

Lotte Laserstein, Lady with Red Beret, ca. 1931, charcoal, pastel, chalk, gouache and oil on paper, 65 x 50 cm, Berlinische Galerie, Foto: Anja Elisabeth Witte, © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019



The Ideal “New Woman”

The Berlinische Galerie has acquired a work by Lotte Laserstein with committed support from the Friends of the Museum

“The work fills a gap in our collection, and its quality and modernity are exceptional.” (Dr Thomas Köhler, Director of the Berlinische Galerie)

Thanks to a number of extremely well-visited exhibitions, including in Berlin and Frankfurt am Main, the rediscovery of the painter Lotte Laserstein (1898-1993) and her recognition by art historians are now secure. As a consequence, more and more museums are keen to acquire her works.

However, most paintings by this outstanding artist, who was threatened by the Nazis and saved by exile in Sweden, are still in the possession of private collectors. This means that not many of her extraordinarily sensitive portraits are permanently accessible to the public.

“Having given our substantial backing to the highly successful Lotte Laserstein exhibition, we Friends of the Berlinische Galerie were also eager to support the museum in acquiring a work by the artist. This is an important addition to the collection.”
(Jens-Rainer Jänig, Chairman of the Förderverein)

Now the Berlinische Galerie has, indeed, had the good fortune to expand its holdings. This is the first work by Lotte Laserstein to join the collection. Given that she trained and experienced her heyday in the Berlin of the Weimar Republic, the city’s public museum of modern art, photography and architecture feels a deep bond with the artist. Back in 2009, the Swedish art collector Peter Fors, a personal friend of Laserstein, provided the museum with documentary material from the artist’s estate, and some of this was placed on display at the show “Face to Face”.

With great commitment and support from the Friends of the Berlinische Galerie, the museum has been able to purchase the portrait “Lady with Red Beret” (ca. 1931) from the art dealer and gallery owner Dr Michael Nöth (Ansbach and Potsdam). He in turn acquired the work in 2016 at “Auktionsverk” in Stockholm (one of the oldest auction houses, founded in 1674, and one of the biggest in Sweden) from the estate of a Swedish art collector who was given the picture by Lotte Laserstein herself. Only from 1937 – the year that she escaped from Berlin – did the artist manage to salvage many of her paintings and drawings by bringing them to Stockholm. There, and later in Kalmar, she made a living by taking commissions and selling works from her Berlin years.



About the work

“Lady with Red Beret” ca 1931, charcoal, pastel, chalk, gouache and oil on paper, 65 x 50 cm (already seen at the Berlinische Galerie in 2019 during the exhibition “Face to Face”): Many major works by Laserstein date from the period between 1928 and 1933. Her portraits blend 19th-century realism with the close-ups of modernist photography. She had mastered this mix of traditional and modernist elements with great aplomb. Around 1930 Laserstein’s painting technique altered. The paint is less solid, applied more openly across the surface of the canvas, like in the portrait of this anonymous young woman. She poses for the painter in fashionable streetwear. The russet coat dress with the straight cut and long sleeves is combined with a striped scarf in shades of brown. Her red beret matches the colour of her lipstick. One hand rests in her lap, the other grasps the hint of a seat by its edge. Whereas the head and upper body are worked up in detail, the part below the knee remains sketchy. Although Laserstein has not given her seated model any surroundings or even a visible chair, the woman is not cut loose on the page. She looks well grounded. Her bearing is at once relaxed and focused, her look unmoving but attentive. Lotte Laserstein returned again and again in her works to the contemporary ideal of the “New Woman” which she herself embodied. (Dr Annelie Lütgens, Curator of Prints & Drawings, Berlinische Galerie)

The exhibition “Lotte Laserstein: Face to Face” has moved on to Kiel and can be seen at the Kunsthalle there until 19 January 2020:
<http://www.kunsthalle-kiel.de/en/ausstellungen/Laserstein.html>

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Admission
12 €, concessions 9€

Opening times
Wed – Mon
10 am – 6 pm
Closed on Tuesdays

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