



## OTTO DIX

1891 Gera - Singen 1969

### *Sitzender Akt mit blondem Haar* [*Seated Nude with Blond Hair*]

Black and red chalks heightened with white chalk and gouache on greenish paper; executed 1931.

Signed and dated with red chalk in the upper right: *od 1931*.

910 x 690 mm

PROVENANCE: Auction: Ketterer, Munich, 19-20 Mai 1969, lot 325 – Galerie Nierendorf, Berlin, 1969, 1970, no. 203 and 1973 – Sergio Vacchi, Rome

EXHIBITIONS: *Les Realismes 1919-1939. Entre Revolution et Reaction*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 17 Dec. 1980 - 20 April 1981 – *Realismus 1919-1939. Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Berlin, 16 Mai - 28 June 1981

LITERATURE: *Les Realismes 1919-1939. Entre Revolution et Reaction*, exhib. cat., Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1980, no. 192, reprod. – *Realismus 1919-1939. Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, exhib. cat., Staatliche Kunsthalle Berlin, Munich 1982, no. 192, p. 148, reprod. – 'Otto Dix', in: *Mizue*, Tokyo, vol. 8., 1972, no. 811, p. 5-31, reprod. – Ulrike Lorenz, *Otto Dix. Das Werkverzeichnis der Zeichnungen und Pastelle*, Otto Dix Stiftung Vaduz (ed.), Weimar 2003, vol. III, no. NSk 12.1.5, p. 1432, reprod.

The present drawing is an extraordinary example of Otto Dix's ability to create some of the most intense and electrifying images of the female figure in 20th century art. As one of the leading artists of the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) movement, Dix pioneered the post-war shift towards realism, even to the extremes of 'verism', with which he sought to exaggerate reality to better represent the truth underlying its facade. The intensity of his gaze distils all that is utterly unique within his subject and is depicted with awe-inspiring clarity. Willi Wolfradt writes: *Otto Dix is an elementary event in art: an irresistible bursting forth of primordial, starved-out reality instincts - the barbaric, furious and merry energies of an autodidact leaping past the normal realm of civilization and the studio - a rapid conquest of the situation by virtue of the compelling power of primitive, uninhibited genius.*<sup>1</sup>

Dix and his contemporaries set about creating a mode of representation that stripped their works of any unnecessary, superficial traces. This enabled them to more exactly portray the realities and human geography of their era: the so-called 'golden twenties'. From this intention these painters, such as Christian Schad, Rudolf Schlichter and George Grosz, produced searingly expressive indictments of their age. Wieland Schmied suggests: *Neue Sachlichkeit was the period which unites the two essential characteristics of Dix's work, his ability to translate a comprehensive and unsparing observation of reality into large-scale forms executed with old-masterly incisiveness, and his passionate involvement with everything that is seen. [...] Dix was the Expressionist among the Veristic painters of the Neue Sachlichkeit, and the more he sought to control the impulse and discipline himself, the more intensely this can be felt.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Willi Wolfradt, 'Otto Dix', in *Otto Dix*, edited by Olaf Peters, exhib. cat., Neue Galerie, New York, 2010, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Wieland Schmied, in *Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the Twenties*, exhib. cat., Hayward Gallery, London, 1978/79, p. 26.

Of particular importance to Dix was the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. For Sarah O'Brien Twohig, Dix *focuses on the moral justification of truthfulness in art [...] Hence Dix's use of disturbing or offensive subject matter, his distortion at times bordering on the grotesque, and his often harsh, strident colours must be seen as a Nietzschean-inspired aesthetic strategy, intended to force the viewer to confront issues and feelings in a critical, detached manner.*<sup>3</sup>

In October 1926 Otto Dix accepted a professorial post at the Dresden Academy, marking his return to the city in which he first trained as an artist. Along with his professional security this period was marked by other important events. He and his wife Martha had two children Ursus and Jan, furthermore his artistic practise was bearing fruit; in 1928 he was asked to exhibit at the Venice Biennale and at the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* in New York. The relative comforts afforded by these developments allowed Dix to concentrate upon his art. The world outside of his studio and home became less important as a source of inspiration. Nude models in his studio replaced the prostitutes depicted in his earlier works. At the same time he tried to refine his techniques, in particular by the meticulous approach of preparing his painting in the manner of the Old Masters he idolised. As Brigitte Reinhardt explains: *Dix took a strong interest in old art, especially in that of the Middle Ages and that of the Renaissance. In addition to the subject matter, he is fascinated by the technique of the Old Masters, by the glaze painting to be more exact, which he studied as a student.*<sup>4</sup> Dix even appropriated the manner of monogramming his paintings from his forebears, such as in the present work. The emblematic quality of the initials firmly places him within the Northern European artistic canon.

The present drawing is indeed a preparatory drawing for a painting of the same title. And it has nearly the same size as this painting that the artist executed in the same year.<sup>5</sup> [Fig. 1]

Compared with the painting, that has a certain tendency to mannerism, the present drawing has preserved the direct intense approach and an emotional profundity of Dix' earlier works.

Dix's images of this nature are aesthetically unconventional, precisely because of his aim to portray the normally undisclosed realities of the world. As Wieland Schmied writes: *His concern is with the individual; it is only in the unique and the individual that he finds the universal. When he paints nudes, instead of an anonymous idealised type he shows particular women in all the reality of their flesh.*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sarah O'Brien Twohig, in *Otto Dix 1891-1969*, exhib. cat., Tate Gallery, London, 1992, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Brigitte Reinhardt, in *Otto Dix, Inventory Catalogue of the Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart*, Stuttgart, 1989, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Löffler, *Otto Dix 1891-1969, Œuvre der Gemälde*, Recklinghausen, 1981, no. 1931/3, illustrated.

<sup>6</sup> W. Schmied, in *ibid.*, 1979, p. 28



Fig. 1: *Sitzender Akt mit blondem Haar* [*Seated Nude with Blond Hair*].  
Oil on panel, painted in 1931. 101 x 80 cm.  
Private collection