
[Mary Chan, Kathleen Curry, Kristin Helmick-Brunet]

Author
Chan, Mary, 1965-

Date
1999

Publisher
The Museum of Modern Art

Exhibition URL
www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/190

The Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.
This exhibition, conceived to highlight monographic strengths in the collection of the Department of Drawings, focuses on four artists who worked more or less contemporaneously, yet whose artistic output and stylistic development remained distinct. George Grosz, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst, and Paul Klee were all active in different parts of Germany from the 1910s through the 1930s (Ernst would relocate to Paris in 1922). Each was influenced by different aspects of Dada and became disaffected with traditional art forms, a disillusionment prompted by the political and social upheaval following World War I. The Museum owns twenty-two drawings by Grosz, thirty-nine by Schwitters, seventeen by Ernst, and forty-four by Klee. This selection showcases the depth and breadth of these holdings.

George Grosz

By far the most political of the Dada groups, the Berlin Dadaists favored a firm engagement with external social reality that promoted direct criticism of the bourgeoisie. George Grosz was a founding member and catalyzing force in the movement. Grosz had twice been called into the army during the war but was eventually deemed unfit for duty after a stay in a psychiatric hospital. His drawing Fit for Active Service (1918), in which a skeleton is pronounced fit by a doctor and panel of officers, encapsulates Grosz’s disgust with the military. His cartoonish figures illustrate his belief that social status influences psychological state and thus determines physical appearance. Indeed, in such mordantly pessimistic drawings the ugliness he portrays also reads as moral decay.

Grosz often collaborated on Dada periodicals and reviews with John Heartfield, whose own politically defiant photomontages embodied anti-authoritarianism. In The Engineer Heartfield (1920) Grosz depicted his friend with a mechanical heart and uniform that suggest Heartfield’s self-identity as an engineer or constructor of photomontages. Together with Raoul Hausmann, Grosz and Heartfield arranged the First International Dada Fair in 1920, during which a German officer’s uniform fitted with a pig’s head was suspended from the ceiling. A Grosz portfolio of prints was confiscated from the exhibition, and the artist himself was placed on trial for insulting the army. From 1918–23, Grosz was a member of the Communist party. About his drawings of this time, he wrote in his auto-
biography, “I considered as futile any art which did not offer itself as a weapon in the political struggle. My art, at any rate, was to be a gun and a sword; my drawing pens I declared to be empty straws as long as they did not take part in the fight for freedom.”

Through the 1920s, he continued making drawings and paintings that ridiculed the establishment, but these project less anger. For example, Circe (1927) borrows the myth of the seductress who turns men into swine in its portrayal of the bourgeois gentleman as a pig, yet the grotesque satire is less trenchant due to the delicacy of the watercolor medium. As Fascism steadily gained power, Grosz realized that his art would not change society, and he emigrated to America in 1933.

Kurt Schwitters

Based for most of his career in Hannover, Schwitters worked often in collage, taking the medium a step further than its Cubist origins. Whereas Picasso and Braque had represented tangible objects in their collages, however abstract, Schwitters used pasted papers to constitute the entire structure of his pictures, creating purely abstract designs. Schwitters collected his materials during his daily walks: tram tickets, stamps, newspaper advertisements, and other debris. In choosing these isolated elements of urban detritus (sometimes even washing the papers to lend them a faded, cleansed appearance), Schwitters allied himself with other Dada artists who sought a return to the primitive and instinctual as an escape from the modern experience.

By 1919, Schwitters had begun titling his works “Merz” or the abbreviated “Mz,” choosing the fragment from the word Kommerz, which had appeared randomly in one of his collages. The Merz drawings were numbered and sometimes assigned descriptive titles based on a cut-out word in the work. These titles, like the word fragments themselves, were intended as both meaningful symbols and formal design elements. Merz came not only to designate the collages, but also Schwitters’s larger scale assemblages, poems, sculptures, theatrical and installation projects, indeed his entire artistic vision.

Although chance played its part in the collection of his found materials, Schwitters emphasized that there was nothing haphazard in his delicately balanced, often dense and complex compositions in which form and material become one. Edges were cut and new scraps added until the desired configuration was achieved, adhering to a strict formal control. Mz 252. Colored Squares (1921), for example, is based upon patterned color contrasts. The marked diagonal of the composition and absence of letters or words emphasize the use of color to unify and flatten the picture surface.

Declared a “degenerate” artist in 1937, Schwitters fled Germany for Norway and
eventually settled in England. In the final months of his life, The Museum of Modern Art provided Schwitters with a grant to complete one of his Merzbau projects (a fantastical architectural space). Built along the wall of a barn and called Merzbarn, the project remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1948.

**Max Ernst**

Collage plays a significant role in the oeuvre of Max Ernst, yet the artist sought to hide the evidence of the technique in order to create an apparently seamless image and further the element of surprise. Sometimes even photographs of the collages were reproduced and called drawings to confuse their status. 1919 marked a key year during which Ernst first saw works by Giorgio de Chirico, abandoned figurative painting, and, having already seen Dadaist publications from Zurich, Berlin, and Paris, co-founded Cologne Dada with J.T. Baargeld. Ernst was invited to participate in the 1920 International Dada Fair although he disdained the Berlin Dadaists. His affinity was with Paris Dada, whose use of imagery outside of fine art, reliance upon chance, strong sense of irony, and predilection for combining the visual and verbal were similar to his own art.

In 1922, Ernst went to Paris where he became affiliated with the group of writers and artists surrounding André Breton that would become known as the Surrealists. Ernst’s collages from this period reflect the chief concerns of Surrealism: dreamlike, hallucinogenic scenes and irrational juxtapositions. He became versed in Freudian psychology, alchemy, and mythology, and was, himself, influential in the development of Surrealist theory as outlined by Breton. Several works executed before the official advent of Surrealism served as archetypes. A catalogue of teaching aids provided a rich source of readymade images, some of which reappear in more than one collage. The Hat Makes the Man (1920) stacks cut-out pictures of hats into anthropomorphic, phallic constructions to merge the contradictory elements of an inanimate object with references to the human and to nature, as well as symbols of bourgeois social repression with sexually charged ones.

From 1925 through 1929 he worked mainly in frottage, a technique akin to Surrealist automatism. This rubbing of pencil on paper placed over different objects produced mysteriously textured images that suggest subliminal apparitions. Ernst also often depicted a mythical half-bird, half-beast christened Loplop. Loplop Introduces Members of the Surrealist Group (1931) weaves photographs of key figures from the movement within a serpentine composition. In 1939 and 1940, Ernst was interned in France as an enemy alien. He fled Europe for America in 1941 but resettled in France in 1953.
Paul Klee

The art of Paul Klee inherently resists easy classification. Rooted in Symbolism, Expressionism, Cubism, Orphism, Constructivism, and Surrealism, his work is a veritable index of twentieth-century art. Klee freely maneuvered between abstraction and representation, creating works which range from the openly gestural to the tightly geometric, the wholly linear to the wholly chromatic.

The most readily apparent and accessible aspects of Klee's art are its lyricism, whimsicality, and wit, all flavored by his predilection for the macabre. His effort to mine the unconscious and discover "innocent" sources of creativity is reflected in watercolors like Twittering Machine (1922). These naïve renderings composed of calligraphic lines depicting fantastical figures hovering in illusionistic space inspired the Surrealists to claim Klee as an influence, although Klee himself never formally joined their ranks.

However, after joining with Vasily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and August Macke in 1911 to form the Blue Rider group, whose artistic tenets glorified color and simplified form, Klee began to temper his previous impulses towards parody, caricature, and satire in favor of the expressive power of color. His devotion to color was secured after a 1912 visit to Robert Delaunay's Paris studio and is manifest in Laughing Gothic (1915). This structured approach to color, characteristic of Klee's later "magic square" pictures, rejuvenated Klee artistically, leading him to declare in 1914, "Color and I are one, I am a painter." Through color Klee expressed his lifelong interest in music, treating a single block of color as one note and each combination of hues as one chord, which through deliberate arrangement compose the unique color harmonies of his art in the 1920s.

Klee's connection to Dada is visible in works such as Vocal Fabric of the Singer Rosa Silber (1922). The collage style and the letters embedded in this lyrical work are similar to Schwitters's rougher Merz collages. By grafting the verbal and the visual, Klee and Schwitters aligned themselves pictorially, though not ideologically, with the Berlin Dadaists, who used the conjunction of word and image as their most potent tool of sociopolitical attack.

After fruitful years as a professor at the Bauhaus and a member of the Blue Four group (with Kandinsky, Alexei Jawlensky, and Lyonel Feininger), Klee's artistic production became sporadic directly due to the trauma he felt as the Nazi offensives against "degenerate" artists began to permeate the German art world. Klee left Germany for his native Switzerland in 1933. Beginning in 1937 until his untimely death in 1940, Klee renewed his interest in Surrealist automatism, producing an amazing 1,580 drawings.

Mary Chan, Kathleen Curry, Kristin Helmick-Brunet, Curatorial Assistants
All works are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art and are on paper unless otherwise noted.

**MAX ERNST**

French, born Germany. 1891–1976. To France 1922; in U.S.A. 1941–50

*Farewell my Beautiful Land of Marie Laurencin. 1919*  
Lineblock with pen and ink, \(15\frac{3}{4} \times 11\)" (40 x 27.9 cm)  
Purchase, 1937

*Helio Alcohodada. 1919*  
Pencil, \(17\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{4}\)" (44.9 x 33.4 cm)  
John S. Newberry Fund, 1969

*Trophy, Hypertrophied. 1919*  
Lineblock with pen and ink, \(16\frac{1}{4} \times 11\)" (41.9 x 28 cm)  
Gift of Tristan Tzara, 1936

*The Hat Makes the Man. 1920*  
Gouache, pencil, ink, and cut-and-pasted collotypes, \(14 \times 28\)" (35.6 x 45.7 cm)  
Purchase, 1935

*Here Everything is Still Floating. 1920*  
Cut-and-pasted relief halftones on color relief halftone on paper, \(4\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{2}\)" (10.5 x 12.4 cm)  
Purchase, 1937

*The Horse He's Sick. 1920*  
Cut-and-pasted relief halftone, graphite, and gouache on relief halftone on paper, \(5\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4}\)" (14.6 x 21.6 cm)  
Purchase, 1935

*The Little Tear Gland That Says Tic Tac. 1920*  
Gouache, pencil, and ink on stenciled wallpaper mounted on board with ink, \(14\frac{3}{4} \times 10\)" (36.2 x 25.4 cm)  
Purchase, 1935

*Stratified Rocks, Nature's Gift of Gneiss. 1920*  
Gouache and pencil on chromolithograph of anatomical subject on board with ink, \(6 \times 8\frac{1}{2}\)" (15.2 x 20.6 cm)  
Purchase, 1937

*Untitled. 1920s*  
Hand-tinted, cut-and-pasted relief halftones on color relief halftone with gold metallic paint and pencil, \(7\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}\)" (18.1 x 24.1 cm)  
Given anonymously, 1952

*The Glimmous Bicycle Garnished with Bells the Dappled Fire Damps and the Echinoderms Bending the Spine to Look for Caresses. 1920 or 1921*  
Gouache and ink on chromolithographic chart, \(29\frac{1}{4} \times 39\frac{3}{4}\)" (73.3 x 99.7 cm)  
Purchase, 1937

*Forest and Sun. 1925*  
Graphite frottage, \(7\frac{3}{4} \times 11\)" (20 x 27.8 cm)  
Gift of Mme. Helena Rubenstein, 1953

*Forest and Sun. 1931*  
Oil on cut-and-pasted corrugated cardboard on board with oil, gesso, and graphite, \(16\frac{1}{8} \times 11\frac{3}{8}\)" (41.1 x 28.9 cm)  
Gift of Lily Auchincloss and the T.illie E Bliss Bequest (by exchange), 1984

*The End of the Road. c. 1919*  
Oil on paper (decalcomania), mounted on canvas, \(15\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{3}{4}\)" (40 x 32.3 cm)  
James Thrall Soby Bequest, 1961

*Maternity (Study for Surrealism and Painting). 1942*  
Pencil and white chalk on orange paper, \(8\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{3}{4}\)" (47.9 x 30.8 cm)  
Given anonymously in memory of William B. Jaffe, 1972

*Forest and Sun. 1931*  
Oil on canvas, \(8\frac{3}{4} \times 11\)" (22 x 28 cm)  
Gift of Pierre Matisse in memory of Patricia Kane Matisse, 1978

**GEORGE GROSZ**


*The End of the Road. 1913*  
Watercolor and charcoal pencil, \(11\frac{3}{4} \times 9\)" (29 x 22.9 cm)  
Purchase, 1958

*Air Attack. 1915*  
Pen and ink, \(7\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{3}{4}\)" (19.9 x 26.9 cm)  
John S. Newberry Fund, 1967

*Metropolis. 1917*  
Oil on cardboard, \(26\frac{3}{4} \times 18\frac{3}{4}\)" (68 x 37.6 cm)  
Purchase, 1946

*Fit for Active Service. 1918*  
Pen and ink, \(20 \times 14\frac{3}{8}\)" (50.8 x 36.5 cm)  
A. Conger Goodyear Fund, 1947

*Maternity. 1940. 1941*  
Oil on paper (decalcomania), mounted on canvas, \(15\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{3}{4}\)" (40 x 32.3 cm)  
James Thrall Soby Bequest, 1961

*The End of the Day. c. 1919*  
Pen and brush and ink, \(18\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{3}{8}\)" (47.5 x 37.5 cm)  
A. Conger Goodyear Fund, 1947
PAUL KLEE

German, 1879–1940. Born and died in Switzerland. In Germany, 1898–1933

Still Life with Four Apples. 1909
Oil and wax on paper mounted on cardboard, 13 1/2 x 11 1/8 (34.3 x 28.2 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Peter A. Rübeiz, 1957

The Hanging Ones. 1913
Pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 12 1/2 x 9 1/16 (32.4 x 25.1 cm)
L-B Foundation Fund, 1969

Snail. 1914
Pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 9 3/8 x 12 7/8 (23.6 x 31.7 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

With the Red X. 1914
Watercolor on paper mounted on cardboard, 12 7/8 x 9 1/4 (32.7 x 24.8 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Laughing Gothic. 1915
Watercolor and metallic painted pen on paper mounted on cardboard, 11 3/8 x 6 1/2 (28.9 x 16.5 cm)
Purchase, 1950

Demon above the Ships. 1916
Watercolor and pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 9 3/8 x 8 1/2 (23.7 x 20.7 cm)
Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1944

With the Flag. 1918
Pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 12 5/8 x 9 5/8 (32 x 24.4 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Elliott Cohn, 1962

Christian Sectarian. 1920
Watercolor and oil transfer drawing on paper mounted on cardboard, 12 3/8 x 9 3/4 (31.5 x 23.3 cm)
James Thrall Soby Fund, 1944

The End of the Last Act of a Drama. 1920
Watercolor, transfer drawing and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 9 1/2 x 13 1/4 (23.2 x 33.3 cm)
Gift of Allan Roos, M.D., and B. Mathieu Roos, 1968

The Angler. 1921
Watercolor, transfer drawing, and pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 20 x 12 5/8 (50.6 x 31.9 cm)
John S. Newberry Collection, 1961

The Arrow Before the Target. 1921
Watercolor and oil transfer drawing on paper mounted on cardboard, 9 3/8 x 12 1/3 (23.6 x 31.7 cm)
John S. Newberry Collection, 1960

Flowers in the Wind. 1922
Watercolor and pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 12 x 8 1/2 (30.5 x 21 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Scherzo with Thirteen. 1922
Watercolor, ink transfer drawing, pen and ink, and pencil on paper mounted on cardboard, 11 x 14 1/4 (27.9 x 35.9 cm)
Purchase, 1951

Twittering Machine. 1922
Watercolor, transfer drawing, and pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 25 1/4 x 19 (63.8 x 48.1 cm)
Purchase, 1939

Vocal Fabric of the Singer Rosa Silber. 1922
Watercolor and plaster on muslin, mounted on cardboard, 24 1/4 x 20 1/4 (62.3 x 52.1 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley B. Resor, 1955
Capriccio Equilibrium. 1923
Pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 13 x 19 5/8” (33 x 49.8 cm)
A. Conger Goodyear Fund, 1950

Girl with Doll Carriage. 1923
Watercolor and transfer drawing on paper mounted on cardboard, 19 3/8 x 14 1/4” (49.2 x 33.7 cm)
Purchase, 1951

A Stage for the Use of Young Girls. 1923
Watercolor, gouache, pen and ink, and pencil on paper mounted on cardboard, 19 3/4 x 12 5/8” (50 x 32.1 cm)
The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection, 1978

Flower Garden. 1924
Black paste ground, gouache, and incising, 17 1/2 x 12 5/8” (44.5 x 32.2 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Old City Architecture. 1924
Watercolor, ink, and white ground on paper mounted on cardboard, 17 1/2 x 25” (43.5 x 63.4 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Physiognomy of a Dream. 1924
Pencil on paper mounted on cardboard, 18 1/4 x 13” (47 x 33 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Saignberg, 1976

The Crooked Mouth and the Light Green Eyes of Mrs. B. 1925
Pen, brush, and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 12 5/8 x 9 1/8” (32 x 23.2 cm)
A. Conger Goodyear Fund, 1950

Early Morning in Ro... 1925
Watercolor on paper mounted on cardboard, 16 1/8 x 21 1/4” (42 x 53.9 cm)
Gift of Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon, 1964

Men with Top Hat. 1925
Gouache and pen and ink on paper mounted on cardboard, 16 1/8 x 11 5/8” (41 x 29.5 cm)
Given anonymously in honor of Margaret Scolari Barr, 1964

Slavery. 1925
Gouache, ink transfer drawing, and pencil on paper mounted on cardboard, 18 3/8 x 25” (47.6 x 35.6 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1935

Sacred Islands. 1926
Pen and ink and watercolor on paper mounted on cardboard, 24 3/4 x 18 1/2” (63.2 x 47 cm)
Gift of Philip Johnson, 1981

Three Fruits. 1927
Pen and ink, 19 1/4 x 12 3/4” (49 x 32.5 cm)
A. Conger Goodyear Fund, 1950

View of Ancient City. 1927
Pen and ink and pencil on paper mounted on cardboard, 8 1/4 x 18 1/2” (20.9 x 46.1 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss, 1956

Fire at Evening. 1929
Oil on cardboard, 13 3/8 x 13 3/4” (33.8 x 33.3 cm)
Purchase, 1970

Aged Dwarf. 1933
Watercolor on paper mounted on cardboard, 18 1/4 x 13 7/8” (46.3 x 35.1 cm)
The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection, 1978

Errand Boy. 1934
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil, 19 1/4 x 12 3/8” (48.6 x 31.4 cm)
James Thrall Soby Bequest, 1979

Letter Ghost. 1937
Colored paste on newspaper, 13 x 19 1/4” (33 x 48.9 cm)
Purchase, 1939

Heroic Strokes of the Bow. 1938
Colored paste on newspaper on dyed cotton fabric, 28 1/4 x 20 7/8” (73 x 53 cm)
Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest, 1979

Intoxication. 1939
Colored paste on tracing paper mounted on cardboard, 14 1/4 x 20 1/4” (36.2 x 5.7 cm)
Gift of Gerrard A. Mellon in memory of her son, Karl N. Mellon, 1986

Lady Apart. 1940
Tempera on paper mounted on cardboard, 25 1/2 x 19 1/8” (64.8 x 49.9 cm)
A. Conger Goodyear Fund, 1950

KURT SCHWITTERS

Drawing A 2. Hansi. 1918
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers on paper with cardboard border, 7 1/4 x 5 1/4” (18.1 x 14.6 cm)
Purchase, 1936

Picture with Light Center. 1919
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers, watercolor, oil, and pencil on cardboard, 33 1/4 x 25 7/8” (84.5 x 65.7 cm)
Purchase, 1950

Revolving. 1919
Wood, metal, cord, cardboard, wool, wire, leather, and oil on canvas, 48 3/4 x 35” (122.7 x 88.7 cm)
Advisory Committee Fund, 1968

Watercolor No. 1. The Heart Goes from Sugar to Coffee. 1919
Pencil and watercolor, 11 7/8 x 8 3/8” (30.1 x 22 cm)
Gift of Mrs. Richard Deutsch, 1985
Mez 39. Russian Picture. 1920
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers, pencil, and cardboard on paper with cardboard border, 7 3/8 x 5 5/8" (18.7 x 14.3 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Untitled (For Hohlt on the Occasion of His Wedding) or (iec). 1920
Cut-and-pasted printed papers and pencil on paper, 9 7/8 x 7 1/8" (25.1 x 18.2 cm)
Gift of Marlborough-Gerson Gallery Inc., 1968

Mezpicture 32A. The Cherry Picture. 1921
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers, cloth, wood, metal, cork, oil, gouache, pencil, and ink on cardboard, 36 1/8 x 27 5/8" (91.8 x 70.5 cm)
Mr. and Mrs. A. Atwater Kent, Jr. Fund, 1954

Mez 458. 1922
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers and cloth on paper with cardboard border, 7 x 5 5/8" (17.8 x 14.3 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Mez 379. Petsdamer. 1922
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers on paper with cardboard border, 7 1/4 x 5 1/4" (18.1 x 13.4 cm)
Purchase, 1936

Mez 448. Moscow. 1922
Gouache, wood, and cardboard mounted on cardboard, 6 x 6 1/4" (15.2 x 15.9 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Mez 430. Santa Claus. 1922
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers on paper with cardboard border, 11 1/4 x 8 1/4" (28.4 x 20.8 cm)
Purchase, 1935

Mez 252. Colored Squares. 1921
Cut-and-pasted colored papers and pencil on paper with cardboard border, 10 1/2 x 8 1/4" (27.4 x 21 cm)
The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, 1967

Mez 2005. Constantinople. 1924
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers, cardboard, wood, and pencil on paper, 5 1/8 x 4 1/8" (13.0 x 10.5 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Mez 379. Elikan. c. 1925
Cut-and-pasted colored and printed papers on paper with cardboard border, 17 1/8 x 14 1/2" (43.5 x 36.2 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

Mez 17. Lisitsky. 1926
Cut-and-pasted colored papers on cardboard, 5 1/4 x 4 1/8" (13.3 x 10.5 cm)
Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953

This brochure is made possible by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.