

## Press Release

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### “Ophelia” at the Museum Wiesbaden

**Wiesbaden. October 2025 — Taylor Swift made a painting from the Museum Wiesbaden collection an overnight star with her new music video for “The Fate of Ophelia.” In the first sequence of the clip, Swift herself slips into the role of the tragic character Ophelia from Shakespeare’s play Hamlet and becomes a living painting. It is not officially known which motif served as the template for the music video. However, a direct comparison reveals an even greater similarity to the work from the Museum Wiesbaden collection by the lesser-known Friedrich Wilhelm Theodor Heyser. The Museum Wiesbaden celebrated this with an event attended by around 200 Swifties and art fans on Sunday, November 2, 2025, as well as a search game for Swift and art fans, in which visitors can discover connections between the artist’s song titles and pieces from the museum’s collection starting on November 13, 2025.**

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#### Art history meets pop culture

Born in Gnoien, Mecklenburg, in 1857, Friedrich Heyser was not previously one of the well-known artists of German Art Nouveau and Symbolism. That changed abruptly when singer Taylor Swift referenced Heyser’s painting in her music video “The Fate of Ophelia” in October 2025. Friedrich Heyser studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden under Leon Pohle and Paul Mohn from 1880 to 1883, then under Ferdinand Keller in Karlsruhe from 1883 to 1885. In 1890, he spent a short period studying at the Académie Julian in Paris. Heyser was a member of the General German Art Association and the Grün-Weiß artists’ group, which was founded in Dresden around 1910. Thanks to a donation by F. W. Neess, the Museum Wiesbaden owns an impressive depiction of “Ophelia” floating on the water, surrounded by white water lilies, by Friedrich Heyser, who died in Dresden in 1921. The scene is taken from William Shakespeare’s Hamlet and was famously rendered in 1852 by the English painter John Everett Millais, a representative

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of the Pre-Raphaelites—a group of artists who took their inspiration from the art of Raphael. His “Ophelia” is considered the most famous depiction of this motif. For Taylor Swift, the figure of Ophelia floating in the water, shrouded in symbolic white, was the starting point for the visual interpretation of her song. She translates what she sees in the painting into the visual language of her music video – thus combining art and music in a special way. This makes the Museum Wiesbaden a special place for Swifties: here they can get up close and personal with the artistic thinking of their star.

More information: <https://museum-wiesbaden.de/en/ophelia2>

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