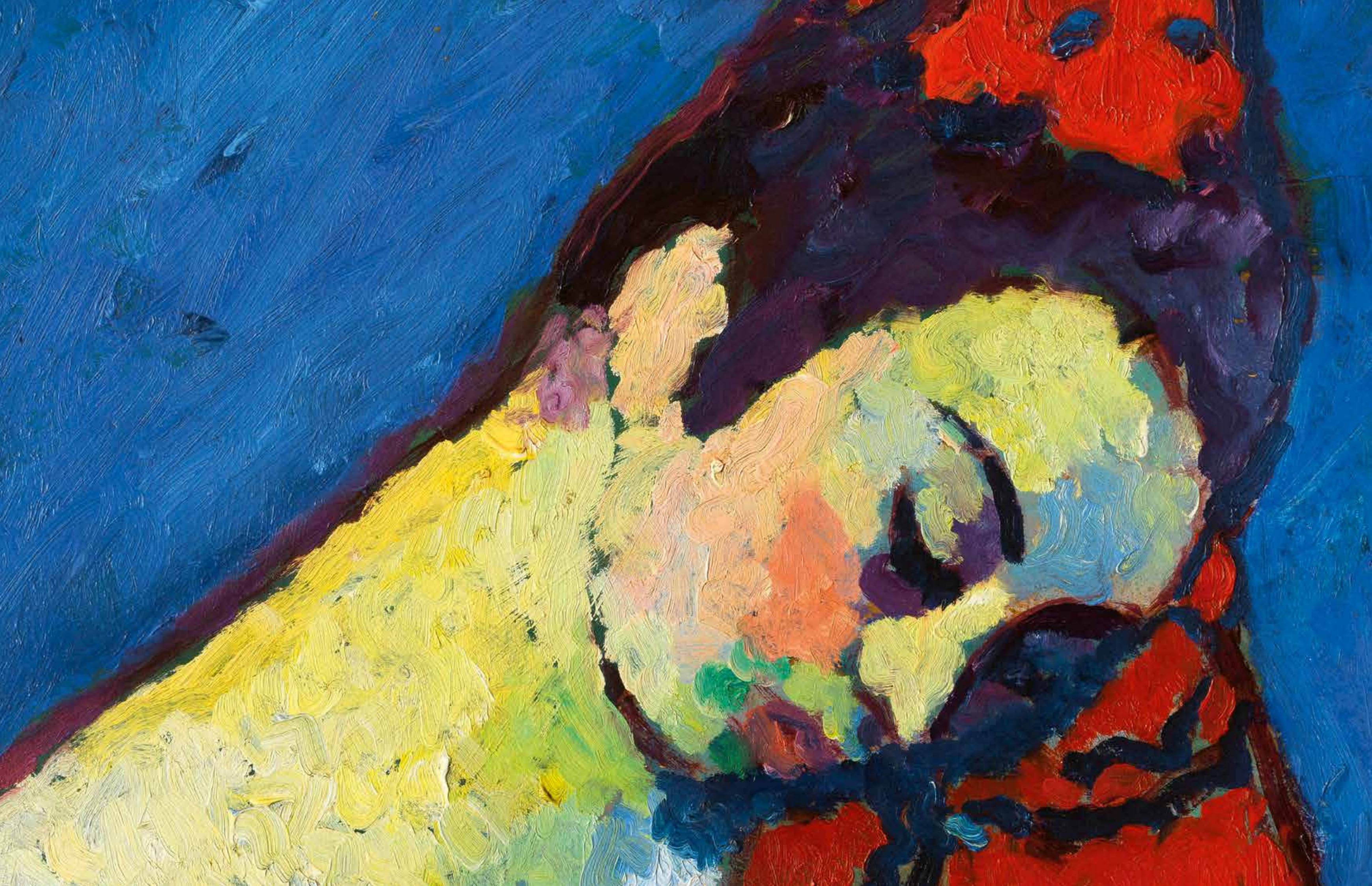


The painting 'Spanish Dancer' by Alexej von Jawlensky is a vibrant expressionist work. It features a central figure, a dancer, rendered in a highly stylized manner. The dancer's face is a complex mix of colors, including yellow, green, and blue, with dark, expressive lines for the eyes and mouth. The dancer's body is primarily a rich, saturated red, with dark, wavy lines suggesting movement and form. The background is a deep, textured blue, which contrasts sharply with the red of the dancer. The overall style is characteristic of the Die Brücke movement, with bold colors and expressive brushstrokes.

**ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY**  
**SPANISH DANCER**  
**AN EXPRESSIONIST MASTERPIECE**

KETTERER  KUNST

EVENING SALE · JUNE 7, 2024 · MUNICH



The work is called up in the Evening Sale on June 7, 2024.

## ALEXEJ VON JAWLENSKY

1864 Torschok – 1941 Wiesbaden

### Spanische Tänzerin. 1909.

Oil on cardboard.  
Signed and dated in the upper left. 100 x 69,5 cm (39.3 x 27.3 in).  
With the expressionist Murnau landscape from the same year on the reverse.  
Jawlensky also used this highly abstract landscape motif in a smaller format in the painting „Murnauer Landschaft“, today part of the collection of the „Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus“, Munich (Murnauer Landschaft, 1909, 50.4 x 54.5 cm, catalogue raisonné no. 283). [JS]

Export of the work from Germany will be possible.

**Nicola Gräfin Keglevich and Dr. Mario von Lüttichau will be happy to provide you with comprehensive advice:**

**n.keglevich@kettererkunst.de | +49 (0)89 552 44-175**  
**m.luettichau@kettererkunst.de | +49 (0)89 552 44-165**

📞 *Called up: June 7, 2024 – ca. 6.14 pm ± 20 min.*

€ 7.000.000 – 10.000.000 (R/N)  
\$ 7,350,000 – 10,500,000

#### PROVENANCE

- Josef Gottschalk Collection, Düsseldorf (possibly acquired from Flechtheim in 1919, until 1941).
- Emma Gottschalk Collection, Düsseldorf (inherited from the above in 1941, until 1954).
- Private collection Rhineland (inherited from the above in 1954, family-owned until 2017: Galerie Thomas).
- Galerie Thomas, Munich (2017).
- Private collection Europe (acquired from the above in 2017).

#### EXHIBITION

- Possibly: Auf dem Wege zur Kunst unserer Zeit. Vorkriegsbilder und Bildwerke, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Düsseldorf Königsallee, July 27 - August 16, 1919, cat. no. 65 (not illustrated).
- Öffentliche Ausstellung der Sammlung Gottschalk, Glücksburger Straße 2, Düsseldorf, 1946/47 (without a catalog).
- Alexej von Jawlensky. El paisaje del rostro, Fundación Mapfre, Madrid, February 9 - May 9, 2021, cat. no. 18, p. 290 (with full-page color illu. on p. 120).

#### LITERATURE

- Maria Jawlensky, Lucia Pieroni-Jawlensky, Angelica Jawlensky, Alexej von Jawlensky. Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings, vol. 1: 1890-1914, Munich 1991, no. 239 (illustrated in black and white on the front and back).  
.....
- Cf. on the landscape on the reverse: Alexej von Jawlensky-Archiv (ed.), Reihe Bild und Wissenschaft. Forschungsbeiträge zu Leben und Werk Alexej von Jawlenskys, vol. 3, Ascona 2009, pp. 150-151 (fig. 14, reverse).

#### ARCHIVE MATERIAL

- Düsseldorf Municipal Archives, no. 0-1-4-22016.0000, „Modern Art“ collection of Emma Gottschalk, pp. 563-565 (on the exhibition of the Gottschalk Collection, 1946/47).
- Düsseldorf Municipal Archives, no. 0-1-4-3907.0000, Gottschalk Painting Collection, p. 165 (on the exhibition of the Gottschalk Collection, 1946/47).

- **Jawlensky's portraits from 1909 and 1910 are considered milestones of European Modernism**
- **“Spanish Dancer” - a masterpiece of unbridled expressionist quality, comparable to Jawlensky's famous “Portrait of the Dancer Alexander Sacharoff” (1909, Lenbachhaus Munich)**
- **Almost all of the paintings from this short creative phase that is characterized by strong colors are owned by international museums today**
- **Alongside “Girl with Peonies” (Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal) and “Red Lips” (lost), this is the largest painting from this important work phase**
- **Both sides were painted during Jawlensky's best creative period: the reverse shows a bright and highly abstract Murnau landscape from 1909**
- **Shortly after it was made, it became part of the important modern art collection of Josef Gottschalk in Düsseldorf, and remained in the family for over nine decades**
- **The “Blue Rider” is currently honored with a comprehensive exhibition at the Tate Modern (until October 2024)**

„There are only very few paintings by Alexej von Jawlensky showcasing this level of quality, and most of them have been museum-owned for many decades. [...]“

Dr. Roman Ziegängsberger

Murnau landscape, 1909 (reverse).





Alexej von Jawlensky, Schokko with red hat, 1909, oil on cardboard, 75 x 65 cm, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Portrait of the Dancer Aleksandr Sakharov, ca. 1909, oil on cardboard, 69.5 x 66.5 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Spanish Dancer, 1909, oil on cardboard, 100 x 69.5 cm.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Helene with Colored Turban, 1910, oil on cardboard, 94.2 x 81 cm, Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Lady with Fan, 1909, oil on cardboard, 92 x 67 cm, Museum Wiesbaden.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Schokko, around 1910, oil on cardboard, 75 x 65 cm, Sotheby's, New York, February 5, 2008.

# “ Enchanting opulence and a delicate play of colors

## Alexej von Jawlensky's "Spanish Dancer" from 1909

Paintings of this quality by the painter Alexej von Jawlensky are few and far between, and most of those that exist have been in museums for many decades, where they are usually among the highlights of the respective collection. Upon the first encounter with „Spanish Dancer“, one can sense almost physically that it is absolutely on a par with „Portrait of the Dancer Aleksandr Sakharov“ (1909, Lenbachhaus, Munich), „Young Girl with Peonies“ (1909, Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal), „Helen with Colored Turban“ (1910, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York) or „Lady with a Fan“ (1910, Museum Wiesbaden). The „Spanish Dancer“ is simply one of those few masterpieces that account for Jawlensky's worldwide fame today just as much as they caused a sensation and inspired contemporaries back then.

Apart from the fact that it is one of Jawlensky's largest paintings with impressive dimensions of 100 by 70 centimeters, it also combines the two most important motifs of his renowned creative phase before World War I: Ever since he had made the picture „Helene in Spanish Costume“ in 1901/02, the motif of the Spanish woman has played a key role his art. On the one hand, he portrays women as strong and spirited, but at the same time - not mutually exclusive - he works out their tender and sensitive nature.

In „Spanish Dancer“, the artist combined the two aspects in a particularly elaborate manner. The never waning painterly appeal, the powerful, mutually amplifying colors, and a formal structure of straight diagonals, curves and counter-curves underline this great fervor. The tilted head, the closed eyes, the calm posture (including the self-contained silhouette) pleasantly counteract the „loudness“ and add this very decisive meditative moment to the picture.

The exquisitely executed wide open fan - Jawlensky's second most fascinating motif in the painting - that the „Spanish Dancer“ holds obliviously in front of her is the icing on the cake. The composition's enchanting opulence, paired with Jawlensky's characteristic supreme painterly vigor, is countered by the extraordinarily delicate play of colors in the fan's mosaic appearance. The fan, which appears to be studded with shiny

pearls, lacks any kind of coquettishness despite its splendour, it seems as if it was both protected and highlighted by its surrounding.

Ultimately, this is what distinguishes Jawlensky's art, an art that pushes the boundaries of the visual realms at every moment and uses opposing, subtly interwoven soothing elements - both in terms of form and content, yielding sophisticated and expressive masterpieces that never lose any of their appeal, no matter how often they are viewed. In this sense, the „Spanish Dancer“ is nothing less than a prime example.

**Dr. Roman Zieglgänsberger**  
Member of the academic council of the Alexej von Jawlensky-Archive in Muralto/Switzerland, Curator for Modern Art, Museum Wiesbaden





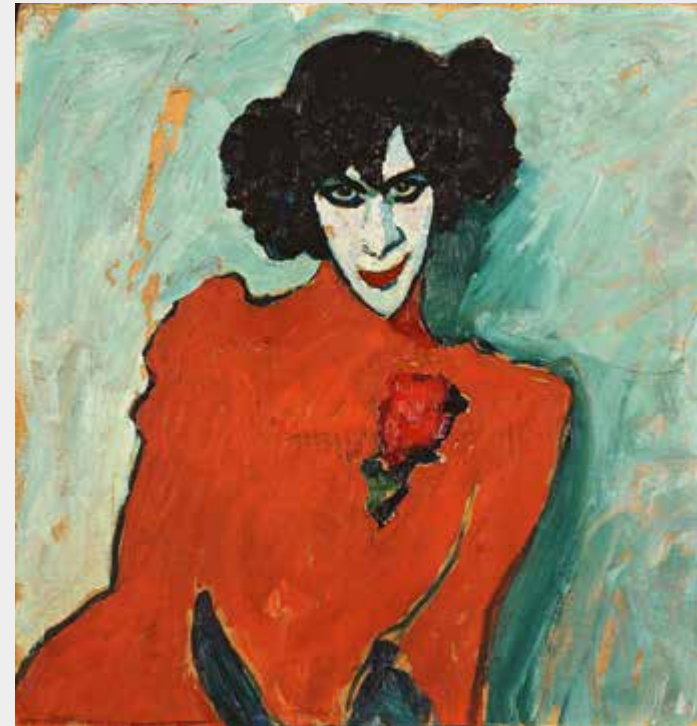
Alexej von Jawlensky, Spanish Dancer, 1909, oil on cardboard, 100 x 69.5 cm.

**“Spanish Dancer” –  
An ecstatic and exuberant expressionist masterpiece**

Jawlensky had reached his absolute creative peak in 1909: He painted his unusually large-scale “Spanish Dancer” in an almost intoxicating array of colors and a bold and free flow. It was during the two years of 1909 and 1910, right before the “Blaue Reiter” was founded, that Jawlensky attained painterly strength in his expressionist portraits that would lead to the creation of iconic highlights of European Modernism. It is the fervent color contrasts, the expressive and seductive pose, and the strict formal stylization that make Jawlensky’s “Spanish Dancer” an inimitable expressionist masterpiece. In terms of painterly quality and art-historical significance, this one-of-a-kind composition is absolutely at eye level with Jawlensky’s other key pieces from this brief creative phase. Works that are almost exclusively museum-owned today.

Along with the “Spanish Dancer”, the paintings “Portrait of the Dancer Aleksandr Sakharov” (Lenbachhaus, Munich) and “Schokko with Red Hat” (Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio), both of which were also painted in 1909, are similar in terms of their colorfulness, expressiveness, and radiance, which is why they are also regarded as highlights of Expressionism today. These important creations by Alexei Jawlensky, just like our “Spanish Dancer”, exude an aura that continues to put us under a spell to this day.

“I painted [...] large figurative works in intense, glowing colors, absolutely not naturalistic and realistic. I used a lot of red, blue, orange, cadmium yellow, chrome oxide green. I contoured the forms in a very



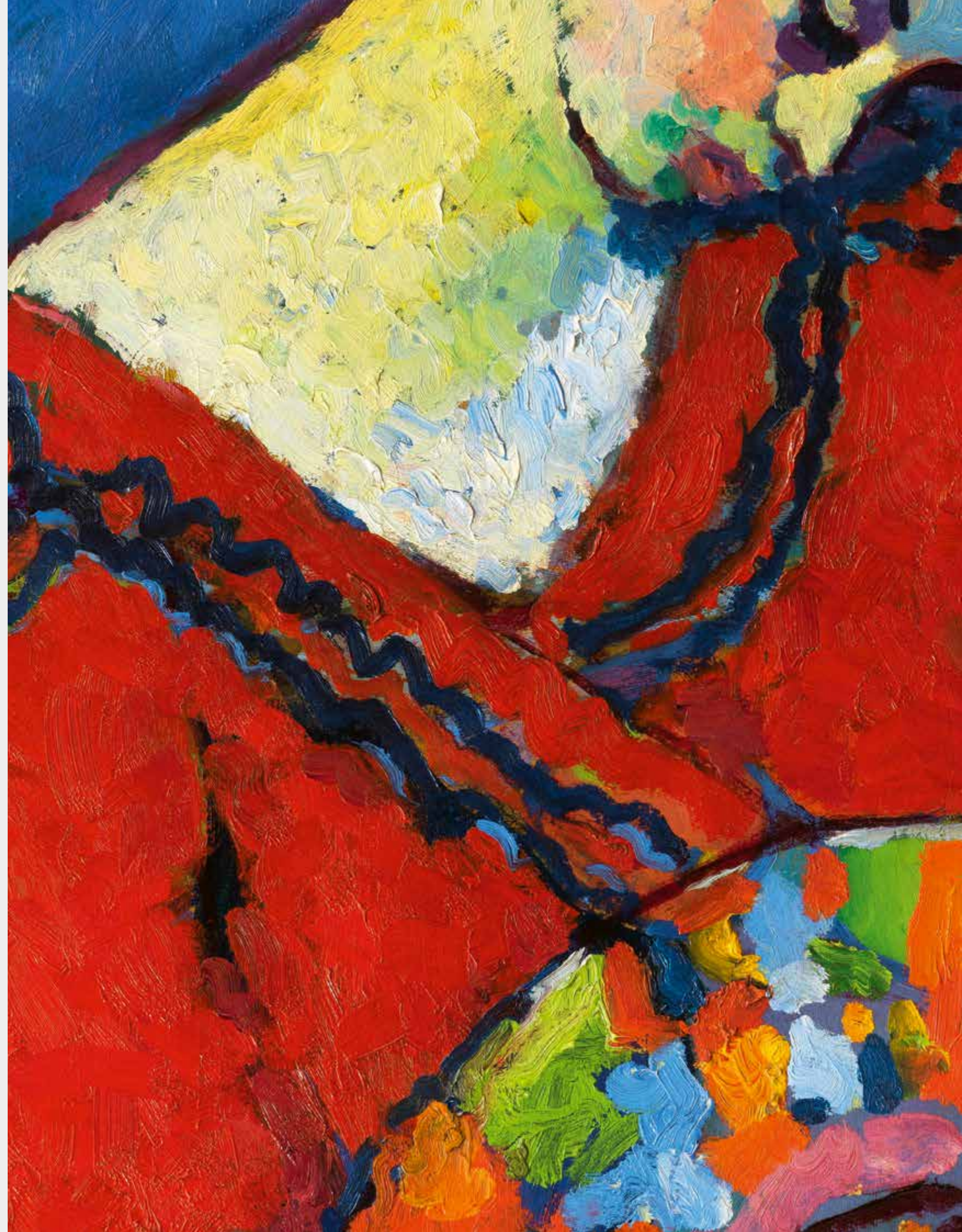
Alexej von Jawlensky, Portrait of the Dancer Aleksandr Sakharov, ca. 1909, oil on cardboard, 69.5 x 66.5 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.

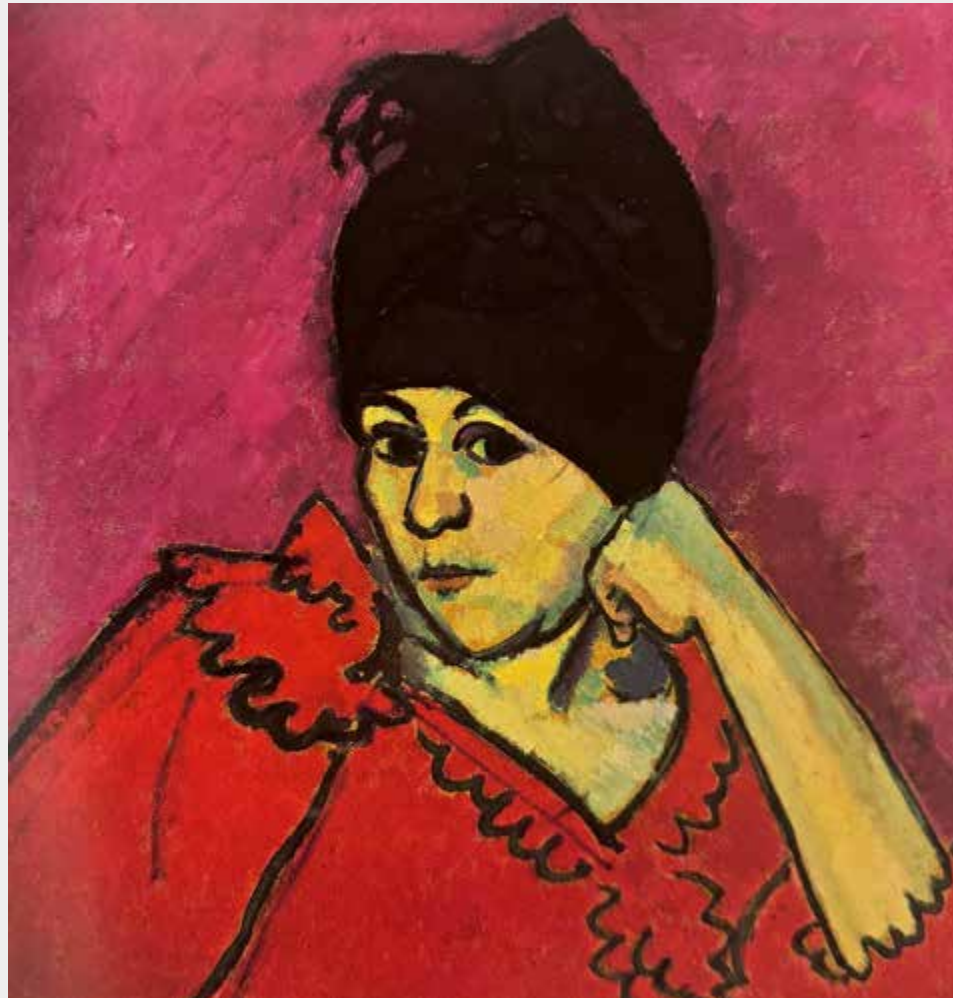
strong Prussian blue and they emanated a powerful inner ecstasy [...] This was the most pivotal moment in my art. During those years up until [...] the war, I painted my most powerful works [...]” (Alexej von Jawlensky, Lebenserinnerungen, 1937)

In these decisive years of 1909/10, Jawlensky took a step of seminal significance for both modern art in general, and his own oeuvre in particular. He liberated the expressive color from the constraints of nature and staged it within the formal framework of an entranced stylization of the human face. While Wassily Kandinsky sought the maximum liberation of color in landscape in the following years, and the young Franz Marc turned to an enraptured animal world, Jawlensky entirely focused on the portrait from 1909 onward.

The motif of an eccentric movement as we find it in his celebrated “Portrait of the Dancer Aleksandr Sakharov”, is taken to a new dimension in our „Spanish Dancer“. In addition to the vibrant color contrast of the bright orange-red dress against the steel-blue background, the fan’s liberated colors and an incarnate that ranges from green to yellow and purple tones, it is, above all, the triangular upper body shaped from diagonals determining the composition that accounts for the incredibly expressive tension that Jawlensky’s “Spanish Dancer” evokes.

Jawlensky drew inspiration for this extraordinarily strong and self-contained, yet introverted pose from his fascination with modern dance. The artist became acquainted with the avant-garde dancer Aleksandr Sakharov in the circle around the Schwabing Salon of his partner, the painter Marianne von Werefkin, no later than 1905. Werefkin’s salon on Giselastrasse was a popular meeting place for avant-garde artists and bohemians at the time, offering its visitors stimulating exchange in those years. Another decisive factor for the choice of motif in „Spanish Dancer“ must have been a general enthusiasm for Spain in Europe in the context of the successful première of Georges Bizet’s opera „Carmen“ in Paris (1875). In 1909, “Carmen” was on the program of the Munich Court Opera.





Alexej von Jawlensky, Dark Blue Turban (Helene with Dark Blue Turban), 1910, oil on canvas on panel, 71 x 69 cm, Merzbacher-Mayer Collection, on permanent loan from the Kunsthau Zürich.



Alexej von Jawlensky with Marianne von Werefkin, Gabriele Münter and Jawlensky's son Andreas in Murnau, 1908, Alexej von Jawlensky Archive, Locarno.

**Helene the “Spanish Dancer” –  
A sensually charged display of female beauty**

The emotional depths that Jawlensky explores with maximum expressiveness in „Spanish Dancer“ are charged with exoticism, passion, vigor, and tragedy. He presents the dancer as an exposed, dramatic figure at the end of a passionate dance in full concentration and elegiac relief. Jawlensky, a bon vivant in every respect, had already been living in a calamitous ménage-à-trois with Marianne von Werefkin and their young maid Helene Nesnakomoff, who gave birth to their son Andreas in 1902, when he painted „Spanish Dancer“ in 1909, elevating it to an iconic stylization of female beauty. While the somewhat older, highly educated, and influential artist Marianne von Werefkin, with whom Jawlensky was living since he had moved to Munich in 1896, was primarily his intellectual partner, his young lover Helene, whom he did not marry until 1922 after he had finally broken up with Werefkin, provided necessary emotional stimuli during these years. Jawlensky's first painted homage to the then very young Helene was the impressionist picture „Helene in Spanish Costume“ (Museum Wiesbaden) from 1901/02. Henceforth, she would not only be Jawlensky's lover but also his preferred model. In the portraits he made of her, he increasingly abandoned pure portraiture and created stylized heads characterized by atmos-

pheric colors, culminating in the renowned „Barbarian Princess (Head of a Young Woman)“ (1912, Osthaus Museum Hagen).

Was it Helene - in the bloom of youth in her early twenties - who inspired the much older man to paint our highly emotional „Spanish Dancer“? Does the artist make us witness to that very erotic feeling that Jawlensky had for his young lover Helene in the art-historically seminal year of 1909?

Looking at contemporaneous works demonstrably based on Helene as a model, the striking red frilled blouse, and the Spain motif that he had already used for a Helene portrait in 1901/02, help us to identify her as a model for the present work, too. The facial features and the highly concentrated expression of the sitter in „Helene with Colored Turban“ (1910, Guggenheim Museum, New York) also show clear parallels, while, unlike our „Spanish Dancer“, the painting has a calmer and more contemplative character. Jawlensky's sensually charged depiction of Helene as the „Spanish Dancer“, on the other hand, is deeply imbued with the emotional turmoil of its creator; it is a masterful presentation of femininity, a progressive liberation from the shackles of artistic and social conventions of the time.

Helene and Andreas 1903, Alexej von Jawlensky Archive, Locarno.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Helene with Colored Turban, 1910, oil on canvas, Guggenheim Museum, New York.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Helene in Spanish Costume, 1901/02, oil on canvas, Museum Wiesbaden.



# Fascination Dance



From left to right: Aleksandr Sakharov's sister, Vladimir von Bechtejew, Marianne von Werefkin, Alexej von Jawlensky, in front of him Helene Nesnakomoff and Aleksandr Sakharov (with black feather), around 1909. © Alexej von Jawlensky-Archiv S.A., Muraito

In the portrait "Spanish Dancer", Jawlensky transferred this free play of self- and public image in the form of imitation and masquerade into a splendid painting. Jawlensky's perception, his fascination with everything new and exotic, finds expression in this colorful portrait of Helene as a „Spanish Dancer“. But the artist also made several portraits of Sakharov, a ballet dancer and close friend at the time; three of which were made in 1909 alone. Our first encounter with the striking motif of the frontal portrait in a symmetrical arrangement is the "Portrait of the Dancer Aleksandr Sakharov" (Lenbachhaus, Munich).

Marianne von Werefkin, Sacharoff (The Dancer Sakharov), 1909, tempera on cardboard. Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte, Ascona.



## Jawlensky and Dance – Helene as "Spanish Dancer" and the "Portrait of the Dancer Aleksandr Sakharov"

Munich was not only one of the hubs for modernist painting, it also was the birthplace of modern dance. This is where the first independent scene of a free and progressive new form of physical expression formed. Jawlensky's contact with Aleksandr Sakharov and his general closeness to the circle of people involved with modern dance provided him with motifs that inspired him to paint his vibrantly colorful works. But it was not only on the official stages where the Schwabing bohemian artists enjoyed their exuberant hustle and bustle. Boisterous studio parties and artist balls, or avant-garde gatherings at Werefkin's salon on Schwabing's Giselastrasse gave Sakharov wonderful opportunities for his self-presentation. A historical photograph documents how the artists Wladimir von Bechtejef and Jawlensky chose traditional tailcoats, while the ladies appeared in fancy evening gowns. Helene, next to Sakharov (right) at the center of the action, also showed up in a flamboyant costume.



Aleksandr Sakharov, around 1912, photo: Hans Holdt.



It was this long-standing and intimate exchange with Aleksandr Sakharov, the artist who trained as a painter in Paris and then turned to expressive dance in Munich, that inspired Jawlensky to create this magnificent painting in 1909. Just as is the case with this both formal and yet intimate image of a Spanish dancer in a traditional red flamenco costume with the obligatory fan and saucy red hairnet, he lends the dancer's face a more familiar carnation and gives this unique and very personal painting a face, namely the features of the young Helene Nesnakomoff, mother of his son Andreas.



# Highlights of European Modernism around 1909



**Henri Matisse**  
L'Espagnole, 1909  
oil on canvas, Pushkin Museum.  
© Succession H. Matisse / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024.



**Alexej von Jawlensky**  
Spanish Dancer, 1909  
oil on cardboard.



**Henri Matisse**  
L'Algérienne, 1909  
oil on canvas, Centre Pompidou, Paris.  
© Succession H. Matisse / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024.



**Ernst Ludwig Kirchner**  
Seated Girl (Fränzi), 1910  
oil on canvas, Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Egon Schiele**  
Wally, 1912  
oil on panel, Leopold Museum, Vienna.



**Gustav Klimt**  
Lady with Fan, 1917/18  
oil on canvas, Sotheby's, London, June 27, 2023.

“The ‚Spanish Dancer‘ is one of those few exceptional Jawlensky paintings that have made for the artist’s worldwide fame today, just as they caused a sensation and provided inspiration back then.”

Dr. Roman Zieglgänsberger

# A journey into light and color

„It was the first time I understood how to paint not what I see, but what I feel [...] And I understood how to render nature in colors according to my ardent soul [...].“

Quoted from: Alexej von Jawlensky, *Reisen, Freunde, Wandlungen*, exhib. cat. Dortmund 1998, p. 42.



Paul Gauguin, *Faaturuma (Melancholic)*, 1891, oil on canvas, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City.

However, Jawlensky first made a stop in Brittany in 1906, the artistic home of Gauguin and his successors, the “Nabis”. The Atlantic landscape had a lasting effect on Jawlensky: “For the first time, I understood how to paint not what I see, but what I feel [...] And I understood how to translate nature into colors according to my fervent soul. I painted many landscapes, bushes in front of the window and Breton heads. The pictures were glowing with color. And I felt deeply satisfied inside at the time”, the artist raves about his stay in Carantec in his memoirs. (Quoted from: Alexej von Jawlensky, *Reisen, Freunde, Wandlungen*, exhib. cat. Dortmund 1998, p. 42).

He wrote to his family, who had remained in Carantec, about his visit to the Salon d’Automne in Paris in October 1906: “I liked very little, so little, almost no one, among the Russians. [...] On the other hand, I found wonderful things among the French - Gauguin, a miracle!” (quoted from: Brigitte Roßbeck, *Marianne von Werefkin*, Munich 2010, p. 101).

Gauguin and his cloisonné technique organized by colored lines hence also became increasingly important for Jawlensky’s painting practice, especially after he had had an opportunity to experience his original paintings.

Maurice de Vlaminck, *Bank of the Seine at Bougival*, 1906, oil on canvas, Museum Barberini, Potsdam. © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024



## Jawlensky and painting in France and Switzerland - Formative visual experiences made in Paris, the south of France and Geneva

French art was of central importance to Alexej von Jawlensky’s artistic development. During a visit to Paris in the autumn of 1906, the artist had his first epiphany when he encountered the glowing canvases and expressive brushwork of the “Fauves”: Matisse, Derain, and Vlaminck. Jawlensky’s knowledge of Fauvist painting, the first presentation of which caused a stir at the Salon d’Automne in Paris in 1905, would also have a decisive impact on his palette.

He met Henri Matisse in person in Paris, as well as Elisabeth Epstein, another Russian-born cicerone, and painter, whom he portrayed and who would later establish contact with Robert Delaunay, the very pivotal moment for his style and the history of painting in the wake of the first “Blue Rider” exhibition.

On his return journey from Brittany via the Côte d’Azur to Munich, the artist took some time to visit Ferdinand Hodler in his studio on Rue de Rhône in Geneva around the turn of the year 1906/07. This was yet another encounter that Jawlensky would cherish for a long time. The artist became intensively involved with Ferdinand Hodler, who had participated in the international exhibitions of the Munich Secession since 1903, and this deep interest was reason enough to visit Hodler in his Geneva studio: “This evening with Hodler, his wife, and Marianne von Werefkin was one of the most interesting evenings I have ever had. Later, during the war, I spent a lot more time with Hodler.” (quoted from: Clemens Weiler, *Alexej Jawlensky. Köpfe, Gesichte, Meditationen*, Hanau 1970, p. 110). It was not only Jawlensky who remembered Hodler’s brittle and expressive linear art, as he would also have an enormous influence on the development of modern painting in general.

Ferdinand Hodler in his studio on Rue de Rhône in Geneva, 1906/07 (in the background: Ferdinand Hodler, *Der Tag*, 1906), photo: G. Wenger.



Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, 1907, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Succession Picasso / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

In the fall of 1907, Jawlensky went to Paris again. He wanted to visit the sensational retrospective of the late Paul Cézanne at the Salon d’Automne, where early Cubist works by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso were also on display, including a first version of the “*Femmes d'Alger*” that disconcerted tout le monde! Gertrude Stein, the American collector in Paris, reported about her friend Alice Toklas’ first visit to the Bateau-Lavoir: “There was a huge painting on the wall, a strange picture of light and dark colors [...] showing a large group - and next to it another picture of three women in a kind of reddish-brown, coarse and posing; all in all quite frightening.” (Quoted from: William Rubin, *Picasso and Braque*, Munich 1990, p. 339).



# The Path to the „Blue Rider“



Murnau landscape, 1909 (reverse).

“Kandinsky, Jawlensky and their partners Gabriele Münter and Marianne von Werefkin brought a creative spirit to [...] Murnau [...] that would later go down in art history as the birth of German Expressionism for the works this period yielded. At the same time, these sojourns that lasted several weeks provided the nucleus of the ‚Neue Künstlervereinigung München‘, which made its first public appearance in September 1909 and which ultimately gave rise to the ‚Blue Rider‘ in December 1911.”

Dr. Roman Zieglgänsberger, quoted from: Alles! 100 Jahre Jawlensky in Wiesbaden, Munich 2021, p.110

## The year 1909 – Pinnacle of Modernism and Jawlensky’s leading role in the „Blue Rider“

Jawlensky spent the summer of 1909 - the year that saw the birth of our “Spanish Dancer” - together with Helene, their son Andreas (passed off as a nephew in public), and Marianne von Werefkin in Murnau, where they painted with Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter in a lively exchange. A summer that was pivotal both for Jawlensky’s ill-fated love triangle with Werefkin and Helene, as well as for his artistic development. The work of all four artists at that time underwent a radical change, as they gradually abandoned Impressionist and late Impressionist styles and turned towards a synthetic and more expressive color painting. Jawlensky had already seen the paintings of the Fauves and early works of Cubism in Paris on his trips to France in 1906 and 1907, and also became acquainted with works by Henri Matisse, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, and Pablo Picasso.

These visual experiences made Jawlensky a progressive thinker within the Murnau artist community, and it was due to his impact that the styles of his fellow painters evolved towards a stronger autonomy of color and an overall more summarised conception of the surface. The liberation of color finally came about in Murnau in 1909, a process with crucial impact on German Expressionism and ultimately on the art of the “Blue Rider”.

The fact that the reverse side of the painting “Spanish Dancer” bears one of these highly abstract landscapes from the seminal Murnau period is an incredibly fortunate coincidence. This fascinating view of the “Blue Land” in summer is exceptionally picturesque and appears to have been captured quite spontaneously. Jawlensky placed large purple shadows on a radiant pink road under a green and white sky, the colors - as in the “Spanish Dancer” - are juxtaposed in flat, pointed forms and bold contrasts.

“Translating nature into color according to the fire in my soul”, was Jawlensky’s highly emotional approach (Jawlensky, *Lebenserinnerungen* (1937), quoted from *Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. I, 1890-1914, p. 30). An approach that also inspired Kandinsky and Münter in Murnau, where they boldly liberated themselves from the constraints of nature as it was perceived.

Just as Jawlensky developed the body of his “Spanish Dancer” from strictly diagonal and triangular shapes, he also composed the radiant “Murnau Landscape” on the reverse from strongly abstracted elements. A comparison with landscapes that fellow artists Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter created around the same time once more demonstrates how advanced Jawlensky’s expressionist understanding of color and form was in 1909. In the same year, Jawlensky also executed this landscape motif in maximum abstraction in the small painting “Murnau Landscape”, today part of the collection of the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.



Alexej von Jawlensky, Murnau landscape, 1909, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus Munich.



Wassily Kandinsky, Murnau - Landscape with Green House, 1909, oil on canvas, Sotheby’s, London, June 21, 2017.

Gabriele Münter, The Blue Mountain, 1908, oil on cardboard, private collection Germany. Ketterer Kunst, Munich, December 5, 2014 © Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024.



Thus Jawlensky’s “Spanish Dancer” is a powerful avant-gardist serendipity in two respects: An extraordinary portrait and a mesmerizing landscape from his best creative period that testify to his genius, his inimitable flair for the free use of form and color, and an audacious conviction to take painting to a new level, even though it was often met with disdain as outrageously progressive for the sheer impact of the colors.

In December 1909, the legendary first exhibition of the ‘New Artists’ Association Munich’ took place at Galerie Thannhauser, an event torn to pieces in negative press reviews, as the colors in the works Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Werefkin and Münter exhibited egregiously deviated from nature. Fritz von Ostini, for example, wrote in the “Münchener Neueste Nachrichten” on December 9, 1909: “[...] As the founding pamphlet of the New Artists’ Association Munich’ explains, the coloristic orgies, this dissociation from nature, truthfulness and all sound skill reveal ‘a pursuit of artistic synthesis’. Holy smokes [...]” (quoted from: Annegret Hoberg, Helmut Friedel, *Der Blaue Reiter und das Neue Bild*, Munich/London/New York 1999, p. 33).

The press fought furiously against a new kind of painting that had gone wild in the truest sense of the word, and the public railed, threatened the artists and spat on the paintings. The art that Jawlensky and his companions showcased in 1909 was far beyond what the tastes and aesthetic sensibilities of his contemporaries could handle. Today, however, their progressive artistic path, liberated from all conventions and pursued against all external resistance with courage and determination, is regarded as one of the most important chapters in the history of 20th-century art.

Jawlensky’s painting “Spanish Dancer” with the “Murnau Landscape” on the reverse is not only one of these fascinating pinnacles of modern European art but also an exceptional example of the complex emotional expressiveness that lies at the heart of painting. In “Spanish Dancer”, Jawlensky’s relentless pursuit of artistic synthesis, a consummate fusion of visual and emotional impressions to create an overwhelming expressive painting, becomes particularly evident.

Today, paintings of comparable quality are almost exclusively museum-owned and hardly appear on the international auction market. Our “Spanish Dancer” has been part of an important private collection in the Rhineland for almost a century, and is now available on the auction market for the very first time. [JS/MvL]

# The Josef Gottschalk Collection



Josef Gottschalk, 1920s. © Rhineland Archive for Artists' Estates

“It is amazing and gratifying to see the enthusiasm, love, and artistic understanding with which modern art is compiled in the Rhineland. (...) The collectors General Director Nothmann, Josef Gottschalk and Alfred Wolff in Düsseldorf, General Director Alfred Tietz in Cologne, the Barons von der Heydt and Claus Gebhard in Elberfeld, Rudolf Ibach in Barmen, and the Krefeld-based Hermann Lange and Dr. Erich Raemisch (...) made a number of their most interesting works available.”

Der Cicerone, 20. 1928, p. 674, on an exhibition at Flechtheim.



Wassily Kandinsky, Arabs II, 1911, oil on canvas, Mr. and Mrs. J. Seward Johnson Collection, Princeton, New Jersey.



August Macke, Gartenrestaurant, 1912, oil on canvas, Kunstmuseum Bern.

In the case of the industrialist Josef Gottschalk, the question arises as to whether art historical research might have overlooked an important collector of international standing.

Who was Josef Gottschalk? Born in Düsseldorf in 1876 and raised in humble circumstances, Gottschalk worked his way up quickly, starting as a factory worker in the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, he became a steel wholesaler in 1911.

The defense industry's demand for steel in World War I helped Gottschalk to amass a huge fortune in just a few years, which also enabled him to compile such a remarkable art collection. In close contact with the Rhenish avant-garde luminaries such as Alfred Flechtheim, Johanna Ey, and Karl Nierendorf, as well as with artists such as Otto Dix and Walter Ophey, the collector found himself at the center of the modern art scene.

Personal documents on the Gottschalk Collection have not survived time. The only surviving documents come from the estate of his brother Ernst Gottschalk, a Düsseldorf sculptor, today kept at the Rhineland Archive for Artists' Estates, which also provides a few sources on Josef Gottschalk.

## The Golden Twenties – A Decade of Art

The Gottschalk Collection, which had been compiled over just a few years, was entirely dedicated to the avant-garde: It comprised around 60 works by artists such as Kandinsky (fig.), Macke, Munch, Jawlensky, Pechstein, and Chagall, many of them in large format. Josef Gottschalk came into contact with Alfred Flechtheim, of whom he would become a regular client, through his brother Ernst early on.

Gottschalk was also an active lender, giving works to, among others, the „Große Düsseldorfer Kunstausstellung“ in 1920 and to exhibitions of the Berlin Secession (1928).

It was also through the agency of Ernst, who had been involved with the artist group „Das Junge Rheinland“ from its formation on, that Josef deepened contacts with the Düsseldorf avant-garde. The two paintings ended up in the collection of Johanna Ey, however, they were confiscated from the Düsseldorf Art Collections as part of the „Degenerate Art“ campaign (EK numbers 2028 and 2049) in 1937, and have been considered lost ever since.

In 1924, Otto Dix made a portrait of Josef Gottschalk, just like he made the famous portrait of Johanna Ey, today at the museum K20 in Düsseldorf.

### Highlights of the Collection

The Josef Gottschalk Collection, liquidated in 1954 after the death of his widow, can not be fully reconstructed today. However, its key masterpieces have been identified:

Jawlensky's „Spanish Dancer“ is indisputably one of the most compelling paintings in the collection and also represents a testimony to Josef Gottschalk's passion for dance (his brother Peter was a dancer), but also his affinity for works characterized by a cubist-expressive formal reduction. The „Spanish Dancer“ remained in the family for around a century.

The 1912 painting „Gartenrestaurant“ by August Macke (fig.) also used to be part of the collection. Gottschalk had acquired it from Herwarth Walden before he sold it to the Municipal Museum in Aachen in 1927, from where it was confiscated as „degenerate“ in 1937. Today the masterpiece is housed at the Kunstmuseum Bern. The collection also included the 1904 painting „Young Woman Under the Apple Tree“ by Edvard Munch (fig.), which is now on display at the Carnegie Museum of Arts in Pittsburgh.



Edvard Munch, Girl under Apple Tree, 1904, oil on canvas, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

### Turning points

The Nazi dictatorship constituted a difficult time for Josef Gottschalk and his family. The works of his brother in Düsseldorf were among the first to be dismantled, and in some cases even melted down. The collection quickly gained an ill reputation for being „degenerate“ and the name Gottschalk, which was also common among Jewish families, added to the pressure. It took a little more than two years, from 1935 to 1937, to provide proof from the parish office in Warstein, his father's birthplace, that he was of Catholic rather than Jewish origin.

Josef Gottschalk died at a sanatorium in Neuss after a long illness in 1941. In June 1943, his company's premises were destroyed by British bomber units, the economic life's work he had left behind was destroyed and the family was faced with the prospect of rebuilding.

However, his vast art collection, including Jawlensky's „Spanish Dancer“, remained intact beyond the Nazi era. In 1946, the Düsseldorf Art Collections contacted the widow Emma Gottschalk. Following an inspection of the impressive inventory, its director Dr. Doede filed a request to make the collection accessible to the public. The military government granted permission to set up a „museum“ in part of her house on Glücksburger Straße 2. Concerning an extension of the exhibition, the director deemed the Gottschalk Collection to be „particularly significant“ in a letter dated April 16, 1947,

*„as it contains major works by artists that were confiscated from public ownership by the former regime. The Düsseldorf Art Collections hereby confirm the unique artistic value of the collection and attaches the greatest importance to ensuring it will remain accessible to the public at the current premises.“* (Düsseldorf Municipal Archive, 0-1-4-3907)

“As of 1909, Jawlensky had liberated his painting style [...] from earlier influences, which becomes particularly evident in his unmistakable portraits of women. The forms are highly stylized and outlined mostly in Prussian blue, the individual color fields are boldly juxtaposed and yield intense color contrasts.”

Angelika Jawlensky-Bianconi, quoted from: Fest der Farbe. The Merzbacher-Mayer Collection, exhib. cat. Kunsthaus Zürich, Cologne 2006. p.193.



Dr. Mario von Lüttichau talks about Alexej von Jawlensky's „Spanish Dancer“. Watch the video here.



KETTERER  KUNST