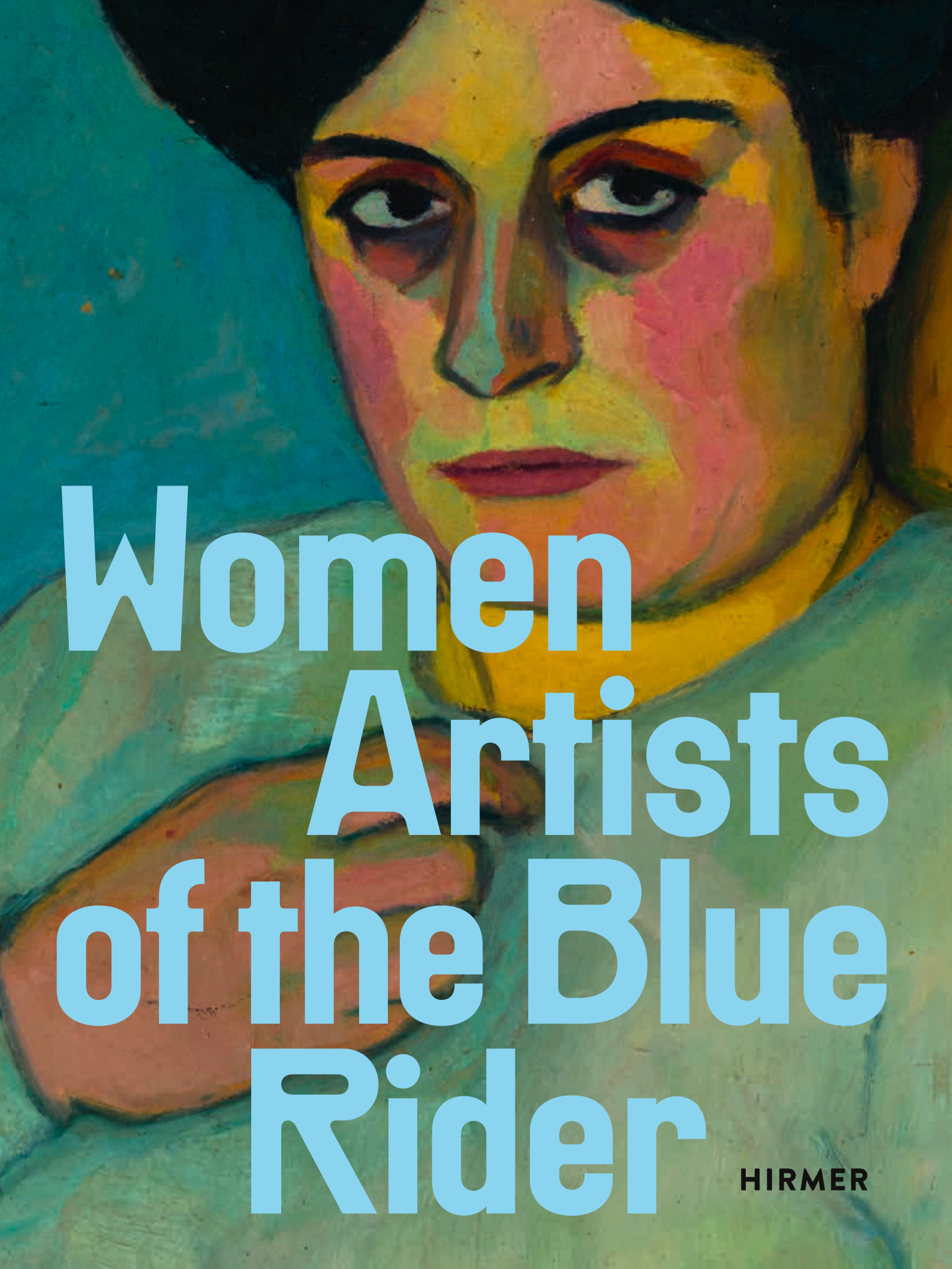




Women Artists of the Blue Rider

HIRMER

Marianne von Werefkin
Gabriele Münter
Maria Franck-Marc
Erma Bossi
Sonia Delaunay-Terk
Emmi Dresler
Elisabeth Epstein
Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke
Natalia Goncharova
Else Lasker-Schüler
Olga Meerson
Carla Pohle

Women Artists of the Blue Rider

Published by

Henrike Hans, Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, Bremen

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Women Artists of the Blue Rider

HIRMER

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↑ Else Lasker-Schüler, *Jussuf prince Tiba*, 1913 – [Cat. 67]

*My esteemed princess,
high-born, wild lad,
sweet woman painter,
When may I come – I
dream of your paintings' sweetness.
(The Prince of Thebes)
Else Lasker-Schüler
(The female friend of the
Blue Rider-Horsewoman)*

In 1913, Else Lasker-Schüler wrote these lines to her friend Marianne von Werefkin. Else Lasker-Schüler played with gender roles and identities, assuming the name of “Prince of Thebes” for her alter ego. Her neologism the “blaue Reiterreiterin” (the Blue Rider-Horsewoman) for Marianne von Werefkin, as a woman artist of this group, stands as a leitmotif over this exhibition project.

For the first time, a major exhibition is dedicated to works by the women artists associated with the Blue Rider, focusing on their crucial contribution to the early twentieth-century avant-garde. As female cosmopolitans, patrons, and pioneers of a novel style of art, they dared to transgress national, social, and artistic boundaries. Their biographies were marked by self-assertion, emancipation, and artistic rejuvenation.

“Off to Munich!” declared Gabriele Münter euphorically when she embarked on her art studies there. Choosing art as a profession demonstrated great courage, since women were refused admission to art academies and gender equality was suppressed by legislation. Nevertheless, the self-organized Damen-Akademie (Ladies’ Academy) in Munich offered the first training opportunities for women artists, while various associations fought for women’s suffrage. The self-confident attitude of the women, manifested in their choosing the education and profession of artist with absolute naturalness, carried over into their artistic work as well. In their pictures, letters, and texts, they sought a new approach to the world and significantly contributed with their ideas to the genesis of Expressionist art. Their portraits, still lifes, and landscapes flaunt a treatment of color and form unknown till then. These women artists evolved innovative approaches to address nature, spirituality, and human existence. Their view of social realities as well as of anti-bourgeois and nonconforming identities testifies to a deliberate departure from traditional norms in a male-dominated art system.

The women artists presented here were friends and competitors, co-founders of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists’ Association Munich), and active in the circles of the Blue Rider. Werefkin opened her “Rosa Salon” (Pink Salon) as early as 1900–02, where artistic and political topics were discussed and a new tendency in art began to coalesce. Münter’s work was featured in all of the exhibitions of the Blue Rider and – as the best-known woman artist – she was represented in the celebrated gallery Der Sturm. Thanks to Elisabeth Epstein’s international network and to her contact with Robert Delaunay and Sonia Delaunay-Terk, the French avant-garde,

too, participated in the Blue Rider's activities. Carla Pohle expressed in her graphic works a social and political message that dealt with poverty, class, and war.

In chronological terms, the exhibition and this catalogue trace a path from Munich's significance around 1900 as a center of a strong women's rights movement, through the artistically active phase of the Blue Rider, to the work of these female artists during the Weimar Republic, in exile, and into the 1940s. This project has a particular focus on socially constructed role models, questions of identity and gender roles, and the international networks linking Munich, Paris, and Moscow. It celebrates, for the first time, the diverse aesthetic of the *Blauen Reiterreiterinnen* artists, bringing together works by Erma Bossi, Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Emmi Dresler, Elisabeth Epstein, Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, Natalia Goncharova, Else Lasker-Schüler, Maria Franck-Marc, Olga Meerson, Gabriele Münter, Carla Pohle, and Marianne von Werefkin.

Some of the works on display have since become world-famous and have been exhibited in numerous European countries, Japan, and the United States. *Still Life with Armchair*, for example, which Münter painted in 1909, was most recently exhibited in Madrid, Paris, and New York. Epstein's self-portrait from 1911, which adorns the cover of this catalogue, made a grand appearance at the Tate Modern in London in 2024 and has already featured on posters for the Lenbachhaus's projects on the Blue Rider, while Goncharova's painting *Baignade* (Bathing), made around 1910, has already been shown in New York, Philadelphia, and Paris. Other works in the exhibition, by contrast, have rarely been seen in public and offer art-historical surprises, such as the works by Dresler, Meerson, and Pohle.

What the selection of works has in common is that they are not only pieces whose aesthetic quality represents the circle of female artists; they can also be drawn upon as documents of a specific historical situation. At the same time, the works must explicitly be examined as contemporary testimonies and specifically scrutinized to determine what reliable statements about gender relations can be derived from them. Who, for example, is depicted, and how? Can conclusions be drawn from this about the artists' networks? Münter and Meerson, for instance, attach great importance to documenting their immediate surroundings. Even more interesting is the question of self-representation and self-staging. The self-portraits by Epstein, Münter, and Werefkin are by no means idealized, but rather depict women who see themselves as serious, reflective artists, rather than stylizing themselves for the present or for posterity.

In this respect, the exhibition offers more than a mere focus on the female artists. Rather, it aims to address issues of identity politics and source criticism from a contemporary research perspective, drawing on findings from recent years. Notable monographic exhibition projects on the work of such artists as Bossi, Franck-Marc, Meerson, Münter, Pohle, and Werefkin have served as an inspirational foundation and have made this project possible in the first place.

Furthermore, the extensive archives of the Museum Wiesbaden, the Lenbachhaus, the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, and other institutions contain numerous archival materials, such as correspondence or documents relating to the editorial meetings of the Blue Rider, which have been deliberately read “against the grain” in relation to the present subject.

This also led to the choice of title for this publication: *Die Blauen Reiterreiterinnen* (*Women Artists of the Blue Rider*). Read as an endonym – a self-designation – invented by Lasker-Schüler, it appears from today’s perspective as a truly prescient reference in the contested terrain of gender-neutral language. We are convinced that this exhibition and catalogue, with their specific focus on women artists, were long overdue and that this project will, furthermore, contribute to a better understanding of a significant era of modernism.

An exhibition project such as this requires close collaboration. To this end, four museums have joined forces, united by a shared drive and passion as well as comparable historical responsibilities: the Museum Wiesbaden, the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum in Bremen, the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau in Munich, and the Museo Comunale d’Arte Moderna in Ascona, which is affiliated with the Fondazione Marianne Werefkin. The staff at these institutions possess expertise acquired over decades, indispensable for such a project. At the same time, through the focus of their collections and their roles in managing artists’ estates, these museums are particularly committed to preserving the works of many of the female artists represented here. It is hard to imagine a more suitable constellation for such a comprehensive undertaking. This has also been recognized by the numerous dedicated institutions and individuals supporting the project. Both the Kulturstiftung der Länder (Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States) and the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung (Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation) are funding all three German venues.

At the Museum Wiesbaden, the exhibition is further supported by the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain and the Verein der Freunde des Museums Wiesbaden e.V. At the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum in Bremen, the Karin and Uwe Hollweg Foundation and Sparkasse Bremen have made this ambitious exhibition project possible. At the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, the Eva Margarete Lückenhof Foundation, the Herbert Schuchardt Foundation, and the Förderverein Lenbachhaus e.V. have dedicated themselves to the project with great commitment. The exhibition at the Museo Comunale d’Arte Moderna in Ascona is supported by the Repubblica e Cantone Ticino – Dipartimento dell’educazione, della cultura e dello sport – Ufficio fondi Swisslos – Aiuto federale per la lingua e la cultura italiana.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed financial or moral support to this important exhibition. We would especially like to thank the many dedicated staff members at the museums who have worked tirelessly to bring this exhibition to fruition. We would like to single

out Roman Zieglgänsberger, Melanie Vietmeier, and Henrike Hans, who, with passion, critical spirit, and great attention to detail, have developed presentations that translate the latest research into an exhibition experience that is both sensorially engaging and insightful.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all the staff members of the four museums.

We are also grateful to the German Commission for UNESCO, which has assumed patronage for a commemorative year in honor of Gabriele Münter in 2027.

Since we developed these exhibitions with the aim of highlighting strong women in art and culture, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Iris Berben for her patronage of the exhibition *Women Artists of the Blue Rider*.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the authors for their insightful and informative contributions to the catalogue: Karin Althaus, Waleria Dorogova, Klara Drenker-Nagels, Bettina Löwen, Nicholas Maniu, Laura Mokrohs, Sylvia Schütz, Beate Söntgen, and Isabel Wünsche. We would also like to extend special thanks to Isabelle Jansen, Maite Ruge, and Sandra Uhrig for their support of the exhibition and the catalogue.

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Andreas Henning

Museum Wiesbaden – Hessisches Landesmuseum für
Kunst und Natur

Matthias Mühling

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau München

Frank Schmidt

Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, Bremen

Mara Folini Ceccarelli

Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona



↑ On the balcony of Kandinsky's and Münter's apartment at Ainmillerstraße 36, Munich, c. 1911/12 – from left: Gabriele Münter, Maria Franck-Marc, Bernhard Koehler Sr., Thomas von Hartmann, Heinrich Campendonk; seated: Franz Marc – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

How is a canon established in the world of art and in the historiography of art? The artists' group the Blue Rider addressed this question intensively – and ultimately became part of the canon. But during this process, the perception of this visionary circle of artists was gradually narrowed down, so that after the Second World War the male members of the Blue Rider were nearly the only ones being discussed and exhibited. Their female associates, by contrast, faded into obscurity or their presence was effaced. A consortium of leading museums of classical modernism in Germany now wants to rectify this. By means of the collaborative exhibition *Women Artists of the Blue Rider*, they aim to honor the leading female artists of this movement, to bring them back into the picture, and ultimately to anchor them in the canon.

The participating institutions have contributed new research perspectives, extensive experience, and their own holdings: The Museum Wiesbaden has been incisively conducting scholarly research into Marianne von Werefkin for decades and in 1990 organized one of the first survey exhibitions on *Künstlerinnen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Women Artists of the Twentieth century). This exhibition showcased works by three women artists – among many others – from the circle of the Blue Rider: Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Natalia Goncharova and Gabriele Münter. The Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum in Bremen, the first public museum in Germany dedicated to a woman artist, has built up a distinguished reputation in the research field of women artists. The Lenbachhaus in Munich, in turn, stands for leading scholarly investigation into the Blue Rider like no other museum. Ever since the mold-breaking *Museum Global/Gruppendynamik* project (Global Museum / Group Dynamics, 2021–2023) was carried out, it is, moreover, the first museum that has consistently incorporated the women artists associated with the Blue Rider into the presentation of its collection.

The Kulturstiftung der Länder (Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States) is especially keen on supporting projects that are characterized by a thirst for innovation, institutional cooperation, and intensive engagement with their own holdings and collection histories – in particular, when light is shed on areas that have hardly been investigated or on disregarded artistic figures like the women artists of the Blue Rider. It is consequently a great joy for us when we can support this long-overdue exhibition project and in the course of the project also strengthen a scholarly network connecting several federal German states. The results will open up a new perspective on the Blue Rider and surely stimulate the expansion of the canon – with an impact that will extend far beyond the duration and venues of the exhibition itself.

Dr. Christine Regus
Secretary General of the Kulturstiftung der Länder

There were many large and small German groups of artists of the avant-garde who were courageous enough to embark on a new, progressive direction between 1908 and 1911, in an effort to break away from an academism that was as constricting as it was conservative. Most of them, in particular the two that are best known – Die Brücke (The Bridge) and Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) – have been exhibited far and wide numerous times and, so one would believe, in great depth. But wait: Here we have to be more precise, since for the Blue Rider a tiny, crucial word has to be added. Because, as far as this group is concerned, they have in reality only “supposedly” been exhibited in great depth.

The significance of women artists for the Blue Rider and for German Expressionism in general has been undervalued and, surely for this reason, hardly addressed till today. Solo shows and publications may have highlighted some of the female members of this group, such as Erma Bossi, Maria Franck-Marc, and Olga Meerson, while others, like Natalia Goncharova, Gabriele Münter, and Marianne von Werefkin, have been accepted into the canon of art history. Yet, whenever a project on the Blue Rider in its entirety was organized, then these women artists were degraded once again to marginal figures and pushed into the background until they became almost invisible.

The in-depth, multifaceted, and in many ways surprising catalogue *Women Artists of the Blue Rider* will ensure that this will not continue to occur. It confirms many things that had only been suspected until now, and shines a spotlight on others that could not have been known, because they were simply kept in the shadows for decades.

This is not the first time that the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung (Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation) has lent its support to such an eye-opening catalogue project. It did so in 2015, for example, with *Sturm-Frauen* (Storm Women: Women Artists of the Avant-Garde in Berlin 1910–1932). We have repeatedly provided funding for museums to make acquisitions intended to give women artists and their achievements greater visibility in the public sphere. One of these acquisitions, the revealing painting *In the Room* by Gabriele Münter, →fig. p. 131 which could fortunately be added to the collection of the Lenbachhaus, can serve as an example, since it will be displayed in Wiesbaden as well as in the traveling exhibition’s other venues in Bremen, Munich, and Ascona.

When we were asked to fund the exhibition catalogue *Women Artists of the Blue Rider*, we thus had many very good reasons to say “yes” – with complete conviction and great joy. This reading experience, which is as rich in content as it is pleasurable, invites the reader to rediscover the Blue Rider from a more broad-minded perspective.

Dr. Martin Hoernes
Secretary General, Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung

We wish to thank the benefactors and sponsors

— of the touring exhibition



— of the catalogue



— of the exhibitions in Wiesbaden



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- as well as all those private lenders who wish to remain anonymous.

—Melanie Vietmeier

Women Artists of the Blue Rider Seen Self-Confident Strategic

The Blue Rider was a circle of the most diverse personalities, who achieved visionary breakthroughs in the fields of aesthetic theory, painting, graphic arts, literature, and music. The two exhibitions they organized in 1911 and 1912 and the almanac published in 1912 stand for subjectification in art, the liberation of color from the depicted object, and the idea of the parity of artistic forms of expression from different epochs, regions, and genres. The Blue Rider was therefore part of the international avant-garde tendencies before the First World War. Its components came from various countries like the German Reich, the French



Fig.1 Gabriele Münter, *The Incomparable (The Poet Sylvia von Harden)*, 1928 – [Cat. 146]



Fig. 2 On the balcony of Kandinsky and Münter's apartment at Ainmillerstraße 36, Munich, c. 1911/12 – (from left to right) Maria Franck-Marc, Franz Marc, Bernhard Koehler Sr., Heinrich Campendonk, Thomas von Hartmann; seated: Wassily Kandinsky – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

Republic, the United States, and the Russian Empire. One of the Blue Rider's special characteristics was its high number of female members, unusual for the early twentieth century, who were active in the movement and who decisively shaped it. Our joint exhibition project aims to recognize this distinguishing feature and for the first time investigate it more profoundly.

It was Carl Einstein's *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Art of the Twentieth Century), volume 16 of the *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* encyclopedia of art history, that first secured a place for the Blue Rider in the canon of European modernism. Einstein incorporated the Blue Rider into the third edition as an "artists' group," specifically as "an association of men" who "set a new goal" for art.¹ The women artists in the circle were not even mentioned as a side note. He highlighted Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Franz Marc above all.² This concentration on a few major names was the key problem in the reception of the Blue Rider during the period of the Weimar Republic. Subsequent research on the circle was likewise not a straightforward process. It reduced the art-historical debates of the interwar years to the concept of Expressionism, the Nazi persecution of the participants and the vilification of their works, and finally the (partially) uncritical enthusiasm of the postwar decades after 1945. These lines of interpretation have continued till today and have solidified into rigid patterns.³

With regard to the contribution of the women artists to the Blue Rider, Einstein's approach – despite the advent of feminist perspectives in art history since the 1970s and the numerous exhibitions on women artists since then⁴ – still determines the scholarly reception of the Blue Rider. This one-sided viewpoint has generated quite a few research gaps that still persist today. Our exhibition and catalogue are shifting the women artists from the circle of the Blue Rider to center stage for the first time. A paradox, however, is inherent in this project: by aiming at a revision of art historiography, it reproduces the logic of difference that it is essentially aiming to overcome. The exhibitions do not see themselves merely as a new effort toward adding further figures to the canon; rather, they strive for a new reading that highlights the Blue Rider as a movement whose diversity of voices and radicality would be inconceivable without the women artists who participated in it.

One focus of the project is on gender issues and on the historical and social conditions for the art and life of these women artists. That they were more than aware of the dominant gender relationships is demonstrated by a quote from a letter by Else Lasker-Schüler to Marianne von Werefkin, from which the exhibition's German title is derived: *Die Blauen Reiterreiterinnen* (literally, The Blue Rider-Horsewomen).⁵ As an item of historical evidence, this letter obliges us to study the sources and the historical context meticulously with respect to the options and limits of gender relationships. Which aesthetic strategies did the women artists develop in order to assert themselves in a competitive field? How did they perceive themselves? What exonyms – external appellations – and external attributions did they see applied to them? Against such a backdrop, the essays in this publication illuminate the networks, sources of inspiration, exhibitions, and publications of the women artists of the Blue Rider, as well as the friendships and rivalries between them. In the course of this, the authors situate questions of identity, mobility, and transnational dialogue in their historical and sociopolitical settings.

Just as the Blue Rider was not an artists' group in a strict sense, → fig. 2 even less an association with a list of members and bylaws, the network of relationships between the women artists of this circle was heterogenous. A few of them were close friends; others were just fellow exhibitors; some probably never met. This project focuses primarily on the eight women artists who participated in at least one of the three exhibitions organized by the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists' Association Munich) between 1909 and 1911, or in one of the two shows of the Blue Rider in 1911 and 1912. The inner circle consisted of Elisabeth Epstein, Maria Franck-Marc, Gabriele Münter, and Marianne

von Werefkin. They had closer or looser ties with Erma Bossi, Emmi Dresler, and Natalia Goncharova, who was represented at the second exhibition of the Blue Rider, and with the little-known Carla Pohle, who took part in the first NKVM exhibition. Based on their close contacts with this group of women artists, the project moreover included the painter Olga Meerson, Sonia Delaunay-Terk, who was a friend of Meerson and Epstein, Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, and the Expressionist writer and graphic artist Else Lasker-Schüler.⁶

Identity, exonyms, and self-perception

The letter mentioned above from Lasker-Schüler to Werefkin from 1913 stands as a leitmotif above the exhibition project, since it demonstrates that this circle's female artists strove to question and to transform – poetically and aesthetically – the prevailing gender relationships.

*My esteemed princess,
high-born, wild lad,
sweet woman painter,
When may I come – I
dream of your paintings' sweetness.
(The Prince of Thebes)
Else Lasker-Schüler
(The female friend of the Blue
Rider-Horsewoman)⁷*

The emphatic grammatical irregularity of this letter's salutation reveals how conscious Lasker-Schüler was that the linguistic attributions of "male" and "female" in no way sufficed to lend expression to the diversity of her feelings. The lived reality of the Blue Rider-Horsewomen at the beginning of the twentieth century was – parallel to language – confined within the corset of gender-specific role models. Their aim was to find a form of expression commensurate with the complexity of their unconventional, emancipatory ambitions. Lasker-Schüler's poetic transformation of the name of the movement in German, *Blauer Reiter*, which explicitly refers to a man, not only supplies the title for our project, but is at the same time an inspirational image. Her address to Werefkin, "wild lad, sweet woman painter," likewise displays how she wittily deals with

stereotypes. As in the aforementioned letter, Lasker-Schüler plays with fluid identities in her poem “Marianne Werefkin,” calling the female artist a “noble guttersnipe” (using the male form of the word)⁸ and remarking of her art, “Here a female master fell from heaven.”⁹ This all makes clear that the Blue Rider possessed a historical awareness of the extent to which women were trapped in their roles and that they had the will to overcome the boundaries demarcated for them by society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, gender roles were clearly defined both legally and socially. Women in the German Reich were, among other things, denied access to art academies – a situation that did not change until the early days of the Weimar Republic. Political demands for women’s suffrage and better education thus treated gender as a contentious category. Lasker-Schüler’s formulations anticipate what would be discussed at the end of the twentieth century, for example, in Judith Butler’s postulate regarding the constructed nature and performativity of gender within queer theory.¹⁰ The dissolution of gender boundaries shaped not only the way the poetess addressed Werefkin, but also her own literary self-staging. Lasker-Schüler thus signed her work with her alter ego “The Prince of Thebes,” the persona as whom she depicted herself in self-portraits. → fig. p. 6 She also expressed the urge to escape social norms poetically in her poem “Weltflucht” (Withdrawal from the World): “I would flee into the immensity / Of myself, ... In order to escape / Into myself!”¹¹ Werefkin, too, felt no obligation to conform to society’s expectations, since, as she said, society had never given her anything. In contrast to many of her contemporaries, she found the social conventions of female representation degrading – such as the custom of showing off women as objects at balls.¹² Later on, she articulated her understanding of her identity even more radically with the words “I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am me.”¹³ Here she is clearly expressing a non-binary conception of herself that transcends gender – and not only in art.

It is astonishing that the seemingly obvious topic of gender relations has scarcely been examined in postwar art history. There has been little interest to date in an analysis of these complex and contradictory biographies that takes a critical look at the sources. On the contrary, art historians have tended to describe these women’s lives as conforming to conventional roles. For example, Münter’s second partner, the art historian Johannes Eichner, portrayed the artist as a “child of nature,” thus perpetuating stereotypical notions of feminine, intuitive art.¹⁴ This cliché of Münter can easily be refuted by examining her formally aesthetic strategies, the significance of her preparatory sketches, and her own written reflections on art.¹⁵

The unconventional lifestyles of these women artists demonstrate that they had the courage to defy assigned gender roles and bourgeois conventions. Many of them, for example, lived together with their partners as unmarried couples: Münter and Wassily Kandinsky, Werefkin and Alexej von Jawlensky, Franck-Marc and Franz Marc, as did the Blue Rider couples Jean-Bloé Niestlé and Marguerite Legros or Heinrich Campendonk and Adda Deichmann.¹⁶ Franck-Marc's relationship with Marc was complicated in its initial years by his relationships to the artists Annette von Eckhard and Marie Schnür; moreover, Helmuth Macke lived in the Marc household for a while in 1911. As a result of this, Franck-Marc was repeatedly summoned back to her parents' middle-class home in Berlin. Prior to her marriage to Robert Delaunay, Sonia Delaunay-Terk had entered into a marriage of convenience with Wilhelm Uhde, a gallerist and patron of avant-garde art, which allowed her access to her dowry and at the same time helped him socially by concealing his homosexuality. Lasker-Schüler's marriage to her second husband, Herwarth Walden — whom she gave this *nom d'artiste* — was just as ridden with conflict as her later brief relationship with the poet Gottfried Benn, seventeen years her junior.¹⁷

These unconventional relationships, and the openness in their dealing with sexual identity and agency, can be understood as early examples of the emancipation of women artists. Our project thus questions the strategies that the individual women artists in the circle of the Blue Rider pursued to assert themselves in the art world despite the prevailing — and for them adverse — social norms of the period.

Cosmopolitan, mobile, connected

The women artists of the Blue Rider were cosmopolitan, mobile, and urbane — Werefkin spoke seven languages (Russian, English, French, German, Polish, Lithuanian, and later Italian), Münter five — she learned Danish and Swedish while in Scandinavia during the First World War — and Pohle spent her childhood in Italy. Bossi, born in the Austro-Hungarian city of Pula in present-day Croatia, grew up in Trieste, a city characterized by cultural diversity,¹⁸ just like Vilnius and Lublin, where Werefkin, though from a traditional Tsarist family, spent parts of her youth in close contact with the local population.¹⁹ In 1898, following the death of both of her parents, Münter traveled to the United States with her sister for two



Fig. 4 Natalia Goncharova, *The Smoker*, 1911 – material for *The Blue Rider* almanac, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich **Fig. 5** Natalia Goncharova, *Laundresses*, 1910 – material for *The Blue Rider* almanac, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

progressive and more moderate members of the NKVM escalated in late 1911, a dispute arose over inviting international guests, as had been the case in the second NKVM exhibition. Several members opposed the proposal for the planned third NKVM exhibition, including Elisabeth Epstein and the US painter Albert Bloch.²⁵ Following the rejection of Kandinsky's painting *Composition V*, a final split occurred, leading to the departure of Kandinsky, Marc, Münter, and Alfred Kubin. Concurrent with the NKVM's third exhibition, the *Erste Ausstellung der Redaktion Der Blaue Reiter* (First Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider) was also held at the Thannhauser gallery. Epstein was shown there too, alongside Münter, and was moreover another artist who played an important role as a networker: It was through her that Robert Delaunay participated in the show – thus involving one of the most progressive representatives of the French avant-garde.²⁶ In the *Zweite Ausstellung der Redaktion Der Blaue Reiter. Schwarz-Weiss* (Second Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider: Black and White), dedicated to works on paper, the artists Franck-Marc, Goncharova, and Münter were represented. The title of the first exhibition explicitly referred to the project of the almanac, a programmatic yearbook published by Kandinsky and Marc that established the Blue Rider as part of a global artistic movement transcending

eras and genres.²⁷ Erdmann-Macke, Franck-Marc, and Münter were part of the editorial team, handling correspondence with galleries, artists, and museums, including procuring the originals for the 141 illustrations. The first draft of the table of contents indicates that works by Epstein, Jawlensky, and Werefkin were also intended for reproduction.²⁸ These were soon omitted, this must also be viewed in light of the fact that very little contemporary art – including from their own ranks – was included in favor of works from different eras and world cultures. Two paintings by Münter →fig. p.129 top, p.138 bottom were reproduced, as was Goncharova's drawing *Grape Harvest*. →fig. p.234 It was previously unknown that the editorial team had at least four additional paintings by Goncharova available as illustrative material: *The Smoker* (1911), →fig.4 *Peasants Picking Apples* (1911), *Laundresses* (1910), →fig.5 and a painting labeled *Spring in the Countryside* (1910) on the reverse side of the reproduction.²⁹

Just as it did for male artists, joining associations and groups offered female artists the advantage of achieving greater visibility and better sales opportunities through joint exhibition and publication projects. Yet even though they were largely granted equal legal status in the newly founded modernist associations such as the NKVM, women artists generally had to overcome social and gender-specific barriers in order to be perceived and recognized as artists.³⁰ The fact that the women artists of the Blue Rider had gained such prominence by regularly participating in exhibitions was therefore unusual for the era. Münter, for instance, exhibited forty-eight works in the presentations of the NKVM and the Blue Rider, the highest number of works among all the participating artists.³¹ Furthermore, the exhibition activities of these female artists early on had a remarkable international impact. Exhibitions were not only venues for presentation, but also forums for making contact, where networks and aesthetic inspiration became manifest. As early as 1906, some of these artists participated in the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, shows that functioned as key platforms for the artistic avant-garde.³² The transnational dimension of their work extended as far as the Russian Empire. Through contacts with the Blue Rider, Münter and Werefkin exhibited alongside Goncharova in the group of the Izdebsky Salon, while Bossi and Münter participated in exhibitions of the Moscow avant-garde group Bubnovyj Valet (Jack of Diamonds), co-founded by Goncharova. In addition, some of them presented works at major exhibitions such as at the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* (First German Autumn Salon),³³ thereby improving their standing within the international avant-garde.

Pictorial spaces as sites of conflict

The women artists of the Blue Rider worked with a broad range of genres and motifs, from landscapes to portraits and self-portraits, from interiors to still lifes, from social realities to urban leisure activities such as the circus, dances, cafés, and the opera. Identity, motherhood, childhood, and labor are only a few of the themes they explored in their works. The following will single out certain motifs – not to categorize them as typically female, but to show how they functioned as discursive spaces of social, gender, and art-historical negotiation. To this end the women artists utilized certain subjects as visual spaces of conflict, with the aim of subverting normative role models.

Goncharova's painting *Bathers* →fig. p.238 is a revealing example, as it disrupts the historically established subject-object relationship inherent to the representation. The artist provoked a fundamental shift in perspective by challenging established visual regimes and traditional gender hierarchies within art history. For centuries, the female body has served as a standardized object of the male artistic gaze. The motif of bathers, in particular, has a long tradition within European art – from mythological depictions of bathing nymphs and goddesses in the Renaissance, through the subject of Susanna at the Bath, to Paul Cézanne's *Bathers* (*Les Grandes Baigneuses*, c.1894–1905). Goncharova subverts this iconographic tradition by placing male bathers at the center of the picture. This is all the more remarkable given that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, women were largely denied access to practicing nude studies of male models, as this contradicted contemporary norms of female propriety.³⁴ By reversing the “male gaze,” the work acquires a distinct art-historical and social dimension. In a similar manner, Pohle's depiction of a sleeping woman defies convention. →fig. p. 279 Here, the unclothed body is not exposed to the voyeuristic gaze, arms and legs shield it from the viewer's eye, and the woman portrayed is wholly absorbed in sleep, transported to a dream world. Werefkin also subversively challenges traditional modes of representation in her gouache painting *Artistes*. →fig.p.104 bottom While Edgar Degas broke new ground with his figures of female dancers by depicting them “behind the scenes” during rehearsals and in unusual poses, the construct of the erotic gaze upon the female figure remained intact. Werefkin's female performers, on the other hand, offer a human perspective on bodies that are not stylized to conform to contemporary ideals of beauty.

Other visual arenas for the examination of social conventions and expectations were the themes of motherhood and children's realms, which – as Dorothy Price points out – became “sites of conflict” in the works of female artists in the early twentieth century.³⁵ Public discourse in late nineteenth-century Europe extolled the mother figure as the bedrock of the social order.³⁶ In the German Empire of the Wilhelmine age, women's roles were mainly reduced to the spheres of “children, kitchen, and church.” Working women – especially female artists – were therefore often perceived as a threat to the social and national order, as they contradicted traditional gender roles. These structural inequalities gradually found their way into sociopolitical debates around the turn of the century. Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne's study *Die deutsche Frau um die Jahrhundertwende* (The German Woman at the Turn of the Century, 1904) made an important contribution to the European women's rights movement by exposing the legal, political, and economic disadvantages faced by women.³⁷ Lasker-Schüler, who agreed to have medical students observe the birth of her illegitimate son Paul due to a lack of money, was repeatedly plagued by financial worries.³⁸ Epstein similarly had to provide for herself. Although her son initially lived with his father after his parents' separation, he moved to Switzerland to be with her at the outbreak of the First World War. In her essay “Some Thoughts on the Creation of Images,” published in the journal *Der Sturm*, she engages theoretically with questions of existential and artistic becoming, comparing the creative process – in which the imaginative spirit brings the work to fruition – to pregnancy.³⁹ Other female artists from the Blue Rider circle were childless, yet all were confronted with societal expectations they felt they had to grapple with. In Münter's painting *Doll, Cat, Child* → fig. 6 – a motif she varied in several versions – the doll has been carelessly set aside. The “doll's mother” is symbolically rebelling here against her social role and responsibility, apparently viewed with disapproval by the white cat.

Like Münter, Franck-Marc intently addressed the theme of children's realms. This choice of motif has often been interpreted as the result of an unfulfilled desire to have children. But it is in fact mostly related to the Blue Rider's interest in the child as an ideal, which programmatically represented authenticity and primal originality.⁴⁰ Münter and Kandinsky amassed an extensive collection of children's drawings between 1908 and approximately 1914; Jawlensky, Klee, and Macke, too, were drawn to children's art and drew inspiration from it for motifs and formal aesthetic properties. Münter quoted from works by her niece Friedel Schroeter in her painting *In the Room* → fig. p. 131 as a picture within a

picture. Other works like *Listening*, →fig. p. 49 but also Kandinsky's *Train Near Murnau* and Jawlensky's *Murnau Landscape*, all three from 1909, speak of the engagement with compositional principles of children's art such as drastic reduction of elements, flatness, and unusual perspectives.

In the early twentieth century, the figure of the child symbolized hope for the future. Numerous scholarly publications, from Ellen Key's *Barnets århundrade* (The Century of the Child),⁴¹ to the New Education writings by Maria Montessori, to Sigmund Freud's research into developmental psychology, testify to a strong academic interest in the subject. The youth movement that flourished in the first third of the twentieth century was likewise closely related to New Education and the life reform movements; however, it increasingly became ideologically nationalistic. Franck-Marc's series of "Children's Pictures" →fig. 7, →fig. pp. 156, 157 are redolent of profound psychological and socially critical aspects, as well as her fine sense of humor. Toy figures seem to have come to life, recalling the animism of Jean Piaget,⁴² and question social hierarchies, or invert the natural order when sheep dance around a fallen shepherd. →fig. p. 154 That this picture and other gouaches from the series of "Children's Pictures" were exhibited at the *Zweite Ausstellung der Redaktion Der Blaue Reiter* (Second Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider) in 1912 confirms the high regard that the circle of the Blue Rider had for these multifaceted and intensely symbolic themes.

While both male and female artists of the Blue Rider devoted themselves to the world of children, the themes of work and social circumstances — particularly with regard to gender issues — are more prominent in the works of Münter, Pohle, and Werefkin. Although Werefkin came from an aristocratic family and enjoyed a privileged position, she addressed the world of working people in her art. The bent figures reflect factory work shaped by industrialization, including shift work and the monotony of repetitive daily tasks. This socially critical perspective certainly also stems from her training in the tradition of modern Russian painting by the *Peredvizhniki* (Wanderers), and her studies under the realist Ilja Repin.⁴³

Against such a backdrop, the depiction of working women in Werefkin's oeuvre takes on particular significance. She often portrays them as teachers or governesses, as in the paintings *Fall — School* →fig. p. 100 and *Girls' Boarding School*, →fig. p. 105 in the few professions open to unmarried middle-class women at the time that allowed for gainful employment and financial independence. Concurrently, Werefkin addressed the physically demanding tasks performed by women, such as washing laundry. →fig. p. 41 The figures depicted therein appear almost uniform, often face-



Fig. 6 Gabriele Münter, *Doll, Cat, Child*, 1930 – [Cat. 152]
 Fig. 7 Maria Franck-Marc, *Bears in a Cage*, c. 1908 – [Cat. 31]



Fig. 8 Gabriele Münter, *Murnau Woman (Portrait Rosalia Leiß)*, 1909 – [Cat. 109] **Fig. 9** Marianne von Werefkin, *Portrait of Rosalia Leiß*, 1909 – [Cat. 193]

less, accented only by white headscarves.⁴⁴ This mostly unpaid work performed by women⁴⁵ is also a recurring motif in Goncharova's depictions of laundresses → fig. 5 and women working in the fields or harvesting. Both Münter's and Werefkin's connection to the rural population is evident in the two portraits of Rosalia Leiß, a resident of Murnau. → fig. 8, 9 Setting their subject against a monochromatic background, both artists eliminate the surrounding space in favor of a flat painting style. While Münter characterizes Leiß as an older woman through sunken cheeks and the attribute of a cane, Werefkin, through the sitter's posture and gaze, and by employing dynamic brushstrokes, lends her an immediate presence that emphasizes the strength and willpower of a woman marked by hard work.



After the Blue Rider

Even after their intensely creative phase prior to the First World War, women artists continued to play a key role for the Blue Rider, as chroniclers of the movement and as administrators of their partners' estates, strategically positioning their partners' works and their own works. They were active with and in the art market, in galleries and museums around the world. Yet above all, they carried on with their own artistic work against all obstacles, from the First World War up to the end of their lives.

While the First World War raged, they continued to exhibit their work in Germany and in exile, joining the avant-garde circles there. In 1915, Münter went into self-imposed exile for five years in Sweden and Denmark, which, as neutral countries, were not actively involved in the

war. In Stockholm, she made contact with the Swedish avant-garde;⁴⁶ in particular, her interaction with Isaac Grünewald and Sigrid Hjertén provided her with new inspiration for flat pictorial composition and bold colors. Through the mediation of Walden and his Swedish wife Nell Walden, with their Berlin gallery *Der Sturm*, Münter's exhibition activity in Scandinavia became very intensive. In 1918, she held her largest solo show to date in Copenhagen, featuring over 100 paintings. In 1916, Lasker-Schüler presented eighty-five of her drawings at the Folkwang Museum in Hagen in a joint exhibition with the Dutch exponent of spiritual abstraction, Jacoba van Heemskerck. Werefkin, on the other hand, emigrated to Switzerland with Jawlensky at the outbreak of World War I; there she maintained close ties in Zurich with the circle of the avant-garde Cabaret Voltaire as well as with the journalist and writer Claire Goll, who was active in the peace movement. In Ascona, she engaged with the alternative colony of artists, writers, and life reform activists centered around Monte Verità.

Even after the dissolution of the Blue Rider, the artists continued to engage intensively with contemporary art movements and new artistic techniques. Franck-Marc, for example, turned to weaving at the Bauhaus, while Epstein and Münter embraced the formal vocabulary of New Objectivity. In the late 1920s, Münter attended Arthur Segal's painting school in Berlin and frequented the Romanisches Café, where she met the Polish-German poet Eleonora Kalkowska →fig.10 and the painter Lou Albert-Lasard, as well as Sylvia von Harden. →fig.1 Münter depicts the journalist and writer in a pencil drawing with just a few precise lines, capturing her "garçonne" look as a representative of the emancipated New Woman of the Weimar Republic. Münter's network also included Hanna Stirnemann, →fig.11 who as the first publicly appointed female museum director headed both the Jena City Museum and the progressive Jena Art Association during the Weimar Republic, thereby becoming a pioneer of a new professional role.⁴⁷

During the Nazi period, many of the women artists worked with motifs that were apparently politically inoffensive, such as flower paintings and landscapes, before experimenting with new forms of expression after the Second World War. Epstein, Franck-Marc, and Münter, for example, engaged for a time in a dialogue with contemporary abstract tendencies. Although some of the women artists still had a few exhibitions in the mid-1930s, the situation worsened for them, too, either because of their origin or religious affiliation, or because they were regarded as representatives of avant-garde art. Delaunay-Terk lived in constant fear



Fig. 10 Gabriele Münter, *The Poet E. K.*
[Eleonora Kalkowska], c. 1926/27 – [Cat. 142]

of being arrested due to her Jewish heritage and constantly changed her place of residence. Lasker-Schüler, also Jewish, emigrated in 1933, first to Switzerland and later to Jerusalem. Approximately 100 of her works were confiscated as “degenerate” from the National Gallery in Berlin alone,⁴⁸ and at least two works by Pohle were seized from museums. Since Münter’s works at this time had not yet entered public collections in Germany, they were not subjected to the persecution of “degenerate art.” Nevertheless, a group exhibition at the Munich Kunstverein (Art Association) in 1937 in which Münter participated triggered outrage from state minister Adolf Wagner. After visiting the exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art), which was held in Munich in the same year as the Nazi propaganda show *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition), she hid her own paintings and the works she possessed by other members of the Blue Rider artists in her house in Murnau, thus saving them from likely confiscation and destruction.

After the Second World War, the women artists continued their struggle for visibility in a male-dominated art world. In 1949, an exhibition of the Blue Rider was held at Haus der Kunst in Munich, which in the context of the postwar recuperation of artists disparaged by the Nazis as

Fig. 11 Gabriele Münter,
Hanna Stirnemann, 1934 – [Cat. 156]



“degenerate” significantly contributed to the canonization of the movement.⁴⁹ Even though Bossi, Münter, and Werefkin were represented as women artists,⁵⁰ their art received less attention than that of their fellow members in the subsequent years. This must be seen against the backdrop of the rise in Europe and the United States of abstraction as the foremost tendency in art, regarded as the expression of individual freedom and the alternative to the ideologically controlled visual languages of totalitarian regimes. Within the setting of the Cold War, abstract art in particular was instrumentalized as a cultural policy in the West, championed as the symbol of the intellectual openness and superiority of liberal democracies vis-à-vis the socialist realism of the states dominated by the Soviet Union. Since the works of the women artists of the Blue Rider were figurative paintings for the most part, this meant a further obstacle to their standing in the art world. Nevertheless, Münter took part in the Venice *Biennale* in 1950 – where works by Werefkin had been shown previously, in 1920, as were pictures by Bossi in 1930 and 1935, under the Fascist regime in Italy. In 1955 Münter was one of only five women artists represented at the first *documenta* in Kassel. In spite of a few exhibitions on individual women artists from the circle that have been held since

the 1990s, and that have contributed fundamental research on them,⁵¹ their scholarly reception has only grown in recent years. Situating them against the backdrop of issues of socially constructed gender roles, self-perception, and external attributions, this traveling exhibition and the present publication desire to do their part to honor the women artists of the Blue Rider in their many different roles: as networkers, patrons, theoreticians, managers, and pioneers of a new art.

——— 1 Einstein 1931, 192. The artists are not grouped together as the Blue Rider in the first (1926) and second editions (1928) but are treated individually. The only female artist included at all is Paula Modersohn-Becker.

2 Just like the concept of an “artists’ group,” so, too, does the emphasis on Klee – which has remained persuasive to this day – fall short. Although he played a special role within the Blue Rider, Einstein ascribed central importance to Klee and consistently valued his work positively, while he took a much more critical stance toward Marc and, in particular, Kandinsky.

3 Further information on this in Mühling 2021a.

4 A milestone was the exhibition curated by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin in Los Angeles in 1976, *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, part of the emerging feminist art movement (Exh. Cat. Los Angeles et al. 1976). Gabriele Münter was most recently celebrated in a comprehensive retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum New York in 2025–26 (Exh. Cat. New York 2025).

5 Else Lasker-Schüler to Marianne von Werefkin, 1913, private collection, reproduced in Fäthke 2001, 185.

6 The names of the women artists vary from publication to publication. We have therefore decided to employ those names under which they are known today, although each author in this publication was free to use the name they prefer. The Lenbachhaus uses the double surname for Maria Franck-Marc, because she herself used this name when exhibiting with the Blue Rider in 1912, even though she was not yet legally married; Sonia Delaunay-Terk chose the double surname during the first phase of joint exhibiting with Robert Delaunay. On this topic, see the essay by Waleria Dorogova in this catalogue.

7 Else Lasker-Schüler to Marianne von Werefkin, 1913, private collection, reproduced in Fäthke 2001, 185.

8 Lasker-Schüler/Kemp 1977, 223.

9 Ibid., 224.

10 Butler 1990, 68–73; see Price 2016, 95.

11 Lasker-Schüler/Kemp 1977, 49; translated by Gary Bachlund, https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?-TextId=85375. See also Schlicht 2023, 76f.

12 Marianne von Werefkin to her father, August 10, 1888, quoted in Malycheva 2016, 71.

13 Weiler 1960, 50.

14 Johannes Eichner quotes Kandinsky, who is said to have told Münter: “You’re a hopeless student – there’s nothing anyone can teach you.” This was in line, however, with the Blue Rider’s admiration for self-taught artists who were actively creative yet “uncorrupted” by the academy. Kandinsky reportedly went on to say, “You have everything from nature” (Eichner 1957, 38).

15 An uncritical reading of the so-called “slandorous letters” exchanged between Erdmann-Macke and Franck-Marc also contributed to a distorted image of Münter, one supposedly confirmed by her portrait photographs — even though striking a serious pose was standard photographic practice at the time, on account of the long exposure times. This is the case with numerous art historians and in Gisela Kleine’s extensive biographical study; see Kleine 1994.

16 Marc and Franck-Marc, Niestlé and Legros, as well as Campendonk and Deichmann, did not marry until 1913.

17 In addition, Meerson had a close relationship with Henri Matisse as his model before her marriage to Heinz Pringsheim (Exh. Cat. Murnau 2025); Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov did not wed until 1955.

18 “This very international city was inhabited by Croatians, Greeks, Armenians, Levantines, and Britons, who all had different native languages” (Rocca 2016, 144).

19 On this, see Sourgailienė-Laučkaitė 2016, 81.

20 Münter recounted this in an interview with Edouard Roditi; see Roditi 1960, 152.

21 Although women artists from the same countries, such as Epstein and Delaunay-Terk, frequently joined forces, Epstein clearly rejected national categorizations. In a letter to Kandinsky, she expressed surprise at “such a nationalistic organization of exhibitions” in reference to an exhibition on “modern German art in Paris,” in which she planned to participate (Elisabeth Epstein to Wassily Kandinsky, March 30, 1914, original in Russian, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich).

22 Lea 2022, 108.

23 Hoberg/Hoffmeister/Meißner 1999, 28; more on Johanna Kanoldt in Hellwig/Schümmer 2023.

24 The first NKVM exhibition presented Bossi, Dresler, Münter, Pohle, and Werefkin, the second Bossi, Münter, and Werefkin, the third only Bossi and Werefkin.

25 Hoberg 2021, 164.

26 See the articles on Sonia Delaunay-Terk and Elisabeth Epstein in this publication.

27 Further information in Hoberg/Mühling 2021a.

28 See Hoberg/Mühling 2021b, 267.

29 The reproductions have been preserved as part of the extensive collection of material for the almanac in The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich. *The Smoker* (101 × 80 cm), *Farmers Picking Apples* (104 × 97 cm), and *Laundresses* (105 × 117 cm) are today in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow; *Spring in the Country* (also known as *Spring in a Village*) is part of the Petr Aven Collection.

30 Further information in Malycheva/Wünsche 2016b, 2.

31 Kandinsky showed thirty-three works in these exhibitions.

32 Goncharova exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in 1906, Epstein at least in 1906, 1907, and 1911, Meerson in 1906, 1909, 1910, 1911, and 1912, Münter in 1907, 1908, 1909, and 1910.

33 Such as Delaunay-Terk, Epstein, Goncharova, Münter, and Werefkin.

34 See Parton 2010, 115f.

35 Price 2022, 20.

36 The image of the mother was radicalized during the Nazi period, when the figure of the mother was purposefully instrumentalized for ideological and demographic aims.

37 See Price 2022, 20.

38 Medical students were present at the delivery at the Royal Gynecological Clinic in Berlin. Lasker-Schüler repeatedly endured financial difficulties in the following years, as did many single mothers. It is doubtful whether she could have actually insisted on child-support payments, since for much of the twentieth century many fathers who were obligated to pay failed to do so, despite the existence of legal provisions. Buske 2004, 37, 109–114.

39 Epstein 1912. The topic of creativity and motherhood is currently being researched by Jordan Troeller in her project “The M/Other Project: Creativity, Procreation, and Contemporary Art” at the Leuphana Universität Lüneburg. See Troeller 2022.

40 Given extensive treatment in Mühling 2021b.

41 The German translation was published as *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* in 1902, the English one in 1909.

42 According to Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, animism is a stage of mental development in young children during which they assume that objects are “animated”; see Jean Piaget, *La représentation du monde chez l’enfant*, Paris 1926.

43 Further information in Exh. Cat. Munich/Wiesbaden/Ascona 2019.

44 See Lanfermann 2016, 20.

45 See Chicago/Lucie-Smith 1999, 68f.

46 Jawlensky and Werefkin, too, had contacts there and exhibited in Malmö (*Baltiska Utställningen*, May 15–October 14, 1914).

47 Köpnick/Stamm 2024.

48 Janda/Grabowski 1992, 140–44.

49 Exh. Cat. Munich 1949. On the role played by Delaunay-Terk in the strategic positioning of Robert Delaunay’s work, see the article by Waleria Dorogova in this catalogue.

50 Exh. Cat. Munich 1949.

51 Among others, see Exh. Cat. Munich/Frankfurt 1992; Exh. Cat. Munich 1995; Exh. Cat. Murnau 2013; Exh. Cat. Munich/Wiesbaden/Ascona 2019; Exh. Cat. Murnau 2025; Fäthke 1990.

I will remain at my post.
I will not be driven away.¹

Marianne von Werefkin



Fig. 1 Marianne von Werefkin, *By the Flower Bed*, c. 1910/14 – [Cat. 204]

—Roman Zieglgänsberger

Stepping out of the Background Gabriele Münter and Marianne von Werefkin

A painting by Marianne von Werefkin → fig.1 made before the First World War, which has received scant attention until now, can offer us deep insights when reassessing the women artists associated with the Blue Rider artists' group. First, because the picture accurately visualizes the "subsidiary role" generally assigned to women in the early twentieth century. Second, because from a new, modern-day perspective it also

reveals that these women artists were themselves acutely aware of the contribution they made to the emergence of modernism, yet could not evade the social norms that opposed their ambitions. They remained virtually invisible behind the dominating male artists. Thus, *By the Flower Bed* shows a bed of fully blooming tulips carefully arranged in rows, with two men in the foreground standing next to each other, their clunky heads put together, as though they are discussing important topics “among men,” while behind them a woman sweeps and tends the well-kept park grounds, doing the actual “care-work.” In reality, suggests Werefkin, the fertile soil that will allow anything at all to flourish is in fact tilled by the woman working in the background and ignored by all. Her contribution has gone unnoticed. If one observes the bald trees arranged in the park, they seem to mark a hierarchy. The distribution of figures between the trees makes clear how such a system is organized – clearly male-dominated and with different visibilities.

In reality, Werefkin was one of the first artists to not only recognize the hard work carried out by women as equivalent to that of men, but also to address it as an inescapable and eternal circle in which women were entrapped.² In the gloomy picture *Return Home* (1909), for example, she depicts women going home in the evening after a long day of work, carrying heavy sacks of damp laundry while dealing with their children. The painting *Laundresses* →fig. 2 might at first glance even seem cheerful, but it collapses into an almost cynical scene of women in a backyard – hidden from the outside world by the fencing – doing the laundry, a form of drudgery always done without complaining. What is more, they also tend to the vegetable garden and at the same time mind and raise the children. The innocent blond girl standing to the right in front of the door is confronted with what the future has in store for her. The vivid colorfulness, the loose brushwork and the laundry merrily fluttering in the wind make the picture appear untroubled, yet it actually mirrors the inescapable, unseen harsh cycle of women’s lived realities at the beginning of the century.

Yet how were these women artists – who in the history of the Blue Rider group have been underappreciated for so long, who penetrated the societal structures that were problematic for all women, as many of their works suggest – regarded in their own artistic circles? Or put more precisely: How did they see themselves and what conclusions did they draw for themselves? In order to explore this issue, the following will examine a selection of portraits and figure paintings by the women artists Gabriele Münter and Marianne von Werefkin.



Fig. 2 Marianne von Werefkin, *Laundresses*, c. 1909 – [Cat. 197]

Marianne von Werefkin in the “parlor”

The seemingly unassuming painting *By the Fireplace* reveals how and where Werefkin positioned herself within the thoroughly male-dominated art scene that surrounded her. She places herself confidently in the foreground and unmistakably as the central figure. → fig. p. 96 In a green, stylishly furnished salon with two antique pink fauteuils, a bluish-white fireplace, gold-framed portraits of the ancestors and an imposing mirror on the wall, a woman is seated at the front left, setting the tone with an “eloquent” gesture of her hand. The two men in tails standing further back on either side of the fireplace do indeed attempt to grasp the stated thoughts now floating in the room: The man on the left raises his hand to his mouth, the one on the right to his ear. Yet it is obvious that the second armchair opposite the main figure is empty; a conversation partner on equal footing is missing.³ Werefkin turned the tables on the society of her time by holding up a mirror to it, because the lady in the “parlor” here serves not merely as pretty decoration for an intellectual conversation. Rather, the dressed-up men, lined up to the side of the unlit fireplace with the two symmetrically placed empty red vases flanking the central Baroque clock, seem to contribute little to a stimulating conversation.⁴



Fig. 3 Ilja Repin, *Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin*, 1888 – [Cat. 219]

In this sense, the painting *By the Fireplace* should be read as a critique of society and thus, first and foremost, as universal. At another level of interpretation, the woman in the armchair on the left can indisputably be identified as the artist herself. For Werefkin was, as was frequently described by her contemporaries, the one who not only decided what topics were discussed in her interdisciplinary “Pink Salon,” but also set the tone.⁵ She had previously hosted a discussion group in Russia,⁶ then, very soon after her arrival in Munich, she founded the elusive “Brotherhood of Saint Luke”⁷ (1897) and, from around 1902/03, maintained a wide-ranging discussion group at Giselastraße 23 that was open to all interested parties. “Baroness Werefkin’s salon formed a focal point in this world [of the progressive anti-academic art scene], to which, incidentally, such noteworthy artists as Franz Marc – who fell in the first year of the war – belonged. ... The epicenter, the source, as it were, of the almost physically palpable waves of energy, was the Baroness. This petite woman ... commanded not only the conversation, but her entire surroundings.”⁸ → fig. 3

And exactly how this oft-quoted passage from the *Erinnerungen* (Memoirs) of Gustav Pauli, the former director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, sounds, is how she appears in the famous *Self-Portrait* from 1910, painted exactly midway between the founding of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists’ Association Munich) and the formation

of the Blue Rider: very alert, intensely upright, and extremely secretive. → fig. p. 94 But the *Self-Portrait* harbors even more. In this picture the artist expresses with painterly means, aside from her strong personality, what her contribution to the establishment of Expressionism in Germany was. Her red – almost red-hot – eyes announce magically as well as disturbingly a mysterious, shimmering inspiration. They strike the observer directly and hypnotically to the core – then as much as now. Anyone in front of her must take a stand. Complacency, or rather, settling into existing conditions, was not Werefkin's style – as the character portrait clearly shows. Her *modus operandi* was instead to incessantly shock, wear down, and goad her environment. Her rousing, energetic vigor was described not only by Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke,⁹ but also by Gabriele Münter, who recounted a spontaneous encounter with her to Wassily Kandinsky: "While I was waiting for the tram at Odeonsplatz around seven o'clock, Marianne came. She had a lot of news, 'Wittenstein has arrived!, Frau Echter has a new daughter, Sacharoff's sister is coming, a fresh new Russian was there and wanted to go to Jawl's school!' I was to come immediately, she was very nice, as always – but I told her that I was tired. ... She had a new hat in her bag and some packages."¹⁰

Werefkin's declared aim was to bring people together and, through creative networking, nurture fertile ground for innovation. Yet one question remains unanswered: Why did she, who claimed such a leading role in her paintings as a true "magician of the avant-garde," not assume the leadership of the association she had initiated, a position that, had she sought it, would likely have been within her reach (even as a woman in this male-dominated era)? Instead, Wassily Kandinsky became the first chairman, Alexej von Jawlensky the second chairman, Adolf Erbslöh the treasurer, and somewhat later Franz Marc was appointed third chairman. Werefkin's name does appear in the "List of Full Members", but only in sixteenth place.¹¹ → fig. p. 23 How can her apparently voluntary restraint be explained? Did she perhaps follow a pattern? After all, Werefkin had ostensibly stepped back in favor of a man previously, in 1896, yet still managed to achieve her own goals. By moving from St. Petersburg to Munich, as is well known, she consciously abandoned her hitherto highly successful career as an artist¹² in order to revolutionize art with her chosen "instrument," her partner Jawlensky, four years her junior and seemingly malleable to her will. Fortunately, however, Werefkin re-emerged as a painter around 1906 and as such – together with Jawlensky, Kandinsky and Münter – formed part of the quartet that in three joint stays in Murnau lasting several months each (between 1908 and 1910) vehemently threw open the door to modernism.

Seen from this perspective, the *Self-Portrait*, just like her return to becoming the “painter” again after previously acting as the “patron,” takes on the function of a rectification. It is as though, a year after the founding of “her” artists’ association and the appointment of her male colleagues to the leading positions in it, she wants to state one thing in her portrait, in which she turns to the observer slightly, but very proudly and knowingly: namely, that she was the driving force behind the entire undertaking.

Why she restrained herself initially remains unanswered, of course. It could be relevant that she might have enjoyed pulling the strings as the mentor, more or less in the background, as “just” member number 16, making sure that things ran smoothly, at least as long as her “marionettes” obeyed dutifully.¹³ A kind of reasoning for both of her “forward retreats” can be detected in her diary-like confessions written between 1901 and 1905 and published as *Briefe an einen Unbekannten* (Letters to a Stranger). Shortly before she began to paint again, the number of passages multiply in which she struggles with her conception of herself and her identity. For example, she states that “I am more a man than a woman. Only the need to be liked and pity make me a woman. I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am me.” And perhaps even more clearly: “I am always true to myself, strict with myself, more lenient with others. In this regard, I am a man. I love the song of love. In this regard, I am a woman. I create illusions and dreams for myself very consciously. In this regard, I am an artist.”¹⁴ This shifting back and forth between what could be female and male aspects of her complex personality indicates that she was very aware of the social corset that women were forced into in that age. She came to the conclusion that the lofty goal of the renewal of art in her time could more easily be achieved by assuming the role of a man. Her early *Self-Portrait*, in which she poses boyishly with short hair and in a sailor’s shirt, yet explicitly as a woman painter, →fig. 4 demonstrates early on that she fought against imposed bourgeois conventions, and not least in her works. For ultimately it was clear to her that it would be crucial to demonstrate strength, to not retreat, and to remain at her “post,” as she succinctly expressed in her diary.¹⁵ It was surely not coincidental that precisely at this turning point, when Werefkin returned to painting again with all her energy, Jawlensky painted his only two oil paintings of his partner, →fig. 5, 6 because this was exactly what made her an interesting subject for him.



Fig. 4 Marianne von Werefkin, *Self-Portrait in a Sailor's Blouse*, 1893 – Fondo Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

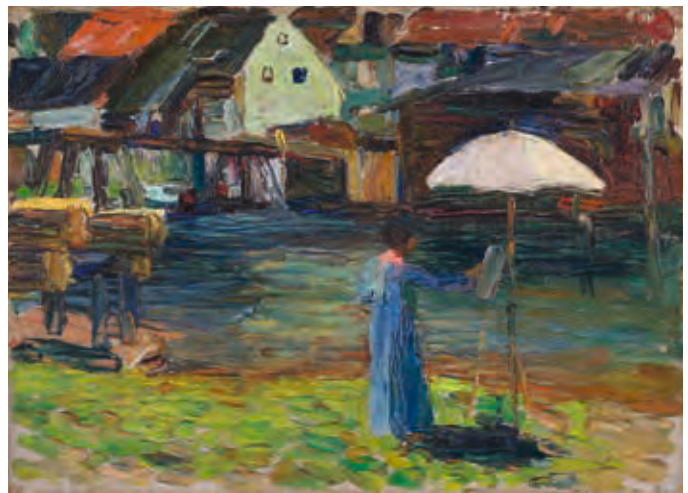
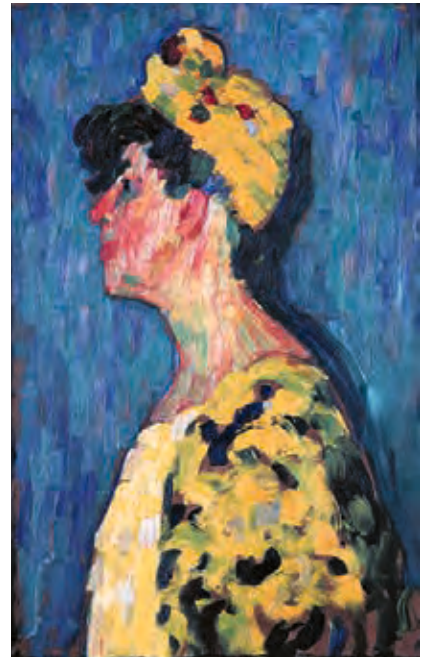


Fig. 5 Alexej von Jawlensky, *Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin*, c. 1906 – [Cat. 215]

Fig. 6 Alexej von Jawlensky, *Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin*, c. 1905 – Collezione Comune di Ascona, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Fig. 7 Gabriele Münter, *Kandinsky Painting a Landscape*, 1903 – [Cat. 101]

Fig. 8 Wassily Kandinsky, *Kallmünz – Gabriele Münter Painting I*, 1903 – [Cat. 217]

Fig. 9 Wassily Kandinsky, *Interior (with Two Ladies)*, 1910 – Kunstmuseum Bern, gift of Livia Klee, 2001

Gabriele Münter's perspective

The couple Kandinsky and Münter followed a very similar style until around 1909, initially Impressionistic, then working in an Expressionist-Fauvist manner, before they each developed an independent visual language and explored different thematic ranges. But one thing can be noted from the beginning: While Münter, as her early photographs in the United States show, →fig. p.134,135 was especially fascinated by people,¹⁶ Kandinsky never shared this interest. This observation is exemplified in the early “portraits” they made of each other in 1903, similar in style, format, and subject. →fig.7,8 In Münter's picture Kandinsky, the teacher, who around this time also became her partner, is the central subject. In contrast, Kandinsky positions the beloved pupil in the landscape composition merely as one of many components.

Seven years later – by which time Kandinsky had long been moving with determination towards absolute abstraction – he depicted Werefkin (much as she had portrayed herself in the *Self-Portrait* of the same period) in the painting *Interior (with Two Ladies)* as a “temperamental personality full of revolutionary spirit”¹⁷ alongside his partner, Gabriele Münter. →fig.9 He placed both women in the living room of the house in Murnau that Münter had purchased in 1909.¹⁸ While Kandinsky emphasizes one “lady” by positioning her in the corner of the room where light meets dark, the other figure merges almost entirely with her surroundings (as before in the background of the landscape), her red dress and green apron matching the red divan and the green wall. What is more, Werefkin appears to be actively lecturing, due to her upright posture and her “more angular” hairstyle, whereas Münter, with her head resting on her hand and a more understated hairstyle, seems to be listening rather passively. This picture likely captures Kandinsky's perception of the two distinct personalities very accurately. It is generally regarded as a true “homage to Werefkin,”¹⁹ but assumes a different light when one takes Münter's painting *Listening* →fig.10 into consideration. At first glance this portrait appears rather as a caricature, in which Jawlensky with his tired little eyes seems on the verge of dozing off and even slumping to the right, and is often interpreted as him doing so simply because he could not follow the intellectual conversation.²⁰ This reading would probably

be correct from Kandinsky's or Werefkin's point of view, but not from the perspective of Münter, who, after all, painted the work at the height of her relationship, as friend and artist, with Jawlensky.²¹ In this context, it is relevant to note how the intellectual art historian Gustav Pauli experienced the discussions in the Giselastraße during his visits there: "On the other hand, all questions regarding art and literature, old and new, were debated with unheard-of zeal and just as much wit – endlessly, for such conversations, in which tongues are sharpened and heads grow hot while everyone thinks only of defending their own opinion, never come to an end."²² In the course of an endless evening of discussion, during which Kandinsky and Werefkin (whether in Munich at the "Pink Salon" or in Münter's house in Murnau) defended their theories in a contest of verbosity, and after a supper of Vienna sausages, it could very well happen that one's eyelids might indeed grow heavy in a dark room lit only by a softly humming kerosene lamp, and one might then wish to sink into a divan while listening. If one recalls that Münter and Jawlensky shared a special artistic and amicable bond in Murnau between 1908 and 1910, and that, moreover, both were, as a rule, more inclined to listen than to talk, then one can also perceive a humorous "sympathy" in the painting *Listening* – an almost tender gaze from the artist towards her colleague, who is so bravely battling sleep, once again opening eyes that have grown small, but who will surely not hold out much longer. One might even perceive in the picture, latently, her own experience of such situations. This interpretation is supported by Münter's programmatical statement, "My interest is in seeing, painting, drawing, not speaking."²³ This could just as well be applied to Jawlensky, who likewise rarely expressed himself as regards art theory. Once one has become aware of this meta-level in the picture – which is certainly by no means in the foreground, yet resonates throughout – one could indeed interpret the portrait, which only at first glance appears belittling, as a genuine portrait of friendship.

Münter was indeed – and this is especially relevant in our context – a master in making subtle commentaries on the people she knew well who populate her figure paintings. Observations on the character of the person portrayed can always be discovered in her pictures when looked at closely, but less about the individual in a psychologizing sense than about the relationships between them.



Fig. 10 Gabriele Münter, *Listening (Portrait of Jawlensky)*, 1909 – [Cat. 112]

This permits a discernment of the reciprocal impact between the persons in her imagery and even allusions to the artist who executed the picture, who must always be taken into account, as in the case of the Jawlensky portrait, even if she does not appear in the picture. When Münter depicts *Jawlensky and Werefkin* as a couple on a hillside, →fig. p. 123 it is immediately obvious how contrary the two “soulmates” must have been. While he uses the break to disconnect and enjoy the moment – presumably rubbing a blade of grass between his fingers – she sits upright on the grass with her head held high. Both of them appear in this spirited picture by Münter as a single unit in equal juxtaposition: electrifying action and revitalizing leisure. Münter portrayed Werefkin once again, probably on the same day, as a solitary figure in a large-format picture, in front of the corn-yellow bottom floor of her house. →fig. p. 122 As shortly before, Werefkin is wearing the same white dress, the same wide hat, “on which there was room for all sorts of things,”²⁴ and the same pink shawl – but now elegantly draped around her neck instead of



Fig. 11 Gabriele Münter, sketch for *Kandinsky and Erma Bossi at the Table*, 1910 – Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München **Fig. 12** Gabriele Münter, *After the Tea II* (Kandinsky with Goltz the Art Dealer at Ainmillerstraße 36, Munich), 1912 – Sammlung Würth

bunched up in her lap as on the hillside. With this self-assured individual portrait, Münter erected an entirely positive monument to Werefkin, who surely impressed her and perhaps even also intimidated her a bit. Werefkin's head rests as it were on a painterly pedestal and everyone, even the artist painting the portrait, must look up to her in admiration. From above, akin to a lighthouse, Werefkin fixes us with a penetrating gaze. In the process – and this is precisely what's fascinating about this tremendous portrait – we get very close to her, yet at the same time an immense, almost insuperable distance remains. This in turn corresponds to a description by Pauli, who observed that the "Baroness stimulates devoted friendship among her often younger compatriots by simultaneously withdrawing from them."²⁵



Münter's enigmatic figural scenes with Kandinsky

Let us now turn to three compositionally sophisticated figure pictures by Münter, which at first glance appear trenchant in their message and have all been convincingly (and absolutely correctly) interpreted as placing Kandinsky undisputedly at the center of attention. Nevertheless, a change of perspective can unearth thematic nuances that up to now have remained buried in the background and either overseen or, since they were perceived as unimportant, disregarded.

The large painting *Kandinsky and Erma Bossi at the Table*, prepared in numerous sketches and realized in three further versions of the painting created between 1909 and 1912, depicts the co-founder of the Blue Rider, clearly emphasized by his blue Alpine jacket, dominating the conversation with his counterpart. → fig. p. 127 It was only noted for the first



Fig. 13 Wassily Kandinsky, painted decoration on commode in Münter's house, Murnau, c. 1909/10 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich **Fig. 14** Gabriele Münter, *Boat Trip with Kandinsky*, 1909 – Private collection

time in 2013 that in one of the preliminary drawings Bossi has her arm outstretched on the table and appears to be countering Kandinsky's arguments with her own views.²⁶ →fig.11 In the painted versions, in contrast, Bossi sits motionless opposite the enraptured, ethereal Kandinsky, who is pontificating with a prophetic gesture.²⁷ What is more, in all these versions executed in oil, Münter has Bossi, the conversation partner with her black hair, white blouse, and dark gray skirt, almost entirely "disappear" into the similarly colored background, while she places Kandinsky indisputably at the center of the composition. What has not been noted previously is that the chair next to Kandinsky, crucial to the picture's composition, is empty (similar to Werefkin's picture *By the Fireplace*), as though someone were missing or had just got up. Münter, who wanted to capture this scene in all of its urgency, has thus surely implied her place at Kandinsky's side.²⁸ In this sense she is demonstratively present without actually being visible.

The situation is very different in the painting *After the Tea*, →fig.12 which is based on an actual visit to Kandinsky's flat in the Ainmillerstraße. The Munich gallery owner Hans Goltz and his wife are calling on Kandinsky

at his home, who receives them with great dignity, dressed in a dark blue suit. On the left, Münter herself can be seen, about to leave the room, though not, it seems, without casting one last disapproving glance back at the almost theatrical scene. Whether she was driven from the room by Kandinsky's self-important demeanor and/or by the art dealer, toward whom she harbored doubts,²⁹ shall remain open here. It should be noted, however, that her relationship with Kandinsky was certainly marked "over the years" by "friction and discord."³⁰ Just how much she was already struggling at this point with Kandinsky's egocentric role within their "artistic" relationship is indicated by a diary entry from the fall of 1910, in which she laments his horseman metaphor painted on a commode as "untrue": →fig.14 "Kandinsky has painted my dressing table ... delicately and humorously. A 'blue rider' and a darker female rider are riding on the middle shelf. He turns toward her and waves, and she rides as fast as she can – sometimes this joke annoyed me because it is untrue – for he never turned around and never said 'come with me.'"³¹ Reordering the artistic balance of power between them, achieving greater independence, bringing her own achievements and qualities into focus: these all seem to have driven her. This was certainly no easy task with such a dominant personality, especially since the relationship had evolved out of a teacher-student dynamic. So it may well have been a strategy of empowerment to occasionally evade Kandinsky's sermons – while painting and consequently taking a stance – by simply slipping out of the (pictorial) space or deliberately leaving the chair empty, rather than fading into the background entirely, because otherwise (like Bossi) one would not have a chance to say anything.

The extent to which Münter struggled to define her own position within the relationship, or to clarify it for herself, is ultimately made clear by the eloquent painting *Boat Trip with Kandinsky*. →fig.13 The dominating painter stands at the very front of the bow of the rowboat like a figure-head, appearing to be off in "other worlds,"³² and has little contact with the other occupants of the boat (Werefkin, Jawlensky's son Andreas, and Münter). Floating above everything with his blind-mirror glasses, it appears as though he does not even notice the group at his feet, even though all of them are in the same boat. In this way Münter characterizes Kandinsky as a solitary monolith, inseparably infused with his vision of the spiritual blue, in this case the rising chain of serrated mountains in the background, before which she has deliberately projected him. Only Münter, as his explicit counterpart, asserts herself actively in the image and is seen from behind at the oars, rowing as the group's "motor." It is out of her, whose face remains concealed, that Kandinsky rises in the picture.

That which Werefkin had denounced in the painting *By the Flower Bed* – the invisible labor of women in the “background” – is here transferred by Münter to her own particular situation. She, too, as Werefkin wrote combatively, has always remained at her post and has, moreover, succeeded quite often in turning the world upside down, like in this ironic, ambiguous *Boat Trip*. Münter achieved this with self-confidence, strategic cleverness, and – one could almost say – subversive rebelliousness, surreptitiously painting herself, as the counterpart to Kandinsky, out of the background and into the foreground.

——— 1 Werefkin/Weiler 1960, 16.

2 See Zieglgänsberger 2024.

3 It is surely not by coincidence that the oval picture frame above the empty chair is empty, while a portrait is implied above the woman on the left.

4 This interpretation was first proposed by the author in 2014; see Zieglgänsberger 2014, 44. In 2019 it was expanded by Anna Straetmans; see Straetmans 2019, 104. A similar situation – the woman as central agent, the liveried men as adornment – is found in the roughly contemporaneous gouache *Female Dressage Rider* (c. 1909/10), reproduced in Exh. Cat. Bietigheim-Bissingen/Bönnigheim 2014, 88, cat. 42.

5 “Werefkin hosted a salon, but not in the conventional sense; she was an extraordinary person with her own inner thoughts, far removed from mundane everyday life and fashionable customs. ... She continually received distinguished guests ... in her Pink Salon or in the large room adjacent to it. ... But more importantly, Werefkin’s intellect and Jawlensky’s talent attracted other gifted artists” (von Bechtejeff 2018, 27).

6 See Straetmans 2019, 102.

7 “Our Saint Lucas brotherhood is the union of a few people who feel, think, and live more open-mindedly. Art has united us. We have discovered how to know, appreciate and love each other. Art, friendship, and sympathy for everything that is beautiful, good, and noble – that is our motto” (Werefkin, quoted in Fäthke 1980, 19).

8 Pauli 1936, 264ff.

9 Erdmann-Macke 2009, 140ff.

10 Gabriele Münter to Wassily Kandinsky, October 11, 1910; quoted in Hoberg 2019, 207.

11 When one counts the five names subsequently crossed out by Gabriele Münter, who compiled the list.

12 See Werefkin/Federer 1975, 8.

13 One reason for her return to painting was their different views on art; see Zieglgänsberger 2019, 50–53.

14 Werefkin/Weiler 1960, 50.

15 At the end of her *Briefe an einen Unbekannten*, Werefkin declares, “I do not know how to give up. I am strong because I am in control of myself” (Werefkin/Weiler 1960, 50).

16 See Exh. Cat. Hamburg 2023.

17 As described by Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke; see Erdmann-Macke 2009, 140.

18 Münter painted the same corner of the room with the red sofa, green wall and embroidered cushions from the same angle – but without any people. → fig. p. 126

19 See Fäthke 2001, 153.

20 See Hoberg 1991. A biographical note published by Annegret Hoberg, moreover, suggests that Münter herself confirms this interpretation of the picture. “All three of them discussed art ceaselessly and each one initially had his own viewpoint and his own style. Jawlensky was less intellectual or intelligent than Kandinsky or Klee and their theories often puzzled him. Once I painted a portrait that I titled *Listening* and that showed Jawlensky with a baffled expression on his chubby-cheeked face, listening to new theories of art by Kandinsky” (Münter, quoted in Hoberg 2017, 39). This note must have been written long after the creation of *Listening*, since Jawlensky only met Klee in 1912 and by that time the relationships between the couples Jawlensky/Werefkin and Kandinsky/Münter had deteriorated somewhat. It therefore seems not very implausible that Münter in her later, rather barbed description of the picture has suppressed, or did not want to see anymore, the meta-level she had painted in *Listening*. This meta-level was based on the close friendship she had enjoyed with Jawlensky in Murnau around 1909, but since she naturally took Kandinsky’s side she was no longer as closely befriended with Jawlensky/Werefkin as before. Bernd Fäthke also suggests this possibility, see Fäthke 2013, 74.

21 Münter mentions in a note the importance of Jawlensky for her art and at the same time his warm-hearted character, which must have gratified her in an ambience of such “art theoreticians” as Kandinsky and Werefkin. In a diary entry from May 1911 about the stays in Murnau she noted: “It was a beautiful, interesting, friendly period of work, with many discussions about art with the enthusiastic ‘Giselists’ [Jawlensky/Werefkin]. I enjoyed showing my works to Jawlensky in particular – because for one thing he liked to praise it a lot and for another he also explained some things to me” (Münter, quoted in Zweite 1983, 52).

22 Pauli 1936, 265.

23 Münter/Hartlaub 1952, n.p. [21].

24 Gabriele Münter in a note to Johannes Eichner: “I painted the Werefkina in 1909 in front of the yellow bottom floor of my house. She was a pompous figure, self-confident, imperious, richly dressed, with a hat like a wagon wheel, on which there was room for all sorts of things” (Münter, quoted in Hoberg 2019, 217).

25 Pauli 1936, 265ff.

26 See Fäthke 2013, 72. Previously, Reinhold Heller discussed the group of works *Kandinsky and Erma Bossi at the Table* at length; see Heller 1992, 51–56.

27 Recently extensively discussed in Hopfengart 2023, 70ff.

28 The “empty space” as metaphor also appears in a letter to Kandinsky: “I am nothing without you, you belong to me and you enrich me, and without you this space is empty” (Gabriele Münter to Wassily Kandinsky, November 1910, quoted in Hahl-Fontaine 2023, 79). The painting represents the opposite, as in it she has deliberately left her seat empty.

29 Hopfengart 2023, 72ff.

30 Hoberg 1992, 40.

31 Gabriele Münter, diary entry from November 1910, quoted in Hahl-Fontaine 2023, 79.

32 As Marianne von Werefkin wrote to Alexei von Jawlensky in a letter from January 1910, describing New Year’s Eve 1909/10: “Very boring New Year’s Eve party. Frau Hartmann was indisposed, Herr Hartmann insufferable, since he had to wait too long for the meal. Kandinsky was in his own world. Mü[nter] sat there like a frog ... at first I tried to entertain all of them, but gradually grew silent” (Werefkin, quoted in Hoberg 2019, 204ff.).

The International Network of the Blue Rider Women

Formed in Munich in 1911, the artists' group The Blue Rider was the driving force behind an important international network of modernist artists until the outbreak of the First World War.¹ The women artists connected with the Blue Rider were especially active in the formation and upkeep of this network. They themselves were an international assortment: half of them came from the Russian Empire (Delaunay-Terk, Epstein, Goncharova, Meerson, Werefkin) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Bossi), the other half from various German cities and regions, in particular Berlin (Franck-Marc, Münter), Bremerhaven-Lehe (Pohle), Elberfeld (Lasker-Schüler), Bonn (Macke), and Siegen (Dresler). Marianne



Fig.1 Students at the painting school of Anton Ažbe, c.1902 – Private collection

von Werefkin and Else Lasker-Schüler, the oldest members, were born in the 1860s; the youngest, Sonia Delaunay-Terk and Elisabeth Macke, in the mid- or late 1880s. These women artists belonged to the upper bourgeois class or the aristocracy and thus enjoyed a certain amount of financial independence, which permitted them to embark on an artistic career. In addition, they were educated, spoke several languages, traveled extensively, and cultivated a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Munich: A place for studying and meeting people

With the exceptions of Delaunay-Terk, who went directly to Paris from Karlsruhe in 1905; Natalia Goncharova, who worked in Moscow until 1914; and Macke and Lasker-Schüler, who lived in Bonn and Berlin respectively, most of the Blue Rider women met each other in Munich. Werefkin was the first to settle in the city, in 1896. She was followed by Elisabeth Epstein and Olga Meerson in 1899, Gabriele Münter in 1901, Emmi Dresler, Maria Franck-Marc, and Carla Pohle in 1902, and Erma Bossi in 1904.

Munich flourished economically and culturally under Prince Regent Luitpold of Bavaria, developing into a leading center for the arts.² The Munich Academy of Fine Arts enjoyed an excellent reputation and featured influential teachers such as Franz Defregger, Adolf von Hildebrandt, and Franz von Stuck, attracting students from all over Europe. Alongside the Art Academy, artists such as Anton Ažbe, Simon Hollósy, and Heinrich Knirr operated private art schools. Ažbe's studio was highly regarded, in particular in central and eastern Europe, and drew art aficionados from the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.³ Not only Alexej von Jawlensky, Wassily Kandinsky, and the brothers David and Vladimir Burlyuk, but also Bossi, Epstein, Meerson, Olga Kardovskaya, and Elena Luksch-Makowsky attended Ažbe's art school. → fig. 1

Munich was particularly attractive to female artists, because although the Art Academy did not begin admitting women until 1920, the Damen-Akademie (Ladies' Academy) of the Munich Association of Women Artists, founded in 1884, had offered women the opportunity to acquire a solid academic education in the arts since the end of the nineteenth century.⁴ Among the students officially enrolled at the Damen-Akademie were Franck-Marc, Meerson, and Münter, while Bossi and Epstein also appear to have taken courses there. Another interesting school for young female artists was the Teaching and Experimental Studios for Applied and Fine Arts run by Hermann Obrist and Wilhelm von Debschitz at Hohenzollernstraße 7a. Emmi Dresler's brother studied at this reform-oriented art and design school starting in 1902, alongside Moissej Kogan, and Carla Pohle attended from 1903 to 1905.⁵

Located right next to the Debschitz School at Hohenzollernstraße 6a was the School of Painting and Figure Drawing run by Kandinsky for the Munich artists' group Phalanx, which offered young, aspiring women artists a further opportunity to expand their studies. Bossi, Dresler, Epstein, Meerson, and Münter all studied there. Meerson, who was involved in organizing the Phalanx school's activities, even rose to the position of "headwoman."⁶ The classes held outdoors during the summer months allowed the women artists to deepen their friendships. In 1902, for example, Meerson encouraged Münter to attend Kandinsky's summer course in Kochel, and the following year, Dresler, Meerson, and Münter spent time together painting in Kallmünz in the Upper Palatinate.⁷ In 1908, Münter and Kandinsky, Werefkin and Jawlensky spent the summer months in Murnau, where Bossi had rented a room at the same guesthouse on Staffelsee. After Münter purchased a house in Murnau in 1909, the four of them spent many stimulating hours there together with their artist friends until the First World War.

In Munich, these young, up-and-coming women artists settled – either alone or with their partners – in the area around the university and the Art Academy, amidst progressive writers and intellectuals, helping to define life in Munich's arts district of Schwabing. An important meeting place for the avant-garde was the salon run by Werefkin in her apartment at Giselastraße 23. It was frequented by artists such as Ažbe, Igor Grabar, and Dmitry Kardovsky, the dancer Alexander Sacharoff, and the impresario Sergei Diaghilev, as well as writers, museum directors, politicians, and Russian aristocrats passing through the city.⁸ Werefkin's closest circle included her compatriots Epstein and Meerson, who had met in Warsaw, presumably as early as 1898.⁹

The artistic and intellectual exchanges in Werefkin's salon gave rise in 1909 to the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists' Association Munich), whose founding members included Werefkin and Jawlensky, Münter and Kandinsky, as well as Vladimir von Bechteev, Adolf Erbslöh, and Alexander Kanoldt.¹⁰ That same year, Bossi, Paul Baum, Pierre-Paul Girieud, Karl Hofer, Kogan, and Sacharoff joined the association. The NKVM's first exhibition in December 1909 at Heinrich Thannhauser's Moderne Galerie featured 128 works by sixteen artists, including Bossi, Dresler, Münter, Pohle, and Werefkin.¹¹ For the second exhibition in September 1910, the NKVM invited not only the Burlyuk brothers from Russia but also numerous artists from Paris, including Georges Braque, André Derain, Henri Le Fauconnier, Pablo Picasso, Georges Rouault, Maurice de Vlaminck, and Kees van Dongen.¹²

Franz Marc and August Macke met in Munich in early 1910 and remained close friends until their early deaths. Elisabeth Macke and Maria Franck-Marc also became friends, so that the two couples visited each other, corresponded frequently, and came together in the social circles of the Blue Rider. Both women supported their partners' work, made embroideries based on their designs, maintained the correspondence, and administered the estates after the early deaths of their partners.¹³ While Franck-Marc became the chronicler of the Blue Rider,¹⁴ Macke operated more as a manager. The latter resided in an upper-class house with a large circle of friends and acquaintances in Bonn that included the artist couples Campendonk, Klee, and Moilliet, and who through them established important contacts with collectors and patrons.¹⁵

The Blue Rider network

Marc, Kandinsky, and Münter met for the first time at Werefkin's salon during the New Year's reception of 1911. Following the controversy surrounding Kandinsky's *Composition V (The Last Judgment)*, they left the NKVM in the summer of 1911 and founded the Blue Rider. The efforts of this group of artists, as expressed in the eponymous almanac and the two exhibitions, were aimed at bringing together the latest trends in German, Russian, and French modernism and to establish an international network of artists. *The First Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider* took place at the same time and in the same location as the third and final exhibition of the NKVM, from December 18, 1911, to January 1, 1912 at Heinrich Thannhauser's Moderne Galerie. The artists exhibited included not only Bloch, Campendonk, Kandinsky, Macke, Marc, and Münter, but also Epstein, Robert Delaunay, and Henri Rousseau from Paris, Eugen von Kahler from Prague, and the Burlyuk brothers from Moscow – while Bossi and Werefkin were still showing at the NKVM.¹⁶ The second exhibition, held from February to March 1912 at the Galerie Neue Kunst – Hans Goltz, became a meeting place where the Blue Rider met up with the Brücke artists Erich Heckel, Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner, Otto Mueller, Emil Nolde, and Max Pechstein; with the Cubists Braque, Delaunay, Derain, Picasso, and Roger de La Fresnaye; with the representatives of the Russian avant-garde Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, and Kazimir Malevich; and with the Swiss artists Hans Arp, Oscar Lüthy, and others.¹⁷



Fig. 2 Gabriele Münter, *New Year's Wish*, title page with woodcut for *Der Sturm. Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste*, ed. Herwarth Walden, vol. 3, 142/143, 1913 – Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg

The works of the Blue Rider artists were exhibited not only in Munich but also, from the very beginning, by Herwarth Walden in his gallery *Der Sturm* in Berlin.¹⁸ They occupied a prominent place in the *First German Autumn Salon*, which he organized in 1913 – a groundbreaking comprehensive exhibition of the international avant-garde that was significantly influenced by the collaboration between Walden and the Blue Rider network. No fewer than five Blue Rider women were represented in this exhibition: Delaunay-Terk and Epstein from Paris, Goncharova from St. Petersburg, and Münter and Werefkin from Munich.¹⁹

The journal *Der Sturm*, published by Walden from 1910 to 1932, was an important forum for artistic exchange among the international avant-garde, in which the Blue Rider women also participated. Epstein's essay "Einige Gedanken über Bildentstehung" (Some Thoughts on the Creation of Images) appeared here in December 1912, and her text "Das Lächerlichsein" (Being Ridiculous) in April 1913.²⁰ Münter contributed four woodcuts and two drawings to the journal, which were reproduced as title pages between November 1912 and December 1915.²¹ → **fig. 2** One of the most important literary contributors to *Der Sturm* was Else Lasker-Schüler, who was married to Walden from 1903 to 1912. Numerous poems by her, as well as prose and dramatic sketches, appeared in the magazine.²²

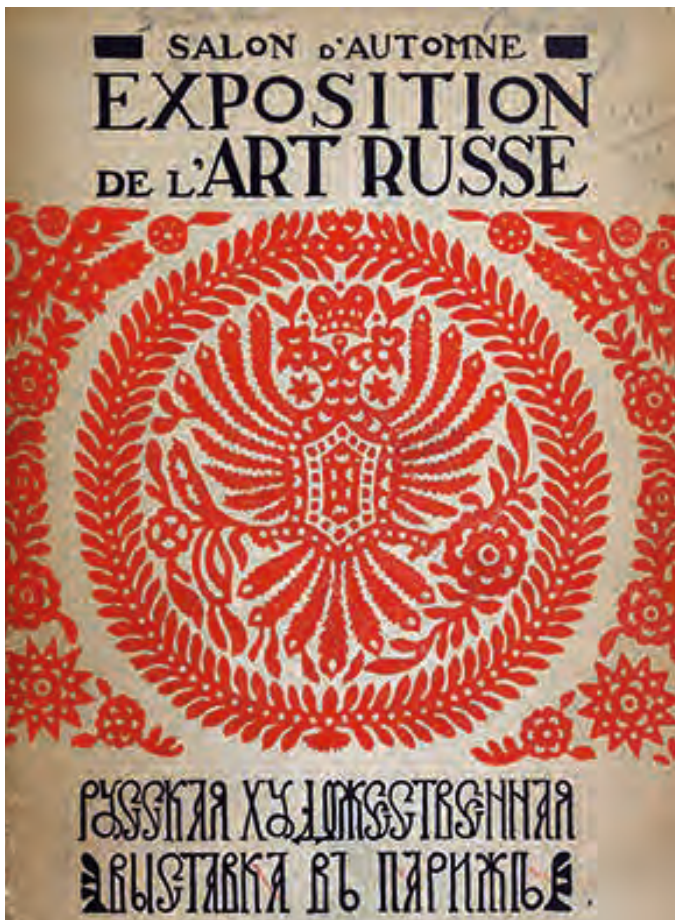


Fig. 3 *Exposition de l'Art Russe at the Salon d'Automne, Paris, 1906 – cover of the exhibition catalogue, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles*

The cover of the September 1912 issue of *Der Sturm* was adorned with a woodcut by Marc illustrating Lasker-Schüler's poem "Versöhnung" (Reconciliation).²³ Franck-Marc and Marc met up with Lasker-Schüler in Berlin in December 1912. Between 1912 and 1916, "Jussuf, Prince of Thebes" (Lasker-Schüler) and the "Blue Rider or Prince of Cana" (Marc) engaged in frequent correspondence featuring both words and images.²⁴ Lasker-Schüler's letters to the "Blue Rider" Franz Marc, which had appeared in the magazines *Die Aktion* and *Der Brenner* between 1913 and 1915, were revised by her in 1915 and published in the first part of her epistolary novel *Der Malik*, edited by Paul Cassirer in 1919.²⁵

During their time in Munich, Kandinsky, Jawlensky, and Werefkin stayed in close contact with the Russian art scene.²⁶ Their works were exhibited in Sergei Makowsky's salon in St. Petersburg, and together with Münter they participated in the International Salon organized by Vladimir Izdebsky in Odessa in winter 1908–1909.²⁷ Kandinsky met Nikolai Kulbin through Izdebsky, who likewise introduced Kandinsky to the Moscow avant-garde artists Goncharova and Larionov.²⁸ As a result, the Munich

group was strongly represented in the first two exhibitions organized by the Moscow artist group Bubnovyi Valet (Jack of Diamonds) in 1910/11 and 1912. The first exhibition displayed works by the Russian Cézannists (Piotr Konchalkovsky, Ilya Maschkov, Aristarkh Lentulov) alongside those of the avant-garde (the Burlyuk brothers, Goncharova, Larionov, Malevich, etc.) and from the NKVM (Bechteev, Bossi, Erbslöh, Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Kanoldt, Münter, Werefkin), and by Albert Gleizes and Henri Le Fauconnier.²⁹ The second show presented an extensive presentation of the works by the French Fauvists and Cubists (Delaunay, Derain, Gleizes, Le Fauconnier, Léger, Matisse, van Dongen) and by the German Expressionists, among them the Brücke artists Heckel, Kirchner, Mueller, and Pechstein, as well as the members of the Blue Rider Kandinsky, Macke, Marc, and Münter.³⁰

Paris: Center of the avant-garde

The other major art hub, which became increasingly attractive to female artists from all over Europe starting in 1905, was Paris. There, Diaghilev's remarkable exhibition *Exposition de l'Art Russe* at the 1906 *Salon d'Automne*, which featured Goncharova, Larionov, and Jawlensky, drew attention to modern Russian painting – from the Peredvizhniki (Wanderers) and Mir Iskusstva (World of Art) to the avant-garde.³¹ → fig. 3 Olga Meerson was the first to settle in Paris in 1904. After discovering Fauvism for herself in 1905, she studied under Henri Matisse from 1908 to 1911, with whom she maintained a close relationship.³² Epstein also first spent time in Paris in 1904–05, where she attended the Académie de la Palette alongside Delaunay-Terk and Marie Vassilieff.³³ After a second stay in Paris in 1906, she settled in Montparnasse in 1908 and continued her studies at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. As her correspondence attests, she maintained close contact with Münter and Kandinsky in Munich until 1914. Epstein and Delaunay-Terk had been friends since their early student days; after Sonia's marriage to Robert Delaunay in 1910 she was a frequent guest at the Delaunays' home, where the international avant-garde gathered. It was also Epstein who, in October 1911, sent photographs of Robert Delaunay's works to Kandinsky and Marc in Munich, thereby establishing the connection between the artist and the Blue Rider that helped Delaunay achieve his breakthrough in Germany.³⁴

After moving to Munich, Werefkin and Jawlensky traveled extensively throughout Europe. Their summer trip to Normandy in 1903 was followed, in 1906, by a nearly year-long stay together in Paris and the south of France, which provided the decisive impetus for Werefkin to resume her painting. In Paris, the couple met Epstein, who not only visited Henri Manguin in his studio with Jawlensky but also introduced him to the work of Delaunay-Terk.³⁵ In late 1911, Werefkin and Jawlensky traveled to Paris again and met Matisse in person there.³⁶ After their unofficial engagement in 1903, Münter and Kandinsky undertook extensive travels to the Netherlands, Italy, and Tunisia. From 1906 to 1907, they lived for a year in Sèvres near Paris, where Epstein and Meerson visited them on several occasions. Like Epstein, Münter was also working at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière at that time.³⁷ Bossi also joined the Blue Rider women in Paris starting in 1911/12.³⁸ In the fall of 1912, Franck-Marc, Marc, and Macke traveled to Paris, where they met with Epstein, the Delaunays, and Le Fauconnier. In January 1913, Delaunay and Apollinaire made a return visit to the Mackes in Bonn.³⁹ Delaunay-Terk, who was planning to publish an art magazine at the time, corresponded frequently with Macke.⁴⁰

The early avant-garde in Russia also maintained contact with Paris. Lentulov, Lyubov Popova, Nadezhda Udaltsova, and others studied with Le Fauconnier and Jean Metzinger at the Académie de la Palette from 1911 to 1913.⁴¹ Alexandra Exter, who traveled frequently to Paris between 1907 and 1914, was acquainted with Alexander Archipenko, Braque, Picasso, and the Delaunays, and in January/February 1912 published the essay “What Is New in French Painting?” in the Kiev magazine *Iskusstvo* (Art), in which she disseminated Apollinaire’s ideas even before they appeared in *Les Soirées de Paris* in April 1912.⁴² Delaunay-Terk also maintained her contacts in Russia, including with Marc Chagall and Alexander Smirnov, who were regular guests at her home. Smirnov, who had visited the Delaunays in Paris during the summers of 1912 and 1913, gave a lecture in December 1913 at the Brodjatschaja Sobaka (The Stray Dog) club in St. Petersburg on Simultanism in French painting and poetry. As examples he displayed Simultaneous posters by Delaunay-Terk as well as a copy of the accordion book *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France* by Blaise Cendrars, which she had illustrated.⁴³ →fig. 4

In Moscow, Goncharova and Larionov also took an interest in Orphism developed by the Delaunays and contacted them in 1913. In their Rayonist Manifesto of 1913, which they published in the catalogue of the *Mishen’* (Target) exhibition in Moscow, they described Rayonism as a “synthesis of Cubism, Futurism, and Orphism,” a movement in painting

Fig. 4 Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Illustration for Blaise Cendrars (Frédéric-Louis Sauser), *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France*, 1913 – The Museum of Modern Art, New York



that, starting from the musical sound of color, sought an equivalence between sound and light waves.⁴⁴ Shortly thereafter, they left Moscow and, at Diaghilev's invitation, traveled to Paris in April 1914 to work with him on sets and costumes for the Ballets Russes. On their way there, they stopped in Rome, where they organized a discussion on Russian and Italian Futurism. In the French capital, they were received by Apollinaire, who had organized an exhibition of their works; the opening was attended by Cendrars, the Delaunays, Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger, and Picasso.⁴⁵

The Blue Rider women at the center of the exhibition and this catalogue espoused a cosmopolitan worldview and operated across national, geographical, and cultural boundaries. In addition to their own artistic work, they were active as correspondents and chroniclers, hosts and managers; they not only cultivated their own personal and social contacts but also facilitated and profoundly shaped artistic exchange and international avant-garde networks prior to the First World War.

- 1 Wünsche 2019a, 9ff.; Wünsche 2024, 168–75.
 2 Metzger/Brandstätter 2008.
 3 Ambrozić 1988, 87–110.
 4 Deseyve 2005; Voit 2014.
 5 Rinker 1993.
 6 Uhrig 2025, 30–34.
 7 Ibid.
 8 Straetmans 2019, 100–107.
 9 Semenova 2025, 42.
 10 Exh. Cat. Munich 1999, 29. The foundational document for the association preserved as a handwritten manuscript by Münter.
 11 Gordon 1974, vol. 2, 354–56.
 12 Ibid., vol. 2, 422–24.
 13 Drenker-Nagels 2014, 68–75; Kreile 2021, 133–37.
 14 Smith 2016.
 15 Walter 2021, 77–79.
 16 Exh. Cat. Munich 1911; Gordon 1974, vol. 2, 522ff.
 17 Exh. Cat. Munich 1912; Gordon 1974, vol. 2, 548–50.
 18 Cf. Enders/Pirsich 2023.
 19 Exh. Cat. Berlin 1913.
 20 Epstein 1912; Epstein 1913. Cf. Voit 2014, 148ff.
 21 *Bauarbeit*, in *Der Sturm* vol. 3, no. 136/137, 191; *Neujahrs-wunsch!*, in *Der Sturm* vol. 3, no. 142/143, 1913; *Bauernfamilie*, in *Der Sturm* vol. 3, no. 152/153, 1913; woodcut, in *Der Sturm* vol. 4, no. 162/163, 1913; drawing, in *Der Sturm* vol. 6, no. 1/2, 1915; drawing, in *Der Sturm* vol. 6, no. 17/18, 1915.
 22 *Der Sturm*, 1910–1932.
 23 *Der Sturm* vol. 3, no. 125/126, 1912.
 24 See Lasker-Schüler et al., 1998.
 25 Lasker-Schüler 1919 – with the dedication “to my unforgettable Franz Marc /THE BLUE RIDER/ eternally.”
 26 Uhlig 1999, 292–99.
 27 Exh. Cat. Odessa 1909; Exh. Cat. Odessa 1910. See also Gordon 1974, vol. 2, 356–62, 438–43; Izdebsky 2005.
 28 Wünsche 2019b, 114–19.
 29 Gordon 1974, vol. 2, 443–47.
 30 Gordon 1974, vol. 2, 536–39.
 31 Exh. Cat. Paris 1906.
 32 Voit 2014, 152–55; Leitmeyer 2025, 62–69.
 33 Bilanz 2013, 48.
 34 Bilanz 2013, 49; Voit 2014, 147ff.; Reinhardt 2016, 167–70.
 35 Exh. Cat. Wiesbaden/Emden 2014, 49ff., 58, note 86.
 36 Wünsche 2024, 170.
 37 Exh. Cat. London 2022, 150.
 38 Exh. Cat. Murnau 2013, 27; Rocca 2016, 141–53.
 39 Kreile 2021, 140.
 40 Bilanz 2013, 68.
 41 Bowlit/Drutt 1999.
 42 Exter 1912, 34–44.
 43 Parnis/Timentschik 1983, 220ff.
 44 Larionov/Goncharova 1913, 87–91.
 45 Exh. Cat. New York 2012.



Fig.1 Gabriele Münter, *Still Life Gray*, 1909 – [Cat. 110]

—Henrike Hans

Women and the Canon On the Reception of the Women Artists of the Blue Rider

Heinrich Campendonk, Robert Delaunay, Alexej von Jawlensky, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Oskar Kokoschka, August Macke, and Franz Marc. The artists of the Blue Rider and their wider circle were well represented at the *documenta* in 1955, the first major international exhibition of twentieth-century art in the German-speaking countries after the Second World War.¹ The show's curators cast a retrospective glance

and strove, as is well-known, to recuperate the avant-garde art that had been vilified as “degenerate” during the Nazi era in Germany. Of the many female artists that had participated in the shows organized by the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists’ Association Munich) between 1909 and 1911 and those of the Blue Rider from 1911 to 1914, only Gabriele Münter was shown at the mega-exhibition in Kassel with two pictures, one of them *Still Life Gray*.² →fig.1 Her works, however, were not reproduced in the accompanying catalogue. This underrepresentation of women echoed that of the total number of participating artists in the *documenta*: 648 works by male artists compared to just twenty-two by women artists. While the male artists stood out in all genres, the selection committee primarily chose still lifes (Gabriele Münter, Séraphine Louis) and portraits (Paula Modersohn-Becker, Emy Roeder) to represent the work of women. The “Artists’ Portraits,” a checkered wall of large photographs of the “essential artists of our century” and “prophets of a new age”³ mounted in the lobby, did not include a single woman. That women merely played a marginal role in what was claimed to be the “international exhibition of twentieth-century art”⁴ seamlessly fits into the regressive worldview of the 1950s – as well as into a canon of art history that since the 1970s has repeatedly been analyzed as male-dominated.⁵ The *documenta* exhibition, even if it decisively defined the canon of avant-garde art, ultimately only offered a snapshot from today’s perspective. At the same time that the formation of the Blue Rider was enshrined as the “founding event of modernism”⁶ after the Second World War, the contributions of the female members of the movement were downgraded. What Alice Rühle-Gerstel had already observed in 1932 seemed to still be the case: Women’s empowerment could only take place in borrowed spaces, since “the space of values and reality belongs to men.”⁷ This phenomenon was not a case of a reassessment of the Blue Rider movement, however. The discrepancy between the women artists of the Blue Rider, who self-confidently presented their works and their role in building the theoretical framework of the group on the one hand, and their perception by the public on the other, surfaced soon after the publication of the almanac and the group’s first exhibitions in 1912.

Blue Rider – Blue Horsewoman

One of the distinctive features of the Blue Rider, when compared to other international avant-garde groups, was the fact that trained female artists not only exhibited in the movement's exhibitions, but that they also exerted an extraordinarily decisive impact on its inner circle of members.⁸ It is undisputed, for example, that Kandinsky received significant inspiration for his art theory from Marianne von Werefkin.⁹ At the same time, Elisabeth Epstein facilitated contact with Robert and Sonia Delaunay-Terk in Paris, and in 1911 Maria Franck-Marc discussed the dissonance of colors with Franz Marc.¹⁰ Münter and Franck-Marc also appear as part of the group in the frequently reproduced photographs from Ainmillerstraße. → fig. p. 11 Münter, in fact, showed the most works, forty-eight, among all the participants in the NKVM and Blue Rider exhibitions. Yet, despite their influence, these female artists did not achieve the same visibility as their male colleagues. They were present, but were recognized in public only within strict limits and solely in relation to their male artist colleagues, as a source of inspiration, or as a pupil, a successor, or the custodian of the male artist's correspondence.¹¹

Even within the movement, self-perception and external perception diverged. In December 1911, Münter wrote to Alfred Kubin: "I hereby introduce to you three new – and feeling very much like newcomers – non-members of the New Artists' Association Munich: Kandinsky, Marc, and Münter," and followed this with the announcement that they would be organizing "our own international exhibition."¹² By thus including herself in the group, she defined her role as that of an artist and not merely as an observer or chronicler. By this point, Münter had already participated in exhibitions at the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne (both in 1907) and held a solo exhibition at the Kunstsalon Lenobel in Cologne (1908). On Kandinsky's recommendation, her works were subsequently shown at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld. Its director, Friedrich Deneken, had initially expressed skepticism ("You wouldn't believe how we're inundated with requests from lady painters"), but was eventually persuaded by the realization "that here, for once, something good is being achieved by a woman."¹³ This statement exemplifies the reservations many directors and curators had about exhibiting works by female artists, who, because of a lack of educational opportunities, were constantly suspected of being dilettanti.¹⁴

Franz Marc, too, informed his brother about his withdrawal from the NKVM and from his planned exhibition, in which "we two [that is, referring exclusively to him and Kandinsky] can show whatever we want,"¹⁵ but only in reference to the organization's male members. In his recollection of the founding of the Blue Rider, penned in 1930, Kandinsky



Fig. 2 Gabriele Münter, *Watering Flowers*, poster for the 11th exhibition of the gallery Der Sturm, 1913, *Der Sturm. Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste* – Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München **Fig. 3** Gabriele Münter, *Construction*, title page with woodcut, *Der Sturm. Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste*, ed. Herwarth Walden, vol. 3, 136/137, 1912 – Private collection

similarly excluded Münter: “Everything happened so quickly. Even before the book [the almanac] appeared, Franz Marc and I organized the first exhibition of ‘the Blue Rider’ in the Galerie Thannhauser.”¹⁶ The almanac’s colophon does not list Münter by name, even though she took care of a major share of the correspondence and editing. Her editorial influence in particular is, however, verified in her many letters. She thus corrected the composer Arnold Schönberg when he placed Kokoschka before Kandinsky: “You know very well what meaning the order of names has!”¹⁷ Her correspondence with Marc and Macke on exhibition participation in 1912 similarly demonstrates her awareness of the allocation of attention and of interpretative authority.¹⁸

The major international exhibitions held before the First World War present a mixed picture: for instance, works by Jawlensky, Kandinsky, Klee, Macke, and Marc were accepted for the Sonderbund Exhibition (Cologne, 1912). At the Armory Show (New York, 1913), however, from the Blue Rider circle only Kandinsky was included. An exception was the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* (First German Autumn Salon, 1913),¹⁹ organized by Herwarth Walden and his gallery Der Sturm. Among the 364 works on display by seventy-six male artists and seven female artists, Delaunay-Terk, Epstein, Münter, Werefkin, and Natalia Goncharova each presented several works.²⁰

Walden was not only an important mouthpiece as a gallery owner. Female artists exerted a lasting influence through his journal *Der Sturm*.²¹ Epstein reflected on the creative process in her essay “Some Thoughts on the Creation of Images,” one of the few published art-theoretical statements by a female artist. “If a painting is created by a true artist, not a single brushstroke has been made without him, without his spirit, without his consciousness – or rather, his semi-consciousness.”²² Walden, moreover, published woodcuts by the female artists, such as for Münter’s first solo exhibition at his gallery in 1913, on the cover of *Der Sturm* as well as on posters. →fig. 2, 3

Nature versus culture: Women artists and art criticism

“Women artists themselves are most at fault when some who were truly deserving cannot be honored. Why are there so many of them?”²³ Hans Hildebrandt made this bizarre statement in the introduction to the catalogue of his study *Die Frau als Künstlerin* (Woman as Artist, 1928). In this book, the author undertakes the first attempt in a German-speaking country to provide a comprehensive survey of “art by female artists.” Following on from the works on women artists by Ernst Guhl (1858),²⁴ Anton Hirsch (1905),²⁵ and Karl Scheffler (1908),²⁶ Hildebrandt included women avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century for the first time. Social transformations necessitated, he claimed, the reconsideration of the role of the woman artist. “Today, for the first time in the history of humanity, the fundamental equality of the female sex, not just that of an exceptional individual, is recognized.”²⁷ Nine years after women had been admitted to state art academies, and in spite of noting their growing professionalization, Hildebrandt resorted in essential points to Scheffler’s argumentation, who had written twenty years before that “the creation and development of all art is only possible when based on the drive for knowledge. ... A woman lacks this need. ... Nature has granted her a will that is directed at a single goal, but at the same time failed to give her the power that is called talent.”²⁸ Hildebrandt collected further indications for the dualism between “mental” (male) and “bodily” (female) art-making. “A woman as a creative artist has never striven for the absolute highest, let alone attained it. And one wonders whether she will ever attain it. Not because the female sex lacks the ultimate genius. A woman has it.”²⁹ But, according to Hildebrandt, in other

areas than a man. For this reason, “the purely artistic values of female art-making” are most often evident in “works that betray a certain inability, and above all ignorance.”³⁰ A woman is above all an instinctive creature, whose “female nature” determines her art, according to this thesis. As Hildebrandt, who was himself married to the trained painter Lily Uhlmann, asserted, nature caused a woman to have a stronger “sense of color” than an understanding for form, so that she tended to “the most personal” subjects, “those most accessible to the emotions.”³¹ Following his line of argumentation, Hildebrandt reproduced particular portraits and still lifes by women artists. He saw a further role for women in relation to male artists as inspirational companions or later epigones. “In spite of the unexpected increase in independence, the tried and true experience once again proves to be correct: The art of a woman accompanies the art of a man. She is the second voice in the orchestra, takes up the themes of the first voice, transforms them, lends them a new, unique color; but she echoes and lives from the first voice.”³² Artistic influence, to Hildebrandt, is seen exclusively as going in one direction — even in relation to the Blue Rider. “Gabriele Münter, for example, certainly accompanied Kandinsky for a considerable distance. She participated in the first transformation of forms, took up the intensified coloring with her revelation of inner spiritual values, infusing this coloring with her own sensitivity. But she could not decide to explore the kingdom of abstraction with others. And Marianne von Werefkin’s pictures, full of penetrating visionary power, mysterious in the first years of her unfettered creation, were not half as radical as the works that she saw being made in Jawlensky’s neighboring studio in the same period.”³³ Although he initially took the emancipatory circumstances as the starting point for his observations, Hildebrandt did not take the step from observing supposedly individual obstacles in women’s art production to systemic ones.³⁴ Consequently, he inferred that avant-garde art, in which “‘skill’ and ‘knowledge’ in an academic sense” were nothing but “obstacles to the development of an artwork,” provided the best conditions for the “nature” of the woman artist. “All the more reason, then, for the creative forces stirring within the artist to find pure and unadulterated expression. This new potential was very much to the liking of those women who possessed an instinct for genius.”³⁵ At the same time, even in early modernism, no woman had appeared “who was able to direct the creative art-making of her time in other directions.”³⁶ This remark seems highly contradictory in light of the quantity and significance of



Fig. 4 Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Self-Portrait on Sixth Wedding Anniversary*, 1906 – Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, Bremen

his material. He thus reproduces, for example, a nude self-portrait by Paula Modersohn-Becker, the first time a woman artist depicted herself in this manner, therefore enriching the history of images with a significant new subject. →fig.4 He did not repeat Scheffler's claim from 1908 that "the passive harmony of a woman is called nature; the conscious and intentional one of a man is called culture."³⁷ But Hildebrandt did assume, nevertheless, the foundations of this assumption, ascribing to women certain supposedly female characteristics and then transferring these to their creative work. Hildebrandt's study is thus an eloquent example of the difficult conditions regarding the visibility of women in art criticism, in which the narrative of Western art history as a succession of brilliant male geniuses continued to prevail.³⁸

The Blue Rider at the Haus der Kunst in 1949

In 1949, the Haus der Kunst in Munich mounted the first exhibition to once again bring together the artists of the Blue Rider after the Second World War. →fig.5 Ludwig Grote, who initiated the project, had previously planned an exhibition of the group's work in Dessau in 1932, but was unable to carry it out due to Nazi interference. Following the artists' ostracism during the dictatorship, his 1949 exhibition established the Blue Rider's widespread popularity as a "modern, open-minded culture."³⁹ Münter was a member of the honorary committee and exhibited nine of her paintings, including five still lifes. The catalogue also reproduces seven works by Werefkin and one by Erma Bossi.⁴⁰ Kandinsky, Macke, and Marc, on the other hand, were each represented by more than forty works. In addition, Kandinsky, Klee, and Marc were quoted in the catalogue with statements on art theory. While, in retrospect, it may be seen as a merit of the exhibition that three of the female artists in the circle were included at all, Grote's catalogue nevertheless reinforced the interpretation that the Blue Rider was solely the work of Kandinsky, with the help of Klee and Marc: "The creative power and strength of the movement are manifested here through the greatness and uniqueness of the geniuses who drove it."⁴¹ Münter and Werefkin, on the other hand – despite the stylistic differences in their work – were placed in relation to one another. When regarding their early paintings, for example, Grote notes that "Münter and Werefkin still have Art Nouveau lines in their landscapes, but they avoid ornate lettering and do not shy away from bold simplifications."⁴² Elsewhere, he summarizes that "Gabriele Münter and Marianne von Werefkin do not confront any problems; their painting remains simple and natural."⁴³ This cursory discussion of the artists can also be found elsewhere, such as in the catalogue of the New York exhibition *German Painting and Sculpture* (1957), a revised edition of the 1931 show.⁴⁴ This kind of marginalization reinforced the perception of Münter and Werefkin as peripheral figures of the Blue Rider – and not as independent artists.⁴⁵

Gabriele Münter: “Creating from inspiration”⁴⁶

Since the end of the First World War and with the exception of the Nazi era, Münter’s works have been featured in numerous international exhibitions,⁴⁷ a development fostered in part by her collaboration with Herwarth Walden until 1920 and with the gallery owners Etta and Otto Stangl in the 1950s. → fig. p. 146 As Sabine Windecker has analyzed, it was in particular her partner, the art historian Johannes Eichner, who shaped the scholarly reception of her work.⁴⁸ In his publication *Kandinsky und Gabriele Münter* (Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter, 1957),⁴⁹ he acknowledged her artistic independence but assigned Kandinsky a superior role, leading Windecker to conclude that Eichner “valued her more for her role as an informant than that of an artist.”⁵⁰ Münter reflected on her own career and artistic practice, but did not express herself in terms of art theory. From her statement that she painted with the “certainty of a sleepwalker,”⁵¹ Eichner construed that “she knows nothing at all other than creating from inspiration, relying on intuition, and refraining from intellectual labor.”⁵² He attributed her artistic expression to an immediate primal quality, presumably in agreement with Münter, and exactly as the artists had called for in the 1912 *Blue Rider* almanac.⁵³ In his essay for an exhibition of Münter’s work in Stockholm in 1916, Kandinsky had previously argued along these lines, stating that her work “arises from a purely inner impulse.”⁵⁴ In subsequent scholarship, Windecker has demonstrated the continuing influence and increasing generalization of this notion.⁵⁵ The direct, unadulterated expression attributed to her was detached by art critics from the Blue Rider’s agenda and transferred to Münter’s personality. For example, Paul Vogt wrote in 1976 about the “natural and naively sensitive young woman” who, “in everything she did, was entirely herself, limiting herself voluntarily in accordance with her simple and direct nature, rather than immersing herself in spiritual problems almost impossible to master.”⁵⁶ Münter was consequently stylized as the antithesis of Kandinsky, who through his writings provided a theoretical foundation for the ideal of intuitive creation.⁵⁷

It is evident here that the abundance of exhibitions and publications, that is, the visibility and public perception of the artist, differs from the evaluation of Gabriele Münter’s art and persona. Her roles as Kandinsky’s partner, as the savior of the Blue Rider paintings from Nazi confiscation, and as the donor of numerous works to the city of Munich often overshadowed her art in the public’s perception.

——— **Henrike Hans**

**Women and the Canon – On the Reception of the Women Artists
of the Blue Rider**



Fig. 5 Ludwig Grote (left) and Gabriele Münter (second from right) at the inauguration of the exhibition *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), Haus der Kunst, Munich, 1949 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

A question of roles

Bossi, Epstein, Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, Franck-Marc, Münter, Werefkin, and the other female artists from the circle of the Blue Rider – the reasons why they have long remained in the shadow of their male colleagues in exhibitions and publications about the movement are complex. The causes have their roots both in early twentieth-century art criticism and in the narrowing of the scholarly reception of the Blue Rider to focus solely on the work of Kandinsky and Marc.⁵⁸ By limiting the female components to roles extraneous to their artistic achievements, their work was relativized. As illustrated by the example of Münter, art historians equated characteristics of female artistic practice with the artists' personalities well into the mid-twentieth century, still adhering to a tradition of art criticism that approached female artists with gender-ideological prejudices. The lives and the art of these women artists were also rendered into novelistic narratives.⁵⁹ As a result, their visibility came at the expense of an objective assessment of their work and their artistic autonomy. The women artists who refused to be confined to any of these roles – particularly as partners or students – received scant attention from art critics.⁶⁰ While feminist art history since the 1970s has made us aware of women artists and the systemic conditions of their education, creative practice, and dissemination, it has thus opened up spaces at the same time that, according to Rühle-Gerstel in 1932, were still closed off: no longer viewing female artists as a subcategory in relation to their male colleagues, but rather recognizing their own independent contributions.

——— 1 See Exh. Cat. Kassel 1955.

2 Ibid. In contrast, Kandinsky had seventeen works and Marc seven paintings exhibited. Münter's other exhibited work was *Evening Sun* (1908).

3 Quoted in Kimpel/Stengel 1995, 16.

4 Haftmann 1955, 15.

5 See Nochlin 1971; Berger 1982; Nobs-Greter 1984; Salomon 1993, among others.

6 Hopfengart 2000, 25.

7 Rühle-Gerstel 1932, 83.

8 On this, see the essay by Melanie Vietmeier in this publication. A comparably high number of women artists is also present among the Russian avant-garde women artists, which here, too, might be a consequence of the accessibility of women to academic art training, such as at the state academy in St. Petersburg since approximately 1854; see Eipeldauer 2015, 9.

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- 9 On this, see Fäthke 2014, 36ff.
- 10 Franz Marc to Maria Franck-Marc, February 5, 1911, quoted in Fäthke 2014, 36.
- 11 One of the few examples of independent art criticism in this period focused on the painterly quality of a work comes from Maximilian Rohe. On the occasion of an exhibition at the Kunstverein (Art Association) in Munich in 1911, he was struck by Werefkin's painting of a burned-down city, since "her visionary painting is infused by a powerfully suggestive quality." See Rohe 1911, 528.
- 12 Gabriele Münter to Alfred Kubin, December 2, 1911, quoted in Kleine 1994, 379.
- 13 Friedrich Deneken to Wassily Kandinsky, January 31, 1908, quoted in Jansen 2017b, 244.
- 14 See Berger 1982, 60ff.
- 15 Franz Marc to his brother Paul, December 3, 1911, quoted in Kleine 1994, 379.
- 16 Wassily Kandinsky on the founding of the Blue Rider, in letters to Paul Westheim, c. 1930, quoted in Exh. Cat. New York 1954, n. p.
- 17 Gabriele Münter to Arnold Schönberg, quoted in Kleine 1994, 389.
- 18 See Hüneke 1989, 191–93.
- 19 Walden 1913.
- 20 See Exh. Cat. Berlin 1913.
- 21 See Pfeiffer 2015, 13.
- 22 Epstein 1912, 236.
- 23 Hildebrandt 1928, 158.
- 24 Guhl 1858.
- 25 Hirsch 1905.
- 26 Scheffler 1908.
- 27 Hildebrandt 1928, 7.
- 28 Scheffler 1908, 29ff.
- 29 Hildebrandt 1928, 8.
- 30 Ibid., 24.
- 31 Ibid., 32ff.
- 32 Ibid., 108ff.
- 33 Ibid., 123.
- 34 Other authors, in contrast, focused more on political and social structures; cf. Maerten 1914.
- 35 Hildebrandt 1928, 121.
- 36 Ibid., 122.
- 37 Scheffler 1908, 20.
- 38 See Salomon 1993, 27ff. Thirty years before, the French sculptor Camille Claudel had attempted to ban the publication of the first extensive article on her work, since its author, Mathias Morhardt, described her work as depending on her teacher and former partner Auguste Rodin. See Camille Claudel to Auguste Rodin, Nov. 1897, quoted in Exh. Cat. Chicago/Los Angeles 2023, 276.
- 39 Hopfengart 2000, 17.
- 40 See Exh. Cat. Munich 1949.
- 41 Grote 1949, 13ff.
- 42 Ibid., 10.
- 43 Ibid., 16.
- 44 "Their [Kandinsky's and Jawlensky's] two friends, Gabrielle [sic] Münter and Marianne von Werefkin, and a few other painters enlarged the loose association, and out of it there arose in 1909 the New Artists' Association Munich" (Exh. Cat. New York 1957, 54).

- 45 For Münter, see Jansen 2017b, 245.
- 46 Eichner 1957, 126.
- 47 See Jansen 2017b, 244–46.
- 48 See Windecker 1991, 17.
- 49 Eichner 1957.
- 50 Windecker 1991, 20.
- 51 Quoted in Eichner 1957, 38.
- 52 Eichner 1957, 126.
- 53 See Windecker 1991, 23.
- 54 Quoted in *ibid.*, 30.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 56 Quoted in *ibid.*, 28.
- 57 Schmidt 1994, 27.
- 58 Hopfengart 2000, 21ff.; Hüneke 1989, 233–63.
- 59 On this, see the tendency towards popular interpretations of the female artists in the group: for example, in Poppe 2011 or Möller 2012.
- 60 See the essay by Sandra Uhrig in this publication.

—Mara Folini Ceccarelli

→ Marianne von Werefkin at the easel, Ascona, c. 1931 –
PSM Privatstiftung Schloßmuseum Murnau

Marianne von



Werefkin

The Ethics of Subjectivity —Marianne von Werefkin

Although Marianne von Werefkin (1860–1938) grew up in an aristocratic Russian environment, she contested its values from an early age; instead, she aligned herself with the ethical, social, and pedagogical ideals of the so-called Peredvizhniki realist movement, under the guidance of her master Ilja Repin, a central figure of Russian realism. When the movement's revolutionary power faded between 1891 and 1893,¹ Werefkin clearly sensed the risk of slipping into an art that, although driven by social intentions, ended up neutralizing the artist's personality and led to a profound break with the realism she had learned from Repin. She also began an intense period of study in the fields of physiology, psychophysiology, and applied psychology, disciplines that analyzed the deep mechanisms of the self, perception, and knowledge.² These studies showed Werefkin that experience of the world is not objective and transparent, but the result of complex interior processes in which emotion, memory, and the unconscious dimension play a vital role. The discovery of the centrality of the subject was decisive for Werefkin – a new art could only be based on the artist as creator, their subjectivity, and their ability to give form to an individual feeling. Her famous statement that art should not represent “what the eye sees” but “what the soul feels”³ summarizes this turning point effectively.

This was only the first step in Werefkin's search for a truly non-mimetic autonomous language, capable of not alienating her personality while helping her assert herself and her feelings as a woman. She shared the prophetic vision of the Symbolists, but clearly grasped its structural limits due to the fact that, despite introducing themes linked to the soul, myth, dream, the invisible, and the ineffable, they



↑ Marianne von Werefkin at the lakefront promenade in Ascona, 1930s – Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

continued to make use of forms, concepts of space, and methods that were representative and mimetic; their recognizable figures and spatial relationships were still anchored in an optical and naturalistic vision of the world. For Werefkin, if art had to make what “the soul feels” visible, it was not enough just to change the subject represented; the instruments of representation themselves needed to be radically transformed – the centrality of the subject had to find a structural correspondence in the pictorial language. Color, form, surface, and space had to emancipate themselves from the descriptive function and become direct vehicles of emotion and inner knowledge.



← Marianne von Werefkin and Alexej von Jawlensky in her studio at Blagodat Estate, Lithuania, 1893 – Forschungsarchiv Alexej von Jawlensky at the Museum Wiesbaden → Dmitry Kardovsky, Marianne von Werefkin, Igor Grabar, Alexej von Jawlensky in Munich (from left to right), c. 1900 – Forschungsarchiv Alexej von Jawlensky at the Museum Wiesbaden

Werefkin's encounter with Alexej von Jawlensky in 1892 was decisive – at the moment she began to realize that the problem with a new art was based on the autonomy of the creative subject, she also assumed an extraordinarily lucid position on her private life. Werefkin made a conscious decision not to marry Jawlensky, in the name of an ideal, absolute, almost mystical love, based on a promise of fidelity and dedication that nevertheless ruled out the bonds of marriage.

This apparently personal choice actually had a profoundly political and symbolic reach – Werefkin's reflection on subjectivity and autonomy was not limited to the artistic field, but overtook the social structure as a whole. Her awareness of the role of women as subordinates preceded and accompanied her search for an autonomous pictorial language. Understanding that women were systematically excluded from the sphere of action and speech, meant, for Werefkin, recognizing the urgency of constructing an alternative space for expression and freedom. The decision not to marry Jawlensky, protecting her emancipation, appeared to be the coherent outcome of a critical vision harbored since the years of her training and continually reworked through her writing, painting, and life itself.



Her departure for Germany did not, therefore, only represent the search for a new cultural context, but was the natural extension of a choice she had already made to free herself from the bonds of her family. Werefkin chose to live independently according to her philosophy of life, with her partner, Jawlensky, in a context as stimulating as Munich. Jugendstil was taking hold in the Bavarian city, with its Secession, magazines, artist studios, and the district of Schwabing, artistic stronghold and meeting place for international anti-conformist *bohemians*, where the Russian community predominated.

In Munich, Werefkin voluntarily stopped painting for around a decade (1896–1906) in order to support Jawlensky's artistic development. She recognized that she had not yet identified the autonomous non-mimetic pictorial language to which she aspired, and was fully aware that, in an artistic system that structurally favored men, it would be hard for a woman to achieve any real social and institutional relevance. Her function did not disappear, but was transformed. Thanks to her profoundly humanistic outlook and her proficiency as an artist, Werefkin became the intellectual fulcrum of Munich's Russian-German community, especially in the Schwabing district.⁴

This sacrifice was accompanied by the conscious abdication of motherhood and the declaration of voluntary chastity, understood as a form of resistance to the oppression of marriage and male sexual domination. Nicoletta Misler locates this self-censorship within a practice widespread among other Russian women artists, such as Marie Baškircева (1860–1884), who gave up love in the name of a sublime ideal of art.⁵ As Werefkin herself states, it was a question of “being chaste and strong as a consequence, to become an artist, to create, to never suffer the degrading yoke of male possession,”⁶ because she saw “with an entirely female sensitivity ... in the physicality of artistic creation, an act of love, an alternative to procreation.”⁷

Werefkin’s break from painting was accompanied by an extremely intense period of theoretical and introspective activity, documented in her journal, *Lettres à un inconnu*, written between 1901 and 1905. In these lines, she questions the meaning of abstaining from art by focusing on her most radical aesthetic theories – the idea of a color emancipated from its descriptive function, loaded with symbolic, emotional, and energetic value, as a vehicle for interior forces, a visual translation of emotions and the invisible, and an instrument capable of giving form not to “what the eye sees” but “what the soul feels.”

Her return to painting was grafted onto two trajectories – one theoretical, the other experiential. Alongside her lengthy self-reflective work and writing of the *Lettres*, her trips to France played a decisive role; in 1903, she went to Paris and Normandy; in 1905, to Brittany with Jawlensky, then to Paris and Provence, before they stopped off in Geneva. In this context, encountering the work of Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne, and Vincent Van Gogh proved to be crucial – in these artists, Werefkin finally recognized a pictorial practice capable of translating into form what she had already understood on a theoretical level. In the work of the Nabis in particular, Werefkin saw how color, taken as the ordering principle of the composition, was expressed through formal choices: *à plat*, a way of applying paint to create uniform color fields instead of modeling with *chiaroscuro*, and *cloisonné*, through which surfaces are separated by clear and sharp contours. These solutions allow the color to be emancipated once and for all from the descriptive function,



↑ Marianne von Werefkin painting *Die Masken des Dorfes* (*The Masks of the Village*) in her studio in Ascona, c. 1925 – Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona → fig. p. 110

giving it an autonomous structural and expressive value, as well as opening up the possibility of constructing the image as a mental, emotional, and spiritual space, governed by internal laws, and not simply transcribing what is visible.

This was accompanied by Werefkin's understanding of the doctrines of *Einfühlung*; along with her discovery of the structuring and autonomous value of color,⁸ this allowed her to find the specific features of her pictorial language, which consisted of synthetic and significant forms that, like an “emotional code” – expressions of the artist's self – were organized dynamically through the specific laws of painting (symmetry, contrast, color agreement, etc.), heralding the revolutionary “abstract” turning point of Kandinsky's art.

Identifying this synthetic and symbolic form of color as early as 1903, before the other members of her artistic circle in Munich, gave Werefkin the strength to begin painting again and the authority to be a valid point of reference, not only on a theoretical level, but also pictorially. Even before the works produced by Jawlensky, Kandinsky, and Münter during their stays along with Werefkin in Murnau (1908/1909), her paintings dated 1906 and 1907 already implied an abstract-symbolic structure, as expressive as it was lyrical, an intrinsic premise of abstract art. This can be seen in *Fall – School*, → fig. p. 100 *The Storm* (c. 1907), → fig. p. 95 and *Sunday Afternoon* (1908), → fig. p. 99 in which the permanence of what is real comes from



↑ Carnival in Ascona, Marianne von Werefkin and Renato Perucchi in a carriage, c. 1929 – Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

the value of rhythm and evocative power that transcends it, demonstrating a new and highly alienating perception of reality; the color is loaded with an increasingly intense symbolic and visionary value, while the figures become stylized and the space loses perspectival depth as it turns into a scene played out within the self. The works of these years show a suffering, often marginal humanity, immersed in psychological landscapes in which color vibrates like an autonomous energy, conveying emotional tensions and existential conflicts.

Murnau became a formal and spiritual workshop. Werefkin, Jawlensky, and their friends, the couple Münter and Kandinsky, painting together, experienced an intense period of intellectual exchange, later thought by critics to have played a crucial role in Kandinsky's emancipation towards abstraction, the "inner necessity" of his "spiritual in art,"⁹ *leitmotiv* and foundation for his revolutionary aniconic shift towards abstract art.

In paintings such as *Two Old Women* (1907), *Sunday Afternoon* (1908), →fig. p. 99 and *Twins* (1909), the dimension of time becomes an existential metaphor in which everything appears disconcerting and suspended due to the ambiguity of its meaning. The scene describes a state of mind rather than an event. The color, loaded with emotional energy, becomes the true subject of the painting, taking on the "ecstatic" function capable of compensating, on a

symbolic level, for the sacrifices and self-censorships that marked Werefkin's life. This is exemplified by *Tragic Atmosphere* (1910), → fig. p.101 in which the woman in the foreground becomes one with the blood-red atmosphere that screams from the depths about the tragic loneliness of a denied passionate love; the nature seems to vibrate with an internal tension, almost animated by a cosmic force. The path and hill no longer obey the laws of perspective, but rather those of rhythm, understood as a universal principle. It is here that Werefkin's deliberation on movement, shaped in part through her interest in expressive dance, finds a reflection in her painting – the space is shot through by forces, dynamic lines, and chromatic counterpoints that suggest an inner rather than physical mobility. This approach also emerges powerfully in her scenes of urban and modern life, such as *The Skaters* (1911). → fig. p.102 The figures, stylized and reduced to simple silhouettes, seem to be taking part in a collective ritual that is more symbolic than narrative – the space is not a real place, but an extension of the psyche, where emotional and spiritual tensions are played out. Here, Werefkin succeeds in turning the social dimension into an existential dimension, without falling back into the pedagogy of realism. The figure is no longer an object of social observation, but a bearer of an inner strength rendered through bright color, distorted proportions, and the absence of a realistic context. In this sense, Werefkin subverts the iconographic tradition from within, re-asserting the primacy of the subjective experience and, implicitly, the expressive dignity of women. It is precisely this profound coherence between life, thought, and visual language that makes her a central figure in European modernity and the Blue Rider.

Werefkin would remain critical of abstraction, judging it to be too radical for the times and, above all, dangerously uprooted from the social and existential questions that beset humanity – art had to retain an ethical and educational function, capable of influencing the individual and collective conscience. This conviction became even more radical when she moved to Switzerland; in the face of the material and spiritual rubble left by the war, indifference became impossible. Werefkin felt the responsibility to convey, through an emotional and symbolic language, an edifying message of hope, aimed, especially, at the humble and marginalized (*Ave Maria* [1927]). → fig. p.108 This gave rise to paintings that, on the one hand, showed

a renewed interest in the working class and everyday suffering (*The Rag Collector* [1917], *The Living and the Dead* [1924], and *The Postman* [1929]) and, on the other hand, shaped ecstatic and prophetic visions (*Via Eterna* [1929]), in which the utopia of a more just world can be glimpsed, founded on unity and universal peace. This interpretation of art, in conditions of material poverty, became an existential practice in its own right – in 1922, Werefkin was one of the founders of the Museo di Ascona, an institution built from the ground up,¹⁰ based on the initiatives of the artists themselves, with the conviction that art could help change the course of history through an ideal of kinship.¹¹ The same tension drove Werefkin's commitment to founding a group called Der Grosse Bär (Ursa Major), in which the artists, like the seven stars in that constellation, saw themselves as mediators between Earth and sky. From this perspective, cosmic harmony became a metaphor for potential universal peace, as in *The Evening of Life* (c. 1922), in which Earth and sky resonate in unison, according to the cosmic vision that, to Werefkin, was inseparable from the human experience.

Werefkin believed that “to awaken, transform, and bring excitement to life, one must be firmly embedded within it ... because we do not flee life and its forms, we force them to serve our faith.”¹² In this sense, the Ascona experience represents the point of greatest coherence between life and work – art as a gift to the community, as a tool for emotional and spiritual education, and the artist as a mediator between the earthly realm and a dimension with a higher meaning. For Werefkin, painting, ethics, and an existential commitment merged into a single vision, which makes her art one of the most profound and conscious testimonies of female expressionism in Europe.

——— ¹ Valentine Marcadé stresses the extent to which, by prioritizing ethical over aesthetic values and limiting itself to chiaroscuro oil painting, the Peredvizhniki movement was incapable of conveying the quality and potential of colors, canvas, and brushstrokes, forcing an entire generation of progressive artists to emigrate to Europe in search of new stylistic stimuli, exhibition opportunities, and a public ready to welcome them. Cf. Marcadé 1971, 85.

² In 1891, Werefkin read *Philosophie des Beaux-Arts* by David Sutter, *L'expression dans les arts* by Sully Prudhomme, *Physiologie des exercices du corps* by Fernand Lagrange, *Sensation et mouvement* by Charles Féré, *Der Ausdruck des Auges* by Friedrich Hersing, *L'irrégulation de l'avenir* and *Education et hérédité* by Jean-Marie Guyau, *Von der Physiognomik* by Johann Caspar Lavater and in 1892, *Les altérations de la personnalité* by Alfred Binet, *L'ésprit et le corps* by Alexander Bain, and *Les maladies de la personnalité* by Théodule Ribot. By no longer configuring psychology as a philosophical theory on the “reality of the soul,” but as a science of “internal phenomena,” these texts highlight an emphatic exchange “between psychic and physiological phenomena.” The “empathic process” of projecting the artist’s self not onto conceptually delimited objects, but onto their forms, implicitly contains an anti-mimetic principle that demonstrates the extent to which Werefkin was intent on giving a scientific foundation to her art, as she states in her journal from 1904: “True art is that which renders the soul of things, and this soul is the soul of the artist” (Werefkin 1901–1905, vol. III, 24).

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Terkel 2010a and Terkel 2010b.

⁵ See Misler 2010.

⁶ Werefkin 1999, 123.

⁷ Cf. Misler 2010, 107.

⁸ Since 1903, after her first trip to France, Werefkin wrote in her journal that “color has an intrinsic value [...] color decides form” (Werefkin 1901–1905, vol. III, 120); “color has a direct influence on the perception of dimensions – a black dot seems smaller than a white or yellow dot, even if they are the same size” (Werefkin 1901–1905, vol. III, 186).

⁹ Kandinsky 1952, 64, 69.

¹⁰ The museum came into being when, to thank the artists who had donated their artworks, the municipality offered them an exhibition space that allowed them to raise their profiles and make a living from selling their works.

¹¹ See Folini 2022, 79–81.

¹² Werefkin 1971, vol. I, 201–209.





← Self-Portrait I (Selbstbildnis I), c. 1910 – [Cat. 200]
→ The Storm (Der Sturm), c. 1907 – [Cat. 188]



← *By the Fireplace (Am Kamin)*, c. 1910 – [Cat. 198]
→ *Ball Scene (Ballszene)*, c. 1908 – [Cat. 189]





- ← *Red City (Rote Stadt)*, 1909 – [Cat. 194]
- *Sunday Afternoon (Sonntagnachmittag)*, 1908 – [Cat. 190]
- *Beer Garden (Biergarten)*, 1907 – [Cat. 185]







← *Fall – School (Herbst – Schule)*, 1907 – [Cat. 186]
→ *Tragic Mood (Tragische Stimmung)*, 1910 – [Cat. 203]



← *Ice Skaters (Schlittschuhläufer)*, 1911 – [Cat. 207]

→ *The Dancer Alexander Sakharoff (Der Tänzer Alexander Sacharoff)*, 1909 – [Cat. 191]





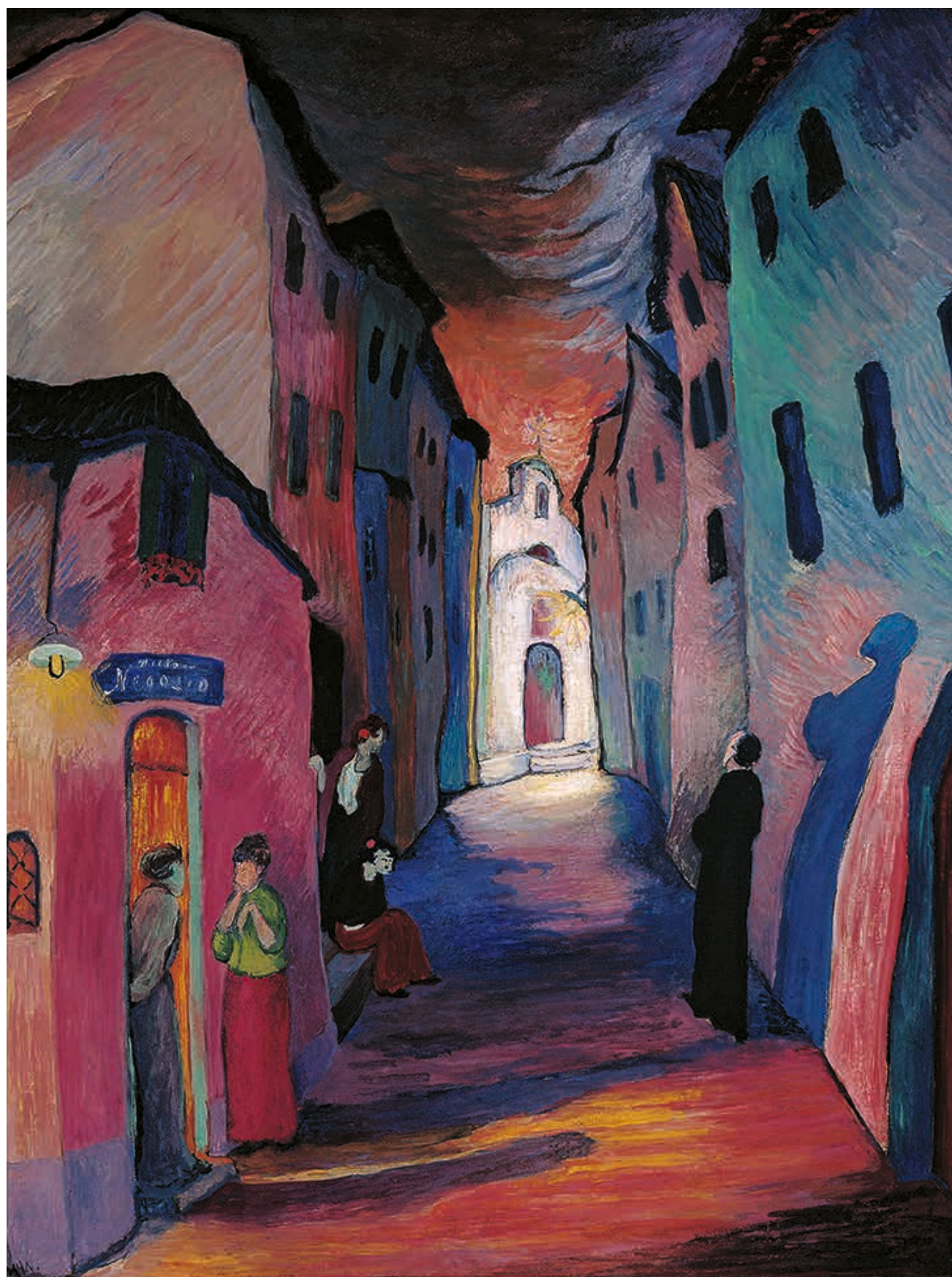


- ← Trapeze Artist (Trapezkünstlerin), 1909 – [Cat. 195]
- ← Artistes (Artisten), c. 1910 – [Cat. 199]
- Girls' Boarding School (Mädchenpensionat), 1907 – [Cat. 187]



- ← After Work (*Feierabend*), 1909 – [Cat. 192]
→ Shingle Factory (*Schindelfabrik*), 1910 – [Cat. 202]







← *Ave Maria*, 1927 – [Cat. 211]

→ *Into the Night (In die Nacht hinein)*, 1910 – [Cat. 201]



- ← *Masks of the Village (Die Masken des Dorfes)*, c. 1925 – [Cat. 210]
- ← *Ash Wednesday (Aschermittwoch)*, 1931 – [Cat. 214]
- *Vilnius Police Station (Polizeiposten Wilna)*, 1914 – [Cat. 208]



—Isabelle Jansen

→ Gabriele Münter smoking on a balcony, Italy or Switzerland,
May 1906 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

Gabriele Münter



“then tomorrow
I will again jump
into something
new and unknown”¹
—Gabriele Münter,
a Free
Woman Artist

Gabriele Münter was a liberated and independent woman. Her need for freedom and autonomy, which she sought in her private life and in her art, has frequently been misunderstood and misinterpreted. The plurality of her painting styles, for example, has repeatedly been judged as indecision. After her separation from Wassily Kandinsky, moreover, the image of the solitary painter shaped the scholarly reception of her work. That this cliché is in no way accurate is demonstrated by her biography. Münter lived in various countries where she readily fit in, particularly since she learned the local language or had already mastered it. She was a social person who placed great value on the exchange of ideas, so that she was always part of an extensive network of contacts that allowed her to regularly participate in exhibitions. Her independence is consequently a sign of her emancipation.

In 1898 the twenty-one-year-old Münter journeyed to the United States with her sister Emmy for a two-year stay, visiting various maternal relatives. This trip took her from New York to Texas and marked a decisive turning point



↑ Gabriele Münter with easel and painting materials, Kochel am See, summer 1902 –
The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

in her career. She taught herself photography, taking almost 400 pictures in only two months. What is more, she decided to become an artist.² The fact that she trained her gaze by means of the technique of photography shaped her work lastingly.³ Prior to her stay in the United States, Münter had studied drawing in Düsseldorf for several months, but decided after her return to study art in Munich.

In 1901 she enrolled in the “Damen-Akademie” (Ladies’ Academy) of the Munich Association of Women Artists. After a woodcut course at the Wolff Neumann School, she transferred to the progressive Phalanx School co-founded by Kandinsky. There she attended Wilhelm Hüsgen’s sculpture course and met Kandinsky while visiting his painting class.



← Gabriele Münter standing in a rowboat, Upper Bavaria, 1901 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich → Students of the Munich Association of Women Artists with Maximilian Dasio in a beer garden; at center rear: Gabriele Münter, summer 1901 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

For four years, from May 1904 to June 1908, Münter led a peripatetic life, mostly with Kandinsky, traveling to the Netherlands, Tunisia, Belgium, Italy, Paris, and Sèvres, as well as to Bonn and Berlin. The year she spent in France was particularly formative. While Kandinsky remained in the suburb of Sèvres, Münter rented a room in Montparnasse, in the same house where Michael Stein, the brother of the American author and collector Gertrude Stein, lived with his wife Sarah. In this way, Münter had access to their collections of avant-garde art, including the newest works by Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. She took drawing courses at the nearby Académie de la Grande Chaumière, at that time directed by the Swiss painter Martha Stettler.⁴ She and Kandinsky also maintained contact with Elisabeth Epstein and Olga Meerson, who were living in Paris at that time.

Münter's stay in Paris was of great importance to her because she exhibited for the first time there, at the Salon des Indépendants in 1907. Her painting evidences an evolution from a late Impressionist style to an Expressionist visual language in the genre of the portrait. The tiny blobs of color dabbed with a palette knife were replaced by vivid colors, lithely applied with a brush to the canvas.⁵ In addition, almost a quarter of her graphic art works were created during this stay in the French capital.

“then tomorrow I will again jump into something new and unknown” —
Gabriele Münter, a Free Woman Artist

Following these years of traveling, which could also be regarded as years of apprenticeship, Münter settled in Munich. In the late summer of 1908, she spent a few weeks with Kandinsky, Alexej von Jawlensky, and Marianne von Werefkin in Murnau. It was here that her painting transformed and definitively acquired an Expressionist visual language: She now employed only strong colors and simplified forms, often contoured with dark lines. Crucial for this change, which had begun a few months previously, were her discussions with Jawlensky as well as the reverse glass painting that she had come upon in Murnau and learned how to do. Münter purchased a house in that town in August 1909 which became a key meeting point for the avant-garde. This is where the working sessions were held for *The Blue Rider* almanac in fall 1911. Promoting the Blue Rider occupied a major portion of her life until the outbreak of the First World War: exhibitions had to be organized, and contact with art dealers, museum directors, and collectors established.

In her work, Münter experimented with diverse painting styles that she utilized concurrently, at the same time expanding her repertoire of subjects. After 1910 she created dark still lifes, for example, for which her collection of folk art served as a source of inspiration. She increasingly focused on the genres of the portrait and the interior scene.

The outbreak of the First World War put an end to this exciting and intensive period. After accompanying Kandinsky to Switzerland, Münter moved to Scandinavia in July 1915, where she remained for five years.

The painter lived in Sweden, primarily in Stockholm, until fall 1917. There Herwarth and Nell Walden introduced her to the couple Sigrid Hjertén and Isaac Grünewald, artists who had attended the Académie Matisse in Paris.⁶ Her pictorial language changed during this period, the colors became more muted, the compositional style more graphic, and the content of her work seemed to take on a more narrative quality, thanks to the frequent compositions involving several figures. In the late fall of 1917 she moved to Copenhagen, where her largest exhibition to date, featuring over 130 works, was held in March 1918.⁷ During her stay in Scandinavia, Münter presented her works in three solo shows and participated in at least seven group exhibitions.⁸ She was celebrated by critics and the

“then tomorrow I will again jump into something new and unknown” —
Gabriele Münter, a Free Woman Artist

Scandinavian art scene as an international avant-garde artist and recognized as an independent painter, although she frequently – for strategic marketing reasons, among other motives – exhibited under the double name of Münter-Kandinsky.

Her return to Germany in February 1920 brought an abrupt end to this period of success. She was almost completely unknown in her home country and had to rebuild her life from scratch. As a woman artist it was much more difficult for her to create a new network than for her male colleagues, especially since she no longer belonged to any group of artists. Before she settled in Berlin at the end of October 1925, she alternated between Munich and Murnau. In late 1929 she traveled to France once more, staying mainly in Paris. A consequence of these constant relocations was that she usually had no studio, so that she focused more intensely on drawing. The so-called “New Woman” was often the subject of these graphic works. Münter condensed her means and thus achieved great expressiveness, creating unsurpassed masterpieces. Simultaneously, she applied a fresh approach to her painterly work, employing a visual language drawing from New Objectivity for some of her works.

In Berlin as well as in Paris, Münter again took courses at art schools. In Berlin she attended the Segal School and in Paris the Académie de la Grande Chaumière once more. She participated actively in the exuberant life of these capital cities, patronizing the Romanisches Café in Berlin as well as Parisian *brasseries* like La Coupole and Le Dôme, gathering spots for the intellectual and artistic circles of these cities. She made numerous new contacts and at a party given by the artist Hermann Konnerth on New Year’s Eve 1927 met her future life partner, Johannes Eichner. The philosopher and art historian gradually took on the larger part of promoting Münter’s work, organizing exhibitions for her and publishing texts on her work. This allowed Münter more time to dedicate to her artistic work. Her stay in France was indeed the beginning of a new highly productive period.

In 1931 she settled in Murnau permanently and from this point on, the first time since her youth, led a sedentary life. Her last trip before the war was to the lakes of northern Italy in 1933. In 1936 Eichner moved from Berlin to live with her in the house in Murnau.



↑ Gabriele Münter in a dress she designed herself at Schnorrstraße 44, Dresden, summer 1905 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

The 1930s were among her most productive years. She painted a lot, exhibited frequently, and continued to expand her network. She became friends, for example, with Hanna Stirnemann, one of the first female museum directors in Germany.

Her work did not come to a halt under the Nazi dictatorship. Although she portrayed the subject of construction work in a small group of paintings, which could be interpreted as opportunistic, the style and composition of these pictures is far from the heroic visual language preferred by the regime.⁹ A novelty in her works was her increased attention to the genre of still life, which lasted until the end of her life.

“then tomorrow I will again jump into something new and unknown” —
Gabriele Münter, a Free Woman Artist

The postwar years in the German art world were dominated by the rediscovery of the various prewar avant-gardes, including the Blue Rider and its circle of artists. Münter received widespread recognition during this period. German museums purchased her paintings for the first time, and she participated in the Venice *Biennale* in 1950 and in the *documenta* in Kassel in 1955. Interest was limited, however, mainly to her works from before 1914. As the open-minded artist that she had always been, she experimented with abstraction as well, in particular in her works on paper. An orientation towards the art market might have played a role in this.

In 1957 Münter donated works of her own as well as a large portion of her collection of works from the Blue Rider group, above all by Kandinsky, to the Lenbachhaus. This major gift was arranged by Hans Konrad Roethel, then the director of the Lenbachhaus, whom she was friends with. The wish of the artist and her partner to start a foundation was likewise realized by Roethel.¹⁰ Up until her death in 1962, Münter remained active as an artist and as an advocate for art. The preservation of her collection during the most difficult times, the donation to a public museum, and the setting up of a foundation all testify to the central significance and social relevance that she assigned to art.

——— 1 Gabriele Münter to Johannes Eichner, Paris, December 6, 1929, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich.

2 Gabriele Münter to her brother Carl Münter and his wife Mary, Moorefield, Arkansas, May 14, 1899, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich. Victoria Horrocks has recently discovered that relatives of Münter owned a photography business in Marshall, Texas, so that she may have received technical tips on photography from them; see Horrocks 2025, 34ff.

3 Ruiz del Árbol 2024; Jansen 2023a.

4 Leroy 2025, 54ff.

5 Jansen 2025a, 76.

6 Müller-Westermann 2025, 74.

7 *Gabriele Münter-Kandinsky. Oljemalninger, Glastavler, Grafik*, Copenhagen, Den Frie Udstilling, March 7–13, 1918.

8 Müller-Westermann 2025, 74–81.

9 Jansen 2023b, 216–18.

10 The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, is the foundation that administers the artist's estate and the house in Murnau.



↑ Gabriele Münter at the opening of the exhibition *The Blue Rider* at the Haus der Kunst, Munich, 1949





- ← Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin (Bildnis Marianne von Werefkin), 1909 – [Cat. 106]
- Jawlensky and Werefkin (Jawlensky und Werefkin), 1908/09 – [Cat. 104]
- Garden in Murnau (Garten in Murnau), c. 1910 – [Cat. 113]



← Still Life on the Tram (After Shopping) (In der Trambahn (Nach dem Einkauf)),
c. 1912 – [Cat. 129]
→ Olga von Hartmann, c. 1910 – [Cat. 114]







- ← Flower Still Life, Sofa and Pillow (Blumenstilleben mit Sofa und Kissen), 1910 – [Cat. 116]
→ Kandinsky and Erma Bossi at the Table (Kandinsky und Erma Bossi am Tisch), 1912 – [Cat. 131]



- ← Living Room in Murnau (Interior) (Wohnzimmer in Murnau (Interieur)), c. 1910 – [Cat. 115]
- Man at the Table (Kandinsky) (Mann am Tisch (Kandinsky)), 1911 – [Cat. 121]
- Kandinsky at the Table (Sketch) (Kandinsky am Tisch (Skizze)), c. 1911 – [Cat. 118]





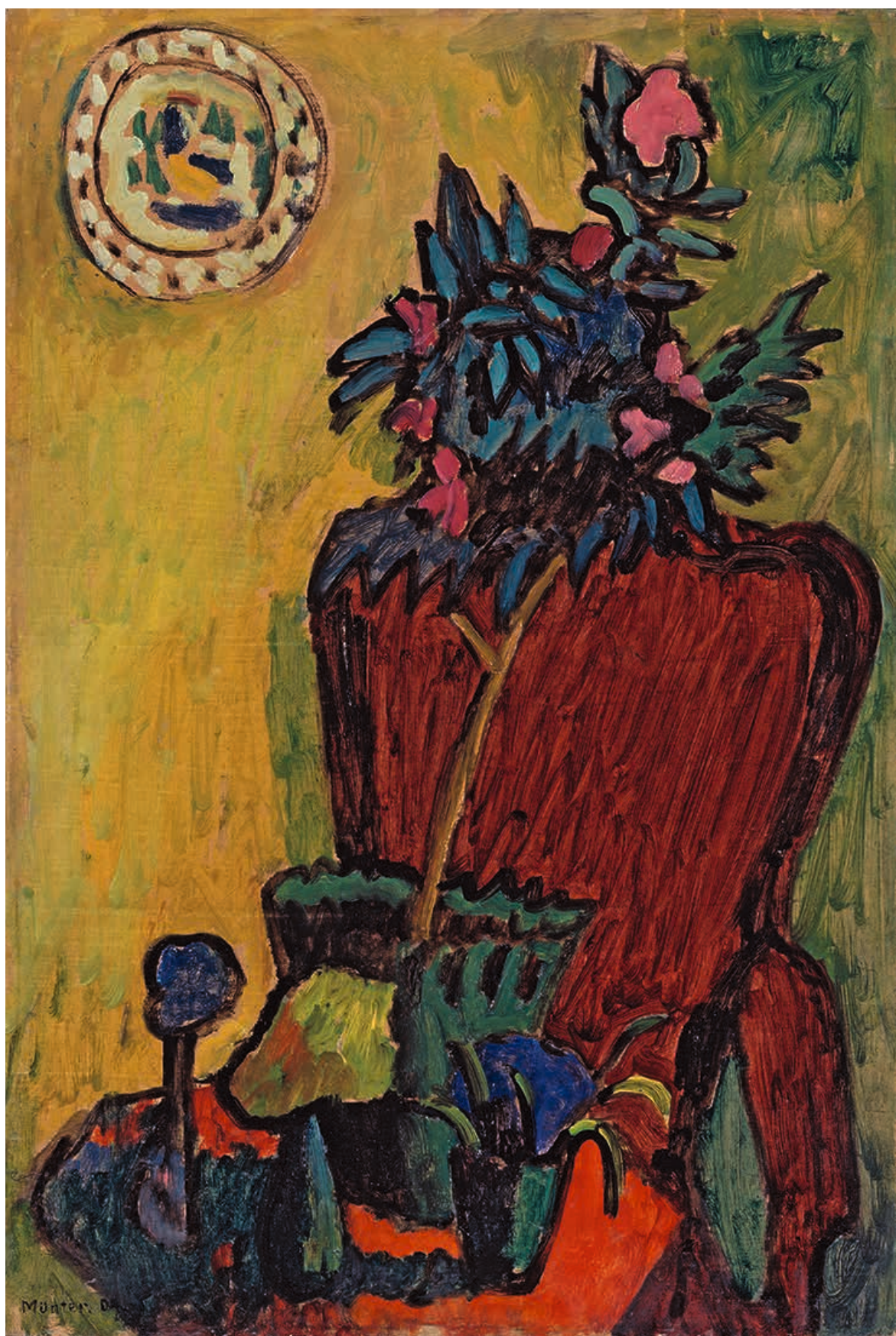
↑ Still Life with Madonna and a Teapot (Stilleben mit Madonna und Teekanne), 1912/13 – [Cat. 132]



- ← *In the Room (Im Zimmer)*, 1913 – [Cat. 137]
- Elfriede Schroeter, *Still Life (Child's Painting) (Stilleben (Kindermalerei))*, c. 1913 – [Cat. 133]
- Elfriede Schroeter, *Portrait of a Woman (Child's Painting) (Weibliches Porträt (Kindermalerei))*, c. 1913 – [Cat. 134]



- ← Dark Still Life (Secret) (Dunkles Stilleben (Geheimnis)), 1911 – [Cat. 120]
→ Still Life with Armchair (Stilleben mit Sessel), 1909 – [Cat. 111]

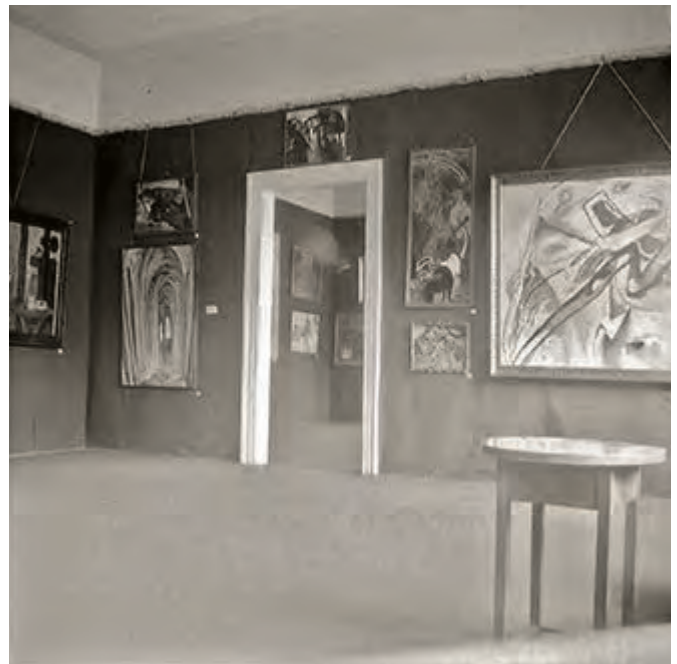
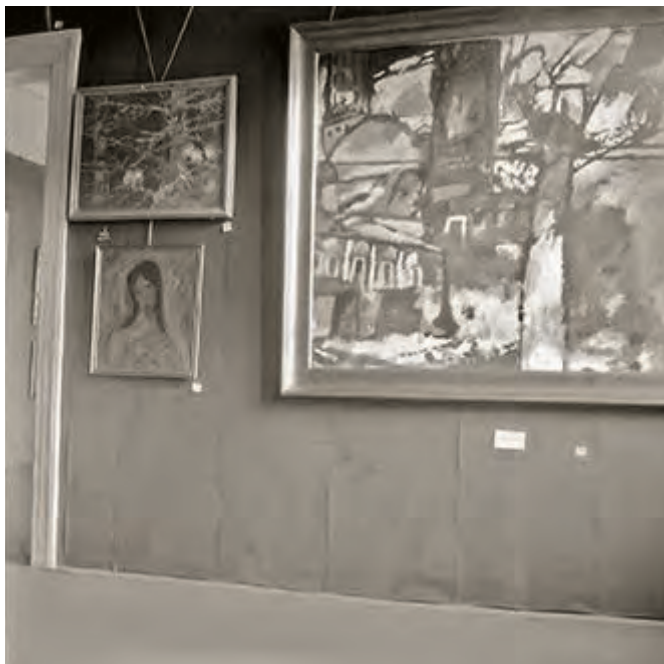




- ← *Young Woman Near Moorefield (Junge Frau bei Moorefield)*, Arkansas, 1899/1900 – [Cat. 95]
→ *Three Women in Sunday Dress (Drei Frauen im Sonntagsstaat)*, Marshall, Texas, 1900 – [Cat. 98]



- ← Little Boy with Toy Gun (Kleiner Junge mit Spielzeugpistole), New York, 1900 – [Cat. 99]
- "Store", Guion, Texas, March 9, 1900 – [Cat. 96]
- ← On the Way to a Steamboat for an Excursion on the Mississippi (Auf dem Weg zum Ausflugsdampfer auf dem Mississippi), St. Louis, 1900 – [Cat. 97]
- Little Girl Standing on a Street (Kleines Mädchen auf einer Straße), St. Louis, 1900 – [Cat. 100]





First exhibition of The Blue Rider, Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, Munich, 1911/12

- ← Room 1 (from left to right): Gabriele Münter, *Dark Still Life (Secret)* (cut off); Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition V* (in the adjacent room); Albert Bloch, *Three Pierrots*; Heinrich Campendonk, *Leaping Horse*; Henri Rousseau, *The Poultry Yard*; Franz Marc, *Portrait of Henri Rousseau*; Robert Delaunay, *La Ville No. 2* (cropped) – [Cat. 123]
- Room 1 (from left to right): Robert Delaunay, *La Ville No. 2*; Arnold Schönberg, *Nocturnal Landscape* (above); Gabriele Münter, *Frosty Landscape* (below); August Macke, *Still Life – Bunch of Flowers with Agave*; Gabriele Münter, *Evening* (above); Albert Bloch, *Houses and Chimneys* – [Cat. 124]
- ← Room 1 (from left to right): Jean-Bloé Niestlé, *Willow Warblers*, Albert Bloch, *Head*; Wassily Kandinsky, *Impression Moscow* – [Cat. 125]
- Room 2 (from left to right): Gabriele Münter, *Still Life (Pink)* (cut off); August Macke, *Native Americans on Horseback* (above); Robert Delaunay, *St. Séverin No. 1* (below); David Burljuk, *Horses* (above the door); Franz Marc, *Landscape with Horses and Rainbow* (above); Wassily Kandinsky, *With Sun*; Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation 22* – [Cat. 127]
- ← Room 2 (from left to right): Franz Marc, *The Yellow Cow* (cut off); Arnold Schönberg, *Self-Portrait, Walking (from behind)*; Wassily Kandinsky, *St. George II*; Vladimir Burljuk, *Portrait Study* (above); Gabriele Münter, *Country Road in Winter* (below); Franz Marc, *Deer in the Forest I*; Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition V* (cut off) – [Cat. 126]
- Room 3 (from left to right): Franz Marc, *Stony Path* (cut off); Robert Delaunay, *Tour Eiffel*; Elisabeth Epstein, *Portrait* (above); Heinrich Campendonk, *Woman and Animal* (below) – [Cat. 128]





- ← Still Life with St. George (Stillleben mit Heiligem Georg), 1911 – [Cat. 122]
- ← The Dragon Fight (Drachenkampf), 1913 – [Cat. 135]
- Still Life with Vases, Bottles, and Branches of a Rowan Tree (Stillleben mit Vasen, Flaschen und Zweigen eines Vogelbeerbaums), 1908/09 – [Cat. 105]



- ← *Sleeping Girl (Brown, Blue)* (*Schlafendes Mädchen (braun, blau)*), 1934 – [Cat. 157]
→ *Woman in an Armchair, Writing (Stenography: Swiss Woman in Pyjamas)* (*Dame im Sessel, schreibend (Stenographie. Schweizerin in Pyjama)*), 1929 – [Cat. 148]



—Melanie Vietmeier

→ Maria Franck-Marc in Ried, 1917 – Private collection

Maria Franck—





Marc

“My yearning is for art”¹ —Maria Franck-Marc

Maria Franck-Marc (1876–1955) was an artist who worked in painting, graphic arts, and textiles.² She grew up in Berlin and completed her training as a drawing teacher at the Königliche Kunstschule (Royal Art School) there in 1895. At the same time, she studied in the private “Ladies’ Studio” run by the painter Karl Storch. In 1904 she continued her studies in Munich at the Damen-Akademie (Ladies’ Academy) run by the Künstlerinnen-Verein (Association of Women Artists). She worked under Otto Modersohn at the artists’ colony in Worpswede in the summer and fall of 1905. That same year she began her relationship with Franz Marc, which was to remain a defining influence on her life.³ She continued to develop her skills in her collaborative artistic work with Marc. Franck-Marc seldom displayed her works, yet presented paintings and prints at the Künstlerinnen-Verein’s summer exhibition in 1907 and received a prize from the association for a design for a fan in 1909.⁴ Inspired by the reformist ideas of a fusion of art and life, both Maria Franck-Marc and Franz Marc worked in the applied arts intensively, with the former designing brooches and other jewelry.

A visit to the first exhibition organized by the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists’ Association Munich) in 1909 made a lasting impression on the artist,⁵ as did a visit in 1910 with the collector Bernhard Koehler, a major patron of Franz Marc’s, in Berlin, to see Koehler’s collection. Koehler’s collection of works by French avant-garde artists such as Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, and Paul Signac electrified her. Other artistic tendencies, however, she regarded more critically.⁶



→ Maria Franck-Marc and Franz Marc on the balcony on Ainmillerstraße 36, Munich, 1911/12 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

Like other artists belonging to the circle of the NKVM, the unmarried couple moved out of Munich to the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, first to Lenggries, then Sindelsdorf, and ultimately to Ried. Collaborative artistic work and discussions with friends about new artistic goals generated ideas for joint projects. Franck-Marc thus took part with the Blue Rider circle in the editorial meetings for the programmatic almanac *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), which established the movement as part of a worldwide artistic endeavor that transcended epochs and genres. Franck-Marc showed three graphic works at the *Zweite Ausstellung der Redaktion Der Blaue Reiter. Schwarz-Weiss* (Second Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider: Black and White), held at Hans Goltz's gallery in 1912. One of the few reproductions in the catalogue of the more than 300 works displayed was the colored drawing *Dancing Sheep* → fig. p.154 by Franck-Marc, together with works by Kandinsky, Natalia Goncharova, Erich Heckel, and others.

In addition to the conventional still life, Franck-Marc's subjects primarily address two central themes: the world of children, and nature with its floral motifs. The former was an important aspect of



← Maria Franck-Marc with Etta and Otto Stangl, c. 1950 – Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See

the Blue Rider, as it symbolized authenticity, unsophisticatedness, and immediacy of expression. This interest must be situated within the contemporary framework of the New Education movement, Sigmund Freud's developmental psychology, and publications such as Ellen Key's *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* (The Century of the Child) from 1902⁷ and Georg Kerschensteiner's study and analysis of approximately 300,000 children's drawings.⁸ As Matthias Mühling has noted, children's art was the antithesis of academicism for the Blue Rider. At the same time, this valuation expressed a rejection of the principles of an industrial-capitalist society that strove to mold children into productive adults. The involvement with children's art was thus, according to Mühling, an expression of "critically emancipatory thinking."⁹ In 1908 Franck-Marc worked on a portfolio of ten "children's pictures", a project that the publishers Insel Verlag ultimately rejected. Like her painting *Toys with Birdcage*, →fig. p.155 the portfolio's gouaches display intense colors and pronounced flatness. The unusual proportions reflect the perspective of a child

looking at its environment. While the title page suggests sweet images, the individual pages surprise the viewer with profound twists and humorous touches. The Nutcracker Soldier, who has gone out of control, trampling the nuts with his feet, →fig. p.156 may be read as an ironical commentary on the Wilhelmine era’s militarist and nationalist mentality and its craving for order and obedience.¹⁰ The above-mentioned drawing *Dancing Sheep* likewise disrupts order and inverts power relationships, with the animals dancing on their matchstick-thin legs around the shepherd – who is signified as a toy by the pedestal.

The painting *Flowers and Yellow Thistles* →fig. p.160 similarly expresses opposition in its choice of plants and their mode of representation. Characteristic of Franck-Marc’s depictions of nature is their exaggerated close-up perspective. Like a zoomed-in shot of nature, a visible horizon is missing, as is clear spatial orientation. The scholarly literature has identified impulses from August Macke’s works on her manner of painting.¹¹ What has not been considered is her involvement with the works of artists Jean-Bloé Niestlé and Robert Delaunay, who both belonged to the Blue Rider. Marc and Franck-Marc shared a close friendship with the animal painter Niestlé and his partner Marguerite Legros.¹² Niestlé, too, chose in his paintings and in his many photographs a close-up view of fauna and flora, as in his *Water Pipit* from 1909, presented at *The First Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider*. During her trip to Paris with Marc and Macke in 1912,¹³ Franck-Marc saw a selection of Delaunay’s “window pictures” series in his studio, paintings in which the color fields of complementary contrasts fill the entire pictorial surface.

The First World War and the death of Franz Marc in 1916 marked a profound turning point for Franck-Marc. From then on, she dedicated herself to his estate, organized exhibitions, and worked on publications, among them a biography of Marc in collaboration with art historian Alois Schardt. In 1936 it was banned by the Nazis, as was the commemorative exhibition held that same year for the twentieth anniversary of Marc’s death. In spite of the increasing vilification of Marc’s works as “degenerate,” Franck-Marc continued to advocate further publications.¹⁴

As regards her own artistic production, she gave up painting and turned to embroidery based on Marc’s models, →fig. p.164 then to weaving mostly abstract tapestries based on her own designs. →fig. pp.165–167 She started learning how to weave during several stays at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau.¹⁵ Her production of tapestries, nevertheless, seems to have begun in earnest in Ascona, where she lived from 1929 to 1939, alternating with Ried. The area’s mild climate allayed her rheumatic condition and she not only met with Marianne von Werefkin, but also interacted with the weaving workshops located there. After her return to her home in Ried, she wove her works in a hut specially constructed for this purpose on her property.¹⁶ Her tapestries from the 1930s to the 1950s demonstrate that she continued to engage with contemporary tendencies in art. This is also evident in her tapestries exhibited at Etta and Otto Stangl’s gallery in 1952, which are formally close to the abstract works of Paul Klee and Fritz Winter. Statements by Franck-Marc from this period connect her ideas to those of the Blue Rider and also apply to her later woven items. As she wrote in 1950, “And this path will surely lead [the painter] to abstract painting. Whoever has set off on this path once will not return to objects, [he/she] will have reached a higher spiritual plane, from which other views and possibilities arise.”¹⁷

——— 1 Maria Franck-Marc to Gabriele Münter, February 15, 1918, quoted in Exh. Cat. Munich 1995, 105.

2 An art history fixated on male artists has long reduced her scholarly reception to her shared life with Franz Marc. It was only in 1995 that the Lenbachhaus dedicated the first-ever retrospective to her. Some exhibitions in recent years have established her as an artist belonging to the Blue Rider: *Maria Marc im Kreis des Blauen Reiter* (Maria Marc in the Circle of the Blue Rider, Schloßmuseum Murnau, 2004); *Expressionists: Kandinsky, Münter and the Blue Rider* (Tate Modern, London 2024); *Gruppendynamik. Der Blaue Reiter* (Group Dynamics: The Blue Rider) and *Der Blaue Reiter. Eine neue Sprache* (The Blue Rider: A New Language), both in the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, 2021–2024 and 2024–2026); *Maria Franck-Marc* (Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See, 2026).

3 At the beginning of their relationship, Franz Marc was also involved with Annette von Eckhart, who was married, and later with the painter Marie Schnür (who was Franck-Marc’s teacher), whom he in fact married. It was only years later that he obtained a dispensation for this marriage and was able to marry Maria Franck in 1913.

4 Exh. Cat. Munich 1995, 23, 35.

5 Maria Franck-Marc to Franz Marc, December 26, 1909: “I am still thinking a lot about the exhibition at Thannhauser and am looking forward to working and to the summer,” quoted in Exh. Cat. Munich 1995, 40. In her biographical memoirs she mentions the purely abstract poster by Wassily Kandinsky for the exhibition (ibid).

6 Maria Franck-Marc to Franz Marc, April 21, 1910, quoted in Exh. Cat. Munich 1995, 45. She also visited a Manet exhibition in Paul Cassirer's famed gallery (ibid.).

7 Like other proponents of New Education, Ellen Key also advocated eugenics and in this context the right to abortion – similar to the feminist Helene Stöcker; see Richter 2018, 154.

8 Kerschensteiner 1905.

9 Mühling 2021b, 255.

10 Vietmeier 2024c, 137.

11 Exh.Cat. Munich 1995, 68.

12 See the correspondence between Franz Marc and Maria Franck-Marc, Marc 2016.

13 During this trip they also visited Elisabeth Epstein.

14 See Vietmeier 2022, 105.

15 “1922–23 Stud.: Bauhaus Weimar Weberei” (1922–23 student, Bauhaus Weimar, weaving), entry on “Marc, Maria,” in *Artists of the World*, database of the world's artists, https://aow-1degryter-1com-1xkqcu5ki0011.emedia1.bsb-muenchen.de/artist/_00062950 [accessed on April 26, 2026].

16 Extensive information on Maria Franck-Marc as a textile artist in Baumgartner 2019a.

17 Epilogue by Maria Franck-Marc in the study on Franz Marc by Klaus Lankheit, Marc 1950, 74f.





- ← Worpswede, Landscape with Farmhouse (Worpswede, Landschaft mit Hof), 1905 – [Cat. 28]
- ← Still Life with Easter Lamb (Stillleben mit Osterlamm), c. 1909 – [Cat. 43]
- Firs on a Sloping Meadow (Tannen am Wiesenhang), c. 1908 – [Cat. 38]



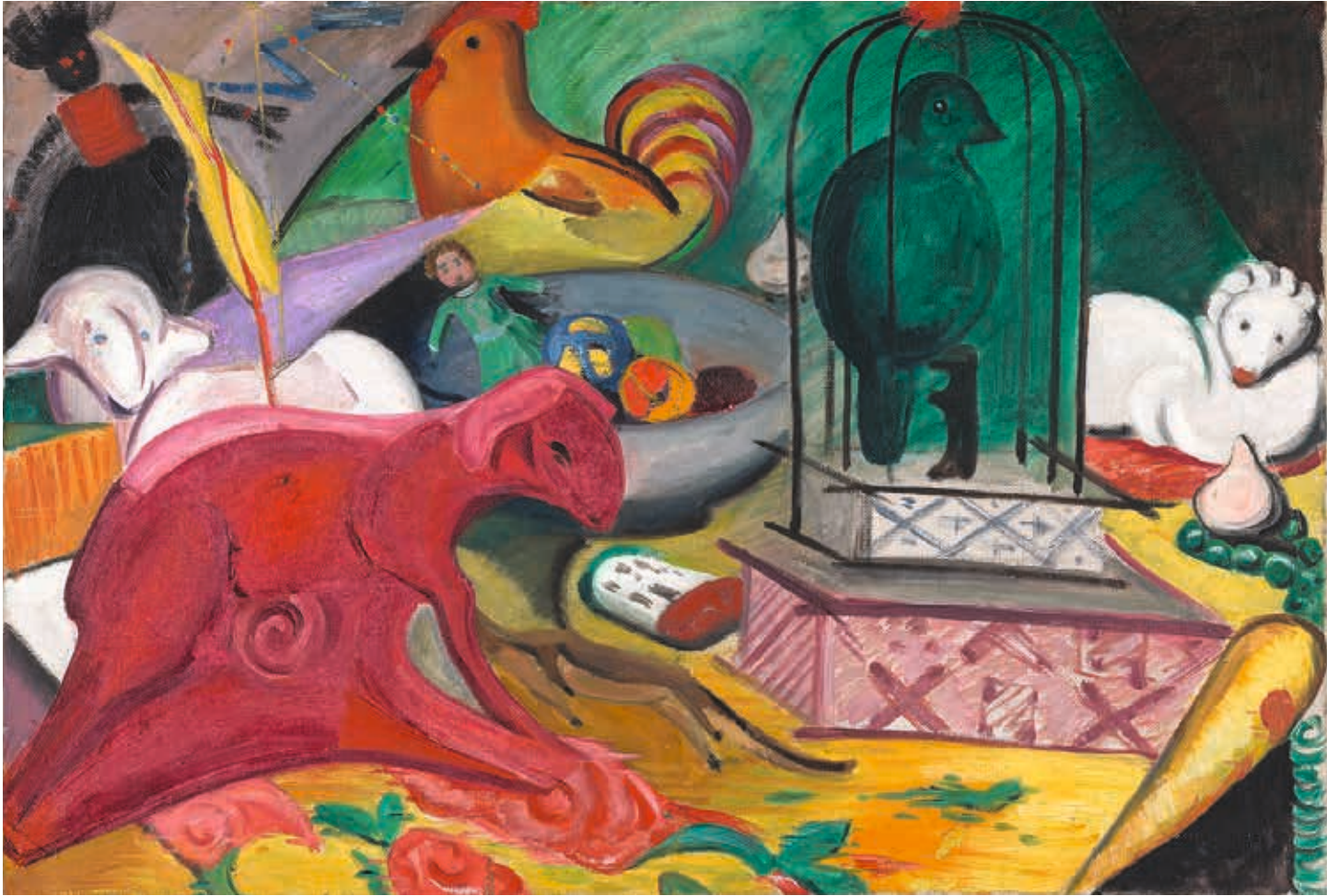
← *Flowers (Blumen)*, c. 1910 – [Cat. 46]

→ *Hyacinth, Tulips and Jugs (Hyazinthe, Tulpen und Krüge)*, c. 1909/10 – [Cat. 44]

→ *Peonies (Pfingstrosen)*, c. 1909/10 – [Cat. 45]







- ← *Dancing Sheep* (*Tanzende Schafe*), 1908 – [Cat. 41]
→ *Toys with Birdcage* (*Kinderspielzeug mit Vogelkäfig*), c. 1911 – [Cat. 48]





- ← Nutcracker (Nussknacker), c. 1908 – [Cat. 35]
- ← Pig, Potato Shepherd with His Flock (Schwein, Kartoffelhirte mit seiner Herde), c. 1908 – [Cat. 37]
- Figures in a Circus Ring (Figuren in der Manege), c. 1908 – [Cat. 33]
- Blue Man with Toy Horses (Blauer Mann mit Spielzeugpferden), c. 1908 – [Cat. 32]





← Three Wise Men (Heilige Drei Könige), c. 1911/12 – [Cat. 50]

→ The Shepherds on the Way to the Manger (Die Hirten auf dem Weg zur Krippe), 1911 – [Cat. 49]





- ← *Flowers and Yellow Thistles (Blumen und gelbe Disteln)*, c. 1913 – [Cat. 52]
→ *Girl with Toddler (Mädchen mit Kleinkind)*, c. 1913 – [Cat. 54]



- ← *Two Children Among Flowers* (*Zwei Kinder zwischen Blumen*), c. 1912 – [Cat. 51]
→ *Flower Still Life with Dahlias* (*Blumenstück mit Dahlien*), c. 1913 – [Cat. 53]







← *Landscape with Horses and Rainbow* (*Landschaft mit Pferden und Regenbogen*),
c.1914/15 – [Cat. 55]
→ *Red in Red* (*Rot in Rot*), c.1935/50 – [Cat. 58]





← *Birds (Vögel)*, c. 1930/35 – [Cat. 56]
→ *Black Line (Schwarze Linie)*, c. 1950 – [Cat. 59]

—Sandra Uhrig

→ Erma Bossi in Munich, c. 1905 – Archivio Carla Pellegrini,
Fondazione Galleria Milano Archive, Milan

Erma Bossi



Searching for Traces —Erma Bossi

Aside from a little-known portrait by the Trieste painter Carlo Wostry from 1902,¹ the depiction of the woman in conversation with Wassily Kandinsky at the dining table in Gabriele Münter's house in Murnau in a painting by Münter →fig. p. 127 was long considered the only known likeness of the artist Erma Bossi (1875–1952).² Münter fixed this motif in several pencil drawings around 1909/10 and used it in a total of four variants of the oil painting until 1912.

Yet how could it be that a female artist close to Kandinsky, who only died in the middle of the twentieth century, seemingly left no traces of her life, apart from a few works? The above-mentioned picture at least documents Bossi's visit to Münter's home, which must have occurred shortly after the purchase of the house in September 1909, as suggested by the pencil sketches. The official register of summer guests to the town³ mentions a further visit to Murnau by Bossi. In 1908 she is listed as "Bossi Erma/painter/Munich" at Martin Echter's pension in the Pfarrgasse 235a. Did she possibly join Kandinsky, Alexej von Jawlensky, Münter, and Marianne von Werefkin during their first painting holiday together in Murnau in the summer of 1908? In 1909 she became a member of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists' Association Munich) and contributed at least sixteen works to their exhibitions up to 1911.

Yet where and from whom did she receive her training? In a biographical note included in the collection catalogue of the Trieste Museo Revoltella from 1933, she stated that she had spent three years studying painting with Anton Ažbe and Heinrich Knirr. The latter had taught her fellow Trieste painter Adolfo Levier a few years previously.⁴ A large share of Bossi's statements, unfortunately, could not be verified in the corresponding archives. What's more, she listed 1882 as her year of birth and thus made herself seven years younger. On a registration form for the Venice *Biennale* she removed a further three years from her age by giving "1885" as her year of birth.⁵ In fact,



← Erma Bossi at the easel in her Milan studio, late 1930s – Archivio Carla Pellegrini, Fondazione Galleria Milano Archive, Milan → Erma Bossi with a friend and her dog Lilina in Milan, 1940s – Archivio Carla Pellegrini, Fondazione Galleria Milano Archive, Milan

the resident registration office in Trieste lists her as Erminia Bosich, born in Pula, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on June 9, 1875. After attending the high school for girls in Trieste, her interest in painting became stronger and she probably took lessons in a private studio, as the city lacked an art academy. Her participation in several exhibitions in Trieste, as well as various small reviews, is documented; in 1897 she was recommended to and accepted in the Trieste Artists' Association, taking part in their group shows until 1904. To date it has been assumed that her path then led her directly to Munich.⁶

Bossi seems to have avoided government offices. She did not fulfill the requirement to report to the registration office, neither in Munich nor in Paris. In Munich only the registration form of her partner, the tenor Carlo Barrera, has been located; she used his surname for some time as the double name "Barrera-Bossi."⁷ Many phases of her life remain undocumented today, and the whereabouts of the majority of her works are unknown. Like Olga Meerson, she shares the fate of many women artists who have remained buried in the shadows of art history because they lacked a famous partner whose fame attracted attention to their own work.

At least some photographs and documents have been recovered through Bossi's nephew Adolfo Bossi that prove her participation in exhibitions and the existence of later works.⁸ In addition, glass plate negatives in the estate of Adolf Erbslöh record works that Bossi made during her time with the NKVM. Aside from two known works, *Moon Night* and *Evening Conversation*, both made around 1910,⁹ they document three lost paintings by Bossi: a view of a port, a concert scene with three musicians (perhaps her lost painting *Trio?*), and the view of a garden between buildings. At least three of these works were shown in the NKVM's second exhibition. Contact between Erbslöh and Bossi is known to have extended until 1932, when Erbslöh planned to organize an exhibition for 1934 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the NKVM's founding. Bossi agreed to take part, as a letter from Erbslöh to Jawlensky mentions.¹⁰

The catalogue of the third NKVM exhibition of 1911 lists Paris as Bossi's place of residence. Participation in the Salon des Indépendants and Salon d'Automne exhibitions cannot be documented,¹¹ but the paintings she had previously created in Munich reveal the strong influence of French art on her work. The titles like *Café Blanche, Paris* and *Moulin Rouge, Paris* of works displayed at the first NKVM show in 1909 suggest that she had visited the French capital at least once before 1911. The play of lights and shadows, as well as the evocative images of urban and night life, show that she was influenced by the poster designs of Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, among others, but that she rendered them self-confidently in the medium of paint. She focused on the essential, employing vibrant colors, leaving details to the imagination, and emphasizing the core subject important to her. Her painting *Interior with Three Figures in a Café* → fig. p. 179 presents a waiter standing to the left and waiting, his entire attention focused on the couple sitting in the foreground. In contrast to the large swaths of color that portray the architectonic space of the café, Bossi creates a sense of depth by staggering the lamps diagonally, accentuating the vastness of the empty café. This device simultaneously highlights the actual subject of the picture, which is the obliviousness of the couple that has tuned out their surroundings. While this work clearly shows her stylistic affinity to Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch, other paintings place her in compositional proximity to Maurice Denis, Édouard Vuillard, or Louis Anquetin.¹²

More conventional, yet no less expressive, is how she staged a portrait of a woman, →fig. p.175 which she presumably presented at the first NKVM exhibition.¹³ The identity of the self-assured young woman in evening dress is not revealed by Bossi. The facial features, the hairstyle, and the fondness for broad hats suggests, however, that the picture is a self-portrait.

From 1921 onward, Bossi was permanently registered in Milan, although she frequently changed addresses. She continued to take part in exhibitions, above all in Milan and Trieste, and showed at the 17th Venice *Biennale* in 1930. In 1952 Erma Bossi passed away in Milan.

——— ¹ Civico Museo Revoltella, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Triest, inventory no. 3141.

² In 2013 the Schloßmuseum Murnau took its oil painting version of *Kandinsky and Erma Bossi at the Table*, which had been acquired for the collection in 2001, as an opportunity to conduct research on Bossi in preparation for an exhibition; see Exh. Cat. Murnau 2013.

³ Register of the summer guests staying in Murnau, Marktarchiv Murnau.

⁴ Vatta 2013, 49.

⁵ Rocca 2013, 59ff.

⁶ Vatta 2013, 33.

⁷ This recalls the double name Münter-Kandinsky, which Gabriele Münter used for some years, even though she was never married to Wassily Kandinsky.

⁸ See Rocca 2013.

⁹ Both works are reproduced in Otto Fischer's *Das Neue Bild* (Munich 1912) on plates VII and VIII, but today must be regarded as lost.

¹⁰ Adolf Erbslöh to Alexej von Jawlensky, January 1, 1932, Family Archive Adolf Erbslöh at the Schloßmuseum Murnau.

¹¹ von Breska-Ficović 2013, 27.

¹² Fäthke 2013.

¹³ Listed in the first catalogue of the NKVM 1909 under no. 12 as "Portrait".



- ← *Portrait of a Man (Bildnis eines Mannes)* (verso), 1910 – [Cat. 7]
- ← *Still Life (Stilleben)* (recto), 1910 – [Cat. 7]
- *Self-Portrait (Selbstbildnis)* (acquired in 1970 as *Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin*), c. 1910 – [Cat. 5]



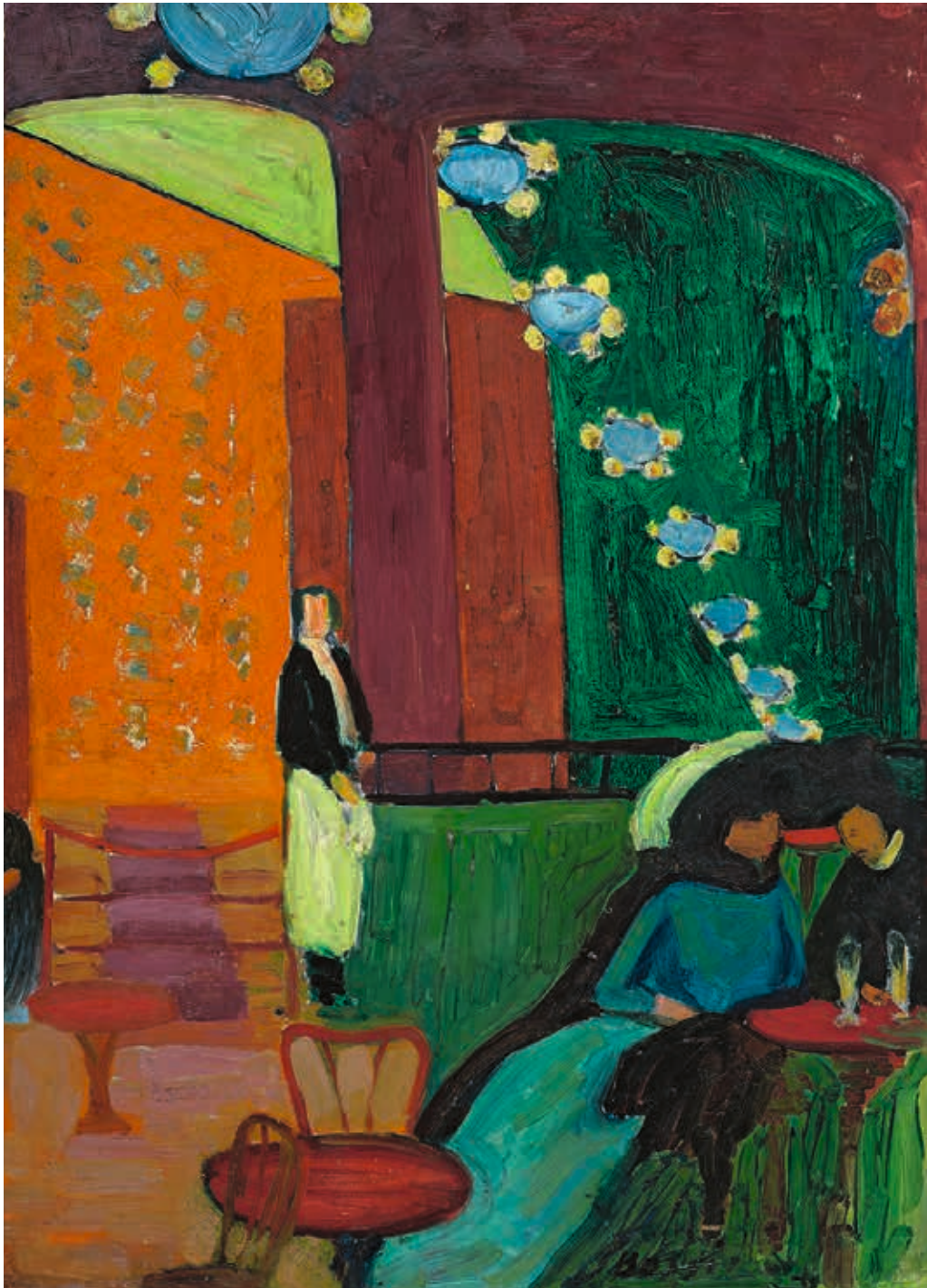




← *Circus (Zirkus)*, 1909 – [Cat. 2]

→ *Interior with Lamp (Interieur mit Lampe)*, 1909 – [Cat. 1]





← *At the Opera (In der Oper)*, 1909/10 – [Cat. 3]

→ *Interior with Three Figures in a Café (Interieur mit drei Figuren im Café)*, c. 1910 – [Cat. 4]



← *Bathers (Badende)*, c. 1911 – [Cat. 8]

→ *Still Life with a Carafe (Stilleben mit Karaffe)*, c. 1912 – [Cat. 9]



—Waleria Dorogova

→ Sonia Delaunay at rue de Saint-Simon, with *Ville de Paris* by Robert Delaunay in the background and a *Fenêtre* beside her, 1950 – Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fonds Robert et Sonia Delaunay

Sonia Delaunay



Rivalry and Promise — Sonia Delaunay and the Strategic Role of the Blue Rider

As is well known, Robert Delaunay's participation in the first 1911 exhibition organized by the editors of *Der Blaue Reiter* at the Thannhauser gallery owed much to the friendship between the young Russian painters Elisabeth Epstein and Sonia Delaunay. Thanks to this connection, five of his works were shown there and he was included at subsequent venues in Germany. A photograph of one of Delaunay's *Eiffel Tower* paintings, sent by Epstein to Wassily Kandinsky, earned the artist a prominent place in the exhibition itself and in the almanac, ultimately leading to the sale of three works.¹

Strikingly, it was not Robert but Sonia who oversaw the practical arrangements, organizing the shipment of additional works to Herwarth Walden in Berlin in 1912. Both Kandinsky and Alexej von Jawlensky – who, it later came to light, had purchased Robert's *La Ville No. 2* – corresponded directly with Sonia regarding the transport of the works and to express their gratitude.²

Robert's involvement with the Blue Rider soon proved advantageous for Sonia as well, as the connections forged there ultimately led to the extraordinarily extensive presentation of works by both Delaunays at the *First German Autumn Salon*, held at Walden's gallery *Der Sturm* in 1913 – an event that marked a decisive breakthrough for Sonia's own interdisciplinary oeuvre.



↑ Sonia Delaunay and Robert Delaunay standing before *Hélise* by Robert Delaunay, 1923 – Paris, Centre Pompidou-MNAM/CCI, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Fonds Sonia et Robert Delaunay

At the same time, the Blue Rider itself benefited greatly from the mediating efforts and communicative talents of the two polyglot networkers Epstein and Delaunay. Through their initiative, the group secured for its exhibition the much-desired new French presence, which, in rivalry with the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (NKVM, New Artists' Association Munich), conferred upon it the transnational stature to which it aspired.³ Robert Delaunay's inclusion in the Munich exhibition thus appears less as the accidental byproduct of personal friendship than as the result of a strategic alignment from which all involved benefited – something Epstein and Delaunay were no doubt fully aware of.

Although the two women most likely first met in Paris around 1906, while studying at the Académie de la Palette, they were immediately linked by a shared Russian-speaking circle. This network included, among others, the philologist Alexander Smirnov, who championed the Delaunays' Simultanism in St. Petersburg around 1913, as well as Alexandra Exter and Marie Vassilieff, who lived alongside Epstein and Sophie Terk (the future Sonia Delaunay)⁴ at Madame Bouvet's boarding house for young women artists at 64 Boulevard de Port-Royal. Epstein's sister, Fanny Hefter, also maintained close ties with Delaunay over the course of many decades. During World War II, Epstein went on to facilitate the sale of works by Robert Delaunay to Switzerland — a vital source of income for Sonia following his death in 1941.

Even decades after its dissolution, the legacy of the Blue Rider remained largely in the hands of the women who had once helped secure its earliest triumphs. When debates surrounding the origins of abstraction resurfaced with renewed intensity in postwar Paris, two artists in particular — Kandinsky and Delaunay — moved to the center of the discussion, along with their widows, who emerged as active participants in the dispute. Although non-figurative art had not constituted a clearly defined programmatic principle in the early years of the group, the Blue Rider was retrospectively recast as a site of competing claims. This became particularly apparent when Ludwig Grote informed Sonia Delaunay in May 1949 of the forthcoming exhibition *The Blue Rider: Munich and the Art of the Twentieth Century, 1908–1914* at the Haus der Kunst in Munich.⁵ She responded by lending ten works from Robert's early oeuvre and encouraged Epstein to exhibit her own work as well.⁶

The timing of Grote's project could hardly have been more sensitive. Against the backdrop of the exhibition *The First Masters of Abstract Art*, held in the spring and summer of 1949 at the Musée de Grenoble and Galerie Maeght in Paris, and of the accompanying publication by Michel Seuphor, heated controversy arose as to which artists deserved a place within the canon of early abstract



↑ Sonia Delaunay wearing a Simultanist ensemble at rue des Grands-Augustins, with *Hommage à Blériot* by Robert Delaunay in the background, 1913/14 – Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Fonds Robert et Sonia Delaunay

painting. What was at stake was not merely the question of who had driven the development of abstraction, and in what order, but also who could legitimately serve as the historical precursor to contemporary art. Sonia Delaunay rejected Kandinsky's status as a pioneer and, with regard to the Munich exhibition, was convinced that Nina Kandinskaya firmly intended "to convert the exhibition into a homage to Kandinsky."⁷ She therefore curated her loans with exceptional care and nuance. The resulting selection suggests that she was much less concerned with positioning Robert Delaunay historically within the framework of the Blue Rider than to reveal the subtle evolution of his early painting, and in comparison with the other artists – Kandinsky above all – to show it to its greatest advantage.



↑ Sonia Delaunay in a Simultanist costume, holding Ricciotto Canudo's *Les Transplantés* with a Simultanist cover, 1913/14 – Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Fonds Robert et Sonia Delaunay

The Blue Rider thus came to occupy a dual role in Sonia Delaunay's biography. On the one hand, it evoked the many years of her long-standing camaraderie with Elisabeth Epstein and the artistic circle they had once shared; on the other, it became a vehicle for her strategic efforts to secure and defend Robert Delaunay's place among the leading figures of modern art – at the very moment when the international historiography of abstraction was beginning to take shape.

Rivalry and Promise – Sonia Delaunay and the Strategic Role of the Blue Rider

——— ¹ On the chronology and sources of these events, see the detailed account in Schuster 1985.

² Wassily Kandinsky to Sonia Delaunay, March 10, 1912 and April 8, 1912; Alexej von Jawlensky to Sonia Delaunay, November 22, 1912, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Fonds Robert et Sonia Delaunay. *III Lettres et manuscrits reçus par Robert et Sonia Delaunay. XIII–XX*. With thanks to Roman Zieglgänsberger for bringing this to my attention.

³ Goetzmann 2016.

⁴ Before her marriage to Robert Delaunay in 1910, Sonia, who had been born Sarah Stern, informally adopted the surname of her relatives Heinrich and Anna Terk, who had raised her in St. Petersburg. She exhibited between approximately 1913 and 1920 under the name of Sonia Delaunay-Terk and signed her works accordingly (occasionally continuing the practice into the early 1920s), especially when exhibiting together with Robert Delaunay. In this light, her use of the double surname may be understood as a deliberate means of distinguishing her own oeuvre.

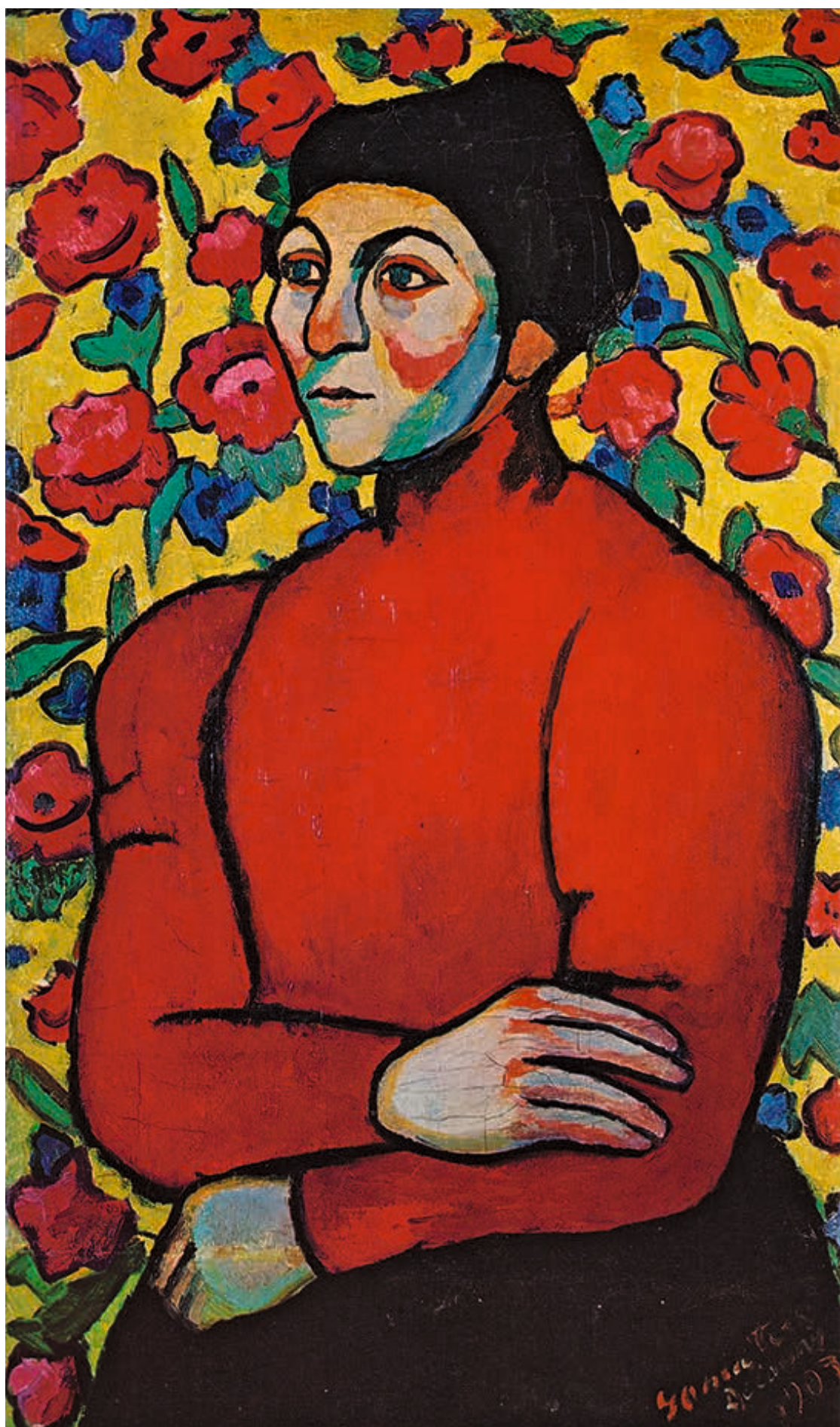
⁵ Sonia Delaunay, Journal, May 24, 1949, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Fonds Robert et Sonia Delaunay, NAF 28443.

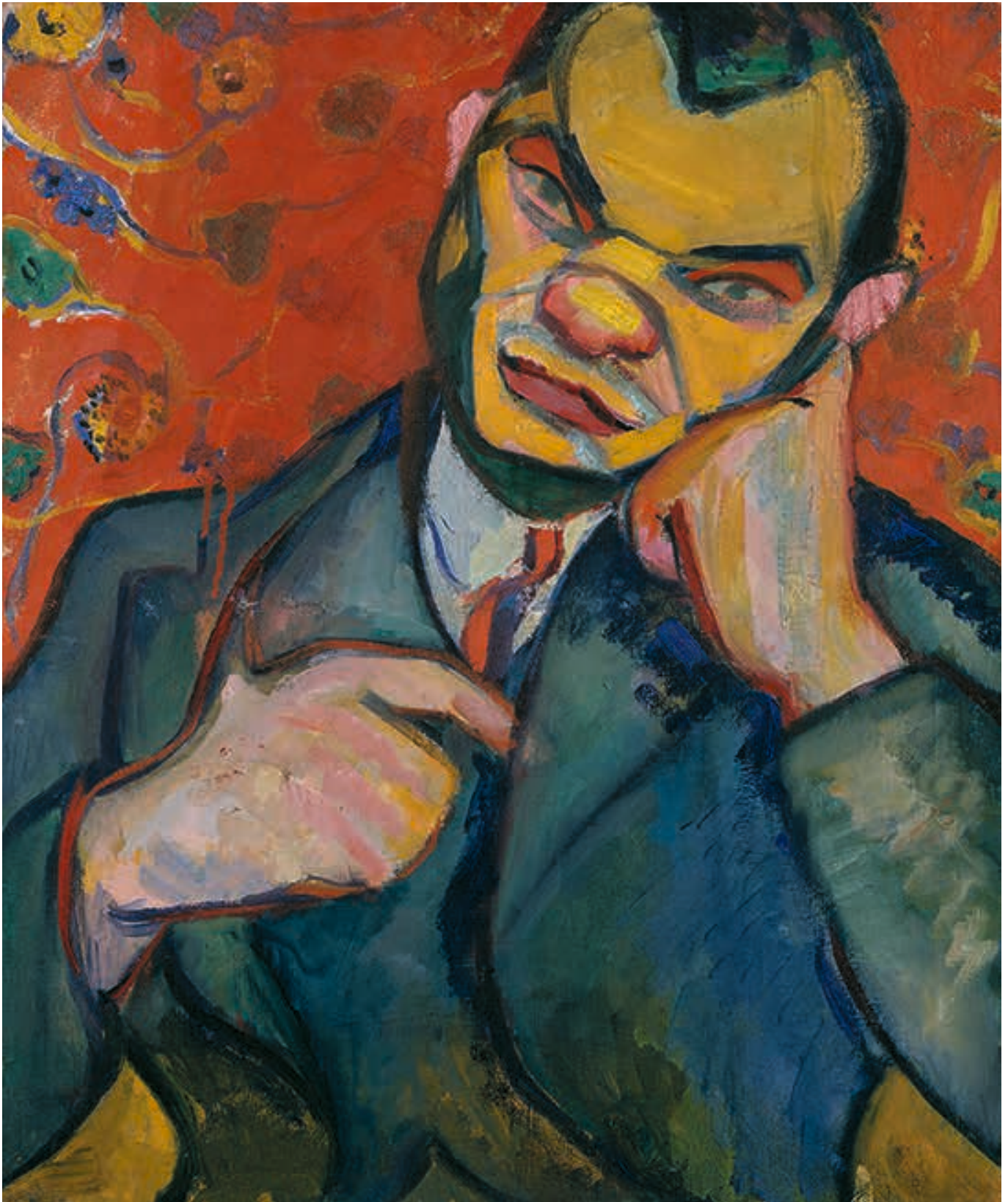
⁶ Ibid., June 11, 1949. Delaunay's loans were later shown in Basel, the second venue of the exhibition.

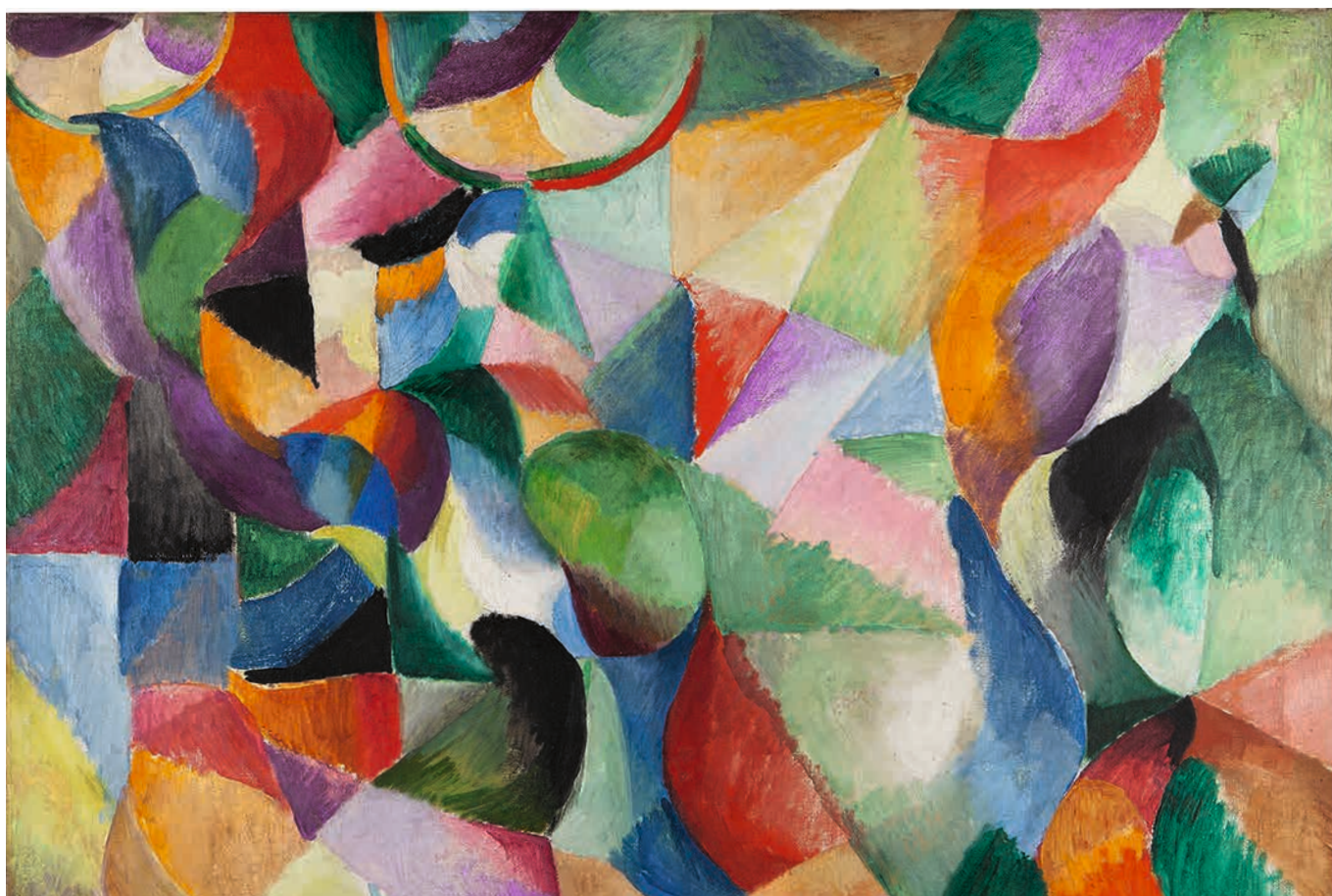
⁷ Ibid., June 14, 1949.



- ← *Deux Fillettes Finlandaises*, 1907 – [Cat. 10]
- ← *Marché au Minho*, c. 1915/16 – [Cat. 14]
- *Philomena*, 1907 – [Cat. 11]







← *Portrait of Tchouiko (Bildnis Tchouiko)*, 1908 – [Cat. 12]
→ *Bal Bullier*, 1913 – [Cat. 13]

—Bettina Löwen



Emmi Dresler



↑ Kandinsky's "Evening Nude Drawing" class in the Phalanx School: Olga Meerson, Emmi Dresler, Wilhelm Hüsgen, Gabriele Münter, Richard Kothe, Wassily Kandinsky, Maria Giesler (from left to right), spring 1902 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

Little Works Create the Big Picture —Emmi Dresler

The only known photograph of Emmi Dresler (1880–1962) shows her drinking tea with six other persons. Taken in spring 1902 at the art school of the Phalanx artists' group, it documents Wassily Kandinsky's "Evening Nude Drawing" class. The woman behind the teapot is Dresler. Her friendship with Gabriele Münter und Kandinsky brought her into contact with the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists' Association Munich) and the Blue Rider. Although she was "in the thick of it," she is today among the women artists whose life and work have mostly been forgotten.¹

Shortly after moving to Munich from her hometown of Siegen, she joined Kandinsky's painting class as one of its first female students. Dresler became part of the circle of the Munich avant-garde, meeting Münter and Olga Meerson. Dresler lived at various addresses in the districts where Munich's cultural life was centered.² She continued her art training and went on a study trip to Kallmünz with her class in summer 1903.³ After the Phalanx closed down, she remained in Munich, maintaining close contact with Münter, who repeatedly stayed in the Pension Stella in the Adalbertstraße, which Dresler had recommended.⁴ Their regular correspondence and her visits to Murnau attest to their continuing relationship. In the summer months of 1904 and 1905, Dresler stayed in Feldwies at Lake Chiemsee, where she probably attended Julius Exter's painting school.⁵

Her diligent work eventually led to her first public recognition. In 1909, her former teacher Kandinsky invited Dresler to the first exhibition of the NKVM. She expressed her surprise at the invitation in a letter to him: "It is completely unclear to me how my works could be important for the association's purposes. I am, of course, very



↑ Kandinsky's "Evening Nude Drawing" class at the Phalanx School (detail), here: Emmi Dresler, spring 1902 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

pleased that you see something in them – and I felt extremely honored to be asked by telegram to send my works." Further on in the letter, she wrote again: "Why my little works are to be exhibited remains a mystery to me, especially here, where I have to act so confident."⁶ The exhibition displayed four works of hers, *Little Garden*, *Hill*, *Street*, and *Little House*, with *Hill* even being reproduced in the exhibition catalogue.⁷ The work listed there as *Street* is presumably identical with the tempera painting *Children Playing*.⁸ →fig. p.202 The other works are now considered lost.

Kandinsky commented on Dresler's work in the context of the NKVM's artistic objectives: "Dresler – the world of the [diminutive] '-chen' (little garden, etc.), that is, the delightful, childlike, which is incapable of growing into the grand universal."⁹ He included her work alongside that of Alfred Kubin and his own, emphasizing that



↑ Emmi Dresler, *Hill*, reproduced in the catalogue for the *First Exhibition of the New Artists' Association Munich*, 1909 – Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München

all three created “things” that “for the most part they had never seen in real form.”¹⁰ In doing so, he recognized their shared departure from the depiction of visible reality in favor of inner visual concepts.

Within the circle of the Blue Rider, a childlike style was regarded as an expression of formal freedom and immediacy. This attitude arose within the context of the debate on reforming art education which occurred around 1900. Artists such as Kandinsky, Münter, →fig. p. 131 and Natalia Goncharova collected children’s drawings and saw them as an authentic form of expression, similar to that found in so-called primitive, folk, and amateur art.¹¹ Dresler shared this interest in the world of children. Unlike Münter, who used a childlike style as an impetus for stylistic simplification,¹² Dresler developed her own symbolic pictorial conception in which groups of children at play are integrated into landscapes that convey a sense of protection and continuity.

Her artistic practice can be regarded within such a context. While Kandinsky strove for the spiritual penetration of the visible, Dresler created small, intimate scenes in which children appear as the symbols of a harmonious world. Kandinsky characterized the “world of the ‘-chen’” ambivalently, yet emphasized the individuality of Dresler’s artistic universe, which sought greatness not in monumentality, but in concentrated smallness.

This approach is evident in her earliest known work, *Children Playing*. → fig. p. 202 The figures depicted here do not appear as individual persons, but as part of an ordered arrangement, placed in a repeating pattern on a path flanked by high walls and featuring shallow steps. The figures’ uniform clothing and absence of facial features cause their individuality to recede into the background. They resemble schoolchildren spending their recess in a sheltered “intermediate space.” Without adult supervision, they are completely absorbed in their own childhood activities. Behind the wall, the view opens onto an urban landscape bathed in evening light, reminiscent of the town of Rapallo on the Ligurian coast in Italy, without being an exact topographic reproduction. Such a connection is plausible, as Dresler visited Kandinsky and Münter in Rapallo, where the couple stayed from December 1905 to April 1906. Not far from their lodgings, the Casa Valle Bella at Via Montebello 4, timeworn steps still lead up to the Basilica of Our Lady of Montallegro, whose architecture is echoed in the painting. Dresler condensed various vantage points into a balanced overall view.¹³

Her approach, established as early as 1907, of combining figures and their surroundings into a cohesive whole in which community is experienced as a spatially structured and emotionally secure order, can also be observed in the 1909 illustration *Hill* and persists in her illustrated picture book *Ring-Around-the-Rosy: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter* from 1914.¹⁴ → fig. pp. 203–207 The seven full-page plates depict children absorbed in various games, such as circle dances, jumping rope, and building snowmen. The book’s “hidden object style” layout playfully conveys the march of the seasons and can simultaneously be read as a visual compendium of contemporary children’s games. Outdoor space takes on central significance. The children never appear indoors, but instead move about in nature

and are fully exposed to the prevailing weather conditions. Snow, cloud formations, and summer vegetation are integral parts of the images. Nature thus becomes an experiential space in which childhood unfolds and determines the course of play.

Despite all their “delightfulness,” Dresler’s depictions do not aim for a sentimental idealization of childhood. Rather, these small communities and sheltered environments appear as symbols of an ideal social order. The children’s play, the actions carried out unconsciously, visualize a supra-individual, timeless principle: a form of coexistence that claims universal validity. Against the backdrop of the impending First World War, this appeal takes on a particular urgency.

Dresler’s “little works” of the following years have largely disappeared. Only three watercolors are known today, and these no longer deal with such motifs.¹⁵ After around 1908 she became involved with the Anthroposophical Society and through this connection created stage scenery and wood sculptures for the Goetheanum in Dornach. Dresler returned to her hometown of Siegen in 1920, where she directed an anthroposophical painting school as well as the shop and gallery space *Kunststube*, repeatedly exhibiting with the local art association.¹⁶ When her house was destroyed in 1945, she moved to Lake Constance, returning in 1954 to Siegen, where she spent the rest of her life till her death in 1962.

—— 1 Emmi Dresler was born in Siegen on December 20, 1880 as Emilie Clementine Dorothea Anna Dresler, the second of three children of industrialist Jacob Heinrich Dresler and his wife, Emilie Wilhelmine Catharina Marianne Seel. See Dresler 2006, 163.

2 The police registration form (no. 507251, Stadtarchiv München) records her living in Munich from April 10, 1902 onward, listing her address as *Kreisstraße 44/II*. From then onward, she is listed as residing in approximately twenty-five different locations in the Munich districts of Schwabing and Maxvorstadt. She probably came to Munich with her teacher from Siegen, Maria Giesler, and possibly also with brother, Paul, who began his studies at the Debschitz School that same year.

3 According to the police registration form (see note 2), Dresler was registered in Kallmünz on July 16, 1903.

4 See *Exh.Cat. Munich 2013*, 98. Dresler lived there from February 18 to April 17, 1905, so that it is probable that both artists lived there.

5 It is known that she stayed in Feldwies from July 18 to November 4, 1904 and from July 19 to November 11, 1905. A connection with Julius Exter, the founder of the Munich Secession artists’ group, is probable, but not documented.

6 Emmi Dresler to Wassily Kandinsky, July 12, 1909, quoted in Hoberg 1999, 17.

7 Exh. Cat. Munich 1909, n. p.

8 Exh. Cat. Munich 1999, 225, no. 13 (note on fig. 13).

9 Copy of a manuscript written by Wassily Kandinsky in 1910 made by Gabriele Münter, quoted in Hüneke 1989, 23.

10 Ibid.

11 See Jansen 2017b.

12 Her involvement with the child's perspective is evident in *Friedel's Picture Book* (1907–1910), a universe of toys, home, and a child's perspective, in miniatures for a dollhouse and in incorporated children's drawings, such as *In the Room*; → fig. p. 131 see Kleine 1997 and Jansen 2017b, 141–143. Maria Franck-Marc likewise treated the subjects of toys and protection in paintings and in the portfolio "Children's Pictures" (1912), creating peculiar scenes and representations of child intimacy.

13 Also visible is the façade of the Poor Clares convent, whose grounds were surrounded by high walls that may be those that frame the steps in the picture. Nearby is the Church of Saint Francis with its bell tower, adjacent to the boarding school of a Catholic religious order. The bell tower is still visible today from the steps. I am grateful to Elisabetta Canepa of the Rapallo Municipal Archives for her assistance in identifying these locations.

14 The date and publishing details of the book can be definitively determined although they are missing in the book itself. They are mentioned in the journals *Mitteilungen für die Mitglieder der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1914), 39, and in *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel*, June 6, 1914, no. 128, p. 673, in which the publisher Georg C. Steinicke (Munich) advertised the "new, special picture book." Contemporary reception was positive, praising it as "a charming, truly artistic picture book that should be in every children's room in Siegen." (*Siegener Zeitung*, December 9, 1922, 289).

15 *Portrait of Dr. Wilhelm Heß* (Museum Wiesbaden), *Curonian Spit* (Siegerlandmuseum Siegen), *Untitled* [Mountain Landscape], reproduced in Exh. Cat. Siegen 1998, 19.

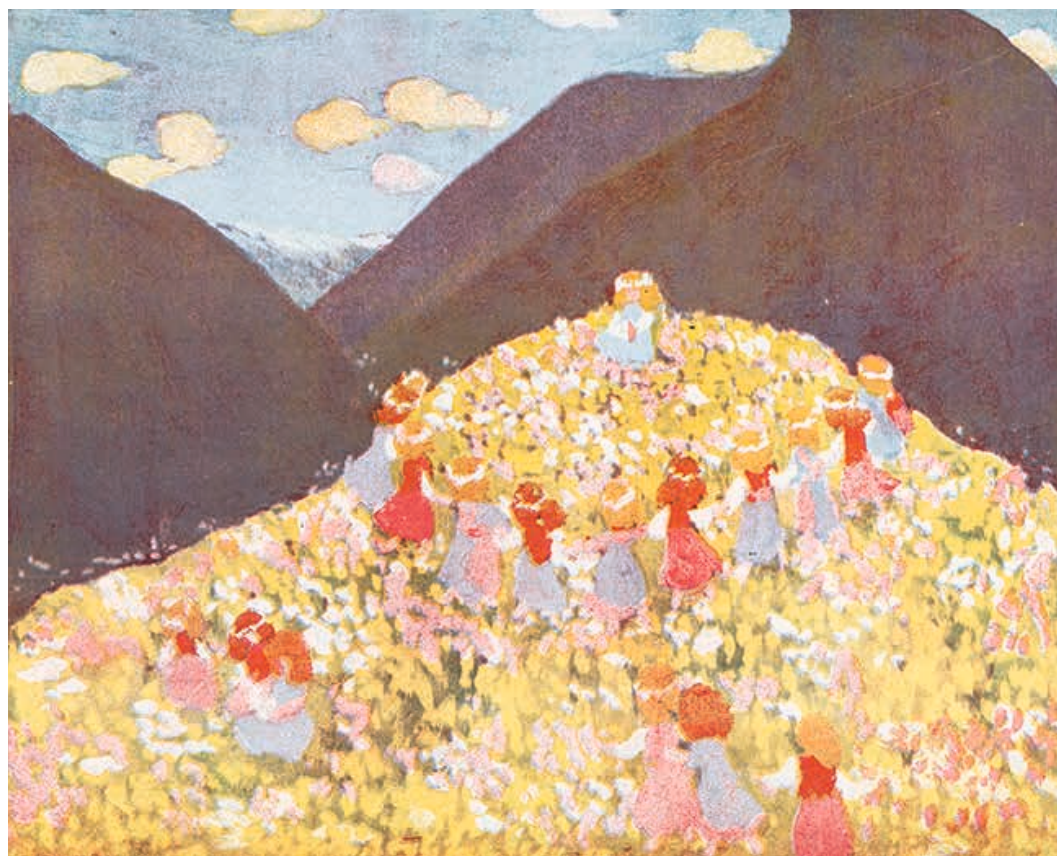
16 "A small exhibition room, in which Emmi Dresler initially displayed Waldorf toys and the delicate ceramics of her brother, developed into the Kunststube"; in an obituary for Emmi Dresler, no date, unpublished compilation prepared by the Archiv Dreslers Park/Gelbe Villa, Kreuztal.

I am grateful to all those who provided me with vital information on Emmi Dresler: Nina Badenberg, Frank W. Frisch, Eike Jungheim, Petra Oberhäuser, Maite Ruge, Ingo Schultze-Schnabl, Ria Siewert, Oliver Teufer, and Peter Vitt.



- ← Children Playing (*Spielende Kinder*), c. 1907 – [Cat. 15]
 → Ring-Around-the-Rosy. Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter (*Ringelreigen. Frühling, Sommer, Herbst und Winter*), 1914 – [Cat. 16]







← → *Ring-Around-the-Rosy. Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter (Ringelreigen. Frühling, Sommer, Herbst und Winter), 1914* – [Cat. 16]



← → *Ring-Around-the-Rosy. Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter (Ringelreigen. Frühling, Sommer, Herbst und Winter), 1914 – [Cat. 16]*



—Melanie Vietmeier

→ Elisabeth Epstein sitting in a garden, date unknown –
The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

Elisabeth Epstein



Networks and Friendships —Elisabeth Epstein

Elisabeth Ivanowna Epstein (1879–1956) was a cosmopolitan artist. She was a networker who contributed decisively to the cultural exchange between France and Germany in the early twentieth century, acting as a nexus between the Blue Rider and the progressive French art scene. Epstein was also one of the few female artists represented in *The First Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider* in 1911/12. All during her life she showed her paintings in numerous exhibitions, and she was a contributor to the journal *Der Sturm* in 1912/13. Her correspondence with Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter, moreover, testifies to her interest in art theoretical issues.

Born Elisabeth Hefter in Zhytomyr in present-day Ukraine,¹ she studied in Moscow under the renowned Impressionist painter Leonid Pasternak before moving to Munich in 1898. There she married the Polish physician and Munich city councilor Mieczysław Epstein, but by 1905 they were separated and by 1911 divorced. After further studies at the private art school of Slovenian painter Anton Ažbe in 1899/1900 and at Kandinsky's Phalanx School from 1902 to 1903, she took lessons from Alexej von Jawlensky and was a regular guest at Marianne von Werefkin's salon.² Her international network included her fellow students from the Phalanx School, Gabriele Münter and Olga Meerson, as well as Alexander Sacharoff and Eugen von Kahler, who was from Prague. In 1904, Epstein began to travel regularly to Switzerland and Paris. At the Académie de la Palette she met Sonia Delaunay-Terk, who introduced her to the circle of the gallerist Wilhelm Uhde,³ one of the first major supporters of modern art in Paris. It was Epstein who recommended Kandinsky



← Elisabeth Epstein at the easel, Paris 1909 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

to the artists' association and magazine *Les Tendances Nouvelles*. Two of her portraits of men (now believed lost), which evidence formal similarities with the work of Delaunay-Terk, →fig. p.212 were reproduced there in 1907.⁴

In 1908 Epstein moved to Paris for good and became a vital link between the Blue Rider and the French avant-garde. She introduced Robert Delaunay to Kandinsky, who then invited the Frenchman to participate in the first exhibition of the Blue Rider and in the eponymous almanac. For the Blue Rider, this not only meant the inclusion of one of the leading figures in contemporary French art, but in turn paved the way for Delaunay to achieve international recognition in Germany, for which his wife Delaunay-Terk repeatedly thanked Epstein. At *The First Exhibition of the Editorial Board of the Blue Rider*, Epstein herself showed a *Still Life with Hat* and a *Portrait*, one of the few works reproduced in the catalogue. As the extensive correspondence with Kandinsky demonstrates, he was her artistic mentor and valued her works so much that he purchased the *Portrait* from the exhibition for his own collection.⁵ →fig.p.137 right Thanks to Epstein's intercession, Kandinsky was able to acquire from Delaunay the painting *The Poultry Yard*, by Henri Rousseau, the recently deceased painter so admired by the artists of the Blue Rider.⁶



↑ Elisabeth Epstein, *Portrait of a Man*, reproduced in *Les Tendances Nouvelles* 3, no. 34 (1907) – Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München

Little has survived of Epstein's early work and even from 1911,⁷ a year in which she painted unceasingly, only two self-portraits are known. → fig. pp. 216, 217 Their flatness and clear outlines reveal a proximity to the artists of the French avant-garde, such as Henri Matisse, and to the New Artists' Association Munich (NKVM).⁸

From Paris, Epstein continued to maintain her international contacts, discussing in letters with Kandinsky strategies for the presentation and sale of her works. They debated, for example, which works she should send to the Blue Rider exhibition in Munich, which to show at the *Salon d'Automne* in Paris, and whether she should participate in the *Union* exhibition⁹ launched by the publisher of *Les Tendances Nouvelles*, Alexis Mérodack-Jeanneau. Through her studies at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière¹⁰ and her participation from 1910 onward in Delaunay-Terk's Sunday discussion group, "Mouvement

franco-russe,” she was well integrated into the Parisian art scene. Epstein habitually visited exhibitions and salons, such as that organized by Marguerite Steinheil,¹¹ the scandalous former mistress of French president Félix Faure. Epstein regularly met Meerson in Paris. Münter sent both of them a reproduction of the woodcut *Happy New Year* at the end of 1910.¹² In 1912, Franz Marc, Maria Franck-Marc, and August Macke visited Epstein. In turn, Marc recommended her to Herwarth Walden, who not only showed two of her portraits at the *First German Autumn Salon*, but also offered her a platform in his magazine *Der Sturm* for the publication of her essays “Einige Gedanken über Bildentstehung” (Some Thoughts on the Creation of Images) and “Das Lächerlichsein” (Being Ridiculous).¹³ Her theoretical reflections on contemporary art and on her own works are elucidated in her letters to Kandinsky, to whom she declared in 1911: “I dedicate myself entirely and wholeheartedly to feeling and sensing ... and it does not seem to me that I am doing something superfluous, but rather, quite the opposite, that from another side I am approaching something true and comprehensible, but only gradually comprehensible, which is accompanied by a slow spiritual development towards freedom. I do what I could not do before, I let myself ‘be’ and do not think.”¹⁴ In addition, she also criticized the tendency towards stylization in art and the soulless emulation of a painting fashion. To her, in contrast, the right path was “studying objects first and then my sensation of them.”¹⁵

With the outbreak of the First World War, Epstein went into exile in Switzerland and joined the pacifist group centered around Romain Rolland.¹⁶ Her work from the 1920s consists primarily of still lifes that take up different currents in Cubism and New Objectivity. Her dire financial situation led her to ask Münter for advice on the possibility of exhibiting and selling her works in Munich and on the state of the market for her miniature portraits painted from photographs.¹⁷ In the 1930s and 1940s, the Jewish artist’s Swiss citizenship, which she had acquired in 1929, protected her from persecution by the Nazis.¹⁸ A long period of silence between Epstein and Kandinsky ended in 1934, when Franck-Marc helped Epstein to rekindle contact with Kandinsky, who had emigrated to France the previous year.

The biographies of Epstein and her contemporaries reveal the enormous mobility and networks among the members of the avant-garde. They also show, however, how wars and political upheaval interrupted or shifted the artistic currents within modernism. Epstein repeatedly forged new networks, such as the group *Les Surindépendants* in 1930s Paris, but maintained long-term friendships from the period of the Blue Rider as well.

——— ¹ On the origin of her surname and her biography, see Oliinyk 2022, 101.

² Reinhardt 2014, 144.

³ Sonia Delaunay-Terk entered into a marriage of convenience with Uhde in 1908.

⁴ *Les Tendances Nouvelles* 3, no. 34 (1907). The same issue reproduced three woodcuts by Wassily Kandinsky: *The Dragon* (1903), *Stars* (1907), and *Cat* (1907).

⁵ Oliinyk 2022, 100.

⁶ Hoberg 2021, 167.

⁷ In 1910 Epstein suffered from a creative crisis, which she described in letters to Gabriele Münter; but in 1911 she reported that she had renewed energy and was continually producing new works. See the letters from Elisabeth Epstein to Gabriele Münter in The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich.

⁸ "Elisabeth Iwanowna Epstein," in Exh. Cat. Munich 2020, n.p.

⁹ Elisabeth Epstein to Wassily Kandinsky, August 16, 1911 and August 30, 1911, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich. The Union internationale des Beaux-Arts, des Lettres, des Sciences et de l'Industrie organized salons in Anger in 1905 and 1907 and in Paris in 1910 and 1911.

¹⁰ In her *Lebenslauf* (Curriculum) of October 29, 1941 she mentions this academy without specifying which years she studied there; see Archiv Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, Zurich.

¹¹ Epstein mentions an exhibition in the "Impasse Ronsin im Steinheil'schen Hause" (at the Steinheil home in the Ronsin alley): Elisabeth Epstein to Gabriele Münter, early November 1910, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich. Félix Faure died during a rendezvous with Marguerite Steinheil. In addition, she was accused of the murder of her husband and her mother, but was ultimately acquitted. See Carole Sterlé, "L'affaire Marguerite Steinheil," in *Le Parisien*, July 24, 2024, revised on August 22, 2025, <https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/laffaire-marguerite-steinheil-lhistoire-dune-veuve-scandaleuse-accusee-dun-double-meurtre-24-07-2025-WY3P6ZUT4NH3PJ626NJM4ODXN4.php> [accessed on April 14, 2026].

¹² Elisabeth Epstein to Gabriele Münter, January 2, 1911, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich.

¹³ Epstein 1912; Epstein 1913.

¹⁴ Elisabeth Epstein to Wassily Kandinsky, presumably in August 1911, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich.

15 Ibid.

16 Pallini 2006, 14.

17 Elisabeth Epstein to Gabriele Münter, April 11, 1921,
The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich.

18 Reinhardt 2017, 171.

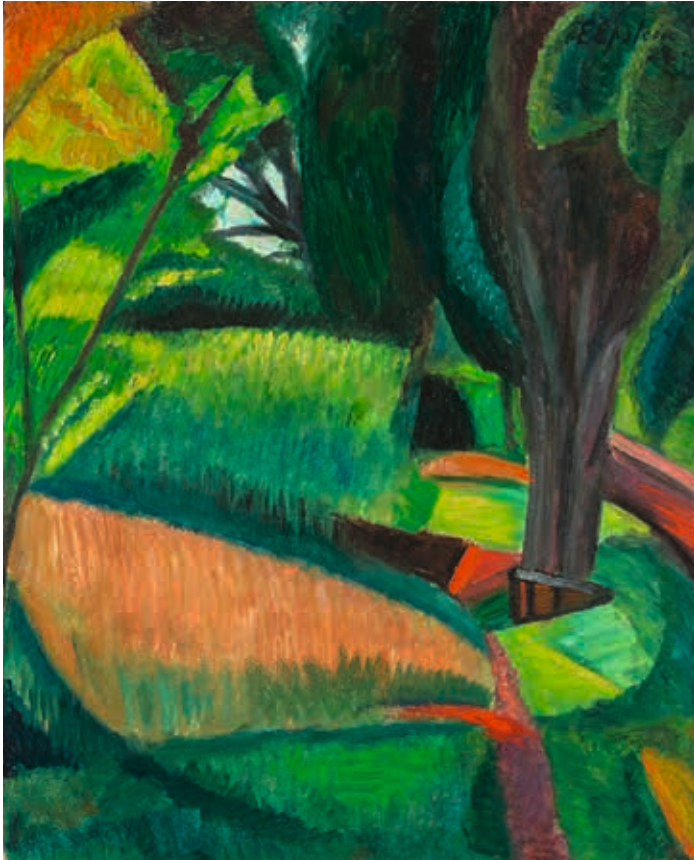
I am grateful to Bernd Hefter and Oksana Oliinyk for providing
extensive information on Elisabeth Epstein.



← Self-Portrait (Selbstporträt), 1911 – [Cat. 17]
→ Self-Portrait (Selbstporträt), 1911 – [Cat. 18]

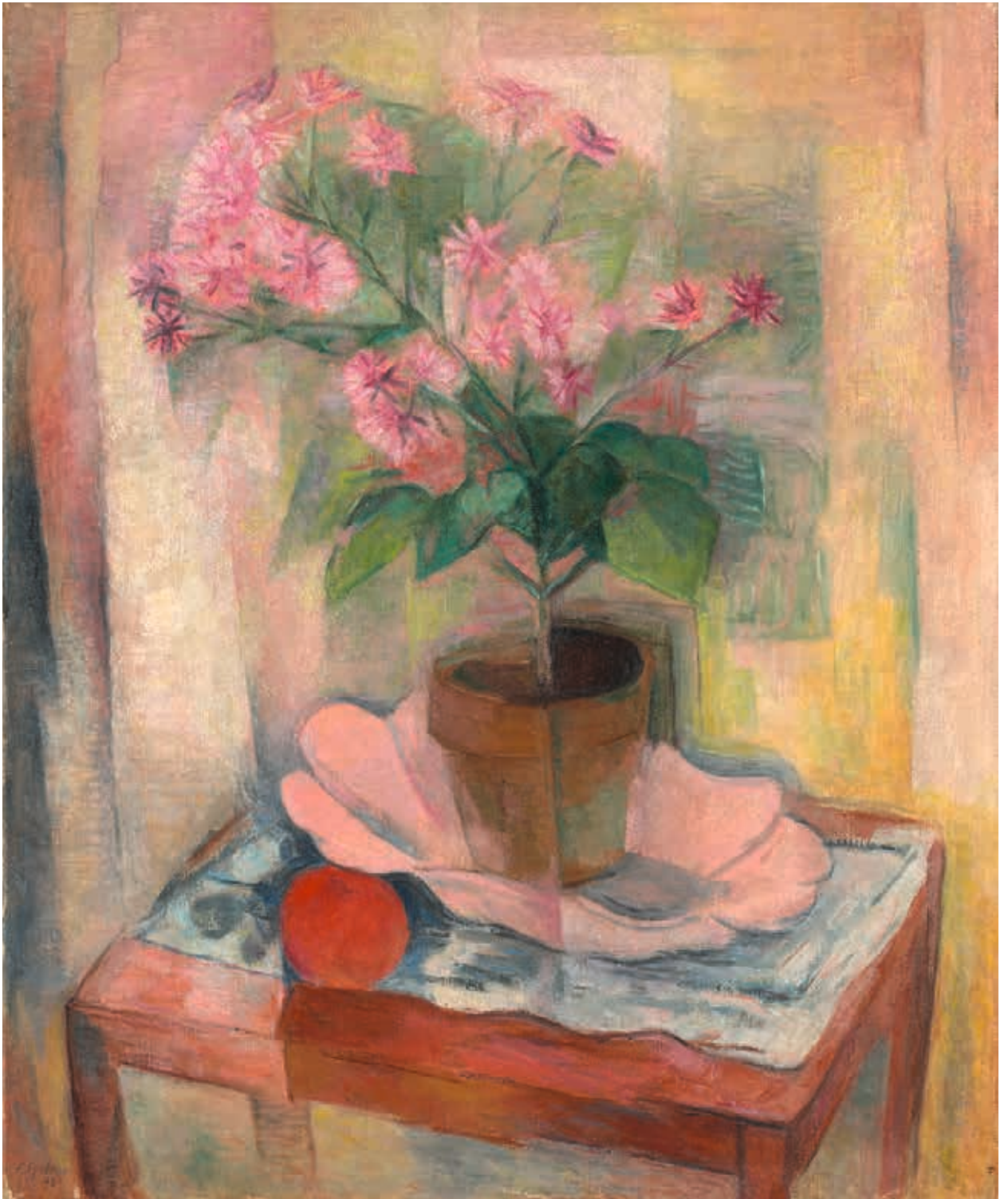






- ← *Maison avec arbre*, 1914 – [Cat. 19]
- *Forest Fantasy (Waldphantasie)*, 1928 – [Cat. 21]
- *Red Chair by the Window (Roter Stuhl am Fenster)*, 1928 – [Cat. 20]





- ← Still Life on a Round Table (Stillleben auf dem runden Tisch), 1945 – [Cat. 23]
- ← Still Life with a Jug (Stillleben mit Kanne), 1935 – [Cat. 22]
- Still Life with Flowers (Stillleben mit Blumen), 1946 – [Cat. 24]

—Klara Drenker-Nagels

→ Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, c. 1910 – Museum August Macke Haus, Bonn

Elisabeth
Erdmann



—Macke

“My Alter Ego” —Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke

August Macke’s wife, Elisabeth (1888–1978), is remembered in art history as the painter’s equal partner and his “alter ego.” For the young, up-and-coming artist, she was not only a muse and model, his closest confidant and an unceasing source of inspiration, but also the person who tirelessly supported his artistic career. After his early death in 1914, she kept his oeuvre together and succeeded in keeping his memory alive. Her published diaries and memoirs supply important testimony to the emergence and establishment of modernist art before World War I.¹

This daughter of an industrialist in Bonn grew up in a wealthy and sheltered bourgeois environment. Her diverse interests and talents included playing the piano, singing, and writing fairy tales and poems. For a while she toyed with the idea of becoming a writer. In 1903, at the young age of fifteen, she met August Macke, one year her senior, on her way to school. A profound love and an ardent interest in their respective artistic ambitions and enthusiasm united them. They wed in 1909 and spent their first year of marriage at Tegernsee in Bavaria, where the first of their two sons was born, before moving to Bonn in 1910. An inheritance from her father allowed the young couple a largely independent life and her husband an undisturbed artistic career, in which she was intimately involved from early on.

In keeping with the ideal of the era of fusing art and life, Elisabeth, along with her mother and grandmother, produced numerous embroideries for tapestries, furniture covers, cushions, tablecloths, and dress trimmings, for which August provided the designs. Later, after his death, she also adapted some of his pictorial motifs to create new embroidered compositions based on her own personal vision. Elisabeth also frequently recorded her own ideas for pictures, as well as for dresses, blouse inserts, hats, and jewelry, in her husband’s sketchbooks.

Inspired by Gabriele Münter's and Wassily Kandinsky's interest in the traditional folk art of reverse glass painting in Upper Bavaria, August and Elisabeth Macke also began to explore this technique around 1911/12, primarily within the circle of their artist friends.² Although Elisabeth did on several occasions render her husband's designs in this medium,³ drawings in his sketchbooks in her own hand prove her sole authorship of both the reverse glass painting *Madonna and Child*⁴ → fig. p. 228 and "Oriental Scene".⁵ → fig. p. 228 In keeping with the traditional folk art characteristics of reverse glass painting, she rendered the forms flat, simple and highly stylized, clearly delineating them from one another with dark outlines and employing vividly luminous and highly contrasting coloring. Since she transferred her preliminary sketches directly onto the glass surface, the images appear laterally reversed in the finished paintings.

The preliminary sketches for the reverse glass painting *Madonna and Child* are found in a sketchbook that August Macke used around 1907/08 while he and Elisabeth visited Berlin and Dresden. In the painting collections there, both of them became fascinated with Early Renaissance painting, in particular with Ercole de' Roberti, as Elisabeth recorded.⁶ His pictures of enthroned Madonnas under a baldachin were probably what inspired Elisabeth to create her secular depiction of a mother and child. She replaced the accompanying figures of saints with stylized trees and flowers, whose ornamental quality is continued by decorative colorful dots on the painting's frame, in this manner dissolving the frame's delimiting function.

Whether the small-format *Byzantine Scene with Saints* → fig. p. 229 is exclusively by Elisabeth is not known with certainty.⁷ Stylistic criteria, however, argue for her authorship. No preliminary sketch is known. The symmetrically parallel composition, the isocephaly – that is, the arrangement of the Apostles' heads at the same horizontal level – the emphasis on the holy figure in front of the conch shell in the picture's center, the form of the crown, and the row of blossoms as a lower border for the image reveal inspiration from Byzantine mosaics. August and Elisabeth saw such mosaics during a trip they took through northern Italy in 1908 at the invitation of Elisabeth's mother, in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna.⁸

The seemingly paradisaical “*Oriental Scene*” → fig. p. 228 surrounded by stylized floral and animal ornaments arose from a strong interest in Arab and North African cultures, which captivated August Macke in particular from 1910 on. Although Elisabeth had traveled to Tunisia with her parents in 1904, ten years before her husband, the picture was actually inspired less by personal experience than by the penchant in their circle of friends and fellow artists for reading fairy tales and stories from these regions.⁹

In spite of her autonomous creative work, Elisabeth Macke never claimed to be an artist. Nevertheless, she was fundamentally important to August Macke’s art, which would never have existed without her.

——— 1 Erdmann-Macke 1962; Erdmann-Macke/Jochimsen/Reinhardt 2009; Erdmann-Macke/Jochimsen/Reinhardt 2021.

2 Erdmann-Macke/Jochimsen/Reinhardt 2009, 96ff.

3 See Bartmann 1979.

4 See Heiderich 1987, vol. 1, 428, book no. 12 A, 45.

5 See Heiderich 1987, vol. 2, 849, book no. 40, 63.

6 See Erdmann-Macke 1962, 89.

7 Dominik Bartmann states that Erdmann-Macke only helped execute this picture and the reverse glass painting *Madonna and Child*; see Bartmann 1979, no. 2 and no. 3, 40ff.

8 See Erdmann-Macke/Jochimsen/Reinhardt 1962, 92. This mosaic made a strong impression on both of them. The painting resembles the mosaic particularly in its depiction of Empress Theodora and her entourage.

9 See Erdmann-Macke/Jochimsen/Reinhardt 2009, 96ff.



↑ August and Elisabeth Macke with their son
Walter, 1911 – Museum August Macke Haus, Bonn
↓ August Macke and Elisabeth Gerhardt, 1908 –
Museum August Macke Haus, Bonn







- ← "Oriental Scene" (»Orientalische Szene«), 1912 – [Cat. 27]
- ← *Madonna and Child (Madonna mit Kind)*, c. 1911 – [Cat. 26]
- *Byzantine Scene with Saints (Byzantinische Heiligenszene)*, c. 1910/11 – [Cat. 25]

—Henrike Hans

→ Natalia Goncharova with face painting, 1913 –
depicted in *Teatr w karrikaturach*, Moscow, no. 3,
September 21, 1913

Natalia Gonch



arova

Breaking Boundaries —Natalia Goncharova

When Natalia Goncharova's (1881–1962) first solo show opened in Moscow in 1913, visitors were amazed to encounter the tremendous number of over 761 of her works.¹ Not only the number of displayed objects was remarkable, but this first solo exhibition presented artworks in a variety of media from thirteen years of creative production.² The public and the press were electrified: 12,000 visitors in only a few weeks, a catalogue sold out in its third edition, which also served as a catalogue raisonné, including a further sixty works not displayed in the exhibition, and strong sales all made the headlines.³ If the artist had had her way, the show would have included at least one more work. In late 1912 she had asked Franz Marc to send her a watercolor for the exhibition which she had given him the previous year.⁴ Although the watercolor was lost on its way to Moscow,⁵ her request illustrates her desire to make her solo show as universal as possible.

The exhibition's enormous dimensions are indicative of the life of a female artist whose productivity surpassed all social and artistic limits. Goncharova first attended the sculpture class at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture before switching to painting, encouraged by her artistic and personal partner, Mikhail Larionov. →fig. p. 238 She was essentially self-taught in this medium,⁶ studying the paintings in Sergei Shchukin's collection,⁷ which included works by Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin, and investigating Russian icon painting and folk art in depth. Her pictures are characterized by simplicity of forms, flatness, and vibrant colors, eventually being subsumed under the label of Neo-Primitivism. "My path leads to the original source of



→ Natalia Goncharova, n. d.

all the arts, the East,”⁸ Goncharova stated in the “Manifesto” of her 1913 exhibition catalogue. She formulated an artistic program that drew its formal vocabulary and its expressivity from the tradition of icon painting and of the *lubki*, the popular prints and broadsheets of Russian folk art, which bestowed upon the appearance of objects an almost mystical significance.⁹

The first exhibitions of her paintings provoked fervent reactions. Her nude painting *The Goddess of Fertility* was confiscated by the police from a one-day exhibition of her work in 1910 and Goncharova was brought to trial on charges of pornography.¹⁰ Nude painting was not considered appropriate for women at that time. Her subjects of seemingly unobserved male bathers, → fig. p. 238 for example, had no precedent in the pictorial tradition of Russian women artists.¹¹ In 1911–12, the scandal repeated itself when her depictions of saints were confiscated at an exhibition and she was accused of blasphemy.¹²



↑ Natalia Goncharova, *Grape Harvest*, 1910/11 – Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou, Paris

Such scandals shaped her public image, which she increasingly sought to influence in the early 1910s. As a driving force of the Russian avant-garde, Goncharova was among the founding members of the artists' association *Bubnovyi Valet* (Jack of Diamonds). Together with Larionov, she formed the group "*Oslini Khvost*" (Donkey's Tail) with a commitment to Cubism and Primitivism, a program she sent to the press in the form of a fourteen-page letter.¹³ The 1911–12 exhibition by members of the Donkey's Tail group – including Marc Chagall, Vladimir Tatlin, and Kasimir Malevich¹⁴ – was followed by two further exhibition projects co-organized by Goncharova. Like their predecessors, the exhibitions *Mishen'* (Target) in 1913 and *No. 4* (1914) brought together numerous artists who resolutely championed the goal of non-academic artistic expression.

Parallel to the novel exhibition formats, Goncharova continued to expand her own artistic activities: she worked across genres, illustrated books, and organized readings and evening dance events in which scandal was often anticipated. She appeared in public with her face painted in protest against the confiscation of her works and as a logical combination of politics and art – making her a forerunner of performance art.¹⁵ She absorbed the avant-garde

painting of Western Europe and synthesized it into a Cubo-Futurism marked by vivid coloration and dynamism. Together with Larionov, she invented the concept of Rayonism in 1912–13 as a basis for abstract art in Russia and disseminated its theory in manifestos.

The artists participating in the Jack of Diamonds exhibition in winter 1910–11 included Wassily Kandinsky, who had traveled to Moscow in the autumn of 1910.¹⁶ In November 1910 Goncharova gave Kandinsky her *Still Life with Lobster* (1909–10), a gift Kandinsky kept in his personal collection as long as he lived.¹⁷ Both of them labored in artist's groups with the goal of a spiritual transformation of society and of art, an ideal Goncharova strikingly visualized in her illustration of the archangel Michael as the Horseman of the Apocalypse for the pamphlet accompanying the Jack of Diamonds exhibition.¹⁸ Goncharova sent Kandinsky several drawings at the end of 1911, presumably among them the sheet *Grape Harvest*, which Kandinsky and Marc reproduced in *The Blue Rider* almanac.¹⁹ The artistic interchange between them intensified with Goncharova's participation in the second Blue Rider exhibition in 1912. In addition, Marc incorporated her into his project of an illustrated Bible of the Blue Rider, for which she supplied sketches.²⁰ In 1913 and 1914 Goncharova was represented with one work each in the Blue Rider exhibitions at Herwarth Walden's Der Sturm gallery. She also contributed three pictures to the *First German Autumn Salon* at Der Sturm in 1913.²¹ Walden was not able to realize the next move, a double exhibition of works by Goncharova and Larionov, due to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. In 1915 Goncharova emigrated to Paris, where she collaborated with Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes as a costume and set designer.²²

Dialogue with international artists and groups was essential for Goncharova's work and was not limited to the Blue Rider. She maintained contact with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's Futurists just as much as with Robert Delaunay and Paul Guillaume in Paris, exhibiting in the latter's gallery in 1914.

The diversity of her art production, as well as her experimental approach and the theoretical foundation of her work, culminated in the concept of "Vsechestvo" (Everythingness), which Goncharova and Larionov coined for their work in 1913.²³ Her solo show of 1913 already followed this principle, assuming more the guise of an art project as an installation without any logical arrangement than of a curated presentation of artworks.²⁴

In 1955 Natalia Goncharova married her partner Mikhail Larionov, after working together for decades, yet each maintaining their individual styles. Their marriage was primarily to ensure the preservation of their artistic estate. It was the last strategic act of their revolutionary work, which consistently fused activism, theorizing, and artistic production.²⁵

——— ¹ See Raev 2015, 116–19. The exhibition was organized by Moscow's first woman gallerist, Klavdiia Mikhailova, and was later shown in St. Petersburg with a reduced selection of 250 works.

² See Parton 2010, 92.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Many thanks to Madame Goncharova for the watercolor. Of course I will send something to her" (Franz Marc to Wassily Kandinsky, January 16, 1912, in Kandinsky/Marc/Lankheit 1983, 117).

⁵ See Kandinsky/Marc/Lankheit 1983, 247.

⁶ Goncharova 2009, 67.

⁷ See Eipeldauer 2015, 10.

⁸ Goncharova 2009, 67.

⁹ See Furman 2016, 202.

¹⁰ Kemfert 2009, 12.

¹¹ Parton 2010, 115.

¹² See Parton 2010, 80.

¹³ Kemfert 2009, 13.

¹⁴ Parton 2010, 80.

¹⁵ See Sidlina 2019, 14.

¹⁶ See Uhlig 1999, 295. See also the essay by Isabel Wünsche in this publication.

¹⁷ Parton 2010, 59.

¹⁸ Ibid., 226.

¹⁹ "Very good drawing by Goncharova arrived today" (Wassily Kandinsky to Franz Marc, December 22, 1911, in Kandinsky/Marc/Lankheit 1983, 86).

²⁰ Parton 2010, 226.

²¹ Exh. Cat. Berlin 1913, cat. 149–51.

²² Raev 2015, 118.

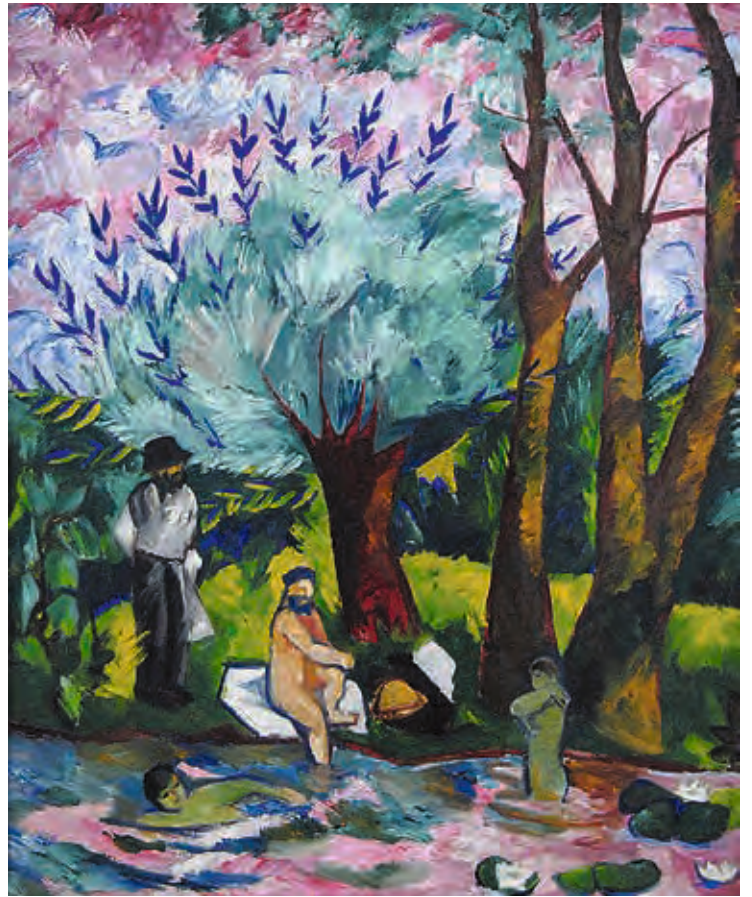
²³ See Sidlina 2019, 14.

²⁴ Furman 2016, 203.

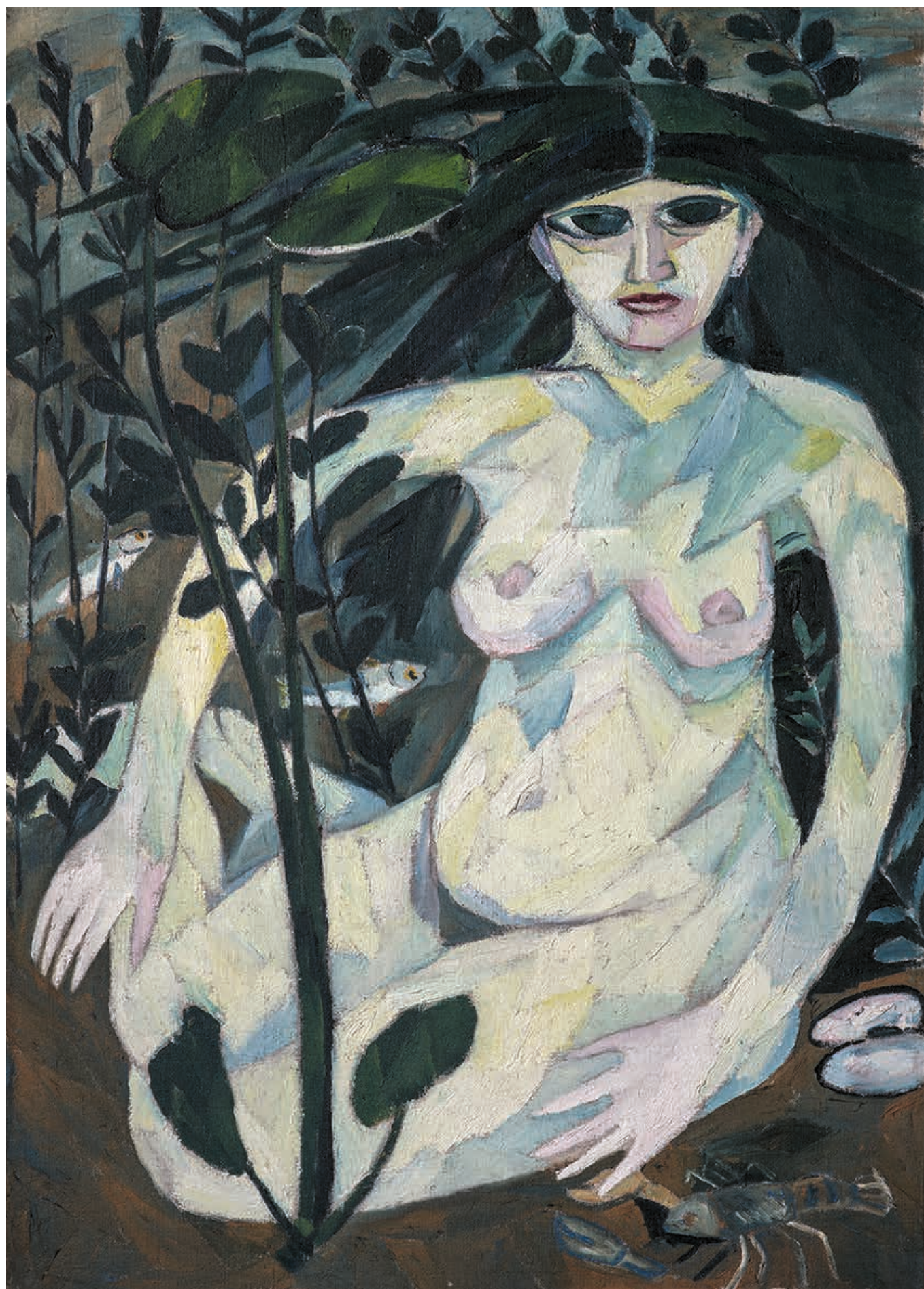
²⁵ See Eipeldauer 2015, 8.



↑ Artists of the *Mishen'* (Target) exhibition in Moscow in 1913: (from left to right) Mikhail Larionov, Sergey Romanovich, Vladimir Obolensky, Natalia Goncharova, Maurice Fabbri, Alexander Shevchenko



- ← *Portrait of Mikhail Larionov (Porträt Mikhail Larionov)*, 1913 – [Cat. 62]
- ← *Baignade*, c. 1910 – [Cat. 61]
- *Rusalka (Water Nymph) (Rusalka (Wassernymphe))*, 1908 – [Cat. 60]





- ← Female Half-Figure (Figurine) (Weibliche Halbfigur (Figurine)), 1922/23 – [Cat. 64]
→ Poster “Grand bal de nuit, Salle Bullier grand bal des artistes”, 1926 – [Cat. 65]



—Nicholas Maniu

→ Else Lasker-Schüler as “Jussuf, Prince of Thebes,” frontispiece for
Mein Herz (My Heart, 1912) – Private collection

Else
Lasker—



Schüler

Cross-Dressing and Self-Mythologizing — The Gender Ambivalence, Jewish Identity, and Poetic Solidarity of Else Lasker-Schüler

Else Lasker-Schüler (1869–1945) is remembered today as one of the most flamboyant figures of the Expressionist movement. In 1894 she moved to Berlin and began to write, inspired by the author Peter Hille. Her first volume of poetry, *Styx* (1902), quickly established her as a prominent figure in the Berlin avant-garde. One of its best-known poems is dedicated to her mother, who died young, and begins with the famous line, “A white star sings a death song.”¹

Lasker-Schüler’s significance derives not only from her literary and visual works, but from the radical manner in which she lived and expressed her identity. From today’s perspective, her articulation of her creativity carries significance for issues of gender roles, performativity, and empowerment.



← Else Lasker-Schüler, Berlin, 1906 – Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, René Schickele Archive → Else Lasker-Schüler, Berlin, 1906 – Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, René Schickele Archive

Lasker-Schüler created the figure of “Jussuf, Prince of Thebes,” her orientalist, gender-ambivalent alter ego.² The prince is the ruler of an imaginary kingdom where (gender) identity is not fixed but can instead be molded poetically. Lasker-Schüler frequently appeared in public in male-connnotated clothing as Prince Jussuf, thus subverting contemporary gender norms. Lasker-Schüler had previously played with gender fashion markers, deliberately shifting between a “masculine” and “feminine” staging of herself. This practice can be regarded retrospectively as an antecedent of drag king performance. She fused cross-dressing, poetic role playing, and self-mythologizing into a radical artistic strategy. Persona and life were deliberately blurred into one another.

Cross-Dressing and Self-Mythologizing – The Gender Ambivalence,
Jewish Identity, and Poetic Solidarity of Else Lasker-Schüler

Lasker-Schüler made her close friends a part of this private universe. In 1912 she met Franz Marc and Maria Franck-Marc and incorporated both of them into her mythopoetic world: Marc became her half-brother Ruben, and Franck-Marc became his wife Mareia/Marei.³ Their intense correspondence, often in the form of painted postcards, bears witness to a deep spiritual kinship and a productive artistic exchange.⁴ Inspired by Marc's interest in color, Lasker-Schüler began to color her ink drawings, while Marc incorporated his friend's motifs into his own imagery.

Her eccentric appearance and her "nonconformist" lifestyle made Lasker-Schüler infamous. During a stay in Sindelsdorf and Munich in January 1913, where she met Marc and Franck-Marc, she caused a stir by wearing gender-ambivalent outfits.⁵ There she also came into contact with other artists from the circle of the Blue Rider. Although she did not actively participate in its projects, she maintained close ties with the avant-garde artists. Moreover, her second husband until November 1912 was Herwarth Walden, the founder of the magazine and gallery *Der Sturm*, both of which served as central platforms for the avant-garde.⁶

The First World War marked a profound watershed for Lasker-Schüler. She came to terms with the death of Marc and of other friends in poems and epistolary novels. About Marc's demise she wrote: "When the Blue Rider was killed ... / Our hands clasped together like rings; / We kissed each other on the mouth like brothers."⁷ The book *Theben*, published in 1923, is likewise dedicated to friendship. In the drawing reproduced in it, *The League of Wild Jews*, →cat. 73 she depicts a heroic and at the same time intimate vision of Jewish community. This drawing is paired with a poem in which she commemorates her deceased gay friend Senna Hoy.⁸ Here, Jewish identity, grief, and poetic solidarity are merged.

As a Jewish artist, Lasker-Schüler took a stance against anti-Semitism early on. Judaism was for her a source of pride, myth, and poetic energy.⁹ In 1938 Nazi persecution drove her to emigrate to Switzerland and afterwards to Palestine. There she fell into a personal crisis provoked by the ominous reports from Europe. She died in Jerusalem only a few months before the end of the Second World War. Her work remains a radical testimony to a modernism in which art, life, gender roles, and resistance are inextricably entwined.

——— ¹ Else Lasker-Schüler, “Mutter,” in Lasker-Schüler/Kemp 1977, 12.

² Ingold 2024, 368 and Dick 2010, 123–125. “Jussuf” is given the alternative spelling “Yussuf” or “Yusuf” in some foreign-language translations.

³ Lasker-Schüler [1919] 2012, 146 (21st Letter, p. 24 in the facsimile) and 149 (28th Letter, p. 27 in the facsimile).

⁴ Lasker-Schüler et al. 1998.

⁵ Lasker-Schüler/Marc/Dick 2012, 27ff.

⁶ The links between Berlin and Munich are demonstrated by the title page of the September 1912 issue of *Der Sturm*. Marc sent Walden the woodcut *Reconciliation*, which he had created as an illustration for the eponymous poem by Lasker-Schüler. Walden and Lasker-Schüler were so impressed by the woodcut that they reproduced it on the title page, while the poem was printed on the back cover. See Dick 2010, 298 and Dick 2012b, 7.

⁷ Else Lasker-Schüler, “Als der Blaue Reiter war gefallen ...,” in Lasker-Schüler/Kemp 1977, 249.

⁸ Else Lasker-Schüler, “Senna Hoy,” in Lasker-Schüler/Kemp 1977, 115.

⁹ Ingold 2024, 369, 379ff.



- ← A Theban Bride and Groom (Ein thebetanisches Brautpaar), after 1934 – [Cat. 89]
→ Prince Jussuf of Thebes (Prinz Jussuf von Theben), after 1934 – [Cat. 90]







- ← Jussuf Admires a Blue Rose (Jussuf bewundert eine blaue Rose), c.1920 – [Cat. 70]
→ The Snake Worshipper in the Market Square in Thebes (Der Schlangen aanbeter auf dem Marktplatz in Theben), c.1921/1930s – [Cat. 83]

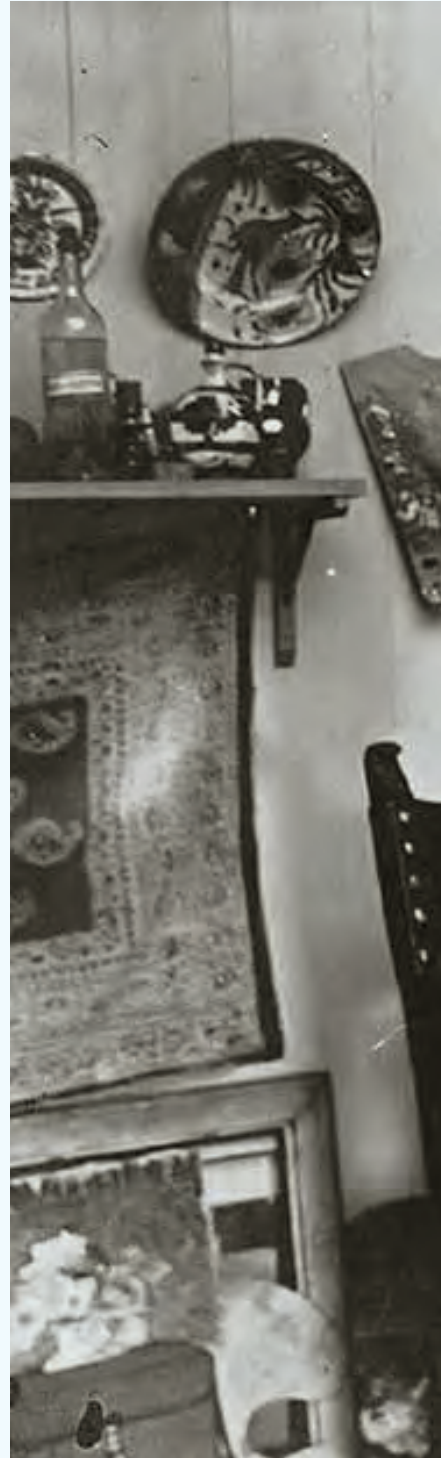


- ← Your Jussuf / and His Chiefs: Stambul, Asser, Gad and Salomein (Dein Jussuf / und seine Häuptlinge: Stambul, Asser, Gad und Salomein, January 3, 1916 – [Cat. 68]
- ← The Jewish Chiefs (Ein thebetanisches Brautpaar), 1913 – [Cat. 66]
- The Snake Dancer in Tiba (Der Schlangentänzer in Tiba), c. 1927 – [Cat. 84]

—Sandra Uhrig

→ Olga Meerson in her Paris apartment, c. 1910 –
Private collection

Olga Meerson





Moscow Munich Paris —Olga Meerson

Olga Meerson (1882–1930) grew up alongside three sisters in a merchant family in Moscow. Her year of birth cannot be definitively established due to contradictions in the official documents. The years given range from 1878 to 1885, yet the most convincing date is notated on the Munich residents' registration card of her husband, Heinz Pringsheim: December 5, 1882.¹

Her parents encouraged their daughter's artistic talent from an early age, letting her attend classes at the Moscow Art Academy as a "free visiting student"² in 1891. After living in Poland for two years, Meerson decided to continue her study of art in Munich. On March 18, 1899, she listed her address on the residents' registration card for the Munich police as "Giselastraße 16."³

Shortly afterwards, she was enrolled in the painting school of the Slovene artist Anton Ažbe. The painter Igor Grabar mentions her name in a letter to his colleague Dmitry Kardovsky from June 16, 1899.⁴ At Ažbe's painting school, where the majority of students were from eastern Europe, Meerson encountered not only a supportive atmosphere, as two photographs demonstrate,⁵ but also came into contact with the circle of artists around Marianne von Werefkin and Alexej von Jawlensky.⁶ She is listed in October 1900 as a student at the Damen-Akademie (Ladies' Academy) offered by the Künstlerinnen-Verein (Association of Women Artists),⁷ before commencing her training at the Phalanx School in 1902, like Gabriele Münter. Three photographs taken there show Meerson with others during her training.⁸ She sat as a model for Kandinsky in Kochel, while he in turn dedicated his *Study for "Sluice"* (1901) to her, a subject from the environs of Moscow, where they had both come from.⁹



↑ Olga Meerson, Étienne Terrus, Amélie and Henri Matisse, unknown person, Marguerite Matisse (from left to right), September 1911 – Private collection

While Meerson was still in a learning phase during her time in Munich, it was her involvement with French art in Paris that triggered a decisive process of maturation, during which she developed her own style. The works that she created as a pupil of Henri Matisse, in particular during the painting holidays at Matisse's summer residence in Collioure in southern France in 1911, appear much more autonomous: *Flowers* → fig. p.260 and *View from the Window*, → fig. p.261 the latter inspired by Matisse's famous painting *Open Window, Collioure* from 1905,¹⁰ which had likewise been created in Collioure. Meerson's talent is most evident in her portraits. By contrast, her landscapes and still lifes often seem like sketches with their raw, unmixed colors.

In Paris she took part in the exhibitions at the Salon d'Automne almost every year between 1906 and 1911, and at the Salon des Indépendants between 1907 and 1911 as well. The titles of her works listed in the catalogues range from portraits and flower still lifes to motifs inspired by her trips to Brittany.¹¹

When Kandinsky approached Matisse in 1911 to solicit a contribution for *The Blue Rider* almanac, he reestablished contact with Meerson.¹² Toward the end of that year, she returned to Germany, after tensions in Matisse's home, arising from her relationship with the painter, had led to a rift.¹³ A year later, on November 12, 1912, she married Heinz Pringsheim, the son of Hedwig and Alfred Pringsheim, the brother of Katia Mann and the brother-in-law of Thomas Mann.

Although Meerson continued to participate in various exhibitions, such as in *Die Frauen* (The Women) at the Alfred Flechtheim gallery in Berlin and at the Gutenberg bookshop in the Tauentzienstraße, along with Kandinsky, only a few of her works are known today. Many are only documented in black-and-white photographs, among them the lost portrait of her nephew Klaus Mann from 1926. Following her suicide on June 29, 1930, her oeuvre disappeared from public view.

——— 1 Stadtarchiv München, EWK 76 B 279. See Jütte 2025a, 13. At the time of the entry in the residents' registration record of Heinz Pringsheim she had no reason for falsifying her date of birth, something she had probably done when applying to the Art Academy in 1891. At that time Olga Meerson had probably not reached the required age.

2 Jütte 2025b, 14.

3 Stadtarchiv München, DE-1992-PMB-M-209, residents' registration card for Olga Meerson.

4 On this see Exh. Cat. Murnau 2025, 27. Igor Grabar, Munich, to Dmitry Kardovsky, June 16, 1899, in Grabar 1974, 127. I am grateful to Alexej Rodionov for providing me with the information about this letter and its translation.

5 Exh. Cat. Murnau 2025, 17 and 74. Two photographs preserved by her family show Meerson next to Anton Ažbe amidst his students.

6 Marianne von Werefkin and Alexej von Jawlensky lived in Giselastraße 23 and thus very close to Meerson.

7 Deseyve 2005, 172.

8 Prints of these photographs are found in the estate of Gabriele Münter at the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, as well as in Olga Meerson's estate in a private collection. According to Münter, Meerson was the "leader" of the class; see Hoberg 1994, 31.

9 Uhrig 2025.

10 National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney, Inv. 1998.74.7.

11 Jütte 2025c.

12 Uhrig 2025, 37.

13 Jütte 2025b, 71–111.



↑ Olga Meerson, c. 1911 – Private collection



← *Flowers (Blumen)*, c. 1910 – [Cat. 92]

→ *View from the Window (Blick durch das Fenster)*, 1911 – [Cat. 93]







→ Portrait of Henri Matisse (Porträt von Henri Matisse), 1911 – [Cat. 94]

—Melanie Vietmeier

→ Carla Pohle, 1906 – Archiv der Gemeinde Herrsching
am Ammersee

Carla
Pohle



A Graphic Artist Close to the New Artists' Association Munich —Carla Pohle

“... I bet she is the same fiery character,
I could not imagine her otherwise.”¹

Thus remarked Käthe Kollwitz in a letter, describing her almost twenty-year-younger friend Carla Pohle (1883–1962).² In addition to remarks in letters, two portraits attest to this friendship. →fig. p.274 The two artists shared an interest in social issues such as poverty and class disparities. Themes of social injustice, but also of human dignity and compassion, repeatedly surface in their works. They often addressed the existential struggles of life, particularly with regard to gender issues. Yet, while Kollwitz has attained a secure place in the canon of art history as one of the major Expressionist artists of Germany, Pohle had slipped into oblivion – until recently. New research for a catalogue raisonné and the preparations for an exhibition in Herrsching am Ammersee, however, have recovered approximately 400 works by the artist.³

Born in Lehe near Bremerhaven, Pohle moved to Genoa with her family in 1892, where she attended a convent school and learned to speak Italian fluently. After the family returned to Germany, she took lessons at an art school in Berlin from 1898 to 1900, where her teacher was the Danish-German painter, graphic artist, and sculptor



↑ Carla Pohle, 1906 – Archiv der Gemeinde Herrsching am Ammersee

Conrad Fehr.⁴ A graduate of the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, he founded the Fehr'sche Kunstakademie (Fehr Art Academy) in Berlin in 1892. It trained male as well as female artists, including Marie Schnür, later the first wife of Franz Marc. After further studies at the State Academy in Kassel (1900–1902),⁵ Pohle attended the Teaching and Experimental Studios for Applied and Fine Arts in Munich from 1903 to 1905, founded the previous year by Hermann Obrist and Wilhelm von Debschitz.⁶

The justification for including Pohle among the extended circle of the female Blue Riders was her participation in the first exhibition held by the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (NKVM, New Artists' Association Munich) in the Thannhauser gallery in Munich in 1909. Alongside Erma Bossi, Emmi Dresler, Gabriele Münter, and Marianne von Werefkin, she was one of only five female artists who took part in the total of three shows organized by the NKVM. From a historical perspective, however, it was by no means a matter of course for female artists to participate. What role Pohle played in the NKVM and what contacts she had in it has up to now not been determined. The catalogue of the first exhibition lists four etchings by her, the medium in which she created her most outstanding works: *Three Women*, *Reclining Woman and Man*, *A Group of People under Leaves*, and *Four Women*. Pohle's early prints from 1909/10 with their classical nudes bear similarities to other works shown by the NKVM by Pierre Girieud, Karl Hofer, and Moisseï Kogan. → fig. p. 276



↑ Carla Pohle, n.d. – Private collection

In addition to etchings, Pohle created oil paintings, watercolors, and drawings. Landscapes in a post-Impressionist style predominate among her paintings, as do portraits, such as those of Gitta Gurlitt and Katharina von Sanden. She lived with the latter from the mid-1920s at the latest until von Sanden's death. Pohle employed the medium of watercolor primarily for painting outdoors in nature, as during a voyage by ship from Palermo to Constantinople and Smyrna (present-day Izmir).⁷ But it is above all in her etchings that, in the midst of radical changes and wars, she uncompromisingly advocates solidarity and humanity. Somber, everyday life, and the questions of gender roles inherent in it, are the central theme that pervades her work: women as the backbone of society, who embody compassion and empathic connections, who take care of

children, feed the poor, and tend to the sick, despite their crowded living conditions and material scarcity. →fig. p.278 The fairy tale motif of *Scheherazade* →fig. p.281 from *1001 Nights* likewise positions a woman's determination at the center: Scheherazade displays great courage and extraordinary cleverness in voluntarily marrying the ruler Schahryâr, in order to put an end to his cruel practice of having his wives killed on the morning after the wedding. Thanks to her compelling tales continued night after night, Scheherazade gains the king's trust and he spares her life.

Again and again, Pohle addresses themes such as war, parting, and death. In her etching *Transformation / Grave Site*, →fig. p.280 dying does not imply a definite end, but a transition from one form of existence to another, a dissolution and metamorphosis reflected in the eternal cycle of nature. *Cries for Help as Houses Collapse* →fig. p.282 probably dates from the 1920s and depicts an existential, perhaps sociopolitical catastrophe: as the world begins to fall apart, people flee in the throes of fear and profound desperation.

This period saw an increased dissemination of Pohle's works via publications and exhibitions, which fostered her visibility as well as the recognition of her work. At least three of her works appeared in the 1925 and 1926 issues of the journal *Jugend*.⁸ In 1925 she exhibited with the Munich Association of Women Artists at the Thannhauser gallery,⁹ alongside Dora Bromberger, Emmy Klinker, Käthe Kollwitz, and others. In 1928 she participated in the first show of the New Secession of Munich, which regularly presented her works in the following years.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Pohle, who lived with the Jewish family Hirsch in the town of Herrsching,¹¹ suffered from a lack of funds and depended on the support of friends such as Mathilde Rüstow. The forced closure of the New Secession of Munich in 1937 meant the loss of this important exhibition opportunity for Pohle. Participation in other exhibitions and the sale of works to public institutions in the 1930s illustrate the internal contradictions of the Nazi regime. On the one hand, Pohle was represented by her painting *Mother and Child*¹² in the *State Art Exhibition* held at the Neue Pinakothek in Munich in 1933 and possibly in the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) at the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 1937.¹³ At the same time, works by her were defamed as "degenerate" and confiscated, such as the painting *The Sick Woman* from the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen (Bavarian State Painting Collection) and the watercolor *At the Baltic Sea* from

Kestner-Museum in Hannover.¹⁴ These contradictions demonstrate that Nazi art policies were governed less by clear aesthetic criteria than by ideological arbitrariness and a craving for power. Recognition and persecution were often intertwined. For the artists affected, this meant a threat to their livelihood.

A bit of relief from her precarious living conditions came from purchases made by public collections¹⁵ such as the Städtische Galerie (Municipal Gallery) in Munich in 1928 and 1931, as part of the “Emergency Action” initiated by the city administration to aid artists who were in a dire economic situation.¹⁶ Until 1955, this museum regularly acquired works by Pohle, even in 1939 and 1941, despite her works being declared “degenerate” and removed from other public collections.

It was not until 1955 that the Heidelberger Kunstverein mounted a solo show of Pohle’s work.¹⁷ Its director, Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, asked the director of the Municipal Gallery in Munich, Arthur Rümmer, “for a small selection of about five oil paintings” as a gesture of administrative assistance.¹⁸ The fact that Rümmer sent twelve oil paintings and eight watercolors testifies to his high opinion of Pohle’s work.¹⁹ That same year, he displayed her works in the *Munich Women Artists* show at the Municipal Gallery.²⁰ The Heidelberg exhibition was “very well received by the public.”²¹ After the Munich show, nonetheless, Pohle complained of a lack of interest – with the exception of a review in the *Münchner Merkur* newspaper – and came to a fundamental conclusion that summed up her artistic career: “Women, it appears, are still not being taken seriously.”²²

—— 1 Quoted in Hertzberg 1997. The bundle of letters from Käthe Kollwitz to the artist Mathilde Rüstow is preserved in the Archive of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

2 Carla Pohle and Kollwitz exchanged works or reproductions of them. Pohle thus possessed a photograph of a bas-relief by Kollwitz. Likewise, in a letter to Alexander and Mathilde Rüstow from December 31, 1941, Kollwitz mentioned a picture that Pohle had given her for Christmas. See Kollwitz 1966, 92.

3 Hellerer/Geiselhart 2024.

4 Exh.Cat. Munich 1955, n. p. More biographical information in Exh. Cat. Munich 1999, 392.

5 Before 1920, women were allowed to attend only a few art academies in the German Reich, including Kassel, according to Henni Lehmann's contemporary survey, but usually only after fulfilling special requirements for admission and under certain teaching conditions. See Lehmann 1914, 3 and Herber 2010, 61ff.

6 Exh.Cat. Munich 1955, n. p. Emmi Dresler's brother, Paul Dresler, also studied there after 1902 (probably until 1910) and was friends with Moisseey Kogan.

7 Hellerer/Geiselhart 2024, 22.

8 In 1925 the drypoint etching *The Laundress* and the charcoal drawing *The Female Tightrope Walker*; in 1926 *The Mother*.

9 Review of the exhibition mentioning some of her graphic works, paintings, and sculptures in *Der Cicerone* 18 (1926): 35ff.

10 Hellerer/Geiselhart 2024, 24.

11 Hellerer/Geiselhart 2024, 27.

12 Exh.Cat. Munich 1933, no. 283.

13 Although Pohle is not listed in the catalogue, a painting with a mother and child subject in a private collection has a label on the reverse from the exhibition.

14 <https://emuseum.campus.fu-berlin.de/eMuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=O&sp=O&sp=3&sp=SdetailList&sp=O&sp=Sdetail&sp=O&sp=F> [accessed on March 27, 2026].

15 Friederike Hellerer and Catharina Geiselhart have been able to identify works in private collections located in places ranging from Germany to Brazil as well as in public collections: Staatliche Graphische Sammlung München, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, Münchner Stadtmuseum, Kunsthalle Bremerhaven, Lyonel-Feininger Museum Quedlinburg, Archiv der Gemeinde Herrsching am Ammersee. Further works are held at the Museum Folkwang, Essen.

16 Hermann 2022, 300–303.

17 *Carla Pohle: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*, January 16–June 2, 1955.

18 Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München (SGL), Sammlungsarchiv, letter from Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub to Arthur Rümmermann, December 22, 1954, original.

19 SGL, Sammlungsarchiv, list of works, original.

20 Exh.Cat. Munich 1955.

21 SGL, Sammlungsarchiv, letter from the office of the Heidelberg Kunstverein to Arthur Rümmermann, February 9, 1955, original.

22 SGL, Sammlungsarchiv, letter from Carla Pohle to Arthur Rümmermann, February 9, 1955, original.

I am grateful to Alexandra Aichberger, Friederike Hellerer, and Catharina Geiselhart for providing valuable information.



Portrait of an old man

1-10-1911



← Self-Portrait (Selbstbildnis), 1938 – [Cat. 164]

→ Self-Portrait at the Easel (Selbst vor Staffelei), n.d. – [Cat. 181]



- ← Käthe Kollwitz, n. d. – [Cat. 178]
- ← Käthe Kollwitz (Profile) (Käthe Kollwitz (Profil)), n. d. – [Cat. 173]
- Palander, n. d. – [Cat. 177]



Portrait of a man

James G. Thompson





← *Eteokles and Polyneikes* (*Eteokles und Polyneikes*), 1909 – [Cat. 161]

→ *Woman Reclining on a Bed with a Blanket* (*Liegende Frau auf Bett mit Decke*), n. d. – [Cat. 175]



- ← Feeding the Hungry (Hungernde speisen), n. d. – [Cat. 172]
- ← Gardener's Wife (Gärtnersfrau), n. d. – [Cat. 168]
- Sleeping Female Nude (Schlafender Frauenakt), n. d. – [Cat. 180]







- ← Transformation / Grave Site (Transformation / Grabstelle), n. d. – [Cat. 182]
- Scheherazade, n. d. – [Cat. 179]
- Man and Woman in the Stairwell (Mann und Frau im Treppenhaus), n. d. – [Cat. 176]



- ← *Cries for Help as Houses Collapse* (*Hilfeschrei vor einstürzenden Häusern*), n. d. — [Cat. 171]
- *The Devourers* (*Die Fresser*), n. d. — [Cat. 166]
- *Female Nude, Embracing a Man in a Room with a View of the City* (*Frauenakt, Mann umarmend im Zimmer mit Großstadtausblick*), n. d. — [Cat. 167]



“On the Artistic Education of Women” The Training of Female Artists from around 1880 to 1920

“On the Artistic Education of Women”¹ was the title of a lecture that Hermione von Preuschen gave at the Internationaler Kongress für Frauenwerke und Frauenbestrebungen (International Congress for Women’s Work and Women’s Efforts) in 1896.² She was a painter, writer, world traveler, and feminist.³ Raised in privileged circumstances, she was able to take painting lessons at the young age of fifteen. Ferdinand von Keller, a teacher at the Kunstakademie (Art Academy) in Karlsruhe,



Fig.1 Ludvík Kuba, *The Painting School of Anton Ažbe*, 1900 – Galerie moderního umění v Hradci Králové

accepted her as a private student and was so impressed by her talent that he insisted, against her father’s will, that she continue her further training in Karlsruhe. Preuschen set up her studio in Munich and took extended trips to France and Italy. She was married twice, had four children, and lived in Italy and Germany. As an artist she invented her own genre, a sort of historical still life. Ambitious and successful, she gained access to potential clients not least thanks to her aristocratic origin, and she organized numerous exhibitions of her paintings in Europe and the United States. After the turn of the twentieth century, her work gradually went out of fashion; she died in 1918, largely forgotten.⁴

The starting point for Preuschen’s lecture was the observation that “a woman who feels called to be an artist faces far greater difficulties than a man.” She vividly describes the prejudices and problems that female artists of her time faced. As one of the few firsthand accounts about the professionalization of women artists – even published – her lecture offers firsthand insights, providing a solid foundation for discussing the educational possibilities for women artists from the second half of the nineteenth century to the dawn of the Weimar Republic.

In her lecture, Hermione von Preuschen offers keen observations based on her personal experience. “A man looks down benevolently and tolerantly at the fingers of the talented, pretty beginner, but woe to the woman who must be taken seriously and who dares to achieve as much or even more than the average man.” This is indeed the case, she explains, because “with kind permission, genius is so free as not to defer to sex.” “A hundred names would scarcely suffice to cite all the truly notable young European female painters.” But even if one cannot speak of genius, less talented female artists, too, should be allowed to cultivate their talents and enjoy a source of income, just as much as the “many minor male talents.” “A solid basis does women no harm whatsoever. In any case, men repeatedly and bitterly reproach them for lacking one.” But unfortunately, the educational situation is far from ideal. “Up to now, certainly, a poor young thing who chooses painting as her profession has only the few pennies she has painstakingly wrested from her parents and is often nothing more than a source of income for the professor, who uses the fees from his constantly overfilled ladies’ studios to build



Fig.2 Class of women practicing drawing after the nude at an art school in the Schwabing district of Munich, probably at the Damen-Akademie on Barer Straße 21, 1907

himself a princely villa that he could never have painted his way to with his own works. For as far as I know, it is only in Rome that women are permitted to attend the art academy. There they can also draw nudes alongside the men, free of charge, which would be impossible in Munich, Berlin, Karlsruhe, and other German art centers. It is true that in recent years special schools for female painters have been founded in various cities, but in my opinion these should really be unnecessary. ... Why not just open the academies to women instead?"

On the path to equal rights

Twenty-four years later, in the summer of 1920, the Bavarian Ministry of Education and Culture decreed that “from the winter semester 1920/21 on, women are to be admitted to study at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste [Academy of Fine Arts] under the same conditions as men,” against the resistance of male professors and students.⁵ This ruling made the Munich Academy, alongside that in Düsseldorf, one of the last art schools in Germany to admit women.⁶ Since 1918, female artists had become increasingly vehement in their demand that women be allowed to enroll at state academies.⁷ Their main arguments included the suffrage for women introduced in 1918 and the Weimar Constitution of 1919, which recognized women as citizens with (almost) equal rights: “Men and women fundamentally have the same civil rights and duties,” as paragraph 109 states.⁸

The Weimar Constitution was preceded by a long struggle for women’s rights and education. The desire to pursue a career was an expression of a deep longing shared by many of them to realize their potential as human beings: “Come, then, my sisters, join me, so that we do not fall behind while everyone around us and beside us is pushing forward and fighting. We, too, want to claim and earn our share in the great redemption of the world, which must finally come to all of humanity, of which we are half. We want to claim our share: the right to develop the purely human in us through the unrestricted development of all our powers, and the right to responsibility and independence within the state.”⁹ This appeal was formulated by the writer Louise Otto-Peters following the experiences of the Revolution of 1848–49, in which women, too, had fought for the legal equality of all people. The new constitution of 1849 declared that all “Germans are equal before the law.” Furthermore, “everyone is free to choose their profession and to train for it wherever and however they wish.”¹⁰ Yet this referred solely to men, as the historian Barbara Beuys notes: “Discrimination against women in everything concerning politics, education, rights, and participation in public life was so deeply entrenched that no words were needed.”¹¹

While it was taken for granted that peasant and working-class women had to work in a wide variety of fields, this did not apply to women of the middle class. For a long time, teaching was virtually the only profession they could practice, but only if they remained unmarried. In nineteenth-century bourgeois society, a woman’s “calling” was ultimately to care for her husband and the home they shared, as well as to

be a mother. This belief legitimized at the same time their exclusion from public, political, and economic life.¹² After the revolution of 1848–49, however, there was great fear that women would continue to be politically engaged. Grassroots politics meant above all forming networks and being involved in associations.¹³ The Prussian Vereinsgesetz (Law on Associations) of 1850 therefore stipulated that women would not be permitted to engage in political activity within associations in any way. This legal provision hung over all organized activities by women throughout Germany as a deterrent until 1908. The women's rights activists Auguste Schmidt, Henriette Goldschmidt, and the aforementioned Louise Otto-Peters found a way around this by setting up "apolitical" women's educational associations, in the well-founded hope that education could become a catalyst for the women's movement.¹⁴

Autonomous organization as the key to specialized training and a profession

Autonomous organization and networking were also considered the ideal path to the highest-quality and most comprehensive training for women artists. Individual studies were certainly possible, like those described by Preuschen, which had defined her own career. Furthermore, women could take private lessons from painters (generally male painters) or train to become drawing instructors. Yet ultimately, an education that qualitatively matched that of the art academies was only made possible by the associations of women artists founded in various cities in Germany, which in turn set up their own schools or "academies".¹⁵

The Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreundinnen (Association of Berlin's Women Artists and Friends of Art) was the oldest and most influential organization of this kind in a German-speaking country.¹⁶ Founded in 1867, it established its own teaching institution just one year later, which eventually became the association's art school. Its structure followed the model of civic self-governance: an elected board of active women artists managed the business activities, while the "Friends of Art" as supporting members contributed to its financial security. This double structure of professional members and a base



Fig. 3 Maximilian Dasio with his students at the Damen-Akademie, 1901 – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

of supportive patrons proved to be long-lasting and was adopted in a similar fashion when later associations were founded. Around 1900 the Berlin Association numbered several hundred members and was thus one of the largest organizations of women artists in the imperial capital.

Following this model, twelve female artists in Munich – among them Bertha von Tarnóczy and Clementine von Braunmühl – founded the Münchner Künstlerinnen-Verein (Munich Association of Women Artists) in 1882, which set up its “Damen-Akademie” (Ladies’ Academy) in 1884.¹⁷ Its name was not only a clear declaration of the intended quality of the training, but also one that took aim at the Munich Kunstakademie

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(Academy of Arts) founded in 1808. For there, women had initially been admitted as students. In 1813 Marie Ellenrieder became the first woman ever to be admitted to an art school in Germany. Until 1837, forty-seven women were able to study at the Münchner Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Munich Academy of Fine Arts). Afterwards, women were not admitted, with only two exceptions. Elisabet Ney enrolled in 1852 and was probably the sole woman at the Academy permitted to study sculpture, and in 1911 the Polish artist Zofia Stryjeńska registered under a male name.¹⁸

Munich held international appeal as a center for art, not just for men. Thanks to the Academy’s reputation, numerous training institutions, and an internationally oriented art market, the city developed into the most important center for studying art after Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thousands of students from all over Europe, Russia, the United States, and even Asia came to study in Munich, often staying on to work afterward, not least as teachers.¹⁹

In this context, the Ladies’ Academy of the Munich Association of Women Artists grew into a focal point from the start. The association, along with its school, largely followed the Berlin model, but gave its “friends of art” less of a voice than the practicing female artists. In keeping with its assertion of being an academy, it drew up an ambitious curriculum. Students worked in the studios and outdoors. Their works were criticized and corrected by instructors several times a week. The students at the Ladies’ Academy were free to choose their subjects and decide what to focus on. They were also simultaneously members of the Association of Women Artists, which, since its founding, had facilitated art sales, organized exhibitions, offered continuing education in the form of lectures, and ultimately provided financial support – through scholarships and as a type of social security for members in need. As in Berlin, the school received state subsidies: Beginning in 1894, it obtained an annual financial subsidy from the Bavarian State Parliament, which was viewed by the association as recognition of women’s education. Dressler’s renowned art yearbook highlighted the special status of the Ladies’ Academy by listing it immediately after the Academy of Fine Arts, the most prestigious institution in the city. As a privately organized but nonprofit institution not operated for personal gain, it differed fundamentally from Munich’s numerous private schools.²⁰

Exemplary: The educational path of Gabriele Münter

One of the students at the Ladies' Academy who is best known today is Gabriele Münter. She arrived there with a clear idea of what she wanted to learn and what the objectives of her training should be. Her predilection for drawing had been noticed early on: "I showed talent from the beginning, I must have drawn everything constantly. ... But I never found a real teacher who would give me the kind of encouragement I needed."²¹ She was born in Berlin in 1877 as the daughter of a wealthy dentist and inherited, along with her sister, substantial assets after the death of both her parents. This provided her, in contrast to most of her female contemporaries, with a high degree of financial security. This economic independence had a profound influence on Münter's educational path. She was able to finance stays in the United States, Munich, and France without having to depend on support from her family, sales from artworks, or money from giving lessons. In spite of her family's initial skepticism, she received private drawing and painting lessons in Düsseldorf, the site of a leading art academy, yet the meticulously detailed realism and historicism of the Düsseldorf school remained alien to her. Her experience of private teaching resembled that of many female art students. While men resorted to private teachers primarily to prepare for admission to an academy, women sought to receive a complete education from private instructors, which such teachers, however, could hardly provide. The range of subjects was limited, teaching was one-sided, depending on the teacher's area of activity, and the women students were often selected more on the basis of financial considerations than their talent. Lastly, a private education was much more expensive than attending a state art academy, which in any case only admitted men.²²

Münter thus took the opportunity to embark on a two-year trip to the United States, where she drew and photographed extensively. After her return, she decided to continue her studies in Munich, following the advice of her friend Margarete Susman. In 1901–02 she attended the Ladies' Academy run by the Munich Association of Women Artists. Teaching was conducted at the recently constructed Künstlerinnenhaus (Women Artists' House) in Barer Straße 21. Münter enrolled in a costume course given by Fritz Hegenbarth and in Maximilian Dasio's class for drawing heads from live models. She also participated in Dasio's course in landscape drawing in Fürstentfeldbruck.

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It was clearly difficult to retain ambitious and progressive artists as permanent faculty members at a school for women, especially since contemporaries consistently looked down on such institutions as second-rate. After Münter's first semester, Dasio was appointed professor at the *Königliche Kunstgewerbeschule München* (Royal School of Applied Arts in Munich) – somewhat less prestigious than the Academy, but regarded as a significant career advancement at the time. In the winter of 1901–02, Münter took a course in drawing heads given by Angelo Jank and soon advanced to his nude drawing class.

She also took advantage of the extracurricular activities offered by the Ladies' Academy, attending lectures and events organized by the Association of Women Artists. The Women Artists' House also maintained a reading room stocked with the leading art journals and art-historical literature, as well as a section of women's literature. Through the Association of Women Artists, Münter came into contact with the women's movement and attended lectures at the *Münchner Verein für Fraueninteressen* (Munich Association for Women's Interests), whose best-known members were Anita Augspurg and Ilka Freudenberg. She also became acquainted with the program of the Debschitz School through the lectures by Art Nouveau artist Hermann Obrist; it had been founded by Wilhelm von Debschitz and Obrist in 1902 as the *Lehr- und Versuch-Ateliers für Angewandte und Freie Kunst* (Teaching and Experimental Studios for Applied and Fine Arts).²³ Women were permitted to attend this reform-oriented institution from the very beginning, and enrollment was correspondingly high. Here, Münter could have embarked on an alternative educational path in the applied arts. The Royal School of Applied Arts in Munich also admitted women,²⁴ and starting in 1905, the *Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie* (Teaching and Experimental Institute for Photography) also welcomed women.²⁵ Unlike in the fine arts, in which women seeking adequate training and professional opportunities still faced many prejudices and difficulties, their work in the applied arts had become widely accepted by then.

The goal of the Ladies' Academy was to offer an educational program in the field of the fine arts that was equivalent in its scope and quality to that available at the Academy of Fine Arts. Yet despite all these efforts, their training did not match that at the Academy, as it was not possible to maintain a consistently high level of quality. In ad-

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dition to the high fluctuation of good teachers, the training at the Ladies' Academy repeatedly proved to be quite conservative – a problem in the field of fine arts that in this period affected all institutional art schools. Since its founding and all during its existence, the Ladies' Academy was plagued by the fear of amateurism, a suspicion or criticism expressed not only by men, but also by women. It was rooted in the prejudice that women did not take their studies seriously and only wanted to pass the time until they got married. Afterwards they would give up their artistic activities or, at most, practice them as a hobby.²⁶ Admission criteria did indeed exist for the students, although it is unclear what these were exactly. What is certain is that these were relaxed around 1903–04. The government committees that supervised the subsidies criticized the lack of an entrance exam in 1906, expressing the suspicion that “the Association wants to receive more tuition in order to reduce its financial burdens, in this way taking the risk of creating an art proletariat.”²⁷ The rapid upsurge in student numbers deteriorated the quality of the teaching, due to the lack of supervision and of space. The main problem for enrolled students, however, was the financial burden: Whoever wanted to complete the same program as the men at the Academy had to pay at least five times as much.²⁸

At the Ladies' Academy, Münter focused on drawing classes, which, however, did not satisfy her – the problems with educational institutions described above certainly contributed to this. She therefore began looking for other suitable options. At the private studio of the well-known graphic artists Heinrich Wolff and Ernst Neumann, she learned the technique of woodcut printing. An exhibition of works by Wilhelm Hüsgen motivated her to take up sculpture and made her aware of the classes offered by the Künstlervereinigung Phalanx (Phalanx Artists' Association). Founded in 1901 by Hüsgen, Wassily Kandinsky, and other fellow artists, the Phalanx was affiliated with a private art school. Münter enrolled in Hüsgen's sculpture class, where she modeled female nudes, and also visited Kandinsky's life drawing and painting classes. She finally felt she had found the right teacher in Kandinsky. “That was a new artistic experience; K. was so different from the other teachers – he explained things in depth and thoroughly and regarded me as someone who is consciously striving, capable of setting tasks and goals for myself. That was new to me and made an impression on me.”²⁹

It was through her studies under Kandinsky at the Phalanx School and during a painting holiday in Kochel in 1902 that Münter received the formative inspiration that would shape her career. This inspiration led to a romantic relationship and a long-term partnership. Münter's biography



Fig. 4 Advertisement placed by the Künstlerinnen-Verein, 1899 – in Franz von Reber and Adolf Bayersdorfer, eds., *Klassischer Skulpturenschatz*, vol. 3 (Munich 1899)

reveals a pattern that recurs frequently among artists of her generation. Studying in another city and attending an art school there provided the starting point for exploring its art scene and educational opportunities, but the decisive artistic influence often came from personally formative encounters and private groups of artists working together.

As a young artist, and later in 1929, Münter repeatedly utilized travel, especially stays in Paris, to further her education. Notwithstanding all the educational opportunities that women had in the art capitals of Berlin, Munich, and Vienna, for example, artists were drawn – whenever possible – to Paris, where countless private and public academies existed that were fully or partially open to women. Here it was possible to connect with the avant-garde – with Post-Impressionism, the Fauves, or Cubism – which Munich could not offer. In 1906–07, Münter lived with Kandinsky in Sèvres for a year. She also rented a room in the artists' quarter of Montparnasse and attended a drawing course given by Théophile Alexandre Steinlen at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière during the winter months. More than twenty years later, in 1929, she took advantage of another stay to further her education at the same school. Münter's time in Paris overlapped with that of two other female artists from Germany: Olga Meerson, who alongside Münter had already taken classes offered by Kandinsky at the Phalanx school, studied at the Académie Matisse, while Paula Modersohn-Becker attended drawing classes at the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Colarossi.

Paths toward success despite systemic difficulties

The case of Münter and the educational paths taken by many other female artists of the period clearly illustrate what key elements were vital to their professional development: parents who were either supportive or did not actively forbid or hinder the course they chose; financial backing, usually also from the family, which was all the more important the more expensive the chosen training was; a willingness to travel – seldom did one place suffice to learn what was necessary – and permission from the family to move to suitable places of study or to travel; and finally the independently organized institutions set up by women that offered a curriculum tailored to the needs of women artists. Such associations aided women artists in finding their way around in these art centers, provided a safety net in case of emergencies, and ultimately created the platforms and exhibition venues that permitted them to take the step towards a freelance career.³⁰

In 1913, the artist and author Henni Lehmann gave a lecture in Frankfurt am Main at the Verein Frauenbildung – Frauenstudium (Women’s Education – Women’s Academic Studies Association) on “The Art Studies of Women,” which echoed many of Preuschen’s arguments from 1896.³¹ Despite all the efforts to enable women to study art, the state academies continued “to keep their gates closed for the most part, no matter how many attempts have been made to gain access. In some places, it is believed that the existing and clearly recognized need is sufficiently addressed by subsidizing private institutions, as is the case in Berlin, Munich, and Karlsruhe, or by awarding scholarships to qualified women to enable them to receive an artistic education. However, it must be firmly denied that this has created, or can create, truly adequate educational opportunities that offer favorable conditions comparable to those available to men at state-supported institutions. We know from the analogy of institutions of higher education what an advantage state schools always have. ... Nowhere is admission subject to conditions that women could not easily fulfill.”

Lehmann combines an overview of the situation with the demand to open up state institutions, since the current state of art education is insufficient, despite all the efforts: “The three art schools for women in Berlin, Munich, and Karlsruhe deserve the highest recognition. They are capable of providing an art education, and their disappearance would be



Fig. 5 Anna von Wahl, *Exhibition of the Verein der Künstlerinnen*, poster for the Königlische Akademie der Künste in Berlin, 1898 – Kunsthalle Bremen – Der Kunstverein in Bremen

deplorable. They are not capable, however, of replacing the academies, since on the one hand their curriculum is much narrower, in regard to the number of subjects as well as to the teaching hours in the individual subjects, and on the other hand training at them is considerably more expensive. The academies open to women are similarly not capable of replacing the inaccessible large academies, since their curriculum is also narrower, their goals are in part mixed with other educational purposes, since they are ultimately located in cities that are not large enough centers of art to familiarize their future artists with historical and contemporary art.” Lehmann sees only one solution: “The demand to open up art academies is a demand for inherent justice, which calls for women to have a complete share in the intellectual heritage of the people.”

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With the admission of women to the Munich Academy of Fine Arts in 1920, the Ladies' Academy was closed. Yet even at the art academies, women still had a struggle to fight. Equality did not exist in the art world. Women's artistic production was confined to specific themes, genres, and approaches – such as to small-scale works and portraits in the field of sculpture. Furthermore, they were structurally disadvantaged in the system of master classes, which formed the core of the academy's training and provided access to the networks of professors.³²

The Munich Association of Women Artists remained in existence until 1967. Admission to an academy did not make advocacy groups superfluous, since they offered exhibition possibilities, networks, and aid when facing financial difficulties. They promoted opportunities for women to succeed in an art world still dominated by men. 1926 saw the foundation of the interdisciplinary GEDOK, the *Gemeinschaft Deutscher und Österreichischer Künstlerinnenvereine aller Kunstgattungen* (Union of German and Austrian Associations of Women Artists in All Art Forms), an umbrella organization that still exists for all associations and groups that uphold the interests of women artists.³³

——— 1 I like the suggestion made in the catalogue *Radikal! Künstlerinnen* und Moderne* (Radical! Women Artists and Modernism) of placing an asterisk at the end of feminine words for women [in German] to “integrate those persons where there are indications that they do not identify as women,” see Exh. Cat. Arnhem/Saarbrücken/Vienna 2024, 8.

This text [in the German original] uses gender-neutral word endings only in general formulations and otherwise follows historical sources for the binary designations woman/man and female artist/male artist, since legislation of the period, the institutional practice of art education, and social norms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries operated exclusively within these categories and did not legally recognize other sexual identities; they are also in general not historically documented. This does not imply the absence of non-binary identities but only reflects their systemic invisibility; see Kortendiek/Riegraf/Sabisch 2019, 3–12.

2 Preuschen 1896. All of the quotes that follow are taken from this brief text.

3 Präger 2018, which also lists further literature on the topic.

4 In 2026 the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin will show the exhibition *Skandal! Hermione von Preuschen und der “Mors Imperator”* (Scandal!, Hermione von Preuschen and the “Mors Imperator”), curated by Birgit Verwiebe. This show focuses on her 1887 painting *Mors Imperator*, whose rejection by the Berlin Akademie der Künste (Academy of Arts) immediately made Preuschen famous.

5 Letter from the Bayerisches Kultusministerium (Bavarian Ministry of Education and Culture) to the Academy of Fine Arts, August 6, 1920, BayHStA, MK 14102, quoted in Hopp 2008, 69ff.

6 Herber 2010, 65.

7 Hopp 2008, 67; see the essay by Meike Hopp and Caroline Sternberg in Exh. Cat. Fürstentfeldbruck 2020, here 22.

8 “What initially seemed like a straightforward formulation turned out to be problematic on account of the restrictive word ‘fundamentally.’ For this qualification effectively continued to block a comprehensive revision of marriage and divorce law, for example, as well as of legal issues regarding assets” (Heinsohn 2018).

9 *Frauen-Zeitung*, April 1849 (Louise Otto-Peters), quoted in Beuys 2014, 12. Barbara Beuys’s study is the basis for the following section.

10 The “Fundamental Rights of the German People” and the new constitution were officially promulgated as imperial law in early 1849. The two quotes refer to Article 2, Section 7, and Article 6, Section 28, cited in Beuys 2014, 14.

11 Ibid.

12 See Hausen 1976 and Bock/Duden 1977.

13 On the world of German bourgeois associations in the nineteenth century, see Nipperdey 1976.

14 Beuys 2014, 17–22.

15 Matz 2001.

16 Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen 2017.

17 This section on the Münchner Künstlerinnen-Verein is based on the landmark study by Deseyve 2005.

18 Hopp 2008, 66ff.

19 See the country essays in Gerhart, et al. 2008, 264–95.

20 According to Deseyve 2005, 32ff. Dressler’s *Kunstjahrbuch* from the years 1906, 311 and 1908, 351ff.

21 Gabriele Münter to Johannes Eichner, September 12, 1928, quoted in Kleine 1994, 40ff. On Gabriele Münter’s training, see also Exh. Cat. Munich/Frankfurt 1992 and Exh. Cat. Munich/Humblebæk/Cologne 2017.

22 See below for specific cost comparisons between the Ladies’ Academy and the Munich Art Academy.

23 Graham Dry, “Eine neue Schule im Stil der Zeit,” in Exh. Cat. Munich 2014, 188–97.

24 A state-approved education for women in the field of applied arts was possible here from 1872 onward; see Schmalhofer 2005.

25 Pohlmann/Scheutle 2000.

26 In this context, women were called dilettantes when they lacked a systematic or basic professional training or they did not depend on an artistic activity to make a living and to compete on the art market against works made by professional painters and sculptors. Art critics were quick to make the accusation of dilettantism to deny all women the serious practice of their profession; see Matz 2001, 30 and Herber 2010, 47ff.

27 Quoted in Deseyve 2005, 71ff.

28 Lehmann 1914, 10ff.

29 Hoberg 1994, 31.

30 An alternative was to completely evade these conventions and to prioritize freedom as a guiding principle; see the project *Frei leben! Die Frauen der Boheme 1890–1920* (Live Freely! Bohemian Women 1890–1920) by Monacensia (2022–2024) and its online magazine, <https://www.muenchner-stadtbibliothek.de/boheme-magazin> [accessed on March 22, 2026], as well as the essay by Laura Mokrohs and Sylvia Schütz in this publication.

31 Lehmann 1914, all of the quotes that follow were taken from this brief text.

32 Hopp 2008, 70ff.

33 See Matz 2001 and <https://gedok.de/> [accessed on March 22, 2026].



Fig. 1 Emmy Hennings, 1912 – Swiss Literary Archives (SLA), Bern, Emmy Hennings Estate

“Live Freely!” Precarious Conditions for Bohemian Women Writers in Munich

“And yet, this life as a bohemian artist life
has been the best part of my entire life so far.
At least it is free, completely free...”¹

Franziska zu Reventlow

Around 1900, the Bavarian capital was home to a vibrant literary and artistic subculture: the Munich bohemian scene. Intellectuals and artists from all over Europe gathered here. With their anti-bourgeois attitudes and behavior, they rebelled against the moral values and authorities of Wilhelmine society as they sought a new way of life. They questioned traditional conventions regarding love and partnerships,

experimenting even in the most private spheres with the goal of changing society. The radicalism of modernity was to find expression in both art and life. Young women who dared to live a free life as artists or writers were willing to take great risks and endure precarious living conditions.²

Despite far-reaching legal restrictions, the women in the bohemian scene lived according to their convictions, risking a break with society and their families. Financial worries were a vital concern, and the greatest challenge in achieving independence was, in most cases, earning one's own money. Higher education and many professional fields were off-limits to women at that time. Training at the Royal Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts was still a male-only domain; women were not permitted to study there until 1920. Those who wanted to study painting or sculpture attended private schools, such as the Ladies' Academy or the painting and drawing school of the Slovenian artist Anton Ažbe at Georgenstraße 16, where Franziska zu Reventlow also took lessons when she first arrived in Munich in 1893.³ The instruction was certainly more modern and avant-garde than at the Academy, but it also entailed a considerable financial burden for many. Reventlow reported on this in a letter to Michael Georg Conrad: “I've been doing better lately; I've even paid off some debts and had lunch every day. I have, in fact, come to the difficult decision to give up sculpture and am now devoting myself exclusively to painting. In the long run, I would not have been able to sustain it, either financially or health-wise.”⁴ Among the many young women who dared to break free in Munich and sought to realize their own life plans were, alongside Reventlow, the writers Margarete Beutler and Emmy Hennings, the cabaret artist Marietta di Monaco, and the dollmaker Lotte Pritzel, as well as, time and again, the poet and drafts-woman Else Lasker-Schüler. As artists, they demanded public attention and left their mark on the bohemian subculture in Munich, Berlin, and Zurich. Unlike the activists of the bourgeois women's movement, the women in the bohemian scene did not form associations or formulate common goals and demands, with each fighting for a self-determined life on her own. Yet despite all their individual differences, they had one thing in common: They saw the power to change society as lying above all in art and literature. In 1918, Hennings formulated this as follows: “I am already setting out the conditions for a new world. Don't let yourself be catered to! And don't cater to others[!] Away with honor! Away with ambition! Remain anonymous! Away with remuneration! Do everything yourself! And offer yourself instead of selling yourself. Voilà!”⁵



Fig.2 Franziska zu Reventlow's room in the apartment she shared with Franz Hessel and Bogdan von Suchocki – Münchner Stadtbibliothek / Monacensia, FR F 19-2

**“I will do what I want...
I shall not marry.”⁶**

The women of the Bohemian scene did not want their families to pressure them into marriage, which they criticized as an instrument for perpetuating inequality. Legally established property and power structures would subordinate them to men and make them financially dependent.⁷ Instead of marriage, they advocated for and experimented with more open concepts of cohabitation, asserting their right to personal and sexual fulfillment in equal partnerships. Beutler, for example,



Fig. 3 Margarete Beutler with one of her sons, c.1905 – Private collection

coined the term “*Lebenskameradschaft*” (lifelong comradeship). From late summer 1903 to spring 1906, Reventlow lived in a shared apartment at Kaulbachstraße 63 with her illegitimate son Rolf, the artist and stained-glass painter Bogdan von Suchocki – who was also her lover – and the writer Franz Hessel.⁸ Often referred to as Munich’s first shared apartment, this three-way living arrangement was experimental in nature. For example, they organized household tasks without following the usual division of labor: While Hessel’s inheritance provided the financial basis, Suchocki was responsible for cooking, and Reventlow cared for her son, born in 1897, translated texts, and painted. Her diary indicates that she also took lessons from Alexej von Jawlensky during this time: “Back at the Jawlensky School since Monday,”⁹ she noted on January 10, 1906, and on the following day: “Jawlensky praised me. I was stunned; I myself thought it was pretty bad and I felt terribly embarrassed, since

the others were all standing around and intently examining my work.”¹⁰ Jawlensky also lived in an unconventional household with the painter Marianne von Werefkin and her maid, Helene Nesnakomoff, in a luxurious apartment nearby at Giselastraße 23. Their Pink Salon became a gathering place for Munich’s art scene, including Wassily Kandinsky, Gabriele Münter, Franz Marc, and the dancers Alexander Sacharoff and Clothilde von Derp. Whether Reventlow was ever a guest of the “Giselists” is not recorded in the diaries. Werefkin, on the other hand, left a vivid description of a visit to Kaulbachstraße in 1904, which attests to the precarious living conditions there: “Yesterday I visited Countess R. on an old and secluded city street that had large gardens and old houses, one house even older than the others, so old that it seems ripe for demolition. I ring the bell. Her friend, a Polish painter whose mother was a princess and who wears someone else’s trousers because he no longer has any of his own, opens the door and greets me with a kiss on the hand. Through the dark courtyard, which opens onto the garden, we reach the entrance. ... A small staircase leads upstairs. One empty room after another. The age of the walls rivals that of the few objects they enclose. Finally, a room that feels lived in. In a tall iron bed lies the charming woman with the eyes of a young girl and her poor face, marked by life. Delightful in her bed, so dainty, quite childlike. And in these wretched surroundings are bouquets of flowers as if from another world – the world of illusions that knows all about this life thrown off course. And the Pole, who has no trousers of his own but the manners of a prince, prepares her soup and brings it to her bedside.”¹¹

Werefkin clearly articulates her horror at Reventlow’s miserable living conditions. It is characteristic of bohemian women artists that, even in precarious circumstances, they emphasize the beautiful aspects in their accounts of their lives. In a prose sketch by Lasker-Schüler, a passage reads: “I wear golden slippers, but there are already holes in my silk stockings. Mr. von Kuckuck becomes strangely gloomy whenever he sits on the barrel of salt and watches me cook. He tells of princesses who must cook and scrub wearing golden slippers and silk stockings, rubbing their hands raw, yet the heavens owe them all the stars.”¹²

“If only it were not for those damned existential worries.”¹³

Around 1900, women without an education typically worked as maids, waitresses, or factory workers. For those from middle-class backgrounds, there were few options other than becoming a teacher or nurse, coupled with the obligation to remain unmarried and childless. However, in Munich, known for its publishing industry, there were progressive publishers who were offering positions in the literary sector. Immediately after moving to Munich in 1902, Beutler secured a position on the editorial staff of the magazine *Jugend*. The young writer greatly appreciated the good fortune that allowed her to find both financial security and “freedom for my own creative work” in the midst of “Munich’s arts scene.”¹⁴ Reventlow used the foreign language skills she had acquired through her upper-class upbringing to produce translations for Albert Langen Verlag. Between 1898 and 1910, she translated around fifty titles from the French – including works by Marcel Prévost, Guy de Maupassant, and Anatole France – often working through the night to meet tight deadlines. Although earnings and prestige for translators were low at that time,¹⁵ this provided Reventlow with an important – though by no means sufficient – source of income to support herself and her son. She was often forced to rely on prostitution to make ends meet. While she criticized bourgeois marriage and hypocritical morality as triggers for prostitution in her essays, writing about her own experience with this trade was a source of shame for her. In 1897, she confided in her diary that one must “even be discreet with oneself” in this regard.¹⁶ Hennings, too, was left with no option but prostitution during several periods of severe financial hardship. Her novels *Das Gefängnis* (Prison) and *Das Brandmal* (The Stigma) are powerful literary testimonies to her experiences with homelessness, hunger, illness, commercial sex, and criminalization. Hennings’s poetology is characterized by writing “not about the street, but from the street; not about illness, but as one feverish with it.”¹⁷ In her books, she addressed the injustices she experienced and criticized the social conditions that had led to them: “If it is forbidden to accept



Fig. 4 Franziska zu Reventlow at the Josephinum, 1895 –
Münchner Stadtbibliothek / Monacensia, FR F 34-04

payment for love by the hour, then it should be forbidden to pay for love by the hour.”¹⁸ Around 1900, prostitution was referred to as “commercial fornication” and was subject to strict control by the “vice squad.”¹⁹ As a rule, it was the prostitutes or, at most, their pimps who were punished, but not the clients. In late 1914, Hennings spent three months in prison, having been accused of stealing from a client and aiding in passport forgery. During this traumatic period of imprisonment, she was visited by Lasker-Schüler and her future husband, Hugo Ball.

“Do not bear a child you did not desire...”²⁰

While Hennings found a literary voice for her own experiences, Beutler aimed to bring the fates of women to public attention through her writing on prostitution. Describing herself as a “collector of fates,”²¹ she depicted the social hardships faced by women, including unwanted pregnancies and the possibility of abortion. Through “the spoken and written word and deed,”²² she advocated the position that only children who were wanted could become happy people who contributed to a harmonious society. Women’s health, contraception, and the termination of unwanted pregnancies posed existential problems not only for women in the bohemian scene. Due to bourgeois moral standards and population policy interests, contraceptives could only be obtained clandestinely, and moral legislation made overt advertising for them impossible under §184 of the amended version of the *Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich* (Penal Code for the German Empire) of 1900. Since 1871, abortions had been prohibited under §§218 to 220 and were severely punished. While Beutler advocated for the right to contraception and abortion, she was also strongly committed to the right to self-determined motherhood. Under the slogan “Free Motherhood,” women, she said, ought to be able to become mothers even if unmarried. Legally, single mothers around 1900 were not permitted to make independent decisions. A guardian was appointed for children born out of wedlock. For Beutler, Reventlow, and Lasker-Schüler, it was a matter of urgent concern to make their own decisions regarding their children’s upbringing and, where possible, to remove them from the violent Wilhelmine school system, thereby contributing to social change. Reventlow summarized this in her 1903 essay “Erziehung und Sittlichkeit” (Education and Morality): “For us ‘modern’ human beings, to which we of the younger generation belong, many of us – most of us – have to fight a difficult struggle before we can free ourselves from the influence of a so-called good upbringing and its archaic moral principles and outlook in order to attain the basis for a freer conception of life. It is therefore only natural that we strive to pass on the fruits of this struggle to our own children.”²³

For many women in the Bohemian scene, writing and art were acts of self-empowerment and, at the same time, a means of changing the world. Marriage and prostitution, education and health, poverty and existential hardship were themes that shaped their personal experiences as much as their artistic work.

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in Munich

—— 1 Letter from Franziska zu Reventlow to Michael Georg Conrad, December 13, 1893, Münchner Stadtbibliothek/Monacensia, MGC B 849 [translated].

2 See Buettner/Mokrohs/Schütz 2022.

3 See Wolff-Thomsen 2010, 135f.

4 See note 1 [translated].

5 Hennings 1988, 176 [translated].

6 Margarete Beutler, *Der Schatten*, unpublished typescript, private collection [translated].

7 See: Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch 1896, §§1353–1356.

8 Franz Hessel later became known through the novel *Jules et Jim* by Henri-Pierre Roché, in which Roché describes his love triangle with Helen Grund, who later became Franz Hessel's wife.

9 Reventlow/Weiser/Gutsch 2006, 411 [translated].

10 Ibid. [translated].

11 Werefkin/Weiler 1960, 37f. [translated].

12 Lasker-Schüler 1908 [translated].

13 Reventlow/Weiser/Gutsch 2006, 492 [translated].

14 Letter from Margarete Beutler to a publisher, undated, private estate, quoted in Mokrohs 2026, 123 [translated].

15 See Briatte 2007, 192.

16 Reventlow 2011, 41 [translated].

17 Behrmann 2017, 430 [translated].

18 Hennings 2015, 100; quoted in English in Ruth Hemus, *Dada's Women* (New Haven and London 2009), 46.

19 See Krafft 1996, 79f.

20 Margarete Beutler, *Am Narrenseil der Ehe*, unpublished typescript, private collection [translated].

21 Beutler 2021, 197 [translated].

22 Letter from Margarete Beutler to Mrs. Vonwiller, 1927, private estate, quoted in Mokrohs 2026 [translated].

23 Reventlow 2004, 220 [translated].

Women on the Threshold “The Women Artists of the Blue Rider” between Art, Craft, and Emancipation

Around 1900, most women who wanted to pursue an artistic career trained at schools of arts and crafts, since state-run fine art academies did not admit women until 1920. Some later found their way into “high” art via this alternative path, while many remained in the arts and crafts, often despite other ambitions. However, some women took the opposite approach, starting with painting and then devoting themselves to arts and crafts. This also applies to most of the women artists



Fig. 1 Gabriele Münter, handbag with women in hoop skirts, 1905 – bead embroidery on black wool fabric with glass beads – The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

of the Blue Rider. Their reasons for taking this step and the direction their artistic work took varied, as exemplified in the following by Maria Franck-Marc and Gabriele Münter. What their lives and career paths had in common was their upbringing in well-to-do families interested in education, who allowed and financed their daughters' education at private institutions, as well as a lifestyle that defied bourgeois norms and values without, however, fully belonging to the bohemian scene. This was in contrast to many of the women writers of the time, such as Franziska zu Reventlow, who radically prioritized independence and often had to pay a high price for it, even to the point of social isolation, impoverishment, and sex work.¹

The ways of life and artistic practices of Franck-Marc and Münter straddled the threshold. They used the “high” arts to create artisanal objects, while simultaneously drawing on the experiences gained from this practice for their painting, without, however, entirely abandoning the hierarchy between “high” and “low” art. They navigated the space between bourgeois life and bohemianism, intertwining desires and concerns that were also articulated within the women's movement.² Both lived and worked in long-term extramarital relationships with male artists, though monogamously and with a desire for a harmonious domestic life. Despite their emancipated lifestyles, neither of them considered themselves – to put it anachronistically – feminists, nor were they involved in the women's movement. This movement had a strong presence in Munich, and it supported the Munich Association of Women Artists, which was dedicated to promoting and training young female talent, creating an environment conducive to dialogue, and fostering mutual solidarity in order to bolster women's creative work – an association to which some members of the Blue Rider, such as Münter, belonged.³

Maria Franck-Marc may have suffered most from the ambivalence of a life spent on the threshold. As the daughter of a wealthy clerk and later bank manager, she was allowed to pursue her artistic interests; however, her parents expected her to give up her professional ambitions in favor of marriage. Like Münter, Franck-Marc initially produced textiles based on her partner's designs and only later worked from her own. While embroideries based on designs by male artist partners were common, they should not be regarded as mere reproductions of an artistic template.⁴ Rather, the embroideries can be seen as experiments in two directions. Thus, Franck-Marc's embroidery *Landscape with Horses and*

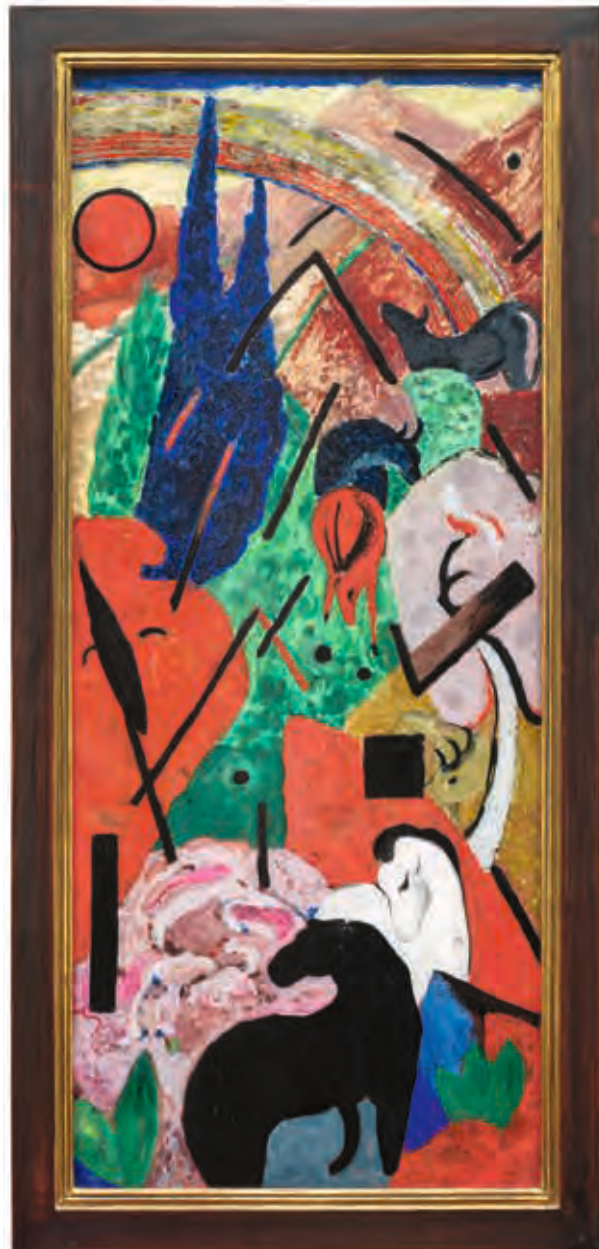


Fig. 2 Franz Marc, *Landscape with Horses and Rainbow*, 1911 – oil on glass, Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See

Rainbow, →fig. p.164 based on Franz Marc's mixed-media design for a reverse-glass painting, →fig.2 features a format that is unusually large and tall for embroidery, requiring that a special technique be executed. She also used very long stitches to translate the flat, partly brushstroke-revealing style of Marc's original into a different medium. Conversely, this form of embroidery fueled Franck-Marc's desire for clearly defined forms and colors in her painting as well. Thus, on March 6, 1915, she wrote to Franz Marc, who was at the front: "Embroidery is also a slower process – the idea and the execution are far apart, and one must grasp the sensa-



Fig. 3 Anonymous, Russia, small handbag with double-headed eagle, 1910/12 – linen, glass beads, cotton thread, and metal thread, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich
Fig. 4 Gabriele Münter, handbag with a peacock framed by floral patterns, c. 1911–13 – appliqué and bead embroidery; gray wool fabric, brown velvet, cotton, gold thread, glass beads, silk lining, reinforced with bone, cotton threads, gold thread, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich

tion firmly and hold on to it. But in return, one has the intoxicating colors – which are never muddled. ... Every effect is clear – and pure – and ultimately, for every spot, there is only one possibility for the color effect.”⁵ Franck-Marc appears to have applied these insights to her flower paintings from that same year, rendering them in clear forms and luminous, high-contrast colors, as seen in *Flowers and Yellow Thistles*. →fig. p.160 Nevertheless, embroidery remained a substitute for painting, which the artist often felt unable to pursue, whether for health reasons or due to a lack of self-confidence that was not alleviated by her husband’s paternalistic behavior. While Franz Marc was at the front, Maria Franck-Marc found solace in embroidering designs from his sketchbooks, in memory of their time together at home and their shared artistic endeavors. After

Marc's death in Verdun, Franck-Marc gave up painting entirely and devoted herself to his estate. However, she continued to embroider and, encouraged by the young weaver Johanna Schütz-Wolff, eventually turned to a new form of textile design. Unlike most other women artists of the Blue Rider, she did so with professional training as a guest student at the Bauhaus in Weimar, where she learned and experimented with dyeing.⁶ Later, she built a “weaving hut” near her home in Ried. The woven tapestries created there echo Paul Klee's teachings with their precisely arranged geometric forms and certain motifs, such as the antenna.⁷ Subjects from her own paintings also reappear, as in the tapestry *Red in Red*, → fig. p. 165 which evokes her early flower paintings, now rendered in a monochromatic style. Maria Franck-Marc exhibited the tapestries only once, namely in 1952 at the gallery of Otto Stangl, the executor of Franz Marc's estate, who displayed the tapestries alongside his drawings.

A different, self-assured approach to the arts and crafts can be found in Gabriele Münter, whose American-socialized, free-spirited parents and her financial independence following their early death allowed for a less restricted way of life. She, too, initially embroidered designs by her partner, Wassily Kandinsky, yet unlike Marc, he also worked with textiles himself⁸ – a sign of his appreciation for craft work, which he also regarded as an art form of equal standing in his writings. In an article about an exhibition by the Munich Secession in 1899, Kandinsky wrote that crafts should be “renamed from craftwork to fine art.”⁹ Their shared engagement with various forms of embroidery – including beadwork – and with the design and creation of garments, though limited to the early years of their relationship, was an expression of partnership and a strengthening of their bond of love. At the same time, bead embroidery, in particular, as a distinct arrangement of colors detached from objects, served as an instructive practice for painting as well. → fig. 1 Münter drew inspiration for new modes of representation from various sources, including so-called folk art – particularly reverse-glass painting, a technique she learned from an artisan – and children's drawings, which she translated into paintings.¹⁰ Münter's knowledge of technical aspects is evident in her extensive correspondence regarding textile works. For example, on July 1, 1904, she wrote to Kandinsky regarding the production of a small handbag: “One must first have the handle and then adapt the handbag to it.”¹¹

Several years later, around 1911 or 1913, Münter produced a handbag based on her own designs. Embroidered using various techniques, it features a peacock framed by floral patterns. →fig.4 The net embroidery with incorporated beads may, as Isabelle Jansen suggests, have been inspired by a Russian peasant handbag from Münter’s collection.¹² →fig.3 Flowers resembling the embroidered ones already appeared in paintings of that time and continue to appear in her later still lifes. The works in various genres fed off one another, driven by an emphasis on craftsmanship as art, as cultivated within the circle of the Blue Rider. According to Shulamith Behr, Münter used her intensive engagement with various materials to engage in playful rivalries with her male colleagues: She acknowledged connections and references to their work, yet confidently highlighted the differences. In contrast to the male-coded emphasis on spirituality, Münter – inspired by the writings of Rudolf Steiner – insisted that reality and truth lay in both the material and spiritual realms.¹³

Hermann Obrist, one of the founders of the innovative Obrist-Debschitz School, hoped to achieve equality between men and women through collaborative work in arts and crafts.¹⁴ Kandinsky maintained close contact with Obrist, and Münter attended lectures at the progressive school, which taught both fine and arts and crafts to men and women alike. Although there were women artists in the Blue Rider group, equality was still in its infancy.¹⁵ It is not known how much the male artists designing the works knew about the requirements, possibilities, and limitations of the various textile techniques, but one may assume it was usually very little. This placed greater demands on the knowledge and willingness to experiment of the women artists who actually executed the work, as they did not merely transfer a template faithfully onto the fabric.

Their artistic practices are embedded in discourses that define expression as the highest – yet male-dominated – quality of artistic work. Crafts, particularly textile work – long regarded as a woman’s domain and a sign of feminine domestic diligence¹⁶ – were indeed revalued as a catalyst for new modes of representation through the Arts and Crafts movement and, subsequently, in Jugendstil and Art Nouveau, which promoted working with defined forms and strong colors. At the same time, however, the division between highly valued design – generally reserved for male artists – and scarcely appreciated execution – mostly carried out by women in the private sphere – remained largely intact. The liberating power attributed to craft work primarily benefited painting in its attempt to break free from academic traditions, and hardly the women artists and their status. The drawer of a chest of drawers that Kandinsky

painted in the Murnau house is indicative of the group's sexual hierarchy:
 → fig. p.52 In the foreground, a male rider gallops forward and turns, his hand raised, toward the female rider dressed in blue, who, sitting in a side saddle, appears to follow him obediently. Münter, too, possessed a great deal of the unconventional energy expressed in the horse's body. Her work as an artist and her written accounts attest to this in equal measure.

——— ¹ Buettner/Mokrohs/Schütz 2022; Bassermann-Jordan et al. 2022.

² See Frevert 1986, esp. chapter II, parts 5 and 6.

³ See Poppe 2011, 13.

⁴ Baumgartner 2019a. See also Ewers-Schultz 2020.

⁵ Maria Franck-Marc, quoted in Baumgartner 2019b, 135.

⁶ Baumgartner 2019a; Uhrig 2004, 25f.

⁷ For example, on the tapestry *Hellrote Formen auf verschiedenem Grau* (Bright Red Shapes Against Various Shades of Gray, c. 1935/50).

⁸ See Exh. Cat. Murnau 2010; Joppien 2020.

⁹ Wassily Kandinsky, quoted in: Jansen 2010, 7 [translated].

¹⁰ See Vietmeier 2024a; Vietmeier 2024b; Vietmeier 2024c.

¹¹ Gabriele Münter, quoted in Jansen 2010, 9 [translated].

¹² Ibid., 15.

¹³ Behr 2022, 116. Behr refers here to Pollock 1993.

¹⁴ See Jansen 2010, 13–15.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹⁶ Parker 2019.

——— List of works

Editorial note

Some of the titles used for artworks in this catalogue reflect the exoticizing and colonial patterns of thought behind the sometimes prejudiced view of non-European cultures and peoples held during the period when these artworks were created. For reasons of historical exactness, they are reproduced here unchanged—not with the aim of confirming the attitudes implicit in them, but because modifying or omitting them would falsify the historical sources. We are aware that repeating them always means perpetuating them, and we have sought in the rest of the texts to put these perspectives in a critical context instead of reinforcing them.

Erma Bossi

Cat. 1, fig. p. 177

Interior with Lamp, 1909 — Oil on cardboard, 23.5 × 32.6 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 2, fig. p. 176

Circus, 1909 — Oil on cardboard, 64 × 79 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. AK 68

Cat. 3, fig. p. 178

At the Opera, 1909/10 — Oil on cardboard, 68 × 47.5 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 4, fig. p. 179

Interior with Three Figures in a Café, c. 1910 — Oil on cardboard, 56 × 41 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 5, fig. p. 175

Self-Portrait (acquired in 1970 as *Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin*), c. 1910 — Oil on cardboard, 71 × 57 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. AK 15

Cat. 6, not ill.

Cityscape, c. 1910 — Oil on cardboard, 68 × 47.5 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 7, fig. p. 174

Still Life, verso: *Portrait of a Man*, 1910 — Oil on cardboard, 65 × 53.9 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, on permanent loan from a private collection

Cat. 8, fig. p. 180

Bathers, c. 1911 — Oil on cardboard, 60.8 × 86.5 cm, Kunsthalle Emden

Cat. 9, fig. p. 181

Still Life with a Carafe, c. 1912 — Oil on cardboard on canvas, 60 × 49.5 cm, Schloßmuseum Murnau, Inv. no. 12786, gift of Volker Westerborg, Frankfurt am Main

Sonia Delaunay-Terk

Cat. 10, fig. p. 190

Deux Fillettes Finlandaises, 1907 — Oil on canvas, 60.5 × 79 cm, Kunsthalle Emden, Pracusa S.A.

Cat. 11, fig. p. 191

Philomena, 1907 — Oil on canvas, 92 × 54.5 cm, Centre Pompidou, MNAM/CCI, Paris, Pracusa S.A.

Cat. 12, fig. p. 192

Portrait of Tchouiko, 1908 — Oil on canvas, 55 × 46 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, on permanent loan from the Stiftung Hamburger Kunstsammlungen, acquired in 1984, Pracusa S.A.

Cat. 13, p. 193

Bal Bullier, 1913 — Oil on canvas, 97 × 132 cm, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Pracusa S.A.

Cat. 14, fig. p. 190

Marché au Minho, c. 1915/16 — Oil and encaustic on canvas, 113 × 139.5 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Pracusa S.A.

Emmi Dresler

Cat. 15, fig. p. 202

Children Playing, c. 1907 — Tempera on cardboard, 39.7 × 34.8 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 16, fig. pp. 203–207

Ring-Around-the-Rosy. Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter, 1914 Picture book, 25.4 × 30 cm, Private collection, Neunkirchen (Siegerland)

Elisabeth Epstein

Cat. 17, fig. p. 216

Self-Portrait, 1911 — Oil on cardboard, 67.3 × 52.4 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. AK 122

Cat. 18, fig. p. 217

Self-Portrait, 1911 — Oil on cardboard, 67.7 × 52 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, in memory of Jerome Pustilnik, New York City

Cat. 19, fig. p. 218

Maison avec arbre, 1914 — Oil on canvas, 44 × 31 cm, Private collection, Munich

Cat. 20, fig. p. 219

Red Chair by the Window, 1928 — Oil on canvas, 55.9 × 46.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Eva Margarete Lückenhaas Foundation 2023

Cat. 21, fig. p. 219

Forest Fantasy, 1928 — Oil on cardboard, 40.5 × 32.7 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Eva Margarete Lückenhaas Foundation 2021

Cat. 22, fig. p. 220

Still Life with a Jug, 1935 – Oil on canvas, 73 × 60 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, on permanent loan from a private collection

Cat. 23, fig. p. 220

Still Life on a Round Table, 1945 – Oil on canvas, 45 × 60 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 24, fig. p. 221

Still Life with Flowers, 1946 – Oil on canvas, 72.5 × 60.1 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2022

Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke

Cat. 25, fig. p. 229

Byzantine Scene with Saints, c. 1910/11 – Reverse-glass painting, 11.1 × 16.1 cm, Private collection

Cat. 26, fig. p. 228

Madonna and Child, c. 1911 – Ink, gouache, and oil behind glass, in original painted frame, 15.7 × 12.8 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. H 118

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“Oriental Scene”, 1912 – Oil, paper and silver foil behind glass, 20 × 24 cm, On loan from the Privatstiftung Schloßmuseum Murnau at the Schloßmuseum Murnau, Inv. no. PSM 56/12217

Maria Franck-Marc

Cat. 28, fig. p. 150

Worpswede, Landscape with Farmhouse, 1905 – Oil on cardboard, 45.5 × 73.6 cm, Private collection

Cat. 29, not ill.

Sky and Leaves, c. 1906 – Oil on canvas, 37 × 45 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 30, not ill.

Self-Portrait, 1906/08 – Pencil on paper, 20.5 × 17.8 cm, Private collection

Cat. 31, fig. p. 29

Bears in a Cage, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on paper, 36.5 × 51 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 32, fig. p. 157

Blue Man with Toy Horses, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on paper, 38.8 × 50 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 33, fig. p. 157

Figures in a Circus Ring, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on paper, 38.8 × 49.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 34, not ill.

St. Francis, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on cardboard, 45 × 58 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2025

Cat. 35, fig. p. 156

Nutcracker, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on cardboard, 37.7 × 47.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 36, not ill.

Easter Lambs, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on cardboard, 45.5 × 53.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2025

Cat. 37, fig. p. 156

Pig, Potato Shepherd with His Flock, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on cardboard, 49.8 × 56.3 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2025

Cat. 38, fig. p. 151

Firs on a Sloping Meadow, c. 1908 – Oil on canvas, 68 × 75 cm, Private collection

Cat. 39, not ill.

Dancing Figurines, c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on cardboard, 32 × 42 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 40, not ill.

Design for the title page for the portfolio “Children’s Pictures,” c. 1908 – Pencil, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on paper, 48 × 57 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2025

Cat. 41, fig. p. 154

Dancing Sheep, 1908 – Pencil, chalk, watercolor, gouache and opaque white paint on paper, 37.5 × 48.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 42, not ill.

Apple Basket in the Grass, c. 1909 – Oil on canvas, 38.5 × 46.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Eva Margarete Lückenhaus Foundation 2023

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Still Life with Easter Lamb, c. 1909 – Oil on canvas, 33 × 50 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

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Hyacinth, Tulips and Jugs, c. 1909/10 – Oil on canvas, 70.5 × 62 cm, Private collection

Cat. 45, fig. p. 153

Peonies, c. 1909/10 – Oil on canvas, 67.5 × 75 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 46, fig. p. 152

Flowers, c. 1910 – Oil on canvas, 41 × 53 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 47, not ill.

Abstract Flower Meadow, c. 1910/11 – Oil on canvas, 63.3 × 46.8 cm, Private collection

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Toys with Birdcage, c. 1911 – Oil on canvas, 60.2 × 88.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

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The Shepherds on the Way to the Manger, 1911 – Oil on canvas, 87.5 × 111.5 cm, On loan from the PSM Privatstiftung Schloßmuseum Murnau at the Schloßmuseum Murnau, Inv. no. PSM 55/12355

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Three Wise Men, c. 1911/12 – Oil on canvas, 78.4 × 88.2 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 51, fig. p. 162

Two Children Among Flowers, c. 1912 – Oil on canvas, 55 × 70 cm, Private collection

Cat. 52, fig. p. 160

Flowers and Yellow Thistles, c. 1913 – Oil on canvas, 50.5 × 40.2 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2022

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Flower Still Life with Dahlias, c. 1913 – Oil on canvas, 79 × 60 cm, Private collection

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Girl with Toddler, c. 1913 – Oil on canvas, 78 × 88 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

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Landscape with Horses and Rainbow, c. 1914/15 – Embroidery thread on textile, 74.8 × 26 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2026

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Birds, c. 1930/35 – Hand-woven carpet, 108 × 85 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

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Bright Red Forms on Various Shades of Gray, c. 1935/50 – Hand-woven carpet, 116 × 88.2 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2022

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Black Line, c. 1950 – Hand-woven carpet, 97 × 77 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

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Rusalka (Water Nymph), 1908 – Oil on canvas, 104 × 74 cm, Museum Ludwig, Köln

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Baignade, c. 1910 – Oil on canvas, 114.5 × 94.5 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, acquired with the support of the Hessische Kulturstiftung, Verein zur Förderung der bildenden Kunst in Wiesbaden e. V. and the state capital Wiesbaden

Cat. 62, fig. p. 238

Portrait of Mikhail Larionov, 1913 – Oil on canvas, 105 × 78 cm, Museum Ludwig, Köln

Cat. 63, not ill.

Espagnol Cubiste – Costume for a Spanish Ballet Dancer, 1915/16 – Chalk, heightened with white, on paper, 32.8 × 23.7 cm, Private collection

Cat. 64, fig. p. 240

Female Half-Figure (Figurine), 1922/23 – Color lithograph on paper, 46 × 33.5 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 65, fig. p. 241

Poster “*Grand bal de nuit, Salle Bullier grand bal des artistes*,” 1926 – Lithograph on affiche paper, 119.5 × 79.6 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Else Lasker-Schüler

Cat. 66, fig. p. 252

The Jewish Chiefs, 1913 – Ink and chalk on vellum, 14 × 18.9 cm, Center for Persecuted Arts, Solingen, on permanent loan from the Else Lasker-Schüler-Gesellschaft, Wuppertal

Cat. 67, fig. p. 6

Jussuf Prince Tiba, 1913 – Ink and chalks on postcard, 14.1 × 9 cm, Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See, Etta and Otto Stangl Foundation

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Your Jussuf / and His Chiefs: Stambul, Asser, Gad and Salomein, postcard, January 3, 1916 – Pencil, 14 × 9 cm, Franz Marc Foundation, Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See

Cat. 69, not ill.

The Daughters of the Emir of Afghanistan, c. 1918 – Ink and chalk on vellum, 14.6 × 9.3 cm, Center for Persecuted Arts, Solingen, on permanent loan from the Else Lasker-Schüler Foundation, Wuppertal

Cat. 70, fig. p. 250

Jussuf Admires a Blue Rose, c. 1920 – Pastel over ink on paper, 28 × 16.5 cm, Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal

Cat. 71, not ill.

Thebes with Jussuf (sketch for an illustration for “Prince of Thebes”), c. 1920 – Ink, pencil, colored pencil, chalk, gold and tracing paper on the back of a telegram form, 25.3 × 16 cm, Center for Persecuted Arts, Solingen, on permanent loan from the Else Lasker-Schüler Foundation, Wuppertal

Cat. 72, not ill.

Nicodemus, c. 1922 – Ink, colored pencil, and chalk on the back of a telegram form, the cut-out eye is backed with silver metallic foil, 25.2 × 15.7 cm, Center for Persecuted Arts, Solingen, on permanent loan from the Else Lasker-Schüler Foundation, Wuppertal

Cat. 73, not ill.

The League of Wild Jews, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 74, not ill.

Imre Carries the Sacred Golden Serpent, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 75, not ill.

Jussuf Takes His Bouquet for a Walk, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 76, not ill.

Jussuf Goes to God, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 77, not ill.

Jussuf Sketches His Mother, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 78, not ill.

Jussuf and His Faithful Brother Bulus in the Temple, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 79, not ill.

Marieë, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 80, not ill.

Prince Jussuf's Morning Music, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 81, not ill.

Schlöme, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 82, not ill.

Thebes with Jussuf, 1923 – Lithograph, hand-colored with colored pencil on paper, 32 × 23.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 83, fig. p. 251

The Snake Worshipper in the Market Square in Thebes, c. 1921/1930s – Ink, colored pencil, and collaged silver paper on paper, 28.3 × 22.5 cm, Franz Marc Foundation, Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See

Cat. 84, fig. p. 253

The Snake Dancer in Tiba, c. 1927 – Ink pen, pencil, chalks, and collaged silver metal foil on thin machine-made paper, 23.5 × 21.3 cm, Center for Persecuted Arts, Solingen, on permanent loan from the Else Lasker-Schüler Foundation, Wuppertal

Cat. 85, not ill.

Elephant with Jussuf, 1927/28 – Ink and colored chalk on imitation Japanese paper, 31.3 × 23.2 cm, Center for Persecuted Arts, Solingen, on permanent loan from the Else Lasker-Schüler Foundation, Wuppertal

Cat. 86, not ill.

Flowers That Became Friends, c. 1930 – Pastel and oil pastels on very thin, ivory-colored paper, 23 × 14.5 cm, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main

Cat. 87, not ill.

Native American Women, c. 1930 – Pastel and oil pastels, partly washed, with ink over pencil on thin, ivory-colored paper, 23 × 14.5 cm, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main

Cat. 88, not ill.

Jussuf Welcomes the Plate-Headed People – A Tribe Discovered by Freytag, c. 1930 – Pastel and oil pastel, partly washed, over pencil on very thin, smooth, ivory-colored paper, 23 × 14.5 cm, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main

Cat. 89, fig. p. 248

A Theban Bride and Groom, after 1934 – Pastel and oil pastels, partly washed, on thin, yellowish paper, 21.5 × 15 cm, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main

Cat. 90, fig. p. 249

Prince Jussuf of Thebes, after 1934 – Pastel and oil pastels, partially washed, ink, collaged with colored tin foil, over a pencil sketch on thin, smooth, ivory-colored drawing paper (from a sketchbook, with perforation at the top edge), 27.5 × 22.5 cm, Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main

Cat. 91, not ill.

Farewell, June 18, 1936 – Pencil, charcoal and chalk on paper, 24.4 × 18.1 cm, Center for Persecuted Arts, Solingen, on permanent loan from the Else Lasker-Schüler Foundation, Wuppertal

Olga Meerson

Cat. 92, fig. p. 260

Flowers, c. 1910 – Oil on canvas, 55.5 × 47.3 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Heinz Pringsheim

Cat. 93, fig. p. 261

View from the Window, 1911 – Oil on canvas, 73 × 59 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Heinz Pringsheim

Cat. 94, fig. p. 262/263

Portrait of Henri Matisse, 1911 – Oil on canvas, 36 × 58 cm, Private collection

Gabriele Münter

For the paintings from the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, and the Lenbachhaus Munich, information regarding painting technique has been limited to the underlying material, as the exact composition of the paints used by Gabriele Münter has not yet been analyzed for every painting.

Cat. 95, fig. p. 134

Young Woman Near Moorefield, Arkansas, 1899/1900 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 3724

Cat. 96, fig. p. 135

“Store”, Guion, Texas, March 9, 1900 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 3534

Cat. 97, fig. p. 135

On the Way to a Steamboat for an Excursion on the Mississippi, St. Louis, 1900 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 3761

Cat. 98, fig. p. 134

Three Women in Sunday Dress, Marshall, Texas, 1900 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 3635

Cat. 99, fig. p. 135

Little Boy with Toy Gun, New York, 1900 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 3817

Cat. 100, fig. p. 135

Little Girl Standing on a Street, St. Louis, 1900 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 3757

Cat. 101, fig. p. 46

Kandinsky Painting a Landscape, 1903 – Canvas board, 16.9 cm × 25 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 102, not ill.

Kandinsky, 1906 – Color linocut on Japanese paper, 25 × 18.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 103, not ill.

Kandinsky at the Harmonium, 1907 – Color linocut on Japanese paper, 15.3 × 12.8 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 104, fig. p. 123

Jawlensky and Werefkin, 1908/09 – Cardboard, 32.7 × 44.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 105, fig. p. 139

Still Life with Vases, Bottles, and Branches of a Rowan Tree, 1908/09 – Oil on cardboard, 76 × 103.5 cm, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz – Museum Gunzenhauser

Cat. 106, fig. p. 122

Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin, 1909 – Cardboard, 81 cm × 55 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 107, not ill.

Miss Mathilde in a Blue Headscarf, 1909 – Cardboard, 72 × 56.2 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. P 30

Cat. 108, not ill.

Grave Crosses in Kochel, 1909 – Cardboard, 40.5 × 32.8 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 109, fig. p. 30

Murnau Woman (Portrait Rosalia Leiß), 1909 – Oil on cardboard, 92 × 64.8 cm, On permanent loan from the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung, Munich, at the Schloßmuseum Murnau, Inv. no. PSM 2/11070

Cat. 110, fig. p. 68

Still Life Gray, 1909 – Cardboard, 34.5 × 50.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 111, fig. p. 133

Still Life with Armchair, 1909 – Cardboard, 71.5 × 48.5 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. S 119

Cat. 112, fig. p. 49

Listening (Portrait of Jawlensky), 1909 – Cardboard, 49.8 × 66.4 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 113, fig. p. 123

Garden in Murnau, c. 1910 – Oil on cardboard, 37.5 × 46 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, donation of W. and M. Rick 2013

Cat. 114, fig. p. 125

Olga von Hartmann, c. 1910 – Textile support, 60.8 × 45.2 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. P 162

Cat. 115, fig. p. 128

Living Room in Murnau (Interior), c. 1910 – Cardboard, 50.6 × 69.3 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. V 107

Cat. 116, fig. p. 126

Flower Still Life, Sofa and Pillow, 1910 – Oil on canvas, 56 × 49 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 117, not ill.

Child in White, 1910 – Cardboard, 44.7 × 33 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 118, fig. p. 129

Kandinsky at the Table (Sketch), c. 1911 – Oil on cardboard, 25.5 × 39 cm, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz – Museum Gunzenhauser

Cat. 119, not ill.

At the Griesbräukeller in Murnau, 1911 – Oil on cardboard, 33 × 44.5 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 120, fig. p. 132

Dark Still Life (Secret), 1911 – Textile support, 78.1 × 100.6 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. S 152

Cat. 121, fig. p. 129

Man at the Table (Kandinsky), 1911 – Cardboard, 50.8 × 68.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 122, fig. p. 138

Still Life with St. George, 1911 – Cardboard, 51.1 × 68 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 123, fig. p. 136

First exhibition of The Blue Rider, Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, Munich, Room 1, 1911/12 (from left to right): Gabriele Münter, *Dark Still Life (Secret)* (cut off); Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition V* (in the adjacent room); Albert Bloch, *Three Pierrots*; Heinrich Campendonk, *Leaping Horse*; Henri Rousseau, *The Poultry Yard*; Franz Marc, *Portrait of Henri Rousseau*; Robert Delaunay, *La Ville No. 2* (cropped) – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 2909

Cat. 124, fig. p. 136

First exhibition of The Blue Rider, Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, Munich, Room 1, 1911/12 (from left to right): Robert Delaunay, *La Ville No. 2*; Arnold Schönberg, *Nocturnal Landscape* (above); Gabriele Münter, *Frosty Landscape* (below); August Macke, *Still Life – Bunch of Flowers with Agave*; Gabriele Münter, *Evening* (above); Albert Bloch, *Houses and Chimneys*, 1911/12 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 2904

Cat. 125, fig. p. 136

First exhibition of The Blue Rider, Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, Munich, Room 1, 1911/12 (from left to right): Jean-Bloé Niestlé, *Willow Warblers*, Albert Bloch, *Head*; Wassily Kandinsky, *Impression Moscow*, 1911/12 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 2905

Cat. 126, fig. p. 137

First exhibition of The Blue Rider, Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, Munich, Room 2, 1911/12 (from left to right): Franz Marc, *The Yellow Cow* (cut off); Arnold Schönberg, *Self-Portrait, Walking (from behind)*; Wassily Kandinsky, *St. George II*; Vladimir Burljuk, *Portrait Study* (above); Gabriele Münter, *Country Road in Winter* (below); Franz Marc, *Deer in the Forest I*; Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition V* (cut off), 1911/12 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 2906

Cat. 127, fig. p. 136

First exhibition of The Blue Rider, 1911/12, Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, Munich, Room 2, 1911/12 (from left to right): Gabriele Münter, *Still Life (Pink)* (cut off); August Macke, *Native Americans on Horseback* (above); Robert Delaunay, *St. Séverin No. 1* (below); David Burljuk, *Horses* (above the door); Franz Marc, *Landscape with Horses and Rainbow* (above); Wassily Kandinsky, *With Sun*; Wassily Kandinsky, *Improvisation 22*, 1911/12 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 2908

Cat. 128, fig. p. 137

First exhibition of The Blue Rider, Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, Munich, Room 3, 1911/12 (from left to right): Franz Marc, *Stony Path* (cut off); Robert Delaunay, *Tour Eiffel*; Elisabeth Epstein, *Portrait* (above); Heinrich Campendonk, *Woman and Animal* (below), 1911/12 – Photograph / New print on baryta paper, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. 2907

Cat. 129, fig. p. 124

Still Life on the Tram (After Shopping), c. 1912 – Cardboard, 50.2 × 34.3 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. S44

Cat. 130, p. 72

Construction Work, 1912 – Original woodcut, title page, *Der Sturm. Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste*, ed. by Herwarth Walden, vol. 3, 136/137, Nov. 1912, Berlin, Private collection

Cat. 131, fig. p. 127

Kandinsky and Erma Bossi at the Table, 1912 – Canvas, 95.4 × 125.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 132, fig. p. 130

Still Life with Madonna and a Teapot, 1912/13 – Oil on cardboard, 73.5 × 70 cm, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz – Museum Gunzenhauser

Cat. 133, fig. p. 131

Elfriede Schroeter, *Still Life (Child's Painting)*, c. 1913 – Cardboard, 35.7 × 33.4 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. KIZ 185

Cat. 134, fig. p. 131

Elfriede Schroeter, *Portrait of a Woman (Child's Painting)*, c. 1913 – Cardboard, 47.5 × 32.8 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. KIZ 180

Cat. 135, fig. p. 138

The Dragon Fight, 1913 – Cardboard, 35.7 × 43.5 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. V117

Cat. 136, not ill.

Habsburgerplatz, 1913 – Original woodcut, title page, *Der Sturm. Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste*, ed. by Herwarth Walden, vol. 4, 162/163, May 1913, Berlin, Private collection

Cat. 137, fig. p. 131

In the Room, 1913 – Textile support, 88.1 × 99.8 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired with the support of the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung

Cat. 138, not ill.

Sketch with Terrier, c. 1920 – Pencil on paper, 26.8 × 21 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 29/201

Cat. 139, not ill.

Erich Gutkind, c. 1925/26 – Black colored pencil on paper, 37.2 × 26.8 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 13/19

Cat. 140, not ill.

The Stylish One (The Poet G. v. B.), c. 1925/30 – Pencil on paper, 18.3 × 13.5 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 29/62

Cat. 141, not ill.

Seated Woman with a Cigarette, c. 1925/30 – Pencil on writing paper, 33 × 23.9 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 25/53

Cat. 142, fig. p. 33

The Poet E. K. [Eleonora Kalkowska], c. 1926/27 – Pen and ink and opaque white on textured paper, 28.8 × 22.3 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 29/59

Cat. 143, not ill.

The Poet E. K. Reading [Eleonora Kalkowska], c. 1926/27 – Pen and ink and opaque white on writing paper, 28.8 × 22.3 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 29/58

Cat. 144, not ill.

The Letter (Reading), c. 1927 – Pencil on textured paper, 22 × 28.8 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 17/12

Cat. 145, not ill.

Hilde Squatting, 1927 – Pencil on writing paper, 21.8 × 13.8 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 14/23

Cat. 146, fig. p. 17

The Incomparable (The Poet Sylvia von Harden), 1928 – Pencil, 28.7 × 22 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 147, not ill.

Portrait Sketch of Loulou Albert-Lazard, 1929 – Textile support, 55 × 33 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. P 216

Cat. 148, fig. p. 141

Woman in an Armchair, Writing (Stenography: Swiss Woman in Pyjamas), 1929 – Textile support, 61.5 cm × 46.2 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. P 39

Cat. 149, not ill.

With a Cigarette, c. 1930 – Pencil on tracing paper, mounted on drawing paper, 16 × 9.8 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 29/141

Cat. 150, not ill.

Woman Smoking, c. 1930 – Pencil on tracing paper, mounted on drawing paper, 16 × 9.9 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. Kon. 29/140

Cat. 151, not ill.

The Letter, 1930 – Textile support, 65 × 92.5 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. P 9

Cat. 152, fig. p. 29

Doll, Cat, Child, 1930 – Cardboard, 37.9 × 45.8 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. V 34

Cat. 153, not ill.

Haystack in Blue, c. 1931 – Oil on cardboard, 32.5 × 44 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, on permanent loan from a private collection

Cat. 154, not ill.

At the Mederer (?) Nursery in Murnau, 1931 – Oil on cardboard, 32.5 × 41 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 155, not ill.

Miss Ellen on the Grass, 1934 – Textile Support, 47.5 × 65 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. V 96

Cat. 156, fig. p. 34

Hanna Stirnemann, 1934 – Cardboard, 35 × 27 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. P 167

Cat. 157, fig. p. 140

Sleeping Girl (Brown, Blue), 1934 – Cardboard, 24.1 × 33 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. V 63

Cat. 158, not ill.

The Blue Excavator (Study), 1935 – Cardboard, 33 × 41 cm, The Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundation, Munich, Inv. no. L 331

Cat. 159, not ill.

Landscape with a White Moon (Rising Moon), 1940 – Oil on canvas, 85.4 × 60.5 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, donation of W. and M. Rick 2013

Cat. 160, not ill.

Advent, 1948 – Oil on cardboard, 64.5 × 49.3 cm, Collection Oßwald & Schwarz, Kaiserslautern

Carla Pohle

Cat. 161, fig. p. 276

Eteokles and Polyneikes, 1909 – Drypoint etching, 16.5 × 16.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 162, not ill.

Four Nudes, 1909 – Etching / aquatint, 16.5 × 16.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 163, not ill.

The Mountain, 1914 – Etching / aquatint, 29.5 × 29.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 164, fig. p. 272

Self-Portrait, 1938 – Drypoint etching, 20.5 × 19.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 165, not ill.

Invocation / Shipwrecked, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 18 × 15 cm, Private collection

Cat. 166, fig. p. 283

The Devourers, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 24.7 × 29.8 cm, Private collection

Cat. 167, fig. p. 283

Female Nude, Embracing a Man in a Room with a View of the City, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 20.5 × 15.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 168, fig. p. 278

Gardener's Wife, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 32.4 × 24.7 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 169, not ill.

Fallen Soldier, n. d. – Etching / aquatint, 26.5 × 23.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 170, not ill.

Group of Emaciated Figures Before a Skeleton with Vulture, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 27 × 21 cm, Private collection

Cat. 171, fig. p. 282

Cries for Help as Houses Collapse, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 14.8 × 21 cm, Private collection

Cat. 172, fig. p. 278

Feeding the Hungry, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 26.8 × 21 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 173, fig. p. 274

Käthe Kollwitz (Profile), n. d. – Charcoal on paper, 47 × 35 cm, Private collection

Cat. 174, not ill.

Boy in a Tub, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 29 × 24.7 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 175, fig. p. 277

Woman Reclining on a Bed with a Blanket, n. d. – Etching / aquatint, 16 × 21 cm, Private collection

Cat. 176, fig. p. 281

Man and Woman in the Stairwell, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 31 × 23.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 177, fig. p. 275

Palander, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 22.5 × 20 cm, Private collection

Cat. 178, fig. p. 274

Käthe Kollwitz, n. d. – Charcoal on paper, 47 × 35 cm, Private collection

Cat. 179, fig. p. 281

Scheherazade, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 29.5 × 19.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 180, fig. p. 279

Sleeping Female Nude, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 29 × 23 cm, Private collection

Cat. 181, fig. p. 273

Self-Portrait at the Easel, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 32 × 27.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 182, fig. p. 280

Transformation / Grave Site, n. d. – Drypoint etching, 18 × 14 cm, Private collection

Marianne von Werefkin

Cat. 183, not ill.

Man in a Fur Coat, c. 1890 – Oil on canvas, 61 × 52 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 184, not ill.

Portrait of Alexej von Jawlensky, 1896 – Oil on canvas, 42 × 24.5 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 185, fig. p. 99

Beer Garden, 1907 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 55 × 73 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 186, fig. p. 100

Fall – School, 1907 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 56 × 73 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 187, fig. p. 105

Girls' Boarding School, 1907 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 55 × 73.5 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 188, fig. p. 95

The Storm, c. 1907 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 57 × 76 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 189, fig. p. 97

Ball Scene, c. 1908 – Tempera and oil crayon on paper on cardboard, 49.5 × 37.1 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Heinz Pringsheim

Cat. 190, fig. p. 99

Sunday Afternoon, 1908 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 36.5 × 50.5 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 191, fig. p. 103

The Dancer Alexander Sakharoff, 1909 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 73.5 × 55 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 192, fig. p. 106

After Work, 1909 – Tempera on cardboard, 57 × 77 cm, Private collection

Cat. 193, fig. p. 31

Portrait of Rosalia Leiß, 1909 – Tempera on cardboard, 64 × 50 cm, Schloßmuseum Murnau, partial ownership of the PSM Privatstiftung Schloßmuseum Murnau, Inv. no. PSM 55/12355

Cat. 194, fig. p. 98

Red City, 1909 – Tempera on cardboard, 74 × 115 cm, Private collection

Cat. 195, fig. p. 104

Trapeze Artist, 1909 – Gouache on cardboard, 24.6 × 19.5 cm, Private collection

Cat. 196, not ill.

Variety Show Horsewoman, 1909 – Gouache on cardboard, 19.4 × 24.6 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 197, fig. p. 41

Laundresses, c. 1909 – Tempera on paper, on cardboard, 50.5 × 64.6 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 198, fig. p. 96

By the Fireplace, c. 1910 – Mixed media on cardboard, 29 × 40 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 199, fig. p. 104

Artistes, c. 1910 – Gouache on cardboard, 19.5 × 24.6 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, on permanent loan from a private collection

Cat. 200, fig. p. 94

Self-Portrait I, c. 1910 – Tempera and bronze paint on paper on cardboard, 51 × 34 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 201, fig. p. 109

Into the Night, 1910 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 74 × 101 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, acquired by the Friends of Lenbachhaus 2018

Cat. 202, fig. p. 107

Shingle Factory, 1910 – Mixed media on cardboard, 105 × 80 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 203, fig. p. 101

Tragic Mood, 1910 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 46.8 × 58.2 cm, Collezione Comune di Ascona, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 204, fig. p. 38

By the Flower Bed, c. 1910/14 – Mixed media on paper on cardboard, 75.5 × 57.3 cm, Private collection, Wiesbaden

Cat. 205, not ill.

Bathhouse, 1911 – Tempera on cardboard, 46 × 70 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

Cat. 206, not ill.

Prerow Stream, 1911 – Tempera on cardboard, 54 × 74 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich

Cat. 207, fig. p. 102

Ice Skaters, 1911 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 57 × 75 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 208, fig. p. 111

Vilnius Police Station, 1914 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 98 × 82 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 209, not ill.

The Rag Collector, 1917 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 67 × 97.5 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 210, fig. p. 110

Masks of the Village, c. 1925 – Tempera on cardboard, 55.5 × 74 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 211, fig. p. 108

Ave Maria, 1927 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 75 × 57 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 212, not ill.

The Postman, 1929 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 57.8 × 75.8 cm, Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 213, not ill.

Via Eterna, 1929 – Tempera on paper on cardboard, 100 × 70 cm, Collezione Comune di Ascona, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona

Cat. 214, fig. p. 110

Ash Wednesday, 1931 – Mixed media on cardboard, 56.7 × 74.9 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, on permanent loan from a private collection

Alexej von Jawlensky

Cat. 215, fig. p. 46

Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin, c. 1906 – Oil on cardboard, 67.5 × 49.5 cm, Museum Wiesbaden, acquired from the estate of Hanna Bekker vom Rath 1987

Cat. 216, not ill.

Portrait of Mrs. Epstein, c. 1906/07 – Oil on cardboard, 45 × 38 cm, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Neue Galerie

Wassily Kandinsky

Cat. 217, fig. p. 46

Kallmünz – Gabriele Münter Painting I, Summer 1903 – Oil on canvas board, 24 × 33 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Cat. 218, not ill.

Kandinsky and Münter in Front of the Easel, March 7, 1905 – Pencil on paper, 8.7 × 8.8 cm, Lenbachhaus Munich, donation of Gabriele Münter 1957

Ilya Repin

Cat. 219, fig. p. 42

Portrait of Marianne von Werefkin, 1888 – Oil on canvas, 60 × 51 cm, Museum Wiesbaden

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The women artists in the circle of the Blue Rider were pioneers of modernism. Self-affirmation, emancipation, and artistic renewal were defining aspects of their lives. These “Blue Rider-Horsewomen” (Else Lasker-Schüler) pushed back against societal norms and challenged traditional gender roles in an art world systemically dominated by men. Their self-confident attitude found expression in their art, through which they sought a new approach to the world. Marianne von Werefkin, Gabriele Münter, and Maria Franck-Marc built an international network that included Elisabeth Epstein, Sonia Delaunay-Terk, and Natalia Goncharova. Their progressive ideas and their innovative art contributed decisively to the creation of Expressionism.