



PRESS RELEASE

# ANNIVERSARY BEQUEST: OUTSTANDING PRIVATE COLLECTION OF WORKS BY HONORÉ DAUMIER IN THE STÄDEL MUSEUM

**BEQUEST MARKS THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STÄDELSCHER MUSEUMS-VEREIN / HONORÉ DAUMIER. THE HELLWIG COLLECTION – EXHIBITION STARTS 24 JANUARY IN THE STÄDEL MUSEUM**

**Frankfurt am Main, 10 January 2024.** Starting 24 January 2024, the Städel Museum presents an exhibition of works by the French artist Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) to mark the 125th anniversary of the Städelischer Museums-Verein. The works are part of the outstanding private collection belonging to the Frankfurt patron of the arts, Hans-Jürgen Hellwig, that constitutes one of the most distinguished collections of Daumier outside France. The collection comprises a total of 4,200 lithographs and wood engravings, 19 drawings, 2 paintings and 36 bronze sculptures – many of which have never been publicly exhibited. Mirroring the full scope of Honoré Daumier's artistic oeuvre, the private collection impresses with its unique quality. With the Städel Museum's presentation of a selection of around 120 works from the Hellwig Collection, these works will be on view to the general public for the first time. The collection is to be donated in its entirety to the Städelischer Museums-Verein as an anniversary bequest, which in turn will entrust it as a permanent loan to the Städel Museum, where the collection will be preserved, researched and presented. Honoré Daumier was one of France's greatest draughtsmen. As a keen observer and controversial contemporary critic, he made a name for himself in the political circles of 19-th-century Paris, primarily through his caricatures which he produced for the illustrated periodicals *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*. Both feared and loved, Daumier became the conscience of an epoch marked by radical social and political upheaval and profound change. His commitment to republican and liberal ideas, to the press and freedom of speech, his fervent interest in modern innovations and his critical, but also profoundly human view of the conditions of his time are impressively manifested in the exhibited works.

**Städelsches Kunstinstitut  
und Städtische Galerie**

Dürerstraße 2  
60596 Frankfurt am Main  
Phone +49(0)69-605098-195  
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188  
presse@staedelmuseum.de  
www.staedelmuseum.de/en

PRESS DOWNLOADS  
newsroom.staedelmuseum.de/en

PRESS AND  
ONLINE COMMUNICATION  
Pamela Rohde  
Phone +49(0)69-605098-170  
rohde@staedelmuseum.de

Franziska von Plocki  
Phone +49(0)69-605098-268  
plocki@staedelmuseum.de

Elisabeth Pallentin  
Phone +49(0)69-605098-195  
pallentin@staedelmuseum.de

Carolin Fuhr  
Phone +49(0)69-605098-234  
fuhr@staedelmuseum.de

The exhibition in the Städel Museum is sponsored by the Städelischer Museums-Verein e.V.

**Director of the Städel Museum, Philipp Demandt**, on the patron of the arts Hans-Jürgen Hellwig and on the significance of this bequest for the Städel Museum: “Hans-Jürgen Hellwig is a collector par excellence: passionate, persistent, enthusiastic and highly knowledgeable. We are delighted to present a selection of some 120 works from his outstanding Daumier collection here at the Städel Museum as our first exhibition of the new year. It is a show that offers sensual pleasure to all viewers, sharpens the mind and invites visitors to engage with the fundamental questions of our own time. As an anniversary gift to the Städelischer Museums-Verein and now on permanent loan to us, the Hellwig Collection is an invaluable addition to our own collection. As a result, the Städel Museum will permanently be established as one of the most significant centres of Daumier research in Germany. My heartfelt thanks go to Hans-Jürgen Hellwig, who through his work on the board of our museum’s association has for decades furthered the interests of the Städel Museum. With his exceptionally generous bequest, he has inscribed his name into the history of patronage for the Städel, which began with its founder Johann Friedrich Städel and has continued to this day in a variety of ways. It is through such commitment by the people of our city that this museum is sustained.”

The collector, **Hans-Jürgen Hellwig**, on the bequest: “A question that preoccupies many collectors is what will eventually become of their collection. For me, this question has never really arisen. In my more than sixty years of collecting, I have collected art for its own sake and not as an investment. And during the over half a century that I have been living in Frankfurt, I have personally incorporated the great tradition of this place: that its citizens see the cultural and social institutions of their city not only as a public responsibility, but also as their own. Margret Stuffmann, former Head of the Prints and Drawings Collection at the Städel Museum, accompanied me as a private collector with her expertise in 19th century French art. For considerable time, I had seen Honoré Daumier only as a caricaturist of political events. It was she who opened my eyes to the artist Daumier: to his artistic qualities, which lie in every single lithograph; to the spectrum of his work, which encompasses all themes of human existence; and to his rich knowledge of history and art. So it is also in gratitude for this that my collection is being passed on to the Städel Museum – as a bequest in my lifetime to the Städelischer Museums-Verein.”

**Sylvia von Metzler, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of the Städelischer Museums-Verein e.V.** on the anniversary and the bequest: “This year, the

Städelscher Museums-Verein is celebrating its 125th anniversary, hence also 125 years of commitment to the Städel Museum by Frankfurt's citizens. Since its foundation on 27 June 1899, our first concern as a museum association has been to facilitate the Städel Museum in consolidating and expanding its collection – and, in addition, in important research projects or large-scale special exhibitions. For over thirty years, our board member Hans-Jürgen Hellwig has rendered outstanding services to the Städelscher Museums-Verein: with the commitment he has shown both to Frankfurt and to the Städel Museum, he continues to emphasise the value of individual civic engagement for the cohesion of society. We owe this exhibition and, above all, this unique bequest to his generosity. His impressive Daumier collection will now become the property of the Städelscher Museums-Verein Foundation on the occasion of our association's anniversary, to be housed and preserved in the Städel Museum. A truly splendid occasion to celebrate!"

#### **ABOUT THE HELLWIG COLLECTION AND THE DONOR**

Over several decades, the Frankfurt-based lawyer Hans-Jürgen Hellwig has assembled an extensive collection of extremely high-quality works by Daumier. Above all, the unique prints in the collection are most precious and extremely rare. Bearing handwritten legends, printers' and censors' notes, they provide fascinating insight into the complex publication process accompanying such prints in times of censorship, thereby highlighting the particular historical circumstances of their creation even beyond the purely artistic quality of Daumier's work.

From the very outset, Hellwig's interest focused on political lithographs in which the artist addressed the major social upheavals in 19th-century France, as well as conflicts throughout and beyond Europe. Hellwig has been a member of the board of the Städelscher Museums-Verein (Städel Museum's association) for over thirty years, including several years as its deputy chairman. In addition, through his exemplary voluntary work in Frankfurt's local politics he has also performed outstanding services to the city's cultural life. He was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honour for his contribution to relations with France in the realms of cultural and legal cooperation. The patron Hans-Jürgen Hellwig will donate his entire collection to the Städelscher Museums-Verein (Städel Museum's association) on the occasion of its anniversary in June 2024. The collection is to be preserved, academically researched and mediated by the Städel Museum.

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION**

**Astrid Reuter, Head of the Prints and Drawings Collection before 1800 at the Städel Museum and curator of the Daumier exhibition,** on the artist and the art historical significance of the Hellwig Collection: "Honoré Daumier was an outstanding

draughtsman. In addition to his oeuvre of prints, he also created sculptures and, from the mid-1840s onwards, an increasing number of independent drawings and paintings that demonstrate the expressive power, diversity and invention of his art. His work is marked by his claim to critically minded contemporaneity, yet at the same time it continues to be timelessly topical. Daumier was highly regarded and collected from early on in artistic circles, especially by Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne and Max Liebermann. To this day, enthusiasm for Daumier among private collectors continues. With his collection, Hans-Jürgen Hellwig also shares in this tradition.”

**Honoré Daumier** was born in 1808 in Marseille and moved to Paris with his family in 1816, where he first worked as an errand boy for a bailiff, then as an apprentice in a bookshop. Through his father’s contacts – a frame-maker with literary aspirations – the artistically gifted Honoré was taught for a short while by the painter, archaeologist and curator Alexandre Lenoir. After that, he attended various private art schools such as the Académie Suisse, where his studies included life drawing classes. However, it was his frequent visits to the Musée du Louvre that proved particularly influential for the remarkable lighting and body language of his depictions. He produced his first lithographs in the 1820s, completing an apprenticeship in the workshop of Zéphirin Belliard from 1825 to 1830.

Even **his early works of the 1830s** showed Honoré Daumier, a champion of freedom of speech and the press, to be a fierce critic of King Louis-Philippe's July Monarchy. His visually powerful images appeared in the journals *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*, published by Charles Philipon. His prints achieved their broad-based impact due to the newspapers’ relatively high circulation. The increasingly restrictive censorship regulations led to bans and penalties, which also affected Daumier. Philipon’s drawing showing the “metamorphosis” of the royal head into a pear, which soon became a ubiquitous motif, had far-reaching consequences. Daumier adopted it for various lithographs such as *Le Passé – le présent – l’avenir* (1834). Among his consummately executed works are the powerfully heightened and relatively large-format depictions of parliament and the massacre in the *Rue Transnonain, le 15 avril 1834* (from 1834).

After **copyright laws were tightened in 1835**, *Le Charivari* kept largely to publishing politically inoffensive genre caricatures until the February Revolution of 1848. These humorous depictions of everyday life were satirical observations of social mores, some of them issued in extensive series. Daumier researched, analysed and fathomed the Parisian petite bourgeoisie. One of his most spectacular satirical inventions was the persona of *Robert Macaire* in all his colourful diversity.

More than almost any other figure, Macaire epitomises the ruthless pursuit of profit that drove the economic liberalism of the July Monarchy. Taken together, Daumier's caricatures of social types paint a larger-than-life portrait of French society in his time. Due to their popularity, numerous motifs were not only published in the newspaper, but were also printed on high-quality paper, either individually or in themed albums.

Daumier was acclaimed as an **outstanding draughtsman** by contemporaries such as Eugène Delacroix and Charles Baudelaire. The Städel Museum is showing altogether seventeen of Daumier's drawings. Passionate and open to innovation, the artist repeatedly experimented with new and surprising formal solutions. He developed his drawings in an ongoing, open-ended process, as is evident in the multiple, intertwined layers of his compositions. His depictions reveal a profound interest in people, their feelings, their expectations and disappointments: this can be seen in the expressive head studies as also in the sometimes theatrical gestures and postures, or in the briskly and vigorously executed compositional ideas.

Following the flight into exile of King Louis-Philippe in the wake of the **1848 February Revolution**, Paris experienced a brief period of euphoria. The Second Republic was proclaimed on 24 February 1848. However, under the authoritarian rule of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte – first as president of the Second Republic and then, from 1852 onwards, as Emperor Napoleon III – disillusionment soon set in. Basic democratic rights such as the right to vote and freedom of the press were increasingly restricted. Daumier created the figure of *Ratapoil* that personified a mixture of cunning *agent provocateur* and violent ruffian. Ratapoil stood for the gang of thugs and shady characters that Bonaparte had set up in 1849 to consolidate his power.

The thematic variety of Daumier's **socially critical caricatures** is enormous and addresses many different spheres of life. Included in the exhibition, for instance, is *Nadar élevant la photographie à la hauteur de l'art* (1862). Daumier was particularly interested in the effects of industrial and technological progress: the railway, the invention of photography, the establishment of the press, world fairs, Parisian urban planning under Baron Haussmann and the art discourses that broke with traditional academic conventions.

During Daumier's lifetime, **peace in Europe** was a fragile entity, with the balance of power constantly shifting. From 1866 onwards, numerous depictions addressed the tensions between France and Prussia, as well as conflicts in the Balkans, Italy and many other places in Europe. To this end, he often used personifications such as the frail lady of diplomacy or the balancing act performed by the figure of Europe. In

formal terms, his images were increasingly reduced to expressive lines, with everything kept to a graphic minimum, thereby in many cases lending them immense power and radical edge. The easing of the press laws in 1868 allowed him once again to considerably expand his field of work.

After numerous political upheavals, the artist who had championed republican values and liberal thinking throughout his life finally witnessed the proclamation of the Republic in 1870 that marked the end of Napoleon III's rule. With his depiction of the dying monarchy, Daumier bid farewell to the political stage after more than forty years of artistic service to the press.

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**Duration of the exhibition:** Honoré Daumier. The Hellwig Collection

**Curator:** Dr Astrid Reuter (Head of the Prints and Drawings Collection before 1800, Städel Museum)

**Duration of the exhibition:** 24 January to 12 May 2024

**Press preview:** Tuesday, 23 January 2024, 11.00 am

**Information:** [staedelmuseum.de](http://staedelmuseum.de)

**Visitor service and guided tours:** +49(0)69-605098-200, [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

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

**Tickets:** until 18 February 2024 Tue–Fri, Sat, Sun + public holidays: 18 euros, reduced 16 euros; from 20 February 2024 Tue–Fri, Sat, Sun + public holidays: 16 euros, reduced 14 euros; from 20 March 2024 Tue–Fri: 16 euros, reduced 14 euros; Sat, Sun + public holidays: 18 euros, reduced 16 euros; every Tuesday from 3.00 pm 9 euros; free admission for children under 12 years. Groups of 10 or more visitors paying regular admission: 16 euros per person. For all groups: please register your visit in advance: +49(0)69-605098-200 or [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**Catalogue:** A catalogue accompanying the exhibition and edited by Astrid Reuter will be published by Hirmer-Verlag. Includes a foreword by Philipp Demandt, introductions by Sylvia von Metzler and Hans-Jürgen Hellwig, and essays by Hans-Jürgen Hellwig, Dorit Schäfer, Hendrik Ziegler and Astrid Reuter. German edition, 239 pages, 34.90 euros (museum edition).

**Audioguide (in German):** Caricatures full of humour and a sense of freedom - experience the graphics and drawings of French artist Honoré Daumier first-hand with the audio guide. Listen in and learn more about the political and social background of 19th century France, which seems surprisingly relevant today. The app contains audio tracks and illustrations for numerous works in the exhibition and lasts around 45 minutes. The tour is available as a free app for the iOS and Android operating systems in the App Store and Google Play Store at the start of the exhibition and can be downloaded to your smartphone either at home or via Städel WiFi.

**Sponsored by:** Städtelscher Museums-Verein e.V.

**Cultural partner:** hr2-kultur

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