



ERNST BARLACH HAUS



**NORBERT PRANGENBERG** 1949–2012  
**Formfreude. 70 Werke zum 70. Geburtstag**

**23. Juni – 8. Sept. 2019**

Ernst Barlach Haus – Stiftung Hermann F. Reemtsma  
Hamburg, Jenischpark, Baron-Voght-Straße 50a  
Dienstag–Sonntag, 11–18 Uhr, [www.barlach-haus.de](http://www.barlach-haus.de)



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## A PRELIMINARY REQUEST

The current presentation shows some extremely sensitive works by Ernst Barlach and Norbert Prangenberg. We ask you to move very attentively through the spaces, to keep your distance and not to touch the exhibits. Thank you.

For the sake of maximum clarity we have dispensed with the usual signage. Details of all the exhibited works by Norbert Prangenberg (1–70) and Ernst Barlach (A–V) can be found at the back of this leaflet.

## **NORBERT PRANGENBERG** 1949–2012 **Pleasure in Form. 70 Works for his 70th Birthday**

Some of my things are also playful or have a love of flourish and spontaneity, a certain pleasure in form. But life isn't unserious because you have a lot of fun now and then. On the contrary, this gives it more depth. And it's the same in the work.  
Norbert Prangenberg, 2000

Going beyond the boundaries of painting, drawing and sculpture, Norbert Prangenberg developed a closely interconnected and widely ramified oeuvre until his death in 2012. It unites archaic symbolism and baroque colourfulness, geometric clarity and organic proliferation, sensuous luxuriance and sensitive spirituality.

Norbert Prangenberg, who trained as a goldsmith, became internationally known through his participation in the documenta 7 in 1982. In 1993 he took up a professorship of ceramics and glass-painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. The often life-sized hollow forms that Prangenberg made from then on in glazed clay, calling them *Figures*, are impressive manifestations of idiosyncratic beauty. They are now at the centre of a homage to Prangenberg's search for objects with presence that takes a leitmotif of his creativity for its title: 'pleasure in form'.

The exhibition, realised in close collaboration with the estate of Norbert Prangenberg, opened on 23 June 2019, the 70th anniversary of the artist's birth. With 70 sculptures, paintings and drawings, it provides a comprehensive insight into Prangenberg's work of over three decades.

I want to produce something with a quality. I want to try to produce a mass that is effective, that has power, presence, beauty.  
Norbert Prangenberg, 2000

Norbert Prangenberg was self-taught as an artist. While training as a goldsmith at the school of applied arts in Düsseldorf, he attentively followed the activities of the charismatic academy professor Joseph Beuys and his students Blinky Palermo and Reiner Ruthenbeck. Beuys's unreserved interconnection of art and life, and his sensitive drawings, fascinated Prangenberg, as did Palermo's paintings of basic geometrical forms. Here he found a confirmation of his own work. Decisive impulses also came from Lucio Fontana: it was his ceramics that prompted Prangenberg to work with clay in the first place.

'For me artistic work always has to do with interiority', Norbert Prangenberg often emphasised in interviews. It had to be felt truly and authentically felt, aimed in search of 'beauty, harmony, consonance, even salvation'. Prangenberg was aware that this romantic ideal of wholeness had to remain utopian in a world of upheavals and crisis. But he still insisted that 'a work should basically have a positive aim; it should be a starting point, an opening into another space.' This

'other space' certainly had a spiritual dimension for Prangenberg, as a Rhineland Catholic: his opulent, often heavyweight work develops an auratic lightness that frequently transcends the material. The glazes have a special significance here: 'The lustre of the glaze is important', said Prangenberg in 1993. 'It displaces the weight, or neutralises it. The coloured glaze takes the fired earth into more airy regions.'

I'm concerned with a basic vocabulary. It's important that the things are simple and complex. For me there's a greater variety in simplicity and reduction than in an outwardly diverse, complicated form.  
Norbert Prangenberg, 1984

In keeping with his desire for openness and abundance of meaning, Prangenberg made an early decision to concentrate on simple basic forms: circle, oval, triangle, rectangle, square, diamond, wavy lines. His creative leitmotiv was the circle in varied formal and motivic manifestations: as a mysterious hollow (as in the large perforated drawings on blackened tracing paper [54] or the reclining and standing vessel *Figures* [31, 33–37, 39, 40–42, 45–52]), as ornamental medallions (in the later ceramics [1, 23, 25, 26, 28–30] and the gestural pastel painting of the early 2000s [22]), as suns or celestial bodies (in the large-format drawings [17, 20] and the 'cosmic' pigment canvases from the 1980s and 90s [32, 38]). Or finally, in the late small oil paintings, as star-like, rosette-like and petal-like round forms, sometimes filled with crosses, which alternate with or transform into heads [55–68, 70].

There is no programme, only an inner necessity. There is no message you're compelled to take on: anyone standing in front of my work is basically in the same position as I am. I'm not superior to him. There's much to my work that even I don't know yet.  
Norbert Prangenberg, 1997

Prangenberg's artist practice is characterised by freedom from conceptual precepts and love of the playfully creative process, with its own momentum that can only be partially controlled. His intuitive, direct and emphatically physical use of material is shown in the exuberant, colourfully glazed *Figures* from 1998 [2–13], and in the monumental ceramics made in collaboration with the ceramicist Niels Dietrich in his Cologne workshop. Prangenberg worked simultaneously on the reclining *Figures*, whose template-produced forms he individualised through glazing and perforation, and on their standing counterparts built up of clay rings, with their asymmetrical bulges, squiggly, garland-like gaps and colourfully burgeoning nodules.

Proceeding from simple vessel forms like the amphora, jug, pot and vase – as the easiest way of setting off an interplay of interior and exterior – Prangenberg developed a complex cosmos of forms, structures and colours that unified opposites in his *Figures*: chapped surfaces combine with the lustre of gleaming glazes; unadorned outer skin reveals delicate colouration within; subdued earth tones are twinned with lively variegation; intensely worked areas balance emphatically neglected ones; strictness turns into exuberance; the massive appears weightless. Prangenberg's figures are always both powerful and vulnerable.

Having a clear monumental form, which is then quite sensitive or even endangered in its details – for me that's a quality.  
Norbert Prangenberg, 1997

Prangenberg was critical of the idea of linear artistic progress. If the circle became the motivic nucleus of his work early on, his entire output can be seen

as a kind of *circling*, whose constant rotation and turning (also a recurring motif [18, 19]) brings about connections and blurs generic boundaries. Reflecting this, our exhibition tour forgoes chronology and is structured as a circuit.

In the last decade of his life, Prangenberg's circling around the interplay of body and spirit leads him to a still closer interlocking of images and sculptures: faience-painted discs turn rounded *Figures* into images carriers, and the images in turn become reliefs of thickly applied glaze. The boundaries between abstraction and figuration are blurred too: while Prangenberg usually called even barely anthropomorphic objects *Figures*, after 2000 the non-figurative image worlds of his paintings increasingly contain figurative elements. Around 2008/09 island heads begin to emerge from paint lakes: masks, grimacing faces, spectres and skulls are among them, along with a long-nosed *tengu* (a creature from Japanese mythology [66]), melancholy clowns and good-natured bug-eyed cuddly toys. One of them Prangenberg titled ICH [ME, 58].

## EVENTS

Would you like to know more about Prangenberg's art? We offer free guided tours every Sunday at 11 a.m., and also recommend the following events (in German):

Sunday 21 July 2019, 12 a.m.

### **Prangenberg at First Hand**

Family, friends and associates in conversation

Tuesday 6 August 2019, 6 p.m.

### **Figure, Contour, Glaze**

Guided tour with the curator, Karsten Müller

Tuesday 3 September 2019, 6 p.m.

### **Transcendence in Terracotta**

A conversation between Veronika Schlör (Katholische Akademie Hamburg) and Karsten Müller (Ernst Barlach Haus) about the immaterial in Prangenberg's art

## CATALOGUE

The book documenting the exhibition *Pleasure in Form* (70 pages with numerous colour illustrations, Verlag Kettler) appears on 21 July and will be presented at the event *Prangenberg at First Hand*.



Norbert Prangenberg 1999  
Photo: Manfred Förster

## NORBERT PRANGENBERG

**1949** Born on 23 June in Rommerskirchen-Nettesheim. **1963–1967** Trains as a goldsmith in Cologne. **1969–1973** Visits the school of applied arts in Düsseldorf. **1980** First solo exhibition at the Galerie Karsten Greve in Cologne. **1982** Participation in the documenta 7. **1984** Mies van der Rohe scholarship and exhibition at the Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld. Begins a collaboration with Niels Dietrich, in whose ceramics studio in Cologne the large *Figures* are later made. **1991/92** Works in the Sèvres porcelain manufactory in Paris. **1993** Professorship of ceramics and glass-painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. **1996** Extensive solo exhibitions in Stuttgart, Münster and Breda. **2001/02** Periods of residence in South Africa. **2003** Collaboration with the Majolika manufactory in Karlsruhe. Travels to Japan. **2004** Retrospective of drawings in Krefeld and Karlsruhe. **2012** Norbert Prangenberg dies on 29 June in Krefeld.

**ERNST BARLACH** 1870–1938

## **Ceramics and Wooded Sculptures from the Ernst Barlach Haus Collection**

When the exhibition *Pleasure in Form* ends, our museum will close until the end of the year for the installation of new lighting. For its reopening in early January 2020 we are presenting an extensive show of Barlach's work from our own collection. The occasion is the 150th anniversary of the artist's birth.

Before taking our leave for the alterations, we have made a focused selection of less-known early works – the presentation of Prangenberg's ceramic *Figures* is a good opportunity to get to know Barlach the ceramicist. Around 1903/04 he designed a series of objects for Hermann and Richard Mutz's manufactory in Altona: decorative small sculptures, relief panels, a wall fountain, and also small faun and satyr heads, which were used to decorate the handles of various receptacles. Barlach's ceramics, with their art-nouveau elegance and panache, were part of a movement for the aesthetic redesign of bourgeois living after 1900, which was also propagated by Justus Brinckmann, then the director of the Hamburg Museum of Arts and Crafts. The desire to be free of ponderous historicism led to an increased interest in the subtleties of East Asian ceramics – so the Mutz manufactory used overflow glazes in the Japanese manner, and Barlach's grimacing heads could also have been taken from Japanese models.

Barlach's concentration on ceramics bore fruit in October 1904: he received a teaching position at the Royal College of Ceramics in Höhr, Westerwald (the Westerwald Ceramics Museum dedicated an exhibition to Norbert Prangenberg's work in early 2019). But Barlach experienced the position as a restriction, and gave it up in April 1905 and moved to Berlin. In 1905/06 he produced only a few more ceramics for Richard Mutz: a handled vase with masks and – after a journey to Russia in Summer 1906 that was to prove artistically ground-breaking for him – figures of beggars, with which Barlach occupied his very own artistic terrain.

The effect this was to have on the works of the 1910s to 30s can be seen in the exhibited wooden sculptures: the selection shows the different sides to Barlach's search for an art of expressive power that concentrates emotional and spiritual

intensity in block-like physicality: from the extrovert passion of the *Desert Preacher* (1911 [I]) to the interiority of the *Ascetic* (1925 [N]) or the nine figures that form the *Frieze of the Listeners* (1930–35 [H]). Particularly impressive is the *Weeping Woman* (1923 [K]), which the Ernst Barlach Haus was able to purchase in 2015: in the abruptly interrupted silhouette of an anvil-like abdomen, the woman's suffering is given an almost brutal physical expression, which takes the work's theme from the individual to the universal.

The assembled wooden sculptures – our museum owns thirty of them, a third of all Barlach's works in wood – are also remarkable in their material aesthetics: Barlach used different kinds of wood, which were by no means untreated. He preferred laminated wood, which he usually stained. The composition of these coatings is currently the subject of a research project. In parallel we are having all the wooden sculptures in our museum and in numerous institutions throughout the country re-photographed. The result – an extensive picture book on Barlach's wooden sculptures – will be published to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the artist's birth in 2020.



Ernst Barlach in August 1938

## ERNST BARLACH

**1870** born on 2 January in Wedel. **1888** Trains as a commercial art teacher at the General Vocational School in Hamburg. Changes to the sculpture class of Theodor Richard Thiele. **1891** Royal Academy of Visual Arts in Dresden. **1892** Joins the master class of Robert Diez. **1895** One-year scholarship to Paris. **1900** Becomes friends with the publisher Reinhard Piper. **1903** Collaborates with Hermann and Richard Mutz's ceramics manufactory in Altona. **1904** Teaches drawing, painting and modelling at the Royal College of Ceramics in Höhr/Westerwald. **1905** Moves to Berlin-Friedenau. **1906** Travels in the summer to Southern Russia (today Ukraine) to his brother Hans, who is working in Kharkiv. This Russian journey will be crucial to his further artistic work. Birth of his son, Nikolaus. **1907** First contact with the gallerist and publisher Paul Cassirer. First drama, *The Dead Day*. Goes to court for custody of Nikolaus, which is granted to Barlach. **1908** Intense preoccupation with the material of wood. **1909** Scholarship to the Villa Romana in Florenz. **1910** Moves to Güstrow. **1913** Resigns from the Berlin Secession; jury member of the Free Secession. **1914** Minder in a day-care centre for the children of soldiers at the onset of the First World War. **1915/16** Trains as a reservist; prematurely discharged. **1917** First solo exhibition at the Kunstsalon Cassirer. **1918** Appointed to the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin. **1920** Mother's suicide. **1926** Designs for a monument in Güstrow Cathedral; takes part in a competition for a Beethoven memorial in Berlin. Love affair with Marga Böhmer, whose husband, Bernhard, becomes Barlach's assistant and secretary. **1927** The

'great work' begins – until 1932 Barlach designs and realises numerous monumental works for public spaces: the *Güstrow Memorial* (1927), the *Spiritual Warrior* in Kiel (1928), the *Magdeburg Memorial* (1929), the *Hamburg Memorial* (1931) the *Communion of Saints* (1930–32) in Lübeck. Writes his autobiography, *A Self-told Life*. **1928** Nationalist circles begin massive smear campaigns in reaction to the memorials in Güstrow and Kiel. **1929** Barlach publicly defends himself against attacks by the Steel Helmet league and other reactionary organisations. **1930** Commission for the monument on Rathausmarkt in Hamburg. Contract with the art dealer Alfred Flechtheim for twenty bronzes to be cast from plaster models. Meets the French sculptor Aristide Maillol in Berlin. Barlach's 60th birthday is marked by exhibitions at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin, the Museum Folkwang in Essen, the Kunsthalle zu Kiel and the Galerie Flechtheim. Increasing right-wing extremist defamation. **1933** Radio broadcast *Artists Now*, a plea for intellectual and artistic freedom. **1934** The Hamburg industrialist Hermann F. Reemtsma visits Barlach in Güstrow. Reemtsma purchases the wooden sculpture *The Ascetic*, and commissions Barlach with the completion of his *Frieze of the Listeners*, begun in 1930. **1935** The wooden sculpture *The Reunion* is removed from the permanent exhibition in the Landesmuseum Schwerin. **1936** The book *Drawings By Ernst Barlach*, published by Piper Verlag, is confiscated by the Bavarian police. **1937** Barlach's health declines. Works by him are shown in the National Socialist propaganda exhibition *Degenerate Art*. 381 of Barlach's works are confiscated from German museums. Dismantling of the *Spiritual Warrior* in Kiel and the memorial in Güstrow Cathedral (melted down in 1941). Barlach is forced to resign from the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin. He is temporarily disbarred from exhibiting and threatened with a permanent occupational ban. **1938** Ernst Barlach dies on 24 October in Rostock.

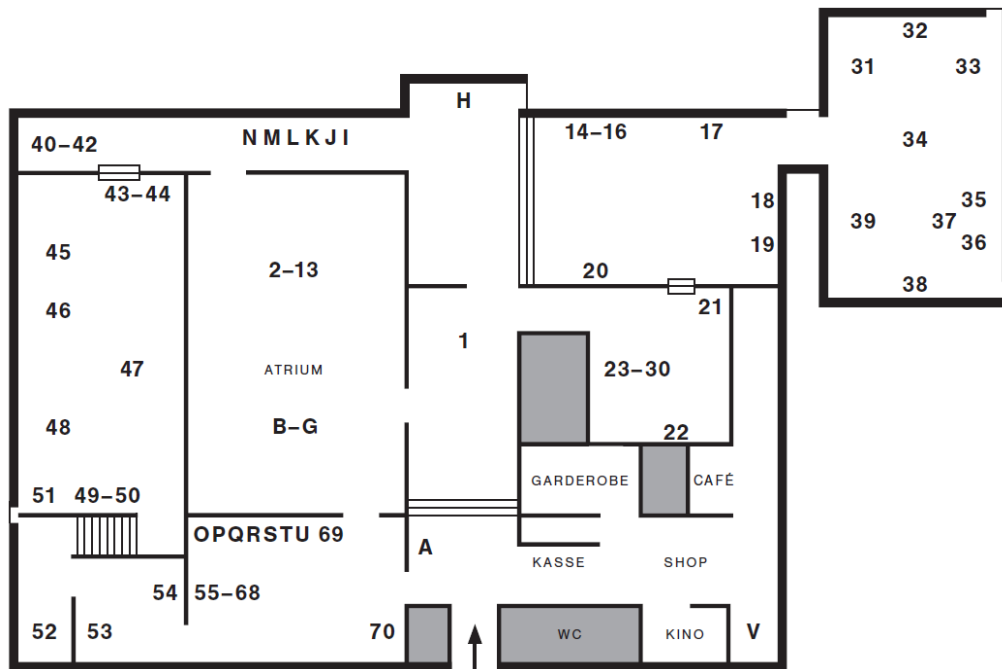
## EXHIBITED WORKS

### 1–70 Norbert Prangenberg

Ceramics, paintings, drawings

### A–V Ernst Barlach

Ceramics and wooden sculptures from the Ernst Barlach Haus collection



ERNST BARLACH HAUS

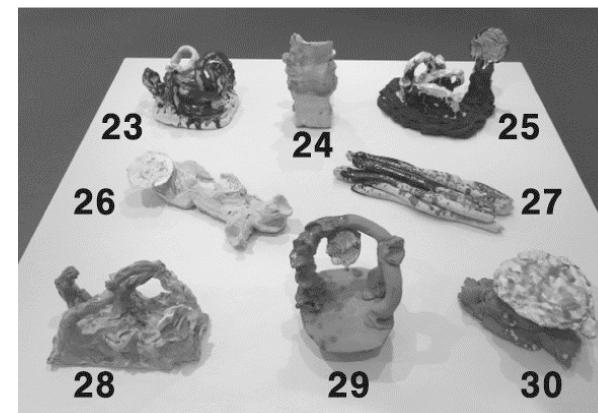
### Norbert Prangenberg (1–70)

All works are the property of the Estate of Norbert Prangenberg.

\* Courtesy of Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne

\*\* Courtesy of Produzentengalerie Hamburg

- 1 *Figure*, 1998, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 2–13 *Figures*, 1998, glazed ceramic
- 14–16\* *Drawings*, 2006, pastel, watercolour and pencil on paper
- 17\* *Drawing*, 2004, watercolour, ink, charcoal and pencil on paper
- 18, 19 *Untitled*, 1993, glazed ceramic
- 20 *Drawing*, 2004, watercolour, ink, charcoal and pencil on paper
- 21 *Figure*, 2008, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 22 *Untitled*, 2003, pastel and pigment on canvas
- 23 *Figure*, 2010, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 24 *Figure*, um 2003/06, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 25 *Peregrina*, 2006, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 26 *Figure*, 2003, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 27 *Figure*, 1990, glazed ceramic
- 28 *Figure*, 2008, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 29 *Scene*, 2010, glazed ceramic
- 30 *Figure*, 2003, glazed ceramic

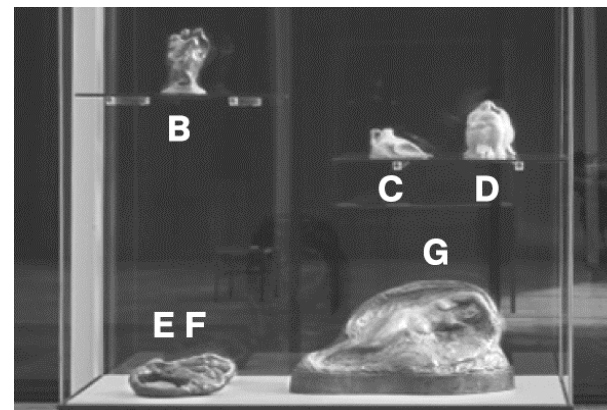
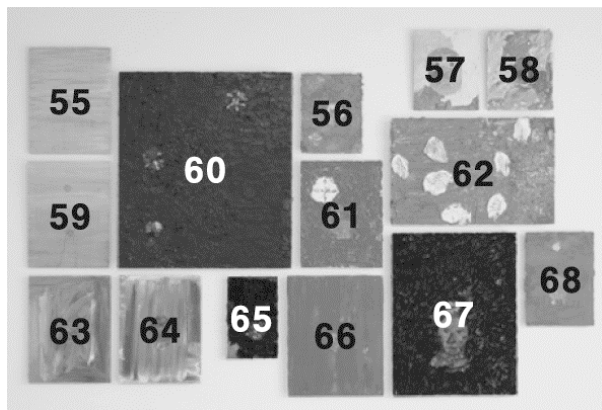


- 31 *Figure*, 1994, glazed ceramic
- 32\* *Untitled*, 1984/85, watercolour, pastel and oil on canvas
- 33 *Figure*, 1994, glazed ceramic
- 34\* *Figure*, 1996, glazed ceramic
- 35 *Figure*, 1994/96, glazed ceramic
- 36 *Figure*, 2000, glazed ceramic
- 37 *Figure*, 1990, glazed ceramic
- 38\* *Eupen Purple*, 1994–98, watercolour, pastel and pigment on canvas
- 39 *Figure*, 1997, glazed ceramic
- 40–42 *Figures*, 2002, glazed ceramic
- 43–44 *Untitled*, 2002, glazed ceramic
- 45 *Figure*, 1995, glazed ceramic
- 46 *Figure*, um 1990/93, glazed ceramic
- 47 *Figure*, 1998, glazed ceramic
- 48 *Figure*, um 1995, glazed ceramic
- 49–50 *Figures*, 2002, glazed ceramic
- 51 *Figure*, 1990, glazed ceramic
- 52 *Figure*, 1995, glazed ceramic
- 53 *Figure*, 1979/81, bronze
- 54 *Untitled*, 1981, watercolour and ink on tracing paper
- 55 *Face*, 5.8.2009, oil on copper
- 56\*\* *The Painter*, 25.1.2009, oil and pastel on cardboard
- 57 *Face*, 11.9.2009, oil on wood

- 58\*\* *ICH*, 2010, oil on wood
- 59\*\* *Untitled*, 1.10.2009, oil on copper
- 60\*\* *Untitled*, 8.12.2008, oil on wood
- 61\* *Head*, 1.3.2008, oil on wood
- 62 *Untitled*, c. 2008/09, oil on wood
- 63 *Face*, 7.8.2009, oil on wood
- 64 *Face*, 18.2.2009, oil on wood
- 65\*\* *Image*, 2008, oil on cardboard
- 66 *Tengu*, 5.5.2010, oil on wood
- 67 *Untitled*, c. 2008/09, oil on gesso
- 68 *Image*, 3.1.2009, oil on cardboard
- 69 *Head*, 2012, ceramic, painted and glazed in faience technique
- 70\* *Image*, 15.5.2008, oil on card

#### Ernst Barlach ( A–V)

- A *Wine Women and Song*, um 1903/04, stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- B *Faun and Nymph*, c. 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- C *Goethe Resting*, c. 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- D *Water Sprite*, um 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- E, F *Triton*, um 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- G *Cleopatra*, um 1903, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)





- H** *Frieze of the Listeners (The Dreamer / The Believer / The Dancer / The Blind One / The Wayfarer / The Pilgrim / The Sensitive One / The Blessed One / The Expectant One)*, 1930–35, oak
- I** *The Desert Preacher*, 1912, oak
- J** *Veiled Beggarwoman*, 1919, oak
- K** *Weeping Woman*, 1923, oak
- L** *Freezing Girl*, 1917, oak
- M** *Death in Life*, 1926, oak
- N** *The Ascetic*, 1925, walnut
- O** *Vase with Masks V*, um 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- P** *Planter with Masks II*, c.1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- Q** *Handled Vase with Masks XII*, c. 1905/06, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- R** *Punchbowl with Masks I*, c. 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- S** *Wine Cooler with Masks*, c. 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- T** *Handled Vase with Masks VI*, c. 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- U** *Planter with Masks I*, c. 1903/04, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- V** *Wall Fountain*, c. 1904, glazed stoneware (Mutz ceramic)
- Permanent loan from the Historic Museums Hamburg Foundation –  
Altonaer Museum