

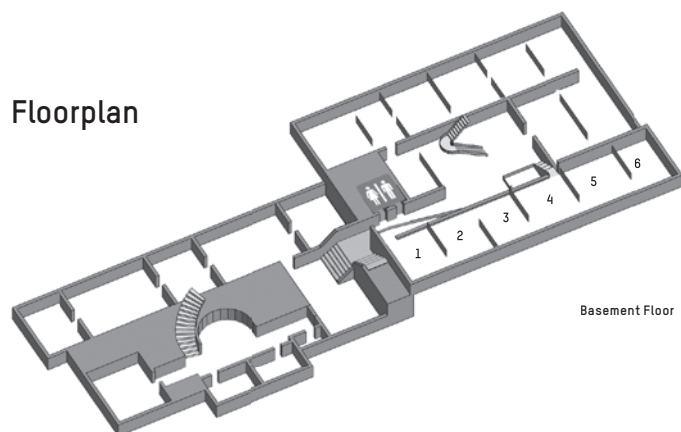
Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733 – 1794). A Very English Swiss

January 17 – April 21, 2014

Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733 – 1794) is being presented in a comprehensive exhibition for the very first time. Grimm pursued a career as topographer, illustrator, caricaturist and painter of watercolors, acquiring quite a reputation especially in England. The exhibition combines examples from every genre Grimm worked in. Loans have been procured from many British collections, including the British Museum, the British Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Tate Gallery, the London Metropolitan Archives, the Society of Antiquaries, the National Museum of Wales, the Victoria Art Gallery of Bath, as well as the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut.

Samuel Hieronymus Grimm was one of the most prolific artists of his time, making thousands of drawings and watercolors, mostly in England, where he settled in 1768. Working for a variety of patrons, Grimm was a versatile painter whose diverse works in such genres as topography, book illustration, and social satire were highly esteemed. He travelled throughout the country, particularly in search of uncommon and sometimes neglected historical and antiquarian sites. His highly skilled images record a remarkable panorama of these as they existed during his time, some of which have subsequently been destroyed. To examine Grimm's work is to scrutinize the fabric of Georgian England before it was transformed by the Industrial Revolution.

Floorplan



- Raum 1: The Early Years
- Raum 2: Remains of the past
- Raum 3: Caricature
- Raum 4: Topographical Scenes
- Raum 5: The Trip to Wales
- Raum 6: The Society of Antiquaries

Room 1: The Early Years

Before Grimm left Switzerland, where he was studying with Johann Ludwig Aberli, he produced a plethora of youthful works in a variety of media and subjects. Much of his work was geared for the characteristic Swiss market of picturesque views within the country, particularly landscapes that foreign visitors often purchased as souvenirs of their travels here. His two views of the *Niesen overlooking the Lake of Thun* (n°s 9 and 10), are representative of the type of views that were demanded at the time. Romantic, charming, agreeably populated by local peasants, views that were precisely the kind of image that Swiss painters of the 18th century wished to project.

While the mountains are still stylized, Grimm's views already demonstrate the atmospheric qualities that marked his more mature landscapes. Grimm too appealed to the rustic interests in *Swiss costumes* (n°s 1 – 6) that likewise became popular subjects painted by many of his contemporaries, both as pictorial documents and as souvenir items.

Among some of Grimm's early commissions were decorations and illustrations meant to be engraved (n° 7 and 8), some perhaps as general vignettes. However, when Grimm settled in London in 1768, his early designs centered on topographical images intended to establish his career as an English painter rather than a Swiss one. His watercolor of *Old Blackfriars Bridge* (n° 12) reveals a quick adaptation to English watercolor painting and techniques of the period. Grimm also produced wonderfully spontaneous views as he wandered in various neighborhoods near his home in Covent Garden (n°s 20 – 22).

Room 2: Remains of the past

The most important commission Grimm received in his early years in London came from Sir Richard Kaye, who would become his main patron for more than two decades. The commission was to paint the *Distribution of His Majesty's Maundy* (n°s 24 – 25), a ceremony in which the King distributed money and food to the poor. Grimm's two very accomplished paintings are tour-de-force images of the ceremony as it was conducted in Whitehall and clearly drawn in situ.

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Both demonstrate an acute understanding of convincing interior perspective as well as a certain veracity in depicting the poor as they await their gifts.

During this period, Grimm developed his watercolor technique even further with distinct views of London scenes, such as *Kennington Common* (n° 39) on the south side of the Thames, still very much rural in 1776, or the annual fair at Fairlop (n° 35), with festive atmosphere and gaiety. In both of these works, Grimm's methods appear facile and uncomplicated – scenes that clearly indicate the sense of the view he is painting.

His watercolor, *An English Harvest Scene* (n° 38), demonstrates, as do many other landscapes of the 1770s, how quickly Grimm became more English than Continental in his subjects and painterly techniques. Even though Grimm had a reputation of working very quickly, none of his works of this period reveal carelessness; they are highly accomplished to the extent that one feels they simply flowed from Grimm's brushes.

Room 3: Caricature

In Grimm's early years in London, he produced dozens of caricatures and satires that were engraved by leading publishers for a very thriving market in the genre. These were often exhibited in the windows of leading print shops and could be purchased for moderate prices. Grimm's caricatures centered frequently on political events, such as the contested *Middlesex Election of 1775* (n° 36), and on ridiculing the outlandish fashion and hairstyles of society that were common among dandies and macaronis (an insulting term describing the Italians). Perhaps the most representative illustration of Grimm's sensibility for caricature is his *The Macaroni of 1774* (n° 30), a watercolor that was engraved several times. The foolish attitude of the figure aptly pinpoints the common view of the macaroni as a rather inane and absurd member of society, in this case laughed at by the spectators behind him.

Grimm's female figures are often represented showing the fashion of impractical and insipid hairstyles carried to the extreme, so exaggerated that they have an almost surreal look to them. His set, *The French Lady in London* and *The English Lady in Paris* (n°s 18 and 19), both of 1771, are prime examples of Grimm's wit in parodying the lengths women of society would go to achieve the new and the bizarre in presenting themselves to society.

Also of interest are the various prints depicting how Grimm expressed the frequent theme of the way in which city life in Georgian London could corrupt the innocence of the rustic visitor.

In *Welladay! Is this my SON TOM* (n°31), Grimm deftly and humorously captured the transformation of the country figure in London to the extent that his father can now hardly recognize his own son. Such images are further evidence of how Grimm, a foreigner, could and did adapt himself to English customs, tastes, and the art market of his day.

Room 4: Topographical Scenes

Much of Grimm's works in the 1770s and 1780s consisted of topographical scenes in almost all of the counties of England. Many of these were geared to depicting specific estates and lands commissioned by their owners as portraits of their properties. His striking view of *Barborough Hall* in Derbyshire (n° 73) came about during a long stay here from another patron, Cornelius Rodes, for whom Grimm painted various views of the estate, as he did as well the estate of *Whitwell Hall* nearby (n° 74). But Grimm also continued to paint sites of antiquarian interest, such as *Tintern Abbey* (n° 70), here in an interior view that with its empty arcades and overgrown foliage heralds a budding romantic vision of the ruin. This is also true of his view of *Tynemouth Priory* (n° 92), splendidly represented in its isolated context overlooking the North Sea, a grandiose monument to the past. Grimm likewise depicted pure landscape at this time, of which his

Cresswell Crags in Derbyshire (n° 75), composed with a low vantage point to accent the rocky terrain, is one of the finest. While Grimm voyaged continually during the summer months, he did not neglect to paint London scenes, some of them contemporary, such as his two views *The Encampment Outside Montagu House* (n° 68) and *Military Camp in Hyde Park* (n° 69). Both depicted the military occupation of key London sites after the Gordon Riots of 1780.

Room 5: The Trip to Wales

Grimm's patron Henry Penruddocke Wyndham (1736 – 1819) hired him in 1776 to illustrate a substantial tour of Wales he was to make during the summer months of 1777. In a period of less than three months, they would cover almost 1,800 kilometers, inspecting not only the severe landscape, but also a variety of castles, churches, and sites of antiquarian interests. Grimm produced hundreds of drawings, some with lengthy inscriptions, creating one of the most complete corpuses of Welsh scenes in the 18th century. Grimm's works were sketched on the spot, each time capturing the essentials of the site his patron wished to record.

Many of Grimm's watercolors during the trip were of castles, such as *Caerphilly Castle* (n° 47) which were in a state of ruin but of prime antiquarian concern for Wyndham. Some of Grimm's studies, too, depicted relatively modern structures, such as *Llangollen Bridge* (n° 62), which Wyndham thought particularly beautiful for its harmonious arrangement.

However, a substantial number of Grimm's Welsh works consisted of views of the rough scenery of the country, such as *Pistyll Rhaeadr* (n° 63), which shows the context and sublime beauty of this waterfall.

The desolate sense of the relatively untamed landscape was best expressed by Grimm in his view of *Pont Aberglaslyn* (n° 56) in central Wales near Snowdonia, also called the Devil's Bridge, where the wildness of the landscape is accented by the two peaks on either side, with only a small patch of sky visible in the background.

When Wyndham published his account of the trip in 1781, he chose various works by Grimm, among the hundreds he produced, to have engraved for illustrations.

Room 6: The Society of Antiquaries

The Society of Antiquarians of London is a learned society formed in essence in 1717 and incorporated by a Royal Charter in 1751. Its essential aim was to foster the study of antiquities in Britain and elsewhere through collecting and documenting pertinent examples from the past. One of the goals of the Society was also the preservation of significant English historical monuments that were in danger of destruction or so inaccessible that their contents were unknown to other specialists. For this, the Society commissioned various artists to record works – architecture and painting – which they then had engraved and published in their journal. Grimm began working for the Society in 1779 when he was commissioned by them to copy the *Embarkation of Henry VIII at Dover* (n° 67), a 16th century painting by an unknown artist in Windsor Castle. The most significant commission Grimm received from the Society was to copy the series of paintings in Cowdray House, one of the great Tudor houses in West Sussex, recording campaigns in France in 1544/45 of Henry VIII. Of the five paintings hung in the dining room of Cowdray, Grimm copied four of them, which were subsequently engraved, not without difficulty, by James Basire after years of labor. Each of Grimm's copies provide remarkable information on the costumes of the day, the way in which camps were established, and an encyclopedia of British arms used in the 16th century. Grimm's copies of these highly important historical documents were particularly fortuitous because of the fire which destroyed much of Cowdray House in September 1793, including all the paintings. Grimm's copies, therefore, remain the only visual record of these vital works known.

Biography Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733 – 1794)

Grimm was born in Burgdorf in January 1733, the second son of Johann Jakob (1680 – 1749) and Anna Maria Grimm-Leu (1694 – 1761). His earliest studies were in Burgdorf where early in his life his interests turned to poetic and artistic pursuits.

In the 1750s, he travelled the Bernese Oberland producing drawings of mountains and glaciers that would later be published. At the same time, he was also taking lessons from Johann Ludwig Aberli (1723 – 1786), with whom he worked for several years, while supplying illustrations for the Bernese publisher Walther.

In August 1765, Grimm went to France to work with the engraver and teacher Jean-Georges Wille. It was during Grimm's three years with Wille that he further developed his landscape style as a result of sketching trips he and Wille took throughout France.

In February 1768, Grimm established himself in London where he would live until his death. He worked for numerous patrons, most notably Sir Richard Kaye, for whom he provided literally thousands of drawings and watercolors of topographical views, antiquarian sites, as well as material he thought would be of interest to his enlightened patron.

Grimm also received important commissions from the Society of Antiquaries, as he did from Rev. Gilbert White and William Burrell, while also making his mark as a remarkable caricaturist.

Grimm was also a persistent exhibitor at the Royal Academy in London where his works were widely esteemed. In his travels throughout England and Wales, there was hardly a monument or an ancient ruin that he did not sketch; some of these are the only visual examples of sites that have subsequently disappeared.

When he died on April 14, 1794, artists and antiquarians alike mourned a painter thought to be one of the great artists of the era.

AGENDA

Public Guided Tours (in German)

Sunday, 11.00: January 19., March 30

Tuesday, 19.00: February 4, March 11, April 15

Guided Tour with the Curator William Hauptman (English/German)

Sunday, February 23, 11.00

Workshop of the Volkshochschule Zürich (in German):

«Samuel H. Grimm. Ein Berner Aquarellist in London»

Monday, February 10, 19.30 – 21.00 in Zürich

Saturday, February 15, 10.15 – 11.45 in Bern, guided tour through the exhibition.

Inscription: www.volkshochschule-zuerich.ch, T 044 205 84 84,

Costs: CHF 70.00 (exl. entrance fee)

INFORMATION

Curators

Prof. Dr. William Hauptman (curator)

Dr. Therese Bhattacharya-Stettler (co-curator Kunstmuseum Bern)

Entrance Fee

CHF 14.00 / red. CHF 10.00

Private Guided Tours, Schools

T 031 328 09 11, vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch

Opening Hours

Tuesday: 10.00 – 21.00

Wednesday – Sunday: 10.00 – 17.00

CATALOGUE

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