



CARL SCHUCH & FRANCE

EDITED BY ALEXANDER EILING, ROLAND DORN, JULIANE BETZ, AND NEELA STRUCK

CONTENTS

LENDERS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
FOREWORD SPARKASSEN-FINANZGRUPPE	7
FOREWORD KULTURFONDS FRANKFURT RHEINMAIN	11
FOREWORD STÄDELSCHER MUSEUMS-VEREIN	12
DIRECTOR'S PREFACE PHILIPP DEMANDT	15

CATS. 103-113

essays & catalogue analysis

ALEXANDER EILING, JULIANE BETZ, NEELA STRUCK CARL SCHUCH AND FRANCE CATS. 1–36	21	EVA BADER, LINDA SCHMIDT NEW INSIGHTS INTO CARL SCHUCH'S PAINTING TECHNIQUE TECHNICAL INVESTIGATION OF THREE STILL LIFES	220
JULIANE BETZ CARL SCHUCH BETWEEN AUSTRIA, GERMANY, AND FRANCE	73	CATS. 114-116	
ON THE HISTORY OF HIS RECEPTION BETWEEN 1904 AND 1928		ROLAND DORN REVISIONS AND THEIR CONTEXT	238
CATS. 37-54		OR, CARL SCHUCH'S RESTART IN PARIS (1882–1885)	
STÉPHANE PACCOUD PARADOXES OF STILL-LIFE PAINTING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE CATS. 55–65	103	VRONI SCHWEGLER THREE LETTERS CAT. 117	248
ALEXANDER EILING THE DISSIMILARITY OF THE SIMULTANEOUS CARL SCHUCH BETWEEN REALISM AND IMPRESSIONISM	125	appendix	
CATS. 66-88			
NEELA STRUCK 'ASPARAGUS ON WHITE' CARL SCHUCH'S STUDIO IN PARIS	161	SOURCES & LITERATURE	255
CATS. 89-102		COLOPHON	262
FABIENNE RUPPEN TOURS DE SUISSE SCHUCH, CÉZANNE, AND THE 'IDEAL LANDSCAPE'	191	PHOTO CREDITS	264

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FOREWORD SPARKASSEN-FINANZGRUPPE

Carl Schuch was a traveller and a European painter in the truest sense. At a time when nationalism was on the rise and divisions were deepening across Europe, he refused to allow his artistic vision to be confined by national borders. His work stands as a powerful testament to the ability of art and culture to bridge divides.

Born in Vienna in 1846, Schuch spent several years living and working in Bavaria, travelled extensively through Italy, and spent time in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Prussia before eventually settling in France. He found artistic inspiration in all of these countries, but above all in France – an affinity that forms the focus of this Städel Museum exhibition. At the time, France was widely regarded in the German-speaking world as the *Erbfeind* – the 'hereditary enemy'. This hostility reached its height during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, further deepening the cultural rift between the two nations. In this climate, artists, architects, writers, and composers were expected to assert a distinctly German identity in their work – a reflection of the so-called *Volksgeist*, or national spirit. Schuch, however, had no interest in such nationalist constraints. Instead, he looked to the European avantgarde, especially the artists he encountered in Paris and the Barbizon School.

Fortunately, the 'hereditary enmity' with France was overcome in the aftermath of the catastrophic conflicts of the twentieth century. Today, France is one of Germany's closest partners within the European Union. And yet, Europe faces new divisions, and the European Union, at heart a peace project, finds itself under increasing pressure.

At Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe, we believe that a united Europe, founded on the strength of its member states, is best placed to address global challenges. Culture, in particular, plays a vital role as a mediator in this process. Exhibitions such as *Carl Schuch and France* highlight the richness that emerges when we engage with Europe's shared cultural heritage. As culture fosters

understanding across borders, we are proud to be Germany's largest non-governmental sponsor of the arts and remain firmly committed to supporting artistic initiatives throughout the country.

Just as with Europe itself, we believe we are stronger together – which is why we are jointly supporting the exhibition *Carl Schuch and France*. Frankfurter Sparkasse, Deutsche Leasing, and the Sparkassen-Kulturfonds of the Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband have once again come together to support the Städel Museum in Frankfurt.

Given the many uncertainties that still surround Carl Schuch's work and biography, art historian Gottfried Boehm once asked: 'Can the oeuvre of a major artist be lost to history?' We hope this exhibition sheds new light on Schuch's artistic legacy and his European vision – and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who helped make it possible.

Prof. Dr Ulrich Reuter President of the Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband

FOREWORD

KULTURFONDS FRANKFURT RHEINMAIN

Art shapes its time and is, in turn, shaped by it. In retrospect, we recognise epochs and styles, connections, and transitions within their spatial and temporal contexts. The exhibition *Carl Schuch and France* at the Städel Museum invites us to rediscover the work of an exceptional painter who developed his artistic language in dialogue with the movements of his era.

Carl Schuch was a crossover artist, navigating between the worlds of Impressionism and Realism on a European scale. His art was particularly influenced by extended stays in France, especially in Paris, where he engaged deeply with the techniques of French Modernism to evolve a distinctive style of his own. The exhibition traces this artistic exchange and also highlights the historical context and cultural ties between Germany and France at the end of the nineteenth century.

At Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, we are committed to supporting outstanding local art and cultural projects that also promote a broader understanding of artistic exchange – both from historical and contemporary perspectives. Carl Schuch's work stands as a powerful example of the richness that emerges from engaging with the artists and movements of one's time. A particular highlight of this collaborative project is the contribution of important loans from Museum Wiesbaden. One of the still lifes from Wiesbaden has been examined by the Conservation Studio of the Städel Museum, yielding surprising new scientific insights now shared with the public.

We at the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain are delighted to support this exhibition and wish all visitors an inspiring encounter with Carl Schuch's remarkable artistic oeuvre.

FOREWORD STÄDELSCHER MUSEUMS-VEREIN

n 1912, the art critic Karl Scheffler summed up the enthusiasm of his contemporaries for Carl Schuch's painting with the words: 'Leibl is revered, Trübner is held in high esteem, but Schuch is loved.' Reading this statement more than a century later may come as a surprise, as the name Carl Schuch (1846–1903) is unfamiliar to many today. It was therefore all the more important for the Städelscher Museums-Verein and the Städelfreunde 1815 to support an exhibition that brings Schuch's outstanding oeuvre back into public view. Schuch's works are presented alongside those of his French contemporaries - including Gustave Courbet, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Paul Cézanne - to illuminate the distinctive character of his art. This kind of insightful, transnational exhibition has a long tradition at the Städel Museum, going back to its legendary director Georg Swarzenski (1876–1957). At a time when narrow-minded nationalism was widespread in early twentiethcentury Germany, Swarzenski - with the support of the Städelscher Museums-Verein – assembled a remarkable collection of modern art that consciously transcended national borders. Since then, the Städel has continued to show German and French art side by side, fostering a vibrant dialogue that celebrates the artistic achievements of both nations. Carl Schuch and France continues this proud Städel tradition, and it is a great pleasure for the Städelscher Museums-Verein and the Städelfreunde 1815 to support a project that so powerfully reflects the museum's enduring spirit. We wish all visitors to the exhibition an enjoyable and enlightening encounter with this unjustly forgotten artist and his French contemporaries.

Sylvia von Metzler Chairwoman of the Board, Städelscher Museums-Verein

DIRECTOR'S PREFACE

In recent years, the Städel Museum has made it its mission to shine a light on artists who have never received the recognition they deserve in the arthistorical canon. Rembrandt Bugatti, Louise Breslau, Lotte Laserstein, Ottilie W. Roederstein, Paolo Troubetzkoy, and Victor Vasarely were all highly successful in their respective artistic fields, only to be largely overlooked in the decades following their deaths. We are proud to continue this tradition with Carl Schuch and France, even though, unlike the above, the Austrian painter already received scant recognition during his lifetime. Schuch struggled with self-doubt and his artistic practice; he rarely took part in exhibitions and, as legend would have it, sold just one painting - a poignant biographical detail that invites comparison with Vincent van Gogh. It was only posthumously, through the major 1906 Berlin show Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst aus der Zeit von 1775-1875, that Carl Schuch's work reached a wider audience and attracted the attention of German museum directors, who began eagerly acquiring his paintings for their collections. The Städel Museum also acquired two of his works, although it would not do so until the 1930s, when Schuch's art was still enjoying a period of popularity. After the Second World War, Schuch's reputation gradually declined, and he became one of the bestknown 'unknown' painters of the nineteenth century. It was not until major retrospectives in Mannheim and Munich (1986), and later at the Belvedere in Vienna (2012), that his work returned to broader public consciousness. Today, Carl Schuch's name remains relatively obscure, perhaps because he is difficult to place within the established currents of art history. Both in his own time and today, Schuch defies conventional categories such as Realism, Impressionism, or Post-Impressionism. A restless cosmopolitan, he moved between Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and France, absorbing a rich variety of artistic influences. Schuch was particularly drawn to the French art of the second half of the nineteenth century, which he studied intensively and reflected upon in his notebooks. His deep engagement with the artistic developments in France, which even led him to settle in Paris for twelve years from 1882, forms the starting point of our exhibition. It places Schuch's work in dialogue with that of his contemporaries, both famous and now lesserknown. Taken together, these works reveal that Schuch developed a style of his own – one that can stand alongside the finest achievements of Gustave Courbet, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Paul Cézanne. His art is characterised by a constant search for colour compositions that were harmonious while still being imbued with an inner tension. In his pared-down still lifes, Schuch kept returning to a carefully chosen repertoire of motifs, reconfiguring them in ever-new arrangements. To gain deeper insights into his distinctive working methods, the Städel Museum's Department of Art Technology & Conservation conducted a comprehensive technical examination of several paintings in preparation for this exhibition. Using advanced analytical techniques such as infrared reflectography, x-radiography, and micro x-ray fluorescence analysis, these investigations revealed the extent to which Schuch reworked his canvases before finally striking a delicate balance of form and colour.

My heartfelt thanks go to the curatorial team – Alexander Eiling, Juliane Betz, and Neela Struck - who spent several years immersed in Schuch's often hermetic artistic world and have created a presentation that is both revelatory and joyful. They were ably assisted throughout the project by Roland Dorn, the leading expert on Schuch and author of the forthcoming catalogue raisonné, and we are deeply indebted to him for his invaluable guidance. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Eva Bader and Linda Schmidt of the Conservation Studio, as well as its head, Stephan Knobloch, Their pioneering and insightful research has set new standards for future technical studies of Schuch's work. We are equally grateful to our colleagues at the Hamburger Kunsthalle and the Museum Wiesbaden, who generously agreed to lend their paintings to Frankfurt well in advance of the exhibition opening. Such early loans made it possible to conduct a comparative technical analysis of several still lifes. After such a display of trust and invaluable support, my special thanks go to Alexander Klar, Markus Bertsch, and Eva Keochakian in Hamburg, as well as to Andreas Henning, Peter Forster, and Ines Unger in Wiesbaden.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of numerous private collectors and museums across Europe and America. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of them for their invaluable cooperation. My very special thanks go to our colleagues in Vienna, Berlin, Freiburg, Hamburg, Hannover, Karlsruhe, Munich, Schweinfurt, and Wiesbaden for generously lending substantial groups of works.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the external authors who, alongside our in-house team, have enriched the exhibition catalogue: Roland Dorn, author of the Carl Schuch catalogue raisonné; Stéphane Paccoud, chief curator at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon; Fabienne Ruppen, assistant curator at the Kunstmuseum Basel; and Vroni Schwegler, artist and professor at the Hochschule Mannheim. Their great expertise has provided valuable new insights into Schuch's work, particularly in relation to French Modernism. Given the complexity of Schuch's personality and the breadth of his artistic influences, *Carl Schuch and France* is an exhibition that requires a thoughtful public-engagement programme. To this end, we are pleased to offer a wide range of educational resources to accompany the exhibition, including a Digitorial, an audio guide, and a printed exhibition booklet. I would like to express my special thanks to our Department of Education and Digital Collection, led by Chantal Eschenfelder and her deputy, Anna Huber, for their dedicated work. I would also like to thank Linon Medien and

Sophie Rois for producing the audio guide accompanying the exhibition. The elegant exhibition design and visual identity were once again placed in the capable hands of Nicole Miller and the design agency tonique, specifically its team of Alexander Horn, Lukas Schmidt, and Anna-Lena Oehm. Tonique is also responsible for the distinctive design of the exhibition catalogue, published by Prestel Verlag and expertly overseen by Katharina Haderer, Markus Eisen, and Cilly Klotz. Internal catalogue management was handled with customary care by Eva Mongi-Vollmer. The translation of the texts was placed in the trusted hands of Judith Rosenthal and the team led by Lance Anderson, who also undertook the English copy editing. My sincere thanks go to all of them.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Our sincere thanks go to the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe, with Deutsche Leasing AG, Frankfurter Sparkasse, and the Sparkassen-Kulturfonds of the Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband (DSGV) as the exhibition's main sponsor. I would particularly like to thank Prof. Dr Ulrich Reuter, president of the DSGV, and Dr Heike Kramer, Head of Social Engagement and Event Management at the DSGV, for their commitment and invaluable support. Our special thanks go to the Gemeinnütziger Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain GmbH, especially its managing director, Dr Susanne Völker, and the entire cultural committee, as well as to the Fontana Foundation, represented by its chairman, Prof. Dr Stephan Scherer. We are also deeply grateful to the Städelscher Museums-Verein e.V. and the Städelfreunde 1815, especially their chairwoman, Sylvia von Metzler, for their longstanding and unwavering support of our exhibitions and projects. We would also like to thank the Aventis Foundation, represented by executive board member Ulrike Hattendorff, and the Rudolf-August Oetker-Stiftung, represented by board member Dr Birgit Sander, for making the Digitorial and the audio guide possible.

The exhibition *Carl Schuch and France* invites you to partake in deriving visual pleasure from immersing yourself in the works on display. We are delighted to present the richest comparative presentation thus far of Carl Schuch's outstanding paintings alongside those of his French contemporaries. I wish each and every one of you an inspiring and rewarding visit.

Philipp Demandt Director, Städel Museum

ESSAYS & CATALOGUE

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.¹ 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.

ALEXANDER EILING JULIANE BETZ NEELA STRUCK

CARL SCHUCH AND FRANCE

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.² 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).3 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.4

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).

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),⁵ 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'⁶ 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.⁷ 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

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).⁸ 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.9 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.¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Apart from Hagemeister, only Wilhelm Trübner published brief clues to Schuch's biography and oeuvre in his memoirs. 12 Hagemeister's accounts are far more extensive, but warrant especially critical reading, as the example of the subject 'Carl Schuch and France' clearly illustrates. 13 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.¹⁴ 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' 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.¹⁶ 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. 17

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,¹⁸ the 1993 dissertation by Christiane Schmieger is particularly worthy of mention.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ There is moreover an enlightening master's thesis on the subject of Carl Schuch's early work and France.²¹ 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.²²

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 exhibition²³ – 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 2012,²⁴ Schuch's concept of the painting as the 'interaction of colour' (coloristische Handlung), 25 and increasing insights into details of Schuch's biography²⁶ as well as his correspondence.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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.²⁹ Most recently, Stefan Borchardt, who curated the Schuch exhibition of 2016, published an overview of the artist and his oeuvre.³⁰ 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.