



## Press Release/Pressemitteilung

**With the “Blue Room” by Helmuth Macke, the Kunstmuseen Krefeld have acquired a unique Expressionist furniture ensemble**

The Blue Room by the Rhenish Expressionist painter Helmuth Macke, created in 1925, now permanently enriches the collection of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld. On the initiative of Director Katia Baudin and with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, and the Friends of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld, it was possible to bring one of the very few surviving examples of Expressionist furniture design to Krefeld. Helmuth Macke (Krefeld 1891–1936 Lake Constance) belonged to the close circle of artists around Heinrich Campendonk, Heinrich Nauen, Franz Marc, and his cousin August Macke. The eight-piece bedroom ensemble was lavishly painted by Macke for his patron and collector Karl Gröppel. The Blue Room is an outstanding testimony to the close connection between free and applied art in the avant-garde of the 1920s and is almost unique in its character as a large Expressionist ensemble.

### Helmuth Macke

Born in Krefeld in 1891, Helmuth Macke became familiar with modern art movements early on through his teacher at the School of Arts and Crafts, Johan Thorn Prikker, as well as through the progressive exhibition program of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld. He was in close contact with the Munich-based artists of the Blaue Reiter and the circle of the Brücke artist group. Macke participated in the legendary exhibitions of modern art and received important commissions for murals after the First World War. Despite the esteem in which he was held during his lifetime, Helmuth Macke almost fell into oblivion. His early tragic death in an accident on Lake Constance contributed to this, as did the destruction of large parts of his high-quality Expressionist work by a bombing raid. In the late 1950s, his artistic estate was handed over to the Kunstmuseen Krefeld by his sister. Only recently has he received the recognition he deserves through exhibitions and publications.

### The Blue Room

Early on, Macke was active in the field of applied art and, for example, established contacts with well-known potteries for whom he designed ceramics. A large painted ceramic bowl, made by the Krefeld-based company Josef Hehl, is also part of the purchase. In 1925, Macke created his most extensive work in the field of arts and crafts: the painting of an eight-piece bedroom ensemble for Karl Gröppel's summer residence on Lake Chiemsee, consisting of a double bed, a wardrobe, a chest of drawers, a bedside table, a mirror, a table, and two chairs.

**Kunstmuseen Krefeld**

**Kaiser Wilhelm Museum Haus Lange Haus Esters**

**Joseph-Buys-Platz 1  
D-47798 Krefeld**  
**kunstmuseen@krefeld.de**  
**T +49 (0)2151 97558 0**  
**F +49 (0)2151 97558 222**  
**www.kunstmuseenkrefeld.de**

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The ensemble was created in gratitude for the support provided by his patron. The strikingly simple design of the room recalls the formal language of the reform architect Richard Riemerschmid—the chair is identical to his Hellerau chair. Macke opted for an ultramarine blue priming for the furniture, from which the brightly colored painting stands out. Framed by abstract symbolic forms, animals and figures move about on the blue ground.

Prof. Dr. Markus Hilgert, Secretary General of the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, comments: "We are delighted to have been able to contribute to bringing the ensemble to Helmuth Macke's hometown. Here, it will be exhibited alongside numerous works by him and his contemporaries: the Rhenish Expressionists. Many pieces of painted furniture and furnishings by Expressionist artists were lost or destroyed during the Second World War. Most of these are known today only from photographs. We are all the more pleased that Macke's Blue Room has been preserved and is now being made permanently accessible after being kept in private hands for more than eighty years and unable to be viewed." Although the Expressionists strove for unity between art and life, there are few comparable pieces, such as the furniture ensemble from Heinrich Campendonk's Villa Merländer in Krefeld, now in the Kunstmuseum Mülheim, or the furniture of Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter in their house in Murnau. Helmuth Macke's room, preserved as an ensemble, thus has an outstanding status. It has been in the possession of the Gröppel family and their descendants since its creation. In 2011, it was acquired at auction by the art dealer Ralph Kleinsimlinghaus (ARTAX Kunsthandel), who had it restored and presented it to the public for the first time in 2012. "In 2019, we were able to show parts of the room on loan in the large exhibition *Folklore & Avant-Garde* at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum," recalls Director Katia Baudin. "From the very beginning, I was thrilled by this wonderful ensemble, which so impressively embodies the connection between art and life in Expressionism—a unique Gesamtkunstwerk. We owe the fact that we were able to bring this ensemble permanently to the museum to the fantastic commitment of our sponsors: the Friends of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld, the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, and the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States."

### Significance for the Collection of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld

"With the acquisition of Helmuth Macke's Blue Room, a magnificent example of the successful combination of art and crafts has been secured for the Kunstmuseen Krefeld. This purchase strengthens the special profile of the museum and the attractiveness of the museum's own collection. The state of North Rhine-Westphalia was therefore pleased to contribute to the success of the purchase," emphasizes Isabelle Pfeiffer-Poensgen, Minister of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. Macke's hometown of Krefeld owns his artistic estate and thus the most extensive part of his oeuvre: a large collection of almost 500 paintings, watercolors, drawings, and sketchbooks.

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In the early 1920s, the then director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Max Creutz, was already fully committed to Helmuth Macke and gave him a prominent place in several exhibitions. Macke's important companions, such as Thorn Prikker, Campendonk, and Heinrich Nauen, are represented in the museum's collection with prominent works. The ensemble is an outstanding testimony to the bridging of free and applied art in the era of Expressionism. "It seamlessly follows the museum concept of the founding director Friedrich Deneken," explains Katia Baudin. "In the early twentieth century, Deneken pursued a novel exhibition and collection concept and initiated pioneering projects aimed at a total artistic approach. The current program has been feeding off this DNA for five years now: Fine and applied art from the Werkbund and the Bauhaus to the present day meet here on equal terms. The Blue Room is a new highlight of the collection and an outstanding example of the role of art in everyday life, which will provide us with numerous impulses for future work." And Dr. Dieter Porschen, Chairman of the Friends, adds: "Looking at the history, one can only say: Macke's furniture ensemble belongs in our city and in our museum. It wonderfully complements the exhibition policy of our museum director, which is characterized by the combination of art and design. The Friends are proud to continue the long path of civic commitment to the art museums of the city of Krefeld."

**The Blue Room will be on view at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum as of May 5, 2022, as part of the "Collection on the Move" presentation, supplemented by other works by Helmuth Macke. The focus on Rhenish Expressionism will be further deepened in the adjacent collection rooms with the large-scale *Drove* cycle by Heinrich Nauen, as well as with major works by Heinrich Campendonk from the collection of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld.**

Extensive image material can be found at [kunstmuseenkrefeld.de/press](https://www.kunstmuseenkrefeld.de/press)

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The purchase was made possible by:

Ministerium für  
Kultur und Wissenschaft  
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



### Visit

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum  
Joseph-Beuys-Platz 1  
47798 Krefeld  
Tue–Thur, Sun 11:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Fri–Sat 11:00 am – 6:00 pm

### Press Contact

Dirk Senger  
Press Office of the City of Krefeld  
T+ 49 (0) 2151 86 1408  
dirk.senger@krefeld.de  
[www.kunstmuseenkrefeld.de/press](http://www.kunstmuseenkrefeld.de/press)

Kunstmuseen Krefeld is a cultural institution of the city of Krefeld.

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