

Norton Simon Museum For Immediate Release

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Maven of Modernism: Galka Scheyer in California

April 7–Sept. 25, 2017

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents *Maven of Modernism: Galka Scheyer in California*, an exhibition that delves into the life of Galka Scheyer, the enterprising dealer responsible for the art phenomenon the “Blue Four”—Lyonel Feininger, Alexei Jawlensky, Paul Klee and Vasily Kandinsky. In California, through the troubling decades of the Great Depression and the Second World War, German-born Scheyer (1889–1945) single-handedly cultivated a taste for their brand of European modernism by arranging exhibitions, lectures and publications on their work, and negotiating sales on their behalf. *Maven of Modernism* presents exceptional examples from Scheyer’s personal collection by the Blue Four artists, as well as works by artists including Alexander Archipenko, László Moholy-Nagy, Emil Nolde, Pablo Picasso and Diego Rivera, which was given to the Pasadena Art Institute in the early 1950s. All together, these works and related ephemera tell the fascinating story of this trailblazing impresario, who helped shape California’s reputation as a burgeoning center for modern art.



Head in Profile, 1919
Emil Nolde (German, 1867-1956)
Watercolor and India ink on tan wove paper
14-1/2 x 11-1/8 in. (36.8 x 28.3 cm)
Norton Simon Museum, The Blue Four Galka Scheyer Collection
© Nolde Stiftung Seebüll, Germany

Galka Scheyer was born Emilie Esther Scheyer in Braunschweig, Germany, in 1889, to a middle-class Jewish family. As a young woman, she studied piano and painting, but it was in 1915, when she first saw paintings by Jawlensky (whom she met shortly thereafter) in an exhibition in Switzerland, that her life took a new direction, that of an ardent art supporter and promoter. (Indeed, it was Jawlensky who nicknamed Scheyer “Galka,” the Russian word for jackdaw, a gregarious, intelligent crow.) In the years that followed, Scheyer became closely associated with Jawlensky and the artists Feininger, Klee and Kandinsky, whom she named the “Blue Four,” among the most popular painters of the German

Expressionist generation, as she set out to promote their work in the United States in 1924. Scheyer found fertile ground for her mission when, in 1925, she moved to California and discovered an enthusiastic audience for her innovative artists and her activities as their representative.

In San Francisco, she quickly gathered important friends around her, including William H. Clapp of the Oakland Art Museum, Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston, Frida Kahlo and Rivera. Moving to Los Angeles in 1930 enlarged the social and cultural network in which she circulated, connecting her to John Cage, Walter and Louise Arensberg, Josef von Sternberg, Peter Krasnow and a host of German émigré artists. Her Hollywood home, designed by Richard Neutra, functioned as a meeting place and gallery for a cadre of art aficionados.

Each object in the exhibition *Maven of Modernism* relates to Scheyer in a personal and meaningful way. From the Blue Four artists, for example, the exhibition presents the rarely seen Jawlensky painting “The Hunchback,” given by the artist to Scheyer in 1917 and based on the same work that she dearly admired when she visited the 1915 “Exhibition of Contemporary Russian Artists,” in Lausanne, Switzerland. Kandinsky’s “Heavy Circles,” 1927, one of the most recognizable works in the Museum’s Blue Four holdings, was given to Scheyer by the artist as a gesture of friendship. Klee’s “Possibilities at Sea,” 1932, another standout in the Museum’s collection, was so beloved to Scheyer that she negotiated its purchase from Klee, writing “It is one of the most amazing pictures I have ever experienced.” And Feininger’s “Untitled,” 1945, was sent to Scheyer after he learned of her diagnosis of cancer, along with a letter stating “It is enough to make one want to shed tears, when we think of you suffering, with your deep love for Art the only thing that keeps your chin up....”

While Scheyer is well known for her support of the Blue Four artists, lesser known is that she built an impressive collection of works by other leading contemporary artists, developed out of her friendships and many social encounters. Highlights in the exhibition include Rivera’s “Blue Boy with the Banana,” 1931, which was acquired by Scheyer during her stay with Rivera and Kahlo in Mexico City in the early 1930s. Weston’s “Two Shells,” 1927, was given to Scheyer as a gift from the artist in 1927, not long after the two met at a party given by his neighbor, Peter Krasnow. Krasnow’s illustrative watercolor “Recalling Happy Memories,” c. 1927, also gifted to Scheyer by the artist, depicts Scheyer lecturing to a small gathering, holding a painting in her left hand and a pointer in her right, with the four blue lines, recognized as symbols of the Blue Four artists, painted in the upper right-hand corner.

Maven of Modernism is organized by Curator Gloria Williams Sander. A series of related programs will be organized, including:

LECTURES

Galka Scheyer: Enterprising Prophetess of the Blue Four
Gloria Williams Sander, Curator, Norton Simon Museum
Saturday, April 22, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Dear Little Tornado: Galka Scheyer in Hollywood
Victoria Dailey, Writer and Independent Curator
Saturday, May 13, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Galka Scheyer: Patron Saint of Modernism in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1925–1929
Susan Landauer, Independent Art Historian and Curator
Saturday, September 16, 4:00–5:00 p.m.

FILM SERIES: *Galka's Circle: Josef von Sternberg in Hollywood*

Morocco (1930), NR
Friday, May 5, 6:00–7:30 p.m.

The Blue Angel (1930), NR
Friday, May 12, 6:00–7:45 p.m.

Dishonored (1931), NR
Friday, May 19, 6:00–7:30 p.m.

Shanghai Express (1932), NR
Friday, May 26, 6:00–7:20 p.m.

FILM *The Films of Maya Deren: Experimental Films 1943–1959*

Friday, June 9, 2017, 6:00–7:20 p.m.

PERFORMANCES

Ships and Skyscrapers: Lyonel Feininger and the Music of His Time
Dr. Polli Chambers-Salazar
Saturday, July 15, 5:00–6:00 p.m.

Shared Vision: Jazz and The Galka Scheyer Collection
Greg Reitan Trio
Saturday, August 12, 5:00–6:00 p.m.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum’s collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.

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