

german art
of the twentieth century



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german art of the twentieth century

by Werner Haftmann Alfred Hentzen William S. Lieberman

edited by Andrew Carnduff Ritchie

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foreword

The exhibition accompanying this book, the first of its kind to be organized in America since Alfred H. Barr Jr.'s pioneering one at the Museum of Modern Art in 1934, has been designed to present as comprehensive a showing of German twentieth-century art as our museum space will permit. It is a qualitative selection, nevertheless, and while all the major German artists of this century are represented, usually by two or more examples of their work, some quite reputable painters and sculptors had to be omitted. This has been done not only for space reasons, but also to avoid the possible tediousness of a survey of more artists than the average gallery visitor is able or willing to digest at one viewing. Fortunately for the reader of this book, both German authors, Dr. Haftmann and Dr. Hentzen, have availed themselves of the opportunity to discuss and to illustrate a number of artists and their works which it was not found possible to include in the exhibition. On the other hand, because of the importance of prints in German twentieth-century art, William S. Lieberman, Curator of Prints, of the Museum of Modern Art, who has been wholly responsible for the print selection in the exhibition, has included and discussed a quite extensive body of graphic work, practically all of it drawn from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Print Room of the Museum of Modern Art.

The exhibition begins with the artists of Die Brücke expressionist movement, from its inception about 1905, coincident with the rise of the Fauves in France. It continues through the next wave of German expressionism, known as Der Blaue Reiter, begun in 1911, the Neue Sachlichkeit or New Realism at the end of and immediately after the first World War, the Bauhaus movement of the 1920s and early '30s and, ignoring the false pathos and propaganda art of the Nazi regime, concludes with a highly selective representation of some of the leading artists of post-World War II Germany.

As the one chiefly responsible for the selection of the paintings and sculpture in the exhibition (Dr. Haftmann and Dr. Hentzen have given valuable advice in their respective fields, as has Dr. Kurt Martin, Director of the Fine Arts Academy, Karlsruhe), I have, of course, attempted to secure the finest possible examples of each artist's work; and whatever quality the exhibition possesses is surely due to the extraordinarily generous response of German and American collectors, both public and private, to our requests for loans.

In the preparation of an exhibition as extensive as this one, I have been indebted to many people, not all of whom can be mentioned by name. I wish especially, however, to express my gratitude to the following: The Government of the German Federal Republic for its sponsorship of the exhibition, its grant of funds to cover the costs of shipping and the insuring of all German loans, and its subsidizing of part of the cost of the publication of this book; the Matthew T. Mellon Foundation for a generous grant for this publication; the lenders to the exhibition, whose names appear on page 5; Morton D. May, for his enthusiastic and generous support of the exhibition and book; the directors and curators of American museums, too numerous to list, who graciously advised me of twentieth-century German works in their respective cities; Dr. Bruno Werner, Cultural Counselor to the German Embassy, Washington, D. C., and Dr. Kurt Martin for their great help in working out details of organization; Dr. Leopold Reidemeister, Director of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, and Dr. Will Grohmann for their kindness in introducing me to many private collections in Germany and for their advice in general; for valuable advice in the selection of the exhibition: Dr. W. R. Valentiner, Director, The North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, and Charles L. Kuhn, Curator, Busch-Reisinger Museum of Germanic Culture, Harvard University; for assistance in the preparation of the English text on painting and sculpture: Miss Greta Daniel, Associate Curator of Design, Department of Architecture and Design, Museum of Modern Art, Sam Hunter, Associate Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, and Professor H. W. Janson, Chairman of the Department of Fine Arts, Washington Square College, New York University; Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon for her exceptional services in the organization of the exhibition; Mrs. Dorothy Simmons and Mrs. Jane Sabersky Isaacson for the index; Miss Frances Pernas, who has seen this book through the press; Charles Oscar, who designed it, and finally, Mrs. Marianne Flack, who has been responsible for the cataloging of the exhibition and for all the details of correspondence in connection with it.

ANDREW CARNDUFF RITCHIE
Director of the Exhibition

painting

Is there such a thing as a "German" modern art? Is not German merely a geographical term, an historical convention which identifies certain unchangeable and inalienable ways of thought, imagination, and expression with national and language boundaries?

For we all know that one of the most astonishing and significant characteristics of modern man is the really tremendous expansion of his historical and spatial consciousness. The past exists for us in a simultaneous present: the timeless immobility of Egypt, the majesty of ancient Greece, the spiritual magnificence of Byzantium, and the visionary expressiveness of the early peoples of Northern and Western Europe, the precise definition of reality of the Italian Renaissance, the ecstatic illusionism of the Baroque. And this is not all that has gone to shape the consciousness of modern man. He has also heard the voices of the magical cultures of Peru, of Mexico, of pre-Columbian America, and responded to the contemplative poise of the East Asians, the sensuousness of India, and the mysterious sign languages of Africa. All of these cultures have affected us and are a part of modern sensibility.

Similarly there has been a wide expansion of our geographic sense. Modern means of communication, the international scope of commerce, politics, engineering, and transportation, have related the whole world to the individual in his daily life. We may assume that it is an imperative of our time to achieve the spiritual mastery of our expanding global environment and the development of our deepening perspectives of time and space. This global image of the world, arising from practical experience and a new historical consciousness, must be balanced by a corresponding humanitarianism and an adjustment in the emotional life of the individual. It requires a broad human vision which will control the pure thirst for knowledge and prevent it from plunging us into anxiety and despair, as has happened in the realm of modern science.

Art is a fundamental reflection of man's emotional make-up. In fact, the advanced art of our century clearly responded to this new vision of a global culture long before public awareness of it. Suddenly old and remote cultures came alive: the prehistoric, the exotic, the primitive. At the same time the plastic arts of the twentieth century, Fauvism, Cubism, Constructivism, abstract art, Surrealism, were immediately projected upon a supra-national plane, as if all the nations concerned were subject to the same drives and compulsions. Today the impact of Picasso, Klee, and Kandinsky is world-wide.

Modern architecture is the most striking example. Its creative idiom is now international. We must realize the significance of the fact that, for the first time in history, an architect such as Le Corbusier is currently building a city in India (with the open hand as its symbol), and at the same time acting as consultant to city planners in Persia and Colombia, constructing an urban housing development in Marseilles, replanning the city center of St. Dié, and designing buildings for Berlin. It should be noted that Le Corbusier's commissions have not followed in the wake of political conquest, as did those of the architects of the Alexandrian empire, but have been the result rather of a spirit of international cooperation and understanding. Moreover it was in Dessau, an insignificant German town, that the Bauhaus ideas were first developed, ideas of the inter-relationship of the arts which in a short time received international recognition. They have altered our concepts of living space and the design of objects for everyday use.

The importance of the Bauhaus ideas is common knowledge. However there are other impulses originating in Germany which have not received the recognition they deserve. I shall not stress influences of a more personal and ephemeral nature, such as Beckmann's activity in America, or Kirchner's in Switzerland. Let me mention only in passing the great liberating role played by Max Ernst in international Surrealism. More important, it seems to me, has been the particular way in which the German spirit responds to the world and how these responses have affected the sensibilities of other peoples. Paul Klee expressed in his painting and writings one of these facets of the German spirit. He reflected the idea, already implicit in German Romanticism (Novalis, Goethe!), that the visible world of nature is only one manifestation of a much more comprehensive, creative force. Beyond the visible are a multitude of other truths out of which man, from the depths of his being, discovers forms that possess an inner necessity and a natural validity. The Russian Wassily Kandinsky (living however in a German environment) proclaimed another fundamental insight, that creative man is able to report on the world and on life without having to rely on physical appearances. This approach to reality was the essence of abstract painting. Both the above approaches were extraordinarily influential, and radically transformed artistic sensibilities throughout the world. Their spiritual birthplace lay in the northeastern European world of expression, and they could have originated only there. Two other impulses of importance in contemporary art, stemming from the same expressive sources, are found in the work of Hans Hartung and of Wols. Although they both are regarded as members of the École de Paris, they are actually of German origin and are immersed in the northeastern European mode of expression.

At the 1955 international congress of abstract art held in Venice, the well-known Italian artist, Gino Severini, deplored the decline of the Latin spirit of clarity and order caused by the younger painters' addiction to northeastern European Expressionism.

Though stated negatively, this complaint made a positive point. Indeed, we find today a strong international tendency among younger artists towards an abstract Expressionism which releases all their psychic and emotional impulses, a general movement now labeled by such diverse terms as Tachism, Spatialism, and Neo-Expressionism. In time it will be recognized that Wols and Hartung were pioneers of this movement.

Although Germany has made several important contributions toward the development of modern painting, it must be recognized that German artists have not worked in isolation. They could not have achieved what they did unless they had been in contact with the rest of Europe, and particularly with the extraordinarily logical and positive French mind, as represented by an artistic evolution extending from Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, van Gogh to Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Delaunay, and Juan Gris.

In speaking of this German contribution, and even of a specific approach of the German mind, I have evidently fallen into a contradiction, having just emphasized the supra-regionalism of modern art. Plastic systems and styles are not isolated things. They have a formal correspondence to a more comprehensive system of relationships in which man of a given period is involved, and into which is tightly woven his attitude to the world and to himself. They are based, therefore, upon a broad human foundation. But this foundation is affected by his surroundings and his origins, by tradition and national peculiarities. We can only understand the interaction of national and international factors in the formation of modern styles if we recognize that modern art is essentially a composite pictorial system to which individuals and regionally determined forces have contributed. Jean Jaurès once expressed poetically a wish which promises to become a reality today: that the peoples of the earth should be like a bouquet of flowers, in which each flower has its own perfume and color, and yet is essential to the effect of the whole bouquet. I believe this concept, which envisages a world-wide federation, exactly illustrates the nature of modern art. And it is a striking fact of our time.

But if this is so, it must be possible to define more precisely those special qualities that give modern German art its individual character within the larger whole.

Characteristics of German Painting

Actually they are not too difficult to define. Since a picture is a visual fact, it is more appropriate to arrive at insight by actual looking than by a discussion of general ideas. Let us therefore compare a few pictures, first a modern French painting and then a modern German painting. As an example, *Le Luxe* of 1907 by Henri Matisse, representing three female nudes in the open air (page 16). In this classical theme we are immediately struck by the predominance of large uniform color surfaces and decorative, linear

qualities. The contours detach themselves from the object to become a simple expressive arabesque which plays over the entire surface in a rhythmic, dance-like movement. When the melodic line of the arabesque so requires, natural forms are distorted without hesitation. Such transformations are also evident in the proportions given to the figures which are governed only by compositional considerations, and which ignore traditional laws of perspective. Here we are obviously confronted with a new pictorial concept of space. The recessions of natural space are translated into flat plane surfaces; the atmospheric element in space has been absorbed into the color surface. The picture presents a series of large, calm, superimposed planes which pulsate under the effects of color. We also note that light has lost its character of directional illumination; it has become an independent force emanating from the color areas. Color as an expressive vehicle, quite apart from its representational function, is the dominant factor in this pictorial scheme. Every plastic element – line, form, color, light, space – has been made largely self-sufficient pictorially, creating and composing the independent field of the painting, the "evocative surface." In this autonomous pictorial field, in this autonomous pictorial space, in this autonomous pictorial light, in this autonomous dialectical arrangement of the formal elements, there arises the "espace spirituel," as Matisse calls it, the spiritual space in which beauty discovered in visible nature is elevated above the natural phenomenon and appears as a harmony. This is the pictorial structure of a new kind of painting, which does not reproduce anything actually seen, but evokes a new harmony, "parallel to nature," as its responsive counterpart – the "evocative picture." In it nature can be converted into an independent pictorial arrangement, in it the creative mind can pursue the fancies that reflect its attitude to life. Sensibility is ordered with a fine, clear, cool regularity, and it is articulated systematically within the tonal structure of the pictorial means. An "expression intime" comes to the fore as content.

Now let us compare this with a German painting, E. L. Kirchner's, *Nude with Hat* (opposite), also done in the year 1907. We recognize the same structural composition without being able to assume any direct influence. Again we see the evocative surface, to which arabesque, form, color, light, and space are linked. But the employment of these agents is quite different, achieving a communication that can no longer be termed "expression intime." The lines are strangely hard, angular, like those of a woodcut, and the incised lines of a gem cutter. The shapes are aggressively restless and clearly linked to the primeval-barbaric forms of primitive races. Color is sharp. The light in the picture is restless and bouncing. The surface is fragmented and nervously subdivided. Thus all the pictorial agents have been handled in such a way as to raise the painting above the tranquilly harmonious and the eurythmically decorative into the sphere of almost violent expression. In fact, the mood of this painting, its communicated content which is incorporated into the formal structure, exhibits a psychic restlessness contrasting strangely

opposite, Kirchner: *Nude in Hat*. 1907. Oil on canvas, 84 x 25 3/4". Städtischen Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, on loan from private collection (*)



Matisse: *Le Luxe, II*. 1907. Casein, 82 1/2 x 54 3/4". Statens Museum for Kunst, J. Rump Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark (*)

(*) not in the exhibition



with the Arcadian calm of Matisse's painting. Whereas the French picture is characterized by the self-sufficiency of its harmonious architecture, the resonant décor, the German painting exhibits the forcing of the pictorial means toward enhanced expression, more profound content, psychic illustration.

Both 1907 paintings denote a definite stage in the development of modern art, which is called Fauvism in France and early Expressionism in Germany. The situation greatly changed however only a few years later when Cubism took over. Let us consider the wonderful picture, *Violin and Pitcher*, painted by Georges Braque in 1910 (page 48). At first glance the design of the painting seems to be quite different from that by Matisse, even in its stylistic origins. Matisse is in the line of Gauguin and Seurat, while Braque derives from Cézanne. But when we analyze the formal composition of this painting in detail, we find astonishing analogies. We see the same rearrangement of the means and their liberation from the representational function. A formal structure rhythmically extending over the surface breaks and crushes the continuum of natural space. The positive shapes of objects and the negative shapes of surrounding nature produce a shifting spatial movement which fuses with and agitates the picture surface. Space itself takes on shape. It loses its naturalistic function as atmospheric envelope and achieves pictorial independence; in its dramatic movement of the surface it becomes an expressive medium of communication. A central point of reference for perspective no longer exists, nor is there a fixed source of illumination. Light itself is released from its naturalistic function and is independently employed according to the accents required by the architecture of the painting. This independent pictorial field, in expressive motion, again possesses the character of an evocative surface. In fact all the depth-suggesting elements in the picture tend to bend back into the surface (note the pitcher). Objects are analyzed, presented prismatically, and emerge as the building blocks of the compositions. They are translated into geometrical structures (cf. the violin), and analyzed from various points of view simultaneously. The observer can completely reconstruct the object in his imagination out of these evocative symbols on the surface. The shapes into which the objects are dissected interpenetrate and relate themselves to each other, transforming the resulting spatial divisions into rigid patterns. An intellectual rather than an optical perception of phenomena becomes the visible content of the picture. Through persistent transformation, the familiar appearance of the representational picture is completely changed, the new picture is born, the evocative picture. As in Matisse! And, as with Matisse, it achieves an architectural harmony, a self-contained formal order.

Now let us look at another German painting: Franz Marc's, *Animal Destinies*, done in 1913 (page 49). It is unnecessary to dwell upon the similarity of the design to its French counterpart. It is quite apparent: we recognize at a glance the same elements, again rearranged to achieve their pictorial independence, and the structure of what we

have called the "evocative picture." But, something has been added – and something has been taken away. The picture is remarkably restless and dynamic, pregnant with meaning. We see an expressive space magically illuminated with color and light, in which all poetic transformations seem possible. In this there are imbedded concrete symbols, symbols of animals. These symbols are not accidental; they are integral images taken from nature, which assemble into a typical shape the appearance and essence of the animal. They have a particular job to do in the realm of this picture. They link the abstract organism of the picture to poetic experience that had its origin in nature, and indicate the distance that the creative sensibility of the painter has traveled from its starting point. This "surfacing at another place," as Franz Marc once defined the nature of his artistic activity, removes the accidental and particular experience to a distant poetic sphere, where the general, meaningful, and spiritual qualities within it are realized. A symbol emerges from a fortuitous impulse. Thus this picture is not a harmonious self-sufficient composition; it records the legend of the death and sacrifice of all creatures in nature's hours of destiny, when "the trees display their rings and animals their arteries," as Marc wrote on the back of this painting. Therefore it also possesses the function of illustration. When we compare it with the French picture, it does not aim at the same clear compactness of composition and form; it seems to want to describe other, more comprehensive facts of experience. It is more of an illustration in the higher sense of the term, more a poetic metaphor of universal experience that includes the entire man.

Now for a last comparison, dating from the third decade of the century, in which there began a new geometrization of painting which endeavored to achieve a more universal harmony of measure, number, and proportion. Let us take one of Léger's monumental pictures, the *Three Women* of 1924 (page 20), which celebrates in a classical theme the experience of the modern workaday world and of technological civilization. We again recognize the formal structure of the "evocative picture" and marvel at the smooth, machine-like precision of form and the stability of the geometrical arrangement of the picture's architecture, the cool, logical exactitude of its intuitive mathematics. When we compare with this picture Schlemmer's *Group of Fourteen* (page 24), we find a totally different mood, an almost mystical belief in the pictorial significance of the human figure. It is a true image of ideas! Schlemmer attempts, by means of a common spiritual denominator, to harmonize the severe ideality of geometry with the forms of living organic matter. He considers man as the focal point of all material and spiritual, rational, and mystical relationship. He develops a supra-individual, generic symbol – an iconic sign – for the human image as the plastic expression of this belief. This is the fulcrum, the starting point, and center of the composition. Opposed to it there is the dynamic element – space. It is the medium of "internal motion." In this space the figures



Braque: *Still Life with Violin and Pitcher*. 1909-10. Oil on canvas, 46 1/2 x 28 3/4". Kunstmuseum, Basel, on loan from private collection, Paris (*)

are assigned their places in terms of a formal contest between figure and space that is resolved in a tension-filled design. Here we recognize quite clearly a reflection of Franz Marc's final, highly romantic intention: to give visible expression to what he called the "underlying mystical design of the world," felt and reflected in man.

I think that these comparisons are very instructive. We have seen that the particular modern paintings considered possess similar formal structures and exhibit the same pictorial intentions. For them we have employed such terms as the "evocative surface" and the "evocative picture." We have, therefore, managed to gain an insight, to experience visually the common attributes, the higher relationships, the supra-national element in modern painting. But we have also seen how German paintings exhibit quite specific characteristics within this general structure. We have noted a peculiar restlessness and compression of the new pictorial architecture, which corresponds to a strange deepening of the expressive range, a style of restrained romanticism full of intense adoration of nature and poetic content. The Germans do not conceive of the picture



Marc: *Animal Destinies (Tierschicksale)*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 77 1/4 x 104 3/4". Kunstmuseum, Basel (*)

as a self-contained entity, existing only as an object with its autonomous architecture, harmony, order, and form, they also see it as a metaphor of more comprehensive spiritual experiences, as an illustration of man's relation to the universe.

Illustration? That seems to be a derogatory word. But here I agree with the painters themselves. In the summer of 1914 Franz Marc wrote to August Macke, expressly referring to a similar opinion stated by Paul Klee: "I am a German and can only plow my own field, what do I care about the 'peinture' of the French? We Germans are and remain born illustrators even as painters." In fact, we might reduce the difference of formal expression between the French and Germans to this simple pair of concepts: "décor" versus "illustration," provided that we are prepared to restore to these two simple and therefore misused words, "decorative" and "illustrative," their entire spiritual dignity and significance.

General Conditions

These specific characteristics also bear the stamp, of course, of the conditions out of which modern German painting arose. They are quite different, much more complicated and more contradictory than those of French painting. French painting developed with an astonishing consistency. The road from Delacroix and Courbet through Manet to the Impressionists, the subsequent crossings of Impressionist boundary lines of pure optical seeing by Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, and Seurat, the development of a new concept of painting based upon inner vision by the Nabis, Toulouse-Lautrec, and the Neo-Impressionists, and, finally, the resolute conclusions reached by the Fauves and



Léger: Three Women (Le grand déjeuner), 1921.
Oil on canvas, 72 1/4 x 99". The Museum of Modern Art,
New York, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund (*)



Schlemmer: Group of Fourteen in Imaginary Architecture,
1930. Oil and tempera on canvas, 35 7/8 x 47 1/4".
Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne (*)

the Cubists – all of this displays a remarkable, faultless logic. One developed out of the other and called forth the third in small, coherent steps. None of this is to be found in Germany, here the situation is strangely blurred and disjointed at the beginning of the century. We need not think of the painters who stood in the forefront of fashionable taste during the Kaiser Wilhelm boom years and masked the true artistic developments – the military, historical, and portrait painters of the era, such as Anton von Werner, Piloty, Defregger, and Lenbach – for France also had its share of such traditionalists in its Meissonniers and Bouguereaus. This picture is very contradictory even in the higher ranks of art. On the one hand, we have the aristocratic idealism of Hans von Marées, who stems from the great draftsmen of the Italian Renaissance and formulates his doctrine of the inward concept of images taken from visible nature but developed from pure perception, which is so strangely parallel to the thinking of Cézanne. Just before the turn of the century Marées was accorded the recognition that was denied him during his lifetime (he died in Rome in 1887), mainly as the result of the clear interpretation of his plastic thought by Konrad Fiedler, and the theoretical work of the sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand. What continued to live in his ideas was this extension and clarification of pure perception by the inner imagination, and the emphasis upon design and form. "The Problem of Form" was the title of the well-known book by Adolf von Hildebrand, which was based upon the ideas of Marées. On the other hand, there was Böcklin's world of highly romantic images. This not only contained a new mythology

of the romantic German feeling for nature, and transformed a new spirituality of nature into figurative allegories, but also charged composition and form with new content. The architecture of the picture was put to the service of nature poetry, and color was intensified to a richness of expression uncommon in the past. Klinger and Franz von Stuck adopted this manner of painting. Von Stuck combined it with the concept of the Jugendstil, provided a forum for it in the Munich Secession founded in 1893, and transmitted it to the younger generation in his work as a teacher in the Munich Academy after 1895. Such important figures as Klee and Kandinsky were pupils of Stuck.

Opposed to this high-strung romantic idealism was a quiet, simple mode of nature painting whose master was Wilhelm Leibl. And this naturalistic tendency similarly split into two distinct movements which were also geographically separated. One had as its champion Max Liebermann, with its center of action the Berlin Secession founded in 1892, and as its background the new metropolitan society of Berlin whose esthetic views were sharply opposed to the imperial court and its representational arts that extolled the military and the empire. The new, unassuming, and personal nature-painting was the artistic reflection of the democratic and liberal ideas of these circles, and comprised German Impressionism. It entered into contact with French Impressionism at an early date, to be sure, but it was also based upon a provincial development of its own in the paintings of Menzel. Its immediate source was not in France, but in the Netherlands, in Dutch plein-air painting, as developed by Jongkind (who in turn was stimulated by the Barbizon school), and by Israel. This rather Nordic origin left a very characteristic mark upon German Impressionism, in the remarkable preference for poetic figure groups and in a lyrical concept of nature. The two strongest powers contributing to Berlin Impressionism at the beginning of the century, Slevogt and Corinth, had begun originally with romantic figure painting.

The romanticism that affected German art found eloquent expression in highly poetic landscape painting that intensified a feeling for nature and an exalted human mood, painting that must really be called German nature lyricism. Curiously corresponding to the Pont-Aven circle of painters inspired by Gauguin, and to the Breton and Scottish landscape schools, groups of painters formed artist colonies in North and South Germany and tried to capture the spirit of unspectacular nature in their paintings of out-of-the-way, unspoiled villages, heaths, and marshes. As far back as 1890 a group of painters came together in the small village of Worpswede, in North Germany, and soon thereafter arose the school of Dachau in southern Germany. By 1895 the Worpswede painters had already captured the gold medals in the Munich Crystal Palace exhibition, thus attaining official recognition. German nature lyricism was of considerable importance in the rise of German Expressionism. Nolde, Rohlf, and Paula Modersohn-Becker grew out of it directly. As a matter of fact, here we find the germs of an Expressionist inter-

pretation of nature, and of the things and forces within it. In the violet pools of water in the marshes, in the blaze of the evening sun, with the large simple silhouettes of houses and trees against the glowing heavens, in the simple gestures of people who worked the soil, there lay a great temptation to express the primitive essence of this nature and its quality of myth by heightening and simplifying forms and colors. Only the shadows of the old romantic tradition still obscured the expressive possibilities latent in the pictorial means themselves, in line, form, and color.

But now an attitude penetrated into this complex milieu from the unexpected direction of the applied arts, meeting these latent possibilities of expression more than halfway. This was the Jugendstil. It derived its name from the magazine *Jugend*, founded in Munich in 1896, which became the spokesman of the new movement, together with the satirical magazine *Simplizissimus* founded at the same time, and *Pan* which Meier-Graefe first published in 1895. The movement had broad international connections. It was allied to the English arts and crafts movement initiated by Morris and Ruskin, whose magazine *The Studio*, founded in 1893 and widely distributed in Germany, had become the vehicle of the English ideas. But the Jugendstil was also closely connected with the Belgian and Scottish applied-arts movements and with French Art Nouveau. Hence before French Impressionism itself had really taken root in Germany, the bold ideas that supplanted it were already at work in the German milieu. They were the ideas of the French Nabis, whose organ of publication was *La Revue Blanche*, founded in 1891. Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis, and Sérusier, with their flat décor and artificially simple "gaucherie," were important influences. In the case of Sérusier and Maurice Denis these influences were early associated with a romantic religious revival which rapidly came into contact with a similar trend in Germany in the school of monastic painting of Kloster Beuron and Father Desiderius Lenz. Then there was Toulouse-Lautrec, but above all there was French Neo-Impressionism. In the very late works of Seurat, such as *Le Chahut* of 1890, a new organization of the picture surface had been developed. An expressive, undulating arabesque gathered the defining contours of objects into its rhythmic flow, and over the surface, consisting of tiny dots of pure pigment, spread a curiously magical radiance of color. Paul Signac had picked up these suggestions of Seurat, and from them developed a highly decorative style of painting which often reached the phantasmagorical in color expression. He based his style upon a theory that emphasized the constructive and expressive possibilities of the pure pictorial means. His book "From Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism" appeared in German translation in 1899, after Germany had already seen exhibitions of his work. This book contained revolutionary statements: "Art as creation is superior to the copying of nature." An entirely new concept of painting was set forth: "Facing his blank canvas, the painter should above all decide which lines and surface effects, which colors and tones are to cover it . . . He



Caricature from *Simplicissimus*. 1896 (*)

plays with the range of his colors . . . Surrendering completely to the pleasure of controlling the play and struggle of the seven prismatic colors, he is like a musician who varies the seven notes of the scale. He will adapt line, chiaroscuro, and color to the character he wants the picture to have. By subordinating color and line to the emotion he feels, the painter becomes a poet, a creator." These were the ideas that had so profound an effect in the German milieu.

A satirical drawing (above) dating from 1896 provides an insight into a German studio of the time better than any words can do. The figure of the artist, which typifies the "modern" artist of that period, is shown with a gay candor. He is the dandy type, the peculiar artistic stylization of the English gentleman that Walter Pater had sketched, and Oscar Wilde had personified for the entire decade, though strangely blended with the French "decadent" typical of the French Symbolist movement, and all in a cloud of German "profundity," of course. We can easily imagine the literary texts from which this painter had formulated his attitude to life: doubtless from Oscar Wilde, but also from Baudelaire, from Strindberg and, of course, from Nietzsche. (The very first issue of *Pan* in 1895 begins with Nietzsche's "Zarathustra before the King.") The paintings represented in this drawing are as complex as the artist himself. In the representation of Salome with the head of John, and in the shrieking Medusa head, we see the studiously literary, demonic quality of Stuck. The picture of the snake, dagger, and lily, and

the portrait of a woman elaborately framed by linear decoration and doubtlessly called Sphinx, show the fascination with allegory and the ornamental line of the Jugendstil. On the easel at the right we find a motif that is especially treasured by the school of German nature lyricism, *Girl Playing a Flute in a Spring Landscape*. In the background there is a seascape which belongs to the stock of motifs of the Impressionist plein-air group; and in the foreground there is a picture whose Pointillist manner confirms for us the influence of Neo-Impressionism. Thus we see how many diverse tendencies of a human, literary, and formal nature made their way into a German painter's studio of the time! But there is something they all had in common: the effort to elevate painting to a poetic level where the significance of pure color and of expressive arabesque are fully realized.

In fact, the Jugendstil already carried within it an awareness of the expressive possibilities of the pictorial means themselves, and that awareness eventually and logically led to abstract painting. The very concept of "abstract style" arose shortly before 1900, as a term to designate an ornamental manner developed from non-objective arabesques, and it is opposed to the "floral style" which represented flowers, tendrils, and creepers. The spokesman for the abstract style was the Belgian, Henri van de Velde, who propagated in Germany toward the end of the century the ideas of Art Nouveau and of Neo-Impressionism developed in Paris. He insisted upon abstract style because it seemed to him that the natural form merely blurred the expressive power of the pictorial means. "A line," he taught, "is a force; it derives its force from the energy of the man who drew it."

This agreed with the ideas circulating in Germany. The apostle of Jugendstil, Hermann Bahr, preached the "music of colors" and looked for a public "that no longer demands any object, but is happy to listen to the music of colors." The painter and architect Endell wrote of "the power of pure colors over the human mind"; the sculptor Obrist talked of the psychic power of abstract forms; and the psychologist Theodor Lipps delivered lectures at the University of Munich on the psychic effect of "organized lines," lectures which enjoyed considerable repute among artists. All of this prior to and around 1900! Endell did a giant relief in free abstract forms on the façade of the Elvira Photo Studio in Munich, while Obrist designed embroidery and called one of these largely abstract designs *Crack of the Whip*. His decorative designs for fountains could be regarded, no doubt, as early forms of abstract sculpture. It is from suggestions such as these that the painter Hölzel was stimulated to explore the laws which govern purely pictorial means and to investigate their capacity to express the spiritual element in art. In the guise of ornamental forms, the first unflinching steps were taken toward the complete abandonment of pictures derived from the actual phenomena of nature. A number of artists turned to abstract symbols which were drawn from the more arbitrary expressive tendencies of a nature lyricism and to the abstract-constructive arrangement of colors found in Neo-Impressionism. A distant objective flashed into view: by continuously

spiritualizing, charging, and condensing the ornamental and the decorative, it became possible to build a bridge from applied art to a new free domain in which art itself became an expressive movement, the reproduction and evocation of spiritual stimuli in an allegory of free color forms. Although these German experiments did not produce a pictorial genius, we must not overlook the extraordinary perspective they set forth. They led straight from the abstract style of the Jugendstil and the arguments associated with it to the abstract painting of Kandinsky, which was born directly out of this climate.

And now the encouraging example of great individuals began to take effect in this pregnant milieu. First there was the Norwegian Edvard Munch, who had had his first big show in Berlin as far back as 1892, and to whom a group of leading poets and writers on art in Berlin had dedicated a book as early as 1895. Actually Munch was a painter who was able to turn all the aspirations of the decade into pictures in which the myth of the world of Nordic destiny was embodied in a completely new, bold manner of giving expressive value to forms and colors. Then there was the Swiss, Ferdinand Hodler, whose broad ornamental approach and emotion-charged, rhythmic organization of the canvas by gestural and formal repetition appealed so strongly to German artists. And now the French began to be more and more influential: first the late Impressionists, and especially Monet, whose shimmering color this German milieu could reinterpret in terms of the fabulous and phantasmagoric just as they did with the open color designs of the Neo-Impressionists. And soon there appeared the great revolutionaries, Gauguin and van Gogh; Cézanne significantly remained in the background even though the Berlin National Gallery under Hugo von Tschudi had acquired a painting by him as early as 1899. This entire structure was supported, and provided with spiritual underpinning, mainly by a select group of museum curators, writers on art, collectors and art teachers, such as Hugo von Tschudi, Count Harry Kessler, Julius Meier-Graefe, Alfred Lichtwarck, Ernst Osthaus, and Henri van de Velde. And it is this group of sensitive spirits that began to trace the sources of man's first and most primitive expression. Here, then, are the origins of the preoccupation with the early forms of art, with the mode of expression of primitive peoples, with folk art, and the drawings of children. Here again we find a sign post, pointing to a new goal.

This cursory summary would not be complete, however, if we did not at least call attention to the general spiritual background and framework of these developments. For the German "fin-de-siècle" was in a state of powerful spiritual fermentation which was undermining all the barriers of tradition and convention. Wagner's mythic symbolism had already produced an excited response. Now the visionary ideas of the Rosicrucians and the obscure verbal splendor and subtle sensibility of the French Symbolists flooded in from the West. And from the North, with Ibsen, Strindberg and Jacobsen, there came a new, complicated psychological view of man, displaying the many facets

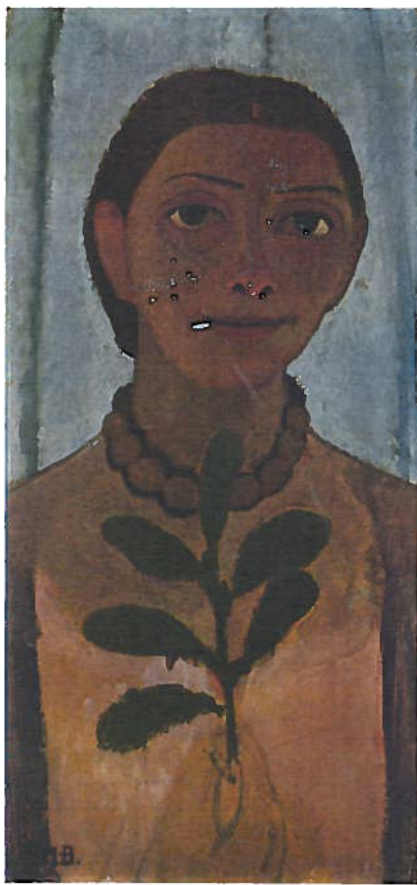
of his personality, his enigmatic nature, and the extent to which he was at the mercy of the stirrings of the soul. The verbal brilliance and the intellectual magic of Friedrich Nietzsche broke upon this restlessness like a bombshell. His aristocratic, anti-bourgeois attitude, his desperate struggle for a new vision of man, his insistence upon the dignity and the inalienable individuality of the self, his lofty and gigantic perspectives of a revolutionary transvaluation created a wholly new point of departure. This outlook contained nothing precise, philosophical, or theoretical; it was a revolution in mental attitude, a spirit of critical and creative freedom which acknowledged no tradition, and obeyed itself alone with joyous aggressiveness. The new mood gave way to what was probably one of the most remarkable phenomena in modern history, the German youth movement, in which an entire generation prepared, under the slogan "war against school and home," to reshape their lives and to attain a new approach to nature, to reality, and to the community of man.

It was this unusually complex situation that was the breeding ground for the new art movements of the twentieth century in Germany. On careful reflection, we find that out of this background the spiritual attitude of Expressionism follows with the inner consistency that is always the mark of genuine spiritual events.

Origin of Expressionism

We may take the years 1905-06 as the key period for the birth of German Expressionism. 1905 is the year in which the Fauves appeared as a group in the Paris Autumn Salon. The extension of the human situation made the problem for painting quite clear. The allegorical cloak that obscured the vision of reality had to be pushed aside, a new dialogue with the world had to be initiated, unburdened by tradition and history, and this direct relationship between nature and the ego had to be expressed with as much force as possible. The center of gravity no longer lay in things themselves, but in the sensation they produced, for which a new language now had to be found. It was only natural that the painters sought out the intimations of this direct language where they did: in the art of primitive peoples, in peasant folklore, in the forms created by the "naïve," and by children.

German Expressionism arose simultaneously in artists' associations geographically separated and working independently of each other: the Brücke in Dresden, the Neue Künstler-Vereinigung in Munich, from which the Blaue Reiter seceded, and in the work of individuals. Only around 1910 and 1911 did it coalesce into a general stylistic expression. In North Germany it was brought about by the work of three important individuals who had no contact with one another: Paula Modersohn-Becker, Christian Rohlf, and Emil Nolde.



Modersohn-Becker: Self Portrait with Camellia. 1907.
Oil on board, $23\frac{5}{8} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$ ". Folkwang Museum, Essen



Modersohn-Becker: Old Peasant Women. 1906-07. Oil on
canvas, $30\frac{1}{4} \times 22\frac{1}{2}$ ". Private collection, U. S. A.

Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907) came directly from the school of German nature lyricism. She had moved to Worpswede in 1899, had worked with Mackensen, and had married the Worpswede painter Modersohn in 1901. Her friendship with Rilke and Carl Hauptmann put this highly emotional young woman in contact with the spiritual stimuli that were agitating Europe. In 1900 she was in Paris and discovered for herself Millet and the Breton landscape painters, in other words, she saw French painting through Worpswede eyes. But as early as 1903 she was back in Paris in order "to regard Worpswede through a critical lens." The nature lyricism of the Worpswede school had already become too genre-like for her. She sought a "great simplicity of form" which should aim at and strike to the simple core of things and convey the gripping emotion ignited by this new reality. She then began to see the things and people around her as "great in

their simplicity." She reduced each objective form to its essential formal rudiments, thus obtaining an expressive pictorial vocabulary with which objects and the sensations they occasion could be described "as with runic writing." What happened, she felt, was that in looking at the fragmented multiplicity of nature, one's sensibilities became confused, and she as a painter had to refer to the poetic counterpart for experience in her imagination: "One should not think so much about nature when painting a picture. Make the color sketch approximately as you felt it in nature." In this concentrated labor, essentially very lonely, a manner of handling form grew up slowly within her that enabled her to understand immediately the vision of Gauguin and Cézanne when she encountered their works in Paris in 1905 and 1906. Death prevented Paula Modersohn-Becker from building upon this fortunate encounter a rich body of work, and one of her last wishes was to be able to travel to Paris again, because "fifty-six Cézanne's were being



Rohlf: Dark Mountains. 1912. Oil on canvas, $31\frac{7}{8} \times 39\frac{1}{2}$ ". Kleemann Galleries, New York



Rohlf: Amazon. 1912. Oil on canvas, $31\frac{1}{2} \times 39\frac{3}{8}$ ". Folkwang Museum, Essen

shown." Thus her work remained a fragment. But in her portraits (page 79) the expressive definition of form, whose essential core also revealed the universal, mythic center of the human being portrayed, and the ceremonially rigorous style of her self portraits which are invested with the highly emotional humanity of this young woman (Self Portrait with Camellia, page 28), indicate the distance that already separated her from Worpswede nature lyricism.

Paula Modersohn-Becker had crossed the threshold to the art of expression in a completely independent, almost compulsive evolution. And this same necessity is exhibited in the work of Christian Rohlfs (1849-1938). Rohlfs was fifty-six years old when he found his own Expressionist style. He had begun as a landscape painter in Weimar and in constant development had traveled from an intimate naturalism to a reserved Impressionism. In the circle of van de Velde, who had taken over the direction of the Applied Arts School in Weimar at the beginning of the century, he encountered the late Impressionism of Monet, Neo-Impressionism, and shortly thereafter, van Gogh. Then Osthaus, who was at the time building up his collection of these French innovators, took him along to Hagen. In Osthaus' extremely European environment the nearly sixty-year-old Rohlfs went through a stormy period of growth. The tremulous light - intensified to the point of incorporeality - radiated by the color of the late Monet, the dramatic power of color and the free handling of the pictorial means displayed by van Gogh were the problems to be solved. His goal was a new Expressionist lyricism. From these points of departure, Rohlfs succeeded in arriving at his initial solutions in Soest in the summer months of 1905-06. They are views of this medieval town, architectural paintings in pure luminous color like the cathedrals of Monet but executed in a spontaneous script whose calligraphic points to van Gogh. The subject matter was resolutely fused with the picture surface and the color ornamentally arranged in strong, pure tones. The picture acquires the character of a colored window, illuminated from within. Having reached this point, Rohlfs in his further development was concerned with making the individual elements grow together, in order to reinforce the scintillation and the hovering quality of the incorporeal color. Color is simplified to red-blue-yellow, a dominant fundamental, and a rising accompanying tone attuned to it. The basic colors are made to vibrate by constant transitions and crossings. The oscillation of the surface dematerializes the motif, and the lyrical and legendary discovered within it appear on the evocative surface. The picture becomes a visual poem.

For this pictorial transformation always involved a new way of perceiving reality. It sought the profound, the primeval, the legend woven into nature. It was this new perception that led Rohlfs to find in late French Impressionism the new means required for the desired intensification of the expressive content of painting - a highly creative misunderstanding. This same key word, misunderstanding, also applies (in the period



Nolde: Christ Among the Children. 1910. Oil on canvas, 34 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 41 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Dr. W. R. Valentiner

1905-06) to the third of the North German Expressionists, Emil Nolde, when, at the age of forty, he saw for the first time works by the Frenchmen Monet, Gauguin, and van Gogh, in the circle of Osthaus.

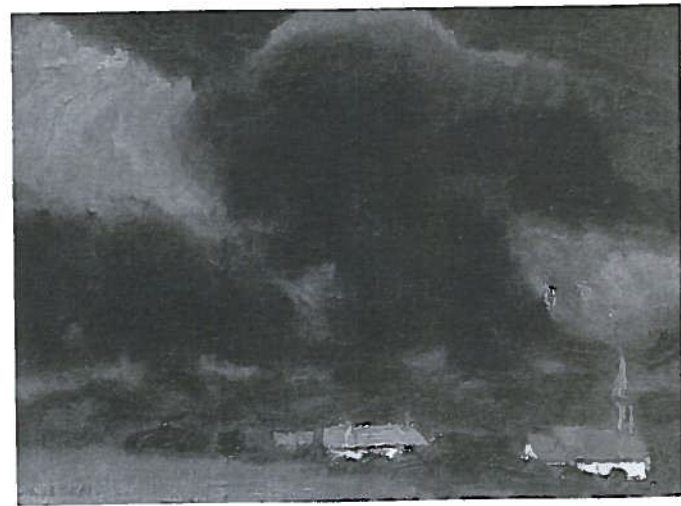
Emil Nolde (1867-1956) had been exposed to Dachau nature lyricism in 1898, and in Paris in 1900 to the paintings of Manet, Daumier, and Goya. Stimulated by these influences, he sought to translate into pictorial terms the chthonian, mythic, and legendary forces which he saw all about him in nature. When he saw the new French paintings he broke out of the tonality of the **Munich school** and the lyricism of the Dachau group into a world of free, luminous color. Thus he substituted the sensuous, symbolic power of color for the literary and the metaphorical. He had scarcely encountered late Impressionism when he began an ecstatic reinterpretation of it. He painted landscapes, pictures of gardens and flowers whose violent color and spontaneous calligraphy raised the motif wholly beyond the representational, earning him in 1906 the invitation of the Brücke painters to join their association as "payment for these storms of color." But Nolde's chthonian concept of nature and his fantasy which sought the mythical were much too personal to be able to ripen in a community. He had other companions - van Gogh, Munch, Ensor. He was opposed to discussion, opposed to intellect, in favor of the pure painterly instinct, for which a "vague notion only in glow and color" sufficed as the impulse for a painting. In 1909 he tried to come closer to the mythical in religious paintings: he painted a Pentecost and the Last Supper and let this series culminate in the altar-like iconostasis of the 1911 cycle of the life of Christ. These are paintings of powerful expressiveness in which typified masks and archaic gestures evoke faces of barbaric power, and the glow of the color shifts the setting into the legendary and the other-worldly. This brought him close to the elemental powers of the art of primitive people. In 1913-14 Nolde went to New Guinea. What he described in his diary there as characteristic of primitive art also defines the core of his own art: "the absolute originality, the intensive, often grotesque expression of force and life in the simplest form." Here we see Nolde's recurring fundamental experience, experiencing nature as a mythical encounter. It is this expressive feeling for nature that makes him do battle with Liebermann's Impressionism and the Berlin Secession, and makes his generation regard him as the champion of a new German art. His fantasy is always located in those human zones where the myth arises out of ancient memories. The close-up view of things, the simple, archaic power of the composition, the blazing allegorical value of color are the means employed to present this mythicalism on the canvas. In the 'twenties the landscape becomes more prominent. The dramatic is transformed into the epic. Nature becomes a luminous legend. The experiencing of reality, which had appeared under the aspect of an intimate expressive relationship between the world and man at the beginning of the century, had now found a mode of expression.



Nolde: Three Russians. 1915. Oil on burlap, 28³/₄ × 39¹/₂". Collection Richard L. Feigen, New York



Nolde: Flowers. c. 1915? Oil on burlap, $26\frac{1}{4} \times 33\frac{1}{4}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Werner E. Josten



above, Nolde: Stormy Landscape. c. 1920? Oil on canvas, $29 \times 39\frac{3}{4}$ ". Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe



Nolde: Amaryllis and Anemone. Watercolor, $13\frac{3}{4} \times 16\frac{3}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Philip L. Goodwin

The Brücke Community of Artists

While this new spirit operated within the individual in North Germany, in Central Germany it brought together in a community a group of very young artists for whom this very community and camaraderie provided a fresh spirit of aggressiveness. In 1904 four young student painters of the Dresden Institute of Technology came to know each other: Kirchner, Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff, and Bleyel, and in 1905 they founded an artist's association which they called Die Brücke (The Bridge). Their collective studio was an empty shoemaker's store. Here a joint style was evolved out of a feeling of spiritual solidarity, and they lived the dream of communion which van Gogh and Gauguin had dreamed before them.

The Brücke had no program. In 1906 Kirchner did a small manifesto in the form of a woodcut which, together with a general appeal to youth, contained nothing but the assertion that everyone "who portrays, directly, without qualification, the creative impulse" belongs to the Brücke. In a letter of 1906, in which Schmidt-Rottluff asked Nolde to join them, he also stated as the objective of the Brücke merely "the attraction of young and fermenting elements."

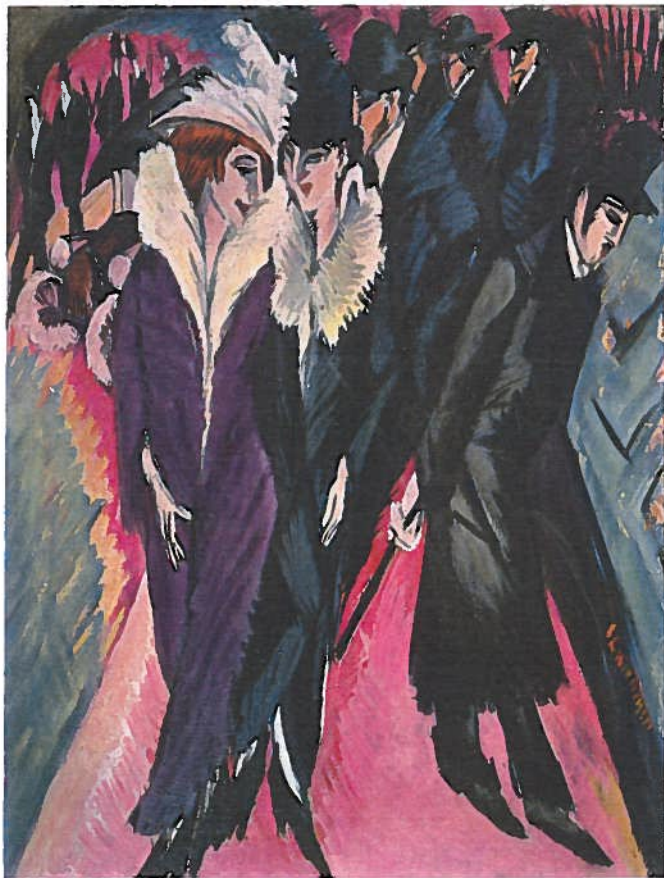
Light is shed upon the inner state of these young painters by a report made by Kirchner on Heckel's first visit to him, the latter climbing the studio staircase with a shirt open at the collar, with provocative poetic flourish, and declaiming "Zarathustra" aloud. This feverish consciousness of being of an elite characterizes the Brücke community, which had chosen as its motto Horace's "Odi profanum vulgus." It nourished itself on the reading of Verlaine, Rimbaud, D'Annunzio, Jacobsen, Walt Whitman, Dostoyevsky, Strindberg, Wedekind, Hölderlin, and, over and over again, Nietzsche.

The Brücke held its first exhibition in 1906 in the showroom of a Dresden lamp factory; this was followed in 1907 by a second show in Richter's art gallery, in which Pechstein and Nolde, who had been recruited in 1906, also participated. The two shows achieved nothing but a "succès de scandale" which accompanied the Brücke artists for a long time.

What was shown in these exhibitions was painting of great spontaneity, motifs taken directly from nature, landscapes, nudes, but presented in a summary, hasty symbolic script and in shouting, luminous color which tended to accumulate in large color areas despite the rapidity of the brush work. Spontaneous and personal as this early Brücke idiom may have appeared – and doubtless was – the sources that came together there, releasing a style of great homogeneity, were very diverse. To be sure the burning spirit of van Gogh was already at work; the young painters were also aware of the Impressionist means and the Neo-Impressionist theory of the division of color into its pure values, which Kirchner had been able to study in an exhibition organized by Kandinsky



Kirchner: Dodo and Her Brother. 1905-06.
Oil on canvas, 67 1/4 x 37 1/2". Smithsonian
Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts



Kirchner: The Street. 1913. Oil on canvas, $47\frac{1}{2} \times 35\frac{7}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Kirchner: Market Place with Red Tower. 1915. Oil on canvas, $47\frac{1}{4} \times 35\frac{5}{8}$ ". Folkwang Museum, Essen

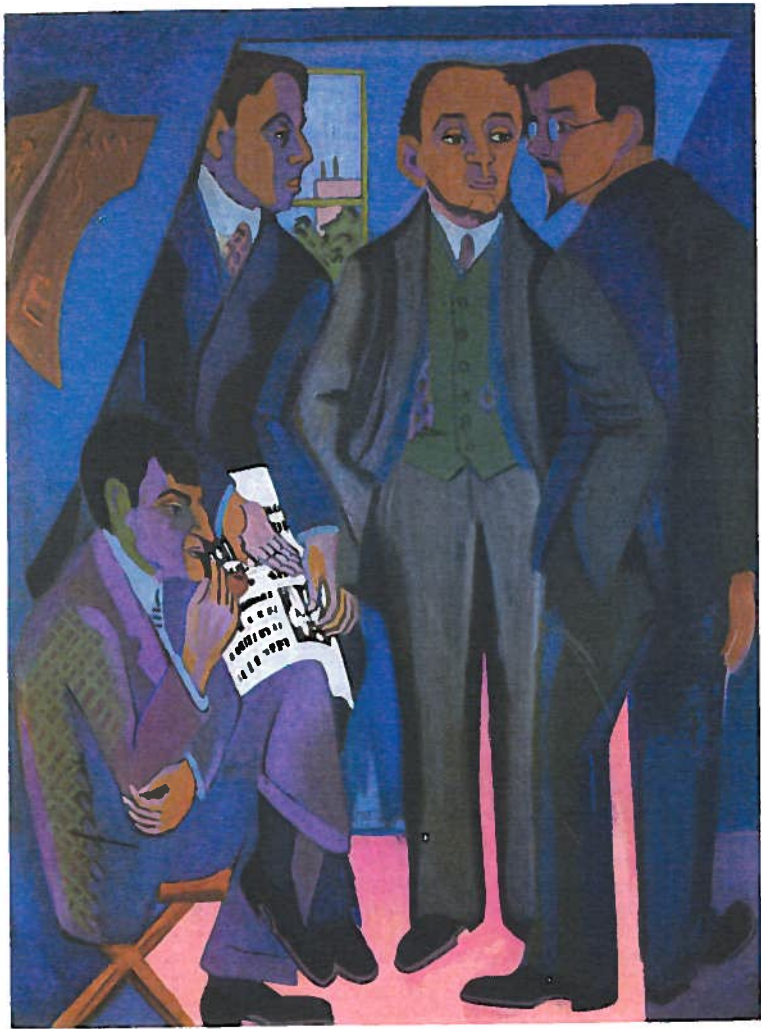
In Munich in 1904. Then there were the expressive arabesque and the decorative flatness of the Jugendstil and the impressive art of Edvard Munch, which expressed itself with similar means. But there was something else as well, impetuous, original, barbaric, which gave this painting an unprecedented aggressive boldness. In 1904 Kirchner had encountered the art of the South Seas in the ethnographic museum, this provided the confirmation and the motivation necessary to extract the ultimate power of expression from all these suggestions already present in contemporary painting. Thus there arose painting of an astonishing, almost poster-like appeal, with intense colors, with striking symbols in the place of objects, with a feverish, highly dramatic subject matter, but which already clearly presaged the flat structure of the new evocative picture.

Employing a securely established pattern of construction and a formally enriched and tension-charged picture surface, the Brücke painters further developed their style. But since their objectives ran parallel to those of the French Fauves, it was only natural that the Brücke soon entered into contact with Fauvism, at the latest, by the end of 1907 when Pechstein returned from Paris. The individual elements comprising their painting, defined only roughly up to that time, coalesced into a richer pictorial expression during the wonderful summers they spent at the Moritzburg lakes and on the shores of the North Sea, always in direct contact with nature. Their surfaces are broken up into many small parts, the rough object-symbols are subdivided with greater multiplicity into biting, fan-like outlines and assume the character of a nervous script. The color becomes less brilliant and is arranged in rich, broken rhythms. This second Brücke style, which evolved in tiny steps, lasted until approximately 1911.

In 1911 Kirchner, Heckel, and Schmidt-Rottluff transferred their activities to Berlin, where Pechstein had already moved in 1908, and where Otto Mueller had joined the association in 1910. A new and final Brücke style now developed in the circles of the New Secession, which had been rebelliously carved out of Liebermann's Berlin Secession by Nolde and Pechstein in 1910. It is based entirely upon their earlier assumptions. But if, for example, we examine Heckel's *Crystal Day* (page 48) or Kirchner's *The Street* (page 40) we discover a completely new organization of space. The surface is broken into echeloned layers of flat relief, which are peculiarly meshed into one another and yield a crystalline, shifting space of high dramatic tension. Embedded in this lively planar space are the object-symbols, whose brittle, spiky calligraphy accentuates the dramatic spatial tension, and colors are reduced to earth tonalities, from which a restless green or pink stands out sharply here and there. It is now Cubism that influences the Brücke, but with what different objectives! The new, dramatically wielded means serve to push the tension of the pictures to the furthest extreme. This is clearly shown in Heckel's painting, *Two Men at a Table*, of 1912 (page 47), in which the world of fractured forms suggests the mood of Dostoyevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov."



Kirchner: *Artillerymen*. 1915. Oil on canvas, 55 1/4 x 59 3/8. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Morton D. May



Kirchner: Zurich. 1926. Oil on canvas, 53 x 47". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Bruce B. Dayton, Minneapolis

opposite, Kirchner: The Painters of the Brücke. 1925.
Oil on canvas, 66 ¹/₈ x 49 ⁵/₈". Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne

It is shown too in Kirchner's street scene by the hectic figurative symbols, the restless interlacing of the space, and the desperate tension of color, all of which superlatively reflect the spiritual and historical situation - Berlin's Kurfürstendamm in 1913!

It was only natural that the varied individualities involved in this new, highly expressive style, a style which encouraged self-revelation, should grow apart. This brought the community to an end. The Brücke collapsed in 1913.

The intimate community of the Brücke artists in which fundamental formal, technical, or pictorial discoveries were immediately seized upon by the entire group enable us to trace the development of Brücke Expressionism as a collective movement. If we were to characterize the different personalities more precisely, we might say that Kirchner was the richest in ideas, the most sensitive, and the most gifted, always insisting on imposing his own intensified, feverish mood upon the picture, that Heckel was the lyricist who sought to report his poetic experiences, and that Schmidt-Rottluff was closest to the earth, full of power, and most in need of putting his experience of nature in monumental form. Otto Mueller, more at the periphery of the Brücke, was the gentle poet who throughout his life dreamed a simple Arcadian dream. But all these personalities fitted smoothly into a common style of expression.

At the break-up of the community the various members parted company and went their own ways. Erich Heckel (born 1883) turned slowly to a more lyrical concept of nature, though he did not break entirely with the stylistic program of the Brücke. The same is true of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (born 1884), and of Otto Mueller (1874-1930) who arrived at a simple, monumental, and brilliantly colored vision of nature. Note especially Mueller's landscapes, his figures on the shores of lakes, his nude, sharp-breasted gypsies, their huts silhouetted against the dark glory of colored planes, a sunflower looking like a melancholy star - the vision gradually reaching a mythical radiance.

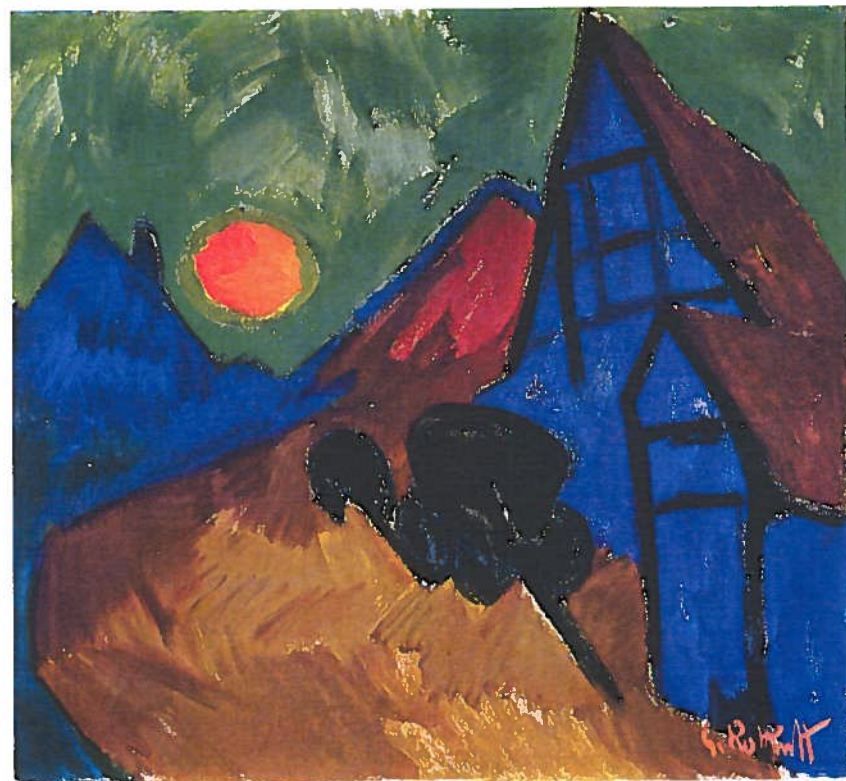
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) who became a patient in Davos, Switzerland in 1917 experienced the broadest development. This man of the big city comes face to face in Switzerland with the austere mountain scenery and seeks and finds a large-scale, runic script of epic character. He now records his new experience of reality in these hieroglyphs that denote objects. His mountain landscapes and simple monumental pictures are taken from the life of the peasants. Their structure is very severe, emphasizing a framework of verticals and horizontals. The pictures now assume the monumental character of tapestries (page 45). Soon after 1928 Kirchner's style changes again, Picasso begins to affect it. His cursive writings now reach into more abstract regions. Simultaneity of front and side views, the tying of separate objective forms into a single arabesque, rhythmic mirrorings, the separation of unified complex forms by color, by all these devices the picture is transformed into an abstract, rhythmic-ornamental structure. Shortly before his death Kirchner seemed about to enter a new creative



Heckel: Two Men at a Table, 1912. Oil on canvas, 38 1/4 x 47 1/4". Kunsthalle, Hamburg



Heckel: A Crystal Day. 1913. Oil on canvas, $47\frac{1}{4} \times 37\frac{3}{4}$ ". Collection Max Kruss, Berlin



Schmidt-Rottluff: Rising Moon. 1912. Oil on canvas, $34\frac{1}{2} \times 37\frac{1}{2}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Morton D. May, St. Louis, Missouri



Rottluff: Pharisees. 1912. Oil on canvas, $29\frac{7}{8} \times 40\frac{1}{2}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon Fund

opposite, Schmidt-Rottluff: Washerwomen by the Sea. 1921. Oil on canvas, $38\frac{1}{2} \times 44$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Richard K. Weil, St. Louis, Missouri

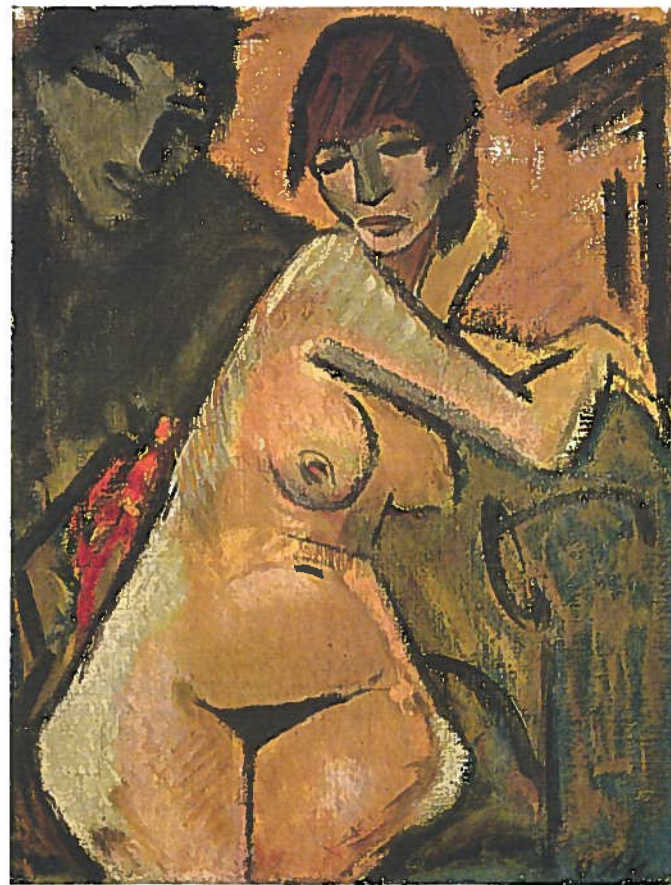
cycle. His latest pictures reproduced nature in a less altered form. But Kirchner had no more time left to him. Terrified by the symptoms of his recurrent illness, despondent over the iconoclasm of a Germany rapidly turning barbarian, which confiscated, mocked, and destroyed his works, the painter, whose heart's desire was the renewal of German art, committed suicide on June 15, 1938.

If we are to summarize the achievements of the Brücke, we might say that it succeeded in finding a language for a fundamental transformation of the experience of reality, by which the new perception of reality could be expressed. It was an insight into the representational independence of the pictorial means, whereby line, form, color, space, became self-sufficient entities and conveyed expression beyond the literary, and





Mueller: *Three Girls in the Woods*, c. 1920. Oil on burlap, 48 × 53". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Morton D. May, St. Louis, Missouri



Mueller: *A Pair of Lovers*, c. 1928. Oil on board, 39 3/8 × 29 7/8". Dr. Bernhard Sprengel, Hanover

It was finally the slow elaboration of the visual field, upon which the new contact with reality could be deposited as a picture, the evocative surface. Only upon such a surface, which held nothing visible in the sense of an imitative realism but merely evoked a relationship to reality, could the actual experience of reality be recorded in runic writing or in hieroglyphs. It is this achievement in the pictorial that gives the Brücke its spiritual importance and, at the same time, relates it more closely to the phalanx of Frenchmen, led by the genius of Matisse and the Fauves.

The Blaue Reiter

While the Brücke were active in North and Central Germany, a small circle of painters had gathered in Munich around the Russian Wassily Kandinsky. Kandinsky had entered the Jugendstil milieu of Munich in 1896; he had studied with Stuck and had learned how to express his Russian fantasy of fairytale and legend in the language of the Munich Jugendstil. After 1903 other travels took him to Italy, Tunisia, and often to France, acquainting him with the new color of the Neo-Impressionists and the Fauves. But all this was linked up for him with old recollections of vivid Russian folklore, which he now encountered again in the peasant art of Upper Bavaria, forcing him to seek the possibilities of spontaneous, naive, spiritual expression behind the decorative and constructive – the artistic values of color. At an early date he was joined by another Russian, Alexei von Jawlensky, who had encountered the painting of Cézanne, van Gogh, and Matisse in Paris, and now tried to intensify the new, skillfully managed color of the French into the transcendental, in his own Russian manner. Their two friends, Gabrielle Münter and Marianne von Werefkin, and a few other painters enlarged the loose association, and out of it there arose in 1909 the New Artists Association of Munich. In addition to those mentioned above, its members included Erbslöh, Kanoldt, and Kubin. In 1910 Bechthejeff, Karl Hofer, Moissej, Kogan, and Pierre Gilleud were added. An initial exhibition was held in the winter of 1909; another in the autumn of 1910, in which the young painters of the French avant garde were also represented: Picasso, Braque, Derain, van Dongen, Rouault, and Vlaminck. What was shown was the Fauvism of Kandinsky and Jawlensky, raised to the level of spontaneous and naive expression, and the work of Erbslöh and Kanoldt, inspired by the Jugendstil. The pictorial credo of the group of painters can be perfectly summarized in the words of Otto Fischer in his book "Das Neue Bild" of 1912, dedicated to the New Artists Association: "Color is a means of expression that speaks directly to the soul. It is not correct drawing that portrays the nature of things, but rather the spirited and expressive contour. Things are not things alone if they are the expression of the soul."

But Kandinsky was involved in stormy intellectual developments during 1910 and



Marc: Fighting Cows. 1911. Oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 54". Private collection, New York

1911 which extended far beyond the boundaries of the New Artists Association and attracted new, unusually talented painters. Franz Marc, August Macke, and soon Paul Klee joined him in 1911. In 1910 Kandinsky had summarized his ideas in a manuscript of a book, "The Spiritual in Art" (published in 1912). This is a polemic against materialism and calls for a new spiritualization of life. Just as science had dissolved substance and matter, just as Matisse and Picasso had prepared a new spiritual view of the objective world, all painting must now be liberated from its function of reproducing the world of material objects and become a spiritual evocation and activity. The culminating idea of the book is the statement: "The harmony of color and form must be based solely upon the principle of the proper contact with the human soul." The music of abstract color areas should be sufficient to carry the inner music of things, to which man's soul responds. Thinking along these lines, Kandinsky in 1910 had already painted, in bold



Marc: Blue Horses. 1911. Oil on canvas, 41 ³/₈ × 71 ³/₈". Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

anticipation, his first abstract picture. These were the ideas that so greatly excited his friends, and which they associated with their own romantic, religious conviction of a great existential bond linking man and the universe, for which the painter, using new tools, could erect pictorial allegories, "symbols that belong on the altars of the coming spiritual religion," as Franz Marc put it.

But these ideas were far beyond the comprehension of many of the other artists in the New Artists Association. As a result the association broke up in December 1911. On December 18, 1911 the circle around Kandinsky and Marc opened an exhibition of its own under the title *Der Blaue Reiter* in which Kandinsky, Marc, Macke, Campendonk, the Burliuk brothers, the musician Arnold Schönberg, and the Frenchman Delaunay (as an example of the "great abstract" tendency), and Henri Rousseau (as an example of the "great real" tendency) took part. A graphic show was held in the Goltz art gallery

in March 1912; it included, in addition to the *Blaue Reiter* group, Kubin and Klee, the Frenchmen Braque, Derain, de la Fresnaye, Picasso, and Vlaminck, the painters of the *Brücke*, Hans Arp, and the Russians Larionoff, Gontcharova, and Malevich.

Exhibitions were held in Cologne, Berlin, Hagen, and Frankfurt. In 1913 the *Blaue Reiter* again exhibited as a group in Herwarth Walden's Berlin *Autumn Salon*. Then the war tore the group apart.

The solid core of the *Blaue Reiter* consisted of Kandinsky, Marc, Macke, Jawlensky, and Klee. The name was taken from a book that Kandinsky and Marc edited in 1911 and published in 1912. This dealt with the works of the naive artist: peasant glass painting, old German woodcuts, and children's drawings. It described the new anti-naturalist movements in Germany, Russia, and France. Schönberg wrote on the corresponding developments in music. Kandinsky developed his ideas and contributed a play "*Der gelbe Klang*" ("The Yellow Sound"). An intense frame of mind prevails throughout this beautiful volume, a spirit close to those great spiritual objectives that Franz Marc had defined in a romantic, paradoxical, but unusually significant formulation as, "sensing the underlying mystical design of the visible world."

What Franz Marc (1880-1916) meant by that can be seen in his pictures. Their great theme is animals, for, in Marc's vision, the entire life and being of animals seemed to be part of an existing natural order. If one could penetrate the animal spirit, and enrich one's visual imagination with images stemming from the deeper knowledge of the nature of animals, it would be possible to return to this order, the Franciscan "*ordo caritatis*," and to take from it more unified images. For visible nature is only one point of departure. And thus in the *Red Horses* or in the famous *Tower of Blue Horses* (page 58) we see the symbol of the animal appear in radiant red or blue, because the expression demands such spiritual resplendence. In the *Tower of Blue Horses*, a motif that Marc saw in the pastures of Lenggries, he erects a transparent architecture of animal bodies. Their refulgent blues become a spiritual link to the sign of heaven, a cathedral of creature forms in the great sweep of the world. *Animal Destinies* (page 49) tells us of the death and sacrifice of animals; their place and participation in the great chorus of being is the theme of the painting, *Deer in the Forest*.

These are spiritual pictures! They set the general and the mythical free from the particular, penetrating reality itself, and communicating through suitable means an experience that could not be reproduced but only be evoked. If we consider the means, we find a painting field which is moved by plastic forces, and in which atmosphere has been transformed into crystalline light, color, arabesque, sign and symbol are coordinated with sure expressive means. Every formal element functions descriptively and also supports the order of expression. Out of the indissoluble union of these elements is born a magic face of color and light that is a vehicle for all the poetic transformations.

It has embedded in it the signs of reference that lead back to the original experience in nature. What is evoked finally is the certain sense of the immanent unity of the universe. In Marc's eyes, bursting the bounds of the visible did not do injury to creation, it was just at this point that there arose the hope of experiencing the "underlying mystic design" behind natural appearances. Marc expresses this thought very clearly in a statement of 1913: "Longing for indivisible Being, liberation from the errors of sense in our ephemeral life is the basic mood of all art. Its great goal is to dissolve the entire system of our partial sensation, to show an earthly Being that dwells behind everything."

Marc's approach is very clear; he begins by choosing simple and typical forms taken from the bewildering multiplicity of nature; by means of these typical forms, given emphasis by repetition, he seeks to set up a classic rhythm which will correspond to the pulsating rhythmic quality of a living nature. In 1910, under the influence of Macke, Kandinsky, and Jawlensky, he became aware of the expressive possibilities of color. And in 1911 with the painting *Red Horses* he took his decisive steps, freeing color from nature and, by the act of contemplation, raising it to the higher level of a symbol. But this new independent life of color also required a new formal organization. Cubism, and in particular Delaunay's high-colored Orphism, were of assistance in this task,



Marc: *Tower of Blue Horses*. 1913.
Oil on canvas, 78 ³/₄ × 51 ¹/₄".
Formerly in collection of National Gallery,
Berlin, present whereabouts unknown (*)



Marc: *Deer in a Flower Garden*. 1913. Oil on canvas, 21 ⁵/₈ × 29 ⁷/₈". Kunsthalle, Bremen



Marc: Tyrol. 1913-14. Oil on canvas, 53 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 57". Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich

around 1912. Marc's great plastic images then pressed toward a unity with his pantheistic religious feeling. But once taken, this direction, which was reinforced by Kandinsky's example, led Marc to abandon objective pictures entirely. The last step toward abstract painting was made in 1914, then the experience of nature and the world entered into an even broader sphere of feeling. Marc at this time wrote in his diary: "What had previously been taken as 'pictorial material' by our passion, now is reduced to simple numerical relationships and vibrations." But war broke out, and Marc fell at Verdun in March 1916.

August Macke (1887-1914) similarly found his personal style during these years and was stimulated by the same sources. He was far more uninhibited than Marc; all his senses were directed toward the beauty of nature. For him to paint was "to go through Nature rejoicing." As early as 1907 he came upon Matisse's lyrical color in Paris and, after 1910, in contact with his friends in the Blaue Reiter, he achieved a spiritual mastery of color that enabled him to transform the visible world into poetry. In 1912 he met Delaunay, and Delaunay's Orphism taught him to articulate his emotion through a pictorial order based on subtle color relationships. Macke always had something bright, clear, and crystalline before his eyes, and his actual picture of the world was lyrically transformed on canvas by that instinctive vision. From the indications supplied by Delaunay and from his own angle of vision, Macke, in a marvelous, poetic penetration of visible nature, developed the brilliant series of pictures of 1913, subjects from the Thuner See, women looking out the window, pedestrians, children in the park (pages 62-63). Here his feelings of intense joyousness reached a highly personal expression. In the spring of 1914 he traveled with Paul Klee and Louis Molliet to Tunis. In the precious series of watercolors which followed, Macke succeeded in making each picture a plastic metaphor of the pure, ordered beauty of the world, and his subjects acquired poetic and legendary qualities. But here too death interrupted a development that was only in its beginnings; Macke died in Champagne in September 1914, but many of his thoughts lived on in Paul Klee and were matured by him.

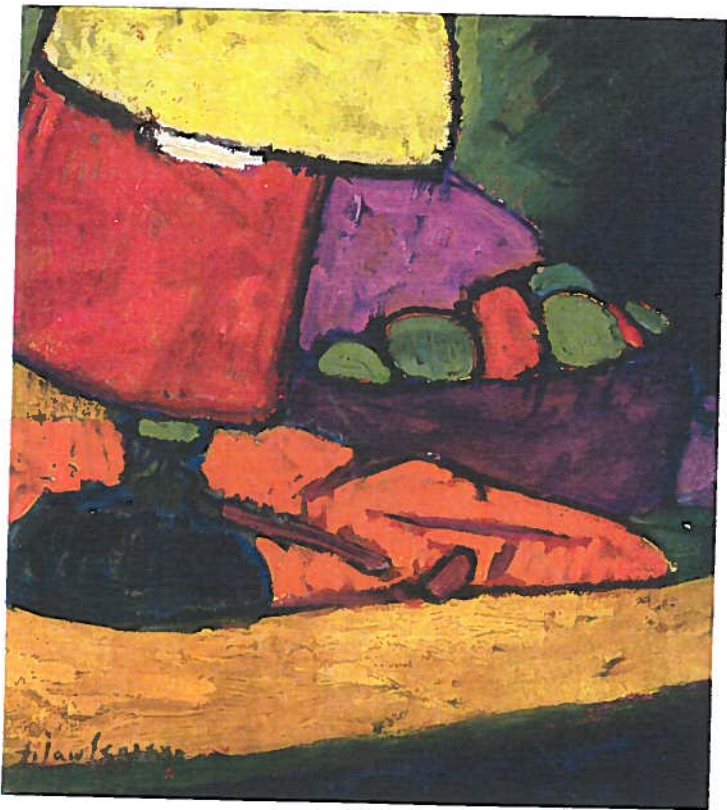
The trip to Tunis with Macke was very important for Paul Klee (1879-1940); it released in him his gift for color. Klee's role in the Blaue Reiter is a very special one. In 1914 he had no real oeuvre to his credit, and yet his genius was already operating as the moral court of judgment among these Blaue Reiter painters who were so dedicated to high ideals. He patiently awaited the steady growth for which he seemed destined, and set down the stages of this slow evolution in small drawings, in paintings on glass, and little watercolors. When in the autumn of 1914 he joined the Blaue Reiter group, he had just drawn illustrations for Voltaire's "Candide." These tremulous figures, released by the further development of Klee's line, arose directly out of a "well-spring of psychic improvisation." The lines, feeling their way like tentacles over the luminous surface of the paper, materialized into leaping, wispy scenes. Line as an instrument of psychic



Macke: The Dress Shop, 1913. Oil on canvas, 19⁷/₈ × 23⁵/₈". Collection Mrs. Gisela Macke, Bonn



Macke: Girls under Trees, 1914. Oil on canvas, 47¹/₄ × 63". Kunsthau, Zurich, on loan from private collection



Jawlsensky: Still Life with Lamp. 1906-07. Oil on cardboard, $21\frac{1}{4} \times 18\frac{7}{8}$ ". Mrs. Hanna Bekker-vom Rath, Frankfurt



Jawlsensky: Egyptian Girl. 1913. Oil on board, $24 \times 19\frac{1}{2}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Morton D. May, St. Louis

improvisation was fully mastered. The association with Kandinsky and Marc, and his contact in 1942 with Delaunay's "peinture pure" directed him toward color, and the Futurists brought back into clearer consciousness ideas already present in him regarding the visual translation of motion. What Klee aimed at was the clearest exposition of his poetic feeling as provoked by an objective experience, he called this "pushing into the Beyond." But at the same time he discovered in nature's formative processes, in the growth of plants, in the structure of organisms, a fine plastic regularity, a rich variety of basic patterns, and an ordering rhythm. And then Klee set out to create for himself a set of rules governing painting methods, which might permit him to make visible both his subjective spiritual responses and his objective insight into the plastic productions of nature. In this way he could fashion a second and more complete reality. Such subtle experiences and thoughts drew Klee's friends in the Blaue Reiter close to him, even though his studio contained only happy improvisations and no ripe results.

His maturity required an overwhelming visual experience, and the trip to Tunis gave that to him. "Matter and dream at the same time, and the third element, my Ego all interwoven," was Klee's first response to this land. His strong visual and emotional experience fused a number of separate influences into something whole and individual: Cézanne's color modulation, the Cubists' "superimposed planes," Delaunay's ordering of color areas. A luminous pattern of spots of color, abstracted from nature, gave rise to an expressive structure that needed only the most sparing graphic indications in order to place it alongside nature as an independent plastic image. In the course of the few days spent in Tunis, Klee became a painter. It was the beginning of that long series of poetic pictorial creations whose importance as models we are just beginning to understand.

The romantic-religious tendencies implicit in *Der Blaue Reiter* found their characteristic expression in Alexei von Jawlensky (1864-1941). He was first influenced by Cézanne and then, even more significantly, by Kandinsky, Matisse, and by certain specifically Russian emotions. Working from all these sources, he developed a characteristically naive pictorial décor that even in the beginning had a mystical resonance. During his years with the Blaue Reiter, he painted landscapes and portrait heads almost exclusively (page 65). Their powerfully luminous color and their firm arabesques elevate and transform the motif into an ingenuous symbolism, that could soon turn to religiosity. This movement toward religious feeling took place during the war years and led to a single theme that Jawlensky slipped through his fingers tirelessly like beads of a rosary: the human face on which can be recognized the imprint of the Divine, often in the form of the Slavic double cross. Thus Jawlensky brought to extreme fulfillment the element of religious thought in the Blaue Reiter. He wished his pictures to be mystical objects of meditation. Since as he was wholly a man of the East, he arrived at the modern icon.

However the prime moving spirit in the Blaue Reiter was Wassily Kandinsky (1866-



Kandinsky: Landscape with Houses (Murnau). 1909. Oil on board, 27 ³/₈ x 38". Kunstsammlungen der Stadt, Düsseldorf

1944). In the course of a profound, spiritual assimilation of the ideas growing out of the Jugendstil, van Gogh, the Neo-Impressionists, and the Fauves, he succeeded in evolving the abstract picture. His aim was now no longer to reproduce objects in painting, but to make painting itself the object, the new pictorial structure was marked by an inner resonance which moves sensibility in the same way as do representational pictures and the creations of nature. This event took place in 1910, and from that date Kandinsky abandoned objective titles as well, choosing such designations as "Abstraction," "Improvisation," and "Composition."

"Composition" always denoted some analogy to music. In the early abstractions of



Kandinsky: Improvisation No. 30 (Warlike Theme). 1913. Oil on canvas, $43\frac{1}{4} \times 43\frac{3}{4}$ ". The Art Institute of Chicago, Arthur Jerome Eddy Memorial Collection



Kandinsky: Composition. 1913. Oil on canvas, $34\frac{1}{2} \times 39\frac{1}{4}$ ". Room of Contemporary Art, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

1910-11 one could even find a relationship to Wagner's great operatic compositions. Just as Wagner's music is saturated with sensuous and symbolic allusions and evokes images of large scenery and figurative analogies in the listener's mind, so the waves of color in these first incunabula of abstract painting conjure up a whole inventory of material associations: symbols of walking forms, horsemen jumping, sturdy Russian churches, dramatic or bucolic scenic backgrounds. If the eye follows the epic course of the sonorous colors, it is continually confronted by these individual figurative symbols, leitmotifs, as it were, of a dramatic composition for the stage: movements of mystical color which seek to make a dramatic state of the soul visible, but do not yet sufficiently trust their independence from representation to be able to entirely abandon objective reference. Such naturalistic and sentimental residues still muddy the over-all formal organization. This fact emerges most clearly in the spatial organization which still has a naturalistic character, as of a corridor, in the perspective gradations from foreground to background. But the painting changes as early as 1914. The scheme of lines that determines the form is woven into the tempestuous colored background in a free arabesque. And now, too, the attempt to produce illusions of space disappear. The picture seems to soar away from terrestrial perspective, with its simple arrangement of foreground, middle ground, background, into a cosmic perspective in which this clear recession is replaced by and merges into a more complicated space. 1912-13 is the period in which Kandinsky vigorously came to terms with the pictorial organization of the young Frenchmen. In his paintings of 1913 (pages 68-69) we see illusionistic space give way to a shallow pictorial depth which does not observe traditional perspective, a system of stepwise layers of space and interpenetrating planes. The comparison with Cubism is obvious, but in that comparison we recognize the way in which Kandinsky gives this relatively rational system, with its calculated architecture, a very broad tension in a highly expressive way by irrationally puncturing and opening up space. Kinetic forms of motion bring a space-time element into the painting. In this way the orchestration of a new kind of picture is created, embracing both the rational and the irrational, the finite and the infinite, the static and the dynamic; the unbridled force of the North European-Eastern world of expression has erupted in an Orphic song. If one had to choose a stylistic designation for this art, it could only be called Abstract Expressionism.

The Origin of Abstract Painting

What had been achieved, then, was the discovery of a plastic procedure which made the expressive inner world of man immediately visible without having to resort metaphorically to the images of the outer world. But how was that possible? In point of fact, these ideas had long been prepared for in Germany and were, moreover, influential

Kandinsky : Composition (3), 1914. Oil on canvas, 64 x 36 1/4". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund





Corinth: Self Portrait. 1924. Oil on canvas, $39\frac{3}{8} \times 31\frac{5}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, gift of Curt Valentin



Corinth: Winter at Walchensee. 1924. Watercolor, $16 \times 18\frac{1}{4}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Erich Cohn, New York

below, Corinth: Near the Walchensee - Silver Way. 1923. Oil on canvas, $23\frac{1}{4} \times 35$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Erich Cohn, New York





Kokoschka: Portrait of Dr. Tietze and His Wife. 1909. Oil on canvas, 30 ¹/₈ x 53 ⁵/₁₆". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Fund

throughout Europe. Kandinsky came to abstract painting in 1910, but only a year later Larionoff in Moscow arrived at abstraction, and in 1912 Delaunay and Kupka did so in Paris, all quite independently of Kandinsky. Nonetheless, it was Kandinsky who came upon the earliest and most valid results in Munich!

I have already pointed out that the problem of abstract form had been raised quite openly in the esthetic of the Munich Jugendstil, as early as the beginning of the century, Obrist and Endell had concerned themselves with non-objective ornamental sculpture, and Hölzel in 1906 experimented with abstract ornament in painting. In the same year Kubin, frightened and fascinated by a glance into a microscope, painted a series of abstract pictures resembling bundles of filmy material and crystals or shell-like fragments. And in his novel "Die Andere Seite" (1908-09) Kubin has a painter (in some ways autobiographic) ponder over a "fragmentary, calligraphic style that would express the slightest tremors of mood, like a sensitive meteorological instrument." The correspondence between Marc and Macke in 1910 is constantly concerned with the abstract powers of color and the psychological effects of their pure tones. There is also the case of Ciurlionis, the Lithuanian, who as early as 1905 seriously took up the comparison of color and musical tones, a common topic in the painters' studios of that time, and painted compositions that grew increasingly abstract in a kind of symphonic movement, Sea Sonata, Sun Sonata, etc. Out of his abstract-cosmic vision he created forms which resembled heavenly bodies moving in infinite spaces, shot through with Jugendstil arabesques and rhythms. This whole development is not altogether surprising if we think of Odilon Redon, the "peintre symphonique," or Klimt. It is merely a reflection, carried to a characteristic extreme, of a particularly enthusiastic, ornamental aspect of the Jugendstil. The core of new truth that lay behind such merely groping or romantic experiments was worked out with the clearest consciousness by Kandinsky, whose gifts of intuition and intelligence developed it into a solid spiritual patrimony.

Personal elements also entered into the matter. Kandinsky was a Russian, and the symbolic language of the icon, the mystical splendor of the Orthodox Church, the variegated ornament of Russian folk art were deeply rooted in his sensibility. From time immemorial the mystical element in Russian humanity had expressed itself in sensuous images set against the abstract background of the surface. Moreover, Kandinsky had an extraordinary sensitivity to the living essence of pure color, and this was connected with his great powers of synesthesia. As a young student in Moscow he had heard Wagner's "Lohengrin," and he was able to translate musical sound into a play of colors, writing, "I realized that painting has the same power as music." He then reacted to developments in modern painting itself. When, during his youth in Moscow, he saw a painting of a haystack by Monet, he did not at first recognize the object depicted at all, but was conscious of experiencing a vivid pictorial presence, a picture, whose purely



Kokoschka: Dent du Midi. 1910. Oil on canvas, $31\frac{1}{8} \times 45\frac{1}{4}$ ". Collection Mrs. W. Feilchenfeldt, Zurich

painterly means were of such intensity as to leave the object represented quite uninteresting. His plastic thinking evolved through a chain of development extending from Impressionism through Gauguin and the Neo-Impressionists to the Fauves. All of Kandinsky's work from 1905 to 1910 was devoted to finding a solution step-by-step to Gauguin's question, "Why should we not be able to create color harmonies that correspond to the state of our souls?" And the answer finally culminated in pure abstract painting.

Now, strangely enough, the solution seemed especially to coincide with the great changes of ideas in modern science. With the splitting of the atom, old concepts of matter were replaced by concepts of energy, and the traditional solidity of objects gave



Kokoschka: Portrait of Herwarth Walden. 1910. Oil on canvas, $39\frac{1}{2} \times 27\frac{1}{4}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Samuel H. Maslon, Wayzata, Minnesota (through the courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts)

way to the idea of the field of force. Furthermore there was the necessity, as it proved, of introducing the concept of space-time; it transformed the static perspective system, by which observed reality had been understood visually since the Renaissance, into a dynamic picture of the world which discarded traditional perspective. These new scientific premises gave unexpected confirmation to the suspicions of the painter that visual reality consisted only in the human capacity for perception and found its counterpart in an inner representation. When Kandinsky heard in his youth of the achievement of smashing the atom, he wrote, "The discovery hit me with frightful force, as though the end of the world had come. All things became transparent, without strength or certainty." At that moment the chain binding the painter to visible things broke, for now the abandonment of natural appearances no longer meant that the artist despised or violated creation; on the contrary, it had become necessary to bring the new and broader conception of the universe into artistic vision.

This belief in the possibility of rendering in pictorial terms the "underlying mystical design of the visible world" gives the Blaue Reiter painters their great significance. Out of their approach came the abstract and hermetic painting which formed the new attitudes of modern man to plastic reality, and to these attitudes Kandinsky and Klee gave a world-wide authority.

Oskar Kokoschka

But further desire for knowledge was in the modern spirit. It was directed immediately toward man and his inner being. Through Munch and Strindberg it had already been made clear, artistically, that man does not exist on a narrow plane that is free of doubts. This intuitive probing of the inner world of man through art was now powerfully confirmed by the science of psychoanalysis founded by Freud in Vienna. And out of the milieu of the Vienna Jugendstil came the painter, Oskar Kokoschka (born 1886), who had an incomparable capacity for uncovering images beneath the sensitive skin of natural appearances. At the point of strongest psychological tension Kokoschka bored in, as it were, and came up with – the self portrait.

His early pictures, of the period 1908-09, are immediately recognizable representations of still lifes and portraits. But the visual reality of objects and faces within these works really represents the psychological state of the painter, and this is achieved by a hallucinatory manipulation of the painter's objects. His portraits are sketches of human faces made half in a trance, and they disclose more about the painter and his humanity than they do about the model. For this reason all the models resemble each other in their spiritual condition. The eye of the painter looking at a man suddenly conceives something phantasmal in him, a play of gesture, some piece of mimicry caught on the wing,



Kokoschka: The Power of Music (Die Macht der Musik), 1919. Oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 59". Stedelijk van Abbe-museum, Eindhoven, Holland

which takes the place of the subject, and which the artist relentlessly isolates and penetrates. This response of the painter stands in direct relationship to himself alone. His painting is, to be sure, a visual impression, but there is behind this, submerged, an element of second-sight, another aspect of the artist's reality – it is a revelation of himself. Kokoschka attempts to illustrate this vision with the means at the disposal of painting. This is objectively expressed in the portraits by means of grimace and gesture, and hence the emphasis on the head as the scene of mimicry and of the hand as the scene of gesture (page 74). The means themselves are an Impressionism made ecstatic; the graphic elements become nervous and hectic, and the color feverish and phantasmagoric.

The goal of the picture is the most expressive possible illustration of a vision that has been torn out of the feelings, and an impression even though, as may happen, the organic body of the picture itself is in shreds. The painters of the Brücke, those of the Blaue Reiter, and Nolde all sought to transform a visual experience into painting. Kokoschka came from the other side of reality, from a world that objectified dream and vision. It was his genius to show the visionary possibilities of German Expressionism.

The Answer of the Environment

All these new anti-naturalistic movements in the new German painting won many followers in an astonishingly short time. A group of German painters gathered around Matisse in Paris as early as 1908, Purrmann, Levi, Moll, and in the Rhineland another center of a more French-oriented expressionism (Chagall, Matisse) took form with Thorn-Prikker, Helmuth Macke, Campendonk, Nauen, and Morgner, who was killed in action at an early age. The older masters of German Impressionism, and especially Lovis Corinth, also let themselves be drawn along a little way, and the broad public soon became aware of the new directions in painting. In the summer of 1912 the great Sonderbund show in Cologne brought together the entire constellation of European modernism for the first time. Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Munch had rooms to themselves. Around them were grouped the new European painting: Picasso, the French, Swiss, English, and Dutch. Against this world background there now appeared the Expressionists of the Berlin New Secession, the painters of the Blaue Reiter and the Brücke. This ensemble was an impressive documentation of the range of the new styles in Europe.

Berlin had become a powerful propaganda center, marshaling the new forces. There in 1910 Herwarth Walden founded the magazine *Der Sturm*. Originally it had been conceived rather as a militant literary organ, but it soon became a recruiting medium for the new European painting. Walden had brought Kokoschka to Berlin in 1910 and published in *Der Sturm* a large number of his masterly Expressionist portrait drawings in a series called "Portrait of the Week." In 1914 the artists of the Brücke contributed to *Der Sturm* as did also in 1912, those of the Blaue Reiter. By 1913 Paul Klee's first drawings appeared on the title pages of the magazine. And then, in 1912, Walden attached a gallery of his own to the editorial offices, and in rapid succession showed a solid chain of the new artists: Kokoschka, the Blaue Reiter, the Futurists, the German Expressionists, the French Cubists, and Orphists, Ensor, Delaunay, Archipenko. In the autumn of 1913, the same year in which the famous Armory Show was held in New York, introducing the modern movement to the United States, Herwarth Walden summed up his gallery activity in the first German Autumn Salon. The show contained 360 works, with the paintings of Henri Rousseau in the place of honor. In fraternal proximity to the works



Kokoschka: London Bridge: View of the Thames. 1925-26. Oil on canvas, 35 3/4 x 51 1/4". Room of Contemporary Art, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo

of the German innovators were hung those of the Italian Futurists, the French Cubists, Chagall, Delaunay, Brancusi, Archipenko, and Epstein, Mondrian was also represented and so were Max Ernst and Hans Arp. With an amazing sureness of touch, Walden had brought together almost all the forces that had determined or were to determine the over-all picture of modern art. And this demonstration of the great unified stylistic tendency, covering all countries, was of the greatest significance. It can be said that after the Sonderbund exhibition and the Autumn Salon the significance of modern painting in Germany could no longer be overlooked.

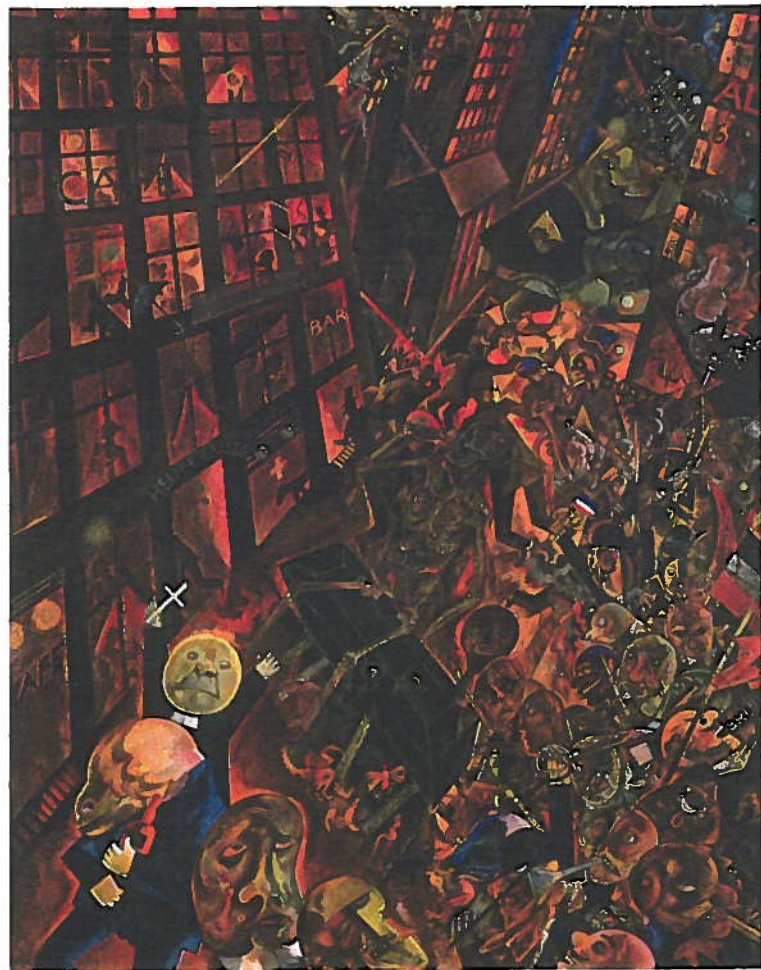
The War and the New Realism

Then came the war, interrupting this fortunate and continuous development. It left many great gaps. Marc, Macke and Morgner fell, Kandinsky and Jawlensky left Germany. Almost all the painters were at the front for years. Hofer was in a prison camp in France, Kirchner had a nervous breakdown and was taken to Switzerland, critically ill. The experience of the war changed humanity. When Germany collapsed, it was not only a war that was lost, the entire political, social, and philosophical structure broke down. The disintegrations in the social sphere, however, had less significance for the new formal structure of art. Changes of systems of expression occur outside of political life; moreover, the artists had long since assimilated the war in their revolutionary transformation. In 1916 Paul Klee set down the following thought: "I have had this war within me for a long time, and therefore it does not affect me inwardly at all." Thus the claim of the new expressive painting and its continuity of thought were conserved, but the spiritual condition of humanity and temporal events, disturbing to artistic man, had changed.

The influences that did arise from the war operated in two directions. Immediately afterwards there was felt in all the countries of Europe a need for serenity, for the stately calm of the classic, for a quieter dialogue with nature. I have already pointed out that at the beginning of the third decade, the foremost Expressionists, Nolde, Rohlfis, Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff, and even Kirchner, also began to draw back to a less agitated mode of conceiving nature and a more serene and monumental pictorial architecture. Kokoschka too, after the first hectic outbreaks of his temperament, found his way to a dramatic Impressionism that corresponded to his more relaxed and joyful mood of adoration before nature.

At the same time one had to digest the terrifying experience of trench warfare, a brutally immediate reality, and also to absorb the Utopian dogmas of mass welfare which rose like bubbles from this quagmire, and which were in contrast to the overwhelming harshness of the German post-war world. Man's outlook became stern and bitter, preoccupied with the dark side of social life. Profiteers, pimps, prostitutes, the mutilated, the wretched flotsam of the war were compelling subjects for pictures with which one could actively moralize. Art became a weapon of attack and defense.

This socially critical realism which at the outset had connections with the expressive means of Futurism, Dadaism, and the Italian "pittura metafisica" was introduced by George Grosz (born 1893). More a draftsman than a painter, he had built up out of suggestions from Pascin, Kokoschka, and Klee, an apparently childlike, but actually sophisticated, linear style, with which he tersely depicted reality. From Futurism and



opposite, Grosz: Funeral of the Poet Panizza. 1917-18. Oil on canvas, 55 1/8 x 43 1/4". Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Stuttgart



Grosz: Café Neptun. c. 1920. Watercolor, $18\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$ ". The Art Institute of Chicago, Olivia Shaler Swan Fund



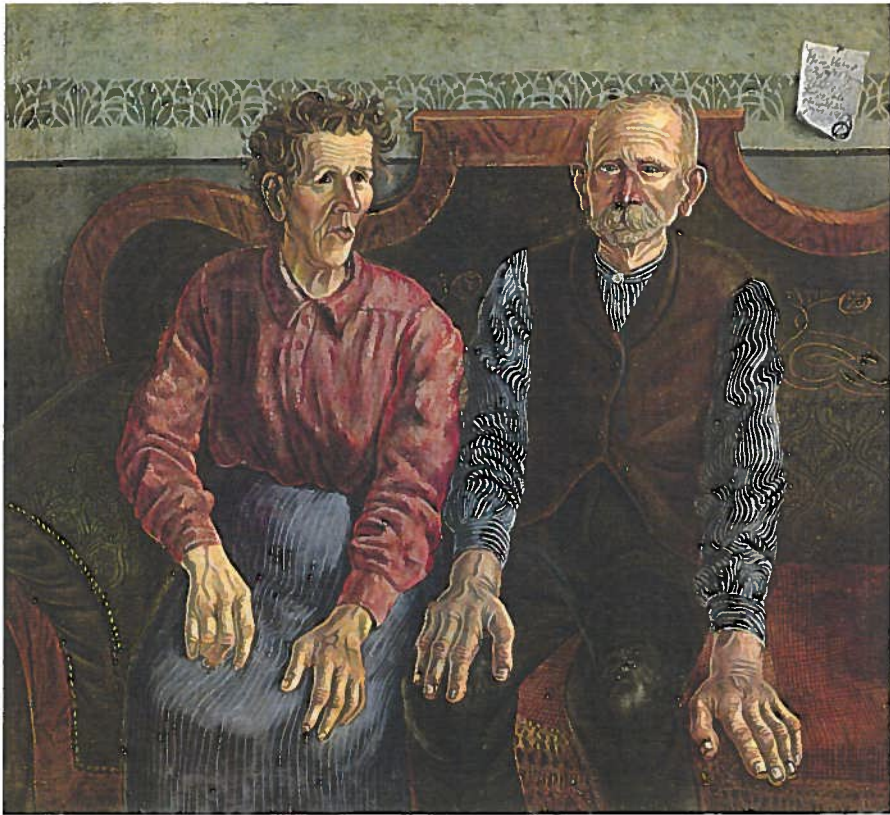
Grosz: In Rue Blondel. 1925. Watercolor, $18\frac{1}{4} \times 16$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Erich Cohn, New York

Dadaism Grosz adopted the technique of simultaneous vision, in order to interweave individual satirical images in the whole rhythm of metropolitan life (page 83). He now set the striking power of these means to work in the service of his biting topical satire, aggressively representing the basest aspects of the reality of his times. In the process the elements of caricature and satirical realism more and more displaced a Futurist and Dada stylistic vocabulary. From this emerged the candid, reportorial style of a critically observing realist, whose sardonic images expressed his discontent with the age.

Another bitter realist arose in this violent German Expressionist climate, Otto Dix (born 1891). His glance, which had become hardened and accusing in the face of the horrors of trench warfare experienced as a front line soldier, now discovered the same terror everywhere in naked reality. This reality was not to be evoked by "art." Only the dissonant and the very gross could bring to a heightened clarity such a tortured



Grosz: The Poet Max Hermann-Neisse. 1927. Oil on canvas, $23\frac{3}{4} \times 29\frac{1}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York



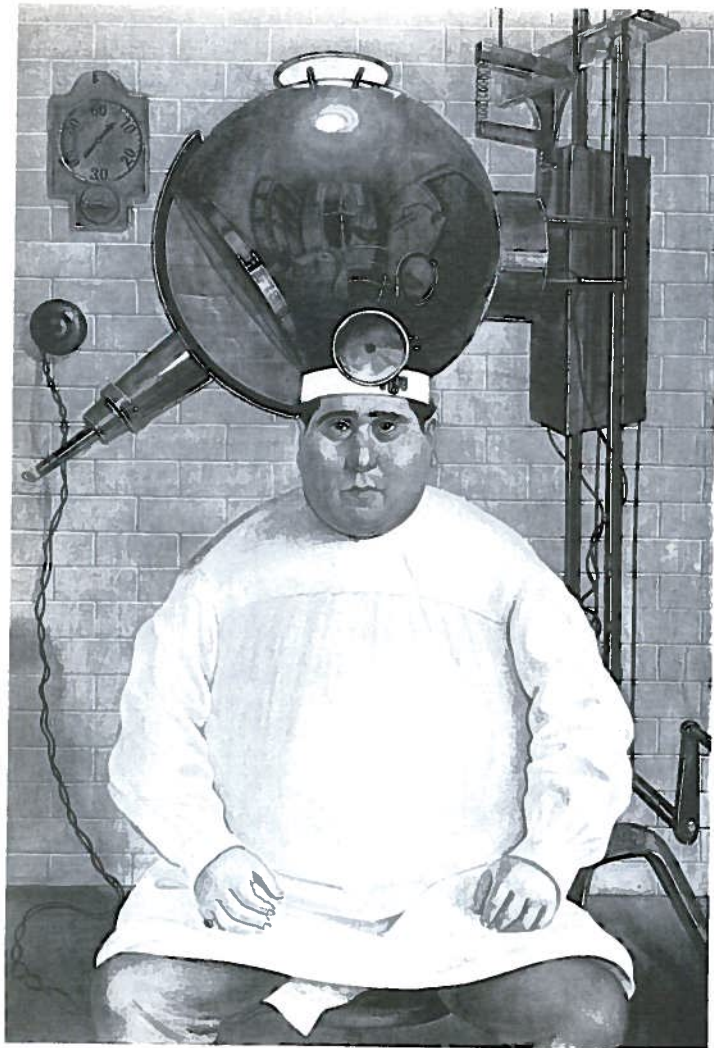
Dix: My Parents, 1924. Oil on canvas, 45 7/8 x 51 1/4". Niedersächsische Landesgalerie, Hanover

reality. With violently aggressive vision, Dix destroys the superficial and arrives at a harsh reality of all that is questionable, absurd, and objectionable. Half masochist, half moralist, he illustrates his themes in the fine technique of the old masters. The dissecting glance and the relentless insistence of the carefully built-up old-master technique with which Dix defined objects give these horrible themes the ghastly clarity and silent immobility of a dream (below). There now appears that heightened reality which illusionistic Surrealism sought with its techniques.

In these pictures, objects and an environment hostile to man appear in another dimension. They become a magical counterpart. This magic is recognizable even in the harshest reality. This characteristic answer of modern sensibility to the troubling qualities of contemporary existence had already arisen in the Italian "pittura metafisica" about 1916, and at about the same time had brought forth Dada's anarchical and yet very profound manipulation of the scraps of reality.



Dix: Trench Warfare (Schützengraben), 1922-23. Formerly in collection of Dresden Gallery, present whereabouts unknown (*)

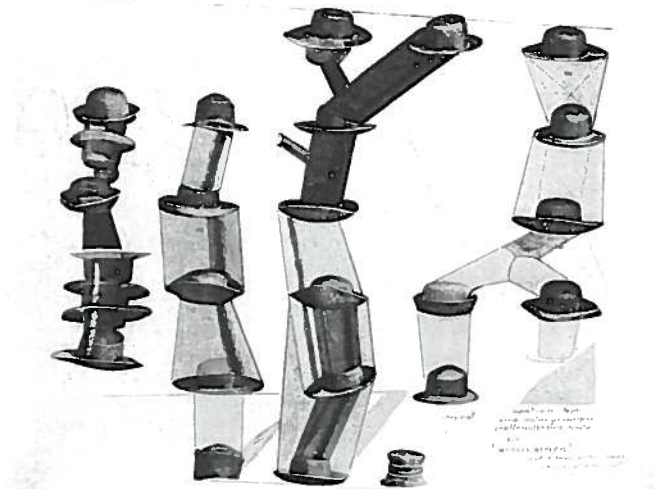


Dix: Child with Doll. 1928. Oil on wood, $29\frac{1}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{4}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

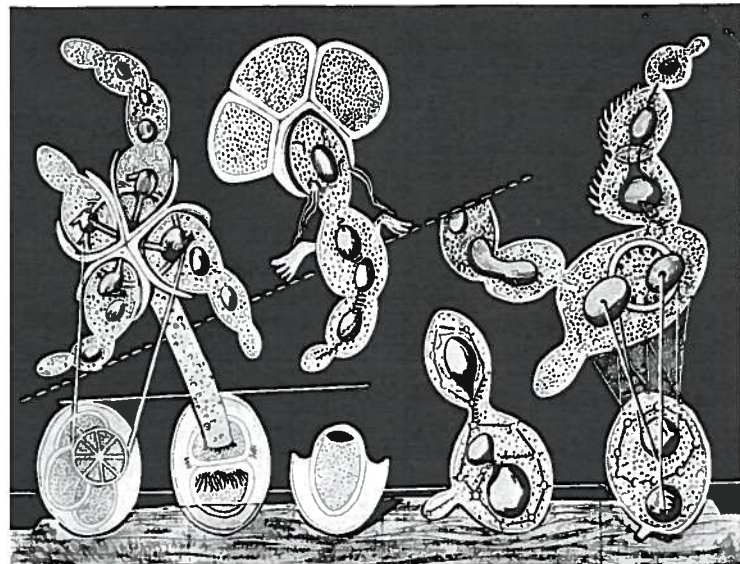


opposite, Dix: Dr. Mayer-Hermann. 1926. Oil on wood, $58\frac{3}{4} \times 39$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Philip C. Johnson

Now Max Ernst (born 1891) took up this theme of the new relationships of things. He left "art" out entirely. He drew on material that already existed, that was prefabricated, and "ready-made." He was fascinated by the magical, sharp reality of the technical drawings in the catalogues put out by the machine industry, and the engravings of scientific textbooks. The intense reality of these illustrations cast a spell and tempted him to manipulate the prefabricated pictures in order to make their harsh reality more eloquent by means of irrational juxtapositions (below). If one cut these pictures out and rearranged them freshly, as a fascinated curiosity might dictate, the elements of the fantastic automatically emerged. Montages of a precise verisimilitude were formed, which became dream pictures by the confusion of representation of objects, objects which were transformed into magical presences. These prefabricated pictures were used to form an astonishing world of marvels in an absurd realistic style, a poetic reinterpret-



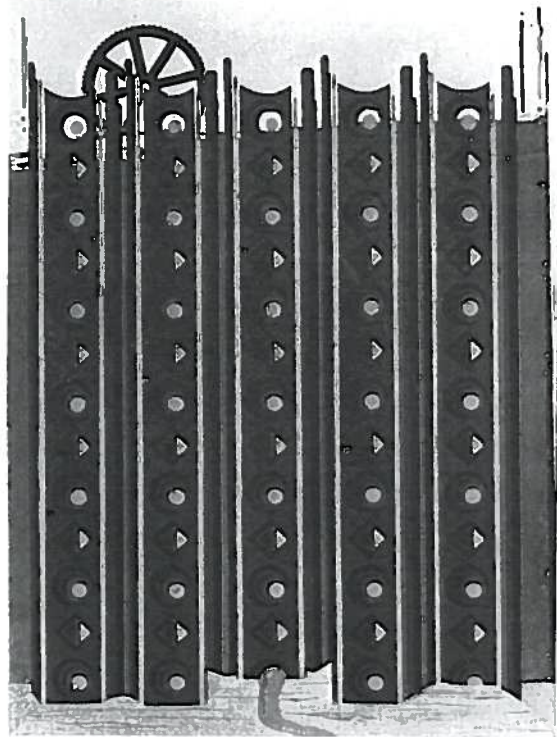
Ernst: The Hat Makes the Man. 1920. Collage, pencil, ink, watercolor, 14 x 18". The Museum of Modern Art, New York



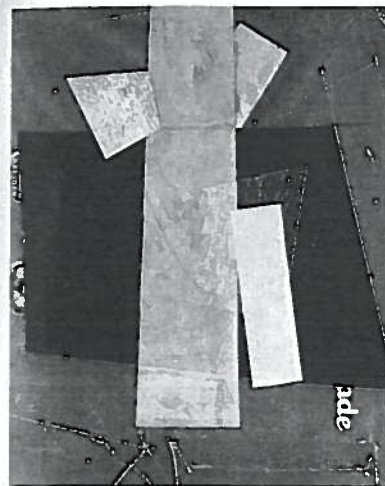
Ernst: The Gramineous Bicycle Garnished with Bells the Dappled Fire Damps and the Echinoderms Bending the Spine to Look for Caresses. 1920 or '21. Anatomical chart altered with gouache, 29 1/4 x 39 1/4". The Museum of Modern Art

tation was achieved by the arbitrary coincidence of elements of reality. In these montages one basic aim of veristic Surrealism was already achieved. When Ernst moved to Paris in 1922, this idea of an irrational manipulation of facsimiles of objects, in order to provoke the strongest poetic effects, had penetrated deeply into international Surrealism.

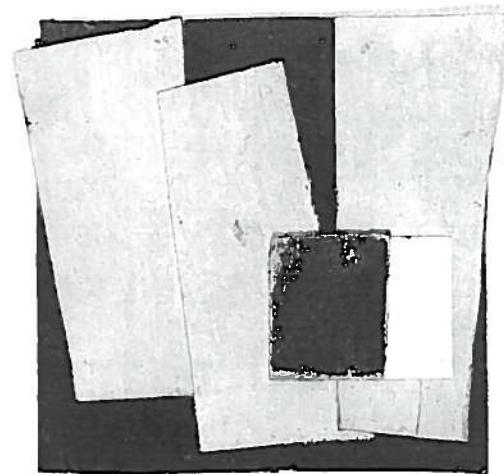
Out of a similar feeling for the mystery of commonplace things, Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) in Hanover discovered a new variation on Dada paintings in about 1920. He no longer set form against form, but material against material. With marvelous witchery, he collected every kind of waste and scrap and imaginatively put them together to form compositions (pages 93-95). Out of these remnants he made new objects in which the juxtaposition of diverse details, created a new atmosphere of reality.



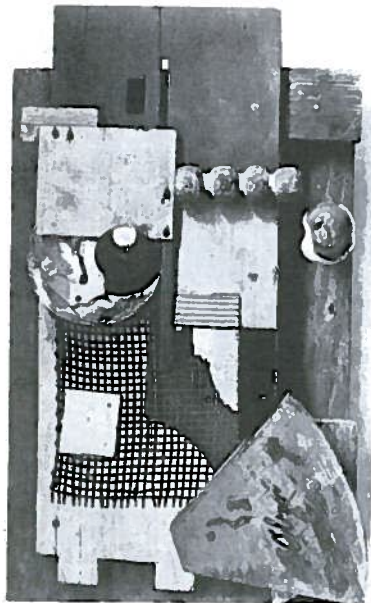
Ernst: *The Little Tear Gland That Says Tic Tac*. 1920. Gouache on wallpaper, $14\frac{1}{4} \times 10''$. The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Schwitters: *Drawing R 2: Hanst-Schokolade*. 1918. Collage of colored papers and wrapper, $7\frac{1}{8} \times 5\frac{3}{4}''$. The Museum of Modern Art, New York

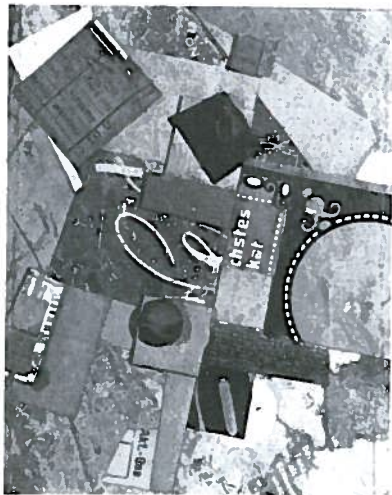


Schwitters: *Merz 448: Moscow*. 1922. Collage of cardboard and wood, $6 \times 6\frac{1}{4}''$. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest



Schwitters: Merz Construction. 1921. Collage, painted wood, wire, paper, $14\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ " Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection, Pennsylvania

Schwitters: Merz 2005. Constantinople. 1924. Collage of cut paper, cardboard, tram tickets, pellet of wood, $5\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest



Schwitters: Picture with Light Center. 1919. Paper collage with oil on cardboard, $33\frac{1}{4} \times 25\frac{7}{8}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York

This novel relationship of objects and an expressive realism, romantically diluted, gave rise to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* which Hartlaub in 1925 brought together in a great exhibition in his gallery in Mannheim. It corresponded to the classic-realist tendencies among the Italians ("valori plastici") and the French (Derain, Picasso) and was broadly conceived, but it did not bring to light any name worthy of particular mention.

This trend, however, contributed to the development of the pictorial world of Carl Hofer (1878-1955), whose painting was characterized by a spare and disillusioned idealism. The starting point for Hofer was Hans von Marées and Cézanne, and he believed that in his long residences in India (in 1909 and 1911) he had found a lyrical ideal of figure painting. But friction with the realities of life, the war, his internment for years as a prisoner, the bitter atmosphere of the post-war period, crushed the shell of his idyll. The ideal of maidenhood was replaced by the suburban girl, and the place of a glowing fleshiness was often taken by a mask. His paintings became sober, without sensuousness and their bare structure was open to the light of day. A dry color with few accents built up the flat background. A few themes always recur and in the course of this repetition, the organization of the pictures becomes more ascetic. This quality in German art between the two wars is a special accent. Hofer was a painter who began with a dream of ideal beauty which contact with reality shattered. Out of this disenchantment came his pictures which were also interpretations of his times.

Max Beckmann

The most powerful figure in this trend of the time toward a new definition of reality was Max Beckmann (1884-1950). The war confronted him too with its stern truths, and forced him to give up the early style that he had developed in the Impressionist climate of the Berlin Secession. An inexorable determination to state facts kept him squarely facing reality. Once more it was the tangible object or figure that led to a new artistic statement. Physical reality was that which could be grasped and precisely determined as a volume. If the visible were disrobed, and pure and simple form defined, these shapes then attained an unusually powerful emblematic presence, becoming suitable material for the construction of reality. However, since forms were defined as sculptured volumes, they entered into an intrinsic contradiction with their surrounding space. It was precisely the solidity of Beckmann's reality that gave space, by contrast, its empty, limitless, uncertain character, and made it the locus of the gods and of anxiety. In order to break down this void, Beckmann struggled to find a new arithmetic of solid things; what had to be done, he said, was to put a jumble of things in front of the emptiness of space, so that its fearful depth would not be seen. The drama of every picture by Beckmann arises out of the tension between the objects and space.

In these pictures, objects and figures are seen in emphatic contour and strong volume, each an isolated presence asserting its own powers of existence. Every volume pushes into space individually and supports itself against the next. The separate volumes build up with brute force the spatial scheme which becomes its own convincing reality. Emptiness is filled with interlocking forms which check the movement of space. And the collision between space and volumes form the drama of the picture. We do not have an imitative reproduction of reality represented by means of real facts, but a structured reality built up of real facts. On this pictorial stage which criss-crossed and framed the painting surface, Beckmann then began to let objects and figures come together in allegory, fables of human life that are quite plausible and convincingly made. If it often happened that the allegory could not be resolved at every point, it always had the immediate value of a metaphor of an existential experience of reality.



Beckmann encountered Expressionism about 1917 but at once attempted to combine it with an aggressive realism, somewhat in Grosz' direction. Cubism, and the late German Gothic masters' system of spatial division, helped him to work out his dramatic, lattice-like space. Henri Rousseau taught him the magical nobility of simply defined objects. From 1920 Beckmann built up his motif with emblematic pictorial symbols. Piece by piece, in a hard, naive determination to define, he found for himself the form and volume of the object, fitting it into the construction of the picture. Forms are established by drawing, color seems to have been merely added. He often made trips to Paris, and after 1928 he allowed a blooming coloration to grow slowly in his paintings. This was the final step from a graphic treatment of form to a more painterly definition. In this new phase the stern preoccupations with contour, volume, space, and color came to a forceful conclusion. Beckmann now expressed intuitively the entire content of his experience of reality in magnificent paintings. Great triptychs became the stage for his figure groups and for the dark allegoric scenes in which Beckmann locked his experience of existence (pages 104-105).

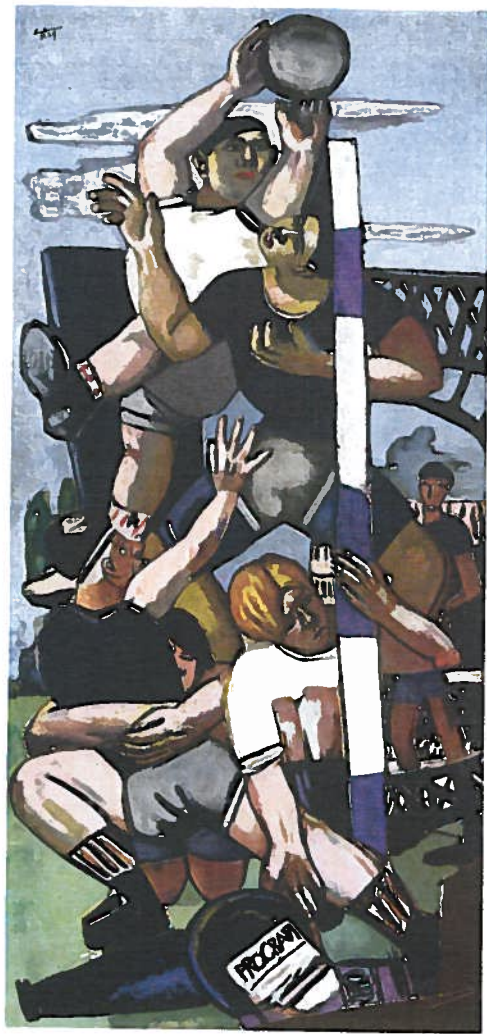


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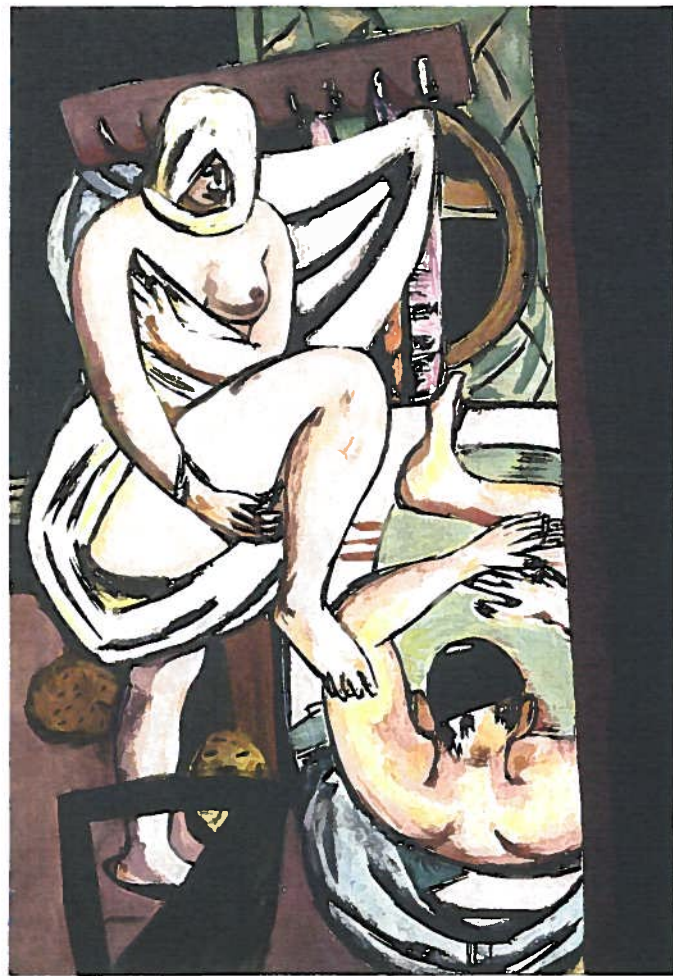
Beckmann: View of Genoa. 1927. Oil on canvas, $35\frac{1}{2} \times 66\frac{1}{2}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Morton D. May, St. Louis, Missouri

opposite, Beckmann: Family Picture. 1920. Oil on canvas, $25\frac{3}{8} \times 39\frac{3}{4}$ ".
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr.

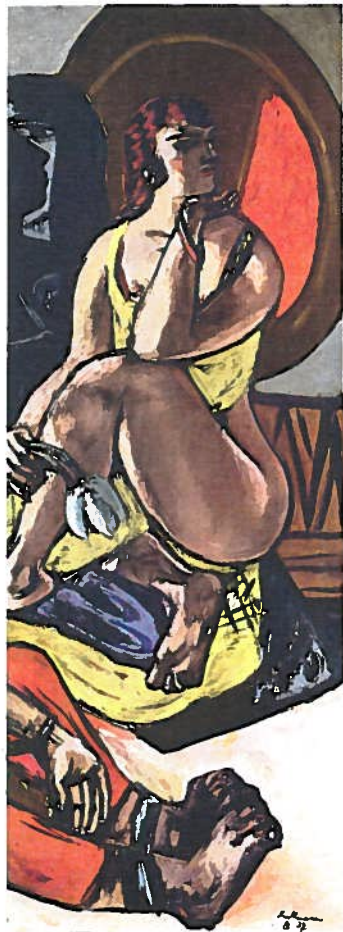


opposite, Beckmann: The Bath. 1931. Oil on canvas, 70 x 48".
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Morton D. May, St. Louis, Missouri

Beckmann: Rugby Players. 1929. Oil on canvas, 84 ⁷/₈ x 39 ³/₈".
Städtisches Museum, Duisburg







Beckmann: Temptation. 1936. Oil on canvas, triptych,
center panel 79 x 67", side panels each 84 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 39 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
Collection Dr. Stephan Lackner, Santa Barbara, California

Beckmann's greatness lies in the inexorable way in which he gave expression to his own vision of reality and to his position in the world. But this evocation of an external reality was at the same time a self-invocation. "The real love for the things outside of us and the deep secrets of events within us," as he put it, came to characteristic synthesis. Beckmann called this method of his "transcendental realism."

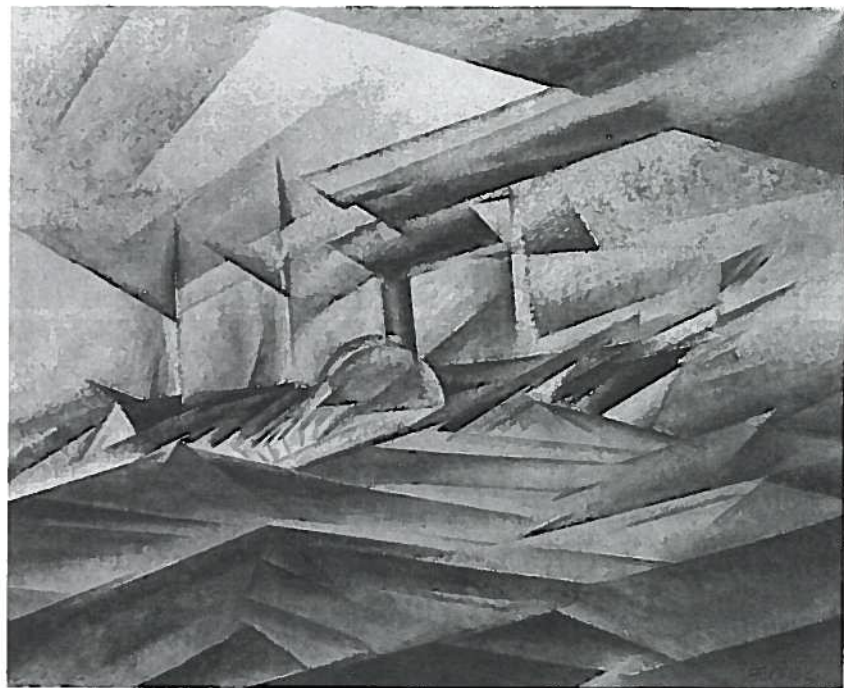
The Painters of the Bauhaus

The new efforts to arrive at a plastic definition of contemporary experience can be understood as a further development of the Expressionist view of nature. Now the ideas concerning Orphic and abstract paintings that had sprung up in the Blaue Reiter were developed further and brought to striking maturity. They found their concentrated center of action in the Bauhaus.

At the beginning of 1919 in Weimar, Walter Gropius, an architect, had founded the Bauhaus, an institution that in research and instruction took for its theme the forming of the entire human environment through architecture, industrial design, painting, and sculpture. The fine and applied arts were seen to grow out of present-day practical circumstances, determined by technology as well as by spiritual conditions. The fine arts studios were thought of as a kind of emancipated creative center, the chambers of the heart, from which the elevated and free artistic impulses were to penetrate into the utilitarian world of the workshops. With marvelous sureness of touch, Gropius brought together the most sensitive painters, those who were thinking through the problem of form most keenly. In 1919 Lyonel Feininger was invited to the Bauhaus; in 1921, Paul Klee and Oskar Schlemmer; in 1922 Kandinsky followed, and in 1923, Moholy-Nagy.

Kandinsky and Klee came directly from the Blaue Reiter, Feininger and Schlemmer were also close to the circle. Moholy-Nagy and Kandinsky (who had just returned from Russia) brought to this artistic forum the ideas of Russian Constructivism and the Dutch de Stijl movement. Van Doesburg, Mondrian, Malevich, El Lissitzky, Naum Gabo had close personal relationships with the Bauhaus. The Orphism of the Blaue Reiter and Constructivism balanced each other fruitfully. Basically this remained the key, although a Constructivist purism, and the emphasis on industrial design which developed out of it, slowly came to the fore and produced serious tensions.

In 1925 the Bauhaus moved to Dessau. Gropius left in 1928, and the Bauhaus went through a grave internal crisis. Schlemmer accepted a call to Breslau in 1929; in 1930 Klee went to Düsseldorf. Mies van der Rohe in 1930 tried to recapture the old Bauhaus spirit. But meanwhile the Bauhaus had become the target of the cultural program of rising national socialism. Then in 1932 the institution retreated to Berlin and was closed there in May of 1933 as a "hotbed of cultural Bolshevism."



Feininger: *The Side Wheeler*. 1913. Oil on canvas, 31 ³/₄ × 39 ⁵/₈". The Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan

The emigration of the men of the Bauhaus now began. Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer, Marcel Breuer departed for the United States. Kandinsky moved to Paris, and Klee to Bern. Although today the name of the Bauhaus has almost become synonymous with functionalism in architecture, Constructivism in the plastic arts, and industrial design, its identification solely with these developments is a quite erroneous limitation of its spiritual range. The works and the teachings of its four great painters – Kandinsky, Klee, Schlemmer, Feininger – made a unique and genuine contribution to modern painting, which was to inscribe the name of the Bauhaus firmly in the annals of the history of the fine arts as well. What took place there on the highest artistic plane was the extension of the ideas that Kandinsky and Klee had begun to set forth in the Blaue Reiter. Feininger and Schlemmer also shared in this accomplishment.

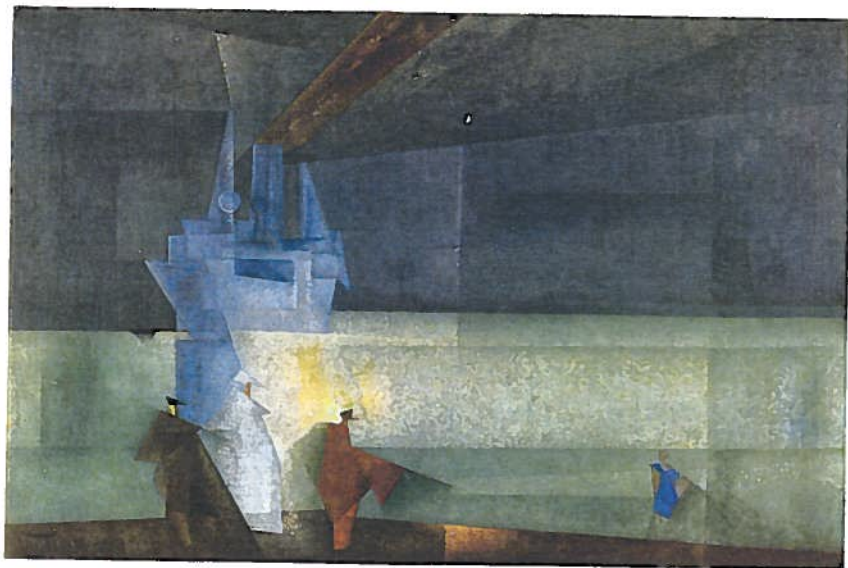
Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956) exhibited with the Blaue Reiter in the Berlin Autumn Salon of 1913. In Cubism Feininger found the harmony, discipline, and order that corresponded to his personality, but at the same time his romantic feeling for nature required him to make this strict order poetic. In 1914 he became acquainted with Delaunay and now recognized in Orphic Cubism the lyrical possibilities of the Cubist formula. And through Delaunay's architectural pictures, he found his way to his preferred themes. The evolution from Orphism to the Blaue Reiter, with its idea of an "underlying mystical design," was only logical.

In his Bauhaus paintings, Feininger worked to clarify his Cubism, which was initially very dynamic. Fine-layered and transparent planes create a cool spatial crystal, in which the play of clear horizontals and verticals are held in asymmetrical balance. Constructive directional lines and fine points of support, where Feininger likes to put a human figure as a punctuation, define this clear spatial geometry. The pictorial design, composed like a fugue, recaptures the crystalline vision of the Gothic architecture of the old German cities (page 141). The transparent structure of the picture transforms the motif into visual poetry. In Feininger's seascapes a great open space and a mirrored atmosphere are fixed in this calculated order. The lucid, magical geometry of his pictures, which sets forth infinite space in diamond-like facets, allows the romantic spirit and gentle mysticism of the Blaue Reiter to shine through clearly. In his last pictures as well (Feininger returned to his native America in 1937), the fugitive play of the atmosphere is refracted in an enchanted space.

Oskar Schlemmer (1888-1943) had no immediate contact with the Blaue Reiter, but his work too was characterized by the effort to humanize the formal, geometric painting of Cubism. He wanted to preserve an image of man at the center of the geometrical orders, as a humanist symbol joining the rational and the mystical. And so with purist rigor he composed his paintings, setting a formalized idol in the midst of a world of three-dimensional geometry, an idol of man as a symbol of a supra-individual.



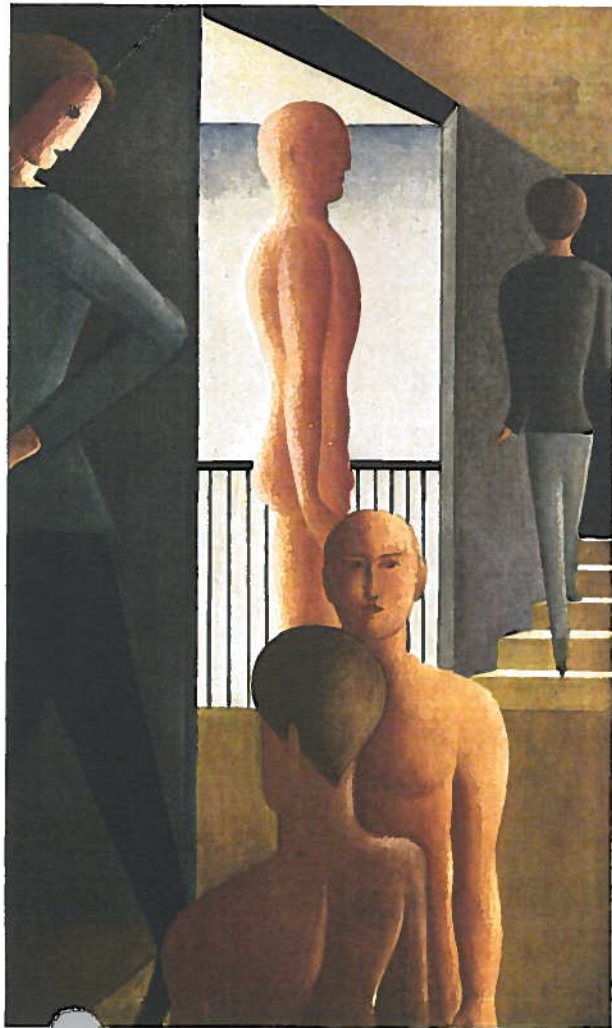
Feininger: Bridge III. 1917. Oil on canvas, 31 1/2 x 39 3/8". Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne



Feininger: The Steamer "Odin," II. 1927. Oil on canvas, $26\frac{1}{2} \times 39\frac{1}{2}$ ". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest

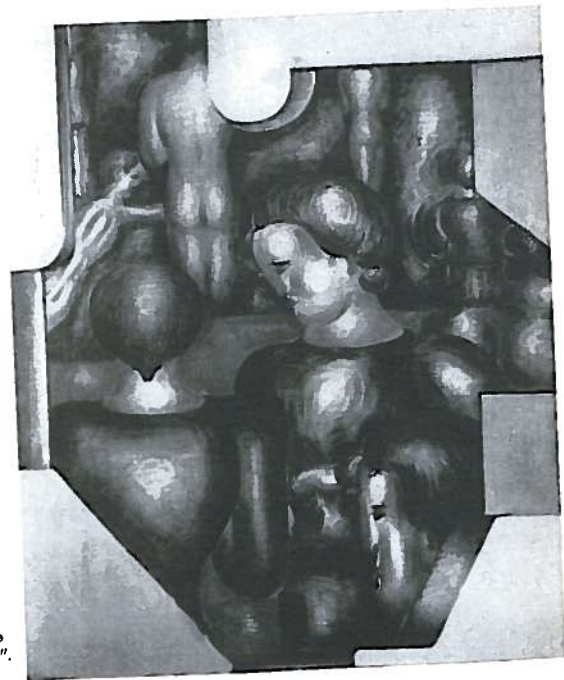


Feininger: Barfüsser Church in Erlurt. 1927. Oil on canvas, $39 \times 31\frac{1}{4}$ ". Collection Dr. Ferdinand Ziersch, Wuppertal-Barmen

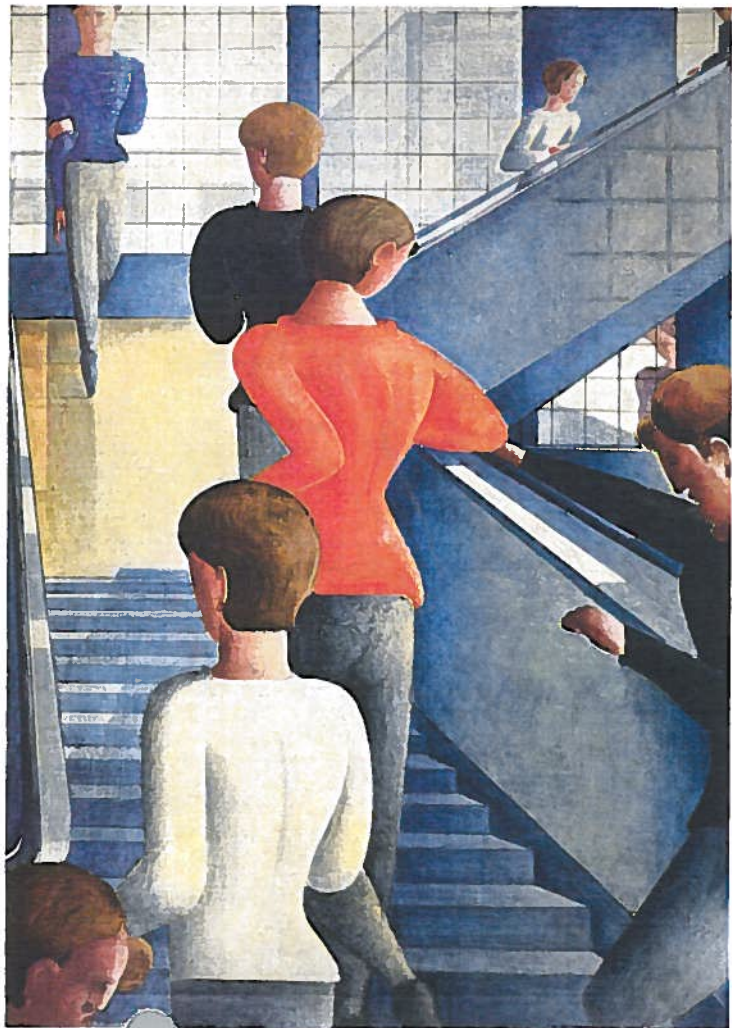


Schlemmer: Five Men in a Room. 1928.
Oil on canvas, 59 x 35 3/8".
Collection Dr. Max Fischer, Stuttgart

When Schlemmer came to the Bauhaus, he undertook a class in stage design. He was passionately devoted to the theater and the dance, and in those years was working on the completion of his Constructivist "Triadic Ballet." He was now able to have his mannequin-like figures appear actively in the imaginary, artificial space of the theater. Schlemmer had learned that the figures which he executed as a dancer introduced a human element of tension into the formalistic space of the theater. It was these spatial configurations that Schlemmer, as painter, wished to put into permanent form (page 114). And thus there occur in his pictures groups of figures set on various planes; the inter-



Schlemmer: Group in Cut-Out View (Gruppe im Ausschnitt). 1930. Oil on canvas, 44 x 35".
Rose Fried Gallery, New York



Schlemmer: Seated Figure, 1936. Oil on canvas, $25\frac{1}{4} \times 18\frac{7}{8}$ "', Folkwang Museum, Essen

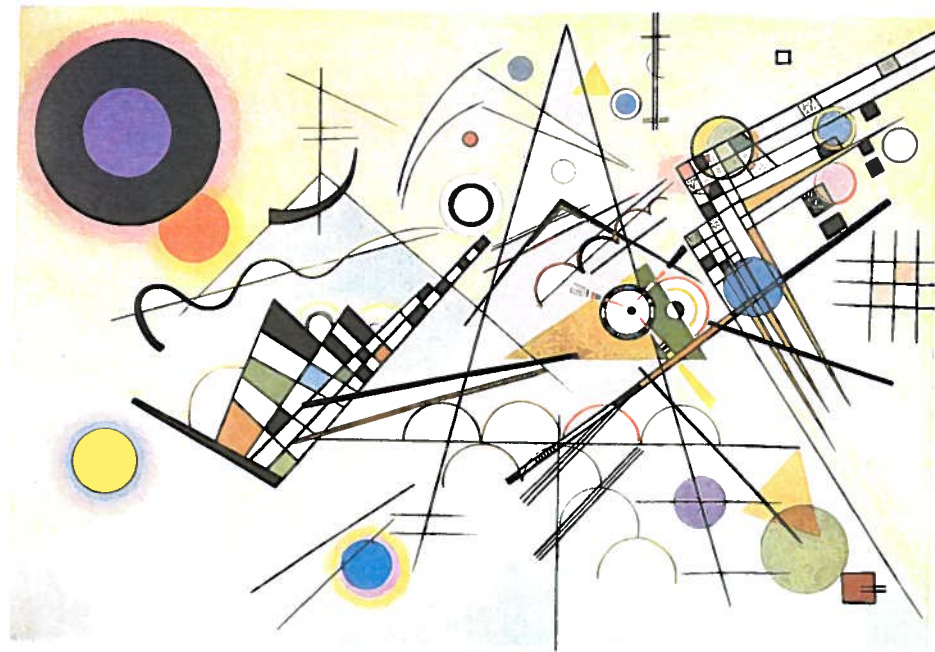
opposite, Schlemmer: Bauhaus Stairway, 1932. Oil on canvas, $63\frac{3}{4} \times 44\frac{3}{4}$ "',
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Philip C. Johnson

sections and dislocations of the planes create a spatial geometry whose irrational character reflects the inner tensions of man. His theme was "the many-sided representation of man in the abstract spaces of the future, of transparency, of mirroring." In this connection he created an icon-like figure in which the mystical relationship of man and space could be contemplated as a "symbol of a unity of nature and spirit."

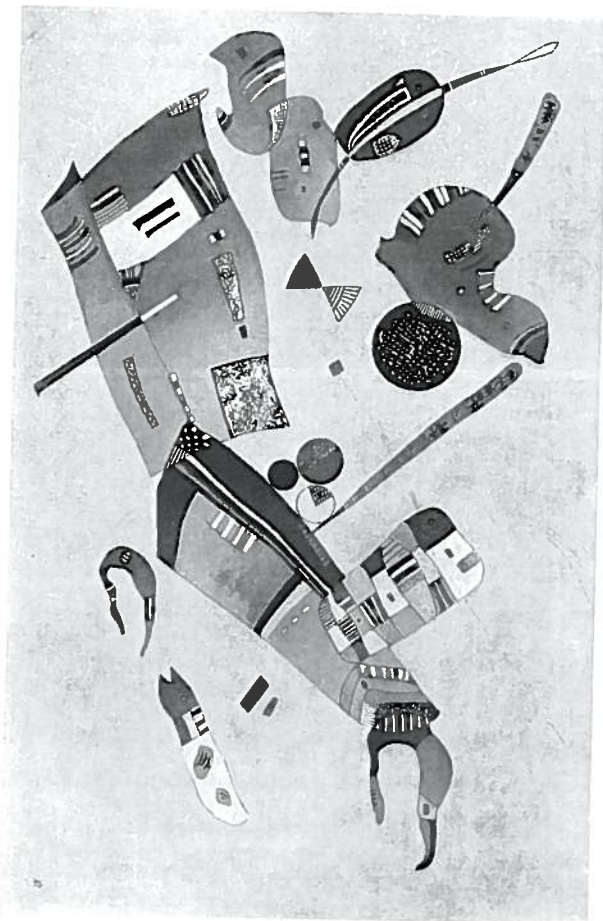
A mystical conception of the unity of all being was at the core of the Blaue Reiter. Kandinsky's art drew its life from it, but when he came to the Bauhaus in 1922 not only his style, but also the purpose of his art, was greatly changed. In 1945 he had gone back to Russia and at close range lived through the experiments of the Russian Constructivists who conceived of abstract geometrical form as a concrete reality. This led him to suppress the expressive and psychologically evocative factors in his art and to assert the picture in its concrete actuality as a self-existent harmony. Carried along by the magnificent spiritual tension of the Bauhaus, which uniquely held in equilibrium the most rigorous architecture and the purest poetry, Kandinsky enthusiastically adopted this new idea. His pictures become sharply defined, bright, and of a geometrical precision (opposite). A sensitive play of balanced geometrical forms is set forth on the white surface in brilliant, unadulterated colors: circles, triangles, squares, rods, arcs, twists of line. As far as possible every form is standardized and exactly determined with T-square, triangle, and compass. The closeness to Constructivism is obvious, but still more obvious is the difference in range. The pictures now seem like musical compositions with a firm beat in rich rhythm, and they can be experienced as pure, concrete formal organizations without seeking references to objective, sensory experience. By means of such elementary forms, an autonomous, verifiable, pictorial reality is constructed with a fine regularity. Expressionism has thereby been put aside, since the artist's passions or the settling of accounts with visible nature were no longer in question. As in a musical composition, the artist has invoked and created a higher state of being, from which a gleam of a universal harmony falls into the darkness that surrounds man. Kandinsky's paintings became an instrument of the universal and a fraternal neighbor to the puritanical genius of Mondrian.

In his late Paris period (he emigrated to the French capital in 1933), Kandinsky once more showed a magnificent synthesis in a style of extraordinary scope. Then the freest intuitions united with the clearest spiritual control to achieve concrete forms that once again took on a more human content.

If we consider Kandinsky's work as a whole, it comprises the entire domain of abstract painting, ranging from abstract Expressionism to rigorous Constructivism. This was the powerful message that Kandinsky passed on to the next generation to be mastered and further developed. It is predominant today in the most significant areas of contemporary painting in the world.



Kandinsky: Composition 8, No. 260, 1923, Oil on canvas, 55 1/2 x 79 1/8", The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



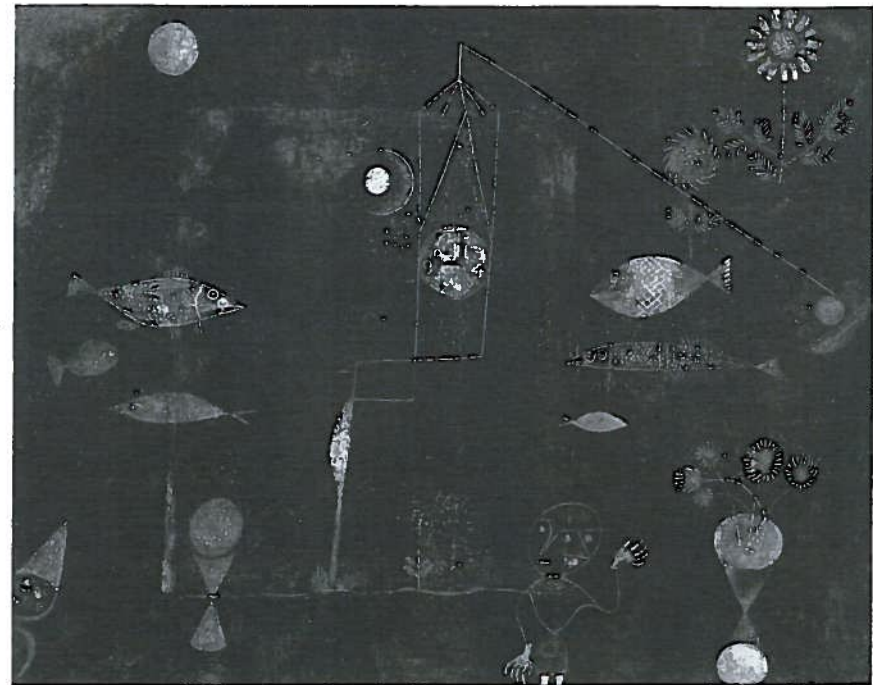
Kandinsky: No. 678. 1940. Oil on canvas,
39 1/4 x 25 1/2". The Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum, New York

But there was still another artistic contribution of the Bauhaus which was to find world-wide response. It came from Paul Klee and was also based on the romantic vision of the great connections in the realm of being between the ego and the world, the earthly and the cosmic. For Klee a picture was in the highest sense a "comparison to the totality of the All." For this vision he sought a lasting intuitive symbol, an image which could serve as a formal analogy for the all-embracing unity of man and the world. To find this unifying image, which was not merely a reproduction of visible nature, he carefully prepared his expressive means, his thought, and his technique. He transformed every pictorial device – line, form, rhythm, forms of movement, space, tone, color – by the most precise analysis, freeing them from their representational function for a more evocative freedom. As the field in which these plastic forces were to appear, he produced the plane, the abstract picture surface entirely independent of nature, on which what had been evoked could be written down. He composed and moved the picture surface by his ordering of the superimposed planes, thereby creating an autonomous pictorial space which does not observe traditional rules of perspective. With the addition of color a magically illuminated, independent space of colored light appears. He now moves over this evocative surface, drawing on it with an attenuated line which in the course of its improvisation becomes a vehicle of every psychic stimulus. Heeding his own powers of association, he brings something poetic to his immediate intuitions. The results may be a nature poem about a plant, animal, or landscape, but they can also lead to an aerial or subterranean region alien to man. Or Klee may uncover merely a vague resonance, or an acrobatic, dancing movement caused by the rhythmic play of the colors themselves. Something mythical might be suggested in the tone of the colors, or Klee might let a discursive line, feeling its way among the magic zones of colors, find essences that are at home between the stars and the earth. Thus he prepared the picture surface as a vibrant sounding board and a sensitive organ which responded to poetic impulses and intuitive experience.

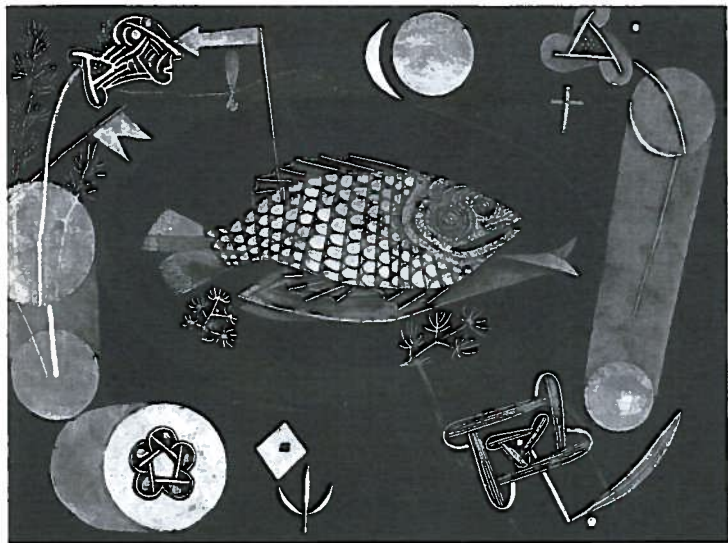
But these impulses and experiences arise out of a very deep realization of physical nature. A preoccupation with nature was a "conditio sine qua non" for Klee. He endeavored to orient himself precisely in the natural world. By the most exact analytic observation of nature's forms and by a penetrating contemplation of them, he developed a repertory of quintessential images. From the stock of ideas cultivated in his subconscious, there emerged on the picture surface symbols of reality of an astonishing precision; they not only reproduced the static factors in natural scenes but also the forces and genetic processes of nature: growing, blooming, streaming, swaying. It is nature deeply understood, deeply immersed in a wealth of remembered ideas that was used in the painter's vision. And so it was possible for these intimations of a complex, unified reality to reach expression through well-handled means, both reflecting the painter's



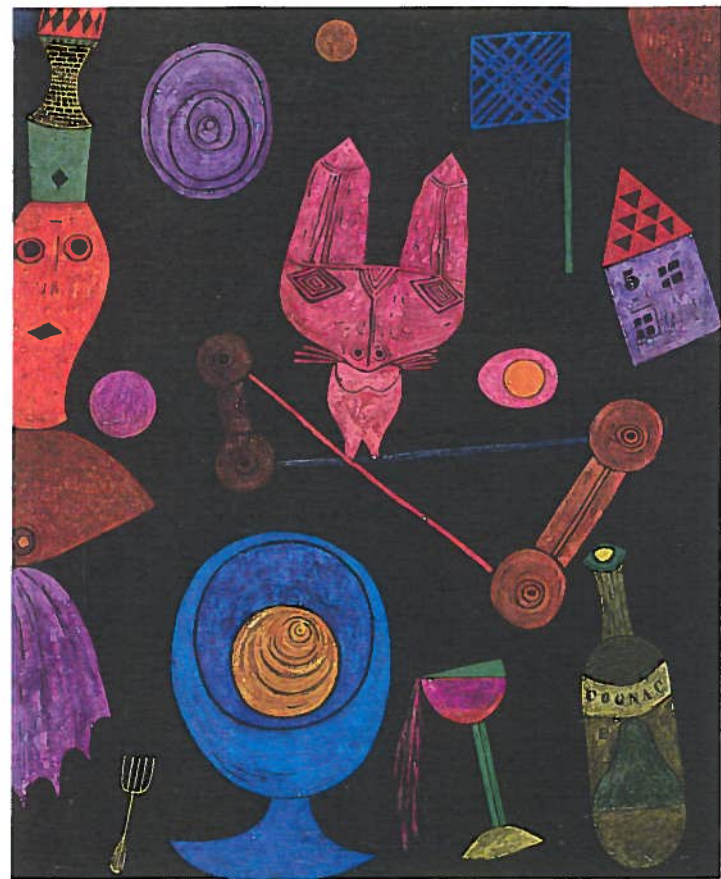
Klee: Landscape with Dam (Flussbaulandschaft), 1924. Oil on canvas, 14 ¹/₈ x 21 ¹/₈". Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe



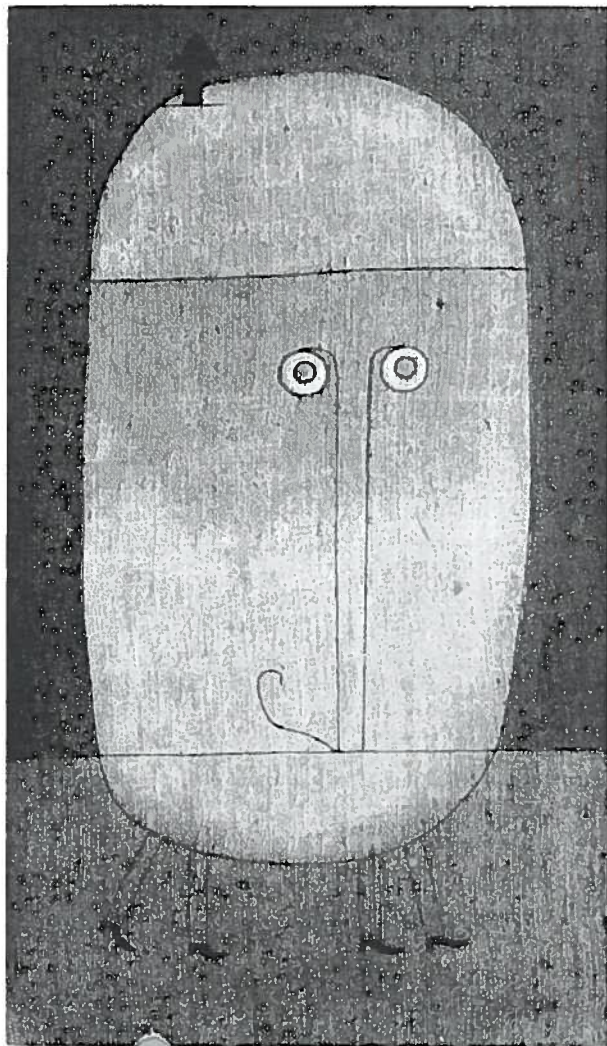
Klee: Fish Magic (Fischzauber), 1925. Oil on canvas mounted on board, 30 ³/₈ x 38 ¹/₄". Philadelphia Museum of Art, Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, Pennsylvania



Klee: Around the Fish (Um den Fisch). 1926. Oil on canvas, 18 ³/₈ x 25 ¹/₈". The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Fund



Klee: A Gay Repast (Bunte Mahlzeit). 1928. Oil on canvas, 33 ³/₈ x 26 ³/₄". Collection Mrs. Gabriel Hauge, Washington, D. C.



Klee: Mask of Fear (Maske Furcht), 1932.
Oil on burlap, 39 1/2 x 22 1/2". Collection
Dr. and Mrs. Allan Roos, New York

own introspection and becoming formal symbols of something actually seen. Klee's pictures were, therefore, a self-sufficient architecture as well as a plastic image: finely tuned harmonic structures as well as illustrations of a poetic intuition of the world. They were abstract and objective at the same time.

Klee's art showed how this apparent incompatibility between the decorative and the illustrative, between architecture and image, between the abstract and the objective could be resolved. A broad new conception of the singleness and poetic wholeness of reality was revealed into which the individual components of experience entered on an equal footing: the Ego of man, the Thou of things, the Below of the terrestrial, the Above of the cosmic. Klee's small, modest papers and paintings disclosed a new vision of things which gave painting a remarkable poetic breadth and depth. That explains the fascination Klee has exercised in the last decade, and indicates why he is one of the greatest masters of the century.

The German Contribution

We see that the German contribution to European painting has been very diversified. By their powers of conviction Kandinsky and Klee brought the various lines of development in abstract painting to a flowering which fertilized all of European painting. But there were also Beckmann's "transcendental realism," Kokoschka's dramatic Impressionism, Kirchner's hieroglyphics, Klee's cultivation of a plastic alphabet that seemed to make possible the erection of a bridge between the poles of a "great reality" and a "great abstraction." With these artists German painting stood at the complex beginnings of a style.

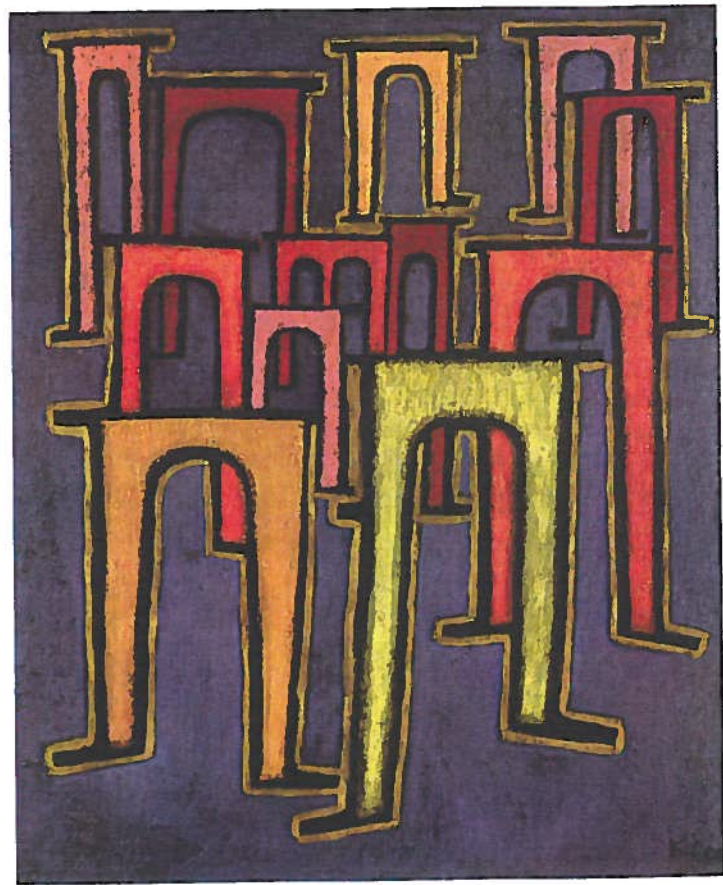
Compared with that of the other countries of Europe, German painting showed a decidedly romantic character. The Orphic and nature mysticism, man's place in the cosmos, run through all its pictorial statements as a private theme. France's rational genius gave the new European program of modernism formal strength and clarity of style, but German painting added depth and an ideal dimension.

Totalitarianism and the Second World War

But just as this magnificent development was spreading wide and deep into the life of society, and public and private collections were opening their doors to it, it succumbed to a new political and spiritual catastrophe. In a tendency to self-destruction that obviously lies deep in the German nature, the German people destroyed the bases of their own creative freedom. Hitler and his cohorts assumed power in 1933. Persecution of the free creative spirit began.



Klee: Caprice in February (Capriccio im Februar), 1938. Oil on canvas, 39 x 28 1/2".
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Morton Neumann,
Chicago



Klee: Revolution of the Viaduct (Revolution des Viaduktes), 1937. Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 19 3/4".
Kunsthalle, Hamburg



Klee: *Captive (Gefangen)*, 1940. Oil on burlap mounted on wood, $19\frac{3}{4} \times 18\frac{1}{4}$ ". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Zimmermann, New York

We shall merely list a few events here: In 1933 the Bauhaus was closed and all artists and museum directors with modern tendencies were dismissed from public employment. Almost all the men of the Bauhaus and a large number of modern artists including Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger, Kokoschka, and Beckmann emigrated. In 1934 Hitler made a threatening speech against "degenerate art." There followed in 1935 the organized enrollment of artists in the Reichskunstkammer, whose approval had to be obtained for any exhibition. Any activity outside this official artists' "guild" could be suppressed by the police. Hitler threatened modern artists with the "insane asylum or jail." In 1937 there was the confiscation of all "degenerate art." In 1938 the sale and destruction of the confiscated works by an "Appraisal Commission" took place. That year Kirchner committed suicide. In 1939 the modern masterpieces collected over the decades, from van Gogh to Matisse and Picasso, from Marc through Lehmbruck to Klee, were sold in Lucerne. In order to strike at the artists in their private studios as well, the most significant of them were forbidden by the police to paint.

The desolation of totalitarian practices in art now extended far and wide. In precise correspondence with the art theory of Russian Bolshevism and some aspects of Italian Fascism, the demand was made for an "art arising out of the people, that even the lowliest Stormtrooper can understand." In November 1935 Goebbels asserted the primacy of the political just as Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini and today Grotewohl, Krushchev, and Mao-Tse-Tung have done: "The freedom of the activity of the artist must stay within the limits set forth by the political idea, not by an artistic idea." The result was totalitarian art, which is the uniform stylistic phenomenon of any dictatorship: a false, prettified, photographic realism that monotonously recapitulated the same themes, glorifications of the Führer, the party, the race and the earth, mother and child, war, the heroic fighter. Essentially all these prescriptions aimed at annihilation of faith in the value of the individual personality and in the destruction of free and independent thought. The artistic productions of totalitarianism were by their very nature dead before they were begun.

They did not however affect authentic art, which went underground and there lived and went its unerring way. It is one of the most convincing proofs of the vitality and inner necessity of modern German art that despite the distress and persecution of the free painters, it did not lose its spiritual dedication. Even when the war broke out of this madness, this dedication sustained the individual through the streams of blood, sorrow and fire, and through the misery of years of imprisonment that so many painters, Fritz Winter among them, had in addition to endure. But human greatness consisted in the fact that this work was carried on apart from the spirit of aggression and hate, and in the awareness that every work finished, as the painter E. W. Nay once wrote, "added a grain of love to the All."

Painting Today

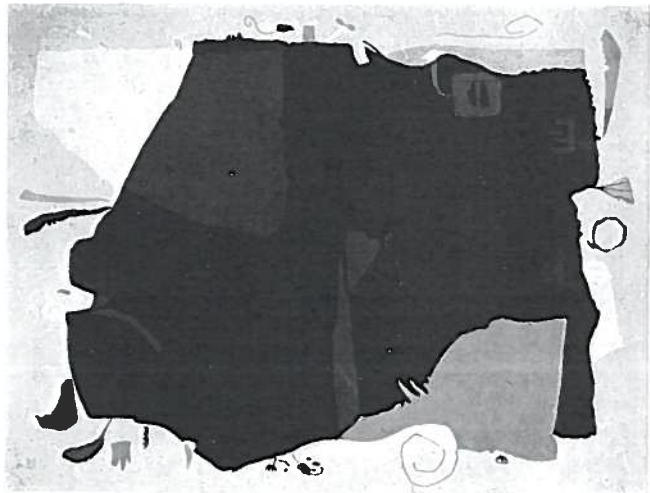
The exhibition is not large enough to allow us to trace adequately the development of post-war German painting. This painting would be interesting merely as a phenomenon of intellectual history. For it proved that when the war was hardly over, and all structure of a social, philosophical, and intellectual nature seemed to be destroyed, the idea contained in this development showed an unsuspected power of regeneration. Hardly had the ideal of modernism risen again to the surface here and there, in the midst of the hunger and misery of a ruined Germany, than it was at once clear that it had not been affected by the war and the horrible political events. Rather it had completely preserved that former continuity of thought which nourished it, and was responding to the same forces which guided the new European generation in painting. A unified, fundamental pattern seems to be at the bottom of all the efforts of the younger European painters. This was all the more amazing in the case of Germany, inasmuch as its leading masters, Klee, Kandinsky, Kirchner, Beckmann, were dead or out of the country, and such splendid creative spirits as Hartung and Wols had fled to France. Here is seen in striking clarity the extent to which all European painting shares the same spiritual longing and condition.

In Germany too, as in the rest of Europe, abstract painting became the predominant stylistic expression. It was not that representational painting disappeared, but it could no longer shake the position attained by the Expressionists and by Picasso and Beckmann; it remained confined to a quiet, restrained, often melancholy or virtuosolyricism. The political impulse toward a socialist realism found no echo in Germany. Klee, Kandinsky, Mondrian were the reigning saints.

The influence of a painter of the older generation, Willi Baumeister (1889-1955), who had not belonged to the Bauhaus group of artists but had been a good neighbor of theirs, should not be overlooked in considering this expansion of abstract painting. Baumeister's starting point was similar to Oskar Schlemmer's and from there he soon went on to the French purists and Léger. During the Nazi persecution he suppressed the objective more and more. In 1937 there came his first "ideograms," abstract symbols that have the same effect as ancient writing on old walls, and that invite the fantasy to distant flight. Henceforth Baumeister eagerly let the suggestive calls of colored forms lead him to ever new discoveries. This has resulted in a many-faceted achievement by a painter of wide range who is sensitive to many stimuli. He has painted loose, plastic compositions utilizing organic forms: canvases with dark symbols of an ethnographic character that look like rubbings from some very old inscription, with reminders of the earliest sagas. In these fragmentary forms now and then figures can be discerned (opposite). All these directions crossed each other in many manners; abstract exercises in problems of



Baumeister: Homage to Jerome Bosch. 1953. Oil on composition board, 43 1/4 x 59". Collection Mrs. Margarete Baumeister, Stuttgart



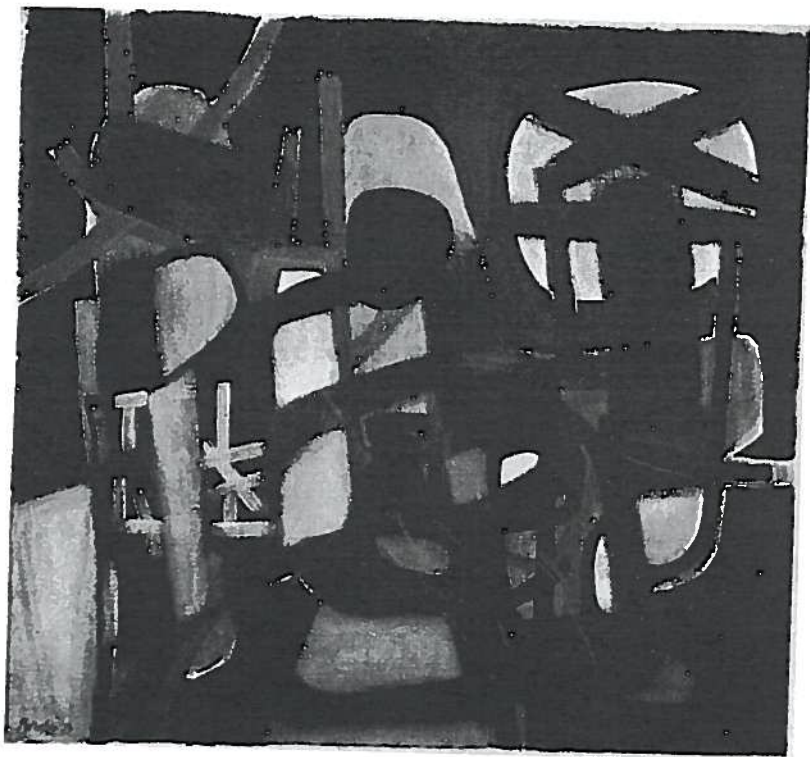
Baumeister: Montaru I. 1953. Oil on pasteboard, $39\frac{3}{8} \times 54\frac{1}{4}$ ". Niedersächsische Landesgalerie, Hanover

equilibrium were followed by a cycle of pictures with abstract figures, dark pictorial myths, by gaily-colored, humorous fables. Each style showed an astonishing connection with ancient memories and with the primitives. The formal richness and the breadth of content of these abstract paintings has stimulated many young painters.

If we wished to sketch the situation of art today in Germany, we would have to mention many directions and many individuals. We should once more encounter, at the intersection of objective and abstract painting, those Orphic or self-contained works in which an abstract structure still preserves symbols referring to the objective world. Representing this tendency are Werner Heldt (1904-1955), Eduard Bargheer (born 1904), and above all, Werner Gilles (born 1894), as well as Heinz Troekes (born 1913), whose pictures are still further removed from the object. At the opposite extreme we would find concrete painting, which for the last few years has had its own seminary in the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, under the leadership of Max Bill and Vor-



Winter: Light Breaking Through
(Durchbrechendes Licht) 1934.
Oil on canvas, $63\frac{3}{4} \times 43\frac{1}{4}$ ".
Owned by the artist



Winter: Dead Forest (Toter Wald). 1953. Oil on burlap, $53\frac{3}{4} \times 57\frac{7}{8}$ " Collection Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon, New York

demberge-Gildenwart. Between these two positions there is a meditative school of painting reflecting the poetic power of abstract forms, of which Gerhard Fietz (born 1910) and Konrad Westphal (born 1894) might be considered representative. In contrast to this direction is a form of painting which makes full use of the dramatic, or figurative, values of abstract form, developed by Georg Meistermann (born 1911) and Josef Fassbender (born 1902). Among the younger generation the abstract Neo-Expressionism introduced by Hartung and Wols has come to the front, it attempts to record on the



Werner: Premonition (Vorahnung). 1952. Gouache on paper, $35\frac{3}{8} \times 27\frac{1}{2}$ ". Collection Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon, New York

canvas surface, in the most spontaneous calligraphy, moments of human consciousness. Many names may be mentioned in this connection: Hann Trier (born 1915), Fred Thieler (born 1916), Hoffmann-Soenderborg (born 1923), Goetz (born 1914), Greis (born 1913), Bernhard Schultze (born 1915), etc. This is a very rich representation of contemporary abstract painting, and it has recapitulated the basic pattern of modern painting in the West.

This exhibition presents three independent, significant personalities who already have a large body of work behind them: Fritz Winter, Theodor Werner, and Ernst Wilhelm Nay. Perhaps they represent the high points of present-day German painting, at any rate, their work certainly shows its characteristic processes.

Fritz Winter (born 1905) most clearly belongs to that fine continuity of German romantic thought that the Blaue Reiter introduced into modern sensibility and that was further developed by Klee's work. Winter started from that point. He himself went through the Bauhaus, was Kandinsky's assistant, and was in close relationship to Klee. There was in addition his own personal experience. In his youth Winter had worked as a miner and there, in the gray glimmer of the rocks, had seen and lived with sunken primeval forms, the imprints of an earlier world. The processes of becoming and passing away here came to life for him in a secret stratum. They summoned him to see creation in the finely formed images of nature, and to understand them more broadly with a view of their hidden processes, to take into consideration not only their nouns: a tree, a stream, a flower, but also their verbs: growing, flowing, blooming. Winter sought a form at the level of the pictorial that could convey this poetic experience. If we closely examine the two pictures by Winter in the exhibition (pages 133-134), we can trace the poetic and constructive intensification of his characteristically romantic feeling for nature. He returns to the point at which man is himself part of creation, and from which "original point of creation," as Klee called it, he repeats ways of becoming and growing which coincide with the processes of all nature. Faced by these pictures, our concepts of objective and abstract break down. We see in them, it is true, non-representational diagrams of physical and psychic energies, structures, fields of force, basic crystalline patterns. But these abstract schemes are permeated by the suggestion of a deeper connection between Winter's personal expressive world and the motivating forces of a living, organic nature, the universal in us and around us.

Theodor Werner (born 1886), who came to abstract painting by way of Cézanne and the Cubists, has comparable aims, but they are still further removed from the objective world. Against a rich background of atmospheric space are set in motion zigzags, curved forms and arabesques, which are alternately delicate and coarse (pages 135 and 137). The painter's concept of the picture is also attuned to his own experience of the world. Werner's intelligence has absorbed the achievements of modern science and its multi-



Werner: 11/56. 1956. Oil and tempera on canvas, 39 3/8 x 28 3/4". Walther Scharf, Oberstdorf/Allgäu

dimensional picture of the universe. Three-dimensional things no longer count there, they have been replaced by structures of an abstract, algebraic nature, oscillations, movements, tensions. "Man who is at a loss in the new space," says Werner, "must go along with these changes emotionally. As a painter he must find forms that conduct this modern existential space into the imaginary and, then and there, locate it in the emotional domains of color forms." Examining Werner's pictures, we see a spirit at work that contemplates a more universal order, going beyond the painter's mastery of nature or pictorial composition. This spirit seeks to relate artistic form to the new spaces of science, and brings us closer to man's newly-found relationship to an expanding universe.

A Latin spirit may perhaps reject the weighting of the construction and décor of the picture with the far-reaching content Winter and Werner seek. It is true that a picture is always a self-contained, concrete fact, but like every other phenomenon it has both



Nay: With the Red and Black Dots. 1954. Oil on canvas, 49 1/4 x 79 1/4". Kunsthalle, Hamburg

surface and depth. Order, form, construction, these lie on the surface, what motivates them rises out of the depths of man himself.

Ernst Wilhelm Nay (born 1902) stands completely apart from this romantic attitude and its concern with content. He has a very special position in modern painting. Originally Nay, whose humanity and passions put him close to Kirchner, was attracted by that artist's hectic, formal hieroglyphics. However he soon translated them into the realm of color, a color of the sharpest and clearest gradations. His colored forms achieved so strong an evocative force that they became capable of mysterious transformations of optical experience, and even of the discovery of far-removed mythical representations. Often one could ask in their presence, as did Mallarmé before Gauguin's work, "How is it possible to combine so much mystery with such vulgar splendor?" But this "vulgar splendor" linking the interaction of complementaries with a glittering chromatic gradation showed Nay's sure, instinctive feeling for the laws of color relationships. At the same time these color constellations reorganized pictorial space, and set it in motion by the serial ordering of the patches of color. The flat pictorial field was formed from a surface moving in time and space. In recent years Nay has removed one layer after another. He eliminated objective emotions, content, psychological factors, and reduced drawing and form to free spots of color. Next he sought to organize these spots into simple geometrical designs until he had arrived at color as the basic essential of form and surface. This contemplative penetration of his medium crystallized into a theory, freeing his creative intelligence from mere instinct and impulse, thereby also excluding a psychological motivation.

Nay's new pictures are graceful, free, and bright, and leave behind all that is dark, anxious, or emotional. They do not express anything other than themselves, that is, anything beyond the pure concrete formations on the surface. His basic task is to create the picture out of color; his basic theme is to energize the surface of his painting by means of color transitions, which take a theme over the colored surface in characteristic counterpoint. The contrapuntal interweaving of these individual color themes and cadences, playing against the orchestrated color of the surface itself, yields the chromatic composition which "is" the picture. These color energies, which were first given expression as varied, amorphous color patches, became solidified in Nay's latest series of paintings into a basic form, namely, the disk (see *Dark Melody*, page 140). Nay explains the logic of this development as follows: "Movement, represented two-dimensionally by the diagonals of the plane surface, and immobility, represented by verticals and horizontals, in conjunction produce on the flat surface the disk, which transforms the dynamic energy of motion into a latent energy concentrated in the dot." These potential color energies, spreading like musical voices over the surface, create the intricate polyphonic design of the picture.



Nay: Dark Melody. 1956. Oil on canvas, 49 1/2 x 78 3/4". Collection Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon, New York

What we have here is a surprising impulse toward "peinture concrete," which would seem to provide a new direction and a new supply of energy for this particular kind of modern painting. Since the de Stijl contribution of Mondrian and van Doesburg – that is to say about thirty years ago – this painting, despite its basic validity, lapsed into a rigidly monumental platonic geometry. I would not be surprised to find that Nay's paintings, products of pure intuition, alert intelligence, passion, and discipline, may turn out to contain a message that the world would do well to heed. Of his works Nay has said: "They embrace in harmonious relationship, vitality, sentiment, and discipline."

WERNER HAFTMANN

sculpture

German sculpture and painting of our century, like that of earlier periods, has many points of connection with the art of neighboring countries, especially France, and in recent times there has been almost as close a relationship to the art of England and Italy. This association, sometimes tight and sometimes loose, does not, however, have a leveling effect. In the world of form, too, each of the important nations in the field of art possesses its own language and its own development, since in each case the suppositions and traditions have been diverse. It is a fact of German twentieth-century sculpture that despite its manifold interweaving with the sculpture of other nations, it has gone its own way and has its own cachet without being provincial. It is European and German at the same time.

The most important representatives of German sculpture have been known in the United States for a long time, better known than in any other country outside of Germany. Even before World War I, the first works of Georg Kolbe had reached America, and after the war many others followed, thanks especially to the efforts of William R. Valentiner. Gradually a considerable number of the sculptures of Ernst Barlach crossed the Atlantic, and Wilhelm Lehmbruck's art is not represented so impressively in any German museum today as it is in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The works of these sculptors, like those of the leading contemporary German master Gerhard Marcks, were introduced into the United States principally by Curt Valentin, the art-lover and dealer, who originally came from Germany.

The present exhibition, comprising twenty works of German sculpture covering half a century, can show only some of the main relationships and high points. This historical survey will have to adduce a rather more extensive selection of material in illustrations, in order to fill in at least partially the connecting links between the isolated examples.

The beginning of the new German sculpture is marked by the great figures of Barlach and Lehmbruck. But in order to understand their work and their special contribution in their historical context, it will be well to learn something of the preceding situation of sculpture in Germany.

Around 1900 there were three main official trends in German sculpture, which had a wide impact by reason of the sheer volume of civic monuments and public commissions given out by Kaiser Wilhelm's states and the several other principalities and cities; but the artistic importance of these tendencies is very dubious.