Audio Guide Transcript

Storm of Progress: German Art After 1800 from the Collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum

November 8, 2020–February 28, 2021
Main Exhibition Galleries

SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

STOP 1
Introduction Gallery: Director's Welcome

Speaker: Brent Benjamin
              Barbara B. Taylor Director
              Saint Louis Art Museum

Hello, I'm Brent Benjamin, Barbara B. Taylor Director of the Saint Louis Art Museum. It's my pleasure to welcome you to *Storm of Progress: German Art after 1800 from the Collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum*. COVID-19 has disrupted most art shipping, and as a consequence, we have revised our exhibition schedule to develop this extraordinary show, which tells a 200-year story of German art drawing on the Museum's holdings, a collection that is virtually unparalleled outside of Germany. The Museum's collection of German art is unique for an American museum. It includes a strong focus on German Expressionism and the works of Max Beckmann as well as every major artist in German postwar and contemporary art, including such luminaries as Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter, and Sigmar Polke. This unique civic treasure is a testament to the philanthropic support of our patrons, notably Morton D. May, and we celebrate that generosity by presenting *Storm of Progress* free of charge.

This exhibition audio guide offers 16 expert commentaries. You will discover many different perspectives on German art narrated by the Museum's modern and contemporary art curators. You will also hear from our curators of American art, decorative arts and design, and prints, drawings, and photographs, highlighting the collaborative nature of this collection and institution.

German art has been exhibited in various ways at the Museum over the past decades, yet this is the first exhibition in our history to unite both modern and contemporary German works. Together, our curators will reflect on Germany's unique history—including its industrialization, national unification, World Wars I and II and the Holocaust, the Cold War and its aftermath—and explore the deeply resonant themes that span art movements and time periods.

We encourage you to experience this guide in any order you like; you may follow it chronologically or pick and choose. Each featured object can be located by following the floorplan on this webpage or by identifying the audio icon on the object's label in the exhibition.

Whether you're listening from home or in the Museum galleries, I hope you enjoy this audio guide and your visit to *Storm of Progress*.

STOP 2
Introduction Gallery: *Landscape with Pathos*

Speaker: Hannah Klemm
**   Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art**
**   Saint Louis Art Museum**

Hello, I am Hannah Klemm, the associate curator of modern and contemporary art at the Saint Louis Art Museum. *Landscape with Pathos*, at first glance, looks almost abstract, yet artist Georg Baselitz has in fact taken an image of a landscape—blue sky, white clouds, trees, and a rocky outcrop—and flipped it upside down. This painting is one of the first works in which Baselitz inverted his imagery, a formula that became his signature style.

It was in 1969 that Baselitz began inverting his compositions; he wanted to stress the constructed nature of painting by creating a sense of dislocation for the viewer. He also wanted to disrupt traditional visual entry into pictorial space and any easy narrative readings of his paintings, but he didn't want to create a work that was fully abstract. He often used biography as a starting point for the content of the painting, either locations from his life or people in it, yet the subjects he chooses were often also part of long art historical traditions—such as landscape painting, in this case.

Baselitz was seven years old at the end of World War II. He spent his childhood in Communist East Germany in the town of Deutschbaselitz in Saxony. In 1957 he fled East Germany and enrolled in art school in West Berlin.

This painting is based on the landscape of Saxony. Baselitz was inspired by multiple sources that documented the landscape of his Saxon home. First, he looked to documentary photographs from a 1939 booklet published by the Saxon authorities that detailed regional landscapes and monuments. Baselitz brought several of these booklets of the Saxon landscape with him when he left East Germany. Second, many of his inverted landscapes of this time were influenced by the meticulous regional landscape paintings of the 19th-century Saxon painter Ferdinand von Rayski. Baselitz had seen the work of von Rayski in Dresden as a child with his father. Nearly a

century after they were painted, von Rayski's paintings had been appropriated by the Nazi party for propagandistic purposes.

Baselitz was interested in using his method of inverting the imagery as a way to examine the problematic history of the German landscape. In particular, he was interested in how the Nazis embraced and utilized the German landscape and German aesthetics to glorify the Third Reich, casting a dark shadow on historic artworks and motifs considered typically German.

In his paintings Baselitz confronts the human and cultural tragedies of World War II. *Landscape with Pathos*'s layered references and dislocating inversion conveyed the displacement and rootlessness caused by the war and subsequent division of Germany that Baselitz also personally felt through his own exile, while the deft combination of expressive, abstract, and documentary traditions demonstrate how landscapes have been coded and coopted throughout history as symbols of national and cultural identity.

STOP 3
Nature and Nationhood: *Sunburst in the Riesengebirge*

Speaker: **Simon Kelly**
              Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
              Saint Louis Art Museum

Hello, I'm Simon Kelly, curator of modern and contemporary art at the Saint Louis Art Museum.
The picture that you are looking at, *Sunburst in the Riesengebirge*, is by Caspar David Friedrich,
the leading painter in the German Romantic movement, which flourished in the early decades of
the 19th century. Romanticism was a complex historical movement. One of its most important
elements was the new significance that it gave to landscape painting, since it emphasized the
individual's subjective and emotional response to nature. Friedrich's picture dramatically
captures a mountain landscape as sun breaks through the stormy clouds and illuminates the
distant hills. Another expanse of bluish peaks is visible at back left, while a tiny hut at top left
suggests a human presence. Friedrich evokes the effects of changing weather conditions as if he
had painted this work outdoors. Yet the development of this picture is in fact more complex and
arguably more interesting. Friedrich's painting is a work of memory made 25 years after he
visited the Riesengebirge Mountains on a hiking trip in 1810. These mountains, also known as
the Giant Mountains, today border the Czech Republic and Poland, and they were close to the
town of Dresden in southern Germany, where Friedrich spent most of his life.

Although his work is ostensibly naturalistic, Friedrich developed a personal language of
symbolism in his painting that is clearly evident in *Sunburst in the Riesengebirge*. The fir in the
foreground thus symbolizes vitality, while the dead tree alongside is a reminder of human
mortality. The sunburst of light in the distance represents the hope for eternity, a hope that was

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central to Friedrich, who was a deeply religious man and saw landscape painting as a way of expressing his Christian beliefs. This picture gains extra poignancy when we understand that Friedrich knew his health was failing at this time. In 1835, indeed, he suffered a stroke, which largely curtailed his painting production. This is probably one of his last pictures.

Sunburst in the Riesengebirge is a recent purchase by the Museum and fills a long-standing gap in the Museum's collection. Friedrich's works are rare, and there are only four other paintings by the artist in American museums. His work is all the more important for our collection since it had a deep impact on later generations of German artists right up until the present day. Perhaps most notably, Gerhard Richter has often acknowledged the inspiration that he has drawn from Friedrich's work.

STOP 4
Nature and Nationhood: Prints by Max Klinger

 Speaker: Abigail Yoder
             Research Assistant
             Saint Louis Art Museum

Hello, I'm Abby Yoder, research assistant in modern and contemporary art. Here we see a selection of prints from Max Klinger's second major print series, *The Rescue of Ovid's Victims*. First published in 1879, when Klinger was only 22 years old, this ambitious series was intended to align him with great intellectual, artistic, and literary figures in history, including the playwright William Shakespeare, the German composer Robert Schumann, and the ancient Roman poet Ovid. For this series, Klinger illustrated three tales from Ovid's famous collection of mythological stories, *The Metamorphoses*. In Ovid's tellings, nearly all of the characters meet unfortunate ends, with one or more figures transforming into flowers, trees, or other creatures. Klinger took it upon himself to "rescue" these characters by altering the narrative of Ovid's stories. Ovid himself was known for his own alterations of these already ancient stories during his lifetime, so with this print series, Klinger presented himself as beating Ovid at his own game.

The series opens with an image of Ovid's bust appearing in a vision to Klinger as he sits at his workspace with folded hands. The work is a dedication to Ovid and suggests Klinger's reverence for the poet as his inspiration, but the series then takes an ironic turn. Klinger illustrated two stories from *The Metamorphoses*—Pyramus and Thisbe, and Narcissus and Echo—that both originally end in sorrow: star-crossed lovers Pyramus and Thisbe die by suicide after a series of unfortunate misunderstandings, and the cursed nymph Echo falls helplessly in love with the vain Narcissus, who loves only his own reflection.

Klinger offers less tragic interpretations of these tales. For example, in the two prints of Narcissus and Echo, he shows a charming and successful courtship. The first print highlights the couple in the background, and trees divide three scenes of them hesitantly meeting by the shoreline, coming closer, and then kissing. Their interactions are observed in the foreground by a faun and a satyr, which is a disguised self-portrait of Klinger. In the second print, the loving

couple is nowhere to be seen. Instead, Klinger alludes to their happier fate with sexually suggestive imagery in the lower vignette.

Klinger was a prolific printmaker, producing hundreds of prints during his lifetime. Though he also worked as a painter and sculptor, he was especially drawn to printmaking, as he believed the black-and-white medium was better suited to explore dreamlike, fantastic, or psychological imagery. His prints influenced later generations of German artists, including the Expressionists of the early 20th century.

STOP 5
Nature and Nationhood: *Window Draperies*

Speaker: Genevieve Cortinovis
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts and Design
Saint Louis Art Museum

Hi, I'm Genevieve Cortinovis, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts and Design here at the Saint Louis Art Museum, and I am very pleased to tell you a little more about this window curtain made by the German designer Margarete von Brauchitsch.

In 1908 the British design magazine *The Studio* described the contemporary embroidery of von Brauchitsch as whether "graceful or strong, rich or sparing . . . always reliable and uniform." One might argue about whether the black and sage-green gridded bands on this unbleached linen curtain are best described as graceful, strong, rich, or sparing, but it's hard to dispute that they are uniform. The consistency lay not in the steady hand of an expert embroiderer, but rather the rhythmic pulse of a sewing machine. Although historically tied to traditions of handcraft, von Brauchitsch saw great potential in machine embroidery, considering it an efficient and cost-effective means to make well-designed textiles for the home and body.

Born in 1865 into a large, aristocratic family, her artistic training did not begin until after her marriage to the architectural photographer Ernst von Brauchitsch, who she would later divorce, and the birth of her son. From 1890 to '95 Margarete trained in the Leipzig studio of the painter Max Klinger, whose work is also featured in this gallery, and then traveled to Vienna and worked under the painter and graphic designer Kolomon Moser, who would go on to cofound Wiener Werkstatte, a cooperative enterprise of craft and design workshops. Upon returning to Germany, she began experimenting in a range of media, including wallpaper, ceramics, stained glass, and textiles, which would become her artistic calling card.

She settled in Munich in 1898 and, that same year, was one of the founding members of the United Workshops for Art in Handicraft. The founding of these design workshops, which

connected artists with skilled producers helping to market and exhibit their creations, underpinned the commercial success of the Munich Jugendstil, the German arm of the international Art Nouveau movement. Von Brauchitsch was an artist and entrepreneur, running her own workshop that employed 16 women who executed her embroidery designs. She won major commissions, including a monumental stage curtain for the Munich Schauspielhaus and participated in a number of international exhibitions, including the 1904 World's Fair, held here in St. Louis.

Although one of the most important German textile artists of her day, von Brauchitsch's enterprises could not survive the upheaval and economic crisis brought on by World War I. She spent much of her later life working as a housekeeper for a wealthy family. Although her early paintings and designs were lost or destroyed, a great variety of pillow covers, tablecloths, and curtains made under her watchful eye survive as testaments to her creativity and business savvy.

STOP 6
Nature and Nationhood: *Village on the Sea*

Speaker: **Simon Kelly**
                Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
                Saint Louis Art Museum

This painting is by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, a key figure in the avant-garde group Die Brücke, or

The Bridge, founded in Dresden in 1905. He was one of the original members of the group, and

it was he who suggested the name Die Brücke, inspired by a line from Friedrich Nietzsche's

Thus Spake Zarathustra, "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end." The Brücke

artists thus saw their art as a bridge towards the future, and Schmidt-Rottluff's innovative

approach is clearly evident in this painting, *Village on the Sea*. Schmidt-Rottluff represents his

vista as an abstract pattern of vibrant color, flat shapes, and dynamic zigzagging lines rather than

a more conventionally naturalistic window onto nature. In the foreground is a red field with

flowers that resemble broken eggshell cups. Pointed pines are behind to left and right, and red

and yellow striped fields appear in the center. Further back are fishermen's cottages, balloonlike

trees, and distant expanses of sea and sky.

Schmidt-Rottluff's view was painted in the remote fishing village of Nidden, which was then

part of the eastern reaches of the German Empire but today forms part of Lithuania. From the

late 19th century artists had traveled to Nidden, attracted by the natural beauty of its expansive

sand dunes and pine forests and also the life of the fisherfolk that offered an antidote to city

existence. Schmidt-Rottluff's friend Max Pechstein had painted in Nidden regularly. As a result

of Pechstein's encouragement, Schmidt-Rottluff spent four months in Nidden in the spring and

summer of 1913, producing approximately 30 paintings. *Village on the Sea* is one of the most

impressive of these. Particularly notable are the complementary color contrasts of red and green, and yellow and blue, and the strong black outlines, the latter reflecting Schmidt-Rottluff's interest in the linear qualities of printmaking. The artist's time in Nidden can be seen as the culmination of his many renderings of the sea. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner wrote that the bracing North Sea air brought out a "monumental" quality in Schmidt-Rottluff's painting.

Village on the Sea was acquired by the National Gallery in Berlin in 1919, so it would have been among Schmidt-Rottluff's best-known pictures in the 1920s and 1930s. In July 1937, however, it was confiscated by the Nazis, and it subsequently appeared in the *Degenerate Art* show in the same year—that propaganda exhibition organized by the Nazi government to indoctrinate the German people against Expressionist work. It was later acquired by the prominent St. Louis collector Morton D. May in 1950 and bequeathed by him to the Saint Louis Art Museum in 1983 as part of his transformative gift of German Expressionist paintings.

STOP 7
Expressionism: Paintings by Max Pechstein

Speaker: **Melissa Venator**
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow for Modern Art
Saint Louis Art Museum

Hello, I'm Melissa Venator, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow for Modern Art at the Saint Louis Art Museum, and these are two paintings titled *Indian and Woman* and *The Big Indian*, both made in early 1910 by Max Pechstein.

When we look at these paintings today, we see a brightly decorated room with two extraordinary figures. But if we were Germans looking at these paintings in 1910, everything about them would have reminded us of modern, big-city life and one place in particular: Berlin. Now, Berlin wasn't just the capital of Germany. It was the third-largest city in Europe, and it gained a reputation for being a hotbed of lawlessness and indecency. Life really was different in Berlin, but that was due to demographics, not morality.

In 1910 Berlin had two million residents—more than twice the size of the next largest German city—and most were young people who moved from the countryside to work in its factories. Single and independent, they spent their free time in all-night bars and cabarets, where they saw variety shows of dancers, musicians, and comedians. Max Pechstein was one of these transplants. He moved from Dresden to Berlin in 1908 and immersed himself in the city's nightlife, especially its cabarets and circuses. He didn't just attend these cabarets, he got to know the performers and in 1909 began to paint them too.

And that's what we see when we look at *Indian and Woman* and *The Big Indian*. We're in Pechstein's studio, decorated with bright rugs and wall paintings. His abstract painting style makes it impossible to recognize the man and woman from their appearance, but details identify them as cabaret performers.

Look at the man. Pechstein calls him an "Indian" in the titles. But while researching him, I consulted a specialist in Indian textiles who confirmed that his clothes are not authentic. They're

a theatrical costume meant to look Indian to the average Berliner. In this period there was a fad for cabaret acts of non-European music and dance, typically Indian or African. Many of these cabaret artists were not members of the culture they represented in performance. For instance, publicity photos often show white Germans masquerading as Middle Eastern belly dancers or Indian snake charmers. So, it's possible that this man, this so-called Big Indian, was no more Indian than his costume.

This fad for cultural appropriation—like the fake Indian and African cabaret acts—coincided with the height of Germany's colonial empire, which lasted for almost 40 years, from 1884 to 1919. News from the colonies in Africa and the South Pacific fascinated Germans, who delighted in exotic art and literature that promoted a fantasy of colonial life. And Pechstein really bought into that fantasy. Three years after making these paintings, he moved to the German colony of Palau and intended to live there permanently. But the outbreak of World War I, only a year later, forced him to return to Germany.

STOP 8
Expressionism: *Woman's Head with Green Eyes*

Speaker: **Melissa Venator**
            Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow for Modern Art
            Saint Louis Art Museum

This is a painting titled *Woman's Head with Green Eyes*. It was made in 1915 by the American artist Lyonel Feininger. So, why is an American in an exhibition of German art? Feininger is a special case. He was born in New York to German parents who were classical musicians. They planned for him to follow in their footsteps and sent him to Germany at the age of 16 to study at a music conservatory. When he arrived, he promptly enrolled in drawing classes, and the rest is history.

Feininger lived in Germany for 50 years, working first as a very successful illustrator whose satirical and political cartoons appeared in European journals and even in the *Chicago Tribune*. He later worked as an artist and as a teacher at the Bauhaus school of art, architecture, and design. And he would have stayed in Germany, but the Nazis blacklisted him, so he returned to the US.

Now, let's look at the painting. Feininger was in his 40s when he made *Woman's Head with Green Eyes*, but he had only been painting for six years. And his transition from illustrator to painter is part of its story. He was incredibly successful as an illustrator, but Feininger had always dreamed of being a painter. And it was his wife, Julia, who finally convinced him to leave illustration. She even taught him how to paint, because unlike Lyonel, Julia had attended art school and was a trained professional artist. So, in 1908 Lyonel closed himself up in his studio for five years and developed a painting practice from scratch. And Julia supported their family of five so he could focus on his art.

They remained a very close couple for the rest of their long lives. Lyonel took thousands of photos of Julia and their children, but he only painted four portraits of her. And you're looking at one of them: *Woman's Head with Green Eyes* is a portrait of Julia.

Knowing that connection transforms how we see this painting. She's not an anonymous model in a studio but a beloved wife painted by her husband. We see their mutual affection, and we see Julia as the confident and strong woman that she was. It's telling, I think, that this portrait stayed in the Feininger family until Julia's death in 1970.

And the fact that we can read so much emotion in Julia's face and in her bearing—in what is, after all, a fairly abstract portrait—is a legacy of Feininger's illustrations. Julia seems to look right at us with her enormous, catlike eyes, which are half-lidded in a softened gaze. Her mouth turns up, her cheeks blush, and she leans toward us, all body language that communicates warmth and familiarity.

Feininger spent 20 years as an illustrator learning how to coax subtleties of human behavior out of pen and ink drawings—nothing more. And he carries that ability into his paintings, apparently of simple subjects, but invested with deep meaning, like this portrait of Julia.

STOP 9
War and Its Aftermath: *The Homecoming of 1918*

Speaker: **Melissa Wolfe**
                Curator of American Art
                Saint Louis Art Museum

Hi, I'm Melissa Wolfe, curator of American art here at the Saint Louis Art Museum. The artist of *Homecoming* is Karl Hoeckner, who was born in Munich to a family who had been printmakers for generations. He immigrated to Chicago in 1910 when he was 27, and he immediately joined the city's active group of artists who were interested in finding an American grounding for the various Modernist trends that were developing in Europe. However, World War I was a turning point in the artist's career. Traumatized by the horrific accounts of warfare, Hoeckner turned to his brush to express his distress. As he himself described, "My art aims, up to the outbreak of the [world] war, were the search for and the expression of beauty. During the war I became interested in truth—in bitter truth and the struggle of life in general . . . we moderns [meaning himself] are not commercial minded but are endeavoring to depict truth."

In *Homecoming* Hoeckner focuses on the massive humanitarian crisis of the war. A seemingly unending line of bodies march, or limp, toward us, though where they are coming from and where, exactly, they are headed is unclear. They seem merely to advance toward us with an unsettling intensity of need. Their broken, emaciated, and disfigured bodies tell us, without a word being spoken, what the cost of this warfare has been. The painting is a bitter indictment of both its specific subject, World War I, but also its universal subject—war. The gaunt, pale figures could be refugees, or they could be spirits of the dead.

Well aware of the Vienna Secessionists from his time in Munich, Hoeckner employs their wavering line—but large and overly emphatic—to evoke both physical and psychological extremes. His lifelike scale, acidic tones, and harsh contrasts also work to accost any complacency. Hoeckner continued his commitment to social and humanitarian issues, continuing in his career to address labor and class inequities.

STOP 10

War and Its Aftermath: *Christic and the Sinner*

Speaker: **Melissa Venator**
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow for Modern Art
Saint Louis Art Museum

This is a painting titled *Christ and the Sinner*, made in 1917 by Max Beckmann. It shows a passage from the Gospel of John from the New Testament of the Christian Bible. In the passage Jesus is asked to determine the fate of a woman accused of adultery. The law called for her to be stoned to death, but Jesus responded, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," the source of the familiar expression, "let him who is without sin cast the first stone." It's interpreted as a lesson in the virtue of forgiveness and a warning against hypocrisy. After all, are any of us so good that we can judge the action of others?

Beckmann often depicted scenes from the Bible, but he wasn't a particularly religious man. For him, biblical stories represented universal themes, like the idea of forgiveness, easily understood by the average German. And that's an important point to remember. In the German census of 1910, over 98 percent of Germans identified as Christian, either Protestant or Catholic. They would be familiar enough with Bible stories to identify the subject of this painting from the figures alone, and they would also know its moral lesson.

But while Beckmann refers to the biblical account, he also departs from it. Jesus stands at the center in a white robe, but Beckmann shows him beardless and bald, looking, in fact, very much like Beckmann himself. The woman at his feet is the woman accused of adultery, kneeling in prayer and thanking Jesus for his intercession. The other figures are harder to identify. One may be a soldier, another in tights and a red pointed hat and apron is a complete mystery. And they all make bizarre hand gestures. These are puzzles with no clear answers, which leave us with unresolved curiosity, a response I regularly have to Beckmann's art.

As we try to understand *Christ and the Sinner*, its date helps a lot: 1917, the middle of World War I. By then Beckmann's war was already over. He volunteered as a medical orderly in early 1915 and spent a year in occupied Belgium caring for wounded soldiers. In a letter home, he described how the wounded men reminded him of the sufferings of Jesus, likely the only example of a heavily wounded man he had ever encountered in his life before the war.

Beckmann's constant exposure to pain and death led to a breakdown and discharge on medical grounds. While recuperating he began to paint large biblical scenes in a new angular and more abstract style, paintings including *Christ and the Sinner*. For Germans in the midst of war, not just Beckmann, the Bible's apocalyptic narrative seemed a wholly appropriate metaphor for the large-scale human loss and environmental devastation.

STOP 11
Trauma and Memory: *Tulb*

Speaker: **Hannah Klemm**
              Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
              Saint Louis Art Museum

Towering over a mountain range against a bright blue sky, an eagle flies with its wings spread. The eagle is a reoccurring symbol in A. R. Penck's artistic practice. While he depicted eagles often in paintings and drawings, he also wrote about their symbolic and metaphorical importance as a motif. In a 1974 text titled *Eagle,* Penck investigated the historical significance of the eagle in mythology, discussing how it had been employed symbolically across many societies, yet primarily as a symbol of power.

Under the eagle the word *TULB* is painted in large letters. While it might seem like nonsense, when read backwards it spells the word *blut*, or blood in German. In this context, the eagle can be read as a reference to the Nazi eagle, the symbol for the government of Nazi Germany, conjuring memories of Germany's recent past—particularly the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust. Through this juxtaposition of images and words, Penck forced viewers to confront and reflect on the war through symbols of Germany's power and the mythology of its landscape.

The reversal of the word *blut* can also be seen as a tongue-in-cheek reference to Penck's friend and fellow artist Georg Baselitz, who had become famous for his inverted compositions. Penck and Baselitz had known each other since the 1950s, when they both lived in East Germany. When Baselitz fled East Germany to go to art school in West Berlin in 1957, he tried to convince Penck to come with him. Penck refused, wanting to stay in Dresden and continue to try to function as an artist in East Germany. As it became clear that Penck was not going to be accepted into the official art world of the East German Socialist party, Baselitz helped connect Penck to the West German art dealer Michael Werner, whom Penck would work with for the rest of his life. Due to his status as a dissident artist, Penck couldn't legally send his paintings to West Germany for exhibition or sale. Instead, he met Michael Werner on the outskirts of East Berlin. Penck transported his folded canvases in a suitcase that he handed off to the dealer to

bring back to his Cologne gallery. This painting was one of the works passed over the border in this fashion.

TULB can also be understood as a work by an East German artist reflecting on the division of the country and the responsibility of both Germanies towards their shared history. East Germany had historically framed itself as the anti-Fascist state, stressing how Communists had been persecuted alongside the Jewish people by Nazi Germany. This allowed the East German government to distance itself from Germany's past and associations with the Nazi party while also disallowing comparisons with its own totalitarian present. From his position as an outsider in both his own country and the broader world, Penck addressed what he saw as the false Cold War dichotomy of friend and foe.

In the right-hand corner of this painting is a stick figure man with his arms out. This was a sign Penck created that he called the Standart Man. He viewed it as a universal symbol for art and mankind, one that he hoped would bridge divides by creating a common symbolic language.

STOP 12
Capitalist Realism: . . . *Higher Beings Ordain*

Speaker: **Molly Moog**
Research Assistant
Saint Louis Art Museum

Hello, I'm Molly Moog, research assistant in modern and contemporary art at the Saint Louis Art Museum. Sigmar Polke's 1968 editioned portfolio *. . . Higher Beings Ordain* imitates the antiaesthetic look of scientific documentation. Grainy photographs with captions document arrangements of household items as well as the artist himself, who impersonates different objects and personas. Each portfolio also includes original hand-drawn diagrams that demonstrate impractical inventions. The banal look of the portfolio and its witty juxtaposition of images reveal Polke's characteristic humor, aimed at deflating societal pretensions and uncovering uncomfortable truths.

Polke spent most of his childhood in East Germany until his family fled to the West at the end of the 1950s. In the '60s he studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, where he and his classmates responded to Germany's postwar consumer culture. Within a decade after the end of World War II, West Germany had experienced a seemingly miraculous economic recovery, leading to the widespread availability of coveted consumer goods like modern cars, televisions, and appliances. Polke, who had been raised in Communist East Germany, approached these developments with ambivalence, recognizing a culture of conformity and the comforts of materialism that supplanted memories of recent hardships and the traumas of the war.

Within Polke's portfolio everyday items like rulers, buttons, and gloves serve as symbols of the average West German household that purchased these types of goods. In the print *Glass Palm Tree*, a set of Midcentury Modern drink glasses is stacked into the shape of a palm tree. The palm was quite an exotic plant in the 1960s, when many Germans still could not afford to visit tropical locations. In Polke's work it came to embody escapism and aspirations towards travel, romance, and conventional good taste—all qualities that Polke scrutinized in postwar German society.

He also ridiculed the worship of modern art and the cult of the artist as a genius in the drawing *Apparatus used for impregnating the air with a picture*. It depicts a device that twirls a picture of Polke to imbue the surroundings with the essence of the artist. Polke's antiheroic self-portrait—with large spectacles and a grin—mocks the pretensions of artists like Joseph Beuys, a professor at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Beuys famously cultivated his iconic persona through self-imaging and performance. For this drawing Polke used a ballpoint pen on graph paper, materials more associated with office work than art-making. Polke's ordinary materials and the absurdly scientific appearance of his portfolio suggest the artist's skepticism of a culture of rationality and objectivity that had nevertheless allowed for the rise of Nazism in the 1930s.

STOP 13
Performative Impulse: *Urbis II*

Speaker: **Hannah Klemm**
Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
Saint Louis Art Museum

Joseph Beuys holds an almost mythical position in the pantheon of postwar German art. He was an important teacher, political activist, and artist. Beuys believed that art and life were inextricable, that art could change society, and that everyone could be an artist. Beuys was a multimedia and multidimensional artist, never intending his practice to be singular in its interpretation or presentation. In his work Beuys endowed humble, everyday objects and actions with spiritual meaning. He was famously charismatic and created an iconic public persona, combining the performance of self with political action.

Beuys served as professor of monumental sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy from 1961 to 1972. He believed that art should compel conversation, communication, progressive social action, and be open to everyone. Acting on this belief, throughout the 1960s Beuys implemented an open enrollment policy in his class, accepting any student who wished to study with him.

Throughout the 1970s, as part of his performance art practice, Beuys lectured extensively on art and politics—specifically, on the task of creating a genuinely democratic society. He started using blackboards to write on during his lectures. While the blackboards played an important didactic function as a site for information during the lecture, Beuys deliberately saved the blackboards with their writing, often exhibiting them as autonomous works of art almost as soon as they were created.

This work, *Urbis II*, was a blackboard drawing from a performance Beuys did in Rome in 1972. These public discussions exemplified Beuys's role as artist, teacher, and activist. On this chalkboard Beuys sketched out the points of this talk. At the center he wrote *LIBERTÀ*, which is Italian for freedom. Beuys often linked freedom to creativity, art, and expression. The three main headings for this lecture are, from left to right: *Freiheit*, or freedom; *Demokratie*, or democracy; and *Sozialismus*, or socialism. Beuys was an avid supporter of and activist for

Democratic Socialism, believing that the state should take care of people's basic needs. He felt this would allow individuals the freedom to develop innovative ways of thinking and would, in turn, support overall societal well-being.

With the blackboard drawings such as this one, Beuys liberated drawing from associations with private, individual artistic acts. Rather, it became a function and document of a communal action. The blackboard drawings also take on performative meaning—functioning as a lasting document of the relationship between artist, audience, and artwork. It was really social relationships that were Beuys's primary area of concern, and works like *Urbis II* allow us to continue to explore and discuss fleeting, collective performative moments long after the lecture is over.

STOP 14
Performative Impulse: *Werksotger*

Speaker: Molly Moog
             Research Assistant
             Saint Louis Art Museum

Franz Erhard Walther is an innovator in the field of participatory artwork. Starting in the 1960s he has designed objects from fabric, wood, and other materials that participants activate by touching, wearing, holding, walking on, and entering inside of them. The artworks themselves are the open-ended situations in which people reconsider themselves and their bodies in relationship to Walther's creations, to the surrounding space, and the element of time. In the 1960s Walther moved beyond the established materials and definitions of art, conceiving of an artwork as a temporal and subjective encounter in which the viewer takes an active role in the creation of meaning.

Born in 1939, Walther studied at the State University of Fine Arts in Frankfurt until 1961, when he was expelled for his experimentation with materials—which ran counter to the school's more conventional curriculum. Afterwards, he enrolled at the influential Düsseldorf Art Academy, where he met professor Joseph Beuys and fellow students exploring new ways of thinking about art. In the early '60s Walther began designing participatory works in collaboration with his wife, Johanna, who sewed his creations in her parents' tailoring shop. In 1967 he moved to New York City, where he would continue to live and work until 1973, coming into contact with American Minimalist and Conceptual artists.

This drawing is a diagram of Walther's 1969 artwork titled *Plastisch*, or sculptural. To engage with the work, two participants lay down a long strip of fabric formed into a large sack at either end. Each participant slips the sack over their body, covering everything except for their feet. The participants then move according to their own inclinations, walking along the strip of fabric that runs under their feet and connects them together.

In this drawing Walther laid out six potential steps in the activation, annotating each with notes on concepts and ideas that may have arisen while witnessing it. Walther interpreted his artworks

using an open-ended vocabulary that changed and developed over time. Here the word *Stufen* (steps) indicates the movement of the participants while inside of the sacks. *Beziehungsgefüge* (the structure of relationships) may point to the physically challenging relationship between two participants in the work. For Walther the word S*kulptur* (sculpture) often referred to an understanding of one's own body as a sculptural form.

Walther has said that his works acquire significance by being handled and engaged with and that their meaning continues to evolve with multiple activations. For this reason, drawings like this have been important aspects of his practice that have allowed him to think through and document the implications of his work as they emerge.

STOP 15
Cold War Painting: *4 Muses*

Speaker: **Hannah Klemm**
Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art
Saint Louis Art Museum

In this large-scale painting Jörg Immendorff has created a fictitious artist's studio in which he has depicted himself and three of his contemporary artist friends: Georg Baselitz, Markus Lüpertz, and A. R. Penck. He chose this group because he saw them as artists all deeply linked to the politics of postwar Germany.

Immendorff was part of a generation of artists born at the end of World War II. He studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy under the famed Conceptual artist Joseph Beuys. Beuys's political activism was a key influence on the young Immendorff. Like Beuys, Immendorff believed that art was inextricable from politics. His paintings and performances called for social change and extended from his radical socialist viewpoints.

In the late 1970s Immendorff began painting imagery that directly confronted the division of Germany, combining autobiography with social and political commentary. In *4 Muses* he examines both the politics of Germany at the time and what it means to be an artist, looking at the inherent contradictions between isolated studio art practice and activism.

Closest to the foreground, the artist Georg Baselitz is depicted seated at a table. He is looking at an image of himself in a mirror. In the reflection a crown has slipped down from his head and is situated around his neck, while an inverted figure hangs in the background, a play on Baselitz's signature style. The most visible table leg depicts an eagle, referencing Nazi symbolism and standing as an emblem of Germany's traumatic past. Here the eagle is bound and inverted, indicating a loss of its political power, yet it is still there as a reminder never to forget the past.

On the right side of the canvas is A. R. Penck, the only artist of this group who resided in East Germany at the time this work was painted. Penck is depicted in the shadows surrounded by

images of State Socialism's repressive tactics. His table is held up by figures resembling East German border guards. Military personnel and the Berlin Wall loom in darkness.

Immendorff was introduced to Penck in the mid-1970s through their mutual art dealer, and they became close friends and collaborators, often meeting up in East Berlin. Penck appears in several of Immendorff's paintings on Germany's division.

The other two figures depicted are Markus Lüpertz and Immendorff himself. Lüpertz examines himself in a mirror resting on a table supported by heads with their eyes covered by German flags. Lüpertz had become known for his artwork that pushed the German population to confront their Nazi past. While Immendorff stands looking at himself in a mirror, the table legs represent his own sculptures.

Through this complex symbolic painting, Immendorff celebrates German artistic achievement while challenging linear narratives and questioning clear understandings of the complex issues surrounding German national identity construction.

STOP 16
Blurring Boundaries: *World Receiver Brüsselerstrasse*

Speaker: **Molly Moog**
              Research Assistant
              Saint Louis Art Museum

A telescoping antenna extends out of this sculpture as though ready to receive a transmission. However, you won't hear a sound coming from its core, a block of solid concrete. Renowned artist Isa Genzken has produced a series of these paradoxically silent radios, called *World Receivers*, starting in 1987, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Evoking the global nature of radio transmission, many of the works in the series are titled after international cities. The title *World Receiver Brüsselerstrasse* encompasses the name of a street in Berlin as well as the capital of Belgium—Brüssels or Brussels.

Born in 1949 in northern Germany, Isa Genzken moved to Berlin with her family as a child. She studied at the famous Düsseldorf Art Academy in the 1970s and was exposed to works of American Minimalism on view in Düsseldorf art galleries.

In the 1980s Genzken moved to Cologne, a city still rebuilding after Allied bombing raids of the 1940s. She began casting the *World Receivers* in concrete, a material closely associated with postwar architecture. Germans of Genzken's generation grew up in and around Modernist housing made from prefabricated concrete slabs that replaced the crumbling ruins left in the aftermath of World War II. The cracks and holes that mark the surface of *World Receiver Brüsselerstrasse* are reminiscent of wartime ruins themselves as well as the effects of time and weather on the cheaply constructed facades of postwar slab buildings. The intentionally rough surface treatment in Genzken's sculpture highlights the vulnerability of what appears to be a solid and impenetrable material. Concrete is also the material of the Berlin Wall, constructed by East Germany in 1961 to stem the flow of defectors to the West. A symbol of Germany's ideological division, the wall nevertheless could not prevent all communication between East and West Berlin.

Situated in a block of concrete, the antenna—a recurring symbol within Genzken's body of work—brings to mind the radio stations that became sites of communication and propaganda transmission both within and across borders during the Cold War. However, it also suggests broader notions of connection, inspiration, and receptivity. A few years before she began her *World Receiver* series, Genzken made an oblong sculpture from plaster and the sweepings from her studio floor. Sticking a wire antenna in the top, she called the work *Mein Gehirn* (My brain)—a physical representation of artistic insight. Later she said of her *World Receivers*, "My antennas were also meant to be "feelers"—things you stretch out in order to feel something, like the sound of the world and its many tones."

STOP 17
Blurring Boundaries: *LS #17*

Speaker:　**Eric Lutz**
　　　　　　Associate Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs
　　　　　　Saint Louis Art Museum

Hello, this is Eric Lutz, associate curator of prints, drawings, and photographs. We are looking here at the large-scale photograph by the contemporary artist Beate Gütschow entitled *LS #17*. Gütschow composes what looks like a panoramic view of a northern European countryside, very reminiscent of Dutch 17th-century paintings. A low, flat horizon is dominated by a vast sky, and lounging figures by a river are enjoying the scenery. Yet what we are seeing is not a window onto an actual place but a meticulous simulation. The artifice is apparent only after sustained and close viewing. For example, the shadows do not match up throughout the image, and there are elements that are disruptive to a harmony of the overall scene, such as patches of dirt, discarded shipping palettes, and the oddly small scale of the main tree.

Gütschow used advanced visual software—digitally stitching the image together from dozens of different negatives that she had taken on her travels. Rather unexpectedly, the sources for the individual elements in this composition are far from the natural environment it suggests. She chose to photograph in urban centers, public parks, even construction sites, recombining the elements to appear as if we are looking at untouched wilderness. Further, she includes city dwellers—people engaged in mundane urban activities. Indeed, many of the figures in *LS #17* look disconnected from or awkwardly situated within the bucolic countryside.

All of these subtle inconsistencies reveal the traces of Gütschow's process for constructing her picture. She even goes so far as to engage the margins around the image by including the registration marks and the printing information from the large-format printer she uses. Gütschow revels in this push and pull between the believability of the illusion and the artifice of its construction.