

*Karl Drerup: A Modernist Drawn to Life*



COVER  
Karl Drerup  
*View of Mt. Teide from Puerto de la Cruz,  
with dragon tree*  
Tenerife, 1934-37  
Etching  
4 x 9 IN.  
Private collection

*Karl Drerup: A Modernist Drawn to Life*

August 14–October 23, 2010

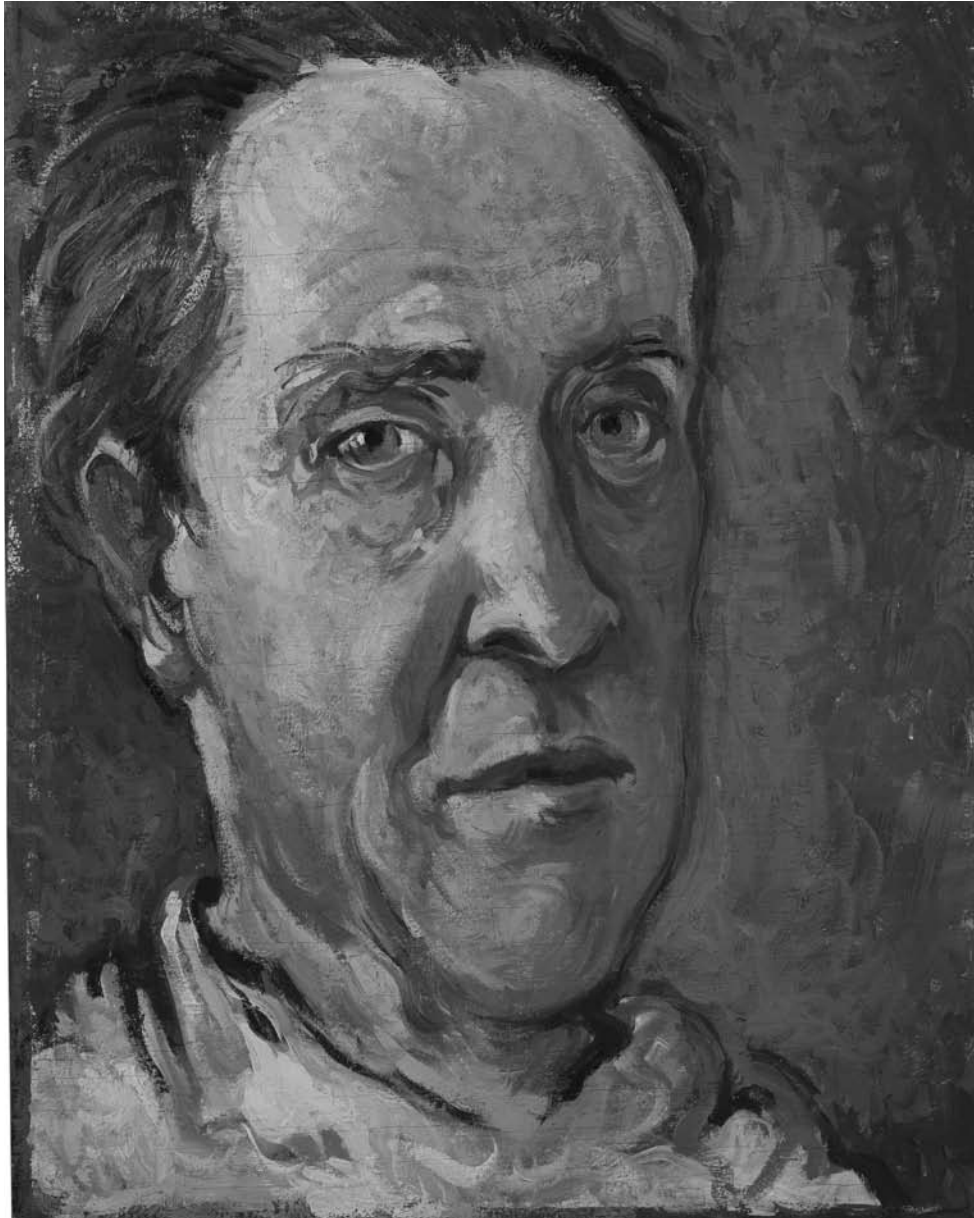
KARL DRERUP ART GALLERY  
PLYMOUTH STATE UNIVERSITY



Karl Drerup  
*Study for enamel*  
New Hampshire, late 1940s–1950s  
Watercolor on paper  
12 x 20 IN.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

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Karl Drerup  
*Self-portrait*  
Oil on plywood  
13 x 15 IN.  
New Hampshire,  
about 1955  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

# *Introduction*

IT IS AN HONOR to welcome you to *Karl Drerup: A Modernist Drawn to Life*, another in a series of exhibitions of Karl Drerup's extraordinary work presented in the gallery that, in bearing his name, proudly acknowledges his achievements and influence.

This exhibit focuses on Drerup's drawings, which are varied in their style and content, and united in their powerful sense of line and their expressiveness. Recently I was fortunate to join a class of University students being introduced to the drawings by gallery director Catherine Amidon. Students were enthralled, as visitors to the exhibit will be, by the keen observation, the richness of thought and sometimes humor, and the authentic artistry on display.

Also on display are Drerup's energy and passion, attributes that Drerup promoted among his students when he led the art department at Plymouth State University. One alumna said that it was years before she fully understood the compliment implied when Drerup, in reference to a piece on which she was working, called her a "door-slammer," an artist with genuine passion.

Some of these former students are practicing, award-winning artists, and some are art appreciators and collectors; all describe his powerful and positive effect on their lives. His creativity and joy continue in the art department he founded, a vibrant program producing wonderful studio artists, graphic designers, art educators, and art historians.

Plymouth State University acknowledges the work of Drerup specialist and curator Jane Port in creating the exhibit and the important Drerup research by scholar Diana Collecott. We are grateful to Karl's son Oliver Drerup and to our donors for their help in making possible this exciting exhibit of an internationally acclaimed artist.

Sara Jayne Steen

*President, Plymouth State University*



Karl Drerup  
*Drawing*  
Possibly Tenerife, 1930s  
Ink and watercolor on paper  
9 x 12 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

# Foreword

*Karl Drerup: A Modernist Drawn to Life* is the third exhibition in a series focusing on Drerup's work. Exhibitions of his paintings in 2005 and enamels in 2007 presented opportunities for visitors to explore Drerup's subject matter, careful craftsmanship, and rich iconography in different media. Drerup's innate ability as a draftsman, the focus of this exhibition, serves as a foundation to all of his work. The masterful drawings on display reflect both his talent and the rigors of his European education.

While the work in this exhibition reveals new facets of Drerup's prolific career, the two catalogue essays expand the understanding of his creative life and the sociopolitical context of his *oeuvre*.

Exhibition curator Jane Port's essay maps Drerup's life journey while focusing on the importance of his early training on the continent where drawing was a fundamental part of artistic study well into the twentieth century. But even before his formal studies commenced, Port points out that drawing was his natural inclination from youth. The playfulness of his cartoons and satirical drawings that she curated into the exhibition and wrote about in her essay is suggestive of the wit that is such an important part of Drerup's storied life.

Diana Collecott's essay adds a new dimension to Drerup's intellectual, social, and cultural life by exploring a lesser known chapter of his life in the Canary Islands where he and Gertrude, his Jewish wife-to-be, sought safety during Hitler's rise to power. Fertile encounters between Drerup and others seeking refuge and intellectual freedom from Nazism such as poets Louis Zukovsky and Basil Bunting and philosopher, mathematician, and historian Bertrand Russell provide insight into Drerup's broad range of social and intellectual connections.

After immigrating to America, Drerup became a more reserved individual, settling into a quiet life in central New Hampshire. His work was sold to collectors and museums and was loaned to exhibitions across the country, but he became disengaged from the networks developed during the early part of his career and reluctant to be involved in new ones affecting the resonance of his work. The recent series of exhibitions and publications and his presence on the Web are allowing broader audiences to appreciate Karl Drerup's *oeuvre*. This couldn't possibly happen without the support of individuals and institutions dedicated to this process.

Many thanks to Oliver Drerup for his steadfast assistance with and encouragement of our continued research, publication, and exhibition of his father's work. We also appreciate George and Louise Hauser's ongoing support of this work. I would also like to thank Lorne Finley, Robert Stapledon, and Elizebeth Seabrook.

At PSU, President Sara Jayne Steen and Provost Julie Bernier have provided the institutional support that is essential to the success of a collaborative project. The Office of Public Relations has coordinated marketing efforts and ensured the quality of the printed materials.

A special thanks to Lamson Library and Learning Commons at PSU and Special Collections at the University of Durham Library, UK, for facilitating access to research materials and collections.

This project was funded in part by a grant from the New Hampshire Humanities Council.

Catherine S. Amidon

*Director, Karl Drerup Art Gallery*

*Interim Director, Museum of the White Mountains*



Karl Drerup  
*Etching*  
Europe, 1920s–1930s  
3.5 x 4 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

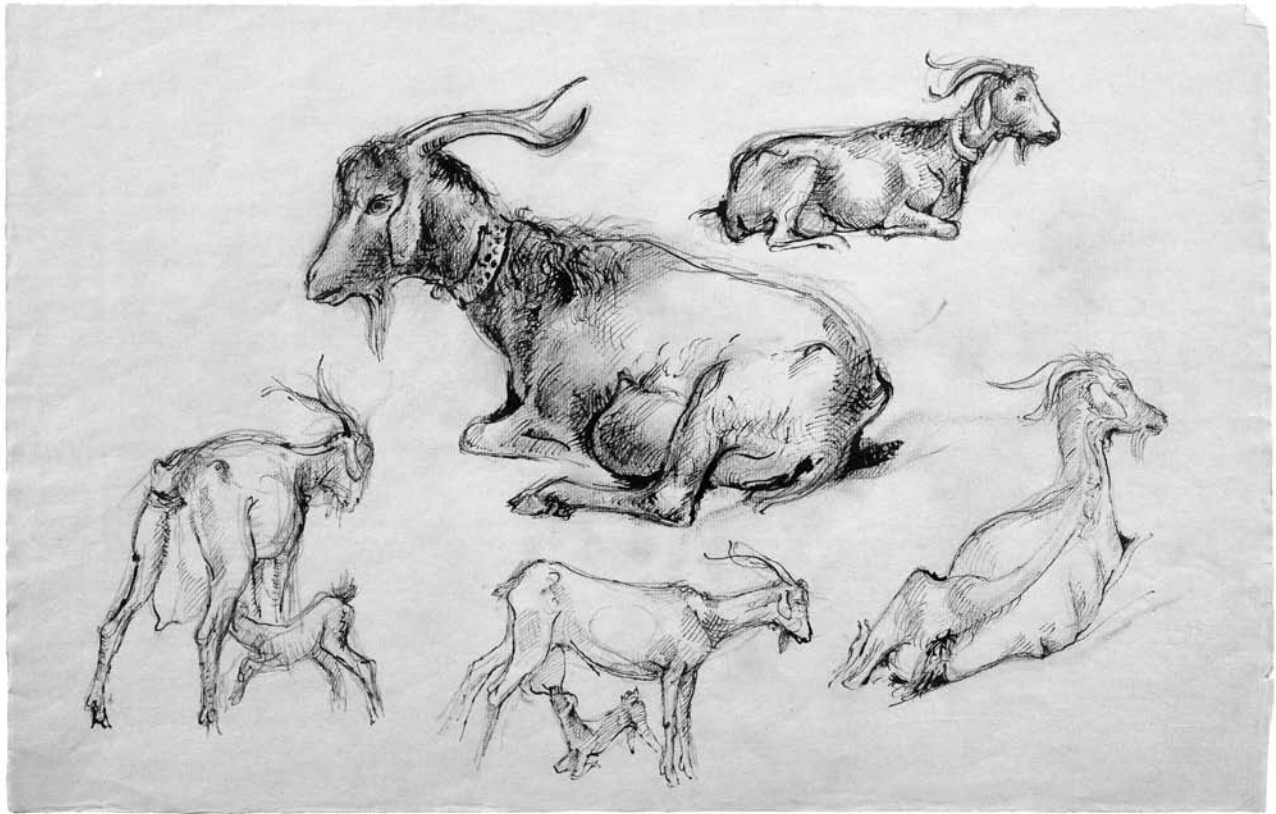


FIGURE 1  
Karl Drerup  
*Study of Goats*  
Tenerife 1930s  
Black ink on paper  
13 X 20 IN.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

# *Karl Drerup: Drawn to Modernism*

JANE L. PORT

THE ART OF KARL DRERUP (1904–2000) is characterized by an expressive yet economical line. Whether with pencil on paper, sketches on clay tiles and vases, oil on canvas, or in many-layered richly colored enamels, Drerup conjures imagery that is alive and connects directly with the viewer in the most universal human terms. The artist's masterful draftsmanship provides an eloquent foundation for his work in all media (fig.1).

Born at the dawn of the twentieth century, Drerup embraced the progressive and modernist ideas of the era in both art and life. He admired Paul Cézanne's studies of the balance between art and nature and Paul Klee's witty and unpretentious invented world. He esteemed Käthe Kollwitz's wrenching works of social commentary and was enchanted by the painter Arnold Böcklin's fusion of naturalism and fantasy in his work. Drerup rejected the rigid social mores and religious dogma that existed in many facets of society—and in the lives of his devoutly Catholic family. By 1930 Drerup was an artist of recognized ability and promise in his

native Germany, but the tightening grip of fascist elements in the government drove him to continue his studies in Florence. Though he returned home for family visits and entered his works in exhibitions in the early 1930s, Drerup never lived in Germany again. He further distanced himself from his conservative background when he chose Gertrude Lifmann, a brilliant linguistics student studying in Italy, as his wife and life-long partner. Both grew up in Westphalia, but Drerup was raised Catholic and Gertrude had a Jewish background.<sup>1</sup>

## **A Progressive Education**

The term modernism has many definitions, though today it is often defined by the characteristics of Cubism developed by Pablo Picasso and George Braque in the early twentieth century or the many variations that followed. Thus, in two-dimensional modernist works, the art itself is the reality and not an illusion that represents a reality beyond, like a view from a window. This definition



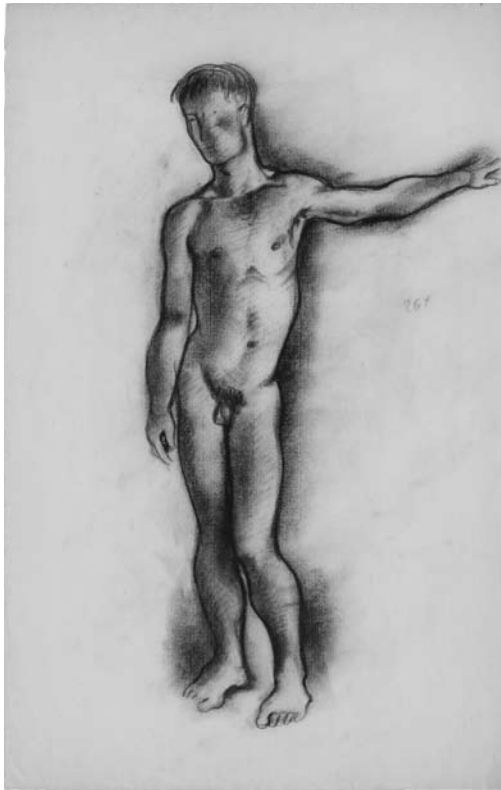
FIGURE 2  
*Still Life*  
Possibly Tenerife 1930s  
Grisaille watercolor on paper  
9 X 12 IN.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

was well-established in the art world by the time Drerup began his studies in graphic arts at Münster's Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts) in 1921. In the applied arts and three-dimensional arts, modernism meant stripping away the non-functional decoration so loved by the Victorians and replacing it with no decoration or flat, stylized, or conventionalized (simplified) motifs. Drerup's mature work reflects these modernist characteristics filtered through his own distinctive lens (fig. 2).

In 1928, yearning for a larger world, Drerup continued to follow his own path, this time toward the vibrant world of art and life in Berlin. He was aware of the Bauhaus (1919–1933), founded in Weimar to join the fine and applied arts, a goal of progressive educational reform in Germany since the early years of the century. Though Drerup had friends among its students, he did not feel comfortable with the level of experimentation for its own sake that had developed at the school. He chose to study in the broader world of Berlin where he earned an advanced degree

in the graphic arts from the Vereinigte Staatsschulen für freie und angewandte Kunst (the Unified State Schools for Fine and Applied Arts), now the Universität der Künste (the University of the Arts). At the time, the school was “an institution that rivaled the Bauhaus as a center of progressive teaching.”<sup>2</sup> However, it promoted a middle ground between the avant garde and the traditional practices of fine craftsmanship and strove toward a broad understanding between the disciplines of the fine and applied arts. “In [the school] all the workshops were available for common use, so that the students had the opportunity to move freely between the different departments.”<sup>3</sup> This philosophy of education meshed well with Drerup's intense curiosity and ability to quickly absorb new media, techniques, and processes into his artistic repertoire and allowed his innate drive toward meticulous workmanship to flourish.

As he finished his studies in Berlin, in 1930 Drerup was encouraged to apply for the prestigious Villa Romana Preis, awarded



annually since 1905 to a few students for advanced study in Florence with a stipend, free residence in the Villa Romana palace, and access to its atelier. However, by then the tentacles of the National Socialist Party were reaching into all state institutions and Drerup did not want his future study to depend upon its approval. On his own Drerup entered a three-year program at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence, where he focused on the figure and composition under the painter Felice Careña (1879–1966) (fig. 3).

A humanist in personal philosophy, Drerup did not discard the symbolic stories of his Catholic upbringing. He began his depictions of Saint George slaying the dragon, the tale of Saint Hubert, and the birth of Jesus at various times in his life in reaction to events in the world and to landmarks in his own life. Saint George slaying the dragon, a traditional Christian representation of good versus evil, appeared in his painting on ceramics in Italy as fascism took hold in Germany (fig. 4). Representations of the



*Left:*  
FIGURE 3  
*Figure Study*  
Europe 1920–1937  
Charcoal on paper  
20 x 16 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

*Right:*  
FIGURE 4  
*Study for enamel*  
New York or New Hampshire,  
late 1940s–50s  
Charcoal on paper  
27 x 16 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

tale of Saint Hubert's revelation and redemption in the wilderness began when Drerup found a peaceful end to his flight from Europe in the United States and, later, in the woods and mountains of New Hampshire.<sup>4</sup> Depictions of the birth of Jesus in a stable surrounded by Mary and Joseph and domestic animals seemed to begin around the time of the birth of his own son.

In Drerup's imagery the absence of various categories is telling. There are few references to war and they are most often men in uniform sitting around a table talking or listening to a story or music. There are no automobiles, airplanes, skyscrapers, or other iconic signs of modern life. Architectural landscapes and cityscapes evoke older European styles, other imagery includes working people, simple wooden fishing boats, women in the marketplace, and flora and fauna of fantastic variety. Mythological creatures such as mermaids and mermen are not other-worldly but seem to be of flesh and blood—albeit part fish. Drerup produced a large number of circus images in



FIGURE 5  
Lithograph, 'Der Akrobat'  
Tenerife, 1930s  
12 X 10 IN.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

Europe (fig. 5). In the late 1940s and 1950s, however, when his son was growing up, the imagery became softer and quieter and featured soft, glowing colors instead of its earlier bold graphic quality. These images illustrate circus families whose members perform only for each other, not for the public, simply and quietly working together.

### Graphic Arts

Illustration and storytelling attracted Drerup from the beginning. For his graduation project in Münster, Drerup illustrated a history of the nearby town of Kamen. A traditional *Wanderjahre* with friends through Spain and North Africa followed in 1924. Unfortunately, the year of traveling ended with Drerup battling tuberculosis in a Swiss sanatorium. During that time, he continued his graphic work. In 1926 he produced a mountain landscape that decorated the binding of *Spanische Wanderungen: Ein Reisebericht (Spanish Wanderings: A Travel Guide)* written

by his friend, writer Hans Roselieb (1884–1945). In 1927 Drerup illustrated Roselieb's *Der Barbar: die Geschichte eines Stieres (The Barbarian: the Story of a Bull)*, a story influenced by their travels through Spain. In Berlin, Drerup studied graphic arts under Hans Meid (1883–1957) who was known for his work in book illustration.<sup>5</sup> Around 1929, perhaps as part of his graduation requirements, Drerup completed 42 illustrations for a 1931 German edition of Prosper Merimee's *Carmen*. In keeping with the dramatic story of love, betrayal, and death, his original black ink drawings are bold in style and feeling.<sup>6</sup> No book illustrations are known to exist after those for *Carmen*, but Drerup continued to use Spanish imagery in his other work (fig. 6).

Drerup produced many drawings and engravings in the three years he spent with Gertrude in Spain's Canary Islands. A small etching depicting an island wharf survives from that time (fig. 7). During his early education in a Cistercian monastery school, Drerup drew caricatures of the monks to lighten his feeling of oppression



FIGURE 6  
*Study for enamel*,  
New York or New Hampshire,  
late 1940s–1950s  
Charcoal on paper  
16 x 20 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

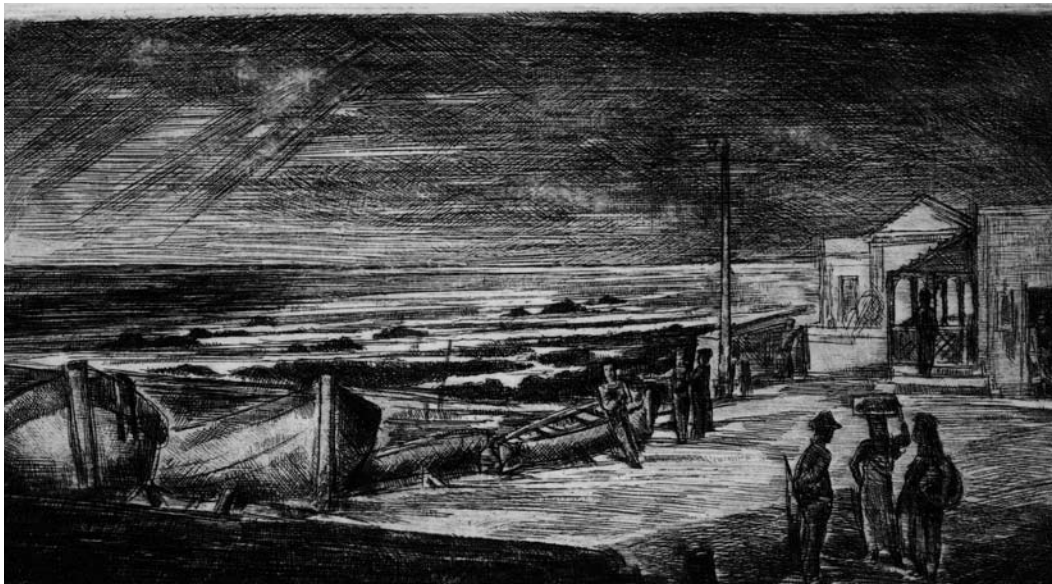


FIGURE 7  
Karl Drerup  
*Etching*  
Tenerife, 1930s  
4 x 9 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

FIGURE 8  
Karl Drerup  
Caricature, 'Ole Torero'  
Tenerife, 1930s  
Charcoal on paper  
20 x 16 IN.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph



FIGURE 9  
Karl Drerup  
Caricature, 'Hermann Lohengrin'  
Tenerife, 1930s.  
Charcoal on paper.  
20 x 16 IN.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph



and amuse his friends. Later, in the 1930s, he produced a number of caricatures of Adolph Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Spain's Franco that exposed their pompous arrogance and lust for power at any cost (figs. 8 and 9).

Drerup produced paintings in oil, pastel, watercolor, and gouache throughout his career, with various subjects including landscapes, still lifes, and portraits and genre scenes. The artist also produced numerous crayon and ink portrait studies that quickly establish the unique individuality of the sitter for the viewer (fig. 10). Other kinds of figure studies offered Drerup the opportunity to investigate and gain insight into the different ages and characters of a variety of human beings. The drawing books that survive from the islands and from early days in New York are filled with animals, floral motifs, mythological characters, and decorative design elements—all exhibiting Drerup's perfectly confident line. Each drawing seems to flow directly from the artist's mind to the paper.

### Ceramics and Enamels

Drerup's seemingly insatiable appetite for new areas of expertise, and the opportunity to combine his fine art background with a vernacular tradition in an applied art, led him to informal study of the traditional Italian technique of majolica during his stay in Florence. In this work, his ability to create a strong design in a small space with a few strokes of his brush, his inexhaustible imagination, and seemingly endless capacity for work led to hundreds of tiles and small bowls that display diverse imagery from the Mediterranean world around him. Later, much of that work was stored with relatives and lost in the bombing of Germany.

After three years of idyllic living and working on the island of Tenerife, the Drerups emigrated to the United States in the spring of 1937, fleeing Spain's fascist agents who were menacing the ports of the Canary Islands. In New York, separated from his family and without financial resources, Drerup collaborated with another European émigré to produce porcelain vases and lamp bases for



*Left:*  
 FIGURE 10  
 Karl Drerup  
 Horst von Maltitz  
 New York or New Hampshire, 1940s–1950s  
 Crayon on paper  
 24 x 16 IN.  
 Private collection  
 John Hession photograph

*Right:*  
 FIGURE 11  
 Karl Drerup  
 Study for ceramic or enamel  
 Europe or New York, 1930s–early 1940s  
 Charcoal on paper  
 11 x 9 IN.  
 Private collection  
 John Hession photograph

the New York market (fig. 11). It was a successful partnership. For the versatile Drerup, it was not a difficult move from ceramics to enameling, which enabled him to work independently in his apartment with relatively few materials and a small kiln. Drerup's bowls, plates, and panels were produced in simple geometric forms that avoided both the trendy biomorphic forms and the oval forms that referenced the Victorian era. Drerup brought the same consummate craftsmanship and lively imagination that characterized his ceramic decorations to his enamels. By 1940 one of his bowls had been purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Further, as the American craft movement grew, Drerup's jewel-toned enamels were in high demand for the exhibitions traveling the country, as was his expertise as a juror for those shows (fig. 12).

### Teaching

Like many of his fellow immigrants from central Europe, Drerup was drawn to academia, first at Adelphi College (now University) in New

York. After the war ended, he received offers from prestigious schools across the country, including Dartmouth College, to teach drawing and painting. Having found a home in rural New Hampshire, Drerup refused the offers. Like Saint Hubert, who found inspiration in the forests and mountains of central Europe, Drerup found renewal in central New Hampshire's woods, lakes, and mountains. After discovering he lived near Plymouth State Teachers College (now Plymouth State University), Drerup began teaching a few drawing and painting classes. He believed elementary and secondary education teachers especially needed a well-rounded background in the arts, and he grounded his students at Plymouth State in a broad range of media and techniques, much as he had been taught in Berlin. Drerup delighted in his students and he and his classes became legendary over the years. He retired in 1968 after 20 years of teaching, leaving a popular art department that is still growing today.

## Endnotes

- 1 Details of the artist's biography in this essay are derived from several sources: Drerup and Sunderland family papers, private collections; the author's conversations with Karl Drerup, Massachusetts, 1993; Brown, Robert, Archives of American art. A sketch of Drerup's life drawn and transcribed from a tape-recorded interview with Karl Drerup in New Hampshire in 1976, Karl Drerup Papers, 1933–1974, Microfilm reels 3961-3962.
- 2 Harrod, William Owen, Bruno Paul: *The Life and Work of a Pragmatic Modernist* (Stuttgart: Axel Menges, 2005), 7.
- 3 Fisher-DeFoy, Christine, "Artists and Art Institutions in Germany 1933–1945," *Oxford Art Journal* 9, (1986): 16–29.
- 4 Saint Hubert (about 656–727/8 C.E.), honored as patron saint of the hunt in the Middle Ages, had strayed in his spiritual life as a young cleric. According to legend, as he pursued a magnificent stag for sport, the animal turned toward him and Hubert was astounded to perceive a crucifix between its antlers. He knelt before the animal and his spirit was reborn.
- 5 Meid studied at the school for applied arts and the fine arts academy in Karlsruhe with impressionist Wilhelm Trübner (1851–1917) and realist Walter Conz (1872–1947). Meid spent the first year of his career designing for the Meissen Porcelain Works. In 1908 he moved to Berlin where he established himself as a successful independent artist and book illustrator. During his career he illustrated many classic works of literature including works by Cervantes, Goethe, and Heine, and works by contemporary writers Hermann Hesse and Gerhart Hauptmann.
- 6 See Plymouth State University and Karl Drerup Gallery, Karl Drerup (1904–2008) *Enchanted Garden: Enamels by an American Master* (Plymouth, New Hampshire: 2007), p. 7, fig. 2.



FIGURE 12  
Karl Drerup  
*Study for enamel*  
New Hampshire, 1940s–1950s  
Black ink and watercolor on paper  
12 x 16 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph



FIGURE 1  
Karl Drerup  
*San Telmo, Puerto de la Cruz*  
Tenerife, 1934–37  
Oil on board  
11 x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.  
Private collection

# *On Tenerife in the Thirties*

DIANA COLLECOTT

THE CANARY ISLANDS in the Atlantic Ocean, now autonomous provinces of Spain, were once the far west of the old world. Known to the Romans as the Fortunate Isles, they offered a place of respite and inspiration to Karl and Gertrude Drerup from 1934 to 1937. During these years, Hitler's rise to power in Germany and the start of Nazi persecution of Jews made it impossible for the couple to return home after Drerup had completed his graduate work in an Italy made dangerous by Mussolini's Fascists. When they left for Madrid in 1933, putting those dictators behind them, they could not have known that Spain would soon be torn apart by Civil War and forced to submit to Francisco Franco for 40 years.

A more immediate reason for the couple's flight to the edge of Europe was the return of Drerup's tuberculosis, contracted during an extended visit to Spain and North Africa in 1924. The largest of the Canary Islands, Tenerife, with its clean air and benign climate, attracted those suffering from TB, which Tenerife journalists associated with modern cities and described as "the plague of

our time."<sup>1</sup> Drerup was cured there, while being intensely productive, as evidenced by the many drawings, engravings, and oils that survive from that period, together with his lively Tenerife sketchbooks.<sup>2</sup> The significant number of paintings that remain on the island, in both private and public collections, show that Drerup's presence is still felt there;<sup>3</sup> it is also clear that Tenerife, with its vivid local life and exceptional physical features, remained part of his imaginative landscape even in New Hampshire.

The Drerups settled on the northwest coast of Tenerife, in Puerto de la Cruz (previously known as Puerto Orotava), where the lush Orotava Valley meets the sea, backed by a dramatic volcano. Snow-capped Mount Teide dominates the scene, as shown in Drerup's finely overdrawn oil painting of the tiny shrine of Saint Elmo, known locally as San Telmo (fig. 1). The etching on the cover depicts Teide in the background, while the foreground includes a fabled dragon tree, a close relative of the famous Drago Milenario (fig. 2). Postcards from Tenerife in the Drerups'

FIGURE 2  
*The 3,000 year-old dragon tree  
at Icod de los Vinos, Tenerife*  
Postcard from the Drerups' collection  
35 x 55 IN.  
Private collection



collection show that these scenes were ‘drawn from life’ (figs. 3 and 4). Yet the apex of Teide also features as a simplified motif in the modernist still life on page 12. Although Orotava and its port had been a destination for travellers since the nineteenth century, these landscapes belong to a place very different from today’s high-rise resort, one that elicited the German explorer Friedrich von Humboldt’s wonder at the new world. By the 1930s, Puerto de la Cruz, with its carved wooden balconies and shady squares, had an established British colony and regular German and American visitors. Not long after the Drerups’ departure, the New York poet Louis Zukovsky spent a New Year’s holiday at Puerto de la Cruz’s best hotel and reported that wealthy citizens of the Third Reich could afford a three-week return voyage and two weeks on the island.<sup>4</sup> He also updated the Drerups on the activities they had enjoyed there: outings to viewpoints, fishing trips, sea bathing, tea parties, and tennis matches among the largely English clientele. Their photo album records these enjoy-

ments, presenting a stylish pair hardly distinguishable from other holiday-makers (figs. 5 and 6).

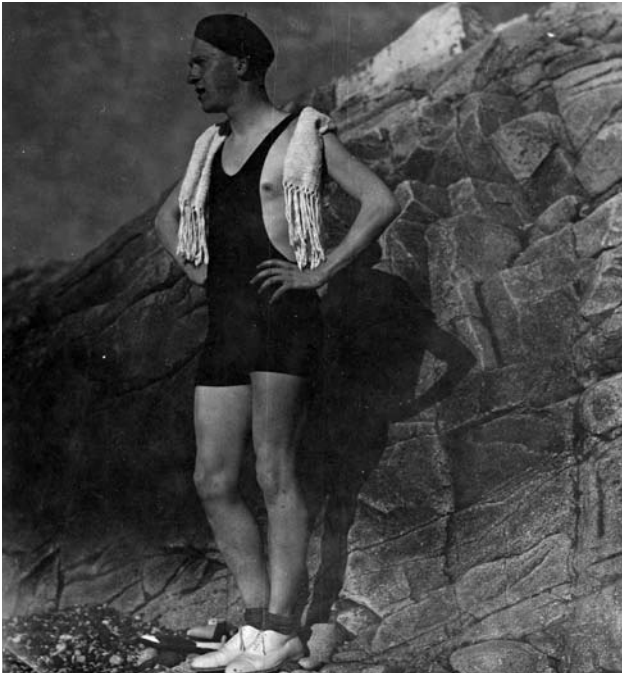
Other photographs in the Drerup family collection show a simple but idyllic home on a hillside above the port, with a sun terrace and tropical garden, a separate outhouse used as a studio, and a large living room where the couple are seen amid Drerup’s canvasses (figs. 7 and 8). Drerup’s portrait of the British poet Basil Bunting hung in this room.<sup>5</sup> The previous tenant of the property, Bunting had arrived on Tenerife in 1933 with his American wife Marian Culver and their two small daughters (fig. 9).<sup>6</sup> Unable to continue paying the rental, they moved into a more modest home on a banana plantation (fig. 10). The Buntings and Drerups had much in common, not the least of which was their pacifism and liberal politics. They had all been living in Italy, where Bunting’s teacher was Ezra Pound in Rapallo, and Drerup’s was Felice Carena in Florence;<sup>7</sup> Gertrude and Bunting were both gifted linguists who had studied at the



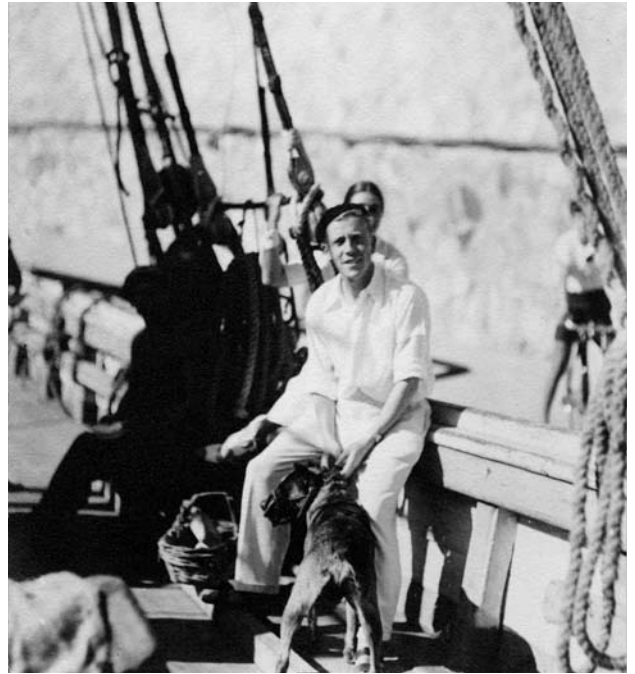
Top left:  
FIGURE 3  
*The Orotava Valley with  
Mt. Teide, Tenerife*  
Postcard from the Drerups' collection  
3.5 x 5.5 IN.  
Private collection



Top right:  
FIGURE 4  
*San Telmo, Puerto de la Cruz*  
Postcard from the Drerups' collection  
3.5 x 5.5 IN.  
Private collection



Above:  
FIGURE 5  
Unknown photographer  
*Karl Drerup in bathing suit*  
Tenerife, 1934-37  
Black and white photograph  
4 x 3 IN.  
Private collection



Above:  
FIGURE 6  
Unknown photographer  
*Karl and Gertrude on a fishing ketch  
with their pet dog*  
Tenerife, 1934-37  
Black and white photograph  
7 x 5 IN.  
Private collection



FIGURE 7  
Unknown photographer  
*Karl's studio at Puerto de la Cruz*  
Tenerife, 1934–37  
Black and white photograph  
5 x 7 IN.  
Private collection



FIGURE 8  
Unknown photographer  
*Karl and Gertrude in their living room*  
*at Puerto de la Cruz*  
Tenerife, 1935–37  
Black and white photograph  
45 x 2.75 IN.  
Private collection

London School of Economics, and Gertrude and Marian were keen tennis players. The Drerups were comparatively well off, as long as Drerup could receive financial support from his family in Germany, supplemented by Gertrude's English teaching. During the Buntings' lean years on Tenerife, their marriage foundered and, as Marian's friend and counsellor, Gertrude developed a role later valued in her life at Thornton.<sup>8</sup>

Between the two artists a significant friendship developed and continued by correspondence for decades. In 1939, on the eve of Britain's declaration of war on Germany, Bunting would write to the Drerups: "We three made our 'separate peace' years ago, when I was still the only one of us who expected a war between England and Germany."<sup>9</sup> Both men were cultured cosmopolitans who chose a modernism of the margins, rather than identifying with international movements such as Surrealism or Expressionism. While their less tolerant contemporaries associated folk art with reactionary nationalism,<sup>10</sup> they

were sympathetic to indigenous cultures and vernacular traditions, acknowledging the inheritance of the Arts and Crafts Movement: this drew Bunting to Celtic illumination and Drerup to the equally ancient art of enamelling.<sup>11</sup> For these reasons, both men eventually chose to live in regions remote from metropolitan centres, Bunting in his native Northumbria and Drerup in New Hampshire.<sup>12</sup>

While Bunting recalled being "gloomy" in the sunlit Canaries, for Drerup, those creative years of early maturity left a tangible legacy. Receptive to every experience and disciplined by rigorous training, he stored the images that would later shape all he made — animals and birds, sailboats and townscapes, horse-riders and circus people, saints and mermaids—together with the vibrant colours that would eventually be realised in the enameller's art. In 1935, Bunting composed a brief aubade that reminds us how, as Drerup's work records, Mount Teide stands to the east of Puerto: "On highest summits dawn comes soonest/



FIGURE 9  
Unknown photographer  
*The Bunting family at Puerto de la Cruz*  
Tenerife, 1934–35  
Black and white photograph  
7 X 5 IN.  
Bunting Archive, Durham University

FIGURE 10  
Karl Drerup  
*Sketch (Cabin in banana plantation)*  
Tenerife sketchbook, 1936–37  
Graphite on paper  
4 X 7 IN.  
Private collection



(But that is not the time to give over loving.)<sup>13</sup> Jane Port has made the interesting suggestion that the terraced fields above the town “are reflected in the multi-levelled compositions of later enamels” by Drerup (fig. 11).<sup>14</sup> Together, the friends walked the donkey paths between those fields, calling greetings to the women at work in the market gardens and watching the taciturn camel men bringing produce down to the port. These experiences informed their work; the finest poem Bunting wrote on Tenerife, entitled “The Orotava Road,” ends with lines that correspond to Drerup’s entrancing pictures of young women carrying fish and fruit on their heads (fig. 12):

... The girls’ smiles repeat  
the black silk curve of the wimple  
under the chin...  
You can guess their balanced nakedness  
under the cotton gown and thin shift.

They sing and laugh.  
They say “Adios!” shyly but look back  
more than once, knowing our thoughts  
and sharing our  
desires and lack of faith in desire.<sup>15</sup>

“The poets have learned how to see,” wrote one critic about Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters on Cézanne*.<sup>16</sup> This may well apply to the reciprocal relationship between Bunting and Drerup, which was fostered by their shared response to Tenerife.

If both men were spectators of a peasant culture they were tempted to idealise, they were also participants in more sophisticated aspects of life on the island. Drerup received immediate recognition from the artists, poets, and intellectuals of his own age who formed the *Circulo de Bellas Artes* based in the capital, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, and the nearby university town of La Laguna.<sup>17</sup> Their prime mover was Eduardo Westerdahl Oramas,

FIGURE 11  
Unknown photographer  
*Terraced fields in the Orotava Valley*  
Tenerife, 1930–1950  
Sepia photograph



FIGURE 12  
Karl Drerup  
*Market Women*  
Tenerife, 1930s  
Oil on canvas  
27.75 X 21.75 IN.  
Private collection  
Lorne Finley photograph



an internationalist of Swedish and Canarian descent, who had travelled widely in Europe and was familiar with contemporary German art and design.<sup>18</sup> Recognizing a window of opportunity when the oppressive regime of General Primo de Rivera came to an end in 1930, this group started the avant-garde review *Gaceta de Arte*.<sup>19</sup> Westerdahl gave Drerup a one-man show in 1934, introducing him to readers of the review as a painter and ceramicist.<sup>20</sup> In 1935, Drerup designed a cover for the magazine, featuring an illustrated map of the island.<sup>21</sup> In 1936, his work was included in a major exhibition of “new art,” in an illustrious company that included Max Ernst, Vassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Ben Nicholson, and others.<sup>22</sup> In this context, and among friends who valued social democracy and artistic autonomy, Drerup was respected for his humanity, impeccable craftsmanship, and vivid vision. He gained portrait commissions and found devoted patrons in the Koppel family, German immigrants with a successful business in Santa Cruz.

In May 1935, Westerdahl and the writer Domingo Pérez Minik organized an international exhibition of Surrealist art, inviting the French poet André Breton and his wife Jacqueline to Tenerife, where they were fêted by the *Gaceta de Arte* group. Earlier that year, the English philosopher Bertrand Russell took a six-week holiday in Puerto de la Cruz while waiting for a divorce. He was soon sought out by Pérez Minik and Westerdahl, who interviewed him for their review with the help of Gertrude Drerup, a skilled interpreter; she is just visible on the right of Drerup’s photograph (fig.13).<sup>23</sup> At the time Russell, like Bunting, was warning of “the imminent danger of war”;<sup>24</sup> both had been conscientious objectors to World War I, but Bunting would join the RAF in 1939, while Russell would spend most of World War II in the U.S.

Bunting also foresaw the coming conflict in Spain; writing in the London *Spectator*, he speculated that General Franco might “disguise a purely military dictatorship as Fascism.”<sup>25</sup> That article appeared in July 1936—the very month in which



*Left:*  
FIGURE 13  
Karl Drerup  
Westerdahl, Russell, and Perez Minik at  
Puerto de la Cruz  
Tenerife, 1935  
Black and white photograph  
3 x 5 IN.  
Private collection

*Right:*  
FIGURE 14  
Unknown photographer  
Gertrude Drerup's passport photograph  
Place unknown, 1930s  
1.5 x 2 IN.  
Private collection

Franco, then military governor of Tenerife, staged a military coup, making the island his stepping stone to power on the mainland. Fearing that, like the poet Federico Garcia Lorca (an early victim of the Falangists) he was “on Franco’s list,” Bunting had already fled to England. Gertrude also escaped, under the cover of an English family, and managed to visit her surviving relatives in Holland (fig. 14). In April 1937 Drerup followed, making a hair-raising escape in a banana boat and staying with Bunting in London.<sup>26</sup> Each taking a ship to New York, they managed to meet again: the Canary Islands had been their stepping stones to a new life in America.

## Endnotes

- 1 “11th Manifesto of G.A.” *Gaceta de Arte* 22: 3 (Dec. 1933). Translation by C.B. Morris, *Surrealism and Spain, 1920–1936*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 6.
- 2 Dated 1935–36 and 1936–7, the Tenerife sketchbooks are in a private collection.
- 3 For example, in the Museum of Contemporary Art at Puerto de la Cruz. Inaugurated in 1953, this collection was named for Eduardo Westerdahl, who helped to select the works displayed.
- 4 Letter to Karl and Gertrude Drerup from Louis Zukovsky, Grand Hotel Taoro, Orotava Valley, 31 January 1938. Zukovsky had visited Tenerife the previous year, and on this trip shipped his car there. The letter ends with Zukovsky encouraging the Drerups as they settle in the U.S. Bunting Archive, University of Durham, England.
- 5 The present whereabouts of this three-quarter length portrait of Basil Bunting (1900–1985) are unknown. Drerup painted a head and shoulders portrait of the poet in New York in 1939; this is now in the Bunting Archive at the University of Durham, England.
- 6 The Buntings arrived in Tenerife in 1933 with a two-year-old daughter born in Italy; their second daughter was born on the island early in 1934. Soon afterwards, they had to move out of the pleasant house, meeting the Drerups as they did so.
- 7 Felice Carena (1879–1966) was an outstanding painter of the Italian Novecento who was at the apex of his fame between the wars. He taught at the Accademia di Belli Arti in Florence, where Drerup studied painting and portraiture from 1930 to 1933; Pietro Annigoni (1910–1988), famous for his portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, had studied under Carena from 1927 to 1929. Drerup and Annigoni became friends when both attended the free life-classes held every afternoon at the academy. At the time, Drerup was considered the better portraitist, but the two artists held each other in mutual esteem. Annigoni gave the Drerups a self-portrait dated 1938, in memory of their time together in Florence, and the Drerups sent a friend to pay their respects to Annigoni when he attended a retrospective of his own work at the Brooklyn Museum in 1969.
- 8 Marian returned to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in time for the birth of their son in May 1937. She later visited the Drerups in New Hampshire. They helped to place the Buntings’ boy in a local school where he died of polio in 1953, to the distress of his divorced parents.
- 9 Bunting letter to “Carlos” (his nickname for Drerup), Throckley, Northumberland, 2 September 1939. Bunting Archive, University of Durham, England. In a letter of 25 January 1938, Bunting had exclaimed, in Italian, Spanish, and German: “Death to Mussolini! Down with Franco! Devil take Hitler!” with a verve that recalls Drerup’s cartoons of the dictators and their henchmen. Private collection.
- 10 In his personal account of surrealism in Tenerife, Domingo Pérez Minik accused the Rivera regime of the “folk nationalism of a political dictatorship” (*los nacionalismos mas o menos folkloricos de una dictadura politica*) against which he and his colleagues had revolted in the 1930s. *Faccion Espanola Surrealista de Tenerife*. (Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1975) 16.
- 11 “Lindisfarne plaited lines” are a structural motif of Bunting’s long poem *Briggflatts* (1966). The Drerups’ library contained *Half-Hour Lectures on the History and Practice of the Fine and Ornamental Arts* (London: Longman’s, Green and Co., 1884) by William Bell Scott, a leading member of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England, who had strong connections with Newcastle and Northumberland. The book, which includes illumination and enameling, represents a direct link between Bunting’s background and Drerup’s art. It bears the initials E.A.B and may have been a gift from Bunting’s mother Annie, whom Drerup met in London in 1937.
- 12 Despite this, their influence on younger writers and artists was considerable: Drerup’s through his long and distinguished career at Plymouth State and Bunting’s (when he too had gained an international reputation) through visiting fellowships at universities in California and British Columbia. I am grateful to the artist’s son, Oliver Drerup, for first drawing my attention to how much the two friends had in common.
- 13 “First Book of Odes”, no. 27. *The Complete Poems of Basil Bunting*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 105.
- 14 Jane L. Port, “Enchanted Garden: Enamels by an American Master”. *Karl Drerup (1904–2000): Enchanted Garden*. (Plymouth, NH: Karl Drerup Art Gallery at Plymouth State University, 2007) 11–18, 13.
- 15 “First Book of Odes”, no. 30. *The Complete Poems of Basil Bunting*, 107. Originally published in 1950, this was the first of Bunting’s poems to be translated into Spanish, by Andres Sanchez Robayna of La Laguna University, Tenerife.
- 16 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters on Cézanne* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corp., 1985) ix–x. Karl Drerup, who admired Rilke’s poetry, had a copy of this book.
- 17 This “fine arts circle”, which had its own gallery in Santa Cruz, included the writers Emeterio Gutierrez Albelo, Augustín

- Espinosa, Domingo López Torres, and Domingo Pérez Minik, the ceramicist Juan Ismael Gonzalez, and the painter Oscar Dominguez (a Tenerifan who had worked with Salvador Dalí, Ives Tanguy, Max Ernst, and Marcel Duchamp).
- 18 In *Eduardo Westerdahl: Suma de la Existencia* (Cabildo de Tenerife: Instituto Oscar Dominguez de Arte e Cultura Contemporánea, 2002), Pilar Carreño Corbella gives an in-depth and lavishly illustrated account of the life and work of Westerdahl (1902–1983), which includes brief references to Drerup.
- 19 “G.A.,” as it was called, carried the strapline “review of international culture” (*revista internacional de cultura*) and appeared monthly from 1932 to 1935, with occasional numbers in 1936 and 1937. Late in life, Pérez Minik edited an anthology of contributions to this feisty magazine. *Gaceta de Arte: 1932–35* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Canarias, 1989).
- 20 Westerdahl, “El pintor y ceramista Carl Drerup.” *Gaceta de Arte* (May 1934).
- 21 This design—with camels, dragon trees, donkeys, water carriers, boats, and mermaids that both mimic tourist motifs and anticipate Drerup’s later enamels—was also used on the cover of Volume I of the facsimile reprint of *Gaceta de Arte* (Vaduz, Lichtenstein: Topos Verlag, 1981).
- 22 “*Exposición de arte nuevo en Tenerife: oleos, gouaches, dibujos, litografías.*” Santa Cruz, May 1936. This exhibition was largely based on the Gaceta de Arte gallery’s own collection, which had already acquired work by Drerup.
- 23 Domingo Pérez Minik (1903–1989) was an almost exact contemporary of Drerup’s. He and his wife Rosa were on friendly terms with the Drerups and remained in contact after their departure from Tenerife. In 1972, Pérez Minik sent them a signed copy of his book about the artists and writers who visited the island in the 1930s, *Entrada y Salida de Viajeros* (Tenerife: Ediciones Nuestro Arte, 1969.) This included an account of their encounter with Bertrand Russell, and its inscription recalls their “happy days together in Puerto de la Cruz.”
- 24 Russell, *Which Way to Peace?* (1936), reprinted in the *Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Volume 10: 1927–42, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 25 Bunting, “The Roots of the Spanish Civil War,” *The Spectator* (July 1936). Bunting claims to have played chess with Franco, who was posted to Tenerife in March 1936. See Miguel Angel Cabrera Acosta ed., *La Guerra Civil en Canarias* (La Laguna, 2000).
- 26 Karl Drerup, in conversation with Warren Priest (recorded at Thornton, 1990).



Karl Drerup  
*Figure Study*  
Europe 1920s–1937  
Charcoal on paper  
20 x 16 in.  
Private collection  
John Hession photograph

# Contributors

## **Catherine S. Amidon, Project Director**

Catherine S. Amidon is director of the Karl Drerup Art Gallery and interim director of the Museum of the White Mountains at Plymouth State University. She has curated more than 30 exhibitions including three that toured nationally and published numerous articles in journals, reviews, and exhibition catalogues. Amidon obtained a doctorate from the University of Paris I, Sorbonne, France, while working at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris. Subsequently she has taught, lectured, and worked as an independent curator. She was awarded a Fulbright Hays Grant for *Comparative Cultural Diversity in Transition in the Baltic States and Russia* and a Fulbright Fellowship to Jamaica where she worked at the National Gallery and the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts.

## **Jane L. Port, Curator**

An independent scholar and curator, Jane Port has worked on numerous projects and grants at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, including as a contributor to *Silver of the Americas, 1600–2001*, *American Silver in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Vol. 3 (2008). She has served as curator of collections at the Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts from 2002–2005 and as exhibition curator and author of the catalogues for *Karl Drerup (1904–2000) Enchanted Garden: Enamels by an American Master (2007)*, and *Karl Drerup: Drawn to Modernism* at Plymouth State University, Plymouth, New Hampshire (2010). She is a contributor to the upcoming exhibition catalogue *Craft Revolution: The American Studio Movement 1945–1970*, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, New York.

## **Diana Collecott, Contributor**

A widely published specialist in twentieth-century American and British literature and culture, Diana Collecott grew up in London and received her doctorate from Bristol University. A senior Fulbright fellow, she has held visiting research posts in Japan and the U.S., including the H.D. Fellowship and the Donald E. Gallup Chair at Yale University. She has also been a British Council consultant and visiting professor in the Czech Republic, Italy, and North Africa. While teaching at Durham University in the U.K., Collecott co-founded the Basil Bunting Archive and Poetry Centre with Richard Caddel, directing its research program and discovering Karl Drerup on the initiative of Drerup's family. She is currently researching the Drerup's time in Italy, in collaboration with American and European colleagues.

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