

Report 2, by Dr Jill Lloyd

Assessment of the collection as a key asset in the worldwide understanding of German Expressionism

Introduction

Leicester City's collection of German Expressionist Art plays a unique role in promoting the worldwide understanding of German Expressionism. Not only does it feature outstanding individual examples of German Expressionist art; it also includes an impressive range of artworks, in particular works on paper, which illuminate the history, background and development of the Expressionist movement.

Although certain artists (such as August Macke) and certain representative works, which are present in the most important international collections of German Expressionism (particularly in Germany and the United States), are missing from the Leicester collection, this weakness is compensated for by the inclusion of émigré artists and women artists whose works are difficult to find elsewhere. The so-called 'lost generation' of German and Austrian émigré artists - including Martin Bloch, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, Ernst Neuschul and Margarete Klopffleisch - is particularly well represented in Leicester by works in the permanent collection and important loans that contribute to the collection's unique character. Moreover, although there are several museums in the United States (listed in section B) that have benefited from donations by German émigré collectors, Leicester is the only museum in the United Kingdom that has such deep historical links with major émigré collectors of German Expressionism, such as Albert, Tekla and Hans Hess, and Dr Rosa Schapire. From an international perspective, Leicester's collection of German Expressionist art tells the story of émigré culture in the United Kingdom in a unique fashion, playing a vital role in our understanding of the reception and dissemination of the Expressionist movement, and preserving many works for posterity that might otherwise have fallen victim to the violent upheavals of twentieth-century history. Given the historical conflict between Germany and the United Kingdom during this period, the fact that a provincial English museum should have provided a haven for German Expressionist art is a remarkable phenomenon that deserves broader international recognition.

Since 1991 Leicester has also actively pursued the acquisition of "work by leading women artists who have traditionally been under-represented in the documentation of developments at this time," building on their small pre-existing collection of women artists such as Käthe Kollwitz and Emma Schlangenhäusen. This aspect of the collection is of unique value in the worldwide understanding of German 20th-century art.

Although the discussion of key works that follows necessarily focuses on outstanding individual paintings and sculptures that reflect these defining aspects of the Leicester collection, it must be said that the large collection of prints and drawings is

of considerable importance to the worldwide understanding of German Expressionism. In this instance, it is the collection of works on paper as a whole rather than individual key works that must be regarded as an important asset. The scope of the collection provides an overview of the Expressionist movement and its key influences, including, for example, works by Albrecht Dürer, Alfred Rethel, and artists of the Secessionist generation such as Max Liebermann, Max Slevogt and Ludwig von Hofmann, who introduced modernist art to Germany. The leading Expressionist artists (including the Brücke artists Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Max Pechstein, Otto Müller and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Blaue Reiter artists Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Heinrich Campendonk and Paul Klee, and Austrian Expressionists such as Alfred Kubin and Oskar Kokoschka), are all represented by drawings and prints – the latter medium having played a particularly important role in defining the identity of Expressionism and disseminating the movement. The collection of works on paper also includes an impressive range of independent artists associated with Expressionism such as Ernst Barlach, Käthe Kollwitz and Ludwig Meidner, and a few key examples of Weimar artists, including Max Beckmann, Otto Dix and George Grosz.

Combined with these high-profile names Leicester also possesses a unique collection of works on paper by lesser-known artists of the émigré generation, which is of particular significance for future researchers. This includes works by artists whose reputations have been more or less eclipsed by history: the collection of 34 watercolours, paintings and drawings by the Czech émigré artist Arnold Gerstl is a prime example of this aspect of the Leicester collection's worldwide significance.

Section A: an outline of key works in the collection and their particular significance within the narratives of German Expressionism.

This section includes an in depth analysis of ten outstanding individual art works (paintings and sculptures) and two groups of works on paper in Leicester's Expressionist collection that have been chosen to represent its four defining characteristics:

- Outstanding individual works by leading Expressionist artists that often illuminate the history of émigré collectors in the United Kingdom.
- Important works by the 'lost generation' of German émigré artists.
- The strong representation of women artists in the collection as a conscious aspect of the museum's acquisitions policy.
- The importance of groups of works on paper.

These representative works are listed in order of the date they were acquired by the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, with works on paper following paintings and sculptures.

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Franz Marc, *Red Woman*, 1912, oil on canvas. Permanent Collection (Purchase from Stefan Pauson, 1944)

Franz Marc's *Red Woman* is the most important and internationally significant individual work in the Leicester collection. It is the only painting by Franz Marc in a UK museum and is a rare work within the artist's oeuvre, painted at the height of his powers. Barry Herbert acknowledged the significance of this painting for the Leicester collection in a 1971 article in *Arts Review*, where he described it as "without question, the most important of the German pictures to be seen at Leicester." In a letter of 1992, Christopher Wright described *Red Woman* as "the most significant foreign painting in the collection and... an acknowledged masterpiece of 20th century art." (Leicestershire Museums and Art Gallery history files, L.F10.1944.0.0).

The exhibition history of *Red Woman* testifies to its importance. It was submitted by Marc to the seminal international exhibition of modern art organized by the Sonderbund in Cologne in 1912 – a clear sign of the significance Marc attributed the painting. On this occasion it was actually refused, and subsequently exhibited in Herwarth Walden's influential Der Sturm gallery among the *Refüsierte Bilder des Sonderbundes* later that year. Between 1913 and 1917 it was shown three more times at Der Sturm, once on the occasion of an exhibition of modern art works in the collection of Franz Kluxen, who had acquired *Red Woman* directly from the artist in 1912. The painting subsequently passed into the collection of Alfred and Tekla Hess, and was hung in the special room decorated with yellow walls and a blue ceiling that was reserved for Marc's paintings in the Hess Villa in Erfurt.

Threatened by the rise of Fascism in Germany, Tekla Hess tried to safeguard a large part of the Hess collection by sending sixty paintings – including *Red Woman* - to Switzerland, which were shown at the Kunsthaus Zurich in the exhibition *Neue deutsche Malerei* in 1934. In a 1958 affidavit Tekla Hess testified that she was forced by the Gestapo to direct the Kunsthaus Zürich to "send my Marc paintings that are stored with you" back to Germany for the Marc memorial exhibition that was scheduled to take place at the Köln Kunsthalle in 1936. Although the Nazi authorities ultimately forbade the exhibition, seminal paintings from the Hess collection were thus forcibly brought back to Germany. At this point the business manager and director of the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Walter Klug, took the Hess collection of Marc paintings into his 'safekeeping,' subsequently offering them for sale. *Red Woman* was passed in commission to the Galerie Thannhauser in Berlin in 1935 (a year before the gallery was forced to close), where it was apparently acquired and saved for the family by Tekla Hess' brother, Stefan Pauson. When the family fled to Great Britain, *Red Woman* came with them; it featured in the heroic exhibition of *Mid-European Art*, organised by Trevor Thomas and sponsored by the Free German League of Culture in 1944. Marc's painting was the most important and expensive purchase (£350) in the original group of four paintings acquired from the Hess family in 1944. By this precarious route *Red Woman* ended up as the jewel in the crown of the Leicester collection of German Expressionist art. How narrowly it escaped an alternative fate is underlined by the fact that a painting with the same subject of nude women in nature (*Bathing Women (Bathing Girls)*, 1910) was confiscated from

the Städtische Kunstsammlungen Düsseldorf as degenerate in 1937 and sold in 1939 at the Galerie Fischer auction in Luzern.

Quite apart from the light that *Red Woman's* history throws on the Nazi attack on Expressionist art and the fate of its émigré collectors, the painting is a key asset in the worldwide understanding of German Expressionism in terms of its style and subject. It exemplifies the development of avant-garde style associated with the Munich-based Expressionists of the Blaue Reiter group, who were initially inspired by the innovations of French Post-Impressionism. The visits Marc made to Paris in 1903 and 1907 made a decisive impact on his art, spurring him to modernise his style in response to Van Gogh, Gauguin and Cézanne. Reinforced by the exhibitions of modern French art he subsequently saw in Munich, Marc introduced vibrant colour and simplified forms to his paintings. As can be seen in the beautiful gouache on loan to the New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, *Horse and Donkey*, 1912, Marc's subject matter concentrated on depictions of animals in nature, which he associated with purity and harmony, in opposition to the materialism of the modern industrial world. Marc's animal paintings involved an updating of Romantic themes, and his colour symbolism was also partly inspired by Romantic colour theories – blue being associated with the spirit. In a letter to fellow artist August Macke dating from 1910, Marc assigned emotional values to colours: "Blue is the male principle, astringent and spiritual. Yellow is the female principle, gentle, gay and spiritual. Red is matter, brutal and heavy and always the colour to be opposed and overcome by the other two." (Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968], p. 182).

Although Marc focused almost exclusively on animal painting, there are a small number of works depicting nude women in nature, painted primarily in red and yellow tones. Marc's red *Nude Lying among Flowers*, 1910 (catalogue raisonné 127, now in a private collection), in which the forms of nature echo the woman's curves, provides a direct precedent for *Red Woman*. However, the Leicester painting is more overtly primitivistic, depicting a Gauguinesque nude with tribal markings on her hip in an exotic, jungle-like setting illuminated by vibrant, glowing colours. According to the social Darwinism of the day, women were frequently associated with animals and tribal peoples, all of whom were thought to be closer to nature than man, who was understood to occupy the top rung of the evolutionary ladder. From the Expressionists' point of view, this made women, along with tribal peoples and their artefacts, a source of rebirth and renewal that countered the rationalistic, materialistic bias of modern society. *Red Woman* is the most overtly primitivist painting in Marc's oeuvre, corresponding quite closely to August Macke's paintings with red Indian subjects such as *Indians* (private collection) and *Indians on Horseback* (Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich), both dating from 1911. Marc and Macke had been closely allied since first meeting in 1910, and the glowing colours and interpenetrating forms in *Red Woman* demonstrate Macke's influence, alongside the influence exerted on both artists by Robert Delaunay, whom they visited in Paris in 1912.

1912 was indeed a seminal year for the Blaue Reiter group, spearheaded by Marc and Wassily Kandinsky. It saw the publication of the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*, edited by these two artists, which proposed a wide-ranging and universalist concept of the primitive that included folk art, child art and other world cultures. Marc visited the ethnographic museum in Berlin in January 1911, where he was especially impressed by Cameroon woodcarvings. He subsequently contributed an essay titled "The 'Savages' of Germany" to the Almanac, using the term to describe the innovatory Expressionist art of his peers.

This project brought Marc into close contact with the artists of the Brücke group, who were firmly committed by this date to a primitivist world vision based on their depictions of the (often female) figure. Indeed, the exotic, rhythmic forms of *Red Woman* bear witness not only to Marc's knowledge of Gauguin (whose Tahitian paintings were exhibited in Munich in 1910), but also figurative works by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner that were inspired by illustrations of Indian mural paintings from the cave temples of Ajanta. The print by Kirchner of cabaret dancers that Marc used to illustrate his above-mentioned essay in the Almanac demonstrates this rounded, rhythmic Ajanta figure style, that also features in Kirchner's painting, *Five Bathers at the Lake*, 1911 (Brücke-Museum, Berlin). But whereas Kirchner presents provocative frontal nudes, Marc opts for the Romantic device of the *Rückenfigur* or figure seen from behind, which encourages the viewer to empathize with the woman's harmonious integration with nature.

Marc's exotic tribal woman is also an imaginative equivalent for the native women both Max Pechstein and Emil Nolde later encountered on the journeys they made to the South Seas in 1913. Like Pechstein, Marc's vision of 'primitive' woman is essentially romantic and exotic, rooted in the European tradition of the Garden of Eden before the Fall. In 1912, Marc indeed collaborated with August Macke on a mural decoration in the latter artist's studio in Bonn depicting *Paradise* as a harmonious coexistence of man, woman, and animals in nature. As Barry Herbert remarked in his 1971 article in *Arts Review*, *Red Woman* "extends a characteristic Expressionist concept, namely the humanistic idea of man's interrelationship with nature." He continues: "The depth of his [Marc's] feeling for all the vital forms of life, the inspiration and delight he experienced in nature's beauty are evoked here with consummate grace and mystery."

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Lyonel Feininger, *Behind the Church*, 1916, oil on canvas. Permanent Collection (Purchase from Tekla Hess, 1944)

The second of the major oil paintings to be acquired by the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery from the Hess family in 1944 was Lyonel Feininger's *Behind the Church*, 1916, which was purchased from Tekla Hess for £120.

Originally in the Kaiser collection in Weimar, the painting must have passed into Alfred Hess' hands after 1920, when Feininger had his first exhibition in a public

museum at the Erfurt Anger Museum, and a close friendship developed between the artist and the Hess family. Of all the artists in his collection, Hess had the closest personal relationship with Feininger; this is reflected in the fact that Feininger's works were hung in Hess' smoking room in the villa in Erfurt. According to Hans Hess's memoirs concerning the family's famous visitor's book, the artist brought his three sons with him to the Hess villa and gave Hans carved wooden toys, including houses, towers, bridges and figures that could be assembled into "Feininger-villages." (*Dank im Farben – Aus einem Künstlergästebuch, Aus dem Gästebuch Alfred und Tekla Hess*, afterword by Hans Hess, R. Piper and Co. Munich, 1957 p.39). In 1923, when Hess invited Feininger to spend some weeks as an artist in residence in Erfurt, the artist painted several works inspired by the city, including *Barfüsserkirche in Erfurt*, which displays a similar composition to *Behind the Church*, with dark foreground buildings, tiny pedestrians and a crystalline, illuminated church in the background plane. During this stay Feininger experienced night raids by conservative German nationalists and anti-Jewish groups on both the Hess mansion and the house belonging to the director of the Erfurt Museum, Walter Kaesbach.

Alongside a number of key oil paintings, and an important collection of works on paper that are presently on loan to the Leicester Museum, the small wooden toys Feininger carved for Hans Hess accompanied the family when they fled Germany in 1939. Feininger's importance to Tekla Hess (who continued to correspond regularly with the artist and his wife Julia after they settled in New York in 1938), is underlined by the fact that a Feininger woodcut was used to illustrate the small pamphlet published on the occasion of the *Mid-European Art* exhibition in 1944, which displayed four oils, four watercolours and six prints by Feininger from the Hess collection, including *Behind the Church* under the title *The Square*. Three years after the artist's death in 1956, Hans Hess began to compile a catalogue raisonné of Feininger's work, which was integrated into his book *Lyonel Feininger*, the first monograph on the artist, published by Thames and Hudson in 1961. This demonstrates how key émigré figures such as Hans Hess and Walter Neurath, head of Thames and Hudson, kept the flame of Expressionism alive during a period when the United Kingdom was generally hostile towards German art.

Lyonel Feininger's work occupies a pivotal position in the history of German twentieth-century art, in the sense that it links Expressionism to the Bauhaus. After studying in Hamburg and Berlin, Feininger had moved to Paris in 1906, where, like Marc and Macke, he came under the influence of Robert Delaunay's prismatic Cubist style. Returning to Berlin in 1908, Feininger joined the Expressionist avant-garde when Franz Marc invited him to exhibit with the Blaue Reiter group in Berlin at Herwarth Walden's First German Autumn Salon in 1913. Walden gave Feininger his first one-man show at the Sturm Gallery in 1917, where *Behind the Church* was exhibited as *Platz an der Kirche*. A year later the artist joined the Novembergruppe, and in 1919 Feininger was invited by Walter Gropius to become a member of the teaching staff at the newly established Bauhaus in Weimar. Feininger's famous woodcut design representing a cathedral for the 1919 Bauhaus manifesto depicts crystalline architectural forms symbolising the utopian mood and medievalism that pervaded the early Bauhaus. Essentially these ideals grew out of Expressionism and

were given an extended life by the Swiss Expressionist, Johannes Itten, and the artists associated with Der Blaue Reiter - Feininger, Kandinsky and Klee – who joined the Bauhaus teaching staff.

Behind the Church, painted during the First World War in 1917, illustrates a transitional moment between Expressionism and what was to become Feininger's Bauhaus style. Its theme is linked to the urban subjects of Expressionism, which Feininger explored in his earlier caricatural depictions of city streets like *Promenade (Pedestrians)*, 1912. However, in paintings such as *Town in Moonlight*, 1916 and *Behind the Church*, 1917, Feininger shifted his attention to the architectural structure of the city. The figures become small, incidental shapes punctuating the geometric structures that soar around them. Like other artists of the Blaue Reiter who were influenced by Delaunay, Feininger uses light and colour to dematerialize solid form; his choice of church motifs, in this case the Stadtkirche in Weimar and its adjacent square, also relates to the spiritual, utopian dimension of Der Blaue Reiter. However, the sombre earth-coloured tones and geometrical structure of *Behind the Church*, with its emphasis on vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines, radically departs from the colourful, organic style associated with pre-war Expressionism. Feininger's fascination with architecture and his preference for pictorial geometry clearly predict his contribution to the evolution of Bauhaus style.

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Emil Nolde, *Head with red-black hair*, c.1910, watercolour. Permanent Collection (Purchase from Tekla Hess, 1944)

Emil Nolde's watercolour, *Head with red-black hair*, circa 1910, purchased from Tekla Hess for £30, was the third important work from the Hess family to enter the Leicester collection in 1944.

When building up his collection of Expressionist art in the 1920s, Alfred Hess had acquired a number of Nolde's works, including two oil paintings that were stored for safe keeping in Switzerland after 1933, but were returned by the Kunsthau Zurich to the Kolnische Kunstverein in 1935 for a Nolde exhibition that opened in early January. We learn in a letter sent by Tekla Hess to the Feiningers in November 1945 that part of the Hess collection, including works by Nolde, Kirchner and Marc, ended up in New York. *Head with red-black hair* was fortunately one of the key Noldes in the Hess collection that made the precarious journey to England with the family. Alongside four other Nolde watercolours, it was exhibited with the title *Mask*, and wrongly dated 1919, in Leicester's 1944 exhibition of *Mid-European Art*.

The correct date for this Nolde watercolour is almost certainly 1911, as it closely relates to the many depictions of urban women that the artist made after moving to a permanent winter studio in Berlin in the autumn of that year. Indeed, the frontal, mask-like face and hat perched at a diagonal angle across the woman's forehead feature in a number of oil paintings with Berlin subjects, including *Slovenes*, 1911, *Lady and Two Gentlemen*, 1911 and *At the Wine Table*, 1911. There are other watercolour studies of women's heads relating to Nolde's Berlin paintings, such as

the woman in profile who reappears in *Tea-Table*, 1911 (illustrated in *Emil Nolde, Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings, Volume One 1895-1914*, Sotheby's Publications, London 1987, p.353). *Head with red-black hair* relates to the mask-like face in *Slovenes*, although the head in this case is more generic, recurring in a number of variations across the series of Berlin paintings.

These urban subjects were a new departure for Nolde, who had previously concentrated on countryside and religious themes. Although his contact with the Brücke group, which he joined briefly in 1906, was sporadic by 1911, Nolde's move to Berlin coincided with the arrival of the other Brücke artists in the capital city. Nolde and Kirchner both responded to the urban milieu in their Berlin paintings; but whereas Kirchner focused on women stalking the city streets between 1913 and 1915, Nolde was fascinated by urban nightlife, producing café and cabaret scenes that are illuminated by lurid artificial light and peopled by fashionable men and women. In his autobiography Nolde recorded his impressions of the underworld life of the city at night: "where demi-monde beauties sat in their elegant robes, pale with powder and the smell of death.... I drew and drew, the light of the rooms, the superficial glamour, all the people, whether bad or good, whether half or fully ruined. I drew this 'other side' of life with its makeup, its sparkling dirt and its corruption." (Emil Nolde, *Jahre der Kämpfe, 1902-14*, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll, 2002, p.137, author's translation)

During the winters of 1910-11 Nolde refined his watercolour technique in sketches of theatre performances at the Kammerspiel and Deutsches Theater, where Max Reinhardt reserved nightly seats for the artist and his wife. This resulted in the fluid, improvisational style evident in *Head with red-black hair*, where the watercolour pigments freely interact with the rapid black brushstrokes that chart the contours of the woman's face; the liquid green and yellow hues indeed evoke "the smell of death" that Nolde associated with the decadence of big city life.

Such urban subjects contrast with the Nolde's characteristic themes drawn from the remote northern countryside on the island of Alsen, where he lived in for most of the year. Nolde associated the northern landscape and its inhabitants with a deep-seated sense of Nordic identity and authenticity; as in the case of Marc, he regarded man's identification with nature as an alternative to the flux of modern civilization. Nolde's quest for an authentic, 'primitive' alternative to modern society eventually led him in 1913 to join an expedition to the German colony of New Guinea, where he made numerous watercolours and paintings of South Seas natives.

Before embarking on this adventure, Nolde enthusiastically researched and sketched native artefacts that he discovered in the Berlin Ethnographic Museum in 1911 – at exactly the same time as he formulated his series of paintings depicting Berlin city life. The mask-like quality of *Head with red-black hair* closely relates to Nolde's sketches and paintings of tribal masks, such as *Mask Still Life 3*, 1911 (William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City). Moreover, the subsequent watercolours of native heads that Nolde sketched in New Guinea display a similar style and treatment of the head - floating in space as if severed from the body. Despite her

“superficial glamour” and modernity, the woman in *Head with red-black hair* manifests a savage, animalistic presence that closely identifies her with Nolde’s primitivist themes. This explains the title *Mask*, ascribed to the watercolour in 1944.

The confluence of modernity and primitivism is not unique to Nolde; indeed it also emerges as a central theme in Kirchner’s street scenes, which are peopled by threatening women with mask-like faces sporting extravagant feathered hats that look like tribal costumes. In their different ways both Kirchner and Nolde depicted the modern metropolis as the exotic ‘other.’ *Head with red-black hair*, which relates to both urban modernism and tribal primitivism, plays an important role in charting this paradoxical Expressionist theme, which was one of the first manifestations of the city as an urban jungle.

**Max Pechstein, *Nidden Coastline with Fishing Boats*, 1909, oil on canvas.
Permanent Collection (Purchase Leger Galleries 1952)**

Alongside the three purchases from the Hess’ collection in 1944 described above, Tekla Hess gifted a watercolour by Max Pechstein titled alternatively *From My Window*, (Letter from Thomas to Tekla Hess, 25 March 1944) or, more recently, *The Bridge at Erfurt* (*The Expressionist Revolution in German Art, 1871-1933*, Leicestershire Museums, 1978, p.94). Together with the masterly woodcut, *Portrait of Alfred Hess* smoking his pipe, on loan to the museum since 1987, this watercolour testifies to the close relationship between Max Pechstein and the Hess family. Described by Hans Hess as “one of the first” artists to visit the family in Erfurt (*Dank im Farben*, op.cit. p.37), Pechstein was a regular guest: *The Bridge at Erfurt* indeed depicts the view from a guest room in the Hess villa, painted between 6 April and 18 April 1919 during one of the artist’s many sojourns in the city.

This early gift to the Leicester Museum prepared the ground for the next important acquisition of an Expressionist painting, namely *Nidden Coastline with Fishing Boats*, 1909, by Max Pechstein, which was purchased from the Leger Galleries in 1952. This painting plays as important a role in representing the Brücke artists in the Leicester collection as Franz Marc’s *Red Woman* does in representing Der Blaue Reiter. It is a major example of Brücke painting from the classic Dresden period, painted when Pechstein and the other artists of the group were establishing their Expressionist style.

Nidden Coastline with Fishing Boats shows a beach scene on the Curonian Spit, a narrow sandy peninsula separating the Curonian Lagoon from the Baltic Sea, which now belongs to Lithuania and Russia but was part of East Prussia until the First World War. Artists and writers (including Lovis Corinth, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Sigmund Freud and eventually Thomas Mann) began visiting this remote, windswept region of sand dunes, where an artists’ colony sprang up at the turn of the century. In 1909 Pechstein made his first trip to Nidden, initiating a pattern of summer visits that continued until 1913. Having sold a landscape painting he exhibited in the Berlin Secession in 1909 to the German politician Walter Rathenau, Pechstein had the necessary funds to finance this first expedition. In his memoirs he describes his

impressions of Nidden: "I was as full of expectation and hope as an explorer on his way to unknown territory. And that's what I found. A wonderful landscape with its tough breed of people produced by the fishing profession... I drew and painted the dunes, the sea... the resting fishing boats with their steep masts, clouds and storms." (Max Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, Wiesbaden 1960 pp.34-37)

Pechstein's summer visits to Nidden eventually produced a significant body of work including landscapes of the village and its surroundings, bathers and fishing scenes. The artist identified with the hard-working local people, whom he pictured amid the elemental forces of sea and storm in paintings such as *Fisherman in a Boat*, 1909. The Expressionist theme of man's identification with nature as an alternative to modern civilization played a vital role in Pechstein's interpretation of Nidden; he conceived of the fishing village as a 'primitive' location fostering an authentic way of life. Describing his return to Berlin, Pechstein recalled: "I was a pretty sight. Red-brown, dark-brown like an Indian, with a crude boatman's beard... I got through the first night in civilization with joy and pain, but with more pain than joy." (*Erinnerungen*, op. cit. p.38)

Despite Nidden's primitivist associations, *Nidden Coastline with Fishing Boats* testifies to the sophistication of Pechstein's style and his knowledge of current trends in European painting. Pechstein's first visit to Nidden marked the end of his intense engagement with Van Gogh's paintings and drawings, which the Brücke artists had seen in a major exhibition at the Galerie Arnold in Dresden in November 1905. In terms of its composition, *Nidden Coastline with Fishing Boats* indeed refers directly to the coastline scene depicted in Van Gogh's *Fishing Boats on the Beach at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer*, 1888 (Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam), which was exhibited in this Dresden show. In both paintings the division between beach and sea follows a diagonal from bottom right to left, although this compositional element is more steeply inclined in the Van Gogh. The shapes of the foreground boats and smaller boats in the background plane are extremely similar, although Pechstein places his larger fishing boats in the shallows rather than on the beach. Like Van Gogh, Pechstein constructs his composition around complementary colour contrasts: the yellow beach contrasts with the blue of sea and sky, while the boats are brightly painted in red, green, dark blue and yellow. But whereas Van Gogh emphasises line in his calligraphic composition, Pechstein dwells on colour, placing a large red sail at the centre of the painting that is reflected, alongside the hues of the boats, in the surrounding water. The central role played by colour in *Nidden Coastline with Fishing Boats* signifies a shift in Pechstein's style in 1909, when Matisse and Derain increasingly influenced him. Similar scenes of fishing boats, rendered in extremely bright colours, are to be seen in Fauve paintings of Collioure, which Pechstein knew from his visit to Paris in December 1907 and subsequent exhibitions of Fauve painting in Germany. *Nidden Coastline with Fishing Boats* thus charts an important moment of stylistic transition in Pechstein's work, which reflects the more general evolution of Brücke style.

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Lovis Corinth, *Portrait of Carl Ludwig Elias, aged 7, 1899*, oil on canvas. Permanent Collection (Purchased from Mrs B Levy with MGC/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, 1968)

The next step in the acquisition of major Expressionist works for the Leicester collection came in 1968, when two paintings were purchased with a MGC/V&A purchase grant. Lovis Corinth's lively *Portrait of Carl Ludwig Elias, aged 7, 1899*, was the first painting by this major German artist to be purchased by a museum in Great Britain. In 1936 Erich Goeritz had donated Corinth's *The Temptation of St Anthony after Gustav Flaubert, 1908*, to the Tate Gallery, but it was not until 1991 that the Tate bought *Magdalen with Pearls in her Hair, 1919*. In 1997, when the Tate mounted a major retrospective of Corinth's work, the National Galleries of Scotland received *Hell, fragment*, also known as *The Fall, 1901*, on extended loan. *Portrait of Carl Ludwig Elias, aged 7*, is consequently the earliest Corinth painting in a British public collection; its importance within the artist's oeuvre is supported by the fact that it was included in the major exhibition of Corinth's work held to celebrate his sixty-fifth birthday at the Nationalgalerie Berlin in 1923.

The painting was executed in the year when the artist began to exhibit with the recently founded Berlin Secession. In Corinth's leading roles in the progressive art movements of his time, first in the Free Union of artists in Munich and subsequently in the Berlin Secession, he became an important precursor of Expressionism. As Dorothy Price points out in *Lot 1*, Corinth first coined the term 'Expressionism' in 1911 to describe an exhibition of French Fauve artists in Berlin, although he was not initially enthusiastic about their work. However, like other artists whose work straddles the turn of the century, such as Ferdinand Hodler and Edvard Munch, Corinth nevertheless participated in the developments of Expressionist style in his later work. The increasingly expressive quality of Corinth's paintings after 1910 - clearly evident, for example, in *Cain, 1917* (Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf) and his later self-portraits - is often associated with the after-effects of a stroke suffered by the artist in 1911. The Nazis condemned Corinth's late, expressive style: 295 of his works were confiscated from German museums in 1937 and seven of these were included in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition that year.

Despite the schism imposed on Corinth's oeuvre by the Nazis, to some extent the expressive characteristics of his later work are implicit in his earlier painting style. He never easily fitted into the category of German Impressionism that was represented by artists such as Max Liebermann and Max Slevogt in the Berlin Secession. For example, *Portrait of Carl Ludwig Elias, aged 7* shows how Corinth was intent in his portraiture on penetrating beyond appearances to capture the psychology of his sitter. In this instance he focuses on the boy's head, the steady gaze of his eyes and the determined set of his mouth, to convey strength of character and confidence. The lively detail of the head contrasts with Corinth's summary treatment of the child's body, the tasselled chair and surrounding space. His brushwork in these areas is characteristically bold and sweeping, emphasising the sensuality of the paint. The stark tonal contrasts between the boy's suit, his white collar and the regal velvet chair in which he is sitting, are offset by the subtle hues of the table and background, where the oils are applied wet in wet.

Corinth's treatment of his sitter results in an unusual childhood portrait that avoids any trace of sentimentality. Carl Ludwig Elias was the son of the distinguished art critic, Julius Elias, who was known for promoting French Impressionism in Germany and for his translations of modern Scandinavian authors and dramatists. When he grew up, Carl Ludwig worked as a lawyer in Berlin before fleeing to Norway to escape the rise of National Socialism. Although he was granted asylum and eventually citizenship in Norway, he was arrested after the Nazis invaded. He perished in a concentration camp.

Corinth's brilliant portrait of Carl Ludwig Elias thus opens a window on the world of a confident, intellectual Jewish family in turn-of-the-century Berlin, which, within the boy's lifetime, had been brutally destroyed.

L.F49.1968.0.0

Ludwig Meidner, *Apocalyptic Vision*, 1912, oil on canvas. Permanent Collection (Purchased from Mr Siegfried Oppenheimer with MGC/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, 1968)

The second painting purchased with the 1968 MGC/V&A grant was Ludwig Meidner's *Apocalyptic Vision*, 1912, which is the most important example of urban Expressionism in the Leicester collection. Depicting a group of three naked men on the outskirts of an exploding city, the painting is the first in a series of apocalyptic cityscapes that the artist painted in 1912-13. Frequently these paintings are interpreted as prophetic of the approaching war in Europe.

The theme of apocalypse - so powerfully conveyed in Meidner's exploding cityscapes - was indeed central to Expressionism during this period; it recurs in Kandinsky's abstract compositions, which draw their fragmented imagery from the Revelation of St John, and in Expressionist poetry by Georg Heym and Jakob von Hoddis. In 1912 Meidner joined with these two poets and his fellow artists, Richard Janthur and Jakob Steinhardt, to form a club known as Die Pathetiker, whose members were dedicated to portraying the emotional impact of modern urban life.

Apocalyptic Vision was painted during a manic burst of creativity that Meidner experienced during an intense heat wave in the summer of 1912, when the artist was living and working in a crude attic studio in Berlin-Friedenau. That "angry, vicious summer," as the artist later observed, seemed to induce a visionary state that compelled him to "unload (his) obsessions onto canvas day and night - Judgement days, world's ends and gibbets of skulls." He continues: "All summer I trembled before steaming canvases, which in every part, every tattered cloud and torrential stream, foretold the misery of the world... I broke countless tubes of indigo and ochre. A painful compulsion forced me to smash everything that was stable and upright, to spread ruins and rags and ashes over all my landscapes..."

Meidner presents the city as a battleground where a dynamic life and death struggle between immense elemental forces is taking place. Whereas the relationship

between humans and nature is usually presented as a source of harmony and renewal in Expressionist painting, the relationship between the ruined city and the male nudes in Meidner's *Apocalyptic Vision* reeks of chaos and destruction. With his genitals exposed, the foreground nude lies in a state of sexual surrender next to a broken tree, which, like the pillar of fire and eclipsed sun, is a symbol of cataclysmic upheaval and apocalypse. Stylistically, Meidner was under the spell of Van Gogh, while his mannerist figures were partly inspired by El Greco - artists who both played an inspirational role for the Expressionists.

Apocalyptic Vision also attests to the close relationship between the poets and painters of urban Expressionism. Like his poet friend Georg Heym, Meidner was deeply influenced by the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche: the underlying Nietzschean idea of the Apollonian city as a symbol of civilization being threatened by the Dionysian forces of chaos, pervades both their work. *Apocalyptic Vision* is thus of key importance in the narrative of Berlin Expressionism; it links Expressionist painting and poetry, bringing together the pivotal Expressionist themes of the city, the cosmic night and apocalypse.

L.F453.1978.0.0

Ernst Neuschul, *Messiah*, 1918, oil on card 94 x 53 cm (purchased from Christie's with a National Art Fund grant in 2007) and *Negro Mother*, c.1931, oil on canvas (purchased from Campbell and Franks Ltd with MGC/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, 1978)

A third painting purchased with an MGC/V&A grant, Ernst Neuschul's *Negro Mother*, circa 1931, entered the Leicester collection in 1978. The artist is also represented by an earlier painting, *Messiah* 1918, which was purchased with a National Art Fund grant in 2007. Together these two key works by Neuschul represent a unique holding of this important émigré artist in the United Kingdom. The two paintings demonstrate the transition from Expressionism to Neue Sachlichkeit that is representative of the interwar period in Germany.

Neuschul's half-length self-portrait titled *Messiah* shows the artist preening his bare torso in front of a stylized landscape, while his face expresses an emotion of manic ecstasy. Executed in self-consciously avant-garde style, the painting emanates the same kind of narcissistic intensity and self-dramatization that we find in Egon Schiele's nude self-portraits and his self-portraits as saints and martyrs. Neuschul, who was born in Aussig some forty miles north of Prague in 1895, was indeed aware of Austrian Expressionism, having moved to Vienna to pursue his painting studies in 1915. In order to avoid conscription in World War One, the artist starved himself and feigned insanity – experiences that are poignantly reflected in *Messiah*.

After an adventurous period in the early 1920s, when Neuschul toured the world as dance-partner to his exotic girlfriend, Taka-Taka, the artist settled in Berlin. He began to paint realist paintings in which he discarded his Expressionist style in favour of the hard-edged observation of daily reality characteristic of Neue Sachlichkeit. Increasingly Neuschul was motivated by a passionate political and social

commitment to bettering the fortunes of working men and women. Between 1930 and 1932 the artist worked in Wilhelm Reich's experimental school in Berlin for the city's unemployed adolescents. At the same time Neuschul became Professor of Fine Arts at the Berlin Academy and was elected chairman of the politically motivated Novembergruppe, which had been founded in 1918 by artists of the Expressionist generation including Max Pechstein, and transformed by more radically left-wing members such as George Grosz, John Heartfield and Hannah Höch, in 1921.

Neuschul's choice of a black model in *Negro Mother*, 1931, had precedents in Expressionist art: from around 1910 the Brücke artists had been fascinated by black cabaret and circus artists, bringing them to their studios to model for their nude and figure paintings. However, while Kirchner, Heckel and Pechstein regarded black models as the exotic 'other' and as a source of authenticity and vitality, Neuschul consciously avoids these romantic associations, depicting instead a black woman in everyday working clothes nurturing her child. Nevertheless Neuschul heroizes his subject by representing the woman on a monumental scale as a modernized version of the virgin and child. The rather incongruous setting in a park surrounded by trees, underlines the woman's proximity to nature; indeed the startled look in the eyes of the mother and child as the artist/spectator disturbs their intimacy, suggests that, despite their modern clothes, they retain something of the shyness of wild animals. Although Neuschul evidently sympathizes with and admires his subject, these associations were integral to European notions of the 'primitive.' The painting thus emanates an ambivalence that is symptomatic of the difficulties involved for a European artist in representing a black woman 'objectively.'

Neuschul's heroic representation of a black woman at a moment when black people were actively discriminated against in Germany inevitably fell foul of the Nazis when they seized power in 1933. That year a Neuschul exhibition was closed down, and some paintings were confiscated and destroyed. Because of his Jewish birth and radical political opinions, Neuschul also lost his teaching post, whereupon the artist fled to his home town of Aussig. After a period in Moscow, where he narrowly escaped Stalin's purges, Neuschul returned to Aussig to find that several of his paintings in an exhibition had been painted over with swastikas. Although the artist fled with his wife and child to London in 1939, members of his family who stayed behind perished in the death camps. Neuschul left his early works behind and many were permanently lost.

Neuschul is one of the émigré artists in the Leicester collection who slipped into obscurity in exile. The first important exhibition of his work was held at the Haus am Lützowplatz in Berlin in 1966, but it was not until 1978 that the Campbell and Franks Gallery in London mounted an exhibition of his work to coincide with the Hayward Gallery's *Neue Sachlichkeit* exhibition. Hailed on this occasion as "a stunningly convincing painter," the "neglected Ernst Neuschul" was deemed to be "the discovery of this period." (foreword to exhib. Cat. *Ernest Neuschul*, Leicestershire Museums, 1988) The Leicester Art Museum's purchase of *Negro Mother* was followed in 1988 by a retrospective of the artist's work, organised by the museum's assistant keeper, Julia Collie. Leicester has thus played a major role in saving a

leading artist of the Neue Sachlichkeit period for posterity. Neuschul's highly individual interpretation of the realism of the epoch as a means of empathising with his proletarian subjects throws new light on the scope and intent of Neue Sachlichkeit painting.

L.F3.1988.0.0

Lotte Laserstein, *Self-Portrait with a Cat*, 1928, oil on panel. Permanent Collection (Purchase from Agnew and Sons 1988)

One of the outstanding qualities of the Leicester collection is its strong representation of women artists, whose importance has only recently begun to be recognised in histories of German Expressionism. This aspect of the museums' policy was underlined by the exhibition 'Domesticity and Dissent,' organised by the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in 1992. The exhibition included the museum's significant acquisition of Lotte Laserstein's *Self-Portrait with Cat*, 1928, purchased from Thomas Agnew and Sons in 1987 when the first UK exhibition of the artist's work was held at the gallery.

Lotte Laserstein lived as an émigré artist, not in the United Kingdom but rather in Sweden, where she fled to escape Nazi persecution in 1937 and remained for the rest of her life. In Weimar Germany she had enjoyed considerable success, entering the Berlin Art Academy among a handful of women students in 1921, and being awarded its gold medal in 1925. Laserstein subsequently established her own studio in Berlin and had her first exhibition at the Fritz Gurlitt gallery in 1930. She also exhibited at the Prussian Academy of Art, the Glaspalast and the Women's Art Society in Berlin, as well as in Hamburg, Munich, Stuttgart and Düsseldorf. In 1937 she showed *Self-Portrait with Cat* alongside two other paintings at the World Fair in Paris. Because she was one-quarter Jewish, these works were not hung with the German entries but rather in the general pavilion.

Under pressure from the Nazis, Laserstein had already been obliged to close her studio in Berlin and seek refuge abroad; in December 1937 she successfully showed her work at the prestigious Galleri Modern in Stockholm, which led to a number of portrait commissions and eventually to a rewarding career in Sweden. Unlike many of the artists of her 'lost generation,' Laserstein thus re-established herself successfully in exile, although her status as a woman artist together with her historical and geographical displacement has undoubtedly led to her work being less well known than it deserves.

The presence of a major early self-portrait by Laserstein in the Leicester collection is consequently of international importance. *Self-Portrait with Cat* is among a number of early self-portraits in which the artist affirms her professional status and represents herself in the role of the 'New Woman,' sporting her androgynous cropped hairstyle or 'Herrenschnitt.' As Dorothy Price observes in her excellent analysis of Laserstein's self-portraiture, ('Representing Herself: Lotte Laserstein between Subject and Object' in *Practicing Modernity, Female Creativity in the Weimar Period*, edited by Christiane Schönfeld, 2006, p.68f.), Laserstein locates her

self-image at the juncture of subjective and objective viewpoints. Although she presents herself with a self-detachment that corresponds to the “objectifying view of male Modernism,” she “neither toys with female beauty and charm, nor offers herself as a potential object of male desire. She meets the viewer, rather, with the appraising demeanour of an (artistic) authority.” (See Anna-Carola Krause, Lotte Laserstein, *My only Reality*,” Philo Fine Arts, 2004, p.102).

In place of the traditional artist’s palette (that she holds, for example, in *Artist with Model*, 1928 (Collection of Renata and Michael Hornstein, Montreal), Laserstein nurses a large tabby cat in her lap, which she claimed had strayed into her studio and she fed with milk and brandy to keep it still while she painted it. Anna-Carola Krause interprets the cat as an ironic symbol of narcissism and the female element; temporarily nestling in the artist’s lap, the cat displays an alert, self-contained independence that corresponds to the frank self-assessment implicit in the artist’s gaze.

Stylistically, *Self-Portrait with Cat* relates to the return to realism in the mid-1920s that is associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit*. In fact, Laserstein’s realist style grew out of the academic training she received as a pupil of Erich Wolfsfeld, who advocated a realistic style of painting and drawing in the tradition of nineteenth-century artists such as Adolf von Menzel and Wilhelm Leibl. With her fine attention to detail, such as the textures of the cat’s fur and the heavy textile of the artist’s smock in the painting under discussion, Laserstein was also inspired by German renaissance portraits by Dürer and Holbein, as well as by images from popular culture representing the ‘New Woman.’ As Dorothy Price points out, she brings together these various strands to produce a distinctive contemporary take on academic figure painting. Both in terms of the representation of women during the Weimar period and in terms of the complexities of *Neue Sachlichkeit* style, Lotte Laserstein’s *Self-Portrait with Cat*, 1928, contributes significantly to our understanding of the narratives of 20th-century German art.

L.F10.1991.0.0

Gabriele Münter, *Portrait of Anna Roslund*, 1917, oil on canvas. Permanent Collection (Sotheby’s (Art Collections Fund) 1991)

The purchase at auction of Gabriele Münter’s *Portrait of Anna Roslund*, 1917, in 1991 coincided with Leicester’s decision to add “work by leading women artists who have traditionally been under-represented” to their acquisition policy. Münter’s portrait provides an ideal complement to the Laserstein self-portrait discussed above in as much as it also relates to the emergence of the “New Woman,” in this case represented by the Swedish writer and musician Anna Roslund, whom Münter met in Copenhagen in 1917.

Münter is primarily known in histories of German Expressionism as the companion of Kandinsky during the *Blaue Reiter* years. Indeed, Münter played an important role in the movement: she took part in the first two exhibitions of the New Artists’ Association of Munich, and in the two *Blaue Reiter* group exhibitions in 1911 and

1912; two of her works were also illustrated in the *Blaue Reiter Almanac*. On the outbreak of the First World War Münter moved with Kandinsky to Switzerland, and following their separation in 1917 she settled in neutral Scandinavia until 1920. With the help of Herwarth Walden's wife Nell (née Roslund), Münter established a successful independent career in Scandinavia - as Laserstein was to do some twenty years later. After building up a circle of artist and writer friends in Stockholm, Münter moved to Copenhagen, where a major exhibition of her work took place in March 1918 at the Copenhagen Konsthall. She also opened a private painting school and received a number of portrait commissions.

Portrait of Anna Roslund, which depicts Nell Walden's younger sister, is probably the first of these commissions as it relates to sketches dated 1917, when Münter arrived in Copenhagen. In terms of its subject it follows on from a number of Swedish portraits in which Münter focused on "the contemplative mood, severe hair-styles and reform dress of early twentieth-century emancipated womanhood." (Shulamith Behr, "Gabriele Münter, Portrait of Anna Aagaard," *NACF Review*, 1992, p.58). Anna Roslund is thus depicted in a loose-fitting blue dress with cropped blond hair. The fact that she is smoking a pipe, which was understood as a sign both of masculinity and bohemianism, underlines her independence and freedom from convention. Painted at a moment when Münter was successfully establishing her own independence from the assertive presence of Kandinsky, *Portrait of Anna Roslund* can be read as a displaced self-portrait, reflecting the female qualities of independence and determination that the artist admired in the Scandinavian women she encountered and she actively pursued.

The painting takes its cue from Münter's *Blaue Reiter* style, focusing on planes of glowing colour and simplified shapes, initially inspired by Alexei Jawlensky. While she tended to work on an intimate scale before 1914, this portrait has a monumental presence, emphasised by the frontal position of the sitter with her strong jawline and confident ice-blue eyes. The large, simplified red brooch that Münter places just off-centre in the composition adds a daring colour accent that rhymes with the shape of Anna Roslund's piercing round eyes.

The painting was shown at the Copenhagen Konsthall in Münter's 1918 exhibition and subsequently remained in the possession of the Roslund and Aagaard family until 1991. Its purchase by Leicester made the work publically accessible for the first time, throwing light on a lesser-known chapter of Gabriele Münter's independent artistic career.

Y.F1.2014.0.0

Renee Sintenis, *The Athlete*, bronze sculpture, bequest, permanent collection.

The recent gift of Renée Sintenis' *The Athlete (The Sprinter Nurmi)*, 1926, is an important addition to the Leicester collection's representation of German women artists. The bronze sculpture was bequeathed to Leicester in 2013 on the death of Gerta Silberberg, who was the last surviving relative of the wealthy industrialist and art collector, Max Silberberg of Breslau. According to the museum's records,

Silberberg had purchased his version of *The Sprinter Nurmi* in 1928 for 1000 DM; it was produced in addition to the official limited edition especially for the collector. After being forced by the Nazis to sell his collection in the 1930s, Max Silberberg perished in a death camp during the war. When his son Alfred and daughter-in-law Gerta escaped to Britain, Sintenis' sculpture had apparently accompanied them on their journey.

Born in 1888, and thus belonging to the generation between Münter and Laserstein, Sintenis' work forges an important link between Expressionism and Neue Sachlichkeit. Like other women artists who were excluded from German fine art academies before the First World War, Sintenis initially enrolled at the School of Arts and Crafts in Berlin, until her father insisted that she broke off her studies to become a secretary. This led to a split with her family, after which Sintenis began to make the small bronze animal sculptures she is best known for, and to exhibit with the Berlin Secession in 1913. Sintenis' work was rooted in pre-1914 German modernism: the successful animal sculptor and Berlin Secessionist August Gaul provided a precedent for Sintenis' work, and Franz Marc also exhibited his animal subjects at Herwarth Waldens' Sturm gallery in 1912 and 1913. The sculptress moved in the artistic circles of the period, modelling for the sculptor Georg Kolbe and striking up close relationships with the writers Rainer Maria Rilke and Joachim Ringelnatz. In 1917 she married the writer and artist, Rudolf Weiß.

Sintenis enjoyed her greatest success in the 1920s. Initially she exhibited, like Lotte Laserstein, with Fritz Gurlitt, but her breakthrough came when her work was taken up by the prominent art dealer, Alfred Flechtheim, who organised a number of exhibitions featuring Sintenis' sculptures and drawings between 1920 and 1933. In 1931 Sintenis was the first sculptress to become a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. However, in 1934 she was excluded from the Akademie because, according to the Nazi's Nuremberg Laws, she was classified as a quarter Jewish. Although she was allowed to remain in the Reich Chamber of Culture and continued to work, her sculptures were confiscated in 1937 from museums in Berlin, Erfurt, Düsseldorf and Bremen as part of the 'Degenerate Art' campaign. In 1944 Sintenis lost a large number of her works when her Berlin studio was destroyed in an air raid.

The Athlete (The Sprinter Nurmi), 1926, represents Sintenis at the height of her success and power. The iconic image depicts the Finnish sprinter Paavo Nurmi, who was the most successful athlete of the age, winning nine gold Olympic medals and setting twenty-four world records during the 1920s. Nurmi indeed embodied the passion for sport that characterized the Neue Sachlichkeit era - which is also a central theme in Lotte Laserstein's work. In the elongation and forward thrust of Nurmi's body, Sintenis captures the athleticism, strength, youth and good health that were the ideals of her age. The dynamic of the composition and the sketchy handling of the bronze create a sense of powerful, forward-thrusting energy, an impression of speed that is reinforced by the athlete's front foot overlapping the plinth.

This generic image of the ideal, athletic male body was devalued during the Nazi era when it became associated with their sinister promotion of the Aryan race,

represented, for example, in Leni Riefenstahl's two-part film of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. However, in 1926 *The Athlete (The Sprinter Nurmi)* had very different associations for Sintenis. A photograph of the sculptress posing alongside Paavo Nurmi published in the journal *Der Querschnitt* (1926, p.876) suggests that he provided inspiration for her self-image as the "New Woman." With her famous androgynous hairstyle and long-limbed body, Sintenis was also an active sportswoman, one of the first women to drive a car, and an accomplished horsewoman. The forward-rushing dynamic of *The Athlete* in many ways embodies the aspiration for historical progress that she and other liberated and independent women of her age embraced.

Renée Sintenis re-established her career in West Germany after the war when she was appointed professor at the Berlin Art Academy in 1947 and became a member of the newly founded Akademie der Künste in Berlin in 1955. Her large-format sculpture of the Berlin bear, and the small-format versions that are presented to award-winners at the Berlin film festival, have ensured her on-going fame. The presence of Sintenis' iconic sculpture of *The Athlete* in the Leicester collection represents her achievement, and illuminates an important, transforming theme in German art.

LF17.1955.00 - LF29.1955.00 and LF83.1955.00 – LF94.1955.00

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, postcards, prints and watercolour donated by the estate of Rosa Schapire in 1955

The most important group of works in Leicester's German Expressionism collection is the selection of works on paper by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff that were donated to Leicester by Dr Rosa Schapire's estate in 1955. This group bears witness to the activities of an important émigré collector and represents an excellent overview of Schmidt-Rottluff's work from his early Brücke years up until 1938, the year before Rosa Schapire fled to England.

Schapire was a renowned art historian and an early supporter of Expressionism. She became a non-active member of die Brücke in 1908 and built up an extensive collection of Schmidt-Rottluff's work, which she managed secretly to export to England when she fled Nazi Germany in 1939. In 1946 she offered part of this collection to the Tate gallery, writing to the director John Rothenstein that the gift was intended "as a token of my gratitude for the hospitality that I found in your country." However, anti-German sentiment and Rothenstein's ignorance of modern German art meant that Schapire's bequest was not settled until after her death in 1954. Since the offer of her complete collection of graphics and works on paper to the British Museum was rejected in 1950, these were dispersed among various museums in Germany, Holland, Belgium, Chicago and Tel Aviv, alongside the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery .

Leicester played a vital role in the history of Rosa Schapire's émigré years: in 1953 the museum hosted an exhibition of Schmidt-Rottluff's graphic works from her collection, together with stone carvings belonging to the artist. Schapire considered

this the highpoint of her activities in England and consequently bequeathed a set of ten postcards by Schmidt-Rottluff to the museum. Her executor Gustav Delbanco added the 1938 watercolour, *Landscape* to this bequest together with twelve prints, writing in February 1955 that he thought it would be interesting for Leicester to receive this gift “as yours is the only museum in the country which has a number of pictures by the German Expressionists.” (Leicester History Files, Schmidt Rottluff 1955, letter dated 22. February 1955).

The hand-drawn postcards from Rosa Schapire’s collection include early examples dating from 1909-1913, when the Brücke artists frequently exchanged postcards with other members of the group and their supporters. These small, improvisational drawings in coloured crayon, pen and watercolour are not only important for reconstructing the history of the group; they also give a unique insight into the youthful energy and enthusiasms of the artists, acting almost like an early 20th-century version of instant messaging. One of the most interesting postcards, present in two versions in the Leicester collection, illustrates an offprint lithograph published in the Expressionist journal *Die Aktion* in 1913. The message on the first of these postcards recommends Rosa Schapire to read *Die Aktion*, while the second, hand-coloured version records Schmidt-Rottluff’s interest in Paula Modersohn-Becker’s work. Alongside more personal postcards (such as the three dated 1921, each carrying a single word inscription, ‘Zum – Fünfzigsten - Geburtstag,’ to celebrate Rosa Schapire’s birthday), these early postcards give a fascinating insight into Schmidt-Rottluff’s interests and activities during the Brücke years.

The other highlight of the Rosa Schapire bequest is the group of twelve lithographs and woodcuts, including some important and rare Brücke-period prints by Schmidt-Rottluff. The earliest print is *Harbour at Low Tide*, 1907, which demonstrates the painterly lithographic technique Schmidt-Rottluff introduced to the other Brücke artists. This depicts a boating scene in Dangast, the German North Sea resort that the artist first visited in 1907, accompanied by Rosa Schapire. The woodcuts in the bequest, dating from 1910-1916 form an outstanding group in a technique that was of central importance to die Brücke. Associated with direct expression and authenticity, their woodcuts demonstrate the distinctive Brücke style that was influenced by Edvard Munch’s innovative woodcuts and tribal woodcarvings from Palau. For example, Schmidt-Rottluff’s *Evening Conversation*, 1911, shows the patterns of the wooden block emerging through the image in a style clearly influenced by Munch.

This unique group of works from one of the earliest supporters of Expressionist art is a key asset in the collection.

LF84.1988.0.0 – LF104.1988.0.0., LF.29.1989.0.0, LF.55.1990 – LF.59.1990.00, INV347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 356.

Arnold Gerstl, group of drawings, pastels, watercolours and oil paintings gifted by the artist’s family from 1988-1990.

This important group of works by the German/Czech Expressionist Arnold Gerstl is an example of the role that Leicester plays in preserving the work of émigré artists that would certainly otherwise have been lost for posterity. This aspect of the collection must be considered a key asset in terms of its international importance, as it illuminates a hidden page of history and provides a forum for later researchers into Expressionism.

Very little is known about Arnold Gerstl at present: he was born in Prague in 1888 and died in Windsor in 1957. After growing up in Prague and Vienna, he worked in a film studio in Heidelberg from 1913-14; he then served as an officer in the Austrian army during the First World War. Subsequently Gerstl settled in the Bavarian town of Starnberg, where he was active in the Luitpold-Gruppe of artists (a splinter group of the Münchener Künstlergenossenschaft founded in 1892), and exhibited in exhibitions at the Glaspalast in Munich from 1928-31. In 1933, on account of his Jewish roots, he fled Germany for England, where he became a British citizen in 1939. From 1946 he worked as a curator at the Burton Art Gallery in Bideford.

Gerstl's works in the Leicester collection show that he used luminous colours with simplified figurative forms, favouring pastel and watercolour alongside oil painting. There is a strong, empathetic relationship between man and nature in his work; the forms and branches of trees, for example, are often depicted with expressive human gestures. More generally, Gerstl's figure scenes evince a fantastic, theatrical mood that relates to Austrian Expressionism, especially to the work of Alfred Kubin and the set designs of Alfred Roller. Possibly this aspect of Gerstl's work also relates to his experience of working in cinema.

The Leicester collection provides a mini-overview of Gerstl's oeuvre, which will allow the artist belatedly to take his place in histories of Expressionism. To my knowledge this is the only public collection of the artist's work.

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Section B: A List of Public Collections internationally that have closely related works.

Although many of the major public collections of German Expressionist art are in German museums, the Leicester Arts & Museums collection more closely resembles public collections in the USA, Canada and Australia, many of which are similarly founded on donations and purchases from émigré collectors and artists. In the USA, the activities of the émigré art dealers J.B. Neumann and Curt Valentin meant that German Expressionism was known in New York in the late 1920s and 1930s. The enthusiasm of Alfred H Barr, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, who organized the major survey exhibition *Modern German Painting* in 1931, ensured that German Expressionism was definitely on the map in the USA before the Nazis came to power and war broke out. Nevertheless French art came to dominate the development of both private and public collections in the USA during the post-war era. Given the strong tradition of donating to American museums, émigré collectors played an

important role, as they did in Leicester, in building up public collections of German Expressionist art, when museum acquisition policies generally focused on French modernism.

In Canada, like England, there was far less knowledge of and greater resistance to German art. In 1958 an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* observed how the “two world wars have built an iron curtain between German art and the ‘western world.’ While everybody knows the French art movements, the average North American art lover is much less well-informed about the work of the modern Germans.” (Quoted by Anabelle Kienle Ponka in ‘Bringing German Expressionism to Canada,’ in *Storm and Spirit* The Eckhardt-Gramatté Collection of German Expressionist Art, Winnipeg Art Gallery, September-December 2013). As Anabelle Kienle Ponka remarks: “In Canada, the influence of German émigrés was pivotal, as they were largely responsible for bringing German Expressionist art into the country.” (Ibid. p.32) This renders the Canadian collections listed below similar to Leicester.

Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge MA

The Busch-Reisinger Opened in 1903 as the only museum at the time in North America to promote the understanding of art from German-speaking Europe. The first modern painting, Max Beckmann’s *Self-Portrait with Tuxedo*, 1927, was purchased in 1941 after the Nazis confiscated it from the Nationalgalerie Berlin. Under the influence of Charles L Kuhn, the museum’s curator from 1930-1968, the museum transformed into a leading collection of German Expressionist art.

Detroit Institute of Arts

W. R Valentiner, born in Karlsruhe in 1880, played a vital role in his capacities as curator, advisor and museum director of several US museums, in building up public collections of German Expressionist art in America. In 1914 he had been assigned Franz Marc as his sergeant in World War One and subsequently he became friendly with and supported several of the Expressionist artists. He launched the first exhibition of German Expressionism at the Anderson Galleries, New York, in 1923 and the following year was appointed director of the Detroit Institute of Art, where he remained until 1944. Through his efforts, major works by German Expressionist artists are among the museum’s recognized strengths.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

W.R. Valentiner also inaugurated the outstanding collection of German Expressionism at LACMA when he directed the museum between 1946 and 1953. Augmented in 1980 by the establishment of the Robert Gore Rifkind Centre for German Expressionist Studies, this collection includes an outstanding selection of Expressionist paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings and illustrated books.

Milwaukee Art Museum

Milwaukee's collection of German Expressionism is based on 450 prints donated to the museum by Marcia and Granvil Specks in 2000. Although not an émigré collection as such, the Specks' passion for German Expressionism went hand in hand with the importance they attached to remembering the Holocaust. This was reflected in the 1999 documentary film *Eyewitness* that the Specks produced, chronicling the lives of three artist/prisoners who worked in secret and recorded the everyday life in the death camps. The Expressionist collection in Milwaukee, like Leicester's, is particularly strong in works on paper, but it also includes outstanding individual paintings by Kirchner, Kandinsky, Münter etc.

Museum of Modern Art, New York

After Alfred H Barr's early support of modern German art (Kirchner's *Street, Berlin*, 1913 was purchased in 1939 and Max Beckmann's *Departure* Triptych, 1933-35, was donated in 1942), MoMA focused in the post-war years on the acquisition of French and American modernism. However, the post-war collection of German art includes a number of star paintings, purchased and donated mainly from the 1950s onwards, and an extremely important collection of works on paper (recently included in the exhibition *German Expressionism, the Graphic Impulse*, MoMA, 2011). Although MoMA's collection of German Expressionism far exceeds Leicester's in terms of quality and scale, it nevertheless bears a certain resemblance in terms of its debt to émigré collectors and Jewish patrons.

Neue Galerie, New York

Once again, the quality and scale of this collection, which is devoted exclusively to modern German and Austrian art and design, exceeds Leicester's. The collection includes a large number of Expressionist paintings, works on paper and decorative arts, which were catalogued in the museum publication titled *New Worlds*, on the occasion of the museum's opening in 2001. This private museum was founded by its president, Ronald Lauder, who is also president of the World Jewish Congress, and the art dealer and exhibition organizer Serge Sabarsky, who died in 1996.

North Carolina Museum of Art

The collection of the North Carolina Art Museum also benefited from the activities of W.R. Valentiner, who was its director from 1955-58. In 1958 Valentiner organized the first major exhibition of E.L. Kirchner's work at the museum. Valentiner left a bequest of German Expressionist works from his own collection to the museum, including paintings, sculptures and works on paper. The museum also owns an important Feininger, *The Green Bridge II*, 1916, dating from war years like Leicester's *Behind the Church*, 1917.

Saint Louis Art Museum

The jewel in the crown of the Saint-Louis Art Museum is their extensive collection of Max Beckmann – the largest public collection of the artist's work in the world. The

museum also has extensive collections of German Expressionist artists, including major paintings by Heinrich Campendonk, Lovis Corinth, Erich Heckel, Alexei Jawlensky, George Grosz, Kandinsky, E.L. Kirchner, Oskar Kokoschka, Georg Kolbe, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, August Macke, Franz Marc, Ludwig Meidner, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Otto Müller, Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Georg Tappert. The collection of works on paper by Expressionist artists is not extensive but very select, including outstanding prints and drawings. The quality of the collection results from gifts donated by two local businessmen and philanthropists, Morton D May and Joseph Pulitzer Jr.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

In 2009 the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts acquired part of the Ludwig and Rosy Fischer collection, collected by the couple in Frankfurt between 1913 and 1922, which was as important in its time as the Hess collection in Erfurt. The couple's son, Ernst Fischer, only saved a fraction of the collection, originally comprising some 500 Expressionist works, when he immigrated to the United States in 1934. Other works were confiscated from the family and from the Museum in Halle, where Rosy Fischer had made a major donation in 1924. Some of these works were sold to American collectors like Morton D May, and have since passed into the above-named museums: the Busch-Reisinger, MoMA and Saint Louis all own paintings originally in the Fischer collection. A number of important oil paintings, including works by Kirchner, Heckel, Nolde, and Pechstein together with a large number of important works on paper, are now to be seen in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton, Ontario

This is the most comprehensive collection of German Expressionist and Weimar period prints in Canada. Acquisitions began in the 1960s, spearheaded by three McMaster University educators: art teachers, George Wallace and Naomi Jackson Groves, and Professor of German, Dr Karl Denner. The print collection features important works on paper by Barlach, Corinth, Kirchner, Heckel, Grosz, Kollwitz, Dix and others.

Smaller collections of German Expressionism and Neue Sachlichkeit with a strong émigré influence are found at a number of university museums in America, such as Oberlin College, Ohio, Indiana University Museum, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, the University of Iowa Museum of Art, the Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University and the University of Michigan Museum of Art. In Canada, the Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, the National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Winnipeg Art Gallery all hold collections of German 20th Century Art, including donations from émigré collectors.

There are also a significant number of German Expressionist artists represented in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. The collection has been augmented by émigré donations.

Section C: International Private Collections with closely related works.

There are a number of private collectors of German Expressionism in Germany, Switzerland the USA and elsewhere with a public profile. The most important of these are Ronald S. Lauder (New York), the Serge Sabarsky estate (partly on loan to the Neue Galerie, New York), Robert Gore Rifkind (LACMA), Nelson Blitz and Catherine Woodward (New York), Ruth and Jacob Kainen (781 works donated to National Gallery of Art, Washington DC in 2012) Lothar-Günther Buchheim (housed in the Museum der Phantasie, Bernried), Gabrielle and Werner Merzbacher (Zurich, exhibited internationally including Royal Academy London, *Masters of Colour, Derain to Kandinsky*, 2002), Frieder Burda, (Museum Frieder Burda Baden-Baden) and Andrew Lloyd Webber (London and Berkshire).