

«The Miracle in the Snow – Pieter Bruegel the Elder»

23 November 2019 – 1 March 2020

Press Release

Pieter Bruegel's small panel painting of the Adoration of the Kings in the Snow (1563) is the focus of the exhibition at the Oskar Reinhart Collection 'Am Römerholz' from 23 November 2019 to 1 March 2020. It is his only painting in a public art collection in Switzerland and a special jewel in our collection. The exhibition also includes a range of other compositions, especially works on paper by Bruegel the Elder, which bring out aspects of his art that are fundamental to any interpretation of this complex painting – aspects such as his seminal approach to the landscape and the 'updating' of the Bible story for his own contemporaries. A particularly important side of Bruegel's work is the ongoing pictorial discourse as to the revelatory or deceptive nature of the viewer's perception of the subject matter. Other features of his work – such as his recourse to motifs drawn from the repertoire of Hieronymus Bosch, the role of the seasons, and the presence of Flemish village life – are all explored in the exhibition, as is the impact of global cooling in Bruegel's time as the Little Ice Age took hold. The exhibition also investigates the status of the Winterthur Adoration in relation to his other winter scenes – an entirely new genre at the time – and its evolution in the next century of its life.

The exhibition has been preceded by detailed examinations of the painting, partly resulting in new, revealing images, in collaboration with the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien and international experts. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to access the findings of the scientific examinations via a media station and are invited to compare the original with images taken using macrophotography, X-radiography, raking light, infrared photography and infrared reflectography. These findings can also be accessed online by users worldwide via the website [Inside Bruegel](#).

Dendrochronological investigations by experts at the Belgian research institute KIK-IRPA have not only established the age of the wood used for this panel, they have also conclusively shown that this and another three panels by Bruegel the Elder all derived from the same oak tree in the Eastern Baltic region. An exhibit of wooden planks and a cross-section of a tree trunk helps to explain how the newly felled trunk would have been split and treated.

The provenance history of the Adoration, its reproduction in copies by Pieter Bruegel the Younger, and the special interest that the collector, Oskar Reinhart, took in the work of this Flemish master, are illustrated in the exhibition by means of documents, images and books from the library left by Oskar Reinhart.

The Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, the library of the ETH, and private collectors have very generously loaned works for this exhibition.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, in a German and an English edition (each with abstracts in French), which explores both technical and art-historical aspects

of the painting and offers readers an interpretation of this multifaceted little miracle – the first ever representation of falling snow in an easel painting.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition there will be a series of special events and guided tours, including a lecture evening with renowned Bruegel experts and a museum concert on the theme of winter. There will also be workshops for children, young people and adults alike, encouraging individual creativity.