

Press release

Museum Folkwang 100

The dream of one's own museum: With the Impressionist show *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin*, Museum Folkwang looks back on two outstanding collectors of the early 20th century, Kojiro Matsukata and Karl Ernst Osthaus

Essen, 26.11.2021 – The exhibition highlight *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin – Images of a Floating World* (6 February – 15 May 2022) will kick off Museum Folkwang's centenary in 2022. The important collection of late 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.

Matsukata and Osthaus developed their passion for modern French art out of an industrial environment – their private collections soon sought their own. Osthaus, who came from the Ruhr town of Hagen, and Matsukata, a Japanese shipbuilding entrepreneur, independently cultivated contact with artists in their studios, consorted with the same art dealers and took an interest in each other's cultures of origin. Within a few years, they assembled extensive collections of Impressionist and Late Impressionist art, with the aim of making the new developments in modern art accessible to a broad public in their own museums. They attached just as much importance to historical artefacts as to new design principles of their time. Artistic personalities such as Henry van de Velde (Osthaus) and Frank Brangwyn (Matsukata) acted as advisors to them in building up their collections.

From its beginnings as a collection with natural history and applied arts departments, the Museum Folkwang developed within a very short time after its founding in 1902 in Hagen into one of the pioneering venues for modern art worldwide. The first work that museum founder Karl Ernst Osthaus purchased for his collection of French art was the large-format painting *Lise with a Parasol* by Pierre-Auguste Renoir in 1901 – a masterpiece of Impressionism. Vincent van Gogh's painting *The Wheatfield behind Saint Paul's Hospital with a Reaper*, which was painted during the artist's highly productive phase in Arles, was already shown by Osthaus at the opening of his museum. The Museum Folkwang was thus the first German museum to acquire Late Impressionist art, which was still controversial at the time, and to offer the artists a platform. When, after Osthaus's death, the Folkwang collection moved from Hagen to Essen and merged with the Municipal Art Museum Essen in 1922 to form the new Museum Folkwang, an outstand-

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ing, internationally recognised collection of modern French art was available. To this day, Impressionism is one of the central focal points of the collection.

With the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo, the Museum Folkwang was able to win an important cooperation partner for the anniversary show *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin*. The National Museum of Western Art is one of the most important museums of modern art in Japan and, since its foundation in 1959, has preserved the core holdings of the Matsukata Collection – which at the time of its creation in the 1910s and 1920s held an outstanding international position in the field of French modernism in terms of size and quality. Unlike Osthaus, Matsukata did not succeed in founding a museum during his lifetime. A large part of his collection remained in Europe until the Second World War and at the end of the war, the French government confiscated between 400 and 500 objects that were in Paris. Restitution of the Matsukata collection by France did not take place until the late 1950s on the condition that a museum for Western art be established. Although the original scope of his collection was considerably decimated, this finally realised Matsukata's dream of a museum, today's National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo. For the first time since its foundation, extensive holdings of the Impressionist collection are returning to Europe for the exhibition *Renoir, Monet, Gauguin*.

In the exhibition, important acquisitions by the two collectors enter into dialogue, including Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Lise with a Parasol* (Osthaus) and Édouard Manet's *Portrait of Monsieur Brun* (Matsukata). Several sculptures by Auguste Rodin from both collections make it possible to experience the French sculptor's creative process over thirty years on his life's work *The Gates of Hell* in the show. Works by pioneers of modernism such as Paul Gauguin meet major works by his contemporaries Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne. The fascination of both collectors for Pointillism comes to light in the compilations of works by Paul Signac, Henri Edmond Cross and Théo van Rysselberghe. Finally, in the central hall of the exhibition, a 360-degree landscape panorama unfolds with paintings by Claude Monet, Gustave Courbet and Charles-François Daubigny, which inspired the title *Images of a Floating World*. The selection of French modernist works is complemented by a group of East Asian artworks from the former Osthaus collection: Matsukata and Osthaus were united by the idea of a museum that encompassed fine art as well as decorative arts, Western as well as Eastern art. The interaction of past and present as well as the exchange between the older and younger generation of artists were also decisive for both collectors in the conception of their museums. In the exhibition, the expansive installations by the contemporary Japanese artists Chiharu Shiota (*1972) and Tabaimo (*1975) continue this unifying idea into the present.

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 theme of People and Nature in Tokyo from June 2022.

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Other lenders to the exhibition are the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and the Artizon Museum with the Ishibashi Foundation in Tokyo, the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud in Cologne and the Osthaus Museum in Hagen. They all make it possible to bring together works from the Matsukata and Osthaus collections, some of which have been separated for decades.

The exhibition is under the patronage of Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

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Information

RENOIR, MONET, GAUGUIN

Images of a Floating World

The Collections of Kojiro Matsukata and Karl Ernst Osthaus
6 February 2022 – 15 May 2022

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

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Press conference: 3 February 2022, 11 a.m.