

# essays & CATALOGUE

All titles and dates presented in the following pages take into account  
Dr Roland Dorn's research for the catalogue raisonné.














When an exhibition of French still-life painting opened at Marie Held's Frankfurt gallery at the turn of the year 1908/1909, the magazine *Die Kunst für Alle* responded with a review that mentioned the Austrian Carl Schuch in the same breath as his French contemporaries Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Édouard Manet, Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet, and Alfred Sisley.<sup>1</sup> His classification as a French artist probably resulted from the frequent spelling of his first name as 'Charles' in those days. Yet it also serves to illustrate the polarity distinguishing the artist's reception to this day: it has always been difficult to determine Carl Schuch's position between German-Austrian and French art. Combining richly nuanced tonal painting with liberated brushwork, his works on canvas can neither be convincingly ranked as German nineteenth-century art in the manner of artists like Wilhelm Leibl, Hans Thoma, and Wilhelm Trübner, nor can they be linked to Impressionism. It is precisely this 'unclassifiability' that accounts for the special allure of delving into the study of his oeuvre and examining his connection to the French art of the second half of the nineteenth century.

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## CARL SCHUCH AND FRANCE

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### A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Born to a well-off family in Vienna on 30 September 1846, Carl Schuch expressed his desire to become an artist early on. He received his initial instruction from Matthias Adolf Charlemont. In October 1865, he began studies with Karl Wurzinger and Karl Mayer at the Academy in Vienna but abandoned them after two semesters. He then took private lessons from the landscape painter Ludwig Halauska, with whom he repeatedly explored the city's environs in search of motifs (cats. 39, 40; see also cat. 42). The first time he participated in an exhibition, he showed finely painted Alpine landscape views.<sup>2</sup> However, after his parents and, in 1869, his sister had died, he left his hometown.

Following his first extensive travels in Italy in 1869/1870 (cats. 1, 2, 4, 6), Schuch lived and worked in many different places until his death. Between 1871 and 1876 he often stayed in Munich and its surroundings (cat. 43), where he met Trübner in the spring of 1871 and Leibl in the summer of the same year. A circle of progressive artists had formed around the latter, and Schuch associated with them intermittently (cat. 20).<sup>3</sup> Over the next few winters, he worked in Rome (1872/1873), Brussels (1873/1874), and Munich (1875/1876; cats. 45, 48), sometimes joined by Albert Lang and Wilhelm Trübner. The few surviving figure paintings and genre scenes by Schuch stem from these years. (cats. 47, 49). The ever-restless Schuch travelled frequently, visiting various cities (including Vienna and environs [cat. 74], Dresden, Antwerp, The Hague, Haarlem, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam), and in the summer months set out in search of suitable landscape motifs, for instance in Olevano (1873 and 1875; cats. 6, 44), on a tour from Rügen to Lake Chiemsee (1874), and in Wessling and Bernried (1876; see fig. 1). In 1873 he stayed at Lake Hintersee near Berchtesgaden, where he made the acquaintance of the painter Karl Hagemeister, who would publish his memories of Schuch in 1913 and thus contribute greatly to shaping posterity's view of the artist.<sup>4</sup>

Presumably with the aim of furthering his development independently, Schuch (cat. 37) left Munich and set up an extravagant studio for himself in Venice, which he used from the autumn of 1876 to the spring of 1882 (cat. 9; p. 173, fig. 9).



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FIG. 1 Carl Schuch: *At Wesslinger See*, 1876, oil on canvas, 44.5 × 70 cm, Kunsthalle Bremen

There he studied in depth the works in his own collection (cats. 10, 28),<sup>5</sup> especially the pigments used by Trübner and Thoma (fig. 3). He also worked on ambitious still-life compositions such as the *Large Kitchen Still Life* (fig. 2) and the *Bric-à-Brac Shop* (see cat. 7) in the style of seventeenth-century Dutch banquet pieces. In his architectural scene of the *Abbazia S. Gregorio in Venice* (fig. 4), painted on site, he studied the effect of sunlight on colour. He continued spending the summer months ‘inspecting’<sup>6</sup> and painting landscapes, for example in South Tyrol (1877). Along with Hagemeister, he painted in Ferch and Kähnsdorf in the Mark of Brandenburg in 1878, 1880, and 1881 (cats. 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 69, 112).

In November 1882, Schuch moved from Venice to Paris. He hoped to find a more stimulating atmosphere in the cultural centre of the Belle Époque, even though he routinely left the city on the Seine in the summer months for extensive study trips. These explorations took him to Lake Hintersee (1883), Scheveningen (1884, 1885), and the Saut du Doubs in the French-Swiss Jura Mountains, where he carried out his most important landscape paintings between 1886 and 1892 or 1893. He used the winter months to work in his Paris studio on still lifes – the compositions that today constitute the best-known portion of his oeuvre.

In March 1894, Schuch returned to Vienna, where he died of a venereal disease on 13 September 1903.

#### POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The sparseness of the source material poses a challenge to any study of Carl Schuch and his complex biography. Four notebooks have come down to us – two each from his working phases in Venice and Paris.<sup>7</sup> As they cover only a small portion of his oeuvre (1878–1881, 1881/1882, 1883/1884, and 1885), they convey a sense of how substantial the gaps representing the rest of his career must be, especially from 1886 onwards. These notebooks present



FIG. 2 Carl Schuch: *Large Kitchen Still Life*, 1879–1881, oil on canvas, 160 × 183 cm, Belvedere, Vienna



In den "Wildenten" die gelb. Sienna absonder-  
ungsvergessen in der tiefsten Schatten bei,  
der Sienna - fass in der noch in Waben.  
mit Cadm. Lack - dort Preuss. Lack Cadm.  
Sienna nat. fällt mir Weiss zu finden.  
Das tiefste Grün - das Wildentenkörpers in  
tiefsten Schatten Schwarz Cadm. <sup>Preuss.</sup>  
Blau. In den Übergängen dann auffallend  
Siennanat. Es dürfte sehr feine Bräun-  
ung gelb. Sienna ganz feine wie den Pfeilgrünung  
Charakter nicht zu sehen. Cadm. & Preuss. Blau  
mit Weiss in tiefster Luft  
In Glanz blau Ultramarin zu d. Blau.

Die Färbung ist fast färbig, die Färbung mit  
goldenen Ton. Schwarz mit Sienna nat.  
gibt nur ein violetten Ton. <sup>dort</sup> Als  
Cadm. vorzuziehen mit Schwarz & gelb.  
Sienna - die gelb. steht in tiefer Cadm.  
Lagerung. In Mischungen Schwarz  
Sienna nat. steht nicht mehr in Vergleichung  
dort Cadm. <sup>schon leicht</sup> Sienna gelb & Weiss die Sienna  
ist ein (Bräun) grünlichgrün an d. Schwarz Cadm.  
Weiss in der Ton gemalt. Der Übergang in  
in diesem Blau des Übergangs nicht mehr  
beurteilen. Farben in der gelb. Sienna  
Lack dazu noch d. Sienna nat. aufged.  
(nur Lack)

Sienna nat. & gelb. Sienna gelb. Cadm.

FIG. 3 Carl Schuch: Notebook Venedig I, fol. 51r, notes on pigments in Wilhelm Trübner's *Mallards and Pheasants*, 1880, Belvedere, Vienna

us with an abundance of written musings on studio practice, which appear cryptic to anyone lacking more in-depth knowledge of Schuch's work. He made notes on such aspects as how other artists painted and the colours they used as well as his own palettes – information that only rarely bears a direct connection to one of his own paintings. The only example where there appears to be a plausible link between a dated painting and a likewise dated notebook entry is the still life *Flowers and Apples* (cats. 35, 36).<sup>8</sup> Schuch also sketched works by his fellow artists as well as ideas for compositions of his own.

Schuch's correspondence has survived in one form or another only in part, although at 80 letters that part is not insubstantial.<sup>9</sup> In 2012, Roland Dorn and Fabienne Ruppen brought to light a bundle of letters Schuch wrote to the architect Thomas Brug of Mannheim, considerably expanding our overview of Schuch's biography while at the same time demonstrating how little we know about it to this day.<sup>10</sup> The numerous letters to Karl Hagemeister – which, however, are not known in the original – formed the basis for the latter's above-mentioned Schuch biography of 1913. Especially considering the lack of other sources, this publication bears great significance for further research.<sup>11</sup> Apart from Hagemeister, only Wilhelm Trübner published brief clues to Schuch's biography and oeuvre in his memoirs.<sup>12</sup> Hagemeister's accounts are far more extensive, but warrant especially critical reading, as the example of the subject 'Carl Schuch and France' clearly illustrates.<sup>13</sup> The information he gives about which artworks Schuch saw and when and where he saw them often proves imprecise – presumably above all because the two fell out in the spring of 1884 and Hagemeister cannot be regarded as an eyewitness for the majority of Schuch's Paris years. In keeping with the times, he moreover had a nationalistic outlook, for which reason his biography does more to obscure than to illuminate the relationship between Schuch's late work and French art.

Shortly after Schuch's death, his paintings – which he rarely exhibited or sold – were discovered by collectors and museums in German-speaking Europe. As a result, in the period until World War I they were enthusiastically collected and presented in several exhibitions organised by art dealers in Munich, Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> It was in this framework that Frankfurt's first-ever Schuch exhibition took place at the Kunstverein in 1911. After World War II, however, his work fell increasingly into oblivion until large-scale exhibitions in Mannheim and Munich in 1986 and at the Belvedere in Vienna in 2012 once again brought him to the attention of a wider public. Whereas the former show subscribed closely to Schuch's categorisation as a member of the 'Leibl Circle'<sup>15</sup> that had taken hold in the early days of his reception, the retrospective in Vienna shed light on the 'European' Schuch and his myriad sources of inspiration.<sup>16</sup> There have also been exhibitions revolving around Schuch and his relationship to French Modernism: an exhibition in Dortmund in 2000 examined his connections and similarities to Cézanne and Manet, and one in Hausen ob Verena and Hüfingen in 2016 focused on the links between Schuch and Gustave Courbet.<sup>17</sup>

Little research has been carried out on Schuch at universities. Apart from two dissertations in Vienna in the 1970s calling attention to the artist as a



FIG. 4 Carl Schuch: *Abbazia S. Gregorio in Venice*, 1878, oil on canvas, 84 × 69 cm, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover

landscape and as a still-life painter,<sup>18</sup> the 1993 dissertation by Christiane Schmieger is particularly worthy of mention.<sup>19</sup> She examined Schuch's oeuvre against the background of the history of optics and physiology, contributed substantially to our knowledge of the literary sources at play, Schuch's written legacy, and his colouristic approach, and undertook to pinpoint his theoretical position between Realism, Naturalism, and Impressionism. Beate Söntgen, meanwhile, analysed Schuch's oeuvre in the framework of her dissertation on visual perception in the Leibl Circle.<sup>20</sup> There is moreover an enlightening master's thesis on the subject of Carl Schuch's early work and France.<sup>21</sup> And in her diploma thesis, the conservator Christina Schaaf-Fundneider took a closer look at Schuch's painting technique and juxtaposed his written remarks with technical examinations of nine of his paintings.<sup>22</sup>

The foundational research on Carl Schuch lies in the hands of Roland Dorn, who is soon to complete work on his catalogue raisonné of the artist's oeuvre. We have Dorn's participation in the above-mentioned exhibition projects – and in particular his extensive catalogue section for the 1986 exhibition<sup>23</sup> – to thank for the continual expansion of the body of knowledge pertaining to Carl Schuch. It meanwhile encompasses the study and publication of Schuch's notebooks in conjunction with the exhibitions in Dortmund in 2000 and in Vienna in 2012,<sup>24</sup> Schuch's concept of the painting as the 'interaction of colour' (*coloristische Handlung*),<sup>25</sup> and increasing insights into details of Schuch's biography<sup>26</sup> as well as his correspondence.<sup>27</sup> The same is unreservedly also now true of the Frankfurt exhibition project, which Roland Dorn has accompanied and enriched with his expertise in the capacity of scholarly adviser and co-editor, for example, by placing his partially unpublished research on Schuch's notebooks and correspondence at the curators' disposal. Based on newly discovered sources, the first volume of the *Carl Schuch-Studien* by Roland Dorn and Fabienne Ruppen set new knowledge standards for the artist's Venetian period.<sup>28</sup> Since her licentiate thesis, Fabienne Ruppen has published foundational insights into the topographic reality and colour compositions of Schuch's late landscapes painted at the Saut de Doubs.<sup>29</sup> Most recently, Stefan Borchardt, who curated the Schuch exhibition of 2016, published an overview of the artist and his oeuvre.<sup>30</sup> In their function as members of the board of directors of the Carl Schuch-Gesellschaft, the three last-named scholars have moreover undertaken to further the foundational research and increase the interest in Carl Schuch and his work.

A study of Schuch's relationship to French art in all its breadth, from the academic Salon artists and Realism to Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, is still lacking in the scholarship on Schuch. He himself mentioned a great number of artists in his letters and notebooks. Particularly in his Parisian years, he kept himself well informed about the goings-on in the art world and absorbed influences from different 'camps' to turn them to advantage for his own work. The exhibition *Carl Schuch and France* seeks to retrace these interrelationships by shedding light on direct and indirect connections through juxtapositions of works by Schuch and those of his contemporaries. With its roughly biographical/chronological layout, the show thus explicitly encourages its visitors to engage in visual comparison. →





**CAT. 1**

Carl Schuch: *View of Rocca Santo Stefano*, 1870, oil on canvas, 32.5 × 38 cm, Belvedere, Vienna, inv. no. 1117



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**CAT. 2**

Carl Schuch: *Rock Face in the Campagna*, 1870, oil on canvas, 54.5 × 73.5 cm,  
Museum Wiesbaden, inv. no. M 596





**CAT. 3**

Camille Corot: *View of Marino in the Alban Hills in the Early Morning*, 1826/1827, oil on canvas, 23 × 35 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, inv. no. 1498



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**CAT. 4**

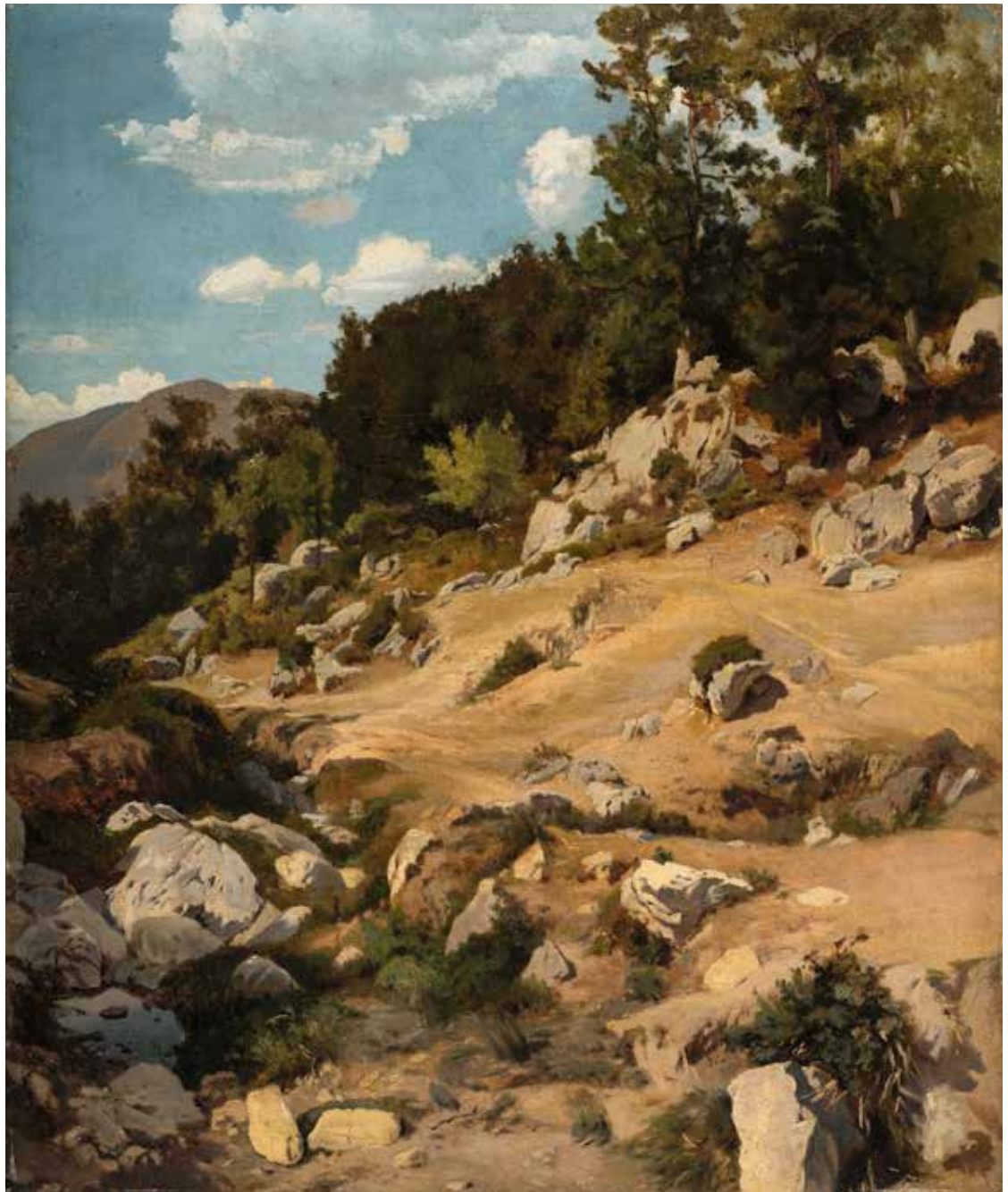
Carl Schuch: *Ponte Salario, Facing Downstream*, 1870, oil on canvas, mounted on panel, 31.9 × 43.2 cm,  
Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover, inv. no. KM 187/1912





**CAT. 5**

Edmund Friedrich Kanoldt: *From the Serpentara near Olevano*, 1869, oil on cardboard, 44 × 59 cm, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, inv. no. 1016



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**CAT. 6**  
Carl Schuch: *Near Olevano*, 1870, oil on cardboard, 48.5 × 40.5 cm,  
Museum Georg Schäfer, Schweinfurt, inv. no. MGS 5388





**CAT. 7**

Carl Schuch: *Small Bric-à-Brac Shop*, 1878, oil on canvas, 84.5 × 69.5 cm,  
Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover, inv. no. KM 169/1912



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**CAT. 8**

Carl Schuch: *Jugs, Cabbage, and Apples*, c. 1880/1881,  
oil on canvas, 70 × 91.5 cm, private collection

**CAT. 9**

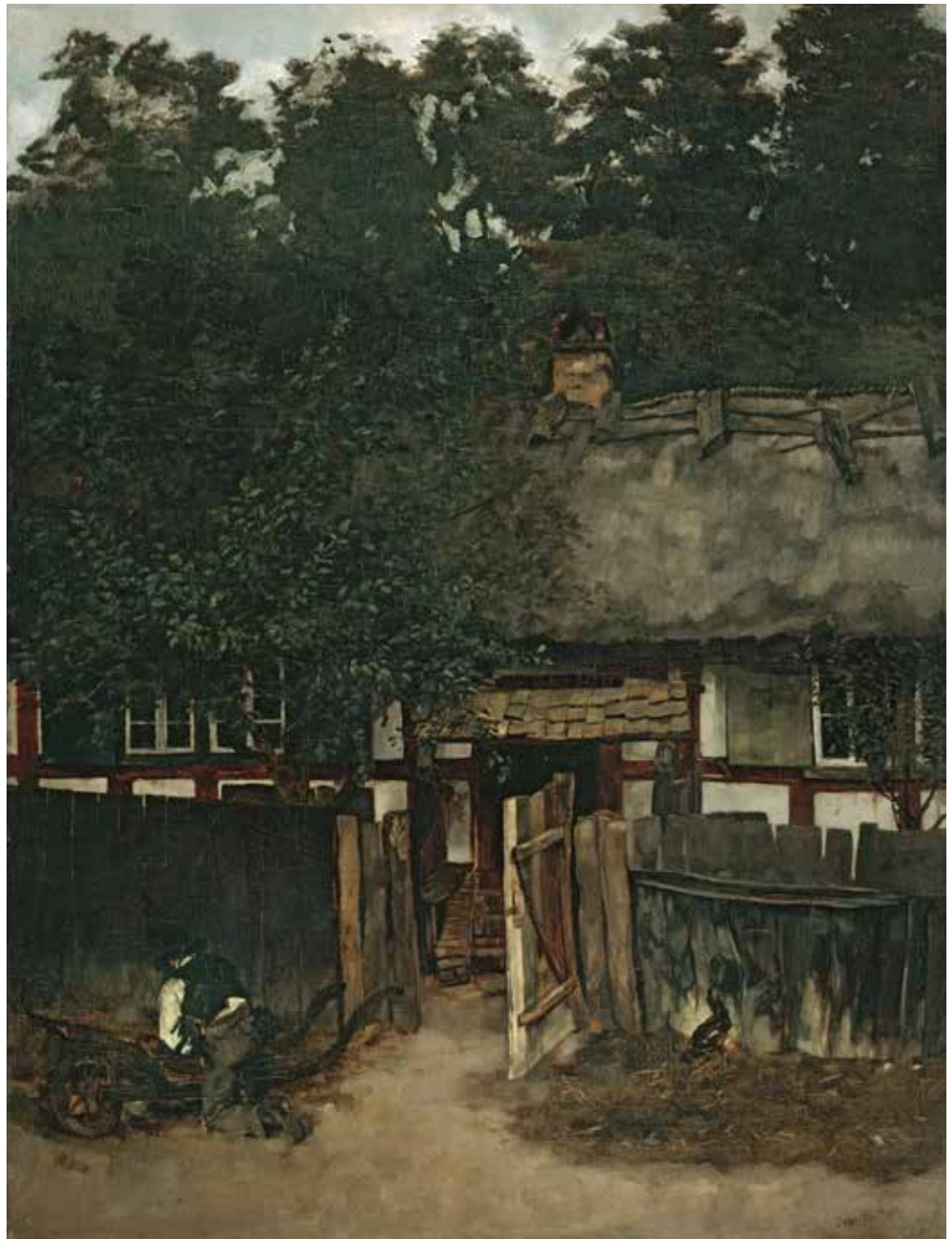
Carl Schuch: *Studio in Venice*, 1881,  
oil on canvas, 89.2 × 66.5 cm,  
Sammlung Andreas Gerritzen, Bremen





**CAT. 10**

Wilhelm Trübner: *Cottage in Wessling*, 1876, oil on canvas, 42.5 × 53 cm,  
Museum Georg Schäfer, Schweinfurt, inv. no. MGS 582



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**CAT. 11**

Carl Schuch: *Cottage in Ferch*, 1878, oil on canvas, 93 × 70 cm,  
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich, inv. no. G 5151



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**CAT. 12**

Théodore Rousseau: *Barbizon Landscape – Near the Gorges at Apremont*, c. 1840–1845, oil on canvas, 49 × 91 cm, Sammlung Andreas Gerritzen, Bremen

**CAT. 13**

Jacob Isaacksz. van Ruisdael: *Dune Landscape with Fence*, c. 1647, oil on oak panel, 44.3 × 36.2 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, inv. no. 1240





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**CAT. 14**  
Carl Schuch: *Saw Pit*, 1880, oil on canvas, 44.2 × 55.9 cm,  
Hamburger Kunsthalle, inv. no. HK-1549





**CAT. 15**

Carl Schuch: *Oven in Ferch*, 1878, oil on canvas, 70 × 84 cm,  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, inv. no. A II 33



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**CAT. 16**  
Antoine Vollon: *Cliff*, c. 1870, oil on canvas, 90 × 115 cm,  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, don de la Collection de Bueil & Ract-Madoux par l'intermédiaire  
de la Société des Amis du Musée d'Orsay, 2021, inv. no. RF MO P 2021 3





**CAT. 17**

Karl Hagemeister: *Brandenburg Landscape*, 1880, oil on canvas, 80.5 × 120.5 cm,  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, inv. no. A III 475



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**CAT. 18**

Carl Schuch: *Field of Reeds at Ferch*, 1881, oil on canvas, 60 × 89 cm,  
Städtische Museen Freiburg, Augustinermuseum, loan from Sammlung Morat, inv. no. 2022/286



### ‘THE PARISIAN COSMOS’

It was through a governess from Geneva that Carl Schuch came in contact with the language and culture of France early on. He was already familiar with modern French painting at least ten years before moving to Paris in 1882, and he studied it wherever the opportunity arose. In addition to the collection of the businessman Johann Peter Kaspar Meyer in Dresden (which Schuch first visited in 1873),<sup>31</sup> he encountered it above all at the Vienna World’s Fair of 1873, in exhibitions at the Vienna Künstlerhaus (for instance in 1868 and 1882), during a stay in Brussels (1873/1874), and in the spring of 1882 on a ‘spin’ to the ‘modern Frenchmen’ in Marseille and Nice.<sup>32</sup>

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Schuch first travelled to Paris in the early 1870s (cat. 19). The exact dating of that first stay was long disputed and only recently narrowed down to the winter of 1871/1872 by Roland Dorn.<sup>33</sup> In an undated letter to his friend Julius Rettich, Schuch reported enthusiastically about the stimulating cultural life in the French art capital: ‘This, then, is Paris – also a painter’s eldorado. [...] A lot of work being done here, and sometimes I go mad and throw myself recklessly into a frenzied whirl of brushes and paints.’<sup>34</sup>

In the early 1880s, after working in Venice for several years in relative isolation, Schuch was so drawn to the city he described as a ‘sanatorium for the mind and spirit’<sup>35</sup> that he moved there in November 1882. The details of the subsequent phase of his life from 1886 onwards, which coincides with his late work, have largely remained a mystery.<sup>36</sup> Apart from the reference to a ‘hotel garni’ that has come down to us from Hagemeister, we know neither where the painter from Vienna lived nor who might have made up his Paris network of acquaintances.<sup>37</sup> What is more, the surviving sources provide us with only limited insights into his everyday life. In addition to the biographical recollections of Karl Hagemeister, who in the winter of 1883/1884 stayed with Schuch and broke with him after a quarrel, Schuch’s Paris notebooks, which end in 1885, and his letters are the only sources on his position in the Paris art world. Their evaluation enables an overview of partially verified, partially probable visual experiences and thus (at least) an inkling of how he perceived the ‘Parisian cosmos’.<sup>38</sup>

Carl Schuch satisfied his visual and intellectual curiosity by visiting museums, exhibitions, auctions, and galleries. Along with sketches, he recorded his impressions, analyses, and questions in notebooks. The two surviving notebooks of his Paris years contain a multitude of artists’ names, colour notations, and composition sketches. Indications of the times and places where he had his visual experiences, on the other hand, are rare.

Schuch’s letters and Hagemeister’s biography inform us that the Louvre and the Musée du Luxembourg, the auctions at Hôtel Drouot, and the dealerships in Rue Laffitte were venues Schuch regularly frequented. Individual events such as estate exhibitions can often be identified only by looking at the artist’s notebooks side by side with the ‘spectrum of possibilities’ spread out by Isabelle Cahn.<sup>39</sup> In addition to the Salons of 1883, 1884, and 1885, Schuch provenly visited the *Exposition nationale des beaux-arts* (autumn of 1883).<sup>40</sup> Cahn’s pointer to the international exhibitions at the Galerie Georges Petit has likewise proven valuable for our purposes. Presumably



FIG. 5 Wilhelm Leibl: *Three Women in the Church*, 1878–1882, oil on mahogany panel, 113 × 77 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle