

New Objectivity

until 7 July 2019

Next to the continuation of Oskar Kokoschka's painterly expressionism, a contrary movement established itself in Austria in the 1920s: New Objectivity. Its name derives from the legendary eponymous exposition of post-expressionist art in Mannheim in 1925. Its main characteristic is the attempt to efface expression as far as possible. The painter's brushstroke is invisible. The movement's followers aimed at rendering reality in an objective manner with great sobriety. Formally, they harked back to the Renaissance period and masters like Albrecht Dürer. They not only rediscovered the intricate glazing technique that was to conceal the individual brushstroke but also strove to emulate the iconographic models of Old German painting. The variety of solutions brought forth by the New Objectivity movement in Austria was greater than that in other European countries.

Albin Egger-Lienz, who produced his most significant works after the First World War, already anticipated the New Objectivity approach in his monumental style and the corporeality of his figures. With his understanding of figures and surfaces evident in *The Spring*, Egger-Lienz prepared the ground for the great painter Alfons Walde. Both artists' works present themselves as committed to the landscapes and people of their Tyrolean Heimat. Walde is mainly known for his Kitzbühel mountain sceneries in winter.

Other varieties of New Objectivity are Magic Realism and Fantastic Surrealism. One of these approaches' key exponents was Franz Sedlacek, who had grown up in Linz, studied chemistry, and worked as a curator at Vienna's Museum of Technology. Peopled with uncanny figures, his fantastic sceneries are informed by late Gothic painting and the world landscapes of the early sixteenth-century Danube School. *Twilight Song* radiates the mood between idyll and threat that is so characteristic of this artist's work.

Incorporating stuffed animals and cacti, masks, and dolls, Rudolf Wacker assembled trivial objects to strange still lifes painted in an eye-deceiving, old-masterly style. Thus, New Objectivity came to develop a pictorial language of its own in which lifeless and isolated objects were executed in trompe l'oeil.

The artist Herbert Reyl-Hanisch was primarily concerned with representing emotions as landscapes of the soul. His *Big Port* does not confront the viewer with a really existing town but with an ideal notion transformed into a toy scenery.

Greta Freist's early work has to be categorized as belonging to New Objectivity art as well. *A Painter's Family* unfolds the dreary vision of an imaginary family life.

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Viktor Planckh's preferred subjects were portraits, figure compositions, landscapes, and nudes. He focused on the suburbs' gloom and the sad life of people between the wars. His *Self-Portrait* presents him as a pensive young man with sorrows weighing on his mind.

Robert Kloss dedicated himself to flower still lifes, pictures of cities, and portraits captured in unusual views and perspectives. He relied on Cubist principles of composition and, as his portrait *Terzetta* shows, an expressive palette.

The tradition of the 1930s was also taken up after the Second World War. Josef Floch's *Interior with Black Screen* ranks among the artist's key works. Inspired by French paintings of interiors, Floch developed a very special type of pictures after 1945, presenting scarcely furnished rooms with high window and door openings, which, imbued with silence and melancholy, feature man in their center.