

Curt Ziegra, Portrait of a Young Woman, 1928, fixated pastel on velvet paper mounted on cardboard, 47 x 42 cm, signed above left "Curt Ziegra 28.", unframed.

Curt Ziegra (1878 Düsseldorf - 1946 Tegernsee) is one of the artists whose artistic significance was almost wiped out by the terror of the National Socialists and whose life and work can therefore only be traced in fragments today.

As the son of the Dresden-born artist and photographer Max Ziegra (1852-1923), who was mainly active in Berlin, and his wife Veronika, he first studied at the teaching institute of the Berlin Museum of Decorative Arts and in the winter semester of 1895/96 at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin, continued his studies at the Dresden Academy of Art under Carl Bantzer (1857-1941) from 1899 and finally studied at the Grand Ducal Saxon School of Art in Weimar under Hans Olde (1855-1917) from 1904. In 1906 he was represented there alongside famous painters such as Max Liebermann (1847-1935) and Lovis Corinth (1858-1925) in the 3rd exhibition of the Deutscher Künstlerbund at the Grand Ducal Museum with a female nude from behind, as mentioned by Richard Muther in the feature section of the Viennese newspaper *Die Zeit* and the *Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung*. In Weimar, he also came into contact with the prominent art patron and publicist Harry Graf Kessler (1868-1937).

From 1907, Ziegra can be traced in Munich, where it can be inferred from mentions in the *Münchener neueste Nachrichten* that he subsequently continued his training with Max Feldbauer (1869-1948), a member of the *Scholle* and the *Munich Secession*. Ziegra was able to establish himself successfully in Munich until the First World War. Curt Ziegra's "light and colorful pointillist landscapes" were praised in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* (1911), he became the first secretary of the Deutscher Künstlerverband München and exhibited at the Münchner Kunstverein and in Weimar, among others. He took part in the First World War in the Infantry Lieb Regiment (Munich), mainly as a war painter. He produced drawings and watercolors of theaters and places of war, some of which were reproduced full-page in the magazine *Jugend* (1916), exhibited in several war picture exhibitions in Berlin and Munich (1916) and praised in the media. On the occasion of the exhibition *Kriegsbilder* in Thannhauser's Moderne Galerie, the *Münchener neueste Nachrichten* wrote (1916): "Much of representational interest can be found among Kurt Ziegra's drawings."

During these years, Curt Ziegra must also have met Anne Elisabeth, called Anne-Lise, née Schaefer, divorced Kösters (1885-?). She was a French teacher at Werdenfels-Gymnasium (1918/19) and took over the scientific management of the Garmisch-Partenkirchen daughters' home, which, as can be seen from advertisements in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* (1919) and elsewhere, offered scientific and home economics training as well as painting and music lessons. Kösters - and thus probably also Ziegra at some point - got to know many famous intellectuals of her time through the neighboring fashionable *Kurheim Dr. Wigger* (spa home). This is evidenced by a letter from Davos in 1915 to Olga Schnitzler (1882-1970), née Gussmann, then wife of the playwright Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), who was immensely important for Viennese modernism. Olga's sister Elisabeth, known as Liesl, married to the then well-known actor Albert Steinrück (1872-1929), fell ill with pulmonary tuberculosis at an early age and spent her last years in a sanatorium in Partenkirchen from 1910, where she gathered many important artists and cultural figures around her. Kösters is mentioned a total of 14 times in Arthur Schnitzler's diaries from 1917 and 1918. She takes part in joint excursions, meals and a séance (07.09.1917) and gets to know Heinrich Mann (1871-1950) and Tilly Wedekind (1886-

1970), among others. In one of Schnitzler's dreams (22.11.1918), Anne-Lise's sons appear - one of them is the chemical technician Helmut Kösters, born in 1910.

Schnitzler mentions her one more time in 1922, when the question arises as to whether his daughter Lili (1909-1928), who will later marry the officer Arnaldo Cappellini and commit suicide in Venice in 1928, should be placed "with Mrs. Ziegra (school in Partenk. for young girls)". In the meantime, Curt Ziegra and Anne-Lise Kösters had met and probably married in 1919. In the same year, Ziegra, who now lived in Partenkirchen, exhibited at the Graphische Werkstätten in Munich, about which the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* wrote: "Kurt Ziegra, who worked as a war painter, showed a number of drawings. Ingenious, fleetingly written and yet vividly vibrating views of mosques and cathedrals, of boulevards, of the Danube and the Somme. Reporting that does not conceal the individual and brings the factual to life." Ziegra was also a successful artist in the following years, portraying Gabriele Münter (1877-1962), for example, and exhibiting at the Munich art exhibition in the Glaspalast (1924) and the Berlin Secession (1926), among others. In 1926 he is registered again at Liebigstraße 17 in Munich.

Whether Curt and his wife were still a couple when misfortune befell him under the National Socialists cannot be verified. Anne-Lise can only be traced once more, indirectly through an advertisement in the *Münchner neueste Nachrichten* in 1931: "Frau Dr. med. E. Spindler's Kur- u. Töchterheim auf Schloß Gumpenburg / Partenkirchen / neben Wiggers Kurheim, früh. Daughters' home Ziegra". Due to his Jewish ancestry, Curt Ziegra was expelled from the Reich Chamber of Culture in 1936. At this time, he appears to have been living in Hamburg for some time. Although a member of the NSDAP, the Hamburg chemical weapons developer Hugo Stoltzenberg hid him in his villa in Othmarschen from 1938. Around 1940, Ziegra can be found living at Caprivistraße 28 in Blankenese. As late as 1943, he created works such as a chalk drawing that bear witness to happier days in Partenkirchen. After the war, he lived at Pippinstraße 19 in Gauting. He died in a hospital in Tegernsee in 1946.

Apart from a few fine works by Ziegras in Munich's Lenbachhaus, only a few other works are accessible to a wider public or have been preserved. The pastel from 1928 offered here is one of his strongest works ever, despite its less than optimal state of preservation. It shows a young, as yet unidentified woman with blue eyes and a blonde bob, facing the viewer. This hairstyle was extremely popular in the 1920s and reflects the more self-confident image of women at the time. Accordingly, it was subsequently a hate object of the Nazis and the saying "Aryan is the plait, Jewish is the bob" became widespread. The German Gymnastics Federation used the slogan to exclude women with this hairstyle from gymnastics activities. The red glowing robe of the portrayed woman stands out impressively against the dark, iridescent background.