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JUNE 21 -
OCTOBER 16, 2022

CRANACH THE UNTAMED
THE EARLY YEARS IN VIENNA

The exhibition is a collaboration between the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna and the Oskar Reinhart Collection "Am Römerholz" in Winterthur, and it is the first-ever exhibition to focus on the few years Lucas Cranach the Elder (Kronach 1472-1553) spent in Vienna at the beginning of his career. We know of only ten works that he produced during his stay in the city, and most of them are on show in the exhibition. The *Cuspinian Portraits* and Kunsthistorisches Museum's *St Jerome in Penitence* – seminal works from this period of Cranach's life – are displayed together in the city where they were painted. Together with high-carat loans from the Albertina, the Picture Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin among others, they form the heart of the show, which focuses on religious works in Cranach's early oeuvre.

We know a great deal about the middle and final phases of his life, thanks to the fact that Cranach became court painter to the Electors of Saxony in 1505 and continued to serve them until the end of his life, and because he was a close friend of Martin Luther, putting a face on the latter's reform movement. Another important reason for Cranach's success was his workshop, which implemented his manner with great efficiency and flexibility, making him one of the most popular and productive painters of the German Renaissance.

The Viennese Cranach: a late Discovery

In contrast, his early Viennese oeuvre, which includes some of his best-known compositions, was only discovered around 1900. There are no extant contemporary sources on Cranach in Vienna. All we have are later remarks by members of his circle, and the fact that patrons who commissioned some of his early works lived in Vienna, which suggests the artist was active there.

Lucas Cranach the Elder first trained with his father Hans Maler, before spending formative months in Nuremberg, a city without guild regulations, something that attracted many artists. Here, Cranach encountered Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), who was not only in contact with Cranach's later master, Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, but also with Conrad Celtis, the "arch-humanist" appointed to Vienna University in 1497 by Emperor Maximilian I.

Cranach's Patrons

During his stay in Vienna, Cranach's manner evolved into a virtuoso style: employing an at times novel, highly-expressive and emotional idiom, he knew how to delight his patrons. The fact that Johannes Cuspinian, a professor at Vienna University, and his wife Anna commissioned Cranach in 1502/03 to paint their portraits to commemorate their wedding suggests that the almost-thirty-year-old artist moved to Vienna around the year 1500. From 1490 onwards, the city enjoyed a period of political stability; however, it seems to have lacked artists able to produce sophisticated portraits and woodcuts. Lucas Cranach the Elder made the most of this "lack of skilled workers", winning a circle of important clients among the humanists settling there. He presumably stayed in Vienna until 1503/04, when he moved to Wittenberg to enter the service of the Elector of Saxony and found his workshop. In Vienna he worked for Johannes Cuspinian (1473-1529), the humanist Johannes Fuchsmagen (1450-1510), who may have commissioned the *St Jerome* (1502), and Johannes Winterburger (1460/65-1519), the city's leading book publisher. According to the guild regulations passed in 1500, only married master-painters were allowed to settle in Vienna. However, members of Vienna University were subject to the autonomous jurisdiction of the university, and this may be the reason why Cranach was allowed to work there.

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Between Religious Tradition and Humanism

The exhibition showcases a number of paintings together with drawings and woodcuts from Cranach's early years; in addition, we present little-known copies of lost originals by him. For the first time, the *Wedding Diptych of Dr Johannes Cuspinian and Anna Cuspinian-Putsch* leaves the Oskar Reinhardt Collection in Winterthur to return temporarily to the place where it was painted – Vienna. Cranach produced it to commemorate their wedding, and he decided on a novel approach: he placed the sitters not in a room but in a landscape filled with Christian-humanist symbolism.

Because of its coarse character, the *Crucifixion* (*Schotten-kreuzigung*) is regarded as Cranach's oldest known work (1500; Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna). Acquired by the museum from the Schottenstift, a Benedictine Monastery in Vienna, the small panel depicts the martyred Christ, his body covered in sores and wounds. The group of mourners documents Cranach's familiarity with Franconian painting, but the costumes of Christ's enemies are informed by Ottoman, Polish and Hungarian models, which the artist presumably first encountered in Vienna.

Cranach's unique woodcut *Mount of Calvary*, a loan from the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, probably also dates from around 1500. The artist convincingly and drastically renders the sufferings of the crucified men through their often grotesquely deformed bodies.

The Penance of St Jerome is generally regarded as Cranach's first extant dated painting (1502; Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna). As in the Cuspinian portraits, he placed the protagonist in a verdant landscape. All forms seem strangely animated, and the assembled animals gaze at us in a somewhat disconcerting way. Johannes Fuchsmagen, a diplomat and humanist living in Vienna who chose St Jerome as his patron saint, may have commissioned both this painting and *The Twelve Drawings of the Months in the "Vienna Filocalus"*. This manuscript, now in the Austrian National Library, is the oldest of several extant copies of a late-classical calendar almanac written by the calligrapher Furius Dionysius Filocalus (AD 354). Of these personifications of the twelve months, the exhibition in Vienna initially presents *May*, later substituted by *January*.

St Valentine with a Donor (perhaps Valentin Kardinger) from the Picture Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna was originally the outer wing of a now-lost altarpiece. It is shown together with *The Stigmatization of St Francis*, a second wing that is now in the Belvedere in Vienna. The whip-like tree boldly cutting across St Francis is typical of small forms and dynamic elements.

The Staatliche Museen zu Berlin have lent us the charcoal studies *The Penitent Thief* and *The Impenitent Thief*. The limbs of the thieves condemned to die on the cross with Jesus flail around ecstatically while their bodies bear only a passing resemblance to the human anatomy. Here, the artist imagines being broken by and rising up against the pain as two contradictory reactions to these gruesome tortures.

Another highlight of the exhibition is *A Foolish Virgin* (c. 1503; Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg). Unfinished details suggest this is a (training) study or template. She is one of the girls in a parable in the gospel according to Matthew, and here we encounter the vigorously modelled, voluminous drapery typical of Cranach's Viennese works. They are almost an echo of the wearer's agitation.

Cranach did not stay long in Vienna, and this makes the expressive idiom of the works he produced here and his endeavours to embed his sitters and saints in nature even more remarkable. These works are a world away from the courtly-elegant manner Cranach developed after 1505 as court artists to the Electors of Saxony.

The exhibition catalogue examines in depth this, the artist's first known phase and presents almost all extant works that Cranach produced during his sojourn in Vienna, most of which are now among the star exhibits of the collections housing them. Individual essays also explore Cranach's artistic roots, the Vienna in which he lived and worked, and the history of how his Viennese works were only rediscovered around 1900.

Exhibition curator: Guido Messling

Installation and technical realisation: Gerhard Veigel | Museums- und Ausstellungsservice

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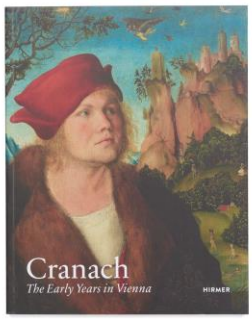
CATALOGUE



CRANACH
The Early Years in Vienna
Essays by K. Baumhoff, B. Blauensteiner, A. Fingernagel, S. Heiser, C. Koch, G. Messling, E. Pokorny, K. Richter
168 pages, 70 colour photographs
20 x 24 cm, paperback
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price: € 24.95

Available in the Museum Shop and online

EVENTS

In connection with the exhibition, we offer a varied programme comprising guided tours, lectures, and a book presentation:

THURSDAY EVENINGS AT THE MUSEUM
Lectures in the Bassano Hall

Thursday, July 7, 7 pm
Presentation of the book Cranach A–Z (Hatje Cantz) with the author Teresa Präauer

“Oh Cranach!” The writer Teresa Präauer begins her trenchant stories on the life and work of Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) and his son with this joyful exclamation. She also explores the workings of Cranach’s celebrated workshop, and his everyday life as a successful businessman in tumultuous times.

Teresa Präauer’s alert gaze focuses on both mythological and religious figures such as Venus and Eve, or Cranach’s still well-known portraits of his friend Martin Luther. She continually references the present, for example, when she explores the “Instagramability” of Cranach’s idealized faces.

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CURATOR TOURS WITH GUIDO MESSLING
Thursday, 21 July & Thursday, 1 September
at 6.30 pm
duration: c. 60 min.
tickets: € 6

GUIDED TOURS OF THE SPECIAL EXHIBITION
Thursdays at 7 pm
Sundays at 3 pm
duration: c. 60 min.
tickets: € 6

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us on **Instagram** and **Facebook** and keep up-to-date with preparations for the exhibition prior to the opening, catch a glimpse of the show, and receive information about our programme of events.

IG: @kunsthistorischesmuseumvienna
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OPENING TIMES AND ADMISSION CHARGES

Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna
Maria-Theresien-Platz
1010 Vienna

Information on opening hours and admission prices:
https://www.khm.at/en/visit/besucherinformation/hours-admission/

All tickets are also available at the online shop:
shop.khm.at/en/

Tue thru Sun, 10 AM – 6 PM
Thu till 9 PM

Open daily in June, July and August!

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PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

Press photographs are available in the press section of our website free of charge, for your topical reporting: http://press.khm.at/.

Lucas Cranach the Elder (Kronach 1472–1553 Weimar)
Marriage-Diptych of Johannes Cuspinian and Anna Cuspinian-Putsch
1502/03
Pine wood, each 60 × 45 cm
© Sammlung Oskar Reinhart «Am Römerholz», Winterthur

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Lucas Cranach the Elder
St Valentine with a Donor
c. 1502/03
Spruce wood, 91.5 × 49.5 cm
© Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Wien

Lucas Cranach the Elder
The Penance of St Jerome
dated 1502 bottom centre
Limewood, 56 × 41.4 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna
© KHM-Museumsverband

Lucas Cranach the Elder
The Crucifixion of Christ
("Schotten Crucifixion")
c. 1500
Limewood, 58.2 × 45.9 cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna
© KHM-Museumsverband

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Lucas Cranach the Elder
The Mount of Calvary
c. 1500
Woodcut, 399 × 285 mm
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstich-Kabinett

Lucas Cranach the Elder
The Penitent Thief on the Cross
c. 1500
Charcoal, heightened with white, on red prepared paper, 226 × 121 mm
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstich-Kabinett

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Lucas Cranach the Elder
The Impenitent Thief on the Cross
c. 1500
Charcoal, heightened with white, on red prepared paper and 215 × 218 mm
© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstich-Kabinett

MEDIA ACCREDITATION

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We request that, in addition to mentioning your medium, you also specify the date of your visit and attach a scan of your valid press pass. Many thanks for your understanding!

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