**SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF, KARL (1884-1976)**

The German Expressionist painter, print-maker and sculptor Karl Schmidt-Rottluff was born into a miller’s family in Rottluff near Chemnitz in Saxony. Like Emil Nolde and other artists at the time, he added his birthplace to his common surname “Schmidt”. During his short career as a student of architecture at the Technical University in Dresden, he co-founded *Die* *Brücke* together with Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel and Fritz Bleyl in June 1905. Although he discontinued his studies, he remained part of the group until its official dissolution in Berlin on 27 May 1913. Unlike his former *Brücke* colleagues he did not undergo major stylistic changes during the 1920s when many artists returned to a greater naturalism. During the National Socialist dictatorship, his art was officially defamed and included in the propaganda exhibition ‘Degenerate Art’ (1937). He continued to be active as an artist until his death and remained a resident of Berlin, where he had moved in 1911. In 1947, he accepted a professorship at the newly founded Academy of fine Arts in the western part of Berlin; he also played a prominent role in the foundation of the *Brücke-Museum Berlin* which opened in 1967. Together with the Karl and Emy Schmidt-Rottluff Foundation the *Brücke-Museum* looks after his estate which includes paintings, works on paper and sculpture, as well as an impressive collection of the artist’s woodblocks.

Schmidt-Rottluff caught the art public’s attention initially not so much as a painter, but especially for his graphic work, particularly his woodcuts. From relatively early on, the artist could rely on an independent network of collectors, the most significant being the art historian Rosa Schapire. In 1924, she published the first catalogue raisonné of his prints: interestingly, though, it did not actually contain any illustrations. Schmidt-Rottluff had a special interest in the applied arts as well as in sculpture. Many of his wood-sculptures date back to the First World War when he was stationed in the Lithuanian town of Kovno. He also created silver jewellery for his wife and his circle of collectors, integrating pieces of amber which he had collected during his numerous trips to the Baltics. His paintings – comprising landscapes, figure scenes, portraits or still life – are characterised by angular shapes and strong colour contrasts, resulting in a style which has been described as expressive, monumental and primitive.

References and further reading:

Gunther Thiem and Armin Zweite (eds), *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. Retrospektive*, Munich 1989.

Magdalena M. Moeller (ed.), *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. Werke aus der Sammlung des Brücke-Museums Berlin*, Munich 1997.

Gerhard Wietek, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. Plastik und Kunsthandwerk sowie Werkverzeichnis*, Munich 2001.

Gerhard Wietek, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. Zeichnungen auf Postkarten*, Cologne 2010.