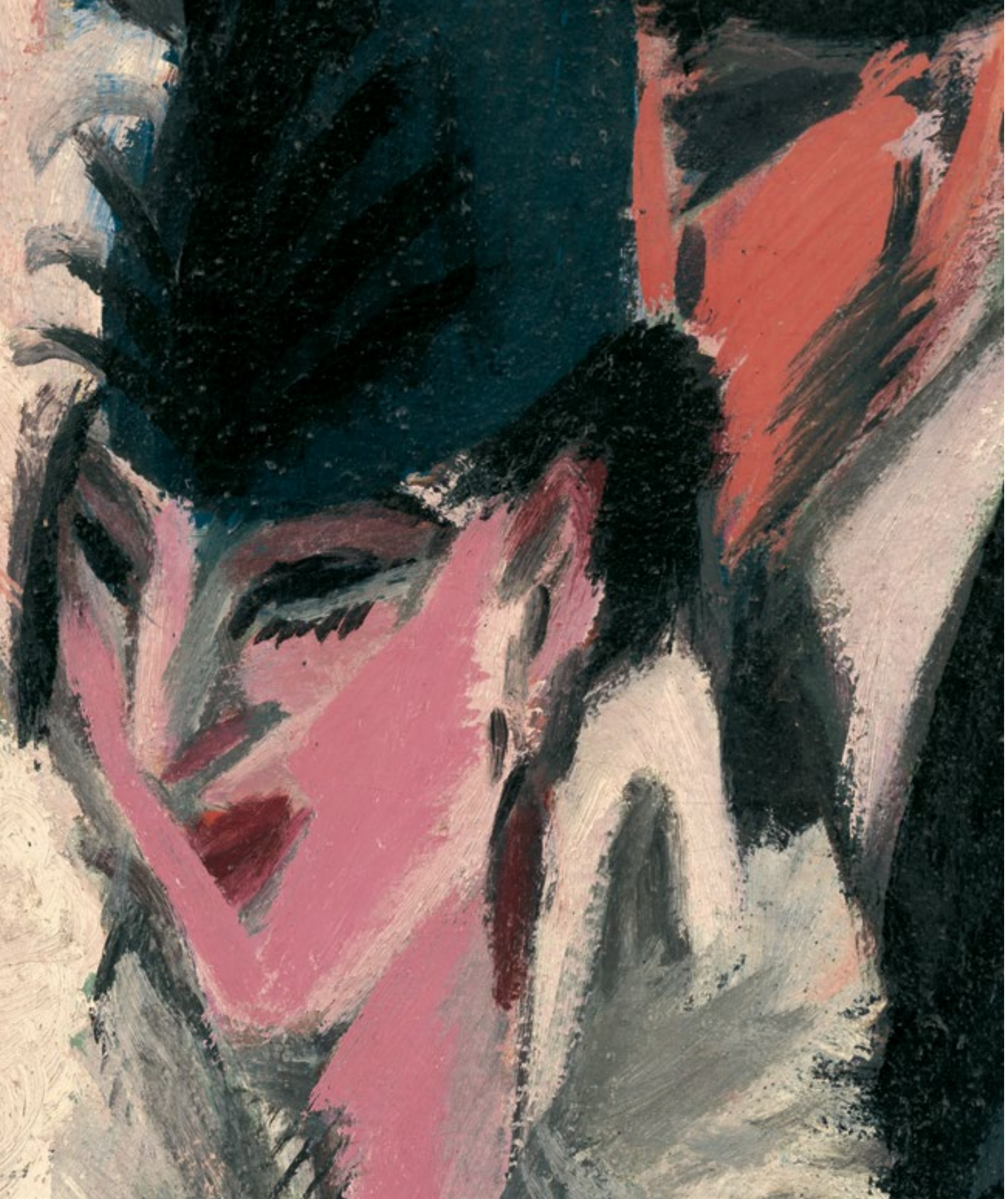

CHAPTER TWO
KIRCHNER'S WORKING PROCESS
THE STREET SCENES

Kirchner's artistic vision was consistently centered on representation, even though his career ran concurrent with the birth of modern abstraction.[1] His aim, formulated during the *Brücke* years, involved grasping the forces he found in the world around him and interpreting them with authentic feeling. This commitment is summed up in the statement: "All art needs this visible world and will always need it, quite simply because, being accessible to all, it is the key to all other worlds."[2] Kirchner realized, however, that the inspiration of the world was only the starting point. He said: "Every day I studied the nude, and movement in the streets and in the shops. Out of the naturalistic surface with all its variations I wanted to derive the pictorially determined surface."[3] This involved examining and clarifying his initial impulses in order to better understand their potential for formal innovation and iconographical meaning. The many studies related to the Street Scene series serve as an unusually focused demonstration of this investigatory process. By examining these works, we can begin to sense how Kirchner, "gives shape to what he has experienced."[4]

The sheer number of Street Scene studies indicates the level of ambition Kirchner brought to this theme. They include countless notebook sketches, some thirty large drawings in pen and ink and wash, as well as in pastel and charcoal, and over twenty prints. While it was relatively common for him to base paintings on earlier sketches, he never made use of detailed preparatory drawings. He explained that they were not a "benefit," since "forms arise and undergo change during the process of work...."[5] Jotted-down impressions found in his sketchbooks provided the seeds for paintings of all kinds.[6] But his ideas could also develop further in the studio, as he turned to canvas or made additional studies, a practice that seems to have increased in the Berlin years.[7] Prints also played a role in this evolution. While Kirchner did not neglect other motifs during the period from 1913–15—including nudes, dancers, circus performers, portraits, landscapes, and city views—none received the thorough analysis undertaken with the Street Scenes.

Drawings from the Street and the Studio In discussions of Kirchner's work, much has been made of the fragmented sketches the artist characterized as "hieroglyphs."[8] These quick notational drawings were, as he said, sensations "set down unmediated."[9] In some instances, a sketch is so abbreviated or abstracted that it seems he barely looked down at the sheet as he absorbed his subject and made his marks. Many consist of tangles of lines that convey the excitement of responding to the world with two-dimensional equivalents (pages 90, 94 bottom). Kirchner believed this kind of visual discovery was a prime responsibility of the artist and he talked about "a vital love of life"[10] derived from such drawings. Yet what is revealed in them is not only the essence of the observed phenomenon, but also the artist's own temperament. Art historian Patricia G. Berman has discussed the phenomenon of rapid drawing that became prevalent in the early years of the modern period, noting connections between such drawings of the figure and personal sensibility. She states, "Gestural drawing defines the body as the artist's autograph rather than merely perceived sensation through the synopsis of the body."[11] In the literature on Kirchner, his abilities are often described as "seismographic."[12]

Many sketchbook drawings focus on generalized types or movements that stimulated Kirchner as he walked the streets or lingered in cafés, but these are not translated specifically into paintings. Others provide more direct links, even though changes occur along the way. His organic approach is evident in several sketches and a large pen, brush, and ink study (pages 84, 85) that relate to *Five Women on the Street* (page 86), the first painting in the Street Scene series. A woodcut (page 87) also corresponds to this composition. Similarly, sketchbook drawings of male figures seen from behind on a busy street (page 88 top and right) can be associated with the painting *Berlin Street Scene* (page 89).[13] Yet, while this orientation of following the crowd appears in several large-scale drawings (pages 92, 93, 98, 99, 111), it finds its way into only that one canvas. In some cases, sketchbook studies and drawings inspired works in mediums other than painting. One scene of a couple strolling beside a carriage (page 112 bottom) is approximated in a later lithograph (page 114), while a sketch of a man and woman, perhaps arguing, turns up in an etching (page 117).

Such related studies reveal Kirchner's exploration of both iconographic and formal variations. One iconographic detail found frequently in the large-scale drawings, as well as in the pastels and prints, is the male and female shown together (pages 96, 99, 110, 116, among others)—a motif conspicuously absent from all but the last painting in the series, *Women on the Street* (page 7). But even here, the male on the right is strangely ambiguous in gender because of his outfit. Some large-scale drawings also provide an opportunity to examine formal structures, like the patterning of lights and darks across a composition (pages 104, 111, 116). Accents in ink and wash serve to intensify the inherent energy or even anxiety emanating from these scenes, while also unifying them visually. Some sheets make evident how Kirchner emboldened his lines with broad pen strokes to add dramatic emphasis, added quick hatchings to define contours, or brushed on shaded areas with gray wash to emphasize the rhythms of figures in motion (pages 92, 98, 99).

The Pastels The Street Scene pastels offered Kirchner the opportunity to experiment with color while further elaborating on the nuances of his subject. In some instances, he devised a chromatic scheme that appears in both a pastel and a painting, as seen in two versions of a scene with a cocotte in a red dress (page 18; fig. 1 and page 105). In other examples, color solutions are previewed in pastels, as with the yellow and green streets in two closely related works (pages 96, 108), that turn up in paintings with very different compositions (pages 7, 127). Color in the pastels also clearly heightens the impact of the imagery. The spontaneity and dynamism achieved through quickly rendered, overlapping lines and shaded areas of drawings and pen-and-ink studies are conveyed instead through the vibrancy of contrasting and layered hues.

Some pastels are closely related to paintings, for example with *Street Scene* (*Friedrichstraße in Berlin*) (pages 106, 107). The main figure in the painting is nearly fully imagined in the pastel, as demonstrated by her pose and coloring. The men, with their extended legs, have already begun to line up for what will be a dramatic, Futurist-inspired parade. The carriage at the right in the canvas, as well as the elegant pink dog, have not yet arrived on the scene, although dogs can be noted in several other Street Scene-related studies (pages 103, 108, 110). In terms of iconography and content, however, a notable difference occurs in the pastel, where a male figure is prominently placed at the left, on an equal footing with the streetwalkers. In the painting, this male is barely visible behind what looks like a lamppost. Instead, the women form their own triumvirate. This arrangement can be understood as a sign of solidarity among those who prowl the streets at night in Berlin, or as a symbol of commodified sexuality, with the women posing as if in a store window display, or perhaps sauntering forth on a fashion show runway.

Potsdamer Platz (page 127), the largest of the Street Scene paintings, is the most highly structured, so it is not surprising that several related works exist. The overall environment depicted in the scene is already defined in the pastel and charcoal versions (pages 124, 125), while particular poses are altered slightly in the painting. The train station with arches in the background, and early indications of a curved building at the left, which housed a large café, are seen early on. The suggestion of receding space is more clearly articulated in the charcoal, so it probably came later in the evolution of the imagery. Even the black-and-white woodcut version (page 126), which reverses the scene, indicates a point in Kirchner's process before the painting was entirely finished, since the distinctive "widow's veil" on the female figure at the left has not yet appeared. This detail in the painting may mean the canvas was completed after the outbreak of war in August 1914, when war widows began to appear on the streets of Berlin in such hats.[14] Streetwalkers took up this disguise either to shield themselves from the police or to elicit sympathy. Kirchner's use of this motif indicates that the older prostitute in his painting might have worn the veil also to obscure her advancing age. With its ominous, dream-like setting, this painting implies several possible narratives.

Finally, the formal device of a truncated figure rendered straight on occurs in several pastels (pages 96, 108, 118), but in just one painting. By cutting figures at about waist-high, Kirchner brings the viewer close-up to the action, and adds a new level of immediacy. It is difficult to imagine the artist sketching on the street from such a vantage point. In *Two Cocottes* (page 123), it is as if he jumped right in front of the streetwalkers, the way a paparazzo might, providing an opportunity for an extremely intimate view. In fact, the faces and poses in this work are so personalized that they might have been enhanced in the studio by working with models who served as stand-ins. The result is a sense of portraiture rather than Kirchner's usual mask-like, blank faces. However, in the painting related to this pastel, the effect changes dramatically—the nubile, glamorous women become ugly and threatening in their anonymity (page 122). In contrast to such psychological effects, another pastel with a similarly truncated composition offers something completely different. In *Women on the Street* (page 121), Kirchner deviates from his usual symbolic orientation to play with formal rhythms and fractured forms, in a manner comparable to that found in other, more abstracted modes of contemporary art at this time.

Printed Images Often, the order of a print in any sequence charting Kirchner's creative evolution can be determined by the reversal of its imagery. If Kirchner used one work as a guide (a painting, for example) as he drew his image on a lithographic stone, a woodblock, or a copperplate, the imagery of the composition would be reversed when inked and printed onto paper from one of those matrices. This becomes clear when comparing the woodcut version of *Five Cocottes* (page 87) with the painting of the same motif, *Five Women on the Street* (page 86). The wheel of a vehicle on the left in the painting shows up on the right of the woodcut. Similarly, the figure looking in a shop window is reversed, as is the prominent hand-on-hip gesture of the central character. But other differences in the two compositions also affect meaning. In the woodcut version, the left figure has become oddly disembodied, with a face and an outfit that differ dramatically from those of her companions. Why is she cut away, or lit so differently? Does this figure occupy a new role in the narrative? In addition, the print shows all the other figures looking toward her, while in the painting, one figure glances in a different direction. The odd figure seems like an outcast.

Kirchner believed that each technique offered unique possibilities. In describing printmaking, for example, he said, "the technical procedures doubtless release energies in the artist that remain unused in the much more lightweight processes of drawing or painting."[15] In fact, with the Street Scene-related works, while close comparisons like the one cited above between a print and a painting occur occasionally, more often the prints—like the drawings and pastels—have a more experimental or investigatory role within Kirchner's overall creative process.

Since an etching plate can be as small as a sketchbook, and just as easy to transport, there is no doubt that some of Kirchner's etchings were drawn on the spot, which could account for the spontaneity of their lines. Kirchner talks about drawing on his plates "directly from nature," giving them the effect of "the most immediate of hieroglyphics."[16] His *Street Scene with Little Dog* (page 110) and *War Widows on the Street* (page 95) demonstrate the immediacy he achieved with quickly scratched lines. But there are also examples in which the medium was used to carefully construct a composition, as in the delicate lines drawn in lyrical, arc-like motions in *Crowd of Passersby and Electric Tramcar* (page 113). Kirchner defines the crowded street as a whirl of centrifugal forces, with cocottes surrounded by male figures at right, left, back, and front. A tram and its tracks add a somewhat stabilizing element

at the right, but also evoke the congestion of the urban street. The vortex of this composition is situated in the head of the gentleman in front. The abrupt twist of his neck is seen in comparable figures in other compositions, most particularly in the *Berlin Street Scene* painting (page 89), where the man in question has been interpreted as a possible portrait of the artist.[17] The dramatic gesture certainly calls attention to this male figure, yet such a tilting of the head can also be found in the female at the right of the composition in *The Elegant Couple* (pages 93).

Some etched lines display a great forcefulness, as if the etching needle was slashed roughly across a copperplate and the grooves then deepened by allowing the plate to stay in its acid bath for an extended time. The potential of such assertive lines is seen in *Cocotte Offering Herself* (page 117), with its stark linear structure communicating vivid emotion. The man thrusts forward and the cocotte leans back, suggesting that the figures might be shouting at a pitch that is almost audible. Is the gentleman reacting negatively to being approached by the streetwalker? In the echoing bodies, Kirchner conjures up a primordial dance of the sexes, transported to the city street.

Through unorthodox uses of technique, Kirchner sometimes achieved a particularly gritty effect that gives a negative veneer to his urban scenes. In an approach contrary to the practice of traditional printmaking, he often allowed imperfections to remain on the surfaces of his copperplates, rather than burnishing them away. The result is irregular printing and areas of distress that show up in many of his etchings.[18] He often approached lithography in a similarly unconventional manner, in this case by manipulating the surfaces of the stone to produce unusual tonalities.[19] This experimentation took place in his own studio; he did not rely on the expertise available in commercial print workshops. As a result, the prints show none of the fastidiousness often associated with the medium. On the contrary, Kirchner's struggles with the sometimes unyielding technical requirements of printmaking give his works a raw urgency.

In *Leipziger Straße, Intersection* (page 114), the congested composition and scumbled lithographic surface produce an image so intense and forbidding that it is difficult to read. The cocottes at the center of the composition are barely discernable in the midst of the busy intersection. A sinister nighttime atmosphere is enhanced by Kirchner's choice of yellow paper. Both this lithograph and *Cocottes on the Kurfürstendamm* (page 115) have an illicit undercurrent, heightened by paper where the color approximates the lurid glow of artificial lights.

The most dramatic effects in Kirchner's prints are found in his woodcuts, where flat black areas contrast sharply with the pale surface of the paper and result in high-pitched, staccato rhythms. One can almost hear the steps made by the crowd against the pavement in *Flaneurs in the Street* (page 101), while lights and darks also allude to flickering signs or headlights of passing vehicles, even without evidence of their sources. Hatched lines in drawings become sharp rays in the gouges of woodcut, as indicated along the right arm of the male figure in *Street Scene, after a Shower* (page 101). This man appears nearly electrified as the excitement of the street is transferred to his body. Kirchner formulates an unusual visual device here with the head of a cocotte carved directly on the male's back, with rays surrounding her like an aureole. Is Kirchner proposing a symbiotic link between the man and the woman? Is she the alter ego? We remember his statement: "I am now like the cocottes I once painted...."[20]

The Street Scene Paintings Although clearly a series of utmost importance to Kirchner, the Berlin Street Scenes were exhibited only intermittently, and never as a group. None were shown in his solo show that opened in Jena in February of 1914, but research indicates that one may have been on view in a Free Secession exhibition in Berlin that spring, and another possibly shown in Malmö that year.[21] Even with the outbreak of the war in August 1914, and Kirchner's subsequent physical and mental infirmities and hospitalizations, exhibiting opportunities continued.[22] It is believed that *Street Scene* (*Friedrichstraße in Berlin*) (page 106) and *Two Women on the Street* (page 122) were included in a solo show at the Ludwig Schames Gallery in Frankfurt in 1916, and *Potsdamer Platz* (page 127) was shown at the Free Secession exhibition in Berlin in 1916 and at the Kunsthaus Zurich in 1918.[23] Others may also have been on public view. In 1920, quite significantly, the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, upon Kirchner's recommendation, acquired *Street, Berlin* (page 5 left), where it resided until removed by the Nazis and shown in their *"Degenerate" Art* show in 1937. The painting was later acquired by The Museum of Modern Art in New York.[24]

Since the 1920s, art historians have treated these paintings with high regard. The first of many essays devoted exclusively to the series was written in the late 1960s, and the paintings figure prominently in publications not only on Kirchner's work, but also on the art of the *Brücke* group, and on German Expressionism generally. In early discussions, there was some ambiguity surrounding their subject, since their titles usually make no specific reference to prostitution.[25] (The one exception is *Street with Red Cocotte*

[page 18; fig. 1], the painting from 1914 that was reworked in 1925.) I was among those confused about the motif in MoMA's *Street, Berlin* (page 5 left), thinking it only a scene of elegantly dressed figures on the way to the opera or some such fancy event. But closer inspection gives many clues to the contrary. For example, would it be common in this period for women to be out at night, unaccompanied, and all dressed up? And what do the lurid colors and the rather menacing male figures signify? What is to be made of the knowing glances, swaying hips, and syncopated steps of the central figures?

A discussion of titles should also consider the related prints, documented in the 1920s by Gustav Schiefler, Kirchner's longtime friend and supporter, who compiled the first print catalogue raisonné. Many are identified with the term "kokotte," the German word for cocotte, or prostitute. Since the artist was probably involved in the documentation process, he either generated these titles or approved them. In addition, two paintings refer to areas well known for prostitution in nighttime Berlin of those years: Friedrichstraße and Potsdamer Platz. Similarly, one of the lithographs in the series locates the action on Leipziger Straße, another of the thoroughfares known as places where, according to a contemporary commentator, "the 'flowers of the asphalt' offer themselves to be bought."[26]

Kirchner's streetwalker, as representative of the bustling modern metropolis, acknowledges negative forces without denying excitement and allure. In images of both confrontational immediacy and narrative complexity, Kirchner creates figures who epitomize the anonymity, loneliness, and disquietude of the urban street, as well as its artificial veneer and sometimes tawdry glamour. He acknowledges predatory forces and injects an element of danger. Through distorted perspectives that place his protagonists on the frontal picture plane, he constructs a claustrophobic space that implicates the viewer. In *Potsdamer Platz* (page 127) the traffic island is cropped in a way that suggests we are about to join the two cocottes. Brushwork throughout the series captures the frenzy of the city, with its tensions and clamor. In one example, *Two Women on the Street* (page 122), the strokes build a surface that seems to rock with an inner explosiveness.

While male figures appear frequently in the Street Scene drawings, pastels, and prints, Kirchner turns his attention back to the female figure in the paintings, with men serving only a peripheral role. Even in *Street, Berlin* (page 5 left), where a male shares the stage, he does not share the attention. In only one example, the late *Women on the Street* (page 7), does a male figure stand on an equal footing with a female. The figure on the right, in a flowing garment that appears feminine, is actually a man, as identified by his trousers and hat. However, his downward glance points to a secondary role, while a female on the left also occupies a prominent position.[27] In *Berlin Street Scene* (page 89), men are seen from behind, but are placed front and center, seemingly to be preyed upon. Here the bright red lips of the figure on the right forge a direct link to the heavily made-up women.[28] If this male face is indeed a self-portrait, the identification with the prostitutes is especially provocative. With a cigarette thrust in his mouth, a comparable head occupies a position at the lower left of the pastel *Red Cocotte* (page 105). And, in a 1915 lithographic self-portrait (page 16), the cigarette seems like a distinctive mark of identification.

Kirchner makes his cocotte a symbol by emblemizing her. These women of the demimonde, part of a fringe society usually hidden from view, are presented in strikingly assertive poses. One commentator characterizes his streetwalkers in this way: "What holds for them also holds for the mass-produced goods of the time: they 'flaunt, entice, provoke desire.'"[29] Up close to the viewer, these elegant and stylized figures, with blank, mask-like faces, embody the blasé attitude identified by Simmel. But they also seem as haughty and aloof as fashion models whose gestures exude a confidence in their own appeal. In *Five Women on the Street* (page 86), they are as if on stage, resembling dancers in a revue. Social commentator Hans Ostwald, writing at the time, describes such types as a common sight: "the chain of women that strut around the square—or make a 'detour' into the neighboring streets—in front of the flashing bar signs, is endless."[30] In *Street Scene* (*Friedrichstraße in Berlin*) (page 106), they proudly take their position at the head of a line of eager men, while in *Potsdamer Platz* (page 127), they are placed on the proverbial pedestal, calling to mind mannequins in store windows that slowly revolve to show off the latest fashions. There is no shame indicated by these poses, and instead a certain camaraderie among these women is suggested.

Unlike the aura imparted by Kirchner's counterparts on the music-hall stage, the eroticism of these figures is not generated by energetic movements. Their gestures are subtle—like the sway of hips in *Street, Berlin* (page 5 left) or the cinematic turns in *Five Women on the Street* (page 86)—and their offer of sexuality is illicit. Sometimes more dramatic action is found in the male figures, as they boldly step forward or gather in crowds. And a sense of bristling activity is certainly a product of Kirchner's paint handling. Some observers, including the artist in later life, have identified a source of dynamism in geometric patterns that can be established by connecting figures within these composi-

tions. Kirchner noted that rhomboids formed by the heads in *Berlin Street Scene* (page 89) imply motion.[31] But such diagrammatic overlays seem less effective in explaining the effects of his paintings than do his other expressive means.

The particular brand of sexuality associated with the streetwalker leads Kirchner to a distinctive range of color to convey varying moods. Strident red, pink, and purple communicate a sense of dazzling excitement, not simply by defining showy outfits, but also by permeating the streets, sidewalks, and buildings in a highly evocative sign of an eroticized city. Black connotes glamour, but with an added component of danger. The glistening coat of the prominent male figure in *Street, Berlin* (page 5 left) appears satin-like. This color and texture, together with the figure's posture and possibly furtive glance away from the streetwalkers, could be construed as signaling a shady character. Rather than a potential client, he may be the procurer, keeping close tabs on the activities of his "girls." Males in black, dark blue, or deep purple tones lurk in the backgrounds of several paintings, not necessarily as mere pedestrians or potential prey, but possibly as those who themselves are out at night to seek thrills. A black-clad male figure in *Potsdamer Platz* (page 127) steps dangerously into the street from a sidewalk that ends in a threatening point and borders an ominous alley.

Vegetal tones of green or yellow take the paintings in other directions, with a sickly pallor that seems nearly toxic in *Five Women on the Street* (page 86), and with a generally unhealthy glow, presumably shed by bright lights, surrounding the figures in *Women on the Street* (page 7). A tone of diseased green also spreads to the face of one of the figures in *Two Women on the Street* (page 122), where there are clear allusions to the tribal masks that for *Brücke* artists inspired radical new forms while also referencing basic instincts. More than the other blank-faced streetwalkers found throughout the series, these women seem utterly dehumanized by their profession. Black strokes covering the hair of the figure on the right have been interpreted as constituting a widow's veil, but certainly not as defined as the one seen in the *Potsdamer Platz* painting (page 127). Yet the strokes themselves contribute to the mood of distress.

Shifting Interpretations Numerous essays on the Street Scene paintings have contributed to unraveling the meanings embedded in these complex works. Nearly all authors point to the modern metropolis, exemplified by Berlin, as their overarching subject. Kirchner's city has been seen as a symbolic setting for the contemporary human psyche.[32] It has exemplified a money economy and its consequent alienation,[33] while also reflecting the growth of consumerism and its leisure-time activity of shopping in enticing department stores.[34] Its depiction of instability has been recognized as paralleling the formulations of the literary figures of Expressionism,[35] while its aesthetic qualities define a new kind of beauty.[36] It has been understood as the outgrowth of a Germanic tradition, and also of contemporary Darwinism.[37] Yet running through all these various interpretations is a common vocabulary, distinctive in the words chosen to describe these paintings. The disturbing atmosphere has been called fragmented, distorted, jarring, and nervous, while also acknowledging the dynamism, spontaneity, excitement, and pervasive eroticism found there.

In this essay, the city of Kirchner's Street Scenes has been compared to other urban subjects in his art. In addition, the prostitute motif has been examined through the eroticism fundamental to his vision—in nudes, which express a natural sexuality, and in dancers, whose movements and costumes convey an ecstatic energy and exoticism. Examples have ranged from the fluid style of the Dresden years to the taut renderings characteristic of his time in Berlin. Kirchner's extensive working process has been explored in order to demonstrate how he refined his subject and determined his expressive means. Yet the construction of his compositions also needs to be understood in relation to other paintings he executed at the time. Two that contain familiar eroticized motifs serve as examples of a newly self-conscious compositional structure in his art. Such attention to formal concerns might indicate that Kirchner was responding to contemporary modes of abstraction while maintaining his representational and symbolic focus. In describing himself and his art at a later date, Kirchner said: "the only certainty is that he creates from the forms of the visible world, however close or far from them he desires to or must come."[38]

Three Bathers (fig. 35) derives from the summer spent in Fehmarn in 1913 and was probably painted in the studio that fall, at about the time Kirchner embarked on the Street Scene series. Here the stylized nudes and enveloping waves constitute an emblematic structure even more defined than that found in the Street Scenes, while the bathers remain a positive force of nature. Another major work of this period, *Trapeze Acrobats in Blue* (fig. 36), depicts popular entertainers similar to cabaret dancers. This group of female performers is situated high above an audience, made up of what appears to be mostly males. Unlike Kirchner's dancers, however, these women are posed in a complex arrangement that emphasizes angles and fractured space, when they might have been shown in action. Bright colors add to the sense of excitement, fun, and daring, as the glow of spotlights vitalizes this scene.

Another emphasis in this discussion of the Street Scenes has been the fact that Kirchner turned away from his usual erotic motifs when he focused on the streetwalker. With an air of artificiality, this figure exhibits a sexuality that is callous and cynical rather than natural or ecstatic. The alienation and estrangement implicit in this social outcast type is expressed in Kirchner's feelings about prostitution as a, "way out of the search for love...."[39] The break up of the *Brücke* group had cut him off from the personal and artistic support that had sustained him in life and in art during his formative years. Berlin presented itself as a large, hectic, and forbidding city. In the art world, rivalry was more common than friendship, and the level of success Kirchner felt he deserved seemed to elude him. These were lonely and difficult times and the approaching war would soon affect his life in an even more drastically negative way.

Yet, at this time and in this place, Kirchner redoubled his efforts to create the Street Scene series with a burst of creative energy and ambition, enabling him to reach a new level of maturity in his art. Taken together, these paintings present a view not only of the modern city, but of modernity itself, one that captures its many contradictions. The streetwalker personifies these ambivalent forces. The teeming metropolis, a magnet for business as well as culture, is glamorous and alluring, but also crowded, impersonal, and filled with dangerous elements. All these qualities of modern life are embodied here, in paintings that come at a distinct time in Kirchner's life, and also at a historic moment for Berlin and for Germany as a whole.

35 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. **Three Bathers**. 1913.
Oil on canvas. 6' 5 3/4 x 58 1/16" (197.5 x 147.5 cm).
Art Gallery of New South Wales Foundation Purchase 1984.
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

36 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. **Trapeze Acrobats in Blue**. 1914.
Oil on canvas. 46 7/8 x 35" (119 x 89 cm).
Private Collection

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As a postscript, one should note that Kirchner took up the subject of the street scene again in the mid-1920s, in Switzerland, where he had settled near Davos during his illnesses of the war years, and where he remained for the rest of his life. This later series was prompted by a visit to Germany made after nearly a decade away. Perhaps stimulated by seeing Berlin again, Kirchner made street scenes his subject once more, in paintings, drawings, and prints. While the series is not as extensive as the one we have examined, with its numerous related works, it demonstrates a renewed dedication to this motif. However, by this time, Kirchner was at a very different stage in his life and in his art. The rural mountains of Switzerland provided a stark contrast to prewar Berlin. Also, artistically, he had come to more fully embrace principles of abstract patterning even as he clung to representational imagery. In *Street Scene at Night* of 1926–27 (fig. 37), a studied detachment from his motif is immediately apparent, as compositional design is the prime concern, rather than authentic feeling or potential symbolism. Unlike the streetwalkers of the earlier series, these figures merely participate in city life, they do not attempt to embody it.

37 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. **Street Scene at Night**. 1926–27.
Oil on canvas. 39 3/8 x 35 7/16" (100 x 90 cm).
Kunsthalle Bremen–Der Kunstverein in Bremen, Germany

Notes

1 It should be noted that Kirchner's work became more abstracted in the 1920s and into the 1930s, seemingly under the influence of contemporary styles. It returned to its more representational emphasis in the last years of his life, in the later 1930s.

2 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, under the pseudonym Louis de Marsalle, in "Zeichnungen von E. L. Kirchner," *Genius* 2, book 2 (1921): 216–34, reprinted in English as "E. L. Kirchner's Drawings," in Jill Lloyd et al., eds., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1880–1938* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2003), p. 226.

3 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, in a letter to Botho Graef, September 21, 1916, reprinted in English in Victor H. Miesel, ed., *Voices of German Expressionism* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), p. 18.

4 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, "E. L. Kirchner's Drawings," 225.

5 Ibid.

6 For the most detailed account of Kirchner's sketchbooks, see Gerd Presler, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Die Skizzenbücher, "Ekstase des ersten Sehens." Monographie und Werkverzeichnis* (Weingarten, Germany: Gerd Presler, 1996). Many of Kirchner's sketchbooks are housed in the Kirchner Museum Davos, Switzerland. Comparisons between some sketchbook drawings and other works, in the plates section of this catalogue, suggest that more research into dates of execution of individual pages would be illuminating.

7 Jill Lloyd, in "Panama Girls: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and the Urban Cabaret," in *North Carolina Museum of Art Bulletin* 17 (1997): 16, notes that this practice was rare in the Dresden years. Philip Larson, in "Drawing Styles and Graphic Detail in *Brücke* Art, 1905–1920," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, New York, 1971), pp. 152–53, points to a change in Kirchner's practice in 1911, when he began to use drawing as a more extensive part of his creative process. Larson states: "Pure art now proved just as exciting to Kirchner as his immediate sensations and a foreign notion crept into *Brücke* art: a drawing need not first of all serve the artist's response to observed nature. A drawing could instead serve the compositional demands of some hypothetical painting or print. This theoretical change paved the way for innumerable formal inventions in the future."

8 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, "E. L. Kirchner's Drawings," 225–26. The term recurs in other writings.

9 Ibid., 226.

10 Ibid.

11 Patricia G. Berman, *Modern Hieroglyphs: Gestural Drawing and the European Vanguard, 1900–1918* (Wellesley, Mass.: Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, 1994), p. 97.

12 For two examples of the use of this term, see Katharina Sykora, *Weiblichkeit, Großstadt, Moderne: Ernst Ludwig Kirchners Berliner Straßenszenen, 1913–1915* (Berlin: Museumspädagogischer Dienst Berlin, 1996), p. 46, and Magdalena M. Moeller, "Höhepunkt des Expressionismus: Kirchners Berliner Stil der Jahre 1911–1914," in Magdalena M. Moeller and Roland Scotti, eds., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, und Druckgraphik. Eine Ausstellung zum 60. Todestag* (Munich: Hirmer, 1998), p. 29.

13 Correspondences can also occur in other works. For example, the sketch on page 88 right, mentioned as resembling *Berlin Street Scene*, also has a clear relationship to the print on page 113 top.

14 The identification of the widow's veil is cited in many discussions of *Potsdamer Platz*. Scholar Sherwin Simmons in "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913–16," *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (March 2000): 130, n. 108, discusses the sexual connotations of women's mourning attire after the outbreak of the war.

15 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, under the pseudonym Louis de Marsalle, in "Über Kirchners Graphik," *Genius* 3, book 2 (1922): 251–63, reprinted in English as, "On Kirchner's Graphic Works," in Jill Lloyd et al., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, p. 227.

16 Ibid., p. 229.

17 Pamela Kort, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Berlin Street Scene* (New York: Neue Galerie Museum for German and Austrian Art, 2007), pp. 31–32.

18 Andrew Robison, "Beziehungen zwischen den künstlerischen Gattungen im Schaffen von Ernst Ludwig Kirchner," in Anita Beloubek-Hammer, ed., *E. L. Kirchner, "Ekstase des ersten Sehens" und gestaltete Form: Kolloquium anlässlich der Ausstellung "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Erstes Sehen. Das Werk im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett"* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2007), p. 81, suggests that Kirchner also used the method of "open-biting" in his etchings, which means that he exposed the plate to acid without the barrier of any resist. Robison argues that he did this "so the image became rougher in line and tone and appeared more spontaneous or sketch-like." (Robison provided the author with an English translation of his text.)

19 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, "On Kirchner's Graphic Works," p. 228.

20 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, in a letter to Gustav Schiefler, November 12, 1916, as cited in Roland Scotti, "War, Art, and Crisis: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1914–1918," in Jill Lloyd et al., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, p. 28. The entire letter appears in Wolfgang Henze, ed., with Annemarie Dube-Heynig and Magdalena Kraemer-Noble, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Gustav Schiefler, Briefwechsel, 1910–1935/1938: Mit Briefen von und an Luise Schiefler und Erna Kirchner sowie weiteren Dokumenten aus Schieflers Korrespondenz-Ablage* (Stuttgart and Zurich: Belser, 1990), p. 83 (letter no. 65).

21 Katharina Henkel, "Kirchners Berliner Jahre 1911 bis 1917," in Katharina Henkel and Roland März, eds., *Der Potsdamer Platz: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner und der Untergang Preußens* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz; G+H, 2001), p. 202.

22 Kirchner had five solo exhibitions and was in more than fifteen group shows from 1914–18, according to Scotti, "War, Art, and Crisis," p. 46, n. 8.

23 See Donald E. Gordon, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 319, for the exhibition history of *Street Scene* (*Friedrichstraße in Berlin*). See Lucius Grisebach and Annette Meyer zu Eissen, eds., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1880–1938* (Berlin: Nationalgalerie Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 1979), p. 193, for the exhibition history of *Two Women on the Street*, and p. 194 for *Potsdamer Platz*. For further reference to *Potsdamer Platz* see Roland März, "Am Abgrund: Kirchners Potsdamer Platz," in Henkel and März, *Der Potsdamer Platz*, p. 37.

24 The provenance history for *Street, Berlin*, 1913, is recorded on The Museum of Modern Art website (http://www.moma.org/collection/provenance) within the "Provenance Research Project."

25 For a discussion of this issue of the ambiguous titles, see Charles W. Haxthausen, "Images of Berlin in the Art of the Secession and Expressionism," in Kelly Morris and Amanda Woods, eds., *Art in Berlin, 1815–1989* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1989), p. 80.

26 "Satyr," the anonymous author of "Lebeweltnächte der Friedrichstadt," in Hans Ostwald, ed., *Die Großstadt Dokumente* 30 (1906): 15–16, as cited in Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p. 111. *Die Großstadt Dokumente* is a series of fifty pamphlet-size texts, by various authors, issued from 1904 to 1908, which addresses topics related to the emerging metropolis. Sexuality and the city is one of these topics. For further information on this then-popular series, see Peter Fritzsche, "Vagabond in the Fugitive City: Hans Ostwald, Imperial Berlin, and the 'Großstadt-Dokumente,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 3 (July 1994): 385–402.

27 For a discussion of this painting, see Sabine Fehlemann, *Expressionismus: Meisterwerke aus dem Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal* (Schleswig, Germany: Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen Schloss Gottorf, 2001), p. 44. A proposal is made there to interpret the main figures as two couples, one behind the other. But there seem to be two male heads between the figures in the front couple, joining other males seen in the background.

28 Some commentators have suggested that the two men are sequential views of the same figure, giving him special status. See Gordon, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, pp. 92–93.

29 Rita E. Täuber, "Annäherungen: Kunst und Prostitution im Kaiserreich," in Henkel and März, *Der Potsdamer Platz*, p. 215, who quotes from Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Das Schaufenster," in *Jahrbuch des deutschen Werkbundes 1913* (Jena 1913), p. 59f. See also Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers," 117–48, for a study of the commodity culture aspects of the Street Scenes.

30 Hans Ostwald, "Dunkle Winkel in Berlin," in Ostwald, ed., *Die Großstadt Dokumente* 1 (1905): 21–24, as cited in Rowe, *Representing Berlin*, p. 93.

31 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, in a letter to Carl Hagemann, February 27, 1937, describes, "how the movement of the passers-by is comprehended in the rhombus of the heads which is twice repeated. In this way life and movement arise from an original geometric form." The letter is cited in Gordon, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, p. 93, as well as in other discussions of the Street Scenes. A diagram Kirchner drew in this letter is reproduced in Kort, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, p. 15. This analysis by Kirchner, in 1937, may relate to his interest in abstraction in the 1920s and 1930s.

32 See Ewald Rathke, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Straßenbilder* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, Jun. 1969).

33 See Rosalyn Deutsche, "Alienation in Berlin: Kirchner's Street Scenes," *Art in America* 71, no. 1 (January 1983): 64–72.

34 See Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers."

35 See Magdalena M. Moeller, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Die Straßenszenen, 1913–1915* (Munich: Hirmer, 1993).

36 See Haxthausen, "Images of Berlin," pp. 61–82, and "'A New Beauty': Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Images of Berlin," in Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidrun Suhr, eds., *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 58–94.

37 Kort, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, pp. 28–32.

38 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, "Ein neuer Naturalismus? Eine Rundfrage des Kunstblatts," in *Das Kunstblatt* 9 (1922): 375, as cited in Lucius Grisebach, "Kirchners 'Hieroglyphe,'" in Magdalena M. Moeller, ed., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Aquarelle und Zeichnungen. Die Sammlung Karlheinz Gabler* (Munich: Hirmer, 1999), p. 38.

39 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, in a letter to Gustav Schiefler, January 26, 1920, as cited in Täuber, "Annäherungen: Kunst und Prostitution im Kaiserreich," p. 216. The entire letter appears in Henze, ed., *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Gustav Schiefler*, pp. 158 and 162 (letter no. 138).