



G2 Kunsthalle
Gottschedstraße 2
04109 Leipzig
Germany

Besuchereingang /
Visitors' entrance
Dittrichring 13

+49 (0)341 35 57 37 93
info@g2-leipzig.de
www.g2-leipzig.de

Press release
EN

NEO RAUCH

Works from the Hildebrand Collection

30 January – 10 May 2020

Press preview: Wednesday, 29 January 2020, 11AM

Opening: Wednesday, 29 January 2020, 3–8PM

G2 Kunsthalle, Dittrichring 13, 04109 Leipzig, Germany

On occasion of its fifth anniversary, G2 Kunsthalle presents an exhibition of selected works by Neo Rauch from the Hildebrand Collection. On view from February until May 2020, the presentation in two large gallery rooms gathers paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures dating from between 1993 and 2018. Rauch, who was born in Leipzig in 1960, has risen to international renown since the mid-1990s with paintings whose distinctive visual idiom has had a sustained influence on the development of contemporary art.

In the first room, selected works from the 1990s come face to face with a large-format painting created in 2013. The juxtaposition sheds light on the genesis of Rauch's oeuvre, which, beginning in the mid-2000s, culminates in monumental multi-figure compositions.

Early works such as *Plan* (1994), a painting on paper in an unusual circular format, are distinguished by their pared-down pictorial vocabulary and schematic figures as well as flat monochrome backgrounds, often in earthy tones. A characteristic example of the collage and montage techniques with roots in Dada and Surrealism that define this Rauch's output during this period, the imposingly large tondo also already anticipates the use of staggered arrangements of elements to produce an illusion of depth. In *Sofa* (1993), a work inspired by comic strips, graphemes and characters still share a single plane on the surface. The *Horizonte* series (1995), finally, shows the artist probing the depth of the pictorial space. It is a compositional principle that will subsequently take on ever greater importance in Rauch's art. The creation of a homogeneous illusion of depth will pave the way for an expansion of the artist's thematic repertoire and allow for the orchestration of polydimensional constellations of figures involved in complex interactions.

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The individual's isolation in society is a recurrent theme in Rauch's oeuvre. Staged in vaguely theatrical settings, groups of figures are enmeshed in disconcerting scenes. Although the five protagonists of the painting *Das Treffen* (2013) turn toward each other, they appear to be monads, sealed off by the specific temporality of a fictional pictorial universe. The self-contained and hieratic disposition of the cast is based on a pyramidal compositional scheme that is familiar from Italian Renaissance panel paintings. Even as they approach each other, the figures seem frozen in mid-motion. Their eyes do not meet but instead gaze into the void. The disruption of an action that remains forever unaccomplished is a melancholy motif. As in a *sacra conversazione*—a Christian pictorial type that visualizes the silent dialogue between the Blessed Mother, saints, and the faithful—the gathering in the picture and the intellectual exchange between the beholder and the work of art take place in the medium of contemplation, on a spiritual plane. However, strife and antagonism as well as grotesque and playful elements disturb the moment of reflection. The clash of contrary energies and mixed messages is a device that Rauch has employed in his visual cosmos with some regularity.

In the second room, three formidable and vividly colorful paintings in large formats created in 2016 and 2018 unleash their enigmatic narrative power. Sorcerers, artists, servants, gardeners, stooges, charlatans, watchmen, spectators, and highwaymen as well as hybrid and monstrous creatures muster and congregate at crossroads, along hedgerows and walls, on well-trodden paths and village squares, in stables. Suffused with an atmosphere of mystery and bathed in glaring artificial light, these landscapes of the mind and soul are replete with reminiscences of the past and present, of legend and myth. Set at the precarious intersections between dream and reality, they interweave these elements for a projection from the depths of memory.

The working-class figures and apocalyptic industrial architectures of Rauch's early work from the 1990s live on in the somnambulistic bustle of these enchanted yet strangely suspect scenes. Obscure plots hint at bafflement and unease as much as confident expectation but are untethered from concrete historic events and social developments. The recurring stock characters are not infrequently executed in enough detail to suggest portraits, although Rauch's figures and their roles elude unequivocal identification. Defying any attempt at prosaic narrative recapitulation with a carefully calculated and programmatic ambiguity that informs all elements of the picture, his compositions distill from history and biography a cohesive world unto itself, a refuge for deep-rooted yearnings that what was thought lost may yet be salvaged and safeguarded while remaining open to interpretation.

In all three large-format compositions, a tower looms in the background above the action. The motif may be read paradigmatically, as an echo of formative childhood experiences, and emblematically, as a barricade guarding Rauch's art. He grew up in Aschersleben, a small town in Saxony-Anhalt whose silhouette is still dominated by the medieval towers of its old

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city wall. In 2012, Rauch, in honor of his long-standing ties to Aschersleben, established a foundation at the scene of his early years that preserves and presents his graphic art. The four color lithographs *Abendmelodie*, *Brüter*, *Fürstin*, and *Bann*, which are on view in this room as well, were created in 2011 in connection with the preparations for the foundation. The bronze sculpture *Nachhut*, also from 2011, and a number of paintings in smaller formats dating from between 2011 and 2018 round out the exhibition at G2 Kunsthalle.

Text by Anka Ziefer
Translation by Gerrit Jackson

Biographical notes:

Neo Rauch, b. Leipzig, 1960, studied painting with Arno Rink at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig from 1981 until 1986, then in Bernhard Heisig's master class from 1986 until 1990. He was Arno Rink's assistant in 1993–1998 and professor of painting and graphic art at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig in 2005–2008. The Graphics Foundation Neo Rauch in Aschersleben was inaugurated in 2012. In 2018, Rauch and Rosa Loy designed the sceneries and costumes for Richard Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth Festival. Rauch lives and works in Leipzig. *Awards and accolades (selection)*: TAURUS European Cultural Award, 2019; Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, 2018. *Solo exhibitions (selection)*: Uffizi (Palazzo Pitti), Florence, 2019; Fondazione Coppola, Vicenza (with Rosa Loy), 2019; Drawing Center, New York, 2019; David Zwirner, Hong Kong, 2019; Des Moines Art Center, Iowa, 2018; Museum de Fundatie, Zwolle, NL, 2018; Galerie Eigen + Art, Berlin, 2016; David Zwirner, London, 2016; BOZAR—Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 2013; Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz (with Rosa Roy), 2012; Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden, 2011; Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig / Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, 2010; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2007; Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Canada, 2006; Albertina, Vienna, 2004; Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, 2002; Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig / Haus der Kunst, Munich / Kunsthalle Zürich, 2000; Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig, 1997. *Group exhibitions (selection)*: kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (Andreas Gursky—Neo Rauch—Jeff Wall), 2014; Hamburger Kunsthalle (Exhausted Heroes—Ferdinand Hodler, Aleksandr Deyneka, Neo Rauch), 2012.
