

WALL TEXTS

CARL SCHUCH AND FRANCE

24 SEPTEMBER 2025 UNTIL 1 FEBRUARY 2026**EXHIBITION ANNEX****WALL TEXTS****CARL SCHUCH & FRANCE**

Carl Schuch (1846–1903) is one of the most fascinating exponents of late nineteenth-century painting. His still lifes and vibrant landscape paintings, composed with a fine sense of colour, are highly appealing. At the same time, his art defies assignment to any particular style, group, or even nation. Born in Vienna, Schuch was a restless cosmopolitan constantly on the move between Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and France, an artist who processed numerous influences in his work. Schuch's chief focus was contemporary French art, in which significant innovations were underway in his time: A young generation of artists was countering Idealism and Romanticist glorification with a new 'veracity' in painting. In this context, demands for the unbiased representation of nature and heightened attention to one's own life reality played a decisive role. Visual perception, the direct experience of nature, and the endeavor to capture that experience were also Schuch's main concerns. He used his summer months primarily to paint out of doors. In his studio, on the other hand, the still life was his most important field of work. His notebooks testify to his pronounced interest in colour values and combinations.

In 1882, Schuch settled in Paris, where he would remain for twelve years, and immersed himself in the myriad currents of French art that had emerged since 1850. *Carl Schuch & France* is devoted to that exploration. The juxtaposition of works by Schuch with those of his contemporaries Gustave Courbet, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne, and numerous other painters offers a means of contemplating Schuch's highly independent oeuvre within the multifaceted context of modern French art.

BIOGRAFIE

Carl Eduard Schuch is born to a well-to-do family in Vienna on 30 September 1846. His parents die prematurely, and Schuch and his sister Pauline are raised by an aunt. As a young man he receives instruction in drawing.

1865–1869

Schuch studies at the art academy in Vienna. After just two semesters there, however, he decides to take private lessons from the landscape painter Ludwig Halauska (1827–1882) instead. Together they devote themselves to painting out of doors.

1869

Schuch debuts with two alpine landscape depictions in the *1. Große Internationale Kunstausstellung* at the Künstlerhaus in Vienna. In the years that follow, he shows individual paintings in Vienna and Munich, including the works *Pond*, *Apples and Pears*, and *Italian Architectural Picture* [on view here](#).

1869/70

Following his sister's death, Schuch leaves Vienna and sets out for Italy. He travels first to Venice, then on to Sicily and Rome. He lodges in the Casa Baldi guesthouse in Olevano from June to October 1870, then returns to Vienna by way of Rome and Florence.

1871

In January, Schuch moves to Munich, where he makes the acquaintance of Wilhelm Trübner (1851–1917) and others. That summer, the two artists work together in Bernried on Lake Starnberg. On an excursion to Lake Walchen, they meet Wilhelm Leibl (1844–1900).

1871/72

It is presumably in this winter that Schuch first sojourns in Paris. No details have come down to us concerning his stay there.

1872

In May/June, Schuch paints in Purkersdorf near Vienna. In October, he travels via Venice and Florence to Rome, where he shares a studio with Trübner in the winter.

1873

Starting in May, Schuch once again sojourns in Olevano. In June, he rushes to Vienna to manage his finances after the stock-market crash. The World's Fair taking place there features an extensive section on French painting. Major works by Gustave Courbet are moreover on exhibit in the Kunstverein in June. At Lake Hintersee near Berchtesgaden, Schuch makes the acquaintance of the painter Karl Hagemeister (1848–1933), who is also interested in French art. In the fall, Schuch

moves into a studio in Brussels. In December, he and Hagemeister together visit numerous museums in Antwerp, The Hague, Haarlem, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam.

1874

Wilhelm Trübner comes to Brussels in the spring. In search of landscape motifs, Schuch and Trübner travel to Lake Chiemsee by way of Rügen, the Harz Mountains, and the Bavarian Forest.

1874/75

Schuch sojourns in Olevano for the third and last time.

1876

Schuch spends the winter of 1875/76 in Munich and the summer with Trübner in Wessling and Bernried.

1876–1882

In the autumn of 1876, Schuch moves to Venice, where he lives and works during the winter months until 1882. He has a sumptuous studio set up for himself in the Calle del Traghetto S. Gregorio, Dorsoduro N° 180II. He continues his custom of travelling during the summers, undertaking study trips to the cities of Upper Italy and searching for landscape motifs in the Alpine region. In the winters, he works on ambitious, large-scale still-life compositions in Venice.

1877

In April, Schuch exhibits publicly for the last time. Within the framework of the 276. *Ausstellung des Österreichischen Kunst-Vereins*, he shows the *Italian Architectural Picture* painted in Olevano.

1878, 1880, 1881

Schuch visits Hagemeister to paint the scenery in the Mark of Brandenburg. He lives and works in Ferch on Lake Schwielow (1878 and 1881) and Kähnsdorf on the Seddin Lake (1880).

1882

Schuch leaves Venice in the spring. He travels to Arco on Lake Garda and to Vienna, among other places, before settling in Paris in November.

1883

In the spring, Schuch begins recording the visual experiences he has at the Salon, exhibitions, the Louvre, the Musée du Luxembourg, auctions at Hôtel Drouot, and elsewhere in Paris. He uses the so-called Paris I notebook until 1884, and sketches still-life compositions in it. He spends the summer painting at Lake Hintersee near Berchtesgaden. In the winter, Hagemeister visits him in Paris.

1884

The friendship between Schuch and Hagemeister ends in the spring. Schuch spends the summer months in Holland, where he visits numerous museums.

1885

Schuch uses the so-called Paris II notebook. In it, he concerns him-self primarily with pigments, palettes, and works by French artists. On Whitsuntide, he formulates his concept of the painting as 'interaction of colour', which he tests in numerous still lifes. He spends the summer in Scheveningen near The Hague, where he visits the Gemeentemuseum. He also travels from there to the World's Fair in Antwerp.

1886–1892/93

In several summers, Schuch travels from Paris to the Saut du Doubs on the French-Swiss border, near Gustave Courbet's native region. It is in these years that he carries out his most important landscape paintings.

1894–1903

In March 1894, Schuch returns to Vienna, where he dies of a venereal disease on 13 September 1903.

NACH/AFTER 1903

Starting in 1904, various art dealers in Berlin, Munich, and Vienna exhibit paintings by Schuch. Museums begin purchasing his works, for example the still lifes *Lobster with Pewter Jug and Wine Glass* and *Mallard, Turnips, and Casserole* on view in this exhibition. In the German-speaking world, the *Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst* (1906) sparks a regular Schuch craze that will last until the 1940s.

TRAINING & ITALY

Carl Schuch expressed the wish to become an artist early on. He received drawing instruction as a young man and in October 1865 enrolled at the academy in Vienna. However, he studied there for only two semesters. Starting in 1867, he took private lessons from the renowned landscape painter Ludwig Halauska (1827–1882).

Together, teacher and pupil undertook study trips and painted in the open air, for instance at Lake Mondsee in the Salzkammergut. Schuch's first paintings bear the clear mark of Halauska's sparse, watercolour-like style, while also betraying his own interest in changing atmospheric moods as well as suspenseful motifs and framings. Schuch debuted with two alpine landscape depictions in the *1. Große Internationale Kunstausstellung* at the Künstlerhaus in Vienna in 1869. After the deaths of his parents and sister, he left his native city. In the autumn of 1869, he set out for Italy. He travelled from Venice to Sicily by way of Naples and stopped in Rome and Olevano on his return trip. There he encountered the German painter Edmund Kanoldt and under his influence developed a warmer, tonal palette.

TRAVEL YEARS & MUNICH

In January 1871, after his first stay in Italy, Carl Schuch went to Munich. There he made the acquaintance of Wilhelm Trübner (1851–1917) and, not long afterwards, Wilhelm Leibl (1844–1900). The latter had gathered around himself a circle of progressive artists who had committed themselves to 'pure painting'. They chose the simplest possible motifs and made the painting process visible by means of their open handling of the brush. The famous French painter Gustave Courbet, whose art was considered unacademic and 'genuine', was an important example for the German artists.

Schuch and Trübner travelled together to Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, where they visited numerous museums. They also frequently worked together, sometimes painting the same motifs. It was in this context that Schuch carried out his first still life, which he exhibited in the spring of 1876.

Schuch was long classified as an artist of the so-called Leibl circle. In fact, however, he only lived in Munich intermittently. His many journeys took him to other places, among them Rome and Brussels, where he shared studios with Trübner. In the fall of 1876, Schuch deliberately parted with the Munich milieu and moved to Venice.

SCHUCH & HAGEMEISTER

We have little to no information on many of the phases of Schuch's life and work. What we do know is based in good part on the memories of his artist friend Karl Hagemeister (1848–1933). The two painters met at Lake Hintersee near Berchtesgaden in the summer of 1873 and remained in close contact, in person and by mail, for about ten years. They took extensive study trips together, above all to Belgium and the Netherlands. In the summers of 1878, 1880, and 1881, Schuch travelled from Venice to Hagemeister's native Mark of Brandenburg, where he carried out a large number of landscape depictions. Hagemeister in turn visited Schuch after

the latter had moved to Paris. It was there that their friendship came to an end in the spring of 1884.

Hagemeister only began publishing his memories of Schuch after the latter's death: In 1913, his extensive monograph of his artist colleague came out, containing numerous illustrations of works, quotations from letters, and information on places and times in the context of Schuch's work and travels. Yet many of these details are subjective in nature and inexact by present-day research standards. What is more, Hagemeister retrospectively played down the importance of French art for Schuch's oeuvre.

VENICE 1876 –1882

From the autumn of 1876 to the spring of 1882, Carl Schuch lived primarily in Venice. He rented a flat in a prime location near the Canal Grande. On the upper floor, he had a lavishly furnished studio set up for himself which he depicted in several sketches and paintings. In his initial years in 'La Serenissima', he participated in social life on and around St. Mark's Square, but then gradually became ever more of a recluse.

During the summers, Schuch took extensive trips to the mountains and the Mark of Brandenburg. In wintertime, he pursued an in-depth study of colour in his studio and analyzed the paintings in his collection, among them examples by Wilhelm Trübner and Hans Thoma. He also painted elaborate still-life compositions, some of them quite large, testifying to the scale of his ambition. In the tradition of Dutch seventeenth-century banquet pieces, they feature precious objects and symbols of transience such as skulls. Inspired by Trübner's paintings, Schuch began painting still lifes with mallards, one of the motifs he would return to repeatedly in ever new constellations in the years that followed. From January 1881 onwards, if not before, an aversion to Venice and a desire to move to Paris become ever more apparent in his notes.

IN THE MARK OF BRANDENBURG

During his Venetian period, Carl Schuch made three trips to the Mark of Brandenburg, where his artist friend Karl Hagemeister lived: He spent the summers of 1878 and 1881 in Ferch on Lake Schwielow, and in 1880 he painted in Kähnsdorf on the Seddin Lake. These summer sojourns enabled him to make excursions to nearby Berlin with its Nationalgalerie and emerging art scene.

In the paintings of these years, Schuch explored the landscape, frequently with the aid of architectural or other constructive elements: Buildings, a saw pit, a runoff ditch lend structure to the pictorial surfaces. Schuch liked the 'unspectacular' Mark landscape because it enabled him to concentrate on the aspects he regarded

fundamental—colour and light, space and composition. He usually painted his motifs from close quarters in tightly framed scenes with high horizons. He had already begun depicting the change of colours in the sunlight in Venice back in 1878. He returned to this endeavour in Brandenburg and found his way to a warm, more light-filled colour scale.

PARIS 1882–1894

In november 1882, Schuch moved his base to Paris. In that centre of art and culture, important new developments were taking place in painting and literature, drawing attention from all over Europe and holding great appeal for artists and intellectuals. Paris proved to be a highly stimulating environment for Carl Schuch as well. Countless artists were exhibiting their works there, offering him a rich fund of visual material. His notebooks testify to his intensive explorations, above all of still-life painting. This was a genre ranked low in the academic hierarchy. But among collectors these paintings representing just a few objects—including those from the plant or animal world—were in demand. Still lifes moreover now became a kind of laboratory for progressive artists. They appreciated the artistic liberties the genre offered and used them to experiment with different painting styles.

Schuch produced numerous kitchen still lifes in his studio, works that today constitute the best-known part of his oeuvre. In ever new constellations, he combined fruit, vegetables, and/or dead animals with carefully selected but simple vessels made of various materials. He arranged these objects on bare painting boards or white cloth. He changed his compositions repeatedly, for example by exchanging certain elements, and thus investigated different colour harmonies and contrasts as well as cooler and warmer hues.

STILL LIFE & MODERNISM

In 1880s Paris, Schuch came into contact with a great many different art currents. He encountered exponents of academic painting as well as the myriad facets of modern art production. The selection of still lifes on view here ranges from works by the Realist Gustave Courbet and the Impressionist Claude Monet to the pastose painting experiments of Adolphe Monticelli. Schuch took inspiration from works by these and other painters for his own compositions, in which he strove for the ideal distribution of colour values.

The paintings by Schuch and his contemporaries frequently exhibit strong colour contrasts, for example red and green or blue and orange. A so-called 'complementary contrast' consists of one of the three basic colours—red, yellow, and blue—and a mixture of the respective other two. Many nineteenth-century colour theories revolved around such principles. Eugène Chevreul's theory of 'simultaneous contrast' was

especially widespread. Among other things, he proved that the effect of colours changed and the contrasts between them appeared stronger when they were seen side by side. Like many painters, Schuch drew on findings of this kind. He referred to the process of composing with complementary contrasts as 'interaction of colour'. The Impressionists, for their part, interested in optical colour mixing, placed strokes of pure, bright colours one next to the other on the canvas. Schuch continued to do the mixing on his palette, for which reason only small brightly colourful spots of this kind are found incorporated into the tonal painting of his works.

SCHUCH & CÉZANNE

Carl Schuch was already being compared with the 'father of modern painting', Paul Cézanne, as early as 1905, and was sometimes even referred to as the 'German Cézanne'. In his written legacy, however, Schuch never once mentions the far more famous Frenchman. It is also unclear whether they ever met or were even familiar with each other's works. Schuch could have seen paintings by Cézanne in a Parisian paint shop, as he is known to have visited galleries in the same part of town.

The visual parallels between the two artists' work are the most obvious in their still lifes. Executed in roughly the same period, they are distinguished by comparable arrangements: for the most part vessels, fruit, and cloth on a table in front of a wall. Yet their painterly approaches were different. Cézanne's paintings consist of firmly incorporated, clearly demarcated zones of colour and short, systematically placed brushstrokes. The objects are represented three-dimensionally but appear distorted because the artist painted them from different angles. And he made no effort to convey their materiality. Schuch, on the other hand, depicted what he saw in such a way that the objects, spatial interrelationships, and materials are clearly recognizable. Owing to his soft, loose painting style, his works have more in common with the Impressionist approach than Cézanne's. What Schuch and Cézanne share is the careful balancing of colours and forms on the canvas. What is more, in the work of both, the painting process took increasing precedence over the objects depicted.

COMPOSITIONS & WORKING PROCESSES

Carl Schuch changed his compositions repeatedly and often used the same canvas several times. As a result, forms are discernible beneath the surfaces of many of his paintings. In order to gain a better understanding of Schuch's exploratory working process, three of his Parisian still lifes were examined by technical means at the Städel: *Mallard, Turnips, and Casserole*; *Ginger Jar with Pewter Jug and Plate*; and *Apples on White, with Half Apple*. Imaging methods were used to make the layers beneath the surfaces visible. The results of the x-radiography, infrared reflectography, and micro x-ray fluorescence analyses show that there are completed

still-life arrangements beneath the surfaces of all three works. In a series of working steps, Schuch painted over and changed them. In the process, he exchanged some objects and shifted the positions of others. As a result of his constant quest for felicitous colour, light, and material arrangements, many of his still lifes are known in several only slightly differing versions—for example the three paintings of apples on a white cloth. Some of the discarded compositions resemble other surviving paintings. Schuch's still lifes prove to be motivically closely interrelated serial experiments in painting.

TONES & VARIATIONS

In Schuch's oeuvre, we frequently encounter still lifes closely related to one another in terms of motif. The most well-known example is *Apples on White*. The basic constellation of the three paintings is identical: a plate with apples on it and apples in shades of red, green, and yellow loosely scattered on a white tablecloth, next to them a water carafe. Within this overall scheme, there are slight variations. In one painting, a porcelain bowl with pears has replaced the gleaming metal jar with a handle. Instead of a yellow apple, the artist has placed a green apple on the plate to the left. The apple in the foreground appears with a knife, peeled in a spiral and cut in half. Viewed as a series, the three paintings appear to capture the process of eating an apple.

Motivic changes of this kind brought about only minor shifts in the colour values—and were nevertheless of great importance for Schuch: Every adjustment of hue brought further modifications in its wake in order to maintain the fine compositional balance. The contemplation of the *Apples in White* paintings as a threesome makes the artist's persistent serial approach palpable. It forms an interesting parallel to Monet, who in the 1880s was the first to paint one and the same motif repeatedly in various light atmospheres and weather phenomena. Schuch differed from Monet, however, in that he was interested not in the fleeting impression, but solely in the 'events' taking place in the painting.

HUNTING STILL LIVES

Schuch had already begun painting hunting still lifes back in his Venice days. In Paris, he then devoted himself intensely to depicting dead birds. He frequently painted mallards, but also pheasants and smaller birds. The objects he combined them with varied. It could almost be said that Schuch worked in experimental series, testing what chromatic changes came about when, for example, a tin vessel was exchanged for an enamel pot or a pot made of clay.

Many still lifes of the second half of the nineteenth century bear the clear mark of Jean Siméon Chardin (1699–1779). A good century earlier, he had changed the

perspective on the still life. He shifted the focus from the objects' symbolic or moral content—and thus from what was then still the accepted function of still lifes—to their actual perception. In this spirit, he placed just a few items in front of a neutral background and elevated the sensitive painterly representation of light, colours, materials, and surface structures to the status of pictorial subject. What is more, already Chardin adopted a looser and more open painting style free of demarcating contours. Schuch's brushstrokes are in part block-like in manner and do not always bear a relation to the object they depict. He reproduced what he saw by purely painterly means. In order to achieve the desired 'interaction of colour', every hue was to integrate optimally into the overall ensemble of colours and brushstrokes.

AT THE SAUT DU DOUBS

Starting in 1886, Schuch travelled regularly from Paris to the FrancheComté in the summertime. Near Gustave Courbet's native region, he painted the landscapes today considered his most accomplished works in that genre. He found numerous appealing subjects in the Doubs Valley but never painted its main attraction—the waterfall. Instead, he captured a rockface in the sunshine in chromatically varied versions, a sawmill on the riverbank, wild whitewater rapids, and views of the forest interior. His primary concern was with painterly and colouristic matters, from which he did not want to be distracted by more spectacular motifs.

Schuch followed in Courbet's footsteps not only topographically: It is thanks to his in-depth exploration of the Frenchman's works that his late landscapes are captivating in the vitality brought about by the pastose application of the paint with a brush and even in part with a scraper. This method enabled him to capture, for instance, the rough surface of the stones.

In addition to medium-sized paintings exhibiting traces of working in the open air, there are two extant large-scale examples the artist must have painted in his studio. In the large on view here, Schuch combined the richly varied play of light and shade with his use of colour contrasts in a striking composition distinguished by its interweave of light and colour. The high standard to which Schuch aspired with this work is evident in the size of the canvas. This painting can be considered a distillation of Schuch's painterly legacy