

Welcome to the exhibition about Carl Schneiders!

In the area to the right from the entrance, you can learn more about the artist's biography. If you would like to first enter the exhibition hall, you can skip the first four texts and begin directly with the text "Knowledge and Seeing."

Carl Schneiders did not date and only gave a few of his works exact titles. Therefore, we have chosen not to use object labels in this exhibition. In the catalogue, you can find information about the dating, material, and technique of the works.

We thank the artist's daughter Gabriele Schneiders, the Rhineland Archive for Artist Estates, the Friends of the Aachen Museum, and other private lenders and sponsors for their support of this exhibition project.

BIOGRAPHY

1905-1923

Carl Schneiders was born in Aachen in 1905, the son of architect Albert Schneiders. He recognized the aesthetic appeal of tools such as pliers and saws at an early age and drew their forms, which were developed from their function. In 1922, at the age of seventeen, he decided to study at the Bauhaus in Weimar, a new art school founded in 1919 that pursued the innovative approach of bringing together art and craft, practice and teaching in a holistic way.

At the Bauhaus, Schneiders was taught by Johannes Itten, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Oskar Schlemmer. He met Lyonel Feininger and learned about the radical ideas of the Dutch art movement De Stijl from Theo van Doesburg. Kandinsky taught him the importance of the line and geometric shapes such as the circle, triangle and cylinder. While Kandinsky's colour theory concentrated on the emotional effect of colours, Schneiders followed Paul Klee's approach of reducing nature to simple forms and experimenting with colour gradations from cold to warm or with complementary contrasts.

1923-1932

In 1924, Carl Schneiders began studying at the State School of Fine and Applied Arts in Berlin under Carl Hofer, whose master student he became. During these years, Schneiders travelled extensively, visiting Paris and Provence and was inspired by the southern light and colours of Corot and Cezanne.

In 1930, he took over a master studio at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin. There he was surrounded by the most important pioneers of modernism: Max Liebermann, Käthe Kollwitz, Max Pechstein and Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner. In the vibrant city, Schneiders

experienced the tensions between established artists and the avant-garde: "We were swept along by the powerful impetus that could be felt in all areas of art at the time.

We experienced the dispute between the Brücke people and the Academy, followed Nolde's argument with Liebermann [about the right of Expressionism to exist], visited exhibitions and worked like crazy."

1932-1945

In the early years of the Nazi regime, Schneiders was not yet subject to any major restrictions. His landscapes were not a provocation in the eyes of the new rulers. In 1935, he was honoured with the Grand State Prize of the Prussian Academy of Arts and suddenly became a sought-after artist. A year later, he was awarded a scholarship at the German Academy Villa Massimo in Rome.

In 1937, the tide turned: while still in Rome, Schneiders learned that his landscape had been removed from the museum in Duisburg as 'degenerate'. The depiction, characterized by atmospheric transitions, was deemed "too French". However, the assessment did not follow any standardized guidelines and was tied to local decision-makers. In 1943, for example, he was awarded the Albrecht Dürer Prize by the city of Nuremberg despite his works having previously been rejected.

Together with Carl Hofer, Otto Dix, Robert Pudlich, Edgar Ende and Max Pechstein, Schneiders was invited to represent Germany at the International Exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh in the USA in 1938. His daughter Gabriele was born in the same year.

1948 - 1975

Immediately after the war, the School of Applied Arts Mainz offered Schneiders the position of head of the painting class. Almost at the same time, in 1948, he was invited to help set up the Aachen School of Applied Arts. Schneiders decides in favour of his native city and moves to Aachen with his wife Alice and daughter Gabriele. His wife died in 1949.

In 1950, Schneiders was once again invited to represent Germany at an exhibition in Pittsburgh. His work was purchased. He declined an exchange professorship in the USA after consulting the artist Anton Wendling, who reported on the productivity-orientated working conditions in the USA. Responsibility for his daughter also played a role in his decision. Successful years followed with exhibitions in Munich, Düsseldorf, Rome and Milan.

From 1959 to 1970, Schneiders taught freehand drawing for architects and civil engineers at Aachen University and was awarded an honorary professorship in 1964. Carl Schneiders died of a heart condition in 1975.

Exhibition hall:



KNOWLEDGE AND SEEING

The Dutch coast, a place of longing and a second home for many inhabitants of Aachen, magically attracted Carl Schneiders. Between 1958 and 1968, he frequently travelled to the province of Zeeland, where he painted a great part of his harbour and beach paintings. Instead of scenic vistas buoys, flagpoles or beach cabins became independent motifs.

The challenge for the artist was to put aside his knowledge of the meaning of the objects and instead visualize the world as an abstract, geometric framework of shapes, lines, colours and surfaces which he wanted to bring into a coherent dialogue.

What appears in his works to be a random section of a picture is actually based on intensive compositional studies. Schneiders initially approached a new motif with pencil sketches and charcoal drawings. He then used tempera on paper to test the choice of colour and the composition before Schneiders enlarged some motifs and transferred them to oil on canvas. On the basis of various versions Schneiders' gradual abstraction of the model can be observed.



THE DUTCH COAST

Who doesn't recognize the drawbridge at Zierikzee, the breakwaters along the Dutch coast and the Wadden Sea. These are places that Carl Schneiders often visited and which inspired him to create his most beautiful works. While Max Liebermann painted impressionistic subjects in the same surroundings, Schneiders was inspired to focus on the objects themselves.

The charcoal drawings in particular illustrate the process of creating his works. They form the first abstraction step towards the model and test different perspectives on the constructive, tectonic framework. It is only in the tempera sheets that colour is added as a balance of cold and warm colours. The oil painting enriches the composition with an attractive surface design. The matt colour surface of a canvas prepared with chalk by the artist himself and the coloured underpainting lend the oil paintings their special intensity, as well as the special atmosphere created by the empty spaces and muted colours.



POETRY OF SILENCE

Still lifes take up a lot of space in Carl Schneiders' work. As a teacher at the at the School of Applied Arts in Aachen, he taught the basics of geometric forms alongside nude studies and open-air drawing. During this time, the artist arranged flower vases and simple objects into artistic arrangements in his private life, whose unbroken, bright colours are reminiscent of the French painter Henri Matisse. Schneiders achieves alienation through the size and dominance of the objects: a garden rake or flour sieve become monumental structures. Schneiders juxtaposes their supposed insignificance with the power of form, composition and colour in an exciting way. Representationalism itself becomes a pictorial theme.

Schneiders took up a teaching position at the University of Aachen in 1959. In contrast to the small groups at the School of Applied Arts, he now taught aspiring architects the basics of freehand drawing, perspective and the reproduction of geometric bodies: "Painting comes from seeing and does not require expensive materials or experimental techniques. The laws of harmony and order remain valid at all times. For me, painting means putting the world in order, as Matisse once said: Art should be like an armchair in which I rest."



MOTIFS FROM HOME

Schneiders also found many inspiring motifs in his hometown of Aachen. In addition to the picturesque meadow valleys of the Soers, the architect's son painted particularly "constructed" cityscapes, like the railway crossing in Burtscheid, the cupola of St. Johann or the characteristic silhouette of Aachen Cathedral. The terraced banks of the river Rur reservoir and high-voltage power stations in Eschweiler were also worthy of his attention. Works such as the "Roofers" reach the highest level of abstraction. The motif is dominated by a clear architectural design and dispenses with any illusion of space: "I plan my pictures like an architect builds a house."

To this day, the modernity and expressiveness of Carl Schneiders' works lies in their calm and balance, clear geometric structure and flatness, their surface design and simple statement.

Thank you very much for your visit!