

PRESS RELEASE

Johannes Itten & Thun. Nature in Focus
8 August – 22 November 2020

Press preview

7 August, 11 am or on request

Opening

7 August, from 6:30 pm
with music by *timorosso*, alphornists from the Bernese Oberland
(may change at short notice due to Covid-19)

How Johannes Itten found nature in the Bernese Highlands

Johannes Itten (1888-1967) was a seminal figure in the art history of the twentieth century. Did you know that his career as an artist began in the city of Thun? And that his view of the landscape and of nature was shaped by his experiences at Lake Thun and the surrounding countryside? The Kunstmuseum Thun now presents *Johannes Itten & Thun: Nature in Focus*, an exhibition exploring the early phase of the artist's career. On view are a series of never-before-seen paintings and drawings that document the extent to which Itten's experience of the landscape around Thun influenced him to develop the concept of nature that is fundamental to his art. The repercussions can be felt even in his work after 1940. Accompanying the images on view are theoretical reflections on Itten's ideas about nature.

From Thun to Bauhaus Master in Weimar?

Johannes Itten evidently roamed the landscape around Lake Thun often between 1918 und 1920, seeking inspiration for his art and insights on his path toward abstraction. He wrote one of his most important artistic journals in the mountains overlooking Lake Thun, in Sigriswil. These notes pay eloquent testimony to how important these impressions were for his artistic path.

The 'dematerialisation' of nature

In chronological order, in ten chapters grouped around prominent key works, the exhibition examines the artistic range covered by Itten's engagement with the theme of nature. Each chapter illuminates different aspects: nature and subject, nature and abstraction, the architecture of nature, colour and nature, all the way to Itten's contemplative tree studies. The transformation of a subjectively experienced natural form into an art form governed by objective laws is a pursuit Itten described as 'dematerialisation'. Starting in the twenties and thirties, he balanced the abstract and figurative rendering of nature in ever-new, complex constellations. Itten's interest in East Asian calligraphy and ink painting provided additional new impulses: along with abstract ornamentation, these impressions gave rise to a steady stream of depictions of landscape, plants and figures at various levels of abstraction.

Kunstmuseum Thun
Thunerhof, Hofstettenstrasse 14, 3602 Thun
T +41 (0)33 225 84 20 / F +41 (0)33 225 89 06
kunstmuseum@thun.ch, www.kunstmuseumthun.ch

Thun-Panorama
Besuchsadresse: Schadaupark, 3602 Thun
T +41 (0)33 223 24 62
panorama@thun.ch, www.thun-panorama.ch

Itten's 1962 exhibition at Kunstmuseum Thun

The fact that Itten's first major retrospective in Switzerland was held not in Zurich or Bern but at the Kunstmuseum Thun is also a theme addressed by the exhibition, with a separate chapter devoted to the development of this solo show in 1962. The current exhibition was organised in collaboration with the Johannes Itten Foundation and Itten specialist Prof. Dr. Christoph Wagner, Chair of Art History at the University of Regensburg.

Seeing pictures in a different light

In cooperation with the company ARRI, a Viewing Lab equipped with the latest lighting systems will be available for the entire course of the show where viewers can experience the effects of dynamically changing lighting conditions on original artworks. In the lab, digitally controlled light of varying qualities and colour temperatures generate widely divergent perceptions of one and the same artwork.

An extensive catalogue is being published by HIRMER to accompany the exhibition, edited by Prof. Dr. Christoph Wagner and featuring essays by Helen Hirsch and Ines Rödl that examine Itten's ideas about nature within the art-historical context and present newly discovered sources that further illuminate the works on view.

An attractive supporting programme of walks, dance performances and yoga as well as breathing exercises will be offered, the details of which can be found on the website kunstmuseumthun.ch.

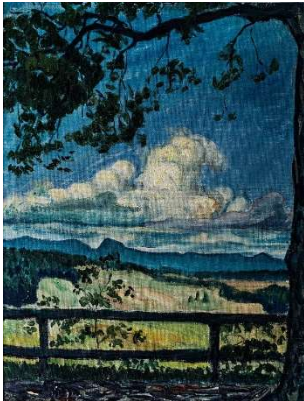
Press

If you require additional photos or if you have questions, or would like to make an appointment for a visit, please feel free to contact us at any time:

Kunstmuseum Thun: Elsa Horstkötter (elsa.horstkoetter@thun.ch), +41 (0)33 225 82 07

Press photos and legends

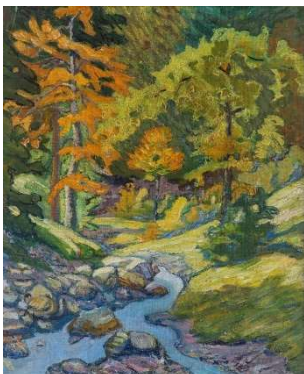
Please ask for high-resolution images. We send them via WeTransfer-Link.



Johannes Itten
Landschaft mit Zaun bei Süderen-Linden
1907
Private Ownership
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Jörg Pütz



Johannes Itten
Selbstporträt
1911
Private Ownership
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Jörg Pütz



Johannes Itten
Herbst am Bach
1912
Private Ownership
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Christian Helmle

Kunstmuseum Thun
Thunerhof, Hofstettenstrasse 14, 3602 Thun
T +41 (0)33 225 84 20 / F +41 (0)33 225 89 06
kunstmuseum@thun.ch, www.kunstmuseumthun.ch

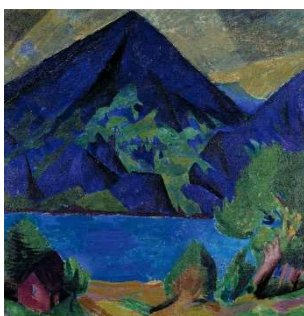
Thun-Panorama
Besuchsadresse: Schadaupark, 3602 Thun
T +41 (0)33 223 24 62
panorama@thun.ch, www.thun-panorama.ch



Johannes Itten with his mother, Matthias and his sister Marie with children in Thun
1923



Johannes Itten
Föhre (Baumstudie)
1934
Private Ownership
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Martin Richi



Johannes Itten
Berg und See
1940
Kunstmuseum Thun
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Christian Helmle



Johannes Itten
Geometrisch-Organisch
1958
Kunsthhaus Zürich
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Kunsthhaus Zürich



Johannes Itten
Herbstblätter
1963
Private Ownership
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Jörg Pütz



Johannes Itten
Baumstudie
1966
Private Ownership
© 2020, Pro Litteris, Zürich
Photo: Jörg Pütz