

Press release

Zurich, 11 September 2014

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents Ferdinand Hodler and Jean-Frédéric Schnyder in a joint exhibition

From 12 September 2014 to 26 April 2015 the Kunsthhaus Zürich is staging an exhibition curated by the artist Peter Fischli that focuses on two central and very different practitioners of Swiss painting: Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918) and Jean-Frédéric Schnyder (b. 1945). Incorporating some 180 works, it highlights commonalities and differences, and includes a few surprises.

Realised by the artist Peter Fischli for the Kunsthhaus, this exhibition centres on a selection of drawings and paintings by Ferdinand Hodler from the Kunsthhaus's own collection, including landscapes, nature studies, figure compositions and portraits. Jean-Frédéric Schnyder's image cycles 'Bernese Veduten' ('Bernese Views', 1982-1983) and 'am Thunersee' ('on Lake Thun', 1995) are linked to the Hodlers conceptually. Fischli focuses on the creative processes of two characteristic representatives of Swiss art: one a celebrated and pivotal master of the transition to Modernism, the other an artist who brought key new ideas to bear following the end of a Modernism become classical. The landscape, studied and painted in the open air, plays a key role in both cases. The presentation emphasizes the features common to both artists but also highlights the dissimilarities. For curator Peter Fischli, the concept of dissimilarity is indeed the unspoken title of the exhibition.

THE EVERYDAY VERSUS THE SUBLIME

In 1970-71, after contributing to the legendary 'When Attitudes Become Form' exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1968, Schnyder made his first ventures into the field of painting. The 'Bernese Views' (1982-83) saw this engagement gaining greater depth and importance. With no studio to work from at the time, the artist had no option but to strap his easel to his back and take to his bicycle, day after day, painting 106 motifs from Bern and the surrounding area in the style of *plein-air* painting. From nature and the city to the charming and the ugly, and from Migros supermarket to Minster, the cycle boasts a formidable wealth of motifs. Schnyder's goal was painting as a process devoid of judgments: painting *per se*. Study drawings and installational objects by the artist complete the presentation. Deployed as part of the creative process, tools such as a racing bike, hiking boots, a rucksack and an easel are transformed into sculptures. The differences from the work of Hodler are striking. For Switzerland's greatest painter of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, everything revolves around judgment, emphasis, elaboration – and sublimation. In Hodler, grand form

enables us to experience human being and landscape in their relationship to an intellectual sense structure.

NIESEN AND NIEDERHORN

Hodler typically painted his landscapes in the open air. The 'Bernese Views' were Schnyder's first, cheerfully earnest foray into this method of painting. The 1995 cycle comprising views of Lake Thun placed him squarely in Hodler's territory. The Niesen, for example, is a Hodler mountain par excellence. Schnyder, whose technique had acquired greater subtlety between the 'Bernese Views' and the Lake Thun paintings, depicted it on a number of occasions along with the Niederhorn, its counterpart on the opposite side of the lake. Unlike in the views, here he concentrates primarily on two motifs. The locations are the same; it is the meteorological, atmospheric and energy conditions that change. Sometimes the mountains almost stand out; sometimes they are enveloped in clouds. While Hodler always sought the sublime instant, with Schnyder we alternate between the presence and absence of the ideal painterly moment. The act of painting itself is the only constant.

PAINTING ABOUT PAINTING

In Hodler, painting was already an omnipresent theme. For all their differences, then, the major feature that the two artists' works share is that they deal first and foremost with painting itself. Moving beyond iconography and categorizations, the presentation allows us to share the artists' perspectives on the translation of the world into painting. The selection and exhibition design by Peter Fischli – an important contemporary artist bringing a fresh eye to Hodler the Old Master – make for a presentation that is both unique and unparalleled.

WORKS LONG UNSEEN

The Kunsthau, which holds several hundred works by Ferdinand Hodler, left the choice of exhibits to Peter Fischli. With some 22 paintings and 61 drawings, the presentation includes an impressive array of Hodlers. The fragile works on paper will be exchanged half-way through the exhibition. Jean-Frédéric Schnyder's work is represented by more than 100 pieces dating from between 1982 and 1995. They have been loaned by both private collectors and prominent Swiss museums including the Aargauer Kunsthau, the Kunstmuseum Basel and the Kunstmuseum Bern, the Bündner Kunstmuseum, the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst and the Collection Pictet.

Admission is included in the normal entrance fee and is free on Wednesdays. There are public guided tours regularly and on various days of the week. Registration is not required. Further information can be found in the events calendar at www.kunsthau.ch.

Supported by the Vontobel Foundation and the Erna and Curt Burgauer Foundation.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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

Opening hours: Fri-Sun/Tues 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Wed, Thurs 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Public holidays: Christmas 24/26 December, 31 December, 1/2 January 2015, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admission to the Hodler/Schnyder exhibition including the collection: CHF 15 / CHF 10 (concessions and groups), Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge. Admission free on Wednesdays.

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

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/kunsthaus-zuerich. Magasins Fnac: sales points in Switzerland: Rive, 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 AND CONTACT FOR THE MEDIA

Visual material can be downloaded from the website www.kunsthaus.ch under Information > Press.

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