

PRESS RELEASE

June 2, 2026

Major Acquisition: Two Paintings from the Hugo Simon Collection remain at the Brücke-Museum

Thanks to the generous support of the HERMANN REEMTSMA FOUNDATION and the Friends of the Brücke-Museum, the Brücke-Museum has been able to acquire two outstanding paintings by Max Pechstein and Otto Mueller from the heirs of Hugo Simon. This is one of the most important acquisitions in the history of the Brücke-Museum.

Max Pechstein's *Vier Akte in Landschaft* (1912) and Otto Mueller's *Porträt Otto Mueller (Selbstbildnis mit grüner Bluse, ca. 1909)* once formed part of the important art collection of the Jewish collector and patron Hugo Simon (born 1880 in Ušice, died 1950 in São Paulo). He was persecuted by the Nazi regime and deprived of a large part of his collection. Both works were restituted from European museums to Simon's heirs and have been on long-term loan to the Brücke-Museum since 2022.

Lisa Marei Schmidt, Director of Brücke-Museum: „I am absolutely delighted that with this acquisition we have not only been able to permanently secure two important paintings by the *Brücke*-artists Max Pechstein and Otto Mueller for the museum, but also to continue commemorating the exceptional figure of Hugo Simon and his moving story, while honoring his many contributions to German art and culture. My special thanks go to the HERMANN REEMTSMA FOUNDATION and the Friends of the Brücke-Museum. This acquisition was only possible because of their extraordinary commitment.”

Rafael Cardoso, great-grandson of Hugo and Gertrud Simon: „For us as a family, it is deeply moving to see these two works, which accompanied Hugo and Gertrud Simon into exile, now definitively reunited. Not only because they are together again after more than eight decades of separation, but also because they have found a home once more in Berlin. At last, they have returned home to bear witness to a history that must never be repeated.”

Sebastian Giesen, HERMANN REEMTSMA FOUNDATION, Hamburg: „We are very pleased that these two important paintings by *Brücke*-artists from the Hugo Simon Collection now have a permanent home in Berlin. Their acquisition and public presentation by the Brücke-Museum — following their restitution to Hugo Simon's descendants — are intended to preserve the memory of this fascinating personality and also to bring a measure of belated justice to his family. The robbery, expulsion, and murder of the Jewish population also resulted in Germany irretrievably depriving itself of its formative elites.”

Felix von Böhm, Chair of the Friends of the Brücke-Museum: „As the Friends of the *Brücke*-Museum, we are very pleased to have been able, together with the HERMANN REEMTSMA FOUNDATION, to make this important acquisition for our museum's collection possible. We thank our members for the many substantial donations and are pleased that this civic

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commitment not only enables people to take pleasure in the beauty of art, but also helps keep alive the moving provenance histories of these two works.”

Who Was Hugo Simon?

Hugo Simon (1880–1950) was a person of extraordinary versatility and commitment: trained as an agriculturist and banker, a Social Democratic finance minister, a generous patron of culture, and a passionate art collector, he played a major role in shaping the Weimar Republic. He was a convinced pacifist and was involved in many charitable causes. His dazzling personality inspired novelistic characters in the works of writers ranging from Alfred Döblin to Klaus Mann.

In the 1920s, the Simons’ villa in Berlin-Tiergarten was a prominent meeting place for (left-wing) intellectual circles. His extensive art collection included works by Caspar David Friedrich, Max Liebermann, Edvard Munch, and the *Brücke*-artists. As a Jew and because of his political engagement, Simon was doubly persecuted under the National Socialist regime. For this reason, he and his wife Gertrud decided to emigrate to Paris as early as 1933. There he succeeded in establishing a new livelihood as a financial broker and once again became very active as a patron of culture.

Simon was able to take a large part of his art collection with him to France, including Max Pechstein’s *Vier Akte in Landschaft* and Mueller’s *Porträt Otto Mueller (Selbstbildnis mit grüner Bluse)*. Following the Nazi occupation of France in 1940, the family fled to Brazil with the help of forged passports. The art collection remained behind and was confiscated; the fate of parts of it remains unclear to this day. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Simon, living in exile, devoted all his energies to recovering his collection of more than 200 works, as well as his original name and his citizenship. However, his efforts were unsuccessful. He died in São Paulo on July 4, 1950.



Max Pechstein, *Vier Akte in Landschaft*, 1914,
Oil on canvas, Brücke-Museum

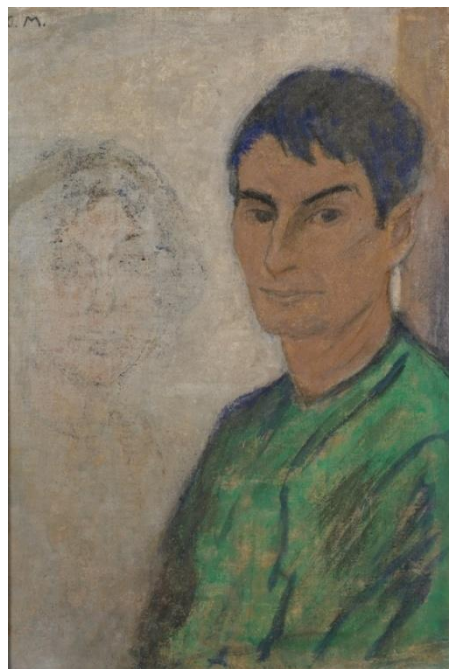
Max Pechstein

Max Pechstein's painting *Vier Akte in Landschaft* is of the utmost significance both in art-historical and cultural-historical terms. Few other works capture so vividly the decisive turning point in Pechstein's artistic development between his departure from the *Brücke*-artists' group and the First World War, and it marks a high point in his Expressionist oeuvre: through heightened colors and forms, and sweeping lines, he conveys the immediate experience of human beings and nature as a unified whole. At the same time, the influence of French Fauvism is strikingly evident in this work. The treatment of the bodies and their movements is particularly reminiscent of Matisse's bathing and dancing scenes. The painting demonstrates how Pechstein now articulated and defined color and form more clearly. Of the many nude paintings that Pechstein created in 1912 in the Baltic landscape of the Curonian Spit, *Vier Akte in Landschaft* is the strongest and most compelling. It fills a gap in the *Brücke*-Museum's extensive holdings, which until now did not include a painting from this important phase of Pechstein's career.

Provenance

In 1938, Hugo Simon lent the painting to London, where it was shown in the exhibition *Ausstellung Exhibition of Twentieth Century German Art*, which opened as an international response to the Nazi propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art*. It was then presented in Paris in

the exhibition *Art Allemand Libre*. After that, the trail of the painting is initially lost. Many stages in the history of the painting's loss remain obscure; it was not until 1966 that it resurfaced in a storage facility of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Until its restitution in 2021, it was part of the collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne / Centre Georges Pompidou. The painting was restituted to Hugo Simon's heirs by the French government on the recommendation of the Commission pour l'indemnisation des victimes de spoliations (CIVS).



Otto Mueller, *Porträt Otto Mueller (Selbstbildnis mit grüner Bluse)*, around 1909,
Oil and tempera on canvas, Brücke-Museum

Otto Mueller

Otto Mueller's *Selbstbildnis in grüner Bluse* hung in the 1920s in the library of Simon's villa on Drakestrasse in Berlin Tiergarten. There he received a veritable *Who is Who* of the Weimar Republic, from Thomas Mann to Albert Einstein. It is a striking work that shows the artist in the year before he became a member of *Brücke*. With raised eyebrow, the artist looks skeptically out of the canvas at the viewer. On the left side, traces of a second overpainted female head - presumably that of his wife Maschka Mueller - seem to show through. The coloring, the blue accents in the artist's hair, and the - by Mueller's standards - almost penetrating green of the shirt reveal the first signs of Expressionism. In general, only a small number of self-portraits from this phase of the artist's work survive. Prior to this acquisition, the Brücke-Museum's collection contained not a single painted self-portrait by Mueller and only a few early works overall. Like Pechstein's *Vier Akte in Landschaft*, it therefore fills a gap in the collection.

Provenance

Hugo Simon also included this painting in the 1938 London exhibition *Twentieth Century German Art*. After that, the trail of the painting is lost. Thereafter, the painting's whereabouts remain unknown for a time. In the 1970s, it entered the collection of York Castle Museum in the United Kingdom from the estate of the author and art critic Herbert Read (d. 1968), who had been involved in the 1938 London exhibition. It was restituted from there to Hugo Simon's heirs in 2010.

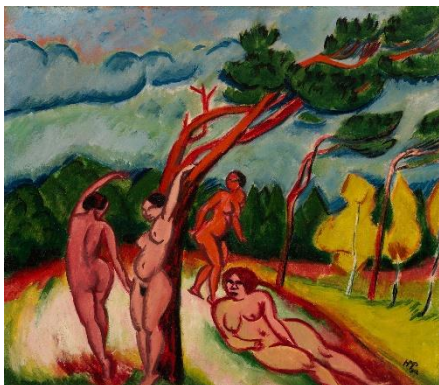
The acquisition was made possible through the generous support of



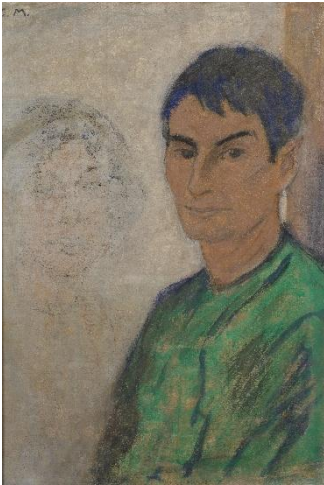
Förderverein des Brücke-Museum e.V.

Images

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Max Pechstein, *Vier Akte in Landschaft*,
1914, Öl auf Leinwand, Brücke-Museum



Otto Mueller, *Porträt Otto Mueller (Selbstbildnis mit grüner Bluse)*,
um 1909, Öl und Tempera auf Leinwand, Brücke-Museum

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