

## Fascination for the Mysterious and the Enigmatic

***Myths and Mysteries: Symbolism and Swiss Artists* is the first exhibition ever to throw light on the pivotal role played by Swiss artists in the international context of symbolism, showing some 200 works, many of which are key masterpieces of the epoch. Great Swiss painters, sculptors, draftsmen, and photographers will be viewed in relation to symbolist artists from neighboring countries. One third of the exhibits are from the Kunstmuseum Bern Collection. They have been supplemented with loans from Swiss museums and eminent international collections. Thus the exhibition is able to offer a seldom and multi-faceted overview of symbolism.**

Symbolism in the visual arts was born in Paris around 1890, with Swiss artists such as Ferdinand Hodler, Carlos Schwabe, and Félix Vallotton playing a highly influential role. Symbolist art comprises artworks that do not comply with notions of everyday reality. Rather, the realities they show cannot be scrutinized scientifically and exist in the mind. Besides key works by Ferdinand Hodler, Félix Vallotton, Arnold Böcklin, Carlos Schwabe, and Giovanni Segantini, the show is featuring masterpieces by Gustav Klimt, Fernand Khnopff, Franz von Stuck, Gaetano Previati, William Degouve de Nuncques, and Hans Thoma among others. Structured according to subject matter, the exhibition comprises paintings, drawings, photographs, prints, books, posters, and sculptures.

### Places of yearning and spheres of our intuition

Symbolism is not a style but a mind-set. The goal of the international movement around 1890 was to turn its back on the profane reality of industrialization marked by technology, urbanization, and the anonymity of mass society. The symbolists exposed the rational side of the industrial age as a cold, callous, and superficial world. Under this surface they found real life where the mysterious and miraculous call out, but also where the uncanny and our instinctual nature lurk. Artists took on the task of making what was lost, the arcane, the beautiful, and truth visually palpable. Symbolism assimilated a wide variety of artistic movements and combined them into something new. It is permeated with the melancholy of the end of an era and the hopes for a fresh start. In this way it is closely affiliated to the present. Not only the boundaries separating the arts were in dissolution, but humankind's attitude to nature was changing too. After the great turbulence of the Romantic era, humankind became again more concerned about spiritual values, although it now sought cosmic rather than religious spirituality.

### The existential issues of our times

The exhibition bears the title *Myths and Mysteries* because the symbolists, in a demystified world, strived to illustrate that society cannot exist without ideals, dreams, and the promise of happiness. Today's unbelievably widespread and popular fantasy genre is nothing more than a late offshoot of symbolism. Therefore, the exhibition not only makes it possible for us to intensively study the great classics of fin-de-siècle art—it likewise provides answers to the existential issues presently engaging our attention.

**Contact person:** Brigit Bucher, [brigit.bucher@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:brigit.bucher@kunstmuseumbern.ch), Tel.: +41 31 328 09 21

**Images:** Marie Louise Suter, [press@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:press@kunstmuseumbern.ch), Tel.: +41 31 328 09 53

**KUNSTMUSEUM BERN**  
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERNE  
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BERNE

HODLERSTRASSE 8–12 CH-3000 BERN 7  
T +41 31 328 09 44 F +41 31 328 09 55  
INFO@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH WWW.KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

**MEDIEN-SERVICE**  
SERVICE DE PRESSE / PRESS OFFICE  
T +41 31 328 09 19/44  
PRESS@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

## The Exhibition

**Duration:** 26.04. – 18.08.2013

**Opening:** Thursday, April 25, 6:30 p.m.

**Curator:** Dr. Valentina Anker

**Admission fee:** CHF 18.00 / red. CHF 14.00

**SBB RailAway-Kombi:** 10% reduced prices for train ride and admission. Available at train stations or the Rail Service 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/min. on the Swiss landline network)

*The exhibition is a co-production with the Museo Cantonale D'Arte and the Museo d'Arte Lugano, where it will be shown from September 14, 2013 until January 12, 2014*

**Museo  
Cantonale  
d'Arte**

## The Exhibition Catalogue



**Myths and Mysteries. Symbolism and Swiss Artists.** Published by Kunstmuseum Bern, Museo Cantonale d'Arte and Museo d'Arte Lugano. Essays by Valentina Anker, Michel Draguet, Marco Francioli, Matthias Frehner, Sharon Latchaw Hirsch, Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, Alexander Klee, Albert Lévy, Laurence Madeline, Annie-Paule Quinsac, Pierre Rosenberg, Cristina Sonderegger, Beat Stutzer and Jacques Tchamkerten. German, Italian, French and English. Somogy Editions. ISBN-10: 2757205390 / ISBN-13: 978-2757205396. CHF 45.00

## The Poster



F4  
89,5 x  
128 cm  
CHF 20.00

## The Special Events

### Öffentliche Führungen

Sonntag, 11h: 28. April, 5./12./19. Mai, 9. Juni, 7./21./28.

Juli, 4./11./18. August

Dienstag, 19h: 30. April, 28. Mai, 4./18./25. Juni, 30. Juli, 6. August

### Öffentliche Führungen mit thematischen Schwerpunkten

Dienstag, 14. Mai, 19h: Engel und Dämonen

Sonntag, 26. Mai, 11h: Natur und Landschaft

Sonntag, 16. Juni, 11h: Frauen und Fabelwesen

Dienstag, 16. Juli, 19h: Kosmos und Paradies

Sonntag, 28. Juli, 11h: Nacht und Vergänglichkeit

### Öffentliche Führung mit Dolmetscher in

Gebärdensprache: Dienstag, 14. Mai, 19h

### Visites guidées publiques

Mardi, 7 mai, 19h30 / Dimanche, 28 juillet, 11h30

### Public Guided Tours in English

Sunday, June 2, 11:30 am / Tuesday, August 13, 7:30 pm

### Einführung für Lehrpersonen

Dienstag, 30. April, 18h

Mittwoch, 1. Mai, 14h

Anmeldung T 031 328 09 11,  
[vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch)

Kosten: CHF 10.00

### Vortrag von Dr. phil. Rudolf Koella, Kunsthistoriker, Publizist: «Vallottons kritischer Blick auf den Symbolismus»

Dienstag, 28. Mai 2013, 20h

Anmeldung nicht erforderlich, Ausstellungseintritt

### Kunst und Religion im Dialog

Sonntag, 2. Juni, 15h30–16h15

### Volkshochschulkurs

Mittwoch, 22./29. Mai, 5./12. Juni 2013, 15h

Anmeldung: [info@vhsbe.ch](mailto:info@vhsbe.ch)

## With the generous support of:



**KUNSTMUSEUM BERN**  
MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE BERNE  
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BERNE

HODLERSTRASSE 8–12 CH-3000 BERN 7  
T +41 31 328 09 44 F +41 31 328 09 55  
INFO@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH WWW.KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH

**MEDIEN-SERVICE**  
SERVICE DE PRESSE / PRESS OFFICE  
T +41 31 328 09 19/44  
PRESS@KUNSTMUSEUMBERN.CH