

PRESS RELEASE

STYLE AND PERFECTION. HENDRICK GOLTZIUS AND DUTCH MANNERIST PRINTMAKING

4 JUNE TO 14 SEPTEMBER 2014

Press preview: Tuesday, 3 June 2014, 11 am

Exhibition Hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings

Frankfurt am Main, 19 May 2014. The Städel Museum in Frankfurt presents a high-carat selection of Netherlandish prints from the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century from 4 June to 14 September 2014. The special exhibition focuses on about sixty-five works by the artist Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617), one of the most brilliant draftsmen and printmakers active around 1600. His oeuvre is characterized by highly erudite and deliberately complex contents as well as extremely stylized solutions and, thanks to his engravings' international dissemination, became famous throughout Europe. The exhibition "Style and Perfection. Hendrick Goltzius and Dutch Mannerist Printmaking" presents a total of about one hundred prints and four complementary drawings from the holdings of the Städel Museum in the Exhibition Hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings. Alongside major works by Goltzius, the show comprises works by Jan Harmensz. Muller (1571–1628), Jan Saenredam (1565–1607), Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629), and Jacob Matham (1571–1631) as important artist of his circle.

Born near today's Venlo in the Netherlands in 1558, Hendrick Goltzius was one of the last great masters of copperplate engraving before this printing method took second place to the more flexible and personal etching technique in the seventeenth century. Goltzius came from a rather modest family of artists on the Lower Rhine and, after being trained as a copperplate engraver, worked for renowned publishers of prints in Antwerp before he founded his own publishing house in Haarlem in 1582. Though far from the realistic Baroque style of the seventeenth century as a late mannerist artist, Goltzius also ranks among the masters ushering in the Dutch Golden Age.

Beyond his technical perfection, another special quality of Hendrick Goltzius's art lies in its high degree of reflection. He was not only a printmaker but also a draftsman creating his own compositions for his publishing house from its very beginnings. Goltzius was in close contact with the most important Dutch artists and particularly with the chief art theorist of his day, Karel van Mander (1548–1606). Owing to these

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connections, which were linked with endeavors to professionalize art in the Netherlands on an academic level, he got in touch with Bartholomeus Spranger (1546–1611), the influential court painter of the Holy Roman Emperor in Prague. Goltzius developed a copperplate technique suited to translate Spranger's elegant, affected, and figure-oriented mannerism into the medium of printing. His graphic means consist in virtuoso, elaborately swelling and subsiding lines and flexible hatchings that emphasize the plasticity of forms and unfold a calligraphic quality of their own. Spranger's art focuses on figures – elegant women and muscular heroic men; thematically, they oscillate between religious and often erotically tainted mythological subjects. Goltzius's own compositions in this style, such as his sheets from the series *The Roman Heroes* (1586) or *The Great Hercules* (1589), mainly highlight the figures' heroic aspect.

His works after Spranger ensured Hendrick Goltzius's international renown; his publishing house produced the best prints of his time both in terms of contents and technique. Though Goltzius gave up Spranger's style after only a few years, his pupil Jan Harmensz. Muller continued to work in this overelegant mannerist mode, even enhancing its sophisticated graphic language with shimmering moiré effects in the hatchings. Goltzius, who always experimented with new techniques and forms like with the colored or chiaroscuro woodcut, came to prefer a calmer, clearer language of forms informed by Antiquity and the Italian Renaissance under the influence of a tour through Italy in 1590 and 1591. Large copperplate engravings after ancient sculptures such as his *The Farnesian Hercules* from 1592 exemplify this turn. In the 1590s, Goltzius also began to dedicate himself to an intense study of the old masters, especially to Albrecht Dürer's and Lucas van Leyden's prints. With his so-called "master prints", the Netherlandish artist strove to demonstrate his position as an artist on a par with – or even superior to – the old masters in the sense of "aemulatio", the endeavor to equal or surpass one's models. Besides the frequently programmatic prints he engraved himself in those years, his imaginative compositions were mainly executed by artists of his workshop like Jacob Matham and Jan Saenredam in particular. Around 1600, Goltzius entrusted his stepson Jacob Matham with the management of his publishing house, gave up his work as a printmaker, and committed himself to painting until his death in 1617.

The Städel Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings is in the fortunate position of being able to present the work of Goltzius and his circle as printmakers in a comprehensive way based on its own, very good holdings. Part of the works preserved in the museum come from the collections assembled by the institute's founders Johann Friedrich Städel (1728–1816) and Johann Georg Grambs (1756–1817), the first chairman of the foundation's administrative board. These holdings were prudently complemented by Johann David Passavant (1787–1861), the director of the Städel collections, in the nineteenth century. Another part of the prints comes from the estate of Senator Johann Karl Brönner (1738–1812), a contemporary of J. F. Städel. The museum's Department of Prints and Drawings not only comprises

extraordinary examples of Hendrick Goltzius's major copperplate engravings and woodcuts but also rare artist's proofs by Jan Muller, which provide enlightening insights into the engravers' working techniques. The presentation is rounded off by some of Goltzius's drawings, also from the Städel's own holdings.

"Style and Perfection. Hendrick Goltzius and Dutch Mannerist Printmaking" picks up the thread of former exhibitions on old prints shown in the Städel Museum. Art-historically speaking, Goltzius's works close a gap between early sixteenth-century prints like those of Lucas van Leyden, who was very influential in the Netherlands (exhibited in 2006), or of Albrecht Dürer (exhibited in 2007) on the one hand and seventeenth-century prints by such artists as Jacques Callot (exhibited in 2002), Rembrandt (exhibited in 2003 and 2013), or Claude (exhibited in 2012) on the other. As is the present presentation, these exhibitions were concerned with familiarizing visitors to the Städel Museum with the technical specifics, the particular compositional circumstances and possibilities, the individual and social function, the marks of quality, in short: with the significance and beauty of the visual medium of prints.

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Curator: Dr Martin Sonnabend, Head of the Department of Prints and Drawings before 1750

Research assistant: Annett Gerlach, Städel Museum

Venue: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt

Exhibition dates: 4 June – 14 September 2014

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

Opening hours of the Städel Museum: Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday 10 am – 6 pm.; Thursday and Friday 10 am – 9 pm

Opening hours of the Study Room of the Department of Prints and Drawings: Wednesday, Friday 2 – 5 pm; Thursday 2 – 7 pm. The Study Room is closed for summer break from 6 August to 29 August 2014.

Admission: 12 euros, reduced 10 euros, family ticket 20 euros; free admission for children under twelve years of age; Saturday, Sunday, and holidays 14 euros, reduced 12 euros, family ticket 24 euros

Advance ticket sales online at: tickets.staedelmuseum.de

General guided tours of the exhibition: Friday 7 pm, Saturday 3 pm

Special guided tours upon request at: +49(0)69-605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de.

Further Städel program offers at www.staedelmuseum.de