

KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts

EMIL NOLDE

(1867 Nolde - 1956 Seebüll)

The German artist Emil Nolde was born as Hans Emil Hansen in Nolde, a village in the northern Schleswig countryside on the Danish-German border. In 1902, he adopted the name Nolde after his birthplace. He was to become a leading representative of German Expressionism. Unlike the members of the Dresden-based artists' group "Die Brücke" (The Bridge), Nolde was something of a loner. Although briefly a member of the group at their invitation, he did not share their artistic approach and attitude to working methods. The "Brücke" artists worked collectively, debated art theory intensively and remained a tightly linked group. However, after disassociating himself from the group in 1907 Nolde continued to have friendly relations with "Brücke" members. Reflecting his farming background, he found inspiration primarily in nature. He captured its power and beauty in his prints, watercolours and oil paintings.

In his early years Nolde was frequently on the move, visiting Flensburg, Munich, Karlsruhe, Paris and St. Gallen. He learnt wood-carving, worked in furniture factories, taught drawing, attended night classes and took private painting lessons. It was not until after 1901 that Berlin began to play an important role in his life. He began to forge contacts to influential collectors and potential patrons, among them Carl Ernst Osthaus, Gustav Schiefler and the art historian and writer Rosa Schapire. Through their support he achieved increasing recognition and established a life as an independent artist. He became a member of the Berlin Secession and his contact to "Die Brücke" in 1906-07 further contributed to his relatively late success. His work figured in group and solo exhibitions staged by leading galleries such as Cassirer and Commeter, adding to his renown.

In the years preceding World War I, Nolde developed his own distinctive style as a printmaker, draughtsman and painter. He was to adhere to it throughout his life. His use and handling of colour was of key importance. It mattered little whether the subject was a landscape, a seascape, an animal or a floral or figurative motif. In addition to classic watercolour techniques, Nolde delighted in experimentation. The medium offered him a seemingly inexhaustible range of technical possibilities and he explored the limits of its potential, working with tempera, ink and coloured chalks. Watercolour demands speed, discipline and patience. Its fascination lies in its extraordinary luminosity.

Pigments and water work together and the degree of transparency or strength of colour depends on the number of layers of wash. Working rapidly while the paint is still wet, the artist must achieve a fine balance between spontaneity



Emil Nolde in Munich, 1937
© Nolde Stiftung Seebüll

KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts

and control, until the right intensity of colour and formal contrasts are reached. Nolde worked on delicate but highly absorbent Japanese paper, whose irregular edges and extremely fine fibres lend his images a distinctive character. The technical mastery of his work is one of the high points of German Expressionism.

During the First World War Emil Nolde was spared from military service on grounds of age. In 1926, he and his wife Ada moved from Berlin to Seebüll, close to the Danish border. They built a house and studio tailored to his artistic needs, with a cottage garden surrounding the house designed by Nolde himself. In the years that followed it would provide him with a rich source of colourful motifs.

During the Third Reich, Emil Nolde, despite his initial attempts to ingratiate himself with the new National Socialist regime, got caught in the crosshairs of their cultural policies. After his expulsion from the Prussian Academy of Arts many of his works were included in the exhibition "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art), which was held in Munich in 1937. A continuously expanded edition of the exhibition travelled to numerous cities in the German Empire between 1938 and 1941. A large number of Nolde's works were seized from collectors or confiscated from German museums. In 1941, Nolde was banned from working but this did not prevent him from continuing to paint in secret. During the Nazi years he produced a rich body of small-format watercolours which he called his *Ungemalte Bilder* (Unpainted Paintings).

After Nolde's death in 1956 the studio and dwelling house were converted into a foundation and museum - the Stiftung Ada und Emil Nolde. Today the museum is one of the most popular artists' homes and studios in Europe, annually opening its doors to thousands of art-loving visitors.