

**Entartete Kunst, according to Hitler**  
*The Lucerne Auction • 1939*

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

# *Entartete Kunst, according to Hitler*

## 1939 - The Lucerne Auction

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

### Liège, La Cité Miroir

17 October 2014 to 29 March 2015

**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

Tél. : +32 (0)4 230 70 50  
[info@citemiroir.be](mailto:info@citemiroir.be)  
[www.citemiroir.be](http://www.citemiroir.be)

### Opening times

Every day: from Monday to Friday, from 9 am to 6 pm  
Saturday and Sunday, from 10 am to 6 pm

### Price

| Full price | Concessions<br>(- 26 / groups / students ) | - 14 years old | Article 27 |
|------------|--|----------------|------------|
| 12 €       | 8 €  | Free of charge | 1,25 €     |

### Guided tours

Art&fact - Guided tours by specialists. Reservations required.  
Booking service open from Tuesday to Friday from 9 am to 1 pm  
T : +32 (0) 43 66 56 04  
[art-et-fact@misc.ulg.ac.be](mailto:art-et-fact@misc.ulg.ac.be) - [www.artfact.ulg.ac.be](http://www.artfact.ulg.ac.be)

### Catalogue

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

### Organisation

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

**Press contact** - Caracas PR – [info@caracascom.com](mailto:info@caracascom.com) - 32 4 349 14 41 – 32 495 22 07 92

## **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 Hivoo (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.

## An apt and striking staging

The exhibition's design was entrusted to Christophe Gaeta. A renowned set designer, he specialises in historical stagings that tell a story where context is essential. Christophe Gaeta is often approached to design important and prestigious temporary exhibitions and to furnish museums. His recent achievements include designs for the Librarium Museum, a permanent space within the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels, for the Red Star Line Museum in Anvers, and for the "14-18" exhibition as part of the series of exhibits "It's Our History," presented by the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces in Brussels.

"Designing an exhibition at La Cité Miroir is a privilege and an advantage," explains the set designer. "The setting is bright and spectacular, but we are faced with a major constraint. It is obviously out of the question to hang works by Picasso or Chagall in the light of day. We needed to transform this constraint into an asset. To do this without spoiling the general atmosphere and while incorporating the works into the exhibition on degenerate art as wisely as possible, we had a large 'box' built that will be installed on the platform. It was designed so that it can be used later for other exhibitions. This box has a strong connection to the site, keeping in mind the atmosphere of the space and particularly the goals of La Cité Miroir. Here, visitors are invited to reflect on and confront the past in order to better understand the present."

Imposing in scale (30 metres long, 15 metres wide and 4 metres high), the box is a tubular structure with a reinforced framework. It will be covered with a high-tech fabric creating the effect of stretched mirrors, with the same properties as mirrors. Easy to install, this box will reflect the entire site. Inside, the path will be one-way; visitors will not be able to wander or cross paths with each other the way they would in an art gallery, for example.

According to Christophe Gaeta's philosophy, set design tells a story. There are two entrances planned. The first, an introduction, explains the context of the time, degenerate art, and the Lucerne auction. The second, the exit door, highlights the fact that other works were purchased in Lucerne and dispersed throughout the world. Inside the exhibition, the designer wished to create a dual experience. After leaving the entranceway, visitors will arrive in a sort of no man's land plunged in darkness. Each painting will be presented on an individual "island", as if the wall and ground underneath

had been “ripped away”. This idea perfectly reflects the historical fact of the Nazi confiscation of works of art from German museums. The “islands” will be well-lit; all the rest, however, will disappear into the shadows. It will be possible to make out the silhouettes of visitors who will play the role of “voyeurs”, like those who came to the Lucerne auction to buy the works at the lowest prices. On the ground in front of each painting, the catalogue inventory number and starting price of each work will be listed.

### **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**

#### ➤ **Our struggle – International exhibition by Linda Ellia**

From 17 October to 12 December 2014

As part of the "Degenerate art according to Hitler" exhibition

The Georges Truffaut space - La Cité Miroir

Free entry on presentation of the ticket for "Degenerate art according to Hitler"

An extraordinary event at Liège!

How can art react when confronted with horror?

When it comes to *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), Adolf Hitler's book-cum-programme, forgetting and destruction are not an option. How do you face the unacceptable? Painter and photographer Linda Ellia chose to convey the violence of his emotion by covering the text of this book of hatred to make it illegible.

Alongside Linda Ellia, artists like Willem, Enki Bilal, painters Miquel Barceló, Philippe Cognée and Vladimir Velicokvic, designer Christian Lacroix, as well as children and passers-by... each of them was invited to paint, sculpt or black out their page of *Mein Kampf*.

In total, more than 600 pages were distributed and published in 2007 by French publishing house Editions du Seuil (\*) under the title *Notre Combat* [Our Struggle].

The result is fascinating, achieved by the graphic impact and the emotion brought out by this unique work.

Combined and guided visits for groups are provided by the Art & Fact association (University of Liège) and the Belgian Territoires de la Mémoire [Realms of Memory] education centre.

#### ➤ **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 Guillaumin** (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)*.

➤ **What to see in the Art Collection (ULg)**

Chagall, Ensor, Laurencin: "degenerate" artists in ULg's Art Collection

24 October to 31 January

Free exhibition open Monday to Friday, from 10:00 to 12:30 and 2:00 to 5:00, and on Saturday from 10:00 to 1:00.

With over 60,000 pieces, the Art Collection at the University of Liège (Wittert Gallery) can boast of housing works by several artists auctioned at Lucerne: Marc Chagall, James Ensor, Marie Laurencin... Echoing the works that will be presented at La Cité Miroir, these paintings, sketches, and prints from the university's heritage will be exhibited at the Wittert Gallery, in conjunction with productions by artists active in Liège in the 1930's: Jacques Ochs, Auguste Mambour, or even Idel Ianchelevici. One part of the exhibit will retrace the International Exhibition of 1939.

➤ **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.

**Press contact** : Caracas PR - [info@caracascom.com](mailto:info@caracascom.com)

+32 (0)4 349 14 41 - +32 (0)495 22 07 92

**MNEMA**  
Cité Miroir

**TERRITOIRES**  
DE LA MÉMOIRE

**bal**  
musée des beaux-arts de Liège

**Les musées**  
de Liège

**Université**  
de Liège

**Liège**

Avec le soutien de

**FÉDÉRATION**  
WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

**Wallonie**

**Province**  
de Liège

**ethias**