

Media release
Zurich, 19 May 2022

Kunsthaus Zürich exhibits sketchbooks by Rudolf Koller

From 20 May to 14 August 2022, the Kunsthaus Zürich presents the largest overview to date of the sketchbooks of Swiss artist Rudolf Koller (1828–1905). Koller is known for his characterful portraits of animals and for the ‘Gotthard Post’, an iconic painting in Swiss art history which is also in the Kunsthaus Zürich. The temporary presentation follows the digitization and partial restoration of some 3,600 sketchbook sheets.

While Rudolf Koller’s painting ‘The Gotthard Post’ (1873), with its horse-drawn mail coach hurtling down the Gotthard Pass at breakneck speed, is one of the most visited and most reproduced works at the Kunsthaus in the 20th century, other pieces by the artist have been consigned to storage in recent times. The sketchbooks, in particular, could only ever be presented as extracts, for conservation reasons. Now, a cabinet exhibition put together by Jonas Beyer, Curator of the Collection of Prints and Drawings, offers an overview of these key holdings.

FROM SKETCHES TO OIL STUDIES

The Kunsthaus Zürich holds 67 of the 85 surviving sketchbooks of Rudolf Koller. Taking these together with other drawings, etchings, oil studies and paintings, this makes him one of the best-represented artists at the Kunsthaus. The presentation ‘Rudolf Koller. The Sketchbooks’ reveals a vast cosmos of sketches that could scarcely be more varied, ranging from playful finger exercises to detailed, pictorially executed drawings. This comprehensive show marks the conclusion and culmination of a multi-year restoration and digitization project which allows the books to be presented in a fresh new way. It includes the most significant sketchbooks, complemented by masterfully executed sheets that were removed from the books at an earlier stage. The sketchbooks are also shown in dialogue with Koller’s oil studies for works such as the ‘Gotthard Post’, allowing viewers to retrace directly the individual stages in the painting’s development. The exhibition showcases the many and varied techniques employed in Koller’s sketchbooks, from graphite, pen and charcoal to coloured chalk.

ORIGINALS ON SITE. DIGITAL VERSIONS ONLINE

All the sketchbooks are from the Kunsthhaus's Collection of Prints and Drawings and can normally only be viewed by prior appointment. The 12-week survey exhibition is a rare chance to discover a virtuoso draughtsman whose work is so much more than the label of 'animal painter' might suggest. As of this year, it is also possible to browse already ten of the sketchbooks by the artist in virtual form at digital.kunsthhaus.ch, and so discern the connections between his drawings and paintings; further books will follow. Media points in the exhibition offer opportunities to navigate through individual volumes.

PUBLICATION AND GUIDED TOURS

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with contributions from Jonas Beyer, Silvan Faessler, Rebecca Honold and Simone-Tamara Nold (published by Scheidegger & Spiess). It is available from bookstores and the museum shop, price CHF 22. Public guided tours (in German) by art educators take place on Saturday 10 June at 3 p.m., Saturday 2 July at 11 a.m., and Saturday 13 August at 11 a.m.

The Kunsthhaus will be happy to arrange private guided tours on request.

The restoration and digitization of Rudolf Koller's sketchbooks was made possible by the Stiftung Familie Fehlmann, Winterthur.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Heimplatz, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthhaus.ch

Fri-Sun/Tue 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see www.kunsthhaus.ch.

Admission incl. collection: CHF 23 / CHF 18 (concessions and groups). Admission free to visitors under the age of 17.

Advance ticket sales: www.kunsthhaus.ch

Zurich Tourism, tourist information office in Zurich main railway station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, info@zuerich.com, www.zuerich.com.

CONTACT FOR THE MEDIA.

Media releases and images to download as well as an overview of dates for media briefings can be found at www.kunsthhaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/.

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