

**Growing – Blossoming – Wilting. Ernst Kreidolf and plants**  
04.09.2020 – 10.01.2021



**Ernst Kreidolf (1863 – 1956) has never been forgotten as a painter and picture-book artist. His works seduce us into the world of fairy-tale and dream, in which plants play a central role. The exhibition in Kunstmuseum Bern shows Kreidolf's studies, marked by scientific curiosity, and presents the impressive original illustrations to his books.**

Even as a child at his grandparents' farm in Tägerwilen, Ernst Kreidolf tried to record everything that glows and blossoms with his drawing pen. He also acquired a broad botanical knowledge. This closeness to nature was to accompany him throughout his life, and he expressed it in his work particularly through the personification of plants. Early on Kreidolf experimented with developing an artistic language on the basis of plant studies. Finally, in the *Blumen-Märchen* (1898) he succeeded in merging the observation of nature and imagination.

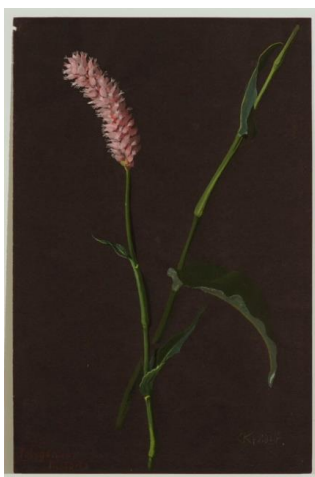
*'There are two things that fascinate me about Ernst Kreidolf. On the one hand, it is his art, which draws the viewer into fairy-tale worlds that are as fantastical as they are poetic, and yet does not lose its reference to real life. On the other hand, I am fascinated by his involvement in a diverse artistic environment. He was part of a pulsating art scene, he was in contact with musicians and writers, and was close friends with many visual artists.'*

Dr Barbara Stark, Director Städtische Wessenberg-Galerie, Konstanz

With the *Blumen-Märchen* (1898) and his books *Die schlafenden Bäume* (1901) and *Gartentraum* (1911) Ernst Kreidolf set new standards in picture-book design. The trained lithographer wrote the poems and stories for these books himself, but he was also active as a sensitive illustrator. His fantastical pictures for the school reading book *Roti Rösli im Garte* (1925) would make a lasting impression on the memories of generations of Swiss children.

In most of his picture books Kreidolf remained true to the principle of placing a poem that he had written himself next to the pictures. In his memoirs he wrote: 'In all my picture books (...) the picture is always the primary, the thing that was produced first, the text always secondary, the accompaniment to it.'

In this way small narratives which are also very much related to contemporary history are spun around the flower creatures; narratives which are suitable for reading aloud, and so concise that they invite further story-telling. Dying, violence and threats of various kinds are also present in Kreidolf's work. In all the books, as well as the lighter scenes there are some that are dark and uncanny. Contrasts and emotional swings are typical of the arrangement of the pictures. With this ambivalence of melancholic dreaminess and humour the exhibition invites visitors on a stimulating journey through the varied cosmos of Kreidolf's world of plants.



*'In a lonely knotweed on black paper, the vulnerability and strength of nature are revealed – Ernst Kreidolf's representations of plants touch upon existential questions. I am impressed by the way in which he manages to do this with simple means thanks to a precise observation of nature. And I like his humour, which makes many of his works look surprisingly fresh even after over a hundred years.'*

Marianne Wackernagel, Curator of the exhibition

#### **Media preview**

The media preview for the exhibition *Growing – Blossoming – Wilting. Ernst Kreidolf and Plants* with the curator Marianne Wackernagel and the Director of the Städtische Wessenberg-Galerie, Konstanz, Barbara Stark, will be held on **Tuesday, 3 September 2020** at **11.00 a.m.** in Kunstmuseum Bern. Please register by e-mail at [press@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:press@kunstmuseumbern.ch).

Additional individual dates are possible on request.

#### **Curator**

Marianne Wackernagel, Director, Collection of Prints and Drawings, Kunstmuseum Bern

The exhibition was organised in collaboration with the Association and Foundation Ernst Kreidolf as well as the Städtische Wessenberg-Galerie, Konstanz. After the presentation in Kunstmuseum Bern, it will be shown in the Städtische Wessenberg-Galerie, Konstanz from 29 January to 11 April 2021.

#### **With the support of**

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You can download press images as further information on our [media website](#).

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