

Worpswede

Fritz Mackensen's first visit in 1884 marked the beginning of the Worpswede artists' colony. Fascinated by the expanse of the sky and the landscape of the Teufelsmoor, young painters started to settle in the village outside of Bremen from the year 1889 onwards, where they found a new subject matter for their art in the depiction of nature and peasant life.

Mackensen, Hans am Ende, Otto Modersohn, Fritz Overbeck and Heinrich Vogeler laid the foundations for the nationwide reputation of the artists' village. In 1895 the Worpswede artists were featured in a joint exhibition at Munich's Glaspalast and made a name for themselves in the German art scene. Their reputation attracted other artists, as well as the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, to Worpswede. Here is where Rilke met the sculptress Clara Westhoff, whom he later married. Other liaisons were made: between Heinrich and Martha Vogeler as well as between Otto Modersohn and Paula Modersohn-Becker. A family of artists was briefly established but it quickly broke up due to differences in the political as well as artistic viewpoints of its members. The First World War and its aftermath marked a final turning point. Hans am Ende fell in combat, Heinrich Vogeler radically broke with his art and embraced communism. Otto Modersohn had already left Worpswede earlier upon the death of his wife Paula.

Nevertheless, Worpswede remained in focus. Bernhard Hoetger built the "Niedersachsenstein", the Kaffee Worpswede and the Große Kunstschau.

At the same time, the local tradition was taken up by a second generation of artists, such as Georg Tappert, Albert Schiestl-Arding, Udo Peters, Alfred Kollmar, Willy Dammasch, Tetjus Tügel, Bram van Velde, Walter Müller, Sophie Bötjer-Mallet and Lisel Opper.

National Socialism was supported by some in Worpswede's artist community, others reacted passively.

Public perception of the artists' colony after the Second World War was shaped by the "Junge Worpsweder Gruppe" but most of all by the work of the surrealist Richard Oelze. As a result, many artists continued to reside in the colony as place of inspiration. But the same time, a lively artisan scene and a bustling tourism trade began to emerge.

The acquisition of the dilapidated Barkenhoff and its opening as the Heinrich-Vogeler-Museum in 1981 marked the successful preservation of an important cultural monument of the founding generation; in 2007 it underwent another thorough renovation. But due to ever-tighter public funding, a backlog developed in the town's renovation efforts, in particular for its museum buildings. This culminated in the building authorities' closure of the Große Kunstschau, which was in danger of collapsing. A concerted community effort succeeded in acquiring public funds for restoring the building designed by Hoetger. In 2008, funds were provided by the European Union for the "Worpswede Master Plan". These funds were allocated for the complete renovation and modernisation of the four major museums of Barkenhoff, Große Kunstschau, Haus im Schluh and the Worpsweder Kunsthalle, as well as for the new design of the visitors' centre in the Philine-Vogeler-Haus. Welcome to the new Worpswede!



Artists of the Artists' Colony

Carl Vinnen	(1863 - 1922)
Hans am Ende	(1864 - 1918)
Otto Modersohn	(1865 - 1943)
Fritz Mackensen	(1866 - 1953)
Fritz Overbeck	(1869 - 1909)
Heinrich Vogeler	(1872 - 1942)
Paula Modersohn-Becker	(1876 - 1907)
Clara Rilke-Westhoff	(1887 - 1954)
Lisel Oppel	(1897 - 1960)

Tourist Information

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