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"Anything is a legitimate area of investigation."  
— Jenny Holzer

NEWS

***Implacable Witness: Käthe Kollwitz Graphic Works***

June 20 – August 6, 2006

University Art Museum  
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**PRESS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The UAM presents *Implacable Witness: Käthe Kollwitz Graphic Works*, an exhibition examining the etchings, lithographs, and woodblock prints of this extraordinary German artist. Curated by UAM Associate Director Ilee Kaplan, this project explores Kollwitz's signature themes—social injustice, rebellion, poverty, parents and children, and a rigorous scrutiny of her own visage.

"While I drew, and wept along with the terrified children I was drawing, I really felt the burden I am bearing. I felt that I have no right to withdraw from the responsibility of being an advocate. It is my duty to voice the suffering of man, the never-ending sufferings heaped mountain-high. This is my task, but it is not an easy one to fulfill"<sup>1</sup> —Käthe Kollwitz

Throughout her long career (1867 – 1945), Kollwitz advocated social and political change through her intense and powerful graphic works. After her marriage to physician Karl Kollwitz in 1891, she was inspired by her husband's patients, residents of a working class neighborhood in Berlin. Kollwitz's first etching series' (*The Weavers* and *Peasant Wars*) describe the revolution of the working class in 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany. *Revolt*, featured in *Implacable Witness*, includes a famous historical figure, "Black Anna," who incites the group to battle.

As her work developed, Kollwitz strove for greater simplicity both in the image and in the message. Using strong patterns of dark and light as well as concise linear work, she repeatedly explored themes of human suffering. About the woodcut *Memorial for Karl Leibknecht*, Kollwitz says:

"As an artist I have the right to extract emotional content wherever I sense it, to internalize it and to reveal its impact. Thus I also have the right to depict the workers' farewell to Leibknecht, ... without being interpreted as his political follower."<sup>2</sup>

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Karl Liebknecht was an attorney and left-wing member of the German parliament (Reichstag). In 1919, he and compatriot Rosa Luxemburg were abducted, tortured, and murdered by the Freikorps—an ultra-conservative militia.

Kollwitz lost one of her two sons in World War I and a grandson in World War II. She endeavored through numerous graphic works and sculpture to visualize her grief and the grief of all parents at the death of their children. She was the first woman elected to the Prussian Academy of Art in 1919. In 1937, Kollwitz's work was included in the infamous *Degenerate Art* exhibition organized by the Nazi Regime. She died in 1945. Kollwitz's legacy of unforgettable prints, drawings, and sculptures are a timeless protest against the evils we impose on each other and the sufferings of humankind.

This collection of prints has been selected from the Special Collections Department at California State University, Long Beach. The UAM, a division of the College of the Arts, has received funding for this project thanks to the generosity of the Instructionally Related Activities Fund, the College of the Arts, CSULB, and the CSULB Library. The Bess J. Hodges Foundation, the Dwight Stuart Youth Foundation, the Arts Council for Long Beach, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services provide education program funds.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

UAM @ noon  
June 27, 12:15 – 1 pm  
Gallery talk with curator Ilee Kaplan

UAM Summer Film Series  
Friday + Saturday  
12 noon German Expressionist Films; 2:30 PM, Photography Films  
Please visit our web site for more information

**PRESS IMAGES**

Electronic images are available upon request  
Please call the Public Relations office at 562.985.4299 or send an e-mail to [svinci@csulb.edu](mailto:svinci@csulb.edu)

**SUMMER GALLERY HOURS**

Tuesday-Saturday 12-5 pm; closed Sunday, Monday and all University holidays

<sup>1</sup>Käthe Kollwitz, *The Letters and Diary of Käthe Kollwitz*, ed. Hans Kollwitz, trans. Richard and Clara Winston [Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1955] p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Käthe Kollwitz, *Diary*, 1920.