



the new

BERLIN 1912 - 1932

INGA ROSSI-SCHRIMPF (ed.)



LANNOO



Royal Museums
of Fine Arts of Belgium

MICHEL DRAGUET	7
PREFACE	
TIMELINE	8
1912 - 1932	
INGA ROSSI-SCHRIMPF	15
FROM ART NOUVEAU TO NEW OBJECTIVITY	
HELMUTH KIESEL	33
BERLIN FROM ITS EXPANSION INTO A WORLD-CLASS METROPOLIS UP TO THE EVE OF THE APOCALYPSE	
BURCU DOGRAMACI	43
NEW BERLINERS	
JANINA NENTWIG	53
REVOLUTION!? DADA, ARBEITSRAT FÜR KUNST AND NOVEMBERGRUPPE	
MATTHIAS SCHIRREN	63
MELTING POT OF MODERNITY	
ANNE SÖLL	73
VISIONS OF EQUALITY	

SABINE T. KRIEBEL	83
SUBJECTIVITY, PHOTOMONTAGE, AND MODERNITY	
NICHOLAS BAER	93
POST-PERSPECTIVAL AESTHETICS IN 'THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI'	
THE NEW BERLIN 1912 - 1932	
I	101
URBAN AVANT-GARDE & WAR	
II	125
REVOLUTION & UTOPIA	
III	167
BERLIN MYTH	
IV	217
CRISIS	
APPENDICES	239



CAT. 1

PAUL KLEE

Mit dem Kometen (With the Comet), 1917

Watercolour on gypsum-based cotton gauze,
Indian ink on cardboard; 24.5 × 22 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, inv. 11191

PREFACE

On 11 November 1918, the armistice signed by the German delegation in Compiègne brings an official and definitive end to hostilities on the Western Front. For Belgium, this means liberation from just over four years of German occupation. The idea of creating a new world haunted young Germans—just as much as it did the young Belgian generation—and their eyes now turned toward Germany and its young capital, Berlin. The current exhibition, which is part of commemorations for the Great War, focuses more specifically on the period when the metropolis of Berlin was seen as a symbol for renewal, and on a post-war era where “everything seemed possible”. Its chronological framework spans the period of 1912-1932, from the opening of the famous gallery *Der Sturm*, to the George Grosz retrospective in Brussels and Ghent, which was the final manifestation of cultural collaboration between Germany and Belgium before the days of the Third Reich and the countdown to World War Two. The emphasis with the current exhibition is on the immediate aftermath of World War One and the visions of utopias, hopes and crises of that period, all of which were closely followed by the Belgian intellectual and artistic community.

Beyond its mission to conserve, exhibit and study works handed down from the past, an art museum also pursues an essential social mission, namely to revitalise these artefacts by investing them with a meaning that allows us to define ourselves, in the here and now. The significance of this exhibition is not only, therefore, in the evocation of artistic currents and utopian visions from a past that we now commemorate one hundred years later; but also it is a question of reflecting on what this past – of which museums are the guardians – can mean for us today. The sense of memory is only complete if it is accompanied by a desire to influence the future.

In 1926, the famous Berlin writer and journalist, Kurt Tucholsky, wrote his *Gruss nach vorn (Greeting to the Future)*, which was written as if it were written for an imaginary reader from the year 1985. He assumes that the men of the future have not yet solved the great questions of his time, such as the creation of a “League of Nations”, or the emergence of a “Pan-Europe”. It is them that he addresses, in particular, with the following words: What is left remaining, remains simply down to chance: that which was so neutral that it made it through, and that which was truly great (but only about one half of it, which no one cares about – except maybe just a little, on a Sunday morning, at the museum). We don’t really understand each other, do we?

It is up to the museum, therefore, to spark this interest to address this question and facilitate this dialogue between the visitor of today and the artist of yesterday. The great questions that were pondered by the contemporaries of 1918 are no less pertinent today, at a time when our democratic values are being renegotiated everywhere. What future, what sort of society and which kind of environment do we want for ourselves, for our children and our grandchildren to live in? “You’re smiling; my voice is echoing down from the past, and you know better about everything”, as Tucholsky also wrote. So, let’s talk about it.

I would very much like to thank all those who have contributed to this beautiful exhibition, starting with the Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, represented by Visit Brussels and the Loterie Nationale as well as our loyal patron, Tree Top Asset Management and all the lenders – museum institutions, galleries, or private collectors – without whom this exhibition would not have been possible. My thanks also go to our external advisors who shared their knowledge, amongst whom Monika Flacke and Nicholas Baer, Cinematek, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Goethe Institute.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Inga Rossi-Schrimpf and Gaëlle Dieu as well as EducaTeam and its partners (Les Midis de la Poésie, the Saint Lucas School of Arts, Julien Aert) and all the members of staff of our museum who helped realise this event.

MICHEL DRAGUET

General Director of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

TIMELINE



CAT. 2



FIG. 1

1912

- MARCH: Herwarth Walden opens the gallery *Der Sturm* with an exhibition of paintings by *Der Blaue Reiter*; the 6th exhibition of *Young Belgian Art* exhibits works of James Ensor and Rik Wouters
- APRIL: Formation of the *Zweckverband Groß-Berlin* (Greater Berlin Administrative Association), connecting Berlin with the surrounding towns at the municipal level, preparatory to the formation of the city of Greater Berlin in 1920
- APRIL/JUNE: *The Futurists* exhibition in the *Der Sturm* gallery – this exhibition then travels to the *Galerie Georges Giroux* in Brussels
- SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER: Start of the First Balkan War
- DECEMBER: Prolongation of the Triple Alliance amongst the German Reich, Austria-Hungary and Italy

1913

- FEBRUARY: An SPD motion to introduce universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage is rejected in Parliament
- APRIL: Opening of the 28th World's Fair in Ghent
- MAY: King George V of England and the Russian Tsar Nicholas II are guests at a wedding at the German imperial court in Berlin – the last big meeting of European monarchs.
- The retrospective Wassily Kandinsky exhibition, organised by *Der Sturm*, travels to Brussels
- JUNE: Beginning of the Second Balkan War, ending with the Treaty of Bucharest in August
- SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER: First German Autumn Exhibition at *Der Sturm*
- NOVEMBER: During a visit to Germany, Belgian King Albert I reaffirms his country's neutrality in the event of war to the Emperor and his Chief of Staff

1914

- MAY: Assurance of unrestricted German loyalty to Austria-Hungary ("German blank cheque")
- JUNE: Opening of the *Werkbund* exhibition in Cologne, at which Bruno Taut exhibits his *Kristallhaus* and Henry van de Velde his *Werkbund-Theater*
- 28 JUNE: Assassination of Austrian heir-apparent Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo by Serbian nationalists. The ensuing international tensions produce the "July crisis" and ultimately lead to the outbreak of World War I
- 30 JULY: Large anti-war rally of Social Democratic workers in the centre of Berlin
- AUGUST: In the German Reichstag, the SPD also decides to vote for war credits (political "Burgfrieden")
- 3 AUGUST: German declaration of war against France, and invasion of Belgium by German troops in violation of neutrality. Occupation of the conquered territories
- 4 OCTOBER: The call "To the World of Culture", signed by 93 German intellectuals glorifying the unity of German militarism and German culture, appears in the *Berliner Tageblatt*

1915

- FEBRUARY: German U-boat war, then naval blockade by England ("hunger blockade");
- MAY: Italy enters the war on the side of the *Entente*
- JULY: First regulation against profiteering due to food shortages
- DECEMBER: SPD officially asks for peace negotiations to begin – the request is rejected by the bourgeois parties

1916

- JANUARY: Foundation of the *Spartacist League* under Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg
- FEBRUARY: Hugo Ball opens the *Cabaret Voltaire* in Zurich; Start of Dadaism.
- MARCH/ APRIL: Albert Einstein publishes his "General Theory of Relativity"
- APRIL: "Easter Uprising" of the Irish independence movement, defeated by the British army
- NOVEMBER: Germany and Austria proclaim an independent Kingdom of Poland
- DECEMBER: All available turnips in the German Reich are confiscated to secure popular nutrition ("cabbage winter")
- The Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) offer negotiations to end the war – the Allies refuse

1917

- 11 MARCH (27 February by Russian calendar counting): Beginning of the "February Revolution" in Petrograd, Russia
- MARCH: Administrative separation of Flanders and Wallonia in occupied Belgium to safeguard German influence after the war
- 6 APRIL: The USA declares war on the German Reich; Foundation of the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD)
- 16-24 APRIL: General strike against the continuation of the war and for immediate peace without annexations
- AUGUST: First peace demonstrations and mutinies in the German Navy
- 2 NOVEMBER: British Foreign Minister Balfour promises the Jews a "national home" in Palestine
- 7 NOVEMBER (25 October by Russian calendar counting): Beginning of the Bolshevik "October Revolution"



CAT. 3



CAT. 4



CAT. 5

in Petrograd, leading to the formation of a Government of People's Commissars under the chairmanship of Lenin, and to the issue of a peace decree
 18 DECEMBER: Foundation of the *Universum Film AG* (Ufa) in Berlin as a propaganda instrument of the Supreme Army Command

1918

- 8 JANUARY: American President Wilson's "14 Points" principles for peace.
- 3 MARCH: Signing of the peace of Brest-Litovsk between Russia and the Central Powers
- 10 JULY: Constitution of the "Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republics"; Russia adopts a "councils" (soviets) system.
- 29 SEPTEMBER: The German Supreme Command unexpectedly calls for immediate ceasefire negotiations
- OCTOBER: Clément Pansaers flees temporarily to Berlin
 Paul van Ostaijen goes into exile in Berlin (until May 1921)
- 3/4 NOVEMBER: Sailors' uprisings in Kiel trigger the November Revolution; Military uprisings throughout Germany and in Brussels and Liège; Workers' and soldiers' councils are formed; Repeal of the ban on assembly and censorship
- 9 NOVEMBER: Calling of a general strike in Berlin; The abdication of the Emperor is proclaimed by the incumbent Chancellor on his own initiative; Transfer of the office of Reich Chancellor to Friedrich Ebert (SPD); The proclamation of the Democratic Republic by Philipp Scheidemann (SPD) at 14:00 and of the Free Socialist Republic by Karl Liebknecht a little later
- 11 NOVEMBER: Signing of the ceasefire in Compiègne; Beginning of the return of 6 million German soldiers, including 1.5 million invalids

- 13 NOVEMBER: Foundation of the *Stahlhelm, League of Front Soldiers* organisation to prevent the November Revolution
- 15 NOVEMBER: Founding of political parties: the right-wing conservative DNVP, the left-liberal DDP and the right-liberal DVP
- DECEMBER: Founding of the Novembergruppe artists' association and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Working Council for Art) in Berlin
- 24 DECEMBER: So-called "Ebert-Groener Pact" between the transitional government and the army to crush a sailors' uprising at the Berlin Castle ("Bloody Christmas")
- 30 DECEMBER: Foundation of the *German Communist Party* (KPD)

1919

- 5 JANUARY: Introduction of the eight-hour day to integrate demobilised soldiers
- 5 JANUARY: Founding of the anti-Semitic German Workers' Party (DAP), renamed in 1920 to the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP)
- 5-12 JANUARY: *Spartacist* insurrection in Berlin, bloodily suppressed on 12-13 January by government troops and *Freikorps* paramilitaries ("January Uprising")
- 15 JANUARY: Arrest and murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg (KPD) by members of the paramilitary Guards Cavalry Rifle Division *Freikorps*
- 19 JANUARY: National Assembly elections; Introduction of secret, equal and direct suffrage for everyone from 20 upwards; Women receive the vote for the first time
- 6 FEBRUARY: Owing to the unrest and political insecurity in Berlin, the constituent National Assembly meets in Weimar; Friedrich Ebert becomes the first Reich President
- 21 FEBRUARY: Assassination of Bavarian Minister-President Kurt Eisner (USPD)

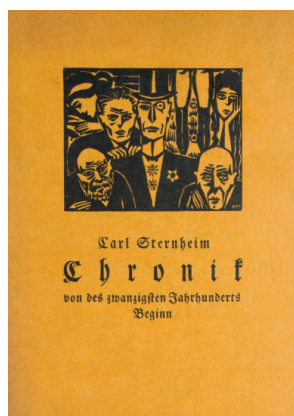
- 3-13 MARCH: "March riots"
- 22 MARCH OR 1 APRIL: Walter Gropius founds the Bauhaus in Weimar
- 22 MARCH-1 AUGUST: Soviet Republic in Hungary; followed by the persecution and murder of its supporters ("White Terror")
- 2 JUNE: Appearance of the *Dadaist Manifesto* in Berlin and founding of the magazine *Der Dada*
- 28 JUNE: Signing of the peace treaty by the German Reich
 The US Senate fails to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and the USA does not join the League of Nations; USA reverts to the policy of "splendid isolation"
- 6 JULY: Magnus Hirschfeld opens the first Institute of Sexual Research in Berlin
- 31 JULY: Adoption of the so-called "Weimar Constitution" as Germany's first parliamentary democratic constitution
- 8 OCTOBER: Murder of the leader of the left-leaning USPD Hugo Haase in front of the Berlin Reichstag building
- 18 NOVEMBER: Paul von Hindenburg's claims in front of a Reichstag committee of inquiry that the German army was not defeated, but "stabbed in the back" (from the homeland) ("stab-in-the-back myth")
 Paul Colin, Clément Pansaers, Albert Daenens, Firmin Mortier and others travel in 1919 to Berlin

1920

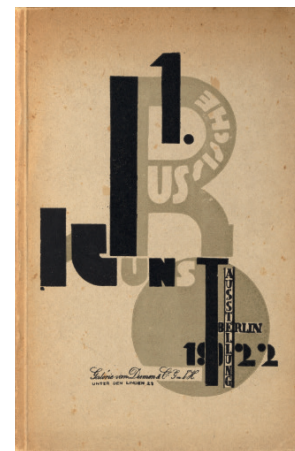
- 27 FEBRUARY: Première of Robert Wiene's film *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*
- 12-17 MARCH: (*Lüttwitz-*)*Kapp Putsch* to take over the government. With a general strike preventing it from ruling effectively, Putsch government resigns after just 100 hours
- 12 MAY: *Reichslichtspielgesetz* (Reich Cinema Act) on censorship of "trash and filthy information films", but also of socially critical films



CAT. 6



CAT. 7



CAT. 8

JUNE-JULY: Marthe aka Tour Donas exhibits at *Der Sturm* in Berlin for the first time – her work is part of Walden's standard repertoire until 1925
 JUNE: Unrest in German cities due to rising food prices
 First International Dada Fair in Berlin
 6 JUNE: Reichstag elections with losses by the centrist parties
 13 SEPTEMBER: Publication of Ernst Jünger's war diary *In Stahlgewittern (Storm of Steel)*
 20 SEPTEMBER: League of Nations hands the districts of Eupen and Malmédy to Belgium
 1 OCTOBER: Entry into force of the "Greater Berlin Act" (incorporation of suburban municipalities); Berlin becomes the world's third largest city after New York and London, with 3.86 million inhabitants
 14 DECEMBER: Division of Ireland into Northern and Southern Ireland by the Government of Ireland Act
 In 1920 Clément Pansaers travels again to Berlin, Oscar Jespers and Peter Baeyens visit Paul van Ostaïjen.

1921

MARCH: "March Action" of the KPD, proclaiming the end of the Republic, and as a result of which it loses around 400,000 members
 29 MARCH: Establishment of a customs border in the occupied Rhineland – the occupied zone becomes an independent economic territory of the Allies
 21 APRIL: Condemnation of Dada artists George Grosz, Wieland Herzfelde and Johannes Baader for insulting the Reichswehr in the graphic folder *Gott mit uns (God with us)*
 23 APRIL: Exhibition of international woodcuts by the group *Lumière* in Antwerp, with the first post-war participation of German artists in a Belgian exhibition, followed by more graphic exhibitions with German artists at *Lumière* and *Ça ira!*
 11 MAY: Beginning of the "fulfilment policy": acceptance of the Allied payment claims (132 million gold

marks in 66 annual instalments) and their fulfilment to demonstrate their unfulfilability
 29 JULY: Adolf Hitler becomes chairman of the NSDAP
 24 AUGUST: Opening of the tower telescope of the *Einstein Foundation* in Potsdam, intended for verifying the Theory of Relativity
 24-25 AUGUST: Signing of the US-German peace treaty
 26 AUGUST: Assassination of former minister Matthias Erzberger by members of the right-wing *Consul* organisation
 29 AUGUST: Imposition of a state of emergency in response to the murder (ended 23 December)
 31 AUGUST: Protest demonstrations against right-wing radicalism throughout the German Reich
 19 SEPTEMBER: Opening of the AVUS (automobile, traffic and exercise road) motor-racing circuit in Berlin
 12 OCTOBER: The League of Nations Council in Geneva recommends the division of Upper Silesia, contrary to the results of the plebiscite
 Frans Masereel arrives in Berlin, where he meets, *inter alia*, Erich Reiss and Israel Ber Neumann, who will publish his woodcuts

1922

JANUARY-FEBRUARY: Exhibition for the *Tweede Congres voor Moderne Kunst Art* in Antwerp with the participation of artists from *Der Sturm* (Rudolf Belling, Ivan Puni, Maria von Uhden, etc.)
 3 APRIL: Josef W. Stalin becomes General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party
 16 APRIL: Signing of the Treaty of Rapallo between Germany and Soviet Russia, thereby breaking Germany's foreign policy isolation
 MAY-JUNE: Frans Masereel's first solo exhibition in Germany at Alfred Flechtheim's gallery in Berlin
 29-31 MAY: International Congress of Progressive Artists and First International Art Exhibition in Düsseldorf, with the participation of Belgian artists

(Donas, Peeters, etc.); Belgian collector Robert Feron acquires Otto Dix's painting *Two Children* (today: MRBAB)
 4 JUNE: Acid attack on Philipp Scheidemann (SPD) by the far-right *Consul* organisation
 24 JUNE: Assassination of Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau by the far-right *Consul* organisation
 18 JULY: "Law for the Protection of the Republic" (prohibition and prosecution of anti-Republican associations)
 25 SEPTEMBER: *Dadaist and Constructivist Congress* in Weimar
 15 OCTOBER: Opening of the *First Russian Art Exhibition* at the *Galerie Diemen* in Berlin – in April 1923, this exhibition travelled to Amsterdam
 22 OCTOBER: The *International Exhibition of Revolutionary Artists* takes place in Berlin with the participation of the Belgian Group *Lumière*
 27/28 OCTOBER: "March on Rome" of the Italian fascists under Mussolini; Mussolini receives quasi-dictatorial powers
 DECEMBER 1922/JANUARY 1923: Jozef Peeters and Michel Seuphor travel to Berlin

1923

11 JANUARY: French and Belgian troops march into the Ruhr area – the reason given is the arrears in German reparations payments; Britain condemns this as unlawful
 12 JANUARY: The German government stops all reparation payments and supplies to France and Belgium; Call for "passive resistance"
 13 FEBRUARY: German customs border is moved to the eastern border of the occupied Ruhr area
 24 APRIL: First live-music transmission from the *Eberswalder* experimental radio station in Berlin
 25 APRIL: George Grosz's graphics' portfolio *Ecce homo* is confiscated in Berlin because of "lewd presentations"

FROM ART NOUVEAU TO NEW OBJECTIVITY*

Relations and interactions between
the German and Belgian art milieux

INGA ROSSI-SCHRIMPF

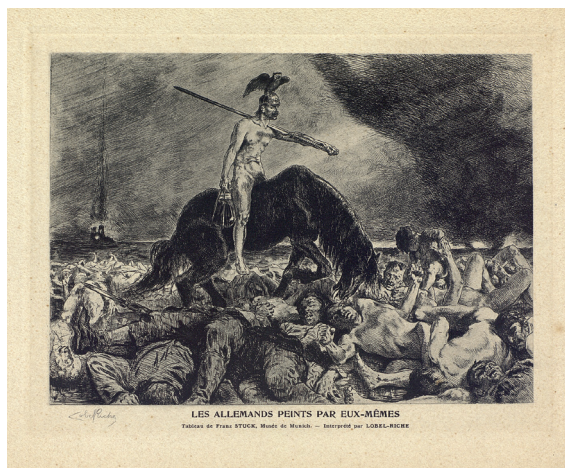
* The considerations in this chapter are based upon previous research for essays and readings on Belgian-German art transfer in the 19th century and more recent research on the early 20th century, which has still to be summarised. See also the recently published essays Rossi-Schrimpf 2018a and 2018b.

1. De Schaepdrijver 1997.
2. Amongst others, see: Leonardy and Roland 1999 and Roland, Beyen and Draye 2011.
3. Cf. Inga Rossi-Schrimpf 2018, in particular the introduction and article by Christina Kott and Hubert Roland.
4. Paenhuysen 2011 en Devillez 2011.

Between Germany and Belgium we observe an intense, albeit rather one-sided transfer within the period from the turn of the century until the outbreak of World War I. In her fundamental publication dating from 1997,¹ Sophie De Schaepdrijver describes just how incisive, (not least because of an underlying cultural attachment), the experience of the violation of neutrality with the German invasion and the occupation was for Belgium, the Belgian population and Belgian culture. Apart from the political and social consequences, numerous research studies into the literature of the time have pointed to a resulting break, both with cultural relations with Germany and more generally with the German-speaking cultural sphere as well as with the Belgians' own cultural self-image.² Belgium, a "terre-entre-deux", had lost one of the poles that had been seen as its role to connect. The Germanic part of the *âme belge* was now associated with German barbarism (cat. 16). This association led to an identity crisis.

Nevertheless, the cultural exchange did not end, and indeed the war and the occupation paradoxically led to a certain intensification of the cultural transfer between Belgium and Germany.³ We might even conclude that German-Belgian relations in the field of visual arts underwent not a complete, clean break, but above all a displacement.⁴ This displacement was manifested both in the content and in the persons involved as well as

in a more balanced relationship of the two sides, leading in some areas even to a reversal of the relationships of influence. Whereas around 1900, the "Belgian style" and Belgian artists such as Constantin Meunier, Fernand Khnopff, George Minne, Eugène Laermans and Félicien Rops and architects like Henry van de Velde and Victor Horta had been instrumental in the development of German (classical) Modernism, a young generation of Belgian artists and architects now discovered first of all Expressionism, but above all



CAT. 16

Les Allemands peints par eux-mêmes, frontispiece by Lobel-Riche after the painting *Der Krieg* (1894) by Franz von Stuck, in Emile Verhaeren, *Le Crime allemand: 1914-1915*, Paris, Maison du Livre, 1915; AML (Archives et Musée de la Littérature), Brussels, inv. MLPO 17920

the utopias around *Gemeinschaftskunst* (Communal Art), the Novembergruppe, Constructivism and Bauhaus to support their own claims to assist, through art in all its forms, in shaping a “new world”. Particularly important is the fact that the Belgians’ interest in German art, architecture, literature and film was now part of a general internationalism. This internationalism was distinct in essence from pre-war cosmopolitanism, without being viewed as conflicting with the simultaneous national aspirations expressed during the war in Flemish activism, and which continued after the end of hostilities.⁵

This multi-layered theme of the interrelations between Germany and/or German-speaking cultures and the Belgian art milieu can only be touched upon here in a few highlights that are relevant to the structure of the exhibition. Of particular interest to us for this project is the Belgian perception of German art and its milieu between 1912 and 1932, though especially the significance

of Berlin and the myth of this city from 1918 until around 1924/25.

THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

1912. In Munich, Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky published *Der blaue Reiter Almanach*. Kandinsky’s book, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, had been published shortly before, with references to the positions of the Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck. Two galleries were opened, Herwarth Walden’s *Der Sturm* in Berlin and the *Galerie Georges Giroux* in Brussels, and they began collaborating that year. With his *Erster deutscher Herbstsalon*⁶ in 1913, Walden responded to the *Internationale Kunstausstellung des Sonderbundes westdeutscher Kunstfreunde und Künstler*,⁷ which had been held a year before in Cologne, claiming to exhibit, systematically and comprehensively modern art, particularly in its disputed manifestations.

5. On this, see: also Servellon 2018.

6. See: Moeller 1988 and Selz 1991/98.

7. Schaefer 2012.



FIG. 1

Henry van de Velde, *Werkbund-Theater*, Cologne, 1914, view from south-west

8. See: Fischer 2018.
9. De Ridder 1930, p. 177.
10. See my unpublished address "Turn of the Century German-Belgian Artistic Relations", *Workshop Internationalism and the Arts: Imagining the Cosmopolis at the Long Fin de Siècle*, Tate Britain/ICE (Internationalism and Cultural Exchange, 1870–1920) Network; London, 5–6 September 2013.

In the *Herbstsalon*, the European avant-garde, as the essence of modernity, first expressed itself in a concentrated manner. The selection reflected Walden's own conception of a Cubist-Expressionist-Futuristic synthesis of style, which would end up also influencing the Belgian avant-garde. In Cologne, however, in the field of sculpture, the Belgian George Minne was a central figure, celebrated alongside painters Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Paul Cézanne as a pioneer of the modern age. Finally, in 1914, the exhibition of the German *Werkbund* was opened, again in Cologne, in which, alongside Bruno Taut's *Glashauss* and Walter Gropius' *Musterfabrik*, Henry van de Velde's *Werkbund Theater* also caused a sensation (fig. 1). Van de Velde, who headed the *Weimarer Kunstgewerbeschule*, from which the Bauhaus would emerge five years later, was able to restate his own aesthetic positions here. The *Werkbund Theater* would be widely taken into the vocabulary of younger German architects after the war.⁸ In contrast, one searches in vain for younger Belgian artists at these ground-breaking exhibitions. This absence should not surprise us, because Belgian art at the time was mainly attached to a regional form of Neo-Impressionism, the so-called Luminism, and shortly before World War I was lagging behind the international avant-garde, which was gaining ground everywhere: "We have to admit: when the war broke out in 1914, we in Belgium were neither particularly 'European' nor particularly 'modern'!"⁹

Given a significant influence of Belgian artists and writers on German Classical Modernism and the partial anticipation in Symbolism and Art Nouveau of the theoretical positions of *Der Blaue Reiter*, the Bauhaus, etc., it is striking how little direct influence, the other way round, German and more generally the European avant-garde had on Belgian art between 1910 and 1914. This is all the more surprising as these were known not only through magazines and travel, but also through exhibitions in Belgium itself. With the exception of Jules Schmalzigaug, one can best

speak of a delayed artistic reaction, as in works by Paul Joostens, Prosper de Troyer or Edmond van Dooren. Works that often reflect at the same time the interest in the metropolis that developed during the war.

Still less can one speak of any artistic reception of the German avant-garde before 1914. Although since 1884 German artists had regularly been invited to exhibitions by more progressive circles, such as *Les XX*, *La Libre Esthétique* or *Kunst van Heden*, reactions go no further than positive mention in the press. Overall, contemporary German art was perceived up to about 1900 by and large as rather backward, an image only upset by the country's constantly strengthening reputation in applied art.¹⁰ In 1912, *La Libre Esthétique* exhibited works by the founders of the Düsseldorf *Sonderbund* Clarenbach, Kukuk and Ophey, while, in 1913, *Kunst van Heden* exhibited artists of the



CAT. 17

Stan van Offel, 'Caricature à l'occasion de l'exposition Kandinsky à la Galerie Georges Giroux', in *La Belgique artistique et littéraire*, part XXXII, 15 July 1913; AML (Archives et Musée de la Littérature), Brussels, inv. MLR 00843

Munich School, among them Franz Marc. The German Expressionist avant-garde was represented in 1913 in Brussels by Kandinsky at the Giroux gallery. The exhibiting of this artist can be regarded as being as challenging to the Belgian art milieu as the Futurist exhibition of the previous year, both of which stood out from the rest of the Giroux programme.

It has rightly been pointed out in the literature that Georges Giroux, along with a small number of Belgian art critics, spurred on by *Der Sturm* and Herwarth Walden, had only just become aware of the need for a new model for the Belgian art scene.¹¹ This new model ultimately did materialise in the long run. Although in 1913 Kandinsky's work was still received with incomprehension (cat. 17), he and Franz Marc were seen a few years later among Belgian critics as the most valued artists from Germany. No painter from *Die Brücke* would become significantly relevant for the Belgian conception of Expressionism, which is characteristic of the rootedness of the Belgian reception in Idealism and Symbolism, to which Kandinsky, Marc or even Chagall were closer. The fact that the very colourful and expressive paintings of the German Expressionists of *Die Brücke* found little favour with the Belgians can also be read from this assessment by painter Ferdinand Schirren, who in 1912 visited the *Sonderbund* exhibition in Cologne: "Apart from the Van Goghs, Cesanes (sic) and Gauguins, it is of terrible savagery."¹² For Schirren, the new, modern art was "an extravagant exploitation of Van Goch (sic), Gauguin and Cessane (sic)". However, some younger Belgian artists also leaned on these artists in their efforts to overcome Luminism, among them especially Rik Wouters.¹³ All in all, in the period shortly before the outbreak of World War I, quite a lot was emerging, upon which the young generation born between 1890 and 1900 began building around 1918, as the need to open up to the European avant-garde began to be understood.

OCCUPATION AND EXILE

In his fundamental essay, *Ekspressionnisme in Vlaanderen (1918)*,¹⁴ written still during the German occupation of Belgium, Paul van Ostaijen rallied closely, not only to Herwarth Walden's futuro-Cubist-Expressionist conception of art, and thus to a stylistic synthesis of the artistic innovations that had reached Belgium shortly before the war, but in his development of the concept of Flemish Expressionism based upon his acquaintance with the work of James Ensor, to the final pre-war developments in Belgian art itself, and, albeit unwittingly, to Ensor's increasing artistic influence on German art.¹⁵ His conception of a humanitarian Expressionism, as presented in the 1918 text, became characteristic of the Flemish avant-garde. Priority was to be given to the human and the ethical. This subscribing to Expressionism (and, at the same time, to Cubism and Futurism) was a late rebellion against the bourgeois character of the (post-)Impressionism that had prevailed until the war. In doing so, Van Ostaijen, on the lines of Werner Sombart, equated "bourgeois" with the capitalist spirit and not with the bourgeois class. This rebellion was not only artistic, but more generally socio-politically directed against the bourgeois parent generation.¹⁶ Despite being isolated by war and occupation, the young Flemish artists were keen to participate, as Van Ostaijen put it, in a "innovative, general-European drive for life".¹⁷

Ekspressionnisme in Vlaanderen lies also at the end of a four-year period in which the Belgian art scene had been split amongst exile, battle-front and life under occupation, between passive resistance and active collaboration and all kinds of intermediate stages. The paradoxical intensification of Belgian-German cultural transfer took place in the occupied part of Belgium and in the neutral Netherlands.¹⁸ The following elements constituted this wartime cultural transfer: the previously existing interest of the German artistic and literary war colony in Belgium in Belgian ancient and contemporary art; the cultural work undertaken as part of the so-called Flemish pol-

11. Muls, Roland and Van Mol 2009, p. 276.
12. Fernand Schirren in a letter to his wife, Cologne, postmark 25.5.1912, letter, private collection, Brussels.
13. See: Leen 2017.
14. Van Ostaijen 1979.
15. For an analysis of this basic study by Van Ostaijen, see: Borgers 1996, pp. 169-181.
16. Paenhuyzen 2010, inter alia 11-13.
17. Van Ostaijen 1979, p. 65.
18. On this three-way relationship, see Nathalie Toussaint's unpublished dissertation Nathalie Toussaint, *Interconnexion des avant-gardes picturales entre la Belgique, l'Allemagne et les Pays-Bas de 1914 à 1924. Une exemplification* (UCL, 2000), and also Den Boef and Van Faassen 2013. I thank Nathalie Toussaint for providing me with a copy of her dissertation.

19. De Schaepdrijver 2018.

20. Borgers 1996, pp. 198–200.

itics of the German occupier and the strong isolation of Belgium as a result of occupation and exile abroad.

The German occupier's large-scale, cultural policy projects can be neglected by and large for the perception of German art by Belgians, with the exception of the founding of the Flemish University in Ghent. The cultural transfer within the German artist and writer war-time colony took place more in a traditional direction. We can highlight three focal points: Carl and Thea Sternheim's villa in La Hulpe, Fortuna Brulez's salon in Ghent, and James Ensor's studio, which became a sort of place of pilgrimage for German artist-soldiers, among them being Erich Heckel and Max Beckmann. The Sternheims' circle included, amongst others, art dealer Alfred Flechtheim and art critic Carl Einstein, who was to play a leading role in the Brussels' *Conseil des Soldats* and became friends with Pansaers. Guests included Berlin writer Gottfried Benn, Otto Flake and Hermann von Wedderkop, and all are frequently appearing names in the Belgian-German exchange between the wars. Visitors to the Brulez salon included German art historians and professors, amongst them Professor of Philosophy and Education Hermann Nohl, and artists of the *Sanitätszug* in Ostend under the direction of art historian Kaesbach, probably alongside Otto Herbig and Erich Heckel. However, a direct exchange with the young generation of Belgian artists did not pass through these locations. Exceptions are poet and art critic Clément Pansaers and artist Jozef Cantré. With his 1917 magazine *Résurrection*, supported by the *Generalgouvernement*, Pansaers was the first to present German literary Expressionism to a French-speaking audience. He had become acquainted with this literary movement as a tutor at the Sternheims. Jozef Cantré, however, was one of the young men who enrolled in the Vlaamse Hoogeschool Gent, founded by the Germans. Such an enrolment was at the same time an act of rebellion or provocation against the Belgian war society, in which young men had

a difficult time.¹⁹ In this way, Cantré came into contact with the Brulez. It cannot be ruled out that already in their salon he had come into contact with the woodcuts or at least the drawings of Heckel and Herbig. Finally, Heckel created during his time in Ostend a large number of such graphic works (cat. 54, 55).

More important for the further development of Belgian art than the few direct contacts and discussions during the occupation was the reading of German sources on art. Books such as the *Almanach des Blauen Reiters* and magazines such as *Die Aktion* and *Der Sturm*, and later *Das Kunstblatt* were accessible, especially at the University of Ghent, but also elsewhere. Indeed, given its relative isolation, this younger generation, which started to work independently only during the war, fell back on these German sources. Paul van Ostaijen was one of those young Flemings who, in addition to his memories of works of art seen before the war and discussions with comrades, was guided primarily by German sources, as evidenced by quotes in his writings of the last years of the war and his reading list from 1919.²⁰ Paintings of 1918 by his friend Jos Leonard (fig. 2) reflect



FIG. 2

Jos Leonard, *Untitled*, 1918, water colour and ink on paper, 61 × 54 cm, Antwerp, Fibac

the same sources and discussions. Because of the proximity to the occupier and the Flemish movement, Paul van Ostaijen, Jozef Cantré and initially Pansaers also left Belgium in 1918 for fear of repression.

This brings us to another decisive factor in Belgian development: exile; that is, the forced abandonment of one's own comfort zone and the concomitant imposed inter-culturality. Even before the war, one Belgian artist, Jules Schmalzigaug, had undertaken his artistic development mainly in artistic "exile", and had, at least aesthetically, joined Futurism. For him, the logical consequence of a general Flemish – in truth, Belgian – blindness to international trends was that young seekers left the country.²¹ He remained, however, an exception. With the German invasion, this confrontation with international trends became an unavoidable consequence for a much larger part of the Belgian artistic community and exile was a driving force in the modernisation of Belgian art. This can be seen in Gustave de Smet and Frits van den Berghe, and finally also in Jozef Cantré, under the influence of German Expressionist woodcuts and of a few paintings such as Franz Marc's *Gelbe Kuh*, which the Belgians appear to have first known only from black and white reproductions (fig. 3). This work was first illustrated in, *inter alia*, *Das Kunstblatt*, and later also in various Belgian magazines, and was finally exhibited in Brussels in 1931. In the Netherlands, German Expressionism was accessible, not only through magazines, but also through exhibitions, such as those of *Der Sturm 1916* in Amsterdam, or in private collections, primarily the Regnault collection in Blaricum. For this reason the artistic influence of German Expressionism was expressed above all in the Belgian woodcut (fig. 4,5).

With Van Ostaijen, Pansaers and Cantré or De Smet and Van den Berghe, we can distinguish three aspects of a Belgian reception of German Expressionism around 1918, different but all rooted in the exchange between the German war colony and Belgian artists. The strand associated with Van



FIG. 3

Franz Marc, *Gelbe Kuh* (Yellow Cow), 1911, b/w-illustration from *L'Art vivant en Europe, Cahiers de Belgique*, 1931, the painting is now held by the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York

Ostaijen would develop primarily in the direction of a more purist aesthetic form of a Cubo-Expressionism and finally of Abstraction, but not without passing through Dadaistic formal experiments. The latter would determine Pansaers' further development as well as his devotion to French Dadaism and ultimately Surrealism. Within the realm of fine arts, Paul Joostens is to be considered as Belgian Dadaist (cat. 19). Totally different is the further development of Cantré, who joined the pacifist circle *Lumière* and co-founded the graphic group *De Vijf*, or again of De Smet and Van den Berghe, who, under the current generic term of Flemish Expressionism, tapped into local traditions and classical themes. In the 1920s, the latter artists can be named in the same breath as the guiding forces for the magazine *Sélection* as well as the official Belgian government's version of Belgian Modernism. However, the prevailing discourse had to go as far as to deprive Expressionism of its German roots so as to make it somehow acceptable in polite society.²² It is easy to imagine that the link between the Belgian reception of German Expressionism and the occupant's Flemish policy did not contribute to a broader, and above all, official recognition of this trend.

21. See, amongst others, Jules Schmalzigaug to his parents, letter dated 17.03.1911, MRBAB/AACB, Fonds Schmalzigaug, inv. 50.176.

22. De Ridder "Gustave De Smet et l'expressionnisme", in *L'Art libre*, Bruxelles, 1920, p. 106..

NEW BERLINERS

The metropolis of Berlin as an artistic contact zone between the wars

BURCU DOGRAMACI

BERLIN TRANSIT

The Berlin of the 1910s and 1920s assumed mythical status long ago. The city on the Spree is synonymous with a metropolitan city of the inter-war period caught in a process of artistic transformation and awakening, with its vicious inhabitants, ambitious employees and escapist shorthand typists – to mention just a few of the images evoked in the literature of the day.¹ However, at the time, Berlin had long been a city of migration and not just the magnet for Jewish immigration from the East since the 19th century, and especially during World War I and after.² A review of the art and city history of early 20th-century Berlin shows how migration processes significantly shaped the metropolis and its cultural landscape. The arriving, settling and departing artists all sought to define their relationship with the city's urban matrix – with the city at times featuring as an actor or dialogue partner in their works.

Within the space of a hundred years, Berlin had developed into a metropolis: as late as 1807, the city had 162,000 inhabitants. Spurred on rural exodus and industrialisation, this number rose to two million by 1905. International immigration also contributed to the growth of Berlin's population: In 1905, 100,000 of its foreign-language residents – and thus 60% of all immigrants, came from Poland and another 10,000 from Russia and Finland.³ After World War I, the creation of Greater Berlin by the incorporation of suburban municipalities in 1920, caused the popula-

tion to jump to 3.8 million.⁴ In the first decade of the twentieth century and after World War I, Berlin became increasingly an art metropolis, exerting a great appeal to international artists,⁵ with internationally operating gallery owners and art dealers such as Herwarth Walden, Alfred Flechtheim and Israel Ber Neumann as brokers.

Whilst international Berlin prospered in the first years of the new century, World War I produced a caesura. French, German and Russian artists who had recently exhibited together now faced each other as enemies. Uwe M. Schneede writes:

“Foreigners like Kandinsky and Jawlensky had to leave Germany, being now enemies, and Wilhelm Lehmbruck and Otto Freundlich similarly quit France; Chagall could no longer return from Russia to Berlin and Paris. Artist groups were suddenly dissolved, travelling and exhibition tours outside the country were no longer possible, and art dealers' business dried up.”⁶

With the war, it was not only the idea of European artistic cooperation, as articulated for example in exhibitions in the gallery *Der Sturm*, that was weakened for years to come. In the course of the armed conflicts, people also (here unintentionally) came to Berlin and the surrounding area, leaving their mark on the architecture with their presence. From 1915, Muslim prisoners of war from the *Entente* countries lived in the so-called

1 I refer here, amongst others, to: Kracauer 1930 and Moreck 1931.

2 Berlin 2012.

3 Allers 2017, pp. 75, 91ff. On the anti-Polish “Prussian defence policy” and the related xenophobia, cf. Bade and Oltmer, 2005, pp. 28ff.

4 Allers 2017, p. 102.

5 Schrader and Schebera, 1987, pp. 5–7 (preface).

6 Schneede, 2013, p. 23.

Halbmondlager (crescent camp) in Wünsdorf, near Berlin. To encourage them to change sides to the Ottomans – then war allies of the Wilhelmine Empire – their religious needs were respected. The construction of a wooden mosque was probably part of this persuasion effort.⁷ In this case, the presence of “strangers” in the immediate vicinity of the imperial capital was probably not particular cause for concern; rather, the prisoners of war and the low, domed building with minarets were considered exotic and sensational. This would explain their widespread use as a postcard motif (fig. 1).

From the “Mohammedans” dressed in Turkish trousers, turbans and fez on the coloured postcards, it seems a long way to the elegant fashion figurines of Berlin fashion designer Kenan (fig. 2). However, this artist, born Osman Assaf Kenan in the Ottoman Empire, came only in 1920 to Berlin

to study at the Teaching Institute of the State Handicrafts Museum. He soon made a name for himself with his elegant graphics for fashion magazines such as *Sport im Bild*, *STYL* or *die neue Linie* and as a fashion design teacher at the Reimann handicrafts school. His fashion drawings, many of them for Berlin fashion houses such as Herrmann Hoffmann or Regina Friedländer, are dedicated to the urban scene, with skyscrapers, billboards and automobiles as the ingredients of a fashion world in which the actors are defined as elegant cosmopolitans. Notably, Kenan’s Turkish origin is not mentioned in the numerous contemporary articles about him. Whether the artist himself obfuscated his identity or whether it was basically not an issue, being incompatible with the stereotypical ideas of a “Turk” cannot be reconstructed. Kenan did not return to Turkey until 1943, in the middle of World War II and

7. On the Wünsdorfer Mosque, see comprehensively: Höpp, 1996.

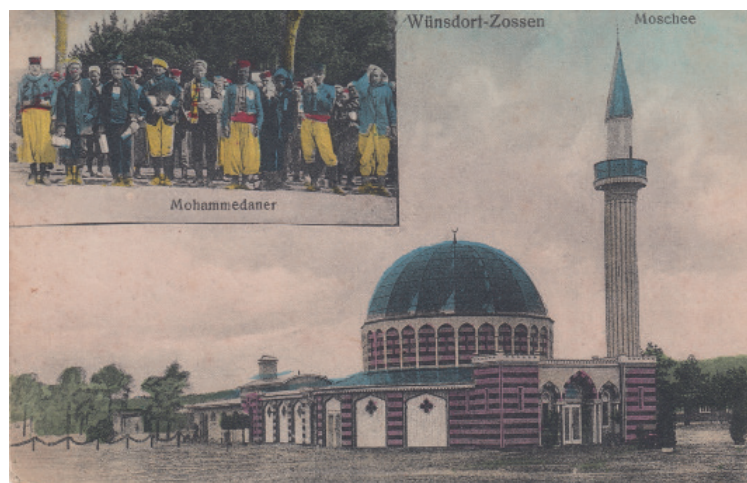


FIG. 1

Postcard of the Wünsdorf Mosque, 1916/17, 8.6 × 13.5 cm, from the author’s private archive



FIG. 2

Kenan, *stop!* Models by Herrmann Hoffmann, *STYL*, no. 4, 1924, plate 6, 27.2 × 20.8 cm, from the author’s private archive

8. That year, Kenan (1895-1953), who adopted the surname Temizan probably as part of the Kemalist name reform, took up a position at the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts, where he taught fashion design. However, already in the 1930s the artist was active for the Turkish propaganda magazine *La Turquie Kemaliste*, dedicated to the achievements of republican Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. On Kenan and other fashion graphic artists of the Weimar Republic, cf.: Dogramaci, 2004.

9. Over Herwarth Walden en de kunstenaars van zijn galerie Der Sturm, cf. inter alia Delmenhorst 2000; Herwig and Von Hülsen-Esch 2013.

10. Walden 1923, p. 46.

11. For the Russian artistic diaspora in Istanbul, Berlin and Paris cf.: Vasil'ev 2000.

12. Schlögel 2007, p. 103.

13. Marc Chagall, in Roditi 1960, p. 50.

14. Adressen in Berlijn 1995a, frontispice.

15. Schlögel 1995, p. 16.

16. Schlögel 1995, p. 19ff.

probably in reaction to the Allied attacks on Berlin.⁸

Kenan's presence in Germany coincides with the establishment of a dynamic art scene. Especially from the 1910s onwards, the German capital acted as magnet for foreign artists, a situation also explained by its thriving gallery landscape, including galleries such as *Der Sturm*, which attracted international artists.⁹ Despite, or even because of, its anonymity and impersonality, Walden recognised Berlin as "the capital of the United States of Europe",¹⁰ which, however, had still to be founded. Only a few years after the end of World War I, the gallery owner expressed here his longing for a peaceful Europe. And vice versa, the multinational, multi-religious and multi-ethnic Berlin of the 1920s is unthinkable without the devastation of World War I and the events that followed it. The great empires – Ottoman, Russian Tsarist, Wilhelmine and Austro-Hungarian – disintegrated, to be replaced by newly-founded nation-states. The Russian Revolution led to the flight of numerous artists, many of whom moved to Berlin or Paris after a stopover in Istanbul.¹¹ The Russian diaspora in inter-war Berlin, which in the early 1920s tallied 300,000 people,¹² included Marc Chagall, Naum Gabo and Wassily Kandinsky. Chagall describes inter-war Berlin as "a kind of caravanserai, the meeting place of everything travelling back and forth between Moscow and the West".¹³ Berlin's Russian citizens preferred to settle in the west of the city, with Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf home to, amongst others, Alexander Archipenko (Kurfürstenstraße), El Lissitzky (Geisbergstraße) and Alexej Remizov (Kirchstraße).¹⁴ Presumably, in this part of the city, war and crisis had left large apartments vacant. This also put them close to cultural and consumer institutions such as cinemas, theatres and department stores, which accumulated in the west of Berlin.¹⁵ It is to the Russian community around the *Kaufhaus des Westens* that R.G. Batalin devoted his novel *Petersburg am Wittenbergplatz* (*Petersburg on the Wittenbergplatz*) (Detmold: Verlag der



FIG. 3

R. G. Batalin, Cover for *Petersburg am Wittenbergplatz*, Detmold: Verlag der Meyerschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1931

Meyerschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1931) (fig. 3). However, by the time this book was published, the Berlin Russian community was falling apart, with some of its members moving on to Paris or Prague, others returning to Soviet Russia.¹⁶ The economic crisis and probably also the tense domestic political situation, with the strengthening of the political right, may have contributed to artists saying farewell to Berlin.

Looking back, it can be said that the Berlin of the inter-war period formed an important point of reference for an international group of artists. At the same time, exile movements made Berlin into an "arrival city". The historian Karl Schlögel writes:

"The century of refugees has its own capitals; Berlin is one of them. They are provisional dwelling-places until further notice. Refugees appear when war and revolution break loose somewhere or another, driving thousands upon thousands of people like a tidal wave.

They sink back into nothing, even though the place of salvation proved an illusion. Refugees build no cathedrals, no monuments; refugee movements leave behind no traces, it seems."¹⁷

Schlögel goes on to write that knowledge of the emigrant Berlin of the inter-war period survived primarily in the written sources – newspapers, memoirs and fiction – but hardly manifested itself in the city itself. Even so, it is not totally invisible, as the presence and artistic work of the arriving and immigrant artists, or those only passing through the city in transit, are also reflected in the artistic works created in Berlin or in memory of them. In addition to objects – paintings, graphics or photographs – exhibitions in which local and “foreign” artists participated together, also point to international and migrant Berlin, which produced numerous places of contact, from the artist’s studio to the gallery to the artists’ café.

EXCHANGE FORUMS: EXHIBITIONS AND ARTISTS’ ASSOCIATIONS

As the founder of the magazine (1910) and gallery (1912) *Der Sturm*, Herwarth Walden was a leading promoter and mediator of avant-garde art movements such as Expressionism, Futurism and Constructivism. His magazine provided space for manifestos and debates on the latest art trends, while his gallery provided a space for contemporary positions, in which modern art could be seen publicly in its original version. Walden organised premiere retrospectives (of Wassily Kandinsky), and premiere solo exhibitions (of Gabriele Münter). The artists too came in person: Futurists Marinetti and Boccioni, along with Robert Delaunay and Apollinaire, lectured in the gallery.¹⁸ *Der Sturm* was a place that exposed audiences and local artists to international positions, an exchange forum at which encounters took place and future collaborations were initiated. Walden

himself travelled to major European cities to attract artists for his ambitious gallery and magazine programme¹⁹ – and to prepare the ‘First German Autumn Salon’ (1913) (fig. 4). For this exhibition at Potsdamer Straße 75, Walden brought 335 paintings, graphics and sculptures from 85 international artists to Berlin, with the exhibits coming from Russia, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere.²⁰ Herwarth Walden assembled the exhibition together with painters August Macke and Franz Marc. The “First German Autumn Salon” was one of the last European exhibitions prior to the outbreak of World War I. Like the “documenta” established in Kassel only four decades later, the exhibition formed a contemporary showcase and an overview of new artistic trends in an international perspective.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
18. Selz 1991/98, p. 59.
19. Cf. Chagall, in Roditi, 1960, p. 43, where Marc Chagall remembers: “Walden often came to Paris looking for new painters to exhibit in Berlin in his gallery *Der Sturm*.”
20. Cf. Selz, 1991 (as in footnote 18), p. 59.



FIG. 4

Announcement of the exhibition “Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon – *Der Sturm*”, 1913, Manuscript department, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz