

Toyen: An absolute divergence

25 March – 24 July 2022



Successively presented in Prague, Hamburg and Paris, this retrospective of the oeuvre of Toyen (1902–1980) is an opportunity to discover the remarkable career of a major woman artist, a Surrealist who used painting to call the image into question. In all 150 works – paintings, drawings, collages and books from museums and private collections – form an exhibition whose five parts illustrate and interconnect the high points of a quest totally out of step with standard approaches.

Born in Prague, Toyen devoted herself to a career systematically at the convergence of her century's most radical movements. At the heart of the Czech avant-garde, she and Jindrich Styrsky (1899–1942) founded "Artificialism", claiming total identification "between painter and poet". Coming in the late 1920s, this movement was a striking prefiguration of the "lyrical abstraction" of the 1950s. However, Toyen's concern with the erotic, together with her determination to explore new areas of awareness, brought her closer to Surrealism. In 1934 she was one of the founders of the Czech Surrealist movement, and it was then that she became friends with Paul Éluard and André Breton.

During the Second World War, she hid the young Jewish poet Jindrich Heisler (1914–1953), while producing impressive series of drawings capturing the horror of the times. In 1948, refusing the totalitarianism that was taking hold in Czechoslovakia, she moved to Paris to join Breton and the Surrealist group. Although she took part in all of its events, she occupied a place apart, pursuing her exploration of the erotic through the link between desire and representation.

Highly individual in every respect, Toyen constantly denied being a painter, despite being one of the rare artists to reveal the depth and the subtleties of thinking in images, a method whose full visionary reach still remains untapped.

The exhibition is organised by the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, The National Gallery in Prague, and the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

PRESS RELEASE

Director of the Musée d'Art Moderne

Fabrice Hergott

Curators

Annie Le Brun, writer, in association with Dr. Annabelle Görgen-Lammers, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg and Dr. Anna Pravdová, National Gallery of Prague

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Toyen, Le Paravent/The Screen, 1966
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Visitor information

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
11 Avenue du Président Wilson
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Open Tuesday–Sunday
10am–6pm

Late closing: Thursday

Admission

Full rate : 13 €
Concessions : 11 €

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