

Press release
Zurich, 18 May 2017

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'Mexican Graphic Art' exhibition

From 19 May to 27 August 2017 the Kunsthhaus Zürich presents an overview of the development of Mexican graphic art, from late 19th-century figurativism to the earliest abstract works in the 1970s. Many of the exhibits are receiving their first showing in Switzerland.

The exhibition opens with the 19th-century social satires and skeleton images ('calaveras') of the internationally renowned graphic artists Manuel Manilla and José Guadalupe Posada. It then spans the arc from Ignacio Aguirre, Alberto Beltrán, Fernando Castro Pacheco, Jean Charlot, Leopoldo Méndez and Alfredo Zalce to 'los tres grandes' ('The Three Greats'): Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, who produced a large number of murals – 'muralismo mexicano' – on political, nationalistic and social issues between the 1920s and 1970s.

POPULAR, SOCIALIST, INTERNATIONAL

Some outstanding works come from the Taller de Gráfica Popular – a people's graphic art workshop established in 1937 by a collective of international artists in Mexico, whose members produced flyers and posters for the masses supporting trade unions, popular education and socialist issues in the country. Revolutionary ideas and engagement with socio-cultural and socio-political concerns play a key role in the history of Mexican art. The editions published by the Taller de Gráfica Popular/La Estampa Mexicana on show at the Kunsthhaus exemplify the typical Mexican tradition of black-and-white woodcuts and linoleum prints. The images depict Mexican life and the customs and characteristics of its indigenous populations, but also include the country's first forays into abstract art.

MANY WORKS RECEIVING THEIR FIRST PUBLIC SHOWING

The exhibition curated by art historian Milena Oehy comprises 47 works on paper by 27 artists who live or lived in Mexico. More than half are being shown for the first time in Switzerland. These important works, printed using a range of techniques between the late 19th century and the 1970s, deal with issues such as poverty and wealth, love and cruelty, and the poetry and hardships of everyday life. In addition to prints by José Guadalupe Posada, there are characteristic Realist works by Leopoldo Méndez, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros as well as abstracts by Rufino Tamayo and Francisco Toledo. Four photographs by Armin Haab on loan from the Fotostiftung Schweiz complete the presentation.

ARMIN HAAB, HIS COLLECTION AND THE KUNSTHAUS

The photographer Armin Haab (1919–1991), who was born in the canton of Zug, first travelled to Mexico in 1948, using his camera to record cultural monuments, people and their customs. He revisited the country in 1954, 1962, 1973 and 1977. Captivated by its culture, he acquired original Mexican graphic works from various galleries in the country, the TGP (Taller de Gráfica Popular/People's Graphic Art Workshop), collectors and direct from the artists on his travels between 1949 and 1980. The collection of some 400 Mexican prints and portfolios accumulated up until his death in 1991 comprises works by 65 artists, all of them relief, intaglio and flat printed. This collection – the only one of its kind in Europe – offers a representative overview of the development of graphic art in Mexico from figurativism to the first abstracts, covering the period from 1847 to 1976. Haab donated it to the Kunsthaus Zürich in the late 1980s. A small number of pieces were shown in public for the first time in 2012, as part of the Kunsthaus exhibition 'Posada to Aljés. Mexican Art from 1900 to the Present'. Since then, the collection has been comprehensively researched.

CATALOGUE AND ART EDUCATION

The accompanying catalogue (320 pages, about 480 illustrations), with contributions from curator Milena Oehy, is published in English and German as part of the collections series and is on sale from the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 39. Participation in the public guided tours (in German language) is free of charge: Sunday 21 May at 11 a.m., Wednesday 21 June and Thursday 6 July at 6 p.m. Private guided tours by arrangement.

ADMISSION, OPENING HOURS

Admission to 'Mexican Graphic Art' incl. collection: CHF 16/CHF 11 (concessions and groups). Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge. Wednesdays: admission free.

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.

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.

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. Closed on Mondays. For public holiday opening see www.kunsthaus.ch

NOTE TO MEDIA

This press release as well as images are available at www.kunsthhaus.ch >
Information > Press.

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