

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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## EXPRESSIONIST AND OTHER MODERN GERMAN PAINTINGS AT NATIONAL GALLERY

Washington, D.C., September 18, 1989 -- Thirty-four outstanding German paintings from the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection begin an American tour at the National Gallery of Art, November 19, 1989 through January 14, 1990. Expressionism and Modern German Painting from the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection contains important examples by artists whose major paintings are extremely rare in this country. The nineteen artists represented in the show include Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Wassily Kandinsky, Emil Nolde, Erich Heckel, Otto Dix, Johannes Itten, Franz Marc, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

The intense and colorful works in this exhibition are among the modern paintings Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza has added, along with old master paintings, to the collection he inherited from his father, Baron Heinrich (1875-1947). Expressionism and Modern German Painting, to be seen at three American museums, is selected from the large collection on view at the Baron's home, Villa Favorita in Lugano, Switzerland, through October 29, 1989. It is the first exhibition devoted entirely to the modern German paintings in the collection.

"Comprehensive groupings of expressionism and modern German paintings are extremely rare in American museums and we are pleased to offer a show of this extraordinary caliber here this fall," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery.

The American show has been selected by Andrew Robison, senior curator at the National Gallery. "The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection contains superb examples of the traditionally distinguished early twentieth-century European artistic movements of the Brücke, the Blaue Reiter, the Bauhaus, and Neue Sachlichkeit," according to Mr. Robison. "However, the collection is adventuresome and surprising in containing masterpieces not only by the famous but also by lesser known artists. Thus, our selection and installation will present a less traditional and more coherent picture of German painting in the first decades of this century, as it developed from sources like Van Gogh into the mature styles of the core expressionists and others."

The Baron's interest in collecting twentieth-century art began in the early 1960s with the purchase of a watercolor by Emil Nolde. In the foreword to the exhibition catalogue he explains the basis for his collecting rationale before that point, "During my youth my father had always brain-washed me that twentieth-century art was of little interest. For a long time I believed him and for fifteen years after his death I bought solely old master paintings." On the reason he decided to purchase the Nolde watercolor he commented, "I had instantly been struck by its bold color range and by the very particular atmosphere that emanated from it."

As he learned more about the expressionist movement, that its artists had been oppressed by the National Socialist regime and that their art was officially branded as "degenerate," became additional incentives for Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza in collecting them. After the Nolde watercolor, he began to purchase works by various Dresden- and Berlin-based Brücke artists, especially those by the artist in the group who is perhaps his favorite, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. The exhibition contains five Kirchner paintings including Curving Bay, 1913, which along with Circus, 1913, by August Macke, also in the show, is the Baron's most recent expressionist acquisition.

Expressionism and Modern German Painting has been organized by the Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation in collaboration with the National Gallery of Art and the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth. Professor Peter Vergo of the University of Essex, England, is the author of the accompanying catalogue. After its showing at the National Gallery, the exhibition will travel to the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, January 27 to March 25, 1990, and to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, April 18 to July 1, 1990. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.