

LYONEL FEININGER / ANDREAS FEININGER

The Modern Sea, The Modern City

Prints, Drawings and Photographs from the Collection

Lyonel Feininger was a major early 20th-century German Expressionist painter, draftsman and printmaker who in the 1920s taught at the progressive Bauhaus school of art, design and architecture in Weimar, and then Dessau, Germany. His son Andreas Feininger concurrently studied at the Bauhaus, focusing on architecture and later becoming a renowned photographer of mid-20th century New York City.

German by ancestry, American by nationality, and fully trans-Atlantic in life experience, both artists perhaps not surprisingly created work featuring the globe-spanning subjects of oceans, ships, cities and skies. This exhibition compares and contrasts the visions of these two artists who depicted similar elements of their different worlds in entirely different media, but with the same effect of uniquely contributing to the advance of 20th-century Modernism and its forms and ideas.

LYONEL FEININGER (1871-1956)

Born in New York City to German immigrant parents, Lyonel Feininger studied art in Europe from 1887 to 1892 before returning to the USA to forge a successful career as a graphic artist and cartoonist. At the age of 36 he moved to Germany to become a fine artist. Absorbing the avant-garde movements of his day, Lyonel Feininger fused Cubism's overlapping planes and angles with Expressionism's forceful lines and forms to create works suffused with pulsing energy, evanescent atmosphere and graphic power. Of particular note in this gallery is the 1920 woodcut, *Gelmeroda*, a commanding print related to a series of paintings of a medieval German church that is among his best-known.

Lyonel Feininger is considered a leading German Expressionist painter who was aligned with the main avant-garde German artists of his day; he also specialized in woodblock printing, a technique he taught at the Bauhaus after World War I. Enjoying increasing success throughout Europe in the subsequent years, in 1937 he and his wife Julia (Berg) left Germany for the USA to escape Nazi oppression: Julia was Jewish and in 1935 the Nazis had maligned Feininger's art as "degenerate." Once they were settled in New York, Lyonel's work gained recognition by being acquired The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the subject of an extensive dual exhibition with Marsden Hartley at The Museum of Modern Art.

ANDREAS FEININGER (1906-1999)

In 1906 Andreas Feininger was born in Paris to Lyonel and Julia (Berg) Feininger. After World War I, Andreas studied at the Bauhaus in Weimar where Lyonel taught, becoming conversant with many of the era's European architects, painters and photographers and working in various cities. He escaped Nazi Germany in 1939 and moved to New York, where he began a life-long body of work that captured New York's booming energy alongside its pathos and often anonymous-making unease.

Working for both the Black Star Agency and the US Office of War Information, after World War II Andreas Feininger rose to the pinnacle of the international photography world. This entailed over 15 years as a photographer for *Life* magazine and publishing countless books and articles that in many ways defined the art and craft of the photographic medium of the post-war decades.

As an artist, Andreas Feininger revolutionized mid-20th century gelatin silver photography with technical innovations that allowed him to picture New York City in never-seen-before ways. Unique vantage points and compressed fields of vision produced nearly abstract compositions of ships, crowds and clouds, while a more straightforward approach yielded classic views of the people and places that comprised New York's citizens of diverse ethnicities and international backgrounds.

In 1998, just months before his death, Andreas Feininger gave the Santa Barbara Museum of Art a group of 20 of his photographs, many of which are on view at the Museum in this exhibition for the first time.