period spent in his native Russia, a country torn apart by revolution. These are the years in which Chagall establishes himself as a modern master. Unlike his contemporaries, he develops an art that articulates his Jewish and Russian culture and also enters into a dialogue with the visual languages of modernism – from Fauvism to Cubism and Orphism, from Expressionism to Suprematism. He combines these novel forms of painterly expression with his own imaginative motifs to create some of the most innovative and expressive works of 20th-century art. His experiences in Paris and elsewhere reinforce his highly personal and individual pictorial language and prompt him to create images that form the core of his art for the remainder of his career. The exhibition will trace this evolution.

CIRCUS, PEASANTS, LOVERS. MUSIC, STAGE DESIGN AND FOLKLORE

The themes within Chagall's early work are diverse and timeless: self-portraits, the circus, lovers, music and peasants but also more sombre preoccupations, such as suffering and death, recur throughout his long career. The exhibition opens with important images from his formative years, such as 'The Poet with the Birds' from 1911, on loan from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and 'The Birth' (1911), from a private collection. The presentation is divided into theme-based groups: works from the first years in Paris, nudes, a homage to Russia, the influences of Cubism, Suprematism and Orphism, designs for the theatre. A group of later works reveals how Chagall continued to refine the repertoire of his earlier oeuvre right up until the end of his long career.

MUSIC, DRAMA, LITERATURE AND DANCE

Chagall's outgoing, imaginative approach to his art celebrates subjective and autobiographical experiences in an overtly narrative and theatrical manner. It comes as no surprise that he worked regularly as a stage designer. Representations of archetypal Jewish characters such as folk musicians, jesters and masters of ceremonies, Torah scribes and wedding dancers symbolize music, drama, literature and dance. With his narrative skills and his unorthodox use of structure combined with his audacious use of colour and special poetic sensibility, Chagall created some of the icons of classic modern painting in images such as 'I and the Village' (1911) from the Museum of Modern Art, New York and 'The Promenade' (1917-18) from the State Russian Museum in St Petersburg.

The exhibition is supported by the Chagall family and the Comité Chagall in Paris. Once its run at the Kunsthaus comes to an end, it will transfer to Tate Liverpool. The curators Simonetta Fraquelli and Tobia Bezzola have secured the loan of numerous works from major European and American collections, including the Centre Pompidou – MNAM (Paris), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and MOMA (New York) the State Russian Museum (St Petersburg) and Tate (London).

ART EDUCATION, CONCERT AND PUBLICATION

A 200-page catalogue accompanies the exhibition. It includes essays by Simonetta Fraquelli, Angela Lampe, Monica Bohm-Duchen, Stephanie Straine, Ekaterina L. Selezneva and Jean-Louis Prat as well as images of the works on show, comparative illustrations and a biography of Marc Chagall. It is published in German and English by Hatje Cantz, and is available at the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 48 and from bookstores.

A comprehensive art education programme and public guided tours are also being organized. Private guided tours can be arranged on request by telephoning +41 (0)44 253 84 84 (Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–midday)

At 11 a.m on Sunday 17 March, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra makes a guest appearance in the lecture hall of the Kunsthaus, playing works by contemporaries of Chagall including Ernest Bloch and Igor Stravinsky. Tickets and further information can be obtained from the ZKO Ticket Office, tel. 0848 84 88 44, www.zko.ch.

A contribution to culture by Credit Suisse – Partner of the Kunsthaus Zürich.

ALSO OPEN ON MONDAYS

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich
Tel.: +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthaus.ch.

Exhibition opening hours: Sat, Sun, Mon, 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 (Eng/Ger/Fr): CHF 22 / CHF 17 concessions and per head for groups of 20 or more. Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge.

Public guided tours in German: Mondays 12 midday, Wednesdays 6 p.m., Thursdays 3 p.m., Fridays 5 p.m., Sundays 11 a.m.

Guided tours in other languages: Saturday 16 February (French), Saturday 9 March (English), both at 11 a.m.

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.

Zurich Tourism: Tourist Service at Zurich Main Railway Station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, www.zuerich.com.

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.

MEDIA CONTACT

Visual material is available for download at www.kunsthhaus.ch under Information > Press. Audio samples from the audioguides for children and adults are available on request.

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