**Gutfreund, Otto (1889 – 1927)**

Born August 3, 1889 in Dvůr Králové in northeastern Bohemia

Died June 2, 1927 in Prague

Otto Gutfreund is recognised as the most important Czech sculptor of the early twentieth century. Trained in Paris under Anotine Bourdelle, Gutfreund took an interest in Gothic art and Cubism. This exposure catalysed his Cubist period (1911-1919) and he quickly emerged as leader of Czech Cubist sculpture. In May 1911 in Prague, Gutfreund became a founding member (treasurer, 1912; chairman 1913) of *Skupina výtvarných umělců* (The Group of Fine Artists, active 1911-1914). He contributed to their magazine *Umělecký Měsíčník* (1911-1914)*.* When the group split in autumn 1912 over Emil Filla’s rigid definition of Cubism, Gutfreund remained with *Skupina*. Gutfreund returned to Paris in spring 1913 and again in April 1914. Upon the outbreak of World War I, he joined the French Army and was sent to the Foreign Legion. Gutfreund spent the postwar period of January 1919–July 1920 in Paris and made his last Cubist works. Upon return to Prague, he shifted between 1920 and 1927 from Cubism to ‘Civilismus,’ a style that celebrated the citizen of the newly founded Czechoslovak Republic and bore affinity to the pan-European return to classicism and realism. At the end of his life he approached abstraction in sculptures that move from the soberness of Civilismus to experimental modernism.

Gutfreund began his artistic training in 1903–1906 at the School of Ceramics in Bechyně in southern Bohemia, followed by study in 1906–1909 at the School of Applied Arts in Prague. From November 1909 to June 1910 he studied in Paris at the newly opened and progressive *Académie de la Grande Chaumière* as a student of the modern sculptor and former Rodin-assistant Antoine Bourdelle. Gutfreund had met Bourdelle when the latter came to Prague for an exhibition of his work at the *Mánes Society of Fine Arts*, held February–March 1909. In June–July 1910, Gutfreund traveled with his art historian friend Antonín Matějček from France to England, Belgium, Holland, and Germany.

During his early Cubist period, he exhibited some of his most iconic bronze sculptures, such as *Anxiety* (1911), *Hamlet* (1911-12), *Viki* (1912-13), and *Cubist Bust* (1913-14). In March 1912, Gutfreund exhibited at the Fifth *Neue Sezession* exhibition in Berlin. In autumn 1913 he exhibited with *Skupina* at *Der Sturm* Gallery in conjunction with Herwarth Walden’s “*Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*.” Gutfreund traveled to Berlin in November–December 1913 and to Dresden with Filla in January 1914. While in service to the French Foreign Legion, Gutfreund fought in the battles of the Somme, Artois, and Champagne in 1915. He was accused in 1915 of sedition and held in 1916–1918 at a POW camp in the Abbey of Saint Michel de Frigolet in Provence, where he nevertheless produced sculptures in wood. In Prague in 1920, he joined the *Mánes Society of Fine Arts* and exhibited with *Tvrdošíjní* (Stubborn Ones) in 1921. Gutfreund taught from 1926 until his death in 1927 at the School of Applied Arts in Prague.

**List of works**

Gutfreund, Otto. *Otto Gutfreund: Zázemí tvorby* [The Hinterland of Creativity], ed. Jiří

Setlík. Prague: Odeon, 1989.

Gutfreund, Otto, ‘Plocha a prostor’ [Surface and Space], *Umělecký Měsíčník* (no. 2,

1912), trans. Alexandra Büchler, 92-95 in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-gardes, 1910 – 1930.* Eds. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.

**Secondary sources**

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Lamač, Miroslav. *Osma a Skupina výtvarných umělců 1907-1917*. Prague: Odeon, 1988.

*Otto Gutfreund: Sculpture and Drawings*, exh. cat. Ed., Scottish Arts Council.

Edinburgh: The Council, 1979.

*Otto Gutfreund*, exh. cat. Ed., National Gallery of Art. Prague: Národní galerie v Praze,

1996.

Vlček, Tomáš, ‘Otto Gutfreund,’ 186-201 in Jiři Švestka and Tomáš Vlček with Pavel

Liška, eds., *Czech Cubism 1909 – 1925: Art, Architecture, Design* (1991). Prague: i3 CZ & Modernista, 2006.

*Zwei Wegbereiter der Moderne: František Kupka und Otto Gutfreund,* exh. cat. Vienna:

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, 1996.

**Online Resources**

National Gallery in Prague, Collection of Modern Art, Veletržní palác

<http://www.ngprague.cz/en/objekt-detail/veletrzni-palace/>

Otto Gutfreund (images of artworks with extensive biographical information by Anna Pravdová and Bertrand Schmitt)

<http://otto-gutfreund.net>

Grosvenor Gallery, London (introduction to 1966 exhibition catalogue)

<http://grosvenorgallery.com/artists/gutfreund-otto/>

Messine Galerie & Conseil, Paris (images of several artworks)

<http://galeriemessine.com/en/expositions/presentation/70/otto-gutfreund-1889-1927-sculptures-dessins>

*Anxiety* (1911 – 12) at Olomouc Museum of Art

<http://www.olmuart.cz/MMU/COLLECTIONS/our-treasures/COLLECTIONS-GUTFREUND/>