

Media Release

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Ingenious Women Women Artists and their Companions

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Curators: Bodo Brinkmann, Katrin Dyballa (Bucerius Kunst Forum), Ariane Mensger

They portrayed royalty and nobility, owned workshops, schooled individual aspirants, but for the most part fell into oblivion: women artists. Northern and southern Europe of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries was home to far more women painters, teachers and graphic artists (some highly successful) than we have been led to expect. While, for women a career in art was not altogether out of the question, it was deemed socially undesirable and would be pursued only under exceptional circumstances. However, aided by family members, teachers, and other pioneers, such prescriptive roles could be breached.

Women were long barred from art academies (in Italy, for instance, until 1606). Hence, typically, women artists stemmed from artistic families, where they could acquire the necessary skills outside of official studies. Of Marietta Robusti, nicknamed La Tintoretta (c. 1554/55–1614), – daughter of Jacopo Robusti, known as Tintoretto, – we know that she accompanied her father on commissions at an early age before herself becoming a celebrated painter. Yet others had less good fortune and worked for their family members in secrecy. Still others were married into artist families. Of Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750), evidence indicates that her husband, painter Jurien Pool (1666–1625), not only encouraged her to paint, but that her still lifes even sold more than his. Rarer aspirants stemmed from a higher social class, as was the case with Sofonisba Anguissola (1532–1625). Trained by artist and master Bernardino Campi (1522–1591), she even received commissions from the Spanish court.

A joint endeavor initiated by the Bucerius Kunst Forum Hamburg and the Kunstmuseum Basel, the exhibition showcases works by eighteen women artists, contextualizing them for the first time with those of their fathers, brothers, husbands and teachers: This series of focused juxtapositions, creative and thematic parallels and divergences are presented in truly fascinating form. Against the background of societal and familial milieu,

Ingenious Women brings together portraits, history paintings, still lifes, drawings and graphic arts dating from the Renaissance, Baroque and Classicist epochs.

The exhibition is supported by:
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Imagery and information on the exhibition

www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media

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