
Press Release



ERNST BARLACH and Käthe Kollwitz 13.02. – 25.05.2009

In co-operation with the Ernst Barlach Haus
Stiftung Hermann F. Reemtsma, Hamburg



PRESS INFORMATION

Leopold Museum-Privatstiftung
MuseumsQuartier Wien
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www.leopoldmuseum.org

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In 2009 the Leopold Museum is showing the work of Ernst Barlach (Wedel 1870 – 1938 Rostock) in the most extensive retrospective of his work to be presented in Austria to date. Rudolf Leopold has personally selected more than 40 sculptures and 100 drawings for the exhibition. Assembled from the Ernst Barlach Haus Hamburg, the Leopold Museum and also from private collections, the works will introduce the public in Vienna to the oeuvre of one of the most significant German artists of the 20th century.

Curator of the exhibition: Rudolf Leopold
Research assistant: Patricia Spiegelfeld
Exhibition architecture: Gustav Peichl

THE WORK OF ERNST BARLACH

Ernst Barlach's early work remained within the traditions of Symbolism and Jugendstil. During his stays in France, Barlach could develop little enthusiasm for the work of Rodin. It was not until he returned from an extended stay in Russia in 1906 that he found his way to his own compact style. Through the presentation of his beggar figures at the Berlin Secession he became acquainted with the art dealer Paul Cassirer, who was a key supporter of modern art in Germany. Subsequently, Cassirer would publish Barlach's graphic and literary work, and in 1917 he organised the artist's first solo exhibition. In 1910 Barlach moved to Güstrow and set up a studio there. During this period he increasingly reduced the bodies of his figures to the essentials. In concise forms his depictions transport the spirituality, the still greatness of everyday men and women, as seen in subjects like the old farm woman or the shepherd playing his flute, but also deep introspection. One must only look at how "Reunion" is composed: Thomas recognises the male figure standing before him as the resurrected Christ. The essence of Ernst Barlach's art lies in his ability to express his devotion to and love for his fellow human beings in drawings and sculptures. His work is seen as symbolising an era of upheaval. Although Barlach first greeted the outbreak of war in 1914 with enthusiasm, as can be seen in his avenger figure, he later became a pacifist on account of his personal experiences. The artworks that he produced after 1918 frequently express a deep spirituality, which is manifested in more tranquil forms and unified contours.

In 1926 Barlach began to accept public commissions for monuments and memorials, which were removed or destroyed following the rise of the National Socialist regime in 1933. During the Nazi era the sculptor's work was considered "degenerate art". During these difficult years Barlach found a supporter in the Hamburg art patron Hermann F. Reemtsma, who acquired drawings and sculptures from him. In 1934 Reemtsma commissioned Barlach with the production of the "Frieze of the Listeners". After the artist's death in 1938 Hermann F. Reemtsma remained one of his most important advocates. After 1945 the works that had been removed from public space were restored or replaced.

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THE HERMANN F. REEMTSMA FOUNDATION

In the late 1950s Hermann F. Reemtsma created a foundation that made his collection of works by Ernst Barlach accessible to the public on a permanent basis. In 1960 Reemtsma commissioned the erection of a museum building in Hamburg that would become the Ernst Barlach Haus, which in accordance with the donor's wishes was built in the vicinity of the Elbe River. Most of the works shown in this exhibition are from the Barlach Haus.

EXHIBITION DESIGN

The exhibition architect has endeavoured to design the Barlach/Kollwitz show at the Leopold Museum in such a way that an independent but unassuming spatial context allows the art objects, sculptures and drawings to make their own impression. The primary objective is not to create a spectacular and elaborate display, rather to create an atmosphere for the artworks that provides orientation and blends in well with the museum.



Prof. Rudolf Leopold in the
"sculpture avenue".

A "sculpture thoroughfare" extending through three rooms has been set up, the "Barlach Avenue". Stretching a distance of 40 metres, it presents 42 bronze sculptures of varying dimensions, from the beginning of the 20th century until Barlach's death in 1938. This arrangement gives rise to a communicative unity among the individual artworks, while the master's drawings and sketches are presented on the surrounding walls.

At the end of the sculpture avenue, a well-proportioned, attractive special area has been set up for the sculptures and drawings of Käthe Kollwitz.

Following projects in Frankfurt (Städel Museum) and Bonn (Bundeskunsthalle), this is Gustav Peichl's first exhibition design for an Austrian museum.

Gustav Peichl

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KÄTHE KOLLWITZ

Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) née Schmidt grew up in a family that was intellectually active and unconventional and held deeply felt moral and social principles. These values marked her both as a person and as an artist. Her giftedness for art was recognised early on and supported by her father. She attended the Art School for Girls in Berlin, and at the age of 17 moved to Munich to continue her studies. Influenced by Max Klinger, she decided against the colourful approach to painting and found her own expressive artistic style in the black and white of drawing and etching.

Following her marriage to the physician Karl Kollwitz, she settled with him in a Berlin working-class district, commiserating with the destitution and sorrow of the poor people. Inspired by Gerhart Hauptmann's drama "The Weavers", she worked over the course of several years on a series of six etchings entitled "The Weavers' Revolt". With this effort she achieved great success, and it represented her major breakthrough as an artist. She created a further print series of consummate perfection after the historical novel "The Peasants' War", a depiction of popular uprising against repression.

A poster for the German Home Industries Exhibition was removed from advertising columns at the wish of Empress Auguste Viktoria, because it displeased her to look at the realistic depiction of the poor, overworked woman it showed. Kollwitz took refuge in her family, seeing her two children as the wellspring of her happiness. When her beloved 18-year-old son fell in the War, she became a radical pacifist. Now in her work she saw her mission even more in speaking out against war and violence. The woodcut presented an ideal medium. Her "Memorial Sheet for the Murdered Karl Liebknecht" is a touching document. She did not want a revolution, she wanted to open hearts to the neediness of human beings. This was the sense in which her art was to have "a purpose".

Under the National Socialist regime Kollwitz was prohibited from exhibiting, but her reputation as a symbol of humanitarian art protected her from persecution. Her last series of lithographs, "Death", was created in 1934/35. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, this great German artist stood with passionate commitment against human poverty and suffering. In their power these works are comparable to the etching cycles of Goya.

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ERNST BARLACH AND KÄTHE KOLLWITZ

Ernst Barlach and Käthe Kollwitz shared a kindred spirit. Like Kollwitz, Barlach also felt that the faces of farmers and workers were more interesting and striking than those of the cultivated bourgeoisie. Käthe Kollwitz also had a special relationship to Russia and its people. Although she admired the Russian Revolution, she did not want to share in the path it took. She felt that she belonged to the world of Goethe and Kant.

Käthe Kollwitz admired Barlach greatly, finding that his sculptures had achieved perfection while she was still forced to struggle with form. It was not until the age of 53 that Kollwitz turned her attention to the woodcut, inspired by works by Ernst Barlach that she had seen in the summer of 1920 at a Berlin Secession exhibition. The expressive possibilities offered by this technique opened a new path for coming to terms with the painful experiences of the First World War and the death of her younger son as a soldier.

Ernst Barlach also valued Käthe Kollwitz greatly as an artist and a human being. For the Güstrow cathedral he created a monument, a floating figure with the face of a mother overcoming pain and sorrow. The publisher Reinhard Piper, a friend of Ernst Barlach, reported a conversation with the artist that took place in 1928 in Güstrow. Barlach said: "In creating the angel, the face of Käthe Kollwitz found its way into the work without my intention. If I had wanted to do something like that, it probably would have turned out badly."

The exhibition, realised by the Leopold Museum in co-operation with the Ernst Barlach Haus, has been complemented by works from the Museum's own collection. In combining the work of the two artists, the show traces the numerous personal and artistic points of contact between Ernst Barlach and Käthe Kollwitz while also exploring their differences. Presenting the two artists side by side unfolds a fascinating dialog.

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ERNST BARLACH (SCULPTOR, GRAPHIC ARTIST AND WRITER)

- 1870 Born January 2 in Wedel near Hamburg
- 1888 - 1891 Attends the General Vocational School in Hamburg
- 1891 - 1895 Studies sculpture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Dresden
From 1892, master class with Robert Diez
- 1895 - 1896 First residency in Paris; attends the Académie Julian
- 1898 Participant in the Große Berliner Kunstausstellung with the sculpture
“The Beet Pickers” (entitled “Work”)
- 1904 - 1905 Teaching position at the “Keramische Fachhochschule” in Höhr
Westerwald
- 1906 Travels for two months through Russia; impressions from this trip
inform his expressionistic concept of humankind.
Birth of his son Nikolaus
- 1907 Artistic breakthrough with the exhibition of the sculptures “Blind
Russian Beggar” and “Russian Beggar with Cup”
Contract with the artdealer and publisher Paul Cassirer
Becomes member of the Berlin Secession
Works for the satirical journal “Simplicissimus” (until 1908)
- 1908 First wooden sculptures
First bronzes cast
- 1909 Residency in Florenz: Villa Romana-Prize
Friendship with the poet Theodor Däubler
- 1910 Relocates to Güstrow, lives there with his mother and son
- 1912 Publishes first play “Der tote Tag” (The Dead Day) with 27 lithographs,
with Paul Cassirer
- 1914 - 1917 Publishes articles for “Kriegszeit” (Wartime) and for “Der Biedermann”
(The Honest Man). In 1915, discharged from a two-month Landsturm
soldier training in Sonderburg. Petitions by Max Liebermann, Max Slevogt
and August Gaul
- 1917 Creates lithographs for the play “The Poor Cousin”
First retrospective at Paul Cassirer
- 1923 Creates wood-cut illustrations for Walpurgis Night from Goethe’s play
“Faust”
- 1927 Generates Güstrow Memorial for the soldiers killed in action during World
War I at the cathedral in Güstrow
- 1928 Creates the memorial Spiritual Warrior at the University Church in Kiel
- 1930 Honorary exhibit at the “Preußische Akademie der Künste”
(Prussian Academy of Arts). Participation at the Venice Biennale on the
occasion of his 60th birthday
- 1931 Creates the Hamburg Memorial
- 1933 Protests in a letter against the expulsion of Käthe Kollwitz and Heinrich Mann
from the “Preußische Akademie der Künste” (Prussian Academy of Arts)
Attains the highest civil order “Pour le Mérite”
- 1934 - 1937 Fervid attacks of Nazis against Barlach, removal of his memorials, bans on
his plays and books
- 1938 Dies on October 24 in Rostock; October 28 funeral in Ratzeburg

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KÄTHE KOLLWITZ (GRAPHIC ARTIST AND SCULPTOR)

- 1867 Born July 8 in Königsberg
- 1885 - 1889 Begins artistic career as student of Karl Stauffer-Bern in Berlin and Ludwig Herterich in Munich
- 1891 Marries the doctor Karl Kollwitz; they have two sons (1892 and 1896)
Moves to Berlin, district Prenzlauer Berg
- 1898 Participates in the Berliner Kunstausstellung (art exhibit) with the graphic cycle Revolt of the Weavers based on Gerhard Hauptmann's play "Die Weber" (The Weavers) – with it she achieves her artistic breakthrough
- 1898 - 1903 Teaching assignment at the "Künstlerinnenschule" (Art School for Women) in Berlin
- 1899 Member of the Berlin Secession
Creates graphic folios based on the part of "Gretchen" from Goethe's play "Faust"
- 1901 First residency in Paris
- 1904 Second residency in Paris; studies at the Académie Julian, learns the fundamentals of sculptural design
- 1907 Residency in Florenz: Villa Romana-Prize
- 1908 - 1911 Works for the satirical journal "Simplizissimus"
- 1909 First sculptural works
- 1913 Elected to the board of the Secession
- 1914 Son Peter killed in action at the Western Front
- 1916 Sees the sculpture "Mourning" by Barlach at the Berlin Secession
- 1917 Exhibition at Cassirer for her 50th birthday
- 1920 Inspired by Barlach, creates her first woodcuts
- 1921 - 1922 Completes the suite "War" as a series of woodcuts
- 1927 Journey to Russia
- 1928 Head of master class for graphic arts at the "Preußische Akademie der Künste" (Prussian Academy for the Arts)
- 1929 Receives the highest civil order "Pour le Mérite"
- 1936 Her works, along with those by Ernst Barlach, Wilhelm Lehmbruck and Heinrich Mann, are removed from the anniversary exhibit "Berlin Sculptors from Schlüter to the Present" at the Academy
- 1937 Exhibitions of her works are banned
- 1938 Starts work on the relief Grievance, after Barlach's funeral (completed 1940)
- 1944 Relocation to Moritzburg near Dresden
- 1945 Dies April 22; her urn is transferred to Berlin in September

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CATALOGUE RECOMMENDATIONS

Der Bildhauer Ernst Barlach

Skulpturen und Plastiken im Ernst Barlach Haus – Stiftung Hermann F. Reemtsma
Edited by Sebastian Giesen, with articles by Eva Caspers, Sebastian Giesen, Elisabeth Laur and Werner Schnell

270 pages with ca. 240 illustrations (80 in colour), hardcover, German/English

Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg, 2007

ISBN: 3980980952 | ISBN-13: 978-3980980951

€ 36.70

Der Zeichner Ernst Barlach

Bestandskatalog der Zeichnungen im Ernst Barlach Haus

Edited by Sebastian Giesen, with articles by Andrea Fromm, Sebastian Giesen, Arie Hartog, Gudula Mayr, Horst Otto Müller, Volker Probst, Dagmar Rödiger-Lekebusch and Claudia Valter

376 pages with ca. 530 illustrations (83 in colour), hardcover, German

Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg, 2002

ISBN: 3980791661 | ISBN-13: 978-3980791663

€ 36.70

Ernst Barlach und Käthe Kollwitz im Zwiegespräch

Martin Fritsch (ed.), 144 pages, 4 colour and 180 b/w illustrations, hardcover, German
E.A. Seemann Verlag, Leipzig, 2007

ISBN: 3865021395 (2nd edition) | ISBN-13: 978-3865021397

€ 25.60

Käthe Kollwitz. Meisterwerke der Zeichnung

Edited by Hannelore Fischer. With articles by Hannelore Fischer, Alexandra von dem Knesebeck, Werner Schade und Doris Schmidt.

Köln 1995, 255 pages, 124 colour illustrations

ISBN: 3770134362 | ISBN-13: 978-3770134366

€ 25,00

Käthe Kollwitz. Druckgraphik, Zeichnungen & Plastiken aus dem Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln

Exhibition Diözesanmuseum Hofburg Brixen 17.03. bis 27.05.2007.

Edited by Diözesanmuseum Hofburg Brixen, with articles by Hannelore Fischer, Alexandra von dem Knesebeck, Katja Lambert, Leo Andergassen

Bozen 2007, 189 pages, numerous colour illustrations

€ 20,00

FILM RECOMMENDATION

Ernst Barlach. Mystiker der Moderne

A film by Bernd Boehm

DVD, 43.3 min, German

© 2006 NDR / Böhm-Lutz Filmproduktion Hemmelmark

produced for NDR in co-operation with ARTE

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THE EXHIBITION IN THE LEOPOLD MUSEUM

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Rudolf Leopold

SCIENTIFIC ASSISTANT
Patricia Spiegelfeld

EXHIBITION DESIGN
Gustav Peichl

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OPENING

Daily except Tuesday from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Thursday 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Closed on Tuesday

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