Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion | BERLIN

Neue Nationalgalerie
Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

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PRESS RELEASE
Neue Nationalgalerie
Potsdamer Straße 50, 10785 Berlin
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Max Ernst to Dorothea Tanning: Networks of Surrealism
Provenances from the Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch Collection
17 October 2025 – 1 March 2026
A special exhibition of the Neue Nationalgalerie and the Zentralarchiv – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

In cooperation with the Zentralarchiv, the Neue Nationalgalerie presents *Max Ernst to Dorothea Tanning: Networks of Surrealism. Provenances from the Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch Collection*. One hundred years after the "First Surrealist Manifesto" (1924), this exhibition gives new insights into the ramified networks of this international art movement of the 20th century. The focus is on both the histories of the art works and on life stories of Surrealism's central artists, dealers, and collectors.

On the basis of a representative selection of paintings and sculptures by artists such as **Leonora Carrington, Salvador Dalí**, **Max Ernst**, **Leonor Fini**, **René Magritte**, **Joan Miró**, and **Dorothea Tanning**, the exhibition showcases the findings of a research project on the provenances of artworks from the **Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch Collection**, which was realized jointly with the State of Berlin. The exhibition not only maps out the manifold paths taken by Surrealist artworks predominantly during the 1930s and 1940s, but also sheds light on how historical circumstances, personal relationships, and social networks contributed to the spread of the international movement.

Starting in January 2023, around 100 artworks from the **Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch Collection** – all created up until 1945 – were systematically examined with a view to their origin and the succession of their owners. The aim was to ensure that none of them constituted cultural property seized as a result of Nazi persecution, especially from Jewish owners. These works include important paintings by artists like Salvador Dalí, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miró, Tamara de Lempicka, and Dorothea Tanning. The collector couple acquired the works between the 1970s and the 2000s from galleries, dealers, and auctioneers around the world. Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch gifted their excellent collection to the State of Berlin in 2010, which then made it available to the Neue Nationalgalerie as a permanent loan. Surrealist works and Abstract Expressionism from the New York School form the heart of the collection.

The findings of the project carried out at the Zentralarchiv for the purpose of investigating and verifying the provenances of the artworks are being presented in this exhibition.

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In three sections, the show traces the eventful paths of the paintings and sculptures, which took them from Paris via Brussels and other European cities into exile in Mexico and the USA during the Nazi period and the Second World War. The circle of Surrealists was characterized by its complex relationships in which friendship, love, and business connections often overlapped. Thus, the circulation of works was marked by less formalized transactions. When Nazi Germany occupied France in 1940, numerous Surrealist artists along with their collectors and dealers were forced to flee. Here, too, it was helpful to have connections: many left Europe and emigrated to the USA and elsewhere; others failed to secure an exit visa and had to go into hiding in the unoccupied part of France. Some were able to take their works with them, while others had to leave them behind.

This phase that was characterized by changes in location is directly reflected in the provenances of these artworks. In various ways, the biographies of the individual objects testify to friendships and business relations and in equal measure to loss, persecution, and new beginnings. Going far beyond the individual stories of the artworks, these object biographies offer deep insights into the complex networks of the Surrealist movement as well as into the great political challenges of the time.

This special exhibition is held in the lower story of the Neue Nationalgalerie (reserved for the permanent collection) and brings together a selection of 26 works from the Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch Collection, including Max Ernst's *Gloomy Forest with Bird* (1927) and his *Painting for Young People* (1943), André Masson's large painting *Massacre* (1931/32), Leonor Fini's *Two Women* (1939), Joan Miró's *Arrow Piercing Smoke* (1926), and Dorothea Tanning's *Voltage* (1942).

Issued by the Zentralarchiv, a **booklet in the series** *Guides to Provenance Research* will be published in German at the start of the exhibition. It presents 15 object biographies as examples and documents the provenances of all 26 works in the exhibition, as researched in the project. With the opening of the exhibition, the findings of the provenance research project will be published online at recherche.smb.museum

Max Ernst to Dorothea Tanning is curated by Maike Steinkamp, Curator at the Neue Nationalgalerie, Lisa Hackmann and Sven Haase, Research Associates for Provenance Research at the Zentralarchiv. Curatorial Assistant: Ricarda Bergmann, Neue Nationalgalerie. Research Assistant: Sara Sophie Biever, Zentralarchiv.

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