

PRESS RELEASE

WELCOME TO PARADISE.

24 FEBRUARY – 27 JUNE 2027

Exhibition Annex

Press Preview: Tuesday, 23 February 2027, 11.00 am

Frankfurt am Main, October 2026. Paradise—a place of longing that has fired the human imagination for centuries. Representing both an earthly and a heavenly garden, as well as the original harmony between humans and nature, it became a projection space for religious, philosophical and artistic ideas. The large-scale exhibition *In the Garden of Paradise. Art and the Perception of Nature around 1400* explores this tension, focusing on a pivotal period of upheaval in European art.

The starting point is one of the most famous and, at the same time, most enigmatic paintings in the Städel Museum: *The Little Garden of Paradise* (ca. 1410–20). Barely larger than an open book, the panel reveals an astonishing wealth of detail. The Virgin Mary is depicted amidst courtly society, and the enclosed garden can be interpreted as both a religious symbol and a setting for worldly love. The work is particularly notable for its unparalleled closeness to nature: more than twenty-five plant species, twelve bird species and three insect species are depicted with astonishing precision, reflecting a newly awakened interest in nature as a space for observation and knowledge. The exhibition focuses on this groundbreaking connection between art and the perception of nature, situating *The Little Garden of Paradise* firmly within the historical and artistic context of Europe around 1400—a time marked by upheaval, conflict and intellectual exchange.

Around eighty high-calibre loans from international museums, including the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, the Louvre in Paris and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, bring this development to life. Alongside paintings by Jan van Eyck, the “Master of Flémalle” and Pisanello, the exhibition also features sculptures, goldsmith work, tapestries, drawings and illuminated manuscripts. The exhibition is complemented by an immersive installation by the Berlin-based artist and stage designer Philipp Fürhofer, which reinterprets the sensual dimension of *The Little Garden of Paradise*. Even in the Middle Ages, paintings were intended to appeal not only to the eye, but to all the senses—through the chirping of birds, the scent of flowers, the taste of fruit and the texture of fabrics.

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Fürhofer transfers this idea to the present day and creates a walk-in “Garden of Paradise” that brings the historical imagery to life in an atmospheric way.

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

Project Manager: Dr Corinna Gannon (Assistant Curator, Dutch, Flemish and German painting before 1800, Städel Museum)

Sponsored by: Städtelscher Museums-Verein e. V.