WINTER TALES
Depictions of Winter in European Art from Bruegel to Beuys
October 18, 2011 - January 8, 2012

An exhibition organized by the Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Kunsthaus Zurich
Guest curator: Ronald de Leeuw, Amsterdam

The creation myths of most great civilizations agree that winter came into the world to punish man, or as a plague. Boreas, the Greek god of the cold north wind, personified winter. In northern mythology three years of frost herald the end of the world.
Large-scale depictions of how Napoleon’s Grande Armée was defeated by the Russian winter are a modern equivalent of these ancient scenarios of the end of the world. The contrary vision comprises serenity and joyous seasonal cheer: we can feast our eyes on views of a snow-bound countryside with skaters enjoying themselves on frozen ponds and rivers in the distance. In the middle of the 16th century, northern Europe - especially Flanders - witnessed the birth of the “pure” winter landscape. For the first time these scenes are intended to stand alone and are not conceived as part of the Labours of the Months. It is probably no accident that this period was known as the “Little ice Age”, which was marked by exceptionally low median temperatures. In the late 18th century, there is a revival of by then long-unfashionable winter landscapes: at first romanticized, they evolve to reflect the palette of winter.

Impressionism, Dutch art and a wealth of landscapes - these were the ingredients of earlier winter exhibitions. The Kunsthistorisches Museum and the Kunsthaus Zurich have expanded this successful trio. Broadening the selection to include many different genres and schools, the two museums present a comprehensive survey comprising over 180 works by west-European artists. For the show’s curator, Ronald de Leeuw, a personal winter tale has come true.

Four galleries and nine small rooms of the KHM’s Picture Gallery form the show’s spectacular setting: The works on show date from 1450 to the present. In addition to the subjects mentioned above, there are Dutch allegories of the months, depictions of winter festivities and folk customs, and still lifes; even portraits join in and present changing winter fashions.

Light-hearted and harmless winter amusements or the life-threatening forces of nature - both scenarios exist. Finding something magical in inhospitable nature was the preserve of a small elite: warm and well-fed, they were able to enjoy various seasonal amusements.
Ice skating, a popular sport for gallant lovers, parties, travelling, freezing animals, peasants and beggars, the cold, poverty and old age proved popular subjects for many centuries.

In the 21st century, large blockbuster exhibitions are subject to organizational and economic limitations and constraints - which means we had to reject an attractive group of works: there are almost no winter paintings by artists from Russia and Scandinavia, or from America, and no Japanese woodcuts.

The paintings are arranged more or less in chronological order; Ronald de Leeuw was able to augment the selection by including large-scale tapestries and an imperial sleigh as well as cups and goblets, fragile porcelain figures and vessels cut from semi-precious stones.

Over thirty important museums, among them the Louvre and the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, the National Gallery and the Tate in London, the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, and our partner the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam have lent outstanding works. Three years in the making, the exhibition also brings together important loans from Munich, Strasbourg, Rotterdam, Dresden, Zurich, Philadelphia, Darmstadt, Edinburgh, Cologne, The Hague, New York, Gent, Weimar and Boston. However, the unique focal point of the exhibition in Vienna is in the Picture Gallery of the Kunsthistorisches Museum: Pieter Bruegel the elder’s painting *Hunters in the Snow*, perhaps the most famous depiction of winter in European art. But the exhibition also includes paintings by Jacob van Ruisdael, Hendrick Avercamp, Jan van Goyen, Aert van der Neer, Peter Paul Rubens, Jan Steen, Jacob Jordaens, William Turner, Francisco de Goya, Caspar David Friedrich, Gustave Courbet, Jean-François Millet, Claude Monet, Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, Vincent van Gogh, Giovanni Segantini, Edvard Munch, Joseph Beuys and Anselm Kiefer.
Pieter Bruegel the elder
*Hunters in the Snow*
1565
panel, 117 x 162 cm
© Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Giuseppe Arcimboldo
*Winter*
dated 1563
panel, 66.6 cm x 50.5 cm
© Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Lucas I. van Valckenborch
*Winter landscape*
dated 1586
canvas, 117 x 198 cm
© Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Karel van Mander
*The Crucifixion in a Winter Setting*
1599
oil on panel
© Paris, Galerie de Jonckheere
Peter Paul Rubens
The Rape of Orithyia by Boreas
1615
panel, 146 x 140 cm
© Vienna, Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien

Peter Paul Rubens and workshop
Winter
before 1626
oil on canvas
© London, The Royal Collection © 2011, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Jan Asselijn
Winter Landscape with Hunters on a Bridge
c. 1647
canvas on panel, 49.7 x 35.3 cm
© Paris, Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt

Willem Schellinks
City Walls in Winter
1650
canvas, 74 x 105 cm
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
© Amsterdam, Collection Rijksmuseum
Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)
Lady Caroline Scott as Winter
1776
Oil on canvas
© Bowhill, The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, KT

Pierre Maximilien Delafontaine
The Skater (Bertrand Andrieu)
1798
canvas, 179 x 130 cm
Paris, Musée de la Monnaie – Monnaie Paris
© Paris, Monnaie de Paris/Jean-Jacques Castaing

Joseph Mallord William Turner
Snowstorm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps
1812
Oil on canvas
© London, Tate

Francisco de Goya
The Physician
c. 1813
oil on canvas
© Edinburgh, National Gallery
Peter Fendi
The Pretzel Seller on Dominikanerbastei
1828
Öl auf Holz
© Vienna, Wien Museum

Ernest Meissonier
Campagne de France, 1814
1864
panel, 51,5 x 76,5 cm
Paris, Musée d’Orsay
© RMN (Musée d’Orsay)/Hervé Lewandowski

Gustave Courbet
Deer Hunting in Franche-Comté
1866
Oil on canvas
© Kopenhagen, Ordrupgaard Museum

Alfred Sisley
Snow at Louveciennes (Yvelines)
1878
canvas, 61 x 50,5 cm
Paris, Musée d’Orsay
© RMN (Musée d’Orsay)/Hervé Lewandowski
Claude Monet  
**The Magpie**  
1868/69  
canvas, 89 x 130 cm  
© RMN (Musée d'Orsay)/Hervé Lewandowski

Richard Wenig  
**Nocturnal Sleigh Ride of King Ludwig II of Bavaria**  
c. 1880  
oil on canvas  
© Munich, Bayerische Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen

Paul Gauguin  
**Paris in Winter**  
1894  
© oil on canvas  
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum

Emilio Longoni  
**Glacier**  
1906  
Oil on canvas  
© Milan, Private Collection c/o Möbeltransport
Michael Powolny: design
equation: Wiener Keramik
The Four Seasons
c. 1907
© Vienna, MAK - Österreichisches
Museum für angewandte
Kunst/Gegenwartskunst

Kasimir Malewitsch
Morning in the Country after a Snow Storm
1912
Oil on canvas
© New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum

Joseph Beuys
Sleigh
1969
Wood sleigh, felt, straps, lamp, animal fat
ca. 35 x 90 x 35 cm
sleigh stamped in oil (brown cross)
edition: no15/50
© Vienna, Sammlung Philipp Konzett, und
VG-Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2011/Foto: Erich
Tarmann
OPENING HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

Kunsthistorisches Museum
Maria Theresien-Platz
1010 Vienna

Tuesdays – Sundays
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Thursdays 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
(The Coin Collection closes at 6 p.m.)

- adults € 12,-
- concessions € 9,-
- Vienna Card € 11,-
- Groups of 10 or over € 8,-
- guided tour, p.p. € 3,-
- children under 19 free
- annual ticket € 29,-
- Audio Guide (German, English) € 4,-

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

exhibition catalogue: € 35,-

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