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Press release

In good company

Special exhibition at the Museum Beethoven-Haus focuses on the history and reception of the famous Beethoven portrait by Joseph Stieler.

From December 17, 2019 until April 26, 2020

Bonn, December 13, 2019 – For the anniversary year BTHVN2020, the obviously most famous portrait of Beethoven is put at the centre of a dedicated exhibition in the new area for temporary exhibitions at the Museum Beethoven-Haus. Silke Bettermann, Art historian at the Beethoven-Haus, is the curator of this special exhibition. The portrait that Joseph Stieler (1781-1858) painted in early 1820 can currently be seen at the *Beethoven. Welt.Bürger.Musik* exhibition at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn. In lieu of the Stieler portrait, an interpretation of the Stieler portrait by British artist Mark Alexander (born 1966) is on display at the Beethoven-Haus. Core points of the exhibition are the creation history and the impact of the portrait.

On behalf of Bavarian kings Maximilian I. Joseph and Ludwig I. painter Joseph Stieler travelled to Vienna several times to portrait members of the imperial family. The paintings of the monarch but also the portrait of Antonie Brentano, who together with her husband ordered the Beethoven portrait, demonstrate Stieler's great gift for rendering his models.

The step-by-step development of Beethoven's portrait can be traced rather precisely, because notes taken by both the painter and the composer during the painting sessions have been preserved. They illustrate how Stieler turned rather general ideals into a coherent portrait. The sources of inspiration he used are summarised visually in a figure in the exhibition room. Based on its concept, the Beethoven portrait can clearly be categorised into the group of portraits showing poets and scholars. Therefore, it is compared to other examples of this work group here.

Already during the portrait's creation did the general interest in Stieler's Beethoven portrait prove great, however, during the following 150 years it grew so tremendously that the portrait virtually became a real Beethoven icon. A screen presentation at the exhibition shows the many different and unique approaches undertaken by artists and designers until the very present.

A companion publication to the special exhibition has been published by the Beethoven-Haus publishing house, edited by Silke Bettermann. It can be purchased at the Beethoven-Haus shop for 12 €.

Press photographs are sent on request.

Special exhibitions

In good company—Joseph Stieler's Beethoven portrait and its history
From December 17, 2019 until April 26, 2020

Loaners

Bavarian State Painting Collections, Munich
Bavarian Administration of Palaces, Gardens and Lakes, Munich
Berlin State Library—Music department and Mendelssohn Archive
Lenbachhaus Art Gallery, Munich
Wittelsbacher Ausgleichsfonds, Munich
Freies Deutsches Hochstift/Goethe-House Frankfurt (Brentano-Haus Oestrich-Winkel)
Lévy Gorvy, New York
Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg

General programme

Curator's guided tours with Dr. Silke Bettermann
Sunday, January 26, 2020, 11 am
Saturday, February 29, 2020, 3:30 pm
Sunday, March 22, 2020, 11 am
Finissage
Artist's talk in cooperation with the Pamme-Vogelsang Gallery from Cologne
Sunday, April 26, 2020, 6 pm

Opening hours of the Beethoven-Haus museum starting December 17:

Daily from 10 am to 6 pm
Information on closing days can be found at www.beethoven.de

Advance ticket sale

Tickets with a fixed time slot can be booked at Bonnticket (https://www.bonnticket.de/beethoven-haus-bonn/?referer_info=bt_partner) or bought at the Beethoven-Haus shop. Group reservations must be requested at the museum office at museum@beethoven.de.
The admission also includes the curator's guided tours. Free admission to the Finissage.

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