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The Solingen Artist's Colony « Black House » (Germany)

New member of Impressionisms Routes©

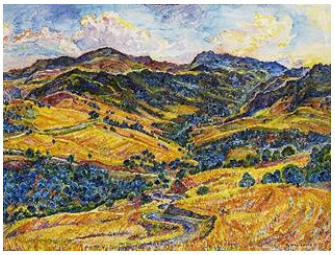
The Solingen Artists' Colony " Black House" Solingen owes its origin not to enthusiasm for a special landscape or as a retreat into a special, even untouched nature, but rather to the commitment and attraction of intellectuals and free spirits. First and foremost, the work of a very educated, self-confident and emancipated lady - Erna Heinen-Steinhoff (1898-1969) - who, as a muse of the arts, created, cultivated and developed a literary salon in the manner of the 19th century in Solingen at the beginning of the 1920s, a meeting place for painters, writers, musicians and intellectuals. Together with her husband, the business journalist and art-loving lyricist Hanns Heinen (1895-1961), Erna Heinen-Steinhoff developed as a muse into an important patron of the arts. Over the years, the literary protagonists of the "Black House" were joined by three painters. Erwin Bowien (1899-1972), Bettina Heinen-Ayech (1937-2020) and Amud Uwe Millies (1932-2008).

They painted portraits, landscapes, cityscapes and captured scenes of everyday life. They found their motifs in the green vegetation of the Bergisches Land, and later on extended journeys together, which regularly took the Artist Colonists to Paris, Scandinavia or Switzerland. The three painted on location, in front of nature "Plein Air", as it was also important to capture the respective light together with the atmosphere directly with oil paints, pastels and watercolours. In 1963 Bettina Heinen-Ayech moved to Algeria, where she was to become one of the most famous landscape painters.

The Bettina Heinen-Ayech Foundation has initiated the project Museum Artists' Colony "Black House" Solingen. It sees itself as a pioneer in the creation of a presentation, meeting and documentation place for all the intentions of the work of the Artist Colonists of the time that are to be preserved. Visitors should get to know the life and work of the Artist Colonists. In addition to the works of the Artist Colonists, the planned museum will also present literary friends, sculptors and artists who were close to the "Black House". In addition, special exhibitions of other national and international artists can expand the exhibition spectrum.

The museum will also honour the exemplary attitude and life's work of the artist, nazi opponent and exile Erwin Bowien. Due to political developments, the artist left his country in 1933 to go into exile in the Netherlands. The Reich Chamber of Culture issued an exhibition ban and had his paintings confiscated by the Gestapo. After the occupation of the Netherlands by the Wehrmacht, he had to go into exile and survived the war in hiding in the Allgäu. He managed to secure the release of a Dutch hostage and to hide an escaped French prisoner of war. He used the enforced time to write a diary in French in this lost village "at the end of the world", in which he recorded the exciting chronicle of the village at the end of the war. The result was an exciting work - largely based on dialogue - which is ideally suited to be made into a movie. The book was published in 2000 by the famous Harmattan publishing house (ISBN 2-7475-0040-3) in Paris. After 1945, he founded the Artists' Colony "Black House" again and, as a European before the times, campaigned for friendship between peoples.

Impressionisms Routes©, Cultural Itinerary of the Council of Europe, is pride to welcome the Solingen Artist's Colony as a new member.



Bettina Heinen-Ayech: The Mahouna mountain massif in Algeria, summer 1992.
Erwin Bowien: Catalogue Raisonné N° 1141 - Dutch Coast in Summer, 1937
Erwin Bowien: Arc de Triomphe, Paris 1961

INFORMATIONS

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