

Press release
Zurich, 30 August 2018

Kunsthaus Zürich presents 'Robert Delaunay and The City of Lights'

From 31 August to 18 November 2018 the Kunsthaus Zürich is staging a major exhibition devoted to the work of Robert Delaunay (1885–1941). Its key themes include Paris, early aviation, sport and role of colour in painting at the dawn of the modern era. Presenting some 80 paintings and works on paper, it is the most comprehensive exhibition to date of Delaunay's oeuvre to be shown in Switzerland.

A pioneer of abstract art, Delaunay investigated the use of colour in the depiction of movement, technology and sport. The Kunsthaus exhibition considers his position as a central figure within the Parisian art world and shows the full range of his work, from the early 'divisionist' and Fauve portraits of 1906 and 1907 to his designs for the Palais des Chemins de Fer and the Palais de l'Air at the 1937 Paris World's Fair and the last great series of paintings, 'Rhythms without End', created in the final years of his life. The presentation is enriched by the inclusion of photographs and films by prominent contemporaries who were also inspired by the city of Paris, such as Germaine Krull, Man Ray, André Kertész, Ilse Bing and René Le Somptier.

THE EIFFEL TOWER AND THE ADVANCE OF TECHNOLOGY

A pictorial vocabulary based on colour contrasts and circles, acting as formal elements and cosmic symbols, became the hallmarks of Delaunay's work. The exhibition will include several important examples of his famous series from the pre First world War years, such as his renditions of the curved vaults and stained-glass windows of the late-Gothic church of Saint Séverin in the Quartier Latin and images of the quintessentially Parisian landmark and symbol of modernity, the Eiffel Tower; his related images of 'The City', where views of the rooftops of Paris, a giant Ferris wheel, aeroplanes and the sun dominate the picture plane; and his 'Window' series, in which Delaunay created a new type of painting based entirely on colour contrasts as equivalents to the interaction of light, space and movement. In these works the fabric of the city seems to dissolve into a field of broken hues. Guillaume Apollinaire, the critic and supporter of Delaunay's work, assigned this optical effect, based on the self-contained relationships, tensions and harmonies of pure colour, to his own concept of Orphism, an approach that brought together colour, light, music and poetry. Delaunay preferred to refer to it as 'pure painting', an idea that was perhaps best explored in his celebrated 'Disc (The First Disc)' (1913), in which he

avoided all apparent references to the visible world, instead offering a concrete representation of prismatic light effects.

DYNAMISM ON LAND, WATER AND IN THE AIR

The disc form recurs in Delaunay's paintings from 1906 onwards. Between 1913 and 1932 this shape formed the subject of several canvases entitled 'Sun and Moon', such as the spectacular example in the Kunsthaus's own collection. A series of works from 1914 dedicated to the pioneer of aviation, Louis Blériot, also makes extensive use of the circular form. In his quest to depict dynamism, Delaunay embarked on a series of more representational works of modern life, including his famous 'Runners' paintings of 1924–25. He had already tackled the sport theme in his earlier 'Cardiff Team' paintings. It is probable that his interest in movement and the races was rekindled by the spectacle of the Olympics, which were held in Paris in 1924.

SOCIETY PORTRAITS

During the 1920s he also painted numerous portraits of his circle in Paris, among them the poets and writers Philippe Soupault and Tristan Tzara, together with several fashionable socialites who are shown wearing fabrics designed by Sonia Delaunay. In his series 'Rhythms without End', Delaunay became close to the world of geometric abstraction that was gathering momentum in Paris in the early 1930s. His work later served as a model for Op Art and also became a leitmotif for artists working in a concrete, constructivist vein.

LOANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Major museums and private collections in Europe and America assisted Simonetta Fraquelli, a freelance curator specializing in early 20th-century Parisian art, by lending some of their Delaunay masterpieces which, for conservation reasons, are rarely permitted to travel. They include the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou in Paris, the van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

AUDIOGUIDE, GUIDED TOURS, PUBLICATION

A scholarly and lavishly illustrated catalogue in English and German (Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 176 pages, 147 illustrations) accompanies the exhibition. It includes newly commissioned essays by Céline Chicha-Castex, Nancy Ireson, Anne de Mondenard and Simonetta Fraquelli that contribute to the critical re-evaluation of this remarkable artist. It is available at the Kunsthaus shop for CHF 51 and at bookstores.

The exhibition website tells many of the fascinating stories that inspired Delaunay, including the murder of a publisher and the first flight across the

English Channel. The Kunsthaus's art education service has produced audioguides for adults and children. For those who prefer a more personal approach, public guided tours in German take place on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 6 p.m., Fridays at 3 p.m. and Sundays at 11 a.m. An English guided tour is provided on 15 September at 4 p.m.

A contribution to culture by Credit Suisse – Partner Kunsthaus Zürich.
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GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthaus.ch

Fri-Sun/Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see www.kunsthaus.ch.

Admission to the exhibition: CHF 23 / CHF 18 (concessions and groups).

Combination tickets including the collection and exhibition CHF 26 / CHF 19.

Free admission for children and young people up to age 16 and members of the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft.

Advance sales: SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on travel and admission: at stations and by phoning Rail Service 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/min. by land line), www.sbb.ch/kunsthaus-zuerich.

Zurich Tourism: hotel room reservations and ticket sales, Tourist Information at Zurich Main Railway Station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, information@zuerich.com, www.zuerich.com.

NOTE AND CONTACT FOR THE MEDIA

Visual materials are available at www.kunsthaus.ch > Information > Press.

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