

Life in Fall

13.2. — 27.9.26

PRESS KIT

OLD
MASTERS

FROM
DUCCIO

TO
LIOTARD

**KUNST
MUSEUM
BERN**

With the support of:



Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne



Burggemeinde
Bern



One of the treasures of the Kunstmuseum Bern is the significant holding of works of early art. From 13 February to 27 September 2026, the museum is putting this part of its collection at the centre with the exhibition *Life in Full. Old Masters from Duccio to Liotard*. Alongside masters from the early modern period, the exhibition features works of Florentine and Sienese painting from the Trecento and Quattrocento as well as masterpieces of the Baroque. A fascinating exhibition that reflects the full range of life: martyrdom meets grandstanding, asceticism encounters opulence, virtue confronts lust.

Skillful altarpieces by Niklaus Manuel and the Bern Carnation Masters, and intimate devotional works of medieval Florentine and Sienese painting from the 13th to the 15th century are juxtaposed with elegant portraits and opulent still lifes by artists such as Joseph Heintz, Johannes Dünz, Albrecht Kauw and Jean-Etienne Liotard. Joseph Werner's allegorical representations of virtue, justice and healing meet dramatic narratives from Greek mythology. With around 70 paintings and some works on parchment, the exhibition *Life in Full. Old Masters from Duccio to Liotard* in the Kunstmuseum Bern presents an impressive picture of the rich and varied imagery from the late Middle Ages to the Baroque.

Treasures from six centuries

The exhibition encompasses works from the 13th to the 18th century, starting with Duccio di Buoninsegna's *Maestà*, the oldest painting in the collection of the Kunstmuseum Bern. It includes major holdings of Bern artists, but also some works from Germany, France and the Netherlands. One major focus is formed by the elaborate altarpieces of the Bern Carnation Masters, active between 1480 and 1510, and the significant holding of works by Niklaus Manuel, born around 1484.

The main gallery is devoted to Manuel, who was not only a painter, poet and graphic artist, but also a reformer, mercenary and alderman of the city of Bern, and to the Bern Carnation Masters. Many altarpieces, some shown free-standing, present extravagant and highly detailed scenes from the lives of the saints, and invite deeper contemplation.

Earthly and heavenly goods

In the age of the Baroque, Bern was one of the powerful city states, and for centuries the more affluent parts of the population enjoyed economic prosperity. Opulent still lifes displaying the rich harvests of the rural estates, as well as a comprehensive selection of prestigious portraits reflect this 'material culture' and the luxury of bourgeois life.

At the same time, and in contrast with the presentation of material wealth, concepts of a good and virtuous way of life were also addressed in painting. Examples of this are allegorical paintings by Joseph Werner and the famous Bern Tablet of Cebes by Joseph Plepp. This monumental painting, over 3 metres wide and with around 200 figures, shows the vicissitudes of humankind on their way to salvation.

The Estate of Adolf von Stürler

One highlight of the exhibition is a selection of works from the estate of the artist Adolf von Stürler (1802–1881). The painter left some 170 works to the Kunstmuseum Bern, which found their way into the collection in 1902. These include works by Florentine and Sienese masters of the Trecento and Quattrocento such as Bernardo Daddi, Fra Angelico and from the workshop of Sandro Botticelli – works which are without parallel in Switzerland, and which are among the oldest and most valuable paintings in the Kunstmuseum Bern's collection. The holding also includes the *Maestà* by Duccio di Buononsegna, as precious as it is famous, which can be seen in a cabinet in the exhibition alongside other altarpieces and fragments.

Of Flora, Neptune and Venus

In another cabinet, mythological depictions by Bernese, French and Dutch artists serve as counterpoint to the many biblical scenes. This small but fine selection shows the fates of Greek gods and nymphs from the 16th to the 18th centuries. As a particular feature, miniatures by Joseph Werner are also on view. The small, very filigree works on parchment are shown only rarely because of their sensitivity to light.

Opening

Thursday, **12 February 2026**, 19:30

The exhibition will be open from 18:00.

Admission to the exhibition is free on this evening.

Curator

Anne-Christine Strobel

Curatorial assistant

Michelle Fritschi

With the support of

Kanton Bern, Burgergemeinde Bern, Pierre Kottelat

Media preview

We cordially invite you to the media preview with curator Anne-Christine Strobel on **Wednesday, 11 February 2026 at 10:00 at the Kunstmuseum Bern.**

Please register via press@kunstmuseumbern.ch.

Represented artists

Heinrich Aldegrevier (1502–1561)
Fra Angelico (†1455)
Hans Asper (1499–1571)
Jacob de Backer (1555–1585)
Berner Nelkenmeister
Balthasar van den Bossche (1681–1715)
Sandro Botticelli (Werkstatt) (1445–1510)
Crispin van den Broeck (1524–1591)
Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255–1319)
Jacopo del Casentino (1279–1358)
Lucas Cranach d. J. (1515–1586)
Bernardo Daddi (1295–1348)
Johannes Dünz (1645–1736)
Taddeo Gaddi (†1366)
David Cornelisz de Heem (1663–1718)
Joseph Heintz d. Ä. (1564–1609)
Jan Sanders van Hemessen (circle of) (1500–1566)
Albrecht Kauw (1616–1681)
Jean-Etienne Liotard (1702–1789)
Niklaus Manuel (I.) (1484–1530)
Master of the Madonna della Misericordia
Andrea di Nerio (1331–1387)
Lorenzo di Niccolò di Martino (around 1373–around 1412)
Alvaro Pirez d'Evora (before 1411–after 1434)
Joseph Plepp (1595–1642)
Nicolas Poussin (attributed to) (1594–1665)
Johann Ulrich Schellenberg (1709–1795)
Vincent Sellaer (1490–1564)
Joseph Werner d. J. (1637–1710)



Digital Guide

There is a freely accessible Digital Guide to accompany the exhibition. It can be accessed from Wednesday, 11 February 2026 via QR code or guide.kunstmuseumbern.ch/en/Alte-Meister.

Press images

Download press images:

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01

Joseph Heintz d. Ä.

Portrait of a Lady, 1598

Oil on canvas

87 × 70 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, depositum of
Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft,
Bundesamt für Kultur, Gottfried Keller-
Stiftung

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



02

Duccio di Buoninsegna

Maestà, around 1290–1295

Tempera on poplar wood, covered with
canvas, original frame

31,5 × 23,2 × 2,5 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, Estate of Adolf von
Stürler, Versailles

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



03

Fra Angelico

Madonna col Bambino, around 1445–1450

Tempera on poplar wood

46,6 × 35,1 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, Estate of Adolf von
Stürler, Versailles

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



04

Sandro Botticelli (Werkstatt)

Madonna del Magnificat (Replica of a panel
in the Uffizi, Florence), after 1480

Tempera on poplar wood, fragment of a
tondo

36 × 27,3 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, Estate of Adolf von
Stürler, Versailles

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern

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05

Bernese Carnation Masters

John's Sermon in Front of Herod, 1495-1500

Mixed media on fir wood

107,5 × 125 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, Staat Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



06

Niklaus Manuel (I.)

The Beheading of John the Baptist, around 1514

Mixed media on spruce wood

121,2 × 84,2 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



07

Niklaus Manuel (I.)

The Temptation of Saint Anthony, 1518-1520

Mixed media on spruce wood

101 × 126 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, depositum of Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Bundesamt für Kultur, Gottfried Keller-Stiftung, acquired with contributions of Kanton Bern, Burgergemeinde Bern, Gemeinde Bern and Verein der Freunde Kunstmuseum Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



08

Joseph Werner d. J.

Allegory of Justice, 1662

Oil on canvas

166 × 225 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, Staat Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern

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09

Joseph Werner d. J.

Flora in Front of a Fountain, 1666

Gouache on parchment over copper plate
14 × 10,5 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, Staat Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



10

Johannes Dünz

The four Seasons: Summer, n. d.

Oil on canvas

58 × 78 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, Staat Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



11

Albrecht Kauw

Storage with cock and hen, 1678

Oil on canvas

146,5 × 101,3 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern



12

Jean-Etienne Liotard

Simon Luttrell, futur Earl of Carhampton,
1753–1754

Oil on canvas

83 × 63 cm

Kunstmuseum Bern, loan of the art
collection of the City of Bern

Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern

Current and upcoming exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Bern

Panorama Switzerland. From Caspar Wolf to Ferdinand Hodler
until 5 July 2026

Stiftung Expressionismus. From Gabriele Münter to Sam Francis
until 5 July 2026

Franz Gertsch. Blow-Up
14.8.2026–17.1.2027

Journey into Freedom. Capri – Skagen – Monte Verità
30.10.2026–31.1.2027

Opening hours

Tuesday
10:00–20:00

Wednesday–Sunday
10:00–17:00

Monday closed

Contact

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Accreditation for media representatives

Admission to all exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Bern is free for media representatives with a valid press card. Please fill in the digital accreditation form which you can either access via kunstmuseumbern.ch/en/press/media-accreditation or by screening the QR-Code before your visit.

