

Hans Otto Orlowski, *Die Stolze (The Proud One)*
Insterburg 1894 - 1967 Berlin

oil and mixed media on wood
21 ¼ by 18 inches (54 by 45.7 cm)
monogrammed and dated upper left: '1931'

provenance: Collection Habbel, Gut Weisham;
sale Ketterer Kunst GmbH, Munich, May 14, 2004, no. 69;
Private Collection, South Germany

exhibited: *Hans Orlowski*, Galerie Wolfgang Gurlitt, Berlin, 1934.

literature: Fritz Schwarzenberger, *Werkverzeichnis Hans Orlowski*, Berlin, 1972, no. 33.

note: The painter and print-maker Hans Otto Orlowski (fig. 1) was born in Insterburg near Königsburg in East Prussia. His father was a tailor and moved the family to Königsberg, Potsdam, and then Charlottenburg. Orlowski first studied at the Academy of Decorative Arts in Berlin from 1911 to 1915. But the First World War interrupted his studies and he served briefly as a soldier in Serbia until he was wounded. He was then employed as a draftsman in the War Ministry, but also began producing his first independent prints. In 1918 he returned to art school and became a member of the Berlin Secession, a progressive group whose members included, among others, Lovis Corinth, Käthe Kollwitz, and Emil Nolde. Orlowski graduated in 1919, and in 1921 he began teaching at the Decorative Arts Academy in Charlottenberg, where he remained until 1945. In 1924 he visited Paris, and his style evolved away from Expressionism to a more realistic, even classical, manner applied primarily to nudes. The artist's first one man exhibition, which included the present painting, was held in Berlin in 1934 at the Wolfgang Gurlitt Gallery, which was renowned for being one of the first in Germany to show Matisse, Kokoschka, Slevogt, Corinth, and Kubin. During the Second World War Orlowski was involved with saving the collection of the Berlin National Gallery. His own workshop and apartment were destroyed and many of his paintings and prints lost. Beginning in 1945 he taught at the Berlin University of the Arts and during his last years received a number of exhibitions throughout West Germany.

In the early 1920s Orlowski's nude studies (figs. 2a-b) displayed the angular, intense Expressionist style that was then current in Germany. But by the late 1920s and into the early 1930s his paintings of nudes become more sensual and more traditional (figs. 3a-c) with great attention devoted to the texture of the flesh. By closely cropping his compositions and excluding any background detail, as in this example, Orlowski was able to achieve an intense directness and even disturbing connection between the model and the viewer. This artistic approach lasted only a short while, as he then evolved a grander, broader neo-classical style for nudes painted in the late 1930s and into the 1940s (figs. 4a-b). Due to the painter's own editing of his works and the destruction of the War, early paintings like this by Orlowski are rare.