
KUNST HISTORISCHES MUSEUM



Michaelina Wautier, Painter

30 September 2025 to 22 February 2026

An exhibition organised in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Arts, London

Michaelina Wautier (1614/18–1689) is one of the greatest art historical discoveries of recent decades. Completely unknown in the previous century, she is now considered one of the most important female painters of the seventeenth century and lauded as a successor to Rubens and van Dyck.

At a time when female artists were mainly occupied with still life or genre painting, Michaelina Wautier also confidently succeeded with sophisticated history painting. For a long time, people did not want to believe that her impressive *Bacchanal* was painted by a woman. Her works bear witness to extraordinary originality, subtle humour, and remarkable courage.

At the same time, Michaelina Wautier continues to puzzle us: We don't know when she was born or where she was educated. We assume that she was taught painting by her brother Charles, with whom she probably shared a studio. Wautier dated her artworks exclusively between 1643 and 1656, although she did not die until 1689. The great art collector of the time, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614–1662), collected her works, but there are no contemporary commentaries about her art. Thanks to Leopold Wilhelm, the Kunsthistorisches Museum owns the world's largest collection of Wautier's paintings, including her masterpiece, the *Bacchanal*.

In the exhibition, Michaelina Wautier's virtuosity and the artistic quality of her paintings prove themselves equal to works by contemporaries such as Peter Paul Rubens or Anthony van Dyck, inviting us to rediscover Wautier as a leading artist of her time.

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Her magnificent series on the *Five Senses* will be shown in Europe for the first time. The exhibition offers a contemporary female perspective on both traditional and innovative pictorial themes and the male body. The exhibits on display invite visitors to get to know Michaelina Wautier as a master of the senses and a sensual master, and to explore her art-historical re-discovery.

Curated by Gerlinde Gruber

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
The Royal Academy of Arts, London

30 September 2025 to 22 February 2026
27 March to 21 June 2026

PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

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Michaelina Wautier
Bacchanal
before 1659
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Picture Gallery
© KHM-Museumsverband

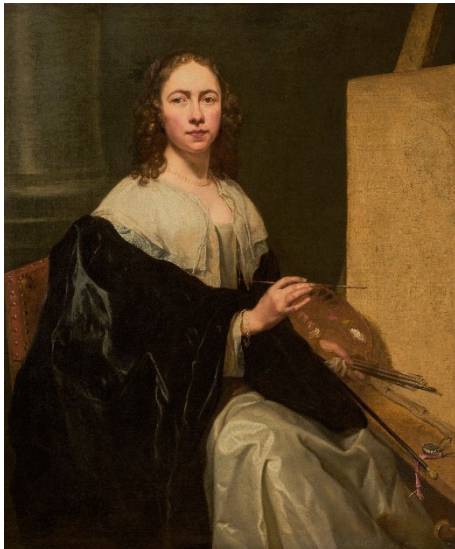


Michaelina Wautier
Two Girls as Saint Agnes and Saint Dorothy
Leinwand, 89,7 × 122 cm
Photographer: Rik Klein Gotink
Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp - Flemish
Community

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Michaelina Wautier
Boys Blowing Bubbles
1640s
Oil on canvas, 90.5 x 121.3 cm
Gift of Mr. Floyd Naramore, 58.140
Seattle Art Museum
© Seattle Art Museum



Michaelina Wautier
Self-Portrait
about 1645
Oil on canvas
120 x 102 cm
Private collection
Photo © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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