

ANNUAL INVITATIONAL SHOW

“In the Manner of Tamara Lempicka”

Tamara Lempicka is regarded as one of Art Deco's most celebrated artists. Researching Tamara's eventful life is like being immersed in the drama of European war and revolution (think of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*). At the age of 20 Tamara married prominent Polish lawyer Tadeusz Lempicki in Saint Petersburg, Russia. With the onset of the Russian Revolution, they quickly moved to Paris. With her husband unable to find work, they lived for a while from the sale of family jewels. The birth of a daughter in 1919 strained the couple's resources, at which point Tamara decided to become a painter. With some training at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts (the revolution having ended), her first paintings were still lifes and portraits. The turning point in her career came with the exhibition of her paintings in Paris in 1925 at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, which gave its name to the style Art Deco (“Deco” from “Decorative”). And there was a turning point in her personal life, too, as affairs and flirtations (with men and with women) led to a divorce from Tadeusz in 1928 and an eventual marriage to Austro-Hungarian Baron Raoul Kuffner in 1934. She quickly became known in the press as “The Baroness with a Brush.”

Tamara's portraits and highly stylized nudes of the 1920s were quintessentially Art Deco. Art Deco was all about geometric motifs and bright, bold colors. One of her best-known paintings was her *Self-portrait in a Green Bugatti* (1929), painted for the cover of a German fashion magazine to celebrate the independence of women. The elegant green dress and the gray gloves symbolize glamour, of course, but it's the gloves (the gloves!!) that convey the image of a strong, self-assured woman. The woman in the painting is wearing “gauntlet gloves.” The long length signifies strength and power—not for nothing were they designed like the medieval armored glove that was thrown down to initiate a duel.

With the outbreak of World War II, Tamara and her husband moved to the United States. Here she painted celebrity portraits, as well as still lifes and, in the 1960s, some abstract paintings. Her work fell out of fashion in the post-war years, but made a comeback in the late 1960s, with the rediscovery of Art Deco. She moved to Mexico in 1974, where she died in 1980.

Please join us for the screening presentation of the internationally acclaimed feature documentary *The True Story of Tamara de Lempicka & The Art of Survival*.
June 27 at 2pm in the Library. RSVP strongly suggested.