



Ben Uri PRESS RELEASE: For immediate release: 09 December 2020

Important Marie-Louise von Motesiczky painting acquired by Ben Uri Gallery and Museum



Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, *Circus Scene*, 1964
Oil on canvas 53.6 x 90.3 cm (21 x 35 1/2 in).
© Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Trust. All rights reserved
Purchased at Chiswick Auctions, 4 December 2020

Ben Uri has acquired at a rare sale an important late career painting by Viennese-Jewish émigrée artist Marie-Louise von Motesiczky (1906 Vienna, Austria – 1996 London, England). *Circus Scene* (1964) is one of only a handful of works offered for sale from the collection of the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Trust, the first time a group of her paintings has been presented at auction. Her work has been previously exhibited at Ben Uri in *Forced Journeys: Artists in Exile in Britain, c. 1933-45* (2009–10) and *Out of Austria* (2018), but this is the first example of her work to enter the Ben Uri Collection. It will be shown in the next exhibition of New Acquisitions and Long-term Loans at Ben Uri Gallery in 2021, alongside other recent important acquisitions by Georg Ehrlich and Peter Howson, among others.

About the painting: This dramatically lit, complex and arresting composition was inspired by a circus performance attended by the artist and is loosely based on three photographs taken at the time (now in the Motesiczky Archive at Tate). During her years in England, the influence of Motesiczky's early mentor Max Beckmann gave way to that of Oskar Kokoschka, apparent in the looser, freer brushwork and softer, less angular figures. The curve of the ring is echoed in the sweeping overhead gesture of the woman's feather boa while the horses are posed in various performing attitudes. Compressed into and framed by the rectangular format, the scene is also reminiscent of one of the artist's carefully composed still-lives. The painting can be seen on benuri.org the first full scale virtual museum and research institution.

About the artist: Marie-Louise von Motesiczky was born into a wealthy, Jewish family in Vienna, Austria in 1906. She left school at the age of 13 and attended art classes in Vienna, The Hague, Frankfurt, Paris, and Berlin before being invited in 1927/8, to join Max Beckmann's masterclass in Frankfurt. Following the Anschluss, she resettled in England with her mother, participating in group exhibitions and holding solo London shows including one at the Czechoslovak Institute in 1944, the Beaux Arts Gallery in 1960, and the Goethe Institute in 1985 – the latter bringing great late critical acclaim and cementing her reputation as an important twentieth-century figurative painter. Her life and work are recognised within the Ben Uri Research Unit's study and digital recording of the Jewish and immigrant contribution to British visual culture since 1900.

Editors notes:

About the collection: The Ben Uri pre-eminent and core collections together comprise 845 works, predominantly from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, by some 373 artists, three-quarters of whom are immigrants.

Find out more at benuri.org The first full-scale virtual museum and research institution.

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Currently closed due to covid; re-opening 2021