

PRESS RELEASE

ON THE WAY TO THE FUTURE – THE STÄDEL’S DIGITAL EXTENSION

**FRANKFURT MUSEUM DEVELOPS DIGITAL EXHIBITS PLATFORM,
EDUCATIONAL APP GAMES FOR CHILDREN, WEB-BASED ART-HISTORY
COURSES AND A VARIETY OF FURTHER ONLINE OFFERS**

The Städel Museum, Germany’s oldest museum foundation, is taking its 200th birthday this year as an occasion for a fundamental redefinition of its diverse educational programme as well as the museum visitor’s experience. Against the background of the increasing digitalization of everyday life, the extension of its educational responsibility into the digital realm is a key building block for the Frankfurt museum. To this end, the Städel has launched a wide range of initiatives to be published over the course of its anniversary year. To begin with, a comprehensive digital exhibits platform is presently in the making – a tool as intelligent as it is intuitive that will allow visitors to “roam” the Städel collection at their leisure. Innovative and educational computer games for children are also undergoing realization, online art-history courses are being developed in cooperation with Leuphana Universität, the prototype of a completely novel digital art book is being produced, and the educational “digitorial” already available now offers a modern means of preparing for visits to exhibitions. Starting in February 2015, Städel visitors will moreover have free access to WiFi throughout the museum and its grounds, allowing them, for example, to download the Städel app (available from March onward), listen to the audio guide on their own devices, or simply document their museum experience and share it by way of the social media. A newly developed Digital Art Cabinet right in the museum will supplement the media table by providing means of trying out the new exhibits platform and the app game for children.

On these individualized and service-oriented educational paths, the Städel Museum is thus progressing ever farther into the digital realm. Its aim in doing so is to strengthen its vanguard role in the field of digital mediation in general, and to assume a leading role in the area of global digital art reception and mediation.

The Städel Museum’s digital extension is being made possible by numerous sponsors: the Department of Culture of the City of Frankfurt am Main (tagging of exhibits platform), the Städtischer Museums-Verein (online art-history course), the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation; digitalization of the drawings of the Department of Prints and Drawings), the Willy Robert Pitzer

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Stiftung (game for children), the State of Hesse within the framework of the Excellence Projects LOEWE I and LOEWE II (development of exhibits platform), the Georg und Franziska Speyer'sche Hochschulstiftung (exhibition films), the Aventis Foundation (digital), the FAZIT-STIFTUNG (Städel App), the DZ BANK AG (tagging of photography exhibits platform), and private sponsors.

When asked about the idea behind the museum's broadly conceived initiative, Städel director Max Hollein explained: "The increasing digitalization of our lifeworld also has an impact on cultural contents hitherto thought of as analogue, for example a five-hundred-year-old Dürer painting or a drawing by Henri Matisse. Museums likewise find themselves confronted with the tremendous changes taking place in nearly all areas of life, changes that fundamentally redefine how we deal with information, education and culture. If we take advantage of the potentials offered by the rapidly progressing digital developments, and succeed in creating a genuine alternative offer, we are paving the way for the institution's future and the Städel Museum's next two hundred years."

The successful extension of the Städel Museum building in February 2012 is now being followed up with the development of innovative digital educational offers – in a nutshell, the museum's digital extension. Today's media landscape is characterized in general by rapid transformation, including constantly changing user patterns and the new means available in the area of knowledge dissemination. Far from merely reacting to these ongoing developments, the Städel Museum has taken the initiative to create interactive, participatory forms of mediation that – offered to the public free of charge – will satisfy the demands brought about by its responsibility to society to serve as a place of learning, and the challenges it faces and will continue to face as a museum of the present and the future. In order to create such a programme hand in hand with the operation of the real museum, it does not suffice to translate the physical visit into a virtual one. On the contrary, the aim is to provide an entirely new form of access independently of the physical visit by offering an autonomous, comprehensive, decentralized and diversified digital education programme.

The heart of the Städel's digital extension programme is the **digital exhibits platform**, which will offer the public an entirely new and unlimited form of online access to the works in the collection, above and beyond the physical boundaries of the Städel. In the framework of a joint project with the Software AG company, the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences and mtG, the innovative, cloud-based media platform has been in the development phase since mid 2012. It will provide visitors with a means of "roaming" the collection digitally, but also of carrying out targeted semantic searches in the Städel's comprehensive holdings. The front end is being developed and implemented in collaboration with the design firm Zum Kuckuck. The tagging of the works in the collection, being carried out in cooperation with the Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, guarantees not only art-theoretical but also intuitive, associative and emotional access to the works. As is also the case with the Städel's

analogue educational offers, this approach is thus capable of responding to the interests of each individual user by providing individual access to the collection's contents. The principle behind the exhibits platform – which is the outcome of an excellence project funded by the State of Hesse – was first presented at the CeBIT expo in 2013. The first version of the exhibits platform is to be published in the spring of 2015. In this beta test phase, users will be invited to participate actively and offer feedback to aid the tool's further development. Once the test phase has been completed, the complimentary digital exhibits platform will make a wide range of text formats, audio sequences and film productions on works in the collection available. The contents and scholarly findings of special exhibitions can thus be preserved past the duration of the respective show, and multifaceted information about works in the collection can be placed at the disposal of the interested public as well as the research community.

Jointly with external partners, the Städel Museum is also carrying out an outstanding digital project to develop innovative, educational **computer games** that will aid young users in engaging with the museum's contents in an entertaining and playful fashion. The first to reach completion will be a free-of-charge point-and-click adventure app game for tablets being created in collaboration with the computer game manufacturer Deck 13 for iOS and Android. Scheduled for publication in March 2015, it targets children age eight and older, and sweeps them off on a journey of discovery through the adventurous pictorial worlds of the Städel's paintings, drawings and prints. Along the way, the children encounter masterworks such as Johannes Vermeer's *Geographer* or Daniel Richter's *Horde*. With the aid of their lively tour guide Flux, they carry out tasks and solve riddles that convey art-educational contents by exploratory means. The app game will be recorded by Andreas Fröhlich, the voice-over artist and radio-play actor well known for his role as Bob Andrews in the successful German audio play *Die drei ???*

Beginning with the exhibition *Monet and the Birth of Impressionism* in March 2015, interested persons will have the opportunity to take a so-called **digitorial** at no cost before visiting the show. One way of distributing the digitorial will be to send it out to online ticket purchasers. On a responsive website, key exhibition contents, background knowledge, and information about art-historical and culture-historical contexts will be made easily accessible by way of an innovative storytelling approach. Realized jointly with the Scholz & Volkmer agency, the digital format in German and English will enable visitors to tune in to the exhibition themes before their visit. The contents will be interwoven on multiple levels by a blend of image, sound and text that will tread entirely new paths with regard to the depiction, narration and mediation of art – at home, in a café, on the way to the exhibition.

Yet another key element in the Städel's digital extension programme is the free comprehensive multi-module **online art-history course** in modern art presently being developed in cooperation with the Leuphana Universität in Lüneburg. To be

launched in 2015/2016, the online course is based on works from the Städel Museum collection. Here as well, the focus is on the development of an innovative digital educational tool.

The **Städel film programme** is slated for further extension this year. Partially in collaboration with media partners such as 3sat, the museum's own production of films on exhibitions and artists will be enhanced by new formats designed for use on various digital platforms and the Städel's YouTube channel, and capable of conveying comprehensive audio-visual impressions of works in the collection in a surprising way.

After working with the digital agency Zum Kuckuck last year to develop a fundamentally new **website** especially for mobile devices, from mid February 2015 onward the Städel will be offering its visitors free **WiFi**. As many as four hundred users will have simultaneous access to WiFi throughout the museum. This offer will also facilitate the use of the Android and iOS-compatible **Städel app** that will be available free of charge starting in March 2015 on the occasion of the exhibition *Monet and the Birth of Impressionism*. Downloadable at all usual stores, it will provide interesting background information on some one hundred works in the Städel collection in German and English as well as various audio-guide tracks – a truly worthwhile enhancement to the in-app on sale during the show and offering the entire Monet audio guide for the visitor's smartphone.

The visitors' own devices offer the most convenient way of using the various new digital educational offers, but the entire range of digital applications will also be available for exploration and use right in the Städel buildings. The newly conceived **Digital Art Cabinet** opening in early March will be furnished with tablets and touchscreens for trying out the digital exhibits platform and the app game. The Digital Art Cabinet will also offer the media table already developed in 2012, with a stimulating associative program for entering into interactive dialogue with the works in the Städel collection.

Quite befitting the occasion of the Städel's two-hundredth anniversary, in mid 2015 a scholarly research project on the history of the museum's collecting activities will be made digitally accessible. The project **“Historische Hängung”** (“Historical Art Presentation Forms”) will offer a website enabling visitors to explore the various historical exhibition rooms and collection presentations of the Städel's early days in a digital room reconstruction, as well as to compare the various presentation forms that have gone in and out of use over the decades. Background information on the Städel's holdings will also be included.

A so-called **print-on-demand service**, offered jointly by the Städel Museum and the dm drugstore chain, was already introduced in the summer of 2014 for more than two

hundred motifs in the Städel collection. High-quality framed reproductions in various formats and media can be ordered on the dm website and in its stores.

These target-group-specific offers are fully compatible with the **museum education programme** launched at the Städel Museum several years ago. The Städel is already considered a pioneer in the area of online and social-media communication Germany-wide. The **Städel blog**, for example, which offers a look behind the scenes of our exhibition annex, has an average of 10,000 readers a month. The **films on exhibitions and artists** elaborately produced by the Städel itself have been viewed on the museum's YouTube channel 500,000 times. The **Facebook** page, with more than 25,000 fans, and the **Twitter** account, with some 10,000 followers, as well as the **Instagram** account, opened in 2014 and geared primarily to non-German users, all continue to grow and serve as important channels for the communication of the museum's contents. Innovative events such as exhibition **tweetups** – for example on the occasion of the Erwin Wurm exhibition – not only serve as a means of reaching new visitor groups, but also as a forum for Twitter-community discussions of the Städel's themes all over Germany.

Targeted use is made of new technological developments on all levels of the Städel Museum's work – for example in the conservation workshop, exhibition planning, or in the cataloguing of the works in the collection. Without exception, the institution's core activities – collection, preservation, research, exhibition and education – thus profit from digital innovations.