

PRESS RELEASE

RENOIR. ROCOCO REVIVAL.

IMPRESSIONISM AND THE FRENCH ART OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

2 MARCH TO 19 JUNE 2022

Exhibition annex

Press preview: 1 March 2022, 11 am

Frankfurt am Main, 8 February 2022. Pierre-Auguste Renoir is one of the outstanding painters of French Impressionism – and far more than that. From 2 March to 19 July 2022, for the first time the Städel Museum will be addressing the surprising references in his art to Rococo painting in a large-scale special exhibition. Whereas Rococo painting was considered frivolous and immoral after the French Revolution, it underwent a revival in the nineteenth century and was widely visible in Renoir's lifetime. Having trained as a porcelain painter, he was also intimately acquainted with the imagery of artists such as Antoine Watteau, Baptiste Siméon Chardin, François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. He shared the Rococo's predilection for certain subjects, among them promenaders in the park and on the riverbank, moments of repose in the outdoors, and the garden party. Renoir also frequently devoted himself to the depiction of domestic scenes and family life as well as intimate moments such as bathing, reading or making music. Yet he not only took orientation from the motifs of the Rococo, but also particularly admired its loose and sketchy manner of painting as well as its brilliant palette, aspects that would have a formative influence on him and many other artists in the Impressionist circle.

The exhibition at the Städel presents the complex history of the Rococo's reception in nineteenth-century France. Trenchant juxtapositions of Renoir's art with works of the eighteenth century as well as his own contemporaries – Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet and Berthe Morisot – will provide an overview of Impressionism's intense artistic examination of the Rococo.

"RENOIR. ROCOCO REVIVAL" is being sponsored by the Savings Banks Finance Group with Deutsche Leasing AG, Frankfurter Sparkasse and Savings Banks Cultural Fund of the German Savings Banks Association as its main sponsors. The Städtische Museums-Verein e.V. along with the STÄDELFREUNDEN 1815 were instrumental in making the exhibition possible. The project received additional support from the Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung.

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Taking highlights of the Städel collection such as Renoir's *After the Luncheon* (1879) and Antoine Watteau's *Embarkation for Cythera* (ca. 1709–10) as its point of departure, the exhibition will show a total of some 120 outstanding paintings, works on paper and handcrafted objects from international museums such as the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the National Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, as well as private collections.

“The first exhibition highlight at Frankfurt’s Städel in 2022 is devoted to the master of Impressionism and his passion for the Rococo. Hence ‘Renoir. Rococo Revival’ not only ties in with past large-scale exhibitions of modern French art at the Städel, but also closes one or the other gap in what is, surprisingly, a little-researched area of Impressionism. The fact that we were able to comprehensively plan and mount this exhibition in times of the pandemic is due to the outstanding commitment and involvement of all of those who participated in its realization, the lending museums, as well as our supporters and partners. We are extremely fortunate to have all of them at our side,” says **Philipp Demandt**, Director of the Städel Museum.

“Our aim is to promote cultural beacons nationwide through our sponsorship. This exhibition is a further highlight in our long-standing partnership with the Städel Museum. Through juxtaposing works from the Rococo period, the presentation offers a unique opportunity to rediscover Renoir’s art and to form an understanding of the links between the epochs”, says **Heike Kramer**, Head of the Department of Social Commitment at the German Savings Banks Association. Their support as the exhibition’s main sponsor is taking place in conjunction with Deutsche Leasing AG and the Frankfurter Sparkasse. Kramer continues: “Expanding perspectives, creating new connections, and broadening knowledge – this is an essential part of the power of art. At the same time, it is also the driving force and aim of museum work, and it is the Savings Banks Finance Group’s motivation for sponsoring this exhibition.”

Sylvia von Metzler, Chairwoman of the Board of the Städtelsche Museums-Verein e.V., on their commitment: “The Städtelscher Museums-Verein has stood for discovering, experiencing and facilitating art for more than 122 years. Our primary objective is to contribute to the expansion of the of Städel Museum’s collection through important acquisitions as well as to support their highly respected exhibition programme – above all with the STÄDELFREUNDE 1815, whose members campaigned in an extraordinary way for this task. With Renoir, the focus is on a crowd pleaser, one of the most influential figures in French painting at the close of the

nineteenth century. This exhibition will relate where Renoir took his inspiration and why his works seem so alluring to this very day.”

“Our exhibition prompts one to explore the multifaceted references Renoir and his contemporaries made to the eighteenth century in all of their complexity. In the case of Renoir in particular, tradition and modernity interplay in a productive way: His reinterpretations of well-known and again-fashionable subjects in Rococo art as well as his modern *fêtes galantes*, genre and boudoir scenes, nudes, and still lifes splendidly integrate themselves into the homes of his collectors with their luxuriant Rococo-style furniture”, state curators **Alexander Eiling, Juliane Betz and Fabienne Ruppen**.

EXHIBITION THEMES

Depictions of a carefree world populated by sumptuously dressed couples abandoning themselves to distractions and amusements have shaped our conception of Rococo painting. The term makes reference to a Late Baroque style of decoration that predominated in architecture, art and the applied arts, furniture, and fashion between 1715 and 1780. After the French Revolution in 1789, it was regarded as outmoded and backward-looking: in everyday language, “rococo” even came to be synonymous with bad taste. However, the style experienced an unprecedented boost beginning in the 1830s, so that today one speaks of a “**Rococo revival**” in the nineteenth century. At the time, the increasing appreciation for art and culture of the previous century can also be explained against the background of the nascent nation states. In France, collectors, art critics or writers saw Rococo as the highest embodiment of a genuinely French style. Besides exhibitions and growing collections, for instance at the Musée du Louvre, during Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s lifetime (1841–1919) the dissemination of well-received writings (by the Goncourt brothers, for example) and printed reproductions of Rococo works in art magazines contributed to a heightened visibility of art of the eighteenth century.

Renoir’s artistic ties to the Rococo proved to be very close from the start and would remain so until the end of his life. He said of himself that he was first and foremost inspired by the collection at the Louvre, where he was lastingly influenced by, among others, paintings by François Boucher and Antoine Watteau. Renoir’s examination of subjects and the pictorial language of the Rococo becomes apparent based on the example of the first version of Watteau’s *The Embarkation for Cythera* from 1709/10 (Städel Museum). The painting is juxtaposed with Renoir’s works *Woman with a Fan* from ca. 1879 (The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown) and *The*

Promenade from 1870 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) at the beginning of the exhibition.

The protagonists in paintings by Renoir and his contemporaries no longer belong to the aristocracy but to the bourgeoisie, who amuse themselves at venues of urban recreational culture – be it in blossoming parks and gardens in Paris such as in *Lise (Woman with a Parasol)* from 1875 (Museo Nacional Thyssen Bornemisza, Madrid), in garden cafés like in *After the Luncheon* (1879, Städel Museum), or at the opera such as in *At the Theatre* (1876/77, The National Gallery, London). Unlike the idealized natural settings in Rococo paintings, the places of bourgeois pleasure portrayed by Renoir often cannot be given an exact name. For example, in his painting *The Oarsmen at Chatou* from 1879 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), whose motif is reminiscent of Watteau's *The Embarkation for Cythera*, does not capture a fictional island of love from mythology but a popular restaurant destination on the Seine. In doing so, he formulates a personal, modern version of the **fêtes galantes** or *fêtes champêtres*, which artists like Watteau and his only student, Jean-Baptiste Pater, had established as a genre in the eighteenth century. By making such references, Renoir not lastly expected to achieve commercial successes on the art market.

The multifacetedness of Renoir's reception of the Rococo also becomes visible in other artistic media, above all in the area of drawing. One particular proclivity he nurtured was for eighteenth-century drawing techniques: pastel painting as well as the *trois-crayons* technique. The latter is a combination of three different kinds of chalks (red, black and white). Like his predecessors Watteau, Lancret or Boucher, Renoir employed it both for sketches as well as for drawings of more finished character. In contrast, he used pastel painting primarily for representative portraits. The exhibition presents Renoir's sketches and independent drawings alongside outstanding examples of works by Rococo artists.

Another key aspect that links Renoir with art of the eighteenth century is his interest in **decorative art**, the combination of painting and craftsmanship. In his rare theoretical writings, in view of increasing mechanization, which had serious consequences for craftsmanship, Renoir demanded a stronger connection between fine art and applied art as was customary in the eighteenth century. There are numerous "decorative" works in Renoir's oeuvre, ranging from examples from his training as a porcelain painter to wall paintings, which were commissioned works for his broad network. This is exemplified in the exhibition based on paintings that

originated at and for the country estate of his patron Paul Berard, the Château de Wargemont in Normandy.

In Renoir's day, the **boudoir** was regarded as the quintessence of the Rococo. Equivalent to the gentleman of the house's study (*cabinet*), since the eighteenth century it served as a place to which women could retreat, and in literature and art it constituted the setting for erotic fantasies. The master of boudoir paintings was François Boucher. Like the room as such, beginning in the late eighteenth century his art was criticized by Denis Diderot as morally questionable. A frequently confrontationally sensuous manner of representation also remained characteristic of boudoir scenes of the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by a comparison of Boucher's painting *Resting Girl (Louise O' Murphy)* from 1751 (Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne) with Renoir's *Reclining Nude (Gabrielle)* from 1903 (Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest).

The exhibition illustrates that all his life, the female nude constituted a central theme in Renoir's oeuvre. He frequently staged his models as **bathers** in landscape settings, for which compositions by Boucher and Fragonard in the Louvre's collection served as his principal models. The loose and vibrant brushstroke of these Rococo artists as well as the pastel-like colouration had a direct influence on the painting style of Renoir and his contemporaries. Like his paragons, Renoir situated his bathers mostly in undefined surroundings far away from reality, such as in the painting *Female Nude in a Landscape* (Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris) and *Bathers with Crab* (Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh). Borrowing from eighteenth-century works, Renoir's bathers stand for an offensive orientation towards sensuousness: The artist saw the female body as unflawed, which is why it constituted the ideal point of departure for his painterly exploration of beauty.

Furthermore, there are numerous **genre paintings and figures in costume** in Renoir's body of works that vary and skilfully refresh motifs in eighteenth-century painting, at the same time blurring the boundaries between portrait and genre painting. Most of the latter depict everyday scenes and aim for the rendering of a specific "type", in Renoir's case, for instance, of a young actress in a theatre costume (*Madame Henriot in Costume*, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio) as well as of women reading or doing needlework in a domestic environment (*Portrait of Madame Monet*, The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown). Furthermore, from the 1890s on Renoir increasingly addressed the subject of making music, which had already often been dealt with in the eighteenth century (*Woman Playing the Guitar*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon). Besides these rather cheerful motifs, Renoir turned towards depictions

that suggested a moral reading and apparently show carelessly dressed young women (*In Summer*, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin). In doing so, he yet again oriented himself towards eighteenth-century works, particularly towards those by Jean-Baptiste Greuze.

Whereas Renoir saw himself as a “figure painter”, the **landscape** motif nevertheless also played a major role, especially when he travelled. The artist valued the quality of light “*en plein air*”, prompting him to use completely different shades of colour. The landscapes in various media shown in the exhibition, from oil and watercolour painting to pen-and-ink drawing, illustrate Renoir’s versatile and individual line strokes and brushwork. In remarks he made about his painting and drawing style, the artist specifically made reference to the eighteenth century. As was the case with other Impressionist paintings, critics also saw a parallel between his loose brushwork and the sketchy mode of Rococo-style painting, especially in works by Fragonard.

Finally, the genre of the still life constituted an important field of experimentation for Renoir’s constant examination of painting as such. Several of his numerous **still lifes** are clearly based on the art of Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, the most notable still-life painter of the eighteenth century. In these paintings by Renoir it is less a matter of the symbolic content of the objects being depicted than of the exploration of painting’s possibilities. Moreover, in Renoir’s case, as in the case of other Impressionists, among collectors the popularity of decorative motifs played a role.

List of Exhibited Artists

Henri Baron (1816–1885), François Boucher (1703–1770), Louis-Auguste Brun, called Brun de Versoix (1758–1815), Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757), Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin (1699–1779), Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852–1929), Edgar Degas (1834–1917), Narcisse Diaz de la Peña (1807–1876), Françoise Duparc (1726–1778), Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805), Nicolas Lancret (1690–1743), Aristide Maillol (1861–1944), Édouard Manet (1832–1883), Ernest Meissonier (1815–1891), Claude Monet (1840–1926), Adolphe Monticelli (1824–1886), Berthe Morisot (1841–1895), Jean-Baptiste Pater (1695–1736), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), Antoine Watteau (1684–1721), Émile Wattier (1800–1868), Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805–1873)

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Curatorial team: Dr Alexander Eiling (Head of Modern Art, Städel Museum), Dr Juliane Betz (Deputy Head of Modern Art, Städel Museum), Dr Fabienne Ruppen (Research Assistant, Modern Art, Städel Museum)

Exhibition dates: 2 March to 19 June 2022

Press preview: Tuesday, 1 March 2022, 11 am

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

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de

Visitor services: +49(0)69-605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de, or use the contact form at www.staedelmuseum.de/kontakt

Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun + public holidays 10 am–6 pm, Thu 10 am–9 pm

Special opening hours: Current information on special opening hours on public holidays can be found at www.staedelmuseum.de

Tickets and admission: Tickets can be booked online at shop.staedelmuseum.de/en. Tue–Fri: 16€, reduced 14€, Sat, Sun, and public holidays: 18€, reduced 16€; free admission for children under 12; groups of 10 or more (non-concession adults): 14€ per person, however 16€ per person on weekends. All groups are required to book their visit in advance by contacting us at +49(0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de.

Current COVID information for visiting the museum: An overview of the current regulatory requirements applying to individual visitors and groups can be found at www.staedelmuseum.de/en/covid-info. We advise you to check for updates immediately prior to your visit.

Programme: The exhibition will be accompanied by a broad programme of events, some of them online as an ideal way to prepare for the museum visit and others in-person with a pandemic-compliant selection of guided tours.

General guided tours of the exhibition (in German): From 2 March to 3 April: Tue 1 pm and 4 pm / Wed 1 pm and 4 pm / Thu 4 pm and 6 pm / Fri 1 pm / Sat 10:15 am and 4 pm / Sun 10:15 am and 4 pm.

From 5 April to 19 June: Tue 1 pm, 2 pm and 4 pm / Wed 1 pm, 2 pm and 4 pm / Thu 2 pm, 4 pm and 6 pm / Fri 2 pm and 4 pm / Sat 10:30 am, 11 am and 4 pm (not on 30 April, 4 pm, and not on 21 May, 4 pm), Sun 10:30 am, 11 am and 4 pm.

Tickets for the general guided tours are available exclusively via the online shop at shop.staedelmuseum.de/en. Current information about guided tours, special offers on public holidays, and opening hours are posted on www.staedelmuseum.de.

Rendezvous with Renoir: Saturday, 30 April and Saturday, 14 May from 7:00 to 23:00 pm. An exclusive evening with a guided tour in the exhibition plus drinks and a get-together with a bar in the Städel garden. Limited number of tickets available via the online shop at shop.staedelmuseum.de.

Museum at home – live Renoir programme (in German): Online tour of “RENOIR. ROCOCO REVIVAL” on 20 February at 2 pm, 23 February at 12 pm, 27 February at 2 pm, in March every Wed at 12 pm and Sun at 2 pm, in April every Sun at 2 pm (dates and times available at shop.staedelmuseum.de).

Digitorial®: With the free one-pager you can immerse yourself directly into the pictorial world of Renoir – into idyllic scenes of recreation and sensuous amusement. With interactive modules, audio tracks and informative short texts, the Digitorial® presents Renoir’s surprising connections with the Rococo against the background of rapid political and social transformation. The ideal preparation for your exhibition visit – from home or on the go. The German and English versions of the Digitorial® for the exhibition will be available online at the end of February at renoir.staedelmuseum.de. The Digitorial® is a registered trademark of the SCHIRN, Städel and Liebieghaus, conceived, realized and continually updated by the three Frankfurt museums as a digital learning resource. The Digitorial® for “RENOIR. ROCOCO REVIVAL” is being supported by the Deutsche Börse AG.

Audio-guide app: Become acquainted with the oeuvre of the Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir from a new point of view: The audio app ushers users into France of the nineteenth-century. In audio tracks and illustrations, the ca. 60-minute-long audio-guide reveals the surprising connections between Impressionism and eighteenth-century French art. Available at the end of February from Apple’s App Store and Google Play. The tour is available as a free app for both iOS and Android operating systems and can be downloaded to a smartphone from the comfort of your home or on the day of your visit using the Städel’s Wi-Fi network. The audio-guide is also available in the museum via hireable handhelds, at a fee of 5€ (or 8€ for two).

Catalogue: The catalogue accompanying the exhibition, “Renoir. Rococo Revival”, edited by Alexander Eiling in collaboration with Juliane Betz and Fabienne Ruppen, will be published by Hatje Cantz Verlag. With greetings by Helmut Schleweis as well as Sylvia von Metzler, and with a foreword by Philip Demandt and contributions by Alexander Eiling, Guillaume Faroult, Juliane Betz, Marine Kisiel, Fabienne Ruppen, Astrid Reuter, Matthias Krüger, Michela Bassu and Mary Morton. German and English edition, 328 pages, 39.90€ (museum edition).

Booklet: A booklet accompanying the exhibition will be available in German for 9.50€.

Sponsored by: Savings Banks Finance Group with Deutsche Leasing AG, Frankfurter Sparkasse and Savings Banks Cultural Fund of the German Savings Banks Association; the Städel’sche Museums-Verein e.V. with the STÄDELFREUNDE 1815, Dagmar-Westberg-Stiftung

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