

Extraordinary Visions: *Entgegenständlichung* in Expressionism

by

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For my grandparents,
Ernest Ray and Betty May

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Abstract

Entgegenständlichung in Expressionism results when art deforms or changes what an object looks like or when art is ornamental. Expressionists were influenced by much non-Western art in addition to Western artists. Despite similarities to some movements, Expressionism was new—a revolution in fact—that showed no ideal beauty or realism, concentrating instead on colour, line, and surface. The *Geist* or spirit of the artist is far more important in Expressionism than mimicking nature. Included is an analysis of four different movements which influenced art history and philosophy and are important precursors to Expressionism: Greek sculpture, Oriental carpets, the *Sturm und Drang* and the *Romantik*. Three artists: Kandinsky, Klee, and Kirchner are introduced and their works examined. *Entgegenständlichung* is further examined as it relates to Kandinsky and Klee's publications, while Kirchner's works are examined in comparison to female nudes and landscapes done by various artists in different time periods.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Art depicts verifiable objects in various ways: as they are, deforms them, or changes their visible reality. Art also produces ornaments that are colourful and abstract such as oriental carpets and kimonos which bear little or no relationship to anything real. When art deforms or changes the visible reality of verifiable objects or depicts ornaments, it is *Entgegenständlichung*.

One of the first ideas regarding what an artist is capable of depicting is from Aristotle who said: “Da der Dichter ein Nachahmer ist, wie ein Maler oder ein anderer bildender Künstler, muß er von drei Nachahmungsweisen, die es gibt, stets eine befolgen: er stellt die Dinge entweder dar, wie sie waren oder sind, oder so, wie man sagt, daß sie seien, und wie sie zu sein scheinen, oder so, wie sie sein sollten.”¹ This is countered by the anti-Aristotelean author, J. M. R. Lenz, who wrote regarding idealization: “Der liebe Gott hat die Welt wohl gemacht, wie sie sein soll, und wir können wohl nicht was Besseres klecksen; unser einziges Bestreben soll sein, ihm ein wenig nach zuschaffen. Ich verlange in allem—Leben, Möglichkeit des Daseins, und dann ist’s gut; wir haben dann nicht zu fragen, ob es schön, ob es häßlich ist.”² Of course, these ideas are products of their time just as artworks are children of their time.

The context of Expressionism can be explained by Kandinsky:

Wenn die Religion, Wissenschaft und Moral (die letzte durch die starke Hand Nietzsches) gerüttelt werden, und wenn die äußeren Stützen zu fallen drohen, wendet der Mensch seinen Blick von der Äußerlichkeit ab und sich selbst zu. Die Literatur, Musik und Kunst sind die ersten empfindlichsten Gebiete, wo sich diese

¹ Aristotle, *Poetik*, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014), 85. “The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate one of three objects—things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be.” Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, edited by S. H. Butcher, 4th Edition (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1936), 97.

² Georg Büchner, “Lenz,” in *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe und Dokumente in zwei Bänden*, Band 1, hrsg. Henri Poschmann, (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1999).

geistige Wendung bemerkbar macht in realer Form. Diese Gebiete spiegeln das düstere Bild der Gegenwart sofort ab, sie erraten das Große, was erst als ein kleines Pünktchen nur von wenigen bemerkt wird und für die große Menge nicht existiert. Sie spiegeln die große Finsternis, die erst kaum angedeutet hervortritt. Sie verfinstern sich selbst und verdüstern sich. Andererseits wenden sie sich ab von dem seelenberaubten Inhalt des gegenwärtigen Lebens und wenden sich zu Stoffen und Umgebungen, die freie Hand lassen dem nichtmateriellen Streben und Suchen der dürstenden Seele.³

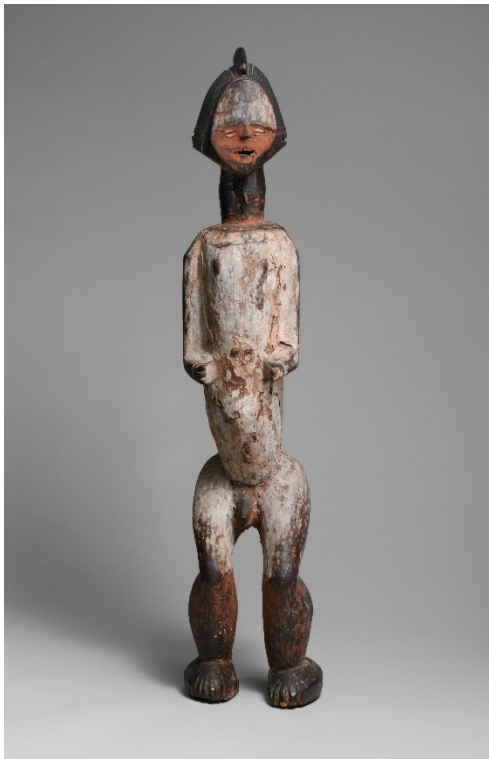


Figure 1: Reliquary: Standing Male Figure, 19th c., Gabon or Republic of Congo; Kota peoples, Mbete group, wood, pigment, metal, cowrie shells, 82.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, courtesy Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002. Photo courtesy Metropolitan Museum.

At a time when man was unable to rely on the religion, science, or morality of society, man turned inside to his soul, to himself. At this time, artists looked to non-European art for inspiration. The spiritual aspects of sculptures from West and Central Africa captured the attention of artists beginning in the 1900s as a way to leave behind Western art's defining naturalism. Of course, they had no knowledge of the original meaning or context of these sculptures. In 1910 there was a Gauguin (for an example, see Figure 2) exhibition in Dresden (where the Expressionist group, *Die Brücke*,

³ Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst: insbesondere in der Malerei*, (München: R. Piper Verlag, 1912), 26-27. "When religion, science, and morals (the latter by the strong hand of Nietzsche) are shaken and when the outer supports threaten to fall, man turns his gaze from the external to the deeper essence within him. Literature, music, and art are the first sensitive spheres in which this spiritual revolution makes itself felt, in the form of reality. These spheres reflect immediately the dark picture of the present; they feel the immensity of what, at first, was only a minute point of light, noticed by few and ignored by the vast majority. These spheres reflect the great darkness which, at first, was barely indicated. Gradually, they dim and darken. Yet, on the other hand, they turn from the soulless life of the present to approach those substances and forms which strive freely in the non-material search and which survive even in the darkest soul." Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*, ed. Hilla Rebay, (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1946), 26-27.

operated) and this intensified the interest of Expressionists in non-Western art.⁴



Figure 2 Paul Gauguin, *Ia Orana Maria (Hail Mary)*, 1891, oil on canvas, 113.7 cm x 87.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, bequest of Sam A. Lewisohn, 1951. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁴ Denise Murrell, "African Influences in Modern Art," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, April 2008, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/aima/hd_aima.htm.

Oscar Wilde, writing closer to the time of Expressionism than either Aristotle or Lenz, said: “Art begins with abstract decoration with purely imaginative and pleasurable work dealing with what is unreal and non-existent...Art takes life as part of her rough material, recreates it, and refashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact, invents, imagines, dreams, and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative or ideal treatment.”⁵ Many people struggled with this idea: “The rise of abstraction in the twentieth century prompted a critical reevaluation of the idea that art is an imitation or idealization of the world, hence that it might be representational by definition.”⁶ And this is our problem. Art is historic in nature, changing based on society and time. As such it is normal that art would not reflect one philosophy. The Greeks dealt with what is *möglich*, the possible; Lenz and the anti-Aristotelians of the *Sturm und Drang*, with what is *wirklich*, the real; while the Expressionists dealt with what is *unwirklich*, the unreal. Paul Hatvani describes Expressionism as follows:

Der Expressionismus ist eine Revolution auf den Kopf gestellt; damit will ich nun keine Definition gesagt haben, sondern bloß ein Argument zu seiner Geschichte...Evolutionen in der Kunst können nur nach Form und Inhalt...definiert werden...der Expressionismus hätte nun neuerdings das *Ich* entdeckt. Im Impressionismus hatten sich Welt und Ich, Innen und Außen, zu einem Gleichklang verbunden. *Im Expressionismus überflutet das Ich die Welt...kein Außen...*Nach dieser ungeheuerlichen Verinnerlichung hat die Kunst keine Voraussetzung mehr. So wird sie *elementar*. Der Expressionismus war vor Allem die Revolution für das Elementare.⁷

Expressionism arose from the turmoil of the early twentieth century particularly as it lasted through the First World War into the early 1920s. As Hatvani outlines, the *ich* was what became

⁵ Oscar Wilde, *Intentions: The Decay of Lying, Pen Pencil and Poison, The Critic as Artist, The Truth of Masks*. (Brentano's: New York, 1905), 21-22.

⁶ "abstraction," In *Aesthetics A-Z*, ed. Eran Guter, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

⁷ Paul Hatvani, "Versuch über den Expressionismus," in *Expressionismus: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1910-1920*, hrsg. Thomas Anz and Michael Stark, (Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler, 1990), 38.

preeminent in its discovery by the Expressionists. This *ich* was not just the imagination but the inner soul. It was first discovered by the German Romantik: called *der Innere* by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis.⁸ Schlegel said, “Der eigene Zweck der Einbildungskraft ist das innere, freie, willkürliche Denken und Dichten.”⁹

Walter Pater, who did not live to see Expressionism believed that non-realistic art would be boring:

What modern art has to do in the service of culture is so to rearrange the details of modern life, so to reflect it, that it may satisfy the spirit. And what does the spirit need in the face of modern life? The sense of freedom. That naïve, rough sense of freedom, which supposes man’s will to be limited, if at all, only by a will stronger than his, he can never have again. The attempt to represent it in art would have so little verisimilitude that it would be flat and uninteresting.¹⁰

Luckily, Pater is incorrect. Expressionism is anything but flat and uninteresting even though verisimilitude is not present. Perhaps Pater did not take the *ich* into account. In any case, Expressionism was a Revolution. Hans-Günther Schwarz writes, “Die moderne Kunst ersetzt diesen Realismus der Darstellung durch den antirealistischen Symbolismus...Damit sind 500 Jahre europäischer Geistesgeschichte und ihre Reflexion in der Geschichte der Malerei

⁸ Novalis writes: “Die innere Welt ist gleichsam mehr Mein als die *äußre*. Sie ist so innig, so heimlich—man möchte ganz in ihr Leben—sie ist so vaterländisch. Schade, daß sie so traumhaft, so ungewiß ist. Muß denn gerade das Beste, das Wahrste so scheinbar—und das Scheinbare, so wahr aussehen? / Was außer mir ist, ist gerade in mir, ist mein—und umgek[e]hrt.” Novalis, *Novalis Werke*, hrsg. Gerhard Schulz, (München: C. H. Beck, 2001), 476.

⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophische Vorlesungen aus den Jahren 1804 bis 1806*, hrsg. E. J. H. Windischman; Bd. 2. (Bonn: Eduard Weber, 1837), 48.

¹⁰ Pater, *Winckelmann: Englisch und Deutsch*, hrsg. Hans-Güther Schwarz, Schriften Der Winckelmann-Gesellschaft; Bd. 28, (Stendal: Winckelmann-Gesellschaft, 2010), 79, 81.

negiert.”¹¹ Expressionism, like *les Fauves* in France is a culmination of anti-realistic movements which began with German Romanticism.

The artistic ideal that was manifested by the idealization and imitation of human beauty in Greek sculpture was challenged by the Elizabethans with their concentration on character, the 17th century Dutch painters and their “gemeine Natur”, as Winckelmann states, and the German *Sturm und Drang*. Our concentration on Expressionism shows a new facet. Expressionism shows no ideal beauty, no realism but a completely new style concentrating on colour, line, and surface and as such, is different not just from Greek statues but the art of the *Sturm und Drang* and the *Romantik*. However, Expressionism does share similarities in terms of colour and line with Oriental carpets.

¹¹ Hans-Günther Schwarz, *Orient—Okzident: Der orientalische Teppich in der westlichen Literatur, Ästhetik und Kunst*, (München: Iudicium Verlag, 1990), 306.

CHAPTER 2: GREEK SCULPTURE AND ORIENTAL CARPETS

The history of art in the West reaches its high point with the Greek ideal which, “expressed itself pre-eminently in sculpture.”¹² The sculptures of the Ancient Greeks are an example of objectification, “Vergegenständlichung” through idealization, which results in elevation. The Greeks believed in and enacted an ideal of beauty. They had a “cult of the body” which furthered the idea that bodies should be balanced and muscular (in men) just like the gods. Walter Pater writes: “Out of Greek religion, under happy conditions, arises Greek art, *das Einzige, das Unerwartete*, to minister to human culture. The claim of Greek religion is that it was able to transform itself into an artistic ideal.”¹³

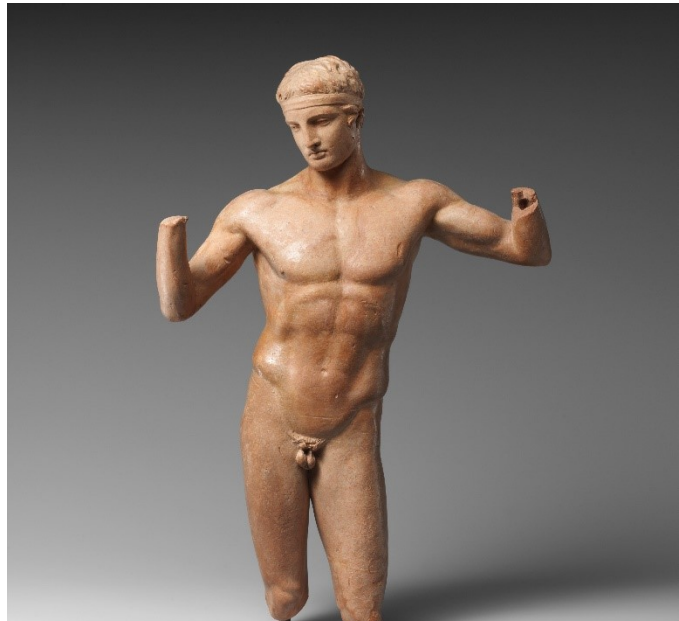


Figure 3: Terracotta statuette of the Diadoumenos (youth tying a fillet around his head), 1st century B.C., terracotta, 29 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, courtesy Fletcher Fund, 1920. Photograph courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Therefore, ideal beauty in both men and women was depicted in statues. Beauty was equated with goodness in men and truth. Winckelmann illustrates the incredible significance of beauty amongst the Greeks when he says:

And as beauty was so longed for and prized by the Greeks, every beautiful person sought to become known to the whole people by this distinction, and above all to approve himself to the artists...we find in Greek histories the most beautiful people distinguished...the procreation of beautiful children might be promoted by prizes...the existence of contests for beauty...The general esteem for beauty

¹² Pater, *Winckelmann*, 55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

went so far, that the Spartan women set up in their bedchambers a Nireus, a Narcissus, or a Hyacinth, that they might bear beautiful children.¹⁴

It is no surprise then that Greek statues reflect the cult of the body and the high idealization of beauty in Greek society. Due to the uniformity of beauty in terms of proportions, statues are very similar consisting of muscular men (Figure 1) and curvaceous (never muscular) women. It is often impossible to differentiate between a sculpture of a God and a sculpture of an athlete or a goddess and a normal woman. Both their bodies are images of ideal perfection, including symmetry of face and body in perfect proportions and equate man with God(s). This equation is supported by the accessibility of the Greek deities. They live on Mount Olympus and regularly interact with divine and not divine people and entities. Pater further states that, “This ideal art, in which the thought does not outstrip or lie beyond its sensible embodiment, could not have arisen out of a phase of life that was uncomely or poor.”¹⁵ In this way, Pater is saying that Greek statues are the result of Greek society at the time. Wassily Kandinsky writing many years later about Expressionism concurs, with an addendum: “Jedes Kunstwerk ist Kind seiner Zeit, oft ist es Mutter unserer Gefühle.”¹⁶

It is possible to say that the Greek ideal is important with regards to Expressionism as a foil since Expressionism does not concern itself with any sort of ideal. This is very obvious in Kirchner’s *Badende Frauen* (Figure 14). The Greek plasticity is translated into flatness, life, and colour—the ideal of modern art created by the French. Expressionism is a unique movement and indeed, a revolution, but it does share some basic philosophical similarities with other movements such as the freedom and individuality of the *Sturm und Drang* and the fantasy of the

¹⁴ Winckelman in Pater, *Winckelmann*, 53.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁶ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 3. “Every work of art is a child of its time, while often it is the parent of our emotions.” Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 9.

Romantik. As explored in the introduction, Expressionists and their immediate predecessors were highly influenced in terms of colour, line and form by Oriental carpets and Japanese wood-cuts.¹⁷ The Oriental carpet shares the colour and lines of Expressionism and most importantly, shares the idea of *Entgegenständlichung*. Figure 2 is a silk Kashan carpet and like many Oriental carpets, is a colourful and symmetrical balance of non-representational images having associations with earth and water. Many of what look to be some sort of flowers, represent the earth while some of the flowers are actually fish, representing the water. When comparing the thought of the Greeks to that of the Orient, Walter Pater says that, “in oriental thought there is a vague conception of life everywhere, but no true appreciation of itself by the mind, no knowledge of the distinction of man’s nature” while “in Greek thought the ‘lordship of the soul’ is recognised; that lordship gives authority and divinity to human eyes and hands and feet; inanimate nature is thrown into the background.”¹⁸ This difference can be accounted for through the different societies which produced their respective art works. Greek statues were born of a fixation on the ideal human body and are works of individual artists. Oriental carpets and their patterns are made collectively in what are predominately Islamic areas. This means that realistic depictions or reproductions of humans and animals are forbidden, although many ornaments have a pre-Islamic origin. As such, carpets are ornamental and symbolic. Kandinsky explores the process of *Entgegenständlichung* in oriental carpets:

Es ist zum großen Teile möglich, daß das Ornament auch einst aus der Natur entstand (auch die modernen Kunstgewerbler suchen ihre Motive in Feldern und Wäldern). Aber wenn wir auch annehmen würden, daß keine andere Quelle als äußere Natur gebraucht war, so wurden doch im guten Ornament andererseits die Naturformen

¹⁷ For more information on the influence of Oriental carpets on modern art, see Hans-Günther Schwarz’s *Orient-Okzident: Der orientalische Teppich in der westlichen Literatur, Ästhetik und Kunst*. München: Iudicium Verlag, 1990

¹⁸ Pater, *Winckelmann*, 51.

und Farben nicht rein äußerlich behandelt, sondern vielmehr als Symbole, die schließlich beinahe hieroglyphisch angewendet wurden. Und gerade deswegen wurden sie allmählich



Figure 4 Silk Kashan Carpet, 16th century, Iran, silk (warp weft, and pile); asymmetrically knotted pile, 249 cm x 171 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, Gift of Mrs. Douglas M. Moffat, 1958. Photograph courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

unverständlich, und wir können nicht mehr ihren inneren Wert entziffern.¹⁹

This symbolic use of what could have once come from nature or indeed mythology is shown in Figure 5. Figure 5 is a carpet with geometric compartments based on a star pattern. The compartments are filled with geese, *qilin* (horned mythological creatures with a deer body, ox tail, and horse hooves) Chinese dragons and phoenixes in combat. While these images are close to representations of mythological figures, they are much like the flowers and fish in Figure 4, symbols, ornament. Hans-Günther Schwarz writes: “Muster und Farben des Teppichs zeigen die Möglichkeit einer Kunst, die sich nicht die Natur zum Vorbild nimmt und jede konkrete Repräsentation vermeidet. Der Teppich hat bereits gelöst, was sich mit ihren antiimitativen Voraussetzungen zur Aufgabe gestellt hat.”²⁰ This is what Expressionism succeeded in doing.

Kandinsky wrote in 1912:

Wenn wir schon heute anfangen würden, ganz das Band, das uns mit der Natur verknüpft, zu vernichten, mit Gewalt auf die Befreiung loszusteuern und uns ausschließlich mit der Kombination von reiner Farbe und unabhängiger Form zu begnügen, so würden wir Werke schaffen, die wie eine geometrische Ornamentik aussehen, die, grob gesagt, einer Krawatte, einem Teppich gleichen würden.²¹

The *Entgegenständlichung* of Oriental carpets was known to Expressionists.

¹⁹ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 99. “While ornamentation may have had its start through nature, its motives have been taken from meadows or forests. Assuming no other source than visible nature was used, natural objects and colours were treated not externally but symbolically. For this reason, they gradually became incomprehensible, no longer deciphering their real value.” Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 81.

²⁰ Schwarz, *Orient-Okzident*, 305. “The patterns and colors of the carpet show the possibility of an art that does not take nature as an example and avoids any concrete representation. The carpet has already unlocked the task of anti-imitational requirements which it set itself.”

²¹ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 97-98. “If we were to begin to sever the bonds which bind us to nature, striving to achieve freedom by force, devote ourselves exclusively to combination of pure colour and absolute form, we would produce works of equal artistic value as geometric ornamentation on neck ties or carpets.” Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 80.



Figure 5: Carpet with a Compartment Design, first half 16th century, Iran, silk (warp and weft), wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile, 497.8 cm x 340.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, courtesy Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 1910. Photograph courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

It is important to note that while Expressionism and Oriental carpets share bright colours and *Entgegenständlichung*, they are very different in ways beyond their mediums. Expressionist works are never symmetrical. Paul Klee even cut his *Temple Gardens* (Figure 13), into 3 sections and re-ordered them, potentially to avoid approaching symmetry. In addition, modern art has a *Standpunkt* or a point of view and is thus subjective as the artist and what the artist sees with his inner eye is more important than the representation of the outer world. Many carpets share similar traditional patterns and are not necessarily designed by their maker.

The goal of art is to create something that was not there before. As Schwarz and Kandinsky have explained, art is not found in nature. It is in opposition to nature. Art and nature are separate as Hegel has stated.²² This is evident in Oriental carpets and Expressionism. In contrast to these two types of art, Greek art was all about the outer or what existed and what could be seen. Especially since their gods were visible. This outer world became paramount again in the Enlightenment which led later to in the *Sturm und Drang*, a movement which valued the individual, particular, and characteristic.

²² He does this in his *Ästhetik I/II*, comparing the *Naturschöne* with the *Kunstschöne*. The latter comes from the mind and thus is spiritual therefore is higher than beauty in nature and should be held in a higher regard.

CHAPTER 3: STURM UND DRANG AND ROMANTIK

The *Sturm und Drang*, or “Storm and Stress” in English, is a German anti-Enlightenment movement of the late 1700s. In contrast to the Enlightenment which valued rationalism, scientific theory, and what is *Allgemein*, or general, the *Sturm und Drang* valued nature, individualism, and feeling. The Enlightenment is a movement of science and labels and order where man starts his emancipation from God and religion as Goethe’s *Prometheus* illustrates. Man is tempted to be above God and to be the master of all, especially nature and this is shown in art and science. This mastery of nature is particularly evident in the rise of the French garden—the perfect image of the ordered Enlightenment. A French garden has perfect symmetry and all plants are groomed and ordered. The English garden, as the model for the *Sturm und Drang* has serpentine paths that follow no symmetry and plants are allowed to grow according to nature and do not conform to any ideal. The literature of this time was anti-Aristotelian in nature and was inspired by the works of William Shakespeare. The individual is more important particularly to the anti-Aristotelian authors such as Lenz, and later Büchner and Brecht. Writers such as these in books such as Lenz’s *Die Soldaten*, tried to correct the ills of society. The painterly works of this time, though not directly part of the *Sturm und Drang*, nevertheless reflect the same anti-enlightenment sentiment, as children of their time, reflect the destructive and untameable power of nature (figure 7) and are meant to evoke strong emotions, such as fear or shock (figure 6).

The Night-Hag Visiting Lapland Witches depicts a scene from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, where the Night-Hag, lured by the smell of an infant’s blood, visits the Lapland witches in order to dance and partake in the sacrifice of the baby. The Night-Hag herself is a demon on horseback circled by the nine hounds that “Milton has likened to those that surround Sin and

kennel in her womb in *Paradise Lost*.”²³ The witch’s bluish skin contrasts with the child’s rosy complexion. Her bracelets are blood red and she wears some kind of pelt as a hooded cape. She holds the child while phantom hands climb a ladder and hold aloft a very pointy dagger. On the far left witches beat drums while others dance on the right. The scene is indeed nightmarish and can evoke strong feelings of fear and horror from the viewer. Indeed, Lawrence Feingold, explores the underlying sexual threat in the painting of castration and death.²⁴ As an example of popular art during the *Sturm und Drang*, Henry Fuseli’s *The Night-Hag Visiting Lapland Witches* reflects the detail and particular as well as strong emotion, namely, horror.



²³ Lawrence Feingold, “Fuseli, Another Nightmare: *The Night-Hag Visiting Lapland Witches*,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 17 (1984): 51.

²⁴ Feingold, “Fuseli,” 59.

Figure 6: Henry Fuseli, *The Night-Hag Visiting Lapland Witches*, 1796, oil on canvas, 101.6 cm x 126.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, purchase, bequest of Lillian S. Timken, by exchange, and Victor Wilbour Memorial, The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment, Marquand and Charles B. Curtis Funds, 1980. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Vernet's *Storm*, is another example of popular art during the *Sturm und Drang* period that, while not created by a *Sturm und Dranger*, nevertheless shared anti-Enlightenment ideals. This artwork shows that in contrary to the Enlightenment idea that man has conquered nature, nature is instead as unpredictable and as uncontrollable as ever before, which can result in irrational destruction. Additionally, nature is governed by its own laws and will not conform to those of man. There are many natural phenomena that cannot be controlled as depicted in *Storm*.



Figure 7: Attributed to Joseph Vernet, *Storm*, n.d., gouache on grey paper, 35.9 cm x 62.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, courtesy, Rogers Fund, 1907. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the *Sturm und Drang*, there was no imagination in painting; instead there was realistic detail meant to elicit strong emotions or show the unconquerable power of nature. Goethe, in some notes for an unwritten article wrote, “No true work of art should seek to play on the

imagination: that is the concern of poetry.”²⁵ Fuseli’s work is born out of the imagination of Milton’s poems but does not contain imagination itself because all possible terrors are illustrated. Vernet’s *Storm* is a very clear example of the dangers of nature and how very unconquerable it is.

The German *Romantik* began at the end of the 1700s and in art, lasted until the 1840s. Romanticism as a European movement closely resembles the *Sturm und Drang* as another anti-Enlightenment, anti-rationalism movement which also emphasised the individual, irrational, and emotional. However, the *Sturm und Drang* emphasised the outer while the *Romantik* emphasised the inner where there is no reality but symbol. The Germans were ahead of the rest of Europe in terms of anti-Enlightenment sentiments. The *Romantik* did bring new and revolutionary elements to art and thought such as imagination, vision, and the transcendental, or spiritual. Additionally, of interest was the mysterious, nature as beauty, and the past, chiefly, the medieval era. In this era, the artist was an innovator and did not follow rules or traditions.

Carl Gustav Carus’ *Gothic Windows in the Ruins of the Monastery at Oybin* (Figure 8) is an example of *Romantik* painting. During this period, there was a renewal in interest in the Middle Ages, including gothic architecture and these ruins were used as a motif by the artists of the *Romantik*. This image invites the viewer to think and juxtaposes the ruins with the young trees and plants in order to present a renewal of life and hope. Carus was a student and follower of Caspar David Friedrich but where Friedrich’s works stress mood and atmosphere, Carus’ focus was on physiological accuracy, as seen in the careful representation of plants in *Gothic Windows in the Ruins of the Monastery at Oybin*. The constant renewal of nature versus the

²⁵ Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, *Goethe on Art*, ed. tr. John Gage, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 220.

decay of manmade buildings and the loss of religion only still represented in magnificent buildings.



Figure 8: Carl Gustav Carus, *Gothic Windows in the Ruins of the Monastery at Oybin*, ca. 1828, oil on canvas, 43.2 cm x 33.7 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, purchase, 2005 Benefit Fund, and Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation and Eugene V. Thaw Gifts, 2007. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 9: Caspar David Friedrich, *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, ca. 1825-30, oil on canvas, 34.9 cm x 43.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, courtesy Wrightsman Fund, 2000. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Caspar David Friedrich's *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, by showing the two men (Friedrich himself, and a friend) from behind, invites the viewer to also contemplate the moon and the surrounding nature. It makes the viewer a participant. In addition to gothic churches as motifs during the *Romantik*, so too was the moon a favourite motif. The moon represented pious contemplation and transcendence. The moon as a motif of transcendence is important regarding the *Romantik* inner. Looking at the moon invites contemplation that goes beyond the outer appearance to the inner spirit. This painting, like *Gothic Windows in the Ruins of the Monastery at Oybin*, is indicative of its time, just as Expressionist works are indicative of 1910-1920, due to

the spirituality of and transcendence of the plants and moon as motifs. Of Friedrich, Goethe writes that he is “an artist who holds fast to nature with earnestness and truth, who unfolds his inner self in his works, and strives towards significance, who, in a word, unites the particularity of the general idea with a characteristic rendering of the individual parts.”²⁶ Indeed, the nature in the painting has been realistically represented but is nonetheless an imagined situation filled with the mood and atmosphere of a dark forest path lit by a crescent moon. The purpose of this situation is the freedom of composition or style outside of tradition. Focusing on the inner during the *Romantik* was a break from tradition without which Expressionism would not be possible.

²⁶ Goethe, *On Art*, 229.

CHAPTER 4: ART AND ARTISTS OF EXPRESSIONISM

This section includes an introduction to three different Expressionist painters, Kandinsky, Klee, and Kirchner, who were German or painted in Germany as part of this great art revolution. Examples of their work, including oil paintings, woodcuts, and written excerpts are included to gain an understanding of the *Entgegenständlichung* in their art and Expressionism as a whole.

Chapter 4.1: Wassily Kandinsky

Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow in 1866. He attended and graduated from Grekov Odessa Art School and then attended the University of Moscow where he studied Law and Economics. He was offered a professorship at the University of Dorpat after demonstrating success in his chosen profession. He was first exposed to Folk Art in 1889 in Vologda. Inspired by Monet and Impressionism, he left his successful career and went to Munich in 1896 to train as an artist. Founded Phalanx group in 1901 to “introduce advanced French painting to the backward Munich art world.”²⁷ The early 1900s included idealized and imagined paintings of Russia and Germany during the middle ages that reflect a connection with the *Romantik*, a theme that continued later in his work. In Paris in 1906 encountered the Fauves, Nabis, and like Klee, went to Tunisia. Involved greatly in *Jugendstil/Avant Garde* painting and Berlin Secession with whom he disagreed. He later founded the group *Der Blaue Reiter* in 1911 with Franz Marc. Kandinsky had various influences from “Russian folk tales of his youth through to the colour of the Fauves and the decorative brushwork of Vuillard.”²⁸ He turned to landscape and used stark colours like van Gogh and Matisse. The *Improvisations and Compositions* explore colour and

²⁷ "Kandinsky Wassily (1866 - 1944)." In *A Biographical Dictionary of Artists, Andromeda*, edited by Lawrence Gowing. 2nd ed. Windmill Books (Andromeda International), 1995.

²⁸ "Kandinsky, Wassily (1866 - 1944)." In *The Bloomsbury Guide to Art*, edited by Shearer West. Bloomsbury, 1996.

line and derive their titles from his love of music and the desire to avoid figurative terms.²⁹ He published his art philosophy in 1912 as *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (Concerning the Spiritual in Art). He and Marc both saw in painting the qualities of the mystical and spiritual. Kandinsky returned to Russia in 1914 but later went back to Germany in 1921 to work for the Bauhaus. His return was due to the Bolshevik revolution and he became a teacher, teaching about the properties of form, which he had hoped to teach in Russia. He published another work, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche: Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente* (Point and Line to Plane), in 1926. In 1933, the Nazis closed the Bauhaus and he moved to Neuilly, close to Paris, where he remained “still concerned with extracting the essential energy of the forms, as opposed to making an abstraction from natural appearances.”³⁰ He died in 1944.

Kandinsky believed that art should be a purely artistic composition consisting of form: “Die Form allein, als Darstellung des Gegenstandes (realen oder nicht realen) oder als rein abstracte Abgrenzung eines Raumes, einer Fläche, kann selbständig existieren.”³¹ It is supported by colour. When laying thought to material, subjective characteristics such as shade or tone are added and because of the relationship between form and colour, such as shape and proximity to other colours, objective shells also exist. Different forms (triangles, circles, squares) filled with different colours (yellow, blue, green), have different effects. Kandinsky explains, “Dabei läßt sich leicht bemerken, daß manche Farbe durch manche Form in ihrem Wert unterstrichen wird und durch andere abgestumpft. Jedenfalls spitze Farben klingen in ihre Eigenschaft stärker in spitzer Form (z. B. Gelb im Dreieck). Die zur Vertiefung geneigten werden in dieser Wirkung

²⁹ "Kandinsky," In *The Bloomsbury Guide to Art*.

³⁰ "Kandinsky," In *A Biographical Dictionary of Artists, Andromeda*.

³¹ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 51. “Form stands alone as a representative of realistic or unrealistic object, or as an abstract limitation of space or surface.” Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 45.

durch runde Formen erhöht (z. B. Blau im Kreis).³² Colour and form combinations that do not fit this are not *Unharmonisches* but reflect the infinite possibilities of combinations and effects resulting from the inexhaustible number of colours and forms. Spiritual harmony exists in the depicted beings and objects but so too in colours. Like Klee, Kandinsky has his own idea of how the artist functions:

1. hat jeder Künstler, als Schöpfer, das ihm Eigene zum Ausdruck zu bringen (Element der Persönlichkeit),
2. hat jeder Künstler, als Kind seiner Epoche, das dieser Epoche Eigene zum Ausdruck zu bringen (Element des Stiles im inneren Werte, zusammengesetzt aus der Sprache der Epoche und der Sprache der Nation, solange die Nation als solche existieren wird),
3. hat jeder Künstler, als Diener der Kunst, das der Kunst im allgemeinen Eigene zu bringen (Element des Rein- und Ewig-Künstlerischen, welches durch alle Menschen, Völker und Zeiten geht, im Kunstwerke jedes Künstlers, jeder Nation und jeder Epoche zu sehen ist und als Hauptelement der Kunst keinen Raum und keine Zeit kennt).³³

Kandinsky practices this himself but also recognizes the individuality of every artist and every painting when he says: “Die ganze Epoche will sich abspiegeln, ihr Leben künstlerisch äußern.

Ebenso will der Künstler sich äußern und wählt nur die ihm seelisch verwandten Formen.”³⁴

³² Kandinsky *Über das Geistige*, 53. “The value of certain colours are emphasized by certain forms and dulled by others. In any event, sharp colours sound stronger in sharp forms (for example, yellow in a triangle). Those inclined to be deep are intensified by round forms (for example blue in a circle).” Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 46.

³³ *Ibid.*, 65. “This inner necessity which consists of three mystical elements is brought about through three mystical ways: 1. Every artist, as a creator, has to express his own personality (element of personality). 2. Every artist, as a child of his age, is impelled to express the spirit of his age (element of style composed from the message of the epoch and the language of the nation, as long as the nation continues to exist). 3. Every artist, as a servant of art, is impelled to present art as such (element of pure, eternal art, which is constant among all people, nations and ages, and is evident in the works of every artist, every nation and every epoch, as the main element of art, irrespective of time and space). *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 67. “Every epoch strives to reflect itself, to express its life. Likewise, the artist wishes to express himself and chooses only those forms which are sympathetic to his soul. *Ibid.*, 56.



Figure 10: Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation 27: Garden of Love II*, 1912, oil on canvas. 120.3 cm x 140.3 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, courtesy Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Regarding creating a composition, Kandinsky says, “die naturellen Formen stellen Grenzen, die in vielen Fällen diesem Ausdruck im Wege liegen. So werden sie zur Seite geschoben und die freie Stelle wird für das Objektive der Form gebraucht—Konstruktion zum Zweck der Komposition.”³⁵ With this idea, colour is very important in a painting. Kandinsky had his own theory of colour as outlined in his book, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* beginning with green. Green is to make yellow colder. Since green contains two different forces, that of blue and

³⁵ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 112. “As natural forms create boundaries, they often constitute an impediment to expression. Therefore, the objective in the form must be set aside to free the space for the purpose of constructing the composition.” Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 89.

yellow, it has the possibility of movement. Blue is the heavenly colour, infinite and pure. Green is a restful colour, the colour of summer. Green on the side of blue is grave and contemplative. Green on the side of yellow is alive and happy.³⁶ Black is silence, death, hopeless and still. White is pure joy and purity. Grey is in between, a lighter grey is hopeful. Red is strong and powerful, warm. Brown is unemotional and hard. Orange is red brought closer to humanity so violet is the opposite, moving away from humanity and is sad, frail.³⁷ Within colour, Kandinsky takes into account what the viewer sees:

Das Auge wird mehr und stärker von den helleren Farben angezogen und noch mehr und noch stärker von den helleren, wärmeren: Zinnoberrot zieht an und reizt, wie die Flamme, welche vom Menschen immer begierig angesehen wird. Das grelle Zitronengelb tut dem Auge nach längerer Zeit weh, wie dem Ohr eine hochklingende Trompete. Das Auge wird unruhig, hält den Anblick nicht lange aus und sucht Vertiefung und Ruhe in Blau oder Grün.³⁸

In *Improvisation 27: Garden of Love II*, many of these colours are present. Vermillion and yellow are loud strong colours while there is respite in the green and blue in the upper left. There are few straight lines in this painting; most are serpentine. This is an excellent example of a work of art that is completely independent of nature. There is nothing recognizable in this work. Everything is *Entgegenständlich*. Colour is very important in Kandinsky's works. He writes: Im allgemeinen ist also die Farbe ein Mittel, einen direkten Einfluß auf die Seele auszuüben.³⁹ This is so in his *Rain Landscape* as well. Similar to *Improvisation 27: Garden of Love*, it includes similar colours and provides restful blue for when the eye tires of the red and yellow.

³⁶ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 78-80.

³⁷ Ibid., 80-86.

³⁸ Ibid., 45. "The eye is attracted by light colours and still more by the lightest, warmest ones. Vermilion attracts and stimulates like the flame eternally craved for by all men. The bright yellow of a lemon hurts the eye after a while, as a shrill trumpet note may disturb the ear. The eye becomes restless, is unable to fix its gaze for any length of time, and seeks distraction and rest in blue or green." Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 40.

³⁹ Ibid., 49. "Therefore, colour is a means of exercising direct influence upon the soul." Ibid., 43.

Additionally, this work is a very clear example of *Entgegenständlichung*. With the name *Rain Landscape*, one may think that a landscape and rain would be recognizable. This is not the case but it is normal, as Kandinsky says:

So tritt in der Kunst allmählich immer näher in den Vordergrund das Element des Abstrakten, welches noch gestern schüchtern und kaum sichtbar sich hinter die rein materialistischen Bestrebungen versteckte.

Und dieses Wachsen und schließlich Überwiegen des Abstrakten ist natürlich.

Es ist natürlich, da, je mehr die organische Form zurückgetrieben wird, desto mehr dieses Abstrakte von selbst in den Vordergrund tritt und an Klang gewinnt.

Das bleibende Organische hat aber, wie gesagt, eigenen inneren Klang, welcher entweder mit dem inneren Klang des zweiten Bestand/teiles derselben Form (des Abstrakten darin) identisch ist (einfache Kombination der beiden Elemente), oder auch verschiedener Natur sein kann (komplizierte und möglicherweise notwendig disharmonische Kombination). Jedenfalls aber läßt das Organische in der gewählten Form seinen Klang hören, wenn auch dieses Organische ganz in den Hintergrund gedrängt wird. Deswegen ist die Wahl des realen Gegenstandes von Wichtigkeit.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 58-59. "The abstract idea in art is constantly creeping further into the foreground, although only yesterday it was hiding timidly and hardly visible behind the purely materialistic movement. This growth and final predominance of the abstract is natural. The further the organic form is pushed into the background the further the abstract will automatically come to the foreground and increase in emphasis. The remaining organic form, however, as previously stated, has its own inner tone and harmony, which may either be identical with the inner tone or harmony of the second component of the same form (the abstract element), a composition of the two elements; or it can be of a different nature (complicated, inharmonic combination). At any rate, the inner note of the organic form will be heard even though this organic form has been pushed into the background. For this reason, the choice of the material object is important." Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 50.



Figure 11: Wassily Kandinsky, *Rain Landscape*, 1911, watercolour on paper, 25.4 cm x 31.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Courtesy Jaques and Natasha Gelman Collection 1998. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Chapter 4.2: Paul Klee

Paul Klee was born near Berne, Switzerland in 1879. His father was German and taught music at Berne – Hofwil, and his Swiss born mother was a professional singer. An accomplished violinist, Klee decided to pursue visual art where he could create, not just preform and studied fine art in Munich from 1898-1901 where he was also formally trained in figure drawing. He visited Italy in 1901-02 where he developed an interest in Renaissance paintings. He moved to Munich in 1906 and discovered post-impressionist works by Van Gogh, Cezanne, and Matisse.

This French influence resulted in working from nature but not imitating nature. He joined the *Blaue Reiter* in 1911 where he was influenced by Kandinsky and retained his connection to nature. He met Delaunay in Paris in 1912 who encouraged works in colour. This interest in colour was compounded by a visit to Tunisia in 1914. Klee served in the German Army during World War I and unlike other Expressionists, such as Franz Marc, survived. Following the war he taught at the Bauhaus from 1921. In 1925, his *Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch (Pedagogical Sketchbook)* was published. Klee began teaching in 1931 at the Academy in Düsseldorf until his dismissal in 1933 due to his “Entartete” work. He died of scleroderma in 1940.

Klee begins *Über die moderne Kunst* with a metaphor comparing an artist to a tree: the root system is everything the artist has experienced and is influenced by, the trunk the artist, and the branches and leaves the artist’s work. The artist is the channel through which the roots reach the branches. He explains:

Es wird niemand einfallen, vom Baum zu verlangen, daß er die Krone genau so bilde, wie die Wurzel. Jeder wird verstehn, daß kein exaktes Spiegelverhältnis zwischen unten und oben sein kann. Es ist klar, daß die verschiedenen Funktionen in verschiedenen Elementarbereichen lebhaftere Abweichungen zeitigen müssen.

Aber gerade dem Künstler will man zuweilen diese schon bildnerisch notwendigen Abweichungen von den Vorbildern verwehren. Man ging sogar im Eifer so weit, ihn der Ohnmacht und der absichtlichen Fälschung zu zeihn.

Und er tut an der ihm zugewiesenen Stelle beim Stamme doch gar nichts anderes als aus der Tiefe Kommendes zu sammeln und weiterzuleiten. Weder dienen noch herrschen, nur vermitteln.

Er nimmt also eine wahrhaft bescheidene Position ein. Und die Schönheit der Krone ist nicht er selber, sie ist nur durch ihn gegangen.⁴¹

⁴¹ Paul Klee, *Über die moderne Kunst*, (Bern: Verlag Benteli Bern-Bümpliz, 1945), 13, 15. “Nobody would affirm that the tree grows its crown in the image of its root. Between above and below can be no mirrored reflection. It is obvious that different functions expanding in different elements must produce vital divergences. / “But it is just

Art (like music) has multiple dimensions, the first consisting of “the elemental ingredients of the picture”: *Linie*, which solely contains the quality of ‘measure’; *Helldunkeltöne*, consisting of ‘weight’ and ‘measure’; and *Farbe*, including the qualities of ‘quality,’ ‘weight,’ and ‘measure’.⁴² However, each dimension is part of the whole. Each dimension eventually becomes the past but they have the possibility of appearing again and becoming the present. To Klee, art is the transformed image of nature. These dimensions in varying groups and combinations form *Gebilde*, “die abstrakt Konstruktionen heißen mögen, konkret je nach der Richtung der herangelockten vergleichenden Assoziation Namen wie Stern, Vase, Pflanze, Tier, Kopf oder Mensch annehmen mögen.”⁴³ This is the second dimension. The third dimension is meaning, or *die inhaltliche Dimension*.⁴⁴ This naming convention that Klee mentions, where an abstract construction can be named after the concrete object or association which inspired them, is seen in Figure 12: *Movement in Vaulted Chambers*. The painting is, like Kandinsky’s works, and example of *Entgegenständlichung*. However, many of Kandinsky’s works such as Figure 10 differentiate from Klee’s naming convention in that they are purely spiritual works.⁴⁵ Like the Oriental carpets, they are not art from nature but his own inner images. The colours and lines here reflect those of Expressionism and the colours, prevalent and iconic in so very many of Klee’s works are inspired by his time in Tunisia. Klee’s works, as Expressionist works, are painted wholly from his inner perspective. While they have names that are from associations

the artist who at times is denied those departures from nature which his art demands. He has even been charged with incompetence and deliberate distortion. / And yet, standing at his appointed place, the trunk of the tree, he does nothing other than gather and pass on what comes to him for the depths. He neither serves nor rules—he transmits. / His position is humble. And the beauty at the crown is not his own. He is merely a channel.” Paul Klee, *On Modern Art*, tr. Paul Findlay, (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 13, 15.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19-21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 35. “Images which, in the abstract, may be called constructions, but which, seen concretely, may be named each after the association which they have prompted, such as star, vase, plant, animal, head or man.” *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁵ Here, spiritual is the chosen translation of *geistig*. *Geistig* can, like the noun *Geist*, relate not just to the mind or intellect but also to the supernatural spirit or the soul. Expressionism comes from the soul or spirit, not the mind which relates to intellect or reason.

with nature they could not have come from anywhere other than Klee's "ich", from inside himself, he is a channel for his spirit. The trunk of a tree creating leaves from roots.



Figure 12: Paul Klee, *Movement of Vaulted Chambers*, 1915, watercolour on paper mounted on cardboard, 23.5 cm x 28.3 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Courtesy of the Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 13: Paul Klee, *Temple Gardens*, 1920. Gouache and traces of ink on three sheets of paper mounted on cardboard. 23.5 cm x 28.3 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Courtesy of the Berggruen Klee Collection, 1987. Image courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Temple Gardens is one image made up of three separate panels which were painted as one piece, cut into three and then reordered. The panel on the far left was cut from the centre and was therefore between the middle and far right panels. Like *Movement of Vaulted Chambers*, *Temple Gardens* is another example of Klee's *Entgegenständlichung* rooted in nature. This tendency towards nature, however, does not negate this piece as an example of Expressionism. While somewhat geometric like many of Klee's works, it nevertheless has the movement and colour of Expressionism and the reordering of the panels gives the work more of an unreal perspective such as Kirchner's *The Seahorn* (Figure 15).

Chapter 4.3: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Kirchner was born in Aschaffenberg in 1880. He studied Architecture from 1901-05 in Dresden but received no formal artistic training. Like many other Expressionists he was influenced by Art Nouveau, Van Gogh and Matisse. Kirchner helped to found *Die Brücke* in 1905. His works were very forceful in colour and form. Figurative paintings “acquired the high-key colour and brushwork of Van Gogh and the visionary aspect of Munch.”⁴⁶ Explored woodcut and heavy angularity. In 1910 Kirchner became a cofounder of the New Secession. “In 1910 the group moved to Berlin and Kirchner began a series of works based on modern city life. These showed street scenes, circuses, cafés and dance halls as places of deception and despair, using a vigorous hatching and hellish colour schemes.”⁴⁷ Served during World War I until he had a nervous breakdown. His work during the 1920s exhibited Cubism, monumentalism, and increasing abstraction. Unfortunately, he committed suicide after his work was labelled “Entartet” by the Nazis in 1938.

⁴⁶ "Kirchner Ernst (1880 - 1938)." In *A Biographical Dictionary of Artists, Andromeda*, edited by Lawrence Gowing. 2nd ed. Windmill Books (Andromeda International), 1995.

⁴⁷ "Kirchner, Ernst Ludwig (1880 - 1938)." In *The Bloomsbury Guide to Art*, edited by Shearer West. Bloomsbury, 1996.



Figure 14 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Badende Frauen*, 1910, colour woodcut, 33.8 cm x 29.2 cm, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss, B.S. 1940s. Photo courtesy Yale University Art Gallery.

Badende Frauen (1910) depicts two nude women. It is a woodcut featuring shades of orange, blue and green. The woman in the foreground is very angular and unsymmetrical. Walter Pater says, “...the Hellenic ideal has nothing in common with the *grotesque*.”⁴⁸ This is not to say that Kirchner’s works are such. However, in comparison to Figure 15, a bronze statuette of Aphrodite featuring smooth curves and symmetrical proportions, the

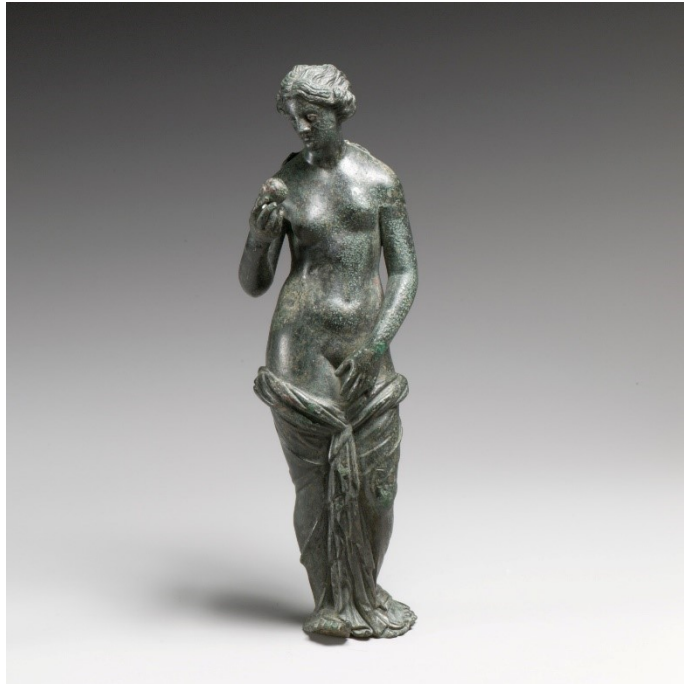


Figure 15: Bronze statuette of Aphrodite with silver eyes, 3rd-1st c. B.C., Bronze, 20.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York City, bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971. Photo courtesy Metropolitan

Badende Frauen can perhaps be understood why the Nazis saw Kirchner’s works, and those of other Expressionists, as “degenerate”. However, it is important to remember that the goal of art is to create something that was not there before. Expressionism was a revolution, as Hatvani said. And as such, these bathing women are not supposed to look like Aphrodite. Pater writes:

The spiritual forces of the past, which have prompted and informed the culture of a succeeding age, live, indeed, within that culture, but with an absorbed, underground life...Hellenism is not merely an element in our intellectual life; it is a conscious tradition in it...individual genius works ever under conditions of time and place: its products are coloured by the varying aspects of nature, and type of human form, and outward manners of life. There is thus an element of change in art; criticism must never for a moment forget that ‘the artist is the child of his time.’ But besides these conditions of time and place, and independent of them, there is also an element of permanence, a standard of taste, which genius confesses. This standard is maintained in a purely intellectual tradition; it acts upon the artist, not as one of the influences of his own age, but by means of the artistic products of the previous

⁴⁸ Pater, *Winckelmann*, 63.

generation, which in youth have excited, and at the same time directed into a particular channel, his sense of beauty.⁴⁹

Change is elemental in art. Each piece of artwork is created by a different person in a different place, in a different time, in a different environment. Art is historical and changes in style always. Aphrodite, as a Greek statue is supposed to present the ideal. *Badende Frauen* is not. Instead, *Badende Frauen* Kandinsky writes, “das ist schön, was einer inneren seelischen Notwendigkeit entspringt. Das ist schön, was innerlich schön ist.”⁵⁰ It is interesting to compare Kirchner’s *Badende Frauen* and Cézanne’s *Bathers* in light of this quote. The women in *Bathers* have the curves of the Greek statue but lack the idealized beauty of Aphrodite. The women are instead imperfect like the women depicted in *Badende Frauen*. Like the statue of Aphrodite, however, they too lack the angularity and *Entgegenständlichkeit* present in *Badende Frauen*. The women in Cézanne’s *Bathers* are suggestive of realistic forms, but more in analogy with the surrounding trees. They symbolise the connection between women and nature.

⁴⁹ Pater, *Winckelmann*, 41, 43.

⁵⁰ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige*, 119. “That is to be considered beautiful which results from an inner spiritual need, as only that which is spiritual can be beautiful.” Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual*, 95.



Figure 16 Paul Cézanne, *Bathers*, 1874-75, oil on canvas, 38.1 cm x 46 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York City, bequest of Joan Whitney Payson, 1975. Photo courtesy Metropolitan Museum.



Figure 17: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *The Seehorn*, 1919, etching, 28.2 cm x 25 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, gift of Ruth Cole Kainen. Image courtesy National Gallery of Art.

This landscape of Kirchner's reflects the movement and action of Expressionism and provides an unreal perspective. This step away from reality in terms of perspective is similar to the landscapes of the Chinese and Japanese.



Figure 18: Wang Hui and assistants, *The Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour, Scroll Three: Ji'nan to Mount Tai*, datable to 1698, handscroll; ink and colour on silk, 67.9 cm x 1393.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, purchase courtesy the Dillon Fund Gift, 1979. Photo courtesy Metropolitan Museum.



Figure 19: Unkoku Tōban, *Landscape*, 17th century, handscroll; ink on silk, 32.4 cm x 49.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, courtesy Mary Griggs Burke Collection, gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015. Photo courtesy Metropolitan Museum.

These three images are all examples of *Entgegenständlichung*. They have not been painted as an *Abbild* of nature. This is in contrast to Camille Pissarro's *Jalais Hill, Pontoise*. All four are very different in style and come from different places and time periods but the first three are united spiritually in their presentation which breaks the connection to what is commonly regarded as reality. There has been no effort to copy the outer appearance. Thus this spiritual aspect lives on in Expressionist works such as Kirchner's, *The Seehorn*.



Figure 20: Camille Pissarro, *Jalais Hill, Pontoise*, 1867, oil on canvas, 87 cm x 114.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum, New York, bequest of William Church Osborn, 1951. Photo courtesy, Metropolitan Museum.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Eine Wirklichkeit ist nicht vonnöten,
ja es gibt sie gar nicht, wenn ein Mann
aus dem Urmotiv der Flairs und Flöten
seine Existenz beweisen kann.⁵¹

Expressionist works do not imitate reality. Reality, with or without idealization, was depicted by the Greeks and during the *Sturm und Drang* and negated in the *Romantik*. The largest example of “unreal” art is the Oriental carpet. Klee explains how the artist arrives at a composition that deforms an object:

Einmal mißt er diesen natürlichen Erscheinungsformen nicht die zwingende Bedeutung bei, wie die vielen Kritik übenden Realisten. Er fühlt sich an diese Realitäten nicht so sehr gebunden, weil er an diesen Form-Enden nicht das Wesen des natürlichen Schöpfungsprozesses sieht. Denn ihm liegt mehr an den formenden Kräften, als an den Form-Enden.

Er ist vielleicht ohne es gerade zu wollen Philosoph. Und wenn er nicht wie die Optimisten diese Welt für die beste aller Welten erklärt, und auch nicht sagen will, diese uns umgebende Welt sei zu schlecht, als daß man sie sich zum Beispiel nehmen könne, so sagt er sich doch: In dieser ausgeformten Gestalt ist sie nicht die einzige aller Welten!

So besieht er sich die Dinge, die ihm die Natur geformt vor Augen führt mit durchdringendem Blick.

Je tiefer er schaut, desto leichter vermag er Gesichtspunkte von heute nach gestern zu spannen. Desto mehr prägt sich ihm an der Stelle eines fertigen Naturbildes das allein wesentliche Bild der Schöpfung als Genesis ein.⁵²

⁵¹ Gottfried Benn, “Wirklichkeit,” in *1400 Deutsche Gedichte und ihre Interpretationen*, band 7: *Von Gottfried Benn bis Nelly Sachs*, hrsg. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2002).

⁵² Klee, *die moderne Kunst*, 43. “First, he does not attach such intense importance to natural form as do so many realist critics, because, for him, these final forms are not the real stuff of the process of natural creation. For he places more value on the powers which do the forming than on the final forms themselves. / He is, perhaps, unintentionally, a philosopher, and if he does not, with the optimists, hold this world to be the best of all possible worlds, nor to be so bad that it is unfit to serve as a model, yet he says: In its present shape it is not the only possible world. / Thus he surveys with penetrating eye the finished forms which nature places before him. / The

The artist follows this process with the thought: “es sah diese Welt anders aus und es wird diese Welt anders aussehen” and that it is possible that creation in other worlds resulted in something different.⁵³ Above all, the artist is free to develop whereas nature follows laws and is thus unfree. Works of art come from many sources, not just nature, but dreams and the imagination and thus create new realities which brighten life “Weil sie nicht nur Gesehenes mehr oder weniger temperament-voll wiedergeben, sondern geheim Erschautes sichtbar machen.”⁵⁴ All artists have their own *Weltanschauung*, or world view and Expressionists aim not to represent something as it is but see it through their *ich* and reduce it to its elemental forms. The emphasis is on colour, lines, and surfaces as opposed to creating a copy of the material world. This discovery of the *ich* was due to thinkers and artists at the beginning of the eighteenth century which resulted in *Entgegenständlichung*. Artists no longer felt able to trust and draw inspiration from the outside world, in Europe at least, so they turned to African art and other non-European artworks for inspiration but most especially, they turned inward, to the spirit.

deeper he looks, the more readily he can extend his view from the present to the past, the more deeply he is impressed by the one essential image of creation itself, as Genesis, rather than by the image of nature, the finished product.” Klee, *On Modern Art*, 45.

⁵³ Klee *die modern Kunst*, 43. “This world at one time looked different and, in the future, will look different again.” *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 49. “For not only do they, to some extent, add more spirit to the seen, but they also make secret visions visible.” *Ibid.*,

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