

PRESS RELEASE

STÄDEL | WOMEN WOMEN ARTISTS BETWEEN FRANKFURT AND PARIS AROUND 1900

10 JULY TO 27 OCTOBER 2024

Exhibition annex

Press preview: 9 July 2024, 11 am

Frankfurt am Main, 10 June 2024. Modernism is unimaginable without the contribution of women artists. Not only well-known women painters and sculptors such as Louise Breslau, Ottilie W. Roederstein, and Marg Moll, but also many others successfully established themselves in the art world during the period around 1900—Erna Auerbach, Eugenie Bandell, Mathilde Battenberg, Marie Bertuch, Ida Gerhardi, Dora Hitz, Annie Stebler-Hopf, Elizabeth Nourse, and Louise Schmidt, to name just a few. In Paris and Frankfurt alike, they built international networks and supported one another. As influential teachers and art agents, some of them also shaped the history of the Städel Museum and Städelschule. It is time to dedicate a major exhibition to these women for the first time ever, and to discover them anew. From 10 July to 27 October 2024, the Städel Museum presents some 80 paintings and sculptures by altogether 26 women artists. Among them are significant artworks from renowned US and European museums and numerous works from private collections, which are exhibited for the first time. Previously unpublished archival materials accompany the works. Photographs and letters tell of international studio collectives, the strategic importance of professional artist associations, and successes, but also of continual efforts to gain recognition.

The exhibition is supported by the Gemeinnützige Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain GmbH, the Damengesellschaft of the Städelscher Museums-Vereins e. V., the Dr. Marschner Stiftung, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung, and CATRICE.

The exhibition features women artists who, with great independence and professionalism, asserted themselves in an art world dominated by male “artist geniuses”. From the perspective of their networks, a complex picture of women artists’ training and working circumstances in the modernist era emerges—from the struggles of the pioneers in 1880s Paris to the first female sculptors at the

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Städelschule (Städel art school) around 1900 to the self-determined young generation of women artists in the New Frankfurt of the 1920s and '30s. Widely different stylistically, the works testify to the diversity of women's artistic approaches, while also mirroring the radical social and aesthetic upheavals of the time. In their art the women painters and sculptors undertook critical investigations of their own existence as artists in a male-dominated environment. They self-confidently presented themselves in the circles of their female friends and companions and called traditional gender roles into question. By depicting the nude body, they also claimed their right to a motif complex previously reserved for men. In the process, they not only availed themselves of painting and drawing but also increasingly entered the territory of sculpture, which on account of its technical and material requirements and the physical strain it involved was considered the "most masculine" artistic medium.

Städel Museum director Philipp Demandt on the exhibition: "Käthe Kollwitz, Lotte Laserstein, Otilie Roederstein: In recent years the Städel Museum has devoted major exhibitions to successful women artists. This summer we are presenting the Städel / Women to our public—26 modern women painters and sculptors in *a single* show. As the result of an extensive research project on the history of our institution and its collection, the Städel Museum has succeeded in reconstructing remarkable women artists' biographies and locating lost works. We are thus closing gaps in the research while in turn opening doors for further study. This exhibition will fundamentally change our understanding of the situation of women artists around the turn of the last century and their influence on the development of modern art. I am deeply indebted to our lenders and sponsors, who once again have shown how essential their dedication is to the core aspects of our museum work."

Sylvia von Metzler, chair of the board of directors of the Städtischer Museums-Verein e. V., on the project: "This year the Städtischer Museums-Verein is celebrating its 125th anniversary. Today we are a network of more than 10,000 friends who support the Städel Museum in its multifarious undertakings both financially and non-materially. Our association's Damengesellschaft—women's society—has provided substantial aid to the current research and exhibition. This circle of patrons primarily champions themes concerning women in art in the past and present. We accompanied the project's development from its inception. It is important to give the broad public access to the contributions of women artists to modernism."

"The exhibition sheds light on the multifaceted nature of women's art production around 1900 from the perspective of female artists of Frankfurt and their close

connections to Paris. The study of women's self-determination in the struggle against gender-specific discrimination in training and professional practice encourages us to re-examine the established art-historical canon and, owing to its relevance to society, is of particular concern to the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation", emphasized **Dr Martin Hoernes, the secretary general of the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung.**

The exhibition curators Alexander Eiling, Eva-Maria Höllerer, and Aude-Line Schamschula: "Our exhibition concentrates on the artistic activities of women painters and sculptors between 1880 and the 1930s. We devote ourselves to three generations of women artists as well as the widely diverse interrelationships between the Frankfurt art world and the French art capital. Following a prologue exploring the circle of women artists around Otilie Roederstein in Paris, the focus turns to the training situation for women at the Städel art school and Frankfurt's new School of Arts and Crafts in the 1920s. We introduce these artists along with their individual achievements and highlight the widely branching networks with which they supported and encouraged one another. It is an exhibition about the self-empowerment of women artists who were no exception in their day."

The exhibition is the result of a research project that started with the retrospective on the painter Otilie W. Roederstein (2022). The Roederstein-Jughenn Archive domiciled in the Städel Museum since 2019 provides insights into a network of women around Roederstein who supported and encouraged one another in matters of training and exhibiting, while also providing each other practical help. Private and professional connections of this kind contributed significantly to the professionalization of women painters and sculptors and their ability to gain a foothold in the art world of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Another source of important findings was a re-examination of the Städel Museum's historical archive with a view to the training situation of women artists at the Städel school (Städelschule)—and thus a study of the institution's own history. Further research was carried out in private estates and external archives, especially in Paris, yielding results that are likewise reflected in the exhibition.

An introduction to the exhibition

In the late nineteenth century, private and professional networks were highly significant for women painters and sculptors. By collaborating with and supporting one another, female artists were able to overcome the disadvantages presented them by the societal system of the time. Until 1919, for instance, women were excluded from Germany's state art academies, while also facing limitations on their individual

freedom as well as prejudices to the effect that members of their sex lacked professionalism and creativity.

Focussing on three generations of women artists, the exhibition retraces the stylistic and aesthetic changes that came about in their art as well as the developments taking place in their training and working conditions between 1880 and the 1930s. While it is organized chronologically, the exhibition's presentation also addresses issues of vital importance to female painters and sculptors in their day. Paris remained a major focal point throughout the period in question, thanks to the wide variety of training opportunities it offered as well as its prominence as an art capital.

Women artists' networks in Paris: By the 1880s, Paris had developed into a world-class art capital. Women painters and sculptors converged there to train in private art academies or so-called "women's studios" led by renowned French male artists. The city served **Louise Catherine Breslau, Elizabeth Nourse, Otilie W. Roederstein**, and their colleagues as the launchpad of their careers and an important centre of their international network. It was Paris that offered them the means of becoming successful artists. What is more, some of their most important encounters took place in the city's training establishments. The exhibition features Louise Catherine Breslau's programmatic *A Portrait of Friends* (1881), a painted homage to the community of women she lived and associated with in Paris. The young artist showed the work at the Paris Salon, where it made her famous overnight.

As teachers and founders of private art schools, **Otilie W. Roederstein, Tola Certowicz, Martha Stettler**, and others also played key roles in expanding women's opportunities for obtaining an artistic education. Roederstein, for example, became an influential teacher after her move to Frankfurt, and assisted her female pupils in gaining admission to private academies and studios in Paris. As a result, the French capital remained a nexus for further generations of women artists as well.

The study of anatomy: The study of the nude body was a fundamental element of artistic training. Owing to moral reservations, however, access to this discipline was made difficult for women. Teachers willing to offer women instruction in nude drawing were rare; an exception was the history painter Luc-Olivier Merson. One of Merson's pupils was **Annie Stebler-Hopf**, who exhibited her painting *At the dissecting table (Professor Poirier, Paris)* (c. 1889) at the Paris Salon, thus provoking conservative critics who disapproved of it for being "unfeminine". Already that response alone speaks volumes about the strict gender-specific norms and expectations facing women artists until into the 20th century.

“Feminine art”?: In keeping with the tastes of the general public in their day, many women artists devoted their works to scenes of everyday life such as interiors or mother-and-child depictions. Unlike their male colleagues, however, they were all too often under pressure from society to confine themselves to these ‘typically feminine’ motifs in their work. Such clichéd conceptions overlook the fact that, in their handling of their subjects, women artists such as Martha Stettler and **Dora Hitz** were actually far more concerned with formal and stylistic matters—for example how to depict light phenomena or achieve a dynamic, expressive painting style.

The German painter **Ida Gerhardi** captured an entirely different facet of modern life. In paintings she carried out on site, for example *Dance Scene VIII (Can-Can Dancers at Bullier)* (ca. 1904), she devoted herself to scenes of Parisian nightlife—as one of the first women artists to venture that subject matter. After all, in those days it was taboo for a middle-class woman to be present in a nighttime establishment unaccompanied by a man. The choice of such themes is to be understood as a deliberate departure from the normative expectations with which women artists saw themselves confronted. Gerhardi was also frequently criticized for her adherence to French Post-Impressionist principles in her painting style.

From Paris to Frankfurt: Like Otilie W. Roederstein, **Marie Bertuch** of Hanau settled in Frankfurt in the early 1890s after several years of training in Paris. Both painters brought new ideas and teaching methods with them, which they put into practice in their work with young talents such as **Mathilde Battenberg** and **Pauline Kowarzik**. The exhibition presents, for instance, a number of portraits by the painter Mathilde Battenberg including the *Portrait of Peter Carl MacKay* (1915), which the Städel Museum has newly acquired for its modern art collection.

Artistic training for women in Frankfurt: The art school of the Städelches Kunstinstitut—Städelschule for short—had been admitting women to a separate “women’s studio” for painting since as far back as 1869. The institute’s founder Johann Friedrich Städel had stipulated in his will that the school was to be accessible to all children of Frankfurt’s citizens “without distinction of sex”. It was thus one of the first public institutions in Germany to offer women professional artistic training. In 1893, however, the school withdrew this teaching offer for a decade to come. It was then that a sizeable number of women found their way to the privately run Städel studios of Otilie W. Roederstein and Wilhelm Trübner. Starting in 1904, the Städel art school finally granted women equal access to all classes, setting an important example in the area of artistic training for women in Germany.

Women sculptors: The Städel art school was also exceptional with regard to women's training in sculpture. As early as 1893, the young art student **Louise Schmidt** managed to be admitted to the school's sculpture class, which until then had been the preserve of male students. The exhibition showcases her *Sun Worshipper* (1913). Schmidt also went on to teach sculpture. One of her first pupils was **Marg Moll**, who would become a distinguished sculptor in her own right.

Pauline Kowarzik: The artist, collector, and art patron Pauline Kowarzik of Frankfurt is closely linked to the Städel Museum. On account of her expertise, the purchasing committee of the Städtische Galerie (Municipal Gallery) affiliated with the Städel Museum appointed her as its first female member in 1916. In 1926 she donated her collection to the city of Frankfurt in return for a life annuity which she received in monthly instalments. A large number of superb paintings and sculptures thus made their way into the Städel. During her lifetime, Kowarzik was a successful painter and exhibited her works in venues as near as the Rhine-Main region and as far as New York. Recently acquired for the Städel Museums's collection, the *Still Life with Flowers, Onions and Stoneware Jug* (1913) is on view in the exhibition along with other works by the artist.

Trübner's female pupils: Between 1896 and 1903, in addition to the training offered by Otilie W. Roederstein, the opportunity to take private instruction from Wilhelm Trübner also drew many women to the Städel art school. His pupils profited from his progressive teaching methods, which—revolving entirely around painting in the open air—were unusual for Frankfurt. Trübner's most gifted pupils included his later wife **Alice Trübner (née Auerbach)** and **Eugenie Bandell**. Both advanced to become recognized artists whose works were shown in numerous exhibitions in Frankfurt and far beyond. Among the works on display in the exhibition are Trübner's *Doll under Glass Dome* (before 1912) and Bandell's *Sun at Noon (Wilhelmsbad)* (1913). Although both women departed distinctly from their teacher's example in terms of subject matter as well as style, contemporary critics occasionally degraded them to the status of imitators—a verdict that has continued to distort the perception of their artistic achievements to this day. Alice Trübner and Eugenie Bandell were both actively involved in local culture and women artists' associations.

Women artists at the new Frankfurt School of Arts and Crafts: The 1920s were a time of radical change in Germany—for society in general and women in particular, who had only gained the right to vote and equal access to state art academies throughout the country not long before. In the city on the Main, it was also the age of "New Frankfurt", a programme launched with the aim of renewing the townscape and society alike. In 1923 the Städel art school merged with the city's School of Arts and

Crafts and underwent fundamental reorganization. Structured after the example of the Bauhaus in Weimar, the new joint institute brought fine arts and crafts together under a single roof. **Erna Auerbach** of Frankfurt, for instance, studied in the “free painting” class led by Johann Vincenz Cissarz. The school also established so-called master classes led by prominent artistic figures such as Max Beckmann, who took charge of a master class in painting in 1925. **Inge Dinand, Anna Krüger, and Marie-Louise von Motesiczky** were among his most outstanding pupils. Among the works in the exhibition are *Portrait of a Girl with Braids and Two Boys* (1929) by Dinand, Motesiczky’s *Stool* (1926), and Krüger’s painting *Seated Female Nude* (undated, 1930s?), another new acquisition by the Städel Museum.

The National Socialist accession to power in 1933 marked the end of the new Frankfurt School of Arts and Crafts. Under the Nazi regime, both the emancipated “New Woman” of the 1920s and the independent woman artist were declared enemy stereotypes. A phase of liberal training for women artists in Frankfurt thus came to an end, not to be resumed for many years to come.

All women artists featured in the exhibition: Erna Auerbach, Eugenie Bandell, Mathilde Battenberg, Helene von Beckerath, Hanna Bekker vom Rath, Marie Bertuch, Olga Boznańska, Louise Catherine Breslau, Tola Certowicz, Inge Dinand, Ida Gerhardt, Dora Hitz, Pauline Kowarzik, Anna Krüger, Rosy Lilienfeld, Else Luthmer, Marg Moll, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, Elizabeth Nourse, Maria Petrie, Ottilie W. Roederstein, Louise Schmidt, Madeleine Smith, Annie Stebler-Hopf, Martha Stettler, Alice Trübner

STÄDEL | WOMEN: WOMEN ARTISTS BETWEEN FRANKFURT AND PARIS AROUND 1900

Exhibition dates: 10 July to 27 October 2024

Curators, Städel Museum: Dr Alexander Eiling (Head of the Modern Art), Eva-Maria Höllerer (curator, Modern Art), Aude-Line Schamschula (assistant curator, Modern Art)

Historical Archive: Dr Iris Schmeisser (Head of Provenance Research and Archives)

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

Special opening hours: Up-to-date information on special opening hours at staedelmuseum.de/en

Tickets: Tue–Fri €16, reduced €14, Sat, Sun + holidays €18, reduced €16; every Tuesday from 3.00 pm €9; admission free for children under 12. Groups of at least 10 persons who would normally be charged the full admission fee: €16 per person. Groups are required to book in advance by contacting +49(0)69-605098-200 or info@staedelmuseum.de

Guided tours: Tuesdays 1.00 pm / Sundays 11.00 am / Thursday, 3 October, 11.00 am / Barrier-free general guided tour with detailed work descriptions on Sunday, 25 August, 2.00 pm / Barrier-free general guided tour with sign language interpreter on Tuesday, 17 September, 1.00 pm. Tickets are available online at shop.staedelmuseum.de/en. Go to staedelmuseum.de/en for the latest information on general guided tours, special holiday offers, and the museum opening hours.

Online tour – Städel I Women: Sunday, 14 July, 4.00 pm; go to shop.staedelmuseum.de/en for further dates and tickets.

Audio guide app: Discover 26 women artists, their multifaceted artistic oeuvres between Frankfurt and Paris, and their influence on art and society around 1900. In addition to illustrations, the one-hour app contains audio tracks on approximately 30 artworks. Starting on opening day, the audio guide will be available free of charge for the iOS and Android operating systems at the App and Google Play Stores and conveniently downloadable onto smartphones, for example at home or within Städel WiFi range.

Catalogue: A catalogue edited by Alexander Eiling, Eva-Maria Höllerer, and Aude-Line Schamschula and published by the Hirmer-Verlag will accompany the exhibition. With a foreword by Phillip Demandt and contributions by Eva Sabrina Atlan, Juliane Betz, Éléonore Dérisson, Regina Freyberger, Natalie Gutgesell, Anne-Catherine Krüger, Iris Schmeisser, Corinne Linda Sotzek, and Marion Victor. In German with English translations of the essays and artists' biographies, 232 pages, 188 ills., €39.90 (museum edition)

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