

GABRIELE MÜNTER. THE HUMAN IMAGE
11 FEBRUARY TO 21 MAY 2023

With *Gabriele Münter. The Human Image*, the Bucerius Kunst Forum is presenting the first major exhibition of the work of this important German Expressionist focusing on a single theme: the artist's intense engagement with portraiture from 1899/1900 to 1940. Around 100 paintings, prints, drawings, photographs and reverse paintings on glass are being brought together to illustrate the enormous diversity of Münter's work and her unique pioneering spirit. On view in addition to works from the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau in Munich will be loans from important collections such as the Milwaukee Art Museum, the National Gallery of Ireland, the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, and the Israel Museum, as well as from private lenders.

Throughout her life Gabriele Münter (1877–1962) took an active interest in people and capturing their likenesses. She already did pencil portraits as a child, as well as making photographs of people she encountered on a trip through the United States (1899/1900). At her artistic debut in 1907 at the *Salon d'Automne* in Paris, the majority of her exhibited works were portraits. "Portrait painting is the boldest and the most difficult, the most spiritual, the most extreme task for the artist. To go beyond the portrait is a demand that can only be made by those who have not yet advanced toward it," she once said. During her years as a founding member of *Der Blaue Reiter* group, Münter produced incomparable portraits cast in a colourful, vibrant formal language. And later, during her exile in Scandinavia and after her return in 1920, it was still people that fascinated her the most. Her sketchbook drawings are unsurpassed, both in their expressive rendering of individuals in just a few strokes and in their deft composition.

The exhibition *Gabriele Münter. The Human Image*, organised in cooperation with the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau in Munich, is divided into six chapters: *self-portraits, portraits, portraits of children, figural portrayals, people in drawings* and *group portraits*. Each chapter is arranged chronologically, beginning with Münter's early photographs, which have rarely been exhibited to date. These provide evidence of the artist's keen eye for people, situations and compositions, attesting to Münter's artistic and visual talent from an early age. The prints and drawings she produced over the ensuing decades, viewed alongside her vividly coloured painted portraits, allow us to trace her artistic development and her relish in experimentation. The consummate handling of colour and form for which she would become known, as well as her distinct talent for drawing, are just as

arresting here as the versatility of her visual language.

In her portraits, Münter manages to capture the personality of each sitter by fine-tuning the painting style, composition and degree of abstraction in each case. At the same time, the portrait genre allowed her to express what compelled her in terms of content or form. In her group portraits, Münter conveys interpersonal relationships and group dynamics through the structural fabric of the image, in some cases incorporating the landscape into the composition as a carrier of meaning.

The open architecture of the exhibition space enables sight lines between the various chapters, revealing parallels and the multifaceted nature of Münter's oeuvre. Kathrin Baumstark, director of the Bucerius Kunst Forum and curator of the exhibition, felt it was important in this focused monographic show to consider Münter as an artist in her own right, independent of the context of *Der Blaue Reiter* and Wassily Kandinsky, and to demonstrate her vast artistic range detached from her biography. In this way, the Bucerius Kunst Forum is able to spotlight Münter's singular importance as a central artistic figure of German Expressionism.

An extensive catalogue will be published by Hirmer Verlag to accompany the exhibition, with essays by Kathrin Baumstark, Christine Hopfengart, Isabelle Jansen, Ulrich Pohlmann, Frank Schmidt and Uwe M. Schneede (approx. 240 pages, with colour illustrations of the exhibited works, 29.90 EUR at the exhibition).

Exhibition sponsor Hapag-Lloyd AG will enable free admission to the show on International Women's Day, 8 March 2023.

The exhibition is sponsored by



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