

PRESS RELEASE

# ON THE WAY TO THE FUTURE – THE DIGITAL EXTENSION OF THE STÄDEL

**FRANKFURT MUSEUM DEVELOPS DIGITAL EXHIBITS PLATFORM, EDUCATIVE  
COMPUTER GAMES FOR CHILDREN, ONLINE ART HISTORY COURSES, AND  
NUMEROUS FURTHER WEB OFFERS**

**Frankfurt am Main, March 2015.** The bicentennial of the Städel Museum in 2015 provides the oldest museum foundation in Germany with an occasion to completely redefine its educational program as well as the experience of a visit to its collections. Seen against the background of the increasing digitalization of everyday life, the extension of museum's educational mission into digital space presents itself as an essential cornerstone. In view of this objective, the Städel has launched numerous initiatives to be realized on the way to its bicentennial: besides the expansion of its online and social media communication channels and its film program, a comprehensive digital exhibits platform for both intelligent and intuitive "strolls" through the collection is presently implemented among other things. While innovative and educative computer games for children are being conceived and realized, the Städel's development measures also include the prototype of a completely novel digital art book as well as a well-founded offer of art history courses that help prepare visits to the Städel's exhibitions. With these measures, the museum further extends its individualized and service-oriented educational programs into the digital sphere. The Städel has already secured two million euros of the projected total of five million external funds for implementing its numerous projects. Comprehensively going through, assessing, editing, and preparing the works of the collection for their digital presentation alone necessitated the engagement of ten new employees. This way, the Städel wants to further consolidate its position as trailblazer in the field of digital education and to take a leadership role in the global digital reception and communication of art.

"The increasing digitalization of the world we live in also concerns supposedly analog cultural contents like a five-hundred-year-old Dürer painting or a hand drawing by Henri Matisse. Museums are equally confronted with the enormous changes in all spheres of life that fundamentally redefine the way we deal with information,

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education, and culture. If we use the potential of the advancing digital development adequately and succeed in developing a genuine, alternative offer, we will set the stage for the future of the institution and the next two hundred years of the Städel Museum,” Max Hollein, Director of the Städel, describes the institution’s broadly conceived initiative.

After the successful extension of the Städel Museum building in February 2012, the institution is now digitally extended with the development of new educational facilities in the field. The Städel does not only respond to present changes in the media landscape, continuously emerging new forms of digital habits of use, and new possibilities in the dissemination of knowledge. It is also working on free-of-charge interactive, participatory forms of conveying its contents, thereby fulfilling its social responsibility as a place of learning and the requirements of an institution of the present and the future. Conceiving such a package in parallel to the real museum cannot simply consist in a translation of the physical visit into a virtual one: the measures rather aim at ensuring a new access apart from the physical visit, an access based on an independent, comprehensive, decentralized and diversified range of subjects.

Among other things, the Städel Museum prepares **a digital exhibits platform** granting a wide and international public an unlimited and novel online access to the works of its collection beyond the institution’s physical boundaries. Since mid-2012, the Städel’s endeavors focus on the development of an innovative Cloud-based media data platform in cooperation with the Hochschule Darmstadt and the Software AG. This platform permits digital “strolls” through the extensive holdings of the Städel Museum and boasts specific semantic search facilities. The works of the collection are presently tagged in collaboration with Bildarchiv Foto Marburg in a way that will make them accessible both along art-historical and intuitive, associative, emotional lines. Like in the case of the Städel’s analog educational programs, the platform will guarantee an individual approach to the collections’ contents for the different users’ varied interests. In addition, the responsive design allows a practical use of the platform in all display formats and on various mobile terminal devices. The principle of this exhibits platform developed in the context of an excellency project supported by the State of Hesse was for the first time presented at the CeBIT in 2013. The prototype of the platform was brought to completion early in 2014. After the presentation of the beta version scheduled for the following year, the digital exhibits platform will be freely accessible on the Städel Museum’s bicentennial in 2015. Already existing digital elements such as audio sequences, films, or blog articles will

be integrated into the platform. Contents of special exhibitions and scholarly findings made in the context of their preparation will be preserved this way for the public and researchers beyond the actual duration of the shows' presentation.

An outstanding digital project developed by the Städel Museum in conjunction with external partners aims at innovative and educative computer games dealing with contents of the museum in a completely different, entertaining and playful manner. The beginning is made with a title conceived together with the computer game designer Deck 13: the game offers an exciting access to the many stories behind the collection's works to children from eight to ten.

Future visitors will be provided with a free-of-charge **online art history course** before their visit, such as when they buy an online ticket. This course contains background information on the subject of the respective show and tips for the visit of the presentation. The real stay in the Städel will thus be perfectly interlinked with the available digital background information on the exhibition.

As of mid-2014, the Städel Museum together with dm-drogerie markt will offer a **print-on-demand service** for more than two hundred motifs from the Städel's collection. Framed reproductions in various sizes and media formats can be ordered both on the Internet and in the retailer's outlets.

The **Städel film program** will be further extended within the next years. Additional joint productions are being planned together with various media partners to underpin the Städel's numerous specially produced exhibition and artist films. The Städel Museum's own development of new formats for digital distribution channels will be stepped up so that a comprehensive audio-visual look behind the scenes of the museum's activities can be conveyed.

Together with "Zum Kuckuck," a design office for digital media, the Städel Museum also works on a completely new **website**, which will go online in the summer of 2014 and be specially tailored to mobile devices. Free **Wireless LAN** will be available for visitors everywhere in the Städel from the middle of the year, too.

Another cornerstone of the Städel Museum's digital extension is the development of a special **Museum app** which will be published in late 2014: interweaving the analog and the digital museum visit, it comprises much additional information on the Städel's presentations and special exhibitions.

These target-group-oriented offers perfectly merge with the manifold **educational program** realized by the Städel in recent years. The Städel Museum is already acclaimed as a pioneer in the field of online and social media communication today. The **Städel Blog**, which grants a look behind the scenes of the institution and its exhibition activities, has 10,000 readers each month. The Städel's lavishly produced **exhibition and artist films** have reached 400,000 views on the museum's YouTube channel. The Städel's **Facebook** channel with nearly 20,000 fans and its **Twitter** account with 8,000 followers keep growing and are important disseminators for educational contents. Innovative events such as exhibition **tweetups** – like the one on the occasion of the Dürer show – not only regularly reach new visitor groups but also ensure that the themes focused on by the Städel are discussed in the Twitter community all over Germany. It was also the Dürer show for which the Städel's first exhibition app was developed; it fascinated visitors with a special tour for children and an audio guide. The Dürer app was used by 12,000 persons.

The Städel's digital facilities are also to be found right on its premises. Since the reopening of the house in 2012, the **media table in the Main Cabinet**, the individualized **audio guide** with its manifold tours, or the family app **Artonaut**, for instance, have convinced experts as well as the general public.