

## **Courbet – Dreams of a Realist** 25 September 2021 – 2 January 2022

### **Press Release**

The exhibition “Courbet – Dreams of a Realist” at the Oskar Reinhart Collection 'Am Römerholz' presents the collection's entire works by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) for the first time, as only parts of the group have been on display until now. Complemented by individual, high-quality paintings on international loan, the exhibition gives a broad overview of the artist's work.

An enthusiastic participant in the art discourse of his time, Courbet consistently emphasised the need for individual artistic freedom, and pursued his own path with uncompromising rigor. Setting his face against established academic conventions, he deliberately sought to defy them – but was not averse to playing (sometimes in mischievously provocative ways) with historical models and modes of seeing. Throwing down the gauntlet to contemporary society, Courbet's everyday scenes in history painting format and his unidealised, sensual depictions of the nude devoid of mythological pretexts caused uproar and more than a little scandal. In his quest for veracity, the artist turned to the depiction of everyday motifs drawn most notably from his home region of Franche-Comté, committing them to canvas with unprecedented painterly immediacy. He became a proponent and leading practitioner of a “Realism” which at the same time deftly appropriated ideas from Romanticism. Courbet was a great source of inspiration to the generations of artists who came after him, and his work is as relevant today as it ever was.

The collector and patron of art Oskar Reinhart (1885–1965) from Winterthur rightly viewed Courbet as a ground-breaking “forefather of modern painting”, particularly valuing him as a direct precursor of French Impressionism – the actual focus of Reinhart's prodigious collecting activities. The cabinet exhibition “Courbet – Dreams of a Realist” displays for the first time in its full breadth the exceptional Courbet collection that Reinhart accumulated during his lifetime, complemented by two international loans of outstanding quality. It spans the arc from Courbet's early landscapes of his native Franche-Comté to the dramatic, impasto wave paintings of the mature period which are considered the high point of his oeuvre. The exhibition offers a uniquely wide-ranging insight into Courbet's artistic development, and explores the central themes and motifs of his work in an intimate context. An extensive programme of themed tours, workshops and events examines individual aspects of Courbet's art.



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