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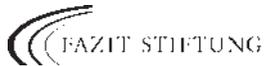
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EMIL NOLDE “DEMON OF THIS REGION”

Felix Krämer

“It was unpleasantly loud in the rooms,” Emil Nolde reported to his friend Hans Fehr on the subject of his exhibition in the Galerie Commeter in Hamburg in 1913: “‘Dreadful, dreadful’, shouted one visitor. ‘Flogging would be too good for a fellow like that’, shouted another.”¹ This was not an isolated incident. Time and again the Expressionist artist’s exhibitions gave rise to tumultuous scenes and disputes. His presentations were castigated as “torture chambers”,² and Nolde himself was described as a “barbarian”,³ the “terror of the virtuous”⁴ or as an “artistic anarchist of the most audacious kind”.⁵ For a seasoned art critic like Julius Meier-Graefe, Nolde’s works were nothing but “archaism” and “historical socialism from the catacombs”.⁶ But even then there were numerous positive opinions too, describing the particular fascination which Nolde’s paintings radiate. Many people revered the artist as an “inwardly profoundly serious painter”⁷ or even as a “very unusual personality of genius”⁸ and saw in his pictures the works of “an endlessly rich spirit”.⁹ For them, a visit to his exhibitions was “one of the most festive occasions of our time”.¹⁰ Kurt Freyer observed in 1912: “The essential, the depth of his sensibility, the power of his experience, the solemn feeling in his works defies all attempts at description.”¹¹

What is remarkable is the highly emotional nature of the reviews. Very few critics were immune to the intense effect produced by Nolde’s art; its glowing colour harmonies, exuberant imagination and atmospheric landscapes continue to enchant the viewer today. “There are only two possible attitudes towards the work of the sixty-year-old north German painter Emil Nolde: for and against,” summarised the *Kasseler Neueste Nachrichten* newspaper in 1928.¹² Although his decorative representations of

cottage gardens and north German landscapes as well as his numerous watercolours of flowers were admired by a wide audience then as now, his religious and fantastic works provoked mystification and violent rejection. He was a complex character who united a number of opposing qualities within his person. He could convincingly present himself as a simple, honest soul from the countryside. And at the same time he was a supreme master of all marketing mechanisms and devoted himself to the sale of his art with the skill of a practised businessman. He was a self-taught artist who had attended various art schools, a painter who did not tire of voicing his aversion to urban society and who nonetheless spent a great deal of his life in the city. And although he believed that his art was not sufficiently appreciated, he was by far the most successful German artist of his generation. Nolde was a German nationalist with a Danish passport, who voted for the Social Democratic Party and later joined the National Socialist Party of North Schleswig (NSDAPN). He was someone who, despite the defamation campaign, the destruction of works of art and being banned from working as an artist, nonetheless continued to place his hopes in Adolf Hitler. After the war, Nolde was regarded as the epitome of the persecuted artist in spite of his ambivalent role during the Nazi period.

Friends and acquaintances described Nolde as having a complex personality. Carl Georg Heise was of the opinion that his “deliberate show of primitiveness was a sort of camouflage, rather than corresponding to his slow but profound way of thinking that often contained a hidden meaning.”¹³ Fehr explained: “I mean to say, in his pictures and in his comments he

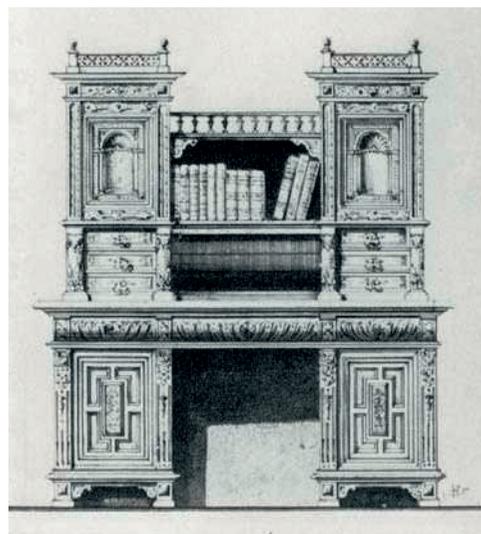


Fig. 1 Heinrich Saueremann, desk for Theodor Storm (design), 1887, executed by Emil Nolde during his apprenticeship in Flensburg



Fig.2 Arnold Böcklin, *Deianira and Nessus*, 1898, Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern

was the epitome of strength, and yet on the other hand he also displayed what I could almost describe as a hint of anxiousness or hypersensitivity.”¹⁴ These contradictions corresponded, in fact, with Nolde’s self-perception. Before his engagement with Ada Vilstrup he sketched his idea of an artist thus: “Someone who loves both nature and culture, who can be divine and yet an animal, a child and yet a giant, naive and yet sophisticated, soulful and yet intellectual, passionate and dispassionate, bubbling with life and silently contemplative. That is the able artist who does not cling one-sidedly to something, but who creates great art.”¹⁵

To this day, our view of the artist and his art is determined to a large extent by the four volumes of his autobiography, which was published from 1931. Although Nolde was still convinced in 1913 that he could not explain his works – “Art itself is my language, and the only one in which I can say in full what drives and moves me”¹⁶ – he later spent a great deal of time explaining his life and his art to the public through his writings. Since then his autobiography has served countless art historians as historical evidence, frequently without allowances being made for Nolde’s strong self-styling.¹⁷

NOLDE BEFORE NOLDE

Hans Emil Hansen was born on August 7, 1867 in the village of Nolde in the marshes near the North Sea, in the region surrounding the border between Germany and Denmark. He was the Hansens’ sixth child. Like his father and his three older brothers he was destined to continue the family tradition and work on the farm. After primary school, which he completed with mediocre results, he was compelled to help out at home. In this environment, which was characterised above all by hard physical work, little attention was paid to his creative interest. He took refuge in religion. First of all he wanted to become a missionary, and then an artist. “I often sat up in the hayloft, dreaming of the big wide world. Or I imagined I was with Dürer and Makart”, he later remembered: “I had read a little book about Dürer. And Makart? When Makart died the village newspaper published a notice about his huge paintings, which travelled to all the big metropolises. I was riveted by the fact and especially to learn that art was still alive during that time.”¹⁸ A few months before the news of the death of the Viennese Salon artist Hans Makart, who was celebrated at that time like pop stars today, Nolde had begun a four-year apprenticeship as a wood carver in Flensburg (fig. 1). Alongside his training he also took lessons in commercial drawing. At the end of his apprenticeship he was allowed to accom-

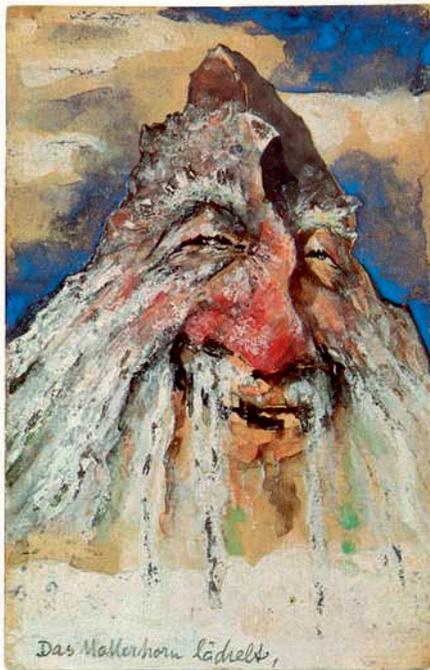


Fig. 3 Emil Nolde, *The Matterhorn Smiles*,
Mountain Postcard, 1896, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll

pany his master to a trade fair in Munich. From there he went to Karlsruhe to work in a famous furniture factory. For him, the lessons at the local college of arts and crafts were more important than his job. A year later he continued to Berlin, where he supported himself with casual jobs until he found a position as draughtsman and model builder in a fashion-accessories factory. However, Nolde did not stay here for very long either. At the beginning of January 1892 he was appointed to the Museum of Industries and Trade in St. Gallen in Switzerland as a teacher of ornamental and colour drawing.

Nolde seemed to have arrived at last. He joined enthusiastically in the life of the prosperous little town. He took out a life insurance policy, joined the bowling association and the Swiss Alpine Club and climbed the Matterhorn. The mountaineer from north Germany became a local celebrity as a result of his sporting achievements. He became friends with his pupil Hans Fehr, and travelled to Milan, Vienna and Munich. They visited museums, exhibitions, and theatre and opera performances. But life as a teacher did not satisfy him in the long term and he sought other challenges. Nolde's artistic ambitions came increasingly to the fore. On several occasions he participated in exhibitions at the local art association, presented drawings after paintings by the Salon artists Carl Theodor von Piloty and Bruno Piglhein and turned in vain to potential patrons in the hope of a scholarship: "And yet, I continued to live in hope."¹⁹

It was during this period that he created his first painting, *Mountain Giants* (cat. no. 1), on which he worked for about two years and with which he applied unsuccessfully to the annual exhibition in Munich in 1897. This first painting is surprising for its large format of 93.5 x 151.5 cm. The subject of the work is also unusual: it shows several grotesque heads smirking and grinning at each other. This "strange early work",²⁰ which the artist would later hang over the door of his home in Flensburg, lacks the authority and dynamism of his mature paintings. The subject is rough and direct, the brushwork ponderous. The artist feels his way tentatively. Although Nolde's *Mountain Giants* do not disguise their kinship with the trolls of Scandinavia, it is evident which artistic model they are following: like many of his contemporaries, Nolde was an enthusiastic admirer of Arnold Böcklin, whose art was celebrated at that time as the alternative to French painting. Nolde even regarded the Swiss artist as one of the "most important artists" of the time.²¹ Böcklin's threatening landscapes are contrasted with wild-looking fabulous creatures which greatly influenced Nolde's art with their unbridled fantasy (fig. 2). Nolde's enthusiasm for the fantastic and the grotesque runs like a common theme through his work. "For him, the prefix 'proto-' was a sign of quality; his passion was for the uncivilised, the archaic, the antemundane, and elves and sorceresses were closer to him than the gods of ancient Greece," commented Walter Jens.²²

Although a painting like *Mountain Giants* seems surprising at the beginning of an artist's career, it is also directly related to Nolde's biggest commercial success, which formed the material basis for his artistic career. The breakthrough occurred with his *Mountain Postcards* – a series of watercolours in which Nolde

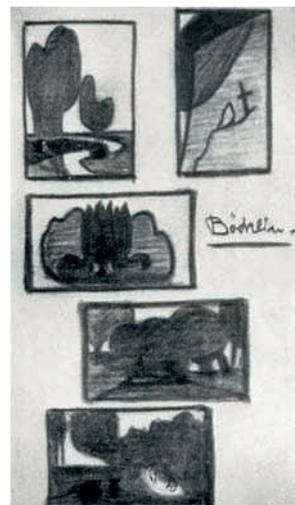


Fig. 4 Emil Nolde, compositional studies after
Arnold Böcklin, 1899, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll

produced caricatures of the Alpine peaks as human figures from myths and fairy tales (fig. 3). Two of the subjects were reproduced in colour in the magazine *Jugend*. Nolde had the postcards printed at his own expense in a run of 100,000. It was enormously successful: the entire print run was sold out after only ten days. Nolde's profit – 25,000 francs – was enough to last for five years. Nolde moved from St. Gallen to Munich. His application to the Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) to join Franz von Stuck's class was unsuccessful, whereupon he tried his luck at the private schools of painting. His Dachau-based teacher Adolf Hölzel encouraged him to study the composition of paintings (fig. 4; p. 167, fig. 3). In order to analyse the visual structures behind the effects, he used reproductions to create compositional studies after works by George Frederic Watts and Böcklin, Francisco de Goya, Max Liebermann and other artists. Even at this early stage, it is possible to see how much the trained craftsman Nolde was interested in optical effect in the liberal arts, too.

Paris was at the time the undisputed capital of the arts. Nolde travelled to the French capital in October 1899 and took lessons at the renowned Académie Julian, as well as attending exhibitions – including the World's Fair – and museums. In the Louvre he made a copy after Titian's *Allegory of Alphonse d'Avalos* (fig. 5), and painted religious paintings and nudes in the academic manner. Paris was full of young, ambitious artists. Paula Becker, who would later marry Otto Modersohn, wrote to her sister Milly of the "farmer's son from Schleswig", who had "worked for a long time as a craftsman": "Now he has taken up the cause of true art, and a serious ambition. He is also with-



Fig. 5 Emil Nolde, copy after Titian's *Allegory of Alphonse d'Avalos* (Musée du Louvre), 1900, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll

drawn, like all people from the north."²³ Nolde stayed in the city for nine months, but this was not his world: "Paris gave me very little, and I, of course, had expected so much."²⁴ In early July 1900 Nolde returned from Le Havre via Hamburg to North Schleswig on a cargo ship.

A few weeks later, the restless artist travelled to Copenhagen. Again he enrolled as a student at a private art school. "I registered at the Zahrtmann School but I was only able to attend a few lessons. My eyes could not bear it."²⁵ Nolde was lonely and did not make friends. His efforts to achieve professional recognition were all the greater. He tried to apply here what had been successful in St. Gallen. He had ten views of Copenhagen printed as postcards, but sold only a small number. Nolde considered writing newspaper articles about young Danish art, which enjoyed international interest at the time. He visited the best-known protagonists – including Vilhelm Hammershøi, whose works were celebrated at the World's Fair. The two taciturn painters had little to say to one another: "He spoke slowly and quietly, we all spoke calmly," Nolde summarized the meeting.²⁶ The tone of his paintings from this period is as reticent as Hammershøi's (fig. 6). Nolde painted Copenhagen's canals in muted colour, a fishing village and several seascapes (*Light Sea Mood*; *Dunes*; *Canal (Copenhagen)*, cat. nos. 3–5), which anticipate his *Autumn Seas* (cat. nos. 29–31), executed from 1910 onwards, in their remarkable reduction. Light, which in its delicateness is reminiscent of the Skagen paintings of Peder Severin Krøyer (fig. 7), is the protagonist of these atmospheric paintings.

The painting *Before Sunrise* (cat. no. 7), created in 1901, stands in contrast to this nuanced atmospheric painting. Loud, garish and grotesque: "Two strange animals, one sitting on a rock nest and the other flying out to hunt," is how the painter described the scene in which he built on his representation of *Mountain Giants*.²⁷ During the months of July to September 1901 Nolde withdrew to the remote fishing village of Lildstrand in North Jutland. Here he created drawings with visions of creatures from the realms of ghost stories and myths (cf. p. 37, fig. 1), as though in a state of intoxication, but also wrote letters whose confusion caused Fehr to fear that Nolde had lost his mind. He was also in close contact through written exchange with the Danish pastor's daughter Ada Vilstrup. The actress, twelve years his junior, and the ambitious painter had met shortly beforehand. Their engagement followed just a few weeks after Nolde's return to the Danish capital, and they were married in February 1902. Their marriage remained childless. Ada, whose life was overshadowed by countless stays in hospitals and sanatoriums, remained at her husband's side until her death in November 1946, and was a tireless advocate of his art. She supported him actively by cultivating contacts, travelled to visit collectors with his paintings, engaged in correspondence in his name, and organised exhibitions. Without her commitment it is impossible to imagine Nolde's success as an artist.



Fig. 6 Vilhelm Hammershøi, *Frederiksholms-Kanal*, 1892, private collection



Fig. 7 Peder Severin Krøyer, *Summer Evening on the South Beach of Skagen*, 1893, Skagens Museum

FIRST SUCCESSES

The painter changed his name when he married. With official approval, he would from then onwards call himself after his place of birth: Nolde. In this way the artist emphasised both his origin and his close connection to his homeland, which he would highlight as a characteristic of his art.²⁸ The next destination after the wedding was Berlin, then Jutland, until in the autumn of 1902 the couple rented a flat in Flensburg. By the following May, they had moved again, to the Baltic island of Als. They would find their home for the following 13 years in a vacant fisherman's cottage. A shack on the beach served as his studio: "My little studio, how happy I was! – Through the window the eyes swept freely across the ocean, and there was nothing to be seen except for the water and the clouds and, on bright days, beyond that the narrow strip of land of the Danish islands."²⁹ His happiness spread to his easel, too. Paintings such as *Two on the Beach* and *Springtime in the Room* (cat. nos. 6, 9) communicate a harmony and intimacy absent from Nolde's earlier work. The interior that shows Ada in the living room of the fisherman's cottage, flooded with sunlight, is a milestone in Nolde's artistic development with its light colourfulness and unrestrained brushstrokes. Both the lively, almost shimmering application of paint and the emphasis on the light as a constitutive element of the painting reveal his intense study of French Impressionism. These impressions are echoed in Nolde's paintings of gardens, which he painted from 1903 onwards (fig. 8).

The first occasions on which he participated in exhibitions in Kiel, Berlin, Lübeck, Cologne and even Brussels were cause for optimism. Between 1902 and 1905 he was mentioned in 32 exhibition reviews, as Ada proudly reported to her husband.³⁰ The disappointment when the sales that they had hoped for did not

materialise was all the greater. The couple was afflicted with financial difficulties: their monetary reserves were almost entirely depleted following Nolde's nomadic years. He raised a loan on his life insurance, and Ada attempted a career as a music-hall singer in Berlin. Accompanied by a trained goose she performed a stage show that ended in a fiasco (p. 282, fig. 3). Ada suffered a physical and mental breakdown.

Following a joint recuperation retreat in Italy, Nolde travelled back to Als in the summer of 1905, and on to Berlin in the autumn. From this point onwards, he would spend half of the year in the capital, generally accompanied by Ada. He created prints (cf. p. 73, fig. 1) in order to introduce his art to a larger audience. He simultaneously attempted to systematically construct a network. "It can only be of advantage if one seeks out acquaintanceship," as he wrote to Ada.³¹ He established contact with the influential gallerist Paul Cassirer – who showed several of his works that same year – as well as with the president of the Berlin Secession, Max Liebermann, and Julius Meier-Graefe. A few years later, they were among his most outspoken critics.

The Noldes were constantly on the road, cultivating their contacts. In 1906 the artist received an emphatic letter from Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. "Let me explain immediately why I am writing. 'Brücke', our local artists' group, would consider it an honour to welcome you as a member." As a "tribute to your riots of colour" Nolde was invited to join the association, which had been established in Dresden the previous year.³² Ada reacted with "jubilant happiness", whereas her husband was noticeably reserved in comparison. He was concerned about his artistic freedom. In addition to the "curiously pronounced joy [...] in not being alone", membership of the association also offered commercial advantages.³³ Nolde was about 15 years older than the

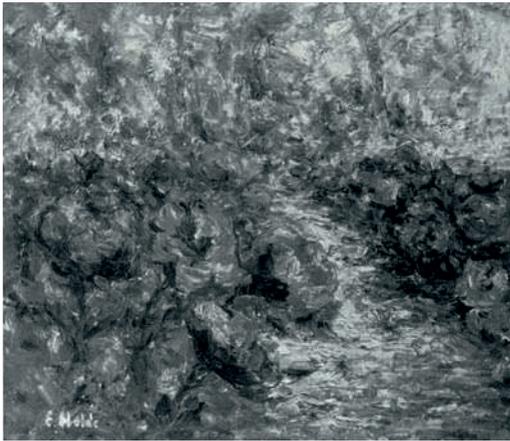


Fig. 8 Emil Nolde, *Little Rose-Garden*, 1903, private collection

“Brücke” artists. In May, Schmidt-Rottluff accepted Nolde’s invitation to visit Als, and in the following year Nolde went to Dresden. Their artistic influence on each other remained limited, however, and was largely confined to exchanges on issues related to print-making techniques. Nolde introduced the idea of attracting passive Brücke members, who would support the group with their contributions and contacts, in addition to the active ones. And yet it was primarily Ada who worked tirelessly to gain supporters for her husband. It was also she who visited the collector and patron Karl Ernst Osthaus in Hagen, initially on her own. He acquired Nolde’s *Springtime in the Room* for his private Folkwang Museum. This was Nolde’s first significant painting sale, achieved at the relatively advanced age of 39. The next important meeting took place only a few weeks later, in May 1906: the Noldes met Gustav Schiefler, director of the Hamburg District Court, and the latter’s wife Luise. The renowned collector of works on paper and art publisher became enamoured with Nolde’s work and henceforth one of Nolde’s most important supporters – also as the author of the catalogue raisonné of his works on paper. In addition to private collectors, public museums began to take an interest in the north German painter’s art. The Westfälisches Landesmuseum Münster was the first of these, with its purchase of *Burchard’s Garden* of 1907 (cat. no. 16). Even before the First World War, the circle of Nolde’s supporters read like a “Who’s Who” of the German Expressionist scene: Rosa Schapire, Botho Graef, Ernst Gosebruch, Harry Graf Kessler, Max Sauerlandt, Ludwig Justi and Heise. Although Nolde participated in numerous Brücke exhibitions during the course of his membership of the group, which lasted almost two years, this was not where he showed his most important works. He was presumably more interested in continuing to receive significant attention beyond the context of Brücke. On November 9, 1907 Nolde announced his withdrawal from the artists’ group:

“There is so much in the ‘Brücke’ group that I wish were different, and these thoughts concern me much more than they should. I have to concentrate very hard in order to be able to work, and every distraction is of disadvantage to my art.”³⁴

“ORGIES OF COLOUR”

Nolde discovered the potential of colour for his painting in the summer of 1906 with the series of garden and flower paintings. In the space of two years, 28 of these works, painted with vibrant brushwork, were executed in rapid succession. Plants spread out over the entire canvas like a carpet in paintings such as *Flower Garden: Pansies* and *Flower Garden, without Figures* (cat. nos. 15, 17). Nolde was less interested in the individual flowers, however; his focus was on the atmospheric overall impression, in which colour becomes the primary medium of expression, as in the works of Claude Monet and, more importantly, Vincent van Gogh. The artist developed an increasingly dissipated, dynamic painting style in which the contours recede further and further. When Nolde exhibited some of these “orgies of colour”³⁵ in 1908 at the Galerie Cassirer in Berlin, the critic Max Osborn was impressed by the “boldness and intensity of the effect”.³⁶ Ludwig Pietsch expressed his annoyance at the same time: “It is not possible for me to speak seriously of the [...] garden landscapes, flower paintings [...] of Emil Nolde. How people who call themselves artists can paint stuff such as this, and how they can have the audacity to exhibit it, is incomprehensible. But perhaps they know their public better. After all, one already sees scraps of paper with the word ‘Sold’ attached to some of the pitiful blotches!”³⁷

To this day, these paintings are among the artist’s best-loved works, thanks to their highly sensuous quality. Nolde was second to none in heightening colouristic effect through colour combinations so that the luminosity of his works immediately catches the viewer’s eye. When Nolde was first able to exhibit four paintings in 1905 in Berlin in a group exhibition at Cassirer’s gallery, he proudly told Fehr: “Liebermann’s sun spots, which were so greatly admired, look almost like moonlight next to the embers in my painting, but obviously his painting has great beauty all the same. V. Gogh’s painting has a freshness and power equal to mine, but all the other paintings recede into a sort of grey-ness.”³⁸ Liebermann and van Gogh – these were the artists against whom Nolde measured himself. Colourfulness went on to become the artist’s trademark. Purple and orange, green, blue and yellow suddenly collide. Nolde discovered “colour as his true means of expression”, commented Manfred Reuther, the former director of the Nolde Stiftung Seebüll.³⁹ The importance Nolde attached to the effect of colour becomes clear in his detailed account of his colours to the chemist Carl Hagemann, collector of Expressionism: “The paints that I have used for 8 years are ‘Behrend Paints’ (Grafrat near Munich). [...] In order to examine their resistance to light, air, humidity, etc., I painted stripes of the

paint from my palette onto a strip of canvas, cut this strip lengthwise, placed one half in the sunshine outdoors, and the other in a dark cupboard. Two months later I could see, and was pleased to find, that the colours had lost little of their luminosity. [...] My method of painting is without any artifice, I do not mix the paints at all, or only very little, and paint the piece I have begun wet on wet, and give the paintings no varnish.”⁴⁰

Nolde would continue to paint flower and garden paintings time and again. Although his subjects initially consisted of neighbouring flower beds, his focus soon shifted to his own garden. After moving to Utenwarf, a farmhouse near Tønder on the west coast in 1916, the Noldes also planted their own garden (cf. *Flower Garden G (Blue Watering Can)*; *Autumn Garden*, cat. nos. 85, 95). And when they moved once again ten years later, acquiring the vacant property at Seebüll in order to build a house on the opposite mound with a large studio and picture gallery in line with Nolde’s ideas, this also included a kitchen garden and flower garden (fig. 9). In addition to the paintings, the gardens inspired Nolde to paint a series of countless flower watercolours (cat. nos. 87–94).

It was important to Nolde for his view of himself as an artist not to allow himself to be influenced by the judgments of others. His painting *Free Spirit* (cat. no. 10) of 1906, which he himself considered to be central to the development of his oeuvre, takes up this aspect. The brilliantly colourful depiction features four people who, wearing long, colourful gowns, act as though they were on a stage. The second figure from the left is accentuated, and represents, as he wrote in his autobiography, the painter himself: “Praise on the left, grumbling and criticism on the right, none of this moves him.”⁴¹ Nolde was convinced that, as a “true” artist, he stood above his fellow human beings. He wrote to Fehr: “You know of my inclination to want to distinguish between the artist and the human being. The artist is to me



Fig. 9 Haus Seebüll with garden



Fig. 10 Emil Nolde, *Frau A*, c. 1902, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll

something like an addition to the human, and I can speak of him as I would of something other than the self.”⁴² Nolde had internalised the Romantic conception of the artist-genius who, furnished with special gifts, is condemned to walk his path in solitude as a “prophet” or “martyr”. As early as 1919, Heise interpreted the figure of the Free Spirit as an identification of the artist and the suffering Christ.⁴³ In art criticism, too, Nolde was described as an outsider. “Alone, able to rely only on himself,” it said in the publication *Kunstblatt* in 1918, for example, “he suffered the derision and hatred of his fellow human beings for decades, striding forward unperturbed and assured of success along the thorny path of the pioneer.”⁴⁴ Nolde’s frequently repeated admission that he painted without any purpose or any theoretical underpinning also corresponds to his view of himself as a genius: “When I painted badly, I was a human being [...] with desires and knowledge; when I painted well, I was nothing but an artist [...] Painter, paint! To think is not even a substitute.”⁴⁵

Nolde’s works are carefully composed (fig. 10).⁴⁶ Preparatory underdrawings can be seen with the naked eye (cf. *Christ in Bethany*; *Exotic Figures (Fetishes I)*, cat. nos. 36, 57): “Eight large canvases lean against the wall, drawn upon with the pen.”⁴⁷ While Nolde arranged his landscapes like stage areas, the representations of figures are generally conceived from the centre of the composition, which provides them with optical stability. According to his autobiography, *Free Spirit*, too, was created without a firm plan, subconsciously, while he was actually in the process of working on his garden paintings: “Unexpectedly and suddenly I was driven towards something quite different”, he wrote. “I painted the Free Spirit. The air behind was still flaky, but the figures were painted in quite simple areas of colour [...] In later years I often surprised myself with what I had painted, and occasionally I also created beyond myself, as in the case of *Free Spirit*, where I could grasp that which was entirely involun-

tary only later.”⁴⁸ For Nolde, this painting marked out his path from the fleeting and detailed brushstroke of Impressionism towards a summary, planar painting style.

RELIGIOUS PAINTINGS

Free Spirit is also a key work in the sense that it anticipates the group of religious paintings that in the artist’s view represented the high point of his oeuvre. Although Nolde initially numbered the painting among his “biblical and legend paintings”, it no longer features in the later list of these works, totalling 51 altogether.⁴⁹ Other contemporaries saw this painting style as an indication that Nolde had not followed pictorial tradition, but instead painted the works “as personal revelation” and “incarnated experience”.⁵⁰ Some writers expressed their incomprehension: “His religious epics are bizarre, questionable, inconsistent,” Hans Harbeck, for example, wrote in 1911, attacking the paintings as “a witty buffoonery”.⁵¹ The approachable representation of Adam and Eve (*Paradise Lost*, cat. no. 43) looks surprisingly provocative even to present-day viewers. The couple sit side by side, strangely detached. The representation of *Holy Night*, too, with a black-haired Mary and a newborn Baby Jesus still surprises the viewer today (*Holy Night*, side panel from *The Life of Christ*, cat. no. 42). The painting is part of the nine-part *The Life of Christ* of 1911–12, which marks the high point of the group of religious paintings. This polyptych reminiscent of a medieval winged altar was created without a specific commission, and only “a few of the few who saw it were able to grasp entirely the subtlety and impact at the same time”, Nolde was convinced.⁵² Biting scorn was heaped upon the work at the defamatory exhibition *Degenerate Art* of 1937–38 (fig. 11): “Painted witches’ spells, carved pamphlets were passed off as ‘revelations of German religiosity’ by psychopathic smearers and enterprising Jews,

turning them into cash,” one label above the work read. The fact that in his religious paintings Nolde actually represented the disciples as “strong Jewish types”⁵³ was simply ignored. He claimed, however, that he had quite naively followed “an impulse for truth”, and that he “presented Jewishness as it was and as it has never before been painted in art. – The Apostles and biblical people were appropriated in past artistic periods, always painted as Italian or northern sages and citizens. I returned them and Christ to their people.”⁵⁴ In the group of religious paintings one can see Nolde’s attempts to counteract his reputation as a painter of gardens and flowers. He was convinced that he had successfully completed a development “from the optical external appeal to the perceived inner value”.⁵⁵ With this subject matter, he simultaneously tapped into the growing desire for a new spirituality on the eve of the First World War. By positioning himself in opposition to the materialism of the bourgeoisie, he became the herald of a new spirituality that in the rawness of its form had nothing in common with traditional religious painting.

AN ARTIST SURROUNDED BY SCANDAL

After he withdrew from the Brücke artists’ group, Nolde was surprised to find that he was accepted as a member of the Berlin Secession, battered by internal turmoil as it was, in 1908. He took part in several of its exhibitions, although its president Max Liebermann made no secret of his dislike for the north German artist, whom he accused of pathological ambition.⁵⁶ Almost 90 per cent of the 3000 submissions for its spring exhibition had been rejected by the jury. When Nolde heard of the rejection of his painting *Pentecost* (fig. 12), he lost his composure, because this was the first time that he had wanted to show one of his religious paintings to the public in Berlin. He held the president himself responsible for the decision: “Everything was influenced by Max Liebermann. In charming words, and under the pretence of goodwill, the assertion was constantly repeated that they wanted to support young artists, but in reality our suppression was all the more forceful.”⁵⁷ Nolde launched a fierce attack on Liebermann in an open letter, accusing the latter of primarily pursuing his own business interests in all that he did for the Secession: “He causes as much as possible to be written and published about himself, he does and paints and exhibits as much as he possibly can. The result of this is that the entire young generation, oversated, cannot bear to look at another one of his works, that it recognises how deliberate this all is, how weak and kitschy not only his present works are, but also a number of his earlier ones.”⁵⁸ Nolde’s expulsion from the Secession was decided by a vote of forty votes to two, with three abstentions. “What was probably the most spectacular art scandal of the pre-war period” was stoked by the capital’s press, which made Nolde known throughout Germany as an artist surrounded by scandal.⁵⁹ In the second volume of his autobiography, *Jahre der Kämpfe* (Years of Struggle), Nolde later sketched himself not so much as the trig-



Fig. 11 *The Life of Christ* in the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Berlin, February 1938

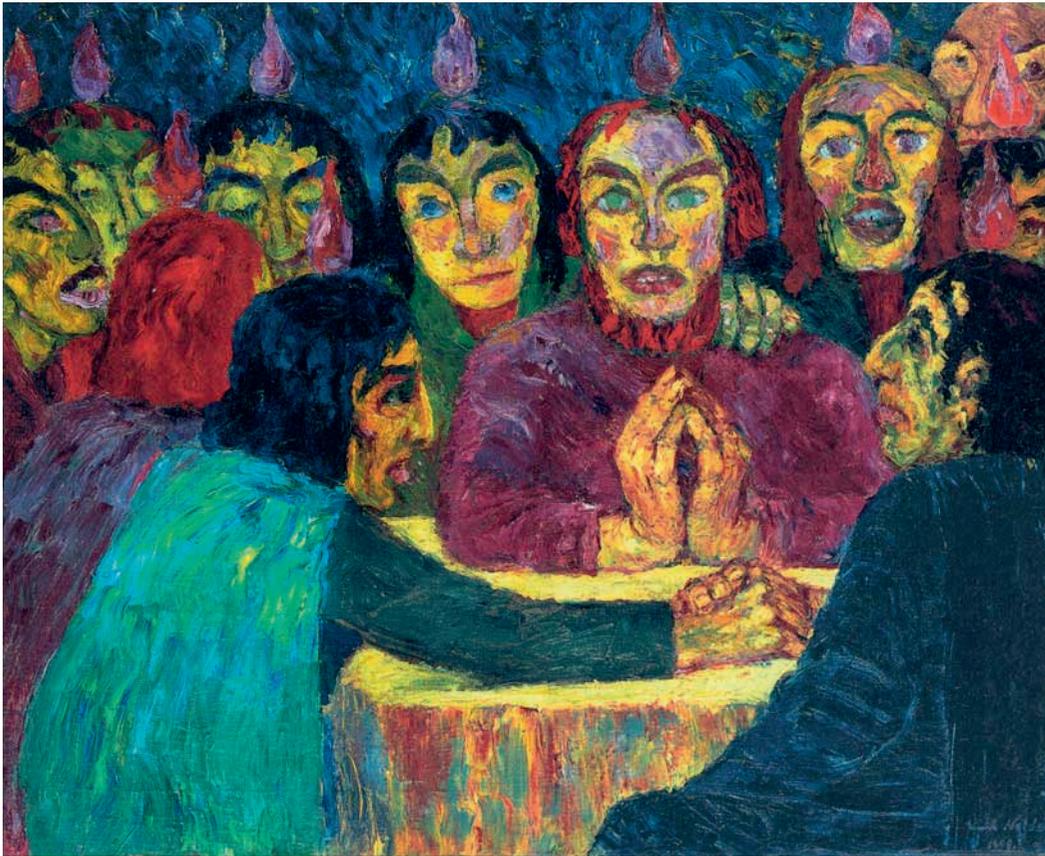


Fig. 12 Emil Nolde, *Pentecost*, 1909, Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie

ger for the conflict, but rather as a defenceless victim who, spontaneously and compelled by his conscience, “fulfilling a duty”,⁶⁰ had been pushed to protest, and then had to defend himself against the aggression of “the overpowering opposing forces”: “What was the point of my bold rebellion against the Jewish power that reigns over all of the arts. What did I, an awkward boy from the countryside with my belief in what is right and in humanity, think I was doing on this slippery, slick terrain!” And: “Everything was twisted, lied about, distorted. [...] What happened next was that I was decried as an angry anti-Semite, and so the persecution began.”⁶¹ Even though the media criticised Nolde, this accusation is to be found in his autobiography alone. Nolde did not present himself as an anti-Semite in his public utterances before the National Socialists’ rise to power. His stance was increasingly radicalised as he became older and against the background of the economic and political conditions of the Weimar Republic.⁶² As early as November 1931, the artist reported to Fehr that he was following with consternation the “cultural and political events, we cannot withdraw from them entirely and we believe that the entire Soviet system is of Jewish

origin, and that it serves Jewish interests that culminate in their attainment of world domination through their financial power and the power of masses of people unable to take responsibility.” On a more soothing note, he adds: “None of this is to say anything bad about Jewry. The self-interest of every race expresses itself according to the degree of the life force that inhabits it.”⁶³ Three years later, the artist published anti-Semitic comments in *Jahre der Kämpfe*: “Jews have little soul and creative gift. Jews are very different people from us.”⁶⁴ He went further than this value judgment about people, stating that it was equally important to know in assessing a work of art whether this “is the work of a Jewish creator and whether it is of Jewish intellectual origin”.⁶⁵

“THE PRODUCT OF A SICK MAN”

Two days after his expulsion from the Berlin Secession, Nolde joined the Neue Seession (New Secession). The latter had been founded some months before, but it would be no more than a short episode in Berlin’s artistic life. Nolde’s first presentation at the Neue Seession was met with massive criticism: “There is no



Fig. 13 Emil Nolde, *Resurrection*, side panel from *The Life of Christ*, 1912, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Fig. 14 Ernst Josephson, *The Holy Sacrament*, 1889-90, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

way of avoiding the thought that Nolde's *Christ in Bethany* is the product of a sick man, a very sick man", wrote Johannes Sievers, who worked at the Kupferstichkabinett (Prints Collection) of the Berlin museums, in the art journal *Cicerone*.⁶⁶ Sievers can hardly have known that the work of a "mentally ill" artist was indeed an important source of inspiration for Nolde. In 1908, and thus one year before he created the first of the religious paintings, Nolde travelled to Sweden. The visit to the painter Ernst Josephson's sisters was the highlight of the trip, "when we were allowed to dig through the portfolios containing hundreds of drawings by their brother. [...] All material things in the world may have been without interest to him in the twelve years during which he continued to live in this way, and perhaps this is the very reason why the drawings he created could often become so strangely pure and beautiful."⁶⁷ Thomas Röske and Karl-Ludwig Hofmann have pointed to the fact that Josephson's work served as a model for the German Expressionist (figs. 13, 14).⁶⁸ Nolde saw confirmation of his own deliberations in the Swedish artist's drawings, which were liberated from all social convention. This enthusiasm is also tangible in Ada's report, which confirms the two artists' close connection: "Some of his things have quite a

lot in common with the colour drawings by my husband, so that one might say: they knew one another, and yet this was not the case. [...] His sister[s], whom we visited, gave us half each of 4 drawings, we take great pleasure in strange works that are in the studio here."⁶⁹ Hoffmann suspects that the many religious works by Josephson made Nolde aware of the potential of biblical subjects, and that they served as inspiration for the works that he then painted in rapid succession.⁷⁰ Nolde's contemporaries shared his euphoria, and one year later, a large selection of Josephson's drawings was exhibited at the Berlin Secession.

A PAINTER OF THE CAPITAL

Although Nolde spent several months each year in Berlin from 1905 onwards, he did not like to exhibit his work in the capital as a reaction to his dispute with the Berlin Secession. And so the most extensive Nolde exhibition, comprising 460 exhibits, took place in 1927 on the occasion of his 60th birthday in Dresden, followed by Hamburg, Kiel, Essen and Wiesbaden. It was not until after this touring exhibition that an exhibition of his watercolours and drawings was presented at Galerie Ferdinand Möller in Berlin which aroused greater attention. Paul Ferdinand Schmitt, editor

of the Berlin-based publication *Abend*, hoped that the artist would decide to “bury the hatchet once and for all” following this presentation.⁷¹ Not only the “the provinces” should be allowed to value him with exhibitions of his work, but “we all have the right to get to know one of our greatest painters at home”. Despite the fact that Berlin was a permanent place of residence for him, Nolde remained ambivalent about the city. His autobiography gives the impression that Berlin played only a subsidiary role. Life there is sketched on just a few pages, while even his hikes in the Alps are described in detail. In 1913 more than two million people lived in the German capital. In July alone, the overground and underground trains transported 4,574,374 people. Nolde was at the heart “of the tempestuous, billowing big-city life”.⁷² Enormous retail palaces transformed shopping into an experience. People lived on credit – and Nolde, too, had more than 5000 reichsmarks of debt.⁷³ He lived in a studio-flat in Tauentzienstrasse (p. 125, fig. 1). His move to Bayernallee in the fashionable district of Charlottenburg took place in 1929, although the artist actually wanted a villa by the star architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (fig. 15). The first designs had been drawn, and the property near the Botanical Garden in Dahlem had been purchased, but the plans were dashed.

Nolde’s participation in the social life of the capital was also reflected in his art, which related to current events on occasion. A whole year before the First World War broke out, Nolde painted several military depictions, thus accommodating the increasing appetite for war (cf. *Soldiers*; *Battlefield*, cat. nos. 54–55). In the travelling exhibition *Die Kunst im Kriege (Art in Wartime)* organised by Karl Ernst Osthaus in 1916, which was held from February 27 until March 26, 1916 on the premises of the Berlin Secession, the paintings were presented as patriotic examples of modern war art. Two years later the atmosphere had shifted: enthusiasm was followed by disillusionment. In the year of the October Revolution Nolde painted *Agitated Gathering*, to which he later gave the new title *Revolution* (cat. no. 56). This is one of the most political paintings by the artist, who in 1919 was elected by the business committee of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Workers’ Council for Art)* to join its Artistic Working Party, but who did not actively participate in this left-wing union of visual artists.

Like other Expressionist artists and writers, Nolde saw the city and the countryside as opposing spheres: “A greater contrast to the distant summery rural life was impossible to imagine. There was the peaceful forest with its singing birds, all the sweet little animals and the great clouds resting above the high crowns of its beech trees; here were the petrol roads, the cigarette fumes emerging from taverns, the pale cheeks of human slaves.”⁷⁴ As early as 1902 the artist complained: “Let me flee, away from here, far away! I long for nature’s pure life. For sunshine, for the west wind that beats the waves against the shore. Thunder clouds. I want the spray to sweep across my face, and I

want to have soaking-wet clothes.”⁷⁵ Time and again, he contrasted the “people of nature” with the “spoiled big-city people”⁷⁶ with their “impotent bitumen lions and hectic demi-mondaines”⁷⁷ in his writings.

IMAGES OF LONGING

Nolde regularly spent the summer months in North Schleswig, where he could work undisturbed, away from the bustle of the capital city. It was here that his numerous landscape paintings were created, with their expansive skies, low-lying horizons and lonely farm buildings (cf. *Close Evening*; *Autumn Garden*, cat. nos. 86, 95). These paintings are to this day among his most admired works, and ensure that Nolde’s name remains tightly intertwined in public perception with North Schleswig. “The influence of the broad plains of his homeland beside the North Sea, its expansive views as far as the horizon and at the same time the conscious, intense observation of individual events, the flowing, unobstructed transition between close-up and panoramic views and the close correspondence between heaven and earth or water – all these were absorbed within him and had a lasting effect on his perception”, is how Reuther describes these paintings.⁷⁸ In these works in particular, the longing for a simple life close to nature can be felt. These are idealised landscapes, painted utopias. Telegraph poles, chimneys and railways are nowhere to be seen in them.

Nolde’s fantasy depictions, too, make a strangely detached impression, far removed from the current artistic production of his contemporaries: “Just one more tiny step and we arrive at Böcklin, Stuck and the other alchemists of a bygone age, whose inner voice once endangered our eardrums,” according to Meier-

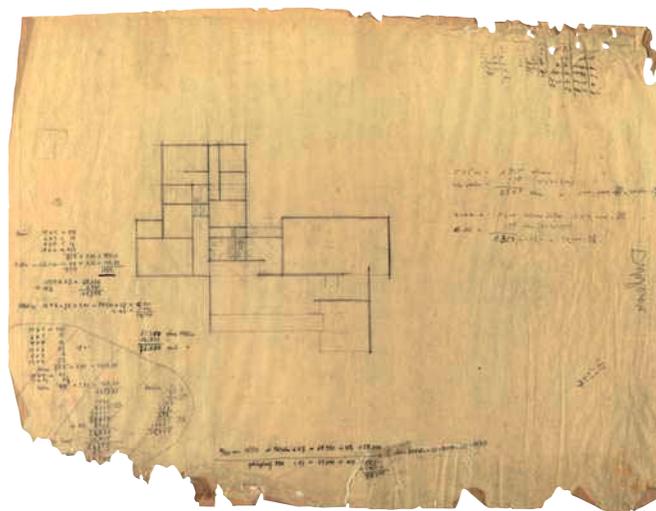


Fig. 15 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, floor plan of *Nolde House*, 1929, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll

Graefe's conviction in 1924.⁷⁹ When Nolde was born, Otto von Bismarck was chancellor. The artist was 47 years old when the First World War broke out. His early art-historical references were the artist-stars of the late nineteenth century. Hans Thoma, who at the time was highly appreciated in bourgeois circles, was among them. Nolde called on him during a stay in Karlsruhe in 1911, in order to show him his woodcuts with representations of fairy tales: "He in particular, I believed, must understand these and like them a little bit. Perhaps I, too, as an artist, could be of some small significance to him. – I was not admitted. The portfolio was returned, with a few cool words. This was a mistake on my part, and a disappointment."⁸⁰ Nolde's displeasure is understandable in view of what the two artists had in common. Their shared interests were not limited to their enthusiasm for Böcklin and rejection of German Impressionism. The parallels are to be found primarily in their art and choice of subjects. Their oeuvres are both dominated by idealised landscape and fantasy depictions, in addition to portraits and religious works, while current social issues and nude painting are almost entirely absent. The north German artist appears repeatedly to make direct references to the work of "the German people's favourite painter", as Thoma is described in *Meyer's Grosses Konversations-Lexikon* of 1909. Although Nolde's restless application of paint fundamentally distinguishes his work from Thoma's paintings, there are astonishing parallels: comparing Thoma's *Children Dancing in a Ring* of 1884 (fig. 16) with Nolde's painting *Wildly Dancing Children* (cat. no. 18), the influence can also be seen in the child holding a baby in its arms, positioned in the background. In their multi-volume autobiographies the two artists present themselves as simple, honest souls from the countryside. Their origins play a decisive role in the reception of their work. On the basis of their rural backgrounds, a deeper understanding of homeland and nature is attributed to them, which is why their representations – despite their idealisation – were felt to be authentic. Direct, unaffected, honest: these characteristics were ascribed to both artists by their followers. It was not unknown for collectors such as Hagemann or art historians like Justi to become enthusiastic about both Thoma and Nolde. In his memoirs the director of the Nationalgalerie reports that he had inspired Liebermann's "hatred of an Old Testament magnitude" by not only "daring to resist" his "lust for power", but also "honouring German masters through acquisitions and exhibitions, not only the younger ones, the hated Corinth and Nolde, but also older ones, such as Thoma and Böcklin".⁸¹

Nolde's landscapes are juxtaposed with the group of Berlin pictures, whose subjects he found in variety shows, the cabaret and theatre. The director Max Reinhardt allowed him and Ada to attend the dress rehearsals and all performances at the Deutsches Theater and Kammerspiele for free. Nolde captured the events on stage in dozens of watercolours and drawings. The couple also went to cafés and dance halls in the course of their

activities. Nolde describes these impressions in a series of 17 paintings (cf. *Dance II; In the Box; In the Coffeehouse*, cat. nos. 47–49). As an uninvolved observer he studied nocturnal social gatherings, which he committed to canvas with bright colours and a small number of bold brushstrokes. In these works, the protagonists are reminiscent of caricatures (fig. 17). These are distorted pictures of a society that fascinated Nolde, but which remained foreign to him. Together with the depictions of Hamburg's harbour, which were created virtually simultaneously (cf. *Tug-Boats on the Elbe; Smoking Steamers*, cat. nos. 27–28), these are the only works in the north German painter's oeuvre that focus his gaze on life in the metropolis.

Like many other artists at the beginning of the twentieth century, Nolde was also interested in non-European art. He made studies in the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (Royal Ethnological Museum). He acquired numerous exotic figures and objects as well as modern kitsch objects, which he made use of in his still lifes (cf. *Exotic Figures (Fetishes I); Still Life (Victoria and Albert)*, cat. nos. 57, 60). After his attempt to make a voyage of several weeks on a German warship failed in May 1912, an opportunity for long-distance travel presented itself almost one year later. As participants in an expedition of the Reichskolonialamt (Imperial Colonial Office), the Noldes travelled through Russia to Southeast Asia (fig. 18). Vari-



Fig. 16 Hans Thoma, *Children Dancing in a Ring*, 1884, location unknown

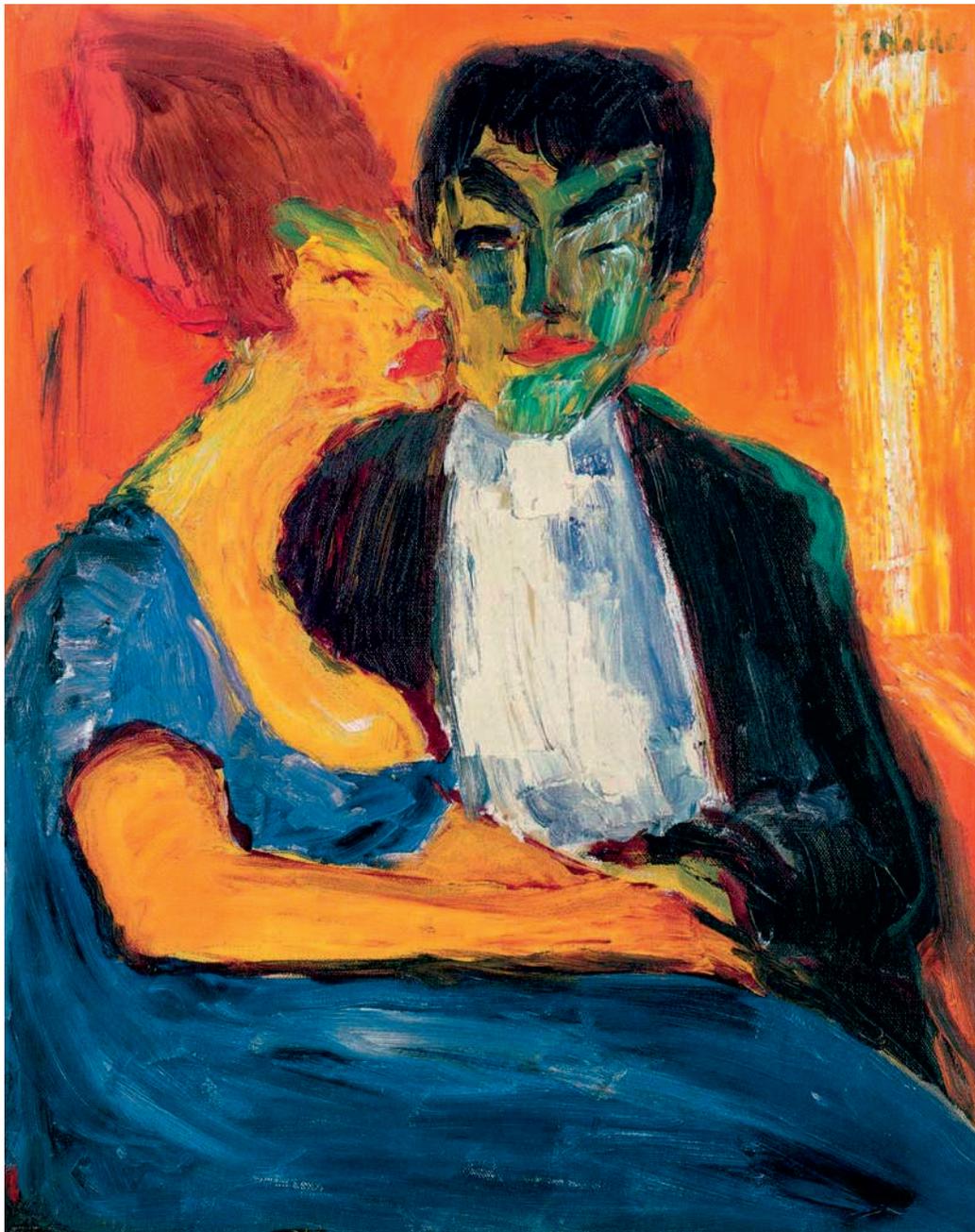


Fig. 17 Emil Nolde, *In a Night-Bar*, 1911, Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo

ous paintings, watercolours and drawings were created in New Guinea (cf. *Tropical Sun*; *Nusa Lik*; *South Sea Warriors*; *Mother and Child (Blue Skirt)*; *Native (Tattooed Face)*, cat. nos. 66–70). The couple set out on their journey home after five months, learning about the outbreak of the First World War on the return trip. Unlike Paul Gauguin, whom he admired, Nolde did

not strive for a new geographical centre for his life. He was in search of new impressions that he could use for his art. Nolde's hope "of discovering first nature, completely untouched by any form of civilisation"⁸² would not be fulfilled because Western influence had left its traces here, too: "The natives are a magnificent people, wherever they have not already been spoiled by

contact with the culture of the whites.”⁸³ There are no suggestions of colonisation in his portraits of the native populations or in his atmospheric landscapes such as *Tropical Sun* and *Nusa Lik*. Nolde depicts foreign lands as he does his own homeland, as an untouched idyll. In the South Sea works it is not his origin but his status as an eyewitness that makes these representations appear authentic to the naive viewer. When the artist exhibited these works even before the end of the First World War, the reaction to them was emphatic. After his return, Nolde painted additional exotic subjects, in some cases based on sketches. Some of these seem to confirm beliefs about “barbaric natives” which were in currency in some places in Europe at the time; in *Trophies of the Savages* (cat. no. 71), for example, the blood of the decapitated heads drips towards the viewers.

“THE MOST GERMAN”

During the Weimar Republic Nolde cemented his reputation as one of the most important German artists. Numerous museums and collections acquired his works, and interest in the Expressionist was on the rise in other countries, too. When he participated in an exhibition at the Anderson Galleries in New York with other German artists in 1923, it was euphorically declared that “Nolde is the great success, everybody proclaims him to be the strongest of them all.”⁸⁴ Nolde worship reached its apotheosis in 1927, on the occasion of the artist’s 60th birthday. In this year, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Kiel, a touring exhibition of 460 works celebrated his life’s work, Sauerlandt produced a volume of Nolde letters, Schiefler published the second part of his catalogue raisonné of works on paper, and Rudolf Probst published a festschrift. This volume featured contributions by, among others, Paul Klee, Ernst Fuhrmann, Paul Westheim and Kurt Breysig, whose essay set the tone for the cult of Nolde: “The people that has been given such a lord and master of its art must receive his work [...] Criticism is foolish and inappropriate from the outset, applause almost presumptuous.”⁸⁵ Despite his great success, the image of the doubting artist who struggles with himself persisted. Many saw Nolde as an elemental force and ineffable natural phenomenon. His art was considered by many to be typically German, tightly intertwined with the homeland. It was said to be the “experience of the blood”⁸⁶ or the “voice of the blood [...] that speaks out of Nolde’s compositions”.⁸⁷ Christian Saehrendt has pointed to the fact that many right-wing forces in the Weimar Republic interpreted Nolde’s works of art as “harbingers of a ‘national uprising’”.⁸⁸ This view was supported by museum directors such as Justi, who styled him the “master of German art true to its roots”.⁸⁹

The National Socialists’ rise to power was greeted with euphoria by the Noldes. Emil Nolde submitted an application for admittance to the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* (Militant League for German Culture) – which was rejected. He remained optimistic, however, that the “beautiful rising of the German



Fig. 18 *Among Native Women*, photograph from the manuscript *Neuguinea. 1913 und 1914* (New Guinea. 1913 and 1914)

people”, as he wrote to the Norwegian art historian Henrik Grevenor, would lead to a good outcome: “Many bad things seem to have been reported abroad about Germany; when and where might a revolution have been accomplished in such a restrained manner without recourse to military actions. People who know Germany will not believe the horror stories in any case.”⁹⁰ Erna Hanfstaengl, the cousin of the new director of the Nationalgalerie, Eberhard Hanfstaengl, used her influence so that on November 9, 1933 the Noldes were invited by Heinrich Himmler to attend as guests of honour a reception celebrating the tenth anniversary of Hitler’s attempted putsch in Munich. They reported enthusiastically: “The Führer is great and noble in his aspirations, and a brilliant man of action.”⁹¹ Nolde joined the newly founded *Nationalsozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Nord-schleswig* (National Socialist Working Association of North Schleswig; NSAN), which would later be merged with other Nazi organisations in the region to form the *NSDAP Nordschleswig* (National Socialist Party of North Schleswig; NSDAPN).⁹² When Joseph Goebbels asked artists for a declaration of loyalty to Hitler in the summer of 1934, Nolde was among the signatories. At this time it was by no means decided how the new rulers, to whom the artist so eagerly offered his services, would classify his painting. Unlike the work of Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, Karl Hofer and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, his work was not socio-critical; he did not paint the consequences of the First World War or the

turmoil of the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, Nolde's commitment to social democracy in 1907 and to the Arbeitsrat für Kunst in 1919 had been mere episodes.

After their accession to power, the National Socialists' attitude to the visual arts was initially totally unclear. Numerous statements document this fact. Kessler noted in the summer of 1933: "Flechtheim spoke. He told of the events in Berlin in the arts: the opposing directions among the Nazis, those who affirm modern art, also Nolde and Barlach, and those who want to stamp it out under the leadership of Schultze-Naumburg."⁹³ While Paul Schultze-Naumburg, Alfred Rosenberg and Hitler were opposed to Nolde, he was initially supported by Himmler, the NSD-Studentenbund (National Socialist Student Federation) and Goebbels. Albert Speer had hung a number of watercolours by Nolde in Goebbels' official residence in Berlin: "Goebbels and his wife accepted them with enthusiasm – until Hitler came on a viewing, disapproved of them in the harshest of tones, and the minister immediately summoned me: 'The paintings have to go at once, they are absolutely impossible!'", Speer reported in his memoirs.⁹⁴ The propaganda minister had already made enthusiastic pronouncements about the development of colour in Nolde's watercolours as early as 1924.⁹⁵ In the first years of the Third Reich, Nolde attempted to stage himself as a National Socialist through and through. Anything seemed possible – even that he would become the figurehead of German art. Nolde did not hesitate to denounce his colleagues: Max Pechstein was a Jew, he declared to the National Socialist authorities.⁹⁶ For this behaviour he would later be ostracised by artists such as Karl Hofer, who proclaimed him a "disgusting Nazi and denouncer".⁹⁷

All of Nolde's attempts to woo the National Socialists were in vain. He was deeply wounded when the rejection of his work became visible to everybody at the opening of the *Degenerate*

Art exhibition in Munich on July 19, 1937. Nolde was one of the most prominently displayed artists in the exhibition, with a total of 33 paintings. In the confiscation campaign in German museums initiated by Goebbels on June 30, Nolde was at the top of the list, with a total of 1102 works, including 73 paintings.⁹⁸ He interpreted the vilification as a misunderstanding because he considered himself to be part of the "movement". In a letter to Goebbels in which he demanded the return of his confiscated works of art, he emphasised that he had engaged as "virtually the only German artist in open combat against the flooding of German art by foreign elements".⁹⁹

In spite of the defamation, three exhibitions of Nolde's work took place in Germany in 1937, including a show that was opened on June 12 by Rudolf Probst at the Mannheimer Kunsthaus (fig. 19).¹⁰⁰ Although in accordance with the artist's wishes the press had not been informed about the exhibition, the president of the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Reich Chamber of Fine Arts), Adolf Ziegler, became aware of the event during a visit to Mannheim on July 8, and ordered that it be shut down immediately. Nolde's paintings could not be shown publicly in Germany, with a small number of exceptions, from this point onwards. The Munich-based art dealer Günther Franke reported that, after 1937, he camouflaged the presentations of work by living artists as Romantic exhibitions. These included a 1940 show featuring works by Nolde and Xaver Fuhr.¹⁰¹ Exhibitions continued to take place in the USA. In October 1940 *Time Magazine* reported about a solo exhibition of the "father of German Expressionism" at the Katherine Kuh Gallery in Chicago: "Artist Nolde, now 73, is still in Germany [...] He is a Nazi Party member. Although he is officially banned, he paints what he likes, sells it while Nazis look the other way. Reason: Hermann Göring collects Nolde paintings."¹⁰²

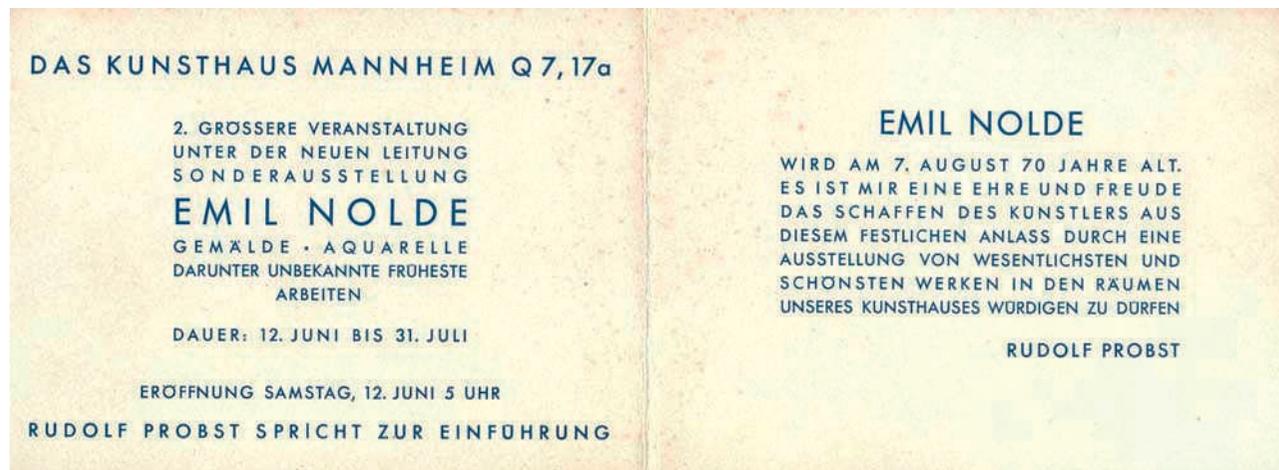


Fig. 19 Invitation to the opening of the exhibition *Emil Nolde* at Kunsthaus Mannheim on June 12, 1937

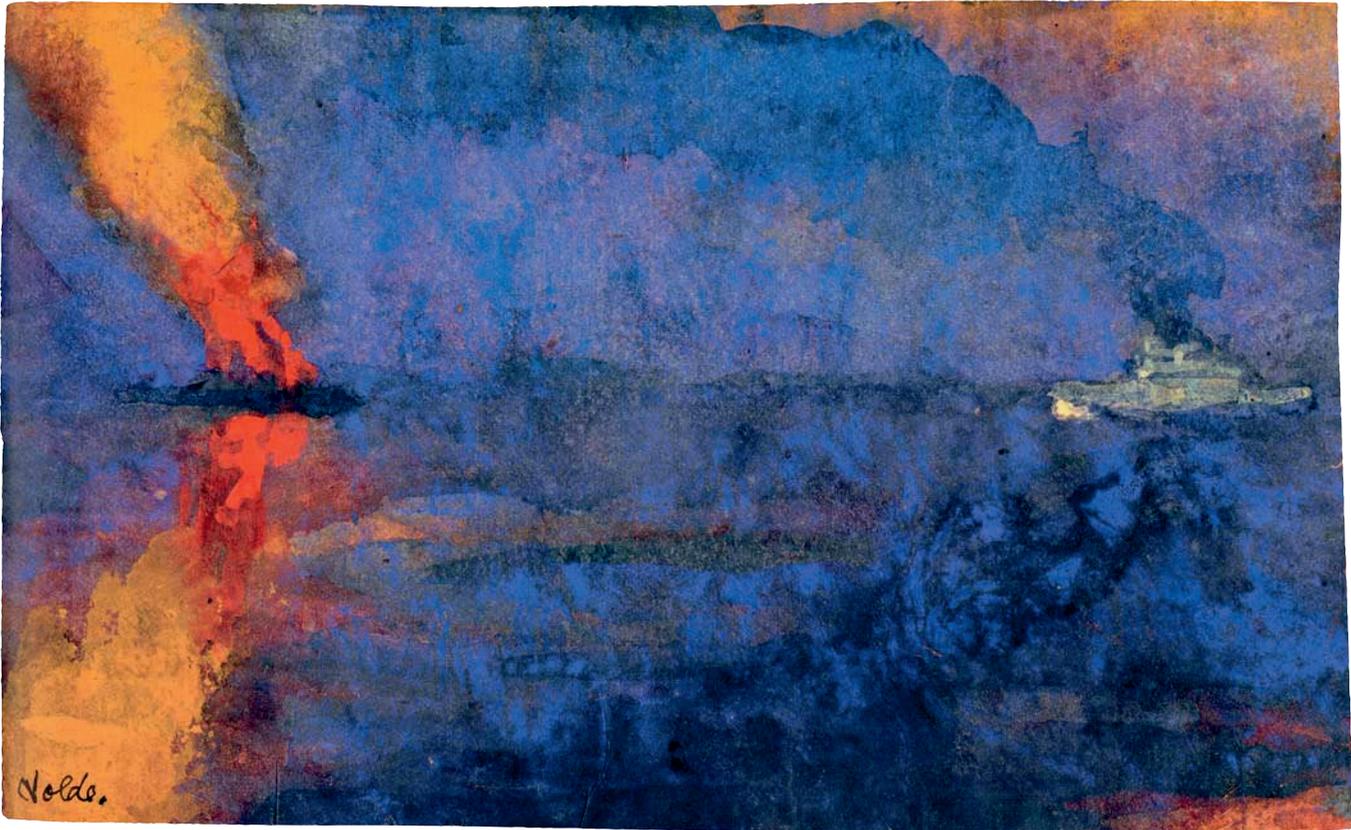


Fig. 20 Emil Nolde, *Warship and Burning Steamers*, between 1938 and 1945, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll

Suffering from ill health – Nolde had undergone surgery in 1935 in Hamburg, having been diagnosed with cancer of the stomach – the artist increasingly withdrew to his property in Seebüll. From 1941 the Noldes also gave up their regular sojourns in Berlin. Nolde began work on the series of so-called *Unpainted Pictures* in 1938 (cf. cat. nos. 120–134). Until the end of the war, he created more than 1300 of these small-format watercolours, giving his exuberant imagination free rein. The viewer encounters mysterious figures from myths and legends, which Nolde assigned to a world “beyond rules and cool knowledge”.¹⁰³ The present makes only occasional appearances, when, for example, burning warships are depicted (fig. 20). Nolde worked wet-on-wet on strongly absorbent Japan papers, so that – as in the watercolours of landscapes (cf. cat. nos. 99–102) – chance, too, plays a compositional role in the running paint. He does not leave it at that: “I myself looked at them for a long time and often, and almost always repeatedly worked on each individual sheet, making changes, heightening them in terms of colouring, drawing and expression.”¹⁰⁴ The importance to him of this particular series was already to be seen in 1938, when he began to transpose individual works from the series of *Unpainted Pic-*

tures into oil (cf. *Encounter II; Dream*, cat. nos. 139, 141). He gave titles only to the 54 works which he painted in oil, after transferring them from paper onto canvas. The painting *The Holy Fire* (cat. no. 136), after a watercolour, depicts a lonely rider moving away from a narrow pyramid upon whose tip a f'lazes. Like the paintings *Holy Sacrifice* and *Burning Castle* (figs. 21, 22), also executed in 1940, the representation appears to take into account the National Socialists' enthusiasm for a purportedly German-Nordic culture. It is possible that in these works, which he grouped with his “Viking pictures, ‘Warriors’, ‘Nordic People’ and ‘Gaut’”,¹⁰⁵ Nolde was attempting to move closer to a range of subjects that also corresponded to the ideas of the Nazis. *Burning Castle* hung alongside two other works at the home of Ilse Göring-Diels, who was the widow of Hermann Göring's dead brother, where “it must be a particular delight to Hermann”.¹⁰⁶ In 1944 Nolde's works were brought to Hermann Göring's summer residence in Austria, which served as a place of refuge for him at the end of the war.¹⁰⁷

Nolde's work continued to sell well despite the difficult political situation: in 1940 his income was 52,151.34 marks. The head of the Reichssicherheitsdienst (Reich Security Service), Reinhard



Fig. 21 Emil Nolde, *Holy Sacrifice*, 1940, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Fig. 22 Emil Nolde, *Burning Castle*, between 1938 and 1940, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll, watercolour from the series *Unpainted Pictures*, from which the now-lost painting *Burning Castle* was painted

Heydrich, ordered emphatically that the money supply of the “infamous art-Bolshevist and leader of degenerate art” should be cut off once and for all.¹⁰⁸ Nolde was excluded from the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste “because of a lack of reliability”, and was banned from working as an artist as a main or subsidiary source of income (p. 44, fig. 1). From this point onwards, Nolde was no longer able to buy paints or painting supplies. “A sword dangling above my head, I had been robbed of movement and freedom,” reported Nolde in his memoirs.¹⁰⁹ Not only did the artist still obtain painting utensils through friends like the painter Hans Holtorf; dealers including Günther Franke, Hildebrand Gurlitt and Probst continued to sell his works, while his prices rose after 1933.¹¹⁰ Bernhard Sprengel acquired *Verbascum and Lilies* (cat. no. 119) directly from the artist in the summer of 1944.¹¹¹ In addition to the *Unpainted Pictures* – which Nolde had started to produce three years before the ban on working – Nolde produced several large-format paintings even after the prohibition. The majority are representations of flowers, including seven works whose subjects were sunflowers (cf. *Sunflowers in the Evening Light*, cat. no. 137). The choice of this subject may have been a reference to van Gogh, an artist cast out by society.

How much Nolde suffered in this situation is made clear in a private letter dated January 26, 1942 and addressed to the husband and wife Hans and Ruth Gallwitz. In this letter, Emil and Ada congratulate the young parents on the birth of their youngest daughter and give them both a work and a typescript of their descriptions of their travels in the South Seas (cf. fig. 23). Although the addressees had no connection to the National Socialist Party, Ada – who was also writing in her husband’s name – used the letter for very fundamental explanations: “Dear

friends in Vienna, On the occasion of the arrival of this little branch to a rather large family tree, we are sending you a piece that has given us courage and joy in what has been a fairly difficult time for us. But that which is proclaimed in the enclosed papers has occurred in opposition to all feelings and expressions: the most German, Germanic, loyal artist has been excluded. This is the thanks he receives for his fight against inundation by foreign elements and against the Jews, the thanks for his great love of Germany, although the cession of North Schleswig would have made it so easy for him to join the other camp. Most of all, it is the thanks for his great art, to which he has dedicated his life. It is the thanks for his affiliation with the party, in which he does see the solution to the people’s problems, despite numerous mistakes [...]”¹¹²

In February that same year, an incendiary bomb destroyed Nolde’s Berlin home in Bayernallee. His art collection with works by Klee, Josephson, Lyonel Feininger and others was consumed by flames. Many of his own works were burned, too, including almost the entire collection of prints. The war could also be felt in Seebüll, although far removed from urban centres: “These air raids are frightening, with all their destruction and dangers to people. The swathes of bombs currently roll over our house every day or night,” the Noldes reported in late January 1944.¹¹³ A few months later, Ada added that “the enemy planes attack our holiday trains and people who stand together. These are no doubt training flights for future terror pilots!”¹¹⁴ And yet Nolde never considered leaving his homeland. He visited sanatoriums in Switzerland on several occasions during the National Socialist dictatorship, and also had good connections to Scandinavia. His Danish citizenship – he felt that he was part of the German minority in Denmark¹¹⁵ – would have made it easy for him to emi-

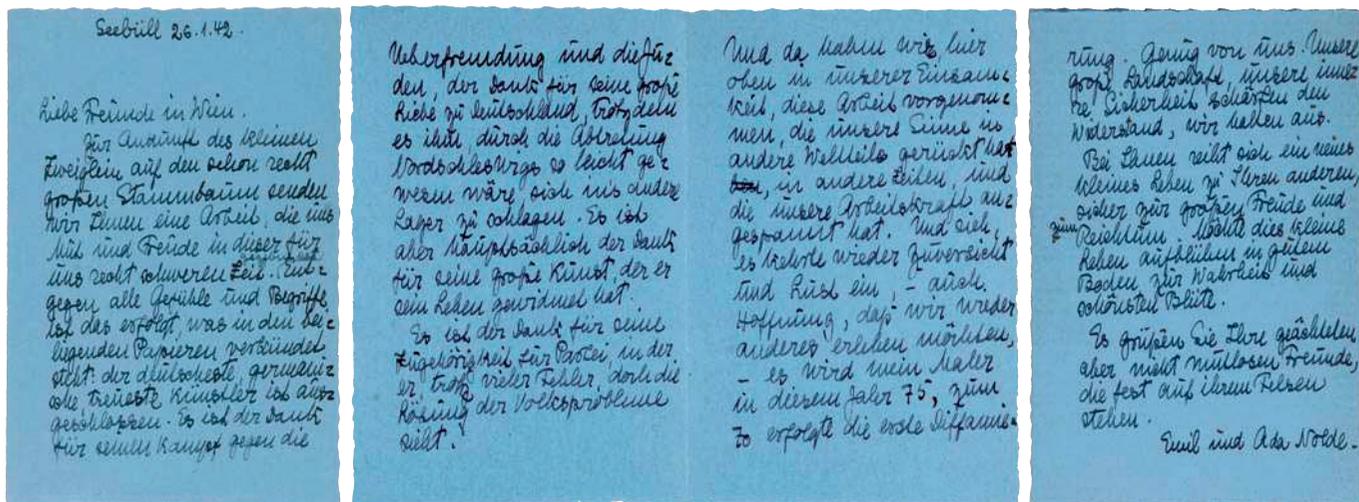


Fig. 23 Letter from Emil and Ada Nolde to Hans and Ruth Gallwitz, January 26, 1942, private collection

grate. As early as November 1933 Ada thanked Klee for his suggestion as she declined it: “After all, Emil is subject to rigorous opposition, no holds barred, but it is as though none of this can touch him, and he is so much a part of Germany that one would tear out his roots without being able to find other soil for them if he had to be replanted.”¹¹⁶

AFTER 1945

At the end of the war, the Noldes were in Seebüll. More than 100 paintings were created by 1951. “The liberation of the eyes and hands caused the entire human being to take a deep breath in new spirituality and increased creation,” the artist wrote.¹¹⁷ The paintings depicted flowers and landscapes, including *Light Sea* (cat. no. 142), as well as repeated representations of couples (cf. *Dream*, cat. no. 141). The restive, powerful paint application of the pre-war works has given way to a gentler brushstroke. Some of the works feel almost mellow and playful, as when a purple-coloured child’s head gazes out at the viewer in *Spring in Autumn* (cat. no. 135). The countless watercolours of flowers, which he continued to paint until 1955, do not differ from his earlier representations.

As a former member of the NSDAPN, the artist was required to undergo a denazification process. In August 1946 the authorities officially confirmed that he “is not to be considered an activist. N. joined the National Socialist Party in 1935 although there was no imperative to do so. His oppositional attitude is unmistakably indicated by the Nazi regime’s assessment of his works of art, and this is to be viewed as a rejection of the regime.”¹¹⁸ This statement amounts to the official proposition that, as the National Socialists rejected Nolde’s art, he cannot have been a National Socialist. This liberating message was over-

shadowed by Ada’s fragile health. She died of a heart attack in the autumn of 1946. Only a few months previously, the Noldes had determined by will the founding of the Stiftung Seebüll Ada und Emil Nolde, which continues to administer the artist’s estate to this day.

To his friends’ surprise, Nolde remarried in February 1948. His second wife, Jolanthe, was 26 years old at their wedding, a student of German and the daughter of the composer Eduard Erdmann, a friend of Nolde’s. She accompanied the last years of Nolde’s life. The artist was perceived by a German public traumatised by the National Socialist and war period as a prime example of the artist defamed by the Nazi dictatorship. Even during his lifetime, Nolde made an “application for compensation for the victims of National Socialist persecution”, in which he asserted that it would not have been possible to resign from the National Socialist Party “without thereby putting his life and work at serious risk”.¹¹⁹ The application was, however, rejected on account of his membership of the party. “Those who advanced the National Socialist tyranny,” says the explanatory statement, have no right to receive payments.¹²⁰ After the war Nolde was awarded numerous honours in rapid succession: in 1946 he was appointed professor by the regional government of Schleswig Holstein, in 1949 he received the Stephan-Lochner Medal of the city of Cologne, followed in 1950 by the prize awarded at the XXV Biennale in Venice for his graphic oeuvre, and in 1952 by the Pour le Mérite order in the peace category and the Kulturpreis of the city of Kiel. Nolde’s work was represented not only at the first documenta exhibition in 1955, but also shown posthumously at the second and third documenta (1959/1964).

Nolde died of bronchitis in Seebüll in April 1956. He was buried there in a kind of mausoleum, next to Ada. In accordance

with the artist's wishes, the house with the picture gallery and the garden were made accessible to the public after his death. Over the course of the years, the secluded dwelling developed into something like a place of pilgrimage for Nolde fans from the Federal Republic of Germany and Denmark. It received up to 120,000 visitors per year in the 1980s.¹²¹ Siegfried Lenz's best-seller *Deutschstunde* (*The German Lesson*), published in 1968, contributed to this success. It describes a painter harassed by being forbidden to paint and under Gestapo surveillance. While Nolde was long rejected for his "formalism" and "bourgeois decadence" in the German Democratic Republic, some of the top politicians in the Federal Republic of Germany were full of enthusiasm: Chancellor Helmut Schmidt had a sign bearing the inscription "Nolde Room" put up in front of his office in the Federal Chancellery in Bonn as a "small compensation",¹²² and organised a Nolde exhibition at the Chancellery in 1982. He also joined Lenz on a holiday in Nolde's footsteps on Als.¹²³ The former chancellor's private collection also includes several works by Nolde. President Richard von Weizsäcker wrote a personal introductory greeting on the occasion of the departure of the long-time director of the foundation, Martin Urban.¹²⁴ At the Chancellery admiration continues to this day under Angela Merkel;

Nolde's *Breakers* (1936, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie, cf. fig. 24) crash above the heads of visitors in the seating area in her office, while *Flower Garden A (Thersens's House)* (1915, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie) is on display behind her desk.

With 1356 paintings, countless watercolours and drawings and more than 500 prints, Nolde's oeuvre is remarkably large. And there are so many publications about this artist that it is difficult to maintain an overview. The spectrum ranges from opulent illustrated volumes via various exhibition catalogues to doctoral theses and excellent individual analyses. As Nolde correctly observed, he would actually have suited the National Socialists' views on art policy with his close ties to the nineteenth century, fascination with Nordic mysticism and belief in homeland and nation. This may be surprising from today's perspective, as our ways of looking at things are so profoundly shaped by the course of history that it is very difficult to imagine Nolde as the official representative of the Third Reich's visual arts. And yet just one small step prevented this from coming to pass. Unlike the Italian Fascists, who used Futurism to further their agenda, the Nazis did not use the visual arts to furnish themselves with a modern, contemporary image. If they had, Nolde would perhaps



Fig. 24 Angela Merkel in conversation with US Secretary of State John Kerry at the Federal Chancellery, February 2013. In the background is the painting *Breakers* (1936) by Emil Nolde

have experienced a fate similar to that of Arno Breker and Leni Riefenstahl, who in the space of a few years reached the pinnacles of their careers thanks to official Nazi commissions, a fact that made their fall all the greater.

“Only if one accepts Nolde’s personality in all of its crude inconsistency can one [...] truly do justice to his art,” as Florian Illies stated in 2008.¹²⁵ The critic Adolf Behne summarised it as early as 1947: “Stylistically Nolde is one of the ‘degenerate’ artists, this is certainly the case, but not as a character. [...] If some writers give the impression that Nolde, as he was ‘degenerate’, was also a hero of intellectual resistance, this idea must be rejected. He was willing to offer up his art to the Nazis, and their rejection was the only impediment. He is a degenerate ‘degenerate’.”¹²⁶

Walter Jens’s lament, articulated as early as 1967, that one cannot “view Nolde with Nolde’s (or Sauerlandt’s) categories and meditate on his ‘thoroughly German art’ or the ‘Nordic nature’”, has lost none of its relevance to this day.¹²⁷ Jens, however, suggests that Nolde’s oeuvre and the artist himself should be categorically separated in the reception of Nolde’s art. To do so would distort the view of the manifold relationships between artistic production and historical context, however. In retrospect, Nolde’s extensive written explanations, which create the closest of bonds between his art and his biography, may not have helped access to his work. His descriptions and interpretations impede understanding, separate from his views, of an oeuvre whose many-faceted nature leaves much to be discovered.

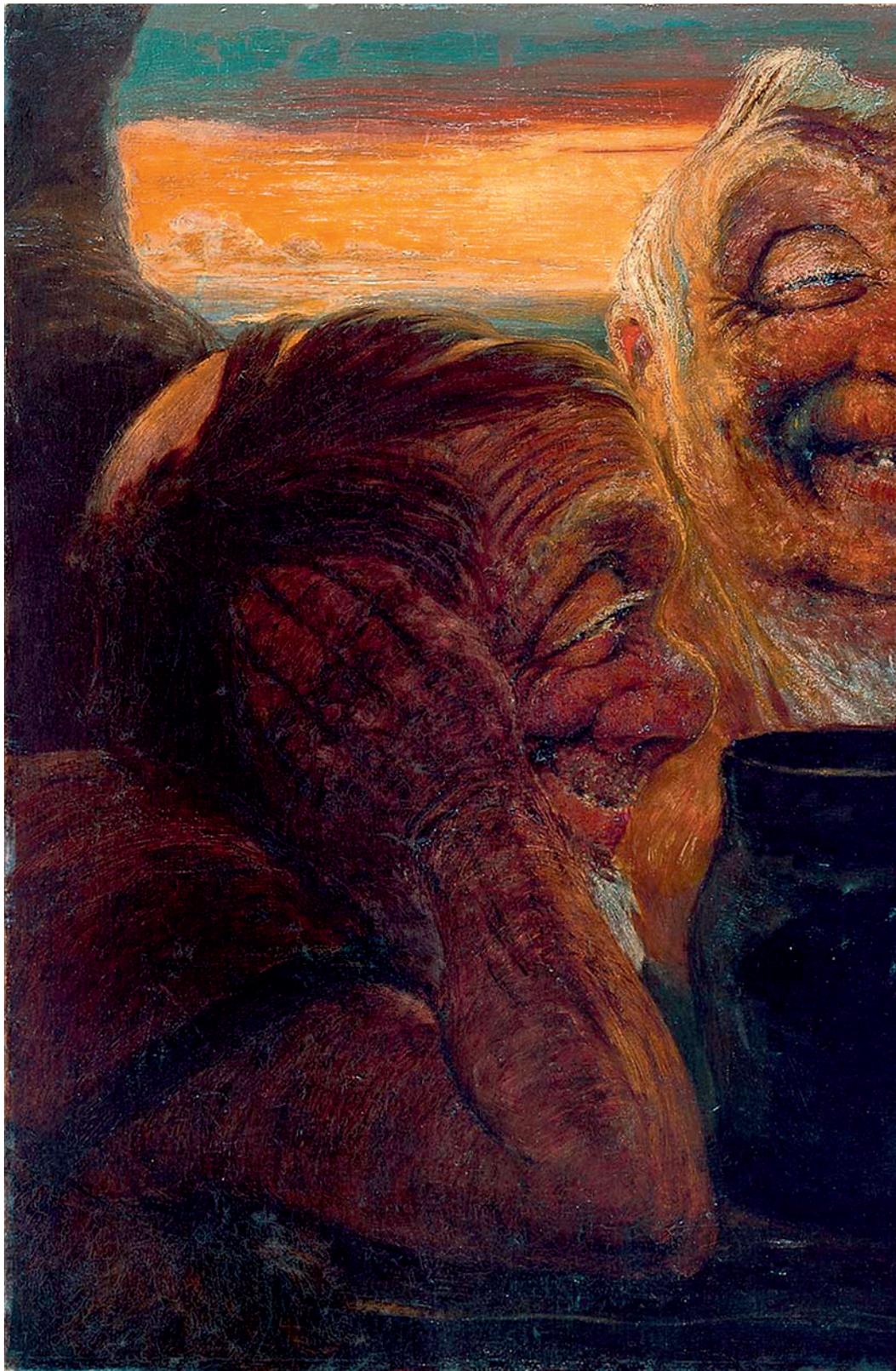
Today Nolde is without doubt one of the most important artists of the modern age. Not only is his standing higher than that of virtually any other painter; he also succeeds in casting a spell over his public. While some admire Nolde’s unique use of colour, others revere him for the uncompromising way in which he followed his chosen path. International artists like Karel Appel, Asger Jorn and Per Kirkeby have made a close study of his works – and also the “Junge Wilde” of German painting during the 1980s would have been unthinkable without Nolde. The particular quality of his work lies in the way that opposites, such as the intense and the charming, the garish and the delicately coloured, combine to form a new tense entity without appearing to clash. Paul Klee, who valued “Nolde, the age-old soul”, contributed a text to the latter’s festschrift on the occasion of his 60th birthday. It puts into words both Nolde’s ambivalence and also his particular fascination, and makes an appeal to the viewer’s attention: “Nolde is more than just earthy, he is also the demon of this region. Domiciled elsewhere oneself, one is always aware of the cousin down there in the depths, the elective relation. One does not lie down to sleep with demons, the tension of their proximity is too great.”¹²⁸

- 1 Solo exhibition of Emil Nolde’s work at Galerie Commeter in Hamburg, March 1913, Emil Nolde to Hans Fehr in early April 1913, copy in archive of the Nolde Stiftung Seebüll (ANS).
- 2 Alfred Heuer: “Emil Nolde”, in: *Jahrbuch für den Kreis Pinneberg*, no. 6, 1922, pp. 17–52, here p. 46.
- 3 Adolf Behne: “Ausstellung Emil Nolde”, in: *Welt am Abend*, February 15, 1930.
- 4 Hans Harbeck: “Emil Nolde”, in: *Hamburger Nachrichten*, no. 186, April 21, 1911.
- 5 *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, quoted from Emil Nolde to Hans Fehr, October 17, 1904, in: Hans Fehr: *Emil Nolde. Ein Buch der Freundschaft*, Cologne 1957, p. 37.
- 6 Julius Meier-Graefe: *Grundstoff der Bilder. Ausgewählte Schriften*, Carl Linfert (ed.), Munich 1959, pp. 108–114, here pp. 113–114.
- 7 Curt Stroemer, in: *Der Cicerone*, vol. 5, Leipzig 1913, pp. 805–806.
- 8 B. (Brüning): “Nolde-Ausstellung”, in: *Flensburger Nachrichten*, November 12, 1909, quoted from Karl-Ludwig Hofmann: “Berufung als Beruf – Emil Nolde 1905–1913”, in: *Nolde im Dialog 1905–1913. Quellen und Beiträge*, exh. cat. Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe, Munich 2002 (exh. cat. Karlsruhe 2002b), pp. 42–121, here p. 91.
- 9 Kurt Freyer: “Hagen i. W.”, in: *Der Cicerone*, vol. 4, Leipzig 1912, pp. 277–278, here p. 277.
- 10 Hildebrand Gurlitt: “Zu Emil Noldes Aquarellen”, in: *Die Kunst für alle*, no. 44, 1928–29, pp. 41–42, here p. 41.
- 11 Freyer 1912, p. 277.
- 12 German M. Vonau: “Emil Nolde”, in: *Kasseler Neueste Nachrichten*, March 30, 1928.
- 13 Carl Georg Heise: “Begegnungen mit Emil Nolde”, in: *Brücke-Archiv*, no. 6, Berlin 1972–73, pp. 23–26, here p. 23.
- 14 Hans Fehr, quoted from Thomas Viktor Adolph: “Emil Nolde – gesehen von seinen Freunden. Dokumente der Verbundenheit mit dem Maler”, in: *Emil Hansen aus Nolde. Der Maler aus dem schleswigschen Grenzland eine Gestalt zwischen Deutschland und Dänemark*, Flensburger Studienkreis, Flensburg 1974, pp. 73–77, here p. 76.
- 15 Emil Nolde to Ada Nolde, August 21, 1901, ANS, quoted from *Emil Nolde. Briefe aus den Jahren 1894–1926*, ed. by Max Sauerlandt, Berlin 1927, pp. 35–36.
- 16 Emil Nolde to “Herr S.” (probably Max Sauerlandt), April 17, 1913, quoted from Nolde 1927, pp. 90–91, here p. 90.
- 17 On this subject see Kirsten Jüngling: *Emil Nolde. Die Farben sind meine Noten*, Berlin 2013, pp. 289–292.
- 18 Emil Nolde: *Das eigene Leben. Die Zeit der Jugend 1867–1902*, Berlin 1931, p. 42.
- 19 Nolde 1931, p. 100.
- 20 Emil Nolde to Paul Juncker, August 2, 1949, quoted from Reuther 1985, p. 306.
- 21 Emil Hansen to Hans Fehr, May 7, 1899, quoted from Fehr 1957, p. 23.
- 22 Walter Jens: *Der Hundertjährige. Festvortrag zur Feier des 100. Geburtstages von Emil Nolde am 7. August 1967 in Seebüll*, Flensburg 1967, n.p.
- 23 Paula Becker to Milly Becker, May 27, 1900, quoted from *Paula Moder-*

- sohn-Becker in *Briefen und Tagebüchern*, ed. by Günter Busch and Liselotte von Reinken, Frankfurt am Main 1979 (Modersohn-Becker 1979), p. 226.
- 24 Nolde 1931, p. 152.
- 25 Ibid., p. 163.
- 26 Emil Nolde: *Das eigene Leben. Die Zeit der Jugend 1867–1902*, Cologne 1988, p. 225.
- 27 Nolde 1931, p. 175.
- 28 Ibid., p. 178.
- 29 Emil Nolde: *Jahre der Kämpfe*, Berlin 1934, p. 28.
- 30 Ada Nolde to Emil Nolde, February 23, 1907, ANS, quoted from Indina Woesthoff: “Nur Ihr glücklicher Optimismus wird schon den Schatten des Bankrotts verscheuchen” – Der Einsatz von Ada und Emil Nolde für die Künstlergemeinschaft ‘Brücke’”, in: exh. cat. Karlsruhe 2002b (Woesthoff 2002b), pp. 186–199, here p. 187.
- 31 Emil Nolde to Ada Nolde, July 10, 1905, quoted from Manfred Reuther: “[...] alles musste wie neu erfunden werden.” Emil Noldes Weg zu seiner Bildsprache”, in: *Nolde im Dialog 1905–1913*, Stadt Karlsruhe – Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe, exh. cat. Städtische Galerie Karlsruhe, Munich 2002, pp. 10–25, here p. 10.
- 32 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff to Emil Nolde, February 4, 1906, quoted from Nolde 1934, pp. 90–91, here p. 91.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Emil Nolde to Erich Heckel, November 9, 1907, quoted from Woesthoff 2002b, p. 197.
- 35 P. L. (Paul Landau): “Aus dem Berliner Kunstleben”, in: *Freisinnige Zeitung*, no. 14, January 17, 1908, quoted from Bernard Echte and Walter Feilchenfeldt (eds.), “*Den Sinnen ein magischer Rausch*”. *Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer. Die Ausstellungen 1905–1908*, Wädenswil 2013, vol. 5, pp. 642–645, here p. 645.
- 36 M. O. (Max Osborn): “Kunstsalon Cassirer”, in: *National-Zeitung*, no. 51, July 13, 1908, quoted from Echte/Feilchenfeldt 2013, pp. 652–657, here p. 658.
- 37 L. P. (Ludwig Pietsch): “Kunstaustellungen”, in: *Vossische Zeitung*, January 18, 1908, no. 29, 5th supplement, quoted from Echte/Feilchenfeldt 2013, p. 646–648, here p. 648.
- 38 Emil Nolde to Hans Fehr, September 11, 1905, copy in ANS.
- 39 Manfred Reuther: “Blumen, Gärten und Tiere. ‘Grüße von unserem jungen Garten’”, in: idem (ed.): *Emil Nolde*, Cologne 2010, pp. 83–99, here p. 87.
- 40 Emil Nolde to Carl Hagemann, February 28, 1912, quoted from Hans Delfs, Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau and Roland Scotti (eds.): *Kirchner, Schmidt-Rottluff, Nolde, Nay ... Briefe an den Sammler und Mäzen Carl Hagemann 1906–1940*, Ostfildern-Ruit 2004, no. 10, p. 30.
- 41 Nolde 1934, p. 94.
- 42 Quoted from Fehr 1957, p. 95.
- 43 Carl Georg Heise: “Emil Nolde. Wesen und Weg seiner religiösen Malerei”, in: *Genius. Zeitschrift für werdende und alte Kunst*, vol. 1, 1919, pp. 20–30, here p. 25. See also Meier-Graefe 1959, p. 111.
- 44 Paul Erich Küppers: “Emil Nolde”, in: *Das Kunstblatt*, vol. 2, 1918, pp. 329–343, here p. 330.
- 45 Nolde 1931, p. 154.
- 46 See Angela Lampe: “En quête d’une esthétique de persuasion”, in: *Emil Nolde*, exh. cat. Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris; Musée Fabre, Montpellier, Paris 2008, pp. 85–93. Among other things, Lampe draws attention to the fact that Nolde makes a conscious attempt to involve viewers by employing monumental proportions and frontal representations of his figures.
- 47 Emil Nolde to a friend (presumably Max Sauerlandt), July 28, 1926, quoted from Nolde 1927, p. 178.
- 48 Nolde 1934, p. 94.
- 49 Cf. the list of his “biblical and legend paintings”, ANS. Reproduced in: *Emil Nolde. Die religiösen Bilder/The Religious Paintings*, ed. by Manfred Reuther, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll, exh. cat. Dependence Berlin of the Nolde Stiftung Seebüll, Cologne 2011, pp. 138–139.
- 50 Paul Westheim: *Helden und Abenteurer. Welt und Leben der Künstler*, Berlin 1930, p. 208.
- 51 Harbeck 1911.
- 52 Emil Nolde to Hans Fehr, March 4, 1912, ANS, quoted from Andreas Fluck: “Das grosse Werk” – Der Gemäldezyklus ‘Das Leben Christi’ 1911/12”, in: *Emil Nolde. Legende, Vision, Ekstase. Die religiösen Bilder*, exh. cat. Hamburger Kunsthalle, Cologne 2000, pp. 30–39, here p. 31.
- 53 Nolde 1934, p. 170.
- 54 Emil Nolde to Hans Fehr, October 23, 1930, ANS, quoted from Fluck 2000, p. 32.
- 55 Nolde 1934, p. 107.
- 56 Hans Fehr to Emil Nolde, September 27, 1909, ANS, quoted from Christian Ring: “Max Liebermann und Emil Nolde – Blumen- und Gartenbilder”, in: *Max Liebermann und Emil Nolde. Gartenbilder*, ed. by Martin Faass, exh. cat. Liebermann-Villa am Wannsee, Berlin, Munich 2012, pp. 38–50, here p. 49.
- 57 Nolde 1934, p. 143.
- 58 Emil Nolde: “Erklärung”, in: *Kunst und Künstler*, no. 9, 1911, pp. 210–211, here p. 211. See also Martin Faass: “Max Liebermann und Emil Nolde – Chronologie und Hintergründe eines Konflikts”, in: exh. cat. Berlin 2012, pp. 10–25.
- 59 Hofmann 2002, p. 60.
- 60 Nolde 1934, pp. 142–150.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 At the same time he maintained a business relationship with Ludwig Schames, a Jewish art dealer in Frankfurt, and was in friendly contact with the Turgels, a Jewish couple whom he had met on Sylt in 1930 (cf. *Mrs T. with a Red Necklace*, cat. 104).
- 63 Emil Nolde to Hans Fehr, November 12, 1931, ANS, quoted from Isgard Kracht: “Ansichten eines Unpolitischen? Emil Noldes Verhältnis zum Nationalsozialismus”, in: *Emil Nolde. Farben heiß und heilig*, Vorstand der Stiftung Dome und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt, exh. cat. Stiftung Moritzburg – Kunstmuseum des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle 2013, pp. 193–198, here p. 195.
- 64 Nolde 1934, p. 101.
- 65 Ibid., p. 196.

- 66 J. (Johannes) Sievers, "Die Neue Sezession", in: *Der Cicerone*, 1911, vol. 3, pp. 178–179.
- 67 Nolde 1934, p. 98.
- 68 Thomas Röske: "Expressionisten entdecken 'Irrenkunst'", in: exh. cat. Schleswig 2003, pp. 118–119 and Karl Ludwig Hofmann: "'So ganz merkwürdig rein und schön' – Emil Nolde und Ernst Josephson", in: *Expressionismus und Wahnsinn*, ed. by Herwig Guratzsch, exh. cat. Schloß Gottorf, Schleswig, Munich 2003.
- 69 Ada Nolde to Gustav Schiefeler, November 13, 1908, quoted from Hofmann 2003, p. 123.
- 70 Hofmann 2003, p. 130.
- 71 Paul Ferdinand Schmitt, in: *Abend*, April 2, 1928, quoted from Eberhard Roters: *Galerie Ferdinand Möller. Die Geschichte einer Galerie für Moderne Kunst in Deutschland 1917–1956*, Berlin 1984, p. 102.
- 72 Nolde 1934, p. 115.
- 73 Emil Nolde to "Herr St.", November 25, 1909, quoted from Nolde 1927, pp. 75–76, here p. 76.
- 74 Nolde 1934, pp. 115–116.
- 75 Emil Hansen to a friend, January 27, 1902, quoted from Nolde 1927, pp. 38–39, here p. 38.
- 76 Emil Nolde to unknown recipient, May 24, 1915, quoted from Fehr 1957, p. 88.
- 77 Nolde 1934, p. 137.
- 78 Manfred Reuther: "'My Homeland was like a Fairy Tale to me' – On Emil Nolde's Landscape Painting", in: *Emil Nolde. Mein Wunderland von Meer zu Meer/My Wonderland from Sea to Sea*, ed. by Manfred Reuther, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll, exh. cat. Dependence Berlin of the Nolde Stiftung Seebüll, Cologne 2008, pp. 9–13, here: p. 11.
- 79 Julius Meier-Graefe: *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Kunst*, vol. 3, Munich 1924, p. 665.
- 80 Nolde 1934, p. 129. See also Brigitte Baumstark: "Emil Hansen in Karlsruhe", in: exh. cat. Karlsruhe 2002b, pp. 30–41, here p. 40.
- 81 Ludwig Justi: *Werden-Wirken-Wissen. Lebenserinnerungen aus fünf Jahrzehnten*, ed. by Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Kurt Winkler, vol. 1, Berlin 2000, p. 412. See also Karl Hofer to Leopold Ziegler, August 24, 1933, quoted from *Karl Hofer. Malerei hat eine Zukunft. Briefe, Aufsätze, Reden*, ed. by Andres Hüneke, Leipzig/Weimar 1991, pp. 195–197, here p. 197.
- 82 Nolde 1934, p. 197.
- 83 *Ibid.*, p. 240.
- 84 Wilhelm R. Valentiner to Emil Nolde, October 26, 1923, ANS. Valentiner, the director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, quotes a report by the gallery owner Rudolf Meyer-Riefstahl.
- 85 Kurt Breysig, in: *Festschrift für Emil Nolde anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstages*, Dresden 1927, p. 18.
- 86 Vonau 1928.
- 87 Rudolf Probst: foreword in: *Festschrift 1927*, pp. 11–13, here p. 11.
- 88 Christian Saehrendt: "Emil Nolde heute", in: Manfred Reuther (ed.): *Emil Nolde*, Cologne 2010, pp. 9–17, here p. 11.
- 89 Ludwig Justi: "Zu Emil Noldes 65. Geburtstag", in: *Museum der Gegenwart. Zeitschrift der deutschen Museen für neuere Kunst*, no. 2, 1932, p. 52.
- 90 Emil Nolde to Henrik Grevenor, April 27, 1933, quoted from Uwe Danker: "'Vorkämpfer des Deutschtums' oder 'entarteter Künstler'? Nachdenken über Emil Nolde in der NS-Zeit", in: *Demokratische Geschichte*, no. 14, 2001, pp. 149–188, here p. 151.
- 91 Emil Nolde to Hans Fehr, November 10, 1933, transcript in ANS, quoted from James A. van Dyke: "Something New on Nolde, National Socialism, and the SS", in: *Kunstchronik*, year 65, no. 5, May 2012, pp. 265–270, here p. 269.
- 92 Probably in 1934, cf. essay by Aya Soika and Bernhard Fulda, p. 49; Jüngling draws attention to the differing dates specified by Nolde: Jüngling 2013, pp. 227–229. Nolde was also a member of the Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare), the Reichskolonialbund (Reich Colonial League), the Reichsluftschutz (Reich Air-Raid Defence) and the Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland (People's League for German Culture Abroad). Cf. questionnaire for presentation to the denazification committee (as note 125). See also Monika Hecker: "Ein Leben an der Grenze. Emil Nolde und die NSDAP", in: Nordfriisk Instituut (ed.): *Nordfriesland*, no. 110, June 1995, pp. 9–15.
- 93 Harry Graf Kessler: *Tagebücher, 1918–1937*, ed. by Wolfgang Pfeiffer-Belli, Frankfurt am Main 1979, p. 728.
- 94 Albert Speer: *Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main und Berlin 1969, pp. 40–41.
- 95 See Joseph Goebbels, diary entry for August 29, 1924, in: *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, ed. by Elke Fröhlich, part 1, Aufzeichnungen 1924–1941, vol. 1, Munich 2004, p. 213.
- 96 See for example Lyonel Feininger to Johannes Kleinpaul, August 3, 1935; quoted from Diether Schmidt (ed.): *In letzter Stunde. 1933–1945. Schriften deutscher Künstler des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, Dresden 1964, pp. 74–75, here p. 75 and the essay by Aya Soika and Bernhard Fulda, p. 48.
- 97 Karl Hofer to Graßmann, quoted from Hofer 1991, p. 238.
- 98 Cf. database of the research centre "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art) at the Freie Universität Berlin, <http://emuseum.campus.fu-berlin.de/emuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=SdetailList&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F>, accessed November 5, 2013. See also Katrin Engelhardt: "Die Ausstellung 'Entartete Kunst' in Berlin 1938. Rekonstruktion und Analyse", in: Uwe Fleckner (ed.): *Angriff auf die Avantgarde. Kunst und Kunstpolitik im Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin 2007, pp. 89–187, here pp. 92–94.
- 99 Emil Nolde to Joseph Goebbels, July 2, 1938, Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BAArch), R 55/21014. See also the essay by Aya Soika and Bernhard Fulda, p. 50.
- 100 Not 92, as has been claimed several times – this is the number of works in storage in Mannheim with Probst. Cf. Karl-Ludwig Hofmann and Christmut Präger: *Rudolf Probst 1890–1968, Galerist, Wädenswil* (in preparation)
- 101 Doris Schmidt: *Briefe an Günther Franke. Porträt eines deutschen Kunsthändlers*, Cologne 1970, p. 29.
- 102 Anonymous: "German Expressionist", in: *Time Magazine*, New York, October 14, 1940.

- 103 Emil Nolde: “Worte am Rande”, July 8, 1943, ANS, quoted from Werner Haftmann: *Ungemalte Bilder*, Stiftung Seebüll Ada und Emil Nolde, Cologne 1963, pp. 33–39, here p. 38.
- 104 Emil Nolde: *Reisen, Ächtung, Befreiung 1919–1946*, Cologne 1967, p. 147.
- 105 Ibid., p. 148. See also: *Emil Nolde. Begegnung mit dem Nordischen*, ed. by Jutta Hülsewig-Johnen, exh. cat. Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld 2008.
- 106 Ada Nolde quotes Ilse Göring-Diels in a correspondence card to Bernhard and Margrit Sprengel, May 6, 1943, quoted from Ulrich Krempel: “Zur Geschichte der Sammlung Sprengel, 1937 bis 1945”, in: *Emil Nolde und die Sammlung Sprengel 1937–1956. Geschichte einer Freundschaft*, exh. cat. Sprengel Museum Hannover, Hannover 1999, pp. 36–91, here p. 73, note 242.
- 107 Correspondence card from Ada Nolde to Bernhard Sprengel, undated (1944), quoted from *ibid.*, note 261.
- 108 Cf. Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein, dept. 460.19, no. 741, quoted from Jüngling 2013, p. 253. See also Reinhard Heydrich to the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, April 25, 1941, BArch R55/21018, Bl. 19, quoted from Saehrendt 2010, p. 12.
- 109 Nolde 1967, p. 125.
- 110 Cf. Gesa Jeuthe: *Kunstwerte im Wandel. Die Preisentwicklung der deutschen Moderne im Nationalen und Internationalen Kunstmarkt 1925 bis 1955*, Berlin 2011, pp. 149–164, here p. 161.
- 111 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 160; as well as Krempel 1999, pp. 43, 66, 68, 72.
- 112 Ada Nolde to Hans and Ruth Gallwitz, private collection. The full text of the letter: “Dear friends in Vienna,
On the occasion of the arrival of this little branch to a rather large family tree, we are sending you a piece that has given us courage and joy in what has been a fairly difficult time for us. But that which is proclaimed in the enclosed papers has occurred in opposition to all feelings and expressions: the most German, Germanic, loyal artist has been excluded. This is the thanks he receives for his fight against inundation by foreign elements and against the Jews, the thanks for his great love of Germany, although the cession of North Schleswig would have made it so easy for him to join the other camp. Most of all, it is the thanks for his great art, to which he has dedicated his life.
It is the thanks for his affiliation with the party, in which he does see the solution to the people’s problems, despite numerous mistakes.
And up here in our loneliness we have taken on this work, which has transported our minds into other parts of the world, into other times, and which has harnessed our working energy. And behold, optimism and desire returned again – as did the hope that we may experience something different again – my painter will be 75 this year, and the first defamation took place when he was 70. Enough about us. Our great landscape, our inner certainty sharpen our resistance, we endure. With you a little new life joins your others, undoubtedly bringing joy and enrichment. May this little life bloom in good soil towards truth and flower most beautifully.
Greetings from your outcast but not downhearted friends, who stand firm on their rock. Emil and Ada Nolde.”
- 113 Ada Nolde to unknown recipient, January 31, 1944, quoted from <http://www.kettererkunst.de/kunst/kd/details.php?obnr=411302153&anummer=411>, accessed November 5, 2013.
- 114 Ada Nolde to unknown recipient, May 2, 1944, quoted from *ibid.*
- 115 Roters 1984, doc. 85, pp. 275–276.
- 116 Manfred Reuther: “‘Die schöne Bauidee mussten wir aufgeben, ein Ideal wurde damit zu Grabe getragen.’ Emil Nolde und Ludwig Mies van der Rohe”, in: *ibid.*, Nolde Stiftung Seebüll: *Nolde und Mies van der Rohe*, Seebüll 2012, pp. 9–41, here p. 12.
- 117 Nolde 1967, p. 177.
- 118 German Denazification Committee, Case G/K 12866, resolution of August 13, 1946, LA-SH, Dept. 460.19, no. 32.
- 119 Landesentschädigungsamt Schleswig-Holstein, Wlb – N01, June 15, 1954, LA-SH, dept. 761, no. 13668 and dept. 460.19, no. 741.
- 120 *Ibid.* Nolde had applied for compensation for the 50 works, including 7 paintings, which had been confiscated in November 1941. On the confiscation see also p. 51.
- 121 Anna Brenken: “Flaches Land mit Heiligem. Ein Besuch im Nolde-Museum und Anmerkungen zu einer Kontroverse”, in: *Die Zeit*, no. 18, April 29, 1988.
- 122 “Geniale Einfachheit. Helmut Schmidt über seine Liebe zum Expressionismus”, interview, in: *Kunst der Moderne 1800–1945 im Städel Museum*, ed. by Felix Krämer and Max Hollein, coll. cat. Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, Ostfildern 2011, pp. 42–45, here p. 44.
- 123 See Helmut Schmidt: “Nolde-Ausstellung im Bundeskanzleramt”, a speech held by the Chancellor on the occasion of the opening of the Nolde exhibition at the Federal Chancellery, February 10, 1982, in: *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung*, no. 19, March 4, 1982, pp. 150–151.
- 124 Richard von Weizsäcker, in: *Ruth und Martin Urban. Seebüll 1962 – 1992*, speeches and words of greeting on the occasion of the departure of Martin Urban as director of the Nolde-Stiftung on September 5, 1992, Seebüll 1992, n.p.
- 125 Florian Illies: “Das liest die Kanzlerin”, in: *Die Zeit*, no. 32, July 31, 2008.
- 126 Adolf Behne: “Epilog zur Nolde-Ausstellung”, in: *Berlin am Mittag*, no. 184, September 10, 1947.
- 127 Jens 1967, n. p.
- 128 Paul Klee, in: *Festschrift 1927*, p. 26.



Cat. no. 1 *Mountain Giants*, 1895–96
Oil on canvas, 93.5x151.5 cm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll





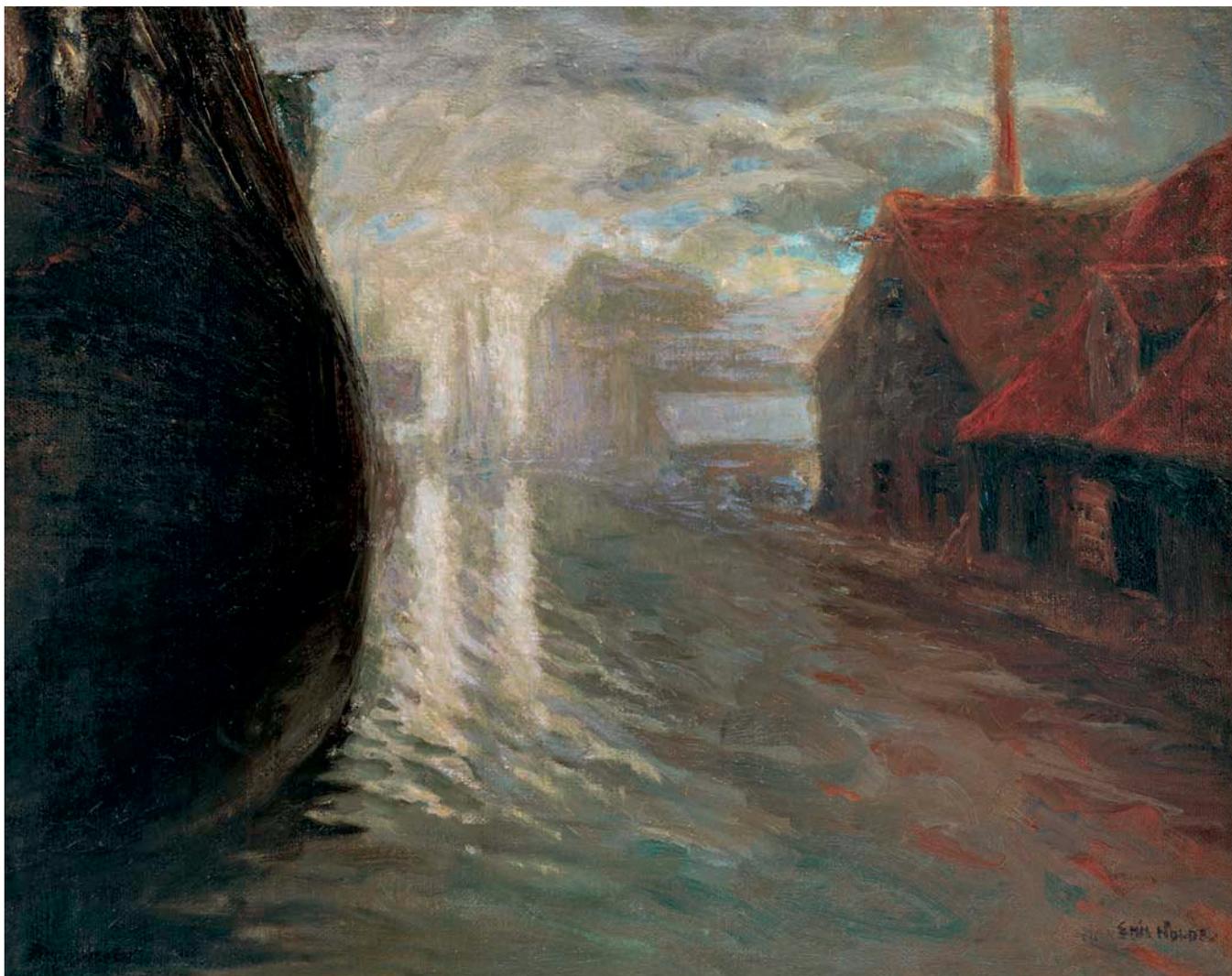
Cat. no. 2 *Self-Portrait*, 1899
Oil on canvas, 41x32 cm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Cat. no. 3 *Light Sea-Mood*, 1901
Oil on canvas, 65x83 cm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



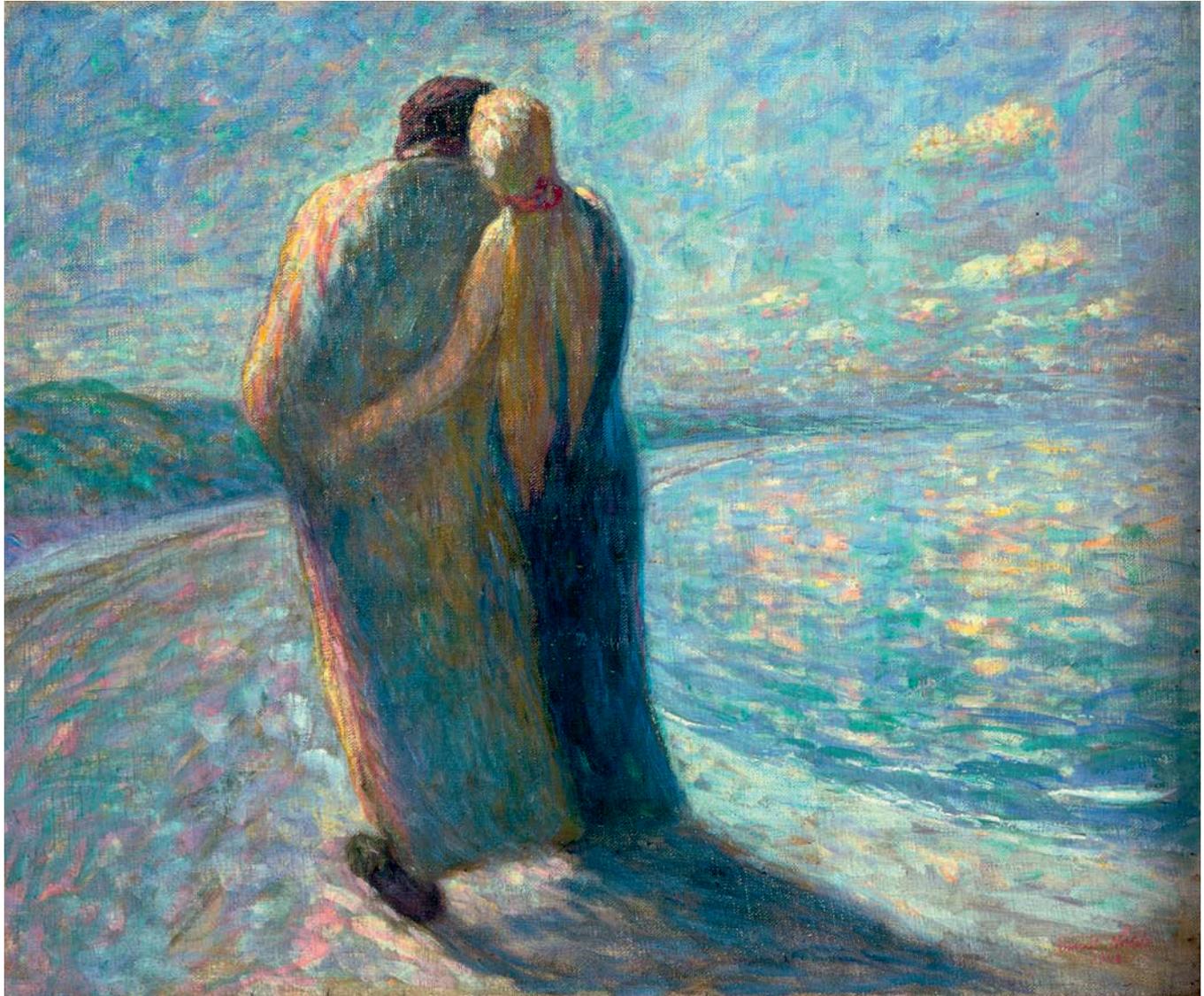
Cat. no. 4 *Dunes*, 1901
Oil on canvas, 65x84 cm
Private collection



Cat. no. 5 *Canal (Copenhagen)*, 1902

Oil on burlap, 65.5x83 cm

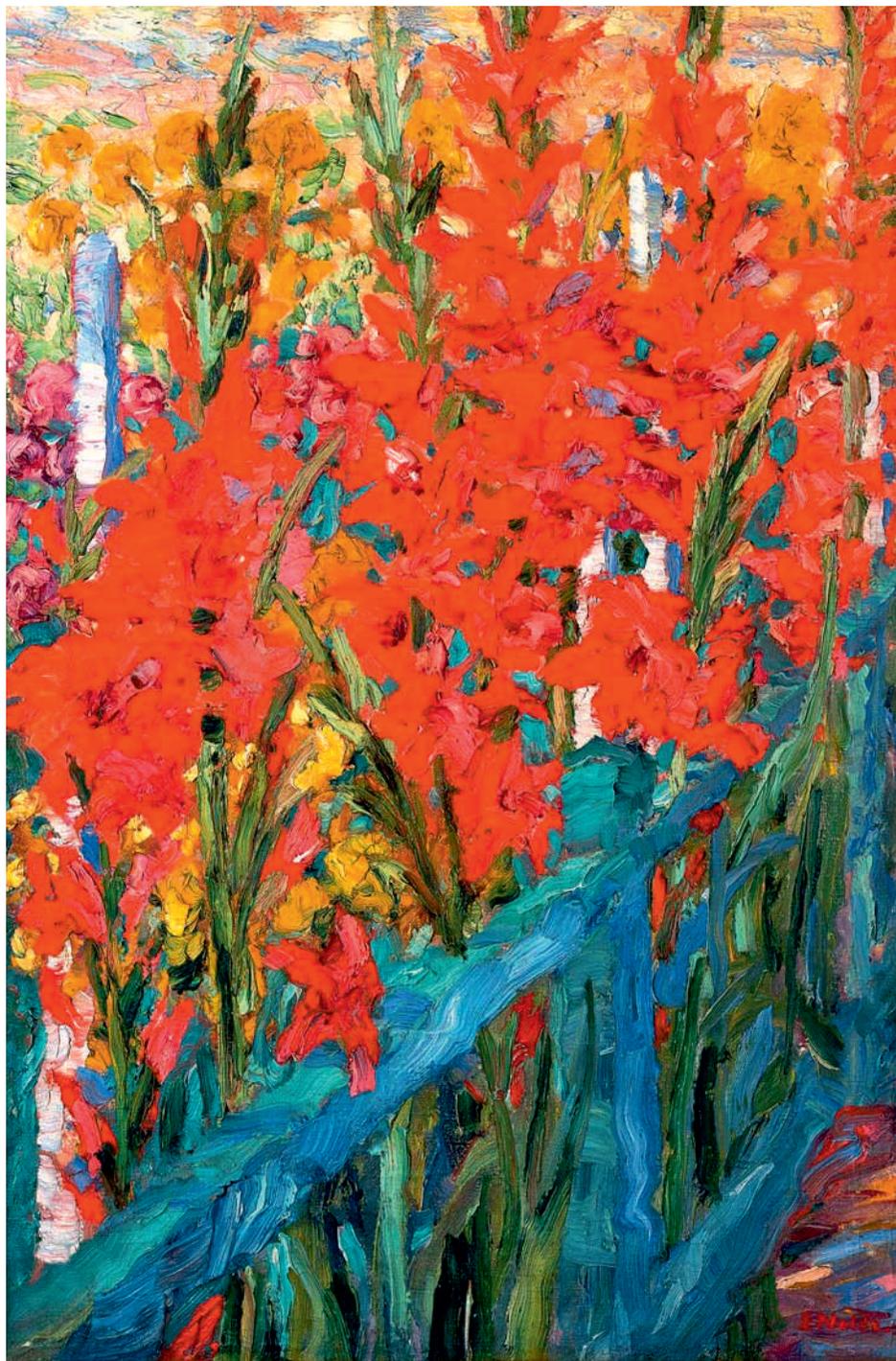
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



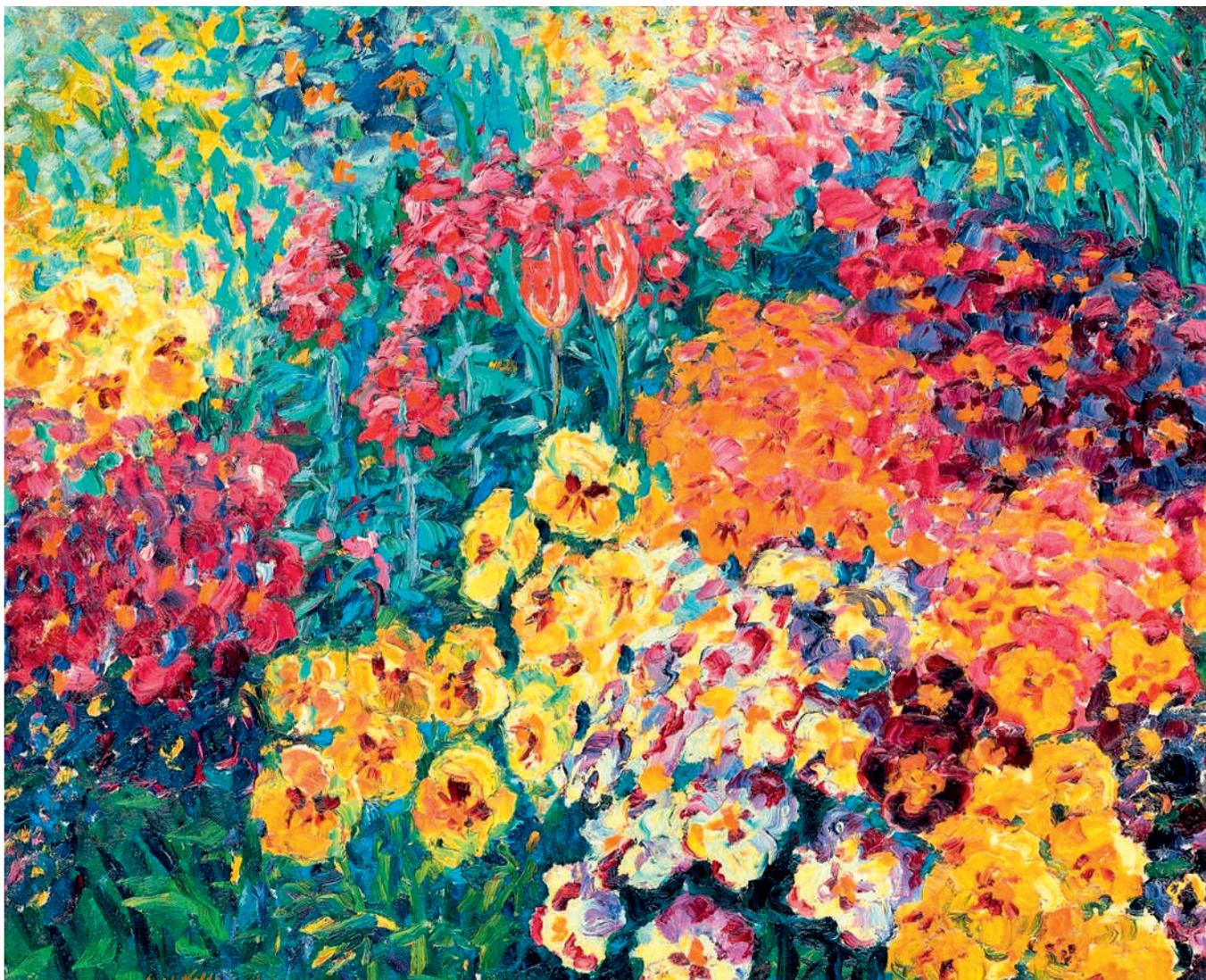
Cat. no. 6 *Two on the Beach*, 1903
Oil on canvas, 73.5x88.5 cm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Cat. no. 7 *Before Sunrise*, 1901
Oil on canvas, 84x65 cm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Cat. no. 14 *Iris*, 1907
Oil on canvas, 77x52 cm
Private collection



Cat. no. 15 *Flower Garden: Pansies*, 1908

Oil on canvas, 73.5x89.5 cm

Private collection



Cat. no. 16 *Burchard's Garden*, 1907

Oil on canvas, 64x82.5 cm

LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur. Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster



Cat. no. 17 *Flower Garden, without Figures*, 1908

Oil on canvas, 60x70 cm

Private collection





Cat. no. 18 *Wildly Dancing Children*, 1909

Oil on canvas, 71.5x87 cm

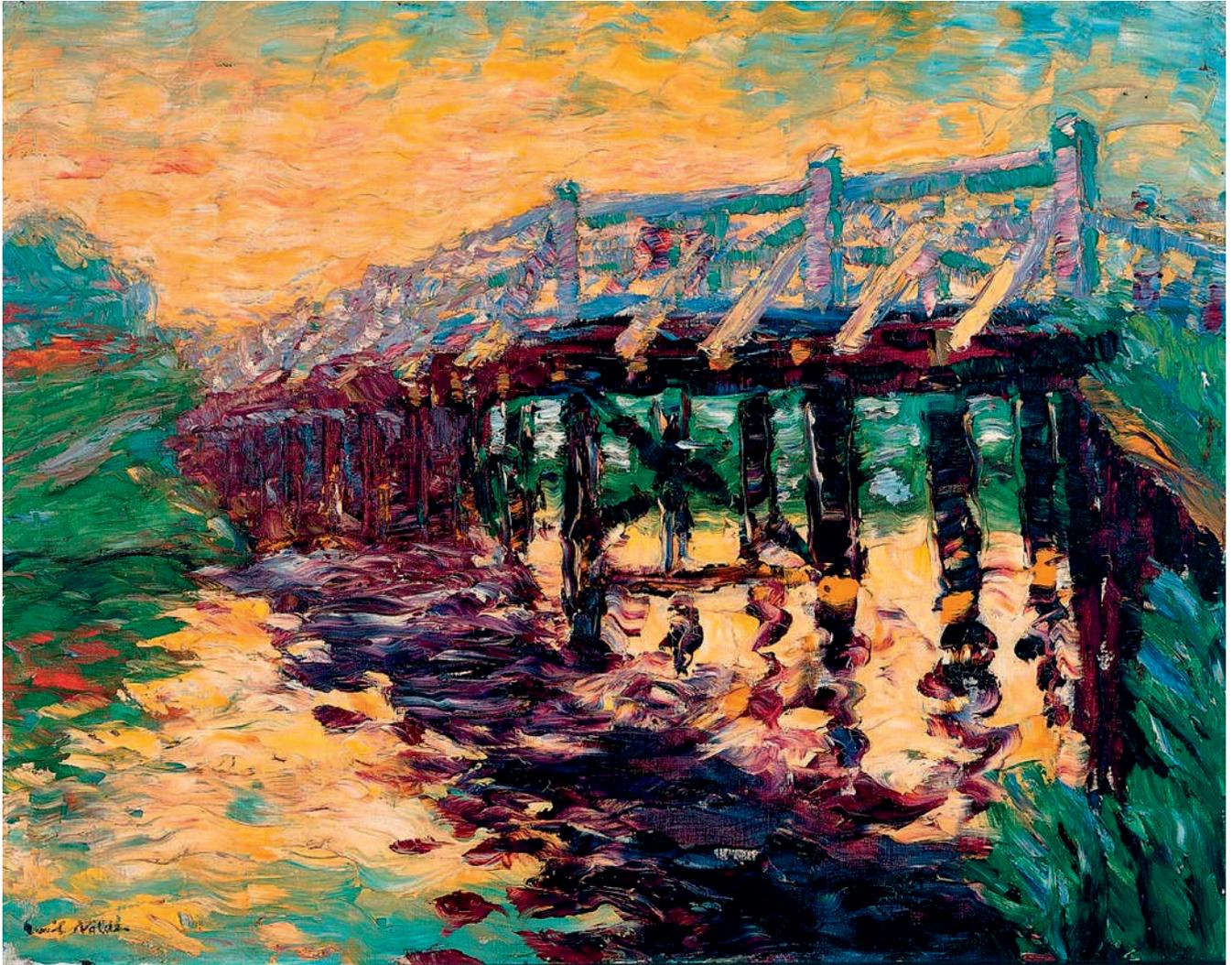
Kunsthalle zu Kiel



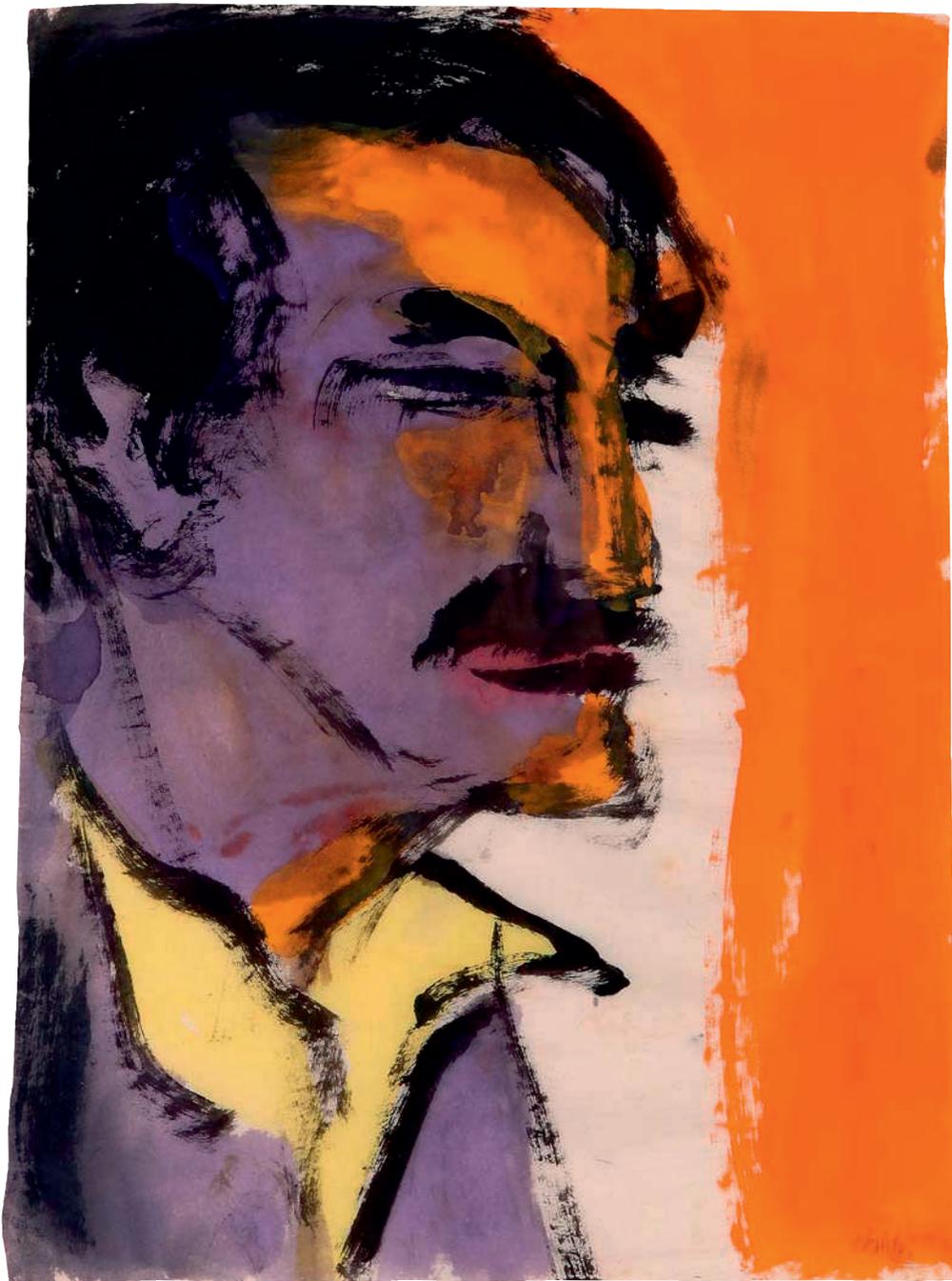
Cat. no. 19 *Frisians, Man and Woman*, 1910

Oil on canvas, 69.5x89.5 cm

Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Cat. no. 20 *Bridge*, 1910
Oil on canvas, 65x83.5 cm
Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal



Cat. no. 103 *Portrait of Hermann Probst*, 1921
Watercolour on Japanese paper, 345 x 455 mm
Private collection



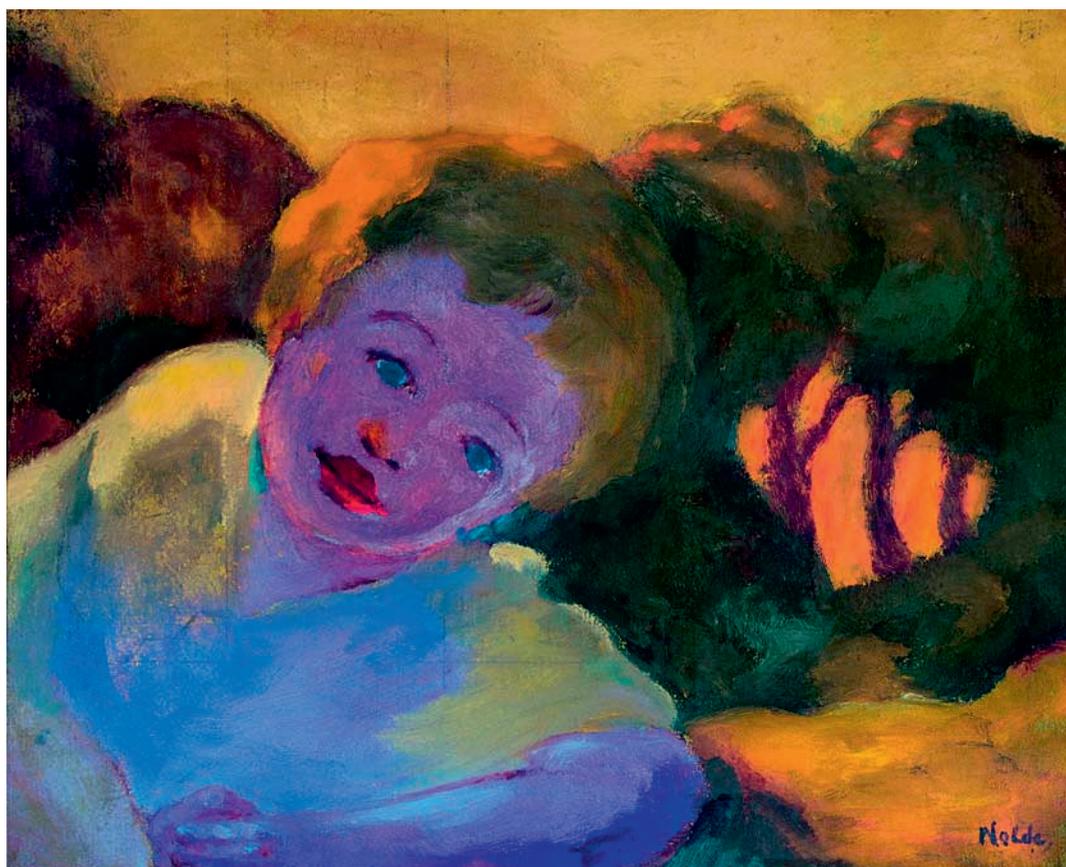
Cat. no. 104 *Mrs. T with a Red Necklace*, 1930
Watercolour on Japanese paper, 479x355 mm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Cat. no. 105 *Portrait of a Lady (Purple Dress)*, undated
Watercolour and Indian ink on wove paper, 399x322 mm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



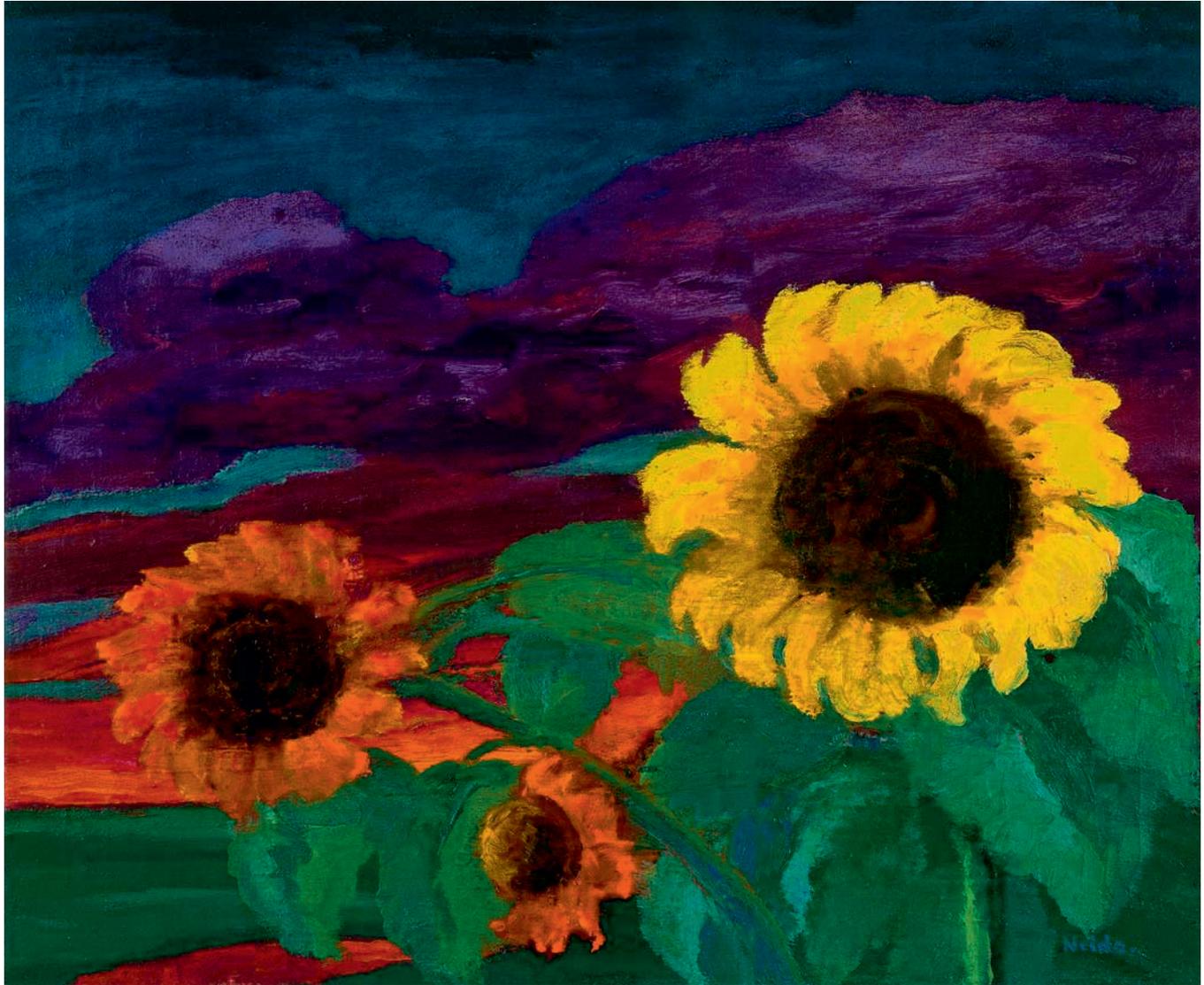
Cat. no. 106 *Young Mother*, 1917
Woodcut on thick wove paper, 212x154/320x262 mm
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main



Cat. no. 135 *Spring in Autumn*, 1940
Oil on canvas, 57x70.5 cm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Cat. no. 136 *The Holy Fire*, 1940
Oil on canvas, 70x110 cm
Nolde Stiftung Seebüll



Cat. no. 137 *Sunflowers in the Evening Light*, 1943

Oil on canvas, 73x88 cm

Private collection



Cat. no. 138 *Large Poppies (Red, Red, Red)*, 1942

Oil on canvas, 73.5x89.5 cm

Nolde Stiftung Seebüll