

Catalogue: *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933*

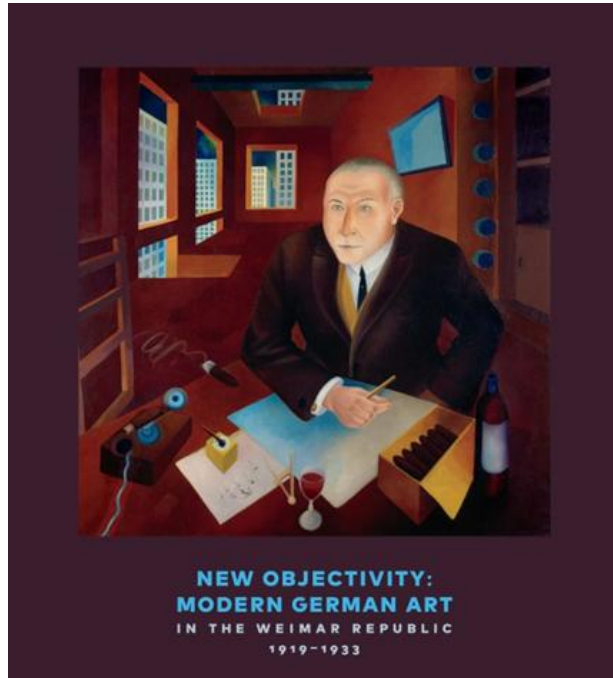


Image caption on page 4

(Los Angeles—June 30, 2015) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is pleased to announce its catalogue for the exhibition *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933* (on view October 4, 2015–January 18, 2016), the first comprehensive exhibition in the United States to explore the dominant artistic trends of this period.

Between the end of World War I in 1918 and Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Germany experienced its first democracy, the Weimar Republic. This short-lived period is known as a time of major transformations—political and economic upheavals in the aftermath of the war, accompanied by rapid modernization, shaped a society that witnessed fast-paced changes oscillating between sociopolitical insecurity and relative stability. The Weimar Republic was also a thriving laboratory of art and culture. As the country experienced this unprecedented upheaval, many artists rejected Expressionism in favor of a new realism to capture this emerging society. Dubbed *Neue Sachlichkeit*—New Objectivity—its adherents turned a cold eye on the new Germany: its crippled war veterans, desperate prostitutes, and alienated urban landscapes, but also its emancipated new women, modern architecture, and mass-produced commodities. Organized by LACMA in association with the Museo Correr in Venice, Italy, and featuring nearly 200 works by more than 50 artists, the exhibition juxtaposes painting, photography, and works

on paper, offering the rare opportunity to examine the similarities and differences between the period's diverse media.

The goal of the ambitious catalogue *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933* is twofold: it aims to provide a new and timely scholarly account of New Objectivity and to create a lasting record of the eponymous international exhibition. Both the exhibition and catalogue focus on many well-known artists such as Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, August Sander, Christian Schad, Rudolf Schlichter, and Georg Schrimpf, but also lesser known ones, such as Aenne Biermann, Hans Finsler, Grete Jürgens, Carlo Mense, Herbert Ploberger, and Georg Scholz. Due to the unprecedented range of artists, this volume includes individual biographies, which are supplemented by short interpretations of the most important artworks represented in this exhibition characterizing their contribution to the history of realism.

Both exhibition and catalogue are thematically organized, taking at its point of departure the observation that portraits, still lifes, landscapes and cityscapes as well as Realist subject matter such as prostitutes, workers, and war veterans shape much of the visual compendium of *New Objectivity*. Smaller thematic essays intentionally depart from earlier approaches that investigate New Objectivity only in relation to the traditional genres of art history (i.e. portraiture, still lifes, and landscapes). Although many artists of New Objectivity revisited and revised these genres, they did so through the lens of the trauma caused by WWI on the one hand and Germany's rapid postwar modernization on the other. "Life in the Democracy and the Aftermath of War," "The City and the Nature of Landscape," "Man and Machine," "Still Lifes and Commodities," and "New Identities: Type and Portraiture" comprise five essays by Graham Bader, Daniela Frabricius, Pepper Stetler, Megan Luke, and Lynette Roth. These texts investigate complex tensions and intersections between traditional genres and new subject matter—such as typologies instead of individualized portraits and commodities rather than allegorical still lifes—that reflect responses to the effects of war and technological modernization, newfound democratic freedoms, and a rapidly developing capitalism.

The catalogue's larger scholarly essays aim to locate German New Objectivity in broader international, historical, sociopolitical, geographical, and artistic contexts in order to assess the significance of this new realism. Stephanie Barron's introductory essay discusses New Objectivity's distinctiveness from German Expressionism and anchors the new German realism within complex and rapidly shifting national, political, and social contexts. Sabine Eckmann's essay attempts to tease out the specific nature of this German realism; the paintings and photographs of New Objectivity make visible an alienated relationship to reality, sometimes in the form of a dangerous and unpredictable

outside world, one that is either devoid of humans or populated with ugly bodies and hyperbolic faces that appear to be filtered through a ghostly and uncanny present. The catalogue also devotes much attention to the progressive nature of Germany's Weimar Republic. Maria Makela, for example, explores emerging feminism, as well as lesbian and gay culture and more broadly the openness toward alternative sexualities.

In their respective essays, Jim van Dyke and Olaf Peter investigate the politics of New Objectivity by studying and interpreting primary sources from the 1920s through the end of the Cold War in 1989, demonstrating complex understandings of New Objectivity during politically decisive periods. Keith Holz expands the national and geographical focus to discuss the international reception of New Objectivity while also exploring New Objectivity as a German idiom. For example, he shows how international artists employing similar realist means had a difficult stance in 1920s Germany. Lastly, Matt Witkovsky and Andreas Huyssen do away with the exceptionalist status of New Objectivity within modern art history and explore the return to figurative painting after the advent of avant-garde experimentation showing how photography, montage, and mimetic painting constructively influenced one another.

The 360-page hardcover catalogue includes 300 full-color images and is copublished by LACMA and DelMonico Books/Prestel. *New Objectivity* is edited by the exhibition's curator Stephanie Barron, senior curator of Modern Art at LACMA, and Sabine Eckmann, William T. Kemper Director and chief curator of the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum in St. Louis, Missouri.

*New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933* is available at the LACMA Store and [online](#) to LACMA members for \$67.50 and to non-members for \$75.

**Credit:** This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in association with Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia.

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**Image caption:** Catalogue cover of *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933*, Courtesy of Prestel Publishing

### **About LACMA**

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes nearly 130,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art, Latin American art, ranging from pre-Columbian masterpieces to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over a million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives, such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement at [lacma.org](http://lacma.org). Situated in Hancock Park on over 20 acres in the heart of Los Angeles, LACMA is located between the ocean and downtown.

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**Stephanie Barron** is Senior Curator of Modern Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where she has organized more than 75 exhibitions, including three groundbreaking and award-winning examinations of German art and politics: *“Degenerate Art”: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (1991), *Exiles + Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (1997), and *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* (2009). She also co-organized *German Expressionism: Art and Society 1909–1923* at the Palazzo Grassi, Venice (1997).

**Sabine Eckmann** is the William T. Kemper Director and Chief Curator at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum at Washington University in Saint Louis, where she also teaches in the Department of Art History & Archaeology. She specializes in modern German and contemporary art, medium aesthetics, and critical theory. She was the exhibition associate of *Exiles + Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (1997) and coedited *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* (Abrams and LACMA, 2009).