

# Kunst Museum Winterthur

Media Release

## Dutch Mountains From the Dutch Lowlands to the Alps

July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Kunst Museum Winterthur | Reinhart am Stadtgarten

For the first time, the discovery of the Alpine mountain world by the Dutch pictorial tradition is the focus of an extensive exhibition. The prelude to this was the friendship between artists Jan Hackaert from Amsterdam and Conrad Meyer from Zurich and the resulting appreciation of the Alps. Visitors can expect an impressive panorama of mountain painting, ranging from Pieter Brueghel the Elder to Felix Meyer, from Caspar Wolf to Alexandre Calame, which includes prints, topographical drawings, and impressive oil paintings.

### Media Information on the Exhibition

Thursday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 11 a.m. or individual guided tour by appointment  
Kunst Museum Winterthur | Reinhart am Stadtgarten, Stadthausstrasse 6, 8400 Winterthur

### The Search for Exotic Motifs

By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch painters took up a motif that had previously received little attention: the landscapes of their own country. They revolutionized painting and created a new awareness of their homeland, the Dutch hills and lowlands. They soon exported their interest in the real world to more remote regions: so-called “Bentvueghels” or Birds of a Feather, Dutch artists who moved to Rome, began to supply the domestic market with exotic motifs, with their ideal landscapes being southern mountain ranges, among them Jan Both (1618/1622 – 1652). His “Nordic” counterpart was Allaert van Everdingen (1621 – 1675), who brought Scandinavian landscapes with spectacular waterfalls and rugged mountain ranges into the Dutch picture repertoire.

Despite their passage through Switzerland, none of the Bentvueghels captured its impressive mountain landscape though. Only the commission of a Dutch lawyer enabled Amsterdam Master Painter Jan Hackaert (1628-1685/90) to systematically explore the Alps for the first time. Together with his painter friend, Conrad Meyer from Zurich (1618-1689), he set out to topographically map the Glarus region. In a creative exchange, Hackaert and Meyer created the first realistic interpretations of the high mountain ranges in European art. At the same time, Hackaert created ideal landscapes in which he freely created realistic Swiss landscape motifs. These composed mountain landscapes enjoyed great popularity in Holland and promoted the representation of mountains in Dutch painting.

### The Discovery of the Alps

The budding scientific interest in the origin of the Alps promoted the artistic appropriation of this motif – thus, e.g., by Felix Meyer of Winterthur (1653 – 1713). Among other things, he created illustrations for Zurich natural scientist Johann Jacob Scheuchzer and his Swiss mountain studies. His mountain landscapes made him a pioneer of Alpine painting: the *Lower Grindelwald Glacier* (around 1700) was the first ever depiction of a glacier in an oil painting. The heyday of Swiss Alpine painting is based on an interplay of art, science, and aesthetics in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Alps, previously perceived as inaccessible places of horror, were finally ennobled throughout Europe by the famous poem of Bernese universal scholar Albrecht von Haller and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy of nature.

### Dramatic Mountain Motifs

This changed perception of the mountain world was the basis of Caspar Wolf's (1735 – 1783) artistic focus on impressive natural scenery. Together with Bernese publisher Abraham Wagner, he explored the Bernese

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Oberland on daring hikes. His depiction of the Lower Grindelwald Glacier proves that he advanced the farthest into the as yet unexplored mountain world. Wolf found independent interpretations of the Alpine mountain world and, thus, became seminal as to style – and not only for domestic art production.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was not only Wolf but also the so-called “Little Masters” who reshaped the image of Switzerland. With Johann Ludwig Aberlis’ (1723 – 1786) invention of coloured outline etching, Swiss motifs reached households and art collections throughout Europe. He and his colleagues, such as Johann Jakob Biedermann (1763 – 1830), also created delicate *en plein air* watercolours, some of which are on public display for the first time in this exhibition.

Against this background, Alexandre Calame (1810 – 1864) from Geneva developed a representation of the Alps according to academic principles. His late Romantic, dramatic mountain painting became a national school with countless imitators. The celebrated artist undertook daring tours, from which he brought back numerous sketches. They formed the basis of his large-format commissioned works. The detailed reproduction of the foreground and the ingenious play with light and shadow illustrate his intensive study of the Dutch masters. His awe-inspiring depictions made him the most influential representative of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Alpine painting in Europe.

## Opening Reception

Friday, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018, from 6 p.m.

Kunst Museum Winterthur | Reinhart am Stadtgarten, Stadthausstrasse 6, 8400 Winterthur

The entire supporting programme can be found at [kmw.ch/events](http://kmw.ch/events)

## Pictures and information about the exhibition

[kmw.ch/press](http://kmw.ch/press) or on request

## Catalogue

A richly illustrated scientific catalogue published by Hirmer-Verlag, Munich, accompanies the exhibition.

Price: CHF 36

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