This bulletin comprises watercolors by Sanya Kantarovsky and texts by Eli Diner following certain threads by Gregor Quack.

Front cover: Diefenbach and Fidus on a stroll

Two countervailing tendencies: The additive and the subtractive. Futurist and primitivist. Sartorial interventions ending in geometric space opera or else the renunciation of clothing. Between these two poles flourished (and foundered) a spectrum of activity (and fantasy), whose practitioners we might broadly divide into The Robes and The Geometers.

(Europe) The first quarter of the 20th century — particularly the years on either side of WWI. Artists turn to clothing design. This was not, of course, the first time. But unlike, say, the smocked waists and other medieval archaisms of the Pre-Raphaelites' "artistic dress," created firstly as costumes to be worn by models, props for paintings (subsequently assimilated into Victorian women's fashion), the figures under consideration here all designed, and sometimes sewed their OWN garments; only some produced, or hoped to produce clothes for wider consumption. Acts of self-fashioning inspired by that old Romantic ideal — a seamless cloth sewn of art and life.

This they shared. Another common thread between the otherwise antithetical Robes and Geometers: *joy.* Whether in angular, colorful, collaged or rationally simplified garments — designed to reflect the vitality of the present or urge the future — or in rags and robes unearthed from the bowels of the past, the costumes promised a corrective to mournful and constrictive bourgeois attire. For men: drab monochrome. The fruits of a century of banalization in dress, what British psychologist John Flügel termed the Great Masculine Renunciation: an abandonment of color and ornamentation, underway since the end of the 18th century, rendering menswear "the more austere and ascetic of the arts." For women: vast frilly and strangling accoutrement, target of the rationalizing and moralizing efforts of the dress reform movement. This was a matter, said the reformers, in bloomers and liberty bodice, not merely of comfort, but also of health.

Health was a big concern. For everybody. The hygiene of clothing. From its feminist, pragmatist origins in mid-19th-century England and the United States, hygienic dress reform became a generalized cause in Germany, seen, for example, in Gustav Jaeger's promotion of animal hair as the only textiles fit for humans to wear. And those who knew what was good for them in the 1880s had on woolen undergarments. Wilde: "From a

continuation of the Greek principles of beauty with the German principles of health will come, I feel certain, the costume of the future." So, too, a few decades later, with our artist-clothiers: a coalescing in garments of the aesthetic and the hygienic — art and life, again — both among those designing garments for the future at hand and those advocating the robe.

The divisions, of course, are more numerous than the similarities. I won't dwell on the obvious aesthetic antinomies: the undulations and folds of the repudiators; the straight lines and abstractions of the geometers. It should be evident as well that this style divide mirrored diametric attitudes toward modernity — embrace or retreat, respectively. Divisions, though, ran both between and within the two camps. Among the geometers, for instance: to adequately reflect radically transformed historical realities, does clothing demand simplicity or complexity?

You'll notice that the robed repudiators consist only of Germans (German speakers, if not German nationals). While by no means an exclusively Teutonic preserve, the flight from modernity, the dream of primordial return, took on a wild urgency among Germans, unmatched in scope or enthusiasm elsewhere in Europe. Particularly in those social movements emerging in the late 19th century — vegetarianism, nudism, back-to-naturism, vagabondage, and various experiments in utopian living, all loosely woven together under the banner of *Lebensreform* — we witness the hypertrophying of the Romantic glorification of the past, nature, passion, and experience.

It would be too simple, however, to characterize the repudiators and geometers as merely temporally overlapping, the former representing a belated romanticism, the latter an emergent modernism. We glimpse more than a few romantic aftereffects among our modernists. And across the screen of all the garments below: the ecstasies and contradictions — political and aesthetic — of the spectacular, grotesque closure of the long 19th century.

GUSTAV KLIMT

In an indigo caftan, Klimt could be found mornings taking his constitutional around the Schönbrunn. 45 minutes every day. He was very sporty. Lifted dumbbells. Fenced. Wrestled with his male models. "Strapping, austere, and suntanned," thought Schiele. And Hans Tietze: "a revolutionary of the old school, a sophisticated primitive, a mix of sex maniac and ascetic, man of the world and monk; a generous egoist, given over to his powerful instincts and the most extreme sophistication."

Summers he spent on the banks of the Allersee. With Emilie Flöge, her dresses by Klimt. Baggy, billowing, *Jugendstil* patters. He adorned his smocks at the shoulder or down the arm with appliqué filigrees. He said his quest was for the *Urkleid*, the pure, primordial garment. But he was just kidding. Really it was the *Künstlerkleid*, artistic dress, a notion that had been floating around. Clothing was too important to be left to the tailors.

Klimt and Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, they looked back to the Baroque, the Rococo, the Biedermeir because, said Hoffman, those movements "approached all fields of life." Well, there you go: The Wiener Werkstätte and the dream of the integrated aesthetic whole! A sinuous, sensuous Gesamtkunstwerk. Every detail a pleasure dome, and every pleasure dome a part of a bigger pleasure dome. Why can't life be more like that?

SONIA DELAUNAY

"The rhythms made us want to make the colors dance, too," recalled Delaunay of her evenings at the Bal Bullier. "Everyday wear as well as Sunday clothes were really monotonous and drab. We wanted to end this general state of mourning. It was up to us to find a way. I myself wore my first simultaneous dresses."

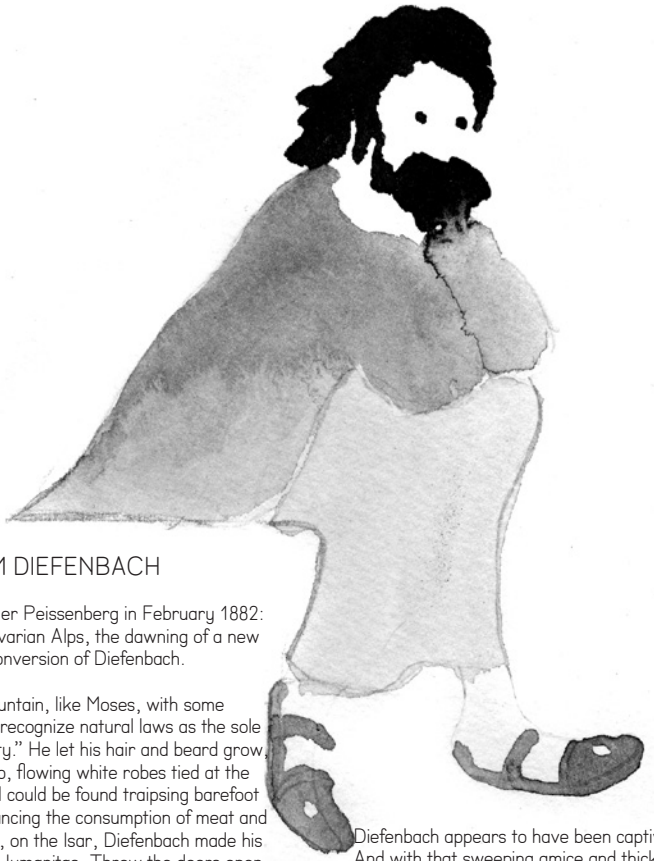
Simultaneity: she and Robert had borrowed it from Chevreul. Painters since Delacroix had been drawing on the chemist's color theory, developed during his tenure as director of dyes at the Gobelins textile works. Delaunay's dresses might have marked a fitting return — the application of *the law of simultaneous color contrasts* to fabrics — but really she just liked the way it sounded. *Simultanéité!* The frenzy of the city, of technological innovation. All those novel ways of time and space. And playfully pseudoscientific. "Research" she called her dresses and paintings alike.

"Here is a description of Mme. Sonia Delaunay's simultaneous dresses," wrote Apollinaire. "Purple dress, wide purple and green belt, and under the jacket, a corsage bodice divided into brightly colored zones, delicate or faded, where the following colors are mixed: antique rose, yellow-orange, Nattier blue, scarlet, etc., appearing on different materials, so that woolen cloth, taffeta, tulle, flannelette, watered silk and *peau de soie* are juxtaposed."

Commotion of color and texture. Sartorial collage. But in her wild re-combinations, Delaunay left the dress forms as she found them. Again, Apollinaire: "Since they [Sonia and Robert] want to be of their own time, they don't innovate in the cut of clothing (in that they follow contemporary fashion), but rather seek to influence it by employing new fabrics which are infinitely varied with color."

But these exhilarated surfaces could not deny depth. Not for Blaise Cendrars: eternal, erotic truths peaked through the segments of her collages, at the points of intersection and overlap:

Anything that is a bump pushes into the depths
Stars dig into the sky
Colors undress you through contrast
"On her dress she wears her body"



KARL WILHELM DIEFENBACH

From the peak of Hoher Peissenberg in February 1882: a sunrise over the Bavarian Alps, the dawning of a new consciousness: The conversion of Diefenbach.

He descended the mountain, like Moses, with some very definite ideas: "I recognize natural laws as the sole manifestation of divinity." He let his hair and beard grow, adorned apostolic garb, flowing white robes tied at the waist with a rope, and could be found traipsing barefoot through Munich denouncing the consumption of meat and beer. Outside of town, on the Isar, Diefenbach made his home and workshop, Humanitas. Threw the doors open to a growing "family" of pupils; fused simple living, art, a metaphysics of *Gott-Menschenthum* (divine humanity), and nudism (both for the health benefits and the aesthetics).

The painter's ecstatic landscapes, mystical visions, Egyptian reveries and fulminating scenes of divine encounter seem to have gone over rather well in some circles, so even while he stood trial in a much a publicized public nudity case in Munich, he got an invitation to show his work at the Österreichischer Kunstverein. The Viennese public just could not get enough of the Münchner's Symbolist fantasias, and the exhibition, *Der Geist Gottes in der Natur* (The Spirit of God in Nature), had to be repeatedly extended, eventually drawing some 80,000 visitors.

Diefenbach appears to have been captivated by his own image. And with that sweeping amice and thick, cascading hair, who could blame him? A natural model, he presented himself to the camera with effortless gravity. A photo: He sits on a bench. Hands clapped, resting on crossed legs. Downcast gaze. His eyes are hidden, but the intensity of his contemplation is manifest. Diefenbach later painted this scene, enveloping his likeness in a misty darkness and lifting the angle of perspective. He now looked down on himself from a floating vantage. Hovering behind the seated sage the enormous, stony face of Christ. Or is the face Diefenbach's own? His most ambitious project: a 70-meter narrative frieze in silhouette, *Per aspera ad astra*, depicting a father leading his children from hardship to paradise, a quest for "divine humanity." But that hair! That robe! Identifiable even in silhouette: the father, of course, was none other than Diefenbach.

GIACOMO BALLA

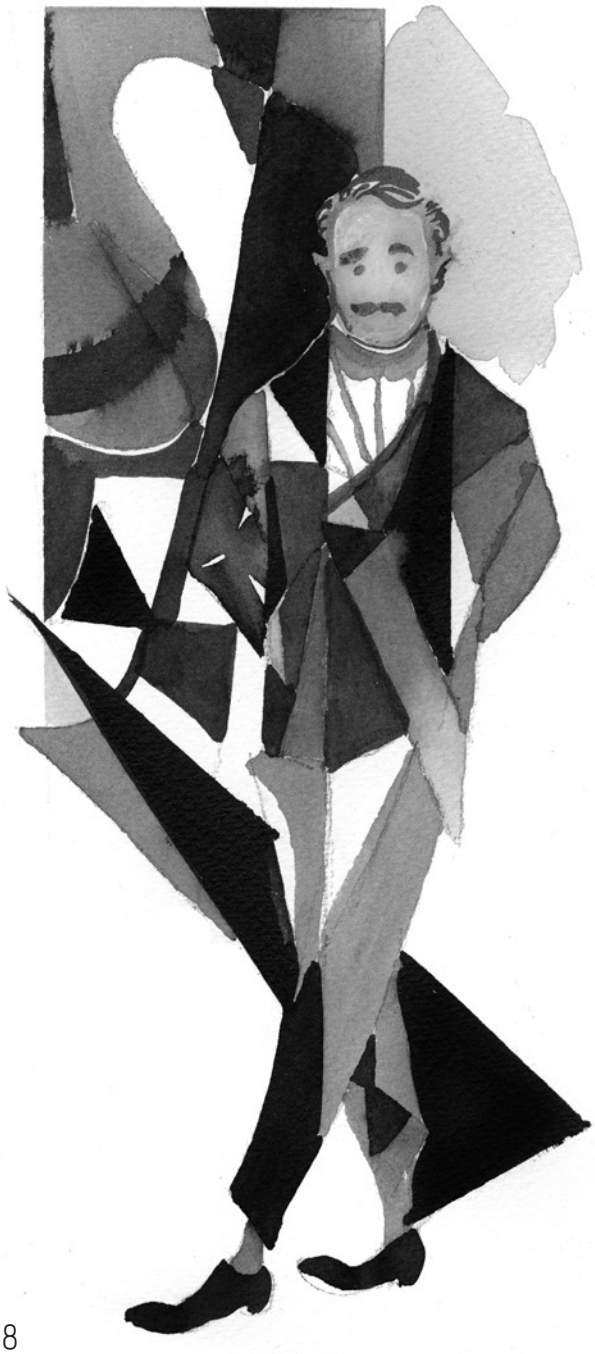
Dynamic
Asymmetrical
Nimble
Simple and comfortable
Hygienic
Joyful
Illuminating
Strong-willed
Flying and aerial
Short-lived
Variable

Such were the principles adduced by Balla in the *Manifesto of Male Futurist Dress* of May 1914. Doleful and constrictive attire was out. He made jackets without lapels or collar. Jutting forms, angular cuts and kaleidoscopic patterns. That famous Futurist delirium of dynamism. Chaos of destruction and construction.

But one of Balla's principles demands elaboration: *variable.* With his modificanti — modifiers, but evoking as well *la moda* — "appliqué pieces of cloth (of different size, thickness or color) that can be attached at will to any part of the dress with pneumatic buttons" — Balla endeavored to accelerate the pace of fashion. Why wait for next season?

We see him posing in his studio in a Futurist suit: between garment and painting a continuous field of geometric abstraction. The *modificanti* allowed him to match any room. A delicate balance between the urge toward upheaval and the appeals of bourgeois domesticity. And for all the Futurist paeans to mechanization, Balla had his suits made by a tailor.

The manifesto had originally appeared in French. By the time of the Italian version, September 1914, the text had undergone changes, starting with its title: *The Antineutral Dress: A Futurist Manifesto*. Then an epigraph from Marinetti's founding *Futurist Manifesto*: "We will glorify war, the world's only hygiene." Urging Italy's entrance into the war on the side of the Triple Entente, Balla recasts the drab suit as the neutral suit — weak, humiliating, cowardly, un-Italian — the Futurist suit as interventionist, "joyfully bellicose clothing." In the green, white and red of the flag, the antineutral suit could be augmented with belligerent modificanti. Balla, Marinetti and Francesco Cangiullo all planned to wear one to an interventionist rally at Sapienza in December, but only Cangiullo's suit was ready in time. He climbed above the crowd who cheered wildly for the patriot.



FIDUS

Like Peter and Paul, his name was bestowed on him: "Fidus," said Diefenbach, because of the lad's faith, his unshakable allegiance. They strolled naked, they painted. Later things got tense, and Diefenbach redubbed him "Infidus."

He left.

But the disciple had gotten a lot from the master: Sun worship, of course, and the persuasion of the white robe. Fidus, though, was a young man; he needed a young man's robe. He wore it sleeveless, hanging just past the knees and cinched at the waist with a dark belt. He grew no beard; tucked his long hair back behind his ears: the seeker at the start of the journey rather than the wizened sage.

And so he became the painter of youth. Illustrator of *Jugendstil* fantasies: his blonde adolescents throw their arms wide to the rising sun, let its beams wash over their naked bodies. Wilhelmine teenagers pinned his postcards to their bedroom walls and dreamt of a union of the spiritual and the sensual.

But what he really wanted was to BUILD something. Drew plans for arenas, concert halls and, above all, temples, fusing art nouveau drippings, gothic protrusions and runic cyphers. His *Tempel der Erde* nearly got built. In Woltersdorfer, in 1907, Fidus made a temple of different sort: a studio cum salon, tricked out in ceremonial grandeur and frequented by theosophists and titillated bourgeois ladies.

His increasingly *völkisch* themes made Fidus a darling of the Freie Deutsche Jugend. And when the war came, he recognized it at once as the moment the German spirit would assume its brilliant, redemptive form.

A double blow, then, when the Weimar years saw his popularity dwindle, a fate he ascribed to the monstrous influence of communists and Jews. A terrible quiet reigned in the temple. No longer young, he grew a beard. Bought a cardigan.

From 1925 Fidus turned to Aryan themes with ever-greater enthusiasm. Joined the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*. But the Nazis were suspicious of his spiritualism and erotic abandon. They banned his postcards. He painted a portrait of the Führer. In letter after letter he tried to explain himself to the regime: "I still hope for everything from this great artist Hitler! All power to him! Greetings from your Germanic brother of the light, Fidus"

VARVARA STEPANOVA

Art was either revolutionary or it was nothing: "Our task," Stepanova declared to her fellow Soviet artists, "is to find ourselves a place in real life." They turned to pots and pans. And clothing. The Constructivists tried to make themselves useful, pursued the dream of a complete transformation of daily life wrought — or at least aided — by objects. It was not, however, a forgone conclusion. In *Questions of Everyday Life*, Trotsky warned that the revolution depended on people fundamentally changing the way they lived at the most quotidian level.

"Fashion is a psychological reflection of the habits of daily life and aesthetic taste," Stepanova wrote. "As such, it is giving way to programmed clothing, suited to the wearers work in different sectors or for a specific social activity." If utility would determine form, pattern remained the field in which to elaborate a new Soviet style. Stripes in particular — whether the bold, angled patterns of her sportswear or the staggered vertical bands intersecting circles in a summer dress — appear like an affirmation of Ippolit Sokolov's declaration, "the style of the USSR is the straight line!"

In the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin asked: "Does fashion die (as in Russia, for example) because it can no longer keep up the tempo?" Stepanova, however, saw that the rhythms of fashion — the incessant forward motion of the quest for novelty — when freed from the strictures of bourgeois taste and the market would cohere with the advancing Soviet rationalization of life. But her employment at the First State Print Textile Factory (1923–24) coincided with the semi-capitalist New Economic Policy, instituted two years prior: limited private trade and manufacturing and state-owned businesses had to become profitable. Soviet consumer tastes remained conservative, and Stepanova's uncomplicated and androgynous designs, only a few of which ever went into production, remain the distant echo of a projection of an egalitarian future.

GUSTO GRÄSER

Wandering out of the Southern Carpathians, out of a petrified class of burghers — the so-called Transylvanian Saxons — with their fabled *Deutschtum* and indifferent Lutheran God — Arthur became "Gusto" because that was how he lived: unbridled. And Gräser was the plural of Gras, he said, handing out blades of grass as a calling card.

1896. The Millennium Exhibition in Budapest. First prize in woodcarving went to 17-year-old Gräser. Then off to study art in Vienna. He, too, found himself in the folds of Diefenbach's robes during the Meister's stay in the Austrian capital.

Two years later, he painted an angel; its fiery sword guides away from the city, into wilderness. And another anti-modern allegory, *Der Liebe Macht*, divides between a flaming industrial hell and verdant arcadia, while a cluster of figures tries to discover their way from the former to the latter.

The path was clear. In 1900 Gräser destroyed his paintings and sculptures. To escape the strictures of modernity, the *Naturmensch* would have to abandon art. His was a call to action; a commitment to art could only be a betrayal of life. Gräser's project was one of embodiment, a lived *Lebensphilosophie*. He took to the roads, slept in caves (or often in jail), knocked on doors throughout Germany, Switzerland, Austria, a wandering lesson in willful simplicity and freedom.

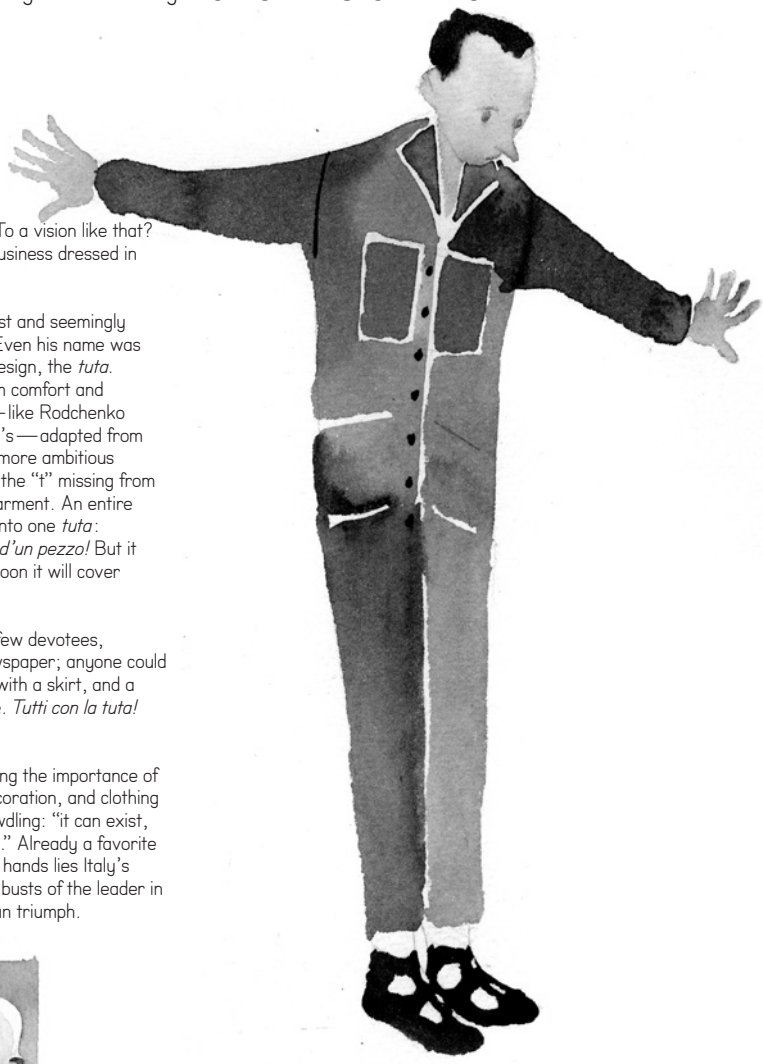
Evidently literary production did not pose the same problem of commitment that painting did. He wrote poetry. No doubt the materiality of the art object, for Gräser, coincided with an acquisitiveness (if not quite Marx's "immense accumulation of commodities") to which his very figure was designed to serve as a moral corrective. In its *things,* modernity confines us.

A poem describes how he used to be like you:

I knotted me into the father-noose —
And even bragged about it
Hung myself by the silken necktie —
By manhood's executioner

Freed of the noose, the question remained: What does one who is unconstrained wear? Gräser experimented with a few possibilities — togas, animal skins — before finally settling on what would become the iconic German vagabond look of the 1910s and 20s. Long hair and beard, a loose tunic, headband, satchel and rope sandals laced up the calf. "Altogether a genuinely distinguished look," wrote Adolf Grohmann in his book on the *Naturmenschen*. It was Gräser's appearance as well that excited Hermann Hesse when the vagabond stopped in Gaienhofen. (The two would go wandering together, and Gräser would inspire any number of Hesse's fictional gurus.)

In the years after World War I, Gräser became hero to a reinvigorated *Lebensreform* and commune movement. His pacifism and primitivism now appeared all the more prophetic. The *neue Schar*, a pilgrimage of the young, a children's crusade to rediscover nature: they took to the fields and forests of Thuringia beneath banners bearing quotes from Gräser.



THAYAHT

Tutti con la Tuta!

Who wouldn't rally to a slogan like that? To a vision like that? A MILLION PEOPLE going about their business dressed in loose-fitting jumpsuits.

THAYAHT: a second a generation Futurist and seemingly at odds with Balla's cries of asymmetry. Even his name was symmetrical. So to the form of his 1919 design, the *tuta*. Universal garment designed for "maximum comfort and complete freedom of movement," it was — like Rodchenko & Stepanova's work suit or Moholy-Nagy's — adapted from the American overall. But the tuta was a more ambitious item, a totality. *Tutta* means whole, total; the "t" missing from the name is found in the T-shape of the garment. An entire SINGLE piece of fabric (4.5 x 7 m) goes into one *tuta*: *Tuta la stoffa!* It is a single garment: *Tuta d'un pezzo!* But it covers everything: *Tuta la persona!* And soon it will cover everyone: *Tuta la gente!*

Actually it seems the *tuta* did find quite a few devotees, *i tutisti*. The patterns appeared in the newspaper; anyone could make a *tuta*. Then came a women's *tuta* with a skirt, and a two-piece, the bituta. A tuta for everyone. *Tutti con la tuta!* But which tutti, exactly?

The late 1920s, and the Duce was declaring the importance of "an Italian style in furnishings, interior decoration, and clothing [that] does not yet exist." No time for dawdling: "it can exist, therefore it must come into existence now." Already a favorite subject of THAYAT — "the man in whose hands lies Italy's fate" — he was turning out icy, burnished busts of the leader in steel and iron, allegorical paintings of Italian triumph.

And he echoed Mussolini's cries for a distinctly national fashion: "As Italians of the Fascist era, we should have the courage to create a new type of clothing." THAYAHT lamented foreign influences as "Northern" and "Anglo-Saxon" and "anti-Mediterranean" and distinctly out of place here. And he heeded the call: in 1932, in the *Manifesto for the Transformation of Male Clothing*, he announced his plans for 16 new garments, a total system of clothing for the Italian man. At once universalizing, and nationalizing. I don't think any of these ever got made.

POSTSCRIPT

Guto Grässer wanders out of the wilderness and into the city. Munich, 1945. Carried on weary inertia and wasted legs: the steps of a man who has been walking for a lifetime. Unheard from in years, celebrity long vanished, his costume remains unchanged — a bit tattered, that's all.

The twin spires of the Frauenkirche rise out of a vast blanket of rubble into which slumps the church's own crumbling nave. Grässer seems oblivious — or indifferent — to all this cinder and debris. He'd always hated cities.

Though the vagabond's look had been stitched together as a cynosure, an embodied lesson, a walking morality play, his appearance here comes off not as the hieratic *I told you so* we might have expected, nor really as a bad joke — though the very energies he had conducted fed right into Nazism: exaltation of the land, primordial return, transcendence through discipline and abandon. Perhaps a dumb joke is what it is, the type that — depending on your mood — gets funnier or more grating with every repetition. His beard and tunic, so farcically persistent. The Energizer Bunny of *Lebensreform*.

Incongruous with the backdrop, with history — a man out of time. Yet Grässer's stroll has about it something of the calculated arbitrariness of a fashion spread, bombed out Munich a fabulous location for a shoot. His dispassion is neither the cold judgment of the prophet nor chastened awe. Rather, it is the blank stare of fashion.

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