

PRESS RELEASE

BATTLE OF THE SEXES. FRANZ VON STUCK TO FRIDA KAHLO

24 NOVEMBER 2016 TO 19 MARCH 2017

Press preview: Wednesday, 23 November 2016, 11 a.m.

Städel Museum, Exhibition house

Frankfurt, 8 November 2016. From 24 November 2016 to 19 March 2017, visitors to the Städel Museum in Frankfurt will have the opportunity to see a major exhibition that explores a timeless theme: the emotionally charged relationship between man and woman and its representation in art. "Battle of the Sexes. Franz von Stuck to Frida Kahlo" illuminates the artistic exploration of gender roles and gender relations from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War. Featuring over 150 works, the exhibition reveals just how controversial both male and female modern artists were in their reaction towards the construction of gender identities and bears witness to the ways they used painting, sculpture, graphic art, photography and film to tackle stereotypes and role models. Some used their work to confront their audiences with exaggerated gender traits or else sought to undermine stereotypical role models. Others attacked common clichés and aimed to deconstruct them via strategies such as irony, exaggeration, masquerade and hybridization. Gender distinctions – based upon traditional associations of male and female with categories such as active/passive, rational/emotional, culture/nature, state/family – became increasingly defined over the course of the nineteenth century, not only influencing economic, social and political structures, but also art. The exhibition builds upon the Städel's own collection of artworks with direct relevance to the show's theme, including paintings by Max Liebermann, Edvard Munch, and Franz von Stuck, sculptures by Auguste Rodin, and photographs by Frank Eugene and Claude Cahun. Significant loans mean that famous names such as Hannah Höch, Édouard Manet, Gustav Klimt, Otto Dix and Frida Kahlo can be featured in meaningful juxtaposition with lesser-known artists, including works by Leonor Fini, John Collier, and Gustav Adolf Mossa. Works from the canon of modern art are thus complemented by similarly apposite, though somewhat neglected exhibits. The exhibition takes up the intense debates that have come to surround the respective roles played by women and men, offering nuanced insights into the complexity of this often problematic cultural issue, while highlighting the art-historical dimension of a socio-political theme that remains just as relevant in our own contemporary context.

The exhibition is funded by the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain and has received additional support from the Georg und Franziska Speyer'schen Hochschulstiftung.

**Städelsches Kunstinstitut
und Städtische Galerie**

Dürerstraße 2
60596 Frankfurt am Main
Telephone +49(0)69-605098-170
Fax +49(0)69-605098-111
presse@staedelmuseum.de
www.staedelmuseum.de

**PRESS DOWNLOADS UNDER
www.staedelmuseum.de**

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Axel Braun, head
presse@staedelmuseum.de

Alexandra Hahn, deputy head
Telephone +49(0)69-605098-234
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
hahn@staedelmuseum.de

Jannike Möller
Telephone +49(0)69-605098-195
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
moeller@staedelmuseum.de

Paula Stuckatz
Telephone +49(0)69-605098-268
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
stuckatz@staedelmuseum.de

In a statement, Dr. Philipp Demandt, director of the Städel Museum, announced: “Our exhibition highlight at the turn of the year explores a subject that loomed particularly large in the art of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century: the debate surrounding gender roles and gender relations. The avowed aim of this large-scale project is to select outstanding and keenly observed artworks and put them in dialogue with one another. As the various works displayed in the show illustrate, the scrutiny brought to bear upon the construction of male and female identities has lost none of its power to captivate contemporary audiences.”

In twelve chapters overall, the exhibition contains an unprecedented range of artistic subjects, which highlight some of the key aspects characterizing art in its exploration of the interrelationship of women and men. From the mythological representations of Gustave Moreau through to the fantastical images that emerged out of Surrealism, the displays aim to bring into focus modern art’s ever-changing visions of male and female role models, observing the developments they underwent within the context of comprehensive historical and social transformations: from the beginnings of the Women’s Movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, via the debates on gender and sexual controversies that characterized the Weimar Republic, through to the end of the Second World War. The works are arranged chronologically in a display that encompasses both floors of the exhibition house. However, this thematic sequence is interrupted by five monographic chapters, each of which is dedicated to a particular male or female artist whose oeuvre gives special prominence to the theme of the battle of the sexes: Franz von Stuck, Jeanne Mammen, Félicien Rops, Edvard Munch and Lee Miller.

The exhibition is curated by Felicity Korn and Dr. Felix Krämer. In a curatorial statement, Felicity Korn said: “It is especially important for us that the exhibition should include works by both male and female artists, so as to shed as much light as possible on the often highly charged relationship between men and women. It bears mentioning that considerably fewer female artists broached the subject – particularly in the nineteenth century – which is of course also due to the disparities in their educational and professional opportunities. This makes the works by women featured in the exhibition all the more tantalizing: remarkably, female artists often engaged with the theme through irony and humour – even though they were themselves more directly affected by the battle of the sexes.”

“The aim of our exhibition is to encourage people to reflect upon the theme of gender conflict while offering historical insights into this complex topic. The exhibition follows on from the success of the Städel Museum’s 2012 show “Dark Romanticism”, with which we established a precedent for taking on a contemporary theme that resonated with the social attitudes of modern audiences and examined it from an art-historical perspective. While the post-war history of the battle of the sexes is well documented and well-known to many contemporaries, this is less the case with earlier historical periods. Yet for many modern artists, the battle of the sexes was a recurrent theme throughout their life’s work,” said Felix Krämer.

The exhibition “Battle of the Sexes” takes as its historical starting point the emergence of a growing groundswell of voices (led by the Women’s Liberation Movement) demanding social equality between man and woman, which in the nineteenth century made itself heard throughout Europe. For the first time, prevailing models of male and female identity were discussed by the wider public – a debate which from the 1860s onwards also left its mark on the visual arts.

The exhibition begins with an introductory section on Adam and Eve, the biblical story to which the battle of the sexes traditionally traces its origins. There emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a large number of depictions of the first human couple, anticipating the range and diversity of artistic responses that gender-related themes would subsequently elicit. Visitors can see evocative works by Franz von Stuck, Julius Paulsen, and Suzanne Valadon – whose partner, André Utter (20 years her junior), sat as the model for her Adam.

As women’s position in society began to strengthen, fin de siècle art gave rise to a parallel development whereby representations emphasized the guilt of original sin and female powers of seduction. This produced an increasingly important strand of art, predicated upon a particularly destructive and ruinous form of femininity, with the *femme fatale* (French: the fateful woman) coming to denote men’s humiliation and thus serving simultaneously as a projection of male anxieties and sexual desire. In the eyes of many (primarily) male artists, the figure of a woman with aspirations to social equality represented an existential threat. Their work stylized members of the female sex as figures of evil who deliberately courted their powers of sexual attraction to emasculate men. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, strong biblical characters such as Salome, Judith, and Delilah attained cult status, providing subjects for works by numerous artists, including Gustave Moreau, Jean Benner, Lovis Corinth, and Aubrey Beardsley.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the emerging academic discipline of sexual research upturned bourgeois conceptions of clearly delineated gender roles, and opened up topics such as the libido and sexual preferences for public discussion – albeit one that was almost exclusively conducted by men. Artists such as Alfred Kubin, Thomas Theodor Heine, and Félicien Rops no longer had to refer back in their work to mythological and biblical figures, but instead translated stereotypical notions of gender into exaggerated visual ideas. The period gave rise to a large number of artistic representations in which the woman appears as helpless victim, entirely at the mercy of a man who exerts over her the full force of his sexual and social prowess. The exhibition includes a prime example of this sort of imagery in the shape of Emmanuel Frémiet’s sculpture *Gorilla Abducting a Woman* (1887), which nearly half a century later inspired Merian C. Cooper’s famous film *King Kong* (1936).

A quite different perspective is offered by Jeanne Mammen, whose early work is exhibited for the first time at the Städel Museum, and provides the subject for one of the shows’s monographic chapters. The artist’s work engages extensively with the fantastical world of ideas and dreams that grew out of literary Symbolism. Mammen thus created a series of works themed upon Gustave Flaubert’s *The Temptation of*

Saint Anthony (1874), as well as various depictions of strong female figures, including Medusa and Salome. Another artist whose oeuvre accords particular prominence to themes relating to the battle of the sexes is Edvard Munch (who also features in one of the monographic displays). In his pictures, the Norwegian artist depicted the ambivalence haunting the relationship between men and woman, frequently associating eroticism and love with pain and death. In so doing, he typically put the observer in the position of a male voyeur-lover, doomed to fall victim to the seductive power of the woman's physical beauty.

The liberal climate of the Weimar Republic gave rise to a swathe of new nightclubs, strip joints and drag clubs, to which city dwellers flocked in the hope of suppressing the trauma of the First World War by indulging in different kinds of sensual pleasure. Accompanying this new mood was an abiding fascination in art for such subjects as sexually motivated murders, sexual violence, and prostitution. Male proponents of the New Objectivity, including Otto Dix, Heinrich Maria Davringhausen and Karl Hubbuch, depicted ravaged female bodies in the most gruesomely explicit ways and presented them as fetishized objects. Artists used this new and shocking sensibility to shift their focus towards depictions of human depravity and social marginalization, which were duly understood as references to the encroaching brutalization of the social climate and as metaphors for the moribund political system. The period's fascination for sexual crimes transcended genres. Franz Wedekind's drama *Lulu: Earth Spirit/Pandora's Box*, for example, served as the template for Georg Wilhelm Pabst's film *Pandora's Box* (1928/29). In both versions, Lulu falls victim to the murderer Jack the Ripper. Both female and male artists working in Berlin's dadaist circles, such as Hannah Höch and Hans Bellmer, created pictures of distorted, mechanical, and monstrous figures that risked scandalizing audiences, but whose primary purpose was nevertheless to operate as a critique of bourgeois sexual mores.

In addition to these deliberately subversive acts of radical excess, the period was also notable for its preoccupation with the theme of the "New Woman". Amidst the social upheavals precipitated by the First World War, women working on the "home front" found that they had gained in self-confidence as new social and professional freedoms opened up to them. As men returned from the war, often traumatized by their experiences, they were confronted by a generation of women whose understanding of gender roles had been completely transformed. With women having won the right to vote in 1919, the German Women's Movement had reached an important milestone on the road towards achieving political, social and civil rights as citizens. This led to the development of a self-confident and active model of femininity. Portraits by Otto Dix, Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler, Jeanne Mammen and Christian Schad reflect the transformations undergone by society in its understanding of gender roles.

A different emphasis was evident in the surrealist circles of André Breton, Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst, whose art was characterized by a liberal attitude towards sexuality and at the same time a playfully subversive approach to bourgeois society's gender stereotypes. Inspired by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical studies, many surrealists sought to break down gender boundaries. They demonstrated a particular

fascination for the figure of the androgyne, a mythological hermaphrodite with both male and female sexual characteristics. For the surrealists, the androgyne symbolized both the transgression of conventional modes of behaviour and the synthesis of the male and female sex. Surrealism's influence was also felt in the realm of cinema. Artists such as Maya Deren and Alexander Hamid, who were close to the Paris Surrealists, strove to construct a sexual identity, as for example in the 1943 film *Meshes of the Afternoon*.

Female artists working among the surrealists made ongoing efforts to forge an alternative model of womanhood vis-à-vis their male counterparts. These attempts to reconstruct gender had a precedent in cinema: male and female roles were swapped to comic effect in Alice Guy's 1906 film *Les Résultats du féminisme* (*The Consequences of Feminism*). Meret Oppenheim later employed similarly humorous methods, playing upon the preconception that the woman's role was that of a passive object of sexual desire by presenting viewers with a pair of high-heeled shoes, trussed up like a roast goose on a tray. Meanwhile Frida Kahlo created a highly personal and symbol-laden representation in her self-portrait *The Little Deer*.

BATTLE OF THE SEXES. FRANZ VON STUCK TO FRIDA KAHLO

Curators: Felicity Korn (Assistant Curator of Modern Art, Städel Museum), Dr. Felix Krämer (Head of Modern Art, Städel Museum)

Exhibition period: 24 November 2016 to 19 March 2017

Press preview: Wednesday, 23 November 2016, 11 a.m.

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de, info@staedelmuseum.de,
telephone +49(0)69-605098-200, fax +49(0)69-605098-112

Visitor service: telephone +49(0)69-605098-232, besucherdienst@staedelmuseum.de

Address: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Opening times: Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun & public holidays: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Thu & Fri: 10 a.m. – 9 p.m., Mon: closed

Special opening times: Sat 24 Dec: closed; Sun 25 Dec: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Mon 26 Dec: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Sat 31 Dec: closed; Sun 1 Jan 2017: 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Mon 2 Jan: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Entrance: 14 euros; concessions: 12 euros, family ticket: 24 euros; free entry for children under 12; groups of more than 10 people: reduced per person rate. Groups must register in advance by calling +49 (0)69-605098-200 or emailing info@staedelmuseum.de

Advance ticket sales online at: tickets.staedelmuseum.de (until 10 November 2016, Early Bird Tickets will be available from the online shop at a price of 10 euros).

Digitorial: The Digitorial is a project developed by the Aventis Foundation. It can be visited at geschlechterkampf.staedelmuseum.de.

Audio tour and the Städel app: The audio tour is supported by the Georg und Franziska Speyer'schen Hochschulstiftung. It offers tours of the exhibition in German and English. The German audio tour is read by Constanze Becker and Felix Rech (both of the Schauspiel Theatre, Frankfurt). The price for an audio guide is 4 euros, or 7 euros for two. In addition to being available for loan at the museum, the audio tour can also be downloaded via the Städel app from the comfort of your own home. The Städel app is free of charge from the Android and Apple Store, and costs 1 euro for the current IOS and Android smartphones:
<http://www.staedelmuseum.de/de/angebote/staedel-app>

Social media: The Städel Museum communicates the exhibition in the social media with the hashtags #Geschlechterkampf and #Staedel.

General guided tours of the exhibition: Tue 3 p.m., Wed 1 p.m., Thu 7 p.m., Fri 7 p.m., Sat 4 p.m., and Sun 12 p.m.; additionally on 26 Dec at 4 p.m. Please note there is limited space on the tours. Tickets for tours are available from two hours before the start of the tour at the ticket office, or can be ordered online in advance at a special rate of 16 euro (including entrance and tour) at tickets.staedelmuseum.de

Catalogue: A catalogue is being published by Prestel Verlag to accompany the exhibition, containing 336 pages and approximately 400 illustrations. It features an introductory discussion between Felicity Korn, Felix Krämer, and Rose-Maria Gropp, essays by Andreas Beyer and Ute Frevert, and articles by Ingo Borges, Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Katharina Ferus, Miriam Halwani, Kristina Lemke, Nele Putz, Elena Schroll, Svetlana Svyatskaya, Melanie Ulz, Anne Vieth, and Daniel Zamani, and a foreword by Philipp Demandt. German edition/ English edition: 39.90 euros (museum edition).

Visitor's guide: A German-language booklet to accompany the exhibition is available for 7.50 euro.

Sponsored by: Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain

With additional support from: Georg und Franziska Speyer'schen Hochschulstiftung

Media partners: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Verkehrsgesellschaft Frankfurt am Main, Cicero – Magazin für politische Kultur

Mobility partner: Deutsche Bahn

Culture partner: hr2-kultur