

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Herman Euler
(Aschaffenburg 1900 – 1976 Eichbichl)

Portrait of Carletto Thieben

Monogrammed, located and dated at right: *H.E. / München / 1926*

Inscribed upper left: *Carletto / Thieben / Berlin*

Pencil and charcoal on paper

61.2 x 50.1 cm. (24 ¼ x 19 ¾ in.)

Provenance:

Frederick Carspecken, Wilmington;

Acquired from his estate by the previous owner, May 2021;

By whom sold, Bonhams, London, 18 June 2025, lot 86.



This portrait by Hermann Euler from 1926 depicts the dancer Carletto Thieben and reflects the artist's early engagement with expressionist form and a fluid, observational line. It was created during a formative moment in Euler's career, as he developed his mature style in dialogue with the broader movements of German modernism.

Euler, born in Munich in 1900, began painting independently before entering formal study in 1919 at Moritz Heymann's private school. In 1921, he joined the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, studying under Heinrich von Zügel and then Angelo Jank. Around this time, Euler became involved with the Münchner Secession, and began forming close artistic connections, including with his future wife, the painter Daisy Campi. His early work combines academic foundations with an increasingly modern approach to form and atmosphere (fig. 1).



Fig. 1, Hermann Euler, *Self-Portrait*, 1922, 42.5 x 34 cm, oil on canvas, Private Collection

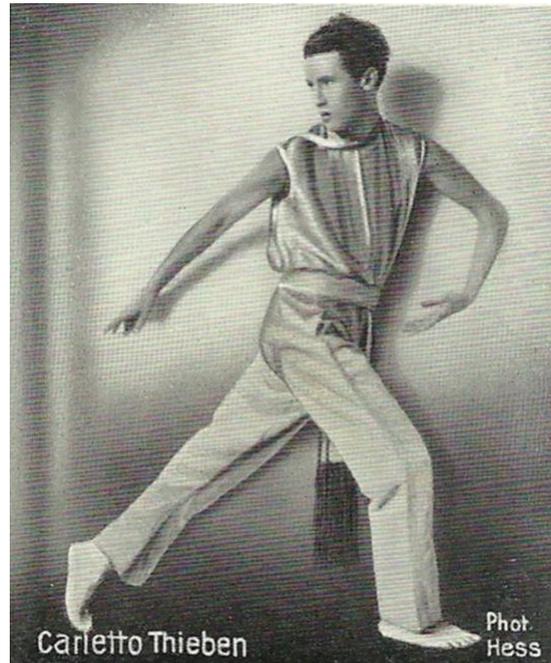


Fig. 2, Card depicting Carletto Thieben, c. 1930

Trained at La Scala, Carletto Thieben (fig. 2) was a principal dancer with Berlin Opera during the 1920s and 1930s. According to *Il Secolo XX*, he had 'a new and exquisitely avant-garde conception of dance,' capable of producing performances 'rich in suggestion and truly artistic effect.' Thieben also partnered onstage with Chinita Ullmann, a major figure in *Ausdruckstanz* (German expressionist dance). Together they performed widely across Europe.

Euler's drawing captures Thieben with a compelling fusion of energy and spontaneity. The line is rapid and searching, conveying both the sitter's sharp features and his theatrical self-presentation, with bow tie, confident pose and expressive hair. The portrait shares stylistic affinities with Ludwig Meidner (fig. 3), particularly in its animated contours and subtle

distortion of form. The drawing's expressiveness lies in its line: looping, soft in places, abrupt and forceful in others.

As with many German artists of the 1920s, Euler's drawings from this period balance an academic understanding of the figure with an emerging modernist language. The influence of his travels, especially to Norway, and his exposure to artists like Edvard Munch, is visible in the psychological sensitivity of the work.

This portrait of Carletto Thieben is not only a lively character study but also a document of cultural exchange, reflecting the intertwined nature of the visual and performing arts in Weimar-era Germany.

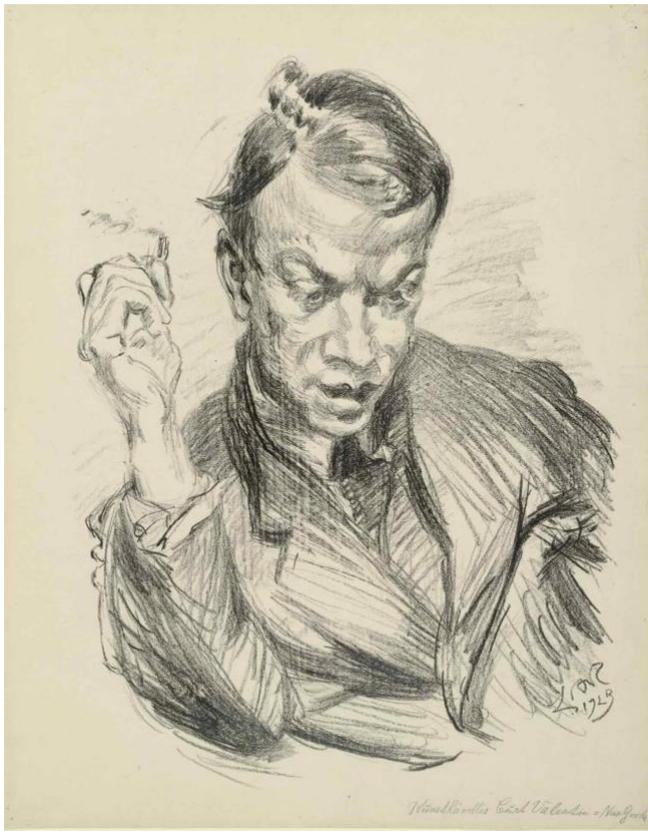


Fig. 3, Ludwig Meidner, *Curt Valentin*, 1923, 63.7 x 49.3 cm, crayon on paper, MOMA