

Press release
Zurich, 27 August 2015

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'A Golden Age' – masterpieces of Dutch painting

From 28 August to 29 November 2015, the Kunsthhaus Zürich presents an exhibition combining some 50 works of 17th-century Dutch painting from a private Zurich collection with selected pieces from its own important holdings: cheerful genre scenes, magnificent still lifes and masterfully composed landscapes by Jan Brueghel the Elder, Hendrick Avercamp, Adriaen Coorte, Jan van Goyen, Aert van der Neer, David Teniers and many others.

The small-format cabinet pieces that are being loaned to the Kunsthhaus Zürich by a Zurich-based private collector have rarely been seen before, and further enhance the museum's already impressive collection of Dutch paintings, comprising works from the renowned Koetser and Ruzicka foundations. The masterful compositions are of exquisite quality and remarkable in their wealth of detail, conveying the allure of an era of burgeoning self-assurance among Dutch artists: the Golden Age – a major epoch in European art history.

REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGES OF A TRADING POWER

The collection also contains a fine selection of Flemish paintings from the Catholic south of the Netherlands. In terms of numbers, however, Dutch works from the mainly Protestant northern provinces that had declared themselves independent in the late 16th century predominate. The exhibition consists almost entirely of works with secular motifs; the collection shown here devotes little attention to the religious art typical of Flemish painting. It therefore reveals not only the differences between the two schools but also the features they have in common. Historically speaking, only Dutch art focused largely – for denominational reasons – on worldly themes. Artists such as Hendrick Avercamp, Adriaen Coorte, Jan van Goyen, Aert van der Neer and other contemporaries invariably drew their motifs from outside the sphere of religion, and accordingly developed these themes much further. In addition to portraits and genre scenes there were, for example, various types of landscapes, including seascapes and 'Italianate' landscapes as well as various sub-categories of still life. The mostly cheerful genre scenes often focus on the everyday lives of the predominantly rural population: peasants by the stove, families enjoying themselves on the ice, ships on calm seas, but also still lifes charged with symbolism and representational aspiration featuring flowers, fruit and expensive objects of the leisured class. They show a country celebrating itself as a trading power that is as anchored as it is open to the world. From the

early 1670s the military defeats began to mount and the Golden Age drew to a close. Indeed, the most recent picture acquired by the collector dates from around 1700.

THE SIGNATURE: A SEAL OF QUALITY

The collector's exacting standards are also reflected in the fact that almost exclusively, he acquired pictures which were signed: for signatures reflected their creators' growing awareness of a market that extended beyond princely courts to encompass the up-and-coming bourgeoisie. Collection curator Philippe Büttner, who is also curating the exhibition, has added some works from the Kunsthaus collection to those from the private collector. The approximately 60 paintings find a temporary home in the Old Master section of the Kunsthaus, which dates from 1910.

INSIGHT INTO ARTISTS, COLLECTORS, COLLECTIONS AND AUDIENCES

It is noteworthy that Swiss collectors did not discover the Old Masters until late on. At the start of the 20th century, they were still unable to compete with the prices being paid by British and American enthusiasts. Major collections were brought to Switzerland by foreigners. In the publication accompanying the exhibition *Lukas Gloor, Director of the Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection*, describes the various types of Old Master collectors, while an introductory text by the lender brings things up to date. Is he a collector of the modern type? He politely declines to be named; but he allows the public to share the personal motivations for his collecting. The catalogue, which is available in German for CHF 49 at the Kunsthaus shop, contains a description of each individual work and places it in its art-historical context. Each is also illustrated, along with numerous detail images to enhance appreciation of the works on display.

The exhibition is an opportunity to experience parts of the private collection in context with works from the Kunsthaus, thereby offering an in-depth insight into the works and revealing synergies among some central artists, including Jan Brueghel the Elder and Jan van Goyen. Establishing a close relationship between artist, collector, museum and viewer creates added value for the audience, once again highlighting the benefits of interweaving private and museum holdings.

Supported by the Athene Stiftung and the Truus and Gerrit van Riemsdijk Stiftung.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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

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

KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

Admission to 'A Golden Age' including the collection: CHF 15/CHF 10 (concessions and groups). Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge.

Public guided tours in German: Sun 6 & 20 September at 11 a.m., Sat 3 & 24 October at 1 p.m., Thurs 5 & 12 November at 6.30 p.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 land line), www.sbb.ch/kunsthhaus-zuerich.

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

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 is available at www.kunsthhaus.ch > Information > Press.

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