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| Der Sturm |
| Storm |
| *Der Sturm* (storm) was the fulcrum of the international avant-garde in Berlin from 1910 to 1932. Herwarth Walden (born Georg Levin, 1878-1941) founded the journal, *Der Sturm*, in 1910. His first wife, the poet Else Lasker-Schüler, likely suggested both his *nom-de-guerre* and the newspaper’s title. Walden, a pianist who had studied with Conrad Ansorge, a former prodigy of Franz Liszt, had ambitions that exceeded the concert hall. Suggesting both the multiplicity of arts that *Der Sturm* would embrace, and the intention to reach a wide audience, the pianist-impresario-editor, Walden, traveled with the poet-playwright-artist, Lasker-Schüler, and the painter-printmaker-dramatist, Oskar Kokoschka, across Germany to distribute the first edition to the people. The group and their paper met with incomprehension, however, so they returned to cultivate a more select audience in the metropolis. |
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Initially, *Der Sturm* showcased literary talent, predominantly Berlin writers (e.g., Lasker-Schüler, Alfred Döblin, Peter Hille, Paul Scheerbart) and contributors recommended by Karl Kraus, editor of the renowned Viennese journal, *Die Fackel*, and *Der Sturm’s* initial benefactor. Through Kraus came architect Adolf Loos, who, along with fabulist Scheerbart, introduced modernist architectural discourse to *Der Sturm*. During the journal’s first two years, the graphic art of Kokoschka and members of *Die Brücke* appeared with increasing frequency. In 1912, Walden institutionalized his commitment to visual art by opening *Der Sturm* gallery near Potsdamer Platz. Until it closed in 1928, the gallery hosted more than 170 shows and initiated programs in a dozen countries, including Japan.  File: DerSturm.jpg  Figure 1 Drawing for *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* (Zeichnung zu *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*) (in-text plate, title page) from the periodical *Der Sturm. Wochenschrift für Kultur und Künste*, vol. 1, no. 20 (July 14, 1910)  Source: http://www.moma.org/collection\_ge/object.php?object\_id=123264&curated=1  Appropriate to its name, the gallery caused a furor in the press. The first exhibit featured expressionist painting by the *Blaue Reiter* of Munich (Albert Bloch, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, August Macke, Franz Marc, Gabriele Münter). Walden seconded this act with the first exhibit of the Italian Futurists (Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Gino Severini) in Germany. Walden, his second wife, Nell, Boccioni, and group spokesman Filippo Marinetti drove a convertible through Berlin’s streets, disseminating exhibition posters to cries of ‘Evviva Futurista!’ This performance complemented readings and recitals in the gallery, and continued a tradition that predated *Der Sturm*. Already in 1901, Walden and Lasker-Schüler had collaborated on *Teloplasma*, a ‘high-art-cabaret’ (and failure); in 1904, Walden had initiated the *Verein für Kunst* (society for art), an enormously successful lecture and performance society, whose guests included such eminent figures as Adolf Behne, Peter Behrens, Gottfried Benn, Gustav Mahler, Georg Simmel, August Stramm, and Richard Strauss. In 1912, Walden folded the *Verein für Kunst* into the *Sturm* gallery’s programs, establishing a home for the period’s most advanced art, poetry, and ideas.  File: WaldenAndRoslund.jpg  Figure 2 Walden with his second wife, Nell (1916).  Source: http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\_image.cfm?image\_id=2163  In 1913, following the tradition of the French *Salon d’automne* (1903+), *Der Sturm* hosted the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*, displaying 366 works of art from twelve countries. The *Herbstsalon* is one of three monumental, international surveys of modern art in 1912-1913 (the others are the 1912 *Sonderbund* exhibit in Cologne and the 1913 Armory Show in New York). A radical feature of the Berlin show is that a woman, Sonia Delaunay, exhibited more works (twenty-six) than any other living artist (her husband Robert followed with twenty-one). Although Walden did not always support women, his record shines next to his contemporaries’. He granted Münterthree solo shows (her more famous partner, Kandinsky, received no more), and he promoted lesser-known women artists, such as Jakoba van Heemskerck and Marthe Tour-Donas. Equally unusual is Walden’s periodic support of supposedly ‘feminine’ media (decorative arts) and aesthetics (the decorative or ornamental). Sonia Delaunay’s collection, for example, included book covers, scarves, and lampshades along with paintings, and Walden defended Klee’s painting, despite criticism of the latter as decorative and ornamental, throughout the 1910s.  The careers of two giants of modern art are entwined with *Der Sturm*: Kandinsky and Kurt Schwitters. In 1912, Kandinsky enjoyed his first solo exhibition at the gallery, and *Der Sturm*’s new press published the first monograph on the artist, *Kandinsky, 1901-1913*, in 1913. Schwitters’s *Merz* collages premiered at *Der Sturm* gallery in 1919, and he theorized *Merz*, a creative mixture of materials and practices, in the main journal and its subsidiary, *Die Sturm-Bühne* (storm stage). The latter took its name from the *Sturm*’s theater society, coordinated by Rudolf Bluemner and Lothar Schreyer from 1917 to 1921. Following *Sturm* tradition, all arts remained integrated: the artist Schwitters studied acting with Bluemner and discussed musical composition with Walden. Schwitters’s *Ursonata* (1923-32), a *tour de force* of performance poetry, is but one result.  File: ErsterDeutscherHerbstsalon.jpg  Figure 3 *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*, Berlin, 1913.  Source: https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fil:Herwarth\_Walden-Der\_Sturm\_1913.JPG  For all its achievements, however, *Der Sturm* always faced adversaries, from a dubious public to insolvency to later criticism from an overtly politicized avant-garde. Suspicions remain about photographs of the apparently prosperous Waldens during World War I. Some scholars believe that Walden was able to continue his international programs during the war, staging shows at home and in neutral countries, because of ties to government intelligence. Although Walden supplied the art for the first two exhibitions at the *Galerie Dada* in Zurich in 1917, some Berlin Dadaists, especially Raoul Hausmann and Richard Huelsenbeck, deplored his commerce and suspect politics. The Russian avant-gardist, Ivan Puni, staged a *Sturm* ‘installation’ *avant la lettre* in 1921, and revolutionary artists in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic modeled their journals on *Der Sturm*, but the more ideologically pure—or rigid—constructivists considered Walden to be incurably bourgeois. Perhaps it surprised them when, ca. 1926, *Der Sturm’s* pages began to reflect Walden’s infatuation with the Soviet Union. His interests no longer resonated with a local audience; the complex closed, and the journal released its last issue in 1932. Walden moved to the Soviet Union, where he contributed to *Das Wort*. In that Moscow-based exile journal, Georg Lukáçs famously debated Ernst Bloch and others over expressionism’s culpability in the rise of fascism. Walden vigorously defended *Der Sturm*. He died in a Stalinist camp in 1941. |
| Further reading:  (Birthälmer, von Hülsen-Esch and Finckh)  (Hodonyi) |