

PRESS RELEASE

CARL SCHUCH AND FRANCE

24 SEPTEMBER 2025 – 1 FEBRUARY 2026

EXHIBITION ANNEX

Frankfurt am Main, 23 September 2025 Carl Schuch (1846–1903) is one of the most fascinating painters of the 19th century. From 24 September, the Städel Museum will present the major autumn exhibition “Carl Schuch and France”, which will take a comprehensive look at his work, as well as at Impressionist and Realist painting. Schuch has long been an insider tip. He is perhaps the best-known “unknown” protagonist of late 19th-century painting. His art is a discovery. As a restless cosmopolitan, he broke away from national attributions early on and devoted himself uncompromisingly to painting. During his lifetime, he was hardly known to the public, but after his death, the art world quickly recognized the quality of his work, before it later fell into oblivion again.

The Städel Museum is bringing together around seventy of Schuch’s paintings in a stimulating dialogue with some fifty important works by French artists, including Paul Cézanne, Camille Corot, Gustave Courbet, Édouard Manet and Claude Monet. The exhibition focuses on Schuch’s years in Paris, where he experienced his most artistically formative period from 1882 to 1894. Schuch’s painting exudes a quiet yet impressive power. His work is characterized by subtle colour nuances, an extraordinary sensitivity to light and atmosphere, and an intense search for artistic truthfulness. Refusing to be pigeonholed into any particular style, he developed an unmistakable visual language.

This exhibition is more than a tribute. It presents Carl Schuch as an artist who, with his European perspective and unwavering attitude, wrote an independent chapter in art history. Current art technology research deepens our understanding of his working methods and opens up new perspectives on his work. The findings are presented in a clear and comprehensible way in the exhibition. With “Carl Schuch and France”, the Städel Museum invites visitors to embark on a journey of discovery that puts the artistic cosmopolitan and his impressive visual world in the spotlight they deserve.

The exhibition is sponsored by the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe with Deutsche Leasing AG, the Frankfurter Sparkasse and the Sparkassen-Kulturfonds des Deutschen Sparkassen- & Giroverbandes, the Fontana-Foundation, the Kulturfonds Frankfurt

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RheinMain gGmbH, the Städelischer Museums-Verein e.V. with the Städefreunde 1815. Additional support is provided by the Aventis Foundation and the Rudolf-August Oetker Foundation.

Philipp Demandt, Director of the Städel Museum: “Carl Schuch is one of the most independent artists of the 19th century. He defied stylistic classification and left behind a body of work of quiet yet impressive power. His still lifes and landscapes exert an extraordinary appeal. His paintings are a feast for the senses, with an enticing interplay of light and colour. Schuch’s uncompromising demands on art, his striving for depth and truthfulness, always took precedence over public recognition. With ‘Carl Schuch and France’, we are presenting an artist who devoted his entire life to studying French painting. His paintings hold their own effortlessly alongside works by Courbet, Manet and Cézanne. This exhibition is much more than a tribute. Carl Schuch’s painting is a discovery.”

Ulrich Reuter, President of the Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband, comments on the sponsorship: “Carl Schuch was a traveller, a European painter in the best sense of the word, who refused to allow national borders to limit his vision at a time of rampant nationalism and division in Europe. His painting is therefore an outstanding example of the ability of art and culture to build bridges. As many things work better together, we are supporting the exhibition ‘Carl Schuch and France’ in association with Frankfurter Sparkasse and Deutsche Leasing AG. Through this project, we are once again demonstrating our commitment to the Städel Museum in Frankfurt.”

Susanne Völker, Director of the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, adds “‘Carl Schuch and France’ impressively demonstrates how fruitful artistic exchange was in 19th-century Europe. Schuch’s visual language is a prime example of the cultural interconnections of that time. As the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, we support projects that highlight such cross-border dialogue. We are particularly pleased that the art-technological investigations carried out on several paintings in collaboration with the Museum Wiesbaden have also yielded new insights into the artist’s work, which are now accessible to a wide audience.”

Sylvia von Metzler, Chair of the Board of the Städelischer Museums-Verein, says: “In 1912, the art critic Karl Scheffler summed up his contemporaries’ enthusiasm for Carl Schuch’s painting as follows: ‘Leibl is revered, Trübner is highly esteemed, but Schuch is loved.’ The exhibition ‘Carl Schuch and France’ is in the best tradition of the Städel, and it is a distinct pleasure for the Städelischer Museums-

Verein and the StädelFreunde 1815 to support a project that embodies the spirit of the museum in such an outstanding way.”

Alexander Eiling, Juliane Betz and Neela Struck, curators of the exhibition,

emphasize: “Carl Schuch pursued his artistic path with great perseverance. His work combines German and Austrian influences with a long and intensive engagement with 19th-century French painting. The exhibition invites visitors to look closely and discover. When juxtaposed with French modernism, Schuch’s liberated use of colour and his unmistakable signature style become apparent. Both features make his paintings well worth discovering. Carl Schuch’s motto was: “See for yourself and find for yourself” – we would like to encourage visitors to do the same.”

Tour of the exhibition: “Carl Schuch and France”

The tour begins by highlighting the many facets of Carl Schuch’s intensive engagement with 19th-century French art. Exemplary juxtapositions with works by Gustave Courbet, Paul Cézanne and Claude Monet provide an insight into the spectrum of artists whose work Schuch studied.

The first section of the exhibition is structured roughly chronologically, following the artist’s biography, and focuses on Schuch’s education and his career as a painter up to 1882. Carl Schuch was born in Vienna in 1846. Following a brief period of study at the Academy of Fine Arts, he took private lessons with the landscape painter Ludwig Halauska. From 1869 onwards, he travelled throughout Europe, visiting Italy, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, among other places. Between 1871 and 1876, he visited Munich several times, where he met artists such as Wilhelm Trübner and Wilhelm Leibl. From 1876 to 1882, Schuch lived in Venice and set up a spacious studio there.

The second section of the exhibition focuses on Schuch’s time in Paris from 1882 to 1894. Five themed rooms showcase the most renowned series of works that he produced during this period. Schuch returned to Vienna in 1894 and died there in 1903. A wide selection of works illustrates his lifelong interest in French painting. He consistently studied the contemporary French avant-garde in private and public collections, at exhibitions, and in the art trade. In addition to well-known contemporaries, he was interested in lesser-known artists whose work is largely forgotten today. “Carl Schuch and France” presents paintings by renowned artists as well as works by lesser-known painters, including Jules Bastien-Lepage, Théodule Ribot and Antoine Vollon. The exhibition is complemented by works by Schuch’s colleagues, including representatives of the so-called Leibl Circle.

With its focus on French modernism, the exhibition also sheds light on Schuch’s painting technique. During his time in Paris, his style became freer and more open to

the diverse approaches that were being explored at the time to intensify colour effects. The latest research into painting techniques provides insight into his analytical and investigative working methods, as well as the careful and consistent development of his compositions. The exhibition follows Schuch's consistent preoccupation with the subject of colour and traces the pivotal stages in his development as a colourist.

Education & Italy

Carl Schuch (1846–1903) expressed an early desire to become an artist. After just two semesters at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, he began taking private lessons from the landscape painter Ludwig Halauska in 1867. Together, they travelled to the Salzkammergut region and other places, where they painted on site. Schuch's keen sense of subtle colour nuances is evident in the first light-filled paintings from this phase, which were influenced by his teacher's watercolour-like style. The exhibition showcases pivotal pieces from this period, including *Bei Wiesenau am Mondsee* (Near Wiesenau on Lake Mondsee, 1869), which exemplifies his vibrant colours and clarity. In 1869, Schuch left Vienna and travelled to Italy, staying in Olevano near Rome, among other places. There, he met Edmund Kanoldt, whose influence led him to develop a warmer, more tonal colour palette. A comparison with works by Halauska and Kanoldt reveals Schuch's growing artistic emancipation and the emergence of his own independent painting style, characterised by his use of colour and tone.

Years of Travel & Munich

After returning from Italy, Carl Schuch settled in Munich in 1870, then a centre of realistic painting in Germany. There, he met Wilhelm Trübner and Wilhelm Leibl. Both artists created portraits of Schuch, which are on display in the exhibition. A circle of progressive artists who were committed to "pure painting" gathered around Leibl. They chose simple motifs and made the painting process visible through open brushwork. Gustave Courbet was an important role model for this group, known as the "Leibl Circle". Until 1876, Schuch worked in Munich intermittently and undertook further study trips to Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. During this period, he painted the same motifs as Trübner on several occasions. In 1876, he created his first still life, *Äpfel und Birnen* (Apples and Pears), one of the few works that Schuch exhibited publicly between 1869 and 1877. At the end of 1876, he deliberately broke away from the Munich milieu and moved to Venice. This was another step on his path to artistic independence.

Venice 1876–1882

For almost six years, Carl Schuch lived mainly in Venice, where he moved into a spacious apartment with a studio in the Dorsoduro district, just a few steps away from the Grand Canal. Initially still part of the social scene around Piazza San Marco, he increasingly withdrew and devoted himself entirely to painting. In his elaborately furnished studio, he created detailed still lifes and interior paintings. A key work from this period is *Hummer mit Zinnkrug und Weinglas* (Lobster with Pewter Jug and Wine Glass, 1877), which hung on the wall of his studio and was the first work to be sold after his death. In 1904, Hugo von Tschudi acquired the painting for the Nationalgalerie in Berlin. The block-like brushwork and reduced colour palette testify to the influence of Wilhelm Trübner. From 1880 onwards, Schuch began to systematically analyse works by fellow artists in his own collection, including Trübner's *Fasane* (Pheasants, 1873). Meticulous notes document his colour studies. From 1881 onwards, his notebooks clearly reflect his desire to leave Venice and move to Paris, the artistic centre of the time.

In the March of Brandenburg (1878, 1880 and 1881)

In 1873, Carl Schuch met the painter Karl Hagemeister at Lake Hintersee near Berchtesgaden. The two maintained close personal, epistolary and artistic contact for around ten years. In 1913, Hagemeister published the only biography of Schuch to date, which, despite its known inaccuracies, continues to shape our image of the artist today. During the summers of 1878, 1880 and 1881, Schuch travelled to Hagemeister's home region of Brandenburg, where he produced numerous landscape paintings. These visits were pivotal for his artistic development, as the unspectacular landscape of the March of Brandenburg enabled him to focus on his core themes of colour and light, space and composition. Schuch often incorporated architectural or structural elements into his landscapes, such as buildings, a sawmill or a sluice. During these summers, he developed an increasingly warm colour palette, evident in works such as *Backofen in Ferch* (Backing Oven in Ferch, 1878) and *Schilffeld bei Ferch* (Reed Field near Ferch, 1881), characterised by their bright tones and loose, sketchy style of painting.

Carl Schuch & French Art

Carl Schuch showed an early interest in modern French art. In the late 1860s, he had the opportunity to admire the first works of the Barbizon School in Vienna. In the following years, he broadened his knowledge in various places. During his travels, especially during his time in Paris, he visited numerous museums, exhibitions, galleries, and art dealers. When and where Schuch saw which works can be partially reconstructed from his written legacy. The exhibition names the tangible encounters

and thus illustrates the diversity of Schuch's visual experiences and the range of artists he studied: in addition to paintings by Charles-François Daubigny, such as *The Lock in the Valley of Optevoz* (1855), he admired works by Gustave Courbet and Claude Monet and was inspired by both Jean Siméon Chardin and Jean-François Millet, whose *Leek Still Life* (c. 1860–65) he copied. The exhibition vividly unfolds this panorama of his visual experiences, while also focusing on lesser-known artists whom Schuch particularly admired, including Jules Bastien-Lepage and Antoine Vollon.

Paris 1882–1894

In 1882, Carl Schuch moved to Paris, where he engaged intensively with numerous artists, as his notebooks impressively document. Still life painting in particular offered him ideal conditions for painterly experimentation. In his studio, he produced numerous kitchen still lifes depicting fruit, vegetables, vessels and game on raw wooden boards or white cloths. Using these objects, Schuch specifically explored colour harmonies, as well as cold-warm and complementary contrasts. The flexible choice of motifs and formal openness of still life enabled him to consistently develop the painterly foundations of his art. At the centre of this chapter is the motif of the bundle of asparagus, which Schuch revisited several times, varying the arrangement and colour harmony. The exhibition includes Édouard Manet's late work of the same name from 1880, which Schuch encountered in 1884 at the Manet estate exhibition at the École des Beaux-Arts and regarded as a formative model. Another key work from this period is the painting *Atelier in Paris* (c. 1885), in which Schuch focuses on painting itself and stages the creation of his works.

Still Lives & Modernism

In the 1880s, Carl Schuch encountered a wide variety of artistic movements in Paris, ranging from academic painting to the diverse facets of modern art. Exemplary still lifes by artists such as Gustave Courbet, the Impressionist Claude Monet and Adolphe Monticelli, known for his impasto colour experiments, illustrate this breadth. Schuch was inspired by the works of these and other painters to create his own compositions, in which he sought the ideal distribution of colour values. Like many of his contemporaries, he was intensely preoccupied with the perception of colours and their interaction, for example in the form of complementary contrasts. From 1885 onwards, Schuch described composing with such exciting contrasts as "coloristic action". His still lifes with slices of melon and pumpkin impressively demonstrate this: the focus is on the contrast between the warm orange of the flesh and the cool blue of the grapes. Juxtaposing his work with pieces such as Claude Monet's *Spanish Melon* helps to contextualize Schuch's artistic position.

Schuch & Cézanne

Since 1905, Carl Schuch has been repeatedly compared to Paul Cézanne, despite there being no evidence of direct contact between the two artists in Schuch's estate. Visual parallels are particularly evident in their still lifes, which were created at almost the same time and follow a similar compositional structure. However, their painterly execution differs significantly. While Cézanne systematically structured defined areas of colour, Schuch worked with a softer, freer brushstroke. Both artists are united by their careful balancing of colours and forms, whereby the painterly process increasingly takes precedence over the depicted object. High-calibre loans of Cézanne's works from international collections make it possible to trace this artistic "parallel" at the beginning of modernism.

Schuch's Working Method: Tones and Variations

Carl Schuch frequently reworked his compositions and used canvases multiple times, an indication of his exploratory and experimental approach to his work. In the run-up to the exhibition, three of his Paris still lifes were examined in detail using X-rays, infrared reflectography and micro-X-ray fluorescence analysis: *Wildente, Rüben und Kasserolle* (Wild Duck, Turnips and Casserole, 1886–94); *Stilleben mit Äpfeln, Birnen und einer Karaffe* (Still Life with Apples, Pears and a Carafe, 1886–94); and *Ingwertopf mit Zinnkanne und Teller* (Ginger Pot with Tin Pitcher and Plate, 1885–88). The revealing results of these technical analyses of the paintings are vividly presented in the exhibition, including in an animated presentation. The layers of the paintings that have been made visible provide fascinating insights into Schuch's multi-layered creative process: they document how he exchanged motifs, reworked compositions and varied pictorial structures, always in search of the most convincing arrangement of colour, light and materiality. This intensive exploration resulted in some still lifes being preserved in several versions that differ only minimally. A striking example of this is *Äpfel auf Weiß* (Apples on White), a version of which is held in the Städel Museum collection.

Hunting Still Lives

Carl Schuch began devoting himself to hunting still lifes while he was still in Venice. In Paris, he intensified this exploration, focusing particularly on depicting dead birds, including mallards, pheasants and smaller species. He deliberately varied the accompanying objects, such as clay pots, tin cans, and enamel tableware, in order to experiment with colour harmonies and contrasts. Replacing a single object could fundamentally alter the tension in the picture. Every shade of colour had to fit into the overall structure as well as possible. In the exhibition, Schuch's hunting still lifes are presented in a traditional yet painterly innovative context, alongside selected works

by Jean Siméon Chardin and Édouard Manet. Chardin, for example, had freed still life from symbolic interpretations, focusing entirely on light, colour and materiality. This approach also had a decisive influence on Schuch's painting.

At the Saut du Doubs

From 1886 onwards, Carl Schuch spent several summers in Franche-Comté, not far from the home of Gustave Courbet. Some of the most important landscape paintings in Schuch's oeuvre were created in the secluded landscape of this region. Schuch deliberately chose unspectacular motifs: a sunlit rock face, a sawmill on the riverbank, rapids or the interior of a forest. His choice of location and painterly execution both reveal Courbet's influence: dense, impasto brushstrokes and areas of paint applied with a palette knife lend the rocks, for example, an impressive presence. While the smaller formats still bear traces of *plein air* painting, the large-scale works were probably created in the studio. The monumental painting *Waldinneres beim Saut du Doubs* (Forest Interior at the Saut du Doubs, 1886–93) condenses light and colour into an atmospheric, multi-layered composition. It marks a high point in Schuch's exploration of landscape painting and can be seen as his artistic legacy.

CARL SCHUCH AND FRANCE

Curators: Alexander Eiling (Head of Modern Art, Städel Museum), Juliane Betz (Deputy Head of Modern Art, Städel Museum), Neela Struck (Associate Curator, Modern Art, Städel Museum), in collaboration with Roland Dorn (author of the Carl Schuch catalogue raisonné).

Exhibition Dates: 24 September 2025 – 1 February 2026

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de/en/

Visitor Services and Guided Tours: +49(0)69-605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de

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

Tickets: €18, reduced €16; Tuesday Special: every Tuesday 3–6 pm €9, admission free for children under 12. Groups of at least 10 persons who would normally be charged the full admission fee: €16 per person. Registration is generally required for all groups, by telephone +49 (0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de. For up-to-date information on special opening hours, please visit staedelmuseum.de.

Digitorial®: The free Digitorial® provides a multimedia introduction to the exhibition, offering descriptive short texts, interactive modules and fascinating background information. It offers in-depth insights into Schuch's unique approach to painting, his close ties to French modernism and the social context of his time. The digital application is available before the exhibition opens at schuch.staedelmuseum.de and can be used on smartphones, tablets and desktop computers. Digitorial® is a registered trademark of the SCHIRN, Städel and Liebieghaus. Conceived by the three Frankfurt museums as a digital educational resource, it has already been realized many times. The Digitorial® is sponsored by the Aventis Foundation.

Audio Guide App: The audio tour, which lasts about an hour and has around twenty stations, is available in German and English and is narrated by the actress Sophie Rois. The free exhibition app is available for iOS and Android in the App Store and Google Play Store from the start of the exhibition and can be downloaded to your smartphone at home or via the Städel WLAN.

Catalogue: To accompany the exhibition, Prestel Verlag will publish a catalogue edited by Alexander Eiling, Roland Dorn, Juliane Betz and Neela Struck, with contributions by the editors, as well as by Stéphane Paccoud, Fabienne Ruppen, Eva Bader, Linda Schmidt and Vroni Schwelger, and a foreword by Philipp Demandt. German and English edition, 264 pages, €54 (book trade edition), €44.90 (museum edition).

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