

# KUNKEL FINE ART

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



## ERICH HECKEL

(1883 Döbeln - 1970 Radolfzell am Bodensee)

Fränzi with blanket, 1909

Watercolour and gouache on paper

22.2 : 28.3 cm

Signed and dated lower left

### Provenance:

Collection Hermann Gerlinger, Würzburg (Collectors Stamp Lugt 6032)

### Exhibitions:

*Der Blick auf Fränzi und Marcella. Zwei Modelle der Brücke-Künstler Heckel, Kirchner, Pechstein,*  
Sprengel Museum Hannover, 28.8.2010 - 9.1.2011

### Literature:

Heinz Spielmann (Hrsg.): *Die Maler der Brücke. Sammlung Hermann Gerlinger*, Stuttgart 1995,  
S. 179, SHG-Nr. 203

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## Fränzi - a model writes art history

*Dresden in June 1909: the Expressionist artists' association Die Brücke causes a sensation with a special exhibition in the renowned Emil Richter art salon. Alongside Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Hermann Max Pechstein, Erich Heckel, who had travelled from Italy especially for the opening, took centre stage. The three artist friends spend the following weeks at the Moritzburg ponds north of Dresden, where they work together in the great outdoors. It is a summer that will go down in art history. This is not least due to their model Fränzi...*

### Searching for originality

Fränzi reclining, Fränzi resting, Fränzi bathing - no model inspired Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Hermann Max Pechstein and Erich Heckel as much as Lina Franziska Fehrmann, known as Fränzi. In the spring of 1909, the girl from a modest background was introduced to the circle of Brücke artists at a young age, presumably by Kirchner's partner Doris Große; she was part of this bohemian community of painters and models until 1911. During the same period, Kirchner, Pechstein and Heckel created a large number of woodcuts, drawings, watercolours and paintings, which are among the most important pictorial creations of German Expressionism. Fränzi appears again and again as the protagonist and as a model among models.



Erich Heckel, *Fränzi lying (black and red)*, 1910, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe

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Fränzi, photographed by  
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1910

What fascinates the three artists about the cheerful girl is that specific childlike impartiality that evaporates with increasing age. What nobody realised at the time was that Fränzi's inspiration would turn the summer retreat they spent together at the Moritzburg ponds near Dresden in 1909 into a key moment in the development of modern art. The circumstances that made Fränzi an art-historical icon of the 20th century, however, require closer examination.

## Art and taboo

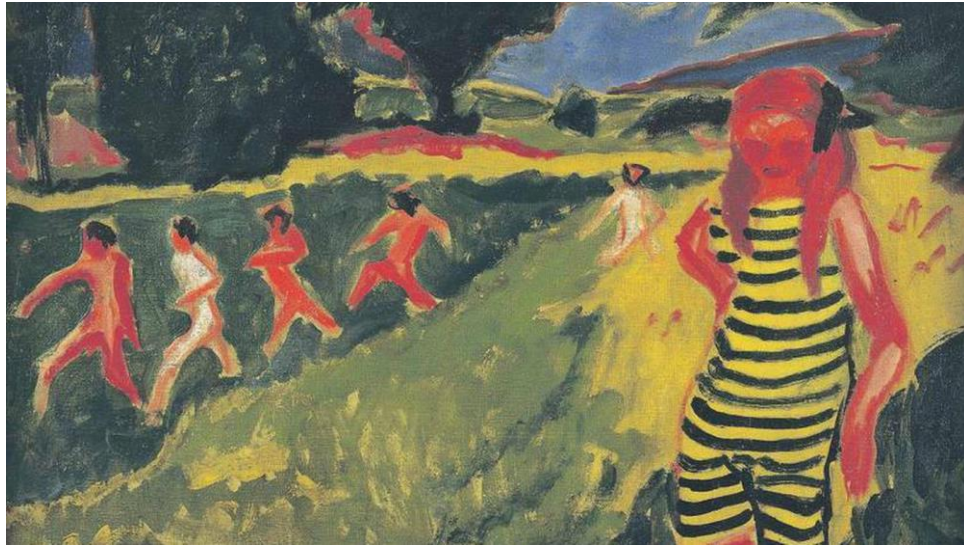
In quite a few works by the Brücke artists, Fränzi appears as a nude or semi-nude. Although artists have been dealing with the depiction of the naked child's body since antiquity and these are part of the canon of art history, the contemplation of corresponding motifs triggers associations that raise the question of the limits of artistic freedom. Around 1900, this topic was no less virulent than it is today and sparked heated discussions. Edvard Munch, for example, caused a veritable scandal with his 1895 painting *Puberty*. Egon Schiele had to serve a prison sentence in 1912 for the drawings of a naked young girl he made in the presence of his partner Wally Neuziel. What motivated these artists, as well as Kirchner, Pechstein and Heckel, to deal with the female nude child, however, lies outside of any voyeuristic or even annoying contexts.



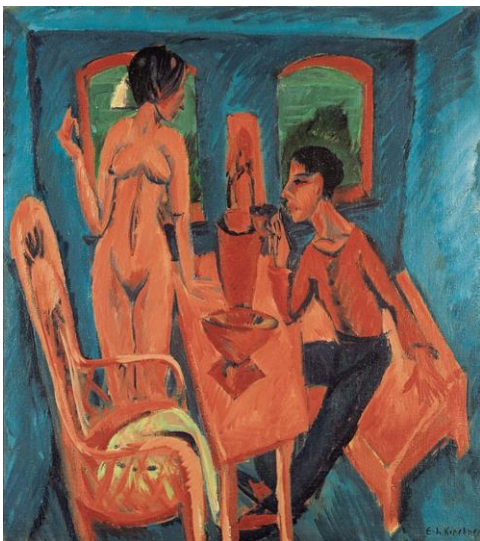
Edvard Munch, *Puberty*, 1895,  
National Museum Oslo

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Max Pechstein, *The yellow-black jersey (Marcella)*, 1909, Brücke-Museum, Berlin



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Tower room, Fehmann (Self-portrait with Erna)*, 1913, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio

In the broader context of Fränzi, an entry in Kirchner's diary from 1927 is revealing, referring to the time when the members of Die Brücke were preparing to show art new paths. Even after the dissolution of the artists' association in 1913, Kirchner, who saw himself as its thinker and spokesman, wrote in his typical, manifesto-like tone: "Art is made by man. His own form is the centre of all art (...) Therefore [one] must begin with man himself." In the age of psychoanalysis, which confronted man with both his body and his drives, this meant that the female nude could not be understood solely in its fully mature state. This inevitably brought the prepubertal and pubertal phases into the artists' field of vision. The woman slumbering in the child and gradually awakening in the girl had become a theme. While Fränzi embodied the first type for the members of the *Brücke*, they saw the second type in the model Marcella, who was six years older. They usually found the third type in their partners, who also modelled for them in the nude.

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## Off to a summer holiday!

Kirchner, Pechstein and Heckel spent the period between mid-June and the end of July 1909 together with their companions and models at the Moritzburg Ponds near Dresden, surrounded by forests. Although the capital of the highly industrialised Kingdom of Saxony, which has a population of over 500,000, is only a stone's throw away, the group literally perceived the area, which was largely untouched by modern civilisation, as paradise on earth. Moritzburg is more than just a summer retreat for the *Brücke* artists. For them, it became synonymous with freedom and informality, a place where a return to a natural life seemed possible and where people found themselves in harmony with both their environment and their innermost selves. Is it any wonder that the three artist friends prefer to devote themselves to painting nudes outdoors under these ideal conditions?



The Moritzburg ponds from the air, contemporary photography

## Painted as if in a daze

*Fränzi with blanket* is one of the most beautiful and boldest watercolours Heckel created at the Moritzburg ponds in the summer of 1909. It is equally captivating with its vibrant colours and its bold brushwork, which is structured by a few strokes of chalk. The girl appears at the centre of the composition, clearly enjoying herself on a meadow. Her erect upper body is suggested by orange tones in a highly simplified manner; the face, suggested in the same colours, is elaborated in more detail by a few strokes. The artist uses black ink sparingly to emphasise Fränzi's red bow of hair and to distinguish her lemon-yellow towel from its surroundings. Heckel sets another striking colour accent with the red and blue striped blanket wrapped around her legs. It looks as if the girl has only recently emerged from the refreshing water and is now warming up in the sun. Heckel also depicts the spatial situation in rhythmically placed brushstrokes. The grass on the embankment appears in vibrant shades of green,

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Detail from *Fränzi with blanket*

while deep brown tones suggest a patch of earth on which Fränzi's towel is spread out. The artist sketches the view of the water beyond with a sweeping brushstroke. In this gestural and forceful act of painting, which brings to mind musical terms such as rhythm and vibrato, Heckel's masterful handling of the watercolour technique, which breaks with academic tradition as it were, is not only communicated, but also the fulfilment of the demand made by the *Brücke* artists to directly express the experience of the moment. The fact that Heckel kept the work until the end of his life and that it was only later titled in pencil by his lifelong partner Sidi Riha emphasises the importance that the artist attached to it.



Details from *Fränzi with blanket*

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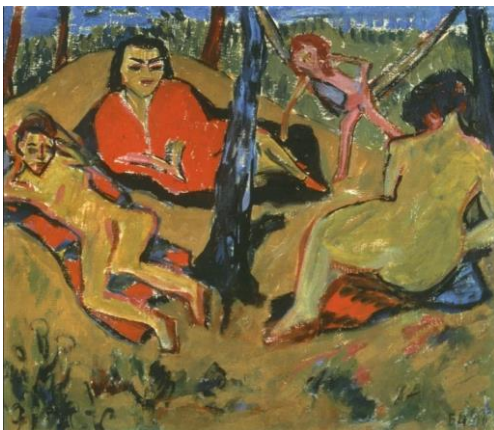
## Hier bin ich Kind, hier darf ich's sein

As mentioned at the beginning, Fränzi can be found in numerous works by the *Brücke* painters. Kirchner's water-colour Fränzi, lying by the water, proves that he also found the moment described by Heckel appealing. It shows the girl at the same spot on the shore in an almost identical pose. In Kirchner's work, too, we find bright primary colours in the midst of a depiction reduced to the essentials, complemented by finely tuned shades of green in the surrounding grass. Once again, the half-naked girl is covered from the waist down by the strikingly striped blanket, and here too the motif of the red hair ribbon appears. Kirchner, however, shows Fränzi's facial features in a far more determined manner: the viewer clearly recognises her fine nose in half-profile, her slightly closed eyes and wide-open mouth seem to suggest a yawn - an entirely childlike expression that corresponds to the model's tender age.



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Fränzi, lying by the water*, 1909

## Moritzburg, a place of longing



Erich Heckel, *Gruppe im Freien*, 1909

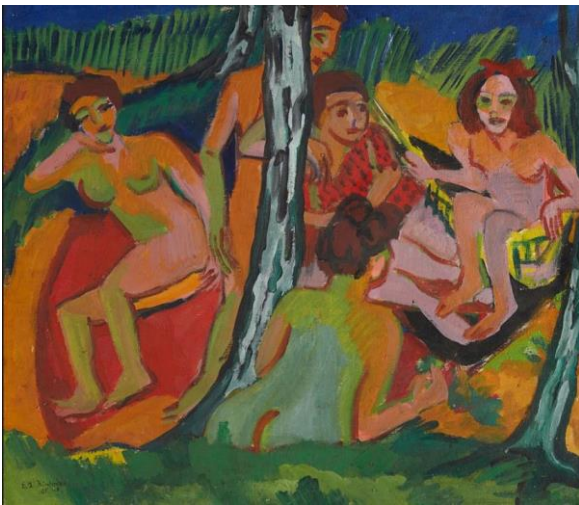
The subject of bathers, of naked people in the great outdoors, plays a central role within the *Brücke* - it manifests the fundamental traits of their conception of life and art, in which both exist free of conventions and constraints. Until the autumn of 1911, when the *Brücke* bid farewell to Dresden and settled in Berlin, joint bathing trips and collective work at the Moritzburg ponds were a tradition that Heckel, Kirchner and Pechstein held on to. Looking back, those weeks and months seem like a moment of peace that lasted for three summers before the pulsating city life caught up with the *Brücke* artists and inspired them to explore other themes - although the motif of bathers would remain a constant in their respective *œuvres*.

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## Fränzi, always Fränzi

The works created at the Moritzburg ponds show snapshots of immediate events as the painters experienced them there. They are characterised by a special atmosphere in which the light-heartedness of warm summer days and unbridled vitality seem to lie. Motifs are often captured by all three artists, but rendered in their own individual ways. For example, Heckel, Kirchner and Pechstein all capture a moment on a wooded bank. The informal scene shows a moment of rest: three female models, most of them undressed, are resting on their towels, some lying, some sitting. Among them is a fourth person: it is Fränzi. In his version, Kirchner clearly characterises the girl through her red hair ribbon, which we already know. Fränzi is depicted in different poses by each of the three artists, but always in a hammock - playing, sitting, almost lying down. These are images of a fleeting moment that will be gone in the blink of an eye. But at the Moritzburg ponds, the world seems to stand still for a moment for Heckel, Kirchner and Pechstein. And in the midst of this world, Fränzi - Fränzi again and again.



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Forest scene*, 1909/20



Max Pechstein, *Forest scene*, 1909