



Laserstein

Face to Face

Lotte



Lasenstein

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Edited
by Alexander Eiling
and Elena Schroll

An Exhibition of the
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main,
in collaboration with the
Berlinische Galerie

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Foreword

In 2014, the Städel Museum purchased the 1928 painting *Russian Girl with Compact* (cat. 10) from the Swedish municipality of Nybro, thus adding a major work by the artist Lotte Laserstein (1898–1993) to its collection. Two years later, its collection could be extended with the acquisition of Laserstein's portrait of a child, *Boy with Kasper Puppet* (Wolfgang Karger), painted in 1933 (cat. 27). This was the first acquisition after I took office as the museum's director, and it has been especially close to my heart ever since – all the more so as a long chain of events links me with this artist. The Laserstein paintings I saw in an exhibition of her work at Das Verborgene Museum in Berlin in 2003 made a lasting impression on me. Then in 2010, during my tenure as a department head at the Kulturstiftung der Länder (Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States) one of her most important paintings, *Evening over Potsdam* from 1930 (cat. 18), came up for sale in an auction at Sotheby's in London. I left no stone unturned to obtain this key work for the Berlin Nationalgalerie. Since then, I have been deeply committed to championing this artist's oeuvre. Therefore, I am delighted to have the opportunity to exhibit *Evening over Potsdam* – a composition that captures the mood of an entire epoch in so striking a manner – for the duration of this Frankfurt show.

In the Berlin of the Weimar Republic, Lotte Laserstein attained initial prominence with her sensitively and delicately painted portraits. The works of Wilhelm Leibl and Carl Schuch had a formative influence on the development of her personal painting style, which is quite evident in her two paintings from the Städel collection. At the same time, the portrait of the young

Wolfgang Karger – a likeness as empathetic as it is sober – especially hints at the artist's own fate. Like Laserstein, the Kargers had Jewish roots. As with Laserstein, the National Socialist regime increasingly ostracised them in the 1930s so that they were forced to leave Germany. Whereas the Karger family emigrated to South America, Laserstein fled to Stockholm in 1937. Although she was as productive as ever in Swedish exile and able to earn her living with her art, her work – cut off from the international art scene – disappeared from public view.

It was not until 1987, just a few years before her death, that an exhibition at the London galleries Thos. Agnew & Sons and The Belgrave Gallery once again raised a broader public awareness of Lotte Laserstein. A show curated by Anna-Carola Krausse in 2003 for Das Verborgene Museum in cooperation with the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin in the Ephraim-Palais, on the other hand, brought about Laserstein's rediscovery in Germany.

Now, for the first time since 2003 – and outside Berlin – we would like to pay tribute to this artist in a monographic exhibition at the Städel Museum entitled *Lotte Laserstein: Face to Face*. The two paintings from our collection form the point of departure for this project, which concentrates primarily on the artist's portraits and the decades marking the prime of her all-too-brief career – the 1920s and 1930s.

We are grateful and happy that the exhibition will subsequently travel to the Berlinische Galerie, and Lotte Laserstein will, in a sense, return home by way of Frankfurt – home to Berlin, one of the most vibrant centres of art during the years between the two world

wars. I am therefore particularly indebted to our partners represented by the director and the curator at the second venue, Thomas Köhler and Annelie Lütgens. The Berlinische Galerie granted the Frankfurt team generous access to the artist's estate, and the staff of the Artists' Archives there provided them with invaluable support and primary sources.

I also owe my heartfelt thanks to Anna-Carola Krausse, the author of Laserstein's catalogue raisonné and curator of fundamental exhibitions of the artist's works. From the beginning, she accompanied our undertaking with her profound knowledge, and throughout the show's preparations, she lent us her support as a scholarly advisor. I would also like to thank the former Head of Modern Art at the Städel Museum, Felix Krämer, who contributed substantially to paving the way for this project's realisation with his work.

Many of our colleagues and a large number of private collectors also backed our endeavour, for which I am most deeply obliged. Our exhibition would not have been possible without the great confidence placed in us by our lenders, who agreed to part with their works temporarily and allow them to travel to Frankfurt and Berlin. Nor would the project have been possible without the support of dedicated partners and sponsors. For the Frankfurt exhibition, we would like to extend our special thanks to the Ernst Max von Grunelius-Stiftung, represented by its executive board Dr Günter Paul and Gerd Schmitz-Morkramer, for its generous dedication and trust. I would also like to convey my thanks to the Rudolf-August Oetker-Stiftung, which through its initiative likewise contributed to the project's realisation. We are particularly indebted to Dr Monika Bachtler, executive member of the foundation's board of trustees, for her efforts and her keen interest. In the implementation of our diverse outreach programmes, the Friede Springer Stiftung and its chairwoman Dr h.c. Friede Springer lent us their steady support and encouragement. Once again, we have received invaluable support from the City of Frankfurt, for which I would like to express by sincere thanks to Dr Ina Hartwig, Head of the Department of Culture Frankfurt am Main.

The many departments of the Städel Museum co-operated closely on the organisation of this exhibition. I am indebted to the staff of the exhibition services, the conservation studio, the building services, exhibition graphics, museum education, marketing, graphics, press and PR, sponsoring, fundraising, information technology, events, catalogue management, the

administration, the museum shop, the library, the director's office and our external partners for their passionate and professional dedication.

Our thanks also go to the team of FINE GERMAN DESIGN in Frankfurt for the catalogue design. The Prestel Verlag accompanied us with its accustomed reliability in the realisation of this catalogue. I am also extremely grateful to the authors Valentina Bay, Alexander Eiling, Anna-Carola Krausse, Kristina Lemke, Annelie Lütgens, Maureen Ogrocki, Kristin Schroeder, Elena Schroll and Philipp von Wehrden for their engrossing contributions.

Kristina Lemke accompanied the exhibition project and catalogue production on all levels with as much confidence as creativity with the assistance of Valentina Bay, Victoria Hilsberg, Úna Meyer, Maureen Ogrocki and Philipp von Wehrden. My sincere thanks go out to all of them.

Finally, I would like to extend my very special appreciation to Elena Schroll and Alexander Eiling, the two curators responsible for the exhibition and this catalogue. As the new Head of Modern Art at the Städel Museum, Alexander Eiling devoted his time and expertise acquainting himself with the project within a very short period. Elena Schroll, Assistant Curator in the department, applied her extraordinary energy and outstanding expert knowledge to the undertaking and fundamentally shaped it. We have their dedication and enthusiasm to thank for the rediscovery of the fascinating painter Lotte Laserstein who now awaits us at the Städel Museum.

Philipp Demandt
Director, Städel Museum





Words of Greeting

Lotte Laserstein has had a permanent place at the Berlinische Galerie for quite some time. Since 2009, the archives of the museum have housed the papers from the artist's estate, which are invaluable to scholarship.

In 2014, Laserstein's painting *In the Tavern* (p.32, fig. 1), which was believed to have been lost, could be presented again for the first time since 1928 on the occasion of the exhibition *Vienna – Berlin: The Art of Two Cities from Schiele to Grosz*. Moreover, we consider ourselves fortunate to be able to present Laserstein's early *Self-Portrait in the Studio Friedrichsruher Straße* (cat.7), which has been with us since 2016 on long-term loan from a private collection. Although the show *Lotte Laserstein: Face to Face* takes into account the artist's creative phase of the 1920s and 1930s and her early career as a portrait painter, it was important to the Berlinische Galerie to thematically expand the focus beyond that with the inclusion of nude drawings and paintings of landscape motifs. We are also supplementing Laserstein's paintings with selected works from our own collection and, by doing so, position the artist within the context of New Objectivity portraiture and nude painting in order to stress simultaneously the individuality of her realism.

With this exhibition, the Berlinische Galerie would like to tie into the retrospective *Jeanne Mammen: The Observer* in 2017/18, which was praised by the public and media, and thus duly reflect society's increased interest in Modernist female artists and particularly images of the modern woman.

I would like to extend my most heartfelt thanks to my colleague Philipp Demandt for making the Städel Museum's exhibition possible as a collaboration with the Berlinische Galerie. The cooperation between the

two institutions was professional, harmonious and collegial, to which Alexander Eiling and Elena Schroll as well as numerous other members of the museum's staff made a major contribution.

It is thanks to the commitment and flawless preparation in Frankfurt that lenders also made their works available for exhibition in Berlin. This means a great deal to us. In particular, the support of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the fact that *Evening over Potsdam* (cat.18) will once more be on display at our institution fills us with gratitude.

I thank Anna-Carola Krausse, whose initial work in 2003 substantially contributed to the rediscovery of Lotte Laserstein, for her patience. We had already spoken for quite some time about how wonderful it would be to re-examine Lotte Laserstein's oeuvre. Now the moment has finally arrived!

At the Berlinische Galerie, my sincerest thanks go out to my longstanding colleague Annelie Lütgens, Head of Prints and Drawings and curator of the exhibition, who after her major project on Jeanne Mammen embraced Lotte Laserstein and her art with incredible passion. She was supported by the trainee curators Kati Renner and Juschka Marie von Rügen, who equally deserve my gratitude.

The Berlinische Galerie's administration, communications, and technical department were vigorously engaged. Our coordinated effort has resulted in the realisation of an exhibition devoted to a fascinating female artist of the twentieth century.

Thomas Köhler
Director, Berlinische Galerie





Lotte Laserstein





By staging an exhibition on Lotte Laserstein (1898–1993; fig. 1), the Städel Museum and the Berlinische Galerie have devoted themselves to an artist who is considered one of the major “re-discoveries” of recent years.¹ Like Jeanne Mammen and Anita Rée, Laserstein was one of a circle of female artists who were extremely successful in the Weimar Republic and whose works were shown in numerous exhibitions and published in many magazines (pp.140–141, figs. 3 and 4). However, early in the National Socialist dictatorship and as a consequence of its state-prescribed art aesthetic, their works disappeared from public view – just like those of many of their male peers. It is only in the past few years that a series of exhibitions have taken it upon themselves to revise our perception on this development, resulting in a more well-rounded understanding of Modernist art production with regard to gender equality.² Yet, the holdings of Germany’s public museums have been limited in their ability to contribute to this process. In the post-war years, they initially strove to reconstruct a largely male-dominated avant-garde

A CONSERVATIVE MODERNISM

Lotte Laserstein’s Portraits –
Between Realism and
New Objectivity

ALEXANDER EILING