**Scheyer, Galka E.**

**(**Emilie Esther Scheyer, 15 April 1889, Braunschweig – 13 December 1945, Los Angeles)

Galka E. Scheyer was a German-American painter, art dealer, art collector, and art teacher. Born into a middle-class Jewish family in Braunschweig, Germany, Scheyer studied painting, sculpture, music, and languages in Munich, London, Paris, and Brussels. In 1916, she became acquainted with Alexei Jawlensky’s work at an exhibition in Switzerland. Inspired by Jawlensky (who gave her the nickname “Galka,” meaning blackbird), Scheyer abandoned her own artistic career to promote his art and between 1919 and 1924 organized a series of travel exhibitions, which she accompanied with lectures, press coverage, an artist’s monograph, and sales of art works. In 1924, at Scheyer’s initiative, the artists’ group The Blue Four (Lyonel Feininger, Alexei Jawlensky, Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee) was founded. It was Scheyer’s plan to arrange exhibitions and offer their work for sale while on an extended stay in the United States. Following her arrival in New York in May 1924, Scheyer devoted herself to promoting the art of the Blue Four through exhibitions and lectures in New York and later on the West Coast. Between 1925 and 1929, she lived in San Francisco and was part of the modernist art scenes in the Bay Area.

Scheyer served as the official “European representative” of the Oakland Art Gallery from 1926 to 1938 and showed works of the Blue Four as well as of other European modernists in Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Portland, Spokane, and Seattle. In 1929, Scheyer settled in Hollywood, where she built a small gallery house on Blue Heights Drive, and attempted to interest affluent members of the Hollywood film community, among them Josef von Sternberg, Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Harpo Marx, and the Warner brothers, in European modernist art.

With her colorful personality and untiring engagement for European modernism, Scheyer quickly became known as the “prophetess of modern art.” Along with her interest in the spiritual dimension of modernist art, she also focused on the reform of children’s art education and was particularly influenced by the work of Franz Cizek, professor at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts. In California, she continued her artistic work with children at the Anna Head School in Berkeley, 1926-1930, and at the Brentwood Town and Country School, 1936-1945. In 1928, she participated in the International Congress for Art Education in Prague, where she served as American delegate, European representative of the Oakland Art Gallery, art critic for the *San Francisco Examiner*, presented a lecture on her main subject, “Free, Imaginative, and Creative Work with Children,” and organized an international exhibition of children’s art. Scheyer was instrumental in introducing and promoting European modernism to the West Coast; her own modernist art collection is today a part of the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena.

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Fig.: Galka E. Scheyer, c. 1949, photograph by Alexander Hammid