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| **Mattis-Teutsch, Hans (1884-1960)** |
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| Hans Mattis-Teutsch was a Romanian artist, born to a German-Hungarian family in Braşov, where he also died. Exemplary of the tortuous modernity in (Central) Europe, he moved like a missionary from peripheries to the centre(s) and back again, and from traditional realism to Jugendstil, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, constructive Abstraction, and Art Deco, before returning to realism. His stay in Paris from 1905 to 1908 was decisive for his choice of painting, which was influenced by the Fauves, Cubo-Futurism, and the polychrome sculptures of Paul Gauguin, in addition to the works of Constantin Brancusi, František Kupka, and the Expressionism of Der Blaue Reiter. His stay in Berlin in 1918 was crucial for his affiliation with *Der Sturm*; the 90th *Sturm* exhibition in 1921 featured him alongside Paul Klee.  Like his other contemporaries, Mattis-Teutsch extracted stylish, spiritual, and cosmic-theosophical visions from fantasised landscapes and projected innermost psychic workings onto his canvases, turning his works into EEG-like condition reports. He later erected functional-decorative, rational, and humanistic edifices based on Socialist utopias, only to end in a ghastly variety of Socialist Realism. Mattis-Teutsch was a keystone of the Romanian, Hungarian, and German avant-garde. Though cosmopolitan, he lived mostly in his Transylvanian hometown of Braşov, exhibiting locally and working as a professor at the art college, nourishing a modern, progressive, provincial art-life. In 1946, he founded the first syndicate of ‘democratic’ artists in Romania.  Mattis-Teutsch started his artistic career learning woodwork in Braşov. He went to Budapest in 1901, and in 1903 continued with sculpture studies in Munich. In 1917, Mattis-Teutsch entered the Budapest avant-garde circles; his linocut album was first issued by the journal *MA*. At this time, Lajos Kassak introduced him to Herwarth Walden. He also collaborated with the ‘*a-z*’ group in Cologne and the Bauhaus. Mattis-Teutsch’s abstract and expressionist cycle of the 1920s, *Seelenblumen* [*Soulflowers*], is a series of buds in a style reminiscent of Kandinsky-cum-Marc. The paintings consist of patterned figures turned into potent and colourful devices, rendering spiritual, dynamic fusion of natural entities into the painterly mass; the figures lose their descriptive particularities as humans, trees, or skies, and thus become purely abstract and rhythmic pulsations, aligning with the ‘musical Expressionism’ sought by the artist: ‘My aim is, by means of painting and sculpture, to create abstract works which can achieve through art a life of their own, one that reflects the states and conditions of the soul.’  File: Hans\_Mattis-Teutsch\_Composition\_1925.jpg  Figure : Hans Mattis-Teutsch, *Composition* (1925). 136 x 125 cm, oil on cardboard. The Museum of Visual Arts, Galati, Romania.  In Budapest during the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Mattis-Teutsch was not involved in the political turmoil, but instead returned to Braşov. In 1920 he had his first solo show in Bucharest. His progression from Expressionism to Constructivism around 1923-1924 coincided with his affiliation to the Bucharest avant-garde. He participated in the *First International Exhibition* of the journal *Contimporanul* in 1924, and then became a contributor and editor of the constructivist journal *Integral* and professor at the Academy of Decorative Arts in Bucharest (a Bauhaus-like institution). Sharing M.H. Maxy’s interests in social art and the ‘synthetic’ (‘integral’) human being, Mattis-Teutsch re-introduced, around 1927, human shapes in his works and developed a ‘constructive Realism’. This Socialist-inspired art system (in art practice and theory) was backed by his 1931 book *Kunstideologie*, which shows the turn from passive to active art, and focuses on art as order and activism and on the shaping of the ‘New Man’. ‘I search for a new human type, with no physiognomy; I depict no story, no history, no memory, just the human being as such,’ he writes. From 1933 until the 1940s, Mattis-Teutsch ceased to work, but expressed criticism of Nazism. After 1945 he engaged in the social and political organisation of the artists, yet he became a misfit because of the criticism from Communist officials, who accused him of modernist  ‘formalism’. Trying to adapt to Socialist Realism, he resorted to surrealist-like, figurative portraiture in the pale, blurred, and wistful settings of propaganda subjects, such as workers, peasants, intellectuals, and Stalin. |
| Further reading:  (Banner)  (Mattis-Teutsch)  (Forgacs, Mattis-Teutsch and Bajkay)  (Hans Mattis-Teutsch und Der Blaue Reiter) |