

## Press release

Frankfurt am Main, 4 May 2017

### **Picnic Time 6 May to 17 September 2017**

Press conference: Thursday, 4 May 2017, 11 am

Exhibition opening: Friday, 5 May 2017, 7 pm

A picnic in the countryside, *un déjeuner sur l'herbe* . . . all over the world, people love to get together and share a meal in the open air. Already the Ancient Greeks enjoyed this pastime, and the invention of the picnic basket in eighteenth-century England marked its rise in status to a veritable society event. Picnicking is currently undergoing a revival in Western metropolises – whether at stylishly arranged “diners en blanc” or carefree outings to the park with bag, baggage and barbecue grill.

*Picnic Time* is the first major exhibition ever devoted to the phenomenon of the picnic. From 6 May to 17 September 2017, the show at the Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt am Main is retracing the fascination of dining out of doors through a wide range of different periods and cultures. For instance, what is the nature of the lavish picnics during the Henley Royal Regatta in England? How do people picnic on the world's highest mountains? How do they do it in the Middle East and during cherry-blossom season in Japan? On more than a thousand square metres of exhibition space, numerous objects – including picnic utensils of widely differing forms, makes and origins – as well as installations, photographs and films bear witness to the abundant diversity of a popular custom.

People have always consumed meals out of doors. In the Baroque era, dining in the open air advanced to become a favourite summertime diversion among the French nobility, and gave rise to the term *pique-nique*. Picnicking also attained great popularity in eighteenth-century England and is still as fashionable as ever there today: at the famous Ascot races, the Henley Royal Regatta, the Wimbledon tennis championships and the opera in Glyndebourne, it is a major high society event. Following a tradition that goes back as far as the eighth century, the Japanese gather during the cherry blossom festival for aesthetically staged picnics highlighting poetry and song. Picnickers in the Middle East, on the other hand, are reminded of their nomadic roots when they leave town and pilgrimage out to the countryside with their family and friends to cook and feast in the open air. In Germany, immigrant families continue the custom, using the public space and parks for barbecuing and leisure-time activities. The show sheds light on historical and contemporary picnic rituals and objects of Switzerland, Germany, France and the Nordic countries, India, Iran, Mexico and many other countries and regions.

The picnic is a custom practised by people of all social strata. It can be a refined ritual or a spontaneous, casual gathering. At high society events and gay countryside outings alike, the sharing of food and drink brings people together and creates a sense of community. Picnicking *en plein air* is distinguished by playful freedom from constraint; it can offer relaxation and togetherness and sometimes even help overcome class boundaries.

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Picnic rituals around the globe are as manifold as the utensils developed to celebrate them. The exhibition presents numerous examples: wonderfully decorated Japanese lacquerware picnic sets of the period around 1800 from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, for instance, point to their use by a highly developed courtly society. The French company Louis Vuitton manufactured leather cases both elegant and stable for outings to the countryside by car or motorcycle, and Fortnum & Mason's luxurious picnic baskets, complete with china dishes, silver cutlery, and blown-glass champagne flutes, leave nothing to be desired. Light-weight aluminium dishes prove practical for hiking in the Swiss mountains, and plastic designer products offer another pragmatic alternative. Specially devised tables and chairs, clothing, fans and parasols round out the selection.

Over the past forty years, the photographer Barbara Klemm of Frankfurt has shot picnic scenes all over the world; in this exhibition, they are on view to the public for the first time ever. Taken on travels to places like Cape Town, China, Ukraine or Iran, the photos visualize the sociable outdoor gatherings in all their similarities and differences. The young Indian photographer Arko Datto's *PIK-NIK* project of 2013-2015 provides insights into the elaborate picnics typically celebrated in the winter months in West India. At these events, which require prodigious logistical effort, blaring music and excessive dancing play as important a role as the food itself. Ali Renani's pictorial collages mirror the multifaceted activities accompanying the open-air meals people partake of in Iran – a country of passionate picnickers – on the New Year holiday Nowruz.

In a series of caricatures produced especially for *Picnic Time*, the painter, cartoonist and illustrator Hans Traxler gets straight to the heart of what makes the British picnic unique. Who but the British would come up with the absurd idea of having their meals served them *in* (not by!) the swimming pool? Likewise created for this show, a series of paper-cuttings by young Swiss artists address various aspects of the picnic. And visitors are welcomed at the entrance to the museum by what is presumably the single most iconic artwork on the theme – Edouard Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* –, newly interpreted true to scale by the street artists Balázs Vesszősi and Gündem Gözpinar.

The picnic method has also found a use in action art. The Riklin brothers' gigantic participative art project *BIGNIK*, in progress since 2013 in the St. Gallen region of Switzerland, has undertaken to create the world's largest picnic blanket. And in 1983, the Nouveau Réaliste Daniel Spoerri invited a hundred members of the Paris art scene to a banquet in the park of Montcel Castle in Jouy-en-Josas, and subsequently had the entire remains – a forty-metre-long table, chairs, dishes, cutlery, bottles, leftover food – buried on the spot. In 2010, this *déjeuner sous l'herbe* was the first contemporary artwork ever to be excavated by archaeologists. A bronze cast of the finds will be on display in the show along with a photo documentation of *BIGNIK*.

The exhibition also sheds light on some of the more unusual manifestations of the picnic culture, for example the Mexican *Día de los Muertos*, Day of the Dead. On this occasion, people join their ancestors for a holiday lasting several days and culminating in picnics at graveyards. And if you think that's weird: during the Napoleonic Wars, the British nobility took

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to picnicking at the side of the battlefield.

As a mass event, the picnic can even have an impact on politics. The show recalls the Pan-European Picnic held on the Hungarian-Austrian border on 19 August 1989. Several hundred East German citizens took advantage of the situation to flee to the West – and thus played a decisive role in the fall of the Iron Curtain.

An extensive catalogue (396 pages, 400 illustrations) is accompanying the exhibition. In it, contributions by internationally renowned experts take in-depth looks at the wide-ranging themes addressed by this multifaceted show. It will be available in the museum for 29 EUR and in bookshops for 32 EUR.

A further enhancement to the exhibition is the attractive framework programme of lectures, workshops and discussions as well as a special film series organized in cooperation with the Deutsches Filmmuseum. What is more, numerous events will take place in the Metzler Park surrounding the Museum Angewandte Kunst, inviting visitors to help make the summer of 2017 “Picnic Summer” in Frankfurt. Among other things, a wooden fondue caquelon built especially for the show – and large enough to accommodate an eight-person picnic – will be set up there.

The exhibition is being made possible with kind support from the Swiss Consulate General in Frankfurt am Main, the European Central Bank, Gstaad Saanenland Tourismus and our hotel partner Fleming’s Hotels & Restaurants.

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## **Picnic Time**

6 May to 17 September 2017

## **Director**

Matthias Wagner K

## **Curator**

Dr. Charlotte Trümpler

## **Assistant curator**

Leonie Wiegand

## **Location**

Museum Angewandte Kunst  
Schaumainkai 17  
60594 Frankfurt am Main

## **Information**

T +49 69 212 31286  
F +49 69 212 30703  
[www.museumangewandtekunst.de](http://www.museumangewandtekunst.de)

## **Opening hours**

Tue, Thu–Sun 10 am – 6 pm, Wed 10 am – 8 pm

## **Admission**

9 EUR, reduced 4.50 EUR, free for children and teens under 18 and students of the Goethe University and the Städelschule

## **Sponsors**

Swiss Consulate General in Frankfurt am Main, European Central Bank, Gstaad Saanenland Tourismus

## **Hotel partner**

Fleming's Hotels & Restaurants

## **Press contact**

Dorothee Maas, Julia Ditsch and Julia Quedzuweit  
T +49 69 212 32828/73243  
F +49 69 212 30703  
[presse.angewandte-kunst@stadt-frankfurt.de](mailto:presse.angewandte-kunst@stadt-frankfurt.de)

## **Press downloads**

[www.museumangewandtekunst.de](http://www.museumangewandtekunst.de)

## **Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit**

T +49 69 212 32828  
F +49 69 212 30703  
[presse.angewandte-kunst@stadt-frankfurt.de](mailto:presse.angewandte-kunst@stadt-frankfurt.de)