

REMIX The Collection

KUNST
HALLE
BREMEN



THE COLLECTION

Edited by
Christoph Grunenberg
Dorothee Hansen
Eva Fischer-Hausdorf

Texts by
Christoph Grunenberg
Dorothee Hansen
Eva Fischer-Hausdorf
Hartwig Dingfelder
Manuela Husemann
Mara-Lisa Kinne
Jennifer Smailes

REMIX

WIENAND

**KUNSTHALLE
BREMEN**

FROM ICON TO WORK OF ART

Painting on the Eve of the Renaissance

ITALY

Until the early 15th century, panel painting almost exclusively served religious purposes. Small domestic altars and Florentine Madonnas were an invitation to private prayer. Their shapes reference late Gothic architecture and their precious gold backgrounds imbue Christ, Mary and the Saints with a heavenly glory.

In the first half of the 15th century, the Renaissance was already under way. It was not simply a “rebirth” of antiquity; it also implied a new view of nature. In 1435, Leon Battista Alberti published his treatise on central perspective and, ever since, paintings have been understood as windows into the world. Gold backgrounds were substituted with representations of landscapes and interiors were given measurable dimensions. Gothic forms were now replaced by allusions to Classical architecture, such as Corinthian pilasters, delicate palmette friezes and coffered ceilings.

GERMANY

In the late 15th century, German artists also came into contact with the ideas of the Renaissance. In 1495, and from 1505 to 1507, the Nuremberg painter Albrecht Dürer travelled to Northern Italy, which was a source of great inspiration for him. In his representations of *Saint Onuphrius* and *John the Baptist* (fig., p. 33), his emphasis was on the rendering of muscles and tendons rather than halos. The surrounding landscape is also described with great attention to detail. Nevertheless, these were not autonomous paintings but served as the wings of a house altar.

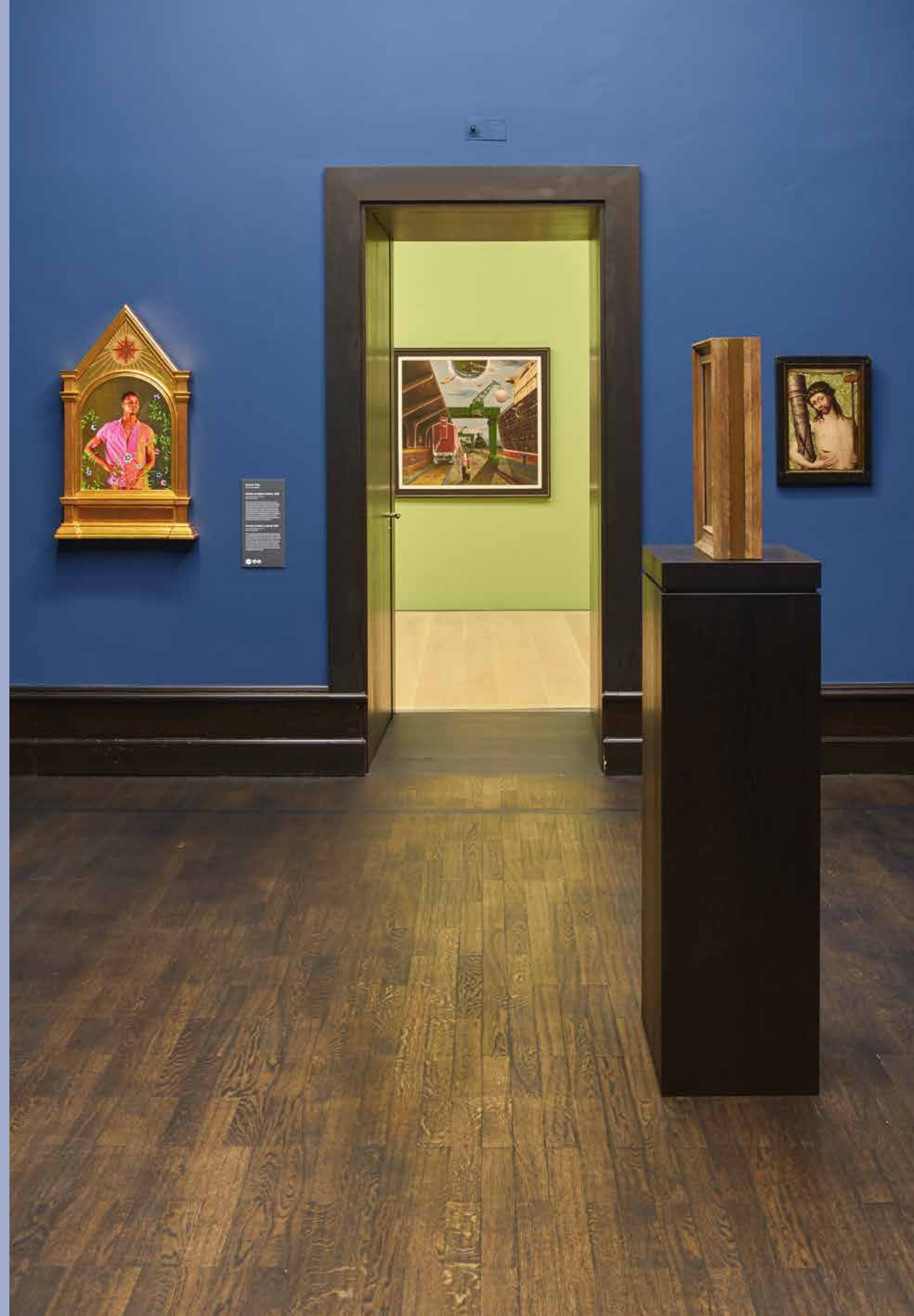
Lucas Cranach never travelled to Italy. Through writings and pictures, however, he too was familiar with the ideals of the Renaissance. In addition to numerous altarpieces, he painted many portraits. Portraits at the time were a

completely new genre; they were devoid of any religious function and became extremely attractive to the nobility and wealthy merchants. Ancient mythology also provided material for new pictorial subjects. One of Cranach’s successful subjects was the *Resting Nymph* (fig., p. 35). She is reminiscent of a naked Venus and accompanied by a Latin inscription. Such pictures offered aesthetic pleasure and at the same time posed an intellectual challenge to humanistic collectors. With works like these, painting emancipated itself from its predominantly religious functions. The painters, who had previously seen themselves primarily as craftsmen, developed into artists who proudly signed their works.

HIERONYMUS KLUGKIST: THE BREMEN COLLECTOR OF DÜRER

On 14 November 1823, the Bremen Senator Hieronymus Klugkist (1778–1851), together with 33 art lovers, founded the Kunstverein in Bremen (Bremen art association). As a collector, Klugkist specialised in the work of Albrecht Dürer. In addition to a few paintings, he primarily collected drawings, watercolours and prints by the Nuremberg master. Klugkist bequeathed his pictures to the Kunstverein. Although some watercolours and drawings were lost in the Second World War, the Bremen Dürer collection is still one of the most significant in the world.

Dorothee Hansen





JACQUES DE GHEYN II
1565 Antwerp – The Hague 1629

Mice, c. 1600
Oil on oak, 12 x 20 cm
Bequest of Dr. Hermann Henrich Meier, Jr.,
1928

Is this a still life or an animal painting? The question seems futile – especially since insects and small animals can be found in many floral still lifes. In any case, the painting is an allegory

of transience. The mice gnaw at a crust of bread that is pointedly placed next to a candle stub in the middle of the picture. The extinguished candle is a symbol of the passing of time. DH



JERONIMUS SWEERTS
1603 – Amsterdam – 1636

Still Life with Flower Basket and Parrot, 1626
Oil on oak, 39.3 x 50.3 cm
Gift of Carl Schünemann, 2017

This is the only known painting signed by Sweerts. He worked in the workshop of the flower painter Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, whose daughter he married in 1627. From childhood on, Sweerts was familiar with exotic plants and birds, which his father traded across

Europe. In this picture you can see a parrot from South America, a feathered cone from the Pacific, a Cuban land snail and bulb plants from Turkey – all precious collectibles back then. DH

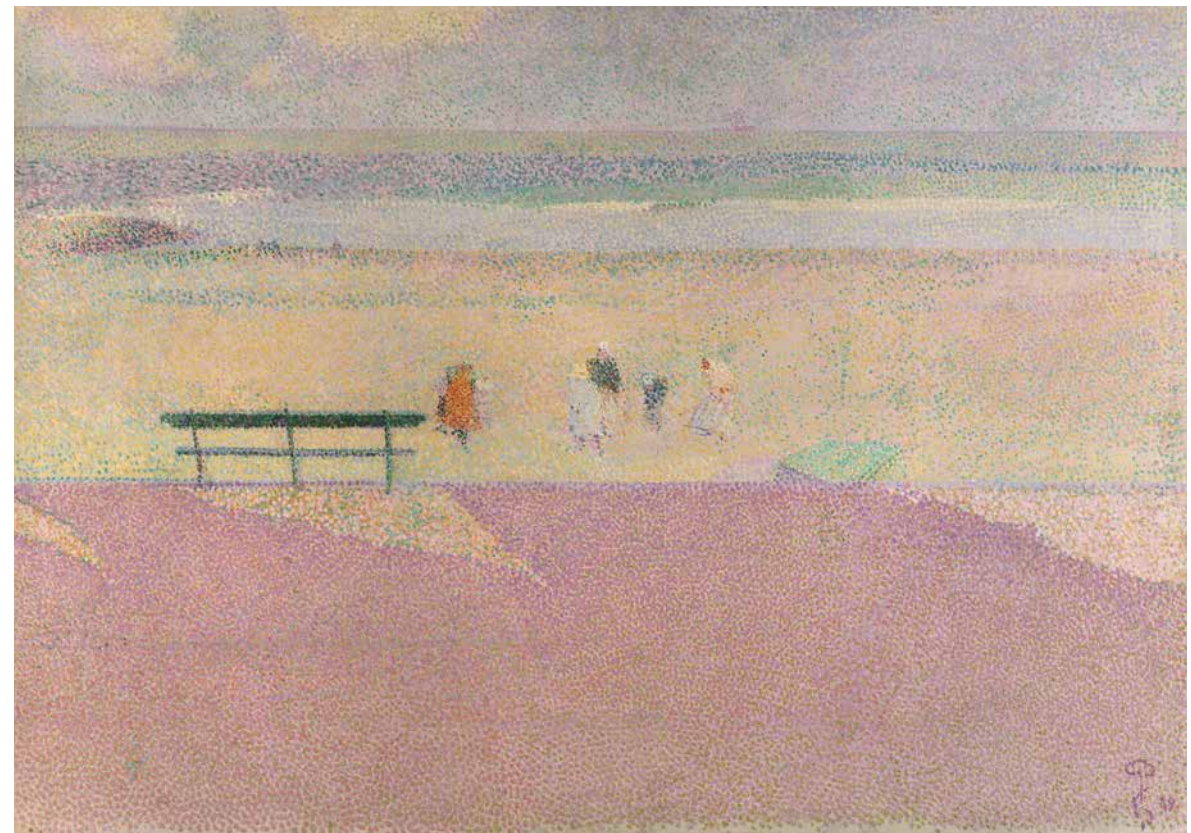


VINCENT VAN GOGH
1853 Zundert – Auvers-sur-Oise 1890

Poppy Field, 1889
Oil on canvas, 72 × 91 cm
Acquired with the Support of the Galerieverein,
the Kulenkamp-Stiftung and with Funds from
the State, 1911

In 1889, van Gogh admitted himself to a sanatorium in Saint-Rémy. This is the first picture he was allowed to paint outside the institution. On the left side of the painting, one can see the walls of the premises. In the past, van Gogh was often described as a brilliant artist who, in a kind of creative frenzy, captured his ideas

directly on canvas. But today one knows that he proceeded very thoughtfully. He prepared the *Poppy Field* in a large brush drawing. In the painting he then tightened the symmetry of the composition, and in a later step he added the yellow house on the right side from his imagination. DH



HENRY VAN DE VELDE
1863 Antwerp – Zurich 1957

Seashore (Beach at Blankenberghe), 1889
Oil on canvas, 60.7 × 85.7 cm
Acquired through a Donation from the Bremer
Hochbau AG, 1965

Around 1888, van de Velde became acquainted with the works of Post-Impressionist painters Paul Signac and Georges Seurat. He soon began to compose his own pictures with tiny dabs of paint. The dots of primary colour – so the theory goes – were supposed to blend into new tones in the spectator's eye. Thus this technique is also called Pointillism (“point” is French for

“dot”). The artist arranged a strictly and starkly abstracted view of the beach at the Belgian seaside resort Blankenberghe in this new style. Only a few paintings from this brief period of work have survived. About four years later, van de Velde gave up painting to devote himself to decorative art and architecture. DH

BETWEEN MONTMARTRE AND MONTPARNASSE

Paris and the Dawn of Modernism

THE CAFÉ DU DÔME

Around 1900, Paris exerted an enormous attraction on artists from Europe and the United States. The French capital had been a source of inspiration to German artists in the 19th century, and many young creative talents flocked there in the early 20th century. Paris was enticing: as a contrast and alternative to the state academies in Germany, it offered liberal art schools, where it was possible even for women to receive training. In addition to numerous artist ateliers, most of which had been built in the Montparnasse and Montmartre districts, there were also numerous opportunities for exhibiting. Above all, the city allowed a vibrant exchange with famous artistic role models and up-and-coming, like-minded people.

One of the most important meeting places was the Café du Dôme in Montparnasse. Opened in 1898, it soon became the first port of call for newcomers as well as a regular meeting place for the Parisian avant-garde. The circle of so-called Dômiers included Rudolf Grossmann, Moïse Kiesling, Jules Pascin, Hans Purrmann, Rudolf Tewes from Bremen and Albert Weisgerber. Many others, such as Wilhelm Lehmbruck, were in informal contact with this group. They did not have a common programme. Instead, each of the artists worked in their own visual languages – in movements ranging from late Impressionism to the painting of the Fauves – above all, Henri Matisse, who became a key figure of the Dômiers. The art of the Dômiers soon became popular in Germany, especially through the future gallerist Alfred Flechtheim, who had been a frequent visitor to the Café since 1906. In 1911, it was the Berlin art dealer Paul Cassirer who exhibited their works for the first time. The director of the Kunsthalle Bremen, Emil Waldman, was very interested in the works of the Dômiers in the 1920s and acquired several paintings from them.

THE BATEAU-LAVOIR AND CUBISM

The Dômiers maintained a wide range of contacts with the various powerhouses of the Parisian avant-garde, such as the older Nabis, the young Cubists of Montparnasse around Henri Le Fauconnier and the group surrounding Pablo Picasso at the Bateau-Lavoir in Montmartre. In addition to Picasso, Kees van Dongen, Otto Freundlich, Juan Gris, Moïse Kisling, Amedeo Modigliani and others worked in this simple artists' atelier. Georges Braque, André Derain, Raoul Dufy, Marie Laurencin, Jean-Paul Laurens and Jean Metzinger as well as writers, art critics and gallery owners were frequent visitors. Picasso, Braque and Derain took a special interest in the work of Paul Cézanne: his search for elementary basic forms in nature and his analytical approach became the source of their new, Cubist visual language – one of the most important artistic ideas of the early 20th century. The collection in the Kunsthalle Bremen reflects the many facets of the various artistic movements that met and exchanged ideas in Paris at the beginning of the 20th century: from the late Impressionist colour tendencies of the Dômiers, to the earthy tones and geometric abstractions of the Cubists, from the poetic realism of a Lehmbruck to the cubic construction of Oto Gutfreund.

Eva Fischer-Hausdorf



ACTIVATING THE SENSES

New Media and Questions of Perception in Art

ART AND TECHNOLOGY

World-changing scientific discoveries and rapid technological developments characterised the 20th century and increasingly impacted the world in which people live. In the 1960s, in particular, many artists responded to these developments by integrating technical media such as film, video and computer into their art, thus arriving at completely new artistic questions and solutions.

NAM JUNE PAIK AND JOHN CAGE

The Korean artist Nam June Paik is regarded as a pioneer of video art. While studying in Germany, he forged important contacts with the local and international contemporary music and art scene. Together with Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell, he was a leading participant in the first Fluxus actions. Prior to 1963, he exhibited manipulated television sets, in which he directly influenced the television picture by incorporating stimuli from the New Music movement. With this, Paik turned the mass medium into an artistic means of expression and became the founder of video art. In 1965, he was the first artist to use a video camera; in 1969 he revolutionised the technical possibilities of this medium by developing a visual synthesiser. Using this technology, it was possible for the first time to combine, overlay, multiply or split live images and existing video material. Paik's interest in technical innovation was linked to the desire to involve the viewer directly in his art. In the 1960s, he began creating interactive works of art in which the recipients were either involved in or completed the work. His aim was to bridge the gap between art and life.

Together with Paik, the American composer and conceptual artist John Cage strove to blur the boundaries between music, visual art, dance and theatre, as well as between

high art and popular culture. Chance was a significant compositional principle for Cage. A key work in this context is the sound environment, *Writing through the Essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience"* (1985/91), first created in 1987 for *documenta 8* in Kassel and later reinstalled on the top floor of the Kunsthalle. This meditative, multimedia "Gesamtkunstwerk" (total work of art) confronts the viewer and listener with a bewildering arrangement of light and sound based on a mixture of rational compositional decisions and calculated chance.

SPHERES OF EXPERIENCE IN THE KUNSTHALLE BREMEN

Together with one of the world's most important collections of works by Nam June Paik, this major work by John Cage forms the core of the media art collection at the Kunsthalle Bremen. Wulf Herzogenrath, an expert with extensive international connections, and director of the museum from 1994 to 2011, laid the foundation for this unique collection. During his term of office, the collection of new media art was expanded to become an important focal point through acquisitions from 1960 to the present. These include the large-scale installations by James Turrell, Olafur Eliasson and Diana Thater. They create spheres of experience in which visitors can reassess their perceptions in different ways. While Thater fills an entire room with several video projections, blending with the existing architecture but also redefining the spatial effect, James Turrell and Olafur Eliasson reduce the artistic material to the medium of light in different colour moods and wavelengths. In this way, the new media allow an artistic examination of the perception of space and time.

Eva Fischer-Hausdorf

