

24 November 2011

THE MAD SQUARE MODERNITY IN GERMAN ART 1910-37

NGV International

25 November 2011 – 4 March 2012

This summer the National Gallery of Victoria presents the first exhibition in Australia to explore the radical avant-garde art movements that emerged in Germany during one of the most important and chaotic periods of the twentieth century.

The Mad Square: Modernity in German Art 1910–37 brings together an experimental, provocative and utterly compelling collection of over 200 paintings, photographs, prints, films, sculptures and decorative arts pieces with loans from museums and private collections around the world.

Dr Gerard Vaughan, Director, NGV said: “This remarkable exhibition gives visitors the opportunity to experience an extraordinary moment in German art.

“Following the catastrophe of World War I and during a period of revolution and chaos, German artists entered an exhilarating phase of creative and artistic fervour, when radically modern art movements were born and flourished”.

The Mad Square explores Expressionism, Dada, Constructivism, Bauhaus and New Objectivity, with each of these bold and provocative art movements presenting the artists’ passionate engagement with the concepts of modernity, metropolis, culture and politics. Though widely varied in content and style, the movements are inter-related through a shared interest in radical experimentation.

Works from leading artists of the time, including Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch, Karl Hubbuch, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Käthe Kollwitz, László Moholy-Nagy, August Sander, Christian Schad, Rudolf Schlichter and Kurt Schwitters, emphasise the great diversity and innovation of these key avant-garde movements that emerged in a number of cities across Germany, and Berlin in particular.

The exhibition draws its inspiration and title from Felix Nussbaum’s 1931 painting *The mad square* which depicts contemporary Berlin and the art of the period as being both fabulous and mad.



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Dr Petra Kayser, Curator, Prints and Drawings said: “The exhibition explores the fascinating and complex ways in which artists reacted to social, political and technological changes and represented this modern world.

“The range of artworks in *The Mad Square* makes this the most comprehensive exhibition of German modernism ever to be shown in Australia”.

The exhibition examines the impact of World War I and the transformation of German society from the establishment of the Weimar Republic through to the dictatorship of the National Socialists in the 1930s.

The Mad Square culminates with a section on the 1937 *Degenerate art* exhibition in Munich. Selected works presented alongside installation photos tell the story of an exhibition that was designed by the National Socialists’ to ridicule the mental deficiency and moral decay that had supposedly infiltrated modern German art.

This important and insightful exhibition emphasises the legacy of innovation left by the Weimar Republic on art and culture over the decades.

The exhibition comes to the NGV from the Art Gallery of New South Wales, curated by Jacqueline Strecker.

The Mad Square: Modernity in German Art 1910–37 will be open daily (closed Tuesdays) from 10am–5pm, running from 25 November 2011 until 4 March 2012.

Admission fees apply: Adult \$18 | Concession \$12 | Child (5-15 yrs) \$9 | Family (2 adults & 3 children) \$45 | Students \$10 every Thursday | NGV Member Adult \$9 | NGV Member Family \$45 |

Parental guidance is recommended for young visitors.

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An Art Gallery of New South
Wales travelling exhibition



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Christian Schad
Self-portrait 1927
oil on wood
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