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Myths and Mysteries

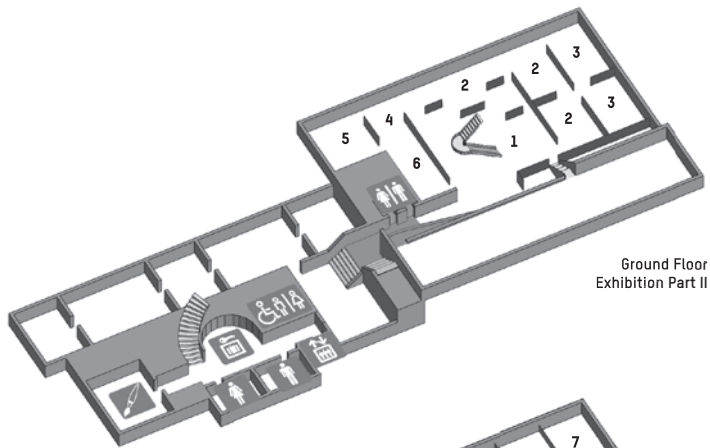
S Y M B O L I S M A N D S W I S S A R T I S T S

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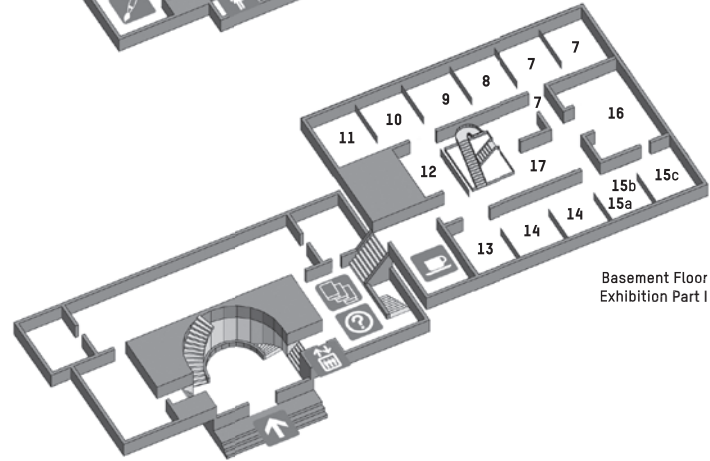
**KUNST
MUSEUM
BERN**

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Basement Floor Exhibition Part I

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Introduction

The large exhibition *Myth and Mystery: Symbolism and Swiss Artists* throws light on the part played by Swiss artists in symbolism and is eagerly anticipated as there is currently a strong international interest in symbolism. The Kunstmuseum Bern has entrusted the curatorship to the expert in the field Valentina Anker. The exhibition brings together some 200 works including paintings, drawings, photographs, prints, books, posters, and sculptures. Many of these masterpieces are from museums in Switzerland as well as from overseas, mostly never travelling as loans. Thus the exhibition is able to offer a seldom and unique multi-faceted overview of symbolism.

Symbolism in art began in Paris around 1890, and the Swiss artists Ferdinand Hodler and Carlos Schwabe were inspiring from the very beginning. For the first time ever, the show points out by means of key comparisons Switzerland's role for symbolism. Leading Swiss painters, sculptors, graphic artists, and photographers are examined in the context of their interaction with the artists of the neighboring countries of France, Germany, Austria, Italy as well as of Belgium, the birthplace of the symbolist movement.

We are showing major symbolist works that were already presented at the Salon de la Rose + Croix in Paris, at the «Secession» exhibitions in Vienna and Munich, as well as at early Venice biennials. Symbolist art comprises works that not only contradict the reality we see. They demonstrate that there is a reality whose existence can not be scientifically proven, but which we can at least imagine.

The symbolist movement spread throughout all of Europe at the close of the 19th and early 20th centuries. On the one hand, it breathed

new life into the art scene, on the other it assimilated diverse artistic movements. And on the whole it is imbued with the melancholy of the end of an era and the hope of a fresh start. Thus it has close affinity to our epoch. The boundaries separating the arts had grown fluid and humankind's attitude to nature was changing. After the great turbulence of the Romantic era, humankind became again more engrossed with spiritual values, although it sought a cosmic rather than a religious spirituality.

The exhibition is a collaborative project with the Museo Cantonale d'Arte and the Museo d'Arte Lugano, where it will also be shown from September 14 2013 to January 12 2014.

1

Nocturnal Depths and Dreams

The night veils things in darkness while also unveiling the invisible, fears, and nightmares.

In Ferdinand Hodler's *Die Nacht* (The Night) the harmonious peacefulness of the sleeping people is disrupted in the composition by a black, heavily veiled figure crouching on the man at the center: is it a personification of nightmares? Or death? Everything is in a state of change, and the allusion to something terrible happening triggers the beholder's imagination to muse on what it could be. In Boccioni's *Paolo et Francesca*, in which the two adulterers are carried away by the storms of hell, the red flames glow as intensely as their passion. Arnold Böcklin's *Ruine am Meer* (Ruins near the Sea) are a nocturnal omen and almost Romantic, with cypresses swaying in the wind and black crows as ominous portents. Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer's *Venise* (Venice), with its nocturnal scene of Venice, veils the canal in a thin fog with soft pastel tones in a velvety world of dreams and fantasies. The night wanes in Henry Füssli's *Einsamkeit im Morgenzwielicht* (Loneliness at the First Light of Dawn), and the morning dusk is disturbed only by the dog barking at something we cannot see. In Xavier Mellery's *Mon vestibule* (My Vestibule) the quiet atmosphere and the darkness is frequently broken by mysterious and strange lights and shadows. Presenting a strong contrast to Ferdinand Hodler, the dreaming woman and her environment in Gaetano Previati's *Chiaro di luna* (Moonlight) no longer seem to be of the material world. The pedestal of Rodó's *Wasserfontäne* (Jet d'eau) (Fountain) displays an inscription with a verse from Paul Verlaine's poem, *Clair de lune*, which was set to music by Gabriel Fauré.

2

Metamorphoses of Women in Artists' Imaginations

The «woman» was a popular and a key subject in symbolism. Giovanni Segantini's *Die Eitelkeit / Die Quelle des Bösen* (Vanity / The Source of Evil) illustrates how a woman, who is looking for her mirror image on a water surface, comes instead face-to-face with a snake- or dragon-like monster staring back at her from the spring. We think of the female version of the myth of Narcissus, but in fact it is more in that it confronts the symbolic character of a female figure with a landscape representation.

Salome, who desired that John the Baptist be beheaded, is the subject of Arnold Böcklin's *Die Tochter der Herodias mit dem Haupt des Täufers* (Herod's Daughter with the Head of John the Baptist). Salome had already been a source of fascination during the Romantic period, as for example in Delacroix's *Die Enthauptung Johannes des Täufers* (The Beheading of John the Baptist) and later in Gustave Moreau's masterpiece *Salomé à la colonne* (Salome with Column).

Presumably Jan Toroop's *Zwei Frauen* (Two Women) are seraphs, that is, six-winged angels, whose elaborate coiffeurs form an arabesque and who appear to be making their way from the Garden of Eden to the stellar regions beyond the frame.

Carlos Schwabe's *Die Welle* (The Wave) depicts foreboding prophetesses who, as the wave is about to break, scream hysterically and foretell the horrors of the future.

In symbolism the female is additionally represented as an unfeeling and icy being, such as in *La Solitude* (Loneliness) by Fernand Khnopff. Symbols articulate this impression: the mask of Hypnos that is

attached to a poppy flower, the soap bubble with an only just discernible angel inside of it, as well as the sword decorated with precious stones. The woman's dress is like a shield that protects against gaining any insight to the layers underneath it. Her loneliness is that of Mallarmé's Herodias: «Oui, c'est pour moi, pour moi, que je fleuris, déserte!» («Yes, it's for me I bloom, deserted!»)

The symbolist notion of nature is multi-faceted and profound. Four aspects predominate: the sacred (as we find in Arnold Böcklin's *Der Heilige Hain* [The Sacred Grove]), the dialogue with nature (as in Ferdinand Hodler's *Zwiesgespräch mit der Natur* [Dialogue with Nature]), the search for origins (as in William Degouve's *Forêt mystérieuse* [The Mysterious Forest]), and the personification of natural forces (as in Félix Vallotton's *Die Quelle* [The Spring]).

To veil and unveil something, to discover and lose it, to hear its inner music, to delve into its unfathomable and hidden secrets, to discover and explore the harmonies of its sounds and colors as Baudelaire describes in his programmatic poem *Correspondences*: these are the modes in which symbolism transcends the boundaries of feelings and emotions. Finding corresponding colors and permeating painting, melodies and scents enhance the visual impressions of painters: the separate senses with which we perceive begin to merge and become one and everything strives to form a new unity. Symbolism is concerned about entirety, the dissolution of boundaries, definitions, and certainties.

From the Genesis to Exoticism

In Nature's temple, living columns rise,
Which oftentimes give tongue to words subdued,
And Man traverses this symbolic wood,
Which looks at him with half familiar eyes,

Like lingering echoes, which afar confound
Themselves in deep and sombre unity,
As vast as Night, and like transplendency,
The scents and colours to each other respond.

And scents there are, like infant's flesh as chaste,
As sweet as oboes, and as meadows fair,
And others, proud, corrupted, rich and vast,

Which have the expansion of infinity,
Like amber, musk and frankincense and myrrh,
That sing the soul's and senses' ecstasy.

[Charles Baudelaire, «Echoes.» (Correspondences) in: *ibid. The Flowers of Evil*, translated by Cyril Scott (London: Elkin Matthews, 1909) www.gutenberg.org]

Since the Romantic era, mountains and mountain ranges were associated with the yearning for far-off places, especially exotic ones. Feragutti Visconti embarked from Buenos Aires and journeyed to Tierra del Fuego. With missionaries helping him and travelling in a German fishing boat he went to distant and unspoiled regions of the earth. Feragutti painted a series of portraits of Patagonians, displaying great understanding for their rituals and myths as well as the everyday life of this «primitive people». These works, especially *Die Familie des Patagoniers* (The Family of the Patagonian) mark a transformation in Feragutti's painting, which from hence on displayed an new intensity of color. The Bernese traveller and natural scientist Adolf Methfessel was by no means a symbolist painter, but his works display a keen interest in exotic landscapes and countrysides. In 1868 he enlisted in the Paraguayan War, working as a landscape painter and cartographer. The pictures of his visits to the elevated tablelands of the Parana and to the waterfalls of Iguazu and Misiones are now largely kept in the La Plata Museum and in the Kunstmuseum Bern. *Im Urwald* (In the Jungle) is a work illustrating the wilderness not far from Iguazu Falls. The luxuriant vegetation is evocative of the «lost paradise». In the painting *Die Elefanten* (The Elephants), Charles Gleyre stages nature as the «Garden of Eden» with a herd of elephants, a hippopotamus, a lion, and a gigantic pterosaur or flying reptile. In the foreground of the overloaded and rich scene a couple embraces as Adam and Eve. Thus exoticism and the Genesis in the Bible have been conflated in the yearning for a return to the simplicity of our natural state and to the paradise that Gauguin dreamt of also.

High Mountains and Reflective Lakes

In the course of the centuries mountains awakened a variety of emotions in the artists who painted them. For Alexandre Calame storms and landslides symbolized the anger of the gods. Around the close of the 19th century, natural phenomena were often represented as personifications. Thus Giovanni Segantini's *Die Lawine* (The Avalanche) is a masculine woman throwing a huge ball of snow onto the earth. Sar Péladan was so taken by Rodó's *Die Lawine* (The Avalanche) —with the subtitle *Stimme der Klüfte, Zerstörung* (Voice of the Gorges, Destruction) —that he invited the artist to participate at the first Salon de la Rose + Croix. The French author Péladan was an occultist and one of the pioneers of the French Rosicrucian movement. Rodó's *Avalanche* was conceived as part of a gargantuan utopian temple that was to be hewn out of a mountain rock face.

In Charles Giron's *Nebelschwaden (Lauterbrunnental)* (Fog Patches: Lauterbrunnental) the clouds take on the shape of women playing musical instruments and dancing, among them one plays the harp and another the violin. Ferdinand Hodler depicts a powder-snow avalanche in the background of his painting *Die Lawine* (The Avalanche). Clouds of snow spread in circular rings although the event as such is almost invisible. The gaze of the beholder meanders upwards along a stream in a seemingly serene landscape. Auguste Baud-Bovy has imbued Mt. *Niesen* with a spiritual ambience by means of rays of sunlight. Hodler too painted the mountain in *Thunensee von Leissigen aus* (Lake Thun Viewed from Leissigen). Hodler's mountain invokes the perfect geometry of a triangle. In the painting *Thunensee und Stockhornkette* (Lake Thun and the Stockhorn Range), Ferdinand Hodler unites the colored stripes of the lake, the fog, and the sky by parallelism.

Animals, Hybrids, and the Enigmatic

The symbolists often resorted to using animals that we know from Greek mythology, from esoteric traditions, and prehistoric fauna in their works of art, but also depicted animals as the friends of humankind. Often too we find hybrid beings, which adopted all kinds of shapes. No artist saw the bonds of friendship between humankind and animals as strongly as Giovanni Segantini: *Die beiden Mütter* (The Two Mothers) reveals the affinity between animals and humans in the shared primeval experience of motherhood.

Radiant light illuminates the herd of sheep in Segantini's *Bergerie - Contrasto di luce* (Light contrast - Sheep Shed). Arnold Böcklin's *Meeresstille* (Calm at Sea) is a masterpiece of the mysterious with a voluptuous mermaid captivating the beholder. The ocean is both calm and unsettling; under the water we discern a Triton (a Greek oceanic god) and a snake-dragon playing a deadly game. Echoing the siren, seagulls peer into the distance. The artist's *Kampf der Kentauern* (Battle of the Centaurs) is very different. In it the brutal violence of the animal and human hybrids reaches a peak. The battle scene was believed to allude to the German-French War of 1870-1871 or also be a reference to antiquity and Rubens's and Delacroix's lion hunts. Hence we have likewise hung Odilon Redon's study *La Chasse aux lions d'après Delacroix* (Lion Hunt After Delacroix) here. It reveals not only the symbolists' interest in this particular subject matter but additionally that of the Romantic artists such as Delacroix.

Les petites faunesses (The Small Female Fauns) by Eugène Grasset are exceptionally charming and playful, and the *Faunesse debout* (Standing Female Faun) by Auguste Rodin is likewise outstanding on

account of its gracefulness and the way the light plays on the sculpture's surfaces. But Jean-Joseph Carriès depicted the most moving faun of them all with its immense sadness. Carriès succeeded in illustrating the dual nature of a human and animal hybrid represented in the head of the being alone. But just as skillfully he managed to render the dreamy drunkenness and disappointment of a sleeping faun as it awakens, (just like in the symbolist poem *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (The Afternoon of a Faun) by Stéphane Mallarmé).

Clara von Rappard's painting *Seele Brahmane (nach Goethe)* (Brahmin Soul (after Goethe) portrays an unusual being with luxurious hair and a melancholy face; its body is sphinx-like and engulfed in a twilight cosmic landscape of smoldering colors. We find ourselves transported into the nebulous universe of the Brahmini transmigration of souls in which the cosmic soul lives through a cycle of rebirths and metamorphoses. *La grenouille monstrueuse* (The Monstrous Frog) by Jean-Joseph Carriès has hare's ears and bird's legs, and the tail and head of a duck. It takes us into the future, that is, into a future of the freedoms acquired through such techniques as collage and assemblage, of the new and different art techniques that fascinated both surrealists and modernist artists alike. The subject of animals, a focus in Darwin's theory of evolution, was very popular in symbolist art.

D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous? (Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?), is the title of Paul Gauguin's famous painting. Do Darwin's laws of evolution not count for people who are, according to Christian tradition, the summit of creation? In symbolism representations of paradise are portrayals of Adam and Eve's lost Garden of Eden. Charles Gleyre encloses their bliss in a so-called tondo or circular picture in his *Skizze für das irdische Paradies* (Sketch for the Garden of Eden). The scene is both ideal and homely. Cuno Amiet concentrates on the apple tree, the couple, and the apple in his *Paradies* (Paradise). Augusto Giacometti reveals great distance from the idyllic Garden of Eden that Gleyre illustrated: *Adam und Eva* (Adam and Eve) are united in the clutches of a huge python that roles itself into a perfect circle and thereby references the tondo form. Giovanni Segantini's *Engel des Lebens* (Angel of Life), an artwork of incredible delicacy and packed with nostalgic ambience is not a portrayal of the Virgin and Child and instead conjures up the heavenly state of the child before losing its mother. Segantini takes the subject of angels up again in the *Verkündigung des neuen Wortes* (Announcement of the New Word), which he designed as an illustration for Friedrich Nietzsches *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In Carlos Schwabe's *Passion* the impressive passion procession is a metaphor for art itself. Paradise and the Garden of Eden, so close and in fact so far away from us, were painted and drawn by the symbolists as the expression of deep yearning.

From India to the Planet Mars

In 1899 a world bestseller was published in Geneva: *Des Indes à la planète Mars* (From India to the Planet Mars). In it the heroine, the medium Hélène Smith (her real name was Elise Müller), wrote and drew messages from Mars in the Martian language. The hero is the extremely serious and renowned Genevan psychiatrist and theology professor Théodore Flournoy, and Hélène Smith was a patient of his over a number of years.

The narrative and the portrayal of the aliens as well as travel journals of spirits became fashionable among the symbolists. According to Flournoy, Hélène «suffered from the disorder» of glossolalia, the gift of tongues. This reveals how progressive his ideas were, which followed Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious mind. Flournoy saw in the novels that were written in a somnambulist state not only the exaggerated dreams and fantasies of a half-conscious medium, but that they reflect its woken state and are translations of forgotten memories.

After a disagreement with Flournoy after the great success of *From India to the Planet Mars*, Hélène had enough of the psychologist. She sought refuge in religion and created works that were dictated to her by God. The Musée d'art et d'histoire in Geneva exhibited her pictures, which attracted a lot of visitors. After she died most of her works were lost: the «delirious clairvoyant with the wonderful name,» as Jacques Lacan called her, was to be held in great esteem by the surrealists. They saw in her «a siren of the conscious mind» as Victor Brauner depicted her for the Tarot de Marseille.

The Legend of the Wandering Jew

Ferdinand Hodler painted several versions of his *Ahasver (Der ewige Jude) / Ahasver* (The Wandering Jew). The symbolists were fascinated by the legend of the Wandering Jew – more than 1800 years old – and it awakened interest about the history of the Jews, their wandering and largely diaspora existence. The subject of the *Wandering Jew* is a symbol for existential moral values. The work is permeated by an ambience of yearning for immortality, solitude, and spirituality.

In Giuseppe Mentessi's *Ramingo*, a pilgrim with a staff reverentially climbs the grand steps leading up to the entrance of the church. They are lined by large statues of martyrs. The statue of Christ chained to a column turns to life and bows down to the wayfarer. After long tribulations, Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer's *Les Bergers* (Shepherds) brighten up when a star appears as their beacon and continue their way along the road. The artist accompanies them, in search of the poetic.

The subject of the wayfarer crops up again and again in symbolism: the wanderings of those without a homeland, the unemployed without an abode, figures resembling those in Ferdinand Hodler's *Enttäuschten Seelen* (Disappointed Souls). Arnold Böcklin's mysterious *Heimkehr* (Homecoming) depicts the expensively dressed figure of a man who pauses at a basin of water. Behind him is a mirror image on the surface of the water in a basin, he does not see it. A window is lit up in front of him while the house is blanketed in the dark: how can the man return home to the past after all the

Allegories of Time

changes that have occurred during his long period of wandering? For Hans Thoma's *Verlorenen Sohn* (Prodigal Son) the rainbow heralds a happy return and forgiveness.

Emile Fabry alludes in *Les Gestes ou Automnal* (Gestures or Autumnal Feeling) to the ages of man and their chronological order, while the figures of women make up a unity. The ritualized gestures remind us of silent theatrical performances. Émile Fabry stages people in a way that seems removed from customary and realistic modes of perception. The deformed faces mirror physical development — according to spirituality and not as the body grows according to the laws of nature. In their triptych, Edoardo Berta and Pietro Chiesa allude to the different ages of man through the changing light of day (dawn, midday, and evening). Additionally, Berta refers to the religious festival in June *Ritorno dal Corpus Domini* (Return of the Feast of Corpus Christi) which is symbolized by the abundance of daisies growing in the fields. Ferdinand Hodler painted childhood in *Der Auserwählte* (The Chosen One). It is a portrait of his son Hector, «protected» by winged beings while the boy kneels before a tree that is surrounded by stones.

In contrast to the gentle grace in Edward Burne-Jones's *Altar for Hymen*, Arnold Böcklin's *Hochzeitsreise* (Honeymoon) depicts the newly married couple, even though the landscape around them seems reasonably idyllic, standing on the edge of a cliff. The relationship between the man and the woman is complex: they both are vulnerable and free out in the open, but their future is concealed.

Figures of Violence – from Oedipus to Cleopatra

Arnold Böcklin painted *Bergschloss mit Kriegerzug* (Mountain Castle) with Marching Soldiers in a Roman landscape which appears pleasant and friendly. But along the dusty road we see mysterious soldiers, and where they are heading is unclear. No violence is depicted but insinuated all the same. In his *Sterbende Kleopatra* (Dying Cleopatra) Böcklin painted the queen of Egypt at the very moment she is committing suicide by the bite of a viper after her nation was taken by the Roman emperor. Her eyes are veiled in shadow, while the splendor of the brocade seems to underscore the ambience of subjugated anger. *Der Kuss der Sphinx* (The Kiss of the Sphinx) depicts a moment of burning passion between Oedipus and the Sphinx, who confronted him with a riddle to solve or pay with his death. In the legend Oedipus is the victor and finds the right answer, but did Franz von Stuck perhaps in fact reverse the outcome by enhancing the animal and all-consuming force of the Sphinx?

Demonic forces reign in Albert Welti's painting *Nebelreiter* (Riders in the Fog) as a battle of horsemen takes place and is in full force, thunderous and musical alike, in a scene that could be from Richard Wagner's Valkyrie.

The Ticinese artist Filippo Franzoni, an acquaintance of Welti, was well-versed with works of the imagination, and his painting *Streghe, diavoli, mucche* (Witches, Devils, and Cows) illustrates his hallucinatory world. His *Apparizioni* (Apparitions) evidence his unbridled imagination. He creates phantasmagoric characters that could almost be *écriture automatique* or automatic writing.

The Rosicrucians and Their Influence

Josephin Péladan, called «Le Sâr», founded the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose+Croix* (The Kabbalistic Order of the Rose+Croix) in 1889 with its seat in Paris. Because of differences on the religious orientation of the order, Péladan already left the order in the following year and founded a new Rose+Croix fraternity, the *Ordre de la Rose-Croix Catholique et esthétique du Temple et du Graal*.

In 1892 he organized, at the famous Paris Durand-Ruel Gallery, the first Salon de la Rose+Croix. All in all, six Salon exhibitions took place, with the last one mounted in 1897. The Rose+Croix Salons rejected naturalism and were more inclined to explore the occult and spirituality in art embodying the ideal.

Music was likewise an essential element of the Rosicrucian universe: Erik Satie composed, inter alia, his *Sonneries*, and often passages from Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* were played. The Salon exhibitions were very important for European artists, such as Fernand Khnopff, Gaetano Previati, Jan Toorop, and especially for the Swiss symbolists, who found international recognition through this platform. The poster made for the first Salon de la Rose+Croix was designed by Swiss artist Carlos Schwabe in 1892, and for the show Ferdinand Hodler submitted his *Die Enttäuschten Seelen* (Disappointed Souls), a work that was to be seen as the embodiment of symbolism. A number of other Swiss artists participated in the first Salon: Eugène Grasset, Rodo, Albert Trachsel, and Félix Vallotton (who later refused to be called a symbolist).

The Blissful Body

In Greek and Roman antiquity, representations of day were blissful and happy, those of night extremely frightening. Later the Romantics painted landscapes of sunrises and sunsets and included people as witnesses of these spectacular scenes. In Ferdinand Hodler's landscapes such protagonists are given different roles—sometimes they function as allegories, participate in a dance scene, or gesticulate and move rhythmically. The subject matter of humankind's bliss and harmony with the universe culminates in his painting *Der Tag* (The Day). Awakening and feeling at one with the world is symbolized by light. The human body is responsive to rhythm, as was theoretically expounded by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, the founder of rhythmic and musical education. In 1900, the Genevan musician and pedagogue founded a method for learning and experiencing music and called it *Le jour* (The Day). According to this method, the cycles of nature correspond to motions and emotions. In his painting Hodler reserves a prominent place for the human body through the rhythmic motions of the figures. The female figure in the foreground unfolds like a flower that opens up to the sun. The gestures of the figures remind us of people praying, of worship, of devotion to light. In his *Studie zum Tag* (Study for The Day), the protective gestures of the hands covering the eyes underscore the cosmic power of light. The graceful dancing steps in *Zwei Frauen in Blumen (Empfindung Ib)* (Two Women in Flowers - Emotion Ib) symbolize joy, an emotion that is likewise expressed with radiant forcefulness in *Entzücktes Weib* (Ecstatic Woman).

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze: Music and Rhythm

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze saw a strong interconnection between music, emotions, and body movement. This is illustrated in the famous lines he spoke after visiting a concert performance of Richard Strauss's *Elektra*: «In the last scene Elektra sings her triumph in a wonderful crescendo, and as she reaches the point at which she can no longer sing she begins to dance! And we become conscious of the fact that the body is a much more expressive medium than the word, even if it is sung.»

It is remarkable that Geneva was the birthplace for a form of art that became very widespread and highly influential; a form of art that was based on music and found freedom of expression and inspiration in rhythm. Jaques-Dalcroze's ideas were adopted in the early 20th century in the works of Ferdinand Hodler, Firmin Gémier, Serge Diaghilev, and Adolphe Appia.

The musician Ernest Bloch, the photographer Fred Boissonnas, the psychologist and psychiatrist Theodore Flournoy, and the healer Émile Magnin were among the people inspired by Jaques-Dalcroze's teachings.

Both Hodler as well as Jaques-Dalcroze understood the essence of symbolism, in which the worldly and sacred had its place side-by-side. Jaques-Dalcroze repeatedly pointed out that the rhythm of the universe is expressed through the body. To a degree, Hodler's *Eurythmie* (Eurythmics) was the conclusion of his monumental series of paintings such as *Die enttäuschten Seelen* (Disappointed Souls). Simultaneously it illustrates his belief in the significance of rhythm as he had already articulated in *Der Tag* (The Day). The title *Eurythmie* [Eurythmics] opens up new sides to notions of lifespan, a subject Hodler had already addressed in earlier artworks: death is part of the rhythm of life, the slow strides of the old men are dance-like.

15a

The First Goetheanum and the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner

After intensively studying Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's work, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) wrote his mystery dramas that were performed in Munich. He recognized how important it was to translate the ideas of anthroposophy into music, theater, and poetry. As the founder of anthroposophy, he defined this philosophy as «the road to knowledge, which leads the spirituality inherent in the human being to the spirituality of the universe». Steiner decided to have a temple built, which he named the Goetheanum. In the construction of the building, right-angles were considered too «aggressive». Hence they were discarded altogether and replaced by architectural elements that correspond to the aesthetics of flowing movements and change. The building rises out of a concrete foundation and all its parts and details are determined by «organic principles». The Goetheanum was built in Dornach near Basel from 1914 to 1918 during the War years by young volunteers from 17 different nations. The dome was destroyed by arson on New Year's Eve 1922-1923. The Goetheanum was rebuilt between 1925 and 1928. Anthroposophy, according to which there is a struggle between the good, «Ahura Mazda», and the evil, «Ahriman», was to influence numerous symbolist artists, among them Piet Mondrian in his early work and the majority of artworks by the visionary Andrei Belyj.

15b

Monte Verità, an Anti-Urban Utopia for an Artists' Colony

The Monte Verità Colony near Ascona was founded between 1900 and 1905. The idea originated in 1895 in Austria, in a colony for vegetarians in Veldes that was founded by Arnold Rikli, a Swiss naturopath; this was where Henry Oedenkoven from Antwerp and pianist Ida Hofmann from Monte Negro sought a refuge from the paralyzing effects of modern civilization. Likewise in the district of Locarno there were other experimental «life-style reforms» being tried out, new back-to-nature ways of life: theosophist Joshua Klein and the naturalistic painter Fidus joined Oedenkoven and Hofmann. They built open-air huts themselves at Monte Verità and installed sunbathing pools. They also had the idea of building a vegetarian health resort. The idea of a «return to nature» stems from Henri Rousseau's major work, a treatise on education, *Emile: or on Education*. Rousseau was an author, philosopher, pedagogue, natural scientist, and composer. The self-built «huts» for the «colonists» go back to cultivating traditional notions of craftsmanship, which had roots also in the British movements that were initiated by John Ruskin and William Morris. The work was either carried out naked or wearing special clothing, and the builders moved rhythmically and considered their task a spiritual one. The Dance of Monte Verità, merging spiritualism and rhythms of the body, was invented under the influence of Jaques-Dalcroze who stayed at the colony in 1909. And in 1913 Rudolf von Laban started his own school of dance (founded in Munich), which he called the «living temple» or the «cathedral of the future». Like the work of Jaques-Dalcroze or Rudolf

15c

Dancing Under Hypnosis

Steiner, the Monte Verità movement was based on the ideas of the spiritualists and naturists, ideas that were also disseminated by artists in symbolist artworks.

An emphasis on the topic of the sick body was a popular among the symbolists. While the «glossolalist» Hélène Smith had an impact on Théodore Flournoy's ideas and theories, experiments were also carried out using healing methods that were related to art, especially in the case of hypnosis. The actress Magdeleine G. (Magdeleine Guipet, originally from Valais), who suffered from migraines, was hypnotized by Emile Magnin, professor at the Ecole de magnétisme in Paris. According to the actress she had never before danced. Under hypnosis she now danced with great success for artists, for example she danced before Rodin, in circles of clairvoyants in Geneva, Munich, and London, in halls or theaters, where she was examined by numerous psychiatrists and hypnotists. Composers such as the Genevan Ernest Bloch, the French men César Franck or Claude Debussy were sometimes present when Magdeleine danced, often while she was interpreting their works. The photographer Frédéric Boissonnas took pictures of her dancing in a state of hypnosis, of which several negatives and blueprints still survive. The rest has vanished apart from reproductions in Emile Magnin's book *L'Art et l'hypnose: Interprétation plastique d'œuvres littéraires et musicales*, to which Theodore Flournoy contributed an introduction and was of the opinion that «hypnosis does not produce things and talents that are not already there to start with.» Like Hélène Smith (see chapter 8), Magdeleine was a peripheral heroine of symbolism.

Death

Death unites all the epochs: death means inevitable fear, horror, nightmares, and nevertheless plain reality. It is the subject of *Tombe romane a Concordia* (Roman Graves of Concordia), where hardly visible gravestones peep out of the water not far from the city Aquileia, which was destroyed by Attila. Death likewise brings the young women in the procession of Bertas *Funerale bianco* (White Funeral) together, a scene in which everything oscillates between white brightness and deep-black tones. The lightness of the painting is strongly contrasted by Arnold Böcklin's *Pietà*. Veiled in black, the mother's agony in mourning is apparent. Her dark body stands out against the golden background of heavenly splendor, and she supports Christ's head with its pallid face with her hand, his body is wrapped in white linen.

The cruel anguish over a still-born baby has been made sacred by Cuno Amiet in the triptych *Die Hoffnung* (Hope) (also: *Die Vergänglichkeit / Transience*). By closing the two outer wings the skeletons of the parents of the dead child disappear and only roses of remembrance remain. In his painting *Schmerz* (Pain) Carlos Schwabe has created a personification of pain in a woman veiled in black striding along a narrow path between two grave sites.

In the 19th century, psychoanalysis linked Eros and Thanatos, that is, love and death, together: In Eugène Laermans' painting *Liebe* (Love), death as a dark skeleton with large wings and bearing a scythe threatens to claim a couple of lovers just as a cupid bites the man vehemently. In similarly sombre colors, Laermans painted *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil) In this composition a huge old

woman is surrounded by symbols: she sits between the two towers of a cathedral, at her feet is a black coffin, she has laid aside the mask that hides her satanic face.

Cosmos and Infinity, Riddles and Keys to Knowledge

Cosmic notions inspired the symbolist world of thought. The journey from the Earth to the Moon was never represented as often as it was at the end of the 19th century. There was a great general enthusiasm for the writings of Camille Flammarion, who reported about extraterrestrial journeys and alien planets, inciting a «cosmic feeling» among his reading audience. The symbolist circles were, for example, fascinated by Flammarion's fantastic story *Urania*, which Ernest Biéler illustrated parts of.

The Milky Way too inspired the imagination of painters at the time: In Augusto Giacometti's *Sternenhimmel (Milchstrasse)* (Stars of the Heavens/Milky Way), the dark cosmos is broken by colored bursts of light of imaginary fireworks. Giacometti portrays the space in which the stars of the Milky Way sparkle in cold and dull colors as if it was an illuminated path to unknown worlds. And, again with the help of a tondo and using a similar range of colors, Augusto Giacometti interprets our solar system mythologically in *Phaeton im Zeichen des Skorpions* (Phaeton under the Sign of Scorpio). Odilon Redon's *Quadriga. Le char d'Apollon* (Quadriga, Apollo's Chariot) likewise glows on account of its colors as if it was an ocean of flowers or an abundance of precious stones. The couple on a hill painted by Augusto Giacometti who gaze at an infinite rainbow in *Regenbogen* is reminiscent in a way of the boundlessness that preoccupied Romantic artists such as Carl Gustav Carus, Caspar David Friedrich, or even Giacomo Leopardi.

Agenda

Öffentliche Führungen

Sonntag, 11h: 28. April, 5./12./19. Mai, 9. Juni, 7./21./28. Juli, 4./11./18. August
Dienstag, 19h: 30. April, 28. Mai, 4./18./25. Juni, 30. Juli, 6. August
 Anmeldung nicht erforderlich, Ausstellungseintritt genügt

Öffentliche Führungen mit thematischen Schwerpunkten

Dienstag, 14. Mai, 19h:
 Engel und Dämonen
Sonntag, 26. Mai, 11h:
 Natur und Landschaft
Sonntag, 16. Juni, 11h:
 Frauen und Fabelwesen
Dienstag, 16. Juli, 19h:
 Kosmos und Paradies
Sonntag, 28. Juli, 11h:
 Nacht und Vergänglichkeit

Öffentliche Führung mit Dolmetscher in Gebärdensprache

Dienstag, 14. Mai, 19h

Visites guidées publiques

Mardi, 7 mai, 19h30
Dimanche, 28 juillet, 11h30

Public Guided Tours in English

Sunday, June 2, 11:30 am
Tuesday, August 13, 7:30 pm

Einführung für Lehrpersonen

Dienstag, 30. April, 18h
Mittwoch, 1. Mai, 14h
 Anmeldung T 031 328 09 11
 vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch
 Kosten: CHF 10.00

Vortrag von Dr. phil. Rudolf Koella,

Kunsthistoriker, Publizist:
«Valottons kritischer Blick auf den Symbolismus»
Dienstag, 28. Mai 2013, 20h
 Anmeldung nicht erforderlich, Ausstellungseintritt genügt

Kunst und Religion im Dialog

Sonntag, 2. Juni, 15h30 – 16h15

Volkshochschulkurs

Mittwoch, 22. / 29. Mai, 5. / 12. Juni 2013, 15h
 Anmeldung: info@vhsbe.ch

KATALOG / CATALOGUE

Mythos und Geheimnis. Der Symbolismus und die Schweizer Künstler. Hrsg. Kunstmuseum Bern, Museo Cantonale d'Arte und Museo d'Arte Lugano. Mit Texten von Valentina Anker, Michel Drague, Marco Francioli, Matthias Frehner, Sharon Latchaw Hirsch, Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, Alexander Klee, Albert Lévy, Laurence Madeline, Annie-Paule Quinsac, Pierre Rosenberg, Cristina Sonderegger, Beat Stutzer und Jacques Schamkerten. Der Katalog erscheint in Deutsch, Italienisch, Französisch und Englisch. Somogy Editions. ISBN-10: 2757205390 / ISBN-13: 978-2757205396. CHF 45.00

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Public holidays	09.05.2013: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. 18.05./19.05./20.05.2013: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Private guided tours	T +41 31 328 09 11, F +41 31 328 09 10 vermittlung@kunstmuseumbn.ch
Curator	Dr. Valentina Anker

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The exhibition is a co-production with the Museo Cantonale d'Arte and the Museo d'Arte Lugano, where it will be shown from September 14, 2013 until January 12, 2014

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Kunstmuseum Bern
Hodlerstrasse 8 – 12, CH-3000 Bern 7
T +41 31 328 09 44, F +41 31 328 09 55
info@kunstmuseumbn.ch
www.kunstmuseumbn.ch