

**Max Oppenheimer, Portrait of Lil Dagover, c. 1938, charcoal drawing on paper, heightened with white, 51.5 x 40.5 cm, signed centre right "mopp.", inscribed below right (recto) "Lil Dagover", unframed.**

**The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout (90 x 70 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.**

Alongside Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980) and Egon Schiele (1890-1918), Max Oppenheimer (1885 Vienna - 1954 New York City) is one of the pioneers of Austrian Expressionism. Despite this, he was hardly known to the general public for a long time - partly due to his persecution-related migration - but has been brilliantly and rightly brought back into focus in recent years through major exhibitions (Leopold Museum Vienna, 2023; Belvedere Vienna 2010/11).

As the son of the journalist Ludwig Oppenheimer (1828-1903) and his wife Regina Knina (1851-1921) from Prague, Maximilian Oppenheimer, pseudonym MOPP, was born into Viennese Jewish intellectual circles. His brother was the writer Friedrich Oppenheimer (1886-1960), who called himself Friedrich Heydenau, and his cousin was the illustrator and stage designer Hugo Steiner-Prag (1880-1945). After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (1900-1903) and the Prague Art Academy (1903-1906), the homosexual Oppenheimer led a restless life as an artist, which was to continue involuntarily until his death.

From 1908, he established himself as a freelance artist in Vienna, where he became friends with Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka - however, a jealous press campaign by Kokoschka in 1911/12 ended this friendship. After a first solo exhibition at the Galerie Thannhauser in Munich and a first monograph (1911), he moved to Berlin for an exhibition at Paul Cassirer in 1912 before moving to Zurich in 1915. There he was a founding member of the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 and took part in the first Dada exhibition at the Galerie Coray in Zurich in 1917. He then left the Dadaists again and devoted himself in Geneva primarily to the visualization of music, incorporating Futurist and slightly Cubist stylistic devices, which resulted in his monumental major work Orchestra (1923). After a brief stay in Vienna in 1924, he returned to Berlin in 1925, where he was extremely successful in his portraits and scenes from the world of sport and medicine, depicting the metropolitan lifestyle of the Weimar Republic with a thoroughly individual approach of New Objectivity and Futurism.

He returned to Vienna in 1931. As early as 1933, his work was defamed as part of the wave of persecution by the SA after the Reichstag fire, and in 1937 nine of his works were destroyed by the Nazis from museums in Berlin, Dessau, Hanover and Wuppertal as part of the wave of confiscations following the "Degenerate Art" propaganda show. Just in time before the so-called "Anschluss" of Austria in 1938, he was able to flee to Zurich, where he published the highly acclaimed autobiographical book Menschen finden ihren Maler. His Viennese apartment in Neulinggasse was looted, the paintings and prints in his collection confiscated and partially destroyed. At the beginning of 1939, he managed to emigrate to New York and, a year later, to export some of his works from Austria, which were shown in New York in 1940 at the Nierendorf Gallery, which had been expelled from Berlin. Although his creative energy remained unchecked, he now frequently returned to themes from earlier works and found it difficult to build up a stable clientele. In 1954, Max Oppenheimer died impoverished and lonely in his New York apartment. His death was only noticed a few days later by the maid.

The large-format charcoal drawing offered here shows one of the greatest German-speaking stars of the 20th century, the actress Lil Dagover (1887-1980). Born Marie Antonie Sieglinde Marta Seubert in Pati in what was then the Dutch East Indies, she was educated in Great Britain, France and Switzerland before moving to Weimar, where she met her future husband, the Austrian actor Fritz Daghofer (1872-1936). The marriage only lasted six years, but the stage name "Lil Dagover" derived from it remained. With leading roles such as in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and in other films by Fritz Lang (1890-1976) or Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1888-1931), she became a celebrated UFA star, but also played at Max Reinhardt's (1873-1943) Deutsches Theater or at the Salzburg Festival, and even filmed for Hollywood (1931).

During the National Socialist era, she did not distinguish herself propagandistically, but did not resist accepting 23 (!) roles between 1933 and 1944, the title of *Staatsschauspielerin* (1937), the War Merit Cross for her appearances at the front to support the troops and inclusion in the so-called "Gottbegnadeten-Liste" (list of those pardoned by God) in 1944. As a follower, she remained a celebrated UFA star and was able to continue her career unscathed after the Second World War until her death in 1980. Her post-war roles in the Edgar Wallace films are particularly popular.

It is not known when Max Oppenheimer and Lil Dagover met. By 1930 at the latest, however, they were on the jury for the *Miss Germany* competition in Berlin together with other artists such as Emil Jannings (1884-1950) and Max Pechstein (1881-1955). Oppenheimer had already been part of the jury for the first *Miss Germany* competition in 1927. In 1931, Oppenheimer produced a pastel and charcoal drawing showing Dagover as a sophisticated, heavily made-up woman of beguiling beauty. In the more intimate and direct charcoal drawing offered here, however, she appears more mature and serious. Her appearance and style correspond to photos of Dagover published in 1938 in the magazine *Filmwelt*, for example. As Oppenheimer and Dagover never met again after his escape and the Second World War, the drawing could have been created shortly before Oppenheimer's emigration in 1937/38.