

PRESS RELEASE

EMIL NOLDE. RETROSPECTIVE

5 MARCH TO 15 JUNE 2014

Press preview: Tuesday, 4 March 2014, 11 am
Städel Museum, exhibition annex

Frankfurt/ Main, 27 February 2014. From 5 March to 15 June 2014, the Städel Museum will be devoting a major exhibition to the lifework of one of the most prominent German Expressionists, Emil Nolde (1867–1956). Although Nolde's oeuvre has been represented in numerous special thematic exhibitions, the last retrospective to pay tribute to his work in Germany took place twenty-five years ago. Some 140 works will be on view, among them such masterworks as *Springtime in the Room* (1904), *The Life of Christ* (1911/12) or *Candle Dancers* (1912), but also a number of paintings and prints by the artist hitherto never shown outside of Seebüll. Realized with support from the Nolde Foundation Seebüll and many lenders, the show will draw from new research findings to provide an overview of the wide diversity of Nolde's oeuvre. The selection will range from Expressionist landscapes to glittering nocturnal scenes of Berlin, exotic South Seas motifs, and religious depictions. Arranged in rough chronological order, the retrospective will comprise paintings, watercolours and prints from all phases of the artist's career. A special focus will be directed towards Nolde's early and late work, which past exhibitions have often tended to neglect. The show will also provide insight into his experimentation with various manners of painting before finally arriving at his own characteristic style. Nolde's loose and dynamic approach relegates the contours of the depicted figures to the background; vibrant colours are the primary means of expression.

"The Städel Museum was one of the first in Germany to acquire works by the German Expressionists. The latter are accordingly of great significance for our collection. Following such exhibitions as *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Retrospective* (2010) and *Beckmann & America* (2011/12), we are now very happy to have the opportunity to feature a further chief exponent of Expressionism in a monographic presentation", comments Städel Museum director Max Hollein on the project.

"Hardly any other Classical Modern artist has been so manifoldly discussed and is as omnipresent in German museums as Emil Nolde. On the basis of current research

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results, the retrospective will shed new light on one of the world's most well-known artists, whose oeuvre still awaits discovery in many respects", adds Dr Felix Krämer, exhibition curator and head of the Collection of Modern Art at the Städel Museum.

On the two floors of the exhibition annex, *Emil Nolde. Retrospective* will showcase the artist's lifework in twelve sections covering the entire breadth of its thematic and media diversity. It will begin with Nolde's early work. His first painting, *Mountain Giants* (1895–96) from the Nolde Foundation Seebüll, already anticipates the artist's fascination with the fantastic and grotesque that would later turn up in his oeuvre again and again. The painting will be shown in the first room of the exhibition along with works testifying not only to the early influence of Danish painting on Nolde, but also how he was inspired by French Impressionism. He made his artistic breakthrough with paintings of flowers and gardens in which he experimented with the potential of colour. These motifs, considered characteristic of Nolde, will be on view in the second room of the show along with figural works carried out during the same period. The latter are distinguished by a rather two-dimensional painting manner, as exemplified by the major composition *Free Spirit* (1906). The following room will address Nolde's approach to abstraction as seen in the *Autumn Seas* series (1910). The motif of the wild sea was one that would preoccupy him all his life. The views of thunderous waves beneath a dramatic sky were executed in a wooden shed the artist had built for himself directly on the beach on the Baltic Sea island of Alsen. That "studio" is where Nolde also carried out a number of his early Biblical and mythological scenes shown in the subsequent room. Religious subjects are among the brightest highlights in his oeuvre. Nolde realized Old and New Testament motifs – for example the *Burial* (1915) – with vivid colours and a two-dimensional application of paint. The following room will be devoted exclusively to the prominent altarpiece of *The Life of Christ* (1911/12), which by way of exception – especially for the Städel retrospective – will be permitted to leave the exhibition gallery designed for it in Seebüll. After the Nazis had confiscated this nine-part Biblical cycle – Nolde's magnum opus – from the Museum Folkwang in Essen, it was prominently featured in the first room of the defamatory *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich. Nolde's religious paintings will be followed by his observations of Berlin, where he lived half of every year from 1905 onwards. Masterworks of German Expressionism such as *In the Coffeehouse* (1911) from the Museum Folkwang in Essen or *Dancer in a Red Dress* (1910) from the Kunsthalle Emden portray the boisterous nightlife in the German metropolis. For the first time, these works are being presented alongside political and socio-critical paintings by the artist such as *Soldiers* (1913) or *Battlefield* (1913). It was in Berlin as well that Nolde became interested in non-European aesthetics and art, the subject of the next room. The painting *Exotic Figures (Fetishes I)* (1911) is

based on drawings Nolde made of objects on display at the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde (Royal Ethnological Museum).

The show will continue on the upper floor of the exhibition annex with the works executed during and after Nolde's participation in an expedition of the Reichskolonialamt (Imperial Colonial Office) to New Guinea. The fiery palette of *Tropical Sun* (1914) from the collection of the Nolde Foundation Seebüll manifests the artist's longing for a natural idyll untouched by Western civilization. The section on the South Seas will be followed by a presentation of Nolde's works of the years 1915 to 1932, a period in which he concentrated on motifs in his native region of Northern Schleswig. There he portrayed the unbridled natural force of the sea as well as his flower garden, which – in works such as *Close Evening* (1930) – he juxtaposed with the bleak Nordic scenery. He also painted watercolours of flowers in rich abundance, great variety and gay hues. The exhibition will spread out a vivid tapestry with altogether twenty such paintings hung closely side by side. In addition to flowers, one of Nolde's main interests in this phase was fantastic motifs which, like the *Sea Woman* (1922), reveal the influence of Arnold Böcklin. Among the works distinguished by their grotesque subjects is the watercolour *Animal and Woman* (1931–1935) from the *Fantasies* series, which in our show will form a transition to the watercolours that came to be known as the *Unpainted Pictures*. Nolde executed these exceptional watercolour compositions from 1938 onwards during the period of the National Socialist dictatorship. In 1941 he was comprehensively prohibited from practicing his profession: he could no longer present his works in public or sell them. He already began transposing works from the *Unpainted Pictures* series into oil as early as 1938. The subsequent room will be devoted to a selection of these paintings. To this day, many of the works based on the *Unpainted Pictures* have never been presented in public, for example *Spring in Autumn* (1940). In keeping with the chronology, the last section of the show will focus on the final phase of Nolde's life from 1946 to 1956. In his late works, expressive depictions of nature and landscape play a decisive role. The exhibition will conclude with *Troubled Sea* (1948) from the Kunsthalle zu Kiel.

Emil Nolde was born on 7 August 1867 in the village of Nolde near the German-Danish border as Hans Emil Hansen. Following elementary school he completed an apprenticeship as a wood sculptor, also taking instruction in commercial draughtsmanship. From 1892 onwards, Nolde taught colour and ornamental draughtsmanship at the Industrie- und Gewerbemuseum (Museum of Industry and the Trades) in Sankt Gallen. The great commercial success of his *Mountain Postcards* enabled him to embark on a career as a painter in Munich in 1897. In the years that followed, until 1902, Nolde took classes at various private art schools in

Munich, Paris and Copenhagen, and made the acquaintance of Scandinavian artists. In 1902 he married the Danish actress Ada Vilstrup. On that occasion he changed his name to Nolde after his native village. He executed his first garden painting in 1903; from 1906 onwards he devoted himself to that subject with particular intensity. In 1903 the Noldes moved to the Baltic Sea island of Alsen, though starting in 1905 they spent half of every year for the most part in Berlin. In 1906 Nolde became a member of the "Brücke" artists' group, to which he belonged for eighteen months; in 1908 he joined the Berlin Secession, from which he was excluded in 1910, however, owing to disagreements with Max Liebermann. Beginning in 1912, Nolde's works began to receive wide public attention in Germany; they came to be shown far and wide and were regularly reviewed in the arts sections of the newspapers. By the end of the 1920s, twenty-one museums had paintings by Nolde in their collections. After his participation in the "Medical-Demographic German-New-Guinea Expedition" of the Reichskolonialamt in 1913, his compositions began to incorporate motifs of the South Seas. From 1923 onwards his works received international attention. The National Socialist assumption of power brought about a major break in Emil Nolde's career. He and his wife welcomed the new regime with high hopes, already submitting an application for admission to the nationalistic Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur (Militant League for German Culture) in 1933 – which, however, was rejected. The following year Nolde joined the Nationalsozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (National Socialist Association) of Northern Schleswig (NSAN) which was later among the founding parties of the National Socialist Party in Northern Schleswig (NSDAPN). Numerous letters and documents have survived from this period, documenting the artist's desire for involvement. Despite his efforts, however, he was not able to realize his objectives. On the contrary, in 1937 1,102 of his works were confiscated from public collections, and 47 of his works, including 33 paintings, were subsequently shown in the *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich. In 1941, he was moreover barred from the "Reichskammer der bildenden Künste" (Reich Chamber of Visual Arts) and prohibited from practising his profession. Between 1938 and 1945 he executed the *Unpainted Pictures* workgroup, consisting of oil paintings after his own watercolours. Following World War II he received numerous distinctions, for example an award for his graphic work at the XXVth Venice Biennale. Nolde died in 1956 at the age of eighty-eight.

The exhibition "Emil Nolde. Retrospective" will travel to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark (4 July to 19 October 2014).

EMIL NOLDE. RETROSPECTIVE

Curator: Dr Felix Krämer, Head of the Collection of Modern Art at the Städel Museum

Project Management: Felicity Grobien, Städel Museum

Exhibition dates: 5 March to 15 June 2014

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Venue: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Sat and Sun 10 am–6 pm, Thu and Fri 10 am–9 pm

Special opening hours: Fri, 18 April, Mon, 21 April, Thu, 1 May, Thu, 29 May and Mon, 9 June 2014 10 am–6 pm.

Admission: 12 EUR, reduced 10 EUR, family ticket 20 EUR; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays 14 EUR, reduced 12 EUR, family ticket 24 EUR; admission free for children to the age of 12; groups (min. of 10): 10 EUR/person; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays 12 EUR/person. Groups are required to book in advance.

Advance ticket sales online at: tickets.staedelmuseum.de

Catalogue: The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue edited by Felix Krämer. With a foreword by Max Hollein, essays by Christian Ring, Aya Soika, Bernhard Fulda and Felix Krämer and contributions by Caroline Dieterich, Chantal Eschenfelder, Katharina Ferus, Felicity Grobien, Isgard Kracht, Franziska Leuthäuffer and Brigitte Sahler. Prestel Verlag, 300 pages, German edition 39.90 EUR, English edition 44.90 EUR.

Visitors' guide: A 40-page guide to the exhibition (for visitors age 12 and over) will be available for 7.50 EUR, in sets for school classes 1 EUR per guide.

Social Media: The Städel Museum is communicating the exhibition on the social media with the hashtag #nolde.

Audio guide: An audio guide to the exhibition will be available in German and English language. The German version will be narrated by musician and actor Herbert Grönemeyer. 4 EUR

General guided tours of the exhibition: Tuesdays, 11 am; Fridays, 7 pm; Saturdays, 11 am; Sundays, 3 pm. The number of participants is limited. Tickets: 5 EUR plus admission fee, on sale at the Städel cashier's desk starting two hours before the tour begins.

Special guided tours of the exhibition: On request at +49(0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de

Framework programme: The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive programme of events and activities, for example lectures as *Emil Nolde im Nationalsozialismus (Emil Nolde in the National Socialist Period)*, Thu, 20 March 2014, 7 pm, with Dr Bernhard Fulda (historian at the University of Cambridge), followed by a panel discussion with Dr Bernhard Fulda, Stefan Koldehoff (art critic), Dr Felix Krämer (head of the Collection of Modern Art at the Städel Museum). Moderation: Florian Schwinn (hr2-kultur). And *"Zukunftsfrohe junge Maler mit Bestrebungen, die den meinen gleichen" – Emil Nolde und die Künstlervereinigung „Brücke“ ("Optimistic young painters with aspirations akin to mine" – Emil Nolde and the "Brücke" Artists' Association)*, Thu, 3 April 2014, 7 pm, with Dr Indina Woesthoff (author and art historian). The complete programme of events and activities accompanying the exhibition will be available at www.nolde-in-frankfurt.de.

With support from: Fazit-Stiftung, Georg und Franziska Speyer'sche Hochschulstiftung, Stadt Frankfurt am Main

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