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# KUNST HISTORISCHES MUSEUM WIEN

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## Bruegel

October 2, 2018 - January 13, 2019

Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna

### Statement of the General Director

Anyone interested in art knows the name Bruegel: Pieter Bruegel the Elder and his work have attained a legendary status in our collective consciousness. The most important Netherlandish painter and draughtsman of the 16th century had already achieved great fame during his own lifetime, but was largely forgotten in the 18th and 19th centuries and only rediscovered by art historians in the early 20th century. His variety of subjects, which draw on the earlier pictorial traditions of Jheronimus Bosch and the latter part of the Middle Ages, and their originality of execution, still elicit great fascination from viewers today.

Once in a lifetime – this commemorative exhibition on Pieter Bruegel the Elder, who died 450 years ago next year, is one of the largest exhibitions ever hosted by the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna. Thanks to collectors from the Habsburg family, the Picture Gallery of the Kunsthistorisches Museum is fortunate to hold more than twelve paintings securely attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The 2018–19 jubilee exhibition, commemorating the 450th anniversary of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's death, deserves particular note as the first comprehensive monographic presentation ever devoted to the master. Also for the first time, his works in different media – paintings, drawings and prints – are united in one show. Only in Vienna could this outstanding project have succeeded, as the Kunsthistorisches Museum owns nearly a third of the master's paintings.

While recent years have seen the focus of research increasingly devoted to the painted oeuvre of the Bruegel sons, a milestone in the investigation of the painted work of the dynasty's founder has now been set through the exhibition of technical studies of all twelve panels in the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The art-historical scholarship on the paintings was thoroughly revised, and the provenance of the Vienna panels critically examined. Spurred on by this comprehensive project and the prospect of presenting its results to the public for the first time, a scholarly community was assembled for this unique venture of a monographic exhibition. This exceedingly positive response is mirrored both in the lively academic exchange among arts professionals and in the sensational number of loaned works by Bruegel that can now be shown to the public. For their generosity and great faith in entrusting us with such fragile works – all among the most precious holdings of their respective collections – we extend our wholehearted thanks to the numerous institutions and lenders from around the world who have contributed, and who have collegially and constructively supported this project.

I am extremely proud that our team of renowned international curators – Sabine Pénot, Elke Oberthaler, Manfred Sellink and Ron Sponk – were able to realize what is the world's largest-ever exhibition of works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. This show is both a gift and an invitation to dive into Bruegel's world, whose subjects remain relevant even after 450 years.

Sabine Haag, General Director of the KHM-Museumsverband