

KUNKEL FINE ART

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

Walter Bondy

1880 Prag – 1940 Toulon

Walter Bondy was born into a family of wealthy Austrian industrialists. He grew up in Vienna, where he trained as a painter at the Academy of Fine Arts. After visits to Berlin and Munich he moved to Paris in 1903. In Montparnasse, he frequented popular bars and brasseries such as Le Dôme and was one of the first members of the Café du Dôme' circle, a German art community that made the cafe its focal point. Le Dôme's popularity steadily increased up to the outbreak of World War I. It soon became the principal meeting place in Paris for German-speaking painters, writers, intellectuals, art critics and dealers.



Walter Bondy, c.1900

In Paris, Bondy's painting was initially influenced by the work of Edouard Manet and the French Impressionists. Later, Paul Cézanne and Vincent van Gogh provided important stimuli. Bondy went on to develop a modernist style which, although by no means avant-garde, built on elements of traditional French art to produce its own distinctive painterly language.

Bondy assumed something of a leading role in the dissemination of French modernism in Germany before World War I. This is largely due to his excellent links to the Berlin art scene. He began to exhibit with the Berlin Secession in 1904 and enjoyed the support of one of the most influential gallerists of the time, his cousin Paul Cassirer, who actively promoted his work. In 1911, Cassirer staged a group exhibition featuring paintings by Bondy and his Dômier colleagues – the painters Rudolf Levy, Hans Purrmann and Jules Pascin. In 1913, Cassirer hosted a joint exhibition of work by Bondy and Max Beckmann. Bondy settled in Berlin in 1913. With the outbreak of war his links to France and to the 'Café du Dôme' group ruptured and the group eventually dissolved. He earned his living working as an art dealer with another cousin, Erich Cassirer, and also wrote columns for Bruno Cassirer's art magazine *Kunst und Künstler*. In 1927, Bondy set up a publication of his own, the art journal *Kunstauktion*, which reviewed all the major European art auctions. It was the forerunner of the magazine *Weltkunst* which is still published today.

The rise of National Socialism forced Bondy to leave Berlin in 1932. He fled to Sanary-sur-Mer in the south of France where a small circle of German-speaking émigrés had settled. Here, he met his second wife and together they ran a photography studio. The capitulation of France in 1940 drove Bondy, a diabetes sufferer, into a severe depression. He lost all interest in life and died shortly afterwards in exile.