

Press release

Museum Folkwang 100

Museum Folkwang opens the year of its centenary with major Impressionist show *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin – Images of a Floating World. The Collections of Kojiro Matsukata and Karl Ernst Osthaus*

Essen, 3.2.2022 – The Museum Folkwang is celebrating its 100th anniversary in Essen this year and is looking back on the (Post-)Impressionist beginnings of its collection with the exhibition highlight *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin – Images of a Floating World* (6 February – 15 May 2022): The important collection of (Post-)Impressionist works from Museum Folkwang, founded by Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874–1921), will enter into dialogue with the collection of Kojiro Matsukata (1866–1950) from the holdings of the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo. With around 120 masterpieces by Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Auguste Rodin, among others, the show illustrates how modern French art was not only appreciated by Western collectors at the beginning of the 20th century, but also found an early following in Japan. This is told through two pioneers of the modern museum: the collectors Matsukata and Osthaus.

The exhibition *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin – Images of a Floating World* focuses on the Matsukata and Osthaus collections and what they have in common. It was from an industrial environment that both Kojiro Matsukata and Karl Ernst Osthaus developed their passion for French modernist art at the beginning of the 20th century. Osthaus, a native of the town of Hagen in the Ruhr region, and Matsukata, a Japanese shipping entrepreneur, maintained contact with artists in their studios, associated with the same art dealers and took an interest in each other's cultures of origin. While Osthaus began collecting as early as 1898 and had built a widely respected museum collection by the time of his premature death in 1921, Matsukata's first purchases date from his stay in London from 1916 onwards. Subsequently, the Japanese collector amassed extensive collections of French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism (among others) in just a few years, which can now be seen on a larger scale in Europe for the first time since the 1950s.

The exhibition brings together important (Post-)Impressionist acquisitions by the two collectors, including Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Lise with a Parasol* (Osthaus) and Édouard Manet's *Portrait of Monsieur Brun* (Matsukata). The fascination of Osthaus for Pointillism comes to light in the extensive compilation of works by Paul Signac, Henri Edmond Cross and Théo van Rysselberghe. In one of the fourteen exhibition rooms, the former Great Picture Hall of the Museum Folkwang in Hagen is partially reconstructed: Two paintings by Paul Cézanne are juxtaposed here with Paul Signac's *The Port of Saint-Tropez*, which was formerly in the collection of Museum Folkwang and is now part of the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo. Another room is dedicated to Auguste Rodin's life's work *The Gates of Hell*: Thirteen sculptures by the French sculptor from

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both collections make it possible to understand the process of creating this monumental work, which took more than thirty years. Osthaus bought Rodin's first sculptures for the Museum Folkwang, *The Age of Bronze* and *Eve*, in 1903; from 1918 onwards, Matsukata continuously acquired small and large sculptures through the director of the Musée Rodin in Paris, Léonce Bénédite, and built up one of the largest private Rodin collections worldwide. In addition to the bronze sculptures, a plaster model of *The Gates of Hell* can be seen in the exhibition.

Finally, in the central hall of the exhibition, a landscape panorama unfolds with paintings by Claude Monet, Gustave Courbet and Charles-François Daubigny, which inspired the title *Images of a Floating World*. In the centre of this presentation the installation *I hope...* (2021) by the Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota takes up the motif of the floating world and transforms it into a hovering, three-dimensional landscape. In the sea of red cords, the outlines of three filigree metal boats appear, as do hundreds of pieces of paper. At the artist's invitation, people from all over the world have expressed their hopes and wishes in these notes, thus taking part in art and current events. This unifying idea also guided Kojiro Matsukata and Karl Ernst Osthaus, who brought together current trends in the art of their time in their museums, wanted to encourage their contemporaries to participate and strived for a dialogue between Western and Eastern art. In addition to Shiota's work, two multimedia installations by the artist Tabaimo in the exhibition continue this unifying idea into the present.

In the last exhibition room, works by Paul Gauguin meet major works by his contemporary Vincent van Gogh. While Van Gogh was more strongly represented in Osthaus's collection than in Matsukata's, with works such as *The Wheatfield behind Saint Paul's Hospital with a Reaper* and *Portrait of Armand Roulin*, both collectors acquired a core stock of works by Gauguin within just one year. Major works from both collections, such as *Two Breton Girls by the Sea* (Matsukata) and *Contes barbares* (Osthaus), represent different creative periods of the artist.

Even though Matsukata and Osthaus probably never met in person, their collections come together in the idea that modern art begins with French (Post-)Impressionism. Matsukata and Osthaus were united by the idea of a museum that encompassed fine art as well as applied arts, Western as well as Eastern art, historical artefacts as well as current trends in the art of their time. With forty works from the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo, around fifty works from the Folkwang Collection and further loans from renowned public collections such as the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne, and the Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo, the exhibition *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin – Images of a Floating World* makes it possible to bring together and present the original collections of Kojiro Matsukata and Karl Ernst Osthaus in Essen.

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Following the exhibition at the Museum Folkwang, the National Museum of Western Art will continue the juxtaposition of the Osthaus and Matsukata collections with an exhibition on the dialogue with nature in Tokyo from June 2022.

The exhibition is under the patronage of Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. It is made possible by the generous support of the RAG Foundation and the main sponsors RWE AG and Evonik Industries AG; funded by the Federal Foreign Office.

Information

RENOIR, MONET, GAUGUIN **Images of a Floating World**

The Collections of Kojiro Matsukata and Karl Ernst Osthaus

6 February 2022 – 15 May 2022

Tickets at <https://museum-folkwang.ticketfritz.de/>

Mobility partner: Ruhrbahn

Online tickets are valid for short-distance travel with Ruhrbahn to the museum.

A comprehensive exhibition catalogue has been published by Hatje Cantz Verlag.

The audio guide to the exhibition with 24 tracks can be downloaded free of charge via the Museum Folkwang app. It can be used before, during and after the visit to the exhibition (free of charge in the Google Play and App Store).