

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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FOR RELEASE:

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PRESS PREVIEW:

Monday, March 4, 1963

11 am - 4 pm

The first major retrospective of work by Emil Nolde (1867-1956), a pioneer of modern art and a founder and leader of German expressionism, will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art from March 6 through April 30. More than 200 paintings, watercolors and prints, ranging in subject matter from bold landscapes and cabaret scenes to profound religious works have been selected by Peter Selz, Curator, Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions. They are from private and public collections here and abroad, including the Nolde Foundation in Germany to which the artist left many important works.

The exhibition is shown under the sponsorship of the Government of the German Federal Republic.

A suspicion of the 'isms' of the 20th century as well as his own morose personality made Nolde rely deeply on his animistic fantasy and in the intense experience of nature in the forms of the sea, clouds, marshes and flowers, Selz points out in the catalog* accompanying the show. "But in the true fashion of the romantic and the expressionist, he imposed his special artist's personality on the world, the image of which he distorted to express his own unresolved conflicts."

Nolde was primarily a colorist. The sheer visual beauty of his vibrant expression is best revealed in his watercolors, of which 90 (including India inks) are in the current exhibition. It was in this medium, Selz says, that Nolde was best able to give his works the sense of improvisation and spontaneity so important to his creative process.

With Rouault and Chagall, Nolde painted the most significant 20th century pictures of explicitly religious subjects. Among those shown are the symbolic Last Supper, the tender Christ Among the Children, the powerful triptych Mary of Egypt and the monumental The Entombment.

At the same time the sea, the marsh and the garden continued to inspire Nolde throughout his lifetime. In a long series of pictures the ocean is no longer seen from a distance as in traditional landscapes. "These paintings, with their surging bottle-green waves and sparkling, heaving whitecaps, the dark valleys between the crests, the low horizons and sometimes strange sweeping cloud formations are more than depictions of the sea. They are visual equivalents of a physical experience," Selz points out.

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*EMIL NOLDE by Peter Selz. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Distributed by Doubleday & Co., Inc. 99 pages, 67 illustrations (17 in color) \$3.50.

In the desolate and lonely northern countryside of Utenwark and Seebull in North Schleswig where Nolde was born and to which he always returned, he executed some of the most powerful landscapes of the 20th century, landscapes that speak of the vast spaces and the great quiet of the moors, where the ever changing light and restless clouds give drama and life to nature. Among those on view are The Evening and Sultry Evening in which a huge bunch of flowers is superimposed on a fantastic landscape, and Frisian Farm on a Canal.

Nolde was a passionate lover of flowers and in the bleak countryside planted gardens filled with sunflowers, amaryllis, roses, poppies and even camelias which served as a model for a great many oils and watercolors during the last 30 years of his life. His finest flower paintings, Selz says, are removed from all environmental relationships. Like the waves seen without coastlines they are painted without soil or vase, only with petals, stamens, pistils and perhaps a few leaves.

The exhibition includes 55 prints by Nolde who came to occupy the top rank in this medium. He began etching in 1889. His woodcuts date from his association with the Brücke in 1906. His 13 color lithographs of 1913 constitute the climax of German expressionist graphic art.

A group of "unpainted pictures" done during World War II concludes the exhibition. As a leading German painter whose work had been bought by museums and private collectors throughout the twenties and thirties, Nolde expected to be the artistic spearhead of the ^{new} "Movement." The Nazis, however, considered him a "degenerate" artist, and his friends were dismissed from museum posts, his exhibitions closed, his work confiscated and sold at auctions. In 1941 he was ordered by the Nazis to stop painting.

A Danish citizen (Nolde's part of Germany had been given to Denmark at the close of World War I), he could have left Germany but he preferred to remain secretly painting small watercolors. After the war, Nolde emerged as the grand old man of German art. He translated many of his "unpainted" pictures into oils. He was decorated, bemedaled, given an honorary professorship, awarded national and international prizes. He died in 1956 at the age of 88.

The exhibition will later be shown at the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Pasadena Art Museum.

In connection with the Nolde exhibition:
April 4, 1963, 8:30 p.m., in the Museum of Modern Art
Auditorium.

Notes on Expressionist Painters, illustrated lecture by
Thomas M. Messer, Director, The Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum.

Tickets: Museum members \$1.50, non-members \$2.00,
students 75 cents (includes Museum admission)

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw or Josephine
Bradley, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N.Y. CI 5-8900



Emil Nolde.

Emil Nolde

***more than 180 works by a
founder of german expressionism***

***the museum of modern art
11 west 53rd street, new york***

march 6 - april 30, 1963

daily 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

thursdays 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.

sundays 1 p.m. - 7 p.m.

admission \$1.00 members free