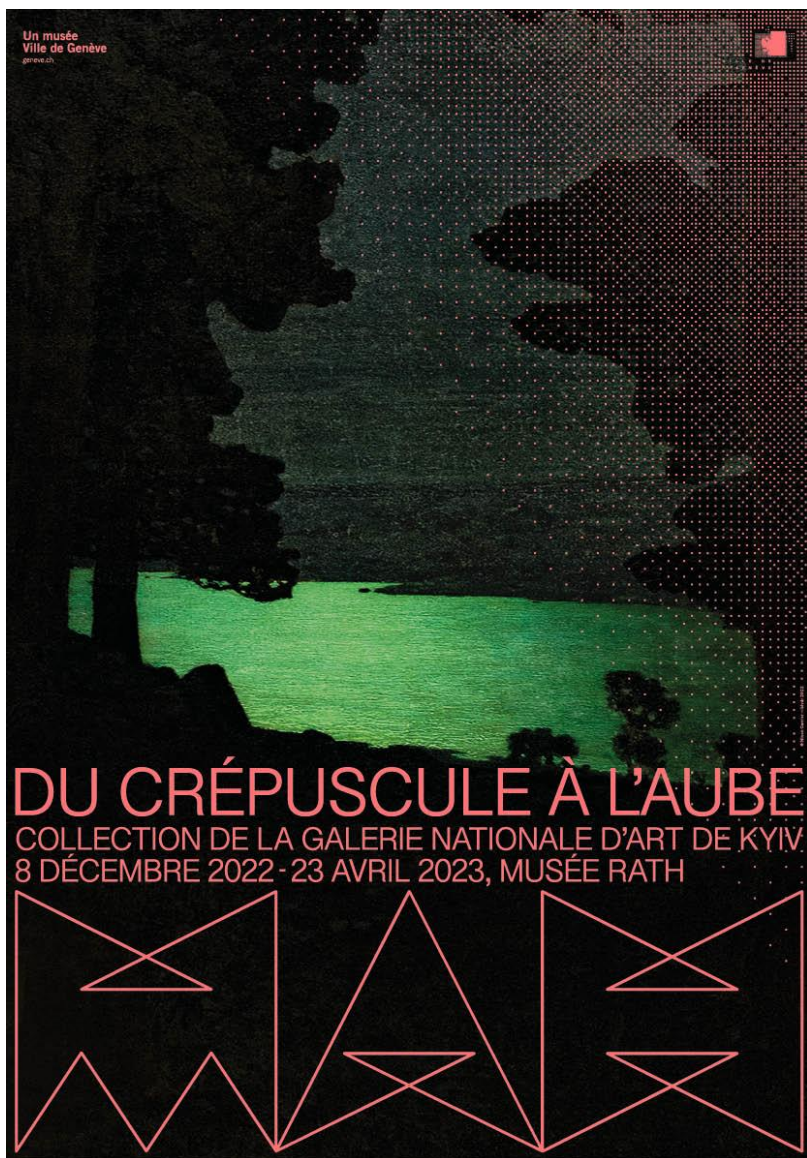


PRESS RELEASE

FROM DUSK TO DAWN – MUSÉE RATH
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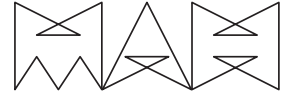
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From Dusk to Dawn

Geneva, November 2022 – The Musée d'Art et d'Histoire (MAH) in Geneva is pleased to invite the Kyiv National Art Gallery to present an exceptional exhibition opening on December 8 at the Musée Rath. *From Dusk to Dawn* brings together some fifty major artworks from the Ukrainian museum's collection on the theme of the night. Organised against the backdrop of war between Russia and Ukraine, this event is an opportunity for the MAH to reaffirm its mission as an institution of refuge and to underscore that art is a universal heritage.

1. A Centennial Exhibition

From Dusk to Dawn is part of a series of projects launched by the Kyiv National Art Gallery in celebration of its centennial in 2022. The MAH today welcomes a modified version of an exhibition presented last year in Kyiv. This event reveals a major aspect of Ukrainian cultural heritage to the Swiss public.

Paintings and works on paper from the nineteenth and twentieth century have been selected around the theme of the night's hours, that strange, suspended period between evening and morning. Among the selected pieces are works by exceptional artists, including Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900), Wilhelm Kotarbinsky (1848-1921), Julius von Klever (1850-1924), Arkhyp Kuindzhi (1841-1910) and Illiia Repin (1844-1930).

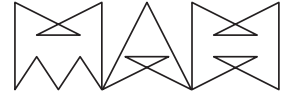
2. The Theme of Night

During the nineteenth century, technical evolutions in painting opened new possibilities that notably allowed artists to render the perception of space at sunset and after. They could now create impressions of night and prioritise the power of pictorial effect over rational perception and visual narrative. The contrasts between darkness and light brought about by natural light, candles and electric lamps, flamboyant sunsets, and shimmering sunrises created new visual energy that continues today to stir feeling and emotion in viewers. And just below the surface are the social and political changes and tumults of the period.

Among the numerous landscape artists who depicted the Ukrainian natural world in the evening and at night, a special role was played by Arkhyp Kuindzhi. During his time, the artist's series of paintings recreating the moonlight's reflections by using the most illusionistic effects possible were hugely successful. We are lucky to present one of his most emblematic pieces here.

This exhibition brings together work from both secular and religious worlds and public and private spheres and offers views of what is near and what is far. Artistic trends mix and personalities overlap, whether Romantic, Academic or Symbolic, whether Realism or Impressionism. All attest to the particularly poetic resonance of night in Ukraine in the vein of the famous writer of Ukrainian origin, Mykola Gogol (1809-1852), who wrote:

“Do you know the Ukrainian night? Oh, you do not know a night in Ukraine! See it: the moon watches from the middle of the sky. The infinite vault of the heavens has opened and stretched wide, becoming even more infinite. It burns and breathes. The entire earth is bathed in silver light; strange in its warmth and freshness, it breathes bliss, it pours out an ocean of perfume. Divine night! A magical night!”



3. Connections with Geneva

The Kyiv National Art Gallery's collection clearly connects to the MAH collection. This exhibition aims to recall the international resonance of landscape painting as developed by the nineteenth-century school of Geneva. These artists established a new relationship with nature and granted it the capacity to reveal human emotions. Their approach echoed in distant cultures beyond the borders of Europe.

4. The MAH: An Institution of Refuge

The themes of the eternal battle between light and darkness – the undeniable victory of the day over the night – add profoundly symbolic meaning to this exhibition's opening, given the current context.

For several months, the MAH has reflected on its values. These values were deemed essential in defining the museum's activities in a way that considers its present and envisions its future. These values are the reflection of its particular identity and history and attest to its integration into the city. In the past, the museum took in work from the Prado Museum (1939), archaeological objects from Gaza (2007), as well as Syrian, Yemenite and Libyan pieces seized in Geneva as part of efforts to fight against illegal trafficking (2017). The role of the MAH as an institution of refuge is now clear. "Culture is a universal asset. In times of crisis, it is natural to show solidarity, irrespective of frontiers", explains Marc-Olivier Wahler, director of the MAH, who has been in contact with the Kyiv National Art Gallery since the beginning of the crisis. History has indeed taught us that artistic and cultural heritage is a top target during armed conflicts. Through the intermediary of the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH), Ukrainian authorities have solicited help from several State parties to the 1954 Hague Convention. The City of Geneva, through the Department of Culture and Digital Transition, called upon teams from several municipal cultural institutions, including the MAH. In just three days, a truck was able to leave Geneva for Lviv with emergency supplies and several hundred crates to safely transport and protect the artwork.

The Kyiv National Art Gallery has not halted its activities despite the extremely difficult situation resulting from the Russian army's invasion and the pursuant declaration of a state of emergency in Ukraine. Even after its building was damaged in a rocket attack on central Kyiv, the museum continued to work on both Ukrainian and international projects. As a result, the Kunstmuseum in Basel, in collaboration with the MAH, is also involved in this operation. The Swiss-German museum will open the exhibition *Né en Ukraine* on December 6, 2022.

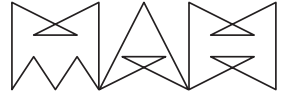
Ukraine's current battle is all the more pressing with regard to the principal values of Western civilization – democracy, freedom and human rights. The theme of darkness in this exhibition takes on a philosophical and symbolic significance. *From Dusk until Dawn* offers a glimmer of hope by reminding us that the sun always rises after the darkest night.

5. The Kyiv National Art Gallery

In 2022, the Kyiv National Art Gallery celebrated the centennial of its foundation and is one of the oldest and most important art museums in Ukraine.

Its collection includes more than fourteen thousand paintings, works on paper, sculptures and art and craft objects.

Among the most famous pieces are icons from the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, portraits by Volodymyr Borovykovsky (1757-1825) and Dmytro Levytsky (1735-1822) and landscapes by Ivan Aivazovsky and Mykola Ghe (1831-1894).



Finally, let us note the group of works by Illiia Repin and Mukhailo Vrubel (1856-1910) among other artists from the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, not to forget contemporary Ukrainian artists.

6. Spotlight on Four Artworks



Arkhyps Kuindzhi (1841-1910)

Night at the Don River, 1882

Oil on canvas, 165 x 116 cm

© The Kyiv National Art Gallery, photo: Mykhailo Andreyev

The vibrant night-time landscape by Arkhyps Kuindzhi, *Night Along the Don River*, plays a unique role in the history of Ukrainian art. The artist was fascinated by the possibilities of painting, texture and light. Born in Karasivka, a village now a part of the city of Mariupol, Kuindzhi was particularly interested in the beauty of the night. The water, lighted by the moon, became a recurring trope in his work following the huge success of his painting *Night Along the Dnieper River* (1882).

Kuindzhi became the darling of art enthusiasts as a result of his iconoclastic and interesting way of exhibiting his paintings. To begin with, he placed *Night Along the Dnieper River* alone in an exhibition gallery. The room was covered in a dark and dense fabric to block out any outside light, while the painting was lighted by an electric torch – an innovation for his contemporaries – hidden in the décor. The ray of light directed toward the painting, like a lunar path, lent the image an almost phosphorescent aspect. The public was enchanted, and the immediate success encouraged Kuindzhi to create a series of nocturnal landscapes on the theme of riverbanks. *Night Along the Don River* is one of these emblematic paintings that led people to reconsider their vision of reality.



Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900)
Scene from Life in Cairo, 1881

Oil on canvas, 66,5 x 98,2 cm

© The Kyiv National Art Gallery, photo : Mykhailo Andreyev

In 1869, Ivan Aivazovsky participated in an official mission to assist in the inauguration of the Suez Canal. He was part of a huge influx of European travellers who created their own narratives on Egypt and its inhabitants. With nineteenth-century artists, writers and scientists being the main producers of descriptions of the Orient for the European public, sending a well-known painter to this foreign land made sense. What's more, Aivazovsky was originally from Crimea, a hub of multicultural commerce. He was therefore accustomed to diversity and readily embraced the new and unusual.

The artist drew on his bright memories and sketches made during his visit to create an alluring image of Cairo at sunset: men lounging on a beautiful terrace enjoying entertainment by street performers with a grand view of a mosque's dome, a minaret and many townhouses unfolding in the background. In the distance, the Giza pyramids can be seen in silhouette. The motif of a landscape at sunset bathed in the rays of the setting sun was common in Aivazovsky's work. His seascapes present sleepy coastal cities in the calm of the night, immersed in dazzling sunsets or during naval battles where ships, burning like torches, can be seen. As a figure painting in an urban night-time setting, *Scene from Life in Cairo* is a landscape imagined by a nineteenth-century traveller's dream of the Middle East.



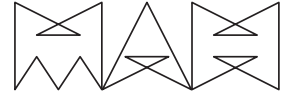
Wilhelm Kotarbinsky (1849-1921)

Satyr, unknown

Oil on canvas, 70 x 122 cm

© The Kyiv National Art Gallery, photo : Serhiy Trytynychenko

The biography of Wilhelm Kotarbinsky illustrates the tectonic shifts that rattled the arts and culture in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Born in Poland, he matured as an artist in Rome and spent a considerable part of his life in Kyiv. It is there that he was commissioned to create frescos for St. Volodymyr's Cathedral, the construction of which became important to Kyiv's cultural scene. The



artist was popular with both cognoscenti and the general public, and his art became as eclectic as it could be in the face of triumphant Modernism. Kotarbinsky showed an interest in symbolism influenced by his sophisticated academic training. His work can be found on the walls of homes of the wealthy, on postcards and even in the city hospital. In the eyes of his peers, he was the poet of tragic love and death, with a slightly decadent twist. This label made him vulnerable to criticism when the 1917 Revolution and civil war radically changed the political discourse and popular culture. Forgotten for a period, Kotarbinsky has recently been rediscovered, with his work drawing the attention of art professionals.

Classical mythology is widely represented in Kotarbinsky's art. He was fascinated by Greek and Roman heritage at different periods. This is why *Satyr* cannot be precisely dated. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the figure of the satyr was radically reconsidered in philosophical and literary discourse. Friedrich Nietzsche's analysis shed a different light on Greek culture by drawing attention to its pessimistic and problematic aspects. From this point of view, Dionysian tendencies were as present as Apollonian characteristics, which were largely borrowed from Greek art. This thesis was espoused by much of the cultural elite throughout Europe. The satyr found its place in the literature and fine arts of the time, both as a symbol of protest against civilization and as an image of something suppressed.

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Illia Repin (1844-1930)

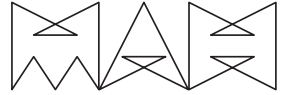
Nun, 1887

Oil on canvas, 124 x 90 cm

© The Kyiv National Art Gallery, photo : Mykhailo Andreyev

Known for his excellence in portraiture and religious and historical scenes, Illia Repin is a unique phenomenon in nineteenth-century Ukrainian art. Although he was faithful to the principle of realism, even when working on imaginary or sacred subjects, he was considered to be inconsistent in his choice of subjects: village life, Paris' cafés, portraits of the cultural and intellectual elite and also the repression of political opposition during the Tsarist regime. To his critics, he usually responded that he depicted everything that stimulated a lively interest in him.

His cousin Emilia was among the singular characters who continued to interest this attentive portrait artist. The young nun is represented in her modest black habit, which blends with the dark décor of a monastic cell. In contrast, her pale face and piercing eyes pop out, punctuating the painting's incredible beauty. *A Nun* (1887) is a masterly depiction of the religious and ascetic atmosphere of an orthodox convent.



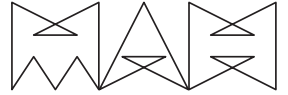
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General information Musée Rath
Place de Neuve – 1204 Genève
Open Wednesday-Friday, 2 p.m. – 7 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Closed Monday and Tuesday

Admission between CHF 10.-/ 5.-
Free up to age 18 and the 1st Sunday of every month

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Arkhyp Kuindzhi (1841-1910)
Night at the Don River, 1882

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Oleksandr Hausch (1873-1947)
Fountains, 1908 (?)

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900)
Cart in the Field, 1848

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900)
Scene from Cairo Life, 1881

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Julius von Klever (1850-1924)
Winter Sunset, 1885

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Mykhailo Vrubel (1856-1910)
Angel with A Censer and A Candle, 1887

Watercolor, lead pencil, varnish on paper glued on cardboard
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: N. Tenvighorn



Mykhailo Vrubel (1856-1910)
The Lamentation, 1887

Watercolor and lead pencil on paper
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
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Mykola Ghe (1831-1894)
Florence, 1864

Oil on canvas
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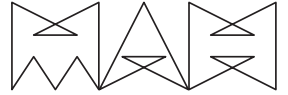
Illia Repin (1844-1930)
Nun, 1887

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Pavlo Svedomsky (1849-1904)
Buried in the Flowers, 1886

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Wilhelm Kotarbinsky (1849-1921)
At the Altar, unknown

Oil on canvas
© The Kyiv National Art Gallery,
photo: Mykhailo Andreyev



Wilhelm Kotarbinsky (1849-1921)
Satyr, unknown

Oil on canvas
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