

## Press Release

7 May 2024

### Press Invitation to Presentation and Photo Shoot

**“Seid untertan der Obrigkeit”**

**The Akademie der Künste acquires 13 Švejk drawings by George Grosz for its Art Collection**

**Wednesday, 22 May, 11 am**

**Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz 4, 10117 Berlin**

With

**Prof. Frank Druffner** (Deputy Secretary General of the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States)

**Chizuru Kahl** (Consultant for the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung)

**Rosa von der Schulenburg** (Head of the Art Collection at the Akademie der Künste)

**Werner Heegewaldt** (Director of the Archives at the Akademie der Künste)

**Please register in advance: [presse@adk.de](mailto:presse@adk.de)**

Erwin Piscator and George Grosz's 1928 production of *Der Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk* (The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk) at the Theater am Nollendorfsplatz was a landmark event in theatre and art history. Satirist and pacifist **George Grosz's** figurines and the singular sketches he made in designing the set were a key part of this: his work on the production included larger-than-life “cardboard comrades”, which were presented using the modern technology of conveyor belts and as animated film sequences. A number of these drawings – a selection published by Malik-Verlag in 1928 under the title *Hintergrund* that landed Grosz in court – are still well known today. Three of his sheets, the so-called *Christus mit der Gasmaske* (Christ with Gas Mask), *Seid untertan der Obrigkeit* (Bow to the Authorities) and *Die Ausschüttung des heiligen Geistes* (The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit), were seized for “publicly reviling institutions of the Christian churches” and resulted in one of the longest trials centred on art in the modernist period. In the end, despite two not-guilty verdicts, the supreme court of the German Reich ordered the destruction of the Christ drawing and any reproductions of it. However, Wieland Herzfelde, Grosz's publisher, magicked it away before bequeathing it, in the 1980s, to the Akademie der Künste, where it has been kept ever since as a special treasure. The Art Collection has now succeeded – with generous support from the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States and the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung – in acquiring *Seid untertan der Obrigkeit*, the other large-format drawing that led to Grosz's prosecution, as well as a preliminary study for the third, lost sheet *Die Ausschüttung des heiligen Geistes*, part of a bundle of 13 works from the estate of George Grosz and from a private source in Italy.

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On **Wednesday, 22 May**, the 13 previously obscure Švejk drawings will be presented at the Akademie der Künste.

These Švejk drawings will be put on public display together with other sheets from the Stadtmuseum Berlin and from private collections in the exhibition “Was sind das für Zeiten?’ – Brecht, Grosz und Piscator”. The show, which runs from 4 July to 25 November 2024 at Das kleine Grosz Museum, is being mounted in cooperation with the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

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