



British & European Fine Art | Live Online (04 Dec 2020 D)

Fri, 4th Dec 2020

Viewing:

Individual lots can be viewed ahead of the sale by appointment only.

Wed 2 Dec, 9am - 5.30pm

Thu 3 Dec, 9am - 5.30pm

Fri 4 Dec, 9am - 3.30pm

Please contact the [British & European Fine Art Department](#) to book an appointment.

Lot 820 §

Estimate: £1500 - £2500 + Fees

MARIE-LOUISE VON MOTESICZKY (AUSTRIAN 1906 - 1996)

Property from the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust (lots 820 - 827)

MARIE-LOUISE VON MOTESICZKY (AUSTRIAN 1906 - 1996)

Lobster

oil on canvas

40.3 x 60.5 cm (15 3/4 x 23 3/4 in)

EXHIBITED:

London, Roland Browse & Delbanco, *The Renaissance of the Fish. Paintings from the 17th to the 20th Century*, 1953, no. 42 (erroneously dated 1952)

Munich, Städtische Galerie, *Erna Dinklage, Marie-Louise Motesiczky*, 1954, no. 118

London, Beaux-Arts Gallery, *Marie-Louise Motesiczky*, 1960, no. 28 (erroneously dated 1954)

Linz, Wolfgang Gurlitt Museum, Neue Galerie der Stadt, *Marie-Louise Motesiczky*, 1966, no. 34 (erroneously dated 1954)

Vienna, Wiener Secession, *Marie-Louise Motesiczky*, 1966, no. 34 (erroneously dated 1954)

Munich, Galerie Günther Frank, *Marie-Louise Motesiczky*, 1967, no. 34 (erroneously dated 1954)

Bremen, Kunsthalle, *Marie-Louise Motesiczky*, 1968, no. 34 (erroneously dated 1954)

London, Goethe-Institut, *Marie-Louise von Motesiczky. Paintings Vienna 1925 - London 1985*, 1985, no. 39 (illustrated in the catalogue; erroneously dated 1954)

LITERATURE:

Eva Michel, *Marie-Louise von Motesiczky 1906-1996. Eine österreichische Schülerin von Max Beckmann*, diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 2003, p. 55, pl. 76, illustrated in colour (erroneously dated 1954)

Marie-Louise von Motesiczky 1906-1996, exh. cat., 2006, p. 200, discussed; p. 202, fig. 49, illustrated in colour

Jill Lloyd, *The Undiscovered Expressionist. A Life of Marie-Louise von Motesiczky*, New Haven/London, 2007, p. 148, discussed

Ines Schlenker, *Marie-Louise von Motesiczky 1906-1996, A Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, New York, 2009, p. 231, no. 119, illustrated

Painted in 1953, the artist's playful depiction of a cyclopic-eyed lobster, served up on a silver salver with accompanying garniture borders on the humorous. Indeed, in her diary Marie-Louise's month-long struggle to capture the essence of the crustacean is tinged with a hint of the absurd. She triumphantly marked the painting's completion on 13th April 1953 with the words: 'Finally lobster finished, a weight lifted from my heart'. In her catalogue entry Schlenker wryly notes: 'To celebrate - and possibly as a little revenge for the trouble it had caused - Motesiczky went out to eat half a lobster the next day' (Schlenker p. 230).

The particular significance of *Lobster* for Marie-Louise is not clear, but an important influence on her following her arrival in London was Oskar Kokoschka who was also living in exile in England. The subject of the present work could well have been inspired by the older artist's rendition of another crustacean: his influential painting *The Crab* of 1939-40 (collection of Tate).

Lobster was included in *The Renaissance of the Fish. Paintings from the 17th to the 20th Century* – a surely tongue-in-cheek exhibition title – at Roland Browse and Delbanco the year it was painted. Other artists represented in the show included Picasso, Matisse and Max Ernst beside emerging British artists William Scott, Prunella Clough, Edouard Paolozzi and Lucian Freud (see Lloyd p. 148).

Property from the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust (lots 820 - 827)

Viennese emigré artist Marie-Louise von Motesiczky (1906-1996) parted with few of her works during her lifetime, and since her death less than a handful have appeared on the open market. Lots 820 - 827 span four decades - from 1945 to the early 1980s - and mark the first time a group of her paintings is to be offered at auction.

Marie-Louise lived in Vienna until the Anschluss in 1938, when Austria was annexed by Germany and she and her Jewish mother were forced to emigrate to England in 1939. The primary influence on her art was the German painter Max Beckmann whom Marie-Louise had first met in her early 'teens in 1920. She recalled: 'A winged creature from Mars could not have made a greater impact on me'.

During her formative years Marie-Louise enjoyed a privileged life. Her mother Henriette was scion of an illustrious Viennese Jewish banking dynasty. Her maternal grandfather, Leopold von Lieben, was President of the Stock Exchange; her grandmother, Anna, one of Freud's early patients. She counted the Todescos, and Ephrussis among her family circle. Growing up in an apartment on Brahmsplatz in central Vienna, she, her mother and her brother Karl spent their summers at Villa Todesco in Hinterbrühl, south west of the capital.

But over time family tragedy, financial difficulties and the rise of Nazi Germany took their toll. Marie-Louise's father had died in a hunting accident many years before and her mother's considerable inheritance gradually diminished through high taxation, poor investments, and the financial

crash of 1929. Then, with the rise of the Third Reich she and her mother felt compelled to flee Austria. Further distress followed when her brother Karl, who had remained in Austria, was arrested and deported to Auschwitz, dying of typhus there on 25 June 1943.

Immediately following the Anschluss Marie-Louise and her mother travelled to Holland, emigrating to Britain early the following year. In London she reconnected with Oskar Kokoschka, a family friend in Vienna but now similarly exiled. Kokoschka ensured that her work was shown in a series of group exhibitions, culminating in a one-person exhibition at the Czechoslovak Institute in the autumn of 1944.

Despite Kokoschka's support, starting afresh in Britain proved challenging, and it wasn't until 1960 that she had her next one-person show at the influential Beaux Arts Gallery. But on the Continent Marie-Louise's reputation was growing. She received wide acclaim when her work was exhibited in Amsterdam and The Hague in 1952, one of her canvases being purchased by the Stedelijk Museum; she showed in Munich in 1954 and Düsseldorf in 1955, and in the 1960s enjoyed further shows in Austria and Germany. Finally, a full 25 years on, in 1985 her work was shown again in London, at the Goethe-Institut. Widely acclaimed in the press, it seemed the climate was favourable for the re-discovery of Marie-Louise's art.

Further exposure followed: In 1994 she was the subject of a major retrospective in Vienna at the Österreichische Galerie, Oberes Belvedere and in Manchester at the City Art Gallery. In 2006-07 her work was shown in a centenary exhibition at Tate Liverpool, and travelled to Frankfurt, Vienna and Passau, ending in Southampton City Art Gallery. In 2007 Jill Lloyd's biography of Marie-Louise appeared, followed in 2009 by the catalogue raisonné of her paintings by Ines Schlenker. Most recently, in the autumn of 2019, Tate Britain held an exhibition devoted to her to inaugurate the gallery named in perpetuity as the 'Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Archive Gallery' for all future displays of Tate's archive holdings in general.

The work of Marie-Louise von Motesiczky held in public collections

Institutions in the UK holding works by the artist include: the British Museum, Freud Museum, National Portrait Gallery and Tate in London (which also holds her archive); the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester, Manchester Art Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh and the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow. Elsewhere her work is in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin; the Stedelijk, Amsterdam; the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam; the Städel Museum, Frankfurt; the German Literary Archive in Marbach; the Albertina, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, the Leopold Museum and the Museum Wien in Vienna, and the Lentos Kunstmuseum. Linz.

The Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust

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