

Museum Folkwang

Flyer Text

The exhibition is under the patronage of Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and the President of the French Republic Nicolas Sarkozy.

Paris between 1860 and 1900: rarely has a capital undergone so rapid and profound a transformation. It is difficult today to measure the effect on the city of the massive public works undertaken during the Second Empire – under Napoleon III and his prefect Georges-Eugène Haussmann – and during the Third Republic: boulevards, large squares, train stations, theatres, the opera, parks and squares appeared in record time: new subjects for landscapes, urban this time, for modern artists.

Opened in 1868, the spectacular Pont de l'Europe arching over the tracks of the Saint-Lazare train station provides an exemplary illustration of that revolution. Around the station and the bridge, a new quarter arose with wide streets and long rows of houses. Close by, new boulevards were laid down to link the suburbs with the city centre, with standardized urban planning: homogeneous facades, wide sidewalks bordered by rows of trees, Morris columns, gaslights, shops, department stores, cafés etc. The majority of the artists presented in this exhibition lived, in fact, in this new quarter at one time or another: Manet, Monet, Caillebotte or Goeneutte, or around the Boulevard de Clichy, such as Seurat or Signac, or in neighbouring Montmartre, such as Renoir or Van Gogh.

The Impressionists and their contemporaries immortalized the new city in their paintings, exploring the near and the far, the familiar and the strange, movement and amusement. Views from above over the crowd, traffic along the lively boulevards or deserted squares, a fleeting moment on the street, in a café or in the parks, are some of the images of modern Paris that inspired the Impressionists and the artists of their day.

The new capital also rapidly became a prime subject for photography, invented in the first half of the 19th century. In comparison with paintings, however, its range of subjects is even wider. While industrialization remained marginal in the Impressionists' paintings, new suburban industrial sites attracted the photographers' attention. In the exhibition, photographs will be juxtaposed with paintings not to provide documentary testimony, but instead to allow a more profound perception of the city, and to illustrate the specificities of painting and photography. The selection of photographs concentrates on ten important moments in the history of urban photography with major works by masters such as Gustave Le Gray, Edouard Baldus, Charles Marville, Louis-Emile Durandelle, Henri Rivière and Eugène Atget.

The exhibition presents the capital of modernism in a number of chapters. It begins with a panoramic view from Montmartre, shows streets and boulevards, squares and monuments, parks and cafés, views from ateliers and apartments. It lets the visitors stroll along the quays, glance through train stations and explore the suburbs to then return to the pulsating big city life to frequent cabarets and restaurants, theatres, circuses and operas by night.

In 2010, Essen and the Ruhr Area are the European Capital of Culture, presenting to the world a unique project – transforming the third largest polycentric agglomeration in Europe, today divided into 53 municipalities, into a new metropolis under the sign of culture. This cultural capital has as its maxim a phrase coined by Karl Ernst Osthaus, founder of the Museum Folkwang at the beginning of the last century: *Transformation through Culture – Culture through Transformation*. The Museum Folkwang is taking advantage of this exceptional opportunity by dedicating an exhibition to the first European metropolis of modernism.

The exhibition includes ca. 80 paintings and 125 photographs. It is curated by Françoise Cachin, founding director of the Musée d'Orsay from 1986 to 1994, and from 1994 to 2001 director of the Musées de France. Responsible for the photography section are Françoise Reynaud, curator for photography at the Musée Carnavalet, Paris, and Virginie Chardin, freelance curator.

An extensively illustrated catalogue will be published on the occasion of this exhibition with contributions by internationally renowned specialists offering new perspectives on the relation between metropolis, urbanism, fine arts and photography.

The exhibition is presented in proven partnership with E.ON Ruhrgas AG.