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*Arcimboldo – Bassano – Bruegel*  
*Nature's Time*

11 March to 29 June 2025

Time and nature – they play a central role in human life, and they are the focus of the spring special exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The spectacular presentation explores the connections between people and their environment in sixteenth-century Europe and how these were depicted in art. Of particular interest is the visualization of nature's annual cycles: the seasons and the months.

The Renaissance witnessed many important changes: population growth, Humanism, technical and scientific developments, as well as expeditions by land and sea to distant corners of the globe.

The Kunsthistorisches Museum houses eighty works by the Bassano Family, celebrated Venetian artists who specialized in evocative landscapes and masterful depictions of nature. The conclusion of a comprehensive research project that focused on this dynasty of painters and their workshop was an important impetus for this exhibition. With over 140 works – by, among others, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525/30–1563), Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593), Jacopo Bassano (1510/12–1592) and his son Leandro Bassano (1557–1622), Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), and Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) – the show explores how Renaissance artists experimented with the depiction of the seasons, the cycles of nature, and the passing of time. Central to the exhibition are art-historical aspects and the content of the works as well as why and for which location they were commissioned. The show enables guests to understand

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and appreciate how people in the Renaissance positioned themselves and found their place in the world.

A wealth of marvellous artworks awaits visitors to the exhibition. On show are paintings, sculptures and tapestries, clocks, globes, scientific instruments and calendars as well as precious manuscripts and printed works from the rich holdings of the Kunsthistorisches Museum and loans from national and international museums, among them the Albertina, Vienna; the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung, Munich; the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence; LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections, Vaduz – Vienna; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, London; the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; the Austrian National Library; Royal Collection Trust, London; the Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.

This splendid exhibition takes visitors on a fascinating journey of discovery: from the beginnings of a new understanding of natural phenomena in the art around 1500 to the evolution of still life painting in the early seventeenth century, in which artists made nature the main focus of their works.

The exhibition *Arcimboldo – Bassano – Bruegel, Nature's Time* was curated by Francesca Del Torre Scheuch.

The exhibition architecture is by Gerhard Veigel.

A lavishly illustrated catalogue will be published in German (Belser) and English (Hannibal).

An extensive supporting programme with guided tours and lectures as well as an informative and interactive web journal for adults and children accompany the show.

<https://www.khm.at/en/visit/exhibitions/arcimboldo-bassano-bruegel/>

## EXHIBITION TOUR

### **A new way of looking at nature (Gallery I)**

The earliest known renderings of life cycles date back to antiquity. However, only in the sixteenth century were depictions of signs of the zodiac and planets derived from classical antiquity combined with images of rural activities. This is how pastoral every-day scenes, animals, and plants entered the canon of European art. Works that focused on seasonal activities, festivities, and customs reflect a growing interest in the seasons.

Art's ability to depict the world and its inhabitants helped make it into a strategic instrument in the service of science. The invention of printing made it possible to disseminate foundational scientific works on anatomy, fauna, and flora. Illustrated books such as Giovannino de' Grassi's *Taccuino di disegni* – one of the few surviving pattern books of the Middle Ages – formed the basis for exchanging knowledge.

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Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer represent the vanguard in the evolution of scientific modernity. Leonardo's plant studies *Sprigs of Oak and Dyer's Greenweed*, produced as theoretical and artistic reflections on the constantly changing universe, and Dürer's *Dead European Roller* and his *Bouquet of Violets* both depicted nature with unflinching verisimilitude. Dürer's exquisite handling would inform the technique of later generations of artists who copied and disseminated his studies and scientific illustrations.

Expeditions showed the importance of navigational instruments, turning them into sought after pieces for royal collectors. On show in the exhibition are Dürer's detailed *Maps of the Southern and Northern Sky*, widely disseminated as woodcuts, ground-breaking globes by Gerhard Mercator, and Erasmus Habermel's state-of-the-art instruments to determine the points of the compass.

The evolution of modern science reached a new level in the second half of the sixteenth century, at which point it also became a subject for artists, here represented by Giorgione's (1477/78–1510) celebrated but still mysterious *Three Philosophers*, who are shown clutching instruments that suggest astronomical and mathematical knowledge.

## **Courtly banquets and conversations (Gallery II)**

Working in the middle of the sixteenth century, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and Jacopo Bassano focus on the relationship between man and nature by depicting the seasons in their art. They are interpreters of a new zeitgeist and transpose the seasons onto the walls of private rooms designed for convivial conversations and intellectual exchanges.

Pieter Bruegel introduces the depiction of seasonal activities, a decisive step in the invention of landscape paintings as an independent genre. Bruegel's series of *The Seasons* originally comprised six paintings owned by Nicolaes Jongelincx, a wealthy merchant in Antwerp. In his celebrated compositions *Hunters in the Snow (Winter)*, *The Gloomy Day (Early Spring)*, and *The Return of the Herd (Autumn)*, Bruegel brilliantly captures the changes in nature that occur in the course of a year through light and atmosphere. The series presumably decorated the walls of Jongelincx's dining room, offering topics for conversations on art and pastoral life for the host and his guests.

Giuseppe Arcimboldo, originally from Milan, works for three Habsburg emperors, Ferdinand I, Maximilian II, and Rudolf II. He, like his imperial patrons, is deeply interested in nature. Arcimboldo incorporates scientific viewpoints in his art, and he proves himself to be a careful and accurate observer of nature. His fascinating cycles of allegorical portraits depict the seasons and the elements. As a designer of courtly festivities, he knows how to stage them: He fuses typical seasonal fruits, flowers, and animals to create original heads that stimulate intellectual discourse. He also alludes to the good government of the Habsburgs. Their rule represents harmony and continuity – just like the cycle of nature.

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## The ‘Viennese’ months (Gallery VIII)

The Dal Ponte family, better known under the name Bassano, was one of the most celebrated dynasties of artists of their age. Their depictions of the seasons were much sought after well into the seventeenth century. It also owes its rise to the growing interest of the Venetian aristocracy in land purchases on the mainland and the dissemination of agricultural knowledge through a lively publishing activity. Moreover, the Bassano Family were also skilled at adapting their compositions to the requirements of their different patrons.

The seasons are perhaps the most popular subjects produced by the family patriarch, Jacopo. *Spring (The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden)*, *Summer (The Sacrifice of Isaac)*, and *Autumn (Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law)* depict every-day life, which is harmoniously combined with religious motifs. One of Jacopo’s sons, Francesco, enlarges the format of these compositions and incorporates motifs of the zodiac, replacing the biblical scenes included in his father’s earlier series.

Also on show is the fascinating series painted by another of Jacopo’s sons, Leandro, that depicts the *Twelve Months*. Leandro takes centre stage in the exhibition. His series documents how the subject of the seasons evolved over time. The paintings created for courtly patrons and large spaces surprise with depictions of peasants and merchants interacting with aristocratic landowners, while the previously strictly rural scenes are now expanded to include an urban setting. Leandro also introduces innovative new subjects, such as Carnival in February and a Lenten market in March, offering charming insights into every-day life in the Venetian Republic during the Renaissance.

## Epilogue (Gallery IX)

The conflation of art and science in depictions of the seasons and the months functioned as an important stepping stone for the development of a novel artistic taste and of still life painting. The final gallery juxtaposes the courtly iconography of the tapestry from the *Grotesque Months* series and the bourgeois dimension of Johann Baptist Saive’s (c.1540–1624) seasons.

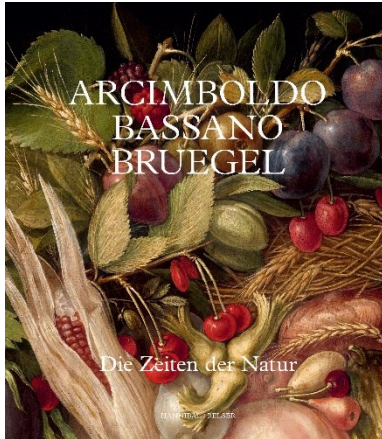
The exhibition concludes with Arcimboldo’s portrait *The Four Seasons in one Head*, an iconic summary of the passage of time.

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## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



### *Arcimboldo – Bassano – Bruegel. Die Zeiten der Natur*

Francesca Del Torre Scheuch (Ed.)

320 pages, 24 × 28 cm, hard back

German: Belser

English: Hannibal

Price: € 49

Available in our museum shops and [online](#).

## KID'S SPECIALS



### *Investigating the seasons*

#### **A research booklet on the exhibition**

Young visitors aged 6 to 10 can look forward to their own wall texts in the exhibition as well as a free children's folder in German and English. With the help of Emilio the donkey and his friends, children can explore the exhibition for themselves.

Young researchers can also find additional information in the form of games in our web journal: [zeitendernatur.khm.at/spiele](http://zeitendernatur.khm.at/spiele)

The free research booklet for children is available in German and English at the entrance to the exhibition.



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**PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS**

Press photographs are available in the press section of our website free of charge, for your topical reporting: [press.khm.at/en](https://press.khm.at/en)



Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593)

***Four Seasons in One Head***

1590

Poplar panel; 60.4 × 44.7 cm

Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. 2010.77.1;

Paul Mellon Fund

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington



Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593)

***Summer***

1563

Lime panel; 67 × 50.8 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

© KHM-Museumsverband



Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593)

***Winter***

1563

Lime panel; 66.6 × 50.5 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

© KHM-Museumsverband

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Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593)

**Earth**

c.1566

Panel; 70 x 49 cm

LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections,  
Vaduz – Vienna

© LIECHTENSTEIN, The Princely Collections,  
Vaduz – Vienna/SCALA, Florence



Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1526–1593)

**Spring**

1555/60

Panel; 68.3 × 57 cm

Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,  
Alte Pinakothek

© bpk/Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen



Jacopo dal Ponte, called Bassano (1510/12–1592)

**Summer (Sacrifice of Isaac)**

1570/75

Canvas, top and bottom extended; 78.5 × 110.5 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

© KHM-Museumsverband

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Jacopo dal Ponte, called Bassano (1510/12–1592)  
***Sleeping Shepherd***

c.1568

Canvas; 99.5 × 137.5 cm

Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum

© Szépművészeti Múzeum/Museum of Fine Arts



Francesco dal Ponte, called Bassano (1549–1592)  
***Summer***

c.1580

Canvas; 111 cm × 145.5 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

© KHM-Museumsverband



Leandro dal Ponte, genannt Bassano (1557–1622)  
***June***

1581/87

Canvas; 145 × 216 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

© KHM-Museumsverband



Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525/30–1569)  
***The Return of the Herd (Autumn)***

1565

Oak panel; 117 × 159.7 cm

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery

© KHM-Museumsverband



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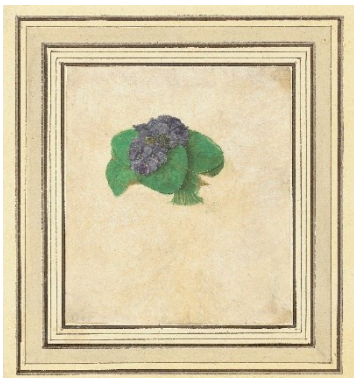
Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525/30–1569)  
***Hunters in the Snow (Winter)***  
1565  
Oak panel; 116.5 × 162 cm  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery  
© KHM-Museumsverband



Giorgio da Castelfranco,  
called Giorgione (1477/78–1510)  
***The Three Philosophers***  
1508/09  
Canvas; 125.5 × 146.2 cm  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery  
© KHM-Museumsverband



Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)  
***Sprigs of Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*)***  
1506/12  
Red chalk, touches of white chalk, on orange-red prepared paper; 188 × 154 mm  
The Royal Collection/HM King Charles III  
© Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2025, Royal Collection Trust



Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)  
***Bouquet of Violets***  
1495/1500  
Watercolour and gouache on vellum, highlighted with white, mounted on cardboard; 115 × 102 mm  
Vienna, Albertina  
© Albertina, Vienna

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Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)

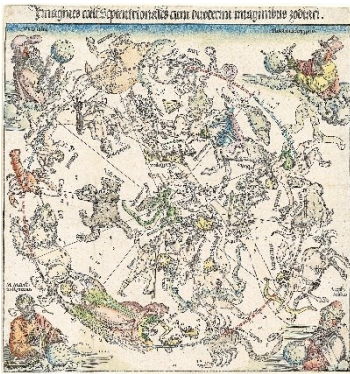
***Dead European Roller***

c.1500

Watercolour and gouache on vellum, highlighted with opaque white and gold; 274 × 198 mm

Vienna, Albertina

© Albertina, Vienna



Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528)

***Map of the Northern Sky***

1515

Woodcut, coloured; 450 × 433 mm

Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München

© Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München



Giovannino de' Grassi (documented in Milan c.1389–1398) and Workshop

***Taccuino di disegni***

1385/1410

Various techniques on parchment; 32 numbered leaves; 205 × 146 mm–260 × 186 mm

Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica 'Angelo Mai' e Archivi Storici, Cassaf.

© Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai e Archivi storici

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## EVENTS

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive supporting programme with guided tours, lectures, workshops, and a symposium. All information, dates, and advance online ticket sales can be found at: <https://www.khm.at/en/visit/exhibitions/arcimboldo-bassano-bruegel/>

### **Guided tours with curator Francesca Del Torre Scheuch (in German)**

Wed, 14 MAY

Wed, 4 / 25 JUNE

At 4 pm

Limited number of participants

### **Guided tours in English**

SUN, 16 / 23 / 30 MARCH at 3 p.m.

SUN, 6 / 13 / 20 / 27 APRIL at 3 p.m.

SUN, 4 / 11 / 18 / 25 MAY at 3 p.m.

SUN, 1 / 8 / 15 / 22 / 29 JUNE at 3 p.m.

Limited number of participants

### **Guided tours in French**

SAT, 5 / 26 APRIL at 3 p.m.

Limited number of participants

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## OPENING HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

Daily except on Mondays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Thu & Sat, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

In June daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thu & Sat, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The current admission prices can be found on our website at:

[www.khm.at/en/visit/besucherinformation/hours-admission/](http://www.khm.at/en/visit/besucherinformation/hours-admission/)

All tickets and offers are available in the online ticket shop:

[shop.khm.at/en/tickets](http://shop.khm.at/en/tickets)

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok in order to stay informed about the preparations leading up to the opening, the supporting programme and gain glimpses of the exhibition.

Instagram: @kunsthistorischesmuseumvienna

Facebook: @KHMWien

TikTok: @kunsthistorischesmuseum

#ArcimboldoBassanoBruegel

#KunsthistorischesMuseum

## MEDIA ACCREDITATION

Journalists visiting the KHM-Museumsverband for professional purposes are entitled to free admission to its exhibitions and locations. For this purpose, you need to register via [presse@khm.at](mailto:presse@khm.at) at least two working days in advance.

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!

## PRESS CONTACT

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