

The Museum of Modern Art

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PUBLISHED IN GERMANY, 1923

An exhibition of 45 prints published in Germany during one crucial year --1923-- will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from October 20, 1973 to January 13, 1974, where they will be shown in the Paul J. Sachs Galleries.

Directed by Riva Castleman, Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books and Howardena Pindell, Assistant Curator, Published in Germany, 1923, includes work by German artists as well as by many of the artists who moved freely between Russia, France, Switzerland and Holland and stopped in Germany to enjoy the abundant opportunities for print-making in Hannover, Munich, Cologne and the Bauhaus print workshop in Weimar.

The year 1923 was marked by change and the questioning of established traditions throughout Europe. World War I had plunged Germany into inflation and political uncertainty. Recovering from the shock of war and the loss of colleagues, German artists now sought to redefine their positions and to set down new theoretical foundations for their work.

The founding of the Bauhaus in Weimar by Walter Gropius in 1919 represented an attempt to reestablish the role of the artist in society by repairing the breach between the artist and the technician. By 1923, during the first major Bauhaus exhibition, however, there were indications of unrest within the organization due in part to the growing influence of the Dutch De Stijl and Russian Constructivist artists.

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Many German artists were deeply affected by the political turmoil and moral chaos surrounding them. Max Beckmann and Otto Dix, advocates of the New Objectivity, sharply focused in printed images their concerns for mankind, distorted by bitter memories of the war and an uncanny sense of things to come.

A change in Soviet cultural ideology encouraged the departure from Russia in 1922 of Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky and El Lissitzky. They all published prints in Germany the following year. Jean Arp, who had been involved in the Dada manifestations in Zurich during the war, joined Kurt Schwitters, a German Dadaist, in Hannover where they both created prints for Schwitters' Merz publications in 1923.

Disturbingly prophetic of future political and cultural developments was the formation in 1923, at the Pesaro Gallery in Milan, of a group of artists who called for a return to the tenets of classical painting. Their first guest speaker was Mussolini. In November, 1923 Hitler was imprisoned at Landsberg for his participation in the Beer Hall putsch in Munich. It was at Landsberg that he was to write Mein Kampf.

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