

VAN HAM

Unravelling the Works on Paper of George Grosz - An Immersion in Artistic Expression and Social Commentary

George Grosz, a key figure in the Dada movement and New Objectivity of the early 20th century, is known for his biting satire and sharp social commentary. While Grosz is perhaps best known for his paintings, his equally significant work lies in his watercolours, drawings and collages. These delicate works offer a unique insight into Grosz's artistic process, his political views and the social turbulence of his time. VAN HAM is delighted to offer an extensive range of works in the "Modern Art" auction on June 6, 2024, showcasing his rich palette of images and ideas across the many developments of his strong oeuvre.

George Grosz grew up in the turbulent environment of pre-war Germany. Growing up in a lower middle-class family and his experiences as a soldier in the First World War had a lasting influence on his artistic sensibility. His disillusionment with the political establishment, rampant corruption and social decay in Weimar Germany fuelled his artistic expression. After the First World War, Europe experienced a wave of artistic experimentation and cultural upheaval. Grosz became one of the leading figures of the Dada movement. With his provocative drawings and satirical illustrations, Grosz skewered the hypocrisy and decadence of Weimar society and earned himself a reputation as a fearless critic and provocateur. As the Dada movement developed into the politically charged New Objectivity, Grosz's work took on a new urgency and seriousness. He turned his sharp eye to exposing the corruption and moral bankruptcy of the German ruling class, producing a series of scathing indictments that exposed the inequalities and injustices of the time.

After emigrating from Germany in 1933 due to the rise of National Socialism, Grosz found a new artistic home in New York. His works reflect the social and political atmosphere of the city during the 1930s and 1940s. He portrays the city and its inhabitants with a critical eye, revealing the social injustices, the misery of the big city and the effects of capitalism. His characters are distorted and exaggerated to emphasise the despair and alienation of modern society. Despite his emigration from Germany, Grosz remained a committed observer and critic of European politics. His works on paper from the New York years are therefore also characterised by a certain melancholy, as they show the inner turmoil of an artist caught between two worlds.

In Georges Grosz's late work, he portrayed his wife as a nude model in pornographic works - a drastic departure from his earlier political themes. These depictions polarised the art world. Grosz's wife became the central motif, with her body and sexuality taking centre stage. The artist's decision raises questions about the nature of their relationship and his artistic motivation. Some see it as voyeurism and objectification, others interpret it as an expression of freedom and experimentation. The works challenge the viewer by raising questions about sexuality, power and desire. The provocative visual language

questions traditional notions of beauty and eroticism, as well as the role of the artist as observer and manipulator of the human body. His depictions are characterised by a mixture of tenderness and irony, reflecting his complex relationship with his wife. Through subtle gestures and facial expressions, Grosz is able to capture the dynamics of their relationship and give the viewer an intimate insight into their life together. This change reflects not only an artistic evolution, but also a personal maturity and serenity that Grosz achieved in his later years.

George Grosz's fearless commitment to artistic expression and social commentary has inspired generations of artists to use their work as a tool for change and resistance. Through his innovative efforts, Grosz pushed the boundaries of artistic expression, constantly challenging the status quo and leaving a legacy that remains relevant and influential.