

MEDIA RELEASE

Zurich, 8 May 2017



Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918), *Sacred Hour*, 1907, reworked 1913, oil on canvas, 182 x 223 cm
Kunsthaus Zürich, Inv. 833, Photo: Kunsthaus Zürich

New publication:

Ferdinand Hodler: Catalogue raisonné der Gemälde, vol. 3: *Die Figurenbilder*

On 16 May 2017, the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) will present the third volume in its catalogue raisonné of paintings by Ferdinand Hodler. Publication of the book devoted to the figure paintings marks another milestone in Hodler scholarship, and also in the research activities of SIK-ISEA. The renowned Hodler scholars Professor Dr Oskar Bätschmann and Paul Müller (*lic. phil.*) penned the introductions to the general topic and to the major works, while authors Regula Bolleter (*lic. phil.*), Dr Monika Brunner, Sabine Hügli-Vass (*lic. phil.*) and Milena Oehy (*lic. phil.*) provided contributions on several groups of works and commentaries on the paintings.

Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918), the most significant Swiss painter at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, discarded artistic conventions and explored new forms of expression, not only in his landscapes and portraits, but also in his monumental history paintings and symbolist figure paintings, which met with acclaim far beyond the country's borders. Hodler produced about 1,800 paintings and several thousand drawings and sketches in all. Ever since its foundation in 1951, the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) has been cataloguing these works by Ferdinand Hodler and examining them with the aid of art technology, so that over time the Institute has evolved into a centre of competence for Hodler research. Since 1998 SIK-ISEA has been compiling a catalogue raisonné of Ferdinand Hodler's paintings. These were grouped by genre into landscapes, portraits and figure paintings, with each group the subject of its own volume. The fourth and final volume will contain a comprehensive biography with documents relating to Hodler's life and œuvre.

Following the catalogue raisonné of landscapes in 2008 and portraits in 2012, the third volume, devoted to the figure paintings, is now ready for publication. The figure paintings include the genre scenes, symbolist works and history paintings. Together they account for a large proportion of Hodler's painted œuvre (630 works, similar in number to his landscape paintings). Hodler's output of figure art dates back to his training as a pupil of Barthélemy Menn, who specialised in this field. Hodler very soon began to enter the Concours Diday, the Geneva-based competition open to this type of painting, just as he participated in the Concours Calame with his landscapes. He was frequently successful, and the prize money helped him considerably to earn his living. The experience also taught him the popular benefits of the patriotic genre. Early in his development, Hodler threw great energy into exhibitions at home and abroad, and he launched his career by producing works for these shows at his own expense. Examples were *Schwingerumzug* (*The Procession of Swiss Wrestlers*) in 1882 or, to mention the most famous and successful of these exhibition paintings, *The Night* in 1889/90, which caused an uproar in Geneva, earned him his first significant recognition in Paris, and was rewarded with a gold medal in Munich. Having entered the competition for the Polytechnic College in Zurich in 1889/90, Hodler took part in all the major public competitions for figure paintings and murals. His entry for the *Exposition Nationale* in Geneva in 1896 was crowned with success, and so was his entry that same year for a hall of weaponry at the Landesmuseum in Zurich. The frescoes he was finally able to implement at the Landesmuseum in 1900 after a long dispute sealed Hodler's reputation as a monumental painter and led to commissions for

Jena University, the Kunsthaus in Zurich, Hanover Town Hall and Zurich University, as well as further work from the Landesmuseum.

Like the first two volumes, this one on the figure paintings consists of an introduction to the theme, the catalogue proper with details of provenance, exhibitions and literature, an annex listing works no longer attributed to the artist or of questionable status, a short biography and various indices. The commentaries discuss aspects such as the trigger for the painting (commission, exhibition, competition), stylistic factors and Hodler's work process (from the original sketch via the study in colour to the final painting) as well as any findings from examinations using art technology. A typical feature of Hodler's oeuvre are the frequent repetitions of common motifs, whether in replicas, different media or as variations on a theme. This phenomenon is encountered in all the genres. Groups of works have therefore been defined for the figure paintings, just as they were for the landscape and portrait catalogues, with an introduction providing commentary in each case.

The research project is headed by the Hodler scholars Professor Dr Oskar Bätschmann and Paul Müller (*lic. phil.*). The authors of this third volume are Professor Dr Oskar Bätschmann, Regula Bolleter (*lic. phil.*), Dr Monika Brunner, Sabine Hügli-Vass (*lic. phil.*) and Milena Oehy (*lic. phil.*). Karoline Beltinger (*dipl. Rest.*) leads the art technology team.

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Printed edition and online access

Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918). Catalogue raisonné der Gemälde, volume 3: Die Figurenbilder

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As a companion to the print version, the digital version of the catalogue raisonné of paintings by Ferdinand Hodler (www.ferdinand-hodler.ch) offers extra search options and permits rapid access to all substantive data relating to his oeuvre. As the database will be constantly updated for as long as the Hodler project continues, online subscribers also enjoy exclusive insights into the latest research findings. As the oeuvre is embedded within the virtual environment of SIKART Lexicon of Art in Switzerland (www.sikart.ch), it is presented here within a broader context, so that works by Ferdinand Hodler can be studied against the full backdrop of art production in Switzerland.

Order publication

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