

# The Museum of Modern Art

## MoMA ANNOUNCES MAJOR SURVEY OF KÄTHE KOLLWITZ, THE FIRST NEW YORK MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVE OF THE GERMAN ARTIST'S WORK

### Exhibition Brings Together 120 Rarely Seen Drawings, Prints, and Sculptures from Public and Private Collections in the US and Europe

**NEW YORK, NY, July 12, 2023**—The Museum of Modern Art announces the first-ever New York City museum retrospective devoted to Käthe Kollwitz, and the first major international loan exhibition of her work in the United States in more than 30 years. On view at MoMA from March 31 through July 20, 2024, *Käthe Kollwitz* will present a focused exploration of the artist's career in approximately 120 rarely seen examples of her drawings, prints, and sculptures drawn from public and private collections in the US and Europe. Organized chronologically, the exhibition will trace the development of Kollwitz's work from the 1890s through the 1930s, a period of unprecedented turmoil in German history marked by the social ills of industrialization in the late 19th century and the traumas of war and political upheaval in the early 20th century. Crucial examples of the artist's most important projects will showcase her commitment to socially critical subject matter, and key selections of preparatory studies and working proofs will highlight her creative process. *Käthe Kollwitz* is organized by Starr Figura, Curator, with Maggie Hire, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints.

Käthe Kollwitz (German, 1867–1945) was born in the Prussian city of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia). She initially trained as a painter but quickly turned to drawing and printmaking, which she saw as the most effective mediums for social criticism. She also worked occasionally in sculpture. In the early decades of the 20th century, when many artists were experimenting with the language of abstraction, Kollwitz remained committed to figuration and an art of social purpose. During an era when the leading figures in all fields were almost exclusively men, she was widely acknowledged as one of history's most outstanding graphic artists, and became one of the few women artists to achieve international renown in her own lifetime.

As a woman confronting the injustices of her era, Kollwitz radically asserted the female point of view as a necessary and powerful agent for change. Unflinching in her pursuit of raw emotional honesty, she continually reworked her central themes of motherhood, grief, and revolt from one work to the next. Her drive was fueled by a bold ambition for herself as an artist and a dedication to bringing visibility to women and the working class. Figura explains, "Kollwitz forged an art of compassion and social conscience that resonates as powerfully today as it did in her lifetime, and this exhibition aims to reintroduce her at a moment when her commitment to social and political change is of renewed, even urgent, relevance."

Among the pivotal works in the exhibition will be Kollwitz's iconic etching *Woman with Dead Child* (1903), accompanied by a revelatory sequence of studies, state proofs, and hand-colored working proofs that chart the artist's process of conceiving and reconceiving its composition. During a period when childhood mortality was a devastating reality, Kollwitz

used the traditional Christian subject of the Pietà as a point of departure to reflect upon the theme of mothers grieving the loss of their children. Other highlights of the exhibition will include works such as *Peasants' War* (1902-08), a print cycle that drew attention to the struggles of the working class, and *War* (1921-22, published 1923), a portfolio of seven woodcuts spotlighting the trauma of war from the point of view of those left behind—parents, widows, and children.

Together with the loans of many extraordinary drawings and unique prints that have rarely, if ever, been exhibited in New York, the exhibition will feature several important works from MoMA's collection, including, most notably, *Self-portrait en face* (1904). One of the most remarkable self-portraits made in the early years of the 20th century, it was acquired jointly by The Museum of Modern Art and Neue Galerie in 2021. *Käthe Kollwitz* and its accompanying major publication will explore the artist's legacy and her place in an expanded narrative of modernism.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue, edited by Starr Figura and featuring texts by Kirsty Bell, Maggie Hire, Dorothy Price, and Sarah Rapoport, that explores crucial aspects of Kollwitz's art, career, and legacy, including her professional life and connections in Berlin, her groundbreaking approach to the subject of women's grief, and her work's reception in the US.

#### **SPONSORSHIP:**

Leadership support for the exhibition is provided by the Eyal and Marilyn Ofer Family Foundation.

Generous funding is provided by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art and by the Robert Lehman Foundation.

Major funding for the publication is provided by The Museum of Modern Art's Research and Scholarly Publications endowment established through the generosity of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Edward John Noble Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Perry R. Bass, and the National Endowment for the Humanities' Challenge Grant Program.

The Bloomberg Connects digital experience is made possible through the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

#### **PRESS CONTACTS:**

Jack Spielsinger, [jack\\_spielsinger@moma.org](mailto:jack_spielsinger@moma.org)  
Sara Beth Walsh, [sarabeth\\_walsh@moma.org](mailto:sarabeth_walsh@moma.org)  
MoMA Press Office, [pressoffice@moma.org](mailto:pressoffice@moma.org)

**For downloadable high-resolution images, visit [moma.org/press](https://moma.org/press).**