

Media release
Zurich, 4 September 2020

Wild at Heart. Romanticism in Switzerland

From 13 November 2020 to 14 February 2021 the Kunsthaus will be turning the spotlight on Romanticism, with an exhibition of over 150 works spanning the arc from Henry Fuseli to Alexandre Calame and the early Arnold Böcklin. It reveals the considerable contribution made by Swiss artists to the development of European landscape painting, follows them to academies abroad, and explores the close ties between them. The overview will also extend to famous Romantics from other countries such as Caspar David Friedrich, Eugène Delacroix and J.M.W. Turner, thus adding an international perspective to the appreciation of Swiss Romanticism.

In the late 18th century, Romanticism spread across Europe. Artists began creating works that focused on feelings and the fascination of the unfathomable, in contrast to the sober, rational art of Neoclassicism. The Swiss discovered the visual potential of their own landscapes, committing the majestic Alpine environment and the eternal ice of the glaciers to canvas. Curator Jonas Beyer draws our attention to a key era of Swiss art history that until now has only been explored through myriad individual aspects.

A MOOD OF CHANGE THAT CROSSES BOUNDARIES

The focus on a typically Swiss variant of Romanticism offers a deeper insight into the interrelationship between specifically local character and international connections. The particular mood of change that characterizes Swiss art of this period finds its most tangible expression in the intensive exchanges with artists in neighbouring countries. Swiss artists flocked to the academies in Paris, Dresden and Vienna, building highly effective networks but also responding with an artistic sensibility to the local characteristics of their study environment. Conversely, by the end of the 18th century the sights of the Swiss landscape had become popular motifs for romantically minded artists from abroad. This vibrant cross-border exchange suggests that it is more meaningful to speak not of 'Swiss Romanticism' but rather of 'Romanticism in Switzerland', thereby highlighting both shared artistic concerns and artistic peculiarities dictated by local circumstances. Visitors will experience these through paintings, drawings and films grouped together thematically in the 1,000-m² exhibition gallery.

ROMANTICISM LIVES ON

A presentation of this scope has been made possible by loans of valuable works from Swiss collections and the inclusion of precious exhibits from Germany, Austria, the UK and France. The list of artists extends from pre-Romantic painters of the calibre of Caspar Wolf and Johann Heinrich Wüest, via well-known names from the Romantic era such as the Swiss Alexandre Calame, Charles Gleyre and Léopold Robert, to international greats including Eugène Delacroix, Caspar David Friedrich and J.M.W. Turner. Meanwhile the video works 'Everything is going to be alright' by Guido van der Werve, 'Projection (matin)' by Remy Zaugg and David Claerbout's 'Travel' remind us that the Romantic ideas of the late 18th and early 19th centuries still resonate in the present day.

EVENTS

Roundtable discussion: 'What does Romanticism say to us today?'

With Elisabeth Bronfen, Florian Illies and Simon Strauss

24.11.2020, 6.30 p.m.–8 p.m. Kunsthau Zürich, auditorium.

The Romantic attitude to life has much appeal today: its emphasis on passion and fascination with the inexplicable have become increasingly relevant once again at a time when the rational has come to dominate every facet of our everyday lives. In her work on Gothic fiction and the theme of night, Elisabeth Bronfen has already devoted much attention to the mysterious and unfathomable; Florian Illies has attempted to answer the question 'Is Romanticism curable?' in a chapter from his volume of essays entitled 'Gerade war der Himmel noch blau'; and Simon Strauss recently asked in an interview: 'How political is Romanticism? Is it still possible today to write neo-Romantically, to crave passion and earnestness?' The distinguished contributors to this roundtable discussion will debate these questions openly, to expand our understanding of 'Romanticism's' place in the here and now. In German. In cooperation with the Literaturhaus Zürich.

Ticket: CHF 15 / 10 (concessions and members). Booking required.

Matinee concert by the Zurich Chamber Orchestra

29.11.2020, 2 p.m.–3 p.m. Kunsthau Zürich, auditorium.

The ZKO presents the soundscapes of three composers from the Romantic era who could hardly be more different: Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms and Arnold Schönberg. The concert is accompanied by a discussion in which curator Jonas Beyer explains the background and particular features of the exhibition 'Wild at Heart'. In German.

Zurich Chamber Orchestra: Willi Zimmermann (violin and conductor)
Ryszard Groblewski (solo viola)

Ticket: CHF 50, members of the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft CHF 40, students/apprentices CHF 20. Ticket sale: www.zko.ch. The concert ticket also includes admission to the exhibition.

Wild at Heart: From idea to exhibition (background talk)

9.12.2020, 6 p.m.–7.30 p.m. Kunsthaus Zürich, auditorium.

A lot goes on behind the scenes to create all the impressions a visitor takes in during a 90-minute visit to an exhibition. Among the many participants who help the curator transform the idea into a reality are lenders, restorers, advertisers, technicians, architects, authors and others. This conversation between Jonas Beyer and Christoph Stuehn reveals some of what it takes to make it all happen. In German.

Ticket: exhibition ticket or CHF 10. Booking required.

Piz Palü – audio play performance

With Meret Hottinger (Ziska), Christian Sprecher (Jon), Julian M. Grünthal (Jesko); narrator: Doris Strütt; music/sounds: Rolf Caflisch

27.01.21, 6.30 p.m.–8 p.m., Kunsthaus Zürich, auditorium.

This audio play performance is inspired by the 1929 silent film 'The White Hell of Piz Palü'. The legendary mountaineering epic is transposed into a dystopian future and dismantled with relish on stage, culminating in a bizarre fight between the three protagonists. The performers take the clichés to new heights, and question the longing for idealized nature as well as the ideologies that are often associated with it. Join our team of mountaineers on an Alpine trek full of emotional peaks, crevasses and abysses. In German.

Ticket: CHF 15 / 10 (concessions and members). Booking required.

PUBLICATION AND ART EDUCATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue (Prestel Verlag, 288 pp., approx. 200 ill., in German) with contributions from leading figures in Romanticism research including Werner Busch, Johannes Grave, Florian Illies, Monique Meyer, Tobias Pfeifer-Helke, Michael Thimann, Franz Zelger and others. It is available from the museum shop and bookstores.

An audioguide for adults in German, English and French fills in the background and explores the theme of the exhibition through 21 of the works on display. A separate audioguide for children in German is also available, together with a colouring sheet.

Public guided tours in German take place on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. and Sundays at 11 a.m. We will be happy to arrange private guided tours in all official Swiss languages and others on request.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, 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.

Admission CHF 23 / CHF 18 (concessions and groups). Combination tickets including the collection and exhibition CHF 26 / CHF 19. Admission free to visitors under the age of 17. Information subject to change.

Advance sales: Kunsthaus Zürich online, with numerous additional offers for events and exhibition related products: www.kunsthhaus.ch/en/tickets.

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

SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on admission when travelling by public transport: www.sbb.ch/kunsthhaus-zuerich.

A contribution to culture by Credit Suisse – Partner Kunsthaus Zürich.

INVITATION TO EDITORS

Media releases and illustrations are available for download at www.kunsthhaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/.

The press conference takes place at 11 a.m. on 12 November in the Kunsthaus (doors open at 10.30 a.m.). We would be pleased to welcome you. Registration is not required. We will be pleased to organize interviews with curator Jonas Beyer by prior arrangement.

Contact and further information:

Kunsthaus Zürich, Kristin Steiner

kristin.steiner@kunsthhaus.ch, +41 (0)44 253 84 13