

Media release  
Zurich, 6 October 2022

## Kunsthaus Zürich presents 'Aristide Maillol. The Quest for Harmony'

**From 7 October 2022 to 22 January 2023 the Kunsthaus Zürich devotes a major survey exhibition to one of the leading sculptors of early Modernism – Aristide Maillol – and places him in the context of his time.**

Aristide Maillol (1861–1944) is the most important French sculptor of the early modern era after Auguste Rodin. A major and influential figure who is both modern and timeless, Maillol created sensual art that embodies the values of clarity and balance of forms, making him a consummate artist of the classical tradition. The exhibition is conceived as a survey, focusing on the highly productive period before the First World War when Maillol discovered his true vocation and presented himself to the public as a sculptor.

### FROM PAINTER TO SCULPTOR

The exhibition brings together over 140 works, with both sculptures – including most of the artist's key works – and paintings: Maillol began his career as a painter, producing canvases of great quality that are still little known outside France. Also on display are decorative objects, tapestries designed by Maillol, and enchanting drawings. The presentation additionally incorporates paintings by contemporaries such as Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis and Édouard Vuillard in which works by Maillol can be seen, revealing the closeness of Maillol's relationship to them.

### THE GREAT SCULPTOR OF THE FEMALE FIGURE

Alongside Rodin's unbridled sculpture, imbued with the brilliantly emotional energy that enabled him to reinvent the genre for France and the 19th century in general, Maillol's works appear more restrained and classical. Yet Maillol's modernity lies in the striking way his figures are integrated into clear overall forms that – although it is not immediately apparent – are often based on a geometrical analysis of the body, and specifically the female form. While Rodin frequently created male figures, couples and entire groups of figures of both sexes as well, the 'Cézanne of sculpture', as Maillol is often referred to, remained the great sculptor of the (mostly unclothed) female figure. He masterfully condensed the female nude, his lifelong subject, ultimately endowing it with a

powerful monumentality. While the early sculptures still fitted perfectly into the interiors painted by the Nabis and the spirit of that progressive group of artists, by the end of his career Maillol stands alone, a kind of Titan from another age. Other sculptors have long since moved on to new ways of exploring the body, being and figure. Maillol, meanwhile, remains faithful to the classical image of the body, adeptly deploying and balancing the weight of its masses to elicit compositions that, at times, verge on the tectonically impossible.

### THE IMAGE OF WOMAN TODAY: A COMMENTARY IN THE PUBLICATION

Maillol's contribution to Modernism lies in the formally rigorous reformulation and geometrization of the classical female nude in sculpture. In terms of subject matter, however, he persevered with a highly traditional theme within the history of the medium. A male artist, then, with a predilection for depicting nude women? Against this backdrop, the Kunsthaus came up with idea of an extra publication, to accompany the Zurich presentation of an exhibition that was originally conceived at the Musée d'Orsay. In it, 'Vénus au collier', a life-size female nude by Maillol from the Kunsthaus Collection, is sent on a journey through the museum's galleries, encountering works by female artists along the way, ranging from the figural to the abstract, and from neoclassical through modern to contemporary. Maillol's thematically traditional depiction of woman is thus contrasted with the artistic work of women, to reconsider his oeuvre from a modern-day perspective. This photo essay is complemented by an article by the British writer Catherine McCormack. The texts and images thus open new doors without fundamentally devaluing the existing perspective, enabling a fascinating and novel insight that will, it is hoped, contribute to the current debate.

### COOPERATION WITH IMPORTANT LENDERS

The exhibition, which occupies the rooms of the Chipperfield building designed for temporary presentations, is a cooperation between the Kunsthaus Zürich, the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie, Paris, and La Piscine – Musée d'art et d'industrie André Diligent, Roubaix. It enjoys the generous support of the Fondation Dina Vierny – Musée Maillol.

The official exhibition catalogue, 'Aristide Maillol (1861–1944). La quête de l'harmonie' (352 pages, 304 illustrations), was published in French by Gallimard in April 2022. It includes essays by Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, Ophélie Ferlier-Bouat, Ioana Jimborean, Nathalie Houzé, Catherine Chevillot, Estelle Bégué, Claire Bernardi, Céline Chicha, Cristina Rodriguez-Samaniego and Fabienne Stahl. The collection publication 'Maillol. Ein anderer Blick / A different view', in German and English with an essay by Catherine McCormack and a photo essay by Franca Candrian, is published to coincide with the opening of the exhibition in Zurich. Both publications are available in the Kunsthaus shop (catalogue CHF 68, collection publication CHF 21) and from bookstores.

## EVENTS

### Maillol – The Quest for Harmony

12 January 2023, 7.30–9 p.m.

Concert by the Zürcher Kammerorchester. Works by Erik Satie, Claude Debussy and Othmar Schoeck. Willi Zimmermann (violin and conductor).

Ticket: CHF 50, including admission to the exhibition. <https://zko.ch>

### 'Harmonious or inharmonious' – a workshop for families

27 November, 10.30 a.m.–12.30 p.m.

What makes for chromatic harmony? When do we sense that a form has been perfected? We look at harmony and dissonance in painting and sculpture, then move on to the studio to explore those contradictions in works of our own. With Barbara Brandt.

Tickets: adults CHF 10 / children CHF 5

### Public guided tours

In German: Saturdays 8/22 October, 5/19 November, 3/17 December, 7/21 January, 11 a.m.–12 midday. In French: Sunday, 30 October at 2 p.m. Meeting point: Kunsthaus Zürich, help desk, Heimplatz 5 (Chipperfield building).

The Kunsthaus will be happy to arrange private guided tours on request in German and other languages.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, [www.kunsthaus.ch](http://www.kunsthaus.ch)

Fri–Sun/Tue 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see [www.kunsthaus.ch](http://www.kunsthaus.ch).

Admission incl. collection: CHF 23 / CHF 18 (concessions and groups). Children and young people under the age of 17 free of charge.

Free admission with 2022 and 2023 annual memberships.

Advance ticket sales: [www.kunsthaus.ch/tickets](http://www.kunsthaus.ch/tickets)

Zurich Tourism, tourist information office in Zurich main railway station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, [info@zuerich.com](mailto:info@zuerich.com), [www.zuerich.com](http://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.kunsthaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/](http://www.kunsthaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/).

For further information, contact: Kunsthaus Zürich, Kristin Steiner, [kristin.steiner@kunsthaus.ch](mailto:kristin.steiner@kunsthaus.ch), tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 13