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Potsdam, April 25, 2024

***Modigliani: Modern Gazes***  
**April 27 – August 18, 2024**  
**Museum Barberini, Potsdam**

**Almond-shaped, sightless eyes are an unmistakable feature of Modigliani's style. With their stoic noblesse, his portraits and nudes have become icons of modern art. Like Frida Kahlo and Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani provoked both hostility and admiration, and his early death encouraged the creation of legends. Only a few of his pieces are found in German collections. The show *Modigliani: Modern Gazes*, the first exhibition of his work in Germany in fifteen years, offers a revised image of Modigliani, presenting him as an artist who turned his gaze to emancipated women. The exhibition brings together fifty-six of Modigliani's portraits and nudes in dialogue with thirty-three paintings, drawings, and sculptures by artists such as Gustav Klimt, Jeanne Mammen, Pablo Picasso, Natalia Goncharova, Egon Schiele, and Paula Modersohn-Becker. International lenders include the Albertina, Vienna, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, the Nahmad Collection, the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, the Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin, the Tate, London, the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.**

### **Modigliani as chronicler of the *femme moderne***

Modigliani's images of women were long considered the expression of male voyeurism. *Modern Gazes* reassesses the painter's view of women and shows him as the chronicler of a growing female self-confidence in the years before and during World War I. Modigliani portrayed emancipated women with short hair and men's clothing – including female artists, writers, and fashion designers – even before the new image of the *femme garçonne* appeared in the painting of the New Objectivity in the 1920s. This context also suggests a reevaluation of Modigliani's nudes: more than their nakedness, it was the unconventional independence of his subjects that was considered offensive, expressed in their slender bodies and self-assured demeanor.

"For the first time, an exhibition distances itself from the image of Modigliani as a womanizer with alcoholic tendencies. We were amazed at how infrequently this cliché from the 1950s has been questioned in scholarship on his work," explains Christiane Lange, Director of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and curator of the exhibition.

"All of our exhibitions shed new light on supposedly familiar themes and artists. In *Modern Gazes*, we show that rather than degrading his models by objectifying them, the painter

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related to them as equals on equal footing,” adds Ortrud Westheider, Director of the Museum Barberini and curator of the exhibition.

Modigliani grew up in a liberal French-Italian Jewish household. After studying art in Venice and Florence, he went to Paris in 1906. In the avant-garde world of Montmartre und Montparnasse, he portrayed art dealers, female friends, and fellow artists like Pablo Picasso, Chaïm Soutine, and Diego Rivera. His paintings of nudes provoked a scandal at his first solo exhibition at the gallery of Berthe Weill in 1917.

“Modigliani’s works are among the prominent centerpieces of museums and collections. We are delighted that due to the trust and generosity of the lending institutions and collectors, it was possible for us to present such a large number of the artist’s major works in Potsdam,” says Ortrud Westheider.

#### **In European context for the first time**

After the last Modigliani show at the Kunsthalle in Bonn in 2009, *Modern Gazes* is the first exhibition devoted to the artist in Germany in fifteen years. Conceived in cooperation with the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and presented there this past winter, the show brings together fifty-six works created by Modigliani between 1907 and 1919 in Paris.

The exhibition explores the painter’s artistic development, with portraits of his avant-garde friends, dynamic drawings of female dancers, early drawings of nudes with unconventional body types, images of *femmes garçonnes*, monumental paintings of nudes in unusual closeup views, and androgynous-seeming portraits with elongated necks.

For the first time, an exhibition on Modigliani broadens the view beyond Paris and considers his oeuvre in the context of European artistic developments. The presentation of his work alongside thirty-three paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Paula Modersohn-Becker, Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner demonstrates how a young generation of artists throughout Europe formulated a new human image at the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### **Provenance research for the exhibition project**

Exhibitions on Amedeo Modigliani have often led to the discovery of forgeries of his work. The paintings exhibited in *Modern Gazes* consist exclusively of secure works from the catalogue raisonné compiled by Ambrogio Ceroni in 1971, while the works on paper were selected from the catalogue by Osvaldo Patani. Since both catalogues show gaps, the provenance of all the exhibited pieces was further studied, leading to the acquisition of new knowledge.

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**Forty-eight lenders from twelve countries**

Loans for the exhibition come from institutions including the Albertina, Vienna, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, the Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin, the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Tate, London.

The exhibition is accompanied by a 256-page catalog published by Prestel Verlag with contributions by Flavio Fergonzi, Cécile Girardeau, Carolin Heinemann, Peter Kropmanns, Nathalie Lachmann, Christiane Lange, Victoria Noel-Johnson, Beate Söntgen, Jens-Henning Ullner, and Ortrud Westheider.

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