

Press release
Zurich, 6 February 2014

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'From Matisse to the Blue Rider. Expressionism in Germany and France'

From 7 February to 11 May 2014 the Kunsthhaus Zürich will be staging 'From Matisse to the Blue Rider. Expressionism in Germany and France'. Schmidt-Rottluff, Kirchner, Pechstein and others come face to face with more than 100 works by Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse and Delaunay to correct the widespread view that Expressionism was a uniquely German invention. After the Kunsthhaus, this enlightening and colourful exhibition moves on to the US and Canada.

Today, 'Expressionism' is commonly viewed as a German movement – yet in fact it originally emerged at the start of the 20th century from the enthusiastic engagement of German artists with Classical Modernism in France, even as contemporary French art had already established a presence in Germany. 'Van Gogh struck modern art like a bolt of lightning,' was how one German observer of the scene described the painter's impact on German artists – at a time when they were simultaneously receptive for the art of Seurat, Signac and the Post-Impressionists. Then followed Cézanne, Gauguin and Matisse. The response by the artists of 'Die Brücke' and 'Der Blaue Reiter' (Blue Rider) to French Post-Impressionism and the 'Fauves' was an explosion of colour. Collectors in Germany also eagerly acquired and exhibited French art, while museum directors with an eye to the future were purchasing it for their own collections.

ONLY SHOWING IN EUROPE

This exhibition sets the record straight. It demonstrates that Expressionism is a movement shaped by the spirit of cosmopolitanism and productive exchange. It presents the findings of recent research into the more than 100 masterpieces by 37 artists on display, documenting a history of reception that has hitherto been little studied by scholars. The curator of the exhibition's sole showing in Europe is Cathérine Hug. Together with the Kunsthhaus Zürich, Timothy O. Benson, curator at the Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies, has succeeded in bringing together paintings and graphic works that featured in major exhibitions and collections of the time, or were studied in detail by German artists in Paris. They are juxtaposed with 'counterparts' in which the impact of the works that provided the initial inspiration can clearly be seen.

THE BERLIN SECESSION, SONDERBUND AND OTHER INFLUENCES

Unlike Impressionism and Divisionism, with their focus on the world around us, this is an art that gives formal expression to the inner feelings and psychological states of its creators, in a language that is both powerful and laden with energy. The relatively coarse brushwork reflects the fears, but also the hopes, which imbued that extraordinarily productive and eventful period before the First World War. The strong influence on the art scene of associations such as the Berlin Secession and the Sonderbund in Cologne, as well as gallery owners, art dealers and collectors such as Paul Cassirer, Harry Graf Kessler and Karl Osthaus, is absolutely essential in order to understand this chapter of art history and the perception of art works from the various expressionist movements. Visionary museum directors populated their collections with masterpieces of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Fauvism, arousing widespread public interest.

A VIVID PRESENTATION OF SCHOLARLY RESEARCH

As well as a tour through European art history from Paris to Berlin, the exhibition reflects the findings of new research into Franco-German relations in the early years of the 20th century, opening up striking perspectives and new interpretations of Expressionism with remarkable alacrity. The Kunsthaus Zürich is dividing the works up into thematic and formal groups: van Gogh, Paris, Fauves, Berlin, Cubism, 'Die Brücke', 'Der Blaue Reiter'. Visitors can expect an all-encompassing sensory experience marked by surprising confrontations. The expressive power of the works and their relationships to each other are immediately apparent and easy to comprehend. A section including historical materials – printed matter such as source texts, archival records, photographs and press reviews – further underscores the exhibition's contribution to scholarship.

LOANS FROM THE WORLD'S LEADING MUSEUMS

The approximately 70 paintings, 30 prints and 40 historic documents are drawn from public and private collections in Europe and overseas. The most celebrated include the Musée d'Orsay, Tate, the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the National Gallery of Art Washington, the National Gallery in Berlin, the Folkwang Museum and the Merzbacher Kunststiftung. From Zurich, the exhibition travels to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal. Timothy O. Benson is responsible for the background scholarship and for the cooperation between the Kunsthaus and LACMA. The results of his most recent research form part of an extensive catalogue, complemented by essays from Laird M. Easton, Claudine Grammont, Frauke Josenhans, Katherine Kuenzli, Peter Kropmanns, Magdalena M. Moeller and Sherwin Simmons and a conversation by curator Cathérine Hug with Georg Baselitz and Robert Menasse. With 304 pages and approximately 200 colour

illustrations, it is published by Prestel and is available in the Kunsthaus shop, price CHF 58.

Supported by Credit Suisse – Partner of the Kunsthaus Zürich, the Truus and Gerrit van Riemsdijk Foundation and the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung.

ADMISSION INCLUDES AUDIOGUIDE IN THREE LANGUAGES

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich. tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthaus.ch. Open: Fri-Sun/Tues 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Wed, Thurs 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. Public holidays: Easter 18-21 April, 1 May: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admission to the exhibition including audioguide in English: CHF 22 / CHF 17 (concessions and groups). Combined ticket incl. collection: CHF 25 / CHF 18 (concessions and groups). Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge.

Zurich Tourism: hotel room reservation and ticket sales available from the Tourist Service at Zurich Main Railway Station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, information@zuerich.com, www.zuerich.com.

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 land line), www.sbb.ch/matisse. Magasins Fnac: sales points in Switzerland: Rive, Balexert, Lausanne, Fribourg, Pathé Kino Basel.

ART EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

Guided tours take place on various days of the week: Wednesdays and Thursdays at 6 p.m., Fridays at 3 p.m. and Sundays at 11 a.m. On Saturdays from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., special guided tours link the contents of the exhibition with works from the Kunsthaus collection. English tours: 27 February at 4 p.m., 21 March and 13 April at 1 p.m. Private guided tours by arrangement.

A comprehensive art education programme with discussions, workshops and tours designed for all ages is available and is already online.

There is also an academic programme consisting of three events (in German):

Wed 26 March, 6.30 p.m. – 8 p.m.: Prof. Alexandre Kostka (University of Strasbourg): 'Künstler und Vaterländer: das kosmopolitische Netzwerk des Harry Graf Kessler'. A short lecture on the influence of this dedicated patron of art, who brought vision and diplomacy to the task of art promotion at the start of the 20th century. Followed by an audience discussion chaired by Cathérine Hug.

Wed 9 April, 6.30 p.m. – 8 p.m.: Dr. Katja Förster (Karlsruhe): 'Lieber Klee, wie freue ich mich, deine hieroglyphenbriefe zu lesen... Dein Franz' – On the importance of artists' letters for the understanding of biographies. A comparative examination of the correspondence between Paul Klee and Franz Marc. Short lecture followed by a discussion with Prof. Wolfgang Kersten (University of Zurich). Chaired by Cathérine Hug.

Wed 16 April, 6.30 p.m. – 8 p.m.: 'Sehnsucht nach dem Fall – 1914 und Gedächtniskultur'. A performative discussion between Dr. Felix Philipp Ingold (Romainmôtier), Prof. Herbert Lachmayer (Vienna), Cathérine Hug (Kunsthaus Zürich) and Dr. Gesa Schneider (Literaturhaus Zürich). In association with the Literaturhaus Zürich.

These events will take place in the lecture hall of the Kunsthaus. The entrance fee is included in the admission to the exhibition.

CONCERT BY THE ZÜRICH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA (ZKO)

Modern art is the locus for a striking confluence of painting and music. For composers such as Debussy, concepts such as sound and colour are synonymous. The music of Expressionism, by contrast, lives from bold brushwork and a desire to test boundaries. The ZKO will be performing in the Kunsthaus at 11 a.m. on Sunday 2 March. For tickets and further information, see www.zko.ch

NOTE AND CONTACT FOR THE MEDIA

Visual material is available to download at www.kunsthaus.ch under Information > Press. Contact: Kunsthaus Zürich, Press and Public Relations, Kristin Steiner kristin.steiner@kunsthaus.ch, tel.: +41 (0)44 253 84 13