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BARLACH EXHIBIT IN OTTAWA

An exhibition of 137 works by the North German artist Ernst Barlach, including sculpture in bronze and porcelain, original drawings, woodcuts and lithographs opened in Ottawa on January 17 at the National Gallery. They were on loan from galleries and private collections in West Germany. This, the single Canadian showing, will run until February 16.

The display was organized by the Ernst Barlach Society in Germany and Dr. Wolf Stubbe, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the Kunsthalle in Hamburg, who prepared the catalogue. The show has been circulated by the Travelling Exhibition Service of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, D.C., under the sponsorship of the Cultural Division of the West German Foreign Office. It returns to Germany immediately following the present showing. This is the first time that so many works of sculpture by this noted twentieth-century artist have been available in Canada, where a smaller, Canadian-owned show of Barlach prints has travelled from coast to coast during the past eighteenth months.

SCULPTURE

Although, in reproduction, most of Barlach's carvings in wood and models cast in bronze look huge, because they have monumental bulk and simple sweeping lines, almost all are much smaller than life-size, as is the case with the 35 pieces in the current show. They range from figures made soon after a two-month trip to Russia in 1906 ("The Melon Easter", 1907, and "Russian Lovers", 1908), through the

violent expressionistic phase ("Frenzy", 1910, "The Avenger", 1914, and "The Fugitive", 1920) to the artist's growing preoccupation with religious and mystic themes ("Christ appears to Thomas" 1926, and "Monks Reading", 1932), ending with the witch-like tittering of the 1937 "Old Woman Laughing", the year before the 68-year-old artist died under the shadow of Adolf Hitler.

DRAWINGS

The 59 drawings in the present exhibition also show the wide range of the artist's development from his youthful, playful Art Nouveau stage in the 1890's, onward. Some half-dozen works of special interest show Russian landscape and character heads made under the inspiration of the brief but vital experience in Southern Russian in 1906. No fewer than 15 splendid examples of Barlach's mature drawing style come from the renowned Barlach collection of Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Niescher of Aachen in West Germany.

GRAPHIC WORKS

The graphic section of the exhibition presents 43 of Barlach's most dramatic works in the difficult medium of woodcut and in lithograph, often side by side with the preparatory drawing. These include "Raging Barbarian", 1916/17, and "Kneeling woman with Dying Child", 1919, which force a striking contrast to the large, very rare woodcuts illustrating the "Ode to Joy". The show includes all seven of the mystic "Transformations of God", carved in 1920/21.