

Lecture Notes

Syllabus 1/26: GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM : DIE BRUCK AND OTHERS

NOT members of Die Brucke:

PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER – Germany had a chauvinistic society. Parents discouraged her desire to be an artist c/o she also wanted a family but supported her nonetheless. Rejected by art schools c/o she was female, and finally accepted by school/artist colony at Worpswede. Saw Impressionists, and others, and then Gauguin's work in Paris – Tahitian Series – she was blown away. Began developing her mature style upon her return. She did a series of portraits: self, and others. Very focused on nude half-torsos in primitive style. Died in childbirth.



- **01_Self-Portrait with Amber Necklace - 1906 – Modersohn-Becker**



- **02_Self Portrait with Camellia Branch - 1907 – Modersohn-Becker**

KATHE KOLLWITZ – German-born. Accepted to school of industrial arts. Didn't want to pursue painting. Anti-war pacifist. Chose printmaking – easier to reproduce and disseminate, and less expensive than a painting. Married a physician who helped poor.



- **03_Female Nude with Green Shawl seen from behind - 1903 – Kollwitz** - color lithograph (looks like a painting) – quiet, simple nude study showing her virtuosity



- **04_The Survivors - 1923 – Kollwitz** - painting – “Make War Against War” – 1924 post WWI during Weimar

Republic – corrupt govt responsible for allowing Nazi party to ascend war. Survivors are women, children (orphans) and injured men. Showing us the horrors of war.



- **05_Death Seizing a Woman - 1934-36 - Kollwitz –** Lithograph – very powerful – deliberate expressionism with a social / political activist intent. Part of a whole series of anti war. She had one son drafted and killed in WWI which fueled her passion for activism.

EMILE NOLDE – Nolde was devoutly spiritual person however images look so crude. How can that be??

Nolde’s primitivism influenced by current theories originated and promoted by Johan Gottfried Herder in Munich in late 18th century:

- the German people should look not to the East or West for inspiration but rather to their own indigenous peasant roots and folk art as a source of inspiration because it was pure and German and not corrupted by the French influence, or Russian or British or Eastern etc. --A “noble savage” mentality because the peasants are closer to their roots because they are less corrupted.



- **06_The Last Supper - 1909 – Nolde -** Color a principle vehicle for Nolde. Contemporary figures not idealized, crude and rough. Part of Nolde’s mature characteristic style.



- **07_The Prophet - 1912 – Nolde –** rough wood block print. Nolde is exploiting the expressive potential of his medium. Bringing out the roughness, blockiness of the wood, for the purpose of intensifying the feeling that this is a pure, deep religious image.



- **08_Female Dancer - 1913 - Nolde–** Crude “table dancer” – Nolde is focusing on African sensuality and exuberance that was prevalent at the time in Europe and showing her

as a basically sensual, primitive being linked to that primitivist tendency.

DIE BRUCKE: Started with 3 – **Heckel, Kirschner, Schmidt-Rottluff** – architecture students at Dresden Technical Academy in 1907 tired of the provinciality of small town society. They had read Nietzsche. Decided to change the world by rejecting contemporary society. Formed an artist group. Published a periodical. Began exhibiting together.

Named themselves “The Bridge” – refers to the *Übermensch* / Overman from Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra* - the person who realizes the problems of society takes the leap to fulfill his own destination as a more enlightened individual and a better ultimate life AND becomes the bridge for the rest of man to follow. Cultivated deliberate Bohemian lifestyle – rejecting norms of society – drugs and debauchery – and made art accordingly.

PECHSTEIN -



- **09_Brucke Poster - 1909 - Pechstein** – (not in our book)



- **10_Somali Dancers - 1910 - Pechstein** – reveals influence of African folk art.

HECKEL –



- **11_Standing Child - 1910 - Heckel** – blockprint – 14 yr old girl model – pose coy- deliberate subtle eroticism. Chauvinistic – no women members / only models. Flat planes of color (Fauvist influence, and Gauguin and others)

SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF -



- **12_Self Portrait - 1934-36 – Schmidt-Rottluff –** very much the dapper, intellectual avante garde artiste; loose brushwork, sketchiness, heavy contour outline, flat areas of color.



- **13_Three Nudes – Dune Picture from Nidden - 1913 – Schmidt-Rottluff –** flat colors, simplified forms, flat space, outlines a la Matisse and Fauvism. Harkens back to neolithic sculpture



- **14_Venus of Willendorf (25000BCE)** (former Austria)

KIRSCHNER

- Arnason says he was the most creative of the group. He fashioned himself as the leader. He was the one who got them organized and publishing in their journal but also the one who alienated them and the reason they all quit.
- Decided they needed to move away from provincial Dresden to Berlin where their little Bohemia would be more understood.
- Die Brücke artists felt they were genius Supermen alienated from society because they were enlightened and misunderstood. See Optional Reading “Abstraction and Empathy” by Worringer: 1. enlightened people will understand abstraction better 2. empathy involves representational art 3. nonwesterners (primitive people) are natural abstractionists based on what we’ve seen of the objects they produced 4. the more alienated the artist, the more affinity with primitive urge to express through abstraction
- Powerfully expressive, emotive, forceful, assertive. (influence of Nietzsche)
- Kirschner drafted, had nervous breakdown c/o couldn’t stand authority. Eventually SUICIDE. Nazis thought his art was degenerate even tho Nazis used Die Brücke artist Rottluff’s work.
- **In both works below,**
 - paint is applied loosely, thickly
 - Angular approach foretells cubism and also influence of African masks
 - Colors are bold and heightened (influence of fauvism)



- **15_Dresden Street - 1909- Kirchner**



- **16_Berlin Street -1913 - Kirchner**
 - Portrays people as posing, superficial aristocrats



- **17_Marketplace with Red Tower -1915 - Kirchner**
 - Shortly before being drafted. Still using tools of expressionism like van Gogh but also using Cubism for expressive effect: Distorting angle of view , tilted perspective, claustrophobic effect = uneasiness and tension. Reflective of 1915 Germany.