

## MEDIA RELEASE

Zurich, 16 January 2013



Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918)  
*Portrait of Berthe Jacques*, 1894  
Oil on canvas, 35 x 28 cm  
Private ownership  
Foto: Private ownership

### New publication:

### Catalogue raisonné der Gemälde von Ferdinand Hodler: *Die Bildnisse*

**On 16 January 2013, the Swiss Institute of Art Research (SIK-ISEA) will present the second volume of its *catalogue raisonné* of paintings by Ferdinand Hodler, devoted this time to his portraits and self-portraits. This publication marks a further milestone in the research that SIK-ISEA has dedicated to Hodler and also in the Institute's scholarship. The responsibility for this work resides with Prof. Dr. Oskar Bätschmann and Paul Müller (*lic. phil.*), both reputed Hodler experts, and with the two principal authors of this volume, Dr. Monika Brunner and Dr. Bernadette Walter.**

At the turn of the 20th century, Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918) was Switzerland's leading painter. He cast aside artistic conventions and tested new techniques in landscape and portrait painting and also in his monumental historical and symbolist compositions. His achievements were recognised far beyond the national borders, even in his own lifetime. Hodler produced about 2000 paintings and several thousand drawings and sketches. Since its foundation in 1951, the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) has been cataloguing the works of Ferdinand Hodler and using technological methods to analyse them. As a result of these unbroken efforts it has become a centre of competence in the field of Hodler research. SIK-ISEA began compiling the *catalogue raisonné* of paintings by Ferdinand Hodler in 1998. His works have been divided into landscapes, portraits and figurative works, with separate volumes for each. The fourth and final volume will contain a comprehensive biography along with documents relating to the artist's life and work.

Following the *catalogue raisonné* of landscapes, which appeared in 2008, this second volume tackles the portraits and self-portraits. Whereas Hodler's landscapes and figurative works frequently found their way into exhibitions and private collections, his portraits have so far attracted less attention among researchers and art dealers. Unfairly so, for in the 20th century Hodler was a sought-after Swiss portraitist. His lifelong interest in portraits is all the more significant given the competition posed by photography after its invention in 1839. New justifications had to be found for preferring the brush and palette as an alternative, and yet there are no traces of this crisis in Hodler's work. Indeed, his rigorous exploration of the portrait as something much more than a painted likeness illustrates his passionate defence of the genre. Hodler's extensive output is the result of an unwaning interest in people, their physiognomy and their personal traits, all of which he sought to express by painterly means. Friends and family provided most of his early subjects. Later he was commissioned by politicians, scholars and collectors such as Adrien Lachenal, Carl Spitteler, Gertrud Müller and Willy Russ-Young. He often portrayed the same person from various different angles, including Augustine Dupin, the mother of his son Hector, and Berthe Hodler-Jacques, his second wife. The diary-like series in which he recorded the terminal illness and ultimate death of his lover Valentine Godé-Darel is unique in the history of portrait painting. The numerous portraits of Giulia Leonardi and Letizia Raviola exemplify Hodler's quest to capture the personality and essence of his sitters in their features. The considerable quantity of self-portraits is



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quite outstanding and owes much to commissions by collectors. Hodler's self-portraits not only reveal how carefully he observed himself, but also chart his artistic development.

Researching the portraits and self-portraits for the *catalogue raisonné* generated some important discoveries and insights. This volume, like the first, contains an introduction to the topic, a catalogue section with details of provenance, exhibitions and secondary literature, an annex listing rejected works and those of dubious authorship, a short biography, and a number of indexes. The commentaries include both biographical data about the sitter, notes on style and on Hodler's approach to the work, and any findings gleaned from technological analysis. The authors discuss such issues as what distinguishes a portrait from a genre painting or from a study for a symbolist composition (both of which are addressed in the third volume), while particular attention is paid to the significance of facial expression and choice of technique.

The research project is led by Hodler scholars Prof. Dr. Oskar Bätschmann and Paul Müller (*lic. phil.*). The authors of the second volume are Prof. Dr. Oskar Bätschmann, Dr. Monika Brunner and Dr. Bernadette Walter. The art technology team was headed by Karoline Beltinger (*Dipl. Rest.*).

The project has been funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, many well-known arts foundations, and a number of private benefactors.

### **Print version and online access**

Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918). *Catalogue raisonné der Gemälde, Volume 2: Die Bildnisse*

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23.5 x 32 cm, 432 pages, 480 catalogue entries, 753 (mostly colour) illustrations, stitched, cloth with embossed spine, binder tape, 2 ribbon markers, colour sleeve, in slip case. CHF 480 or CHF 540 incl. online access. Subscription price (until 31 January 2013) CHF 360 or CHF 405 incl. online access. **This book is published within the series «Catalogues raisonnées of Swiss Artists» and can be ordered online via [www.sik-isea.ch](http://www.sik-isea.ch) (Publications).** To order by post, please request the forms from SIK-ISEA.

The digital version of the *catalogue raisonné* of paintings by Ferdinand Hodler ([www.ferdinand-hodler.ch](http://www.ferdinand-hodler.ch)) broadens the search options provided by the printed version, offering swift access to all relevant data about his oeuvre. As the database is regularly updated during the project, online subscribers also have exclusive access to the latest research findings. Embedding the oeuvre within the virtual universe of the SIKART Lexicon on art in Switzerland ([www.sikart.ch](http://www.sikart.ch)) enables Ferdinand Hodler's work to be appreciated within the wider context of artistic production in Switzerland.

### **Contact for further information**

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