

# KUNKEL FINE ART

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

## DODO, i.e. Dörte Clara Wolff

1907 Berlin - 1998 London

Born in Berlin to a comfortably-off middle-class Jewish family, Dörte Wolff trained as a graphic designer and fashion illustrator at the Kunst- und Gewerbeschule Reimann, a private art school in Berlin, from 1923 to 1926. Working under the pseudonym *Dodo*, she began her career making fashion plates for magazines and went on to produce illustrations for *ULK*, a widely distributed satirical journal to which the artist and illustrator artist Jeanne Mammen also contributed. Between 1927 and 1929 Dodo reached the high point of her artistic career. In this short period, over sixty of her gouaches were published as full-page or double-page illustrations in *ULK*. They are remarkable for their vivid colour and vibrant draughtsmanship.



Dodo, c.1928

Dodo earned broad recognition for her ironical, often highly acerbic depictions of scenes from the daily life of Berlin's sophisticated haute bourgeoisie. In these depictions she focused chiefly on the relationship between the sexes. Narcissistic dandies are paired with aloof adolescents, elegant bon viveurs with sensual chorus girls, and hardened bachelors with seductive man-eaters. The figures are set before a glittering backdrop of cafes, bars and dance halls. The carefree lifestyles, amorous episodes and casual flirtations highlight the superficiality of the rapport between the sexes, only underlining their growing estrangement. Possessing acute powers of observation, Dodo was the perfect chronicler of the sophisticated decadence of the Golden Twenties. Using typifications and powerful stylization, she drew directly on her own experience to portray the opinions and attitudes of the era. She let herself be inspired by the unsentimental realism and objectivity of 'Neue Sachlichkeit' and also employed a caricatural approach. Her fashionably dressed figures with their half-closed almond eyes and exaggeratedly thin-lipped mouths ooze arrogance and snobbery. But this deliberately constructed facade of aloofness backfires against them, and their apparently carefree existence appears strangely void and vapid.

The Depression of 1929 brought Dodo's work for the journal *ULK* to an end. Soon afterwards, her private life took a dramatic turn and she entered a period of emotional upheaval, on a roller coaster between euphoria and despair. In 1936, the political situation in Germany obliged her to emigrate to England. The move marked a turning point in her life. As an exile, she was unable to replicate the

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earlier successes of the Berlin years. Her career was overlooked and her oeuvre largely forgotten until its rediscovery in 2012 when exhibitions staged by the Staatliche Museen in Berlin and at the Ben Uri Gallery, The London Jewish Museum of Art brought new international awareness of her art.