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Expressionism is one of the most varied movements in twentieth-century art. From 1905 until the early 1920s it united diverse art forms between figuration and abstraction. The expressionists turned against nineteenth-century naturalism and impressionism, and developed stylistic forms characterized by simplified or distorted shapes, bright colours or colours that contradict visible reality. What mattered were inner perception and personal expression transcending outward phenomena.

Expressionism's great stylistic diversity makes an unequivocal definition essentially impossible. It can best be described as an attitude of mind that rebelled against traditional forms and norms. The expressionists demanded Nietzsche's 'Umwertung aller Werte' (transvaluation of all values), and their radical position led to utopian and visionary concepts. Despite this crucial characteristic, as Doris Wintgens argues in her introduction, there are comparatively few studies about the expressionist utopia compared with constructivist trends in art.¹ And yet it was the expressionists above all who sought an 'earthly paradise' – a future of happiness and harmony, exploring many paths with diverse results.

Industrialization, urbanization and the explosive growth in population since the end of the nineteenth century brought extreme social changes. Life was becoming technologized, scientized and bureaucratized. Expressionists reacted sceptically to this development, perceiving it as inhumane, and designed anti-materialistic visions for a better world. They wanted a radical break with the past so that a new society could be built; initially they greeted the First World War as a cleansing force that would destroy the old – oppressive – order. After the collapse of the German empire, the November Revolution in 1918 brought about the final upsurge of expressionist utopias,

more political than before. But great disillusion swiftly set in.

The most important expressionist art groups before the First World War were the Brücke (The Bridge), founded in Dresden in 1905, and Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), established in Munich slightly later. They represented the two opposing poles of expressionism – the figurative and the abstract.

Brücke

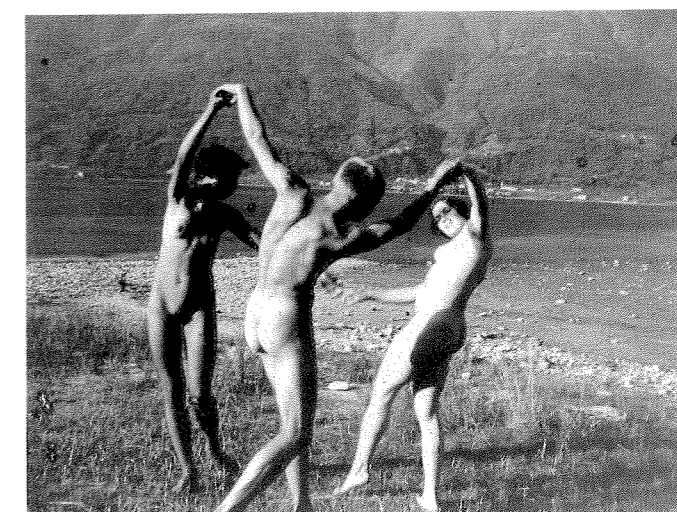
'Der neue Mensch' (the new man) is an expressionist concept that refers to the renewal of man and society and underpinned the Brücke. The name Brücke most probably came from Friedrich Nietzsche's book *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883–1885). There the bridge stands for the longing for change and future orientation, and for the unity of art and life. They wanted, wrote Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884–1976), a member of the Brücke, to attract all revolutionary and provocative elements.²

In the Brücke's 1906 manifesto, youth is the symbol of change and renewal. At its core lie the artist's individual freedom and self-determination.³ Its members announced that that they were seeking spontaneity, originality and naturalness, rejecting art colleges, established methods and styles. They dismissed fundamental fixed rules for making art so that each artist could develop his own artistic language.⁴ To make their point, the four founders, Fritz Bleyl (1880–1966), Erich Heckel (1883–1970), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938) and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff – all students of architecture in Dresden – did not attend art academy.⁵

In the early years of the Brücke, the work centred on the nude. In line with their artistic principles, the artists



Erich Heckel, *Der gläserner Tag* (The Glass Day), 1913 | Oil on canvas, 138 x 114 cm | Collection Pinakothek der Moderne, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich



Johann Adam Meisenbach, *Dancing at Laggo Maggiore in Ascona* (from left to right: Betty Baaron Samoa, Totimo?, Katja Wulff), 1914 | Photograph, 12 x 9 cm | Collection Kunsthhaus, Zurich

attached no value to the academic depiction of correct anatomy and proportions. They distorted the human body to heighten their expression. They studied the body in natural poses, the nudes wandering around Kirchner's studio, and they went into the countryside to paint nudes in natural surroundings. They introduced the *Viertelstundenakt*, fifteen-minute nude poses that forced the artist to capture the essence quickly. Eschewing professional models with practised stock poses, the artists modelled for one another or used their girlfriends, or boys and girls who posed and moved with unforced composure. The intense coexistence of the artists with models and girlfriends was part of a new concept of life and promoted the chance of capturing situations spontaneously on paper. The models were always on hand, so intimate and sexual scenes, far from being hidden, were presented to the viewer in drawings and paintings. There was a unity of art and life.⁶ These artists actually put into practice alternative forms of working and living that were diametrically opposed to conventional morality and the established art institutions – a 'lived' utopia.⁷

Their depictions of the nude were an affront to academic opinions and middle-class morality alike. Curbing the passions, after all, was seen as respectable and civilized. For the Brücke artists, though, 'naturalness' meant a victory over fossilized social conventions. This was to lead to the 'new man', and so desire and passion were at the forefront of their work. Here, too, there are parallels with the work of the revered Nietzsche, who placed the Dionysian worldview and zest for life at the heart of his writings.

The Brücke artists expressed a new attitude to life that cannot be seen in isolation from *Lebensreform*, a movement that took off in Germany around 1900. One well-known example was the alternative lifestyle community on Monte Verità near Ascona, where a new expressionist dance form, the *Ausdruckstanz*, was created.⁸ *Lebensreform* was opposed to industrialization, materialism and urbanization and pursued an original state of nature. Its supporters wanted to cure people of the diseases of civilization and advocated plenty of exercise in the fresh air. Nudism became popular. These views were expressed in the art of the Brücke. If their paintings are to be believed, the artists moved freely and naked with their models in the summer landscape. Casting aside the outward characteristics of civilization and returning to elementary nature, in which an ideal, harmonious symbiosis held sway, they tried to create an ideal state of nature that came close to paradise.

The aim of the Brücke artists was to create in a spontaneous, intuitive and original manner.⁹ This explains their

interest in non-Western art, which they considered original and therefore worthy of imitation. They encountered this art for the first time in the anthropological museum in Dresden. The romantic notion that original human nature could still be found in far-flung places has fascinated artists since the nineteenth century. Emil Nolde and later Max Pechstein travelled to Oceania in the footsteps of Paul Gauguin. Unlike Gauguin, they always returned to the urban environment as active members of society in order to point it in new directions. Their works of art can be regarded as criticisms of civilization, as an expression of abhorrence of society at the time and as a search for new ways of life.

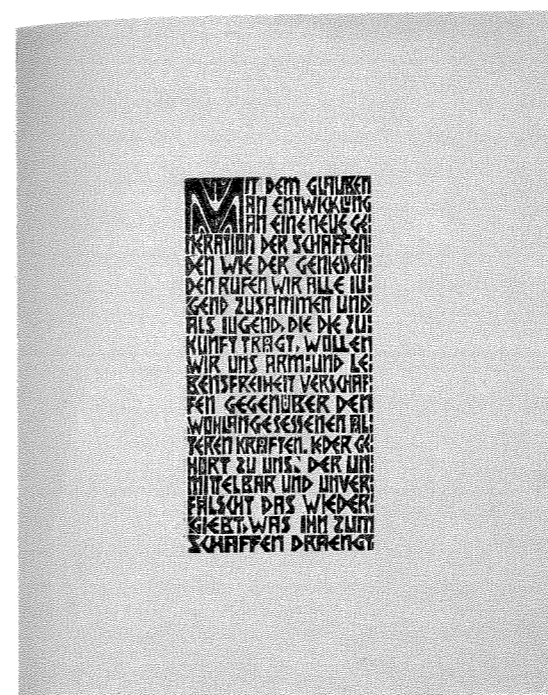
Mythical images and ancient cult worship underlie Nolde's pictures of candle and fire dances. His interest lay in the originality and ecstasy that burst forth from someone in a trance. He and the other members of the Brücke also depicted music halls, cabarets and dance-halls. Nolde spoke of the primitive phenomena he encountered there.¹⁰ In the early 1920s he became acquainted with the young dancing partners Lavinia Schulz and Walter Holdt.¹¹ Nolde was impressed by their costumes, masks and movements and supported them financially. There are clear parallels between the couple's work and his paintings of fantasy figures from this period. The dancers were fascinated by exoticism, primitive art and art linked to religions or cults.¹² Nolde was also friendly with Mary Wigman, one of the leading performers of the Expressionist *Ausdruckstanz*.¹³ He and Kirchner made a number of paintings of her.

In the Brücke art and life formed an entity. Their studios were models for an alternative lifestyle with freedom as the guiding principle. Their works let the viewer join in. The unity of art and life is also expressed in the furniture, murals, embroidery and other objects they made. Their rooms and studios became a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that expressed their utopia. Their art permeated their lives and, conversely, was an expression of their alternative lifestyle.

The group broke up in 1913, when most of the members of the Brücke were living in Berlin. As a group they were no longer able to pursue their ideals in practice in Dresden. However the artists did continue – albeit as individuals – to seek an artistic interpretation of their utopian vision.

Der Blaue Reiter

Unlike the Brücke, Der Blaue Reiter was not a homogeneous, organized group. *Der Blaue Reiter* was the title of an almanac which, however, was only published once – in 1912. The editors were Franz Marc (1880–1916)



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Program of Die Brücke, 1906 | Woodcut, 28.3 x 22.3 cm | Collection Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz



Wassily Kandinsky, Cover of Der Blaue Reiter, 1914 | Collection Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin

and the Russian Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), who had gone to Munich in 1896 to become a painter. In December 1911 these artists staged a *Blaue Reiter* exhibition in the city's Thannhauser Gallery, an exhibition that travelled around a number of European cities until 1914.¹⁴ They also put together an exhibition of prints in Hans Goltz's gallery in Munich in 1912. Among the artists who exhibited were Heinrich Campendonk, Paul Klee, Alfred Kubin, August Macke, Gabriele Münter, Alexej von Jawlensky and Marianne von Werefkin. They are regarded as members of Der Blaue Reiter.

Der Blaue Reiter did not develop a collective style like the Brücke artists, although a clear abstract tendency is obvious. This characteristic cannot be seen in isolation from the desire to conquer materialism, which these artists maintained was far too dominant in their own time. Kandinsky developed an elaborate theory of art in which he argued that art should undermine the soulless, material life of the nineteenth century to construct a new life of spirit and soul.¹⁵ His utopian vision is expressed in the almanac's title print, which symbolizes the victory of the spiritual (St George) over the material (the dragon).

Kandinsky and Marc were not seeking political or economic change; what they wanted was a far more fundamental renewal of human existence. They were convinced that they were on the brink of a new 'spiritualized era' that would make itself known in all aspects of humanity. Art played a central role in achieving it. A radical break with art traditions was needed because they had not led to true spirituality. 'Inner necessity' (*innere Notwendigkeit*), not the outside world, should determine the creation of the work of art. Kandinsky's approach was intuitive. Forms and colours had meaning as bearers of emotional expression.¹⁶ The work of art should engender deeper emotions in the viewer and create a sensitive soul.¹⁷ In rejecting figuration he was endeavouring to show the viewer the way to an entirely new aesthetic experience. His theory focused on the spiritual development of man, which would lead to a new state of mind and ultimately to a change of human nature.

Kandinsky and Marc argued that art and religion were closely linked. Artists should have the prophetic gift of attaining higher spiritual planes, which in turn they could communicate to 'ordinary people'. In his argument about the great spiritual revival, Kandinsky refers to theosophy, which he regarded as one of the great spiritual movements.¹⁸ He was familiar with the writings of Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, who he believed tried to approach the problems of the spirit on the path of inner knowledge. Blavatsky's theosophy was

seen as a revelation of a higher truth originating from a divine centre in man's innermost being. Kandinsky was convinced that the new spirit in painting was linked to the coming spiritual era foreseen by theosophy. His 1911 book *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (Concerning the Spiritual in Art) ends with this prediction.¹⁹

In the early phase of his abstract art Kandinsky often tried to find forms that would in some way remind the viewer of objects from nature, such as the human figure, horsemen and mountain landscapes. One reason for not severing the link with nature completely was that he did not want to create the impression that his works of art had a purely decorative function, like a tie or a carpet. He stressed that the beauty of colour and shape was not the ultimate objective.²⁰ He maintained that people were not yet able to experience compositions of pure colour and form because of traditional views about art. Through his method he attempted to arouse emotional shifts and 'vibrations of the soul' in the viewer. It was important to feel the spirit, the 'inner resonance' of things. His art would prepare the viewer to feel the spirit through the material. His method would confirm that a new spiritual era was dawning for the new man.

What the artists of the *Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* had in common was that they thought that they had found in primitive and non-Western art the purity and originality that most people had lost over the course of their lives. Franz Marc called the artists of *Der Blaue Reiter* and the *Brücke* 'savages', who were fighting a great battle for the new art against the old, organized power.²¹ However the *Brücke* artists addressed themselves far more to earthly sensuality and the intense experience of life; the artists of *Der Blaue Reiter* more to the spiritual. Marc hoped to create symbols of a future spiritual religion that he believed he had discovered behind visible reality.²²

Initially Marc presumed he would be able to find originality in rustic life, so a number of artists from *Der Blaue Reiter* went to live in the country. Later the human figure disappeared from Marc's paintings because he believed he recognized the originality, beauty and purity of life in animals. In his depictions of animals he strove for the utopia of an earthly paradise in which creation appeared to be reconciled again. He empathized with the animal and wondered how it perceived and experienced its surroundings. In his last period he made his works of art more and more abstract and came to realize that 'true' nature could only be conceived or felt through the human intermediary. Marc's vision was focused not on practical realization but, as a spiritual concept, on a distant, intangible future.²³

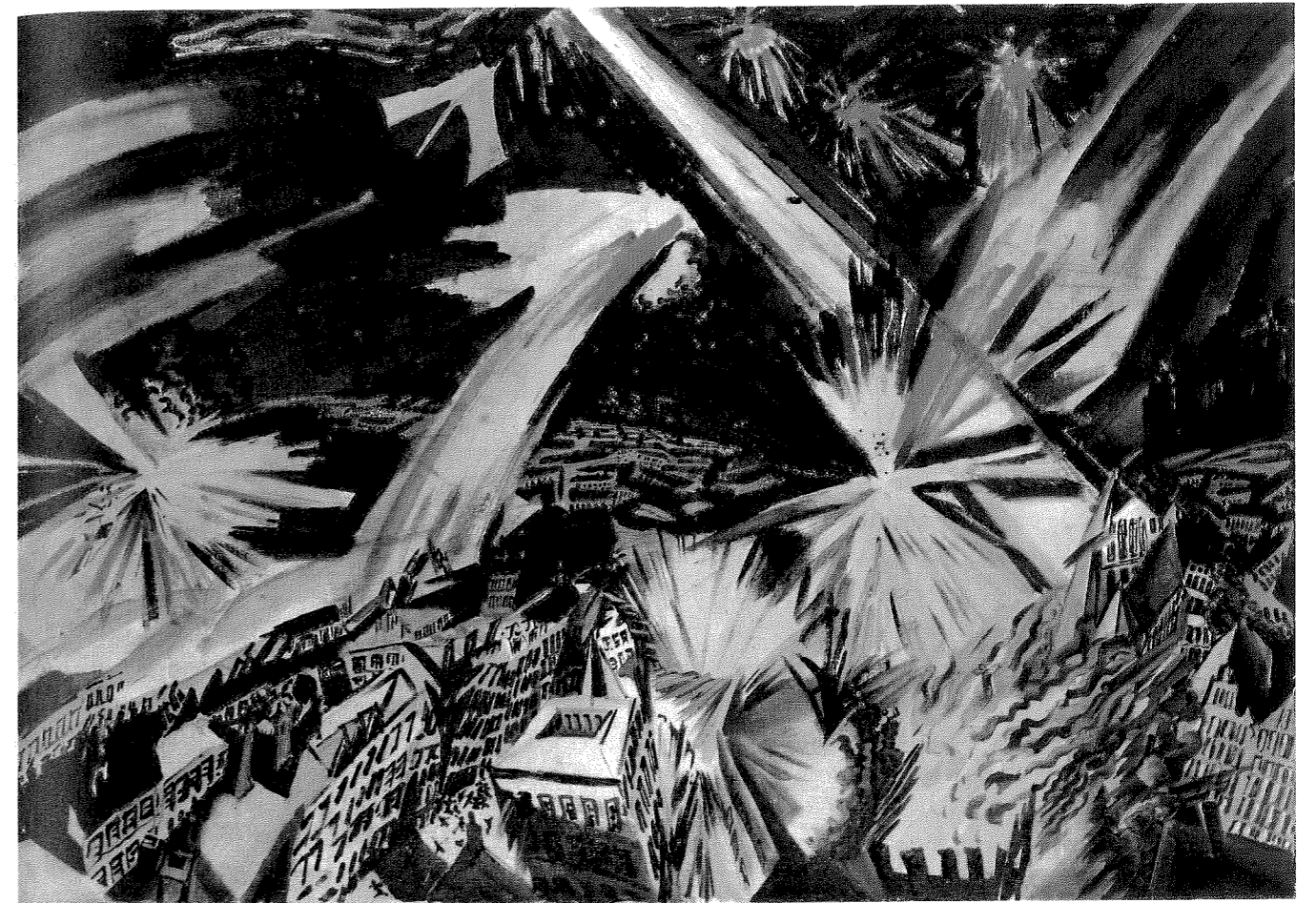
Decline and Renewal

Like most expressionists, Franz Marc welcomed the war enthusiastically as a purifying and invigorating force that would bring the long-anticipated renewal. For him the central issue was the spiritual revolution. He spoke about a 'European civil war', a battle for the mind (*Geisteskampf*) against the inner, invisible enemy of the European mind-set.²⁴ It would create a new European man in the sense of Nietzsche's *Herrenmensch* and a life with new ideals.²⁵ The war would bring forth a higher form of spiritual existence. However, the horrors at the front brought swift disenchantment and the high hopes were destroyed. Like so many artists of his generation, Marc perished there.

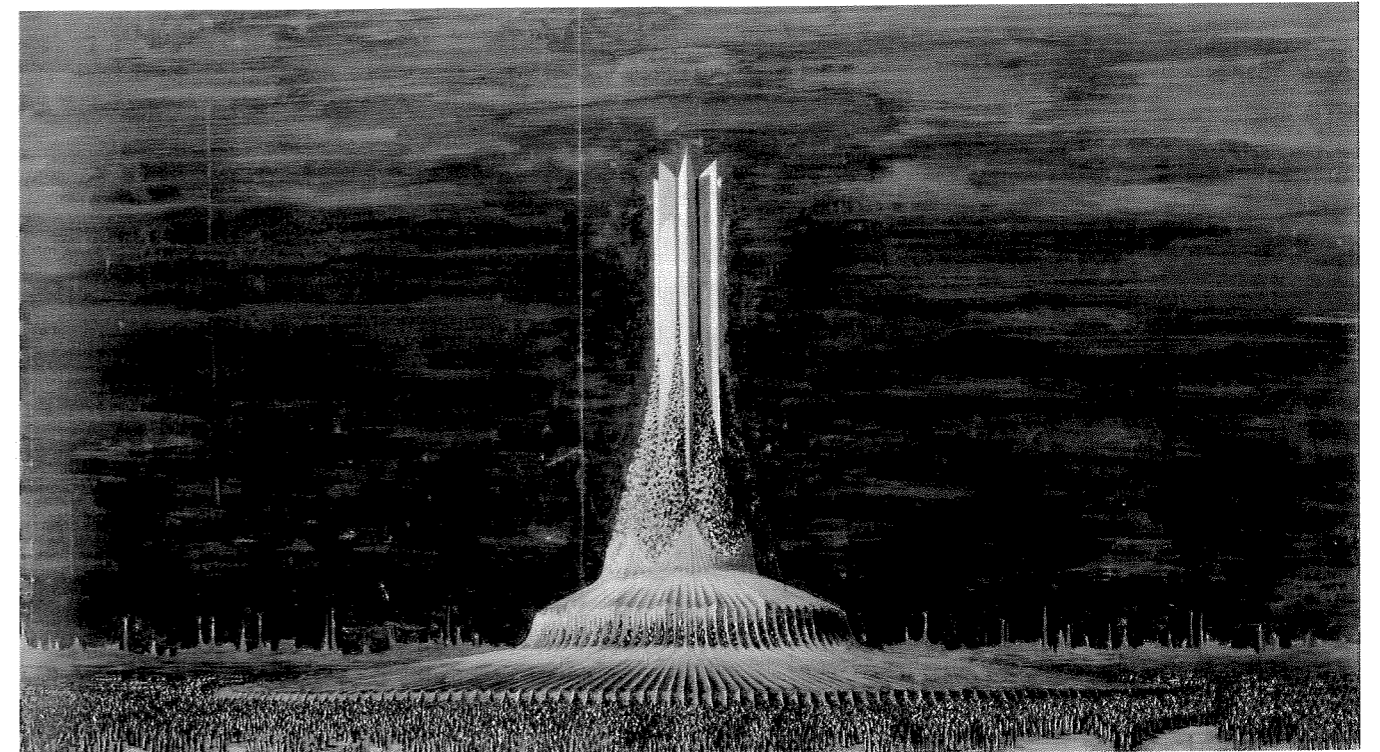
The apocalyptic townscapes by Ludwig Meidner (1884–1966) are often seen as an ominous warning of the First World War; however, this interpretation of his work only emerged during the war. Clearly the majority of these paintings evoke the end of the world, a subject that reflects mankind's primeval fears. Meidner's inspiration came from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and the Old Testament.²⁶ He was also fired by his friend Jakob van Hoddis's famous poem *Weltende* (1911), which is regarded as the expressionist archetype. Destruction and decline were visionary ideals for the expressionists as criticisms of a world perceived as ossified and a validation of the utopia of 'the new man'. These found expression in the apocalypse, the last judgement and war and revolution.

The end of the war was accompanied by revolutionary riots. Workers and soldiers' councils tried to construct a new democratic and socialist state in Germany. A vacuum had been created and it had to be filled. For the first time some artists became politically active and set up revolutionary organizations. At the end of 1918 there were two major societies of progressive artists, architects, writers and composers in Berlin that were closely linked: the *Novembergruppe* and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*. Artists were often members of both groups. Although anti-naturalist, expressionist tendencies dominated, an attempt was made to unite all progressive art forms.

While it is true that the members of the *Novembergruppe* did not share a coherent aesthetic principle, they were united in their dream of brotherhood, of a utopian concept of a large classless society and of the new man. In 1919 the *Novembergruppe* published the pamphlet *An alle Künstler! (To All Artists!)* with a cover lithograph by the former *Brücke* member Max Pechstein. It shows a man clutching his heart, from which flames leap to the town and factories behind him; it is from here that the new society will arise. Although the artists of the *Novembergruppe* originally tried to find answers to the political



Ludwig Meidner, *Apokalyptische Stadt* (Apocalyptic City), 1913 | Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 115.5 cm | Collection LWL – Museum für Kunst und Kultur (Westfälisches Landesmuseum), Münster



Wassili Luckhardt, *Denkmal der Arbeit* ('An die Freude') (Monument of Labour ['Ode to Joy']), 1920 | Pencil, gouache, 74 x 129.4 cm | Collection Akademie der Künste, Berlin

upheavals and drew up political guidelines, they had no party policies or coherent manifesto. Political demands were not worked out and had already been abandoned by 1919. The post-war pathos and idealism in the group disappeared in the early 1920s. The members thought that only radical artistic objectives should be pursued. The idea of changing the world through art remained a utopian dream. From then on, the Novembergruppe concentrated on staging exhibitions.²⁷

The Arbeitsrat für Kunst was established and headed by architecture critic Adolf Behne (1885–1948), architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938) and Walter Gropius (1883–1969), who later founded the Bauhaus. Impressed by the November Revolution, they were passionate about their ideas for a new community. The enjoyment of art would no longer be the privilege of the few but would bring joy to the masses.²⁸ The different arts and architecture, which were to be fused into a single entity, would be revealed to the people in new community centres. The Arbeitsrat demanded the abolition of the established art institutions, after which artists – who considered themselves the new spiritual leaders – would run newly founded organizations.

In a publicity brochure for the Arbeitsrat in December 1919, Behne wrote that their major objective was the communal development of an all-embracing utopian building project that would unite architecture, sculpture and painting.²⁹ The idea is encapsulated in Rudolf Belling's design for *Dreiklang* (Triad, 1919), a six-metre-high monumental sculpture. The three figures symbolize architecture, painting and sculpture. Inside there was to be a stage for an orchestra that would play music by Schönberg, Hindemith and Stravinsky. This synthesis of the arts was never actually constructed full size. In the Arbeitsrat Gropius championed an uncompromising interpretation of their dream of a future new world, because 'ideas die as soon as they become compromises'.³⁰ When the Arbeitsrat staged the 'Ausstellung für unbekannte Architekten' (Exhibition for Unknown Architects) in April 1919 in I.B. Neumann's gallery in Berlin, Gropius wrote to one of the exhibitors, Wenzel Hablik, 'Send me more; in the final instance this is what we want: utopia!'³¹

Their disappointment with the results of the revolution left the expressionists' high hopes in ruins. The artists drew the obvious conclusion from the failure of the utopian building project and the overestimation of the general desire for innovation – the Arbeitsrat für Kunst broke up in April 1921.³²



Rudolf Belling, *Der Dreiklang* (Triad), 1919 | Bronze, 90 x 77 x 73 cm | Collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



Walter Gropius, *Werkstattgebäude* (detail, western glass façade), 1926, photographed by Gert von Bassewitz, 1969



Oskar Kokoschka, *Gesindel in der Sternennacht* (Rabble in the Starry Night), title page of *Der Sturm*, 1910 | Collection Institut Mathildenhöhe, Städtische Kunstsammlung, Darmstadt

Gläserne Kette

In November 1919 Bruno Taut and 14 architects, for the most part exhibitors at the exhibition for unknown architects, began an exchange of letters about the role of architecture in the society of the future. This group, Die Gläserne Kette (the Glass Chain), made sketches and drawings of utopian buildings and cities which they regarded as a signpost to a society in which peace and mutual understanding, not self-destruction, would rule.

Most of the members of the group chose pseudonyms with which they signed their letters; these names often referred to their building ideals. Bruno Taut ('Glas') championed building with glass, Wassili Luckhardt ('Zacken') opted for pointed crystalline shapes, Carl Krayl ('Anfang') hoped for a new beginning and Wenzel Hablik ('W.H.') and Hans Scharoun ('Hannes') used variations of their own names. Gropius's pseudonym 'Maß' (measure) could mean balance, reserve or constraint. Although he did not actively contribute to the correspondence, he followed it with interest and reacted critically in personal letters to Bruno Taut, which he signed 'Maß'.³³

The members of the Gläserne Kette attributed a special meaning to crystal. In their eyes it symbolized the new age and their utopian faith in a perfect society. Crystal is traditionally a symbol of purity, clarity and spirit. The New Jerusalem is also likened to crystal. The architects' designs were often based on crystalline forms. Glass was their ideal building material.

The influence of writer Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915) is evident in Bruno Taut's work. They became friends after Taut had published an article in the magazine *Der Sturm* in which he called upon architects, painters and sculptors to work on a large *Gesamtkunstwerk*.³⁴ Their friendship found expression both in Scheerbart's publication *Glasarchitektur* (1914), a programmed appeal for a building made of glass, and in Taut's *Glashaus* at the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition in Cologne in 1914. Scheerbart's book was dedicated to Taut and the aphorisms that were to be found on the frieze of the glass temple, such as 'Das bunte Glas/ zerstört den Hass' (Colourful glass/ destroys hatred), originated from Scheerbart.³⁵

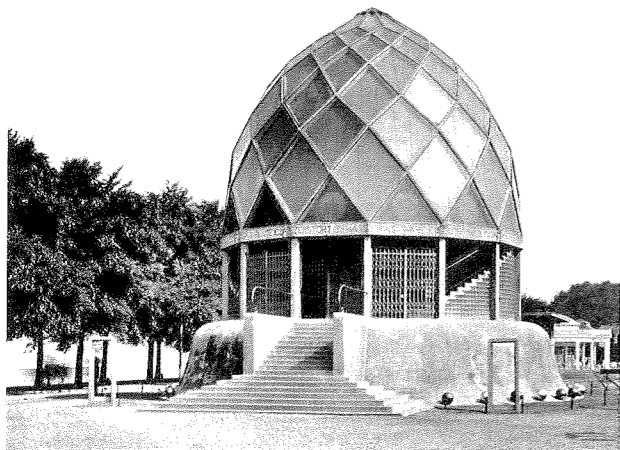
In his book *Glasarchitektur*, Scheerbart advances the theory that the enclosed spaces in which people grow up may have a negative effect on them. He advocated using coloured glass to dematerialize buildings, seeing this as a condition of fundamental social renewal.³⁶ In so doing he took a stand against the consequences of industrialization and the inhuman living conditions in cities. A paradise on earth would only be possible if building in brick were to be replaced by coloured glass architecture.

Taut's *Glashaus*, the Glass Pavilion, was the first expressionist glass building. Staircases with glass steps followed curved walls of glass bricks to a room with a dome. After climbing the stairs, visitors arrived in the filigree dome, where orbs hung in a circle with a coloured light source in the centre. According to a reviewer at the time, the design radiated a warm, subdued light and a fairy-tale sensation. Another staircase led down to a waterfall with illuminated cascades that filled the space with an 'enchancing spectrum of light, space and movement'.³⁷ In his article 'Farbenwirkungen aus meiner Praxis' (1919), Taut described the Glass Pavilion as a lighting effect that began deep blue below, changing through moss green to golden yellow as it rose, culminating in radiant pale yellow at the apex of the space.³⁸ His aim was to create a garment for the soul from coloured glass.

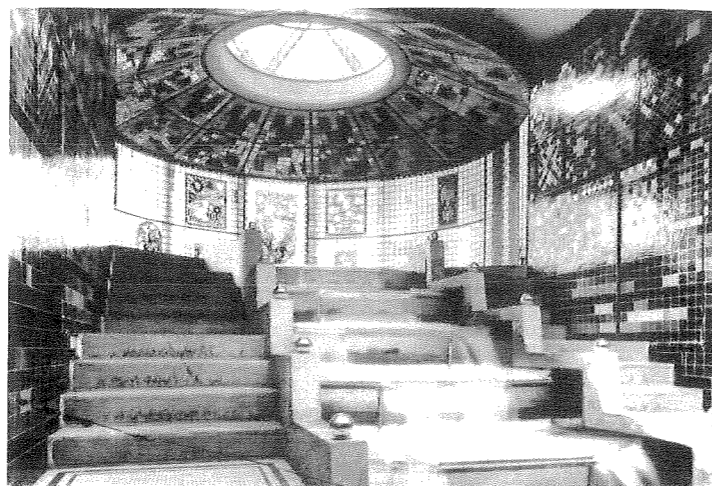
In 1919 Bruno Taut published his *Alpine Architektur* drawings. In them he crowns one of the world's highest mountains with gigantic glass buildings. In a note on the drawing he observed that constructing these edifices would be incredibly difficult and would require sacrifices, but would not be impossible. He quoted Goethe's words: 'One so seldom demands the impossible of others.'

A controversy arose among the members of the Gläserne Kette about the antithesis of inner vision (*innere Anschauung*) and the power of reason. Bruno Taut, Hans Scharoun, Hermann Finsterlin and Paul Gieseler thought that form had only a secondary significance and that faith, vision and imagination were most important.³⁹ This was the only way a state of innocence crucial to spiritual renewal could be created. Imitation of shapes in nature would only lead to a new formalism. Wenzel Hablik and the Luckhardt brothers disagreed with this idea and thought that nothing at all could exist without form.

Bruno Taut represented the 'official line' of the Gläserne Kette. He argued that imagination was truer than reality. Intuitive visions, not rational analyses, were the best pointers. Adolf Behne also rejected rationalism. In an essay that coincided with the 'Neues Bauen' exhibition in Berlin (1920), at which almost all the members of the Gläserne Kette exhibited, he denounced the supporters of cheap housing, which he branded as barracks (*Massenquartiere*) and human stables. He maintained that the architects in the Gläserne Kette wanted nothing to do with the building of such unworthy dwellings.⁴⁰ Until further notice they would rather withdraw into the world of their imaginations and wait for a more favourable time, 'Once the world becomes guided by insight and charitableness, then we will help to build it!'⁴¹



Bruno Taut, *Glashaus* at the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, 1914



Bruno Taut, *Glashaus* [interior] at the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, 1914



Lyonel Feininger, *Kathedrale* (Cathedral) title page of Walter Gropius, *Manifest und Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses* (Bauhaus Manifesto and Programme), 1919 | Collection Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin

Over time the members of the *Gläserne Kette* became disillusioned with ordinary people's lack of responsiveness to their ideas. The hope of a spiritual revolution dwindled before their eyes. Their utopian thinking had reached satiation point and the attention of Bruno Taut and other architects shifted from intuition to rationalism and clarity. The correspondence came to an end in December 1920. Nevertheless the ideas of the *Gläserne Kette* and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* played a great role in the foundation of the Bauhaus.

The Early Bauhaus

On 1 April 1919 – shortly after the November Revolution – Walter Gropius founded the *Staatliches Bauhaus* in Weimar. The manifesto of the early Bauhaus was closely linked to that of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* and the *Gläserne Kette*. Gropius, after all, was a member of the *Gläserne Kette* and chairman of the *Arbeitsrat*. But in contrast to those groups, he managed to build on the reforming ideas from the time of the November Revolution in his manifesto for the Bauhaus and succeeded in achieving important elements of it. His ambition was borne by the hope that something new could be built from the ruins of the lost war and the breakdown of spiritual and economic life.⁴²

Gropius's 1919 manifesto and programme for the Bauhaus opens with the woodcut *Kathedrale* by Lyonel Feininger, who had been developing his 'crystalline' expressionism since 1912. It emerges from the text that the cathedral is a symbol of the fusion of the different disciplines in the arts in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and of the idea of a medieval construction site (*Bauhütte*). Here the cathedral is an expression of an unalienated community in which the individual is subsumed and experiences spirituality, and of the craftsmen who collectively work on the construction and make decisions together. In that sense this community can be seen as a kind of basic democracy.⁴³ The manifesto ends with the solemn words:

Let us together wish for, dream up and create the new building of the future which will be everything in a single form: Architecture and sculpture and painting, that once soared heavenwards from the millions of hands of craftsmen, will now stand as a crystal symbol of a new coming Faith.⁴⁴

In his visionary manifesto Gropius had in mind a utopian building of the future and in the programme he even mentions the communal planning of extensive utopian building designs such as community and sect buildings.

At the same time the programme has a practical orientation, and training based on traditional methods plays a great role. However, the Bauhaus was without an architectural department for years and in the early stages Gropius appointed primarily painters, who determined the institution's image. This is why architecture tends to feature in the Bauhaus programme as an objective for the future: 'The final, albeit remote goal of Bauhaus is the united work of art, the major building in which there is no longer a line dividing monumental and decorative art.'⁴⁵ The different disciplines would be developed separately before being united in the great building in which the new man would be accommodated. Gropius evidently gave the utopia of the new architecture even fewer chances of success than the members of the *Gläserne Kette*. For this reason Wolfgang Peht believes that Gropius was ultimately a greater visionary.⁴⁶ For the time being, the renewal of man would proceed more modestly on the basis of building and craftsmanship. In the post-war period, he saw the crafts as the foundation on which a cooperative of all the creative forces, regardless of social background, could be constructed. He hoped that a new originality would emanate from the common people (not from the artists).

In the early days an esoteric and conspiratorial mood dominated the Bauhaus. Gropius devised ceremonies that sometimes embraced cultic features, and even Bauhaus lecturer Kandinsky's geometric forms of this period stemmed from esoteric contexts. Johannes Itten (1888–1967) was the central figure of the early Bauhaus. He developed the teaching concept and taught the students the obligatory *Vorkurs* (preliminary course). He was a devotee of Mazdaznan, a movement based on Zoroastrian, Christian and Hindu doctrines. With his philosophy of life, he exerted a great deal of influence in the Bauhaus. Concentration, breathing and rhythmic exercises, morning hymns and sermons were part of his teaching method. He wanted to free creative forces in the individual and provoke a mystic perception of things. His aim was to educate creative people in harmony with themselves and the world. He described his teaching principles in his article 'Analysen alter Meister', which was published in the almanac *Utopia. Dokumente der Wirklichkeit* (1921).

While Gropius increasingly distanced himself from his utopian ideas in favour of a pragmatic functional entity of art and technology, Itten clung to the objective of creating a 'new man' through a change in ways of thinking and feeling. When Itten left in March 1923 the Bauhaus underwent a fundamental change.

Even after the reorientation of the Bauhaus around 1923 – when art and technology formed a new entity – the old symbols such as the crystal preserved their identity-forming character, and the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* remained in place. The glass studio building that Gropius designed for the Bauhaus in Dessau in 1925–1926 works like a crystal because of the reflections and was conceived as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, even though it has a modern, utilitarian character and the workshops – like industrial laboratories – developed new products. The idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was not relegated to the background until the arrival of Hannes Meyer, the second director and an advocate of strict functionalism, in 1928.⁴⁷ The notion of utopia lived on. Now, however, it was sought in the possibilities of industrial production. People wanted to use technology to find a solution to social problems.

The development in architecture and design occurred in other art forms, too. In the 1920s, reality again played a major role in painting internationally. Although abstract painting developed further, figuration – and the New Objectivity in particular – dominated in the years between the wars. This movement turned against the utopian models of a better society and humanity, against the spirituality, intuitiveness and irrationality of expressionism.

The initial exalted belief in the liberating power of war had proved to be an illusion. The high standards of expressionism and the associated expectations of a new man in a new society ultimately led to great disappointments. Because expressionism defined itself primarily, not just formally, as a spiritual movement, doubts arose when the intellectual climate changed. The expressionists were creators of a new world, but failed to deal with the real world after the First World War. As far as the painters of the New Objectivity, men like Otto Dix and George Grosz, were concerned there was no longer any question of a lofty vision of the future. They depicted reality in all its horror and imperfection. Although social utopias still appeared to have relevance immediately after the war, they were rapidly overtaken by reality. There was an anti-expressionist mood, and as early as 1920 Wilhelm Hausenstein coined the phrase: 'Expressionism is dead!'⁴⁸

1 One of the few exhibition catalogues that addresses utopia in expressionist art and architecture is *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1993).

2 'Nun, eine von den Bestrebungen der Brücke ist, alle revolutionären und gärenden Elemente an sich zu ziehen – das besagt der Name Brücke.' (Now, one of the Brücke's aspirations is to attract all revolutionary, fermenting elements towards its self, as the name Brücke.) Emil Nolde, *Jahre der Kämpfe, 1902–1914* (Cologne, 1967), 92.

3 The entire manifesto reads, 'Mit dem Glauben an Entwicklung, an eine neue Generation der Schaffenden wie der Genießenden rufen wir alle Jugend zusammen. Und als Jugend, die die Zukunft trägt, wollen wir uns Arm- und Lebensfreiheit verschaffen gegenüber den wohlgenessenen älteren Kräften. Jeder gehört zu uns, der unmittelbar und unverfälscht das wiedergibt, was ihn zum Schaffen drängt.' (With our faith in development, in a new generation of creative and appreciative minds we call on all young people. And as young people who will bear the future we wish to create the room for manoeuvre and freedom of life in the face of the satisfied older forces. Anyone who presents directly and without falsification what drives him or her to creativity can be one of us.) Meike Hoffmann, *Leben und Schaffen der Künstlergruppe 'Brücke' 1905 bis 1913. Mit einem kommentierten Werkverzeichnis der Geschäfts- und Ausstellungsgrafik* (Berlin, 2005), 244–245.

4 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in *Chronik KG Brücke* (1913), illustrated in Hoffmann, *Leben und Schaffen der Künstlergruppe 'Brücke'*, op. cit. (note 3), 309.

5 Ibid., 23–25.

6 Ibid., 205–206 and 227–228. Hoffmann, unlike Peter Bürger (2001), argues correctly that the Brücke artists rejected art as an isolated system, that restoration of the social relevance of art and the destruction of the ossified conventions were essential. Now in contrast to Bürger's opinion it has also been shown that Dada did have sound artistic objectives and was not against the institutionalized status of art but was far more in favour of a radical new art (Van den Berg 2006). The sharp contrast that Bürger creates between expressionism and Dadaism in that sense in his classic text *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974) and elsewhere is untenable. Peter Bürger, 'Die Brücke – eine avantgardistische Bewegung?', in: exh. cat. *Die Brücke in Dresden, 1905–1911* (Dresden: Galerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen/Cologne, 2001), 46–51; Hubert van den Berg, 'From a New Art to a New Life and a New Man: Avant-Garde Utopianism in Dada', in: Sascha Bru and Gunther Marten (eds.), *The Invention of Politics in the European Avant-garde,*

1906–1940, *Avant-Garde Critical Studies* 19 (Amsterdam, 2006), 133–150.

7 Cf. Reinhold Heller, 'Bridge to Utopia. The Brücke as Utopian Experiment', in: *Expressionist Utopias*, op. cit. (note 1), 62–83, here 71.

8 Exh. cat. *Monte Verità. Berg der Wahrheit. Lokale Anthropologie als Beitrag zur Wiederentdeckung einer neuzeitlichen Topographie* (Munich: Museum Villa Stuck/Milan, 1980); Renate Foitzik Kirchgraber, *Lebensreform und Künstlergruppierungen um 1900*, diss. University of Basel (Basel, 2003), URL: <http://edoc.unibas.ch/671/> (accessed 19 January 2013).

9 'unmittelbar und unverfälscht', Hoffmann, *Leben und Schaffen der Künstlergruppe 'Brücke'*, op. cit. (note 3).

10 Manfred Reuther, 'Emil Nolde. Der Tanz in Leben und Kunst', in: exh. cat. *Tanz in der Moderne. Von Matisse bis Schlemmer* (Emden: Kunsthalle/Cologne, 1996), 98–105, here 103.

11 Emil Nolde, *Reisen, Ächtung, Befreiung, 1919–1946* (Cologne, 1994 [1967]), 77.

12 Athina Chadzis, *Die expressionistischen Maskentänzer Lavinia Schulz und Walter Holdt; Studien und Dokumente zur Tanzwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998).

13 Reuther, 'Emil Nolde', op. cit. (note 10), 105.

14 Ortrud Westheider, 'Die Tournee der ersten Ausstellung des Blauen Reiters. Eine Rekonstruktion in Korrespondenzenberichten', in: exh. cat. *Der Blaue Reiter* (Bremen: Kunsthalle Bremen/Cologne, 2000), 49–54, here 49.

15 Wassily Kandinsky, 'Über die Formfrage', in: Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc (eds.), *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich, 1965 [1912]), 132–182, here 136 and 181.

16 Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (Berne, 1952 [1911]), 132–182, here 115.

17 Ibid., 23.

18 Ibid., 42.

19 Ibid., 143. '... dass dieser Geist in der Malerei im organischen direkten Zusammenhang mit dem schon begonnenen Neubau des neuen geistigen Reiches steht, da dieser Geist die Seele ist der Epoche des großen Geistigen.' (... that this spirit in painting it connected organically, directly, with the rebuilding of our new intellectual realm already started, as this spirit forms the soul of the epoch of the truly Spiritual.)

20 Ibid., 115.

21 Franz Marc, 'Die "Wilden" Deutschlands', in: Kandinsky and Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter*, op. cit. (note 15), 28–32, here 28.

22 Ibid., 31.

23 Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, 'Utopie und Abstraktion. Franz Marc und die Bedeutung romantischer Denkvorstellungen für die Kunst der Moderne', in: exh. cat. *Franz Marc. Kräfte der Natur,*

Werke 1912–1915

(Munich: Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst/Münster: Westfälisches Landesmuseum/Ostfildern, 1993), 153–167, here 166.

24 Franz Marc, 'Das geheime Europa', in: *Franz Marc. Schriften*, ed. Klaus Lankeheit (Cologne, 1978 [1914]), 163–167, here 165 and 166.

25 '... dass so rasend schnell der große Krieg kommen würde, der über alle Worte weg selbst das Morsche zerbricht, das Faulende ausstößt und das Kommende zur Gegenwart macht. ... Das Volk ahnte, dass es erst durch den großen Krieg gehen musste, um sich ein neues Leben und neue Ideale zu formen.' (... that the great War would come with such speed, that brings the rotten down irrespective of all words, that triggers the rot, and makes the future the present. ... The people sensed that it would first have to survive the Great War in order to form new life and new ideals.) Franz Marc, 'Im Fegefeuer des Krieges', in: *ibid.*, 159.

26 Angelika Schmid, 'Die sogenannten Apokalyptischen Landschaften (1912/1916): "Mahnende Rufer" des Künstlers Ludwig Meidner', in: exh. cat. *Ludwig Meidner. Zeichner, Maler, Literat, 1884–1966* (Darmstadt: Mathildenhöhe/Stuttgart, 1991), vol. 1, 84–95.

27 Helga Kliemann, *Die Novembergruppe* (Berlin, 1969), 45–46.

28 Exh. cat. *Arbeitsrat für Kunst Berlin 1918–1921. Ausstellung mit Dokumentation* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1980), 87.

29 Ibid., 114.

30 Ibid., 90.

31 'Senden Sie mehr, das ist letzten Endes das, was wir wollen: die Utopie!' Ibid., 82.

32 Armin Schulz, 'Hinein in die Menschheitswogen', in: exh. cat. *Novembergruppe* (Berlin: Galerie Bodo Niemann, 1993), 9–21, here 18.

33 Iain B. Whyte and Romana Schneider (eds.), *The Gläserne Kette. Briefe von Bruno Taut und Hermann Finsterlin, Hans und Wassili Luckhardt, Wenzel August Hablik und Hans Scharoun, Otto Gröne, Hans Hansen, Paul Goesch und Alfred Brust; Korrespondenzen*; 10 (Ostfildern-Ruit, 1996), 9–10.

34 Ibid., 14.

35 Ibid.

36 Paul Scheerbart, *Glasarchitektur* (Munich, 2000 [1971]), 25, 42, 127, etc.

37 W. Durth, 'Die Neuerfindung der Welt als gute Wohnung im All. Bruno Taut und die Gläserne Kette', in: exh. cat. *Gesamtkunstwerk Expressionismus. Kunst, Film, Literatur, Theater, Tanz und Architektur 1905–1925* (Darmstadt: Mathildenhöhe/Ostfildern, 2010), 338.

38 Ibid., 338.

39 Whyte/Schneider, *The Gläserne Kette*, op. cit. (note 33), 16.

40 Ibid., 18.

41 Ibid., 'Wenn die Welt von Einsicht und Güte wird geleitet werden, helfen wir ihr zu bauen!'

42 Gropius in 1963 to Tomás Maldonado. Quoted in: Nicole Colin, 'Bauhaus philosophisch. Kulturkritik und soziale Utopie', in: Jeannine Fiedler and Peter Feierabend (eds.), *Bauhaus* (Cologne, 1999), 22–25, here 22.

43 Gerda Breuer, '"Kristallenes Sinnbild eines neuen kommenden Glaubens". Expressionistisches Handwerk und Gesamtkunstwerk am Bauhaus', in: exh. cat. *Gesamtkunstwerk Expressionismus*, op. cit. (note 37), 402–411, here 407.

44 'Wollen, erdenken, erschaffen wir gemeinsam den neuen Bau der Zukunft, der alles in einer Gestalt sein wird: Architektur und Plastik und Malerei, der aus Millionen Händen der Handwerker einst gen Himmel steigen wird als kristallenes Sinnbild eines neuen kommenden Glaubens.' Hans M. Winkler, *Das Bauhaus 1919–1933. Weimar, Dessau, Berlin und die Nachfolge in Chicago seit 1937* (Cologne, 2002 [1962]), 38–41.

45 'Das letzte, wenn auch ferne Ziel des Bauhauses ist das Einheitskunstwerk – der große Bau –, in dem es keine Grenze gibt zwischen monumentaler und dekorativer Kunst.' Ibid., 40.

46 Wolfgang Pehnt, *Die Architektur des Expressionismus* (Stuttgart, 1981 [1973]), 108 and 116.

47 Breuer, 'Kristallenes Sinnbild eines neuen kommenden Glaubens', op. cit. (note 43), 407.

48 Exh. cat. *Realismus und Sachlichkeit. Aspekte deutscher Kunst 1919–1933* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1974), 11.