

kunstmuseum basel

Castaway Modernism

Basel's Acquisitions
of "Degenerate" Art

*“It feels like a fairy tale
to me, if only the circumstances
that led to it weren’t so
harrowingly real and brutal.”*

Georg Schmidt,
director of the Kunstmuseum Basel,
to the Jewish art critic Paul Westheim
in his Paris exile, July 1939

The Basel Acquisitions 1939: A Chronology

1936 The new Kunstmuseum—today’s Hauptbau—is inaugurated. At this time, the Basel collection includes very little modern art.

1937 The National Socialists who rule Germany under Adolf Hitler seize “degenerate” art from German museums: modern works that are anathema to the regime.

The director of the Basel museum, Otto Fischer, inquires whether the seized works are for sale.

1938 The Nazi regime decides to sell “internationally salable” works of “degenerate” art abroad to raise revenues in foreign currencies.

The National Socialists destroy many of the seized works that are not considered “internationally salable.”

1939 The incoming director of the Basel museum, Georg Schmidt, travels to Berlin. He selects works of “degenerate” art for potential acquisition.

The museum’s board of trustees, its highest decision-making body, applies to the executive council of the Canton of Basel-Stadt for a special fund to finance acquisitions of “degenerate” art.

The government approves a loan of CHF 50,000, which is used to purchase twenty-one works of European modernism for the Basel collection.

Eight works are bought at an auction of “internationally salable” art in Lucerne organized from Berlin by the Ministry of Propaganda. Thirteen more works are bought directly from art dealers commissioned by the Nazi authorities.

The acquisitions make their public debut in Basel in November.

1941 Nine works the Basel museum has been unable to acquire are sent back to Berlin. Two of them are now considered lost.

Kunstmuseum Basel | Neubau
2nd Floor



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Having seized power in Germany in 1933, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) stifled artists' creative freedom.

Thousands of works that did not conform to the Nazi state's ideology and racial science were denounced as "degenerate" and, in 1937, confiscated and removed from German museums. The best-known of these works were sold abroad in 1939 to raise revenues in foreign currencies.

In the summer of 1939, the Kunstmuseum Basel acquired altogether twenty-one eminent works formerly held by German museums.

The acquisitions laid the foundation for the modern collection. But they were also a business deal with a dictatorial government.

The exhibition reconstructs the history of the Basel acquisitions as well as the losses in connection with the Nazi regime's ostracization of "degenerate" art.

ROOM 1

Basel 1937

A new museum of art without modernism

The new Kunstmuseum Basel—today’s Hauptbau—is inaugurated in 1936.

The art collection of the City of Basel is celebrated for its works by Old Masters.

The collection as it stands includes very little modern art: the handful of works in this room are all that the Kunstmuseum has to offer in its “contemporary gallery” before 1939.

Having struggled for decades with a lack of space, the museum’s officials now face the question of how to fill the new building with art worthy of its stately halls.

PAUL KLEE (1879–1940)

Senecio (Soon to be Aged) (Senecio [Baldgreis]), 1922

Oil on chalk grounding on gauze on card, 40.3 × 37.4 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1931

Provenance: Alfred Flechtheim, Düsseldorf/Berlin; 1927 Galerie Neue Kunst Fides, Rudolf Probst, Dresden/Mannheim; ...; Graphisches Kabinett Günther [and Sophie] Franke, Munich; 1931 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased from Günther and Sophie Franke

The painting was produced during Klee’s years at the Bauhaus and continues to be one of his best-known and popular works. Besides Nolde’s *Blue Iris I*, it was one of the first acquisitions of modern art for the Kunstmuseum Basel. The playful title makes reference to the botanical name for “old-man-in-the-spring,” *Senecio vulgaris*. Klee felt the effects of the National Socialist repressions after they seized power in 1933: he was ousted from his position as professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and he subsequently returned to his hometown of Bern.

LOUIS MOILLIET (1880–1962)

At the Circus (Im Zirkus) (3rd version), 1914–15

Oil on canvas, 140.5 × 200.3 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired with funds from the Birmann-Fonds 1915

Provenance: 1915 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased from the artist

This was the first painting of classical modernism at the Kunstmuseum Basel. In 1914, Moilliet traveled to Tunisia with Paul Klee and August Macke. He wrote the following about this painting, which he produced after the trip: "My 'circus' was not painted because of the motif; it was my desire to recognize the energy and spatial images in the effects of the color." The work, which initially met with widespread public rejection due to its bold colors, was purchased from an exhibition at the Kunsthalle Basel the very same year it was created. It would be another fifteen years before another modern work entered the museum's collection.

EMIL NOLDE (1867–1956)

Blue Iris I (Blaue Iris I), 1915

Oil on canvas, 89.1 × 73.8 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1930

Provenance: before 1924 Willy Hahn, Cologne; ...; Kunsthaus Schaller, Stuttgart; 1930 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased from the Kunsthaus Schaller

Blue Iris I was already in the possession of the Kunstmuseum Basel in 1939, and at this point in time it was one of the few works of modern German art in the collection. The second version of the painting, which was also painted in 1915, is in the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle. Sixty-five of Nolde's paintings were confiscated from German museums, thirty-three of which were on display at the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Munich in 1937. In the efforts to rehabilitate ostracized art after the war, this overt persecution initially led to Nolde becoming the epitome of the persecuted artist. Recent research, however, has confirmed his staunch National Socialist convictions and led to a revision of this prior assessment.

WILHELM LEHMBRUCK (1881–1919)

Female Torso (Weiblicher Torso), 1910

Stone cast (concrete cast), Height: 117 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1938

Provenance: ca. 1918 Max Wistinetzki, Allenstein, East Prussia (from ca. 1936 Meged, Palestine); 1938 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased from Max Wistinetzki

Nine stone casts and one in bronze are known to have been made of this sculpture. It was produced at the beginning of Lehmbruck's productive artistic period in Paris, which simultaneously marks his departure from academic art: along with Ernst Barlach, Lehmbruck is now regarded as a pioneer of classical modernism. He became known worldwide through his participation in presentations such as the Salon d'Automne in Paris and New York's Armory Show in 1913. He was briefly deployed as a paramedic during World War I, moving to Zurich after his release. He took his life, presumably due to depression, in 1919.

MAX ERNST (1891–1976)

The Great Forest (La Grande Forêt), 1927

Oil on canvas, 113.8 × 145.9 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1932 with a contribution from Dr. Emanuel Hoffmann-Stehlin

Provenance: Walter Schwarzenberg, Brussels; 2/1–2/1932 auction Schwarzenberg, Galerie Giroux, Brussels, lot 158a; 2/2/1932 Kunstmuseum Basel

Max Ernst was one of the most important artists for the Basel-based collector and patron of the arts Emanuel Hoffmann-Stehlin, who aided the Kunstmuseum in the purchase of this outstanding work. Ernst, one of the most influential Surrealist artists, used the grattage technique that he developed for the structures in the forest rising in the center of the painting: the objects placed below the painted canvas, whose relief becomes apparent by scratching off the layer of paint, introduce an element of chance into the working process. In 1922, Ernst moved to Paris, the capital of Surrealism. Three of his paintings were confiscated from German museums in 1937; they are considered to be missing to this day. Two of them were on display in the exhibition *Degenerate Art*.

LOVIS CORINTH (1858–1925)

Portrait of Reich President Friedrich Ebert

(Bildnis des Reichspräsidenten Friedrich Ebert), 1924

Oil on canvas, 140 × 100 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1937 with contributions from the unions and the Department of Education of Basel-Stadt

Provenance: Charlotte Berend-Corinth, Berlin, widow of the artist; 1937 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased from Charlotte Berend-Corinth

Corinth painted a portrait of the first Reich president of the Weimar Republic in Ebert's home one year before his death. In this portrait, he is depicted less as a Social Democrat than a crisis-proof head of state: at this point in time, he had introduced a currency reform to counter rapid inflation and thwarted an attempted coup by the NSDAP under Adolf Hitler against the still young parliamentary democracy. In 1937, the conservator of the Kunstmuseum Basel, Otto Fischer, was able to acquire the portrait of Ebert from Corinth's widow, the artist Charlotte Berend-Corinth, for the collection with contributions from the unions and the Department of Education of Basel-Stadt. However, there was strong disapproval within the Kunstkommission. Fischer's vote was required to push through the purchase.

ROOM 2

Germany 1937

“Degenerate” art I—confiscation and exhibition

The National Socialists under Adolf Hitler, who have been in power in Germany since 1933, wield the term “degeneracy” as an ideological cudgel against modern art.

In 1937, some 21,000 sculptures, paintings, and works on paper deemed “degenerate” are seized from German museums. Works by Jewish artists or with Jewish or political themes are among the campaign’s primary targets.

The exhibition *Degenerate Art* held in 1937 pillories the ostracized modernists. Meanwhile, the *Great German Art Exhibition* showcases works that have the regime’s approval.

Otto Fischer, the director of the Basel museum, inquires whether the art seized from museums is for sale.

HANNS LUDWIG KATZ (1892–1940)

Male Portrait (Männliches Bildnis), ca. 1920

Oil on canvas, 65 × 50 cm

Kunsthalle Emden

Provenance: Stiftung Kowarzik, Frankfurt am Main; 1921 Badische Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, gift from Stiftung Kowarzik; 7/10/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 7/19/1937 propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art*; 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); ...; 1964 Galerie Mona Lisa, Paris; ...; date unknown, private collection, Paris; ca. mid-1980s Galerie Michael Hasenclever, Munich; 1987 Henri Nannen collection, Hamburg; 1989 Stiftung Henri and Eske Nannen and gift of Otto van de Loo, Emden (Kunsthalle Emden)

Around 1920, Hanns Ludwig Katz worked intensively on portrait painting. *Male Portrait* is one of the few works that have survived from this phase. Others were either destroyed or lost when Katz emigrated to South Africa in 1936. One year later, in 1937, he was vilified as “degenerate” due to his Expressionist style of painting and his Jewish faith, especially since he was an active member of the Jüdischer Kulturbund, the cultural federation of German

Jews, in Frankfurt am Main. In the years between the two world wars, Katz's works were on display in important exhibitions of modern art, for instance at Paul Cassirer's art salon in Berlin. The appreciation of his art ceased completely as a result of National Socialist persecution.

LUDWIG MEIDNER (1884–1966)

***Self-Portrait (Selbstbildnis)*, 1912**

Oil on canvas, 79.5 × 60 cm

Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt

Provenance: 2/19/1918 Carl Steinbart; 1923 (?) Erich Wiese, Breslau; April 1929 Schlesisches Museum der Bildenden Künste, Breslau, gift from Erich Wiese; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as "degenerate" art; 1937 propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art*; ...; Dr. Hans Fetscherin, Munich; 1958 Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt

This self-portrait points the way forward for the artist's oeuvre in two ways: the powerful brushstrokes mark the artist's departure from Impressionism; and the bold use of color while realistically depicting the subject makes Meidner one of the first expressive realists. In 1937, the National Socialist state confiscated the work from the Schlesisches Museum der Bildenden Künste in Breslau (today Wrocław, Poland), at the time part of the German Reich, and presented it in the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Munich and at further venues. It was also illustrated in the accompanying brochure. At the time, the work had entered the Breslau collection as a gift from its director, Erich Wiese, who lost his position there in 1933 but was able to acquire the work a second time in 1958—this time for the Landesmuseum Darmstadt.

PAUL KLEE (1879–1940)

***The Saint of the Inner Light (Der Heilige vom innern Licht)*, 1921**

Color lithograph on card

Sheet: 37.6 × 24 cm

**Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett,
acquired in 1935**

Provenance: Alfred Hess, Erfurt; ...; Galerie Valentien, Stuttgart; 1935 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased from Galerie Valentien

This sheet, bought in 1935 for Basel a few years after *Senecio*, is part of the first so-called Bauhaus portfolio, which featured prints by several Bauhaus masters. Printed and bound in the workshops there, the total of five portfolios united art and craftwork, as was consistent with the school's ideals. Ten copies of this Klee print were confiscated from German museums in 1937. The motif was presented in the "exhibition of infamy" *Kunst der Geistesrichtung 1918–1933* (Intellectual Art, 1918–1933) in Breslau and moreover printed in the brochure accompanying the propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Munich, which included fifteen works by Klee.

MARC CHAGALL (1887–1985)

***The Pinch of Snuff (Rabbi) (La Prise [Rabbin])*, 1923–26**

Oil on canvas, 116.7 × 89.2 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1927 (?) probably auction at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris; 11/9/1928 Das Kunsthhaus, Herbert Tannenbaum, Mannheim; 11/9/1928 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, purchased from Herbert Tannenbaum; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 17; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

Chagall painted this portrait of a Jewish scholar in Paris after an reproduction of an earlier version from 1912 (private collection). The rabbi lifts a pinch of snuff to his nose, which, unlike smoking, practicing Jews are allowed to do on the Sabbath. As a work by a Jewish artist and depicting a Jewish subject and symbol of the Jewish faith, *The Pinch of Snuff* was vilified immediately after the National Socialists seized power: it was shown in the defamatory exhibition *Images of Cultural Bolshevism* in Mannheim in 1933. Following its confiscation from the museum there in 1937, it was dragged through the streets and pilloried as a waste of tax money. It was also on display within the scope of the National Socialist propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art*. Georg Schmidt, who bought the painting in 1939 at the auction of “degenerate” art in Lucerne for the collection in Basel, also reckoned with resistance against the purchase in Basel. Today it is regarded internationally as one of the best-known works of classical modernism.

WILHELM LEHMBRUCK (1881–1919)

***Kneeling Woman (Grosse Kniende)*, 1911, cast 1925**

Bronze, 174.5 × 67.7 × 140 cm

Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg

Provenance: 1925 cast commissioned by the City of Duisburg, purchased from Anita Lehmbruck, widow of the artist

In the beginning, Lehmbruck’s motif of the *Kneeling Woman* became a symbol of the hate of modern art in Germany and later the symbolic work of its rehabilitation. Four stone casts existed during Lehmbruck’s lifetime. Due to a lack of financial means, the artist was temporarily unable to have bronze casts made. In 1927, reactionaries in the Tonhallengarten in Duisburg knocked down and severely damaged this first posthumous bronze cast of 1925. The National Socialist regime also disdained Lehmbruck’s art: in 1937, the stone cast presented in the exhibition *Degenerate Art* broke due to improper handling, and another one was destroyed during the war in a Berlin air raid. A bronze cast of *Kneeling Woman* was a striking prelude to the first Documenta in 1955. Following World War II, it thus came to represent the will to rehabilitate the art outlawed during the period of National Socialism.

GEORGE GROSZ (1893–1959)

***The End (Das Ende)* (Sheet 83 from the portfolio *Ecce Homo*), 1917**

Offset lithography, Sheet: 36 × 26.5 cm

***Friedrichstrasse* (Sheet 1 from the portfolio *Ecce Homo*), 1918**

Offset lithography, Sheet: 36 × 26.5 cm

Beauty, Thee I'll Praise (Schönheit, dich will ich preisen)

(Color plate 3 from the portfolio *Ecce Homo*), 1919

Offset lithography, Sheet: 36 × 26.5 cm

***Twilight (Dämmerung)* (Color plate 16 from the portfolio *Ecce Homo*), 1922**

Offset lithography, Sheet: 36 × 26.5 cm

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett

Provenance: Alfred Klinkmüller, Berlin; 1949 Galerie des 20. Jahrhunderts, Berlin-Ost, purchased from Alfred Klinkmüller; 1968 Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, permanent loan from the State of Berlin

George Grosz unsparingly called attention to social and political wrongs in his paintings and drawings. His portfolio *Ecce Homo* likewise deals critically with the circumstances in the Weimar Republic. Upon closer inspection, what at first glance seems to be a wanton, frivolous mood, reveals itself as a world full of violence, fear, and neglect. Grosz's oeuvre—he rejected any sort of antidemocratic tendency—was confiscated due to his political convictions. The large share of his works affected by the “*degenerate art*” campaign, confiscated and destroyed by the dozens, can be explained by the prevalence of his portfolios in German museum collections.

GEORGE GROSZ (1893–1959)

Right Is with the Strongest (Das Recht wohnt beim Überwältiger)

(Sheet 9 from *The Robbers*, Act I, Scene 1), 1921–22

Photolithography, Sheet: 49.9 × 38 cm

I Have Done My Part ... Plundering Is Your Business (Ich habe das Meine getan ...

***Das Plündern ist eure Sache!)* (Sheet 4 from *The Robbers*, Act II, Scene 3), 1922**

Photolithography, Sheet: 47.9 × 37 cm

I Want to Exterminate Everything around Me, Which Restricts Me, That I Am Not Lord

(Ich will alles um mich her ausrotten, was mich einschränkt, dass ich nicht Herr bin)

(Sheet 1 from *The Robbers*, Act I, Scene 1), 1922

Photolithography, Sheet: 57.6 × 42.5 cm

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett

Provenance: John and Gertrud Heartfield; 1975 Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, acquisition through the Kulturfonds der DDR from Gertrud Heartfield

Unlike many of his contemporaries, George Grosz did not in the least welcome World War I or glorify it as a purifying event. Instead, his drawings, which were published in the leading print media of the 1920s and 1930s, showed him to be one of the sharpest representatives of socially driven, critical art. In early 1933, Grosz left Germany for New York, where

he had given painting lessons at a private school since 1932. The National Socialists expatriated him shortly after seizing power. He ultimately became an American citizen in 1938. One year prior to that, many of his portfolios were removed from German museums. He did not return to Germany until 1959.

WASSILY KANDINSKY (1866–1944)

***Small Worlds II (Kleine Welten II)*, 1922**

Lithograph in yellow, red, blue, and black, Sheet: 33.1 × 28.2 cm

***Small Worlds III (Kleine Welten III)*, 1922**

Lithograph in yellow, red, blue, and black, Sheet: 33.1 × 27.5 cm

***Small Worlds VI (Kleine Welten VI)*, 1922**

Lithograph in black, Sheet: 33.7 × 28.8 cm

***Small Worlds VII (Kleine Welten VII)*, 1922**

Lithograph in yellow, red, blue, and black, Sheet: 33.2 × 28.1 cm

***Small Worlds IX (Kleine Welten IX)*, 1922**

Dry point, Sheet: 30 × 26.7 cm

***Small Worlds X (Kleine Welten X)*, 1922**

Dry point, Sheet: 30 × 26.5 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett

Provenance *Small Worlds II, III, VI, and VII*: Alois Schardt, Halle/Berlin; 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, purchased from Alois Schardt

Provenance *Small Worlds IX and X*: Galerie Cramer, Geneva; 1957 Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, purchased from Galerie Cramer

Kandinsky, a pioneer of abstraction in the 1920s, came to the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1922. The 230 copies of the *Small Worlds* portfolio were produced that same year. The title of his most important portfolio of prints is telling: each sheet is a small artistic world in itself. In line with the respective possibilities of the three different printing techniques of woodcut, etching, and lithograph, he combined expressive fragments reminiscent of figurative motifs with abstract-geometric forms. The National Socialists vilified his oeuvre as “degenerate”; nevertheless, from 1933 until his death in 1944—and despite German occupation—he lived largely unimpeded in Paris.

RUDOLF BELLING (1886–1972)

***Head in Brass (Kopf in Messing)*, 1925**

Brass, 39 × 22.5 × 19 cm

Kulturhistorisches Museum Rostock

Provenance: 1926 Museum Folkwang, Essen; 8/25/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 11/24/1938 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission, returned; 1943–44 Bernhard A. Böhmer, Güstrow, wartime evacuation to Güstrow by Rolf Hetsch; 5/3/1945 Estate of Bernhard A. Böhmer, Güstrow; 5/3/1945 Wilma Zelck, Rostock; 3/21/1947 Soviet Occu-

pation Zone, Deutsche Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung, secured by Kurt Reutti; 3/21/1947 Museum der Stadt Rostock (today the Kulturhistorisches Museum Rostock), storage in depot to be returned to museum of origin, 2009 asset attribution

The fate of the oeuvre of Rudolf Belling exemplifies the arbitrariness of National Socialist art policy. Like his abstract-expressive sculpture *Triad (Dreiklang)*, a version of *Head in Brass* was part of the *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich. Yet Belling had successfully submitted his bronze *The Boxer Max Schmeling* to the *Great German Art Exhibition*, which opened at the same time. When this became apparent, *Triad* and *Head in Brass* were removed from the defamatory exhibition in Munich. Contrary to what is often assumed, the head appears not to have been modeled on Toni Freeden. Belling instead seems to have had Madonna figures in mind.

MAX BECKMANN (1884–1950)

Descent from the Cross (Kreuzabnahme), 1917

Oil on canvas, 151.2 × 128.9 cm

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Curt Valentin Bequest, 1955

Provenance: Georg Hartmann, Frankfurt am Main, purchased from the artist, returned; 1919 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, purchased from the artist; 10/26/1936 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 1938 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/21/1941 Curt Valentin, New York, acquired through Karl Buchholz; 1954 Estate of Curt Valentin; 1955 Museum of Modern Art, New York

The radical transition that took place in Beckmann’s style under the immediate impression of the horrors of World War I is recognizable in this painting. In the depiction of Christ’s descent from the cross, the artist, deployed to the front as a medic, precisely and at once poignantly portrays the apparently unredeemed dying surrounding him. In 1918, the painting was acquired for the Städel Museum in Frankfurt as the first modern artwork after World War I. “I chose this painting, because I found these very things depicted by a very powerful artist in a very authentic way.... Beckmann was in the war and experienced all of the horror there,” said Georg Swarzenski, the museum’s director at the time, who was ousted by the National Socialists in 1933. The work was showcased in the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Munich.

ROOM 3

Germany 1938 “Degenerate” art II—vilified and forgotten

Many of the artists whose works are removed from German museums in 1937 have only just started their careers.

Their art reflects the realities of the 1920s: the hardships and opulence of city life, mass unemployment and political radicalization.

The National Socialists destroy most of the works by these young and comparatively obscure artists because they have no use for them.

Many of the artists stand no chance of making a name for themselves in Germany, let alone abroad, and are forgotten. Some examples of the art of the interwar period are on display in this room.

FRANZ FRANK (1897–1986)

The Unemployed (Proletarians) (Die Arbeitslosen [Proletarier]), 1928–29

Oil on canvas, 191 × 298 cm

Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt

Provenance: early 1950s Landessozialgericht, Darmstadt, purchased from the artist; Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt

“The army of unemployed, muffled and silent, stand shoulder to shoulder.” This is how the artist described this monumental painting, which he considered his magnum opus. Still, each figure in this wall of people is an individual—Frank worked with models from a nearby soup kitchen. Until 1939, the canvas bore the title of *Proletarians*, before Frank chose the nonpolitical designation *The Unemployed*. Between 1928 and 1933, the artist was represented at numerous exhibitions. The City of Dresden and the State of Saxony purchased his paintings. After 1933, Frank refused to join the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, which is why he was dismissed from his post as lecturer at the educational academy in Kassel. Because abstraction was the predominate style after World War II, his entire oeuvre faded into obscurity.

OTTO NAGEL (1894–1967)

***Weekly Market in Wedding (Wochenmarkt im Wedding)*, ca. 1926**

Oil on canvas, 79.5 × 100.5 cm

Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Kunstsammlung, inv.no.: MA 48

Provenance: 12/22/1951 Deutsche Akademie der Künste, Berlin, purchased from the artist; 1968 Walli Nagel, Berlin, taken over by the Deutsche Akademie der Künste; 1985 Akademie der Künste, Berlin, gift of Walli Nagel

In 1937, the National Socialists confiscated numerous works by Otto Nagel from public collections. They are likely destroyed. That same year, Nagel, who had fought as a soldier in World War I and was actively involved politically, was in jail, banned from working as an artist and vilified as “degenerate.” In his art he intensively examined the life of underprivileged sectors of the population and the class struggle. In *Weekly Market in Wedding*, the unsparing representation of the faces become a mirror of the prevailing social contradictions and antagonisms. Nagel’s success in the GDR hampered his reception in reunited Germany.

JOSEF VINECKY (1882–1949)

***The Muse (Sinnende)*, 1921**

Stone Cast, 49 × 25 × 28 cm

Museum Wiesbaden

Provenance: It is not clear whether this work is identical to the sculpture by Josef Vinecky confiscated from the Gemäldegalerie Wiesbaden; Landesmuseum Wiesbaden

Josef Vinecky counts among those ostracized artists whose reception in Western Europe came to a complete standstill after 1945. Henry van de Velde’s former assistant created a diverse oeuvre encompassing applied art and architectural and independent sculpture. The coherent, concentrated shape of the *Muse* from 1921 is in keeping with the subject of contemplation. *The Muse* was produced during Vinecky’s time in Wiesbaden, where he and his wife Li Vinecky-Thorn ran a successful painting school. In 1933, he lost his job as the director of the carpenter’s workshop at the academy in Breslau, at the time part of the German Reich. Having changed locations numerous times in response to the political circumstances, after the war he worked as a private teacher in the Czech city of Olomouc.

CONRAD FELIXMÜLLER (1897–1977)

***Lovers in Front from Dresden (Liebespaar vor Dresden)*, 1928**

Oil on canvas, 160 × 100 cm

Albertinum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden

Provenance: 1968 Albertinum, Galerie Neuer Meister, Dresden, gift of the artist

After World War I, the Dresden-born artist had a substantial influence on the city’s nascent cultural life. Initially still inspired by Cubism and Expressionism, in the 1920s his style became more objective. Personal motifs replaced political ones. For this work, which relates through its sober atmosphere to the Neue Sachlichkeit style, he received the grand prize for painting at the 1928 anniversary exhibition of the Sächsischer Kunstverein in Dresden. Beginning in 1933, Felixmüller was harassed due to his former involvement in the Communist Party of Germany and his art was vilified as “degenerate.”

ANITA CLARA RÉE (1885–1933)

***White Nut Trees (Weisse Nussbäume)*, 1920–25**

Oil on canvas, 71.2 × 80.3 cm

Hamburger Kunsthalle, purchased with funds from the
Campe'schen Historischen Kunststiftung, 2013

Provenance: 1935 Friederike Frieda and Dr. Ernst von der Porten, Hamburg/Zurich/Brussels/South of France, bequeath of the artist; ...; private collection, Belgium; 10/14–15/2008 auction, Campo & Campo, Antwerp, lot 83; 10/14–15/2008 Jean-Ange Van Innis, Belgium; 11/25/2011 auction no. 190, Auktionshaus Grisebach G.m.b.H., Berlin, lot 226, withdrawn; 6/23/2012 auction, Beurret & Bailly, Antwerp, lot 366, sale after an amicable agreement with the sole heir and granddaughter of Frieda von der Porten; 6/23/2012 Le Claire Kunst, Hamburg; 6/6/2013 Hamburger Kunsthalle

Anita Rée was baptized and raised a Protestant; however, in the perfidious categories of the National Socialist state, her descent from a Jewish family in Hamburg sufficed to ostracize her and her oeuvre. Rée, who had built up an ever-expanding public, received noticeably less commissions even before the National Socialist seizure of power. In 1932 she moved to the North Sea island of Sylt, where in 1933 she took her own life. The works she created in the 1920s are today considered to mark a high point of her creativity. And *White Nut Trees* is recognized as a masterpiece of Neue Sachlichkeit.

KARL OPFERMANN (1891–1960)

***Old Jew (Alter Jude)*, 1923**

Wood, carved, 41.5 × 22.5 × 12 cm

Bürgerstiftung für verfolgte Künste—Else-Lasker-Schüler-Zentrum—
Kunstsammlung Gerhard Schneider

Provenance: Gerhard Schneider; 2004 Bürgerstiftung für verfolgte Künste, Solingen, purchased from Gerhard Schneider

Karl Opfermann's sculpture *Old Jew* from 1923 is characterized by the expressive gaze and striking features as well as a powerfully modeled, animated chin beard. After training as a sculptor in Flensburg and Hamburg, Opfermann, who served as a soldier during World War I, was initially able to celebrate several successes with official commissions and purchases by museums. As a member of the Hamburg Secession as well as the Novembergruppe, he belonged to the north German avant-garde. His relationship to National Socialism is difficult to pin down: until 1936, like numerous other sculptors, Opfermann—a member of the NSDAP—received several public commissions for decorative figures on barracks. Commissioned by his uncle, a factory director, he created a bust of Adolf Hitler in 1935. Two of his works were confiscated and destroyed in 1937. He was discharged from military service for health reasons.

LASAR SEGALL (1891–1957)

***The Eternal Wanderers (Die ewigen Wanderer)*, 1919**

Oil on canvas, 138 × 186 cm

Museu Lasar Segall, São Paulo

Provenance: 1919 Stadtmuseum Dresden; 9/23/1933 *Degenerate Art* propaganda exhibition; July 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 depot of exhibits from the propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art*, Velten/Mark; ...; Emeric Hahn, Paris; ...; 1957 Museu Lasar Segall, São Paulo

Lasar Segall, who was born in Vilnius, which belonged to Russia at the time, received art training in Berlin and Dresden. Art critics, who praised the “gloomily mystic character” of his art, soon mentioned his name in the same breath as Kandinsky and Chagall. Segall was cofounder of the Dresden Secession in 1919. *The Eternal Wanderers*, his key work produced that same year, was bought by the municipal museum there. On the basis that Segall was a Jew, it was presented in the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in 1937, after having been removed along with three other paintings of his—two of which are now regarded as destroyed—from German museums. In Brazil, where he had emigrated as early as 1923, he succeeded in making a fresh start as an artist.

MILLY STEGER (1881–1948)

Resurrection (Memorial to Two Sisters)

(*Auferstehung [Grabmal für zwei Schwestern]*), 1921

Plaster, painted, 109.5 × 55 × 34 cm

Permanent loan from a private collection to the Zentrum für verfolgte Künste, Solingen

Provenance: Bürgerstiftung für verfolgte Künste, Solingen, permanent loan from a private collection

After an Expressionist phase, *Resurrection (Memorial to Two Sisters)* was created at the outset of the 1920s, when Steger turned to a neoclassical formal language: accordingly, sobriety and the expressively stretched form merge in this sculpture of two figures. Steger, who had a remarkable career for a woman in the Weimar Republic, is surely a representative of a forgotten generation of artists of this period. However, it is questionable whether she can be regarded as having been persecuted: while her works were removed from German museums, there are also indications of opportunistic decisions made in relation to the Nazi regime.

PAUL KLEINSCHMIDT (1883–1949)

***Barmaid (Bardame)*, 1932**

Oil on canvas, 135 × 110 cm

Arthouse Collection

Provenance: Maria Salzmann-Kleinschmidt, Ulm, daughter of the artist; Hanna Bekker vom Rath, Frankfurt am Main; 1949 private collection, Basel; ...; Galerie Herbert Leidel, Munich; 1996 private collection, Germany; 6/23/2010 auction, Sotheby’s, London, lot 167; 6/23/2010 private collection, Europe; 5/14/2021 private collection unknown, purchased from private collection, Europe; 5/14/2021 auction, Sotheby’s, New York, lot 149; 5/14/2021 Arthouse Collection

A central motif in Paul Kleinschmidt's works are voluptuous, sensual women in the bars, cabarets, and cafés that characterized Berlin's nightlife. *Barmaid* illustrates the special quality of his unusual approach to the most popular motif of the Weimar Republic: his works often appear wan and focus primarily on the figures. Although he was well connected and surrounded by prominent advocates, ostracization by the National Socialists brought his career to an abrupt end. Banned from painting, in 1936 he emigrated with his family via Switzerland and the Netherlands to France. He was interned in 1943 and forced to resettle in Germany. He lost a major share of his works during an air raid in the final weeks of the war.

ELFRIEDE LOHSE-WÄCHTLER (1899–1940)

Lissy, 1931

Pencil and watercolor on paper, Sheet: 68 × 49 cm

Private collection Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Provenance: Galerie Krokodil, Hamburg; ...; Galerie Brockstedt, Hamburg; ...; Galerie Michael Hasenclever, Munich; before 1990 (?) Marvin and Janet Fishman, Milwaukee; 10/18/2000 auction Marvin and Janet Fishman Collection, Sotheby's, London, lot 4; 10/18/2000 private collection Städel Museum Frankfurt

Lissy is one of numerous expressive drawings and pastels that Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler—inspired by her friends Otto Dix and Conrad Felixmüller—created from the 1920s on. At the beginning of the 1930s, however, her life was marked by a difficult marriage to Kurt Lohse and her unstable mental state: a nervous breakdown was followed by several periods of hospitalization and a diagnosis of schizophrenia. After her divorce in 1935, she was legally incapacitated, and after being subjected to forced sterilization as an inmate in a mental hospital that same year, her artistic production came to a standstill. On July 31, 1940, she was murdered in the National Socialist “Aktion T4” euthanasia program.

JEANNE MAMMEN (1890–1976)

Revue Girls (Revuegirls), 1928–29

Oil on paper, 64 × 47 cm

Berlinische Galerie—Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur

Provenance: 1977 Berlinische Galerie, acquired from the artist's estate

Jeanne Mammen's artistic ascent came to an abrupt end with the National Socialist seizure of power: up to that point, she had worked successfully as an illustrator for various newspapers and magazines, while at the same time creating a multifaceted painterly oeuvre by being interested in people on the street, in cafés, and in nightclubs. In 1933 she withdrew into inner emigration, and after World War II she was unable to build on her previous success. *Revue Girls* is her best-known painting. The women appear unapproachable, testifying to the distanced style of Neue Sachlichkeit. The austere side view, which against the dark background directs the viewer's attention entirely to the prominent profiles, even brings Renaissance portraiture to mind.

CHRISTOPH VOLL (1897–1939)

***Joseph*, 1923–24**

Oak, painted, 138 × 38.5 × 32.5 cm

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München

Provenance: Galleria del Levante, Munich; 1976 Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, acquired from the Galleria del Levante

Before the National Socialists seized power, Christoph Voll was represented in museum collections with sculptures and works on paper. In 1937, forty-three of his works were confiscated, thirty-three of which are later listed in the Nazi inventory as destroyed. His early Expressionist works were especially affected by the confiscations. Whereas his *Joseph* figure stands at the beginning of what was more of a veristic, classical phase of his oeuvre, the rough treatment of the surface retains an Expressionist vibrancy. After 1933, Voll was initially allowed to continue his work as a professor at the Baden State School of Art in Karlsruhe, but he was later suspended. After his defamation, in 1937 his contract was not renewed. He died in 1939 at the age of just forty-two.

Berlin 1938–39

“Degenerate” art III—vilified and sold off

The Nazi regime urgently needs funds in foreign currencies: well-known works of “degenerate” art are set aside for sale abroad.

780 paintings and sculptures and 3,500 works on paper are categorized as “internationally salable” and gathered in a warehouse set up in Berlin-Schönhausen in 1938.

The Reich Ministry of Propaganda commissions four art dealers with “liquidating” this stock. The officials also prepare an auction in Switzerland.

In 1939, Georg Schmidt, the incoming director of the Basel museum, visits the warehouse in Berlin, where he sees major works of German and French modernism. But he also has his hosts show him art that the Nazi authorities consider unsuitable for sale abroad.

ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY (1864–1941)

Variation: Severe Winter (Variation: Strenger Winter), 1916

Oil on canvas artists' paper, mounted on card, 36 × 27 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, acquired in 1941

Provenance: 1922 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim; 8/28/1937 RMVP, confiscated as “degenerate art”; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); October 1939 Hildebrand Gurlitt, Hamburg, purchased from RMVP; 1941 Hans Gessner, Münchenstein; 1941 Kunstmuseum Basel

As a Russian, during World War I Jawlensky was considered an “enemy foreigner” in Germany and had to leave the country. The two *Variations* acquired by the Kunstmuseum Basel in 1941 were produced during the artist's years of Swiss exile on Lake Geneva. He

observed the landscape there from the window of a cramped apartment that he shared with his family. Because of his modest living situation, he used canvas artists' paper as ground. Jawlensky viewed the resulting landscape series as a mirror of his state of mind: "My soul had changed due to enormous suffering, and that demanded finding other forms and colors in order to express what moved my soul." He undertook the last journey before his death in 1937, when he visited the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Munich, where his art was vilified.

ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY (1864–1941)

Variation: Night (Variation: Nacht), 1916

Oil on canvas artists' paper, mounted on card, 35.5 × 27 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, acquired in 1941

Provenance: 1922 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim; 8/28/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as "degenerate" art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin ("internationally salable" art); October 1939 Hildebrand Gurlitt, Hamburg, purchased from RMVP; 1941 Hans Gessner, Münchenstein; 1941 Kunstmuseum Basel

Following a memorial exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Basel on the occasion of Jawlensky's death, the museum acquired two works. The exhibition was initiated by Karl Im Obersteg, a collector and member of the Basel Kunstkommission during the purchases made in 1939. He was also part of the Basel delegation at the 1939 auction in Lucerne. Works such as this one demonstrate that art vilified as "degenerate" continued to find its way into the Kunstmuseum Basel even after the 1939 purchases: the confiscations from German museums by the National Socialists led to an international redistribution that had a lasting impact on the museum world.

KARL SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF (1884–1976)

Russian Village (Russisches Dorf), 1919

Oil on canvas, 88 × 100 cm

Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg

Provenance: 1922 Ruhmeshalle, Wuppertal-Barmen; 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as "degenerate" art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin ("internationally salable" art); 1938 special holdings RMVP, Berlin; ...; 1954 Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg

Like many artists of his generation, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff also served as a soldier in World War I. This painting was produced in 1919, while he was still under the impression of his deployment in the Russian Empire. Heightening the impressions left while he was there, the work uses simplified forms, which here become buildings, and pronounced, intense colors. Both elements are characteristic not only of Schmidt-Rottluff's art but also of the style of painting of the Brücke artists' group, which he had founded in 1907 along with Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Fritz Bleyl, and Erich Heckel. His works therefore did not conform to the reactionary artistic ideal of the National Socialists, who in 1937 ostracized Schmidt-Rottluff as "degenerate." They confiscated more than six hundred of his works from public ownership and banned him from his profession in 1941.

KARL HOFER (1878–1955)

***Self-Portrait (Selbstbildnis)*, 1935**

Oil on canvas, 115 × 91 cm

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie.

Legacy in memory of Paul E. Geier and Gabriele B. Geier

Provenance: 12/13/1935 Nationalgalerie (Kronprinzen-Palais) Berlin, exchanged with artist for the *Self-Portrait* from 1928; 8/16/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 53; 6/30/1939 Paul Esselborn and Gabriele Brougier Geier, Rome/Cincinnati, purchased through Fritz Steinmeyer Kunsthandels AG Luzern at the auction at Galerie Fischer; 5/19/2014 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, bequest from Gabriele Brougier Geier

In this painting, Hofer depicts himself as one of the most important representatives of art of the interwar period. When the *Self-Portrait* was confiscated, he painted a second version. Hofer had publicly criticized the National Socialist regime multiple times; in the eyes of those in power, his influence as a teacher at the Hochschule der bildenden Künste in Berlin made him “one of the most dangerous art celebrities of the Weimar system.” Eight of his works were presented at the exhibition *Degenerate Art*. Hofer divorced his first wife, who as a “non-Aryan” was henceforth no longer under the legal protection of the “privileged mixed marriage.” She was murdered in Auschwitz just a few years later.

ERNST BARLACH (1870–1938)

***The Reunion (Christ and Thomas) (Das Wiedersehen)*, 1926**

Sapele mahogany, 90 × 38 × 25 cm

Ernst Barlach Haus—Stiftung Hermann F. Reemtsma, Hamburg

Provenance: Paul Cassirer, Berlin; 1926 Landesmuseum Schwerin; 8/18/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 2/13/1939 Bernhard A. Böhmer, Güstrow; 1939 Hermann F. Reemtsma, Hamburg; 1960 Ernst Barlach Haus, Stiftung Hermann F. Reemtsma, Hamburg

This group of figures, one of Barlach’s major works, shows a biblical scene: Thomas, a disciple of Jesus, does not want to believe in his resurrection until he has seen it with his own eyes and can place his finger on Christ’s wounds. Besides this first large version made of wood, in 1937 three further, smaller bronze sculptures featuring the same motif were confiscated from German museums. This work can be identified in historical photographs of the depot of “internationally salable” art at Schönhausen Palace. Acting in opposition to the authorities’ agenda, the art dealer Bernhard A. Böhmer, a friend of Barlach’s, sold it from there to a collector in Germany.

MARC CHAGALL (1887–1985)

Winter (L'Hiver), 1911–12

Watercolor and gouache on cardboard, 48.2/48.8 × 61.6/62.4 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, acquired in 1939

with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1925 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main; 8/25/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 16; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

This work, the only piece of graphic art among the Kunstmuseum Basel's 1939 acquisitions, already evinces what later became Chagall's characteristic combination of different perspectives; at the same time, the bird's-eye view conveys the feeling of floating above the rural scenery. The untreated surface of the paper in the foreground reads as a snowscape behind which rises a bluish-gray winter sky. As a painting by a Jewish artist who made Judaism the main theme of his works, Chagall's art was particularly targeted by the persecution of the National Socialist regime.

LYONEL FEININGER (1871–1956)

Gelmeroda VIII, 1921

Oil on canvas, 100.3 × 80.3 cm

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Purchase

Provenance: 1924 Schlossmuseum (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen) Weimar; August 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 3/7/1940 Galerie Ferdinand Möller, Berlin/Zermützel, exchanged for a painting by Ernst Oehme; 1952 Curt Valentin, New York; 1953 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Feininger saw the Gothic village church with the unusual pointed spire in Gelmeroda, a district of Weimar, for the first time in 1906. He subsequently and for decades integrated it into sketches, prints, and paintings. He painted the first oil painting of a thirteen-part series in 1913. This eighth version of the motif was produced during Feininger's period as the director of the printing workshop at the Bauhaus in Weimar, where he taught from its foundation in 1919 until 1925. Along with Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Alexej von Jawlensky, in 1924 he established the exhibition collective Die Blaue Vier (The Blue Four). In 1937, the German-American artist resettled in the United States, where he was able to gain a foothold in the art world despite his advanced age.

ERICH HECKEL (1883–1970)

Spring in Flanders (Frühling in Flandern), 1916

Oil on canvas, 82.7 × 96.7 cm

Osthaus Museum Hagen

Provenance: Rosy Fischer, Frankfurt am Main; 1924 Städtisches Museum für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe Halle an der Saale, purchased from Rosy Fischer; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 3/5/1941 Galerie Ferdinand Möller, Berlin/Zermützel/Cologne,

exchanged for a painting by Ernst Oehme; November 1946 secured by Kurt Reutti; ...; 1949 Galerie Ferdinand Möller, Cologne; 1953 Osthaus Museum Hagen

While the title may suggest otherwise, *Spring in Flanders* does not feature an idyllic landscape, but one that has been ravaged by shelling: in World War I, Heckel was deployed in this region as a medic. Like the other members of the Brücke artists' group, in the interwar period he was able to celebrate major successes with his expressive works. However, the seizure of power by the National Socialists brought that to an abrupt end. More than seven hundred of his works were confiscated as part of the "degenerate art" defamation campaign. *Spring in Flanders*, taken on commission by Ferdinand Möller as "internationally salable," remained in Germany after the war.

PAUL GAUGUIN (1848–1903)

***The Sorcerer of Hiva Oa (Le Sorcier d'Hiva Oa)*, 1902**

Oil on canvas, 92 × 73 cm

Liège, Musée des Beaux-Arts / La Boverie

Provenance: Ambroise Vollard, Paris; ...; Pauline Kowarzik, Frankfurt am Main; 1926 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, purchased from Pauline Kowarzik; 12/1/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as "degenerate" art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin ("internationally salable" art); 6/30/1939 auction "Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen," Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 44; 6/30/1939 Le Musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain, Liège

All his life, Paul Gauguin was on a quest for a mythical paradise, which he projected onto the region of the South Pacific. His interest in non-European cultures, perceived nativeness, and spirituality resulted in two journeys to Polynesia—where, as a European, he naturally profited from the structures of French occupation. *The Sorcerer of Hiva Oa* testifies to the inspiration that Gauguin drew from the lifeworld he encountered there: he developed a new style characterized by bright colors that often fill large areas and that are delineated by strong contours. The condemnation and confiscation of his art by the National Socialists was probably not just about questions of style. Gauguin's works had become famous worldwide, with the result that an interest in their sale for acquiring foreign currency may well have played a role.

ROOM 5

Basel 1939

To buy or not to buy?

Georg Schmidt is determined to build a modern collection in Basel.

He persuades the trustees, whose approval is required for all acquisitions, to purchase works formerly held by German museums—at the planned auction in Lucerne and directly from the warehouse in Berlin.

The first work of “degenerate” art bought by the Kunstmuseum Basel is Franz Marc’s *Animal Destinies*.

After a contentious debate, the board of trustees asks the executive council of the Canton of Basel-Stadt to provide funding to finance the acquisitions. Though politically controversial, the request is eventually greenlighted.

FRANZ MARC (1880–1916)

***Animal Destinies (The Trees Showed Their Rings, the Animals Their Veins)*
(*Tierschicksale [Die Bäume zeigten ihre Ringe, die Tiere ihre Adern]*), 1913**
Oil on canvas, 194.7 × 263.5 cm

**Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from
the government of Basel**

Provenance: 1916 Maria Marc, Ried, widow of the artist; 1930 Städtisches Museum für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe, Halle, purchased from Maria Marc; 8/21/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 1939 Hildebrand Gurlitt, Hamburg, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Hildebrand Gurlitt

Franz Marc was killed in action in 1916 in World War I. A year later, *Animal Destinies*, the prophetic vision of a world on fire, was presented in Berlin in a memorial exhibition for the artist. The right third of the painting was destroyed in a storeroom fire. Paul Klee, who was Marc's friend and, like him, a member of the Expressionist group of artists Der Blaue Reiter, restored the work in 1919 on the basis of preliminary studies and illustrations of it. However, by using markedly darker shades of color, he kept the loss visible. In 1937, the painting, which was already considered one of Marc's major works, was part of the National Socialist confiscations. Georg Schmidt saw it in the depot of “internationally salable” art at Schönhausen Palace; he arranged its purchase even before the special credit for the acquisition of “degenerate” art was approved. The parallels between the fates of artist and work, the ostracization by the National Socialists, and the apocalyptic subject have made the painting an icon of Expressionism.

ROOM 6

Lucerne 1939 “Modern Masters from German Museums”

The auction “Modern Masters from German Museums” is held by Galerie Fischer, Lucerne, on June 30, 1939. 350 prospective buyers from Switzerland and abroad attend the event.

A hundred and twenty-five works from the warehouse of “internationally salable” art at Schönhausen Palace are to be sold off.

All in all, eighty-six works in the Lucerne auction enter private and public collections outside Germany.

The Kunstmuseum Basel’s delegation acquires eight pictures, spending roughly half of the CHF 50,000 appropriated by the government.

PAUL KLEE (1879–1940)

Villa R, 1919

Oil on card, 26.5 × 22.4 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: November 1919 Pauline Kowarzik, Frankfurt am Main; 1926 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, purchased from Pauline Kowarzik; 8/25/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 59; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

This early work by Klee was created shortly before he began teaching at the Bauhaus. It is one of the first oil paintings by Klee, who had long worked exclusively on paper. Reinterpreting traditional landscape painting, he transforms the view of nature into—as he called it—“abstract pictorial architecture” with mysterious elements such as the isolated letter *R*. At the auction in Lucerne, the painting, known as “House at the Roadside” (*Haus am Weg*), was not among the works the Basel delegation had planned to bid on, but it was ultimately purchased with the funds that were still available.

ANDRÉ DERAÏN (1880–1954)

Still Life with Calvary (Nature morte au Calvaire), 1912

Oil on canvas, 65.3 × 57.3 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: Galerie Kahnweiler, Paris; ca. 1913 Carl Hagemann, Elberfeld/Frankfurt am Main; 1929 Museum Folkwang, Essen, gift from Carl Hagemann; 8/25/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 32a; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

This painting marks a sea change in Derain’s work in which he abandoned the strong colors of his Fauvist period. A second painting of the same motif (private collection) originated that same year. It shows the identical view from the window from a slightly different perspective. Derain drew fierce criticism due to his participation in a tour organized by the National Socialist artist Arno Breker for propaganda purposes in 1941, and after World War II his works were temporarily not exhibited. Along with other French artists, he had visited studios in Berlin. With his participation in the tour, Derain apparently hoped to recover his house in Chambourcy that had been confiscated by the Germans.

HENRI MATISSE (1869–1954)

The River Bank (La Berge), 1907

Oil on canvas, 73.2 × 60.3 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1953

Provenance: 6/13/1907 Félix Fénéon, Paris, commission; 6/18/1907 Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris; 2/6/1908 Karl Ernst Osthaus/Museum Folkwang, Hagen, purchased at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune; 1922 transferred to the Museum Folkwang, Essen, with the collection of Karl Ernst Osthaus; 8/25/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 96; 6/30/1939 Max Mueller, Ascona; ...; 1953 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased from private collection through Ernst Beyeler

This landscape with a mild spring sky was produced in Collioure, a fishing village on the western Mediterranean coast, where Matisse regularly painted between 1905 and 1914. It was here, too, that he and André Derain developed Fauvism—a style of art using bold, unmixed colors. Schmidt was familiar with the painting from the 1939 auction at the Galerie Fischer in Lucerne, from where it entered into a private Swiss collection. Fourteen years later, the Kunstmuseum was offered the opportunity to buy it. Schmidt, still in office, praised it as a “particularly precious work” from the artist’s classical Fauve period. Like the works by Jawlensky in this exhibition, *The River Bank* is also an example of the fact that art that had been deemed by the Nazi state to be “internationally salable” and sold abroad could years later find its way into the collection of the Kunstmuseum.

HENRI MATISSE (1869–1954)

***Flowers and China (The Capuchin Cress) (Fleurs et céramique [Les Capucines])*, 1913**

Oil on canvas, 93.5 × 82.5 cm

Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Provenance: 11/27/1913 Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris; ...; 1917 Robert von Hirsch, Offenbach; 1917 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, gift of Robert von Hirsch; 8/25/1937 RMVP, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 94; 6/30/1939 Le Ray Berdeau, New York/West Palm Beach; ...; 1954 Arnold Kirkeby; 11/19/1958 auction, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York; 11/19/1958 Marc Miczne, Rio de Janeiro, and Sidney Janis Gallery, New York; 1/21/1959 Galerie Beyeler, Basel; 11/1/1959 G. David Thompson, Pittsburgh; 1962 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Between 1909 and 1911, Henri Matisse’s radiant colors and uncanny sense of lightness became increasingly prevalent, likewise in the work of his numerous students at the Académie Matisse. He was highly respected by the German Expressionists—the Brücke artists’ group would have liked to have admitted him as a member. The fact that the director of the Städel Museum, Georg Swarzenski, brought this work into the collection of the museum in Frankfurt am Main in the midst of World War I testifies to his European convictions. Robert von Hirsch, the Jewish collector who had financed it, emigrated to Basel in 1933, where he also became an important patron for the Kunstmuseum. *Flowers and China* was confiscated in 1937 and auctioned off in Lucerne in 1939. Thanks to one of the largest fundraising campaigns of the postwar period, the work could be brought back to the Städel Museum.

WILHELM LEHMBRUCK (1881–1919)

***Seated Girl (Sitzendes Mädchen)*, 1913–14**

Stucco, red-tinted and polished, 30 × 48 × 22 cm

Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, acquired in 1921, 1937 confiscated as “degenerate,” 1999 bought back with Lotto funding

Provenance: Galerie Schaller, Stuttgart; 1921 Württembergische Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, purchased from Galerie Schaller; 8/27/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 72; 6/30/1939 Joseph Pulitzer Jr., St. Louis, purchased through Pierre Matisse at the auction Galerie Fischer; ...; 1963 at the latest Ira Haupt, New York; 1963 probably Enid Annenberg Haupt, New York; 5/13/1998 auction, Christie’s, New York, lot 229; 1998 Galerie Michael Werner, Cologne/New York; 1999 Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

Lehmbruck produced four versions of *Seated Girl* during his lifetime—in bronze, terra-cotta, and artificial stone. In a historical photograph, they can all be seen lined up in the depot of “internationally salable” art at Schönhausen Palace—two of them are missing today. The version presented here comes from the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, where it was confiscated in 1937. In 1939, the Basel Kunstkommission unsuccessfully attempted to purchase it at the auction in Lucerne. After years of being dealt on the art market, the work could finally be bought back by its museum of origin: one example of the efforts made by numerous German museums to retrieve confiscated works of art.

MARIE LAURENCIN (1883–1956)

***Portrait of a Young Girl (Portrait de jeune fille)*, ca. 1924**

Oil on canvas, 64 × 54 cm

Liège, Musée des Beaux-Arts / La Boverie

Provenance: Galerie Flechtheim, Berlin; 5/26/1925 Stadtmuseum Ulm, purchased from the Galerie Flechtheim; 8/26/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 83; 6/30/1939 Le Musée d’Art moderne et d’Art contemporain, Liège

For years, Marie Laurencin maintained a lively exchange with the artistic avant garde in all of Europe—a painting by Henri Rousseau at the Kunstmuseum Basel shows her with her partner, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire. With its delicate and dark-eyed depiction of the sitter, *Portrait of a Young Girl* is an example of Laurencin’s carefree portraiture, which she developed independent of influences such as Cubism and Dadaism. Bought by the Stadtmuseum Ulm in 1925, the work—the only one by the French artist in a German museum—was confiscated by the National Socialists in 1937 and sold two years later at the auction in Lucerne. From there it entered the collection of the Belgian city of Liège and thus remained accessible to the public.

PABLO PICASSO (1881–1973)

***The Soler Family (La Famille Soler)*, 1903**

Oil on canvas, 150 × 200 cm

Liège, Musée des Beaux-Arts / La Boverie

Provenance: 1903 Soler collection, Barcelona; ...; Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Paris; 1914 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne; 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 114; 6/30/1939 Le Musée d’Art moderne et d’Art contemporain, Liège

Picasso was commissioned by the Soler family to produce this painting during his so-called Blue Period—based on a family photo and inspired by Manet’s *The Luncheon on the Grass*. In 1939, the Kunstkommission in Basel hoped to acquire the impressive work. However, since this would have almost completely exhausted the entire special credit from the government, this plan was abandoned on the day of the auction. The Musée des Beaux-Arts in Liège, who had a much larger acquisition budget at its disposal, bought the painting in 1939 at the auction in Lucerne along with eight other works.

JAMES ENSOR (1860–1949)

Death and Masks (La Mort et les masques), 1897

Oil on canvas, 78.5 × 100 cm

Liège, Musée des Beaux-Arts / La Boverie

Provenance: Vande Putte Collection, Brussels; ...; Dr. Keller, Paris; ...; Das Kunsthaus, Herbert Tannenbaum, Mannheim; 1927 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, purchased from Herbert Tannenbaum; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 39; 6/30/1939 Le Musée d’Art moderne et d’Art contemporain, Liège

About his mask motifs, which made him famous, James Ensor wrote, “Behind the masks there is violence and glamor.” His expressive style became a model for numerous Expressionists. In this painting, death, holding a candle that has gone out—a symbol of impermanence—joins the masked people. Sources of Ensor’s inspiration were his parent’s souvenir shop as well as the carnival tradition in his hometown of Oostende. This is one of the artist’s best-known works, and the Basel Kunstkommission agreed from the very beginning that it should be bought for Basel at the auction in Lucerne. Following a misunderstanding with colleagues in Zurich, who also wanted to submit an offer for it, the work went to the delegation from Liège.

OTTO DIX (1891–1969)

Portrait of the Artist’s Parents I (Bildnis der Eltern I), 1921

Oil on canvas, 101.1 × 114.8 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1924 Johanna Ey, Düsseldorf; 1924 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne; 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 37; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

As an early work in the style of Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity), the intimate portrait of the artist’s parents shows an unadorned reality of life yet lends great dignity to the traces of hard work. Dix produced a second version in 1924 that is now at the Landesmuseum Hannover. After the National Socialists seized power, Dix was removed as one of the first from his teaching post at an academy. The confiscation of his works can most of all be traced back to their pictorial content, which was characterized as “disgraceful” due to its depiction of prostitution, poverty, and war invalids. Instead of leaving the country, the artist retreated into “inner emigration” on Lake Constance and painted little more than landscapes.

LOVIS CORINTH (1858–1925)

Flowers and Daughter Wilhelmine (Blumen und Tochter Wilhelmine), 1920

Oil on canvas, 111 × 150 cm

**Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit
from the government of Basel**

Provenance: 1920 (?) Wolfgang Gurlitt, Berlin, probably gift of the artist; ...; at the latest 1931 Curt Glaser, Berlin; 1931–32 Nassauisches Landesmuseum, Wiesbaden; 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 25; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

In the works from his final years, floral still lifes became an important motif for Corinth, who revived the classical subject with downright impetuous and gestural brushwork. Produced after a stroke, Corinth’s late oeuvre was proclaimed by the National Socialists to be “pathological and unintelligible scribbling” and vilified as “degenerate.” At the auction in Lucerne, the Basel Kunstkommission (board of trustees) initially wanted to acquire another still life by the artist, but then ended up buying this work: the virtuoso use of color permeates the portrait of his daughter, the exuberant flower arrangement, and the ominous dark sculpture with equal intensity.

PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER (1876–1907)

***Self-Portrait as a Half-Length Nude with Amber Necklace II
(Selbstbildnis als Halbakt mit Bernsteinkette II), 1906***

Oil on canvas, 61.1 × 50 cm

**Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit
from the government of Basel**

Provenance: 1913 Herbert von Garvens-Garvensburg, Hannover; 1928 Kestner Museum Hannover, purchased from Herbert von Garvens-Garvensburg; 8/20/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 8/20/1937 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/30/1939 auction “Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen,” Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 97; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

This intimate self-portrait is one of the artist’s best-known works; she died shortly after completing it. It is considered to be one of the first nude self-portraits ever and was in all likelihood not meant for public display. The portrait, exhibited for the first time in 1913, was based on a photograph and also reveals the influence of the ancient mummy portraits that fascinated the artist. Although it surpassed the set limit, the Kunstkommission acquired the painting for the Kunstmuseum at the Lucerne auction.

ROOM 7

Basel 1939

From Berlin for inspection I

Two weeks after the Lucerne auction, the trustees convene for another meeting.

Georg Schmidt has had twenty works sent from Berlin to Basel for inspection. This presentation is the first time they are gathered again since then.

The majority of them come from the warehouse at Schönhausen Palace. The five works by Oskar Schlemmer and Georg Schrimpf are an exception. The National Socialists considered them unsuitable for sale abroad.

The trustees need to make a selection: the remainder of the government's acquisitions fund is not enough to purchase all works Schmidt has ordered.

OSKAR SCHLEMMER (1888–1943)

Interior with Five Figures, Roman (Fünf Figuren im Raum, Römisches), 1925

Oil on canvas, 97.1 × 62.2 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1927 Folkwang Museum, Essen, purchased from the artist; 7/6/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; July 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Karl Buchholz

In its examination of the subject of the body in space, this painting is characteristic of Schlemmer's oeuvre. He also pursued this interest in revolutionary projects as director of the Bauhaus stage, temporarily giving up painting in the mid-1920s. When the National Socialists rose to power, Schlemmer hoped to be spared ostracization, as he understood his art as “unpolitical.” Nevertheless, in 1933 his retrospective at the Kunstverein in Stuttgart was closed—his art was found to be “decadent” and “crude,” as the Nazi daily *NS-Kurier* put it.

OSKAR SCHLEMMER (1888–1943)

***Three Women (Drei Frauen)*, 1924–25**

Oil on canvas, 71.2 × 80.3 cm

Missing

Provenance: March 1931 Schlesisches Museum der Bildenden Künste, Breslau; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 1/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; whereabouts unknown

Today, only a historic black-and-white photograph is left of *Three Women*. Georg Schmidt had the work brought to Basel from Berlin as one of three paintings by Schlemmer—who described his art as “referring to the Romantic, the German, and the classical”—along with two paintings by Georg Schrimpf. Schmidt had found these five paintings in what he referred to as a “shed” where works were stored that the National Socialists had not categorized as “internationally salable.” When it became evident that only two of Schlemmer’s works would be purchased, Georg Schmidt turned to the art dealer Buchholz with the request, “Be generous and give it to us!,” albeit unsuccessfully.

OSKAR SCHLEMMER (1888–1943)

***Women on Stairway (Frauentreppe)*, 1925**

Oil on canvas, 120.6 × 68.9 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1927 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, purchased from the artist; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; July 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Karl Buchholz

Schlemmer tried to argue against his art being outlawed, yet six of his paintings, among them the works later sent to Basel, were on display in the defamatory exhibition *Degenerate Art* in 1937. That same year, his art was also presented at in the propaganda exhibition *Bolshevism Unmasked* in Berlin. After he had left the Bauhaus and lost several jobs as a result of National Socialist repression, Schlemmer eked out a living doing odd jobs and working as a house painter, salesman, and for a paint factory.

GEORG SCHRIMPF (1889–1938)

***Girl at the Window (In the Morning) (Mädchen am Fenster [Am Morgen])*, 1925**

Oil on canvas, 77.5 × 48.5 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1927 Nationalgalerie Berlin; 7/7/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; July 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Karl Buchholz and Hildebrand Gurlitt

Following a Romantic tradition of painting, beginning in 1938 Georg Schrimpf was among the artists who developed a new style that soon became known as Neue Sachlichkeit, or New Objectivity. This work by Schrimpf, acquired by the Kunstmuseum Basel and featuring typified female figures in interior spaces looking out at wide-open landscapes, is charac-

teristic of his oeuvre of the 1920s. Georg Schmidt recognized a connection to the art tradition of German Romanticism—he saw the works as conveying an “experience of being imprisoned in a room and longing for the blue distance beyond.” He was all the more baffled by the work’s ostracization. The National Socialists did not regard the artist’s works as “internationally salable.” Schmidt later wrote that he had “rescued them from certain destruction.”

GEORG SCHRIMPF (1889–1938)

On the Balcony (Girl on the Balcony)

(Auf dem Balkon [Mädchen auf dem Balkon]), 1927

Oil on canvas, 94 × 73 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1927 Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, purchased from the exhibition *Münchener Neue-Secession*; 7/9/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; July 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Karl Buchholz and Hildebrand Gurlitt

Schrimpf’s works escaped the first wave of National Socialist persecution. Although the artist was active in left-wing politics movement, he was appointed to a professorship in Berlin in 1933, though he was dismissed four years later. As with other artists, the Nazi regime had no consistent stance toward Schrimpf’s oeuvre: his early work was ostracized, yet his later landscape paintings were exhibited in German museums and purchased even after the wave of confiscations. Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s deputy in the party leadership, valued his art and in 1937 arranged for one of Schrimpf’s works to be removed from the exhibition *Degenerate Art*. Schmidt discovered both of the artist’s works in what he called a “shed” in which artworks were stored that the National Socialists had not categorized as “internationally salable,” and had them brought to Basel.

MAX BECKMANN (1884–1950)

The Nizza in Frankfurt am Main (Das Nizza in Frankfurt am Main), 1921

Oil on canvas, 100.1 × 65.3 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1922 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, purchased from the artist; 7/7/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 12.06.1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired through Karl Buchholz

Before Beckmann lost his professorship at Frankfurt’s Städelschule following the National Socialists’ seizure of power in 1933, he was one of the most successful artists of the Weimar Republic. This painting depicts the city as a landscape. “The Nizza” (after the city of Nice) is what the people of Frankfurt call a park with Mediterranean plants on the bank of the River Main across from Sachsenhausen. Georg Schmidt had three works by Beckmann sent to Basel from Berlin and supported the purchase of this painting.

MAX BECKMANN (1884–1950)

***Rugby Players (Rugbyspieler)*, 1929**

Oil on canvas, 213 × 100 cm

Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg

Provenance: 1930 Galerie Flechtheim, Berlin; 1930 Staatliche Gemäldegalerie Dresden, acquired from Galerie Flechtheim; 8/12/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; November 1943 Karl Buchholz, storage with Karl-Heinz Brandt, Gramzow; March 1945 Karl Buchholz, storage at the Rosgartenmuseum, Konstanz; December 1945 Marie-Louise Buchholz, Überlingen; April 1948 Galería Buchholz, Madrid; September 1948 Buchholz Gallery Curt Valentin, New York; 1955 Estate of Curt Valentin, New York; 1955 Galerie Grosshennig, Düsseldorf; 1955 Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg

This painting shows the denouement of a rugby match. Piled high in an extreme vertical format, one team attempts to score as the other tries to prevent it. Since its introduction in Germany in the 1870s, rugby spread only gradually. It was not very popular in the Weimar Republic, where boxing and cycling became mass phenomena. Beckman was already a star when he painted this dramatic match. He went into exile in Amsterdam in 1937 before emigrating to the United States ten years later. He was one of the few artists of the time who was able to build on his success after the war.

MAX BECKMANN (1884–1950)

Still Life with Saxophones (Stilleben mit Saxofonen)*, 1926

Oil on canvas, 85.5 × 195.3 cm

Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Provenance: 1927 Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt am Main; 10/26/1936 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 4/15/1941 Karl Buchholz, Berlin/Madrid; September 1948 Curt Valentin, New York; 1954 Estate of Curt Valentin, New York; June 1955 Galerie Wilhelm Grosshennig, Düsseldorf; October 1955 Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

The artist absorbed jazz music, which caused a furor in the years following World War I in Germany but also met with fierce opposition, in concerts and cabarets. The two saxophones in this work are labeled: “Bar African” makes reference to a jazz club in Frankfurt, whereas “On New York” refers to the roots of the music genre. Because it could not be purchased in Basel, Beckmann’s still life, like *Rugby Players*, had to be sent back to Berlin in 1941.

* Not in the exhibition for conservation reasons

ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER (1880–1938)

Peasants Eating Lunch (Peasant Meal) (Bauernmittag [Bauernmahlzeit]), 1920

Oil on canvas, 133 × 166 cm

Ulmer Collection

Provenance: 1924 Kunsthalle Hamburg; 7/4/1937 RMVP, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; 3/12/1941 Galerie Ferdinand Möller, Berlin/Zermützel/Cologne, exchanged with Karl Buchholz for a painting by J. Weidner; 1954 Karl Julius Anselmino Collection, Wuppertal; Wolfgang Wittrock, Berlin; 1990 Ulmer Collection

As a member of the Brücke artists' group, beginning in 1905 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's paintings acted as virtual revolutionary stimulus for the development of German painting. With the marked physiognomy of the figures assembled around the table as well as the color effect heightened by contrasts, *Peasants Eating Lunch (Peasant Meal)* is characteristic of his bold, expressive art. After a factional dispute over whether Expressionism should be considered particularly German or “degenerate,” the ostracization of the style in the National Socialist state became prevalent. In 1937, more than one hundred of Kirchner's works were confiscated from German museums; just under thirty of them were part of the exhibition *Degenerate Art*. Declared “internationally salable,” this work—along with *The White Cow*—was at the Kunstmuseum Basel from 1939 to 1941.

ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER (1880–1938)

The White Cow (Die weisse Kuh), 1920

Oil on canvas, 80 × 85 cm

Hamburger Kunsthalle, purchased 1949

Provenance: 1925 Kunsthütte/Städtische Kunstsammlung Chemnitz; 8/19/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 4/18/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; 3/12/1941 Galerie Ferdinand Möller, Berlin, exchanged with Karl Buchholz for a painting by J. Weidner; ...; 2/19/1949 Eberhard and Katharina Troeger, Falkau/Titisee, Schwarzwald; 2/19/1949 Hamburger Kunsthalle

When, for health reasons, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner settled in the Swiss town of Davos in 1918, he was quickly fascinated by life in the Alps. He captured not only the Alpine landscape in numerous paintings but also the population and their livestock. However, *The White Cow* isolates the animal from this context, imbuing it with nearly human characteristics. Kirchner was severely affected by the National Socialists' defamation of his oeuvre. The circumstances of his death by a firearm are mysterious and remain unclarified to this day.

LOVIS CORINTH (1858–1925)

***Ecce Homo*, 1925**

Oil on canvas, 190.7 × 150.6 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1925 Charlotte Berend-Corinth, Berlin, widow of the artist; 1929 Nationalgalerie Berlin, purchased from Charlotte Behrend-Corinth; 7/7/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/12/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, acquired from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired through Karl Buchholz

In this Passion scene, which Corinth painted the year of his death, the artist not only places the biblical story in a modern context, but the models for the henchmen and Christ come from his circle of acquaintances. As a celebrated member of the Berlin Secession, Corinth operated between academic art and the avant-garde—not quite a clear case for the National Socialist category of “degeneracy.” As a result, it was only Corinth’s late work, whose expressiveness was associated with a stroke and thus pathologized, that was declared “degenerate.” Forty-five of his paintings were confiscated from German museums. *Ecce Homo*, in any case one of his most famous works, became the title motif of Paul Ortwin Rave’s first treatise on the *Kunstdiktatur im Dritten Reich* (Art Dictatorship in the Third Reich) and a symbolic image for persecuted art.

ROOM 8

Basel 1939

From Berlin for inspection II

The trustees weigh their options and decide which of the works sent from Berlin to purchase.

At the urgent request of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, the Kunstmuseum Basel returns the works not selected for acquisition in 1941. Two of them are now considered lost.

Otto Dix's *Trench* was likely destroyed. Georg Schmidt had tried for months to have the controversial painting sent to Basel, but to no avail.

Twenty-one works of modern art enter the Basel collection in 1939—eight from Lucerne and thirteen from Berlin.

ANDRÉ DERAÏN (1880–1954)

Vineyard in Spring (Les Vignes au printemps), ca. 1904–05

Oil on canvas, 89.2 × 116.3 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: Kunsthandlung Burg & Co., Berlin; 1928 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, purchased from the Kunsthandlung Burg; 8/28/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/12/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 6/12/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired through Karl Buchholz

In July 1939, Georg Schmidt described this picture as “the only truly important painting of French modernism still to be found in Berlin.” The Kunstkommission in Basel selected it from the consignment on approval and purchased it with the second half of the special acquisition fund. The work complemented Derain's *Still Life with Calvary* bought in Lucerne. Under the influence of Henri Matisse, the artist had become an exponent of Fauvism—a modern French art movement whose output, distinguished by radiant colors, a critic had referred to as painting by “wild beasts.”

PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER (1876–1907)

***Sitting Old Peasant Woman (Sitzende alte Bäuerin)*, ca. 1903**

Oil on canvas, 81.8 × 65.5 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1913 Bernhard Hoetger, Worpswede; ...; Kunsthandlung Goyert, Cologne; 1925 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, purchased from the Kunsthandlung Goyert; 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/12/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Karl Buchholz

At the turn of the twentieth century, Modersohn-Becker, a pioneer of classical modernism, worked in the northern German artists' colony in Worpswede, where she often found her models in a poorhouse. The retreat to the countryside, the close touch with nature, and the proximity to peasant life informed her choices of earthy colors and motifs: in its formal simplification, the flattened surface, and reduced color palette, this profile portrait of a peasant woman is highly progressive. Although Modersohn-Becker hesitated to exhibit her art, after her early death many of her works found their way into German museums. In the course of the National Socialists' confiscations of “degenerate” art, seventy-three of her works were removed from German museums.

PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER (1876–1907)

***Boy with Cat (Knabe mit Katze)*, ca. 1903**

Oil on canvas, 70.4 × 45.2 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1907 Otto Modersohn, Fischerhude, husband of the artist; 1913 Kestner Museum Hannover, purchased from Otto Modersohn; 8/20/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/12/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Karl Buchholz

In the final years of the nineteenth century, Paula Modersohn-Becker received professional training at a private school in Berlin, which was unusual at the time—women were prohibited from studying at the academy. Her style changed beginning in 1900, primarily under the impression of several sojourns in Paris. In this painting, her gradual departure from her surroundings in Worpswede is palpable. The peasant boy with the cat is shown from the front, free of any context. The work was part of a consignment on approval for the Kunstmuseum from the depot at Schönhausen Palace.

PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER (1876–1907)

***Old Poorhouse Woman (Alte Armenhuslerin)*, ca. 1905**

Oil on canvas, 126 × 95 cm

Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal

Provenance: 1917 Bernhard Hoetger, Worpswede; ...; Dr. Alfred Ganz, St. Niklausen; 1929 Kunstsammlungen der Stadt Konigsberg, purchased from Alfred Ganz; 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schonhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; 3/6/1941 Bernhard A. Bohmer, Gustrow, exchanged with Karl Buchholz for *Die Malerin Seeburg* (The Painter Seeburg), by F. Dreber; ...; at least 1957 Prof. Dr. med. Willi Schulz, Hamburg; 1969 Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal

Modersohn-Becker combines figural and landscape portrayal in this large format. The woman sitting on a chair under trees, who seems to be arduously controlling her posture, was Anna Schroder, called “Dreebeen,” one of Modersohn-Becker’s preferred models. She lived in a poorhouse in Worpswede opposite the artist’s residence. Modersohn-Becker’s work was initially vilified by the National Socialists as “degenerate”; however, this assessment was controversial among the responsible Nazi authorities. Like *Boy with Cat* and *Sitting Old Peasant Woman*, this work was part of a consignment sent to Basel for approval, but it was not purchased and was subsequently returned to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.

EMIL NOLDE (1867–1956)

Masks (Masken)*, 1911

Oil on canvas, 73 × 77.5 cm

**The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri,
Gift from the Friends of Art, 54-90**

Provenance: 1912 Museum Folkwang, Hagen, later Essen; 8/25/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schonhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission, later purchased; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; November 1943 transferred to Karl-Heinz Brandt, Gramzow; March 1945 stored at the Rosgartenmuseum, Konstanz; December 1945 Marie-Louise Buchholz, Uberlingen; April 1948 Galerıa Buchholz, Madrid; September 1948 Buchholz Gallery/Curt Valentin, New York; 1954 Estate of Curt Valentin, New York; June 1955 The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, gift of the Friends of Art for the Nelson-Atkins Museum

Masks, like about approximately one hundred additional works by Nolde from between 1911 and 1929, were created under the influence of his visits to the Berliner Volkerkundemuseum, the city’s ethnological museum: besides masks, the expressive work also shows the carved ornamentation of the bow of a canoe (Salomon Islands) and a war trophy made from a human head (Munduruku culture, Brazil). In 1939, *Masks* was part of Georg Schmidt’s first selection from among the works on offer in Berlin. However, he could not persuade the Kunstkommission to approve the purchase. Along with *Young Horses*, the work was rejected, and Nolde’s *Twilight (Marshy Landscape)* subsequently ordered and bought from Berlin.

* Not in the exhibition for conservation reasons

EMIL NOLDE (1867–1956)

Twilight (Marshy Landscape) (Vorabend [Marschlandschaft]), 1916

Oil on canvas, 73.4 × 100.9 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1920 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, purchased from the artist; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/12/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; July 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, purchased through Karl Buchholz

Twilight (Marshy Landscape) was one of the last acquisitions to enter the Kunstmuseum’s collection in 1939. The Kunstkommission in Basel had the work sent from Berlin and later decided to purchase it at its meeting on August 21, 1939. The use of color in this depiction of a landscape on northern Germany’s Wadden Sea makes dry land, water, and sky flow into one another. As an Expressionist, Nolde was one of the artists most affected by the confiscations: a total of 1,113 of his works were removed from German museums. He tried in vain to convince Nazi functionaries that he was against the “foreign elements in German art.”

EMIL NOLDE (1867–1956)

Young Horses (Junge Pferde), 1916

Oil on canvas, 72.4 × 100.3 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, acquisition and by exchange 79.2551

Provenance: 1935 Nationalgalerie Berlin, exchange for *Family* by the artist; 7/7/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; November 1943 transferred to Karl-Heinz Brandt, Gramzow; March 1945 stored at the Rosgartenmuseum, Konstanz; December 1945 Marie-Louise Buchholz, Überlingen; April 1948 Galería Buchholz, Madrid; 1951 Franziska Tugendhat de Iglar, Caracas; 1979 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in exchange (?)

Georg Schmidt had originally selected this work in Berlin for the purpose of recommending its purchase to the Kunstkommission in Basel. However, it was shelved in favor of the delivery of *Twilight (Marshy Landscape)*, to which it is comparable as an atmospheric depiction of a landscape. However, the colors have darkened over the years. As the most successful artist of his generation, Nolde was one of the few Expressionists to have achieved international renown as early as during the Weimar Republic. After his death, a memorial exhibition at the Hamburger Kunstverein in 1957 heightened his fame. His oeuvre also entered the American art canon—at the latest with a special exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1963.

OSKAR KOKOSCHKA (1886–1980)

***The Bride of the Wind (Die Windsbraut)*, 1913**

Oil on canvas, 180.4 × 220.2 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: December 1914 Otto Winter, Gross-Flottbek near Hamburg; 1924 Kunsthalle Hamburg, purchased from Otto Winter; 7/4/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/12/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, purchased from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; 6/12/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired through Karl Buchholz and Hildebrand Gurlitt

This autobiographical painting by Kokoschka, which by 1939 was widely recognized as a masterpiece of Expressionism, is testimony to his brief but intense romantic relationship with Alma Mahler. When the National Socialists seized power, Kokoschka lost his professorship at the Dresden Academy. He went into exile in 1934 and lived in Prague until 1938, thereafter in Great Britain. He was considered Hitler’s “art enemy no. 1,” partly because, as one of Germany’s most prominent artists, he made no secret of his rejection of all despotic states. A total of 606 of his works—an especially large number—were removed from German museums, most of which were sold abroad.

OTTO DIX (1891–1969)

***The Widow (Die Witwe)*, 1925**

Tempera on wood, 84 × 100 cm

Missing

Provenance: 1925 Karl Nierendorf; 1925 Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, commission; 4/18/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, for inspection, returned; April 1941 Bernhard A. Böhmer, Güstrow, commission, later returned to RMVP; whereabouts unknown

All that remains of this work today is a black-and-white reproduction. Dix shows the bearded woman, whose posture is almost that of a Herald Angel, against the rigid grid of a masoned wall with a white lily in her hand and wafting veil. The painting was presented in the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in four German cities before Karl Buchholz sent it to Basel for inspection after Georg Schmidt’s visit in Berlin. However, the Basel Kunstkommission decided to restrict itself to Dix’s *Portrait of the Artist’s Parents I* acquired in Lucerne. All trace of the painting was lost after it was returned to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.

OTTO DIX (1891–1969)

***Trench (Schützengraben)*, 1921–23**

Oil on canvas, 227 × 250 cm

Missing

Provenance: 1923 Galerie Nierendorf; 1923 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, returned; 1928 Stadtmuseum Dresden; July 1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 4/15/1939 Bernhard A. Böhmer, Güstrow, commission, later purchased; whereabouts unknown

This monumental painting—one of the major works of art produced in Germany in the interwar years—has presumably been destroyed. The unsettling depiction of World War I, which Dix experienced at the front, was detested in conservative nationalist circles as unpatriotic. Because of its fierce rejection, the painting was removed from the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne and replaced by the *Portrait of the Artist's Parents I* that is likewise now in Basel. *Trench* was then presented at the first “exhibition of infamy” in Dresden in 1933 and denounced by the National Socialists as “painted military sabotage.” For months, Georg Schmidt unsuccessfully attempted to have the work brought to Basel.

Castaway Modernism

The acquisition of twenty-one works in 1939 proved a watershed moment for the Kunstmuseum Basel.

The works have formed the foundation of a collection of modern European art that grew over the following decades thanks to permanent loans, gifts to the museum, and further acquisitions and now ranks among the premier such collections in the world.

But the documentary record also attests to the loss of invaluable works such as Käthe Kollwitz's cast-stone *Mother with Two Children*.

KÄTHE KOLLWITZ (1867–1945)

***Mother with Two Children (Mutter mit zwei Kindern)*, 1932–36**

Plaster, Height: 77.2 cm

Private Collection

Provenance: 9/18/1943 safekeeping at the Nationalgalerie Berlin, taken there by the artist, exhibited on permanent loan from the Kollwitz community of heirs; 1991 Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin, permanent loan from the Kollwitz community of heirs; 2011 Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum Berlin, permanent loan from the Kollwitz community of heirs

A mother bends intimately over her two children, wrapping her arms firmly around them. The multilayered levels of meaning of this scene range from giving and seeking protection and unconditional love, to fear of the loss of a child. Käthe Kollwitz, who lost her first son in World War I, initially planned to portray only a mother with a child. When her two granddaughters were born in 1923, she added a second child to the composition. In 1939, the art dealer Karl Buchholz offered Georg Schmidt a stone cast of Kollwitz's *Mother with Two Children* for the Kunstmuseum Basel. The work was subsequently destroyed during the bombardment of Berlin in 1944. The artist had this original plaster cast stored at the Nationalgalerie for safekeeping.

Franz Marc, whose *Two Cats, Blue and Yellow* the Kunstmuseum acquired at the Lucerne auction, was already famous outside Germany in 1939. Jankel Adler's oeuvre, by contrast, remains largely obscure even today.

JANKEL ADLER (1895–1949)

Cats (Katzen), 1927

Oil, chalk, and sand on canvas, 100.5 × 120.5 cm

Museum Ludwig, Cologne / Haubrich Donation, 1946

Provenance: 1928 Josef Haubrich, Cologne; 1946 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne, donation of Josef Haubrich; 1976 Museum Ludwig, Cologne, transfer from the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum

Shortly before the beginning of World War I, the Jewish artist Jakub (called Jankel) Adler, born near what is today the Polish city of Łódź, moved to Barmen near Wuppertal, where he attended the painting class at the school of arts and crafts. In the years between the wars, he was a member of various artists' groups, such as Das Junge Rheinland or the Novembergruppe. He received the Gold Medal at the exhibition *Deutsche Kunst* in Düsseldorf in 1928 for *Cats*, whose aggressive character is communicated in the heavily grooved surface. His paintings found their way into prestigious German museums. Ten works, of which the majority are regarded as lost or destroyed, were confiscated in 1937. Adler had already left Germany in 1933. He volunteered for military service in 1940. He was evacuated from Dunkirk in 1940 to Great Britain.

FRANZ MARC (1880–1916)

Two Cats, Blue and Yellow (Zwei Katzen, blau und gelb), 1912

Oil on canvas, 74.1 × 98.2 cm

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1913–14 Alexej Jawlensky, Munich/Ascona, in exchange for Jawlensky's painting *Girl with Doll*; May 1920 Galerie Goltz, Munich; ...; Rudolf Ibach, Wuppertal-Barmen; 1927 Kunstverein Wuppertal-Barmen (Ruhmeshalle), gift from Rudolf Ibach; 7/5/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as "degenerate" art; 6/30/1939 auction "Gemälde und Plastiken moderner Meister aus deutschen Museen," Galerie Theodor Fischer, Lucerne, lot 88; 6/30/1939 Kunstmuseum Basel

Along with five other paintings by Marc, *Two Cats, Blue and Yellow* was shown at the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Munich in 1937. The Deutscher Offiziersbund, the German military officers' association, protested the vilification of an artist killed in action while serving in World War I. The intervention had the result that Marc's *Tower of Blue Horses* was removed from the wall, and the hall with the rest of Marc's paintings, which also displayed works by Corinth and Lehmbrock, was subsequently closed to the public. This sequence of events reflects the dissensus that prevailed all the way to the highest circles regarding the question of which art was to be considered "degenerate." The work was purchased by the Basel delegation at the auction in Lucerne.

Felix Nussbaum did not have any works in German museums in the 1930s. His art bears witness to the boundless violence visited upon Jews by the Nazi regime.

FELIX NUSSBAUM (1904–1944)

***The Folly Square (Der tolle Platz)*, 1931**

Oil on canvas, 97 × 195.5 cm

Berlinische Galerie—Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur

Provenance: 1975 Berlinische Galerie, acquired from the artist's estate

Exhibited at the Berlin Secession the year it was painted, *The Folly Square* made the Jewish painter Nussbaum famous overnight. The humorous look at contemporary cultural life in Germany from the perspective of an aspiring artist attracted a great deal of attention. Two years later, the National Socialists' rise to power ended this promising development. Nussbaum did not return to Germany from his artist-in-residency at Villa Massimo in Rome. He lived in exile in Italy and France before finally going into hiding into Belgium. He and his wife Felka Platek were denounced, arrested, and murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

The artist Marg Moll, too, is a member of the “forgotten generation.” Her *Dancer*, which was displayed in the *Degenerate Art* exhibition, was believed to have been destroyed until it turned up a few years ago.

MARG MOLL (1884–1977)

***Dancer (Tänzerin)*, ca. 1930**

Brass, Height: 65 cm

Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin

Provenance: March 1931 Schlesisches Museum der Bildenden Künste, Breslau, purchased from the artist; 7/8/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; 1938 depot of exhibits from the propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art*, Velten/Mark; 1941 Bavaria Filmgesellschaft, Munich, prop in the feature film *Venus on Trial*; ca. 1941 Königstrasse 50 depot, Berlin, remaining stock of “degenerate” art; 2010 Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin, found during excavation in front of the Rotes Rathaus, Berlin (formerly Königstrasse 50)

Cubist and Futurist elements connect in Marg Moll's female figure *The Dancer* for the purpose of lending form to the fascination with movement in space. The history of the work is also markedly eventful: the sculpture found its way into the Schlesisches Museum der Bildenden Künste in Breslau in 1931. In 1937 it was part of the exhibition *Degenerate Art*, and in 1941 it served as a prop in the propagandist feature film *Venus on Trial* (*Venus vor Gericht*), where it was used as a defamatory symbol for an artwork from a Jewish art dealership. The figure was considered missing until it was rediscovered by chance, along with other works of art, during the construction of a subway in front of the Rotes Rathaus, Berlin's city hall, in 2010.

Ernst Barlach's *Head* was the only sculpture among the works acquired at the time. The peace monument of which it was part was melted down for arms production during World War II.

ERNST BARLACH (1870–1938)

***Floating Figure (Schwebender)*, 1927, cast 1987**

Bronze, 217 × 74.5 × 71 cm

Loan from the Kulturring der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Wirtschaft at the Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Schloss Gottorf, Landesmuseen Schleswig-Holstein, Schleswig

Provenance: 1987 cast commissioned by the Kulturring der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Wirtschaft, permanent loan at the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen, Schloss Gottorf

In 1927 Barlach produced a horizontally suspended figure for the Güstrow Cathedral as a memorial to soldiers killed in action during World War I. However, the figure, often compared with an angel, defied all expectations of conventional memorials to heroes and, once in place, incurred the hatred of nationalist forces. The original was confiscated by the Nazis in 1937 and was melted down in 1940 within the scope of the “metal donation of the German people to the Führer” for the production of weapons. In 1939, Barlach's artist friend Bernhard A. Böhmer, who was one of the art dealers commissioned with the “liquidation of *degenerate art*,” had a second casting made from the plaster model salvaged before the sculpture was destroyed. Two more recasts were produced in 1952 and 1987.

ERNST BARLACH (1870–1938)

***Head of the Güstrow Monument to the Victims of the War (Kopf des Güstrower Ehrenmals)*, 1927, cast 1930**

Bronze

Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired in 1939 with a special credit from the government of Basel

Provenance: 1930 Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin/Düsseldorf, cast of the head commissioned based on a working model of the Güstrow memorial; 1930 Museum Folkwang, Essen; 8/25/1937 RMVP, Berlin, confiscated as “degenerate” art; August 1938 Schönhausen Palace depot, Berlin (“internationally salable” art); 6/12/1939 Karl Buchholz, Berlin, acquired from RMVP for the Kunstmuseum Basel; July 1939 Kunstmuseum Basel, acquired through Karl Buchholz

“Quite accidentally, I conjured Käthe Kollwitz's face,” Barlach remarked about the close resemblance between the head of the suspended figure of his Güstrow peace memorial for the soldiers killed in action during World War I and his artist friend, who had lost her son in that war. This version of the head is one of only two early casts made from the working model in its original size during Barlach's lifetime. The remaining thirteen copies were produced after the artist's death.

Georg Schmidt and Paul Westheim—a correspondence

One day after the trustees had examined the works sent from Berlin, the Kunstmuseum's director reported on the Basel acquisitions to the influential Jewish art critic Paul Westheim. Westheim's magazine *Das Kunstblatt* had established him as a major champion of modern art. Writing for various periodicals from his exile in Paris, he called for a boycott of the Lucerne auction. Schmidt's letter and Westheim's reply show that both considered the Basel acquisitions of "degenerate" art a historic decision. Westheim was taken to an internment camp in France in 1940 and released in 1941. He lived in Mexico until his death in 1963.

Translations: Rebecca van Dyck

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