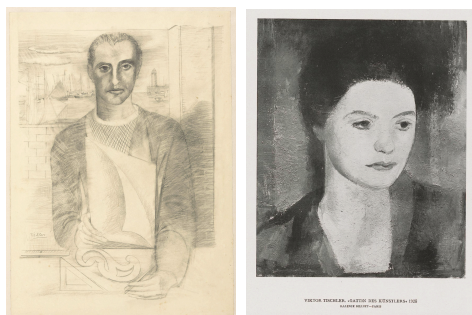


Viktor Tischler: A Life of Art, Persecution, and Exile

By Ariela Braunschweig, 29 May 2025

The rediscovery of Viktor Tischler began with a letter by the artist found at the New York Public Library, in which the artist himself pleaded for support, stating that he had been forced to leave everything behind in Paris and needed funds to continue his career (Annex 1). This personal account, a stark reflection of the struggles faced by Jewish artists displaced by war and persecution, led to a deeper investigation into Tischler's life and work. What emerged was the story of a remarkable yet largely forgotten artist, whose legacy was overshadowed by the devastating impact of Nazi persecution and exile.

Viktor Tischler was born on June 24, 1890, in Vienna into a well-established Jewish family. He studied at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts under Rudolf Bacher and Franz Rumpler, beginning his career as a portrait painter and quickly earning recognition for his work. Initially influenced by Impressionism, his style later evolved to include elements of Expressionism and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement. A prominent family in Viennese modernist circles, the Tischlers



maintained close connections with notable artists and personalities such as Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele, and Alma Mahler-Werfel. In 1917, Tischler married Mathilde (Malka) Ehrlich (1897–1951), an accomplished mezzo-soprano opera singer. Born in 1897, Mathilde began her professional career in Berlin and, by 1911, was performing at prestigious venues in Vienna. Their daughter, Marianne (Manina), was born in 1918 and later became an artist as well.¹

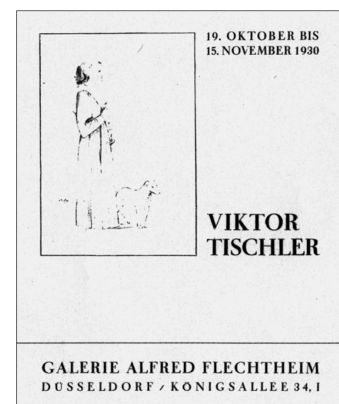
Fig. 1 Viktor Tischler, Self-Portrait, 1905 - 1930, Pencil on Paper, 475 mm x 345 mm.

Photo credit: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (accessed April 7, 2025).

Fig. 2 Viktor Tischler, Wife of the Artist, 1928.

Photo credit: Tietze, Hans: Viktor Tischler, Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration, Vienna (accessed April 7, 2025).

That same year, Tischler co-founded the *Neue Vereinigung*, an association of Jewish artists in Vienna. In 1920, he became a member of the *Hagenbund*, founded in 1900, one of Austria's most progressive artistic groups. Without a formal manifesto, the group embraced a liberal approach to politics and religion, fostering a pan-European artistic network, until it was disbanded in 1938. Many Jewish members, including Georg and Bettina Ehrlich-Bauer, Josef Floch, Lilly Steiner, Robert Kohl, and Fritz Schwarz-Waldeg, were either forced into exile or murdered in concentration camps. In 1924, the art historian Arthur Roessler published a monograph on Tischler's work, featuring 40 reproductions of his paintings and



¹ Manina Jouffroy-Tischler. In: sammlung.belvedere.at. Accessed April 2, 2025 (short bio)

drawings. By 1928, Tischler sought greater artistic freedom, and he relocated to Paris with Mathilde and their daughter. In Paris, Tischler became affiliated with the Paris *Neo-Romantics*, a group with ties to Surrealism and modernist expression. This loosely associated movement included many Jewish painters, such as Eugène Berman (1899–1972), Léonid Berman (1898–1976), Philippe Hosiasson (1898–1978), Léon Zack (1892–1980), Georges Merkel (1881–1976), Josiah Victor Ades (1893–?), Jacques Zucker (dates unknown), and Maurice Grosser. His work was exhibited in 1930 at the Düsseldorf gallery of Alfred Flechtheim, one of the most influential German art dealers of the time, known for promoting both German and French avant-gardes. Tischler's artistic reputation flourished, and in 1935 he was awarded the prestigious Austrian State Prize for his contributions to contemporary art. However, his success was soon threatened by political upheaval.

With the rise of the Nazi regime, Tischler's work was condemned as "Entartete Kunst" (*Degenerate Art*) in 1937, leading to the confiscation and destruction of two of his works from the Gemäldegalerie in Dessau: *Betender* and a *Selbstbildnis* (Annex 2). The Nazis' Entartete Kunst campaign sought to purge Jewish, modernist, and leftist influences from German and Austrian culture, targeting artists like Tischler, who defied the Nazi vision of "pure" German art.

Despite these threats, Tischler remained active in the Parisian art scene. In 1939, he contributed to *Freie Kunst und Literatur*, a publication of German-speaking artists in exile who opposed fascism (Fig. 3).

The *Union des Artistes Allemands Libres* was originally founded in autumn 1937 as the *Union des Artistes Allemands* (Union of German Artists), also referred to as the *Freier Künstlerbund* in German. The group later adopted the French word for "free," becoming the *Union des Artistes Libres Allemands* before settling on its final name, *Union des Artistes Allemands Libres*, in spring 1938.



Fig. 3 *Freie Kunst und Literatur – Mitteilungsblatt des Freien Künstlerbundes*
Issue: Wednesday, 01 March 1939 (Page 3/11)
Data Provider: Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933 - 1945, Frankfurt

Several members of the association were also targeted in the Nazi Entartete Kunst exhibition, which aimed to ridicule and discredit modernist artists. In response, the group organized an exhibition in 1938, held in a Paris trade union building, as a form of artistic resistance. One of the participating artists, photographer Josef Breitenbach, documented the event.²

In 1940, with the Nazi occupation of France, life became increasingly dangerous for Jewish refugees. Tischler was arrested as a foreign national and sent to Camp des Milles, an internment camp in southern France where many Jewish intellectuals and artists were detained.³

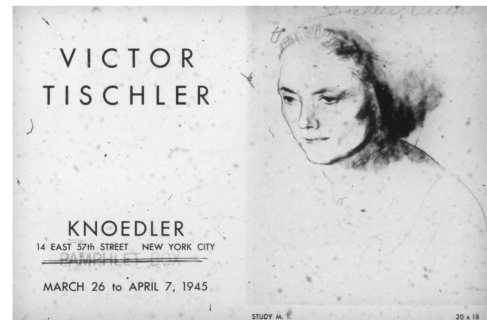
² Holz, Keith, and Wolfgang Schopf. 2001. *Im Auge Des Exils: Joseph Breitenbach Und Die Freie Deutsche Kultur in Paris 1933-1941*. Berlin: Aufbau.

³ Gausmann, Angelika. 1997. *Deutschsprachige Bildende Künstler Im Internierungs- Und Deportationslager Les Milles von 1939 Bis 1942*. 1st ed. Paderborn: Möllmann

As deportations to Nazi death camps escalated, Tischler's life was in imminent danger. His daughter, Manina, who had emigrated to the United States in 1938 with her husband Robert Thoren, helped secure his escape. With financial backing from his family and support from the Emergency Rescue Committee, Tischler and his wife fled France via Lisbon and arrived in New York on May 22, 1941(annex 2).⁴

Tischler had been highly respected in Vienna and Paris, but he struggled to gain recognition in America. He initially lived with his daughter, working on a farm while painting in his free time for an upcoming exhibition. He later settled in New York.

Despite facing professional and financial challenges, Tischler remained dedicated to his art. With the endorsement of his fellow artist Josef Floch, he sought a fellowship in 1944 from the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars. His application requested \$1,500 to fund the creation of paintings for a solo exhibition. In the application he directly described his persecution: "I had been forced to leave all my property, including my paintings, in France where they most likely perished." Though he received partial funding, he never regained the prominence he once had in Europe.⁵ Unlike some European émigrés who managed to establish themselves in the American art world, Tischler remained largely overshadowed, despite two solo exhibitions shortly after the war in 1945 at Knoedler Gallery and in 1946 at Passadoit Gallery in New York.



Feeling disconnected from American culture, Tischler returned to France in 1949, settling in Cannes. There, he focused on painting landscapes, maritime scenes, and historical architecture. Although he continued working, the scars of exile and persecution marked his later years.

Viktor Tischler died on February 25, 1951, in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, France. While much of his oeuvre was lost due to Nazi persecution, his surviving works are housed in major institutions, including the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and the Jüdisches Museum Wien.

Despite his early success in Vienna and Paris, Tischler's name has faded from art historical accounts of modernist painting, likely due to the profound disruption of his career, the loss of many of his works, and his lack of success rebuilding his artistic identity in exile. However, surviving historical documentation and artwork underline the contribution to modernist circles of Viktor Tischer, an artist whose work deserves renewed attention. His life journey, shaped by innovative artistic contributions and a career disrupted by persecution, offers a powerful testament to the resilience of displaced artists in the face of war, loss, and cultural erasure.

⁴ See "Tischler, Victor (also: Robert Thoren), 1940–1942. Emergency Rescue Committee Records, 1936–1956. In Copyright. Part of the German and Jewish Intellectual Émigré Collections. <https://archives.albany.edu/concern/daos/1831d446j?locale=en>

⁵ I.A. Grantees 1933–1946, b. 33 f. 7, Tischler, Victor, 1944–1945, Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars records. Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

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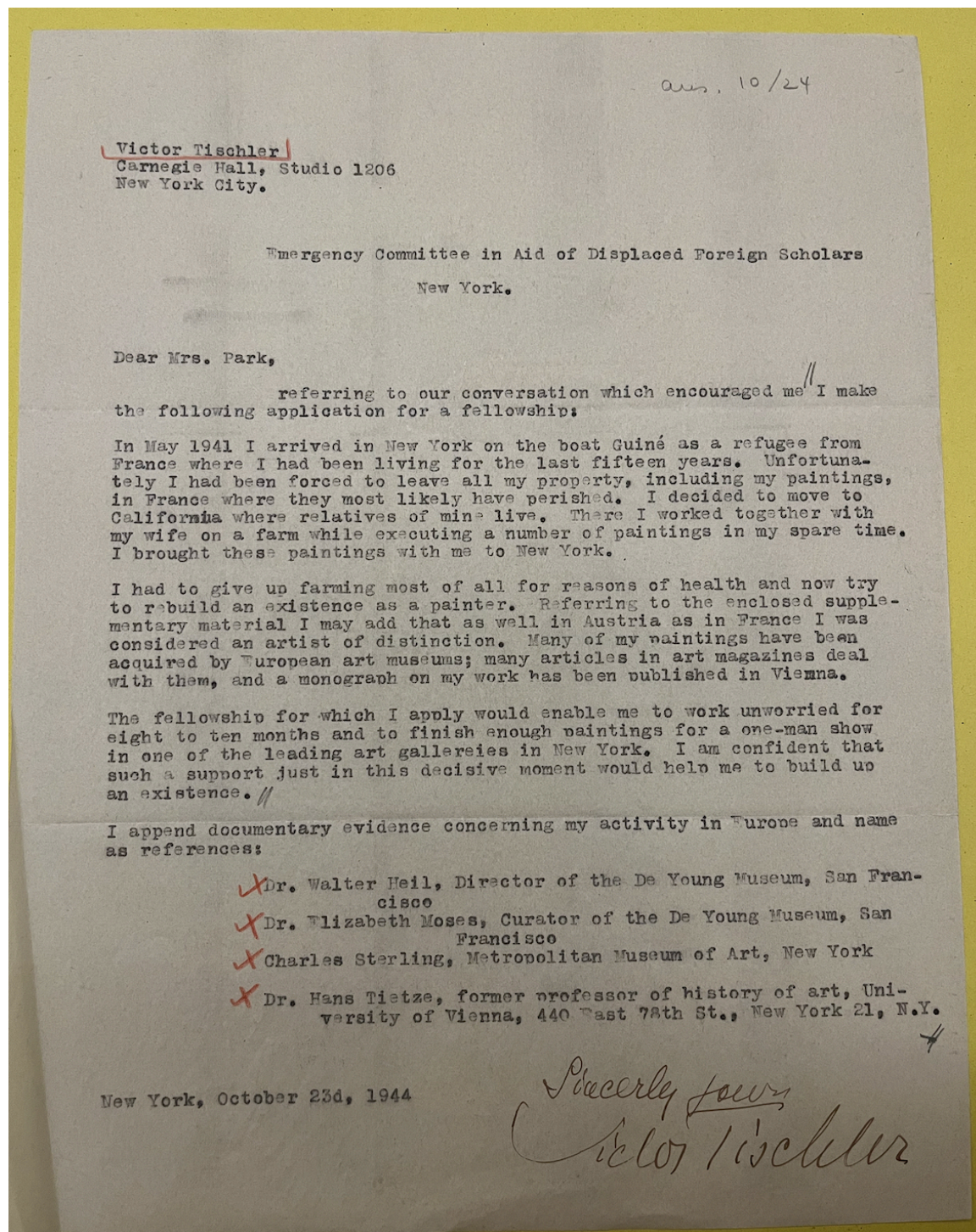
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***Please find additional sources in which Viktor Tischler is mentioned in the artist registry here: [Persecuted Jewish Artists, Viktor Tischler].**

Annex 1



I.A. Grantees 1933-1946, b. 33 f. 7, Tischler, Victor, 1944-1945, Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars records. Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

Annex 2

noch Dessau
Gemäldegalerie

- 3 -

			Techn.	S t a n d	Davis.	RM
69. Schlemmer	(10927)	2 Frauen am Tisch	A		X	
70. Steinhardt	(10960)	Betrunkene	D		X	
71. Stern	(10933)	Erdgeist	D	E.J.	E	
72. "	(10935)	Sumerun	D		X	
73. "	(10957)	Afrikanische Szene	D		X	
74. "	(10958)	Negerin	D	E.J.	EJ	
75. "	(10959)	Afrikanische Szene	D	E.J.	EJ	
76. Tischler	(10955)	Betender	D		X	
77. "	(10956)	Selbstbildnis	D		X	
78. Verschiedene	(11002)	Mappe mit 12 Lithos und Holzschnitte	D	B		
79. Verschiedene	(11003)	Mappe mit 12 Lithos	D	Böhmer	T	
80. "	(11004)	Mappe mit 12 Lithos	D	Dr. Gurlitt	V	1 Sfr.
81. "	(11005)	Mappe mit 12 Lithos	D	"	V	1 Sfr.
82. Wimmer	(10952)	Fabrik	D		X	
83. "	(10953)	Arme Leute	D		X	
84. "	(10954)	Markt	D		X	
85. Franke	(5591)	4 Blätter, Radierung	D		X	
86. Gleichmann	(5594)	Mappe (Chindren) 2 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
87. Graf	(5596)	Drei Blätter 2 Holzschnitte 1 Litho	D		X	
88. Gross	(5596)	Mappe Rose hoch	D		X	
89. Grossmann	(5598)	Mappe Kokain 12 Lithos	D	Dr. Gurlitt	V	1 Sfr.
90. "	(5599)	Boxer, 3 Lithos	D	"	V	1 Sfr.
91. Hartmann	(5598)	Schiffe	D		X	
92. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
93. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
94. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
95. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
96. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
97. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
98. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
99. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	
100. Grosse	(5599)	Mappe: 5 Steinzeichnungen	D		X	

- 3 -

vol. 1, p. 98

"Entartete" Kunst. Digital reproduction of a typescript inventory prepared by the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, ca. 1941/1942. (V&A NAL MSL/1996/7) London: Victoria and Albert Museum, January 2014. <http://vam.ac.uk/entartetekunst> (accessed April 03, 2025).

Annex 3

ORIGINAL
(To be retained by
Clerk of Court)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

774

DECLARATION OF INTENTION
(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

No. 112574

In the DISTRICT of SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

of the UNITED STATES at LOS ANGELES Court

(1) My full, true, and correct name is VICTOR TISCHLER (aka Bill Teedillo)

(2) My present place of residence is 1413 Sierra Mar P.O. Box 1111 Los Angeles, California

(3) I am 51 years old. (4) I was born on 6-24-90 (5) My occupation is Painter

(6) My personal description is as follows: Sex Male, color white, complexion dark, color of eyes brown, color of hair brown, height 5 feet 10 inches, weight 160 pounds, visible distinctive marks None

(7) I am married; the name of my wife or husband is Matilde; we were married on 5-10-17 at Vienna, Austria; he or she was born at Vienna, Austria on 2-5-88 and entered the United States at New York, N.Y. on 5-22-41 for permanent residence in the United States, and now resides at with me

(8) I have one child; and the name, sex, date and place of birth, and present place of residence of each of said children who is living, are as follows: Marianne f 9-11-18 Vienna, Austria - with me

(9) My last place of foreign residence was St. Raphael, France; (10) I emigrated to the United States from Lisbon, Portugal; (11) My lawful entry for permanent residence in the United States was at New York, N.Y. on 5-22-41 under the name of VICTOR TISCHLER SS Guine

(12) Since my lawful entry for permanent residence I have not been absent from the United States, for a period or periods of 6 months or longer, as follows:

DEPARTED FROM THE UNITED STATES			RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES		
PORT	DATE (Month, day, year)	VESSEL OR OTHER MEANS OF CONVEYANCE	PORT	DATE (Month, day, year)	VESSEL OR OTHER MEANS OF CONVEYANCE

(13) I have Not heretofore made declaration of intention: No. In the District of Southern District of California

(14) It is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States and to reside permanently therein. (15) I will, before being admitted to citizenship, renounce absolutely and forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which at the time of admission to citizenship I may be a subject or citizen. (16) I am not an anarchist; nor a believer in the unlawful damage, injury, or destruction of property, or sabotage; nor a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government; nor a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching disbelief in or opposition to organized government. (17) I certify that the photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of me and was signed by me. I do swear (affirm) that the statements I have made and the intentions I have expressed in this declaration of intention subscribed by me are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. SO HELP ME GOD.

SEALED
OF THE
U. S. DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
Los Angeles, California
This 14th day of November, anno Domini 1941
Certification No. 23-105080 from the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, showing the lawful entry for permanent residence of the declarant above named on the date stated in this declaration of intention, has been received by me, and that the photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.

(DO NOT ATTACH PHOTOGRAPH TO THIS COPY OF DECLARATION)

By: A. R. Zimmerman, Clerk U. S. District Court, Southern District of California

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
(Edition of 1-19-41)

450-15119 U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

112551-112700

Ancestry.com. California, U.S., Federal Naturalization Records, 1888–1991. Entry for Victor Tischler. Accessed May 21, 2025. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3998/records/2408479>.