

An impressionist landscape painting featuring a range of blue mountains in the middle ground, a body of water in the foreground, and a sky with soft, pinkish clouds. The style is characterized by visible brushstrokes and a vibrant color palette.

FONDATION BEYELER

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# RUDOLF STAECHELIN COLLECTION

CÉZANNE · DEGAS · GAUGUIN · HODLER · MANET  
MONET · PICASSO · PISSARRO · RENOIR · VAN GOGH



## RUDOLF STAECHELIN COLLECTION

The paintings from the celebrated collection of Rudolf Staechelin (1881–1946) are returning to Basel, after a four-year interval in which the pictures were shown (with works from the Im Obersteg Collection) in widely acclaimed exhibitions at the Museo Nacional Reina Sofia in Madrid and the Phillips Collection in Washington. Now, from the end of August 2019, nineteen outstanding examples of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Classic Modernism are to be seen at the Fondation Beyeler in Riehen. The paintings, by Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Ferdinand Hodler, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Camille Pissarro, and Auguste Renoir, are currently displayed together in a dedicated presentation. Subsequently, individual pictures will be included in the periodically rehung exhibition of the Fondation Beyeler's permanent collection. Thus the works from the Rudolf Staechelin Collection will be publicly accessible again in Basel, where a new chapter begins in the collection's eventful history.

### 1–7

This symbol points out those works in the exhibition that are commented on in the following. Please watch out for the number and symbol on the captions to the exhibits, and the corresponding numbers in the guide.



# 1

## **Pablo Picasso, *Arlequin au loup*, 1918**

The figure of the Harlequin, deriving from the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, evolved over the years in France into a popular character combining humor with elements of melancholy. The Harlequin surfaces very early in Picasso's work, especially in the paintings of the Rose Period, but also in the artist's Cubist phase. In a sketchbook from 1916, Harlequin figures appear in widely varying guises, some depicted in a seemingly Cubist style, with others in a naturalistic manner. At this point Picasso was especially occupied with theater and ballet, designing stage sets and costumes for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

The painting *Arlequin au loup* shows a theatrical figure rendered with an astonishing degree of realism. Picasso places the Harlequin in front of a white curtain; the head and hat are slightly tilted, the mouth closed. The arm and hand gestures are eloquent. Rudolf Staechelin bought this work in 1918, the year of its completion.

## 2

### **Paul Cézanne, *Verre et pommes*, 1879–1882**

The still life plays a central role in the work of Paul Cézanne. Through this genre, the artist incessantly explored the principles of painting, especially with regard to compositional structure. Apples that he arranged on a table were one of his preferred motifs. These compositions are artfully balanced: the apples lie in two groups of three on the table, with a green “solitaire” between them, placed slightly to the front. The tabletop, the upper edge of which divides the canvas into two halves, emphasizes the flatness of the picture, the apples its spatiality. Cézanne plays with surface, space and the importance of color. A contrast to the apples is provided by the transparent glass, which also stands on the table, reflecting the light at right angles to the edge of the table and the napkin. This accent of white is continued in the cloth and imbued with a sense of movement. With the red and green apples, Cézanne employs an apparently simple motif to show us how a picture and our own perception work.

**Vincent van Gogh, *Le jardin de Daubigny*, July 1890**

*Le jardin de Daubigny* was painted in Auvers-sur-Oise, where Vincent van Gogh spent the last two months of his life. The work is one of thirteen paintings in the wide, double-square format that the artist began to use in mid-June 1890.

With his dynamic, powerful brushwork, van Gogh gave expression to his own, very personal view of the garden in summertime and the property in the background. This is a nurtured and secluded place of retreat, as demonstrated by the carefully laid-out flower beds and the trees that line the garden, for example. Yet in his panoramic depiction, Van Gogh also emphasizes the garden's scale and movement.

Technical investigations of the weave pattern of van Gogh's canvases, carried out by the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, revealed that the canvas for all of the painter's double-square pictures was cut from the same roll. The canvas for *Le jardin de Daubigny* from the Rudolf Staechelin Collection and for *Champ aux meules de blé* in the Beyeler Collection are now reunited in this exhibition.

## 4

### Ferdinand Hodler, *Le Grammont après la pluie*, 1917

The Grammont is a mountain that rises to the south of Lake Geneva. Ferdinand Hodler painted numerous views of the mountain under different light conditions – in this case, after a rain shower. The vantage point for these paintings is generally just above Vevey or Montreux, with this picture perhaps the most impressive of the entire series. The painter did not hesitate to modify the physical form of the landscape for the sake of compositional coherence: the promontory shown here jutting out into the lake is less clearly visible in reality. This slightly adjusted visual element serves the artist's aim of depicting the mountain as a heavy, dark mass looming above the lake. Hodler seeks to create an exalted image of nature in all its beauty and monumentality. Through the painter, the Grammont becomes a manifestation of the sublime.

## 5

### Ferdinand Hodler, *La morte*, 1915

Death, for Ferdinand Hodler, was an ever-present experience. His parents and his siblings all died while he was young. The loss of his mother and of his lover Valentine Godé-Darel must have been particularly dreadful for him. In the painting from the Rudolf Staechelin Collection, Hodler conveys the finality of Valentine's passing, on January 25, 1915, with remarkable poignancy. Her corpse appears laid out on horizontal bands of color. The elongated body is accentuated at the head and feet by short vertical lines of reddish-brown. The artist emphasizes the flatness of the composition by means of the layering in the lower half of the picture. This effect is further reinforced by the empty white area above the body, and by the narrow blue lines that conclude the upper edge of the composition. The format and structure are reminiscent of Hodler's landscapes. The model for this composition may have been the painting *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1521/22) by Hans Holbein the Younger, which Hodler saw at the Kunstmuseum Basel in 1885. Hodler succeeds in finding a form, at once striking and appropriate, to express the unspeakable mystery of death.

## 6

### Édouard Manet, *Tête de femme*, 1870

The female portrait is one of the most frequent and richly varied subjects in Édouard Manet's oeuvre. The painter depicted women in their social roles in public spaces, taking inspiration from the models of classical antiquity, but also, as in the painting *Tête de femme*, creating individual studies in a highly personal style. The woman portrayed here, whose identity has never been conclusively established, is rendered as a half-length figure, seen frontally and in close-up. The dark back-ground and sitter's garments are created in loose brushstrokes. In her face, the color condenses into an opaque layer of paint from which the eyes, in particular, stand out. The impression conveyed is that the subject finds direct eye contact with the painter disagreeable at such close range, as if she were trying to avoid his scrutiny by turning her upper body slightly to one side and tilting her head. Her averted gaze becomes the sole element of action in the picture. A spatial field of tension arises in the area between the sitter looking away on the one hand, and the painter as well as the viewer looking closely on the other.

**Edgar Degas, *Femme à sa toilette*, circa 1892**

In his late work, Edgar Degas was preoccupied with two motifs: the dancer and, above all, the female nude. He often depicted intimate scenes from everyday life, as in *Femme à sa toilette*. Degas was a superb draftsman, who continually grappled with the question of how to render a simple gesture, or even a complex sequence of movements, on a static picture surface. In *Femme à sa toilette*, the front of the picture space is structured diagonally by a washstand with a blue water jug and basin. The woman's body follows the same line, and thereby interrupts the interplay of powerful blue tones between the foreground and background. The woman stoops over the washbasin, balancing one hand above her head while the other lifts a sponge to her left armpit. Although the face and body are only vaguely sketched, the movement is recorded with great precision.

Shortly after Degas's death, the artist's entire estate was sold at auction. Rudolf Staechelin took this opportunity to purchase *Femme à sa toilette*, together with Paul Cézanne's still life *Verre et pommes (2)* from Degas's private collection.



Ferdinand Hodler  
*Le Mont-Blanc aux nuages roses*, 1918  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 85 cm  
Rudolf Staechelin Collection  
Photo: Robert Bayer

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