KARLSRUHE, GERMANY

Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe: Masterpieces

Twenty paintings from the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, from Grünewald and Cranach to Kandinsky and Max Ernst.



The collection of the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe was shaped first by the interests of the rulers of Baden and then by public collecting. Its paintings include work by German, Dutch, Flemish and French artists.

The twenty chosen here run from two panels of Grünewald's Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece to Kandinsky, Beckmann and Max Ernst. On the way there are portraits, landscapes and still lifes, as well as a Cupid stung for stealing honey, Böcklin's Poverty and Care given human form, Rubens's founding of Constantinople and Winterhalter's company of listeners in a garden. Some have been admired for generations; others are less likely to turn up in a survey of art history. Two places appear twice: Rouen, painted by Monet and by Pissarro, and Karlsruhe itself, in two views by Carl Kuntz.

Artline chose these works from the museum's documented holdings, independently of the museum. Any of them may be on loan or off display. Dates and attributions keep the qualifications given in the collection records.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/kunsthalle-karlsruhe

The selection · 20

1. Forest
   Max Ernst · 1927
2. Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece: Crucifixion
   Matthias Grünewald · 1523–1524
3. Poverty and Care
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4. Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece: Christ Carrying the Cross
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7. Still Life with a Fallen Candle
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9. The Three Daughters of Julius Johann von Vieth und Golssenau
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10. Rocky Reef on the Seashore
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11. View of Karlsruhe from the South
    Carl Kuntz · 1804
12. Karlsruhe Palace from the Palace Garden
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13. View of the Sea at L'Estaque
    Paul Cézanne · 1883-1885
14. The Great Bridge at Rouen in Rainy Weather
    Camille Pissarro · 1896
15. The Seine at Rouen
    Claude Monet · 1874
16. Cupid as a Honey Thief
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17. The Decameron
    Franz Xaver Winterhalter · 1837
18. Still Life with Oranges, Bananas, Lemon and Tomato
    Paula Modersohn-Becker · 1906
19. The Founding of Constantinople
    Peter Paul Rubens · c. 1622-1623
20. Houses at Le Pouldu
    Paul Gauguin · 1890

01 / 20

Forest

Max Ernst

1927 · Oil on canvas · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Max Ernst. Forest. WikiArt source label: Max Ernst Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/max-ernst/forest-1927 · Max Ernst Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

Ernst builds his forest by repetition. There are enough upright forms across the canvas for them to read as trunks, yet their dense, jagged surfaces look just as much like rough construction, and none of them becomes a comfortably familiar tree. Overhead, a red arc works at a scale quite unlike anything beneath it.

Object source · Open artwork

02 / 20

Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece: Crucifixion

Matthias Grünewald

1523–1524 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Matthias Grünewald. Tauberbischofsheim altarpiece: Christ on the Cross with Mary and Saint John. Image credit: Matthias Grünewald; Source credit: 1. The Yorck Project (2002) 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei (DVD-ROM), distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH. ISBN : 3936122202 . 2. Google Art Project. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Grünewald gives Christ's body almost nothing to compete with. There is no elaborate setting, only a confined, dark space, and the figure's strained outline and bodily detail carry the severity of the scene. Below, Mary and John respond by gesture alone. With so little else in view, the outstretched arms and the positions of the two mourners are hard to overlook.

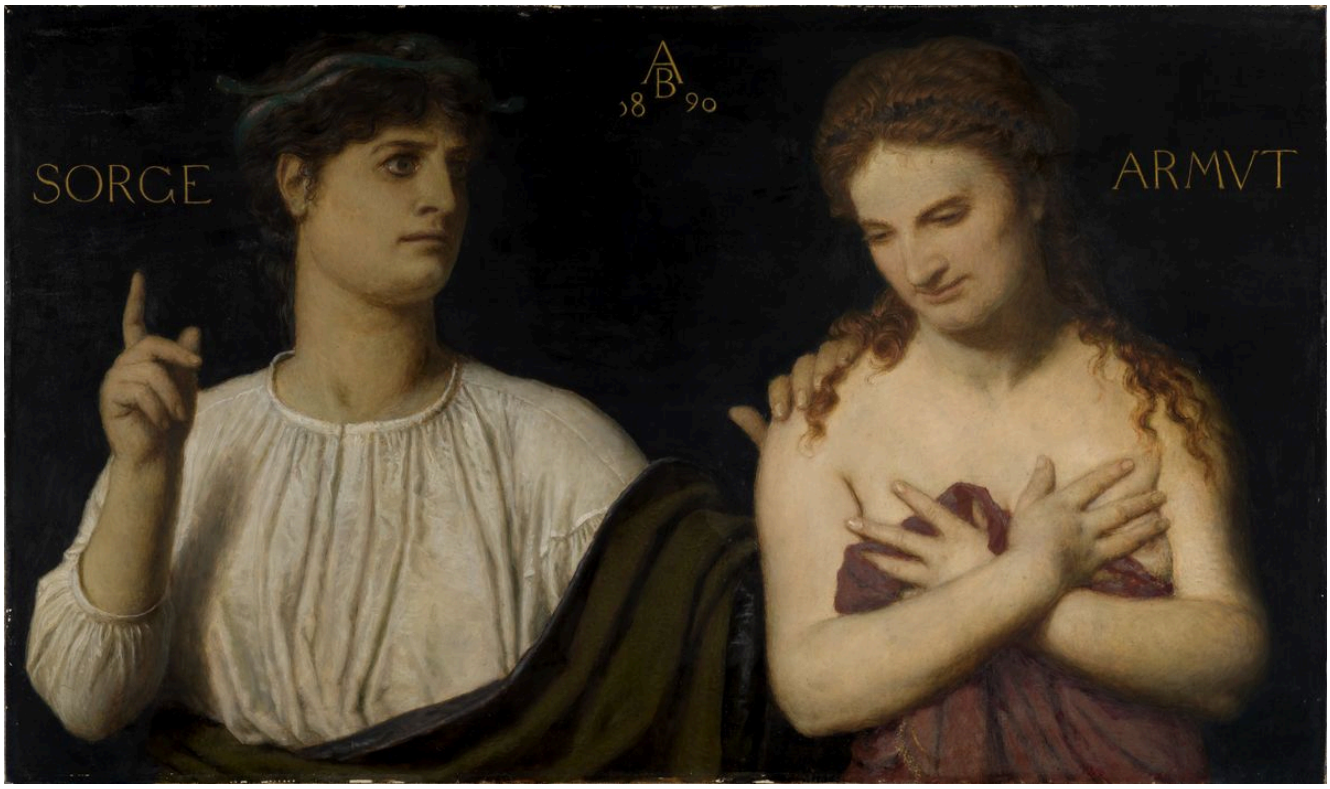
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 994

03 / 20

Poverty and Care

Arnold Böcklin

1890 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Arnold Böcklin. Armut und Sorge. Image credit: Arnold Böcklin; Source credit: Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Sammlung online. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Two women are paired closely. One raises a finger and the other folds her arms. Without the names Poverty and Care they might pass for unnamed sitters. Böcklin has given abstract conditions human form, but a raised finger and folded arms are ordinary, particular gestures, and the labels never quite absorb them.

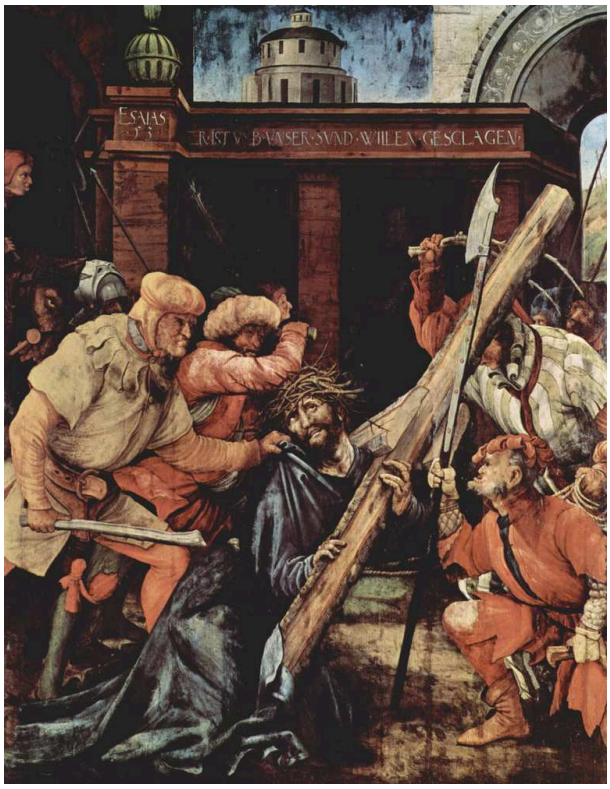
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 958

04 / 20

Tauberbischofsheim Altarpiece: Christ Carrying the Cross

Matthias Grünewald

1523–1524 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Matthias Grünewald. Tauberbischofsheim altarpiece: Christ Carrying the Cross. Image credit: Matthias Grünewald; Source credit: The Yorck Project (2002) 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei (DVD-ROM), distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH. ISBN : 3936122202 .. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Christ's bent body has to make its way through a space already taken up by other people and by the huge weight of the cross. The diagonal timber is both burden and obstacle. It cuts through the crowded group beneath an architectural opening and keeps the figures from separating easily.

The Crucifixion from the same altarpiece leaves its figures in a sparse, dark space. Here suffering is congested and on the move.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 993

05 / 20

At the Morning Toilet

Justus Juncker

1752 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Justus Juncker. At the morning toilet. Image credit: Justus Juncker; Source credit: Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Pictures already hang on the walls of Juncker's room before a mirror adds one more image to them, and tiles and furniture fill out the rest. The seated woman is placed firmly among these things, busy with the everyday grooming that the title calls her morning toilet.

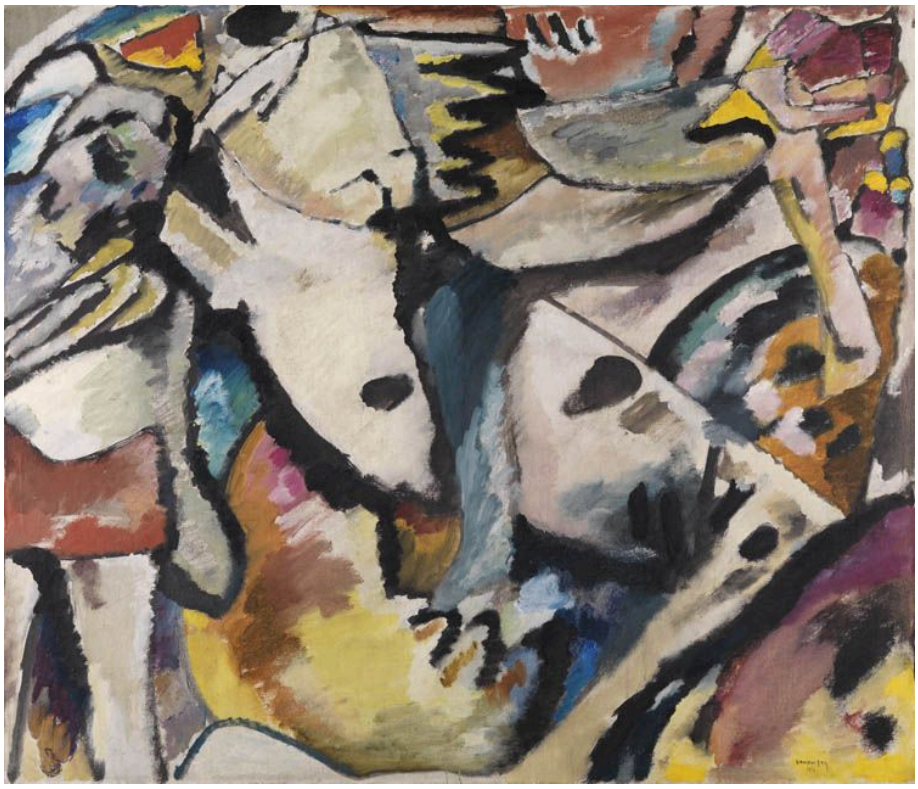
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2506

06 / 20

Improvisation 13

Wassily Kandinsky

1910 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Wassily Kandinsky. Improvisation 13. Image credit: Wassily Kandinsky. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

If you look for a scene, the painting offers hints of one: a contour that might be a body, another that might be terrain. They never come together into anything dependable. Meanwhile the coloured patches and crossing black marks set up relationships of their own, and the picture holds together whether or not any area is identified as an object.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2596

07 / 20

Still Life with a Fallen Candle

Max Beckmann

1930 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Max Beckmann. Still life with fallen candle. Image credit: Max Beckmann; Source credit: https://www.kunsthalle-karlsruhe.de/kunstwerke/Max-Beckmann/Stilleben-mit-gest%C3%BCrzter-Kerze/A1C925EE4DA39411535E9298B95C5E13/. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

A still life is not supposed to contain events, yet Beckmann's title names one. The fallen candle lies as a horizontal break among objects crowded into a compressed space, and strong contours insist on how close together everything is. Drapery and a framed surface add further layers without opening up any room between them.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2435

08 / 20

Madame Jeantaud

Edgar Degas

c. 1877 · Oil on canvas · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Edgar Degas, Bildnis Madame Jeantaud, c.1877. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 1.0. Resized and JPEG-compressed; no crop or retouching. CC0 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC0 1.0

Madame Jeantaud's extended arm draws the sofa into the pose, so the furniture has a real say in how she occupies the picture. Her dark clothing rises against its pale surface, while her hat and upright torso pull in another direction. Nothing overt happens. Whatever movement Degas finds lies in that asymmetry.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2493

09 / 20

The Three Daughters of Julius Johann von Vieth und Golssenau

Anton Graff

c. 1773 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Anton Graff. Bildnis der drei Töchter von Julius Johann von Vieth und Golssenau. Image credit: Anton Graff; Source credit: Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The title identifies the three sisters only through their father, Julius Johann von Vieth und Golssenau. Graff avoids the regularity of three portraits lined up side by side. He draws them into a compact group, linked by hands and inclined heads, and small differences of tilt and contact keep each one distinct. Against the dark background their pale faces form a single close outline.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: Lg 1913

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Rocky Reef on the Seashore

Caspar David Friedrich

1824 · Oil on canvas · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Caspar David Friedrich, Felsenriff am Meeresstrand, 1824. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 1.0. Resized and JPEG-compressed; no crop or retouching. CC0 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC0 1.0

A sharp silhouette rises in the distance above low, spreading rocks and pools. That contrast of vertical and horizontal is very nearly the whole drama. No figure stands on the shore whose reaction might set the mood, and Friedrich leaves these relations exposed beneath a violet-blue sky.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2261

11 / 20

View of Karlsruhe from the South

Carl Kuntz

1804 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Carl Kuntz. Blick auf Karlsruhe von Süden. Image credit: Carl Kuntz; Source credit: 1. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe 2. Google Arts & Culture. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

For a view of a city, this gives the city surprisingly little room. Kuntz approaches Karlsruhe across fields, with animals in the foreground and no architectural landmark close at hand. Tall trees and a broad sky make the town one part of a wider worked landscape, and farming takes up a large share of the picture.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 1715

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Karlsruhe Palace from the Palace Garden

Carl Kuntz

1804 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Carl Kuntz. Blick auf das Karlsruher Schloss vom Schlossgarten aus. Image credit: Carl Kuntz; Source credit: 1. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe 2. Google Arts & Culture. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Here the palace is the destination and the garden is the way in. Lawns, trees and small groups of animals soften the approach. The formal architecture stays distinct and organises the whole view from the far side of open grounds, which leaves the foreground to the garden.

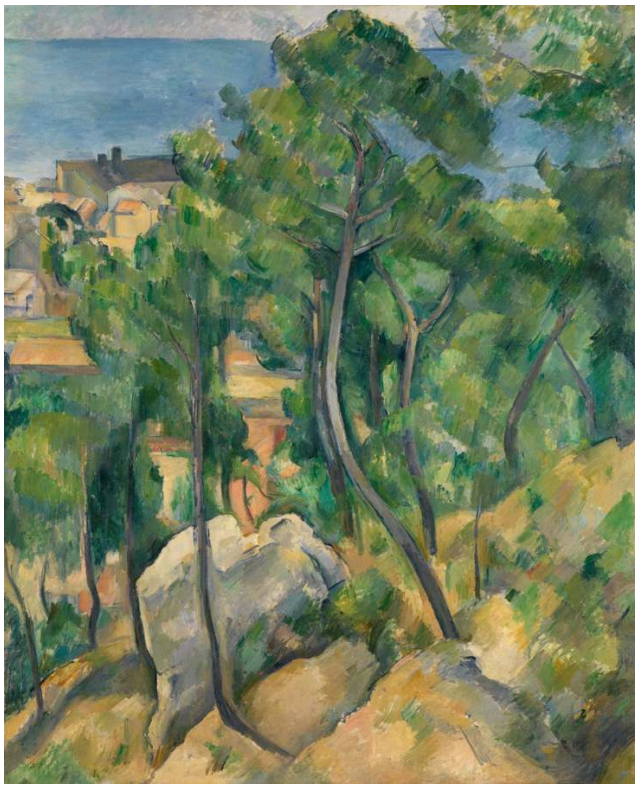
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 1964

13 / 20

View of the Sea at L'Estaque

Paul Cézanne

1883-1885 · Oil on canvas · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Paul Cézanne, Blick auf das Meer bei L'Estaque, 1883–1885. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 1.0. Resized and JPEG-compressed; no crop or retouching. CC0 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC0 1.0

Trees and sloping ground stand between the viewer and the water. Cézanne gives these near forms real structural weight through adjoining areas of green, blue and ochre, and the sea takes its place within the same arrangement. Depth here is built from colour relationships as much as from recognisable objects.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2450

14 / 20

The Great Bridge at Rouen in Rainy Weather

Camille Pissarro

1896 · Oil on canvas · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Camille Pissarro, Blick auf die Grosse Brücke zu Rouen bei Regenstimmung, 1896. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 1.0. Resized and JPEG-compressed; no crop or retouching. CC0 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC0 1.0

From Pissarro's raised viewpoint, the connections made by the bridges are easier to follow than they would be at street level. Small figures, vehicles and river traffic keep the structure busy under a heavy sky. The rain weighs on the working city without dissolving its routes.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2488

15 / 20

The Seine at Rouen

Claude Monet

1874 · Oil on canvas · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Claude Monet, Die Seine bei Rouen, 1874. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 1.0. Resized and JPEG-compressed; no crop or retouching. CC0 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC0 1.0

The masts are the fixed points, firm verticals against broken water and sky. In the river below, short marks make the reflections less stable than the boats they echo, and Monet holds the port together through that difference.

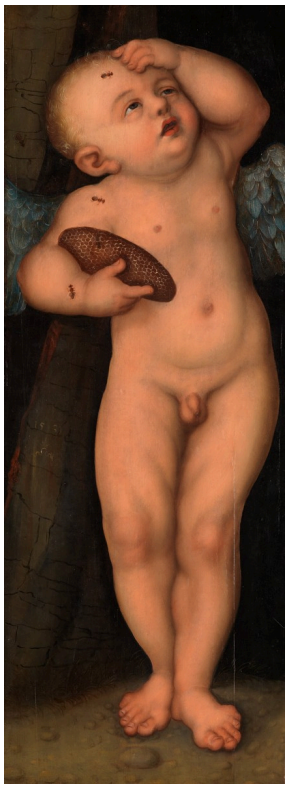
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2502

16 / 20

Cupid as a Honey Thief

Lucas Cranach the Elder

1531 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Lucas Cranach the Elder. Cupid as Honey Thief. Image credit: Workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder / After Lucas Cranach the Elder; Source credit: 1./2. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, digitale Sammlung 3. Google Arts & Culture. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Cupid has the honeycomb, and the bees have found Cupid. His lifted hand turns his small body into an image of discomfort, and the picture confines the episode to a narrow space where little else happens. The moral about desire gets its point from the choice of victim: Cupid himself pays for the sweetness, and the price is a physical one.

The work is listed under Cranach, but its image credit names the workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder or a copy after him, so whose hand painted it remains an open question.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 811

17 / 20

The Decameron

Franz Xaver Winterhalter

1837 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Der Decamerone. Franz Xaver Winterhalter; Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/). Full-frame resize and JPEG compression. · CC0

Winterhalter gathers a company in a garden to tell stories, and much of the picture goes to the listeners. Their varied poses and elaborate clothes make them as conspicuous as any speaker, and the garden setting suits their shared leisure.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 1217

18 / 20

Still Life with Oranges, Bananas, Lemon and Tomato

Paula Modersohn-Becker

1906 · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Paula Modersohn-Becker. Stilleben mit Orangen, Bananen, Zitrone und Tomate. Image credit: Paula Modersohn-Becker; Source credit: Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Modersohn-Becker gives the fruit solid volume with simplified colour and does not catalogue its surface detail. The rounded forms sit close to pale cloth and a dish on the tabletop, and their weight comes from how the shapes relate to one another.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2557

19 / 20

The Founding of Constantinople

Peter Paul Rubens

c. 1622-1623 · Oil on oak · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Peter Paul Rubens, Die Gründung Konstantinopels, c.1622–1623. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 1.0. Resized and JPEG-compressed; no crop or retouching. CC0 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC0 1.0

Rubens condenses a city's foundation into one coordinated group. The ruler's gesture links command to the work of construction, and the other figures carry the action across the panel beneath a broad sky, with an eagle above. The ruler's costume marks him out, and so does the way all this activity seems to take its direction from him.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2759

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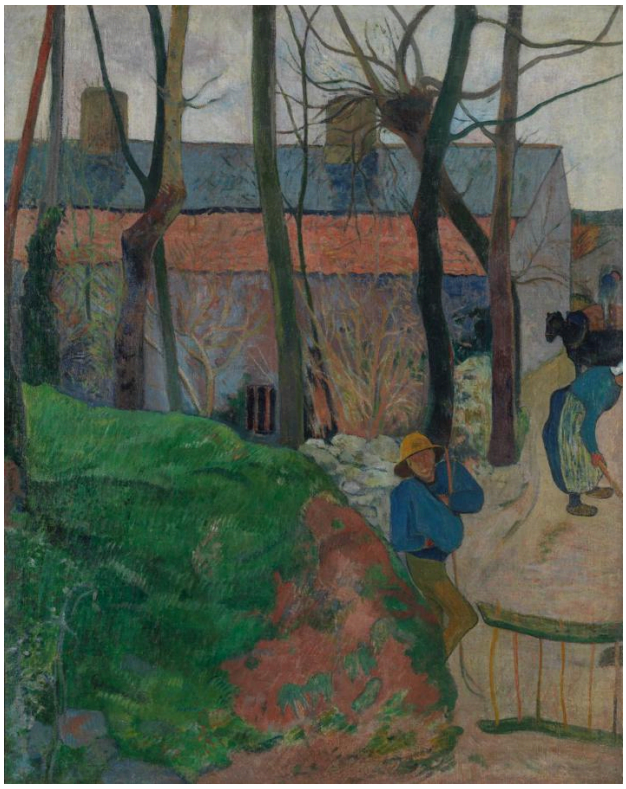
Houses at Le Pouldu

Paul Gauguin

1890 · Oil on canvas · Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



Paul Gauguin, Häuser in Le Pouldu, 1890. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. CC0 1.0. Resized and JPEG-compressed; no crop or retouching. CC0 1.0; compressed study reproduction. · CC0 1.0

Bare trunks cut across the coloured houses and divide the narrow gaps where small figures appear. Gauguin, like Cézanne at L'Estaque, lets trees stand in front of his subject and builds the obstruction into the design. Here it becomes a pattern of interlocking surfaces, in which foreground and buildings press together into one arrangement of colour. The village is still recognisable, but deep, continuous space is no longer the only aim.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: 2503

Rouen and Karlsruhe, twice each

Two painters made the Rouen pictures, and they hardly seem to be looking at the same city. Monet's is a port of masts and unsteady water. Pissarro looks down from a height in the rain and sees a network of routes, with bridges, figures, vehicles and river traffic all in play. Kuntz painted both Karlsruhe views, and they have more in common than their two destinations suggest. One reaches the town across farmland and the other reaches the palace through its garden. Yet architecture fills the foreground in neither, both approach across open ground, and animals appear in each.

Further reading

Concerning the Spiritual in Art

Wassily Kandinsky; translated by Michael Sadleir · Read free · English

Kandinsky's own statement of his aims, in Michael Sadleir's English translation. He argues for a search for meaning in colour and in form that need not depict objects. Improvisation 13 is the only painting by him in this selection, so it is the place to see whether the argument holds up in paint.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12

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