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Kirchner and the Berlin Street

Deborah Wye



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Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's remarkable series of paintings known as the *Berlin Street Scenes* is a highpoint of the artist's work and a milestone of German Expressionism. Kirchner moved from Dresden to Berlin in 1911, and it was there, immersed in the vitality of a teeming city and under the looming shadow of imminent world war, that he created the *Street Scenes* in a burst of creative energy and ambition. Berlin was at this time undergoing rapid growth, and as Kirchner absorbed the crowds and energy of city life, his work responded with acute perspective, jagged brushstrokes and searing color. As the most extensive consideration of these paintings in English, this richly illustrated volume examines the creative process undertaken by the artist as he explored his themes through various media and presents a major body of related work including drawings, pen-and-ink studies, pastels, etchings, woodcuts and lithographs. It also investigates the significance of the streetwalker as the dominant motif of this series, and provides insight on its relationship to Kirchner's wider oeuvre.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) was one of German Expressionism's foremost practitioners. His painterly aesthetic was formed within the Brüche group, in Dresden, where he was one among a number of artists rebelling against bourgeois life and the stale conventions of the academy. Kirchner made his *Street Scenes* series immediately following the dissolution of Brüche. Today he is increasingly recognized as one of the major figures in the early development of Modern art.

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