

Zurich, 17 July 2023

Press Release

Ticino in the Spotlight: Artists in Italian-speaking Switzerland

23 August to 12 November 2023

Opening: 22 August 2023, 6 p.m.

It may seem surprising that the Canton of Ticino is so seldom a topic of exhibitions in German-speaking Switzerland. Given the romantic notions about its beautiful landscapes, its Mediterranean climate and its “Italianità”, Ticino has, for centuries, not only been attracting tourists, but also casting its spell on artists. From the unique history of its architectural heritage, influencing much of Europe, to the artists’ colony of Monte Verità, which became both a haven and a stage for cultural creativity in the early 20th century, this is a region entwined in myriad narratives. Now, the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich is presenting works from its own collection to put the focus on the major points of artistic activity in Ticino from the 17th century to the present day.

Just as the region takes its name from the Ticino River that runs through it, so too does a rich and diverse spectrum of artistic approaches flow through and define the cultural landscape of the canton. A canton of Switzerland since 1803, Ticino’s location south of the Alps has, for centuries, assured its cultural affinity with Italy. Artists and architects from Switzerland have long been drawn to Rome and Milan. Until well into the 20th century, the Accademia di Brera in Milan played an important role in training artists from Ticino. Yet the international influence of Ticino artists and architects is by no means restricted to Italy, as evidenced by such figures as **Pietro Bettelini** (1763–1829) or **Serge Brignoni** (1903–2002), who studied in cities such as Paris and London.

Both the southern location and the lack of art schools in Switzerland had an influence on the region’s art production, because it meant that artists from Ticino sought to study abroad or even emigrate to other European centres. Similarly, during the 18th and 19th centuries, people from the upper echelons of society discovered Switzerland as a travel destination. Enchanted by travel journals and by the picturesque landscape renderings of the lesser-known Swiss artists, Ticino increasingly became a tourist destination. When the Gotthard Tunnel opened in 1882, there was a fast and direct link between the regions north and south of the Alps for the first time, further encouraging travel and the exchange between artists. This newfound accessibility promoted Ticino as a hub of artistic activity, as evidenced in the formation of various groups of artists, such as “Der Grosse Bär” and “I Solidali”.

The exhibition at Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich addresses the diversity of Ticino's cultural landscape as a complex space of interaction and exchange, and as the meeting place and cradle of important artistic influences. Instead of a chronological narrative, the exhibition is based on thematic focal points. All of the works shown are from the holdings of the Graphische Sammlung itself, covering a broad range of subject matter. On the one hand, the exhibition looks at Ticino as a motif, whether in landscape portrayals, as a place of creative output or as an essential part of an artistic biography. On the other hand, Ticino is shown as a cultural space, as the domain of artists, the meeting point of diverse positions and as a source of inspiration. For this reason, the exhibition features not only artists from Ticino, but also artists with a variety of connections to the canton. Their techniques and approaches range from the ink drawings of **Pier Francesco Mola** (1612–1666) and the landscapes by **Ludwig Hess** (1760–1800) to works by **Hans Arp** (1889–1966), **Imre Reiner** (1900–1987) and **Anita Spinelli** (1908–2010), as well as the prints of **Mark Tobey** (1890–1976) and **Flavio Paolucci** (*1934) produced in the Lafranca printing workshop, and even the architectural designs by **Mario Botta** (*1934).

Concurrently, the Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana (MASI) in Lugano is hosting the exhibition "**From Albrecht Dürer to Andy Warhol. Masterpieces from the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich**" (10.9.2023–07.01.2024).

Practical Information

Curated by	Saskia Goldschmid, Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich
Opening hours	10:00–17:00 daily closed: Mo, 11.9.2023 after 12:00 p.m
Entrance	free
Press contact	Julia Burckhardt, Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, Tel +41 44 632 40 46; presse@gs.ethz.ch
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