

**Media release**  
**Zurich, 25 March 2021**

## **Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'Gerhard Richter. Landscape'**

**From 26 March to 25 July 2021, the Kunsthhaus Zürich celebrates the work of Gerhard Richter, with its first solo exhibition by the most important contemporary German artist. It focuses on one of the genres that is central to his oeuvre: landscape painting. On display are some 140 works, most of which are being shown for the first time in Switzerland; they include 'Townscape PX' (1968), spectacular 'Seascapes' from Berlin and Bilbao, and the energy-laden 'Jungle Picture' (1971) from a private collection. Some 80 paintings are accompanied by drawings, prints, photo collages, overpainted photographs and artist's books from the years 1957 to 2018.**

The exhibition initiated by guest curator Hubertus Butin and realized with Kunsthhaus curator Cathérine Hug is arranged thematically. Extending over 1,200m<sup>2</sup>, it guides visitors through the rich diversity of Richter's creative process.

### SECOND-HAND LANDSCAPES

From the outset, Richter views the landscape through a medium of mechanical reproduction: photography. The photos that form the basis for his pictures are mostly ones that he has taken himself, and he uses them to create not painted landscapes, but paintings of photographed landscapes. The specifically photographic aesthetic that informs the composition, structure and colour palette remains clearly visible, as in the oil painting 'House in Forest' (2004), with its view of the staff building at the famous hotel in Sils Maria. Thus begins his critical reflection on the lost potential of painting.

### ROMANTIC IMAGES ARE 'CUCKOO'S EGGS'

The German Romanticism of an artist such as Caspar David Friedrich is a key point of reference for some of Richter's paintings. He draws on the aesthetic of those earlier works, depicting expansive skies and low horizons, atmospheric sunsets, misty landscapes, cloudscapes and rainbows. Yet at the same time he is compelled to question the Romantic tradition, as with 'Ice' (1981) which, while reminiscent of Friedrich's 'Sea of Ice' (1823), can no longer function as the visible manifestation of the divine that Friedrich felt it to be. Because the atmospheric

nature of many of Richter's landscapes nevertheless prompts many to regard them as Romantic, he tellingly describes them as 'cuckoo's eggs'.

### LANDSCAPES IN ABSTRACTION

In the 1960s and 1970s especially, Richter produced highly abstract images of mountains, parks and cities that, through painting, further explore the potential of an abstraction that has its origins in photography. These works alternate between landscape motifs depicted as reproductions of originals and a self-referential materiality of colour expressed through broad brushstrokes. This dualistic principle does not aim at a classical abstraction in which the form becomes autonomous, but rather asks to what extent the form can achieve autonomy from a basis in photographs. Measuring 250 x 680 cm, the two-part work 'St. Gallen' (1989) is an abstract, but the title and a horizon line running right across the picture create the association with a landscape.

### LANDSCAPES AS FICTIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

In the 1970s and 1990s, Richter also produced landscapes in the form of fictional constructions. Working in oil painting, printing, photo collages and three-dimensionality, he creates landscapes and monumental spaces that can never exist in reality but are highly suggestive. The motifs of seas, mountains and clouds have been put together in such a way that their size or arrangement transcends any real experience.

### OVERPAINTED LANDSCAPES

From the 1980s onwards, Richter produces non-representational overpaintings of landscape motifs, employing a wide range of often strongly corporeal techniques including peeling, scraping, smearing and squeegeeing. The photograph of a landscape conveys a representational motif by means of reproduction, while at the same time paint is applied to the surface in such a way as to produce abstraction. These two levels of reality – including titles devoid of locational information such as '10. Apr. 2015' (2015) – appear as an interlocked unity, forging a bond that is close and replete with tension, yet at the same time subtle.

### LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

In 1981 Richter said of his landscapes: Such works show my 'longing', they are a 'dream of classical order and an unspoilt world.' And indeed, the term landscape mostly comes with positive connotations. From the viewer's perspective, all will surely agree with the assessment that there is nothing in Richter's landscapes to offend our idea of what is 'beautiful'. Equally, the art historian Dietmar Elger, biographer and director of the Richter Archive in Dresden, has noted a subversive element in Richter's statement from 1970 that he wanted, in his landscapes, to paint 'something beautiful': at the time, other artistic movements such as Pop Art

and conceptual art as well as politically motivated works were setting the tone. Richter was bucking the trend.

### LANDSCAPES IN UNEASY TIMES

Our appreciation of landscapes and their aesthetic quality increases with the onset of industrialization and the emergence of tourism in the 19th century; and they come to be increasingly important and valued as they are devastated by wars and environmental disasters. The contemplation of both art and landscapes evokes strong feelings. The year 2021 is set to be dominated by the corona crisis, the most tangible consequences of which, at a personal level, are social distancing and limitations on mobility. Scheduling the exhibition at this time offers a glimmer of hope. A visit to the Kunsthaus Zürich is a clear reminder of the value of sensory experiences within a community away from virtual worlds and screens – especially when, translated into a spatial and therefore physical experience, they become surfaces onto which our longings and thoughts are projected – as is the case with Gerhard Richter's landscapes.

In association with the Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien.

Supported by Credit Suisse – Partner Kunsthaus Zürich and Swiss Re – Partner for contemporary art.

### ART EDUCATION PROGRAMME: GUIDED TOURS, PODIUM DISCUSSIONS, CONCERT

An audioguide for adults in German, English, French and Italian fills in the background and explores the theme of the exhibition through more than 20 of the works on display. A separate audioguide for children in German is also available, together with a colouring sheet.

#### Guided tours (probably from May)

Public guided tours in German take place at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 3 p.m. on Fridays, with an introduction at 11 a.m. on Sundays. The Kunsthaus will be happy to arrange private guided tours on request.

#### The return of the sublime

A conversation between Julia Gelshorn, professor of art history, landscape architect Günther Vogt and artist Julius von Bismarck, moderated by curator Cathérine Hug. In German.

Wed 26 May, 6.30 p.m.–8 p.m., auditorium

CHF 15 / CHF 10 concessions; CHF 5 with a valid exhibition ticket and for members.

## From idea to exhibition

With curators Hubertus Butin (Berlin), Cathérine Hug (Kunsthau Zürich) and Lisa Ortner-Kreil (Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien), moderated by Christoph Stuehn. In German.

Sun 13 June, 11 a.m.–12.30 p.m., auditorium

CHF 10 / CHF 8 concessions; CHF 4 with a valid exhibition ticket and for members.

Part of Zurich Art Weekend.

## From the mind onto the paper

Armed with her typewriter, author Julia Weber accepts requests from exhibition visitors for new texts inspired by landscapes, which they can then take away with them.

Sun 27 June, 1 p.m.–6 p.m., Miró garden of the Kunsthau Zürich.

## Sound Scapes

A journey into the broad spectrum of piano sounds that could have accompanied Gerhard Richter in his work. With music from Johann Sebastian Bach to John Cage and György Kurtág; by and with guerillaclassics, Hiromi Gut, and with international 'surprise guest' emerging talents.

Wed 14 July, 6.30 p.m.–8 p.m., auditorium and public space around the Kunsthau.

CHF 15 / CHF 10 concessions; CHF 5 with a valid exhibition ticket and for members.

## GERHARD RICHTER FOR THE HOME

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue (Hatje Cantz, 220 pp., 190 ill.) with brand-new texts by Hubertus Butin, T. J. Demos, Matias Faldbakken, Cathérine Hug and Lisa Ortner-Kreil. It is available in German and English for CHF 48 from the Kunsthau shop and bookstores.

Also available from the shop are newly issued, limited-edition art prints starting from CHF 150 and the print 'Sheet Corner' (1967/2020) in a limited edition of 30 copies, price CHF 4,900. Exceptionally, both have been exclusively authorized by Gerhard Richter for the Kunsthau Zürich.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthau Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, [www.kunsthau.ch](http://www.kunsthau.ch)

Fri–Sun/Tue 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thu 10 a.m.–8 p.m. For public holiday opening see [www.kunsthau.ch](http://www.kunsthau.ch).

Admission CHF 23 / CHF 18 concessions and groups. Combination tickets including the collection and exhibition CHF 26 / CHF 19. Admission free to visitors under the age of 17. Information subject to change.

Advance sales: Zurich Tourism, tourist information office in Zurich main railway station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, [info@zuerich.com](mailto:info@zuerich.com), [www.zuerich.com](http://www.zuerich.com).

### INFORMATION FOR EDITORS

Media releases and images are available for download at [www.kunsthhaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/](http://www.kunsthhaus.ch/en/medien-bereich/media-corner/).

A virtual tour of the exhibition (in German only) will be available from 29 March at [www.kunsthhaus.ch/medien-preview-gerhard-richter](http://www.kunsthhaus.ch/medien-preview-gerhard-richter) for journalists who were unable to attend the media preview.

Contact: Kunsthaus Zürich, Kristin Steiner, [kristin.steiner@kunsthhaus.ch](mailto:kristin.steiner@kunsthhaus.ch), +41 (0)44 253 84 13