

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 110 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* presents a focused exploration of the artist's career in approximately 110 rarely seen examples of her drawings, prints, and sculptures drawn from public and private collections in the US and Europe. Organized chronologically, the exhibition traces 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 a 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 resistance 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 are 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 in her images of a mother grieving the loss of a child. Other highlights of the exhibition include *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 memorializing the anguish of World War I 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 features 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.

AUDIO GUIDE:

What can we learn from Kollwitz's art of social purpose? Explore contemporary perspectives on Kollwitz's groundbreaking work with reflections from speakers like celebrated author Sheila Heti and acclaimed visual artists and photographer Wolfgang Tillmans. With curator Starr Figura as your guide, you'll learn about the historical moment in which Kollwitz found herself and how she used her talents to put forth a woman's point of view that advocated for social and political change. Each audio stop is punctuated by a contemporary voice discussing the relevance of Kollwitz's work today, including printmaker Rob Swainston on artistic process, *The Lonely Palette* Podcast host Tamar Avishai on the role of motherhood, and somatic therapist Emily Price on how art can help us navigate difficult emotions.

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