

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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PRESS PREVIEW

Tuesday, September 17, 1985

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST PRINTS FROM THE COLLECTION OF RUTH  
AND JACOB KAINEN GO ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. August 19, 1985. An exhibition of ninety prints from the private collection of Ruth and Jacob Kainen opens in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art on September 22, 1985 and runs through February 9, 1986. Among other artistic interests, the Kainen Collection contains one of the finest groups of German Expressionist prints still in private hands. This is the first time the collection has been exhibited publicly.

Jacob Kainen (a Washington painter and printmaker, former curator and scholar in the graphics division of the Smithsonian Institution, and collector) and his wife, Ruth (also an author and collector of prints), began expanding their individual collections of German prints and drawings at the time of their marriage in 1969.

In 1973, the Kainens began to focus primarily on the works of Ernest Ludwig Kirchner, now the major figure in their collection. Kirchner was, in their opinion, the greatest printmaker whose career had begun in the twentieth century and the major figure in the German Expressionist movement. His known output is catalogued at 2,150 works, surpassing that of any other modern Western printmaker, including Picasso.

The first room of the exhibition contains 23 prints by Kirchner. Made between 1905 and 1933, the works include lithographs, woodcuts, etchings, and

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drypoints in black and white and in color, on white and on colored papers. Kirchner -- taught to make woodcuts by his father, a professor of paper technology -- produced almost 1,000 woodcuts during his career. Ten are represented in the exhibition, including such major color woodcuts as Bathing Couple, 1910, and The Blond Painter Stirner of 1919. Among the finest black and white woodcuts, Five Tarts, 1914, is one of Kirchner's more memorable urban images drawn from his experience of Berlin. His later works include Alpine landscapes, such as Mountains with a Mountain Hut, 1921, which reflect Kirchner's move to Davos, Switzerland in 1917. Kirchner's powerful and innovative lithographs are also represented by such masterpieces as Performer Bowing, 1909, Russian Dancers, 1909, and Three Bathers by Stones of 1913.

The second room of the exhibition is devoted to eighteen works by other artists of Die Brücke (The Bridge) -- an organization of artists founded in Dresden in 1905 and existing until 1913 -- of which Kirchner was a leader. Its members, in addition to Kirchner, included Eric Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Fritz Bleyl, Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, and Otto Mueller. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff described one of the Brücke's aims as being "to attract all the revolutionary and fermenting elements to itself." The group placed a special emphasis on printmaking, the revival of a characteristic form of old German art whose most notable masters were Dürer and Cranach. Several works from Emil Nolde's Hamburg Harbor Series of 1910 can be seen in this room, as well as his greatest print, The Dancer of 1913. Two early Brücke nudes are on view: Heckel's Standing Woman, 1911, and Schmidt-Rottluff's Nude, 1909.

The third room of the exhibition focuses on German printmaking in the early 1920s, soon after the end of World War I. Works in this room, including those by older printmakers such as Corinth, Rohlfs, and Kollwitz, reflect the artists' experience of the war and an increased awareness of cultural and political events. One work by Lovis Corinth, Self-Portrait, is inscribed with

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the exact date of the war's end: November 10. Eight works by Walter Gramatté from 1916-23 include his rare and important color lithograph Torment of 1920.

The fourth room contains prints by a slightly younger generation of German printmakers, still strongly influenced by the war but also reflecting Germany's brief period of stability in the late 1920s. Many of these artists were later forced to leave Germany with Hitler's rise to power. Works in this room range from the formalism of Heinrich Campendonk to the tightly worked images of Paul Gangolf. The last two works in the exhibition are by Rolf Nesch, the greatest heir to German Expressionist printmaking in the next generation.

The exhibition has been organized by Andrew Robison, senior curator and curator of the Gallery's department of prints and drawings. The fully illustrated catalogue includes contributions by Dr. Robison and by Christopher With of the Gallery's education department. Jacob Kainen has contributed an essay on Kirchner's prints and Ruth Kainen an essay on collecting German Expressionist prints.

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