

RONNY VAN DE VELDE



George Grosz (Berlin 1893 - Berlin 1959)

Apaches (When it was all over, they played cards), 1917 Apachen (Als alles vorbei war, spielten sie Karten)

Pen and ink on paper
253 x 333 mm

Signed and dated lower right: Grosz 1917

A cheap basement-flat in all its slimy detail, the coarse, dulled trio round the table with cards and drink, afterplay of a sex killing which will only come to be revealed after closer investigation. Hatchet and straight-razor on the floor, spats of blood on the trouser leg of a grinning murderer sitting on the female corpse, the corpse that – barely concealed – is pulled along up to the table. The extreme brutality and indifference exuding from this scene, supercedes tabloid sensationalism. The loss of all values is the final stage of a purely greed-driven society, despite all the fine middle-class shine. Ecce homo. Black humour and effective provocation, the nightmare envisioned with sobriety and precision. 'The catastrophe had begun ... I drew drunks, men vomiting, men with clenched fists cursing the moon, sex murderers playing cards sitting on a wooden chest inside which one can see the murdered woman. I drew wine boozers, beer boozers, gin boozers, and a frightened-looking man washing his hands sticky with blood ... I drew little men fleeing, lonely and demented, through empty streets...' (A Little Yes and a Big No: The Autobiography of George Grosz, 1946)

Provenance:

George Grosz Estate

Exhibitions

- Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1962, George Grosz, No.156, full-page ill. p. 39
- Travelling exhibition George Grosz.
- Gli anni di Berlino/Die Berliner Jahre
- Palazzo Reale, Milano, May 30-July 28, 1985
- Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara, August 3-September 29, 1985
- Museum Moderne Kunst, Wien, December 12, 1985-January 31, 1986
- Accademia di Belle Arti, Napoli, February 26-April 13, 1986
- Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, April 26-June 8, 1986
- Museum Villa Stück, München, September 3- October 26, 1986
- Staatliche Kunsthalle, Berlin, March 13-April 15, 1987
- Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover, November 27, 1987-January 24, 1988

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, October 5, 2005-January 9, 2006,
Dada, ill.

Literature:

George Grosz, *Ecce Homo*, Berlin, 1923 (and several facsimile reprints), p.97, ill.

George Grosz, *A Little Yes and a Big No*, New York, 1946, p.97, ill. ;
1954, p.10, ill.

Herbert Brittner, *George Grosz*, New York, 1960, p.10, ill.; Köln, 1961, p.10, ill.

Hans Hess, *George Grosz*, London, 1974, ill.39

Uwe M. Schneede, *George Grosz. Der Künstler in seiner Gesellschaft*, Köln, 1975, ill. 25

Uwe M. Schneede, *George Grosz His Life and Work*, London, 1979, ill. 76

Serge Sabarsky, *George Grosz. Gli anni di Berlino/Die Berliner Jahre*, 1985, ill.52 (Also English and French editions)

Artist description:

George Grosz was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1893. After studying art in Dresden and Berlin he began contributing cartoons to German journals such as "Ulk" and "Lustige Blatter".

On the outbreak of the First World War Grosz was conscripted into the German Army. A strong opponent of the war, he was eventually released as unfit for duty. However, the following year, desperate for soldiers, Grosz was called up again. Kept from frontline action, Grosz was used to transport and guard prisoners of war.

After trying to commit suicide in 1917, Grosz was placed in an army hospital. It was decided to execute Grosz but he was saved by the intervention of one of his patrons, Count Kessler. Grosz was now diagnosed as suffering from shell-shock and was discharged from the German Army.

In 1917, Grosz joined with John Heartfield in protesting about the German wartime propaganda campaign against the allies. This included anti-war drawings such as "Fit for Active Service" (1918), in which a well-fed doctor pronounces a skeleton fit for duty.

After the Armistice Grosz was active in left-wing politics and contributed to communist journals published by Malik-Verlag. He also joined with artists such as John Heartfield, Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Kurt Schwitters to form the German Dada group. Grosz's drawings often attacked members of the government and important business leaders. Grosz was taken to court several times but although heavily fined, managed to escape imprisonment. Grosz's collected drawings, "The Face of the Ruling Class" (1921) and "Ecce Homo" (1927), earned him an international reputation as a politically committed artist.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s Grosz directed his attacks against Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. In 1932 Grosz was forced to flee from Nazi Germany and after settling in the United States became a naturalized citizen in 1938.

His memoirs, *The Autobiography of George Grosz* was published in 1955. George Grosz returned to Germany in 1959, saying "My American dream turned out to be a soap bubble". He died shortly after his arrival following a fall down a flight of stairs.