

Martha Stettler
An Impressionist Between Bern and Paris
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Martha Stettler: Artist – Patroness – Pioneer. The Kunstmuseum Bern is mounting the first comprehensive retrospective devoted to Martha Stettler (1870–1945). This exceptional woman painter was born in Bern and later worked in Paris. During her lifetime she received prestigious awards for her works at international exhibitions. And over a period of almost 40 years she was head of the Paris Académie de la Grande Chaumière.

After a pause of 35 years, the time has come to present the work of Martha Stettler to the general public. The exhibition provides insights into the art of this remarkable painter, who has hitherto been much neglected by art history, while also unfolding an episode of women's history from the close of the 19th century through the early 20th century.

Martha's father, her avid patron and supporter, was Eugen Stettler, the architect of the Kunstmuseum Bern. Until 1892 Martha Stettler visited the Berner Kunstschule, which was then still renting rooms in the basement of the Kunstmuseum Bern. In 1893, as a young woman, she went to Paris together with her partner, Alice Dannenberg, an artist from the Baltic regions. In Paris Martha intended to study art further and live independently in the way she wanted to. Despite the fact that Martha always enjoyed the support and encouragement of her family, as a woman she did not have the same educational opportunities as her male colleagues.

However, Martha Stettler managed to assert herself. Working in an impressionist style, she received prestigious awards for her participation at international exhibitions, for example, in 1910 in Brussels or, in 1913, at the 11th International Kunstausstellung (International Art Fair) in Munich. Characteristic for her work is the energy of her use of color. Mostly her outdoor scenes have been painted from an elevated position, looking upon children intent on what they are doing and upon the adults who are taking care of them. The play of light and shadow creates rhythmic accents and interconnects the figures represented in the paintings in a way that produces internal visual narratives.

Additionally, in 1904, Martha Stettler was one of the cofounders of the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, which still exists today. Among its former students it boasts Alberto Giacometti and Meret Oppenheim. From 1909 onwards she was head of the art academy, successfully promoting its development over almost 40 years. Both as an artist and pedagogue, Martha Stettler played a pioneering role in women's emancipation.

Her work evidences her great proficiency and outstanding qualities as an artist, and the exhibition illustrates why Martha Stettler is an important figure in early 20th-century painting.

Curator

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Quotations

«*Welche Konzentration auf das Wichtige, welche merkwürdige Kraft in der Betonung der wesentlichen Momente des Gegenstandes zeigen ihre Bilder!*»

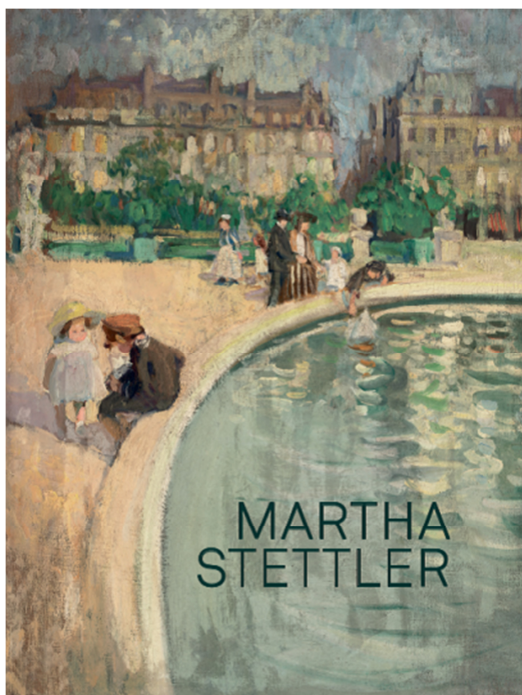
Bernese dialect poet Rudolf von Tavel in *Die Garbe*, 1924

«*...keck in den Farben und markant im Ausdruck der Technik... hier haben wir es sicherlich mit einem starken Talent zu tun.*»

Der Bund, 1910

«*...un des plus beaux envois du Salon, un de ceux où se montre avec le plus d'éclat une véritable nature de peintre.*»

Mazeran in *Grand illustré*, 1906



Catalogue

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Martha Stettler.

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