

FONDATION
VINCENT
VAN GOGH
ARLES

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EXHIBITIONS FROM 02.03.2019 TO 20.10.2019

NIKO PIROSMANI — WANDERER BETWEEN WORLDS

WITH TRIBUTES BY TADAO ANDO, CHRISTINA FORRER, ADRIAN GHENIE, RAPHAELA VOGEL,
SHIRANA SHAHBAZI, YOSHITOMO NARA, ANDRO WEKUA,
GEORG BASELITZ & PABLO PICASSO

VINCENT VAN GOGH: SPEED & APLOMB



NIKO PIROSMANI – WANDERER BETWEEN WORLDS
VINCENT VAN GOGH: SPEED & APLOMB

The exhibition *Niko Pirosmani – Wanderer between Worlds* brings together almost thirty paintings by the Georgian artist (1862–1918) presenting a real and fantastical panorama, suffused with great calm, of an epoch in the midst of transition. Pirosmani's imposing figures and motifs, with their powerful graphic quality, are wide-ranging: a train steaming through the countryside at night, a woman with a mug of beer, a monumental boar and, sometimes, animals such as a giraffe or lion from imagined lands. Rarely dated, his paintings on wax cloth are largely composed in black and white, enlivened by the presence of blue or red.

Self-taught, a wanderer, meandering between town and country, Pirosmani embodies the popular modern vision of the clear-sighted artist on the margin of society. Far from the symbolic intermediate spaces of galleries, artists' groups and museums, Pirosmani forged an œuvre imbued with modesty in the taverns and stables of Tbilisi and its surroundings, painting to order or offering his art in exchange for food. He distanced himself from the image of the naive painter immured in his solitude and – like Van Gogh – built up a body of work that seems to belong to everyone.

Uniting works by these two artists for the first time in the same place, *Niko Pirosmani – Wanderer between Worlds* is thus no ordinary exhibition. The Georgian painter is namely presented at the Fondation alongside five canvases by **Vincent van Gogh**, grouped under the title **Vincent van Gogh: Speed & Aplomb**. Produced between 1884 (the Dutch period) and 1889 (the Provençal period), Van Gogh's paintings, too, convey a sense of speed and attest to a humble look at the people and the things surrounding the Dutch artist.

Pirosmani's influence on the art and vision of his contemporaries is clear. His œuvre was caught up in the ferment of emulation propelling the various Russian and Parisian avant-gardes of the era. Alert to artists whose work – seen as "authentic" – signalled a rejection of academic conformism, the Russian avant-garde awarded generous space to Pirosmani at the exhibition *The Target* held in 1913 in Moscow. **Pablo Picasso's** 1972 drypoint etching *Portrait of Niko Pirosmani*, presented in the Arles exhibition, speaks of the impact of the Georgian's work on French modernist avant-garde circles.

The legacy that Pirosmani has bequeathed to the art of our own day also deserves a closer look. Among homages by contemporary artists on the second floor, the exhibition at the Fondation also includes a new piece by **Tadao Andō**: a monumental monolithic table incorporating blue roses – in the words of the Japanese architect, "a metaphorical tomb in memory of this artist". Pirosmani's influence continues to make itself felt in new ways through the works of artists such as **Raphaëla Vogel** and **Christina Forrer**.

Historical events have kept Pirosmani's work away from France for many decades. It is high time that his paintings are made accessible to the general public.

Curator: Bice Curiger

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SELECTION OF WORKS ON SHOW



NIKO PIROSMANI

Woman with a Mug of Beer

Oil on wax cloth, 114 x 90 cm

Georgian National Museum, Shalva

Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts, Tbilisi

© Infnitart Foundation Vienna /

photo: Roberto Bigano



NIKO PIROSMANI

Kakhetian Train

Oil on cardboard, 70 x 140 cm

Georgian National Museum, Shalva

Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts, Tbilisi

© Infnitart Foundation Vienna /

photo: Roberto Bigano



NIKO PIROSMANI

Boar

Oil on wax cloth, 55 x 74 cm

Georgian National Museum, Shalva

Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Arts,
Tbilisi

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photo : Roberto Bigano

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SELECTION OF WORKS ON SHOW



VINCENT VAN GOGH

The Woodcutter (after Millet),

Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, September 1889

Oil on canvas, 44 x 26,2 cm

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



CHRISTINA FORRER

Wulp, 2016

Cotton and wool, 48 x 57 cm

© Christina Forrer / Photo : Joshua White



ADRIAN GHÉNIE

Portrait of Niko Pirosmaji, 2018

Oil on canvas, mounted on wood

35 x 30 cm

Infiniart Foundation

NIKO PIROSMANI

Born around 1862 in Mirzaani, Niko Pirosmani is a source of national pride in his country, Georgia. Considered in Western Europe as the Douanier Rousseau of the Caucasus, he drew his inspiration from the people around him, from traditions, from daily life in the countryside and on the outskirts of Tbilisi, as well as from animals. Other sources, such as medieval icons, folk art and Russian engravings, likewise infuse his frank and direct paintings. Executed for the most part on black waxed cloth, they were humbly crafted in unconventional locations such as stables, shops and cheap restaurants, and offered in exchange for accommodation or food.

Discovered in 1912 in Tbilisi by Mikhail Le Dentu and the brothers Ilia and Kirill Zdanevich, Niko Pirosmani was caught up in a ferment of emulation that propelled his oeuvre to the forefront of the art scene and fostered its positive critical reception, beginning in his own lifetime. In 1913 his work was presented at *The Target* exhibition organised in Moscow by the Russian avant-garde artists Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova.

Described as an artist of national stature from 1916 onwards, Pirosmani by this point had no fixed address. Deeply hurt by a caricature circulated in the press, he disappeared and died alone and penniless in 1918.

Niko Pirosmani – Wanderer between Worlds brings together almost thirty paintings from the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi, which today houses the majority of the known works by the artist, the large part of whose production has been destroyed.

Conceived in sections, the exhibition also presents Pirosmani's paintings in tandem with contemporary artistic production. At the same time, it opens a unique dialogue with the work of Vincent van Gogh and thereby illuminates the parallels and differences between the lives and hearts of two artists wreathed in many mysteries.

The exhibition *Niko Pirosmani – Wanderer between Worlds* is organised in collaboration with Adrian Barsan, **Infinitart Foundation** Vienna, project initiator, **the Georgian National Museum** and its director general David Lordkipanidze, **the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia**, and **the Albertina Museum** Vienna.



VINCENT VAN GOGH

Vincent van Gogh was born on 30 March 1853 in Groot-Zundert in the Netherlands. At the age of 16 sixteen he joined Goupil & Cie, a firm of art dealers in The Hague, and subsequently worked in the company's offices in Brussels, London and finally Paris. After being dismissed in 1876, he went on to become a lay preacher in a mining community in the Borinage area of Belgium between 1878 and 1879.

In August 1880 Van Gogh decided to become an artist. He wanted to be a painter of everyday life, in particular the daily lives of peasants, following in the footsteps of Jean-François Millet. Influenced by Dutch painting of the seventeenth century, by 1884 he was already handling his brush in a spirited manner that revealed the speed with which he painted, as evidenced by *The Flying Fox*. In 1886 Van Gogh moved to Paris, where he produced numerous drawings and paintings of the rapidly developing French capital, among them *Path in Montmartre*. During this period he mixed with artists including Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Gauguin and Émile Bernard. He also tried his hand at still life, and a comparison of *Shoes* (1887) with his previous treatment of the same subject (*Shoes*, 1886) offers an excellent example of the evolution of his style in Paris.

Convinced that colour was the key to modernity, in February 1888 Van Gogh set off for Provence, in search of radiant sunlight and cherishing a dream of establishing a community of artists – a studio of the South. He settled in Arles, where he continued to pursue his ideas on style and technique. One of the paintings from this period is *Sower with Setting Sun* (1888), which shows the deployment of colour and light in his work. After a violent dispute with Gauguin, the mentally and physically fragile Van Gogh voluntarily entered an asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. Here he would paint some of his most emblematic pictures, on occasion in series, as in the case of *L'Arlésienne (Madame Ginoux)* in 1890. During the twenty-seven months he spent in Provence, Vincent produced more than five hundred paintings and drawings.

In May 1890 he moved to Auvers-sur-Oise, where in little more than two months he executed his final seventy paintings. Vincent van Gogh died on 29 July 1890 at the age of thirty-seven. Barely ten years after his death, his œuvre began to attract the interest that would make Van Gogh one of the most famous and celebrated artists in the history of art.

NIKO PIROSMANI & VINCENT VAN GOGH

Vincent van Gogh and Niko Pirosmani, both self-taught, developed a singular relationship with the world. Whereas Pirosmani was in direct contact with his public, in front of whom he painted luminous canvases that were immediately legible inside Georgia's gloomy taverns, the isolated Van Gogh created paintings that were never admired in his lifetime, but which would be masterpieces. The two artists shared the need to paint with speed and elation, producing works that spoke a clear and direct language.

THE ARTISTS AND THEIR WORKS

ANDRO WEKUA

Andro Wekua was born in 1977 and lives in Berlin. His artistic approach at the intersection of artifice and nature evolves between memory and dream. Without eyes, his figures are not permitted to respond to our gaze; they remain first and foremost projection surfaces inviting introspection. The sculpture presented here emanates a certain darkness which, reminiscent of the backgrounds of Pirosmeni's paintings, contrasts and sets up a dialogue with *Licking Face* and its areas of luminous colour.

RAPHAELA VOGEL

Born in 1988 in Nuremberg, Raphaela Vogel is based in Berlin. Her artistic practice seeks to marry her own questions with what is causing a split in our contemporary society – particularly the tension between the physical world and the world of technology. Inside *Hochbett* (2016), a screen shows a film in which the artist goes to Georgia in search of her dead father, evoked by the funerary stele. Taking the shape of an Omega, the last letter of the Greek alphabet, *Loch* (2018) presents a gateway cast from real architectural elements. These installations unfolding in space testify to the large physical presence of Vogel's works.

YOSHITOMO NARA

Born in 1959, Yoshitomo Nara studied fine art in Japan and Düsseldorf. Very quickly linked with Japanese Pop Art, he remains one of its most important representatives. The artist excels in the iconography of childhood, and creates images of superficial innocence that allow him to denounce the failings of contemporary Japanese society. Nara here reprises two of Pirosmeni's famous portraits: *Queen Tamar*, the first woman to rule Georgia, and *The Actress Margarita*, a French actress with whom Pirosmeni fell in love and for whom he bought, so legend has it, all the roses in Tbilisi.

ADRIAN GHENIE

Romanian artist Adrian Ghenie, born in 1977 and living in Berlin, has created a portrait of Niko Pirosmeni from the only documented photograph of the Georgian artist. Composed of broad swathes of paint applied in an imprecise manner, the work harbours a corrosive force; oscillating between abstraction and figuration, it reveals the conceptual nature of Ghenie's approach. A veil seems to cover the sitter's face, but we can make out his moustache. The portrait appears as an echo of Niko Pirosmeni's personality: simultaneously passionate and fractured.

GEORG BASELITZ

Painter and sculptor Georg Baselitz was born in 1938 in East Germany and today lives and works in Munich. He participated in the renewal of the discourse on painting and its methods after the Second World War and maintains a critical and innovative relationship with art history, trying to link his oeuvre to the movements sidelined by the war. From very early on he chose to invert his images, in a gesture that was both iconoclastic and poetic. We find this inversion in his ink portrait of Pirosmeni, in which the Georgian painter appears side by side with Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), the famous nineteenth-century Japanese artist and one of Van Gogh's indisputable masters. We find this inversion in his ink portrait of Pirosmeni, in which the Georgian painter appears side by side with Hokusai, the famous nineteenth-century Japanese artist and one of Van Gogh's indisputable masters.

CHRISTINA FORRER

Born in 1978, Christina Forrer paints, weaves tapestries and produces works on paper. Through an outwardly gentle iconography and a lively palette, the Swiss artist represents the power relations that govern our society, while at the same time affirming a visual and technical heritage derived from craftsmanship. She also claims a feminist legacy from the women artists of the early twentieth-century avant-garde and their works of textile art. The anxiety that seizes us when we look at the scenes depicted in her tapestries contrasts with the time and the calm composure required by their weaving, establishing a particular tension. In the face of the serenity emanating from the paintings by Pirosmeni, Forrer's works present nightmarish thoughts.

TADAO ANDO

Tadao Ando was born in 1941. Known for his constructions deploying concrete and natural light, the Japanese architect is self-taught – a status he shares with Niko Pirosmeni. In homage to the latter, Ando has created a seven-metre-long table encasing blue roses in its plexiglas Plexiglas top. Symbolising the table envisioned by Pirosmeni, around which he hoped artists would gather, this sculpture is also intended as the metaphorical tomb of the Georgian painter, whose place of burial is still unknown.

SHIRANA SHAHBAZI

Shirana Shahbazi, born in 1974 in Tehran, lives and works in Zurich. Her photographs, taken outdoors as well as in the studio, constantly oscillate between the natural and the artificial. Those on display here maintain a critical relationship with the genres still in force in art history, which seek to categorise images. Thus, Shahbazi's works present still lifes, a portrait and a landscape – but without entirely matching any of these classifications. The hieratic character of these photographs echoes Pirosmeni's paintings and their way of establishing a frontal and direct relationship with the viewer.

ILIAZD (ILIA ZDANEVITCH)

Iliazd, real name Ilia Zdanevich, was a poet, art historian and publisher, who was born in 1894 in Tbilisi and died in 1975 in Paris. Together with his brother Kirill and the painter Mikhail Le Dentu, he was one of the first to discover Pirosmeni's work. He designed and published many collections of modernist poetry, today collector's items, and worked with many of the great European artists of the early twentieth century, including Marcel Duchamp, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso.

PABLO PICASSO

Pablo Picasso was born in 1881 in Malaga, Spain, and died in 1973 in Mougins, France. He was introduced to the work of Niko Pirosmeni by his friend Iliazd, for whom he illustrated several anthologies, and via the Pirosmeni exhibition organised in 1969 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. In 1972 Picasso made a portrait of the Georgian painter in drypoint for the monograph *Pirosmenashvili* 1914, probably basing it on photographs and a caricature.

THE FONDATION VINCENT VAN GOGH ARLES

FULFILLING VINCENT'S WISH

“And I hope that later on, other artists will emerge in this beautiful part of the country.”

Letter from Vincent to his brother Theo (Arles, 7 May 1888).

The Fondation offers a unique approach to Vincent van Gogh in exploring the resonance of his art and thinking with the work of artists today.

Vincent's art reached its pinnacle during his stay in Arles from February 1888 to May 1889. Beginning in 1983, likewise in Arles, Yolande Clergue invited contemporary artists to donate a work to pay homage to Van Gogh. Thanks to patron Luc Hoffmann, in 2010 a public utility foundation was established. The City of Arles placed at its disposal the Hôtel Léautaud de Donines, a prestigious fifteenth-century residence which, following its renovation by the architectural agency Fluor, opened in 2014 with over 1,000m² of exhibition space. The Fondation's resolutely contemporary bias is underscored by the integration within the complex of two permanent artworks by Raphael Hefti and Bertrand Lavier.

All year round, thanks to partnerships established with public and private collections, the Fondation presents one or more original canvases by Vincent van Gogh, in company with works by leading contemporary artists such as Yan Pei-Ming, Roni Horn, David Hockney, Urs Fischer and Alice Neel. Also on display are works by the nineteenth-century masters who inspired Vincent, primarily Jean-François Millet and Adolphe Monticelli. In addition to monographic and thematic exhibitions, the Fondation hosts extramural symposia, which examine changes and developments in the arts and artistic techniques in Van Gogh's own day, as well as Vincent's affinities with other artists and forms of artistic expression. Art mediation and educational programmes are also key areas of focus for the Fondation, which seeks to bring visitors even closer to the artists and themes presented, for example through guided tours and activities tailored to different publics, as well as through workshops held in schools in Arles and the surrounding area. The Fondation shop, conceived as a luminous, colourful and iridescent link between the original building and its contemporary interiors, welcomes visitors in the bright and clear light so dear to Van Gogh.

The Fondation fulfils Vincent's wish to create in Arles a place of reflection, fertile production and stimulating dialogue between artists.

“Then, as you well know, I love Arles so much [...].”

Letter from Vincent to Theo (Arles, 18 February 1889).



The Fondation, *Vincent* (2014) and *Fontaine* (2014) by Bertrand Lavier
© Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles / FLUOR architecture

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

EXHIBITIONS FROM 2 MARCH TO 20 OCTOBER 2019

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ADMISSION

Full rate: €9
Reduced rate: €7
Free admission: children under 12, disabled visitors,
ICOM members, press card, tour guides, curators,
journalists
12-18 & students: €4

OPENING HOURS

From 2 March to 22 April 2019:
Fondation and bookshop open
from Tuesday to Sunday, from 11am to 6pm

From 22 April to 30 September 2019:
Fondation and bookshop open
everyday from 11am to 7pm.
and from 10am in July and August.

From 30 September to 20 October 2019:
Fondation and bookshop open
from Tuesday to Sunday, from 11am to 6pm

Last admission 45 minutes before closing.

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