

Hermann Struck, Portrait of Arno Holz, 1920, drypoint on paper, 324 x 257 mm (image), 388 x 544 mm (plate), 534 x 702 mm (sheet), monogrammed "HS" with Star of David in the image, signed lower left "Hermann Struck" and numbered lower right "96/100," stamped "HvR" on the reverse, indicating the Horst von Rabenau Collection, unframed. Condition: slightly browned, but overall very good.

The print was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout (40 x 30 cm) of the company HALBE. A fitting frame – in museum quality – with museum glass (anti-reflective, very high UV protection, anti-static, abrasion resistant) of the company HALBE can be provided on request.

Hermann Struck (Berlin 1876 – 1944 Haifa), whose Hebrew name was Chaim Aharon ben David, was not only a prominent painter, etcher, and lithographer in the first half of the 20th century, but also a Zionist from the very beginning. He is the only internationally recognized artist who settled in Eretz Israel as early as the beginning of the 1920s and played a pivotal role in the founding of major art institutions there, such as the *Tel Aviv Museum* and the *New Bezalel*, the art academy in Jerusalem.

Born to Berlin merchant David Struck and Henriette Hanff, he studied at the Berlin Academy of Arts and was already an established artist in Berlin by 1900. Above all, he was praised as an excellent technician in the field of printmaking, for example by Max Liebermann (1847–1935) and Lesser Ury (1861–1931). Lovis Corinth (1858–1925) said of him: "He has rekindled my skill with the needle." In 1908, Struck published a standard work on *The Art of Etching* (*Die Kunst des Radierens*), which was repeatedly reprinted and revised until 1923. As a foreword, his friend, the theater critic Alfred Kerr (1867–1948), wrote the poem "Dear Struck...." He set up separate conversation rooms in his studio for the many visits from artists, poets, theater people, musicians, journalists, scholars, and rabbis.

Prominent and influential poets, painters, writers, scholars, and politicians commissioned portraits from him. His portraits reflect the liberal, enlightened bourgeoisie of the imperial era. At the same time, however, he also painted Jews from Eastern Europe, many of whom lived in Berlin's slums beyond Alexanderplatz. His respect for Jewish scholarship and tradition is evident in his portraits of Jewish figures. Hermann Struck, too, was a law-abiding Jew who studied the Jewish scriptures daily. During World War I—like many German Jews, he had volunteered as a soldier—he served as an advisor on Jewish affairs to the German Army's Eastern High Command in those parts of the Russian Empire that today belong to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Belarus.

And he was a Zionist from the very beginning. Hermann Struck had first traveled to Palestine as early as 1903. On his way back, he painted a portrait of Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) in Vienna; Herzl passed away shortly thereafter. Until the founding of the State of Israel, this portrait of Herzl was the very embodiment of Zionism. It typically adorned every Zionist event, wherever it took place. In 1922, Struck settled permanently in Eretz Israel, but until 1933 he regularly spent the summer months in Berlin, where he had kept his studio on Brückenallee. His final years were increasingly marked by illness and a growing sense of powerlessness in the face of the threats to which the Jews of Europe were exposed. In the years following 1933, he helped—wherever and however he could—Jews from Germany who were seeking refuge in

Eretz Israel from Nazi persecution. Hermann Struck died in 1944 at his home in Haifa, before Europe was liberated from Nazi rule.

The portrait shown here depicts the German poet and playwright Arno Holz (1863–1929), a representative of Naturalism. Born in Rastenburg, he later grew up in Berlin and lived in Berlin-Schöneberg from 1910 until his death. Beginning in 1888, together with his friend Johannes Schlaf (1862–1941), he developed the theory of “consistent naturalism” in the programmatic treatise *Die Kunst, ihr Wesen und ihre Gesetze* (Art, Its Essence and Its Laws), which was based on an exact depiction of milieu, incorporating elements of colloquial language. At the same time, all subjectivity was to be eliminated, and the approach was to be as scientific as possible. Thus, they postulated the formula “Art = Nature – x,” by which they meant that art should correspond to nature as closely as possible, and that it was therefore the task of artists to minimize the x in the formula as much as possible. Holz received the Schiller Prize in 1885, among other honors, and was on the shortlist for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1929. In 1923, Holz was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Königsberg, and in 1926 he was appointed to the Prussian Academy of Arts.

Provenance

The print was once part of the Collection of Horst von Rabenau, which became apparent by the collector’s stamp (Lugt 4427) on the backside.

Horst von Rabenau, who came from an aristocratic family first mentioned in documents in the 13th century, was born in Rybnik in Silesia in 1899, but spent his youth in Pyritz (Polish: Pyrzyce) in West Pomerania. After serving as a soldier in the First World War, he studied dentistry at the University of Greifswald, received his doctorate in 1923 and set up as a dentist in Stolp (Polish: Stupsk). During this time, he began to collect African art in particular, partly as a result of several trips to Africa, but also prints, and became friends with the painter Walter Timmling (1891–1948). Von Rabenau fought on several fronts during the Second World War. Afterwards, his family had to flee their homeland, which had now become Polish, and found a new home in Wuppertal, where his wife was from. He lost his entire collection during the Second World War.

From the 1950s onwards, von Rabenau built up a new collection, concentrating now primarily on German, Dutch and French prints and – to a lesser extent – drawings from the 15th to 19th centuries. He acquired these mainly from the Düsseldorf art dealer C. G. Boerner. Horst von Rabenau's collection remained in the family until his death in 1993 and was only gradually broken up in the last two decades.