



Christoph Stölzl An Expressionist Riot of Colour as the Plumage of Rapture – Georg Tappert's Vision of a Dance of Decadence

Seven girls in a vaudeville show, attired and made up to look like Japanese geishas, dance across a small stage meant to evoke an exotic atmosphere, complete with cardboard rock and colorful lanterns. Reddish light warms the scene, bouncing off robes, faces and interior decor. The women have been made to look anonymous, as nothing more than glamourous illusions moving to a beat. Expressionism, as the echo of big-city nightlife, as the intoxicating mix of colors and lights, as the ostentation of ecstatic revelry – it is in this masterwork that all of these aspects are condensed. The oil painting was created in the two fateful years that defined German Modernism, when an arclight of inspiration seemed to flow ceaselessly between the *Blauer Reiter* movement in Munich and the autumn salon held by Berlin's *Der Sturm* gallery in 1912. It was sometime between 1911 and 1913 that the European avant-garde defined the concept of "Expressionism" for itself – style that came to define an entire period. And right in this middle of this artistic upheaval was Georg Tappert, barely thirty years old at the time. Almost as if in a state of rapture, he created intensely colorful, impulsive, and passionate images. His head was filled with the demimonde of the cabarets and vaudeville revues, bars and circuses, female dancers and chanteuses. In 1910, the founders of *Die Brücke* had dreamt of visions of paradisaically innocent nudity in a natural setting. But Tappert, working at the height of his powers in the years before 1914, discovered the "beauty of ugliness" instead. It was a provocative new idiom that came especially to the fore in his nude portraits. Nowhere else in the German avant-garde does one find such unabashed eroticism and overpowering femininity, such a frank celebration of sexuality.

Tappert was born in Berlin in 1880, the same year as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Franz Marc. Like Max Pechstein, he was not a child of the middle class, but worked as a tailor's apprentice before finding his artistic vocation. He lived in abject poverty until 1913, when he received a state teaching post. In 1906, he was apparently working as an art teacher Worpsswede. In 1910, after his works had been rejected by the jury for an exhibition devoted to the Berlin Secession, he founded the New Secession together with Pechstein. Tappert's particular talent for making friends gained him an entrée to Kandinsky and the Blauer Reiter circle. In 1912, works of his were shown at the legendary exhibition held in Cologne by the Sonderbund. Here, his paintings hung in the same room as those of Franz Marc and the artists of *Die Brücke*. He worked as an illustrator on Franz Pfempfert's "Action" and was one of the initiators of the "First Jury-Free Exhibition" based on the model of the "Independents" in Paris.

In 1912, Tappert took part in the second *Blauer Reiter* exhibition in Munich. During the German revolution in 1918/19, he was among the artists who committed themselves body and soul to combatting the monarchy and supporting democracy. Like Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Berlin street scenes, Georg Tappert's oversized, multi-figure paintings of 1910–1914 would surely rank among the treasures of mature Expressionism – if only they had all been preserved.

4 Georg Tappert

1880 – Berlin – 1957

"Geisha-Revue". 1911/13

Oil on canvas. 115.5 × 105.5 cm (45 ½ × 41 ½ in.).

Signed lower right: Tappert. Catalogue raisonné:

Wietek 134. On the reverse the painting "Zwei Akte vor Bäumen". Circa 1914 (Wietek 151). Margins patched, minor retouchings. [3548] Framed.

Provenance

Galerie Nierendorf, Berlin / Private Collection, Switzerland / Private Collection, Europe

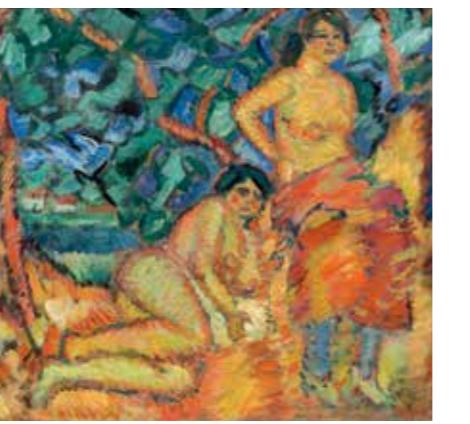
EUR 350,000–450,000

USD 412,000–529,000

Exhibition

Georg Tappert. Berlin, Galerie Nierendorf, 1963, cat. no. 22, ill. of reverse p. 8 ("Zwei Akte in Landschaft [Betty]") / Georg Tappert. Gemälde 1906–1933. Wiederentdeckung eines Expressionisten (= 70. B·A·T-Ausstellung). Hamburg, B·A·T-Haus, 1977, cat. no. 17, w. ill. of reverse ("Zwei Akte in Landschaft") / Georg Tappert. Ein Berliner Expressionist 1880–1957. Berlin, Berlinische Galerie, 1980/81, ill. of reverse p. 19 ("Zwei Akte vor Bäumen") / Georg Tappert. Deutscher Expressionist. Schleswig, Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen, Schloss Gottorf, and Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2005, cat. no. 25 ("Geisha-Revue") and cat. no. 37 ("Zwei Akte vor Bäumen"), ill. p. 79 and p. 80 / Berlin-Tokyo. Tokyo-Berlin. Die Kunst zweier Städte. Berlin, Neue Nationalgalerie, and Tokyo, Mori Art Museum, 2006, p. 342 (dated "um 1911"), ill. p. 100 (the "Geisha-Revue" was also reproduced on the exhibition banner which hung at the Neue Nationalgalerie)

- Rhythmic movement as an expression of urban dynamics
- Striking proof of exoticism in the Arts before 1914
- Incunabulum of German Expressionism



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