

# **CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH**

INFINITE LANDSCAPES



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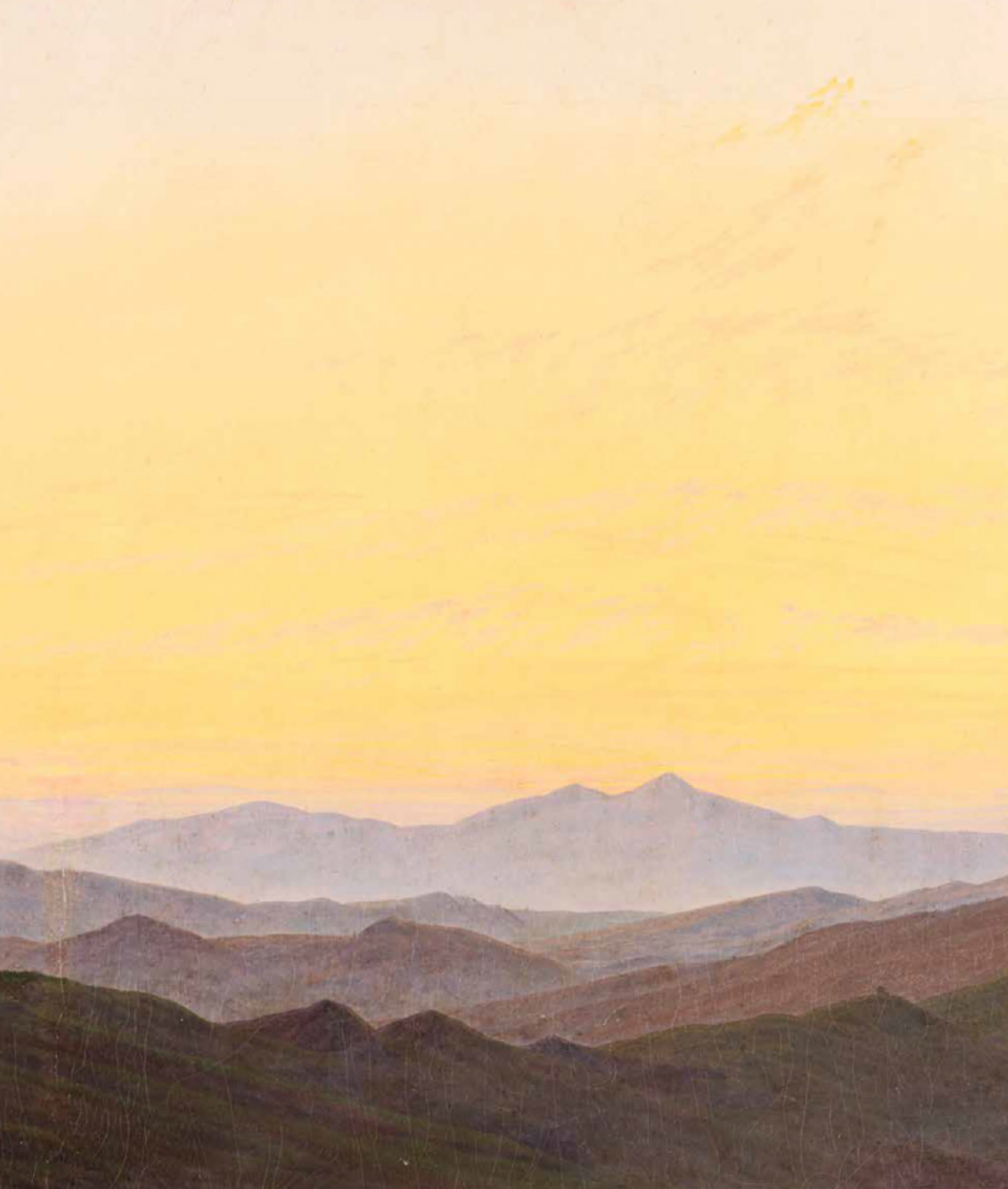
## INFINITE LANDSCAPES

ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONALGALERIE DER STAATLICHEN MUSEEN ZU BERLIN  
EDITED BY BIRGIT VERWIEBE AND RALPH GLEIS



**Nationalgalerie**  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

**PRESTEL**  
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# PREFACE

An exhibition marking an artist's 250th birthday is an opportunity to encounter his oeuvre in unaccustomed breadth and depth. Naturally, the Freunde der Nationalgalerie were delighted to support this important endeavor.

Only during the course of preparations did we come to realize we were actually working on something new: a comprehensive monographic exhibition devoted to Caspar David Friedrich has never before been mounted in Berlin. When we recall all of the marvelous exhibitions held at the Alte Nationalgalerie over the past two decades, this seemed extraordinary. Friedrich was a key figure in the fabulous *Pictures of Clouds* exhibition of 2004, as well as in *Wanderlust* of 2018, which included Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. In 2004, it was his painting *The Watzmann* that occupied the center of attention. All of these exhibitions were superb and insightful, but none was a large-scale monographic presentation. But the explanation for our mistaken impression that there must have been an extensive presentation of Friedrich's works in Berlin at some point is easy enough to explain. After all, the Alte Nationalgalerie is home to one of the world's largest collections of Friedrich's work, and has repeatedly organized noteworthy exhibitions on Romanticism that showcased these treasures.

It is a genuine cause for celebration that the moment for this landmark has finally arrived, with more than sixty paintings and fifty drawings by Friedrich being presented in Berlin under the title *Caspar David Friedrich: Infinite Landscapes*. The inclusion of such icons as *The Sea of Ice* and *The Chalk Cliffs of Rügen* is made possible by the generosity of our lenders, and in particular by an amicable collaboration between the great Friedrich collections held in Hamburg, Berlin, and Dresden.

Back in 1906, Hugo von Tschudi, then director of the Nationalgalerie, focused on Friedrich's landscapes in his *Centenary Exhibition*, encouraging a renewed interest in this Romantic artist. Von Tschudi presented Friedrich as a painter of light and atmosphere, celebrating him as a forerunner of modernism. Today, when the Nationalgalerie again calls our attention to Friedrich's landscapes, it is from a decidedly contemporary perspective.

Today, the questions Friedrich posed about the relationship between humanity and nature seem more relevant than ever. His depictions of the timeless beauty and sublimity of nature touch viewers deeply, inviting them to rediscover their connectedness to the natural environment in silent contemplation. In our industrialized, digitalized world, nature — always the basis of human existence — has again become a locus of yearning whose very survival faces unprecedented threats.

Our thanks go to our members: in these turbulent times, it is their steadfast loyalty that allows us to make plans far into the future. They continue to show us the confidence that makes it possible to translate the ambitious and laudable aspirations of the curators at the Nationalgalerie into reality.

For the sagacious and enthralling presentation, our thanks to Birgit Verwiebe and Ralph Gleis, who worked together with Sintje Guericke and the entire team of the Alte Nationalgalerie, all of them laboring tirelessly in a long-term effort to bring this sensational exhibition to fruition. Organizational implementation, including financial planning and all of the multifaceted communications related to the exhibition, along with additional events planning, has been in the hands of the team of the Friends. A special thanks, once again, therefore, to André Odier, Katharina von Chlebowski, Lutz Driever, Sina Jentzsch, Romana Eder-Grabher, and Rebecca Schenzinger for their commitment and dedication.

We gladly accept this invitation to experience the works of Caspar David Friedrich with renewed intensity in this exhibition — in the hope that, at a time when darkness descends in many places, the light of his "Infinite Landscapes" will succeed in enchanting us once again.

Christian Kohorst  
Chair, Freunde der Nationalgalerie

# FOREWORD

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Given the multiplicity of approaches to the work of Caspar David Friedrich contained in this catalogue, an attempt at a brief characterization of Friedrich's uniqueness as an artist would seem presumptuous. His extraordinary significance for the collections of the Nationalgalerie, in contrast, can be described very simply: Friedrich's visual works were a part of the museum collection from the very beginning, and more have been acquired over time, yielding one of the most important collections of his work in the world. And it was the Nationalgalerie that was primarily responsible for his rediscovery, too. Presenting nearly one hundred of his paintings and drawings, the *German Centenary Exhibition* of 1906 rescued Friedrich from decades of obscurity and reestablished his reputation as an artist. This was followed by an unparalleled record of Friedrich reception that went on to make him one of the central figures of German art history. Today, visitors from around the world arrive at the Alte Nationalgalerie to view the remarkably modern "landscapes of yearning" created by this Romantic artist.

Astonishingly, no comprehensive survey exhibition devoted to Friedrich as a painter and draftsman has ever been organized in Berlin — though it is the site of his early success, as well as his rediscovery. Our exhibition *Caspar David Friedrich: Infinite Landscapes* remedies this lapse, while commemorating the artist's 250th birthday. Both the exhibition and the present catalogue are made possible thanks to many years of meticulous research by exhibition curator Birgit Verwiebe. In this catalogue, Dr. Verwiebe presents a comprehensive account of Caspar David Friedrich's importance for the Nationalgalerie. Her text is complemented beautifully by Anna Marie Pfäfflin's detailed discussion of the Friedrich drawings preserved in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin — our cooperation partner for this exhibition.

The essays in this catalogue analyze Friedrich's visual works and their interpretive possibilities. With his comprehensive yet succinct account of the diverse views of Friedrich researchers to date, Johannes Grave offers an excellent point of departure for contextualizing the remarks of two major Friedrich researchers, namely Hilmar Frank and Werner Busch. Frank explores ambiguities in

interpreting Friedrich's oeuvre and discusses relationships between pictures conceived of as pairs. Werner Busch elucidates the complexity of Friedrich's compositions with reference to mathematical principles, highlighting the precision and sophistication of his art.

The Nationalgalerie has become a key institution for investigations of Caspar David Friedrich's painting technique, thanks to international cooperations and our own research, directed by Kristina Mösl of the Conservation Department. Her catalogue contribution and the exhibition section she curated devoted to painting techniques provide insights into her research findings emerging from still-ongoing conservation measures performed on and studies related to the paintings *Monk by the Sea* and *Abbey among the Oaks*. Gerd-Helge Vogel's discussion of copies and replicas of works by Friedrich is informed by conservation measures on a copy of the lost *Monastery Cemetery in Snow*, carried out by Kerstin Krainer with the assistance of Iris Masson. His discussion not only provides provocative insights into the history of Friedrich's reception, but also identifies important and hitherto unnoticed references within the works themselves. Reception history is a complex and independent topic within Friedrich research, and its fundamental importance is reflected in all the contributions to this volume.

Sintje Guericke devoted her essay to Friedrich's contemporary reception by the artist Hiroyuki Masuyama. His backlit photographic Friedrich adaptations reinvigorate questions on his approach to form and strategies of presentation.

Both exhibition and catalogue seek to convey a sense of the sheer complexity of Friedrich's art, but also its eminently aesthetic and — even more so — sensuous qualities. Through her meticulous planning for this jubilee exhibition, characterized by authoritativeness, passion, and vision, Dr. Verwiebe has succeeded in achieving exactly that. The result is an enjoyable, intelligent, and astonishingly comprehensive survey of Caspar David Friedrich's oeuvre — one that is long overdue at the Nationalgalerie. For this achievement, she has my heartfelt thanks. I want to express my



gratitude as well to her assistant Sintje Guericke, who oversaw the entire project with her customary focus, as well as the entire team of the Alte Nationalgalerie, whose contributions were as varied as they were indispensable. Special mention should be made here of the conservation measures carried out at the museum under the direction of Kristina Mösl.

Without the support of an enlarged external team, such a comprehensive and complex exhibition project could never have reached fruition. The foundations for this jubilee presentation were laid by decades of research, exchanges of ideas, and discussions, and the contributions to this catalogue are correspondingly varied. My thanks as well to the entire team at Prestel Verlag, in particular Katharina Haderer and Markus Eisen. In addition to being intellectually impressive, the catalogue is also a visual treat. This admirable result can be attributed to our authors, as well as to the sensibility of the design bureau Ta-Trung, specifically Pierre Becker and Robert Krug. Jörg Schildbach and Tim Wildner from the firm Lichtblick Bühnentechnik, as well as Lutz Bertram, together with their teams, were responsible for translating our exhibition concept into reality. In this context, Hiroyuki Masuyama made important conceptual contributions. His works build a bridge to the present, while also marking the “luminous” terminus of the exhibition.

The emphatically positive response and generosity of private as well as institutional lenders made possible an exceptional “once-in-a-lifetime exhibition” at the Alte Nationalgalerie. My heartfelt thanks to all of them. The cooperation with the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and its director, Dagmar Korbacher, as well as the curatorial contribution of Anna Pfäfflin were both essential to the success of our project. We received generous financial support from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM), as well as from the Cultural Foundation of the Federal German States, and we are extremely grateful to both. The greatest contribution of all was made by the Freunde der Nationalgalerie — conceptually, financially, and as always, actively, thanks to the support of Katharina

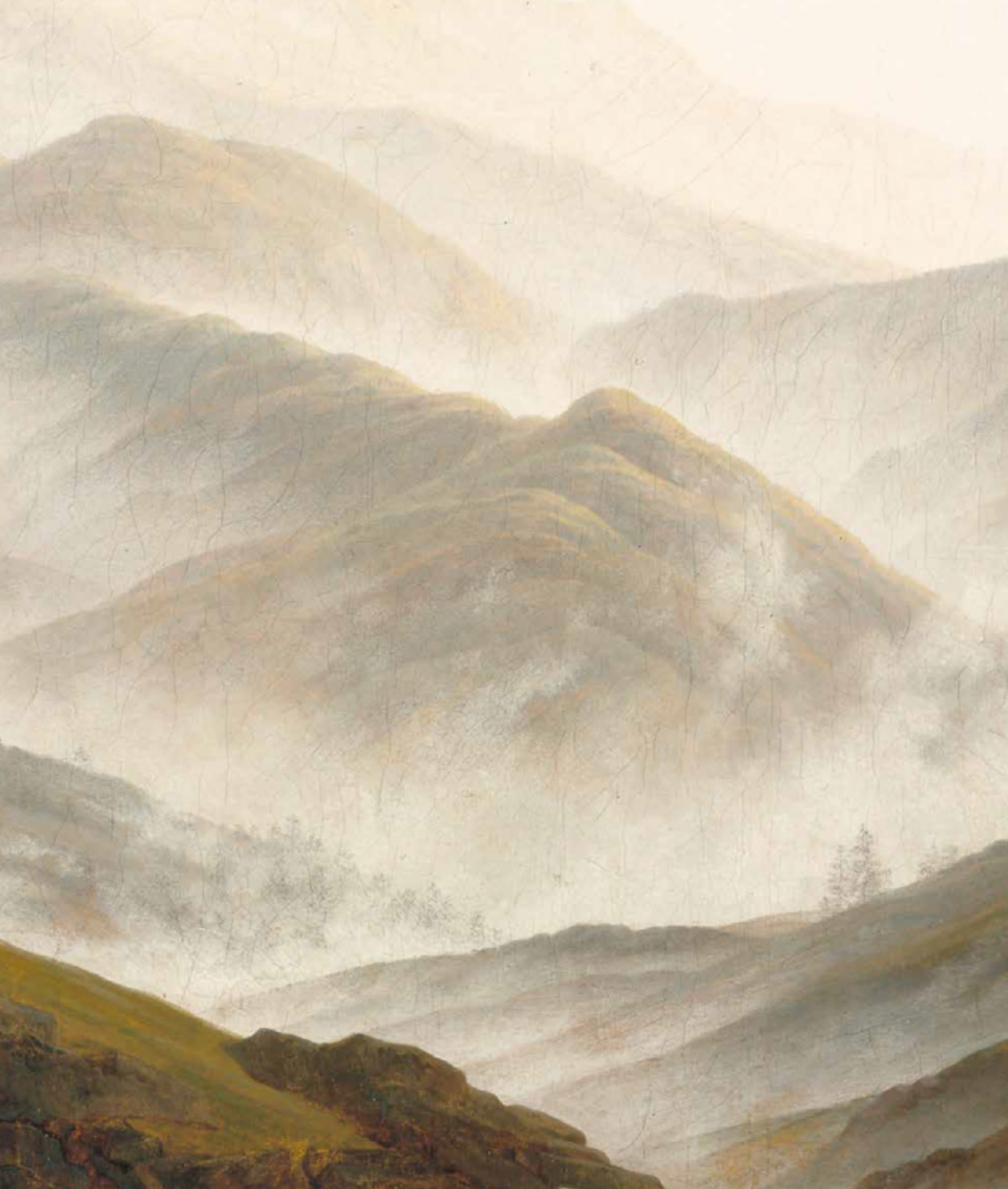
von Chlebowski, André Odier, Sina Jentzsch, and Lutz Driever. My deepest gratitude goes to each of them for their marvelous collaboration, as well as to chair Christian Kohorst.

It is a great pleasure and an honor to see our own exhibition functioning as a component of the larger Caspar David Friedrich celebration taking place in Hamburg, Berlin, and Dresden under the patronage of Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of Germany. Our thanks also goes to our colleagues at the Hamburger Kunsthalle and the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden for collegial exchanges and gracious teamwork.

In 2025, a comprehensive Friedrich exhibition will be held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, with works on loan from all three collections. It is a special source of satisfaction to me to know that Caspar David Friedrich will be journeying out into the wider world, and it is to be hoped that as many people as possible will derive pleasure from his works at all of these locations. The New York show will be the first comprehensive US retrospective of Germany’s favorite Romantic artist. It is also to be hoped that this catalogue will convey much of Friedrich’s complexity, and even provide a taste of the experience of standing before his pictures.

Ralph Gleis  
Director, Alte Nationalgalerie







**THE REDISCOVERY OF CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH  
AT THE *GERMAN CENTENARY EXHIBITION*  
OF 1906 IN BERLIN**

ON THE HISTORY OF COLLECTING AND EXHIBITING AT THE NATIONALGALERIE

BIRGIT VERWIEBE

Born 250 years ago, Caspar David Friedrich created art that continues to enchant a broad public. His pictures captivate the eye, heart, and mind to an equal degree. Friedrich loved nature, and often spent time appreciating it, whether along coastlines or in the mountains. In the morning or evening in particular, he spent much time out of doors, studying the magical colors of the twilight hours. His paintings render with great subtlety the delicate luminous atmospheres he had observed. With enormous dedication, he immersed himself in the diversity of forms he discovered in trees and branches, rocks and clouds. His numerous drawings testify to this, capturing details with extraordinary precision. On the basis of these studies, he later composed his landscapes in the studio, with expansive skies and distant horizons providing intimations of the sheer limitlessness of space and time. With a delicate and at times almost dematerialized paint application,

he created images of yearning and hope, but also of doubt. His works are remarkably close to nature in their details. However, they are not exhausted by the visible. Rather, they contain a readily perceptible level of meaning that goes further, yet can hardly be translated into words. His images touch upon existential questions of human life and its finitude. Friedrich's figures depicted from the rear gaze into an immensity that must ultimately remain a mystery to them. Like them, we stand before his silent pictures, which invite us always anew to engage in deepened contemplation. Considering Friedrich's popularity today, it seems almost inconceivable that his works were largely forgotten following his death. This essay explores his rediscovery in the early twentieth century and the importance of Berlin during Friedrich's lifetime as well as giving a history of the collection and exhibition of his works at the Nationalgalerie.

## CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH AND BERLIN: THE RECEPTION OF HIS ART IN THE PRUSSIAN CAPITAL PRIOR TO THE FOUNDING OF THE NATIONALGALERIE

14 When Caspar David Friedrich first exhibited his works in Berlin at the age of thirty-six, he achieved instantaneous celebrity as the creator of incomparable Romantic landscapes. A pair of masterpieces, *Monk by the Sea* (cat. 74) and *Abbey among the Oaks* (cat. 75), was exhibited at a Berlin Art Academy show in 1810 under the bland title *Two Landscapes in Oil*.<sup>1</sup> The Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III acquired the pair of pictures for 450 thalers. Friedrich's art was thus canonized by the highest possible authority. That same year, the Berlin Academy of the Arts admitted Friedrich, based in Dresden, as a member.<sup>2</sup> Through the extreme motivic reduction and the virtual abstraction of the composition, his *Monk by the Sea* in particular struck a chord and contributed to Friedrich's early fame. Heinrich von Kleist commented on this "marvelous painting," which seemed to mirror his own thoughts and emotions, in a piece titled "Sensations before Friedrich's Seascape" for *Berliner Abendblätter*, published on October 13, 1810 and titled "Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelandschaft" in the original.<sup>3</sup>

Earlier, he had asked Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim for their impressions of *Monk by the Sea*, which then became the basis for his own published remarks. Brentano's observations, together with Kleist's text, are among the most persuasive and penetrating reflections on Friedrich's paintings and his unconventional, highly modern conception of landscape. Brentano thematizes yearning as an unending striving toward the unattainable and the relationship between the human individual and the infinite, whereas Kleist gives voice to Friedrich's apocalyptic worldview and sense of solitude. His ingenious interpretation culminates in the celebrated metaphor of feeling as though "one's eyelids had been cut away," in an expression of boundlessness and lostness whose emotional force is unparalleled.<sup>4</sup>

Already during his lifetime, Berlin played an exceptional role in the reception of Friedrich's work. While traveling from Copenhagen to Dresden in 1798, the artist spent several months—prob-

ably from May until September—in the Prussian capital, and presumably came into contact with future supporters. Between 1810 and 1834, Friedrich presented several works at Art Academy exhibitions. Friedrich was admired and supported by a number of philosophers and poets living in Berlin, among them Friedrich Schleiermacher, Brentano, von Arnim, and Kleist. Schleiermacher visited Friedrich in his Dresden studio in 1810, where he viewed *Monk by the Sea* and *Abbey among the Oaks*. He persuaded the artist to send both works to Berlin for the Academy exhibition.<sup>5</sup> The Crown Prince and later King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, known as the "Romanticist on the throne," encouraged the Prussian king to purchase these works. Moreover, this purchase was followed by further acquisitions by the royal family.<sup>6</sup> Charlotte of Prussia, the Crown Prince's sister, and later the Russian Czarina, also revered Friedrich and initiated various purchases in St. Petersburg. Another important acquisition by Friedrich Wilhelm III was the painting *Morning in the Riesengebirge* (fig. 1). All three masterpieces were publicly accessible in the king's Vaterländische Galerie (Patriotic Gallery) in Bellevue Palace from 1844 until 1865.<sup>7</sup>

Further contemporaries promoted his work in Berlin. The most extensive collection of his works in Germany at the time was owned by the Berlin publisher and art collector Georg Andreas Reimer.<sup>8</sup> Reimer, like Friedrich, was from Greifswald. A friend of the artist, he was not just a collector, but also sold works by Friedrich and others to the Russian court.<sup>9</sup> He showed a number of the pictures he owned in exhibitions, including the Berlin Art Academy exhibitions of 1824 and 1834, as well as at the exhibition *Zum Besten der Griechen*, held in his private home in 1829.<sup>10 11</sup> Thirty-one works by Friedrich belonged to Reimer's estate in 1842.<sup>12</sup> A number of works from Reimer's collection later became a part of the Nationalgalerie's collection.

Another contemporary supporter of Friedrich's was the Berlin banker Joachim Heinrich Wilhelm Wagener. In 1822, Wagener

purchased a pair of pictures directly from the artist, *The Solitary Tree* (cat. 82) and *Moonrise over the Sea* (cat. 83), which he displayed in his private gallery. The Nationalgalerie was established in 1861

when he donated his collection of contemporary art to the Prussian king.<sup>13</sup> These two works represented the inception of the impressive collection of paintings by Friedrich at the Nationalgalerie.

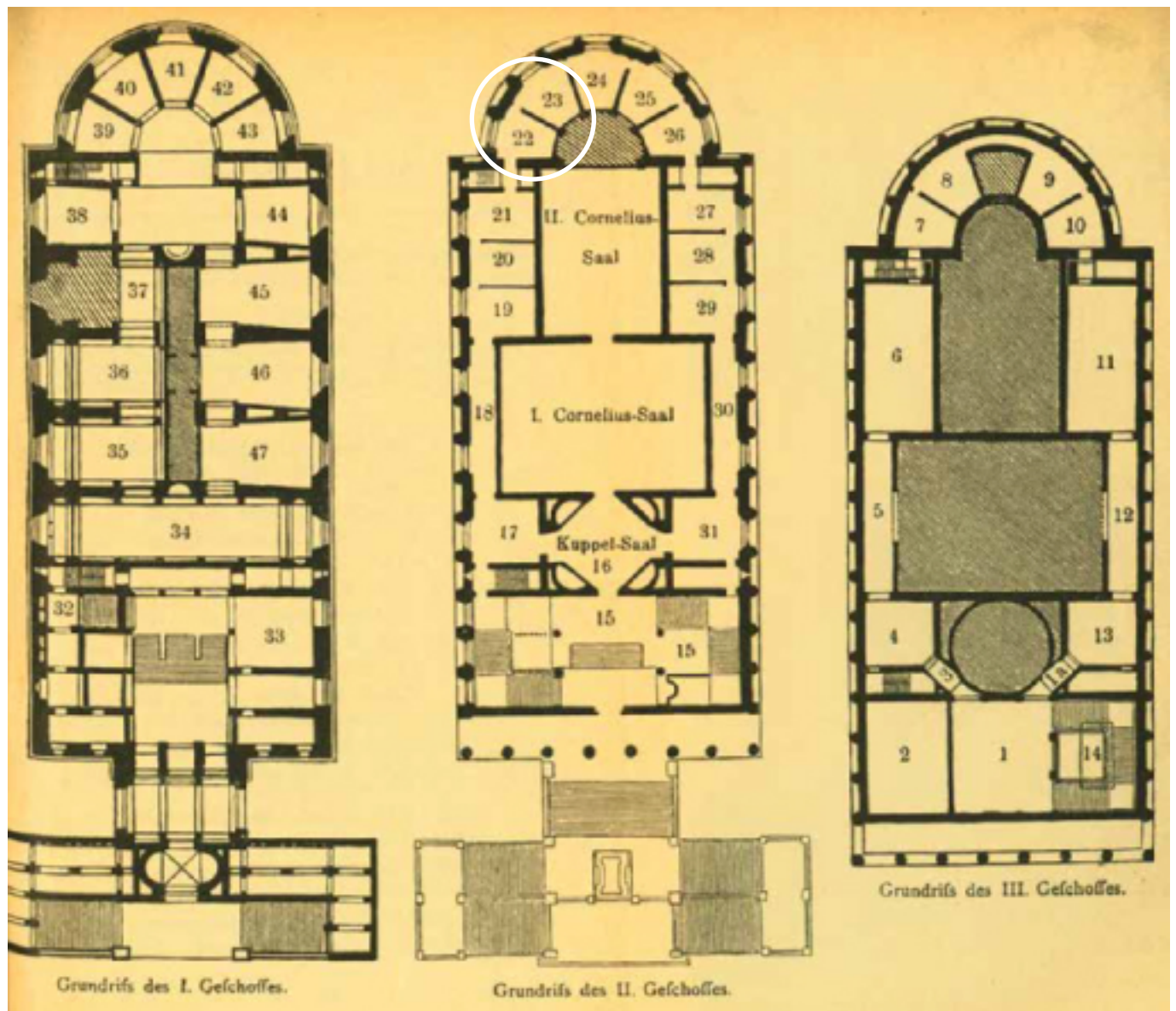
### THE GERMAN CENTENARY EXHIBITION OF 1906 IN THE NATIONALGALERIE AS A TRIUMPH FOR CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH

In the early twentieth century, the Nationalgalerie in Berlin provided the decisive impetus for the rediscovery of Caspar David Friedrich, who had been virtually forgotten at that time. A total of ninety-three works by Friedrich were on view at the *Exhibition of German Art from the Period between 1775 and 1875*, held at the Nationalgalerie in 1906, and also known as the *German Centenary Exhi-*

*bition*, comprising thirty-six paintings and fifty-seven drawings.<sup>14</sup> This represented the most comprehensive presentation of his works to date.

The *German Centenary Exhibition* was among the most important and influential exhibitions ever organized by the Nationalgalerie. Among its precedents was the universal exhibition in Paris in





2 Floorplan, Nationalgalerie, during the *German Centenary Exhibition*, from the exhibition guide. Exhibited in rooms 22 and 23 on the second floor were thirty-six paintings by Friedrich in total, Archive Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin

1900, the *Exposition centennale de l'art français de 1800–1889*. Between January and May 1906, the *Centenary Exhibition* occupied the entire Nationalgalerie. Over two thousand paintings and circa seventy sculptures were on view. Also presented in a number of different rooms in the new museum were approximately 1,300 drawings, watercolors, oil studies, miniatures, silhouettes, and a number of items of furniture. With its reevaluations and rediscoveries of German nineteenth-century art, the exhibition positioned itself within the dispute concerning artistic tendencies current at the time. Light and atmosphere stood at the center of the new conception of art, so strongly shaped by Impressionism, which pointed the way toward modernism. Primarily responsible for the show were the Nationalgalerie museum director Hugo von Tschudi and Hamburger Kunsthalle director Alfred Lichtwark. Other key figures included Woldemar von Seidlitz, who headed the königlich sächsischen Kunstsammlungen (Royal Saxon Art Collections) in Dresden, and Franz von Reber, director of the Bayerische Staatsgalerien, along with Julius Meier-Graefe, an art writer. Peter Behrens, who was commissioned with the exhibition design, created white exhibition galleries for the first time in European

museum history.<sup>15</sup> Following the success of the exhibition, the Nationalgalerie and the Hamburger Kunsthalle each received a special fund of 200,000 German marks for acquisitions. Using these resources, Tschudi was able to purchase Friedrich's *Woman at a Window* (cat. 50), among other works.

Presented in the middle level in two apse rooms in the Nationalgalerie were the thirty-six paintings by Friedrich assembled for the exhibition, while his fifty-seven drawings hung in the Neues Museum (fig. 2). Five pictures by Friedrich were presented from the current collection of the Nationalgalerie; a further picture was lost in 1945.<sup>16</sup> Only one photograph of the presentation of paintings in the Nationalgalerie has survived (fig. 3). In it, we see that the pictures were hung in two rows, one above the next, including such works as *Monk by the Sea* (cat. 74), *The Sea of Ice* (cat. 58), *Stages of Life* (cat. 64), *Woman at a Window* (cat. 50), *Mountain Landscape in Bohemia* (cat. 30), *Plowed Field* (cat. 29), and *Landscape with a Rainbow* ("Shepherd's Lament") (formerly Kunstsammlungen Weimar, lost since 1945). Space between pictures, most having horizontal formats, is minimal. "Hanging in the Friedrich galleries were mainly wide pictures. And the horizontal





3 Presentation of paintings by Friedrich at the *German Centenary Exhibition*, photograph, 1906, central archive, Nasjonalbiblioteket Oslo

element was dominant in them. We felt ourselves enveloped by a peculiar sense of calm and tranquility, seasoned by a gentle, fresh breeze from the Baltic."<sup>17</sup> The dense hanging invested Friedrich's paintings with a powerful aura. "The unified, overall impact of the Friedrich galleries at the *Centenary Exhibition* was that of a large, full symphony," wrote the Norwegian Friedrich researcher Andreas Aubert, "characterized by a quiet, restrained elegance, a profundity that resonated within the silence."<sup>18</sup> For Lichtwark, the "Friedrich galleries" were "the most striking in the entire exhibition."<sup>19</sup> Before the opening, he reported: "Friedrich emerges so magnificently that it exceeds even all of my expectations."<sup>20</sup>

The Nationalgalerie produced a number of publications to accompany the *Centenary Exhibition*. The exhibition's board of directors published a large and comprehensive illustrated catalogue of the paintings in two volumes. The first featured an introductory text by Tschudi and a "selection of outstanding pictures", with 995 reproductions. The second volume appeared not long afterward as a supplement, and included 2,020 catalogue entries written by Meier-Graefe and 1,137 illustrations. In his texts, the author eschewed descriptions of the motifs depicted

in favor of characterizing the manner of execution and coloration. This was justified in the foreword, which points out that the catalogue's pictures were reproduced, rendering commentary on their subject matter superfluous. Since the illustrations were in black-and-white, color descriptions were indeed useful, although the exclusion of any thematic explication of the depicted contents appears an affectation on the part of the exhibition organizers, with their *parti pris* in favor of Impressionism. Published alongside the two large volumes were two guidebooks in pocket format which catalogued all of the exhibited paintings and sculptures, alongside all of the drawings, watercolors, oil studies, etc.<sup>21</sup> Von Seidlitz, the Dresden-based organizer, also published a selection of exhibited works in a small volume, whose text he wrote himself.<sup>22</sup>

With ninety-three works, Friedrich was well represented at the *German Centenary Exhibition*. Tschudi was by no means unfamiliar with the painter: two of Friedrich's major works had been held by the Nationalgalerie since its founding, namely *The Solitary Tree* (cat. 82) and *Moonrise over the Sea* (cat. 83). Shortly after taking office in 1896, he had redesigned a number of exhibition galleries. Lichtwark reported: "Tschudi has now inaugurated



4 Caspar David Friedrich, *Mountain Chapel in Mist*, 1811, oil on canvas, 32 × 45 cm, Nationalgalerie Berlin, lost in World War II, photograph, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive

his new galleries. It is a great success for him. [...] All of a sudden, the forgotten names are on everyone's lips. [...] People stand before Friedrich with wide-opened eyes,"<sup>23</sup> Somewhat later, Tschudi had purchased *Seacoast by Moonlight* (cat. 62) in 1903. In 1905, not long before the *Centenary Exhibition*, the *Exhibition of Works by German Landscape Painters of the Nineteenth Century*, which featured four works by Friedrich, on view in the building of the Berliner Landesausstellung at Lehrter Bahnhof.<sup>24</sup> Despite Tschudi's previous knowledge of Friedrich's works, the comprehensive selection on view in the *Centenary Exhibition* was again revelatory for him. In the catalogue, we read: "with astonishment, we are confronted by an artist who has much to say, and much that is unusual." Tschudi characterizes the "melancholic prevailing mood" with reference to the infinite. But the novel element he admired in Friedrich's landscapes was "the transcription of atmospheric life, of nature in a state of change during the seasons and times of day."<sup>25</sup> Friedrich, he remarks, discovered new motifs: "the brown field, above which the setting sun glows, the lonely plain that becomes lost in the blue twilight of distant mountains, damp meadows across which the shadows of clouds wander, the gently rolling hilly landscape, above which the silvery fragrance of a pale spring day is suspended, the flat waves of the Bohemian mountains, between which the morning fog seethes."<sup>26</sup>

These, for him, are the themes of Friedrich's pictures. Tschudi perceives in them "the beginnings of an ascendant development

that continues in our own time."<sup>27</sup> He substantiates Friedrich's modernity with reference to evaluative criteria derived from plein air painting and Impressionism.<sup>28</sup>

Lichtwark thanks the Norwegian art historian Andreas Aubert in his foreword to the first volume of the catalogue. Aubert is credited with being the first to call attention to Friedrich's importance<sup>29</sup> but his contribution to the rediscovery of Caspar David Friedrich at the *Centenary Exhibition* remains undisputed to this day. He originally became aware of Friedrich when conducting research on Johan Christian Dahl of Norway.<sup>30</sup> When visiting the Nationalgalerie in Berlin on a trip from Kristiania (now Oslo) to Berlin and Dresden in 1888, during which Aubert planned to study pictures by Dahl, he encountered the two Friedrich paintings that had been donated by the banker Wagener, namely *The Solitary Tree* (cat. 82) and *Moonrise over the Sea* (cat. 83). Standing before works of this romantic artist for the first time, he was deeply impressed by the artist's sensitive and profound observations of nature. In his report on this trip, he wrote: "This unusual artist genuinely captured my attention."<sup>31</sup> Aubert's first and formative encounter with Friedrich's works in Berlin commenced the artist's rediscovery, which would reach a highpoint nearly twenty years later in the *Centenary Exhibition* of 1906. Aubert subsequently realized that Friedrich was barely known in Germany. Interestingly, the Dresden Royal Collections director Karl Woermann seems to know nothing of Friedrich's existence, nor of the presence of his



5 Caspar David Friedrich, *Monastery Graveyard in Snow*, 1819, oil on canvas, 121 × 170 cm, Nationalgalerie Berlin, lost in World War II, photograph, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive



6 Caspar David Friedrich, *Monastery Graveyard in Snow*, 1819, oil on canvas, 121 × 170 cm, Nationalgalerie Berlin, lost in World War II, color illustration from the archive of Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin

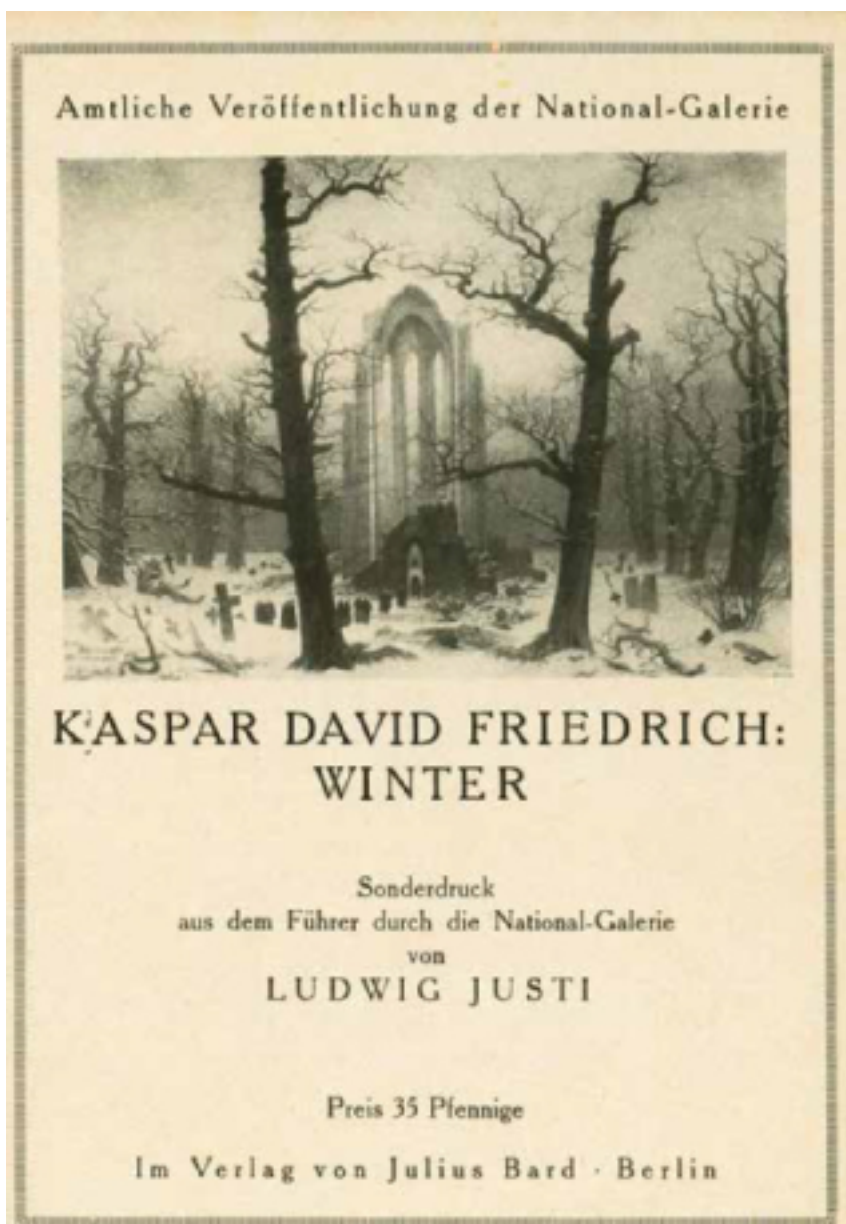


7 View of the Gallery of Romanticism of the Nationalgalerie with the painting *Monastery Graveyard in Snow* by Caspar David Friedrich, photograph, 1936, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive

work in the gallery.<sup>32</sup> The foreword to the German edition of Aubert's book *Die nordische Landschaftsmalerei und Johan Christian Dahl* (Nordic Landscape Painting and Johan Christian Dahl) describes the discord between Woermann and Aubert arising from the former's ignorance.<sup>33</sup> Aubert came to Germany again from 1891 to 1892. In Hamburg, he visited Alfred Lichtwark, who later recalled: Aubert "came to see me in Hamburg [...] and brought Caspar David Friedrich with him, among whose works I had seen only the hay harvest and the moonlight scene in the Dresden gallery, without, however having grasped the master's importance. For us, it was a time of discovery or rediscovery when it came to German art of the nineteenth century."<sup>34</sup>

In 1895–96, Aubert published the initial results of his Friedrich research in the weekly magazine *Kunstchronik*, having meanwhile become intensively occupied with the artist, about whose work he planned to publish a book.<sup>35</sup> He was tireless in his advocacy for Friedrich, and his incomprehension over the ignorance of German art historians was boundless. Friedrich was not even mentioned in Richard Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei im 19. Jahrhundert*

(History of Nineteenth-Century Painting), which appeared in 1893–94. In 1905, one year after the *Centenary Exhibition*, Aubert published a new article about the artist in the magazine *Kunst und Künstler*, referring to him as the "trailblazer of a new art of landscape in Europe."<sup>36</sup> Further articles appeared in 1906 and 1911.<sup>37</sup> Aubert's long-standing commitment to Friedrich was ultimately successful, and culminated in the *German Centenary Exhibition*, which finally made the artist known again. From his own collection and that of his wife, he contributed two paintings by Friedrich to the exhibition: *Rocky Gorges in the Harz Mountains* (cat. 24) and *Forest in Late Autumn* (cat. 32).<sup>38</sup> At Tschudi's request, Aubert traveled to Berlin in January 1906, prior to the exhibition opening, in order to assist with the hanging of Friedrich's paintings. For the second volume of the catalogue, the Friedrich specialist assigned titles and dates to the works.<sup>39</sup> Aubert's planned book on Friedrich occupied him for a number of years. It remained incomplete when he died in 1913. A fragment appeared in Berlin posthumously in 1915.<sup>40</sup>



8 Ludwig Justi, *Kaspar David Friedrich: Winter*, special edition, ca. 1920, archive, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin

The *Centenary Exhibition* received considerable attention in the press. Friedrich was discussed appreciatively in many articles and essays.<sup>41</sup> The display of his pictures had resulted in a "legitimate delight in discovery," remarked Ferdinand Laban, crediting him with an "event in our perception of nature" and "profound atmospheric content." Friedrich's "most powerful work" — *Monk by the Sea* — was, he maintained, "very important, very unanticipated, very atmospherically modern."<sup>42</sup> Franz Dülberg perceived a connection between Friedrich's "extreme sharpness of contour and highly sensitive feel for color gradations," and his "expansive contoured

landscapes" Dülberg perceived "the endlessness and goodness of the universe: vast chains of hills and mountains, vast stretches of sea."<sup>43</sup> For the art critic Emil Heilbut, editor of the magazine *Kunst und Künstler* and a collector of Impressionist art, the *Centenary Exhibition* "was a triumph for one painter, Caspar [David] Friedrich."<sup>44</sup> With an eye schooled by modernism, he saw Friedrich as "the greatest phenomenon" and the "ultimate painter," whose "draftsmanship and color are lively. In his time, he was Germany's greatest artist." Like Aubert previously, Heilbut regarded Friedrich as one of the "trailblazers of art in Europe."<sup>45</sup>

### ACQUISITIONS OF WORKS BY CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH BY THE NATIONALGALERIE

With a total of fifteen paintings, the Nationalgalerie is home to one of the most extensive collections of works by Friedrich worldwide. In 1903, it held two major works thanks to the donation from the banker, Wagener. *Seacoast by Moonlight* (cat. 62) became the

first work purchased by the artist, as initiated by director Hugo von Tschudi, who also acquired the painting *Woman at a Window* (cat. 50) and twelve drawings in 1906 as part of the *Centenary Exhibition*. In 1909, Tschudi purchased *Riesengebirge* (cat. 34).



9 Caspar David Friedrich, *Northern Lights*, ca. 1835, oil on canvas, 141 × 109 cm, Nationalgalerie Berlin, lost in World War II, photograph, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive



10 Caspar David Friedrich, *Northern Lights*, ca. 1835, oil on canvas, 141 × 109 cm, Nationalgalerie Berlin, lost in World War II, color illustration, archive, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin



11 Caspar David Friedrich, *High Mountains*, 1824, oil on canvas, 131 × 167 cm, Nationalgalerie Berlin, lost in World War II, photograph, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive

24



12 Caspar David Friedrich, *High Mountains*, 1824, oil on canvas, 131 × 167 cm, Nationalgalerie Berlin, lost in World War II, color illustration, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive



Under the directorship of Ludwig Justi, seven paintings by Friedrich entered the Nationalgalerie, the largest number of acquisitions: these were *Mountain Chapel in the Mist* in 1911 (lost in World War II; fig. 4);<sup>46</sup> *Monastery Graveyard in Snow* in 1912 (lost in World War II; figs. 5, 6); *Northern Lights* in 1917 (lost in World War II; figs. 9, 10); *The Port of Greifswald* in 1919 (cat. 47); *High Mountains* in 1920 (lost in World War II; figs. 11, 12). *Oak Tree in Snow* (cat. 118) was acquired in 1921 and *Ruined Monastery of Eldena* in 1927 (cat. 56). Justi also augmented the collection of drawings with twenty sheets and two sketchbooks. In 1936, director Eberhard Hanfstaengl acquired *Two Men by the Sea* (cat. 42), *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (cat. 100), and in 1937, *The Watzmann* (cat. 27) as well as two drawings.<sup>47</sup>

The Nationalgalerie's inventory of paintings by Friedrich was stored in Thuringia and the Harz region during World War II. Afterwards, it was initially administered by the Western Allies, and later by the federal states of Hessen and Lower Saxony. The paintings were turned over to the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) following its creation in 1957. The entire inventory of paintings by Friedrich owned by the Nationalgalerie, and now present on Museum Island, was transferred to the Nationalgalerie in West Berlin. In 1960, with the acquisition of *Cabin in the Snow* (cat. 114), a further Friedrich painting entered the collection in West Berlin. *Monk by the Sea* (cat. 74), *Abbey*

*among the Oaks* (cat. 75), and *Morning in the Riesengebirge* (figs. 1, p. 15) were also transferred to the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz for the Nationalgalerie, and formerly at the Berlin Palace. The same was true for a small picture entitled *Fog in the Elbe Valley* (cat. 48), which had hung in the Nationalgalerie prior to World War II as a loan from the Staatlicher Schlösser und Gärten Berlin.<sup>48</sup> The palace administration staked a claim to these four paintings and they initially remained in their possession. The pictures were located in Charlottenburg Palace, and were exhibited on the palace grounds in the Schinkel Pavilion beginning in 1970.<sup>49</sup> In 1973, the federal supreme court of Germany acknowledged the ownership claims of these four pictures put forward by the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz.<sup>50</sup> They were inventoried by the Nationalgalerie in 1985.

In 1992, following German reunification, an important addition was made to the inventory of pictures by Friedrich in the Nationalgalerie under the directorship of Dieter Honisch with the acquisition of the painting *Forest Interior by Moonlight* (cat. 31).<sup>51</sup> In 2001, the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz and the Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg (Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg) reached an agreement that would allow *Monk by the Sea* (cat. 74) and *Abbey among the Oaks* (cat. 75) to remain in the Nationalgalerie.<sup>52</sup> The most recent addition to the ensemble of works by Friedrich, at least for



13 Visitors to the Nationalgalerie standing before Friedrich's *High Mountains*, 1930s, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive

the moment, was the acquisition in 2015 of a copy of the masterpiece *Monastery Graveyard in Snow* (cat. 103; cf. the essay by

Gerd-Helge Vogel in this catalogue), formerly in the Nationalgalerie.

## THE LOST PICTURES BY FRIEDRICH FORMERLY IN THE NATIONALGALERIE

Regrettably, four works by Friedrich were lost during World War II, among them the large-format masterworks *Monastery Graveyard in Snow*, *Northern Lights*, and *High Mountains*, as well as the small picture *Mountain Chapel in Mist* (figs. 5, 9, 11, 4). All of these works had been acquired by Justi. Unlike his predecessors, Justi was determined to fathom the emotional and spiritual dimension of Friedrich's images. "Hanging in the Nationalgalerie is a large number of paintings by Friedrich; each represents a special, unique vision as a pictorial form, a singular, unforgettable sonority as a mood."<sup>53</sup> Friedrich's paintings are strikingly reflected in Justi's discussions; he found the right words for their spiritual values and emotional expressiveness. For the most part, he

supplied detailed descriptions of their color schemes, an invaluable resource in light of these losses.

The masterpiece *Monastery Graveyard in Snow* (figs. 5, 6, 7), acquired in 1912, was accorded much space in Justi's publications. In his guidebook *Deutsche Malkunst im 19. Jahrhundert* (German Nineteenth-Century Painting) of 1920, he devoted a remarkable eighteen pages to the picture, a section that would appear soon after as a special publication, a booklet that was available for thirty-five pfennigs (fig. 8).<sup>54</sup> The guide to the collection entitled *Von Runge bis Thoma* (From Runge to Thoma), which appeared in 1932, attributes a "peculiar, enigmatic impression" to this painting. The "cool, bluish white of the snow is



intensified toward the near horizon, where it encounters the warm tone of the heavy snow-filled air, which becomes finer and brighter above: delicate pink shines through the bare windows [...]. The trees lament or grieve, the building is reminiscent of organ tones or choral singing. This artist awakens the depths of our consciousness."<sup>55</sup>

The large-format painting *Northern Lights*, which entered the collection in 1917, is described by Justi as a "passionate, turbulent painting. Two rock formations loom up; behind them, we see the slanting violet mountainside, above pale yellow and fiery red, below a pair of thunderstruck wayfarers"<sup>56</sup> (figs. 9, 10).

In 1920, Justi succeeded in purchasing the pivotal masterwork *High Mountains*. Executed in 1824, one year before *The Watzmann*, and nearly identical in format, it presents a view of Mont Blanc. These two pictures are arguably the only large-format depictions of high mountains within Friedrich's oeuvre. Since Friedrich was never actually present on location, he worked after drawings by Carl Gustav Carus and August Heinrich.<sup>57</sup> Justi prized *High Mountains* greatly, and immediately publicized the purchase in

the *Vossische Zeitung*.<sup>58</sup> In his guide to the collection of 1932, we read:

"In the foreground, for example, the green is layered, inch by inch, in strips, from warmer, brighter colors to cooler depths, and looking more closely, one notices that they are subdivided further into narrower, more delicate intervals. The rocky massif on the right progresses by rhythmic stepped degrees from violet to green: old wisdom reanimated. Sublime and beyond reproach is the execution of the dominant, central mountain peak. Gradually, the warm sunlight brings out the individual forms from the bluish shadowed surfaces; allowing our gaze to ascend slowly, scanning the lucid spectrum of colors visible in the funnel of the chasm, we discover, to our astonishment, continually new and subtle vibrations of color, of light, intimations of forms; they become progressively rich up to the solemn magnificence of the tallest and steepest mountainside"<sup>59</sup> (figs. 11, 12, 13, cat. 137).





16 Works by Caspar David Friedrich in the Gallery of Romanticism of Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin, photograph 1986, photo archive, Neue Nationalgalerie



17 Works by Caspar David Friedrich in the Gallery of Romanticism, Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin, photograph 1986, photo archive, Neue Nationalgalerie



18 Works by Caspar David Friedrich in the exhibition *Deutsche Romantik* (German Romanticism), 1965, Nationalgalerie (East), Altes Museum Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, central archive

## DISPLAY COLLECTION, CATALOGUES, AND SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS ON CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH AT THE NATIONALGALERIE

The works by Friedrich that were acquired by the Nationalgalerie were continuously presented in the display collection and included in collection catalogues. The descriptions appearing in them were altered frequently, in response to both the growing inventory of works and to changing perceptions of Friedrich's art.<sup>60</sup> To begin with, these extend from the catalogue of 1861, devoted to the founding collection formerly belonging to Wagener,<sup>61</sup> to the catalogues prepared under Jordan beginning in 1876,<sup>62</sup> to the catalogue edited by Tschudi after the reorganization of the collection in 1908 (fig. 14),<sup>63</sup> and all the way to the catalogues and the first guides to the collection published under Justi.<sup>64</sup> In 1934, the last gallery catalogue, at least for the moment, was published under Hanfstaengl.<sup>65</sup>

Following the *Centenary Exhibition* of 1906, with its "exhibition within an exhibition" devoted to Friedrich, it was nearly a century before the Nationalgalerie considered organizing another special exhibition devoted to the artist. For 1940, Paul Ortwin Rave en-

tertained the idea of a double exhibition in conjunction with the art collections in Dresden, and marking the hundredth anniversary of the deaths of both Carl Blechen and Caspar David Friedrich.<sup>66</sup> These plans were never realized. The Nationalgalerie was closed with the outbreak of World War II in 1939.<sup>67</sup> The evacuations of the collections began soon thereafter. The Friedrich collection, then consisting of fifteen paintings, was deposited in the Zoo flak tower. As mentioned above, four of the paintings were lost in 1945 (figs. 4–13). The majority of Friedrich's paintings did, however, survive the war.

In 1945, Rave published the volume *Die Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Nineteenth-Century Painting), with a selection of 240 illustrated German and international works of art with commentary from the collection of the Nationalgalerie.<sup>68</sup> Following in 1949 was Rave's *Deutsche Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts* (German Nineteenth-Century Painting), containing 256 illustrated artworks with commentary.<sup>69</sup> Neither volume discusses the considerable