

Media release

Basel, December 6, 2022

Born in Ukraine The Kyiv National Art Gallery in Basel

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Curators: Galyna Alaverdova, Oksana Pidsukha (Kyiv National Art Gallery) with Olga Osadtschy (Kunstmuseum Basel)

In the exhibition *Born in Ukraine*, the Kunstmuseum Basel showcases works by thirty-one Ukrainian artists from the Kyiv National Art Gallery, Ukraine's national art museum. The forty-nine paintings from the eighteenth through the twentieth century and other works from Kyiv will find a temporary home in Switzerland. A concurrent second exhibition is on view at Musée Rath, Geneva.

In the spring of 2022, representatives of the Kyiv National Art Gallery had approached the Kunstmuseum Basel. Given the lack of protected storage spaces for their collection in Kyiv, they were looking for museums abroad that would shelter selections from the outstanding collection. Rather than merely bringing the works abroad and out of harm's way, they hoped to see them exhibited in their temporary new homes.

Conceived in collaboration with the Kunstmuseum Basel, the exhibition *Born in Ukraine* in the Hauptbau now introduces broad audiences to art from Ukraine, offering visitors an opportunity to discover the heritage of a European culture that we know relatively little about. The show is also an invitation to the many Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland.

The project *Born in Ukraine* pays homage to the distinctive history of the Kyiv National Art Gallery, known as Kyiv Museum of Russian Art when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. Since 2014, the museum has been engaged in a critical review and scholarly examination of its own collection that calls the idea of Russian art as an ostensibly homogeneous body of cultural assets in question. This year's Russian attack on Ukraine has lent that undertaking new and existential urgency.

Among the artists whose work is on display in the exhibition *Born in Ukraine* are Illiia Repin, Dmytro Levytsky, Volodymyr Borovykovsky, Arkhyp Kuindzhi, Mykola Yaroshenko, and Davyd Burliuk. All these painters were born in Ukrainian lands. Many of them, however, were trained in Russia and became cultural exponents of the Russian Empire and, later, the Soviet Union. Some subsequently settled in Western Europe or the United States. In addition to these ethnic Ukrainians, *Born in Ukraine* also features artists with Jewish, Polish, Armenian, or Greek roots whose practices were informed by several distinct national traditions, such as Ivan Aivazovsky, Lev Lagorio, Arkhyp Kuyindzhi, Kostiantyn Kryzhytsky, Isaak Brodsky, and Davyd Shterenberg.

The Kyiv National Art Gallery

The Kyiv National Art Gallery is one of the most prominent art museums of Ukraine celebrating in 2022 the centenary of its founding. It includes above 14'000 paintings, graphics, sculptures, and arts and crafts. Among the most famous museum items there are: icons of the 13th to the 18th century, portraits by Volodymyr Borovykovsky and Dmytro Levytsky, magnificent collections of landscape paintings by Ivan Aivazovsky, Mykola Ghe and brilliant works by Illiia Repin and Mykhailo Vrubel, painters of the end of 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. The collection also holds pieces of modern and contemporary Ukrainian artists, eyewitnesses to the present day, which artistically reproduce their impressions on actual events in Ukraine and on trials that fell to its lot.

Imagery and information on the exhibition

www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media

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