

TRAVELS

Artists on the move

Exhibition Facts

Duration	27 June – 24 August 2025
Venue	Propter Homines Hall The ALBERTINA Museum
Curator	Elisabeth Dutz
Assistant Curator	Laura Luzianovich
Works	133
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Opening Hours	Daily 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Except Wednesday and Friday 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
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TRAVELS

ARTISTS ON THE MOVE

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Ancient buildings, sunny southern landscapes or local mountain worlds: travel has inspired numerous artists to create new perspectives and pictorial worlds. The ALBERTINA Museum's summer exhibition is dedicated to this artistic wanderlust with a selection of 18th and 19th century masterpieces from its own collection - from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Caspar David Friedrich and Tina Blau.

Travels – Artists on the Move spans an arc from the “Grand Tour” – an educational journey through Europe lasting several years with Rome as its destination – to voyages of discovery to distant continents. What was reserved for the sons of the nobility during the Renaissance increasingly became an educational ritual for the aspiring bourgeoisie from the 18th century onwards. There were no fixed routes, important destinations were Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Florence, Pisa and the Eternal City. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was drawn even further south on his Italian journey: the ALBERTINA Museum presents four views from his trip to Italy from its own collection.

Discovering the mountains - from threat to destination

Over the course of the 18th century, the view of the high mountains changed: what had previously been considered wild and inaccessible became the epitome of sublime nature. With improved transportation routes, alpinism began to flourish in the middle of the 19th century.

Archduke Johann endeavored to create a systematic description of the Styrian countryside, resulting in around 1400 watercolors and drawings by his chamber painters. These come from several

generations of artists, with well-known representatives such as Matthäus Loder and Thomas Ender bringing visitors closer to the beauty of the Austrian landscape with their works.

Austrian watercolor painting flourished during the reign of Emperor Ferdinand I, who commissioned numerous artists to document his travels. He engaged artists such as Eduard Gurk, Jakob Alt and his sons Rudolf and Franz, as well as Leander Russ, whose works illustrate many places near and far, from the Salzkammergut to the Egyptian pyramids.

A look at women artists in landscape painting rounds off the presentation in the Propter Homines Hall: The Austrians Olga Wisinger-Florian and Tina Blau had success with their art during their lifetime and were allowed to take part in exhibitions. Other artists such as Emilie Mediz-Pelikan and Marie Lippert-Hoerner, on the other hand, remain largely unknown. This is because as women they were not allowed to study painting academically until the 20th century and rarely received commissions for which they were allowed to travel and paint.

Travels – Artists on the Move draws attention to landscapes that are as diverse as they are special, the intensity of the personal experience of nature and the conditions of travel in the 18th and 19th centuries. The finest drawings and luminous watercolors bring the longing for distant places and new horizons to life.

Exhibition Texts

INTRODUCTION

Traveling – indulging the longing for the unknown and for faraway lands – is a notion dating back to Romanticism, but as a phenomenon it was by no means limited to this era. The desire to leave one's familiar surroundings, to get to know new scenery and distant destinations and capturing them in drawings and paintings for those who had stayed behind also prompted numerous artists of Neoclassicism, Biedermeier, and Realism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to set off for places near and far. They did so either on their own initiative as an educational journey in order to gain inspiration for their own artistic work, or on behalf of ruling dynasties and art publishers editing compilations of the most stunning views of a particular region. Countless picturesque impressions could be gained, whether near ancient buildings in Rome, in landscapes under the southern sun and in alpine mountains, on picturesque lakes, along the Danube and the Rhine, or on journeys to foreign countries.

The Albertina's exhibition sheds light on this artistic love of travel by presenting eighteenth- and nineteenth-century masterpieces from its own collection while illustrating the various travel routes that existed. The show ranges from the Grand Tour and the study of antiquity and the Italian landscape to the beauty of the Austrian countryside, the fascination of the mountains and romantic journeys along the Rhine, and the discovery of other continents. The focus is on the various landscapes and motifs studied, as well as the exploration of nature in the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Caspar David Friedrich, Jakob Alt, Thomas Ender, and Rudolf von Alt. Women landscapists have also conquered nature, as is proven by works by Tina Blau, Olga Wisinger-Florian, Marie Lippert-Hoerner, and Emilie Mediz-Pelikan. Precious drawings and colorful watercolors allow us to sense the hunger for new horizons and witness not only individual experiences of nature but also the travel conditions in those days. In this way, travel becomes art and art becomes a mirror of travel.

The places depicted in the works within the respective exhibition area are indicated in the maps next to the panel texts. Today's country borders have been used to facilitate orientation.

GRAND TOUR

While since the Renaissance the traditional educational tour of Continental Europe had been exclusively reserved for the sons of aristocratic families, from the eighteenth century onward it also became popular among the upper middle classes as the so-called Grand Tour. With Rome as its destination, it lasted several years and was the culmination of any higher education. Time and again, the travelers were accompanied by artists who were supposed to capture the beauties of nature. Over time, fixed routes developed that led to must-see cities. The English voyaged from London to the Channel Coast, with Paris as their first important stop. They traveled via Burgundy and Lyon to Marseille and on to Italy, where Florence was most important as a first station. Visiting Pisa and Lucca, they moved on to the much-longed-for destination of the Eternal City, where they usually spent several months. It was almost obligatory to have one's portrait painted by a local artist. Naples was also on the itinerary, and some were even drawn as far as Sicily, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The return journey was then via Verona, Padua, and Venice. However, there were also many individual routes depending on the personal interests and networks of the travelers, leading through Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands on the way back home.

Goethe's Italian Journey

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's account of his *Italian Journey* (1813–1817) makes him one of the most famous Grand Tour homecomers. During the trip he made around 850 drawings. The writer, who was already well known at the time, traveled incognito in order to be able to move around more freely. In September 1786, he set off for Italy, visited Trento and Verona and stayed in Venice for a first extended stay of a fortnight. Goethe then visited the cities of Bologna and Florence in rapid succession before finally arriving in Rome, the place he had always longed for as a child. After four months he moved on to Naples. Goethe, following in the footsteps of his father on his own Grand Tour, ventured a little further than the latter had done in 1740. In the spring of 1787, he set sail for Sicily. For his exploration of the island he also hired a travel sketch artist, Christoph Heinrich Kniep, to capture the most beautiful vistas. For over a month, the two of them drew side by side. The four views of Sicily by Goethe shown in this exhibition bear witness to this journey and to his passion for drawing. Goethe eventually returned home via Naples and Rome in the spring of 1788.

ROME AND THE STUDY OF ANTIQUITY

Once Grand Tourists had arrived in Rome after months of traveling and numerous stopovers, they stayed for a few months to familiarize themselves with the city's art treasures as profoundly as possible. Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* (1764) played a decisive role in the emergence and spread of the enthusiasm for antiquity. The tour comprised museums, old churches, ancient monuments, and such sites as the excavations on the Palatine, one of Rome's seven hills. The Roman Forum, the ancient marketplace, offered ample opportunity to study the architecture and sculpture of antiquity through the temples, official buildings, market and assembly halls (basilicas), and the two triumphal arches from the first centuries AD. Magnificent villas and their exquisitely landscaped gardens, among them the seventeenth-century Villa Ludovisi, likewise attracted visitors to Rome.

According to the rules of the Académie française, the study of antiquity was the most important element in a painter's education and training, alongside instruction in drawing and copying models. Many artists, thus encouraged by their art academies, traveled to Rome to study the city's ancient heritage and the way the High Renaissance revisited it as to content and form.

THE ITALIAN LANDSCAPE

The artists visiting Rome not only discovered the city's ancient monuments but also undertook excursions to the countryside and familiarized themselves with the unique scenery of the Campagna, the impressive coast near Naples, and the enchanting island of Capri. With its outstanding light, the Southern Italian landscape made a lasting impression on countless artists that prevailed even after their return home. Artists such as father and son Alt and Thomas Ender, whose origins lay in the Austrian Biedermeier period, painted topographically meticulous landscapes effectively staging light, water, and sky in the colors of nature.

Some artists imaginatively assembled different parts of a region, adding fictitious ancient ruins and random staffage figures. They created ideal Arcadian landscapes that were modeled on antiquity and evoked a nostalgic mood for past beauty. This ideal landscape painting style harked back to the seventeenth-century tradition of Claude Lorrain.

FASCINATION OF THE MOUNTAINS

Until well into the nineteenth century, the nature of high mountains was perceived as threatening. Crossing the Alps, as some people did on their Grand Tours, was fraught with danger. There were no well-maintained paths, rivers were not regulated, and one was rather defenseless in the face of rapid weather changes. Many a traveler fell victim to avalanches or rockslides, and some even died.

In the eighteenth century, a genuine enthusiasm for the Alps prevailed. Literature played a quite significant role in this. Publications dealing with the Alps and Switzerland in particular enticed many travelers. Improved transportation conditions had made traveling more comfortable. The golden age of alpinism began in the middle of the nineteenth century, with many first ascents. Artists captured the beauty of the mountains and catered to the newly awakened interest in mountain peaks, glaciers, and wild, pristine nature.

IN THE SERVICE OF ARCHDUKE JOHN

As many as about 1,400 watercolors and drawings were executed by artists in the service of Archduke John. The works of his so-called “chamber painters,” who were on an equal footing with court painters, were originally created in the context of his efforts to produce a systematic description of Styria, for which the artists were to provide a pictorial documentation. Ferdinand Runk was employed by Archduke John from 1795 on and later also worked for the Princes Schwarzenberg and Johann I of Liechtenstein. The commissions that went to Matthäus Loder were still connected with the purpose of documentation, but more and more often motifs from the archduke’s immediate personal life and experiences were added. Loder’s task was taken over by Thomas Ender in 1828. He traveled as far as the glacier regions for Archduke John and also accompanied him on journeys to more distant destinations.

The chamber painters came from several generations of artists. Their works were created over a period of almost fifty years and represent an important contribution to the development of nineteenth-century Austrian landscape painting.

IN THE SERVICE OF EMPEROR FERDINAND I

Archduke Ferdinand (from 1835 Emperor Ferdinand I of Austria) commissioned the most highly renowned artists of his time to paint the most beautiful places throughout the Austrian monarchy. It was the heyday of Austrian watercolor painting. Initially, Eduard Gurk became the archduke's companion and chronicler. In 1830 he created the first drawings for the imperial peep box series, which could be viewed by means of an optical device, offering the illusion of a deceptively real perspective expanse. Soon, Jakob Alt was also employed by Archduke Ferdinand. He had already made a name for himself with his work as a landscape painter for the art publisher Artaria. On the peep box series he collaborated particularly closely with his son Rudolf, yet the works were all signed by Jakob Alt as principal contractor. His son Franz Alt too was a talented landscapist. The painter Leander Russ worked for Emperor Ferdinand I's peep box series starting in 1841.

WOMEN LANDSCAPISTS

In the nineteenth century only few women were able to pursue an artist's career. They were not allowed to study at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, as women were generally assumed to lack a creative spirit in the domain of high art. It was not until 1920 that women were admitted. Before that, they had to rely on private art schools, private teachers and, above all, family support, or their father or a close relative was a painter himself. Nevertheless, there were women landscape painters who traveled with their sketchbooks or painted directly in the great outdoors. The most important practitioners in Austria were Olga Wisinger-Florian and Tina Blau, who were already successful during their lifetimes, and who were permitted to take part in exhibitions. However, as Olga Wisinger-Florian complained, the works of women were poorly hung, and the women artists were not invited to exhibition openings. There were hardly any commissions from financially strong rulers or aristocrats for whom they could travel and paint.

ROMANTIC RHINE JOURNEY

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, based on the writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Heinrich von Kleist, a rapturous interest in the Rhine landscape developed, which was in stark contrast to the wild alpine valleys of Switzerland. The rocky Upper Middle Rhine Valley, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, became a popular tourist destination due to its fascinating river landscape and large number of castle ruins. The classic Rhine Romanticism route essentially stretched from Cologne to Mainz, although there were also variants and extensions similar to the Grand Tour, which led to the Upper Rhine between Basel and Bingen or to the sources of the Rhine.

Many artists either traveled on their own initiative or were commissioned to capture the romantic views of the Rhine in painting. The Swiss artist Johann Ludwig Bleuler, who also owned a publishing house, and the Austrian landscape painter and etcher Laurenz Jansch created important series of *vedute* and views of the Rhine region.

ON THE MOVE

Until the nineteenth century, voyaging had mainly been reserved for the nobility. It was only then, in the course of industrialization, that a wealthy middle class discovered travel as well. From 1825 on, when the first train line was put into operation in England, the railroad rapidly developed into a widely networked transport system over the decades to come, making traveling much easier, more convenient, and safer. Until then, people had traveled in horse-drawn carriages. Artists could only go on such journeys if they had sufficient funds of their own or if they were financed by wealthy patrons. However, they often also traveled on foot to sketch in nature. In 1835, an English company brought out a paint box that was easy to transport and ideal for painting en plein air. The new pocket-sized travel guides published by Baedeker and Hartleben became useful companions. Many of the places that artists wished to capture were difficult to reach. They thus carried sketchbooks with them or had a light travel easel that could easily be set up anywhere.

TRAVELING TO FARAWAY COUNTRIES

The longing for endless expanses and an unbridled spirit of discovery were the driving forces behind travel in the nineteenth century. In most cases, however, it was solid monetary and territorial reasons that led to numerous journeys of exploration and discovery. Artists often accompanied these voyages in order to capture romanticizing impressions of the various stations in paintings and drawings. One of the most ambitious expeditions in the name of science was the circumnavigation of the world with the frigate Novara between 1857 and 1859, which was also not without economic interests. Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, commander-in-chief of the Austrian navy, made the converted frigate Novara available to the Academy of Sciences and the Geographical Society. On board was the landscape painter Josef Selleny, who documented the journey. He produced around 2,000 watercolors, sketches, and studies, thus making a significant contribution to the success of the expedition.

Another example was Leander Russ, who had already been the artistic companion of a diplomat on a trip to the Orient when he was commissioned by Emperor Ferdinand I in 1841 to produce peep box paintings with motifs from Egypt, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Beirut, and India.

Press images

The following images are available free of charge in the Press section of www.albertina.at.
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Thomas Ender
 The Matterhorn as seen from the Gornergrat, 1854
 Watercolor on paper
 33,3 × 50,3 cm
 The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
 © Photo: The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
 Lakescape, 1787
 Brush on paper
 19,5 × 31 cm
 The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna. Permanent loan of
 Österreichische Goethe-Gesellschaft
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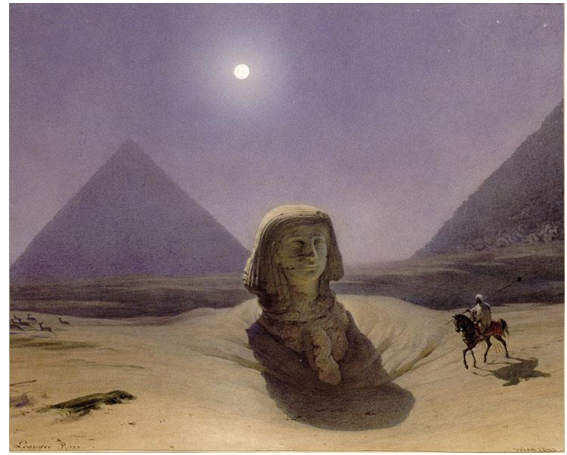
Jakob Alt
 The great navy on the island of Capri, 1836
 Watercolor on paper
 41,3 × 51,7 cm
 The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
 © Photo: The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Rudolf von Alt
 The Dachstein in the Salzkammergut as seen from the
 Vorderer Gosausee, 1840
 Watercolor on paper
 42 × 52,5 cm
 The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Marie Lippert-Hoerner
Mountain in the evening sun (Abfaltern), 1889
Watercolor on paper
10,5 × 15,1 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Leander Russ
At the pyramids, 1842
Watercolor and opaque paint on paper
35 × 43,1 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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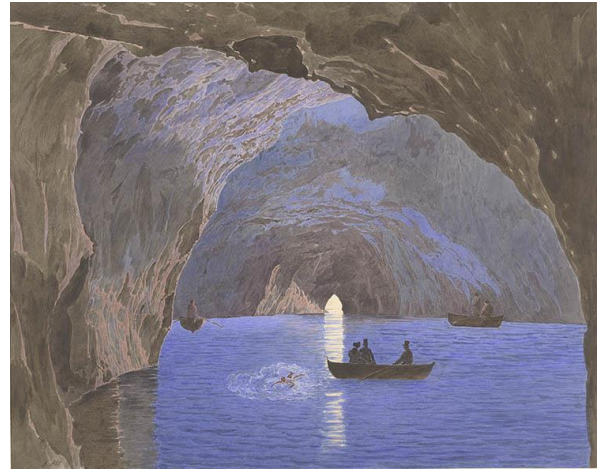
Josef Selleny
Coconut palms on Tahiti, 1859
Watercolor on paper
48,7 × 31,7 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
© Photo: The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Jakob Alt
The Leaning Tower of Pisa, 1836
Watercolor on paper
49 × 42 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Jakob Philipp Hackert
Cestius pyramid with German artists at the grave of a
companion, 1777
Pen and watercolor on paper
34,6 × 46 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
© Photo: The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Jakob Alt
The Blue Grotto on the Island of Capri, around 1835/36
Watercolor on paper
41,1 × 51,6 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Christoph Heinrich Kniep
Landscape near Segesta with temple and equestrian
society, 1788
Pen and brush on paper
39,8 × 55 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
© Photo: The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Anna Baar-Plommer
Mountain lake with Glockner group, 1860-1890
Oil on paper
31,7 × 41,1 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
© Photo: The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Christian Georg Schütz
Ehrenbreitstein on the Rhine with the fortress,
opposite Koblenz, before 1801
Pen, chalk and watercolor on paper
42,7 × 55,8 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
© Photo: The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna



Thomas Ender
Italian landscape, around 1823
Watercolor on paper
15,7 × 22,5 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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