

Anja Tiedemann

**“... they exist; that’s  
all I know.” The Works  
of Georg Kolbe and Vesting  
Order 3711**

When the United States entered the Second World War on December 18, 1941, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the so-called First Powers Act was passed at the same time. This gave the United States Alien Property Custodian the authority to confiscate the property of foreign nationals if the United States was at war with their home country and the person had property in the United States but did not live there.<sup>1</sup> This did not apply to the German emigre Curt Valentin when a large number of works of art were confiscated from his New York gallery in 1944.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it was his former employer and later business partner, the Berlin book and art dealer Karl Buchholz, who was affected.<sup>3</sup> He had been in possession of numerous works on consignment to the gallery since its founding. They had remained his property when, due to the outbreak of war, he transferred his share in the gallery to Curt Valentin in September 1939.<sup>4</sup> Among them were thirty-four works by Georg Kolbe.<sup>5</sup> This study describes their history from the artist's studio to the auction in New York on December 8, 1944, with special reference to Vesting Order 3711 of the Alien Property Custodian in New York.

## **“One day, you will be more satisfied with me.” The Development of the American Art Market for Works by Georg Kolbe**

Curt Valentin and Georg Kolbe knew each other from the Galerie Flechtheim in Berlin, where the aspiring art dealer had worked until his employer Alfred Flechtheim fled Germany in 1933 as a Jew facing persecution. The sculptor was a fatherly friend to the young man (fig. 1).<sup>6</sup> In the fall of 1934, Valentin, who was already unemployed, was offered the opportunity to manage Karl Buchholz's new art gallery and he continued his earlier collaboration with Kolbe. There is evidence that Kolbe's works were exhibited and sold at the Buchholz Gallery in 1934 and 1935, and again from 1939 to 1941.<sup>7</sup> It is very likely that his works were also traded in the intervening years.

At the beginning of the year 1937, Curt Valentin, who was classified as a “full Jew” under National Socialist racial laws, had to leave Germany. He planned to open a gallery in New York with Karl Buchholz as his business partner. Sculpture was to be an important focus, and Georg Kolbe was one of the desired artists.<sup>8</sup> The sculptor was inclined toward this, for the opening up of the American market awakened in him, as in many of his fellow artists, the hope of acceptance and profitable sales. It was agreed that seven bronzes and thirty drawings by Kolbe would cross the Atlantic with the label “by my own hand.”<sup>9</sup> However, one of the sculptures belonged privately to Valentin, who, as a Jew, was not allowed to own any works of art.<sup>10</sup> It was simply included in the group of works destined for the United States. Buchholz had also purchased one sculpture at his own expense for sales purposes for the new gallery; the rest was the property of the sculptor and went to New York on consignment. There, Curt Valentin assigned each work an inventory number.<sup>11</sup> Apparently, however, he did not use the same information as in the commission agreements with Georg Kolbe but simplified the titles of the works.<sup>12</sup>



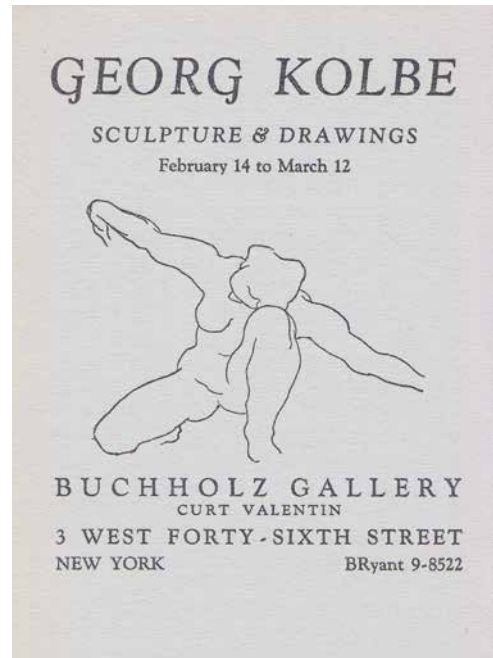
**1** (left to right) Leonore von Keudell, Curt Valentin, Georg Kolbe, Maria von Keudell, undated, historical photograph

At this time, German modernist artists were virtually unknown in the United States.<sup>13</sup> There was thus no promising market for works by Georg Kolbe. As a result, Curt Valentin struggled to sell the sculptor's work. In 1938, he even organized a solo exhibition, for which he received loans from a few American collectors in addition to the aforementioned consignment stock (fig. 2). The lack of success ultimately led Valentin to write to Georg Kolbe on June 15, 1938: "Please do not lose patience in this matter, although I must admit that you have reason enough to do so. One day, you will be more satisfied with me. Y o u may not need it, but I do."<sup>14</sup> Despite all Valentin's efforts, a breakthrough in the American market continued to prove elusive. In 1939, he managed to sell three of Kolbe's drawings, but this was hardly enough to keep the artist afloat until the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939.<sup>15</sup>

## **"...so that, one day, my works will be in enemy territory." The Second World War and Its Impact on the American Art Market**

When hostilities began, the New York business partners Karl Buchholz (fig. 3) and Curt Valentin parted ways. Henceforth, the Buchholz Gallery belonged to Valentin alone. Karl Buchholz's property there remained in the gallery as consignment stock. At the same time, the naval war in the Atlantic began, which was to have a considerable influence on the development of the art trade between Germany and the United States. From October 1939 onward, it became increasingly difficult for German ships to pass through enemy waters. The conquest of Dutch, Belgian, and French ports by German troops provided temporary opportunities to move cargo through Antwerp, for example. However, transporting and insuring works of art became increasingly risky and expensive. By June 1940, the naval war had escalated to the point where shipping was almost unthinkable. From time to time,

**2** Exhibition catalog *Georg Kolbe*.  
*Sculpture & Drawings*, Buchholz Gallery,  
 New York, February 14–March 12, 1938



there were opportunities to send individual consignments by private courier. However, such opportunities were mostly serendipitous and required spontaneous action.<sup>16</sup>

While it had become almost impossible to ship works of art across the Atlantic to the United States, conversely there was no realistic possibility of sending works back to Germany. Of Kolbe's property, five bronzes and twenty-eight drawings were still on commission in New York, so that, in January 1941, the sculptor pondered the situation:

"I would like to draw your attention to a matter that often troubles me: the fate of my bronzes and drawings in your Newjorker [sic] branch. The war is still going on and is apparently going to spread over a wide area—so that, one day, my works will be in enemy territory. At the time, I gave them at the request of the good man Valentin—he could not sell them and never will. It is useless to hope for the distant future, and so I ask you to consider very carefully how these things can return home by any means. Unfortunately, in the meantime, all the routes have been blocked to such an extent that only a journey via Japan remains? You understand that I can no longer be pacified by 'probabilities,' etc."<sup>17</sup>

Georg Kolbe's thoughts revolved around rumors that the United States might enter the Second World War. His idea of bringing the works still in New York home via Japan was not far-fetched. For lack of better routes, Karl Buchholz had at least once managed to find a way through Russia and Japan and successfully transported works from the "Entartete Kunst" confiscation campaign to the United States via this route.<sup>18</sup> This must have come to the attention of the sculptor, who received a response to his thoughts only



**3** The book and art dealer Karl Buchholz, ca. 1938, historical photograph

two days later. The Buchholz Gallery was run by Georg von Hülssen,<sup>19</sup> who wrote on behalf of Karl Buchholz, who was traveling at the time:

“Unfortunately, for the time being, there is no way to send larger art objects even via Siberia and Japan. One could perhaps try to send the drawings over as printed matter, as I sent several prints to New York a few months ago. It is a great risk, of course, and I believe that Valentin would find it particularly painful—especially now that he has to work like this without any support from Europe—should you prefer the uncertainty involved in sending them back to leaving them there.”<sup>20</sup>

But Kolbe was not easily mollified:

“You must have misunderstood my letter about the New York bronzes and drawings. It was addressed to your boss. He should think about the matter. I really would like to have my works returned—or see them sold. After all, these are not a lot of socks to be kept in storage for the sake of the war. Here, in any case, there have been several requests for my works that are still there. Sending them back as printed matter is, of course, nonsense. Please present my letter to Mr. B u c h h o l z for his comments on his return.”<sup>21</sup>

Karl Buchholz had branches in Lisbon and Bucharest, which he visited frequently despite the war. And so it happened that he did not reply until five weeks later:

“I do not believe that the property there is in direct danger, since the company is an American one and therefore, even in the case of absolute war involvement, will in all probability not be harassed. Of course, I would ask Valentin to send the drawings back, but it is indeed better that they are there and continue to have an effect through their existence. I would rather pay for them, i.e., take them over permanently. Especially now, I think it is very important to have your works available in America on a case-by-case basis. Do not worry!”<sup>22</sup>

Just a few weeks later, on June 22, 1941, Germany declared war on the Soviet Union, which would have made it impossible to transport art through Siberia and Japan anyway. In December 1941, the Americans also entered the Second World War. At this point at

the latest, the contact between Curt Valentin and Karl Buchholz broke off. Kolbe's premonitions had already been partially fulfilled.

With the entry of the United States into the war, Karl Buchholz as well as German artists and collectors living in Germany became enemies of the United States. Their property in America was in great danger, contrary to Karl Buchholz's assessment, but he could not know this in the spring of 1941. Instead, he proposed a meeting with the sculptor, the results of which he wrote down on April 21, 1941:

"I therefore hereby accept the five bronzes you kindly gave me on commission for New York, as well as the [...] drawings, and promise to pay you by the end of the year."<sup>23</sup> (See Appendix)

Kolbe responded in agreement, emphasizing once again his previously expressed disappointment with Curt Valentin:

"You know that I am not interested in money [...]. The letter you will send to Valentin is indeed very important, and I would be grateful if you would keep me informed.—The will is always greater than the deed—but it must not fall by the wayside as easily as with Curt Valentin."<sup>24</sup>

The emigrated gallerist had fallen out of Kolbe's favor, if his letters to Karl Buchholz are to be believed. They document the sculptor's criticism that Valentin was not doing enough for him, that he had lost his way, that he was not concentrating on the essentials, and that he was, in general, exhibiting the wrong artists.<sup>25</sup> Admittedly, his comments to Karl Buchholz reflected his own expectations and desires. What it might have meant for a German art dealer to try to sell avant-garde German art in the face of anti-German sentiment in the United States remained unconsidered. The Americans' rejection of German art found growing expression in both museum activities and press announcements. Gallerists and art dealers encountered almost insurmountable obstacles when trying to sell works of German modernism. Established values, such as works by the French Impressionists, were far more popular than innovation, especially when it came to works by artists who were still virtually unknown in the United States. Curt Valentin and his colleagues were forced to adapt their exhibition program to the circumstances. The turn of the year 1940/41 marked an important turning point: from then on, German art was rarely exhibited. When works by German artists were sold, they were by Germans in exile, by artists who had already died, or by clear opponents of the NS regime.<sup>26</sup> The exhibition schedule of the Buchholz Gallery clearly shows that no exhibitions with German participation were possible after the spring of 1941.<sup>27</sup> Occasional exceptions included works of "degenerate art," which was considered "art of democracy," or works by artists who had left Germany, such as Max Beckmann and Paul Klee. After the United States entered the war, the situation worsened once again. Museums exhibited only American artists until the end of the war and beyond.<sup>28</sup>

It seems that Georg Kolbe, contrary to what he told Karl Buchholz, was sympathetic to Curt Valentin's situation. In any case, no correspondence has survived in which he directly confronted the New York art dealer with his dissatisfaction. There is only one letter from the war years, written ten weeks after the events just described, which was a response to birthday wishes and does not document any resentment. Had Kolbe simply wanted to corner the Berlin art dealer and get payment for his work? Buchholz, for his part, was very interested in Kolbe's works during the war for his galleries in Berlin, Bucharest, and Lisbon. It is therefore possible that he did not want to upset the master and simply paid him. Financially, this transaction should not have been a problem. The demand for art was immense, and the necessary earning potential was certainly there.

### **“... they exist; that's all I know.” Vesting Order 3711 and the Consequences**

It was not until July 1947 that contact between Kolbe and Valentin was verifiably reestablished. Kolbe thanked him for a most welcome package that Valentin had sent from New York.<sup>29</sup> Some letters seem to have been lost in the meantime. Contact between Kolbe and Buchholz, who had left for Madrid in early 1945 and never returned, is not documented. Whether the two ever had contact with each other again is questionable. The last letter from New York, dated September 15, 1947, reached the artist only two months before his death and reported on the progress of Vesting Order 3711:

“Unfortunately, all your sculptures and drawings were confiscated as enemy property during the war (they belonged to Buchholz). And I have only a vague idea where they went. They were all auctioned, somewhat obscurely; they exist, that's all I know. [...] I was not allowed to attend the auction myself, as I was a German citizen at the time.”<sup>30</sup>

In fact, on May 29, 1944, 387 works of art were confiscated by order of the Alien Property Custodian under Vesting Order 3711 as the property of Karl Buchholz.<sup>31</sup> Of these, 319 went to auction, which took place that same year on December 8.<sup>32</sup> The difference of sixty-eight works was probably due to a license Valentin had received in advance. He was able to sell in the art market on behalf of the United States of America but found few buyers.<sup>33</sup> Advertisements for the auction were always of the same design and appeared in mid-November, for example, in *The New York Times*, *The Art Digest*, and *ART News*.<sup>34</sup>

Seven bronzes and twenty-eight drawings by Georg Kolbe were included in this auction (figs. 4a–g). The sculptures were given individual lot numbers, while the works on paper were combined into two groups of thirteen and fifteen sheets, respectively.<sup>35</sup> In addition to his works, the auction also included works by other important artists, including Ernst Barlach, Max Beckmann, Edgar Degas, Otto Dix, Carl Hofer, Alexej Jawlensky,

Oskar Kokoschka, Käthe Kollwitz, Alfred Kubin, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Franz Marc, Gerhard Marcks, Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Renée Sintenis (fig. 5).

The horse breeder Theodora H. Pleadwell of the Muffet Farm in Poughquag, New York, purchased lot 31, Georg Kolbe's draft design for *Ruhender Athlet* (Resting Athlete), for \$200.<sup>36</sup> Ella Lewenz of Kew Gardens, New York State, purchased lots 33, 34, 35, and 37 for a total of \$1,233: Georg Kolbe's *Stehende* (Standing Woman, 1935; \$320), *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman, 1930; \$333), *Verkündigung* (Proclamation, 1934; \$222), and a group of thirteen drawings (\$358).<sup>37</sup> Originally from Dresden, Lewenz was a talented cinematographer who captured the life of her Jewish family on film after 1933. She emigrated to the United States, where the films were discovered after her death by her granddaughter Lisa Lewenz and edited into the documentary *A Letter Without Words*, which won the RIAS Berlin Radio, TV, and New Media Award in 2000.<sup>38</sup> Samuel C. Dretzin of New York City paid \$825 for lots 32, 36, and 38: Georg Kolbe's *Stehende* (Standing Woman, 1935; \$250), the draft design for *Ruf der Erde* (Call of the Earth, 1932; \$250), and fifteen drawings (\$325). He was a very active and eclectic collector who can be linked to numerous art auctions and often appears in the respective provenances.<sup>39</sup>

All of the artworks seized by Vesting Order 3711 were identified as having once belonged to Karl Buchholz. After the war, however, it turned out that many of the works had not belonged to him at all but were merely confiscated under his name. There is evidence that this included works by Gerhard Marcks, Renée Sintenis, and Käthe Kollwitz, which the artists had sent to New York on commission.<sup>40</sup> In addition, some collectors placed selected works in the custody of Curt Valentin, probably out of fear that the National Socialists might also intervene in private collections of modern art.<sup>41</sup>

Georg Kolbe had cleverly put Karl Buchholz on the spot and was able to get his works sold just in time. Buchholz, on the other hand, lost a lot of money and was unable to come to terms with this for the rest of his life. In the 1960s, it is documented that he insisted on compensation from the Berlin Compensation Office and received an unknown but probably not very high sum, which Buchholz considered an "insult" to a holder of the Federal Cross of Merit.<sup>42</sup> As late as the 1980s, he was still arguing with the Compensation Office, now claiming that the auction had yielded \$900,000.<sup>43</sup> This sum could only have originated in his imagination, however, especially since the total value of the 387 works of art had been estimated by the Alien Property Custodian at \$28,000. In the end, the Compensation Office referred to the correctly researched auction result of \$6,473.15, but in May 1984 awarded him a new compensation of DM 370 plus interest, for a total of DM 1,161.<sup>44</sup> Buchholz's reaction to this payment is not known.





**4 a** Georg Kolbe, *Stehendes Mädchen* (Standing Girl), 1935, bronze, h. 120 cm, historical photograph



**4 b** Georg Kolbe, *Sitzende* (Seated Woman), 1926, bronze, h. 28.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



**4 c** Georg Kolbe, *Verkündigung* (Proclamation), 1934/35, bronze, h. 65 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



**4 d** Georg Kolbe, *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman), 1930, bronze, h. 50 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



**4 e** Georg Kolbe, *Ruhender Athlet (Entwurf)* (Resting Athlete [Model]), 1935, bronze, 27 × 49.5 × 23 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



**4 f** Georg Kolbe, *Bewegungsskizze II* (Motion Sketch II), 1925, bronze, h. 24 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



**4 g** Georg Kolbe, *Kleine Stehende* (Small Standing Woman), 1935, bronze, h. 77.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

Art property formerly owned by  
Karl Buchholz

<u>LOT NO.</u>	<u>INVENTORY NUMBER</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
<u>28 Cont'd.</u>			
	1360	1	Etching entitled "Woman with Arrow" - 6"x4½"
	1362	1	" " "3 Women" - 9½"x7½"
	1363	1	" " "Head of a Girl" - 6"x4½"
	1361	1	Lithograph entitled "Seated Man" - 14½"x9"
<u>29</u> <u>2 Watercolors by Alex Jawlensky as follows:</u>			
	1229	1	Watercolor entitled "Study" - 10"x8"
	1230	1	" " " " - 10"x8"
<u>30</u> <u>2 Lithographs by Oskar Kokoschka as follows:</u>			
	1301	1	Lithograph entitled "Head of a Woman" - 30"x22½"
	1305	1	" " "Portrait of a Girl" - 23"x18"
<u>31</u>	144	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Reclining Athlete" - 11"x20"
<u>32</u>	145	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Standing Woman" - 32" high.
<u>33</u>	146	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Standing Woman" - 48" high.
<u>34</u>	147	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Crouching Girl" - 20"x14"x11"
<u>35</u>	148	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Listening" 10"x10"x7"
<u>36</u>	1966	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Girl Looking Up" - 42" high.
<u>37</u>	<u>Drawings and Etching by George Kolbe as follows:</u>		
	151	1	Drawing entitled "Seated Nude" - 17½"x14½"
	153	1	" " "Nude" - 19"x15"
	155	1	" " "Nude" - 13½"x19"
	156	1	" " "Standing Girl" - 18½"x13"
	157	1	" " "Standing Woman" - 19"x13"
	158	1	" " "Kneeling Girl" - 19"x14"
	160	1	" " "Nude" - 16½"x13½"
	940	1	" " "Nude" - 16½"x14"
	941	1	" " "Nude" - 14"x12½"
	942	1	" " "Kneeling Girl" - 12"x14"
	943	1	" " "Kneeling Girl" - 18½"x12"
	944	1	" " "Seated Man" - 18½"x13"
	619	1	Etching entitled "Kneeling Girl" - 4 3/4"x7"

5 List of works confiscated and auctioned under Vesting Order 3711 (excerpt) including works by Georg Kolbe, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75.

Art property formerly owned by  
Karl Buchholz

LOT NO.	INVENTORY NUMBER	QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION
38	19 Drawings by George Kolbe as follows:		
	945	1	Drawing entitled "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x13"
	946	1	" " " " "Nude" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	947	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18"x12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	948	1	" " " " "Kneeling Woman" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	949	1	" " " " "Standing Male Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	950	1	" " " " "Standing Girl" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	951	1	" " " " "Standing Nude" - 18"x11"
	952	1	" " " " "Standing Girl" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	953	1	" " " " "Standing Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	954	1	" " " " "Standing Man" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	955	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	956	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x12"
	957	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x12"
	958	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	959	1	" " " " "Nude" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x14"
39	1056	1	Bronze sculpture by Kaethe Kollwitz - entitled "Waving Farewell" - 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"x6"
40	Lithographs, Drawings and Etching by Kaethe Kollwitz as follows:		
	831	1	Lithograph entitled "Versinkender" - 19"x15"
	834	1	" " " " "Death" - 17"x13"
	867	1	" " " " "Not (need)" - 7"x7"
	1884	1	" " " " "Beggar" - 17"x12"
	1895	1	" " " " "The Return" - 13"x14"
	987	1	Drawing entitled "Widow" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	806	1	" " " " "Death Leading Woman" - 23"x18"
	989	1	" " " " "In the Corner" - 17"x13"
	809	1	" " " " "Death and Girl" - 13"x18"
	1366	1	Etching entitled "Self-Portrait" - 8"x5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
41	Lithographs and Etchings by Alfred Kubin as follows:		
	1371	1	Lithograph entitled "Women of Weinsberg" - 11"x10"
	1373	1	" " " " "The Robber Knight" - 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1476	1	" " " " "Haunted House" - 12"x6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1477	1	" " " " "Horse" - 10"x10"
	1478	1	" " " " "Horse" - 10"x10"
	1479	1	" " " " "Woman Sleeping" - 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1480	1	" " " " "Pierrot" - 8"x12"
	1481	1	" " " " "Hunter and Woman" - 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1372	1	Etching entitled "Winter in the Wood" - 9"x12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1475	1	" " " " "Gulliver" - 13"x12"
42	Drawings and Watercolors by Alfred Kubin as follows:		
	1414	1	Watercolor - entitled "David and Goliath" - 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	1	1	" " " " "Faust und Lilith" - 13"x16"
	1443	1	Drawing entitled "Fisherman's Luck" - 15"x12"
	1444	1	" " " " "Country Orgie" - 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x13"
	1445	1	" " " " "Gottlieb" - 10"x12"
	1448	1	" " " " "Wild Bull" - 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1447	1	" " " " "Child Murder" - 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x10"
	1448	1	" " " " "A New Robinson" - 13"x12"
	1449	1	" " " " "Shepherd" - 14"x10"
	1450	1	" " " " "Burglar" - 12"x11"

## **Appendix: Bronzes and Drawings by Georg Kolbe on Consignment to Galerie Buchholz, Berlin, and Buchholz Gallery, New York**

The German titles of the bronzes and drawings given on consignment come from the correspondence between Galerie Buchholz, Berlin (GBB), and Georg Kolbe.<sup>45</sup> The titles of the drawings cannot be assigned due to missing information. The Buchholz Gallery in New York (BGNY) under the direction of Curt Valentin used different designations than Galerie Buchholz in Berlin, which were then probably adopted by the Alien Property Custodian. Reference is made to fig. 5, where the works brought to auction are listed.

The numbering of the drawings was done by the artist himself. No records of this have survived. The sheets were listed in the order in which they were mentioned in the consignment agreements.

These were also documented by the artist himself. No further records of this exist.

Insofar as they were confiscated, the information in the last paragraph of each entry is taken from the documentation of Vesting Order 3711. An assignment of the drawings to lot numbers 37 and 38 as well as their buyers was not possible due to missing information.

### **Bronzes**

#### **Kleine Sitzende (Small Seated Woman)**

1926; bronze

December 2, 1936: purchased by Karl Buchholz on behalf of Curt Valentin (RM 900); officially owned by Karl Buchholz; due to racial laws, unofficially owned by Curt Valentin / January 1937: transfer to New York

No confiscation because private property of Curt Valentin

#### **Entwurf zum Ruhenden Athleten / Reclining Athlete**

1935; bronze / 11 × 20 in.

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNY on consignment (2,000 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (2,000 RM), remains in New York

Lot 31: sold for \$200 to Theodora H. Pleadwell

#### **Kleine Stehende / Standing Woman**

1935; bronze; 80 cm. / 32 in. high

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNY on consignment (1,600 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (1,600 RM), remains in New York

Lot 32: sold for \$250 to Samuel C. Dretzin

### **Stehendes Mädchen / Standing Woman**

1935; bronze; 130 cm. / 48 in. high

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (3,500 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (3,500 RM), remains in New York

Lot 33: sold for \$320 to Ella Lewenz

### **Kauernde / Crouching Girl**

1930; bronze; 49 cm. / 20 × 14 × 11 in.

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (2,000 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (2,000 RM), remains in New York

Lot 34: sold for \$333 to Ella Lewenz

### **Verkündung / Listening**

1934; bronze / 10 × 10 × 7 in.

June 25, 1935: sent to GBB on consignment (800 RM) / latest December 1936: purchased by GBB / January 1937: transferred to New York

Lot 35: sold for \$ 222 to Ella Lewenz

### **Entwurf zum Ruf der Erde / Girl Looking Up**

1932; bronze; 18 cm. / 42 in. high

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (1,600 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (600 RM), remains in New York

Lot 35: sold for \$250 to Samuel C. Dretzin

## **Drawings**

### **[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 59

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 199

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

**[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 212

June 25, 1935: sent to GBB on consignment (150 RM) / October 19, 1936: returned to Georg Kolbe / December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM)  
Lot 37 or 38

**[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 277

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York  
Lot 37 or 38

**“Weibl.”**

Chalk drawing; no. 278

October 11, 1934: sent to GBB on consignment (200 RM) / December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / January 23, 1943: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York  
Lot 37 or 38

**[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 282

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York  
Lot 37 or 38

**[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 284

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York  
Lot 37 or 38

**[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 291

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / December 27, 1939: purchased by BGNV (160 RM)

**[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 303

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / latest January 1939: sold through BGNV (160 RM)



**[title unknown]**

Drawing; no. 320

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941:

purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

**Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)**

Chalk drawing; no. 323

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by

GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

**Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 406

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / December 4, 1939: sold

through BGNV (160 RM)

**Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 410

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by

GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

**Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 415

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by

GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

**Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 430

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by

GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

**Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 440

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by

GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38



### **Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 442

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 445

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 451

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 459

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 496

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 502

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 503

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)**

Chalk drawing; no. 591

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)**

Chalk drawing; no. 593

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)**

Chalk drawing; no. 597

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **34 Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 383

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by BGG (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

### **35 Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)**

Chalk drawing; no. 386

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by BGG (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

## Notes

I am grateful to my colleagues at the Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, for their valuable assistance. I would like to thank the Franz Dieter und Michaela Kaldewei Kulturstiftung for providing the financial means without which the digitization of the documents on Vesting Order 3711 would not have been possible.

- 1 See: *Plunder and Restitution. The U.S. and Holocaust Victims' Asset. Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Holocaust Assets in the United States and Staff Report*, ed. Presidential Advisory Commission on the Holocaust Assets in the United States, Washington, D. C., 2000. See especially the chapter "'Vesting' Assets and the Office of Alien Property Custodian," pp. SR58–SR83; available online at: [https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/pcha/PlunderRestitution.html/html/Home\\_Contents.html](https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/pcha/PlunderRestitution.html/html/Home_Contents.html) [last accessed May 11, 2023].
- 2 For more on the life and work of Curt Valentin, see: Anja Tiedemann: *Die "entartete" Moderne und ihr amerikanischer Markt. Karl Buchholz und Curt Valentin als Händler verfemter Kunst* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 8 (Berlin 2013), pp. 179–205.
- 3 For more on the life and work of Karl Buchholz, see: *ibid.*, pp. 11–34.
- 4 See: *ibid.*, pp. 16–20.
- 5 The complete Alien Property Custodian documents for Vesting Orders (V.O.) 3711, 4285, and 7114 were available as PDFs for this study. All three pertain to Karl Buchholz's property located in the Buchholz Gallery on the day of seizure. V.O. 4285 and 7114 were made after the fact and should be viewed as supplements to V.O. 3711. All three transactions were combined under Reference File F-28-42-E-1. The papers are preserved in the National Archives II, College Park, Maryland. They can be found under the following shelf numbers: RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75. Works by Georg Kolbe are documented only in V.O. 3711. A list of the seven sculptures and twenty-eight drawings was repeatedly given with the respective inventory number, artist's name, work title, and invoice date, whereby the latter probably refers to the date of receipt at the Buchholz Gallery.
- 6 See the correspondence between Curt Valentin and Georg Kolbe, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. Here, one finds a wealth of private details, far beyond the usual business exchanges.
- 7 See: Anja Tiedemann, "Nicht das erforderliche Verantwortungsbewusstsein gegenüber Volk und Staat," in: *idem* (ed.), *Die Kammer schreibt schon wieder! Das Reglement für den Handel mit moderner Kunst im Nationalsozialismus* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 10 (Berlin 2016), pp. 219–235, table "Von der Galerie Buchholz ausgestellte und verkaufte Werke Künstler der Moderne (1934–1943)," see here the entry "Kolbe."
- 8 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 190–194.
- 9 See the correspondence between the Buchholz Gallery and Georg Kolbe regarding commissioned sculptures and drawings, October 24, 1936, December 2, 1936, December 17, 1936, December 30, 1936, December 1936 [without precise date], MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 10 As a Jew, Curt Valentin was not allowed to own any art objects, which is why he smuggled his private bronze into Georg Kolbe's commission goods. The purchase was officially made by Galerie Buchholz, as Valentin would not have been allowed to act as a buyer, either. See the letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, September 15, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin, which states that Valentin bought this work privately for himself. See also the check from the book and art dealer Karl Buchholz, December 2, 1936, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin, which indicates that Buchholz, not Valentin, made the payment.
- 11 See: Exhibit A, Art property formerly owned by Karl Buchholz, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75, pp. 75–76, made available as a PDF for this study (see note 5).
- 12 The simplified work titles were probably adopted later in the course of Vesting Order 3711. The available sources for the works are not sufficient for a reliable identification of the drawings, but they are sufficient for the sculptures. The lost inventory books of Curt Valentin are still an unfortunate gap in the documentation.
- 13 See: Gregor Langfeld, *Deutsche Kunst in New York. Vermittler – Kunstsammler – Ausstellungsmacher, 1904–1957* (Berlin 2011). The dissertation examines the canonization of German modernism in the United States and repeatedly addresses the case of Georg Kolbe.
- 14 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, June 15, 1938, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].

- 15 Letters from the Buch- und Kunsthandlung Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, April 18, 1939, and February 1, 1940, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 16 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 144–152.
- 17 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Karl Buchholz, January 23, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 18 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 144–152.
- 19 For more on the activity of Georg von Hülsen, see: *ibid.*, pp. 57–62.
- 20 Letter from Georg von Hülsen to Georg Kolbe, January 25, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 21 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Georg von Hülsen, January 28, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 22 Letter from Karl Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, March 1, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 23 Letter from Karl Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, April 21, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 24 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Karl Buchholz, April 29, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 25 See: letter from Karl Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, April 21, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 26 Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), p. 231.
- 27 For more on the exhibition activity at the Buchholz Gallery, see: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 261–267.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 219–238.
- 29 See: letter from Georg Kolbe to Curt Valentin, July 14, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 30 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, September 15, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 31 For more information, see note 5.
- 32 See, for example, the announcement in *The New York Times* of November 19, 1944, where the exact number of works to be auctioned is noted. National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75, p. 28 of the PDF (see note 5).
- 33 See: License NY 598479-T, 15.2.1944, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75, p. 42 of the PDF (see note 5); Memorandum, 24.4.1945, *ibid.*, pp. 2–3 (pp. 53–54 of the PDF, see note 5). What Curt Valentin sold to whom or acquired for himself, and whether there were other possible reasons for the absence of the sixty-eight works, are topics for future research.
- 34 See the clippings of announcements in *The Art Digest* (November 15, 1944), *ART News* (November 16, 1944), and *The New York Times* (November 19, 1944), National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75, pp. 27–29 of the PDF (see note 5).
- 35 See: “Art property formerly owned by Karl Buchholz,” undated, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75, pp. 1–2 (pp. 56–57 of the PDF, see note 5).
- 36 See: “Exhibit 1 – On 1/1/45 property, in sale of art objects owned by Karl Buchholz, was awarded to the following,” undated, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75, p. 2 (p. 184 of the PDF, see note 5). No further information on the life of Theodora H. Pleadwell could be found, except that she was apparently a horse breeder. See the Google query: “Theodora H. Pleadwell Muffet Farm” [last accessed May 12, 2023].
- 37 See: “Exhibit 1 – On 1/1/45 property, in sale of art objects owned by Karl Buchholz, was awarded to the following,” undated, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75, p. 2 (p. 184 of the PDF, see note 5).
- 38 See: [http://films.arsenal-berlin.de/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object\\_id/3917](http://films.arsenal-berlin.de/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/3917) and [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa\\_Lewenz](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa_Lewenz) [both sites last accessed May 12, 2023].
- 39 See the Google inquiry “Samuel C. Dretzin” [last accessed May 12, 2023].
- 40 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 18–20.
- 41 Individuals interested in art collected modern art but did not show it to the outside world. As long as the authorities could not infer criticism of the regime, but only personal interest, this behavior was tolerated. Nevertheless, some collectors decided to move their collections, or parts of them, out of the line of fire. See: Anja Tiedemann, “Vom Narrativ des Verbotenen. Das Sammeln moderner Kunst im Nationalsozialismus,” in: Tiedemann 2016 (see note 7), pp. 1–15.
- 42 Handwritten draft of a letter from Karl Buchholz to the Ausgleichsamt Berlin, September 1965, SMB-ZA, Karl Buchholz Estate, Box F.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), p. 19 and note 66.

**45** See: GKM Archive, holdings of the Buch- und Kunsthandlung Karl Buchholz, Berlin, 1936–1941. The English titles and further information on the respective works of art are taken from the documentation of Vesting Order 3711. See: National Archives II,

College Park, Maryland, RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75.



