

Program 2021

Group Dynamics. The Blue Rider and Collectives of the Modernist Period

As part of the program "Global Museum. Collections of the 20th Century from a Global Perspective" of the

German Federal Cultural Foundation

2018–2022

After a heated debate in which the antagonists almost came to blows, Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Gabriele Münter resigned from the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (New Artists' Association Munich) on December 2, 1911. A mere two weeks after the confrontation, they and their fellow dissenters mounted a counter-exhibition at Galerie Thannhauser in Munich. Alongside their own art, they presented works by August Macke, Robert Delaunay, Elisabeth Epstein, Albert Bloch, David and Vladimir Burliuk, Arnold Schoenberg, and Henri Rousseau. The presentation's full title, *The First Exhibition of the Editorial Board of Der Blaue Reiter*, made explicit reference to the Almanac project: this programmatic yearbook would establish the Blue Rider as one of the first transnational artists' circles.

Two interconnected exhibition projects at the Lenbachhaus Munich showcase the museum's outstanding collection of Blue Rider art in dialogue with modernist artists' collectives from all over the world. Starting around 1900, a startling multitude of collective processes and group formations among artists came into being. In exhibitions and writings, they articulated shared aesthetic stances and their determination to bring about intellectual, spiritual, and social change. A close examination of the phenomena of the collective and group dynamics can spur a fresh discussion of categories such as authorship and artistic autonomy, bringing art into focus as a communal process and vigorous debate.

The artists who came together in the Blue Rider circle regarded art as a universal language. "The whole body of work we call art," they wrote, "knows neither borders nor nations but only humanity." However, as their imagination was constrained by the colonial global order before the First World War, they, like others, did not succeed in implementing an emancipatory praxis of art beyond national affiliations and traditional hierarchies and genres. Still, their credo implied that all cultural production was ultimately of equal rank, and this idea is at the heart of the Lenbachhaus's undertaking. Instead of staging the history of styles or aesthetics as a succession of expressions of rivaling tendencies, our exhibition will shed light on the development of collectives in their historical contexts, reconstructing their political agendas and visions both practicable and, in some instances, utopian. Traces of collective labor may be found in manifestos, exhibitions, periodicals, collaborative creations, newly founded schools, and agitation efforts. The period we have chosen, from around 1900 to 1970, spans both the inception of various modernization movements and, at its other end, processes of decolonization and the emergence of new nations.

Groups are propelled by steadfast loyalties and irreconcilable ruptures. Their dynamic is unpredictable: collaboration, discussions, conviviality, rivalry, friendship, open-mindedness, inclusion, dissociation, weariness, controversy, love, polemics, and enthusiasm are characteristic features of the lives of groups. They provide us with one possible model for an understanding of art that is not grounded in the individual: art does not come into being in a vacuum, it grows out of exchanges of ideas and social interactions.

The project is supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation as part of its program "[Global Museum. Collections of the 20th Century from a Global Perspective](#)".

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Group Dynamics—The Blue Rider

Lenbachhaus, March 23, 2021–March 5, 2023

“The whole body of work we call art knows neither borders nor nations but only humanity.”

That was how Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky phrased a core belief that underlay their almanac *The Blue Rider*. Published in 1912, the programmatic yearbook put the Blue Rider (ca. 1911–1914) on the map as one of the first transnational artists’ circles. The same credo now inspires a presentation of the art of the circle’s members—including Gabriele Münter, August Macke, Alfred Kubin, Maria Franck-Marc, and Elisabeth Epstein—at the Lenbachhaus that considers the works in an aesthetic and historical perspective, but also in their spiritual, social, and political contexts. The Blue Rider circle championed a global and egalitarian conception of art not only in words, but also in pictures and deeds, even if, their imagination constrained by the colonial global order before the First World War, they did not succeed in realizing an emancipatory practice of art beyond national affiliations and traditional hierarchies and genres.

The belief proposed by the almanac that all cultural production has equal inherent value is at the heart of the exhibition. We find it put into practice in the selection of images gathered in the almanac: art from different parts of the world and historical periods appears side by side and largely without distinctions of rank. This pluralism of forms and ideas is the core of the Blue Rider’s modernity, which has lost none of its relevance today. For the reconfigured presentation of our collection, this means that the output of the Blue Rider artists is embedded in a narrative framework of art and cultural history that is as global as possible. The exhibition offers the first comprehensive survey of the manifold inspirations that the Blue Rider drew from Japanese woodcuts, Bavarian and Russian folk art, children’s drawings, and contemporary music, as well as Balinese, Gabonese, Polynesian, New Caledonian, Sri Lankan, and Mexican art, illustrated by carefully selected works and artifacts on loan. The presentation also rethinks the story of the Blue Rider as it has long been told at the Lenbachhaus, in which a “central cast” around Münter, Kandinsky, Macke, and Marc has eclipsed other important members of the group (Elisabeth Epstein, Maria Franck-Marc, and many others).

The project is supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation as part of its program *Global Museum. Collections of the 20th Century from a Global Perspective. A collaboration of the Lenbachhaus and the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation. Curated by Annegret Hoberg, Matthias Mühlung, Anna Straetmans*

Group Dynamics—Collectives of the Modernist Period

Lenbachhaus, October 19, 2021–April 24, 2022

Two complementary exhibitions at the Lenbachhaus are devoted to the theme of *Group Dynamics*: On March 23, 2021, we will open a reconfigured presentation of our collection of works by the Blue Rider artists. The circle’s groundbreaking utopian idea that the art of all nations and times deserves to be cherished equally is the conceptual point of departure for our subsequent exploration of the history of modernist artists’ collectives.

Starting around 1900, a startling multitude of collective processes and group formations among artists came into being. Nevertheless, the cultural-historical research in this field of art remains fragmentary. The exhibition *Group Dynamics—Collectives of the Modernist Period* considers the role that artists’ groups played in art history. Instead of staging a contest of rivaling aesthetic tendencies, the presentation sheds light on the development of collectives and the historical circumstances in which they emerged, reconstructing their political agendas, visions, and utopias. The ubiquity of similar historical structures and communal strategies in different settings underscores the crucial role that collectives have played in introducing and disseminating central ideas and innovations—within and beyond modernist art.

The exhibition centers on exemplary artists’ associations in diverse places all over the world, bringing artists, movements, and discourses into focus whose significance has long been undisputed among scholars specializing in particular strands of art history yet which remain largely obscure to broader audiences. It throws into relief these collectives’ particular motivations, their specific modes of practice and forms of expression, the historical and political contexts in which they formed, and the influence these movements exerted on the subsequent evolution of the art of their time and place. The study of group dynamics and

forms of collective practice also paves the way for a critical revision of established categories such as authorship, autonomy, and canonical aesthetics.

The period covered by the presentation—from around 1900 to 1970—extends from the dawn of plural modernization movements to a period of processes of decolonization and the formation of new nations, which often went hand in hand with the emergence of new artistic schools and artists' associations. The international selection includes artists' groups that were active in Buenos Aires, Delhi, Tokyo, Lahore, Casablanca, São Paulo, Khartoum, Beijing and elsewhere.

In preparation for the exhibition, an international symposium with leading experts such as Samina Iqbal & Zehra Jumabhoy, Carol Yinghua Lu, Morad Montazami, Harper Montgomery, Noriko Murai, Teresa Riccardi, Lena Naumann, Nada Shabout, and Aihe Wang—due to the 2020 coronavirus epidemic, the event had to be held via video conference—greatly enhanced our understanding of the issues in question.

Curated by Karin Althaus, Susanne Böller, Elisabeth Giers, Sarah Louisa Henn, Eva Huttenlauch, Matthias Mühling, Stephanie Weber

Mouse on Mars

Spatial jitter

June 12, 2021-September 12, 2021 Kunstbau

September 10, 2021 concert at Ampere/Muffathalle

Mouse on Mars is widely acclaimed as one of Germany's most eccentric and remarkable electronic music projects. With an anarchic hybrid sound swinging between uncontrolled chaos and meticulously arranged structures, Jan Werner and Andi Toma have created a unique musical idiom that nonetheless never settles into definite form—too unpredictable are the myriad modifications they continually implement.

Unconstrained by schools of thought, conventions of genre, and the pressures of the music industry, they are charting their own very distinctive trajectory through the no-man's-land between pop, art, club culture, and the musical avant-garde.

Mouse on Mars take over the Kunstbau with a sound installation for which they are developing a site-specific composition. Working with and responding to the exhibition space, the installation transforms the Kunstbau itself into a gigantic stereophonic acoustic instrument.

The supporting programme is developed in collaboration with BR / Hörspiel, Dokumentation, Medienkunst, the Dynamische Akustische Forschung as well as the Academy of Arts in Munich and Nürnberg.

Curated by Eva Huttenlauch

Jeppe Hein

Space in Movement. Movement in Space

July 17-October 3, 2021

Museum plaza

Jeppe Hein's water pavilion is equipped with sensors that lets it respond to pedestrians in its vicinity. When they approach the circular wall of water, some of the jets are switched off, creating a passage into the water pavilion's interior. Once the visitors are safely inside, the walls close again, screening them off from the traffic on the public plaza and the streets. The effect prompts an unexpected shift in how they perceive the site.

The relationship between the individual and his or her environment and the psychology of how we respond to changes in our surroundings are central concerns in the Danish artist Jeppe Hein's (b. 1974) creative practice. His interactive constructions, which expand the bounds of art into the domain of architecture, are experimental explorations of the fluctuating boundaries between spatial and social parameters such as inside and outside, private and public, integration and exclusion. Although the formal economy of Hein's installations is recognizably inspired by aspects of minimalist sculpture, he is not narrowly focused on literal representation, instead working to produce an immersive environment in which functionalism and design are fused with the viewer's embodied experience.

Hein's interactive water pavilion "Space in Movement / Movement in Space" was acquired for the museum in 2002 with the support of the Jubiläumsstiftung der Deutschen Bank AG and will be reinstalled in 2020.

Curated by Elisabeth Giers

still on view:

Michaela Eichwald
until May, 16 2021
Kunstbau

How to play a trick on painting with its own devices? That is one of the knottier questions in art. The Rhineland of the 1980s and 1990s—where Michaela Eichwald studied and started working as an artist—is known as the stomping ground of a generation of artists who addressed this question head-on. Their endeavors went hand in hand with an approach that framed the creative subject as a ridiculous figure; with a dash of histrionic self-irony, they staged the failure of their grand ambitions in the face of art history and the commodification of contemporary artistic production in their works. Eichwald by no means dismisses the art of these peers. Yet her own work does not give the stage to a self-centered creative ego, nor does the compromised role of painting in an age of commerce on steroids appear as a tangible motif.

Her works instead enact the "fundamental and inexhaustible problems of art" (Eichwald) in the interaction between material and form. The artist preferably paints on synthetic supports like faux leather and PVC. Where the classical canvas served as a neutral background on which the event of painting erupted with unchecked force, such creative effusion is now preemptively snarled by imitation ostrich leather in office-décor beige or car-roof lining with embedded glitter. Eichwald's typically nonrepresentational formal idiom responds to the recognizably contemporary commercial aesthetic of her fabric supports in ways that range from pliable adaptation to adamant recalcitrance; so do her diverse materials (acrylic, paint, wax, watercolors, etc.).

The artist hones techniques that ensure that the work—be it a painting, a text, a sculpture, or a photograph—does not present as an ironclad assertion even when it is finished: "Less hedging, more trial balloons. More life, more expression, more unintelligibility," as she summed up her approach in an interview. Her output is distinguished by her productive disregard for the boundaries between creative disciplines—writing, painting, photography. That is readily apparent in the unconventional and speaking titles of her works, for which she draws on a wide range of sources, from medieval mysticism to contemporary lyric poetry, from bureaucratic solecisms to Dadaist word strings. The exhibition features paintings and sculptures from the past three years. Most of the works were created specifically for the presentation.

Michaela Eichwald was born in Gummersbach in 1967. She enrolled at the University of Cologne in 1987, studying philosophy, history, art history, and German literature. Her first writings were published in the 1990s, even before she started painting. She has had solo exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Kunsthalle Schwerin, and Kunsthalle Aachen, among others. A solo exhibition of Eichwald's work at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, will be on view through mid-May 2021.

Curated by Matthias Mühling and Stephanie Weber

The exhibition was organized in cooperation with the Kunsthalle Basel

Exhibition dates in Basel: October 1, 2021 – January 2, 2022

Under the Open Sky

Traveling with Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter
until June 6, 2021
Lenbachhaus

Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter—we know them as leading figures of the Blue Rider. Yet the two were close companions and collaborators for years before the artists' group was founded. The exhibition undertakes a pioneering reconstruction of their itinerant life between 1902 and 1908. The pair traveled widely and light, working under the open sky to create paintings in small formats and photographs. Oil sketches produced right in front of the motifs and photographs show scenes and sceneries in and around Kallmünz, Rotterdam, Tunis, Rapallo, Paris, and other destinations. Among these works are oil studies, photographs, and sketchbooks by Gabriele Münter that have never been on display in an exhibition. Letting us observe the two partners' unusually close shared engagement with the same motifs and creative techniques, they also illustrate how each developed his or her own and personal perspective on the settings in which they found

themselves.

Having enrolled at the Phalanx art school in Munich in 1901, Münter took up an invitation from Kandinsky, who taught there, to join his class on a work retreat in Kochel in the summer of 1902. Carrying cameras, palettes, small pasteboards, folding easels, and resealable paint tubes, they got on their bicycles and explored the prealpine landscapes of southern Bavaria. They spent a second summer with Kandinsky's painting class in Kallmünz the following year—this time as a couple.

Here they fell into a form of working in tandem that they would continue on their travels during the next several years and that left a clearly recognizable imprint on their art. They approached the same motif trying different techniques, used photographs captured along the way as sources of inspiration for drawings, woodcuts, and paintings, and discussed the innovative ideas that each was developing.

From 1904 until 1908, the couple was mostly on the road. Mobility was the defining characteristic of their private life as well as their work on their art, in which they dedicated themselves to the landscapes and architectures of their travel destinations. Whether in Germany or the Netherlands, in Italy or Tunisia, they followed the itineraries recommended in the guidebooks of the time and selected destinations that had long been popular with tourists. Their technique evinces the influence of Impressionism: rarely using the brush, they applied virtually unmixed paints with the palette knife. The formats are small and intimate, with a focus on the handling of color. Unaffected by social realities, they sought to render the surfaces of the world around them as it presented itself to the eye.

Besides the oil sketches, they gathered a great number of photographs, the majority taken by Münter, who never went out without her Kodak roll-film camera. Suggesting the painter's keen eye for composition, these pictures possess a striking quality that, for today's beholder, lends them genuinely artistic value in addition to their function as private documentation. Similarities as well as differences between the photographic and painted pictures speak to the questions that drove the two artists' shared quest for a modernist idiom, a contemporary pictorial aesthetic. It led them to reject academic convention and embrace the Impressionist model—in Kallmünz no less than in Carthage.

Their wanderings came to a close after four years abroad including, in 1906–1907, an entire year in Paris; back in Germany, they spent the winter in Berlin and the spring in South Tyrol before deciding, in the early summer of 1908, to abandon the restless and rather lonely life on the road and settle down in Munich for good. Their return marks the end of the exhibition, which draws attention to the creative symbiosis between Kandinsky and Münter in the early years of their relationship between 1902 and 1908.

Curated by Sarah Louisa Henn and Matthias Mühlung

A collaboration of the Lenbachhaus and the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation

With generous support from Förderverein Lenbachhaus e.V.

Looking at the Sun at Midnight

Contemporary Art from the Lenbachhaus and the KiCo Foundation

until August 1, 2021

Lenbachhaus

Monica Bonvicini, Candice Breitz, AA Bronson, VALIE EXPORT, Isa Genzken, Flaka Haliti, Barbara Hammann, Judith Hopf, General Idea, Annette Kelm, Barbara Klemm, Eva Kot'átková, Maria Lassnig, Michaela Melián, Senga Nengudi, Helga Paris, Friederike Pezold, Tejal Shah, Cindy Sherman, Katharina Sieverding, Rosemarie Trockel

The Lenbachhaus showcases works of contemporary art created between 1958 and the present. The earliest work in the exhibition is a painting by Maria Lassnig, who pursued a distinctive style of nonrepresentational art in the 1950s. Her intensely physical gestural approach anticipated tendencies in abstract expressionism. She later made art history with her innovative "body-consciousness painting," a practice in which she scrutinized her own body and questions of gender on canvas. VALIE EXPORT and Friederike Pezold, who emerged as key voices in the feminist art discourse in the 1960s, rose to renown with radical performances, videos, and photographs. The artists themselves typically star in works that engage the public in debates around the female body and the male gaze. The Lenbachhaus very early on presented positions in feminist art in its exhibitions and acquired such works for its collection. In the 1970s, questions of gender equality and the relations between men and women were one concern in the work of the Canadian artists' collective General Idea to which AA Bronson belonged; their focus subsequently shifted to the AIDS crisis. Launching

their careers in the 1960s/70s, the photographers Barbara Klemm and Helga Paris documented the rapidly shifting political and social realities in a divided Germany. Personal and public identities, feminism and emancipation, family and neighborhood life are their protagonists. Cindy Sherman devised a personal and self-referential practice that nonetheless never lost sight of the social dimension, exploring her own body, questions of gender, and what she saw as the terrors of the construction of identity. A young artist who has staked out a contemporary position on identity formation, humanity, and sexuality is Tejal Shah; her work in the presentation made its public debut at documenta 13 in 2012.

The title "Looking at the Sun at Midnight" is borrowed from a cycle by Katharina Sieverding. The photographer started working in large formats in 1975, when few women in the art world chose this medium. She was ahead of her time also with the subjects of her photographs, which frame the truly big pictures: politics, German history, gender identity, and the power of the image in the digital era. Although the title remains enigmatic, it unmistakably evokes the idea that things and concerns that are shrouded in darkness seen from one perspective are clear as the bright day from another. If the sunlight throws everything into sharp relief in one hemisphere, it cannot be seen in the other, and yet the sun exists at all times and sustains all life on Earth. Part of that life are questions and conflicts that concern the conditions of communal life, from personal relationships to entire societies and persistent global structures. Those conditions rest on imbalances in the exercise of power, the authority to speak, and the perception of roles that the works on view address.

The exhibition includes works that were acquired for or given to the museum in recent years and have never been on display in our galleries—featuring, prominently, treasures from the KiCo Foundation, which has supported the Lenbachhaus's efforts to bring contemporary art to the public for over twenty years.

Curated by Eva Huttenlauch und Matthias Mühlung