



## MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Ceramic Works Tell Tale of Political Strong-arming**

*Grete Marks: When Modern Was Degenerate* tracks a career thwarted by circumstance

**Milwaukee, Wis.** – *Grete Marks: When Modern Was Degenerate* highlights the artistic output and life story of little-known, Bauhaus-trained ceramist Margarete Heymann-Löbenstein-Marks (German, 1899–1990) through approximately thirty artworks. The exhibition, on view September 6, 2012–January 1, 2013, was developed by the Milwaukee Art Museum with the cooperation of her daughter, Dr. Frances Marks.

This is the first American exhibition to explore Grete Marks's story, an emotionally tragic tale of a forward-looking artist who was crushed by the brutal circumstances of her political time.

After attending the Bauhaus school's ceramics program, Grete Marks founded the *Haël Werkstätten für Kunstlerische Keramik* (Haël Factory for Artistic Ceramics) in 1923 outside of Berlin, Germany. Under Marks' direction, the Haël Factory both honored the German stoneware tradition of its region and exemplified the Bauhaus ideal of uniting Modern aesthetics with efficient mass production. With over one hundred employees, the factory produced boldly geometric tableware, some of which were painted with expressionistic brushwork, to consumers across Germany, the United States, and England. The exhibition also includes video footage of ceramic production at the factory.

"The Modern ceramics created within Marks' *Haël Werkstätten*, with their machine precision, expressive brushwork, and attention to vernacular German traditions, show the Bauhaus teaching's thorough influence on the artist," said Mel Buchanan, Mae E. Demmer Assistant Curator of 20th-Century Design.

In 1933 when Adolph Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany, Marks found herself in an environment where she was guilty of being artistically vanguard, politically left-leaning, and Jewish. In 1934, a member of the Nazi party purchased the Haël Factory, and in 1935, Joseph Goebbels' propagandist Nazi newspaper *Der Angriff* slandered her ceramics as part of the "degenerate" art campaign.

Marks, a widow, and her son fled to England. She worked in the Stoke-on-Trent potteries, traditional manufactories where she held a variety of design positions. Unfortunately, Marks never regained the artistic or leadership stature of her period at the Haël Factory.

"Marks' later ceramics made in England, arguably lacking the artistic vision of her earlier work, suggest that the magic and the promise of the bold young German artist was destroyed, like so much else, in World War II," said Buchanan.

The works in the exhibition are on loan from museum and private collections in the United States and England.

*Grete Marks: When Modern Was Degenerate* is supported by the Chipstone Foundation, the Mae E. Demmer Charitable Trust and the Milwaukee Art Museum's Collectors' Corner.

## **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR *GRETE MARKS: WHEN MODERN WAS DEGENERATE***

### **Opening Event**

Thurs, Sept. 6, 6:15 p.m. | Lubar Auditorium

Join Grete Marks' daughter, Dr. Frances Marks, and curator Mel Buchanan as they discuss *Grete Marks: When Modern Was Degenerate*. Reception to follow.

### **Film Series**

Thursdays, 6:15 p.m. | Lubar Auditorium

*Each film presented with a short introduction and discussion in collaboration with the Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

#### **Oct 4 | *Eyewitness* (1999)**

Academy Award–nominated short film documenting the hidden art and lives of artists in the concentration camps during the Holocaust.

#### **Nov 1 | *The Rape of Europa* (2006)**

Documentary about Nazi Germany's plundering of Europe's great works of art during World War II, and Allied efforts to minimize the damage.

#### **Dec 6 | *The Train* (1964)**

Movie set in 1944, when a German colonel loads a train with French art treasures to send to Germany, and the Resistance must stop it without damaging the cargo.

### **MAM After Dark: Girls Night Out**

Fri, Nov. 16, 5 p.m.–midnight

Details and advance admission at [www.mam.org/afterdark](http://www.mam.org/afterdark).

### **Target Free First Thursdays**

September 6, October 4, November 1, December 6

### **HOURS AND ADMISSION**

The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Thursdays until 8 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults; \$12 for students, seniors, and active military; and free for Members and for children age 12 and under.

The first Thursday of each month is Target Free First Thursday and admission is free for individuals (does not apply to groups).

### **ABOUT MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM**

The Milwaukee Art Museum's far-reaching holdings include more than 30,000 works spanning antiquity to the present day. With a history dating back to 1888, the Museum houses a collection with strengths in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century American and European art, contemporary art, American decorative arts, and folk and self-taught art. The Museum includes the Santiago Calatrava–designed Quadracci Pavilion, named by *Time* magazine as “Best Design of 2001.” For more information, please visit [www.mam.org](http://www.mam.org).

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