

PRESS RELEASE

200 YEAR STÄDEL: FACTS AND FIGURES

THE FOUNDER JOHANN FRIEDRICH STÄDEL

Johann Friedrich Städel (1728--1816) was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1728. His father, Johann Daniel Städel, had moved there from Strasbourg to carry out trade in the free imperial city. The younger Städel initially managed his father's spice business on Frankfurt's Grosser Kornmarkt square. Seven years after the senior Städel's death, Johann Friedrich – now fifty-six years of age -- opened his own commercial establishment on Rossmarkt square. In addition to spices and coffee he traded in dyes such as indigo, and metals such as lead rods. Städel's import activities took him to the most important trade cities in Europe, among them Amsterdam, Paris and London. The spice business rapidly developed into a "money business" as well, and the commission and banking transactions necessary for trade with goods ultimately became Johann Friedrich Städel's chief occupation.

Städel was already a great art admirer at a young age. On his numerous business trips he absorbed a wide range of different cultural influences and developed his understanding of art. He began collecting paintings, drawings, prints and small-scale sculptures as early as the 1760s. Of his approximately five hundred paintings – for which Städel himself had an inventory drawn up in French – the largest percentage were works of the German and Dutch Baroque. In the area of drawings and prints, on the other hand, he evidently pursued the aim of amassing an overview of the history of art. Like his father, Städel was active in the town's "citizens' committee" ("Bürgerausschuss") – the "committee of laudable citizenry of 51 persons", also called the "51er Kolleg" or "council of the 51". He was moreover a member of the theatre committee, and he liked to keep up with technical progress as well. A mere ten years after the invention of the lightning rod, for example, he had one installed on his house.

The plan to make his art holdings accessible to the public, and in that connection to train and support budding artists, was one Städel conceived already early on. The idea was born of the spirit of the Enlightenment, which regarded preoccupation with

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art as an essential part of a person's general upbringing and education. In the effort to commit his vision to paper, he revised his will three times, the last being on 15 March 1815. The need for the various revisions had been brought about by Frankfurt's eventful history and the accompanying changes in the legal parameters. Perhaps Städel also suspected that his will might nevertheless cause a sensation. In any case, distant relatives contested the document immediately after his death. The unmarried and childless Städel had left his assets to a foundation that had not yet existed during his lifetime, thus setting a precedent that went down in the history of law. After eleven years of strife and legal proceedings, the dispute was finally settled. It left a lasting mark on the Civil Code in the form of the so-called Städel article 84: "Where the foundation is not recognized as having legal capacity until after the death of the founder, as regards the founder's endowments it is deemed to have come into being before his death."

"In the name of God!" is the heading of the third and last version of the will signed by Johann Friedrich Städel on 15 March 1815. In it he bequeathed his entire fortune (1.3 million guilders) and his art collection (comprising nearly 480 paintings, some 4,600 drawings, approximately 10,000 prints and a number of valuable books) to the foundation, which was to be named the "Städelsches Kunstinstitut". He dedicated that art institute to Frankfurt, expressing his hope that it would "grace and be useful to" the town's citizens. Johann Friedrich Städel was thus the first citizen in the German-speaking world to found a public art museum.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STÄDEL MUSEUM AND ITS PREMISES

The Städel Museum located on Schaumainkai in Frankfurt is today considered the oldest and most prestigious museum foundation in Germany. The three areas of the collection – the Old Masters, Modern Art and Contemporary Art – as well the Department of Prints and Drawings offer an overview of seven hundred years of European art from the early fourteenth century onward, and spanning the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Classical Modern period and the immediate present. Changing special exhibitions that bear a strong relation to our own holdings moreover underscore the Städel's interest in current research issues and the *œuvres* of individual artists. The collection encompasses altogether some 3,000 paintings, 600 sculptures, more than 4,000 photographs and over 100,000 drawings and prints. The highlights include works by such artists as Albrecht Dürer, Sandro Botticelli, Rembrandt van Rijn, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Max Beckmann, Francis Bacon, Gerhard Richter and Corinne Wasmuht.

Since its founding day, the Städel Museum has consistently developed its collection further with regard to quality as well as quantity. During Johann Friedrich Städel's

lifetime and for several years after his death, the holdings were still kept in the building on Rossmarkt square that had housed his residence and business establishment. In 1833, upon completion of comprehensive alteration and expansion measures, the nearby palace of Postmaster Baron von Vrints-Treuenfeld of the House of Thurn and Taxis in the Neue Mainzer Strasse became the new home to the museum and art school. A milestone in the museum's history was the 1878 opening of a new museum building designed by Oskar Sommer and located on the Sachsenhausen bank of the Main. In 1899, the Städel'scher Museums-Verein was founded as a manifestation of joint civic patronage of the arts. That association today has a membership of 7,600. From 1907, the city moreover founded a Städtische Galerie für Moderne Kunst (municipal gallery of modern art) within the time-honoured private Städel foundation.

The assumption of power by the National Socialists brought about far-reaching changes for the Städel Museum. In 1937, the "Degenerate Art" campaign led to major losses in the modern art department. Two years later, a large proportion of the holdings were removed from the museum for safekeeping during the war. The museum closed in 1943; in 1944 the building was badly damaged by bombing. The decisive tasks after the war – not just throughout Frankfurt but also at the Städel – were to inspect, clean up and re-evaluate. The works had to be retrieved from their places of storage, illegally acquired objects to be returned to their rightful owners, the partially destroyed building repaired and reconstructed. It was not until 9 November 1963 – twenty years after its closure – that the Frankfurt Städel could open its doors to the public once again.

In 1990, the museum building on the bank of the Main was supplemented by an extension in Holbeinstrasse, designed by Gustav Peichl and providing space primarily for special exhibitions as well as offices. In recent years, the Städel has succeeded in expanding its collection above all in the area of contemporary art. To be able to present the contemporary art collection in a manner befitting its quality and quantity, the museum expanded its facilities once again in 2012 through the construction of an underground annex. The light-flooded Garden Halls designed by the architects schneider+schumacher provided some 3,000 square metres of additional exhibition space, thus doubling the scale of the collection presentations. Concurrently with the construction measures, the old building housing the Modern Art and Old Masters collections was thoroughly renovated.

THE DIRECTORS OF THE STÄDEL MUSEUM:

- Carl Friedrich Wendelstadt 1817–1840
- Philipp Veit 1830–1843
- Johann David Passavant 1840–1861
- Gerhard Maß 1861–1885
- Georg Kohlbacher 1885–1889
- Henry Thode 1889–1891
- Heinrich Weizsäcker 1891–1904
- Ludwig Justi 1904–1905
- Georg Swarzenski 1906–1937
- Ernst Holzinger 1938–1972
- Klaus Gallwitz 1974–1994
- Herbert Beck 1994–2006
- Max Hollein since 2006