



22.05. – 03.10.2021

## RENDEZVOUS WITH NELLY.

Eduard Wiiralt  
from the collection  
of Juhani Komulainen

The Tartu Art Museum, in collaboration with the Tuglas Society, is pleased to present the private collection of the Finnish composer and art collector Juhani Komulainen consisting of the works of Eduard Wiiralt (1898–1954). The collector and Wiiralt are tied together by their relationship with France and Paris, where both of them have lived. Komulainen's dedication to and care for the heritage of Wiiralt deserves recognition.

Eduard Wiiralt's career as an artist is significant for both Tartu and the Tartu Art Museum. The printmaker who later became internationally renowned was in 1924 among the first graduates of the Pallas Art School and remains one of the brightest examples of the international success of the school and of Estonian art in general. As a recent alumnus, Wiiralt taught for a while at Pallas but in 1926 he went to live and work in Paris. The exhibition *Rendezvous with Nelly* uses the Komulainen collection to present Wiiralt's life in France. Besides masterful prints, original drawings and monotypes, which can only be made in limited editions, will be shown for the first time in the museum.

The main part of Komulainen's collection consists of a complete set that he acquired from an auction in Paris in 2002 and that contains Wiiralt's oeuvre from the years 1931–1933, when he was in Strasbourg. The 58 originals include numerous unique nude and figural drawings, portraits, sketches and the drawing series *The Saints*. This collection probably belonged to the artist, collector, musician and poet Nelly Stulz, who had invited Wiiralt to Strasbourg. Komulainen has systematically added to his collection, mainly works by Wiiralt from 1926–1939, when the artist was living in France.

In recent years, Tartmus has increasingly committed to exhibiting works belonging to private collections. In 2019, the project *Pallas in Estonian Homes* consisted of two exhibitions for which the curators visited nearly fifty homes, collecting crucial archive material and information about works that had previously been unknown. A year earlier, we exhibited a selection from the rich art collection of Enn Kunila on two floors. It is important that the public also see significant Estonian art from private collections that cannot be displayed every day. Komulainen's collection has been shown in Estonia before (Adamson-Eric Museum (2006), Pärnu (2010), Riigikogu (2017), Kadriorg Presidential Palace (2017–2018), Kuressaare (2018)) but in Tartu, a city that played such an important role for Wiiralt, it will be shown for the first time.

The collection of Juhani Komulainen has been thoroughly researched and analysed by the art historian Mai Levin. The present exhibition is mainly based on her knowledge of both the collection and of Wiiralt in general.

#### EXHIBITION CURATORS:

Joanna Hoffmann, Mare Joonsalu

#### COORDINATOR:

Kristlyn Liier

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Katrin Nõu

#### TEAM:

Richard Adang, Nele Ambos, Indrek Grigor, Margus Joonsalu, Katrin Lõoke, Julia Polujanenkova, Anti Saar, Peeter Talvistu, Kristo Tamm, Ago Teedema, Urmo Teekivi, Mae Variksoo, Jaana Vasama

#### THANKS:

Tuglas Society, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Anu Kippasto, Mai Levin

## EDUARD WIIRALT

### 1898

born on 20 March in Gubanitsy parish in Tsarskoye Selo district in the province of St Petersburg, Russia

### 1909

his family moved to the Varangu manor in Järvamaa county, Estonia

### 1915–1918

studied in the Tallinn School of Arts and Crafts

### 1918–1919

participated in the Estonian War of Independence

### 1919–1924

studied in the Pallas Art School in Tartu

### 1922–1923

supplemented his education in the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts

### 1924

started working as the head of the printmaking studio of Pallas

### 1925

moved to Paris in November

### 1926

travelled with Jaan Grünberg to Italy

### 1931

was in Strasbourg from May to September

### 1932–1933

occasional visits to Strasbourg

### 1938

travelled from France to Morocco

### 1939–1944

lived in Estonia

### 1944–1945

was in Austria and Germany

### 1945–1946

was in Sweden

### 1946–1954

lived in Paris

### 1954

died in Paris on 8 January and was buried in the Père-Lachaise Cemetery

## ABOUT WIIRALT AND THE COLLECTION

Wiiralt realised even as a student in Pallas, but especially in the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts, that he wanted to travel to Paris. The staff of Pallas were hoping that he would come to teach printmaking in Tartu, but for Wiiralt staying in Tartu would have meant too narrow a path of his development as an artist. That is the reason why he went to Paris one year after graduation. This European city of art became his residence and there he created most of his masterpieces. The first Parisian period, which lasted until 1939, was the most colourful. The first years, which the art critic Hanno Kompus has called "the time of storms and craving," left a severe mark on the artist's life since the bohemian lifestyle meant hunger where there was no money, asceticism when work had to be done, and indifference when there was time and money to be spent. A collapse took place in 1933. The diagnosis of a liver disease imposed a change in lifestyle and transformed Wiiralt's world view. His tumultuous youth was over. The 35-year-old artist gave up alcohol, his finances became more stable and more peaceful and harmonious expression became dominant in his oeuvre.

Nelly Stulz, who was the first owner of this collection, appeared in Wiiralt's life some years before this turning point. An educated woman who was interested in culture, she became for a while a devoted supporter of Wiiralt. She offered considerable injections of money and helped to supply Wiiralt with clothes, cigarettes, materials and lodgings. Stulz also participated in organising Wiiralt's exhibitions and the sale of his works. Her own collection of works by Wiiralt started in his first years in Paris. Only a few works were acquired after their relationship ended in 1933. To preserve Wiiralt's legacy, Stulz donated some of his works to the Strasbourg Museum of Fine Arts, the Prints and Drawings Cabinet and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art.

## NELLY STULZ

Nelly Stulz (1892–1969) was born on 13 August 1892 in Strasbourg, the daughter of the artist and miniature maker Gustave Adolphe Stulz. She was a painter, an art collector, a musician and a poet. Stulz exhibited her works at numerous solo exhibitions in Strasbourg and in Paris. Information about her career as a painter can be found in Paul Ahne's article published in the catalogue of her memorial exhibition. Ahne notes her talent, her great successes and how she reached the pinnacle of her career, but also mentions her decline and neglect. Failing eyesight meant that Stulz had to give up painting in her old age and she dedicated herself to poetry. Her oeuvre was described as exalted, undisciplined, uneven and exaggerated: traits that were characteristic of her personality. During World War II, she participated in the resistance movement and was awarded the Resistance Medal. Communicating with Stulz in her old age was apparently not easy; at that time the deeply religious lady stayed sequestered in her home, accompanied by two dogs and birds behind her window. In one of his letters, Wiiralt mentioned that they parted ways because their characters weren't compatible. When Wiiralt fell ill in 1933, he would no longer let Nelly Stulz visit him. At first, she still continued sending him money.

## JUHANI KOMULAINEN

Juhani Komulainen (b 1953) is a Finnish composer who owns over 80 artworks by Eduard Wiiralt. The collector and Wiiralt are tied together by their relationship with France and Paris, where both of them have lived. Komulainen's dedication to and care for the heritage of Wiiralt deserves recognition.

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