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PRESS RELEASE

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

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**Generous bequest leaves Nationalgalerie and Kupferstichkabinett with important works by Max Beckmann and Hans Purrmann
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin announces further provenance research**

The Staatliche Museen zu Berlin has received an important collection comprising two paintings, 46 drawings and 52 prints by Max Beckmann, as well as one painting by Hans Purrmann. The accessions will now enrich the collections of the Nationalgalerie and the Kupferstichkabinett. The works were bequeathed to the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin in the last will and testament of the art historian and Max-Beckmann expert Barbara Malwine Auguste Göpel (1922–2017), with the specific request that they go on display in Berlin. The bequest was facilitated by Eugen Blume, long-serving director of the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin and a close friend of Barbara Göpel.

The two Beckmann paintings are *Self-Portrait in the Bar* (1942) and *Portrait of Erhard Göpel* (1944). The drawings, dating from the period 1900 to 1947, include scenes of Beckmann's service at the front during World War I and portraits of the artist, his second wife Quappi, and the art dealer Gottlieb Friedrich Reber. Many of the drawings served as preliminary studies for well-known paintings. The prints comprise 52 individual sheets, which Barbara Göpel already presented to the Kupferstichkabinett on permanent loan in the 1990s. The painting by Hans Purrmann *Landscape (Houses and Walls in Porto d' Ischia)* is from 1955.

In a statement, Michael Eissenhauer, Director-General of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, said: "Thanks to Barbara Göpel's generous donation, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin are now in the fortunate position of being in possession of an impressive treasure of Max Beckmann's works. The works form a harmonious complement to the world-famous collection of modern art in the Berlin museums." Holm Bevers, acting director of the Kupferstichkabinett, went on to say: "For the Kupferstichkabinett, which previously had only six drawings by the artist, the new accessions of Beckmann works mark a surprising and immensely significant enrichment of our collection." Udo Kittelmann, director of the Nationalgalerie, stated: "Max Beckmann is one of the core artists in the Nationalgalerie's collection, which has now been decisively strengthened. Of particular importance is the accession of *Self-Portrait in the Bar*, because it fills a gap in our collection where Beckmann's *Self-Portrait in Tuxedo* once hung, which the Nazis confiscated from the Nationalgalerie as a 'degenerate' work in 1937 and which is now owned by an American museum. The portrait of Erhard Göpel is proof that under National Socialism not everything was black and white, there were in fact countless shades of grey. We recently documented this in our exhibition *The Black Years. Histories of a Collection 1933–1945* and will continue to address this political dimension of art at the Nationalgalerie in future."

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Barbara Göpel was the widow of art historian Dr. Erhard Göpel (1906–1966), whose role during the Nazi period appears deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, from February 1942 onwards Erhard Göpel was actively involved in the Nazi looting of art in his capacity for the “Sonderauftrag Linz”. Yet on the other hand, he also protected his artist friend Max Beckmann, who the Nazis publicly branded as a “degenerate” artist. After the war, he and his wife became known for their scholarship on modern art and the work of Beckmann and Purrmann in particular.

The Staatliche Museen zu Berlin has a moral and ethical obligation to accept the bequest. It is known that Göpel acquired many of the works directly from the artists. Recent provenance research at the Zentralarchiv of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin has revealed no concrete evidence to warrant a suspicion that any of the bequeathed works were looted. However, since the provenance of many of the works on paper cannot be clarified beyond all doubt, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin continues to recognize its commitment to careful provenance research and a critical handling of the bequest, in accordance with the Washington Principles. The bequeathed works will be presented to the public in the fall of 2018 in a special exhibition at Berlins Kulturforum which will also thematise Erhard Göpel’s biography.

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