

Max Beckmann

Max Beckmann, born in 1884 in Leipzig, was a German painter, graphic artist, sculptor, author, and university professor. From 1900 to 1903, he studied at the Grand Ducal School of Art in Weimar since he was not accepted at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts. He left the art school without a degree and spent a few months in the European art capital, Paris, before moving to Berlin shortly after. In 1907, he declined an invitation to become a member of "Die Brücke" but instead joined the "Berlin Secession", where he was elected as the youngest board member in 1910. In 1913, he left the Berlin Secession and joined the successor group, the "Free Secession", in protest. At the beginning of World War I, Beckmann volunteered for medical service in Flanders and incorporated many of the war experiences he collected in his works over the following months. In 1915, he left his service due to a mental breakdown and settled in Frankfurt am Main. With this crisis, a stylistic reorientation began, and he became more deeply involved in the city's social and intellectual life. Beckmann declined an offer to teach at the Weimar School of Art in 1919. In 1925, he took over the master's studio at the Städelsches Institut für die Kunstgeschichte in Frankfurt, and four years later, he was appointed as a professor. In 1928, his fame reached its peak, with solo exhibitions, retrospectives, and group shows at home and abroad paying tribute to his matured style. However, with the rise of National Socialism, Beckmann faced increasing pressure. He was stripped of his teaching position, defamed as a "degenerate artist", and his works were confiscated. In 1937, Beckmann turned away from Germany, with the support of his patrons and friends, and settled in the Netherlands, while continuing to seek a visa to the United States. He was granted the visa in 1947. Upon arrival in the United States, Beckmann took a teaching position at Washington University in St. Louis. He quickly became an active part of the social and intellectual life in the US with his wife. Traveling, retrospectives, and further teaching engagements followed. In late 1949, the artist accepted a professorship in painting and drawing at the Art School of the Brooklyn Museum in New York. In the fall of 1950, Beckmann suffered a heart attack, which ultimately claimed his life.