

PRESS RELEASE

# MODERNIST ICON FOR FRANKFURT – ACQUISITION OF MAX BECKMANN’S *SELF- PORTRAIT WITH CHAMPAGNE GLASS*

**OUTSTANDING ACQUISITION FOR THE STÄDEL MUSEUM / PAINTING TO BE  
FOCUS OF SPECIAL PRESENTATION STARTING 9 DECEMBER**

**Frankfurt am Main, 14 October 2020.** It is one of the most prominent acquisitions in the more than two hundred years of the Städel Museum’s history. Support from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, the Städtelscher Museums-Verein, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung, the Kulturstiftung der Länder and five private patrons has made the acquisition of Max Beckmann’s *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* for the Städel Museum possible. Executed in 1919, the painting is one of the artist’s most well-known and important works. It has been on loan to the museum since 2011. Thanks to the acquisition, it will now remain in the Städel permanently.

The *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* is among the artist’s most striking self-likenesses. What is more, within a small group of self-portraits meanwhile considered iconic, it is the only one to have remained in private German ownership until now. The artwork was in the legendary collection of Hermann Lange of Krefeld, who acquired it in the 1920s. After Lange’s death, it remained in the possession of his descendants, from whom it has now been acquired for the Städel Museum. Max Beckmann is today the most well-known German exponent of Classical Modern art, primarily on account of his early reception in the USA.

It was three years ago that Städel director Philipp Demandt first signalled his interest in the work to Hermann Lange’s heirs. Extensive negotiations ensued, leading to a generous concession by the owners that paved the way for initial inquiries with institutional sponsors. The latter responded with pledges as spirited as they were substantial, and five private patrons followed suit by committing to similarly exceptional contributions. The artwork is currently on view in the Städel Museum’s Beckmann

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room. From 9 December 2020 to 5 April 2021 it will be the focus of a special presentation at the museum entitled “STÄDEL'S BECKMANN – BECKMANN'S STÄDEL: The Frankfurt Years”.

“The *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* is not only one of the most prominent paintings by our ‘in-house artist’ Max Beckmann, but also an icon of the twentieth century. It has been my fervent wish to acquire this key Beckmann artwork since I took office in Frankfurt. A dream that initially seemed impossible in view of the painting's sheer value, but also its status as a work coveted worldwide, has now – three years later – come to happy realization. Never before has the Städel Museum succeeded in making an individual acquisition of this magnitude. We are as grateful to the entire community of private and public contributors for their overwhelming support as we are to the owners for the great confidence they have placed in the Städel Museum. Thanks to this concerted effort, Beckmann's masterpiece is returning to Frankfurt – its place of origin – forever”, commented Städel director Philipp Demandt.

Monika Grütters, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, stated: “Max Beckmann's *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* can be considered an artwork of national significance for good reason. Within his important and extensive lifework, it marks a point in time characterized by the fresh wounds of World War I on the one hand and the beginnings of the Weimar period on the other. It is without a doubt a key work in the artist's oeuvre. That is why the federal government has supported the efforts to purchase this masterpiece. For the Städel Museum and our national heritage, the successful acquisition is a true stroke of fortune.”

The chairwoman of the Städelischer Museums-Verein, Sylvia von Metzler, spoke about that association's great dedication to the acquisition: “Special ties connect Frankfurt's Städel Museum to Max Beckmann. For a long period, Frankfurt was not only home but also a place of inspiration to Beckmann. Already during his lifetime, the citizens of this city wanted his works included among the holdings of the Städel Museum. The acquisition of the painting *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* for Frankfurt represents a striking continuation of that tradition.”

“The Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung has supported the acquisition of the *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* with a considerable sum. It was a matter of great concern to our founder, the industrialist and patron of the arts Ernst von Siemens, not only to preserve artworks of the highest quality for a broad public, but also to ensure that they were in the right place. With our contribution, we have once again attained that goal – in a virtually ideal manner”, remarked Martin Hoernes, Secretary General of the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung.

“It was in Frankfurt am Main that Max Beckmann created a large proportion of his most prominent artworks. We are delighted to have had the opportunity to support the acquisition of this outstanding painting for the Städel Museum. It will thus remain in the institution that today has one of the world’s largest Beckmann collections to call its own. In 1937, the museum lost its original Beckmann holdings almost entirely to the Nazi confiscation campaign. With this acquisition, however, we can now expand the Beckmann collection amassed at the Städel Museum since World War II through the addition of a major work. Max Beckmann is one of the most important German artists of the twentieth century. It is thus decisive to ensure that the *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* remains in Germany”, observed Frank Druffner, the Deputy Secretary General of the Kulturstiftung der Länder.

### **Max Beckmann and Frankfurt**

Scarcely an artist is more closely associated to the city of Frankfurt and the Städel Museum than Max Beckmann (1884–1950). He lived in Frankfurt from 1915 to 1933, and it was here that he created a large proportion of his key works and developed his characteristic style. In 1925, the city entrusted him with the first master class at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts) and placed a studio at his disposal. Numerous views of Frankfurt, self-portraits and likenesses of friends and acquaintances testify to his close ties to the city. During his Frankfurt phase, his works were on view in eighteen solo and group exhibitions here, and in 1929 the city awarded him its Great Prize of Honour. After the Nazi accession to power, he was dismissed from his teaching position and, much to his regret, compelled to leave Frankfurt. Vilified as “degenerate”, he fled Germany in 1937, the same year Nazi iconoclasm robbed the Städel Museum of nearly its entire Classical Modern collection. More than one hundred works by Beckmann, including ten paintings, were among the holdings taken, making Max Beckmann one of the artists most severely affected by the “degenerate art” confiscation operations. Beckmann died in New York in 1950.

The Städel began acquiring artworks by Beckmann in 1918. Ever since, the museum has sought to do justice to the artist’s close bond to Frankfurt by making every effort to increase its holdings of his works and research his oeuvre, which it has presented in numerous special exhibitions. With eleven paintings, two sculptures and more than a hundred works on paper, the Städel Museum today boasts one of the world’s most extensive Beckmann collections, to which the *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* now belongs.

### About the painting

One of the most important artworks dating from Max Beckmann's Frankfurt years, the *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* has become widely known as a symbol of the interwar period and the Weimar Republic. It was the third self-likeness Beckmann executed after World War I. Whereas in the first two he had portrayed himself as a medical orderly and an artist in his studio, now he presented himself as an elegant dandy at a nightclub – probably the bar of the Frankfurter Hof where, according to contemporary witnesses, his drink of choice was champagne. In search of motifs, he also frequented the restaurant in the waiting room of the main station. In the glare of the artificial light, the artist sits at a bar with a foaming glass of champagne in one hand and a cigar in the other. Yet he does not convey an impression of carefree gaiety; his pose is affected, his smile cold. A grotesque-looking character laughs in the background; in the mirror at the left, the same face laughs back like a menacing echo. Here Beckmann adopts the role he will appear in frequently in the years that follow: of the detached observer of nightlife. In his depictions he exposed the bourgeois hedonism of the post-war period; again and again, its superficiality and extravagant manifestations provided him with impulses for his art. The *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* stands for Beckmann's departure from the Late Impressionist painting manner in favour of the bold outlining of forms and expressive exaggeration of figures that would become characteristic of his style. It is thus key to Beckmann's development, and to understanding him as an artist.

The *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* is in excellent condition. Apart from a few minor steps taken primarily to preserve the paint layer, it has not undergone any appreciable restoration measures. It has never been lined – that is, mounted on a second canvas for additional stability –; it still possesses its original stretcher frame and original (unvarnished) surface, and thus the colour effect intended by the artist.

### Self-Portraits

Hardly any artist of the Classical Modern period produced as many self-portraits as Max Beckmann. He explored the genre in every medium, from painting and drawing to printmaking and even sculpture. Self-likenesses accompanied his artistic career from his early to his late work and mirror decisive phases in his development. In addition to 'classical' self-portraits in which he appears as the main figure, we also frequently encounter him in scenic depictions. There he plays the circus director, the barker, the biblical Adam or the casual observer. Beckmann painted altogether some thirty-five genuine self-portraits including such well-known works as *Self-Portrait with Red Scarf* (Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie) and *Self-Portrait in Tuxedo* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Busch-Reisinger Museum). Among the many impressive works by Max Beckmann, his famous self-portraits are those highest in demand internationally. Only a handful of

them are still in private ownership today; all the others are in museums, and in many cases have been for decades.

### **Provenance**

The *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* was first on view to the public in a Max Beckmann exhibition at the Frankfurter Kunstverein that had been organized in collaboration with his gallerist Israel Ber Neumann in 1921. It was subsequently presented in Neumann's Berlin gallery and offered for sale in the 1921 exhibition of the Munich Secession. During the Weimar Republic it was featured in the major Beckmann exhibitions in Germany in 1928 and Switzerland in 1930. The silk manufacturer Hermann Lange of Krefeld acquired the painting by 1928 at the latest, as can be concluded from the fact that the renowned collector verifiably placed it on loan to the Beckmann retrospective in Mannheim that year. Lange presumably purchased the work directly from Beckmann or through the agency of one of the artist's gallerists, Israel Ber Neumann or Alfred Flechtheim. After Lange's death in 1942, it remained in the family's possession.

The industrialist Hermann Lange was one of the most important collectors of modern art in the Rhineland. He began amassing his collection of contemporary art after World War I. It was made up primarily of works by Cubists and Expressionists, among them Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Marc Chagall and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. An exhibition review appearing in the art magazine *Cicero* in 1928 refers to Lange as the "greatest collector of French Cubists in Germany". Around 1927/28, the visionary collector commissioned the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to design a city residence for him (the present-day Haus Lange, Krefeld). At Lange's request, the rooms were planned in such a way as to ensure the optimal presentation of his art collection. The interior decoration was designed by Mies's partner at the time, Lilly Reich.

### **Details of the artwork**

Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

*Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass*, 1919

Oil on canvas, 65.2 x 55.2 x 2.3 cm (without frame)

Signed at upper left in oil paint: *Beckmann*

Inscribed at upper left: *Frankfurt a/M Sept. 19*

Cat. rais.: Göpel 203

Acquired with the support of the Kulturstiftung der Länder as well as private donors.

Joint property with the Städtelscher Museums-Verein e.V., the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung and the Federal Republic of Germany

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**Location:** Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

**Information:** [www.staedelmuseum.de](http://www.staedelmuseum.de)

**Visitor services:** +49(0)69-605098-200, [info@staedelmuseum.de](mailto:info@staedelmuseum.de)

**Opening hours:** Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun + holidays 10.00 am–6.00 pm, Thu 10.00 am–9.00 pm

**Special opening hours:** Thu, 24 Dec, closed; Fri, 25 Dec, 10.00 am–6.00 pm; Sat, 26 Dec, 10.00 am–6.00 pm; Thu, 31 Dec, closed; Fri, 1 Jan 2021, 11.00 am–6.00 pm

**Admission:** 14 EUR; free for children under 12

**Advance ticket sales:** [shop.staedelmuseum.de](http://shop.staedelmuseum.de)

**Special presentation “STÄDEL’S BECKMANN – BECKMANN’S STÄDEL: The Frankfurt Years”:**

From 9 December 2020 to 5 April 2021, the *Self-Portrait with Champagne Glass* by Max Beckmann will be the focus of a special presentation. The curators are Dr. Alexander Eiling (Head of the Department of Modern Art, Städel Museum) and Dr. Regina Freyberger (Head of the Department of Prints and Drawings from 1750, Städel Museum), documentation Dr. Iris Schmeisser (Head of Provenance Research and the Historical Archive, Städel Museum).

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