

PRESS RELEASE

# DEMOCRACY NEEDS ART – STÄDEL MUSEUM LAUNCHES EDUCATION INITIATIVE

***SHIFTING POINTS OF VIEW. SEEING DIFFERENTLY. UNDERSTANDING ONE ANOTHER***

**Frankfurt am Main, 29 June 2022.** Knowing what is, what has been, and what might come, forming opinions, and engaging in debate and discourse in order to foster a lively democratic culture is at the heart of a major cultural education initiative by the Städel Museum titled *Shifting Points of View. Seeing Differently. Understanding One Another*. Building on the understanding that a museum is a place for diverse social aspects of life, for years the Städel Museum has been developing audience-oriented art education that reflects the times. *Shifting Points of View* is intended to support thinking and acting in a way that promotes democracy. It allows historical developments and processes that have shaped the social value system of freedom and democracy to be impressively retraced through active engagement with artworks at the Städel Museum. The works in the collection from 1300 to the present encompass a wide range of subject matter, telling stories that include topics such as globalisation, resistance, utopia, emancipation, power, oppression, and populism.

“The museum is a place for both art *and* debate. Larger political and social correlations can always be found in art. The Städel Museum – a civic institution rooted in the tradition of humanism – demonstrates with the education initiative *Shifting Points of View* that the ability to judge history can be trained and strengthened by engaging with art. Yesterday can tell us a great deal about today. It enables us to stay alert and face life’s realities by forming our own informed opinions and points of view”, explains Philipp Demandt, Director of the Städel Museum.

“What shapes our points of view, and how are these opinions reflected in art? Learning to read and interpret images, talk about them, discuss them together, and ultimately better understand the social developments and phenomena of our time underlies the educational approach behind *Shifting Points of View*. We see art as a medium to promote democratic discourse. The development of skills in the areas of interculturality and multi-perspectivity, as well as responsible handling of the flood of information and images in the digital age, are also fundamental to the aims of our

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education initiative”, explains Chantal Eschenfelder, head of Education and the Digital Collection, Städel Museum.

Within the framework of the education initiative *Shifting Points of View* an ever-expanding art education programme will be created, consisting of various new formats targeted to a broad audience, such as discursive guided tours, digital offers, practical art seminars and workshops, and specific continuing and advanced training courses. Themes and content that promote democracy are already being addressed in numerous current outreach offers, including online tours, CLOSE UP, the Städel podcast “Blinded by Rembrandt”, Digitalials®, and the training materials used during Education Week. Encountering and engaging with art fosters cultural participation and empowers viewers to help actively shape a diverse democratic society. With *Shifting Points of View*, the Städel Museum is also explicitly addressing day-care centres, schools, and adult education institutions.

#### **Aims of the educational work of *Shifting Points of View***

Important components of the education initiative are the teaching of skills about how to deal with the flood of digital information and images, the acquisition of intercultural competencies, the learning of multi-perspective viewpoints, and encouraging sensitivity to language usage. The focus is on the concept of visual literacy – that is to say, the ability to learn to read images and to train mechanisms of visual communication. Based on the *Shifting Points of View* project, a diversified education programme is being developed for children, teens, and adults: dialogue-based guided tours, interdisciplinary discussions, and practical art exercises, especially in pre-school and school education sectors. The Städel Museum’s education initiative addresses those who will shape tomorrow’s society and reaches out to them during the most formative phase of their development.

As an internal and external education initiative, *Shifting Points of View* also connects institutional players in Frankfurt’s urban society: the Städel Museum staff, freelance art educators, disseminators from the fields of education and social work, as well as a partner network of leading cultural and educational institutions, including the Jewish Museum Frankfurt, the Weltkulturenmuseum, the Historical Museum Frankfurt, the Anne Frank Educational Centre, *beramí e. V.*, and the Federal Agency for Civic Education. The aim is to exchange experiences, ideas, and formats for contemporary education and outreach work and to draw on specialist expertise.

In addition, the Städel Museum is a partner of the initiative TheMuseumsLab – a forward-thinking programme for joint learning and knowledge exchange for young museum professionals that brings together staff from Africa and Europe in various

courses and training stations. TheMuseumsLab sees itself as a platform for learning, exchange, and professional development.

### **Current offers of the education initiative *Shifting Points of View* – a selection**

In recent months, numerous art education offers have been initiated and enriched by topics and contents stemming from the project *Shifting Points of View. Seeing Differently. Understanding One Another*. In the Contemporary Art Collection, for example, CLOSE UP, an art and education space dedicated to “Art & Politics” was set up in November 2021, and the accompanying series CLOSE UP *Talks* (with the philosopher and publicist Michel Friedman) was recently launched. The *Talks* address to what extent art is political. Participants discuss artworks together with the artists who created them. The *Talks* can be accessed on the Städel website. In addition, a CLOSE UP workshop and guided tour formats have been developed especially for different secondary school levels.

The online tours in the series “Museum at Home – Live”, such as “The Power of Images”, “Women Artists”, and “The Golden Age? Rembrandt’s World in a Global Context”, among others, address current, socially relevant topics and shed light on the connections between art and social history, media transition and politics. In the Guest Commentary series, scholars from the Max Planck Society from the life sciences, natural sciences, and humanities open up individual perspectives on the works in the Städel collection to tour visitors. Interdisciplinary perspectives on art can also be experienced after a tour, for instance as a film series.

For the multi-voiced Städel podcast “Blinded by Rembrandt”, journalist and presenter Michel Abdollahi approaches Rembrandt’s masterpiece *The Blinding of Samson* (1636). This painting is considered one of the most moving, shocking, and fascinating works of art. Along with various discussion partners from the fields of art, sports, entertainment, and society, Michel Abdollahi sets out in search of the painting’s “blind spots”. All four episodes of the free podcast can be streamed at [blindedbyrembrandt.de](https://blindedbyrembrandt.de) and on all popular podcast platforms.

The interdisciplinary handouts and tailored workshops that are created each year as part of the Städel’s Education Week for schools, day-care centres, and after-school care groups also offer practical artistic immersion. They focus on arousing curiosity about a greater understanding of the world, having conversations about our coexistence, and group discussions on different perspectives. This year, Education Week will take place at the Städel from 18 to 21 July.

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**Further information about the Städel Museum:** [www.staedelmuseum.de/en](http://www.staedelmuseum.de/en)

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**Städel blog:** More stories and background information on the collection and the special exhibitions: [blog.staedelmuseum.de](http://blog.staedelmuseum.de) / Don't miss any articles: <https://blog.staedelmuseum.de/blog-abonnieren/>