

**AN IMPRESSIVE PANORAMA OF MODERN ART: FIRST PRESENTATION OF THE WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE STURM AT THE SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT**

# **STORM WOMEN WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE AVANT-GARDE IN BERLIN 1910 – 1932**

**OCTOBER 30, 2015 – FEBRUARY 7, 2016**

**PRESS PREVIEW: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2015, 11:00 A.M.**

The STURM heralded the advent of modern art. Originally the name of a magazine founded in 1910 devoted to promoting expressionist art, the term STURM (English: STORM) soon assumed the character of a trademark. Herwarth Walden, the publisher of the journal, also founded the STURM gallery in Berlin in 1912. Numerous women artists, including many from other countries, were presented in Germany for the first time at his gallery. As a movement, the STURM represented a program—one that opposed conceptual barriers, the establishment in general, and the bourgeois character of Wilhelminian society and advocated the total freedom of all arts and styles. Composed of friends with similar interests, the STURM network served as a forum for intensive and animated discourse on the ideas, theories, and concepts of the avant-garde. The additional STURM evenings, the newly founded STURM academy, the STURM theater and bookshop as well as occasional balls and a cabaret offered the artists of the STURM a variety of platforms and made the diverse artistic currents and tendencies in Berlin during the years from 1910 to 1930 accessible to a broad public. The Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is devoting an extensive topical exhibition to the women of the STURM beginning on October 30, 2015. For the first time ever, eighteen women STURM artists representing Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, and the New Objectivity will be presented in a comprehensive exhibition featuring around 280 works of art. The presentation is a somewhat different survey of the most important currents in avant-garde art in Berlin in the early years of the twentieth century. Among the best-known artists represented in the show are Sonia Delaunay, Alexandra Exter, Natalja Goncharova, Else Lasker-Schüler, Gabriele Münter, and Marianne von Werefkin. They are joined by a number of largely unknown or less familiar artists, among them Marthe Donas, Jacoba van Heemskerck, Hilla von Rebay, Lavinia Schulz, and Maria Uhden.

Each of the eighteen women artists of the STURM will be presented along with her most important works in a separate room at the exhibition. They are artists from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, Ukraine, and Russia whose works were exhibited at the STURM gallery or published in *DER STURM* magazine. The writer and composer Herwarth Walden (1878–1941) exhibited works by Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Oskar Kokoschka, and Marc Chagall, the artists of *Der Blaue Reiter*, and the Italian Futurists, but he also actively promoted well over thirty women painters and sculptors strategically and without bias. He was regarded as a visionary and a pioneer on behalf of abstraction and modern art in general, and he united the international avant-garde with his programs. For many women artists, the STURM represented their first big chance, for in the early years of the twentieth century they were neither fully recognized by society nor did they have access to academic training comparable to that of their male colleagues. The life stories, personal circumstances, and critical reception of the eighteen women artists of the STURM are all very different, and their styles vary considerably as well. Yet viewed as a group, they represent an impressive panorama of modern art.

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For this exhibition, the Schirn is presenting a selection of outstanding paintings, works on paper, prints, woodcuts, stage sets, costumes, masks, and historical photographs acquired on loan from prominent museums as well as university and private collections, including, among others, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, the Theater Museum in St. Petersburg, the Tate and Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the National Museum in Belgrade, the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich, and the Von-der-Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal.

The exhibition “STORM WOMEN. Women Artists of the Avant-Garde in Berlin 1910 – 1932” at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt is supported by the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne and the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain. Additional support for the project has been provided by the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung and the Georg und Franziska Speyer’sche Hochschulstiftung.

“Through their ideas and visions, the STORM WOMEN played an instrumental role in the development of modern art. Some of them are still quite familiar to us today, while others have been unjustly forgotten. However, they all played a part in ensuring that new currents in art, such as Cubism, Expressionism, and Constructivism, would gain the recognition they deserved. With this exhibition featuring impressive major works by the eighteen women of the STURM, the Schirn focuses attention on the crucial role played by these artists, while offering insights into the history of their reception. It is an extraordinary exhibition devoted to modern art, the role of women in art, and the significance of a gallery and its strategic program in Berlin during the 1920s—an exhibition featuring famous names and famous works as well as numerous astonishing rediscoveries,” states Max Hollein, Director of Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt.

In the words of exhibition curator Dr. Ingrid Pfeiffer: “Walden was unique among the art dealers of his era. He promoted male and female artists with equal vigor and paid no attention to the typical prejudices of the period. Roughly one-fifth of the STURM artists were women. That distinguished him from many of his fellow gallery owners, such as Paul Cassirer, Alfred Flechtheim, and Wolfgang Gurlitt in Berlin and Heinrich Thannhauser in Munich. Although the subject of women in visual art was openly discussed in many publications during those years, and their claims to originality and creativity were generally denied, Walden refused to be influenced by such discourse. It was the individual work of art that was most important to him. He consistently promoted new the most recent developments in art and never wavered in the face of incomprehension or confrontation. His thoughts and actions were transcended national boundaries, and he constantly sought out networks in all artistic and intellectual fields.”

## STORM WOMEN – SELECTED ARTISTS

Herwarth Walden represented over thirty women artists in all. The Schirn is presenting works by eighteen of them, namely those women of the STURM whose oeuvres are still accessible and have been extensively researched and documented.

The exhibition tour passes through both galleries of the Schirn and begins with works by **Gabriele Münter** (1877–1962). Walden responded with enthusiasm to the artist of Der Blaue Reiter from the outset and organized her first large-scale exhibition featuring eighty-four paintings at the STURM gallery in January 1913. He also arranged to have parts of the show presented later in Munich, Copenhagen, Dresden, and Stuttgart. Among other works, the Schirn is exhibiting Expressionist paintings by Münter from her years with Wassily Kandinsky in Murnau, such as the still life “Apples on Blue” (1908), interiors, including “Kandinsky with Emma Bossi at the Table” (1909/10), and landscapes. Following the outbreak of World War I, Münter fled initially to Switzerland and later lived until her return to Germany in Sweden and Denmark, where she

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celebrated notable successes, including a retrospective in 1918. Through Walden, she also forged ties with the young Swedish avant-garde led by Sigrid Hjertén and Isaac Grünwald.

Along with Jacoba van Heemskerck, Gabriele Münter, Maria Uhden, and Nell Walden, **Marianne von Werefkin** (1860–1938) was one of the most frequently exhibited women artists at the STURM gallery. The Schirn is presenting several of her highly expressive, melancholy landscapes, such as “City in Lithuania” (1913/14) and “Church of Saint Anne, Vilnius” (c. 1913/14) and one of the best-known portraits of the artist painted by her fellow painter Gabriele Münter circa 1909. Her use of color and her profound symbolism played a dominant role in her painting. The artist first met Walden and his second wife, Nell Walden, in 1912 at her salon in Munich, which she had furnished herself—a setting in which Werefkin also engaged in frequent passionate discussions about concepts and forms of expression in modern art with her contemporaries. Walden, who shared many of her views, introduced Werefkin, who was greatly admired within the art scene, to a broader public through STURM exhibitions in Germany and other European countries.

The Dutch artist **Jacoba van Heemskerck** (1876–1923) was featured in ten solo presentations at the gallery, and, with a total of twenty woodcuts, was represented more often than any other artist on the title page of *DER STURM*. In her woodcuts, drawings, and designs for stained glass windows, Heemskerck created abstract worlds in which water, waves on the sea, sailboats, and mountains are blended together in bizarre landscapes. Typical of her work were her liberal selection of colors and forms and her interest in anthroposophical theories. The Schirn is presenting a number of the artist’s most outstanding works, including “Houses in Suiderland, Drawing No. 13” (1914) and “Untitled, Composition XVI” (1917). It was above all her black-and-white prints that made Heemskerck popular and attractive for other publications far removed from the STURM, such as the Bauhaus portfolio entitled *Neue europäische Graphik* (New European Graphic Art) and the American journal *The Dial*.

The origin of name of the journal *DER STURM* can be traced to Walden’s first wife, **Else Lasker-Schüler** (1869–1945). Lasker-Schüler viewed the written word and the drawing as media of expression that often enabled her to achieve a more direct, immediate effect. Her portrait drawings of artists and writers of the period and the self-portrait of her alter ego Jussuf, Prince of Thebes, were published in the magazine in 1912 and later years. The Schirn is presenting selected drawings by Lasker-Schüler in which the influence of Egyptian art and culture is clearly reflected in her perspective, composition, and symbolism. Lasker-Schüler also maintained close ties with the artists of *Der Blaue Reiter* and Marianne von Werefkin, as is clearly evidenced in the exhibition by a hand-drawn postcard sent to Franz Marc and a letter to Werefkin.

**Sonia Delaunay** (1885–1979) first presented works at the STURM gallery on the occasion of the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon in 1913. The artist, who was living in Paris at the time, attracted particular attention with her simultaneous color field painting, the underlying principle of which she also applied to clothing of her own design as well as handcrafted objects, such as book covers, posters, lampshades, and bowls. Among her works exhibited at the Schirn is “Portuguese Market” (1915). It may be viewed as a part of several series in which she captures the hustle-and-bustle of a Portuguese market through the interplay of abstraction and figuration and the dynamic of simultaneous contrasts. In March of 1920, Walden presented a selection of her more recent works, all of which had originated in Spain during the preceding years, in a solo exhibition. In collaboration with her husband, Robert Delaunay, she designed numerous costumes and stage sets for such productions as “Kleopatra” (c. 1918) as well as “Costume of Amneris for the opera Aida” (1920), which are presented in the exhibition.

Born and raised in Ukraine, **Alexandra Exter** (1882–1949) served as a mediator between the Eastern European and Western avant-gardes. She met often with Guillaume Apollinaire and Pablo

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Picasso and was a friend of Sonia und Robert Delaunay. A representative of Cubo-Futurism and the Ukrainian avant-garde, she worked in several different media. The Schirn is presenting some of her remarkable stage-set and costume designs, among them a “Female costume design for Aelita” (a silent film that premiered in Berlin in 1924). After several unsuccessful attempts to have her work shown at the STURM gallery, she was honored for the first time with a major solo exhibition, which also featured her unique Cubist and Constructivist marionettes, in 1927. “Polichinelle” and “Black Harlequin” (both 1926) are on exhibit at the Schirn.

**Maria Uhden** (1892–1918) attracted particular attention in *DER STURM* with her woodcuts. “Four Nudes” (1915), one of her earliest impressive linoleum prints, is presented in the exhibition at the Schirn. Uhden drew inspiration from historical prints and book illustrations that had been revived in the *Almanach* of Der Blaue Reiter. In terms of figuration, planar configuration, and dynamics, some of her woodcuts anticipate the works of the American graffiti artist Keith Haring from the 1980s. Walden continue to show her works at his gallery and in touring exhibitions even after her premature death and well into the 1920s. Uhden’s woodcuts were introduced in the United States through the efforts of the American collector and painter Katherine Dreier.

The mask dances of **Lavinia Schulz** (1896–1924) were described by contemporaries as extraordinary, and they played a pioneering role in the German dance and theater scene of the period. Schulz, who studied at the STURM academy and appeared on the stage of the same name early in her career, evolved in the course of her quest for her own artistic identity from an actress into a gifted theatrical performer. Keenly interested in the relationship between the body and surrounding space, she produced motion studies, choreographic notations, and masks. The Schirn is presenting a large number of full-body masks by the artist, including the couple “Toboggan Women” and “Tobbogan Man” (originals from the year 1924). The stage, dance, and theater were important fields of experimentation in the early years of the twentieth century. The body was viewed as a synonym for the modern self.

The French painter **Marcelle Cahn** (1895–1981) studied in Paris under Fernand Léger and Amédée Ozenfant—both teachers of Purism, an advanced form of Cubism. The Schirn is presenting, among other works, “Woman and Sail” (c. 1926/27) and “Abstract Composition” (1925), in which Cahn’s geometric structural principles based on circles, squares, cylinders, triangles, and rectangles is demonstrated in impressive fashion. Her pursuit of abstraction is revealed in the simplicity and rigor of her formal elements. Her use of color is determined by form. Cahn came in contact with the STURM gallery as early as the second decade of the nineteenth century and was a regular visitor to the exhibitions there. Although she refused Walden’s offer of a solo exhibition, she presented him with cliché, which he published in a special issue of *DER STURM* in 1930.

**Hilla von Rebay** (1890–1967), who was later appointed Collection Curator and Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, became acquainted with the STURM gallery through Hans Arp in 1916. She studied the positions presented at the gallery intensely and found her way to a purely non-representation mode of painting through Kandinsky’s essay *On the Spiritual in Art*. Her work entitled “Composition I” (1915), which she first showed at the STURM gallery, is presented in the exhibition at the Schirn. In addition to watercolors reminiscent by virtue of their lightness of Kandinsky, Rebay also produced paper collages. She was particularly interested in the haptic qualities and the interplay of different paper surfaces. After immigrating to the United States in 1926, she met Solomon R. Guggenheim, for whom she began building a collection of non-representation art that remains the foundation of one of the most significant collections of modern art in the world even today.

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The exhibition tour concludes with the works of **Natalja Goncharova** (1881–1962). One of the best-known artists of the Russian avant-garde, she devoted herself tirelessly in articles, manifestos and within the context of newly emerging artists' group to her investigations into the nature and history of modern art and attracted considerable attention through provocative actions and public appearances. Walden presented her works six times at STURM exhibitions in Berlin alone between 1912 and 1921. The selection of her works presented at the Schirn includes "Peacock" (1911), "Gardening" (1908), and "Woman with Hat" (1913). Goncharova worked as a scenographer for the theater and designed stage sets. Walden was an avid devotee of the theater and established the STURM theater and the magazine of the same name. Many years after the sensational success of the opera *Le Coq d'Or* in Paris, Walden published Goncharova's set design for the production on the title page of an issue of the magazine. The Schirn is presenting several of Goncharova's opera costume designs in this exhibition.

**A FULL LIST OF THE ARTISTS PRESENTED IN THE EXHIBITION** Vjera Biller (1903–1940), Marcelle Cahn (1895–1981), Sonia Delaunay (1885–1979), Marthe Donas (1885–1967), Alexandra Exter (1882–1949), Natalja Goncharova (1881–1962), Helene Grünhoff (1880–?), Jacoba van Heemskerck (1876–1923), Sigrid Hjertén (1885–1948), Emmy Klinker (1891–1969), Magda Langenstraß-Uhlig (1888–1965), Else Lasker-Schüler (1869–1945), Gabriele Münter (1877–1962), Hilla von Rebay (1890–1967), Lavinia Schulz (1896–1924), Maria Uhden (1892–1918), Nell Walden (1887–1975), Marianne von Werefkin (1860–1938).

**DIGITORIAL** The Schirn is offering the new, groundbreaking education offer, the digitorial, for the second time. Interesting and instructive background information relating to relevant art-historical and cultural contexts has been compiled for presentation at an interactive website. This free digital service in German and English enables visitors to acquaint themselves with topics addressed in the exhibition in advance. Visual images, sound, film, and text are combined in a multimedia presentation in which aspects of content are linked in multiple ways, thereby opening up new approaches to the presentation, description, and interpretation of art. The digitorial has made possible by the Aventis Foundation and will be available online one month before the opening of the exhibition.

**CATALOG STORM WOMEN. WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE AVANT-GARDE IN BERLIN 1910–1932** Edited by Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein; foreword by Max Hollein; essays by Claudia Banz, Karla Bilang, Katarina Borgh Bertorp, Anna Havemann, Karoline Hille, Annegret Hoberg, Peter Pauwels, Ingrid Pfeiffer, Christmut Präger, Ada Raev, Lea Schleiffenbaum, Jessica Skrubbe, Irina Subotic, and Marie-Luise Syring. German-English edition, 400 pages, approx. 400 color illustrations; catalog design by Harold Vits, Mannheim; Wienand Verlag, Cologne, 2015, ISBN 978-3-86832-277-4.

**VENUE** SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT, Römerberg 60311 Frankfurt **DURATION** October 30, 2015 – February 7, 2016 (also open on Monday, December 28, 2015, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.) **INFORMATION** [www.schirn.de](http://www.schirn.de) **E-MAIL** [welcome@schirn.de](mailto:welcome@schirn.de) **PHONE** +49.69.29 98 82-0 **FAX** +49.69.29 98 82-240 **ADMISSION** € 11, reduced € 9, family ticket € 22; free of charge for children under eight years **ADVANCE BOOKING** limited Early-Bird tickets can be ordered online at [www.schirn.de/tickets](http://www.schirn.de/tickets) **GUIDED TOURS** Tue 5 p.m., Wed. 8 p.m., Thu. 7 p.m., Fri. 11 a.m., Sat. 5 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. **TOUR BOOKING** individual and/or group tours can be booked by telephone at +49.69.29 98 82-0 and by e-mail at [fuehrungen@schirn.de](mailto:fuehrungen@schirn.de) **AUDIO GUIDE** An audio guide to the exhibition is available for 3 €; descriptions of more than 25 major works narrated by Johanna Wokalek **CURATOR** Dr. Ingrid Pfeiffer **CURATORIAL ASSISTANCE** Lea Schleiffenbaum **DIGITORIAL** The digitorial has made possible by the Aventis Foundation. Design and programming: Scholz & Volkmer **THE EXHIBITION IS SUPPORTED BY** Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne; Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT BY** Ernst von

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**PRESS** Pamela Rohde (Head of Press/PR), Simone Krämer (Press Officer), Timo Weißberg (Trainee) **SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT** Römerberg 60311 Frankfurt **PHONE** +49.69.29 98 82-148 **FAX** +49.69.29 98 82-240 **E-MAIL** [presse@schirn.de](mailto:presse@schirn.de), [www.schirn.de](http://www.schirn.de), [www.schirn-mag.com](http://www.schirn-mag.com)