



## NEWS

### UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 29, 2020

### University of Richmond Museums Presents Panel Discussion on Expressionism



Fritz Ascher (German, 1893-1970), *The Tortured*, 1920s, oil on canvas, 59 x 79.4 inches, Private collection, photograph by Malcolm Varon, New York, ©Bianca Stock

The University of Richmond Museums presents *Expressionisms: Germany and the United States*, a panel discussion presented in conjunction with the exhibition *Fritz Ascher: Expressionist*, currently on view at the Harnett Museum of Art. The panel will be held on Wednesday, February 12, 6 to 8 p.m., in Camp Concert Hall, Modlin Center for the Arts, at the University of Richmond. The program is free and open to the public.

Among the diverse descriptive labels attached to the art of Fritz Ascher (German, 1893-1970), perhaps none is more evocative and distinct than “expressionist.” In the context of visual art, that term has, over the past century and a half, connoted the articulation of strong emotion – through color, brush work, and the aggressive representation of figures and the elements of nature. This

discussion will consider ways in which these figures, particularly in painting, explore embodying emotion and provoke the viewer. Also discussed will be the relationships of political identity, the workings of the unconscious mind, and the realm of the spiritual to the work of Ascher and other important artists, before and contemporary with him, both in Europe and the United States.

Panel discussion will be moderated by:

- Sarah Eckhardt, Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Dr. Eckhardt received a BA from Valparaiso University, and an MA and PhD from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she was awarded a Henry Luce Dissertation Fellowship for her dissertation, *Hedda Sterne and the Abstract Expressionist Context*. At VMFA, her department is responsible for the museum's early 20<sup>th</sup>-century collections, including photography and the sculpture garden. Before coming to VMFA, she worked at the Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and at The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas.

Panelists include:

- Elizabeth Berkowitz, Mellon/ACLS Public Fellow, Rockefeller Archive Center. Her talk is titled "Fritz Ascher and Ideological Color in Modern Art." Dr. Berkowitz is an art historian specializing in the historiography of European modern art and the pre-World War II avant-gardes. She holds a PhD in art history from the Graduate Center, CUNY; an MA in Modern Art from Columbia University; and a Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies from Tufts University. She has worked extensively as a university and museum educator, and has published both popular and academic articles related to exhibition display and modern art history.
- Eckhart Gillen, Independent Curator, Berlin. His talk is titled "German and American Expressionism 1914, 1933, and 1941: Franz Marc, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Mark Rothko. Manifestations of National Identity and the Break of Civilization." Dr. Gillen received a Doctorate from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. He has organized numerous exhibitions and published widely on Russian, American, and German art of the twentieth century. He has published numerous exhibition catalogues and books in the United States and Europe and been awarded several distinctions, including "einheitspreis - Bürgerpreis zur deutschen Einheit" in 2003 (bestowed by the Federal Agency for Civic Education), AICA-USA 2009 for Best Thematic Museum Show, and the Friedlieb Ferdinand

Runge Award 2011 conferred by the foundation Preußische Seehandlung for unconventional art communication (together with Stefanie Barron). He has been an adjunct professor for art history at the Film University in Potsdam-Babelsberg since 2011.

- Ori Z. Soltes, Teaching Professor, Center for Jewish Civilization, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. His talk is titled “Expressionism and Spirituality.” Dr. Soltes teaches across a range of disciplines, from art history and theology to philosophy and political history. He is the former Director of the B’nai B’rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, and has curated more than 85 exhibitions there and in other venues across the country and overseas. He has authored or edited 21 books and scores of articles and essays. Some of his recent books include: *Our Sacred Signs: How Jewish, Christian and Muslim Art Draw from the Same Source*; *Searching for Oneness: Mysticism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*; *Untangling the Web: Why the Middle East is a Mess and Always Has Been*; and *Tradition and Transformation: Three Millennia of Jewish Art & Architecture*.
- Karen Wilkin, Independent Curator and Critic, New York. Her talk is titled “The Collective Unconscious: New York Expressionism.” Ms. Wilkin is the author of monographs on Stuart Davis, David Smith, Anthony Caro, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, Giorgio Morandi, Georges Braque, and Hans Hofmann, she has organized exhibitions of their work internationally. She was a juror for the American Pavilion of the 2009 Venice Biennale. The Contributing Editor for Art for the *Hudson Review* and a regular contributor to *The New Criterion* and the *Wall Street Journal*, Ms. Wilkin teaches in the New York Studio School’s MFA program.

The program is co-organized by the University of Richmond Museums and the Fritz Ascher Society and is sponsored by Allianz Partners.

Note: Images for press are available by contacting Heather Campbell, 804-287-6324 or [hcampbel@richmond.edu](mailto:hcampbel@richmond.edu)

University of Richmond Museums comprises the Joel and Lila Harnett Museum of Art, the Joel and Lila Harnett Print Study Center, and the Lora Robins Gallery of Design from Nature. Admission to all museums is free and open to the public.

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