

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ARTIST EXILED BY NAZIS IN 1932 GIVEN RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION
AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

On Wednesday, October 8, the Museum of Modern Art will open to the public a retrospective exhibition of the work of George Grosz, the great caricaturist and painter who was compelled to leave Germany in 1932 because the Nazis could not endure the increasing force of his satire. The exhibition, which will be on view through November 2, comprises 13 oils, 21 watercolors, and 28 drawings, prints and theatre designs.

This exhibition has been assembled by Lenore Browning and Elodie Courter, Director of the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions, under whose auspices it has been on tour throughout the country for the past year. It has been seen in Iowa City, Des Moines, Kansas City, San Francisco, Seattle and Honolulu. For its first showing in New York two recent pictures never before publicly shown will be added. After it closes at the Museum, the exhibition will again go on tour.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum of Modern Art, comments on the work of Grosz as follows:

"During recent years Grosz has taken his place among the most brilliant American masters of watercolor, and his highly original oils command attention in exhibitions throughout our country. But his world-wide fame still rests upon his satirical drawings of the 1920's. Not since Toulouse-Lautrec has there been a draughtsman with such a vitriolic line. Lautrec draws with a kind of acid elegance; his satire is cold, superciliously objective with no element of protest or moral judgment. He is amused by the haut monde and the demi monde; he despises them, but he does not condescend to hate them.

"By comparison, the technique of Grosz's caricatures seems awkward, the line at first glance feeble, even childish. But as one studies these drawings their ferocity becomes appalling. Rarely in art have human beings been so mercilessly ridiculed, insulted, spat upon as are these post-war victims of Grosz's hatred: fat German bourgeois with cigars and bulging necks, monocled Junker officers, petty tyrants, stupid, pretentious, lecherous and mean. Here is satire without laughter, without wit, but with a sense of moral outrage against human ugliness and vice which reminds one of Jonathan Swift in its morbid intensity and power."

Born in Berlin in 1893 of Prussian Lutheran stock, George Grosz received his training at the Dresden Academy of Art and at the State School of Arts and Crafts, Berlin. He showed special talent for drawing and while still in school earned a living by drawing

185

book. jackets and illustrations for humorous weeklies. A large Futurist exhibition held in Berlin in 1913 proved to be of great interest to the young artist. A visit to Paris the same year familiarized him with the work of Picasso and Chagall.

From 1914 to 1918, Grosz served as a soldier in the trenches, but nevertheless managed to produce so many drawings that upon his return to Berlin he found himself famous. During the next ten years he became the most renowned caricaturist in Europe, publishing one volume of drawings after another. These caricatures combine angry satire with ferocious ridicule.

The discouragement and desperate poverty in Germany following the close of the first World War moved Grosz to protest against both military leaders and war profiteers. He lashed at their arrogance, callousness and stupidity with an even fiercer hatred than that of Dean Swift, whose implacable satire is at times close in spirit to that of Grosz. Like Swift, too, he was fascinated by the most sordid and bestial qualities of mankind. "We were young men in our formative years," says Grosz. "Perhaps unconsciously we became accusers and fighters for a better humanity." So inciting were his vitriolic attacks that Grosz was actually jailed for a brief period in 1923 on fabricated charges of indecency and sacrilege.

Early in the rise of the Nazi movement Grosz turned his insulting attacks against this new outrage. By 1932 he realized that he would have to leave Germany. On invitation of the Art Students League in New York, he came to the United States to teach and has returned only once to Germany to bring his family here. He is an American citizen.

In Germany even twenty-five years ago Grosz had begun to take an interest in the United States in its more romantic aspects: its cowboys, Indians, skyscrapers and even the cut of its ready-made clothes. He wanted to look like an American. Since coming to America he has tried to forget Germany--the Germany of the 20's and of the 30's. In recent years his work has been largely in oils and water-colors rather than in caricature, and his assaults upon human baseness have become less and less apparent. His satirical skill, however, may be seen in the recent drawings which illustrate Ben Hecht's "1001 New York Nights."

In 1937-38 George Grosz received a Guggenheim Fellowship for painting. In 1940 he received the Watson F. Blair Purchase Prize of \$600 for his watercolor Cape Cod. Also in 1940 The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts awarded Grosz the Carol H. Beck Medal for his oil Self Portrait--a prize awarded annually by the Painters' Jury for the best portrait in oil. He is at present teaching at the Art Students League in New York.