Käthe Kollwitz
(1867 - 1945)
1867: Käthe born in Konigsberg, East Prussia.

(Now Kalingrad in Russia.)
Childhood

- Taught socialism and religion by her grandfather
- Tense political climate

Kollwitz, ‘The seed corn must not be ground,’ Charcoal drawing, 1942.
Childhood

- Death of siblings
- ‘Alice in Wonderland’ syndrome

Kollwitz, ‘Woman with dead child.’
Charcoal sketch, 1904
Art Education

- Lessons in drawing and plaster casting as a child
- Practiced life drawings of sailors and farmers
- Went to women’s art schools in Berlin and Munich

Self Portrait, 189. Black gouache, with brush and gray wash, heightened with white gouache on brown wove paper
40 x 32 cm
Karl Stauffer-Bern, ‘Gustav Freytag’ 1886

Max Klinger, ‘Abduction of Prometheus’ etching, 1894
Proletariat

- 1891: Married a doctor who tended to the poor.
- Drawn to his patients, the working class, as subjects

"It was not until much later...when I got to know the women who would come to my husband for help, and incidentally also to me, that I was powerfully moved by the fate of the proletariat and everything connected with its way of life.... But what I would like to emphasize once more is that compassion and commiseration were at first of very little importance in attracting me to the representation of proletarian life; what mattered was simply that I found it beautiful."
The Weavers - 1896

Riot, etching.

Poverty, lithograph.
The End, etching.
Aufruhr/Revolt, 1899. Original etching, drypoint, aquatint, brush etching, sandpaper and some roulette, 29.5x31.5cm.
'Raped,' 1907. Etching, soft ground and roulette, retouched in graphite, on paper

306 x 522 mm
1903 - Woman with Dead Child

Soft-ground etching and engraving with green and gold wash
1914 - Peter's Death

- Aged 21, Peter killed in WWI conflict
- Kathe and Peter shared ideals
- Guilt of older generations for sacrificing their children to a cause they no longer believe in.
1919 - In Memoriam to Karl Liebknecht
1920s - War, Poverty, Women’s rights

‘The Sacrifice,’ 1922, woodcut.  
‘The Mothers,’ 1922, woodcut.
1932 - ‘The Grieving Parents’
Nazis

- 1933: Kathe expelled from the Prussian Academy of Arts
- Nazi control changed the art world - ‘Degenerate art’ deemed un-German.
- 1936: Kathe’s work labeled ‘Degenerate’ and threatened by Gestapo
1930s - Death series

‘Death Seizing the Mother’

‘Death with Girl in her Lap’
More Tragedy

- 1940: Karl Kollwitz died
- 1942: Grandson Peter killed in WWII
- 1943: Her home and a lot of her work was destroyed

Self Portrait, 1927.
“In days to come people will hardly understand this age. What a difference between now and 1914... People have been transformed so that they have this capacity for endurance.... Worst of all is that every war already carries within the war which will answer it. Every war is answered by a new war, until everything, everything is smashed.”

‘The People,’ 1922. Woodcut.
Websites

MoMa collection:
http://www.moma.org/collection/artists/3201?=undefined&page=1

Kathe Kollwitz Museum website:
http://www.kaethe-kollwitz.de/museum-en.htm