

MODERN ART IN EASTERN EUROPE

FROM THE BALTIC TO THE BALKANS, ca. 1890–1939

RECIPIENT OF THE 1997 C.I.N.O.A. PRIZE



S. A. MANSBACH

IN THIS AWARD-WINNING AND groundbreaking study, Mansbach provides us with the first coherent narrative of the modern art movements of Eastern Europe. Analyzing a vast range of works, many published here for the first time, the author argues that our understanding of modernism is incomplete without consideration of this material. He shows how cubism, expressionism, and constructivism, among other modernist styles, were amalgamated with deeply rooted visual traditions in several vital centers – including Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest – in order to express the most pressing concerns of the day, particularly nationalism. Mansbach also considers the critical response of the eastern European art public to these various avant-garde movements. A revisionist interpretation of modernism, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe* provides a much-needed reassessment of the art of this century, as well as of its historiography.

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Preface

THIS BOOK OFFERS both the general reader and the specialist access to a world of seldom-considered visual material. The interpretive overview reclaims the essential role played by eastern European artists in the genesis of the modern aesthetics with which we are familiar in the West. As such, the present study allows for a fuller understanding of the history of modern culture.

A range of methods is employed here to analyze the extraordinary medley of art styles, references, and meanings that were articulated in this vast geographical and culturally diverse region. By examining with varying emphases and perspectives, the

reader is able to discern in individual chapters the distinctive cultural and political histories to which modern art in each land was a highly original response. For the author to have done otherwise – by addressing the art of Slovenia in the same manner as that of Estonia, for example – would have perpetuated the monolithic mindset that has so long obscured the singular achievements of the lands of eastern Europe.

Drawing on a rich array of reference material, this book includes citations of both primary scholarly literature (often difficult to locate by reason of rarity, condition, or language) and more readily available secondary sources (often in Western languages).

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK BENEFITED from the encouragement and support of numerous individuals and institutions, both in the United States and in the region investigated. To those colleagues in central and eastern Europe who introduced me to the extraordinary holdings of public and private collections, as well as to often little-visited repositories of graphic and applied art, journals, and books, I am particularly thankful. To associates and friends who shared their thoughts and comments, and who assisted in the often arduous and frustrating task of gathering the illustrations for this volume, a special debt of gratitude is here expressed.

From the initial stages of the research to the completion of the book, I profited from the exceptional support of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. In my years there as a dean and researcher, I profited from the active encouragement of Henry Millon and Therese O'Malley. Instrumental in the successful completion of my research was the dedication of Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, Irina Kossowska, and Pawel Kozielski, who served me as exemplary research assistants at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA) and proved to be consummate colleagues.

The initial chapters of the book were composed in the ideal environment of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, where I was a Member in 1994. The constructive comments by Irving and Marilyn Lavin and other members of the Institute's School of Historical Studies proved decisive in shaping the book's scope.

The bulk of the writing was conducted in Berlin,

where I was supported as a Senior Research Professor by the Fulbright Commission and by a generous Theodore Rousseau Fellowship from the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and I wish to acknowledge the extraordinary consideration of Richard Pettit, Barbara Ischinger, and Marian Burleigh-Motley. My years in Berlin were enriched immeasurably by the friendship, counsel, and support of Thomas and Barbara Gaehtgens, Frank Badur, Eva Gosztonyi, and Barbara and Leo Benjas. Essential as well was the gracious hospitality of Berlin's Free University, which provided an exemplary academic home for this project and its author.

The geographical compass of this book necessitated years of research travel to the various countries. In each instance I benefited from the organizational expertise and intellectual sympathy of the resident Soros foundations. From Estonia to Macedonia, Soros Centers and their committed staffs assisted with access to collections and libraries, introductions to university and museum colleagues, and translation services. The generosity and enthusiasm of these individuals – several of whom had been among my former students at the Central European University in Prague – and the unstinting intellectual support of so many university and museum scholars in each of the lands I visited were essential for the realization of this project. For enlisting the support of the Soros centers, I wish to thank Suzanne Mészöly and Susan Weber Soros. In particular, I wish to recognize the collegiality in Estonia of Sirje Helme, Ants Juske, Reet Vaiblaine, Ants Hein, Karin Halas, Heie Treier, and Mai Levin; in Latvia of Jānis Borgs, Ojārs Spārītis, Ruta Kaminska, Dace Lamberga, Inta Stangūte, Eduards Kļaviņš, Jurgis Skulme,

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Although numerous requests for illustrations and

publication permission went unfulfilled – sometimes due to the political or economic disorder in the respective countries, in other instances as a consequence of the restructuring of museums or of the restitution of public and state collections in the wake of social reform – the presence here of so many of the desired visual images is due to the cooperation (and often special consideration) of colleagues throughout Europe and the United States, and to their belief in the importance of making better known the essential aesthetic achievements of the respective lands examined in this volume. In addition to the dozens of institutions and individuals who readily agreed to provide reproductive images, special mention should be made of Ana Lim, Jerzy Miziolek, Karel Srp, and Vojtěch Lahoda, who made extraordinary efforts to honor my requests for images difficult to find or to obtain. The enormous challenge of coordinating the photographic material for this book was assumed primarily by Tamara Bissell, whom I can neither thank nor praise sufficiently for her dedication, patience, and competence.

In light of the prevailing circumstances and recent political history of the region, it is not surprising that the quality of individual reproductions provided by the lenders does not always conform to the high photographic standards American publishers and scholars expect. The difficult material and economic conditions in the respective source countries – from the lack of high-quality photographic film stock or chemicals to the financial inability to retain the services of a trained photographer – are hence acknowledged here by the author and publisher, who have readily assumed the challenge to work to best effect within the limitations imposed by the images provided us. In this regard I wish to recognize the willingness of Cambridge University Press to deal effectively with unaccustomed photographic standards and formats, including faded postcard reproductions from the 1960s – often the only surviving image of a work of art. Many of the images were secured on research trips to the region supported in part by a grant from the International Research & Exchanges Board, with funds provided by the U.S. Department of State (Title VIII program) and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The costs of publishing a book of the present scale and subject are considerable. I am pleased to acknowledge the confidence in this project expressed through generous publication subventions from the

Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the J. Paul Getty Grant Program, the Millard Meiss Fund of the College Art Association, and La Confédération Internationale des Négociants en Oeuvres d'Art.

Authors of studies of the present geographical breadth and conceptual scope can easily lose their sense of proportion. That this publication has not

become unwieldy in size, imprecise in focus, or disorderly in its presentation is due to the gentle yet rigorous editorial hand of Judy Spear. That this book appears at all in its present form is due to the unstinting support and dedication of Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press and the design talent of Michael Gnat.



Plate 1. František Kupka, *The Creation*, 1911–20. Oil on canvas, 115 × 125 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Plate 2. Emil Filla, *Reader of Dostoyevsky*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 98.5 × 80 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

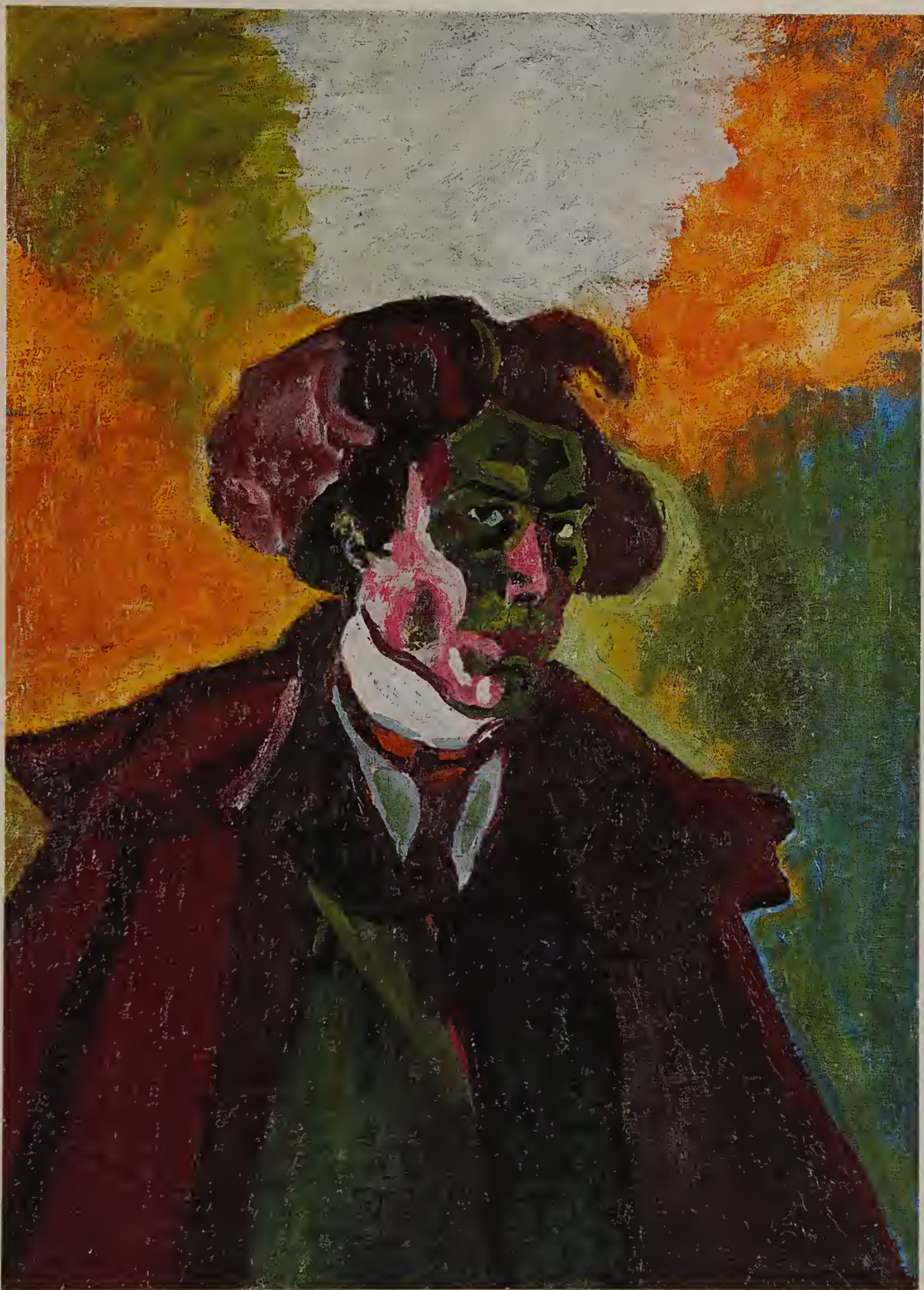


Plate 3. Bohumil Kubišta, *Self-Portrait with Inverness Cape*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 91 × 65 cm. State Gallery of Art, Zlín.

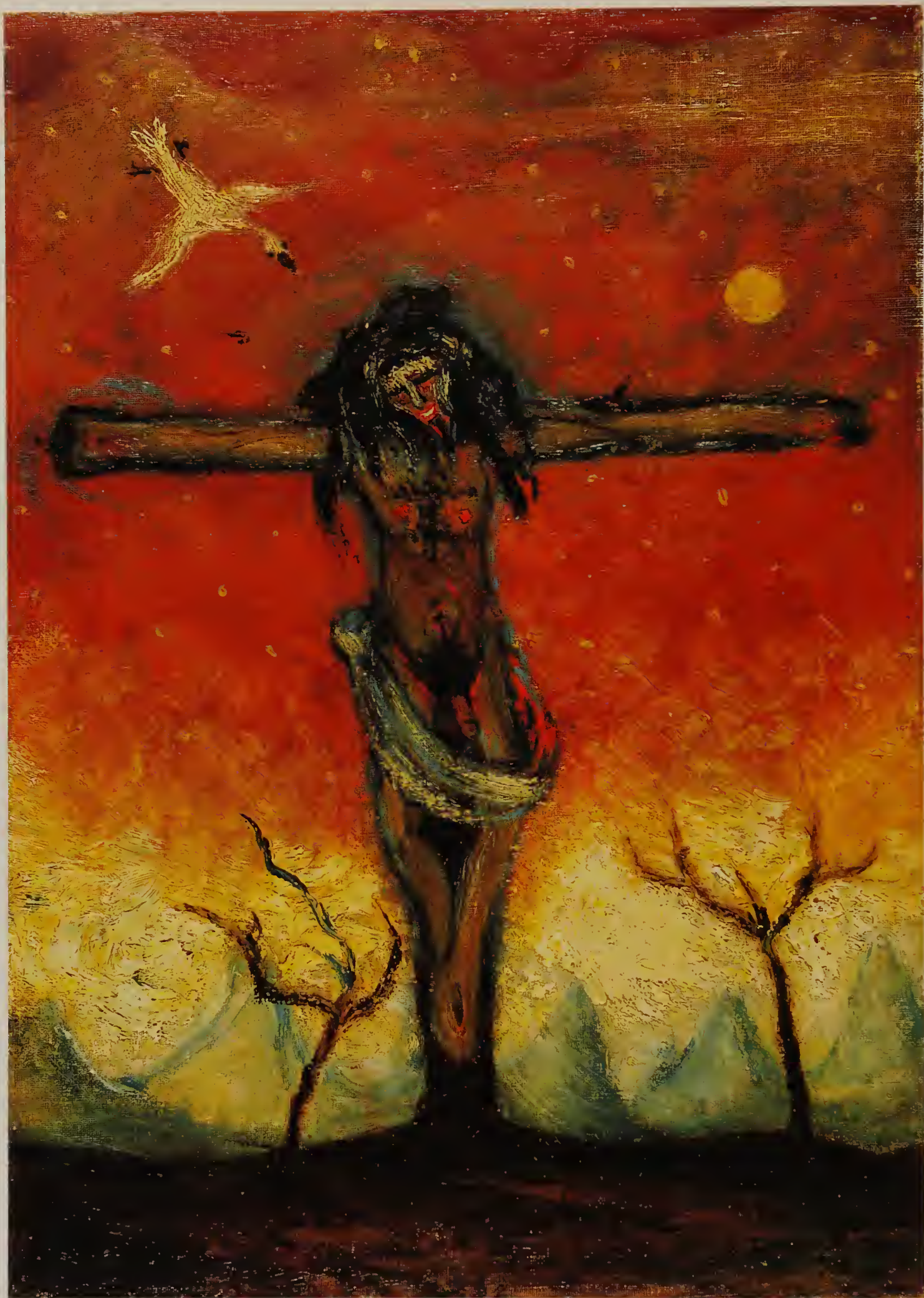


Plate 4. Jan Zrzavý, *The Antichrist*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 36 × 26 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Paul J. Zupnik
archive
Karel Teige
1918/19.

Plate 5. Karel Teige, *Landscape with Path*, 1918–19. Watercolor, 27.3 × 20.7 cm. Benedict Rejt Gallery, Louny.



Plate 6. Jindřich Štyrský, *Elvira the Somnambulist*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 72.8 × 116 cm. Gallery of Art, Zlín.



Plate 7. Zdeněk Pešánek, *Monument to the Pilots Killed during the War, 1924–5*. Model, 10 × 18 × 18 cm. Benedict Rejt Gallery, Louny.



Plate 8. Józef Mehoffer, *Strange Garden*, 1903. Oil on canvas, 217 × 208 cm. National Museum, Warsaw. (Photo: Żółtawska-Huszczka.)



Plate 9. Tytus Czyżewski, *Treble Clef*, ca. 1920–1. Oil on cardboard, 72 × 56 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.



Plate 10. Leon Chwistek, *Fencing*, ca. 1920. Oil on cardboard, 70 × 100 cm. National Museum, Kraków.



Plate 11. Witkacy (S. I. Witkiewicz), *Composition*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 90 × 114 cm. National Museum, Kraków.



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Introduction

THE MATERIAL COVERED in the present study – terra incognita for many readers – constitutes a critical foundation for the modern art well known in the Western world. The creativity that had taken place and was flourishing on the eastern periphery of Europe more than three-quarters of a century ago was appreciated by forward-looking artists, critics, and cultural commentators in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and elsewhere in the West. Many Europeans (and some Americans) knew then that the character and objectives of contemporary art and aesthetics were being fundamentally redrawn by pioneering artists located far distant from the art centers of Paris and Berlin. Throughout the region of the Baltic territories, Russia and Ukraine, Poland, the Czech and Slovak lands, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Balkans, scores of painters, sculptors, and designers were redefining the nature of modern visual expression and its social meanings. Well into the 1930s the leading artistic personalities of these eastern regions were forging a new aesthetics, preparing for new societies, and ultimately educating a new citizenry. In the myriad of journals and reviews that were published throughout Europe and America, as well as in numerous galleries and exhibition halls in metropolitan centers from San Francisco to Stockholm, these eastern European figures and the movements they led garnered worldwide attention. Correspondingly, the editors of eastern European avant-garde publications and numerous exhibition societies reciprocated by publishing and fostering an appreciation of Western advanced art among their own readers and patrons. The resultant cross-fertilization was fully international, extending modern art's reach from Pet-

rograd to Paris, from Constanța to Chicago and well beyond.

The intimate acquaintance of Western artists and intellectuals with the new visions of art and society being articulated on the eastern periphery of Europe – and the almost immediate integration of these visions into the mainstream of modern (Western) art – necessarily raise important questions for contemporary scholars: Why is it that today these avant-garde figures and movements, which earlier in the century overcame their peripheral location to assume a critical and formative role in the genesis of advanced art, are almost totally forgotten and overlooked? Why, after many decades of art-historical scholarship, is our present understanding of the modern movement in general so much more partial than it was a half-century ago, when Western critics, historians, artists, and the educated public were relatively well informed about and indebted to the artistic developments from the Baltic to the Balkans? What happened to eclipse this formative modern art from the general cultural consciousness?

The retreat into relative historical obscurity was not the result of a Western program of willful ignorance or of cultural chauvinism. Rather, it was, in large measure, the consequence of political, social, and even cultural developments in each of the respective nations of this vast expanse of eastern Europe – whether, for example, the ultramontane conservatism of Hungary under the regent Miklós Horthy, or the ethnic intolerance in Romania and Yugoslavia, or the cultural narrow-mindedness in the Baltic states during the 1930s. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the various avant-gardes were themselves partially responsible for their own dis-

solution and disappearance. Through destructive internecine strife and contention, through often dogmatic and uncompromising ideology, and through a general enervation of inventiveness – as evident in the West as in the East – by the end of the 1920s, the avant-garde placed itself in peril. Paradoxically, its decline came at the very moments when its respective apologists and cultural defenders had achieved remarkable international recognition. Such early advocates of the Hungarian avant-garde as Arnold Hauser, Frederick Antal, Charles de Tolnay, and Georg Lukács were among those who figured in this disjuncture, and an equally impressive list of Czech, Latvian, Serbian, Romanian, and other intellectual proponents of eastern European modernists could be mentioned.

The heroic phase of the avant-garde began to fade in Hungary as early as 1919 or 1920 and was within two decades eclipsed nearly everywhere in the East as well as in much of the West. For those progressive artists who sought to construct a new world on the fallen Eastern empires of the tsars, sultans, and Germanic kaisers, all too often the only alternatives were accommodation, exile, and in extreme cases extirpation. On the one hand, for many who elected to emigrate, particularly those who went to the West, a rich artistic life was possible; such practitioners as the Hungarian-born László Moholy-Nagy, the Polish-Lithuanian Jacques Lipchitz, the Romanian Constantin Brâncuși, and dozens more are legitimately acclaimed in the West for their signal enrichment of modern culture, even if the original sources, contexts, and motivations for their art have been overlooked. On the other hand, the many activists from this region who sought refuge in the Soviet Union almost invariably encountered disappointment, hardship, and general neglect under Stalin's régime. Finally, for the numerous artists who felt compelled to remain in (or return to) their lands of birth, fate could be harsh: Many perished in the crucible of domestic political intolerance and, later, brutal foreign occupation. Ironically, the "liberation" of eastern Europe in the mid-1940s too often resulted in the rapid installation of régimes that shared the cultural intolerance of those they supplanted. Under the new authorities, the contributions by modernists of (especially) the 1910s and 1920s were distorted or suppressed to the extent that the exhibition, study, and at times even the discussion of the classical avant-garde were effectively curtailed.

Today, however, in what was formerly (and simplistically) designated by the West as "eastern" Europe, the changed political circumstances (of 1996) foster the brightest prospects in more than a half-century to reassess the signal accomplishments of these countries' modern art history. The opening of archival holdings and collections in the former soviet-styled republics, the vast increase in scholarly bibliography, and, perhaps most significantly, the availability of many primary documents in translation make possible a greater access to seminal influences.

Undeniably, much of modernism was born on the eastern margins of industrial Europe – dadaism in royal Romania, constructivism in the tsarist empire, and uniquely creative forms of cubo-expressionism in Habsburg Bohemia. Moreover, it was in the immense geographical swath from the Baltic to the Balkans that aesthetics of progressive character and insistent social applicability were articulated – philosophies that would fundamentally define the modernist mission universally.

Over the past several decades, Russian and Soviet contributions to the definition of modernism have gained wide currency. This has not been true for many of the other avant-garde movements between East and West whose creative participation in the genesis and development of modern art was, in the aggregate, fully as decisive. The failure to acknowledge the seminal role of Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Romanian, and southern Slavic classical avant-gardes was in large part the result of the cold war. For a half-century the ideological confrontation between East and West suppressed a free inquiry into the full history of modern art. Within the Eastern Bloc, internal investigation was severely restricted for fear either of increasing national self-consciousness or of permitting a challenge to Russian hegemony. Moreover, unhampered access by Western scholars to the rich resources of archives, collections, and research materials was commonly discouraged. By the same token, the political climate in the West did not allow a balanced assessment of the social – and, not infrequently, socialist – programs that were integral to the revolutionary aesthetics of the classical avant-gardes of the East during the early decades of the century. Especially antagonistic to this exploration were many émigrés, whose linguistic facility and familial contact

with the art and its original context might otherwise have served as a firm foundation to encourage free inquiry into the accomplishments (and failures) of the eastern European modernists. The greatest limitation for a Western public, however, was not the difficulty of access to the surviving original works of art, or the impediment of language, or even the obstacle of politics. What has long made the magnitude and merit of modern art from eastern Europe remote is a general ignorance of the historical, political, and social conditions to which the respective modern movements were a creative response.

The region examined in the following chapters was (and remains) extraordinarily varied and complex, its diverse cultural expressions shaped decisively by specific historical events and pressures. The cold-war tendency in the West to envisage the entire region monolithically, and the commensurate Soviet policy to denigrate strategic differences within the Eastern Bloc, long concealed the creative diversity within the modern movement. As a result, the causal connection between national identity and the creation of modernist aesthetics in eastern Europe has been almost entirely overlooked by Western scholars and by many writing in eastern Europe during the era of cold-war tensions. In contrast to earlier practices, the present synoptic survey of classical modernist art in this region is informed by discussions of the modern history of the respective countries. This attempt at historical archaeology of eastern European modern art raises interrelated questions of methodology, organization, and definition.

In the present study definitions of time, geography, and subject are necessarily relative. Even as the cultural traditions, social structures, and political and historical formations differed considerably within the region, they departed essentially from those of western Europe (and the United States). The expressionism, cubism, and abstraction of, for example, Budapest, Prague, or Vilnius may appear morphologically similar to those of Berlin, Paris, or Amsterdam, but these advanced styles were perceived differently by Eastern audiences and carried considerably dissimilar references for their apologists. Likewise, a wholesale application of the iconographic categories developed to assess Western modern art may be inadequate to explicate the meanings and analyze the themes favored in the East. Even with its superficially identical subject and stylistic rendering, an impressionist painting of the bridge at

Mostar made in the early twentieth century did not incarnate the same symbolic content as a slightly earlier impressionist depiction of the bridge at Argenteuil. And despite shared formal attributes, cubist still-life paintings (or sculpture) by Picasso and his Paris-based followers did not carry the intellectual and often political meanings that Czech modernists vested in their unique form of cubo-expressionism. Likewise, the constructivism developed in Poland, Lithuania, and the Baltic countries – notwithstanding the striking parallels that exist among the various manifestations of abstraction – conveyed social associations and furthered aesthetic programs distinct from those articulated in the Netherlands, Germany, and elsewhere in the West. Comparable examples can be drawn for expressionism, futurism, and surrealism, among other modern idioms that may betray stylistic affinities but whose intentions, functions, and reception in the Eastern lands depart from those of Western nations. Differences of this kind determine the meaning, usage, and manipulation of terms in the respective countries surveyed in this study. Rather than attempting to conform to the often shifting applications of period terminology – or imposing a definition borrowed from an alien context – I have chosen to employ essential terms (notably *modern*, *modernist*, and *avant-garde*) flexibly and to allow the meanings to assume more precise definition through specific discussions. For example, Western scholars have long viewed the 1916 display of dadaism in Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire as an original event, indeed as a defining phenomenon in the evolution of modernism. Yet this milestone may be interpreted otherwise from the perspective of Romania, whence the principal figures came and to which most would return. Bucharest and Iași (Jassy) had for several years witnessed a form of dada *avant la lettre*, been amazed by dada poetry and prose, and been provoked by dada visual spectacle, although these manifestations by its small, mostly Jewish avant-garde went under other names. Thus, when a group of Romanian modernists traveled to Switzerland in 1916 and 1917 (principally to avoid being drafted into the royal Romanian army), they transposed to the stage of the Cabaret Voltaire a "dadaism" that was already an important and publicly manifested form of artistic engagement in their homeland. What was witnessed as authentically novel in Zurich by Western artists and audiences (and a succession of historians) was actually an in-

intermediate stage in the history of Romanian modern art. Further, dadaism was a form of radical expression that would later attain some of its most imaginative actualizations in Bucharest (and Iași) – as well as powerfully expressive variants in Zagreb and Belgrade – rather than in Berlin, Hanover, Rotterdam, or New York, where its development has been primarily chronicled.

The territory covered by the present study extends geographically from Estonia south-southwest through Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the Czech lands, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia, and Croatia, to Slovenia. The complex history of this large and diverse region, its range of nationalities, and its breadth of cultures, languages, and divergent traditions should have made the area resistant to reductive simplifications and deceptive uniformities. But Great Power politics, cultural chauvinism, and other partisan presuppositions have over time persuaded many in the West to adopt the misleading monolithic label “Eastern Europe.” Furthermore, in their own advancement of modernism as the consummate transnational aesthetic idiom, Western historians have sometimes ignored the many varied ways in which artists of the East have explicitly embraced local cultural legacies, national conventions, and individual character in creating a style simultaneously modern in its formal display and highly topical in its references.

In part, the differences in origin, function, and meaning between Eastern and Western classical modern art of this period stem from the singular forces – historical and cultural – to which artists were obliged to respond in the respective “nations” lying between the Baltic Sea and the Balkan peninsula. From Estonia to Slovenia the makers of modern art most often emphasized national individuality rather than universality. They responded variously to a public demand for expressions of national self-consciousness through which an emerging nation might stake its claims to membership in a modern world. Such profession of national identity by means of avant-garde art was a cultural phenomenon as widespread in the East as it was rare in the West. Among the developed political states of western Europe and in the United States, modern nationalism has been primarily the province of politicians and statesmen and only incidentally the concern of progressive artists; but then the nations

of the West have often been free to express their identities politically. In the East, by contrast, before the collapse of empires in the ashes of World War I, political, economic, and spiritual constraints meant that only through cultural expression could the national self-consciousness of the “subject nations” be preserved and developed. And in these circumstances, so different from those prevailing in the West, legions of modern artists rushed to enlist their talents in service to their respective nations.

Within the larger context of national identity in eastern Europe, Jewish artists had a unique role in the formation of modernist aesthetics. Rather than being acknowledged as a religious denomination, as in the West, Judaism defined a separate ethnic entity or national minority – one whose interests were understood by the dominant political and cultural classes as fundamentally foreign to the concerns of the majority population or “nation.” As is discussed explicitly in Chapters 2 and 5 (on Poland and Romania) and indirectly in Chapter 6 (on Hungary), Jews were viewed as alien residents with correspondingly limited political rights and civic privileges. The imposition of outsider status had dramatic (and differing) consequences for the development of modern art in each of these lands, especially during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. In Romania, for instance, the avant-garde comprised mostly Jews who turned to new forms of art to contest the cultural prejudices and conventions of the country’s leaders; and in Poland, an expressly Jewish art movement was created to secure a place for (mostly nonreligious) Jews in the formation of a reconstituted Polish state and national culture. In Hungary, by contrast, the Jewish participants in the avant-garde were often motivated by political idealism that challenged the conventions represented by their parents’ generation – one that was unparalleled in the region both for its assimilation and for its leading position in the nation’s industry and culture.

The stimulus for the development of these currents of modern art in eastern Europe came primarily from various mid- and late-nineteenth-century movements of “national awakening.” Promoting cultural expression and preservation rather than the revolutionary political action and social reconstruction that occurred in the West – especially in Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia – informal groups of writers, poets, ethnographers, and musicologists

originated the revival movements in countries from the Baltic north to the Adriatic south that then inspired visual artists to their own expressions of a distinctively national modern character.

Many of these national-revival movements avoided political confrontation with their respective “foreign” overlords – variously Russian, Austrian, German, Hungarian, and/or Ottoman. Since many of the leading figures belonged to the most privileged stratum of society, they were disinclined to undermine their social position or imperil economic entitlement through political agitation. There were many cases also in which the imperial authorities actually sanctioned the development of their subject peoples’ national cultural awareness. These instances were generally less the consequence of noblesse oblige than of a calculated (and quite effective) strategy to secure the political loyalty of an emperor’s often restive national minorities. All the singularly “Eastern” historical conditions fundamentally focused the activities of the various national cultural revivals, which in turn affected the visual artists who reshaped revivalism into modernism.

To appeal to the interests of the revivalists and their patronage, artists of the regions examined here introduced into their paintings and sculpture essential narrative, literary, and even folkloric dimensions. As ethnographic reference has always been a building block of a modern national expression, allusions to historical myths, events, heroes, and folk styles are common in avant-garde art and design. Thus, for example, painters within the context of a national modernist idiom have moved easily and without contradiction between constructivism and folkloric patterning, or between canvases depicting cubist still lifes and heroes from the national myth. In its reconciliation of literary reference and abstraction, narrative context and nonobjective styles, the modernism of eastern Europe has departed fundamentally from the absolutist purity demanded by many Western modernist artists and critics.

Equally distinctive was the avoidance of explicit political content among the early disciples of the respective “national-awakening” movements. Engagement with social reconstruction and political reformation was indirect or incidental for many (but not all) of the modern movements until midway into World War I. Thus, what progressive artists in the East borrowed from modernists in the West was not likely to be a defiant political posture but rather a

repertoire of visual styles and formal solutions that might be adapted selectively to suit the prevailing conditions – aesthetic and social – in the varied cultural landscape on the eastern margins of a rapidly modernizing Europe. Only gradually, and then often in concert with national ambitions there, did revolutionary aesthetics become politicized. In this important regard, then, the leading figures in the arts departed from the radical origins and (at least initially) from the revolutionary practices that so profoundly defined the character and purposes of modernism in the West.

As a one-volume survey of the classical modern art of eastern Europe, this book must be highly selective. Thus, the reader will not find here every progressive artist and modern movement that emerged there during the period under discussion, roughly from the end of the nineteenth century through the 1930s. Rather, I focus on pivotal movements, ingenious figures, and critical perspectives to demonstrate what I believe best represent the strengths and weaknesses of modernist ambitions with respect to both local needs and transnational implications. In addition, I concentrate on those movements – some modest in size and scope and others of monumental achievement – that are less well known in the West as well as comparatively little studied in eastern European literature. Hence, there is an extensive discussion of the various avant-garde formations in Poland, relative to a concise assessment of the modern art in Macedonia. Not included here are the important movements that took place in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other primarily Slavic lands of the former USSR.¹ Nonetheless, the numerous references made in this book to events and figures in Russia intimate the reciprocal influences of Russian (and Soviet) modernism for a richer understanding of the art created in the extensive region lying to its west and southwest.

The principal reason for excluding the modern art of Russia and the Soviet Union is that it has been the subject of numerous excellent studies readily available in Western languages;² to cover the immense compass of its achievements would necessitate a separate volume. One other consideration is that since the beginning of the cold war, eastern European studies have often been skewed by a focus on Russian history, language and literature, and influence. In art history as well, the study of modernism

has since the late 1960s helped to confirm the hegemonic status of Russian culture, at least among a Western public. Although there are indeed persuasive reasons to celebrate the brilliant achievements of Russian twentieth-century art, the distinctive cultures of the lands from the Baltic through the Balkans have been distorted or even appropriated by the “academic imperialism” too often exerted by Russian studies.³ In fact, only a small fraction of the modernism that emerged in eastern Europe conforms to the styles, aims, and references that tsars and commissars promoted and successive generations of historians codified.

More deleterious than such provincial attitudes of the West is the jingoism encountered in the East. Far too many present-day publications are animated by cultural chauvinism rather than by dispassionate inquiry. This unfortunate trend can be understood, in part, as a survival of the widespread practice of historical distortion that was abetted under the former soviet-styled régimes. During the cold war in particular, the study of modern art was sometimes manipulated intentionally for political purposes. To portray a triumphant history of the working class and its interests, or to correspond to the political ambitions of one national group or another, some multivolume histories from socialist countries show altered nationalities, birth dates, and even names of artists. In some instances this legacy has been perpetuated by expunging or denigrating the role played by national minorities or by once-privileged ruling parties in creating the respective nation’s modern culture. To cite the well-known, tragic case of Yugoslavia: Violent attempts were made to “remedy” by cultural cleansing the Serbian bias in much of the scholarship sanctioned under Tito, whereas other campaigns were waged to reinforce a distinctively Serbian reading of history in Kosovo.⁴

This book is loosely organized according to present-day national states. When appropriate, larger regions are treated in a single chapter – for instance, Estonia and Latvia and a grouping of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia. In such cases the geographical ordering facilitates understanding of the sometimes extraordinary difference in meanings, references, and origination of visual styles that may appear superficially identical. Thus, for example, discussions of Slovenian and Serbian (late) impression-

ism reveal how the rendition of the landscape of the southern Balkans can have quite specific national – that is, Slovenian or Serbian – reference despite a similar palette, brushstroke, and canvas size. A painting by Rihard Jakopič was perceived differently by his Slovenian compatriots than one by the Serb Milan Milovanović, although each may have depicted bridges, fields, or rolling hills in a style adapted from French impressionism and influenced by German naturalism.

In the process of examining movements according to political geography, comparisons stand out between analogous styles within the region as a whole. As opposed to the Baltic surrealist variant of Eduard Wiiralt, which had been designed as a conservative counterbalance to the collectivist programs of constructivism, the Czech Karel Teige advocated a progressive surrealism (in part) as a means to promote communist systems of art and social life. That his work attained in Prague the same recognition (if not international currency) as surrealism in Paris, Brussels, and Berlin is instructive; it demonstrates the creative negotiation between convention and innovation, between the local and universal, that defines modern visual expression at its best.

Likewise, constructivism manifested a diversity of meanings beneath its restricted formal vocabulary. Believing in “using the streets as a school for aesthetic and moral education,” the Poles Mieczysław Szczuka and Władysław Strzemiński turned to the organizational principles of the factory and regularized urban planning for socialist cities for their collaborative prescriptions. In contrast to their formal purity and moral rigor, the Romanians Marcel Janco and M. H. Maxy exploited the irregularities and stimulating cacophony of Romania’s only partially westernized urban center as a model for contemporary art. Both the playful dose of dada irreverence introduced into constructivism in Bucharest by the Integral group and the abstract lyricism promoted there by the Punct formation were eschewed by the avant-garde in Warsaw.

Similar juxtapositions can be drawn for expressionism and cubism – for instance, the Czech manifestation of expressionism, through which to register the existential anxiety and spiritual decline of the Habsburg imperium, versus the Hungarian variant, which perceived expressionist aesthetics as an effective vehicle for promoting social regeneration with-

in the empire of the Dual Monarchy. Disparities in the functions of cubism and the verist styles that developed in the late 1920s and 1930s as variously avant-garde advancement or neoclassicist retreat also emerge from considerations of nationalist histories of modern art in the Baltic states, Poland, and Yugoslavia, among other lands in the region.

In studies that focus on the evolution of classical modern art in the West, the reader could expect to find a discussion of the international personal contacts and mutually acknowledged influences among the protagonists in the dramatic unfolding of avant-garde aesthetics. In eastern Europe, however, prevailing social and political conditions as well as artistic traditions discouraged the development of broad, lasting, and defining cross-border artistic influence and exchange. The small cadres of dedicated modernists in the East preferred instead to picture themselves as unique representatives of the emerging nation, as caretakers of the national culture, and as arbiters of progressive thinking. They were motivated by nationalism – cultural, if not always political – as much as by modernism and its frequent transnational claims. This local focus deterred many from establishing contact with like-minded groups elsewhere in eastern Europe, in part for fear of compromising their perception of their own unique contribution to the national mission and to the development of singularly appropriate modes of progressive (national) expression. The resulting isolation of various movements from one another was abetted by supervening political concerns: rivalry among the pre-World War I eastern empires – primarily Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman – was inhospitable to bands of progressive artists who might have wished to forge international links. Thus, for instance, it was extremely difficult for the various Polish progressive movements to join forces across the lines of partition separating Russian, Austrian, and Prussian (German) provinces. Even internally, imperial governments did little to induce interaction: The Czech Osmá (Eight) and the Hungarian Nyolcak (Eight) did not establish a common front or develop close working contacts despite a shared general social outlook, a (Habsburg) political subjecthood, an encouragement of aesthetic experimentation, and a notably parallel role in their respective national histories. Rivalry among the various nationalities constituting each of the multiethnic eastern empires

impeded groups of advanced artists from making common cause, a proclivity that only increased in the wake of World War I, when the Successor States elevated national suspicion and competition to a level of state policy. In this context, cooperation between organizations of radical painters (and sculptors) had little room to develop, especially as they recognized their primary task as securing an influential role for advanced art in the newly reconstituted, established, or aggrandized states, each of which had pressing economic, military, and social challenges to address and hence little means or sympathy to devote to avant-garde culture. That Latvian and Estonian artists worked collaboratively during the early 1920s to mount collective exhibitions was more the exception than the rule. The several examples of international expositions at which significant works of eastern European modern art were displayed in Belgrade, Prague, Bucharest, and elsewhere were mainly the result of uncommon individual engagement by one or two artists or support groups (such as the Mánes Union in Prague).

The general absence of regular, meaningful, and mutually beneficial contact among the principal figures of the eastern European avant-garde – relative to the rich interconnections prevailing to the west as well as those in the multinational Soviet Union to the east – did not mean a complete lack of awareness of what was taking place in this vast and varied region. Artists in Riga were cognizant of progressive developments in Belgrade or Budapest, for example, through the exchange of their respective movements' "little reviews" and through access to other radical cultural journals. Among the large number of small-circulation cultural magazines, it was common practice to publish illustrations of one another's artworks (or even original graphics, mostly linocuts), to reprint articles by one another's supporters, to commission critical reviews of one another's exhibitions, and generally to report on the cultural events throughout the area. In addition, the leading western European journals – *De Stijl*, *Der Sturm*, and *L'Esprit nouveau* – all widely circulated among the avant-garde in eastern Europe, carried information on and reproductions of the art created and exhibited there. Finally, the various exhibition venues in Berlin, Paris, Munich, and elsewhere in the West – dealers' galleries, art fairs, and public exhibition halls – and émigré artists' studios (notably those in Ber-

lin and Paris) provided an informal way of sharing whatever was relayed by visiting artists from the East.

Since a single volume cannot do justice to the full extent and richness of the modern visual expression within the territory under review here, I have chosen to focus primarily on painting and sculpture (and, to a lesser extent, graphic art). By so doing I do not suggest that architecture, photography, and film, for example, played a secondary role in the activities of the eastern European avant-gardes. To the contrary, the functionalist architecture and planning of Parnü, Estonia's summer resort on the Baltic; of Kaunas, Lithuania's provisional capital; and of Bucharest, Romania's burgeoning interwar cultural metropolis, constitute some of the most accomplished modernist monuments and designs to be found anywhere. The profound impact they exerted both locally and internationally can best be assessed in an independent examination. A similar case can be made for excluding photography and film, artistic genres in which modernist practice reached its peak with the contributions of eastern European figures, especially from the Czech lands (Jaromír Funke, Jaroslav Rössler, František Drtíkol), Hungary (Brassai, André Kertész, László Moholy-Nagy), and Poland (Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz). Here, too, the specific character of the issues broached by the principal protagonists as well as the magnitude of the aesthetic accomplishment lobby for a separate treatment.

Since the focus of this study is the development of modernism in eastern Europe, those figures who conducted their careers primarily outside the region, whether by compulsion or by choice – Constantin Brâncuși, for instance – are not included. (Brâncuși – whose principal theater of creativity and focus of attention was France, not his native Romania, and whose contributions to the West are universally ac-

knowledged – is mentioned only insofar as his work, ideas, and personality exerted an influence on the development of modern art in his homeland.) Exceptions have been made, though, for artists whose orientation or commitment while abroad remained consistently engaged with the East (if not with their homeland specifically). Thus, the reader will find here an analysis of the Hungarian avant-garde in Viennese and German exile as well as a discussion of the work completed in Paris or in the United States by adherents to Czech modernism – for example, František Kupka and Vojtěch Preissig.

My decision to focus only on figures who maintained a direct engagement with the artistic events, character, and creative personalities of their native lands (or the post-World War I Successor States) departs from customary practice. Having seen academic inquiry distorted by partisan interests in many recent publications – studies that endeavor to exalt the status of the “national art” by liberally embracing any artist of prominence who might have been born (or descended from parents who were born) within the borders of the country – I have avoided this aspect of national chauvinism.

At the most basic level, then, this book entreats the reader to reconsider the factors (geographical, historical, political, and even psychological) that have circumscribed the use, limited the meanings, and, consequently, restricted the richness of modernist aesthetics. Without awareness of the formative role played by artists from central, eastern, and southeastern Europe in the genesis and reception of modern art, our understanding of its full significance will remain partisan and purblind. By attending to the origins, unfolding, and functioning of classical modernism from these areas, we can better appreciate the complex ways in which progressive artists in the East, as well as in the West, gave shape to the modern world.

The Czech Lands

THE 1867 COMPROMISE (*Ausgleich*) that elevated Budapest to an imperial capital co-equal with Vienna was a bitter blow to Prague, which recognized in Budapest's ascension its own devolution to a provincial capital in the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. For the multinational intelligentsia of the historic lands of the Bohemian crown, this was an almost unbearable cultural and political humiliation (Fig. 1). Prague and the Czech lands of the Kingdom of Bohemia¹ (see Map 1) had served in the past as the proud imperial seat of the Habsburg empire,² achieving the pinnacle of Renaissance and baroque architectural adornment. In the nineteenth century the city had undergone a remarkable "national awakening" in literature, music, and the theatrical arts and had embarked on one of Europe's most ambitious commercial developments – heralded as early as 1791 with a large industrial exhibition. Despite considerable internecine rivalry among the various ethnic groups – predominantly German, Jewish, and Slavic – its cosmopolitan populace was steering the Czech lands toward a prominent position among the ranks of progressive European nations. Further, many citizens had served their emperor in Vienna and proven their loyalty to the Habsburg throne by bearing its arms, staffing its civil service, and implementing its policies. Thus, to witness the Hungarians rewarded with imperial equality while the less rebellious Czechs remained a "divided nation" – kingdom, margraviate, and duchy – subordinate to Vienna was disheartening.³ Such feelings of resentment would long simmer and affect relations between the two peoples, continuing up to and including the present day.⁴

The disappointment of nationalist political expectations during the mid-nineteenth century and afterward encouraged a cultural efflorescence through which the Czech centers could affirm their high standing with other European capitals. By the 1880s the "national awakening" that had been expressed initially through musical and literary forms, and especially in historiography and philology, spread to the visual arts.⁵ Prompted in part by the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art, a predominantly aristocratic association of approximately eighty art-loving patrons,⁶ painting, graphic arts, and sculpture in the Bohemian crown lands had gradually come to benefit from both private and public subventions. Having helped to establish and maintain the Academy of Fine Arts (1800),⁷ the Picture Gallery of Bohemian art (1796),⁸ and a historic monuments commission, the society also expended private resources to acquire art collections for the nation and to send young artists abroad for further study.⁹ Equally significant was its unintended success in promoting (mostly in reaction to its aristocratic practices) the growth among artists and their middle-class supporters of alternative structures through which to encourage the production, display, and acquisition of contemporary national art.¹⁰ (Official sponsorship would come only in the early twentieth century from the art historian-cum-collector Vincenc Kramář, who acquired avant-garde works by Czech artists during his tenure as director of the society's gallery.)¹¹ The sharp rivalry between the Czech and German nationalities in the Kingdom of Bohemia, which was manifested in competitions for the decoration of public buildings, was only exacerbated by the rise of these local groups of art lovers.¹² Each

soon took a nationalist course, often handicapping the development of Bohemian art in their respective attempts to promote all too chauvinistically either Czech or German group interests.¹³ From this environment emerged around 1890 both Czech and German leagues for the advancement of national science and art, each receiving financial support from the imperial coffers¹⁴ as well as benefiting from popular subscriptions. The nationalizing currents reached an ironic culmination in Prague at the turn of the century, when the emperor established the Modern Gallery with separate sections assigned to German and Czech artists.¹⁵

Antagonisms thus particularized between the long-dominant German-speaking population and the nationally self-conscious “native” peoples had been almost universal through central and eastern Europe from at least the last third of the nineteenth century. But a moderating influence was exerted in the Czech lands by the SVU Mánes (Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes, or Mánes Union of Fine Artists,

named after a nineteenth-century Czech naturalist painter of the Slavonic national revival, Josef Mánes [1820–71]) – the most forward looking of artist fraternities, which promoted internationalism. The Mánes Union, founded in 1887, afforded an organizational infrastructure, a place where artists could meet one another freely, and exhibition halls in which to present to the public the dynamic imagery of modern art and artifacts. Encouraging the Modern Gallery to acquire, display, and support art of the highest quality, domestic or foreign, it helped to establish a climate receptive to avant-garde expressions that included uniquely Czech versions of symbolism, expressionism, cubism, and surrealism.¹⁶ With the acceptance of such liberal sentiment in Prague – as in Tallinn, Riga, Ljubljana, and elsewhere – modern artists of varying ethnic origin increasingly understood their task as working collaboratively to create a progressive art for a newly emergent nation. Although arguably this mission was almost fully accomplished by about 1905,

Figure 1. František Břek, *Parable of the Great Decline of the Czechs*, 1898. Wood, 52 × 80 cm. National Gallery, Prague.





Figure 2. František Kupka, study for *Disks of Newton*, 1911–12. Gouache on paper. Private collection. (Courtesy of Meda Mladek.)

avant-garde artists, critics, and collectors of cosmopolitan Prague showed themselves capable of even greater success: In another five years they had elevated their city well beyond the artistic status of Budapest and Vienna to enter the ranks, albeit briefly, of Paris and Berlin as a major cultural metropolis of Europe.

SYMBOLIC BEGINNINGS

Probably the first modern artist anywhere to enter the pioneering realm of nonobjective art, František Kupka was especially influential in helping to formulate the Czech fundamental new vision of the world. Although he lived in Paris after 1897 (the year he turned twenty-six), he continued to endorse many of Bohemia's primary interests – aesthetic, philosophic, and political – and thereby never ceased to exert a tremendous impact on artistic life in his native land.¹⁷ In his early work (and manifold writings), undertaken while pursuing his studies in Vienna (1892–6), he had drawn on the deep currents of central European literary symbolism. His (now lost) *Enigma of Life* of 1894 presented two nude

women, one the personification of Vanitas seated before a sphinx, a conventional symbol of mystery. The figures were surrounded by a “circle of life,” from a segment of which arose an embryo in several stages of development.¹⁸ Related symbolically to this image and to its literary and theosophical sources is a highly emotive color aquatint that belongs to a six-print series titled “Voices of Silence” (*Hlasy ticha*). *The Beginning of Life* contains two interlinked embryonic rings that seem to have been released into the world by a glowing water lily. One of the transparent circles is inhabited by a fetal human whose umbilical cord joins it to the brilliantly mature flower of the other, from whose theosophical center the prenatal child receives its life-supporting force. The image as a whole affirms the primal unity of the universe, an ideal condition not fully sustained through the remainder of the series.¹⁹

Kupka's highly spiritualist preoccupations during these years were manifested pictorially through colors and forms sanctioned by theosophical writers, which not infrequently depended on astral correspondence²⁰ or referred to scientific discoveries, as in *Disks of Newton* (Fig. 2). This blend of the spiritual

and scientific enabled Kupka to infuse his works simultaneously with universal (timeless) reference and striking contemporaneity. They are meant to convey a vision that penetrates beyond appearance to reveal the sounding cosmos, as the artist set forth in a book-length philosophical testament, *Creation in the Fine Arts* (*Tvoření v umění výtvarném*), published in 1923 by the Mánes Union.²¹ It was a vital ontological connection achieved through visual metaphor and synesthetic reverberation – an idealist bond for which a new language had to be invoked, a vocabulary of pure abstraction. Thus, about 1910 Kupka had entered a new universe of art and thought, for which his earlier focus on geometric forms, color harmonies, and symbolic reference laid the foundation. The progression – virtually harmonic in the musical sense – betrays no abrupt break with the past, as the artist marshaled his repertory of visual devices to abstract ends. (Compare, for example, the 1909 *Keyboard/Lake* [Fig. 3] and *Nocturne* [Fig. 4] of the following year.) In a manner similar to Piet Mondrian's "Pier and Ocean" series, Kupka restrained the range of colors, narrowed the focus of the composition, and heightened the predominant geometric forms to allow the fully abstract qualities

Figure 3. František Kupka, *Keyboard/Lake*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 79 × 72 cm. National Gallery, Prague



Figure 4. František Kupka, *Nocturne*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 66 × 66 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna.

of the canvas to assert themselves. (Although the two pioneering abstractionists were deeply stamped by an early exposure to anthroposophical literature, and although each drew on various earlier scientific studies in their respective steps toward nonobjectivity,²² the paths pursued into abstraction differed greatly.)²³ In *Cosmic Spring I* and *Cosmic Spring II* (Fig. 5), Kupka captured more powerfully the rhythms of primal creation that he had rendered in the symbolist harmonies of *The Beginning of Life*. The network of lines and the patterns of color fragments apparent in each version of the "Cosmic Spring" series reprise the geometric forms and brilliant passages of color visible in his previous work. Certain structural similarities can be recognized as well between the concatenating ripples of color in *Water* (Fig. 6) and the abstract linear formations in *Cosmic Spring II*. Likewise, there are compositional parallels between Kupka's figural works – the *Family Portrait* in Paris, for example – and the artist's ambitious abstract canvas, *The Creation* (see Plate 1), which may well constitute Kupka's most monumental achievement of these years. The generative abstraction that incarnated his philosophically weighty themes of cosmos, creation, and life cycle can be understood also as metaphors for the artist's own obsession with life forces, personal and universal. Abstracting through



Figure 5. František Kupka, *Cosmic Spring II*, 1911–20. Oil on canvas, 115 × 125 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

a careful observation of organic processes (often studied through a microscope), a preoccupation with inorganic forms (such as rocks, with their suggestion of permanence), and an interest in astronomy, Kupka attempted simultaneously to reconcile modern humankind with the cosmos while charting his own course in the world.²⁴

An artist similarly concerned with cosmic harmony, biological process, and metaphysical speculation was Vojtěch Preissig, who also led almost all his artistic life outside his native Bohemia.²⁵ His interest in nature's processes, the microscopic world of organic tissues and cell structure, and the sounding cosmos revealed by mathematical rhythms likewise reflected many of the concerns of Prague's intelligentsia. Also like Kupka, with whom he made brief contact in Paris at the beginning of the century, Preissig turned to abstraction as a philosophical as well as an aesthetic means of expression. But whereas the two artists chose the same means to reveal the structures of being, Preissig's reliance on nature was at times more literal and direct. About 1900 he experimented with pulling a series of prints directly from tobacco leaves, thereby allowing the veined

form to impress art with its own authenticity. The use of nature for the regeneration of art (and modern humankind) soon became an intellectual leitmotif for Preissig,²⁶ whose numerous graphic cycles, photographic experiments, and written texts sought a spiritual rebirth through harmonizing sentiment and logic.

Preissig's pedagogical activities in New York and Boston during the teens and twenties necessarily distanced him from the dynamic modernism being created in Prague and throughout the Czech crown lands in the years before the collapse of the Habsburg empire. Nevertheless, his comprehensive attempt to record, analyze, and exploit the varied dimensions of creativity in the visual arts corresponded with similar totalizing schemes undertaken by modernists throughout central Europe. As artist, designer, and author, Preissig concerned himself as well with novel forms of communication – as, for example, in his various designs for an alphabet (Fig. 7) to articulate a new philosophy of modern life.²⁷ His most ambitious project – a decade-long investigation titled "Invention: 'Art Fundamental'" (ca. 1915–25), which served as his aesthetic testa-



Figure 6. František Kupka, study for *Water (Bather)*, ca. 1906–7. Watercolor and pencil on paper, 26.5 × 37.5 cm. Private collection. (Courtesy of Meda Mladek.)

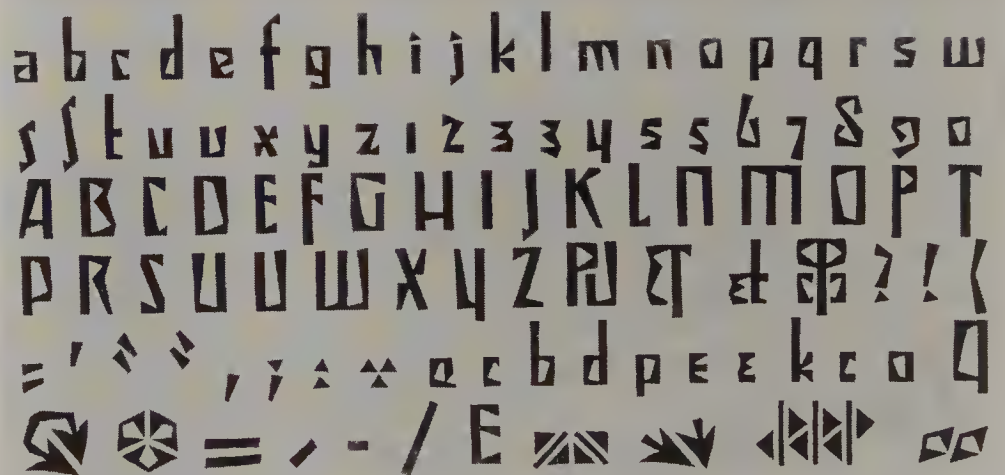


Figure 7. Vojtěch Preissig, designs for the alphabet, ca. 1914. Tusche on paper, 25.3 × 39.9 cm. National Literature Archive, Prague. (From *1909–1925 Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur*, exh. cat., Düsseldorf, 1991.)

ment – was a systematic elaboration of the correspondence between states of mind (for example, inspiration, imagination, invention, concentration, and enthusiasm) and artistic forms (colors, shapes, repetition). It also provided a foundation for the mature abstraction Preissig created on his return to Prague in the 1930s (Fig. 8). In this series of modest-sized works, he reprised and represented most powerfully his lifelong fascination with cosmic unity, biological process, and spiritual force.

The charged abstractions of Preissig and Kupka can be understood as affecting expressions of the psychological and spiritual crisis that defined the intellectual landscape of early twentieth-century Prague.²⁸ In an environment characterized by spiritual alienation and political frustration, the cosmic unities envisioned by Kupka and Preissig were both inspiring and challenging to the younger generation of native Czech modernists.²⁹

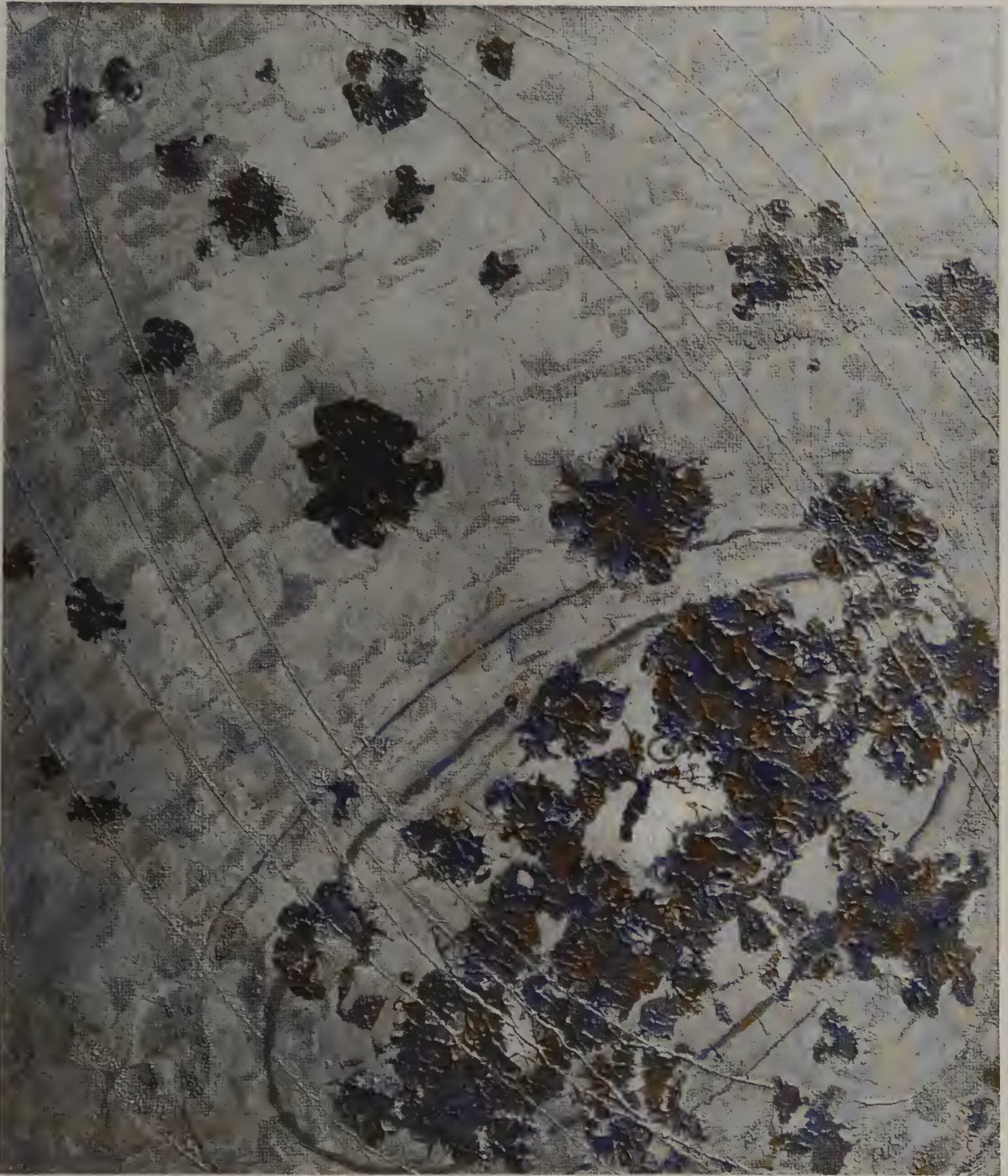


Figure 8. Vojtěch Preissig, *Birth of the World*, ca. 1936. Oil on masonite? 72.1 × 60.6 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

EXPRESSIONISM, CUBISM, AND REDEMPTIVE MODERNISM

For Czech artists born in the 1880s, the 1905 Edvard Munch exhibition mounted by the Mánes Union in Prague was a defining event.³⁰ For the first time, the cadre of young Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian modernists – among them Emil Filla, Bohumil Kubišta, Otakar Kubín (Othon Coubine), and Josef Čapek – witnessed the emotional candor with which an artist could render the psychological alienation of modern life; Munch's charged aesthetics represented art's unique potential to lay bare the soul and plumb the depths of the contemporary psyche. Within two years of this fateful exhibition, many Czech artists had severed the lingering ties to the naturalism, impressionism, and Secessionist aesthetics³¹ they had learned at the academy and begun to express with decisively modern means their own deep disaffection.

Emil Filla drew on Munch's model of an expressionist palette, serpentine line, and disquieting emotional tenor for the depiction of daily town life in Lužánky (Fig. 9). As Munch did in his Christianastad and seaside paintings, Filla exploited the contrast between a deceptively placid setting with warm, earthen hues and the abrupt foreshortening used to heighten emotional intensity. Still more expressive is his *Reader of Dostoyevsky* (see Plate 2), shown with closed eyes, emotionally overwhelmed from his encounter with the Russian author. Falling back

Figure 9. Emil Filla, *Lužánky*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 71 × 92.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague. (From M. Lamač, *Osma a Skupina: výtvarných umělců, 1907–1917*, Prague, 1988.)

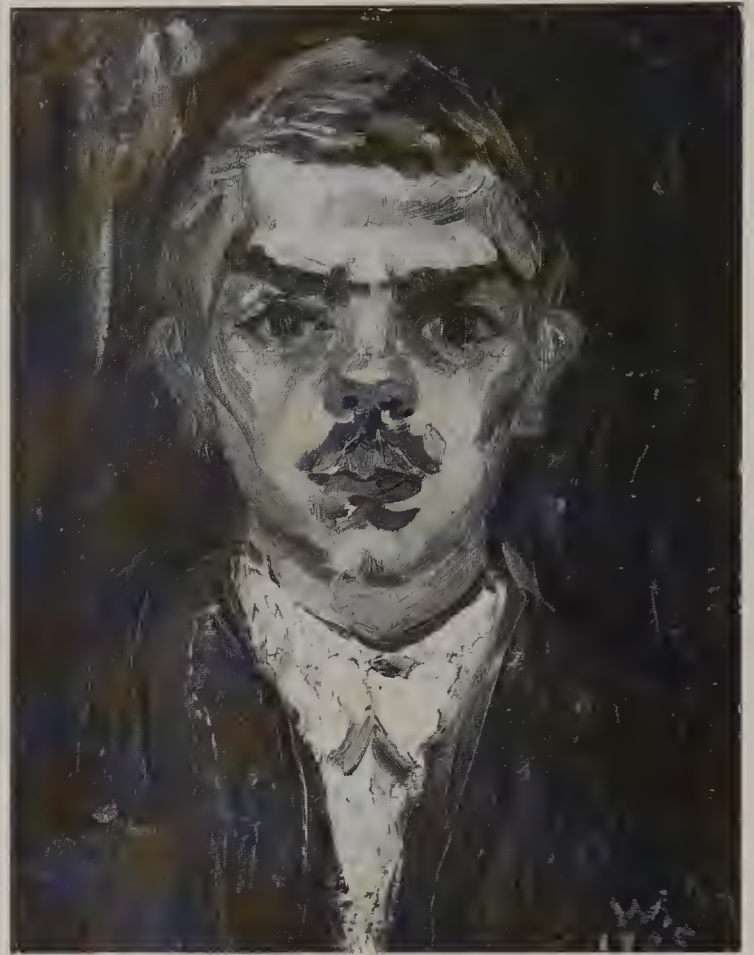


Figure 10. Willi Nowak, *Self-Portrait*, 1905. Oil on cardboard, 90.5 × 32.5 cm. Regional Gallery, Liberec.

against his chair, his arms dangling helplessly, he is, as Filla described himself as having been, "completely stunned by Dostoyevsky's perverse fantasy."³² Against a geometric grid of window, baseboard, and upturned tabletop, the collapsing figure, diagonally counterpoised, is a secular counterpart to the tormented Christ in the crucifixion above his head. The sinuous line of his blue coat picks up the abstract pattern in the carpeting, which is repeated in the rendition of the figure's face – a treatment that calls to mind the abstract paradigms created by Kupka and Preissig.

In 1907, still in the wake of the 1905 Munch exhibition, Filla and several other artists banded together to form the first modernist movement in Prague, *Osma* (Eight). Like its (slightly later) counterpart in Hungary, the Czech Eight brought together young artists from all parts of the country and with diverse stylistic affinities. What united the four Czechs (Filla, Antonín Procházka, Kubín, and Kubišta) and four ethnic "Germans" (Willi [Vilem] Nowak (Fig. 10), Friedrich [Bedřich] Feigl, and Max

Figure 11. Bohumil Kubišta, *Triple Portrait (The Artist Flanked by Bedřich Feigl and Emil Pittermann)*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 86 × 108 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Horb, as well as the student Emil-Artur Pittermann-Longen) was a general feeling of profound disquiet with the state of the empire, the state of art, and the spiritual condition of the age. Bonded by a conviction that together they might present a unified countermovement to the aesthetic, political, and moral conventions they detested in the dying days of empire, they held their first joint exhibition in Prague's Královská Street.³³ The alliance of the two ethnic groups was in itself something of an event, as the tension (and frequent student battles) between Czechs and Germans had earlier forced the imperial government to establish in the Kingdom of Bohemia separate university chairs, exhibition venues, and museum collections, each oriented to the interests and aspirations of the respective contenders.

Although sharing a commitment to show the public an unidealized portrait of a world in decline, the artists differed markedly in their means. German expressionist aesthetics from Berlin, especially from Herwarth Walden's Galerie der Sturm,³⁴ exerted a strong stylistic influence on Osma, as did the work of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Pechstein, Erich Heckel, and others who were exhibited by Mánes.³⁵ Yet a pervasive admiration for contemporary French colorism and classical composition restrained the "bru-

tal expressionism," as the Czech critic Karel Čapek described the German style.³⁶ Another determinant for Osma was the interest in psychic forces that characterized so much of Czech art of the early twentieth century; it was accompanied by a widespread fascination with existential anxiety and loss of faith, themes for which Munch's art provided persuasive and lasting corroboration. Kubišta's engagement with an iconography of moral suffering, physical pain, and uncontrolled violence was the most extreme within the group, and the most expressive. His *Self-Portrait with Inverness Cape* (see Plate 3) well represents Osma's aesthetic posture at the moment of its second exhibition, held in June and July of 1908 in Prague's Topič Gallery.³⁷ When compared with the earlier *Triple Portrait (The Artist Flanked by Bedřich Feigl and Emil Pittermann)* (Fig. 11), the self-portrait reveals the degree and nature of the artist's fascination with expressionist color, physiognomic distortion, and emotional immediacy. The rich palette of the segmented backdrop, the division of the face into warring areas of intense green and thickly applied pink pigments, and the flowing hair with its parti-colored contours are brought into order by a rigorous sense of geometry, evident especially in the pyramidal body and the "color-wheel" section of the background.³⁸ Heavily cloaked in brown, Kubišta



Figure 12. Bohumil Kubišta, *Interior*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 46 × 59 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

appears as a volcanic force erupting in the contemporary world.

In two other paintings of 1908, Kubišta revealed the excited atmosphere in which he worked. A view of an interior (Fig. 12) and a rendition of a sunflower (Fig. 13) have the thick impasto, emphatic linear brushstrokes, and saturated hues of Vincent van Gogh's canvases as well as their emotional charge. His still lifes (Fig. 14) and landscapes of about 1909 take their premise from Cézanne but transpose the Frenchman's classic balance of form and structure into a new color key of emotional tension. By that time Kubišta had absorbed and harnessed the volatility of the previous year and now represented himself as a figure of consummate spiritual force (Fig. 15). The perfect complement to Filla's enervated *Reader of Dostoyevsky* (see Plate 2), Kubišta's representation is of a figure of powerful will – one whose self-confidence and conviction appear to exceed those even of Arthur Schopenhauer (Fig. 16), Osma's intellectual icon. In lieu of the strong contours carefully built up to describe the philosopher's physiognomy, a spectral aura surrounds the painter's self-image, emanating through expressionist flashes of yellow gold pulsing around his eyes, along his nose, under his mouth, and on his cheek. Stressing color contrast, free brushwork, and irregularity of outline, Kubišta enhanced the emotional directness of his image while demonstrating his rejection of academic conventions.

Kubišta's expressionist morbidity was a metaphor for the spiritual decline of the West, at least as it was



Figure 13. Bohumil Kubišta, *Sunflowers*, 1908. Oil on pasteboard, 49 × 53 cm. Krajska Gallery, Hradec Králové. (From M. Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague, 1993.)



Figure 14. Bohumil Kubišta, *Still Life with Lemons*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 65 × 80 cm. Private collection. (From M. Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague, 1993.)

perceived in Prague by members and associates of Osma. Also symptomatic of an increasingly pervasive decadence was the impulse, prompted by the onus of geopolitical reverses, to investigate the darker side of universal themes: *The Night of Love* (Fig. 17) by Filla, who was among the most accomplished in this regard, subverts any expectation that love is a lyrical state of the soul. In this unsentimental conception, a lone tomcat prowls a bloodred landscape

Figure 15. Bohumil Kubišta, *Blue Self-Portrait*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 51.5 × 43 cm. West Bohemian Gallery, Pilsen. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)



Figure 16 (below). Bohumil Kubišta, *Portrait of Arthur Schopenhauer*, 1908. Oil on canvas (unfinished), 91.5 × 71.5 cm. Moravian Gallery, Brno. (From M. Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague, 1993.)



in search of a mate. The undulating fields are crowned by isolated black daubs, suggesting trees; and the preternatural sky is rendered in a pink whose hue clashes unpleasantly with the red of the earth and the greens of the full moon. Where romantics or symbolists might have represented love analogically as aesthetic harmony or poetic tenderness, Filla stripped away all surface sentimentality to reveal ruthlessly the bestial character of a universal primal drive. In like manner, he juxtaposed an emaciated, red-faced, crucified Christ with a well-fed toddler in a country byway (Fig. 18). Even a game of cards between two men (Fig. 19) becomes a disconcerting encounter, with the cardplayers isolated in an emotionally cold environment of deep blues, from whose lower-left depth a contorted gnome of a man turns up an ace in his wizened hand.³⁹ Other artists in Osma took a somewhat less explosive, less “brutal” path. Kubín, for example, invoked the neo-impressionist tradition of Paul Gauguin, while Vincenc Beneš looked to André Derain and the French



Figure 17. Emil Filla, *The Night of Love*, ca. 1907–8. Oil on canvas, 73 × 110.2 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

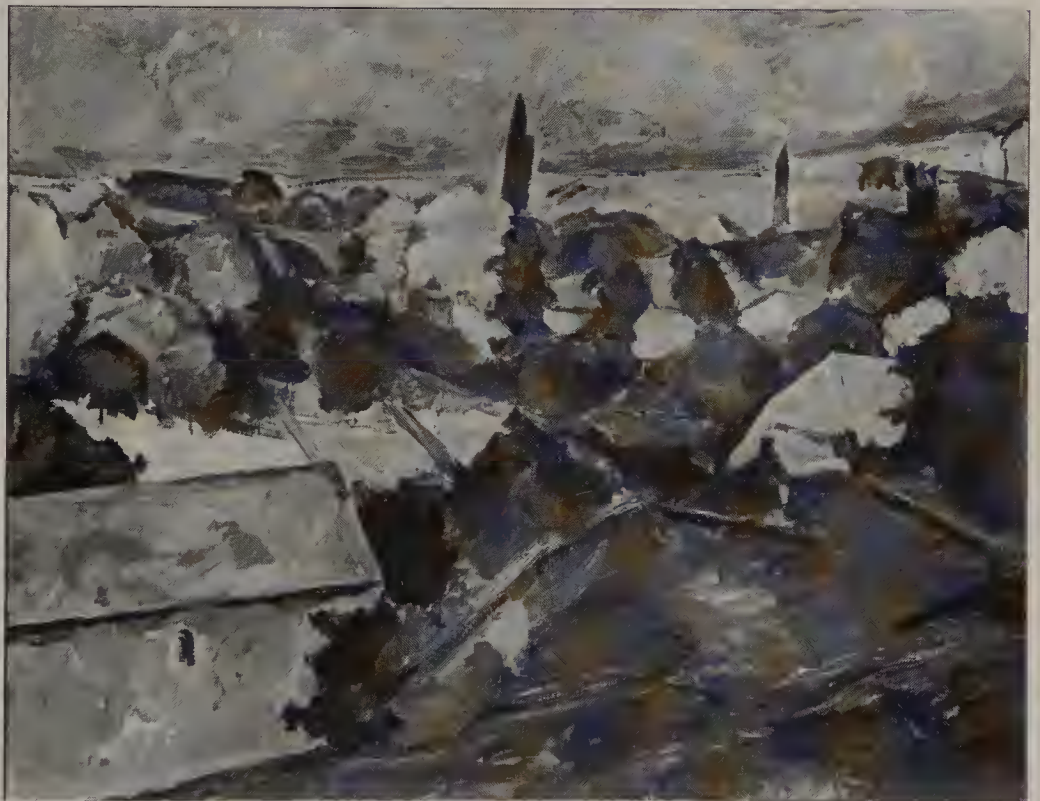
Figure 18. Emil Filla, *Child near a Forest*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 96 × 138 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 19. Emil Filla, *Ace of Hearts*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 65 × 75 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 20. Vincenc Beneš, *Landscape from Michle*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 53.5 × 69.5 cm. Moravian Gallery, Brno.



fauves as models (Fig. 20) and Feigl turned for inspiration to the early portraits of Paul Cézanne (Fig. 21).⁴⁰

Besides giving a powerful emotional charge to Osma and its two exhibitions, Filla's and Kubišta's expressionist painting between 1907 and 1910 inspired artists who were working in an expressionist

vein just outside their own circle, especially Václav Špála and Jan Zrzavý. For Špála the 1905 Munch exhibition remained a decisive event in his aesthetic development, as seen in his *Country Girl* (Fig. 22), which is dependent on parallel images in the Norwegian painter's oeuvre.⁴¹ The influence of Kubišta is evident as well in the exaggerated brushwork,



Figure 21. Bedřich Feigl, *Self-Portrait*, 1908. Oil on pasteboard, 39 × 33.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

primarily in the flattened green of the meadow and in the vertical stripes of the subject's apron. Špála's *Self-Portrait with Palette* (Fig. 23) of 1908 is comparable to Filla's rendition in the same year of the identical theme (Fig. 24). After the founding of Skupina (Skupina výtvarných umělců, or Group of Fine Artists) in 1911, when all the former members of Osma were heavily in the sway of French painting,⁴² Špála's style, too, evolved under a similar fauvist and cubist influence (Fig. 25).

More emphatically expressionist was the work of Zrzavý, who at the outset of his career (1907–9) drew not only on the art of Munch and his immediate colleagues in Bohemia but on the emotional imagery and affecting techniques of the German expressionists, as well as on the charged iconography of the symbolists. In an attempt to project the image of a savage outside the conventions of good taste, Zrzavý appropriated a blatantly artificial mode of self-presentation. His *Self-Portrait I* (Fig. 26) shows the mustachioed young artist, lips painted in red and cheeks rouged, partially hidden by a gold veil that cascades from a woman's straw hat. Around his neck he wears a heavy chain from which depends a hand clasping a bleeding heart. From such an artist we

should expect an assault on popularly held beliefs, as is given irrefutably by Zrzavý's 1908 self-portrait as a hatted hermaphrodite provocatively titled *Wild Woman* (National Gallery, Prague). And in a series of canvases whose modest size belies their monumental emotional impact – what he described as “savage painting” – Zrzavý delivered a powerful blow to the comfortable burghers of Habsburg Prague.

The tenor of these works that probed the expressionist extremes was established while Zrzavý was still a teenager. In *Vale of Tears* (Fig. 27) he introduced the themes of psychological and physical abandonment. Off center and to the right of the canvas is a fashionably dressed waif of a woman who stands alone under a preternaturally flowering tree in a barren landscape, enframed by needlelike peaks into which an inaccessible road winds. The contrast between the fertile tree and dead environment is as disquieting as the plaintive gaze of the helpless figure. This feeling of isolation in a hostile landscape soon evolved into more extreme pictures of madness, violence, and murder that feature the same sharply jutting mountain peaks as a leitmotif. In a host of such morbid expressionist works painted between 1908 and 1910, Zrzavý sought to transpose “matter into the spiritual sphere, and to endow it with psychological faculties.”⁴³ *The Last Song* (Fig. 28) shows an attenuated blue-cloaked figure, his wraithlike head recalling Munch's *Shriek*, who addresses the viewer not with song but with a flow of blood issuing from his exaggerated lips. Scarlet flecks cover the bizarre landscape as if forming a biblical plague of insects. Zrzavý drew much of his inspiration from the unconscious and from the various forms of anthroposophy with which he flirted. Many of his canvases record the exorcism of spiritual torment through “the eruption of pains suffered by the constricted inner self.”⁴⁴ Perhaps nowhere is this primal mode of self-projection expressed more powerfully than in Zrzavý's imaginative self-portrait as the Antichrist (see Plate 4). In what must surely have been the most savage manifestation of his expressionist period, the artist inverted every code of good breeding and religious mores under which he (and his allies in Osma) had chafed. The painting is constructed of successive registers, at the bottom and nearest the viewer a zone of dark, infertile earth out of which emerges two dead trees with tine-sharp branches. In the brilliantly illuminated distant background are Zrzavý's customary spiky mountains,



Figure 22. Václav Špála, *Country Girl*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 71 x 54 cm. Moravian Gallery, Brno.



Figure 23. Václav Špála, *Self-Portrait with Palette*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 83 × 72 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 24. Emil Filla, *Self-Portrait with Palette*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 78 × 58 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

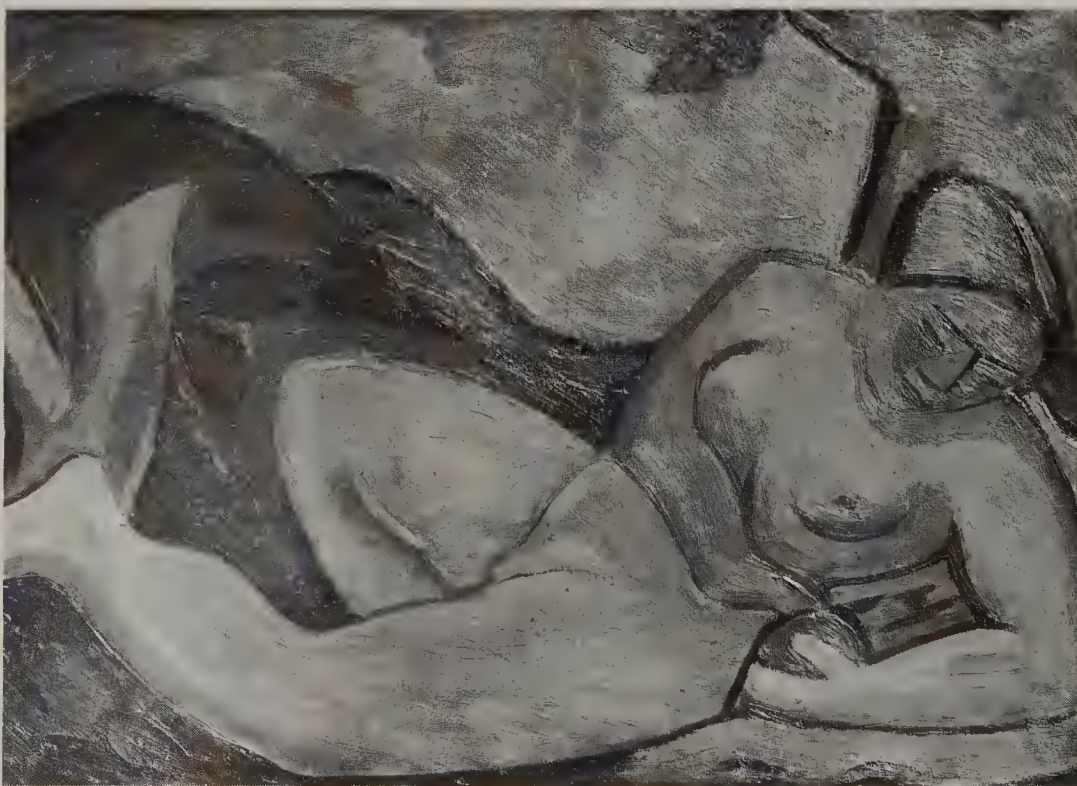


Figure 25. Václav Špála, *Eve*, 1911. Oil on pasteboard, 46 × 66 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

Figure 26 (right). Jan Zrzavý, *Self-Portrait I*, 1907. Tempera on cardboard, 37.5 × 28 cm. National Gallery, Prague. (From *Expresionismus a české umění, 1905–1927*, exh. cat., Prague, 1994, p. 69.)



Figure 27 (below). Jan Zrzavý, *Vale of Tears*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 60 × 80 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 28. Jan Zrzavý, *The Last Song*, 1909. Oil on plywood, 30 × 28.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague.





Figure 29. Bohumil Kubišta, *Kitchen Still Life with Sugar Loaf*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 98 × 73 cm. Private collection. (From M. Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague, 1993.)

which soon give way to a bloodred sky specked with small bursts of gold light. Dominating the entire composition is a frightening image of the Antichrist, pinioned to a cross, the tortured figure externalizing the deepest nightmare. The gruesome head with straggling locks is that of a primitive mask: painted lips, bared teeth, slit eyes, and facial planes daubed with white. The crossbar of the crucifix serves as unnatural extensions of would-be arms; the hermaphroditic breasts are full with prominent nipples; the sweep of loincloth falls away to reveal swollen genitalia. Descending awkwardly from the upper left toward the crucified figure is a parody of the Holy Spirit, while to the upper right a yellow-gold astral body illuminates without warmth. The ultimate declaration of discontent with the prevailing spiritual conditions of contemporary life, Zrzavý's *Antichrist* was also among the last primitivist examples of Czech expressionism before the movement transformed it-

self creatively into a mature form of modernism roughly coincident with the founding of Skupina.

CUBISM AND SKUPINA (GROUP OF FINE ARTISTS)

In about 1910, seeking new sources of inspiration, a flood of Bohemian artists, including leading members of Osma – Kubišta and Filla – traveled to Paris, there to encounter the cubism of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, under whose influence they would develop a uniquely Czech idiom that fused expressionist themes, experiences, and models with the formal language of analytical cubism (Fig. 29). Significantly, this innovative vocabulary would be employed with great effect to communicate the iconography of existential anxiety that so profoundly affected Prague's avant-garde and is so immediate in Kubišta's *Kiss of Death* (Fig. 30).⁴⁵



Figure 30. Bohumil Kubišta, *Kiss of Death*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 154 × 89.5 cm. Regional Gallery, Liberec.



Figure 31. Otto Gutfreund, *Anxiety*, 1911. Bronze, 143 cm high. National Gallery, Prague.

Among those who spent 1910 in the French capital was Otto Gutfreund, who had been for several years and would continue to be incontestably the single most creative figure among modernist Czech sculptors.⁴⁶ Like Osma artists, Gutfreund was engaged with the quintessentially expressionist themes of sacrifice, anxiety, and death. His towering representation of anxiety (Fig. 31), unusual for its size (143 cm) as well as its explicit subject, foreshadows the crisis many in Prague felt on the eve of World War I, while it simultaneously embodies the artist's attempt to release the human psyche from all material constraints. Rising from a crystalline base of "rough-hewn," rocklike shapes, a figure unfolds upward into sharp-edged planes that less describe than intimate a form. Only on reaching the upper quarter of the sculpture does the figure begin to disclose itself. With folded arms held tightly against the chest, the body appears to be fossilized in the avalanche of broken segments that slant with seeming randomness in multiple directions. The result is a disturbing dichotomy: a psychological opposition between simultaneously implied motion and restraint. Heightening the tension is the careful definition of the primitive face, its assertively anxious countenance – with deeply cut eye sockets reminiscent of Munch's

Figure 32. Otto Gutfreund, *Portrait of Viki*, 1912–13. Bronze, 33 cm high. National Gallery, Prague.





Figure 33. Otto Gutfreund, *Self-Portrait*, 1911–12. Bronze, 37 × 28 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

anxious figures – countered by the head's apparent retreat into the cloak of roughly modeled planes. The entire sculpture is animated by the refraction of light that plays across broken, beveled surfaces; and the deep, quivering shadows thereby created endow the figure with an impression of agitated, jerky motion. Gutfreund marshaled disquieting formal elements not merely to create a personification of anxiety; rather, he fashioned an expressionist sculpture to stimulate anxiety in its viewer. With no comfortable plane on which to rest the eyes, no smooth surface to trace, no gently modeled form in which to

take delight, the viewer is compelled to experience vicariously the existential pain a generation of Czech artists understood as the crisis of their time.⁴⁷ Moreover, in numerous written commentaries, the sculptor explained his intention to make tangible his vision of abstruse moods, feelings, and states of being by combining elements from the world of given reality with geometric forms appropriated from the ideal universe of the intellect. It was this creative tension between the physical and the abstract that Gutfreund manipulated to express the themes of Czech cubo-expressionism (see, e.g., Fig. 32).



Figure 34. Otto Gutfreund, *Portrait of My Father III*, 1911. Bronze relief, 40 × 28 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

Figure 35 (right). Otto Gutfreund, *Head of a Man, Cubist Composition*, 1913–14. Tusche and pastel on paper, 28.5 × 22.5 cm. Museum of Art, Olomouc. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)

In a series of relief portrait panels from 1911 and 1912, the sculptor turned his vision inward to express less physical appearance than individual spiritual character. His self-portrait (Fig. 33) attests to the forceful manipulation of clay, which predominates over his physiognomic portrayal – the process of self-creation so powerfully present that the sculptor's profile emerges only tentatively before dissolving into the chaotic matrix of swirling forms. Truly, to see is to see through superficial appearance into the author's creative being, the impression magnified by the dramatic play of light across the deeply gouged



surface and by means of whorling contours. Gutfreund ventured into similar existential territory in a series of portraits of his father, each highly charged phase of which betrayed a different dimension of the old man's character (Fig. 34). Emphasizing variously broken planes, stylizing facial details, simplifying composition, and manipulating with a modeling trowel, the artist created psychological portrait studies that define his father in the aggregate. Such expressionist deformations in the service of psychological tension and dramatic effects led Gutfreund ever closer to cubism. In the work of Picasso (and of Braque), which he saw during his stay in Paris and which was on display in Prague in 1912,⁴⁸ he recognized a compelling formal vocabulary that could

Figure 36. Otto Gutfreund, *Embracing Figures*, 1912–13. Bronze, 63 cm high. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 37. Otto Gutfreund, *Cello Player*, 1912–13. Bronze, 47.5 cm high. National Gallery, Prague.

effectively uncover the structures underlying reality (Fig. 35); the cubists' manipulation of planes and their rejection of Renaissance conventions of spatial recession were fully congruent with the expressionist means he had recently mastered. Thus, it was but a short and highly significant step to extend the broken web of surface facets into space, and to smooth somewhat the tortured angles of the body into a series of integrated contours (Fig. 36).

For Gutfreund cubism represented a uniquely modern access to the absolutes he had long sought: absolute physical form, absolute abstract vision, and absolute expression of spirit. As a result, he increasingly took up the themes favored by Braque and Picasso: music players (Fig. 37), portrait busts (Fig.



Figure 38 (above). Otto Gutfreund, *Cubist Bust*, 1913–14. Bronze, 60 cm high. National Gallery, Prague.

38), female figures, and still lifes (Fig. 39). By the midpoint of the decade, Gutfreund reached the ultimate resolution of his cubo-expressionism in a series of “tabletop still lifes.” Made from the wood scraps he was able to find during his wartime prison confinement, these small sculptures rely simply on planar interpenetration, compositional “imbalance,” and distressed surfaces for their emotional impact. In what may be the most accomplished of the series, *Sitting Woman* (Fig. 40), the artist manipulated the pieces as if he were modeling clay. Exploiting the surface effects (scored, grooved, blackened, and broken) of the wood,⁴⁹ he constructed a figure whose embodiment of both abstract vision and the reality of form exemplified for him the consummate spirit of the creative process.⁵⁰

Otakar Kubín was equally committed to the anxious expression of the psyche by cubist means. Of all the Czech modernists’ work, however, his retained most consistently the creative tension best suggested by the term *cubo-expressionism*. Between 1912 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Kubín, like Gutfreund trained as a sculptor, found a highly charged personal means to reveal the rhythm, edge, and artifice of modern (Bohemian) life. As early as 1907, when he exhibited five works with Osma, Kubín had been criticized in the press for demonstrating an outrageous dissonance in his compositions. By the time he next exhibited in Prague (1908), he

was widely recognized, if not universally admired, as a representative of the new aesthetics, whose primitive directness and uncompromising rejection of the classical tradition was acknowledged by his peers as a “cure” for the overly civilized life in central Europe.⁵¹ To escape the constraints of Habsburg refinement and the self-contentment of Bohemia’s bourgeois values, Kubín moved in 1912 to Paris, where he selectively appropriated compositional techniques from cubism and futurism. A series of still lifes that ensued (Figs. 41, 42) show the artist mov-

Figure 39 (below). Otto Gutfreund, *Still Life with Bottle*, 1913–14. Colored crayon, tusche and collage on paper, 4.5 × 22.8 cm. North Moravian Gallery, Ostrava. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)





Figure 40. Otto Gutfreund, *Sitting Woman*, 1916. Wood, 29.5 cm high. National Gallery, Prague. (From *1909–1925 Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur*, exh. cat., Düsseldorf, 1991.)

ing increasingly toward a dynamic reductivism. Whereas cubism offered to Gutfreund a compositional vehicle through which fundamental structures could be revealed, analyzed, and re-presented (see Fig. 35), it was for Kubín an inspired path toward an expression of the age, signified through a “chaotic” arrangement of planes, a “barbaric” juxtaposition of primary colors, and an energized futurist silhouetting of the figure.

Kubín’s innovative portrayal of the creative chaos of modern life reached its acme in 1914, when he completed the dynamic *Figure II/Silhouette II* (Fig. 43). Here is captured the turbulence and “barbaric” dissonance the artist had pursued since joining Osma in 1907. Zigzagging in a primitive dance far removed from the graceful movement of civilized ballet, a stick figure emblazons the picture as if a bolt of futurist lightning, its contorted angularity transmit-



Figure 41. Otakar Kubín, *Still Life with Box*, 1912/13. Oil on canvas, 64 × 80 cm. Central Moravian Gallery, Ostrava. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)

Figure 42. Otakar Kubín, *Still Life on a Table*, 1913–14. Oil on canvas, 65 × 81 cm. Gallery Benedict Rejt, Louny.



ting the electric energy of its maker's modernism. Although maintaining contact with modernist artists in Prague, Kubín, like Kupka, elected to remain in Paris, conducting his career there until the 1950s. His presence in the French capital removed him from the creative ferment underway in his native land, where Prague's most progressive art movement, Skupina, had been founded in 1911 by fellow former members of Osma and adherents of cubo-expressionism: Gutfreund, Špála, Beneš, Filla, Procházka, and others.⁵² Through the publication of its own journal, *Umělecký měsíčník* (Art Monthly),⁵³ and an active exhibition program – as well as by virtue of its extensive contacts – Skupina enabled the Czech avant-garde to make Prague a European capital of cubism and advanced aesthetics. As elsewhere in the region, exhibitions served to give visibility to modernist Czech art as well as to integrate it into an international forum. Skupina's first show (in Prague's Obecní dům [Municipal Building] in January 1912) was limited to Czech exponents, but by the fall of the same year, it displayed to a Czech audience some of the most advanced canvases of Picasso, Derain,



Figure 43. Otakar Kubín, *Figure II/Silhouette II*, 1912–14. Oil on canvas, 89.5 × 74.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

Heckel, Kirchner, and other masters of the international avant-garde. Until the outbreak of World War I, Skupina would sponsor exhibitions of modern art – both at home and abroad⁵⁴ – that were among the most forward looking in Europe.⁵⁵

One of Skupina's most multitalented members was the Moravian veteran of Osma and a leading protagonist in the Czech expressionist variant of cubism, Antonín Procházka.⁵⁶ His art bore the permanent stamp of the Czech avant-garde's concern with psychologically charged themes. In subject and style the influence of Munch, the German expressionists, and the French fauves (Fig. 44) is almost always apparent. Thus, when Procházka turned to cubism around 1910, he freely endowed it with a

fervently "Czech" character – an expressionist iconography rarely found in cubist circles in France. In *Prometheus* (Fig. 45) especially, drawing on a theme charged with emotion, Procházka "tore" the composition violently into two halves: a wind-whipped cloak separates the roughly painted ethereal realm of the alighting raptor from the dark, rocky cliff on which Prometheus is chained, writhing in torment. A complex network of cubist planes fractures each elongated limb and binds the tragic figure more securely than the loose manacles on his left wrist and around his right arm. The twisting posture of the victim reinforces the compositional spiral while baring his white belly, where the bird of prey will exact its divine punishment. Symbolizing the pain of the sac-

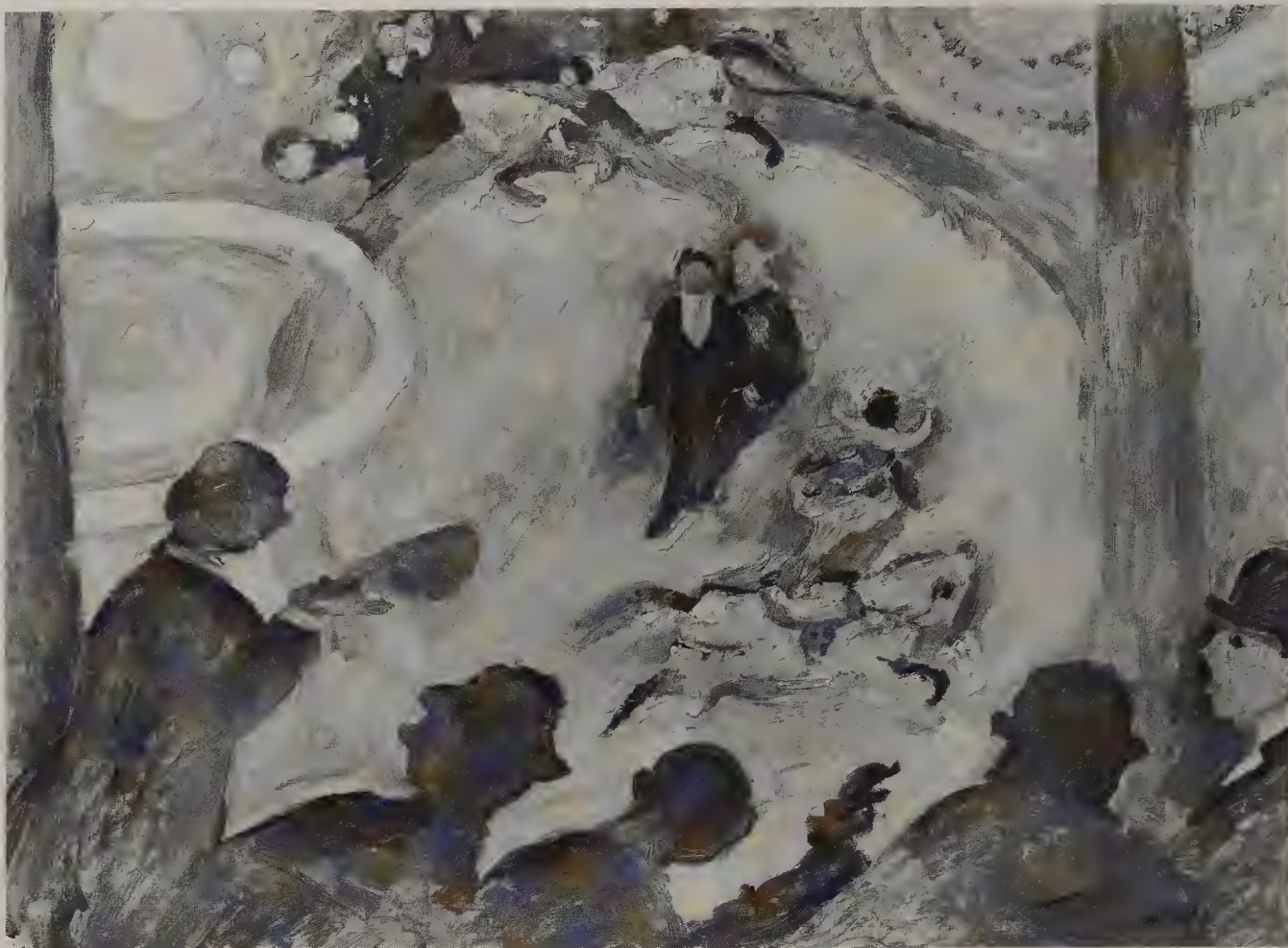


Figure 44. Antonín Procházka, *Circus*, 1907. Oil on cardboard, 47.5 × 65 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

rifice is the handling of Prometheus's cloak, its drapery breaking into sharply angular planes rather than falling into graceful soft folds. Procházka's explicit emphasis on pain and sacrifice, suggested by the choice of subject and effectively communicated by adapting the techniques of cubism, accords perfectly with the Czech modernists' absorption with themes of psychic dissonance, existential anguish, and narrative excess. By provoking in viewers a contemporary empathy with the Promethean anguish of the modern artist himself, Procházka continued a practice that Czech artists since the turn of the twentieth century had favored. In this regard, his work is as comparable with the early achievements of Kupka as with Gutfreund's exactly contemporaneous *Anxiety* (see Fig. 31), which can be understood as a three-dimensional counterpart to *Prometheus*.⁵⁷

In a series of cubist canvases dating from 1912–17, Procházka embraced more subtle means to communicate existential content. In accord with the metaphysical theories to which many of the Czech avant-garde subscribed, he employed the spiral as a universal principle of cosmic movement – as, for ex-

ample, in a 1916 still life with a napkin now in Prague. To assert the primal character of modern civilization, he sometimes treated his subjects' heads as if primitive masks (Fig. 46) and found an equivalent for the dark clashes of the sounding cosmos by orchestrating the cubist fragmentation of instruments and musicians into opposing fields (Fig. 47). But by far the most effective way he invested cubism with the emotional and psychological potency of Czech expressionism was by introducing riotous color. The rich palette of Procházka's cubo-expressionism – unlike the analytical cubism of Picasso and Braque, with its restrained color spectrum – is endowed with hues corresponding to psychological states that the artist endeavored to measure empirically.⁵⁸ Thus, in cubist still lifes, figure studies, and other compositions, we find an expressionist's spectrum of color used less for descriptive than for emotionally provocative purposes.⁵⁹ Procházka's adoption of cubist abstraction must then be recognized for what it signaled in its Bohemian context: a thoroughly modern (and universal) means to release the "energy of the spirit," to quote another Skupina member, Josef



Figure 45. Antonín Procházka, *Prometheus*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 110 × 80 cm. Moravian Gallery, Brno. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)

Čapek. Such a pregnant vocabulary was employed to dramatic effect by others among the group's artists, including Filla, Kubišta, and Čapek himself.

In a series of bathers from 1910–12 (Fig. 48), Filla manipulated the formal cubist play of edge, shifting angles, and irregular planes to create an energy on the canvas analogous to sexual arousal. His most potent presentation of primal drives – of what his contemporaries labeled “inner truth” – was *The Dance of Salome I* (Fig. 49), a half-nude princess who undulates before the seated Herod. As the sybaritic ruler claps in time with the partially clad flutists, a bent-kneed servant in the foreground proffers the severed head of John the Baptist to the dancing

Salome. The theme, combining blood, sex, and an exotic setting, appealed greatly to the Czech cubo-expressionists as did Filla's formal means of conveying sexual energy: a chaotic network of shifting planes, an animating web of white highlights, and a reverberating space set in motion by dissonant colors and by the tension between areas of flatness and suggestions of spatial recession. By depicting the protagonists as if wearing ceremonial masks, he reinforced the primitive dimension of the biblical account and affirmed its pertinence to the primal expressionist themes – violence, eroticism, pain, and anxiety – that were inherited from Osma. This energetic orchestration of what Kubišta called the “living

Figure 46. Antonín Procházka, *Hamlet*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 80 × 49 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 47 (facing). Antonín Procházka, *Concert*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 60 × 40 cm. Central Moravian Gallery of Art, Ostrava. (From *Expresionismus a české umění, 1905–1927*, exh. cat., Prague, 1994, p. 98.) →

Figure 48. Emil Filla, *Bathers*, 1911–12. Oil on canvas, 125 × 83.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague.







Figure 49. Emil Filla, *The Dance of Salome I*, 1911–12. Oil on canvas, 136.5 × 80 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

idea" was present even in such conventionally cubist genres as still lifes and portrait busts (Fig. 50) by Filla. His exploitation of cubist techniques such as interpenetrating planes, fragmented forms, and collapsed space was a step further into the expressive aesthetics of Czech modernism – a venture that Čapek and Kubišta, the most theoretically oriented of Skupina artists, would bring to full resolution.

For Kubišta cubism was a way to penetrate the spiritual domain of modern life and thereby to set free the imagination. Thus, when in 1910 he turned to cubist-inspired still lifes (Fig. 51), his first concern was not analyzing the tabletop objects as compositional structures; rather, he contrived the sharp contrast between blue and gold, horizontal and vertical, curved and hard-edged strata, to make visible what he called a "strong sense of inner truth" – an expression that might or might not be coincident with "absolute" formal structures. In his desire to make ap-

Figure 50 (left). Emil Filla, *Head*, 1913. Bronze, 32.5 × 24.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

Figure 51 (below). Bohumil Kubišta, *Still Life with Funnel*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 46.5 × 55 cm. National Gallery, Prague.





Figure 52. Bohumil Kubišta, *Bathing Men*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 138 × 164.5 cm. Aleš South Bohemian Gallery, Hluboká. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; archival photo.)

parent “the spiritual essence of the modern age,”⁶⁰ Kubišta shared the philosophical aspirations of the Blaue Reiter group of “German” expressionists, especially Wassily Kandinsky, who urged the modern artist to pay particular attention to the spirit and to make it possible for people to experience spiritually the power of abstraction.⁶¹ Kubišta’s affinity with this style was heightened by encounters with the Brücke painters Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Otto Müller in Prague during the latter two’s visit in 1911 (shortly thereafter he exhibited with them in Berlin’s Neue Secession) and with Herwarth Walden, the German dealer in expressionism. Such contacts reinforced Kubišta’s devotion to topics whose classical sources (familiar from a trip to Italy in 1906) could be inflected to convey a modern spirit. Thus,

in the monumental canvas *Bathing Men* (Fig. 52), he adapted the tradition of idylls to contemporary purposes. The natural setting in which the group of five men relax on the waterside does not correspond to a classical Arcadia, nor do the figures conform to the idealized physical types of Renaissance art. The pinkish shoreline, the attenuated bodies, and the circular format of the composition point to an “inner” organizing vision rather than an externally mimetic principle. As many of the studies for the painting make clear, the composition is given order from the “lines of force” that radiate from the eye of the gold-hued seated figure,⁶² second from the left.

From 1911 or 1912, Kubišta turned to themes that might manifest more forcefully the expressive inner vision of the modern age, for which cubism



Figure 53. Bohumil Kubišta, *The Raising of Lazarus*, 1911–12. Oil on canvas, 163.5 × 126.5 cm. West Bohemian Gallery, Pilsen. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)



Figure 54. Bohumil Kubišta, *Still Life with Skull*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 87 × 67 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

could provide the contemporary means. His version of *The Raising of Lazarus* (Fig. 53) exploits geometric theory, expressionist colors, and cubist planar composition (as well as an art-historical reference to the emotive canvases of El Greco) to forge a timely version of a traditional theme and reveal the “heavy and tragic feature of inevitability” that characterizes Czech cubo-expressionism. The same distinctiveness applies to Kubišta’s still-life painting, that most popular genre among French cubists,⁶³ imbued with an emotional charge quite alien to the practices favored in Paris. Thus we find in *Still Life with Skull* (Fig. 54) not just the presence of a memento mori handled as a neutral form in a carefully controlled composition. The inherent expressive significance of the skull is heightened by an explosion of fragmented forms, the compositional motif continued into the cubistic chaos that constitutes the green plant and the cascading tablecloth. It is as if the placid genre of still life has been transposed into a fateful equivalent of *The Kiss of Death* (see Fig. 30).

Kubišta used geometric infrastructure, flattening of outline, and abstract patterning of diagonals, verticals, and horizontals to manifest the tragic character he believed to be inevitable in modern life. Although the expression was at first metaphorical (for



Figure 55. Bohumil Kubišta, *The Hypnotizer*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 60.5 × 58 cm. Gallery of Art, Ostrava. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)



Figure 56. Bohumil Kubišta, *St. Sebastian*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 98 × 74.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 57. Bohumil Kubišta, *Murder*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 88 × 94 cm. Regional Gallery of Art, Zlín.

Figure 58 (below). Bohumil Kubišta, *The Hanged Man*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 50 × 30.5 cm. Moravian Gallery, Brno. (From M. Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague, 1993.)

example, in his 1911 depiction of an epileptic woman, now in the Moravian Museum in Brno), soon the artist deployed with increasing maturity his version of cubism to depict scenes of disorientation (Fig. 55), pain (Fig. 56), violence (Fig. 57), and death (Fig. 58) – subjects that had long constituted the core of Czech modernism.⁶⁴ Among these works, many of which can be recognized as self-portraits, the 1912 *St. Sebastian* (see Fig. 56) and its studies (Fig. 59) most fully and consistently embody the themes and methods Kubišta advocated. Drawing on cubist sculpture, particularly Picasso's 1909 *Head of a Woman*,⁶⁵ the painter emphasized the illusion of a three-dimensional interpenetration of planes while simultaneously maintaining the "flatness" of the surface. Kubišta characterized his intention by the term *penetrism*, meaning a principle of aesthetic investigation through which the surface of things visible could be penetrated and the inner character of modern life revealed⁶⁶ – a kind of aesthetic X ray enabling us to glimpse the subconscious mystical forces of the human spirit.⁶⁷ The universal resonance so generated reflected for him the organization of modern existence to which the movements of expressionism, futurism, and cubism collectively pointed. In the case of *St. Sebastian*, based on a carefully worked-out mathematical scheme of ovals – geometric shapes that in Kubišta's belief system corresponded roughly to life cycles and to cosmic movements – he subject-



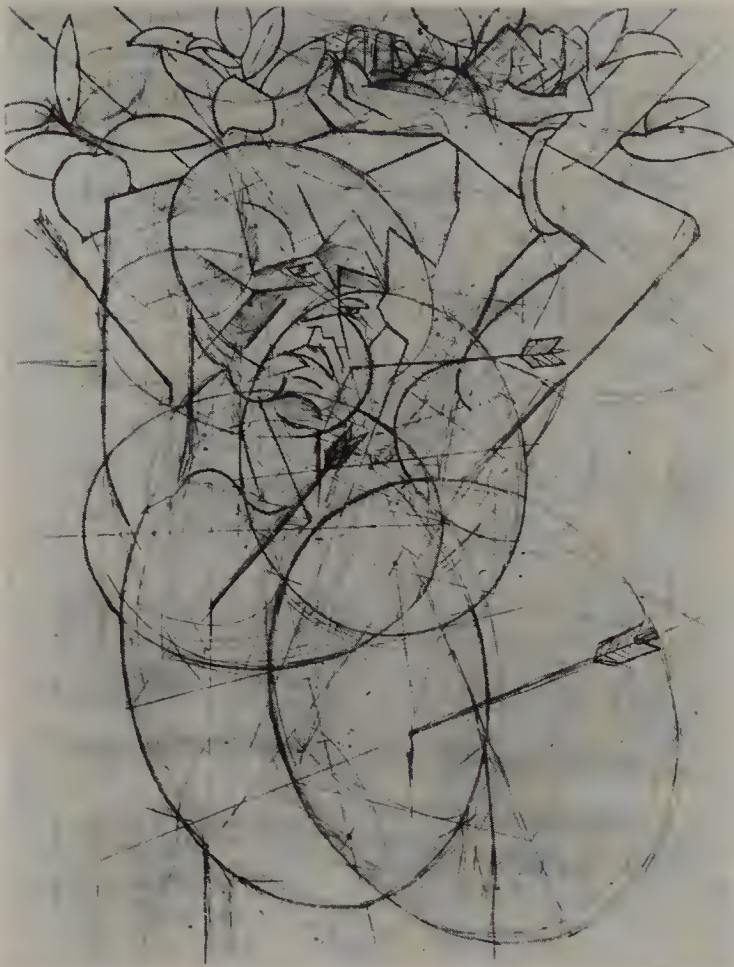


Figure 59. Bohumil Kubišta, study for *St. Sebastian*, 1912. Tusche on paper, 94.8 × 73.7 cm. National Gallery, Prague. (From M. Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague, 1993.)

Figure 60. Bohumil Kubišta, *Study of a Head Inspired by a Sumerian Sculpture*, 1910. Pencil on paper, 31.5 × 24.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague. (From M. Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague, 1993.)



Figure 61. Bohumil Kubišta, *Meditation*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 50 × 30 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

ed himself to the trial of penetrism not just by a superficial network of intersecting planes but by arrows that attest to the anguish of the process.

Indeed, in Kubišta's experience, the forces at work in the modern world were fundamentally primal and often violent. To penetrate to the innermost depths of the contemporary human condition and reveal redemptive features, he reached beyond a superficial embrace of contemporary styles, beyond the confining paradigms of the classical tradition, and even beyond the expressive baroque models so cherished by the Czech avant-garde. In what he must have understood as an existential obligation to establish a "purer," more authentic, more primary connection to elemental principles, Kubišta revisited in 1915 the many sketches of Sumerian sculpted heads he had made in the Musée du Louvre (Fig. 60)

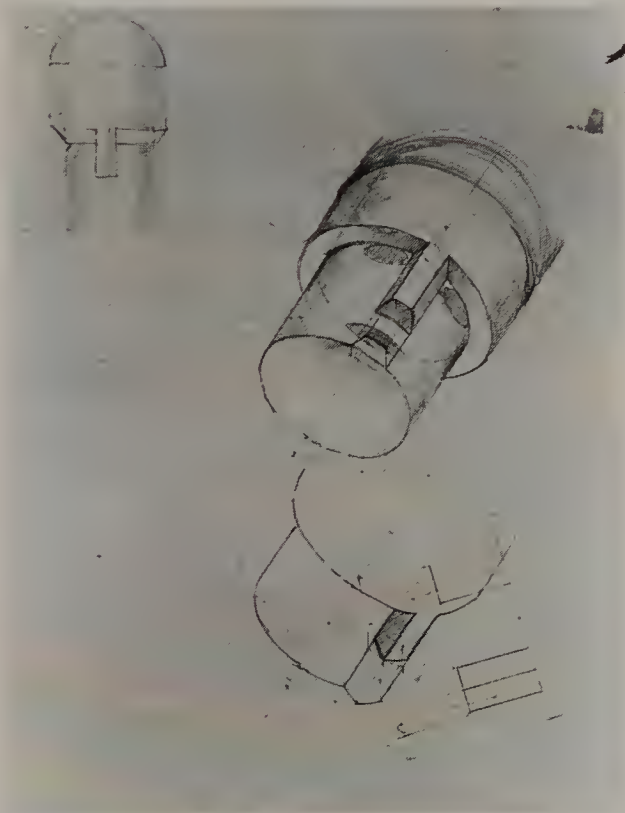




Figure 62. Jan Zrzavý, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 1912. Oil and tempera on canvas, 74 × 58 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

five years earlier.⁶⁸ Having allowed these images to gestate through his period of cubist experimentation, he now drew on them for the creation of the two most finished cubo-expressionist paintings he would execute before his early death.⁶⁹ Paradoxically, for the highly personal *Meditation* (Fig. 61), Kubišta did not turn to the plentiful examples of violence,

pain, and death that surrounded him during World War I.⁷⁰ Rather, he took from the Sumerian figures an archetypal blend of inner character and outer form, of spiritual energy and mathematical systems, and modernized them with expressionist color. The end result – a work of art embodying the long-desired transcendental component of geometric na-



Figure 63. Jan Zrzavý, study for *The Sermon on the Mount*, 1912. Pencil on paper, 54 × 38 cm. National Gallery, Prague. (From *1909–1925 Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur*, exh. cat., Düsseldorf, 1991.)

ture – was instructive for the genesis of *The Hanged Man* (see Fig. 58). Eschewing color to concentrate on the painting's geometric infrastructure, he organized the composition around a dominant ovoid, a favored motif that signified to him the primeval oneness of humanity and the universe.⁷¹ The technique of penetrism, which Kubišta had refined over several years, enabled him to cut through the superficialities of appearance to reveal the lines of force and the spiritual planes at the heart of the composition – and at the subconscious level of the human spirit.⁷² Belying the inherent violence of the theme are the austerity of the palette, the careful brushwork, and the simplicity of forms. By combining a subjective reference to painful reality with a cool aesthetic penetration into the depths of contemporary civilization, Kubišta presented the consummate synthesis of expressionism and cubism that Skupina artists had hoped would lead to a renewal of art and an affirmation of modern life.

Redemption – personal, artistic, and/or societal – lay at the core of Skupina's philosophy. The cubo-expressionist style in which it took form found a

receptive audience in Jan Zrzavý, who became the closest friend, colleague, and disciple of Kubišta in 1911, although he never joined Skupina formally. Both artists were deep in the sway of idealist theory, spiritualist thought, and even magic, and on this common ground they built a mutually productive working relationship.⁷³ Through Kubišta, Zrzavý was introduced to cubism, which he – like his older colleague – used primarily as a technical means for freeing his painting from the superficialities of mimesis and refashioning the often uncontrolled psychological effects that had been his hallmark. The mediating role of cubism – more precisely, cubo-expressionism – is revealed by comparing Zrzavý's *Antichrist* (see Plate 4) with *The Sermon on the Mount* (Fig. 62). Maintaining many of his preferred landscape motifs in the latter canvas – for example, the sharply pointed peaks and the dark, foreboding foreground – the painter introduced a rigorous geometric system to structure the composition. Although the customary cubist fragmentation into planes may not be apparent in the finished painting, it is visible in a pencil study (Fig. 63), where the network of



Figure 64. Jan Zrzavý, *The Good Samaritan*, 1914–15. Oil on canvas, 48 × 34 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

lines is not presented as a linear program of Renaissance perspective but rather appears to have been manipulated artificially, as if the lines defined hard-edged cubist planes. Further examination reveals that the planes suggested by the linear network ultimately function to flatten the pictorial space instead of deepening it illusionistically. In the center the intersecting lines have created a shallow “crystal”⁷⁴ (comprising the preacher who sits on his mountain throne and the kneeling youth at his side), the facets of which are reflected in the spiky peaks, the breaking folds of drapery, and the sharp zigzagging of the broken foreground.⁷⁵ Thus, the pencil study

discloses, in the same way as does Kubišta’s study for his *St. Sebastian* (see Fig. 59), that a geometric program provides powerful form to a spiritual content. For both Kubišta and Zrzavý the geometry of the composition was coextensive with the expression of the magic of “inner life” that lay at the core of contemporary experience and that they strove to exteriorize.⁷⁶ In works of explicit spiritual reference such as *The Sermon on the Mount* and *The Good Samaritan* (Fig. 64), as well as in landscapes and in still lifes, Zrzavý took pains to present “those states of the soul [that] are anchored in the darkness of the unconscious of the human being and in which all human



Figure 65. Josef Čapek, *Factory*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 48 × 61 cm. Aleš South Bohemian Gallery, Hluboká. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)

activity and its external manifestations originate. In painting, it means to elevate matter into the spiritual sphere and to endow it with psychic forces."⁷⁷

Zrzavý's attraction to archetypally redemptive subject matter and challenging compositional structures was fully commensurate with the interests of his Czech contemporaries, whether living abroad (Preissig and Kupka, for example) or in Prague (Kubišta and Josef Váchal). His adventitious embrace of cubism paralleled the enthusiasm for French modernism expressed by the Skupina group, especially Josef Čapek and Václav Špála. Josef and his brother Karel Čapek (a distinguished author, journalist, critic, and translator) both joined Skupina in 1911, upon Josef's return from Paris. From France Čapek brought to Bohemia a new fascination with cubist aesthetics and primitive art, themes that he actively

promoted as editor of the Skupina journal *Umělecký měsíčník* (Art Monthly).⁷⁸ The emphasis on primitive forms, unrefined color combinations, and elementary composition was a logical extension of his earlier painting, from the time he belonged to Osma. Hence, in the work Čapek did under the influence of cubism of about 1912 (Fig. 65), we can readily detect the agitated surface movement, expressive juxtaposition of forms, and robust color combinations characteristic of expressionism. Even in 1913 – by which time he had better control of the cubist technique – we find in such typical cubist themes as *The Drinker* (Fig. 66) residual expressionist elements, especially apparent in the heavy application of paint and in the predominant use of black and gray. It was in that year that Čapek achieved a creative compromise between the purely formal demands he recognized



Figure 66. Josef Čapek, *The Drinker*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 77.5 × 50 cm. Moravian Gallery, Brno. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)

in French cubism and the spiritual content he felt called upon to manifest. Between 1913 and roughly 1920, he explored facets of cubo-expressionism to reveal the primitive magic of modern Czech art.⁷⁹ In *Female Nude* (Fig. 67), its soft hues of mauve and aqua more assertive than the restricted palette of analytical cubism, by far the most striking element is the diagonal orientation, something we do not find in the nudes and musicians of Picasso, Braque, or even Juan Gris. The diagonal composition complements the geometric forms of the nude's body and the curves of the violoncello; together these elements create a pulsing rhythm that gives the work what the artist defined as "[a sense of] revelation and at the same time the feeling of existence and truth."⁸⁰

Such radical experiments and Čapek's freedom from ideological absolutism made him anomalous among his colleagues, and in 1914 they led to conflict with the more uncompromising artists in Skupina, especially Filla and Kubišta. Resigning from the group and joining the Mánes Union, Čapek found an environment where he could freely pursue his version of cubist-inspired primitivism – an expression of the primal energy, transcendental experience, and inner tension toward which the Bohemian modernists had been oriented since the beginning of the century. Whereas Filla, Zrzavý, and Kubišta sometimes invoked the sacred as a vehicle to communicate the mystery of existence (and the redemptive authority of modern art), Čapek relied on secular, quotidian themes to reveal "the creative character of the modern age."⁸¹ In simplified geometric forms he pursued a cubist path to reduce figures to their compositional – and metaphysical – essence. Around 1914 Čapek began orchestrating abstract planes of color to present modernist equivalents to the spiritually potent masks he admired in primitive art (Fig. 68). Drawing on this model during the war years, he created from a cubist vocabulary a cast of contemporary characters whose aboriginal directness and simplicity constitute a forthright expression of primitivism (Fig. 69).⁸² With their uncompromising frontality, masklike physiognomies, and geometrized torsos set within a shallow space, Čapek's seamen are modern counterparts of the warrior kings that first inspired his art in Paris and with which his painting would culminate in Prague (Fig. 70).

Čapek's free adaptation of cubist models and embrace of expressionist effects was paralleled by Václav Špála, who had been part of Skupina in 1911 and left it with Čapek in 1912 to rejoin the Mánes Union. Like the more theoretically oriented Čapek brothers, Špála was deeply impressed by modern French art, finding in fauvism a powerfully expressive vocabulary that would consistently influence his work, even when he turned to cubism about 1913. For Špála expressionism was more than an affecting formal style; it held an ideological affirmation of nature. As a result, he embarked on a decadelong exploration of ways to make compellingly visible an inner spirit that he often represented symbolically in rustic types going about their daily activities – for instance, in his many renditions of washerwomen.⁸³ As he approached a cubist-inspired dematerialization of form, Špála remained wedded intellectually



Figure 67. Josef Čapek, *Female Nude*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 100.5 × 70.5 cm. Private collection. (From *Vergangene Zukunft: Tschechische Moderne, 1890 bis 1918*, exh. cat., Vienna, 1993.)



Figure 68. Josef Čapek, *Head*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 46 × 37 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 69 (right). Josef Čapek, *Sailor (Robinson)*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 81 × 44 cm. Private collection. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)

and formally to his belief in the redemptive powers of the land – a notion demonstrated implicitly in his handling of facial structure (Fig. 71) and explicitly in landscape elements (Fig. 72).

The Czech artists born in the 1880s were a passionate group. Their establishment of Osma and Skupina can best be understood as a tempestuous bid to break through prevailing local conditions and psychological limitations and to deal with universal issues of cosmic importance. Hence, themes of extraordinary (and often disconcerting) expressive power – religious, anthroposophic, or excessively individual – were depicted in a vocabulary drawn from progressive international styles: German ex-

pressionism, French fauvism, analytic cubism. Luminous colors, implied movement, dynamic forms, and other innovations from the West were blended and adapted to local needs and traditions (especially the Bohemian baroque). The result of such a melding of styles and themes was a highly charged art that conformed to the disquieting conditions of the Habsburg Kingdom of Bohemia in a state of spiritual crisis and impending political collapse. With the outbreak of World War I, the existential dramas that the Czech avant-garde had envisioned assumed an appalling reality. By the time the guns were silenced in 1918, the Kingdom of Bohemia and Skupina no longer existed.



Figure 70. Josef Čapek, *The Negro King*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 110 × 77.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague.



Figure 71. Václav Špála, *Self-Portrait*, 1914. Watercolor on paper, 37 × 28.8 cm. Gallery Benedict Rejt, Louny.

TVRDOŠIJNÍ AND DEVĚTSIL IN THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED NATION

During the Great War Gutfreund, Kubín, and Filla were living abroad, while Procházka, Kubišta, Špála, and other Skupina artists were serving at the front. The lack of communication among its affiliates, straitened financial conditions, and the difficulty of mounting exhibitions made it impossible for Skupina to survive the pressures of the war intact; by 1917 the group had collapsed. In the following year Bohumil Kubišta fell victim (a fortnight after the armistice) to the influenza epidemic that robbed central Europe of many of its avant-garde figures, and with his death Bohemia lost its most provocative early-modernist voice. By the time the federal republic of Czechoslovakia was founded on 28 October 1918, the intensity, the charged climate, and many of the erstwhile characters of cubo-expressionism had been eclipsed by new artists' formations that were faced with fresh challenges.

On 30 March 1918 a group comprising primarily veteran artists revealed themselves to the public in an exhibition of Tvrdošijní (Stubborn Ones). The "stubborn" art of Čapek, Špála, Zrzavý, and Vlastislav Hofman was a much-subdued version of their earlier cubo-expressionism. The civil spirit called for by the new national state encouraged as many conflicting programs and aspirations as did the short-lived Tvrdošijní exhibition group itself.⁸⁴ Čapek, for



Figure 72. Václav Špála, *The Song of the Land*, 1914–15. Oil on cardboard, 50.5 × 62 cm. National Gallery, Prague. (From *1909–1925 Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur*, Düsseldorf, 1991.)



Figure 73. Josef Čapek, *Self-Portrait*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 102 × 69 cm. Private collection. (From *1909–1925 Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur*, Düsseldorf, 1991.)

example, turned his “stubborn” cubo-expressionism toward the theme of a man within the city in a self-portrait (Fig. 73) that suggested his integration into dynamic urban structures. In other paintings he showed the inner tension of city life approaching the pitch of Zrzavý’s passionate anxieties underlying the discipline of surface appearance – as, for example, in the forceful *Woman Over the City* (Fig. 74) and *Phantomas* (Fig. 75). On the whole, however, Čapek’s work of the early 1920s is concerned less with the anxious spiritual forces of modernity than with

the social issues and *demimondain* characters – prostitutes, beggars, alcoholics – inhabiting the metropolis. In this way his work is fully commensurate with the engaged literature and criticism that his brother was publishing, while lending itself well to book illustration (Fig. 76) and particularly to posters (Fig. 77). To communicate the identity of these subject types, the painter employed a modern means derived from cubist techniques. Gone are the striking color juxtapositions, overlapping of planes, and fractured surfaces that Čapek had used to dramatic effect

before World War I. An emphasis on simplicity of forms (what the artist called “formal economy”), elementary color combinations, and controlled dynamism allowed him better to portray the country’s new metropolitan character.

In contrast to the moderation of Čapek, Špála reveled in the sensuousness of pure color following the declaration of peace. Especially in his nature scenes (Fig. 78), the artist gave full license to reds, blues, and greens as direct conveyors of the vibrancy of the modern spirit. Špála, who had executed the primitive masklike poster for Tvrdošíjn’s first exhibition, maintained a belief in the “barbaric” nature of modernity even though the sharp edges of his earlier cubist-inspired canvases are now blunted and are constrained to function as the extremities of geo-

Figure 74. Josef Čapek, *Woman over the City*, 1919–20. Oil on canvas, 80 × 43 cm. Regional Gallery, Liberec.

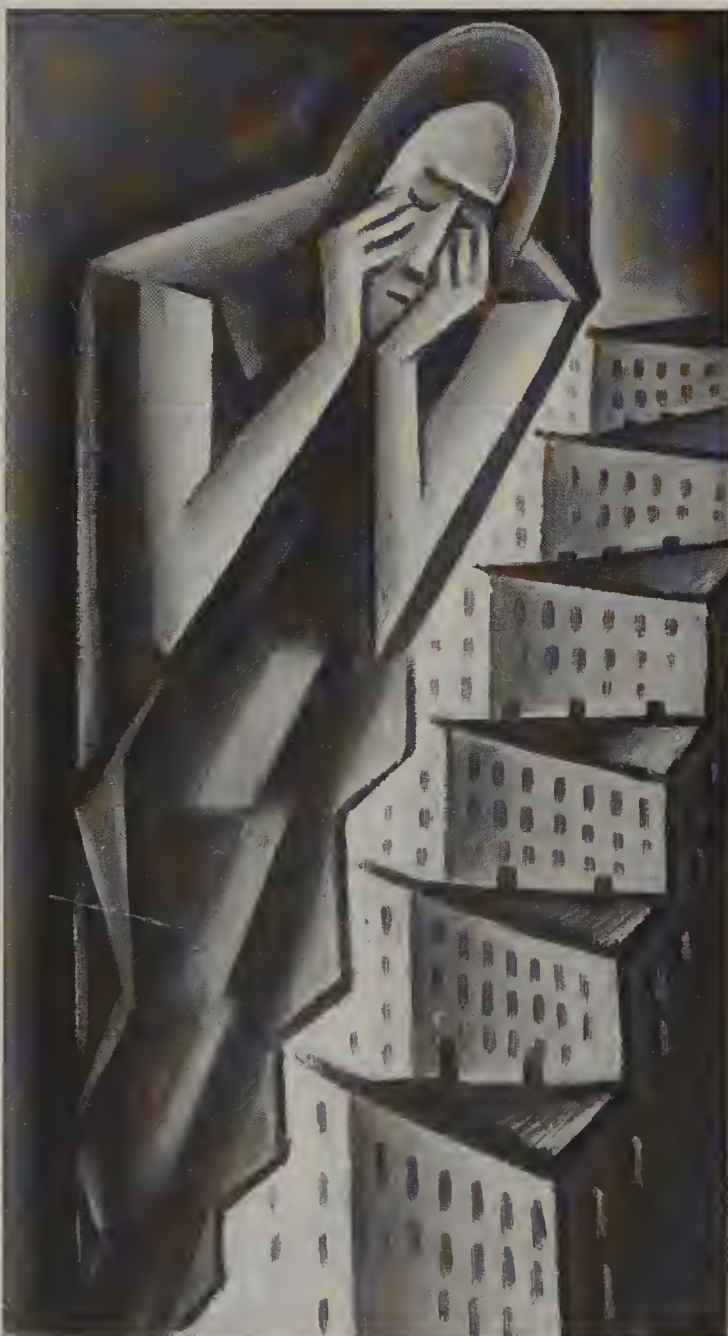


Figure 75. Josef Čapek, *Phantoms*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 56 × 50 cm. Private collection. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Zdeněk Matyáško.)

Figure 76. Josef Čapek, cover for Jules Romains’s *Kumpáni* (*Les Copains*), 1920. Color lithograph, 16 × 12.5 cm. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague (Photo: Miloslav Šebek.)



SCÉNA „ČERVENÁ SEDMA“
 ARNOŠT DVORÁK MRTVÁ



VYDALO „ZÁTIŠÍ“/BM KLIKA/

Figure 77. Josef Čapek, *The Dead*, 1920. Poster for *The Dead* (theater group “The Red Seven”). Color lithograph, 95 × 63 cm. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague. (From *1909–1925 Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur*, Düsseldorf, 1991.)



Figure 78. Václav Špála, *Waiting*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 66 × 50.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague. (From 1909–1925 *Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur*, Düsseldorf, 1991.)

metric forms. Like Čapek, Špála felt the psychological pull of the city. Although less preoccupied with capturing its anxious spirit than were the German expressionists with whom he was in frequent contact, he was attuned to the political dimension of the city's work force, and in a series of designs for book covers, book illustrations, and leaflets, Špála indicated his sympathies with the primitive vitality and social conditions of the modern proletariat (Fig. 79).

Tvrdošíjní artists never demonstrated a consistent point of view. Their prewar embrace of cubist techniques coupled with excited expressionist themes was moderated, in varying degrees, to what might be described as "affected primitivism." Forgoing the obsession with anguished self-portraits, overwrought states of mind, and mystical iconography,

the group focused less on the highly symbolic and subjective than on the general emotional climate of postwar Czechoslovak life. As characterized in the catalog introduction accompanying the third exhibition of Tvrdošíjní in 1921,⁸⁵ this "independent and authentic spiritual and material reality" was presented by means of a more deliberate control of cubism and a tractable variant of expressionism.⁸⁶ Even so, by the early 1920s expressionism of all forms was under assault in Prague. In a scathing review of Tvrdošíjní's third exhibition, Karel Teige, a principal figure within Czechoslovakia's most avant-garde movement in the interwar period,⁸⁷ censured the expressionist art of Zrzavý, Čapek, and Špála for its stubborn spiritual solipsism at the expense of revolutionary commitment.⁸⁸ Teige's broadside attack

on the long-dominant cubo-expressionism heralded the emergence of Devětsil and its engaged aesthetics as the most dynamic force in Czech artistic life.⁸⁹

The Art Union of Devětsil (Umělecký svaz Devětsil) was founded in Prague on 5 October 1920.⁹⁰ Like many other Czech avant-garde formations, it comprised artists, architects, writers, actors, and musicians – all those for whom progressive aesthetics and social ethics constituted what Teige called an “art of the present time.” Devětsil also represented a change in generations, as most of its affiliates were born around the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, when Teige repudiated expressionism as a “cadaver” from a dead era, he was signaling the rise of a new corps of young artists more fit to meet the challenges of the postwar world. In his view expressionism was “an area of vague shadows,” an exaggerated literary art obsessed with mystical symbolism, decadent barbarism, and “convulsive sickly expression.”⁹¹ Its focus on extreme individualism and its lack of visual discipline and self-control led inexorably, in Teige’s view, to nihilism and degeneration. Expressionism’s religious visions and “apocalyptic mythology” impeded the unfolding of the progressive forms of social engagement and “pure aesthetics” that alone, Devětsil believed, could revolutionize art, the state, and modern humanity. Thus, the theoretician, organizer, and artist Teige; the author, playwright, and film impresario Vladislav Vančura (1891–1942); the poets Vítězslav Nezval and Jaroslav Seifert (1901–86); and the visual artists Jindřich Štyrský, Toyen (Marie Čermínová), and Josef Šíma assumed collectively an ideological posture in radical opposition to the inner spirituality and “cosmic permanence” of Czech expressionism and cubo-expressionism.⁹² Equally significant, Devětsil frequently disavowed the traditional materials and techniques of the expressionists in favor of the means and forms that modern technology made available – film, photography, photomontage, and new print methods and typographical processes.⁹³

Teige’s own early work (see Plate 5) was inspired by the “stubborn” canvases of Čapek and Špála and especially those of Zrzavý, about which he wrote a series of sympathetic articles. From contact with these principals of Tvrdošíjní, Teige initially developed a personal style that he labeled “spiritual realism,” purportedly an objective characterization of modern life. Failing to garner critical success when he first exhibited the work (spring 1922), Teige jour-



Figure 79. Václav Špála, cover for Josef Hora’s *Pracující den* (The Working Day), 1922. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague (Photo: Miloslav Šebek.)

neyed to Paris. It was in the French capital, which he believed mostly free of the highly charged emotionalism of German expressionism, that he came into contact with an art of “pure rationalism” (most likely, purism) to adopt and inflect for the collective purposes of Devětsil. The visual results of Teige’s experiences in Paris can be seen in media, techniques, and procedures that would move modernist Czech art in new directions.

In landscape painting, a genre he had pursued since beginning his life in art, Teige renounced his earlier reliance on the “spiritual realism” derived from Tvrdošíjní in favor of the objectivism and rationalism he found in French models. His *Landscape with Semaphore* (Fig. 80), like a host of related works, has a composition regularized into a rough checkerboard of verticals and horizontals, each section carefully outlined. The resulting pattern is a composite of individually abstract pieces that work together to

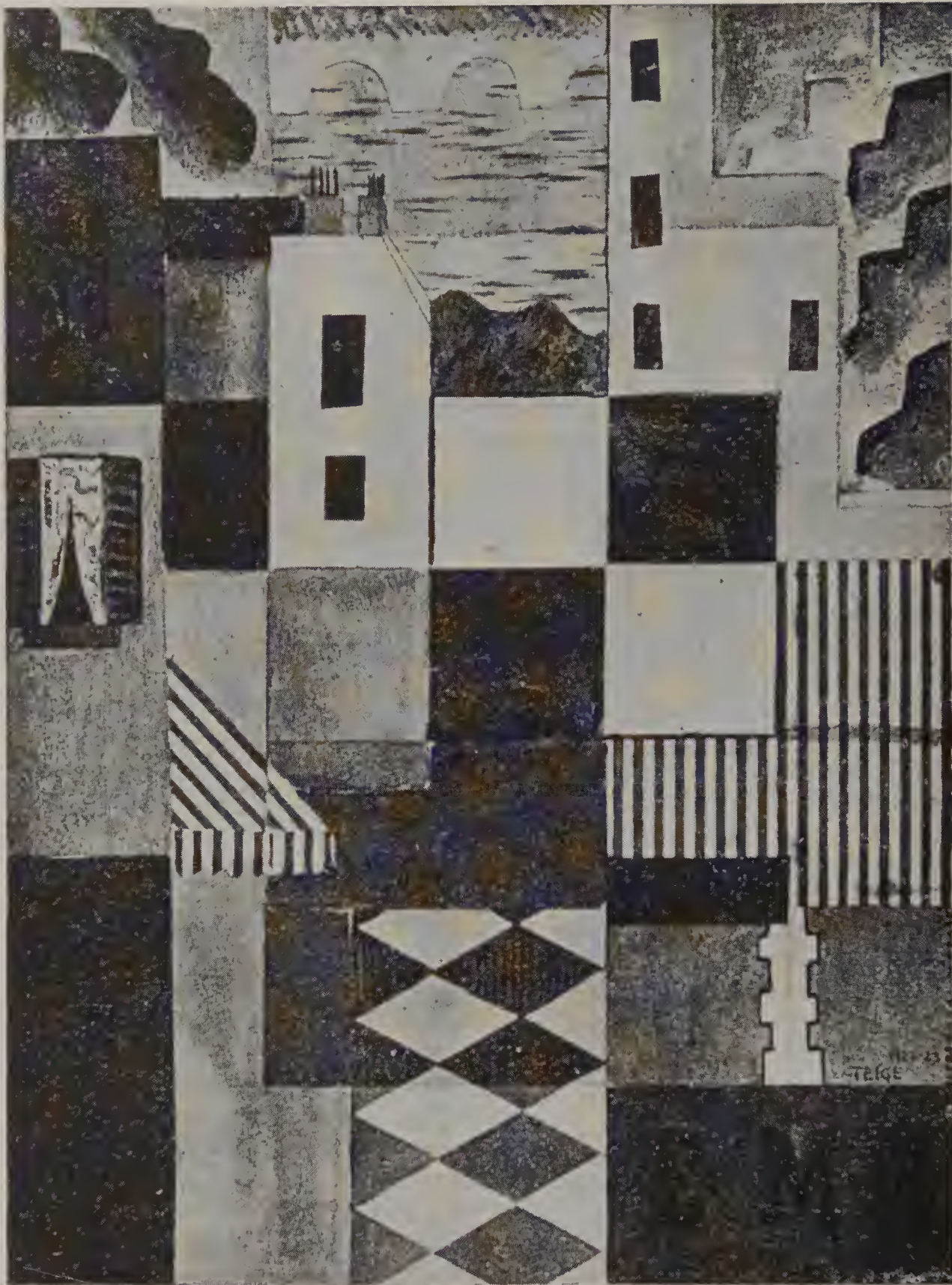


Figure 80. Karel Teige, *Landscape with Semaphore*, 1922–3. Watercolor on paper. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Jiří Hampl.)

create a vibrant motif for the movement of the eye glimpsing the city's blocks and grids. Subject matter of this kind, popular as well with other Czech progressive artists (such as Čapek and Špála), points to the importance of the metropolis as a site of modern activities, modern relations, and modern movement.

The city was for Teige, as it was for much of the international avant-garde, the place where life could be organized along utopian lines, where the individual gives way to the multitude, and where the constancy of urban rhythms replaces the irregularity and arbitrariness of nature. Thus, many of Teige's



Figure 81. Karel Teige, cover of *Disk*, no. 1, 1923. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague (Photo: Miloslav Šebek.)



Figure 82. Karel Teige, cover for *Life: An Anthology of the New Beauty*, 1922. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague (Photo: Miloslav Šebek.)

Figure 83. Karel Teige, *Sovětská kultura* (Prague, 1928). (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)

works can be understood as templates of ideal relationships, whose aesthetic balance, control, and momentum are paradigmatic of a perfectly conceived modern, primarily urban, life. They are also consistent with the functionalist belief in clear, rational, and orderly arrangements that are best realized through a cooperative effort.

The collectivist component of modern construction impressed Teige deeply, and most of his visual production of the interwar period can be understood as affirming (if not always partaking in) group activity. To this end, Teige engaged himself fully with functionalist graphic design and publication: the collaborative constructivist creation of avant-garde journals (Fig. 81), anthologies (Fig. 82), dust jackets (Fig. 83), and letterheads. The increasing reliance on and belief in the validity of mechanical reproduction led him to experiment with photography, photo-montage, and film. It also pushed him toward conceiving book design as something as much for viewing as it was for reading, as is readily apparent in the striking layout for Konstantin Biebl's *With the Boat*





Figure 84. Karel Teige, cover for Konstantin Biebl's *With the Boat That Brings Tea and Coffee* (Prague: Odeon, 1928). (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)

That Brings Tea and Coffee (Fig. 84). Teige's campaign for a dynamic design in which all the components conform to a rationally controlled program reached its creative culmination in the reconfiguration of the alphabet – a prime target for modification, to transmit the message of a truly modern discourse.⁹⁴ In their radical inclusion of photography and their configuration of the human body to convey the pure rationalism of “the art of the present time” (Figs. 85, 86), Teige and his collaborators, Nezval and Karel Pasma, transcended other altered alphabets. The choreographed letters – more likely to be viewed than to be read – signaled an emphasis on the playful and poetic, which increasingly supplanted Devětsil's early preoccupation with proletarian politics and communist ideology.⁹⁵

Teige's multimedia endeavor to replace traditional forms of art and redefine the very means of visual communication led him and Devětsil to their most distinctive “product”: picture-poems. From 1923 through about 1927, the picture-poem represented

the most heterogeneous modernist creation among the international avant-garde, drawing essentially on eastern European constructivism and French-based poetism, the twin pillars of contemporary art.⁹⁶ Along with almost a dozen other Devětsil-affiliated students, poets, musicians, and architects, Teige was captivated by the theoretical possibilities of evocative language, especially that of Guillaume Apollinaire,⁹⁷ which Roman Jakobson and the Prague Linguistic Circle were investigating concurrently. What intrigued Devětsil and Teige most was Jakobson's finding that poetry came into being “when the word is felt as a word and not [as] a mere representation of the object being named . . . when words and their composition . . . acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality.”⁹⁸ This essentialist character of poetry corresponded ideally with the Devětsil artists' interest in constructivist aesthetics, which they knew from their extensive contacts and through periodicals published in Russia, Poland, and Germany

(especially Berlin). Like the “poetism” practiced by Apollinaire and investigated by the Prague school of linguists, constructivist geometry had achieved by 1923 an autonomous identity and purpose through a purification of its means of expression. It was thus to serve Devětsil artists as a universal vocabulary that, when invested with poetic discovery and playfulness, might become a “poetry for the five senses,” as Teige titled an article of 1925.⁹⁹

Functioning as “an optical symbol of reality,” the innovative melding of poetry and constructivism enabled Teige to realize a utopian synthesis of sight and sound, seeing and reading. His early forays into picture-poems are the topical and ephemeral “postcards from utopia,”¹⁰⁰ drawn with poetic license. In both *Travel Postcard* (Fig. 87) and *The Departure for Cythera* (Fig. 88), Teige invoked the notion of metaphoric travel to transcend boundaries – physical, art historical, and cultural. Canceled postage stamps, cutouts of oceangoing vessels, views of picturesque

Figure 85. Karel Teige, The letter “E” from *The Alphabet: Choreographic Compositions* by Milča Majerová, 1926. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague. (Photo: Miloslav Šebek.)

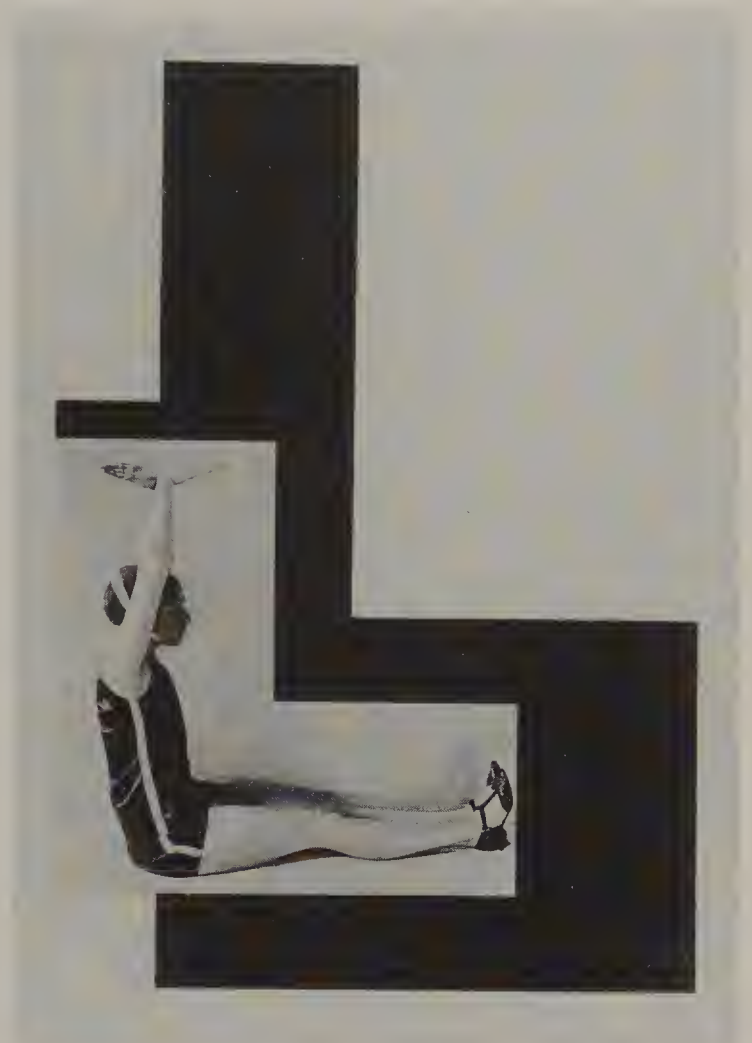


Figure 86. Karel Teige, The letter “L” from *The Alphabet: Choreographic Compositions* by Milča Majerová, 1926. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague. (Photo: Miloslav Šebek.)

towns, and maps are collaged with labels of foreign shipping lines, details of maps with projected itineraries, and other emblems of distant journeys – even images of the celestial Milky Way – to suggest the overcoming of local conditions, traditions, and limitations. Each of the collages has what the artist called “optical words,” which can be *read* as signs of travel and can be *seen* as compositional structures within the whole. Indeed, Teige’s creative manipulation of the collaged elements was based on exploiting the geometric potential of each segment of the carefully constructed composition. The upper and lower registers of *Travel Postcard*, for example, are held together across the intervening “universe” by the painted red circle in the triangular nautical flag and by the red circle of sealing wax affixed to the rectangular envelope. The round forms are picked up again in the postmarks that cancel the stamps on the letter, addressed to Teige’s colleague Seifert in Prague.¹⁰¹ The perception of distance is projected symbolically



Figure 87. Karel Teige, *Travel Postcard*, 1923. Mixed technique, 32.5 × 24.5 cm. City Gallery, Prague. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Frantiek Krejčí.)



Figure 88. Karel Teige, *The Departure for Cythera*, 1923[–4?]. Mixed technique, 26.7 × 22.2 cm. City Gallery, Prague. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)

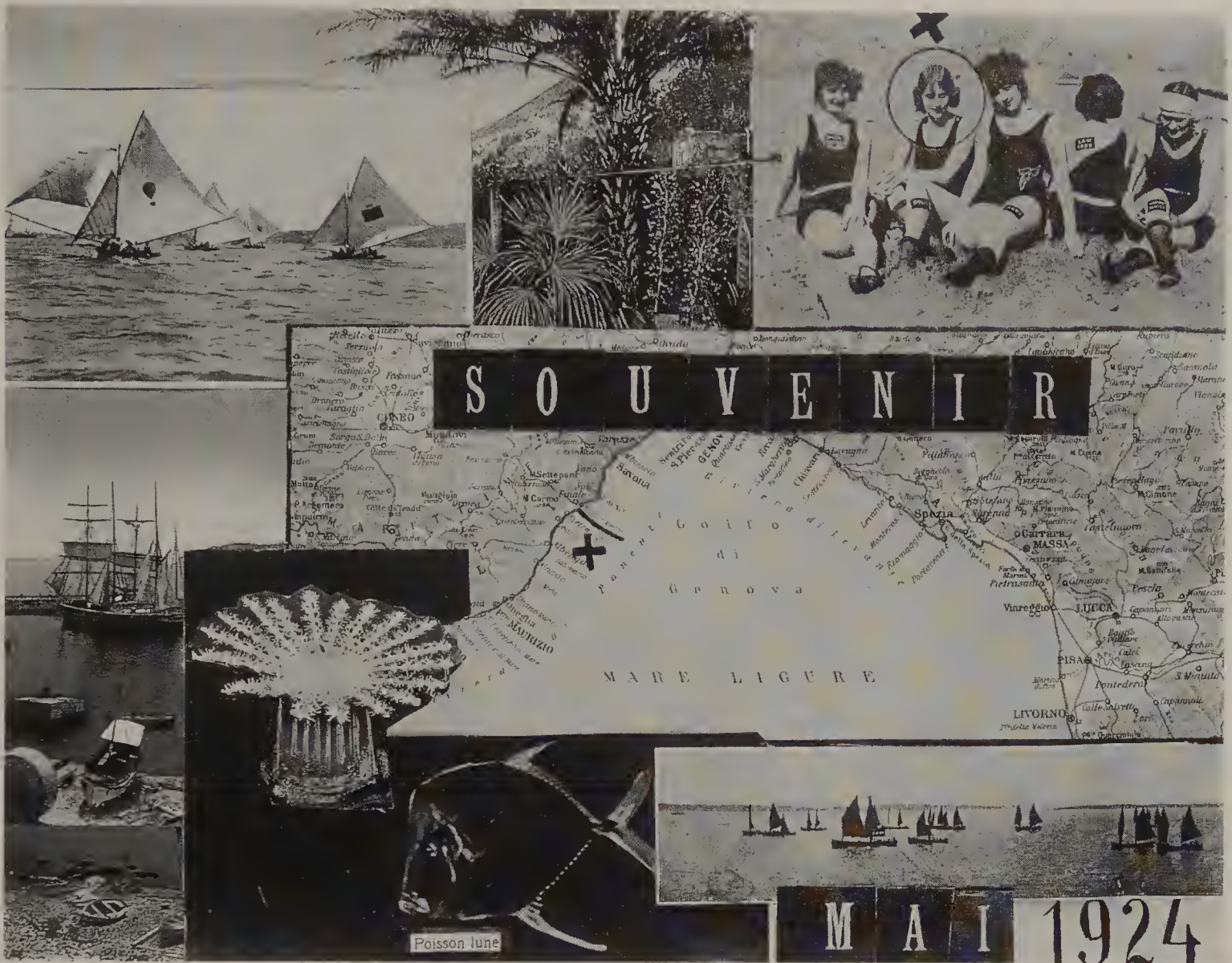


Figure 90. Jindřich Štyrský, *Souvenir*, 1924. Collage, 23.9 × 30.2 cm. National Gallery, Prague.
(From Štyrský/Toyen: *Artificialismus*, 1926–1931, exh. cat., Pardubice, 1992.)

compositional format, collaged elements, and photographic imagery follow closely Teige's example of the year before. Inasmuch as both artists sought to transcend what was ultimately the highly personal and ephemeral nature of the picture-poem by large-scale reproduction, it was inevitably enlisted in the service of book design – for example, Štyrský's imaginative dust jacket for a Devětsil anthology of poems by Nezval, *Pantomima* (Fig. 91), and Teige's cover of his own volume on film.¹⁰⁴ The easy interplay between picture-poems as independent works of art and as applied art points to the medium's transgression of conventional boundaries and its suitability as a mass art form for modern times.

By the midpoint of the decade, the creative balance between functionalism and poetism began to break down in the work of Devětsil's most resourceful figures. Štyrský and Toyen, in particular, believed that their development was being hindered by the

geometric abstraction that had served as a foundation for Czech modernists since the emergence of cubo-expressionism (an abstraction derived ultimately from French cubism, although the influence exerted by reproductions of eastern European constructivism may also have played a role). To reintroduce the imaginative into modern art, the artists took several steps – all highly “artificial,” to employ their favored term.¹⁰⁵ First, returning to the source of the original picture-poem postcards, Štyrský and Toyen moved in December 1925 to Paris to join their Devětsil colleague Šíma, there to refocus the energy and redirect the creative resources of modern Czech art. Second, although they maintained close contact with many of the leading individual members of the international avant-garde living in Paris, they established an “artificial” distance from the numerous groups of modernists active in the city. Third, and most significant, they affirmed the uniqueness of

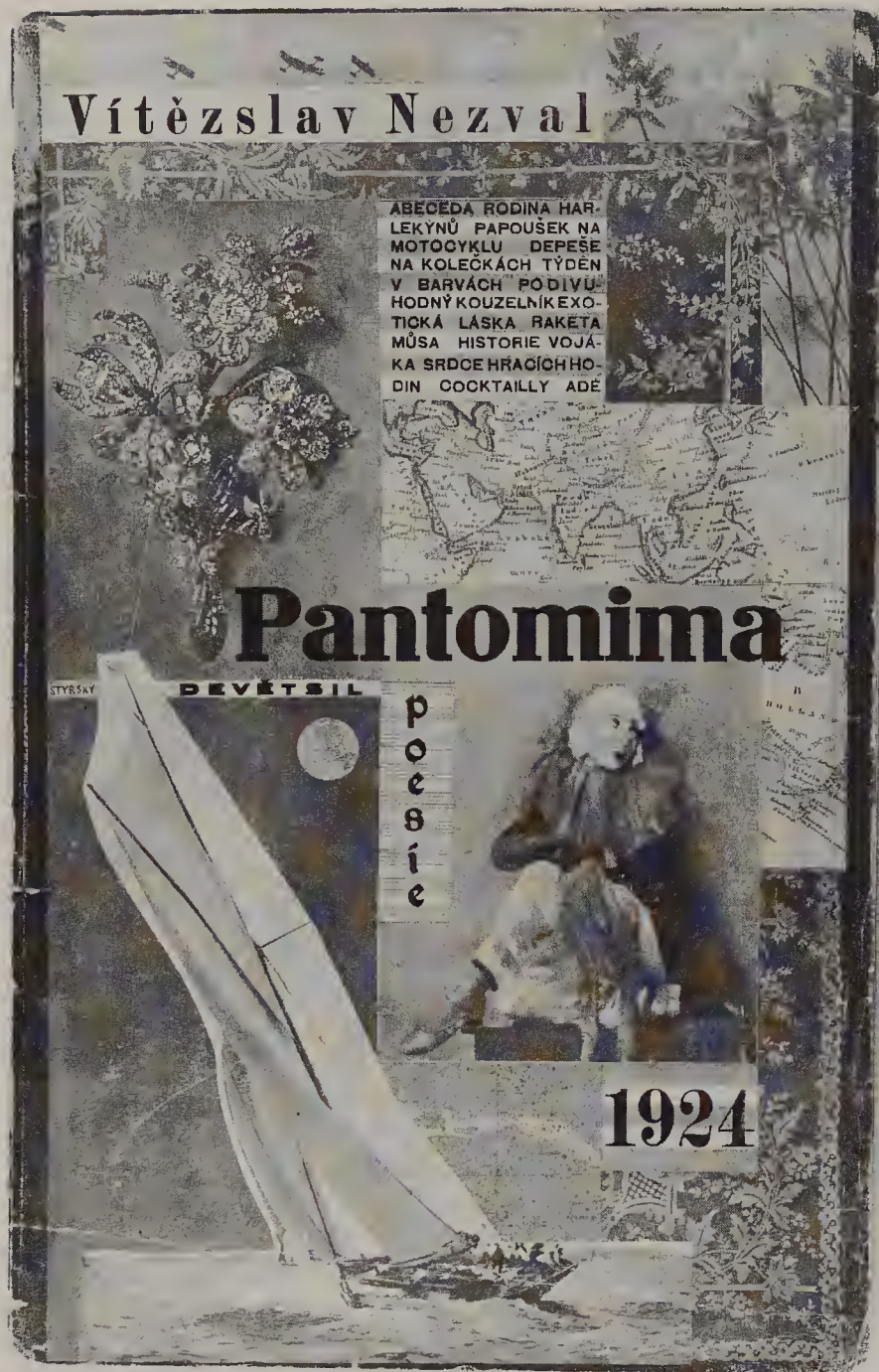


Figure 91. Jindřich Štyrský, cover for Vítězslav Nezval's *Pantomima*, 1924. Decorative Arts Museum, Prague. (Photo: Miloslav Šebek.)

their own variant of modern art by proclaiming it “artificialism.” Decrying the avant-garde practice of recruiting followers or disciples, the exponents of artificialism nonetheless attempted to establish it securely in the mainstream of modernism and universalize its values. Further, what Toyen and Štyrský defined as independent of the aesthetic “deceptions” of the (recent) past was essentially rooted in the poetry and painting that they themselves had been generating in Prague. These contrived claims and postures notwithstanding, artificialism did mark a major step forward – both theoretically and visually – in disciplining and accommodating poetic emotions to the demands of the contemporary framework.

Between 1926 and 1931 Toyen and Štyrský presented the public in Paris and Prague with artificial-

ist works and theoretical statements.¹⁰⁶ The defining principle of their two-person art movement (though Šíma can be considered a third adherent) was giving poetic form and color to an emotional image:

Cubism turned to reality instead of giving sway to the imagination. When it reached the essence of reality, it found that it had no wings. . . . Artificialism arrives with an opposite perspective. . . . [L]etting reality remain as it is, [artificialism] tends to maximize the imagination. . . . Artificialism makes identical the painter and poet. Its interest is concentrated on poetry.¹⁰⁷

In essence, artificialism “render[s] poetic emotions . . . and excite[s] sensibilities that are not only visual. It leads the spectator out of the carousel of his customary imagination, it breaks the system and mechanism of connected images.”¹⁰⁸ Artificialism’s

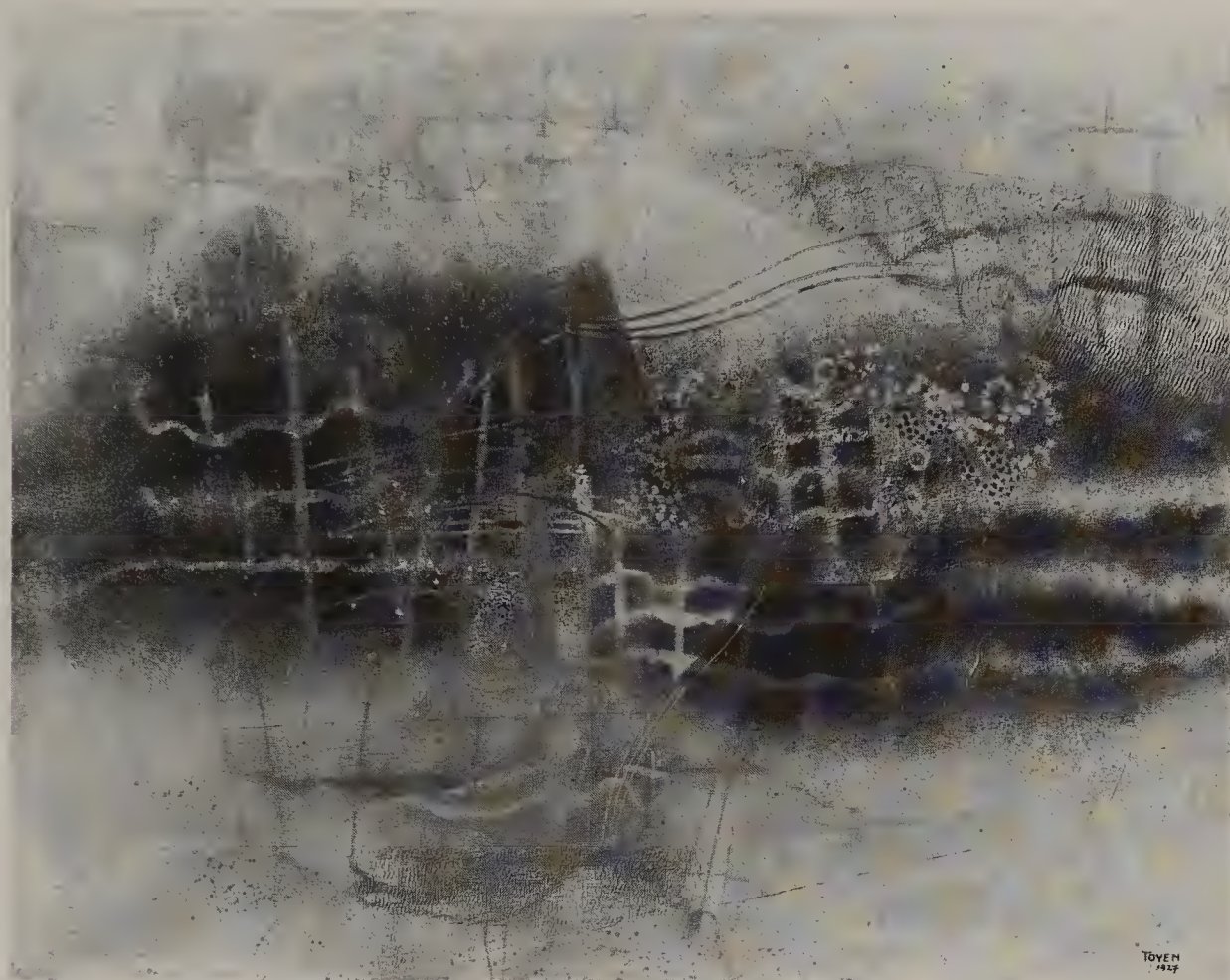


Figure 92. Toyen, *The Mist (Cigarette Smoke)*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 72 × 91 cm. Private collection. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí)

“abstract notion of reality” does not “deny the existence of reality, but [neither does it] build its arguments from it.” Instead, artificialism “concentrate[s] on POETRY that fills the gaps between real forms, and that radiates from within reality.”¹⁰⁹

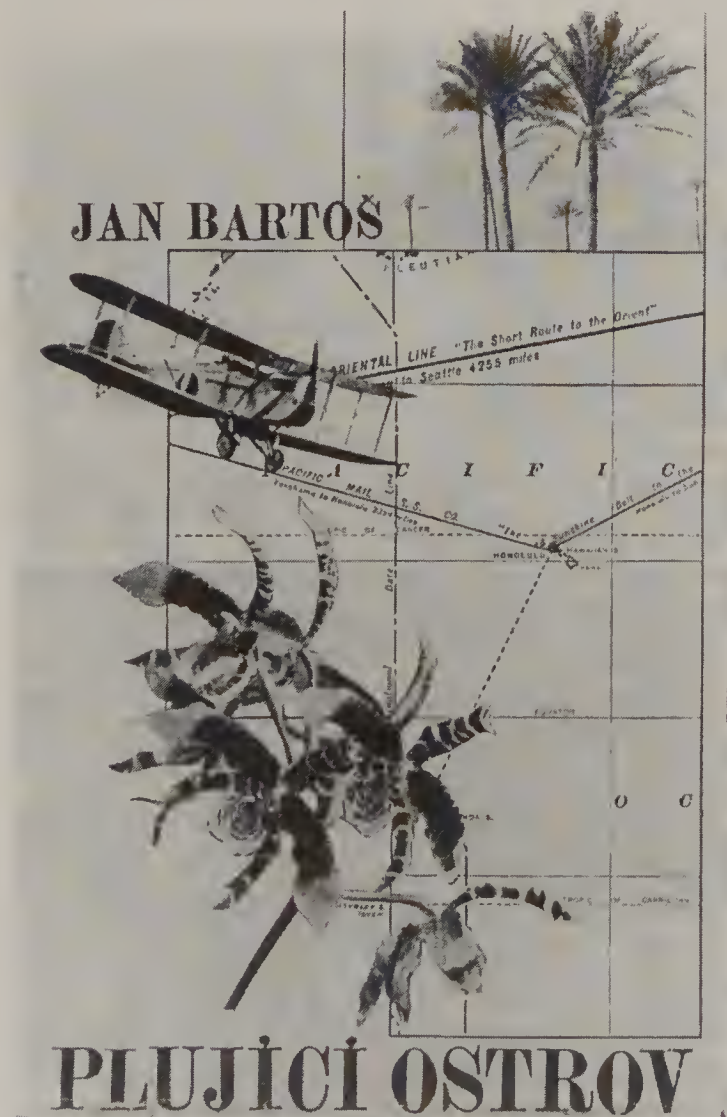
The definition of poetry with which Toyen and Štyrský were working was not that of a merely literary mode of communication. Rather, they had in mind an ideal form of independent discourse that could operate like a spark to excite the emotions and set free the full imagination. To express graphically these rarefied notions, the artists developed innovative techniques to suppress the materiality of paint or pencil, to enhance the richness of the color scale, and to conceal artfully the transitions between colors and forms. Such pictorial methods were recognized by the avant-garde in Prague (in particular by the poet-theoretician Nezval) as a visual parallel to quarter-tone music by Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959), which was likewise advocated by Devěsíl as a means to heighten modern listeners’ sentient faculties. Among the experimental techniques Toyen and Štyrský used was one (borrowed from photography) that involved spraying pastel pigments around and through various natural objects: skins of apples, leaves of plants, and bird feathers (see Plate

6).¹¹⁰ The resulting silhouetting of forms was intended to dematerialize reality, to provide an abstract notion of it. In several canvases serpentine patterns of strings and a regularizing design of netting or of meshes collectively help hold together the subtle web of pastel hues (Fig. 92). These muted colors, fading gently into one another, create a dreamy atmosphere in which sharp definitions, clear boundaries, and assigned borders have no place. Instead, the simulated layers of the canvas liberate the imagination to wander, free-associating according to the titles given to the works. As painter-poets, the artificialists chose titles pregnant with association (e.g., *Mist*, *Sea Water*, *Ebb Tide*, and *Aquarium*) – words that prepare the viewer to be set emotionally adrift in the infinite depths of the painting.¹¹¹ The connection to the sea, apparent in the titles and in the underwater feeling of many of the paintings, was clearly intentional. Here would be encountered in shadowy artificial realms not only the freedom of emotional weightlessness but also primordial forms and creatures that might provoke “the remembrances of re-

membrances,"¹¹² as the painters wrote in the artificialist doctrine.¹¹³

The close connection between painting and poetry (which were often combined in *ReD* [Revue of Devětsil]) reinforced the poetism that lay at the core of artificialism and the progenitorial picture-poems of Karel Teige. Nonetheless, while in Paris and into the early 1930s, Toyen and Štyrský steered clear of the surrealism that increasingly came to dominate the Czech avant-garde. Maintaining artificialism's independence as a movement and the all-important identification of painting with poetry, they resisted surrealism's literary content, its exaggerated estimation of the subconscious, and its self-conscious awareness of the history of art. But by the time the artists returned to Czechoslovakia in 1929, surrealist elements had begun to exert a notable influence on their work (Fig. 93), and within a few years the cre-

Figure 93. Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, cover for Jan Bartoš's *Drifting Island*. (From Karel Teige, 1900–1951, exh. cat., Prague, 1994.)



ators of artificialism would serve as the founders in Prague of explicitly surrealist movements.

SURREALISM

The path from picture-poems through artificialism to surrealism was pioneered by Šíma, who can be seen as representing an early link between Czech poetism and French surrealism. Having moved to Paris in 1921, after a brief association with Tvrdošijní, he joined Devětsil (from France) upon its founding in 1923 and immediately came under the movement's early poetic naïveté. Following Teige's lead, Šíma introduced an abstract geometric component to his canvases (especially apparent in landscapes) and almost as quickly embraced the artificialism of Toyen and Štyrský (Fig. 94). Reconciling these various styles with a decisively surrealist impulse, Šíma had by 1927 advanced the graphic technique of *cadavre-exquis* (Fig. 95) with its reliance on collaborative generation and its distinctive "stylistic" character – erotic play, erratic line, and somatic metamorphosis. In the same year he acted as cofounder of the surrealist group *Le Grand Jeu*.¹¹⁴ His surrealist-inspired work, with its new emphasis on revealing the collective unconscious and exploring the archetypal myths of humankind, was exhibited in March 1928 at the same Aventinum Garret in Prague that would host the first Czech exhibition of Štyrský and Toyen's artificialism the following June.

Like his Czech colleagues, Šíma was committed to the mass-communication principles of the graphic arts. Providing illustrations to poetry also enabled him to enhance by association the inherent psychological enchantment and poetic content of his etchings. The graphic work he contributed throughout the late 1920s to a host of French and Czech progressive publications helped to legitimize surrealism among the Czech modernists, who had until then viewed it with skepticism. It was the politics of communism – which encouraged Teige (as well as most of his confederates) to take seriously the revolutionary constructivist aesthetics of the young Soviet régime in Russia – that made him, at the same time, hesitant to endorse the psychological liberation of early surrealism. He considered surrealism, at bottom, too passive and undisciplined to respond to the serious social(ist) needs of the present. Its stress on the unconscious and on a highly individualistic creativity based on psychic automatism ran counter to



Figure 94. Josef Šíma, *Double Landscape: Thunderstorm*, 1927. Oil on canvas. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Jiří Hampl.)

his own political and aesthetic ideology of collective action, albeit liberally poetic. Teige held that a truly modern art must be consciously controlled and intentionally willed; imagination, though stimulated by poetic evocation, must be rigorously organized, harmonized, and directed by "objective" construction. Only by being subject to the artist's rational dominion (that is, through a composition based on constructivist order) might a contemporary poetic vision be exploited for universal good. Further, Devětsil's close connection to the Prague Linguistic Circle shaped its members' understanding of surrealism, which departed essentially from that of the movement's French authors. For the Czechs, who followed closely Jakobson's theories of language, surrealism was understood initially as a semiotic system of questionable rigor rather than as a psychoanalytic liberation of suppressed states of being. Teige may have thought also that French surrealism of the 1920s suggested too many parallels with Czech expressionism, which he had denounced as "an area of vague shadows," too literary in its content.¹¹⁵

By the end of the decade, coincident with the general loss of faith in artificialism's unique potential to go beyond picture-poetry, Teige's skepticism about surrealism's revolutionary character diminished. In a commentary of 1930 the leader of Devětsil praised André Breton for espousing the principle of dialectical materialism in his *Second Surrealist Manifesto*.¹¹⁶ Soon thereafter Czech culture was showing unmistakable signs of the influence of surrealism: Štyrský

Figure 95. Josef Šíma, *Adam Doubled*, 1927–8. Location unknown.





Figure 97. Toyen, *Summer*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 73 × 100 cm. National Gallery, Prague.

Figure 98 (right). Toyen, *Voice of the Forest*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 92 × 72 cm. (formerly) Private collection. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)

accident, and the fantastical nature of given experience. To accomplish this hyperrealistic spur to the imagination, he often resorted to collage, as in his *Marriage* (Fig. 99), combining snippets of reality: photographs of interiors, illustrations from medical texts, and cutouts from botanical handbooks. On the baroque chair in the left foreground is the tossed wedding bouquet, swathed in veils. At the right side of the composition, we are given a peek into the empty bedchamber, with a painted image of an alighting cupid(?) above two perfectly made beds. The protagonists of the scene – the bride and the fetus – are bracketed between chair and chamber, the bride a composite from the miraculous sphere of poetry or nightmare. Except for her breasts, which are bared and constrained by a studded halter, she is covered with the intricate details of strapping muscles borrowed from a plate in a book on anatomy. Lower down on the body are what can only be gen-





Figure 99. Jindřich Štyrský, *Marriage*, 1934. Collage, 35.5 × 31 cm. Location unknown. (From *Umění* 42, no. 1, 1994, p. 81.)

erative organs, conforming more to those in a text on plant biology than to human features. The botanical reference is reinforced by the bride's left arm, which mutates fantastically into a long-stemmed artichoke (or enlarged stamen). Covering the consort's

head, as if a helmet, is an outsized legume(?) coiffed in curls that upon closer inspection turn out to be intestines. The *foetus in utero*, closely associated in form and location to the bride's head, sits in its uterine vase on the carved mantel next to the baroque

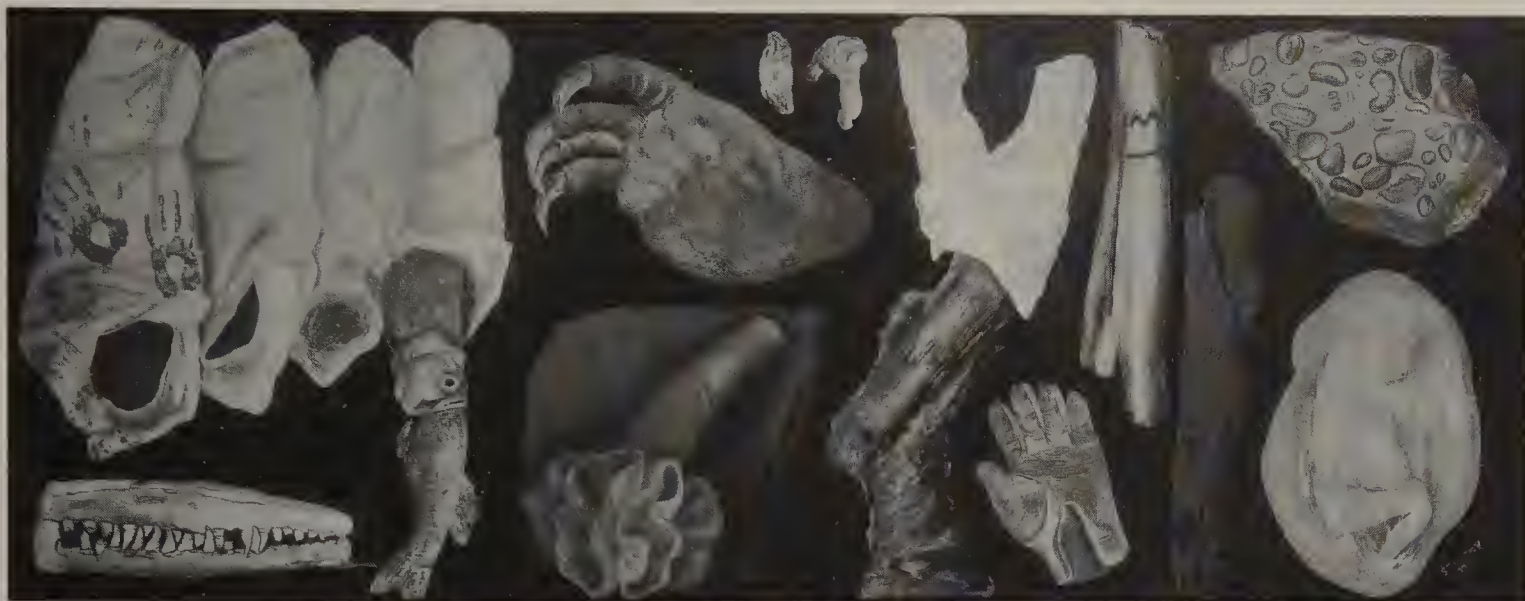


Figure 100. Jindřich Štyrský, *The Trauma of Birth*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 100 × 250 cm. Private collection, Paris. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: Josef Sudek.)

clock. Štyrský's play with transmutation, erotic anticipation, and unexpected shifts in scale and space suggestively exposes the drama that underlies reality. Discovering these enigmatic qualities of reality through collage, he could then transpose the results to canvas: In 1936 the burgeoning possibilities of Štyrský's surrealism were grandly realized in his most important painting, *The Trauma of Birth* (Fig. 100).¹²⁰ Marking the acme of the movement with which Štyrský and Toyen had been engaged since their creation of artificialism a decade before, the painting also records biographic references of considerable interest.

On a visit to Paris in 1935, during which the Czech surrealists Toyen, Nezval, and Štyrský hoped to reconfirm their collegial collaboration with artists based there, Štyrský suffered a heart attack. Surviving the illness, he confronted his mortality by channeling his creative (and recuperative) efforts into painting the present canvas, whose title derives from a psychoanalytic study by Otto Rank.¹²¹ A selection of objects loaded with associative meaning is arranged here in a friezelike composition. Their additive assembly across the picture plane is reminiscent of a textbook presentation of materials laid out for analysis – an arrangement that runs counter to the characteristic surrealist emphasis on illusionistic spaces and to the narrative presentation of figures and things, which Štyrský had orchestrated to great effect in *Marriage*. Here, as in the collage, the artist maintained a sovereign disregard for scale, as objects

are displayed without consideration of their relative size in the real world. Since the things portrayed take on hieratic value and scale based on their weight of association and evocative values, the size inversion functions as a semantic ploy through which new meanings and references are conveyed. Thus, *The Trauma of Birth* is “a panel of objects making up the essence-object, which is in itself the image,” as Štyrský explained in the catalog accompanying the exhibition of this work in Prague.¹²² The symbols laid out in a row – glove, embryo, skeletal crocodile jaws, trouser-enshrouded tree branch, and so on, all denotative of uterine and vaginal confinement – enable the viewer to construct an interpretation based on their syntactical connection. From these clues, and from his writings and a design for Brouk's book *Psychoanalysis* (see Fig. 96), we can infer that Štyrský drew heavily on Freud's dream symbols and on psychoanalytic teachings to inform his own symbolic structures with personalized meaning.

About the time Štyrský was stricken in Paris with a heart attack, Teige was suffering in Prague what can only be described as a philosophical crisis. For many years he had attempted to accommodate the cultural practices advocated by the Communist Party, although like Lajos Kassák, his contemporary in Hungary, his revolutionary interests were rarely reconcilable with party discipline. Acutely conscious by the mid-1930s of the inherent contradiction between the socialist realism promoted by the Soviet Union and the surrealist revolution advocated by



Figure 101. Karel Teige, *Collage number 50*, 1938. Collage, 26.8 × 29.4 cm. PNP, Prague. (From *Umění* 43, nos. 1–2, 1995, p. 37.)

the Czech and French avant-garde, he was unable to contain his wide-ranging creativity within the boundaries permitted the party functionaries. Thus, at the moment Štyrský was going through the trauma of rebirth, Teige was re-creating himself ideologically and aesthetically by embarking on a series of collages far more steeped in surrealism than were his earlier imaginative essays in picture-poetry. In collages, which he continued making throughout his lifetime, Teige gave full rein to fantastic dream worlds and radical transformations (Fig. 101).¹²³ The medium served his imagination as a vehicle for entering unexplored spaces, penetrating unconscious realms, and pursuing vicarious erotic encounters without feeling constrained by ideology. Both an emotional catharsis and an artistic liberation, the

surrealist collage freed him from the formal strictures and rigid self-discipline that constructivism often imposed.¹²⁴

It was in book design, however, that Teige most excelled in adapting surrealist techniques for revolutionary purposes. In his numerous design programs for books on antifascism, Soviet architecture, and “socialist poetry” – and particularly for anthologies and studies of surrealist aesthetics, psychoanalysis, and modernist Czech poetry – Teige revealed a masterly ability to combine imaginative play and rationalized composition (Fig. 102). His commitment, evident as early as the 1920s, to forgo painting and all that was conventionally accepted as “fine arts” in favor of pioneering and promoting media of visual mass communication (photography, film, and graph-

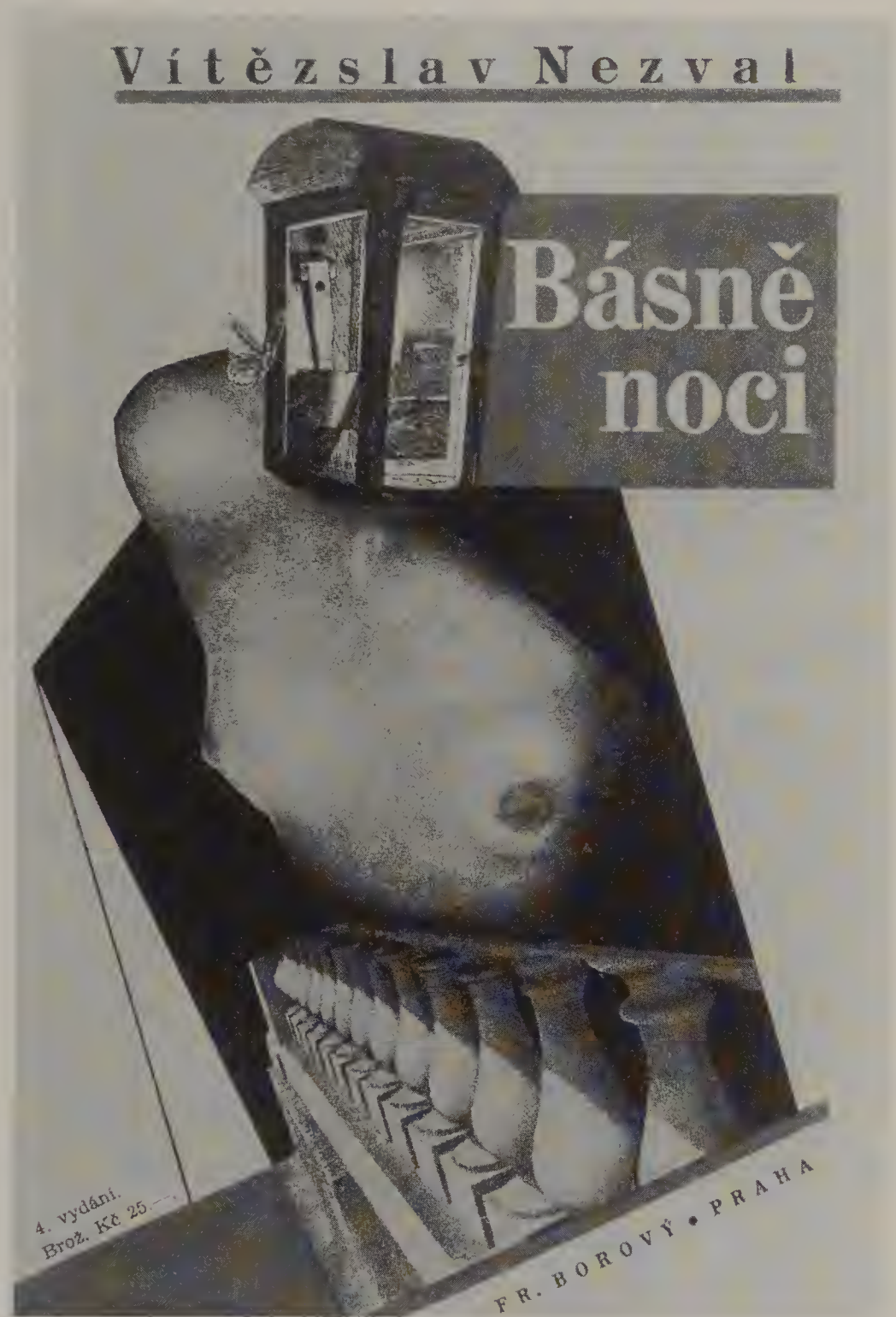


Figure 102. Karel Teige, cover for Vítězslav Nezval's *Song of the Night* (Prague, 1938). (From *Karel Teige, 1900–1951*, exh. cat., Prague, 1994.)

ic design) was intensified from the mid-1930s under the combined influence of surrealism and socialism. From the former he apprehended the poetic and emotional power of subconscious symbols and the universal currency of archetypes. From the latter he inherited the belief in the artist's responsibility to advance the revolutionary march toward the collective political and aesthetic actualization that materialist determinism dictated.

Teige's manifold theoretical and critical writings, undergirding his artistic output and worldview, ap-

pealed to many within the Czech avant-garde, including Zdeněk Pešánek, the Bohemian sculptor in whom surrealism found its most illuminating representative before a long darkness was imposed on Czechoslovakia in 1938. Pešánek, trained as an architect and painter during the heyday of Devětsil, is perhaps most noteworthy as a sculptor of radical techniques. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s he was preoccupied with finding ways to overcome the limitations of gravity and the weight of artistic conventions. This led him at first to a constructivist embrace



Figure 103. Zdeněk Pešánek, *Color Piano*, first version (1925; original ca. 1922). Mixed media. City Gallery, Prague. (Courtesy of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; photo: František Krejčí.)

Figure 104 (facing). Zdeněk Pešánek, *Model for a Color-Kinetic Sculpture*, 1932–3. Metal, glass, and mixed media, 110 cm high. National Gallery, Prague. →

of the products of modern industrial society – electric motors, light bulbs, plastic, and so forth – which he labored to animate mechanically. A planned *Monument to the Pilots Killed during the War* (see Plate 7) would have combined sound, light, and film projection to suggest the very transcendence for which aviators longed. Equally ambitious were constructivist-inspired kinetic sculptures that put in poetic play sound, color, and movement – for example, three versions of a “color piano” (Fig. 103), each of which projected a colored light commensurate with assigned tonal values, and a “luminodynamic” element mounted, appropriately, on Prague’s Edison Transformer Station. Like Teige and most of the Czech avant-garde, however, Pešánek was himself transformed by surrealism. By the beginning of the

1930s, he was advancing beyond constructivism, exploring the potency of moving colors to evoke states of wonder – for instance, in a model for a “color-kinetic” sculpture (Fig. 104), an assembly of extraordinary materials that marks one of the first uses of neon in art. The synesthetic appeal of electricity was also the focus of a series of studies on the general theme “One Hundred Years of Electricity.” Several (now-lost) examples of these light-and-sound kinetic sculptures were the highlight of Czechoslovakia’s contribution to the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques, held in Paris, where they were awarded a gold medal.

The conferral of world honors on Pešánek in Paris was one of the last public affirmations of his country’s notable accomplishments in modernism. In the



late 1930s the surrealism that had ensued from the rich local traditions of cubism, cubo-expressionism, and picture-poetry – in all their respective versions and ingenious variety – was showing signs of stress, as its practitioners divided into warring camps. Many of the most politically committed of Czechoslovakia's surrealists joined with the Stalinist supporters of socialist realism. Others rallied to fight the rising tide of fascism (and Stalinism) by the free expression and unrestrained practice of modernist art. The effect of such an acrimonious split among the cadres of the avant-garde was to provoke condemnation of surrealism (and modernism in general) from both the left- and right-wing press and to alienate its public. Exerting further pressure on the forces of modernism were increasingly shrill cries of nationalism, an-

imated by both real and exaggerated animosity between the German and Czech "nationalities" within the federated republic of Czechoslovakia. By 1938 the cosmopolitan claims of Prague's avant-garde were mocked by the Munich Accords, which only exacerbated the cultural tensions that had long lain just beneath the surface.

Within an all too brief time, however, the strife within the progressive ranks was mooted. After Germany's Nazi troops marched into Prague in 1939, the collapse of freedoms previously guaranteed to artists ushered in a period of existential crisis – a state of siege in which profound anguish and fear of death ironically reprised the very expressionist themes with which Czech modernism had been inaugurated.

2

Poland and Lithuania

PERHAPS NO NATION in Europe has suffered more the indignities of marginalization than Poland. Despite its large population, central location, and cultural vitality, the “Polish Question” regarding its national existence was never a European issue: From the end of the eighteenth century, when the Polish political state was extirpated, until the conclusion of World War I, when it was reconstituted, the crises it faced were essentially Polish concerns. Whereas the “Macedonian Question” and other variations on the “Eastern Question” engaged the interests and threatened the security of all the European powers – east and west – Poland was perceived and treated by outsiders mainly as raw material to be exploited. This was particularly true for Prussia (Germany), Austria-Hungary, and Russia, the three principal powers that had partitioned Poland among themselves and saw in their respective Polish territories little more than conscripts for their armies, peasants to till their lands, workers for their emerging industries, and latent markets for their lesser goods. They denigrated the country’s long and illustrious history and suppressed its political and cultural aspirations. Poland rose to the challenge defiantly, answering its oppressors by developing a strong cultural identity; the core values of the nation thus preserved became the basis for the reconstitution of the nation-state.

The history of modern Poland might be said to have been determined by the third partition of the country in 1795. This was the final act in dissolving the multinational Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had been one of Europe’s great powers in the sixteenth century, when its territories reached from the marshes of Pomerania to the Black

Sea. Weakened over the succeeding centuries by war and economic reverses, the state fell prey to the expansionist ambitions of its immediate neighbors. First in 1772 and again in 1793, Prussia, Russia, and Austria aggrandized themselves at the expense of Poland and Lithuania. Polish resistance to foreign encroachment encouraged rebellion, and in 1794 a revolt broke out, the nationalist revolutionaries being led by a veteran of the American Revolutionary War and general from the Lithuanian grand duchy, Tadeusz Kościuszko. After eight months of bloody conflict, the uprising was suppressed, and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned out of existence.

The more than 120 years of partition had a profound effect on Polish culture, ultimately determining the character, shape, and resonance of its modernist art. To assess Polish modernism, then, means first to recognize that there were several “Polands,” each occupying borders different from those of today and each with a Polish culture that was decisively influenced by the policies and traditions of the respective controlling power. Hence, what was for much of the nineteenth century known as the Grand Duchy of Posen (in English, Poznań)¹ was subject to the rule and influence of Prussia. The Kingdom of Galicia, which included such major cultural centers as Cracow and Lwów, and the contiguous Silesian Duchy of Teschen (the Polish Cieszyn and the Czech Děčín, between which the territory would be divided following World War II), belonged to the Habsburg realm and was shaped by policies of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The so-called Congress Kingdom of Poland² – which embraced the heart of present-day Poland and included among its

principal cities Warsaw, Lublin, and Łódź, along with the formerly “Polish” provinces of Vilna, Grodno, Kovno, Vitebsk, Minsk, Podolia, and Volhynia – was under the absolutist control of the Russian tsar. None of these “Polands” was inhabited only by Poles. Although differing in degree, each area of “partition” was a multinational province of the respective emperor-king.³ Thus, sustaining and developing a Polish culture meant not only contending with one imposed by an often dogmatic foreign overlord; it meant as well acknowledging that the very notion of an indigenous Polish culture was in dispute, as the inhabitants of these partitioned lands defined themselves along ethnic, racial, and religious lines in addition to (and not infrequently in opposition to) national and linguistic ones.⁴ Hence, we encounter modernists in Poland who characterized themselves less as figures in the avant-garde than as proud possessors of a Jewish or Yiddish heritage, a Lithuanian language, a Uniate religious affiliation, or a Ukrainian/Ruthenian background. These complicated internal and external pressures gave rise to a distinctively Polish modern art during the latter years of the nineteenth century and especially in the first third of the twentieth. Far from homogeneous, its forms, audiences, and meanings were determined mainly by the prevailing customs and limitations imposed by the partitioning powers and their legacy. Ironically, it was precisely the resulting frustration, which served to unite Polish residents of the three partitioned territories, that perpetuated the romantic character of the national culture. The elemental bitterness of the Poles would also affect artistic relationships among the several modernist movements in the 1920s.

Several times in the course of the nineteenth century, opportunities for a renaissance of Polish nationhood and cultural expression were presented, only to be crushed. In 1830 Poles in the semiautonomous Congress Kingdom of Poland rose up against the tsar and were decisively defeated within a year, thereafter rarely to be entrusted by their overlords with cultural freedom or political authority. In 1846 Poles in the Free City of Cracow and elsewhere in the province of Austrian Galicia rebelled against the Habsburg emperor, only to be overcome by the superior might of Austrian arms (and by their allies among the Polish peasantry). In the European revolutionary year of 1848, nationalist disturbances that broke out in Poznań were soon suppressed by

Prussian force; and rebellions in Austrian-controlled Cracow and Lwów were easily contained by Austria’s heavy bombardment of the Polish revolutionaries. Finally, the great nationalist insurrection in Russian Poland of 1863–4 was brutally quelled by armies loyal to the tsar. The hope of overthrowing the yoke of foreign domination by violent rebellion thus proved unlikely to be fulfilled and was perceived, rightly, as entailing a crushing retribution and further limitations on the expression of Polish culture. Instead of revolution, then, Poles strengthened their society in order to entreat more effectively with the prevailing powers. Toward this end, programs of self-improvement, which went under such rubrics as “Organic Work”; home-grown institutions like the Land Credit Society, the Society for Educational Assistance, and the Bank of Poland; and other educational, economic, and industrial plans of native self-help were created for nurturing Polish life in the face of the impossibility of achieving independence. Nevertheless, the conditions under which Polishness could be maintained varied markedly among the territories.

In Austrian Poland, which consisted of the fundamentally backward and agricultural Kingdom of Galicia-Lodomera, as well as much of the Duchy of Teschen, the Habsburg imperium was comparatively benign. As early as 1846, even as the supplementary duties of the peasantry were abolished by royal patent, the primarily Polish large landowners maintained their numerous privileges, thereby securing the loyalty to the House of Habsburg of both the Polish masses and the powerful gentry. Fear of restiveness by the woefully oppressed Ukrainians, who made up the majority population in eastern Galicia and who bristled under the curbs forcefully imposed on them by dominant Polish landlords and merchants, further ensured Polish reliance on Austria to protect upper-class interests. Although the province’s higher education was relatively free from the choking restrictions common in Prussian and Russian Poland – a thoroughly Polonized university being allowed to function in both Lwów and Cracow, through which to keep alive the traditions of Polish learning, history, and literary culture – Austrian Poland was plagued by rampant illiteracy and underdevelopment. In the last quarter of the century, as much as 77 percent of the population over school age was illiterate (compared with 4 percent in the contiguous Habsburg crown lands of Bohemia).⁵

Thus, it is debatable both how vital and how extensive the expression of Polish culture could have been in an environment in which the majority had but little access to the rich literature, the innovative historical scholarship, and the impressive accomplishments in the visual arts, which were being produced in isolation from most of the Polish populace. Moreover, the conservators of Polish high culture peremptorily dismissed from consideration fully half of eastern Galicia's inhabitants, as the Polonism propagated in Lwów did not countenance Ukrainian attempts at establishing a national identity.⁶ From the 1880s on, Ukrainian and Polish aspirations were irreconcilable, the Poles refusing to credit "Ruthenians" with having legitimate cultural claims outside a dominant Polish context.⁷ Moreover, the relatively unchallenged dominance of the Polish aristocracy in the political, agricultural, and cultural life of Austrian Poland discouraged innovation or change. As the imperial authorities in distant Vienna had little interest in investing capital resources in this faraway region of the empire, it was to remain an underdeveloped province with little likelihood of dramatic improvement. Ironically, this backwardness and Galicia's peripheral significance to the Habsburg monarchy did entail several advantages for the preservation and development of Polish culture. First, the imperial authorities did not actively discourage expressions of Polish identity. Unique among the partitioning powers, Austria did not forbid the use of the Polish language in education, in governmental affairs, or in the course of everyday activities.⁸ Second, His Apostolic Majesty's government, unlike those of the Russian tsar and the Prussian king, encouraged the Roman Catholic Church to assume a major role in the life of its Polish provinces, hoping thereby to instill conservative values and guarantee loyalty to the crown. Thus, the twin pillars of Polish identity – language and religion – were confirmed by the Habsburg sovereign, and Polish cultural development could continue under his aegis.

The Polish language, customs, and faith were not tolerated by Prussia; indeed, they were actively suppressed.⁹ From Berlin's perspective, the priorities were to affirm the territorial conquests of Prussia and promote its economic aggrandizement as well as to assert the absolute dominance of German values, customs, and culture. Toward that end, the government began methodically to eradicate Polish culture and Germanize all Prussian territory.¹⁰ To ensure po-

litical and cultural dominance in the Pole-inhabited provinces, German was the only officially accepted language of the land, and the Prussian educational system the only permissible model.¹¹ Moreover, the Protestant sect enjoyed a privileged position relative to the station assigned to the Roman Catholic clergy and its parishioners. The Polish primate (based in Poznań) offered only slight resistance to Otto von Bismarck's demands that religious education (for Poles) be conducted in German and that many of the Catholic theological seminaries be closed.¹² Finally, Prussia employed effectively its most refined weapon in the battle for the Germanization of its eastern provinces: military conscription. The thousands of Poles inducted into the Prussian armed forces were sent deep into Germany for their training and posting. Through the rigorous discipline characteristic of the Prussian army, the values of the Hohenzollern dynasty were deeply embedded, and diverging viewpoints – especially any that might hint of Polish national self-consciousness – were stifled.

With little industrial development in the Polish-inhabited territories, apart from the carefully controlled mining and metal works in Upper Silesia,¹³ Prussian Poland remained primarily agricultural, and its great landlords – Polish and German – had little interest in undermining their status and security through promoting radicalism, whether political, cultural, or social. Moreover, as part of its massive – though only partially successful – campaign of colonization, the German government appropriated state funds for the purchase of Polish land to be granted to German colonizers.¹⁴ Prussia's Polish population was fundamentally conservative and compliant, its opposition to a consistent policy of Germanization at best mild. Undeniably the inhabitants benefited from Prussia's rigorously high educational standards, its emphasis on self-discipline, and its thorough organization of economic and political life, which gave Poznań a degree of prosperity far greater than that in impoverished Austrian Galicia or Russian-controlled Poland. And although the German kaisers were less tolerant of Polish cultural expression than was the Habsburg throne, both Germanic monarchies must be judged as respecting their subjects' civil rights more than did the Russian tsars, who conceded little to their fellow Slavs.

Russia's emperors, to whom the largest part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was assigned through the three partitions of the eighteenth cen-

tury, remained suspicious of their kindred subjects from whose territory the Romanov throne had been assailed by eastward-moving armies for centuries. Exacerbating their long-standing fears were Polish revolts against Russian authority that had occurred in the 1830s and again more violently in the 1860s. To ensure undisputed control over their Polish territories and Polish-speaking subjects, therefore, the tsarist authorities governed absolutely as an occupying power and denied all but the most minimal exercise of civil liberties. It was as if a state of war had been declared by the tsar against his potentially rebellious Polish subjects in the “Vistula Territories”: The use of Polish and Lithuanian was proscribed in the conduct of business and government; exiles released from their Siberian servitude were forbidden to return to Polish, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian lands;¹⁵ Poles were denied the right to purchase land or to rent it for long periods; and most civil and cultural freedoms granted to Russians in the territories were denied to Polish speakers. In such a controlled climate, Poles found themselves as hard pressed as the most deprived of the tsar’s Russian subjects, and an affinity soon developed between Polish and Russian opponents of Romanov absolutism. As a result of the close connection between the increasingly radicalized Polish and Russian intelligentsias, Russia’s Poles faced a challenge different from those confronting Polish nationalists elsewhere: how best to make common cause with the masses of their fellow Slavs while resisting the Russian state’s constraints on the promotion of national self-expression and social welfare. This was an issue that many modern artists would embrace after the turn of the century.

Paradoxically, Russia did encourage a modest level of industrialization in the kingdom of Poland – an incentive the far more developed Germanic powers conscientiously avoided.¹⁶ The emerging textile industry in Łódź and the production of agricultural machinery in Warsaw would lead to an expanded middle class that would, in turn, become the principal patrons and apologists for Poland’s avant-garde. Moreover, by the 1890s, the pace of Polish industrialization led to the emergence of Social Democratic workers’ parties and Jewish workers’ unions (the Bund, for example) in such “Polish” cities as Vilnius, Minsk, and Białystok (all then recently incorporated into Russia) as well as parallel groupings within the (former) Congress Kingdom. These political movements would in time produce the ideology that

would animate many of the modernist artists who achieved eminence in the 1920s and 1930s. The liberalism such movements represented, however, and the industries that gave rise to progressive currents elsewhere in Europe were never endorsed by Poland’s conservative upper classes – elites that nevertheless considered themselves the conservators of the nation’s culture. In fact, the large landowners, senior administrative officials, and much of the higher clergy counseled rejection of social activity that might rupture the bond between the Congress Kingdom of Poland and the Russian empire. Many among the middle-class intellectuals believed that the national struggle to achieve social justice and economic advancement should be postponed until Polish independence was realized. Advocating progressive social programs could all too easily provoke hostilities among the different classes in the kingdom, which would then impede or compromise the principal endeavor: securing the political and cultural sovereignty of the Polish nation.

As a result of numerous economic and social factors, the Alliance of the Three Emperors – in whose hands lay the fate of the Polish nation – began to unravel in the final years of the nineteenth century, thereby raising the hopes of eventual independence among the subject nations. As Polish artists and intellectuals grew increasingly impatient with the conditions of foreign domination, they overcame the romantic absorption with the nation’s past greatness (as depicted in the monumental canvases of Jan Matejko) and tragic history (as depicted in the graphic cycles of Artur Grottger)¹⁷ in favor of recognizing new possibilities for national expression in a world rapidly modernizing. Nevertheless, the policies so long in practice in Prussian, Russian, and Austrian Poland would endow modern Polish art with a distinctive profile – its heady and often unstable mix of peoples, customs, and expectations shaped as much by the history of partition as by any purportedly immutable Polish self-image.

EARLY MODERN ART IN POLISH GALICIA

Throughout the nineteenth century, art in Poland was produced by Polish artists – that is, by artists who spoke Polish and took seriously themes of their native history, customs, and interests.¹⁸ In this respect the background for Polish modern art differs from that of many other national cultures, for which

painting, sculpture, architecture, and the decorative arts were until late in the century the work of foreigners – primarily Italians, Germans, and French.¹⁹ Much of Polish art was created in Cracow, where the Austrian authorities encouraged freedom of artistic life and even chartered the School of Fine Arts.²⁰ Thus, it was in Austrian-ruled Galicia that the Society of Polish Artists group called *Sztuka* (Art) was formed in 1897 or 1898 as one of the first of the major movements in the national cultural renaissance, which conventionally goes under the name of Young Poland (*Młoda Polska*).²¹

Young Poland might be understood as a Polish cousin of the “national-awakening” movements in the Baltic and Scandinavian states, which were formed by young writers, poets, critics, and visual artists as a means to consolidate, rectify, and express the national character in forms congruent with modern taste. Appearing a quarter-century later than those in Estonia and Latvia, Poland’s variant was challenged from the outset by the same two competing motivations: maintaining national traditions in the face of foreign occupation and cultural control and, simultaneously, affirming the international currents of progressive art that called into question the essential value and purposes of traditional themes and conventions. The reconciliation of these often opposing tendencies was the principal animating force in the modernism throughout the Baltic region. In Poland, however, it took an especially dramatic and creative shape in which the nation’s artists contended with the constraints imposed from outside by the three partitioning powers and from inside by the competing classes, attitudes, and nationalities of Polish society. The solution arrived at by *Sztuka* artists was an encouragement of individual expression and an avoidance of any written aesthetic program or manifesto. In practice, this meant a range of styles, united by an enthusiasm for what they saw while studying in Paris and Munich.²² Although Cracow afforded the loose confederation of *Sztuka* artists relative freedom of expression, it offered little in the way of material support. The School of Fine Arts was dominated by Jan Matejko until his death in 1893, and his surviving supporters endeavored to maintain the master’s historicizing theories. Thus, there was in these post-Matejko years but limited encouragement to the young modernists. Once Julian Fałat succeeded to the rectorship in 1895, however, a few younger, less tradition-

bound artists were fortunate to secure teaching positions in the prestige-rich School of Fine Arts (from 1900, the Academy of Art).²³ Nevertheless, given the limited size of the province’s middle class, impoverished Galicia included few of sufficient financial means and artistic sophistication to buy or commission the work of the young, mostly foreign-trained painters and sculptors.²⁴ The principal city even lacked a commercial showplace until 1904, which saw the founding of the *Ars* Gallery, a private enterprise whose owner sought – as did *Sztuka* itself – to elevate the aesthetic taste of Cracovian society through exposure to modern art. In the face of these trying circumstances, the affiliates of *Sztuka* produced imaginative images of often compelling contemporary symbolism.

Sztuka presented itself publicly in October 1898, after almost a decade of informal internal debate and discussion, by opening an exhibition in the Old Cloth Hall in Cracow. Although modest in scale – sixty-seven works by ten painters – the display was well received: Extensive reviews appeared in periodicals and newspapers throughout Galicia as well as in major journals in Warsaw and elsewhere in the Russian realm. More than six thousand visitors attended the monthlong exhibition, and a substantial number of the works displayed found buyers. With such enthusiastic response (and not a little critical controversy), the adherents to *Sztuka* were encouraged to formalize their loose exhibition society, electing officers, adopting statutes, and ultimately bringing together painters, sculptors, graphic artists, and architects from all the occupied sections of Poland and from the diaspora. Their aim – albeit unstated – was to affirm the national culture through the general improvement of artistic life in Poland and through participating in international exhibitions.²⁵

Sztuka’s deliberately apolitical strategy – to issue no platform and to adopt no single point of view – was one in which its artists’ range of subjects was limited. It meant that they rejected traditional, large-scale history paintings, which excite patriotic passions. Also not shown in the numerous landscapes, townscapes, portraits, and genre scenes are emblems of modern society or technological advance: railroads (in a country that celebrated the opening of the few lines that the Austrians constructed);²⁶ factories (whose very rarity in Galicia occasioned considerable literary attention); and the improved

roads, newly constructed bridges, and new streetcar lines in Cracow and Lwów. In sum, there are few of the icons of modernity that French impressionists, German naturalists, Hungarian realists, and others concerned with progress introduced into their works. Generally eschewing manufactured emblems of industrial progress, Sztuka artists presented instead the timeless nature of their landscape, the character of their people, and an inventive symbolism through which to communicate subtly their history. Continuing thus to preserve the national culture, the group sought continuity with the past, even as it employed the styles of the present to move Polish art into the modern mainstream.

Among the founding members of Sztuka was a painter from Russian-controlled Radom, Jacek Malczewski, whose canvases of the Young Poland period present symbolically the crisis and opportunities facing Polish art and its intelligentsia.²⁷ Between 1890 and 1894 he was engaged in creating a monumental allegory that owes its extraordinary pictorial effect to the way in which realistic subject matter is melded with the naturalistic treatment of figures, impressionist handling of landscape, and symbolist use of reference. *Melancholia* (Fig. 105) represents the state of contemporary Poland as much as it reveals the personal condition of the artist, who on the reverse of the canvas penned the discouraging lines "Prologue / Vision / The last century in Poland / A whole century." At the upper left in the scene, sitting before an easel, is Malczewski himself, a melancholy figure witnessing an incredible stream of figures tumble forth from his creation. Not unlike Francisco Goya's *Dream of Reason*, whose sleeping intellectual conjures the monsters haunting Spain's fragile enlightenment, Malczewski's creativity has unleashed the contradictory forces afflicting the dream of a modern state based on enlightenment principles. In a manner likely similar to that of the intended contemporaneous viewer, we today are projected imaginatively into the painter's almost barren studio, where we observe with deep discomfiture the whirlwind of Polish society gushing forth from the artist's fervid imagination;²⁸ armed children running to battle; belligerent students gathered around a red flag; alarmed clergy, workers, and peasants; paintbrush-bearing men; praying women; and old men smothered in Russian greatcoats, staring forlornly out the window into a sunlit garden

that they will never enter. Leaning against the sill is the black-cowled, melancholic figure of death, whose bony wrists and hands keep control of the partially open window, while firmly blocking from the brilliant garden of freedom the tumbling cascade of people who so long to enter. Through Malczewski's allegory contemporary Poland is described as incapable of action, having been wrapped up so long in the heavy folds of Russia (the old men in greatcoats); socially rebellious and enamored of radical causes (the armed students and workers gathered around the red flag); resigned to defeat and accommodation (the clergy turned away from the open window); destined to annihilation (the corpses of young men in the foreground); and determined to sacrifice its youngest generations to the violent cause of liberation (the knife- and lance-wielding children). The melancholia surely derives from frustrated attempts among Poland's intelligentsia – historical and present – to secure national liberation.²⁹

Malczewski, like almost all Polish visual artists who belonged to Young Poland and Sztuka, drew heavily on the imagery of the nation's great nineteenth-century romantic poets – Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński – and on the passionate patriotism of Jan Matejko. The poets' powerfully evocative longing for national freedom and expression was consonant with the symbolist aesthetics increasingly popular among Sztuka painters. Malczewski in particular was able to combine an idiosyncratic form of national romanticism with the symbolism popular throughout Europe in these waning years of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. His *In the Dust Cloud* (Fig. 106) depicts the vast expanse of yellow fields of Wielkopolska, the Great Poland district of Prussian Poznań, artfully reinforced by a long horizontal line of trees and endless cloud-filled skies. In the middle of this sublime landscape, symbolic of Poland's bounty and spread, the artist unleashed a whirling dust cloud – less a corporeal phenomenon than a preternatural apparition. The ghostly whorl of a woman and her children was doubtless intended to refer to the native superstitious belief that in dust clouds lurk evil spirits as well as to the insubstantial nature of "Polonia," no more than a phantom spirit in the Polish landscape.³⁰

Malczewski often invoked Polonia as artistic muse. *Painter's Inspiration* (Fig. 107) shows that Polo-



Figure 105. Jacek Malczewski, *Melancholia*, 1890–4. Oil on canvas, 139.5 × 240 cm. Raczyński Collection, National Museum, Poznań.



Figure 106. Jacek Malczewski, *In the Dust Cloud*, 1893–4. Oil on canvas, 78 × 15 cm. Raczyński Collection, National Museum, Poznań.



Figure 107. Jacek Malczewski, *Painter's Inspiration*, 1897. Oil on canvas, 80 × 63 cm. Raczyński Collection, National Museum, Cracow.

nia's influence in motivating him to paint led to profound melancholy; and in a self-portrait accompanied by his wife, he depicts himself wearing shackles and the Russian greatcoat as indications of his – and symbolically, Poland's – subjection, while his wife is shown cradling a fragile spring primrose, symbolic flower of the rebirth Polonia promises. That this painting was executed in 1905 is itself significant, for this was the year of the great insurrection against tsarist absolutism throughout the Russian empire. In the wake of the disastrous Russo-Japanese War and the resulting rebellions throughout the realm, Russian authorities had lessened their grip on the Congress Kingdom of Poland. For a brief period, Polish could be taught in the schools, the Roman Cath-

olic Church was given greater freedom to look after the interests of its large flock, and intellectuals were allowed to use Polish imagery and symbols explicitly in their work. In acknowledgment of this changed climate, Malczewski showed in 1907 his *Primrose: Self-Portrait with Wife* in Warsaw and painted a series of self-portraits in which the constraining Russian greatcoat is absent or is being removed. One of these renditions (Fig. 108) equates the artist (and Poland) with Christ shrugging off a heavy mantle while rejecting the blandishments of the Pharisees.³¹

Malczewski prospered under the patronage of Count Edward Raczyński³² and (until 1901) from his appointment to the Cracow School of Fine Arts. Among his colleagues at the school were other prin-



Figure 108. Jacek Malczewski, central panel from triptych *Tribute Money (Self-Portrait)*, 1908. Oil on cardboard, central panel 92 × 73 cm. National Museum, Poznań.

cipals of Sztuka whose broad interests in progressive art tendencies were often harnessed likewise to the task of furthering the cause of Polish cultural nationalism: Wojciech Weiss, Józef Mehoffer, and Stanisław Wyspiański.³³ Weiss, who in 1909 would assume the chairmanship of Sztuka, was in fact born in Austro-Hungarian Transylvania. Having moved in 1890 to Cracow and its School of Fine Arts to take advantage of the relative freedom to study and contribute to the expression of contemporary culture,³⁴ he created one of the signal works of Polish Secessionist painting, *The Dance* (Fig. 109).³⁵ In a sensual reversal of Malczewski's tumbling figures, Weiss's nubile nude dancers move in a sinuous line into the depths of the scene, there to be transmuted into the limbs of a soaring tree. The lush coloring and undulating movement impart a richly ornamental effect

that echoes the Jugendstil then popular in Vienna, Berlin, and Munich and familiar to the artist. But beneath this decorative display of twisting nudes is a distinctly Polish dimension, the viewer being invited to recognize the sacrifice of youth and youthful energy necessary for the tree of nationalism to grow. Such symbolic themes were current in the literature of Young Poland and appeared not infrequently in Weiss's work of the period, as in *Radiant Sunset* (Fig. 110). Here the blue hills and stubble fields of Austrian Poland are bathed by the piercing brilliance of the setting sun. The juxtaposition of blues and yellow, the sweep of curving brushstrokes, and the strong verticals of the rays call to mind the contemporary work of Edvard Munch, whose canvases and symbolist/expressionist aesthetics were well known in Poland through the description of the Norwegian

artist's close Young Poland associate Stanisław Przybyszewski.³⁶ Equally influential for Weiss were unpeopled landscapes in canvases filled disquietingly with streams of light that seem to be refracted into animation from the viewer's space – a fixture of the Sztuka painters at the turn of the century, Mehoffer among them.

Mehoffer, who joined the society at its founding, depicted his family inhabiting what he called a "strange garden" (see Plate 8), the artist's small, blond son nude, bathed in sunlight, and clutching stems of enormous, overripe flowers; slightly behind him the painter's wife, garbed in a heavy blue dress that glistens as if made from enamel; and in the background – wearing the red head scarf, embroidered short coat, and long white skirt of the native costume – the family servant. All this takes place in a garden so opulent – ornamented by brilliantly hued flowers, carpeted by a tapestry of rich green undergrowth, and enframed by fruit trees laden with ripe apples – as to suggest a Polish paradise, its inhabitants pure and sinless. In place of the sword-bearing Saint Michael, we find hovering in the foreground an enormously outsized dragonfly, whose gold wings and shimmering body are rendered care-

fully as if by a jeweler.³⁷ The presence of the gigantic insect contributes to the fantastic character expressed by the superfluity of ripe flora and the prominence of the all-too-perfect young mother and child. Indeed, through his mastery of saturated hues, careful control of intense lighting, and serpentine progression into spatial depth, Mehoffer was not just presenting one of the most accomplished examples of Polish art nouveau painting; he also projected an ideated image of a Polish new Eden, one that must be recognized as the polar opposite of the grave realism favored by his forebears and contemporaries. Clearly, what Mehoffer envisioned for his son's generation of Polish youth was not the harsh reality of premature death depicted by Malczewski (*Death on the Way to Siberia*; Fig. 111) but a promised land free from the hardships of partition.

Mehoffer's exact contemporary Wyspiański – a fellow founding member of Sztuka – was committed to both the fine and the decorative arts. He was also a leading poet, playwright, sculptor, and art and cultural critic for the Young Poland movement, having been appointed an editor of the journal of the Polish modernists *Życie* (Life). Indeed, Wyspiański can be identified as the intellectual embodiment of Sztuka

Figure 109. Wojciech Weiss, *The Dance*, undated. Oil on canvas, 65 × 99 cm. Private collection. (Courtesy of the National Museum, Cracow.)





Figure 110. Wojciech Weiss, *Radiant Sunset*, ca. 1900–2. Oil on canvas, 61 × 80 cm. National Museum, Poznań.

aesthetics. As a student of philosophy and art history, he soon came under the influence of French symbolism, seeing in the work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Paul Gauguin, and the Nabis an art style intimately connected to his own worldview – one that penetrated beyond surface appearance – and could be adapted with effect to the Polish context. Thus, in his designs for the stained-glass windows to be installed in a Franciscan church in Cracow (Fig. 112), we recognize the linearism of French models combined imaginatively with the sweeping gestures, pregnant symbolism, and palette analogous to those in Weiss's contemporaneous *Radiant Sunset* (see Fig. 110), where the supernatural illuminates the singularly Polish sphere. Wyspiański's extensive work in pastel, particularly his portraiture (Fig. 113), demonstrates a mastery of both the sinuous line of *Jugendstil* and the decorative effects of polychromy, handled as if being worked in stained glass.

Among those following in Wyspiański's philosophic footsteps was the Sztuka sculptor Xawery Dunikowski. Committed to wedding the universal metaphysics of existence with singular contempo-

rary reality, Dunikowski developed an iconography that had European resonance while encapsulating conditions immediately around him. His subjects, germinated in the nineteenth-century Polish obsession with suffering, loss, and bitterness, were updated by their treatment in Young Poland's literature, especially the plays by Wyspiański. Thus, juxtaposed to Mehoffer's life-affirming representation of his wife and son in Edenic surroundings (see Plate 8), Dunikowski's contemporaneous *Breath* (Fig. 114) has a somber monumentality of a fundamentally different cast. The mother's head and torso are simplified into almost geometric forms against which an outsized, protocubist hand cradles the frail, lifeless body of the newborn. The brutal disparity in scale between the massiveness of the mother's geometry and the diminutive baby is made only the more affecting by the tenderness of the mother's effort to breathe life into her child. Intensifying the emotional brittleness of the theme are the reflective geometric surfaces of the copper sheeting. Dunikowski's depiction of the harsh reality of life – especially Polish contemporary life – is evident also in several slightly



Figure 111. Jacek Malczewski, *Death on the Way to Siberia*, 1891. Oil on canvas, 53 × 101 cm. Raczyński Collection, National Museum, Poznań.



Figure 112. Stanisław Wyspiański, *Let There Be Light: God the Father*, detail (design for stained-glass window for the Franciscan Church in Cracow), 1896–1902. Pastel, (entire design) 846 × 390 cm. National Museum, Cracow.



Figure 113 (above). Stanisław Wyspiański, *Portrait of Wanda Siemaszkowa*, 1902–3. Pastel, 61.5 × 47.2 cm. Upper Silesian Museum, Bytom.

later gilt-wood sculptures embodying explicit existential suffering that is fully consonant with Edvard Munch's expressionism and Przybyszewski's aesthetic posture. In one (Fig. 115), as a woman begins her slump into death, her attenuated arms with clutched, overly large hands drooping helplessly, her child strives to lift itself free of the collapsing body with which it is still united. The sculptor's coupling of birth pangs and death throes, in the political context of Young Poland, would have been identified inescapably with the fate of the nation. What makes it notably affecting is the use of symbolist and Secessionist elongation of contours, exaggeration of gesture, and simplification of forms for their political and philosophical resonance. A similar vocabulary is evident in the work of Waclaw Szymanowski, who was among the few Polish artist members of *Sztuka* active (from 1902) in Warsaw.³⁸ His well-known monument to Chopin (1903) in that city betrays a debt to academicism; however, the sculpture he designed for his father's grave (Fig. 116) is one of the consummate examples of symbolist aesthetics in the Russian-ruled kingdom of Poland.



Figure 114 (right). Xawery Dunikowski, *Breath*, ca. 1903–16. Sheet copper, 127 × 118 × 94 cm. Xawery Dunikowski Museum, Warsaw. (Courtesy of the National Museum, Warsaw.)



Figure 115. Xawery Dunikowski, *Motherhood*, 1906. Glued wood, 175 × 112 × 72 cm. Xawery Dunikowski Museum, Warsaw. (Courtesy of the National Museum, Warsaw.)

Around 1908 Sztuka's preeminence among Polish art groups began to be challenged. Cracow had hosted an exhibition of Wassily Kandinsky's works three years earlier, and several innovative cabarets (for example, the Green Balloon) had become the new gathering centers for a younger generation of progressive artists.³⁹ Even among the established figures who had been founding members of Sztuka, there was unease with the privileges awarded to the group in hiring, organizing shows, and access to publicity. Malczewski had ceased exhibiting with his Sztuka colleagues in 1904 as a protest, and in 1908 he became a cofounder, along with several other disaffected veterans of Sztuka, of a new artists' group called Zero.⁴⁰ The name derives purportedly from a comment made within Sztuka's inner circle to the effect

that Sztuka alone represented Polish art and all other artists were but mere "zeros."⁴¹ Paradoxically, after Zero's second unsuccessful group exhibition, held in Cracow during June 1909, the group disbanded; when many of its older participants returned to the Sztuka fold, accompanied by a welcome infusion of younger Zero artists, the precedent society was temporarily rejuvenated. However, despite the presence of new blood – including the thirty-three-year-old painter Wojciech Weiss as the newly appointed president – Sztuka's artistic efforts continued to decline. Its exhibitions garnered increasingly negative reviews, many of which lamented the diminished energy and originality of the once-dynamic Society of Polish Artists. Although Sztuka managed to prolong its existence until 1936, by 1912 it had been eclipsed as a major presence in the nation's culture by entirely new formations of emerging Polish modernists.

MODERN EXPRESSIONIST ART IN GALICIA, 1911–22

By the close of the first decade of the new century, the Young Poland traditions that had animated cultural life in Cracow and beyond were under assault. Young painters and sculptors, mostly born in the 1880s, were weary of the emphasis on patriotic subjects, no matter how hidden by overlays of symbolist, Jugendstil, or expressionist modes of presentation. What these younger figures preferred was an approach that was thoroughly modern in its formal characteristics and free of the traditional national-romanticist content that had long limited artists to narrative subjects. Thus, between 1911 and 1913, a loose confederation of artists, united more by what they opposed in Polish art than by what they shared about its new directions, mounted three annual exhibitions in Cracow. These so-called Polish Independents represented currents ranging from a form of recidivist classicism to cubism. The lack of a defining aesthetic platform, coupled with the showing of works by many artists with long-established reputations – Malczewski and Leon Wyczółkowski,⁴² for example – ensured that the art of the Independents would never be recognized as an open revolt against Young Poland. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm for futurism and cubism charted a new course for Polish art even as World War I broke out and the entire political, geographical, and intellectual landscape of tripartite Poland changed forever.



Figure 116. Waclaw Szymanowski, *Grave Monument to the Artist's Father*, 1906. Bronze, 220 cm high. Powaźski Cemetery, Warsaw. (Courtesy of the National Museum, Warsaw.)

As Poland was divided among three contending powers, its fate was to be at war with itself: The million and a half Polish conscripts within the allied armies of the German and Austro-Hungarian Central Powers and the Russian forces of the Entente waged a conflict that destroyed its native territory. Indeed, it is likely that no party to the war suffered such profound material and human devastation as Poland. And yet during the midst of the deadly destruction, a new national state and new forms of cultural expression were being gestated. Zbigniew Pronaszko was experimenting with forms derived from French cubism and free from narration (for example, in his sculpture for the Church of the Missionary Fathers in Cracow and in a series of nudes [Fig. 117]); his brother Andrzej portrayed a modern Polish Catholi-

cism by means of the geometry of cubism and the concatenated planes and light effects of futurism (Fig. 118). At the same time, August Zamoyski coupled cubism with dynamic expression in a series of abstract portrait busts (Fig. 119), and Tytus Czyżewski investigated protocubism based on geometric forms.⁴³ The breathless pace, extraordinary range, and sheer inventiveness of these experiments may well have been the artists' creative responses to the rampant devastation all about them; significantly, few of this generation revived the traditions of the past with its cast of Polish historical figures. Perhaps it was the conflicted loyalties during the war that discouraged artists from enlisting Poland's past heroes in the cause of any contending party, for none of the partitioning powers had declared itself in favor



Figure 117. Zbigniew Pronaszko, *Nude*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 112 × 65 cm. National Museum, Cracow.

of Polish independence.⁴⁴ In any event, from the ranks of the younger members of the Independents came forth a group of artists sufficiently committed to cubism, fauvism, futurism, and expressionism to constitute a movement. First convened informally as the Society of Extreme Modernists, it was then

expanded into an exhibiting union under the flag of "Polish expressionism" (Fig. 120).

Of all the variants of expressionism (a term loosely applied to all forms of progressive art) that might be said to characterize this movement, there was a special affinity among many of the adherents to the



Figure 118. Andrzej Pronaszko, *Flight into Egypt*, 1918–21. Oil on canvas, 56 × 48 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź. (From A. Olszewski, *An Outline History of Polish Art and Architecture, 1890–1980*, Warsaw, 1989.)



Figure 119. August Zamoyski, *Portrait of Adolf Loos*, 1917. Bronze. (From A. Olszewski, *An Outline History of Polish Art and Architecture, 1890–1980*, Warsaw, 1989.)

Figure 121 (right). Tytus Czyżewski, *Madonna*, ca. 1915. Tempera. (Courtesy of the National Museum, Warsaw.)

kind created just before the war in Germany. Nevertheless, when the first exhibition of Polish expressionists took place in November 1917 under the auspices of the Cracow Friends of Art, the accompanying catalog did not endorse any single innovative form or style; in fact, while defending pure form over narrative content, the artists specifically advocated diverse styles. If there was a programmatic point of view, it consisted in little more than an uncompromising rejection of what Czyżewski labeled “the bluntness and general torpor which prevailed in Polish art at the time.”⁴⁵ Such generality did little to weld the artists into a movement, and soon the incompatibility of such disparate styles as folk art (Fig. 121) and glass painting, neoclassicism, futurism, cubism, and the idiosyncratic metaphysical expressionism of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Fig. 122) – known as Witkacy in order to differentiate him from his father, a renowned critic bearing the



Figure 120. Tytus Czyżewski, poster for the first Formiści exhibition, 1917. Lithograph, 45 × 58.5 cm. (Courtesy of the “Poster Room” of the Central Library of the Academy of Fine Arts, Cracow.)





Figure 122. Witkacy (S. I. Witkiewicz), *Composition with Satan*, 1920. Pastel, 48 × 64 cm. National Museum, Warsaw.

same forename – compelled the confederation of expressionists to reconstitute themselves as the formists (*Formiści*).

By 1918 the core group of Cracow formists (who also called themselves modernists) was joined by adherents in Warsaw, Poznań, and Lwów (Fig. 123). What made it easier to attract supporters and secure exhibition venues was the development of a coherent body of theory to explain and rationalize the focus on form. Between 1919 and 1921 the group published a periodical in Cracow titled *Formiści* as well as numerous catalogs through which Witkacy, Zbigniew Pronaszko, and Leon Chwistek articulated the formist point of view.⁴⁶ In essence, their new style was based on “notions of realism and beauty developed from the experiences of cubism, futurism, and expressionism;”⁴⁷ they recognized “[modern] painting as image[,] . . . not as a return to nature but as a deliberate filling up of a defined space with

specified forms.”⁴⁸ Although their work does contain diverse figural imagery and sources of inspiration, there is apparent an abiding faith in constructing forms from abstract geometry. Zbigniew Pronaszko’s paintings and especially his sculpture – for example, the monumental portrait in wood for Vilnius of the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855)⁴⁹ (Fig. 124) suggest that a synthetic cubism (rather than an analytic cubism or futurism, which most appealed to his fellow formists) was the means of choice for constructing the modern images for a new culture.

For Czyżewski, formism represented an opportunity to exploit the formal vocabulary of the folk imagery with which he grew up. Into works such as *Highland Robber* and *Madonna* (Fig. 125), he introduced a characteristic Polish element. Not until his *Treble Clef* (see Plate 9), however, did he achieve a truly effective creative balance among decorative



Figure 123. A. Pronaszko, poster for the second Formiści exhibition, 1918. (Courtesy of the "Poster Room" of the Central Library of the Academy of Fine Arts, Cracow.)

forms, folk elements (for example, the eye), and the musical synesthesia advocated by Chwistek, the chief theorist of the formist movement. Describing what he called the "multiple realities in art," Chwistek identified four ontological types, each with a corresponding form or style, beginning with primitivism or native folk art, continuing through realism and impressionism, and culminating in futurism. The consummation of this vaguely Hegelian theory is an idiosyncratic variant of futurism illustrated by his painting *Fencing* (see Plate 10), created according to a principle of rhythmic divisions of vibrating, musically synesthetic, forms.⁵⁰

Perhaps nowhere within formism were diversity and idiosyncrasy more manifest than in the work and ideas of Witkacy (Fig. 126). Having enlisted in the Russian army during World War I for reasons that remain vague,⁵¹ he was invalided during the Ukrainian campaign and turned his attention to innovations in art and aesthetics. Propounding a theory of forms that was published under the telling title



Figure 124. Zbigniew Pronaszko, model for a monument to Adam Mickiewicz (erected in Vilna in 1924, intended to be cast in concrete, ca. 12 m high, destroyed by flood in 1938). (Courtesy of the National Museum, Cracow.)



Figure 125. Tytus Czyżewski, *Madonna*, ca. 1920. Oil on canvas? (Courtesy of the National Museum, Warsaw.)

New Forms in Painting and Misunderstandings Resulting Therefrom,⁵² Witkacy created a coherent system that deplores the hegemony of nature and decries the overestimation of constructivism. It posits a theory of pure form that privileges the artist's emotions above anything perceived in nature or conjured by the imagination. This essentially antimechanistic attitude informs a 1922 essay, "Litmus Paper," sharply critical of the futurism and cubism that had been one of the hallmark styles of formism. In his artworks of the teens, which he himself called "monsters," Witkacy indulged in associative color theory not unlike that advocated by Nikolai Kulbin, and parallel to the transrational poetism of Velimir Khlebnikov, both colleagues in Russia. Indeed, on the basis of his Russian work (on canvas and in print), he was invited to join the formists upon his return to Cracow from war service in 1918. Although his theory and painting were often irreconcilable with those of his close friends Chwistek and Zamoyski⁵³ – his pictures more colorful and more visually aggressive (see Plate 11) – Witkacy's controversial presence among the form-

Figure 126. Witkacy (S. I. Witkiewicz), *Five-fold Portrait*, ca. 1917. Photograph, 11.3 × 16 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.



ists was a catalyst for creativity.⁵⁴ At the core of his art and thought is a feeling of metaphysical anxiety through which an individual becomes aware of his or her own personality and of the multiplicity of other existences. It is a worldview that necessarily carries affective resonances (Fig. 127) and, in Witkacy's case, was enhanced through drugs.⁵⁵ From about 1923 or 1924, his search for "the mystery of existence" could no longer be accommodated by art in general – or contained by the formists – and he began to channel his efforts into other, highly individual projects: drama and theater pieces (until 1925), novels and criticism, and especially an unconventional form of portrait photography (Fig. 128). Coincident with his increasing distance from the Polish formists, the movement itself began to disintegrate.

The fluctuating membership in their loosely organized association, the extreme diversity of formal means and philosophical points of view, and the pressure of ever-new artistic formations made it difficult for the formists to sustain themselves as an independent and vital grouping.⁵⁶ Indeed, by 1923 one of its former supporters admitted that the term "formism does not define anything."⁵⁷ Yet we should keep in mind that formism – as a modernist attempt to counter the romanticism that had for so long defined the character of Polish art – helped open Poland to progressive currents from both West and

East. As such, the diversity of the movement must be counted as among its strengths, even if it necessarily compromised its longevity.

EXPRESSIONISM IN A NEW STATE: BUNT AND JUNG IDYSZ⁵⁸

In 1918 the formists participated in a group exhibition held in Lwów. Taking full advantage of the freedom of movement in an increasingly unified, newly sovereign state, they were joined by representatives from the Bunt (Rebellion) group, who came from previously Prussian Poznań. Although it was the formists who were first identified as *expressionist*, the term applies more accurately to the adherents of Bunt. Founded at the end of 1917 in Poznań, where decades of Germanization ensured that German aesthetics predominated, Bunt readily embraced expressionism and found inspiration in Dresden's Brücke, Berlin's Sturm, and Munich's Blaue Reiter artist formations. Nevertheless, its members strove to maintain a Polish orientation.⁵⁹ Like all Polish modernist movements, Bunt was both a literary and fine-arts gathering of writers, dramatists, poets, painters, sculptors, and graphic artists united by a general protest against the conservative strains of naturalism and impressionism in Polish culture. Its founder was Jerzy Hulewicz, a Poznań graphic artist, poet, and dramatist who succeeded Przybyszew-

Figure 127. Witkacy (S. I. Witkiewicz), *Temptation of St. Anthony II*, 1921–2. Oil and tempera on canvas, 72.5 × 142.5 cm. National Museum, Cracow.





Figure 128. Witkacy (S. I. Witkiewicz), *Series with Fur Hat*, ca. 1930. Photographs, 8.9 × 13.6 cm; 8.8 × 13.5 cm; and 8.8 × 13.6. Museum of Art, Łódź.

ski as editor and publisher of *Zdrój* (Source; 1917–20, 1922) (Fig. 129),⁶⁰ the biweekly literary and art journal that chronicled the group's activities. Representing a range of individual interests and functioning primarily as a loose association of artists who chose to exhibit together, Bunt was, like the formist movement, united more by general theoretical affinities and self-interest than by any systematic program or homogeneous aesthetic worldview. Much of its ideological justification derived from the spiritually charged, fervid expressionism of Przybyszewski, an intimate of Munch's, who encouraged his associates, such as Zamoyski, to capture the anxious visions and emotions produced by the subconscious. This attitude was in accord also with Hulewicz's passionate interest in the aesthetics of German expressionism – in particular, rough linocuts analogous to the woodcuts of Germany – to convey primal emotions.

A similar concentration on expressionist graphics informed the activities of the Bunt members Stanisław Kubicki (Fig. 130) and Jan Jerzy Wroniecki. Their connections to German expressionism were especially direct, as both artists were educated in Germany (where Kubicki was born). In the oeuvre of artists who worked in the orbit of German periodicals such as *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*, the rebellious Poznanian expressionists recognized not just a powerful evocation of primitive universality but also a clarion call for socialist revolution. Their commitment to political democracy may explain why they concentrated their efforts on widely distributed graphic arts rather than on individual easel paintings. (Rare examples of remarkably accomplished early cubo-expressionist painting by Buntists include Kubicki's *Ecstasy III*, now in Berlin's Landes Museum for Modern Art.) In any event, the rise of Bunt's political consciousness from about 1920 served ironically to undermine the integrity of the group. Some members, such as Zamoyski, who had been a founder of Bunt, switched allegiance to the less politicized formist camp. Others moved into the arena of engaged art and politics that characterized the galleries, exhibition halls, and artists' cafes of Berlin. By 1922 the rebellion initiated by Poznań's most progressive artists had been embraced by other movements and was manifested in other places. The mark left on Poland's emerging modernist art – of original if only nominal consequence – was prized by at least one

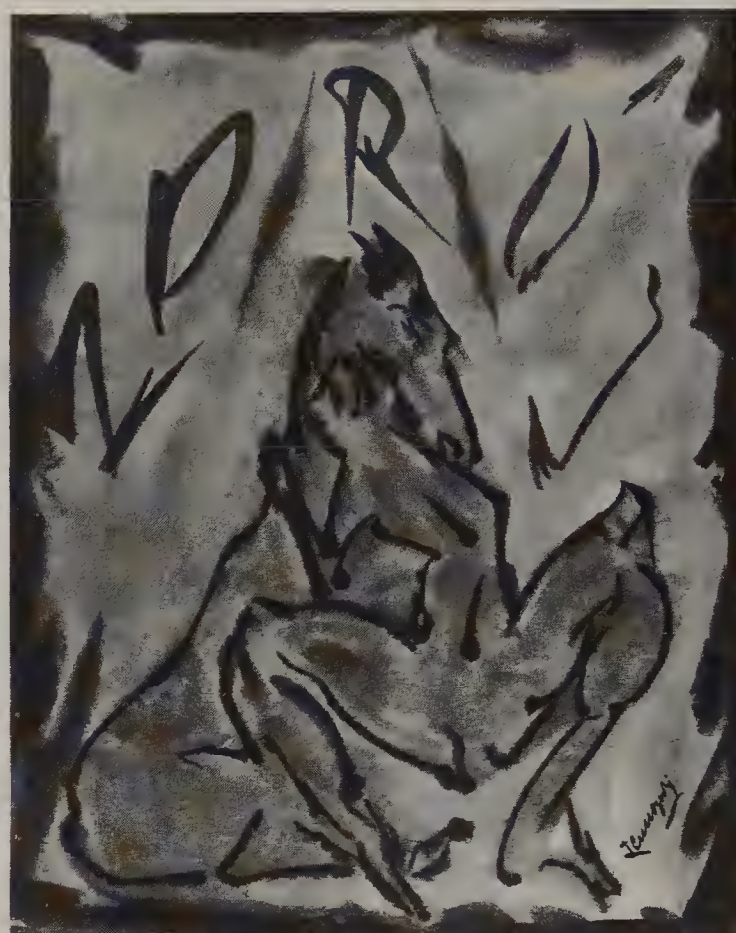


Figure 129. August Zamoyski, cover design for *Zdrój*, 1918. Watercolor and tusche. Library of the National Museum, Cracow.



Figure 130. Stanisław Kubicki, *Oarsman II*, 1917–18. Woodcut. (Courtesy of the National Museum, Warsaw.)

other contemporaneous literary–artistic grouping far to the east in the newly constituted Polish state.

Among the ranks of Jewish artists first exhibiting in Łódź in 1918, under the sponsorship of the Association of Artists and Supporters of the Fine Arts, were



Figure 131. Bruno Schulz, *Procession*, 1920–1. Glass etching, 17.7 × 23 cm. Literature Museum, Warsaw.

Jankiel Adler, Henryk Barciński (1896–1939), Vincent Brauner (1887–1944), Mojżesz Broderson (1890–1956), and others who constituted themselves as Jung Idysz (Young Yiddish). Formed after the armistice of November 1918, Jung Idysz found itself almost immediately blessed with social opportunities while faced with aesthetic challenges. In a newly free and sovereign Poland, the Jewish artist-adherents could for the first time begin to enjoy civil liberties that they had been denied in the Pale of Settlement and elsewhere in the lands now forming the Polish Republic. With this enfranchisement came the desire from some to strive for social integration that the changed political circumstances now made possible, at least theoretically. For others, liberation from the special restrictions imposed on Jews was an invitation to pursue a decisively “Jewish” life, culturally if not necessarily religiously. Proponents of each path endorsed a modern means of expression through which to acknowledge and exploit the new opportunities facing Poland’s Jewish citizens (Fig. 131).⁶¹ For example, Jung Idysz established productive relations with the Bunt artists, with whom the Jewish association exhibited in Poznań (in May 1920 at the Third Exhibition of Independent Artists), and with groups of progressive figures in Warsaw, Białystok, Berlin, and New York. Almost all these collaborations were based on a shared belief in the validity of expressionist aesthet-

ics as the most appropriate means to respond to contemporary life. Thus, Jung Idysz members pursued contact with Herwarth Walden and his *Der Sturm* Gallery in Berlin, with Oskar Kokoschka and the Vienna veterans of expressionism, and notably with Marc Chagall and other Russian artists who created what Jung Idysz believed to be a “Jewish” expressionism. Incontestably expressionist in style (Fig. 132), the members’ mostly graphic work generated heated debate for its *content*, as friction was sparked between competing interests. On the one hand, Jung Idysz eschewed separatist tendencies and sought acceptance within the fold of modernist movements on the basis of its art rather than the religious affiliation or background of members. On the other hand, the group wanted to modernize Jewish culture and make it better known so as to be readily accepted by “Poles” (Fig. 133). Jung Idysz therefore worked with foreign and domestic organizations such as Kiev’s League of Jewish Culture, Warsaw’s Jewish Society for the Propagation of Fine Arts, and Jewish associations in New York and Germany. Although lacking a programmatic manifesto, the group did distribute during its brief lifetime (1918–22) several issues of a newsletter in which general declarations on the importance of Jewish mysticism were printed.⁶² Its principal objective was to find an iconography rooted in its heritage (primarily of nineteenth-century Russian-dominated Poland) that had



Figure 132. Jankiel Adler, illustration for cover of *Jung Idysz*, no. 1, 1919. Linocut. (From Jerzy Malinowski, *Grupa "Jung Idysz" i Żydowski Środowisko "Nowej Sztuki" w Polsce, 1912–1923*, Warsaw, 1987.)

universal resonance and hence would be consequential for a Gentile audience.

The impetus for many to join Jung Idysz stemmed from the Jewish cultural-revival movement that flourished in the euphoria of independence following the war. Not exclusively orthodox in their religious observance, the revivalists investigated Polish Jewish folklore to re-present it for a modern audience in the contemporary idiom of expressionism. In this effort Jung Idysz might be compared with several movements in and around Zakopane from the turn of the century into the 1930s – artists who developed a modern expressionism by drawing on the folk arts and crafts of Poland's southeastern mountain district, where these traditions were carefully cultivated and preserved. Moreover, like Chagall and Issacher Ryback and their counterparts in the Jewish cultural revival in Russia, Jung Idysz artists treated

religious iconography as a kind of folk imagery to be adapted freely. Thus, we find in their oeuvre prints with superficially Christian themes and Jewish subjects handled expressionistically as if they were of principally secular significance.

With such contradictory perspectives, Jung Idysz was only loosely united by the common religious/ethnic background of its adherents, a shared conviction in the appropriateness of expressionist aesthetics, and a collective commitment to the graphic arts. Like the formists and Buntists, with whom Jung Idysz bears close comparison, Jewish artists in the textile city of Łódź had difficulty sustaining themselves in the face of limited patronage, conflicting goals, and competing artist groups that appealed to their members' personal interests. Moreover, the fundamentally expressionist character of their graphic work (and poetry) was itself eclipsed by the dynamic possibilities and universalist claims of constructivism.⁶³

CONSTRUCTIVISM OF THE 1920s IN POLAND AND LITHUANIA

Between 1922 and the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Polish variants of constructivism could be acclaimed as some of the most dynamic modernist art in Europe.⁶⁴ Yet the achievements of the avant-garde and its creative figures did not come easily, as progressive artists fought both mainstream opposition and private reservations. The Polish art sent to international exhibitions and promoted in the official literary and cultural press was an art of moderation, mostly the fruit of a heterogeneous group of Warsaw-based artists known as Rytm (Rhythm).⁶⁵ Its ranks included impressionists, folklorists, classicists, and symbolists – many of them progressive artists who were nonetheless ill at ease with radical aesthetics, whether visual or political, and many who were united equally by their misgivings regarding the traditionalism represented by *Sztuka*. Thus, Rytm steered a middle course between iconoclastic experimentation and conservative convention – a course with ample space for freedom of expression and aesthetic exploration unhampered by a constraining body of theory. The art sanctioned by the group generally manifests as compositions based on rhythmic patterning of lines, planes, and sometimes geometric forms. Such compositional organization of the picture plane is often coupled with a decorative



Figure 133. Jankiel Adler, *The Rabbi Eleazar's Last Hour*, 1917–18. Oil on cardboard, 100 × 70 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź (stolen from museum on 12 June 1981).

use of color. In essence, Rytm aspired to a modern equivalent of classical control and harmony, a goal consonant with the government's objective to build a modern Polish society that avoided both the radicalism of revolutionary Russia and the conservatism of the monarchical past.⁶⁶ Many of Rytm's adherents had resigned from innovative Polish art movements or literary circles in the early 1920s to negotiate a less expressionist or less geometric path.⁶⁷ Indeed, the three founders of Rytm – Waclaw Borowski, Eugeniusz Zak, and Henryk Kuna – made a neoclassical response both to the highly charged emotional-

ism of expressionism and to the cool rationality of constructivism. The nudes of Kuna (Fig. 134) and Borowski (Fig. 135) reveal the distance not just from exaggerated forms of expressionism but also from the emotional intensity of contemporaneous New Objectivity figuration, which influenced many progressive artists throughout central and eastern Europe during the mid-1920s. A few hallmarks – Arcadian subjects (*Diana*, *Atalanta*, *Idyll*), contraposto composition, and a dancelike, flowing figural gesture – affirm Rytm's attempt to link contemporary art to a noble tradition without being depen-



Figure 134. Henryk Kuna, *Rhythm*, 1929. Bronze, 18 cm high. (Courtesy of the National Museum, Warsaw.)

dent on academicism.⁶⁸ It was a style and attitude that garnered support from the government but only disavowal and discredit from the growing legions of Poland's constructivist avant-garde.

Whereas Rytm created a national style of classical moderation appropriate to contemporary political circumstances, the avant-garde endeavored to push Poland to the forefront of international, modernist culture. The country's unique history allowed artists to pursue each direction simultaneously. Thus, while

Rytm was planning its first exhibition for a 1922 opening, the Polish Art Club in Warsaw showed the cubist canvases of Henryk Stażewski and the suprematist works of Mieczysław Szczuka. In support of the most radical positions, a host of modernist pamphlets, broadsides, and journals – such as *Zwrotnica* (Railroad Switch)⁶⁹ (Fig. 136) – most of them with functionalist typographical design, were proclaiming to the newly independent Polish nation the arrival of a “native” avant-garde. The crystallization of these early constructivist elements took place not in Warsaw or Cracow, long the centers of Polish visual culture, but in Vilnius.⁷⁰ It was there, on 20 May 1923, that the New Art Exhibition officially opened in the theater-cum-cinema Corso. Among the first manifestations of constructivist art outside Russia, the exhibition merits examining in some detail; first, however, we need to consider briefly the cultural significance of the host city.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Vilnius was the cosmopolitan capital of a province of the Russian empire. The city's population included significant numbers of Jews among the Poles and Lithuanians there, as well as lesser numbers of Russians, White Russians, and others.⁷¹ Although Vilnius was politically controlled by Russians, who imposed severe restrictions by order of the tsar,⁷² Polish culture enjoyed a long and distinguished history. From the end of the nineteenth century and through the early years of the twentieth, exhibitions by Polish and Lithuanian artists were occasionally mounted, including one in 1903 by Sztuka associates from Cracow, organized by the Vilnius painter Ferdynand Ruszczyk.⁷³ The relaxation of Russian cultural control in 1905 and the subsequent founding of several artists' associations marked the beginning of significant progress in transforming Vilnius into a center for art. In 1910 Ruszczyk played a pivotal role in establishing the Artistic Circle, which promoted aesthetic self-education and embraced such new fields as photography. About the same time, the Vilnius Society of Artists was founded with the support of Vytautas Kairiūkštis (known by many of his Polish colleagues as Witold Kajruksztis), who would become the major Lithuanian figure in the pioneering New Art Exhibition.⁷⁴ The society's principal objective was to consolidate progressive efforts in the city regardless of the artist's nationality. To this end, members were drawn from all its principal nationalities – Jews (who were defined by Gentiles through-



Figure 135. Waclaw Borowski, *Diana*, ca. 1928. Oil on canvas, 150 × 100 cm. National Museum, Warsaw.

out eastern Europe as constituting a “nation” without a homeland), Poles, Lithuanians, and Russians – as well as from Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Cracow, Paris, and beyond. Through these contacts, information about futurism, cubism, and expressionism was brought to Vilnius and quickly absorbed by a receptive community.

With the outbreak of the global conflict in 1914, the Lithuanian region surrounding Vilnius witnessed the rupture of its vibrant central European culture. By 1915 the German army subdued and

occupied the city, there to remain for three and a half years. In February 1918 a Lithuanian National Council proclaimed independence and by late fall of that year set up an autonomous government. As was the case in Estonia and especially in neighboring Latvia, however, the declaration of independence unleashed years of further conflict. The ensuing war was fought variously – and sometimes simultaneously – against intervening troops from Soviet Russia (trying to establish a bolshevist Lithuania) and from newly independent Poland (seeking to actual-

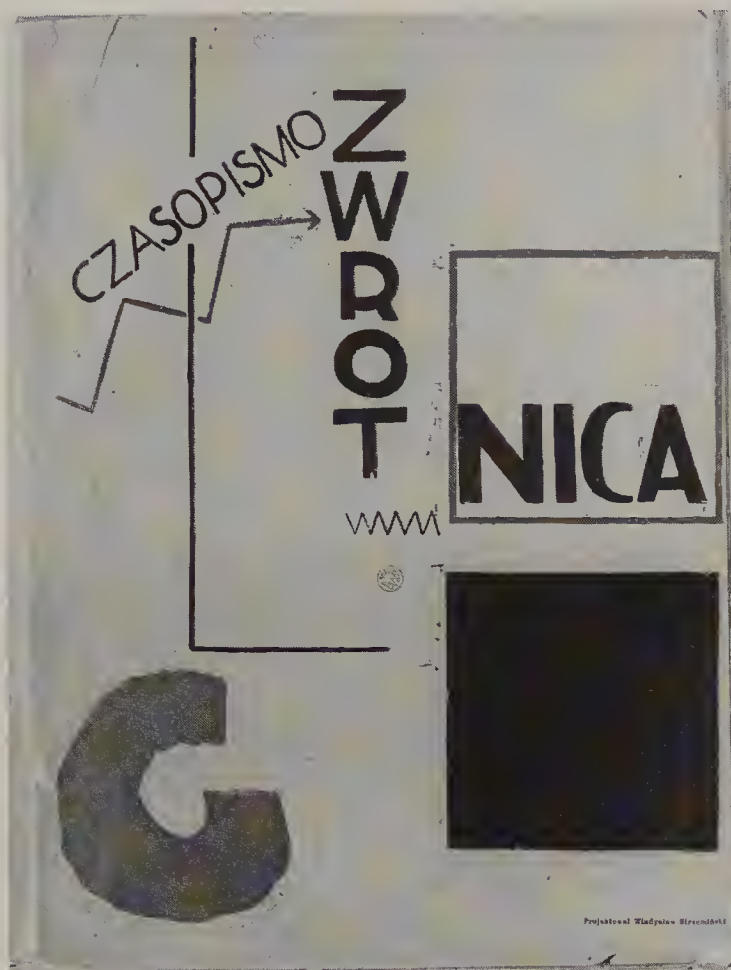


Figure 136. Władysław Strzemiński, cover design for *Zwrotnica* (Railroad Switch), no. 6, 1923. Library of the National Museum, Cracow.

ize its irredentist claims) as well as against German Freikorps and right-wing Russian volunteers (determined to reestablish the ancien régime). In 1922 Lithuanian independence, secured by force of arms at enormous cost, was confirmed by international treaties. Unlike Latvia and Estonia, however, Lithuania achieved only a partial victory, for the agreements awarded its capital (and a significant portion of the national territory) to Poland (see Map 2), whose armies, in abrogation of the Treaty of Suwałki (1920), invaded the city in October 1920, upon the departure of the Russians, and immediately began to Polishize its inhabitants.⁷⁵ Lithuania then established a provisional capital in Kaunas, eighty kilometers to the west.⁷⁶

The Polishization of Vilnius had been manifested as early as 1919, when the Stefan Batory University was opened. Its department of fine arts was led by Ruszczyk, who brought to the faculty leading figures from the formists: Zbigniew Pronaszko and Benedykt Kubicki, among numerous other representatives of Poland's emerging avant-garde. Thus, the

Polish influences in Vilnius confirmed and continued the prewar progressiveness of the city's visual culture, even if many Lithuanian modernists felt compelled to emigrate from their capital. The most celebrated figure who elected to remain, and by doing so forged ties among vanguard artists from Lithuania and Poland, was Kairiūkštis. His participation in the New Art Exhibition just after the borders between Poland and Lithuania were sealed in 1922, as well as his membership in Blok (Block) and in Praesens,⁷⁷ helped to steer the course of Polish modernism – now reconfigured with the departure of many fellow Lithuanians for Kaunas. Kairiūkštis had learned while a student at Moscow's radically revolutionary VKhUTEMAS (Higher Artistic-Technical Workshops) that the consummate responsibility of the modern artist was to construct a new world of calculated paradigmatic formal relationships while striving to overcome the particularism of nationality.⁷⁸ Upon his return to Lithuania, he taught in Vilnius's Vytautas the Great *gymnasium*, and from this single outpost of Lithuanian culture in the Polish city, he completed a series of cubist compositions that hark back to the cubo-futurism he had seen while in Russia. These canvases (Fig. 137) were considerably more avant-garde than anything then being painted in Lithuania – more so, for example, than the work of Petras Kalpokas (Fig. 138) and Adomas Varnas (Fig. 139), who had continued to build on Lithuania's familiarity with German and French styles during the period of civil strife.

By 1922 Kairiūkštis had pushed beyond cubism and entered the rarefied realm of suprematism (Fig. 140), which he understood as offering "the principle of the organicity of an artwork that results from its essence. . . ." He postulated: "Painting without construction is not art but an illustration."⁷⁹ The impact of such theoretical claims was doubtless enhanced and clarified through the extraordinarily advanced typographical design of the accompanying exhibition catalog in which they appeared (Fig. 141). It was this concern with making more visible the constructed world of new pictorial relations that animated Kairiūkštis's joint cause with Poland's young modernists. In the May 1923 New Art Exhibition, he displayed just over twenty works, the overwhelming majority of which demonstrated his belief that "the visual layout . . . is the result of the establishment of a certain ordering of plastic elements on the surface



Figure 137. Vytautas Kairiūkštis, *Cubist Composition*, 1921.
Oil on canvas, 52 × 43 cm. Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius.



Figure 138. Petras Kalpokas, *Self-Portrait*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 80 × 64 cm. M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas.



Figure 139. Adomas Varnas, *In Autumnal Light*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 70 × 70 cm. M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas.

of the canvas, which are brought into a relationship with one another and with the picture as a whole"⁸⁰ (see Plate 12).

Also remaining in Polish-administered Vilnius, and a committed follower of Kairiūkštis, was the Lithuanian painter Vladas Drėma, who confronted the Polonization of his city with the creation of a modern national style.⁸¹

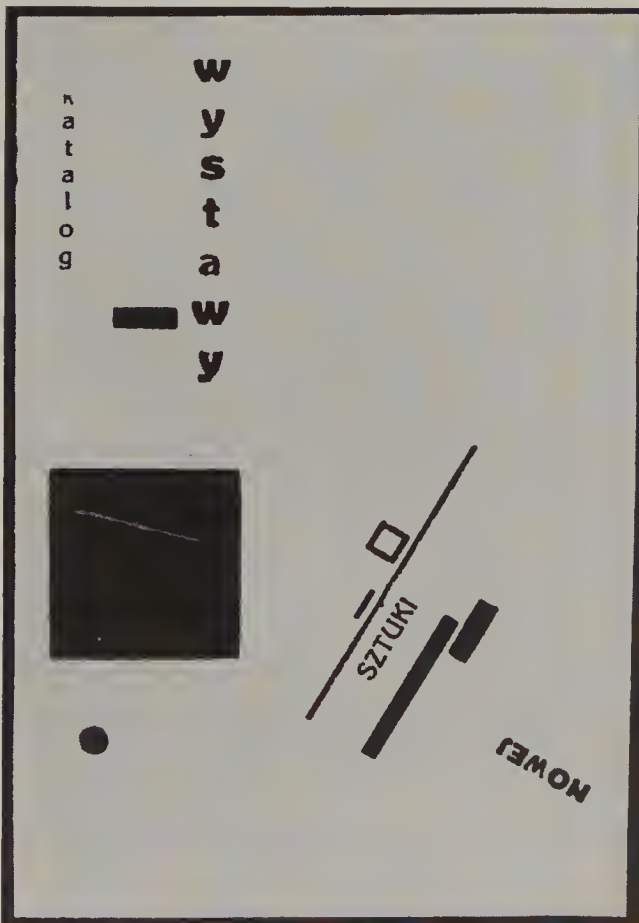
In abstractly composed landscapes (Fig. 142), Drėma orchestrated color as effectively as in his cubo-

constructivist still lifes (Fig. 143). The sea, hills, sun, and sky of the Lithuanian landscape are carefully contoured, and spatial recession is arrested by the transparent surface planes. It is as if the landscape features of the country have been made emblematic by the constructivist conventions of art: The sun is a perfect circle, the overlapping planes on the left edge form a suprematist cross, and the green cloud form obeys the rules of cubist art rather than of nature. Drėma achieved even greater geometric stylization



Figure 140. Vytautas Kairiūkštis, *Suprematist Composition*, 1922-3. Oil on canvas? Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius.

Figure 141. Vytautas Kairiūkštis, cover for catalog *Wystawy Nowej Sztuki w Wilnie* (New Art Exhibition in Vilnius), 1923. Library of the Museum of Art, Łódź.



in his picture of a glazier (see Plate 13), one of the most impressive works of the period created in Polish Vilnius. Harmoniously juxtaposed rectangular blocks of browns, blues, and black and elongated stripes of gold highlighting make for an almost musical play of forms; while the rhythms established by the panes of glass are concatenated through the planar recession of the midground and background. Here Drėma freed himself from dependence on Kairiūkštis to make use of more progressive sources of Baltic modernism. The figure's check-patterned trousers fit well in the constructivist composition, which betrays a debt to cubism in the letters at the upper left corner, and his head stems indirectly from Kazimir Malevich's cubo-futurist peasants of the early 1910s. Drėma's creative blend of native figuration and patterning owes something also to Lithuanian folk traditions in its color harmonies, abstract design, collapse of spatial recession, and (at times) subject matter. The rich hues, abstract composition-

Figure 142. Vladas Drėma, *Landscape*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 27.5 × 19.5 cm. M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas.





Figure 143. Vladas Drėma, *Still Life*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 29.5 × 22 cm. M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, Kaunas.

al patterning, and folk imagery of *The Washerwoman* (Fig. 144) constitute the fullest realization in Vilnius of a Lithuanian modernism based on the precepts articulated by Kairiūkštis.

Equally well versed in suprematism and constructivism was Władysław Strzemiński, who traveled from the Soviet state to Vilnius in 1921. In the 1923 exhibition, which he coorganized with Kairiūkštis, he presented ten works that constitute a summary of the “laboratory” art he must have encountered in the various revolutionary art institutions of Moscow, Minsk, and Smolensk. Perhaps the most pioneering exhibited work that survives was the Rodchenko-related *Plastic Construction (Breakage of the Black*

Square) (Fig. 145), through which geometry’s (and by extension Malevich’s) pure forms are broken and recombined to conform to the demands of the picture surface. Similarly, his *Cubism – Tensions of Material Structure* (see Plate 14) explores the nature of texture (*faktura*) along with the limits of illusion, juxtaposing everyday substances (sand, gravel, cork, and house paint) with the quasi-illusionist, cubist-collage vocabulary of alphabetic letters, curvilinear forms, and planar composition. Strzemiński’s fascination with materials, with the relation between two-dimensional flatness and three-dimensional “reality,” and with the pictorial tension between geometric absolutes and free forms (Fig. 146) were



Figure 144. Vladas Drėma, *The Washerwoman*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 39 × 31 cm. Museum of Art, Vilnius.

all demonstrated in the work he put on exhibition in Vilnius.⁸²

The five other youthful participants in the New Art Exhibition, although lacking the background of Strzemiński and Kairiūkštis in the revolutionary studios of Soviet Russia, nevertheless shared a general

commitment to avant-garde aesthetics. Thus, in the extraordinarily advanced graphics, canvases, and sculpture put on display by Mieczysław Szczuka, Karol Kryński (Fig. 147), Henryk Stażewski, Teresa Żarnower, and Maria Puciatycka, a cadre of chiefly Polish artists established a collective modernist foun-

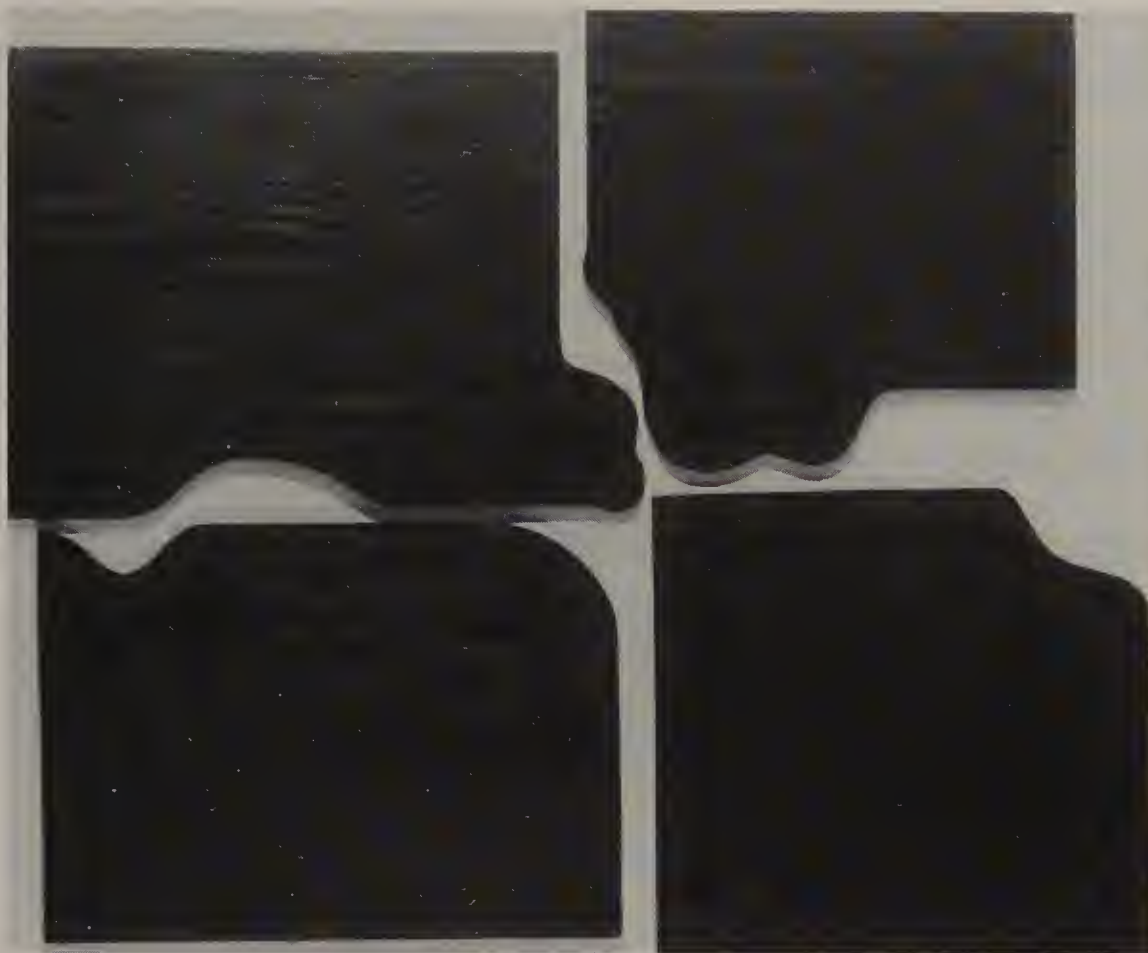


Figure 145. Władysław Strzemiński, *Plastic Construction (Breakage of the Black Square)*, 1923. Oil on wooden board, 52.5 × 63 cm. National Museum, Warsaw.

Figure 146. Władysław Strzemiński, *Synthetic Composition I*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 62 × 52 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.



dition from which to launch, within the year, a sweeping avant-garde offensive. Operating mainly from Warsaw, a city that increasingly assumed the role of Polish cultural capital commensurate with its new status as the seat of national government, these figures – many maintaining links to Vilnius, Lwów, Cracow, and other traditional artist centers – continued the process that would redraw the landscape of modern art in Poland. Through their own avant-garde journal, *Blok* (1924–6), they announced themselves to the world as cubists, constructivists, and suprematists.⁸³ Their program, built on the essays published in the Vilnius exhibition catalog,⁸⁴ called emphatically for the autonomy of nonrepresentational art, understood as a construction of pure forms. Unlike the formists, however, most *Blok* members insisted that their constructions were consummately modern, for they promoted collective work, rejected all forms of individuation, and were fully consonant with the utilitarianism of the machine. Beauty, abjured per se, was replaced by an



Figure 147. Karol Kryński, *Self-Portrait*, 1922–3. Oil on panel, 46.5 × 37.5 cm. National Museum, Warsaw.

insistence on the logical relation of shapes and the ultimate connection between the work of art and its social application. In essence, Blok subscribed to the general theories common to the “first machine age,” giving to semi- and full geometric abstraction the utopian social dimension by which art shapes reality rather than ornamenting it. Accordingly, in their first group exhibition, held in the Warsaw showroom of a Czech automobile manufacturer,⁸⁵ the modernist art that was displayed – and simultaneously published in the functionalist pages of *Blok* (Fig. 148) – affirmed the complementarity of constructivism and machine technology.⁸⁶

Blok produced as much theoretical work as canvases – a fact that led to philosophical disagreements among the members. From the inception of the group, differences in outlook between Strzemiński and Szczuka were acknowledged explicitly. On the title page to the second issue, the editors of *Blok* con-

ceded that the movement brought together contributors united by an absolute commitment to abstraction, even though member artists pursued widely divergent means in realizing it.⁸⁷ Szczuka, the more theoretically engaged of the two, argued that every object should be constructed according to need, for only on that basis could art enter daily life. Moreover, the “constructive factor” must draw its model from the organizational principles of the factory, where production is the result of collaboration and not the effect of any single individual’s effort.⁸⁸ This mechanistic outlook, a point on which Strzemiński and Szczuka were in accord, applies particularly to typographical design (Fig. 149), architecture, cinematography, and other fields that require collective contributions. Szczuka followed his own preaching; destroying his earlier canvases and spatial constructions, he gave up easel painting in favor of truly contemporary work for the masses: reproducible posters



Figure 148 (above & above right). Cover pages from *Blok*, no. 1 (March) and no. 2 (April), 1924. (Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Łódź.)

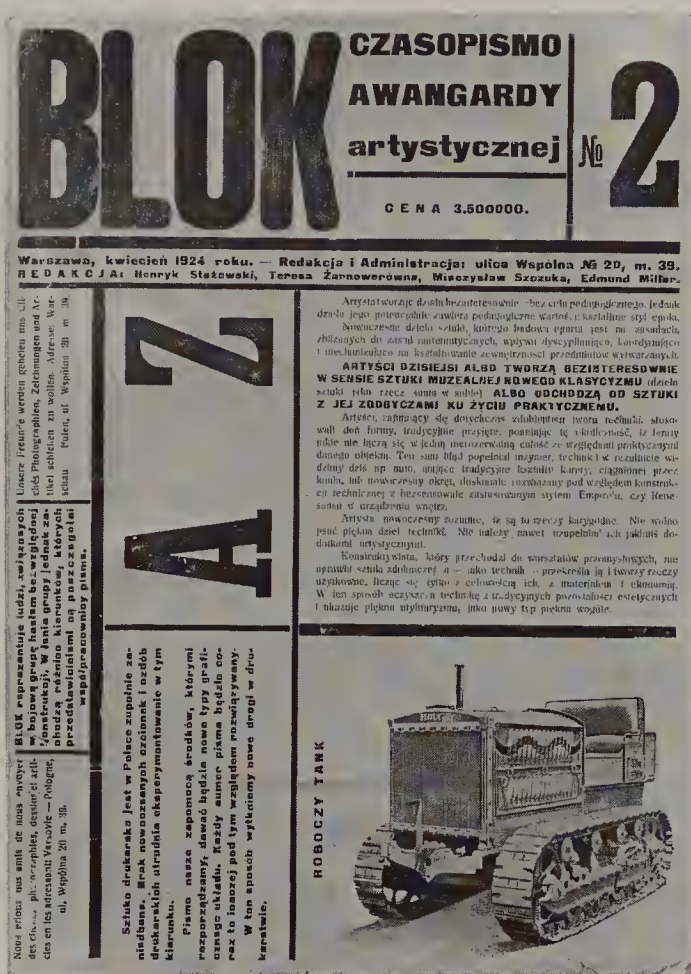


Figure 149 (below). Władysław Strzemiński, typographical design, reproduced in *Blok*, no. 2, p. 7. (Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Łódź.)

(Fig. 150), photomontage (Fig. 151), book design,⁸⁹ film, sculpture (often concepts for monuments to leftist individuals – for example, Karl Liebknecht – or to abstractions such as Liberty), and architecture.⁹⁰ As the reproductions in *Blok* attest (Fig. 152), Szczuka's collaborator Żarnower, with whom he participated in left-wing causes, advanced many of their shared principles.⁹¹ After July 1924 the two colleagues – who advocated an art determined by social needs and context – published the journal alone,⁹² their ideological differences with Strzemiński, Stażewski, and Kobro having proved irreconcilable. The latter three, declaring for an autonomous abstract art that would itself ultimately determine the social order, elected to withdraw from the group – though not from their commitment to an engaged avant-garde aesthetics. Indeed, we can recognize in Strzemiński and his wife Katarzyna Kobro two of the major ideologists of Polish constructivism.⁹³ In his last contribution to *Blok*, a lengthy philosophical essay entitled “B = 2, to read . . .,” Strzemiński set out the principles that would toward the end of the decade be codified into unim: “Art = maximum creation . . . absolute creation. . . The direction of develop-

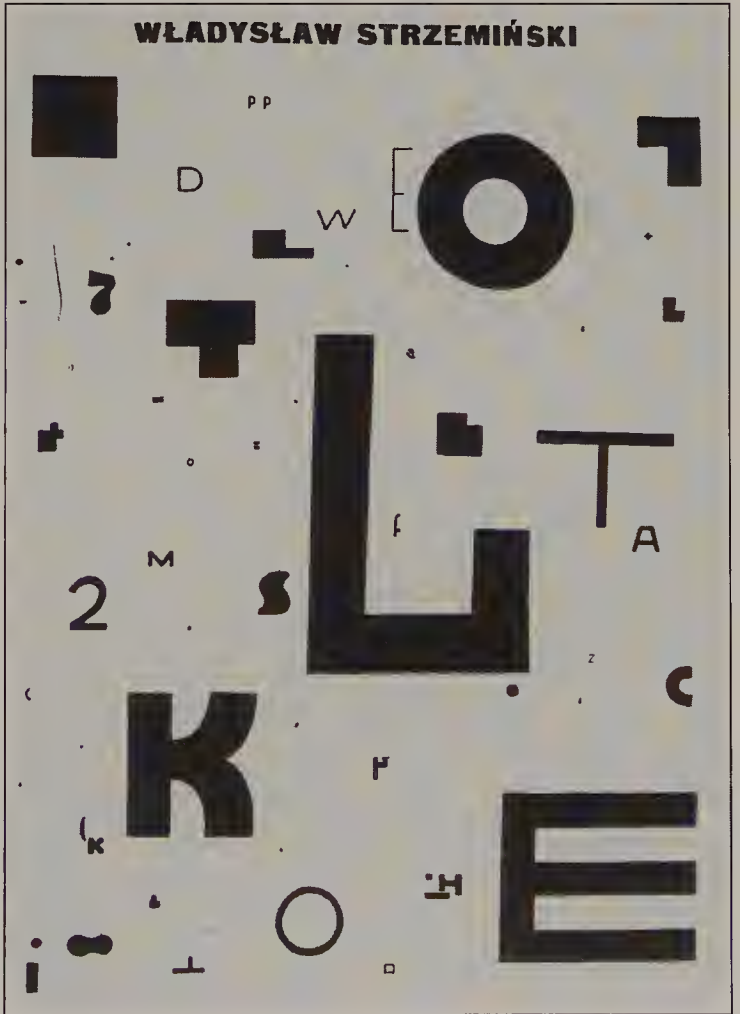


Figure 150 (below). Władysław Strzemiński, typographical design, reproduced in *Blok*, no. 2, p. 7. (Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Łódź.)



Figure 150. Mieczysław Szczuka, *Poster*, 1925. Watercolor, india ink, pencil, and photomontage on paper, 100 × 70 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.

ment of the visual arts . . . in the 20th century can be summarized: to create a work of art as an organic plastic entity."⁹⁴

While the philosophic debate between Szczuka and Strzemiński was raging within Blok, Henryk Berlewi was building his own constructivist system. Having stepped away from an earlier absorption with Jewish imagery and expressionist aesthetics following a meeting with El Lissitzky in Warsaw in 1921, Berlewi was ripe to participate in the constructivism being created in central Europe (Fig. 153). To further his studies and enhance his contacts, he moved in 1922 to Berlin, where he generated in the

following year his own concept of constructivism, titled "Mechano-Faktura" (Fig. 154).⁹⁵ His recent relocation to Berlin prevented him from participating in the 1923 Vilnius New Art Exhibition, but he did enlist in the avant-garde ranks of Blok upon its founding the next year. Berlewi, too, had disagreements with the principal ideologists of Blok. With striking effect, he declared his distance by opening on the same evening (14 March 1924) as Blok's inaugural exhibition, held on the premises of the Laurin and Klement motorcar company, his own work, wittily installed in the Warsaw showroom of the Austro-Daimler automobile company (Figs. 155,



Figure 151. Mieczysław Szczuka, cover design for volume of poetry by W. Broniewski (*Smoke over a City*), ca. 1926. Photomontage on paper, 40 × 31 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.

156). Primarily a constructivism of surface texture, Berlewi's mechano-facture modifies the flat character of a picture through the rhythmic arrangement of the differing textural properties constituting the surface (paint, metal, glass, sand, newspaper clippings, and so on).⁹⁶ Each element dematerializes in the context of the whole – for example, a collaged newspaper clipping no longer invites being “read” and is transformed into typographical rhythm, the pieces of glass taking on a hue, and sand becoming “a grainy, pulverized, trembling timbre.” Thus, a picture ceases to be the extension of a person's individuality; rather, the modernist image is transposed into a composite of metaphors or equivalents that are manifested as textures. Their effective orchestration depends entirely on “. . . mechanistic technology,

modeled on industrial methods that are independent of individual whims and based on the strict and precise functioning of machines. . . .”⁹⁷ Berlewi's constructivist theory proved an ideal approach for functionalist typography and graphic design (Fig. 157).⁹⁸

The disputes that engaged Berlewi and others within the ranks of Blok had more to do with personalities, ambitions, and artistic applications than with basic principles. All the adherents to the group shared a belief in the timeliness and absolute supremacy of constructivism for the modern citizen's needs and Poland's cultural claims. Therefore, when Blok disintegrated in 1926, many former members readily regrouped in Warsaw as Praesens (its journal entitled *Praesens: Kwartalnik Modernistów* [Present: A Modernist's Quarterly]). Like Blok, Praesens attract-

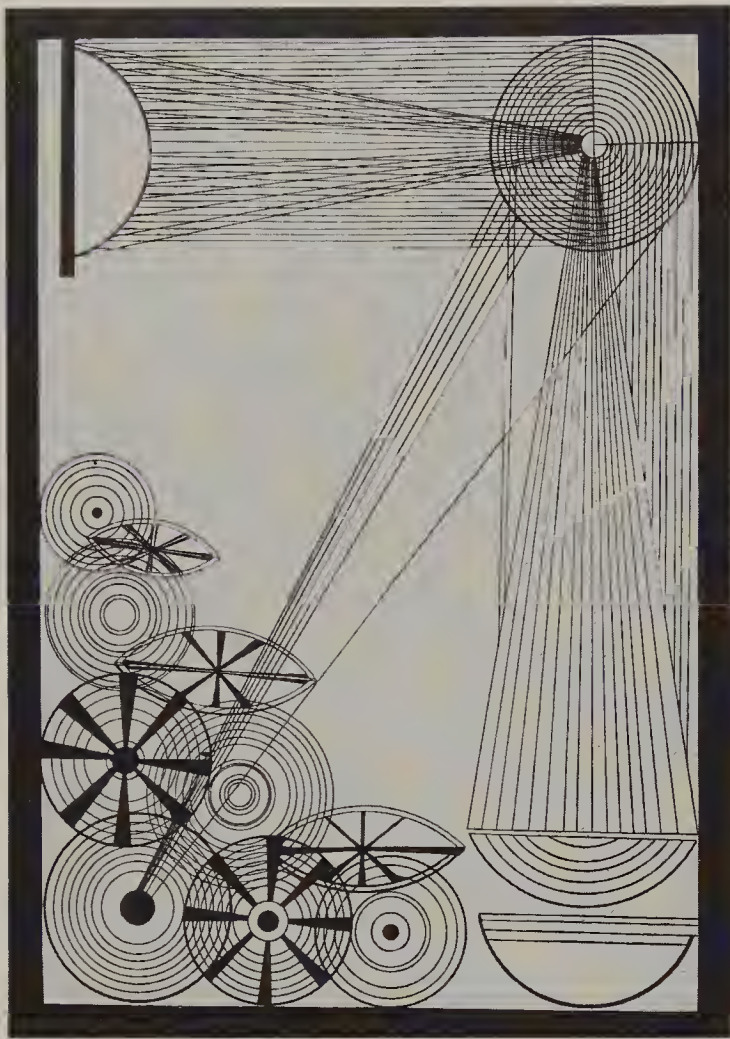
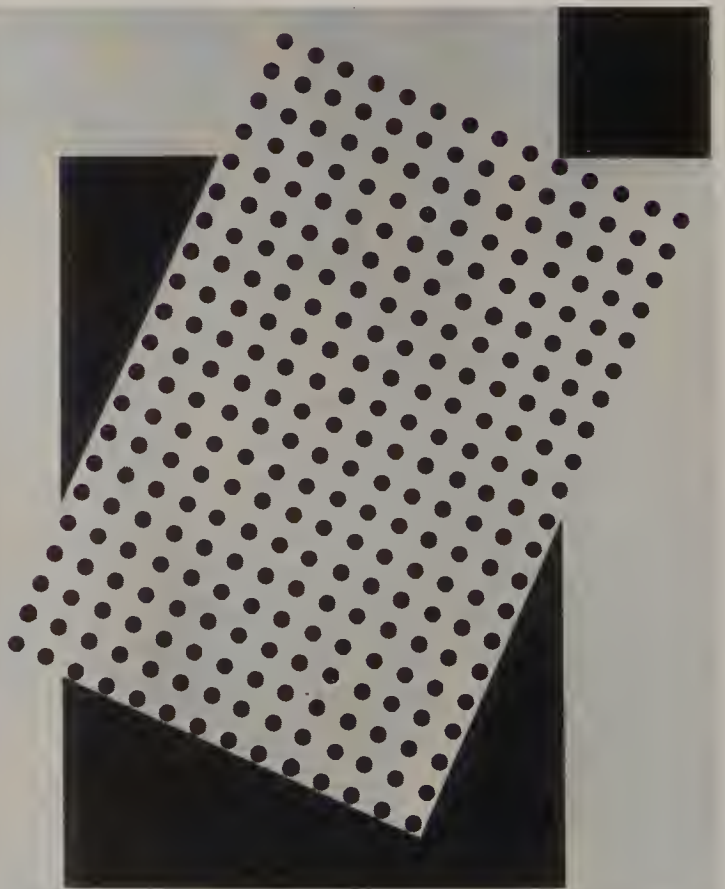


Figure 152. Teresa Żarnower, *Composition with Circles*, 1924. Original lost, published in *Blok*, no. 5, 1924. (Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Łódź.)

Figure 153 (above right). Henryk Berlewi, *Still Life with Bottles*, 1922. Gouache, 55 × 37 cm. (Archival photo; original lost.)

Figure 154 (right). Henryk Berlewi, *Elements of Mechanofacture*, 1923. Gouache. (Archival photo.)

ed architects and painters who shared a primary allegiance to constructivist aesthetics, even if they disagreed on the application of them; also like *Blok*, the movement incurred defections almost from the beginning. Nevertheless, in its first few years, Praesens counted among its adherents not just its predecessor's alumni (Strzemiński, Stażewski, Kryński, Kobro, Aleksander Rafałowski, and Jan Górus) but veterans of the formists (Witkowski, Zbigniew and Andrzej Pronaszko, and Stanisław Zalewski) as well as considerable numbers of progressive architects (Józef Szanajca, Bohdan Lachert, and especially Szymon Syrkus). Indeed, it was primarily as an architectural collaborative that Praesens functioned. What attracted the painters, at least at first, was the programmatic emphasis on architectonic composition – a factor that had as much to do with the construc-



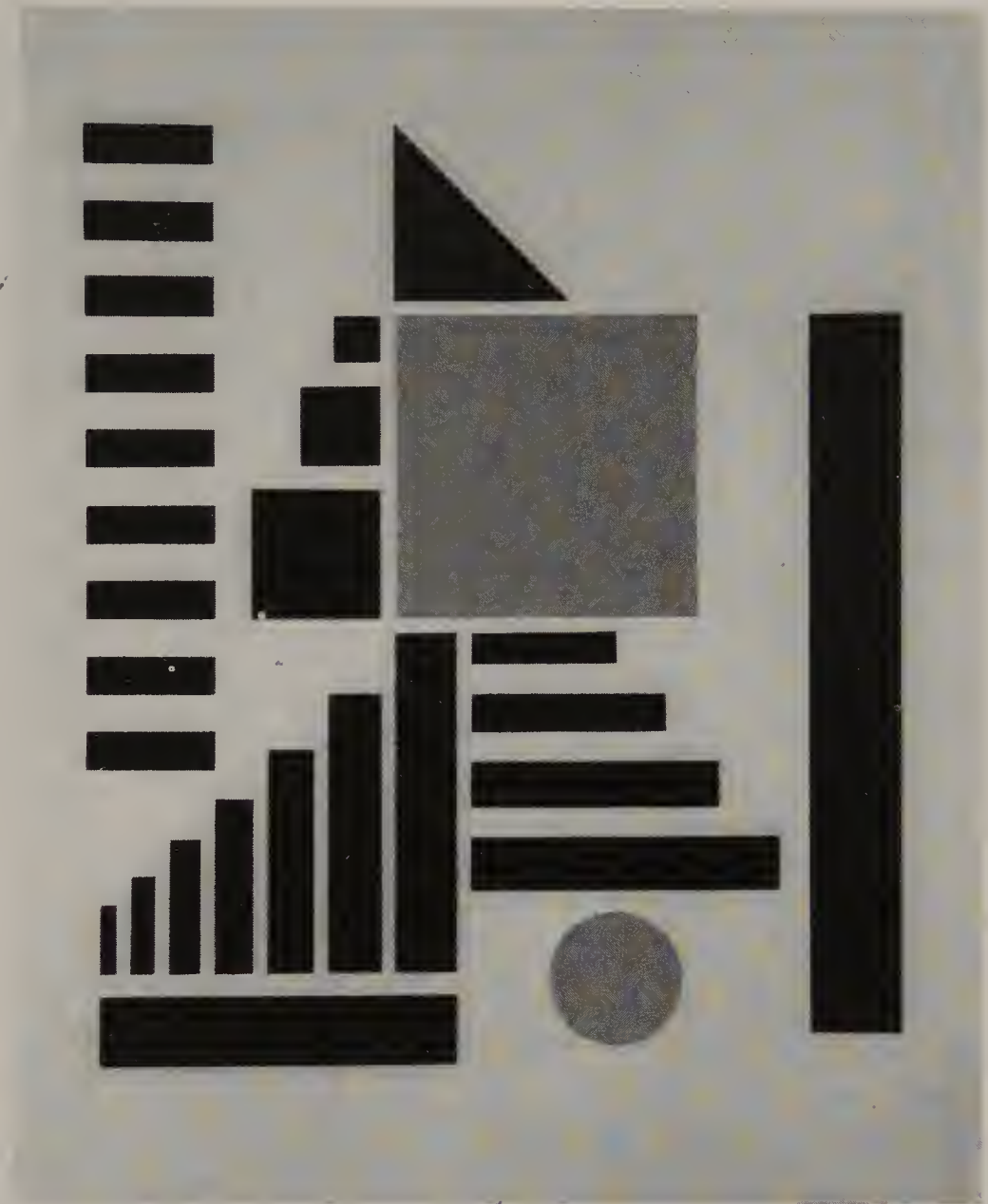


Figure 155. Henryk Berlewi, *Mechano-Facture in White, Red, and Black*, 1924. Gouache on paper, 98 × 81 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.

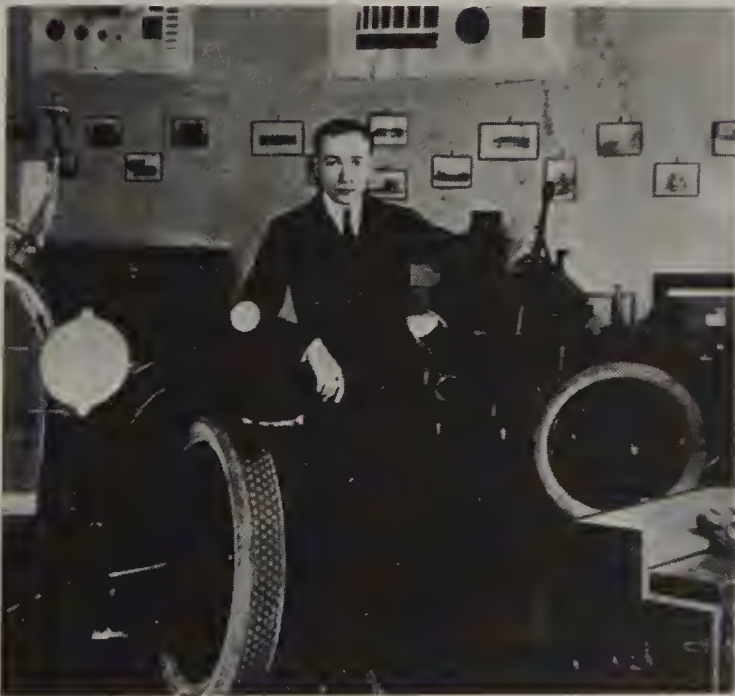


Figure 156 (left). Henryk Berlewi in the Daimler showroom with his exhibition of *Mechano-Factura* pieces, Warsaw, 1924. (Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Łódź.)

tion of small, inexpensive flats built of standard prefabricated elements as with the design of their cubist and constructivist compositions.

Syrkus, the architect-founder of the organization, affirmed the inclusiveness of Praesens's orientation in the group's statement of purpose, which appeared in its journal: "[T]he architectonic approach provides new opportunities, not only artistic . . . but also social."⁹⁹ This twinning of comprehensive design and social utility was of great appeal to numerous painters who shared a belief in collaboration in order to realize a total functionalist environment, extending from interior design to urban planning. The group's

credo was reflected in several exhibitions for which Praesens members designed everything from the pavilions to the paintings on display in the carefully structured interiors.¹⁰⁰ The machine aesthetic that lay at the heart of their constructivist conception made Praesens ideally suited to coorganize the Machine Age Exposition in 1927 in New York, where an American audience had the chance to witness an impressive display of Polish constructivist art by Stażewski and Strzemiński as well as functionalist architectural designs by Syrkus, Szanajca, and Lachert, among others.

The collaboration that all Praesens parties sought was, for the most part, illusory. Syrkus and the architects increasingly assumed the prerogative for the overall transformation of the environment, assigning to the painters a subsidiary role of providing color designs for the buildings' surfaces. Strzemiński, deeply engaged with refining his unist theory, was persuaded that the guiding principle of functionalism could only mean complete "architecturalization," from pictorial space to the physical environment. For him and for other painter members of Praesens who were deeply committed to social reconstruction, industrialization (for example, the mass production of building parts and elements) was a means to transform the social landscape and not merely an economic opportunity to build low-cost housing. To the contrary, the architects understood their task as fulfilling with the greatest efficiency the social needs that currently existed. Thus, like the numerous groups that preceded it, Praesens was riven by discord. By 1929 most of the painters had withdrawn from the architect-dominated Praesens to regroup yet again in radical formation.¹⁰¹

Praesens had offered more than an occasion for internal discussion among Poland's avant-garde, more than opportunities to exhibit their work at home and abroad. Through the organization's quarterly journal, there had been the expectation of communicating to a wider, international community of committed progressive figures, as the periodical had established relations with a network of avant-garde publications throughout Europe and beyond. Further, it was expected that *Praesens* would serve as a forum for original thought and a vehicle for the new typography already pioneered in Poland. In point of fact, few of these high hopes were fully realized. It is true that the issue of June 1926 contained important statements by Strzemiński and Syrkus, as

well as contributions from J. J. P. Oud, Theo van Doesburg, and Kazimir Malevich. The next (and final) number of *Praesens* did not appear until 1930, however, so there was little opportunity to fulfill the promise originally held for the periodical. In functionalist design, also, we must acknowledge that *Praesens* failed to live up to expectations. Outside of its initial cover (Fig. 158), the journal fell short of the high quality of typography so often achieved in *Zwrotnica* and *Blok* and the various futurist books of poetry designed by the Polish avant-garde during the mid-1920s.

Perhaps the most significant of Praesens's publications – one of several independent volumes issued under its imprint – was a title linked to the movement's successor. Strzemiński's "Unism in Painting" had appeared in 1928,¹⁰² the year before he and his fellow constructivist painters resigned from Praesens. Unism is a distinctively Polish variant of the suprematism/constructivism Strzemiński encountered at first hand during his study with Malevich and other members of Russia's dynamic avant-garde in the revolutionary years from 1917 to 1921. As early as 1922, in articles in *Zwrotnica* and *Blok*, he began to rethink suprematism and to develop a functionalist theory that promoted an "absolute painting" free from the spatial contradictions between foreground and background. What Strzemiński perceived to be baroque illusionism in cubism and suprematism, what he described as a "clash of line against line," created for him tensions that undermined the unity (unism) of a painting. The introduction of color only exacerbated these dynamic tensions. As pictorial dynamism could not be separated from the movement of space and time, making all nonunist painting temporally ambiguous, Strzemiński's task was to replace the dualism of dynamic (and temporal) forces with a unified, absolute composition. By so doing, he believed he would have transcended time and created a homogeneous art that might function as an equivalent to nature itself – a new, absolute, and noncontingent nature appropriate for a modern age.

In practice, unism meant eliminating contrasts of color, controlling the dynamic tensions among the compositional elements, and employing a numerical system to balance the design. Strzemiński's paintings between roughly 1923 and 1934 (Figs. 159, 160) show the artist moving developmentally toward compositions that are uniform in texture, restrained in the handling of line, and practically monochro-

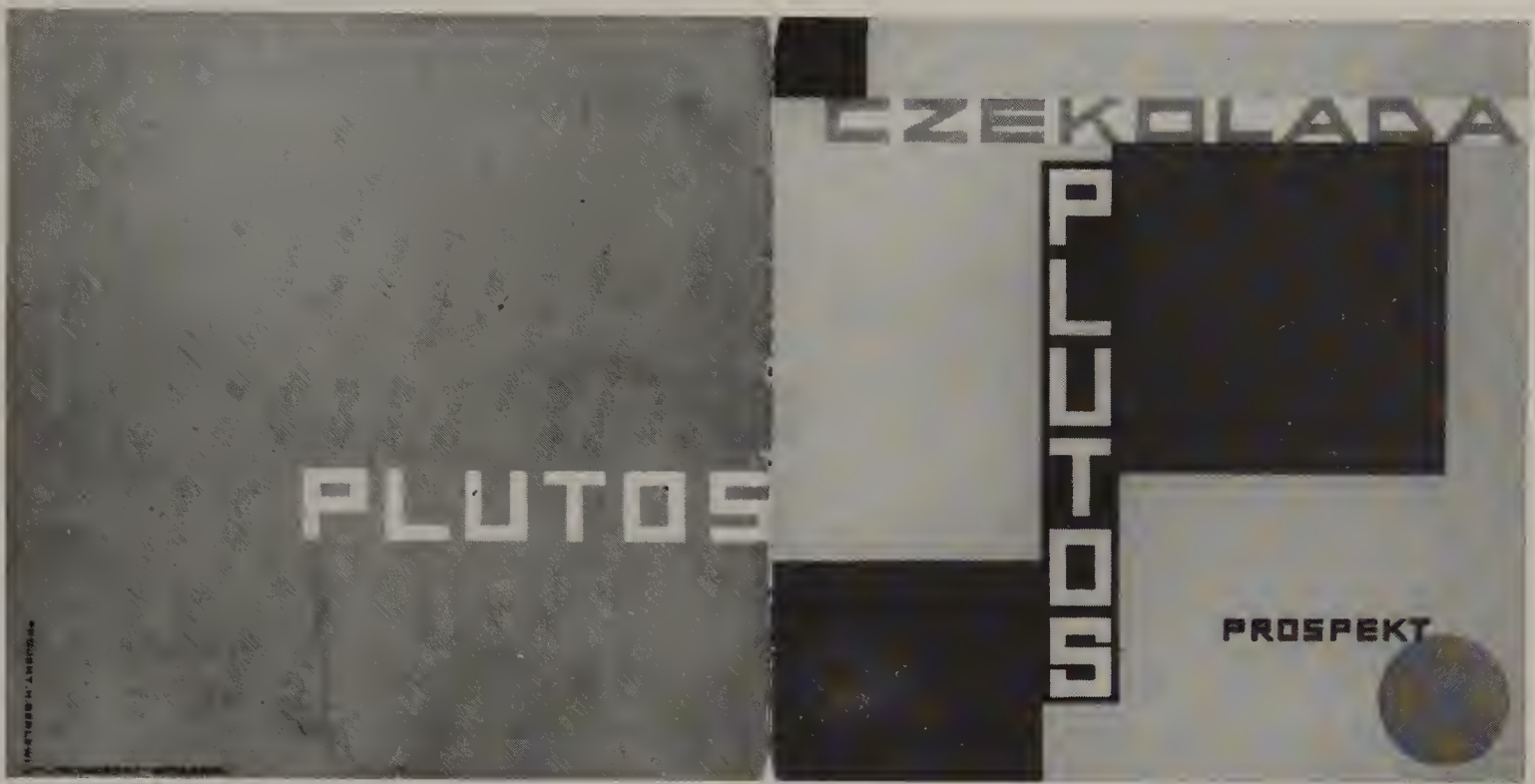
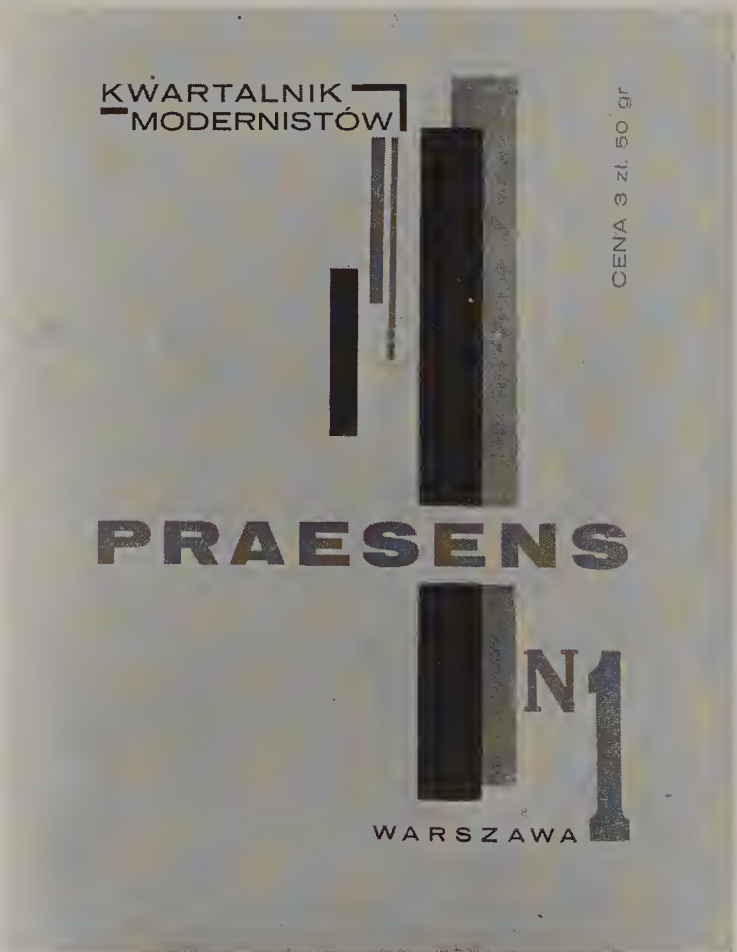


Figure 157. Henryk Berlewi, advertisement for *Plutos Chocolate*, 1925. Printing ink on cardboard, 15 × 15 cm, each segment. National Museum, Warsaw.

matic – all in an attempt to bring the various components of a painting into a unified visual presentation in which nothing of the artist's personality is present. In a flurry of articles written in these years (Fig. 161), Strzemiński and Kobro expanded the theory of unism into the spatial arts of sculpture and architecture.¹⁰³ The three-dimensional work with which Kobro was primarily engaged (Fig. 162) challenged them to “[unify] the sculpture with the surrounding space, a spatial unity.” That which provides “uniformity” to sculpture, without isolating it from its environment, is what the artist-authors called “the spatio-temporal calculated rhythm,” by which they meant a regular sequence of shapes in space: “[A] unistic sculpture is a complex rhythm of spatial shapes and of colored planes . . . reducing the mutual relationships of the consecutive shapes to a common numerical formula.” The element of time, so important to unist painting, was to be manifested in sculpture “in an open manner as a result of the beholding motion around the work of art . . . through rhythm . . . which unites the whole work into a single spatio-temporal unity. . . .” (Fig. 163).

With the maturation of unism – as both an aesthetic and a social philosophy – in 1929, Strzemiński, Kobro, and Stażewski left *Praesens* and established an avant-garde group called “a.r.,” this time with the collaboration of poets – Julian Przyboś and Jan Brze-

Figure 158. Henryk Stażewski, cover of *Praesens*, no. 1, June 1926. Library of the Museum of Art, Łódź.



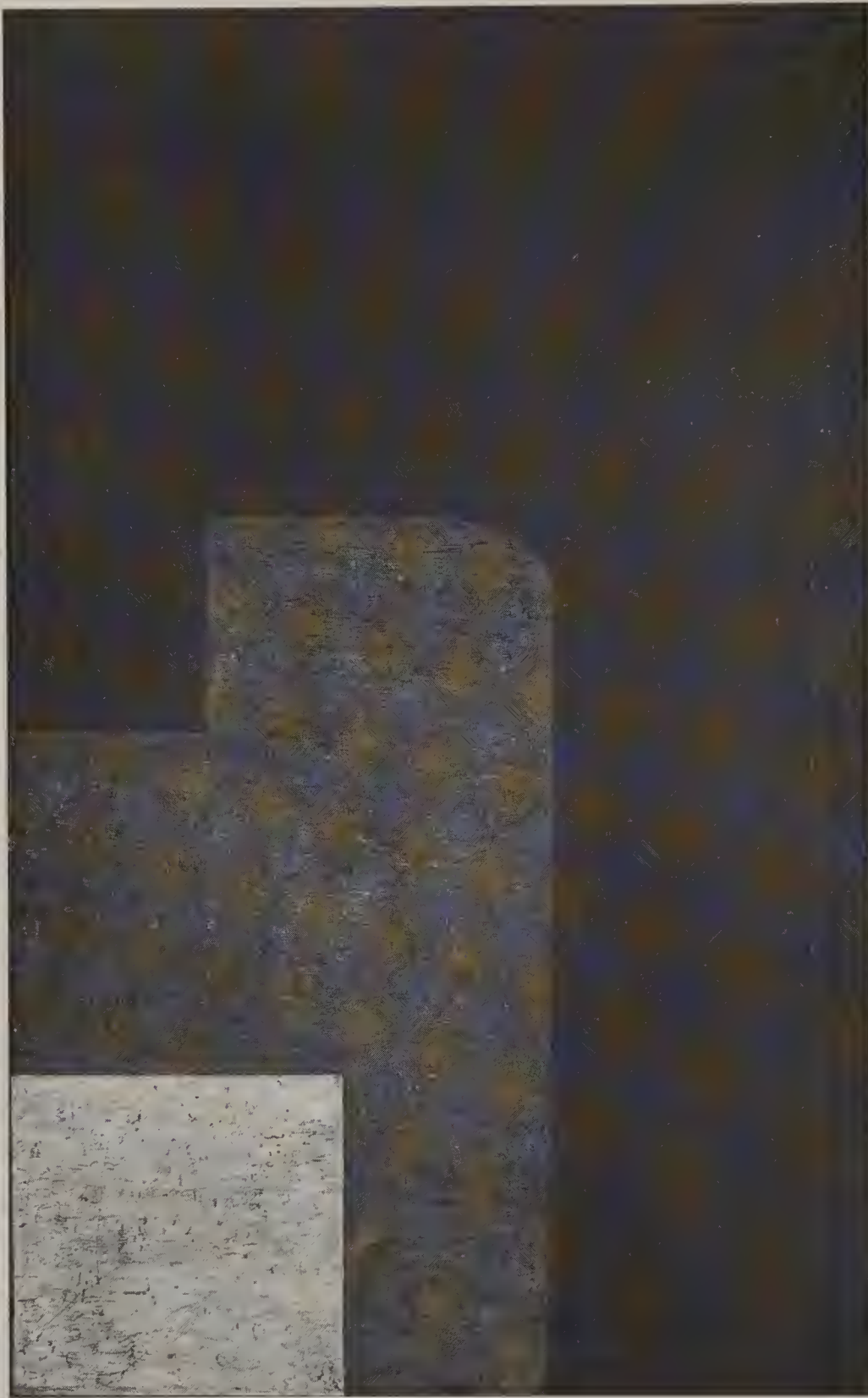


Figure 159. Władysław Strzemiński, *Architectural Composition 13c*, 1929. Oil on canvas, 96 × 60 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.

kowski (who was living in Paris) – rather than with competition from architects. Przyboś understood the initials as standing for “artyści rewolucyjni” (revolutionary artists), and Strzemiński saw them as the abbreviation for “awangarda rzeczywista” (real avant-garde, meaning an engagement with contemporary social life) – both readings reinforcing the essential revolutionary character of “a.r.” In a brief programmatic statement of purpose bearing the title

“Bulletin No. 1 of the ‘a.r.’ Group,” issued as a leaflet in 1930 (there being insufficient funds to publish a journal), Strzemiński and his fellow revolutionaries affirmed that their principles of organic construction, concise composition, and logic of form were applicable to all domains of life and art. The precepts they were promoting were geared to the education of Poland’s emerging urban classes, whose sensibilities would need to be trained through a function-

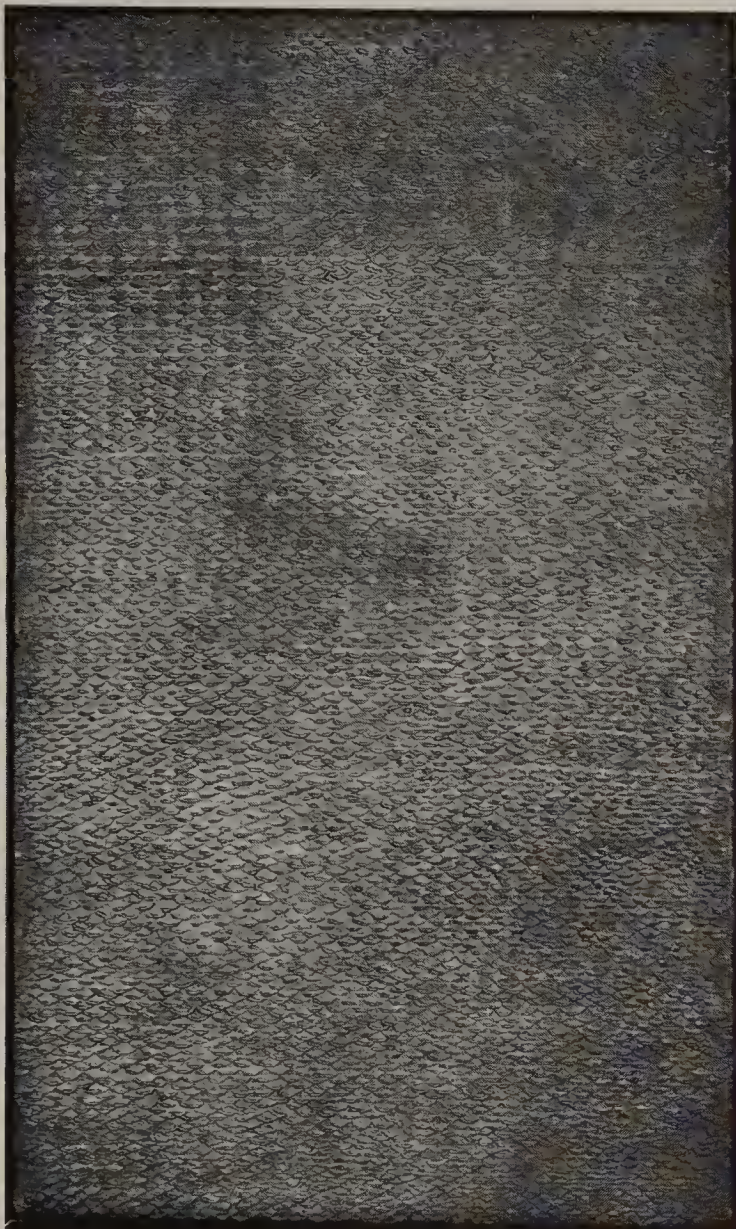


Figure 160. Władysław Strzemiński, *Unistic Composition 8*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 60 × 36 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.



Figure 161. Władysław Strzemiński (and K. Kobro?), cover of *a.r.*, no. 2, 1931. Library of the Museum of Art, Łódź. (Photo: G. Pelicewicz.)

Figure 162. Katarzyna Kobro, *Spatial Composition 5*, 1929–30. Painted steel, 25 × 64 × 40 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.



alist typography, literature, painting (see Plate 15), and urban design.¹⁰⁴ It was in the field of typography that “a.r.” achieved its most pronounced revolutionary results¹⁰⁵ – a fact attributable in part to the emphasis on the book that was shared by the artists and poets who constituted the group. It was also partially the consequence of inadequate financial resources, which favored typography as the least expensive medium through which to articulate a new vision. In 1931 Strzemiński and Kobro moved to Łódź and founded a school for modern typography to spread the new art. The following year, “a.r.” extended its influence by organizing the International Exhibition of Typography, which drew the participation of many of Europe’s most dynamic and progressive designers. But perhaps the single greatest and longest-lasting accomplishment of “a.r.” during the residency of its artist couple in Łódź took place outside the typographical page.

As part of “a.r.”’s attempt to provide the newly urbanized Polish population access to the new culture and the new art through which it was being manifested, Strzemiński determined to build a collection of international modernism. He broached the subject to his colleagues in Blok as early as 1924, and the concept was reinvigorated in 1927 – the year Malevich brought to Warsaw major examples of his earlier work, which he hoped to deposit outside the increasingly hostile Soviet Union. Strzemiński’s plan for constructing a gallery of modernist art to house the Malevich collection in Warsaw was not successful,¹⁰⁶ but by the time of his arrival in Łódź, events were finally favorable for a project of broader scope and content. The civil administration there elected to appropriate funds to bring whatever works “a.r.” might collect to the City Hall, in which rooms were assigned for the establishment of a municipal museum. Serving as “a.r.”’s man in Paris was the poet Brzękowski, who happened to be the secretary of the Society for Cultural Exchange between Poland and France as well as copublisher of the French–Polish journal *Art Contemporain – Sztuka Współczesna – Revue d’Art International*, through which he had direct contacts with the avant-garde of western Europe. Exploiting his position for the benefit of the museum-in-the-making, Brzękowski persuaded numerous artists to contribute work to “a.r.” by donation or exchange. Simultaneously, Stażewski was taking advantage of his membership in the groups *Cercle et Carré* and *Abstraction–Création – L’Art*

non-Figuratif to solicit gifts from among its international membership: Jean Gorin, Fernand Léger, Amédée Ozenfant, Sophie Täuber-Arp, Georges Vantongerloo, and many others.¹⁰⁷ Strzemiński himself was likewise energetically securing donations from Theo van Doesburg,¹⁰⁸ Albert Gleizes, Pablo Picasso, and a group of cubists and nonrepresentational artists from among the former formists and other associations of progressive Polish artists. By February 1931 “a.r.” was able to present to the Municipal Museum of History and Art 21 works, and within a year a further 54 were added, the total rising to 111 in 1937.¹⁰⁹ The “a.r.”-organized collection in Łódź had become one of the first museums of modern art in the world, following those of Hanover and New York.¹¹⁰

Unlike Polish associations of artists whose members were united more by a group exhibition program than by commonality in stylistic or theoretical orientation, “a.r.” members never exhibited together. Their streak of independence may explain in part the productive encounter that took place with Karol Hiller when Strzemiński and Kobro relocated to Łódź in 1931. A chemist by training, Hiller was fascinated by architecture and its ready applicability to improve the social and physical environment of workers. After studying in Warsaw, he had been conscripted into the tsar’s armies and stationed in Moscow and Kiev, where he pursued a course in painting and came under the twin influences of cubo-futurism and communism. In 1921 Hiller returned to Łódź and began combining progressive aesthetics with a commitment to socialist politics and mass culture – a career that brought him into close contact with like-minded poets and painters. Rather than joining any of the numerous artists’ formations, however, he worked independently to further his art, which from 1926 took a turn toward abstraction (Fig. 164). Advocating “the regeneration and the continual enrichment of abstraction . . . through the reconstruction of a bridge between art . . . and man . . .,”¹¹¹ Hiller began to focus on new graphic techniques that would affirm the centrality of technology and the preeminence of constructivist composition. Experiments in heliography he initiated in about 1928 were a variation of cameraless photography that had captivated avant-gardists in many art capitals: covering celluloid with gouache or tempera, Hiller then used it as a negative from which to “print” on photosensitive paper (Fig. 165). As innovative as was

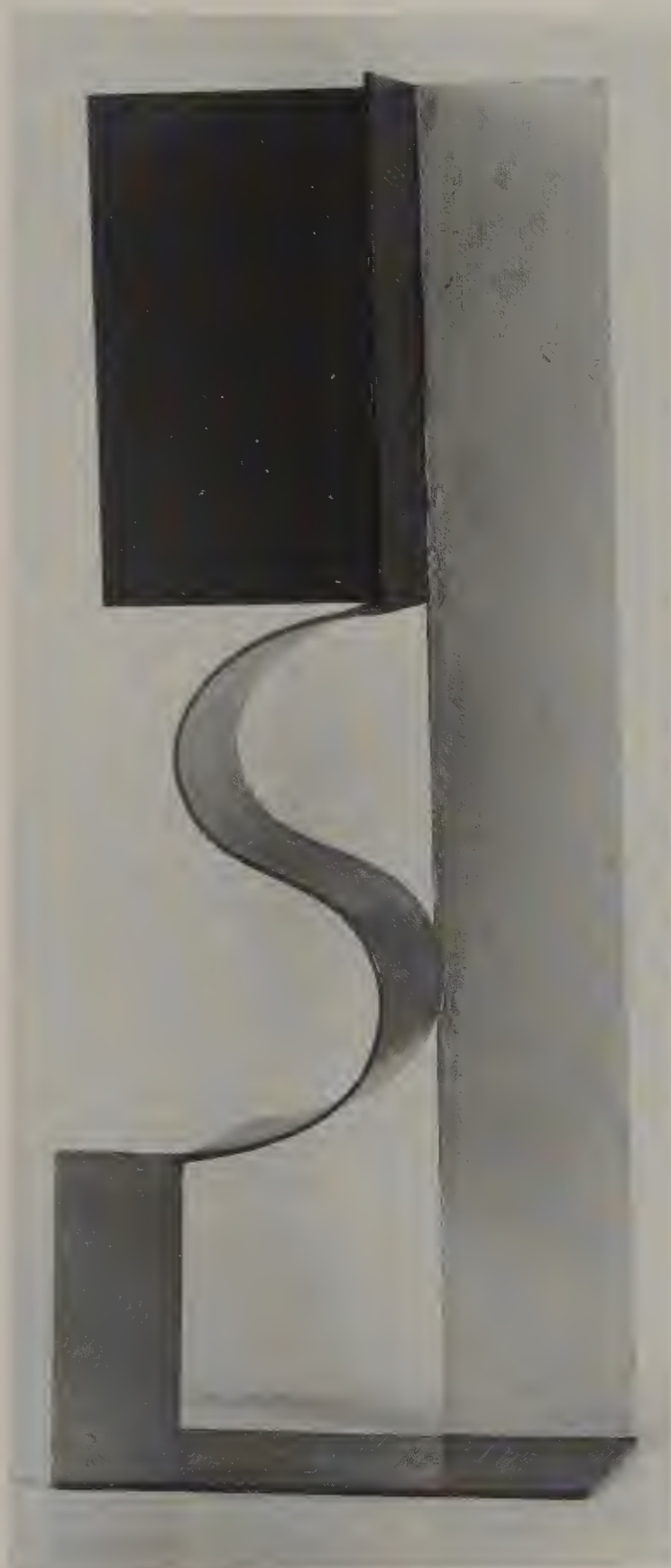


Figure 163. Katarzyna Kobro, *Spatial Composition 6*, 1931. Painted steel, 64 × 25 × 15 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.

the technique, equally remarkable was the style in which the artist presented the machine-derived imagery and geometric forms prized by constructivism.¹¹² This dual commitment to social reform and progressive aesthetics, especially within the graphic sphere, was the basis for a fruitful working relation-

ship with Strzemiński and Kobro when they moved to Hiller's native city. The leading positions they all assumed in the local avant-garde led to active participation in the regional chapter of the Polish Artists' Trade Union. With the impetus of Strzemiński and Hiller, the union began in 1933 to issue a periodical that served as a forum for often polemical articles on modern art and contemporary art theory. Around *Forma*, which in its five-year history published six issues, Strzemiński and Hiller gathered a group of young artists with whom they produced a series of constructivist and cubist works in a variety of media. Among them were the (by-now) avant-garde veterans Kobro, Stażewski, and Chwistek, as well as Stefan Wegner and Aniela Menkesowa.

Strzemiński's art, theory, and proselytizing were central to the sustained vitality of constructivism, whose long tenure in Poland far surpassed that of first-generation constructivist aesthetics anywhere else in Europe. His seminal role in the cultural life of Łódź was officially acknowledged when in 1932 he was awarded the City Art Prize. In the history of the Polish avant-garde's embattled relationships with authorities, this public tribute to the many-sided activities of the country's leading modernist constituted a notable – and exceptional – event.

POLAND'S OTHER MODERNIST MOVEMENTS

A movement of a different nature was founded in Lwów in 1929 by Jerzy Janisch, Mieczysław Wysocki, and Aleksander Kryzwobłocki. Called *Artes*, a name that derives from the Latin, the group carried a Polish subtitle: *Zrzeszenie artystów plastyków* (Union of Plastic Artists).¹¹³ Its uniqueness was in part the result of Lwów's environment, it being a cosmopolitan center with an eminently cultured Polish population – from which the avant-garde sprang and on which it depended for its support – that was not in the majority. As compared with Cracow, Warsaw, or even industrial Łódź, fully 50 percent of the urban intelligentsia (and a notably high proportion of the educated Galician landowners as well) were Jews.¹¹⁴ As those who collectively represented more than a third of Poland's entire population, and constituted a plurality in the eastern provinces, were actively discriminated against by the central government in Warsaw,¹¹⁵ the cultural character of the artists' formations in Lwów devel-



Figure 164. Karol Hiller, *Composition with Spiral*, 1929. Oil and mineral powders on wooden panel, 120 × 47 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.

oped independently from that elsewhere in Poland during the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹⁶ Following the establishment of the Polish national state and the collapse of the Russian and Austrian empires in 1918, the already restive Ukrainian population of Galicia presented its own nationalist demands ever more insistently. Living unhappily in a (short-lived) left-wing state,¹¹⁷ the five to six million Ukrainians under Polish rule in the border province of Lwów intensified their efforts to promote their own dynamic culture.

The fact of its remote location and the absence of a manifesto prescribing an aesthetic focus or ideological orientation enabled Artes to free itself from the dominant Polish modernist trends of expressionism and constructivism. As a result, we find in the numerous group exhibitions between roughly 1930 and 1932 elements of many progressive styles: Artes drew inspiration from events – aesthetic and political – in neighboring Ukraine and Russia and in distant France.¹¹⁸ Its members' earlier connections to such Polish pioneering groups as the formists, Bunt, and the constructivist-oriented circles were less defining for Artes than were the images stemming from mechanical cubism (especially that of Fernand Léger), a relatively gentle form of expressionism (Fig. 166), and surrealism (Fig. 167). The surrealist forms that predominate represent only a partial embrace of the French prototype, however. What intrigued Artes was not the intellectual meanings of surrealism but rather the creative juxtaposition of the unexpected or illogical, the extraordinary realization of a kind of visual oxymoron. Thus, Marek Włodarski (Henryk Streng) enframed a cubist portrait and placed it provocatively beside a free-form, eroticized nude couple (Fig. 168); and Tadeusz Wojciechowski delved into the mysterious psychological depths of ontology and identity (Fig. 169).

The wide repertoire of surrealist techniques, forms, and themes corresponded to Artes's freedom of experimentation and choice of revolutionary effects, unbounded by the rigorous social and aesthetic doctrines of Polish constructivism, expressionism, or the earlier national romanticism. Emphasis was placed on responding creatively to the psychological and intellectual character of the time, rather than probing systematically into the tribulations of contemporary Polish life. Accordingly, Artes members chose art forms they found singularly receptive to a

Figure 165. Karol Hiller, *Heliographic Composition 11*, ca. 1931. Photograph, 8.5 × 11.8 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.

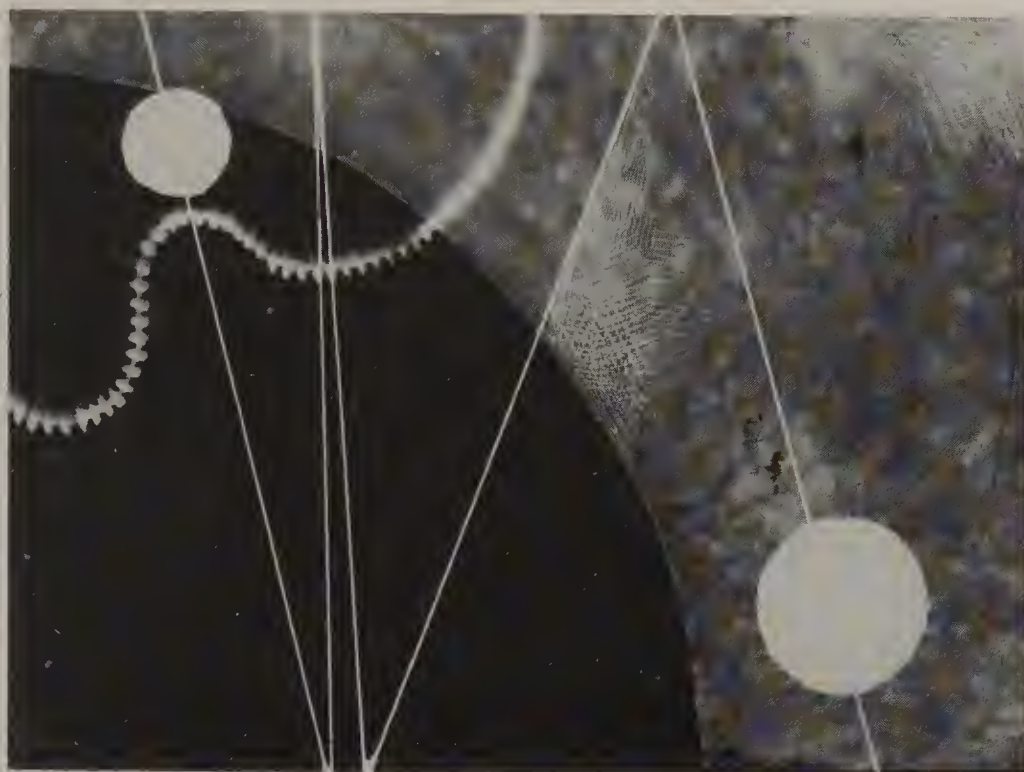


Figure 166 (below). Mieczysław Wysocki, *De Profundis*, 1929. Tempera. National Museum, Wrocław.



surrealist juxtaposition of everyday images: photomontage (Fig. 170) and collage. Their provocative manipulation of these two media was fully congruent with the creative exploitation of graphic design by many others in Poland's avant-garde circles, in-

cluding Karol Hiller's sometime surrealist heliographs. Unlike Hiller and his "a.r." colleagues, however, those who deployed the various modern styles and diverse aesthetic media of *Artes* were only vaguely united by a commitment to social revolu-



Figure 167. Jerzy Janisch, *Portrait in an Armchair*, 1930-1. Oil on canvas. National Museum, Wrocław.

tion.¹¹⁹ Without a concrete aesthetic or ideological program, the stylistic multiplicity of the group, which had fleetingly embraced cubism, futurism, and expressionism, soon led to the abandonment of surrealism – and compromised the vitality of *Artes* itself.¹²⁰ By the mid-1930s the surrealism that had made *Artes* unique among Poland's avant-garde had run its short course, and the group manifested new trends that ran counter to the various forms of modernism Poland's diverse avant-garde had for so long championed.

The influence of Paris on Polish art in the 1920s and 1930s likewise served, for the most part, as a

conservative counterbalance to the constructivism that had its ultimate sources far to the east. The Polish expatriate artists in the French capital who helped advance modernism in Poland (for example, Stażewski and the poet members of "a.r.") were outweighed by less progressive figures among their Paris-based compatriots – artists whose activities and connections exerted a moderating force on the dynamic experimentalism of the Polish avant-garde. In about 1924 a dozen students from the Cracow Academy of Fine Arts went to Paris to work under the guidance of Józef Pankiewicz, one of Poland's most committed disciples of impressionism.¹²¹ The name



Figure 168 (above). Marek Włodarski, *Floating in the Sky*, 1931. Gouache, 22.6 × 36.8 cm. National Museum, Warsaw.



Figure 169 (left). Tadeusz Wojciechowski, *Secret*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 82.5 × 66.5 cm. Museum of Art, Łódź.



Figure 170. Aleksander Krzywoblocki, *Photomontage*, 1930–2. Photograph, 17 × 11 cm. (Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Łódź.)

of the sponsoring organization of the students' study tour, the Paris Committee for Aid to Students Leaving to Study Painting in France, was abbreviated to "K.P." (Komitet Paryski), and the related term – Kapism – eventually evolved to describe the style of its painting, which went beyond Pankiewicz's pictorial transcription of impressionism. "K.P." advocated a controlled colorism through which a work of art could and must be structured to compose not images

from nature but arrangements of colored forms that followed purely pictorial laws. Forswearing narrative subjects, patriotic themes, and direct emotional appeal in a commitment to pure painting, the artists drew on the work of Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, and various expressionists. The spiritual leader of "K.P." was Jan Cybis, whose landscapes, nudes, and still lifes (Fig. 171) were colored constructions that were applauded

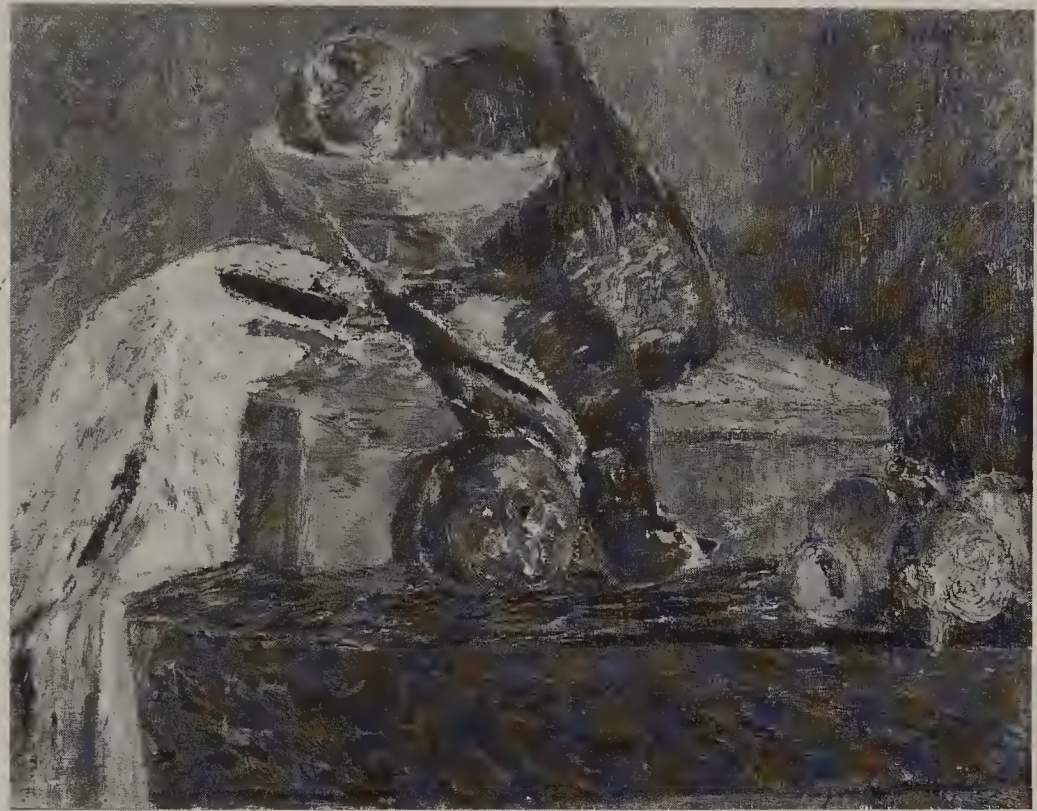


Figure 171. Jan Cybis, *Still Life with Bird*, 1929–31. Oil on canvas, 50 × 61 cm. National Museum, Cracow.

when he and his fellow Kapists exhibited their canvases in Warsaw's Polish Art Club in 1931 and again in 1934 at the Institute of Art Propaganda.¹²² Their belief that painting was independent of a priori rules and not obligated to the world beyond the canvas was in some ways progressive; but reliance on old and modern masters from whom the Kapists derived their program of color composition was perceived by many as *retardataire*.¹²³

Colorism had its most pronounced impact in Cracow, one of Poland's great cultural centers before independence but a city that was mostly bypassed by the dynamic developments of the interwar years. In 1925 a guild with a fluid membership, Jednoróg (Unicorn), was founded to promote "honest painting" based on a controlled layering of color and texture – a practice quite congruent with Kapism. With several formist veterans among its adherents, Jednoróg rejected literary themes and statements of parochialism.¹²⁴ Of the many students of Cracow's Academy of Fine Arts who rallied to its call, one in particular – Jerzy Fedkowicz – deserves mention for his accomplishment in orchestrating color. A self-portrait (Fig. 172) reveals his awareness of constructivism (in the treatment of the background, built up of color blocks), expressionism (in the lively brushwork, especially in the face and neck), and formism

(in the careful asymmetrical composition, given balance by the contrast of dark and warm hues).

That colorism was, at base, imitative of representational styles in art is evident in all its numerous manifestations in Poland during the early 1930s. Despite the various theoretical statements made by colorists in Cracow, Warsaw, and Paris – in which they championed the primacy of pictorial issues over the theme depicted – nearly every one returned subject matter (portraits, landscapes, nudes, still lifes, genre and historical themes) to the center of the canvas. Often this restoration of the subject was motivated by religious, political, or social concerns. For example, in 1925 the Warsaw guild of the Saint Luke Fraternity affirmed the importance of religious imagery – for centuries generally understood as an essential characteristic of the Polish nation – as a means to restore a nationalist content to and affirm moderation within modern art (Fig. 173).¹²⁵ Also in Warsaw, the confederation of communist-oriented artists known as the Czapka Frygijska (Phrygian Cap; 1934–7) promoted (socialist) realism in what they claimed to be the interests of the working class (Fig. 174). The Tribe of the Horned Heart (*Szczep rogata serce*; 1930–9) urged a return to the "authenticity" of Polish pan-Slavic themes with their repertoire of national warriors, while the Free Painters' Lodge (*Loża*



Figure 172. Jerzy Fedkowicz, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1930. Oil on cardboard, 62 × 53 cm. National Museum, Warsaw. (From A. Olszewski, *An Outline History of Polish Art and Architecture, 1890–1980*, Warsaw, 1989.)

Wolnomalarska) advocated the reintroduction of explicitly Polish historical themes to counter the dominance of “foreign” art.¹²⁶

Similarly, other artists’ groups encouraged representation for explicitly ideological purposes. Among them were the Cracow Group (1933–7),¹²⁷ represented by Sasza Blonder and Stanisław Osostowicz (Fig. 175), who combined hortatory messages of communist defiance based on charged subject matter with modernist visual means that drew variously on cubism, futurism, and abstraction. In sum, no matter what the specific theoretical justification, political purpose, or aesthetic objective, all these colorist formations, singly and collectively, effectively returned figuration to the artistic center of Polish art. As such, they must be understood now – as they were sometimes recognized then – as constituting an opposition to the abstraction with which Strzemiński and his allies endeavored to invent a new and modern Polish art commensurate with the demands

of the contemporary world. As more and more veterans of formism, Bunt, and “a.r.” forsook cubism and constructivism for realist representation during the 1930s, the authority of the avant-garde declined. Its deterioration was prompted by extra-artistic circumstances: Economic and political conditions in Poland favored conservatism and a revival of national chauvinism, factors inhospitable to an avant-garde whose position in Polish society had always been precarious.

In the early 1930s Poland experienced one of the greatest economic declines in all Europe, and its leaders’ incompetent response led to a further radicalizing of the country. With unrest in Galicia, especially in Cracow, and elsewhere throughout the land, the authoritarian government of Marshal Józef Piłsudski “cast too big a shadow on Polish life,” as he himself admitted. From March 1932, when his government assumed the power of decree, press censorship was intensified, supervision and regula-



Figure 173. Antoni Michalak, *Crucifixion*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 280 × 194 cm. Private collection. (From A. Olaszewski, *An Outline History of Polish Art and Architecture, 1890–1980*, Warsaw, 1989.)

tion of the universities were increased, and a campaign to exercise control of culture was pursued.¹²⁸ Among the young, especially among the university and art-school students, there sprang up powerful fascist groups that made little secret of their distaste for the cosmopolitanism of experimental artists and of their sympathy for nationalist forms of expression. In this climate, as encouraging to the colorists as it was depressing to the constructivists, avant-garde innovation persisted with ever-less intensity

and originality into the final years of the decade.¹²⁹ Ironically, Strzemiński's heroic achievement of consolidating a collection of modernist art in Łódź circa 1937 can be seen also as a symbolic token of its demise.¹³⁰ For when Polish (and international) modernism was immured within the Municipal Museum of History and Art, the avant-garde was forced to surrender its active participation in the turbulence of Polish life and accept a regulated place in modern art history.¹³¹

Figure 174 (right). Franciszek Bartoszek, *In the Forge*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 160 × 204 cm. National Museum, Warsaw.



Figure 175 (below). Stanisław Osostowicz, *Peasant Epic*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 239.5 × 269.5 cm. (formerly) Museum of the History of the Polish Revolutionary Movement, Warsaw. (From A. Olszewski, *An Outline History of Polish Art and Architecture, 1890–1980*, Warsaw, 1989.)



The Baltic States of Latvia and Estonia

LATVIA AND ESTONIA pursued parallel paths in their respective attempts to fashion a national cultural identity.* Such efforts were carried out in the face of opposition from the entrenched Baltic-German nobility, expansionist Russian (and later Soviet) policies, and not infrequently the conservatism of indigenous groups. In Latvia, as in Estonia, modern art drew on the country's mid-nineteenth-century "national-awakening" movement, which was in each instance principally a literary and musical manifestation of a decidedly local – as opposed to German, Finnish, Swedish, or Slavic – language, literature, religion, and song.¹ The newly validated national literature and music – celebrating native customs, traditions, folktales, and myths – created conditions for the emergence of a strikingly modern visual expression that would help delineate for each nation its contemporary cultural identity while gaining international currency within the mainstream of modern aesthetics.

* Notwithstanding the linguistic kinship and numerous historical affinities between Lithuania and Latvia, the modern art of the former can best be assessed within the context of Polish art. Given its engagement with Poland as both participant and opponent – from the union of the two countries in the fourteenth century, through the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland–Lithuania, and into the 1920s – Lithuania's cultural achievements are recorded in Chapter 2. For simplicity the present chapter employs the twentieth-century names Latvia and Estonia to refer to territories that bore until 1917 the administrative and political appellations Estland, Livland, and Kurland.

LATVIA

Russians began conquering parts of Latvia in 1710;² by 1795 the entire country had been incorporated into the empire of the tsars. The new overlords – following the practices of the Germans, Swedes, Danes, Poles, and others who had exerted control over Latvia – maintained the privileges of the Baltic-German gentry, to whom high positions in government and the army were assigned. In the Latvian countryside, serfdom was made even more onerous with the introduction of tsarist absolutism;³ in Riga and the other towns, foreigners and the resident Baltic-German elite population continued to dominate trade, industry, and especially culture. It was in this environment of political, commercial, and cultural disenfranchisement that Latvians began to reassert their traditions and initiated the process of formalizing a national identity.

Sharing the general objectives of the similar, contemporaneous movement in Estonia, the Latvian "national awakening" (1856–ca. 1880) was led by literary figures, animated by their contact with German romanticism.⁴ They undertook codifying the nation's oral literature – *dainas* – into a modern, formalized literary tongue, researching the folklore and native religion, and encouraging the representation of native themes in contemporary literary, musical, and visual forms.⁵ Relative to the authority of the folk literature and especially the musical tradition, Latvia's visual arts had a less venerated history on which to draw. The absence of a commensurately rich heritage would prove, however, to be an advantage, for it allowed nineteenth-century Latvian artists to open themselves quite freely to foreign influence. Thus, contemporary styles were part of the



Figure 176. Jānis Rozentāls, *After the Service (Leaving the Church)*, 1894. Oil on canvas, 175 × 103 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

“national awakening” in the visual arts from the beginning, and they served as an excellent foundation on which later avant-garde painters, sculptors, and graphic artists would construct a modern Latvian art.

Many went to the Russian imperial capital for their initial training, attending the Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg and then traveling and working in western European art centers, especially in France and Germany. Increasingly, events – mythical and historical – from Latvia’s past and images by and of the protagonists of the “national awakening” entered the work of such artists as Jānis Roze and Kārlis Hūns. The primary phase of the nation’s modern creativity, however, begins with Jānis Rozentāls, Jānis Valters, and Vilhelms Purvītis, all of whom

played decisive roles in the development of the visual arts, aesthetic theory, and cultural pedagogy.

Rozentāls was born at the moment when the New Latvians, as the partisans of the “national awakening” styled themselves,⁶ began their task in the face of economic and political as well as cultural suppression by the Baltic-German (and Russian) overlords. The son of a country blacksmith and thus lacking the means for and access to a proper education, Rozentāls proceeded to educate himself through apprenticeships to house painters.⁷ In time, the aspiring artist gained admittance to the Saint Petersburg academy, where he pursued the traditional classical curriculum and joined a group of Latvian students with whom he studied informally the traditions of



Figure 177. Jānis Rozentāls, *Cabaret (Paris Café)*, 1908. Oil on cardboard, 39 × 46.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

his homeland. His graduation submission, *After the Service (Leaving the Church)* (Fig. 176), reveals the role of realism in this formative phase of Latvian art. The portrayal of figure types and peasant customs was fully consistent with the principles of the academic education a student would then have received in Saint Petersburg. It was mostly this type of art that was exhibited for the first time in Latvia in 1896 under the auspices of the Latvian ethnographical exposition during the Tenth All-Russian Congress of Archaeology in Riga.

A significant sponsor for Rozentāls was the Riga Latvian Society (founded in 1868), which played a dominant role in the national cultural formation through its promotion of Latvian mythology, theater, and music, especially song. With financial assistance from the society, Rozentāls was able in the closing years of the nineteenth century to travel to Scandinavia, Germany, and France to acquaint himself with the modern art being created in the West. By the time he returned to Latvia, he had garnered sufficient experience to begin to reshape the image

of Latvian art in the various new aesthetic orientations: symbolism, pleinairism, and postimpressionism, among other, expressive, Jugendstil and proto-expressionist styles (Fig. 177). Besides producing paintings and graphic art, including many book illustrations for editions of Latvian folktales and for contemporary nationalist playwrights, Rozentāls authored numerous aesthetic tracts. Most of these argued for a modern art that should draw on the stylistic innovations of James Abbott McNeill Whistler,⁸ symbolism as practiced by Arnold Böcklin, and universally valid subject matter or themes celebrating the distinctive episodes of Latvian legendary history. The social dimension of Rozentāls's writings, dependent on John Ruskin and William Morris, is evident in an aesthetics passionately engaged with issues of honesty of materials and of use, leading to spiritual satisfaction in work. Such tenets prompted Rozentāls to join the ranks of Latvian nationalists who rose up in 1905 against the antidemocratic practices of tsarist Russia and its governing Baltic-German agents.⁹ In numerous images on canvas – portraying

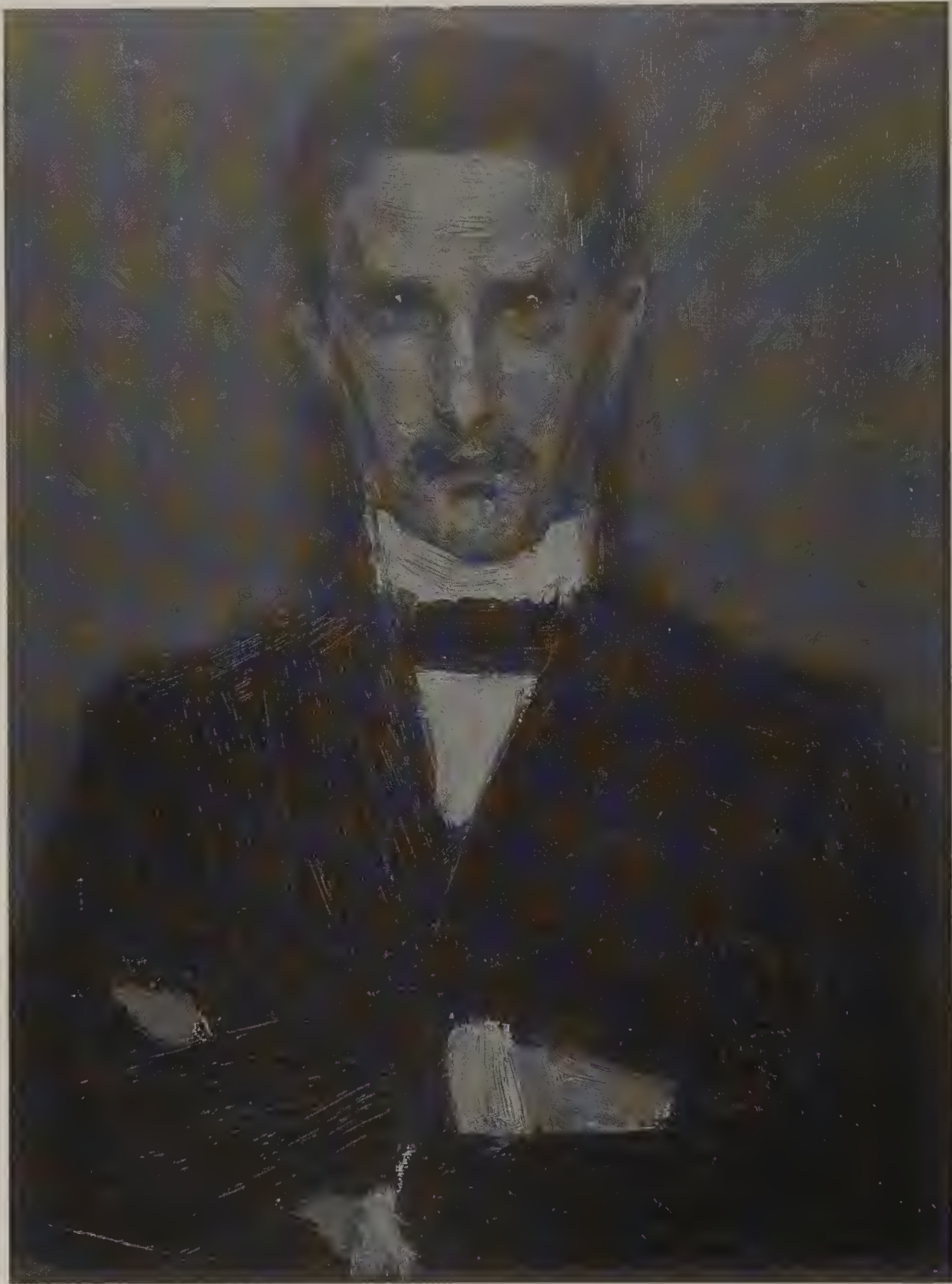


Figure 178. Jānis Rozentāls, *Portrait of Vilhelms Purvītis*, ca. 1898. Oil on cardboard, 25.5 × 19 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

his country's landscape, intelligentsia, and mythological tradition – in dozens of designs for books, in layouts for magazines and newspapers, and in programs for monumental mural painting, the artist manifested his belief that only on the foundation of a vital, modern enlightenment would Latvia achieve

the political freedom and cultural independence it deserved. This was a passionate nationalist outlook that Rozentāls shared with his many students, who would constitute the avant-garde, and with his contemporaries – especially Jānis Valters and Vilhelms Purvītis (Fig. 178).



Figure 179. Jānis Valters, *At a Party*, 1904–5. Oil on cardboard, 51 × 72 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

About the turn of the century, Valters, like Rozenāls and so many other young artists from the Baltic provinces of the Russian empire, enrolled in the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts. Intrigued by the visual and technical freedom of impressionism, he became, after his graduation, the Latvian champion of plein-air painting. In short order, however, Valters began to execute lyrical canvases with strikingly strong coloration, interiors suffused with artificial light, and urban scenes with contemporary figures and forms – a shift that brought him close to the most expressive variants of postimpressionism. In *At a Party* (Fig. 179), for example, the dancing figure and piano player dematerialize into sweeping brushstrokes of pigment. The expressive application of paint, the suggestion of mood rather than the description of forms, and the abandonment of harmonious mixing of hues bespeak more the emerging aesthetics in Germany than a debt to Claude Monet. Indeed, within a year of completing this canvas, Valters moved to Germany, where he increasingly embraced the intense colors, agitated line, and exaggerated forms of the expressionist painters there (Fig. 180).¹⁰ What appealed to Valters, especially in the landscapes of the Brücke artists, was the Germans' ability to reveal the primitive in nature, not unlike his own (and his compatriots') attempts to uncover

Figure 180. Jānis Valters, *Tree Trunks with Foliage*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 62.3 × 72.3 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



the primeval nature of the land and its intimate symbiosis with the Latvian nation. For this task, the brilliant surface gloss of impressionism was no longer adequate.

The rich repertory of styles being imported into Latvia was fully exploited by the most influential modern painter and pedagogue there in the early decades of the century: Vilhelms Purvītis, who began his career as academician and professor at the Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg and put his talents at the service of furthering a modern Latvian visual culture. The founder and first rector of the Latvian Academy of Arts, the director of the State Art Museum, and the educator of a great wave of avant-gardists in the 1920s, Purvītis was equally renowned as a painter – his range of styles commensurate with the breadth of his talent. He could evoke the hidden character of the landscape through the use of a palette limited to grays, white, and black-blue (Fig. 181) as proficiently as he rendered the vitality of rural life through bursts of brilliant color, brushed on the can-

vas with brio (Fig. 182). Although most of Purvītis's work is impressionistic, his long career as a teacher was informed by an encouragement of a wide range of expressive styles and freedom of experimentation.

This diversity is apparent in the work of several of Purvītis's contemporaries. Voldemārs Zeltiņš, whose brief career is remarkable in Latvian art history for its bohemian nature, often used a palette knife or a heavily laden brush to achieve a roughly worked expressive texture. Sacrificing "finish" for the immediacy of the sketch, he created landscapes (see Plate 16) and self-portraits that define a native expressionism in early-twentieth-century Latvian art. By contrast, Voldemārs Matvejs (Vladimir Markov), who unlike Zeltiņš was formally educated and well traveled, drew knowledgeably on the arts of primitive cultures, on Russian and Byzantine icon traditions, and on Italian trecento frescoes as sources to combine with the symbolism and postimpressionism he encountered in western Europe.¹¹ Matvejs's *Seven Princesses* (Fig. 183), for example – its subject an epi-

Figure 181. Vilhelms Purvītis, *Winter Latvian Landscape*, 1910. Oil on canvas. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.





Figure 182. Vilhelms Purvītis, *Summer Landscape*, late 1920s. Oil on canvas? Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

sode from the national mythology – reprises both Paul Gauguin and Piero della Francesca in a structured procession of costumed women with broken drapery folds. The friezelike presentation is the visual expression of the artist's theoretical belief in the importance of line over color and in the preeminence of careful composition over the arbitrary distribution of forms in space. Equally apparent here, as in numerous studies executed between 1910 and about 1912, is Matvejs's faith in the consummate value of early cultures as a model for authenticity of emotion and purity of belief, uncorrupted by academicism.¹² The flat forms, restrained color palette, and controlled line offered his contemporaries a style that Matvejs could justify in philosophical articles as simultaneously modern and ancient, singularly national in its references and yet universal in its resonance. Inspired by his work and by the examples of Rozentāls, Valters, Zeltiņš, and especially Purvītis, the radical generation born in the 1890s was

encouraged to search for ever more modern forms through which to construct a culture appropriate for a nation in the process of political (re)birth.

As Latvia was striving for independence during the second decade of the century, it was beset by the conflict of World War I, which affected the Baltic intelligentsia and especially their artist-affiliates in often contradictory ways. Whereas many had risen up against the tsarist authorities (and their Baltic-German supporters) in 1905 and continued their opposition in the years immediately following,¹³ Latvians proved, however reluctantly, loyal to the tsar when war began in 1914. For the nationalistic Latvians, both principal antagonists were seen essentially as foes: The Germans were aggressors who would likely reinforce the dominance of the Baltic Germans in Latvian political, economic, and cultural life; the Russians were the absolutist opponents of Latvian freedom and statehood. But when the German armies advanced into Courland, Latvia's history-rich

western district whose seventeenth-century stature as a European power continued to serve as an emblem of national greatness, more than a third of the population fled to Russia for sanctuary rather than live (again) under Teutonic domination. In 1915 eight regiments of Latvian riflemen (*strēlnieki*) were created and soon distinguished themselves as the premier units in the tsar's army, notwithstanding the continued promotion of their own nationalist objectives. Drawn from Latvia's student population and from the countryside, the riflemen's allegiance to the tsar was never absolute; most, in fact, were dedicated socialists and in 1917 provided the decisive military force in the Russian bolsheviks' seizure of power.

The support given by Latvia's intelligentsia and most of its peasantry to revolutionary movements stemmed less from socialist principle than from the hope for independence that might ensue upon the overthrow of the tsar. Thus, when the Romanov imperium was toppled, they declared only limited allegiance to Alexander Kerensky's liberal Russian government, which sought to maintain the borders of the empire. Latvia's socialists allied themselves instead with Lenin's bolsheviks, which had promised independence to the empire's nationalities. In Latvia itself, the close of 1917 witnessed not just the downfall of the tsar but also the occupation of Riga by the German army, which allowed Kārlis Ulmanis to assert the country's independence as a democratic, antibolshevik state. In short order, however, Germany was forced to surrender to the victorious Allies, and the Ulmanis government protected by the German kaiser fell victim to the communism so vigorously defended by the Latvian riflemen. In January 1919 the United Workers, Soldiers, and Landless Peasants Council proclaimed Latvia a soviet republic.

Under the leadership of Pēteris Stučka, who had been a coauthor of Soviet Russia's constitution, the Latvian soviet régime soon resorted to a brutal Red Terrorism to secure its authority. These tactics, which alienated most of the communists' own Latvian supporters, rallied even members of the Latvian riflemen to defend the liberal opponents. The ensuing civil strife was exacerbated when the Western Allies agreed to permit the German Freikorps to enter Latvia to suppress the bolshevik régime and to restore the liberal democracy of Ulmanis. The German vol-

unteers, however, proved more interested in renewing the dominance of their Baltic-German brethren than in reinstating a Latvian government, no matter how antibolshevik. Thus, new battle lines were drawn between the German Freikorps and the Latvian nationalists, and between the Germans and the Soviets. With the assistance of Estonian troops and regiments from friendly Scandinavian countries, nationalist supporters of Ulmanis were able to defeat the Germans on the battlefield and ultimately to win the support of the Latvian population. Within a year the communist forces were repelled, and by the summer of 1920 Latvia's bolsheviks withdrew to Soviet Russia, where they would soon assume positions of authority in the party apparatus, the Red Army, and the state government. On 20 August 1920 a peace treaty between the independent Latvian state and Lenin's Soviet Russia was signed, and the six long years of war came to an end.

The fighting had taken a heavy toll on Latvia: massive material destruction for all and tremendous havoc for the intelligentsia, which had been rent and demoralized by shifting allegiances, its population reduced both by emigration and by casualties in conflict.¹⁴ One of the first progressive artists responding to the immediate challenge – to create a modern culture that could simultaneously transcend the tragic past and serve the needs of an emerging new state – was Jāzeps Grosvalds. The modern art witnessed in prewar study tours of Munich, Paris, Italy, and Spain – fauvism, postimpressionism, cubism, and naturalism – were wholly incongruous for the artist in war-torn Latvia. In his work exhibited in Riga and especially in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, Grosvalds chose not to emulate the Western trends he had first endorsed but rather to articulate a native style appropriate to contemporary circumstances. Thus, for example, in *The White Crosses* (Fig. 184) a stark drama of war is represented as an austere contrast in light and dark. The composition draws on the classical pastoral tradition in which two reclining soldiers assume the flanking corner positions of river gods. Across the middle ground progresses a squad of anonymous, simply drawn Latvian soldiers who assist a horse in pulling a supply wagon. In the distance, centrally framed atop a hillock and under two white clouds, are three crosses bereft of christological personages yet evocative of the ultimate sacrifice to which they refer. Painted by an artist who was



Figure 183. Voldemārs Matvejs, *Seven Princesses*, ca. 1909. Oil on canvas, 66 × 71 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

himself a member of the Latvian riflemen and witnessed the carnage of war, the scene acknowledges the sacrifices exacted in the Baltic struggle. Not necessarily a celebration of heroism or a promise of national salvation, the painting promotes reflection rather than action in its blend of Cézannesque composition and simplified figure types adapted from those of André Derain and especially Roger de la Fresnaye¹⁵ and mediated through the realism Grosvalds had learned in Munich. With a similarly restricted palette, *Refugees* (Fig. 185) is a monument to

the heroic suffering of the masses and to their dogged perseverance. Against a backdrop of a burning peasant farmstead, a white-haired prophetic figure braces with one hand a fearful child while clutching in his other hand a sack of his salvaged belongings. The man looms dramatically as an image of steadfastness, both socialist and nationalist, and serves as the artist's moving emblem of his people's fateful attachment to their native land.

After Grosvalds's career was cut short by an early death in 1920, many of his beliefs – aesthetic and so-



Figure 184. Jāzeps Grosvalds, *The White Crosses*, ca. 1916. Oil on canvas, 73 × 90 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

cial – were reinforced by his almost exact contemporary Jēkabs Kazaks (Fig. 186). Educated in Russian Pensa, Kazaks was deeply impressed by the 1916 exhibition in Moscow of Grosvalds's stirring canvases. In a series of wartime works capturing the suffering of Latvian refugees, Kazaks took up the iconic subject and reworked it, introducing geometric and stereometric forms clearly evident here in the masklike visages of a refugee family (Fig. 187). Such use of African images was widely popular among Latvian modernists at the time. Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, for example, portrayed her family in a strikingly related primitive manner, her carved wood sculpture (Fig. 188) betraying a debt to Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani, and the contemporary Russians with whom she studied in Kazan and Saint Petersburg. Yet it was

Kazaks more than anyone else who, during the multi-sided conflict, captured the pathos of Latvian suffering by means of progressive styles. His *Three Mothers* (Fig. 189) depends for its effect on compressed, geometric forms, the figures isolated and flattened against a background and pressed toward the picture surface plane by the object (upturned sarcophagus lid?) on which they sit.

With the victories of the forces for independence, first provisionally in 1918 and finally in 1920, Latvia's art entered its avant-garde maturity. The newly initiated period of colorful experimentation drew on pioneering achievements in modern Western as well as Russian art. In a late work by Kazaks, a portrait of Jūlijs Sproģis (see Plate 17), the radically geometrized forms of the violist's face bear comparison

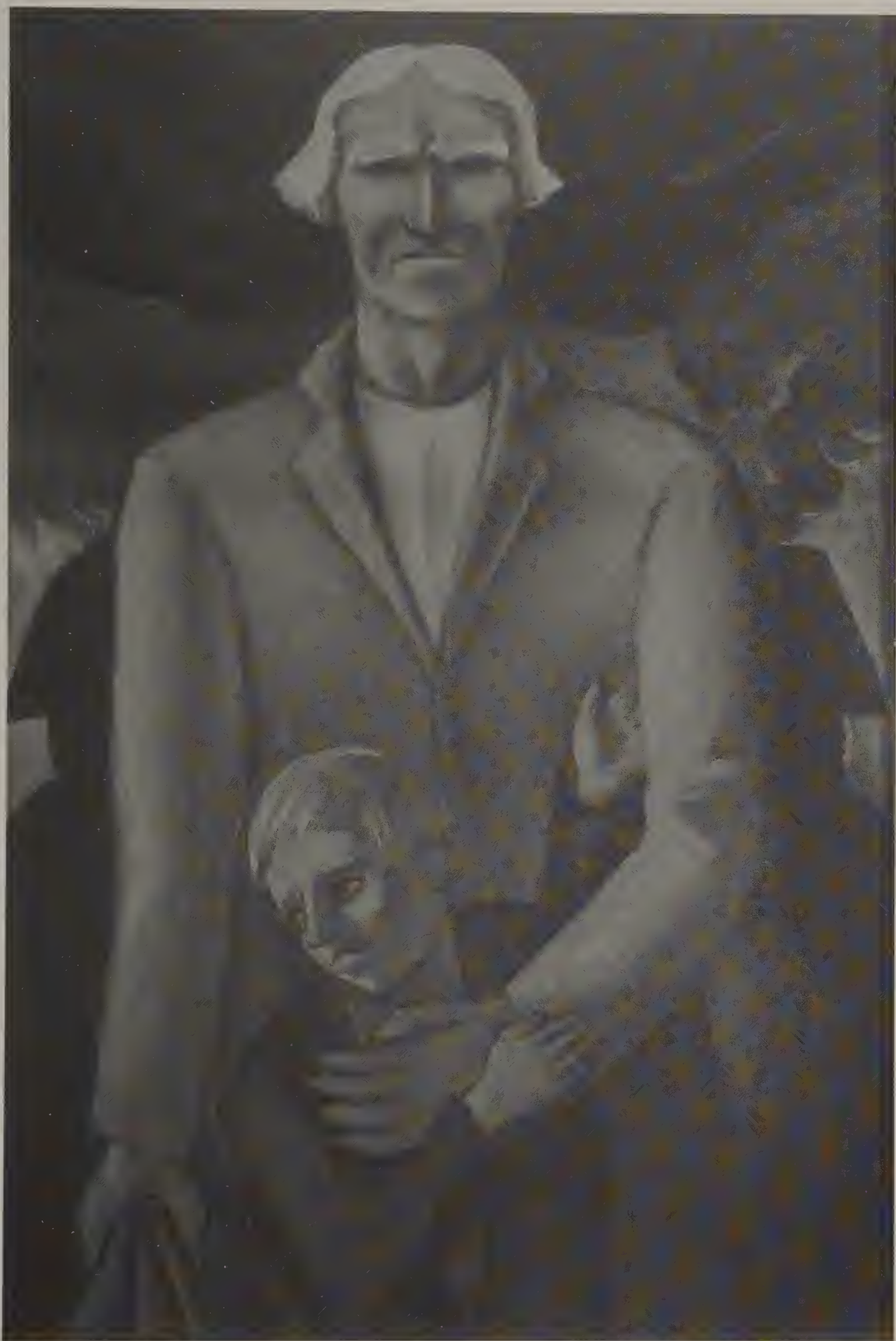


Figure 185. Jāzeps Grosvalds, *Refugees*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 132.5 × 88.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Figure 186. Jēkabs Kazaks, *Self-Portrait with Red Scarf*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 80 × 58 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

Figure 187 (*facing*). Jēkabs Kazaks, *Fugitives*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 210.5 × 107 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga. →

Figure 188 (*below*). Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, two views of *My Family*, ca. 1918. Wood, 10 × 10 × 16.5 cm. Private collection. (Photo courtesy of Džemme Skulme.)





with Henri Matisse's somewhat earlier *Piano Lesson*, while the palette and application of paint evoke the spirit of the Russian cubo-futurists. Equally distant from the somber sufferers of the refugee series is the cavorting *Bathers* (Fig. 190), in which Kazaks brought Picasso's Mediterranean women to the shores of the Baltic. The challenge to construct a modern culture for the new Latvian nation stimulated progressive artistic forces to found in 1920 the Riga Artists' Group. As would be the case with the analogous Group of Estonian Artists founded in Tartu in 1923, the Riga association attracted to its exhibitions, artists' discussions, and public presentations many of the most adventuresome figures of the 1920s. The members of the two groups, many of

whom had studied together in Pensa and Saint Petersburg, were a loose confederation of avant-garde figures who subscribed to different styles, subject matter, and aesthetic programs.¹⁶ Collectively the Latvian contingent – Oto Skulme, Aleksandra Beļcova, Sigismunds Vidbergs, Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, Valdemārs Tone, Uga Skulme, Erasts Šveics, Romans Suta, Jānis Liepiņš, Leo Svemps, Konrāds Ubāns, and others – constituted one of the most searching, productive, and accomplished avant-garde movements in Europe during the period. Its experimentation with a host of modernist visual forms, often purporting to be in the service of the nation, engendered controversy, just as the Group of Estonian Artists did, and indirectly prompted the founding of

Figure 189. Jēkabs Kazaks, *Three Mothers*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 90 × 100 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Figure 190. Jēkabs Kazaks, *Bathers*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 136.5 × 104 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



competing societies, many of which took exception to the Riga Artists' Group's advanced stand on aesthetics and to its often engaged political attitudes.¹⁷

In the wake of the six-year war that had reduced Latvia to poverty even as it assured its freedom, many members of the intelligentsia faced a difficult choice. In their search for an artistic idiom through which to affirm the young state's place among modern nations, it would have been natural to look both to Germany and to Russia for appropriate visual forms. These two great homes of advanced art had been Latvia's bitter adversaries, however, and their armed forces had been expelled only months before the Riga Artists' Group was constituted. Moreover, many progressive Latvian artists – Gustav Klucis

(Klutsis), Aleksandrs Drēviņš, and Karl (Kārlis) Ioganson, among the most prominent – had abandoned their land of birth to put their modern art at the service of the bolshevik society then being brutally consolidated in Nikolai Lenin's Russia.¹⁸ Could Latvia's nationalistic modernists embrace freely and uncritically the radically advanced styles that were employed in Russia to assist the bolshevist forces – a Red Army that the Latvians had just repelled at such great cost?¹⁹ Similar issues arose regarding Germany, with which the Latvian intelligentsia readily identified the recently compromised Baltic-German conservatives. On the other hand, in 1919 and into early 1920, it appeared that Germany might well become a communist state, having witnessed the es-



Figure 191. Erasts Šveics, *Woman with Jug*, ca. 1923. Oil on wood, 71 × 50 cm. Latvian Art Museum.

establishment of short-lived "soviet republics" in Munich, Berlin, and elsewhere (where many Latvians had studied). Fearing both a revival of conservative Baltic-German influence and the rise of German leftism, Latvians were wary of any connection with Germany, at least initially. Among artists there was reluctance to espouse too openly the highly original modern art that was being created in that country. In such a charged atmosphere, in which Latvia re-

mained eager to secure its status among Western allies, political expedience dictated looking to France as a primary source of inspiration.²⁰ Accordingly, several affiliates of the Riga Artists' Group, having sloughed off the sober palette and figuration of Grosvalds and Kazaks, favored the variant of synthetic cubism that was identified with Paris.

Erasts Šveics readily recognized in cubism a viable style for a modern Latvian art. His *Woman with Jug*

Figure 192. Jānis Liepiņš, *Violin Player*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 79.5 × 57 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga



(Fig. 191), from the beginning of the 1920s, demonstrates his interest in Picasso's recent work and especially that of Juan Gris. Šveics also drew on the cubism of Georges Braque, as is evident in several still lifes from around 1923. Even toward the end of the decade, after visiting Dresden and Paris, and despite the momentum away from cubism displayed by his closest associates in the Riga Artists' Group, Šveics persisted in a fundamentally cubist idiom, for him a means through which Latvian culture might participate in the European modernist mainstream.²¹ Another artist whose work was shaped profoundly by French forms of cubism during the 1920s was Jānis

Liepiņš, who studied in Riga, Kazan, and Saint Petersburg (Fig. 192). Like Šveics, Liepiņš made a study trip in 1927 to Paris, Berlin, and Dresden from which he returned confirmed in compositions based on geometry, even as he began to betray the influences of German expressive figuration (Fig. 193).

It was perhaps in sculpture that cubism and its formal development into geometric abstraction were most effectively realized. In stone and wood, both of which carried primeval connotations – rather than in the modern materials of steel, iron, plastic, and concrete – Latvia's sculptors hewed images consonant with the age-old traditions of the Baltic peo-



Figure 193. Jānis Liepiņš, *The Wrestlers*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 91 × 71 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

ples. Avoiding assemblage in favor of the more conventional “native” custom of carving,²² they renewed the primitive national appeal of stone and wood sculpture through contemporary reductive styles. In this regard, the granite figures of Teodors Zaļkalns from the 1910s proved decisive for the development of the avant-garde sculpture of the 1920s. Trained first in the renowned Stieglitz Central School for Technical Drawing in Saint Petersburg and afterward in Émile Bourdelle’s Paris atelier, Zaļkalns became committed to discovering the simplified, often geometrically determined, structure through which to manifest the inner workings of nature. In a series of “fugitives” (Fig. 194) directly par-

allel to the simplified figures in Grosvalds’s contemporaneous works on the same theme, Zaļkalns presented a tectonic three-dimensional form – carved from native granite, reduced to its essential planes, stolid in its imagery – that, as the sculptor once remarked, a Latvian peasant might set up in his barn.²³ Within two years Zaļkalns had pushed his concern with spatial tectonics to a new level of accomplishment in a series of portrait busts of Russian composers, their planar forms summarizing basic physiognomic details (Fig. 195). Although the principal animating theory was the artist’s own independent investigation into the primary geometric structures that underlie nature and especially the human form,

the younger generation of avant-garde sculptors chose to see in Zaļkalns's work a perfect aesthetic bridge between Latvia's indigenous modernist essays and the more developed cubist forms in France and Russia. Thus, somewhat unintentionally, the classically trained and Renaissance-oriented Zaļkalns served as a springboard for the forays of three radical artists.

Emīls Melderis, Kārlis Zālīte-Zāle, and Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, like most of their colleagues, received their education in Russia, principally in Kazan and in the various academies and schools of Saint Petersburg – only afterward spending time in Paris and Berlin. Melderis, following in the path of Zaļkalns, wedded his work simultaneously to innovative forms and native – that is, peasant – traditions. Thus, his black-granite portrait of the writer Pāvils Rozītis (Fig. 196) is a likeness of one of Latvia's most talented authors presented with prominent

Figure 194. Teodors Zaļkalns, *Sitting Woman*, 1916. Granite. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Figure 195. Teodors Zaļkalns, *Portrait of Modest Mussorgsky*. 1976 bronze cast of original 1918–19 plaster, 79 × 48.5 × 53.5 cm. Teodors Zaļkalns Museum, Riga.

eyes, smoothly attenuated mouth, and masklike, geometric nose against a broad, almost simian frontal plane – features exaggerated to resemble an iconic image from the primitive past. The bust is indebted both to Zaļkalns's portrayal of Mussorgsky and – in the polished stone planes of the shoulders and neck – to the cubist bronzes of the Baltic-born Jacques Lipchitz.²⁴ The archaizing of the figure, so typical of Latvian avant-garde sculpture of this period, can be traced in part to Matvejs, who, under the Russian alias of Vladimir Markov, had published an enormously influential booklet titled *Neger-Kunst*.²⁵ Celebrating the wood sculpture of black Africa for the simplicity of its forms, stripped to the pith of plastic essentials, and for its emotional resonance, Matvejs helped Latvia's sculptors achieve a monumentality and clarity in their work. He also suggest-

ed the double source of modernist inspiration – indigenous and foreign – most clearly manifest in the works of Zāle and Marta Liepiņa-Skulme.

Zāle, like others of the avant-garde, overcame the Latvian residual antipathy toward Germany and traveled in 1922 to Berlin, where he spent two productive years.²⁶ A series of quasi-abstract portrait busts and figures he executed there (Fig. 197) profit from his contact with the large number of Russian, Hungarian, and other eastern European modern artists in the German capital. Indeed, from the Russian-born Ivan Puni, around whom many from the Baltic states and Russia gathered while in Berlin, Zāle likely received encouragement to experiment with constructivist forms such as we see in his treatment of facial details. A graduate of Russian education in Kazan, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg, and having well-placed Russian contacts, Zāle participated in Berlin's enormously influential First Russian Art Ex-

Figure 196. Emīls Melderis, *Portrait of Pāvils Rozītis*, 1921. Black granite, 68 × 51 × 40 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Figure 197. Kārlis Zālīte-Zāle, *Portrait Head*, 1922. Destroyed. (Photo courtesy of the Latvian Art Museum, Riga.)

hibition in 1922, thus presenting his work to an international audience. Equally important in locating Latvian modernism in the West – and, reciprocally, Western modernist inventiveness in Latvia – was Zāle's role as an editor of *Laikmets Saturs* (Contemporary Times), whose four issues (in Latvian) promote the aesthetic philosophy of synthesis originally derived from Matvejs.²⁷ Through a fusion of the primitive spirit with the needs and tempo of modern times, Latvian artists maintained, both the deadening hand of academicism and the mechanical recording of reality could be overcome. In response to this philosophical call for a deeper, more searching representation of reality, Zāle introduced to his audience the synthetic forms of cubism along with those



Plate 17. Jēkabs Kazaks, *Portrait of Jūlijs Sproģis*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 61.3 × 52 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Plate 18. Uga Skulme, *The Village*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 92 × 74 cm. Private collection. (Courtesy of Jurgis Skulme.)



Plate 19. Niklāvs Strunke, *Man Entering a Room*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 92 × 86 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Plate 20. Märt Laarman, *Churches of St. Olaf and St. Nicholas*, 1926-7. Oil on canvas? 23 × 17.5 cm. Tartu Art Museum.



Plate 21. Arnold Akberg, *Factory*, 1924. Oil on canvas. Private collection. (Courtesy of the Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.)



Plate 22. Rihard Jakopič, *Kamnitnik in Snow*, 1903. Oil on canvas, 49 × 59.5 cm. Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, on loan in Narodna galerija (National Museum), Ljubljana, Slovenia. (Courtesy Fotoarchiv, Narodna galerija, Ljubljana, Slovenia.)



Plate 23. Veno Pilon, *Portrait of Composer Marij Kogoj*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 94 × 75.5 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana.



Plate 24. France Kralj, *The Death of Genius*, 1921. Oil on jute, 100 × 91 cm. Collection of Zlat Kralj, on loan to the Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana. (Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana.)

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Plate 26. Zlatko Šulentić, *Autumn*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 95 × 70. Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. (Photo: Luka Mjeda.)



Plate 27. Mihailo Petrov, *77 Suicides*, 1924. Watercolor, 31 × 23.8 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade.



Plate 28. Jo Klek (Josip Seissel), design for advertising kiosk, 1923. India ink and watercolor, 25.1 × 33.6 cm. National Museum, Belgrade.



Plate 29. Nikola Martinoski, *Brothel*, 1932. Oil on canvas.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje.



Plate 30. Arthur Segal, *Interior with Reading Woman* (with painted frame), ca. 1920. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.



Plate 31. Max Herman Maxy, *Meissen*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 80 × 69 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.



Plate 32. Max Herman Maxy, *Madonna and Child*, 1923. Oil and collage on cardboard, 57 × 41 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.

of its diverse avant-garde practitioners, whom he came to know while in Berlin.

Also active in Berlin in 1922 was Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, who was then on a study trip to Germany to deepen her understanding of cubism and its successor styles, which she had known mostly at second hand, principally through journals published in Paris and available in Riga. In her plaster *Abstract Figure* (Fig. 198), clearly influenced by the work of Lipchitz, and in an equally inventive bronze-patinated *Guitarist* (Fig. 199), Liepiņa-Skulme transcended earlier wood carvings that were expressive of Latvia's primeval cultural traditions. *The Guitarist* achieves by means of cubism a creative conjuncture of Western modernism and native archaism. Throughout the first half of the 1920s, Liepiņa-Skulme continued to make use of this twinning of traditions to elaborate a monumental style commensurate with the demands of the time. In 1924 and 1925 she began focusing her attention on designs for Riga's projected Freedom Monument, a symbol of national pride and political self-realization. A (destroyed) model (Fig. 200) displaying forcefully geometric architecture and prominent schematization of the figure is one of her last works to synthesize cubism with representation, modernist means with nationalist theme.²⁸ From this point on and through the 1930s, the cubist forms that had been instrumental in her maturation as an artist are replaced by figurative content, the result of her interest in archaeological finds. These experimental forays into cubism are representative of several members of the Riga Artists' Group. But for the dominant figures of the Latvian classical avant-garde of the 1920s – Niklāvs Strunke, Romans Suta, and the other members of the Skulme family – cubism was an essential ingredient in the recipe for modernist art. In works on two-dimensional supports, on porcelain, and for the theater, these sculptors and painters took advantage of varied media to formulate a visual vocabulary appropriate to a new Latvia.

Oto Skulme – a restless product of Rozentāls's Riga teaching – made the customary trip to Russia to enroll in the Stroganov School for the Arts and Crafts in Moscow and later in Stieglitz's Central School for Technical Drawing, where he excelled in courses for theater design. A founder of the Riga Artists' Group,²⁹ Skulme was carried away by the possibilities of cubism, especially its suitability for the national theater, with which he would be profes-

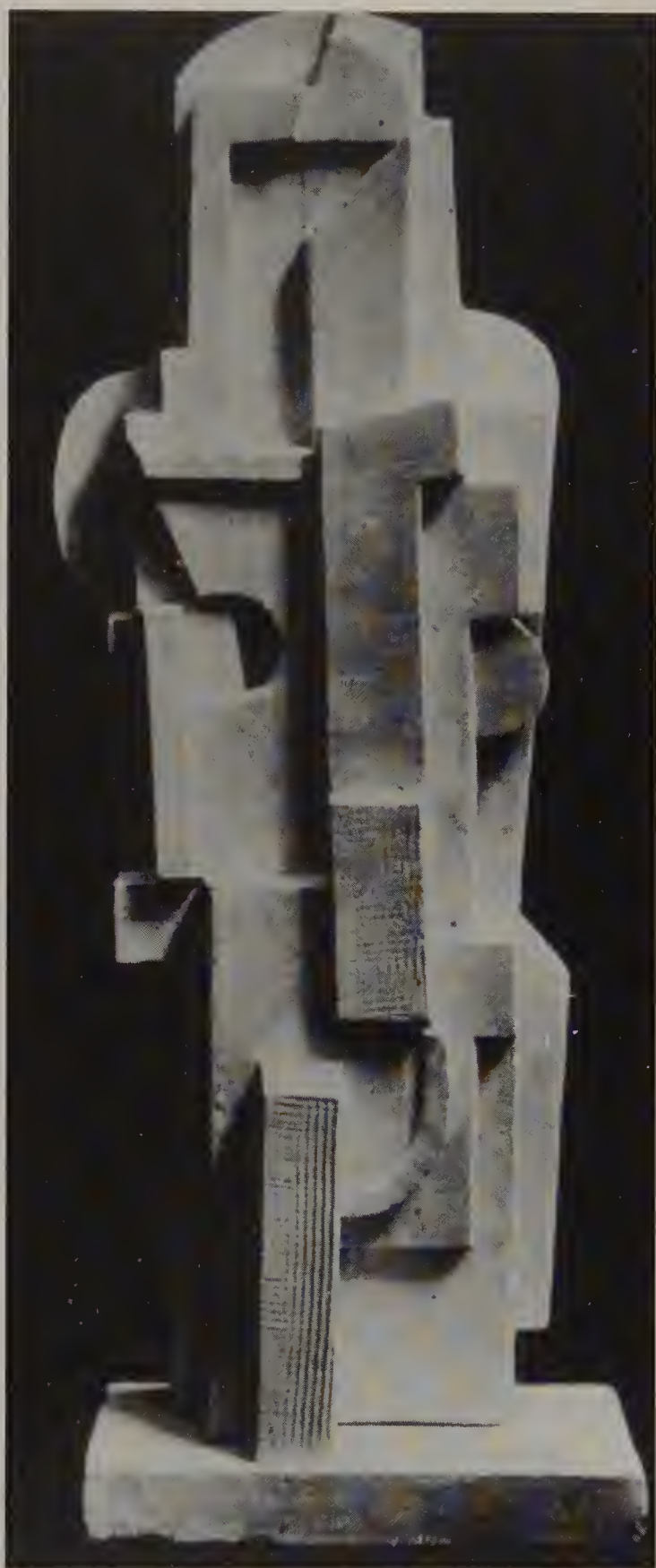


Figure 198. Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, *Abstract Figure*, ca. 1922. Plaster. Destroyed. (From *Unerwartete Begegnung: Lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1990.)

sionally engaged for almost his entire career. It was to continue the investigation into this style that in 1920 he and his wife, Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, took the aforementioned study trip to Berlin; afterward, he went on to Paris. Canvases from the early 1920s show the painter trying to work through the structural dynamics of analytical cubism. In several still-life paintings Skulme limited himself to the somber earthen tones of the Braque and Picasso canvases he had observed during his student days in Moscow. But in other compositions, he was exploring a brighter palette and transposing receding flat planes to the demands of scenography. Skulme's able attempts to orchestrate forms, planes, and colors in a

Figure 199. Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, *Guitarist*, ca. 1924–5. Plaster (later cast in bronze, 1984), 48 × 21.8 × 32 cm. Private collection. (Photo courtesy of Džemme Skulme).



Figure 200. Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, model (destroyed) for the *Freedom Monument in Riga*, ca. 1925. Plaster. (Photo courtesy of Džemme Skulme.)

manner compatible with the three-dimensionality of the stage can be seen to have reached an early success in his 1923 *Composition of a Portrait* (Fig. 201). Against the backdrop of a relatively flat still-life composition, the minimally modeled red-dressed female figure emerges as a dramatic protagonist. The facial planes, segmented arms and hands, and the long line of the body integrate her into the cubist-inspired context, but her prominent placement and framing, as well as her outward gaze, betray the artist's interest in creating a theatrical presence. The extent to which Skulme exploited cubist forms for other purposes becomes dramatically evident in a comparison of this painting with a contemporaneous canvas by Šveics (see Fig. 191), his fellow member in the Riga Artists' Group. Whereas Šveics was content to appropriate the abstracting tendencies of synthetic cubism, Skulme, once he had mastered its structural vocabulary, recognized in cubism a repertoire of modern forms and methods that might set



Figure 201. Oto Skulme, *Composition of a Portrait*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 138 × 103 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga. (From *Unerwartete Begegnung: Lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1990.)



Figure 202. Uga Skulme, *Composition with Figure and Violin*, ca. 1923. Oil on canvas. Private collection. (Courtesy of Jurgis Skulme.)

the stage for the new society being created in the eastern Baltic.

A similar concern with creating the cultural framework for a modern Latvia preoccupied Uga Skulme, Oto's younger brother. He, too, was deeply engaged with modernist aesthetics, for which he served as an apologist in the journals of the time. He was also committed to designing for the theater, as if in this controlled realm he might realize the drama of a new culture. Among the most intellectually oriented of the family, having studied law, painting, and architecture, Uga sought to distill the essential character of the various manifestations of cubism.

The Village (see Plate 18), with its reduction of foliage and architecture to nearly abstract patterns, attests to his interest in the "Estaque" period of Picasso and Braque. Similarly, *Composition with Figure and Violin* (Fig. 202) reveals the artist's absorption with synthetic cubism, although here he added distinctly Latvian components – for example, the traditional patterning in a series of canvases of 1923 and 1924.³⁰ By so doing, he contributed to the avant-garde's manifold efforts to present an art both modern and national.

While the Skulme family played a pivotal role during the first years of the republic, significant sup-



Figure 203. Niklāvs Strunke, *Portrait of Antons Austrīņš*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 60 × 55 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

porting roles were enacted by Sigismunds Vidbergs, Valdemārs Tone, Konrāds Ubāns, Ludolfs Liberts, and Aleksandra Beļcova. The leading players in the drama of the Latvian classical avant-garde, however, were Niklāvs Strunke and Romans Suta. More than anyone else, these versatile figures presented the advanced art of their country on the world stage, participating in exhibitions throughout Europe during the 1920s – contributing new forms and visual meaning to the decorative arts (porcelain, furniture, and glass, in particular) and interior design – as well as redirecting the Latvian stage, film, and opera house toward modernist conventions.

During his student days in Saint Petersburg and Riga, his wide-ranging study trips to Berlin and through Italy, and the time he spent in Latvia as painter, graphic artist, decorator, designer, and even amateur art historian, Strunke was exposed to the entire panoply of modernism. He studied advanced examples of paintings that he found in museums and private collections; he perused journals for the

newest designs; he read treatises on modern aesthetics; and he sought contact with an extraordinary range of the makers of modern art – all by way of learning from others to make something uniquely his own. Thus Strunke's art often contains details that recall (and doubtless inspired) the work of his contemporaries and yet defy easy categorization or association. His early portrait of the writer Antons Austrīņš (Fig. 203) suggests comparison with George Grosz's somewhat later expressionist portraits of the poet Max Herrmann-Neisse (particularly the 1927 version in New York's Museum of Modern Art) in the affective exaggerations of the facial planes and pose. And certain features – the disharmonious palette of green, grays, and blues; the white abstract modeling of the contours of the drapery folds and the unexpected white highlighting of the diagonal ray in the upper left; and the free-floating double "A" initials – recall the formal vocabulary of Liubov Popova (for example, the "Plastic Paintings" of 1915). But the painting is, in the end, a singular ac-

complishment attesting to the Latvian artist's search for a new syntax drawn from the modernist lexicon.

Extending his visual compass across the continent, Strunke borrowed and then adapted synthetic cubism from France, as evidenced in *Two Figures at a Table* (Fig. 204) and in still lifes from the early 1920s. In these works he introduced transparent planes as a means of affirming the aesthetic program of the eastern European artists whose work he knew and admired in Berlin in the 1920s. From an adaptation of their blend of stylized, figural constructivism (Fig. 205), Strunke shifted easily to an Italian Renaissance-inspired self-portrait (Fig. 206), both stimulated by his wide travels. Moreover, while in Italy and France, he looked carefully at the work and theory constituting the "metaphysical" art of Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carrà and used it as a point of departure for a series of heads and self-portraits (Fig.



Figure 204 (right). Niklāvs Strunke, *Two Figures at a Table*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 86 × 71 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Figure 205. Niklāvs Strunke, *Construction of a Head*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 34 × 32 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Figure 206. Niklāvs Strunke, *A Florentine in Winter (Self-Portrait)*, ca. 1924–8. Oil on canvas, 46.5 × 38 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

207). Here the anonymous mechanical figures of the metaphysicians are transfigured into totemic presences, much in keeping with the revival of Latvia's primeval religion and its celebration of native deities;³¹ at the same time, the mannequin is a pregnant characterization of contemporary Latvian political, economic, and cultural conditions – a newly established nation artificially assuming the accoutrements of Western liberal democracy. Such a mood of cultural dislocation is represented graphically in Strunke's *Man Entering a Room* (see Plate 19), which parallels the spiritual disquiet of René Magritte's contemporaneous surrealist canvases.

This sense of incompleteness was addressed also by Romans Suta (Fig. 208) in the introduction to the first published catalog on recent Latvian art:

[T]o what degree has Latvia been able to secure recognition as a nation possessing not only the political rights equal to others, but also deserving of equal estimation as a member of the larger cultural community of nations? Does there not correspond to the political independence of the state a unique national cultural identity that alone is the most secure guarantee of the nation's political achievements and that alone has the ability to bestow on them legitimacy?³²

At home in the creative capitals throughout the continent, Suta knew from firsthand experience that only a vibrant modern culture could validate the political state. Moreover, as one who had studied with Matvejs and Grosvalds, he knew and accepted the heavy obligations his generation bore in bringing Latvia's cultural existence both to internal fruition



Figure 207. Niklāvs Strunke, *Self-Portrait with Doll*, mid-1920s. Oil on canvas, 66 × 64 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

Figure 208. Romans Suta, *Self-Portrait with Pipe*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 49 × 45 cm. Private collection. (From *Unerwartete Begegnung: Lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1990.)

and to international recognition. Attesting to Suta's stature as a principal architect of Latvia's avant-garde culture – within which he functioned as painter, decorator, filmmaker, graphic artist, art critic, and philosopher – is a still-life painting of an atelier (Fig. 209) with architect's instruments arranged on a work desk. Supported upright by a rolled drawing, a tilted T-square, and a triangle is the framed image of Riga's Gunpowder Tower (*Pulvertornis*), the only surviving fortification tower from the fourteenth-century city walls and a national monument commemorating the repulsion of Latvia's invaders, most recently in the years immediately preceding, when the Russian Red Army was driven out of the country.³³ The Gunpowder Tower appears not in its true





Figure 209. Romans Suta, *Still Life with Triangle*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 68 × 62.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga. (From *Unerwartete Begegnung: Lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1990.)

urban context but backed by a (truncated) suprematist–constructivist parallelogram. The historical monument is thus not locked in history; it is shown as an essential part of the new society to be built on the plan of constructivism. Such a reading is encouraged by the view out the window in the upper-right corner of Suta's canvas, through which is framed, against a blue sky of billowy clouds, the corner of a functionalist (modern) building and the prominent electric cables of technology. The drawer under the

drafting board is open, the chair pushed back, as if the artist has momentarily risen from his task of designing a new Riga, the two faces of which – the historic and the future – he sees pictured before him.³⁴

The suprematist square in the still life carries a biographical reference to a decisive phase in the artist's development. In 1919 Suta and many Latvian artist colleagues enlisted their talents in the service of the short-lived communist régime. Like the Latvian revolutionaries who were embellishing the

squares of Soviet Russia with symbols of the new art, Suta created large-scale theatrical decorations on the Russian radical model for May Day celebrations mounted in the city center of the Latvian capital.³⁵ It was in the cubo-suprematist (and subsequent constructivist) vocabulary comprising the geometric forms, flattened space, and asymmetrical composition of such designs that Suta discovered a formal expression to serve his modernist needs without compromising allegiance to the principles of Grosvalds and Matvejs. Indeed, it was at this revolutionary moment that Suta came upon the aesthetic synthesis that would inform his multifaceted artistic enterprises throughout the short life of the Latvian avant-garde.

By 1920 the political revolution in Latvia had passed; however, for the cultural forces, there were battles still to be won. With the founding of the Riga Artists' Group and their first exhibition, Suta assumed the role of spokesperson for the progressive faction. In numerous articles for the press, campaigning vigorously against the conservative impulses in Latvia's newly liberated society, he crusaded for all forms of modernist expression as the only legitimate means through which to secure for the new nation a valid cultural identity deserving of respect from more advanced Western democracies. His own work of the time – a still life (Fig. 210), for example – reveals the influence of Jean Metzinger and Albert Gleizes, whose book on cubism and its principles would have impressed Suta as much as did their canvases.³⁶ He also introduced references to Russian modernism in such works as *Still Life with Saw* (Fig. 211),³⁷ acknowledging Kazimir Malevich's frequent use of the worker's saw. The prominent placement of peasants' tools in a semiabstract context honors in equal measure the native Latvian tradition that Grosvalds and Matvejs had urged modern artists never to forsake. Here again, Suta sought a form of synthesis: between the styles of Western and Eastern modernism, between peasant traditions and contemporary forms of expression, and between figural motifs and abstract tendencies.³⁸

In 1922 Suta, accompanied by his Russian-born artist wife, Aleksandra Belcova, and representing Latvia's modernist movement, went west to meet other progressive artists and to experience at first hand the advanced art and aesthetics he had known up to then primarily through reproductions. On their trip to Poland, Germany, and France, Suta es-



Figure 210. Romans Suta, *Still Life*, 1920–1. Oil on canvas, 61.5 × 45.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

tablished a working relationship on behalf of Latvia's artists with the Blok group of modernists in Warsaw, with the Novembergruppe in Berlin, with the futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and the purists Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant in Paris, and many others.³⁹ He also renewed contact with the significant number of Latvian modernists resident in Berlin. Indeed, while a guest in Zāle's apartment there, Suta wrote (in German) his brochure "60 Years of Latvian Art," which provided the first overview of Latvian artistic accomplishment available to a foreign audience.⁴⁰

Latvian artists' work for the theater and in the decorative arts was yet another dimension of the overarching synthesis between modernist aesthetics and national cultural formation that lay at the core of their country's aspirations. In these fields of engagement, Suta was a principal protagonist, having been a cocontributor to the Riga Artists' Group's innovative designs for the Latvian opera, theater, and ballet stages as well as a cofounder of the Baltars porcelain manufactory.⁴¹ It was actually Suta who proposed establishing Baltars as a means of disseminating modernist-designed articles of everyday use.

Figure 211. Romans Suta, *Still Life with Saw*, 1920. Oil on canvas, 98.5 × 68.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Inspired both by the nativist arts-and-crafts movement – which advocated the medium of ceramics to promote awareness of the national folk culture – and by the inventive suprematist porcelain being produced by Russia’s modernists, Suta and his colleagues made effective use of ceramic ware to propagate the evolving Latvian culture. The name *Baltars* was coined to signify a melding of Baltic tradition and the new art forms then being articulated.

Founded in 1924, Baltars owed its success in large part to fortunate timing, as the porcelain manufac-

tory attracted the participation of Latvia’s artists at the pinnacle of the avant-garde movement. A cadre of mature modernists submitted designs for realization in ceramic,⁴² and within a year of its founding, Baltars garnered international recognition: three medals, including the gold, at the 1925 Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes in Paris. Although the entire modernist enterprise began to exhaust itself just after the middle of the decade, and many of the avant-garde lost interest in porcelain, Suta himself remained a commit-



Figure 212. Romans Suta, *Young Woman with Bird*, 1926. Porcelain plate, 23.8 cm dia. Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts, Riga. (From *Unerwartete Begegnung: Lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1990.)

ted supporter until financial exigencies forced Baltars to close in 1928. His work for the factory during the four years of its existence is, ironically, an excellent barometer for measuring the declining authority of Latvia's avant-garde aesthetics. Indeed, through his designs for porcelain – perhaps the consummate medium for the expression of national folk traditions in a field of modernist engagement – we witness the collapse of the avant-garde's creative synthesis.

Suta's first works in porcelain reflect the embrace of cubism and constructivism that is evident in his contemporaneous painting. By 1926, however, the careful fusion of folkloric and modernist elements begins to break down. In a plate titled *Young Woman with Bird* (Fig. 212), the sweeping arc of the figure's right arm, the repeated curving folds of her native costume, and the sophisticated use of color to suggest motion all demonstrate Suta's skillful orchestration of geometric forms, spatial planes, and rhythmic cadences; but the forceful centrality of the figure predominates, and even the color rings on the edge of the plate function more as a decorative pattern than as part of an abstract composition. In another design from the same year, the folkloric theme of the

Latvian wedding (Fig. 213) has taken center stage, and the modernist elements, significantly intermixed with the abstract vocabulary of Latvia's native religious revival, have been relegated to the periphery. By 1928, the final year of Baltars's production, Suta's earlier mastery of cubism and constructivism has been subordinated to providing the abstract compositional staging (or decorative patterning) for a wedding scene that constitutes the main act (Fig. 214).⁴³ During these same years, and with similar motivation and parallel effect, Suta and his colleagues performed their modernist drama on Riga's legitimate theater and opera stages.

More than other arenas in which Latvia's modern artists were engaged, the theater was subject to foreign – though decisively progressive – influences.⁴⁴ Furthermore, many of those most committed to the theater were trained in Russia, where they were impressed by the Mamontov Opera, the Moscow Art Theatre, and especially the Ballets Russes – all of which had served as suitable vehicles for Russia's advanced artists to further their experiments in innovative forms of communication. Thus, when Latvians turned their attention to the theater from about



Figure 213. Romans Suta, *Wedding*, 1926. Porcelain plate, 37 cm dia. Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts, Riga. (From *Unerwartete Begegnung: Lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1990.)

the mid-1920s, they exploited the available expressionist, cubist, and most of all the constructivist precedents. Jānis Muncis, one of the most imaginative modernist figures animating independent Latvia's performing arts, was trained as a painter before taking up theater direction, scenography, and costume design. In sets he prepared for *Līgātūra* (The Tale of Count von Gleichen) in 1925 (Fig. 215), he adapted the partially expressionist, partially constructivist

character of the stagecraft by Max Reinhardt and Vsevolod Meierhol'd to purely Latvian themes and purposes. Overturning the naturalist conventions of the theater, he emphasized geometrically abstract forms, architectural elements used for expressive effect, and lighting manipulated as if the overall spatial composition were a painting by Suta (Fig. 216). The modernization of Latvia's theatrical world was continued by Herberts Līkums, whose training in the



Figure 214. Romans Suta, *Wedding*, 1928. Porcelain plate, 56 cm. dia. Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts, Riga. (From *Unerwartete Begegnung: Lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1990.)

Figure 215 (below). Jānis Muncis, *Ligātūra* (The Tale of Count von Gleichen), 1925. Tempera on plywood, 60 × 88.5 cm. Rainis Museum for Literature and Art History, Riga.



Figure 216. Romans Suta, *City Motif*, early to mid-1920s. Oil on glass, 48 × 37.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



revolutionary *proletkult* studios of Soviet Smolensk allowed him to introduce to Riga's stage the functionalist tendencies of Russia, often synthesized with the jagged geometry of expressionism (Fig. 217). Suta's own contributions were focused principally on costume design and scenery. For the recently completed opera *Turandot*, for example, his decorative program (Fig. 218) effectively accommodates constructivism, most clearly present in the abstract rendition of the Chinese gate leading to Turandot's palace, with the symbolism in the costume of the oriental prince. Not unrelated is Strunke's striking synthesis of abstract decorative forms and exaggerated geometric figuration in a design for *Hinkemann* (Fig. 219). But like the designs made for the Baltars

porcelain manufactory, the theater sketches increasingly show abstract and other modernist elements relegated to a merely ornamental role (Fig. 220). Indeed, by the late 1920s, Latvia's avant-garde betrayed unmistakable evidence of its decline.

As would be the case in neighboring Estonia, the political conditions in Latvia grew less and less hospitable to inventiveness. Economic paralysis and rampant joblessness among the large number of university graduates and intellectuals dimmed the optimism that had animated modernists since the beginning of the decade and the effective establishment of the Latvian state.⁴⁵ In addition, most of the avant-garde was captivated by the aesthetic possibilities opened up by foreign forms of figuration, whether



Figure 217 (above). Herberts Likums, decorative sketch for Maurice Maeterlinck's *Light Image*, 1928. Gouache on paper. Rainis Museum for Literature and Art History, Riga.

Figure 218 (below). Romans Suta, decorative sketch for Puccini and Alfano's *Turandot*, 1926. Watercolor and tempera on cardboard, 29 × 40.3 cm. Rainis Museum for Literature and Art History, Riga.





Figure 219. Niklāvs Strunke, sketch for Ernst Töller's *Hinkemann*, 1927. Tempera on cardboard, 13.2 × 28.5 cm. Rainis Museum for Literature and Art History, Riga.

Figure 220. Ludolfs Liberts, costume design for Ambrose Thomas's *Mignon*, 1926. Watercolor and tempera on paper, 50.5 × 34.3 cm. Rainis Museum for Literature and Art History, Riga.



for their decorative value or their social incisiveness. Thus, Beļcova established a new visual definition of synthesis in *Tennis Player* (Fig. 221), in which geometric forms are pushed into the background or driven to the edge to allow the fashionably made-up sportswoman to take center court. Similarly, relegating abstract patterns to apparel and upholstery, Uga Skulme portrayed himself (Fig. 222) with the coolly penetrating directness he derived from German New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*). In Vidbergs's graphic work came a shift away from the gravity of revolutionary engagement to designs of mild eroticism (Fig. 223). Perhaps most indicative of the avant-garde's loss of momentum by 1934, the close of Latvia's short life as a democratic state, is a portrait of Zāle (Fig. 224) by Ludolfs Liberts – a painter who had been a prominent constructivist in Latvia during the 1920s. As the present painting reveals, however, within a decade of the avant-garde's high point of commitment and creativity, modernism was being supplanted by a modish, genuinely popular conservative revival.

Neither in Latvia nor in Estonia were the circumstances favorable at this moment in history for the perpetuation of a distinctive national self-image based on the commanding accomplishments of the previous decade. The rise of extremist intolerance, general hostility toward experimentation, and a significantly lowered level of expectation were not encouraging of the modernist styles and programs that Latvian artists had been developing in service to the



Figure 221 (above). Aleksandra Beļcova, *Tennis Player*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 40.5 × 40.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

Figure 222 (right). Uga Skulme, *Self-Portrait*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 81 × 66 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.



Figure 223 (below right). Sigismunds Vidbergs, *Paris*, 1925. Tusche on paper, 17 × 11.5 cm. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

nation since even before its political independence. In 1934, the year of Liberts's stylistically conservative portrayal of Zāle, Kārlis Ulmanis, Latvia's lawfully elected current prime minister – the first head of state following the proclamation of national independence in 1918 – declared a state of emergency and suspended the constitution. Under Ulmanis's authoritarian presidency, which promoted a thoroughgoing Latvianization of the economy and a narrow-minded definition of culture, there was little room for an avant-garde of international ambition to flourish.⁴⁶ By the early to mid-1930s, in concert with the modernist movements elsewhere in eastern Europe, Latvia's progressive artistic forces were in full retreat.

ESTONIA

An Estonian modern art was in the process of being created before the modern nation-state was proclaimed in 1918. Indeed, for the Estonian nation, as for other Baltic lands during the same period, art was to serve as the visual incarnation of its identity *in statu nascendi*. In keeping with practices elsewhere in the region, the visual arts in Estonia were inti-





Figure 224. Ludolfs Liberts, *Portrait of the Sculptor Zāle*, 1934. Oil on canvas. Latvian Art Museum, Riga.

mately connected to contemporary developments in the other arts, especially indigenous music (song festivals), literature (national mythologies), and drama.⁴⁷

This was particularly true for those countries in which the intelligentsia were few in number, concentrated in one or two cities – Tallinn and Tartu for Estonia – and opposed by nonnative national or ethnic groups such as the Baltic-German elite, which had enjoyed for many centuries a position of cultural, commercial, and often political dominance in both Estonia and Latvia.⁴⁸

The disparate attempts to represent native expressions of a national Estonian culture were greatly advanced in the 1860s. Through the manifold efforts of a small number of Estonian (and a much greater number of academically liberal Baltic-German) writ-

ers, ethnographers, poets, and painters – themselves trained mostly in the academies of Saint Petersburg and Düsseldorf,⁴⁹ and slightly later in Munich – an informal but quite extensive movement of “national awakening” was inaugurated.⁵⁰ In 1862 the mythological adventures known as the *Kalevipoeg* (Son of Kalev), extant through an Estonian oral tradition, were systematically compiled, elaborated, and published by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald.⁵¹ Both ancient in its folkloric heritage and fully contemporary in its codification and redaction, the *Kalevipoeg* contained a rich repertory of romantic themes to be appropriated by Estonian artists. For this protomodern phase of Estonian art, reference should be made to the contributions of Johann Köler and Karl Ludvig Maibach. Köler, born in rural poverty and mostly self-taught, immersed himself at an early age in Es-



Figure 225. Johann Köler, *Portrait of Dr. F. R. Kreutzwald*, 1864. Oil on canvas, 72 × 53 cm. Estonian State History Museum, Tallinn.

tonian traditions and folklore. Although successful in Saint Petersburg both as a professor in the Academy of Arts and as a society painter, he is better remembered for his commitment to furthering the Estonian national cultural consciousness. In numerous realist portraits of peasants, character types, and especially major figures in the intelligentsia (Fig. 225), Köler made increasingly visible the subjects of the “national awakening.” This process was furthered by Maibach, whose many depictions of the Estonian landscape and topographical monuments betray the naturalist style in which he was educated at the Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg. Yet what both Maibach and Köler most fully accomplished was the depiction of events, scenes, and personalities of Estonia as authentic subjects for official and academic art – in other words, the presentation of a striking self-image to their contemporaries among the swelling Estonian intelligentsia in Tallinn and Tartu. Additional currency for the self-image of the “national awakening” was provided by the works of a gener-

ation of painters who had been trained for the most part in Düsseldorf. They include religious and historical canvases of Eduard von Gebhardt, renditions of the Estonian landscape by Eugen Dücker, and genre scenes by Gregor von Bochmann and Oskar Hoffmann.⁵²

The principal figure bridging the various realist styles of national romanticism and those that would define the modern era was Kristjan Raud. Issuing from peasant stock and denied the opportunities reserved for the Baltic-German elite, Raud came indirectly to art, securing admission to the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts only in his late twenties. Dissatisfied with Russian academicism, he matriculated at the Düsseldorf Academy, later enrolling in Anton Ažbė’s Munich art school, where he would have encountered among the students large numbers of aspiring modernists from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bohemia, and even Russia. After a few years Raud transferred to Munich’s renowned Academy of Arts and was deeply impressed by the Jugendstil aesthetics there, especially by its suitability as an effective vehicle for the national symbolism he prized. While in Germany he came into contact with Edvard Munch’s work as well as that of the French impressionists. Thus, on his return to Estonia in the early years of the new century, Raud was able to introduce a panoply of contemporary styles (Fig. 226). The innovative teaching methods he brought were, for many of the successors to the “national-awakening” movement, the most appropriate means to express the cultural aspirations of the country. As a result, painters found a solution through which they could maintain a connection with the national past while affirming an identity with and commitment to their own time.

Raud’s long and active career as a painter, graphic artist, and teacher points to a defining characteristic of the Estonian avant-garde: frequent oscillation between forms of consummate modernism – exemplifying avant-garde character and purpose – and a distinctive category of national neoromanticism.⁵³ For Estonian modernist painters (and sculptors) – who otherwise practiced cubism, futurism, constructivism, purism, and surrealism – neoromanticism furnished a ready repertory of figures, forms, and formats (Fig. 227). Its persistence into the present might be recognized, in part, as the legacy of Estonia’s singular “national-awakening” movement.⁵⁴ Given the relatively small size of the country’s intel-



Figure 226. Kristjan Raud, *Rest on a Hike*, ca. 1902–5. Tempera on canvas, 63.2 × 72.3 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn. (From L. Viirjoja, *Kristjan Raud, 1865–1943: Looming ja mõtteavaldused*, Tallinn, 1981.)

ligentsia, it is remarkable that the aesthetic program articulated by the creator-discoverers of Estonian culture in the nineteenth century functioned as a compelling precedent for twentieth-century followers. Instead of abjuring such a paradigm involving folkloric symbols and character types, progressive artists such as Raud sustained it by accommodating its distinctive message in their modern oeuvre.⁵⁵

Raud's success in preparing Estonia to be receptive to the various influences of the West while remaining true to nativist themes had a profound impact on his contemporaries, particularly on a band of slightly younger and aesthetically adventuresome artists: Ants Laikmaa (Hans Laipmann), Nikolai Triik, and Konrad Mägi. Laikmaa, taking a cue from his friend Raud, turned to sources beyond Saint Petersburg for a stylistic vocabulary both appropriate to the needs of an emerging culture and congruent with the demands of a modern age. While focusing his at-

tention on nonacademic trends newly apparent in the northern art of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia (beyond the imperial academy), Laikmaa became enamored of intense colors, decorative patterns of line, and rhythmic construction of composition – a stylistic lexicon he employed in early portraits and in later landscapes (Figs. 228, 229). His orientation was the programmatic basis for the studio school he founded in Tallinn in 1903 (exactly a century after the first drawing institute had been set up in Tartu), the earliest art school to be established in the Estonian capital. Much of the impetus for Laikmaa's search for new forms to represent the emerging nation came from the influential role exercised by a group of writers called Young Estonia (Noor-Eesti) on every aspect of Estonian culture. The circle included Gustav Suits, Friedebert Tuglas, Johannes Aavik, Marie Under (Fig. 230), and others who sought a modern idiom to express the longing



Figure 227. Kristjan Raud, *Sacrifice*, 1935. Tempera on canvas, 160 × 191.6 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

for independence from Russian, Baltic-German, and various academic constraints. All were under the age of twenty-five at the time of the group's founding, just when the revolution of 1905 was redefining the cultural and political reach of the tsardom in the Russian empire.⁵⁶ The close personal connections, shared objectives, and reciprocal influences between Young Estonian poets and writers and the country's painters and sculptors are yet one more manifestation of the process of constructing a modern national identity, initiated almost a half century earlier during the period of "national awakening."

Another visual artist who put his talents at the service of progressive aesthetics and national identity was Nikolai Triik. Like others of his generation, he began his training in Saint Petersburg's Academy of Arts. Upon the dismissal of many of its faculty in 1905 – those in sympathy with the revolution in Russia – Triik continued his education at private at-

eliers and at the art school supported by the Petersburg Society for the Promotion of the Arts. Becoming frustrated by the limited opportunities in the Russian capital, he returned briefly to Estonia to study with Laikmaa before pursuing his education in Helsinki and then in Paris, where he matriculated at the *École des Beaux-Arts* and attended the free academies of Colarossi and Julien. After a prolonged study trip to Norway, Triik made his way back to his homeland, where, in close association with both Raud and Laikmaa, he contributed to Estonian culture the neoimpressionism, symbolism, and especially the fauvism he had recently mastered. Relying also on the decorative techniques that Laikmaa had advocated through his studio classes, and invoking the epic narrative traditions espoused by Young Estonian writers and by Raud, Triik had a wide repertory from which to draw. His versatility is apparent in a tribute to his master, Laikmaa, whom he depict-



Figure 229 (above). Ants Laikmaa, *Winter Landscape*, 1938. Pastel, 45 × 61.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

Figure 228 (below). Ants Laikmaa, *Self-Portrait*, 1902. Pastel, 91.2 × 66.7 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.



Figure 230. Ants Laikmaa, *Portrait of Marie Under*, 1904. Pastel, 50 × 47.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.





Figure 231. Nikolai Triik, *Portrait of the Artist Ants Laikmaa*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 110 × 85 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

ed in a manner conveying fauvist and German expressionist aesthetics with brilliant and jarring color contrasts, rough and uneven modeling, and lively brushwork (Fig. 231). The portrait also betrays a debt to the Swiss Ferdinand Hodler, seen by Young Estonian artists as a modern master with a ready appreciation for national myths. The well-dressed Laikmaa sitting rather impatiently on a stool here is no longer the academic master who confronts the viewer in a self-portrait (see Fig. 228); now he personifies the Estonian intellectual whose lessons have found a spirited audience. Even more explicitly patriotic are Triik's brilliantly colored northern landscapes evoking the symbolism of the primeval home of the Finno-Estonian people (Fig. 232) and his numerous renditions of episodes from the national epic. For example, in *Kalevipoeg's Sailboat "Lennuk"* (Fig. 233), the painter combined the brilliant palette of expressionism that he learned while traveling and studying abroad with the decorative program recommended by Laikmaa and Raud. Thus, the intense

red of the "Lennuk"'s sail, the dynamic diagonal pattern of its ornamentation, and the flaming colors in the background aureoles are witness to the effective fusion of modern aesthetics with indigenous subject matter.

The early efforts of Young Estonia were rewarded in 1904, when allies of the cultural movement assumed political control of Tallinn, replacing the Baltic Germans who had held sway for centuries.⁵⁷ Perhaps it was in part because of this celebrated achievement that many Estonian intellectuals supported the uprising of the following year throughout the territories belonging to the tsar. Although ultimately suppressed, the revolution did incite nationalist and democratic fervor throughout the empire, giving encouragement to artists forming Estonia's cultural avant-garde. Among their number was Konrad Mägi, whose education in Saint Petersburg was cut short by his participation in the 1905 revolt against the tsar. Like Triik, Mägi went to Paris to study and from there traveled extensively in Norway

Figure 232. Nikolai Triik, *Finnish Landscape*, 1914. Oil on pasteboard, 81.7 × 57.3 cm. Tartu Art Museum.



Figure 233. Nikolai Triik, *Kalevipoeg's Sailboat "Lenmik"*, 1910. Tempera and crayon on paper, 72 × 135.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.





Figure 234. Konrad Mägi, *Normandy Coast*, 1911. Oil on canvas. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

and northern Europe, adapting the vocabulary of neoimpressionism, expressionism, fauvism, and late symbolism to the practice of northern landscape painting. After several successful ventures while in Normandy (Fig. 234), Mägi was well prepared to render the physical and symbolic character of his native land upon his return in 1912 (Fig. 235). In other paintings fully congruent with his Young Estonian beliefs, he affirmed the continuity of contemporary intellectual life with that of the epic traditions, as is vividly illustrated by comparison of his *Portrait of a Woman (The Modern Madonna)* (Fig. 236) with one of his religious canvases (Fig. 237).

The years of World War I were trying for Estonia, as the desire for national independence was favored by neither of the principal warring parties: The tsar's armies sought to maintain the Russian empire, while the German forces (supported by many from among the resident Baltic-German population) had little in-

terest in promoting Estonian liberation. Nevertheless, military reverses and privation on the battlefields of the Eastern Front would eventually advance the cause of the Estonians. The Russian revolutions of 1917, in no little measure provoked by the grave military situation, began the process that would help the Estonian people to fulfill their national ambition. In 1917 they demonstrated by the tens of thousands in Petrograd to persuade the provisional Russian government to grant self-rule in the Estonian lands. Upon the seizure of power by the bolsheviks, Estonia was declared an autonomous republic of the new Soviet federation. In elections for the Estonian Constituent Assembly, however, held in the postrevolutionary month of November, the bolsheviks were resoundingly defeated; and on 24 February 1918, Estonia declared its national independence. The following day German troops entered Tallinn, and the new provisional government went into exile.



Figure 235. Konrad Mägi, *Vilsandi Motif*, ca. 1913–14. Oil on canvas, 89 × 76 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.



Figure 236. Konrad Mägi, *Portrait of a Woman (The Modern Madonna)*, ca. 1923. Oil on canvas, 67.5 × 50 cm. Tartu Museum of Art, Tartu

With the defeat of the Central Powers in November 1918, peace did not come to Estonia, nor were the aspirations of its committed intelligentsia fulfilled. Within months of the German surrender to the Entente Powers, Soviet troops entered Estonian territory in abrogation of the articles of the Treaty of Brest–Litovsk (March 1918), in which Russia’s bolsheviks had surrendered their claim on the Baltic region of Estonia and Latvia. With the assistance of a British fleet and volunteers from the Scandinavian countries (primarily Finland), Estonian soldiers and irregulars drove out the invading Soviets in February 1919. No sooner were the bolsheviks overcome than a second German attempt was initiated to take control of the Baltic. Along with Latvian allies, the Estonians succeeded in routing the Germans and their local supporters. One last attempt by the Russians to seize the northern Baltics was repulsed in November 1919. Finally, on 2 February 1920, the Soviet Union was compelled to recognize Estonian independence through the peace treaty signed at Tartu.⁵⁸

During this prolonged and violent period of the nation’s political birth, Estonia’s small cohort of intellectuals and artists was waging a cultural war against both defiant insiders (including substantial numbers of Baltic Germans) and aggressive outsiders (both Russian and German) in an effort to articulate a modern art appropriate for a new nation. The center of their activities was Tartu, a town with a distinguished tradition for supporting art in Estonia: It was



Figure 237. Konrad Mägi, *Pietà*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 134 × 160 cm. Location unknown (Photo courtesy of the Tartu Art Museum.)

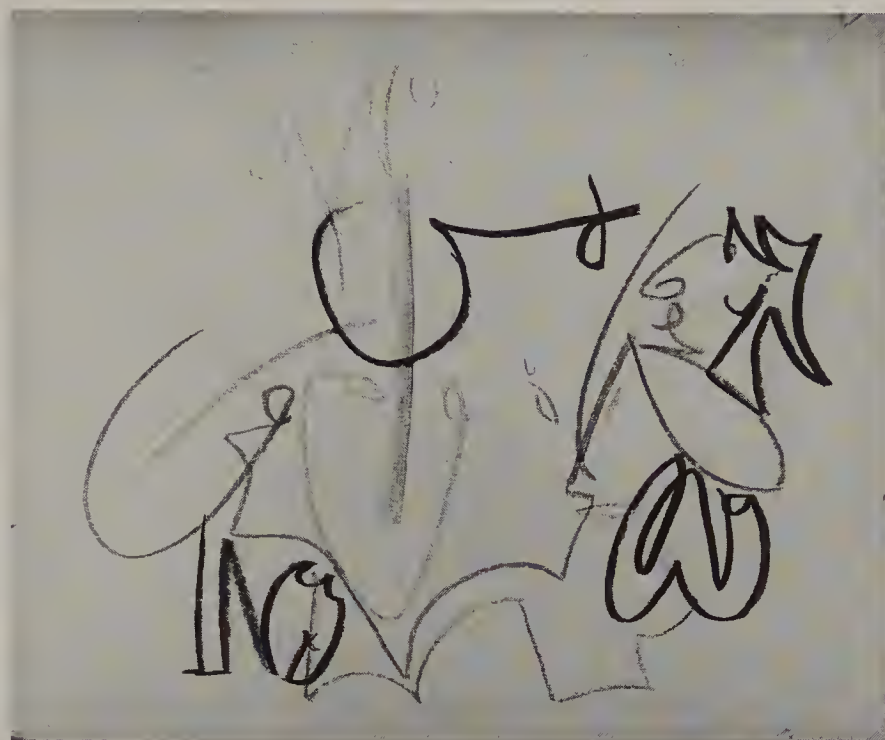


Figure 238. Ado Vabbe, *Paraphrase III*, 1914. Colored chalk and pencil on paper, 32 × 38 cm. Tartu Art Museum.

the place where the first drawing school was established in 1803, where Raud set up his studio school a century later, where in 1912 the Young Estonia literary society sponsored its first permanent art exhibition, and where in 1914 Mägi opened a teaching facility in his studio. Thus, it was historically fitting that Tartu would also be the site for many prominent writers and artists to gather in 1918 to found an association for progressive Estonian culture. Within a year, this society – called Pallas – acted on the initiative of the painter Mägi, the writer and artist Aleksander Tassa, and the sculptor Anton Starkopf to establish an art school. The resulting Pallas School was to become one of the core institutions of the Estonian avant-garde and the training academy for later generations of the nation's artists. Raud, Laikmaa, Triik, Mägi, and others who supported the Pallas project were able to attract many who would populate the ranks of the avant-garde. Among the most committed of the younger talents was Ado Vabbe.

By the time he arrived in Tartu, just before the outbreak of World War I, Vabbe had already benefited from a remarkable education in modern art. He had spent more than two years at Ažbė's Munich school, through which he had come into contact with Wassily Kandinsky and many of the German expressionist members of the *Blaue Reiter*; he had visited many of western Europe's collections of modern art; and he had seen, discussed, and appropriated futurism, cubism, and expressionism through his extensive travels and contacts. As a consequence

Vabbe was perhaps the Estonian artist most predisposed to help develop the various approaches to modern art that would be presented at the Pallas School and elsewhere.⁵⁹ Indeed, on his return to Estonia in 1914, he exhibited in Tartu a series of "Paraphrases" (Fig. 238) and "Schematic Improvisations" that were completely nonobjective works of art. After a brief stay in his homeland, Vabbe went on the road again in search of modernist inspiration. This time, because of the travel limitations imposed by World War I, he went only to Russia, where he re-established contact with Kandinsky and encountered the advanced art of the Russian cubo-futurists and Moscow's revolutionary Jack of Diamonds group. Thus, by the time of his return to Estonia in 1917, Vabbe had synthesized the most radical artistic trends in Europe, from Paris to Moscow, and was surely one of the best-informed young modernist painters on the entire continent. His absorption of developments in western European and Russian painting did not result in a single style; rather, he oscillated among several variants of nonrepresentational and cubo-futurist-inspired figural art. In so doing Vabbe remained consistent with the customary Estonian practice in which artists adopted contemporary as well as traditional, often neoromanticist, themes. Thus, in 1919 he composed both *Music* (Fig. 239), somewhat dependent on Mikhail Larionov's rayonism and German expressionism, and *In the Café* (Fig. 240), which seeks to reconcile figuration with abstract patterning.



Figure 239. Ado Vabbe, *Music*, 1919. Watercolor, tusche, and gouache on paper, 49.3 × 38.1 cm. Private collection. (Photo courtesy of the Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.)

During the early years of Pallas, although a panoply of advanced styles was advocated (Fig. 241), the presence of Starkopf and several German instructors at times lent a pronounced expressionist focus to the studio courses.⁶⁰ One of their followers, briefly associated with the Pallas School, was Peet Aren,⁶¹ whose *Aida Street in Tallinn* (Fig. 242) bears witness to the authority of Estonian expressionism (a work that under different circumstances would not have looked out of place on a German expressionist film set). Within five years, however, the preeminence accorded expressionist aesthetics was resisted by several artists who believed that an emphasis on cub-

ism and constructivism would better fulfill the needs of an Estonian modern art. Founded in Tartu in 1923 by Eduard Ole (Fig. 243) and Felix Randel (Fig. 244), the Group of Estonian Artists (Eesti Kunstnikkude Rühm) would grow to attract the support of almost the entire Estonian avant-garde.⁶²

With no single policy determining the radical aesthetics of the group, a booklet of poems collated in 1924 served as a kind of informal apology for the geometric abstraction practiced by its painters, sculptors, and graphic artists, most of whom were self-taught.⁶³ Johannes Barbarus's "Geometric Man" – which celebrated poetically the accomplishments



Figure 240. Ado Vabbe, *In the Café*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 86.5 × 88 cm. Tartu Art Museum.

and promise of cubism and its successive experimentalist expressions – rationalized the artists' infatuation with radical trends as a legitimate means to represent a modern culture. For example, impressed by the emerging functionalism featured in journals and by the purism then being created by architect-painters in France, Märt Laarman carefully orchestrated geometric forms (see Plate 20), showing the importance attached to architectonic composition.⁶⁴ Similar interests informed the work of Henrik Olvi, whose depiction of the urban landscape of Venice (Fig. 245) is a scenographic study in planar construction and controlled palette. Equally evocative of

cubo-constructivist architectonics are Olvi's ventures into wood sculpture (Fig. 246) and stage design,⁶⁵ and the work of Juhan Raudsepp (Fig. 247). Vabbe, too, whose earlier work evinces the powerful influence of cubism, futurism, and Russian modernist styles, shared in the enthusiasm for constructivism of the Group of Estonian Artists. In the mid-1920s, the futurist fragmentation of his *Harlequin* (Fig. 248) gave way to the more regularized abstraction of constructivist composition (Fig. 249). Although Vabbe and his colleagues were soon to change orientation, his compatibility with the group testifies to its wide influence. Among others caught up in its aesthetic



Figure 241. Kuno Veeber, *Bathers*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 61 × 73 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.



Figure 242. Peet Aren, *Aida Street in Tallinn*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 97.5 × 76.4 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

Figure 243. Eduard Ole, *Still Life with Guitar*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 63.9 × 84.6 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.



Figure 244. Felix Randel, *Still Life*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 60 × 75 cm. Tartu Art Museum.



wake were Jaan Vahtra, Friedrich Hist, Aleksander Krims (Radava), and especially Arnold Akberg. Exploring several stylistic avenues in his youth, Akberg educated himself informally by attending courses in Ants Laikmaa's Tallinn atelier while taking occasional classes elsewhere. Much of his education, however, derived directly from the illustrations he found in contemporary journals. Most decisive for the development of his art was an encounter with *L'Esprit nouveau*, edited mostly by Le Corbusier and Amédée

Ozenfant, through which he became enthralled by cubism, constructivism, and purism. Thus, critically disposed toward the geometric abstraction he knew mostly from reproduction, Akberg joined the Group of Estonian Artists in 1924; in the company of his colleagues, he found confirmation for the aesthetic path he would follow for much of his long life.

Upon enlisting in the group, Akberg focused on industrial and urban imagery rendered in a simplified form of analytical cubism (see Plate 21) – a



Figure 245 (*top left*). Henrik Olvi, *View of Venice*, 1927–8. Oil on plywood, 112 × 68.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

Figure 246 (*top right*). Henrik Olvi, *Head*, 1925. Wood, 64 × 25.5 × 24.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

Figure 247 (*left*). Juhan Randsepp, *composition for a sculpture*, 1925. Red crayon on paper, 33.9 × 24.2 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.



Figure 248. Ado Vabbe, *Harlequin*, 1924. Watercolor on paper, 38.5 × 27.3 cm. Tartu Museum of Art. (From *Oväntat möte: Estnisk och lettisk modernism från mellankrigstiden*, exh. cat., Stockholm, 1993.)

choice that was fully congruent with the precisionist orientation of Ole Laarman, and Olvi. After spending a year or two accommodating figuration to his growing commitment to constructivism, Akberg came to be increasingly at home with abstract tendencies. *Roofs* of 1926 (Fig. 250) illustrates his ability to collapse three-dimensional space into two-dimensional blocks of local color; at the same time, the residual references to windows and chimneys function as emblems of the suprematist square, cross, and rectangle that Akberg had admired in the work of Kazimir Malevich and his followers. A year later, after encountering western nonobjective art at first hand in Paris and Berlin, he commenced a series

of fully abstract collages, stained-glass designs, and programs for wall panels (Fig. 251). Although passionately committed to geometric abstraction, he continued to vary its format (Fig. 252), eschewing the absolutism that defined the abstraction of Piet Mondrian, Malevich, and others whose accomplishments he recognized but whose rigidity he wished to avoid.

By the mid-1920s, geometric tendencies had taken root among the Group of Estonian Artists.⁶⁶ From graphics to ornament to sculpture and painting, the authority of modernist aesthetics was fully felt in Estonia and effectively incarnated the young nation's ambition to be recognized as a progressive culture.⁶⁷



Figure 249. Ado Vabbe, *Constructivist Composition*, 1925. Oil on cardboard, 62 × 49.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

At the end of the decade, however, there was a reaction against the radical art that emerged from the ranks of the Group of Estonian Artists and its supporters. It was not only conservative critics and the more traditional figures within the Central Association of Estonian Artists⁶⁸ who were opposed to the abstract leanings of the avant-garde; many previous supporters and teachers of the progressive artists registered their disapproval as well. Perhaps more significant than opposition from the older legion of

Estonian artists were the reservations manifested by the young cubo-constructivists' peers, many of whom believed also in the power of modern art to convey patriotic aspirations. They differed profoundly, however, in their opinion of the most appropriate stylistic means, contending that figuration could most effectively express the character of the age. By recognizing in representation – whether neoclassicism, New Objectivity, or surrealism – a contemporary vehicle more congruent with their ethnic tra-



Figure 250 (*above*). Arnold Akberg, *Roofs*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 54.7 × 49 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

Figure 251 (*below*). Arnold Akberg, design for a wall panel (frieze), 1927. Oil on panel, 34 × 83.3 cm. Private collection. (Courtesy of the Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.)



ditions and popular taste, these nonconstructivist Estonians of the 1920s and early 1930s helped to revalidate figuration throughout the continent, from the French Atlantic through the Balkans up to the Baltic.⁶⁹ The tendency toward representation became particularly pronounced in the work of Johannes Greenberg.

Greenberg spent much of the first decade of the century in Germany, having studied in Berlin, in Ažbė's studio in Munich, and in the Academy of Arts in the Bavarian capital. This exposure was decisive for his later development, as it instilled a sensitivity to the expressionist art currents that would develop in Germany, which he would in time import with adaptations to Estonia. Also important was a year passed in France (1928), when Greenberg witnessed the reaffirmation of figural art among advanced French artists.⁷⁰ Almost inevitably, given Greenberg's preferences, the New Objectivity would have been of interest, as it drew on both the German expressionist exploitation of affective display and the French focus on the figure. Thus, in Greenberg's art from the late 1920s and early 1930s, we find a personal variant of New Objectivity – traces of expressionism's harsh and dark color combinations, use of strong contour, and undercurrents of eroticism, exoticism, or violence. Through the assertive presence of large, voluptuous female figures (Fig. 253), the artist captured a decadent character within his subjects rather than rendering them abstractly. By so doing Greenberg undermined the idealism and resisted the totalizing theories of the constructivists.

A similar result, if manifested less in the expressive style of German New Objectivity than in surrealistic terms, is apparent in the work of Eduard Wiiralt, whose personal character is captured in a portrait by his colleague Juhan Muks (Fig. 254). Wiiralt's artistic career was conducted principally through the graphic arts, whose various media were effectively employed to reveal disturbingly mystical and erotic incidents that he had imagined while in Paris. In his print *Cabaret* (Fig. 255), the artist detailed well-attired men and diaphanously dressed women dancing in a club that might have been owned by a latter-day Hieronymus Bosch. Similarly disconcerting in its juxtaposition of the overcarefully observed and the extraordinarily imagined is the aptly titled *Hell* (Fig. 256), where in the crowded jostle of heads we find contorted physiognomies and mechanical beings that might have been conjured by



Figure 252. Arnold Akberg, *Brown in Gray*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 67 × 47.6 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

an obsessed modern Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Clearly, the optimism that informed the Group of Estonian Artists in the 1920s had diminished significantly by the early 1930s, when Wiiralt presented his alternative to the constructed world of Akberg and the latter's philosophy of progress.

Indeed, by that time even the cadre of modernists at the core of the cubo-constructivist Group of Estonian Artists had nearly forsaken abstraction in favor of a return to figuration, which many acknowledged as a form of neoclassicism, no matter how innovative. In a painting by Aleksander Krims, for example (Fig. 257), only the still life at the lower right attests to his former commitment to cubism and abstract tendencies. A slightly later work (Fig. 258) is a somewhat flat composition with a classicizing frieze of sportsmen posing in the foreground and running through the middle distance. Likewise, Eduard Ole, one of the founders of the Group of Estonian Artists, had begun moving away from the



Figure 253. Johannes Greenberg, *Woman with Masks*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 107.4 × 72.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

society's stylistic principles in the late 1920s, when he painted a modern version of a classical idyll (Fig. 259). His *Travelers* (Fig. 260) shows how far he had wandered from the path still followed by Akberg (as in Fig. 252), one of the few Estonian artists to keep

faith with the abstract aesthetics of the mid-1920s. The almost universal shift from cubism, constructivism, and futurism toward a modern variant of classicism is not inconsistent with the Estonian artistic pattern, which had, since the late nineteenth

century, been characterized by alternation between advanced and retrograde styles, themes, and approaches. Not uncommonly the same artist would work simultaneously or successively in several idioms, avoiding being constrained to only one, and would exhibit the most advanced art of the time while continuing to illustrate, often quite conventionally, the national epic.

The reasons for such seeming inconsistencies may lie in extra-artistic factors. The economy of independent Estonia – even more than that of neighboring Latvia – was at best precarious in the late 1920s, and neither the government nor private industry ever succeeded in stabilizing it. The destruction wrought during the wars of independence, coupled with the devastating disruption of trade with Russia and lack of adequate Western capital investment, made it im-

Figure 254 (right). Juhan Muks, *Portrait of the Artist Eduard Wiiralt*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 97 × 74 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

Figure 255 (below). Eduard Wiiralt, *Cabaret*, 1931. Etching, 38.8 × 45.7 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

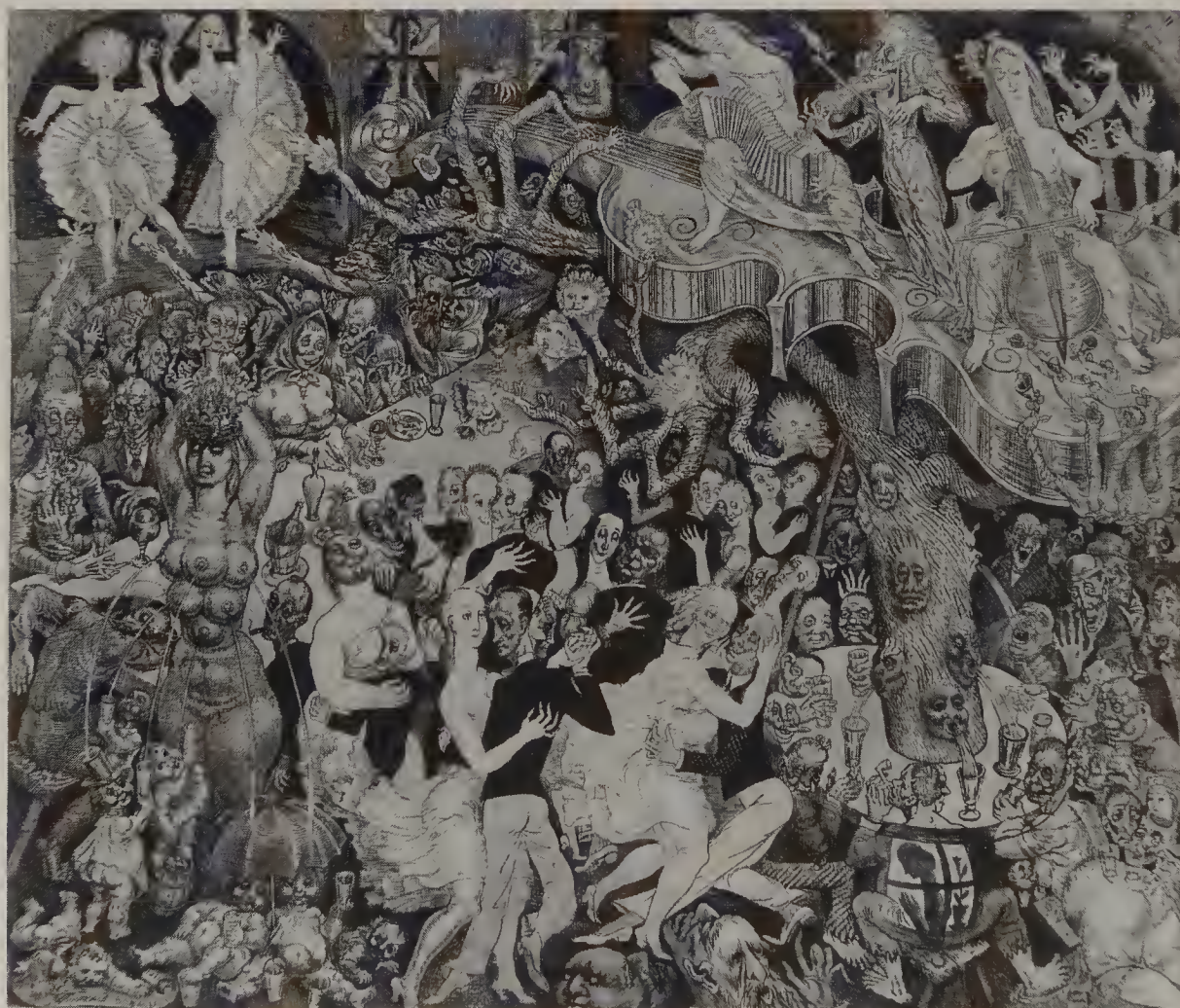




Figure 256. Eduard Wiiralt, *Hell*, 1930 2. Etching, 39.1 × 46.7 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

possible for the country to develop on a secure basis. Moreover, the notably small Estonian intelligentsia, mostly of the urban middle class, suffered particularly harsh consequences of the increasing economic instability during these years; its ability and will to support the avant-garde were soon exhausted. Finally, the political climate, once so promising for the modern expression of a native culture, changed dramatically by the end of the decade. The rise of a powerful rightist movement, virulently anti-Soviet and anticommunist, was not encouraging of art styles that were hard to understand or assimilate into the conservatives' traditional expectations.⁷¹

In 1933 these fundamentally antiparliamentary,

antidemocratic, and antiliberal forces won a constitutional referendum that led, in turn, to a bloodless coup. Once Prime Minister Konstantin Päts assumed authoritarian powers,⁷² the Estonian avant-garde no longer found an atmosphere conducive to the forms of experimentation it had pursued during the preceding decade. A relatively conservative aesthetic expression – a *rappel à l'ordre* – was thus viewed by many within both artistic and political circles as an appropriate accommodation. As a result, the sometimes strident voice of the avant-garde was silenced in Estonia (as in Latvia); only after a half-century would its clarion call for a modern art for free Baltic nations be heard again.



Figure 257. Aleksander Krims, *In the Café (Double Portrait)*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 83 × 104.5 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

Figure 258. Aleksander Krims, *Summer*, undated. Oil on canvas, 67 × 97.6 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.

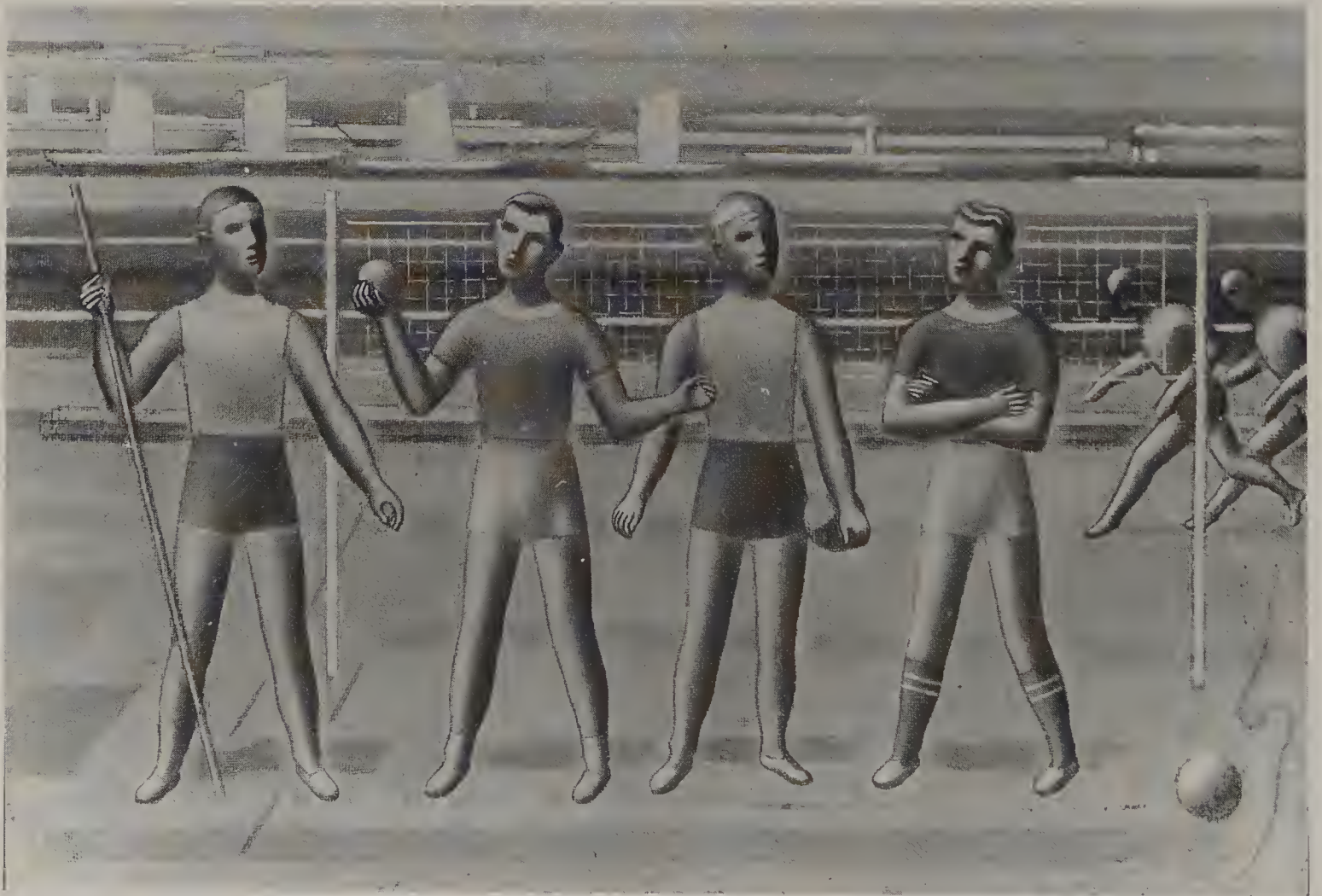




Figure 259 (left). Eduard Ole, *Autumn Melody*, 1928. Oil on panel, 122 × 122 cm. Tartu University Collection, Tartu.

Figure 260 (below). Eduard Ole, *Travelers*, 1929. Oil on panel, 91.5 × 91.2 cm. Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn.



4

The Southern Balkans of the Former Yugoslavia Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia

MODERN ART DEVELOPED comparatively late in the southern Balkans. With an aesthetic order, purpose, and significance unique to each territory, it was a varied response to circumstances that were substantially different from those prevailing in western Europe. Specific developments in France and Germany, and even in Italy and Hungary, can be identified as the basis for a history of modern art that evolves from impressionism to neoimpressionism, through symbolism and art nouveau/Jugendstil, into cubism, expressionism, and abstraction. This codified sequence, widely accepted in the West as “universal history,” does not apply to the equally modern art of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia. To appreciate the distinction, we must first review the singular political history and geography of the region in the modern period.

The area surveyed in this chapter, roughly corresponding to the former Yugoslavia, was for the last half millennium contested ground. During the almost five hundred years this corner of Europe was under Ottoman suzerainty, the political overlords did little to discourage migrations of peoples, the practice of diverse religions, or the mixture of various cultural traditions. From the seventeenth century, however, the region became of ever-increasing interest to European powers. The Balkans were of especial concern to the Holy Roman Empire and its Habsburg sovereigns, for whose imperial realms Ottoman military might, commercial power, and religious doctrines posed serious threat. Even after the Turkish armies were defeated at the gates of Vienna in 1683, the Ottoman Empire, as both an Asian and a European state, continued to be perceived by

Christian Europe as a danger to its interests,¹ if no longer to its survival. And for the next 250 years, Habsburg rulers in particular sought to expand their realms eastward and southward into Ottoman territory.

The expansion of Austrian authority into southeastern Europe, which occurred in stages, was increasingly decisive through the nineteenth century. By 1815, through the Treaty of the Congress of Vienna, predominantly Catholic Slovenia had become a Habsburg dominion,² while mostly Christian Croatia (and Slavonia) entered the imperial realm by virtue of becoming a crown land of Hungary, itself a constituent of the multinational Habsburg monarchy. By 1878, as a result of the terms of the Congress of Berlin treaty (see Map 3),³ Bosnia and Herzegovina, with their substantial Muslim populations, were absorbed into the Habsburg imperium.⁴

Thus, from the third quarter of the nineteenth century and lasting well into the twentieth, the Balkans north of Greece and west of Bulgaria and Romania were divided between two principal contending traditions, orientations, and political formations. This East–West divide was rarely as absolute as is often portrayed;⁵ much intercourse of a political, commercial, and cultural nature did take place. Moreover, it was frequently geopolitical interests, rather than religious or purely territorial matters, that determined governmental policy and influenced cultural practices. As elsewhere, the complex interrelations among contemporary politics, historical legacies, and cultural traditions would propagate various Balkan nationalist aspirations that would, in turn, bring forth singular forms, images, and conceptions of modern European art.

References to countries other than Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia in this chapter are only incidental. Not discussed are the comparatively modest contributions to the complex web of Balkan modernist movements that took place in Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Albania, regions whose modern political and social history – insofar as they affected the development of modern art – are not fundamentally dissimilar to those of Macedonia.

SLOVENIA

From as early as the eighteenth century, there is evidence of an incipient Slovenian cultural consciousness. Expressing itself at first primarily through the gradual articulation of a Slovenian literature,⁶ the national identity of this overwhelmingly Catholic and rural people increasingly began to be manifested through the visual arts. Regardless of the specific medium, the development of a distinctive Slovenian cultural self-awareness was promoted by the compactness of the geographical distribution as well as by the homogeneity of its inhabitants: Fully 90 percent of the inhabitants of Carniola (the heart of present-day Slovenia, with Ljubljana as its principal city) has remained identifiably Slovene. Moreover, there were large concentrations of fellow Slovene speakers and coreligionists in the contiguous regions of Carinthia and Styria (in present-day Austria), as well as in Istria, Gorizia, and Gradisca (currently the border regions between Slovenia and northeastern Italy, which have displayed a centuries-long affinity for Italian culture). Despite the compactness and concentration of the Slovenes, Slovenia was never acknowledged politically as a historic province of the Habsburg empire. In this respect, it differed markedly from its neighbors. Unlike almost every other Balkan state, Slovenia alone was unable to invoke a history of (mostly medieval) national greatness from which to re-create a semblance of native cultural eminence. This would have a significant impact on the character of its modern art; not driven by the customary Balkan reliance on and revival of national historic traditions and imagery, Slovenia was completely open to imported western European modernist impulses.

Although peasant based and conservatively Catholic, Slovenia became by the end of the nineteenth century the wealthiest and culturally most advanced region of the Balkans. There was a readiness among

prosperous farmers, merchants, and the growing professional classes to mingle with the German-speaking population, and the Austrian authorities encouraged this social integration while supporting the development of a native culture. To a significant extent, the officials' tolerant attitude was enabled by the immanent political conservatism of the Slovenes, their abiding Catholicism, and their economic industriousness – all of which were congruent with Habsburg imperial objectives. As a result (in marked contrast to other countries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), Slovenian nationalism before World War I – confined almost entirely to the cultural sphere – meant identification, unification, and expression under the imperial double-headed eagle. Alone among Balkan provinces, Slovenia never sought political independence.⁷ It is in this context that modern art in Slovenia emerged around 1900 with the foundation of the Slovene Art Association.

Established with the patronage of the leading liberal political parties, the association became a vehicle for the organization of cultural life. Its roughly thirty members were living at the time of its founding in the cultural capitals of the empire and beyond: Vienna, Prague, Budapest, and especially Munich. In the Bavarian capital the Slovene painter Anton Ažbė had opened a private art school that attracted aspiring artists from all corners of Europe, with large numbers from Slovenia and from Russia, Wassily Kandinsky among them.⁸ A naturalist painter popularly associated with the Munich School and institutionally affiliated with the eminent Munich Academy, Ažbė was lionized by his compatriots less for his style than for his ability to convey artistic method and for his personal connection to an earlier Slovenian realist tradition.⁹ Ažbė and his school were most significant, however, for what they represented and made possible to a young generation of Slovene painters: the essential contact with and appreciation of the most modern European trends in art.

The character and achievement of this first phase of Slovenian modern visual culture are best incarnated in the work of Rihard Jakopič and his fellow Slovene "impressionists": Ivan Grohar, Matija Jama, and Matej Sternen. All participated in the Slovene Art Association as exhibitors and supported its aesthetic modernism and nationalist mission by writing articles in the liberal press – an intimate connection between the visual arts and critical writing that would become characteristic for the entire span of

Slovenian modernism. The first exhibition of the Slovene Art Association was resoundingly successful, and special trains brought visitors to Ljubljana from all the provinces in which Slovenes lived. Although labeled in the contemporary literature and critical reviews as “impressionist,” the work of Jakopič and his associates might best be described as a competent variant of pleinairism. By the second exhibition, however, which took place in September 1902, Jakopič gave evidence of his increasing command of modern French painting techniques, emphasizing pure pigments, rich impasto, and lack of finish. But the very cosmopolitanism that he and others evinced, which the Slovene Art Association ultimately endorsed, alienated a great number of both liberal and conservative critics.¹⁰ The innovative painting styles, the absence of historical or narrative themes, and the sheer visual impact of the 164 highly colored and freely painted exhibited works was misinterpreted locally as a betrayal of the mores, tastes, and preferences of Emperor Franz Josef, to

whom even the most ardent Slovenian nationalists remained loyal. The consequence of this misreading of the artist’s essentially benign intentions was fatally to reduce support for the Slovene Art Association. The avant-garde figures that constituted its leadership elected to leave Ljubljana for the picturesque village of Škofja Loka and to exhibit their national culture abroad. Paradoxically, this gave the painters the necessary freedom to develop fully a modernist idiom of impressionism (Figs. 261, 262; see Plate 22).

Despite the concerns of the citizens of Slovenia, the imperial government in Vienna did not object to the art exhibited in Ljubljana. In fact, the Slovenian attempt to create a distinctive form of modernism accorded well with the emperor’s policy of holding the disintegrating empire together by encouraging national cultural aspirations within the Dual Monarchy. Thus, when Jakopič, Jama, Grohar, and Sternen exhibited together again in 1904 at the Salon Miethke in Vienna, they were well received by the official and liberal press as a definitive manifestation

Figure 261. Ivan Grohar, *Kamnitnik Hill*, 1905. Oil on canvas, 87.5 × 99.5 cm. National Gallery, Ljubljana.

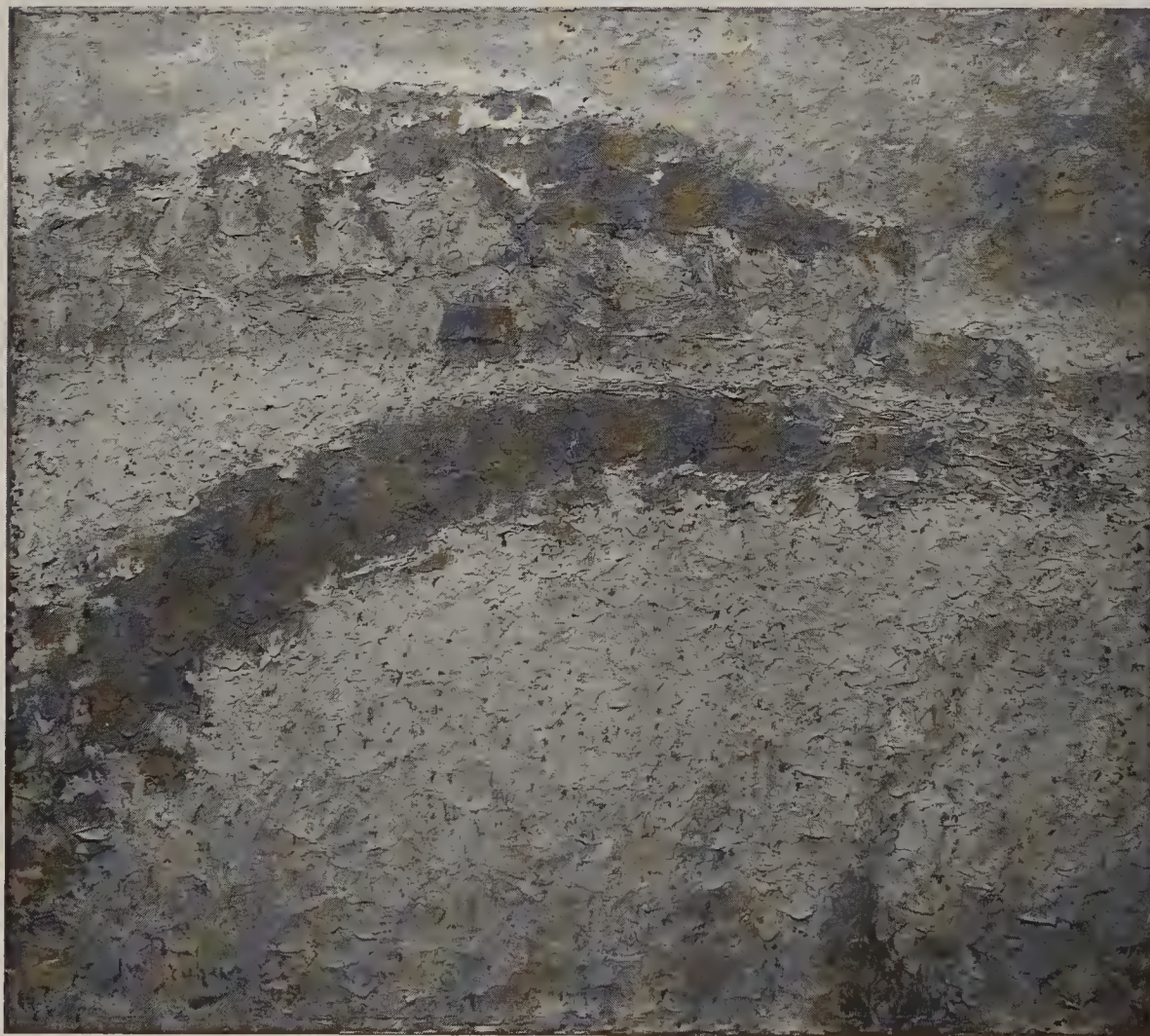




Figure 262. Mateja Jama, *Bridge over the Dobra*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 70 × 100 cm. National Gallery, Ljubljana.

of the Slovenian modern cultural identity. Heartened by their reception (and their sales), the artists formed a club called Sava (after the Danubian tributary that courses through Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia).¹¹ The effect of their 1904 exhibition was to affirm the lyrical, highly colored impressionism of Jakopič and Grohar – as opposed to a revival of the folkloric, religious, or peasant imagery advocated by some in Ljubljana – as the cornerstone of the Slovenian national culture.¹² Moreover, Slovenian impressionism was imbued by its apologists and painters with a native spirituality not to be encountered in other artistic schools or national movements. It was seen by its critics and the general public as incarnating the Slovenian nature and communicating the Slovenian identity. Invited over the next few years to exhibit in Belgrade, Sofia, London, Trieste, and Zagreb, as well as in Bohemia and Poland, Sava garnered for Slovenia international recognition as a full participant in the modern movement.

Notwithstanding its success abroad, Sava had received scant attention at home in Ljubljana, where the climate remained inhospitable to new work. To demonstrate to the Slovenian citizen the dynamism

and visual authority of the members' art, Jakopič returned to the Slovene capital in 1906 and proposed to the governing local authorities that he himself undertake to raise private funds to construct an art pavilion. In this task Jakopič must have had in mind the Secession building he had visited in Vienna. Unlike the Viennese Secession, however, and contrary to his own artistic engagement, Jakopič did not conceive of his pavilion as a temple to modern art per se. Rather, he intended it to function as a national exhibition hall or *Kunsthalle* through which progressive painting and sculpture might be displayed as the national art. In 1909 Jakopič opened the first exhibition in his as-yet-unfinished pavilion; with it, Slovenian modern art was given an appropriate venue in its cultural capital, and advanced forms of impressionism were acknowledged as the official national style.

By 1911, the year of Grohar's death, various members of Sava had begun to go in different stylistic directions, and younger adherents were clamoring for recognition. To Jakopič's credit, he actively supported the dynamic work of younger artists, particularly the group of Slovene expressionist painters

and graphic artists who emerged just before World War I. Jakopič's expressionist leanings at this time (Fig. 263) were approved by Jama, who, although not sharing his colleague's enthusiasm for fauvist visual display, did recognize the importance of strong painterly gesture and striking combinations of pure color as legitimate means to keep the national art both modern and vital. Equally important, the "old masters" of Sava impressionism acknowledged the timeliness of an art engaged with existential events and spiritual content, currents that were manifested for the first time in Slovenia by Fran Tratnik during the years before World War I. Trained in Prague, Vienna, and Munich before returning to Ljubljana, Tratnik drew on his familiarity with symbolism and impressionism to create a highly personal form of expressionism. His numerous graphic works of the period were concerned mainly with human suffering, a subject dramatically reinforced by his mastery of line, stark contrast of black and white, and subtle

manipulation of surface effects (Fig. 264). Tratnik's preoccupation with demonstrating the sorrows of life can be seen as a harbinger of the elaborate forms of expressionism that emerged in Slovenia following the conclusion of the war.

Slovenia was affected by the Great War quite differently than were Slavic lands elsewhere in the Balkans. As noted above, before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 and through the war itself, the Slovenes were overwhelmingly supportive of the Habsburg monarchy and sought only *cultural* autonomy within the empire. Thus, unlike their fellow Slavs in the Balkans, the Slovenes did not choose to see in the conflict a unique opportunity for national liberation and political independence. Nor did they welcome a union with Croatia and Serbia, lands with which the Slovenes had long had significant cultural differences and political disagreement. Nevertheless, Slovenia felt constrained to join the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, proclaimed on 1 December 1918, for several reasons:¹³ the demoralization that ensued upon the dissolution of the old order, the vast wartime human and material destruction that had taken place in Slovenian lands;

Figure 263. Rihard Jakopič, *Reclining Woman*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 61 × 78.5 cm. National Gallery, Ljubljana. (From *Rihard Jakopič, To sem jaz, umetnik . . .*, exh. cat., Ljubljana, National Gallery, 1993.)

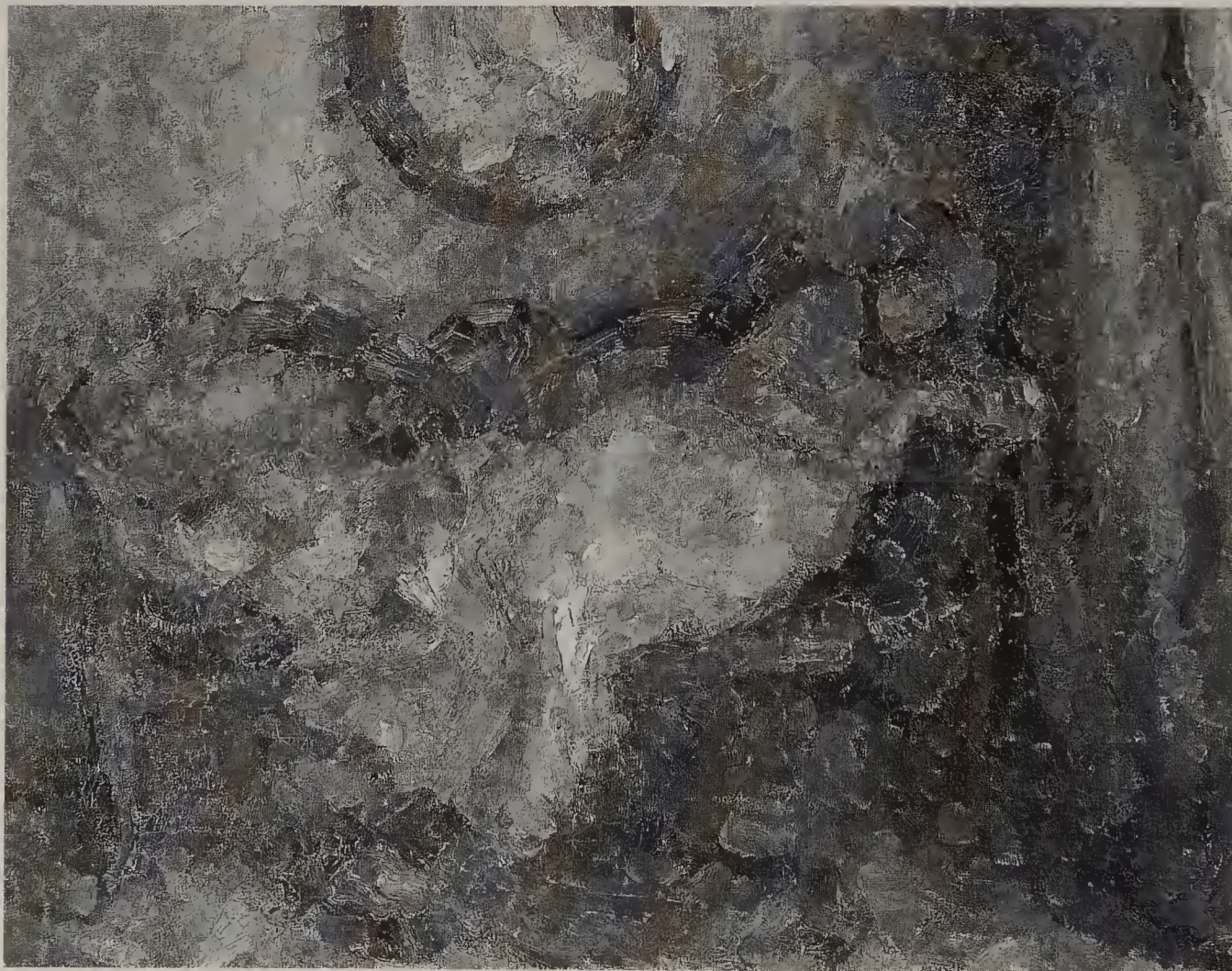


Figure 264. Fran Trtnik, *The Blind*, 1911. Graphite, 83 × 64 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana. (From *Ekspressionizem in Nova Stvarnost na Slovenskem*, exh. cat., Ljubljana, Museum of Modern Art, 1986.)



and the legitimate fear that many of the provinces in which Slovenes dwelt – particularly Styria, Istria, Gradisca, and Gorizia – would be seized by Italy or Serbia, or even by the new republics of Hungary and Austria.

From this postwar environment came an expressionism generated mostly by younger artists who never codified their aesthetic or social philosophy in a unified program. In fact, Slovenian expressionism is characterized by a heterogeneity much richer than the expressionism found in postwar Germany, so profoundly influenced by politics, artistic promotion, and previous practice. Also, unlike that of Germany, Slovenian expressionism of the late 1910s through the mid-1920s was nonurban. The three principal groupings of Slovenian expressionists were located in the Karst area of Dolenjsko¹⁴ (the brothers France

and Tone Kralj), in Novi Mesto¹⁵ (Božidar Jakac), and in Primorsko¹⁶ (the so-called Gorica Circle: Veno Pilon, Ivan Čargo, and Lojze Spazzapan). All three associations affirmed the importance of the spiritual in modern art, even if each sought quite different means to express it.

The war gave rise to a forceful expression of the national culture by Primorsko/Gorizia's Slovenian artists, for the region had been assigned to Italy in the Paris Peace Treaties. Separated politically from central Slovenia but maintaining close contact, the artists there felt a special obligation to affirm in diaspora the essential qualities of Slovenian national consciousness. Working primarily in Trieste and Gorizia and displaying their central European heritage and substantial Italian orientation, the Primorsko Slovenes drew on several artistic sources. Veno Pilon



Figure 265 (above). Lojze Spazzapan, *Portrait of Veno Pilon*, 1923. Bronze, 33 × 28 × 31 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana. (Photo: author.)



Figure 266. Lojze Spazzapan, *Vignette from the Rabljev Village*, 1923. Drawing. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana.

was the most accomplished expressionist of the period. His portrait of the composer Marij Kogoj (see Plate 23) has the emotional power of contemporaneous works created in Berlin by both German and eastern European (especially Hungarian) painters. The composer stands in a dramatic pose with legs splayed. Occupying a shallow space that is activated emphatically by the diagonally placed, upward-

turned keyboard, the subject turns awkwardly. His right hand is severed by the frame, while his left presents the spectator with tensely bent fingers removed entirely from the keyboard. Pilon depicted the creative artist, his hair tousled, as tormented and possessed, and thereby affirmed a connection to prewar Slovenian expressionism as well as to postwar German expressionism. Fittingly, his own likeness –

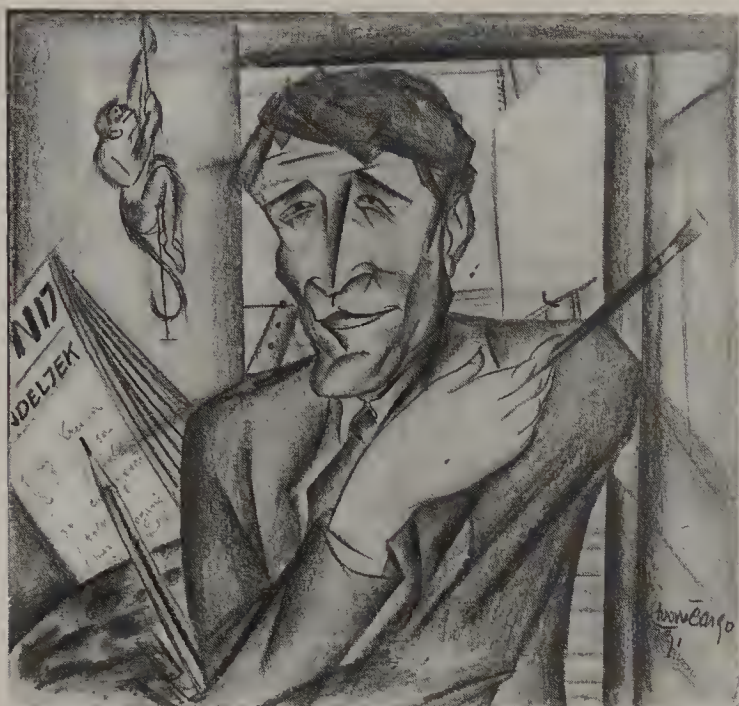


Figure 267. Ivan Čargo, *Self-Portrait*, 1929. Pencil, 20 × 21 cm. Slovenian Film and Theater Museum, Ljubljana.

rendered in a two-dimensional image and a sculpted portrait (Fig. 265) by Lojze Spazzapan – is charged with emotion. A study in distortion and exaggeration, the head is upturned on an abbreviated neck in a way that emphasizes the rounded simian chin and heavy brows – an impression less of caricature than of unrefined, raw creative spirit. In the same vein, a drawing by Spazzapan, *Vignette from the Rabljev Village* (Fig. 266), shows a sitter distorted for expressive effect through foreshortening and stressing the diagonals that both animate and organize the composition.

Strong diagonals employed as a compositional device are often coupled with a highly abstract expressive linearism in the graphic work of Ivan Čargo. A series of his portraits from the latter 1920s (Fig. 267) betrays a remarkable formal kinship with prints created in Germany by eastern European artists, who likewise drew on available modernist styles to portray their contemporaries through an inventive blend of expressionism, cubism, and futurism.¹⁷ Like Berlin, Trieste enjoyed an unusual degree of cosmopolitanism as a direct result of its multinational makeup. Čargo was able to exploit these conditions productively until 1929, when Mussolini's fascist aesthetic policies discouraged the continuation of Slovenian expressionism in Italian Primorsko. At that time Spazzapan, Pilon, and Čargo, among other Slovenian artists, went into exile on the Adriatic coast south of Trieste. There, in the Dalmatian town of Novi Mesto, a young generation of Slovenian writers, musicians, and artists fostered a spiritual renaissance in the postwar years. The dominant visual style was expressionism, and its most accomplished practitioner was Božidar Jakac, who continued along the route charted by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. A prolific draftsman from whom a stream of lithographs, woodcuts, linocuts, and etchings appeared in the 1920s (Fig. 268),¹⁸ Jakac was conversant with expressionist activities in Berlin, in which he himself participated. His *Night in Berlin* (Fig. 269) depicts a scene along one of the city's boulevards, peopled by spectral streetwalkers whose appeal is mitigated by acid colors. Here, dematerializing the physical re-

Figure 268. Božidar Jakac, *Two*, 1921. Woodcut, 11 × 16.2 cm. Božidar Jakac Museum of Art, Kostanjevica na Krki (Slovenia).





Figure 269. Božidar Jakac, *Night in Berlin*, 1922. Pastel, 31 × 40 cm. Jakac House Museum, Novi Mesto. (From *Ekspressionizem in Nova Stvarnost na Slovenskem*, exh. cat., Ljubljana, Museum of Modern Art, 1986.)

ality and heightening the artifice of metropolitan life, Jakac stripped away the superficiality of appearance to reveal the raw spirit of modernity. His belief in the artist's obligation to express the character of the age through the visual media was shared by France and Tone Kralj in Dolenjsko, not far from Novi Mesto, for whose Young Artists Club France Kralj was the leading spirit. He and his brother were prolific painters, sculptors, and graphic artists who experimented with various expressive styles and modes of presentation. France was as likely to invoke primitive, Slovenian folkloric sources (Fig. 270) as to exploit Secessionist symbolism (see Plate 24). His debt to Gustav Klimt, Ferdinand Hodler, and Oskar Kokoschka was as great as his respect for the expressionism of Ernst Barlach, Emil Nolde, and Käthe Kollwitz. With an almost religious zeal, the Kralj brothers channeled the rich streams of European symbolism, primitivism, and expressionism toward Slovenia, where they could be reinterpreted. In so

Figure 270 (below). France Kralj, *Mourning Beggar*, 1919. Plaster, 37 × 35 × 27 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana.

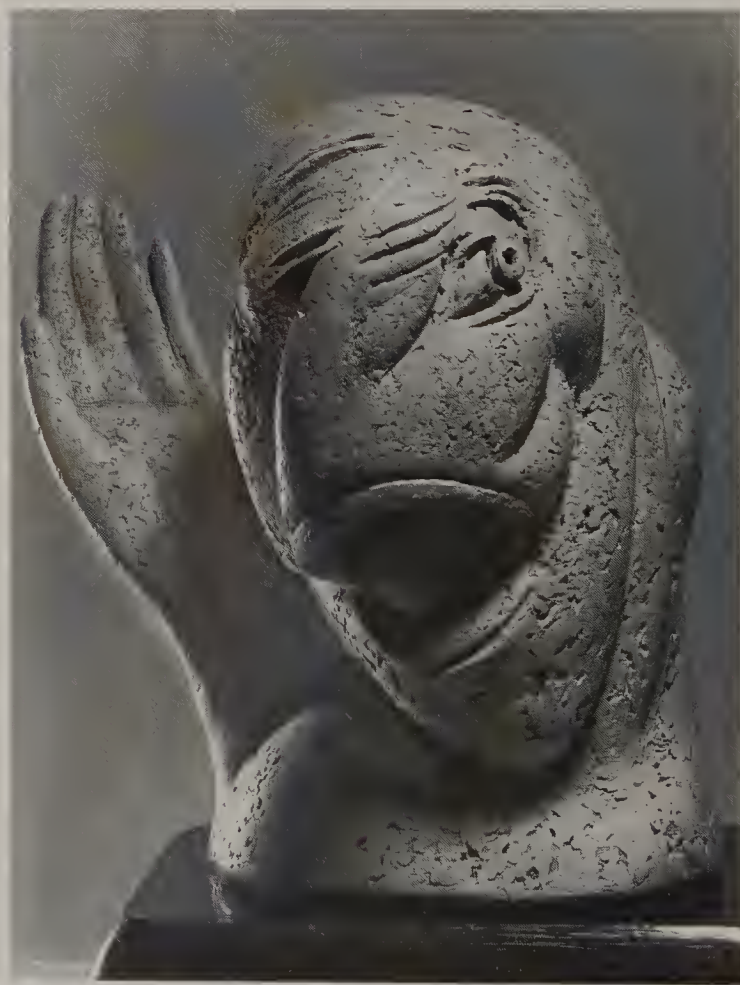




Figure 271. Tone Kralj, *Calvary*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 85.3 × 76 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana. (From *Ekspressionizem in Nova Stvarnost na Slovenskem*, exh. cat., Ljubljana, Museum of Modern Art, 1986.)

doing, they saw little contradiction between creating a modern Slovenian art for the national collections and completing commissions intended for churches (Fig. 271); each was just a complementary dimen-

sion of the spiritual character of the Slovenian state.

By the latter half of the 1920s, after almost two decades of development, the various strains of Slovenian expressionism were beginning to exhaust



Figure 272. Venon Pilon, *Portrait of Walter Bianchi*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 147.3 × 87 cm. Pilon Museum, Ajdovščina.

themselves and the Slovene public. Moreover, there were new currents being expressed in Italy and Germany that were exerting an influence on Slovenian artists. As one response to the changing political and cultural climate, many of the artists – including the Kralj brothers and other former members of the Young Artists Club, as well as Veno Pilon and another two brothers, Nande and Drago Vidmar – moderated their highly charged expressionism and redirected its animating spirit toward a Slovenian form of New Objectivity (Figs. 272–274). The new style was a rejection of the social themes and even the

national spiritual values that informed the various strains of expressionism. It may best be understood as a call to order: aesthetic, social, and perhaps political. Slovenian New Objectivity was a conservative affirmation of the preeminence of “pure” aesthetics, as well as a recognition of the changed circumstances for modern artists. By 1926, when the Slovenian Art Club (formerly the expressionist Young Artists Club) exhibited at a business fair in Ljubljana, artists and their (mostly urban) patrons expected to see in a still life an accomplished representation of, say, tools rendered in a fashionably contemporary

Figure 273. Nande Vidmar, *Portrait of My Brother Drago*, 1927. Oil on jute, 127 × 96.5 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana.



European style (e.g., Fig. 275, from a slightly later period); they did not want to be educated about the social conditions of workers, nor did they seek to be spiritually engaged. Revolutions in culture, society, and politics were increasingly less welcome in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. But this conservative message was rejected by the newest wave of the avant-garde. For the Slovenian constructivists who burst into view in the mid-1920s, modern art was a call for a revolution in all values.

New Objectivity was one manner of rejecting the individualism of Slovenian expressionism; constructivism was the other. Whereas the “realists” of New Objectivity mostly abandoned or avoided radical programs, the constructivists reveled in revolution-

ary engagement. Paradoxically, perhaps, it was this political preoccupation – emphasizing social aspects of art – that would continue the Slovenian modern tradition of relying on art (and artists) to define the national character.¹⁹ Like constructivists elsewhere in Europe, the Slovenes founded periodicals through which to present a new aesthetics, articulate a new politics, and effect a new society. As was the case throughout the region, their radicalism engendered official hostility and resulted frequently in censorship. Avgust Černigoj and Ferdo Delak, the principal figures in Slovenian constructivism, were born respectively in “Slovenian” Trieste and Gorizia, educated in Italy or in Germany, and found themselves “Italian” subjects as a result of World War I. With the



Figure 274. Drago Vidmar, *Boženka (Boženka Dolžič)*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 72 × 52. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana.

rise of fascism, their status as left-wing Slovene artists was untenable, and they left the Italy of Mussolini for Ljubljana, the central Slovenian regional capital of the postwar Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Although the royal régime in Yugoslavia was markedly unsympathetic to nationalist-minded and left-oriented modern designers, Černigoj and Delak were able to present there, albeit briefly, a new and dramatic modernism, not just to the Balkans but to all of Europe.²⁰

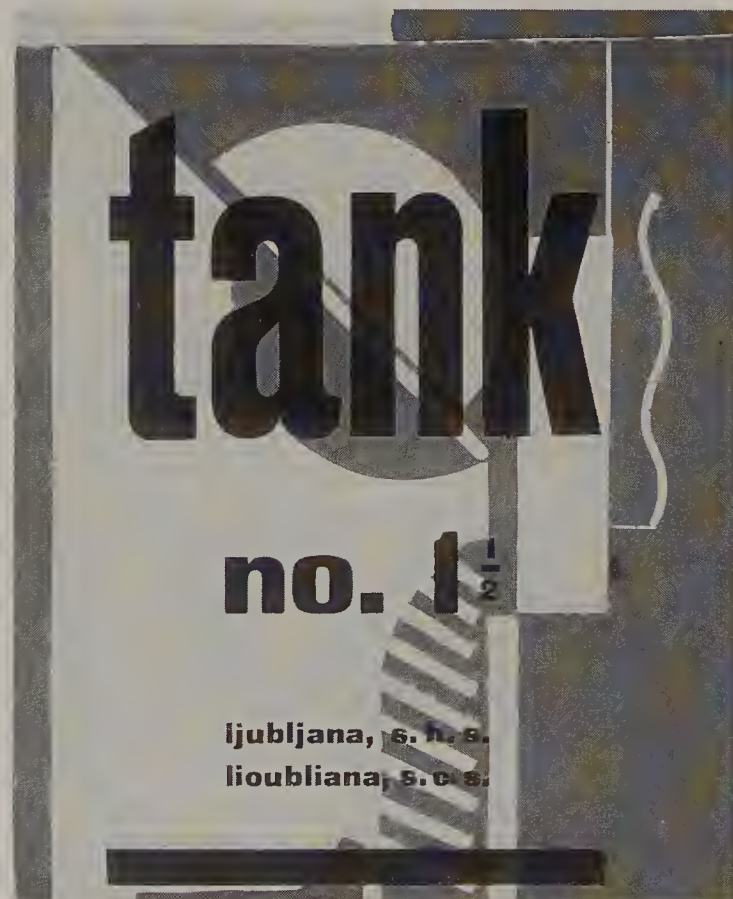
The focus of Slovenian constructivism was the periodical *Tank*, edited by Delak and drawing on the talents of progressive artists and writers from all over central and eastern Europe and elsewhere.²¹ Its two

numbers published during the winter of 1927–8 (the third issue being banned by the authorities) represented the culmination of Yugoslav avant-garde trends that had begun developing as early as 1924 with Černigoj's flirtation with Italian futurism and Delak's connection to the theater of avant-garde expressionism in Germany and constructivism in Russia.²² Despite its short life, the journal was among the most influential cultural enterprises of the decade, enabling the Slovenian progressive front to participate in the international modernist movement as a full confederate. Ljubljana became briefly a capital of the European avant-garde through the pages of *Tank*,²³ one of its principal objectives and accom-

Figure 275. Franjo Stiplovšek, *Still Life Tools*, 1929. Oil on jute, 84 × 89 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana.



Figure 276. Avgust Černigoj, cover of *Tank*, no. 1½, 1927. Collection Nacionalna i Sveucilisna Biblioteka (National Library), Zagreb.



plishments being the abrogation of traditional borders among the various arts and letters. Through page layout, typographical design, and rhythmic progression of pagination, as well as critical content, *Tank* established a dynamic interrelatedness among aesthetic categories (Fig. 276; see Plate 25). The journal realized a syncretism within the arts that Delak proclaimed as an avant-garde goal: "The modern painter is a poet, architect, sculptor, and painter."²⁴

The political dimension of Slovenian constructivism becomes apparent when we decipher the typography that is the foundation for *Tank's* modernist design architecture. In a linocut accompanying an article by Marijan Mikac (Fig. 277), Černigoj deployed a formation of words and letters that functions effectively as abstract design but can also be regrouped by the viewer/reader to be seen as an exhortation to action: "Tank [is] international revolution." In this artful avant-garde style and content, Slovenian constructivism of the mid-1920s reveals its fundamental kinship with contemporary developments elsewhere in Yugoslavia.

CROATIA

Like Slovenia during the decades before World War I, Croatia belonged to the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. Unlike Austrian-controlled Slovenia, however, Croatia was under Hungarian suzerainty – a fact that would be of central significance in shaping Croatia's modern culture. Even before the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century, substantial segments of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia had belonged to the Hungarian crown of Saint Stephen. In the eighteenth century, when the Turkish forces withdrew and the Habsburg government assumed responsibility for organizing and administering the newly won lands, about half the territory of Slavonia and Croatia was incorporated into the *Krajina* (Military Frontier), which was directly administered from Vienna.²⁵ It was Civil Croatia, with Zagreb as its cultural and political center, that was assigned to Hungary, which appointed a *ban*, or administrator, usually a Hungarian landowner. The country's mostly feudally organized agricultural economy was dominated by a nobility substantially Hungarian (in ancestry or in its orientation toward Hungary in language and culture). As in Slovenia, the Roman Catholic Church held the allegiance of the overwhelming majority. For a time, Catholicism served as a binding agent between Croats and their imperial overlords, but differences became manifest when increasing numbers of Serbs moved into both Civil Croatia (and Civil Slavonia) and the contiguous, mostly Croatian Military Frontier.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Croatian and Croatian-Hungarian nobility negotiated certain civil, economic, and cultural liberties from the often contending Hungarian and Austrian parties composing the Danube Monarchy. At times Croatia supported the Austrians; at other decisive moments the Zagreb Diet would side with Budapest's claims. In each instance policy seemed to be determined by a perception of or hope for some form of Croatian aggrandizement. Thus, by the mid-nineteenth century, Croatia received assurances of its special legal and cultural rights from both Vienna and Budapest, even if Zagreb was compelled to affirm allegiance to the Hungarian king, who was, of course, the Habsburg emperor. The province's ambivalence was expressed in a statement by one of its emergent nationalist political movements, the Illyrians, as follows:

According to law we are a land affiliated with Hungary, and in no way a subject people of Hungary. At one time we had our own national non-Hungarian kings. No force or slavery made us subordinate to Hungary, but we through our own free will became subjects not of the Hungarian Kingdom, but of the Hungarian King. We are free and not slaves.²⁶

From the mid-nineteenth century until the end of World War I, Croatian-Hungarian relations were uneasy, particularly in the sphere of culture. Hungary and Croatia were united in rejecting the Austrian policy of introducing German as the exclusive language of administration and education, but Croatia was equally opposed to subordinating Croatian to Hungarian.²⁷ In 1867, as a result of the historic compromise (*Ausgleich*) between the Habsburgs' Austrian territories and their Hungarian kingdom, Hungary was granted parity in the empire with Austria and assumed greater authority in dealing with its national minorities. It then became the Hungarian objective to establish a national state in the entirety of the historic lands of Saint Stephen. Toward this end, national background was itself no barrier to achieving Hungarian citizenship and the rights it carried; citizenship was contingent on adopting the Hungarian language and assuming a Hungarian form of given name (and, frequently, family name). This attempt to Magyarize the nationalities was resented especially by Croats, who had previously enjoyed cultural privileges under the Hungarian crown and now saw their national rights threatened by Budapest.²⁸

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Hungarian nationalism imperiled the existence and further development of a Croatian cultural identity, despite the Hungarian population in Croatia and Slavonia having declined into relative insignificance. As yet another tactic for achieving cultural hegemony, Hungarian authorities did not discourage the growing animosity between Serbs and Croats in Slavonia, Dalmatia, and Croatia. Paradoxically, the increasing resentment and friction fueled the emerging Croatian nationalism that Hungarian policies had suppressed a few years earlier.

The dominant parties espousing Croatian nationalism before World War I sought to establish an independent state. Unlike Slovenian nationalism, then, Croatian cultural aspiration was not consistent with maintaining the Habsburg monarchy. Moreov-



Figure 277. August Černigoj, page of *Tank*, no. 1½, 1927.
National Library, Zagreb.

er, it was believed at the time that only through the articulation and expression of a Croatian modern culture could a unitary state be created. Before such a state could be realized, however, two significant and related geopolitical facts would have to be acknowledged and resolved. First, the Croats were scattered across Slavonia, Dalmatia, and central Croatia; hence there was no compact area of dense Croatian population that could be easily identified and transformed into a state. Second, these provinces contained large numbers of Slavic Serbs, Slovenes, Muslims, and those of other nationalities. To rectify the geographical and demographic obstacles, the Croatian nationalists designated the Serbs as Orthodox Croats, the Slovenes as “mountain” Croats, and most of the other (non-Jewish) peoples long resident in the region as “forgotten” Croats. Understandably, this radicalism was not universally endorsed: The governments in the imperial capitals of Vienna and Budapest and the overwhelming majority of non-Croats in Dalmatia and Slavonia – as well as significant numbers of conservative Croats and non-Croatian nationalities in Zagreb – rejected such sweeping claims and chauvinist attitudes. Despite modifications in the nationalist posture, one principal feature remained constant and would continue to determine political and cultural life in the region: The emphasis on Croatian rights, cultural integrity, and national identity was consistently accompanied by friction with the substantial Serbian resident population.

In the early years of the twentieth century, there arose among some intellectuals (and especially among students) in Croatian lands a “Yugoslav movement.” These groups became political parties and affirmed a belief in the historical commonality of the Croat and Serb peoples as the twin descendants of the Illyrians and as equal southern Slav participants in a prospective union. In part, the Yugoslav orientation was an attempt to overcome the continuing Serb–Croat conflict. But it also represented the ideals of pan-Slavism, which had been growing rapidly throughout the Balkan peninsula. Whether abetted by Russia, inspired by the democratic principles of Tomáš Masaryk,²⁹ or generated internally, pan-Slavism held great appeal; and it served as a cornerstone of the Yugoslav paragon,

... [which] stand[s] on the premise that the Croats and Serbs are one people, that they are equal in relation to one

another and that . . . they must consolidate their strength and their national forces. . . . Consequently, the Croats and Serbs . . . will work shoulder to shoulder as blood brothers in national political questions. . . . As regards national designation and language, which for the Croats and the Serbs is one and the same, the Croats and Serbs will adhere unalterably to the decision . . . according to which our common language is called Croatian or Serbian . . . that the names of Croatia and Serbia [will] occupy a position of honor, that Croatian and Serbian history will be taken into consideration in schoolbooks, that Serbian and Croatian students will be able to study the chief events of each other’s histories, and that both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts will be taught and learned in order that the students may become versed in the reading and writing of each other’s scripts.³⁰

The concept encapsulated above had significant political and cultural resonance in the years just before World War I. As the foundation of the Croatian–Serbian Coalition, which was the strongest political party in Croatia on the eve of the war, it served as the basis for cooperation among all the southern Slavs within the Habsburg empire. Nevertheless, there was considerable opposition to the Yugoslav standpoint. Many parties sought a unitary Croatian state; others aspired to Croatian autonomy within the Hungarian kingdom; and several advocated the creation of a Greater Croatia. What the majority of non-Coalition parties shared, despite numerous bitter disagreements, was the belief that the rights of the Catholic Croats (and Slovenes) were fundamentally different from those of the Orthodox Serbs.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Croatian artists were deeply influenced by the Secessionism they witnessed in Vienna and Budapest as well as by the Jugendstil art generated in Germany. At the first Salon held in Croatia in 1898, these modern idioms challenged the realism that had characterized Croatian painting since the mid-nineteenth century. The medley of modern styles introduced at the Salon – including symbolism and the peculiar central European strain of impressionism (as by Emanuel Vidović [Fig. 278]) among other fin-de-siècle experiments – galvanized the public and encouraged the next generation of Croatian artists to look to Europe, especially to Munich, for their artistic education and standards.

Like their Slovenian counterparts, numerous young Croatian artists went to the Bavarian capital



Figure 278. Emanuel Vidović, *Impression*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 63 × 93. Private collection, Zagreb. (Photo: Luka Mjeda.)

to enroll either in the academy or in Anton Ažbė's private school. From their contact with modern art there, Croats emulated the plastic construction of form, as evident in Josip Račić's(?) *Portrait of a Hatted Woman* (Fig. 279); learned to represent the nude in a postrealist style by means of broad brushstrokes, as in Vladimir Becić's *Nude before a Mirror* (Fig. 280); mastered the expressively painterly treatment of surface effects, as in Miroslav Kraljević's *Self-Portrait with Palette* (Fig. 281); and developed an appreciation of controlled color effects in capturing the spirit of a landscape and depicting still lifes. Indeed, the "Munich School" of Croatian painters brought current European styles and aesthetic concerns to Zagreb and made them acceptable there as both universally modern and singularly Croatian.

Somewhat surprisingly, the burst of impressionist creativity among Slovene and Serb painters who studied in Munich was not emulated on a comparable scale or as accomplished a level by Croat artists. Zlatko Šulentić was among the few Croats whose

impressionist-expressionist works (see Plate 26) found resonance in Zagreb. Much of the educated citizenry appeared to be more engaged by the expressive sculpture of Ivan Meštrović, which in the early decades of the century was influenced by both to Viennese Secessionism and to the sculptural "impressionism" of Auguste Rodin. *The Well of Life* (Fig. 282) effectively represents the Croat's indebtedness to Rodin's technique of surface animation, activation of pose, and preoccupation with themes of human spiritual tension and sacrifice. Moreover, Meštrović focused his considerable skills on fashioning an image of Croatian and southern Slav nationalism by using the most innovative blend of modern sources he had learned in years spent in Vienna and Paris and in touring Italy. In an enormous, never completed work, the multifigured *Kosovo Cycle* (Fig. 283), Meštrović made visible the desire among Zagreb's progressive elite for independence and Yugoslav unity. Although first conceived in Vienna and executed mostly in Paris between 1907 and 1910, the impulse



Figure 279. Josip Račić?, *Portrait of a Hatted Woman*, ca. 1907. Oil on canvas. (Photo: Luka Mjeda.)

and orientation for the *Kosovo Cycle* was always toward the Balkans, particularly Croatia. The sculptor sought to incarnate the popular southern Slav national myth that was rooted in the catastrophic defeat of the Serbs by the advancing Turks on Saint Vitus's Day in 1389. The slain Slavic warriors on Kosovo's fields became transformed through epic poetry and myth making into the heroic embodiment of Balkan liberation from foreign powers – Turkish, Austrian, Italian, and Hungarian. Meštrović's rendition of this national symbol of physical struggle, spiritual suffering, and emotional exhilaration was to be a monumental temple.³¹ For years the sculptor worked on a wood model (Fig. 284), which was exhibited to considerable excitement, even if its complex symbolism was confusing to most. In essence, the program called for a monumental gate, to be entered through a peristyle. Upon penetrating the

sacred enclosure, the visitor would encounter a central building with a cupola and ambulatory, before which was to stand a Romanesque-style bell tower. A statue of Prince Kraljević Marko astride a rearing horse (Fig. 285) would be erected under the cupola, which was to be flanked by several domed chapels. Adorning the temple would be representations of the thousands of Croatian and Serbian victims of the Turkish invasion of the Balkans and the five hundred years of Ottoman domination. A water font placed in front of the building was to symbolize the tears and blood shed by the subject Slavs. Meštrović planned a host of additional figures, figural groups, and architectural elements through which to communicate his symbolic representation of the southern Slavs' saga. In its elaborate, highly personal figuration, the *Kosovo Cycle* is not too distant – except in scale – from the complex programs envisioned by



Figure 280. Vladimir Becić, *Nude before a Mirror*, 1906. Oil on cardboard, 70 × 51. Museum of Art, Osijek.

Figure 281 (below). Miroslav Kraljević, *Self-Portrait with Palette*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 55.2 × 33.2 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. (Photo: Luka Mjeda.)



Figure 282. Ivan Meštrović, *The Well of Life*, 1905. Bronze, 110 cm high. (From *Ivan Meštrović*, exh. cat., Milan, 1987.)



Rodin, Constantin Meunier,³² and Otto Wagner, all of whose developments Meštrović studied. Ironically, once the multinational Yugoslav state was actually established in 1918, the impetus for this overly complex sculptural program disappeared, and with it the motivation to continue its development. Although his focus was on Croatia and Yugoslavia, where he exhibited frequently, Meštrović continued to live abroad, and thus much of his later activity falls outside the present study. It is important, however, to acknowledge his seminal influence: his force of character as well as his expressive sculpture inspired young Croatian artists of the so-called Medu-
lić group (founded in 1908) along similar lines.

The nationalist culture that had developed in Croatia since 1898 underwent a difficult test once World War I began in the Balkans in the summer of 1914. Croatia, like Slovenia, mitigated its cultural nationalism in favor of loyal service to the Habsburg throne. Conservatism was manifested as the nation marshaled support for the cause of maintaining the empire and defending the faith; to this end, patriotic subjects were executed in representational styles.³³ Although the outbreak of war exacerbated Croat-Serb civilian conflict in Croatian territories, relations within the ranks of the multinational imperial army of Austria-Hungary were notably harmonious.³⁴ This military cooperation under the extreme pressure of war would encourage, paradoxically, the advocates for a postwar, southern Slav federal state.

Figure 283. Ivan Meštrović, *The Woman of Kosovo* from the *Kosovo Cycle*. Original plaster cast (ca. 1908) destroyed, marble after 1919. (From *Ivan Meštrović*, Zagreb, 1935.)





Figure 284 (above). Ivan Meštrović, *Kosovo Temple*, 1912. Wooden model. Belgrade National Museum? (From *Ivan Meštrović*, exh. cat., Zagreb, 1984.)



Figure 285. Ivan Meštrović, study for *Prince Kraljević Marko astride a Horse*, 1910. Plaster. (From *Ivan Meštrović*, Zagreb, 1935.)

Nonetheless, not until late 1918, upon the military withdrawal of the Dual Monarchy's armies, did the Habsburg empire simply break apart into its constituent national elements. With the end of Habsburg dominion in the Balkans, a new era of Yugoslav culture was initiated.

Foremost among the Yugoslav modernist movements was Zenit (Zenith), founded in Zagreb in 1921 by Ljubomir Micić. A poet, controversial critic, and polemicist, Micić was the impresario of the Yugoslav avant-garde in the postwar decade. Advocating the transformation of life through the power of radical art, he created a movement that endorsed all forms of contradiction and antinomy: Its journal, *Zenit*, was anticlerical, antiacademic, antibourgeois, and anti-traditional; it stood counter to the very things that had defined prewar modern art in Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia. Assessments of the role of Zenit and the surrealist reaction it soon engendered in Croatia and Serbia – and its profound meanings for and contributions to modern art in the Balkans³⁵ – are best addressed after first examining the early manifestations of Serbian modernist art.

SERBIA

The Congress of Berlin, which redrew the borders of the Balkans in 1878, was a great disappointment to the expansionist aspirations of Serbia. Having lost in battle with the Ottomans in the previous year, independent Serbia now had to rely on Austro-Hungary for support of its Balkan interests. As a result of the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, the newly enlarged Dual Monarchy assumed the role of Serbian patron.³⁶ From the Serbs' perspective, the single benefit to ensue from an otherwise disastrous settlement was their elevation (in March 1882) to the status of a kingdom. The liberal-minded political parties serving the monarchy emulated the institutions of the West as a means of modernizing a backward country, a land that lagged considerably behind both Slovenia and Croatia in economic development. Moreover, the new Serbia remained profoundly irredentist in its desire to expand borders eastward into land disputed with Ottoman Bulgaria, southward into Ottoman "Macedonia," and westward into Habsburg-occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sanjak (administrative district) of Novi Pazar. The military campaigns it initiated to (re)gain such terri-

tory led most often to defeat abroad and internal turmoil at home.

The political and economic conditions prevailing in late-nineteenth-century Serbia were to remain unstable and, for the most part, irresolvable. Following a series of peasant upheavals, political contentiousness, and royal scandals, several military officers staged a coup, seized power in June 1903, and executed the king, queen, and members of the royal family and government. The scandal-ridden Obrenović dynasty was thus deposed and replaced by Peter Karadjordjević. King Peter, almost sixty when placed on the Serbian throne, was for all practical purposes a foreigner. Raised and educated in Paris and Switzerland, his allegiances more with France and Russia than with the Central Powers that had established the Serbian kingdom and for two decades influenced its affairs, the new king and his government followed a nationalist path unfavorable to Habsburg interests. The Central Powers, primarily the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, retaliated by imposing economic blockades and exerting political pressure. In short order, Serbia was cast into perilous circumstances that soon led to hostilities: First, from 1906 to 1911, came the so-called Pig War with Germany and Austria over agricultural goods, and then in 1912 Serbia participated in the First Balkan War, in 1913 in the Second Balkan War (see Maps 4 and 5), and from 1914 to 1918 in World War I. By the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, Serbia had cemented its ties with Paris and Saint Petersburg, had distanced itself from Berlin and Vienna, and had begun to establish relations with some of its Balkan neighbors on which a future confederation of southern Slavs would eventually be modeled.³⁷

The Serbian orientation toward France, strongly encouraged during the reign of King Peter Karadjordjević, had a tremendous impact on the generation of a modern culture. By the turn of the twentieth century, impressionism was firmly established in Belgrade as the hallmark style of Serbian modern art. Although focused on Paris, the artists of Serbian impressionism were trained primarily in Anton Ažbė's Munich atelier (and often in Prague). Here they would have come into contact with the impressive numbers of Slovenes and Croats who also traveled to Munich to receive an aesthetic education in the modern style. Nevertheless, despite the receptivity in Belgrade for things French, the artists' extensive and prolonged exposure to modernist trends in Mu-

Figure 286. Kosta Miličević, *Self-Portrait*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 34 × 25. National Museum, Belgrade. (From *Jugoslovenska Umetnost XX Veka, 1900–1920: Plenerizam, Secesija, Simbolizam, Minhenski Krug, Impresionizam, Ekspresionizam*, vol. 1, Belgrade, 1972–3.)



nich and Paris, and the evident competence of the artists themselves, Serbian impressionism never attained the consummate level of accomplishment of, nor won the international recognition enjoyed by, Rihard Jakopič and his fellow Slovene impressionists of the Sava group (Grohar, Jama, and Sternen). About the time Sava was founded in Vienna in 1904, Serbian artists banded together to establish the Lada group. Here are to be found the best representatives of Serbian impressionism: Kosta Miličević, Milan Milovanović, and Nadežda Petrović. All three painters studied in Munich and continued their education abroad, two of them in Paris. The evolution of their style can best be illustrated by comparing Miličević's self-portrait (Fig. 286), which reveals a debt to the late realism elaborated by Ažbé in Munich,

with *Youth in a White Hat* (Fig. 287), which manifests a competent handling of paint-laden brushstrokes of intense color to model the figure and enliven the surface plane, techniques derived from modern French painting.

Milovanović's impressionism also stems from experience in Munich and Paris. His *Bridge of Tsar Dušan in Skopje* (Fig. 288) not only reveals an infatuation with a common French impressionist subject, but also affirms the painter's interest in (if not yet complete understanding of) Parisian art, such as the fauvist renditions of bridges by André Derain. Equally noteworthy in this canvas is the choice of specific subject: To depict an Ottoman bridge in Skopje in a modern impressionist style was, given the contemporary political climate, to affirm the legitimacy of



Figure 287. Kosta Miličević, *Youth in a White Hat*, 1912–13. Oil on canvas. Private collection, Novi Sad. (From *Jugoslovenska Umetnost XX Veka, 1900–1920: Plenerizam, Secesija, Simbolizam, Minhenski Krug, Impresionizam, Ekspresionizam*, vol. 1, Belgrade, 1972–3.)

Serbian claims on Macedonia as “Old Serbia.”³⁸ Thus, the painting may well have had in Belgrade both aesthetic and political resonance: aesthetic by attesting to Serbia’s cultural modernism and political by warranting Serbia’s national irredentism in the Balkans.³⁹

In the decade and a half of impressionism’s pre-eminence in Belgrade, there was a pronounced lyrical dimension to much of the painting, especially in the years between 1911 and 1913. This can best be seen in the work of Petrović, whose *Boaters on the Sava* (Fig. 289) is built on undulating diagonals, color harmonies, and a delicate touch. The lyrical strain of Serbian impressionism survived World War I and, with artists such as Veljko Stanojević (Fig. 290), remained a dominant mode of expression into the ear-

ly 1920s, when it and the increasingly conservative taste for which it stood were attacked by the radical leader of the Yugoslav avant-garde, Ljubomir Micić. Fired by the creation of the new political state of Yugoslavia in 1918, Micić sought to define its cultural character in a way congruent with international modernism while remaining consistent with native traditions, histories, and even contradictions. To effect an avant-garde social and aesthetic program in Yugoslavia and advance its radical practices abroad, he formed in 1921 the group of artists, poets, and critics called Zenit.⁴⁰ Advocating revolution in all aesthetic, political, and social values, the movement’s journal had an embattled, short history. After two years, by 1923, Micić was forced to move his base of operations from Croatian Zagreb to the



Figure 288. Milan Milovanović, *Bridge of Tsar Dušan in Skopje*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 44.5 × 66.5 cm. Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb. (From *Jugoslovenska Umetnost XX Veka, 1900–1920: Plenerizam, Secesija, Simbolizam, Minhenski Krug, Impresionizam, Ekspresionizam*, vol. 1, Belgrade, 1972–3.)

federal (and Serbian) capital of Belgrade, where he hoped to find a less antagonistic public and a less hostile government. But his militant radicalism engendered official enmity there too, leading to a ban on the periodical in 1926, after the forty-third issue.

Micić's Zenitism was never codified into a coherent or systematic philosophy. Rather, it was an often illogical, self-contradictory, and highly negative socioaesthetic ideology opposed to academic practices, "false" traditions of church and state, and anything bureaucratic. Zenitism was, in sum, a war waged on unexamined mores and constricting conventions. It championed instead a new spirit of the age: pacifist, supranational, cosmopolitan, yet singularly congruent with the specific needs of a modernizing Yugoslavia. In its revolt against stultifying traditions and through its advocacy of modern art as the sole means to establish a radical new way of seeing, thinking, and acting, Zenitism was a full partner in the international avant-garde with its myriad of progressive journals.⁴¹ And like the editors of so many

of these "little reviews," Micić possessed a contentious personality that at once made the periodical possible while ensuring that its life would be brief.⁴²

The first issues of *Zenit* contained numerous manifestos (mostly by Micić himself) whose stentorian tenor is fully consistent with the expressionist style of the layout, graphic design, and many of the published illustrations and original linocuts. Equally evident are stylistic elements derived from dada and futurism, which, as we have seen, had made significant inroads into Croatia and Slovenia during the postwar years. By 1922, following a tour of Germany, where he most likely encountered Russian modernist poets, painters, and designers who were active in Berlin, Micić steered his periodical toward constructivism. In due course, he even published a double issue of *Zenit* devoted to the new Russian art: a cover by El Lissitzky; poetry by Vladimir Mayakovsky, Boris Pasternak, and Velimir Khlebnikov; articles by Ilya Ehrenburg, Lissitzky, and Kazimir Malevich; reproductions of constructivist/suprematist

works by Aleksandr Rodchenko, Malevich, Lissitzky, and Vladimir Tatlin; and numerous other contributions chronicling Soviet film, constructivist theater, and contemporary Russian music. Although a small circle of progressives in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Ljubljana heralded constructivism as a welcome alternative to the long reign of impressionism and expressionism there, the enthusiasm did not extend much beyond these cultural capitals. It was always accompanied by Micić's celebration of the Russian October Revolution, by a stream of articles about Nikolai Lenin and Leon Trotsky, and by constant appeals for aid to the new Soviet society in Russia. For the relatively politically conservative Yugoslav intelligentsia, Zenitism's association with bolshevism made it unacceptable.⁴³

As discordant as *Zenit's* frequent ideological hectoring was its oscillation among a medley of styles, which made it difficult for the reader to determine just which mode of modernism Micić was advanc-

ing: expressionism, constructivism, or dadaism. This confusion may not have been unintentional, for Micić resisted being categorized, and he believed in complete freedom of creative expression. Moreover, it corresponds well to his promotion of dadaism, an avant-garde ideology and form of expression that had particular resonance among adherents to Yugoslavian Zenitism. Branko Poljanski (Micić's brother)⁴⁴ and Dragan Aleksić, also an active contributor to *Zenit*, were the principal Yugoslav dadaists. Their free verse, neologisms, and punning verbal plays attest to the predominant rôle assumed by literary figures in the Yugoslav avant-garde. Further, dadaist literary formulations, which so often appeared in the pages of *Zenit*, encouraged Micić to develop a typography and layout that was compatible with the displays of his contributors. The collaboration among the dada poets and the editor of *Zenit* was a productive one until it ended abruptly as a result of personality conflicts. Nevertheless, it did encourage Micić to

Figure 289. Nadežda Petrović, *Boaters on the Sava*, undated. Oil on canvas, 46 × 55 cm. National Museum, Belgrade. (From *Jugoslovenska Umetnost XX Veka, 1900–1920: Plenerizam, Secesija, Simbolizam, Minhenski Krug, Impresionizam, Ekspressionizam*, vol. 1, Belgrade, 1972–3.)



Figure 290. Veljko Stanojević, *Laudon Street*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 24 × 28 cm. Private collection, Belgrade. (From *Jugoslovenska Umetnost XX Veka, 1900–1920: Plenerizam, Secesija, Simbolizam, Minhenski Krug, Impresionizam, Ekspresionizam*, vol. 1, Belgrade, 1972–3.)



marshal all the forces and styles of modernist aesthetics – futurism, expressionism, constructivism – in a proposed dada-inspired assault on conventional thinking, to be led by a modern “barbarogenius,” who could have been Micić himself.

The “barbarogenius” was a metaphoric creation of Zenitism through which the Europeanization of the Balkans could be effected simultaneously with the Balkanization of western Europe. By these terms Micić believed that the vital native primitivism of the Balkans – so evident to Zenitists in the history of the southern Slavs – could reinvigorate a European civilization whose moral, cultural, and political fatigue had been manifested recently in the paroxysm of World War I. In similar fashion Balkan Yugoslavia might partake more fully of European civilization (and thereby overcome its history of subjugation to foreign empires) by embracing the new, hopeful currents from an idealistic Soviet Union (constructiv-

ism), the spiritual vitality from a republican Germany (second-generation expressionism), and the dynamism from a resurgent Italy (futurism). In essence, Micić’s concept was a dada variant on the romantic theme of creating an ideal state of being by merging the mystical Orient (the Balkans) and the rational West.⁴⁵ Within the Zenitist fold this posture was most fully realized in the art of Mihailo Petrov and Jo Klek (the name Josip Seissel used to sign his Zenitist works).

Petrov began his contribution to *Zenit* by publishing a series of highly expressionist linocuts derived from his awareness of Kandinsky, whose philosophical works he translated for several Serbian publications, and from his familiarity with German expressionism and with the Hungarian modernism of the Ma (Today) group. He was also the author of one of the most remarkable Zenitist works of the era, a tribute to Branko Poljanski’s dadaistic novel *77 Suicides*

(77 *Samoubica*; see Plate 27). Comprising Russian cubo-futurist forms, a chessboard motif borrowed from the Bauhaus visual vocabulary, and Cyrillic letters that function as abstract form but can be sequenced to read "To Branko," the work combines Eastern and Western elements, rationality and play, in an homage to Zenitist liberation as represented in Poljanski's dada-determined fiction.

More systematic, if equally equivocal, was the Zenitist work of Klek. Active as a stage designer, illustrator, graphic designer, photographer, and architect, Klek was perhaps the most creative member of Micić's group. Deeply influenced by the innovative art of the Russian avant-garde as well as by that from the West, he introduced modernism to the mass media of Yugoslavia. His design for an advertising kiosk (see Plate 28) reveals his debt to Hungarian *Aktivizam* and especially the *Képarchitektura* of Lajos Kassák,⁴⁶ the lucidity of the De Stijl movement, and the constructivism (in stage design) of Liubov Popova. Klek's Zenitist combination of wit and modernist design is strikingly evident in his collage *Men Are Killers*

(Fig. 291), whose visual source derives ultimately from Lissitzky's posters for the Red Army but whose message looks contemporaneously toward Micić's anarchic playfulness and prospectively to the surrealism that would soon supplant Zenitism.

With the departure of Klek from Zenit in 1924 and Micić's continued difficulties with the Yugoslav government and with his fellow artists, Zenitism began to decline in influence. By the time of *Zenit's* closure by official decree in December 1926, Micić's singular contributions to modern art in Yugoslavia were almost at an end. Nonetheless, the ideas he had introduced to the Balkans during the journal's five-year existence enjoyed a form of afterlife in Slovenia, where the periodical *Tank*, edited by Ferdo Delak and containing the influential designs of August Černigoj, developed the consummate form of constructivism in the southern Balkans.⁴⁷

Within months of *Zenit's* collapse, a new band of artists emerged. Based in Belgrade, *Oblik* (Form) was among the first in a series of artists' organizations that rebelled against the anarchy of Micić's so-

Figure 291. Jo Klek (Josip Seissel), *Men Are Killers*, 1924. Collage, 10.6 × 12.7 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade.

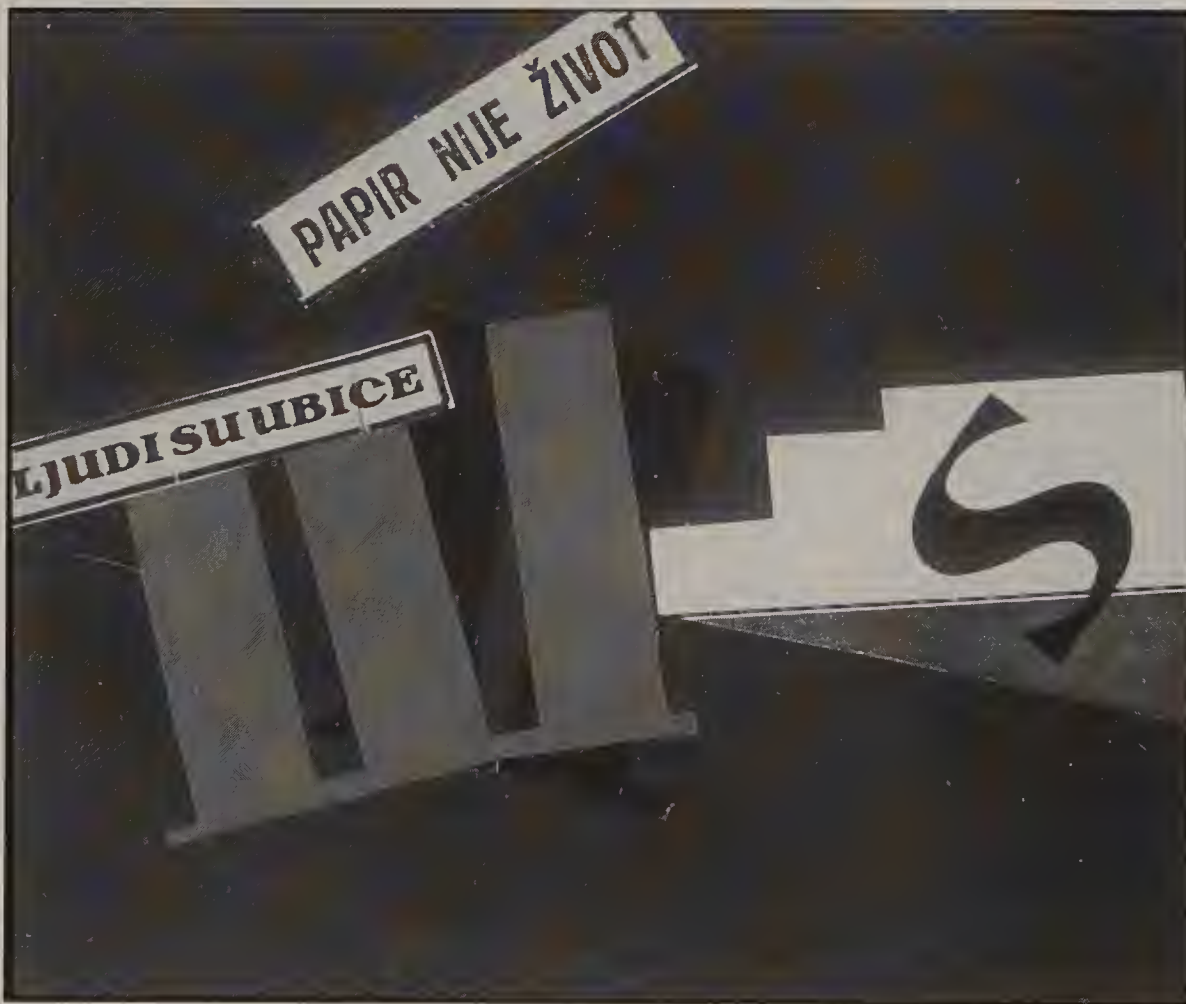


Figure 292. Veljko Stanojević, *Woman Wearing a Turban*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 116 × 80.5 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade.



cial agitation and aesthetic radicalism. Oblik, as its name suggests, emphasized the priority of the figure and thereby brought a measure of order and self-discipline to modern art. A loose confederation of conservative modernists, Oblik counted among its affiliates several prominent Serbian painters who had studied in Paris – artists who were impressed more by the neoclassicism then current in France than by the experimentalism of the previous generation. Stanojević's *Woman Wearing a Turban* (Fig. 292) well encapsulates the classicizing concern with representing the nude through a conscientious buildup of volumetric forms and careful modeling. Likewise, Jovan Bijelić painted canvases that restore the figure to a classically created, three-dimensional space, while reintroducing the genre of still life (Fig. 293). Oblik never had a charter of principles or de-

veloped a systematic program; but its associates did share an abiding faith in classical forms, subjects, and values even if they were expressed in diverse styles, ranging from that of Stanojević (neoclassicism) to the work of Sava Šumanović (Fig. 294), which bears a formal kinship to the imaginative New Objectivity taking place in Croatia.⁴⁸ The shift from constructivism and dada to a more conservative modernism was most evident in the Fifth Yugoslav Exposition of 1927, which took place in Novi Sad.⁴⁹ There members of Oblik and other exponents of figuration were joined by an inventive band of (primarily) Serbian surrealists who had built on the long-standing cultural and political contacts between Belgrade and Paris.⁵⁰ Attesting to the mutually supportive nature of these contacts was the fact that André Breton, a prime figure within the Parisian surrealist firma-

ment, published in Serbian journals his own and other French surrealist tracts that had first appeared in France. As in Paris, so too in Belgrade, surrealism was primarily a literary phenomenon with a pictorial dimension. Thus we find in the principal Serbian surrealist almanac *Nemoguće* (Impossibility) of 1930 and the review *Nadrealizam danas i ovde* (Surrealism Today and Now) numerous manifestos of writers' objectives, with secondary emphasis on the visual. Perhaps most remarkable about the impact of the French on Yugoslavia was that it led to the development of an inventive form of surrealism (chiefly in Belgrade that furthered the maturation of Serbian modernism.

For much of their technical virtuosity, Serbian surrealists drew on the achievements of constructivism. Photograms by Vane Bor (Stevan Živadinović) derive directly from the experimentation of Micić and Klek and from the pages of *Zenit*, which presented the cameraless photos of Man Ray and László

Figure 293. Jovan Bijelić, *Young Dubravka*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 128.5 × 94.5 cm. National Museum, Belgrade. (From *Jugoslovenska Umetnost XX Veka, Treća Decenija: Konstruktivno Slikarstvo*, Belgrade, 1967.)



Figure 294. Sava Šumanović, *Self-Portrait*, 1925. Pencil and chalk? Museum of the City of Zagreb.

Moholy-Nagy. The recurrent *cadavre-exquis* (an aleatory form of collaborative drawings) stems from the collectively realized typography and graphic layout by *Zenit's* poets, designers, and photographers. As for the dada-driven creativity of Micić's enterprise, it is not hard to see how it informed the surrealists' celebration of the irrational and fantastic, the marvelous and strange. The expression on canvas of the artist's private "interior model," shown with all its psychic force and erotic anxiety in the spectral visions of Radojica Živanović-Noe (Fig. 295), is consummately surrealist. Equally characteristic of surrealist psychological dislocation are the collages of 1930 by Marko Ristić and Vane Bor (Fig. 296) and the unconventional work of Dušan Matić (Fig. 297).⁵¹

The mature phase of Serbian surrealism lasted only about three years, roughly from 1929 to 1932. Although surrealist themes persisted in Yugoslavia into the mid-1930s, notably in the work of the Slovene painter Stane Kregar (Fig. 298), the most vital expression of surrealism had ended early in the decade and had begun to be replaced with an art of quite re-

Figure 295. Radojica Živanović-Noe, *A Specter in the Smoke*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 65 × 46.5 cm. Location unknown. (From *Jugoslovenska Umetnost XX Veka, 1929–1950: Nadrealizam, Postnadrealizam, Socijalna Umetnost, Umetnost Nor-a, Socijalistički Realizam*, Belgrade, 1969.)



gressive social self-consciousness. From the political left and right in all parts of Yugoslavia came pressure on the arts to communicate uplifting themes of class, nation, and universal human values. And with the emphasis on social content rendered in conservative styles, there was little place for the creative experimentation, self-exploration, and avant-garde idealism that had defined the varied course of modernist art in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia since the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, contemporary political and cultural developments in Germany, Italy, Hungary, and even France – countries that had continued to exercise a profound influence on events in the Balkan region – were not encouraging of its

modernism. Finally, the singular social and ethnic conditions that prevailed in a federated state of southern Slavs made it difficult to sustain the various national forms of modern art.⁵² A richer understanding of these Balkan conditions, and the creative response to them, can be gained by examining the modern art created in the troubled land of Macedonia.

MACEDONIA

Since the end of Ottoman rule in the nineteenth century, both European powers and peninsular peoples have debated whether a Macedonian nation or



Figure 296. Vane Bor (Stevan Živadinović), *Collage*, 1932. 34 × 25.5 cm. Private collection, Belgrade.

national state existed – or, perhaps more accurately, would be permitted to function – as a culture, partly or fully independent of the dominant authority of its immediate neighbors (Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece). Indeed, it was in large measure the inability to resolve this “Macedonian Question” that led to conflict – a series of Balkan wars, internecine disputes, and terrorism – and to the universal acknowledgment of Macedonia in particular, and by extension the Balkan peninsula as a whole, as the “powder magazine” of Europe. Compared with the national aspirations of other small states of the region, Macedonian developments depart less emphatically in their mode of expression than in their relative belatedness and their specific references. Thus, an appreciation of the

emergence of a modern art in this section of southeastern Europe is inseparable from a consideration of specific political and cultural histories.

The political instability of the Balkans during the nineteenth century had a striking and lasting impact on the Macedonian peoples who were settled in what today are areas of northern Aegean Greece, western Bulgaria, and the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. Coveted by irredentist neighbors, each of which achieved independence only through the agency of the Great Powers, and causing concern for Russia, Great Britain, France, and Austria-Hungary, these lands were the focus of endless controversy and strife. Never recognized as Macedonians, the inhabitants – a true Balkan mixture of

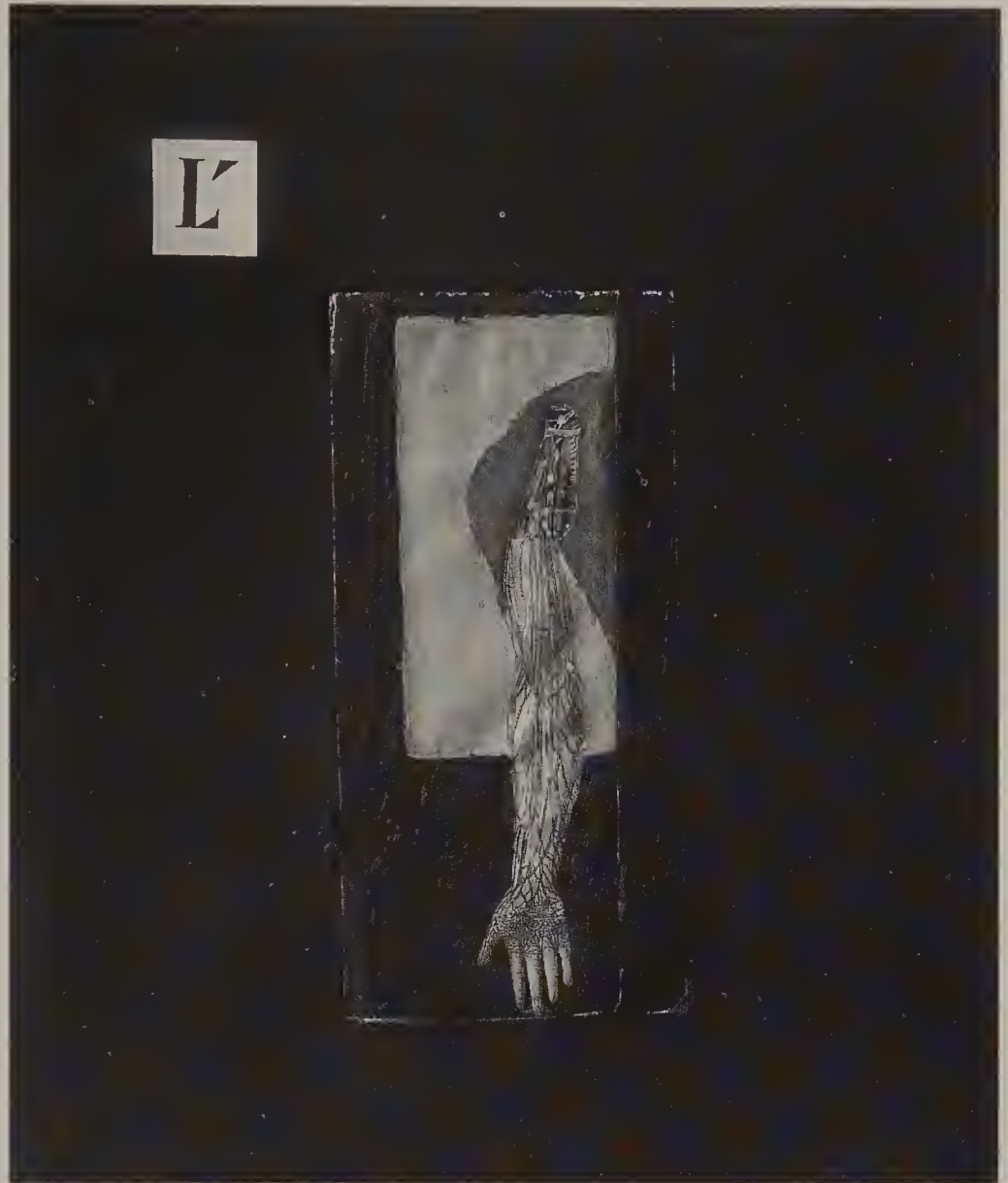


Figure 297. Dušan Matić, *L*, 1930. Collage. (Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade.)



Figure 298. Stane Kregar, *Pilgrim*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 76 × 98.5 cm. City Museum, Ljubljana. (From *Selected Works of Slovene Artists from the Museum Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, 1991.)

heterogeneous peoples, tribes, and traditions⁵³ – were claimed by each of their nationalist neighbors as fellow Greeks, Serbs, or Bulgars. By the conclusion in 1913 of the Second Balkan War, which like the First Balkan War was fought to a considerable extent over the “Macedonian Question,” Macedonia was partitioned between Bulgaria and the allied forces of Greece and Serbia with the full complicity of the Great Powers. Here, as in Poland, the partition and extirpation of the political state would give impetus to the development of a national cultural identity. Indeed, it was in the face of the real threat of the dissolution of Macedonia – orchestrated respectively by Greece, Bulgaria, and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (from 1929, Yugoslavia) – that an emergent cultural nationalism resulted in a modest form of modernism.

Despite Wilsonian expectations for the creation of small national states following World War I, the prewar partition of Macedonia was fundamentally confirmed by the Paris Peace Conference treaties that formally ended the Great War.⁵⁴ Moreover, the victorious Allies allowed their confederates in Athens and Belgrade to aggrandize themselves through the cultural absorption of their respectively assigned portions of Macedonia. Belgrade (Serbia) elected to recognize as the historic Old Serbia its territory of Vardar Macedonia, which it already controlled as a result of victory in the Second Balkan War. The inhabitants were consequently proclaimed the descendants of the Old Serbians and inheritors of the centuries-old Serbian culture. Likewise, the Kingdom of Greece recognized in Aegean Macedonia its “historic” province of northern Greece (albeit with a Slavophone native population). Even Bulgaria – which, as a vanquished combatant in the world war, lost to Greece and Serbia part of its Macedonian patrimony – was confirmed in its possession of Pirin Macedonia, a relatively small district that failed to appease the irredentist appetite of Sofia. The three Balkan powers, sharing mutual antagonisms, were consistent in suppressing all things Macedonian. Policies implemented in an exacting attempt at political absorption and cultural assimilation included deportations, forced internal migrations, and prohibition of the use of Macedonian in private conversation.

Among many intellectuals, notwithstanding the indifference of a large peasantry, the partition of

“Macedonia” and the active quashing of its cultural expression gave rise to claims of and clamoring for a national identity. This striving was particularly intense among the numerous exiles in Bulgaria (where the elite from Vardar Macedonia [Serbia] and Aegean Macedonia [Greece] were forced to immigrate and where they achieved a considerable degree of financial success and positions of influence)⁵⁵ and in Skopje, the traditional center of Macedonian aspirations.⁵⁶ The art produced there after World War I – chiefly the result of political geography determined by more powerful neighbors – resonated with extra-aesthetic overtones. In fact, modern art was encouraged by both extremes within the active, and often quite violent, Macedonian exile movements. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), founded early in the twentieth century as a conservative political association with a strong right-wing orientation, grew increasingly close to its fascist sponsors and by the 1920s waged a terrorist campaign in Vardar (Serbian) Macedonia in an attempt to establish a united, autonomous Macedonia.⁵⁷ Primarily a political movement with considerable popular support, IMRO did endorse cultural expressions, including the development of a modern art that might further the organization’s explicitly political objectives. More consequential for the course of modernism, however, was the support extended by left-wing groupings among Macedonians in all three partitioned areas.

Encouraged by the young Soviet Union, which maintained the traditional Russian backing of Bulgarian interests in the region, substantial numbers of Macedonians in Sofia and western Bulgaria joined various communist groupings. The active endorsement of these organizations became evident during the first, remarkably free, post-World War I elections in Greece, Bulgaria, and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which resulted in communist electoral victories in all three Macedonian districts. In and through such left-wing groups, Macedonian artists and academics came into contact with numerous other intellectuals who rejected the status quo in favor of working for a modern culture with new political, ethical, and aesthetic values. The popularity of communism among Macedonians then increased throughout the 1920s, when, at the prompting of the Comintern, all Balkan communist parties officially recognized Macedonia as a separate Slavic

nation with its own territory, language, and culture. These proclamations, though important to the Macedonian minorities in Greater Serbia, the Kingdom of Greece, and Bulgaria, exerted little direct influence on the respective governments, which simply continued to implement their programs of cultural repression, national assimilation, and economic neglect. Indeed, the Wilsonian ideal of national self-determination found little support within Balkan governmental circles and was mostly ignored by the Great Powers themselves, which were reluctant to renegotiate the national boundaries that would be necessitated by acknowledgment of Macedonian identity. Exploiting this failure, the Balkan communist parties were able to consolidate their support among Macedonians.

Although the extreme left encouraged the development of a Macedonian modern art, the depressed conditions of Skopje from the mid-nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth did not allow the establishment of an art academy.⁵⁸ Thus, aspiring artists were compelled to go elsewhere for instruction. Many traveled to the Yugoslav (and Serbian) royal capital, where, as fellow countrymen from southern Serbia, they were welcomed at Belgrade's quite reputable school of art. Among the Vardar Macedonians who received all or much of their formal training there were artists of varying styles and interests such as Liubomir Belogaski, Vangel Kodzhoman, Lazar Lichenoski, Tsitso Popovich, and Tomo Vladimovski. Others elected to study in the Bulgarian and Romanian capitals – Mihailo Shoilev at the School of Arts and Crafts in Sofia;⁵⁹ Pandilov Avramovski at the Bulgarian Art Academy in Sofia; and Nikola Martinoski at the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest. As Macedonian nationalism matured through the 1920s and early 1930s, these and other artists took responsibility for defining and creating an appropriate ethnic visual culture. Within the context of a backward region and demoralized people, however, many of whom sought integration into rather than separation from the prevailing political and cultural structures, it was necessary to justify a Macedonian national painting style. To this end, numerous articles were published in journals, especially in the periodical *Vardar*. Martinoski was the author of several such arguments, contending that only through a combination of traditional (by which he meant primarily Macedonian medieval) sources

with the guiding force of contemporary painters in Paris and Berlin could a meaningful modern, Macedonian art be created. His own early experiments with expressionism were an attempt to break free of the confining academic tradition he had experienced in Bucharest and at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris. Returning to Yugoslavia, he soon became a principal figure in the Oblik group⁶⁰ and participated in numerous exhibitions in Belgrade, Skopje, and abroad. The ways in which Martinoski served as an apologist both for modern art in general and for a singular Macedonian modernism in particular are evident through a comparison of works from the 1930s. In his depiction of a Skopje brothel (see Plate 29) is revealed the influence of the Parisian demimonde – themes he had appreciated in the art of Moïse Kisling, Chaim Soutine, André Derain, Amedeo Modigliani, Pablo Picasso, and Jules Pascin – and especially the strident expressionism created in Germany and promoted in Berlin. From both sources he derived a style primitivist in its use of harsh color juxtaposition, deep diagonal spatial recession, and vigorous brushstrokes. The avoidance of local color in favor of a strikingly thick application of often pure pigment was doubtless calculated to complement the expressive physiognomies. A painting that attests to the vital spirit and authentic character of its artist, *Brothel* must be recognized as a conscious challenge to the conservative guardians of the status quo.⁶¹

But Martinoski also painted with the perceived needs of nationalism firmly in mind. Invoking medieval Macedonian religious painting, especially its distinguished fresco tradition (significantly recorded both photographically and in paint by Shoilev), Martinoski represented Mary and Jesus as a local peasant mother and child (Fig. 299). The figures, in no manner ennobled, reflect clearly the naturalism that pervaded most phases of the painter's career (a style congruent with contemporary communist aesthetic theory, in fact).⁶² The heavily worked surface derives from his careful study of various forms of Western expressionism, as do the elongated hands of Mary, recalling in particular the renderings by Oskar Kokoschka so widely imitated among artists of Martinoski's circle. It was the active presence of these progressive figures – artists who represented a variety of styles and orientations – that made Skopje a vital center for contemporary art and politics in the 1920s

and early 1930s (Fig. 300). Figuring also in this context were non-Macedonian artists, many of them disaffected intellectuals from Belgrade and elsewhere in Yugoslavia who migrated to Skopje for both political and artistic reasons. As a consequence, Skopje was never as isolated from such innovative art groups as Zemlja in Zagreb or Život in Belgrade as its location and conditions might suggest. From as early as 1924, when artists associated with the Belgrade-based Lada group exhibited there, through the officially sanctioned South Serbian Exhibition of 1927, to the important presentations of the Oblik group late in the decade, Skopje maintained a notable artistic life. The year 1930 saw the establishment

of the Association of Yugoslav Artists of the Vardar Region as well as the Yefimia Society of the Friends of the Arts, whose purpose was to promote Macedonian culture and to further the visual arts as agents of social change. These institutional efforts helped the artists active in Skopje to remain conversant with developments beyond its borders.

Despite the enlarged perspective, however, progressive art in Macedonia was constrained by the same forces that ultimately imperiled modernism throughout the southern Balkans. The artists' hope to capitalize on the unique geographical, historical, and cultural location of Yugoslavia between the mystical Orient and the rational West – a view most



Figure 299. Nikola Martinoski, *Mother and Child*, undated. Oil on canvas. Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje.

Figure 300. Nikola Martinoski, *Portrait of the Journalist Rastko Purić*, 1934. Oil on canvas. Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje.



strikingly encapsulated in Micić's concept of "barbarogenius" – proved substantially impossible to realize. Instead of leading society into an ideal world modeled on the Europeanization of the Balkans (and the simultaneous Balkanization of western Europe), the southern Slavs were hampered by the political and social institutions of their Eastern traditions. Only for brief periods were Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia able to partake of the spiritual vitality of the West, and then primarily on canvas rather than on the ground of political reality. Their creative blend of local reference and international styles – impressionism, expressionism, and constructivism, among others – was always a compromise between competing directions and self-definitions.

Ultimately, the disparity between the artists' ambitions and the realities of the region led to a general suspicion of advanced styles by their contemporaries and their respective royal governments. Thus, for example, Slovenia's discomfort with constructivism, Croatia's resistance to Zenitism, Serbia's disquiet regarding surrealism, and Macedonia's suspicion of abstraction attest to the challenges that modern art faced in a region uncertain of its place in the modern world and persistently unsettled by its history. In this turbulent environment – and hindered by the dictatorial policies advanced by governments throughout the Balkans – the advocates of modernism were compelled to subordinate their aesthetic experimentation with Western styles and radical claims to the

popular demand for a local iconography and subject matter rendered generally with a conservative regard for figurative styles. In light of the enhanced attachment to native reference and regressive means,

modern artists in the southern Balkans were faced with the same fateful choice that confronted their colleagues in capitals both East and West: accommodation or exile.

ROMANIA'S MODERN ART differs from that of other Balkan countries where modernism was a principal vehicle for the development and expression of national identity. Relative to Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia, Romania* was unburdened with defining for the nation its unique history and enduring values. At the same time, the inhabitants of the core Romanian provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia (known historically as the Regat, or Danubian Principalities) had for centuries celebrated what they understood as their unique nature: a Latin nation adhering to an Eastern Orthodox religious rite, a Western nation by language and ethnic heritage located in an Oriental world of Slavs, Turks, and Magyars. Romanians of all strata subscribed to this belief in their national singularity as "Europeans" living in an Eastern environment whose habits, customs, and mores they purported to reject but for the most part accepted. Such disparity between cultural aspiration and geopolitical reality endowed Romania with one of Europe's most troubled modern histories as well as with some of the most potent modernist imagery.

Five years after the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were combined in 1861, each remaining a tributary state of the Ottoman sultan, Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was named as the first prince of the United Principalities.¹ In 1881, as an indirect consequence of the Treaty of Berlin, which

granted it independence,² Romania was elevated to a kingdom, with Karl acceding to the throne. Having no heirs, King Karl was succeeded by his Hohenzollern nephew, Ferdinand, who from October 1914 continued the active royal encouragement of economic development and cultural sponsorship.³ Before turning to a consideration of the modern art created in the Romanian kingdom, mention must be made of those provinces outside the Regat that contained large numbers of ethnic Romanians: Bessarabia and especially Transylvania were regarded obsessively by Romanian irredentists not least because they were cradles of Romanian cultural identity and artistic accomplishment (see Map 6).⁴

Few places in southeastern Europe have had a more diverse ethnic mix than Transylvania. Enjoying a long and distinguished history as a region of highly developed multiculturalism, Transylvania was home to significant populations of German-speaking ("Saxon") merchants and smallholders, Magyar-speaking Szekler craftsmen and farmers,⁵ Hungarian town-centered professionals and county magnates, and Romanians – the last mostly poor and uneducated peasants. Although Romanians constituted the majority of inhabitants, they were not recognized by the special Habsburg chancellery in Vienna charged with oversight of Transylvania.⁶ Even the limited provincial rights of the Szeklers and Saxons were eroded (especially in the cultural sphere) after 1848, when Hungary proclaimed Transylvania as integral to its kingdom – and more so after the *Ausgleich* (compromise) of 1867.⁷ As Vienna deferred to Hungarian authority over internal affairs in Transylvania, the government in Budapest passed laws mandating the preeminence of Hungarian in educa-

* This study follows Romania's own modern convention in referring to itself and its culture as Romania (România) and Romanian (Românești), respectively, rather than employing the customary English usage of Rumania and Rumanian.

tion, administration, and commerce. All Transylvanians, especially Romanians, were strongly encouraged to assume Hungarian names and accept Hungarian place designations.

With few legal means to oppose the encroaching Magyarization of Transylvania,⁸ the resident Romanians established various cultural committees, the leading one founded in 1861. As its title suggests, the Association for Romanian Literature and the Education of the Romanian People (ASTRA) promoted the development of Romanian poetry and prose and encouraged their appreciation among the emerging middle class. This committee assumed greater importance twenty years later with the founding of the Romanian National Party, which vested in a cultural elite nominal responsibility for the political interests of the Transylvanian Romanians. These efforts to develop, safeguard, and express a Romanian cultural identity within Transylvania never involved more than a modest number of middle-class ethnic Romanians (nearly all Transylvanian Romanians being ill-educated peasants completely absorbed with eking out a subsistence living), and none of the

middle-class political parties or cultural associations was radical in its aspirations. In fact, not a single Romanian organization before the outbreak of World War I clamored for Transylvanian independence or formal union with Regat Romania. Having achieved a higher level of cultural and educational development than their kinfolk in the Regat, the non-Hungarian Transylvanians desired no more than the status Croatia had negotiated for itself within the Dual Monarchy: the exercise of moderate cultural autonomy and limited political sovereignty.

WESTERN ORIENTATIONS

Roughly contemporaneous with the union of the two Danubian principalities, art academies were established in the capitals of Iași and Bucharest (in 1860 and 1864, respectively). At first the professors, dependent on (if not always drawn from) the legion of Czech, German, Italian, Swiss, and Hungarian painters active in the Regat, sought to instill a consciousness of the standard European categories of painting – primarily landscapes, still lifes, and genre

Figure 301. Constantin Lecca, *Murder of Michael the Brave*, 1845. Oil on canvas, 124 × 175 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania.





Figure 302. Theodore Aman, *Vlad the Impaler and the Turkish Envoys*, undated. Oil on canvas, 108.8 × 142.5 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania.

scenes – as a counterbalance to Romania’s traditional “primitivist” absorption with portraiture and pictorial ornamentation. At the same time, this first generation of academicians wanted to stimulate a national self-consciousness through the representation of notable events or narratives from Romanian history. The Transylvanian-born Constantin Lecca’s *Murder of Michael the Brave* (the unifier of Wallachia with Moldavia) (Fig. 301) and Theodore Aman’s *Vlad the Impaler and the Turkish Envoys* (Fig. 302) indicate the character of the history painting that was prized at the time.⁹

But it is not only the subject matter that merits attention; painters such as Aman also championed the importance of French stylistic models for Romanian historical scenes, even if the prototypes were poorly understood and awkwardly adapted. The focus on France for an artistic paradigm was part of a Western orientation that would define the modern art created in Romania for the next half century. After preliminary courses in Moldavia and Wallachia – notwithstanding the existence of prominent art schools

there – most aspiring young painters and sculptors were encouraged to finish their education in Munich and Paris.¹⁰ Such a practice reinforced Western inclinations, as is apparent in the example of Nicolae Grigorescu, who became the most accomplished Romanian artist of the later nineteenth century. Coming from a peasant background, Grigorescu began his career by painting icons for the Romanian Orthodox Church and later served as a front-line war correspondent, attached to the High Command, to record the action on the Bulgarian front during the Romanian War of Independence (1877–8) (Fig. 303). After being schooled in the distinctly Romanian context of heroic national events and traditional religious iconography and its corresponding visual style, Grigorescu went to Paris, where he absorbed Barbizon landscape aesthetics and the art of Jean-François Millet, Gustave Courbet, and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. Returning to Romania in 1887, he introduced pleinairism (Fig. 304) and inspired scores of imitators, many of whom emulated his lightness of touch, suppleness of forms, use of long brush-

strokes, and mastery of color. The influence of Grigorescu – as well as that of his younger contemporary, Ion Andreescu, which codified French formal techniques (Fig. 305) – dominated late-nineteenth-century art in Romania and affected, in varying ways, all later movements of modernism there.

The visual authority of Grigorescu and Andreescu is evident in the next generation of Romanian progressive painters, which included Ștefan Luchian, Gheorghe Petrașcu, Theodor Pallady, and the group of painters and sculptors known under the rubric of *Cei patru* (the Four): Nicolae Tonitza, Francisc Șirato, Ștefan Dimitrescu, and Oscar Han. All these figures first studied in Romania and later traveled to Munich and/or Paris, where they were exposed not only to impressionism and postimpressionism but also to Secessionism, symbolism, and art nouveau. The older members of this cadre of French-oriented progressives participated in the epochal Independent Artists' Exhibition of 1896.¹¹ Held in Bucharest, the exhibition was the manifestation of a newly formed Society of Independent Artists, which, as in so many cultural capitals of east-central and southeastern Europe, protested the standards of the official Salon, widely repudiated as artistically moribund. The Romanian society – not unlike related organizations in Vienna, Budapest, Ljubljana, Munich, Zagreb, Bel-

grade, and elsewhere – published in 1898 a review, *Ileana*, that gave “a new impetus to the arts in Romania.” Although it avoided the fiery rhetoric that would soon become common copy for the vanguard periodicals, *Ileana* was a clarion call for a vigorous (Secessionist) aesthetics prompting Romania to attain international recognition as a nation with a modern culture. It was this impetus that gave rise to a flourishing avant-garde.

That the Western (primarily French) training, techniques, and orientation Romania's modern artists favored eclipsed for so long the artistic conventions of the modest Romanian tradition – itself mainly the work of foreign artists – was a critical defining factor. As distinct from the more common Balkan practice of appropriating and adapting Western styles as a vehicle for the representation of national subject matter or the articulation of an explicitly national cultural identity, Romania's early modern artists became, in essence, the representatives of French aesthetics in the Orient. Their uncritical enthusiasm for wide-ranging pictorial styles and philosophies – from Barbizon through art nouveau – foreclosed the possibility of any one national mode of expression. Thus – unlike the Slovenian impressionism of Richard Jakopič or the Serbian impressionism of the Lada group, for example – the pleinairism of Grigor-

Figure 303. Nicolae Grigorescu, study for *The Attack at Smârdan*, undated. Oil on canvas, 75.5 × 142 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania.



Figure 304. Nicolae Grigorescu, *Girls Spinning at the Gate*, undated. Oil on canvas, 43 × 63 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania.



Figure 305. Ion Andreescu, *The Village Well*, undated. Oil on canvas, 37.5 × 46 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania.



escu and the gentle realism of Luchian never crystallized into a Romanian school, movement, or national idiom. Even as these styles were adopted by the country's most accomplished painters, they were always recognized as essentially foreign (French), and indeed, that was a dimension of their great appeal: Romanian art became validated more through its assimilation than through its transformation of progressive modes from abroad.

EASTERN REALITIES

Despite considerable efforts to industrialize, Romania remained during the early years of the twentieth century a predominantly agricultural nation with an impoverished, restive peasantry. The government had taken action to ameliorate the depressing conditions in the countryside – conditions that were widely known to the nation's leadership, many of whom maintained direct connections to their rural proper-

ties.¹² Nevertheless, in 1907 a large-scale peasant rebellion broke out in Moldavia, much to the shock of the urban middle class and of the government, which suppressed the uprising by extreme force. The magnitude of the violence that ensued – tens of thousands killed, maimed, and uprooted – shook the confidence of Romania and brought into question its pretensions to be a Western, Latin country on the periphery of Europe. For those who cherished the notion of an emerging cosmopolitan society, the peasant rebellion challenged both the stability of the state and the fundamental precepts of the culture. That the revolt was concentrated against the Jewish stewards of the great estates gave it an anti-Semitic cast that was profoundly unsettling to the conservative bureaucracy and landowners and those who saw themselves as cultural custodians. This aspect of the 1907 revolt led at first to a regressive attitude among many – including large numbers of underpaid classicists, historians, and lawyers who composed the nation's overstuffed bureaucracy – who had previously encouraged, supported, and endorsed Romania's turn to the West during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. (Indeed, Romanian art of the first decade of the twentieth century was, for the most part, ossified in a fin-de-siècle preoccupation with plein air effects in landscapes, intimist representations of domestic interiors, and realist portraiture.)¹³ But a backlash soon followed, with an avant-garde populated by the very artists whom the conservative Romanians excoriated for their "foreignness": Germans, Macedonians, and especially Hungarians, many of whom were Jewish.¹⁴ These "pseudo-Romanians," as they would later be designated, advocated a culture whose very experimental and cosmopolitan cast would affirm their outsider status while simultaneously making Bucharest an international capital of modernism.

In the years immediately preceding World War I, there arose several modernist reviews and "little magazines" – the voice of a young generation that had low tolerance for what it perceived as the stasis and rigidity of the prevailing cultural values.¹⁵ Among the first, founded in 1912, was *Simbolul* (Symbol), whose editors included S. Samyro, soon to become famous as Tristan Tzara (1896–1963); Ion Iovanaki, later to be known under the pen name of Ion Vinea (1895–1964); and Marcel Janco (Iancu), an adolescent painter-editor who provided the illustrations and layout for the journal. The enthusiasm

of these young men – all in their teens – must have been enormously persuasive; their magazine included contributions by some of Romania's most established symbolist poets, writers, and artists. When for reasons of economics, inexperience, or lack of sustained interest, *Simbolul* ceased publication after four issues (from 25 October to 25 December 1912), Tzara and Vinea had sufficient reserves of energy to found another progressive journal, *Chemarea* (Call) in 1915. Anticipating the daring posture that Tzara (with Janco) would share with Europe under the name *dadaism*, he exhorted his contemporaries in the fourth issue to replace pencils with knives and substitute for the customary editorial conventions a collection of weapons with which to bomb bourgeois chimneys (hearths). Tzara's own poems, published in issues of *Noua Revistă Română* during the editorship of Vinea in 1915, are further manifestations of an aesthetic stance we can only define as *dada avant la lettre* – a creative expression of artistic play and impious wit presented publicly well before it was paraded onstage at Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire in 1916.¹⁶

The assault on rationality and conventional aesthetic expectations mounted by Janco, Tzara, and Vinea could have been possible only under the conditions of ambivalence that described Romania in 1914 and 1915. While the world around it was mired in war, Romania remained for the moment in an undefined (only temporarily enviable) position as a nonparticipatory ally of Germany and active collaborator with Russia and France.¹⁷ As both sides coveted its abundant natural resources of oil and wheat, Romania would declare allegiance to the higher bidder. The Central Powers promised Romania Bessarabia and Bukovina, while the Allies offered Transylvania, the Banat, and a large part of purely Magyar Hungary. In late summer 1916, two years after the war commenced in the Balkans, Romania renounced its treaty with Germany and joined the conflict on the side of Russia and the Allies.¹⁸ Soon after entering Romanian-inhabited Habsburg Transylvania, Romania's large armies were overwhelmed; its forces in the Dobrudja simultaneously fell before the Bulgarians and Turks; and within weeks Bucharest capitulated before the Central Powers whose overtures Romania had so recently rejected. Like Russia, Romania was forced to sign with Germany in 1918 a humiliating treaty stipulating withdrawal from the war and retrocession of its material resources. Depressed and reduced, its mili-

tary forces held back until on 10 November 1918, a week after the Habsburg armies had surrendered and the day before Germany agreed to an armistice ending the Great War, Romania reentered the conflict and began seizing the territory of the vanquished Austro-Hungarian Empire and its Bulgarian confederates. The rewards for this brief and inglorious participation in World War I were considerable: To the Danubian Principalities of the Regat were now joined by treaty not only the eastern Banat and all of Transylvania, originally promised by the Allies, but much of Bukovina and all of Bessarabia, initially pledged as an incentive by the Central Powers.¹⁹ The various treaties that codified the peace brought Romania the greatest territorial aggrandizement in the entire peninsula. Its newly won provinces also created a nationality problem: almost two million disaffected Hungarians and hundreds of thousands of disappointed Germans living in Transylvania became subject to Bucharest, as did some two hundred thousand (mostly Jewish) Ukrainians and Russians of Bukovina and Bessarabia and tens of thousands of Dobrudjan Bulgarians. Indeed, Greater Romania inherited with the expanded territories a commensurately large and restive new minority population; just under a third of Bucharest's subjects were non-Romanians whose allegiance to Greater Romania might be questioned. With their presence the "foreignness" that had long characterized Romanian culture would take on a new dimension during the 1920s, when the avant-garde reached its maturity.²⁰

For many urban dwellers the third decade of the century was prosperous. Bucharest saw an efflorescence of new buildings, great numbers of which were in the international style.²¹ Returning to that city (and, to a lesser extent, to Iași) were many of the avant-garde poets, painters, sculptors, and designers who had left the country during the war years; between 1921 and 1924, Janco, Max Herman Maxy, Corneliu Michăilescu, Hans Mattis-Teutsch, and Mița Petrașcu, for example, left France, Germany, and Switzerland to resume their lives in Romania, joining Victor Brauner and many others who would constitute the avant-garde. The agent and focus of Romanian modernism at this time was the journal *Contimporanul* (Present Time), under the editorship of Janco and Vinea. In the first years of its decade-long existence, the periodical served as the organ of progressive aesthetics and engaged dissent.²² It pointed its "glistening pure steel sword of construc-



Figure 306. Marcel Janco, print from original xylograph for *Contimporanul* 2, no. 26, January 1923.

tive criticism"²³ at all that stood in the way of the emergence of a modern, vital, and creative culture, especially the corruption and persecution that was rampant in most aspects of Romanian society and all levels of government. Prominent in the early issues were the charged illustrations and satirical drawings of Janco, many executed in an expressionist style based on an active line that both describes the often distorted figures and energizes them (Fig. 306). In issue number 2, for example, published in January 1923, is an expressionist illustration to accompany a scathing censure of "the government [taking] measures to ensure domestic order," in which Janco depicted a tightly bound figure in the hands of the authorities. This imagery was undoubtedly a comment on the social limitations under which Romania's national minorities chafed. For the artist and many of his coreligionists within the avant-garde, the condition of the Jews in contemporary Romania was a perpetual concern.²⁴ Frustrated in their attempts to integrate themselves into their society and excluded from the culture reserved for "true citizens," many Jewish artists chose this form of rebellion against the prevailing social at-

titudes, governmental practices, and aesthetic conventions of orthodox Romania.

Significantly, few of the drawings in these early issues can be described as abstract;²⁵ Janco's published work corresponds to the more modest modernism of canvases he exhibited in his first one-man show in Romania. Held in Bucharest's Artists' Union in the closing days of 1922, the displayed works were not all contemporary paintings and graphics. Many dated from the years 1912–15 – that is, before Janco journeyed abroad into the international avant-garde. As a result, there is but slight manifestation of nonfigurative abstraction present in either the journal or the exhibition, almost as if Janco intentionally avoided presenting the type and quality of work that he himself demanded and had indeed already created. His restrained modernist idiom in these examples lacks the visual power and aesthetic challenge for which his earlier dada work (in Switzerland) had effectively prepared him. The very fact of Romania's having produced a mild form of proto-dadaism²⁶ might have led Janco and his fellow editors and advocates to believe that the country was as yet unready for or unreceptive to abstraction. But such an argument is vitiated by the active presence and appreciation – in the Romanian Transylvanian city of Braşov – of Hans Mattis-Teutsch, whose lyrical near-abstract works had been collected since 1918 and would play a central role in the *Contimporanul* group (known also as the New Art group) and in the Romanian avant-garde in general.²⁷

Other features of *Contimporanul's* early issues are translations of selected avant-garde manifestos,²⁸ reviews on contemporary developments, and Janco's own articles, which include a discussion of abstract art if not illustrations of it. The editors also maintained a highly productive contact with the leading European avant-garde journals of the day.²⁹ Their "Activist Manifesto to the Young," published in May 1924 (vol. 3, no. 46), finally moved *Contimporanul* to the forefront of radical poetics and committed aesthetics. Opening with a ringing challenge, the manifesto revives the disdain of futurism and the creative anarchy of dadaism:

Down with Art – for it has prostituted itself!
Poetry is no more than a press to squeeze the lachrymal glands of the girls of any age. . . .
Drama: a jar full of painted foetuses;
Painting: nature's diaper, hung in the job-exchange of a Salon. . . .
Sculpture: the science of fondling buttocks;



Figure 307. Marcel Janco, *Volumetric Architectonic Composition* for *Contimporanul* 3, no. 46, May(?) 1924.

Architecture: an enterprise for building gaudy mausoleums;
Politics: the pursuit of undertakers and middlemen. . . .

WE WANT the miracle of the word, new and whole by itself; the plastic expression, pointed and quick, of the Morse telegraphs. . . .

We want the fine arts to be free from sentimentalism . . . an expression of pure forms and colors related to themselves. . . .

Romania is being built today.

Despite the perplexed political parties, we enter into the great industrial-activist stage. . . .

Let us destroy, through the strength of disseminated disgust, the ghosts cowering under light.

Let us dispatch our dead!³⁰

CONTIMPORANUL



Figure 308. Marcel Janco, *Composition for Contimporanul* 3, no. 46, May(?) 1924.

This clarion call to reject the past in favor of the dynamism of the new was supported by the Romanian veterans returning from avant-garde skirmishes in Budapest, Paris, and Berlin (among them, Mattis-Teutsch, Petrașcu, and Maxy). In their animated company, charged by their recent contact with the most progressive trends of the West, Janco abandoned his prolonged flirtation with expressionism for constructivism.³¹ By mid-1924 he had articulated a new “plastic alphabet” (announced in *Contimporanul* 3, no. 47, September), employing constructivist-derived geometric forms to create purely abstract, often architectonic, formal relations (Fig. 307). In *Contimporanul*’s international exhibition held between 30 November and 30 December 1924 at Bucharest’s hall of the Artists’ Union, in which almost the entire Romanian avant-garde par-

ticipated for the first time,³² Janco publicly revealed a lyrical dimension to his fundamentally constructivist compositions. Eschewing the ideologically charged geometric abstraction of his colleagues in Germany, Holland, Hungary, and Russia – what the exhibition reviewer for *Contimporanul* (nos. 51–2) described as the “cold mechanism” of Western and Russian constructivism – Janco produced a melodious geometrization more consistent with his own (and Romania’s) character (Fig. 308). (This is not to imply that he abjured theory altogether in his work; aesthetic philosophizing was channeled increasingly into his writings on and commissions for international-style architecture and design.)³³

The emphasis on pure form as an expressive vehicle and as an affirmation of modernity was evident also in the canvases exhibited by Arthur Segal,³⁴

who sent from his home in Berlin both abstract and figurative works (Fig. 309; see Plate 30). Almost all his displayed paintings reveal brilliance of color, richness of surface texture, and preoccupation with prismatic effects. From still lifes to portraits, Segal's canvases evince a softness of edge and mottled surfaces that – despite his frequent use of saturated yellows, oranges, and blues – depart from the cold precision and mechanical exactness so common among contemporaneous constructivist “artist-engineers” in Europe and the United States. The remarkable sensitivity to color patterning in his still lifes, combined with the painter's frequent transgression of the picture support to make the frame part of the object – reprising in painting Constantin Brâncuși's incorporation of the base/support into the sculpture³⁵ – won for him a respected position among the avant-garde in Bucharest as well as Berlin. That Segal was invited to participate in the Romanian capital's exposi-

tion of 1924 was probably attributable in large part to the common ethnic background and Romanian experiences shared with Maxy, the exhibition's principal organizer and a member of *Contimporanul's* editorial board. The artists' relationship had been reinforced by their collaboration in Berlin, which by 1922 was widely recognized as the crossroads of the international avant-garde.

For Maxy, a former student in Bucharest of the politicized realism of Camil Ressu and Josef Iser and an autodidact of cubism, futurism, rayonnism, and suprematism, Berlin offered direct exposure to the dynamism of advanced art. Maxy exploited this opportunity fully: He sought association with the Novembergruppe of German (and eastern European) left-leaning artists, architects, and sculptors while he pursued contact with Herwarth Walden, the impresario of the avant-garde in the German capital.³⁶ In 1922 Maxy's efforts were rewarded by exhibitions of

Figure 309. Arthur Segal, *Bridge* (with painted frame), 1921. Oil on canvas, 71 × 91 cm. Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection. (From *Arthur Segal, 1875–1944*, exh. cat., Cologne, 1987.)

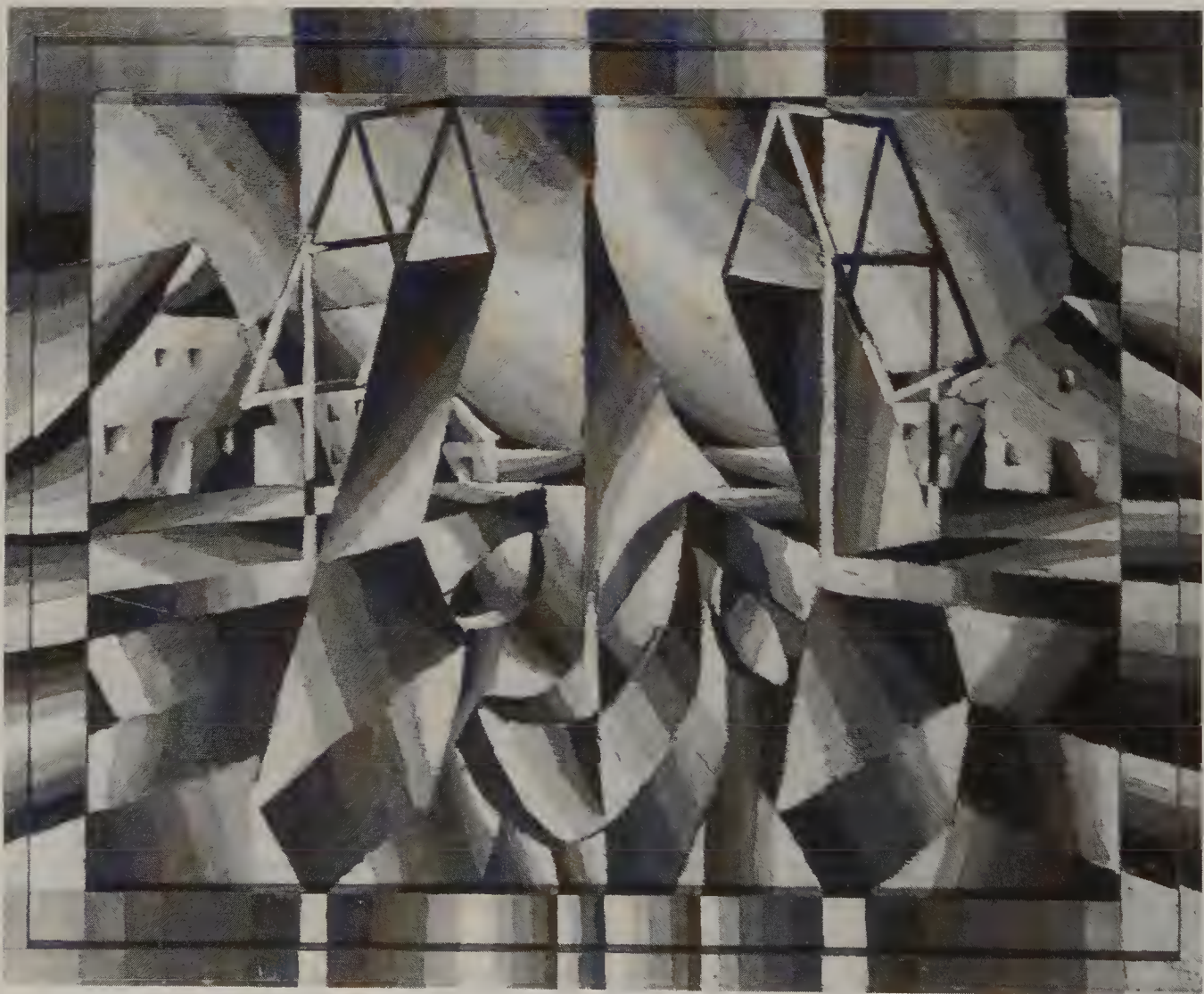




Figure 310. Max Herman Maxy, *Still Life*, undated. Oil on canvas, 80 × 69 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. (From *Bucharest in the 1920s–1940s between Avant-Garde and Modernism*, exh. cat., Bucharest, 1994.)

his new paintings in the rooms of the Novembergruppe and in Walden's renowned Galerie der Sturm (Fig. 310; see Plate 31). Like Segal, Maxy preferred the traditional genre categories for painting – in particular, still lifes, portraits, and townscapes. These he rendered in vibrant hues, indebted as much to the color intensity of Franz Marc as to the jewellike brilliance of Segal. In their compositional structure the canvases of 1922 are explicitly “prismatic,” relying on a fundamentally cubist vocabulary of faceted, shallow forms to organize the surface and describe objects, figures, and even spaces. Unlike his Romanian compatriot in Berlin, however, Maxy emphasized the sharp edges of forms and used modeling with white highlights, less to suggest volume than to distinguish one form from another. At times this practice yields an almost kaleidoscopic effect, as in the 1922 *Nude with a Veil* (Fig. 311), in which the figure of the cloak-draped woman virtually fragments into a loosely grouped network of color “shards.”

After his return to Bucharest in 1923, Maxy demonstrated a more confident control of cubist patterning and color harmony. His experience with collage, garnered through contacts with avant-garde artists in Berlin, had trained him to organize the picture plane architecturally. In these instances the painter worked as if designing a structure whose careful buildup of blocks of color, orchestration of textured surfaces, and rigorous armature of diagonals results fortuitously in a depiction of the Madonna and Child (see Plate 32). More playful, and more daring in their aesthetic experimentation, are his portraits, several of which were exhibited to striking effect in the 1924 *Contimporanul* exhibition. Maxy's likeness of the progressive Jewish writer, Ion Călugăru (Fig. 312) is, in this context, a pivotal work. The geometrization of the sitter's head, especially its patches of green, serves as a tribute to Henri Matisse, Albert Gleizes, and the modernist masters whose work Maxy had studied in Romania, mostly through re-



Figure 311. Max Herman Maxy, *Nude with a Veil*, 1922. Oil on canvas. (Courtesy of Liane Maxy and the National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.)

production. The torso, though, with its broken areas of reds, thick layers of greens and blues, and suppressed geometric structure, affirms his interest in expressive effects and delight in the application of pigment. These characteristics are evident also in a portrait of Tristan Tzara (see Plate 33) in which Maxy added a pronounced whimsical note to the depiction of his fellow modernist. The jarring contrast of hues – the purplish-brown, red-orange, and violet of the background and the greens, pinks, yellow, and reds of the figure – conspires to create a field of colored forms out of which emerges, somewhat unexpectedly, the bifurcated and monocled physiognomy of the dada poet.

The constructivist compositional elements Maxy introduced to modernist aesthetics were an enrichment of the essentially dada-inspired earlier phases of the Romanian avant-garde. Such forms were becoming ever more acceptable to vanguard artists and their poet-advocates in Bucharest. Moreover, the innovative works he showed in the 1924 international exhibition – with their mix of constructivism, synchronic colorism, futurism, and expressionism – served to acquaint the Romanian public with the wide array of progressive approaches in the Western market and taught in the new art schools.³⁷ Although presented through conventional genres, Maxy's paintings of the first half of the 1920s typi-

Figure 312. Max Herman Maxy, *Portrait of Ion Călugăru*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 60 × 40 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. (From *Bucharest in the 1920s–1940s between Avant-Garde and Modernism*, exh. cat., Bucharest, 1994.)



cally exhibited an overly rich combination of avant-garde styles. They were pictures calculated to define a new image of Romania's modern art, one that would bring it up to date with other progressive movements on the European continent. To render still more visible this objective of international aesthetic parity, Maxy invited a rather well-established colleague to exhibit in Bucharest his lyrically abstract – and profoundly European – paintings and sculpture.

Hans Mattis-Teutsch was a classic embodiment of the "foreignness" that constituted the core of Romanian modernist art. Born into a German-speaking family in a Magyar-dominated region of Transylva-

nia, he studied art first in Budapest and then at the Bavarian Royal Academy in Munich. By 1906 he had moved to Paris, where he spent almost two years before returning to his native Braşov and there maintaining well into the 1920s strong links to Hungarian Aktivism, German expressionism, and Russian modernism. Deeply philosophical, Mattis-Teutsch came early to the theories of Wassily Kandinsky, especially those in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, which exercised a profound and lasting influence.³⁸ Equally affecting was his contact with Franz Marc, whose expressionism he adapted in the structure, color, and emotional resonance of his numerous landscapes and abstract compositions (Figs. 313,



Figure 313. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Untitled*, undated. Szekler National Museum in Sfântu Gheorghe.

314; see Plate 34). For Mattis-Teutsch modernist art had an essential role to play in sensitizing viewers to the inner nature of being – a philosophy of art and life he codified in *The Ideology of Art*, a book written in Romania and published in Germany years later.³⁹ His long series of “spiritual flowers” (1919–ca. 1924) perhaps best incarnates his vision of the dynamic rhythms flowing through nature as well as his technical skill at subtle juxtapositions of color tonalities for emotional effect. The attenuated wood and cast-metal pieces Mattis-Teutsch made during the period are three-dimensional extensions of his graphic work, while his carved and painted “block” sculpture (Fig. 315) blossoms from the “spiritual flowers” (Fig. 316) in oil and watercolor.

In the early 1920s, certainly by the time he exhibited with the Contimporanul group (1924), Mattis-Teutsch introduced a lyrical form of constructivism to the emotionally charged natural abstraction of his earlier work. In canvases, works on paper, and sculpture (Fig. 317; see Plate 35), the artist reconciled a geometrization of figural forms with a palette that remains fundamentally indebted to the expressionism he first absorbed in Munich and elaborated in Paris, Budapest, and Braşov. Yet these later pieces show a growing awareness of the work of his Romanian colleagues, especially Maxy’s effective blend of geometry and expressionist effects (see Fig. 312). They demonstrate also that Mattis-Teutsch had be-



Figure 314. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Composition*, undated. Private collection.



Plate 33. Max Herman Maxy, *Portrait of Tristan Tzara*, 1924.
Oil on cardboard, 65 × 53.5 cm. National Museum of Art of
Romania, Bucharest.



Plate 34. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Composition in Yellow*, 1916–24. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.



Plate 35. Hans Matisse-Teutsch, *Composition*, ca. 1924. Oil on cardboard, 34.3 × 27.5 cm. Private collection.

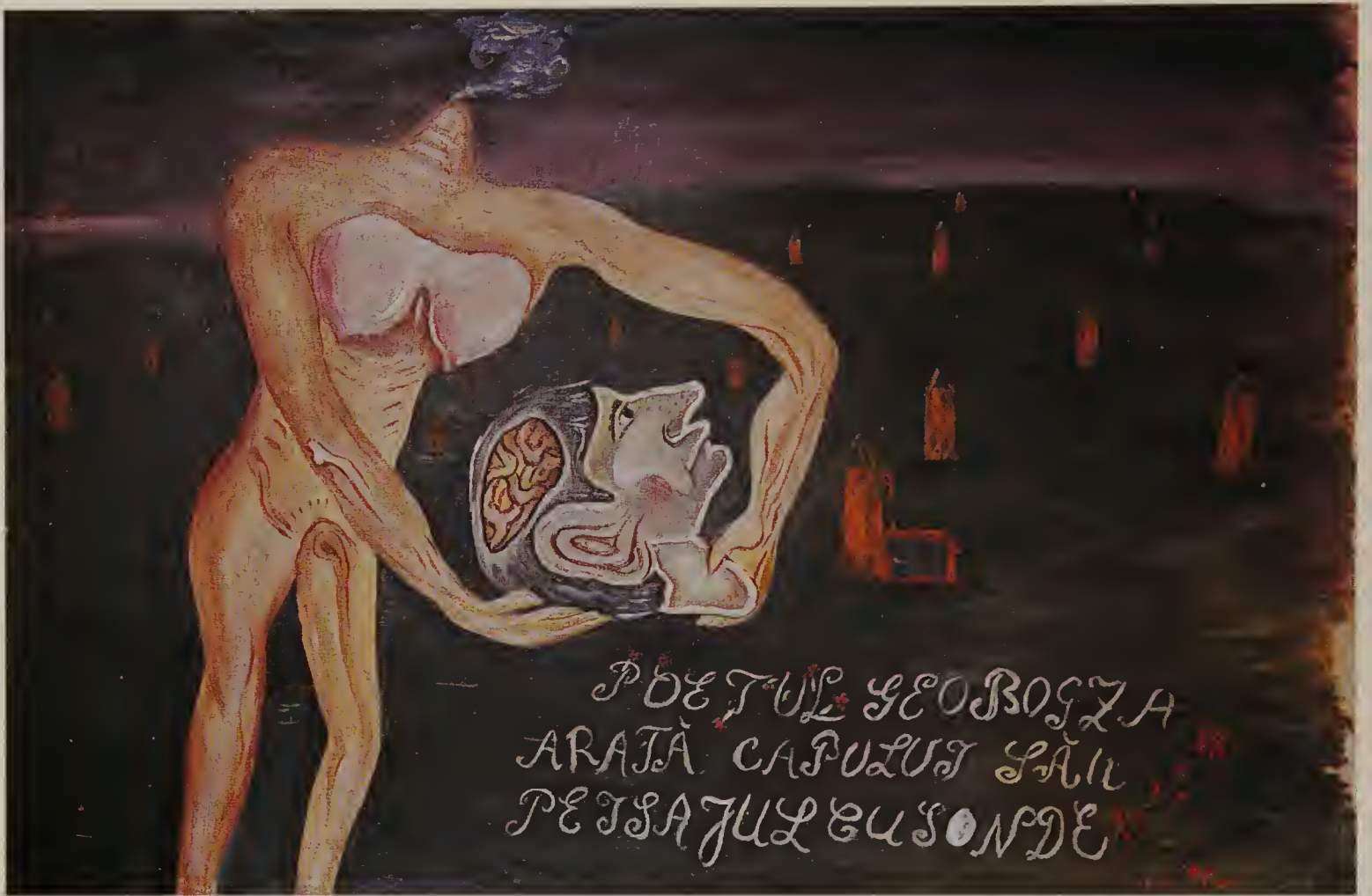


Plate 36. Victor Brauner, *The Poet Geo Bogza Shows His Head the Landscape Populated with Derricks*, 1930. Oil on canvas? Private collection.



Plate 37. János Vaszary, *Golden Age*, 1896. Oil on canvas, 92.5 × 155 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

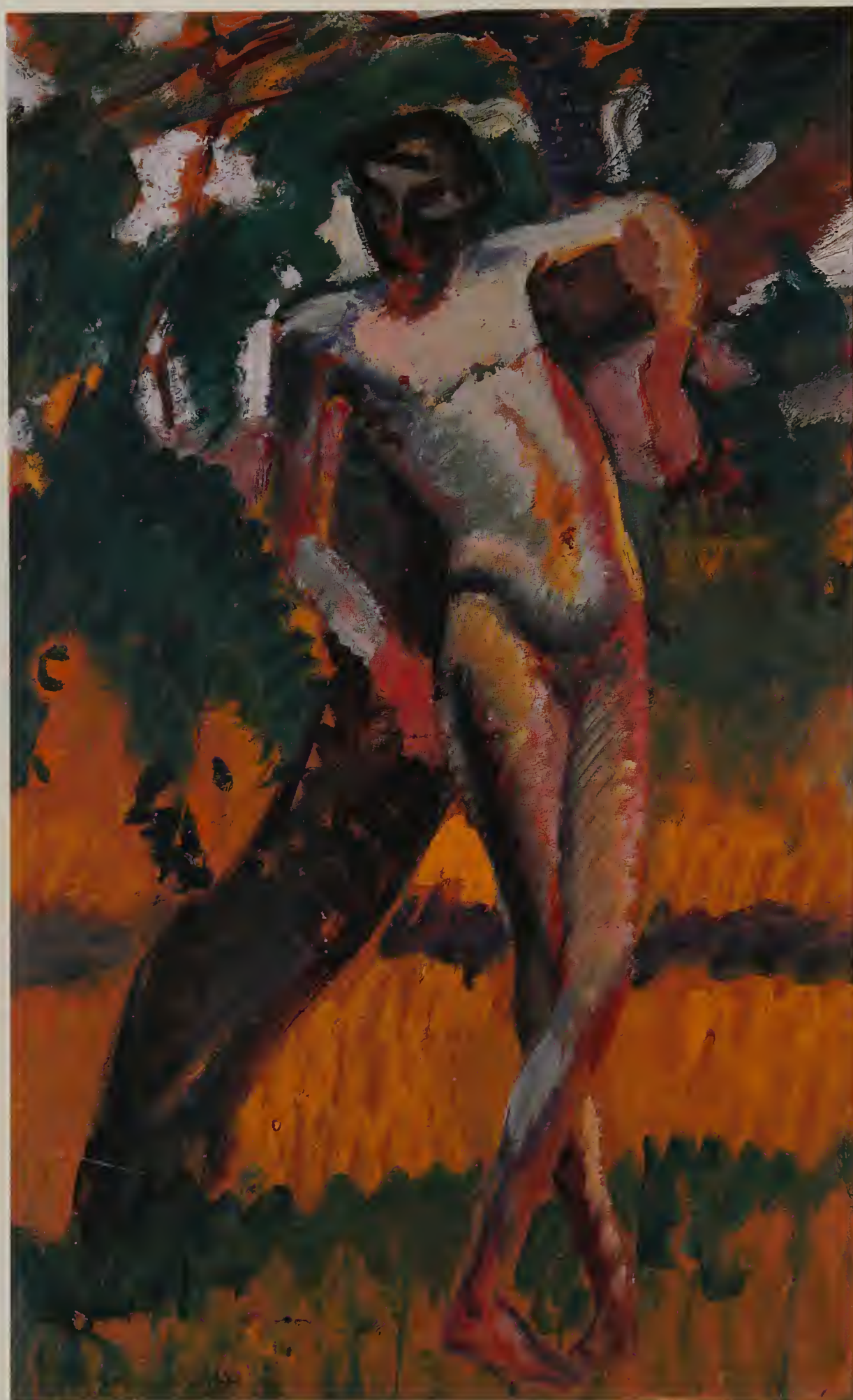


Plate 38. Károly Kernstok, *Nude Boy Leaning against a Tree*, 1911. Oil on paper, 66 × 44 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Plate 39. József Nemes Lampérth, *Self-Portrait*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 75 × 60 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Plate 40. József Nemes Lampérth, *Standing Nude (back)*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 128 × 77 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Plate 41. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Landscape*, ca. 1912–14. Watercolor, 25 × 34 cm. City Museum, Brassóv (Braşov).



Plate 42. Sándor Bortnyik, *Composition with Six Figures*, 1918.
Oil on canvas, 75.5 × 95.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery,
Budapest.



Plate 43. Bertalan Pór, *Workers of the World, Unite!*, 1919. Lithograph, 244.5 × 185 cm. (formerly) Museum of the Modern Age, Budapest.



Plate 44. Lajos Tihanyi, *Man at a Window in Schöneberg, Berlin*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 140 × 106.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Plate 45. Hugó Scheiber, *Theater Interior*, undated. Gouache on paper, 66 × 54 cm. Private collection, Switzerland.



Plate 46. Sándor Bortnyik, *The New Adam*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 48 × 38 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Plate 47. Hugó Scheiber, *Portrait of Lajos Kassák*, ca. 1930.
Pastel on paper, 54.6 × 44.1 cm. Private collection, United States.



Plate 48. Róbert Berény, *Modiano*, ca. 1927. Lithograph, 124.5 × 94 cm. (formerly) Hungarian Advertising Agency Archives, Budapest.



Figure 315. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Painted Sculpture*, ca. 1922-3. Plaster, 20 cm high. Private collection, Braşov.

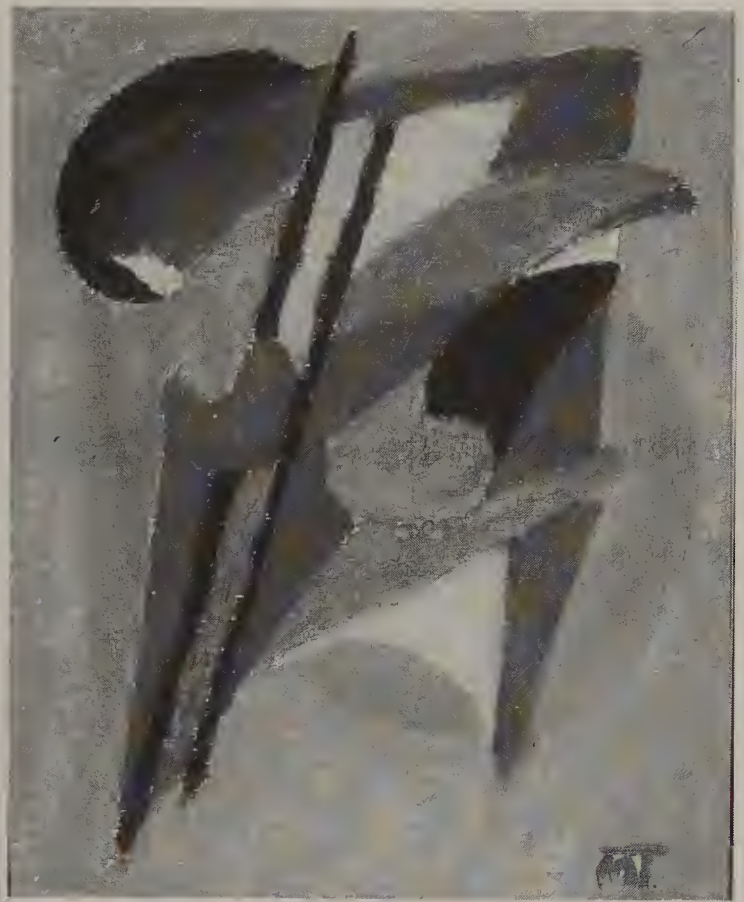


Figure 316 (top right). Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Spiritual Flowers*, ca. 1923. Oil on cardboard, 36 × 29 cm. Private collection, Switzerland.



Figure 317 (bottom right). Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Composition/ Standing Figure*, undated. Wood, 23.5 cm high. Private collection.

gun to embrace the generalized socialist ideology that informed the outlook of the Romanian avant-garde.⁴⁰ *Composition with Flag*, a painting now in the municipal museum in Braşov, relies on a triangular structural foundation that fixes the abstractly attenuated figure firmly to the earth, his hips bracketed by a red square of Kazimir Malevich's utopian suprematism, which, in turn, is surrounded by an orange-red circle/sphere of El Lissitzky's socialism.⁴¹ In an image from slightly later, *Physical and Intellectual Laborers* (Fig. 318), Mattis-Teutsch brought to earth the heaven-gazing intellectualized figures (rendered in "philosophical blue") by virtue of the downward-driving medial section that contains the earthen red physical workers. The use of "spiritual" colors, geometrized forms, and lyrically attenuated figures attests to the range of visual vocabulary effectively developed in Romania to communicate the partisan message of the international avant-garde.

The power of *Contimporanul* to generate interest in and recruits for the Romanian vanguard stimulated the creation of like-minded radical journals. Within months of the appearance of *Contimporanul's* "Activist Manifesto" addressed to Romania's youth, and in the throes of preparing for its first international exhibition, the poet Ilarie Voronca (1903–46) and the painter Victor Brauner, both twenty-one, brought out under their joint editorship the iconoclastic pages of *75 HP* (meaning horsepower, as in the 75-horsepower automobile the Romanians admired) (Fig. 319).⁴² A direct challenge to *Contimporanul's* preeminence within the progressive circles of Bucharest and abroad, *75 HP* was instantly characterized by Janco, one of its first champions, as a "dissident *fronde*." Brauner and Janco responded that they and the band of radical poets and artists they planned to recruit were "the only avant-garde group in Romania."⁴³ Both aesthetically and practically, *75 HP's* objectives and programs differed considerably from those of *Contimporanul*. Voronca and Brauner announced in the modernistic "Aviogram" that served as their manifesto that "laxative formalities" were to be bypassed in favor of reinventing reality according to the principles of modern experience and technology.⁴⁴ The editors of *75 HP* disparaged the *Contimporanul* group as beginning to ring hollow in its aspiration to become the institution of modernism in Romania. By contrast, *75 HP* pledged that "[whenever] what we do becomes a formula, we shall relinquish it." Proclaiming themselves per-

petual innovators, the artists of *75 HP* reveled in belated dadaist rebellion and pugnaciously celebrated an assault on all conventions, including *Contimporanul's* modernist ones. Enraged by the rampant political corruption of the government and disillusioned by the flaccid attempts of the country's cultural leaders to combat it, *75 HP* decried modern literature as "the best toilet paper of the century"; it denounced traditional painting as "the end result of masturbating with tubes of paint"; and it urged its supporters to "urinate on everything," to "drink sulfuric acid," and to "decapitate themselves twice a week." Outrageous though it seems, *75 HP* was, paradoxically, no more brazen in tenor than *Contimporanul's* "Activist Manifesto," published a mere five months before. It is quite close in substance also to the dadaism developed by Tzara, Janco, and other Romanians a decade earlier.

The highest ambition of *75 HP* was to achieve a "true synthesis in art" by which the traditional *paragone* between the visual arts and poetry might be overcome and a mechanistic, fully modern aesthetics put in its place. It was with this objective and by means of this journal that Brauner and Voronca jointly created their picto-poetry, nonfigurative oil paintings in which words culled from the dada-futurist vocabulary were manipulated to expressive effect within a welter of geometric forms (Fig. 320).⁴⁵ The inscription on the canvas surface was dictated less by the requirements of legibility than by the abstract compositional criteria of color, form, and tone. At its best, picto-poetry achieved a provocative tension between modes of "reading" and "seeing," but it rarely attained the mechanistic, modern synthesis its contrivers sought.⁴⁶ The frenzied advocacy of ever-new inventiveness and the fear of the formulaic may well be among the many factors creating a disparity between claim and realization. Although *75 HP* did not survive beyond a single issue, propelled by the riotous energy of youthful editors it soon (like its modernist forebear *Chemarea*) resurfaced in a new guise.

One month following the demise of *75 HP*, its protagonists joined opponents among the *Contimporanul* group and produced yet another in a series of avant-garde publications. Entitled *Punct* (Period, as in the syntactical full stop), the weekly review maintained the Romanian strand of dadaism, however passé, that was woven through the various forms and associations of its modernism.⁴⁷ *Punct* (Fig. 321)



Figure 318. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Physical and Intellectual Laborers*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 100 × 65 cm. Museum of Art, Braşov. (From *La Peinture Roumaine, 1800–1940*, exh. cat., Antwerp, 1995.)



Figure 319. Victor Brauner, *Composition* for cover of *75 HP*, 1924.

repudiated the constraints of tradition and sought “to destroy, at the risk of violence and exaggeration which are inherent in a revolution . . . all substandard creations, be they in painting, literature, sculpture or music . . . , to hoot at all photographers, imitators, and impotents [exponents] of passé-ist art.”⁴⁸ It urged aesthetic revolution in the antilyrical poetry of Voronca, the antilyricism of Scarlat Callimachi, and the antirefinement of Janco.⁴⁹ Like *75 HP*, *Punct* had a positive point to advocate: Promoting “a new art in a new and free country,” it configured itself as the “international constructivist art review.” This lofty ambition gave the compositions of Janco, Maxy, and Brauner, increasingly reproduced in journals, a high level of prestige and predominance within the Romanian avant-garde. Equally important, *Punct*, not unlike *De Stijl* in Holland, acclaimed modernist architecture as the consummate synthesis and fulfillment of all the constructivist arts. As in revolutionary Russia, so too in modernizing Romania could artists “use the streets as a school for aesthetic and moral education.”⁵⁰ But despite *Punct*’s noble as-



Figure 320. Victor Brauner and Ilarie Voronca, *Manifesto of Picto-Poetry*, in *75HP*, 1924.

jective, nonphysical representation of our pure spirit" that was not dependent on reality – or suprarealism – as its source of inspiration. Neither did it rely on sentiment and psychology, as the *Integral* editors understood surrealism to do; integralist art was defined as deriving inspiration from the machine and technology, from construction and order, and yet – like the dadaism it championed – stemming from a source "above reason and logic."⁵³

The art published in and supported by *Integral* was to make visible the abstract reality of the modern world; "representation does not mean copying or imitating but creating the abstract within the tangibly material," as Voronca declared (Fig. 323).⁵⁴ Thus we find in the pages of the journal a significant number of nonrepresentational linocuts, reproductions of constructivist collages and stage designs, images of international-style architecture, quasi-abstract portraits of contemporary artistic figures, and nonfigurative sculpture – all by artists and designers of Romanian, Russian, Dutch, French, and other origins. Ultimately, however, this fashioning of syncretic modernism from the various avant-garde trends and competing personalities was self-contradictory and self-defeating. The integralism so passionately promoted in the call for a synthetic new style was undermined artistically by the very diversity of *Integral's* contributors: Brauner, Janco, Maxy, Mattis-Teutsch, Michăilescu, Petrașcu, and others. Moreover, the irreverent dadaism that animated the review proved incompatible with the idealistic values attributed to constructivism. Even Voronca's theoretical fulmination against surrealism had been confuted several months later, when an article praising surrealism in film appeared.⁵⁵ The discrepancy between editorial policy and visual reality was an irony that must have been appreciated by the surrealists who emerged from the pages of *Integral* as well as from those of *75 HP* and *Punct*.

As the last issue of *Integral* was being delivered in 1928 in Bucharest, the first number of *UNU* (One) had just been assembled – in the remotest corner of Wallachia.⁵⁶ Under the editorship of the irrepressible Sașa Pană (1902–81) (Fig. 324), the poet-apologist of Romanian surrealism, *UNU* was the cardinal monthly magazine of the literary avant-garde.⁵⁷ Its telegraphic manifesto exhorted readers and collaborators to "disinfest your brains!" and to "burn the pulp of the libraries."⁵⁸ The canon of figures embraced by Pană as acceptable to *UNU* included, not unexpect-



Figure 322. Cover of *Integral* I, no. 1, 1925.

edly, Tzara and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (who would soon pay a visit to Romania to consolidate his support among the avant-garde) and especially André Breton, prime mover and theorist of French surrealism. Although purportedly a literary review, *UNU* promoted the visual arts as well; hence, we find on the journal's covers and on many of its pages modernist images in several advanced styles by progressive painters, sculptors, photographers, and graphic artists from throughout Europe and Romania.⁵⁹ Among the legion of now-familiar contributors – Maxy, Tzara, Voronca, Vinea, and Brauner – it was the last named whose art most benefited from the rich mixture of dada, constructivism,⁶⁰ and surrealism (Fig. 325). Beginning in the spring of 1929 and increasing through the next year, surrealism became the predominant literary and visual orientation, with Brauner's compositions, in particular, reaching a high level of proficiency. Among his most fully realized surrealist canvases of this period was a playful portrait of Geo Bogza (see Plate 36), the most notorious of Romania's avant-garde poets and editor-contributor to a plethora of its radical publications.⁶¹

Figure 323. Victor Brauner, *Portrait of Ilarie Voronca*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 109 × 70 cm. Museum of Visual Arts, Galați. (From *Bucharest in the 1920s–1940s between Avant-Garde and Modernism*, exh. cat., Bucharest, 1994.)



Brauner's picto-poetry survives in this image only in the elaborate inscription, which is at odds with the frequent use of constructivist-derived orthography in *UNU's* title pages. The ornamental text here, undermining the synthesis of the picto-poetic medium in which words function as forms, serves simply to reiterate the event taking place in the landscape. In stark contrast to the flowery inscription, replete with its own decorative blooms, is the bleak industrialized landscape in which only oil derricks blossom under a smoke-blackened sky. The subject, Bogza, depicted naked, was infamous among the middle

class – and therefore celebrated by the avant-garde – for the crude language of his verse, which would reach its acme in *Poemul invectivă* (Poems of Invective) in 1933. His pendulous breasts and elongated genitalia are doubtless references to Bogza's imagery in his most notorious publication, *A Sex Diary* (1929), which was the touchstone of Romania's emerging surrealist avant-garde. The severed head that the poet holds carefully in his hands recalls visually the written exhortation of Brauner and his colleagues in *75 HP*, in which the avant-garde was called on to "decapitate themselves twice a week."⁶²



Figure 324. Victor Brauner, *Portrait of the Beloved Sașa Pană*, 1930. Oil on canvas, 50 × 36 cm. Sașa Pană Collection, Bucharest.

And the opening in Bogza's skull, revealing cerebral matter, brings to mind Pană's commandment in *UNU* – to which both Brauner and Bogza were contributors – to “disinfest your brains!”

Playful puns, striking juxtapositions, and arcane self-references were hallmarks of Romania's surrealist movement in the pages of *UNU* (especially through the imagery of Jean David [Fig. 326] and Jules Perahim) until its demise with its fiftieth issue in December 1932. Surrealism continued to flourish also in the seemingly endless succession of short-lived art reviews that were published during the early 1930s,⁶³ as well as in group exhibitions throughout the decade.⁶⁴ But Romanian surrealism was not

destined to reach consummate achievement. In an ironic twist of fate, the incendiary exhortations of *Contimporanul*, *Integral*, and other avant-garde reviews provoked an unintended audience – one that took the artists' charge perhaps too literally. In 1927 Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu (1899–1938), born in Moldavia of Ukrainian or Polish parents, had founded the only true fascist movement in the Balkans: the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Like the artists of Romania's avant-garde, Codreanu sought a national moral regeneration. Sharing their disgust with the rampant corruption in the governance of the nation, he and his followers among the underemployed and underpaid civil servants and professorate



Figure 325. Victor Brauner, *Composition*, ca. 1930. Oil on canvas, 53.5 × 64.5 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.



Figure 326 (left). Jean David, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 41 × 33 cm. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. (From *Bucharest in the 1920s–1940s between Avant-Garde and Modernism*, Bucharest, 1994.)

celebrated action and excess in their revolutionary ambition to hasten the death of the present world with its “sterile, dried-up soul.”⁶⁵ But the cosmopolitanism, socialist sympathies, and “alien” character of Romania’s radical artists were anathema to the intensely chauvinistic and anti-Semitic Codreanu and his cohorts. Soon after its founding, the Legion of the Archangel Michael established a military unit, the Iron Guard, whose armed bands persecuted the members and supporters of the avant-garde. Although suppressed in December 1933 by the government of King Carol II, the Iron Guard continued to terrorize Bucharest’s many Jewish and “pseudo-Romanian” artists and their liberal urban patrons through such front organizations as All for the Fatherland. They were aided by the governing National Christian Party,⁶⁶ which manifested the same rampant anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and profound

cultural conservatism. These attitudes lessened only slightly, when in 1938 King Carol established an absolutist royal dictatorship. In such a persistently threatening atmosphere, Romania's avant-garde was not likely to flourish.

Increasingly disparaged for their Jewish or otherwise "foreign" origin, many of the seminal surrealist artists elected emigration, and their work became part of the artistic currents in western Europe, thereby denying Romania several talented figures.⁶⁷ The small group of practitioners remaining depended on an increasingly formulaic vocabulary of imagery and imagination. This led to a kind of sclerosis of style, which contrasted with the irreverent vigor of the avant-garde's heady years, roughly from 1922 to 1932. Honored more in the breach than in the observance were the pledges made by the creators of *75 HP* ("[Whenever] what we do becomes a formula, we shall relinquish it. . . ."); by the authors and artists of *Integral* ("[E]nough wanderings among intellectualism: Enough with the comic intellectuals!"); and by the founders of *Contimporanul* ("Let us destroy, through the strength of disseminated disgust, the ghosts cowering under light. Let us dispatch our dead!").

Had the avant-garde ever developed a unified and consistent philosophy of art and society, it might have been able to channel its considerable energies into something more popularly accessible, positive, and lasting. But as it was, lacking the customary Balkan task of creating for the nation its cultural identity, the avant-garde in Romania focused almost exclusively on artistic matters and on addressing one another. The result was aesthetic hermeticism, and after up to twenty years of "synthesizing the will of life . . . and the efforts of every modern experience,"⁶⁸ the avant-garde was showing signs of creative fatigue. Indeed, by 1930 *Contimporanul*, the most widely regarded of the modernist periodicals, had become an organ of moderation, forgoing the impassioned aesthetics it once heralded stridently. In its hundredth and antepenultimate issue (fall 1931), its major contribution was to provide a chart of the avant-garde's previous accomplishments and major milestones. Such retrospection and self-celebration would have been unimaginable less than a decade before, when Romania's young avant-garde yearned "to do away with self-promotion as a purpose" in favor of entering "the great industrial-activist stage of development."⁶⁹

AN EARLY, ACKNOWLEDGED, and legally codified status of political and cultural independence sets Hungary apart from other nations with modernist movements examined in this book.¹ Relative to nations whose cultural liberation ensued only with the establishment (or reestablishment) of national states created in the wake of World War I, Hungary had a half-century head start, being a functionally sovereign entity (in a condominium relationship with the Austrian empire). Furthermore, the country's self-governing authority, extending beyond its own ethnic territories, allowed the Magyar minority to exercise an often oppressive cultural suzerainty over non-Magyar peoples in the multinational Hungarian kingdom.² These considerations apart, Hungary shared essential attributes and ambitions with all the other progressive aesthetic movements under review here – commonalities that far outweighed their differences.

Hungary's troubled history as a battlefield between East and West was the principal defining feature linking it with its neighbors. After the native ruling dynasty died out in 1301, a succession of foreign princes laid claim to the crown of Saint Stephen. In the second half of the fifteenth century, a native-born monarch, Mathias Corvinus (reigned 1458–90), brought Renaissance Hungary into the cultural orbit of the West as part of an ambitious campaign that was annulled only in 1526 at the Battle of Mohács, when Hungary fell to the advancing Ottoman Turks. As a result of the military defeat, the country was divided: Central and southern Hungary came under direct Turkish rule; eastern Hungary (Transyl-

vania) was assigned to a local prince under Ottoman suzerainty; and the western and northern parts of Hungary recognized Habsburg overlordship.

By the end of the seventeenth century, coincident with the decline of Turkish authority in the Carpathian Basin, Western armies overwhelmed the Turkish-controlled parts of Hungary and brought all Hungarian territories under the Habsburg crown. In order to repopulate Hungary, whose lands were devastated and whose population was decimated by the war between the crusading armies of the West and the Ottomans, the Habsburg monarchy resettled large numbers of Germans and Serbs. Although the presence of industrious Balkan and western European merchants, artisans, and farmers helped to revive the economy and reestablish the country, it also meant that Magyars became a minority in reunited Hungary. Even in their diminished numbers, however, they proved a major impediment to the imposition of Habsburg absolutism and Catholicism on the multinational and multiconfessional population.

After the Napoleonic Wars, the nobility (which had remained mostly Magyar) and especially its small educated elite recognized the need to redress the country's backwardness by reforming its culture. Thus, societies were formed to promote the modernization of the language and the development of Hungarian as a literary tongue. During the First Reform Age, roughly dating from 1825 to 1848, Hungarian gradually replaced Latin as the official language. This "reform" was not without strong opposition from the roughly 60 percent of the population that was not and did not speak Hungarian and, in turn, sought to assert its own, various cultural longings through programs of "national awakening."

Indeed, throughout Hungary's modern history, tension would exist between the cultural claims of the national minorities and the supervening demands of the dominant Magyars.

In the revolutionary year of 1848, Louis Kossuth and a group of Hungarian reformers rebelled against rule from Vienna and promulgated a liberal constitution through which to establish a modern, democratic state. But having failed to ensure the rights and free cultural expression of the majority non-Magyars, the Hungarian revolutionaries were in a weak position to confront Habsburg armies. With assistance from the Russian tsar, Austrian troops succeeded in suppressing Kossuth and his reformers and imposing the rule of a strong central government headed by Franz Josef I. The young emperor, challenged by continued insistence on increased Magyar sovereignty, structural reform, and cultural expression, was compelled in 1867 to compromise his authority. Much to the chagrin of the empire's other constituent nationalities, especially the Czechs, Hungary was awarded equal status with Austria in the Dual Monarchy, enabling it – until the fall of the Habsburg empire in 1918 – to develop rapidly both materially and culturally. Hungary's postcompromise modernization was not painless, however. The deeply embedded traditions and unassailable privileges of landed proprietors, the cultural arrogance of the minority Magyars, and millions of subject Slavs, Romanians, and Italians ensured a tumultuous transition. And as elsewhere, there was a growing urban intelligentsia, many of them liberally educated *déclassé* gentry, who were profoundly dissatisfied with the inability of the country to employ them all productively. Thus, from above as well as from below, the Hungary of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy was a multinational welter of antagonists easily exploited by antiliberal forces, cultural imperialists, and political radicals. These potentially destructive elements were at times balanced, however, by an efflorescence of cultural creativity and scientific productivity rarely exceeded in modern history. Such a heated environment provided an excellent breeding ground for the emergence, development, and eventual dissolution of a variety of new visions brought to view by a Hungarian avant-garde.

In 1896 Hungary celebrated a thousand years of Magyar presence in the Carpathian Basin – an occasion for a self-congratulatory acknowledgment of its



Figure 327. József Rippl-Rónai, *Lady in a White Robe* (study), 1898. Oil on canvas, 178 × 76.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

economic accomplishments and hard-earned membership within the European fold. The millennium marked also a concerted attempt to legitimize its cultural suzerainty in the region and to affirm the fundamental characteristic of Hungarian culture since the period of Kossuth's revolt: a striving to create, preserve, and develop a distinctive Magyar literature and visual expression while appropriating in the process all that was most progressive in European art. In short, it was both an occasion of national commemoration and a clarion call for further modernization.

Figure 328. Károly Ferenczy, *Woman Painter*, 1903. Oil on canvas, 136 × 129.6 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



It was in the millennial year of 1896 that the Munich-based Hungarian artist-teachers István Réti and Simon Hollósy founded an international artists' colony, the Free School of Painting, in Nagybánya (today Baia Mare, Romania).³ Drawing on their long experience in Munich's art world and contact with modern styles and methods, the artists introduced into Hungary the most progressive Western painting.⁴ Eschewing the formality and perceived restrictiveness of the German academic tradition, the Nagybánya school represented a fundamental shift in the emphasis of Hungarian art toward an unfettered naturalism. With its distinguished faculty and the promise of free artistic development in the newest (Western) styles, Nagybánya attracted numerous aspiring artists from all over the Austro-Hungarian empire and beyond. Among them were József Rippl-Rónai (Fig. 327), who brought to Hungary the style of the Nabis with whom he had been working and exhibiting in Paris, and Károly Ferenczy, whose work from this period marks one of the high points of impressionism in east-central Europe (Fig. 328).⁵

In the immediate postmillennial years, progres-

sive Hungarian artists were self-consciously aware of the singularity of their historical position: They were looking increasingly toward the West for inspiration and innovation, while celebrating their traditional ties to the East. In this Janus-faced outlook can be discerned an aesthetics that would inform the entire history of Hungarian modernism. Painters such as János Vaszary, who had studied not just in the Hungarian kingdom but also in Munich, Paris, and Rome, responded to the challenge by embracing symbolism (see Plate 37), which acknowledged the growing sympathy for contemporary French styles and at the same time satisfied the more tradition-minded patron class with identifiable, often patriotic, subject matter. The encouragement of various competing styles that thus developed – an attitude of tolerance that became a fundamental aspect of Hungarian art during the next quarter century – was intertwined with a belief in art as an effective means to restructure life in its entirety.

While impressionism and neoimpressionism were flourishing in Hungarian Transylvania during the early years of the twentieth century, a small art col-

ony of approximately sixteen members was working just outside Budapest at Gödöllő, its purpose to unite the arts and crafts in a Ruskinian renaissance of progressive social values and aesthetic national reformation. The artists there – Aladár Körösfői Kriesch, for example – employed religious imagery (Fig. 329), Magyar mythical history, and subjects from contemporary Hungarian literary symbolism and folklore to harmonize the traditions of the past with the demands of the present. Their palette of styles included impressionism and neoimpressionism in the handling of light and color; pre-Raphaelitism and Jugendstil in the rendering of outline and contour; and symbolism in the representation of theme and figures.

Other Hungarian symbolist reformers – artists who promoted social reconciliation through highly personalized subject matter – include Lajos Gulácsy and Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka (known as Csontváry). Gulácsy favored the heady imagery championed

by the symbolist poet Gyula Juhász and in turn inspired many other painters to adopt the synesthesia advocated by fin-de-siècle poetics. Csontváry's recondite symbolism owes little to his training in Munich under Hollósy or his studies in Paris. Rather, this pharmacist-turned-painter (Fig. 330) responded to the inner voices that urged him to make apparent the original Magyar presence in the Holy Land posited by postmillennial chauvinist historians. In monumental canvases depicting biblical sites or associated sacred landscapes – such as renditions of Jerusalem's Wailing Wall, views of the Dead Sea from Temple Square, or overscaled cedars of Lebanon sheltering a queue of dancing celebrants – Csontváry adapted the serpentine line and luminescent palette of art nouveau to a stylized appeal for social integration and aesthetic commitment.

The coexistence of impressionism, symbolism, and art nouveau – along with the reforming influence of Gödöllő throughout Greater Hungary – pre-

Figure 329. Aladár Körösfői Kriesch, *Ego sum via, veritas et vita*, 1903. Oil on canvas, 159 × 286.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.





Figure 330. Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1896–1902. Oil on canvas, 32.4 × 40 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

pared the way for the next wave of Western art. As early as 1905 at Nagybánya, Béla Czóbel, Lajos Tihanyi, and Sándor Galimberti had sensed in the work of Paul Cézanne a productive path for Hungarian painters. Believing that Cézanne's art heralded the beginning of a new aesthetic era, they and others turned away from the pleinairism of their teachers and called themselves neoimpressionists. Their social platform – indebted philosophically to the emerging German expressionism, especially that of Munich – affirmed also a stylistic affinity with

French fauvism, as evinced by Vilmos Perlrott Csaba in the brilliant hues of his *Bathing Youths* (Fig. 331), its composition stemming from the work of Cézanne and Matisse. Advocating a return to a freer and at times even "primitive" style of art and life, Perlrott Csaba and his contemporaries were persuaded that the only effective way to introduce into Hungary the modernism they sought was to absorb it at the source. Thus, between 1905 and 1907, there was a virtual flood of young Hungarian painters into Paris, many by way of Munich. Those who returned to

their own country after a few months brought with them a means of transfiguring the modernist vocabulary, even as they renewed their commitment to the distinctive social and cultural character of the Magyar East.

THE FIRST WAVE OF VANGUARD ART

From about 1907 a succession of radical artists' groups congregated in Hungary, primarily in Budapest, the cosmopolitan cultural and political heart of the kingdom. Increasingly leftward in their social ideology and drawing intellectual nourishment from the various loose associations of poets, philosophers, composers, and liberal intellectuals, they formed cir-

cles around such figures as Georg Lukács. For these cultural radicals, so eager to rebel against the prominent financial and political status their parents' generation had recently secured, Cézanne was the symbolic embodiment of a new idealism for which they could serve as the Magyar evangelists. Thus, despite a somewhat willful misreading of the French painter's intentions (and of those of the intellectual apologists of German expressionism), the art historians Frederick Antal, Arnold Hauser, Károly (Charles de) Tolnay, and Lajos Fülep, the composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, and numerous progressive poets, sculptors, and painters combined aesthetics and ethics to synthesize the subjectivism of the East and the objectivism of the West. The interconnections that

Figure 331. Vilmos Perlrótt Csaba, *Bathing Youths*, ca. 1910. Oil on canvas, 77.5 × 91 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.



they established between modernist art and politics would remain axiomatic for the Hungarian avant-garde for the quarter-century of its intrepid history. These were dramatically expressed in the summer of 1908, when Budapest's National Salon mounted the first exhibition of MIÉNK, an acronym for Magyar Impresszionisták és Naturalisták (Hungarian Impressionists and Naturalists).

Including artworks of every antitraditional style and promoting artists of various temperaments in a joint display of antiestablishment aesthetics, this exhibition rejected the inherited idea that art was to serve the wishes and compliment the taste of the patron. In a common commitment to champion their new, politically engaged work, eight of the exhibiting painters – all of the 1880s generation – soon banded together first as “A Keresők” (The Seekers) and then, more objectively, as “A Nyolcak” (The Eight). The original members were Róbert Berény, Béla Czóbel, Dezső Czigány (Fig. 332), Károly Kernstok (see Plate 38), Ödön Márffy, Dezső Orbán (Fig. 333), Bertalan Pór, and Lajos Tihanyi.⁶ Joining several university students who formed a section of the Union of Freethinkers, soon renamed the Galileo Circle (Galilei Kör), Nyolcak and their confederates served as an important nexus for progressive intellectuals throughout Hungary.



Figure 332. Dezső Czigány, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1912. Oil on canvas, 58 × 40 cm. Rippl-Rónai Museum, Kaposvár.



Figure 333. Dezső Orbán, *Still Life with Cactus, Books, and Dishes*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 71 × 87 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 334 (above). Bertalan Pór, *Longing for Pure Love*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 238 × 350 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.

Figure 335 (right). Róbert Berényi, *Woman in Red Dress*, 1908. Oil on paper, 92 × 58.5 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.

Encouraged by Galileo Circle discussions and stimulated indirectly by Lukács's lectures held under the group's aegis, Nyolcak members engaged in a social and aesthetic rebellion against what they perceived as the decadence of the prevailing culture, especially its bourgeois values (Figs. 334, 335). Like others of their generation, both within and outside Hungary, they proclaimed themselves victims of conventional society and denounced industrial capitalism, which had only recently come to Hungary, as the enemy of true social integration and artistic creativity. In this conviction Nyolcak was spiritually akin to many contemporary groups throughout Europe – East and West – who also understood themselves, romantically, as revolutionaries in the just cause of social reconstruction. Painters such as Kernstok, the leader of Nyolcak (Fig. 336), demanded that the modern artist assume political responsibilities to alter the structure and form of visual expression. To realize such a transformation, Nyolcak combined imaginatively the progressive styles of the West (fauvism, cubism, expressionism, and the id-





Figure 336. Károly Kernstok, *Rider at Dawn*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 141.2 × 135.4 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

iom of Cézanne) with traditional genre types (still lifes, nudes, portraits, and landscapes). Their original pictorial solutions produced striking results (Figs. 337–340) and were celebrated immediately as the clearest possible expression of a radically new perspective. Kernstok even claimed to have secured for the modern Hungarian artist the position of “the highest rung of the social ladder, where even if he will not enter into discussion with the gods, he will direct the spirit of the masses.”⁷ His assertion missed the mark, however, since Nyolcak members did not consolidate their ideological musings and were often content with pontificating about the role of modern art in moving Habsburg Hungary toward a democratic republic. The artists were not sufficiently systematic in their thinking or sophisticated in their command of philosophy to marshal compelling arguments to “enter into discussion with the gods” or

Figure 337. Bertalan Pór, *The Family*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 176.5 × 206 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.





Figure 338. Ödön Márffy, *Self-Portrait*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 42 × 69.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

to “direct the spirit of the masses.” But despite the naïveté of their worldview, Kernstok was correct in recognizing that the artist had moved from the periphery of society to its center, from being the servant of the ruling powers to arrogating the authority of intellectual animator.

As the influence of Nyolcak began to diminish between 1913 and 1915, a far more militant band of artists emerged. Based in Budapest and calling themselves *Aktivisták* (Activists), these cultural revolutionaries took the social engagement of Nyolcak and all earlier Hungarian artists to a higher plane. Embracing contemporary literature, music, and the arts as the hallmarks of a new age of commitment, the Activists erected their vision of Hungarian modernist culture on a more radical foundation. Whereas

many of Nyolcak were privileged, rebelling against the values of Hungary’s burgeoning middle class, the affiliates of *Aktivizmus* (Activism) most often came from the lower and lower-middle classes. Thus, their identification with the interests of the masses was perhaps more genuine, if not less romantic, than that of earlier Hungarian artists who had been enamored of socialist aesthetics. What the Activists lacked in formal education they gained through attendance at various discussion groups, and it was from impassioned university debates that they, like Nyolcak, received most of their ideological grounding. The fiery exchanges held by the Galileo Circle persuaded the Activists that each creation of the modern artist must be a political as well as an aesthetic act. Thus, they asserted, the “poet and artist



Figure 339 (above). Desző Czigány, *Funeral of a Child*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 60.5 × 77 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 340. Lajos Tihanyi, *Gypsy Woman with Child*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 84 × 75 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.

should stand in the tempest" of current events.⁸ Accordingly, they were among the first of Hungary's avant-garde groups to draw on futurism, cubism, and expressionism as the basis for a new point of view. Their efforts were coordinated by Lajos Kassák (Fig. 341), the electrifying leader of the Hungarian avant-garde.

Influenced by the innovative German periodicals *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*, Kassák led his followers to advocate the dynamic world of industrial forms and social reconstruction, while abjuring the primal celebration of war championed by the futurists. To focus the attention of the disparate artists constituting the Aktivist ranks and to disseminate its programmatic outlook, Kassák founded in 1915 a periodical with the ringing title *A Tett* (The Deed). Concerned with the broadest issues of culture and its ethical dimensions, he advocated in the journal a comprehensive restructuring of the political order, extending beyond the borders of Hungary and east-central Europe. Although Kassák, active as a poet, had not yet become a visual artist, he was deeply impressed by the stylistic debates held within artists' circles. Preferring inventiveness to consistency and variation to uniformity, he steered *A Tett* and the Aktivists toward a range of modernist styles that reflected throughout a visual debt still owed to Cézanne.

What truly engaged Kassák's passion and consolidated the support of the Aktivist adherents was an uncompromising opposition to Hungary's participation in World War I. Unlike many other cultural radicals from France, Italy, Germany, and England and a commensurate number from the modernist ranks in eastern and southeastern Europe, he could marshal no patriotic enthusiasm for his country's aiding in the conflict. Not surprisingly, Kassák's pacifism – along with his sponsorship of exhibitions promoting progressive art by socialist-minded painters and sculptors, lectures by left-leaning intellectuals, and gatherings of radical artists – fell afoul of Austria-Hungary's wartime censorship. On 2 October 1916, less than a year after its initial issue, *A Tett* was proscribed by the authorities. Kassák was undaunted: Increasingly visible as an opponent of the prevailing régime and the cultural status quo, he launched a new Aktivist journal, *Ma* (Today), within weeks of the demise of *A Tett* (see Fig. 365).

Taking care to skirt the censorship laws, Kassák initially guided his publication more emphatically

toward the fine arts, devoting little space (at least during the war years) to overtly political commentary. By no means had the Aktivists forsaken their agitational politics; rather, they concentrated on the various idioms of visual modernism as the most efficacious means to promote social reconstruction within the context of Hungary's collapsing war effort. In *Ma*'s broad endorsement of contemporary art, it sanctioned the stylistic diversity that had been characteristic of Nyolcak and would remain a defining feature of later Hungarian avant-garde expression. The Aktivists' commitment to the newest artistic and social manifestations of the international avant-garde enabled *Ma* to conduct through its pages a far-reaching intellectual discourse – among the most elevated in east-central Europe. By the closing months of World War I, the journal had succeeded in attracting most of the progressive Hungarian intelligentsia as contributors or supporters and had recruited substantial numbers of aspiring Hungarian expressionists, cubists, and other modernists.

Though never a formal member of the *Ma* group, József Nemes Lampérth (see Plate 39) was often represented in its journal, and he was in periodic contact with its adherents. A committed exponent of what can best be described as expressive naturalism and an admirer of Ferenczy's postimpressionist naturalism at Nagybánya, Nemes Lampérth drew also on the rich coloration of German expressionism and on Cézanne's compositional methods to create an expressionism with a highly individual character (see Plate 40). Among the Aktivists who found inspiration in this singular style was his contemporary János Schadl (Fig. 342), another pupil of Ferenczy's. His expressive depictions of Hungarian villages (Fig. 343) betray the dark colors, thick sweeping contours, and complex spatial relations of German expressionist aesthetics. Schadl showed interest also in patterning and cubist composition: His *Houses and Aurél Bernáth* (Fig. 344) depicts the artist's Aktivist colleague in a contorted expressionist pose, penned in by jutting church towers, fragmenting house facades, and a collapsing spatial recession. Such a rich blend of modern styles epitomizes the Aktivists' inventiveness in adapting styles borrowed from abroad.

Another stable presence in Kassák's Hungarian Aktivist enterprise was Hans Mattis-Teutsch, who figures prominently in the art of Romania.⁹ Using a



Figure 341. Lajos Tihanyi, *Portrait of Lajos Kassák*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 86.5 × 70 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 342. János Schadl, *Youth Reading*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 70 × 50 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 344. János Schadl, *Houses and Aurél Bernáth*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 95 × 75 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.



Figure 343. János Schadl, *View of a Village*, undated. Oil on cardboard, 60 × 49.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

Figure 345. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Dark Landscape with Trees*, 1918. Oil on cardboard, 40 × 49 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.



Figure 346. Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Spiritual Flower*, 1919–22. Watercolor on cardboard. Private collection.

rich palette of vibrant reds, greens, mauves, and other bold hues, Mattis-Teutsch created an abstract rhythm of colored forms that corresponds to the theoretical imperatives he adopted from Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc (Fig. 345; see Plate 41). Much more than a naturalist transcription of trees, hillocks, and mountains, his landscapes of 1915–18 manifest an expressive rhythm of lines and hues that would soon reach a mature form of nonobjec-

tivity. During his Aktivist phase, roughly 1916–23, Mattis-Teutsch embarked on a series of watercolors, oils, and linocuts bearing the collective title “spiritual flowers” (Fig. 346). These works combine the abstract qualities of spirit and matter, nature and humankind, in a transcendent new order. In their visual display, if not fully in their intended metaphysical resonance, Mattis-Teutsch’s compositions brought an expressive abstraction to Hungarian con-



Figure 347. János Kmetty, *Self-Portrait*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 53 × 44 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 348. Imre Szobotka, *Sailor*, 1913? Oil on canvas, 35 × 29 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.



Figure 349. Sándor Galimberti, *Amsterdam*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 92 × 92.5 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.

sciousness while affirming the Aktivists' claim to have challenged the aesthetic conventions of Habsburg Hungary with a novel and multifaceted visual vocabulary.

Among several Hungarian painters and sculptors who were deeply committed to cubist aesthetics, János Kmetty (Fig. 347) was one of the few who returned from Paris to his native land. Although his variant may have been less sophisticated than those of Imre Szobotka (Fig. 348), Sándor Galimberti (Fig. 349), and Valéria Dénes (Fig. 350), his engagement with the Aktivist review *Ma* and his collaboration with Kassák consistently ensured Hungarian access to cubist styles and intentions. Often restricting his

palette to a single dominant hue, Kmetty followed the tradition of both Nyolcak and the Aktivists in exploiting every conventional genre – portraits, still lifes, and many representations of the twin towers dominating the townscape of Kecskemét (Fig. 351).

Of all the artists participant in Hungarian Aktivizmus before the revolutions of 1918–19, Béla Uitz was probably the most representative. Yet another painter who had studied with Ferenczy, Uitz teamed up with Kassák as early as 1915, when the latter founded the first of his avant-garde journals, *A Tett*. Classically trained in the Budapest Academy as well, Uitz managed to combine the monumental figure types that he cherished among Italian Renaissance



Figure 350. Valéria Dénes, *The Street*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 55 × 46 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.

models with the somber palette of cubism. His *Seated Woman* (Fig. 352) reveals the Aktivists' rejection of idealization in favor of a sober portrayal of a working-class madonna. The heavy modeling, the emotional stolidity, and the solid materiality of the sitter owe something to the work of Cézanne, which Uitz knew principally through reproduction. Wedding disparate stylistic sources here and elsewhere, his depictions of the life of laborers and their left-wing apologists (Figs. 353, 354) attest to an early commitment to an art of proletarian culture.

THE REVOLUTIONARY AVANT-GARDE

As Kassák came to believe that the radicalism espoused by Nyolcak – and by several of the Aktivists as well – was out of step with the needs of Hungary, he steered the Ma group of artists, philosophers, and

literary radicals toward social revolution. Beginning in October 1917, the Ma Aktivists increased their visibility through published articles and the numerous exhibitions held under their aegis, particularly those of Uitz, Mattis-Teutsch, and Sándor Bortnyik (see Plate 42). The royal government that had once banned *A Tett* was now embattled and too weak to censor *Ma* effectively, prompting the Aktivists to heighten their protest against the social and artistic precepts of the monarchy. At the end of October 1918, the king's government finally capitulated to a Hungarian national council comprising mostly socialist intellectuals, many from *Ma's* readership.

This Chrysanthemum Revolution was hailed as a great triumph for the workers and soldiers of Budapest. Artists, too, rallied to the cause of the new government. Members of the former Nyolcak and the Aktivist circle joined many other intellectuals who



Figure 351. János Kmetty, *Kecskemét*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 92 × 72 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 352. Béla Uitz, *Seated Woman*, 1918. Oil on cardboard, 87 × 69 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.

Figure 353. Béla Uitz, *Sewing Woman*, 1918–19. Oil on canvas, 85.5 × 72 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 354. Béla Uitz, *Portrait of Iván Hevesy*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 87 × 69 cm. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.

took up brushes and pens on behalf of the nominal socialist régime, especially after Hungary was declared a republic in mid-November 1918. Kernstok, who had once led Nyolcak, accepted a cultural administrator's position under the liberal Count Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955), and Kassák issued special supplements to *Ma* to encourage officials to follow the path he was charting. Typifying the Aktivists' own orientation is Bortnyik's prophetic work on paper *Red Sun* (Fig. 355) – a tumultuous cityscape populated by blue-suited workers placed variously in the shifting ground planes of the city, their geometrized bodies befitting their surroundings. The artist's heavy-handed symbolism – five figures gesturing toward the rising red sun of socialism, which heralds a new day – overwhelms the striking visual means he employed to convey his political and aesthetic convictions. The expressionist lines of force in the animating strokes of white heightening, the futurist-derived diagonals to enhance the emotional tenor, the manipulation of space through cubist conventions of composition, and the exaggerated geometrization of the principal figures all point to the Aktivists' belief in drawing on a variety of modernist sources to compose a singular statement. In message and means, this image, in fact begun in 1918, heralded a social revolution that the Aktivists themselves helped to precipitate – one to which, ironically, they fell victim.

The revolution called for by Bortnyik, by Kassák's *Ma* campaign, and by various artist-intellectual circles was more in the bolshevist vein than in the social-democratic mode that Count Károlyi represented.¹⁰ Exacerbating the artists' disappointment in Károlyi's all-too-modest reforms was the new government's reluctance to invite their participation in a restructuring of society. Given the disastrous state of the nation in the wake of defeat after the world war, Károlyi's administration was in no position to allow groups of utopian-minded artists and bolshevist intellectuals to introduce comprehensive and costly changes. By this point, however, most of the avant-garde had been swept up in a Marxist alternative to Count Károlyi's liberalism: The communists, it seemed, were not only tolerant of disparate viewpoints; they actively promoted access to government by national minorities and disadvantaged social classes that traditionally had been excluded from the higher levels of statecraft. Founded a month after Károlyi was invested with governmental authority

by the Habsburg king, Hungary's Communist Party never attained the cohesion or ideological discipline of its Russian model. Its fundamental openness (at least initially), however, stood in stark contrast to the aristocrat-gentry government of Károlyi – a factor that may explain, in part, its popularity among the mostly urbanized Jewish middle class in Budapest.

In the face of the unforgiving demands served by the victorious Allies on a defeated Hungary, Károlyi elected to resign rather than comply. Within twenty-four hours the communists proclaimed a dictatorship of the proletariat with Béla Kun as de facto head of government. Many of the intelligentsia learned of the new Republic of Councils (or Soviets) in a lecture, "Culture: Old and New," delivered that very day by Georg Lukács to radical artists. This fortuitous coincidence of politics and art presaged the close connection that would develop between Kun's communist régime and the Hungarian avant-garde, who saw as being within reach, for the first time, the profound social reconstruction they had depicted on their canvases and portrayed in their writings. The opportunity offered by the communist régime for shaping the culture of the new society was one that Hungarian modernist artists were well positioned to exploit: They had been experimenting with visual forms of expression by which to unify society and direct "the spirit of the masses" since the time of Nyolcak. Kun gave them further encouragement when he appointed as the people's deputy commissar for culture and education none other than Lukács, who had guided the intellectual development of the progressive artists, defending the early experimentation of Kernstok and Nyolcak as well as inspiring several of the Aktivists.

Such support in official circles stimulated the Hungarian avant-garde to heightened productivity and engagement. The central board of a new directorate for arts and museums included Róbert Berényi, a member of Nyolcak and of the Aktivists (Fig. 356). Numerous radical academies were founded for the reform of art education – often with the active participation of Nyolcak and Activist figures such as Márffy, Pór, Czigány, Orbán, and Tihanyi (in the "artists' city" of Balatonfüred) and Uitz and Berényi (at the Workshop for Proletarian Art). Kernstok, who had once served Károlyi, was encouraged by the Kun régime to establish a free school for aspiring artists of working-class origin, and Nemes Lampérth



Figure 355. Sándor Bortnyik, *Red Sun*, 1918–19. Tempera on paper, 100 × 70 cm. (formerly) Museum of the Modern Age, Budapest.

was active in an art center for laborers. Even summer art camps for proletarian youth were organized by members of the Hungarian avant-garde.

Despite the initial enthusiasm that greeted the Republic of Councils, the government soon alienated the general populace through its excessive internal policies. In its endeavor to revamp society along bolshevist lines, Kun's communist régime resorted to brutal measures. Moreover, its weak hold on the country and its inflammatory domestic program provoked Allied hostility. Thus, with the indulgence of the victorious powers, Hungary was invaded by armies of Romanians, Czechs, and Serbs. Pushed to the brink of collapse, the Kun régime turned directly to the community of artists to galvanize popular allegiance and rally the nation to repulse any further encroachment on Hungarian territory. This governmental gambit was to afford the avant-garde some of their greatest triumphs; for a limited time, they realized Kernstok's ideal of modern artists "standing in the tempest" of contemporary events, creating po-

tent imagery in poster art – a medium that Kassák had long proclaimed as singularly appropriate to a modern age. Admittedly, the perilous condition of the country left little room for subtle expression, and the artists frequently acceded to the exigency for straightforward propaganda on behalf of the communist régime. Most often, though, they made stylistic compromises that allowed them to be both artistically modern and socially engaged.

Bertalan Pór, for example, combined futurist and expressionist elements with an easily understood hortatory message in his *Workers of the World, Unite!* (see Plate 43). Drawing both on his familiarity with Cézanne-inspired heroic figures (from his days as a member of Nyolcak) and on his command of expressionism (from his early work as an Aktivist), Pór here substituted for the Arcadia of the past a dynamically charged environment of the eternal present. Heroically scaled nudes bearing elongated red banners stride forward, creating a compositional vortex – a powerfully affecting movement enhanced by the

Figure 356. Róbert Berényi, *To Arms! To Arms!*, 1919. Lithograph, 123.5 × 184.5 cm. (formerly) Museum of the Modern Age, Budapest.



Figure 357. Béla Uitz, *Red Soldiers Forward!*, 1919. Lithograph, 126 × 192 cm. (formerly) Museum of the Modern Age, Budapest.



Figure 358. Street scene with posters in Budapest, 1919. (From S. Mansbach, *Standing in the Tempest*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, p. 61.)



thick contours and roughly defined surfaces. Style and iconography unite to goad into action any spectator who might have seen this poster affixed to shop windows, walls, and street kiosks.

Béla Uitz's *Red Soldiers Forward!* (Figs. 357, 358) was among the most effective of the posters intend-

ed to stimulate public support for the hard-pressed régime, and it too demonstrates stylistic concessions made for a mass audience: While Uitz capitalized on expressionist drawing to simplify the forms – standardizing the soldiers' bodies and reducing the individuality of the physiognomies – he was careful to

ensure that the advancing figures were easily recognizable. The composition is poorly resolved, however, in the relation between the four striding figures in the foreground and the seemingly infinite procession of the background irregulars. Uitz employed bold red letters in the lower register of the poster to emphasize verbally the message that is only partially realized visually.

Though the Aktivist poster was perhaps the most engaged medium through which Hungary's avant-garde joined the battle for the country's complete social reconstruction, easel art was also enlisted in the service of revolutionary politics. A case in point is Bortnyik's red locomotive (Fig. 359 being one of several versions) emerging from a cubist-derived landscape of factories and industrial sheds, having been given clearance by the signalman – intentionally placed to the left – to burst illusionistically into the spectator's space. Behind the advancing engine of the communist future, with its forceful frontal geometry, the laterally oriented train car reaffirms the flatness of the picture plane. Animating the complex composition is a succession of cylindrical forms suggesting factory chimneys and echoing the shape of the locomotive smokestack. The repeated oblong forms – with the reiterated circles describing lights, wheels, and puffs of smoke – establish an arrhythmic concatenation of geometric planes that invigorates the picture surface; the color red was undoubtedly calculated to reinforce the political nature of the image. Bortnyik's locomotive subject was itself a deliberate choice, for in Hungary – even more than in the industrialized Western countries – the railroad had served for decades as a proud emblem of a dynamic development in an otherwise backward, agrarian society. A similar politicized aesthetics is evident in the artist's imaginative rendition of the industrial landscapes (Fig. 360), which bring rigorously geometric forms into an environment derived from Bortnyik's study of expressionist, futurist, and cubist elements. His cubist modeling, decentralization of the composition, staccato repetition of forms, and striking contrast of warm and cold colors make these works among the most competently resolved Aktivist contributions to the revolutionary cause of 1919.

Ironically, as the embattled Hungarian soviet republic drew increasingly on modern artists for support, the leading figure of the avant-garde seemed to distance himself from the régime. Kassák's reticence did not imply abandonment of his left-wing commit-

ment or of his desire to introduce modernist art into the social nexus. Rather, he relished taking an oppositional position to all of Hungary's governments: monarchical, liberal, bolshevist, conservative, and communist. At bottom, Kassák insisted on the independence of the artist and vociferously rejected any suggestion, much less a mandate, to pursue a particular style, subject matter, or policy. He wanted artists to be revolutionary but not myrmidonian, accepting unquestioningly the validity of any specific revolutionary régime. As internal opposition and external force of arms pressed the communist government to become increasingly doctrinaire in its policies, including those affecting art, Kassák reproved the Kun Republic of Councils. In direct defiance of the government's campaign to promote Magyar chauvinism as a way to win over nationalists, Kassák increased *Ma's* coverage of the international avant-garde.

Kassák's contempt for Kun – an attitude that led the communist régime to ban *Ma* – was in fact not shared by the majority of Hungary's progressive artists. Most of the Aktivists, including János Tábor, remained strong supporters of the soviet republic and continued to serve it loyally (Fig. 361). Others felt obliged to honor the régime, if not entirely for ideological reasons then at least partly for nationalistic ones. Moreover, the communists had secured the allegiance of many artists through their multifaceted and highly regarded program of grants-in-aid to needy painters and sculptors, acquisitions of modern art for Budapest's Museum of Fine Arts, and employment opportunities in the newly established art schools.

Despite their best efforts to galvanize public support for programs and recruit the populace to the defense of Marxist ideology, the régime remained imperiled throughout its short life. The often monumental endeavors of Hungary's avant-garde to safeguard the communist cause were of only temporary duration. On 1 August 1919, precisely 133 days after it seized power in a nonviolent revolution, the Republic of Councils capitulated to royal Romanian troops entering Budapest. That very day, Hungarian modernist culture was to begin its next phase of development – in exile.

MODERNISM IN EXILE

The fall of the soviet republic brought a succession of prime ministers, all conservative figures who at-



Figure 359. Sándor Bortnyik, *Red Locomotive*, 1918/19. Tempera on cardboard, 124.3 × 88.8 cm. Yale University Art Gallery. (Gift of Collection Société Anonyme.)



Figure 360. Sándor Bortnyik, *Red Factories*, 1919. Oil on cardboard, 60 × 51 cm. Janus Pannoniensis Museum, Pécs.

tempted to overturn the revolutionary changes promulgated under the Kun régime. By the time Miklós Horthy, the erstwhile Habsburg admiral, became regent in March 1920, the wave of vicious political reprisals he had long plotted was in full swing. Horthy's troops engaged in a brutal White Terrorism – allegorized by Uitz (Fig. 362) – which singled out for especially ruthless punishment avant-garde artists, many of whom were of Jewish background and socialist orientation. Modern artists who had taken no active role in the revolutionary régimes of Károlyi and Kun were also at risk; and they soon joined the overwhelming majority of Hungary's intelligentsia, which fled Budapest for Vienna, Berlin, and other centers, both East and West.¹¹

Unlike the many Hungarian artists who traveled to Paris in the first decade of the twentieth century and elected to remain there, integrating themselves into French culture, the refugee avant-gardists of 1919–20 never compromised their focus on Hungary. The tight-knit exiles constituted artists' communities that functioned in Vienna and Berlin as they were accustomed to doing in Budapest: Avant-garde journals and exhibition societies were established, art schools were organized, and modernist intellectual circles were reconstituted. Without the stimulus to work in concert with the government – a responsibility that had entailed both opportunities and compromises for artists during the tenure of the Kun régime – the avant-garde was free to develop

"VÖRÖS KATONÁK ELŐRE"



Figure 361. János Tabor, *Red Soldiers Forward!*, 1919. Lithograph, 127 × 96 cm. (formerly) Museum of the Modern Age, Budapest.

and express itself. Thus, in Vienna, where most of Hungary's intelligentsia first traveled, artists sought to assume the modernist mantle from a previous generation of Austro-Hungarian figures: Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt, and other members of the Viennese Secession and expressionist movements.¹²

Not unexpectedly, the first difficult year of exile witnessed the production of posters and graphics that commented bitterly on conditions in the artists' homeland (Fig. 363). With the resumption of *Ma* in Vienna in May 1920, Kassák continued to employ his radical periodical as a weapon to combat Horthy's White Terror and to consolidate his own role as the leading social and political critic of conservatism. Announcing from exile that "the revolution lives in

us and through us continuously,"¹³ he addressed the early Viennese issues of *Ma* primarily to confederates who remained in Hungary – for example, Gyula Derkovits, who delayed his departure for several years during which he recorded metaphorically the trying circumstances in his homeland (Fig. 364) and in the vast former Hungarian lands that the Paris Peace Conference treaties had assigned to Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia.¹⁴ But even as Kassák attempted to give authoritative voice and direction to the dispersed avant-garde, he exacerbated the internal controversies that had characterized Hungarian progressive circles since at least 1915, when *A Tett* was founded. Long-standing differences among the modernists, which had been downplayed



Figure 362. Béla Uitz, plate XII, *White Terror*, from "General Ludd" series, 1923. Etching, 33.3 × 42.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

in Hungary as the artists attempted to appear united in their relations with the prevailing government, resurfaced in Vienna. In exile disputes over social ideology, the issue of nationalities and their place in a future Hungary, and the proper role of the Hungarian avant-garde within the international community of progressive artists were expressed without restraint. Far from placating or prompting the artists to make common cause, Kassák seemed to enjoy his role as agitator within the twin spheres of politics and art. Once he determined to take up the brush in addition to the pen in the service of progressive aesthetics, disagreements among the exiled artists were fueled to the boiling point, with the result that many left Vienna for Berlin and Moscow.¹⁵

CONSTRUCTIVISM

From the beginning of *Aktivizmus*, Kassák seemed to have been satisfied with his role as a poet and ad-

vocate for the Hungarian avant-garde. In late 1920 or early 1921, however, while in Vienna, he decided to become a visual artist in his own right (Fig. 365). What prompted him to embrace advanced painting and the graphic arts as a practitioner remains unclear. Perhaps he was stimulated by increasing contact with such figures as Theo van Doesburg, who expertly combined editorial, organizational, and artistic activities. Or he may have been prodded by his enhanced familiarity with the young generation of Russian abstractionists – multifaceted talents with whom he had become acquainted in Austria. In any case, he embarked on his career as an artist with the same passion and social commitment that characterized his editorship.

Significantly, Kassák's visual art was from almost the first moment fundamentally constructivist, and in 1921 this separated him stylistically from most of his compatriots, who were still working in an expressionist-derived or cubist-oriented idiom. For

Figure 363. Mihály Biró, plate entitled "We Haven't Heard a Single Complaint," from *Horthy Portfolio*, 1920. Lithograph. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 364. Gyula Derkovits, *Last Supper*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 150 × 145 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



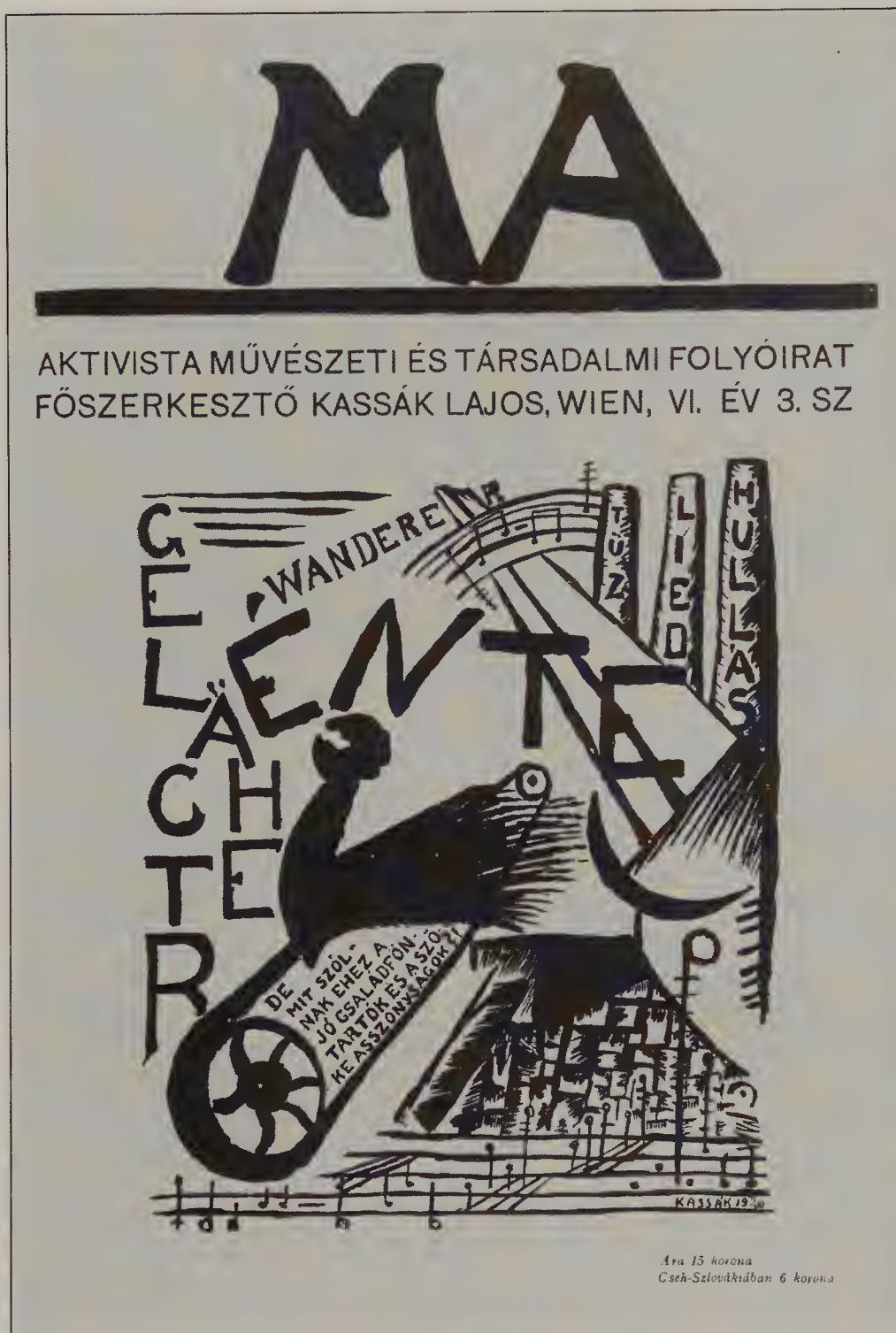


Figure 365. Lajos Kassák, cover design for *Ma*, 1920 (published in 1 January 1921 issue). Linocut.

Kassák, expressionism was no longer a style that held appeal; the progressive Aktivist leader had by then renounced the expressionistic metaphysical in favor of the material, however romanticized. Expressionism, even with its distortions, was visually too close to naturalism, which (with its corollary, subjectivism) the Aktivist leader had opposed since *Ma* first appeared in 1916. That Kassák adopted constructivist tenets in his visual experiments can be explained, in part, as an extension of the direction *Ma* had pioneered in Hungary – advancing constructivism *avant la lettre* both in Aktivist poetry and in ty-

pography.¹⁶ As a rebel against prevailing views and as an untiring promoter of whatever was progressive and socially committed, he must have been captivated by the visual power and novelty as well as by the ethical aspects of this “pure” style.

On the second anniversary of the Hungarian communist revolution, Kassák published on the cover of Vienna-based *Ma* (March 1921) a geometrically abstract linocut (Fig. 366) – his first known attempt at constructivism. An experiment in contrasts of geometric forms, voids and solids, and spatial interpenetration, the image is relatively primitive, es-



Figure 366. Lajos Kassák, cover of *Ma*, 15 March 1921 issue. 30 × 20 cm. (Photograph: Paulmann-Jungeblut, Berlin.)

pecially when compared with contemporary Russian suprematist and early constructivist examples. Within several months, however, Kassák became sufficiently confident to publish a booklet that contained eight new constructivist linocuts along with an eloquent statement of his aesthetic principles written in the characteristic avant-garde declamatory format. Although *Képarchitektúra* (“architecture of the picture,” or “pictorial architecture”) reveals his debt to various currents in the international avant-garde, Kassák insisted on the absolutist nature of his own version of constructivism, by which “there is no

new art and no old art; there is only art. . . .” And again, “art is Art, and no more and no less than this” (Fig. 367).¹⁷

From his 1921 manifesto and subsequent writings, it is clear that Kassák held tenaciously to the belief that the modern artist was compelled to be an advocate for the universal needs of contemporary humankind, a worldview that for its author demanded socialist commitment and constructivist expression. Thus, he called for a modern art that would necessarily serve as the foundation for social change, an art that would transform people and their sur-

roundings in fundamental ways. Kassák departed from other idealists, however, in refusing to compromise the purity of the artist's mission by subordinating his independence to the will of political powers. This attitude estranged him successively from the Habsburg king, the liberal Károlyi, and the communist Kun; it alienated him also from many Aktivist veterans and émigrés of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, who insisted that progressive artists must further the interests of the proletariat by acting in concert with the Communist Party. Two who subscribed to this latter view were Uitz (affiliated with a *proletkult* counterpart to *Ma*) and Bortnyik (closely associated with non-Hungarian communist cells), both highly critical of Kassák and his journal (Fig. 368), which since its founding had been the rallying point for Hungarian Aktivizmus.¹⁸ It was irreconcilable differences of this kind that led most Hungarian



Figure 367 (right). Lajos Kassák, *Pictorial Architecture V*, ca. 1921–30. Oil on cardboard, 28 × 20.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 368. Sándor Bortnyik, *The Prophet* (Lajos Kassák), 1922. Oil on canvas, 80 × 70 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

Figure 369. László Moholy-Nagy, *Architektur III*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 84 × 61 cm. Museum Wiesbaden.



avant-gardists to leave Vienna in the early twenties for Berlin, there to enrich simultaneously their own and international modernist art.

The tens of thousands of Hungarian émigrés constituted one of the largest minorities in Berlin. Prominent among them were members of Nyolcak, the Aktivists (see Plate 44), and independent modernists who hoped to find fertile ground for their socialist and aesthetic idealism in the German capital. By removing themselves to Berlin, the Hungarians did not elude the political contention within their movement over the function of modern art and the responsibilities of the progressive artist. In fact, the highly charged atmosphere of Berlin encouraged just such debate, providing an audience for the critical hypotheses propounded by avant-garde theoreticians even as it afforded artists the conditions for realizing the diversity that had characterized the Hungarian modernist movement from its begin-

nings. Extensive contact with the legions of avant-gardists from throughout Europe (and beyond) then resident in the city profoundly enriched the Hungarians' visual and theoretical vocabulary. Thus, for example, Béla Kádár enlarged his repertory of modern folk imagery to accommodate geometric elements and constructivist composition in a series of Berlin still lifes; László Moholy-Nagy created his glass-architecture variant of "pictorial architecture" (Fig. 369);¹⁹ and Bortnyik examined a variety of abstract shapes in a line of still life studies. Thus, Hugó Scheiber (see Plate 45), Tihanyi, László Péri (Fig. 370), and others such as Perlrott Csaba and Uitz took their places among the foremost ranks of Berlin's vibrant gallery world.

Although various avant-garde journals throughout Europe published innumerable illustrations and commentary by and about their work, life was precarious for the Hungarian modernists. Those who

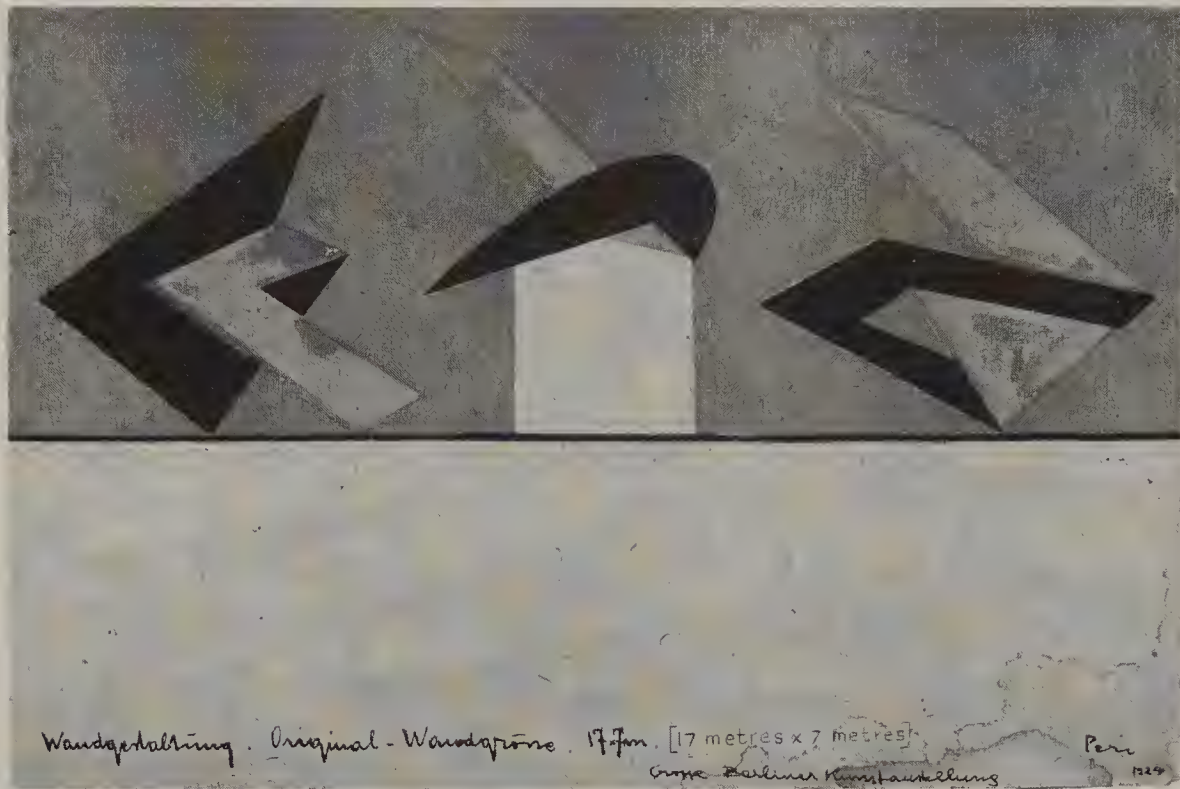


Figure 370 (above). László Péri, *Berlin Mural Design*, ca. 1923. Tempera on linocut, 30.5 × 45.8 cm. Private collection, Germany.



Figure 371. Hugó Scheiber, *The Circus*, 1920s. Gouache on paper. Janus Pannonius Museum.

Figure 372. Béla Kádár, *Mother with Child*, late 1920s. Tempera on paper. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs.



persisted in focusing their thoughts, efforts, and art on developments in Hungary while they were living in self-imposed exile had a particularly difficult time – one made all the more challenging by internecine strife among their ranks. Moreover, the gradual distribution of the Hungarian avant-garde throughout the world meant that their movement rarely spoke with a single voice or presented a unified image. Increasingly, former Aktivists and their colleagues either struck out in independent directions – as, for example, Hugó Scheiber (Fig. 371) and Kádár (Fig. 372), who pursued a highly individualized medley of expressionist, futurist, folk, and constructivist styles – or they elected to follow the ideological paths articulated by such persuasive Hungarian critics in the world of the international avant-garde as Ernő Kállai (1890–1954) and Alfréd Kemény (1895–1945).²⁰

The dynamism of the Hungarian avant-garde during its years of exile gave rise to stylistic experimen-

tation that created considerable controversy. A case in point was the “iconanalysis” of Uitz, who sought in several series of works to confer on particular religious imagery a form of universal validation (Fig. 373). Taking as a point of departure Russian icons, Uitz revealed and represented their inherent abstract structure, a process he used to striking effect in contemporaneous graphic cycles (Fig. 374). In other examples, Uitz, like Bortnyik, augmented his compositions with agitprop slogans and/or explicit political imagery (Figs. 375, 376), work that was often dependent on a constructivist framework. Bortnyik, who could not reconcile with Kassák’s *Képarchitektúra* theory (in brief, a totalizing philosophy of the universe manifested materially), held that the concept signified merely a formal requirement for pictorial harmony – a condition not unlike that demanded in progressive architecture (Fig. 377). As a result, “pictorial architecture” was in itself insufficient to accommodate the degree of ideological commitment



Figure 373 (above). Béla Uitz, *Icon-analysis with the Holy Trinity*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 152 × 142 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.



Figure 374. Béla Uitz, plate from *Analysis* portfolio, 1922. Linocut, 20 × 32.6 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

Figure 375. Béla Uitz, *Nedd Ludd (I)*, ca. 1923. Etching, 33.1 × 42.8 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

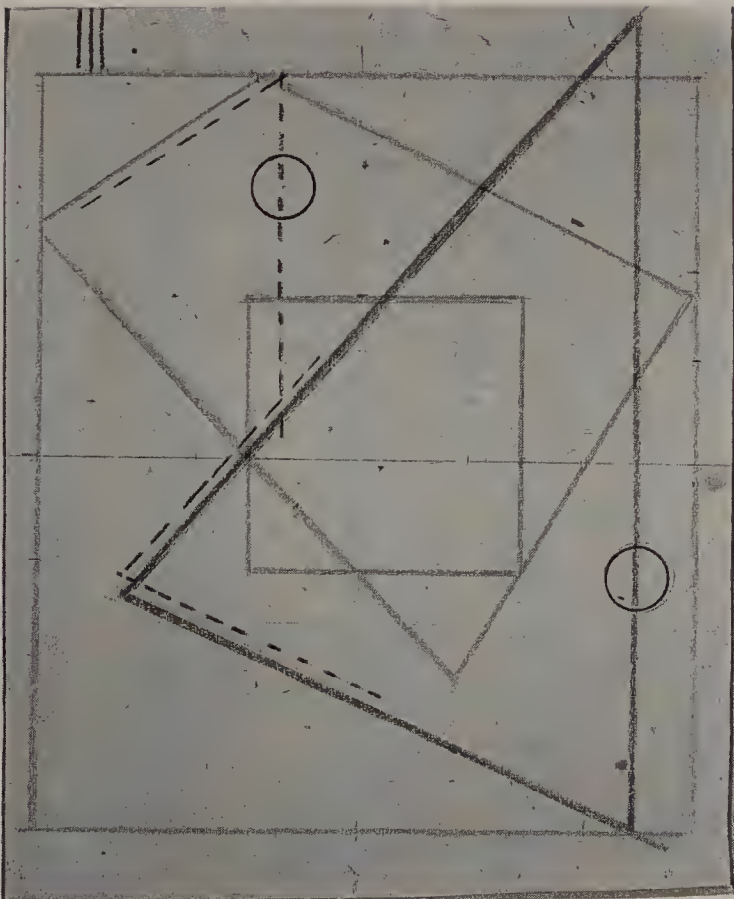


Figure 376 (left). Béla Uitz, *Compositional Analysis for Nedd Ludd*, ca. 1923. Colored pencil on silk paper, 37.5 × 50.5 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

that he and Uitz believed obligatory. Parodying the “new man” for which Kassák and other leaders of the international avant-garde had been clamoring, Bortnyik revealed what he thought of his colleagues’ intellectual posturing in his *New Adam* (see Plate 46). The principal figure in this sardonic canvas is a modishly dressed man of the world – a far cry from the artist-engineer model so often celebrated in the avant-garde context. He is presented as an overdressed middle-class dandy, straw hat in one hand and cane in the other, his rouged face and stilted pose affirming his status as a mannequin and not a man of action. The gears depicted on the freestanding wall behind the figure suggest that he stands on a motorized pedestal that revolves pointlessly. Poised as if on display in a fashionable shop window, the “new Adam” is separated by the transparent plane to his right from a constructed universe of pure ab-

stract relationships. The “pictorial-architectural” elements of Kassák’s ideal realm are removed to an entirely different plane, unaffected by the gravitational pull of the real world, where they float aimlessly in space. In this signal work Bortnyik was censuring the failure of Kassák and his colleagues for producing through their art and theory nothing more than a fashionable mannequin for middle-class consumption. What the age demanded, and what Bortnyik himself purported to provide, was a truly new man and new world of ideal relationships completely free of the past.

An ideological pendant to the exactly contemporary *The New Adam* is an idealized image of Alfréd Forbát, a principal designer in Walter Gropius’s architectural practice in Weimar (Fig. 378), and his wife (Fig. 379). Whereas the “new Adam” was foppishly dressed, Forbát wears the white lab coat of the engineer and betrays the rugged physical features of a poster figure. He stands beneath a model of a villa (designed by Forbát in 1923 as a two-family house in Weimar) reminiscent of the floating architecture of the *New Adam*, while his wife is depicted hieratically as a constellation of geometric forms against a blank panel. The spatial recession is somewhat irrational, but Bortnyik captured here the perspectival disjunction that the artist and architect had gleaned from the “dynamic-constructive system of forces” developed by his fellow Hungarian avant-gardists Moholy-Nagy and Kemény.²¹ Perhaps most remarkable is the comfortable combination of figuration and abstraction, further testimony to the Hungarian avant-garde’s talent for stylistic – if not always ideological – reconciliation.

REPATRIATION AND ACCOMMODATION

Beginning as a trickle in 1921 and 1922 and increasing to a flood by 1925 and 1926, Hungarian avant-garde artists and poets returned to their homeland to face an uncertain future. Not every Hungarian adherent of modern art (and socialist aesthetics) chose to go back to a country that had lost through the Paris Peace Conference treaties almost two-thirds of its territory – its remaining “rump” ruled by the authoritarian Miklós Horthy, the ultraconservative whose White Terror most of the progressives had fled in the first place.²² Although no single explanation accounts for the massive repatriation of the avant-garde, several possible interpretations can be



Figure 377. Sándor Bortnyik, *Pictorial Architecture (I)*, 1921. Color pochoir print on paper, 30.5 × 24 cm. (From *Ma Album*.)

Figure 378. Alfréd Forbát, *Abstract Composition*, 1921. Colored chalk on paper, 20.5 × 20.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.





Figure 379. Sándor Bortnyik, *Portrait of Alfréd Forbát and His Wife*, 1924. Location unknown. (From S. Mansbach, *Standing in the Tempest*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991.)

offered. With a few notable exceptions – Tihanyi, Moholy-Nagy, and a handful of additional Hungarian Bauhäusler – the artists had rarely been more than superficially integrated into the cultural and social mainstream of their respective cities of refuge. The innovative journals they produced there were geared as much to an audience in Hungary as to Hungarians abroad. Such parochialism significantly limited their participation in the dynamic cultural environments of Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere.²³ Equally suggestive was the failure by Kassák and others to establish in these capitals spiritual centers where East and West might meet, with the Hungarians themselves at the hub. Despite the rich and mutually productive informal contact Aktivists in exile enjoyed with other modernists, the numerous discussion sessions, lectures, exhibitions, and publications they sponsored rarely attracted large audiences.

On the whole, the Hungarian artists had not been successful commercially. They had received almost

no private or governmental patronage, and relatively few of their often-exhibited works found buyers. Nor had any of them become established as independent product designers in the profitable world of commercial manufacturers and distributors. Since there were few strong attachments to bind the artists securely to the places they had chosen for relocation – their initial expectations of social revolution, individual artistic success, and personal satisfaction remaining unfulfilled – most of the avant-garde took advantage of improving conditions in their own country to return.²⁴ Their repatriation, however – to an authoritarian Hungary under Horthy's regency – must have been chastening. The government was suspicious of the returned veterans of the revolutionary soviet régime, not least because most had continued their political activities while in exile. In addition, the artistic style of the repatriates, whether essentially constructivist or expressionist or cubo-futurist, was not in accord with the conservative tastes of officialdom and of the still-substantial mid-

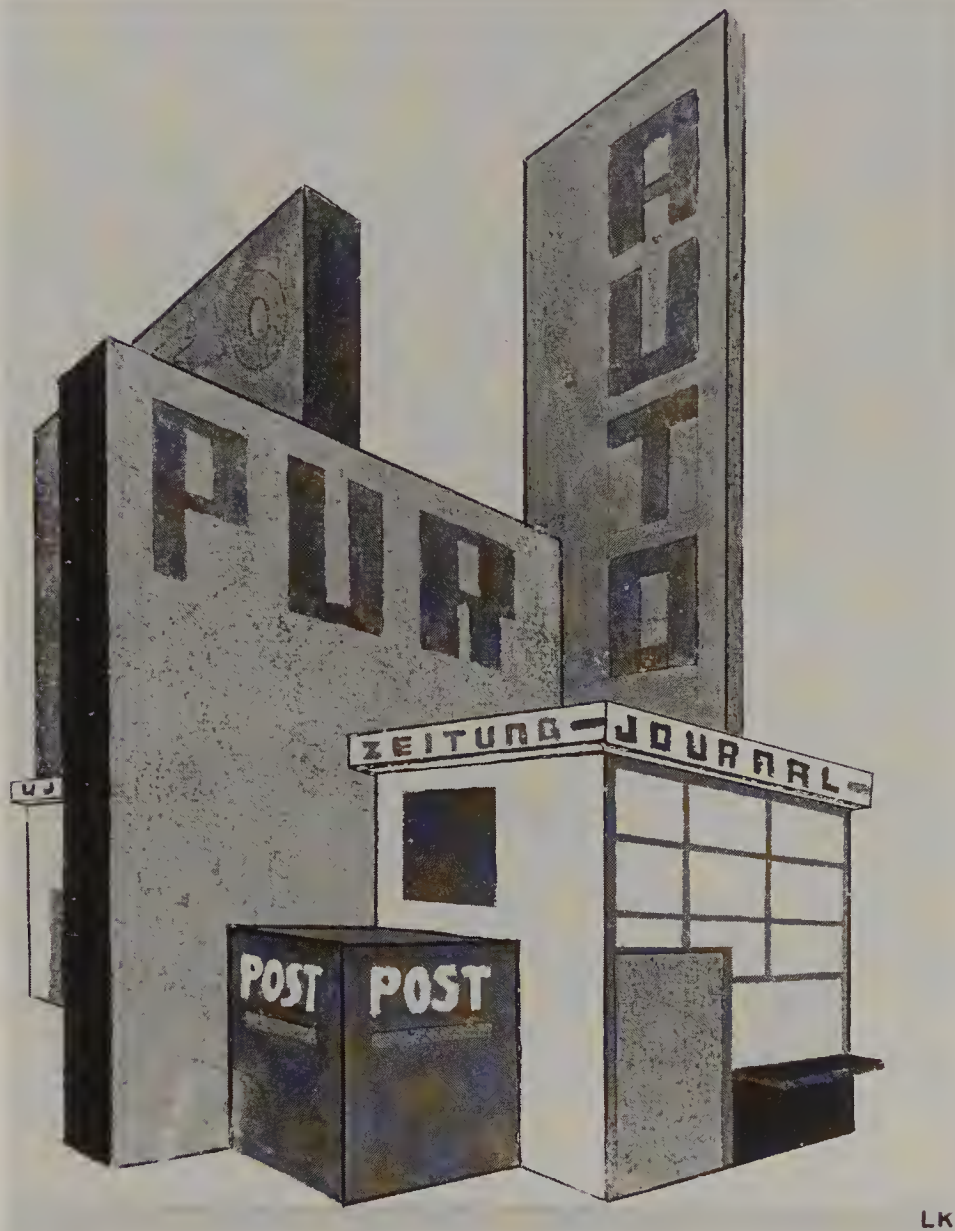


Figure 380. Lajos Kassák, *Advertising Kiosk*, 1922. Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

dle class. With scant freedom to engage in political agitation and with little likelihood of selling enough of their progressive paintings to support themselves, the avant-garde faced enormous difficulties.

Upon their arrival in Budapest, the artists had to contend with an intellectual climate – and not just a government – no longer interested in modernism and with little patience for those who still championed revolutionary aesthetics. Although Kassák, who once again assumed a leadership position, did make an initial attempt to gather a group of younger artists and workers whom he hoped to forge into a socially engaged band of leftist avant-gardists, political reality soon disabused him of his utopian purpose – a disappointing realization that Scheiber registered metaphorically (and not without a hint of caricature) in a portrait rendered in the very mix of

constructivist, futurist, and expressionist idioms that the sitter himself advocated and Hungarian society no longer countenanced (see Plate 47). Other veteran progressives encountered similar resistance to their revolutionary background and social idealism. Bortnyik achieved more success than others through founding a school (based in large part on the example of the Bauhaus) that included graphic art in its curriculum.²⁵ The avenue that opened widest to the returning modernists – as the economy began to stabilize in central Europe between 1923 and the onset of the Great Depression at the end of the decade – was, in fact, applied graphics, especially advertising. This involvement with commercial art was not merely pecuniary; it upheld the Aktivist concern for creating a mass culture, and it corresponded with the constructivist mandate to appeal directly to the

Figure 381. Lajos Kassák, *Steyer Auto*, 1922. Collage on paper, 29.5 × 21 cm. Private collection. (From S. Mansbach, *Standing in the Tempest*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991.)



populace with clear, rational, and dynamic designs. Advertising and the mass media (value-neutral in the 1920s) were perceived by progressive painters and commercial patrons alike as legitimate means to be exploited to heighten the general social and artistic consciousness – as well as to sell consumer goods. Thus, some found a place for their modernist aesthetics in conceiving masterful designs for newspapers, department stores, and shoe sole manufacturers, among others.

As early as 1921 or 1922, Kassák had adapted his utopian “pictorial architecture” to promoting the products of capitalist industry. In a sketch for an advertising kiosk (Fig. 380), he created on paper an example of what he hoped to achieve in physical space. Combining many of the functions and services of urban society – mailbox, newspaper stand, advertis-

ing and placard surfaces, among others – Kassák’s design demonstrates graphically how he planned to translate pictorial theories into the framework of modern life. A drawing that functions simultaneously as “picture” and “architecture,” it “constructs” the architectural program of the composite structure even as its various planes constitute visually an elegant abstract design. Kassák’s newfound interest in constructivism was manifest again in the same year (1922) in an advertisement for Steyer automobiles (Fig. 381). Joining sans-serif type and photography in a geometrically determined composition, he created a striking photomontage that reveals a debt to the dadaists (whose innovative graphic work he had championed in the pages of *Ma*). With the angle of the racing car and the suspended tire seemingly penetrating the viewer’s space, the designer



Figure 382. Sándor Bortnyik, *Modiano*, 1928. Lithograph, 125 × 95 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest.

brought to expressive display the dynamic three-dimensionality he had advocated in his “pictorial-architecture” theory.

Probably the most accomplished graphic designs that the Hungarian avant-garde ever executed, and ones that likewise championed not the revolutionary initiatives of a socialist state but the products of a private concern, were a series of posters for Modiano. An Italian firm that specialized in the manufacture and sale of cigarette papers, particularly in Hungary, the company devoted significant resources to promoting its product. Among those who created advertising designs for Modiano was Bortnyik, one of his first posters exhibiting the geometry of con-

structivist works he had made in the early 1920s. In the lower right, not unrelated to the well-dressed “new Adam” of 1924, is an abstract figure who smokes while contemplating a kiosk on which is prominently displayed another Modiano poster designed by Bortnyik. A large monochromatic circle in the background helps to focus attention on the kiosk and to suggest the risen sun of the new day. The twofold function of the circular disks – to unite the various spatial planes and to tie the geometry of the image to the orthography of the *O*'s in the brand name – is a design conceit reminiscent of Bortnyik's revolutionary *Red Locomotive* (see Fig. 359). An even more mature command of modernist design is evi-



Figure 383. Róbert Berény, *Flóra Turpentine Soap*, 1927. Lithograph, 125.5 × 94 cm. (formerly) Hungarian Advertising Agency Archives, Budapest. (From *100+1 Éves a Magyar Plakat*, exh. cat., Budapest, 1986.)

dent in posters he conceived for Modiano in 1928 (Fig. 382). The rounded letters used for the manufacturer's name affirm his mastery of contemporary experiments in typography that had preoccupied the modern movement from Holland (De Stijl) to Germany (Bauhaus) to Poland ("a.r." group) and beyond.²⁶ Equally evident, in the filmy texture of the cigarette paper, is the avant-garde's hallmark concern with rendering transparency.

Modiano secured the services (and guaranteed, at least temporarily, the livelihood) of many of Hungary's revolutionary artists. Róbert Berény, whose posters for Béla Kun's régime once called Budapest *To Arms! To Arms!* (see Fig. 356), now solicited cus-

tomers for cigarette papers. The flag-waving radical whose mouth resounds with an incendiary cry was replaced by a top-hatted bourgeois contentedly exhaling a sinuous stream of smoke (see Plate 48). The "construction" of the smoker, the building up of the environment on the basis of geometry, the abstract composition divided into trapezoidal forms (held together by the trails of smoke), and the simplified typography far exceed the earlier poster in their innovative formal effect, even if the message conveyed is less dramatic. Equally striking is the comparison between *To Arms! To Arms!* and Berény's poster for a brand of turpentine soap (Fig. 383): Whereas the worker's outstretched arms attest to his revolution-

ary fervor, the geometrically composed woman of 1927 extends her arms in passionate pursuit of spotlessness.

Such extreme shifts of purpose and effect were not uncommon in Hungary during the twenties and thirties. Other examples include the constructivist-derived still life in an advertisement for Meinel tea by János Tábor (Fig. 384), better known for his earlier exhortation *Red Soldiers Forward!* (see Fig. 361). What all these later posters point to is the accommodation their creators made upon their repatriation. By the late 1920s, when most of the Hungarian avant-garde had reassembled in Budapest, the country's increasingly draconian social and political climate made it almost impossible to sustain the array of progressive art for which so much had been sacrificed. With totalitarianism consolidated in central and eastern Europe, the environment was no longer congenial to artists who envisioned a utopian future. The stalwarts who had yearned to "stand in the tempest" of current events were soon overwhelmed by the course of conservatism at home, their achievements silenced by harsh realities. That they tolerated such difficult conditions suggests that

moderation of political idealism must have been an acceptable price for the Hungarians' return and subsistence in their homeland. Although they needed to find ways to oppose the authoritarian régime, the exchange of political for commercial propaganda would ensure at least a modicum of their aesthetics of modern life in a country that under Miklós Horthy held tenaciously to the social structures of the past.

After the early 1930s only those eastern European artists who chose exile were able to bring to full consummation the ideal image of modernity articulated in the early decades of the century. The innovative formal solutions achieved in the fine and applied arts by Moholy-Nagy, Marcel Breuer, György Kepes, and a host of former Hungarian Bauhäusler and Aktivists who sought refuge in the Americas and Australia (or went to western Europe in the wake of World War II) are eloquent testimony to the legacy of their predecessors. By thus engendering an international discourse, these figures shaped the morphology of twentieth-century art in profound ways, helping to realize the progressive new vision of a modern art for modern humanity.

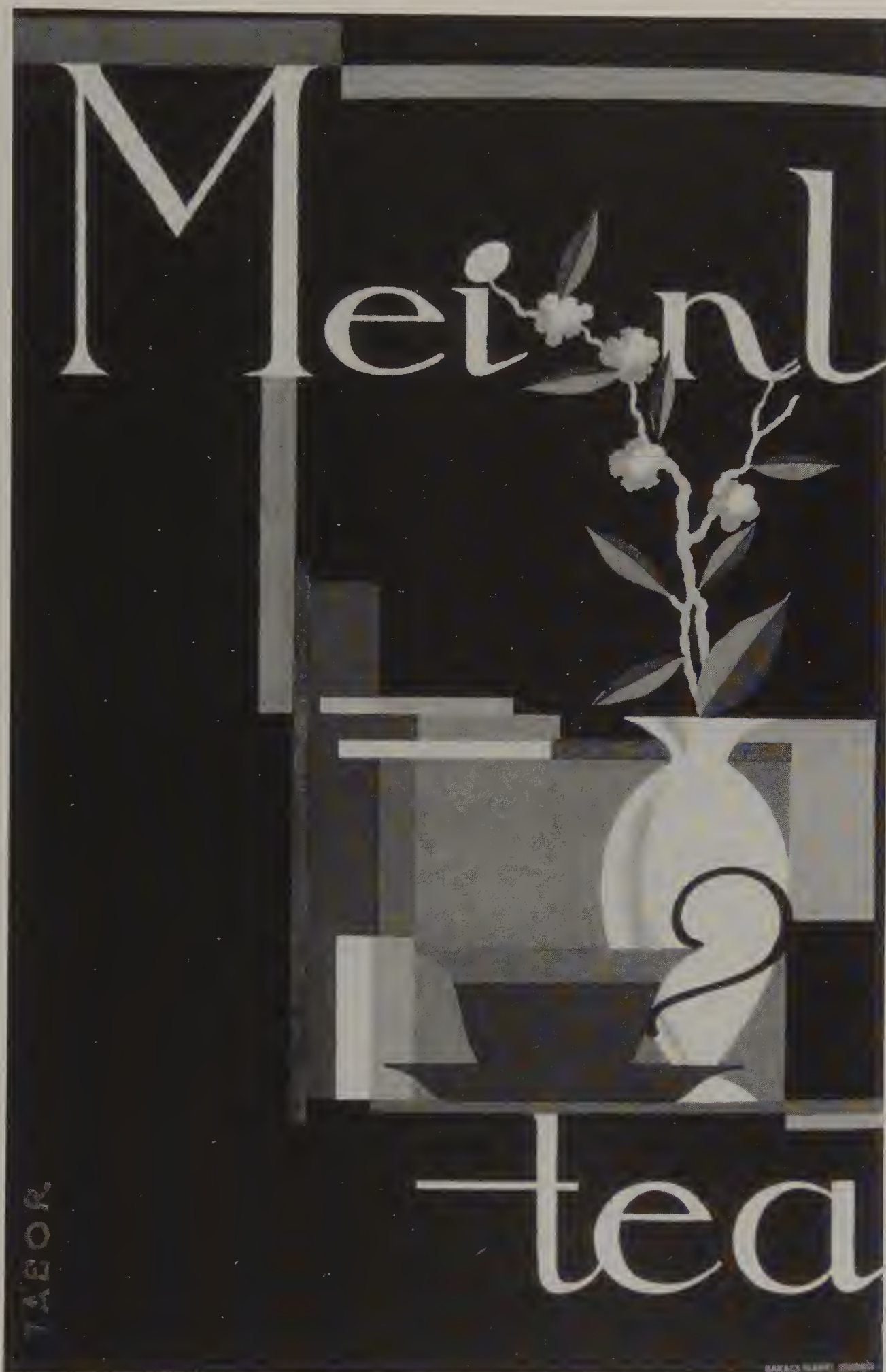


Figure 384. János Tábor, *Meinel Tea*, 1930. Lithograph, 94.5 × 61 cm. (formerly) Hungarian Advertising Agency Archives, Budapest. (From *100+1 Éves a Magyar Plakat*, exh. cat., Budapest, 1986.)

Maps



Map 1. Die Vereinigten Staaten von Gross-Österreich (The United States of Greater Austria-Hungary), ca. 1913, Dietrich Reimer. Collection of the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.



Zeichen-Erklärung:

Jede Farbe stellt je einen Glied = Einzel-Teil oder Nationalstaat des gross-österreichischen Bundes dar

Die schraffierten Stellen (▨) bedeuten (meist deutsche) Enklaven, die auch inmitten der einzelnen Nationalstaaten national berechtigt werden könnten.

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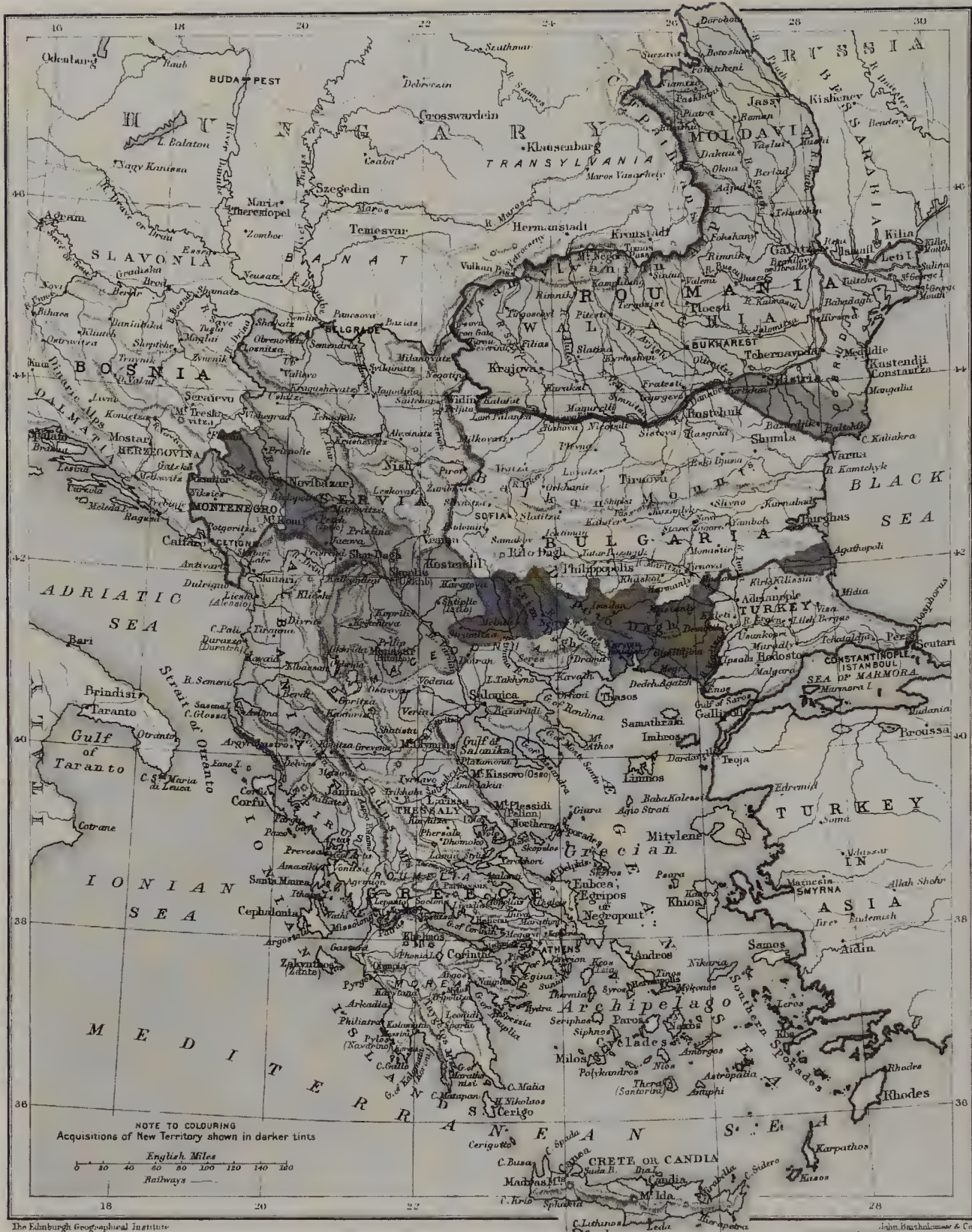
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Map 2. Poland, 1921, Matthews-Northrup Works and Funk & Wagnalls Company. Collection of the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.



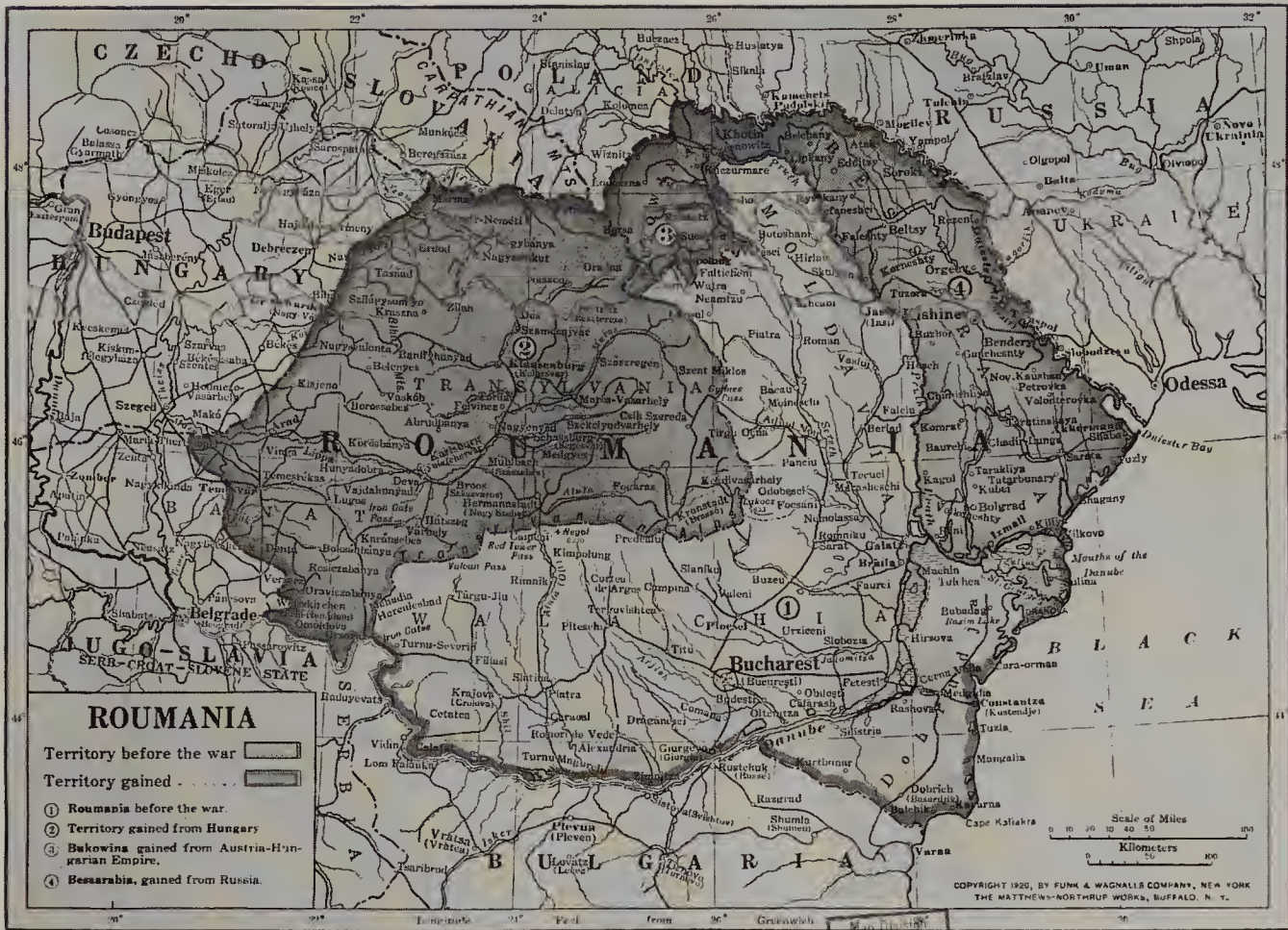
Map 3. Generalkarte der Balkanhalbinsel (General Map of the Balkan Peninsula), ca. 1878, following the Treaty of Berlin, F. Handtke. Collection of the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.



Map 4. The Balkan States, ca. 1913. The Edinburgh Geographical Institute and the Statesman's Year Book. Collection of the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.



Map 5. Südost-Europa (Southeast Europe), 1914. K. Peucker. Collection of the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.



Map 6. Roumania, 1920. Matthews-Northrup Works and Funk & Wagnalls Company. Collection of the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. The territories of present-day Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus that earlier belonged to other states (or political entities) during the period of this study are discussed in the context of Poland and Lithuania, the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia, and Hungary. For example, western Ukraine is appropriately examined in the context of pre-1940 Poland, of which it was an integral part politically, historically, and culturally.

The present volume excludes from its overview the classical modern art of Greece and European Turkey, whose post-World War II history has assigned them politically (if not culturally) to the West. Avant-garde movements that took place there could be assessed equally in an Aegean/Anatolian context.

The exclusion of Bulgaria is motivated by the relative modesty of its artistic achievements as well as by economy: Many of the significant issues to which a discussion of its modern art would give rise are addressed in the chapter on the southern Balkans, particularly in the section devoted to Macedonia.

Also excluded from this study is Finland. Although it remained under tsarist rule for much of the period under discussion, Finnish political, historical, and cultural circumstances depart categorically from those investigated here. Moreover, a study of Finland's signal cultural achievements and its principal artists belongs in the context of Scandinavia rather than that of eastern Europe.

2. In the extensive literature on the topic, two recent publications, both originally exhibition catalogs in New York and Berlin, respectively, can be cited: *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915–1932* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1992); Irina Antonowa and Jörn Merkert, eds., *Berlin–Moscow: Bildende Kunst, Photographie, Architektur, Theater, Literatur, Musik, Film* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur, 1995).
3. Here a well-known example is Kazimir Malevich, the understanding of whose work has been enriched

through recent examinations of his place within the history of Polish and Ukrainian modern art – and not simply as a pivotal personality in the genesis of Russian modernism.

4. For a consideration of such practices, see the discussion of Macedonia in Chapter 4.

I. THE CZECH LANDS

1. From 1867 to the end of the Habsburg imperium in 1918, the Czech lands included the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Moravia, and the southern part of the Duchy of Silesia. Although administered as separate crown lands from Vienna, these three regions constituted an informal political entity and culturally distinctive region.

Bohemia both profited and suffered in its status as one of the three kingdoms within the non-Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy. In the 1870s in particular, during a singularly difficult decade for the Austrians, hopes for a national renaissance of Czech culture, language, and increased political autonomy blossomed, only to be frustrated. For ultimately, the Kingdom of Bohemia would remain subject to Vienna as one of seventeen crown lands that constituted “Austria,” along with the other two Habsburg kingdoms of Dalmatia and Galicia-Lodomeria; the two archduchies of Lower Austria and Upper Austria; the six duchies of Bukovina, Carinthia, Carniola, Salzburg, Silesia, and Styria; the two margraviates of Istria and Moravia; the three counties of Gorizia-Gradisca, Tyrol, and Vorarlberg; and the “town” of Trieste [see Map 1]. (Unlike the Kingdom of Hungary, “Austria” did not have its own name but was officially known in a corporate form as the “kingdoms and crown lands represented in the imperial parliament.” Its more prosaic designation was merely Cis-Leithania – that is, “this side” of the modest Leitha River, which formed the border between “Austria” and Hungary.)

2. The Luxembourg kings Charles IV (1316–78) and his son Wenceslaus IV (1361–1419) chose Prague as the seat of their dynastic imperial court. Ferdinand I (1503–64) was the first of the Habsburgs to rule the Holy Roman Empire from that city. The principal imperial residence remained there until 1611, when the court was evacuated to Vienna. Following the sack of Prague by Swedish troops near the end of the Thirty Years War (ca. 1648), the former imperial seat lost its political and cultural preeminence, not to be recovered until the modern age.
3. Slovakia (its capital, Bratislava, being Pressburg to the Austrians and Pózsöny to the Hungarians, whose coronation city it had long been) was another matter of contention between Czechs and Hungarians. Directly subject to Budapest, Slovakia (Upper Hungary) was “claimed” also by Slavic chauvinists in the contiguous Czech lands.
4. In 1919 Czech troops invaded Hungary with the active encouragement of the victorious Western powers. Although the Czech army was enlisted to oust the communist régime of Béla Kun, it is likely that the promise of being awarded Slovakia – stipulated in one of the peace treaties ending World War I then being written – was also an incentive.

Equally vexing for the Czechs was the status of the Slovaks, who for almost a millennium had been dominated by Hungary, to which Slovak nobles remained mostly loyal despite waves of Magyarization (beginning as early as 1792 and reaching a crescendo in the last decades of the nineteenth century). The cultural nationalism manifested linguistically (not politically) by Slovakia’s small intelligentsia ran counter to Czech linguistic aspirations. Those who advocated the literary use of Czech rarely acknowledged Slovakian as a language; at most it was perceived in Prague as a dialect of the dominant Czech language, which many in Bohemia and some in Slovakia saw as a culturally unifying voice among the non-Polish “western Slavs.”

From the middle of the nineteenth century, significant numbers of nationalist Czechs and some Slovak nationalists evinced a form of irredentism (based on shared ethnicity, “common” language, and parallel political subjecthood) favoring a cultural Czech–Slovak union – a confederation that would assume a political reality in the wake of the dissolution of the Habsburg empire and the postwar conflict with Hungary (see Chapter 6, § “The Revolutionary Avant-Garde”).

5. As was the case with many other “nations” of central, southeastern, and eastern Europe, only in the early nineteenth century did the national language, Czech, serve as the foundation for a national literature. In Bohemia the Czech clergy and intelligentsia played a principal role in the revival of the Czech language and articulation of the national literature, as well as constituting the backbone of the National Museum membership. By 1880, following the in-

flux of tens of thousands of Czech speakers from the countryside, coincident with the industrialization of Bohemia, the German population of Prague (which had been mainly a German-speaking city) fell to only 13.5 percent, although that relatively small number still exerted an overwhelming influence on the economy. A major role in the expression of a Czech identity even before the establishment of the National Museum (and its journal, which anteceded the museum itself) was played by the National Theater, founded in Prague in 1868 and opened in 1881. Following a disastrous fire two months after its inauguration, a new building was funded by public subscription in 1883.

6. The Society of Patriotic Friends of Art (Společnost vlasteneckých Přátel umění) was founded in February 1796 to assume the role of patron of “high art,” which had been exercised by the imperial court before its removal to Vienna. Through its manifold activities the society tried to reverse, or at least arrest, the decline of artistic taste that had ensued as a result of the policies of Joseph II (1741–90). The Habsburg emperor’s various programs to improve the state of general education had cost Prague dearly. The collection at the royal castle had been ordered sold at auction in 1782, and in 1784 the emperor had secularized the monasteries and dispersed their rich artistic holdings. Soon afterward the throne had precipitated the sale of the extraordinary art collections of the Wallenstein, Stranka, and Černin families, to the benefit of the royal courts in Dresden and Vienna. The traditional artistic education had been disrupted by Joseph’s dissolution of the guilds in 1783, leaving a lacuna the society sought to fill through launching a formal academic program.

Comprising German and Bohemian aristocrats, only a few of whom were concerned about the status of nationalities, the society rarely took a decisive corporate position on the issue. When it came to caring for local historical monuments, however, the Czech members of the society played an active part.

7. By the 1820s the academy was being censured by progressive artists for its conservative pedagogy and outdated methods. The teaching program reflected the fundamentally conservative tastes of the society’s aristocratic membership.
8. An 1809 inventory lists 1,057 paintings, most of which were loans from Bohemia’s nobility. Not until the mid-1830s was a permanent collection established, mainly on the bases of gifts and modest purchases.
9. The society was much more interested in the immediate need of acquiring collections of art on behalf of the nation than in creating programs to support emerging artists. The Gallery of Living Artists that was established during its early years gave modest assistance primarily through providing an exhibition venue, rather than through stipends.

10. For example, the Sokol (Falcon) movement, founded in the wake of the 1848 revolution and led by the art historian Miroslav Tyrš, was a self-help association for the improvement of Czech bodies (through promoting physical exercise) and minds (through intellectual activities, including the study of art).
11. Kramář (1877–1960) had been a student of Alois Riegl's in Vienna. Following his studies of art and art history in Prague, he was by 1911 in frequent contact with the leading art dealer of cubism in Paris, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. Through Kahnweiler he met Pablo Picasso, and through Picasso many of the other cubists. Kramář's collection soon included important works by Picasso, Georges Braque, André Derain, and other modernists. His extensive holdings form the kernel of Prague's National Gallery collection of classical modern art.
12. A succinct discussion of nationalism in nineteenth-century Bohemia can be found in Jiří Kořalka, "Fünf Tendenzen einer modernen nationalen Entwicklung in Böhmen," *Österreichische Osthefte* (1980), pp. 199–213.
13. The Vienna World's Fair of 1873 represents a powerful early example of the contention between the German and Czech artists' groups. As part of a program of passive resistance to Austrian authority, leading Czech politicians (especially those affiliated with the "Old Czech" movement) called for a boycott of the "German" fair by Czech artists, who as subjects of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy would necessarily exhibit in the Austro-Hungarian pavilion. By supporting the boycott, artists could demonstrate their commitment to the "national awakening" being led in large part by playwrights associated with the newly established Czech National Theater in Prague.
14. The Habsburg decision to promote free cultural expression among its subject peoples was a deliberate policy to undermine the growing political resistance among national minorities to imperial rule. (The policy was especially effective in Slovenia; see Chapter 4, § "Slovenia.")
15. The emperor signed decrees establishing the Modern Gallery in 1901 and 1902; it opened in 1905 to the public. As pointed out by Roman Prahl ("Václav Brožík's *Ferdinand I among His Artists: On Patronage in Bohemia Around 1900*," *Bulletin of the National Gallery in Prague* 1 [1991], p. 91), the emperor likely created the Modern Gallery as a result of demands submitted by boycotting Czech representatives to the federal parliament. Nevertheless, the emperor's decision to give parity to the two nationalities was foiled by Czech ambitions.
16. As is often the case with organizing institutions, the Mánes Union was unable to retain the loyalties of all avant-garde artists all of the time. Especially in the years between 1909 and 1914, many modernist artists appeared to have reservations about being closely associated with the group. During the 1920s and 1930s as well, other artistic formations competed with Mánes for the allegiance of the avant-garde.
17. Kupka's signal contributions to contemporaneous Czech art were acknowledged officially upon the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. In 1918, Kupka was made a professor at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts, an appointment that (from 1920) he was able to fulfill while continuing to reside in Paris, where he supervised Czech scholarship students who journeyed to Paris to further their education. The state appointment lasted as long as the country's independence; that is, until 1939.
18. The description is based on that of Jaroslav Anděl in "In Search of Redemption: Visions of Beginning and End," in *Czech Modernism, 1900–1945* (exh. cat., Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1990), p. 15; hereafter cited as *Czech Modernism*.
19. The other prints often represent figures in metaphysical isolation, a state commensurate with Prague's roughly contemporaneous advanced literature – for example, that of Gustav Meyrinck, Jakub Deml, and Jiří Karásek – and slightly later by Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel, Max Brod, and others.
20. Astrological concerns were common currency in Prague during these years and were presented with striking results by, for example, František Dvořák (1862–1927).
21. Comparable with these efforts are the abstract parallels between music and nonobjective art pioneered in Lithuania by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis. See Chapter 2, n. 76.
22. Parallels can be drawn also between Kupka and abstract artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Kazimir Malevich, both of whom were conversant with anthroposophy and similar spiritualist theories. Like Kandinsky and Mondrian, Kupka had first experienced the influence of anthroposophy before traveling abroad (through his early contact with the theosophical circle known familiarly as Dvořáková), and their respective sojourns in Paris – Kandinsky's in 1906, Mondrian's before the outbreak of World War I, and Kupka's since 1892 – may well have deepened their interest through exposure to the various strains of anthroposophy then popular within several artists' circles in Paris.
23. Not only was there a divergence in the social, aesthetic, and political programs to which each tied his abstract written theories and canvases, but Kupka's formal concerns differed markedly from Mondrian's version of neoplasticism.
24. Kupka's preoccupation with metaphysical matters led him to rework his paintings, often over many years. Thus, precise dating of the works discussed can be difficult.
25. Following a period of training at Prague's School of Decorative Arts (1892–97), Preissig lived for six years in Vienna, Munich, and Paris. In 1910 he emigrated to the United States, where he remained until re-

- turning to Czechoslovakia in 1930 or 1931. A member of the resistance during World War II, Preissig was captured by the Germans and spent the last months of his life imprisoned at Dachau.
26. Throughout his stay in the United States and persisting during his period of residence in Prague in the 1930s, Preissig continued to experiment, using nature as raw material in his art. In numerous collages from those years, he assembled on supports manufactured artifacts and natural substances, including pine needles, plant roots, and leaves. He also invented means by which to transfer prints from plant matter. Such experimentation led Preissig to explore a host of what were then “new” techniques for making art – for example, drawing on industrial materials, “painting” by pouring or dripping pigment directly onto canvas or other supports, and photographing through various mechanical apparatus (other than cameras).
 27. See “Tvrdošíjní and Devětsil” later in this chapter and also Chapter 2, n. 105.
 28. See Anděl, “In Search of Redemption,” in *Czech Modernism*, p. 17.
 29. These psychological and intellectual tendencies provided a receptive environment for the 1902 exhibition in Prague of the work of Auguste Rodin, whose powerfully emotive sculpture was widely perceived as congruent with the Czech modernists’ spiritual longings. Equally influential on the artistic formation of the younger generation was a 1902 exhibition in Munich, which brought to the fore the highly charged work of the Dutch symbolist Jan Toorop, whose serpentine line seemed to lead the way to deeper emotional realms.
 30. Munch traveled to Prague to see his retrospective exhibition of approximately 120 works (75 of which were oil paintings). The enthusiastic reception of his art in Prague was paralleled in other cities as well – in particular, when presented in Poland and interpreted by Stanisław Przybyszewski.
 31. Traditionalist currents were represented in the work of Antonín Slaviček, Antonín Hudeček, Jan Preisler, František Kaván, and Max Švabinský.
 32. Filla, “Cesta tvořivosti,” in *Úvahy o výtvarném umění* (Prague, 1948), p. 407; quoted in Miroslav Lamač, *Osmá a Skupina: Výtvarných umělců, 1907–1917* (Prague, 1988), p. 527; reprinted with variation from the original 1948 text in Miroslav Lamač, “Czech Cubism: Points of Departure and Resolution,” in *Czech Modernism*, p. 55.
 33. The exhibition opened on 18 April 1907 to overwhelming negative criticism. Max Brod was among the few who reacted positively in print (“Jaro v Praze,” *Die Gegenwart* [1907], pp. 316–17).
 34. In August 1911 Walden mounted an exhibition that included work by Kubišta.
 35. See the section “Cubism and Skupina” later in this chapter.
 36. See Karel Čapek, “K nějmłodši nemecké poezii,” in *Přehled* (Survey of the News), 31 October and 7 November 1913.
 37. The second exhibition of Osmá did not include works by Horb, who had died a few months before; nor did it show works by Kubín, who was at the time in Paris. Their places were taken by Vincenc Beneš and Linka Scheithauerová, the future wife of Antonín Procházka.
 38. Kubišta was fascinated by color theory and drew on the writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Michel Chevreul, and Emil Utitz. He even copied Goethe’s color chart and added copious observations. Kubišta was particularly interested in the associative emotional qualities of color. Often, as here, he would manipulate the colors into a pattern as if orchestrating the viewer’s emotional response.
 39. To recognize Filla’s shift in focus from primarily formal concerns to emotional impact, we need only compare his cardplayers with versions by Paul Cézanne, whom the Czech artist deeply admired and whose spirit dominated the second exhibition of Osmá (according to the artist and critic Václav Špála).
 40. Czech expressionism rarely manifested ideological or programmatic cohesion as did the better-known German variants. Some “expressionist” artists, such as František Bílek (1872–1941) and Josef Váchal (1884–1969), adapted their own version of Czech symbolism to the heightened emotional tenor of expressionism, while many others inflected expressionism into a singularly Czech form of cubism (see the upcoming § “Cubism and Skupina”).
(František Bílek, although known today primarily as a Jugendstil sculptor, was remarkably productive as a draftsman, book designer, and architect, as well as a painter, writer, and aesthetic theorist. Seeking to reveal the “soul” of nature [and, by implication, of humanity] primarily through working with wood, Bílek often employed tree imagery to communicate his melancholic and fundamentally religious views on the life cycle and stages of spiritual growth. In his *Parable of the Great Decline of the Czechs* [see Fig. 1], the artist worked on both the front and back sides of the tree trunk as if to root symbolically the fate of the Czech nation in the entire cycle of nature.)
 - The influence of French postimpressionism on Czech expressionists was reinforced through the important exhibition mounted by the Mánes Union in 1907, following the first exhibition of Osmá. In addition to the French impressionists (Claude Monet, Édouard Manet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Paul Signac), numerous works by Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and Émile Bernard were displayed.
 41. Špála based several works of 1907 on his own copies (several preserved in the City Gallery of Prague) of Munch’s exhibited paintings.
 42. See the section “Cubism and Skupina.”

43. Quoted in Karel Srp, Jr., "Savage Painting and Inward Form: Jan Zrzavý's Symbolic Expressionism," in *Expresionismus a české umění, 1905–1927* (exh. cat., Prague: Národní galerie, 1994), p. 352 (English summary); hereafter cited as *Expresionismus*.
44. Quoted in *ibid.* (English summary).
45. The art-historical terminology for the Czech versions of expressionism, cubism, and cubo-expressionism differs from labels conventionally applied to Russian, French, German, and western European art. Much of the vocabulary used in the present chapter conforms to that in *Expresionismus*.
46. Born in Bohemia, Gutfreund studied at the Prague School of Decorative Arts (1906–9) before entering Émile Bourdelle's Parisian studio at La Grande Chaumière (1909–10). By 1911 he was back in Prague, where he remained until 1914. Returning to Paris, Gutfreund enlisted in the French Foreign Legion and was soon incarcerated for insubordination. After spending most of World War I in an internment camp, he elected to remain in France after the armistice. He was back in Czechoslovakia in 1920, working productively until 1927, when he drowned in the Vltava.
47. In this and other contemporaneous work, Gutfreund invoked stylistically the tradition of Bohemian baroque sculpture. The dynamic expression, implied movement, and highly charged passions that Gutfreund admired in the baroque figures of Ferdinand Maximilian Brokoff (1688–1731) were qualities he cherished also in Gothic carving. Equally influential on Gutfreund's aesthetic expression during this period was the painting of El Greco. For a concise analysis of Gutfreund's cubist sculpture, see Tomáš Vlček, "Otto Gutfreund," in *1909–1925, Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur* (exh. cat., Düsseldorf: Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1991), pp. 186–201; hereafter cited as *Kubismus*.
48. Works by Picasso, Emil-Othon Friesz, and André Derain, along with numerous canvases by German expressionists, were displayed at the end of 1912 in the context of the second exhibition of Skupina. In 1913 and again in 1914, cubist work by Picasso, Braque, and Juan Gris appeared in the group's exhibitions.
49. Parallels can be drawn with Vladimir Tatlin and Ivan Puni, whose contemporaneous "constructivist" (*avant la lettre*) sculpture betrays many formal similarities to Gutfreund's tabletop series.
50. See Jaromír Zemina, "Otto Gutfreund: Gutfreunds Weg zum Absoluten," in Ryszard Stanisławski and Christoph Brockhaus, eds., *Europa, Europa: Das Jahrhundert der Avantgarde in Mittel- und Osteuropa* (exh. cat., Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, 1994), vol. 1, p. 117.
51. See Vojtěch Lahoda, "Otakar Kubín," in *Kubismus*, p. 176.
52. Skupina included a significant number of architects, who collectively created Europe's most adventure-
some cubist buildings, interior design, and applied arts. For discussion of the signal contributions of Czech cubism to modern architecture and design, see Alexander von Vegesack, *Tschechischer Kubismus: Architektur und Design, 1910–1925* (Weil am Rhein: Vitra Design Museum, 1991), pp. 96–111; Jiri Svestka and Tomáš Vlček, *Kubismus*, *passim*; and *Expresionismus*, *passim*.
53. For a concise assessment of the journal, see Vojtěch Lahoda, "Expression, Edge, and Cube: Expressionism and Cubo-expressionism," in *Expresionismus*, p. 350 (English summary).
54. Among the exhibitions outside the Kingdom of Bohemia for which Skupina organized the Czech contributions were the Sonderbund in Cologne, the Erster deutscher Herbstsalon and the Neue Secession in Berlin, and countless showings at galleries of leading dealers (Herwarth Walden's Der Sturm, Hans Goltz's Salon Neue Kunst in Munich, and others in Vienna, Moscow, Paris, Budapest, Düsseldorf, and Dresden).
With the outbreak of war and its resultant isolation of the Czech avant-garde members from one another, Skupina's activities came to a practical end, although the group continued to exist formally until 1917.
55. Mounted in Prague during February and March 1914 under the auspices of the Mánes Union was a highly significant exhibition of modern art (Mánes's forty-fifth) in which were represented Constantin Brâncuși, Piet Mondrian, Robert Delaunay, Alexander Archipenko, Raoul Dufy, Albert Gleizes, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Emil-Othon Friesz, Jean Metzinger, Roger de la Fresnaye, Louis Marcoussis, and others from western, central, and eastern Europe – along with Skupina adherents. That Mánes would invite the latter to participate in its exhibition is notable, as Skupina had been founded three years earlier by musicians, painters, architects, art critics, and sculptors seceding from Mánes in order to establish an independent, cubist-oriented association.
56. Although best known as a painter, Procházka was active as a cubist designer. As early as 1911 he designed cubist furniture and during the years of World War I made numerous sketches for cubist vases, lamps, bookcases, and writing desks. As an architect, he introduced a suggestive mixture of expressionism (based on the crystal forms he knew from the texts of German expressionist theorists) and cubist details. For a good overview of Procházka's creative artistic range, see Vojtěch Lahoda, "Antonín Procházka," in *Kubismus*, pp. 136–57.
57. Like Gutfreund, Procházka was fascinated with Bohemian Gothic sculpture and central European baroque painting. These visual sources functioned collectively as a generalized cultural point of departure for Procházka's cubo-expressionism.
58. See Lahoda, "Antonín Procházka," in *Kubismus*, p. 142, n. 24.

59. For a synopsis of the critical reaction to Czech cubo-expressionism, see Lahoda, "Expression, Edge and Cube," in *Expresionismus*, esp. pp. 349–50 (English summary).
60. An essay on that subject appeared originally in 1912 (reprinted in English in *Bohumil Kubišta, 1884–1918* [exh. cat., Národní galerie, Prague, 1993; with an essay by Mahulena Nešlehová], pp. 61–3; hereafter cited as *Kubišta*). As Kubišta made clear here and elsewhere, the modern artist's primary concern is the spiritual content of new forms. Thus, rather than merely appropriating cubist or futurist formal vocabulary, the painter, sculptor, architect, or designer should "pursue his own way of getting to know the most ordinary and the most transient of things, guided by his own inner voice and profoundly convinced of his truth." Quoted in Mahulena Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta* (Prague, 1993), p. 313; hereafter cited as *Bohumil Kubišta*.
61. See Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst insbesondere in der Malerei* (Munich: R. Piper, 1912).
62. The carefully controlled composition, reinforced by the sight lines among the figures, was of particular importance to Kubišta, who had an abiding interest in geometric theories (as revelatory of the hidden order of nature) and maintained a lifelong fascination with the spiritual dimension of geometrically symbolic forms.
63. Still-life painting did not capture the interest of Bohemian artists before about 1908, and even during the mature period of cubo-expressionism, still lifes had limited appeal compared with self-portraiture, landscapes, and other genres.
64. In a letter to Jan Zrzavý of 28 March 1915, Kubišta confirmed: "My main concern is the spiritual content of the new form. [What Picasso contributed] is by now a fact of common knowledge, as it were, on the grounds of which one should proceed into the spiritual sphere." Quoted in *Kubišta*, p. 19.
65. The Picasso head was exhibited in Prague in 1913 at the fourth Skupina show.
66. Kubišta coined the word *penetrism* in 1913 in an essay titled "Nutnost Kritiky" (The Necessity of Criticism; reprinted with an English translation in *Kubišta*, pp. 63–4).
67. See Anděl, "In Search of Redemption," in *Czech Modernism*, p. 24; see also n. 60 above.
68. For the importance of the Sumerian sketches, see Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, pp. 313–14.
69. Having survived World War I, Kubišta perished at age thirty-four in the influenza epidemic of 1918.
70. Kubišta had enlisted in the armed services of the Habsburg emperor less out of loyalty than to provide for himself materially, something he was unable to accomplish by making art. In 1913, when on military duty in Pula, Kubišta executed a series of war pictures in which he came close in style and intent to the futurism Filippo Tommaso Marinetti had energetically championed as the most engaged form of modern expression. Of the works from that year, perhaps the most fully futurist is his explosive *Coastal Guns in Combat with Ships* (National Gallery, Prague).
71. A comparable attitude was held by František Kupka and Vojtěch Preissig (see the earlier "Symbolic Beginnings"), and a similar formal scheme may have been employed by Kubišta in his *Saint Sebastian* (see Fig. 59).
72. For a structural analysis of the painting, see Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, pl. 152, p. 180.
73. Karel Srp, Jr., suggests (in "Jan Zrzavý," in *Kubismus*, p. 178) that by 1915 the teacher–student relationship had changed to the degree that Kubišta was inspired by the affecting symbolism of Zrzavý.
74. For discussion of the spiritual importance of crystalline forms for the Czech avant-garde, see Lahoda, "Expression, Edge, and Cube," in *Expresionismus*, pp. 348–9 (English summary).
75. Zrzavý's treatment of the ground recalls that in the *Vyšší Brod Altarpiece*, a monument of Bohemian Gothic art that remains popular with the public and scholars.
76. Zrzavý was deeply committed to spiritual symbolism and joined as a founding member the short-lived (1910–12) group called Sursum (Latin for "lift up," as in the passage from the mass, "Lift Up Your Hearts"). Sursum exhibited its late symbolist canvases in Brno (1910) and Prague (1912; with the participation of Zrzavý) before its dissolution.
77. Quoted in Anděl, "In Search of Redemption," in *Czech Modernism*, p. 24 (published originally in 1918).
78. In 1912 Čapek left Skupina and, along with his brother Karel, Zrzavý, and Špála, joined the Mánes Union. Later published works include an article on Negro sculpture (in *Červen* 1 [June 1918–19], pp. 251–3) and a major study of primitive art, *Umění přírodních národů* (Prague, 1938).
79. For a reference to the role of magic among the Czech avant-garde, specific to Čapek, see Anděl, "In Search of Redemption," in *Czech Modernism*, pp. 24–5 and n. 51.
80. Quoted in *ibid.*, n. 53 (from a letter to Čapek's future wife dated 8 April 1913).
81. Čapek published an essay bearing this title ("Tvořivá povaha moderní doby") in *Volné směry* 7, nos. 4–5 (1913), pp. 112–30.
82. Like Malevich's (later) depictions of peasants, which Čapek's sailors resemble, these images carried for the Czech artist profound symbolic associations. By virtue of their negotiating between land and water, the figures may suggest the metaphysical depths that marines traverse. Karel Srp, Jr., points out (in "Josef Čapek," in *Kubismus*, pp. 158–65) that the sailor images may be imaginative self-portraits.
83. Folk imagery, so important to the evolution of modern art in the Baltic countries and elsewhere in east-central and eastern Europe, figures less compellingly in the generation of modern Czech art; however,

- it should not be dismissed. As in other countries covered in the present study, the systematic investigation of the decorative arts in Bohemia – especially ceramics and paintings on glass (*Hinterglasbilder*) – was an essential aspect of the ethnographic studies undertaken to understand the sources of Czech culture better. The widespread interest in folk heritage had reached a popular high point in 1895, when a large ethnographic exhibition was mounted in Prague. The resonance from this exhibition was still felt decades later during the time Špála turned to folk figures for his subjects.
84. Much of the theoretical foundation of the group was provided in the numerous journal articles published by the aesthetician and art historian Václav Nebeský. For a discussion of Nebeský's role in explicating the character of Tvrdošíjní, see Karel Srp, Jr., "Václav Nebeský and the Stubborns," in *Expresionismus*, pp. 357–9 (English summary).
 85. The third exhibition was mounted in Prague in March 1921 and for the first time included works by Paul Klee and Otto Dix. During the same year lectures were given in the Czechoslovak capital by Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.
 86. As quoted and discussed in Srp, "Václav Nebeský," in *Expresionismus*, p. 358 (English summary).
 87. Noteworthy in the substantial scholarly literature on Teige is the special double issue of *Umění* (vol. 43, nos. 1–2, 1995), which presents to an English-reading audience many articles drawn from the presentations delivered at the international colloquium "Karel Teige and the European Avant-Garde," held in Prague in March 1994.
 88. The negative assessment was set forth in a lecture delivered in Brno on 26 February 1922; see Karel Srp, Jr., "Tvrdošíjní a Devětsil," *Umění* 35 (1987), pp. 54–67.
 89. Although postwar expressionism had lost much of the avant-garde flair that characterized its activities from roughly 1907 to 1917, it continued to be a creative vehicle through the 1920s, especially in the fields of book design, graphics, and architecture. In painting and sculpture, however, its earlier claim to avant-garde exclusivity was successfully challenged by Devětsil.
 90. Since there is no known explanation for the movement's title, the translation of *devětsil* into English has long presented ambiguities. "Devětsil" is the Czech name for the butterbur, a plant with huge, roundish leaves and knobbed masses of flower heads that was widely believed to have magic properties. The word also means "nine power," which may symbolize the different branches of art (the Muses).
 91. See Alena Pomajzlová, "Man and the World: 1920s Expressionism," in *Expresionismus*, pp. 355–7 (English summary).
 92. In November and December 1923 Devětsil held its first group exhibition, the Bazaar of Modern Art. The rich mixture of exhibited items – architectural projects, stage designs, photographs, drawings, paintings, and a host of dada-inspired objects and nonart materials – heralded the presence of Teige, Šíma, Štyrský, and Toyen as the most innovative of Czech artists. In March 1923 Tvrdošíjní had organized its last group exhibition, thereby leaving the stage open for Devětsil's public debut.
 93. Photography (film in particular) played a key role in Devětsil's aesthetic development and expression. Among numerous recent studies in English of Czech film and photography, and their place within the avant-garde, are the essays (and bibliography) in *Czech Modernism*, esp. pp. 87–207; and Michal Bregant, "Poems in Light and Darkness: The Films and Non-Films of the Czech Avant-Garde," in *Umění* 43, nos. 1–2 (1995), pp. 52–5.
 94. As the basic building block of conventional visual communication, the alphabet engaged the attention of many avant-garde movements throughout central and eastern Europe (and beyond). See Chapter 2, n. 105.
 95. Teige remained to the end of his creative life deeply committed to a radical restructuring of art and society. His engagement did not preclude – indeed, it frequently encouraged – a playful exploration of new modes, techniques, and technologies. Nor did politics hamper his development as one of the great visual poets of the interwar period.
 96. Among the artists whose work was invoked by Devětsil's picture-poets were Ivan Goll, El Lissitzky, and Vladimir Tatlin, on the one hand, and Man Ray, Le Corbusier, and Philippe Soupault, on the other.
See Karel Teige, "Poetism," *Guest*, nos. 9–10 (1924); and "Naše základna a naše cesta: Konstruktivismus a Poetismus," *Pásmo* 1 (September 1924). For an excellent analysis of Teige's unique conception of poetry and constructivism, see Stanisław Czekalski, "The Postcards from Utopia," *Umění* 43, nos. 1–2 (1995), pp. 40–4; hereafter cited as "Postcards."
 97. In 1926, Teige designed a cover for Guillaume Apollinaire's *Prsy Tiresiovy* (*Les Mamelles de Tirèsias* [Breasts of Tiresias]).
 98. Excerpted from Roman Jakobson, "What Is Poetry?" (originally published in 1933–4) in Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, eds., *Language in Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).
 99. Teige, "Poesie pro všech pět smyslů," *Pásmo* 2 (1925–6). See also Teige, "Manifest Poetismu," *Revue of Devětsil* (hereafter, *ReD*) 1, no. 9 (1928), pp. 317–35.
 100. See Czekalski, "Postcards."
 101. Seifert and Teige collaborated on several projects during the 1920s. Especially noteworthy was a Devětsil "film poem," *Mr. Ulysses and Other News* (1924), whose expressive cinematic fragmentation and remarkable emphasis on nonlinear spatial movement suggest the later work of Dziga Vertov (1896–1954).
 102. Significantly, *The Departure for Cythera* was published by Teige in his slim volume on film (*Film*, Prague,

- 1925), thereby reinforcing the avant-garde linkage between the picture-poem and contemporary cinema. In the volume also appeared Teige's important essay "O českém filmu" (pp. 68–72).
103. Teige's interest in and contribution to film has been examined by several scholars. Among the most sensitive studies are those by Michal Bregant, including his essay "Teigův film," in *Karel Teige, 1900–1951* (exh. cat., Prague: Galerie hlavního města Prahy, 1994), pp. 62–7; hereafter cited as *Karel Teige*.
104. See n. 102.
105. Befitting the present context, Marie Čermínová's adoption of "Toyen" as a nom de plume may well have been meant as an artistic artifice.
106. Paris exhibitions of artificialism were held in October, November, and December 1926 and in the winter of 1927–8. Artificialism was exhibited in Prague at the Aventinum Garret in June 1928 and there again in March 1930. Among the most important contemporary publications were the artificialist manifesto (*ReD* 1, no. 1 [October 1927], pp. 28–30; hereafter cited as *ReD27*), Teige's introduction to the Aventinum Garret exhibition catalog (1928), and Teige's essay of the same year concerning abstraction, surrealism, and artificialism (reprinted in *Avantgarda známá a neznámá* [Avant-Garde Known and Unknown], Prague, 1972).
107. Štyrský and Toyen, "Artificialism," *ReD27*. Excerpts in English appear in Tomáš Vlček, "Art between Social Crisis and Utopia: The Czech Contribution to the Development of the Avant-Garde Movement in East-Central Europe, 1910–1930," *Art Journal* 49(1), p. 33. For a complete English translation, see Štyrský and Toyen: *Artificialismus, 1926–1931*, with essays contributed by Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, Jr. (exh. cat., [Pardubice:] Východočeská galerie, [Karlový Vary:] Galerie umění, and [Prague:] Středočeská galerie, 1992), p. 57; hereafter cited as *Artificialismus*.
108. Adapted from Štyrský and Toyen, "Artificialism," *ReD27*.
109. *Ibid.*
110. This technique was explored by László Moholy-Nagy, Man Ray, and other pioneers of photograms whose work was championed in Devětsil's various publications. The painting with leaves and natural objects corresponds also to a method employed, with different objectives, earlier in the century by Vojtěch Preissig (see "Symbolic Beginnings").
111. "The title of a picture does not describe or name a topic, but it presents its character, and a directive to the emotions. The topic becomes identical with the picture." Excerpted from Štyrský and Toyen, "Artificialism," *ReD27*.
112. Štyrský's dream images attest to the increasing interest the artificialists had in the surrealist stress on dreams. From 1925 to 1940 Štyrský kept a record of his own; it was published in an illustrated volume titled *Sny* (Dreams), edited by František Šmejkal (Prague, 1970).
113. As Toyen and Štyrský worked together closely for more than twenty years, jointly developing artificialism, the freedom of expression espoused by the movement encouraged them to explore different forms and techniques. By 1927 Toyen began to darken her palette and experiment with pouring pigment directly onto the canvas (see, e.g., *In the Park* [1929; color illustration in *Artificialismus*, p. 32]). Building up layers of paint and modeling them with hand or brush, she would then carve out abstract shapes (see, e.g., *Wreck* [1927; illustration in *Artificialismus*, p. 23]). Her innovation constituted an elegant complement to Štyrský's continued emphasis on faded colors, transparency, and fantastic silhouettes.
114. Other founding members included the poets Pierre Jean Jouve, Roger Vailland, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, and René Daumal.
115. See the section "Tvrdošijní and Devětsil." There may have been a nationalistic dimension to Teige's antipathy toward surrealism. As František Šmejkal pointed out ("From Lyrical Metaphors to Symbols of Fate: Czech Surrealism of the 1930s," in *Czech Modernism*, p. 66), Teige's early publication of his *First Manifesto of Poetism* (1924) antedated by several months Breton's *First Surrealist Manifesto* – a fact that gave Devětsil "a certain feeling of priority, amplified by the awareness that Poetism was the first specifically Czech formulation of problems in avant-garde art, a formulation relatively free of foreign influences."
116. See Karel Teige's statements on Breton's surrealist revolution and on surrealist painting, both in *Zvěrokruh* 1 (November 1930), pp. 47–8.
117. In March 1935 Breton would travel to Prague to deliver a lecture, "The Surrealist Situation of the Object," under the auspices of the Mánes Union. He and Paul Éluard believed that Prague was an ideal site for surrealism, as the city was "wrapped in its legendary magic [and] is truly one of those cities that has been able, in a magnificent way, to fix and retain the poetic idea that is always more or less drifting aimlessly through space. . . . Seen from afar . . . it appears to us as the magical metropolis of old Europe. . . . Prague has nurtured within itself all the imagery and the enchantment of the past. . . ." Quoted in Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors to Symbols of Fate," in *Czech Modernism*, p. 65; original text in Breton's *Position politique du surréalisme* (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1972), pp. 121–2.
118. For an excellent, brief discussion (with bibliographical references) of the Surrealist Group in Prague, see Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors to Symbols of Fate," in *Czech Modernism*, esp. pp. 67–8.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
120. For a comprehensive analysis of this painting and its place in Štyrský's surrealist oeuvre, see Karel Srp, Jr., "The Anguish of Rebirth," *Umění* 42, no. 1 (1994),

pp. 74–84; hereafter cited as “Rebirth.” On this article is based much of the following discussion.

121. Otto Rank, *Das Trauma der Geburt* (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924).
122. Quoted in Srp, “Rebirth,” p. 75. The painting was exhibited in November and December 1936 by the Mánes Union.
123. See Bregant, *Karel Teige*, esp. pp. 137–51.
124. In Teige’s search for new modes of expression through which to manifest collectively his commitment to poetism, his engagement with surrealism, and his need for self-analysis, he turned in the mid-1930s to decalcomania, a means of applying ink or paint with a Rorschach-like result.

2. POLAND AND LITHUANIA

1. As a rule, the present text employs the English spelling of the politically dominant variant of a place name. Thus, whereas we use “Poznania” instead of (the Polish) “Poznań” or (the German) “Posen,” “Poznań” designates the capital of the province. Concerning the Lithuanian city of Vilnius – Vilna in Russian and German, and Wilno in Polish – see n. 70.
2. This entity was named for the Congress of Vienna, which met in 1815 to redraw the political boundaries of Europe following the defeat of Napoleon.
3. In the western territories considerable numbers of Protestant Germans were settled, chiefly as a result of a Prussian policy to colonize its region of Poland with a sect that would counterbalance Polish Catholicism. The north and east had large populations of Lithuanians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians, each developing its respective national self-consciousness distinct from that of the Poles who had formerly been their overlords. Throughout the south, especially in Teschen and Galicia, there were many Czechs, Austrians, and others from both nearby and distant Habsburg territories. Moreover, the Habsburg and Romanov Polish lands were heavily populated with Jews. In the territory of the former commonwealth, Jews constituted more than 10 percent of the total population; because of residency restrictions, however, they were concentrated in the market towns, where they were in the majority. In time, Jews would also constitute a significant minority of the principal cities – Warsaw, Vilnius, and Łódź among them.

Also to be noted are the populations of Polish speakers who lived in lands long incorporated into other countries (but that would become in the course of the twentieth century part of modern-day Poland). In East Prussia, especially in the Masurian areas, were pockets of Polish speakers whose link to the principal territories of Poland had been severed in the seventeenth century, when the Hohenzollern dynasty had established its suzerainty. And in Silesia, whose connection with Poland ended as early as the
- fourteenth century, there resided substantial numbers of Germanized Polish speakers.
4. One convention historians of central and eastern Europe invoke to determine nationality is a population’s primary linguistic usage. For Poland, this has singular relevance, given the suppression of the use of Polish by Russian and Prussian authorities and the resultant endowment of the language with nationalist purpose.
5. For a comprehensive discussion of the state of Polish society during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see R. F. Leslie, Antony Polonsky, Jan M. Ciechanowski, and Z. A. Pelczynski, *The History of Poland since 1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); hereafter cited as Leslie et al., *History*.
6. Unlike their counterparts in Baltic countries, Estonia and Latvia in particular, where the national culture was deeply rooted in the peasantry and its primeval religion and distinctive language – and hence preserved among them – the Poles defined their own as fundamentally a “high” culture. Polish scholars, artists, and patrons participated fully in creating and contributing to the fine-arts and humanist traditions, which had deep roots in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth from the period of the Renaissance and was continued even after the partitions. Folk art, as opposed to “high” art, was seldom seen as a legitimate source for the development and expression of a Polish culture, except at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century in Galicia. See nn. 19 and 68.
7. Neither the Poles nor the Hungarians were sympathetic to Ukrainian claims for an independent cultural identity to be created in territory each nation considered its own. The term for Ruthenian (*rusky*) being so similar to that for Russian (*ruscky*), Hungarian and Polish cultural nationalists and political irredentists often referred to things Ukrainian as Ruthenian as one means of denying the independent existence of Ukrainian culture.
8. Habsburg tolerance of local language, national customs, and freedom of religious expression was widespread during the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The Austrian strategy to secure the loyalty of its multinational subjects by such indulgences was quite successful – for example, in Slovenia – whereas lands under direct administration by the Hungarians did not enjoy comparable freedoms. Thus, the Austro-Hungarian Empire could not implement a uniform policy toward the treatment of its diverse subjects.
9. As a result of the relative tolerance of Austrian Poland, many Polish nationalists from Russian and Prussian provinces took refuge in Galicia. The Austrians often permitted these political and social radicals to reside temporarily in Cracow and Lwów, less as a generous gesture than as a calculated political

- decision through which to undermine Russian or German domestic security.
10. These policies were introduced into the frontier province of Poznań as well as into the Prussian lands of Upper Silesia, East Prussia, and Pomerania.
 11. From 1887 the teaching of English was substituted for Polish as a compulsory subject in West Prussia, East Prussia, and Poznań, thereby limiting further the status of Polish cultural expression and appreciation.
 12. Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* was waged against the Poles in the German empire's eastern provinces, as well as in the Catholic areas of Germany (the principal focus of his campaign). The archbishop of Poznań and primate of Poland, Mieszcysław Halka Ledóchowski, himself no Polish nationalist, made compromises with Bismarck in the hope of preserving some of the Church's prerogatives. When he offered a temperate defense against German Protestant encroachment, primarily in the area of education, he was imprisoned for it (in 1874), and the Catholic Church became for the first time in Poznań a focus for Polish nationalism. In 1886 Pope Leo XIII appointed a German as primate of Poland, and Archbishop Julius Dinder ensured that Bismarck's policies were carried out.
 13. Upper Silesia was regarded by both Germans and Poles as lying outside the "accepted" boundaries of the "Polish Republic."
 14. The colonization policy was pursued from 1886. Despite the hundreds of millions of marks appropriated, only several tens of thousands of colonists were settled; and during the early years of the twentieth century, more land was sold by Germans to Poles than was sold by Polish landowners to German settlers. See Leslie et al., *History*, pp. 32–5.
 15. See the section "Early Modern Art in Polish Galicia."
 16. This limited industrialization bound the kingdom of Poland even more tightly to Russia, as only the empire of the tsar was prepared to accept industrial goods produced in the Polish kingdom, rigid tariffs effectively barring the import of (Russian) Polish products by the contiguous empires of Germany and Austria-Hungary.
 17. Much of the scholarship on Polish early modern art has focused on a particular motif, "the iconography of political conflict," which juxtaposes themes representing the national culture in terms of the "tragedy of defeat" or in terms of "visions of freedom and hope." The former often takes on a christological dimension and was particularly popular following the Winter (sometimes known as the January) Insurrection (1863–4), whereas the latter invokes legendary heroes of Poland's medieval and Renaissance past, such as King Boleslav the Brave and even modern figures of triumph, such as Napoleon.
 18. The standard text on early modernism in Poland remains Wiesław Juszczak and M. Liczbińska, *Malarstwo polskie: Modernizm* (Warsaw: Auriga, 1977).
 19. Also unique to the Polish context was the embattled place of painting – relative to the secure tradition of literature – in the endeavor to conserve, create, and express the national culture. In 1857 Julian Klaczko argued in the famous and controversial article "Sztuka polska" (Polish Art) [in *Wiadomości Polskie* in a series of installments on 23 May, 6 June, and 10 October], published in France, that only literature was in a position to express Polish culture. Equally controversial – and distinct from the practice and theory of the Baltic cultures to the east and northeast – were the claims made for indigenous folk art (based in large part on the example of Frédéric Chopin, who had become famous for his masterful use of folk motifs). Just after the turn of the century, there was founded in Cracow a Polish Applied Art Society that actively collected objects of folk art with which to stimulate contemporary artists to take seriously this aspect of the national patrimony. Inspired by the British arts-and-crafts movement, the Applied Art Society had notable success in the fields of contemporary design, interior decoration, stained glass, furniture, and objects for household use and religious ritual.
 20. The other principal center of Polish art was Warsaw. As punishment for the various rebellions against tsarist rule, however, the Russian authorities closed the Warsaw School of Fine Arts from 1831 to 1844 and then abolished it entirely in 1863, following the abortive Winter Insurrection. The only art institution allowed to remain open in Warsaw was the School of Drawing, where Wojciech Gerson (1831–1901) maintained rigorous standards of academic excellence during his tenure as director from 1872 to 1896. In the Prussian Polish province, there was no formal school through which Polish art and culture could be promoted. It is noteworthy also that during the entire nineteenth century, there was not a single Polish journal exclusively devoted to the fine arts.
 21. The term *Młoda Polska* did not appear in print until 1898, when the literary journal *Życie* (Life; founded in May 1897) declared in an editorial that it was "the literary and artistic journal of Young Poland." Some historians, however, have extended the term to embrace the worldviews, primarily aesthetic, that appeared in the territory from about 1890 and lasted roughly until the Polish nation emerged as a political state. There was also a political dimension to the label, recalling the Young Europe movement of social liberalism and political independence of the 1830s.
 22. Despite the political ties to Vienna, relatively few Polish artists from Austrian Galicia went to the imperial capital to study. Throughout the nineteenth century, and especially during the 1870s and 1880s, Paris and Munich attracted the majority of aspiring Polish artists – just as these cities' famed academies and several private schools appealed to many young art students from the southern Balkans, Hungary, and the United States. Indeed, by the beginning of

the twentieth century, almost every member of Sztuka had spent at least some time in the French capital while fully half them had studied in Munich as well.

Much of the following discussion of Sztuka draws on the insights of Jan Cavanaugh, who kindly shared with me in advance of its publication her manuscript, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890–1918*; hereafter cited as *Out Looking In*.

23. Fałat was extraordinarily tolerant of diverse viewpoints and encouraging of modern styles, although his own landscape canvases can be characterized as traditional and tended towards realism. Despite having served at the court of the aesthetically arch-conservative German emperor Wilhelm II, Fałat, once appointed as rector of the Cracow School of Fine Arts, proceeded to retain for his teaching faculty as many progressive Polish painters as possible and initiated significant reforms in the pedagogical program.
24. A notable exception was the wealthy aristocrat Count Edward Raczyński (1847–1926), who had served from 1894 as president of the Society of Friends of the Fine Arts based in Cracow. The count collected impressive numbers of works by Jacek Malczewski and his symbolist contemporaries from Poland and throughout Europe. The bulk of his impressive collection was installed in his family seat at Rogalin, located outside Poznań.
25. Within Galicia Sztuka sought to usurp the role played by Cracow's conservative Society of Friends of the Fine Arts and its wealthy supporters. In the Prussian and Russian zones, Sztuka's influence was less direct and its freedom to exhibit considerably restrained. Outside partitioned Poland, however, where up to a fifth of its members lived, the group first presented itself to a foreign audience in Vienna, displaying works there under the aegis of the Secession. From 1904, when Sztuka participated in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in Saint Louis as the exclusive representative of "Poland" within the Austrian Pavilion, the society was confirmed as an "important institution that will have the most serious impact on developments for the future" (Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*, p. 95, n. 2). It was not without significance for Polish art that this exhibition was mounted at the moment of Russian Poland's rebellion against tsarist rule, in particular against Russia's involvement in a war in the Far East for which the Polish-inhabited provinces were compelled to furnish massive material support and numerous conscripts.
- Between the Saint Louis exposition and the outbreak of World War I, Sztuka was represented in international exhibitions held in Düsseldorf and Leipzig (1904), Dresden and Munich (1905), London (1906), Vienna (1906 and 1908), Budapest (1910), Venice (1910 and 1914), Zagreb (1911), Antwerp (1911), and Berlin (1913).
26. Between 1847 and 1861 a network of railroad lines was created connecting Cracow with Mysłowice (in Upper Silesia), Lwów, and Vienna.
27. Malczewski, like many other Polish intellectuals, gravitated to Austrian Galicia, where there was greater freedom (than in Prussian and Russian Poland) for self-expression, especially on themes of Polish patriotism and on issues of current events. The reputation of Jan Matejko, the existence of a Polish School of Fine Arts, and the presence of the wealthy art collector Count Edward Raczyński (see n. 24) likely played a significant part in Malczewski's decision to lead his professional life mostly in and around Cracow.
28. The cascade of figures forms a rough cross, a configuration that accords symbolically with the prevailing view of "Polonia" – christologically, politically, and ethnically – as a crossroads of nations.
29. The imagery of the painting is echoed in an influential play titled *Wesele* (Wedding), published in 1901 by a colleague of Malczewski's, the painter and playwright Stanisław Wyspiański (1869–1907). The play suggests that even the symbolic alliance of Poland's intelligentsia and peasantry will be of little avail in the fight for national liberation, as neither group is capable of freeing the nation from foreign domination and uniting the various strata of Polish society. Thus, instead of celebrating a new life of creativity, the wedding releases a flood of national melancholia.
30. The employment of "Polonia" as an emblem of the spirit of the Polish nation during the extensive periods of occupation was a constant in the literature, poetry, and visual arts. Perhaps the most influential example was the romantic-mystical graphic cycle "Polonia" by Artur Grottger (1837–67), works executed in the wake of the abortive Winter Insurrection of 1863–4.
31. The conception of Poland as Christ has a long tradition in Polish modern culture, and Malczewski's rendition may well have been intended to invoke the similar topos established by the greatest of all Polish poets of the nineteenth century, Adam Mickiewicz (see n. 49).
32. See n. 24.
33. Throughout Poland, as well as elsewhere in eastern Europe, there was a persistent tension among progressive artists between the conflicting claims of a modern art with national consequence and responsibility and that of "pure" aesthetics, free from all political obligations and national constraints. Sztuka members oscillated between these two poles.
34. In 1902 Weiss began teaching at the Cracow Academy and was in 1910 appointed professor. On three occasions he would serve as the academy's rector.
35. Polish scholars sometimes described the Secessionist art produced from the mid-1890s to the early years of the twentieth century as "expressionism." As this does not accord with conventional usage, the pres-

- ent study refers to the style as Jugendstil, symbolism, or Secessionism – all terms used also in the historiography of Polish art.
36. In 1898 Przybyszewski became editor of *Życie* (Life), the literary organ of Poland's modernists in whose impassioned readership most of the Cracow-based painters can be counted. This journal was founded in 1897 in Cracow; another of the same name had been published in Warsaw from 1887.
For Munch's decisive influence on the evolution of Czech modern art, see "Expressionism, Cubism, and Redemptive Modernism" in Chapter 1.
 37. Mehoffer's vivid polychromy, polished surface effects, and love of ornamentation may derive from his lifelong activity as a designer of stained glass. In 1895 he won an international competition to design the windows for the Collegiate Church of Saint Nicholas in Fribourg (Switzerland), a project that occupied him for almost forty years. During that long period, he was commissioned to create stained glass for Wawel Cathedral in Cracow as well as murals for Cracow's Chamber of Trade and Industry.
 38. Without a strong influence from Sztuka, and having been suppressed for so many decades, Polish artists in the kingdom often looked to Cracow for models and inspiration; others elected to revive a variant of impressionism (luminism; see n. 121), which had notable, if relatively limited, success during the early 1890s. Not until after World War I would Warsaw, destined to be capital of the newly constituted nation, liberate itself sufficiently from subjugating forces to develop a distinctive and original modern art (see below, § "Constructivism of the 1920s"). In the years leading up to these changes, the widespread discontent brought about by opposition to the Russo-Japanese War (1904) prompted the government in Saint Petersburg to loosen its chokehold on Polish culture. The Warsaw School of Fine Arts – ordered closed as punishment for the Polish insurrection in the 1860s – was reopened in 1904, its faculty and students permitted to produce art in various contemporary styles devoted to Polish subjects. Because of financial exigency, however, the school barely managed to keep its doors open after 1909.
 39. Another group to be mentioned in this historical context is *Pięć* (Five), whose constituents – Leopold Gottlieb, Vlastimil Hofman, Mieczysław Jakimowicz, Jan Rembowski, and especially Witold Wojtkiewicz (who was briefly affiliated with Zero) – exerted modest influence on the course of modern art in Poland between 1905 and 1908.
 40. Objections to Sztuka were based not only on its exclusivity in Cracow's art world but on a notable weakening in the group's aesthetic production, both qualitative and quantitative. The death in 1907 of Stanisław Wyspiański and Jan Stanisławski, two of the principal figures in the group, hastened its decline.
 41. As cited in Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In*.
 42. Wyczółkowski conducted master classes at the Cracow School of Fine Arts.
 43. These artists continued the tradition of traveling to Paris to discover and participate in the modernist aesthetics unfolding in the French capital as well as to revive friendships and professional contacts with compatriots living there. Among the more than two hundred Polish artists then in Paris were several modernists, including Louis (Ludwik Kazimierz Władysław) Marcoussis (1878–1941) and Moïse (Mojżesz) Kisling (1891–1953).
 44. Because Poland was a frontier area on the periphery of the warring empires, there was never any doubt that its land would be a principal theater of operations. As citizens of a nonnation without an army to fight for its own interests (i.e., independence), many Poles inevitably threw their support to the power perceived as most sympathetic to Polish claims for freedom. The German position was summed up by the kaiser, who averred that there was no place for an independent Poland in a German world. Hence, most Poles in Prussian Poland rallied to the Russian cause. Poles in the Austrian zone were divided; Vienna's promotion of Ukrainian interests at the expense of Polish ones alienated many in Galicia. Moreover, the fact of Austria's alliance with Germany, given the latter's enormously greater strength, meant that again many Polish people – principally conservative landowners – turned to Russia. For millions of Poles, however, supporting Russia was not acceptable. The tsarist opposition to Polish cultural expression and unrelenting Russification of what the tsar denigrated as his "Vistula Territories," coupled with his absolute enmity toward social liberalism (espoused by many Polish intellectuals), made it impossible for Russia to win the uncompromised support of its Polish subjects.
Józef Piłsudski, who had been appointed commander-in-chief of the units in a "Polish" army chartered by a Supreme National Committee set up in Austrian Cracow, was a tactician who changed sides depending on opportunities. During the course of the war, the respective success of one offensive or another influenced the allegiance of Piłsudski and many Poles. For an extensive analysis of Poland during the war years and directly afterward, see Leslie et al., *History*, pp. 109ff.
 45. See Andrzej Olszewski, *An Outline History of Polish 20th Century Art and Architecture* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1989), p. 30.
 46. The circulation of numerous writings by Chwistek, Witkacy, Jan Hryńkowski (1891–1971), Tytus Czyżewski, Waclaw Husarski, Z. Pronaszko, and others attests to the satisfaction formists took in drafting philosophical texts.
 47. Chwistek, introduction to the catalog of the Third Exhibition of the Formists (Cracow, 1919), p. 8.
 48. Zbigniew Pronaszko, "O ekspresjonizmie" (On Expressionism), in *Maski* (Masks) 1, 1918.

49. The Lithuanian-born Mickiewicz was prized not only as one of Poland's great romantic poets but for his often-quoted statement in the formists' catalogs: "Art is not merely imitation. . . . Art is not and cannot be anything else but an expression of vision."
50. Chwistek's "Wielość rzeczywistości w sztuce" (Multiple Realities in Art), published first in the journal *Maski* (no. 1–4, 1918) and then as a book in 1921, was written for the most part in the trenches of Bolyń and Cracow during the war. The cornerstone of this rather naïve system was what the author labeled *zonism* or *strephism*, a formal means of pictorial stratification based on color and concatenated forms.
51. The considerable literature on Witkacy offers a host of explanations, ranging from the artist's wish to break with his father's domineering views to a claim that he might have wanted to further Polish freedom through joining the army of its principal oppressor.
52. S. I. Witkiewicz, *Nowe formy w malarstwie i wynikająca stać nie porozumienia* (Warsaw, 1919).
53. A remarkably creative artistic dialogue was conducted among these formists of opposing views. For example, Zamoyski sculpted in 1919 *Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's Portrait against the Background of Essence* (now lost). Witkacy responded with *An Insignificant Chip of August Zamoyski* (present whereabouts unknown), exhibited in the formists' display in Poznań in December 1919.
54. An excellent analysis is available in English and Polish, respectively, in Piotr Piotrowski's two studies: "Art in the Crucible of History: Witkacy's Theory and Practice of Painting," *Polish Review* 33, no. 2 (1988), pp. 123–44; and *Metafizyka obrazu: O teorii sztuki i postawie antystycznej Stanisław Ignacego Witkiewicza* (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 1985).
55. Witkacy had a lifelong interest in the effect of artificial stimulants and depressants on creativity. He compiled his findings and stated his views in a booklet titled *Nikotyna, alkohol, kokaina, peyotl, morfina, eter* (Warsaw, 1932).
56. In 1922 at least six members of formism withdrew to participate in the first exhibition of the group Rytm (Rhythm; see § "Constructivism of the 1920s"). Others joined Świt (Dawn; see n. 59), Jednoróg (Unicorn; see § "Poland's Other Modernist Movements"), and Praesens (Present; see § "Constructivism of the 1920s"). In the same year Chwistek admitted that formism had reached a crisis despite the success of its exhibitions both in Paris and throughout newly independent Poland. As a symbolic gesture, Witkacy painted shortly later a farewell self-portrait, *The Convict's Last Cigarette* (1924, Museum of Literature, Warsaw), and left the group, thereafter to execute a host of striking painted portraits.
57. Leon Dołżycki, "A Few Words," *Zwrotnica*, no. 4 (February 1923), p. 98.
- Chwistek, one of the principal theorists of formism, acknowledged in the 1930s that "formism was and has remained the most restrained form of imaginative art. It shaped reality in its own way, but without defining it . . . and throwing it at the service of artistic experience. Neither did formism aspire to a discovery of its hidden secrets. . . . [I]t was and has remained naïve and primitive, and this is where its greatness lies. . . . [I]t did not contribute any theoretical innovations and that is why, perhaps, it had almost no effect on other trends. It had no exploratory character. Its creative values were purely artistic in nature; hence, they were necessarily the most difficult to grasp and the least impressive. . . . Today, when we look at . . . paintings of that time . . . what we see is mildly idyllic, full of inner harmony and serenity . . . though to most Poles it seemed a monstrous perversion and malicious crime." Quoted in English (and reprinted here with slight grammatical variation) in Irena Jakimowicz, *Formiści* (exh. cat., Warsaw: National Museum, 1989), p. 14.
58. The principal texts for Bunt and Jung Idysz remain two seminal studies by Jerzy Malinowski: *Sztuka i nowa wspólnota: Zrzeszenie artystów Bunt, 1917–1922* (Wrocław: Wiedza o kulturze, 1991); and *Grupa "Jung Idysz" i żydowskie środowisko "Nowej Sztuki" w Polsce, 1918–1923* (Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1987).
59. A few years later, between 1920 and 1921, another group of activists emerged in Poznań. Known as Świt (Dawn), these artists were mostly newly resident in the now-Polonized city. They defined their collective role less in terms of a specific program than as an exhibiting society through which to improve the level of artistic production. During its roughly six years of existence, the group's emphasis on marketing discouraged a uniform style of art. Moreover, its dismissive attitude toward other artists active in Poznań prevented Świt from ever becoming thoroughly integrated into the Polish art world.
60. Another group known as Zdrój was active, primarily in the field of literature, between 1920 and 1922.
61. Although not members, Bruno Schulz – whose only surviving oil painting depicts the encounter between a young Hassidic Jew and two smartly dressed young women on the outskirts of a Polish town (*Encounter*, Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw, 1920) – and especially Henryk Berlewi (see § "Constructivism of the 1920s") were represented in several of Jung Idysz's exhibitions. Berlewi was included also in shows organized by Warsaw's Jewish Society – for example, one mounted in Białystok in 1919.
62. For example, a statement in *Jung Idysz*, nos. 2–3 (March–April 1919), asserts that in their mystical beliefs and in their symbolism the artists were committed to seeking spiritual truths.
63. Many of Poland's expressionists gravitated in the early 1920s to Germany, there to join politically engaged artists' collaboratives. In 1922, a pivotal year in the history of modern art, especially for eastern European artists' activities in post-World War I Ber-

lin, many veterans of Bunt and Jung Idysz – Jan-kiel Adler, Stanisław Kubicki, Władysław Skotarek (1894–1970), and Stefan Szmaj (1893–1974) among them – demonstrated their commitment to expressionist aesthetics and leftist politics in that city by participating in the International Exhibition of Revolutionary Artists.

64. The standard and essential text remains the one by Andrzej Turowski, *Konstrukttywizm Polski: Próba rekonstrukcji nurtu (1921–1934)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1981). Although there is an English summary, the work awaits a full translation.
65. Among the literary groups endorsing the art of Rytm were Skamander (taken indirectly from the river “Skamandros,” which Homer mentions in the *Iliad*) and Wiadomości Literackie (Literary News).
66. Poland of the early 1920s equivocated to avoid the political pangs of the nation’s birth. In the closing months of World War I, the various partitions moved in sometimes contradictory directions, and the governing authority of the Polish National Committee was recognized among the Allies only by France. In Galicia a Liquidation Committee made up of all Polish political groupings was constituted at the end of October 1918, whereas a “People’s Government” was declared in Lublin in November. Germans were in control in the eastern Baltic areas, and a Regency Council was temporarily in charge of Warsaw. By mid-December 1918 Józef Piłsudski arrived in Warsaw, assumed the position of commander-in-chief of the Polish armed forces, and was declared provisional head of state. In fact, he controlled little more than the former Kingdom of Poland and western Galicia, eastern Galicia having become part of the Ukrainian Peoples’ Republic upon the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Meanwhile, there was a concerted effort by the Polish right opposing both the bolshevism being manifested in various parts of the nation and Piłsudski’s alleged liberalism. As the right comprised principally wealthy landlords, bankers, and industrialists, its refusal to contribute taxes to the country imperiled the existence of the fragile government in Warsaw. The dangerous dilemma was finally resolved through the agency of Allied pressure: The illustrious pianist Ignacy Paderewski became head of the government. Belonging to no party, he soon assembled a cabinet that was also mostly free from party affiliation and steered a middle course between left and right – one directly parallel to the aesthetic path pursued by Rytm.
67. Among the numerous formists who joined Rytm were Zak, Romuald Kamil Witkowski (1876–1950), and Tymon Niesiołowski (1882–1965).
68. For example, the distinguished Rytm graphic artist Władysław Skoczylas (1883–1934) and the independent Zofia Stryjeńska (1894–1976), drawing on the early-twentieth-century Zakopane style, combined a national folk idiom with a mild modernism. In other areas – “art deco” architecture, applied arts, and de-

sign – a folklore revival gave Polish art a dynamic character during the 1920s.

69. *Zwrotnica*, which bore the subtitle *Kierunek: Sztuka teraźniejszości* (Direction: The Art of the Present), was founded by Tadeusz Peiper (1891–1969) in 1922 and lasted until 1927. Like numerous other “little magazines” of the period, the journal published the work and promoted the ideas of Europe’s leading avant-garde figures. Peiper found the futurists appealing for their personal dynamism (though he was repelled by their destructiveness), and he was partial to suprematism. In 1922 he published Władysław Strzemiński’s “Notes on Russian Art” (see n. 82).
Peiper’s journal became one of the principal vehicles for Poland’s various constructivist movements, chiefly as the result of the publisher’s enthusiasm for all radical art forms dedicated to creating a modern urban life for a mass society. In 1927, when Kazimir Malevich visited Warsaw, Peiper served as host. Together they then traveled to Berlin and soon thereafter to the Bauhaus in Dessau, where Peiper introduced the founder of suprematism to Walter Gropius and Wassily Kandinsky.
70. The spelling of *Vilnius* was highly politicized during the first half of the twentieth century. The Poles insisted on referring to the city as *Wilno*, whereas the Lithuanian claim was affirmed by maintaining the name *Vilnius*. The Russians designated their province as *Vilna*, as did, on occasion, the Jewish plurality of the city.
71. With Jews constituting 48 percent of the turn-of-the-century population, Vilnius was a major center of Jewish/Yiddish culture until 1939. Several of the most acclaimed Yiddish theaters in Europe were there, and it was the home of numerous Jewish theological institutions and schools.
72. For example, before 1905 authorities forbade both speaking Polish in public and printing Lithuanian in the customary Latin characters. As in the cities and towns of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, so, too, in Vilnius a comprehensive program of Russification and strict censorship – initiated in 1865, following the Winter Insurrection of 1863–4 – led to insupportable conditions.
As many of Lithuania’s artists and scholars were Jewish – their status and privileges under Russian control severely limited – emigration between the 1880s and World War I marked the departure of hundreds of thousands from the province. Among the Lithuanian modernists who conducted their careers abroad were the sculptors Jacques Lipchitz and William Zorach, the painters Chaim Soutine and Ben Shahn, and the art historians Bernard Berenson and Meyer Schapiro. The loss of so many highly educated individuals and would-be members of the intellectual class – along with the loss of the capital to Poland (and its subsequent Polonization) in 1922 – further reduced the size and opportunities of the Lithuanian intelligentsia.

73. A graduate of the Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg, Ruszczyk taught from 1904 to 1908 at the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw and at the Cracow Academy of Fine Arts. In 1908 he moved permanently to Vilnius and devoted the rest of his life to furthering Polish art in Lithuania. His images are rich with symbolic references to the Polish land and its subjection to harsh foreign rule – for example, *The Earth* (1898) and *Nec Mergitur* (1904–6), both at the National Museum in Warsaw. Of the latter painting he wrote that its phantom ship was a symbol of immortal Poland.
74. See n. 79.
75. The actions of the Polish troops under the command of General Lucian Żeligowski were officially disclaimed by Warsaw. For two years, however, Poland prolonged the debate over the “Vilnius Issue” in the League of Nations, during which time it consolidated its position in southeastern Lithuania, and Vilnius remained an integral part of the Polish republic until World War II, when Soviet armies invaded under the secret protocols of the German–Soviet Union nonaggression pact of 23 August 1939. For the seventeen years between the League of Nations’ decision of 1922 awarding Vilnius to Poland and the outbreak of World War II – an interregnum during which the borders between Poland and Lithuania were closed – Poland brought in many Polish settlers and “regulated” the expression of Lithuanian culture.
76. Between 1920, when the young independent Lithuanian government was forced to abandon Vilnius to overwhelming Polish military force, and 1940, when Stalin’s Soviet army “liberated” the entire country, there existed in Kaunas a modest avant-garde that took as its model for the creation of native modernism the extraordinary oeuvre of the Lithuanian abstractionist Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911). Čiurlionis embodied the Lithuanian aspiration for a modern culture that would have both national and universal resonance. His biography corresponds closely to the cultural conditions of the nation during the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century. Born at the moment of Lithuania’s “national-awakening” movement, Čiurlionis grew up with a keen interest in reviving native historical, musical, and especially linguistic consciousness – concerns manifested visually in an art that drew on the musical rhythms of folk music and various landscape elements. Within three years of his death in 1911, Čiurlionis’s highly abstract visual vocabulary of musical tones, forms, and references was celebrated as a Lithuanian national treasure with the opening of a permanent exhibition – sited in Vilnius and, for an intermediary period of six years, in Moscow – devoted to his surviving work. A museum to house the collection was finally built in 1925 in Kaunas, the provisional capital.
77. See later in this section.
78. Kairiūkštis enjoyed a broad education in the arts and humanities. Having first studied fine arts in Vilnius, he went to Moscow both to read law at the university and to pursue his interest in art. It was likely a contact with Kazimir Malevich there that led him to enroll at the VKhUTEMAS, where he deepened his acquaintance with futurism, cubism, suprematism, and constructivism. He probably encountered Władysław Strzemiński in Moscow as well.
79. Excerpted from the catalog of the New Art Exhibition (*Wystawy nowej sztuki*), the quoted passage appears in English in *The 70th Anniversary of the New Art Exhibition, Vilnius, 1923* (exh. cat., Łódź: Museum of Art, 1993), n.p.; hereafter cited as *New Art*. A complete English translation is available in *Constructivism in Poland, 1923–1936: Blok, Praesens, a.r.* (exh. cat., Łódź: Museum of Art; Essen: Folkwang Museum; and Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, 1973), pp. 68–9; hereafter cited as *Constructivism: Blok, Praesens, a.r.*
80. An English translation appears in Viktoras Liutkus, “Vytautas Kairiūkštis – the Pioneer of the Lithuanian Avant-Garde,” in *New Art*.
81. Two additional Lithuanian figures worked with Kairiūkštis in the *gymnasium* of Vytautas the Great and later at the Vilnius Studio of Drawing (founded in 1923): Balys Macutkevičius (1905–64) and Juozas Mačiulis (1906–77). Their work collectively is seen by contemporary Lithuanian scholars as contributing to the emergence of a national modern art.
82. These works, as well as his own commentaries on them, show that Strzemiński had begun to go beyond suprematist solutions in the search for a less contingent form of abstraction – one that might have an autonomous character. In a 1922 essay, “Notes on Russian Art” (in which he registered his reservations about suprematism), Strzemiński recognized that “that art of yesterday [cubism and suprematism] has immense visual resources on which the most perfect style of contemporary applied art could be built in the same way that the invention of electricity has made possible the development of present-day electronics.” Within a few years Strzemiński would refine these reflections into what he himself defined as *unism*.
83. In addition to those who exhibited in 1923 in Vilnius (with the exception of Puciatycka), the members of Blok included Henryk Berlewi, Maria Nicz-Borowiakowa, Jan (Jean) Golus, Aleksander Rafalowski, and Mieczysław Schulz.
84. In their respective catalog essays (see *New Art*), Szczuka and Żarnower stressed the importance of the social engagement of contemporary art – a reflection of their leftist political leanings developed in Warsaw.
85. Blok held that an art museum should be understood as a form of industrial enterprise whose product is oriented toward social consumption; thus, the car

- showroom was an ideal venue for its initial exhibition.
86. The eleven issues of *Blok* constitute the only source for the art produced by the group, as nothing is known to survive of the original material.
 87. *Blok*, no. 2 (April 1924).
 88. Mieczysław Szczuka, "Co to jest konstruktywizm," *Blok*, nos. 6–7 (September 1924), p. 3.
 89. Szczuka often put his art at the service of politics, especially when he provided functionalist layouts for the explicitly communist journal *Nowa Kultura* (from 1924) and the left-wing periodical *Dźwignia* (Lever; 1927).
 90. In architectural sketches Szczuka revealed his most profoundly idealistic constructivist conceptions. Although nothing went beyond the paper stage, the few surviving sketches reflect the work of Theo van Doesburg, whose designs were reproduced in the pages of *Blok*. Like some Dutch programs for public housing, Szczuka's designs for "garden cities" reject all ornamentation in favor of a carefully structured manipulation of verticals and horizontals. Given the popularity in Poland during the early twenties of historicist styles for the numerous private villas and apartment houses being constructed, Szczuka's architecture would have been a striking anomaly.
 91. Little of Żarnower's work – and likely none of the sculptures for which she was best known – survives. Thus, as for so many of Poland's avant-garde members, we are forced to rely on the reproductions to be found in numerous contemporaneous journals.
 92. The only surviving writing by Żarnower is her essay for the 1923 New Art Exhibition catalog. An English translation of the original Polish is available in Hilary Gresty and Jeremy Lewison, eds., *Constructivism in Poland, 1923 to 1936* (exh. cat., Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery; London: Riverside Studios; and Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), p. 27; hereafter cited as Gresty & Lewison, *Constructivism*.
 93. Kobro was a Russian who had studied in Moscow's School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture and subsequently at the Free Studios. She met Strzemiński in Moscow in 1918 and traveled with him to Smolensk, where they were married in 1920. Active in the Soviet avant-garde, Kobro became a member of Unovis in Vitebsk. After a brief stay in Riga, she moved with her husband to Poland, becoming in 1924 a Polish citizen. Her works executed while in Soviet Russia reveal a debt to suprematism and constructivism (best represented in the 1972 re-creation of the original 1921 *Suspended Composition 1*, reproduced in its original form in *Blok*, no. 1 (1924), p. 2, and illustrated more recently as fig. 13 (p. 172) in *Constructivism: Blok, Praesens, a.r.*
 94. Władysław Strzemiński, "B = 2, powinno być . . .," *Blok*, nos. 8–9 (November–December 1924). These ideas, which would mature through Strzemiński's participation in other constructivist formations, are discussed later in this section.
 95. The text was written in German in June 1923 and published as a booklet in Polish in March 1924.
 96. In August 1924 Berlewi showed his mechano-facture compositions in Berlin. With the assistance of several poets, he established in Germany an advertising firm, Mechano-Advertisement, that was committed to functionalist design. The graphic works produced by the firm in the mid-1920s are among the most accomplished constructivist designs of the period.
 97. Excerpted from the first published Polish edition (1924) of Berlewi's brochure "Mechano-Faktura," most likely written in Berlin during 1923 (see n. 95).
 98. Berlewi began to retreat from his rather limiting theory and practice of mechano-facture in 1926. In 1927 he met Kazimir Malevich at the latter's lecture in Warsaw, and the following year Berlewi left Poland to settle permanently in France.
 99. *Praesens*, no. 1 (June 1926).
 100. Between 1926 and 1929 the group was represented in exhibitions in Warsaw, Paris, Brussels, The Hague, Amsterdam, and Poznań. Its inaugural exhibition, held in Warsaw in September 1926, displayed paintings, engravings, and interior-design projects by Strzemiński; paintings, sculpture, and theater designs by Katarzyna Kobro; and four drawings from the early 1920s by Kazimir Malevich.
 101. Despite the resignation of several of its principal painters, Praesens continued as an architectural society until 1939.
 102. "Unizm w malarstwie" was issued as booklet no. 3 in the Warsaw series of "Biblioteka 'Praesens.'" A facsimile reprint was published in 1993 by the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.
 103. Most notable in this context is the 1931 *Kompozycja przestrzeni: Obliczenia rytmiczno-przestrzennego* (Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm), which appeared as vol. 2 in the "a.r." Library. This special volume, comprising seventy-nine pages of text and forty-five illustrations, explains the couple's philosophy within the context of unism and the close relationship with Theo van Doesburg's architectural theory. A reprint of the volume was issued in 1993 by the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.
 104. The artists' term for their commitment to the "real" (i.e., the social) world – engaged activities that went beyond unism's preoccupation with the picture – was *antiunism*.
 105. It was not uncommon for avant-garde groups of the 1920s and early 1930s to design a universal alphabet of "rationalized" letters (see Chapter 1, § "Tvrdošijní and Devětsil . . ."). In 1932 "a.r." published an alphabetic design to enhance the "formal organicism, economy, and logic" that was trumpeted in its communiqué in 1930. Comparable with this constructivist alphabet are the 1926 Bauhaus designs by Herbert Bayer (which Teige himself reworked [*ReD* 2, no. 8 (1929), p. 257]) and the numerous pedagogical exercises conducted by the Bauhaus to reform the Lat-

- in (and Gothic) alphabet. Begun as early as 1921 by Lothar Schreyer, they were continued in creative student exercises by Alfred Lakheit, Dolly Borkowsky, Eduard Gillhausen, Alfred Arndt, and Agnes Roghé, among many others.
106. In 1927 Malevich's paintings were put on deposit in Berlin, whence they began a peripatetic journey when the National Socialist régime assumed power. Much of the original deposit resides today in the collections of Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum and New York's Museum of Modern Art.
 107. The entire project benefited enormously from "a.r."s greatest supporter in Paris, Michel Seuphor, who was a direct link to many of the principal figures in the Parisian and Dutch avant-garde.
 108. For the Polish constructivists (especially Stażewski), who attached great importance to a rigorous restriction of means, Van Doesburg was a figure of primary influence. From about 1922 until just before his death in 1931, Van Doesburg was perceived as the most exemplary Western model of the committed avant-garde artist: a painter, architect, editor, and theorist who integrated a reformist social program into all dimensions of his many-sided activities. The only possible reservation Polish modernists might have expressed was the bias of Dutch neoplasticists – especially Piet Mondrian and Gerrit Rietveld, but also (though less demonstrably) Van Doesburg and J. J. P. Oud – toward spiritual, principally anthroposophic, content.
 109. At least twenty-nine of these works of art perished in World War II. Nonetheless, the collection fulfilled the dream of "a.r.," as affirmed by Przemysław Smolik, the city official responsible for the project: "The works that make up the Collection were generously donated by their authors, under the sole condition that they be taken in charge by an appropriate institution, accessible to all. . . . Thus, the International Collection of Modern Art represents an act that is collective and social, in the truest sense." Quoted in Jaromir Jedlinski, "The Museum Sztuki in Lodz: A Question of Identity," in *Polnische Avantgarde, 1930–1990* (exh. cat., Berlin: Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 1992), p. 29.
 110. Its formal installation in Łódź, planned in accordance with unist theories, was finally realized in 1948, when Strzemiński designed what is known as the Neoplastic Hall for the works of the original collection that survived World War II.
 111. The statement, most likely written in 1934 with reference to Hiller's work of the late twenties, is excerpted in Gresty & Lewison, *Constructivism*, p. 49.
 112. Nearly all the surviving heliographs – most of them badly deteriorated – and their preparatory sketches are held by the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź. Hiller described the evolution of the heliographs in a 1934 essay (which appeared in vol. 2 of *Forma*, for which he served at the time as editor). For an English translation ("Heliography as a New Kind of Graphic Technique"), see *Hiller – heliographs* (exh. cat., London: Annelly Juda Fine Art, 1982), with an essay by Andrei Nakov and translations by Kazimierz Zdzichowski and Nakov.
 113. The primary study remains that by Piotr Łukasiewicz, *Zrzeszenie artystów plastyków "Artes," 1929–1935* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975).
 114. According to census figures for 1931, 49–50 percent of all lawyers, 46 percent of physicians, and similar numbers of journalists identified themselves as Jews. Moreover, the Austrian policy of granting civil rights to Jews had enabled a class of Jewish landowners to arise in Galicia, a factor that contributed to the unique cultural demographics of eastern Poland.
 115. The failure of the Polish government to deal fairly with its multinational, and heavily Jewish, populations (primarily Lithuanians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians) can be attributed in part to national insecurity (see Leslie et al., *History*, p. 148). As Poland emerged as a national state less through its own efforts than as a result of the collapse of the Romanov and Habsburg empires (and the defeat of the Hohenzollern), there were constant worries about the irredentist claims of its defeated neighbors and their allies among the peoples unwillingly incorporated into the nation. Only on the Romanian and Latvian borders was Poland without concern for territorial revision.
 116. The local non-Polish population's resistance to Polish cultural dominance recalls similar insurgency among Lithuanians in Vilnius. See the earlier section "Constructivism in the 1920s."
 117. Józef Piłsudski, whose political motto was "Poland will be a great power or she will not exist," sought to set up a puppet Ukrainian state under Polish control, expecting to enhance his country's eastern boundaries at the expense of the bolshevist state, which from 1919 was mired in a civil war. Ignoring the Curzon Line (which the Western Allies had proposed in December 1919 as a border between Russia and Poland), Polish troops entered Kiev only to be defeated by a large Soviet army. Poland later recovered lost ground, however; the peace treaty signed in Riga in 1921 confirmed its possession of Ukrainian-dominated eastern Galicia.
 118. Artes was one of several Polish artists' groups influenced by currents abroad, from France in particular. During the period of Artes's greatest accomplishment, roughly 1930–3, Stażewski was a coorganizer of the first Cercle et Carré exhibition; Strzemiński himself was in active contact with the Abstraction-Création group; and numerous Polish avant-gardists were resident in or visitors to Paris and participants in its modern-art circles.
 119. Whereas explicitly political concerns were rarely expressed visually or mentioned in print in the early 1930s, a pronounced social viewpoint was evident from 1936, when the Polish Communist Party, to which many Artes artists belonged, was banned by

Stalin. Examples of politically inspired work from its members include paintings on the theme of “barricades,” the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin*, and so forth – subjects encouraged by the communists in nearby Ukraine and Soviet Russia.

120. Not until after World War II did surrealism emerge as a dominant art form in Poland. Among its inter-war antecedents, in addition to Artes, were the canvases of Witkacy, the early collages (ca. 1920) of Tytus Czyżewski, and the films of Stefan Themerson.
121. Pankiewicz, Aleksander Gierymski, Władysław Podkowiński, and Leon Wyczółkowski, were among the eminent exponents of Polish luminism, which combines the aesthetic innovations of French and German impressionism (especially those of Adolph Menzel) with the poetic patriotism that lay at the heart of Polish national romanticism. In practice, luminists understood light not merely as a physical phenomenon but as a spiritually affective force. With antecedents in the 1870s, their period of greatest accomplishment was the decade of the 1890s, primarily in Warsaw and in the eastern districts of Russian Poland.
- Pankiewicz’s own move to Paris, where he would direct from 1925 the French branch of Cracow’s Academy of Fine Arts, was the principal incentive for many of his Polish students also to relocate to the French capital. Following its establishment in Cracow in 1923, “K.P.” would be in a financial position to send the first group of its adherents to Paris in September 1924: Seweryn Boraczok, Jan Cybis, Hanna Rudzka-Cybisowa, Józef Jarema, Artur Nacht, Tadeusz Piotr Potworowski, Janina Przewławska, Janusz Strzałcki, Marian Szczyrbuła, and Zygmunt Waliszewski. In Paris they met up with Jacek Puget, and within a year were joined by Dorota Berlinerblau-Seydenmanowa and Stanisław Szepeński.
122. Following their four exhibitions in Poland (between December 1931 in Warsaw and 1938 in Poznań) the Kapists’ colorism exercised a dominant influence on the Professional Union of Polish Artists, the Block of Professional Artists, and other Warsaw-based artists’ associations.
123. “K.P.” gained currency among several disenchanting modernists, including Tytus Czyżewski and Zbigniew Pronaszko, erstwhile formists who sympathized with the group’s emphasis on color as the decisive element in pictorial composition, even if they were not persuaded to join. The Kapists disbanded as an artistic group in 1939, although many remained active as teachers, journalists, and artists into the 1950s.
124. A similar intention was realized by the Zwornik (Keystone) association of Cracow artists, founded in 1928. This loose alliance of colorists lacked a coherent program, but it did function effectively as an exhibition society, to whose activities several graphic artists were attracted. For some of its affiliates, representational subject matter loomed large: Eugeniusz Geppert’s (1890–1979) numerous depictions of bat-

tle scenes and horses reprise the symbolist iconography of Malczewski, and Emil Krcha (1894–1972) revived colorful native folk imagery.

125. The emphasis on a temperate modernism was also present in Rytm.
126. Parallels can be drawn between Poland’s Free Painters’ Lodge and the Tribe of the Horned Heart and the artistic objectives of fascist Italy.
127. See n. 130.
128. Interested primarily in the control of political activities, the government took little responsibility for promoting art or funding it. As a result, around 1930 several artist-organized societies were established – for example, the Zachęta Society to Foster the Fine Arts and the Institute for Art Propaganda, both of which advocated conservative styles, subjects, and uses of art.
129. Sculpture and graphic arts were virtually absent in the avant-garde of this period. Except for the work of Katarzyna Kobro, Maria Jarema (1908–58), and Henryk Wiciński (1908–43), there was almost no modernist sculpture produced in Poland after 1930. Even former avant-gardists turned increasingly retrograde in their realist portraits of historical and political figures (e.g., Xawery Dunikowski’s Cracow statue of Józef Dietl and August Zamoyski’s several monuments), and the Forma group of Warsaw sculptors (1929) made few inroads in the field of modernist art.

Outside of the avant-garde journals discussed above (see “Constructivism of the 1920s”), and the continuing tradition of progressive graphic design in Poznań, where Jan Jerzy Wroniecki and the Bunt artists continued to work, the graphic arts were not an area in which Polish modernists achieved striking success during the 1930s. Genre subjects, folk-art themes, and political programs predominated among the several societies of graphic artists, such as Warsaw’s RYT Polish Graphic Artists’ Association and Cracow’s Society of Graphic Arts. Only within the field of advertisement, especially in poster design, did modernism find a home, albeit precarious.

130. The several groups that continued to exist served as a bridge to the art after World War II. One was the Cracow Group, whose initial activity (ca. 1933–7) helped establish the foundation for later work by Sasza Blonder, Maria Jarema, Leopold Dewicki, and Jonasz Stern, among others.
131. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, even the museum could not provide a safe haven for Poland’s original avant-garde achievements. The collection, as well as Poland’s avant-garde, suffered terribly under German occupation during the war. Many artists were executed and numerous works destroyed in the Nazi endeavor to annihilate Polish culture.

3. LATVIA AND ESTONIA

1. In Latvia, as in Estonia, the native tongue was adopted as a literary language only in the nineteenth cen-

- ture. From roughly 1850 to 1880 nationalism was expressed principally through the publication and performance of ancient and newly minted *dainas*, poetic folk songs that describe traditional Latvian (peasant) life, and *regivārss*, Estonian folk tales and popular songs.
2. There is a substantial multilingual bibliography devoted to Latvian history, although much of it published between 1932 and approximately 1990 is tendentious, ideologically partisan, or partial in its coverage. A balanced introduction for English readers is provided by Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History*, Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1995.
 3. Tsar Alexander I decreed a form of serf emancipation in the province of Livland in 1804. The Livland Peasant Law was never implemented fully and was made redundant in 1861 when serfdom was abolished legally throughout the Russian empire.
 4. As was true throughout the Baltic lands, the initial impetus was provided by liberal Baltic Germans, many of whom created “Latvian” societies for the promotion of native literature, folklore, and music. Although scholarly societies of “Latvian-oriented” Germans antedated by almost a half-century similar groupings in Estonia and Lithuania – the Kurländische Gesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst (Jelgava [in German, Mitau], 1817), Lettisch-Literarische Gesellschaft (1824), and the Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde der Ostseeprovinzen (1834), for example – only in the second half of the nineteenth century did Latvian nationalist aspirations begin to animate the (predominantly) German-speaking intelligentsia. A noteworthy statistic in this context was the increase in the number of Latvian authors of publications (mostly issued by these cultural associations): from 3 percent in 1844, to 6 percent in 1859, to 51 percent in 1869. (See Plakans, *The Latvians*, p. 85.)
 5. Complementing the role of the *dainas* in articulating the national identity, Andrējs Pumpurs authored the epic poem *The Bear Slayer (Lāčplēsis)*, in which the hero triumphs over the Teutonic Black Knight but perishes in doing so. (The ideological authority of the poem’s “Latvian” protagonist remained undiminished through the twentieth century. Not only was a popular play based on the theme and performed more than a hundred times in the years immediately preceding World War I in Russian-ruled and German-dominated Riga, but the power of the poem’s image persuaded the independent Latvian government to create a Lāčplēsis Order by which to acknowledge native heroism during the Latvian War of Independence [1919–20]. Finally, a “nationalistic” rock opera of the same name was written during perestroika by Māra Zālīte.) During this formative period the brothers Reinis and Matiss Kaudzī wrote (in 1879) one of the first important Latvian novels, *The Time of the Land Surveyors*, based on almost two decades of research into typical Latvian characters. As is evident in numerous other literary works of the period – writings with a Slavophilic emphasis – Russian-inspired ethnographic studies were a way for Latvian cultural nationalists to uncover their heritage and create a patrimony for a modern Baltic culture.
 6. The New Latvians can be compared with the roughly contemporaneous Young Estonia movement (see the section “Estonia”).
 7. Rozentāls attended classes in drawing only briefly at the German Trade School in Riga.
 8. Whistler’s carefully constructed investigations of color harmonies and mood deeply impressed the Latvian painter, who emulated the American’s accomplishments. Many of Rozentāls’s titles – for example, *Portrait of the Pianist Borchert (Girl in Gray)* (ca. 1903, Latvian Art Museum) – bear witness to his debt to Whistler.
 9. According to the 1897 census of the Latvian territories (including Lettgallia, which was administratively part of Russian Vitebsk), Latvians accounted for 68.3 percent of the 1.9 million population. Despite their majority status, Latvians were excluded from provincial government, were strikingly underrepresented in the Riga city council, and were prevented from majority government in all but four towns in which they constituted an absolute popular majority. In addition, almost 60 percent of the arable land, a preponderance of the large urban industries, and the bulk of international trading enterprises were reserved for Baltic Germans or Russians.
 10. In his later years Valters spent a great deal of time living in Dresden, where he was known to the German art world as Johann Walter-Kurau.
 11. In a 1919 article El Lissitzky called Matvejs the “first Latvian avant-gardist” and praised him as the theoretician behind the first avant-garde group of Russian artists, the Union of Youth, which had mounted its inaugural exhibition in 1910, first in Saint Petersburg and then in Riga. Also singled out by Lissitzky were Grosvalds (for acting as the organizing force behind the Riga Artists’ Group) and Suta (for his writings). See Jāzepe Kukulis-Baltinaviets, “Hin zur aktiven und synthetischen Kunst!” in *Unerwartete Begegnung, lettische Avantgarde, 1910–1935, der Beitrag Lettlands zur Kunst der europäischen Moderne* (exh. cat., Berlin: Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin, 1990), pp. 33, 36; hereafter cited as *Unerwartete Begegnung*.
Matvejs was more influential on the course of Latvian modern art as a theoretician than as a painter; but he took his painting seriously, and can be recognized for contributing substantially to the avant-garde art during the second decade of the century.
 12. See Matvejs’s 1910 article “Russische Sezession,” in *Jaunā Dienas Lapa* (Daily Newspaper of the Youth), which is excerpted in *Unerwartete Begegnung*, pp. 33–5. The influence of John Ruskin and Wilhelm Worringer in Matvejs’s aesthetics is especially notable here.

13. The opposition to Russian dominance, by no means unique to any one group or party, was endorsed by large numbers of Latvia's impoverished peasantry as well as by the quickly developing urban-based merchants and industrialists, especially those in the "free" professions. The Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party, founded in 1904, played a major role in opposing tsarist authority and soon became the largest social-democratic movement in the empire.
 14. The destruction of Latvia's infrastructure was almost total. In addition, the country lost to war and emigration almost 40 percent of its population, which fell from 2.6 million in 1914 to a census figure of 1.6 million in 1920. Riga, the cultural, industrial, commercial, and political capital, lost 50 percent of its inhabitants during the same period. The precipitous decline was particularly dramatic among the left-leaning intelligentsia, many of whom elected exile.
 15. By the time of World War I, Russian private collections contained many of the most significant modern canvases painted in France. In these collections – almost all of them open to Latvian art students in Moscow and Saint Petersburg – Grosvalds, Kazaks, and their compatriots would have been able to study the numerous Picassos, Derains, Matisse's, and other masterpieces of modern art so presciently assembled by Ivan Morosov, Sergei Shchukin, and others.
 16. Affiliates from each group exhibited together in 1924 at the First Exhibition of Cubists.
 17. Sadarbs (Teamwork) was founded by instructors at the Academy of Arts in Riga – August Annus, Ludolfs Liberts, and Karlis Miesnieks, among others – to advance the cause of realism; while the Mūksala Artists' Society – Ansis Artums, Ā. Melnārs, Jūlijs Viļumainis, and others – followed in the less radical representational path of Valdemārs Tone. Other artists' groupings, of varying degrees of conservative outlook, included the Association of Independent Artists, Radigars, and Zaļā Vārna (Green Crow).
 18. Since Klucis, Ioganson, and Drēviņš exerted little direct influence over avant-garde developments in Latvia itself, they fall outside the principal focus of this chapter.
 19. In Russia and many of the former territories of the tsarist empire, a bitter civil war was being waged between the Red Army and a politically disparate coalition of "white" forces supported by the Western Allies, who had successfully furnished the antibolshevik Latvians with arms, advice, and volunteers in the previous months.
 20. To foster a native culture as well as to wean itself away from a dependence on Russia, the Latvian government implemented a program of travel fellowships for both young and established artists. It was under the auspices of such programs that most members of Latvia's emerging avant-garde, despite political misgivings, went to western Europe. Although France (Paris), Italy, and Spain were the preferred destinations, Germany came to be popular (almost exclusively Berlin and Dresden) for its perceived encouragement of new forms of art and its general sympathy for east Europeans. The choice of Germany may have been stimulated – or at least made less politically onerous – by the end of Baltic-German dominance in Riga by the early 1920s.
 21. Cubism and constructivism, often coupled by Latvian critics, were favored for the facility with which they could be transposed from the canvas into the decorative arts. Cubist and constructivist designs for porcelain and the theater were common within the Latvian avant-garde (see later in this section).
 22. Carving was not always the method of choice for cubist and constructivist aesthetics. When geometric forms could not be readily articulated three-dimensionally in stone and wood, Latvian sculptors molded them in plaster – works they considered final versions, rarely intending to cast them in bronze.
 23. See Ruta Čaupova, "Die lettische Bildhauerei," in *Unerwartete Begegnung*, p. 87.
 24. Not until Melderis traveled to Paris in 1923 and 1924 would he meet Lipchitz, Amédée Ozenfant, and Le Corbusier.
 25. Vladimir Markov, *Iskusstvo negrov* (Petrograd: Izd. Otdela izobrazitel'nykh iskusstv Narodnogo, 1919), better known as the German-translated *Neger-Kunst*. See Chapter 1, n. 78, for contemporaneous Czech publications on African and primitive art.
 26. Niklāvs Strunke, Sigismunds Vidbergs, Romans Suta, Konrāds Ubāns, and others spent time in Berlin during the early 1920s. Many, as members of the Riga Artists' Group, exhibited there with the Novembergruppe.
 27. The four monthly issues of *Laikmets Saturs* appeared sequentially in Berlin from January 1923 and included brief reports on exhibitions of the work of Ivan Puni, Romans Suta, Hans Belling, Fortunato Depero, and Enrico Prampolini; articles by Valdemārs Matvejs, Jan (Jean) Golus, and Amédée Ozenfant; and illustrations of works by Jēkabs Kazaks, Georges Braque, Fernand Léger, Juan Gris, Duccio di Buoninsegna, Alexander Archipenko, Jacques Lipchitz, Pablo Picasso, Carlo Carrà, Konrāds Ubāns, André Derain, Moïse Kisling, and Lucas Cranach, among other modernists and their forerunners. There appeared also articles on and illustrations of African sculpture and textiles and Indian reliefs, all important sources for the archaic resonance Latvia's sculptors endeavored to capture in their modernist works.
- The theory of synthesis, which Matvejs had articulated in Russia a decade before, was reworked by Zāle and Puni as the "Synthesis Manifesto" issued for the World Congress of (Avant-Garde) Artists held in Düsseldorf in May 1922.
- Among other Latvian journals promoting modernist aesthetics are *Ilustrēts Schurnals* (from May 1920, and spelled *Ilustrēts Žurnāls* from the November–December issue); *Zaļā Vārna* (Green Crow; from

- January 1921 and again from 1931); and *Senatne un Māksla* (Old Times and Art), primarily a journal of archaeology of the late 1930s that looked retrospectively at some of the avant-garde works of the 1920s.
28. The cubist style of Liepiņa-Skulme's essay did not ultimately find favor. The award went to Zāle, who prepared a plaster *modello* in 1925 with a decisively noncubist principal figure, perhaps sensing that a naturalist or representational model was more likely to engender support. For the realized project, Zāle gave up entirely his experimental approach of the previous decade in favor of one that stressed the overly muscular figuration so popular worldwide for government-sponsored art during the 1930s.
 29. Oto Skulme served as its president during 1923–39.
 30. In the first years of the Latvian republic, many intellectuals encouraged a revival of the country's traditional religion, known as Dievturība. The figures worshiped – Dievs, Māra, and Laima and almost five thousand lesser deities – were often represented by visual forms that came to be standardized as abstract, geometric patterns, not dissimilar from patterns that appear in Uga Skulme's painting.
 31. The depiction of figures with few or no facial details was commonplace among Latvia's avant-garde artists of the early 1920s. Valdemārs Tone and Konrāds Ubāns, for example, each painted several canvases showing women with schematized physiognomies. Such imagery might be understood within the context of the Latvian fascination with ethnographic studies, supported through official government programs, as a means to uncover, identify, and ultimately to represent the national character. Coincident with the scientific study of Latvia's distant past was an enormous popular enthusiasm for and consequent rebirth of the practice of the native nature religion, to which the pictorial imagery of the avant-garde may be related. (See n. 30.)
 32. From "60 Jahre lettischer Kunst" (Leipzig: Pandora-Verlag, 1923; reprinted in *Unerwartete Begegnung*, p. 15).
 33. The Gunpowder Tower was one of eighteen defensive towers built about 1330. Embedded in its stone wall are cannonballs widely believed to date from the Russian invasions in 1656 and 1710. Thus, the "picture in a picture" of the *Pulvertornis* would have had uncommonly current national significance in the early 1920s – recalling, as it did, Riga's resistance of foreign (primarily Russian but also German) incursion.
 34. A painting from the same year, also titled *Still Life with Triangle* (Latvian Art Museum, Riga), is similar in composition. It is missing the framed picture of the Gunpowder Tower and the pulled-back chair, however, and a lemon is substituted for the architect's T-square.
 35. Suta was probably joined in these revolutionary designs by Aleksandra Beļcova, who had been a student in Saint Petersburg under the Soviet constructivist Natan Al'tman, and who returned in 1919 to Riga, where she and Suta married. It is instructive to compare Suta's still life with Al'tman's design for the decoration of Palace Square in Petrograd (fig. 103 in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915–1932* [exh. cat., New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992]), in which corners of buildings are shown almost identical to those in Suta's painting. Often they are backed by colored geometric forms like the one behind Suta's Gunpowder Tower.
 36. See Jean Metzinger and Albert Gleizes, *Du Cubisme* (Paris: E. Figuière, 1912). In time, Suta would develop a special sympathy for the cubist work of Juan Gris and Fernand Léger.
 37. In a self-portrait (see Fig. 208), Suta depicted himself in a manner congruent with the Russian modernists, many of whom elected to portray themselves having somewhat slanted eyes, wearing a Russian navy shirt, and clenching or holding a pipe to affirm their identity with the working classes.
 38. Suta wrote emphatically about the dangers of relying on a heavy-handed use of native folklore. To synthesize native elements with modernist styles and forms, he found ways to capture – admittedly rather imprecisely – cultural atavisms in the form of a Latvian feeling for color, rhythm, and even temperament.
 39. As a result of these contacts, the Riga Artists' Group held joint exhibitions with Blok (in 1924) and the Novembergruppe (in 1925), worked with Le Corbusier and Ozenfant to publish an article on Latvian art in *L'Esprit nouveau* (in 1924), organized an exhibition of its members' work in Paris (in 1925), and shared other activities. (For a discussion of Blok, see Chapter 2, § "Constructivism of the 1920s in Poland and Lithuania.")
 40. See n. 32.
 41. Aleksandra Beļcova and Sigismunds Vidbergs were the other cofounders of Baltars. Vidbergs had lived in Saint Petersburg, where he had developed a friendship and working relationship with the artistic director of the Imperial (and, subsequent to 1918, State) Porcelain Manufactory.
 42. For a good introduction to Latvian modernist porcelain, see Zigurds Konstants, "Die lettische Porzellan-kunst," in *Unerwartete Begegnung*, pp. 92–7.
 43. The thematic focus on Latvia's native folk traditions, ceremonies, and religious symbolism was part of the enormously popular (and government-sponsored) concern to uncover the nation's ethnographic history and thereby to affirm its unique cultural and spiritual character. It coincided with an enthusiasm for ethnography in general, as evident in Aleksandra Beļcova's plate designs on old Russian themes, especially those combining religious icons, praying peasants, and characteristic *kremlin* architecture. Such emphasis on folk imagery must be understood as a rejection of the revolutionary plates, cups, saucers, and inkstands designed between 1923 and 1925 by Kazimir Malevich, Ilya Chashnik, and Nikolai Sue-

tin for the Russian State Porcelain Factory in Petrograd.

44. The theater and the opera had long been major cultural interests of Latvia's Baltic-German community. A German drama and opera theater had been established in Riga by the end of the eighteenth century and had performed works in German, Russian, Polish, and Italian. Significantly, Richard Wagner was a director of the theater and during his tenure wrote *Rienzi* (his first opera performed in Riga) and *The Flying Dutchman*. Although operas and plays had been written by Latvians in their native language during the period of the "national awakening," tsarist proscription delayed their performance until the twentieth century. Ironically, the first production of the Latvian National Opera following its founding in 1919 was Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. In Riga's Artists' Theater during the years of Latvia's independence, the innovative German Max Reinhardt was retained as director, and the influence of the Russian experimentalist Vsevolod Meierhol'd was pronounced.
45. Between 1922 and the end of the democratic experiment, Latvia had thirteen governments, or on average more than one per year. The large number of political parties, coupled with a general antagonism between rural agrarian groups and urban social democrats, made governing difficult. Moreover, the creation of a large and easily accessible national higher education produced in a few short years more graduates than the fragile economy could accommodate. Thus, the country became less and less tolerant of ambitious social programs, of utopian aesthetic schemes, and particularly of minority groups, whose constitutionally guaranteed freedoms allowed them to prosper. These disquieting conditions led to a growing hostility toward forms and groups seen as advocating cosmopolitanism; nativist causes were ascendant, and the various social and aesthetic forms of synthesis advocated by the classical avant-garde were almost invariably rejected.
46. Although the authoritarian policies of the Ulmanis régime have often been compared with the dictatorial or semidictatorial programs of other contemporary states – Horthy's Hungary, Mussolini's Italy, and even Hitler's Germany, for example – Latvia experienced little of the internal political violence of other absolutist European states. There were no political executions, very few examples of long-term imprisonment of political opponents, and almost no use of explicit coercion by the political police. Nonetheless, an effective enforcement of censorship laws; a firm policy of state "guidance" of culture and the arts, labor, and agriculture; and a corporatist economic program characterized the post-coup (1934) Latvian government of Ulmanis, known in the fashion of the times as the Leader (*vadonis*).
47. Perhaps no event was more representative of the aspirations of the Estonian national awakening than the series of all-Estonian song festivals, the first of which was held in Tartu in 1869. Promoted by the Venemuine Society, named after the mythic Finnish god of music, the initial festival allotted to native Estonian folk music only a minor role; moreover, the festival was under the supervision of a Baltic-German pastor. Nonetheless, during the festivities the audience was exhorted to embrace a program of Estonian education as a means to free Estonians from their dependence upon Baltic-German dominance of culture, the economy, and the local political and administrative organs. Drafted by Jakob Hurt, a leader of the moderate wing of the emergent Estonian intelligentsia and the founder of the mass-culture movement known as the Estonian Alexander School (named after Tsar Alexander I, widely recognized in Estonia as a tsar-liberator), the call for Estonian-language primary schools would take decades before it would be successfully implemented.
48. The Baltic-German nobility, which began arriving in the eastern Baltic along with Danes and Russians in the thirteenth century, early attained almost absolute cultural, economic, and political authority over the Estonian peasantry. These privileges were retained once Estonia was surrendered in 1721 by Sweden to Russia. Tsar Peter the Great and his successors saw in the Baltic-German landowners, merchant associations, and professional classes a stabilizing force. Thus, they continued to wield power – influence that was not challenged until the mid-nineteenth century and not fully supplanted until well into the twentieth. There is a large literature on the influential role of the Baltic Germans in Estonia and Latvia. Among the most accessible English-language studies that also provides an excellent overview of Estonian history is Toivo U. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 2d ed., Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1991.
49. Most Estonian artists received their education in the academy of Saint Petersburg, the imperial capital. By the third quarter of the century, Düsseldorf, renowned for its professors of landscape painting, had become an attractive destination for many young artists from Estonia, as well as from Hungary, Bohemia, and the United States. A school of drawing in Tartu, established as early as 1803, was attended almost exclusively by Baltic Germans.
50. A principal figure in the inception of national self-awareness was Johann Voldemar Jannsen, who had published the first Estonian-language newspaper in 1857. As editor of *Perno Postimees* (1857–64) in Pärnu and *Eesti Postimees* (The Estonian Courier, 1864–80) in Tartu, Jannsen pressed for moderate reform, largely by urging Estonians to collaborate with the dominant Baltic-German institutions for the betterment of their own conditions. Jannsen's daughter, Lydia, best known under her pen name Koidula (Lord of the Dawn), achieved renown as the most eminent poet of the Estonian "national awakening."
51. The *Kalevipoeg* recounts the tragic fate of the Eston-

- ian nation during the late thirteenth century, ending with the promise of a future era of happiness and freedom. It can be compared with the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. Although the symbolic importance of the *Kalevipoeg* cannot be underestimated for its decisive role in representing the historical existence of an Estonian nation, Kreutzwald's compilation was far from universally praised as a literary work by contemporary Estonians, many of whom were preoccupied by competition between Northern and Southern Estonian dialects as claimants to the "national" literary language. Kreutzwald was also likely responsible for the creation of the Society of Estonian Literati, which, like his famous literary compilation, drew on a Finnish model. Although organized simply to promote Estonian literacy in their own language, Kreutzwald's society soon became the leading proponent of Estonian culture, especially in Tartu, where its activities were centered until closed in 1893 by tsarist command.
52. Among the few Estonian sculptors, two contributed to the "national-awakening" movement: Amandus Heinrich Adamson (1855–1929), who studied at Saint Petersburg's Imperial Academy of Arts and later in Paris, and August Ludwig Weizenberg (1837–1921), who studied at the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts before continuing his training in Saint Petersburg, Munich, Vienna, and Rome. Each sculptor spent most of his respective early artistic life abroad, not returning permanently to Estonia until the second decade of the twentieth century.
 53. Instructive parallels can be drawn between Raud and several figures who lie outside the scope of this study: Ferdinand Hodler in Switzerland, Nicholas Roerich in Russia, and particularly Aksel Gallen-Kallela in Finland, especially with regard to the last artist's illustrations to the *Kalevala*.
 54. Neoromanticism may have been a reaction against the eminence, if no longer the outright domination, of Baltic-German culture in Estonia through the 1930s. Its popularity could be attributed, as well, to oppressive Russian influence on Estonian affairs. Tsarist rule over Estonia, begun in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, extended to the second decade of the twentieth.
 55. Raud was himself dedicated to organizing courses on traditional arts and crafts, systematically collecting and popularizing folk art, publishing prolifically on national art matters, creating the Estonian National Museum (1909), participating in the Young Estonia group, and later working in the Estonian republic's education ministry to ensure the protection and maintenance of the national collections of folk art.
 56. See the opening pages of Chapter 2. For Estonia, in particular, the Revolution of 1905, in which sympathy strikes for the slain protestors in Saint Petersburg were held in Tallinn, Narva, Pärnu, and Tartu – thereby resulting in the tsar's order to close the university in Tartu – had a galvanizing effect on the region's character: The still-dominant Baltic-German population in Estland and northern Livland, present-day Estonia, turned increasingly to Imperial Germany for assistance (and colonists); native Estonians were emboldened to agitate with increasing success for political representation and authority; and the Young Estonia movement was inspired to heightened activity and secured the freedom from oppressive Russian censorship to publish albums and journals.
 57. In the same year, Raud opened up his studio as an educational nucleus for Estonian aesthetics in the university city of Tartu, still very much a center of Baltic-German higher education and culture.
 58. Newly independent Estonia was remarkable for passing among the most liberal laws in the world for the protection of minority rights. As the victim of previous restrictive cultural policies, the new nation made certain that its German, Russian, and other ethnic or national groups enjoyed full freedom to establish their own schools and to use their own languages.
 59. Estonians would hear Johannes Semper (1892–1970) deliver in 1914 and 1918, respectively, lectures on futurism and expressionism. Also, Anton Starkopf (1889–1966), who had pursued his study of sculpture in Berlin and Dresden before World War I, brought to Tartu his familiarity with expressionism and cubism when he became a lecturer at the Pallas School in 1919.
 60. In 1921 the Fifth Pallas Exhibition displayed paintings by Otto Dix.
 61. Few of Aren's works from the 1920s and 1930s survived World War II.
 62. In 1922 Estonian artists of a more conservative aesthetic perspective had established in Tallinn the Central Association of Estonian Artists. Kristjan Raud and Ants Laikmaa, who had played a pivotal role in organizing and shaping a progressive art movement in the country, were among the first members of the conservative association. They felt that the younger generation was becoming too radical in its support of cubism, constructivism, and abstract art.
 63. In 1928 the Group of Estonian Artists issued "The New Art's Book," which many contemporary Estonian scholars have argued was introduced to the international public by Theo van Doesburg in an article for the journal *Die Form*. I have been unable to confirm this claim for van Doesburg's promotion by consulting the bibliographic compilations of the Dutch artist's published and unpublished writings. It is true, however, that reliance on a literary text for visual experimentation had enjoyed a long history in Estonia, reaching back to the "national awakening" in the 1860s and recalling the society of Young Estonia and its artist-followers in the early years of the twentieth century.
 64. Lying outside this study but quite closely connected to it is the enormously accomplished work of Es-

- tonia's functionalist architects. A serviceable introduction in English to this rich topic can be found in essays by Mart Kalm and Krista Kodres in an Estonian–Finnish exhibition catalog for the Museum of Estonian Architecture: Karin Hallas, ed., *Toisin: Funktionalismi ja Neofunktionalismi Viron Arhitektuurissa / Funktionalism ja Neofunktionalism Eesti Arhitektuuris* (Otherwise: Functionalism and Neo-Functionalism in Estonian Architecture) (Tallinn, n.d.).
65. Olvi, like others in the Group of Estonian Artists – Aren, Vabbe, and E. A. Blumenfeldt, for example – was active as a stage designer. The theater in Estonia, as elsewhere during the 1920s, afforded progressive artists a unique opportunity to realize their utopian projects on a controlled, if artificial, scale.
 66. Much of the mature avant-garde work had been either presented in or prefigured by an extraordinary exhibition of cubist-related styles sponsored in 1924 and 1925 by the Group of Estonian Artists, first in Tallinn and later in Tartu. The participation of the Latvian avant-garde in the exhibition was significant, as several Estonians had trained in Riga and collaborated with their Latvian colleagues in creating a modernist aesthetics in the Baltics.
 67. Journals, too, played a central role in making known the visual arts and often provided them with a much-needed rationale. Among the host of periodicals that appeared in the fifteen years following independence in 1918, at least three merit mention for the prominence they gave to progressive visual art: *AEG: Poliitika, Kirjanduse, Jasckunsti Ajakiri* (The Political, Literary, and Art Journal), which began in 1928 in Tartu, having been preceded by an Estonian monthly of the same name published in Berlin in 1922; *Agu* (Dawn), which was brought out in Tallinn in 1922; and, most significant, *Taie: Eesti Kunsti Aiakiri* (Art: Estonian Art Journal [in Finnish]), begun in 1928.
 68. See n. 62.
 69. See, in particular, discussions of Poland, Slovenia, and Croatia (in Chapters 2 and 4, respectively).
 70. Although Greenberg spent the years between 1913 and 1920 in Moscow, where he participated in the Mir Iskustva exhibitions, there are few traces of his Russian experience apparent in the works described here.
 71. The most extreme and most popular of the rightist formations was the League of Veterans of the Estonian War of Independence (Essti Vabadussõjalaste Liit). Founded as an advocacy movement to promote veterans' interests during the economic crisis of the early 1930s, the League soon took on the structure and attributes of its foreign models: German Nazis, Italian Fascists, and the Finnish Lapua adherents. Led by Artur Sirk, the League was essentially nativist and virulently opposed parliamentary democracy, exploiting populist disgust with the corruption and nepotism of the Estonian government. The League also fanned anti-Semitism, equating Judaism with the Soviet Marxism that the veterans had themselves combated in the independence wars.
 72. Under Konstantin Päts, a series of measures were taken to suppress the League of Veterans and other extralegal organizations, principally through the imposition of martial law beginning in 1934. In the course of these extreme measures, an "era of silence" (*vaikiv ajastu*) enveloped almost all aspects of civic culture. Nonetheless, it may be argued that Päts's authoritarianism may have been preferable to the fascism that the League of Veterans almost succeeded in realizing.

4. THE SOUTHERN BALKANS OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

1. Orthodox Christians in tsarist lands did not evince the same religious antipathy toward the Islamic empire as was publicly proclaimed in Roman Catholic Europe. Nonetheless, Russian political expansion at Ottoman expense was an essential element of tsarist (and Soviet) foreign policy for four hundred years. Through the 1856 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Crimean War, the victorious European powers assumed the role of guarantor of the Christian peoples still subject to the Sublime Porte (i.e., Ottoman rule). Russia, however, continued to see itself as the protector of Christian Orthodoxy in the region and consequently assumed a determining role on the peninsula, particularly in Bulgaria.
2. The Treaty of Vienna also entitled Austria to occupy the lands of the Venetian republic and to annex the Dalmatian coast and Istria, long of interest to the Habsburgs. Much of the territorial revision codified in the treaty concerned the Polish lands and hence falls outside this chapter.
3. The Congress of Berlin, attesting to the authority of the newly established German empire, was called to order on 13 June 1878 by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Its participants included Russia, France, Great Britain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire. The Balkan states, whose fate was to be determined by the Great Powers, were not represented. As a result of the monthlong deliberations, Bulgaria was reduced in geography but was acknowledged as an autonomous tributary state of the Porte; Macedonia, Albania, and Thrace were returned to direct Ottoman rule; and Romania, Montenegro, and Serbia were recognized as independent. The treaty permitted the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary not only to occupy the provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina; it also allowed the Habsburgs authority over the strategic strip of land separating Serbia and Montenegro (the Sanjak, or administrative district, of Novi Pazar), thereby assuring Vienna a continuing and dominant presence on the peninsula. In the northern Balkans, although newly independent Romania was compelled to surrender

southern Bessarabia, it did receive from Bulgaria both the Danube Delta and the Dobrudja.

Penalized most by the Treaty of Berlin was the Ottoman Empire, which not only lost prestige, authority, and territory throughout the Balkan peninsula but which ceded significant domains to Russia and Great Britain (e.g., Cyprus). Redrawing geopolitical boundaries in much of Europe and beyond, the treaty did not settle territorial disputes, nor did it resolve national aspirations.

4. Bosnia was not annexed officially until 1908.
5. The division was never completely fixed along either religious or political lines. Although Orthodox Christianity and Islam predominated in Albania, Serbia, Hercegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia (whereas adherents to Roman Catholicism constituted the majority in Slovenia and Croatia), all these Balkan lands – with the possible exception of Slovenia – were quite heterogeneous and contained significant minorities and subgroups. Both the Habsburg and Ottoman authorities constantly introduced “outside” peoples as one means of securing militarily the shifting borders between the two empires, as the Ottomans did with quite mixed results when they brought to Bosnia and Serbia janissaries from Egypt. Rarely corresponding exactly to cultural or linguistic patterns, political boundaries had their own – often quite independent – evolution.
6. Slovenian was eventually codified through being adopted as the language of educational instruction. So well entrenched was this tradition that when Austria assumed administrative responsibility for the province, the government provided textbooks that were either bilingual (German/Slovenian) or entirely Slovenian.
7. Support of the territorial integrity of the Habsburg empire was a feature of the various Slovenian political parties. Even the National Radical Party, which separated from the Slovenian Liberal Party and was preoccupied with the national question, remained loyal to the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. Before World War I, only a very few and quite minor political groupings sought the dissolution of the empire and the creation of a southern Slav federal state. Perhaps the best remembered of these groups was *Preporod* (Renaissance), which consisted primarily of educated youths.
8. For the role of Ažbė’s Munich school in the education of other central and eastern European progressive figures, see Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 6.
9. During circa 1882–4, Ažbė studied with Janez Wolf, among the most prominent Slovene realist painters of the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, for many young, culturally self-conscious Slovenes, Ažbė’s school represented a historical link to their culture.
10. As the recognized embodiment of the modern Slovene identity, Jakopič’s canvases were subjected to intense political analysis. Critics assessing the state of national cultural consciousness could see in these works “anarchism” or German liberalism or features alien to the (idealized conception of the) calm control of the Slovene identity. Some of the objections can be assigned to the artist’s erratic shifts in style and application of paint. At moments his technique was indeed very close to that of the French impressionists; other times he eschewed a “systematic” application of paint in favor of richly expressive, almost impulsive, brushwork.
- For an excellent assessment in English of the reaction to Jakopič’s work shown in 1902, see Andrej Smrekar, “Rihard Jakopič: The Genesis of a Myth,” in Andrej Smrekar et al., *Rihard Jakopič: To sem jaz, umetnik . . .* (It’s Me, an Artist . . . ; exh. cat., Ljubljana: Mestni muzej–Narodna galerija, 1993), pp. 152–3; hereafter cited as Smrekar et al., *Jakopič*.
11. Playing a critical role in the reception of the Sava club among fellow Slovenes were articles written by the eminent literary figures Ivan Cankar (1876–1918) and Oton Župančič (1878–1949). Through their endorsement of the national aims of Sava as well as its members’ artistic competence, a powerful nationalist mythology grew up around Jakopič. Cankar and his brother, Izidor Cankar, would continue to serve as apologists for modernism in the years both preceding and following World War I.
12. Paradoxically, Grohar’s *Sower* (exhibited in Trieste in 1907 and intended for the National Museum in Ljubljana) would be praised by conservative critics not for its striking impressionist handling but for its use of the image of the Slovenian peasant and landscape and the Catholic Church tower of Škofja Loka. According to Andrej Smrekar (Smrekar et al., *Jakopič*, p. 156), such a reading of Grohar’s *Sower* “led the way to the domestication of the avant-garde. It provided [the more conservative members of the audience with] a paradigmatic approach to impressionist painting, which suddenly made sense due to the ideological resonance.”
13. It was not until 1929 that the name *Yugoslavia* was officially adopted. In the present text, however, *Yugoslavia* is used interchangeably with the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.
14. Karst is the border area today between Italy and Slovenia.
15. Formerly German Neustädtl in what was until 1918 Carniola, Novi Mesto is now in southern Slavonia, about thirty-six miles southeast of Ljubljana.
16. Primorsko is today in the vicinity of the Italian city of Gorizia.
17. A persuasive comparison can be drawn with the Hungarian resident-in-Berlin Hugo Scheiber (see Chapter 6, § “Constructivism”), as exemplified in his exaggerated portrayal of Lajos Kassák (see Plate 47; and cf. Fig. 341).
18. Jakac’s mastery of the graphic media did not extend to painting.
19. The political and social commitment of the Slovene constructivists led them to direct and mutually ben-

official contact and collaboration with other Yugoslav artists, especially in Serbia and Croatia. Indeed, there was among the constructivists a heightened sense of being Yugoslav, rather than identifying primarily or exclusively with their respective southern Slav states. See the section “Serbia.”

20. The Slovene constructivists were not welcome in increasingly conservative Slovenia. Soon after founding their radical organizations in the mid-1920s, they were compelled to emigrate as the result of their promotion of leftist art, authors, and causes. Delak and Černigoj returned to Trieste and Gorizia, where they played an important role in organizing antitraditional Italian artists.
21. As was the case for many European and American avant-gardists, the Slovenes found that “little reviews” served as the most efficacious vehicles for disseminating their critical perspectives as well as their art. Journals often republished the work of one another’s contributors, and all advertised and promoted the art and philosophies of like-minded pioneers. Thus, news about and articles (as well as original linocuts) by Slovenian constructivists appeared in avant-garde serials in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere.
22. Ljubljana had already been the site of earlier avant-garde publications. In 1921 the periodical *Svetokret* (Dawn) appeared, edited by the actor and poet Branko Poljanski (see n. 44). It was followed in 1922 by *Trije labodje* (Three Swans), issued under the joint editorial direction of the poet Anton Podbevšek, the musician Marij Kogoj (see Plate 23), and the journalist Josip Vidmar, who soon founded in Ljubljana the communist-oriented *Redči pilot* (ReD Pilot). Like *Tank*, these journals endorsed various types of modernist expression and left-wing social engagement; however, none attained the international resonance or engaged the participation of the leading European artists and intellectuals. Neither did they achieve the innovative typographical layout that established *Tank* as a major international organ of modernism.
In 1924 Černigoj had his first exhibition in Ljubljana of the constructivism he had learned from his study at the Bauhaus. That same year, he came into contact with Delak, who was in the process of establishing a reputation as one of the most progressive theater directors in the region and whose troupe, Novi Oder (New Theater), was the incarnation of his radical theories for an avant-garde theater. By the fall of 1925, political pressures had compelled the avant-gardists to leave Ljubljana for Italian Trieste, where they each founded or published progressive journals, although not specifically oriented toward Slovenes. It was not until 1926 or early 1927 that they focused on Slovenian modernist developments within the international context of the avant-garde.
23. Like many of his confederates elsewhere in Europe, Delak wanted his journal to serve as the foundation for a network of avant-garde activities. He envi-

sioned for Ljubljana a *Tank* library, a *Tank* theater, and a *Tank* literary group, among other manifestations of the *Tank* philosophy of modernism.

24. Delak, “The Modern Stage,” *Mladina*, no. 1 (1926), p. 22; quoted in Vida Golubović, “Constructivism and the Slovenian Model,” *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, no. 17 (Fall 1990), p. 62.
25. There were differences (especially during the eighteenth century) in the rights, privileges, and obligations between Civil Slavonia and Civil Croatia – the latter enjoying a great deal of autonomy as well as a relatively powerful nobility.
The Military Frontier, which extended from the Banat in the east to the Adriatic Sea in the west, was from the late seventeenth century populated increasingly by Orthodox Serbs. The Balkan borders of the empire were porous, allowing the migration of Serbian merchants into Croatian cities and enormous numbers of peasants into the Slavonian countryside. To safeguard the empire’s borders, populations of Serbs were moved throughout the Military Frontier, thus assuring a mixed population of Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs that would become and remain to the present a constant source of internal cultural and political friction.
26. Quoted by Elinor Murray Despalatović, in *Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 11.
As Croatia was in the eighteenth century mainly feudal, the large landowners were motivated by self-interest in aligning with either Austria or Hungary. A decisive year in this contest was 1790, when Joseph II introduced a series of reforms in the county organization of the Hungarian kingdom, hitherto completely controlled by the local nobility. Rejecting what they perceived as external interference by Vienna in the exercise of their traditional rights, Croatian landowners closed ranks with their Hungarian counterparts, a union cemented by Austria’s abolition of serfdom and limitation of the privileges of the Catholic Church – both of which institutions were acknowledged as central to the Croatian national tradition. Austrian reform and centralization led Croatia to surrender much of its autonomy to the Hungarian Diet in Buda. Thenceforth, Croatian policy was no longer made principally in Zagreb but was determined in the Hungarian royal capital. This, in time, would facilitate a Hungarian movement of Magyarization in the lands of Saint Stephen.
27. Already in 1791 Croatian resistance to Hungarian as the official language throughout the kingdom had compelled the Diet in Buda to allow Latin to remain the official language. Hungarian efforts to Magyarize the kingdom would resume with greater intensity in the second half of the nineteenth century.
Setting aside the age-old question whether Croatian is an independent language, the present study treats Croatian and Serbian as one and the same (although written in different alphabets).

28. Unlike Transylvania, for example, Croatia had had some autonomy, particularly in the areas of local administration and elementary education, where Serbo-Croatian was permitted. Moreover, Croatia had a token delegation at the Hungarian parliament in Budapest, as well as several lively political parties. Similar opportunities were afforded to Dalmatia.
29. Masaryk (1850–1937), who would become president of the post-World War I state of Czechoslovakia, was greatly admired by southern Slav intellectuals. What impressed Croats and Serbs even more than his democratic principles was Masaryk's perceived ability to reconcile the animosity between Czechs and Germans in the multiethnic Republic of Czechoslovakia. By the 1930s, however, as was to be the case in Croatia and Serbia as well, Masaryk's ideals could not resolve or prevent the resumption of conflict between these antagonists.
30. Cited by Viktor Novak, in *Antologija Jugoslovenske Misli i Narodnog Jedinstva, 1390–1930* (Belgrade, 1930); quoted in Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 515–17; hereafter cited as Jelavich, *History*. The excerpt is from the Croatian-Serbian Coalition's 1905 program for incorporating Dalmatia into Croatia through Yugoslav ideals.
31. The artist was inspired to undertake this subject after a meeting in Split (Dalmatia, which at the time was a center for the Yugoslav ideal) with the Croatian painter Emanuel Vidović, the composer Emanuel Hatze, and the poet Ivo Vojnović. (See Duško Kečkemet, *Ivan Meštrović* [New York, 1970], n.p.) That Meštrović's associates were simultaneously aesthetic modernists and nationalists was critical to the genesis of the sculptural program.
32. Meunier's *Monument to Work* is a suggestive parallel for Meštrović's complicated theory of labor through which his own temple to Croatia and the southern Slavs was to be constructed. He wanted the state to assume the cost of materials and to provide each craftsman-laborer with the same living wage. Senior artists and artisans would instruct younger ones, as in medieval practice. Moreover, as in the Middle Ages of Croatian grandeur, the temple would be built over generations by collective effort, thus ensuring that the physical construction would be paralleled by a spiritual one: the building site as a sacred national temple of harmonious social life and professional instruction.
33. The same phenomenon is observable in Germany, France, and England, where leading figures in the prewar avant-garde lent their talents to the war effort by designing posters, illustrating periodicals, creating camouflage, and in countless other ways subordinating their radical styles to the mass needs of the moment.
34. Even the Serbian Orthodox troops of the Military Frontier remained loyal to the empire. In the opening weeks of the war, the Austro-Hungarian detachments that invaded Serbia comprised up to 50 percent Croatian and 25 percent Serbian soldiers. See Jelavich, *History*, pp. 115ff.
35. See n. 40 and the section on Serbia.
36. See n. 3.
37. The treaty among Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Serbia in the months before the outbreak of the First Balkan War, which pitted the Balkan countries against the Ottoman Turks, marks the first time these parties agreed to form an alliance. The outcome of the conflict in 1912 was a decisive victory over the Turks, whose army was less than half the size of the Balkan forces of 700,000. With defeat, the Ottoman presence in the Balkans was effectively ended. The European Great Powers, always eager to regulate Balkan affairs, insisted on the creation of an independent Albania to prevent Serbia from extending its reach to the Adriatic. Seeking compensation elsewhere, Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria reached a secret agreement on the partition of Macedonia. This division – confirmed in the Treaty of Bucharest, which brought the Second Balkan War to a close in August 1913 – would have significant cultural ramifications.
38. The result of Tsar Dušan's having been crowned in Skopje was that city's elevation to the seat of the Serbian empire during its period of greatest conquest. See the section on Macedonia for a discussion of Serbian claims on that region.
39. There are compelling parallels to support such an interpretation. In the years bracketing the internationally contested annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908, several artists (mostly Hungarian, including Tivadar Csontváry Koszta as early as 1903) executed and publicly exhibited paintings portraying the famed Ottoman bridge of Mostar. Contemporary critics in the empire's capitals of Vienna and Budapest recognized the renditions of the subject in a modern style as a statement of the Habsburgs' legitimate claim to Bosnia, which had been occupied by imperial troops in 1878, as provided for by the Treaty of Berlin.
40. Zenit stood for the consummation – zenith – and embodiment of the most progressive programs for art, society, and life. It is thus comparable to artists' groups like De Stijl, whose meaning goes beyond mere "style" to embrace nuances of *the* style for living. Both groups were totalizing in their objectives.
41. In rebellion against the government's official policy of promoting Serbo-Croatian as the new, national language of Yugoslavia, *Zenit* intentionally eschewed translations into the native tongue, insisting instead on publishing contributions from its international roster of poets, critics, and philosophers in the original Czech, French, English, German, Russian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Flemish, and even Esperanto. Naturally, very few, if any, were sufficiently polyglot to be able to read articles in all these languages. But this, too, was consistent with Micić's combative and impertinent objectives: *Zenit* could legitimately claim at the same time to be fully international and to echo fundamentally dadaist aesthetic sentiments.

42. Micić's entire career was characterized by argumentative relations with allies as well as detractors. His antagonism toward non-Zenitist modes of modern art earned him the enmity of the surrealists and – together with political policies of the royal and later communist Yugoslav régimes – surely played a role in the suppression of the record of his activities for decades after *Zenit* ceased publishing in 1926.
43. As supporters of the Catholic Church and monarchy (Habsburg before 1918 and Karadjordjević in the decade following), most middle-class proponents of modernism in Slovenia and Croatia were unlikely to be engaged seriously by a radical journal whose promotion of avant-garde art was inseparable from advancing Soviet interests.
44. Poljanski, who was known also by such first names as Valerij, Vij, and Ve, was an active contributor to *Zenit* until he left Yugoslavia for Paris in 1927 (see also n. 22).
45. Micić established a gallery to show avant-garde art in Belgrade in April 1924. In its first exhibition, he presented works from throughout the Balkans, eastern and western Europe, and the United States. See Iri-na Subotić, "Avant-Garde Tendencies in Yugoslavia," *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 24 and nn. 21–6; and Subotić, "Zenit and Zenitism," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Fall 1990, p. 25, n. 12.
46. See Chapter 6, especially the discussion of Kassák's design for kiosks (Fig. 380).
47. See n. 23.
48. Croatia also witnessed in these years a return to a form of classicism beyond that of the New Objectivity that had been established in Zagreb. The Zemlja (Earth) group, founded in 1929, was an informal association of almost a dozen painters who communicated lyricism and introspection through exploiting local color. Lacking a definite aesthetic or political program, they can best be characterized as poetic realists.
49. Novi Sad was and remains the regional capital of the Vojvodina, a territory populated by Hungarians, Romanians, Germans, and Serbs, and for almost a century avidly desired by Serbia. In 1918 the Vojvodina was taken from Hungary and given to Serbia by the victorious Allies – a connection left intact when Serbia joined the Yugoslav federation. Mounting the Yugoslav Exposition in Novi Sad may, then, have fulfilled political purposes for Serbian artists.
50. There were several groups of conservative-leaning artists whose opposition to modernism did not always imply a total rejection of modern expressive means. In addition to Oblik, mention should be made of Zograf (an ancient Slavonic word for *artist*). Founded in 1928, it was led by artists who had already expressed (in 1925) their abiding belief in the continuing authority of medieval art and their rejection of contemporary trends imported too slavishly from Paris and elsewhere. Nevertheless, paintings by Vasa Pomorišac (1893–1961), Živorad Nastasijević (1893–1966), and others exhibit a form of primitivism that owes much to expressionism and symbolism. Likewise, Zemlja (Earth) and Trojica (The Three) – both founded in 1929 – among other artists' groups throughout the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, attracted painters schooled in modern styles but still wedded to conventional genre categories and respectful of native traditions.
51. Ristić was a Serbian pioneer of the surrealist practice of decalcomania, while Bor explored the photogram for its chance effects. Together they made *cadavres-exquis*.
52. Once a royal dictatorship was declared in January 1929, King Alexander abolished the constitution and exercised limitless power. He suspended all guarantees on civil liberties, banned political parties and trade unions, and suppressed the bitter rivalries among the historic nationalities of the kingdom. Although he changed the name of the country from the "Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes" to Yugoslavia, the king promoted Serbia in national affairs and cultural spheres, reserving for Serbs all high official posts. Newly redrawn internal boundaries ensured Serbian domination in six areas, Croats in two, Slovenes in one, and Muslims in none whatsoever. These repressive policies led to a mass emigration of Croat, Slovene, and Muslim intellectuals, including large numbers of progressive artists.
- The royal dictatorship established in Yugoslavia was paralleled throughout the Balkan countries – Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania among them.
53. A 1925 British Foreign Office memorandum provides a breakdown of the peoples of the partitioned territory: 1,150,000 Macedonian Slavs; 400,000 Turks; 300,000 Greeks; 200,000 Vlachs; 120,000 Albanians; 100,000 Jews; and 10,000 Gypsies (cited in Andrew Rossos, "The British Foreign Office and Macedonian National Identity, 1918–1941," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 [Summer 1994], n. 47).
54. The redistribution of Macedonian territory following World War I came mostly at the expense of Bulgaria, whose percentage fell to 10.1, or about 6,800 square kilometers. The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes received approximately 38 percent (about 26,000 sq. km.), while the lion's share of Macedonia (more than 51 percent, or about 35,000 sq. km.) went to Greece.
55. Based on censuses from 1926 and 1934, Bulgaria's "own" Macedonian population numbered just over 200,000, and an additional 101,000 refugees from Serbian- and Greek-held Macedonia had entered Bulgaria before 1926. These approximately 300,000 Macedonians in Bulgaria exercised influence well beyond what their meager numbers would suggest. The academic, military, and bureaucratic offices were dominated by Macedonians, as were the professions of medicine, law, and journalism. Also pronounced was the role of Macedonians within the commercial realm.
56. In the territory in and around Skopje, the Serbian-dominated Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slo-

venes made few provisions for any independent cultural expression after World War I. This area, long an object of Serbian interest, was officially designated “South Serbia,” recalling its pre-Turkish medieval history as part of the Great Serbian Empire of King Milutin and Tsar Dušan. Despite effective attempts to administer the region as part of the Serbian state, the powers in Belgrade had little interest in developing it; hence Skopje, Okhrid, and other traditional cultural centers continued their decline into relative insignificance. In time Skopje became sufficiently peripheral to Yugoslav interests to serve virtually as a site of internal banishment for artists too radical in style or content for the royal régime in Belgrade. The presence of creative “undesirables” in Skopje would thus prove a boon to the development of modern art in Macedonia.

57. IMRO functioned almost as an independent government in Bulgaria, its threat and use of violence dominating Bulgarian political life until 1934. IMRO’s terrorists were not infrequently hired out to groups outside Bulgaria. The assassin of Yugoslavia’s King Alexander and the French foreign minister Jean Louis Barthou was an IMRO gunman (hired in 1934 by the Croatian Ustaša).
58. To ensure dependence on Serbia, the government observed a policy to develop no institutions of higher learning in Macedonia.
59. Shoilev (1887–1972) was among the first academically trained artists in Macedonia. As a painter, he worked in a fundamentally realist or naturalist style with limited imagination or flair. However, working as a photographer, he recorded the monuments and topography of Macedonian culture, and thereafter he undertook a career copying historic Macedonian religious frescoes. Through his varied artistic activities, none of which evinced a distinctly avant-garde or modernist visual character, he nonetheless presented to his contemporaries an image of his Macedonian inheritance.
60. For a discussion of Oblik, see the section on Serbia.
61. Brothels would not have been accepted in the conservative Yugoslavian kingdom of the 1930s as legitimate subject matter for an artist.
62. The Balkan communist parties took seriously their commitment to promote the role of art in effecting fundamental social change and in affirming traditional family values. As in the Soviet Union at this period, realism and naturalism were sanctioned, but abstraction was eschewed as elitist and disparaged as incomprehensible to the masses.

5. ROMANIA

The Sublime Porte, whose influence in Wallachia and Moldavia had eroded over the preceding half-century to that of collecting a fixed tribute and exercising a voice in the selection of the local princes, had long resisted the Romanian demand for unification of the Regatene principalities under a foreign prince, a demand raised explicitly by the Porte’s Romanian subjects during the revolutionary disturbances of 1848. The Habsburg emperor had also opposed the union of Wallachia and Moldavia, fearing that such a political move could provoke the emperor’s restive Romanian subjects in Transylvania to make similar demands.

2. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin, which had profound consequences for all the Balkan countries, contained several articles pertaining to Romania. Of particular relevance here is Article 44, stipulating that Romania be compelled to grant to its subjects equal rights and protection irrespective of religious observance or creed. Although rarely enforced, this provision did encourage the mass immigration of Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia. Several hundred thousand settled in nearby Bessarabia, while others’ gravitated toward the principal cities of the Regat to fill professions many classically educated or privileged Romanians disdained. It was from these Romanianized Jews that a great proportion of avant-garde artists and their apologists would come during the 1920s (see the § “Eastern Realities”).
3. See n. 17.
4. The territories of the Regat – Wallachia and Moldavia – retained stable borders throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The northern part of Bukovina was assigned to Romania in 1919 and then surrendered after World War II to the Soviet Union. Southern Dobrudja, with its majority Bulgarian population, oscillated between Romania and Bulgaria, remaining Romanian from 1913 until 1945, whereas the part of Dobrudja that included the important Danubian Delta cities of Cernavoda and Constanța maintained the status it had had since 1878, when it was incorporated into Romania. Bessarabia, overwhelmingly Romanian, was and remains contested territory between Romania and Russia. Its southernmost three districts changed hands numerous times over the past two centuries; most was part of Romania from 1919 until 1940, when (along with northern Bukovina) it was annexed by the Soviet Union.
5. During the eleventh century Hungary took possession of Transylvania, even then populated by Romanians. To strengthen this border province against foreign encroachment, the Hungarian kings encouraged throughout the twelfth century immigration by the Szeklers (a tribe closely related linguistically and culturally to the Hungarians) and the Germans, who were known in the region as “Saxons.” Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, these two peoples enjoyed special privileges under Hungarian suzerainty.

1. Prince Karl, a cousin to Napoleon III, was the son of the head of the Catholic branch of the Hohenzollern dynasty (the Protestant branch being led by the Prussian royal family). Hence, he was ideally positioned to represent the Regat’s desired links to the rapidly developing “West.”

6. Before 1848 Vienna appointed the governor of Transylvania and all high officials. Although there was a local diet, it did not meet regularly, nor was it representative, comprising solely imperial appointees. Romanians, the absolute majority of the resident population, had no direct voice. Their wishes could be presented only by the Uniate Church, for the Romanians' Orthodox Church was not included among the denominations acknowledged by Vienna: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Unitarian.
7. Regarding this *Ausgleich*, see the opening of Chapter 1, the section on Croatia in Chapter 4, and the opening of Chapter 6.
8. Hungarian authorities granted Transylvania only limited parliamentary representation; the delegates it was allowed in the Hungarian diet did not reflect its actual population.
9. Aman was the founder of the Fine Arts Academy in Bucharest and served as its director from 1864 until his death a quarter century later. From 1865 he was also the head of the national collections of art (later the National Gallery in Bucharest), a position that would fall almost a century later to M. H. Maxy, following his decades of accomplishment within the avant-garde.
10. Very few Romanians traveled to Vienna, Prague, or Saint Petersburg to attend the prestigious art schools and academies that attracted so many young artists from other Balkan countries. For aspiring Transylvanian painters and sculptors, however, there were flexible options for study in the academies of the Habsburg empire as well as in Munich, Paris, and Düsseldorf.
11. Another important event of 1896 was the founding in Transylvania of the Free School of Painting. The significance of this school is discussed in Chapter 6, as its founder and the plurality of its affiliates were Hungarian – the Nagybánya (now Baia Mare) artists' colony and school having been at the time within the Hungarian kingdom.
12. In 1907 the disparity between the large estates and the dwarf peasant holdings was by far the greatest in Europe, exceeding even that in late tsarist Russia. The conditions within Romania's burgeoning rural population continued to deteriorate despite efforts on the part of the government to make a few parcels of land available to the peasantry.
13. Ștefan Luchian and several other pleinairists painted canvases depicting the conditions of peasants, even if not with the ruthless realism befitting their predicament.
14. Romania, the most xenophobic and anti-Semitic Balkan country, was the very one whose population comprised large numbers of foreigners. The disproportion is explainable by the fact that Hungary had, from the end of the nineteenth century, extended rights and privileges to Jews and non-Magyars in Transylvania who opted to learn Hungarian and assume Hungarian names (see the opening section of this chapter).
15. The short-lived monthly *Fronța*, which appeared in Iași in 1911, is the earliest documented avant-garde expression in Romania. Inasmuch as the journal affirmed its oppositional character by eschewing all programs, making no mention of its contributors' names, and refusing to have an editorial board, it is difficult now to ascertain exactly how consequential *Fronța* was to the emerging avant-garde.
16. Perhaps a model for Janco, Tzara, and their artist comrades can be found in Urmuz (Demetru Demetrescu-Buzău [1883–1923]), who developed a form of antiliterary prose from 1908 to 1912 in what he called his "bizarre pages." Dadaism, which was in large part the creation of Tzara and other Romanian poets, painters, and designers working in Zurich between 1916 and 1918, appeared in varying manifestations throughout eastern Europe, including Romania, for nearly a decade. Its acme was reached in Bucharest about 1924, following the return from abroad of many of the country's most advanced artists and writers (see later in this section).
17. Romania's government ministers were as conflicted in their loyalties as was the monarchy (the pro-German King Karl and his pro-French nephew Ferdinand). Thus, the wavering that went on between the two warring alliances was due, in part, to the government's own ambivalence.
18. As a result, Romania's mostly Jewish and draft-age avant-garde left immediately for Switzerland. Like Janco, who went to Zurich to complete his education as an architect at the local technical university, Tzara most likely chose that city for its neutrality. More customary for the study of architecture among youth from eastern Europe (especially Jews) was Darmstadt, which in 1915 was in warring Germany, a country with which Romania was still formally allied.
19. As the Allies were fighting the bolshevik régime in Russia, they would not have aggrandized the communist state voluntarily. Hence, Russian Bessarabia was assigned to Romania rather than being allowed to remain under Soviet control. Furthermore, the role of the royal Romanian army in suppressing Béla Kun's Hungarian Republic of Soviets in 1919 was deeply appreciated by the French and British; and this helped win for Romania special consideration at the Paris Peace Conference negotiations.
Anticommunism would become an essential facet of Romanian government policy from 1917 until the end of World War II. To inoculate the peasantry against communism, Romania embarked on the largest land distribution in Europe during the interwar period. At the same time, it instilled in its new subjects an appreciation of Romanian culture. Although never pursued with the relentless intensity of Hungary's earlier Magyarization programs, Romania's efforts were not always respectful of local cultural traditions.
20. A case in point is Transylvania, which had lain technically outside Romania (as the Hungarian territory

- of Erdély) until December 1918. Among the many “foreign” artists there, primarily Magyars and Germans, whose powerful expressionist work exerted significant influence (especially in Oradea, the Banat, Braşov, Timișoara, and Cluj) were Hans Eder (1883–1955), Imre Nagy (1893–1976), and Leon Pascu (1895–1948). The Transylvanian figure most important to Romania’s modernist culture, Hans Mattis-Teutsch, is discussed later in this section as well as in Chapter 6 on Hungary (§ “The First Wave of Vanguard Art”).
21. The brothers Marcel and Jules [Iuliu] Janco were responsible for many of Bucharest’s modernist designs. They had traveled together to Switzerland to study architecture, and from 1922 to the late 1930s maintained an architectural practice in Budapest. Although in general Marcel was responsible for the designs and Jules for the technical drawings and for overseeing the execution of the plans, the specific role played by each remains unclear. In the numerous illustrations of Marcel’s architecture that were published in *Contimporanul*, a journal for which Marcel long served as a principal designer, contributor, and editor, only one image identifies both Janco brothers as responsible (the *Pavilion Suchard*, in vol. 5, no. 67, of 1 June 1926). Among the most notable of the international-style buildings stemming from Marcel’s designs of the period for Bucharest are the apartment houses in the Str. Negustori at number 27 and in the Str. Ceres at number 3 (both ca. 1926 and one of which was reproduced on the cover of *Contimporanul*’s January 1927 issue [vol. 6, no. 72]), the Villa Chihăiescu (ca. 1930), the Villa Wexler (ca. 1931), and the apartment house in the Str. Caimatai at number 20 (ca. 1931). For a comprehensive listing and assessment of Marcel Janco’s classical avant-garde work, see Harry Seiwert, *Marcel Janco: Dadaist – Zeitgenosse – wohltemperierter morgenländischer Konstruktivist*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, series XXVIII, vol. 173, Frankfurt am Main, 1993.
 22. Published between June 1922 and January 1932, *Contimporanul* began its life with a socialist orientation. The name explicitly recalls a left-liberal publication of the same title that appeared in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century (1881–91). In a preface to the first issue of *Contimporanul* in 1922, Nicolae Lupu reinforced the “indebted[ness] for our spiritual, cultural, and intellectual polish to the great socialist review [*Contimporanul*] of the olden days.” By the one-hundredth issue, however, the journal had stepped back from its earlier endorsement of radical aesthetics.
 23. “. . . [T]rebue să apară și sabia scânteietoare de oțel curat a critice constructive . . .” (vol. 1, no. 1, 3 June 1922). In its first two years especially, the journal served as a forum for various dissenting views on politics, the economy, and culture in general. At times the political perspective became quite pointed, as in the 18 November 1922 issue (vol. 1, no. 18), in which the government’s imposition of constraints on press freedom was lampooned; the 25 November 1922 issue (no. 19), in which the political aggrandizement of the country resulting in a Greater Romania is pilloried; or the series of articles by “Alter Ego” (and “named” authors) in issues from 1922 and 1923 that lamented the nation’s increasingly fascist comportment (“Fascism and Its Romanian Origins”). Only from about November 1924 did the periodical focus more narrowly on promoting the literary and artistic avant-garde.
 24. *Contimporanul* often addressed the suppression of minorities and the oppression of Jews. Volume 1, no. 3 (17 June 1922) included an essay by G. Spina on “Antisemitism Cazon” (pp. 13–14); vol. 2, no. 30 (February 1923) contained a probing analysis by I. Vinea, the journal’s principal editor, on “Culture and Antisemitism,” plus a brief article on the government’s prevailing discriminatory “Numerus Clausus” program; vol. 2, no. 32 (February 1923) addressed the state of minorities in Romania; and vol. 2, no. 35 (March 1923) featured a contribution entitled “Profesorii Antisemiti.” Most striking is the cover article of another issue from March 1923 (vol. 2, no. 33), which reports on the just-concluded congress of the Union of Native Jewry; of special note is the commentary on the various resolutions passed in support of Jewish participation in Romania’s culture.
 25. Janco did contribute an abstract, decidedly constructivist (woodcut) composition to the June 1923 (vol. 2, no. 43) issue, as well as several other modest graphics that bordered on complete abstraction during these early years of the journal. The first fully abstract of his numerous cover designs appeared in the May 1924 (vol. 3, no. 46) issue. Other abstract works came from Maxy, who showed his mastery of constructivist forms, cubist vocabulary, and expressionist means as early as the July 1923 (vol. 2, no. 44) issue.
 26. See later in this section and n. 16.
 27. See later in this section.
 28. For example, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s manifesto “Futurist Sensibility” (vol. 2, no. 44, July 1923) and Theo van Doesburg’s “Against the Artist-Imitators” (vol. 2, no. 34, March 1923).
 29. By the third year of its existence, *Contimporanul* was corresponding with a host of the most progressive literary and artistic reviews, including *Noi* (Rome), *La Revue Européen* (Paris), *Staub* (Prague), *Monomètre* (Lyons), *Zenit* (Belgrade), *Disk* (Prague), *De Stijl* (The Netherlands), *Les Feuilles libres* (Paris), *Tentatives* (Chambéry), *Blok* (Warsaw), *G* (Berlin), *Inicial* (Buenos Aires), *Création* (Paris), *L’Esprit nouveau* (Paris), *Der Sturm* (Berlin), *L’Âme d’or* (Montpellier), *Anthologie* (Liège), and others. Within a year it would add to its list of collaborators *Aurora*, (Gorizia), *Little Review* (New York), *Mavo* (Tokyo), *S.4N.* (Northampton, Mass.), and the quite extraordinary *Latitude sud 18°* (Tananarive, Madagascar). By 1925 numerous other progressive journals – from Switzerland (*ABC*), Poland (*Praesens*), France (*Vouloir* and *Les Cahiers d’art*),

- England (*Artwork*), and Mexico (*Sagitario*) – would join the ranks of *Contimporanul*'s collaborators.
30. Excerpted (with slight changes) from the translation by Mihai Matei, "An Activist Manifesto to the Young," *Romanian Review* 1–2, nos. 291–2 (1993), pp. 46–7.
 31. It is likely that the Romanians' contact with Russian suprematism and constructivism was indirect, coming through the numerous cultural and political journals with which they were conversant, as well as from second-hand exposures to vanguard art in various capitals. Arthur Segal and M. H. Maxy had likely attended the First Russian Art Exhibition of November 1922 in Berlin, others had been in Paris, and several Transylvanian artists had belonged to the Hungarian-based Ma group, which had introduced modernist Russian developments (in Vienna) to the West as early as 1920, when a *cordon sanitaire* had restricted the free flow of information.
 32. On the back cover of the October 1924 issue of *Contimporanul* (vol. 3, no. 48), an announcement of the exhibition promised "canvases, prints, [and] sculptures" by the Romanians Constantin Brâncuși, Marcel Janco, Gheorghe Petrașcu, M. H. Maxy, Hans Mattis-Teutsch, and Victor Brauner, as well as many other progressive artists from France, Italy, Germany, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. The January 1925 issue (vol. 4, nos. 51–2), which includes a report on the exhibition, shows that the foreign exhibitors were Marc Darimont, Lempereur Haut, Victor Servrankx, and Jozef Peeters (Belgium); Teresa Żarnower and Mieczysław Szczuka (Poland); Lajos Kassák (Hungary); Karel Teige (Czechoslovakia); Paul Klee, Jean (Hans) Arp, Hans Richter, Arthur Segal, and Kurt Schwitters (Germany); Viking Eggling (Sweden); and Jo Klek (Serbia/Yugoslavia).
The Romanians were listed as M. H. Maxy, Marcel Janco, Mattis Teutsch, Victor Brauner, C. Brâncuși, Milița Petrascu [*sic*], and Dida Solomon.
 33. From the February 1925 issue (vol. 4, nos. 53–4), *Contimporanul* began to devote considerable attention to architecture and particularly that of Janco. The preeminence given to his architectural designs and aesthetic programs, over those of other Romanian modernist architects, may be due in large measure to his position as the only architect among the coeditors of the journal.
 34. Segal moved to Berlin as early as 1892. After leaving for Munich in 1896, he continued his travels to Paris and through Italy, settling again in Berlin in 1904. Although Segal spent summers in Moldavia with his extended family, he was to lead his artistic life primarily abroad. During the war years and shortly afterward, he was in Switzerland, where he came into direct contact with the (Jewish) Romanian artistic community in Zurich. These colleagues persuaded him to return briefly to Romania in 1920 before moving back to Berlin in the same year. Once established in the German capital, he maintained his connections to the Romanian avant-garde by working closely with Maxy and other Romanians during their respective sojourns in Berlin. Represented by the eminent dealer Herwarth Walden in Berlin, his work was frequently discussed and highly regarded in the Romanian press. Thus – unlike Brâncuși (see n. 35), whose work, reputation, and focus were not directed primarily toward Romania – Segal chose to remain engaged with the avant-garde of his homeland during its critically important decade.
 35. Despite the enormous significance of his sculpture and photography for the course of modern art in general, Brâncuși is cited here only to record details of his early history and specific artistic contributions to the country of his birth. He attended the Craiova School of Arts and Crafts and later the National School of Fine Arts in Bucharest. Within two years of completing his studies in 1902, he left for Paris, where he made his career, returning to Romania only twice for short visits. Brâncuși was little known in his native country before the mid-1920s except for a funerary monument (commissioned in 1907) for the Bumbrava cemetery in Buzău: *The Prayer* and *Portrait of Peter Stănescu*. In Paris, however, his studio served as a magnet for many younger Romanians: Irina Codreanu, Gheorghe Teodorescu, and especially Milița Petrașcu, whose work reveals the direct influence of her mentor's sculpture. Once having exhibited in Romania at shows sponsored by Tinerimea Artistică, Arta Română, and *Contimporanul* – and especially following the issue of *Contimporanul* devoted to his work (no. 52, January 1925), which praised Brâncuși as "a champion of the spirit of modern art" – his reputation there was assured. In fact, his prestige was sufficiently high to secure a commission from the Women's National League in Tîrgu Jiu for a war memorial honoring the heroic dead of World War I: *Table of Silence*, *Gate of the Kiss*, and *Endless Column* (1937–8).
 36. Walden had already demonstrated his growing sympathy for leftist artists from eastern Europe. He had given a highly publicized exhibition to the Russian Ivan Puni in 1921, promoted the Ukrainian Alexander Archipenko with several exhibitions, and shown the work of Hungarian modernists with increasing frequency since 1918.
 37. Some months after the December 1924 exhibition, Maxy founded the Studio of Constructivist Art (later transformed into the Academy of Decorative Arts). His model was the German Bauhaus, which had recently undergone a constructivist reorientation of its initial expressionist character.
 38. Despite the frequent citations of *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (1912) by modernist critics, the book had a surprisingly limited influence on the work of progressive artists before World War II.
 39. *Kunstideologie* (Potsdam, 1931). Mattis-Teutsch had elected about 1921 not to emigrate from Transylva-

- nia, once it was absorbed by Romania, and to become a Romanian subject. He then devoted the rest of his career to promoting modern aesthetics in his homeland, participating in its exhibitions, teaching in its schools and academies, forming art groups there (e.g., the Arta Nouă and the Union of Artists, founded in 1929 and 1944, respectively), and publishing.
40. During Mattis-Teutsch's intimate association with the Hungarian avant-garde group Ma (Today) from 1917 to 1919, he proved resistant to the emphatic socialist/communist ideological charge of Lajos Kasák and other prominent adherents. It would take several years for his own socialist engagement to gestate and to supplant the spiritualized worldview that animated his expressionism.

Other Romanian painters in the postwar period turned to communist-inspired themes, often represented in an expressionist manner, although few artists or critics at the time endorsed expressionist theory. The work of Nicolae Tonitza and Francisc Șirato assumed an increasingly expressionist cast, particularly in their renditions of children begging in the streets, miners, and similar themes favored by socialist-oriented Romanian painters in Iași.
 41. The image derives from several works by the Hungarian avant-garde in 1918 and 1919, the group of Aktivists with whom Mattis-Teutsch participated. See Fig. 357.
 42. Voronca assumed the role of editor-in-chief, and the poet Stephan Roll also served as an editor.
 43. *75 HP* (October 1924). The review was not averse to counting among its adherents the members of the *Contimporanul* circle, especially that journal's editorial board: M. H. Maxy, Ion Vinea, and Marcel Janco.
 44. *75 HP* (October 1924). The actual author of the "Aviogram" was Alexandr Cernat. In his megalomaniacal imagery of steam engines, railways, radiators, cable telegraphs, and modern intellects that operate "at the speed of a sixty-story elevator," Cernat addressed by name "the incorrigible and brilliant personality of the painter Victor Brauner, [who] is accompanied by the brave Ilarie Voronca."
 45. Brauner exhibited his picto-poetry in a one-man show held at the time *75 HP* was published and in the *Contimporanul*-sponsored international exposition of modern art two weeks later. These latter included several of his cubist, constructivist, and expressionist works as well.
 46. Of several journals through which picto-poetry was to be advanced (according to *75 HP*) – *Tx843*, *Zero*, and *00* – none ever materialized.
 47. Under the editorship of the writer Scarlat Callimachi, the short-lived *Punct* (sixteen issues between 24 November 1924 and 16 April 1925) counted among its dedicated contributors Ion Vinea, Ilarie Voronca, Marcel Janco, Stephan Roll, Felix Aderca, Ernest Cosma, F. Brunea, and Dida Solomon.
 48. *Punct*, no. 4 (13 December 1924).
 49. The commitment of Janco to this endeavor is reinforced by two facts: his manifold graphic contributions to the journal, relative to the modest number published in *Contimporanul*, and his willingness to accommodate initially the editorial offices of *Punct* in his own house.
 50. Quoted passages are from *Punct*, nos. 1 (1924) and 9 (1925). Given the overlap of personalities and commonality of objectives between *Punct* and *Contimporanul*, it was likely not by chance that each journal began advocating in its February 1925 issues the central role of constructivist architecture in the "pure creation" of the new city, society, and culture.
 51. The monthly periodical *Integral* (March 1925–April 1928) maintained editorial offices in Bucharest and Paris, the latter staffed by Benjamin Fondane (B. Fundoianu) and, occasionally, Hans Mattis-Teutsch.
 52. Attesting to Voronca's passion is a poem, titled "Dadaist Poetry," published in *75 HP* (October 1924).
 53. Quotations from Voronca appear in *Integral*, no. 2 (April 1925).
 54. *Integral*, no. 1 (March 1925).
 55. *Integral*, no. 4 (June 1925).
 56. *UNU* was first published in provincial Dorohoi, near the Ukrainian–Bukovinian border; from its ninth number, it was issued in Bucharest.
 57. A few months before *UNU* appeared, Geo Bogza brought out the first of five numbers of the monthly avant-garde literary journal *Urmuz*, named for the pioneering Romanian dadaist prose writer and poet (see n. 16) who had died at the end of 1923. Bogza rejected the "false sun" of conventionalism and denounced its "intellectual acrobatics." He wished his journal to function as a "lash that whips the mind" and that it might become a "prolific spermatozoon." To his cause he recruited Tristan Tzara, Stephan Roll, Ilarie Voronca, and others who together championed constructivism and surrealism "and all other dynamicisms that are necessary to our life" (no. 1 [April 1928]).
 58. *UNU*, no. 1 (April 1928).
 59. *UNU* published work by Man Ray, Yves Tanguy, Osip Zadkine, and Marc Chagall, along with a host of Romanian figures.
 60. Though they often pilloried other Romanian avant-garde cultural journals and artists' groups for a reliance on constructivist utilitarianism, *UNU*'s editors were not averse to employing the most sophisticated constructivism created in Romania for the graphic design of their own posters and for the typographics and layout of many of their pages.
 61. See n. 57.
 62. Surrealist severed heads of similar style are evident in a number of Brauner's drawings of 1929.
 63. Perhaps the most important periodical in this context was *alge* (Algae), whose six issues were published in Bucharest between September 1930 and July 1931.
 64. Among the notable exhibitions sponsored by avant-garde journals and organizations were those of Con-

timporeanul (1929, 1930, 1932, 1935, and 1936), *Fa-clă* (Torch; in honor of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's visit to Bucharest in 1930), the Group for Fine Arts Criterion (1933), and the Fine Arts group (1934). M. H. Maxy and Marcel Janco were the principal organizers of most of these exhibitions.

65. Quoted by Eugen Weber, "Romania," in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (Berkeley, 1966), pp. 541–2.
66. Although the National Christian Party did not obtain the premiership until 1937, many of its policies and antimodern attitudes were adopted considerably earlier by the royal government. Even King Carol, while publicly disapproving of the Guard, was not loath to make use of it in his adroit (and successful) efforts to engineer a royal dictatorship in 1938.
67. In 1932 Victor Brauner joined the surrealist movement in Paris, where he spent most of the period between 1932 and 1935; he settled permanently in France in 1938. Brauner exhibited abroad more than in Romania during the 1930s, enjoying shows in Brussels, Copenhagen, London, San Francisco, New York, and Amsterdam, as well as Paris. During the same decade his work was displayed also in Japan. Marcel Janco emigrated from Romania in 1939 or 1940, eventually moving to Israel.
68. From the manifesto of the editors of *Integral* 1, no. 1 (March 1925).
69. From "An Activist Manifesto to the Young," *Contimporeanul*, vol. 3, no. 46 (May 1924); translation by Mihai Matei, as in n. 30.

6. HUNGARY

1. With the compromise agreement (*Ausgleich*) of 1867, Hungary became for all practical purposes an equal partner in what was renamed the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary (see later in this section). United with Habsburg Austria in the person of the ruler and in shared administrative control of the foreign service, national bank, and armed forces, Hungary was free – even in a region dominated by emperors resident in Berlin, Saint Petersburg, Vienna, and Constantinople – to implement its own domestic policies.
2. See Chapter 4 on the southern Balkans (especially Croatia) and Chapter 5 on Romania.
3. As noted in Chapter 4 (§ "Slovenia"), Munich was a capital of modern art for all of central, eastern, and southeastern Europe from roughly the 1880s until early in the twentieth century. Many of the young artists who gravitated to Munich elected to work with Hollósy as well as with the Slovenian master teacher Anton Ažbė. The international character of the artists' colony Hollósy subsequently helped to establish in Transylvania persisted for decades after the Free School opened in 1896.
4. Much of the following discussion is drawn from S. A. Mansbach, *Standing in the Tempest: Painters of the Hungarian Avant-Garde, 1908–1930* (Cambridge, Mass., and Santa Barbara, 1991); hereafter cited as Mansbach, *Tempest*. This book contains essays by several authors along with comprehensive scholarly apparatus: notes, multilingual bibliography, and comparative timelines.
5. The impressionism produced at Nagybánya can be compared profitably with that created by Rihard Jakopič and his associates in Slovenia (see Chapter 4, § "Slovenia").
6. Additional artists were often affiliated with Nyolcak, thereby making the group's name more a formality than an accurate description.
7. Károly Kernstok, "A művész társadalmi szerepe" (The Social Role of the Artist), *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century), 1 (1912), pp. 377–80.
8. Kernstok's ringing exhortation was likely first voiced during his lecture titled "Kutató Művészet" (Art as Exploration), delivered on 9 January 1910 before the Galileo Circle. (See Júlia Szabó, "Ideas and Programmes: The Philosophical Background of the Hungarian Avant-Garde," in *The Hungarian Avant-Garde: The Eight and the Activists* [exh. cat., London: Hayward Gallery / Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980]; hereafter cited as *The Eight and the Activists*.) On the same day and to the same audience, Georg Lukács also gave a hortatory talk, the revolutionary ideas of which were later published as "Az utak elvaltak" (The Ways Have Parted) in *Nyugat* 1 (1910), pp. 190–3. For an English translation, see *The Eight and the Activists*, pp. 106–8.
9. See the section of Chapter 5 on "Eastern Realities." Mattis-Teutsch moved in 1912 to Budapest, where he remained until 1919, participating there in the generation of the Hungarian avant-garde.
10. In November 1918, four months before the resignation of Károlyi and the proclamation of a Hungarian soviet republic, Kassák urged in his "Manifesto for Art" (*Ma*, 1918, first special number), "We do not want to be the toy of a dominant class . . . but, side by side with the exploited workers, we are the fanatical bearers of the banner of a new and free human community."
11. By narrowing the scope of this book to a survey of artists who pursued their careers in their native lands – or devoted themselves to the development of modern art there – we necessarily exclude the significant contributions to international modernism made by those who settled abroad and established their reputations independent of nationalist politics. Such artists include, for example, Alfréd Forbát, Andor Weininger, and László Moholy-Nagy (see n. 19), among almost two dozen masters and students at Walter Gropius's Bauhaus; Vilmos Huszár and Lajos D'Ébnet, among several Hungarian members of Dutch De Stijl; and László Péri, Sándor Ek, Béla Uitz, Jolán Szilágyi, László Mészáros, János Reismann, István Sebők, and János Mácza, among the legion of Hungarians who took up residence in Moscow.

12. Not to be overlooked are several other attractions of Vienna, which had served historically as a place of refuge for Hungarian artists and intellectuals seventy years earlier in the wake of the 1848–9 insurrection. Since most of Hungary's twentieth-century intelligentsia spoke German, they could easily adjust to life in a German-speaking capital that the majority had known from their student days (when Vienna was a cocapital of the Dual Monarchy). They were drawn also by Vienna's large and well-established Jewish community, which provided a source of financial support to the mostly impoverished exiles, many of whom were of Jewish background. Perhaps most appealing to Budapest's avant-garde – considering their political persuasion – was the socialist government of the Austrian republic.
13. Quoted in "An die Künstler aller Länder," *Ma* 1, no. 2 (1920), p. 2. By "revolution" Kassák meant a generalized revolutionary cultural politics.
14. As a result of the peace treaties, to which Hungary was compelled to assent on 4 June 1920, the former kingdom lost more than two-thirds of its prewar territory and roughly 60 percent of its population.
15. For a discussion in English of the Hungarians who elected to migrate to Russia, see John E. Bowlt, "Hungarian Activism and the Russian Avant-Garde," in Mansbach, *Tempest*, pp. 143–67.
16. Another consideration is that Kassák, without the slightest training in art, could hardly compete in the dominant expressionist style that others had mastered only after prolonged effort.
17. *Képzőművészet* (Vienna, 1921). For an English translation of the manifesto, see *The Structurist*, nos. 25–6 (1986), pp. 96–8 (trans. Oliver A. I. Botar). A German translation can be found in Hubertus Gassner, ed., *Wechselwirkungen: Ungarische Avantgarde in der Weimarer Republik* (Marburg, 1986), pp. 179–82; hereafter cited as Gassner, *Wechselwirkungen*.
18. See Mansbach, *Tempest*, pp. 69–71.
19. Born in Hungary but conducting his career almost entirely in the West, Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) is discussed here only insofar as his activities were instrumental in the Hungarian avant-garde's development. Between the time of his voluntary exile from Hungary in 1919 and his abandonment of Europe in the wake of Hitler's persecutions – years in which he delivered several well-received lectures in east-central Europe and published numerous influential articles in avant-garde and trade journals there – Moholy-Nagy distanced himself increasingly from his homeland and its various artistic movements. As early as 1922 or 1923, he sought full integration into German circles of art, industry, and education; following five years as a master at the Bauhaus (1923–8) and subsequent design projects in Berlin, Amsterdam, and London, he then accepted an administrative and teaching post in Chicago and continued his signal role in the evolution of modern art in the West through creative enrichment of American education.
20. In any discussion of the artist's responsibility to society in Hungary, the role of its numerous art critics cannot be underestimated. From the beginning of the Hungarian avant-garde, an intimate intellectual cross-fertilization took place between painters and philosopher-critics, the example of Georg Lukács being perhaps the best known. This rich exchange between artist and critic continued in exile, and in this context Kállai and Kemény were seminal. Both were more than authors of reviews; they spoke and wrote on the nature, purposes, and implications of modern art, and especially on its social dimensions. A good selection of their writings can be found in Gassner, *Wechselwirkungen*. See also bibliographical entries in Mansbach, *Tempest*, pp. 218, 225.
21. See László Moholy-Nagy and Alfréd Kemény, "Dynamisch-konstruktives Kraftsystem," *Sturm*, no. 12 (1922).
22. Among those who returned from self-exile in the West between the early 1920s and the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany during the early 1930s were Aurél Bernáth (from Berlin in 1926), Dezső Bokros Birman (from Berlin in 1921), Sándor Bortnyik (from Germany in 1925), Dezső Czigány (from Paris, ca. 1927), Gyula Derkovits (from Vienna, ca. 1927), Noémi Ferenczy (from Berlin in 1932), Béla Kádár (from Berlin, ca. 1932), Lajos Kassák (from Vienna in 1926), Károly Kernstok (from Berlin in 1926), Farkas Molnár (from Germany in 1925), József Nemes Lampérth (from Berlin in 1922), Gyula Pap (from Germany in 1934), and Hugó Scheiber (from Berlin in 1934). With few exceptions the Hungarians who had migrated to the Soviet Union did not return to their homeland; most of those who did – Sándor Ek (1945), Alfréd Kemény (1945), and Béla Uitz (1970), among the most noteworthy – came after a communist régime was established in Hungary following World War II.
23. Surprisingly, given his extensive contacts with the international avant-garde, Kassák, the principal publicist for the exiled artists, never learned German or any other foreign language.
24. Mostly to attract talented intellectuals and to encourage investment, the Hungarian government offered a limited amnesty to those who had supported the revolutionary government of Kun. See Mansbach, *Tempest*, p. 90, n. 83.
25. See Bortnyik's "Programm des ungarischen Bauhauses," excerpted in Gassner, *Wechselwirkungen*, p. 376.
26. See the section "Constructivism of the 1920s in Poland and Lithuania" in Chapter 2.

List of Selected Artists

- Adler, Jankiel (1895–1949)
Akberg, Arnold (1894–1984)
Aleksić, Dragan (1901–58)
Aman, Theodore (1831–91)
Andreescu, Ion (1850–82)
Annus, Augusts (1893–?)
Aren, Peet (1889–1970)
Artums, Ansis (1908–?)
Avramovski, Pandilov (1898–1963)
Ažbé, Anton (1862–1905)
- Babić, Ljubo (1890–1974)
Becić, Vladimir (1886–1954)
Beļcova, Aleksandra (1892–1981)
Belogaski, Liubomir (1911–)
Beneš, Vincenc (1883–1979)
Berény, Róbert (1887–1953)
Berlewi, Henryk (1894–1947)
Bijelić, Jovan (1886–1964)
Bílek, František (1872–1941)
Blonder, Sasza (1909–49)
Bor, Vane (Stevan Živadinović) (1908–90?)
Borowski, Waclaw (1885–1954)
Bortnyik, Sándor (1893–1976)
Brauner, Victor (1903–66)
- Čapek, Josef (1887–1945)
Čargo, Ivan (1898–1958)
Černígoj, Avgust (1898–1985)
Chwistek, Leon (1884–1944)
Csontváry Koszta, Tivadar (1853–1919)
Cybis, Jan (1897–1972)
Czigány, Dezső (1883–1937)
Czóbel, Béla (1883–1976)
Czyżewski, Tytus (1880–1945)
- David, Jean (1908–)
Delak, Ferdo (1905–68)
- Dénes, Valéria (1877–1915)
Derkovits, Gyula (1894–1934)
Dimitrescu, Ştefan (1886–1933)
Dréma, Vladas (1910–?)
Dücker, Eugen (1841–1916)
Dunikowski, Xawery (1875–1964)
- Egry, József (1883–1951)
- Falat, Julian (1853–1929)
Fedkowicz, Jerzy (1891–1959)
Feigl, Friedrich (Bedřich) (1884–1965)
Ferenczy, Károly (1862–1917)
Filla, Emil (1882–1953)
Forbát, Alfréd (1897–1972)
- Galimberti, Sándor (1883–1915)
Geppert, Eugeniusz (1890–1979)
Greenberg, Johannes (1887–1951)
Grigorescu, Nicolae (1838–1907)
Grohar, Ivan (1867–1911)
Grosvalds, Jāzeps (1891–1920)
Gulácsy, Lajos (1882–1932)
Gutfreund, Otto (1889–1927)
- Han, Oscar (1881–1976)
Hiller, Karol (1891–1939)
Hist, Friedrich (1900–41)
Hoffmann, Oskar (1851–1912)
Hofman, Vlastislav (1884–1964)
Hollósy, Simon (1857–1918)
Horb, Max (1882–1907)
Hulewicz, Jerzy (1886–1941)
Hüns, Kārlis (1830–77)
Husarski, Waclaw (1883–1951)
- Iser, Josef (Josif Iser Robinsohn) (1881–1958)
- Jakac, Božidar (1899–?)

- Jakopič, Rihard (1869–1943)
 Jama, Matija (1872–1947)
 Janco (Iancu), Marcel (1895–1984)
 Janisch, Jerzy (1901–62)
- Kádár, Béla (1877–1956)
 Kairiūkštis, Vytautas (Witold Kajruksztis) (1890–1961)
 Kalpokas, Petras (1880–1945)
 Kassák, Lajos (1887–1967)
 Kazaks, Jēkabs (1895–1920)
 Kernstok, Károly (1873–1940)
 Klek, Jo (Josip Seissel) (1904–87)
 Kmetty, János (1889–1975)
 Kobro, Katyrzina (1898–1951)
 Kodzhoman, Vangel (1905–)
 Köler, Johann (1826–99)
 Kralj, France (1895–1960)
 Kralj, Tone (1900–75)
 Kraljević, Miroslav (1885–1913)
 Krcha, Emil (1894–1972)
 Kregar, Stane (1905–73)
 Kriesch, Aladár Körösfői (1863–1920)
 Krims, Aleksander (Radava) (1895–1947)
 Kryński, Karol (1900–44)
 Kryzwoblocki, Aleksander (1901–79)
 Kubicki, Stanisław (1889–1942)
 Kubín, Otakar (Othon Coubine) (1883–1969)
 Kubišta, Bohumil (1884–1918)
 Kuna, Henryk (1879–1945)
 Kupka, František (1871–1957)
- Laikmaa, Ants (Hans Laipmann) (1866–1942)
 Laarman, Märt (1896–1979)
 Lecca, Constantin (1807–87)
 Liberts, Ludolfs (1895–1959)
 Lichenoski, Lazar (1901–64)
 Liepiņa-Skulme, Marta (1890–1962)
 Liepiņš, Jānis (1894–1964)
 Līkums, Herberts (1902–80)
 Lille, Ludwik (1897–1957)
 Luchian, Ștefan (1868–1916)
- Mägi, Konrad (1878–1925)
 Maibach, Karl Ludvig (1833–89)
 Malczewski, Jacek (1843–1929)
 Márffy, Ödön (1878–1959)
 Martinoski, Nikola (1903–73)
 Matic, Dušan (1898–1980)
 Mattis-Teutsch, Hans (1884–1960)
 Matvejs, Voldemārs (1877–1914)
 Maxy, Max Herman (1895–1971)
 Mehoffer, Józef (1869–1946)
 Melderis, Emīls (1889–1979)
 Menkesowa, Aniela (1898–1941)
- Meštrović, Ivan (1883–1962)
 Michăilescu, Corneliu (1887–1965)
 Michalak, Antoni (1899–1975)
 Micić, Ljubomir (1895–1971)
 Miličević, Kosta (ca. 1877–1920)
 Milovanović, Milan (1876–1946)
 Muks, Juhan (1899–1983)
 Muncis, Jānis (1886–1955)
- Nemes Lampérth, József (1891–1924)
 Niesiolowski, Tymon (1882–1965)
 Nowak, Vilem (Willi) (1886–1977)
- Ole, Eduard (1898–?)
 Olvi, Henrik (1894–1972)
 Orbán, Dezső (1884–1986)
 Osostowicz, Stanisław (1906–39)
- Pallady, Theodor (1871–1956)
 Perahim, Jules (1914–)
 Péri, László (1889–1967)
 Perlrott Csaba, Vilmos (1880–1955)
 Pešánek, Zdeněk (1896–1965)
 Petrașcu, Gheorghe (1873–1949)
 Petrașcu, Milița (1892–1976)
 Petrov, Mihailo S. (1902–83)
 Petrović, Nadežda (1873–1915)
 Pilon, Veno (1896–1970)
 Pittermann-Longen, Emil-Artur (1885–1936)
 Poljanski, Branko (1898–1940?)
 Popovich, Tsitso (1914–62)
 Pór, Bertalan (1880–1964)
 Preissig, Vojtěch (1873–1944)
 Procházka, Antonín (1882–1945)
 Pronaszko, Andrzej (1888–1961)
 Pronaszko, Zbigniew (1895–1958)
 Purvītis, Vilhelms (1872–1945)
- Račić, Josip (1885–1908)
 Randel, Felix (1901–77)
 Raud, Kristjan (1865–1943)
 Raudsepp, Juhan (1896–1984)
 Ressu, Camil (1880–1962)
 Réti, István (1872–1945)
 Riemer, Aleksander (1899–1943)
 Rippl-Rónai, József (1861–1927)
 Ristić, Marko (1902–84)
 Roze, Jānis (1823–97)
 Rozentāls, Jānis (1866–1916)
 Ruszczyk, Ferdynand (1870–1936)
- Schadl, János (1892–1944)
 Scheiber, Hugó (1873–1950)

- Schulz, Bruno (1892–1942)
 Segal, Arthur (1875–1944)
 Šíma, Josef (1891–1971)
 Širato, Francisc (1877–1953)
 Skulme, Oto (1889–1967)
 Skulme, Uga (1895–1963)
 Špála, Václav (1885–1946)
 Spazzapan, Lojze (1889–1958)
 Stanisławski, Jan (1860–1907)
 Stanojević, Veljko (1892–1967)
 Stażewski, Henryk (1894–1988)
 Sternen, Matei (1870–1949)
 Stiplovšek, Franjo (1898–1963)
 Strunke, Niklāvs (1894–1966)
 Strzemiński, Władysław (1893–1952)
 Štyrský, Jindřich (1899–1942)
 Šulentić, Zlatko (1893–1971)
 Šumanović, Sava (1896–1942)
 Suta, Romans (1896–1944)
 Šveics, Erasts (1893–?)
 Syrkus, Szymon (1883–1964)
 Szczuka, Mieczysław (1898–1927)
 Szobotka, Imre (1890–1961)
 Szymanowski, Waclaw (1859–1930)
- Tábor, János (1890–1956)
 Teige, Karel (1900–51)
 Tihanyi, Lajos (1885–1938)
 Tone, Valdemārs (1892–1958)
 Tonitza, Nicolae (1886–1940)
 Toyen (Marie Čermínová) (1902–80)
 Tratnik, Fran (1881–1957)
 Triik, Nikolai (1884–1940)
- Ubāns, Konrāds (1893–1981)
- Uitz, Béla (1887–1972)
 Utitz, Emil (1883–1956)
 Vabbe, Ado (1892–1961)
 Vahtra, Jaan (1882–1947)
 Valters, Jānis (1869–1932)
 Vančura, Vladislav (1891–1942)
 Varnas, Adomas (1879–1979)
 Vaszary, János (1867–1939)
 Veeber, Kuno (1898–1929)
 Vidbergs, Sigismunds (1890–1970)
 Vidmar, Drago (1901–82)
 Vidmar, Nande (1899–1981)
 Vidović, Emanuel (1870–1953)
 Viļumainis, Jūlijs (1909–?)
 Vladimirski, Tomo (1904–71)
 von Bochmann, Gregor (1850–1930)
 von Gebhardt, Eduard (1838–1925)
- Wegner, Stefan (1901–65)
 Weiss, Wojciech (1875–1950)
 Wiiralt, Eduard (1898–1954)
 Witkiewicz, Stanisław Ignacy (known as Witkacy)
 (1885–1939)
 Włodarski, Marek (Henryk Streng) (1903–60)
 Wojciechowski, Tadeusz (1902–82)
 Wroniecki, Jan Jerzy (1870–1948)
 Wyspiański, Stanisław (1869–1907)
- Zak, Eugeniusz (1884–1926)
 Zālīte-Zāle, Kārlis (1888–1942)
 Zaļkalns, Teodors (1876–1972)
 Zamoyski, August (1893–1970)
 Žarnower, Teresa (1895–1950)
 Zeltiņš, Voldemārs (1879–1909)
 Živanović-Noe, Radojica (1903–44)
 Zrzavý, Jan (1890–1977)

Selected Bibliography

The following list of sources is organized first by country and then by internal subcategories. Not all subdivisions are parallel; indeed, I have chosen to forgo a comprehensive listing of all the sources (and bibliographical classes) consulted for this book in favor of suggesting variously the range, character, and dimensions of the source material available. To provide culturally and methodologically diverse points of departure for further investigation, I concentrate on materials published in the (principal) indigenous languages as well as in Western ones. Among the numerous recent (and accessible) exhibition catalogs listed, many contain helpful (and often quite complete) bibliographies that need not be repeated here.

To explain the greater number of citations in the sections devoted to Poland, the Czech lands, and Hungary, I submit that more readers are likely to be familiar with the languages used in the scholarship for these areas than for Estonia, Latvia, Romania, and the successor states to Yugoslavia. The decision to omit sources in Russian was made in conformity with the issues raised in this book's introductory chapter. Also omitted, for reasons of economy, is the extensive scholarly literature on the general political, cultural, and economic history of the region and its numerous constitutive states and subregions. The bibliography is organized *chronologically* so that the reader might easily recognize periods during which publication on modern art (and artists) was officially supported in the respective countries.

Because nearly all the research for the present volume was completed by the end of 1993 – the unexpectedly long intervening time between the completion of the text in 1995 and the publication is due exclusively to the considerable obstacles in securing the book's illustrations – little of the most recent scholarly literature is included. The reader is directed to the Notes for bibliographical information not provided below.

I. THE CZECH LANDS

Of the art assessed in this volume, that created in the Czech lands has been the most comprehensively studied and published, both by scholars in the West and those in the East. Recent English- and German-language exhibition catalogs – several of the most important are listed below chronologically – have included helpful multilingual bibliographies to which the reader is directed for an extensive listing of sources. As in all other sections of this Selected Bibliography, those scholarly articles, catalog essays, and books fully referenced in the footnotes are frequently not repeated here.

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1909–1925, Kubismus in Prag: Malerei, Skulptur, Kunstgewerbe, Architektur, exh. cat., Düsseldorf: Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, 1991.

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Karel Teige, 1900–1951, exh. cat., Prague: Galerie hlavního města Prahy, 1994 (contains a useful section about Teige's writings on contemporary Czech modern art).

2. POLAND AND LITHUANIA

POLAND

The scholarly assessment of Poland's modern art has a relatively long and distinguished history. The historiography reflects to a large degree the complexities of the nation's modern history, one characterized by political and territorial divisions as much as by cultural unities. In light of these individual circumstances – and in contradistinction to the bibliographies provided for the other chapters – the following listing tends toward the comprehensive rather than the rigorously selective. This exceptional treatment is intended both to suggest the rich bibliographical materials that await the student of east European classical modern art in general and regarding Poland in particular, as well as to afford an insight into the unique (at least, to the region) history of modern Polish art studies, in which the subject was relatively freely examined during the era of communism. The reader will thus be able to compare the scholarship published in the West with that printed in Poland, especially during the post–World War II decades.

General Sources in Western Languages

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