

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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#186

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FREE GERMAN ART ACQUISITIONS SHOWN BY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Check list - next page

The Museum of Modern Art announces the acquisition of several works by German artists not approved by the Nazi government. The most important of these is a triptych in oil, Departure, by Max Beckmann, acquired through the Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Collection (by exchange). A series of four gouaches on parchment, The Prodigal Son, also by Beckmann, has been acquired by the Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Purchase Fund.

A bronze Head by Ernst Barlach is the gift of Edward M. M. Warburg. This sculpture, a detail of a mourning figure or angel in the War Monument at Guestrow Cathedral, was suspended from the vaulting of a chapel until the monument was dismantled by the Nazis. Another acquisition of a work by Barlach is a charcoal drawing, Angel with a Horn, the gift of Erich Cohn.

Five lithographs from the Farewell and Death series by Kaethe Kollwitz have been acquired through the Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Purchase Fund. A watercolor, Magicians, and five color lithographs by Emil Nolde have been acquired through the same Fund.

Kaethe Kollwitz, one of the artists represented in this collection, is now living in Berlin. Ernst Barlach died in Germany in 1938. The two other artists are living in exile, unfortunately in countries occupied by the Germans: Beckmann in Amsterdam and Nolde in Denmark.

The Museum will show these acquisitions in an exhibition entitled Free German Art, which will open to the public Wednesday, June 24, and will remain on view through August 16. Also on Wednesday, June 24, the Museum will open to the public a small circulating exhibition of paintings by a Los Angeles housewife: Josephine Joy, Romantic Painter; and an exhibition of Salvage Posters by New York High School Students, the result of a competition conducted by the War Production Board and the New York City Salvage Committee. The two latter exhibitions will remain on view for approximately one month.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum, makes the following statement regarding the acquisitions of Free German Art:

"Among the Freedoms which the Nazis have destroyed, none has been more cynically perverted, more brutally stamped upon than the Freedom of Art. For not only must the artist of Nazi

Germany bow to political tyranny, he must also conform to the personal taste of that great art connoisseur, Adolf Hitler - the feeble and conventional taste of a mediocre Viennese art student of thirty years ago, frozen by failure into paranoiac bigotry.

"But German artists of spirit and integrity have refused to conform. They have gone into exile or slipped into anxious obscurity. Of all the painters and sculptors who made the pre-Nazi German school second in Europe only to that of Paris, almost none is now honored, and few tolerated, in Germany today. Their paintings and sculptures, too, have been hidden or exiled, even those that were once the pride of German museums. But in free countries they can still be seen, can still bear witness to the survival of a free German culture which finds its archetype in Goethe, and its living exemplars, so far as the other arts are concerned, in the musicians, Hindemith and Schoenberg, the architects Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, the writers Mann and Werfel. These men and their works are welcome here, and although the painters Beckmann and Nolde, the draughtsman Kollwitz, cannot now leave Europe, the Museum is proud to acquire and show their work, as well as the work of Ernst Barlach, the great sculptor who died recently (and without honor) in his own land.

"The group of acquisitions now placed on view is dominated by the Beckmann triptych Departure. This monumental work, perhaps unrivaled among German paintings of our century, has excited no little speculation and controversy wherever it has been shown. The boldness of its color and drawing, the dramatic force of its conception powerfully enhance a composition which, whatever its obscurity of detail, can have but one meaning: the triumphant voyage of the human spirit through and beyond the agony of the modern world.

"Most of the other works are also to a greater or lesser degree religious in character: Beckmann's Prodigal Son gouaches, and Barlach's Angel with a Horn have a certain gothic humor, but Barlach's heroic Head with closed eyes and Kathe Kollwitz's lithographs of Death attacking impoverished women and children belong to the great tradition of religious and human pathos, which leads back beyond Duerer and Gruenewald to the crucifixes, the Dances of Death, and the violent martyrdoms of German medieval art."

The Museum's acquisitions of Free German Art are as follows:

BARLACH, Ernst. 1870-1938.

Head (detail of War Monument, Guestrow Cathedral) (1927) Bronze, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ " high. Gift of Edward M. M. Warburg.

The head is a detail of a mourning figure or angel which was suspended from the vaulting of a chapel. For this reason the head has been installed well above eye level. The monument has been dismantled by the Nazis. The Museum has shown this bronze before.

Angel with a Horn. 1927. Charcoal, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Gift of Erich Cohn.

BECKMANN, Max. Born 1884. Lives in Amsterdam.

The Prodigal Son. (1921) Series of 4 gouaches on parchment, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8". Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Purchase Fund.

Originally in the collection of the Folkwang Museum, Essen, this series was purchased three years ago but has not been exhibited in the Museum since March 1931, when two of the series were shown in the German Painting and Sculpture exhibition.

Departure. (1937) Oil on canvas, triptych, center panel 84 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 45 $\frac{3}{8}$ "; side panels each

84 3/4 x 39 1/4". Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Collection
(by exchange).

The painter writes that Departure has no "tendentious" meaning and adds: "To me the picture sometimes tells me truths impossible to put in words and of which even I myself did not know before." The Museum showed the triptych as a loan in its Art In Our Time exhibition during the summer of 1939.

KOLLWITZ, Kaethe. Born 1867. Now in Berlin.
5 lithographs from the FAREWELL AND DEATH series.
(1934-36) 25 x 21". Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
Purchase Fund.

Death Summons a Woman. (1934)

Death Tears a Child from Its Mother. (1935)

Death Snatches the Children.

Death Gives a Woman His Hand.

Death and the Child.

NOLDE, Emil. Born 1867. Now in Denmark.

Magicians. (1930-34) Watercolor, 20 1/8 x 14 3/8".
Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Purchase Fund.

5 color lithographs, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
Purchase Fund:

Discussion. 29 1/2 x 23"

Portrait. 28 1/2 x 21 5/8"

Grotesque Figures. 23 x 19"

Young Couple (red version). 24 1/8 x 19 7/8"

Formerly in the collection of the Luebeck Museum.

Young Couple (green version). 24 1/2 x 19 7/8"

Formerly in the Royal Saxon Print Room, Dresden.

NOTE: The Nolde watercolor and five lithographs are shown on the third floor in the Graphic Arts gallery.