

Intemperate Times: Käthe Kollwitz, 1918-1934

January 16 – May 6, 2007

The William Benton Museum of Art

University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

The William Benton Museum of Art's Human Rights Gallery presents **Intemperate Times: Käthe Kollwitz**, a powerful exhibition of thirty prints and photographs about war, poverty and class in Eastern Europe during the 1920's. The humanitarian issues addressed in Kollwitz's work are still relevant today, giving this exhibition resonance and meaning beyond the strength and beauty of the work itself.

Käthe Schmidt, born to a politically progressive Russian family, married Karl Kollwitz in 1891 and settled in Berlin where she became concerned with the plight of the urban poor. During the Nazi era, her work about the horrors of war, poverty and social injustice generated political controversy, forcing her to resign her position as the first female professor at the Prussian Academy. Shortly thereafter she was also forbidden to exhibit her art.

Kollwitz's courageous and truthful images are an indictment of conditions in Germany during the late 19th and early 20th century. The difficulties of the working poor, as real today as they were in the 1920's, are brought into sharp focus in her posters and commissioned pieces. Poster Against Paragraph 218 (1923), commissioned by the Women's Committee of the German Communist Party, protests Paragraph 218, anti-abortion legislation that disadvantaged the poor. Poster Against Alcoholism (1922) speaks out against the ravages of this "typical misfortune of worker's families." Her compelling woodcut Hunger (1925), characterizes hunger as a cruel torturer looming over its victims; and Cottage Industry reveals the exhaustion and despair of a woman exploited by unfair labor practices.

The loss of her son in World War I and her grandson in World War II, made anti-war imagery a cornerstone of Kollwitz's work. In Mothers (1919), women cling to their children, terrified of losing them to war and poverty. The haunting and emotionally charged series War (1922-23) portrays overwhelming fear, loss and pain - the inevitable result of the "frightful insanity" of war; and No More War, commissioned in 1924 by the Social

Democratic Party, illustrates Kollwitz's belief in Goethe's quote: "the seed corn [our children, our future] must not be ground".

Kollwitz's legacy of art and activism is a call to action for all human beings – then and now. Her statement, "drawing is the only thing that makes my life bearable" tells us not only of her passion for her work, but of her belief in the power of art to change the world.

Shown in conjunction with **Intemperate Times**, is *in fear*, a new work by video artist Leslee Broersma. Broersma's re-combined vintage film clips interweave childhood innocence with the realities of a society committed to warfare. Issues of family, social justice and war connect Broersma and Kollwitz, highlighting the timeless relevance of these vitally important human rights issues.

Also on view at the Benton Museum of Art:

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March 13- June 17

The 2006 Master Of Fine Arts Exhibition

March 31 – May 6

Old Master Drawings and Prints

March 31 – May 6