

Art Basel 2021

September 24 – 26, 2021

"The human form will always be the grand parable of the artist."

- Oskar Schlemmer

At Art Basel 2021, Galerie Thomas will focus on the representation of the human figure in modern art. Paintings, sculptures and works on paper span the spectrum from classical modernism and especially expressionism to the post-war avant-garde. Starting with important artists of classical modernism such as Max Beckmann, Chaim Soutine, Edvard Munch and Emil Nolde, the overview at Galerie Thomas' booth will also include works by Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger and Ferdinand Hodler and extend to more recent positions by Andy Warhol or A. R. Penck. Thus, the depictions of the human figure shown at this year's booth of Galerie Thomas at Art Basel report on the intellectual historical development of modern painting, from the primacy of nature to the search for the ideal and concentration on the symbol.

The following works will also be on display in the presentation:



Alexej von Jawlensky's "Portrait of a Girl" belongs to a group of masterpieces that were all created in the period of 1910 and fully represent Jawlensky's individual, unique style, which was to reach its peak in the years leading up to 1912. Here, Jawlensky experiments with the concept abstracting the individual to an extent that it becomes universally valid and an archetypal character.

The portrait of a blonde woman by Kees van Dongen, painted in 1912, is still completely committed to the psychologizing art of portraiture. Its painting style combines realistic and impressionistic elements. Van Dongen became famous overnight when he exhibited with what later became known as the "Fauves". He was considered the wildest of the painters in this group of French Expressionists, which also included Matisse, Derain and Vlaminck. But the "wild one" van Dongen, the disturbing outsider, became one of the most sought-after portrait artists of the late Belle Époque and the golden twenties.



GALERIE THOMAS

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The painting "Figure on a Grey Background" by Oskar Schlemmer makes the leap into the period between the world wars and exemplifies the significant development in the conception of figurative representation of the avant-garde of the 1920s. The theme that runs like a red thread through Schlemmer's oeuvre is the human figure in space. For Schlemmer, the human figure in a pictorial work is an abstraction; his figures are not concrete portraits, but a transfer of the individual into a pictorial structure of elementary formal language.

The subject of the family in a constellation of three in Emil Nolde's painting from 1949 immediately evokes associations with the cycle of themes of religious images, a focus in Nolde's work - in particular with the Holy Family with Mary, Joseph and the little Christ Child, the archetype of the ideal family. Nolde repeatedly worked on Biblical topics throughout his oeuvre, as his life was influenced religiously from earliest childhood. However, it is an undogmatic, immediate and very personal religiosity that is inherent in Nolde's figure paintings which are characterized by glowing colours.



In his work "Le peintre à la Tour Eiffel", Marc Chagall combines his typical imagery between dreamy, almost naive sensitivity and surrealistic complexity with reminiscences of his adopted home Paris and nostalgic memories of his Russian hometown. The painter's head, undoubtedly an ideal self-portrait by Chagall, is at the same time a universal symbol for mankind.

Emil Nolde: © Stiftung Seebüll Ada und Emil Nolde 2021 ; Marc Chagall: © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021

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