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Robert Fishko, *Director*

**GEORGE GROSZ**

(1893 – 1959)

*Berlin Street Scene*, 1930

watercolor

22 x 23 ½ inches

signed and dated lower right "*Grosz / 30*"

**Provenance**

The Artist

Collection of Ulrich Becher, Germany

Private Collection, New York

Forum Gallery, New York



Ralph Jentsch, author of the George Grosz Catalogue Raisonné, has kindly confirmed the authenticity of this work.

**Exhibition**

*Not For Sale*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel, 1992

*Radical Views: Philip Evergood and George Grosz*, Forum Gallery, New York, NY,  
January 17 – February 21, 1998

*George Grosz & Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler*, Galerie St. Étienne, New York, NY,  
September 23 - November 11, 1998

**Note**

George Grosz was a German painter, draftsman and printmaker who is remembered for his pointed satire and social criticism, anti-war caricatures and paintings of Berlin life between the world wars. Grosz was a prominent member of the Berlin Dada from 1918 to 1920, creating mordantly satirical collages, and was associated with the New Objectivity group during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) when his style became more naturalistic in caustic, caricatured studies of corrupt officers, war profiteers, exploitative industrialists, and prostitutes. Grosz was persecuted for insulting the German government and was censored and fined for blasphemy and sacrilege. Relentless in his criticism of the Nazis and

their burgeoning authoritarian dictatorship, Grosz was declared an “enemy of the state” by the Nazis who confiscated his works in German museums, destroying some. As Hitler proclaimed electoral victory and was instated as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933, Grosz narrowly escaped by emigrating to New York that same month.

The first owner of *Berlin Street Scene*, 1930, was Ulrich Becher (1910-1990), an ingenious and important German author and playwright and close friend of George Grosz. The two had met during Becher’s school years, where he was taken on by Grosz as his only pupil. Becher was at the beginning of a promising career as a writer when his first published work, the well-received collection of novellas *Männer machen Fehler*, published in 1932 by Rowohlt, fell victim to the Nazi book burnings in May 1933. Becher was already in exile when his work was condemned as “degenerate” literature; he had fled Germany after the Reichstag fire in February 1933. These events mirrored the experiences of Grosz, whose own artwork was burned following his inclusion in the infamous *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Munich 1937.

On November 11, 1933, Becher married Dana, daughter of the Austrian author and satirist Alexander Roda Roda. Upon fleeing Germany, Becher obtained Austrian citizenship only to flee to Switzerland after the annexation of Austria in 1938. As the son of the Swiss pianist Elisabeth Ulrich, he hoped he would be able to live in Switzerland and continue his work as an author, however in the eyes of the Swiss authorities his anti-fascist stance went against Switzerland's neutrality policy. He was consequently denied a work permit and was forced to emigrate, finding safety in Brazil by way of Portugal in 1941.

Efforts to obtain a visa to enter the United States were to last three years. At last, in 1944, Becher was granted permission to enter the country where he settled in New York City to be near his parents and those of his wife. During his time in New York, Becher worked on his *New Yorker Novellen*, which he gave to George Grosz for his comment. When it was finally published in 1950 under the title *Nachtigall will zum Vater fliegen. Ein Zyklus New Yorker Novellen in vier Nächten (The Nightingale Longs to Fly to His Father. A Cycle of New York Novellas in Four Nights)*, Becher dedicated it stating, “This book was begun in Newfoundland, NJ, continued in New York City, and completed in Blonay, canton Waadt. It was written for George Grosz.” Becher did not have to wait long for his friend’s thanks: “I’m really proud of the dedication,” George told him. “You’ve done well,” was his summary opinion.

Like many ostracized artists whose works were publicly burned, both George Grosz and Ulrich Becher were forced to carve out a new existence in exile, shaping their lives and art. While Ulrich Becher returned to Europe in 1948 making his new home in Basel from 1954 until his death in 1990, George Grosz remained in the United States until just one month before his death when in 1959 he returned to Berlin.