

PRESS RELEASE

# HOLBEIN AND THE RENAISSANCE IN THE NORTH

2 NOVEMBER 2023 TO 18 FEBRUARY 2024

Exhibition annex

Press preview: Tuesday, 31 October 2023, 11.00 am

**Frankfurt am Main, 13 September 2023.** It was a turning point in the history of art: Renaissance painting. What had begun in Italy developed into something completely new in Northern Europe in the works of the painters Hans Holbein the Elder (ca. 1464–1524) and Hans Burgkmair (1473–1531), pioneers of this singular art. Its centre was the free imperial and mercantile city of Augsburg, which became the capital of a German—but also an international—Renaissance within just a few decades. None other than Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), one of the German Renaissance’s greatest painters, would ultimately make this art known throughout Europe. From 2 November 2023 to 18 February 2024, the Städel Museum is devoting an exhibition to this fascinating art-historical epoch. For the first time, it will bring together the most important paintings, drawings and prints of Holbein the Elder and Burgkmair in a presentation further enhanced by works of other Augsburg artists of the period from around 1480 to 1530 as well as prominent works by their colleagues active elsewhere in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Masters such as Albrecht Dürer, Donatello, Jan van Eyck and Hugo van der Goes had a lasting impact on the art of Holbein the Elder and Burgkmair. Uniting some 180 important works from leading international museum collections, the show will offer an overview of the various stylistic particularities of Northern Renaissance painting. A highlight of the Frankfurt show will be the presentation of the two masterworks by Hans Holbein the Younger: *The Madonna of Mayor Jacob Meyer zum Hasen* (1526–1528) from the Würth Collection and the *Solothurn Madonna* (1522) from the Kunstmuseum Solothurn.

“Holbein and the Renaissance in the North” is being carried out with support from the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe with the Deutsche Leasing AG, the Frankfurter Sparkasse and the Sparkassen-Kulturfonds des Deutschen Sparkassen- und Giroverbandes as main sponsor. The Städtelscher Museums-Verein e.V. and the Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung have likewise contributed decisively to making this exhibition possible. The

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project is also being realized with support from the Fontana Stiftung, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung and the Christa Verhein Stiftung.

**Städel director Philipp Demandt** on the exhibition: “The Städel Museum is prized far and wide for its major Old Masters exhibitions. After Rubens, Rembrandt and Reni, it now holds yet another exceptional show in store for the public. The Städel Museum is presenting the Renaissance in the North—a new and entirely unique style of painting that originated more than 500 years ago in the North of Europe at the threshold from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period. We are celebrating the great German painters of the Renaissance and their forerunners in an exhibition featuring some 180 prominent artworks from the world’s leading museum collections. Famous paintings by Hans Holbein the Elder, Hans Burgkmair and Holbein the Younger will enter into dialogue with examples by Albrecht Dürer, Jan van Eyck, Donatello and many others. One of the show’s key objects will be the *Madonna* by Holbein the Younger from the Würth Collection, a painting regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces of the German Renaissance. Its presentation along with the *Madonna* from the Kunstmuseum Solothurn in Frankfurt is a chance not to be missed.”

“The Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe has been supporting the Städel Museum for many years. We are delighted to be a partner in staging an outstanding exhibition in which the museum has managed to unite so many unique Renaissance artworks. The presentation of Hans Holbein the Younger’s *Madonna* at the Städel again for the first time in ten years is a very special highlight”, commented **Heike Kramer, Director of Social Commitment at the Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband**. The support from this main sponsor is being provided jointly with the Deutsche Leasing AG and the Frankfurter Sparkasse. “Art needs dedicated patrons. Only then can we as a society come together to broaden our perspectives and develop new possibilities. Our motivation is the chance to enable many people to partake of these opportunities.”

**Sylvia von Metzler, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Städtischer Museums-Verein e. V.**, on the exhibition: “For nearly 125 years now, the members of the Städtischer Museums-Verein have been combining the pleasure they take in art with active dedication. Our foremost purpose is the comprehensive support of the Städel Museum’s projects—whether the expansion of the collection, important research undertakings or major special exhibitions. The works of Holbein the Elder and his son are true treasures in the Städel Museum collection. Their presentation along with many other prominent examples of Renaissance painting in a large-scale exhibition is an opportunity we will not have again anytime soon.”

“Our foundation’s initiator Dagmar Westberg maintained deep patronage ties to the Städel Museum until the end of her life. The splendid Old Master works were among those she held especially dear—whether a masterpiece of Antwerpen Mannerism, a painting by Jusepe de Ribera or prints by Francisco de Goya. The foundation’s support of the exhibition “Holbein and the Renaissance in the North” is entirely in the tradition of her strong dedication to the Städel Museum. We wish the exhibition every success. May all the visitors take pleasure in the beauty of Old Masterly painting”, remarked **Daniel Hoster, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung.**

“Around 1500, Augsburg was one of the leading art centres north of the Alps. Among the artists of this period, the colleagues and rivals Holbein the Elder and Burgkmair the Elder were especially prominent. Representing the range of stylistic possibilities encompassed by Northern Renaissance painting, their works would come to influence entire generations of later artists, as we see in the paintings of Holbein the Younger. His exploration of the art of Augsburg was groundbreaking to a degree strikingly mirrored in his early work. In less than ten years, Holbein the Younger developed an unmistakable style of his own and thus attained his rank as one of the sixteenth century’s most prominent European artists”, explains **Jochen Sander, curator of the exhibition, Deputy Director and Head of the Collection of German, Dutch and Flemish Art before 1800 at the Städel Museum.**

An exhibition of the Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION**

The exhibition begins with a look at the city of Augsburg also available in a digital application in the exhibition and on the Städel website. One of the leading art centres north of the Alps, **Augsburg** reached a cultural and economic heyday around 1500. The Imperial Diet convened there, and Emperor Maximilian I visited the city frequently over the course of his lifetime, also to take advantage of the services offered by the Augsburg-based Fugger and Welser banking and trading houses. In addition to their striving for social status, it was ultimately the economic power of the Fuggers, Welsers and other influential families that enabled the arts to flourish there. The city was moreover distinguished by an especially openminded climate not only conducive to trailblazing experimentation with modes of Renaissance art shaped by the humanist culture of Italy, but also receptive to the great innovations of Netherlandish painting, which it adopted and developed into an independent artistic phenomenon—the Renaissance in the North.

When the aspiring Fugger family endowed their burial chapel in the Church of St Anne in Augsburg, they were erecting a monument not only to themselves, but also to the commencement of the Renaissance north of the Alps. Here for the first time, Italian architectural and decorative forms were used in the North—modes of expression the three brothers Ulrich, Georg and Jakob Fugger, who commissioned the chapel, had come to know and appreciate thanks to their trade connections in the southern land. In addition to the Augsburg artists **Hans Daucher** (1486–1538) and **Jörg Breu the Elder** (ca. 1475/1480–1537), the master **Albrecht Dürer** (1471–1528) of Nuremberg was involved; it was he who designed the brothers' sepulchral monuments. The exhibition presents, for example, Dürer's *Design for the Tomb of Jakob and Sibylla Fugger* (ca. 1510, Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford). Dürer was adept at developing complex figural narratives and, inspired by an earlier trip to Venice, incorporating Italianate elements into his compositions. Breu's *Painted shutters of the small organ* in the Fugger Chapel (ca. 1520), to be presented outside Augsburg for the first time ever, will constitute yet another highlight.

The Fuggers moreover had themselves portrayed in elaborate likenesses, whether in the form of paintings, prints, drawings or medals. **Hans Holbein the Elder's** drawing of *Anton Fugger* (ca. 1510–1515, Kupferstichkabinett Berlin), the painted *Nuptial Portrait of Jakob Fugger and Sibylla Artzt* (1498, Schroder Collection, Bath) by **Hans Burgkmair** and the latter artist's coloured woodcut of *Jakob Fugger* in a Venetian gold cap (ca. 1510, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich) are just a few examples of the many likenesses to be presented in the exhibition. A portrait of the last-named merchant has also come down to us in a medal (1518, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien) by **Hans Schwarz** (1492–ca. 1550). Modelled on the Roman coin portrait, medals of this kind were a typical invention of the Italian Renaissance soon adopted in Augsburg. The lifesize bronze figure of *Neptune* (1537, Kunstsammlungen & Museen, Augsburg) by **Sebastian Loscher** (1482/83–1551) is also entirely indebted to antiquity. The first post-antique large-scale bronze in the North, it replaced an older Late Gothic figure of Augsburg's Catholic patron saint on the fountain of the municipal fish market. The Protestants had just gained the majority on the city council, and their choice of style and motif amounted to a political statement with which they distanced themselves from the town's Catholic bishop. The fact that he protested to Emperor Maximilian I, albeit to no avail, shows that he got the message.

**Hans Holbein the Elder** (ca. 1464–1524) and **Hans Burgkmair the Elder** (1473–1531) were without question the most important Renaissance painters in Augsburg. And even if they were both active in the same city for nearly thirty years, the two

colleagues and competitors pursued very different paths. Burgkmair looked primarily to Italian art for orientation. He adopted numerous motifs he had presumably recorded during his travels in northern Italy in 1507 and developed them further in his works. A case in point is his remarkable painting of *Esther before Ahasuerus* (1528, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen München). In isolated cases, Holbein also made use of Italian decorative forms in his later years, but for the most part concentrated on the Early Netherlandish painting he had become acquainted with in person during his journeyman years. He adhered to Northern-influenced Late Gothic pictorial traditions particularly in his religious panel paintings. The exhibition will unite prominent examples of religious works by Holbein the Elder as well as portraits, among them his brilliant silverpoint drawings and Burgkmair's portraits of *Hans Schellenberger* and *Barbara Schellenberger* (1505/07, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne).

The two artists already gained excellent reputations for themselves in Augsburg and far beyond its limits early in their careers. Holbein's fame spread as far as Frankfurt, a circumstance to which the high altarpiece for the Dominican church here offers striking testimony. He and his assistant carried out the wing paintings and the predella. To round out the presentation of the monumental *Frankfurt Dominican Altarpiece* (1501, Städel Museum, Frankfurt), the exhibition will also feature various preliminary drawings that provide insights into the working process.

Burgkmair distinguished himself especially in the field of printmaking and came to be known as Emperor Maximilian I's "court printmaker". He also experimented with a range of new methods, for example red chalk drawing, which had become an established technique among Italian artists, and cooperated with artists working in other mediums. In collaboration with the block-cutter Jost de Negker, for instance, he tried out the new techniques of gold printing and colour woodcut—executed with the aid of several printing blocks—to produce such works as the *Emperor Maximilian I on Horseback* (1508, Albertina, Vienna). In the show, Holbein's and Burgkmair's works will engage in direct visual dialogue with selected paintings, prints and sculptures by artists of Augsburg and the German-speaking regions as well as Italy and the Netherlands, including examples by Donatello, Jan van Eyck, Hugo van der Goes, Israhel van Meckenem, Francesco Melzi and Andrea Solario.

The exhibition will come to a close with outstanding paintings by **Hans Holbein the Younger** (1497–1543), among them one of the greatest masterpieces of the German Renaissance—*The Madonna of Mayor Jacob Meyer zum Hasen* (1526–1528, Würth Collection). It has been more than ten years since this painting was last on view in Frankfurt.

When the eighteen-year-old journeyman Holbein the Younger arrived in Basel in 1515, he was an ideal representative of his native Augsburg, having received his

training there. In Basel he made his breakthrough as an artist—as well as his debut in society—with his *Paired Portraits of Jacob Meyer zum Hasen and his wife Dorothea Kannengiesser* (1516, Kunstmuseum Basel), which exhibit the clear influence of the art of Hans Holbein the Elder and Burgkmair. Within less than a decade, however, this exceptional artistic talent had developed further to the point where he repeated the exemplary function of his artistic forebears in Augsburg. And while he had taken direct orientation from a painting by **Jan van Eyck** (1390–1441) for his 1522 *Solothurn Madonna* (Kunstmuseum Solothurn)—as a look at van Eyck's *Lucca Madonna* (1437, Städel Museum, Frankfurt) clearly reveals—his style had changed once again by the time he executed the 1526–1528 *Virgin of Mercy* likewise commissioned by Meyer. Now contemporary Italian painting by **Andrea Solario** (1460–1524) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) served as his point of departure for finding his way to yet another incomparable, new and wholly independent pictorial solution that would represent the absolute climax of the Renaissance in the North.

#### HOLBEIN AND THE RENAISSANCE IN THE NORTH

**Curator, Städel Museum:** Prof Dr Jochen Sander (Städel Museum, Deputy Director and Head of the Collection of German, Dutch and Flemish Painting before 1800)

**Exhibition dates:** 2 November 2023 to 18 February 2024

**Press preview:** Tuesday, 31 October 2023, 11.00 am

**Information:** [staedelmuseum.de](http://staedelmuseum.de)

**Visitor services and guided tours:** +49(0)69-605098-200, [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**Location:** Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

**Tickets:** Tue–Fri, Sat, Sun + holidays €18, reduced €16; Tuesday Special: every Tuesday 3–6 pm €9, admission free for children under 12. Groups of at least 10 persons who would normally be charged the full admission fee: €16 per person. Groups are required to book in advance by contacting +49(0)69-605098-200 or [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**Digitorial®:** The free Digitorial combines interactive modules with short, informative texts to provide an introduction to the exhibition themes. The intuitive way to discover the groundbreaking innovations in painting, sculpture and printmaking developed by the Renaissance artists of the North—and ideal preparation for a visit to the exhibition. Available in German and English at [holbein.staedelmuseum.de](http://holbein.staedelmuseum.de). Designed for use at home, at the museum and wherever the user has Internet access, the Digitorial is a tried and tested SCHIRN, Städel and Liebieghaus brand developed by the three museums as a digital museum education offer. The Digitorial on “Holbein and the Renaissance in the North” was realized with support from the Deutsche Börse Group.

**Audio guide app:** With fascinating explanations by the film and TV actor Sebastian Bezzel, the audio guide offers insights into the lifeworlds of the Renaissance artist Hans Holbein the Elder and his contemporaries and takes users on a journey to the artistic and economic capital Augsburg. In addition to illustrations, the one-hour app contains audio tracks on many of the works in the exhibition. Starting on opening day, it will be available free of charge for the iOS and Android operating systems at the App and Google Play Stores and conveniently downloadable onto smartphones, for example at home or within Städel WiFi range. The audio guide will also be available for hire at the museum for €5 (€8 for two).

**Digital application:** In an app based on Georg Seld's famous 1521 bird's-eye view of Augsburg, visitors can explore the city of Holbein in five digital walking tours. In images, text and sound, Hans Holbein the Elder presents the city from his perspective. Other available themes are “Artists in Augsburg”, “Women of Augsburg”, “Music in Augsburg” and “Emperor Maximilian in Augsburg”. On offer here for the first time, this application will be available in the exhibition and, starting on opening day, downloadable from the Städel website. In German.

**Catalogue:** *Renaissance in the North: Holbein, Burgkmair, and the Age of the Fuggers*, a comprehensive catalogue edited by Guido Messling and Jochen Sander and published by the Hirmer-Verlag, will

accompany the exhibition. With a sponsor's foreword by Helmut Schleweis, a foreword by Philipp Demandt and Sabine Haag and contributions by Wolfgang Augustyn, Andreas Tacke, Guido Messling, Manuel Teget-Welz, Ulrich Söding, Friederike Schütt, Bodo Brinkmann, Jochen Sander, Armin Kunz and Heidrun Lange-Krach. In German and English, 360 pages, €44.90 (museum edition).

**Visitor's guide:** A visitor's guide to the exhibition will be available in German, €9.50.

**Sponsored by:** Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe with Deutsche Leasing AG, Frankfurter Sparkasse & Sparkassen-Kulturfonds des Deutschen Sparkassen- & Giroverbandes; Städel'scher Museums-Verein e.V., Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung

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