

Kunstmuseum Bern

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Press release
Bern, August 15, 2007

“Damned Guy!” Karl Stauffer-Bern: Painter, Etcher, Sculptor
August 17 to December 2, 2007

With Sturm and Drang to great naturalistic achievements

The second of September, 2007, is the 150th anniversary of Karl Stauffer-Bern’s birthday. The first large retrospective since 1957 offers us a comprehensive overview of his complete works. From each of his creative periods we are showing paintings, printing plates, drawings, sculptures, photographs and documents. In addition, the exhibition illustrates that Stauffer-Bern, a manic creator, made a large major contribution to the naturalistic realism of his times.

“Damned Guy!” This quote of Gottfried Keller’s, pertaining to Stauffer-Bern, has been taken for the title of the exhibition. One night, after visiting a tavern together, Stauffer-Bern gave a speech at the top of his voice in the middle of Zurich, provoking Keller to the exclamation in which a great amount of admiration for this stormy, impulsive man from Bern is implicit.

Stauffer-Bern’s oeuvre was produced between 1875 and 1891. Particularly in the field of portrait painting, the artist, who died young, was among the most important artistic personalities of his generation. As a painter, engraver and graphic artist, he created powerful and striking character analyses. Stauffer-Bern, who sometimes in the later stages of a canvas over-painted his pictures or simply scratched off all the paint, often used photographs to spare models and himself from long and tiring sittings. The work photographs and studies for portraits presented in the exhibition demonstrate with what intensity Stauffer-Bern attempted to capture the personality of his models and to distil their essence.

The man from Bern was a manic creator who was not satisfied with merely painting. Self-taught, he created etchings of subtle quality. The technical difficulties of etching he encountered to begin with, he overcame with his customary creative tenacity; proof of this are the etchings and – as a further highlight – several printing plates exhibited here. In addition to this, drawings and photographs illustrate the extraordinarily complex process involved in creating the sculptures.

Stauffer-Bern switched between one activity and another with boundless enthusiasm and in the process accomplished great artistic achievements. In Berlin during the Wilhelminian period, his insistent naturalism corresponded to the taste of a wealthy stratum of society who enjoyed having him paint their portraits. Lydia Welti-Escher, daughter of the Gotthard magnate Alfred Escher, daughter-in-law of the Federal Councillor Emil Welti and Stauffer-Bern’s patroness was one of those who sat for her portrait. Stauffer-Bern came to public notice mainly due to the speculation and scandal surrounding his affair with Lydia Welti-Escher. The events, the details of which are still not completely clear today and which were the subject of many books and articles, continue to overshadow Stauffer-Bern’s deserved recognition as a significant artist and excellent portrait painter of the 19th century.

The exhibition would like to revise this image and show that the spirited artist from Bern made a valuable contribution to the naturalistic realism of his times.

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Mit der Unterstützung von:

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Partner des Kunstmuseums Bern



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Opening

Thursday, August 15, 2007, 18h30

Duration

August 17 to December 2, 2007

Entrance Fee

CHF 12.- / 8.-

Catalogue (in German)

«Verfluchter Kerl!»

Karl Stauffer-Bern: Maler, Radierer, Plastiker

Erscheint im Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Herausgegeben von Matthias Frehner und Brigitta Vogler-Zimmerli
ca. 280 Seiten, ca. 170 farbige und s/w Abbildungen, Format 23 x 29 cm, gebunden, Schutzumschlag.
CHF 68.- ; ISBN 978-3-03823-362-6

Unterstützt durch die Ulrico Hoepli-Stiftung, Zürich

Special Events (in German)

Eröffnungsfeier

Donnerstag, 16. August, 18h30

Öffentliche Führungen

Jeden Dienstag, 19h

Einführung für Lehrpersonen

Dienstag, 21. August, 18h

Mittwoch, 22. August, 14h

Vortrag von Prof. Dr. Bernhard von Arx zu seinem Buch „Karl Stauffer und Lydia Welte-Escher.

Chronik eines Skandals“

Dienstag, 21. August, 20h

Lust auf Kunst am Samstagnachmittag: Karl Stauffer-Bern und das „Janusköpfige Jahrhundert“

Samstag, 25. August, 14h – 15h30

Vortrag von Konrad Tobler

„Karl Stauffer-Bern – zwischen Ferdinand Hodler
und Adolf Wölfli“

Dienstag, 23. Oktober, 20h

Szenische Lesungen aus Herbert Meiers

„Stauffer-Bern – Ein Stück“

Mit Mitgliedern des Schauspielensembles des
Stadttheater Bern

Im November, Daten werden noch bekannt gegeben
siehe: www.kunstmuseumbern.ch

Film im Rahmen der Ausstellung im Kino Kunstmuseum: „Effie Briest“ von Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Sonntag, 30. September, 16h

Dienstag, 2. Oktober, 20h

Dienstag, 9. November, 20h

Aktuelle Informationen unter:

www.kunstmuseumbern.ch

Programmänderungen bleiben vorbehalten

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