

# The Museum of Modern Art

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An exhibition of Kurt Schwitters' work opens at The Museum of Modern Art on July 31 and will remain on view through September 10. It is composed entirely of works in the Museum collections, with examples dating from his first collages of 1918 to works made in England in the last years of his life. Also in the exhibition are prints, books and magazines, and graphics designed by Schwitters which have rarely been exhibited. Photographs of his architectural sculptures, the Merzbau and Merzbarn, and tapes of readings of Schwitters' poetry will be included as well. The exhibition is directed by Jennifer Licht, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture.

Born in Hanover in 1887, Schwitters began to make the collages incorporating rubbish and waste scraps for which he is best known in 1918. Although artists before him had used the collage medium, for Schwitters it became the basis of his style throughout his career.

Words fascinated Schwitters both visually and aurally. His early collages were often composed around a word or name. He also considered typography and graphic design as serious aspects of his work, and formed his own advertising agency. In the early twenties he began to publish his poems, which demonstrate his preoccupation with graphic design, the optical effect forming an active, intrinsic aspect of the poem. Schwitters was famed for his performances of the poems, and participated in many public Dada events.

Schwitters' "life-work" and major artistic effort was his architectural sculpture, the Merzbau; now destroyed but recorded in a few photographs. He began to construct the Merzbau in his house in Hanover in 1923.

Schwitters' art was classified as "degenerate" by the Nazis, and he fled Germany in 1937, first for Norway and later England, where he continued to work until his death in 1948.

(more)

The formation of the Museum's collection of works by Schwitters dates back to 1935 when the first collage was acquired. Since then the collection has been augmented by both gifts and purchases. Nineteen works came to the Museum from the Katherine S. Dreier Bequest in 1953; Miss Dreier was a friend and early patron of the artist. Another group of collages was given in 1967 in The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection. In 1950 Philip Johnson donated a rare collection of more than 30 examples of Schwitters' graphic design assembled by Jan Tschichold, a friend of the artist and himself a graphic designer.

An illustrated checklist of the exhibition with an essay by Jennifer Licht has been published by the Museum and is available in the Museum Bookstore for 25¢.

After its New York showing, the exhibition will tour the United States.

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Additional information available from Linda Gordon, Associate Director, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-2648, -7501

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