

MEDIA RELEASE

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Advance notice of the special exhibition of 30 January – 30 May 2021

RICHARD GERSTL. Inspiration – Legacy Rebel, radical, and misunderstood

Today, Richard Gerstl (1883–1908) is regarded as the first Austrian Expressionist. But his work was too radical for his contemporaries in Vienna, and he took his life at the age of just 25. His rediscovery is closely bound up with the Kamm Collection that has its home in the Kunsthhaus Zug. This special exhibition planned for early 2021 is being organised in collaboration with the Leopold Museum in Vienna. It will be devoted to Gerstl’s intensive period of creative work, and will also engage with his reception, placing a particular focus on contrasting his oeuvre with works from his artistic environment and from subsequent generations.

Richard Gerstl had a keen interest in the international art that he was able to see at the Vienna Secession and in the Miethke Gallery. But his critical, rebellious attitude was surely just as influenced by his great regard for the New Music emerging from the circle of composers around Arnold Schoenberg, and by his fascination for literature, language and philosophy. The work of this young artist was too radical for his contemporaries, however, and he found it almost impossible to exhibit during his lifetime. He took his own life at the age of just 25, leaving behind some 80 paintings.

Today, Gerstl is regarded as the first Austrian Expressionist, and his richly innovative oeuvre even predates Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele. His abstract, gestural painting style and emancipation of colour stood in contradiction to the conventions of his time, but have been appreciated by the artists of subsequent generations, right down to the present day. His pioneering work is increasingly appreciated in the international art world.

The Kunsthhaus Zug holds the second-largest Gerstl collection

The rediscovery of Gerstl is closely bound up with the Kunsthhaus Zug. Gerstl was initially forgotten, but was rediscovered in 1931 by the art historian and gallerist Otto Kallir. He sold a large number of Gerstl’s paintings to Fritz Wotruba, who was the artistic director of the

Würthle Gallery that belonged to Fritz and Editha Kamm-Ehrbar in Zug. Wotruba and the Kamms organised exhibitions and loaned out paintings by Gerstl, and thereby played a significant role in bringing him recognition. Thanks to a permanent loan from the Foundation of the Kamm Collection, the Kunsthaus Zug today possesses the second-biggest collection of Gerstl's works, after the Leopold Museum in Vienna.

An oeuvre of continuing explosive force

The exhibition *Richard Gerstl. Inspiration – Legacy* situates the artist in relation to subsequent generations. How did artists react to his work after 1960? Gerstl's paintings are here contrasted with works by Günter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Arnulf Rainer, Georg Baselitz, Herbert Brandl, Martha Jungwirth and others, thereby underlining the topicality of Gerstl's expressive oeuvre. His own artistic environment is sketched out with works by Gustav Klimt, Edvard Munch, Oskar Kokoschka, Alfred Kubin and Egon Schiele, all of them taken from the Kunsthaus Zug's own collection. This exhibition, featuring works by Gerstl from the Kunsthaus Zug alongside others loaned generously by important Austrian museums, brings Gerstl's historical position into the present, and demonstrates the explosive force that still resides in his work to this day.

A book about the exhibition, prepared in collaboration with the Leopold Museum, is being published by the Buchhandlung Walther König in Cologne.

For immediate release.

For further information on the exhibition programme and for image materials, go to:
<https://kunsthauszug.ch/medien/>

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