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## Apocalypse and Fortune - Digest

Lila M. Held

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APOCALYPSE AND FORTUNE - DIGEST

LILA M. HELD, B.S.

Culminating project Presented to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of the Lindenwood Colleges in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Valuation Sciences

1989



## DIGEST

The premise upon which this study is based is that German Expressionist art has undergone an expansion in marketability, and aesthetic recognition during the past decade. German Expressionism is defined as an art of protest, an art that expressed its fundamental precepts visually through distortion, brutal images, and the emotive use of color and form.

I chose to use Ludwig Meidner to exemplify the characteristics of the movement. The basic tenets of Expressionism are apparent in both Meidner's visual and literary endeavors. Ten years ago, this artist's name and work were obscure. Today, his art appears in galleries, his name is published in literary references, and he is represented in both private and museum collections.

The objective of this inquiry is to give insight into both the aesthetic and market response of German Expressionism. The information included supports the thesis that there has been a transition in the acceptance of the artistic relevance and economic viability of German Expressionist art during the past decade.

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COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY

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Chairperson and Advisor

Adjunct Professor Elizabeth Blagbrough, A.S.A

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I dedicate this work to my husband, Merle; to my children, Garson, Michael, Shelley, Joanne and Barbara; and to my grandchildren, Jessica and Matthew.

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## INTRODUCTION

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This paper will prove the thesis that since 1978, German Expressionist paintings and prints have enjoyed a surge in the world art market, and particularly in the American art market. I shall investigate prices achieved at auction and gallery sales and the underlying justification, both aesthetic and social, that has precipitated acceptance of these works, causing them to be a desirable acquisition for both museums and individual collectors. In addition, I shall examine and define the inherent characteristics of German Expressionism.

My initial task shall be to define German Expressionism in terms of form and content. I am restricting my focus to those characteristics found in the work of the initiators of the movement - the original practitioners, who worked at the beginning of the twentieth century, and who crystallized the ideas, concepts and modes of expression that led to the later developments of the art movement known as German Expressionism.

I shall briefly trace the evolution of German

Expressionism from the early articulation to the development of a sophisticated mature style, the causes of the eventual demise of the movement, the uneven ebb and flow of the market for this art and the reasons behind these vicissitudes.

A visit to the print department of The Cleveland Museum of Art determined what precise course this study would take. While I was there, Dr. Jane Glaubinger, the assistant curator of prints, put before me an ink drawing executed by an artist who was totally unfamiliar to me.

I was astounded. Resting upon an easel was an 18 1/2 " x 23 1/2 " drawing that represented the materialization of everything that I believed defined German Expressionism. It was brutal! It was powerful! It was raw! It was intensely dramatic! It possessed a unique and arresting beauty, grounded in an aesthetic that raced to the core of the viewer's innermost feelings. One's sensibilities were bombarded by the power of this black and white image. It was the epitome of German Expressionism.



Sold by Christies, London, Dec. 2, 1980 for  
L. 2100 = \$ 3,684 in equivalent 1988  
Dollars.

Museum purchased from a gallery

Fig. 1. Rpt. by The Cleveland Museum of Art

In order to present my evaluation of the general market in concrete terms, I propose to closely scrutinize the career of Ludwig Meidner, the artist who executed this drawing. He will be used as a microcosm of German Expressionism and its market progression. Meidner was never associated with any single group of Expressionists, yet his method of production and philosophy of art embodied the essence of German Expressionism, as defined in this paper. I shall investigate his position in the art market, examine his aesthetic principles and describe the basic characteristics of his work. I have chosen Meidner because he is a somewhat obscure artist, particularly in the United States. In this way, I can examine his marketability and name recognition without the prejudice of a "status" name in art.

In summary, the prime concerns of this thesis shall be to define the basic concepts of German Expressionism, survey the market for sales of these works from 1978 to 1988, and to examine the career of Ludwig Meidner, using him as an example in comprehending the characteristics and the expanding recognition and marketability of this art.

## ABSTRACT AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this section, I shall discuss and quote the writings of some of the luminaries of German literature and art, encompassing literary figures who were compatriots of Ludwig Meidner, as well as contemporary writers. I shall also present works by American writers who have turned their attention to German Expressionism. Most pertinent will be the pronouncements of Ludwig Meidner himself. Through this combination I hope to reveal insights into the character of German Expressionism, its history and its philosophy and into why I propose that Ludwig Meidner is The German Expressionist artist.

Until the late 1970s and early 1980s, very little information on German Expressionism, written in English, appeared upon American bookshelves. Even now, although some excellent publications by men such as Peter Selz, Lothar Lang, Wolf-Dietre Dube, Thomas Messer and others, are available the material is not voluminous. Since the early 1980s, as a concomitant to renewed interest in Expressionist art, one can also find articles in art magazines and catalogues written to accompany exhibits.

Information on Ludwig Meidner, written in or translated into English is still very difficult to secure. Meidner's major biographer, Thomas Grochowiak, has never been translated into English. A photocopy translation of Hans Tramer's study could only be obtained through The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionism, Los Angeles, California. Short excellent monographs, such as those written by Jane Glaubinger, Victor Meisel, Frank Whitford, Philip Larson etc. are available. At this time, it is also possible to find a paragraph or two on Ludwig Meidner in books written on German Expressionism whereas, until recently, his name was almost totally unknown.

Two sections of this portion of the study will be devoted to Ludwig Meidner, one quoting works that illumine our comprehension of Meidner as an Expressionist and a second, discussing biographical data.

The economic data gathered from gallery catalogues, price indexes, and personal interviews with gallery and museum personnel, art historians and collectors was crucial to comprehending the expansion of the market for German Expressionism during the past ten years.

The final section of this review of literature is centered upon a financial analysis, in which I compare prices and the percentage of change in prices from 1978 to 1988. I use an example of the six major Die Brücke artists, as well as data on Meidner's sales, and trace the pattern of several individual works of art.

These two components, the development of a stronger market and an increased public interest in German Expressionism go "hand in hand" in establishing the greater magnitude in terms of value for the work. In appraising German Expressionist art, the appraiser must be cognizant of the inherent characteristics and their subsequent effect upon the potential buyer. This is not a "pretty" art. Few decorators would recommend it to hang over the sofa. Yet it is not without appeal to the collector who may be intrigued by its sheer power, drama and emotional impact.

German Expressionism has never enjoyed as "hot" a market as, for example French Impressionism. This study, therefore, attempts to impart some comprehension of the nature of the art with which we are dealing, as well as, an understanding of particular characteristics of a given society that causes such art to be desirable and gain a positive position in the art market.



Despite its erratic quality and apparent uninhibited character, German Expressionism is subject to the same appraisal techniques as any other art. The appraiser must classify the individual work in regard to its artistic morphology. What is the quality of the composition, line, patterns of form, use of color, expressive content, technical skill of the artist, context within its time, unique attributes etc? What is its position in both the short term and the long term art market? What comparable works have been sold, when, where, at what price?

These are the questions with which appraisers deal, regardless of the art movement which they are appraising. The abstract components of a work of art remain constant within a milieu of change and can be applied to all types of art. I will, in this study, address the unique characteristics of German Expressionism, bearing in mind the quality that emanates from its basic nature as a work of art. I will also examine its position in the art market, and the transition that has evolved over the past decade.

#### EVOLUTION OF GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

Man is a rope tied between the animal and the superman .....The greatness of man is that he is a bridge (Die Brücke)

The above quotation taken from a passage in the prologue to Chapter III of Thus Spake Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzsche was the basis of the philosophy of the German Expressionist artists who banded together in 1905 to form the group that became known as Die Brücke. These artists were the initiators of the early Twentieth Century Expressionist movement in Germany. It was upon their foundation that the ensuing developments were built.

In general, the year 1905, the year of the founding of Die Brücke, can be assigned as the critical year in which German Expressionism came into being. By 1911, the group of artists known as Der Blaue Reiter had transformed the movement into a more lyrical, formal, controlled mode of expression. The raw emotion was subdued, but the Expressionistic use of color was retained. The artists of Der Blaue Reiter moved toward greater abstraction of form, rather than emphasizing brutal distortions of naturalism. Kandinsky's totally non-objective art emerged from this trend.

Gunter Buchheim, in his book, Graphik das deutschen Expressionisms, lists eighty artists as Expressionists. German Expressionism, however, is usually associated with the artists of Die Brücke; Ernst Ludwig Kirchner,

Eric Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein, Otto Mueller, Fritz Bleyl and Emile Nolde. The artists of Der Blaue Reiter, which included Wassily Kandinsky, Gabriele Muntz, Franz Marc, August Macke, Alexej Jawlensky, Heinrich Campendonk and Paul Klee, are also categorized as German Expressionists. In addition to those belonging to these specific groups, independent artists such as Max Beckmann, Kathe Kollwitz, Oskar Kokoschka, Edvard Munch, Ludwig Meidner and others also included as German Expressionists.

Edward Henning, who served as the curator of Modern Art at The Cleveland Museum of Art for many years, assessed that Die Brücke was the "heart of German Expressionism." He contended that artists such as Klimt and Schiele, the immediate predecessors of the members of Die Brücke, were basically Art Nouveau artists using, "decadence with delight." The participants of Die Blaue Reiter were engrossed in aesthetic concerns. It was Die Brücke said Mr. Henning, that confronted society and protested with their brutal direct works.

By 1918, German Expressionism had attained public acceptance, and by 1920, the end of the movement was foreseen. G.F. Hartlaub organized a comprehensive

presentation of a new art form which was exhibited at Kunsthalle Mannheim in 1925. This exhibition, "Neue Sachlichkeit," (New Objectivity) sounded the death knell for the German Expressionist movement.

#### IDEOLOGY

Lothar Lang described German Expressionism as an art of protest and revolt against bourgeois reality. He stated:

It was an art that looked forward to a better age. The historical background to Expressionism is marked by events that shaped not only the decade 1910-1920 but the whole century: the universal crisis of the capitalistic system with the First World War, the great Socialist Revolution of October 1917 and the November Revolution of 1918, which created the opportunity for a fundamental reorganization of Social Conditions in Germany. (Lang, p.9)

The radical transformation of a total historic epoch was reflected in the passionate depictions of the German Expressionist artists. The philosophy behind these artistic visions was based upon an assumption that the demise of the bourgeois world was eminent. Their prophecies were sustained by intuition, eluding all grounding in historic processes. Lang asserted that the weakness of German Expressionism was its inability to determine a way out of the crisis associated with the society which was the target of its protest.

Thomas Mann alluded to the uncanniness of their premonitions: "In their excited nerves, their overwrought emotions, the generation of twenty and thirty year olds experienced the war before it came." (Mann, 1956, p.10)

Many of the German Expressionists welcomed the onslaught of a war, since they were convinced that only through revolutionary action could the old order be destroyed. As they developed, both Expressionist art and literature became more radical. The Expressionists equated the end of Wilhelmian society with the end of the world. They tenaciously held to the belief that ordinances by Kaiser Wilhelm II were smothering society, and the arts were suffocating. The Kaiser had dictated the official line on German art in 1902 when he issued the following edict:

Art which presumes to overstep the limits and rules I have indicated is no longer art.....Art should give the lower classes the chance of raising themselves up.....but if art, as now too often happens, does nothing more than present misery in an even more hideous form than it already possesses, then it sins against the German people. (Quoted by Duthy, p.144)

The practitioners of both the visual and literary arts could not tolerate the oppression of their freedom of expression, and rebelled. The only escape, they contended, would have to be the end of civilization in

its current form - the end of the known world. This was expressed in Jacob van Hoddiss's poem, "Weltende" (End of the World) which translates as follows:

His hat flies off the bourgeois' pointed head, everywhere the air rings like cries, slaters fall off roofs and break in two and on the coasts - one reads - the tide is rising. The storm has come, wild seas bound ashore to crush their dams. Most people have a cold. Trains fall off bridges. (Hoddiss, 1958, p.28)

This short poem, with its contention that life would be transformed forever was felt by Hoddiss's contemporaries to contain the essence of a true revelation. Its impact was described in the following passage by Johannes R. Becher, who like Hoddiss, believed in the doctrine that a new social order was poised on the threshold of history:

We felt like new men, like men on the recorded day of creation, a new world would begin with us and we vowed to bring about such tumult that Bourgeois people would lose their sight and hearing and would almost deem it a mercy to be dispatched by us to Hades. (Becher, p.103 f)

The images of a society intent upon its own destruction projected by the German Expressionists, images of the exploding metropolis, the madman, the prostitute -- all of these images of a disintegrating society were never matched with any proposals for the restructuring of a social order or a regeneration of humankind. The protest was not inherently grounded in the destruction of the capitalistic system, but was in

opposition to a middle class of which the protestors were, in fact, a part. These revolutionaries never severed the bonds of middle class ideology in their own lives. Although the Expressionist revolt was directed against almost all aspects of the bourgeois society, it never attacked the socio-economic forces of that society. Indeed, the German Expressionists remained ensconced within the confines of the society that they claimed to refute.

The city was a frequently used motif in Expressionist art - a motif that contained both messianic and nihilistic principles. Georg Heym described its ominous meaning when he wrote the following:

People stop in their tracks in the streets  
and gaze upon the great portents in the sky,  
where comets with fiery noses steal  
menacingly around the jagged towers. (Heym,  
1924, p.1)

This same idea of doom-laden catastrophes was expressed in 1913 by Ludwig Meidner in his painting, Ich und die Stadt (I and the City).

These artists created new modes of expression-distorted countenances, images free from identity with nature and liberated color concepts. Their art became autonomous creative endeavors, rejecting harmony and

moderation. The ecstatic gesture and intuitive vision became the major creative principles. Order and rationality were cast aside. Unlike the Fauves, a parallel French movement that retained equilibrium in their work, the German Expressionists abandoned all restraints. Their work was tumultuous, revealed unbridled emotion and a passionate treatment of color. Johannes R. Becker expressed their zeal in the following passage:





55 Ich und die Stadt. 1913

Fig. 2 Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

Ignorant of social laws, under the delusion that we ourselves need acknowledge no social limitations, assuming that in us and with us the world was for the first time truly genuine and we ourselves the real creators of the world and its first poets - so we set forth, so we went astray, and some fell by the wayside and some were destroyed. But one thing was certain: something monstrous drove us on, a passion without equal motivated us in our inspired turbulence and we were ever ready to sacrifice ourselves for our "mission;" and for this, although perhaps for this alone, we can call to succeeding generations 'Follow our footsteps.' (Becher, p.103f)

The Expressionists eventually did break with the past, discarding the shackles of Bourgeois society. They had no destination, but were convinced that they were menaced by their society and sought a radical departure from its conventions.

German Expressionism was in many ways a self contradictory movement. Its unifying factors, however, were the rejection of tradition and Bourgeois society, its emphasis on inner vision and subjectivity and the magnification of the ego. The movement from its inception was dynamic, with major changes in its parameters occurring during World War I and again after 1917 and 1918.

#### DEFINITION

There is some controversy in regard to the derivation of the term, "Expressionism." Wolf-Dietre

Dube asserts that much of the confusion emanates from the propensity for journalists to engage the term, Expressionism, as a counter balance to the term Impressionism. Some art historians contend that the terminology originated in France, and was first used in reference to several nature paintings by Julien-August Herve which were exhibited in the Salon des Independentes in 1901. Others maintain that the term derives from the critic, Louis Vauxcelles who described the work of Matisse as expressionistic. Still other historians attribute the genesis of the term to comments made by the art dealer, Claude Cassirer when he viewed a work by Max Pechstein at the exhibition of the Berlin Secession.

Kahn-weiler, insists that the term is exclusively German and first appeared in the works of Kurt Hiller and Wilhelm Worringer. The difficulty is probably rooted in the inability to apply a precise definition to Expressionism, and an even greater difficulty in assigning the term to specific artists. Many artists who were labeled Expressionists disclaimed the reference. No actual criteria had ever been established to accurately identify the characteristics of a body of work that can emphatically be designated as Expressionism.

The first monograph on Expressionism was written by Paul Fether in Munich, 1914. In this work he attempted to establish a firm definition, assigning it to be the German counter-movement to Impressionism. He referred specifically to the avant-garde art of Dresden and Munich. The use of the word, Expressionism, however, was rarely used by the artists to whom the nomenclature was subsequently applied. Even Kandinsky in the copious volumes of literature that he produced alluded to the word only once in an obscure footnote.

Several of the artists did, however, attempt to propound an ideology upon which this work of young German artists was based. In 1906, Kirchner engraved in wood the following message for Die Brücke:

Believing in development and in a new generation both of those who create and those who enjoy, we call all young people together, and as young people who carry the future in us we want to wrest freedom for our gestures and for our lives from the older, comfortably established forces. We claim as our own everyone who reproduces directly and without falsification whatever it is that drives him to create. (Dube, 1972, p.21)

In 1912, Franz Marc submitted an article to the famous almanac, Der Blaue Reiter. His explanation of Expressionism read as follows:

In this age of the great struggle for the new art, we are fighting as 'wild beasts,' unorganized levies against an old organized power. The battle seems unequal: but in matters of the spirit it is never the number

but the strength of the ideas that conquers. The dreaded weapons of the 'wild beasts' are their new ideas: these kill more effectively than steel and break what was thought to be unbreakable. Who are the 'wild beasts' in Germany? A large proportion of them are well known and have been much abused: the Brücke in Dresden, the Neue Sezession in Berlin and the Neue Vereinigung in Munich. (Dube, 1972, p.20)

In 1914, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff was invited by the periodical, Kunst und Künstler, to explain his views of the "new programme." He wrote the following:

I know of no "new programme".....only that art is forever manifesting itself in new forms, since there are forever new personalities - its essence can never alter, I believe. Perhaps I am wrong. But speaking for myself, I know that I have no programme, only the unaccountable longing to grasp what I see and feel, and to find the purest means of expression for it. (Dube, 1972, p.20)

Perhaps the most accurate definition of Expressionism was communicated by the words of the poet, Johannes Becher who wrote:

We were possessed. In cafes, on the streets, in our studios, day and night, we were 'on the march,' at a cracking pace, to fathom the unfathomable: poets painters and musicians all working together to create 'the art of the century,' an incomparable art towering over all the art of the past centuries." (Dube, p.21)

No art movement ever springs into being without prior antecedents. The most immediate influences upon German Expressionism included the morose satirical subjects of the Belgian, James Ensor (1860-1949) and the Norwegian, Edvard Munch (1863- 1944). Vincent Van

Gogh (1853- 1890) and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) also interjected an influence. Jane Glaubinger, in a monograph written for The Cleveland Museum of Art, explained the effect that these four artists had on German Expressionism:

Their works exposed troubled souls and were executed in a spontaneous, sketchy manner. All of these artists used color and form for expressive rather than descriptive purposes. The effect of intensely colored, distorted figures is somewhat primitive and crude, but the style perfectly complements subjects exploring man's basest emotions." (Glaubinger, p.300)

Lothar Lang claimed that the "impetus of the force of social conditions was certainly among the elements that caused the Expressionists to retreat into the domain of the individual ego." (Lang, 1976, p.10) Subjectivity and the translation of world problems into the individual human psyche became the hallmark of German Expressionism. The reactionary philosophies of Bergson and Nietzsche influenced the ideology of Expressionism, as did Ludwig Justi's contention that Expressionism is the art of "inner vision or inner experience," a definition that has subsequently gained great acceptance.

LUDWIG MEIDNERTHE EXPRESSIONIST

Ludwig Meidner was described by his contemporaries, as well as by modern scholars, as being typical of Expressionist thought, personality and ideology. The German literary figure, Willi Wolfradt, portrays him as follows:

Everything he does is expression, eruption, explosion. This is the hottest crater of a volcanic epoch, spewing out the lava of its visions in unpredictable bursts and with irresistible power, in the relentless swell of the inner fire. There is probably no other artist whose hand is directed as absolutely as Meidner's by the will to give tongue to his latent explosiveness, the vaulting of his spiritual urgings, his furious energies, to force, to hurl out his inmost being on canvas and paper. A violent passion to disclose himself, a wildness in comprehension that is like a sudden attack, an exultant dissipation of convulsive strength, a heart well acquainted with ecstasy and relentless driving needs: and all this aflame casts its glow into the face of the onlooker with uncanny force, and again and again the intact rocklike genius of his awkward, angular personality unconsumed by the flame, bursts open and is revealed to the fascinated gaze. (Wolfradt, pp.134-143)

As this portrayal depicts Ludwig Meidner, so it describes the pulse of German Expressionism in its truest form.

Both Victor Meisel and Frank Whitford have supported the assertion that Expressionism can be defined in the work of Ludwig Meidner. Victor Meisel

stated that Meidner deserves to be better known, and questioned why he had been so neglected. Meisel evaluated Meidner's work, stating:

[His work] is fully equal to that of others, to that of a Heckel, Mueller or Macke, for example. Furthermore, Meidner made pictures particularly during the decade 1912 to 1922, which are as memorable as anything by Kirchner, Nolde, or Beckmann. He made self portraits as revealing as those by Munch or Schiele, studies of poets, playwrights, and artists rivaled only by Kokoschka's pictures; street scenes rarely surpassed in energy even by the Futurists and apocalyptic visions which disclosed a generation's mood as powerfully as Kandinsky's abstractions. Upon reassessment his art may turn out to be important for both a deeper and broader understanding of German Expressionism.....the claim is put forward by some critics that he was the most complete expressionist of all. (Meisel, p.1)

It cannot be disputed that Meidner played a major role in both the visual and literary aspects of Expressionism. Reference was made to his work several times in the catalogue of the portentous Expressionist exhibition at Marbach in 1960, yet he has, in general, received scant attention either in Germany or abroad. Frank Whitford noted in 1972, "Even in America, where the enthusiasm for Expressionism has always been greater than elsewhere, there have been no major exhibitions of his work and few collectors anxious to acquire it." (Whitford, 1972, p.1) Whitford attributed Meidner's lack of notoriety to the fact that he never associated himself with the predominant factions of the



expressionist movement.

Meisel, on the other hand, attributed the lack of acceptance and recognition to a dichotomy in Meidner's life created by his being both Jewish and German. Meisel asserted:

For German Jews of Meidner's generation who loved and helped create a culture that at best rejected them as Jews and at worst conspired to exterminate them, being Jewish was an excruciating dilemma. (Meisel, p.1)

Marc Chagall dismissed Meidner as talented, but "crazy." and the critic, Edouard Roditi, described Meidner as, "an artist who took masochistic delight in sheer ugliness." (Roth, p.293) Philip Larson questioned Meidner's sanity when he wrote that the apocalyptic scenes could be interpreted as, "confessions of a distraught, tormented individual worrying about his own safety and perhaps even his own sanity." (Larson, p.13)

In the following passage, Victor Meisel, aptly described this quality in Meidner's work:

It is a function of disturbance, profound disturbance which had personal, cultural and historical occasions but which far from vanishing with the man and his era, now seems more intensive and extensive among us than ever before. Little wonder that many found Meidner easy to ignore. (Meisel, p.2)

Meisel suggested that getting to know Meidner's work

more thoroughly might render rewards in terms of our understanding our own dichotomies, multiple identities and fluctuating attitudes about modernism and tradition.

Meidner consistently displayed superb draughtsmanship. He was, technically, one of the most exceptional artists of his generation. Although his cityscapes appeared to explode, the control of his media was at all times masterfully handled. Cityscapes were, indeed, a favorite subject of the Expressionist artists. The Impressionists had depicted the city in terms of landscape. Frank Whitford points out that the Expressionists loved the city for its own sake:

In taking subjects like the concrete apartment blocks of Berlin, the bars and railroad stations, they evolved a new romanticism which found magic in anonymity, asphalt and urban sprawl. (Whitford, p.2)

The Expressionist artists portrayed the density of traffic, people and tall buildings in an endless succession of melancholy patterns, just as the expressionist poets portrayed the darker side of city life eg: the brothels, casualty wards, morgues etc.

TUESDAY 2 DECEMBER 1980



[231]

231

Ludwig Meidner 1980 - L. 1500 - \$ 3,555

Strassenszene

signed and dated 1913, pen, black ink and black wash  
15 x 19in. (38 x 48.2cm.)

PROVENANCE:

Anon. sale, Karl und Faber, Munich, 10-11 Dec. 1969, lot 1158

Fig. 3. Rpt. in A Collection of German Expressionist Drawings (London:Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd. 1980) 30

The poet, Paul Zech, wrote the following selection for Menschheitsdämmerung, the most famous collection of Expressionist poetry:

The windows stand close together  
Like the holes of a sieve  
And houses hug themselves so tightly that the  
streets look grey and swollen like a  
strangler's victim. (Zech)

Until the First World War, the depiction of the city was more the domain of Expressionist poets than painters. The only pre-war painting on this subject were works by Kirchner and Meidner. While Kirchner's work was better known, it failed to impart the threatening quality of the city that entrapped the population within its confines. This quality is apparent in Meidner's paintings.

The city was Meidner's primary subject for both his art and poetry during his Berlin years, 1908-1914. He declared that a street is not made up of tonal values, but is a bombardment of rows of windows, vibrating spots and lines, groups of people and masses of color. His emphasis was on the violent energy that emanated from within an urban environment. The influence of the Futurists, who had been shown at Herwarth Walden's gallery in Berlin during 1911 and 1912 was evident in his depictions.

During the years that he lived in Berlin, Meidner became a creature of the night. He described his excursions in the following passage:

Sometimes when I feel a nocturnal need I venture forth into the city and hurdle headlong along the pavements.....the screams of clouds echo around me, burning bushes, a distant beating of wings, and people shadowy and spitting. The moon burns against my hot temples.....the city nears. My body crackles. The giggles of the city ignite against my skin. I hear eruptions at the base of my skull. The houses near. Their catastrophes explode from their windows, stairways silently collapse.....It is collapsing, going down, breaking up. The energies it generated have finally consumed it. (Meidner, Im Nacken das Sternemeer, quoted by Whitford, p.55)

By 1912, Meidner was creating apocalyptic scenes that revealed a premonition of disaster. His chief biographer, Thomas Grochowiak, maintained that Meidner later thought his 1912 visions of disaster were the result of his appalling living conditions. His early paintings, those executed in 1912 and 1913, were produced in a hot, filthy studio in the Friedenau district of Berlin. At this time, Meidner seemed oblivious to the despicable conditions around him and worked as if he were possessed. He was convinced that he must capture the essence of a vision before it faded. During this same period, both Heckel and Kirchner were entertaining similar premonitions of disaster, which they expressed through less ferocious means than Meidner.



33 Vision eines  
Schützengrabens 1912

Fig. 4. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



34 Die Abgebrannten  
(Heimatlose) 1912

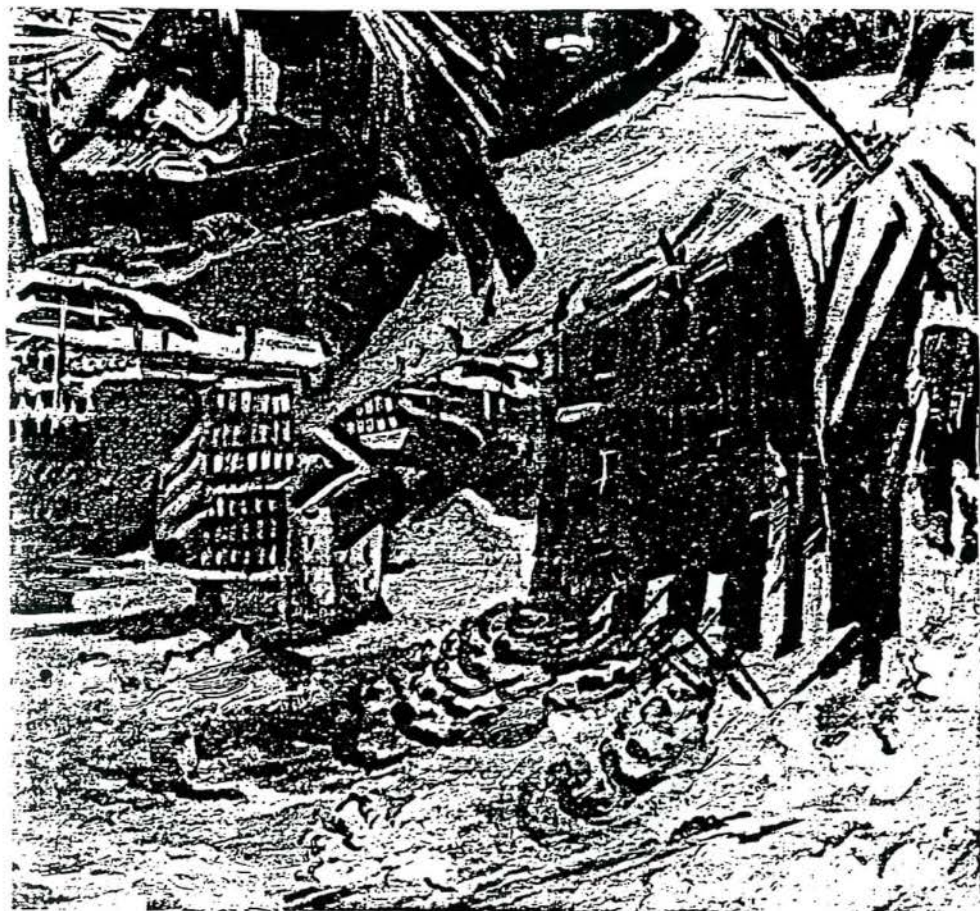
Fig. 5. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



10a Apokalyptische Landschaft, 1912

Fig. 6. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)





9 Brennendes Gebäude. 1912

Fig. 7. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



17a Apokalyptische Landschaft. um 1913

Fig. 8. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

Meidner's passion for painting has been compared to sexual lust or to religious ecstasy. He described himself as watching himself paint, moved by a force stronger than his own will, and no longer in control of his actions:

Quite suddenly while I was painting one evening, I noticed that nothing was going right. I couldn't paint. Then all at once, things began to happen so quickly that I simply began to watch myself paint. My arm was moving of its own accord and I was astounded. Then something came over me: it was the holy spirit. What was really surprising me was - I did not believe in God! I can't describe the presence of the holy spirit. It was extraordinarily eruptive. It lasted only two or three minutes but it left an after effect. I observed that the feeling was what could be called "ecstasy." .....Evening after evening, this happened to me, so often that I began to wait for it. But it also happened on the street so that I had to be careful and control myself; it was as if a storm were sweeping me away. I told all my friends and they thought I was crazy. (Grochowiak, p.119)

The apocalypse was a frequent image of Expressionism. It represented the Expressionist's craving for violent action in which entire cities collapsed and disappeared into jagged craters, explosions shattered the sky and people ran in panic. Meidner claimed that he painted his afflictions out of his system when he expended tremendous energy in executing these works. If Meidner's apocalyptic scenes did not predate the events, these could be depictions of the devastation of Hiroshima, Warsaw or Dresden.

There is a dichotomy in that these works deal with horror, but are never totally cataclysmic. There is always some element of calm inserted into the scene, frequently in the form of a figure who represents an observer. In Meidner's painting, "Apocalyptic Landscape, 1913," as in other apocalyptic works, one notes that in addition to the observer, other elements of calm are included. The sun shines overhead and boats sail serenely along the river in the midst of quaking structures and a brutalized landscape.

I. Michael Danoff asserted, "There is almost, shockingly, an ecstatic, celebratory aspect - mirth as well as madness." (Danoff, pp.6-7) Such works were the means through which the Expressionists could communicate that a war was not only imminent, but was necessary if the world was to rid itself of its prevailing corruption. Thomas Mann explored this idea in Friedreich und die Grosse Koalition. He stated:

How might the artist, the soldier in the artist, not praise God for the collapse of a peaceful world of which he was so tired, so thoroughly tired. War!" (Quoted by Whitford,

The world as reflected through the artist's inner feelings was typical of German Expressionism. Meidner disclosed his personal involvement by depicting himself in his apocalyptic landscapes. The Expressionist poets symbolized subjectivity by including monologues written



Ludwig Meidner Sold 1980, L. 2400 = \$ 4,210.50  
in 1988 Dollars.

Explosion auf der Brücke

signed and dated Oktober 1914, brush, black ink and pencil  
22½ × 17½ in. (58 × 44.5cm.)

EXHIBITED:

Milan, Galleria del Levante, *Disegni di Ludwig Meidner*, Oct. 1966, no. 12  
Frankfurt, Galerie Meyer-Ellinger, *Ludwig Meidner, Zeichnungen, 1912-1915*,  
Dec. 1975-Jan. 1976, no. 14

One of a series of large drawings, some of which were published under the title  
*Krieg*. This was not among those published

Fig. 9. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



56 Im Schützengraben 1914

Fig. 10. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

in the first person. Note the following diary entry by Georg Heym, "I, a torn ocean; I always a storm; I, the mirror of the external, as wild and chaotic as the world." (Heym, p.31)

There was the frustrating attempt by the Expressionists to become the objective observer of the subjective self. Meidner illustrated this attempt in the notation that he inserted beside a 1917 self portrait:

I, Ludwig Meidner, clod of the earth, cut into little pieces, outlawed, apocalyptic, my skull blown into oblivion in the winter wind." (quoted by Whitford, p.56)

Frank Whitford quoted Meidner, choosing the following text from Im Naken das Sternemeer to illustrate that even the prosaic and inanimate became animated in the art and writings of the Expressionists:

My last picture bleeds on its easel. It is like open wounds and ulcers. You can still see how the wet paint shines ardently. And there is work's slaughter-house, bloody and drenched in sweat, and the paint rags scream and stink of turpentine and the palette lies like an open body and my hands shake when I see it. (Quoted by Whitford, p. 56)

Meidner's obsession with the city, his apocalyptic scenes and depictions of life in the cafes can be regarded as a report on big city life. They are industrial landscapes which reveal city life lived at a fevered pitch. In describing the characteristics of

Meidner's drawings during his Berlin years, Victor Meisel wrote:

[He showed] houses twisting and shaking, streets plunging wildly into space, figures whirling or running about.....crowds and vehicles become waves of energy flowing through places filled with exploding darks and lights and shooting Futurist lines of force. (Meisel, p.9)

In the drawing, "The Drunken Street," 1913, Meidner became the embodiment of the title of a book of poems, Here I Come Blown Down the Street, written by his friend, Ernst Blass. Blass was among Meidner's compatriots who frequented the Cafe Westens in Berlin. It was Blass who explained the role of the cafe in the lives of the Expressionists:

It was a place of refuge and an unparliamentary parliament. Even the timid and the silent learned how to talk and express themselves, learned to recognize what it was they really felt deeply about. It was an education in emotional sincerity." (Blass, p.29)

The cafe was a focal point in Meidner's life. Before the development of his religious fervor, Meidner staunchly believed that human relationships were the primary aspect of his existence. They were a source of emotional strength and a safeguard against personal despair. This was a period when German intellectuals believed that human relationships were the only viable alternative to chaos. To explain the Expressionist's idea of salvation, Ludwig Marcuse quoted from Reinhard





93 Selbstbildnis, im Café König, Dresden, 1914

Fig. 11. Rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

Goering's 1917 Naval Battle, stating:

Neither hope for the future, nor the Gods  
Can take the terror out of death.  
One thing only can do this;  
The thought of what was and can be  
In human relationships. (Marcuse, p.294)

Meidner's feelings about the sanctuary of the cafes and the interactions that they afforded are expressed in his prose poem, Im Nacken das Sternemeer. In this work he vividly described an explosive city scene, and then exclaimed:

I think I'll go into the cafes....Oh you cafe bliss - magic brilliance - you paradise of the living. You soul of our age. You great vibrating bell of the here and now. You school of noble spirits. You rendezvous of exalted fighters. You uproarious art of poets. You gallery, cathedral, zeppelin, volcano, cage, tomb and abyss, dunghole and the hour of those who pray. (Meidner, Im Nacken das Sternemeer, p.29f)

Second to Meidner's preoccupation with depicting the city was his propensity toward producing self portraits. Considering the fact that subjectivity was a prime element in expressionist ideology, it is surprising that Meidner, alone among the artists, extensively pursued this mode of expression.



5. Self-Portrait, 1912, charcoal on paper

41

Fig. 12. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master: (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41



11 Selbstbildnis, 1912

Fig. 13. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



1. Night Visage, 1913, oil on canvas

Fig. 14. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41



75 Selbstbildnis mit Zigarette, 1913

Fig. 15. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



21 Selbstbildnis. 1315

Fig. 16. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

117 Selbstbildnis, 1916



Fig. 17. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)





29. *Self-Portrait*, 1916, ink on paper

Fig. 18. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41



10. Self-Portrait with Prayer Shawl, 1918, ink on paper

Fig. 19. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41





153 Selbstbildnis, 1920

Fig. 20. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bonqers, 1966)



52. *Self-Portrait with Hat at Drawing Board*. By Gaslight, 1922. etching

Fig. 21. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41



35 Selbstbildnis, 1937

Fig. 22. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bonqers, 1966)



Die Serie 36 Selbstbildnis, 1954

Fig. 23. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

It is believed that no other modern artist painted as many self portraits as did Ludwig Meidner. Toward the end of his career, he produced nothing else. Jane Glaubinger propounds that an examination of the lifelong succession of Meidner's self portraits unfolds a history of the artist's inner being.

The emotional content of his self portraits was dynamic. His countenance directly confronted the viewer, ugly, questioning, exalting. Emotion was emphasized through an exaggerated use of line, bold contrasts and by accentuating the eyes and mouth. Meidner expressed his feelings concerning portraiture in the following passage:

Do not be afraid of the face of a human being. It is the reflection of divine glory although it is more often like a slaughterhouse, bloody rags and all. Press together wrinkled brow, root of nose and eyes. Dig like a mole down into the mysterious deep of the pupils and into the white of the eye and don't let your pen stop until the soul of that one opposite you is wedded to yours in a covenant of pathos. (Meidner, Im Nacken das Sternemeer, quoted in Whitford, p.55)

Meidner recorded the likenesses of many of the artists and writers of his time. At the literary cafes that he frequented, he became acquainted with the inhabitants of these intellectual establishments. He portrayed luminaries such as Becher, Neisse, Lotz, Werfel, Wolfstein, Van Hoddis etc, capturing their

likenesses through an economy of means. His portraits were simplified images with strong emotional content. Dr. Glaubinger described them as follows:

The artist concentrated on essentials, emphasizing the expressive potential of the eyes, mouth and hands, in a bold style that is somewhat crude and powerful. Groups of parallel lines define facial contours and textures so that the most salient characteristics are rendered in a generalized manner." (Glaubinger, p.306)

When the anthology of poems, Menschheitsdämmerung, was published in 1920, most of the illustrations were portraits by Ludwig Meidner.

German Expressionism was based upon a transcendental vision of the world, a belief in a non-material reality. At the height of a materialistic epoch that fostered the popularity of the dance hall and the bar, a younger generation turned to the spiritual. Just prior to World War I a plethora of exotic religions emerged; Theosophy, Mazdism, Zoroastrianism and other manifestations of Spiritualism. Many of the Expressionists were attracted to one or more of these faiths. Ludwig Meidner returned to Orthodox Judaism, and began to base his subject matter upon the old testament. Religion found its way into his work toward the end of the war.





26. *Biblical Figure*, 1916, ink on paper

Fig. 24. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41



32. Prophet Mirah, 1920. crayon on paper

Fig. 25. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41



Fig. 26. "A Prophet" rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner (Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

It became a central theme when World War I had ended. During this period, Meidner produced hundreds of drawings of old testament prophets. These works display his masterful draughtsmanship and the attaining of a new sensitivity, but lack some of the vigor and vitality of his early art.

The intensity of their endeavors caused most of the German Expressionists to become "burned out" at an early age. None of the Brücke group produced anything to equal their early work after 1919. Kokoschka's work declined shortly after that date, as did the literary output of the Expressionist poets. Once the war had begun, those Expressionists who had yearned for it realized that its horror was as real as their visions. They also became cognizant that it would not necessarily lead to the new order of brotherhood among men that they had thought would replace exploitation and materialism.

In 1919, the November Revolution failed in Germany, and the country was beginning to slip into the mediocrity that was to characterize the Weimar Republic. The German writers, many of whom had taken an active role in the 1918 Communist Revolution, were now aligning themselves with the Independent

Socialists, a newly founded Communist Party. Meidner had always been a Socialist, convinced that the artist was dominated by the Aristocracy and the Middle Class, and was as exploited as a manual laborer. As early as 1913, he had portrayed revolution, and although he had never taken part in the revolutions, he remained devoted to socialist concepts. He fervently believed in the Expressionist doctrine that the artist must join with the poor in a "holy alliance."

#### BIOGRAPHY

Having examined the Expressionist convictions of Ludwig Meidner, I would now like to turn your attention to his biography, and scrutinize the phenomenon that was integrally intertwined with his beliefs and actions. What manner of environment, what pattern of events transpired to create this intense human being, so ardently devoted to expressing his innermost emotions in such an explosive manner, laying bare his soul for all the world to see?

Hans Tramer, in his essay on Ludwig Meidner, contended that there is no other way to consider Meidner's life than in the context of a Jew engaged in the struggle with the terrors of the German threat of annihilation:

As a painter and poet and always, at the same time as a Jew, Ludwig Meidner has created a work, which must be regarded as one of the significant and important documents of the final period in the German-Jewish cultural encounter. In him and through his sympathy with the German fate, its hopes and its bitter decline is revealed as well as his longing for a purer humanity and the ardor of his Jewish faith for a better world. (Tramer, p.1)

Meidner, the sensitive artist, revealed with pen and brush his compulsive search for understanding the torments that he had to suffer in his struggle as a Jew on German soil. Tramer contended, "The sentiment in Meidner's artistic will cannot be called anything else but pious in the deepest sense." (Tramer, 1977/78 p.1) His work was angry, often filled with despair, but most importantly, it anticipated the sudden end of an historically significant era.

Born in Bernstadt, a small town in Middle Silesia, on April 18, 1884, Meidner was the son of the owner of a textile business that had been in the Meidner family for more than a hundred years. It is believed that his affinity toward art was inherited from his mother, whose aesthetic tastes were sophisticated enough to contradict the official dictums and to endorse Arnold Böcklin long before his merit was recognized by the art world. In his early years, Ludwig Meidner devoted far more energy to drawing and creating watercolors than to

academic pursuits. Nonetheless, he remained a student in the schools at Bernstadt until he was fourteen years old, after which time he spent four years studying in the secondary schools of Breslau and Kattowitz.

His parents were not enthused about his pursuing a career as an artist, but he was encouraged by Franz Von Stuck, who had evaluated some of his drawings and water colors. Meidner's application to The Breslau Royal Art School was rejected on the grounds that the content of his paintings was too radical. His family then mandated that he become an apprentice to a mason in preparation for a career as an architect or builder.

In 1903, Hans Poelzig became the director of The Breslau Art School and accepted Meidner as a student of that institution. Despite his bitter disappointment with the "lifeless academic instruction at the school," (Kunz p.73) Meidner remained as a drawing student for two years. Tramer pointed out the significant influence that this drab small town with "the sullen color, the morose narrowness and earthy heaviness," (Tramer, p.3) had upon Meidner throughout his life. In 1929, Meidner commented upon this effect:

Whenever I envied others because they went about their artistic work more carefree, happier, bolder, with more sense of form, sensuality, and grace, that little town would

immediately come to mind, of which I will never be free all my life. (Ludwig Meidner, Das verborgene, p.62)

When his parents refused to extend further support for his pursuit as an artist, Meidner decided to leave Breslau, and in 1905 he set off for Berlin. There he was engaged as an illustrator of furs for fashion magazines, and managed to support a meager subsistence. His nights were given over to his art. He worked in a barren attic studio, living in squalor, until his Aunt established a small stipend on his behalf, which allowed him to go to Paris for further study.

Meidner referred to his Parisian experience as the richest, happiest time of his life. He rented a studio in Montmartre, studied at Academie Julian and Academie Cormon, and relished the opportunity to traverse the picturesque streets of the artist's quarter in Paris. He began to frequent the famous music hall, Lapin Agile, and subsequently developed friendships with other artists, such as Amedeo Modigliani, with whom he had a close relationship. Modigliani is said to have provided Meidner with "a high concept of art and inner beauty." (Tramer, p.4) During this time the Fauvres dominated the Parisian art scene, and vestiges of their influence remained in Meidner's work.



When Meidner was forced to return to Berlin for a military review, he carried with him a multitude of concepts acquired during his Parisian escapade. Meidner's biographer, Thomas Grochowiak, expounds upon this in the following passage:

The growth in literary insights, the widening of the intellectual horizon, the sense of connection, a universal view which helped him loosen his provincial timidity, to inspire in him the wish to become a poet, and therefore becomes an advantage as well as a danger for his double talent. Finally, Meidner was impressed by the matter of course with which people starved in Paris in order to be free for the only purpose of living in the arts. (Grochowiak, p.19)

Meidner, having been granted a deferment by The Military in the spring of 1908, focused his entire existence upon his art. These were years of extreme privation for the artist, as revealed in his writings:

Forsaken, beaten, intimidated and hopeless in brain and intestine....I never had any paint, the pennies were not sufficient for that. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons I used to wander the streets which led to the market. There I would find carrots, potatoes and fruit that had fallen out of the nets of housewives, and I filled my pockets. If I looked carefully, I would have a rich meal. My pot boiled over and I danced around it like someone who was on top of the world. (Meidner, Hymnen und Lasterungen, p.171)

His vivid imagination verged on hallucination, and by 1911, Meidner was plagued by what he termed, "the terrors of war." As a member of a group of artists, poets and writers who gathered at the Cafe Westens and Cafe Grossenwahn, he participated in ongoing

discussions regarding the problems of the age. By the summer of 1912, Meidner had money for food and paint.

He wrote the following description of his life:

I painted day and night, my distress, painted it out of my system, last judgments, the end of the world, hangings of skulls, for in those days the great world lightening was already throwing screaming yellow shadows with snarling teeth on my whining brush. (Meidner, Dichter, Mahler und Cafes, p.73)

In November of 1912, Herwarth Walden dedicated the eighth exhibition at the Sturm Gallery (Konigin-Augusta Strasse 51, Berlin) to a small group called Die Pathetiker (the passionate). The group had been founded by Ludwig Meidner, Jacob Steinhardt and Richard Janthur. This short lived alliance was the only art movement with which Meidner had ever been directly affiliated. Its aim was to express opposition to the lack of pathos in Impressionism. The group introduced some new themes into expressionism. Wolf-Dieter Dube described them aptly when he wrote, "They painted not only street scenes (as their predecessors had done) but also visions of decay and ruin." (Dube, Expressionists and Expressionism, p. 78)

These were the years of the awakening of rebellious political and artistic ideas among the artists of Europe, and the ferment in philosophies and ideologies that occurred just prior to World War I.

Haim Gamzu defined Die Pathetiker within this context:

The Pathetiker were not anti-formalists, for they continued to seek form: but they demanded the expression of powerful experiences and tempestuous emotions through dramatic action and gesture, and a dynamic composition which often bore the stamp of masked Cubism. In any case, this group placed itself on the side of the academic barricades by expressing its energetic opposition to 'Art for Art's Sake' and its open rejection of the 'beautiful and careful picture.' (Gamzu, p.14)

The bourgeois press, in general, took little notice of The Sturm exhibition, but Kristian Kraus wrote in the entertainment section of the Deutsche Monats-Zeitung, "I can hardly recall ever having had such an immediate, tremendous impression in front of a painting as in front of Meidner's 'End of the World....'" (Quoted by Tramer, p.7)

In the November 27, 1912 issue of Aktion, Kurt Hiller expressed his enthusiasm for Meidner's work in the following statement:

.....By his artistic power and also by his efforts to express the mystical experience clearly and unambiguously, Meidner lacks the snobbish wish for ambiguity....He differs pleasantly from those Russo-Munich painters a la Kandinsky who are compromising the whole revolution (and therefore are treated well by the bourgeois press), whose impotent and not even decorative silliness can only be surpassed by the grandiosity of their imposterdom. (Quoted by Tramer, p.7)

Meidner's paintings in the Sturm exhibit drew considerable attention in the art world. His work was acknowledged to be within the same rebellious spirit as that of the artists of Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter and of the Expressionist poets like his comrade, George Heym. "Meidner's art becomes the concrete and visible prophecy of the fate of the coming years for the cities and their inhabitants." (Tramer, p.8) Meidner's acceptance by the critics led to resentment among his cohorts, Janthur and Steinhardt, and subsequently to the disbanding of Die Pathetiker.

In 1912, when Meidner was twenty-eight years old, his work began to break with the chains of tradition, and he started to "give free reign to his passionate nature .... expressing himself in visions and raptures unrestrained by any consideration of form or style." (Dube, Express. and Express. p. 78) Meidner's prolific writings during that period, made no reference to his artistic endeavors. Writing served as a parallel movement for his ideology. It is believed that he developed a stronger affiliation with the poets and writers of the time than with his fellow painters. He became regarded as the "chronicler of German Expressionism." (Dube, Express. and Express. p. 79)

1913 was a decisive year in Meidner's career. His works were being shown in Munich, at the Gallerie Neue Kunst Hans Goltz. He occupied a large atelier on the fifth floor of Wilhelmshoher Strasse 21 in the Friedenau district of Berlin. This studio became a gathering place for artists and poets, an arena where they engaged in lively, and sometimes violent discussions on all manner of subjects. Hans Richter, the painter and film maker, described the setting for these weekly sessions:

.....as if an earthquake had hit paintings and chairs lying and standing around, sheets and food, garbage bags and easels with pants hanging on them. In the midst of all this, Meidner is storming around with pen and brush possessed by the visions of the prophets. He projected them into each portrait, into each self-portrait. Himself a prophet, one who found no peace in the wrath of damnation, in the horrors of the collapsing world.... (Richter, p.65)

Meidner did portraits of almost all the participants of these gatherings. Executing these portraits of poets and writers in pencil or pen and brush, he completed an enormous number of depictions of the intellectual and artistic giants of contemporary German cultural life.



125 Porträt des Bildhauers  
Wilhelm Lehbruck, 1916

Fig. 27. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)

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Ludwig Meidner Sold 1988, L.600 = \$ 1,422

Porträt des Schriftstellers Hans Freimark

signed and dated April 1915, pencil  
17¼ × 13¾ in. (44 × 35cm.)

EXHIBITED:

Notre Dame, University Art Gallery, *The Graphic Work of Ludwig Meidner*,  
Nov.-Dec. 1972, no. 11

Fig. 28. Rpt. in A Collection of German Expressionist Drawings, (London: Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd., 1980)



174. Portrat Dr. Haustein, 1921

Fig. 29. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)





Druckverlag Max Hermann Neisse, 1920

Fig. 30. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



109 Portrat des Malers Konrad Fetzlmüller, 1915

Fig. 31. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



13. Portrait Will. Zierath, 1914

Fig. 32. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



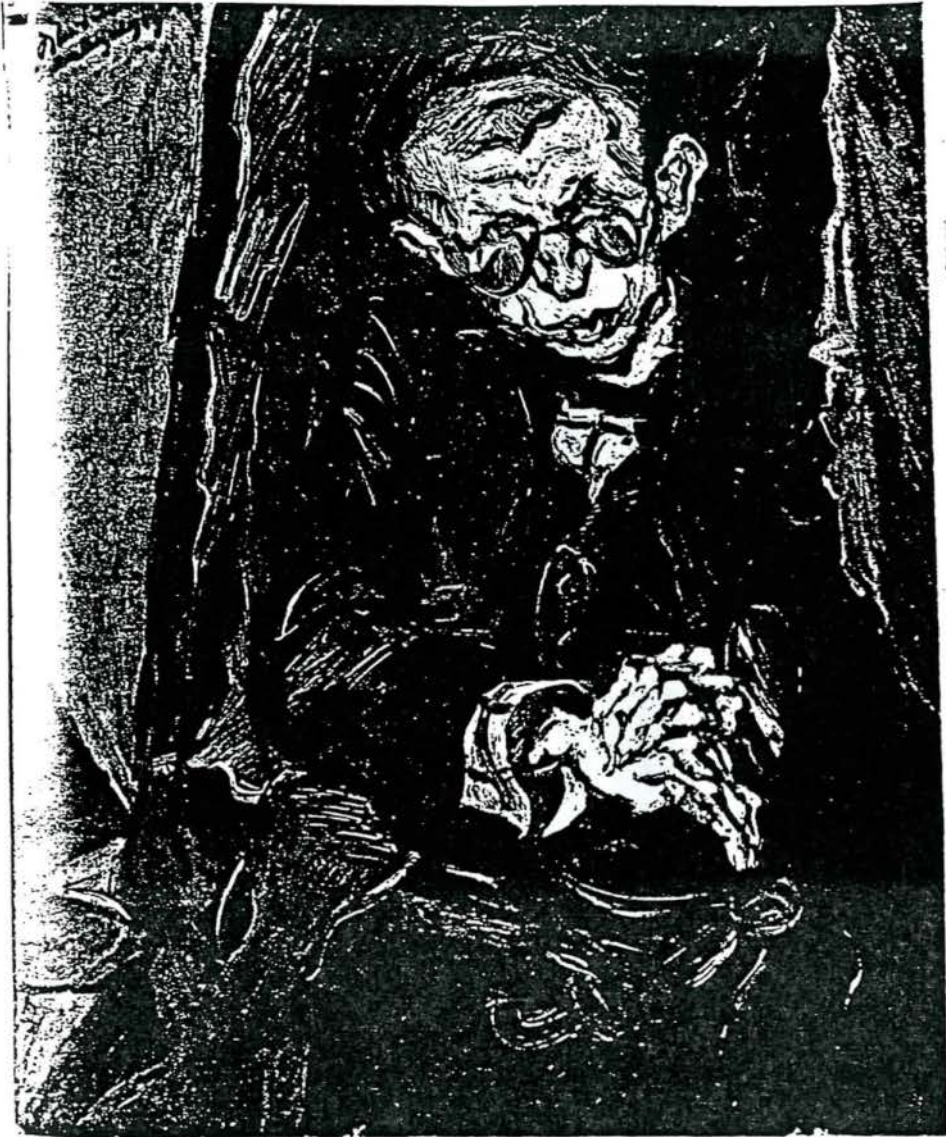
22 Portrait des Dichters Johannes R. Becher, 1916

Fig. 33. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



100 Jünglingsporträt Philipp Keller, 1914

Fig. 34. rpt.in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



18. Portrat des Schriftstellers Max-Hermann Neße, 1913

Fig. 35. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bonqers, 1966)



23 Porträt eines jungen Mannes, 1915

Fig. 36. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



- oben links:  
129 Tanja 1921
- oben rechts:  
130 Portrat eines Schuhmachers 1919
- unten links:  
131 Portrat Eise Meidner 1925
- 132 Portrat des Schauspielers  
Eugen Klopfer 1922

Fig. 37. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



He formed strong personal attachments within this group. Particularly noted was his devotion to the young poet, Ernst Wilhelm Lotz.

Meidner's drawings were frequently solicited as illustrations for publications, but he never succumbed to accepting the role of an illustrator. Rather his drawings were independent renditions, sometimes utilized as a concomitant element accompanying the prose or poetry of literary artists. At times Meidner's drawings were inspired by the literary works. Other times it was a drawing by Meidner that inspired the essay or poem.

In October, 1913, Meidner was invited by Franz Kochmann to be a guest at his elegant villa in Dresden. Kochmann, who owned a large gin factory in Kattowitz, was an active patron of young artists. He specifically invited Meidner because he also owned a lithography firm which, "he wanted to make available to Meidner and his literary friends." (Grochowiak, 1966, p.99) In the spring of 1914, Meidner and Lotz moved to Dresden where they shared a primitive hovel on Bautznor Strasse. During the day they worked on their artistic endeavors, but the nights were reserved for lounging in the cafes of Dresden, their favorite being the literary Cafe

Konig. This placid existence was short lived, as Meidner became enveloped in a torturous emotional state. His incessant arguments with Lotz became more and more intense until, as Meidner confessed, "the Dresden summer became a hell." (Tramer, p.13) This propensity to fail in close personal alliances was apparent later in his life, when it manifested itself in his relationship with his wife.

In June, 1914, Meidner and Lotz were on the threshold of publishing a journal for modern art and literature under the sponsorship of their patron, Kochmann. In July, Lotz left for Berlin, where he was to solicit contributors to the journal. The young poet never returned to Dresden, as he volunteered for duty at the inception of the war and was killed on September 14, 1914. Meidner expressed his feelings over the loss of his friend in the following passage:

God the Lord found the time was ripe. He covered his mysterious face and struck powerfully in his wrath.....I put the loneliness on my back like the cross of passion and went away from here. Day in, day out I fought against the great judgement and spit all over God's holy hand. (Meidner, Dichter, Maler und Cafes, p.68)

When he returned to Berlin in November, 1914, after having accumulated adequate finances from his work for Kochman, Meidner was able to rent a large studio at 16 Landauer Strasse in Wilmersdorf.



209 Berlin.  
Potsdamer Straße, 1913

fig. 38. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bonders, 1966)

Once again, he sought companionship at the Cafe Westens, and gradually Meidner's studio became the gathering place for artists and literary figures who had not yet been drafted into military service. The camaraderie of close friends helped to dispel the despair of those early years of the war.

Meidner became a focal point in this circle of the Berlin "boheme" and was accorded recognition for his abilities as a painter, draughtsman and portraitist. His portfolio, "Kreig," and the collotypes, "Strassen und Cafes" were well received. He continued to produce portraits of friends and acquaintances, works which if scrutinized for their underlying content revealed the terrors and suffering of the artist. He dedicated an entire series, "Europa 1914/15," to his lost friend, Ernst Wilhelm Lotz. The works in this group bear titles such as, "Threatening Militarism," "The nationalistic mob screams for war," "The Awakening of the beast," "Refugees," "Concentration camp," and "Large field of corpses." Death and the slain souls sacrificed to the war became a pervasive preoccupation in Meidner's work.

By 1916, a religious fervor had grasped Meidner. He stated, "I am filled with holy moods and I carry

with me heroic moving figures of the bible.....[I am] consumed by a burning yearning for a deep unity with God." (quoted by Tramer, p.17) Meidner expressed his desire to paint strong religious cartoons when on May 23, 1916, he wrote "the painted, clenched, remorseful prophet, the first painted prophet!!!....will be created" (Meidner, Dichter, Maler und Cafes, p.47)

These intentions were thwarted by his call to military duty in 1916. Just prior to his induction, Meidner composed an inventory of works that he had in his possession. His diary disclosed the following: "50 pieces of religious composition, 11 cartoons, 40 various themes; war scenes, tragic scenes etc., 111 portrait drawings. In addition 15 portraits which he had sent to his friend and patron Dr. Ernst Gosebruch in Essen." (Tramer, p.17) Meidner was assigned to be an interpreter in a French prisoner of war camp in Merzdorf. He complained to his friend Hans Mardersteig, "(I sit in the barracks) putting up during the day with stubborn Parisian apaches, pimps, anarchists and other desequilibres, having to read their correspondence." (Wolff, p.192)

Having no painting materials, yet seething with emotion and bursting with feelings, a new facility of

expression was released. Meidner, the poet emerged. Using the same pen with which he created visual expressions, "the Expressionist poet, Ludwig Meidner, enters into the literature of his time." (Tramer, p.18) His first large book, Im Nacken das Sternemeer, was printed in 1917, and appeared in Kurt Wolff's Verlag in 1918. The volume was graphically decorated with twelve religious drawings and cartoons.

A second success took place in 1918. The Galerie Paul Cassirer arranged a comprehensive exhibition of Meidner's paintings and drawings. Enthusiastic reviews guaranteed recognition for the artist, leading to interest from collectors and museums and to a contract with Cassirer that would allow Meidner to be financially independent for the next several years. Cassirer also sponsored the publication of Meidner's second literary endeavor, Septemberschrei, which was published in 1920. The success of these ventures led to further acknowledgment of Meidner's talents, and one-man shows at both the Kestner-Gesellschaft Gallery in Hanover and the Galerie J.B. Neumann in Berlin ensued.

Willi Wolfradt stated in "Das Junge Deutschland" that Meidner's writings in Septemberschrei were

analogous to his visual works. Wolfradt comments:

These confessions....belong to the few overwhelming works of our time, no matter how much irrelevant notations they contain, how much they are a product of being exiled from his studio by the military service....There is not an ounce of literary trimming in them and they simply state most naturally the inner correlation of Meidner's poetry and painting. The same passion of the heart, the same self humiliation, the same mad life, the same delight in creativity, the same despair, the same hymnic intoxication, the same baroque jubilation of the indulging word-forming, form-tearing fantasy. (quoted by Tramer, p.20)

In addition to the "hymns, prayers and blasphemies" (Trammer, p.20) Meidner created several portfolios of graphic works during this time. In 1917, he produced, "Acht Kopfe," "Strassen und Cafes" and "Die Schaffenden." In 1920, he presented a portfolio of ten lithographs that he titled, "Moses." The first independent monograph about Meidner was written by Lothar Brieger and published in Jung Kunst, Volume 4, 1919.

Meidner was spared almost certain death at the front when he was hospitalized for a minor disability. He expressed his gratitude in the following words:

Yes, I have the great consolation and this hope that I will create, strive for, pray and sing incessantly your praise, oh Lord, implore fiercely for high fulfillment. And I have served you, Lord for twenty, thirty years, you may let me die while painting my last picture, then may your breath blow me away, may the insatiable, praising, creating

hand turn to dust. (Meidner, Dichter, Maler, und Cafes, p.136)

When the war ended, Meidner was anxious to be a participant in the formation of the "new world." He had acquired a reputation as a painter, printmaker, draughtsman, poet and writer. He was a contributor of both graphic and literary material to many of the established German journals. By November, 1918, Meidner had joined the Novembergruppe, an organization dedicated to the development of a cultural and social brotherhood. The invitation for membership to this group proclaimed:

The future of art and the seriousness of the hour forces us revolutionaries of culture (expressionists, cubists, futurists) to unite and join together. We therefore urgently request that all fine artists who destroyed the old forms of art declare their membership in the Novembergruppe. (quoted by Tramer, p.20)

Along with Max Pechstein, in 1919, Meidner published a manifesto in the city of Berlin that was directed to all artists. This document was a mixture of socialism, religion and idealism. Meidner wrote the following passage:

May a holy solidarity unite us painters and poets with the poor! Have not many among us known poverty and the humiliation of hunger and financial dependency! Are we not like beggars dependent on the whims of the art-collecting bourgeoisie!....Painters, architects, sculptors, whom the bourgeoisie pays high salaries for your work - out of vanity, snobbishness and boredom - listen:



this money is covered with sweat and blood and nervefluid of thousands of poor, exhausted men and women - listen: that is an unclean profit....we must be true socialists - light the highest human virtue in us: human brotherhood (Meyers, pp. 274,277)

Meidner reiterated his radical ideology in the design for the cover of a volume of poems, Der politische Dicter by Walter Hasenclever and a volume, Ewig im Aufbau by Johannes Becher. He portrayed the political poet as an agitator pushing away the old order with one hand and welcoming change and the new with the other hand. Once again, Meidner's Berlin studio became the center for poets, writers, artists, actors, publishers etc. And once again, no visitor to his studio escaped the virtuosity of his pen or brush.

An intense devotion to religion began to dominate Meidner's consciousness, and after a short flirtation with Christianity, he turned to Jewish orthodoxy. His art reflected his passionate zeal for religious subject matter, and he depicted, prayer, prophets, evangelists etc. Although no exact time can be noted, it is known that along with his religious ardor, a turning inward occurred. By 1922, Meidner's commitment to expressionism waned. He wrote the following to a friend:

I am sitting in the dunes etching with a cold needle the curves of hills and valleys - very precisely and clearly, in each detail, not

expressionistically bent and obscured - for nature is now my example and she is the only and true example of the painter who cannot create out of his own spirit the richness of forms nature has to offer him, originating in the love of the creator. Reverence for the wealth of forms in nature and humility before its beauty - that is my artistic creed today. (Grochowiak, p.179)

Most critiques on Meidner discuss his turning to naturalistic representation as a weakening of his artistic powers. It is generally accepted that the outstanding years of Meidner's career were those in which he produced his vigorous expressionistic works, the years just prior to World War I (1912-14). There is, however, some controversy in this evaluation supported by critics who admire his more tender, sensitive religious drawings.

When the second edition of the Meidner monograph by Lothar Brieger appeared in 1919, Meidner insisted upon inserting the following comments upon his art and writing, reflecting the changes that were occurring in his creative enterprises:

When you are very young you love free nature - in your twenties the coffee shops....and later you return disappointedly to nature....I am fascinated by the object of a picture. What is more important than the objects of the world? - They are a thousand times closer to us than all the ideas of the world. And the great truths of faith are not ideas but things sensually perceptible....so I am striving to let this inner spiritual world come alive.

Meidner continued, discussing his written works:

The madness, the insanity and shamelessness present in my former prose I have left far far behind and my faith in God has purified and sobered me so much that today I can read those youthful works only with deep embarrassment....Even though there may still be bizarre elements in my pieces and little of that nobility and purity of the spiritual world, it has to be considered that I am also a child of my time and take part in its disease and ugliness, and just now have I started to lift my foot on the pilgrimage to the kingdom of truth - for yesterday I was just like the others and no better than they are. (Grochowiak, pp.179/80)

In 1924, Meidner accepted a teaching position at The Kunstatelier für Malerei und Plastik in Charlottenburg, an institution founded by Lovis Corinth, who Horst Keller has described as the founder of German modernism. Among Meidner's students was a talented young woman, Else Meyer. Else, the daughter of a Berlin physician was to become Meidner's wife and to profoundly effect drastic changes in his career as an artist. Grochowiak reported upon the powerful influence that Else exerted on her husband:

He was fascinated by everything she did and painted, admired the sensuously blooming color of her painting and felt more and more a failure as a painter himself. The longer he observed his wife's painting, the more insecure he grew in his own work. He wanted to paint passionately again as he had done fifteen years ago, but the admiration and the excessive value he placed on his wife's oil paintings paralyzed any initiative in him and he gave up painting. Even his desire to draw came to a stop. (Grochowiak, pp.182/183)

By 1929, Meidner was already experiencing the conflict between devotion to his Jewish heritage and his allegiance to Germany. He wrote the following:

I am one of those who understands German nature and without having to convince myself, I have firmly integrated it into my life, and am at home on German soil and never want to leave it....in order to live in harmony with the earth, its essence, its moral demands and dreams and the beauty of its eternal melodies. (Grochowiak, p.187)

Even the birth of his son, David, in 1929 could not dispel the gloom that was invading his awareness of this divided loyalty.

1931 was a decisive year in Meidner's career. He was commissioned to paint a portrait of the renowned Dr. Leo Baeck. This portrait liberated him from the inhibitions that had been frustrating his artistic creativity. Once again, the artist took up his pencil and brush, and in 1932 began a succession of works dealing with religious themes. He wrote that he could not escape this pursuit regardless of the fact that religious subject matter was of little interest, and sales were sparse.

In 1935, Meidner, along with his wife and child, left Berlin. He accepted a position as the drawing instructor at the Jewish Reform-gymnasium in Cologne. Meidner continued to paint, but accusations began to

accumulate against him and he became labelled a "degenerate." One of the worst attacks came from the racist pamphleteer, Wolfgang Willrich, who in 1937 labeled Meidner the "crazy art-Bolshevist."

Three paintings from the eighty-four of his works that had been confiscated were selected to be shown in the Entarte Kunst exhibition in Munich, Berlin and Dusseldorf in 1937. It was Meidner's self-portrait that was selected to symbolize degenerate art on the cover of the catalogue for this exhibit. Much of Meidner's work had already been burned in the notorious Auto-da-fe of degenerate art in the courtyard of the Berlin Fire Department. This demeaning of his art was met with defiance, expressed through the only means available to the artist. A new self-portrait was created which Heinz Schoffler described as follows:

A proud, not a humiliated man is looking at the viewer. Only the outline of the hand is indicated, the hand that creates unwanted works, and where the Jewish star is supposed to be, the painting remains fragmentary. This was the creative protest of a single individual, not bowing to the power of the circumstances, but meeting it with the silent means available to him. (Schoffler, p.345)

Once again, Meidner experienced premonitions of forthcoming catastrophe, and by 1938 his visions became a reality when the horrors of Hitler's planned genocide burst forth. Death and destruction invaded the lives

of millions of innocent men, women and children. Meidner expressed his outrage through a multitude of drawings depicting the carnage. In 1939, he took up the pen once again and wrote the last book that he was to produce on German soil, Nichts als Liebe. On August 2, 1939, Ludwig and Else Meidner through the efforts of an English colleague, were able to emigrate to England. Their son David's escape had been previously achieved.

The Meidner family's sojourn in a country whose lifestyle and language was entirely foreign to them was beset by extreme poverty. Although his body was starving, Meidner fed his spirit with the visual delights of the British Museums. He was particularly attracted to William Blake, whom he accepted as a kindred soul. In June, 1940, the male refugees from the Nazi atrocities were placed in a camp near Liverpool, and several months later transferred to the Isle of Man. It was there that Meidner renewed his acquaintance with his friend Kurt Hiller and met Karl Schwitters and other artists that had taken refuge in England, only to be thrust into protective confinement in the country that was supposed to offer them sanctuary.

In the meantime, Else Meidner had petitioned the

government for the release of her husband, and in November, 1941, Ludwig Meidner was allowed to return to London, only to discover that he had been stripped of all his possessions. Although some of the German artists living in England were able to support themselves through their work, Meidner found that his art had little popular appeal. Else, whose paintings were more marketable supported the family and enabled them to establish residence in a modest flat.

Eventually, a benefactor, Segfried Oppenheimer, rescued the Meidners from their poverty. He valued their art highly, and in addition to purchasing works for his own private collection, he arranged other commissions for them. Nonetheless, Meidner longed for his literary and artist friends. He suffered from a cultural isolation that along with his inherently difficult temperament began to affect his relationship with his family and acquaintances.

These years of personal as well as world turmoil (The war was raging throughout Europe) were not unproductive ones for Meidner in an artistic sense. He produced works that have been interpreted as psychological studies of people living with constant fear. He drew religious pictures. He drew the

occupants of the English coffee houses where he sought solace in the evenings, and finally, he embarked upon a series of fantasy drawings based upon his personal hallucinations.

The latter included artistic erotica which were assembled into a 1975 exhibition in Frankfurt a.M. titled, "Bordellszenen." Thomas Grochowiak described this portion of Meidner's oeuvre:

These are strange creations, fantasies of an aging man made visible by his pencil, and in these waves of clothed and naked female bodies, beating on each other, hysterically pulling each other's hair, tearing back and forth, scratching, biting, stabbing, pulling each other while still falling and still fighting until they are unconsciously lying on the ground, unrestrained with arms and legs high in the air - it is fascinating to see that Meidner is not only a supreme master of life drawing but also of organizing groups and single figures being thrown in baroque curves throughout the picture: a chaotic turmoil, but in its instinctively sure rhythm and its formal mastery it never lacks the necessary artistic economy. (Grochowiak, p.208)

In these works, Meidner is also depicted himself as an aging hermaphrodite. The battle between abstraction and intuition, established Meidner clearly on the side of intuition. This body of work, which was not suitable to be marketed, was described by Dieter Hoffman in the catalogue for the exhibition, "Ludwig Meidner, Watercolors from the London Exile." Hoffman wrote the following:



Instead of enjoying his bisexual nature as an increased possibility for sexual gratification, he feels himself condemned between the sexes. Guilt-ridden he exhibited a self portrait: an ugly old man with limp hanging breasts and testicles. (Hoffman, p.5)

Meidner's sojourn in London was devastating as far as material wealth, despite repeated efforts by his patron, Oppenheimer, to engage clients, sponsor an exhibit at the Ben Uri Gallery (October 5th -November 2, 1949) and to repeatedly aid the Meidners in the sale of their works.

Finally, in the years 1951 and 1952, Meidner produced a body of work which he grouped together under the title, "Londoner Totentanz," (London Death dance). This portfolio was comprised of an allegory of his immigration period, including London pub scenes and paintings reflecting the influence of English color lithographs. Vestiges of Hogarth are apparent, but also the idiosyncracies of Ensor and Bosch. These works drew the attention of Dr. Ernst Buchholz, whom Meidner had portrayed in 1921. Dr. Buchholz, who had become the public state prosecutor in Hamburg, invited Meidner to return to Germany. Meidner returned alone, renewed old acquaintances, and wrote the following to his friend, Johannes R. Becher:

For some time now I have been back in Germany for a visit, coming from London where I had to spend fifteen sad years of exile, and this trip has become a wonderful experience for me. Hardly a day passes without a happy surprise. Tonight when I followed an invitation of the publisher Rowohlt, my dear old friend Herbert Ihering opened the door for me, and I am giving him this letter for you....I have applied for my German citizenship again; my wife, however, does not want to return to the old fatherland; she has become a hater of Germans. (Kunz, pp.91/92.)

Meidner's reluctant return to London was followed by repeated hallucinations. Eventually, his papers came from Germany, along with the news that a place was being held for him in a nursing home in Frankfurt a.M. Despite Else's pleading, Meidner left England and the couple pursued separate paths from August, 1953 to the end of their lives. Meidner was engaged to paint a number of portraits, which he admitted required some concessions and compromises before being accepted. In general, he enjoyed moderate financial success and personal well being.

On his seventieth birthday he wrote the following letter:

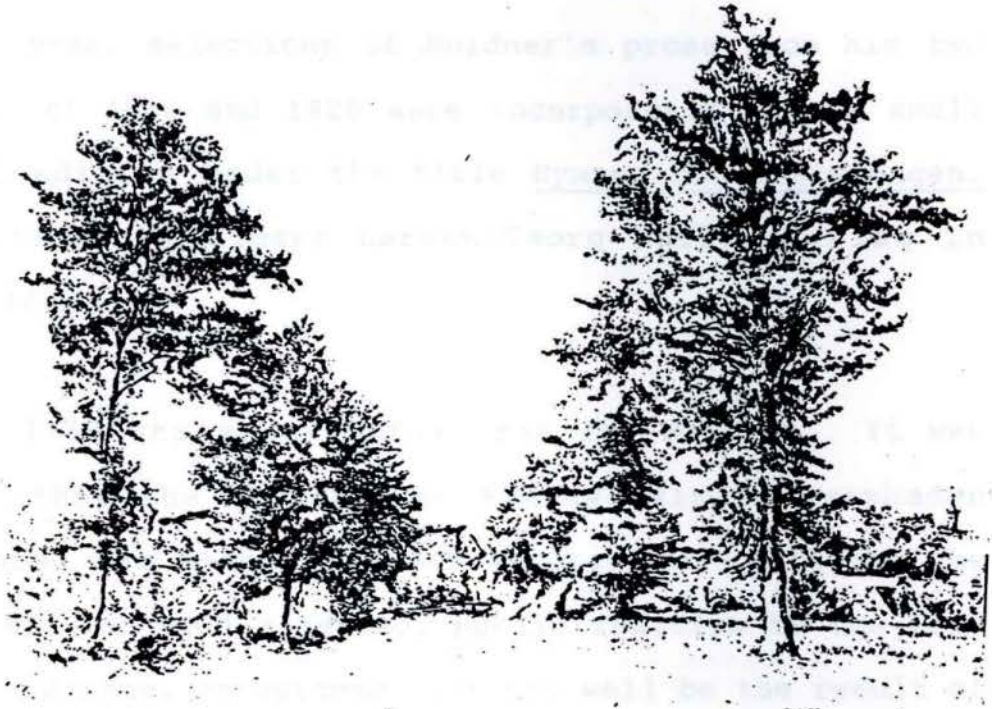
The arrival of the seventieth birthday on the first day of Passover inspires me to write a few lines about myself, and this is not difficult for me, since I am not only a painter but have always been a person who enjoys writing....I cannot deny that I belong to the German art. I have been educated by it, its thoughts and ideas have always been mine, and I did not have to go to England for

fourteen years to become aware of this, I have always known it. - So I have returned to Germany, it could not have been otherwise, and I am glad to be able to hear the German language everywhere and every day, and I have the hope to finish my life's work here. (Martelli)

Meidner did finish his life's work in Germany, but not within the confines of the nursing home. In 1955 he moved to a spacious studio in the village of Marxheim, and became engrossed in naturalistic landscape painting. His works were the antithesis to the prevailing trends in artistic endeavors. Meidner explained his position in a letter written to Ludwig Kunz in Amsterdam:

....in Germany now pure abstraction is trump and king. I am not afraid, however, to oppose it and paint from nature, as it has to be painted today. Some people say, all this has been done a thousand times already and that there is nothing new, but each generation has its own vision of nature, and today one can look at open nature with a loving eye, and such painting will look very differently than the realism of 1900 or 1880 or even 1860. I just can't let myself be intimidated by such demagogic talk. (Hodin, pp.130/131)

Despite the deteriorating condition of his health, Meidner continued to work, engaging a studio assistant to help with menial tasks. He not only painted and exhibited his art, but returned to writing as well. He was a contributor to the large Chagall monograph by Walter Erben.



54. Landscape, 1925, drypoint

Fig 39. rpt. in Victor Meisel, Ludwig Meidner: An Expressionist Master (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan, 1978) 41

In 1957, he wrote a piece for the volume, Anung und Aufbruch, published by the poet Karl Otten. He also wrote an essay on Jacob van Hoddiss for the posthumous collection of Hoddiss's poems, edited by Paul Portner. Meidner's recollections of Amedeo Modigliani as a young man were included in a volume produced in 1959. That same year, selections of Meidner's prose from his two books of 1918 and 1920 were incorporated into a small gift edition under the title Hymnen und Lusterungen, published by Albert Largen/Georg Muller Verlag in Munnich.

1959 was an eventful year for Meidner. It was then that the Nassauische Kunstverein in Weisbaden honored him with a one man exhibition. Although the exhibit was well attended, public reaction to the work was moderate, an outcome that may well be the result of Meidner's own moderating constraints and the diminishing force of his work. An explanation is revealed in the following passage which Meidner wrote in the exhibition catalogue:

I can no longer rage in whirls of ecstasy and enthusiasm as I once did, praising what is praiseworthy and idolizing what is worthless. The revelation of religious truth and the experience of a long life have made me incredibly sober. Before the gates of eternity all jubilation and eccentricity ceases except for the jubilation before the throne of mercy of the almighty. (Grochowiak, p.223.)

Meidner continued to vacillate between the written word and the painted image. As he approached his eightieth birthday, he remained lucid and spontaneous. Following a visit with Meidner, his old friend, Hans Richter, wrote:

There lives Meidner in disorderly order as earlier in Friedenau, in the midst of old drawings, full of monumental power and new paintings of mature wisdom....friendly and alone, but in harmony with life which did not spare him any trials....(Richter, p.61)

The final years of Meidner's life were a time of honor and celebration. Thomas Grochowiak, director of the Recklinghausen Studatische Kunsthalle, arranged a major exhibition in 1963 that included 230 of Meidner's oil paintings, drawings, water colors and etchings. Most of the work was from the earlier expressionistic period. This exhibition traveled from Recklinghausen to Berlin, and then to Darmstadt. It served as a pre-celebration for Meidner's eightieth birthday, and drew wide audiences and salutary tributes from the German intellectual community.

On the occasion of his eightieth birthday, April 18, 1964, Meidner was awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz (the highest honor awarded by the German Federal Republic government). He was also named a member of the Academy of Arts in Berlin, and accepted the Johann Heinrich Merck-Medaille of the city of Darmstadt.

Meidner declined an invitation to temporarily occupy a studio at the Villa Romana in Florence because he did not feel physically or psychologically strong enough to accept this distinction. Nonetheless, his work did travel to Italy and was exhibited in a one-man show in both Milan and Rome.

Meidner continued to sketch and to dictate literary works until his death on May 14, 1966. He left a legacy to the world of art and literature. Although the spirit of Expressionism was somewhat diminished in his later life, the force and sheer power of both his visual art and his writing is imprinted forever upon man's comprehension of the era in which he lived. One can define German Expressionism in terms of the ideas that this artist expounded and the visions that he created.

#### MARKET PROFILE

The preceding information has been directed at gaining insight into the artistic and aesthetic nature of German Expressionism, its underlying motives, its motifs, its manner of representation. The task of the appraiser is to address two aspects of an object. First, he considers, analyzes and classifies the subject property. Next he examines the marketplace in

relation to that object. It is this approach that I have taken in examining the German Expressionist art movement. The next section of this study will, therefore, deal with the second task, an investigation of the market response to German Expressionism.

#### INTERVIEWS - MUSEUM PERSONNEL

Personal interviews were a vital source of information. I was privileged to speak with outstanding authorities on German Expressionism; museum personnel, gallery personnel and collectors, some of whom were able to inform me about the history of the market for German Expressionism, and all of whom were in a position to impart considerable information regarding the current market. I was also exceedingly curious about the general interest in German Expressionism, since aesthetic interest and value go hand in hand.

My survey began with a broad scope, attempting to gather data and formulate concepts about the movement in general. As the study progressed it became focussed upon the ultimate topic of this thesis, the expansion of the market viability of German Expressionism during the past decade.



There was a general consensus among those who responded to my inquiries that there had been growing interest and an expanding market for German Expressionist art during the past twenty to twenty-five years, with a considerable increase in interest and surge in the market for these works during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

One of the first people to assist me in this venture was Elizabeth Prelinger, the Assistant Curator of Painting at The Carnegie museum of Art and author of the book, Edvard Munch - Master Printmaker. I met with her in spring of 1984, and some of our discussion centered upon the fact that German Expressionist art was not only bringing higher prices, but that more literature was available and that there were currently more collectors. Ms. Prelinger suggested a number of directions that this study might take, provided me with an excellent bibliography, and referred me to other people who she believed might serve as resource persons.

At her suggestion, I contacted Emily Dana, of the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard University. Ms. Dana discussed the Busch-Reisinger collection with me, and explained the difficulty that the two World Wars, in

which Germany had been the opponent of the United States, had posed for an American museum devoted to the collecting of German art. The Busch family, under the influence of Kurt Valentiner, had started collecting German Expressionist art in the 1930s. This was an expeditious time to collect German Expressionism, since these works were being brought to the United States by the artists and by other refugees fleeing Nazi Germany. The work had little monetary value at the time, and when available for purchase, was extremely inexpensive.

My next museum interview took place with Edward Henning at The Cleveland Museum of Art. Mr. Henning, who was at that time the Curator of Modern Art, has been the author of numerous publications on Twentieth Century art movements. He explained that German Expressionism was the condensation of a long tradition in Germany. Although it has sometimes been considered an analogous movement to Fauvism, Expressionism, Mr. Henning asserted, differed from the French movement, which was based upon aesthetics, in that Expressionism's underlying theme was human emotion. Mr. Henning maintained that prices for German Expressionism had increased enormously during the past twenty-five years, but since these works have not been sought after with the same fervor as French art, they

are still accessible.

There had always been an elite group of collectors of German Expressionism in the United States, but World War II had stimulated an increase in this activity. German artists and intellectuals were forced to leave Germany or face incarceration. Those who left Germany in the early thirties were able to take with them many of their personal possessions, a privilege that was withheld by the mid 1930s. Mr. Henning concurred that many German Expressionist works of art became available at exceedingly reasonable prices on the American market.

Mr. Henning also discussed the diversity in the laws for exporting art works from Europe. France is reluctant to export art and English exports are governed by restrictions if the proffered price can be met within the country. The Swiss are open to export as are the Germans, although it is contemplated that some limits will also be imposed by Germany in the future.

In September, 1984, Dr. James Burke, the director of The St. Louis Art Museum discussed German Expressionist art with me. St. Louis is fortunate

in having an outstanding collection of German Expressionism due to the early interest of Perry Rathbone, who was the director of the museum in the 1940s and to the fact that the late Morton B. May donated a considerable number of fine Expressionist works to the museum.

Following World War II, in 1946, The St. Louis Museum defied popular trends in the United States and purchased German Expressionist art. Since the wartime prejudices against both Germany and Japan lingered until the 1950s, few products from either of these countries were considered desirable commodities prior to that time. Following the exhibition of "Degenerate Art," that took place in Germany in 1933, the German museums rid themselves of German Expressionist art works. Some of the art found its way to the United States with the artists or their admirers, but much of it was "dumped" in Switzerland. These works were purchased by both Britains and Americans for modest prices, and subsequently were readily available in the marketplace.

Dr. Burke outlined the market progression of German Expressionism during the twentieth century. During the 1920s German Expressionism enjoyed a period

of prosperity. The work was widely exhibited and sales were brisk. With the advent of Hitler's rise to power in Germany through the post war period, the German Expressionist artists barely managed to survive in the midst of rejection. Their works could not be shown in their native country. The most fortunate of the artists were allowed to leave Germany. Others were sent to concentration camps, some, such as Nolde, were Nazi sympathizers and were permitted to remain in Germany, but were restricted from exhibiting their work.

Immediately following the war, the market for German Expressionism was extremely depressed due to a combination of circumstances. First, there was the disdain for German products. To this was added a divided attitude within the contemporary art world. One faction of artists, such as the Abstract Expressionists, Rothko, Kline, DeKooning, Motherwell etc. was highly emotive, expressing aggression and loneliness. After suffering the ravages of war, there was also a demand for and a desire to produce tranquil art and art that evaded subject matter. A plethora of movements developed that were based upon purely aesthetic concerns. German Expressionism, an art dealing with subject matter and dedicated to presenting

a strong message, did not fit into those current modes. It was not until the end of the 1970s and early 1980s that the art world and the marketplace once again experienced a desire for strongly emotional figurative art, art that presented powerful images and expressed potent social and political messages.

One of the outstanding American authorities on prints is Riva Castleman, the curator of the print department at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Ms. Castleman has been the initiator of many superb exhibitions, and is the author of a number of excellent publications. Despite a busy schedule, Ms. Castleman graciously consented to discuss with me this project on German Expressionism and the history of German Expressionist prints in the MOMA collection.

At its inception, "The New Museum of Modern Art had as its only collection, a group of contemporary German prints," (Castleman, 1981, p 327). Paul J. Sachs had donated these first acquisitions with the advice that the museum should collect as well as display contemporary art. These works were intended to substantiate that current art was acceptable in a museum collection. Until the establishment of The Museum of Modern Art, museums were founded upon a

philosophy of their functioning only as repositories for proven art of the past.

The Museum of Modern Art has been acquiring a significant number of works by the "New German Expressionists," but is currently purchasing only a small number of early twentieth century German Expressionist prints. These purchases include works by lesser known German Expressionist artists. Ms. Castleman referred to the very high prices and the volatility of the market for German Expressionism as factors that make their purchase a risky investment for an institution.

In 1957, MOMA presented an exhibition titled, "German Art of the Twentieth Century." Many of the prints from the collection were included in traveling exhibitions sponsored by the Museum, and publications devoted to prints of our century continued to be published, with the demand flourishing in the 1970s and 1980s.

Ms. Castleman reiterated that a museum is not free to pursue collecting according to only aesthetic considerations, but must be cognizant of the demands of society. She commented that since the 1960s the

interests of the art community and the business community have interacted and influenced the production of prints as a means to extend the availability of art to the public. This has posed some difficulty for museums as collectors, since it is not feasible nor practical for an institution to acquire every work that it might deem desirable to add to its collection.

In a brief interview with Anselmo Carini, the curator of prints at the Chicago Art Institute, Mr. Carini related that the Institute began acquiring German Expressionist art in the 1930s. Generous gifts in the 1940s allowed the museum to build upon this strength. The Chicago Art Institute is still purchasing German Expressionist work, and has sufficient funds available for the museum to also buy atypical works from this period.

Mr. Carini showed me a brush and ink drawing by Ludwig Meidner, "Selbstbildnis, 1913." The drawing was being offered for sale by a New York dealer. It was signed and dated and had a similar portrait on the reverse. The provenance of this drawing, like most of the German Expressionist works at The Chicago Art Institute, was the D. Thomas Bergen Collection. When the Bergen collection was auctioned in 1980, some of



the works were purchased by friends of the Chicago Institute who donated them to the museum. This work by Meidner, was being offered for sale at \$7,500.00 (Seven Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars). However, Mr. Carini pointed out that the paper was extremely thin and delicate. This prohibited it from being a desirable purchase for the museum.

#### INTERVIEWS - COLLECTORS

To a large degree, the number and intensity of interest of the collectors of a particular type of art directly affects the strength of the market for that art. It controls the number and quality of the works that may be released to or withheld from the marketplace. In the case of an artist, such as Ludwig Meidner, whose work is primarily held in private collections, it is the collectors who are responsible for the inaccessibility of the art for public display or purchase. Thus, I consider it imperative that I include the collectors with whom I met in this section on the financial analysis of German Expressionism.

There are few collectors of German Expressionism in the United States, and still fewer collectors of the work of Ludwig Meidner. However, single examples of Meidner's work can be found in a

number of American Museums, such as the St. Louis Art Museum, The Chicago Art Institute, The Memorial Gallery in Rochester, New York and others. He was not even mentioned in MOMA's 1931 show, "Modern German Painting and Sculpture," or in the 1957 exhibit, "German Art in the Twentieth Century." The first major exhibit in the United States to include Meidner's work was a 1972 show at Notre Dame University. This was followed, in 1976, with a showing of the Marvin and Janet Fishman Collection at The Milwaukee Art Center. I. Michael Danoff wrote the following review:

The convulsive brushwork and movement of line, the intense and often clashing colors, and the troubled, sometimes hysterical vision in his apocalyptic landscapes and self-portraits all make the accomplishment of Ludwig Meidner between 1912 and 1915 unsurpassed as a statement of German Expressionism. (Danoff, p.5)

Other exhibits of work by Meidner have taken place at The University of Wisconsin, The Los Angeles County Museum and in Tel Aviv, Israel. A 1987 exhibit had been planned for Berlin, London and the United States. Unfortunately, the plans were cancelled when the major curator for the show was unable to participate.

The most comprehensive showing of Meidner's work was at the University of Michigan Museum of Art in 1978. This exhibit displayed the drawings and prints

that belonged to D. Thomas Bergen and the paintings belonging to Marvin and Janet Fishman. These two outstanding collections have subsequently been partially merged, forming a spectacular conglomerate of works by this artist.

Marvin and Janet Fishman were named among the "Top 100 Collectors in America" in the March, 1989 issue of Art and Antiques Magazine. The article states that some scholars consider the Fishman collection to be the "foremost private collection in Germany or outside." Part of this collection is scheduled to tour Germany and America in 1990-1991. In describing "his pictures of suffering and violence," Mr. Fishman declared, "It's tough stuff. This isn't for the usual collector. Most people would prefer a Monet....But for me there is no substitute." (Fishman quoted in Art and Antiques, March, 1989) In referring to his exceptional assembly of Ludwig Meidner's work, Mr. Fishman confessed, "We made him known." Indeed, the Fishmans have an exceedingly comprehensive collection of Ludwig Meidner's work. It is exceptional in both quality and quantity.

I was privileged to have Mr. Fishman personally escort me through his collection and discuss the works with me. Marvin and Janet Fishman began their

enterprise by collecting the art of local Wisconsin artists. They then turned their attention to late nineteenth century and early twentieth century French painters, Miro, Monet, Calder etc. About fifteen years ago, they became fascinated with German Expressionism, and began to accumulate this art. In 1980, when the D. Thomas Bergen prints and drawings by Meidner were put on the auction block at Christies in London, the Fishmans purchased many of these works.

The Fishman collection includes examples from various phases of Meidner's career, ranging from his early art to works from the 1920s. The latter are realistic, soft depictions, lacking in the vigor of movement and robust use of color that is evident in his earlier pieces. There are many prints, drawings, and major paintings from Meidner's "best period," including among the oil paintings an exciting apocalyptic scene and an exceptional self portrait.

Mr. and Mrs. Fishman have exhibited their collection at museums and universities throughout the country. Mr. Fishman commented that although Meidner's art is available on the German market, the prices for German Expressionist artists have increased to a degree that they are becoming prohibitive.

It is interesting to note that most of the collectors of German Expressionism initially acquired French art, and then sought the German. This was substantiated in an interview with Mrs. Nathan Smook. Nathan and Marion Smook have traveled widely and have been art collectors for approximately twenty-five years. They possess a varied collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century art. The collection is strongest in French and German art, including work by Derain and other Fauves. The German Expressionists are represented by works of Nolde, Heckel, Jawlensky, Kollwitz, Marc and others.

Mrs. Smook informed me that they too had inaugurated their collection with the French artists. They began to procure German art when they felt the need for works with greater strength and vitality. Having acquired German Expressionist art, they found that they felt comfortable living with these works, and enjoyed the greater stimulation that Expressionist art afforded.

One of the primary collectors of German Expressionism in the United States is the Beverly Hills attorney, Robert Gore Rifkind. Howard Junker, in an article for Connoisseur Magazine (October, 1981) wrote,

"In the past decade he has accumulated about 60% of the material in his specialty." (Junker, p.112) The Rifkind collection includes, in addition to sculpture, paintings and periodicals, approximately 6,000 prints and 3,500 volumes written on the subject, German Expressionism.

Utilizing this wealth of research material Mr. Rifkind has established a study center for German Expressionism at The Los Angeles County Museum. The facilities are made available only to serious students of German Expressionism, and may become accessible upon formal application to the center. Although I was not able to personally interview Robert Rifkind, I was privileged to have these facilities at my disposal for several weeks during the course of this study, and to have some pertinent discussions with Susan Trauger, the center's librarian.

In addition to founding the center, Mr. Rifkind has established three grants for scholars in residence and five travel grants for the study of German Expressionism. By 1981, eight exhibitions of German Expressionist art had drawn their material primarily from the Rifkind collection.

Rifkind, also, had originally collected French art. After determining that his real interest was in German art he pursued his enterprise with renewed fortitude. He stated:

I started at least a decade, maybe a decade and a half, too late. I wasted ten years buying French prints. It became apparent to me that the only way I could do what I wanted to do was with a tremendous amount of energy and as fast as I could. Otherwise the material was gone. (quoted by Junker, p.113)

O.P. Reed, a Los Angeles art dealer became Rifkind's personal curator. Over a period of six years, the two men traveled to Europe ten times to gain greater understanding of Expressionism and to purchase works for the collection. Mr. Rifkind stated that he enjoys the contrast of this brutal anguished art to his well ordered law practice. In an address to the Annual College Art Association, Rifkind asserted that a movement should not be judged by its major artists alone, but by the amalgamation of both its major and minor contributors.

In keeping with this philosophy, Rifkind has included in his collected materials information on lesser known and second generation artists of the Expressionist movement. The study center provided me with an abundance of material, both primary sources and secondary, on Ludwig Meidner. Documents that I have

not seen reproduced elsewhere and which contained information not published in any other source that I have encountered were available at the Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionism.

INTERVIEWS - GALLERY PERSONNEL

At the inception of this project, Alice Adam, a private art dealer in Chicago, generously assisted me in attaining a direction for this study and provided me with fundamental insights into German Expressionist art. Ms. Adam enjoys an excellent reputation for her expertise on German Expressionism. She imparted pertinent information about the subject, and confirmed that there had been a strong expansion in the market for this art since the late 1970s.

In November of 1985, I visited a number of galleries in New York City, and interviewed well-informed personnel at galleries that are known to specialize in the sale of German Expressionist art.

Roland Augustine, the director of Gallerie Bellman corroborated that the market for German Expressionism had been exceedingly good during the past five years, and was continuing to rise. He assured me that fine examples of this work were achieving high prices, but



cited that a peculiar element in the market for German art was the fact that The "New German Expressionist" works were commanding prices equal to those of the original German Expressionists. Mr. Augustine gave as examples prices for works currently in the gallery, such as a hand-tinted Nolde lithograph for sale at \$55,000.00 (Fifty-Five Thousand Dollars), a very fine pencil sketch by Kirchner priced at \$32,000.00 (Thirty-Two Thousand Dollars) and a pencil drawing by Beckmann for which the gallery was asking \$29,000.00 (Twenty-Nine Thousand Dollars).

The second gallery interview was held with Dorothea Carus, director of The Carus Gallery on Madison Avenue. Ms. Carus has specialized in German Expressionist art for approximately fifteen years. She related that at the present time there was a great "fad" for German Expressionism, and that people who had never heard of Heckel or Kirchner five years ago were willing to pay relatively high prices for their work. Nonetheless, Ms. Carus disclosed that the prices for German art were still not as high as prices for French art. While German Expressionism was selling in the thousands, mediocre French Impressionism was selling in the millions. She contended that the segment of the public that follows fads will eventually tire of German

Expressionism, and seek to acquire whatever mode of artistic expression next becomes fashionable.

She pointed out that among the serious collectors of German Expressionism, the trend had been to initially begin collecting French art, and then move on to German because "The appreciation of German Expressionism, requires a considerable amount of maturity." She too noted that the "market development for this art really began four or five years ago."

Since so much German Expressionist art was destroyed in the wars, the available works are very scarce. Frequently, there is only a single image of a particular print in existence. As a result the price for the surviving image will be quite high, even if the print is not in mint condition.

If indeed the strong demand for German Expressionism is merely a fad, the prospects for the long term market are questionable, making these works poor candidates for an extensive investment if they are being purchased for monetary gain. However, for the connoisseur who has the intellect and knowledge to appreciate these creative endeavors for their aesthetic merit, Ms. Carus alleged that their ownership is at all

times a rewarding venture.

Hildegard Bachert of Gallerie St. Etienne is respected as an authority on German Expressionism. I met with Ms. Bachert in 1985, and again in 1987. She has been dealing with German Expressionist art for the past forty years, and is extremely knowledgeable about the characteristics, the practitioners and the markets for this art. In the 1940s, Ms. Bachert said she could sell a Klee or a Kokoschka but no one would buy a Schiele, a Meidner or a less celebrated Expressionist.

By the 1950s, according to Ms. Bachert, people were no longer seeking "pretty" pictures, but were communicating a need for truth in art. By 1960, there was actually a backlash against ultra-realism and pleasant images. The young people of the 1960s wanted no pretense, no cover up, an attitude that became reflected into the values of society as a whole.

In the 1980s, a change in attitude toward German art caused market prices to rise, narrowing the gap between prices paid for German and French art. German art, however, still remained less expensive. The only possible exception, Ms. Bachert maintained, had been prices achieved by Kathe Kollwitz, whose work had never

experienced a problem in gaining acceptance.

A particular sale can establish a new price in either the wholesale or retail art market. Ms. Bachert very candidly discussed market manipulation among dealers. As a group, she said, dealers can boost the prices of particular artists or types of art. She contended that at times there has been collusion among dealers, with bids on particular works being withheld in exchange for the withholding of bids on other works. The public and the government, having been made aware by recent newspapers and magazine articles, have been disclosing such practices, and prohibitions are being imposed.

The appreciation for Expressionism in the 1980s Ms. Bachert attributed to several factors: people had begun to travel more; the strong dollar made prices reasonable; an international closeness had developed, allowing the public to become more knowledgeable and to see artists that had not formerly enjoyed world wide notoriety. The work of an artist such as Ludwig Meidner, who was little known outside of Europe, could be seen and gain respect. Although his work that was executed after his return to Germany from England in 1945 had changed considerably from that of his early

years, his excellent draughtsmanship remained apparent in all phases of his career. His art was now available for scrutiny and appreciation by a wide audience.

An example of the strong market that had developed for Expressionism by 1985 was a large ink drawing, "Prophet Portrait," by Meidner which the gallery had for sale at \$16,000.00 (Sixteen Thousand Dollars). Ms. Bachert also referred to the sale of a Nolde water color at Sothebys for \$693,000.00 (Six Hundred and Ninety-Three Thousand Dollars), and cited that \$85,000.00 (Eighty-Five Thousand Dollars) to \$200,000.00 (Two Hundred Thousand Dollars) was common for Schiele water colors, while his oil paintings were selling at Four to Five Million Dollars.

This interview concluded with a general discussion of the art market, and how German Expressionism fit into this broad scheme. Economic conditions have always been a market factor. Many patrons sought German art in order to avoid the exorbitant prices being demanded for French art. International purchasing was stimulated by records becoming more reliable, and by auction and dealer's values being updated and becoming based upon actual sales. Works that were highly prized in Germany were sometimes

difficult to sell in the United States where the artist was not widely known. Similarly, particular works were difficult to obtain outside of Germany. Prices often reflect where the object was acquired, and many dealers of German Expressionist art traveled to Germany in the hopes of purchasing lesser known works at bargain prices.

Museums have acquired German Expressionist art for their collections primarily through donations by individuals or galleries. Frequently galleries have contributed specific pieces in order to stimulate interest in a particular period or a certain artist. Galleries have also, at times, sold art works to a museum at a very low cost as a means of arousing public awareness. It is interesting to note the continuing number of museum and gallery exhibitions of German art, despite the influx of numerous other modes of expression in contemporary culture.

When I last spoke with Hildegard Bachert, in 1987, she assured me that the market for German Expressionism retained strength, although it appeared to have reached a plateau after the steep ascent during the 1980s. The prices were still high and were congruous with the general strength of the art market, and an interest in

German art and culture persisted.

In September, 1986, I had the opportunity to interview the German Historian and art dealer, Rudolph R. Bayer. Mr. Bayer had been engaged by the Kyle Belding Gallery in Denver, Colorado to present a lecture on German Expressionism. During our interview Mr. Bayer discussed Ludwig Meidner, an artist whose work he greatly admires. He explained his reasons for collecting this artist's work, imparting to me insights and his personal reactions to this art.

Ludwig Meidner, stated Mr. Bayer, descends from a nineteenth century background of classicism. His work reveals an underlying softness and sense of humanity, despite its overt dynamism. Mr. Bayer stressed the inaccessibility of work by Ludwig Meidner and its current position on the European market, stating, "For his quality, the few works that come on the market are very inexpensive."

Several times during the course of this study, I encountered references regarding proposed exhibitions of Ludwig Meidner's oeuvre, but no confirmed reports were ever accessible. Mr. Bayer assured me that a show had been planned for 1985. Since much of Meidner's art

was in the hands of private collectors located in East Germany, it was not made available for loan to the exhibition, and the plans were subsequently disbanded.

Mr. Bayer also spoke of a second exhibit that had been planned for either Berlin, Stuttgart or Munich, and then New York in 1988. This is possibly the same show that Marvin Fishman said was cancelled, ostensibly because of the unavailability of one of the curators. It is unfortunate that neither of these plans materialized. Perhaps in 1990/91 the work of this singular artist so representative of a powerful, relatively short lived but influential movement in twentieth century art will be exhibited in Europe and the United States when the Fishman exhibit comes to fruition.

The final interview for this study was with Perry Rathbone, a former director of the St. Louis Art Museum, and presently associated with Sotheby's Auction House. Mr. Rathbone was a guest speaker at The Denver Art Museum in September, 1987. He allotted time for a brief discourse on German Expressionism following the lecture. Perry Rathbone is extremely knowledgeable on the topic, having declared his interest in this art movement early in the twentieth century, and being



largely responsible for the initial acquisition of German Expressionist art by the St Louis Art Museum. It was at Mr. Rathbone's invitation that Max Beckmann came to St. Louis where he taught art and pursued his career as a painter for a number of years.

Mr. Rathbone said that he had acquired his first German Expressionist print in 1940, paying "next to nothing" for it. In 1937, when The Museum of Modern Art held its first German Expressionist exhibition under the auspices of Alfred H. Barr, a Max Beckmann drypoint could be purchased for \$35.00 (Thirty-Five Dollars). A similar print, according to Mr. Rathbone, would bring \$8,000.00 (Eight Thousand) - \$10,000.00 (Ten Thousand Dollars) on today's market.

Rathbone was well acquainted with Kurt Valentin, a former Berlin art dealer. Valentin, who had established a gallery in New York in the 1940s had struggled with the meager market for German art. At that time, a Kirchner woodcut sold for \$10.00 (ten Dollars), and an Otto Mueller painting could be bought for \$100.00 (One Hundred Dollars). The market was dominated by French Impressionism. Mr. Rathbone noted that this is still true, but that German Expressionism, especially Expressionist prints had steadily

appreciated during the past ten years.

"German Expressionism," Mr. Rathbone propounded, "reflects the tensions of modern life. It is an emotional art that deals with the tremendous experiences of civilization, a task for which French art is inadequate." Mr. Rathbone noted that one is seeing more simultaneous Expressionist exhibits than at any time in recent history. He anticipates that in the future we will witness an even greater interest in this art and an expanding market for German Expressionism.

#### MARKET ANALYSIS FOR GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST ART

In this section I will present data on sales during the past decade for art executed by Ludwig Meidner and by six distinguished Die Brücke artists. My intent is to show the percentage of change in the prices achieved by this art from the base year, 1978 to the year 1988. Die Brücke will be represented by Erich Heckel, Ernst Kirchner, Otto Mueller, Emile Nolde, Max Pechstein and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

I obtained data from catalogues produced by auction houses, such as Sotheby's and Christies in New York and London; Hauswedell and Nolte, Hamburg; Gallerie Gerda Bassenge, Berlin; Karl and Faber,

Munich; Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer, Munich and Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne. In addition to surveying the auction results for the years 1978 and 1988, I also examined the sales reports for the intervening years.

I sought sales information from galleries both in Germany and in the United States. I subscribed to the Catalogues from Wolfgang Wittrock, Kunsthandel in Dusseldorf as this gallery is a major source of German Expressionist art. I scrutinized art magazines for reviews, announcements of available catalogues and forthcoming exhibitions.

I also acquired price information at exhibitions and through gallery publications. I obtained reports on the sales of the selected German Expressionist artists from Gordon's Print Price Annual, Mayer's, International Auction Records, Hislop's Art Sales Index and Leonard's Annual Price Index. An attempt was made to obtain as recent information as possible.

Where the figures were quoted in foreign currency, D Marks, Swiss Francs, British pounds etc., these prices were translated into United States dollar values based upon the exchange quoted by United Bank of Denver, Colorado, on October 3, 1988. This date was

used throughout for consistency. Using a single date for all transactional information eliminates the need to calculate the variances for different time periods. The bank informed me that inflation factors are also taken into account when the fixed rate of exchange is established.

The figures presented are utilized to make comparisons, and to report a result based upon the percentage of change within the ten year span being considered. This study was designed to render an overall estimate of the market progression of German Expressionist art during the past decade.

The precise method employed in arriving at conclusions is as follows: The works were divided into two categories.

1. Prints
2. Drawings and Paintings.

The latter were regarded as a single entity since many of the artists combined the two processes, using brush, pen and pencil in a single work, making it difficult to identify the work as a drawing or a painting. Also, some of the German Expressionists did very few paintings in either oil or water color, perhaps, having a single sale in a given year. No average price was

possible in this case. The total of all of the sales prices for a particular artist, within a given year, in each of the above two categories was divided by the number of works that were sold within the category to derive an average price. Average prices were recorded for 1977/78 and 1987/88. The difference between the two figures was determined and divided by the base year (1978) price to obtain a percentage of loss or gain. The results of these calculations are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

TABLE 1.

PRICE CHART IN U.S. DOLLARSPRINTS

ARTISTS	AV. PRICE <u>1978</u>	AV. PRICE <u>1988</u>	\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE
ERICH HECKEL	1,426.00	4,212.17	2,785.52	+195%
ERNST KIRCHNER	3,206.48	14,336.09	11,129.61	+347%
LUDWIG MEIDNER	187.11	360.65	175.54	+94%
OTTO MUELLER	3,205.76	12,476.31	9,270.27	+289%
EMILE NOLDE	3,073.56	6,543.35	3,469.75	+129%
MAX PECHSTEIN	1,713.75	2,774.58	2,060.83	+289%
KARL SCHMIDT-ROTTLUF	1,906.41	3,456.09	1,549.68	+81%

TABLE 2.

PRICE CHART IN U.S. DOLLARSDRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS

ARTISTS	AV. PRICE <u>1978</u>	AV. PRICE <u>1988</u>	\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE
ERICH HECKEL	2,702.42	20,671.00	17,968.58	+665%
ERNST KIRCHNER	2,745.55	42,353.10	39,607.55	+1,443%
LUDWIG MEIDNER	994.13	9,439.78	8,445.65	+850%
OTTO MUELLER	24,001.25	153,521.66	129,520.41	+540%
EMILE NOLDE	11,082.04	144,807.93	133,725.89	+1,206%
MAX PECHSTEIN	1,677.74	54,791.32	53,113.58	+3,166%
KARL SCHMIDT-ROTTLUF	3,987.12	24,660.72	20,673.59	+519%

The sampling of representative artists as shown in Table 1 and Table 2 does not represent sufficient population to permit the random sampling that scientific measures demand. However, calculating the average price for the works of every artist being used in this survey for the years 1978 and 1988, and from that average determining the percentage of gain or loss for each artist is sufficient evidence to prove the thesis that German Expressionist art has gained in monetary value from 1978 to 1988.

The tables disclose that in all cases, there was an increase in dollar value and in percentage. The range for the average price of prints went from \$360.65 in 1978 to \$14,336.09 in 1988. For paintings and drawings the average price went from \$9,439.78 in 1978 to \$153,521.66 in 1988. The percentage of change for prints ranged from 81% in 1978 to 347% in 1988, and for paintings and drawings from 519% in 1978 to 3,166% in 1988.

A close examination discloses that this has been a fluctuating market, with some artists holding a stronger position than others at particular times. As noted, Meidner did not enjoy as great an increase in the sale of prints as the better known print artists of



Die Brücke. The sale price of his drawings and paintings, however, places him directly at the midpoint in the percentage of gain. There were three artists having increases that were greater and three artists that had increases that were less than Meidner's. Meidner did some oil paintings, a media that usually commands a higher price than works on paper, but his major mode of execution was a combination of drawing and painting with black ink, using both pens and brushes, and executed on paper.

TABLE 3

SALES OF MEIDNER'S WORK 1978-1988PRINTS

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>\$ AV. PRICE</u>	<u>SOLD</u>	<u>% CHANGE</u>
1978	187.11	15	NA
1979	160.59	15	17
1980	301.15	18	+47
1981	211.43	25	-30
1982	280.62	49	+32
1983	301.91	29	+8
1984	277.37	45	-8
1985	210.30	31	-24
1986	278.03	40	+32
1987	393.49	56	+42
1988	360.65	50	-8

DRAWINGS & PAINTINGS

1978	994.13	8	NA
1979	7,867.00	8	+700
1980	4,902.00	2	-38
1981	2,814.00	52	-43
1982	1,382.29	7	-51
1983	3,424.31	23	+148
1984	2,758.50	4	-19
1985	2,515.29	7	-9
1986	1,347.50	8	-46
1987	2,492.14	21	+85
1988	9,439.78	9	+279

Table 3 traces the rise and fall of the number of works sold and the average prices achieved by Ludwig Meidner's works from 1978 to 1988. The market for his prints was extremely uneven, and while the overall conclusion of this survey reveals that ultimately the sales of his paintings and drawings showed a 279% increase, the pattern of sales displayed considerable fluctuation. Note the number of sales recorded in 1981. These represent the auction of the large collection of Meidner's work that had been owned by D. Thomas Bergen. 52 sales of paintings and drawings are recorded, but the percentage of change in the average price is reduced 43% from that of the prior year. This demonstrates the effect upon prices when a large number of an artists works is offered for sale simultaneously, a situation known as "blockage."

I attempted to trace the sales of some individual works by Ludwig Meidner for the period, 1978 to 1988. This proved to be exceedingly difficult, because few Meidner works had appeared on the market. They are held in private collections and in museums. Private sales by individuals, of course, are not recorded, and figures for such transactions are not accessible. There was the large sale of the D. Thomas Bergen collection that was auctioned by Christies, London in

1980. Most of those works became the property of a private collector, and subsequently have not appeared upon the market again.

After examining the data for all recorded sales for each year from 1979 to 1988, I was able to trace multiple sales for five works, although in most cases there were no more than two sales for the work during the period being considered. Using 1988 dollars, I have calculated both the dollar amount and the percentage of increase for each year over the price of the base year (the year within the given time span for this report in which the first sale was recorded). Illustrations were available for only four of the works, and I have included them along with the following data:

PORTRAIT OF JACOB HODDIS

1. December 2, 1980. Sold at auction by Christies, London for L 1,100, the equivalent of \$1,930.

2. Offered for sale in 1984 by Wm. Schab Gallery for \$7,500 (Retail)  
Using raw numbers: 7500-1930 = \$5,570 or 289% more in 1984 than in 1980

If adjusting for the difference from wholesale to retail based upon an assumption of the retail price being twice that of wholesale: 3750-1930 = \$1,820 or 94% more.

UMZUG - signed and dated 1915 (38x46 cm)  
15"x18" - Ink & brush.

1. May 12, 1979 sold at auction by Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne #459 for DM4800 = \$2,652

2. December 6, 1982 sold at auction by Hauswedell & Nolte, Hamburg #992 for DM6500 = \$3,591

3591-2652 = \$939 or 35% more in 1982 than in 1979

3. 1984, offered for sale by Wm. Schab Gallery for \$7,500 (retail)

Using raw numbers 7500-2652 = \$4,848 or 182% more

If adjusting for difference from wholesale to retail based upon an assumption of the retail price being twice that of wholesale: 3750-2652 = \$1,098 or 41% more.

STRASSE IN WILLMERSDORF - signed and dated 1913 (170x140 cm) ca. 64"x56"- Drypoint, ed. of 25.

1. May 19, 1979 sold at auction by Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne #533 for DM800 = \$442.

2. December 1, 1980 sold at auction by Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer, Munich #1086 for DM1300 = \$718

718-442 = \$276 or 62% more.

3. March 4, 1981 sold at auction by Sotheby-Parke-Bernet, N.Y. #294 for \$1,980

4. November 19, 1981 sold at auction by Sotheby-Parke-Bernet, N.Y. #313 for \$1,540

Since the two above sales were in the same year, I averaged the prices = \$1,760 and used this average in computing the increase. 1760-442 = \$1,318 or 298% more.

5. June 4, 1983 sold at auction by Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne #505 for DM850 = \$470

470-442 = \$28 or 6% more than in 1979

6. June 1, 1987 sold at auction by Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer, Munich #751 for DM900 = \$497

497-442 = \$55 or 12% more.

GRAND CAFE SCHOENBERG - signed and dated 1913 (40x47 cm) 16"x19" - ink on paper

1. February 12, 1980 sold at auction by

Christies, London L1900 = \$3,333.

2. September 6, 1984 sold at auction by Hauswedell & Nolte, Hamburg #1111 for DM1800 = \$9,945  
9945-3333 = \$6,612 or 198% more.

STREET SCENE AT NIGHT IN SOUTH BERLIN-  
signed and dated 1913 (44x54 cm) 17 1/4" x 21 1/2" - Brush, pen, black ink and pencil.

1. December 2, 1980 sold at auction by Christies, London #205 for L2400 = \$4,211.

2. July 6, 1985 sold at auction by Hauswedell & Nolte #1050 for DM17,000 = \$9,392  
9392-4211 = \$5,181 or 123% more.

Unfortunately, there were not enough works by Ludwig Meidner that had been sold more than once in the past decade to provide sufficient evidence upon which to base any relevant conclusions. At best this examination of what works appeared on the market and what their prices were can serve as a microcosm of the broader market for his art during this time frame. When compared with Table 3 showing a broad survey of the sales of all of his prints and all of his paintings and drawings I can conclude that, indeed there was an overall rise in price, although much smaller in this selected group than when considering his works as a whole.

It is interesting to observe that both of these surveys attest to the fact that although the market for Meidner's work has enjoyed an overall escalation, it has

been an exceedingly erratic market. 1980/81 was a prime year for sales, and Strasse in Wilmersdorf sold for extremely high prices at the two 1981 sales. The prices realized for these prints were, however, considerably reduced when they were sold in 1983 and 1987 although in both cases they were above the 1979 price.



[269]

269 Sold, 1980 (Auction) L. 1100=\$1,950  
 Sold, 1984 (Retail) \$7,500 by  
 Ludwig Meidner William Schab Gallery, New York City

Bildnis Jacob van Hoddis

signed, inscribed with title and dated 3 Januar 1914, pen, black ink and pencil  
 17½ × 13½ in. (44.5 × 40cm.)

Hans Davidson (pseudonym Jacob van Hoddis) published his influential expressionist poem 'Weltende' in *Der Demokrat* in 1911

EXHIBITED:

Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Art, *Drawings and Watercolors from Minnesota Private Collectors*, May-June, 1971, no. 46  
 Notre Dame, University Art Gallery, *The Graphic Art of Ludwig Meidner*, Nov.-Dec. 1972, no. 10

Fig. 40. rpt. in A Collection of German Expressionist Drawings, (London: Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd., 1980)



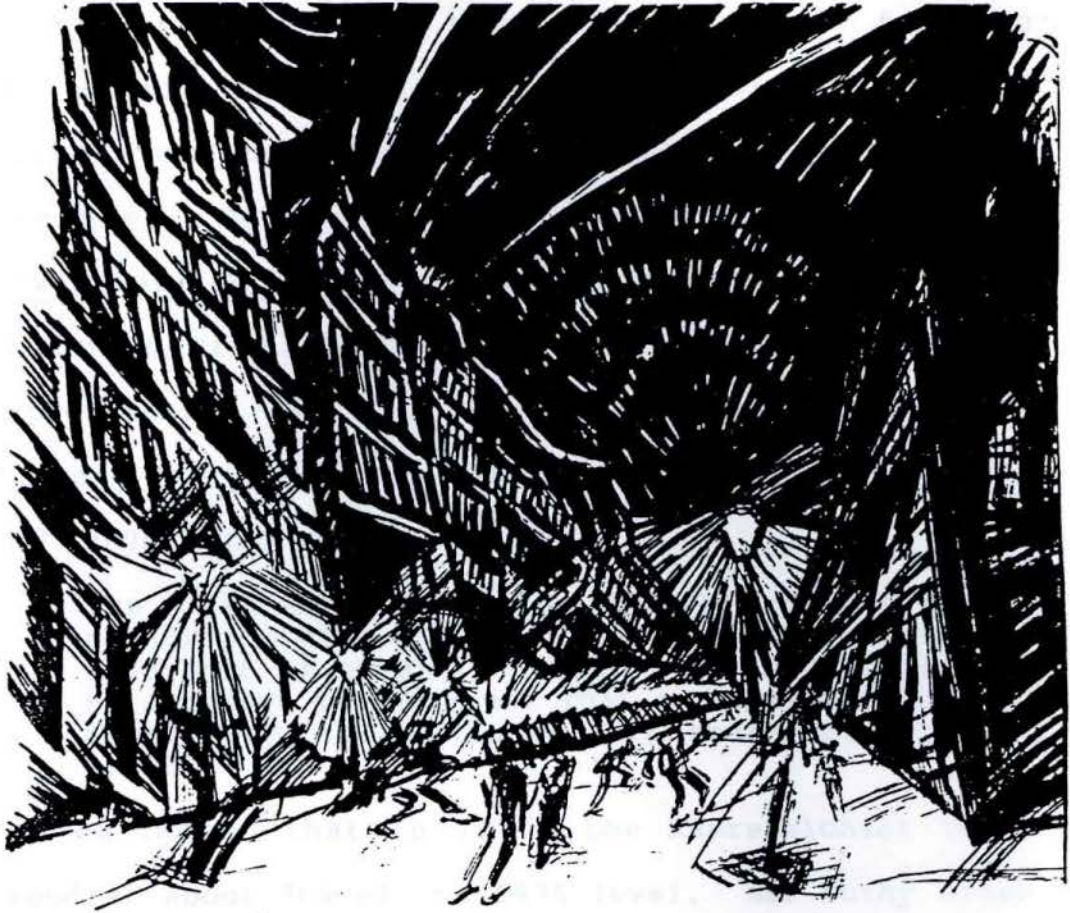


Fig. 41. "Umzuq" - signed and dated 1915. Sale 1984-  
\$7500 rpt. by William H. Schab Gallery, N.Y.



69 Grand-Café-Schöneberg, 1913

Fig. 42. rpt. in Thomas Grochowiak, Ludwig Meidner  
(Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1966)



[205]

Sold, 1980, L. 2400 = \$ 4,211 in 1988 Dollars

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**Ludwig Meidner**

Nächliche Strasse in Berlin-Sud

signed and dated Berlin 1913, brush, pen, black ink and pencil  
 17½ × 21½ in. (44 × 54.6cm.)

**PROVENANCE:**

Anon. sale, Karl und Faber, Munich, 14-16 Oct. 1964, lot 1593

**EXHIBITED:**

Notre Dame, University Art Gallery, *The Graphic Work of Ludwig Meidner*,  
 Nov.-Dec. 1972, no. 8

Fig. 43. rpt. in A Collection of German Expressionist Drawings, (London:Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd.1980) 10

The 1980s have been a prime time for the appreciation and sales of German Expressionist art, but markets are based upon human fickleness and popular demands. Robin Duthy, editor of The Alternative Investment Report, wrote in the May, 1984 edition of Connoisseur Magazine that the market for German Expressionism was still primarily in German speaking Europe, but had been expanding internationally since the 1960s. She wrote:

The common denominator of all of their painting styles was a ruthless confrontation with both inner and outer reality, and it is this aspect in their art that is particularly admired by those who collect today. Duthy, p.142)

She estimated that in 1984, the Expressionist index stood at about 80% of its 1975 level. Ms. Duthy cites figures for several specific artists which she considered most relevant in the 1984 market. I call your attention to the average 1988 prices which I have included for comparison:

Emile Nolde - record price \$300,000; usual range \$10,000 to \$50,000 (Average 1988 price = \$144,807); Ms. Duthy maintained that there was great demand for all of his periods and subjects since he was a very consistent artist. His work was re-evaluated in the 1980s reflecting a 90% increase from 1975.

Erich Heckel - record price \$260,000; usual range \$3,000 to \$15,000 (Average 1988 price = \$20,671) Heckel's work had shown an increase of 120% since 1975 with all of his important work having been done before 1914.

Ernst Kirchner - Record price \$185,000; usual range \$2,000 to \$15,000 (Average 1988 price = \$43,353) Prices increased 110% from 1975 to 1984. 1908-1916 was his best period, but dating his work is difficult because he is known to have altered the dates.

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff - Record price \$68,000; usual range \$3,000 to \$15,000 (Average 1988 price \$24,661) The 150% rise from 1975 was the steepest for a German Expressionist artist. His best period was 1908-1914, although work done in the 1940s also sold well.

Max Pechstein - Record price \$40,000; usual range \$1,500 to \$10,000 (Average 1988 price = \$54,791). Prices had only risen 30% from 1975 to 1984. Ms. Duthy refers to him as a very uneven artist.

The Print Collector's Newsletter, in its review of the European summer print sales for 1984, assessed the 1984 art market. I believe this is of interest since it represents the mid point in the time span that I have chosen for this study. The newsletter refers to the Hauswedell & Nolte June 8th and 9th sale, which highlighted Expressionist art. Heckel's Franzistehend sold for \$59,314, and Nolde's Die Heiligen Drei Konige sold for \$28,175. R.S. Johnson, the Chicago art dealer, is quoted as stating that it was difficult for dealers to buy as the German public were the chief purchasers, placing great confidence on the estimates, which he felt were quite high. Mr. Johnson assessed the situation as being the result of the German's desire to unload their Deutchmarks.

Print Collector's Newsletter review points out that the primary difference between American and German auctions in the mid 1980s was based upon the exchange rate:

European collectors seem to be looking for shelters against further devaluation of their currencies in the world money market. But, resoundingly, as in the United States, the pattern of the rare prints becoming rarer and achieving phenomenal priced continues. (Print Collector's Newsletter, Vol. XV, #4, Sept.-Oct., 1984, p. 21)

This situation has, indeed, continued for a number of reasons. Works on paper are inherently fragile. The German Expressionist printmakers did not produce large editions. Many of the finest works of art were subject to the devastation of two world wars. Thus, it is that today it is not unusual for single images of a print to be the only one in existence. Such rarity surely escalates the value.

The mobility of works on paper made this art extremely attractive to both European and American buyers. The strength of the dollar in the mid 1980s gave Americans buying abroad a tremendous monetary advantage, despite the advancing prices that prints, drawings and water colors were commanding.

Peter Michell, the London art dealer, asserted in the November, 1984 issue of Art and Auction that the

art market, in general, was strong and noted the enormity of the prices and the plight of the novice collector. He wrote:

Time feels short. Instead of starting with an apprenticeship in the form of a little drawing today, you really have to plunge in at quite a high level. (Michell, p.92)

Michell was convinced that the strength of the market could not be attributed solely to the power of the dollar, but evolved from a widespread desire to collect. He quite obviously was correct in his assertion, since the art market has continued to gain strength throughout the monetary fluctuations of the 1980s.

Michell maintained that the market of the 1980s was no longer restricted to an elite few, and included a population with the desire to acquire works of art for the sake of owning them. The following expresses his viewpoint:

People say the Americans are buying because of the strong dollar. They are going to buy anyway. The strong dollar is just another reason to do so. If you start collecting, it is difficult to give up--like a drug--and you are unlikely to give it up if the currency fluctuates. The people who made the most money did so accidentally. It never entered their minds to expect to make money. (Michell, p.92)

Marvin Fishman reaffirmed this when he was asked about collecting by Art and Antiques Magazine. "We can't

stop," he said, "We'd like to, but we can't. It's like nicotine."

In his article, Mr. Michell discusses the fact that many recent collectors may not have large sums of money to spend. He is convinced that collectors, particularly those from North America, have expanded their horizons during the 1980s. They are better informed, traveling more and becoming more exposed to art. He maintains that it is only a matter of time before the lesser known artists will become universally known and their works, consequently, will be in demand. Collectors, states Mr. Michell, should not ignore excellent works by lesser known artists of a period. He wrote, "I very much hold to the principle of a better picture by a smaller name than a mediocre picture by a large name." (Michell, p. 90)

Meidner's work would fit into this category of excellent work by a lesser known artist. In 1977, D. Thomas Bergen, the collector, contended that the enthusiasm for Meidner, which was held by a small group of collectors, would be justified in time.

The market for German Expressionism has continued to expand throughout the 1980s with some works reaching



record prices in 1987 and 1988. At Christies London sale on July 2, 1987, Kirchner's "Russisches Tanzerpaar" sold for L 105,000 (\$184,211), a record price for any German Expressionist print. Exceptionally strong sales were noted at several West German auctions in late spring and summer, 1988. John Dornberg reported on these sales in his article, "Revenge of the Degenerates," in the October issue of Art News. He stated, "The clear favorites in Cologne, Munich, Hamburg and Berlin were classical modern artists, particularly the German Expressionists....." (Dornberg, p.28)

Henrik Hanstein recounted that the 981 lots that Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne offered for sale on May 27 and 28, 1988 were "more or less sold out, bringing \$4.1 million" (quoted by Dornberg, 1988, p.28). A 1909 Pechstein oil painting, "Lagoon," estimated at \$217,000\* actually sold for \$429,000\*. \$100,000\* was paid for a set of Karl Schmidt Rottluff's "Ten Woodcuts." The comparative highest price increments over estimates were achieved by three post cards done by members of Die Brücke. A 1911 card executed by Kirchner and Heckel rose from \$5,000\* to \$28,000\*. A 1910 postcard by Schmidt Rottluff estimated to sell for \$3,530\* sold for \$13,530\* and a post card with a

theatre sketch signed by both Heckel and Kirchner sold for \$15,295\*.

(\* These prices could not be translated into dollars as of October 3, 1988, the base date upon which other calculations have been made since prices in the original currency were not quoted.)

Lesser known German Expressionists, such as Ludwig Meidner, have also gained esteem. He is currently appreciated for his artistic merit, ideology and marketability. Only a few years ago his name recognition was extremely limited, and his position on the art market was equally restricted. A report in Sotheby's Preview Magazine, February/March 1988 disclosed that in the Munich sale of art from the Dr. Ernst Rathenau collection a number of the works achieved double their estimate. They cite as an example of the strength of twentieth century German portraiture a "disturbing self portrait," (Sotheby's Magazine, February/March, 1988) by Ludwig Meidner which sold for \$49,718.00. This figure represented a record for the artist.

Strong prices are still being reported for German Expressionism. The following are the most recent auction sale prices as reported by Print Collectors

Newsletter, November/December, 1988; January/February, 1989 and March/April, 1989. Unless otherwise noted, the figures in parentheses represent the dollar value as of October 3, 1988 in order to keep all data consistent.

Erich Heckel - Average price for 1988 prints = \$4,212

1. "Franzi" signed and dated 1910 - litho. - sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #486 on June 15, 1988 = SF 40,500 (\$25,155)

2. "Kinder auf der Bank" signed and dated 1910 - woodcut on vellum (slightly damaged) - sold by Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne #373 on May 27, 1988 = DM 26,000 (\$14,365)

3. "Liegendes Kind" signed and dated 1910 - drypoint and burnishing (some foxing) - sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #480 on June 15, 1988 = SF 21,500 (\$13,354)

4. "Ruhende" signed and dated 1911 - litho. painted in grey, black & light brown (some staining) - sold by Christies, N.Y. #57 on November 1, 1988 = \$12,000 (Dollar value on day of sale)

5. "Sitzende am Wasser" signed and dated 1913 - Hand colored woodcut (slight stain) - sold by Sothebys, London #337 on December 1, 1988 = L 14,000 (\$24,561)

6. "Vor dem Spiegel" 1911 signed - hand colored woodcut on soft wove paper (some minor water stains) auction by Sothebys, London #376 on December 1, 1988 = L 11,500 (\$20,175)

ERNST KIRCHNER - Average price for 1988 prints = \$14,336

1. "Akt mit schwarzem Hut" 1912 - signed-woodcut on handmade paper with watermark (rare 1st state single split in margin & slight dust traces) - sold by Galerie

Kornfeld, Bern #17 on June 17, 1988 = SF 410,000 (\$254,658)

2. "Frauen am Potsdamer Platz" 1914 - woodcut on thin wove paper (slight repair in ink) - sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #30 on June 17, 1988 = SF 860,000 (\$534,161)

3. "Freihafen Frankfurt a. M.," Frankfurter Westhafen, 1916 - color litho. (hand painted, minor defects) - sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #21 on June 17, 1988 = DM 230,000 (\$127,072)

4. "Selbstbildnis als Kranker, Kopf des Kranken," 1917/18 - color monoprint from woodblock on white wove paper (slightly visible fox marks cleaned in 1971) Sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #22 on June 17, 1988 = SF 860,000 (\$534,161)

5. "Selbstbildnis als Kranker, Kopf des Kranken," 1917/18 - (woodcut hand painted in black on white wove paper, knife marks on verso) - Sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #23 on June 17, 1988 = SF 360,000 (\$223,602)

6. "Stadtbahnbogengen in Berlin" 1915 - color litho. (hand painted on thick white wove paper, slight staining) - Sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #20 on June 17, 1988 = SF 400,000 (\$248,447)

7. "Badende Frauen zwischen weissen Steinen" 1912, signed - painted woodcut on Japan paper (a few soft creases, ink in margins) Sold by Christies, N.Y. #72 on November 1, 1988 = \$100,000 (Dollar value on day of sale)

Otto Mueller - Average price for 1988 prints  
= \$12,476

1. "Am Ufer sitzendes Madchen [sitzsendes Madchen in Landschaft], 1922-26 - signed-hand colored litho. on Japan paper with watermark (minor defects) - sold by Christies, N.Y. #116 on November 1, 1988 = \$55,000 (Dollar value on day of sale)

Emile Nolde - Average price for 1988 prints =  
\$6,543

1. "Kniendes Madchen", 1907 - signed-Drypoint and tone etch. on proof paper (only 2 known impressions) - sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #801 on June 15, 1988 = SF 60,000 (\$37,267)

2. "Tingel-Tangel II, 1907-1915 - signed-color litho. on tan wove paper (light mat staining) - Sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #807 on June 15, 1988 = SF 32,000 (\$19,875)

3. "Dusterer Mannerkopf," signed and dated "07" - painted litho. on wove paper (3rd final state, 2 pinholes, crease at corner, tape abrasions on verso) - sold by Christies, N.Y. = \$40,000 (Dollar value on day of sale)

Max Pechstein - Average price for 1988 prints = \$2,775

1. "Komen und Gehen," 1905 - colored woodcut on wove paper (very rare, flawless impression) - sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #835 on June 15, 1988 = SF 3,200 (\$1,988)

2. "Sitzendes junges Madchen," 1908 - colored woodcut (probably a proof) - sold by Galerie Kornfeld, Bern #86 on June 17, 1988 = SF 19,500 (\$12,112)

3. "Badende I," signed and dated 1911-painted woodcut on smooth wove paper (a few short tears and light surface dirt) - sold by Christies, N.Y. #140 on November 1, 1988 = \$75,000 (Dollar value on day of sale)

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff - Average price for 1988 prints = \$3,456

1. "Holzschnitte," 1919 - 11 large format hand painted woodcuts and index on laid paper (complete series, each sheet signed, slight mat staining and isolated stains on one sheet) - sold by Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne #860 on May 27, 1988 = DM 175,000 (\$96,685)

2. "Segler auf der Elbe II," signed and dated 1911 = woodcut on wove paper (rare print, a

few soft creases, faint stains, short tears)  
sold by Christies, N.Y. #175 = \$18,000

These figures represent prices for sales that took place after mid 1988. Most of the 1988 price guide catalogues actually quote prices for the year 1987 and early 1988, since "lead time" is needed for publication. A comparison of the print prices in the above listing with the average prices for the preceding year clearly implicates that there has been a robust market for German Expressionist prints during the past six months. In the next section of this study, I shall review and analyze the implications of the data that I have presented.

### THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Having examined German Expressionist works of art, scrutinized a multitude of literary sources, visited museums, galleries and private collectors, I conclude that the thesis upon which this paper is predicated is correct. There has definitely been an increase in value for German Expressionism during the past decade.

This appreciation in value is apparent both in a non-economic and economic sense. Literature on German Expressionism found in the form of books, monographs, magazine articles etc. was, until recent years, extremely rare. Few studies were available. Exhibits almost non-existent. Currently, numerous articles in art journals, scholarly volumes by men such as Lothar Lang, Peter Selz, and Wolf-Dieter Dube and magnificently illustrated coffee table volumes on German Expressionist art are available. All of the above lend credence to a heightened public interest.

During the 1980s, there have been several outstanding exhibitions of German Expressionism. There were four large shows that received wide exposure. In 1983, an exhibit of "New German Expressionism" was presented. The extensive schedule for displaying this show was concomitant with the growing interest in

Expressionist art as a whole. The show traveled to the following locations: The St. Louis Art Museum, P.S.1, Long Island, The Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, the University of Pennsylvania, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, The Newport Harbor Art Museum, California and The Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.

In 1983/84 a very important show of German Expressionist sculpture appeared at the Joseph-Haubrich Kunsthalle Kohn in Germany, The Los Angeles County Museum and The Hirshorn Gallery in Washington, D.C. The splendid Max Beckmann retrospective was seen in 1984 at The St. Louis Art Museum, The Los Angeles County Museum, The Nationalgalerie, Berlin and the Haus der Kunst, Munich. The Los Angeles County Museum featured another large exhibit of German Expressionism from October 9th to December 31, 1988.

In addition to these very large exhibitions, smaller shows have been featured at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, numerous individual commercial art galleries and at galleries on college campuses.

The participants in the discussions noted were persons known to be renowned for their knowledge about



German Expressionism and current art markets. The people selected to be interviewed for this study number among the leading authorities on German Expressionism in the United States. Without exception, museum personnel, gallery personnel and collectors all concurred that the market for German Expressionist art had been upwardly dynamic since the late 1970s, and that a surge in value had continued into the 1980s. The market in the closing years of the 1980s is still a vigorous one.

The second facet of my thesis is that Ludwig Meidner could be used to define and personify the characteristics and market progression of German Expressionism. If one examines the nature of German Expressionist art, its basic tenets in terms of both form and content, and then examines the underlying character and mode of execution of Ludwig Meidner's art, the affinity cannot be ignored.

Meidner, like the German Expressionist movement as a whole, was quite obscure in the art world before the late 1970s. In fact, when I began this study the response to the name Ludwig Meidner was "Ludwig who?" Even among gallery and museum personnel limited knowledge existed. Only one complete biography has

been written. That was the book by Thomas Grochowiak, a volume that has never been translated into English from the original German. Other works eg: brief monographs and a translation of a study by Hans Tramer comprised all of the written materials available about this artist.

Prior to the 1980s, one rarely saw works by Meidner exhibited at museums. Presently he is represented with either a painting or a print in many museum collections of German Expressionist art. American galleries, which specialize in German Expressionism, at times have a Meidner work for sale. German galleries more frequently offer his art. My investigation pointed to only two American collectors that could lend significant insight on this artist - Marvin Fishman and Robert Gore Rifkind.

His recorded sales, however, reveal a sizable percentage of increase, analogous to the expansion of the German Expressionist market as a whole. Sotheby's Preview Magazine, February/March, 1988 reported that a print by Ludwig Meidner had achieved a price of \$49,718. They cited this sale as an example of the strength of twentieth Century German portraiture on the current art market. This report attests to the fact

that Meidner is at last gaining recognition. It also verifies that his market could be considered a microcosm of the current German Expressionist market.

My thesis is based upon a definition of German Expressionism as an untutored, unwilled form of artistic articulation. Subjectivity was at the core of Expressionistic art. It was an art that was founded upon an escape from the reality that its practitioners could not tolerate.

Elements of mysticism and dehumanization entered their work as they struggled with the conflict between the reality that existed and their vision of an ideal society. Their only escape lay in turning inward toward an internal world of feelings and human instincts. Their subject matter became raw human emotion, and through this means the Expressionists revealed their most sacred convictions and feelings about the world.

The summary of my research analysis will substantiate that my thesis is correct. German Expressionist art, as defined above, has enjoyed a steady progression throughout the 1980s both in public recognition and in market value.

RESEARCH METHODSLITERATURE PREPARATION

In researching this project I employed a number of different methods to garner as complete information on the subject as possible. I relied heavily upon literary sources, visual perception and personal interviews. The survey began with a broad scope in order to gather data and formulate concepts about the German Expressionist movement in general. As the study progressed, it became focused upon the ultimate topic of this treatise, the market progression of German Expressionism using Ludwig Meidner as an example that the past decade has witnessed an expansion of both aesthetic and market interest in German Expressionist art.

Before directly investigating the German Expressionist movement, I did some extensive reading on the social, political and economic history of Germany during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I wrote several small essays on these topics, and when I felt comfortable with my comprehension of the historical events that gave birth to German Expressionism, I turned my attention to some of the philosophers of the period and to the art

movements that were the predecessors of German Expressionist art.

### INTERVIEWS

Personal interviews were a vital source of information, and I was privileged to talk with outstanding authorities on German Expressionism. I queried each individual, asking a similar series of questions regarding the characteristics of the art, the practitioners and the underlying ideology. I also inquired about collectors, how the work came from Germany to the United States, and what the market history had been.

Simultaneously, I began to read about German Expressionism, visit museums and galleries and to interview experts in the field. I went to a number of museums that were reputed to have outstanding works in this period. In addition to looking at the collections that were open to the public, I was afforded the opportunity to see works that were in storage areas. I was permitted to closely examine both oil paintings and works on paper and to peruse curatorial files. Most of the curators were exceedingly generous with their time, and spoke with me at some length regarding this project.

In addition to providing me with facts about German Expressionism, the museum's holdings and the current market from a curator's viewpoint, the people with whom I spoke frequently suggested bibliography and other sources of information. I was given the names of collectors and specific galleries to visit. I began to accumulate slides and books.

The following is a list of museums visited and curators with whom I spoke: Albright-Knox Museum, Buffalo, N.Y. (Curator - Sheryl Brutvan); Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University (Curator - Emmy Dana); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Curator - Elizabeth Prelinger); Chicago Art Institute (Curator - Anselmo Carini); The Cleveland Museum of Art (Curators - Edward Henning and Jane Glaubinger); Los Angeles County Museum (research at The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionism - Librarian Susan Trauger); Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, N.Y. (telephone interview with Curator Dale Rosenthal who arranged for me to study collection and files); Museum of Modern Art, New York (Curator - Riva Castleman); St. Louis Art Museum (Director - James Burke, Curator-Michael Shapiro)

I visited the collections at other museums, such as The Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Detroit

Institute of Art, The Cincinnati Museum of Art, The Brooklyn Museum of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and several campus galleries. The collections were examined, although I was not able to arrange an interview at each of these institutions.

During the process of gathering information I also went to a number of galleries known to specialize in German Expressionism. The major galleries that deal in these works are located in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. In some cases the interviews were informative, but brief, such as my conversations with Marilyn Pink in Los Angeles, with R.S. Johnson and Eva-Maria Worthington in Chicago and with Allan Frumkin, Richard Feigen, Margo Schab and others in New York.

Extensive interviews with the following: Alice Adam of Chicago, Roland Augustine of (Galerie Bellman) New York, Hildegard Bachert (Galerie St. Etienne) New York and Dorothea Carus of (Carus Gallery) New York yielded a great deal of market information.

I had occasion to hold in-depth interviews with the German art historian, Herbert Bayer, and with the former director of the St. Louis Art Museum and vice president of Sotheby's, Perry Rathbone, both

acknowledged experts on German Expressionism.

In addition to the indispensable help of all of the above people, I was also privileged to view the private collections of Janet and Marvin Fishman and of Nathan and Marion Smook. These collectors were not only gracious enough to personally escort me through their collections, but to discuss the works, their collection experience and goals with me, and reveal insights about the art market from a collectors viewpoint.

Riva Castleman was kind enough to arrange for me to use the study center at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, where both literary material and works on paper were made available for my viewing. The art department at the Boston Public Library and the library at the Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard University both furnished excellent source materials. The staff at The Denver Public Library were helpful in attempting to locate and obtain requested data.

The two weeks that I spent studying at the Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionism in Los Angeles were invaluable in my accomplishing this project. I had the opportunity to examine materials



that I would not have had access to anywhere else. Many of the books and documents are extremely rare. There is a wealth of information on German Expressionism. At the Robert Gore Rifkind Center, more knowledge was accessible about lesser known artists, such as Ludwig Meidner, than any other place at which I did research. Susan Trauger, the librarian, was extremely helpful, bringing me special documents that Mr. Rifkind had in his office and providing me with translations and photocopies of needed materials. There was such a wealth of information at the center that a two week period was an extremely meager time allowance. Only by obtaining photocopies of an enormous amount of material could I begin to take full advantage of this exceptional opportunity.

#### GATHERING FINANCIAL DATA

I analyzed the 1978 and 1988 sales of the works of Ludwig Meidner and of the six major Die Brücke artists; Erich Heckel, Ernst Kirchner, Otto Mueller, Emile Nolde, Max Pechstein and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. Data was obtained from the following auction houses: Sotheby's and Christie's in New York and London; Hauswedell and Nolte, Hamburg; Gallerie Gerda Bassenge, Berlin; Karl and Faber, Munich; Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer, Munich and Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne.

I wrote to both Sotheby's and Christie's requesting any additional information that they might have available on the general art market within the past decade. I also requested any specific data they could furnish on the prices for German Expressionism.

Galleries, both in Germany and in the United States, provided sales information. I subscribed to Catalogues from Wolfgang Wittrock, Kunsthandel in Dusseldorf. I scrutinized art magazines for announcements of available catalogues and forthcoming shows. I attended exhibitions and purchased gallery publications.

In addition, I consulted Gordon's Print Price Annual, Mayer's, International Auction Records, Hislop's Art Sales Index and Leonard's Annual Price Index. for reports on the sales of the German Expressionist artists that I selected for my study. I made every attempt to obtain the most recent information possible.

Where the figures were quoted in D Marks, Swiss Francs, British pounds etc., prices were translated into United States dollars, based upon the exchange quoted by United Bank of Denver, Colorado, on October

3, 1988. This date was used throughout for consistency. The bank informed me that the fixed rate of exchange incorporates the inflation factor.

From these sales figures, I calculated the percentage of change from 1978 to 1988. Tables 1,2 and 3 are based upon the data that I gathered from the price guides and gallery catalogues. Sales data was updated whenever possible.

The method utilized was as follows: The works were divided into two categories - 1. Prints, 2. Drawings and Paintings. The latter were regarded as one entity since many of the artists used brush, pen and pencil in a single work making it is difficult to categorize these works. The total sales for each artist, within a given year were divided by the number of works sold. This yielded the average price. Average prices were recorded for 1977/78 and 1987/88. The difference between the two figures was determined and divided by the base year (1978) price to obtain a percentage of loss or gain.

In addition to calculating the percentage of gain from 1978 to 1988, the percentage of change from year to year within the designated time span was estimated

for the sales of Ludwig Meidner's work. Meidner's fluctuating market, reflects the uneven pattern for German Expressionism as a whole. All of the percentages were calculated and were then organized into the charts appearing in the market analysis section of this study.

I examined all of the recorded sales for Ludwig Meidner's work from 1978 to 1988, and was able to find multiple sales for five works. In some cases, there were only two pieces that had been sold more than once during the period. Taking these five works, I have calculated in 1988 dollars, both the dollar amount and the percentage of increase for each year over the price of the base year (the year within the given time span for this report in which the first sale was recorded). The data appears on pages 139, 140 and 141. Illustrations of four of these works are shown on pages 143, 144, 145 and 146.

The results of this investigation serve as a microcosm of the broader market for Ludwig Meidner's art during this time frame. Comparing these results with Table 3 which discloses a comprehensive survey of the sales of all of his prints and all of his paintings and drawings, I conclude that there was an overall rise

in price, although smaller in this selected group than in his works as a whole. An interesting aspect is that in both cases his market is clearly erratic.

I reviewed the 1984 study done by Robin Duthy, editor of The Alternative Investment Report and a frequent contributor to "The Investor's File" in Connoisseur Magazine. The year 1984 is pertinent since it is approximately midway between the target dates of this report. Ms. Duthy's study concentrates on the market progression from 1975 to 1984, also close to a ten year span. Her findings are as follows:

Emile Nolde -----	90% increase
Erich Heckel -----	120% increase
Ernst Kirchner -----	110% increase
Karl Schmidt-Rottluff -	150% increase
Max Pechstein -----	30% increase

In the September/October issue of The Print Collector's Newsletter, there was a review of the European summer print sales for 1984. The newsletter reported on the June 8th and 9th sale of Expressionist art at Hauswedell & Nolte at which Heckel's Franzistehend sold for \$59,314, and Nolde's Die Heiligen Drei Konige sold for \$28,175. When I analyzed the findings of Ms. Duthy and the report of The Print Collector's Newsletter, it became clear that by 1984, the market for German Expressionism showed considerable strength.

My next task was examining the reasons for the strength of the market at that time, and determining whether the causes gave the market sufficient sustaining power to continue its climb. Peter Mitchell's article dealt with these questions, encompassing considerations of the strength of the dollar, collector's motivations and the position of secondary artists on the market.

I gathered data on the most recent prices that were available for German Expressionist art. Some works reached record prices in 1987 and 1988. At Christies London sale on July 2, 1987, Kirchner's "Russisches Tanzerpaar" sold for L 105,000 (\$184,211), John Dornberg reported on the West German auctions that took place in late spring and summer, 1988. His article, "Revenge of the Degenerates," which appeared in the October issue of Art News stated, that the classical modern artists, particularly the German Expressionists, were clearly the best sellers at the auctions in Cologne, Munich, Hamburg and Berlin.

I scrutinized Henrik Hanstein's report on the May 27th and 28th sale at Kunsthaus Lempertz, Cologne which brought in \$4.1 million. All of the works achieved over their estimates. The actual sale prices were as

follows:

Pechstein "Lagoon," -----	\$429,000*
Karl Schmidt Rottluff 10 Woodcuts--	\$100,000*
Kirchner and Heckel post card-----	\$28,000*
Schmidt Rottluff postcard -----	\$13,530*
Heckel and Kirchner postcard -----	\$15,295*

(\* These prices could not be translated into dollars as of October 3, 1988, the base date upon which other calculations have been made, since prices in the original currency were not quoted.)

In order to ascertain whether strong prices for German Expressionism are still holding, I referred to the most recent auction sale prices reported in Print Collector's Newsletter, November/December, 1988; January/February, 1989 and March/April, 1989. The reported sales are listed on pages 154 - 157. I compared the prices for these prints to the average print prices for each artist in 1988.

I next examined Ludwig Meidner's position in the current market. A report in Sotheby's Preview Magazine, February/March 1988 disclosed that in the Munich sale of art from the Dr. Ernst Rathenau collection a number of the works achieved double their estimate. The sale of a Meidner self portrait for \$49,718 is cited as an example of the strength of twentieth century German portraiture.

Evidence that Meidner is, at last, being accepted

as a vital entity in German Expressionist art is supported in the article by Peter Selz in the April, 1989 issue of Arts Magazine. Mr. Selz reports that one of Meidner's apocalyptic scenes was chosen to represent "War" in the show which ran from October 9th to December 31st, 1988 at The Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This show will travel to the Fort Worth, Texas Museum of Art before going to Germany to the Kunstmuseum Dusseldorf and the Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg, Halle.

#### RESEARCH PROBLEMS

A major handicap that I had in researching German Expressionist art was that most of the material is written in the German language. I was fortunate in that the Robert Gore Rifkind Center provided many translations into English. I had other translations prepared by private individuals who had either lived in Germany or were students of the German language.

There were several specific problems in researching the work of Ludwig Meidner. His work covered a span of sixty years, during which time there were variations in style, technique, media and subject matter, making comparisons that are essential to an estimation of value difficult.



Very few of his works have been sold during the past decade. Many of them were destroyed during Hitler's regime. Most of his art is in the hands of individual collectors or in museums, and rarely appears for sale. His works are particularly scarce on the American market. As noted earlier, it has been difficult to obtain sufficient works for an exhibit because so many of them are held by collectors in East Germany.

Another problem, relevant to Ludwig Meidner, was the dearth of biographical information. Identifying particular pictures was also a challenge. The titles of his works were frequently non-specific. Many were simply called "Self-portrait," "Apocalypse," "Landscape," or "Prophet," with several pieces bearing the identical title having been executed in the same year.

Securing the necessary materials for this study was difficult due to my lack of proximity to a major center for scholarly research. It was, therefore, necessary that I travel to New York, Boston, Cleveland, Los Angeles etc. in order to obtain sufficient information.

A final problem in relation to any study of art markets is the fact that it is really not possible to index art works. Alexandra Peers, discussed this dilemma in an article that appeared in the March 23, 1989 issue of The Wall Street Journal. She wrote about the Sotheby's Art Index, which is reprinted monthly in Forbes Magazine. (see page 178) Ms. Peers points out that units of art are not like units of stock, since each work of art is individual.

She quoted Samuel Pennington, publisher of The Maine Antiques Digest who wrote the following:

The harm is that (collectors) believe this is some sort of a Dow Jones index, some sort of rational, mathematic index, when in fact it is not.....Chinese Ceramic are up? What do you mean by Chinese Ceramics? Seventeenth century? Nineteenth century? Art works, unlike stocks, aren't indexable because each is unique. (quoted by Peers, p. C1)

Karen Davidson, who coordinates the index in the United States reiterated the same idea stating that while the methodology is "similar to other (financial) indexes' methodology, works of art are unique. It's very subjective." (quoted by Peers, p. C1)

The question at hand is more than academic, since the index is routinely used by dealers, often used by insurance companies and sometimes used by appraisers. One of the most misleading aspects of such an index is

### Sotheby's Art Market Trends

Index sectors	Dec 1987	One month ago	One year ago	Two years ago	Five years ago	One month % change	One year % change	Two year % change	Five years	
									% change	average annual % change
Old Master paintings	373	349	303	289	205	+ 6.9	+ 23.1	+ 29.1	+ 82.0	+ 12.7
19th-century European paintings	323	323	279	249	184	nil	+ 15.8	+ 29.7	+ 75.5	+ 11.9
Impressionist & Post-impressionist art	723	661	490	380	267	+ 9.4	+ 47.6	+ 90.3	+ 170.8	+ 22.0
Modern paintings (1900-1950)	757	666	512	364	245	+ 13.7	+ 47.9	+ 108.07	+ 209.0	+ 25.3
Contemporary art (1945 onward)	609	609	551	497	342	nil	+ 10.5	+ 22.5	+ 78.1	+ 12.2
American paintings (1800-pre-WWII)	871	789	698	667	450	+ 10.4	+ 24.8	+ 30.6	+ 93.6	+ 14.1
Continental ceramics	331	320	290	284	266	+ 3.4	+ 14.1	+ 16.5	+ 24.4	+ 4.5
Chinese ceramics	581	550	526	486	436	+ 5.6	+ 10.5	+ 19.5	+ 33.3	+ 5.9
English silver	381	381	343	306	189	nil	+ 11.1	+ 24.5	+ 101.6	+ 15.1
Continental silver	220	220	201	181	139	nil	+ 9.5	+ 21.5	+ 58.3	+ 9.6
American furniture	459	459	404	330	213	nil	+ 13.6	+ 39.1	+ 115.5	+ 16.6
French & Continental furniture	319	319	299	273	234	nil	+ 6.7	+ 16.8	+ 36.3	+ 6.4
English furniture	634	634	517	419	267	nil	+ 22.6	+ 51.3	+ 137.5	+ 18.9
Aggregate index*	512	482	403	344	252	+ 6.2	+ 27.0	+ 48.8	+ 103.2	+ 15.2

Basis: 1975 = 100 (\$).

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\*Contemporary art was added to the Art Index in September 1987. The aggregate index excludes this category prior to that date. Sotheby's Art Market Trends reflect subjective analyses and opinions of Sotheby's art experts, based on auction sales and other information deemed relevant. Nothing in Sotheby's Art Market Trends is intended as investment advice or as a prediction or guarantee of future performance or otherwise.

that it portrays art as constantly moving upward, because only the winners are included. Gary P. Brinson, president of First Chicago Investment Advisors, warned that "this is because art that has fallen in value often won't be put up for sale."

The index doesn't take into consideration that a particular chest of drawers or a particular Cezanne painting may come on the market only once in a lifetime. Ms. Peers cautioned that while this has been, and is being used as a tool in the selling and purchasing of art by collectors, galleries and auction houses, its reliability is limited. It might well serve as a warning to all of us who because of the nature of our profession (appraisal) attempt to categorize and to a degree index works of art in order to establish their value.

Nonetheless, if we are to arrive at as objective an evaluation as possible, some standards of measurement must be utilized. In the next section of this study, I shall review and analyze the implications of the data that I have presented.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In a July, 1988 article for Art in America, Carter Radcliff referred to "the marriage of art and money." He maintained that the two are interrelated, and that aesthetic considerations and economic considerations in art are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. This is an expansion of a theme propounded by Henry James, who insisted that marriage is a market transaction and that "no market, not even the most crass, confines itself to monetary exchange. A financial deal always has an aspect of the social, in the large and small senses of that word, and the social entails the esthetic." (Henry James quoted by Ratcliff, 1988, p.77)

The relationship between the aesthetic and economic concerns is evident throughout the history of art. Whether the patronage is provided by the church, a monarch, wealthy dynasties, generous individuals, corporations, or the successful entrepreneurship of an aggressive gallery director matters little. The fact remains that the creative endeavors of the artist must be promoted and sustained by economic support. It is, therefore, imperative to the proving of this thesis that an analysis of the economic evolution of German Expressionism from the year 1978 to 1988 be

demonstrated.

The development of German Expressionism during the past decade is, indeed, a two sided coin. On the one hand, there is the economic progression, verified in the preceding sections of this study. The numbers presented represent the results of gallery and auction sales during the past decade, and attest to the fact that there has been a decided increase in the monetary value of German Expressionist art throughout the 1980s. On the other hand, there is the increase in public interest in German Expressionism as an art movement.

Studies done in 1984 revealed that the escalation was well under way by mid-century. In 1987 and 1988, German Expressionist works were bringing record prices. Exceptionally strong sales were noted both in the United States and in West Germany. In the spring and summer of 1988, works were selling well above their estimated prices at auction.

These findings were confirmed in all of the price indexes, auction house and gallery reports which were consulted. They were further verified by all of the people who were interviewed. Curators who must be cognizant of the market status in order to purchase or

deaccession for their respective museums, gallery directors to whom the art business is their means of a livelihood and collectors, who are involved in the purchasing of art, all attested to the fact that the evolution in market value for German Expressionist art has been brisk throughout the 1980s.

At one point, I had suspected that there might be a waning of interest and that a plateau had been reached, but an examination of current data belied that assumption. Despite short term variations in the market, the trend during the past ten years, has been consistently upward in value. Sales continue to be strong rendering exceedingly high prices. The demand is gaining strength while the limited supply is being diminished.

Many German Expressionist works were destroyed in the two world wars. Since some of the artists died in the wars, the creative endeavor was sometimes prematurely cut off, limiting the number of works in the marketplace. The German Expressionists are most famous for their extraordinary woodcuts, a fragile medium since they are executed on paper. We can surmise that the quantity of German Expressionist works will decrease as time goes on, causing their prices to

soar even higher due to their rarity.

Lesser known German Expressionists, such as Ludwig Meidner, have gained appreciation. At the present time, he is becoming recognized for his superb draughtsmanship and creative energy. Only a few years ago his name recognition was extremely limited, and his position on the art market was equally restricted. The forthcoming 1990/91 exhibit of his works from the Marvin Fishman collection will, undoubtedly raise both his esteem and his marketability.

Meidner was a fortunate choice to use as an example of German Expressionism. The more one observes his visual art and the more one reads his literary outpourings, the more convinced one becomes that he truly represents the spirit of German Expressionism. This assumption is based upon the acceptance of a definition of German Expressionism that I have used throughout this paper.

Having read profusely about German Expressionism and having looked at hundreds of images, I accept as fundamental to the movement those qualities that gave German Expressionism its initial impetus, that caused it to break with the traditions of the past and lent



the art its Dionysian frenzy and ferocious vigor. It is these forces that attack the viewer, causing him to recoil with emotion, often revulsion, and always envelop him with an awareness that he is confronting a physical and emotional challenge to his very existence.

Meidner's bursting apocalyptic scenes, anguished prophets and his passionate writings expose him as an artist obsessed with expressing his innermost feelings. These feelings he communicated through revelations that utilized the most potent means available to him.

The other side of the coin reveals a growing interest by the art world and by the general public in German Expressionism as an art form. Names that had previously been obscure are now familiar. There have been numerous gallery shows and museum exhibits devoted to the art of these early twentieth century German artists. Books and periodicals have been published and widely distributed. The accumulating of German Expressionist art has become desirable among collectors. Terms such as Neo-Expressionism and New Expressionism have come into common usage.

German Expressionism has served as a model for many of the young artists of the 1980s. Ludwig

Meidner, in particular, is frequently singled out as an artist who has provided an inspiration for these aspiring New Expressionists, and vestiges of his technique, subject matter and style can be noted in their works.

The formalism of Cubism and Geometric Abstraction has given way to an art less concerned with aesthetic considerations and an "Art for Art's Sake" attitude. In its stead there has been a mandate for art devoted to the expression of human emotions and intuitive forces. Although German Expressionism was a revolt against the academicism and naturalism of the nineteenth century, as well as the bourgeois mores reflected in that art, it remained a figurative art. A total deviation from naturalistic representation did not occur until the late works of Kandinsky.

In my opinion, not only is German Expressionism enjoying an advancing market, but media other than painting and sculpture are advancing as well. A greater share of the population have become purchasers of art, and every purchase is not necessarily a major piece. The large collections; private, museums, etc. have dominated the market, and most assuredly will continue to do so. However, the aggregate of

individual buyers who add to their collections for aesthetic delight, prestige or investment become part of a "tour de force" that can and does influence the total market.

### CONCLUSIONS

German cultural history has been tumultuous since the close of the nineteenth Century. At that time and early in the twentieth century, German culture enjoyed a position of world wide admiration. The Germans were greatly respected for their excellent education system and their scientific, technical and financial acumen. Then came World War I, and all things German were treated with disdain by the allies. Gradually, the animosity was dispelled, and once again there was a lively exchange in trade, the arts, education etc.

This revival was again stifled with the advent of World War II. For a number of years following the second world war German culture was anathema to the other western nations, and the market for its cultural objects was at a standstill. It was well into the 1950s before Americans were willing to purchase German Expressionist works. If one traces the market for German Expressionist art in the United States subsequent to World War I a fluctuating pattern emerges concurrent with political relationships:

1. During the 1920s the works of German artists were being shown and sold in the U.S.
2. From 1933, with the advent of Hitler, German art was rejected. The Expressionists were not being shown in Germany either. The

artists were dispersed, with some fleeing the country, some being sent to concentration camps, and others being allowed to remain in Germany, but being prohibited from working or exhibiting their work.

3. During the period immediately following World War II, the prices for German art were extremely low and there was virtually no demand for the work.

In addition to the prevailing attitudes toward Germany, German Expressionism was inconsistent with the aesthetic demands of the time. Contemporary art, in the early part of the century did not deal with subject matter. Numerous movements developed based upon purely aesthetic concerns. On the other hand, German art dealt primarily with subject matter and propounded a social message. Thus, the American market was incompatible with the work produced by the German Expressionists.

Finally, the barriers began to break down, and within recent years we have witnessed a notable increase in demand for German Expressionism. Exhibitions, as noted earlier in this study, have been held at major universities. German Expressionism has been featured at museums throughout the United States and in Germany. The list of exhibitions of German Expressionist art being shown in museums and galleries in the latter half of this century is extensive.

The Busch-Reisinger Museum of Harvard University, which houses over 12,000 objects of German art, shared the same fortunes as German art as a whole in this country. It was virtually boarded up during those years in which Americans rejected all German culture. Today, it serves as a repository for fine paintings, graphics and sculpture by contemporary German artists, whose works are exhibited along side the historic material, that forms the base of the collection,

It is difficult to assess what social forces drive a society to turn from scientific reasoning and a reliance upon numerical equations toward an art that is based upon the emotive and instinctive facets of man's nature. Yet in the past decade this has occurred. One ponders whether the pendulum is perhaps beginning to swing toward another direction, as some of the new art once again presents abstract motifs.

Expressionism, however, is still very much in the limelight of current art activities, and if a transition is about to occur, it does not appear to be rapid or imminent. The motivations and techniques of the German Expressionist artists have had a profound influence upon the art of the twentieth century, an influence which will undoubtedly exert its power well

into the future.

This study was directed toward imparting knowledge about the art market for German Expressionism in support of my thesis that there has been a steady expansion in this market during the past decade. It was also focused on a comprehension of the underlying concepts of German Expressionism. For that reason, I presented extensive materials on Ludwig Meidner, an artist who in my estimation was the epitome of German Expressionism in all aspects of his Being and in his creative endeavors.

These artists of the twentieth century were the chroniclers of a world in transition, a society unable to fully grasp the changes that were being wrought upon it by industrial development. They represent a people unable to cope with the evolution that characterized all facets of human existence. What could the artist, the mirror of civilization, do except to portray anguish, human suffering and violence through distorted, agonized images.

Politics aside, if we consider the ties between the first decades and the final decade of this century it becomes apparent why Expressionistic art is again

sought after. People are flocking to see, and are purchasing Expressionist art done in the early 1900s. They are also pursuing the art of the new schools of Expressionists, both German and American. The term "Neo-expressionism" has gained common usage in the art world.

What is it that draws a society toward this highly emotional, undisciplined mode of expression? What are the sociological similarities? Western civilization is again experiencing transition and the turmoil that accompanies it. In the early 1900s Western society transcended from a rural entity into the machine age. In the 1980s, we have moved from an industrial society into a technological era. We suffer the same pangs as those of our parents and grandparents, and our arts reflect our pain.

I do not believe that the attitudes cherished by a society can be ignored in estimating the value of art, in general, or in estimating what its choices will be. If a particular type of visual expression and literary articulation is compatible with our innermost intuitions, we, as a society elevate its value, as we have done with German Expressionism during the past decade. Perhaps art is not a "two sided coin" after



all, but a many faceted jewel with each of its facets contributing to its value.

MARCH, 1949.

James R. Das Deutsche Sprache

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