

Press release



## Storm at Panorama Mesdag

**16<sup>th</sup> October 2018, The Hague – turbulent seas, menacing skies, devastation, and suffering in the fishing community: in an exhibition that opens on 18 November, the focus at Panorama Mesdag will be on storms, culminating in the storm of 1894. A remarkable selection of paintings will be on show, by artists including Hendrik Willem Mesdag, Jozef Israëls, Louis Meijer, Andreas Schelfhout, and Johannes Christiaan Schotel, with stirring depictions of the overwhelming power of nature.**

### Storms in 19th-century painting

Storms were a popular subject for artists in the early 19th century. Andreas Schelfhout and Johannes Christiaan Schotel painted romanticised scenes that emphasised the insignificance of the human being in the face of natural catastrophe. Around 1850–1860, the artists Willem Antonie van Deventer, Louis Meijer, and Jozef Israëls, working in Scheveningen, chose instead to depict the emptiness of the landscape *after* a storm. There is a deceptive tranquillity about their poetic paintings: only upon closer inspection do we see the drama unfold.

### Mesdag

Mesdag too returned to the theme of storms. However, his paintings of the storm of 1894 are more realistic, almost journalistic. The marked drama and ugliness of the shattered fishing vessels (*bomschuiten*) are at odds with the peaceful Hague School paintings with which we are all familiar. The different versions, on which Mesdag worked for years, are on view together for the first time in this exhibition.

### Commemoration

Artists also saw the depiction of storms as a social responsibility. After every natural disaster, a commemorative volume was published. Schelfhout depicted the storm of 1825, for instance, which he had witnessed at first hand. He wrote to the bookseller Immerzeel: 'When the frightful storm and towering waves were raging at their most horrendous ... I witnessed a spectacle, the memory of which still strikes terror into my heart'. His first impressions, the elaboration of his sketches, and the commemorative volume are on view together in the exhibition. Mesdag too worked on a similar book, compiled to commemorate the storm of 1894.

## **Panorama Mesdag**

Panorama Mesdag is the ideal place for an exhibition on the theme of storm in 19th-century painting. Not only because its collection contains Mesdag's key work, *After the storm of 1894*, but also because Mesdag produced an impressive portrayal of the old Scheveningen, as it existed before this disastrous storm, in his Panorama. The 1894 storm touched Mesdag personally; he realised that his beloved Scheveningen would never be the same again. His paintings of the storm symbolise that transformation.

The exhibition *STORM* will be on show from 18 November 2018 to 3 March 2019.

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### **Editorial note (not for publication):**

Fig.: H.W. Mesdag (1831–1915), *After the Storm of 1894*, 1896, Oil on canvas, 138 x 178 cm, Collection of Panorama Mesdag

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