
The Sun: Source of Light in Art

February 25–June 11, 2023

Press Conference: Thursday, February 23, 2023, 11:00 a.m., Museum Barberini, Potsdam

With:

- Érik Desmazières, Director, Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris
- Ortrud Westheider, Director, Museum Barberini
- Michael Philipp, Chief Curator, Museum Barberini

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Following the press conference, Curator Michael Philipp will lead a tour of the exhibition.

WiFi in the Museum Barberini: Barberini_Gast, no password

Images may be downloaded at museum-barberini.de/de/presse

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Potsdam, February 23, 2023

The Sun: Source of Light in Art
February 25, – June 11, 2023

On February 25, 2023, the exhibition *The Sun: Source of Light in Art* opens at the Museum Barberini. Conceived in collaboration with the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris, it is the first exhibition to explore the sun in art from antiquity to the present. The point of departure is Claude Monet's 1872 painting *Impression, Sunrise*, which gave the Impressionist movement its name over 150 years ago. The painting, which is now in the collection of the Musée Marmottan and is shown outside Paris only very rarely, will be on view in Potsdam for the first eight weeks of the exhibition.

The exhibition comprises 130 objects, with paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, prints, photographs, and videos by artists such as Sonia Delaunay, Otto Dix, Albrecht Dürer, Olafur Eliasson, Adam Elsheimer, Max Ernst, Caspar David Friedrich, Joan Miró, Claude Monet, Edvard Munch, Odilon Redon, Peter Paul Rubens, Katharina Sieverding, and William Turner. It includes loans from over sixty museums and private collections, among them the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, the Munchmuseet, Oslo, the Musée du Louvre, Paris, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and the Albertina, Vienna.

The first exhibition devoted to the sun in European art from antiquity to the present

As the source of warmth and light, a symbol of fertility, and a guarantor of life and growth, the sun is a universal theme. It played a central role in European art from earliest times, whether as the personification of divine powers, a protagonist in mythological narratives, an atmospheric element in landscape painting, or an intensifier of color in modern art. *The Sun: Source of Light in Art* is the first exhibition to explore representations of the sun in European art from antiquity to the present and showcase the ever-changing ways in which the sun has been perceived, studied, and interpreted for over 2,500 years.

Since the earliest documented cultures, the sun has been the focus of religious and mythological conceptions and was venerated as a symbol of inexhaustible power. The sun god Helios, and later Apollo, served as an allegory for rulers from Alexander the Great to Napoleon. The motif of the divine sun chariot and mythological stories such as the fall of Icarus or Phaethon inspired artists from centuries past to the present day. With Christianity, the identification of the sun with the Roman god *Sol invictus* (the unconquered sun) was

transmuted into the light symbolism of Christ. The solar star was no longer seen as an autonomous power, but as an element of the world created by God. Images of the Crucifixion show the sun as a witness in the heavens and integrate it into the event as a solar eclipse.

130 works by artists from Albrecht Dürer to Olafur Eliasson, Caspar David Friedrich, Claude Monet, Edvard Munch, and Peter Paul Rubens to Katharina Sieverding, William Turner and Félix Vallotton

The exhibition also explores the complex iconography of the sun in astronomy and esoteric thought and shows how artists, both past and present, have visualized the unity of the individual and the cosmos. In landscape painting, the sun gained importance from the early seventeenth century on and became a means of expressing atmosphere or mood. Around 1850, the sun emerged as the true subject matter of the Impressionists with their precise renderings of natural phenomena. After 1900, color began to be used more freely in painting and was employed with greater intensity in the depiction of landscape. From 1910 on, the visual experience of sunlight and scientific discoveries related to the perception of color played a role in the dissolution of the pictorial object, leading to abstract forms of representation.

“As a motif, the sun is found in all periods of European art and plays a role in the most diverse contexts – from religion to astrology to landscape painting. It’s all the more surprising that until now, the iconography of this important theme has not yet been explored. Our exhibition traces the constant fascination with the sun that artists since antiquity have expressed in their works,” explains Michael Philipp, Chief Curator of the Museum Barberini and curator of the exhibition.

The show brings together 130 works – including paintings, sculptures, bronzes, manuscripts, and prints – by artists such as Alice Boughton, Sonia Delaunay, Otto Dix, Albrecht Dürer, Olafur Eliasson, Adam Elsheimer, Max Ernst, Caspar David Friedrich, Hendrick Goltzius, Bernhard Heisig, Joan Miró, Claude Monet, Edvard Munch, Odilon Redon, Johann Rottenhammer, Peter Paul Rubens, Joachim von Sandrart, Katharina Sieverding, William Turner, Félix Vallotton, and Maarten de Vos. The collaboration with the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris was inspired by two paintings by Claude Monet: *Impression, Sunrise*, which gave its name to the Impressionist movement in 1874, and *The Port of Le Havre, Night Effect*. Monet painted both works in 1872 from a hotel room overlooking the port in his home city of Le Havre. He captured the view once by night, showing it as an energy-charged site of modernity, and again in the morning, awakening beneath a red sun. *Impression, Sunrise*, on loan from the Musée Marmottan and probably one of Monet’s most famous paintings, is shown only very rarely outside of Paris. For the Potsdam show, the Paris museum is

making an exception: the work will be presented in Potsdam for the first eight weeks of the exhibition.

The over sixty lenders to the show also include the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, the Munchmuseet, Oslo, the Musée du Louvre, Paris, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and the Albertina, Vienna.

“In 2024, the first joint exhibition of the Impressionists will be commemorated worldwide, for example with shows at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris and the National Gallery of Art in Washington as well as the international program *Destination Impressionnisme*. We conceive of our *Sun* exhibition as the upbeat to the international anniversary year,” explains Ortrud Westheider, Director of the Museum Barberini. “The theme is traditionally very important for Potsdam, too, as a center of solar observation. The year 1874 saw the founding of the Astrophysical Observatory Potsdam, where researchers like Wilhelm Oswald Lohse studied sunspots. In 1922, the Einstein Tower designed by Erich Mendelsohn was completed on the Telegrafenberg and served as the site of experimental tests on Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity. To this day, the Einstein Tower is used for scientific research on the sun. Our program of events and our digital content explore the theme with talks, discussions, tours, and workshops.”

The Sun: Source of Light in Art is an exhibition of the Museum Barberini, Potsdam, and the Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris. In Paris, the show was entitled *Face au soleil. Un astre dans les arts* and was on view from September 21, 2022, to January 29, 2023. A symposium took place in 2021 in preparation for the exhibition. The extensive exhibition catalogue is published by Prestel Verlag and includes contributions by Nils Büttner, Matthias Krüger, Michael Philipp, Helene von Saldern, Ortrud Westheider, Hendrik Ziegler, and Michael F. Zimmermann.

The Unconquered God: Personification

In ancient Greece the sun was first embodied in the figure of Helios, and later Apollo. From there the anthropomorphic conception of the solar deity made its way through the Roman Empire, where it was known as *Sol Invictus*, the unconquered god, to the Christian era, in which Christ was worshiped as the true sun.

No ancient divinity was better suited to represent the power of the ruler than the sun god, the beautiful, youthful bringer of light and guarantor of order. Emperors and kings sought to share in his splendor and adopted images of the sun god to ennoble themselves, using his passage in the sun chariot to gloriously depict their own triumphs. These extravagant symbolic associations declined in the seventeenth century, and the sun became an earthly allegory of day.

Fall of the Highflyers: Myth

In the imagery of ancient Greece, the sun was not only a creative force and symbol of life, but also the most visible element of cosmic order. This assigned specific boundaries to human conduct; those who overstepped them saw themselves subjected to the vengeful workings of fate. Two ancient myths relate tales of youthful hubris – overconfidence and imprudence – in which the sun plays a crucial role: the stories of the young men Phaethon and Icarus, who fell from the sky. Whereas the reckless Phaethon, the son of a god, sought to determine the course of the sun, the overconfident Icarus came too close to it. The sun was a divine power that was not to be challenged.

Dethronement: Biblical Interpretation

The Old Testament describes the sun as an element of Creation made by God. Its purpose is to bring sunlight and seasons, and to extol the glory of God. Christian depictions of the Genesis reflect this reading. This functional perspective disempowered the sun, which in ancient Greece was conceived of as an autonomous power, a god that embodied the cosmic order. The New Testament augmented the religious instrumentalization of the heavenly body. While early images of the Crucifixion still portray the sun in the manner of ancient personifications, they show it as a powerless witness. This was meant to emphasize the cosmic dimension of the occurrence, as was also the case with the solar eclipse that occurred upon the death of Christ, as reported by St. Luke the Evangelist.

The Power of the Constellation: Esotericism

From the high cultures of antiquity until the early modern period, the sun was associated with secret power. Astrology counted it among the seven planets as defined by Aristotle. According to the principle of the children of the planets, it was believed to influence the character of those born under its sign. In tarot, a fifteenth-century card game that esotericists regard as a secret Egyptian doctrine, the sun is one of the trumps. Depictions of these subjects show them as a human figure or use the symbol of the sun with a face. In medieval alchemy, the sun's energy facilitated the quest for the Philosophers' Stone, the symbolic goal of the *magnum opus* (great work). This also included the production of gold, the most valuable metal, which alchemists associated with the sun and which artists continued using into the twentieth century.

The Sun in View: Humanity and the Universe

The sun's immediate impact allows individuals to perceive themselves as part of the world as a whole. This relationship can be visually captured by turning toward the sun. Gestures or glances directed toward the sun are communicative acts that respond to its palpable energy. The visual experience of the glowing sun in nature can also be experienced as a revelation of the transcendental. During the nineteenth century, artists created spiritually charged landscape paintings in which the sun serves as a point of crystallization that symbolizes the presence of the divine. The "Càntic del sol" (Canticle of the Sun) by St. Francis of Assisi is a lyrical expression of this interconnectedness that has inspired numerous artists. Installations that are filled with yellow light seek to emulate the holistic, corporeal experience of the impact of sunlight.

Looking at the Sky: Astronomy

From time immemorial, the sun has been the object not only of religious veneration, but also of careful observation as a celestial body. As early as antiquity, astronomers studied the sun's position in the cosmos and its influence on the seasons. Along with regular changes such as the length of the days, deviations in the sun's appearance were carefully recorded, while solar eclipses, sunspots, and sun dogs were considered evil omens even into the sixteenth century. In the nineteenth century, improved telescopes made it possible to investigate the physical characteristics of the sun and document the dynamics of its surface. Astronomical photographs and drawings of phenomena such as eruptive flows of matter often also possess aesthetic qualities and evoke the magic of the hitherto unseen.

Seeing the Sun: Landscapes

The sun is the natural source of light. However, it wasn't until the early seventeenth century that it acquired a particular importance in landscape painting. Artists observing the luminosity and spectacular color effects of sunrises and sunsets realized that a uniform, warm visual space could develop an emotional quality. The sun became an artistic means of expression that lent an atmospheric mood to paintings of naturalistic or idealized landscapes. The sun frequently became the dominant visual element, with the focus placed solely on painterly light effects. During the nineteenth century painters also explored their own perception in their depictions of the sun. In around 1900 the celestial body over the landscape became an expression of the spiritual for the Symbolists.

Intense Radiance: Color

The increasingly free use of color in painting after 1900 brought with it greater chromatic intensity in landscape painting as well. Depictions of the rising or setting sun were well suited for exaggerated effects of color, which often became the dominant pictorial element. After 1910, visual experiences of sunlight and the discoveries of color physiology played a role in the development of nonobjective art. From the 1930s onward, abstract paintings frequently showed the sun as a circle. Precisely because this archetypal form had no illustrative function, it could be used as a symbol for the energetically charged center of the cosmos. Pop Art of the 1960s, which rejected any spiritual significance in art, adopted the motif of the sun as an ironic but aesthetically effective quotation.

Exhibition schedule:	February 25–June 11, 2023
Exhibited works:	One hundred thirty objects (sculptures, paintings, manuscripts, prints, photographs, videos, light installations, medals, and books)
Curator:	Michael Philipp, Chief Curator, Museum Barberini
Artists:	<p>Adam Elsheimer (1578–1610)</p> <p>Albert Trachsel (1863–1929)</p> <p>Albrecht Dürer (1472–1528)</p> <p>Alice Boughton (1867–1943)</p> <p>Antonio Corradini (1668–1752)</p> <p>Arthur G. Dove (1880–1946)</p> <p>Bernhard Heisig (1925–2011)</p> <p>Carlo Saraceni (1579–1620)</p> <p>Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840)</p> <p>Charles de la Fosse (1636–1716)</p> <p>Charles-Marie Dulac (1866–1898)</p> <p>Claude Monet (1840–1926)</p> <p>Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem (1562–1638)</p> <p>Edvard Munch (1863–1944)</p> <p>Eugène Boudin (1824–1898)</p> <p>Félix Vallotton (1865–1925)</p> <p>Francesco di Simone Mosca, called Moschino (1531–1578)</p> <p>Franz von Stuck (1863–1928)</p> <p>Georg Pencz (1500–1550)</p> <p>Sebald Beham (1500–1550)</p> <p>Gérard Fromanger (1939–2021)</p> <p>Giovanni del Biondo (1330–1399)</p> <p>Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617)</p> <p>Jacopo de' Barbari (ca. 1470–before 1516)</p> <p>Joachim von Sandrart (1606–1688)</p> <p>Joan Miró (1893–1983)</p> <p>Johan Gregor van der Schardt (ca. 1530–after 1581)</p> <p>Johann Rottenhammer (1564–1625)</p> <p>Johann Sadeler (1550–1600)</p> <p>Jörg Breu the Elder (1475/80–1537)</p> <p>Katharina Sieverding (b. 1944)</p>

Laurent Dabos (1761–1835)
Ludwig von Hofmann (1861–1945)
Maarten de Vos (1532–1603)
Maurice Denis (1870–1943)
Max Ernst (1891–1976)
Max Pechstein (1881–1955)
Odilon Redon (1840–1916)
Olafur Eliasson (b. 1967)
Otto Dix (1891–1969)
Otto Piene (1928–2014)
Paul Signac (1863–1935)
Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)
Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1526/27–1569)
Richard Pousette-Dart (1916–1992)
Sebald Beham (1500–1550)
Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979)
Thomas Cole (1801–1848)
Valdemar Schønheyder Møller (1864–1905)
Claude Joseph Vernet (1714–1789)
Virgil Solis the Elder (1514–1562)
Wilhelm Morgner (1891–1917)
William Turner (1775–1851)
Yves Klein (1928–1962)

Lenders:

Sixty lenders from thirteen countries (Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, USA), including

- Albertina, Vienna
- Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich
- Dulwich Picture Gallery, London
- Munchmuseet, Oslo
- Musée du Louvre, Paris
- Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid
- National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
- Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
- Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
- Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

Exhibition area:	Around 1,000 square meters
Exhibition design:	Gunther Maria Kolck, Hamburg, and BrücknerAping, Büro für Gestaltung, Bremen
Address:	Museum Barberini, Alter Markt, Humboldtstraße 5–6, 14467 Potsdam
Opening hours:	Daily (except Tu) 10 a.m.–7 p.m. Kindergartens and schools by appointment M–F (except Tu), 9–10 a.m.
Admission and ticketing:	M, W–F € 16 / € 10, Sa/Su/holidays € 18 / € 10 Free admission for schoolchildren and visitors under 18
Social Media:	#SonneBarberini in the #MuseumBarberini on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube
Barberini digital: App, Prolog, Close-ups, 360° Tour	<p>The Barberini App is a personal guide before, during, and after the museum visit. It offers audio tours in German and English for adults and children as well as parent-child tours, exhibition texts in simplified language, service and event information, e-tickets, and video interviews with experts. The app is free and available in the App Store and at Google Play. museum-barberini.de/app</p> <p>The Barberini Prolog sets the tone for the current exhibition. As a compact multimedia website, the Prolog offers an overview of themes and works and can be used to prepare for the museum visit or to recommend the show to others. prolog.museum-barberini.de</p> <p>In conversation with art historians, the expert video introduces the theme of the exhibition <i>The Sun: Source of Light in Art</i>. With Nils Büttner (Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart), Marianne Mathieu (co-curator of the exhibition, Paris), Michael Philipp (Museum Barberini, Potsdam), Hendrik Ziegler (Philipps-Universität Marburg),</p>

and Michael F. Zimmermann (Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt).

www.museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek/

In the video series **Close-ups**, the curatorial and museum education team of the Museum Barberini present works from the collection of Impressionist paintings and offer insight into their creation, visual language, and reception.

www.museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek/

The **360° Tour** on the museum website offers the opportunity to explore the exhibition in digital form. Users can navigate virtually from one exhibition room to the next and view each work in detail using the zoom function (projected availability in early March at www.museum-barberini.de).



The Sun: Source of Light in Art

Edited by Michael Philipp, Ortrud Westheider,
and Daniel Zamani

With contributions by Nils Büttner, Matthias Krüger,
Michael Philipp, Helene von Saldern, Ortrud Westheider,
Hendrik Ziegler, and Michael F. Zimmermann

Prestel Verlag, Munich, 2023

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219 color illustrations

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Book trade € 42, museum shop € 34

Contents:

- Michael Philipp, "A Star with a Face: The Physiognomy of the Sun from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century"
- Nils Büttner, "Bright Light on the Horizon: Images of the Sun in Landscape Painting from Altdorfer to Turner"
- Hendrik Ziegler, "Ruling Like the Sun: Political Dimensions of a Metaphor from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century"
- Michael F. Zimmermann, "Seeing the Sun: Insight – Blindness – Impression"
- Matthias Krüger, "Liminal Physical Experience and Artistic Transgression: Gazing at the Sun in Modern Art"

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Claude Monet
Impression. Sunrise, 1872
Oil on canvas
50 x 65 cm
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris,
Gift of Eugène and Victorine Donop de Monchy, 1940
© bpk / RMN – Grand Palais



Caspar David Friedrich
Willow Bushes under a Setting Sun, 1832–1835
Oil on canvas
22 x 30,6 cm
Freies Deutsches Hochstift / Frankfurter Goethe-Museum,
Frankfurt am Main
© David Hall – ARTOTHEK



William Turner
Mortlake Terrace, 1827
Oil on canvas
92,1 x 122,2 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Andrew W. Mellon Collection
© Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington



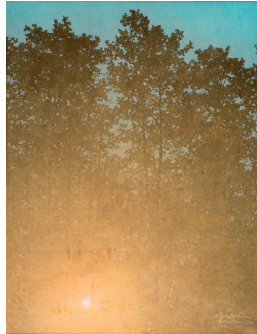
Arthur G. Dove
Red Sun, 1935
Oil on canvas
51,44 x 71,12 cm
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.
© Andrew Dintenfass, The Estate of Arthur G. Dove,
courtesy Terry Dintenfass, Inc., New York, N.Y. 10021



Peter Paul Rubens
The Fall of Phaëthon, 1604–05,
probably reworked ca. 1606–08
Oil on canvas
98,4 x 131,2 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons'
Permanent Fund
© Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington



Joachim von Sandrart
The Day, 1643
Oil on canvas
148 x 123 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Schleißheim,
Staatsgalerie Schleißheim
© Blauel Gnam – ARTOTHEK



Valdemar Schønheyder Møller
Sunset: Fontainebleau, 1900
Oil on canvas
116,2 x 88,3 cm
SMK, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen
© SMK, Photo: Jakob Skou-Hansen



Félix Vallotton
Sunset, Orange Sky, 1910
Oil on canvas
54 x 73 cm
Kunst Museum Winterthur, purchased with a contribution
by Charles and Lisa Jäggli-Hahnloser, 1976
© SIK-ISEA, Zürich (Jean-Pierre Kuhn)

Clouds and Light: Impressionism in Holland

July 8–October 22, 2023

Landscape painting originated in Holland, and the realism of the seventeenth-century Old Masters long set the standard. With the development of plein air painting in France, nineteenth-century Dutch artists found new inspiration. Painters of the Hague School captured nature's changing moods of light in vast, cloudy skies using a wide range of grays. Beginning in the 1880s, Impressionist influences from France sparked an interest in cityscapes and images of modern life, followed by the unleashing of color in the painting of Pointillism. The exhibition *Clouds and Light: Impressionism in Holland* brings together around a hundred works by some forty artists including Johan Barthold Jongkind, Vincent van Gogh, Jacoba van Heemskerck, and Piet Mondrian.

Lenders include the Rijksmuseum and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Kunstmuseum Den Haag, the Dordrechts Museum, the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, and the Singer Museum in Laren.

An exhibition of the Museum Barberini, Potsdam, in cooperation with the Kunstmuseum Den Haag. Under the patronage of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Germany, His Excellency Ronald van Roeden.

Edvard Munch: Trembling Earth

November 18, 2023–April 1, 2024

This first exhibition of landscapes by Edvard Munch focuses on his approach to nature. On the one hand, Edvard Munch viewed nature as a cyclically self-renewing power; on the other, he saw it as a reflection of his own inner turmoil. Munch developed a pantheistic understanding of nature, which he projected onto the forests and coasts of Norway. The dramatic weather depicted in his paintings is especially striking in light of the current climate crisis. The exhibition brings together around ninety loans from institutions including the Munchmuseet, Oslo, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, the Museum Folkwang, Essen, and the Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal.

An exhibition of the Museum Barberini, Potsdam, the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, and the Munchmuseet, Oslo.

From September 15, 2023 until January 22, 2024 the Berlinische Galerie will be showing *Edvard Munch: Magic of the North*.