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Potsdam, November 16, 2023

***Edvard Munch: Trembling Earth***

November 18, 2023 – April 1, 2024

Museum Barberini, Potsdam

On November 18, the exhibition ***Edvard Munch: Trembling Earth*** opens at the Museum Barberini. Organized in cooperation with the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, USA, and the MUNCH in Oslo, the exhibition is the first to focus on Edvard Munch's fascination with nature. The show features over 110 works by the Norwegian artist, with some of his most famous motifs as well as unknown works. Also on view are the monumental preliminary studies for Munch's paintings for the Aula at the University of Oslo, which have not been exhibited in Germany for over a century. Lenders include the MUNCH in Oslo, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Museum Folkwang in Essen, the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, and the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal. The exhibition in Potsdam is curated by guest curator Jill Lloyd, an expert on modern European art.

**The first exhibition of Edvard Munch's landscapes**

Edvard Munch is known for his haunting images of primal human emotion. His interest in the psychological dimensions of existence, however, was matched by an equally strong fascination with nature. Employing his unique sensibility and power of imagination, Munch explored motifs taken from nature, seeking to fathom humanity's place in the cosmic cycle of life. The image of the landscape in Munch's work, however, has received little systematic attention up to this point. Now for the first time, the exhibition ***Edvard Munch: Trembling Earth*** and the accompanying catalogue investigate the meaning of such images in Munch's oeuvre, questioning common assumptions and examining the contemporaneous artistic, scientific, and philosophical influences that contributed to his understanding of nature. With motifs ranging from undulating coastlines and fairytale forests to snow-covered or stormy landscapes, luxuriant gardens, and the exuberant play of sun, air, and water, Munch's work also resonates with the present-day climate crisis against the backdrop of current natural catastrophes.

"Although Edvard Munch devoted almost half of his works to motifs from nature, until now he has not been perceived as a landscape painter. With ***Edvard Munch: Trembling Earth***, our desire is to open up this perspective on his work," says Ortrud Westheider, director of the Museum Barberini. "Especially in conjunction with the Impressionist landscapes in

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the Hasso Plattner Collection, it is fascinating to see how Munch, a Norwegian contemporary of the Impressionists, connected landscape with the inner life and how such different perspectives on nature could develop at the same time in Europe. While the goal of the Impressionists was to recreate the sensory experience of nature through light and color, for Munch nature was always also a mirror of his own inner turmoil, giving his landscape images a greater sense of drama. We are especially fortunate that the exhibition *Edvard Munch: Magic of the North* at the Berlinische Galerie overlaps with our Munch show for eight weeks. The public thus has the opportunity to experience the dimensions of the oeuvre of one of the most important artists of the modern era in all its facets in both Berlin and Potsdam. With the preliminary works for the Aula paintings, which were exhibited at the Berlin Secession in 1913 and were enthusiastically received by audiences in Berlin, we also have a direct thematic connection to the exhibition of our Berlin colleagues.”

**116 paintings, woodcuts, lithographs, and drawings from twenty-one lenders in eight exhibition chapters**

From June 10 to October 15, 2023, the exhibition was on view at its first station, the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Curated by Jay A. Clark, it received outstanding reviews: “A revelatory exhibit” (*The Wall Street Journal*); “Magnificent . . . Munch the landscapist coexists with the connoisseur of affliction” (*Financial Times*); “Glorious . . . It’s a revelation” (*The Atlantic*); “a major modern painter in a new, broader, enlivening light” (*The New York Times*).

The Potsdam exhibition, curated by guest curator Jill Lloyd, features 116 works in eight exhibition chapters. In late April 2024, the show will travel to its third station, the MUNCH in Oslo, where it will be curated by Trine Otte Bak Nielsen.

The chapters of the exhibition engage with a variety of natural spaces to explore the active role played by the landscape in the art of Edvard Munch. While the chapter *In the Forest* exemplifies Munch’s sense of nature as a mysterious realm and a place of romantic growth and decay, the chapter *Garden and Field* reveals his fascination with the interaction between humanity and nature. In *Between Land and Sea*, coastal landscapes serve as a backdrop for separation, attraction, and solitude, while the beaches of Åsgårdstrand, Warnemünde, Hvitsten, and Ekely – locations where Munch lived and worked for many years – symbolize a *Summer Retreat*. The chapter *The Scream of Nature* addresses existential questions of the relationship between man and nature: here, a lithograph of what is probably Munch’s most famous work, *The Scream*, is juxtaposed with the explosive color of his monumental painting *The Sun*. The chapter *Storm and Snow* explores the degree to which early twentieth-century climate fears, marked by

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anxiety over the dawn of a new ice age, are reflected in Munch's landscapes. *In a Cosmic Cycle* shows how Munch assimilated new scientific discoveries that revealed nature as a dynamic force, visualizing it as vital and ever-changing and interweaving it with the human body and fate. The exhibition concludes with the chapter *Light and Knowledge*, featuring the designs for Munch's monumental Aula paintings. For the presentation of these works, some of which are six meters long, the Museum Barberini has installed a special "room within a room," facilitating a presentation similar to the hanging of the works in the Aula at the University of Oslo.

Tone Hansen, director of the MUNCH, states: "In 1940, Edvard Munch bequeathed the entirety of his oeuvre still in his possession to the city of Oslo. This legacy, now housed in the MUNCH, includes not only texts, letters, photographs, and personal items, but over 26,000 works of art – an extraordinary oeuvre that we can now also spatially accommodate since the opening of the new museum building in 2021. Our primary aim is not only to conserve the collection, but also to investigate and interrogate it again and again, and for us, too, it made sense to focus on his landscape images for the first time. The tremendous interest in the three exhibition stations in the United States, Germany, and Norway demonstrates that even 160 years after Munch's birth, his work continues to be relevant."

The works in the exhibition come from twenty-one lenders, including the MUNCH and the Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design in Oslo, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Dallas Museum of Art in Texas, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Finnish National Gallery in Helsinki, the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Museum Folkwang in Essen, the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, and the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 228-page English catalogue published by MUNCH, Oslo, with essays by Jay A. Clark, Nanna Leander, Jill Lloyd, Trine Otte Bak Nielsen, and Arne Johan Vetlesen.

For the duration of the exhibition, the Museum Barberini will extend its opening hours: beginning November 18, the museum will open at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday through Sunday. On Mondays, the museum open at 10:00 a.m. as usual.

Concurrent with the show in Potsdam, a second exhibition on Munch and Berlin, *Edvard Munch: Magic of the North*, is on view at the Berlinische Galerie until January 22, 2024. A combination ticket for admission to both exhibitions is available from the museums for € 20 (reduced admission € 12).

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Both exhibitions are under the joint patronage of Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and His Majesty King Harald V of Norway.

An exhibition of the Museum Barberini, Potsdam, the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and the Munchmuseet, Oslo. In Williamstown, the exhibition was curated by Jay A. Clark and was on view June 10–October 15, 2023. The MUNCH in Oslo will present the exhibition April 27–August 25, 2024, curated by Trine Otte Bak Nielsen.

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