

Media release, 24 January 2025

Northern Lights

26 January – 25 May 2025

At the beginning of the year, the Fondation Beyeler presents the thematic exhibition “Northern Lights”, focussing on around 70 landscape paintings by artists from the Nordic Countries and Canada created between 1880 and 1930, among them key works by Hilma af Klint and Edvard Munch. These artists all share the nature of the North, in particular the boreal forest, as a common source of inspiration. The seemingly boundless expanses of the forest, the radiant light of endless summer days, the long winter nights, and natural phenomena such as the northern lights gave rise to a specifically Nordic form of modern painting that exerts enduring appeal and fascination. “Northern Lights” features paintings by Helmi Biese, Anna Boberg, Emily Carr, Prince Eugen, Gustaf Fjæstad, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Lawren S. Harris, Hilma af Klint, J. E. H. MacDonald, Edvard Munch, Ivan Shishkin, Harald Sohlberg and Tom Thomson. While many of these artists are celebrated in their home countries, they are likely to yield fascinating new discoveries for most visitors. It is the first time an exhibition is devoted to this particular theme in Europe.

The boreal forest, also known as taiga or taiga forest, is the world’s largest primeval forest and plays a crucial role in the planet’s balance of the ecosystem. Its dense coniferous forests stretch south and north of the polar circle, covering large parts of Scandinavia, Finland, Russia and Canada. Its unfathomable uniformity and immense expanse make for an overwhelming experience. The boreal forest thus plays a dominant role in almost all the paintings in the exhibition. Only Anna Boberg and, in his later works, Lawren S. Harris painted landscapes north of the tree line, or even in the perpetual ice of the Arctic. Another element of these intense northern landscapes is water. In the paintings, the countless lakes and fjords often supply a horizontal contrast to the vertical trees of the forest and make the wind visible as it continually disturbs the water’s surface. The latter is particularly apparent in the works of Helmi Biese and Akseli Gallen-Kallela. Next to the snow, which defines the landscape’s appearance from late October into April, the light is another recurring motif: the mystical northern lights that illuminate the sky with vibrant colours, the bright summer days that never fully turn to dark, the summer solstice, and the darkness of endless winter nights. Artists perceived these natural phenomena not only as pictorial motifs but also as a vital force that significantly influenced their work. They thus not only captured what they saw, but also gave form to emotional experiences that transport the viewer into the vastness of the boreal forest and inspire reflection on the relationship between man and nature.

The unique atmosphere of the North, with its extreme climatic conditions, has fascinated and inspired artists for centuries. In the North, a youthful generation of painters developed new strategies for depicting nature. The artists featured in this exhibition share an intensity in their manner of painting that seems to mirror the intensity of the natural environments they construed as landscapes. Through vibrant colour, expressive brushwork, unconventional compositional and perspectival distortions, a psychological component, and at times the sheer size of their works, they aspired to visually capture the seasonal extremes of the natural light and the overwhelming vastness of the northern wilderness. The exhibition follows no particular chronology. Rather, individual rooms are devoted to the artists and their respective ways of approaching their natural surroundings and constructing them as a landscape, rendering a personal image of nature

Among the artists featured in the exhibition, only Edvard Munch (Norway), Akseli Gallen-Kallela (Finland) and Hilma af Klint (Sweden) enjoy international acclaim. “Northern Lights” further brings together painters who, while held in high regard in their countries of origin, would have deserved stronger international recognition. These include Helmi Biese (Finland), Harald Sohlberg (Norway), Gustaf Fjæstad, Anna Boberg and Prince Eugen (Sweden) as well as Emily Carr, Lawren S. Harris and Tom Thomson (Canada).

The painters of the North absorbed impulses from the conventions of different pictorial traditions as well as from the avant-garde trends emerging in continental Europe. Influential modern artists such as Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse helped shape modern landscape painting in the North, opening new perspectives in terms of colour, light and form. While Nordic painters embraced these ideas, they interpreted them in their own, distinctive way, developing a unique form of Northern modernism. More than a style, it embodies an ethos that celebrates inhospitable nature, along with its grandeur and its nuances.

From 1870 to 1920, Nordic painting experienced a golden age, in which a breathtaking variety of images was created. The advent of modernity was defined by a thirst for freedom, self-determination and independence, leading artists to forge new paths. A key element found especially in and Scandinavian and Finnish painting appears to be the view from above. These panoramic landscapes give the impression of having been painted with the aid of images captured by a drone. Helmi Biese, as well as Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Anna Boberg or Prince Eugen adopted this perspective, as though not only painting the landscape but actively creating it, as godlike originators of nature, instead of merely imitating it through art.

It is noticeable that the landscapes on display often depict views of nature in which humankind is only marginally present. Yet, indirectly, humans are present: for example in Edvard Munch's landscapes of the soul, in his painted shadows or in a train's fleeting smoke. In Gustaf Fjæstad's panorama-like detailed view, footprints in the snow attest to the transience of human life as set against the scale of eternal nature. The absence of human presence may also be linked to northern painters' guiding notion of having their work conjure an idealising cliché of utopian yearning for unspoilt nature.

The Buffalo AKG Art Museum played a prominent part in the history of Nordic modern art in Canada. In 1913, the museum hosted the groundbreaking exhibition "Contemporary Scandinavian Art", which also travelled to other North American cities. For the first time in North America, works by contemporary Northern artists were on view in a large group show. Visitors to the exhibition included Canadian painters Lawren S. Harris and J. E. H. MacDonald, whose paintings are also featured in the Fondation Beyeler's exhibition. The impressions of Northern painting they gathered in Buffalo were to have a lasting influence on the "Group of Seven", a group of artists of which they became founding members a few years later, and which paved the way for modern painting in Canada.

The timespan under consideration not only encompasses the cultural-historical era of modernity, in which existing traditions were systematically questioned. From a geopolitical standpoint, this is also the period, in which new nation states formed in the North, accompanied by pronounced efforts to forge corresponding national identities. Artists staged the landscapes of their homelands as emblems of cultural heritage. The impressive nature motifs were often interpreted as symbols of the national soul and the connection with one's own culture.

"Northern Lights" is the latest in a long line of presentations of modern landscape painting at the Fondation Beyeler, among them exhibitions devoted to Gustave Courbet, Ferdinand Hodler, Piet Mondrian, Claude Monet and Giovanni Segantini. The Fondation Beyeler is now expanding its perspective northward, in remembrance of the fact that, back in 2007, it staged what was then the largest exhibition to date of Edvard Munch's work outside of Norway.

The Fondation Beyeler has commissioned contemporary Danish artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen (*1987) to create a new digital installation, which will premiere alongside the exhibition. In *Boreal Dreams*, the artist explores the effects of the climate crisis on the ecosystem of the boreal zone by conceiving virtual landscapes based on scientific data collected through fieldwork and on gaming technology.

A richly illustrated exhibition catalogue, edited by Ulf Küster for the Fondation Beyeler and designed by Melanie Mues, Mues Design, London, is published by Hatje Cantz Verlag, Berlin. On 240 pages, it brings

together essays by Katerina Atanassova, Louise Bannwarth, Helga Christoffersen, Ulf Küster, Angela Lampe and Anne-Maria Pennoen.

The exhibition "Northern Lights" is organised by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel and the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo, New York. It is curated by Ulf Küster, Senior Curator, Fondation Beyeler, in close collaboration with Helga Christoffersen, Curator-at-Large and Curator of the Nordic Art & Culture Initiative, Buffalo AKG Art Museum. *Boreal Dreams* was commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel and is supported by the New Carlsberg Foundation and the Danish Arts Foundation. Project management for *Boreal Dreams* is handled by Iris Hasler, Associate Curator, Fondation Beyeler.

The exhibition is generously supported by:

Beyeler-Stiftung
Hansjörg Wyss, Wyss Foundation
L. + Th. La Roche-Stiftung
New Carlsberg Foundation
Annetta Grisard
Fondation Coromandel
Vontobel Stiftung
Berta Hess-Cohn Stiftung
Danish Arts Foundation
as well as further foundations and patrons who prefer to remain anonymous.

Northern Lights International Exhibition Committee:

Camilla und John Lindfors, Gina und Erik O'Neill, Christine Standish und Christopher Wilk, The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, Bareva Foundation/Claudia Steinfels, Charles W. Banta, Ben und Louisa Brown, Jan Petter Collier und Familie, Maire und Carl Gustaf Ehrnrooth, David und Angela Feldman, Lars Förberg, Kristine Furuholmen, Alice und Jeremy Jacobs, Jr., Nadja Laine, Øystein Moan Familie, Helena und Gert W. Munthe, Oreck Family Foundation, Christine Sabuda und Christopher Bihary, Christian und Theresa Sinding, Stichting Pamina, Alexandra und Michael Storåkers, Anita und Poju Zabłudowicz

Press images are available under www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

Fondation Beyeler

The Fondation Beyeler in Riehen near Basel is internationally renowned for its high-calibre exhibitions, its major collection of modern and contemporary art, as well as its ambitious schedule of events. The museum building was designed by Renzo Piano in the idyllic setting of a park with venerable trees and water lily ponds. It boasts a unique location in the heart of a local recreation area, looking out onto fields, pastures and vineyards close to the foothills of the Black Forest. In collaboration with Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, the Fondation Beyeler is constructing a new museum building in the adjoining park, thus further enhancing the harmonious interplay of art, architecture and nature.

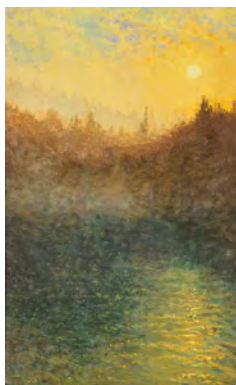
Further information:

Dorothee Dines
Head of PR & Media Relations
Tel. + 41 (0)61 645 97 21, presse@fondationbeyeler.ch, www.fondationbeyeler.ch
Fondation Beyeler, Beyeler Museum AG, Baselstrasse 77, CH-4125 Riehen, Switzerland

Fondation Beyeler opening hours: 10am to 6pm daily, Wednesday 10am to 8pm



Edvard Munch
Train Smoke, 1900
Oil on canvas, 84,5 x 109 cm
Munchmuseet, Oslo
Photo: Munchmuseet / Halvor Bjørngård



Hilma af Klint
Sunrise (Preworks for Group III), 1907
Oil on canvas, 95 x 60 cm
HaK 37
Courtesy of The Hilma af Klint Foundation



Akseli Gallen-Kallela
Spring Night, 1914
Oil on canvas, 115.5 x 115.6 cm
Lillehammer Art Museum, deposited by The Savings Bank
Foundation DNB Photo: Camilla Damgård



J. E. H. MacDonald
Algonquin Park, 1914
Oil on wood panel, 20.3 x 25.4 cm
Private Collection



Gustaf Fjæstad
Winter Moonlight, 1895
Oil on canvas, 100 x 124 cm
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm
Photo: Hans Thorwid/Nationalmuseum



Harald Sohlberg
A House by the Coast (Fisherman's Cottage), 1906
Oil on canvas, 109 x 94 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Edward Byron Smith
Photo: bpk / The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY



Helmi Biese
View from Pynnikki Ridge, 1900
Oil on canvas, 91 x 115 cm
Finnish National Gallery, Ateneum Art Museum, Hoving Collection
Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Aleks Talve



Prince Eugen
Örlången Lake, Balingsta, 1891
Oil on canvas, 90 x 81 cm
Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde, Stockholm
Photo: Lars Engelhardt / Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde

Press images: www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

The visual material may be used solely for press purposes in connection with the exhibition. Reproduction is permitted only in connection with the current exhibition and for the period of its duration. Any other kind of use – in analogue or digital form – must be authorised by the copyright holder(s). Purely private use is excluded from that provision. Please use the captions given and the associated copyrights. The images may not be cropped or overwritten.

We kindly request you to send us a complimentary copy.



Iwan Shishkin
Wind Fallen Trees, 1888
 Charcoal on canvas, 138 x 201 cm
 Finnish National Gallery, Ateneum Art Museum
 Photo: Finnish National Gallery/Hannu Pakarinen



Emily Carr
Abstract Tree Forms, 1931/32
 Oil on paper, 61.1 x 91.1 cm
 Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust
 Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery



Lawren S. Harris
Lake Superior, ca. 1923
 Oil on canvas, 111.8 x 126.9 cm
 The Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario
 © Family of Lawren S. Harris
 Photo: AGO



Anna Boberg
Northern Lights. Study from North Norway, n.d.
 Oil on canvas, 97 x 75 cm
 Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, bequest 1946
 Ferdinand and Anna Boberg
 Photo: Anna Danielsson/Nationalmuseum



Tom Thomson
Northern Lights, 1916 or 1917
 Oil on wood, 21.5 x 26.7 cm
 National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa,
 bequest of Dr. J. M. MacCallum, Toronto, 1944
 Photo: NGC

Press images: www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

The visual material may be used solely for press purposes in connection with reporting on the exhibition. Reproduction is permitted only in connection with the current exhibition and for the period of its duration. Any other kind of use – in analogue or digital form – must be authorised by the copyright holder(s). Purely private use is excluded from that provision. Please use the captions given and the associated copyrights. The images may not be cropped or overwritten.

We kindly request you to send us a complimentary copy.

Artist Biographies

Helmi Biese (1867–1933)

Helmi Katharina Biese, born Ahlman, was from Helsinki. Her father, Frans Ferdinand Ahlman, a Finland Swede, was a translator and took care to instill a knowledge of the Finnish language and culture in his four children; their Russian mother, Katarina Grigorjef, born in the Baltic, mainly spoke Swedish. At the age of seventeen, Biese enrolled as a student in the drawing school of the Finnish Art Society. From 1884 to 1888 she trained as an art teacher at the private academy of Adolf von Becker, where Akseli Gallen-Kallela had also recently attended courses. Biese subsequently joined a group of young Finnish painters centered around Gunnar Berndtson, whose members included Väinö Blomstedt and Ellen Thesleff. For financial reasons, Biese spent nearly her entire working life as a teacher at the School of Arts and Crafts in Helsinki. It was only during the 1920s that she temporarily succeeded in devoting herself to painting. In 1896 she married Hjalmar Biese, whom she had known since her schooldays. She gave birth to a son in 1903. Unlike many of her fellow-students, Helmi Biese lacked the opportunity to expand her artistic horizons by spending time abroad. It was only in 1914 that the award of a scholarship enabled her to take a study trip, with her family, to Denmark and Sweden. At the end of her life, she stated that although she was grateful for her family life, she had not been able to develop artistically as she had wished – which was no doubt in part a consequence of her obligations as wife, mother, and teacher.

Biese generally spent the summer on the Finnish coast of the Archipelago Sea, which she often painted, or at a cabin inland. She was chiefly interested in the dynamic shifts and contrasts of the Finnish climate, with its stormtossed conifers and winter landscapes of snowbound silence. She particularly specialized in painting from a birds-eye view, which suggests that her landscapes, some of them large-scale, were assembled from multiple studies of nature and completed in the studio.

As early as the late 1890s Biese's work was attracting the attention of Finnish art critics, who commended her pictures for their "masculine" character, comparing them with the art of Pekka Halonen and Eero Järnefelt. She was honored in the 1920s with a number of solo exhibitions. After her death, however, she soon fell into obscurity, and little has changed in the meantime to restore her reputation.

Anna Boberg (1864–1935)

The Swedish artist Anna Katarina Boberg was the daughter of the writer and Theosophist Carin Scholander, born Nyström, and the architect Fredrik Wilhelm Scholander. Relatively little is known of her artistic training. In 1884 she briefly attended the Académie Julian in Paris. In 1888 she married Ferdinand Boberg, who became one of Sweden's leading architects. The couple was well connected in the Stockholm art scene, with contacts that included members of the Swedish royal family, such as the painter Prince Eugen. Boberg was also active as a ceramicist and creator of designs for textiles, tapestries, and costumes, which were exhibited at the 1900 Paris Exposition and elsewhere. In 1905 she became the artistic mentor of Crown Princess Margareta for several years.

Boberg traveled with her husband to the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and India. The most important journey she undertook, however, was to the Lofoten islands, in northern Norway, in the summer of 1901, a trip that marked the beginning of a unique artistic engagement with the landscapes of the Arctic. For over thirty years, she repeatedly returned to the Lofoten, spending long periods living there, partly on her own, in a studio house built by her husband in the small harbor town of Svolvær. In freezing temperatures, she painted in plein air – sometimes even in a small boat on the water – insulating herself from the cold with a specially made suit of animal furs and with her portable easel mounted on a frame that she strapped to her body. Her Impressionist oil sketches, made with a palette knife, show the harbors and fishing boats of the region, with glaciers and snow-covered mountains. Her depiction of such luminous phenomena as the northern lights and the midnight sun culminated in a series of free experiments with color. In her autobiography, published in 1934, Boberg vividly describes her unconventional life in the Lofoten islands. In her lifetime, Boberg became chiefly known for her Lofoten paintings, which attracted attention first in Sweden and then in Denmark, Germany, and England. Her work was also seen in Paris, where it was

widely praised by art critics. She was the only woman invited to take part in the traveling show “Exhibition of Contemporary Scandinavian Art”, held in 1912–13, and one of the three female artists included, alongside their male colleagues, in the “Swedish Art Exhibition” that toured through the United States in 1916.

Emily Carr (1871–1945)

Emily Carr was born in Victoria, British Columbia. Her parents, who had migrated to Canada from Britain, died relatively young. At the age of nineteen, Carr began to study art at the California School of Design in San Francisco. In 1899, after working for several years as an art teacher in Victoria, she moved to London to continue her studies at the Westminster School of Art. While in Paris in 1910, she enrolled at the Académie Colarossi and familiarized herself with the latest European movements in art, such as Fauvism and Cubism.

Some years earlier, however, Carr had already found the core theme on which her reputation is still based, when she began investigating the culture of the Indigenous peoples in her home region – an interest that at the time was highly unusual. From 1899 onward, Carr paid repeated visits to First Nations communities, recording her impressions in numerous sketches and paintings as well as writing books about her experiences. Although her pictures are pioneering and exhibit great empathy, the fact that they are characterized by Western traditions of painting, such as Fauvism, has led them to being regarded critically today as images from an outsider’s perspective of a culture in decline.

In 1912, Carr relocated to Vancouver, where she initially found some recognition for her work, especially among anthropologists, but only a year later she moved back to her hometown. There, disappointed by her lack of success, she painted very little, bred dogs, and ran a boardinghouse. It was not until 1927, after her encounter with the Canadian “Group of Seven” and in particular its founding member Lawren S. Harris, that she returned to painting. Harris became her mentor and friend and introduced her to Theosophy. Carr’s later work focuses on the great coniferous forests of the Pacific, which were already then under threat from industrial logging, a development that Carr found personally distressing. In 1933 she bought a caravan that enabled her to live and paint in the midst of nature in the summer. The works of this period are imbued with an immediacy and dynamism that in part result from the artist’s use of oil paint diluted with gasoline on cheap manila paper. Carr’s acquaintance with the painter Mark Tobey led her to explore new, abstract approaches to painting, which influenced her forest pictures, although she herself never ventured into abstraction.

Prince Eugen (1865–1947)

Eugen Napoleon Nikolaus, Prince of Sweden and Norway, Duke of Närke, was born as the fourth son of Prince Oscar and Princess Sofia; his uncle was the reigning monarch, King Carl XV. When Eugen was seven years old, his father acceded to the throne as King Oscar II. In 1907 his eldest brother became King Gustaf V but refused to be coronated. As a member of the royal family, Eugen had official duties throughout his life.

Prince Eugen began his studies in art history at Uppsala University and took painting lessons with Wilhelm von Gegerfelt. From 1887 to 1889 he studied in Paris with the academic painters Léon Bonnat, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Alfred Roll, and Henri Gervex. In France he also formed connections with Scandinavian artistic circles and made the acquaintance of Anders Zorn, Carl Larsson, Richard Bergh, Albert Edelfelt, and Peder Severin Kroyer.

After returning to Sweden, Eugen began to support modern developments in art by organizing exhibitions and purchasing works for the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm as well as his private collection. He had an extensive network of contacts and corresponded with such leading figures as Alfred Lichtwark, director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, who was a close friend.

The artist’s landscapes, which rarely include human figures, are characterized by depictions of vast open spaces and “tall skies”, displaying a peculiar Symbolist charm. In 1913 two of his landscapes, *Clear Night after the Rain* and another work, were included in the Exhibition of “Contemporary Scandinavian Art”, which traveled to several cities in the United States. He spent the late summer of 1892 at Waldemarsudde

(Cape Waldemar) in the southern part of the island of Djurgården in Stockholm. There he commissioned the architect Ferdinand Boberg, husband of Anna Boberg, to build a spacious Art Nouveau residence, where he lived from 1905 onward. The house is now a public museum containing Prince Eugen's extensive collection of art and memorabilia.

Gustaf Fjæstad (1868–1948)

Gustaf Adolf Christensen Fjæstad was born in Stockholm as the son of Kristina Andersson and Peder Christensen Fjæstad, the owner of a shoe manufactory. He studied at the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts. In 1893 he assisted Bruno Liljefors during his decorative work for the Biological Museum, and in 1896 he worked as an assistant under the direction of Carl Larsson on the staircase murals of the Swedish Nationalmuseum. From 1897 to 1905 Fjæstad was a member of the Artists' Association in Stockholm. Fjæstad was influenced by the ideas of Romantic nationalism. His search for unspoiled nature and his interest in Swedish folk traditions took him away from the city, to the Värmland region in the west of the country. In 1898 he married Maja Hallén, a fellow painter, and the couple moved to the small town of Arvika. A few years later, they settled on nearby Lake Racken. This marked the beginning of the emergence of an artists's colony, the so-called Racken Group. Initially, Maja Fjæstad wove tapestries after paintings by her husband, aided by assistants. In 1906, his sisters, Anna and Amelie, set up production as the Fjæstad Tapestry. Another focus of Gustaf Fjæstad's activities lay in making hand-carved furniture, assisted by local craftsmen. He was also an accomplished sportsman, with a passion for bicycle racing and speed skating. From the 1890s onward, Fjæstad became internationally known, especially for his pictures of winter scenes. These works seem to anticipate photorealism: their Pointillist style of painting gives them the visual texture of grainy photographs. He often took photos that served as inspiration for his paintings, at times drawing a grid as an aid to transfer the photographic image to the canvas. Some of his winter pictures were included in the 1912–13 exhibition "Contemporary Scandinavian Art" and the 1916 "Swedish Art Exhibition", which toured several cities in the eastern half of the United States. These works prompted J. E. H. MacDonald and Lawren S. Harris to paint winter landscapes of their own.

Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865–1931)

Axel Waldemar Gallén was born in Pori in the Grand Duchy of Finland, then part of the Russian Empire. His father, Peter Wilhelm Gallén, a former cashier at the Bank of Finland, owned and managed the Jaatsi farm in Tyrvää with his second wife, Mathilda. The family spoke Swedish at home, but Axel also learned Finnish as a child. Later, in 1907, Axel Gallén Finnicized his name to Akseli Gallen-Kallela. Gallen-Kallela was fourteen when his father died. Interested solely in art, he pursued his passion with his mother's support, enrolling in drawing classes at the Finnish Art Society in Helsinki. In 1884 he continued his studies in Paris at the Académie Julian under academic painters such as William Bouguereau and Tony Robert-Fleury and later in the studio of Fernand Cormon. While a student, he spent the summers in the forests of Finland. At the Paris Salons of 1886, 1888, and 1889 and the 1889 Paris Exposition, Gallen-Kallela was commended in particular for his naturalist depictions of Finnish motifs. In 1890 he married Mary Slöör, a gifted pianist. The couple spent their honeymoon in Karelia, the region between Finland and Russia and birthplace of the *Kalevala*, Finland's national epic. There Gallen-Kallela sought inspiration for his mythological scenes. He also developed a form of Symbolism fused with nationalist sentiment and became an advocate of Finnish independence, which the country achieved in 1917. In January 1895 Gallen-Kallela traveled to Berlin, where he moved in avantgarde circles, collaborated with the group that launched the art journal *Pan*, and joined bohemian gatherings at the Zum schwarzen Ferkel (The Black Piglet) tavern. He also met Edvard Munch, holding a joint exhibition with him at the gallery of Ugo Barroccio. After the sudden death of their four-year-old daughter Marjatta, in March 1895, Akseli and Mary Gallen-Kallela settled in their wilderness studio in southern Finland's lake district. Designed by the artist and built in 1894–95, they called their new home "Kalela" and lived with their two children born in 1896 and 1898 respectively, for a total of twelve years, 1895–1901 and 1915–21. Kalela was frequented by family, friends, and fellow artists, including the composer Jean Sibelius and many others.

Between 1901 and 1909 Gallen-Kallela lived and traveled in different parts of Finland and in Europe. His frescoes for the Finnish Pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exposition propelled his international career. He exhibited at the Vienna Secession in 1901 and 1904, with Wassily Kandinsky's Phalanx group in 1902 in Munich, and with the Brücke group in 1906, becoming a member in 1907. In 1914 he had a solo exhibition at the Venice Biennale and in 1921 a retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1909–10 Gallen-Kallela and his family lived in Kenya. There he discovered an entirely new visual world that inspired an explosion of color and expressive brushstrokes in hundreds of paintings. He lived and worked in the United States in 1923–26, spending his final years in Tarvaspää, his studio near Helsinki. Gallen-Kallela died in 1931 in Stockholm, on his return from Copenhagen.

Lawren S. Harris (1885–1970)

Lawren Stewart Harris, born in Brantford, Ontario, came from a wealthy business family. His inheritance enabled him to pursue a career as an artist free of financial cares and to sponsor the Canadian art scene. After beginning his studies in Toronto, he went to Berlin in 1904 to study with the genre painter and portraitist Adolf Schlöbitch and with Franz Skarbina, who was influenced by French naturalism and Impressionism.

Returning to Canada in 1908, Harris began spending summers traveling around the vast country in search of new motifs. He explored western Canada and then in the 1920s moved on to the area around Lake Superior and Algoma as well as the Canadian Rocky Mountains, before later spending time in the Arctic. From 1934 to 1940 he lived with his second wife, Bess, in the United States, including in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In 1911 he met J. E. H. MacDonald, who became a lifelong friend. Together, the two artists visited the 1913 "Exhibition of Contemporary Scandinavian Art" at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, which transformed Harris's approach to painting. From this point on, he strove to break free from European traditions, seeking inspiration in the wide-open Canadian landscape for an art that could be considered authentically Canadian. With James MacCallum, an important patron of Tom Thomson and several of the artists of what would become the "Group of Seven", he set up the Studio Building in Toronto in 1914 to provide affordable workspaces for his artist colleagues. With the founding of the "Group of Seven", in 1920, Harris not only became the group's leading figure but also established himself as one of Canada's leading artists. In addition to working as a painter, he was active as a patron, critic, and lecturer, providing encouragement to many Canadian artists, including Emily Carr, who was a close friend.

As a follower of Theosophy, Harris saw art primarily as a source of spirituality and transcendence. After 1930 he developed an increasingly abstract and sparse formal language in his depictions of mountains and lakes, which in the 1940s evolved further toward radical abstraction.

Hilma af Klint (1862–1944)

The Swedish artist Hilma af Klint was born into a family of naval officers in Solna, just north of Stockholm. With her three siblings she spent her childhood in the barracks of a military academy headed by her father. Her mother was from a Swedish upper-class family in Finland. As a young girl, af Klint came under the influence of the photographer and court painter Bertha Valerius, who introduced her to the spiritual circles of Stockholm.

In 1882 af Klint was admitted to the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. During her studies she showed a particular aptitude for figure and anatomical drawing, which later enabled her to secure employment as an illustrator at the veterinary institute in the city. The artist initially had a studio in Stockholm and in 1917 moved to a studio house built for her on the island of Munsö, in Lake Mälaren, near Stockholm, where she lived with her partner, Thomasine Andersson.

In 1904 Hilma af Klint's life and art reached a turning point. She abandoned academic and Symbolist painting and devoted herself to carrying out the commissions she claimed to receive from supernatural beings in the spirit world. That same year she joined the Theosophical Society. In the 1920s she took an active interest in anthroposophy, meeting Rudolf Steiner and paying extended visits to the Goetheanum in Dornach near Basel.

In 1906 af Klint began to work on *Primordial Chaos*, a series of pictures in which she developed a new, nonfigurative visual language composed of geometric and organic forms. Over roughly the next forty years, she created some one thousand works, including large-scale canvases with striking color contrasts, and from 1922 on using watercolor as almost her sole medium. In 1914–15, against the backdrop of World War I, she painted *The Swan*, a cycle of somber images in which a white and a black swan symbolize fundamental oppositions between the spheres of dark and light or life and death. In 1932 af Klint decided that her work should remain unseen by the public until twenty years after her death. Her nephew Erik af Klint became the executor of her estate.

J. E. H. Macdonald (1873–1932)

James Edward Hervey MacDonald was born in Durham, England, to an English mother and a Canadian father. At the age of fourteen, he emigrated with his family to Canada and in the same year began his training as an artist at the Hamilton Art School in Ontario. In 1889 he enrolled at the Central Ontario School of Art and Industrial Design in Toronto, after the family had moved there from Hamilton. At the same time he served an apprenticeship as a lithographer. From 1895 to 1911 MacDonald worked in Toronto and London in various capacities as a commercial artist, collaborating with Tom Thomson and others. Until 1921 he was active as a freelance graphic designer and art teacher, before accepting a teaching post at the Central Ontario School of Art and Industrial Design. He became the school's principal in 1929. MacDonald's first exhibition, held in 1911 at the Arts & Letters Club in Toronto, featured early views of the snow-covered High Park, the city's largest municipal park, which greatly impressed Lawren S. Harris. In 1913 the two artists visited the "Exhibition of Contemporary Scandinavian Art" at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, a show that heralded the emergence of a new artistic conception of landscape, leading in 1920 to the creation of the "Group of Seven". From then until 1933, this association of Canadian landscape painters strove to establish an independent national vision of art. Its first exhibition took place in May 1920 at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario).

In the years that followed, MacDonald traveled with Harris around Algoma, Georgian Bay, and Lake Superior, making a large number of small-scale, impasto-painted oil sketches. He was interested above all in the seasonal changes of color in the boreal forest, with a particular liking for the reddish, glowing hues of autumn. Waterfalls and canyons were among his favorite motifs. From 1924 to 1930 MacDonald painted every summer in the Canadian Rockies, especially in the mountain area around Lake O'Hara. His animated brushwork and use of thick impasto point to the influence of Tom Thomson's oil sketches.

Edvard Munch (1863–1944)

The Norwegian Edvard Munch, who spent his childhood years in Oslo (then known as Christiania), is by far the best-known artist featured with a group of works in our exhibition. Munch grew up in a devout Christian household. His mother died early of tuberculosis, a few years before his favorite sister, Johanne Sophie, suffered the same fate. Munch, who had escaped the disease, was plagued throughout his life by depression and feelings of guilt as well as by a constant fear of failing to meet the religious standards imposed in particular by his father.

After studying for a time in Oslo, Munch went to Paris in 1889, where he studied with the late-realist and salon painter Léon Bonnat, among others. Further lengthy stays abroad followed, especially in Germany. Munch developed a highly individual style that defied categorization, addressing themes such as death, sexuality, and bohemian artist life in pictures that were blisteringly frank. His art had a polarizing impact, exemplified by the so-called "Munch Affair" in 1892, when an exhibition of his work in Berlin caused such a scandal that it was forced to close just a week later.

Despite his many detractors, however, the number of his supporters and admirers grew steadily. His antibourgeois attitude and defiance of convention in painting made him a quintessential modern artist in his own lifetime. Above all, he touched the emotions of the industrial age, speaking of existential anxiety, loneliness, melancholy, and depression in pictures that have lost nothing of their relevance. These achievements culminate in his most famous work, *The Scream*, from 1893.

The Nordic landscape has a prominent place in the drama of Munch's paintings and works on paper, in which the endless forests, the reflections of the sun and moon on water, and the clear nights become an expression of states of mind. Especially in his later years, Munch painted a great deal outdoors, using an open-air studio where his paintings were directly exposed to influences of nature. He left his artistic estate to the City of Oslo, where it is housed and shown at the Munchmuseet.

Iwan Shishkin (1832–1898)

Ivan Ivanovich Shishkin was born in the provincial town of Yelabuga in what is now Tatarstan. His father, a prosperous merchant with a great interest in nature, history, and archaeology, recognized his talent for drawing and fostered his artistic development from an early age.

In 1852 Shishkin began attending the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. Upon graduation, he continued his studies at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. He was particularly impressed by the work of the Swiss artist Alexandre Calame, who was highly regarded in Russia. From 1862 to 1865 a scholarship enabled him to study abroad, at first in Munich, then with Rudolf Koller in Zurich, and finally in Düsseldorf.

After his return to Russia, Shishkin devoted himself almost exclusively to the depiction of the Russian landscape, with a prodigious output in paintings depicting the boreal forest and woodland scenes that earned him the nickname "Czar of the Forest." In the summer he lived in the countryside near St. Petersburg, making several plein air sketches every day. These provided the basis for large-scale studio drawings and oil paintings, which demonstrate his exceptional gift of observation. Shishkin rendered the rays of sunlight striking through densely packed spruces and larches with naturalistic precision, at the same time that his landscapes reflect the Romantic conception of nature as an integral whole.

Shishkin, like his artist friends Ilya Repin and Ivan Kramskoi, was a member of the Peredvishniki, or Wanderers, a cooperative founded in 1870 to organize traveling art exhibitions and foster the dissemination of realist tendencies in Russia. A major retrospective in St. Petersburg in the 1890s and his highly praised etchings helped to ensure a wide reception for works such as *Morning in a Pine Forest* (1889), with its iconic motif of bear cubs playing in a forest setting. At the "Paris Exposition" of 1878, which he visited, Shishkin was hailed as one of the most important landscape painters of his era.

Harald Sohlberg (1869–1935)

Harald Oskar Sohlberg was born in Oslo (formerly Christiania). His father ran a successful fur shop. At the age of sixteen, he was apprenticed to the scene painter and theater decorator Wilhelm Krogh in his hometown but left the position in 1889 without an apprenticeship diploma. While working for Krogh, he also studied at the National College of Art and Design until 1890, attending courses in technical drawing and glazing. In years that followed, he was largely self-taught and only occasionally took advantage of professional instruction, from Erik Werenskiöld and others, and then from Harriet Backer and Eilif Peterssen.

In 1894 Sohlberg attracted interest at the National Art Exhibition in Oslo with his painting *Evening Glow*, a Symbolist "mood landscape" in the manner of Caspar David Friedrich. A traveling scholarship in the following year enabled him to work at the Paris studio of the Norwegian painter Frits Thaulow. In 1897 he spent several months at the Grand-Ducal Saxon Art School in Weimar.

Sohlberg's first excursion to the Rondane mountains on skis in 1899 became the starting point of a long-term artistic exploration of this austere landscape. Between 1901 and 1933 he completed three versions of the painting *Winter Night in the Mountains* as well as a multitude of drawings, paintings, and prints with variations on the same theme. From a synthesis of outdoor studies and photographs, he created idealized Symbolist scenes that conveyed his pantheist world view and became archetypal examples of Nordic landscape painting.

From 1902 to 1905 Sohlberg lived with his family in the remote mining town of Roros, after which he moved back to Oslo. There he painted enigmatic views of the coast and tranquil summer nights on the fjord in summer. His reputation soon grew as one of Norway's most important artists: in 1907 he exhibited at the Venice Biennale, where he showed one of his most famous paintings, *A House by the Coast*, and in 1912

at the Künstlerbund Hagen in Vienna. The following year, Sohlberg's works, including the first version of *Winter Night in the Mountains* and *A House by the Coast*, made a great impression on the Canadian artists Lawren S. Harris and J. E. H. MacDonald when the traveling exhibition "Contemporary Scandinavian Art" came to Buffalo.

Tom Thomson (1877–1917)

Thomas John Thomson was born in Claremont, Ontario, into a farming family of Scottish descent. His parents taught their ten children to read and write as well as hunt and fish and encouraged them to take an interest in music and literature. Thomson abandoned his studies at the Canada Business College in Chatham, Ontario, after only eight months. For a time, he managed to eke a living with casual work, before moving to Seattle in 1901, where he took a job as an elevator operator and worked as an engraver and draftsman. At the end of 1904 he returned to Canada and began attending evening courses taught by the painter William Cruikshank at the Central Ontario School of Art and Industrial Design in Toronto. In 1909 he joined the advertising agency Grip Limited, where he met J. E. H. MacDonald and others.

On weekends, Thomson traveled outside the city with his artist companions to make sketches, especially of Georgian Bay and Algonquin Park, a nature reserve established in 1893 covering an area of nearly 8,000 square kilometers northeast of Toronto. In the summer he worked as a tourist guide and fire ranger.

Because of his close connection with nature, he was better able to cope with life in the wilderness than his friends from the city. From 1915 on, he made long trips in a canoe that he equipped with a tent and painting gear. Within six years, Thomson made some 400 small-scale oil sketches, a few of which he expanded into large-scale paintings. With spontaneous brushstrokes and a palette of luminous colors, he painted views of the Canadian North that were unconventional and immediate in a way that launched a new style of painting and helped give shape to the country's cultural identity. The members of the artists' association known as the "Group of Seven" saw Thomson as their source of artistic inspiration.

On 8 July 1917 Thomson disappeared on Canoe Lake; his body was recovered eight days later. The circumstances of his death remain unclear to this day and even now are the stuff of legend.

Associated Events “Northern Lights”

Events

Art Breakfast – in German

Sunday, 9 February, 23 March, 6 April and 11 May, 9–12 a.m.

A delicious breakfast at the Beyeler Restaurant im Park, followed at 11 a.m. by a guided tour of the current exhibition.

Price: Adults CHF 80.– / IV CHF 75.– / Visitors up to age 25 CHF 55.– / Art Club, Young Art Club, Friends of the Fondation Beyeler CHF 48.–

The Art of Meditation

Early risers can experience the museum in the stillness of morning and start the day with a guided meditation. In partnership with Sutra House: www.sutra-house.com

Thursday, 27 February, 9–9.45 p.m.: with Alex Frei, Following the light (German)

Thursday, 13 March 9–9.45 p.m.: with Alex Frei, The wish to grow (German)

Thursday, 24 April, 9–9.45 p.m.: with Magnus Renggli (German)

Thursday, 15 May, 9–9.45 p.m.: with Alex Frei, Where there is light, there is shadow (German)

Attendees can view the exhibition after the event. Doors open at 8.45 a.m.

Admission: CHF 7 plus museum admission

Artist Talk with Jakob Kudsk Steensen

Wednesday, 26 March, 6.30 p.m.

The curator of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Helga Christoffersen, talks to Danish artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen about his artistic practice and his digital installation “Boreal Dreams”, which was commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler and premieres alongside the exhibition “Northern Lights”. With “Boreal Dreams”, the artist explores the impact of the climate crisis on the ecosystem of the boreal zone by creating virtual landscapes based on scientific data collection and gaming technology.

The talk will be held in English. The exhibitions can be viewed prior to the event.

Price: Admission

Film screening with Ingmar Bergman

Wednesday, 9 April, 6.30 p.m.

The classic film dramas by Swedish screenwriter and director Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007) are often intense explorations of interpersonal relationships, their abysses and doubts. After the screening of the black-and-white Swedish psychodrama *Persona* (1966), film producer Joachim von Vietinghoff and the artistic director of the Deutsche Kinemathek, Rainer Rother, will talk about the significance of Swedish landscapes, in particular the barren island of Fårö, which Bergman discovered for himself in 1960 and made his refuge. Parts of the film *Persona* were also shot there. The exhibitions can be viewed prior to the event.

Price: Admission

Café conversation “Finding Strength in the Forest” – in German

Tuesday, 25 March and 6 May 2025, 2:30 p.m.–4 p.m.

The works in the exhibition “Northern Lights” will provide the starting point for this café conversation session, in which participants are invited to share their personal experiences in the forest and reflect on the special atmosphere of this key ecosystem.

The café conversation is a free event hosted by the Fondation Beyeler, in which participants are invited to narrate and share personal experiences and anecdotes. These conversations provide an opportunity to gain new perspectives and establish connections.

The café conversation will be held in German and moderated by Monika Hungerbühler. Open to all aged 18 and older. Meeting point: in front of the Restaurant of the museum
Price: CHF 0.- Participation is free (incl. admission to the museum), online ticket required. Maximum of 20 participants.

Outdoor excursion “Forest Air. Ecology & Conifers” – in German

Saturday, 17 May, 2–4.30 p.m.

The excursion takes place within the context of the exhibition “Northern Lights”. Inspired by landscape paintings of the boreal forests of Scandinavia and Canada, the participants will explore the indigenous flora and fauna and breathe in regenerating forest air. As a site of the planet’s eventful cultural and natural history, the forest is all at once habitat, economic resource and recreation area. What about Basel’s coniferous and broadleaf trees? How does our region’s woodland differ from the taiga – the boreal forest ecosystem of the North? Walking along Bettingen’s forest paths with forestry expert Guido Bader and an art educator from the Fondation Beyeler, the participants will explore species of conifers such as Douglas firs, spruces, firs and pines, as well as the native birch, getting to know their characteristics. They will also gain much valuable knowledge about the preservation of biodiversity and the resilience of different tree types in times of climate change.

Guido Bader trained as a forestry engineer (ETH) and has been in charge of the Canton of Basel-Stadt’s forests and woodlands within the Basel Forest Office for 23 years. In cooperation with the Basel Forest Office.

Meeting point: 2.00pm Bus station St. Chrischona (Bus 32), then onward by foot. The excursion does not take place at the museum. Participants should bring sturdy footwear and protection against the rain, as well as water and snacks. The excursion will take place in all weather conditions (except in the event of severe weather).

Price: CHF 0.- Participation only possible with a free online ticket!

Tours

Curator’s Tour – in German

Wednesday, 29 January, 26 February and 30 April, 6.30 –7.30 p.m.

See the Matisse exhibition through the eyes of the show’s curators on this tour.

Price: CHF 35.– / Art Club, Young Art Club, Friends of the Fondation Beyeler, Museums–PASS–Musées CHF 10.–

Insights – in German

Every second Monday from 3 February, 2-3 p.m.

Every second Monday art educators offer thematic tours through the Matisse exhibition, offering fresh and surprising insights.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 3 February | The myth of untouched wilderness |
| 17 February | The 1912/1913 travelling exhibition of Scandinavian art in the United States |
| 3 March | In search of the origins – artistic expeditions |
| 17 March | The “Group of Seven” and the establishment of a Canadian school of landscape painting |
| 31 March | Shifting perspectives – panoramas and close-ups |
| 14 April | More than painting – synaesthesia and spirituality |
| 28 April | The myth of untouched wilderness |
| 12 May | Realism, symbolism and national romanticism |

Price: Admission plus CHF 7. –

A Work in Conversation – in German

Every second Wednesday from 12 February, 12.30-1 p.m.

During this brief but intensive encounter with a selected work of art the visitors will learn about the characteristics of the work, the artist, and the corresponding period.

12 February	Gustaf Fjæstad, <i>Newly Fallen Snow</i> , 1909
26 February	Edvard Munch, <i>Starry Night</i> , 1922-1924
12 March	Lawren Stewart Harris, <i>Lake Superior</i> , um 1923
26 March	Tom Thomson, <i>Pine Island, Georgian Bay</i> , 1914/1916
9 April	Hilma af Klint, <i>Serenity of the Evening</i> , 1907
23 April	Akseli Gallen-Kallela, <i>Waterfall at Mäntykoski</i> , 1894
7 May	Harald Oskar Sohlberg, <i>A House by the Coast (Fisherman's Cottage)</i> , 1906
21 May	Emily Carr, <i>Sunlight in the Woods</i> , 1934

Price: Admission plus CHF 7. –

Storytelling carpet – in German

Sunday, 16 February, 23 March and 13 April, 11 a.m. – 12 noon

Together with their parents, children aged three to six sit on a colourful carpet in front of works of the exhibition, listening to fascinating stories and spinning their own tales. The stories take the artworks as their starting point: close observations, background information or biographical anecdotes are conveyed in age-appropriate form, and the children are invited to look, explore and make up their own stories.

Price: children CHF 7.- / adults: admission fee

Family Tour – in German

Sunday, 23 February, 30 March, 27 April and 25 May, 11 a.m.–12 noon

Tour of the exhibition for children ages 6 to 10 accompanied by an adult.

Price: children up to age 10: CHF 7.– / adults: admission fee

Guided tour for visitors with visual impairments – in German

Thursday, 27 February, 4.30–5.30 p.m.

Works in the exhibition are carefully transposed into words.

Price: admission fee / free for accompanying person

Young Think Tank Presents: Our Favourites from “Northern Lights”

Wednesday, 5 March, 5.30–6.30 p.m.

Whether it be music, food, drinks or books – we always have a favourite. It therefore comes as no surprise that the Fondation Beyeler's young employees should also have their very own number one picks among the works on display. Exchanging openly with participants, they share fascinating background stories and interesting facts, and generally look forward to stimulating conversations in the current exhibition “Northern Lights”, to be continued around drinks at the restaurant.

The “Young Think Tank” was established in 2013 to allow young employees of the Fondation Beyeler to connect with one another. It addresses issues they care about, seeks to open new perspectives onto current topics, and develops ideas, concepts and projects.

Meeting point: Museum Foyer, Language: German and English, Participation possible at any time – no registration needed.

Price: Free with valid admission to the museum

Performative Tour – in German

Sunday, 16 March, 11 May, 4.30–5.45 p.m.

The performative tours offer new perspectives on the exhibition “Northern Lights”. Together with a performance artist, the participants explore the various museum spaces. They encounter works of art through different performative exercises, making use not only of your eyes but your whole body. This way they receive unusual perceptions of the works and their context. No prior knowledge or skills required.

Price: admission + CHF 10.–

Guided tour for deaf and hearing impaired visitors

Thursday, 20 March, 4.30–5.30 p.m.

Visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing are invited to discover the artworks in the exhibition in this signed tour.

Price: admission / free for accompanying person

Guided viewing for visitors with dementia – in German

Wednesday, 16 April, 10.30–11.15 a.m.

This museum tour looks in detail at selected works in the exhibition and, as part of a group conversation, gathers and shares the many observations, thoughts, memories and associations they call forth.

Price: admission fee + CHF 7.– / free for accompanying person

Workshops

Sketch it!

Wednesday, 19 February, 12 March, 9 April and 21 Mai, 6.30–7.30 p.m.

“Sketch it” provides an opportunity to engage creatively with selected works on display at the Fondation Beyeler. Henri Matisse’s deeply expressive paintings and sculptures provide particular inspiration to experiment with various drawing techniques. Participants thus gain a fresh perspective on the original works. All materials provided.

Price: admission fee + CHF 10.–

Open Studio

Saturday/Sunday, 22/23 February, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day

Saturday/Sunday, 29/30 March, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day

Saturday/Sunday, 26/27 April, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day

Saturday/Sunday, 24/25 Mai, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day

The Open Studio workshops are a hands-on opportunity to find out more about the themes and techniques used by artists and to experiment with different creative means.

No registration necessary. Attendance is free and open to all age groups (children up to 12 accompanied by an adult).

Workshop for children “Scouting nature” – in German

Wednesday, 16 October, 20 November, 18 December and 15 January 2025, 2–4.30 p.m.

A tour to discover the exhibition, followed by playful experimentation in the studio. For children ages 6 to 10.

Price: CHF 10.– incl. materials

Workshop for Adults “Northern Lights” – in German

Wednesday, 23 April, 6–8 p.m.

A tour to discover the exhibition, followed by artistic activities in the studio.

Price: admission fee + CHF 20.– incl. Materials

“Among the trees at dusk and dark” – A workshop for adults – in German

Wednesday, 26 February and 19 March, 6–8 p.m.

A flashlight-lit outdoor expedition into the park of the Fondation Beyeler at dusk and dark.

This expedition will start with a brief tour of the exhibition “Northern Lights”, discussing painterly representations of the boreal forest dating from 1880 to 1930. At nightfall, the participants will then explore trees in the museum park originally found in northern forest ecosystems. Which tree personalities live here? Which animals are at home in the park and active at night? Finally, they will build bird feeding stations while enjoying hot spruce syrup and seasonal delicacies in the restaurant’s fireside lounge.

The workshop is led by Julia Sommerfeld and Jasmin Ofner. It will take place in all weather conditions

(except in the event of severe weather). Participants should bring sturdy footwear, warm clothing and protection against the rain.

Price: admission fee + CHF 20.– incl. Materials

Holiday Workshop – Tree Creatures and Leaf Figures – in German

Tuesday to Thursday, 4–6 April, 10 a.m.–4 a.m.

Inspired by the Fondation Beyeler's artworks and park, participants will get to know exciting natural materials and explore their artistic possibilities. They will produce pigments from plants, use twigs for drawing and leaves for printing. The experiments may lead to collages, sculptures or even books. At the end, the participants will present their productions to families and friends.

For children aged 7 to 10, CHF 180.- per child for 3 days.

Limited number of places, registration at tours@fondationbeyeler.ch

Further offers

Booklet for children

The booklet for children with ten exciting hands-on activities invites children to explore the exhibition room by room. The activity booklet is available free of charge in the museum foyer.

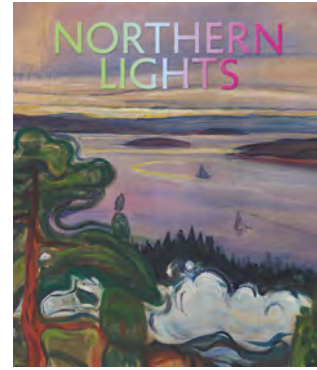
Fondation Beyeler opening hours:

10a.m. to 6p.m. daily, Wednesday through 8p.m.

Public guided tours and events

Daily programme at: fondationbeyeler.ch/en/programme/calendar

Northern Lights



Description

The fascination of the North is enduring: vast, impenetrable coniferous forests on the edge of the Arctic polar region, "white" summer nights, the long darkness of snowy winters and the famous Northern Lights exert a magical attraction. The Fondation Beyeler is dedicating an exhibition to this global phenomenon with landscape paintings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries from Scandinavia, Finland and Canada. In addition to works by famous painters such as Edvard Munch, Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Hilma af Klint, it also features paintings by artists who are highly respected in their home countries, but who—unjustly—have been virtually unknown in Central Europe until now. The Nordic pictorial worlds of Harald Sohlberg, Gustaf Fjæstad, Emily Carr, Tom Thomson and Prince Eugen of Sweden are finally being presented to a wide audience. Other artists represented in the exhibition and catalogue are Ivan Shishkin, Anna Boberg, Helmi Biese, Lawren S. Harris and J. E. H. Macdonald.

Exhibition

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, January 26 – May 25, 2025
Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo, NY, August 1, 2025 – January 12, 2026

EDITED BY

Ulf Küster für die Fondation Beyeler,
Riehen / Basel

TEXTS BY

Katerina Atanassova, Louise Bannwarth,
Helga Christoffersen, Anne-Maria
Pennonen, Angela Lampe, Ulf Küster

DESIGN BY

Mues Design, London

240 pp, 140 ills.

270 x 230 mm

Hardcover

CHF 62.50, € 58,00

978-3-7757-5914-4 (Deutsch)

978-3-7757-5915-1 (English)

Publication date: 05.02.2025

Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH

Mommensenstraße 27

10629 Berlin

Fax: +49 30 34 64 678 29

www.hatjecantz.de

Vertrieb / Sales:

yannick.schuette@hatjecantz.de

sabine.jenske@hatjecantz.de

Presse / Press:

presse@hatjecantz.de

Tel: +49 30 34 64 678 23

**HATJE
CANTZ**

Media release, 24 January 2025

***Boreal Dreams* by Jakob Kudsk Steensen**

17 January – 25 May 2025

The Fondation Beyeler is delighted to premiere a new digital installation by acclaimed contemporary artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen (*1987 in Denmark), which will be presented alongside the exhibition «Northern Lights» (26 January – 25 May 2025). *Boreal Dreams* explores the impact of the climate crisis on the ecosystem of the boreal zone. Turning to gaming technology, Jakob Kudsk Steensen conceives virtual landscapes based on scientific data collected through ecological fieldwork. The audiovisual installation will be on display in the park of the Fondation Beyeler, as well as freely accessible via a web experience.

A large-format, double-sided LED wall and site-specific soundscape installed in the park of the Fondation Beyeler will offer visitors an immersive experience of the forests of the Northern Hemisphere. The boreal forest, also known as taiga or forest taiga, is the world's largest primeval forest, stretching south and north of the polar circle and covering large parts of Scandinavia, Russia and Canada. The region plays a crucial role in the planet's global ecological stability, yet it rarely features in public discourse around climate change and resource scarcity. The boreal zone's unique, harsh landscape of coniferous forests, tundra and moors operates as a carbon pool and reflects the sunlight, contributing significantly to keeping global temperatures low.

Jakob Kudsk Steensen's *Boreal Dreams* takes as its starting point scientific simulations run at the *Marcell Experimental Forest*, a globally leading institute for long-term ecosystem research located on the southern edge of the boreal forest near Bovey, Minnesota that Steensen visited to gather data from ecological fieldwork. In the *Marcell Experimental Forest*'s ten-year research project five woodland areas are enclosed in greenhouse-like, open-topped chambers that are artificially exposed to incremental atmospheric changes in order to simulate and forecast alternate ecological futures.

For *Boreal Dreams*, Steensen and his collaborators have used research material to create different climatic futures at temperature variances of 0, +2.5, +4.5, +6.5 and +9 degrees. These scenarios send a clear message: the warmer it gets, the more the boreal forest struggles to maintain balance. Carbon stored in the soil is released into the atmosphere, further accelerating climate change and disrupting boreal ecological rhythms. In *Boreal Dreams*, Jakob Kudsk Steensen gives audiovisual expression to the shifts and changes in the boreal forest's soil, flora and fauna, as well as providing a soundscape of the changing ecosystem, which he developed with sound artist Matt McCorkle and dream scientist Adam Haar. The work further unfolds as an interactive web experience, accessed from anywhere on visitors' smartphones. This opens up a visually compelling narrative experience of multiple forest futures to explore in our own hand. Mirroring the field study in Minnesota, visitors to the Fondation Beyeler can – virtually – move from one scenario to the next, from one possible future reality to another. Five climate models present five possible fates for the forest – and thus for humanity. Each of these experimental stages may remain a feverish dream, an imaginary scenario, or may anticipate the ecological conditions of the future, as well as draw attention to how these future changes to the boreal may in turn impact inner changes and rhythms within us.

Boreal Dreams evolved from Steensen's deep interest in the influence of historical landscape painting on the design of computer game worlds. Steensen takes the view that, in their own way and using the means available to them, landscape painters of the past were also creating imaginary worlds. It is also through them that the oftentimes transfiguring ideas of unspoilt and sublime nature have found their way into today's creation of artificial game worlds. Steensen thereby points to yet another realm of experience that these centuries-old masterpieces promise to fill with life – today and in future.

In his artistic practice, Jakob Kudsk Steensen follows a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach at the interface of ecology, technology, science and art. In his simulations, sound designs and immersive installations, influenced by his extensive knowledge of computer games, he practises «environmental storytelling», in which players in virtual environments can independently explore additional narratives beyond the primary game thread. Ever since his artistic beginnings, Steensen has been experimenting with gaming software and tools to build virtual worlds aiming to merge actual and computer-generated realities. He is driven by the fundamental question of how our perception of nature may be expanded by means of technology. Steensen develops his works in collaboration with scientists, at times involving extensive fieldwork, as well as composers and applying methodologies taken from past work within the media and gaming industries. He immerses himself in overlooked ecosystems, collecting data, photographs and stories in order to create visual narratives both rooted in real places and speculative in nature.

Recent exhibitions and projects include «The Ephemeral Lake» at the Hamburger Kunsthalle (2024), «Berl-Berl» at the ARoS Museum of Art, Aarhus and at the Halle am Berghain, Berlin (2021/22) as well as «Liminal Lands» at Luma Arles (2021). Other notable presentations include «The Deep Listener» (2019) and «Catharsis» (2020) at the Serpentine Galleries in London.

Boreal Dreams was commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel and supported by the New Carlsberg Foundation and the Danish Arts Foundation. The exhibition project was curated by Helga Christoffersen, Curator-at-Large & Curator, Nordic Art and Culture Initiative, Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Project management for *Boreal Dreams* was handled by Iris Hasler, Associate Curator, Fondation Beyeler.

***Boreal Dreams* (2024/25)**

Live simulation, courtesy Jakob Kudsk Steensen, commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel
Creator & Lead Artist: Jakob Kudsk Steensen

Co-Producer: Liz Kircher

Sound Artist: Matt McCorkle

Text Writer & Dream Scientist: Adam Haar

Web Developer: James Wreford

Graphic Designer: Roxy Zeiher

Installation Producer: Andrea Familiari

Project Producer / Studio Management: Alex Boyes

Additional Development: Wouter Weynants

Boreal Dreams was developed in collaboration with and with the scientific support of the Northern Research Station of the USDA Forest Service. Special thanks to researchers Stephen Sebestyen and Nancy Glenn.

Link to web experience: <https://borealdreams.live>

Press images are available under www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

Fondation Beyeler

The Fondation Beyeler in Riehen near Basel is internationally renowned for its high-calibre exhibitions, its significant collection of modern and contemporary art, as well as its ambitious schedule of events. The museum building was designed by Renzo Piano in the idyllic setting of a park with venerable trees and water lily ponds. It boasts a unique location in the heart of a local recreation area, looking out onto fields, pastures and vineyards close to the foothills of the Black Forest. In collaboration with Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, the Fondation Beyeler is constructing a new museum building in the adjoining park, thus further enhancing the harmonious interplay of art, architecture and nature.

Further information:

Jan Sollberger

PR & Media Relations

Tel. + 41 61 645 97 29, presse@fondationbeyeler.ch, www.fondationbeyeler.ch

Fondation Beyeler, Beyeler Museum AG, Baselstrasse 77, CH-4125 Riehen, Switzerland

Fondation Beyeler opening hours: 10am to 6pm daily, Wednesday 10am to 8pm



Jakob Kudsk Steensen
Boreal Dreams, 2024/25
 Live-Simulation, Courtesy Jakob Kudsk Steensen,
 commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel



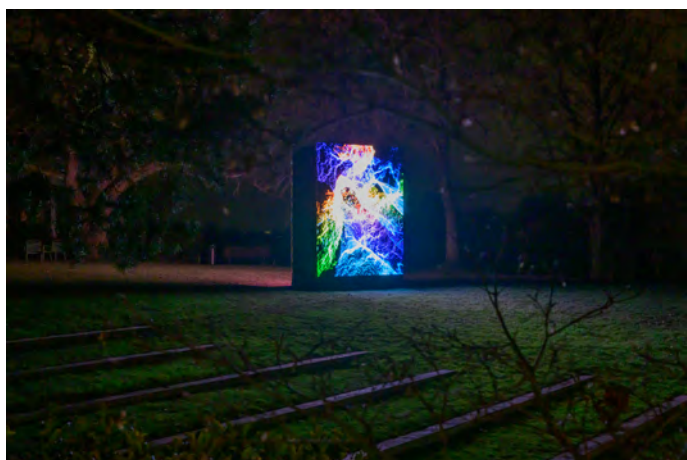
Jakob Kudsk Steensen
Boreal Dreams, 2024/25
 Live-Simulation, Courtesy Jakob Kudsk Steensen,
 commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel



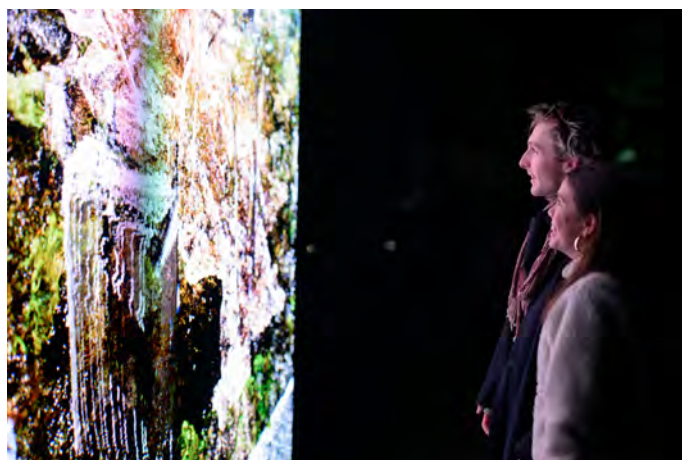
Jakob Kudsk Steensen
Boreal Dreams, 2024/25
 Live-Simulation, Courtesy Jakob Kudsk Steensen,
 commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel



Jakob Kudsk Steensen
Boreal Dreams, 2024/25
 Live-Simulation, Courtesy Jakob Kudsk Steensen,
 commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel



Installation view **Boreal Dreams**
 Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, 2024/25
 Photo: Mathias Mangold



Installation view **Boreal Dreams**
 Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, 2024/25
 Photo: Mathias Mangold

Press images: www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

The visual material may be used solely for press purposes in connection with reporting on the exhibition. Reproduction is permitted only in connection with the current exhibition and for the period of its duration. Any other kind of use – in analogue or digital form – must be authorised by the copyright holder(s). Purely private use is excluded from that provision. Please use the captions given and the associated copyrights. The images may not be cropped or overwritten.

We kindly request you to send us a complimentary copy.

FONDATION BEYELER

Partners, Foundations and Patrons

BEYELER-STIFTUNG

HANSJÖRG WYSS, WYSS FOUNDATION

Public Sponsors



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern EDI
Bundesamt für Kultur BAK



Kanton Basel-Stadt
Kultur



Main Partners



Partners



GLOBUS



J. Safra Sarasin

RICHARD MILLE



Foundations and Patrons:

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF FONDATION BEYELER
A. MICHAEL & URSULA LA ROCHE STIFTUNG
ART CLUB OF FONDATION BEYELER
ART MENTOR FOUNDATION LUCERNE
ASUERA STIFTUNG
BAREVA STIFTUNG
CRISTINA & DR. THOMAS W. BECHTLER
CLAIRE STURZENEGGER-JEANFAVRE STIFTUNG
CHRISTINA DE LABOUCHERE
FX & NATASHA DE MALLMANN
TATIANA DE PAHLEN LORENCEAU & CHARLES LORENCEAU
ULLA DREYFUS-BEST
SABINE DUSCHMALÉ-OERI
ERICA STIFTUNG
ERNST GÖHNER STIFTUNG
FEDERAL OFFICE OF CULTURE
FONDATION COROMANDEL
FONDATION PHILANTHROPIQUE FAMILLE SANDOZ
SIMONE FORCART-STAEHELIN
FRIENDS OF THE FONDATION BEYELER
FUNDACIÓN ALMINE Y BERNARD RUIZ-PICASSO
GEORG UND BERTHA SCHWYZER-WINIKER-STIFTUNG

ANNETTA GRISARD
HANS IMHOLZ-STIFTUNG
HILTI ART FOUNDATION
HMSL STIFTUNG
KARITATIVE STIFTUNG DR. GERBER-TEN BOSCH
L. + TH. LA ROCHE-STIFTUNG
LUMA FOUNDATION
MAX KOHLER STIFTUNG
NACHSON & NATALIA MIMRAN
DR. CHRISTOPH M. MÜLLER AND SIBYLLA M. MÜLLER
PATRONESSES OF THE FONDATION BEYELER
ELLEN & MICHAEL RINGIER
CRAIG ROBINS & JACKIE SOFFER
SCHEIDEGGER-THOMMEN-STIFTUNG
MAX & MARIANNE STAEHELIN-SEIDEL
STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION (SNF)
SULGER STIFTUNG
TARBACA INDIGO FOUNDATION

as well as further foundations and patrons
who prefer to remain anonymous.

The art education programme and the free admission scheme for children and young adults up to 25 are supported by the **Thomas and Doris Ammann Foundation**.