

PRESS RELEASE

The Hague, 3 October 2019

Louis Apol on Nova Zembla: bitter cold, polar bears, and northern lights in Panorama Mesdag



Panorama Mesdag presents an adventurous expedition to Nova Zembla, depicted by nineteenth-century artist Louis Apol. For the first time ever since 1955, so many ‘travel works’ will be on display together. In 1880, artist Louis Apol (1850-1936) from The Hague joined a scientific expedition to Nova Zembla. He spent four months on board the polar schooner *Willem Barents* and created a spectacular visual report. This trip inspired him for the rest of his life. His works are on display from 19 October to 1 March 2020.

Louis Apol

Apol was the most renowned painter of winter landscapes of his era. The expedition to Nova Zembla offered him a unique opportunity to study the most remarkable ice formations and desolate, snow-covered landscapes up close and to depict them. From the ship, he was able to record magnificent reflections of light on ice and snow surfaces.

Unique visual report

The exhibition *Louis Apol on Nova Zembla* at Museum Panorama Mesdag features a selection of unique pencil drawings, sketches, and water colours created by Apol in the course of this adventurous trip. Visitors experience the exciting expedition through the eyes of this unusual crew member; it offers a unique insight in life on board of the polar schooner and the artist’s working method. This exhibition also focusses on the remarkable creatures, human beings, and natural phenomena that he encountered during the journey.

‘Apol draws and sketches everywhere; he won’t even leave his sketchbook behind when we go out hunting.’ *Source: Captain’s log of Nova Zembla expedition.*

Panorama

The theme fits well into the museum’s nineteenth-century character. Similar to Hendrik Willem Mesdag, founder of museum Panorama Mesdag, Apol was an artist of The Hague School and painted

Dutch landscapes with loose brushstrokes, with due regard for depiction of light and atmosphere. Moreover, Apol was inspired by this trip to create a panoramic painting in 1896. Fifteen years earlier, Mesdag had painted his Panorama of Scheveningen. As such, Apol and Mesdag became close competitors. Apol's panorama was displayed successfully for many years in the Amsterdam Panorama building.

Minke Schat, Director of Panorama Mesdag: 'Passion for and admiration of the landscape are crystal clear in his images, and Apol's enthusiasm is still catching today. At the same time, his subject matter is surprisingly topical: unfortunately, the far-fetching consequences of climate change in the Arctic region prevent contemporary travellers from following in Apol's footsteps. This is food for thought and links up the present and the past.'

Panorama Nova Zembla

The exhibition also calls attention to the panoramic painting created by Apol in 1896 based on his Nova Zembla sketches. The panorama fell off the radar around 1930. What happened to this enormous canvas?

The exhibition *Louis Apol on Nova Zembla* is on display from 19 October 2019 to 1 March 2020.

This exhibition will partly be enabled by financial support from Stichting Beheer en Behoud Panorama Mesdag, Vaderlandsch Fonds ter aanmoediging van 's-Lands Zeedienst, Vereeniging de Prins Hendrik Stichting, Directie der Oostersche Handel en Reederijen, Admiraal van Kinsbergenfonds, and Helden der Zee Dorus Rijkers Fonds

END OF PRESS RELEASE

Note to the editor:

Image 01: Louis Apol, *An abandoned ship, frozen in ice*, 1880, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Image 02: Louis Apol, *Northern lights at Nova Zembla*, 1880, Van Bommel family collection

Press preview: Thursday 17 October 2019, from 10:15 to 11:30 am Location: Panorama Mesdag, The Hague. R.S.V.P. before 16 October: media@panorama-mesdag.nl

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