

**THE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT IS BRINGING THE WORLD OF BOHEMIAN PARIS TO LIFE IN A LARGE AND IMPRESSIVE EXHIBITION**

## **ESPRIT MONTMARTRE**

### **BOHEMIAN LIFE IN PARIS AROUND 1900**

February 7 – June 1, 2014

Press preview: Thursday, February 6, 2014, 11 a.m.

Not without reason, a contemporary critic in the 1890s wrote about Montmartre in Paris: “The quarter resembles a huge studio.” Important artists such as Edgar Degas, Pablo Picasso, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, or Vincent van Gogh lived and worked there. With a previously unsuspected realism, they produced memorable paintings that mercilessly revealed the underbelly of the dazzling *Belle Époque*. With these works, which remain unique even today, they crucially influenced the history of art in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. From February 7, 2014, the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt presents the first group exhibition with more than 200 works, and focuses on the quarter of Montmartre with its stories and protagonists. Various phenomena are explored in different thematic sections: “Montmartre as a Village – A View of a different Paris” confronts the visitor with atmospheric views of the neighborhood’s topography. The exhibition then highlights the “Cafés, Absinthe Drinkers, and Variétés” and the representation of “Models, Dancers, and Prostitutes.” A further section deals with “The Fantasy Land of the Circus.” “The Montmartre as an Area for Outsiders and Social Change” introduces the visitor to the inhabitants of the district, its labourers, beggars, clochards, and washerwomen, but also to the people who participated in demonstrations in these politically and socially agitating days. While “The Network of Artists and Art Dealers” sheds light on the exchange between artists and the flourishing art market in the quarter, the last section is dedicated to “The Poster as a New Art Form” and magazine illustrations.

The presentation spans from around 1885 to the beginning of the First World War, when most artists moved to the southern Montparnasse area. The Montmartre, however, was considered a microcosm for artistic self-perception that first found literary expression in Henry Murger’s novel *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (1847–1849). The neighborhood soon attracted numerous artists who deliberately chose a bohemian life in impoverished circumstances on the margins of society – even though they often came from wealthy homes. Their new identity as voluntarily-involuntary outsiders was mirrored especially realistically and impressively in their art. The exhibition assembles outstanding paintings and works on paper, historical photographs, posters, and graphic works from German and foreign museums and private collections such as the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, the Tate Gallery in London, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, the Kunsthaus Zurich, the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Works by 26 artists like Pierre Bonnard, Ramon Casas, Edgar Degas, Kees van Dongen, Vincent van Gogh, Max Jacob, Marie Laurencin, Pablo Picasso, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Suzanne Valadon, and other less known, yet equally fascinating artists convey a vivid impression of the historically unique atmosphere of Montmartre around 1900.

“Esprit Montmartre. Bohemian Life in Paris around 1900” is sponsored by Amundi and receives additional support by the Georg und Franziska Speyer’sche Hochschulstiftung.

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Max Hollein, Director of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, describes the project as follows: “The exhibition ‘Esprit Montmartre’ unfolds a fascinating panorama of the lively and influential art scene of Paris around 1900. At Montmartre, a moving portrait of society was brought forth with the utmost creativity by both famous and almost forgotten artists. All their works have exercised a pronounced influence on the European and the international history of art. Seeing so many works assembled in Frankfurt is a rare occasion and a special gift for the visitors.”

Dr. Ingrid Pfeiffer, the curator of the exhibition, adds that “the presentation – by viewing the bohemian world on Montmartre from an art-sociological perspective and taking the social and historical contexts into account – clearly reveals how remarkably the myth and legend of the quarter differed from its reality. ‘Esprit Montmartre’ shows the *true* life of its inhabitants far from the usual clichés. The artists’ works are moving, sensual, and rousing, and their subjects and pictorial ideas, materials, and stylistic solutions essentially anticipated the artistic developments of Modernism.”

**Montmartre**, named after the hill on which it is located has belonged to Paris since 1860. The quarter offers a contrasting alternative to chic Paris with its wide boulevards and long avenues radically systematized by the urban planner Georges-Eugène Haussmann. With its abandoned quarries, old mills, gardens, vacant lots, and the slum known as the “Maquis”, the quarter has preserved an almost rural character. Montmartre provided fertile soil for painters as well as poets, writers, and composers, such as Paul Verlaine, Jacques Offenbach, and Erik Satie. They all found cheap accommodations there, living together with actors, washerwomen, and seamstresses in the Bateau-Lavoir, probably the most famous studio building. The poverty was frequently not only exposed in the artists’ pictures but constituted a crucial element of the way they stylized themselves as bohemians, an attitude that went hand in hand with their desire for individual and artistic freedom. The artists chose themes from their everyday life and brought unusual perspectives to their painting through their personal views.

The exhibition of the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt assembles quiet Parisian landscapes of Montmartre such as **Vincent van Gogh’s** (1853–1890) “Montmartre, derrière le Moulin de la Galette” (1887, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam). Van Gogh, who lived in Montmartre with his brother Theo, loathed the city’s buzz of activity and found a favorite subject in the still village-like quarter. The French painter **Kees van Dongen** (1877–1968), who was of Dutch origin and took up residence in Paris in 1899, establishing himself as an illustrator for numerous newspapers, also produced charming views of the neighborhood. His works mainly deal with the continuing urbanization, a focus that becomes particularly evident in his paintings depicting the building of the Neobyzantine basilica Sacré-Cœur like the one titled “Montmartre, Le Sacré-Cœur” (1904, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco). The section is rounded off with works by Catalan painters such as **Santiago Rusiñol** (1861–1931) and **Ramon Casas** (1866–1932).

The show also comprises extraordinary works by the young **Pablo Picasso** (1881–1973), particularly from both the artist’s Blue Period and the Rose Period following it, e.g. the painting “Femme à la chemise” (1905, Tate Gallery, London). It was in Paris where Picasso became familiar with the works of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, which had a decisive influence on both his style and his portraits of the poor and underprivileged in those early days of his career. In the eight years he spent facing the desolate and miserable

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world of Montmartre, he developed a number of pictorial ideas and art forms that were to become landmarks for early twentieth-century Modernism.

The presentation also highlights two outstanding women artists of Montmartre, **Suzanne Valadon** (1865–1938) and **Marie Laurencin** (1883–1956). An unconventional bohemian, Suzanne Valadon was one of the first women to abandon the traditional female role model by emancipating herself from her position as model, muse, and mistress of various painters like Auguste Renoir and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. She watched the painters, listened to their conversations about art, and filled dozens of sketchbooks with her drawings. When Edgar Degas became aware of her talent, he fostered it. Valadon's touching nudes and self-portraits such as her early "Autoportrait" (1883, Centre Pompidou, Paris) are on display in the Schirn. Visitors will also come upon the playfully Cubist group portrait "Apollinaire et ses amis" (1909, Centre Pompidou, Paris) by Marie Laurencin, who was originally trained as a porcelain painter. The artist presents herself together with her friends Fernande Olivier, Picasso and his dog, and her patron Guillaume Apollinaire. The influential collector Gertrude Stein purchased the painting and thus made Laurencin known among the avant-garde artists.

A large part of the life of Montmartre took place in the streets or in the numerous cafés and drinking establishments. The Schirn presents, among other works, socio-critical works by **Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen** (1859–1923) which focus on scenes in the quarter's streets like "Le 14 juillet 1895" (1895, Musée de Petit Palais, Genève). These paintings bear witness to hard work, social misery, emotional indifference, but also to individual and collective desire. The many variétés, cabarets, and circus performances as well as the entertainments in brothels and special establishments seemed to promise an escape from social constrictions. Scenes of coffeehouses showing men and women sitting at tables, staring into their glasses and looking stolid and vacant were among the most common artistic depictions of Montmartre. Almost as numerous are opulent scenes of the frivolous and light life in the variétés and cabarets with their dancers and prostitutes such as those rendered in works by the Italian painter **Giovanni Boldini** (1842–1931) like "Scène de fête au Moulin Rouge" (c. 1889, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). The Moulin Rouge, the Moulin de la Galette, the Chat Noir, or the Cabaret Au Lapin Agile were places that tolerated every kind of excess. With an unbiased gaze, the painters of Montmartre – first and foremost **Edgar Degas** (1834–1917) and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec – revealed the dark sides of an entertained society. Also presented in the Schirn exhibition, Degas's "Scènes de maisons closes" (1875–1885, private collection) disclose the dismal everyday routine in Parisian brothels. Degas was the first artist who portrayed prostitutes without any erotic or pornographic connotation, but as self-confident and self-determined women. The commission to design the poster for the 1891 autumn season of the Moulin Rouge marked the beginning of **Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's** (1864–1901) successful commitment to poster art. Three thousand copies of his "Moulin Rouge: La Goulue" (1891, Kunsthalle Bremen) were put up in Paris. Relying on simplification, reduced compositions, fragmentation, movement, and exaggeration as his means, Toulouse-Lautrec portrayed the society surrounding him.

The exhibition also explores the fascinating network of artists and intellectuals, art dealers and gallery owners. Visitors will find themselves confronted with works by **Amedeo Modigliani** (1884–1920), the probably "last true bohemian" of Montmartre, as Ludwig Meidner called him. Modigliani was friends with numerous artists and intellectuals of his time like Pablo Picasso and Guillaume Apollinaire, whom he immortalized in the characteristic likenesses "Portrait de

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Picasso" (1914/15, Musée Picasso, Antibes) and "Portrait de Guillaume Apollinaire" (1915, private collection). The anything but insignificant influence of art dealers like Berthe Weill and Ambroise Vollard provides a further point of interest. It was Weill who discovered painters like Pablo Picasso and Kees van Dongen and promoted them by showing their works in her gallery. Ambroise Vollard is regarded as one of the most important trailblazers of the then emerging Modernism. Vollard's portrait by **Félix Vallotton** (1865–1925), "Portrait d' Ambroise Vollard" (1902, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam), testifies to the depicted art dealer's unerring judgment and expertise.

**CATALOG:** Esprit Montmartre. Bohemian Life in Paris around 1900 / Die Boheme in Paris um 1900. Edited by Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein. With a foreword by Max Hollein and essays by Nienke Bakker, Markus A. Castor, Phillip D. Cate, Danièle Devynck, Anita Hopmans, Peter Kropmanns, Chloë Langlais, Vinyet Panyella, **Robert McD. Parker**, and Ingrid Pfeiffer, as well as biographies of the artists and a historical map with addresses of studios, places of entertainment, galleries and so on by Michael Raeburn. German and English editions, each of 320 pages with ca. 320 color illustrations, 24 x 29 cm (vertical format), hard cover; designed by Kühle und Mozer, Cologne; Hirmer Verlag, Munich, ISBN 978-3-978-3-7774-2197-1 (English), ISBN 978-3-7774-2196-4 (German), 34 euros (Schirn), 49,80 euros (trade edition)

**VENUE:** SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg, D-60311 Frankfurt. **EXHIBITION DATES:** February 7 – June 1, 2014. **OPENING HOURS:** Tue, Fri–Sun from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Wed and Thur from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. **INFORMATION:** [www.schirn.de](http://www.schirn.de), e-mail: [welcome@schirn.de](mailto:welcome@schirn.de), phone: +49.69.29 98 82-0, fax: +49.69.29 98 82-240. **ADMISSION:** 10 euros, reduced 8 euros, family ticket 20 euros; free admission for children under eight years of age. **ADVANCE BOOKING:** online under [www.schirn.de/tickets](http://www.schirn.de/tickets). **GENERAL GUIDED TOURS:** Tue 5 p.m., Wed 7 p.m., Thur 7 p.m., Fri 11 a.m., Sat 3 p.m., Sun 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. **CURATOR:** Dr. Ingrid Pfeiffer. **CURATORIAL ASSISTANCE:** Lea Schleiffenbaum. **SPONSORED BY:** Amundi. **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT BY:** Georg und Franziska Speyer'sche Hochschulstiftung. **MEDIA PARTNERS:** Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Scholz & Volkmer, ACHT Frankfurt, Journal Frankfurt, VGF. **CULTURAL PARTNER:** hr2 Kultur. **TRAVEL PARTNER:** Deutsche Bahn. **SPARPREIS KULTUR:** Visit the exhibition with the "Sparpreis Kultur" round trip ticket valid for three days. From 39 euros. Up to four persons accompanying you save 10 euros each. Available under [www.bahn.de/kultur](http://www.bahn.de/kultur)

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** The Schirn communicates the exhibition in the Social Web with the **HASHTAG** #espritmontmartre **ONLINE-MAGAZIN:** [www.schirn-magazin.de](http://www.schirn-magazin.de) **FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/Schirn](http://www.facebook.com/Schirn) **TWITTER:** [www.twitter.com/Schirn](http://www.twitter.com/Schirn) **YOUTUBE:** [www.youtube.com/user/SCHIRNKUNSTHALLE](http://www.youtube.com/user/SCHIRNKUNSTHALLE) **INSTAGRAM:** @schirnkunsthalle

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