

## The Women Artists of the Blue Rider

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich  
October 12, 2027–April 23, 2028

In 1913, Else Lasker-Schüler wrote to her friend Marianne von Werefkin:

*"Esteemed princess, much-noble wild boy, sweet painter,  
when may I come—I dream of the sweetness of your pictures.  
(The Prince of Thebes) Else Lasker-Schüler (friend of the Blue Rider's Horsewoman)"*

Else Lasker-Schüler liked to toy with gender roles and identities, sometimes styling herself Prince of Thebes. The curious moniker "Blaue Reiterreiterin"—literally, the "Blue Rider's rideress"—she coined for the Blue Rider's women artists is the leitmotif in this exhibition project.

It is the first time that we dedicate a comprehensive presentation to the women artists in the Blue Rider's orbit, turning the spotlight on their substantial contributions to the avant-garde of the early twentieth century. They were cosmopolitans, patronesses, and pioneers of a new kind of art. They dared to cross national, social, and creative boundaries. Their lives were defined by their resolve to forge their own path, defy limitations, and explore new creative ideas.

"Off to Munich," Gabriele Münter wrote with palpable enthusiasm when she enrolled in art school. Pursuing a career in the arts was a courageous choice: women were barred from studying at the public academies. Laws codified their unequal status. The self-organized Ladies' Academy in Munich at least offered some training to aspiring women artists, and various associations fought for universal suffrage. The women artists' revolutionary attitude is recognizable in their work as well. In their pictures, letters, and writings, they sought to chart a new approach to the world. Their ideas contributed significantly to the genesis of an Expressionist art. Portraits, still lifes, and landscapes reflect a hitherto unseen handling of color and form. Women artists devised innovative ways of rendering nature, spirituality, and human existence. Their perspectives on social realities and anti-bourgeois and nonconforming identities attest to their deliberate rejection of traditional standards in an art world dominated by men.

The artists whose works the exhibition gathers were friends and rivals, cofounders of the New Munich Artists' Association (NKVM) and active in the Blue Rider circle. In Marianne von Werefkin's "Pink Salon," they debated questions of art and political issues and sketched the outlines of a new history of art. Gabriele Münter invited the public to see her work in exhibitions at the renowned gallery Der Sturm. Thanks to Elisabeth Epstein's extensive network and her acquaintance with Robert Delaunay and Sonia Delaunay-Terk, the French avant-garde participated in the Blue Rider project. Carla Pohle's graphic art sent a social and political message, grappling with poverty, class, and war.

The exhibition spans a period from the years around 1900, when Munich was home to a vital women's rights movement, to the Blue Rider and on to the women artists' activities

during the Weimar Republic, in exile, and into the 1940s. Putting particular focus on the social construction of role models, questions of identity, and gender roles as well as the international networks connecting Munich to Paris and Moscow, it is the first presentation to honor the manifold aesthetics of the "Women Artists of the Blue Rider."

**With works by:**

Erma Bossi—Sonia Delaunay-Terk—Emmi Dresler—Elisabeth Epstein—Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke—Natalia Goncharova—Else Lasker-Schüler—Maria Franck-Marc—Olga Meerson—Gabriele Münter—Carla Pohle—Marianne von Werefkin

**An exhibition of the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich, in cooperation with Museum Wiesbaden and the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, Bremen, as well as the Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Ascona/CH.**

**The exhibition is held as part of the celebrations on occasion of Gabriele Münter's 150th birthday.**

**Concurrently, UNESCO has proclaimed a commemorative year in honor of Gabriele Münter's life and work in 2027.**

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