

PRESS RELEASE

REMBRANDT. LANDSCAPE ETCHINGS FROM THE STÄDEL MUSEUM

28 AUGUST TO 24 NOVEMBER 2013

PRESS PREVIEW: TUESDAY, 27 AUGUST 2013, 11 AM

EXHIBITION GALLERY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS AND DRAWINGS

Frankfurt am Main, 19 July 2013. Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (1606–1669) is world famous to this day as a painter of exceptional portraits and history paintings. Yet there was another subject that also preoccupied him throughout his career: landscape. The Dutch painter addressed himself to this theme not so much in painting, but all the more intensively in drawing and printmaking. From 28 August to 24 November 2013, the Städel Museum will present this key aspect of his oeuvre in the exhibition “Rembrandt. Landscape Etchings from the Städel Museum”. The presentation in the gallery of the Department of Prints and Drawings will feature altogether sixty-two works from the holdings of the Frankfurt Museum, including forty-six Rembrandt etchings. The artist’s pure landscape etchings will be supplemented in the show by further works. The latter include etched Rembrandt self-portraits, early etchings in which landscapes are depicted in connection with history motifs such as “St Jerome in the Wilderness” or the “Flight into Egypt”, and depictions of Arcadian pastoral scenes which Rembrandt encountered with a perceptible sense of humour. Other prints likewise to be presented in the show – engravings, woodcuts and etchings by such artists as Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525–1569) Domenico Campagnola (ca. 1500–1564), Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1616), Hercules Seghers (ca. 1590–ca. 1638) or Claude Lorrain (1600–1682) – will moreover place Rembrandt’s works into the context of his forerunners and contemporaries in the area of landscape in printmaking.

Rembrandt was not only a painter, but also the most prominent printmaker of his time. His etchings, which abound with special technical and artistic inventions, influenced art until well into the modern period, and have always been much sought after by connoisseurs and collectors. Rembrandt’s landscape etchings are among the rare prints by the artist. With only one exception, this workgroup is represented in the Städel Museum collection in its entirety. In view of the fact that he sold them reluctantly and produced only a relatively small number of proofs, the artist’s relationship to his landscape etchings seems to have been an exceptional and very

**Städelsches Kunstinstitut
und Städtische Galerie**

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

PRESS DOWNLOADS
www.staedelmuseum.de

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Axel Braun, head
Phone +49(0)69-605098-170
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
braun@staedelmuseum.de

Silke Janßen, press officer
Phone +49(0)69-605098-234
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
janssen@staedelmuseum.de

Karoline Leibfried, press officer
Phone +49(0)69-605098-212
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
leibfried@staedelmuseum.de

personal one. The exhibition at the Städel Museum thus represents an invaluable opportunity to discover these precious works.

Rembrandt's landscape etchings were carried out in two relatively brief phases – the first group between 1640 and 1645, and the second between 1648 and 1652. Around 1640, shortly after Rembrandt had purchased a stately house in Amsterdam and during the period in which his wife Saskia became severely ill and died, he began taking walks in the city's immediate surroundings. He recorded his impressions en route in sketches which later served him in the studio for the conception of his etchings.

This direct study of nature was the point of departure for the etched landscapes. The latter, however, are not to be understood as topographically precise views. On the contrary, without exception, Rembrandt's etchings are carefully calculated independent compositions. Even if some of the works depict real, locatable scenes (for example the *View of Amsterdam*, ca. 1640/41), others freely combine various views with one another, or merely hint at certain places. In the landscapes of the later phase, fantastic imaginary elements or those influenced by the landscape prints of other artists occasionally enhance Rembrandt's pictorial world, as seen in the *Landscape with a Square Tower* (1650) or the *Canal with a Large Boat and Bridge* (1650). On the one hand his landscapes have a typically Dutch quality about them – they take the everyday and commonplace as their point of departure –; on the other hand they are concerned primarily with specifically artistic issues and problems such as composition, the suggestion of breadth and depth, the reproduction of textures, and finally – and most especially – the representation of atmosphere and light. In his etchings Rembrandt explored nature's myriad guises, for example foliage or plants, but also phenomena such as decaying old farmhouses (*The Omval*, 1645; *The Windmill*, 1641).

Every landscape is essentially a section of reality. Yet Rembrandt's works always seem to be informed by Creation in its entirety. This is well illustrated, for instance, in what is perhaps the artist's most well-known landscape etching, the *Three Trees* of 1643. There we discover the tiny figure of a draughtsman in the wild, devoting himself to the grandiose play of the light pouring onto a wide and multifariously animated landscape.

Employing various graphic strategies – overlapping hatching, certain line patterns, the multiple biting of the plate, manipulations of the plate's surface, the use of "plate tone" and drypoint accents as well as the virtuoso distribution of light and shade – Rembrandt succeeded in producing a rich spectrum of tangible and intangible visual values which condense to allow exceptionally intensive perception. When we

immerse ourselves in the contemplation of Rembrandt's landscapes, we gradually gain a sense of their fine nuances and inner vibrancy.

Particularly from 1650 onwards, in his quest for new means of expression in printmaking, Rembrandt began making use of the drypoint technique – in addition to etching – in a previously unknown manner. This graphic method, which involves the simple scratching of the plate with a sharply pointed utensil, creates irregular, difficult-to-control effects and significantly reduces the number of well-wrought proofs. Previously used primarily for small corrections and enhancements to the acid-etched plate, for Rembrandt drypoint became a printmaking technique in its own right. His search for a balance between the classical “bitten” etching and drypoint led to the steadily increasing use of the latter in proportion to the former, and ultimately to prints executed exclusively in drypoint. With this method he achieved depictions with entirely new light effects. The etched landscapes, in which he focussed on nature's visual complexities, evidently served Rembrandt as an important means of experimentation in printmaking.

All of the works to be displayed come from the Städel Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings, which will accordingly present a small but artistically delightful excerpt from its rich holdings of drawings and prints – comprising altogether more than 100,000 sheets – within the framework of the exhibition. Among the department's holdings is an extensive and qualitatively high-ranking group of Rembrandt etchings consisting of some 350 works. The Städel Museum's etchings by this Dutch artist were already the subject of an exhibition of the Department of Prints and Drawings once before (“Rembrandt. The Etchings in the Städel”, 2003). At that time, a cross-section of the holdings was presented with the aid of approximately seventy selected examples. For the most part, the Rembrandt holdings date back to the institution's beginnings and the private collection of its founder Johann Friedrich Städel (1728–1816). Amassed in the second half of the eighteenth century, and in part in the early nineteenth as well, the group of Rembrandt works belonging to the Department of Prints and Drawings includes extremely rare and superb prints. A number of additional works were acquired over the course of the nineteenth, twentieth, and present centuries, for example the rare proof of the *Sleeping Dog* (ca. 1640) in 2007, likewise to be placed on view in the show “Rembrandt. Landscape Etchings from the Städel Museum”.

REMBRANDT. LANDSCAPE ETCHINGS FROM THE STÄDEL MUSEUM

Curator: Dr. Martin Sonnabend, Head of the Department of Prints and Drawings in charge of works up to the mid eighteenth century

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

Exhibition dates: 28 August to 24 November 2013

Press preview: Tuesday, 27 August 2013, 11 am

General guided tours of the exhibition: Wednesdays at 7:30 pm and Sundays at 11:00 am

Special guided tours by request; please contact: +49(0)69-605098-200; info@staedelmuseum.de; for further events and activities, see www.staedelmuseum.de

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de, info@staedelmuseum.de, telephone +49(0)69-605098-0, fax +49(0)69-605098-111

Opening hours: until 30 September 2013: Tuesday, Friday to Sunday 10 am – 6 pm, Wednesday and Thursday 10 am – 9 pm

From 1 October 2013: Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday 10 am – 6 pm, Thursday and Friday 10 am – 9 pm

On 3 October 2013: 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: 12 EUR, reduced 10 EUR, family ticket 20 EUR; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays 14 EUR, reduced 12 EUR, family ticket 24 EUR; admission free for children to the age of 12; groups (minimum 10 persons): 10 EUR/person; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays 12 EUR/person

Online ticket shop and advance ticket sales at: tickets.staedelmuseum.de