



**The Fritz Ascher Society
for Persecuted, Ostracized, and Banned Art**

<https://fritzaschersociety.org>

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THE FRITZ ASCHER SOCIETY LAUNCHES “DigiFAS” DIGITAL INITIATIVE

October 2020

On October 17, 2020 The Fritz Ascher Society for Persecuted, Ostracized, and Banned Art (FAS) will launch [DigiFAS](#): diverse, innovative digital initiatives that provide new ways of engagement with the art and life of artists persecuted by an authoritarian regime. Building on the success of the Zoom lecture series “Fight or Flight: Stories of Artists Under Repression,” which was initiated in spring 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this launch includes the Society’s first-ever fully digital exhibition “Fritz Ascher: Themes and Variations,” and the 2-week digital engagement project “Send in the Clowns.”

The Fritz Ascher Society researches, publishes and exhibits artists whose lives and careers were stymied by oppression or persecution. Fritz Ascher (1893-1970) was a German Expressionist artist of Jewish birth who survived National Socialist persecution between 1933 and 1945 without ceding to create. FAS to date has mounted several well-regarded American and German museum exhibitions and in-person programming focused on Ascher’s life. Rachel Stern, Director and CEO of the Society, states: “In this time of extreme political and social insecurities and social isolation, DigiFAS provides new ways to communicate the creativity and resilience of artists in the face of extreme duress and stimulate contemporary dialogue about the inherent questions their lives pose about individuality, human integrity, and creative freedom which has become, alas, all too relevant today.”

The Society’s first-ever fully digital exhibition “Fritz Ascher: Themes and Variations” embraces the potential of the virtual space to explore new and different facets of Ascher’s creative legacy. “Themes and Variations” brings viewers into Ascher’s universe through both the 3-D exhibition software Kunstmatrix as well as the Society’s website. The exhibition introduces Fritz Ascher’s life and work through multi-media explorations of critical moments in his biography, as well as of persistent aesthetic concerns. “Send in the Clowns,” scheduled to run October 19 - 30, 2020, uses Ascher’s interest in the clown as a starting point to contextualize the resonance of the clown both historically and today. An interdisciplinary digital engagement project that brings together prominent academics, clowns, and clowning educators, “Send in the

Clowns” explores the imminently topical subject of the clown as a masked figure, needing to perform a joy for society despite the potential for deep, inner pain and turmoil. The “Fight or Flight” Zoom lecture series continues to feature scholars and critics working on artists whose lives were shaped by National Socialist persecution, and the historiographic consequences of trying to create during or after the fall of oppressive regimes (program below).

DigiFAS is sponsored by Allianz Partners.

<https://fritzaschersociety.org/digifas/>

Details of initial DigiFAS programming:

“Fritz Ascher: Themes and Variations”

Debut October 17, 2020

DigiFAS’ first digital-only exhibition, “Fritz Ascher: Themes and Variations” provides a thematic introduction to Ascher’s life and work through the lens of some of the defining moments in his personal biography, as well as through a focus on aesthetic concerns that preoccupied him throughout his career. “Themes and Variations” is comprised of a 3-D virtual exhibition space, created with the program Kunstmatrix, as well as 10 corresponding thematic web pages that each provide a multi-media “deep-dive” into this aspect of Ascher’s life and work. The web pages feature a combination of short video/audioguides of a selected Ascher work, explanatory content, curated image galleries, expert interviews, and scholarly publications.

<https://fritzaschersociety.org/fritz-ascher-themes-and-variations/>

“Send in the Clowns”

October 19 - October 30, 2020

“Send in the Clowns” is an interactive 2-week digital engagement project which explores the clown as a figure between tragedy and comedy, between self-identification and stage--a character designed to (literally) mask the performer’s true feelings behind a facade of happiness. “Send in the Clowns” uses the prominence of the “clown” figure in Fritz Ascher’s work as a lens through which to explore the duality of the clown both historically and today. Using social media platforms as well as Zoom, “Send in the Clowns” includes two virtual roundtables—one entitled “The Clown on Stage,” featuring a commedia dell’arte scholar, an art history and theology scholar, and the founder of a clown school in Minnesota; the other “The Hospital Clown: Between Joy and Sadness,” featuring the founder of Red Noses Clowndoctors International and three clowns currently working in the pediatrics wards at American hospitals—as well as further posts exploring Ascher’s interest in the subject, and Twitter and Instagram takeovers by a current hospital clowns and a theater scholar. Full schedule available at

<https://fritzaschersociety.org/send-in-the-clowns/> .

“Fight or Flight: Stories of Artists Under Repression”

This free Zoom lecture series investigates artists whose life and art were impacted by the German Nazi terror regime of 1933-1945. The series aims to increase awareness of how artists both well-known and obscure responded under National Socialism, and the corresponding critical and art historical aftermath.

Begun in Spring 2020, past and upcoming “Fight or Flight” speakers include scholar and curator Aya Soika on “The Difficult Case of Painter Emil Nolde (1867-1956),” critic and curator Karen Wilkin on “Hans Hofmann: Coming to America,” scholar and curator Eckhart Gillen on Lea Grundig “Jewish Identity and Communist Belief,” and scholar Lynette Roth on “White Shadows: The Photograms of Anneliese Hager (1904-1997)”. All recordings of “Fight or Flight” events are available on DigiFAS. <https://fritzaschersociety.org/fight-or-flight-stories-of-artists-under-repression/>