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Acquisitions of Modern Art by Museums: Supplement

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Acquisitions of Modern Art by Museums

Supplement to THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE November 1970

The Von der Heydt Museum at Wuppertal has recently acquired, from the Von der Heydt Foundation with the assistance of West German Radio, *An Old Woman from the Alms-house* by Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907). Painted about 1905, the picture (Fig.61) measures 126 by 95 cm.

Among the many portraits painted by Paula Modersohn-Becker, children and old women are found more often than people in middle-age. The painter was moved in particular by the early and later years of life, because it is most often then that human life and destiny are most clearly revealed. Here we see an old woman from the alms-house, sitting in a slightly unnatural pose and with the mistrusting, watchful eye of one who is unused to being an object of special attention. The picture must have originated after the 29-year-old painter's return from the journey, in February and April 1905, which led her to Paris for the third time. Her encounter with the works of Gauguin and with the group of painters influenced by him (Vuillard, Bonnard, Denis) would have strengthened her existing inclination towards a style that deviated from Impressionism. This can be discerned in the form of the figure itself, as well as in the simplified outlines of the horse and the trees in the background. The sky above the high horizon is over-clouded as far as the eye can see, so that we can feel the flatness everywhere, against which the powerful figure is dominantly placed.

With the painting of Modersohn-Becker, the last significant theme of this artist's work, that of simple folk in old age, which until now has been missing from the extensive collection of her works in the Von der Heydt Museum, is now also represented.

The National Portrait Gallery, London, has recently acquired, as a 1969 purchase from the Magdalene Street Gallery, Cambridge, Jacob Kramer's *Portrait of Harold Monro* (Fig.62). Formerly in the collection of Mrs Alida Monro, the picture was drawn in 1923 and is in chalk and Indian ink on grey paper, measuring 35·5 by 29·2 cm.

It was after the collapse of *The Poetry Review* in 1912 that Harold Monro (1879–1932) moved to Devonshire Street, W.C. and opened the Poetry Bookshop. The bookshop soon became an international centre for poets and artists of all sorts, and Epstein and his wife were for a long time among the various residents in the bed-sitting rooms which Monro let out over the shop. The Ukrainian born artist, Jacob Kramer (1892–1962) was

a friend of Epstein's and posed for the body of the *Risen Christ* (1919) and for a portrait head in 1922. It seems possible that he came into contact with Monro through Epstein, although both men had wide circles of friends in all branches of the arts. Monro records sitting to Kramer in his diary on 17th September 1923.¹

Kramer's later portrait drawings, such as one done of Epstein in 1930,² became increasingly academic, but the portrait of Monro admirably demonstrates his early preoccupations. Clearly influenced by the African sculpture which was being collected by many of his contemporaries, it is very much a mask, and is also a reflection of more overtly Cubist influences from the Vorticists, with whom Kramer exhibited. While he evolved his own brand of Cubism, it is always used in an expressionist mould and his early works show a greater intensity of feeling than those of the Vorticists. In this, he is very close to other Jewish artists of the period like Meninsky, and Epstein whose work, despite a brief flirtation with Vorticism in *The Rock Drill*, is fundamentally expressionist. Kramer's portrait of Monro is an interesting period image rather than a work of great physical or psychological depth. It is however the only known portrait of Monro and provides an attractive image of him at the height of his career. It was reproduced as frontispiece to the 1933 edition of his poems.

ROBIN GIBSON

¹ Information kindly supplied by Miss Ruth Tomalin.

² See MILLIE KRAMER: *Jacob Kramer* [1969], p.59 (repro.).

The Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller at Otterlo has lately acquired a bronze portrait relief of the artist's father by Otto Gutfreund (1889–1927). It was made in 1911 and measures 40 by 27·5 cm. (Fig.63).

Gutfreund, the Czech artist, studied in Paris with Bourdelle in 1909–10, in that particularly fertile period when Zadkine, Lipchitz and Lehmbruck also came to study there. After a period spent in his own country, Gutfreund returned for a second, longer stay in Paris (1914–20). This time he came into contact with many leading French artists. The relief-portrait of his father was made after his return to Prague and shows the degree to which he had already assimilated Cubism after his first visit to Paris. With his friend, Emil Filla, who accompanied him to France in 1914, Gutfreund was to a large extent responsible for many of the more forward-looking developments of art in Prague in the 1920s.

The Tate Gallery has recently acquired, as a gift from Charles Lahr in memory of the sitter, the *Portrait of Esther Lahr* by William Roberts. It is on canvas, measuring 50·8 by 40·6 cm., is signed, and was painted in 1925 (Fig.64).

Esther Archer (1898–1970) was born in London of Jewish refugee parents. She married Lahr in 1922, not long after buying what was afterwards known as the Blue Moon Bookshop at 68, Red Lion Street, W.C.1, a business that became well known in the 1920s and 1930s for its affiliations with the artistic and literary *avant garde*. The Lahrs were friends of the Roberts's. William Roberts was teaching at the Central School when Lahr commissioned him to paint the portrait of his wife, at the special price of £25. The picture was painted in 1925, and was probably finished before November of that year. When it hung in Red Lion Street, Epstein would from time to time bring friends to see it, saying that he regarded it as Roberts's best work. The Blue Moon Bookshop was destroyed in the 1940 blitz.

(Based on notes supplied to the Tate by the sitter's daughter, Miss Oonagh Lahr, and dated 28th April, 1970.)

The emendation of the rules for admission of portraits to the **National Portrait Gallery, London**, in order to allow the gallery to acquire portraits during the life-time of distinguished sitters has resulted in several important acquisitions. Foremost among them was the painting of E. M. Forster by Dora Carrington, presented in December 1969 by Mrs Frances Partridge (Fig.65).

Forster apparently had never seen the portrait, though he suspected that it was being painted. He believed that work on it must have gone on for some considerable time, between 1924 and Carrington's tragic death in 1932, though she would never admit that she was painting him. Mrs Frances Partridge remembers E. M. Forster making frequent week-end visits to Ham Spray House and thinks it likely that the window to the right of the sitter's head is part of the dining-room window there. Ralph Partridge (Carrington's husband) offered to send the portrait to E. M. Forster after his wife's death, but Forster replied that he would prefer a still-life. The portrait therefore remained at Ham Spray House until Ralph Partridge's death, in 1960, when it passed to his second wife, Mrs Frances Partridge. Soon afterwards Mr Lawrence Gowing suggested to her that the painting would ultimately be a suitable acquisition for the National Portrait Gallery.

The portrait is painted on canvas, 50·8 by 40·6 cm., and is unsigned. Carrington was a student at the Slade from c.1911. Michael Holroyd, in his recent biography of Lytton Strachey, records that she won a scholarship and, in 1911–12, the Melville Nettleship prize for figure composition. The cool tones and free brushwork of the *E. M. Forster* point to the Post-impressionistic tradition which, championed by Roger Fry, dominated the *avant-garde* art world during Carrington's student days.

MAUREEN HILL

In 1969, the **National Portrait Gallery, London**, purchased from Miss Gabrielle Cross, the artist's niece, Glyn Philpot's 1908 *Self-portrait*. It is on canvas, and measures 90 by 67·5 cm. (Fig.66).

The immense reputation which Glyn Philpot (1888–1937) had built up for himself in the pre-war years as an artist of international standing, vanished overnight with the advent of

the war, which followed closely on his death in 1937. Such are the vagaries of public taste that he is now little more than a vaguely remembered name on pictures in art gallery basements round the world and is still beyond the reach of critical acclaim, as his exclusion from such exhibitions as the recent Arts Council *Decade 1920–30* makes plain. Whether future generations will find a place for him among the accepted exponents of British art in the first half of this century remains to be seen.

Part of the problem surrounding his art is, surely, that at a casual glance through his *œuvre* he seems to have failed to establish a definite identity for himself. The gulf between the subdued, Sargent-esque portraits of 1910–1920 and the intense, brightly-coloured and thinly painted mythological canvases of the 30's seems irreconcilable; and yet, on closer study, it will be seen that the same sureness of draughtsmanship, brilliance of technique, originality of colour and the same highly personal, introspective approach can be found in his best work at all times in his career.

The *Self-portrait*, painted in 1908 when he was twenty-three and was working at a studio in 52 Glebe Place, is in the tradition of many other self-portraits by talented young artists (the famous one by Reynolds in the NPG springs to mind), and closely reflects his early preoccupations. On a trip to Spain in 1906, Philpot had been able to make the by then almost obligatory study of Velazquez and it can be seen from the *Self-portrait* how his mastery of the Spanish painter's technique was made from first-hand study and not from imitation of Sargent or his followers. That Manet and Sargent were of considerable influence on his early work, however, can be seen in paintings such as *La Zarzorosa*, 1911 (Fitzwilliam Museum) and *The Circus Boy*, 1909 (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam), but he never attempted the flashy virtuosity practised by other disciples of Sargent such as Lavery and de Laszlo. The 'classical' qualities of technique and composition found in the *Self-portrait* stood Philpot in good stead until 1929 when he began to make a serious attempt to bring his art into line with contemporary developments and in so doing antagonised his public. These qualities, combined with the humanity and sensitivity of his approach to his sitters raise many of his portraits above the level of mere documentary interest to works of art in their own right in the best tradition of English portraiture – whether they be early works such as the portraits of Lord Crawford and Sir Philip Sassoon, Bishop Gore of 1920, or the 1934 portrait of Lady Melchett painted in his 'modern style'.

See ed. A. C. SEWTER: *Glyn Philpot* [1951], pl. 9.

ROBIN GIBSON

A late *Self-portrait*, drawn by Lovis Corinth in lithograph crayon, and measuring 50·3 by 33·7 cm., was given to the **Cleveland Museum of Art** for the Mr and Mrs Charles G. Prasse Collection (Fig.67). It is dated November 1923. The artist, like many another great portraitist, found himself to be his own most available model; and so in paintings, drawings, and prints, self-portraits trace a progressive record of his style. By 1923 Lovis Corinth was sixty-seven years old and had survived the shattering personal experience of a stroke twelve years before, as well as the commonly experienced hardships of the war years and their aftermath. But this drawing also follows the personal triumph of a large exhibition of the artist's paintings assembled by the Berlin National Gallery in the summer of 1923. The drawing has the emotional intensity one expects of a Corinth portrait. It shows how this mature portrait style can suggest the plurality of the sitter's personality by exaggeration or distortion of selected features. The strength and concentration of the

drawing is focused in the head and the torso, and arms are presented as less important appendages, proportionately smaller in size. To this expressionist use of distortion of form Corinth adds his own characteristic emphasis on the light. A lifetime of observation is concentrated in his skilful portrayal of the play of direct and reflected light that fragments surface planes and gives life and mobility to his image while at the same time it defines a firm structure of bone beneath. The resultant effect of the drawing, which strongly evokes the forceful personality of its artist-subject, is that the immediate and the ephemeral are captured and held in a grasp of masterly control.

LOUISE S. RICHARDS
Curator of Prints and Drawings

The National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, has lately received as a gift, from the artist's nephew, Edwin John, Gwen John's *Girl in a Green Dress*. The picture is on canvas and measures 58·5 by 38·5 cm. (Fig.68).

The sitter is unknown and the portrait difficult to date, except that it resembles work by Gwen John between 1914 and 1930. It is unlikely to be any earlier than this, since it was only about then that she began to apply paint in small, dry slabs, giving the picture a rough impasto surface. The tones are kept very even by using the same green for the dress and the background, the only difference being that in the dress it is interspersed with touches of dark brown (the same colour as the hair) and in the background with light brown (the same colour as the face). The only other colour is a rather drab orange on the lips and the necklace. Shapes and features are much simplified, most notably the clasped hands, which follow the same formula as in the *Young Woman wearing a large hat* (Private Collection, U.S.A., illustrated in Arts Council 'Gwen John' Catalogue [1968], No.46) – not that they have been treated superficially, as a pentiment reveals that they have been carefully lowered about a quarter of an inch.

Exhibited:

Gwen John Memorial exhibition, Matthiesen, 1946, No.52.
Gwen John, Matthiesen, 1961, No.11.
Women's International Art Club, 1963.
Gwen John, Arts Council, 1968, No.32.

DAVID FRASER JENKINS
Assistant Keeper in Art

The National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., has lately acquired Augustus John's 1930 *Portrait of Tallulah Bankhead*. It is painted on canvas, and measures 120 by 61·5 cm. (Fig.69). From the collection of Tallulah Bankhead, it was purchased by the Honorable and Mrs John Hay Whitney at Parke-Bernet, 17th April 1969, and presented by them to the Gallery.

Tallulah Bankhead wrote in her autobiography, 'My most valuable possession is my Augustus John portrait... Even though I get down to living in a hall bedroom and cooking on a Sterno I'll never part with that picture.' The actress sat for John in 1930 when she was the darling of the London stage. Before she would 'consent to immortality' she made John agree to sell her the portrait for a thousand pounds once it had been exhibited. When completed, the portrait was shown for two weeks at the Royal Academy and then sold to Tallulah. From then on it hung in the bedroom of every house in which she lived.

John portrayed Tallulah in light, evanescent pastels – plum

and pink – dressed in the negligee which she wore in the play *He's Mine*. He caught much of her temperament and as producer, Arthur Hopkins, remarked of the portrait, it showed the world what he had long suspected: Tallulah had a soul.

BEVERLY COX

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has acquired, as part of its centennial acquisitions, the following trio of figurative works.

The Henry Moore bronze *Head* (Fig.70), the gift of Mr and Mrs Frederick B. Deknatel, is of bronze, measures 40·5 cm. in height and was made in 1957. It is one of an edition of three casts from the working model for the Roman travertine *Reclining Figure* in the court of the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. Literature: HERBERT READ and ALAN BOWNESS: *Henry Moore, Sculpture and Drawings*, Vol.3 [1965], p.24 No.417.

The second work (Fig.72) is a fully characteristic example of Giacometti's late style. It is the *Bust of Diego*, which is cast in bronze, is No.2 of an edition of six, was modelled in 1961 and measures 34 cm. in height. It is an intended gift to the Museum from Susan Morse Hilles.

The third work is Andrew Wyeth's striking *Portrait of Anna Christina* (Fig.74), painted in tempera on masonite, measuring 58·5 by 53·5 cm., and dating from 1967. It is an intended gift to the Museum of Miss Amanda K. Berls.

The sitter, Christina Olson, is the subject of many of Wyeth's paintings, the best known of which is *Christina's World*. She was partly crippled by infantile paralysis and lived with her brother on a farm near the Wyeths in Maine until her death in January 1969.

The Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, has recently acquired Epstein's 1947 *Bust of Lucien Freud* (Fig.71). This unique cast, made of plaster, hollow cast, with a brown patina, measures 64·2 cm. in height and 83·2 cm. in width, and was the gift of the Epstein Estate through Lady Kathleen Epstein by courtesy of Dr and Mrs Alan J. Mishler, 1967. The sitter, Lucien Freud, the grandson of Sigmund Freud, is a painter and sculptor and was a son-in-law of Sir Jacob Epstein from 1947 to 1956. The bronze cast after this model is illustrated in RICHARD BUCKLE: *Jacob Epstein Sculptor*, Cleveland-New York [1963], fig.475. The head was cast separately (BUCKLE, p.308). Literature: W. STECHOW: 'Three Works by Jacob Epstein', A.M.A.M. Bulletin, XXV [1967/68], pp.19 ff. (This entry is taken from the *Bulletin* [Winter, 1970], p.70.)

In May 1970, **The National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.**, purchased from the Kennedy Galleries, Jonathan Shahn's 1967 portrait-sculpture of his father, Ben Shahn (Fig.73). Signed on the base, the piece measures 42·5 by 30 by 28·5 cm.

Jonathan Shahn is one of the late Ben Shahn's five children. Although he does line drawings, his main preoccupation is sculpture.

In this copper and bronze work entitled *Portrait Of My Father* young Shahn reflects much of Ben Shahn's interest in oppositions – the inanimate rigidity of the medium is at once softened by the human warmth of the subject. His father is shown reclining, probably as he lay in bed during an illness, reading the galley proofs of his latest book.

BEVERLY COX

In July 1970, the **Bristol City Art Gallery** purchased Peter Blake's 1964 drawing entitled *Executive Type* (Fig.75). It is in pencil, on paper, and measures 31·7 by 25·4 cm.

This drawing was commissioned by Nairn Williamson Limited (advertising agency: J. Walter Thompson, Art Director, Edward Booth-Cliborn) to advertise Cresta Floors and it appeared in *The Times* in October 1964. Peter Blake was asked to draw an 'executive type', and this he perfectly achieves. It is a friendly characterization gathered in part from the pages of *Esquire*, but, as ever, he adds personality so that we have both a type and an individual. The easy exaggerations of the cynic or of satire, and the trite imagery of so much commercial work are avoided. But there is gentle humour for behind the executive is the bottom part of 'The Fine Art Bit', of 1958, the most likely of Peter Blake's works that he would own, perhaps. (It was recently bought by the Tate.)

It is fitting that this drawing should have been generously presented by the artist to a sale in aid of the Designers and Art Directors Association which, since 1962, has set out to foster and maintain the brilliant revival of high quality commercial art work of the 1960's. Peter Blake has done work for advertising, book and magazine illustration, posters and record sleeves. Artists in these fields have looked far harder at Peter Blake's work and in particular at his paintings than at the work of any of the Pop artists with whom he has been bracketed. Of those Pop artists, who have studied 'graphic communications' so much, many have done very little commercial work. But perhaps many of them know that the often inadequate translation of their paintings into silk-screen prints is more of a commercial proposition. Peter Blake here responds to a commission with enormous care, and honesty, fitting it as equally to his own style and interests as to its purposes. There is no division of allegiances, no restrictions. It is both commercial art and contemporary drawing at its best. And it was excellently reproduced and suited to the advertisement's wording.

Peter Blake makes obvious his delight in whatever medium he takes up. This drawing is beautifully designed and shows the happy detail, line and remarkable and subtle control of tone that pencil can allow. He adds texture, possibly even suggesting that the tie is not quite pure silk and if we note the button-down soft collar, and remember it is 1964 we have already suggestions of confidence, of middle class, and of fastidious trendiness. So

these lovingly drawn buttons are more than just fun; they are a part of Peter Blake's magic.

FRANCIS GREENACRE

The National Portrait Gallery, London, has recently purchased, from a private collector, through the Leicester Galleries, one of the casts of Epstein's 1950 bronze of Ralph Vaughan Williams (Fig.76). It measures 39 cm. in height (N.P.G. 4762).

The bust of Vaughan Williams is one of Epstein's most sensitive and moving characterizations. It is part of that long series of portraits of distinguished men to which Epstein devoted his genius. He wrote of the sitter in his *Autobiography*: 'He reminded me in appearance of some eighteenth-century admiral whose word was law. Notwithstanding, I found him the epitome of courtesy and consideration and I was impressed by the logic and acuteness of everything he discoursed upon and was made aware of his devotion to an art as demanding as sculpture... We were received with charming hospitality by the Master at his country home in Dorking, from where we went at his invitation to hear his annual performance conducting the Bach St Matthew Passion'.

There are several other recorded casts in public and private collections, including the Arts Council, the City Art Gallery, Manchester, the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, and the City Art Museum, St Louis.

R. L. ORMOND

The National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., has recently purchased, from Roland, Browne and Delbano, one of the casts of Marino Marini's bust of Henry Miller (Fig.77).

Henry Miller, one of the most controversial authors of our time, sat for the original of this bronze bust in 1961 at Marini's summer home in Forte dei Marmi. Typical of the artist's expressionism, the surface is richly textured, but the shape is simplified. The long ovoid head rests on a thin, cylindrical neck; the eyes, under sagging lids, are set in a penetrating gaze. The fourth of six casts, this bust is 30·5 cm. high and is signed 'M.M.'

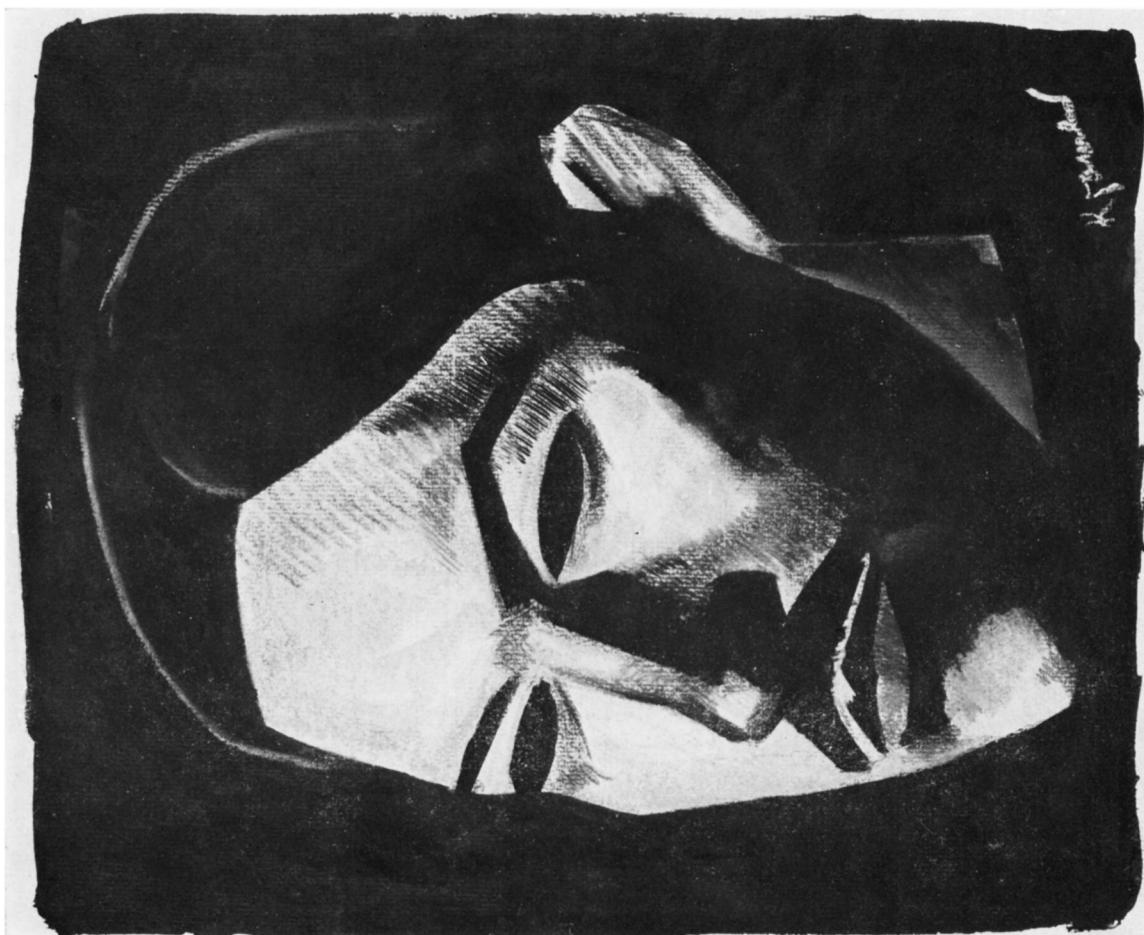
BEVERLY COX



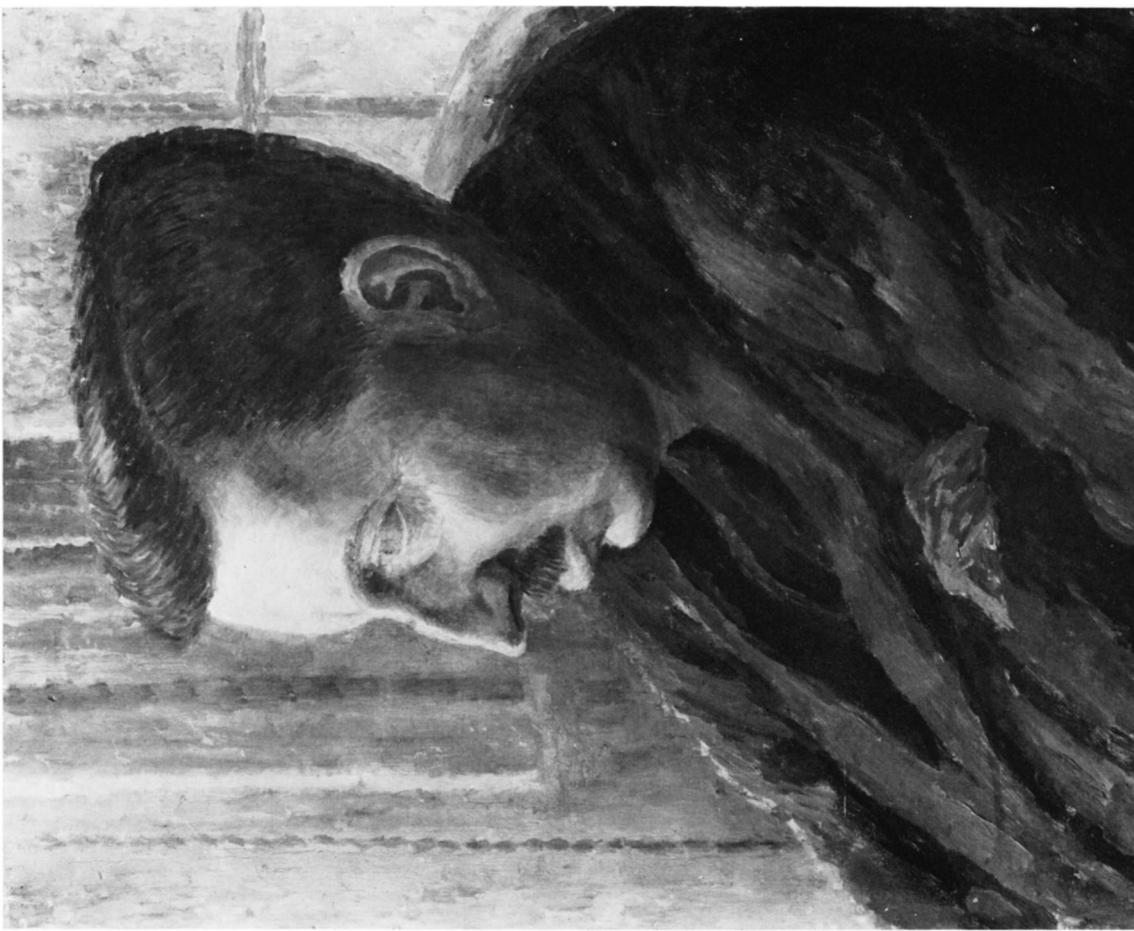
61. *An Old Woman from the Alms-house*, by Paula Modersohn-Becker. c. 1905. Canvas, 126 by 95 cm. (Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal.)



63. *Portrait of the Artist's Father*, by Otto Gutfreund. 1911. Bronze, 40 by 27.5 cm. (Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo.)



62. *Portrait of Harold Mono*, by Jacob Kramer. Signed. 1923. Chalk and Indian ink on grey paper, 35.5 by 29.2 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)



65. *Portrait of E. M. Forster*, by Dora Carrington. Canvas, 50·8 by 40·6 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)



64. *Portrait of Esther Lahr*, by William Roberts. Signed. 1925. Canvas, 50·8 by 40·6 cm. (Tate Gallery, London.)



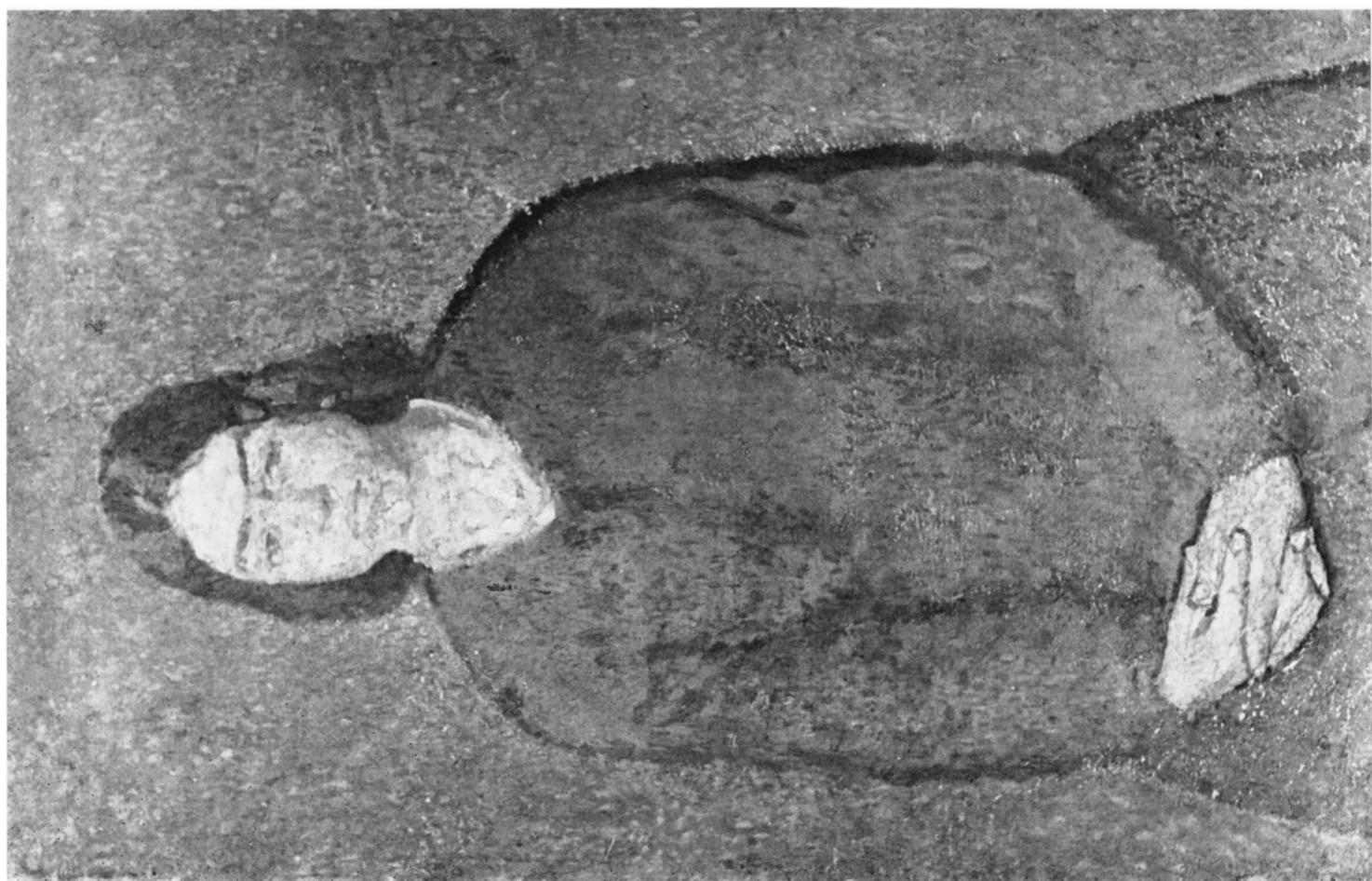
67. *Self-Portrait*, by Lovis Corinth. Signed and dated November 1923. Lithograph crayon, 50³/8 by 33⁷/8 cm. (Cleveland Museum of Art.)



66. *Self Portrait*, by Glyn Philpot. 1908. Canvas, 90 by 67.5 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)



69. *Portrait of Tallulah Bankhead*, by Augustus John. 1930. Canvas, 120 by 61.5 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.)



68. *Girl in a Green Dress*, by Gwen John. Canvas, 58.5 by 38.5 cm. (National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.)



70. *Head*, by Henry Moore. 1957. Bronze; height, 40·5 cm.
(Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



71. *Bust of Lucien Freud*, by Jacob Epstein. 1947. Plaster, hollow cast, with brown patina, 64·2 by 83·2 cm. (Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin.)



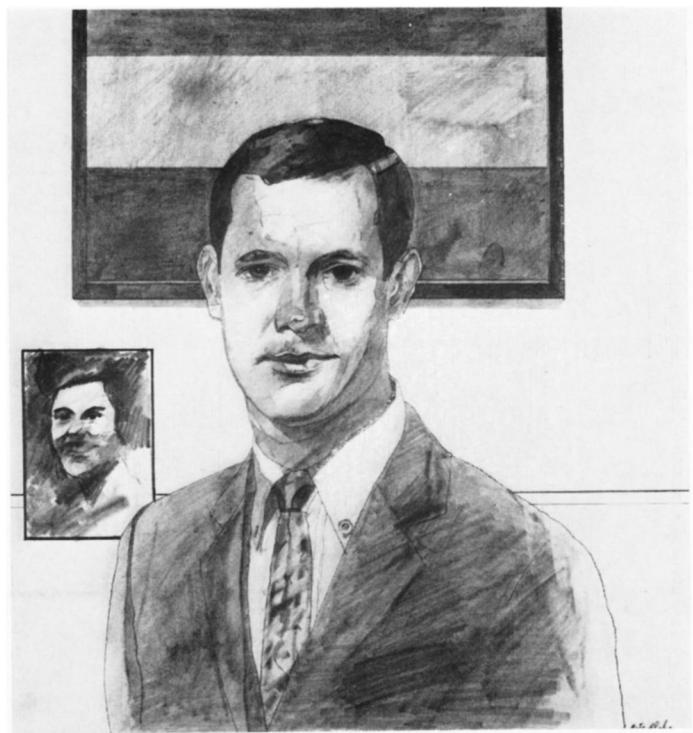
72. *Bust of Diego*, by Alberto Giacometti. 1961. Bronze; height 34 cm. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



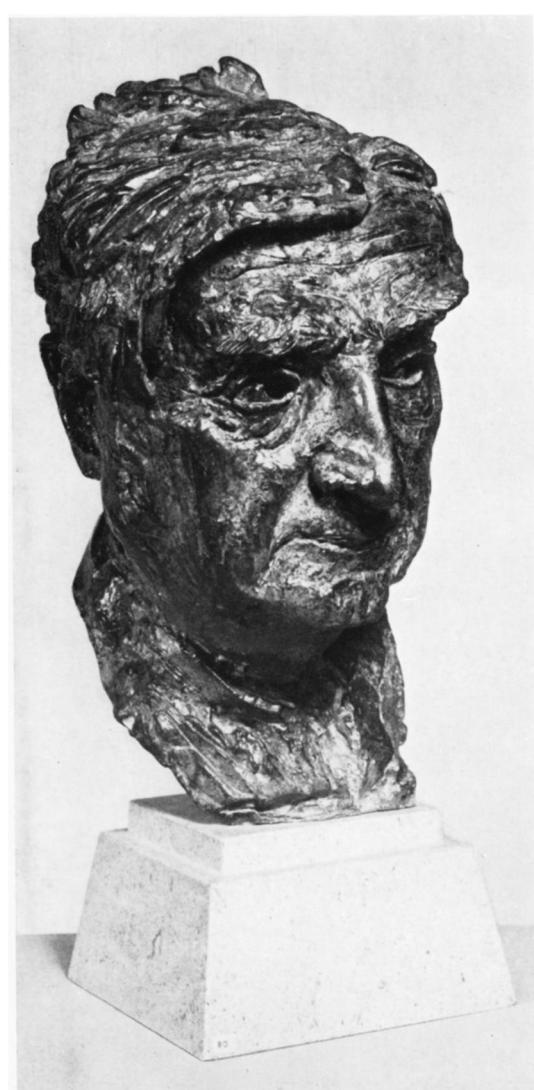
73. *Bust of his Father Ben Shahn*, by Jonathan Shahn. Signed. 1967. Copper and bronze, 42·5 by 30 by 28·5 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.)



74. *Portrait of Anna Christina*, by Andrew Wyeth. 1967. Tempera on masonite, 58·5 by 53·5 cm. (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)



75. *Executive type*, by Peter Blake. Signed. 1964. Pencil on paper, 31·7 by 25·4 cm. (Bristol City Art Gallery.)



76. *Bust of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, by Jacob Epstein. 1950. Bronze; height, 39 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, London.)



77. *Bust of Henry Miller*, by Marino Marini. Signed. 1961. Bronze; height, 30·5 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.)



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Art between Social Crisis and Utopia: The Czech Contribution to the Development of the Avant-Garde Movement in East-Central Europe, 1910-30

Author(s): Tomáš Vlček

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Art between Social Crisis and Utopia: The Czech Contribution to the Development of the Avant-Garde Movement in East-Central Europe, 1910–30

By Tomáš Vlček

The avant-garde movements in East-Central Europe were influenced not only by the cultural centers of Western and Eastern Europe—Paris, Berlin, The Hague, Milan, and Moscow—but also, and profoundly, by their respective cultural traditions. This is especially true for the various Czech avant-garde groups, whose art was as much a response to their nation's own history as it was a rejoinder to progressive artistic developments elsewhere in Europe. The present article seeks to survey the Czech avant-garde in this dual context, and thus will touch on issues that have yet to be fully understood and assessed.¹

The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century constituted in the Czech lands of East-Central Europe a period of dynamic and significant cultural and economic development. Many of the personalities born there in the latter half of the nineteenth century played a central role in creating modern culture, not just locally but internationally: the philosophers Edmund Husserl and Tomáš G. Masaryk; the scientists Ernst Mach and Sigmund Freud; literary figures such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Franz Kafka, and Franz Werfel; the art historian Max Dvořák; the composers Gustav Mahler and Leoš Janáček; and the artists Adolf Loos and

František Kupka, among a host of luminaries. Most of these figures were older than those who would make up the avant-garde generation; and most would stand more or less apart from avant-garde associations, programs, and manifestos. Nonetheless, the rise of the avant-garde in Prague would have been impossible without the cultural accomplishments of the preceding generation, which served as the avant-garde's point of departure.² Furthermore, the avant-garde could never have developed as it did without interaction with the theses, creations, and personalities of still earlier generations, despite the sometimes conflictual nature of the encounter.

The crisis of modernity was experienced far more palpably in Czechoslovakia than anywhere else during the early twentieth century,³ since the perception of the contradictions inherent in life there was based on and augmented by tradition. As early as the Middle Ages, culture in the territory that we know today as Czechoslovakia sought opportunities to express the psychological contradictions of life by transforming them into emotionally affective forms. Nowhere is this traditional “catharsis” expressed more powerfully than in the Bohemian Baroque, a style through which the dichotomy of body and spirit

is communicated through a spiritualized sensuality.⁴ In more modern times, the internal cultural oppositions have often taken the form of contradictions inherent in economic and social structures⁵—contradictions that became even more pointed during the period of the rise of the Czech avant-garde, when the political formation of East-Central Europe underwent the most radical changes.

During World War I, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy plunged ever more rapidly toward its eventual disintegration, resulting in the establishment of the Czechoslovak republic in 1918. The ensuing political changes formed the framework for the development of an art and aesthetics that sought its own escape from social crisis in a utopian desire for a new life.

The Eight

Although its roots were in the late nineteenth century, the concept of a new art that might lead to a new life emerged forcefully in Czech culture in the beginning of the twentieth. The first generation of Czech avant-gardists presented itself to the world in 1907 through an exhibition in Prague of works by eight artists: Bohumil Kubišta, Emil Filla, Antonín Procházka, Otakar Kubín, Vincenc Beneš, Bedřich Feigl, Arthur Pitter-

mann, and Willy Nowak. These figures, inspired by a 1905 exhibition in Prague of paintings by Edvard Munch, focused on the expressive power of art to communicate the psychic drama of modern man's inner life. Unlike the previous generation of Art Nouveau artists, who sought a harmonious synthesis of nature and culture, the Eight, as the 1907 group was called, were animated by an attempt to unify dynamically the contradiction of psychic experience and modern social reality—all within the pictorial structure. Their sense of the dynamism inherent in these contradictions found its most dramatic expression in the presentation of figurative themes that were activated by the tension in the relations between man and nature. They found instructive models in the symbolism of Munch, the realism of Honoré Daumier, and the psychic expressiveness of El Greco. The Eight took additional inspiration for a new manner to harmonize the contradictory elements of artistic expression—symbolic and realistic, expressive and constructive—from the paintings of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, which they encountered in 1910. Influenced by the work of Paul Cézanne as well,⁶ members of the Eight immediately comprehended the possibilities offered by the dynamic construction of a Cubist painting. And it was through a form of Cubism that they were able to create their own artistic synthesis.

Most obsessed among the Eight with the idea of synthesis was Bohumil Kubišta,⁷ intellectually the most distinctive personality of the first generation of the Czech avant-garde. In 1910 he traveled to Paris, where he soon became acquainted with the work of Picasso and Braque. Through his own work, which was shaped by his encounter with French Cubism, he won over many of his fellow Czechs to Cubism. Although most Czech artists were at this time still under the influence of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism (and heavily reliant on the sculpture of Auguste Rodin),⁸ the Eight found in Cubism a new basis for artistic expression. Indeed, in their positive, spontaneous reaction to Cubism, they continued the long tradition in Czech art of resolving contradictory issues of artistic expression by appropriating abstract forms. Whereas Alphonse Mucha had found one solution at the turn of the century in organic nature-based ornamentation, artists of

the Czech avant-garde drew on the expressive work of Munch and the Bohemian Baroque as models for their own brand of Cubism, which sought to mediate the multilateral relations between art and modern scientific reality.⁹ Thus were the foundations of the Eight's Cubism rooted in an amalgam of Czech tradition and more contemporary Western developments; the principles held true not only in painting but also in sculpture, the applied arts, and architecture. It was as a result of this distinctive Czech Cubism that Prague became one of the most vital centers of the European avant-garde in the years between 1910 and 1916.

Group of Fine Artists

The organizational and instrumental heart of Cubist-oriented Czech art was the Group of Fine Artists, which held its first exhibition in 1911. In addition to the members of the Eight, led by Kubišta and Filla, the Group attracted the painters Václav Špála and Josef Čapek; the sculptor Otto Gutfreund; the graphic artist V.H. Brunner; the caricaturist Zdeněk Kratochvíl; the architects Pavel Janák, Josef Gočár, Josef Chochol, and Vlastislav Hofman; the literary figures Karel Čapek and František Langer; and the art historian Václav V. Štech. The Group publicized its views in *Umělecký měsíčník* [Art Monthly], a periodical that served as a vehicle for contact among not only the cadres of the French-oriented Czech art and literary avant-garde but also the Prague-based German-language literati, which included such authors as Franz Werfel and Albert Ehrenstein, as well as a great number of figures representing German Expressionism in literature and the fine arts. In addition, the monthly published studies that analyzed the ties between avant-garde art and primitive art, folklore, and, especially, African cultures; it also assessed issues related to the theory of art, especially the ideas of the Vienna School of art history.¹⁰ Thus, local expression was shaped by a myriad of sources, from the traditional Baroque incarnations of the spiritual, which reflected the existential side of Central European art, to the novel visual and literary forms of Cubism and Futurism. As a result, the main theme of the Czech Cubists became, in both painting and sculpture, a figure conceived existentially as the fulcrum between the world of the spirit and the senses, between



Figure 1 Otto Gutfreund, *Anxiety*, 1911, bronze, 58½ inches (148 cm) high. National Gallery, Prague.

nature and the universe. This drama was realized perhaps most effectively in the sculpture and theoretical studies of Otto Gutfreund. Through his work, the relationship between sensations and emotions, on the one hand, and creative intelligence and intuition, on the other, assumed dramatic heights. Formally, the outward shape of an object was deconstructed and its static volume was manipulated in such a fashion as to emphasize structural dynamism in a space that might be visualized as the spiritual features of modern reality. In other words, Gutfreund's destruction of the traditional figure type and his introduction of abstract formal elements was a means to communicate feelings of metaphysical anxiety. His existential imagery can best be recognized in such works as *Anxiety* (Fig. 1). It is also apparent in the titles of paintings by Gutfreund's fellow members of the Group: Kubišta (*An Epileptic Woman*, *Saint Sebastian*, *Hypnotist*, and *Kiss of Death*); Filla (*Salome*); and Procházka (*Prometheus*).

The creative activity of the Group of

Fine Artists led increasingly during the years 1911 and 1912 toward a heightened combination of contradictory tendencies. This was exacerbated by encounters with foreign art that represented orientations quite opposed to that of Picasso, Braque, and the French Post-Impressionists. In 1912 the second exhibition of the Group presented, in addition to works by Picasso, André Derain, and Othon Friesz, seminal paintings by the German Expressionists of the Brücke—Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff among them. Coming to terms with German Expressionism affected deeply the art of the Czech Group, which had drawn heavily on the ideas of Adolf von Hildebrand and Alois Rieg; they then felt compelled to reformulate in their work the relations between optical and haptic forms of expression. Perhaps the most significant solution was articulated by Gutfreund, who transposed these relations from painting to sculpture (*Fig. 2*). In essence, he sought to dematerialize reality as the necessary means to objectify abstract reality in sculpture; that is, he rejected the purely mimetic in favor of the abstract and symbolic. He was joined in this solution by Kubišta, who proceeded from formal combinations of Cubism, Expressionism, and Futurism toward ever more complex, symbolic syntheses that drew on Far Eastern, African, and other sources. The Group was thus able to exploit creatively the theme of inner anxiety as well as sensuality, thereby leading to a kind of visual hedonism, beautifully expressed in the works of Procházka, who wedded his Baroque-inspired dramatic visions to an emotive pictorial structure based on Orphism and Futurism.

Cubism made it possible for Josef Čapek, Otakar Kubín, and Václav Špála to use a pictorial organization based on simple geometric forms as the structural framework for a new conception of figural themes, especially in the years 1912 to 1916. From about 1914, the painters restricted the geometric structure of their work in order to emphasize emotive features, especially through the use of simple figures formed through light and color contrasts. For the artists, as well as for humanity in general, the experience of the first few years of the world war led to a reappraisal of the most fundamental values of human thought. As it happened, during the last



Figure 2 Otto Gutfreund, *Don Quixote*, 1911, bronze, 15 inches (38 cm) high. National Gallery, Prague.

years of the European conflict, reevaluation coincided with the disintegration of the Group of Fine Artists and the rise of a new movement of modern artists.

The Obstinate Ones

The preoccupation with effecting various forms of syntheses was embraced wholeheartedly by the next group of Czech modernists, who are known as the Tvrdošíjní, the Obstinate (or Stubborn) Ones.¹¹ These artists, who first exhibited in 1918 and who had been deeply affected by World War I, did not understand synthesis as only (or principally) a formal resolution of the contradictions of art, science, philosophy, and history that had preoccupied the Czech Cubists. The Obstinate Ones redefined synthesis as the unification of all creative thinking through the revival of the magic immanent in reality; they found inspiration in nature, in the work of the occasional painter, and in the creations of "primitives" and naïves.¹² It is not surprising, therefore, to find among its members the Symbolist painter Jan Zrzavý, the lyrical sensualist Rudolf Kremlička, the landscapist Otakar Marvánek, and the Expressionist painter and architect Vlastimil Hofman, as well as the former Cubists Josef Čapek and Václav Špála.

In 1919 the ideology of the Obstinate Ones was summed up by the theoretician Václav Nebeský, who wrote: "Until now we have been defining [art] only

from the point of view of form; but now it must be defined more specifically also from the point of view of content."¹³ In other words, the Obstinate Ones sought to revive the importance of subject matter in a modern art seemingly obsessed with pictorial structure or form. Their ambition was directly parallel to efforts being made at the time in modern Czech literature, focusing on the fundamental meanings of a story: the modern prose of, for example, Karel Čapek and František Langer, who emphasized the multiple primary meanings of creative experiences and visions. Like the German Expressionists, with whom the Obstinate Ones shared an emphasis on the expression of emotion, the Czech artists sought to simplify formal characteristics in a work of art so that meaning could be forthrightly communicated.¹⁴ Špála, for example, limited himself to the use of two simple forms and the three elementary colors of blue, red, and white. Čapek and Kremlička used a limited palette and an emphasis on light in order to emphasize immediacy. All of the members of the Obstinate Ones believed that art had the power to shape an individual's relation to the world—i.e., to effect a moral revival of society through its content—and that "until contact between man and man is more substantial, any call for true social art is in vain."¹⁵ The same precepts were picked up in the 1920s by the next (and most radical) group of the Czech avant-garde, the artists who called their association "Devětsil."¹⁶

Devětsil

An association of young writers, composers, and artists who shared a vision of a new art freed from the bonds of the past, Devětsil was founded in 1920 by members of the youngest generation of Czech artists following the war. They were all born about the year 1900 and their youth was among the most powerful values for the collective aspiration of creating a new culture. Fascinated by the potential of the modern, postwar world, the members of Devětsil revealed energy and optimism in their social criticism, idealistic objectives, and radical modern art.

The earliest years of this avant-garde movement were devoted to distancing itself from the problems and issues that had limited earlier generations. Thus, Devětsil rejected the contradiction between the theoretical and intuitive atti-

tudes that had preoccupied Czech artists from Symbolism through Cubism. For these young painters—such as Josef Šíma, Alois Wachsmann, František Muzika, Adolf Hoffmeister, Toyen, and Jindřich Štyrský—and especially for their theoretically oriented leader, Karel Teige, pure fascination with modern civilization in all its manifestations sufficed as the source for a truly modern art style and content, which Devětsil's own programs and essays labeled “poetic naïvism.” Although representation was often reduced to simple abstract forms and was always employed symbolically, the young artists adopted Cubist principles of observing an object from different angles. With its stress on the symbolic, however, Devětsil betrayed its indebtedness to the principles of contemporary Czech literary experiments,¹⁷ which undertook to explore the visual values syntactically embedded in language.¹⁸ The visual and literary arts, traditionally separate, were so closely interconnected at this moment that they seemed to function symbiotically, deriving inspiration from one another. In fact, it was the appropriation and adaptation of “extra-artistic” genres that constituted the most progressive aspects of Devětsil culture: poetry and “visual” poetry, theater, typography, photography, and other art forms.

All these art forms were characterized by Devětsil's “poetic naïvism,” which was itself marked by a euphoric affirmation of modern life. With boundless enthusiasm for all things modern, poetic naïvism subsumed all contradictions and opposing tendencies, and not infrequently exploited the traditional opposition between fine art and “non-art” in theory and practice. For example, in a 1923–24 Devětsil exhibition held in Prague and Brno, “The Bazaar of Modern Art,” major works by Devětsil artists were exhibited alongside anonymous posters, technical objects such as ball bearings, and numerous implements of quotidian use. Such Dadaist juxtaposition, akin to exhibitions held in Berlin at the same time, sought to overcome adventitious distinctions of value between art and life in an affirmation of the multisided nature (and sources) of modern creativity.

Despite many links with German artists, especially those associated with various Dada movements, Devětsil's closest contacts were, like those of their artist forebears, primarily French. For

this younger generation, the “dammed poets” of France—Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Arthur Rimbaud—were the patriarchs of modern art. Unlike earlier modernists, Devětsil found the most important currents to be initiated not by Cézanne but by the “Douanier” Rousseau and to reach their acme (in France) with the formal and objective reductionism of Amédée Ozenfant and the purism of Edouard Jeanneret. Beyond French art, both the poets and the painters of Devětsil recognized in the poetics of F.T. Marinetti's *parole in libertà* a major impetus for their own creativity. Devětsil opened itself also to international contacts in the field of architecture, where the journal *Stavba* [Construction] served as a conduit of information about the work and ideas of such avant-garde architects as Le Corbusier, Theo van Doesburg, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and other modernists.

In exhibitions like “The Bazaar of Modern Art,” the dualistic principle animating the Czech avant-garde became apparent. Both the programs and the creative activities of Devětsil showed an increasing tension between what might be called “Poetism” and Constructivism. Indeed, this binary contrast masked other internal oppositions regarding the proper fields and creative methods of a fully modern art. Karel Teige gave vent to the polarities in his programmatic essay “Our Basis and Our Way,” subtitled “Constructivism and Poetism”:

In the period whose essence is formed by contradictions, we must have the psychological ability to perceive strange almost paradoxically sharp contrasts. The heart is not the leading force—but our reason must not judge the affairs of sensibility. Life needs just as much reason as poetry. Contrasts: nature vs. civilization; sentiment vs. intellect; imagination vs. reason; liberty vs. discipline; structure vs. poetry; public vs. intimacy. The value of individual items is not negated by these contrasts, but is enhanced by them.¹⁹

Naturally, it is possible to add to Teige's enumeration of binary oppositions a complementary list of categories that were of concern to Devětsil during the early 1920s: attitudes toward proletarian art, ideological strategies toward

creative liberty, modern reality, and so forth.²⁰ These important issues were often subsumed under the binary opposition of poetic/constructive, the resolution of which was the primary stimulus to the creation of “pictorial poems.”

Of all Devětsil's artistic manifestations, none was as popular in its time as the “pictorial poem.” Fundamentally, it was a blend of visual material and poetry intended to galvanize the imagination. In Teige's programmatic texts, pictorial poetry was affirmed as the form of modern art which would replace both the painted picture and written poetry: the pictorial poem should be “written” and “read” as a new genre of infinitely inventive communication with and about the world.²¹ In his essay “Poetry for All Five Senses,” Teige intimated that this genre depended on a circumscribed use of language, a language of suggestion rather than description, thereby stimulating the imagination.²² He characterized the new form of art and poetry as

a language devoid of grammar; its vocabulary is more like signals than a conversation.... A word of this poetry is far from being a word of a spoken language or of a literary language. It is an optical symbol or reality, similar to a flag that symbolizes its country. Here poetry abandons not only music, it abandons linguistics as well. Its vocabulary rises to the level of modern pictography.²³

In his attempt to create a language of “signals” in which the reality of art would be combined with the beauty of life, there was more than a degree of utopian naïveté. Nevertheless, pictorial poetry does represent a genuine attempt to find an original solution to the incoherent and contradictory tendencies apparent in modern society, as well as in modern art. The language of suggestion or signals became for Devětsil the operative means to develop works of art that might bridge the gap between visual and literary artists. Pictorial poems, which took the expressive form of collage, enabled each to blend the images of modern optical culture with intimate lyrical motifs. Some collages incorporated personal letters and diary entries, others integrated photographs taken on journeys through foreign countries; but in all cases the imagery was



Figure 3 Otakar Mrkvička, Karel Teige, and František Zelenka, Scene from a Performance of *Breasts of Tirésias* by Guillaume Apollinaire, Prague, 1926, photograph.

intended to be playful, suggestive, and metaphorical. A work drawn from a performance of Apollinaire's *Breasts of Tiresias* (Fig. 3) provides a good example of the evocative imagery of pictorial poetry, which here interweaves objects and human figures suggestively and allusively.²⁴ The most successful application of the language of visual signals, however, was through graphic and typographic means. It was exploited particu-

larly in the layout and use of montage apparent in Devětsil's journals and miscellaneous publications: *The Almanac Life* (1922), *Disk* (1923–25), *Zone* (1924–26), *Construction* (1923–31), *The Almanac Front* (1927), *Horizone* (1927–31), and *Revue ReD* [Revue of Devětsil] (1927–31), nearly all designed by Teige himself.

The melding of literature and the graphic arts—pictorial poetry—provided a creative environment in which poets and fine artists worked together on numerous Devětsil publications; for example, Jaroslav Seifert's *On the Waves of TSF* (with graphics mostly by Teige; Fig. 4), Vítězslav Nezval's *Pantomima* anthology of poems in collaboration with Jindřich Štyrský (Fig. 5), and Teige's 1926 book of typographic montages, *Alphabet* (with photographs by J. Paps and poetry by Nezval). In such publications, photomontage played a major role, having the potential of serving simultaneously as a “document of reality” and as an abstract work of art. This dual role naturally appealed to the artists of Devětsil, who prized the allusive while affirming the given world. Furthermore, photography (including its variants, especially film) was a fully modern medium and thus presented an appropriate field for Devětsil activities.²⁵ The result was a wide range of experimentation with photography, photograms, and photomontages by such avant-garde figures as František Drtikol, Jaroslav Rössler (Fig. 6), and Jaromír Funke.

In its attempt to bridge the gaps among the arts and between the arts and modern life, the Czech avant-garde did not overlook music; here, too, Devětsil sought to achieve a creative synthesis. The principal figures active in this enterprise were Miroslav Ponc and Zdeněk Pešánek. Ponc was among the most widely traveled of the Devětsil members, having been associated in Berlin with Herwarth Walden's Der Sturm circle and enterprises, and having established contacts with such Bauhaus masters in Weimar as Walter Gropius, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Oskar Schlemmer.²⁶ From these associations, as well as from his familiarity with Wilhelm Ostwald's color theory, Ponc developed a system of equivalents combining the tones of color and music (Fig. 7). His innovative synthesis of musical and visual forms was not unrelated to the work of Ponc's Devětsil colleague Pešánek, a sculptor known for highly evolved abstract structures. In 1922 Pešánek attempted to create a “color piano” by depressing certain keys of the instrument to project colors in a manner reminiscent of various nineteenth-century inventions.²⁷ This preoccupation with musical-visual synesthesia was carried over into his design for *Monument to the Pilots Killed during the War* (Fig. 8). While technical limitations prevented its successful realization, the metal-and-glass monument was intended to function as a kinetic audiovisual display, replete with floodlit fountain and the acoustical effect of roaring airplane engines.

In all of these synesthetic fusions effected by Devětsil artists, compositions of poetic allusion—so often full of humor, wit, and elegance—served as a fanciful environment in which to cushion contact with reality, as was explained by the poet Vítězslav Nezval in “The Drop of Ink”: “If we are to create a new art, we have to surround our thoughts by nirvana and keep our concentration while the world around us disappears and little clouds begin to emerge.”²⁸ The poetic atmosphere that Nezval alluded to as a means of coping with reality was embraced by two painters who chose the term “Artificialism” to characterize their work. Štyrský and Toyen, whose exhibition appeared at the Paris Gallery of Contem-

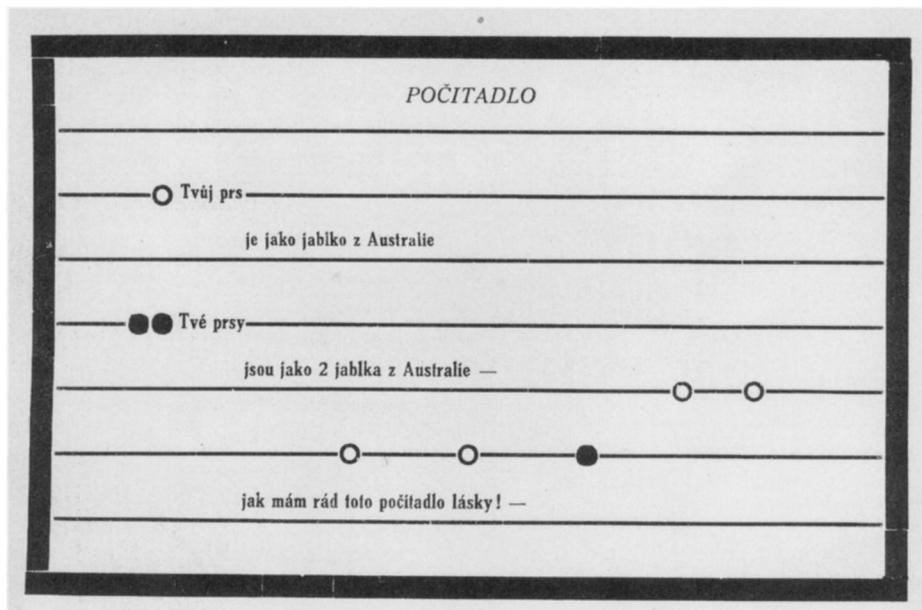


Figure 4 Jaroslav Seifert and Karel Teige, page from the book *Na vlnách TSF*, 1925, showing the framed passage “Your breast is like an apple from Australia, your breasts are like two apples from Australia, how much I like this calculating frame of love!”

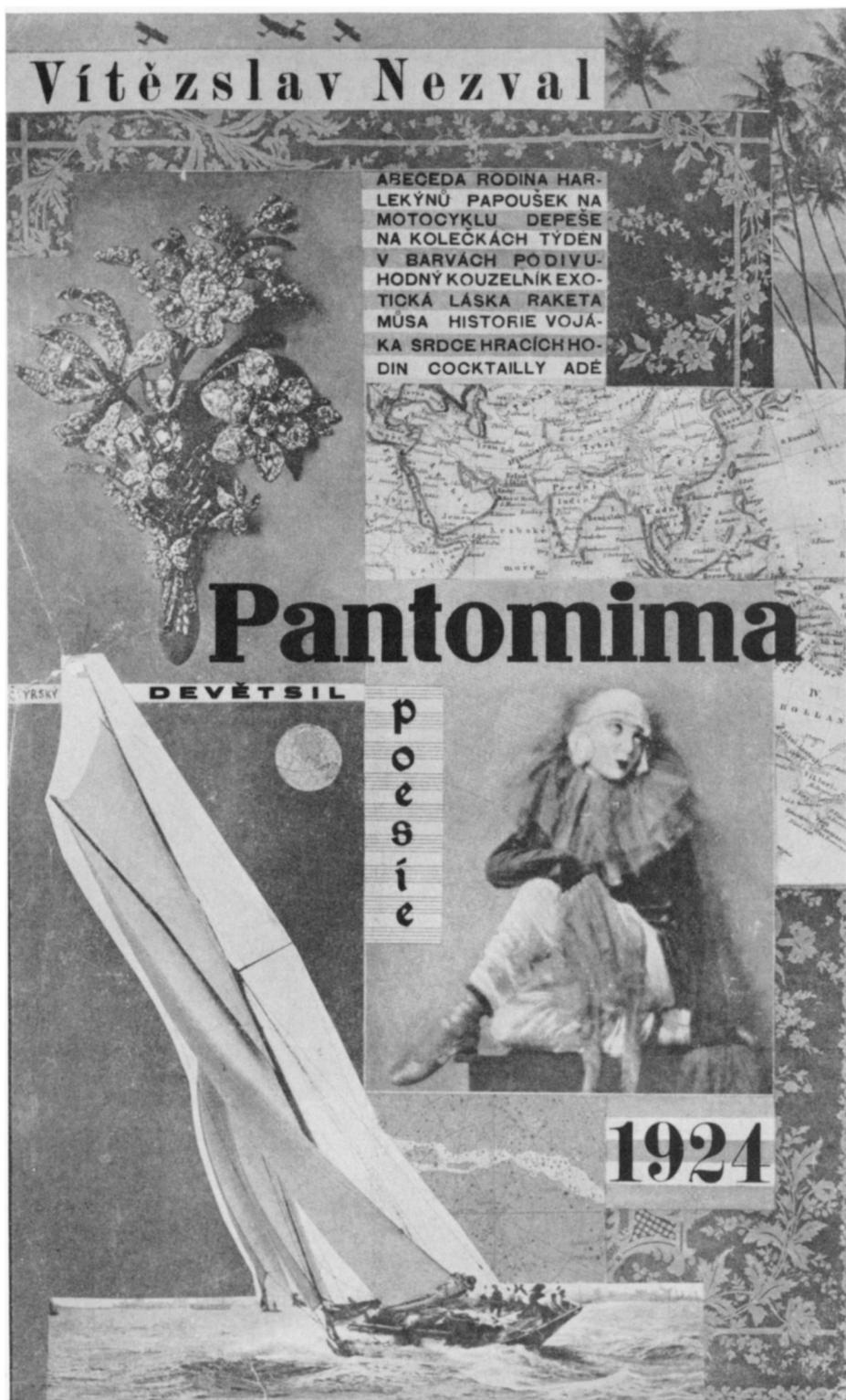


Figure 5 Vítězslav Nezval and Jindřich Styrský, cover of a Devětsil anthology of poems, 1924.

porary Art in 1926, explained the concept as follows:

Cubism turned to reality instead of giving sway to the imagination. When it reached the essence of reality, it found that it had no wings. Artificialism arrives with an opposite perspective. . . [L]et-

ting reality remain as it is, [artificialism] tends to maximize the imagination. . . . Artificialism makes identical the painter and poet. Its interest is concentrated on poetry.²⁹

Toward achieving that poetic end, the painters increasingly sought subject mat-

ter that was allusive and dreamlike, that had principally a metaphoric connection to reality:

We could characterize the substance of Artificialism as the non-objective concretization of impressions, feelings, remembrances, and fantasies connected with some seen, undergone, or just dreamt-about reality, which in the course of time lost its shape, its position in time and space and after which remained merely an unpronounceable essence, a vague trembling of our senses, a vibration of feelings.³⁰

Thus, the very titles of the paintings are poetically evocative: *Peel*, *Miraculous Elvira*, *Morning*, or *Chinese Tea Shop*. Stylistically, as in Toyen's *Toboggan* (Fig. 9), the paintings rely for their "concretization of impressions" on abstract structures, strong outlines, translucently applied colors, and textures

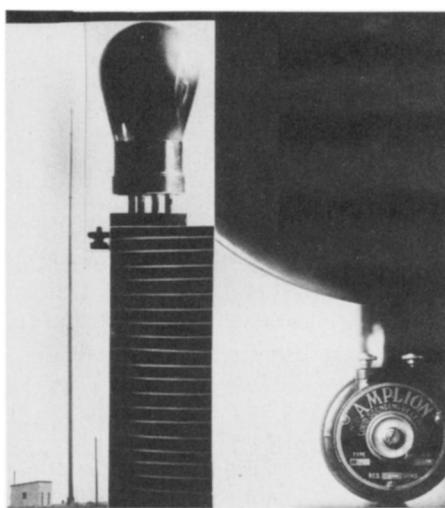


Figure 6 Jaroslav Rössler, *Radio*, 1923–24, photomontage, 11 3/8 x 9 5/8 inches (29 x 24.5 cm). National Gallery, Prague.

reminiscent of natural elements: sand, water, and so forth.

In the course of the late 1920s, Artificialist painting increasingly approached Surrealism as Toyen and Štyrský shifted their aspiration from that of provoking in the viewer "a vague trembling of the senses" toward attempting to explore the mysterious depths of the human psyche. In this maturation of intention, the Artificialists prepared the way for the emergence of Czech Surrealism and the abandonment of Cubism. Given the traditional emphasis on symbolism, association, synthesis, and imagination that characterized the entire

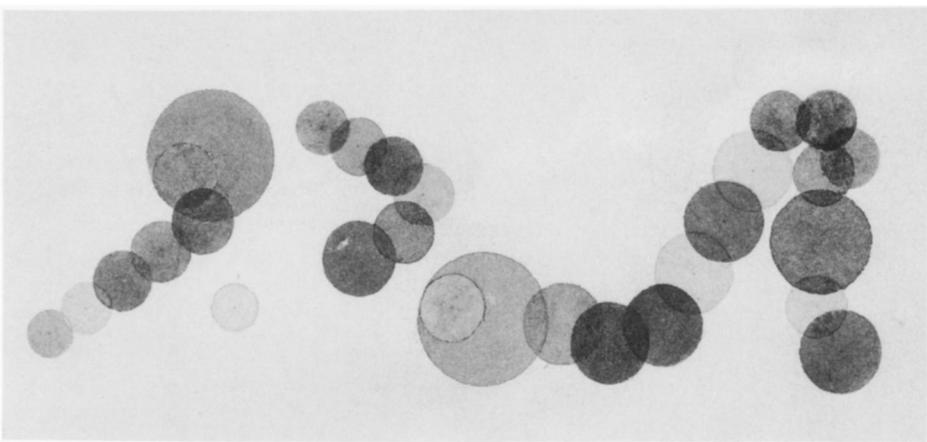


Figure 7 Miroslav Ponc, *Colored Music*, 1925, watercolor, $7\frac{1}{8} \times 10\frac{5}{8}$ inches (20 × 27 cm). Private collection, Prague.

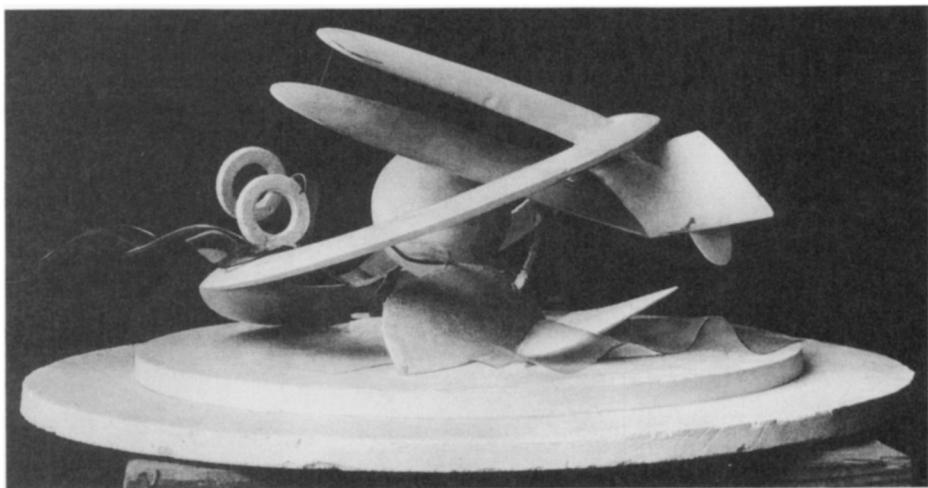


Figure 8 Zdeněk Pešánek, study for *Monument to the Pilots Killed during the War*, 1924–26, glass, Galalith, and mixed mediums, $1\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ inches (4.5 × 20 cm). Gallery B. Rejta, Louny.

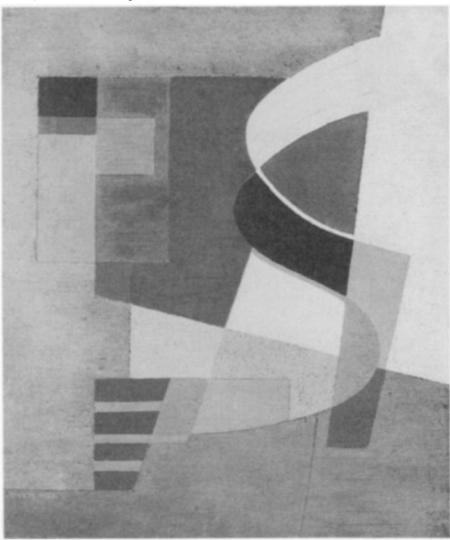


Figure 9 Toyen, *Toboggan*, 1926, oil on paper, $21\frac{5}{8} \times 17\frac{1}{8}$ inches (55 × 45.5 cm). National Gallery, Prague.

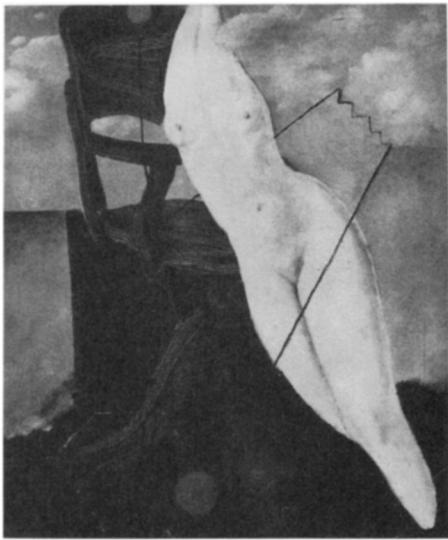


Figure 10 Josef Šíma, *Building II*, 1922–28, oil on canvas, $27\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{7}{8}$ inches (70 × 58 cm). Destroyed.

sweep of Czech avant-garde art, it was only natural that Surrealism should emerge forcefully among Czech painters and poets. By the mid-1920s, Josef Šíma

was living in Paris and was in close contact with contemporary French art, especially with the poets Pierre Jean Joeve, Roger Gilbert-Lecomte, and René

Daumal, with whom he founded in 1927 the group Le Grand Jeu. For Šíma, art was a means to free the imagination, as is evident in his poetic landscapes and paintings of nudes (**Fig. 10**). According to one writer, “An important role was played by the symbolism of floating and flight, which removed objects from the current semantic relations and transformed them, simultaneously, into an expression of the painter’s longing for freedom and transcendence.”³¹

In Šíma’s paintings and graphic work, the Czech avant-garde finally achieved its desire to find harmony and unity in a world of profound contradictions. Šíma’s ability to join his personal experience and the dreams of his generation with generally accepted symbolic expression significantly enriched the ideological scope of Czech avant-garde art by opening it further to the progressive trends in contemporary Western art while drawing upon the ideals established by previous generations of the nation’s intellectuals. As such, the Czech avant-garde at the end of the 1920s attained the goal of a classic European civilization as advocated by Husserl and Masaryk: a marriage of the classical tradition of European science and humanism with modern knowledge as the most efficacious means to overcome the crises and contradictions of the modern world.

Notes

1 Up to the present time, the Czech avant-garde has been viewed as so peripheral that both its participants and its contextual development have been overlooked. Several recent studies have clarified the issues: Miroslav Lamač, *Osma a Skupina výtvarných umělců* (Prague, 1988); František Šmejkal, *Devětsil* (Prague, 1985); and Jiří Kotalík, *Tschechische Kunst der 20er und 30er Jahre, Avantgarde und Tradition* (Darmstadt, 1989).

2 The crisis of modernity was understood by Freud as one of inner integrity, by Husserl as occasioned by the development of European science, by Loos as evident in the pathology of ornament in modern architecture, by Masaryk as a fundamental social problem, and by Kafka as one of alienation and lost ethical values.

3 For an analysis of the political and social dimensions of Central European culture of the time, see: Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1980); and Tomáš Vlček, *Praha 1900* (Prague, 1987).

4 Light, as a spiritualization of the sensual attitude toward the world, played an important role in Czech Gothic and Baroque art. In the nineteenth century it once again assumed great importance. See: Tomáš Vlček, *Light in Czech Painting of the 1880s and 1890s* (Prague, 1982).

- 5 Cf. Christian Norberg Schulz, *Genius Loci* (New York, 1979).
- 6 The works of Paul Cézanne were presented at numerous exhibitions of modern French art arranged in Prague in the first decade of the twentieth century through a group known as the Mánes Society. An essay on Cézanne by Julius Meier-Graefe was published in the Czech art journal *Volné směry* 11 (1907), pp. 85–103. Cézanne was the focus of attention for many of the foremost Czech art critics of the period, including F.X. Šalda (“Prokletý malíř,” *Volné směry* 11 [1907]) and Bohumil Kubišta (“Paul Cézanne,” *Novina* 3 [1910]).
- 7 Kubišta made an effort at synthesizing the various contradictory tendencies such as modern and traditional art or European and Eastern art. He even coined a term by which to describe the “penetration” of these different structures: “Penetrom.”
- 8 The Mánes Society was the principal Czech art organization for the appreciation and exhibition of French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, including the sculpture of Rodin.
- 9 Kubišta and the sculptor Otto Gutfreund were among those Czech Cubist artists who saw in this style a coherent blend of subjectivity (art) and objectivity (intellectual knowledge). For Kubišta, geometry was a means to achieve “the higher levels of meaning in painting.” See: Bohumil Kubišta, “O předpokladech slohu,” *Přehled* 10 (1911), p. 37.
- 10 The attempt to apply the methodology of Alois Rieggl is apparent in essays written by Pavel Janák, a theorist of architectonic Cubism. See: Pavel Janák, “Obnova průčelí,” *Umělecký měsíčník* 2 (1912), p. 85. Rieggl’s works were well known in Prague, and the attitudes of the Vienna School of art history were embraced by many Czechs, including Vincenc Kramář, a theorist and collector of Cubist works.
- 11 The implications of “tvrdosíjní” (Obstinate) were explained in the foreword of a catalogue for the first exhibition of the group, held in Prague in 1918. S.K. Neumann defined the term there as the attitude of the artists to the constant struggle for a modern art.
- 12 Josef Čapek was especially active in publishing a number of studies on folklore and primitive art, including the popular *Nejskromnější umění* [The Most Modest Art] (Prague, 1920).
- 13 See: Václav Nebeský, “Umění a společnost” [Art and Society], *Volné směry* 22 (1923–24), p. 16. Nebeský’s theoretical studies resulted in phenomenological methods directed toward interpreting art in terms of abstract and empirical relations.
- 14 The second Prague exhibition of Tvrdošíjní was held in January 1920 and repeated in Dresden and Berlin. (*Die Aktion* had devoted a special number [June 16, 1917] to the work of Josef Čapek.) The third Prague exhibition of Tvrdošíjní included works by Otto Dix, Ernst Hoffmann, Otto Lange, Lasar Segall, and Paul Klee.
- 15 Nebeský (cited in n. 13 above), p. 20.
- 16 The literal meaning of *devet* is “nine” and of *sil*, “powers” or “Muses.” The term “Devětsil” thus symbolizes the union of the different branches of art (the Muses). “Devětsil” can also be translated as the flower “Butterbur.”
- 17 “The pre-image is reduction, simple universality, simplicity of complexity, a thing or a person that exists only in fiction and the dream.” See: Karel Teige, “Obrazy a předobrazy,” *Musaion* 2 (1921), p. 56.
- 18 The poets of Devětsil, such as Vítězslav Nezval and Jaroslav Seifert, held that visual motifs and associations were the primary characteristics of modern poetry. The prose works of Vladislav Vančura well represent the way in which visual aspects of the literary imagination could combine with the visual thinking processes concurrently introduced by modern art.
- 19 Karel Teige, “Naše základna naše cesta,” *Pásma* (1924), pp. 1–2.
- 20 Karel Teige, “Nové umění proletářské” [New Proletarian Art], *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* (Brno, 1922). The issue of proletarian art was also discussed outside the context of Devětsil by S.K. Neumann and Václav Nebeský.
- 21 See: Karel Teige, “Malířství a poesie” [Painting and Poetry], *Disk* 1 (1923), p. 19.
- 22 For further discussion, see: Tomáš Vlček, “Utopický jazyk uměleckých projevů devětsilu” [The Utopian Language of Devětsil’s Manifestos], *Umění* 35 (1987), pp. 145–50.
- 23 Karel Teige, “Poesie pro všechn pět smyslů” [Poetry for All Five Senses], *Pásma* 2 (1925–26).
- 24 This example, moreover, points to the important stimulus that the contemporary theater provided for Devětsil; the “Liberated Theater,” especially, served as a corollary to Teige’s pictorial poetry program.
- 25 A pioneering essay of 1922 argues that photography and film were the most vivid mediums in modern art. See: Karel Teige, “Foto, kino, film,” *Život* 2 (1922) pp. 153–68.
- 26 Ponc cooperated with Schlemmer in the scenic realization of *A Quarter-Tone Ballet—Dancing Theater*. For additional information, see: Tomáš Vlček, “Le Concept de musique colorée dan l’œuvre plastique du compositeur Miroslav Ponc,” *Umění* 35, no. 2 (1987), pp. 151–57.
- 27 See Judith Zilcher, “Color Music: Synesthesia and Nineteenth-Century Sources for Abstract Art,” *Artibus et Historiae* 16 (1987), pp. 101–26.
- 28 Vítězslav Nezval, “Kapka inkoustu” [A Drop of Ink], *ReD* 1 (1927), p. 307.
- 29 Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, “Artificialisme,” in *ibid.*, p. 29.
- 30 František Šmejkal (cited in n. 1 above), n.p.
- 31 František Šmejkal, *Josef Šíma* (Prague, 1988), p. 424.

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Cubism and Futurism in Paris

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Lisle and Mme Loubens anticipate Redon. The Durany portrait and the books in his library, as well as the first-rate dancer seated are of course pure Degas. Cézanne is handsomely represented by the self-portrait already mentioned (showing a certain resemblance to Verlaine) and a rhythmically organized water-colour of bathers. Then there is a truly remarkable trio: a Gauguin pastel of a Tahitian woman, the extraordinary *Armour* by Odilon Redon (Fig. 116) which makes one understand what the colour black can really be, and the surrealist wash drawing by Rodin showing his conception of the 'Birth of the Greek vase' issuing from the female form. The nineteenth century is concluded by an impressive group of four Seurat black-and-whites, including the monumental portrait of Aman-Jean, well illustrating the possibilities and the limitations of his manner.

As for our century, it is more alluded to than really present, with one drawing each for Bourdelle, Bonnard, Signac, Villon, three not too significant Matisses, two huge water-colour paintings by Picabia (hardly to be called drawings) and six pre-first world war Picassos.

An exemplary catalogue, as readable as it is instructive, enhances the many attractions of this exceptional exhibition.

JACQUES FRYSZMAN

Cubism and Futurism in Paris

The cubist exhibition held in Bordeaux last summer and then (until 10th November) at the **Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris** was slightly disappointing: it neither contained any of the most important cubist paintings by Picasso or Braque, nor was it planned to illustrate the history of the movement, although it was introduced by a few pieces of African sculpture and four works by Cézanne. These were followed by twenty by Picasso, all done between 1908–14 and demonstrating his early development step by step. After that no particular plan or conception could be discerned. What the exhibition offered was a great number (247 items, including the sixty-five not shown in Bordeaux) of works by various Cubists, sculptors as well as painters, dating from 1907–26. To make up for the paucity of masterpieces, a special effort had been made to include some works which are not always easily accessible. Some loans from the National Gallery of Prague were particularly welcome: there was Picasso's *Self-portrait* and *Portrait of a Woman* of 1907, two powerful works which dominated the second room; his *Landscape with Bridge* of 1909 and the *Woman with Guitar* of 1911, all formerly in the Vincenc Kramář collection; Braque's *Clarinet and Violin* of 1913 and his *Still-life with Pipe* of 1921–22 from the same source. Five paintings by the Czech artists Emil Filla, Bohumil Kubista and Antonín Prochazka, also from the Prague gallery, showed clearly that these had been faithful followers of the Paris *avant garde* and threw

a light on the close relations which once existed between the two cities. Three bronzes of 1911–13 by the sculptor Otto Gutfreund, whose name has become familiar in Paris since the museum of Pointoise has exhibited some of his works, made a greater impression. Other foreign museums which had contributed to the exhibition included the Moderne Galerie of Saarbrücken which had lent three of Archipenko's works, including the gracefully curved *La Danse* (1912) and a *Tête constructive* (1913) which may well have inspired Gabo's *First constructed Head* (1915) (not here shown), just as Archipenko was probably the first sculptor to have opened up his figures (which could also not be seen here).

Loans had further come from the Kröller-Müller Museum whose paintings by Gris belonged, together with those from the Sonja Henie-Niels Onstad Foundation, Oslo, to the high-lights of the show; the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam whose Malevitch, the pre-suprematist *Musical Instruments* (1913) was his only work here on view; and the Bayrische Staatsgemäldesammlung of Munich whose *Portrait of Professor Gosse* (1917) by Duchamp-Villon was his last, most formal work. The majority of exhibits came from French public and private collections and particularly from the Musée National d'Art Moderne (Picasso, Léger, Delaunay, Duchamp, Villon). The Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris itself owns a great number of cubist works (Picasso's analytic *Le Pigeon aux Petits Pois* (1911) and Braque's *Tête de Femme* (1909) among them) which constituted a considerable part of the exhibition.

After more than half a century cubist works are still not really popular, as most people find it too difficult to 'read' them. Even in an age which has taught the public to accept works it cannot understand without protest, a cubist exhibition will therefore not often be crowded. This one could have been made more attractive by a certain amount of guidance: a few inscriptions, some quotations from the many writings of the artists, a less laconic catalogue. As this was absent, a part of the public which consisted largely of very young people and their teachers seemed bewildered.

The more initiated probably enjoyed finding so many works by little known artists under one roof and to see the familiar ones in a stylistically limited (the cubist) context. This was certainly an occasion to make one realize how successful a movement Cubism was, at least among artists, almost from the beginning. Léger and Delaunay made their first cubist experiments in 1909, and Léger's *La Courseuse* is one of the earliest works here shown. 1910 is the date of Derain's *Nature morte à la table*, Roger de La Fresnaye's *Nature morte aux trois anses* and Le Fauconnier's almost expressionist *Portrait of the Poet Pierre-Jean Jouve* (Fig. 117). In the Salon des Indépendants of 1911 the cubist

painters were introduced to the public of Paris. By then they had become numerous. In the recent exhibition this was illustrated by Gris's *Nature morte à la jatte*, Metzinger's *Paysage cubiste*, Duchamp's *Joueurs d'échecs*, Villon's *Portrait of Raymond Duchamp-Villon*, and Herbin's *Le Clocher* (which is still closer to Cézanne than to Analytical Cubism), all works from the year 1911.

In fact, by then Cubism had become an *avant-garde* fashion. Chagall's *Half-past three* (1911) and *Hommage to Apollinaire* (1911/12) were cubist paintings, so was Malevitch's *Yellow Cow* (1911), and even Kokoschka's *Tubutsch* drawings (1911) show cubist influence. In 1912 the German expressionists were infected: Marc's *Tiger*, Macke's *Zoological Garden*, Heckel's *Glass Day* and Schmidt-Rottluff's *Pharisees* were all attempts to come to terms with the new style. Mondrian, Larionov and Feininger were equally affected. Had it cast its net so wide, the Paris exhibition, which had made a timid start with the Czech artists and the Argentinian painter Pettoruti, would have gained much in interest.

But if it did not demonstrate that Cubism was a European movement, it managed to give an impression of the variety of artists it attracted in Paris. Léger and Juan Gris, of course, appeared once more as the strongest among them. Both were fairly well represented, Léger among others by such paintings as *The Alarm Clock* and *Le 14 juillet* (both 1914) which show how literally he took Cézanne's precept of the cube, the circle and the cone, and the *L'Homme à la pipe* (1920) in which the human figure had become a domineering robot. Gris's still-lives, on the other hand, appeared like a highly sophisticated intellectual game with objects whose forms, here flattened out and there rounded, by a complicated interplay of colour and contour, seemed now to recede and then to stick out, without disturbing the harmony of every composition. One felt, as always in front of his paintings, that he was the one artist who really thought on the same lines as Picasso and Braque and was prodigiously gifted as a painter as well.

One knows the Museum's own paintings by Delaunay: the *Towers of Laon* (1912) in which a reduced Cubism is used to underline the organization of architecture; the *Nu à la Coiffeuse* (1915) in which the female body is rendered through discs of light colour; and the attractive *Symphonie colorée* (1915/17) which reveals this artist's decorative talent most clearly. There were, however, none of those pictures in which he came close to pure abstraction. The sudden change in the work of Villon, on the other hand, could be followed in the works here shown. In the portrait of his brother Raymond (1911) and in *La Jeune Fille au jardin* (1912) he made only the most limited use of the cubist technique, while the well-known *Soldiers marching* (1913) and the *Femme assise* (1914) are no more than delicately tinted combinations of geometric shapes.

More widely known through their book *Du Cubisme* (1912) than through their painted work which is more easily seen in France than elsewhere, Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger belonged to the most distinguished artists included in the recent exhibition. Gleizes's *Les Baigneuses* (1912) as well as *Les Femmes qui coudent* (1913) were interesting efforts, rather isolated in the context of cubist painting, to represent human figures and a landscape in one painting. *Les Baigneuses* are not far removed from Cézanne, but there is a certain difference in the treatment of the background, where houses, chimneys and trees are rendered in traditional perspective, and the human figures in the foreground which have been formed by cubist principles. In *Les Femmes qui coudent* the interpenetration of space, architecture and figures extends over the whole canvas, but the fragmentation of the figures never goes as far as in works by Picasso or Braque. In *Femmes assises devant une fenêtre* (1914) (Fig. 120) the warm, gay colours show the influence of Delaunay. In the last two works the human presence is strongly underlined.

Metzinger (see Fig. 118), who was often close to Gleizes, combined the traditional division of a picture in foreground, middleground and background with cubist elements, as could be seen in his *Paysage cubiste* of 1911. In *L'oiseau bleu* (1913) and *La fumeuse* (1914) realistically modelled details like the bird or the shoulder of the smoking lady are contrasted with abstract ones. Metzinger too used more colour in his analytical pictures than Picasso and Braque whom he follows closely in other respects, for instance in the use of the double profile and the turn to Synthetic Cubism.

A personal note could also be found in the work of Georges Valmier whose compositions – 'geometrical still-lifes' – consist of many very small parts which are painted in light, cold, slightly sweet colours. The most superficial application of cubist principles, finally, was illustrated by several works by André Lhote.

Cubist sculpture, which probably belongs to the best produced in this century, was very weakly represented, although there were half a dozen pieces by Laurens as well as by Zadkine. Fortunately cubist sculpture is magnificently displayed in the Musée National d'Art Moderne next door.

The exhibition of Futurism which took place at the **Musée National d'art Moderne** at the same time and closed its doors on 19th November was in every respect more satisfactory. Relatively small – it comprised eighty-four items – it was well selected and coherent. The six founding members of the futurist movement, Boccioni, Balla, Carrà, Russolo, Severini and Soffici, were represented by some of their most important works of the years 1909–16, and to these had been added twenty drawings by the architect Antonio Sant'Elia who was a Futurist in theory rather than in practice, indebted

to the Vienna school and not as dynamic as Gordon Craig in his stage designs. Nearly all exhibits had been lent by Italian collections, and a few by the Museum of Modern Art of New York. There were also documents from the archives of Marinetti, Severini and Apollinaire; the various futurist manifestoes (the first of which appeared in *Le Figaro* in February 1909), catalogues of the earliest futurist exhibitions, such as that shown chez Bernheim-jeune in February 1912, and correspondence. The catalogue of the exhibition under review will itself remain a document of value, as it contains the ten most important manifestoes in French, texts by various Italian contributors on such subjects as literary Futurism and the cultural heritage of Futurism, and besides, a chronology and a selected bibliography. Every catalogue entry is accompanied by a reproduction.

The one great artist in this exhibition was without any doubt Boccioni whose sculptural works, and particularly the *Development of a bottle in space* (1912), were even more original and more cogent than his paintings. One could follow his development from the pointillist *Riot in the Gallery* of 1910, with its agitated crowd (one of the subjects Marinetti recommended) and accentuated lamps, or the dynamic *Ville qui monte* of the same year, to the strange series *Etats d'âme* (1911) which looks like the exorcism of a symbolist theme and technique; the *Horizontal volumes* (1912) where the influence of Cubism has invaded the background, while face and hands of the figure are conventionally modelled; the masterly *Elasticity* (1912) in which the pink horse and the brown rider emerge gradually from innumerable, colourful shapes which are not only interlocked as in a cubist work, but also pulling in various directions; to the monumental *Materia* (1912) and the *Dynamism of the Human body* (1913) where the shapes are no longer human, but abstract. The *Dynamism of a male head* (1914) shows the subdued colours of Analytical Cubism, but none of its usual serenity. And *The Charge of the Lancers* (1915) is a violent answer to Villon's *Marching Soldiers*.

The political aspect of early Futurism was illustrated by Carrà's *Funeral of the Anarchist Galli* (1911) which looks in a crayon study like a well arranged theatrical scene, but in the painting has become a riot around a coffin that could be taken for a missile, with red flags flying while diagonal rays transmit the excitement of the crowd to all corners of the canvas. When this painter reached the stage of collage – as in his *Mots en liberté* (1914) (Fig. 119) – he used that technique to achieve the effect of an explosion, and there is irony in the contrast of such words as 'sport' or 'aviatore' and the tinsel which glitters on the cardboard.

Severini's paintings were the futurist reflection of city life at its gayest and most elegant. The Musée National owns the

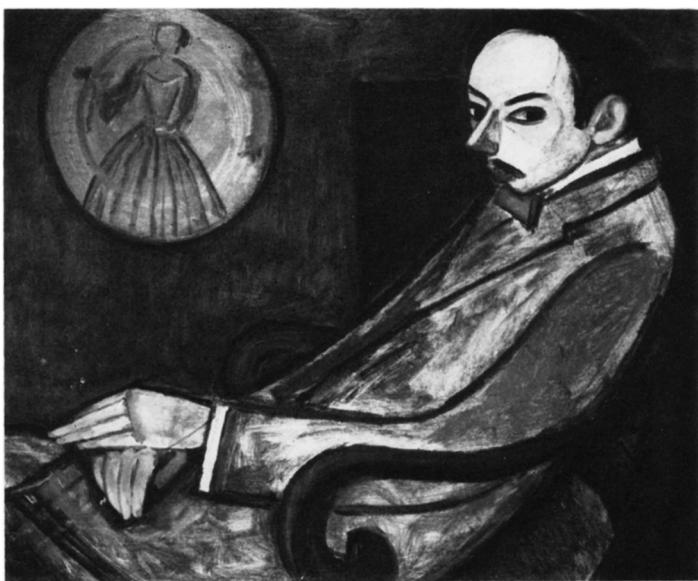
replica of *La danse de pan-pan à Monaco* which was painted in 1911, was in the first Paris exhibition, then belonged to Walden, was later lost and repeated by the artist in 1959–60. The impression of a lively crowd could hardly be more convincingly conveyed than by this composition of innumerable small facettes. Severini was a fine colourist and loved a pretty surface, as came out in the *Blue Dancer* where spangles produce a glittering decorative and also suggestive effect. In the *Dynamism of a Dancer* he used the multiplication of parallel forms to achieve the impression of movement, as Balla did in his *Petite Fille courant sur le balcon* and also in the more famous, but not here present *Lady with Dog*. In *Rythme abstrait de Madame M.S.* (1912) eyes and mouth are displaced, but locks, hat, feather, flower and cigarette mark the personality of the sitter distinctly. In 1913 Severini was very close to abstraction: the *Formes d'une danseuse dans la lumière* show no human features, but a centrifugal composition of shapes. The *Guns in action* (1915) which consists of inscriptions rather than of painting is a war document which, very much in opposition to Marinetti's belligerent enthusiasm, strikes one as sarcastic.

EDITH HOFFMANN

A Tapestry Exhibition in Paris

Tapestries are rewarding material for temporary exhibitions. Indeed this is the very purpose for which they were first made in northern Europe – huge yet easily transportable works of art, hung to enhance great occasions with a palatial splendour of design and colour and to entertain the curious crowds with heroic images. The exhibition *Chefs-d'œuvre de la tapisserie du XIV^e au XVI^e siècle*, at the **Grand Palais, Paris** (26th October 1973–7th January 1974 and at the **Metropolitan Museum, New York**, 7th February–19th April 1974), is one of the most comprehensive ever devoted to this theme, including no fewer than ninety Franco-Flemish tapestries of the period 1375–1520 drawn from collections as far flung as Leningrad and Honolulu. It permits direct comparisons between many important pieces which have never before been seen together.

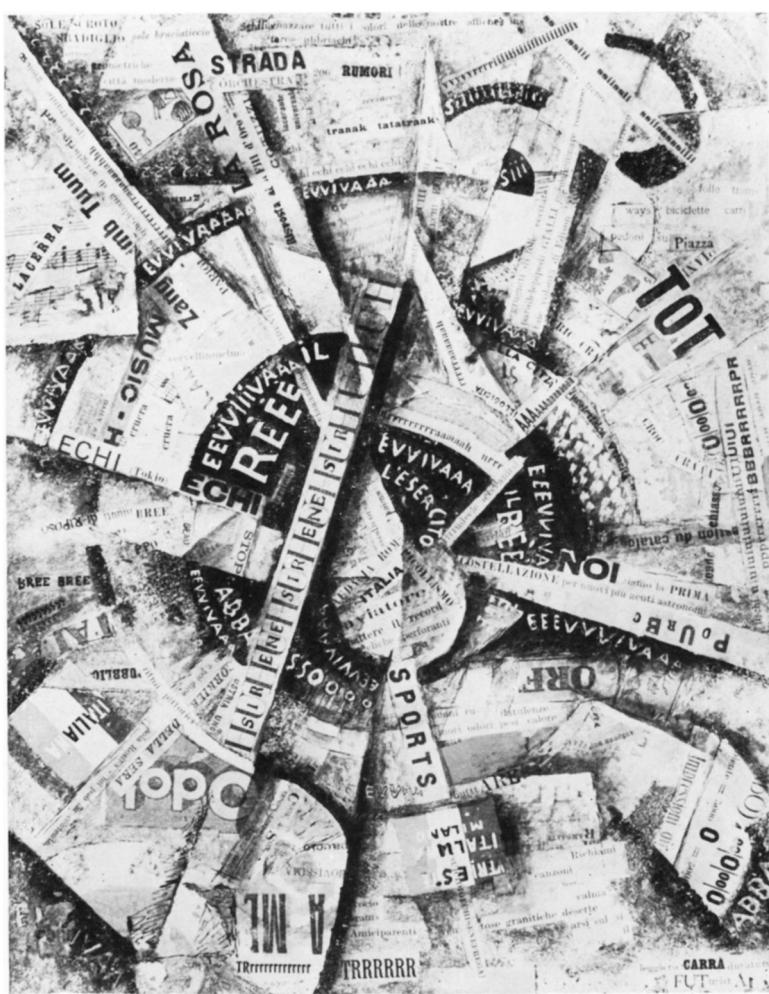
Francis Salet, in his perceptive introduction to the exhibition catalogue, notes that studies of medieval tapestries have lagged behind those of architecture, sculpture and painting. But it must be recognised that there are formidable difficulties, since so few extant examples are documented, and stylistic analysis is hampered by the fact that each piece represents an artistic collaboration between the original designer, another artist or group of artists who enlarged the small design to a full-size cartoon and finally the weavers, who freely adapted backgrounds and ornamental details and even the figure subjects, especially if they were repeatedly rewoven. These points are



117. *Portrait of the Poet Pierre-Jean Jouve*, by Henri Le Fauconnier. Signed and dated 1909. Canvas, 81 by 100 cm. (Musée National d'Art Moderne. Paris.)



118. *Nature Morte au Sucier*, by Jean Metzinger. Signed. 1917. (Private Collection, Belgium.)



119. *Manifestation interventionniste or Peinture—Mots en liberté*, by Carlo Carrà. 1914. Collage on board, 38.5 by 30 cm. (Collection Mattioli, Milan.)



120. *Femmes assises devant une fenêtre*, by Albert Gleizes. Signed and dated 1914. Canvas, 114 by 145.5 cm. (Collection Echeverría, Caracas.)

Czech Cubist Prints

Author(s): Jana Wittlichová

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Parmigianino may have been the first artist in Italy to conceive of etching as a reproductive medium. The inception of this practice in Bologna undoubtedly provided a critical precedent for the Bolognese Passarotti's adoption of this practice some 20 years later. Furthermore, Antonio Fantuzzi, who made reproductive etchings after the works of Primaticcio and others at Fontainebleau during the 1540s, was originally from Bologna, where he presumably first encountered the use of etching for reproduction.³⁷ Parmigianino's influence spread to Venice largely through the etched copies of his prints and drawings by Schiavone, who, according to Lomazzo, was Parmigianino's pupil.³⁸ It would appear that Parmigianino was the seminal figure who initiated this tradition in Bologna.

This unconventional use of etching for reproduction became widespread in that city during the seventeenth century. In a new study of Francesco Brizio, a professional printmaker in Bologna during the seventeenth century, Veronika Birke noted that

Brizio reversed traditional procedure during his early period by employing engraving for his original designs and etching for his reproductions of paintings.³⁹ Brizio's seventeenth-century biographer Malvasia related that Brizio's first teacher was Bartolomeo Passarotti,⁴⁰ so, presumably, Brizio first learned to use etching as a reproductive medium from Passarotti. Etching was also used for reproduction by several other Carracci students, including Giovanni Lanfranco, Sisto Badalocchio, and Guido Reni.⁴¹

In conclusion, the use of etching as a reproductive medium was apparently initiated in Bologna by Parmigianino in the late 1520s. Parmigianino's practice was continued by Fantuzzi, Schiavone, and Passarotti during the 1540s and 1550s. In the hands of these artists, etching expanded the possibilities for reproductive printmaking to include the reproduction of less finished sketches, in addition to the finished designs which had been traditionally reproduced in engravings.

37. To the best of my knowledge, this connection has not been discussed in earlier studies of Fantuzzi. On Fantuzzi's etchings, see especially: H. Zerner, 'L'eau-forte à Fontainebleau: le rôle de Fantuzzi', *Art de France*, IV, 1964, pp. 70–85; Zerner, *Die Schule von Fontainebleau: Das graphische Werk*, Vienna and Munich 1969, pp. 19–22; Zerner, *Italian Artists of the Sixteenth Century: School of Fontainebleau* (*The Illustrated Bartsch*, XXXIII), New York 1979, pp. 221–56; and S. Béguin et al., *L'Ecole de Fontainebleau*, Paris 1972, p. 261–75.
38. Schiavone's etchings are fully illustrated in H. Zerner, *Italian*

Artists of the Sixteenth Century (*The Illustrated Bartsch*, XXXII), pp. 37–111.

39. V. Birke, *Italian Masters of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (*The Illustrated Bartsch*, XL, commentary volume, part 1), New York 1987, p. 173. Two examples of Brizio's early reproductive etchings may be found in Birke, *op. cit.*, pp. 238ff., nos. 45 and 46, with illustrations.

40. Malvasia, *op. cit.*, I, p. 379.

41. See Birke, *op. cit.*

Czech Cubist Prints

Jana Wittlichová

Czech Cubism flowered with the generation of artists born in the 1880s. In the second half of the first decade of this century they formulated their reaction to the decorativeism of Art Nouveau and to the conventions of Impressionism. These views were

manifested in the field of art criticism and theory, through the establishment of an opposition group of young painters called 'The Eight' and in the two exhibitions they organized in 1907 and 1908. The most decisive initial influences on their thinking at

this early stage were a number of exhibitions organised by the Artists' Union *Mánes* in Prague: in 1905 Edvard Munch, in 1907 Cézanne, van Gogh and Gauguin, and in 1910 'Les Indépendants' from Paris. Bohumil Kubišta, Emil Filla and Vincenc Beneš were the three painters among the members of the 'Eight' who were most strongly influenced by Munch. Together with the younger artists Joseph Čapek, Václav Špála, the sculptor Otto Gutfreund and the architects Josep Gočár, Pavel Janák and Vlastislav Hofman, they became the joint creators of Czech Cubism.

In 1911 these artists (with the exception of Kubišta who was still a member of the official artists' union *Mánes*) founded another avowedly revolutionary organization called the 'Group of Artists' and launched a magazine *Umělecký měsíčník*. Czech Cubism emerged not only out of the usual struggle between the old and the new. The main element in its development and the most decisive for the specific form that it took, was the issue of whether to follow the sharply outlined ideas of the cubism developed by Picasso and Braque, or whether to accept a broader conception of modernism as established by contemporary French painting and other European trends such as German Expressionism and Italian Futurism. This latent conflict came to a head in 1912 when a few artists, followers of the less pure and orthodox conception of Cubism, left the 'Group of Artists' and returned to *Mánes*. This conflict between the two factions of the Czech avant-garde found its expression in two exhibitions based on two different concepts: an exhibition of paintings by Picasso, Braque, Derain and Gris organised by the 'Group of Artists' in 1913, and an exhibition entitled 'Modern Art' assembled on a broader basis for *Mánes* by the Parisian theoretician, A. Mercereau, in 1914.¹

The new trends from abroad were received by the Czech avant-garde artists in a critical and creative manner; they strove to reach the roots of the problems in their own way and to find their own original solutions. The clash of opinions resulted in a number of collective statements as well as giving rise to indi-

vidual disputes which permeated through the entire Czech avant-garde culture of that time. First-hand information was gleaned by Czech artists and theoreticians during their journeys abroad, primarily to Paris, undertaken for this purpose since the end of the first decade of the century. The longest-lasting link with the French art world was provided by the critic and theoretician Vincenc Kramář; he first met Picasso and Kahnweiler in 1910 and began to build up his own spectacular collection of French Cubist paintings (now mostly in the National Gallery in Prague).² Within the 'Group of Artist' he was closest to Filla with whom he promoted the orthodoxy of Picasso's conception of Cubism as the only path forward for modern art.

Archives and correspondence document other Czech-French contacts, such as Kubišta's and Čapek's visits to the Simon Weil, Berheim, Kahnweiler and Vollard galleries in Paris, as do Čapek's and Filla's collections of photographic documentation of pictures by Picasso and Braque. Czech art magazines, such as *Volné směry* and *Umělecký měsíčník*, published regular reviews of Parisian exhibitions and articles on new developments in contemporary art. Attention was also paid to events in Berlin and in Munich, and contacts established between Czech artists and German Expressionists, in particular the members of the groups *Die Brücke* and the *Neue Secession* in Berlin, and with the periodicals *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*. This led to the important participation of French and German painters in a number of exhibitions of *Mánes* and the 'Group of Artists'.³ This development was disrupted by the outbreak of the First World War – emigration and military service, limited possibilities for exhibiting and publishing work, disrupted international contacts, and abrupt changes of attitude on the part of artists and the unstable social situation brought about fundamental changes in the structure of the Czech art world. Only a few of the pre-war Cubist generation were able to maintain earlier developments and consolidate their ideas. These were Špála, Čapek and Hofman, who with others formed in 1918

1. Delauney, Dufy, Gleizes, Lhote, Marcoussis, Metzinger, Mondrian, Rivera, J. Villon, Archipenko, Brancusi, Duchamp-Villon, Gonzales and others took part in the exhibition.
2. V.Kramář (1877–1960), art historian, author of a book *Cubism* published in Brno in 1921, was involved in assembling a collection of French art for the National Gallery in Prague, bought in 1923. His private collection of Cubist French and Czech paintings was bequeathed to the National Gallery in

1960. In 1972 H. Kahnweiler gave one painting and fourteen prints of Picasso's late work to the National Gallery to commemorate his friendship with Kramář.

3. In the second exhibition of the 'Group' in Prague in 1912 paintings by the following artists were exhibited: Heckel, Kirchner, Mueller, Schmidt-Rottluff, Derain, Friesz, Picasso. In the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* in Berlin in 1913 the following took part: Beneš, Filla, Procházka, O. Kubín, Gutfreund, Gočár, and Janák.



78. Bohumil Kubišta, *Old Prague Motif*, 1912, etching, 200 × 180 mm (Prague, National Gallery).

a group with the name *Tvrdošíjní* ('The Staunch Ones'), reflecting their attachment to what had gone before, although the members were by no means united in their views. The periodical *Červen* (June), edited by the poet S. K. Neumann, became the platform for their opinions.⁴

Although printmaking was an important medium for other contemporary artists, most obviously the

second generation of Symbolists represented by František Bílek and František Kobliha, prints played only a marginal role in the work of the Czech avant-garde before the First World War. The main struggle to push through the new ideas took place in painting (and in associated developments in sculpture, architecture and to some extent in the decorative arts); by comparison avant-garde prints from the period

4. S. K. Neumann (1875–1947), poet. His ideas developed from anarchism to socialism; in his literary and art criticism of the

1910s he supported Cubism and Futurism. The magazine *Cerven* was published between 1918 and 1921.



79. Bohumil Kubišta, *Plea*, 1915, woodcut, 255 × 155 mm (Prague, National Gallery).

between 1912 and 1914 are rare. However, they share one typical feature: they underline or extract some of the key episodes of contemporary experimentation, and are often replicas of paintings of key importance for the artists. The reason behind their creation was not only technical curiosity; they were not merely creative experiments, but also an attempt to achieve greater publicity for an idea which the specific characteristics of printmaking tended to

enhance. These prints, of which only a small number of impressions were made, were not usually numbered and only occasionally signed, and served as gifts for the artists' friends. Seen against the background of contemporary exhibitions, theoretical essays and study journeys, they serve as further witness to the local conflict of ideas, and to the international artistic contacts mentioned above.

All the prints by the Czech Cubists were the work

5. Unless otherwise stated, the quotations from Čapek come from his correspondence: *Dvojí osud* (*Dual Destiny*), Prague

1980, and *Victor Dyk, S. K. Neumann, the Čapek Brothers: Correspondence*, Prague 1962.

of painters who had received no special training in printmaking: in Čapek's words, 'A certain imperfection is one of the modern virtues; but I don't mean clumsiness'.⁵ Prints produced by members of the 'Group of Artists' stood in deliberate opposition to the work of the generation that considered a perfect mastery of technique a basic requirement of printmaking. The efforts of this conservative generation were promoted by the foundation in 1910 and the steady development of a Print Department at the Prague Academy under Max Švabinský, together with the establishment in 1917 of an Association of Czech Graphic Artists named after Hollar, which had its own exhibitions and publishing programme and only ceased its activities in the 1960s.

Czech Cubist prints moved away from the analytic linear quality of etching or drypoint towards the expressive synthesis of woodcut or linocut. This development corresponded with changes in style. After an initial adherence to Picasso and Braque's Analytical Cubism of 1910 to 1913, they moved towards a broader and more individual conception of Cubism. The later prevalence of woodcut and linocut, during and after the First World War, was also due to the cheapness of materials, and to the fact that young artists could turn to Czech Symbolist printmakers for technical guidance, as these artists had also produced their major works in these media during the second decade of the century.

At the same time fresh inspiration was provided by the woodcuts of Gauguin, Munch and Derain, and by the prints of the German Expressionists, especially the members of the *Brücke*. Conversely, however, the impact of German Expressionism on Czech painting and sculpture was not profound: Josef Čapek made this clear in his review of Walden's *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*, held in Berlin in 1913: 'Germans today still prefer colourful and expressive form, which, however, under the pressure of their pathos and of their inclinations to the symbolic and grotesque is transformed into a noisy and drastic expressionism, which moreover lacks the better aspect of the other, primarily French, creative work: that is, the necessary expressivity and depth of beautiful form'.⁶

Among the Czech Cubists, Bohumil Kubišta (1884–1918) was the most radical in his efforts to uncover the basic principles of artistic understanding. His almost fanatical belief in the underlying mathematical and geometrical structure of paintings, based on examples he studied by El Greco, Poussin and Cézanne, was followed from 1910 by his analysis of Cubist methods of composition. His own

paintings were the result of this research and of his earlier experience of Munch's 1905 exhibition in Prague and of the contemporary second generation of Czech Symbolists in the 1910s, represented by the group *Sursum*. The pre-Cubist prints by Kubišta are etchings which originated around 1907, and comprise portraits, genre scenes and landscapes, including views of Florence. The important role of line and light in these small prints remained a typical and constant feature of Kubišta's work throughout the 1910s. For the origin of these prints Kubišta's stay in Paris in 1910 was of the utmost importance. He absorbed from Picasso, Braque and Friesz the new tendency to substitute tonal values for colour: this is reflected not only in his paintings but also in his drawings in which vigorous brush lines contrast with the white background of the paper.

One of the first examples of this retreat from colour to near monochrome is the painting *Old Prague Motif*, dated 1911, which was turned into an etching a year later (fig. 78). The traditional motif of a popular Prague view with its panorama of Gothic and Baroque towers has been transformed here into a multidimensional composition of architectural form, based, as a preparatory drawing reveals, on a well thought-out compositional plan. The play of light on form gives the picture a particular meaning, and underlines two basic features in the development of Kubišta's work: 'the experience of Cubism and an effort to increase the spiritual content of painting'.⁷ The poverty and suffering of Kubišta's own life and the difficulty of pursuing his own artistic path were in some ways so extreme that they led him into an increasing isolation. He did not join the 'Group of Artists' although he made efforts to establish international contacts in both France and Germany.⁸ His financial problems had been solved when he joined the army and was stationed in Pulja (Istria) in 1913, but his paintings and prints from this period give evidence of his unceasing struggle both as a human being and as an artist.

Around 1915 several works based on the image of a suffering man emerged; this theme had appeared first in 1912 in a painting of St Sebastian. In these, as well as in his woodcut *Plea*, 1915 (fig. 79), inspiration came from drawings he had made

6. *Lumír*, XLII, 1913–14.

7. Mahulena Nešlehová, *Bohumil Kubišta*, Prague 1985, p. 22.

8. Kubišta had personal contacts with Kirchner and Mueller, who visited him in Prague in 1911. In 1911–12 Kubišta was listed among the members of the group *Die Brücke*.



80. Bohumil Kubišta, *Istrian Landscape*, 1918, woodcut, 197 × 198 mm (Prague, National Gallery).

of Sumerian heads seen in the Louvre whose compositional structures were surprisingly close to his own aims at that time. *Plea* is Kubišta's first print obtained from a wooden block and its surprising technical virtuosity raises a question about the sources of his expertise. The answer probably lies in the work of František Bílek, a sculptor and painter belonging to the symbolist generation of the turn of the century. One of Bílek's woodcuts was used on the title page of a special Czech issue of the magazine *Die Aktion* published in 1916, suggesting the respect the young generation had for his work.⁹

In 1917–18 Kubišta returned to printmaking, making five woodcuts or linocuts, three landscapes (fig. 80), one still-life in a landscape, and one self-portrait. His hopes for the post-war period are reflec-

ted in changes in the character of his work. He creates a luxuriant structure of vegetable motifs with Cubist echoes, sometimes bordering on ornament, emphasising the inner power of nature as a symbol of a new attitude to life. The magazine *Červen*, in which some of these works were reproduced, enabled him to express this feeling through his prints. No parallel development is seen in his paintings, and so no sound basis is available for a more detailed analysis of this new direction in his work, which was interrupted by his sudden death in 1918 in the epidemic of Spanish 'flu'.

Another member of this generation who was influenced by Munch and who took part in the activities of the 'Eight' group was Emile Filla (1882–1953). In 1908 he created his first print, the forcefully-drawn lithograph *Portrait of Dostoyevsky* which reflects the relationship of the young artistic and literary generation towards the Russian novelist. This already technically-sophisticated print was fol-

9. *Die Aktion*, vi, 1916, no. 18/19, issue entitled *Böhmen*.

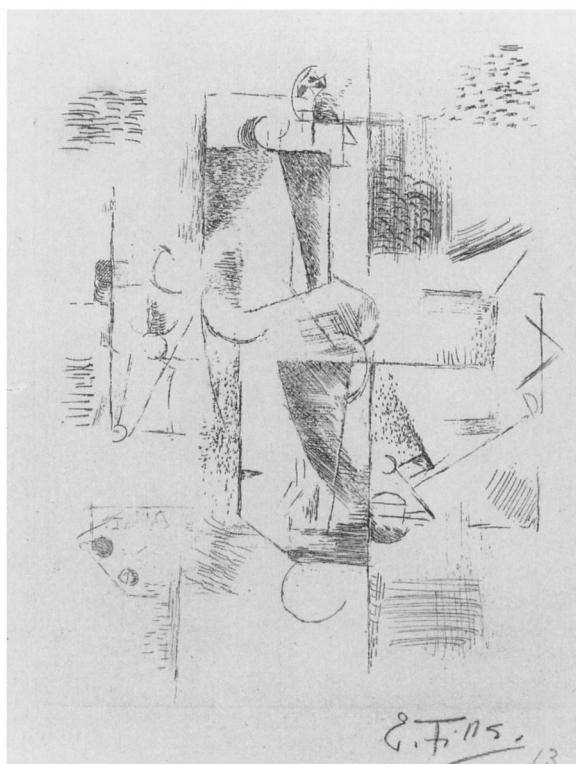
lowed by further examples in 1913–14, when Filla experimented in particular with the possibilities of etching (fig. 81). He did not return to printmaking until 1929, and in the thirties his work in the medium culminated with prints of Cubistic still-lives and female figures, which belong to the end of the period that has been described as 'lyrical cubism'. He also created a series on the subject of animal fights, and the deeds of Hercules, which were intended as an expressive and dramatic protest against emerging Nazism.

It seems likely that the growing interest on the part of Czech Cubists in printmaking, which dates from 1913, was due to the exhibition 'Modern French Art', organised in May and June of that year in Prague by the 'Group of Artists'. The core of this exhibition was composed of paintings by Derain, Picasso, Braque and Gris and a collection of folk and primitive art. With the exception of Gris all these artists exhibited prints as well as paintings. An etching by Picasso and woodcuts by Derain had been lent by Vincenc Kramář, while the remaining French works of art belonged to Henry Kahnweiler. It is possible to identify the prints by Picasso which were exhibited in 1913 by comparing the list of exhibits with the items illustrated in *Umelecký městřík* and with the prints Kramář bequeathed to the National Gallery in 1960. They were *Two Nudes* (Geiser 21), *Head of a Man*, (G.32) and *Still-Life* (G.22 and G.33).

From 1912 Filla adopted Picasso's Cubism which was to become the basis for his lifelong work. Filla's prints from 1913 and 1914 are two linocuts, one woodcut and five etchings which cover two of the main Cubist subjects: the human figure (head) and the still-life. The etched *Head of a Woman* of 1913 is of particular interest (fig. 82). It is built in a crystal clear construction of straight and curved lines on a system of diagonal cuts – a system that he was trying out at the same time in sculptural pieces. The systematic way in which Filla gradually divides the head into layers, as it were separating the sensory organs into each slice, reveals his intellectual and rational approach. Material structure as a step in the development of Cubism around 1913 is represented in Filla's etching *Head of a Woman* in the form of a curve drawn by a comb, a hatching stroke or as stippling.

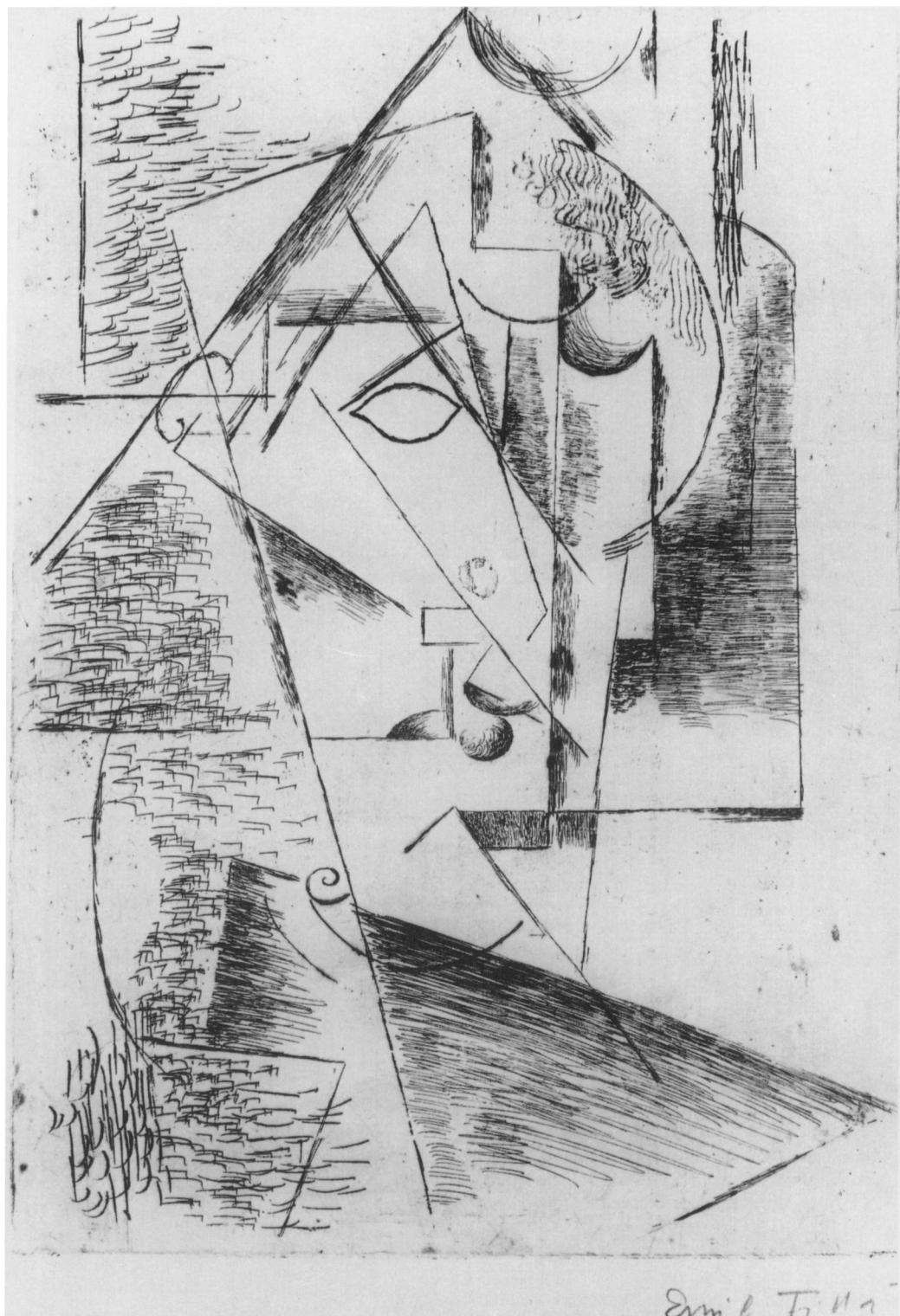
In the years 1913 to 1914 Filla created four prints on the subject of a still-life. The last of them, ordered by Herwarth Walden for his magazine *Der Sturm* in Berlin was made at the beginning of Filla's exile in Holland in the autumn of 1914 (fig. 83). Material and substance are expressed here explicitly in areas describing the texture of sand or wood, and in the use of lettering and small objects. The trend towards a direct contact with material (which is seen also in his contemporary sculptural relief work) led Filla to woodcut and linocut, the latter a technique that he later used only once, in 1930. The still-life made for Walden also reveals signs of his residence in Holland in its relationship with seventeenth-century Dutch painting. This is reflected in an increased awareness of three-dimensionality and balance in composition, which was to become the basis for Filla's 'Lyrical Cubism' of the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰

Vincenc Beněš (1883–1979) was the painter closest to Filla in age and attitude. For him Cubism was a short but intensive episode to which he, like most of his colleagues, devoted all his energy not only as an artist but as a theoretician and organiser.

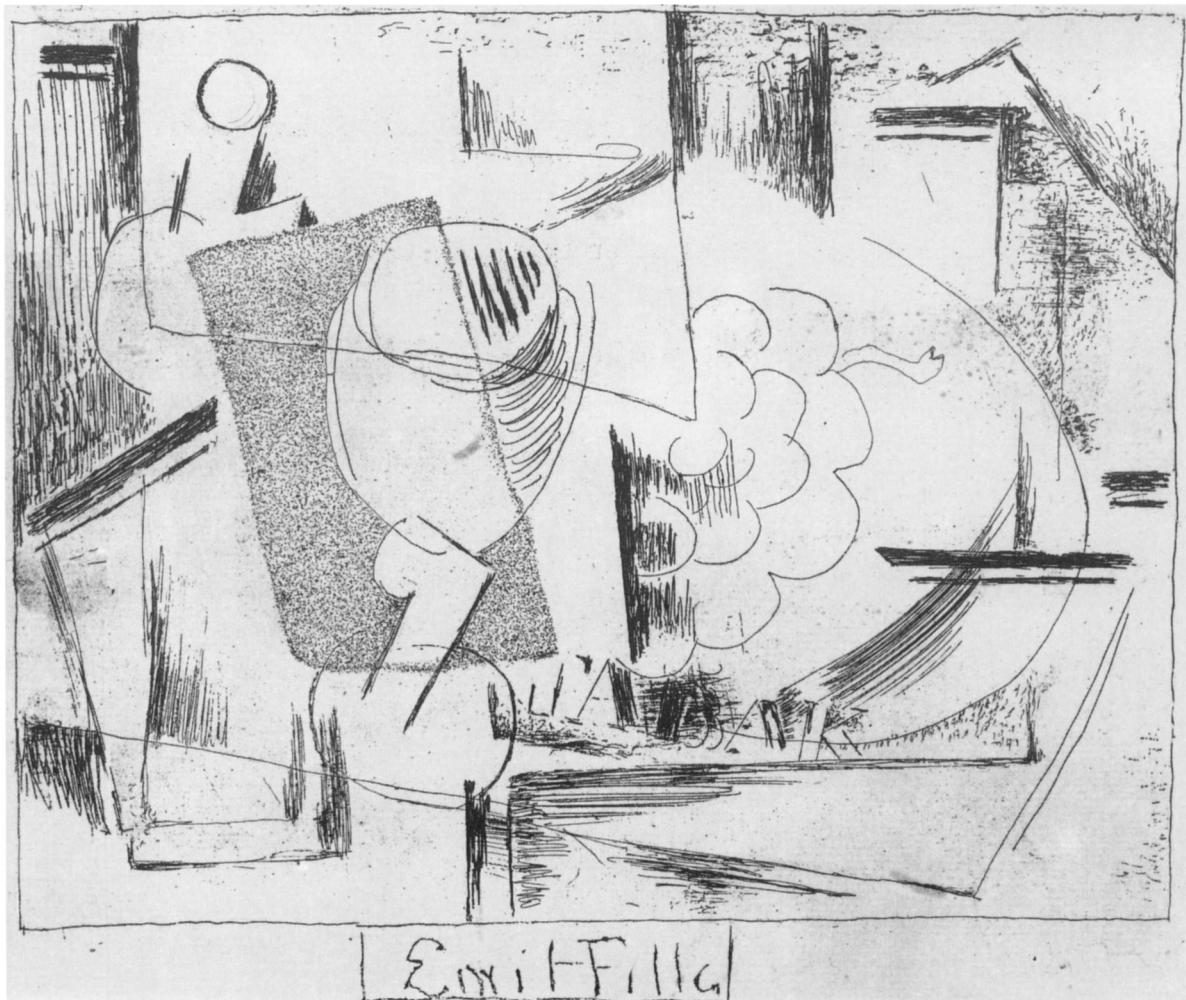


81. Emil Filla, *Woman*, 1913, etching, 234 × 175 mm
(Prague, National Gallery).

¹⁰. Filla travelled to Holland for the first time in 1906 on a journey that took him to Berlin, Holland, Paris and Italy. He devoted several essays to Dutch painting of the 17th century.



82. Emil Filla, *Head of a Woman*, 1913, etching, 496 × 272 mm (Prague, National Gallery).



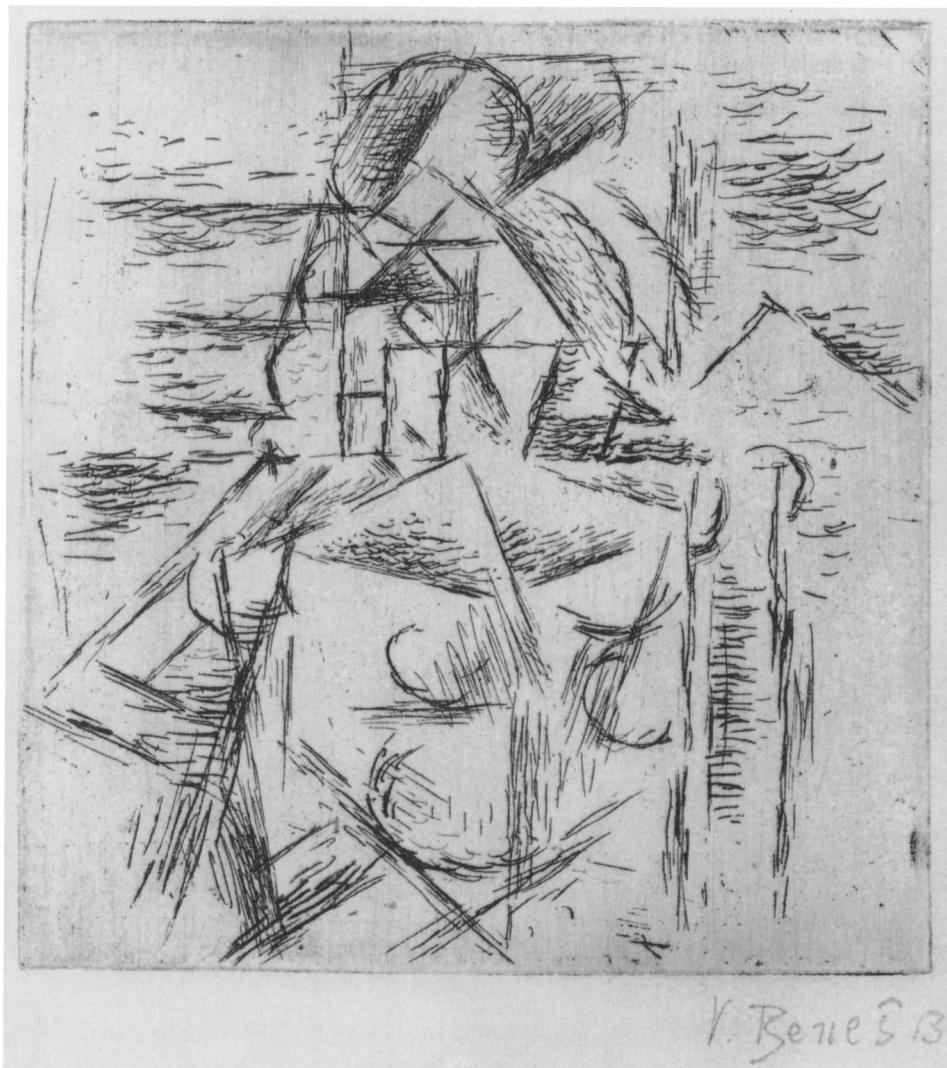
83. Emil Filla, *Still-Life with a Goblet and Grapes*, 1914, etching, 192 x 243 mm (Prague, National Gallery).

Graduating from the Academy he took part in the 'Eight' show in 1908. During this period, strongly marked by the influence of Munch's Expressionism, Beneš grew close to Kubišta and also made a trip to Paris. In 1911 he took part in founding the 'Group of Artists' and *Umělecký měsíčník*, and, with Filla, was the most orthodox supporter of Picasso and Braque's type of Cubism: 'A close community with Picasso and Braque is not a dogma; there are only similarities which always occur in an age, similarities both in form and subject matter'.¹¹

¹¹. V. Beneš, 'Moderna, čili aby bylo ještě jasnější (Modernism, or Let's make it clear)', *Umělecký měsíčník*, III, 1913–14.

In the course of 1914–1915, however, Beneš gave up his Cubist attitudes, destroyed most of his work, and became a realist of the type of Bonnard, which suited both his sensual perception of reality and his need for direct contact with the subject.

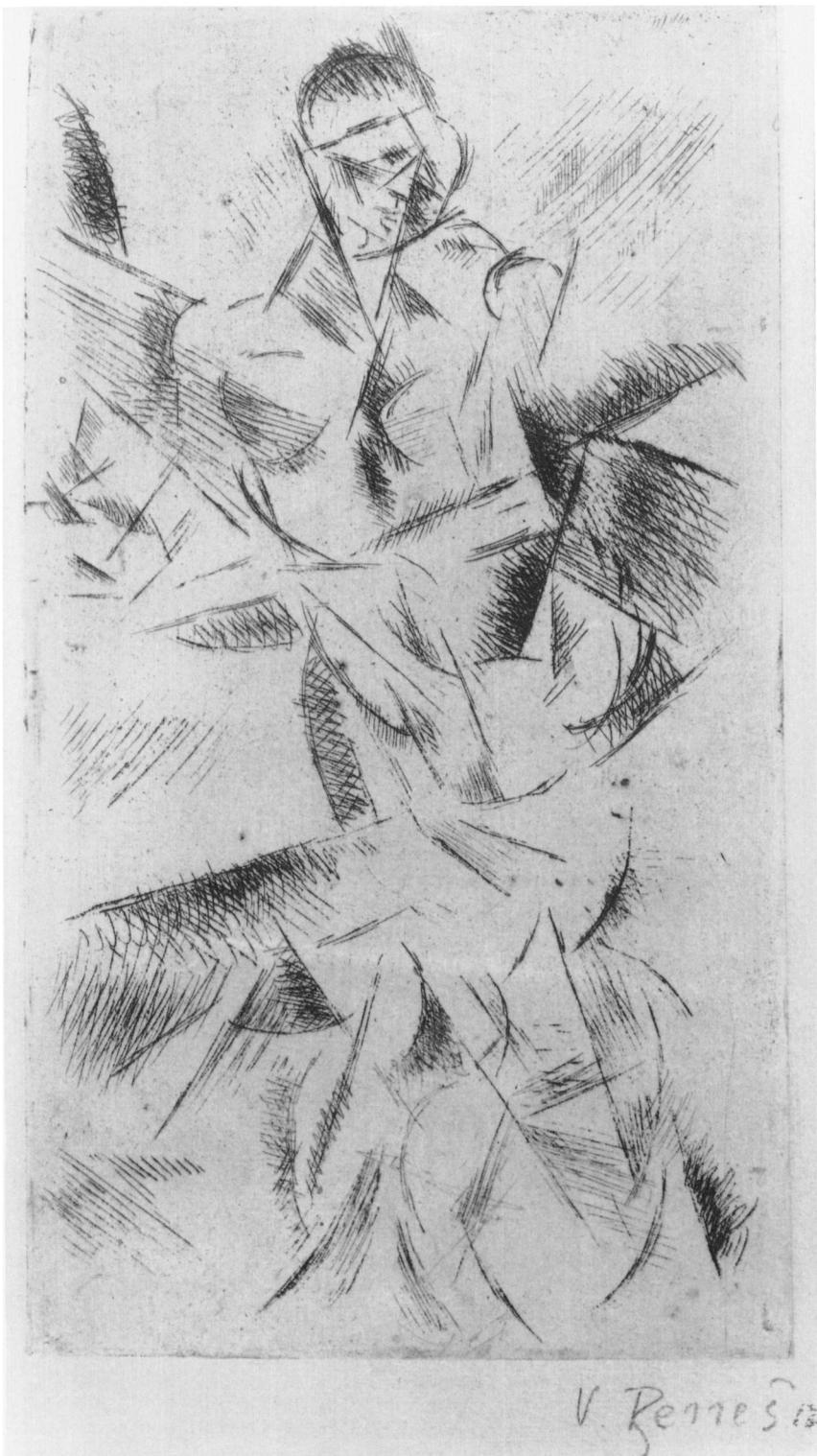
This explains his limited interest in printmaking. He made a few etchings in 1913–1914 and later a few lithographs, which were closer in their approach to painting than printmaking. The etching *Woman* of 1913 (fig. 84) is an analysis of the form of a figure integrated into a landscape. The clarity of the elements of the composition and its stability and



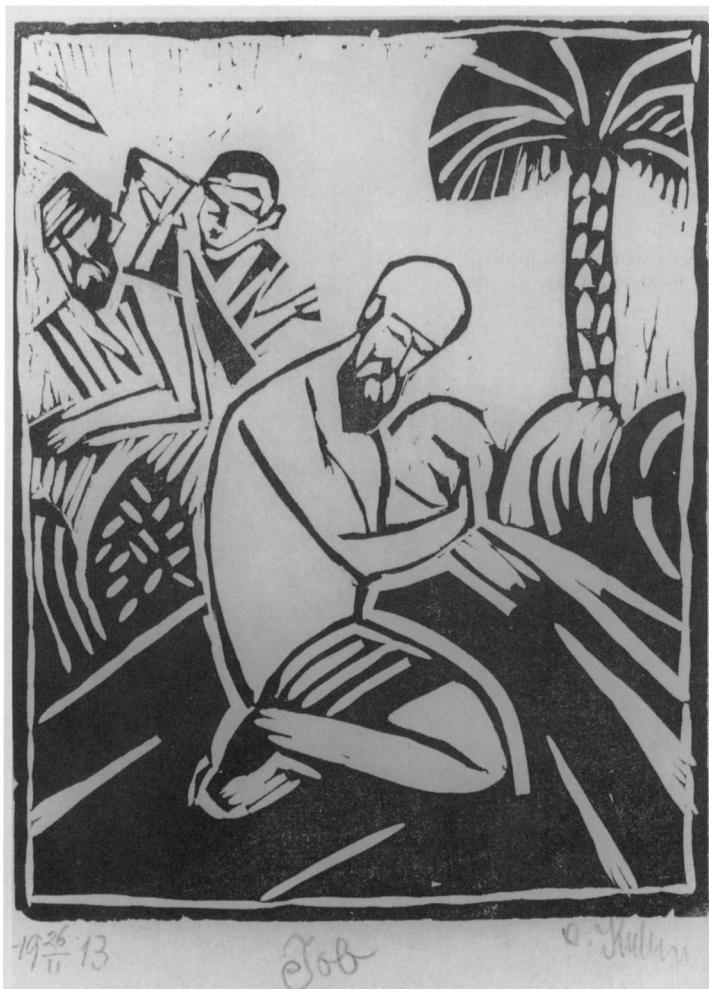
84. Vincenc Beneš, *Woman*, 1913, etching, 126 × 118 mm (Prague, National Gallery).

balance within a square format are close to some contemporary examples by Picasso. By comparison, the 1913 drypoint *Figure of a Woman (Danseuse?)*, (fig. 85) shows a combination of dynamic geometrical construction with an intensity that links him to Kubista. These prints illustrate the two opposing poles of Beneš's work at the time. At the turn of 1913–1914 he created two more still-lives (a lithograph and a linocut), both reproduced in *Umělecký městřík*, in which he reacts with a certain hesitation to the material elements in Picasso's still-lives of 1913 (a glass, a musical instrument, leaves, wood).

Before we turn our attention to the second trend in Czech Cubism, represented in both paintings and printmaking by Čapek and Špála, we should mention the work of Otakar Kubín (1883–1969), which further exemplifies the mood of this generation and the personal radicalism of Czech avant-garde artists. Kubín (Othon Coubine) took part in the 1907 exhibition of the 'Eight'. Nevertheless, he was at this time attracted much more to van Gogh's type of Expressionism than Munch's. He studied Cézanne's autonomy of forms, and by developing expressionistic tendencies particularly in his colour, he arrived



85. Vincenc Beneš, *Figure (Danseuse)*, 1913, etching, 181 × 103 mm (Prague, National Gallery).



86. Otakar Kubín, *Job*, 1913, woodcut, 205 × 157 mm (Prague, National Gallery).

at a personal style to which the Germans responded with interest. From 1911 he was in contact with Walden who asked him in 1913 to take part in the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon*, and organized two exhibitions of his work in the gallery of '*Der Sturm*'.¹² After 1915, influenced by the new environment of France where he settled, he gradually turned to neoclassical landscape painting and remained faithful to this style for the rest of his life.¹³

¹². 1914 with Chagall, 1916 with Kokoschka.

¹³. Kubín lived permanently in France from 1910, except for several years spent in Prague between 1951 and 1964.

The changes in Kubín's painting were matched by changes in his printmaking. His prints were not numerous, but they were always an integral part of his work. Under the influence of German Expressionism he created a few woodcuts reflecting the hardship he experienced while living in Paris. *Job* (1913) (fig. 86) and the album *La Misère Humaine* (1914) (fig. 87) shows the abrupt change in Kubín's prints from a combination of Kirchner's German harshness with Derain's French lyricism, towards the expressively-pointed and formally-simplified style which represents the ultimate stage of Kubín's 'Cubistic Expressionism' (to use the term employed by Walden).

Josef Čapek (1887–1945) was, with Emil Filla, the most prolific printmaker among the Czech Cubists. The sources of his work were extremely varied, and his prints show his sensitivity to the atmosphere in Prague and his interest in contemporary cultural developments abroad. Of particular importance in this context were Čapek's journeys to Paris in 1911 and 1912.¹⁴ During his second stay he saw, among other things, a major exhibition of the group 'Section d'Or' in the rue de la Boétie which confirmed his broad conception of Cubism as the style relevant to all aspects of modern times. Apart from his interests in the fine arts, Čapek became acquainted with

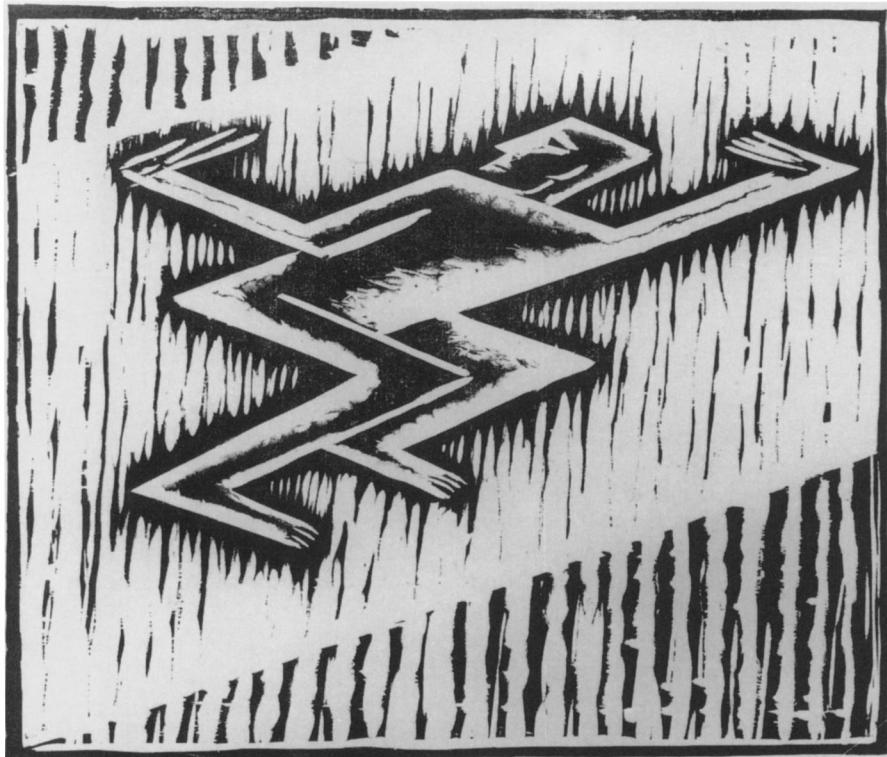
modern literary trends, such as Unanimism and Futurism.¹⁵ He was also attracted by primitive art.¹⁶

Čapek's first significant prints were made between 1913 and 1914, such as the etching *Figure Called Lelio* of 1914 (fig. 88), which is a version of a painting from 1913.¹⁷ This originated at a time when Čapek was most strongly attracted to Cubism and when the already mentioned dilemma about its interpretation was being widely discussed. In this print Čapek applied Picasso's principles with some freedom – analysis is combined with a synthesis into elementary two- and three-dimensional shapes such as the segment and cylinder. The printmaker's handwriting

14. He undertook the journey in 1911 with his brother, the writer Karel. He ended it in Spain, attracted, as were other members of his generation, by El Greco. In 1912 he was accompanied by Hofman.
15. Part of the literature they brought back with them (including the work by Marinetti) was translated by Karel Čapek in an anthology *Moderní francouzská lyrika* (*Modern French Lyric Poetry*), Prague 1920.
16. J. Čapek, 'Sochařství černochů (Negro Sculptures)', *Cerven*,

1918, with linocuts by V. Špála; see also Čapek's book *Umění původních národů* (*Primitive Art*), Prague 1938.

17. The print is in the British Museum collection, reproduced in *Print Quarterly*, iv, 1987, p. 62. It is signed, titled and dated later. The print was made in the spring 1914, coinciding with Čapek's essay 'Lelio', reflecting Berlioz's composition 'Lelio or Return to Life'. The German translation of Čapek's 'Lelio' was published in *Die Aktion*, vii, 1917, no. 49/50.



87. Otakar Kubín, illustration for *La Misère Humaine*, an album of six woodcuts published in Paris in 1914 with an introductory poem by Otto Klein translated by Blaise Cendrars, 168 × 200 mm (Prague, National Gallery).