

Entartete Kunst, according to Hitler
The Lucerne Auction • 1939

17 October 2014 to 29 March 2015
La Cité Miroir - Liège

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1939 - The Lucerne Auction

Picasso, Chagall, Ensor, Kokoschka, Corinth, Derain, ...

Liège, La Cité Miroir

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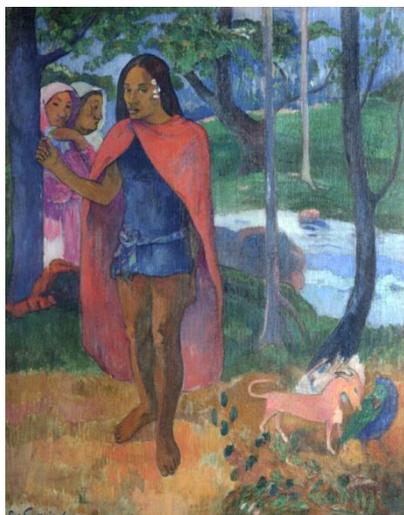
An original exhibition bringing together in Liège the works from the Lucerne auction

Art and history are combined in an exhibition presented in Liège dedicated to works that were sold by the Germans at the Lucerne auction in 1939.



Franz MARC (Munich, 1880 – Verdun, 1916), *Pferde auf der Weide*, 1910. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Liège (Bal). © Ville de Liège.

On the eve of the Second World War, the Nazi authorities wished to dispose of the Modern art works in display in German art galleries that they considered “degenerate”. In June 1939, they organised a grand auction in Lucerne. This auction, which was to take on a historic dimension, offered works by some of the greatest artists of the period: Gauguin, Chagall, Matisse, Kokoschka and even Picasso...



Paul GAUGUIN (Paris, 1848 – Iles Marquises, 1903), *Le sorcier d'Hiva Oa ou Le Marquisien à la cape rouge*, 1902. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Liège (Bal). © Ville de Liège.

The Belgian government was represented at the auction, as was a delegation from Liège that had managed to raise quite a large sum. Belgium acquired several works of art for the museums of Antwerp and Brussels while Liège purchased nine exceptional paintings that today form part of the city's major collections.

Now scattered around the world in prestigious private and public collections, a large number of the works from the auction will be brought together for the first time and exclusively presented at the Cité Miroir in Liège. The exhibition will be enriched by numerous documents evoking the historical context of the auction.

The Cité Miroir, a building with an exceptional architectural style, is a new multipurpose cultural venue in the very heart of Liège. It was built in 1939 and has just been fully renovated. This complex

housed the Sauvenière public baths and swimming pool. It is now devoted to public and cultural projects. Within the framework of “Entarte Kunst, according to Hitler”, the venue will also host a varied programme of animations, including film screenings, conferences and events related to the exhibition.

Information :**Venue :**

La Cité Miroir
Place Xavier Neujean, 22
B-4000 Liège

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info@citemiroir.be

Opening times :

Every day :

- From Tuesday to Sunday, from 10 am to 6 pm
- Monday, from 2 to 6 pm

Price :

Full price (+ 18 years old)	Concessions (- 18 / groups / students)	School groups	Article 27	- 12 years old / Students in the City of Liège
12 €	8 €	5 €	1,25 €	Free of charge

Guided tours:**Art&fact**

Guided tours by specialists. Reservations required.

Groups: 70 €/20 pers.
Individual visit: 9 €

Booking service open from Tuesday to Friday from 9 am to 1 pm

T : +32 (0) 43 66 56 04
F : +32 (0) 43 66 58 54
art-et-fact@misc.ulg.ac.be
http://www.artfact.ulg.ac.be

Catalogue :

Catalogue in French. Visitor's Guide in English, Dutch, German,

Website :

<http://www.citemiroir.be>

Organisation :

City of Liège, University of Liège, Mnema asbl, Les Territoires de la Mémoire asbl, Les Musées de Liège asbl.

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Degenerate Art (Entartete Kunst), according to Hitler The Lucerne Auction, 1939

Picasso, Chagall, Ensor, Kokoschka, Corinth, Derain, etc.

at La Cité Miroir (Liège)

From 17 October 2014 to 29 March 2015

This autumn, La Cité Miroir in Liège will host a major exhibition: 'Degenerate Art (Entartete Kunst) according to Hitler - The Lucerne Auction'. It is a new exhibition, which brings together masters such as Chagall, Picasso, Gauguin, Ensor and many others around the theme 'Art and Power'.

Art and history will form the essence of this exhibition, which reunites the works the Nazi regime considered as degenerate and sold at auction in Lucerne in 1939, for the first time in Europe. Today, scattered throughout the world in prestigious private and public collections, the vast majority of these works from the sale (those that are still preserved and that can still be transported) will be presented exclusively at La Cité Miroir in Liège. Numerous documents evoking the historical context of the sale will add substance to the exhibition. It is important to note that the Lucerne auction exclusively concerns works originating from German museums and not those confiscated from Jewish families.

Historical context

The Lucerne auction was part of a broader process concerning the Nazi regime's attitude to modern art. On the eve of the Second World War, the Nazi authorities wanted to dispose of the modern artworks they classed as 'degenerate' (Entartete Kunst). Museums from thirty-two towns across the Rhine were affected. *"In total approximately 7,000 works of art were confiscated from state museums,"* explains **Jean-Patrick Duchesne**, professor of art history at the University of Liège and scientific curator of the exhibition. *"On the other hand the regime never banned private sales. There is considerable ambiguity and contradiction surrounding the concept of degenerate art. There was however no unanimity within the regime."* Some of the works confiscated were destroyed but fortunately the majority have been preserved.

Experts rigorously selected the pieces likely to be sold off at extortionate prices during a 'trial run' to determine their value. An important auction was held at Lucerne, at the Theodor Fischer gallery on 29 June 1939. This sale, which was to take on a historical dimension, comprised 125 works. The catalogue lists 108 paintings and 17 sculptures by 39 artists: the precursors of expressionism (such as Ensor, Gauguin and Van Gogh), German impressionists (such as Corinth, Liebermann and Mataré), French or foreign members of the School of Paris (Ecole de Paris) (including Braque, Chagall, Derain, Marie Laurencin, Matisse, Modigliani, Picasso and Vlaminck) and particularly German expressionists (the Germans Dix, Grosz, Hofer, Macke, Marc, Nolde, the Austrian Kokoschka and the two Swiss artists Amiet and Klee).

Liège, the driving force of the sale

Far from being publicised, preparations for the Lucerne auction were organised with the utmost discretion. Nevertheless, they came to the attention of the local Liège resident Jules Bosmant, teacher and influential art critic (and future director of the Fine Arts Museum of Liège). Sensing a good deal for the city, he brought off an amazing feat, amassing BEF 5 million (the equivalent of EUR 3,300,000), a colossal amount at the time, in a single month. The money came from the City of Liège, the Belgian State and patrons. The Liège delegation dispatched to Lucerne negotiated with the official delegations to obtain a piece of the cake. It succeeded in purchasing nine exceptional canvases (out of ten discounted paintings), which currently form part of the major works of the City's collections and are permanently exhibited in its Fine Arts Museum.

At this point, it is interesting to note that after a rich history including several developments during the 20th century (the very first museum was built in 1905), the Fine Arts Museum, open since July 2011 and rechristened BAL (Beaux-Arts Liège) now comprises all the collections of Liège, those of the Museum of Walloon Fine Arts, the MAMAC collections (Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art), the Fonds des Anciens collections (800 paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries that have never been exhibited in public) and 40,000 works originating from the Prints and Drawings Room (Cabinet des Estampes et des Dessins).

The Fine Arts Museum's 'national treasure'

The Liège delegation dispatched to Lucerne to negotiate the acquisition of the works consisted of Auguste Buisseret, liberal alderman responsible for the Fine Arts (future minister and mayor), Jacques Ochs, director of the Academy and the Fine Arts Museum and Olympe Gilbert, editor-in-chief of the newspaper La Meuse and teacher of a Walloon art history course at the University of Liège.

The Liège delegation succeeded in 'extracting' the following paintings:

- **Marc Chagall** (1887-1985): *The Blue House (La maison bleue)*
- **James Ensor** (1860-1949): *Masks Confronting Death (Les masques et la mort)*
- **Paul Gauguin** (1848-1903): *The Magician of Hivoa (Le sorcier d'Hiva-Oa)*
- **Oscar Kokoschka** (1886-1980): *Monte Carlo*
- **Marie Laurencin** (1885-1956): *Portrait of a Little Girl (Portrait de jeune fille)*
- **Max Liebermann** (1847-1935): *Rider on the Beach (Le cavalier sur la plage)*
- **Franz Marc** (1880-1916): *The Blue Horses (Les chevaux bleus)*
- **Jules Pascin** (1885-1930): *Lunch Room (Le déjeuner)*
- **Pablo Picasso** (1881-1973): *The Soler Family (La famille Soler)*

These nine paintings constitute the 'core' of the Musée des Beaux-Arts collections. Masterpieces classified as 'national treasures', they are also the most popular with the public, particularly the works by Chagall, Gauguin, Ensor and Picasso.

Six additional paintings for Belgium

A second, national Belgian delegation, from the Acquisitions Commission for Fine Art, was also present in Lucerne. With a far more modest sum – BEF 100,000 - it left with six paintings (*Georg Brandes* by **Lovis Corinth**, *Portrait of Walter Mehring (Portrait de Walter Mehring)* by **Georges Grosz**, *Men at Table (Hommes à table)* by **Karl Hofer**, *The Hypnotist* or *Portrait of the actor Ernst Reinhold (L'Hypnotiseur or Portrait de l'acteur Ernst Reinhold)* by **Oscar Kokoschka**, *Flower Garden (Jardin de fleurs)* by **Emil Nolde** and *Young girl seated (Jeune fille assise)* by **Jules Pascin**) destined for the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Antwerp and Brussels. The other buyers at the Lucerne auction consisted of dealers, collectors, experts and directors of American and Swiss as well as English, French, Dutch and Swedish museums.

Today, the works that were sold in Lucerne are scattered across the world in prestigious private and public collections. For the first time thirty of them will now be reunited and presented exclusively at La Cité Miroir in Liège.

La Cité Miroir, a new, versatile cultural venue

La Cité Miroir, inaugurated in January 2014, offered a new lease of life to the iconic building of the former Sauvenière Baths and Spa (Bains et Thermes de la Sauvenière). A spectacular and prestigious establishment, this location also represents considerable symbolic value.

Georges Truffaut, the project's pioneer, became famous for the role he played in resisting the Nazi occupation. Hence organising the exhibition about degenerate art at this venue proves to be perfectly fitting. *"We are particularly interested in degenerate art and in the debate between art and power"*, explains **Jacques Smits**, Director of the non-profit organisation Territoires de la Mémoire and Managing Director of the non-profit organisation MNEMA. *"Our mission is not stuck in the past. We want to make an intelligent connection between the past and the present to prepare for the future. When we learned about the project for the exhibition on the Lucerne auction, we wanted to be involved in terms of infrastructure and as a partner. This exhibition represents a major educational tool, that's how we view it. There will also be musical performances and activities involving cinema, literature and architecture. As a building La Cité Miroir could qualify as a piece of modern art, reminiscent of the Bauhaus style. The Bauhaus school, founded in Weimar in 1919 by Walter Gropius was considered as degenerate by the Nazi regime and was closed in 1933."*

From Baths and Spa to La Cité Miroir

This building, with its exceptional architecture, was constructed as the result of the initiative of Georges Truffaut, alderman for public works for the City of Liège. Anxious to offer its citizens the possibility of freedom in the form of sport and hygiene, in 1936, he requested the architect Georges Dedoyard to design a complex consisting of swimming pools, sports halls and public baths. The Sauvenière Baths and Spa establishment, inaugurated in 1939, consists of six floors. It is also equipped with an air-raid shelter that can accommodate 400 people. After more than half a century of fine, loyal service the Baths closed in 2000, as they no longer complied with safety standards. Four years later,

the non-profit organisation Les Territoires de la Mémoire submitted a restoration project for the building. After works spanning several years, the building has been masterfully renovated and opened its doors under the name 'Cité Miroir'.

Quick flashback: since its foundation in 1993, the non-profit organisation Les Territoires de la Mémoire's objective has been to play the role of 'educational cordon sanitaire' against the resurgence of extremist parties. It devotes its resources and energy to civic education, resisting ideas that curtail freedom and building democracy. In the early 2000s, the non-profit organisation began to feel cramped at its offices located on the Boulevard d'Avroy. However, the former Baths and Spa complex, ideally located in the city centre, just a stone's throw from the Boulevard d'Avroy, was perfectly suited to the non-profit organisation's multiple activities that continue to grow.

Jacques Smits, director of Territoires de la Mémoire, began to think about restoring this iconic site for the people of Liège. Various partners became involved in the project and on 10 December 2004, Human Rights Day, the non-profit organisation MNEMA (*memory*, in Greek) was created to successfully restore the Baths. The complex, inaugurated on 14 January 2014, is dedicated to civic and cultural projects, civic education, remembrance and cultural dialogue.

Surrounding the exhibition

The 'Degenerate Art according to Hitler - The Lucerne Auction' exhibition will reunite thirty works (including the nine Liège paintings) originating from private and public collections from all over the world. The missing works (125 pieces were sold in Lucerne) will also be present, in a highly original manner. The vast spaces at La Cité Miroir will also host a varied programme of entertainment, including film screenings, classical music concerts (organised in association with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Liège), conferences and encounters related to the exhibition. A second complementary exhibition will be provided by the painter and photographer Linda Ellia on the theme 'Mein Kampf' (*'My Struggle'*): works of art designed from the pages of the book by Adolf Hitler.

On display at the Fine Arts Museum of Liège

The nine paintings originating from the Lucerne auction will leave the walls of the Museum for six months. During this period they will be replaced by nine other major works that the Liège delegation acquired from renowned art galleries in Paris in August 1939. The Lucerne auction proved to be an excellent deal and the Liège delegation only spent 16.7% of its 'war chest' (BEF 834,951.98 out of their available 5 million). Buisseret, Gilbert and Ochs therefore decided to visit Paris in August where they were able to acquire nine paintings of great value: **James Ensor** (1860-1949): *Shells (Coquillages)*, **Othon Friesz** (1879-1949): *The port of Antwerp (Le port d'Anvers)*, **Marcel Gromaire** (1892- 1971): *Peasant with fagot (Paysan au fagot)*, **Armand Guillaumain** (1841-1927): *Lock at the Bouchardon Watermill at Crozant (L'écluse du moulin Bouchardon à Crozant)*, **Jean Picart-Ledoux** (1902-1982): *Nude (Nu)*, **Paul Signac** (1863-1935): *Comblat Chateau (Le château de Comblat)*, **Maurice Utrillo** (1883-1955): *The Galette Mill (Le moulin de la Galette)*, **Kees van Dongen** (1877-1968): *The Violinist (La violoniste)*, **Maurice de Vlaminck** (1876-1958): *Red Flowers (Fleurs rouges)*.

A lavish and comprehensive catalogue

A comprehensive catalogue will be published on the occasion of the exhibition. Each painting in the exhibition will be accompanied by a detailed description. Many experts were also asked to produce scholarly and astute articles explaining the Lucerne auction and its historical context in detail.

Mediation

To complete your visit, La Cité Miroir also houses a permanent exhibition 'Never again! A journey through the Nazi camps to withstand today' ('Plus jamais ça! Parcours dans les camps Nazis pour résister aujourd'hui').

An educational file on the exhibition is available to schools and groups on request.

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