

**How to Look *Sachlich*: Fashion and Objectivity in Weimar Germany**

by

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*damit wir nicht vergessen*

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## ABSTRACT

“How to Look *Sachlich*: Fashion and Objectivity in Weimar Germany” is an analysis of the representation and treatment of fashion in the late Weimar works of the architect and designer, Lilly Reich (1885-1947) and the painters, Otto Dix (1891-1969), Christian Schad (1894-1982), and Lotte Laserstein (1898-1993). Its argument is that these artists, through their acute handling of clothing and fabric, pushed the aesthetic program of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) beyond strict *Sachlichkeit* (objectivity) and ultimately show that *Neue Sachlichkeit*, contrary to its association with sobriety, is a style of material extravagance. The terms “*Sachlichkeit*” and “*Neue Sachlichkeit*,” popular in every facet of Weimar culture from fashion to architecture and painting to journalism, connoted matter-of-factness, functionality, and realism. By examining the treatment of fashion and fabric in these paintings and architectural projects, this study, drawing upon design and architectural theory, sheds new light onto the painterly practices of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, while also demonstrating that an emphasis on surface materiality was an aesthetic strategy common to both the architecture and painting of the period. In this way, fashion and an accentuation of tactile surfaces serve as critical links between architectural *Sachlichkeit* and painterly *Neue Sachlichkeit* during the Weimar Republic.

Schad, Dix, Laserstein, and Reich undermine rationality and sobriety in their *sachlich* and *neu sachlich* works by emphasizing the texture and appearance of material surfaces to the extent that they take on expressive lives of their own. By presenting this material excess, these artists respond to a cultural preoccupation with objectivity, the sociopolitical conditions of the



period, and counter the outgoing discourse of spiritualized subjectivity that was tied to Expressionism. For Schad, Dix, Laserstein, and Reich, *Sachlichkeit* offered a mode of cultural production that was oriented around externalized facts and the objective world. Instead of exposing social realities through abstraction and appeals to emotion, these artists represented tangible surfaces and charged them with the task of expressing the material realities of modern life. While neither rational nor sober, the striking appearance of surfaces in their works is nonetheless “objective” in the sense that it constitutes a mimetic response to the processes of objectification and fetishization in market capitalism, which transform both people (subjects) and commodities (objects) into instruments to aid in its perpetual growth.

## INTRODUCTION

### Method and Argument

The words *Sachlichkeit* (objectivity) and *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new objectivity), fashionable amongst visual artists, architects, writers, and critics in 1920s Germany, designated sobriety, functionality, and realism, characteristics befitting modern life in a new democratic republic. Whereas *Sachlichkeit* originated in debates about architecture in the late nineteenth century, *Neue Sachlichkeit* gained popularity in the mid-1920s as a label for post-expressionist realist painting. As Harry Francis Mallgrave has shown, Richard Streiter was the first to employ the term *Sachlichkeit* in an architectural context in his 1896 essay “Aus München.”<sup>1</sup> Roughly thirty years later, Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, director of the Mannheim Kunsthalle, coined the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* in a letter to Max Beckmann dated May 17, 1923 to describe a new breed of realist artists who “remained – or who have once more become – avowedly faithful to a positive tangible reality.”<sup>2</sup> Their distinct origins notwithstanding, the terms, *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, were used interchangeably in the popular media of the Weimar Republic, much to the chagrin of those who advocated for their application in the specific contexts of architecture

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Streiter “Aus München,” *Pan* 2.3 (1896): 249 See: Harry Francis Mallgrave, “From Realism to Sachlichkeit: The Polemics of Architectural Modernity in the 1890s,” in *Otto Wagner: Reflections on the Raiment of Modernity*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1993), 292, note 40.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918-1924* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 155. Quoted in Wieland Schmied, “Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the Twenties,” in *German Realism of the Twenties: the Artist as Social Critic*, ed. Louise Lincoln (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1980), 41.

and painting. Few scholars have analyzed the parallels between the terms, due to their origins at different times and their associations with different media.<sup>3</sup> Given that *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* were defined in relation to a common goal of producing works that were true to the material conditions of the modern world roughly a quarter century apart, I concentrate on the thematic of fashion and consumer culture as a means to demonstrate the similarities between the two terms and the works associated with them.

This dissertation is an analysis of the ways in which the architect and designer Lilly Reich (1885-1947) and the Weimar-era painters, Otto Dix (1891-1969), Christian Schad (1894-1982), and Lotte Laserstein (1898-1993) manipulated the aesthetic program of *Neue Sachlichkeit* by driving its stylistic conventions to an excessiveness that was antithetical to the term's association with strict objectivity. As a result, in the cases of both painting and architecture, this so-called objectivity was neither entirely rational nor sober. *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists so vividly captured the appearance of surfaces that, in these works, the world of things seems to acquire an animated and spectacular life of its own. This objective, albeit exaggerated aesthetic language thrived in the Weimar Republic's culture of fashion, echoing its strategies to seduce consumers through tantalizing sartorial surfaces.

This is the more striking because *Sachlichkeit* originally represented the antithesis of the values historically associated with fashion – the luxurious, decorative, and feminine. But during a period of relative economic stability between 1924 and 1929, *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* acquired a fashionability in spite of the objectivity they signified. The distinctive treatment of clothing, consumer products, and materials by *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists reflects the

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<sup>3</sup> A notable exception is Rosemarie Haag Bletter's introduction to *Adolf Behne: The Modern Functional Building*, trans. Michael Robinson (Santa Monica: The Getty Research Institute for History of Art and the Humanities, 1996), 49-53.

dynamics at play in the Weimar Republic's thriving consumer culture, wherein worth, as Marx argues in *Capital* (1867), is determined by a complex negotiation between objective market values and subjective emotional values. The resulting heightened appearance of clothing and surface materiality in these works is quite literally "objective" in the sense that it exposes the realities of a capitalist system, which reified people and fetishized commodities. By representing the alienating effects of objectification through an objective pictorial mode, *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists, operating under the auspices of realism, lay bare the absurdities, illusions, and conflicts of modern life. The exaggerated visual language of *Neue Sachlichkeit* is, in this regard, objective and true to the distorting conditions of capitalism.

Much like the popularized iteration of minimalism today, with the tiny house movement and Donald Judd-inspired interiors, *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the Weimar Republic suggested abstinence from the inessential, the stripping away of fashion's decorative flourishes in the name of expediency and progress. Yet, as all styles inevitably are, it was coopted by a savvy consumer culture, wherein, paradoxically, less became more. Accordingly, appeals to *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in architecture, fashion, and painting by no means guaranteed total objectivity and simplification on all fronts. The visual and material culture of the Weimar Republic proves that extravagance and *Neue Sachlichkeit* were not mutually exclusive, but rather two sides of the same coin. Embracing the materialist impulses of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, artists responded to and represented the excesses of modern life. These artists pushed *Neue Sachlichkeit* beyond the strictly objective and created works, which exude an undeniable fashionability, but are neither easily consumable nor trenchantly critical.

In contrast to the tendency in scholarship to negatively define *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* as reactions against separate developments in architecture and art, I positively define *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a spectacular material style that is simultaneously bound to and the

inverse of architectural *Sachlichkeit* from the turn of the century. When, in the twenties, *Sachlichkeit* acquired the “*Neue*” that differentiated it from pre-war *Sachlichkeit*, it became fashionable in nearly every facet of Weimar culture. Although existing studies have emphasized the distinctiveness of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting, I focus on fashion as the common thread that binds architectural *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* together. I also expose the ways in which *Sachlichkeit* needed to be presented as a negation of itself in order to be commercially viable. In the twenties, *Sachlichkeit* was framed as an antidote to fashion, all the while exuding a fashionability that Weimar-era critics, visual artists, and consumers alike recognized.

At the turn of the century, architects like Streiter and Hermann Muthesius promoted the principle of *Sachlichkeit* as a means to advance a new and honest mode of building, through which they also repudiated historicist ornamentation and denounced the stylistic whims of fashion. In so doing, they prioritized the building’s use and the specific needs of its inhabitants, while undermining the aestheticism of the past. *Sachlichkeit* represented the reorientation of architecture around these pragmatic concerns and dictated that authentic style was the outcome of design, wherein form and materiality directly conveyed a building’s function. Therefore, unadorned forms and materials as such, in opposition to added decorative programs, were to sustain architecture’s reputation as the mother of arts. With the relegation of ornament to debates about functionalism and aesthetic honesty came the rise of a sumptuous surface materiality. This is evident in works by Reich, her collaborator Mies van der Rohe, Adolf Loos, Peter Behrens, and others at the Bauhaus under Walter Gropius’ directorship.<sup>4</sup> This turn away from

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<sup>4</sup> See Robin Schuldenfrei, “Sober Ornament: Materiality and Luxury in German Modern Architecture and Design,” in *Histories of Ornament: From Global to Local*, eds. Gülru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016), 334-348.

ornamentation and towards simplicity, functionality, and objectivity, did not preclude *Sachlichkeit* from becoming a fashionable style.

In the early-to-mid twenties, painters, eschewing the anti-naturalism and spiritualized subjectivity of expressionism, adopted an “objective” or matter-of-fact attitude towards representation. The visual markers of objectivity in painting included undetectable brushwork, hard-edged contours, static and seemingly airless compositions, as well as polished, metallic surfaces. Since critics and historians often discuss *Neue Sachlichkeit* in terms of cynical resignation and as a repudiation of expressionism, it is easy to forget that Hartlaub also defined the term positively, emphasizing its immediacy in capturing the material realities of the modern world. *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters registered the lavish material culture and psycho-sexual dynamics of the Weimar Republic through a purportedly objective mode of representation. Yet, in paintings of fashionably-clad women, for instance, clothing evades the leveling effects of strict objectivity, and the fantastical qualities of the depicted garments become startlingly apparent. The fastidious treatment of fashionable female subjects and sartorial materials in these works instigates a rich interplay of illusion, performativity, and fantasy that runs contrary to *Sachlichkeit*, disturbing its patterns of style and behavior.

Moreover, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was objective not only because of its association with cool anti-sentimentality, but also because of its status as a figural mode of representation – its *Gegenständlichkeit*. *Neue Sachlichkeit's* *Gegenständlichkeit* or concreteness in representing an external reality through painting is what, for critics and architects like Adolf Behne, drew the definitive line between Weimar-era *Neue Sachlichkeit* and *Sachlichkeit* in architecture both before and after the First World War. Whereas architects championed prewar *Sachlichkeit* as a slogan for use-oriented form and the honest application of materials, *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists returned to figuration as a means to capture a truthful image of the world. As Behne repeatedly argued, the representational aims of painterly *Neue Sachlichkeit* were incompatible with *sachlich*

architecture, whose practitioners sought to dismantle the traditional representational systems of architecture, like figural ornamentation and symmetrical ground plans. Even though I do not disagree with Behne's argument, I cannot accept it as the final word that *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* are wholly incongruous. There is more to be done in recognizing the common traits of both *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

This study, challenging the stark chronological and medium-based divides that separate *Sachlichkeit* from *Neue Sachlichkeit*, demonstrates that concerns about fashion and rich surface qualities are what actually unite them. Furthermore, the fanciful appearance of clothing and fabrics in works by Dix, Schad, Laserstein, and Reich is key to understanding an often-overlooked paradox concerning *Neue Sachlichkeit*, with its purported sobriety, rationality, and objectivity. As they represented women and the materials of fashion, *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists, however committed to realistically depicting the world, produced works that exploit *Sachlichkeit*'s development into a fashion by 1930, despite the movement's intended purpose as a bulwark against fashion. These purportedly objective aesthetic strategies failed to tame the expressiveness of clothing and rationalize the spectacular qualities of fabrics like velvet and silk. In examining this phenomenon, I take an approach that cuts across disciplines and modes of cultural production, demonstrating that the affinity between objectivity in painting and architecture is ultimately bound to *Sachlichkeit*'s historical entanglement with fashion.

### **Ism or Branded Good?: A Brief History of *Neue Sachlichkeit***

Debates about *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s meaning and its efficacy as a label for a movement began right at the time of its introduction in the early-to-mid twenties. Paul Westheim's 1922 survey in *Das Kunstblatt*, entitled "Ein neuer Naturalismus??" (A New Naturalism??) helped to

stoke debates about post-expressionist realism in the Weimar Republic.<sup>5</sup> Prominent art and literary figures, including Hartlaub, Alfred Döblin, Ludwig Meidner, George Groß, Behne, and Wilhelm Michel responded to the survey with varying assessments on how to best represent the modern world. In his response, Hartlaub described two major tendencies in recent realist painting, categorizing them in two wings or *Flügel*. On the left wing were the so-called verists, with the neo-classicists occupying the right. The next year, Hartlaub invented the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* in a letter describing an exhibition that he hoped to open that fall, about which he wrote, “I am interested in bringing together representative works of those artists who in the last ten years have been neither impressionistically relaxed nor expressionistically abstract... who have remained unswervingly faithful to positive palpable reality, or who have become faithful to it once more.”<sup>6</sup> When Hartlaub finally launched the exhibition, *Neue Sachlichkeit: Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus*, in 1925, he employed the two-winged approach, which he had previously described in the 1922 survey and the 1923 letter.

Even Hartlaub, who coined *Neue Sachlichkeit*, included a cautionary word about his terminology in the catalogue for the 1925 exhibition. “We do not want to commit ourselves to the new buzzwords,” he stated.<sup>7</sup> Hartlaub was also careful to point out the indebtedness of *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists to earlier movements, while maintaining that the works in the exhibition did mark a departure from expressionism. He reasoned that the intensity with which this new generation of painters depicted the objects of contemporary life contrasted with the intensity with which expressionist painters registered internal, psychological, or spiritual states. This intensity,

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Westheim, “Ein neuer Naturalismus??,” *Das Kunstblatt* 9 (January 1922): 369.

<sup>6</sup> As quoted in Fritz Schmalenbach, “The Term Neue Sachlichkeit,” *The Art Bulletin* 22, 3 (September 1940): 161.

<sup>7</sup> “Wir wollen uns nicht auf die neuen Schlagworte festlegen.” Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, *Ausstellung Neue Sachlichkeit: Deutsche Malerei Seit dem Expressionismus, 14. Juni – 13. September 1925*, no page numbers.



however channeled towards different aims, was according to Hartlaub, the common denominator bridging the art of the past and present. “Soon one will know,” he wrote, “that the new art was already embryonically present in the older forms, and that the visionary fantasy of the older ones is very much preserved in the "verism" of today.”<sup>8</sup>

As the catalogue introduction suggests, Hartlaub’s left and right wings do not necessarily align with the politics of the artists in each group, but rather indicate different attitudes towards realist representation. On the left, the verists conveyed the tempo of modern life by capturing the material facts of the tangible world. Contrasting the ultra-contemporaneity of the verists, the classicists, on the right, were apparently more timeless in treating objects as conduits revealing the eternal laws of existence in the realm of art.<sup>9</sup> As Hartlaub cautioned, however, these terms were only “half correct” and ran the risk of obscuring the nuances of a diverse set of artistic practices.<sup>10</sup> Historians still cite Hartlaub’s two wings today, but rarely bring to light the hesitancy, which the curator expressed about them in the 1925 exhibition catalogue.<sup>11</sup>

A closer examination of the language Hartlaub originally used to characterize *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting demonstrates that he never conceived of the term as monolithic, let alone entirely stable. The label failed to initiate ideological or even stylistic coherence amongst the group of those artists featured in his exhibition, which ran from June 14<sup>th</sup> through September 13<sup>th</sup> 1925. As a matter of fact, the artists associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit* did not live in a

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<sup>8</sup> “Bald wird man wissen, daß die neue Kunst schon in der älteren keimhaft enthalten war und daß von der visionären Phantastik der älteren selbst im ‘Verismus’ von heute viel bewahrt geblieben ist.” Hartlaub, *Ausstellung Neue Sachlichkeit*, no page numbers.

<sup>9</sup> Hartlaub, *Ausstellung Neue Sachlichkeit*, no page numbers.

<sup>10</sup> “‘Veristen’ hat man die einen genannt, Klassizisten könnte man fast die anderen nennen, aber beide Bezeichnungen sind nur halb richtig, decken den Bestand nur unscharf und könnten leicht wieder zu einer neuen Herrschaft des Kunstbegriffs über die konkrete Fülle der Erscheinungen führen.” Hartlaub, *Ausstellung Neue Sachlichkeit*, no page numbers.

<sup>11</sup> See note 10. Hartlaub, *Ausstellung Neue Sachlichkeit*, no page numbers.

centralized location, nor did they constitute a unified movement with common goals, aesthetic strategies, or political affiliations. There was no collaborative manifesto penned by like-minded artists defining *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a movement. Ultimately, it comprised a loose affiliation of artists brought together by a curator, who, through his exhibition, aimed to showcase new tendencies in realist painting across Germany. At the same time, Hartlaub's own writing makes it apparent that he never intended to impose uniformity onto the group and was from the start, wary of the coarseness of buzzwords or *Schlagwörter*, even though that is exactly what the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* became.

Franz Roh, a contemporary of Hartlaub, took a different approach in his study of post-expressionist painting, *Nach-Expressionismus – Magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten Europäischen Malerei* (1925). The critic and historian did not employ the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, using “magic realism” instead, a concept that did not achieve the same level of popularity. In his book, between the text and the illustrations, Roh included a now oft-cited and reproduced table, showing a list of one-to-one contrasts between expressionism and post-expressionist realism. Under the expressionism column are words and phrases like “ecstatic objects,” “dynamic,” “loud,” “warm,” and “like unhewn stone” that directly oppose qualities of post-expressionist painting, such as “sober objects,” “quiet,” “cool to cold,” and “like bare metal.”<sup>12</sup> Roh sets up a rather stark contrast between the two movements with this table, echoing his argument that a definitive artistic rupture took place in around 1920.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, however, he complicates this narrative throughout the text.

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<sup>12</sup> “*Ekstatische Gegenstände...Dynamisch...Laut...Warm...Wie unbehauenes Gestein*” versus “*Nüchterne Gegenstände...Statisch...Still...Kühl, bis kalt...Wie blank gemachtes Metall*” Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus – Magischer Realismus: Probleme der Neuesten Europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925), 119.

<sup>13</sup> Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, 3.

The label “magic realism” alone encapsulates the tension between fantasy and objectivity that is apparent in many of the paintings associated with the movement, a quality that Hartlaub, too, remarked upon in his 1925 catalogue.<sup>14</sup> It is as though, with “magic realism,” Roh recognizes that some aspects of expressionism survive in the realism of the period. While he insists on the distinct tendencies of post-expressionist painting in the text and the table, he also concedes that historical reality has shown change to be impure, and rarely, if ever initiating an entirely clean break from the past.<sup>15</sup> Hence, for Roh, this development in realist painting was sober and cold, yet magic, as opposed to being “mystical” (*mystisch*) as expressionist art had been. The magic of this realism was not merely its ability to show mystery in the world by literally representing it as magical, but rather to channel objective representation as a force that unleashes the magic of an otherwise unknowable mystery that already exists behind the objective world.<sup>16</sup> Its association with objectivity notwithstanding, this kind of realism captures the magic that radiates from the world of things, albeit through a decidedly cool and sober visual language.<sup>17</sup>

Critic Wilhelm Michel offered yet another perspective on *Neue Sachlichkeit*, citing its origins in a postwar crisis of subjectivity, an *Ich-Krise*. Artists, responding to the traumas from the preceding decade, jettisoned the idealism of expressionist painting and, in turn, depicted the

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<sup>14</sup> See note 8.

<sup>15</sup> “So erhebt sich die grundsätzliche Frage, wieweit Expressionismus und Nachexpressionismus im Sinne eines Nebeneinander oder aber der wirklichen Ablösung der einen Richtung durch die andere aufzufassen sind. Wir müssen hierbei klar halten, daß in der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit der Begriff der Wende in seiner Reinheit überhaupt nicht vorkommt, da alles menschliche Geschehen mit langer Vorbereitung und weitreichenden Nachklängen behaftet ist.” Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> “Mit ‘magisch’ im Gegensatz zu ‘mystisch’ sollte angedeutet sein, daß das Geheimnis nicht in die dargestellte Welt eingeht, sondern sich hinter ihr zurückhält.” Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, forward, no page.

<sup>17</sup> Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, 30.

world as a material network of concrete facts. According to Michel, their *Neue Sachlichkeit* was wholly separate from the *Sachlichkeit* of pre-expressionist times. Yet, this reorientation of values, as he wrote in his review of Hartlaub's 1925 exhibition, did not result in the total dismissal of psychological complexities or even romanticism in painting. Michel explains that this new generation of painters discovered of a new thingliness (*neue Dinglichkeit*), through which they forged "a new mental relationship" with objects.<sup>18</sup> Instead of reproducing their external appearances alone, the artists in Hartlaub's show recognized objects as "solid, psychological facts."<sup>19</sup> Throughout the review, Michel describes the wide array of pictorial strategies employed by artists such as George Grosz, Alexander Kanoldt, Georg Schrimpf, and Dix, all of whom showed at the *Neue Sachlichkeit* exhibition. In their varied representational modes, Michel observes, these artists render *Sachlichkeit* anew, while refusing to "smuggle" the old sense of the word into their contemporary moment.<sup>20</sup>

By stark contrast, Rudolf Arnheim refutes both the newness and artfulness of *Neue Sachlichkeit* altogether in his 1927 text, "*Neue Sachlichkeit* and Old Stupidity."<sup>21</sup> While it made sense to speak of a *Sachlichkeit* as means for purification in architecture and design, it is less meaningful and even misleading, the author notes, to employ the term "*Neue Sachlichkeit*" in the context of painting because it is not new at all. According to Arnheim, this objectivity, in fact, derives from the mimetic traditions of Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the

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<sup>18</sup> Wilhelm Michel, "Die Neue Sachlichkeit," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 28:5 (August 1925): 299.

<sup>19</sup> Wilhelm Michel, "Die Neue Sachlichkeit," 299.

<sup>20</sup> Michel, "Die Neue Sachlichkeit," 299.

<sup>21</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, "Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn," in *Neue Sachlichkeit Band 2: Quellen und Dokumente*, ed. Sabina Becker (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 295-296. Rudolf Arnheim, "Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn," *Die Weltbühne* 23:15 (1927): 591

Renaissance.<sup>22</sup> Yet this so-called objective figuration in the contemporary moment has been degraded into an “uncreative stupor,” in which artists excise any traces of style and individual creative agency. In other words, this *Neue Sachlichkeit* was just good old-fashioned bad art that showed nothing more than the artist’s ability to copy the appearance of objects in the world. Arnheim ironically invokes *Sachlichkeit* in the conclusion of his text, describing a work by Dix at Hartlaub’s show by listing, in a matter-of-fact way, some notable pictorial details visible in the portrait, “brocade fabric, a face, a curly hairstyle...”<sup>23</sup> Even as Dix represents “every needle stitch and eyelash,” Arnheim writes, he conveys nothing substantive apart from a collection of finely painted details. In the eyes of the author, such an approach surely satisfied the materialistic desires of a paying bourgeois audience, who, possessing an unrefined critical acumen, rejoice in expertly executed minutiae.<sup>24</sup> As Arnheim puts it, “An aesthetic of pedantic correctness, this *Neue Sachlichkeit* is a very old one.”<sup>25</sup> Its newness is only found in its “audacity to put out this stupidity as art.”<sup>26</sup>

Writing in the same year and publication as Arnheim, Behne also criticized *Neue Sachlichkeit* for being a style that catered to the bourgeoisie, much as Biedermeier had done in the nineteenth century with its elaborate program of meaningless ornaments. After definitively refusing any positive connection between a painterly *Neue Sachlichkeit* and architectural *Sachlichkeit*, Behne arrives at an appropriate analogy:

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<sup>22</sup> Arnheim, “Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn,” 296.

<sup>23</sup> Arnheim, “Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn,” 296.

<sup>24</sup> “*Der Konflikt zwischen den wilden modernen Malern und dem zahlenden Publikum, daß ‘alle Einzelheiten fein ausgeführt’ haben will, scheint beigelegt.*” Arnheim, “Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn,” 286.

<sup>25</sup> Arnheim, “Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn,” 296.

<sup>26</sup> “*Neu ist nur der Mut, dessen Stumpfsinn als Kunst auszugeben.*” Arnheim, “Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn,” 296.

Finally does a connection exist between the *neue Sachlichkeit* of painters and the *Sachlichkeit* of new architects? Not in the slightest....The Biedermeier of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters corresponds to architecture –Biedermeier-ism.<sup>27</sup>

By comparing it to Biedermeier-ism, Behne argues that *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting is a false friend of architectural *Sachlichkeit*. Unlike abstract painting and *Sachlichkeit* in architecture, *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting conveys meaning through figuration and narrative content. It is, therefore, according to Behne, not at all objective in a progressive sense. Rather, it is *gegenständlich* – or representative of concrete things. Authentic *Sachlichkeit*, on the other hand, in its rejection of ornament and idealized conceptions of form, transmits meaning through materials directly and stays true to lived reality. In this way, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, as a kind of Biedermeier-ism, reverses the logic of *Sachlichkeit*, whose proponents, like Behne, had targeted inauthentic bourgeois styles of the nineteenth century and onward.

*Neue Sachlichkeit*'s prominence during a moment of economic stability, furthermore, helped to establish its reputation as an artistic fashion from which the bourgeoisie could profit. Alfréd Kemény, for example, also called *Neue Sachlichkeit* a Biedermeier-ish style totally incapable of catalyzing social change because it exists to flatter bourgeois sensibilities.<sup>28</sup> Along

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<sup>27</sup> “Besteht schließlich ein Zusammenhang zwischen der ‘neuen Sachlichkeit’ der Maler und der *Sachlichkeit* der neuen Architekten? Nicht der geringste. Die neu Architektur geht wirklich auf ihre ‘Sache’ los – ‘die neue Sachlichkeit’ trotz ihres namens geht glatt an ihrer Sache vorbei! Was sie *Sachlichkeit* nennt ist *Gegenständlichkeit*. Der Gegenstand ist aber für die Malerei niemals die Sache, so wenig ‘Formen’ die Sache des Architekten sind. Wollte man den Vergleich richtig durchführen, so entspräche der gegenständlichen ‘neuen Sachlichkeit’ der Maler eine Architektur, die statt mit ihren sachlichen Elementen mit ‘Formen’ und mit ‘Ornamenten’ arbeitet – eine Auffassung, die die neue Baukunst gerade überwunden hat. Der Biedermeier der neuen *Sachlichkeit*-maler entspricht auch in der Architektur – die Biedermeierei.” Adolf Behne, “Die Neue *Sachlichkeit* oder der unsterbliche Biedermeier,” in *Neue Sachlichkeit Band 2: Quellen und Dokumente*, ed. Sabina Becker (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 298. Adolf Behne, “Die Neue *Sachlichkeit* oder der unsterbliche Biedermeier,” *Die Volksbühne* 2:9 (1927): 5.

<sup>28</sup> Durus (Alfred Kemény), “Zwischen ‘neuer’ und revolutionärer *Sachlichkeit*,” in *Neue Sachlichkeit Band 2: Quellen und Dokumente*, ed. Sabina Becker (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 382-383. Durus (Alfred Kemény), “Zwischen ‘neuer’ und revolutionärer *Sachlichkeit*,” *Die Rote Fahne* (January 1, 1929).

these lines, Walter Benjamin, in a critical assessment of the poet Erich Kästner, argued that *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists are lackeys for the bourgeoisie, writing, “Their function is to bring forth, politically speaking, not parties, but cliques, literarily speaking, not schools, but fashions, economically speaking, not producers, but agents.”<sup>29</sup> By creating objects for consumption and amusement, these artists not only reproduce, but also exploit the “negative calmness” that sustains profit-driven capitalism.<sup>30</sup>

Béla Balázs, in his oft-cited “Sozialismus und Sachlichkeit” of 1928, offers perhaps the most compelling takedown of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. “*Neue Sachlichkeit*,” he explains, “arose as an image of a taylorized world... It is the aesthetic of the conveyor belt. It is the last stage of that reification (*Verdinglichung*), which Karl Marx declared as the greatest curse of bourgeois capitalism.”<sup>31</sup> With this, Balázs identifies a striking parallel between *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s *Versachlichung* (objectification) and Marx’s *Verdinglichung*. This process of objectification, whether its called *Verdinglichung* or *Versachlichung*, is for Balázs, the means through which “all manifestations of life in capitalist societies” become commodity fetishes, seducing consumers with fantastical appearances that hide social conflicts and underlying inequitable material relations. Balázs submits that these consanguineous forms of objectification are, in the final

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<sup>29</sup> “*Ihre Funktion ist, politisch betrachtet, nicht Parteien sondern Cliquen, literarisch betrachtet, nicht Schulen sondern Moden, ökonomisch betrachtet, nicht Produzenten sondern Agenten hervorzubringen.*” Walter Benjamin, “Linke Melancholie: Zu Erich Kästners neuem Gedichtbuch,” *Die Gesellschaft: Internationale Revue Für Sozialismus und Politik* 1 (1931): 182.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Linke Melancholie,” 184.

<sup>31</sup> “*Sie ist als Bild der taylorisierten Welt aus dem Lebensgefühl des Trustkapitals erstanden. Es ist die Ästhetik des laufenden Bandes. Es ist die letzte Etappe jener ‘Verdinglichung,’ die Karl Marx als den größten Fluch des bürgerlichen Kapitalismus bezeichnet hat.*” Béla Balázs, “Sachlichkeit und Sozialismus,” in *Neue Sachlichkeit Band 2: Quellen und Dokumente*, ed. Sabina Becker (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 398. Béla Balázs, “Sachlichkeit und Sozialismus,” *Die Weltbühne* 24, 52 (1928): 916-918.

analysis, not actually objective at all, but rather constitute a “phantasmal objectivity” (*gespenstliche Gegenständlichkeit*).<sup>32</sup>

The following year, Ludwig Marcuse commented upon the inherent contradiction of Weimar-era *Sachlichkeit* being, as he put it, “an un-objective exaggeration.”<sup>33</sup> According to Marcuse, the trend of *Sachlichkeit* proceeded from the desire of artists and writers to embrace an objective attitude towards things by diminishing subjective aspects, like emotion and personality. This intention to depict real life as such resulted in a reality, which was, in his mind “absolutely contrary to itself.”<sup>34</sup> By way of example, he describes the work of an unnamed writer, who “so oddly and vigorously casts a spell of his own personal attitude towards life over the facts...”<sup>35</sup> This leads Marcuse to assert that a true *Sachlichkeit* is implausible due to the “genuine *Unsachlichkeit*” of people.<sup>36</sup> A paradoxical buzzword – “*Sachlichkeit*” – Marcuse asserts, “is only a new exaggeration of the subject: not on the subjective, but rather on the objective ladder.”<sup>37</sup>

Marcuse sums up the paradox of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which has vexed critics and historians since the twenties. In rejecting the expressionist visual markers that emphasize the subjectivity in painting, *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists did not jettison the subjective altogether.

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<sup>32</sup> Balázs, “Sozialismus und Sachlichkeit,” 398.

<sup>33</sup> “*Sachlichkeit, eine unsachliche Verstiegenheit.*” Ludwig Marcuse, “Sterbende Schlagworte,” in *Neue Sachlichkeit Band 2: Quellen und Dokumente*, ed. Sabina Becker (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 388. Ludwig Marcuse, “Sterbende Schlagworte,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 39 (February 15, 1929).

<sup>34</sup> “Aber heute schon deckt es – ironischerweise – eine Realität, die ihm absolute konträr ist.” Marcuse, “Sterbende Schlagworte,” 389.

<sup>35</sup> “*Das tun viele: aber er, an den ich im Moment denke, zieht die Tatsachen so ungewöhnlich energisch in den Bann seines persönlichen Lebensgefühls, daß seine Selbstabstempelung ‘Sachlichkeit’ die groteske Spannung zwischen Wirklichkeit und Schlagwort ganz besonderst prononciert.*” Marcuse, “Sterbende Schlagworte,” 389.

<sup>36</sup> Marcuse, “Sterbende Schlagworte,” 389.

<sup>37</sup> “*Die ‘Sachlichkeit’ ist nur eine neue Verstiegenheit des Subjekts: nicht auf der subjektiven, sondern auf der objektiven Leiter.*” Marcuse, “Sterbende Schlagworte,” 389.



Rather, they confronted the postwar crisis of subjectivity in a visual language that focused more on external appearances and materiality. In this way, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was less an absolute denial of subjectivity, than reevaluation of it through the physical objects in a society grappling with objectification on multiple fronts – from the gruesome aftermath of mechanized warfare, to the future of industrialized production, and the pressures of rationalized labor. For Marcuse and others cited here, *Neue Sachlichkeit* revealed the disingenuousness of artists and writers, who were content to profit from objectivity as an artistic fashion, which was not actually new or even objective. Behne’s scathing remark, equating *Neue Sachlichkeit* with the “phantasmal objectivity” of the commodity fetish, best underscores the term’s treachery.

Already in 1925, Hartlaub and Roh addressed the persistence of the subjective and fantastical in recent realist painting as positive aspects of this work, which developed organically from past movements like expressionism. Yet, only four years after he coined the term, Hartlaub expressed resignation about *Neue Sachlichkeit* in a 1929 letter to Alfred Barr, stating, “In the last analysis this battle cry is today much misused and it is high time to withdraw it from currency.”<sup>38</sup> It is not at all surprising that *Neue Sachlichkeit*, as a fashionable buzzword, failed to communicate this complex negotiation between subjectivity and objectivity during the Weimar Republic. The reasons with which critics dismissed *Neue Sachlichkeit* also reveal justifiable anxieties about artists merely reflecting the reification of lived reality through a fashionable artistic lens that was purportedly objective, but also aestheticizing. What deserves more attention, however, is the capacity of this lens to reveal the critical intersections between modern identity formation and fashion in the Weimar Republic precisely because of the conflation of subjective and objective values that *Neue Sachlichkeit* entails.

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Alfred Barr, “Otto Dix,” *The Arts* 17.4 (January 1931): 237.

When Fritz Schmalenbach referred to the “fashionable formula” of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in his 1940 article “The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*,” he identified the source of Hartlaub’s frustrations. The author, benefitting from hindsight, recounts the term’s history and defines it in the following:

...it was not the “objectivity” of the new painting which the term was intended in the first place and above all to formulate, but something more universal underlying this objectivity, and of which it was the expression, a revolution in the general mental attitude of the times, a general new *Sachlichkeit* of thought and feeling.

Schmalenbach emphasizes a new objectivity in cultural attitudes more broadly as it manifested in the painting of the period, rather than singling out the novelty of the painting’s objectivity as such. Writing fifteen years after Hartlaub’s exhibition, Schmalenbach also explains that *Neue Sachlichkeit* was not a “a community of style...characterized by...machine-like precision and polish”, but rather “a popular slogan for the new mental attitude, a ready-made phrase...to be filled in with a fresh set of connotations.”<sup>39</sup> The popular term moved freely between media and cultural realms, from architecture to painting and fashion, much to the dismay of figures like Behne and Hartlaub himself. Since *Neue Sachlichkeit* seemingly captured the *Zeitgeist* of the twenties, he explains, most people after 1926, had no idea that it originated as a “term of painting.”<sup>40</sup> Schmalenbach’s history of the term goes a long way in explaining Hartlaub’s readiness to dispose of the term, which eventually fell out of favor during the war and the years immediately following it.

Art historian Wieland Schmied revived the discussion about *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the postwar context with his 1968 book *Neue Sachlichkeit und magischer Realismus in Deutschland, 1919-1933*, which appeared twenty-nine years after Schmalenbach’s short essay was published in *Art Bulletin*. Schmied staunchly defended the position that “no movement, however, stands so

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<sup>39</sup> Schmalenbach, “The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*,” 164.

<sup>40</sup> Schmalenbach, “The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*,” 163.

diametrically opposed to expressionism like *Neue Sachlichkeit*, like *Magische[r] Realismus*, no movement was so very “anti-expressionism.”<sup>41</sup> He also writes convincingly about the peculiarities in the strategies employed by post-expressionist realists. Instead of framing *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a proper movement, Schmied emphasizes its ad hoc status as a term serving the purposes of curators and critics, rather than artists first and foremost. He then concludes that the paintings alone, rather than written theories and manifestos, offer the best insights into *Neue Sachlichkeit*, for they evidence, in Schmied’s words, “not as much a new style, as a new mode of seeing” and “new spiritual confrontation with the world of things”<sup>42</sup>

According to Schmied, the pictorial qualities of *Neue Sachlichkeit* are marked by a productive tension between sobriety (*Nüchternheit*) and exaggeration (*Übertonung*).<sup>43</sup> With a supposedly sober and unbiased attitude, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters render all pictorial elements equally important, endowing them with the same level of exactitude and clarity, which, as he put it, “can lead to an exaggeration of details in relation to the picture as a whole.”<sup>44</sup> Most importantly, it is a skeptical, as opposed to a sentimental, attitude that enables these two rather counter-intuitive tendencies of sobriety and exaggeration to work together. Once trapped within the confines of the entire picture, these individually emphasized pictorial details reveal truth

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<sup>41</sup> “*Keine Richtung aber stand so diametral gegen den Expressionismus wie die Neue Sachlichkeit, wie der Magische Realismus, keine Richtung war so sehr ‘Anti-Expressionismus.’*” Wieland Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Hannover: Fackelträger-Verlag Schmidt-Küster GmbH, 1969), 13.

<sup>42</sup> “*Die Neue Sachlichkeit ist weniger ein neuer Stil als eine neue Sehweise; diese entspringt nicht nur einer veränderten Optik, sondern auch einer veränderten Einstellung zu den Phänomenen des Lebens, und sie bedingt eine Hinwendung zu anderen Themen, die in radikalem Maße der modernen Zivilisationsumwelt und dem alltäglichen Lebensbereich entnommen sind.*” Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> “*Zur Nüchternheit und Schärfe des Blicks gehört auch, daß er alle Details wichtig nimmt, daß er sie möglich gleichmäßig genau und klar zu fassen bekommen versucht, was mitunter zu einer Übertonung des Details gegenüber dem Bildganzen führen kann.*” Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus*, 26.

<sup>44</sup> See quotation in note 43. Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus*, 26.

through a material register in objective, rather than subjective terms. This emphasis on objectivity, as Hartlaub and Roh already explained in the twenties, is not necessarily mutually exclusive of subjectivity. Schmied, likewise, observes in certain cases, especially in the paintings by Dix, that the “internal engagement and sobriety of the viewpoint by no means preclude one another.”<sup>45</sup> In fact, he regarded Dix as the expressionist of the verists in Hartlaub’s left wing.<sup>46</sup> He also described Schad’s relentless mental fixation upon people, bodies, and their nakedness. For Schmied, Schad’s mode of painting yielded not only a cool pictorial sharpness, but also depth in the surface as well the interior psyche emerging through the physical body.<sup>47</sup> Schmied’s analysis confirms that an objective mode of painting like *Neue Sachlichkeit* may be positioned against expressionism, but it can also be materially expressive, evoking the psychological charged physical features of objects and people.

This finds no greater expression than in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* portraits. Schmied, writing in a 1991 article “*Die Neue Sachlichkeit Malerei der Weimarer Zeit*,” observed the preference of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters to represent people clothed, “packed in as many wrappers as possible.”<sup>48</sup> He explains, “They paint him [the subject] protected by suits, vests, ties, leather jackets, coats, by gloves, hat or cap.”<sup>49</sup> The masculine bias notwithstanding, Schmied’s statement rings true in the portraits analyzed in the chapters to follow. In embracing an attitude of

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<sup>45</sup> “*Inneres Engagement und Nüchternheit des Blicks schließen einander also keineswegs aus, wie viele Bilder der neuen Sachlichkeit beweisen...*” Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus*, 26.

<sup>46</sup> Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus*, 38.

<sup>47</sup> Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus*, 50.

<sup>48</sup> “*Der Maler der Neuen Sachlichkeit stellen den Menschen lieber angezogen dar, in möglichst viele Hüllen gepackt. Sie malen ihn geschützt durch Anzüge, Westen, Krawatten, Lederjacken. Mäntel, durch Handschuhe, Hut oder Mütze.*” Wieland Schmied, “Die Neue Sachlichkeit: Malerei der Weimarer Zeit,” *Germanica* 9 (1991): 5.

<sup>49</sup> See quotation in note 48. Wieland Schmied, “Die Neue Sachlichkeit: Malerei der Weimarer Zeit,” 5.

*Sachlichkeit* towards the representation of everyday life, these painters convey the objective qualities of clothing, hair, and skin with such exquisite detail that they seem animate on their own, independent of the sitter. Even though the exaggerated materiality of *Neue Sachlichkeit* serves as a rhetorical foil to the ecstatic subjectivity and spiritualized psychology of expressionism, it would be inaccurate to deem *Neue Sachlichkeit* works inexpressive. Rather, these portraits deliver expressivity through the materiality of the physical world, which operates in a dialogue with the subjects that inhabit it.

It was already evident in the twenties and thirties, as the above-mentioned critiques suggest, that *Neue Sachlichkeit* was an artistic fashion, which represented the illusions and materialism that underpinned the Weimar Republic's consumer culture. The other problem was that *Neue Sachlichkeit* remained difficult to define, since it never functioned as a proper movement.<sup>50</sup> Klaus Petersen argued that *Neue Sachlichkeit* has nothing to do with an "ism," stating instead that it is "...a buzzword that no longer effectively combines ideological and formal-aesthetic tendencies."<sup>51</sup> As he points out, scholars often add scare quotes or refer to it as the "so-called *Neue Sachlichkeit*."<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Dennis Crockett deemed Hartlaub's *Neue*

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<sup>50</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of various attempts to define *Neue Sachlichkeit*, see Steve Plumb, *Neue Sachlichkeit, 1918-1933: Unity and Diversity of an Art Movement* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> "Weil wir es hier nicht mit einem neuen Ismus zu tun haben, sondern mit einem Schlagwort, das ideologische und formal-ästhetische Tendenzen nicht mehr gültig zusammenfaßt." Klaus Petersen, "'Neue Sachlichkeit': Stilbegriff, Epochenbezeichnung oder Gruppenphänomen?," *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 56:3 (1982: September): 467.

<sup>52</sup> Petersen, "Neue Sachlichkeit," 464.

*Sachlichkeit* to be a “semantic impasse.”<sup>53</sup> It was for related reasons that Jost Hermand called it a “half term,” which unlike dadaism or expressionism is not recognized as an artistic school.<sup>54</sup>

In these ways and given its affinities with fashion, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was more of a branded goo, as Hermand suggests.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the branded nature of *Neue Sachlichkeit* must not be dismissed, but rather examined more carefully. Critics, ignoring fashion’s legitimacy as a critical creative mode and means of self-expression, failed to recognize the productive juncture formed by fashion and *Neue Sachlichkeit*. On the contrary, its ethos of materialism inspired more than passive reflections of modern life that embolden bourgeois greed. The portraits examined here show that the artists associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit* appropriated the visual languages employed in the consumer culture of the Weimar Republic, in the most powerful examples, to critique its impact on the identities of modern female subjectivity.

While the literature on *Neue Sachlichkeit* is extensive, surprisingly few scholars have grappled with gender and fashion in relation to the term. This is true of the 2015 LACMA exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic*, which presents an impressive breadth of coverage. Yet, with few exceptions, it rehearses familiar narratives about the New Woman’s contentious social status and does not discuss in depth *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s relationship to fashion. Mila Kaneva, on the other hand, argues in *Women in Weimar Fashion* (2008), a study of the illustrated press and female fashion journalists, that fashion and its consumption were significant expressions of female agency in Weimar culture, but she does not extend her field of inquiry to *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting. The

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<sup>53</sup> Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder, 1918-1924* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Jost Hermand, “Einheit in der Vielheit? Zur Geschichte des Begriffs ‘Neue Sachlichkeit,’” in *Das literarischen Leben in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Keith Bullivant (Königstein: Scriptor, 1978), 80.

<sup>55</sup> Hermand, “Einheit in der Vielheit?,” 80.

Weimar Republic's burgeoning fashion industry and its critical ties to female identity formation have been little treated in the copious literature around the artistic production associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Further evidence of this gap is found in two of the most notable contributions to scholarship on the subject, whose authors either anchor the movement and its related phenomenon in male identity or assume masculinity as the norm from which to precede.

In *Cool Conduct* (2002), the German literary scholar and cultural historian Helmut Lethen analyzes a series of social types that employ objectivity as a way to cope with collective feelings of shame after Germany's defeat in the First World War. According to Lethen, the aesthetic and literary strategies of *Neue Sachlichkeit* represent the defense mechanisms of distancing and deflecting that shaped Weimar-era culture. Marked by an externalized gaze and matter-of-factness, this doctrine of "cool behavior" shielded a wounded collective psyche that was burdened by shame. In assessing this phenomenon, Lethen does little to intervene against the stereotype, which he himself points out as a problem, that *Neue Sachlichkeit* is a "male cult," whose male authors often figure women as "ahistorical."<sup>56</sup> Lethen's method is indebted to Helmuth Pleßner, who deployed a hybrid mode of philosophical, anthropological, and sociological thought to analyze the "coolness of society" in his *Grenzen der Gemeinschaft: eine Kritik des sozialen Radikalismus* (1924).<sup>57</sup> The complexity of *Cool Conduct*'s theoretical apparatus leaves little room for the author to differentiate between the experiences of men and women, and as a consequence, he largely glosses over the historical identity politics of the Weimar New Woman in the book.

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<sup>56</sup> Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 73.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Lethen, *Cool Conduct*, 52-100.

Similarly, Devin Fore's *Realism After Modernism* (2012) is a significant reexamination of figuration in modern visual and literary culture, but is restricted by its exclusive focus on male bodies and producers. The argument Fore advances throughout the book is that modern art witnessed a rehumanization during the interwar period, wherein a reinvigorated interest in the human form revived the mimetic traditions of realism. As Fore compellingly notes, however, this development was predicated not upon an idealized and whole body, but rather upon a distinctly postwar notion of the human figure already problematized by "aesthetic modernism, social modernity, and technical modernization."<sup>58</sup> "In sum," Fore asks, "what happens to realism once the human is no longer a perfect integer?"<sup>59</sup> The answer, as *Realism After Modernism* demonstrates, is that the rehumanization of interwar art challenges the totality of realism by representing the fissured reality of modern life and the damaged human figure as the shell protecting a fragile psyche. The formalism of Fore's method enables astute readings of interwar realist phenomena, but shifts the stakes of the book away from the underlying social realities that shaped the different kinds of bodies to be represented. In overlooking the material and aesthetic differences in representations of the male versus the female body, Fore privileges a human figure that is male by default.

Arguing for a deeper engagement with *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s relationship to gender, I concentrate on female subjectivities encountered in artistic and popular portrayals of the New Woman, a social type synonymous with bobbed haircuts and short, loose-fitting dresses that also represented the recently acquired, albeit controversial rights and freedoms of Weimar women. In appealing to objectivity and appropriating the visual language of fashion, the works

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<sup>58</sup> Devin Fore, *Realism After Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2012), 3-4.

<sup>59</sup> Fore, *Realism After Modernism*, 4.



that I analyze failed to align with establishment politics, but criticized from within the hierarchies of class and gender that made Weimar Germany a rather unexceptional and disturbingly familiar product of capitalism. By exposing the critical power of feminist constructions of objectivity within the world of fashion, my work challenges the assumption that *Sachlichkeit* was exclusively the domain of male subjectivity.

The analysis of *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s relationship to fashion enables the subtleties that already existed in Hartlaub's and Roh's earliest discussions of post-expressionist realism to come to the fore. In these works, the subjective authorial viewpoint is minimized in order to emphasize the objective validity of the portrayal at hand. *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters indeed reacted against the subjective impulses of expressionism. However, in so doing, they turned to the objects of everyday life and revealed the expressivity of the material world. Evident in these *Neue Sachlichkeit* portraits is a concatenation of seemingly unedited details, which exist in productive tension with one another. Having leveled objects and people as equal ontological terms, these painters stage a rich interplay between female subjects and the fashionable garments they wear. This intersection between clothing and identity offers a new perspective from which to critique the misguided dismissal of *Neue Sachlichkeit* as an affirmative mode of bourgeois culture.

### **Chapter Outline**

This study contributes to the reevaluation of realism after modernism, but does so by also countering the narrative that presumes *Neue Sachlichkeit* to be a male cult. To be sure, it is not simply the consideration of fashion here that challenges the male-dominated concerns of interwar realism. Instead, the careful analysis of the prominence in *Neue Sachlichkeit* portraits of women, who also happen to be wearing garments depicted with striking details, serves as this project's point of departure. For better or worse, *Sachlichkeit* became a material style in the Weimar

Republic that was materially expressive, but not spiritually expressionistic. Rather than dismissing *Neue Sachlichkeit* on the grounds of being an artistic fashion, I interpret its fashionability as a core aspect of the term that scholars have largely ignored. My approach sheds new light on the historical complexities of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and the anxieties about fashion that it represents.

My analysis of Laserstein in the first chapter explores *Sachlichkeit* as a phenomenon of women's dress. The new ideals of practicality and freedom that the term connoted in ladies' fashion were commonly showcased in publications of the day together with illustrations of daytime functional garb like cotton tennis dresses, woolen driving costumes, and linen summertime frocks. At the same time, the social structures through which *Sachlichkeit* drove this vision of the emancipated New Woman remained largely unchanged, supported by the still dominant patriarchal and elitist cultural values that historically suppressed women and less affluent social classes. In her portraits, Laserstein demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the visual languages that were employed to promote *Sachlichkeit* in mainstream fashion publications. She appropriates these forms in order to confront the quandary that *Sachlichkeit* posed for women living in Weimar Germany's thriving consumer culture. Infusing the fashionability of *Sachlichkeit* with critical messages about modern female identity, Laserstein depicts both the strength and sensuality of the modern Weimar woman.

In the second chapter, I concentrate on *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a label for the realism of Schad and Dix. The complex relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting comes to the fore in the New Woman portraits by these artists, which feature sumptuous portrayals of velvet, silk, and fur. The uncannily objective treatment of sartorial details in these works assist and complicate the viewer's reading of the New Woman's subjectivity, in that fashion functions to both reveal and shield her before the public's gaze. By

uncovering details in the biographies of the painters and analyzing the depiction of sartorial surfaces in their works, this chapter argues that Schad and Dix were *Modemaler*, or painters of fashion in the Weimar Republic. Yet these paintings, however exemplary of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, are not by any means straightforwardly objective. Faced with the task of representing the commodified world of an exploited populace and of reified things, Schad and Dix emphasize the fantasy and expressiveness of clothing by amplifying the very material qualities upon which they targeted a purportedly disinterested eye.

Material extravagance in the stripped-down architecture of *Neue Sachlichkeit* is the subject of the third chapter. Here, I present a case study on designer and architect Lilly Reich (1885-1947), who, with her partner Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), designed the *Café Samt und Seide* (Velvet and Silk Café) as a centerpiece of the 1927 fashion exhibition *Die Mode der Dame* (Ladies' Fashion) at the newly inaugurated exhibition grounds of the Radio Tower in Berlin. With its swaths of fabric suspended on chromed metal rails, the *Café*, as one fashion journalist declared, was an exemplary manifestation of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. I argue that the *Café* itself and *Die Mode der Dame*'s critical reception reveal a tension between the functional and the aesthetically pleasing that contributed to *Sachlichkeit*'s growing commercial success and, in hindsight, can be seen as a part of its transformation into an increasingly empty signifier at the end of the twenties. The *Café* is consistent with the ongoing shift in architecture away from superficial decorative programs and towards bare form and its materials as such that *Sachlichkeit* inspired. Yet, with the *Café*, Reich carried out this logic of *Sachlichkeit* to such an extreme that it announced itself as a style of material opulence, notwithstanding the rhetoric of reduction therein.

Proponents of *Sachlichkeit* believed its principles would help architects and artists safeguard the aesthetic integrity of objects produced in the wake of the rapidly changing conditions of industrial modernity. Since *Sachlichkeit* developed its critical function vis-à-vis the

capitalist forces from which it could never fully escape, leftist critics argued that *Neue Sachlichkeit* was a reifying force complicit in the capitalist project. I contend that the movement's fashionability, precisely its failure to resurrect the stable stylistic categories of an idealized pre-capitalist culture, constitutes a form of critical realism, wherein the dialectical temporality of fashion, which continually borrows from the past while existing firmly in the present, thwarts the post-Enlightenment insistence on falsely linear representations of historical time. The figures in my study emphasized the fashionability of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, offering a commentary on the problem of style under capitalism and exposing the material realities of modern life.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Dressing the New Woman: The Look of *Sachlichkeit* in Lotte Laserstein's Portraiture

#### Introduction: Lotte Laserstein and *Neue Sachlichkeit*

In her portraits, Lotte Laserstein (1898-1993) depicts the fashionable *Sachlichkeit* of the so-called emancipated New Woman in the twenties. During the Weimar Republic, terms like *sachlich* (sober) and *zweckmäßig* (utilitarian or practical) saturated fashion discourse, as they did other cultural practices.<sup>60</sup> The Weimar woman's identity as an enfranchised blue- or white-collar employee necessitated this new vocabulary of dress. A transformation of the legal and political status of German women began in the late nineteenth century and continued through the aftermath of the First World War. By 1918, the *Gleichberechtigung* granted women the right to vote and the same legal status as men, while the 1919 Weimar Constitution secured this equality.

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<sup>60</sup> For an overview of the terms *Sachlichkeit*, *Zweckmäßigkeit*, and functionalism in European architectural discourse see the first chapter of this dissertation. Other valuable sources include: Harry Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 99, 207-211. Also see: Frederic J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). For perspectives on the term in literature: Kerstin Barndt, *Sentiment und Sachlichkeit: der Roman der Neuen Frau in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003) and Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). In fashion: Gesa Kessemeier, *Sportlich, Sachlich, Männlich: Das Bild der 'Neuen Frau' in den Zwanziger Jahren: Zur Konstruktion Geschlechtsspezifischer Körperbilder in der Mode der Jahre 1920 bis 1929* (Dortmund: Edition Ebersbach, 2000). And in the visual arts: Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919-1933* (New York: Prestel Publishing, 2015).

Conservative critics bemoaned these destabilizing developments because they supposedly threatened the woman's traditional identity as a homemaker and mother.

Fashion historian Valerie Steele has argued that some of the most dramatic changes to women's fashion occurred during this period, between the years 1905 and 1925.<sup>61</sup> The New Woman demanded affordable, utilitarian clothing that allowed ease of movement for her modern lifestyle, which included work outside of the home and sports like tennis. In a moment of economic stability after 1924, Weimar women spent 25% of their income on clothing.<sup>62</sup> By 1924, hem-lengths rose to knee level for the first time and remained there until the early 1930s. According to fashion historian Gesa Kessemeier, slim "masculine styles" made of "serious" fabrics such as cotton and wool suggested "*Sachlichkeit* and discretion."<sup>63</sup> While cotton had long been associated with women's fashion, as historian Beverly Lemire has argued, during the Weimar Republic, cotton textiles, particularly when featuring clean, regular geometric designs such as stripes or checks, were considered *sachlich* and distinct from more feminine floral prints, while being implemented in easy-to-maintain utilitarian garments, which were often inspired by menswear designs.<sup>64</sup> Utilitarian, *sachlich* garments served pragmatic needs, and as the decade progressed, functionality in dress acquired its own fashionability.

In the twenties, *Sachlichkeit* was fashionable, fashionable dress was *sachlich*, and so too was the identity of the New Woman. The following is an analysis of Laserstein's representations of the New Women and the latter's relationship to the aesthetics of functionality or *Sachlichkeit* in fashion between 1927 and 1931, taking her 1929 painting *Tennispielerin* as its primary focal

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<sup>61</sup> Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 224.

<sup>62</sup> Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Kessemeier, *Sportlich, Sachlich, Männlich*, 234.

<sup>64</sup> See: Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

point. Through these works, Laserstein responds to contemporary discussions about women's sociopolitical mobility and freedom in the Weimar Republic. Countering stereotyped portrayals of the *sachlich* New Woman, her paintings proffer a more nuanced understanding of modern femininity through *Sachlichkeit*, which Laserstein portrayed as a sensuous yet practical trend. Rather than providing the means to satirize the New Woman, as images in the Weimar press show, the *Sachlichkeit* in Laserstein's work shapes a complex image of identity with relation to class and gender in 1920s Germany. While reproducing the fashionable signifiers of *Sachlichkeit* in her portraits, Laserstein displaces the operations of commodification that undermine the agency and identities of modern women, thereby destabilizing the bourgeois and heteronormative images of femininity that circulated through the same Weimar culture of fashion, in which the artist herself participated.

Two images from 1929, one photographic, the other a painting, figure the New Woman in relation to divergent understandings of *Sachlichkeit*. The first image, lifted from a 1929 issue of the magazine *Illustriertes Blatt*, was featured in Siegfried Giedion's *Befreites Wohnen* (1929) (Figure 1). It portrays a peroxide-blonde fashion model wearing shorts and a sleeveless top, standing in *contraposto* behind a tennis net. The photograph also appears in Mark Wigley's *White Walls, Designer Dresses* (1995). In his study, Wigley uses fashion to deconstruct modern architecture's ambivalent relationship to the myths of rationality and clarity that purport to be beyond the cycles of consumer culture.<sup>65</sup> As the author explains, the photograph of the rationalized woman wearing sports clothing symbolizes the values of modern architecture. Wigley writes, "The white wall is the sports outfit of architecture, a thin coat over the newly

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<sup>65</sup> Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995). Siegfried Giedion, *Befreites Wohnen* (Zürich: O. Füssli, 1929), 83.

pumped-up body of the building.”<sup>66</sup> For figures like Marcel Breuer and Giedion, he argues, it was indeed the woman in sports clothing that allegorized the functional, streamlined surfaces of the modern built environment, which ought to resist the marring decorations of traditional fashion. Wigley interprets Giedion’s tennis player as an exemplar of the historical tendency that equated the rationalized body and unembellished dress of the sporty New Woman with progressive, modernist design.

The second image is Laserstein’s *Tennispielerin* (Figure 2).<sup>67</sup> In the same year Giedion published *Befreites Wohnen*, Laserstein went to a tennis court near her studio in Wilmersdorf, Berlin with her best friend and favorite model Traute Rose.<sup>68</sup> There she began painting *Tennispielerin*, which depicts the icon of Weimar modernity, the New Woman, looking *sachlich* – sporty, practical, functionally dressed, and fashionable – in a public setting. Situated in the foreground of the image, the tennis player wears a red, white, and blue-gray striped dress and is seen with five other figures in the distance, who all sport clothing of solid colors. Through scale, pattern, and placement, Laserstein frames the dress as key to the figure’s self-presentation, in that it distinguishes her from the rest of the ensemble to which she nevertheless belongs.

The painting’s hushed color palette coupled with its flickering splotches of sunlight supplies the tennis player’s solid frame with a sense of warmth and delicateness. As the long

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<sup>66</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 119.

<sup>67</sup> Laserstein entered the competition for the *Großen Staatspreis* sponsored by the Preußische Akademie in 1929 with *Tennispielerin* and two other works, including a nude and a self-portrait. Although she was not chosen as the winner, Laserstein and *Tennispielerin* garnered interest from a buyer, Adolf Kandler, whose offer Laserstein declined. She later exhibited the painting at the *Verein Berliner Künstler* exhibition *Sport als Kulturfaktor* in June 1930. See: Anna-Carola Krause, *Lotte Laserstein: 1898-1993: Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 170-171.

<sup>68</sup> Tennis was one of Laserstein’s favorite pastimes. Coached by Traute, the artist often played against her mentor, Professor Wolfsfeld. Caroline Stroude, *Erich Wolfsfeld, Lotte Laserstein, Gottfried Meyer: 5<sup>th</sup> December 1990 to 4<sup>th</sup> January 1991* (London: Thos. Agnew & Sons Ltd, 1990), 15.



amorphous shadows creep diagonally across the picture plane, the vertically oriented stripes of the tennis dress follow. While the dress stops at her knees, a prominent shadow, emerging behind her, continues forward, engulfing her muscular legs and granting the viewer intimate access to the otherwise guarded figure, her gaze averted. Laserstein emphasizes the tennis player's avoidant line of sight with the tennis racket that rests on the back of the chair, running parallel beneath her securely folded arms. This compositional line instigates a juxtaposition between the tennis player and a couple, emphasizing the singularity of the subject, who remains distinguished from the pair. The artist presents the tennis player as an individual and social type, who signals through her powerfully embodied dress that she is at once fashionable and functional, lithe and powerful.<sup>69</sup> From Laserstein's *Tennispielerin* emerges an image of a self-contained modern woman, whose appearance, dress, and setting exude the aesthetics of Weimar-era *Sachlichkeit* through a feminist lens that works against the uncritical imaging of the New Woman as commodity for mainstream consumption.

By contrast, the provocative picture in *Befreites Wohnen* objectifies a woman in order to make an argument about principles related to *Sachlichkeit*, which were intended to combat fashion and its unruly stylistic changes. Giedion captured the photograph with the text, "The new practical tennis costume, whose general introduction in America is striven for."<sup>70</sup> In Weimar Germany, even tennis costumes were discussed as fashion alongside the latest sartorial trends. While the model's clothing is intended to exemplify the decidedly anti-fashion aesthetics and functionality of modern architecture with its stark white walls, she is represented in a manner

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<sup>69</sup> Anna-Carola Krause was the first to explore the tension between "typological individuals and individualized types" in relation to Laserstein's painting, a reading of the artist's work to which this study is indebted. See "Typisierte Individuen und individualisierte Typen. Bildnisse zwischen sozialer Repräsentation und malerischer Präsenz" in Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 85-111.

<sup>70</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 120. See also: Giedion, *Befreites Wohnen*, 83.

that is far from modern. Embedded in the text, the image of a scantily clad blond has the opposite of the intended effect. Rather than illustrating the new tendencies of modern architecture through fashion, the photograph situates the aesthetics of modern architecture as a kind of fashion against fashion. As Wigley concludes, “All the elaborate attempts to isolate the white wall from fashion, may, in the end, be insufficient to block the obvious thought that it is just a look. But not just any look: it is the look of a resistance to fashion, the antifashion look.”<sup>71</sup>

Laserstein pictures the conflicted identity of the New Woman through the aesthetics of *Sachlichkeit* that were popular in the painting, fashion, and architecture of Weimar Germany. While *Befreites Wohnen* furnishes an image that illustrates, in the context of Giedion’s book, a woman upon whom the anti-fashion principles of modern architecture have been imposed, Laserstein’s portraits suggest how women themselves confronted *Sachlichkeit* and its fashionability as both a positive and negative force in their lives. *Sachlichkeit*, which originated as an antidote to fashion in turn-of-the-century architectural discourses, developed into a cultural, artistic, and sartorial fashion through the twenties. In her ambivalent depictions of fashion and female identity, Laserstein reveals feminist constructions of *Sachlichkeit*, which counter its more typical narratives about male subjectivity and resisting fashion. Even though architects and fashion journalists alike championed *Sachlichkeit* as a means to achieve freedom and equality, the prevailing patriarchal and elitist cultural attitudes, which historically oppressed women and the non-elite, also promoted this image of the fashionably *sachlich* New Woman. In her portrayals of femininity and fashion, Laserstein alludes to this contradiction.

By the time the terms *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* were firmly established in the artistic and popular culture of the twenties, Laserstein was a relatively well-known painter.

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<sup>71</sup> Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, 121-122.

During a period between 1928 and 1933, the artist's most productive years, she showed at twenty Berlin exhibitions and three outside of Berlin. This includes her debut at the *Jahresausstellung der Preußischen Akademie* in 1928, a touring exhibition of the same year sponsored by the Elida cosmetics company called *Das schönste deutsche Frauenporträt*, which premiered at the Gurlitt Gallery in Berlin and subsequently traveled to Düsseldorf, Karlsruhe, Frankfurt am Main, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Munich, Hof, and Hamburg, the 1928 portrait exhibition *Die Frau von Heute, Der Mensch unserer Zeit* in May 1930, and the exhibition *Die gestaltende Frau* also in 1930.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, her first solo-exhibition at Galerie Gurlitt opened in 1931.

With some notable exceptions, Weimar historians have neglected Laserstein's paintings.<sup>73</sup> More recent scholarship has analyzed the appropriation of popular realist styles in Laserstein's works as a means by which the artist delivered social commentary about female identity throughout the twenties. Art historian Dorothy Rowe, for example, maintains that Laserstein's naturalistic, and at times painterly realism is progressive.<sup>74</sup> In making this argument, she refutes Benjamin Buchloh's evaluation of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and 1920s realism as a "cipher of regression."<sup>75</sup> According to Rowe, the masculine bias of Buchloh's argument ignores the fact that for Laserstein, realism was a "powerful vehicle for the institutional training and public exhibition of her particular brand of metropolitan modernism."<sup>76</sup> Moreover, as Anna-Carola Krause has argued, Laserstein distinguished her work in an art market suffering from, what the

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<sup>72</sup> Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 168-174.

<sup>73</sup> See: Stroude, *Erich Wolfsfeld, Lotte Laserstein, Gottfried Meyer*. Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999). Dorothy Rowe, "Representing Herself: Lotte Laserstein between Subject and Object," in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 68-88.

<sup>74</sup> Rowe, "Representing Herself," 70.

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting," *October* 16 (Spring, 1981): 39-68.

<sup>76</sup> Dorothy Rowe, "Representing Herself," 70.

scholar has called, an *Avantgardemüdigkeit*, or avant-garde fatigue.<sup>77</sup> Since she asserted her status as a professional artist and responded to the Weimar preoccupation with objectivity, Laserstein should indeed be considered a central figure in the history of *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

At the same time, Laserstein's paintings are visually and thematically distinct from the work of her *Neue Sachlichkeit* contemporaries like Georg Schrimpf, Karl Hubbuch, George Grosz, and Otto Dix. That Laserstein participated in the "The Most Beautiful German Female Portrait," a 1928 Elida-sponsored portraiture contest, which the painter Christian Schad also happened to enter, suggests that her painting was compatible with Weimar consumer culture and, in many ways, affirmed bourgeois ideals of beauty. For creating the most compelling representation of the era's beauty standards, the winner of the competition would be awarded the "Georg-Schicht Prize." The contest culminated in an exhibition at the Gurlitt Gallery, featuring a selection of the top twenty-six submissions. Among the finalists chosen were Laserstein, with her *Russian Girl with Compact* (1928) (Figure 3) and Schad with *Lotte* (1927) (Figure 4), while a portrait by Willy Jaeckel took first prize (Figure 5).

In her definitive study on the competition and tendencies in portraiture at the end of the Weimar Republic, art historian and curator Susanne Meyer-Büser regards the competition as a crucial turning point in art of the twenties. She argues that some of the chosen paintings, reminiscent of society portraiture, are conservative in their often-sentimental emphasis on the individuality of the subject. As Meyer-Büser points out, the winning portrait was also intended to function as a national type symbolizing the beauty of the German woman.<sup>78</sup> That being said, it

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<sup>77</sup> Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 73.

<sup>78</sup> Susanne Meyer-Büser. *Das schönste deutsche Frauenporträt: Tendenzen der Bildnismalerei in der Weimarer Republic* (Berlin: Reimer, 1994), 41.

would be a mistake to call Laserstein's submission *Russisches Mädchen mit Puderdose* conservative.<sup>79</sup>

In the painting, Laserstein constructs an image of a modern woman's self-awareness from multiple perspectives through the theme of cosmetics, as though responding to the Baudelarian trope of makeup in the history of modern art since the 1863 appearance of *The Painter of Modern Life*.<sup>80</sup> From the front, the subject is seen peering into the mirror of her compact, while the mirrored surface to her side reflects her image in profile. She holds the delicate powder puff in her fingertips, as she shifts her eyes to her left, gazing at her image in the compact, which is a reflection of her reflection. Laserstein's sensitive brushwork highlights the rich material qualities of the woman's red velvet blouse and her dark eyes framed by wispy eyebrows and feathery, cropped hair. While representing the New Woman type, the picture also depicts a private moment in which an individual woman, gazing at her reflection, maintains her public face. Therefore, Laserstein, directly referring to the contest's sponsor, also pictures the mediation of external appearances through cosmetics and reflections. The viewer will never behold exactly what the woman herself sees.

### **The New Woman: A Genuine Reproduction?**

The uniformity of the *sachlich* New Woman was a recurring topic for Weimar-era critics. For instance, writing in 1930 in *Die Form*, the official publication of the *Deutsche Werkbund*, Dr. W. Lotz explicated the connection between work and sports uniforms, whose pared-down

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<sup>79</sup> As Krause and Meyer-Büser have shown, the exhibition received significant press coverage in daily newspapers, art journals, and illustrated fashion magazines, where Laserstein's entry was also reproduced. One critic, writing in the *Berliner Tageblatt Abendausgabe*, on 11.27.1928 even insinuated that Laserstein's painting should have been the winner because it was "*physiognomisch, geistig wie malerisch, eher die "typische" Frau dieses Jahr ...als das preisgekrönte Jaeckel Portrait.*" Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 169, n. 531.

<sup>80</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "In Praise of Cosmetics," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1995): 31-34.

aesthetic and functionality were infiltrating the New Woman's daytime clothing, making her garments increasingly shorter and looser.<sup>81</sup> Whereas wealthy women owned clothing dedicated to exercise, middle class women, who had to earn a wage and could not afford extra clothing, exercised, arriving directly from their place of employment, while wearing work clothes. Citing the uniform as the decisive catalyst in recent sartorial developments, Lotz writes:

Also the influence of sports will come into the picture more in average clothing than in high fashion because there is in the latter a specialized sports clothing, while the woman, who has worked all day in the office goes to the sports field or hiking in the same clothing.

Sports and the professional life effect clothing in the sense of typologizing, and that is very understandable because sports clothing from clubs and teams is actually a uniform, exactly like how earlier clothing of a profession was distinctive of a standardized type.<sup>82</sup>

Since the New Woman relied on her work clothing to also function as her outfit for sports, everyday clothing needed to adapt to these new standards of activity. Professional dress, thus taking its cues from utilitarian sports garments, became increasingly standardized. By this logic, fashion for the average person, then, signified not only a social type, like the New Woman, but also her line of work and preferred leisure activities.

Laserstein plays with the viewers' associations with the New Woman as a social type through her representations of fashion, manipulating the sartorial signifiers of *Sachlichkeit* such as checked or plain fabrics and masculine or sports-inspired silhouettes with looser cuts and shorter hems. Her *Traute Rose with Red Cap and Checkered Blouse* (1931) (Figure 6) illustrates this approach. The checked fabric in the portrait announces itself as both delicately applied paint

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<sup>81</sup> Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (New York: Oxford, 1989), 197.

<sup>82</sup> "Auch der Einfluß des Sports wird bei der Durchschnittskleidung viel mehr in Erscheinung treten als in der großen Mode, denn dort gibt es besonderer Sportkleidung, während die Frau, die den Tag über im Büro gearbeitet hat, in derselben Kleidung auf den Sportplatz oder auf Wanderungen geht.

*Sport und Berufstätigkeit wirken auf die Kleidung im Sinne einer Typisierung, und das ist sehr verständlich, denn die Sportkleidung von Verbänden und Spieleinheiten ist ja sogar uniform, genau so, wie früher die Kleidung der Berufsstände als einheitliche Typen ausgeprägt waren.*" W. Lotz, "Typus und Individuum in Kleidung und Mode," 433.

and a sensuous substance that covers the body. Here, an energetic interplay of brushstrokes comprises the model's casual outfit. Laserstein exaggerates the texture of the modest dress by preserving traces of horizontal brushstrokes in thin brown paint. Traute rests her large hands on her lap above a prominent passage of facture, visually evoking the sense of touch through the exaggerated scale of her hands. Her checked blouse lacks the precision and rigidity of a rational grid, as the red lines wiggle and curve freely over the contours of her shoulders. Wearing a matching red cap, the subject gazes off into the distance, turning her body to the front. Traute's comportment appears to deflect attention away from her face, foregrounding the presence of her clothing in the portrait.

The 1927 painting *In the Tavern* (Figure 7) also features checked fabric as a strategic compositional device.<sup>83</sup> Here, Laserstein represents the checks on the tablecloth in close proximity to the subject, but not part of her clothing. The woman, sitting alone in a restaurant, displays immediately recognizable features of the New Woman type, with her cropped *bubikopf* hairstyle, unadorned clothing, and androgynous facial features. Laserstein's portrayal of the subject, however, invites a reading of her identity as more than a stereotype. She looks down and sideways, with her piercing blue eyes contrasting the neutral tones that comprise her skin, hair, and clothing. With her face in profile and arms limiting the visibility of her body, the subject

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<sup>83</sup> Laserstein exhibited this piece at her first public showing at the *Jahresausstellung der Preußischen Akademie* in 1928. Critics repeatedly positively singled the painting out over the 800-other works exhibited. The *Preußische Akademie* purchased the painting for 950 RM. Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 168. Additionally, scholars and curators believed, until recently, that *In the Tavern* was presumably lost or destroyed in the war. The work was exhibited for the first time since its disappearance in the 2013 exhibition at the Berlinische Galerie *Wien – Berlin: Kunst zweier Metropolen*. See: Agnes Husslein-Arco, *Wien – Berlin: Kunst zweier Metropolen: von Schiele bis Grosz* (New York: Prestel, 2013).

makes herself only partially available to the viewer. Her expression and guarded comportment incite empathy for her, as she sits engrossed in thought.

Laserstein's handling of the materials that surround the subject is instrumental in initiating this experience. As she removes her brown gloves from her carefully modeled hand, the woman in the picture leans with her elbows on table covered with a blue and white checked cloth. The linear pattern of the tablecloth creates perspectival lines that both separate as well as connect the viewer and subject. Rather than sustaining the viewer's attention through the gaze of the subject, Laserstein invites an empathetic and haptic connection with her by emphasizing the tactile qualities of the materials that constitute her environment. Depicted in the act of pulling off her glove, the woman catalyzes a sense of release. This feeling counteracts the tense compression of her body against the table that has been draped with the checked fabric. These banal movements are visually linked through Laserstein's pictorial treatment of the gloves and the fabric. In both *Traute Rose with Red Cap and Checkered Blouse* and *In the Tavern*, the textures and patterns of material surfaces like the tablecloth, gloves, and clothing, help to shape the viewer's perception of the women.

A photographic portrait of Ellen Auerbach by her business partner Grete Stern utilizes checked fabric to achieve a similar effect (Figure 8). The two women worked together in their avant-garde commercial studio Ringl + Pit and produced abstract advertisements, often featuring layered fabric collages and stereotype-shattering portrayals of women.<sup>84</sup> In the photograph, Stern lies atop the checkered fabric, as she rests her fingers beneath the placket of her top, looking away from the camera. While Laserstein's portrait predates the photograph of Stern, both images

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<sup>84</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Ringl + Pit, see: Maud Lavin, "Ringl + Pit: Representation of Women in German Advertising, 1929-1933," in *Clean New World: Culture Politics and Graphic Design* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 50-70.



use the sober checkered pattern of industrially produced fabric as a sensuous medium to facilitate a rather intimate encounter with the subjects.

Depictions of plaid fabric in fashion advertisements, on the other hand, produced an entirely different aesthetic experience. One example from 1924 in *Elegante Welt* shows a tightly cropped, close-up photograph depicting a checked fabric sample, which serves as a background for a drawing of three women in patterned coats (Figure 9). A 1921 cover of the same publication features the checked fabric of a practical traveling outfit, which, gives the impression of an all-over pattern covering a flat plane, functioning independently from the woman's corporeal form (Figure 10). Whereas the fashionable checks in these examples subjugate the women to the confines of their grids, Laserstein visually represents fabric as a haptic medium through which the viewer can access the represented women.

In his *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* (1926), Otto Dix depicts the subject looking sallow in a boxy red and black checked dress, her ensemble accented by a loose stocking that creeps down her leg (Figure 11).<sup>85</sup> Like *In the Tavern*, the work contains familiar fashionable signs of the New Woman with her stylish androgyny, including the short hairdo and practical daytime clothes, but the rich haptic qualities evident in Laserstein's portraits are absent in the image of von Harden. Her stiff hands seem to levitate above the flat plane of the dress,

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<sup>85</sup> Dix and von Harden remained in contact through the 1960s. After the war, von Harden immigrated to London. In her letters, she describes working during the day in the office, and continuing to write in the evening. She consistently informs Dix of her travels to Germany and suggests rendezvous. In 1961, von Harden corresponded with Dr. Maurice Besset of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris to arrange a visit and talk at the museum where her portrait is exhibited. In the letter, Dr. Besset refers to von Harden as "*Dame*." Her reply jokes about her infamous connection to the girlish quality of the New Woman, despite her age. She writes, "I am no lady, I myself with my 67 years am still a girl, that is, not in a corporeal sense, but rather purely intellectually. [*Ich bin keine „Dame,“ ich bin selbst mit mein 67 Jahren noch ein Mädchen, d.h. nicht im Sinne des ‚du corps‘, sondern rein intellektuell.*"]". See Signatur: DKA, NL Dix, Otto, I, C-306 at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum – Deutsches Kunstarchiv, Nürnberg.

which reads as a graphic illusion, rather than a material substance. She sits alone at a marble table in the corner of a café, flaunting a cigarette and directing her icy gaze through the monocle that also seems to float atop her gaunt and pallid face. Clashing with the pink hues of the walls, her dress obfuscates the contours of her torso, as her limbs, appearing contorted, rest in an unnatural position. With an arm stretched across her body, von Harden places her claw-like hand near her hip. Propping her other arm atop the ornate chair, she balances a cigarette between the fingers on her oversized hand. Dix's highly specific and hyperbolic visual language, veering towards the grotesque, transforms von Harden's likeness into a caricature of the New Woman type.

Another image that depicts the Weimar New Woman sitting alone in a café is Christian Schad's *Sonja* of 1928 (Figure 12). Contrasting Dix's *von Harden* and Laserstein's *In the Tavern*, this work shows the subject wearing a decidedly less utilitarian garment, which features partially transparent sleeves of silk that flow freely from the middle of the upper arm to the wrist. Her little black dress is reminiscent of a contemporaneous design by Coco Chanel, which was known as the "Ford dress" (Figure 13).<sup>86</sup> Sonja's large dark, deep-set eyes address the viewer as she rests her arm against the table, establishing a stark tonal contrast between her sleeve and the tablecloth. The feminine flourish provided by the silk flower attached to her left shoulder complements the flush of pink that has been painted high on her cheekbones. Schad's representation of her short dark hair, severe countenance, and psychological detachment shapes an image of Sonja as a nontraditional, yet fashionable New Woman.

During the Weimar Republic, the rise of *Neue Sachlichkeit* signaled a return to the objective rendering of the material world by the unemotional eye and technical hand of the artist.

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<sup>86</sup> As discussed by Nancy Troy in *Couture Culture: A Study of Modern Art and Fashion* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 315-317.

The figurative painters typically associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit*, such as Dix and Schad, skillfully recorded the discordant details of modern life in static compositions that resemble airless worlds frozen under glossy, polished surfaces. When compared to *von Harden* and *Sonja*, Laserstein's *In the Tavern* is much more subdued in its pictorial effect and message. Lacking the cool metallic glare and harsh stylization of works by Schad and Dix, Laserstein's painting seems modest and more naturalistic by comparison, inviting empathy with the subjects. Her works may be subtler, but through them Laserstein furnishes no less incisive critiques of modern life, resisting, albeit through a sartorially conscious pictorial language, uncomplicated conceptions of what it meant to be a modern woman in 1920s Germany.

Krause has aptly characterized Laserstein's painterly approach as one shaped by a *Nahsicht*, or close vision.<sup>87</sup> The result is a paradoxical aesthetic experience instigated through the paintings, wherein a materially oriented mode of representation gives clues about the depicted woman's subjectivity, despite her being portrayed as psychologically detached. As Krause wrote, "[Laserstein's] fashionable women are not female clothes hangers, rather the painter portrays women, who understand their clothing-style as an expression of their personality..."<sup>88</sup> As correct as this assertion may be, it should also be added that Laserstein's treatment of clothing does more than passively reflect its wearer's personality. By representing material surfaces like the New Woman's clothing with such visual acuity, Laserstein, moreover, inserts critical commentary about fashion's capacity to not only convey stereotypes, but to also undermine them, while serving as a medium for the individual's self-expression, proposing, in

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<sup>87</sup> Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 90.

<sup>88</sup> "*Ihre modischen Frauen sind keine weiblichen Kleiderständer, sondern die Malerin schildert Frauen, die ihren Kleidungsstil als Ausdruck der Persönlichkeit verstehen...*" Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 106.

the end, that fashion, like painting, is a mediated form of representation, which is instrumental in negotiating the terms of identity formation.

Scholars of the Weimar period have discussed how the New Woman embodied complex individual experiences, while also symbolizing, as a scapegoated type, the social instability of twenties Germany. Accordingly, Hanne Loreck has argued that the New Woman was a *Kunstprodukt*, or a synthetic media invention that represented fears about the rationalization and modernization of life.<sup>89</sup> Atina Grossmann, on the other hand, emphasizes the New Woman's importance as a multi-faceted expression of Weimar-era developments, writing:

This New Woman was not merely a media myth or a demographer's paranoid fantasy, but a social reality that can be researched and documented. She existed in office and factory, bedroom and kitchen, just as surely as in a café, cabaret, and film. I think it is important that we begin to look at the New Woman as producer and not only consumer, as an agent constructing a new identity, which was then marketed in mass culture, even as mass culture helped to form that identity.<sup>90</sup>

Crucial to Grossman's point is the reality that the New Woman encompassed a diverse set of individual experiences. Historian Mila Ganeva, echoing Grossman, substantiates her argument that the New Woman was indeed a producer, by analyzing the ways in which the Weimar Republic's fashion industry became an important arena for the New Woman's cultural contributions.<sup>91</sup> A consideration of the tensions between individual and type as well as consumer and producer that emerge from discussions about the New Woman provides a richer understanding of the material realities that she represented. Not just a consumer of fashionable goods and entertainment, the New Woman produced through her productive labor in the realms

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<sup>89</sup> Hanne Loreck, "Das Kunstprodukt "Neue Frau" in den Zwanziger Jahren," in *Mode der 20er Jahre*, eds Christine Waidenschlager and Christa Gustavus (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1991), 12.

<sup>90</sup> Atina Grossmann, "Girlkultur or Thoroughly Rationalized Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany?," in *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, eds. Judith Friedlander, Blanche Wiesen Cook, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 64.

<sup>91</sup> Ganeva identifies the female fashion journalist as a 20<sup>th</sup> century *flâneuse*, meaning an observant female cultural actor who participates in urban life and actively negotiates modern femininity in the public sphere. See: Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion*, 33-38.

of art, journalism, and industry, the commodities and images that infiltrated the market in twenties Germany.

Such an understanding of this cultural phenomenon challenges antifeminist representations of the New Woman, which deny the agency of women as cultural actors by emphasizing uniformity and mechanization instead. One such image, an oft-cited 1926 cartoon from the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (Figure 14) depicts a Ford conveyer belt propelling finished Tiller Girls down an assembly line. The caption states, “Ford takes over the production of the Tiller Girls. Daily production: 15,000.”<sup>92</sup> A dance troupe famous for their risqué, leg-baring costumes and precisely synchronized choreography, the Tiller Girls were recognized by thinkers like Siegfried Kracauer as a manifestation of a cultural obsession with the masses and the rationality associated with *Sachlichkeit*. The high-kicking legs of the Tiller Girls collectively represented the massification of culture under advanced capitalism, where there was little room for individual and non-conforming self-expression. Mocking the logical conclusion of the Weimar Republic’s cultural trends, the cartoon unites the capitalist giant – Ford, a pillar of efficiency and profit – with a most titillating source of entertainment. Consumers could get their Tiller Girls just as they could a Model T – in any form they wanted, so long as it was standardized.

Roughly ten years earlier, when Paul Poiret authorized the reproduction of his Parisian designs for the American market in 1917, he needed to find a way to maintain the image of his brand, which consumers trusted for its authenticity, exclusivity, and luxury, while making copies of his originals.<sup>93</sup> Fearful that mass production would adulterate his reputation, Poiret marked the

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<sup>92</sup> “Ford übernimmt die Herstellung von Tillergirls. Tagesproduktion: 15 000.” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 13, no. 35 (March 28, 1926): 411.

<sup>93</sup> Troy, *Couture Culture*, 18-79.

American copies with a special label, granting them the status of “genuine reproductions” (Figure 15).<sup>94</sup> In his efforts to preserve his good name as a couturier in the business of mass-produced ready-to-wear, Poiret promoted the notion of authenticity in a copy. Laserstein’s New Women portraits can be likened to his “genuine reproductions.” Even though Poiret’s “genuine reproductions” were indeed replicas, and Laserstein’s portraits are rather customized variants of a type, the commonality between the two is a rhetoric that attempts to uphold the concept of authenticity in typologies. In Laserstein’s case, the genuine quality of her portraits, while not sentimental or essentializing, stems from Laserstein’s tendency to depict the image of the endlessly reproduced New Woman typology, while still emphasizing highly nuanced and individualistic details in the clothing and comportment of her subjects.

### **The Gendering of *Sachlichkeit***

On May 25, 1930, a critic in the *Berliner Morgen Post* used the word delicate (*zart*) to describe Laserstein’s *Tennispielerin* in spite of her powerful presence.<sup>95</sup> Her masculine and “delicate” appearance challenges static understandings of gender, as does the man standing behind and to the right of her. The central figure’s gaze calls attention to his dainty frame and cinched waist, juxtaposed against her substantial frame. The styling and stripes of the dress, which is bound both at her natural waist and hips, exaggerates the proportions of the lower two thirds of her body. This, in conjunction with the foreshortening of her legs and the diagonal perspectival lines in the composition, minimizes the scale of those who surround her. Laserstein orients the tennis player in the middle of a crisscrossing compositional structure, whose most weighted axis is indicated by the ninety-degree bend in her elbow. Here, the shadows and pattern of the dress pull the figure forward, while her gaze and tennis racket push the viewer’s eye

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<sup>94</sup> Troy, *Couture Culture*, 304-313. Label illustration is found on 307.

<sup>95</sup> Krausse, *Leben und Werk*, 109.

backwards. These pictorial devices engender a dynamic formal relationship between the figures as they respectively exhibit both masculine and feminine traits. In her paintings, like *Tennispielerlin*, Laserstein treats the *sachlich* femininity of the New Woman with fluid contradictions.

While the sartorial *Sachlichkeit* to which Laserstein alludes here and in her other New Woman portraits, exemplified progress and mobility for women, debates on *Sachlichkeit* in fashion and design still relied on a narrow utilitarian and anti-feminine bias. As such, the relationship between social freedom and *sachlich* masculinizing fashions for women only impersonated a transformation of gender relations. In actuality, the ruse still depended on the traditionally defined masculine/feminine binary. For instance, architectural historian Despina Stratigakos has argued that how *Sachlichkeit*, “was understood in deeply gendered terms,” serving, in the context of architecture and design, to neutralize women practitioners’ supposed natural *Schmuckwillen* or “will to ornament.”<sup>96</sup> In this sense, progressive design, freedom, and mobility took visual expression in the aesthetics of the masculine, or the “not feminine” look of *Sachlichkeit*. Establishing the Weimar woman’s self-sufficiency required much more than a categorical negation of femininity, a reality that Laserstein’s body of work addresses.

The New Woman’s identity was the site where the fears and fantasies concomitant with progress and tradition collided. Scholars have characterized the Weimar period as one of extremes, from hyperinflation and political ruptures to its decadent nightlife and demographic disparities. After the atrocities of the First World War, the *Frauenüberschuss* or “excess of women” catalyzed dialogues on the public and private duties of women, whose numbers

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<sup>96</sup> Despina Stratigakos, *A Women’s Berlin: Building the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 119, 122.

exceeded men by roughly 2 million.<sup>97</sup> As Renate Bridenthal, Grossman, and Marion Kaplan have put it, women were perceived as both the “guardians of morality” and “the chief agents of a culture of decadence.”<sup>98</sup> More recently, Kathleen Canning has shown how the masculine biases of narrowly defined political histories evade the complexities of female subjectivities and the activities that constituted the formation of female citizenship in this period, which included consumption, working in and outside of the home, and participation in politics.<sup>99</sup> Analyzing the ways in which artists, like Laserstein, represented women in relation to work, art making, fashion, and leisure provides a richer historical understanding of female identity in twenties Germany, while countering the masculine biases that persist in scholarship.

During this period, as sartorial *Sachlichkeit* gained popularity amongst women, the concept was also conscripted in efforts to counteract a crisis of postwar masculinity. Ute Frevert argues that this crisis of masculine culture was “characterized by de-individualization, alienation from nature, technification, and objectification,” a problem that required the humanizing touch of the woman and the reinstatement of traditional family values in a postwar society.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, as Ulrike Baureithel has pointed out, the principles of *Sachlichkeit* were enlisted as a means to formulate a new masculinity or *Männlichkeit*, which distinguished a younger

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<sup>97</sup> Kathleen Canning, “Claiming Citizenship Suffrage and Subjectivity in Germany after the First World War,” in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, eds. Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 127. See also Eve Rosenhaft, “Women Gender, and the Limits of Political History in the Age of ‘Mass’ Politics,” in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, eds. Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 149-173.

<sup>98</sup> Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Marion Kaplan, *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 13.

<sup>99</sup> Canning, “Claiming Citizenship,” 129.

<sup>100</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, 171.



generation of *sachlich* men from the fallen Wilhelmine patriarchal authorities of the past.<sup>101</sup> For both men and women, *Sachlichkeit* seemed to offer a panacea for this an ongoing crisis of gender. While *Sachlichkeit* became a fashionable aesthetic signifier of the New Woman's controversial public image, it was also an accessory to reactionary discussions about the insecurity of the Weimar man.

The perceived reformatory quality of *Sachlichkeit* in Weimar Germany originated in architectural and design theories from the turn of the century. Whether a counterbalance to the decadence of a supposed excess of women or decorative ornaments, *Sachlichkeit* connoted a logic of correctness, reduction, or stripping away. Pushing for the honest and appropriate use of materials in consumer products that meet social needs, Hermann Muthesius, the cofounder of the *Deutsche Werkbund*, implemented the term "*Sachlichkeit*" as an alternative to the word "style," thereby providing a corrective to industrial capitalism's cheap commoditized forms. He promoted the concept "in the elimination of every merely applied decorative form, and in shaping each form according to demands set by purpose."<sup>102</sup> For Muthesius, ornaments were superfluous if they do not arise from an appropriate use of materials and "strictly [follow] the purpose that the work should serve."<sup>103</sup> Frederic J. Schwartz's attentive reading of the cultural criticism surrounding the *Werkbund* warns against the clumsy conflation of *Sachlichkeit* with functionalism.<sup>104</sup> Instead, he contends that the rhetorical push of Muthesius' writing utilizes

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<sup>101</sup> Ulrike Baureithel, "Erzeuger ohne Geschlecht: Neusachlicher Literaturdiskurs als Paradigma formbildender Männlichkeit und Kunst," *Figurationen* 3, no. 11 (2002): 13-28.

<sup>102</sup> Hermann Muthesius, *Style-Architecture and Building-Art: Transformations of Architecture in the Nineteenth Century and Its Present Condition*, trans. Stanford Anderson (Santa Monica: The Getty Center, 1994), 79.

<sup>103</sup> Muthesius, *Style-Architecture*, 79.

<sup>104</sup> Schwartz, *The Werkbund*, 42.

*Sachlichkeit* in order to critique fashion, the problematic arena where the decorative and feminine are firmly situated.

For Muthesius' contemporary, Adolf Loos, the woman's affinity for ornament and fashion perpetuated social ills. Making a case for a kind of sartorial *Sachlichkeit*, he wrote in his 1898 text, "Ladies Fashion,"

No longer by an appeal to sensuality, but rather by economic independence earned through work will the woman bring about her equal status with the man. The woman's value or lack of value will no longer fall or rise according to the fluctuation of sensuality. Then velvet and silk, flowers and ribbons, feathers and paints will fail to have their effect. They will disappear.<sup>105</sup>

Gainful employment and economic independence, he declared, will result in the eradication of fashion's sensuous velvets and silks, which stood in direct opposition to the dignity of a well-cut English suit. In Loos's schema, woman's fashion is deception, and its superficial flourishes epitomize the fetters of an outmoded, dysfunctional society. According to Loos, the woman who has earned the right to work wears pants.<sup>106</sup> An insistence on fashion, therefore, prolongs women's subordinate social status.<sup>107</sup> Equating the constant change of fashion with an unstable moral ground that leads to sexual indiscretion and even rape, Loos writes, "[Sensuality] is in the air and it is infectious."<sup>108</sup>

In his 1965 "Functionalism Today" lecture, Theodor Adorno discusses Loos' critiques of the ornament at length.<sup>109</sup> Imparting the brutal excessiveness of *Sachlichkeit* taken to a cold Loosian extreme, Adorno writes, "[*Sachlichkeit*] could no longer inflict on men – whom it

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<sup>105</sup> Adolf Loos, "Ladies' Fashion," in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays, 1897-1900*, trans. Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 103.

<sup>106</sup> Loos, "Ladies' Fashion," 102.

<sup>107</sup> For a more thorough discussion on Loos's arguments in relation to gender and fashion see Jane Stewart, *Fashioning Vienna: Adolf Loos's Cultural Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2000). Patrizia McBride, "'In Praise of the Present': Adolf Loos on Style and Fashion," *Modernism/modernity* 11, no. 4 (November 2004): 745-767.

<sup>108</sup> Loos, "Ladies' Fashion," 100.

<sup>109</sup> Theodor Adorno, "Functionalism Today," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), 10.

supposedly upheld as its only measure – the sadistic blows of sharp edges, bare calculated rooms, stairways, and the like. Virtually every consumer had probably felt all too painfully the impracticability of the mercilessly practical.”<sup>110</sup> Writing forty years after the term’s rise to popularity, Adorno illustrates the supposed futility of *Sachlichkeit*’s utilitarian aesthetic pushed to an extreme, evoking its ultimate fate with the phrase – “The absolute rejection of style becomes style.”<sup>111</sup> It was evident already in the twenties, however, that *Sachlichkeit* became exactly what it was intended to oppose. Now a fashion, the term maintained its vague credibility as the unofficial aesthetic of functionalism, while it was hawked as a sexy synonym for the sleekly modern in popular culture at the same time. Rather than dismissing *Sachlichkeit*’s fashionability, Laserstein, in her works portraying the fashionable New Woman, demonstrates the function of *Sachlichkeit* in shaping modern female identity.

### **Laserstein as the Creating Woman**

Laserstein employed the aesthetics of *Sachlichkeit* to represent the New Woman, including herself, as a producer of culture. In her poster design for the 1930 Leipzig exhibition *Die gestaltende Frau* (The Creating Woman) (Figure 16), the artist portrays an androgynous female artist with cropped hair, who closely resembles Traute. She sports the artist’s uniform, a crisp white smock, as she presses the weight of her body on the clear work surface. With her large, prominent hands ready and eyes fixed downward, she is at the precipice of creation. The bold black text fixes the word *gestalten* (to design, form, or build) at the center with the words “the” and “woman” securely balanced above and below on either end. Through this formal framing, Laserstein situates the central figure as an active woman producer like a craftsman

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<sup>110</sup> Adorno, “Functionalism Today,” 10. Also, see Siegfried Kracauer’s similar remarks on the naked, uncanny style of the *Neues Bauen*, in “Das neue Bauen. Zur Stuttgarter Werkbund-Ausstellung: ‘Die Wohnung,’” *Frankfurter Zeitung* 72, no. 561 (July 31, 1927).

<sup>111</sup> Adorno, “Functionalism Today,” 10.

approaching his quality materials with resolution and skill. Her simple, unadorned garment recalls the functional overalls of a macho mechanic, but she is neither an engineer nor an avant-garde artist constructor à la László Moholy-Nagy (Figure 17). In his 1926 photographic portrait, Moholy, wearing a *Monteuranzug*, crosses his arms securely behind his back, as the ready-made black and white planes form an abstract *mise-en-scène* to support him. By contrast, the blank surfaces in Laserstein's scene are indeed the working materials of which the woman artist takes control. With this work, the artist presents woman painter in 1930, like herself, who aspired to assert her professional status in the face of social and institutional conservatism.

The women's artist organizations *Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen* and the *Deutsche Staatsbürgerinnen Verband* sponsored the exhibition, *Die gestaltende Frau*, which featured works by women in a wide variety of fields, including architecture, sculpture, painting, graphic art, arts and crafts, technology, photography, music, and creative writing at the Wertheim Gallery. In his review of the show, Max Osborn expressed his admiration for Laserstein and the other exhibiting painters. The creative achievements exhibited in the show, as the critic explained, make the *Deutsche Staatsbürgerinnen Verband's* project to advocate for the talents of women artists unnecessary, since the exhibition clearly proves their aptitude in every artistic field.<sup>112</sup> Closing his review with a duplicitous comment, Osborn writes, "But gladly one confirms again...that women know how to create as well as men – in principle not even a compliment – but women like so much to hear it."<sup>113</sup> The male critic, validating the artistic prowess of women by comparing them to men, is not at all surprised by their abilities, but tells the women what he thinks they want to hear anyway. His positive reception of the show notwithstanding, Osborn's

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<sup>112</sup> Max Osborn, "Die gestaltende Frau," *Vossische Zeitung*, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1930.

<sup>113</sup> Osborn, "Die gestaltende Frau."

condescending tone suggests the how difficult it was for women artists, like Laserstein, to navigate the art world and be taken seriously as professionals.

Laserstein's portrayal of the woman artist in the *Gestaltende Frau* poster appears to be consistent with the painter's own self-image. A look into Laserstein's background provides further insights into the struggles that she experienced since her childhood in realizing her career goal to become a working creative professional. Her upbringing in a liberal, matriarchal family fostered her talents and independent spirit from a young age. Laserstein was born in 1898, the first child of Hugo and Meta Laserstein (née Birnbaum) in Prussian Holland. The bourgeois family gained another member in 1900, when Laserstein's sister Käte was born in 1900. Two years later, Laserstein's father succumbed to heart complications, and her mother took the girls to live with their grandmother in Danzig. There, Laserstein grew close with her aunt, Else Birnbaum, a painter who also ran an art school. Birnbaum, recognizing her niece's propensity for art, supported Laserstein's aspirations to become a painter, an unlikely career for a woman at the time. The young artist learned the fundamentals of painting from her aunt at the school until 1912, when the family moved with their grandmother to Berlin.

Berlin and its collection of nineteenth century French painting inspired Laserstein, who studied at the *Realgymnasium, Chamisso-Schule*, until 1918 when she completed her *Abitur*. Between 1918 and 1921, Laserstein ruminated on her future. During this uncertain time, she studied graphic design under Adolf Propp and worked as a freelance artist. Propp dismissed Laserstein's goal to become a painter, suggesting that she would never succeed. Laserstein also visited Art History seminars at the *Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität* in Berlin, but found the professors to be *todlangweilig* (mind-numbing) and quit after two years.<sup>114</sup> Finally

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<sup>114</sup> Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 37.

landing in the right place, she entered the class of Erich Wolfsfeld at the *Akademische Hochschule der Bildenden Künste* in the winter semester of 1921/1922 where she would study painting. By 1925, the *Preußischen Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Kunst, und Volksbildung* bestowed upon the artist the prestigious award of the *Ministermedaille*. That same year, Wolfsfeld accepted Laserstein as a *Meisterschülerin*. Earning this prestigious status allowed the artist to continue her advanced study of painting for two more years.<sup>115</sup>

Her 1921 admission to Wolfsfeld's class at the Academy of Arts in Berlin was fraught with the kind of gender-based conflicts typical of the Weimar period. The school's director Arthur Kampf upheld the institution's patriarchal values for as long as possible and only began accepting female students in 1919.<sup>116</sup> A public statement regarding the admittance of female students was issued on Kampf's behalf on March 27, 1919.

The earlier objections against the admittance, even if they could still be maintained on factual grounds today, must be abandoned because of political considerations. So the director of the Düsseldorf Academy Prof. Roeber has advised him (Kampf) that one has also determined there to give up the earlier resistance.<sup>117</sup>

This reluctant capitulation evidences little conviction in the belief that women were entitled to equality under the law, let alone a proper education. Laserstein later recalled that women remained a minority in the school, experiencing prejudice from male faculty members.

According to the artist, one male professor said, "No rush my ladies, the next ship to *Tierra del Fuego* departs first in two weeks."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 63-64.

<sup>116</sup> Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 42.

<sup>117</sup> "Die früheren Bedenken gegen die Zulassung, selbst wenn sie heute noch aus sachlichen Gründen aufrecht erhalten werden könnte, müßten aus politischen Erwägungen fallen gelassen werden. So habe ihm [Kampf] auch der Direktor der Düsseldorfer Akademie Prof. Roeber mitgeteilt, daß man auch dort sich entschlossen habe, den früheren Widerstand aufzugeben." Quoted in Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 43.

<sup>118</sup> "Keine Eile meine Damen, das nächste Schiff nach Feuerland geht erst in zwei Wochen." Quoted in Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 43.

Laserstein's choice to pursue a formal education at the academy was more progressive than it might seem today. Despite the academy's conservative atmosphere, Laserstein would achieve the merits of a professional artist, a goal few women of the time were fortunate enough to realize. There were additional motives that contributed to Laserstein's decision to study at the academy. Compared to smaller applied arts schools, where women typically studied, state institutions, like the Academy of Arts, had lower tuition, greater course offerings, and more expansive networks, aiding access to scholarships, jobs, competitions, and exhibitions. With an academic training, women were no longer limited to jobs in teaching and applied arts, but could earn a living as independent fine artists. For women artists, in particular, higher education was the first step toward gaining recognition in a climate that valued evidence of technical mastery in contemporary painting, like *Neue Sachlichkeit* had during the Weimar Republic.

Laserstein's career trajectory suggests that ambitious women artists in the Weimar period purposefully distanced themselves from the applied arts, a field traditionally regarded as subordinate to the fine arts. In 1922, Laserstein learned of the academy director's plans to restructure the school's departments and curriculum. Under this measure, the department of applied arts would merge with the fine arts department. A 1922 letter from Laserstein to the academy's director reveals that she understood her work as a graphic artist merely as a job to finance her education in painting.<sup>119</sup> In it, she wrote, "Although I work in the handicrafts as

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<sup>119</sup> "Sehr verehrter Herr Direktor! Gestatten Sie, daß ich in einer für mich entscheidenden Angelegenheit ihre Zeit in Anspruch nehme. Ich besuche die Akademie seit Oktober vorigen Jahres. Infolge der immer schwieriger werdenden Lebensverhältnisse ist es mir nicht mehr möglich, die Kosten für das Studium aufzubringen. Meine Mutter ist als Witwe auf ihr Vermögen angewiesen und gesundheitlich nicht mehr in der Lage, sich in eine dauernde Erwerbsstellung zu begeben. Meine Schwester bestrietet ihre Universitätsstudium soweit wie möglich selbst, nimmt aber für die Lebenserhaltung noch meine Mutter in Anspruch. Obwohl ich so viel wie möglich kunstgewerblich arbeite, reicht der Verdienst nicht aus, Schulgeld und Material, geschweige denn Lebensunterhalt zu bestreiten. Da ich aus diesen Gründen gezwungen wäre, mein Studium

much as possible, the earnings are not enough to meet the expenses of tuition and material let alone the cost of living.”<sup>120</sup> She explained that her financial situation made it impossible to finish the program, since she no longer received support from her mother, who was unable to work because of her failing health.

At the time, Laserstein worked as a decorator at a toy company and at the Rosenthal china company, while she also copied patterns for a carpet manufacturer.<sup>121</sup> Caroline Stroude has pointed out that Laserstein’s financial situation limited the time and money she could devote to her social life, noting that the artist, however, did make the decorations for the Academy’s annual masquerade ball.<sup>122</sup> Eventually earning the most as an illustrator of an anatomy textbook, Laserstein was financially able to complete her studies. Krause interprets Laserstein’s aforementioned letter to the academy’s director as proof that the artist differentiated the prestige of the fine arts from the applied arts, which were more of a means to an end.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, the director’s plan to collapse the hierarchy between painting and applied arts by restructuring the academy was detrimental for women artists like Laserstein, who were well aware of the feminine gendering of the applied arts and strove to attain the cultural capital granted to male artists through their painting.

For Laserstein, gaining such a status was crucial because being perceived as an established fine arts painter would influence the ways in which critics wrote about her work. For,

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*abzubrechen, richte ich an Sie, sehr verehrter Herr Direktor, die Bitte, mir nach Prüfung der Angelegenheit (Steuerquittung beiliegend) eine Freistelle zu bewilligen. Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung Lotte Laserstein.” Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 47.*

<sup>120</sup> “Obwohl ich so viel wie möglich kunstgewerblich arbeite, reicht der Verdienst nicht aus, Schulgeld und Material, geschweige denn Lebensunterhalt zu bestreiten.” Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 47.

<sup>121</sup> Stroude, *Erich Wolfsfeld, Lotte Laserstein, Gottfried Meyer*, 13.

<sup>122</sup> Stroude, *Erich Wolfsfeld, Lotte Laserstein, Gottfried Meyer*, 15.

<sup>123</sup> Krause, *Leben und Werk*, 47.



as Osborn's review demonstrates, a woman artist might paint as well as a man, but it was the male artist who set the normative standard for excellence. Affirming this perception in his 1928 text, *Die Frau als Künstlerin*, art critic and historian Hans Hildebrandt examines the creative propensities and achievements of women in the history of art.<sup>124</sup> Praising women's artistic talent, Hildebrandt declares, "The woman has it [ingeniousness],"

But in other areas than in those, which are suited to the man. The female possesses it, where she can apply her bodily and spiritual personality without any confinement: in life and in love.<sup>125</sup>

Hildebrandt praised the intuitive, primitive talent of the woman, which lent itself to decoration, ornamentation, motherhood, and love. Accordingly, women should thrive in the fields of theater, music, dance, or at whatever tasks require a unification of body and soul.<sup>126</sup> Hildebrandt's treatise on female creativity was, for the time, a good faith effort to recognize women's contributions in art. Yet, as Scheerer West has pointed out, the origins of Hildebrandt's arguments are rooted in nineteenth-century anti-feminist theories.<sup>127</sup> Hildebrandt perpetuated female stereotypes, and his text did little to support the ambitions of female artists, like Laserstein, who sought recognition within the same venues and structures as male artists.

Returning to the poster, Laserstein's emphasis in it on the word "*gestaltende*" coupled with the subject's androgynous appearance counters Hildebrandt's notion that female creativity is driven by organic intuition. Here, the female artist is a working expert in uniform. By 1930, the uniformity of the masculinized New Woman was long since prosaic, and with the poster,

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<sup>124</sup> Krausse also contextualizes the gender politics of Laserstein's career with a discussion of Hildebrandt's *Die Frau als Künstlerin*. See Krausse, *Leben und Werk*, 163-175.

<sup>125</sup> "Doch auf anderen Gebieten als auf jenen, auf denen sie dem Manne eignen mag. Das Weib besitzt sie, wo es seine leiblich-geistige Persönlichkeit ohne jede Einschränkung einsetzen kann: im Leben und in der Liebe." Hans Hildebrandt, *Die Frau als Künstlerin* (Berlin: R. Mosse, 1928), 8.

<sup>126</sup> Hildebrandt, *Die Frau als Künstlerin*, 12.

<sup>127</sup> Scheerer West, introduction to *Visions of the Neue Frau: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, eds. Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company 1995), 1.

Laserstein shows a professional woman in uniform working in defiance of clichés about female creativity. The exhibition itself was the product of a network that was vital for Laserstein and her colleagues, who continually confronted assumptions that female artists were amateurs.<sup>128</sup> With this poster depicting an active female creator, Laserstein not only promotes *Die gestaltende Frau*, as a concept and as an exhibition in 1930, but also challenges the anti-feminism that critics paradoxically used to promote women artists of the period.

At a time when successful independent women were still groundbreaking, Laserstein powerfully asserted her status as a professional fine artist through the practice of self-portraiture. In one such work, *Self Portrait with Cat* of 1928, the artist sits at an easel in her studio, holding a paintbrush in her left hand, while suggestively cradling a tortoiseshell cat in the other (Figure 18). The large windows that line the wall behind her bathe the scene in a natural light that creates subtle tonal variations on the surface of her skin and white cotton smock. The garment amplifies the visual impact of her body, as it balloons the outlines of her form, conveying a sense of confidence. With a slightly raised eyebrow, Laserstein peers outward with the whites of her large brown eyes prominent and bright. In this work, she skillfully captures the texture of the cat's lustrous fur with the fine application of oil paint on a wood panel and thereby inserts herself in the grand tradition of the Great Masters from Dürer to Holbein the Younger, both of whom she emulates in this self-portrait. Through this act of self-staging, Laserstein, as Krausse has shown, aimed to solicit recognition of her talents and expertise. One critic, however, writing in the *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung* on July 31, 1930 deemed the portrait a "strikingly and genuinely feminine self-portrait," making the artist's gender the focal point of the work.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Anna-Carola Krausse, *Lotte Laserstein: meine einzige Wirklichkeit / My Only Reality* (Philo Fine Arts: Dresden, 2003), 174.

<sup>129</sup> Krausse, *Leben und Werk*, 167.

On a very basic biological level, the critic was not wrong, but this uninteresting fact was undoubtedly not his point. Labeling the artistic self-presentation of a woman, whose own appearance and ambitions clearly defy the stereotypes that constitute mainstream femininity, as “strikingly and genuinely feminine” suggests that the critic overlooked the portrait’s critical function altogether. Such a characterization exhibits not only a conservative view on gender and art criticism, but it also ignores the picture’s capacity to speak ambivalently about the artist, her artwork, and identity. This is not at all to say that representations of women looking conventionally feminine are categorically uncritical, but the writer’s assertion of Laserstein being “genuinely feminine” was a loaded remark for a woman artist, who sought to prove the quality of her work irrespective of her gender. This self-portrait, the poster for *Die gestaltende Frau*, and her other portraits of New Women make female identity indeed the critical point, but never in a way that dictates precisely what a genuine femininity should be or how it should look. Rather, Laserstein’s portrayals of women, including herself, engaged in artistic labor or in public settings wearing fashionable clothing, complicate, through the artist’s treatment of scale, bodily comportment, and surface textures, the viewer’s emotional identification with and understanding of these modern female subjects, whose femininity seems to operate on the edges of bourgeois gender and sexual norms.

#### **Laserstein and Fashion: “...Not Too Close to the Fashion Journal”**

Weimar fashion journalists used the term *Sachlichkeit* when writing about menswear-inspired and functional garments as well as plain, striped, or checked fabrics. When discussing the latest sportswear of 1928, one *Elegante Welt* journalist declared, “*Sachlichkeit* is the

motto!”<sup>130</sup> Johanna Thal of *Die Dame* discussed the popularity of *Sachlichkeit* in dress, commenting, “Where *Sachlichkeit* is necessary, we find it distinctively in fashion. Never before has the sport suit been arguably so calm, so practical and in every sense functional with all fashionable attractiveness like it is today.”<sup>131</sup> Yet, the unadorned utility of *sachlich* garments did not, in fact, cause the demise of fashion as such. Rather than initiating an enduring formal standard based on material and functional needs, as architects and designers had envisioned, *Sachlichkeit* became as fashionable as any other trend. Situated under the rubric of *Sachlichkeit* were the products of the fashion industry’s rationalized production methods and sophisticated marketing tactics.

Examples such as these from popular fashion magazines of the era, such as *Die Dame* and *Elegante Welt*, demonstrate that *Sachlichkeit* was a prominent sartorial force in the 1920s. Alarmed by these changes, the critic responsible for the now-classic opinion piece, “Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women,” feared that fashion was only the beginning of an enduring *Vermännlichung* or masculinization of women that would irrevocably alter their essence and inspire them to abandon their roles as mothers and wives. “But the trend went even further,” the critic wrote, “women no longer wanted to appear asexual; rather fashion was increasingly calculated to make women’s outward appearance more masculine.”<sup>132</sup> Throughout

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<sup>130</sup> K.R., “Sachlichkeit ist Devise! Sportkleider für St. Moritz und die Riviera,” *Elegante Welt* 3 (February 8, 1928): 36-37.

<sup>131</sup> “Wo *Sachlichkeit* notwendig ist, finden wir sie in der Mode deutlich ausgeprägt. Noch nie war wohl der Sportanzug bei aller modischen Kleidsamkeit so ruhig, so praktisch und in jeder Hinsicht zweckmäßig wie heute.” Johanna Thal, “Sachlichkeit und Schönheit in der Mode,” *Die Dame* 8 (1<sup>st</sup> January Issue 1930): 58.

<sup>132</sup> “Enough is Enough! Against the Masculinization of Women,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 659. Originally published as “Nun aber genug! Gegen die Vermännlichung der Frau,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (March 29, 1925): 389.

the Weimar Republic, *Sachlichkeit* in dress was a visible target for critics, who disapproved of the changing socio-political status of women.

The French designer Paul Poiret, who claimed to be the first to do away with the corset in 1908, was a key figure in the sartorial developments that would lead to *Sachlichkeit* in dress, much to his dismay. Relieving women of the pain and constriction caused by the corset, Poiret preferred columnar-shaped garments like his renowned hobble skirt, which minimized corporeal curves as well as the wearer's range of movement. His claims for the sartorial emancipation of women and their bodies still evidenced, however, a notable degree of sexism: "I favor small breasts that rise forth from the bodice like an enchanting testimonial to youth... It is unthinkable for breasts to be sealed up in solitary confinement in a castle-like fortress like the corset as if to punish them."<sup>133</sup> Poiret achieved fame in Germany, and his visits to Berlin caused great excitement. When the designer travelled to Gerson's, one of the city's main department stores in 1911, female consumers flocked to admire the models that wore his designs.<sup>134</sup> After Poiret's 1925 visit to Berlin, a journalist in *Der Querschnitt* called him, "the dictator of the woman and her servant, her god and her slave."<sup>135</sup>

In his 1927 text "Fashion in 30 Years," also translated and published in *Der Querschnitt*, Poiret blamed the valorization of American technology and popular culture, otherwise known as *Amerikanismus* or Americanism, for the modern preoccupation with functionality in

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<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*, 227.

<sup>134</sup> Poiret wrote to his wife in Paris to share news about his enthusiastic reception in Berlin: "You could have counted the people who came this morning only by the thousands, and a few minutes ago, when the afternoon show was over, an entire crowd, delirious with joy acclaimed your little sweetheart with an enthusiasm unprecedented in Berlin" Quoted in Mila Ganeva, "Elegance and Spectacle in Berlin: The Gerson Fashion Store and the Rise of the Modern Fashion Show," in *The Places and Spaces of Fashion, 1800-2007*, ed. John Potvin (New York: Routledge, 2009), 129.

<sup>135</sup> "...er ist der Diktator der Frau und ihre Diener, ihr Gott und ihr Sklave." Jeanne Bailhache, "Poiret," *Der Querschnitt* 6, no. 6 (1926): 478.

contemporary dress.<sup>136</sup> He predicted that the future would show a continuation of current trends, but to such an extreme that the woman's "thirst for liberation and independence" would never be quenched.<sup>137</sup> She will also practice many new kinds of sports, all of which, he argued, negatively impact her elegance, causing her to look even more masculine and *sachlich*. Poiret explained, "The more this American spirit and taste for American and Negro dances, the more masculine and objective-dry (*sachlich-trockener*) the attire of the woman becomes."<sup>138</sup> While Poiret supposedly freed women and their bodies from the corset, he was not at all interested in dispensing with elegance and other coded descriptors for acceptable femininity, a standard that *Sachlichkeit* in dress apparently violated.

Exhibiting elegance and athleticism nonetheless, the central figure in *Tennispielerin* epitomizes the *Sachlichkeit* of the New Woman. At the time Laserstein painted *Tennispielerin*, the most common sports outfit for a woman was still a skirt or dress.<sup>139</sup> With its bold stripes, knee-length hem, and drop-waist, her dress conforms to fashionable *Sachlichkeit*. She is situated with three other women and one man, who congregate near a fence lining the perimeter of the court, where a woman, the person farthest away, is playing a game. The tennis player's clothing and body take compositional precedence in the work, calling attention to sartorial codes that made the New Woman, just like her dress, both decorative and functional.

That Laserstein's works are evocative of fashion imagery does not undermine their potential to raise questions about the social realities of women during the Weimar Republic. In her study on the nude in *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, art historian Janina Nentwig, characterizing

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<sup>136</sup> Paul Poiret, "Die Mode in 30 Jahren," *Der Querschnitt* 7 (January 1927): 31.

<sup>137</sup> Paul Poiret, "Die Mode in 30 Jahren," 31.

<sup>138</sup> "Je mehr sich dieser amerikanische Geist und der Geschmack an diesen amerikanischen und Negertänzen entwickeln wird, desto maskuliner und sachlich-trockener werden die Toiletten der Frauen werden." Paul Poiret, "Die Mode in 30 Jahren," 32.

<sup>139</sup> Rowe, "Representing Herself," 87, n. 34.

Laserstein's painting as conservative and academic, situates *Tennispielerin* as a foil to Anton Räderscheidt's own version of a *Tennispielerin* from 1926.<sup>140</sup> Laserstein's representation of the tennis player's androgyny, short hair, and muscular features notwithstanding, Nentwig asserts, "Laserstein does not scrutinize the stereotype of the New Woman disseminated by the mass media, rather she affirmatively illustrates the widely propagated changing gender roles."<sup>141</sup> Contrary to Nentwig's conclusion that Laserstein's portrayal of the tennis player is uncritical, scholars such as Krause and Rowe have remarked upon the *Tennispielerin*'s populist appeal as a typological study, but they maintain that Laserstein's representations of urban types are not without "equivocation," as Rowe put it.<sup>142</sup>

In the painting, Laserstein depicts the tennis player as at once empowered and powerless. The woman's intimidating size suggests her physical strength, a quality that was atypical in the fashion illustrations of the period. At the same time, Laserstein renders the tennis player motionless, sitting on the side, despite being dressed for the occasion. Laserstein achieves a pictorial dissonance in *Tennispielerin* by reproducing the fashionable signifiers of the New Woman not to affirm commercial stereotypes, but to reveal their limits in representing the complexities of modern female subjectivity. More than a representation of a popular social type, the painting reflects, through its appropriative pictorial language, the disjuncture between fashionable ideals and the sociopolitical realities of everyday life.

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<sup>140</sup> Janina Nentwig, *Aktdarstellung in der Neuen Sachlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 208-209. Janina Nentwig, "Akt und Sport. Anton Räderscheidts 'hunderprozentige Frau'," in *Leibhaftige Moderne: Körper in Kunst und Massenmedien 1918 bis 1933*, eds. Michael Cowan and Kai Marcel Sicks (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005), 97-116.

<sup>141</sup> "Laserstein hinterfragt das massenmedial vermittelte Stereotyp der Neuen Frau nicht, sondern illustriert affirmativ den allseits propagierten Wendel der Geschlechterrollen." Nentwig, "Akt und Sport," 109.

<sup>142</sup> Rowe, "Representing Herself," 78.

Nevertheless, the fashionability of Laserstein's painting did not go unnoticed by critics. *Tennispielerin* was even reproduced in the May 1930 issue of the *Berliner Tageblatt's Mode und Kultur* section. In the morning edition of *Germania*, a critic, noting the fine line between fashion illustration and Laserstein's painting, warned, "The artist should reflect as to whether her works are [not] too close to the fashion journal."<sup>143</sup> This criticism reveals an anxiousness regarding the fine artist's appropriation of imagery from fashion publications. Krause has presented numerous examples in which Laserstein adapted motifs popularized in fashion photography.<sup>144</sup> According to the scholar, Laserstein's *Traute Rose with White Gloves* (Figure 19) recalls a photograph by Madame d'Ora published in *Die Dame* in 1931 (Figure 20), and *Traute Rose with Red Cap and Checkered Blouse* (1931) (Figure 8) resembles Man Ray's photograph of the fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli from around 1930 (Figure 21).<sup>145</sup> Further, a 1928 article in *Uhu* features a portrait (Figure 22) of a seamstress whose comportment and necktie resonates with Laserstein's *Traute Rose with Tie* (1931) (Figure 23).<sup>146</sup> In adapting fashionable motifs from magazines in her portraits, Laserstein not only undermines the apparent high art status of her supposed "academic and conservative" realism, but also provokes the viewer to consider how the visual language of realism can reframe the depiction of everyday garments as well as the New Woman's relationship to them.

For instance, Laserstein's *Russian Girl* (1928) (Figure 24) brings to mind images frequently published in the fashion press.<sup>147</sup> Tightly cropped photographs of women wearing hats could be utilized to seduce consumers, foregrounding the attractive features of the commodities

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<sup>143</sup> Krause, *My Only Reality*, 136.

<sup>144</sup> Krause, *My Only Reality*, 135.

<sup>145</sup> Krause, *My Only Reality*, 135.

<sup>146</sup> "Schönheit im Winkel – Eine Entdeckungsfahrt des "Uhu," *Der Uhu* 2 (November 1928): 24-28.

<sup>147</sup> The painting depicts the same model that appears in Laserstein's *Russian Girl with Compact*.



over the women wearing them (Figure 25). In such examples, the rich materials comprising hats and collars dominate the photographic compositions and obstruct the women's faces, making the women the accessories to the hats. Conversely, representing the subject in such close visual range also gave the impression of objectivity in revealing the character of the subject. Following this physiognomic approach are the images featured in Vicki Baum's October 1930 essay in *Uhu* entitled, "Which woman is the most desired?." <sup>148</sup> One of the images, taken by the fashion photographer Yva, reveals through a close-up, the facial features of the depicted woman, which were supposed to convey her personality, as the caption beneath suggests, "coquetry in youth (Figure 26)." The image accompanied an assortment of other portraits of female types, from the sultry movie star and the astute intellectual, to the disheveled country girl, prompting readers to contemplate the appeal of each type through the photographs, providing an objective view of their faces.

Whereas in these examples emphasis was given to either the fashion or the subject, in *Russian Girl*, by way of contrast, Laserstein exaggerates the haptic qualities of all the surfaces in the picture, including the woman's hat, collar, skin, and hair. The smooth black-brown fur collar that frames her round face blends into her wooly dark hair, while gentle brushstrokes ease the transition from fur to skin. The viewer comes to know the subject through the interplay of sartorial textures and surfaces that Laserstein activates in the portrait through her acute brushwork. At the same time, however, the woman's head-on gaze and puckered lips suggest a more direct seductiveness. While visually similar to the close, frontal depictions of women in the illustrated press, *Russian Girl* exemplifies the distinct pictorial objectivity that recurs in

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<sup>148</sup> In addition to her prolific work in fashion, advertising, and portraiture, Yva was the teacher of fashion photographer Helmut Newton. For more on her life and career: Marion Beckers and Elisabeth Moortgat, *Yva: Photographien 1925-1938* (Berlin: Das Verborgene Museum, 2001).

Laserstein's oeuvre. Her visual representations that emphasize the haptic qualities of material surfaces operate as a proxy to aid in the viewer's empathetic connection with what are often emotionally-guarded female subjects.

While the culture of fashion was a vital source for Laserstein's art production, it also constituted an important professional network for the artist. Well acquainted with the most influential women in Berlin fashion and art circles, Laserstein belonged to such groups as the *Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen*, the *Deutscher Lyceum Club*, and the *Deutsche Staatsbürgerinnen Verband*, all of which fostered exchanges between the realms of fashion, art, theater, and journalism. In 1929, the "Art and Fashion" column in the November 29<sup>th</sup> edition of the *8 Uhr Abendblatt* reported:

Mrs. Elisabeth Mamroth held residence at a table set especially apart. Among her guests were observed the painters Julie Wolfthorn and Lotte Laserstein, the charming lady consort of Police Commissioner Dr. Weiss, the beautiful Maria Oppenheim and the elegant young Renaissance Theater actress Baroness Maria von der Osten-Sacken.<sup>149</sup>

Through this lively network of women professionals, Laserstein established social relationships that were crucial for obtaining commissions, exhibition opportunities, and receiving favorable reviews in the press.

Working these connections to her advantage, Laserstein painted portraits of two formidable figures in Weimar fashion journalism, Ola Alsen and Polly Tieck (the latter also known as Ilse Falkenfeld), which she exhibited in the 1929 show *Die Frau von Heute* (Figures 27 and 28). Alsen, the editor of the fashion magazine *Elegante Welt*, who praised Laserstein's contribution to the show, also purchased the painter's *Girl with White Lace Collar*.<sup>150</sup> Krausse, furthermore, speculates that Alsen also encouraged Laserstein to produce a set of fashion

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<sup>149</sup> Quoted in Krausse, *My Only Reality*, 180.

<sup>150</sup> Krausse, *My Only Reality*, 130. Ola Alsen's article appeared on November 11, 1929 in the newspaper, *8 Uhr Abendblatt*.

drawings in 1932 (Figure 29). Within these circles, Laserstein apparently earned a reputation for being a fashionable woman herself. Describing her stylish appearance, a friend Uwe Wolf recalled, “Miss Laserstein knew all about color; was well dressed, in wide men’s trousers, and wore makeup; a fashion, which was entirely unusual in our city Cuxhaven. In short, as a 10 to 12 year old, I idolized this woman, who was around 30.”<sup>151</sup>

As well as moving within this sartorially conscious milieu, Laserstein reflected critically on the Weimar Republic’s culture of fashion by referencing its modes of representation, as she did with works like *Tennisspielerin*. Providing a means of comparison, two illustrations from *Elegante Welt*, one from 1924 and the other from 1929, exemplify a consistency in format, despite their respective differences. In the earlier example, three women stand side-by-side on a tennis court with the net behind them, each wearing similar variations of sports clothing (Figure 30). Their stylized bodies are motionless and conform to the *Sachlichkeit* dictated by the fashion of the period. Minimal pockets, belts, pleats, seams, and a bold checkered pattern provide an optical illusion of volume and curves, all the while maintaining their slender columnar figures. Together, the four women portrayed in the later example form a more dynamic composition (Figure 31). With two women on either side of the net, there is at least the suggestion that they might start a match. Compared to the demure sweetness in the 1924 example, the fashionable *Sachlichkeit* is more severe here. The hemlines of the skirts are higher, and the women’s sleek coifs are also shorter. All in all, these illustrations fail to account for the movement required by an actual game of tennis, and the women, consequently, serve as clothes hangers for functional fashion.

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<sup>151</sup> “Fräulein Laserstein verstand etwas von Farben; kleidete sich abgestimmt, in weiten Männerhosen und schminkte sich sogar; eine Mode, die selbst in unserer Großstadt Cuxhaven völlig unüblich war. Kurz, ich himmelte diese Dame, die etwa 30 Jahre alt war, als 10 bis 12 Jähriger an.” Krausse, *Leben und Werk*, 78.

Laserstein manipulates the fashionable convention of passive women modeling active wear in *Tennispielerin*. The single tennis player stands apart from the group ensemble, and the careful staging of her clothing, accessories, and setting create a dynamic interplay of textures and forms that depart from the illustrations. Here, she perches precariously atop a thin-framed garden chair, which by comparison makes her own form appear all the more hefty. While decidedly inactive, the tennis player also reveals her own strength, as large feet and hands ground her body in a rather unstable position. She grasps her forearm and closes off her body to the viewer, while she gazes beyond the court, displacing the viewer's attention away from the game, much like the women in the illustrations. The tennis player and her powerful body remain the focal point of the image; although she appears isolated from the action.

Through its formal and thematic tensions, *Tennispielerin* encompasses the contradictions that shaped Weimar women's lives. Its sociopolitical resonance derives from a series of contradistinctions that reverberate with the terms of the debates on *Sachlichkeit* as a sartorial aesthetic – softness/hardness, regularity/irregularity, and utility/sensuousness. The *Tennispielerin*'s outfit and setting both reference and challenge the utilitarian regularity associated with *Sachlichkeit*. The tennis court fence, her racket, and wide-gauged mesh cap occupy the top third of the composition and form an abstract lattice that emphasizes the picture's complex geometric structure, but their rational pattern eventually devolves into a disorientating network of lines. The stripes of her dress operate as both serialized and individualizing pictorial elements. While they evoke rationality and build the graphic appearance of a tennis dress, the stripes also bend irregularly with the curves of the body. Instead of maintaining the visual effect of a strictly two-dimensional patterned surface, the stripes sacrifice their regular geometry to the task of modeling the woman's individual form.

Laserstein's handling of the canvas also opposes the composition's sober linearity. The sandpaper texture of the pictorial surface, which Laserstein achieved by treating the blank canvas before painting, mimics the roughness of the court. More importantly, it offers a haptic sensuousness that challenges the optical patterns formed by the stripes and crisscrossing lines. The stain-like shadows, which bleed diagonally across the canvas, enhance the impression of this organic irregularity, as they stretch and distort the athletic bodies from which they originate. The swirling texture of the sandy canvas along with the abstract shadows work together and achieve an erratic quality in the picture. While the stripes of the tennis dress and the chain-link fence thematically imply a graphic regularity, their visual impression is one that lacks mechanistic precision, a notion bound to the concept of *Sachlichkeit*.

With this work, Laserstein, refusing to resolve the tensions that characterized *Sachlichkeit* as a widespread sartorial trend, rather exacerbates them through her representation of fashion and the New Woman. The *Tennispielerin's* *sachlich* dress is at once a functional uniform for a well-known female type, but it also operates as a personalized garment in an individualized portrait. Her position in the middle of the composition, while at the sidelines of the game, with gaze averted, embodies the New Woman's social ranking. Although she challenged patriarchy and made *Sachlichkeit* fashionable, the New Woman remained a marginalized member of the so-called weaker sex. *Tennispielerin* exemplifies the quandary that arises when over-determined narratives of functionality become fashionable in a society already weary of accommodating modern, functional women in everyday life.

### **The Fashionability of the Tennis Player**

Through *Tennispielerin*, Laserstein, not only appropriating the visual conventions of the fashion press, also responded to discussions about women and sports that were sustained

throughout the Weimar Republic. For cultural critics of the era, the tennis player, in particular, embodied divergent female identities, from the fashion icon to the masculinized woman. In her painting, Laserstein appears to unite these opposite sides of the debate, all the while distinguishing her tennis player from the hyperbolic portrayals that commonly represented the athletic New Woman in the mainstream media. Even though she draws upon the pictorial modes that often minimized the complexities of female subjectivity, Laserstein is as much indebted to the popular press as she is seemingly critical of it. In *Tennispielerin*, the painter's quieter approach to representing this divisive subject matter resists contributing to the paranoid debates about the New Woman that perpetuated binaristic understandings of gender.

Throughout the Weimar Republic, cultural commentators often wrote ambivalently about the growing popularity of sports amongst women. On the one hand, sports symbolized the New Woman's freedom. Fitness was a way for women to build confidence and maintain a healthy lifestyle, as well as their appearance.<sup>152</sup> On the other, critics dismissed the New Woman's preoccupation with sports as a poorly veiled attempt to remain thin and stay in fashion. Critical backlash notwithstanding, women of the era recognized that exercising in moderation would help them achieve the ideal look of the moment. Yet, whereas some physical activity and dieting resulted in a desirable appearance, vigorous exercise and strict diets would make a woman's body appear too masculine.<sup>153</sup> Doctors even speculated that a woman's participation in sports might catalyze a biological masculinization and negatively impact her ability to bear children.<sup>154</sup>

In her 1927 texts "*Wettkampf und Weiblichkeit*" and "*Emanzipation durch Sport*," Annemarie Kopp refutes such thinking, promoting sports, instead, as a medium for fomenting

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<sup>152</sup> Kessemeier, *Sportlich, Sachlich, Männlich*, 149.

<sup>153</sup> Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism*, 223.

<sup>154</sup> Getrud Pfister ed., *Frau und Sport* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1980), 35.

social change and new gender relations. While sports, especially tennis, helped to popularize a new image of femininity, they also functioned as a social backdrop for flirtation between the sexes, fostering what historian Erik Jensen has called an “atmosphere of lustful sexuality,” which had the potential to reinforce traditional gender dynamics.<sup>155</sup> According to Kopp, however, sports encouraged women to develop a sense of individuality. The modern woman, possessing a capable body, she advised, should maintain her health and individualism through exercise and sports. By incorporating physical activity into their everyday lives, women would not only be better equipped to contribute to society, but would experience, on an individual level, a “body and soul” balance.<sup>156</sup> Most importantly, as Kopp explained, the increased popularity of sports amongst women was challenging stereotypes associated with femininity, which she argued, “is no longer called flabbiness, but rather is called: being powerful and self-confident, fierce and strong.”<sup>157</sup> Contesting the validity of the fears surrounding the mobility and freedom of the New Woman, Kopp champions women’s participation in sports as their rightful return to the “functional,” or the “*Zweckmäßige*.”<sup>158</sup>

The consumer culture of the Weimar Republic thrived with the success of the emerging markets created by sports and fitness. Fashion magazines capitalized on the New Woman’s interest in physical wellness, publishing countless articles that informed women of the latest exercises, clothing, and diets. Underwear companies aggressively advertised girdles, flattening brassieres, and other shape-wear to help women achieve the desired slender form when diet and

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<sup>155</sup> Erik N. Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 25.

<sup>156</sup> Annemarie Kopp, “Emanzipation durch Sport,” in *Frau und Sport*, ed. Getrud Pfister (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1980), 70.

<sup>157</sup> “*Diese Weiblichkeit heißt nicht mehr Weichlichkeit, sondern heißt: kraftvoll und selbstbewußt, kämpferisch und hart sein.*” Annemarie Kopp, “Wettkampf und Weiblichkeit,” in *Frau und Sport*, ed. Getrud Pfister (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1980), 130.

<sup>158</sup> Kopp, “Wettkampf und Weiblichkeit,” 132.

exercise were not enough. During the Weimar Republic, fitness was a cultural realm colonized not only by capitalism for its profitable potential as a fashion, but also by women, who had the financial and social freedom to participate in such activities in the public sphere.

During this period, tennis, in particular, had become more accessible to the non-elite and especially appealed to women. Laserstein likely staged *Tennispielerin* in a Wilmersdorf, Berlin park, not far from her studio, where public tennis courts still exist to this day. Tennis, traditionally a middle and upper class sport, entailed various costs for club fees, equipment, and clothing, not to mention requiring the privilege of leisure time. Yet, the increased availability of functional clothes and public courts like the ones pictured in *Tennispielerin* made the sport more affordable to the less affluent. Corroborating this, a 1928 article in *Das Magazin* declared tennis to be one of Germany's fastest growing sports, with 100,000 organized players alone.<sup>159</sup> The article also acknowledges women's interest in the sport as a fashion, noting, as a result, the secondary importance of their athletic abilities. For, tennis, the article explains, is a social game that people play to be seen, where "the many externals, which the woman emphasizes on all occasions – looks, clothing, appearances – are especially observed..."<sup>160</sup> Contrary to Kopp's argument, the article, resorting to stereotypes about femininity, underscores the fashionability of tennis, which was propelled by images of women tennis players in the popular media, such as Suzanne Lenglen, Paula von Reznicek, Nelly Neppach, Helen Willy, and Cilly Aussem. Some players, like Aussem, were known for their beauty, while Lenglen, a French athlete, was the target of ridicule, despite her trend-setting, signature headband.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> F.W. Starke, "Tennis wird Volkssport," *Das Magazin*, 5, no. 60 (August 1929): 3859.

<sup>160</sup> "Die vielen Äußerlichkeiten, auf die die Frau bei allen Gelegenheiten Wert legt, Aussehen, Kleidung, Auftreten, werden gerade beim Tennis besonders beachtet." Starke, "Tennis wird Volkssport," 3859.

<sup>161</sup> Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 35.



For instance, a 1926 satirical drawing published in the popular illustrated literary magazine *Simplicissimus* titled “The World Champion” (Figure 32) shows a female tennis player who resembles Lenglen. The drawing exaggerates Lenglen’s features with her wide headband, short dark hair, prominent nose, and distinctive chin. With a clenched fist, Lenglen slouches, looking aggravated as she drowns in her loose-fitting green cardigan. A tall man with a strong build dominates the scene and makes the otherwise powerful Lenglen appear feeble. The accompanying caption reads, “Too bad about your temper Madame – with that panache you could have ruined a few dozen men!”<sup>162</sup> The cartoon, playing on a pun, proposes that Lenglen’s talents were enough to not only beat a few dozen men at tennis, but also “ruin” them, if it were not for her temper.

Lenglen’s persona and well-documented career publicly defied traditional understandings of gender. A nontraditional woman, she was the first professional female tennis player, a milestone that incensed conservative fans of the sport.<sup>163</sup> Jensen interprets Lenglen’s professionalization as an act of “emancipation,” which allowed her to profit more directly from her talents.<sup>164</sup> The *Simplicissimus* cartoon suggests that, in the eyes of a skeptical public, Lenglen’s professional status made her the epitome of the sporty, masculinized, and fiercely independent New Woman, who possessed qualities that ultimately threatened male suitors. Sports historian Getrud Pfister’s analysis of satirical imagery in *Simplicissimus* depicting the athletic New Woman demonstrates how cartoons such as this utilized the setting of the tennis court as the backdrop for a budding romance between men and women or the habitat of

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<sup>162</sup> “Schade um Ihr Temperament, Gnädigste – mit dem Elan könnten Sie ein paar Dutzend Männer ruinieren!” *Simplicissimus* 31, no. 11 (1926): 156.

<sup>163</sup> Erik Jensen, “Sweat Equity: Sports and the Self-Made German,” in *Weimar Culture Revisited*, ed. John Alexander Williams (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 193.

<sup>164</sup> Jensen, ‘Sweat Equity’, 193.

combative, undesirable women.<sup>165</sup> Combining both options, this cartoon featuring Lenglen shows that the latter precluded the former.

If they appealed to fashion, female tennis players could still capitalize on their status as women athletes without being perceived as threatening. Also seeking to profit from the popularity of female tennis players, editors of illustrated magazines commissioned figures like Neppach and von Reznicek to write, as tennis authorities, on the latest fashions. Neppach's 1924 text for *Sport im Bild* "Neues von der Tennis Mode" informs readers of new trends in sports clothing abroad.<sup>166</sup> According to Neppach, high-quality washable velvets and silks impart, this season, a new sense of luxury to the standard utilitarian garments of the past. The functional cut of these new silk sport dresses, Neppach adds, enables its wearers to "jump like Lenglen."<sup>167</sup> In Von Reznicek's article for a 1926 issue of *Der Querschnitt*, the tennis player offers a short history on "fashionable body parts."<sup>168</sup> Today, she explains, legs are the corporeal feature *à la mode*, which women accentuate by wearing scandalously short evening dresses that are about as long as a handkerchief is wide.<sup>169</sup> Von Reznicek concludes her article with a prudish joke, "What remains left for later? A small leftover midway, that we could call the 'golden parts.'"<sup>170</sup> Providing commentary on socially acceptable fashions, these women athletes maintained their celebrity without overtly breeching bourgeois standards of femininity.

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<sup>165</sup> Gertrud Pfister, "Frauensport im Spiegel der Karikatur: eine Analyse des Simplicissimus (1919-1933)," in *Umbruch und Kontinuität im Sport: Reflexionen im Umfeld der Sportgeschichte. Festschrift für Horst Ueberhorst*, eds. Andreas Luh and Edgar Beckers (Bochum: Universitätsverlag, 1991), 376-401.

<sup>166</sup> Nelly Neppach, "Neues von der Tennismode," *Sport im Bild* 15 (August 8, 1924): 894-895.

<sup>167</sup> Neppach, "Neues von der Tennismode," 894.

<sup>168</sup> Paula von Reznicek, "Der Modische Körperteil," *Der Querschnitt* 6, no. 5 (1926): 363.

<sup>169</sup> von Reznicek, "Der Modische Körperteil," 365.

<sup>170</sup> "Was bleibt für später noch übrig? Eine kleine restliche Mittelstraße, die man vielleicht kurz 'die Goldene' nennen könnte." von Reznicek, "Der Modische Körperteil," 365.

In addition to fashion discourses, reform movements since the late nineteenth century helped to promulgate new ideas about women's health and hygiene. For example, the Life Reform Movement, *Lebensreformbewegung*, advanced new regulations to combat the ills of rapid industrialization and urbanization in contemporary life.<sup>171</sup> While they promoted exercise, vegetarianism, as well as physical- and psychotherapies, their progressivism did not exactly extend to the realm of gender. Historian Michael Hau notes that both feminist and anti-feminist ideologies shaped these reform efforts from the nineteenth century through the 1930s, concluding, "life reformers were not necessarily more progressive in their attitudes toward changing gender relations than their counterparts in regular medicine."<sup>172</sup> In this regard, the reformers dissuaded women from working outside of the home because it was unnatural for them to abandon their rightful duties as mothers and wives.

As the twentieth century progressed, however, such attitudes, especially in relation to sports, began to change. Already in 1900, Else Spiegel named sports the "mighty enemy" of "all our follies of fashion."<sup>173</sup> Later, critics like the sports commentator Carla Verständig argued that the woman's struggle for free movement and independence from stifling aesthetic norms will combat outmoded notions femininity.<sup>174</sup> A study by sociologist Susan Suhr indicated that by 1930, of the 5,678 female employees surveyed, 62% of them practiced sports more or less regularly.<sup>175</sup> Frevert's 1986 study of women in interwar Germany shows that in 1929 nearly 400,000 women belonged to the German Gymnastics Association (*Deutsche Turnerschaft*);

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<sup>171</sup> Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>172</sup> Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty*, 83.

<sup>173</sup> Else Spiegel, "Wir wollen uns bewegen," in *Frau und Sport*, ed. Getrud Pfister (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1980), 110.

<sup>174</sup> Pfister, *Frau und Sport*, 38.

<sup>175</sup> Susan Suhr, *Die weiblichen Angestellten: Arbeits- und Lebensverhältnisse: eine Umfrage des Zentralverbandes der Angestellten* (Berlin: Zentralverband der Angestellten, 1930), 46.

240,000 were members of the Imperial Federation of Women's Gymnastics (*Reichsverband für Frauenturnen*), and the total female membership of other assorted sports and exercise clubs reached over two million. The scholar, thusly, interprets these developments as the consequence of women marrying later and enjoying their social independence.<sup>176</sup> Between 1920 and 1924, Frevert notes, women married on average at the age of 25.4, while men entered marriage at 28.<sup>177</sup> Calling the period after a woman's schooling and before marriage the "interim of individual freedom" (*Interim individueller Freizeit*), Frevert argues that this was a significant period in the New Woman's life, in which she was free to work, spend her own money, and join professional as well as sports organizations.<sup>178</sup>

Even though women's interest and participation in sports was a well-documented reality, it was still trivialized. For instance, Willy Meisl, in his 1927 article "*Die Sportsfrau von Gestern*," noted the significance of sports in women's lives, but explained the phenomenon away as originally being the product of a cultural fashion. "What the women do," he wrote, "is fashion."<sup>179</sup> According to Meisl, sports clothing became popular, not because of a need, but because of women's aesthetic whims.<sup>180</sup> Eventually, however, sports and functional clothing became more meaningful reflections of the modern woman's desires for "sports and nature, movement, velocity, freedom, and momentum," which, in the end, he decided are not superficially motivated by fashion alone.<sup>181</sup> Leisure activities, such as tennis, were instead valid

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<sup>176</sup> Ute Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 197.

<sup>177</sup> Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, 197.

<sup>178</sup> Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, 197.

<sup>179</sup> "Was die Frauen machen, ist mode." Willy Meisl, "Die Sportsfrau von gestern," *Uhu* 2 (November 1927): 16.

<sup>180</sup> Meisl, "Die Sportsfrau von gestern," 16.

<sup>181</sup> Meisl, "Die Sportsfrau von gestern," 17.

expressions of the Weimar woman's freedom to work and experience life outside of the domestic realm.

In *Tennispielerin*, Laserstein situates the terms of the debates about women's relationship to sports through a sartorially conscious pictorial language, but without the anxiety and rigidity that informed such discussion. Instead, she stages the contradictions of *Sachlichkeit*'s fashionability through and around the tennis player, who, quite literally, turns the other cheek. Self-sufficient in the pictorial space, she exists in spite of the viewer's incessant, questioning gaze. The *Tennispielerin*'s nonchalant attitude is the fitting rejoinder to the controversies swirling around the New Woman in the Weimar Republic. Through the painting, it is as though Laserstein shows the difference between dismissing something as a mere fashion and recognizing the ways in which fashion operates as a material register of the sociopolitical conflicts that shape everyday life.

### **Conclusion: Desiring *Sachlichkeit***

Laserstein's *Tennispielerin*, having already facilitated a discussion about the ways in which fashion and sports shaped popular images of female subjectivity in the Weimar press also raises questions about labor. By portraying a scene of middle class leisure, the painter alludes to the social conditions that made this privilege possible for some New Women and out-of-reach for others. As the twenties progressed, rationalized labor practices eventually infused elements of *Sachlichkeit* into daily life.<sup>182</sup> Many women implemented rationalization in the domestic sphere, with the aim of making their lives more hygienic and efficient. From scheduling tasks to wearing short, easy-to-maintain hairstyles, and functional clothing, the New Woman restructured her life through the principles of *Sachlichkeit*. Yet, this rationalization also underpinned the expectation

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<sup>182</sup> Atina Grossmann, "*Girllkultur*," 75.

that women should be increasingly productive both at home and in the workplace. For the women who experienced these struggles, everyday commodities like mass-produced sports dresses were tactile symbols of their exclusion and exploitation.

Ultimately, attitudes towards women's work did not change during the Weimar Republic. Frevert has shown that the percentage of workingwomen between 1907 and 1925 only increased from 34.9% to 35.6%.<sup>183</sup> Yet, in white-collar fields, three times as many women worked in 1925 as in 1907.<sup>184</sup> The female *Angestellten* or white-collar employees worked as shop girls and secretaries, receiving few opportunities for advancement. While these positions granted women more freedom than they would have had as domestic workers, they did not enable women to replace men in higher power managerial positions. The increased presence of women in the public work sphere was only more noticeable because industries, which traditionally hired women anyway, further rationalized their labor practices and increased the number of unskilled jobs for women.<sup>185</sup>

Accordingly, the principles of scientific management enabled employers to streamline services and production into more menial, low-paying jobs. Widespread mechanization, which required great amounts of investment capital, remained unnecessary because women provided an abundance of cheap, unskilled labor. The fashion industry, for example, still consisted of networks of small workshops where women, like the seamstress pictured in *Der Uhu* in 1928 (Figure 22), toiled over small sewing machines for little pay. The kind of dress that Laserstein pictured in *Tennisspielerin* would, in all likelihood, have been a product of what historian Nancy

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<sup>183</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, 176-177.

<sup>184</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, 177.

<sup>185</sup> Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, "Beyond Kinder, Küche, Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* ed. Renate Bridenthal et al. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 314.

Green has called the “multiple paths” of industrialization, which included both large-scale mechanized productions and small-scale operations in home workshops.<sup>186</sup> In this system, the dress’ striped fabric, having been produced in a large industrialized weaving operation, would then be delivered by an overseer to a small workshop where women would cut the pattern, sew, and finish the dress.

The New Woman was an important consumer of Weimar culture, but, as Grossmann has argued, her role as a producer, whether a visual artist or textile worker, must also be considered. Providing a comprehensive overview of the Berliner *Konfektionsindustrie*, Uwe Westphal explicates the various stages of production that comprised the making of garments like those represented by Laserstein in her paintings, which were likely products of one of its lower tiers.<sup>187</sup> At the highest level of the hierarchy were the expensive *Couture* or *Modell* genres. These garments were made of the best fabrics fashioned into the most up-to-date designs in lower production numbers. Fashion houses premiered two collections of luxury goods per year, and their production began with a trip to Paris, where a designer and the house director studied the latest models for the upcoming season. The middle tier, also known as the *Mittelgenre*, were clothes made in greater quantities of still quality fabrics, but the garments lagged stylistically behind the most current fashions. Inexpensive clothes made with cheap fabrics and produced in the highest numbers were part of the *Stapelgenre*, also known as staple goods.

During its production, the tennis player’s dress would have landed in the hands of numerous female workers in a process known as the *Verlagssystem* or the putting-out system, the most common fabrication method. This process separated the construction of the garments from

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<sup>186</sup> Nancy L. Green, *Ready-to-Wear and Ready-to-Work: A Century of Industry and Immigrants in Paris and New York* (Dunham: Duke University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>187</sup> Uwe Westphal, *Berliner Konfektion und Mode: die Zerstörung einer Tradition, 1836-1939* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1986), 54-63.

their sales and marketing, for which the fashion company took responsibility.<sup>188</sup> The company also controlled the creative direction as well as distribution of the goods to wholesalers and retailers. Contracting out the manual labor, the companies relied on small workshops, often in homes, to undertake the clothing production, while the overseers, the *Zwischenmeister*, managed the making of the garments. These *Zwischenmeister* obtained the materials from the fashion companies and brought them to the workshops, where they supervised the workers, who were mostly female pattern-cutters and sewers.

A 1927 report from the *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin* offers a disturbing image of this labor system:

In Berlin there are thousands of such small home workshops. Mostly settled in the working class neighborhoods in the north and east, countless women sew for the confection houses in their apartments under the worst working conditions. The Berlin departments of public health registered a higher than average mortality rate due to tuberculosis in the clothing trade.<sup>189</sup>

While putting their lives at risk, women working in the textile and fashion industries earned meager wages, averaging around 59.8 Pfennig.<sup>190</sup> In 1927, a woman working in a home workshop earned only three Marks for finishing a wool coat, meanwhile a coat of the lowest *Stapelgenre* would have been 42 Marks in 1929.<sup>191</sup> A worker earning these low wages could hardly afford to purchase the coat whose production relied on her own labor.

A 1928 survey entitled “My Working Day, My Weekend” (*Mein Arbeitstag, Mein Wochenende*) conducted by the German Textile Workers Union (*Deutscher Textilarbeiter*

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<sup>188</sup> Westphal, *Berliner Konfektion und Mode*, 54.

<sup>189</sup> “In Berlin gäbe es Tausende von solchen kleinen Heimarbeiterwerkstätten. Zumeist angesiedelt in den Arbeiterbezirken im Norden und Osten nähten unzählige Frauen in ihre Wohnungen unter schlechtesten Arbeitsbedingungen für die Konfektionshäuser. Die Berliner Gesundheitsämter registrierten im Bekleidungs-gewerbe eine überdurchschnittlich hohe Mortalitätsrate auf Grund von Lungentuberkuloseerkrankungen.” Quoted in Westphal, *Berliner Konfektion und Mode*, 62.

<sup>190</sup> Westphal, *Berliner Konfektion und Mode*, 62.

<sup>191</sup> *Berliner Konfektion und Mode*, 62.



*Verband*) featured a 150 texts by employees, who documented their experiences balancing life at home and in the factory, while working long hours for low wages.<sup>192</sup> Expressing frustration with the apparent lack of progress in industrial modernization, one employee at a large spinning and weaving firm wrote, “It is a so-called modern business! It always gets built and expanded, but nothing gets better.”<sup>193</sup> Another female textile worker described her conflicted relationship with clothes:

Many – many clothes come into my hands. I like many of them and I often want to put on one or another of them, but that’s not possible, the wage is too low that I could not afford such expensive fabric. My hourly rate is 49 cents, and from that I have to with my mother, who also works, cover the entire household. Rent, heat, light, everything because my father doesn’t take care of anything. Consequently clothing for me remains last.<sup>194</sup>

Her account, in drawing attention to her hands, underscores the ways in which her occupational duties and desires implicated the sense of touch. While the existence of rationalized labor made her employment possible, the inequalities of these practices also made it impossible for her to consume the very goods that signified her New Woman status. As she feels and constructs the garments, which she cannot afford to buy herself, the New Woman, who has supposedly been granted the freedom to earn a wage, is left with a desire for the clothes that continually pass through her hands.

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<sup>192</sup> For a sustained analysis of women’s labor and the Weimar-era survey *Mein Arbeitstag, Mein Wochenende*, see Joan Campbell, “Joy in Work: The National Debate, 1800-1945 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 200-205.

<sup>193</sup> “*Ich arbeite als Weberin in einem Großbetrieb, der in Spinnerei und Weberei über zwietausen Arbeit beschäftigt. Es ist ein sogenannter moderner Beterieb, aber, aber! Da wird immer gebaut und vergrößert, aber verbessert wird nichts.*” Alf Lüdtke, *Mein Arbeitstag. Mein Wochenende: Arbeiterinnen Berichten von ihrem Alltag 1928* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1991), 55.

<sup>194</sup> “*Viele – viele Kleider bekomme ich in die Hände, manches Kleid gefällt mir und oft möchte ich mir das eine oder andere zulegen, aber das geht nicht, der Lohn ist zu niedrig, daß ich mir kostbare Stoffe leisten könnte. 49 Pfennige beträgt mein Stundenlohn, davon muss ich mit meiner Mutter, die auch auf Arbeit geht, den ganzen Haushalt bestreiten. Miete, Kohlen, Licht, alles, da mein Vater für nichts sorgt. Infolgedessen bleiben Kleider für mich meist bis zuletzt.*” Lüdtke, *Mein Arbeitstag. Mein Wochenende*, 15.

In her 1914 book *Die Künstlerin*, the communist art critic Lu Märten, examining the economic conditions of workingwomen, focusing primarily on the female artist, offers a compelling interpretation of the significance of women's hands in modern industry.<sup>195</sup> Providing a critical, unromantic image of the individual in the era of mass industrialization, Märten writes, "the production of profits, and indirectly the production of goods only needs hands, not skills or personal abilities, but hands."<sup>196</sup> Through this synecdochic identification, the critic explains how modern women are only useful as their working hands, making their bodies merely functional tools for the production of goods and profits. More hands, therefore, meant higher profits for industry, but lower wages for workers, whose agency and talents could never be fully valued.

In her portraits of fashionable New Women, Laserstein questions *Sachlichkeit's* potential to visually signify progress, equality, and functionalism in relation to modern female subjectivity during the Weimar Republic. Her attentive treatment of sartorial surfaces in works like *Tennisspielerin* makes apparent the power of the haptic, desiring touch in a rationalized culture that still relied on the tedious handwork of women. By emphasizing the tactile qualities of fabric, hair, skin, and painting itself, Laserstein counteracts the ideals of mechanized slickness that prevailed under the regime of *Sachlichkeit*, asserting, instead, through this emphasis on materiality the importance of her own skills and personal abilities, to quote Märten, as a professional women artist. Reduced to the product of her handiwork, the female textile worker, by contrast, struggled in an economic milieu that alienated her from her own labor, denying her access to the tangible goods that she produced. Reasserting the agency of her own labor through

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<sup>195</sup> Lu Märten, *Die Künstlerin: eine Monographie* (Munich: Langen, 1919).

<sup>196</sup> "...daß sie zur Erzeugung von Mehrwert, mittelbar zur Erzeugung von Waren nur noch 'Hände' brauchte, nicht Qualitäten oder persönliche Geschicklichkeiten, sondern Hände." Lu Märten, *Die Künstlerin*, 16.

the sensuality of fashion and paint, Laserstein appropriates a *Sachlichkeit* that epitomized female emancipation but fell short of effecting comprehensive social change despite popularizing the New Woman's sartorial signs of freedom and functionality.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Painters of Fashion: Otto Dix and Christian Schad as *Modemaler*

#### Introduction: *Der Modemaler*

Two *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists, Otto Dix (1891-1969) and Christian Schad (1894-1982) were painters of fashion, or *Modemaler*. They depicted the Weimar Republic's culture of fashion in paintings of the New Woman. Packing these images with arresting sartorial details, Dix and Schad commented upon fashion's role in shaping female identity through a pictorial language that was in conversation with the consumer culture of 1920s Germany. The exaggerated appearance of clothing in their works, furthermore, runs parallel to the fashionability of the objective realism known as *Neue Sachlichkeit*, itself the reigning artistic fashion of the period. Schad and Dix confronted the materialistic culture of Weimar Germany, where the illustrated press flooded the streets of Berlin with images and articles on the best skirt length for autumn, velvet capes for *Silvesterabend*, and advertisements for artificial silk produced by the textile firm Bemberg. It is also through these striking portrayals of sartorial surfaces that Schad and Dix launched self-reflexive statements about the material focus undergirding the objectivity of *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

While the representation of fashion is prominent in their paintings, Schad and Dix shared few ties. The artists, despite moving in similar milieus, never collaborated and were not well acquainted. Historians and critics have since then recognized them as leading figures of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, but compared to Dix, Schad received considerably fewer professional accolades

early on. For example, only four of his well-known paintings from the Weimar era sold before the Second World War.<sup>197</sup> Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub included Dix, but not Schad, in his 1925 exhibition *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which debuted in Mannheim and travelled throughout Germany. Additionally, Franz Roh did not mention Schad in *Nach-Expressionismus* (1925), a study of post-Expressionist tendencies in contemporary art at the time. In his 1969 book, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus in Deutschland 1919-1933*, however, Wieland Schmied revived the discussion about *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the postwar context and included individual sections on the two as preeminent post-expressionist painters.<sup>198</sup> In the following, a discussion of Schad and Dix as *Modemaler* will show the similarities in their respective artistic practices. Explications of the visual and thematic complexities in their *Neue Sachlichkeit* works depicting fabulously dressed women also provide insights into these artists' use of the aesthetics of *Neue Sachlichkeit* against strict objectivity in ways that ultimately reveal the expressive and even fantastical qualities of clothing.

The label *Modemaler* is a provocative one for Dix and Schad because it embodies both the strengths and weaknesses of their artistic output through the twenties. *Neue Sachlichkeit's* increase in popularity coincided with a period of relative economic stability between 1924 and 1929, when more people could afford to consume goods and popular entertainment with greater frequency. Thus, stated positively, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was as much a response to the proliferation of commodities in the Weimar Republic as it was a rejection of expressionism and its spirituality. The values that *Neue Sachlichkeit* embodied, such as matter-of-factness and truth in materials,

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<sup>197</sup> Jill Lloyd, "Christian Schad: Reality and Illusion," in *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, ed. Jill Lloyd and Michael Peppiatt (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 15.

<sup>198</sup> Wieland Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Magischer Realismus in Deutschland, 1918-1933* (Hannover: Fackelträger-Verlag Schmidt-Küster GmbH, 1969), 36-44, 50-51.

provided a means for artists like Dix and Schad to represent life in a rapidly modernizing postwar society. By exploiting the pictorial conventions of objectivity in their depictions of clothing and female subjects, Schad and Dix situate fashion as a critical aspect of progressive realist painting in the twenties.

Yet, the prominence of fashion in these works also makes them vulnerable to criticism from those who do not recognize fashion's critical capacity. With their sartorially conscious subject matter and overall fashionability, these works can understandably be misconstrued with affirmative culture. Further, Schad and Dix both renounced establishment politics, deliberately styling their public personas and artistic products as politically indifferent. Dix once famously said, "Don't bother me with your idiotic politics – I'd rather go to the whorehouse,"<sup>199</sup> while Schad claimed that center of his work was man as "individual" and "not in a political body."<sup>200</sup> Their female portraits also moved freely through consumer culture, since fashion magazines published reproductions of paintings by Dix and Schad as covers and illustrations. Perhaps it could be argued, then, that the two artists, who eschewed political participation, and their *Neue Sachlichkeit* works, which feature extraordinary representations of clothing and women, prioritized fashionable surface appeal over issues traditionally befitting of critical scrutiny.

Critics indeed rebuked *Neue Sachlichkeit* on these grounds, dismissing it as a reifying cultural fashion. Berthold Brecht lambasted *Neue Sachlichkeit* for being reactionary, and Georg Lukács contended that the movement was "apologetic and leads so clearly away from any poetic

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<sup>199</sup> Olaf Peters, "'Painting, A Medium of Cool Execution': Otto Dix and Lustmord," in *Otto Dix*, ed. Olaf Peters (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 97.

<sup>200</sup> "Mittel punkt meiner Arbeit war und ist der Mensch. Der Mensch als Einzelwesen, nicht in der politischen Masse." Christian Schad, "Dada Surrealismus Neue Sachlichkeit," in *Christian Schad: Texte, Materialien Dokumente*, ed. Günter A. Richter (Rottach-Egern: Edition G.A. Richter, 2004), 88.

reproduction of reality that it can easily merge with the Fascist legacy.”<sup>201</sup> The left’s standard charge against *Neue Sachlichkeit* was that its artists, in advancing a so-called objective pictorial mimesis, simply reproduced the surface of reality in painstaking details without sufficiently critiquing its underlying social conflicts. As literary scholar David Midgley aptly summarized:

In a general way since 1930, “*Neue Sachlichkeit*” had become a slogan with which Marxists and liberals could taunt each other... The more firmly it became identified in public awareness with the enjoyment of material wealth and the culture of commercial interest, the more it was stigmatized by the intelligentsia as signifying a lifestyle and outlook bereft of personal identity and critical consciousness.<sup>202</sup>

An obsession with things, critics of *Neue Sachlichkeit* claimed, fosters false consciousness and creates a world where people are treated like objects. The scintillating surface luster and the conspicuousness of fashion in Schad’s and Dix’s paintings, moreover, distract people from reckoning with the deeper, more difficult dynamics that shape their lives. Even today, art historians have discussed *Neue Sachlichkeit* in terms of its ideological culpability as a proto-fascist movement.<sup>203</sup> Such an approach, however, ignores the nuances of Dix’s and Schad’s portraits of the New Woman, where the representation of fashion operates in tension with but never fully outside the world of affirmative culture.

A 1925 cover of *Die Dame*, picturing a *Modemaler*, further elucidates why this label is an incisive one for Dix and Schad (Figure 33). With a long black beard and waxed mustache, the artist in the cartoon concentrates on his painting that is indistinguishable from a contemporary fashion plate. The already-framed canvas shows a demure and rosy-cheeked blonde in a short

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<sup>201</sup> “Nur der ‘Realismus’ der ‘neuen Sachlichkeit’ ist so offenkundig apologetisch und führt so deutlich von der dichterischen Reproduktion der Wirklichkeit weg, daß er ins faschistische Erbe einzugehen vermag.” As quoted and translated by Benjamin Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting,” *October* 16 (Spring, 1981): 40. See Georg Lukács, *Essays Über Realismus*, vol. I, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. IV (Neuweid: Luchterhand, 1971), 148.

<sup>202</sup> David Midgley, *Writing Weimar: Critical Realism in German Literature, 1918-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 52.

<sup>203</sup> See Buchloh, “Figures of Authority.”

pink dress complete with bell sleeves, a swing skirt, and a saccharine floral pattern. Even the woman's dog is an accessory, which, while looking absurd in an oversized pink bow, coordinates with its mistress. The painter is himself a fashionable caricature, sporting fancy patent leather shoes, pinstripe pants, and a smock adorned with delicate paint stains, atop a shirt with a black ascot and wingtip collar. Far from a rugged bohemian or an austere modernist, the *Modemaler* easily coheres with his painted subject matter. The cartoon, promoting a rather uncomplicated relationship between art and fashion, positions the *Modemaler* as an illustrator of the garb worn by a conventionally attractive woman, whose short hair and hemline, hardly transgress bourgeois propriety.

Whereas *Die Dame* presented the *Modemaler* without commentary, a feature in *Sport im Bild*, another lifestyle magazine for well-to-do readers, joked about his limited creative agency, parodying his transformation from a painter into tailor. The article narrates an interaction between an artist and his client, a notable, but anonymous aristocrat, Frau Gräfin X, as she requests an updated portrait from the painter, a veritable slave to fashion:

“*Meister*, rrrrrr,... will you come to me, I would like...rrrrrr...for you to make me a new evening dress...and rrrr...a new Parisian hat...rrrrr...”

Then the painter, who in reality was more of a tailor than a painter, betook himself to the palace of the countess, brought with him the newest fashion journals, then painted over the lady's portrait according to their descriptions. Though the payment was also very befitting because when the lady asked him: “How much do I owe you, dear *Meister*?” he retorted, “As much as you paid for your last evening dress and for your last hat.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> “*Meister*, rrrrrr, ... kommen Sie zu mir, ich möchte...rrrrrr....., daß Sie mir ein neues Abendkleid machen ...und rrrr..... einen Pariser Hut...rrrrr...’  
Begab sich dann dieser Maler, der in Wahrheit mehr Schneider als Maler war, in das Palais der Gräfin, brachte er die neusten Modejournale mit, nach deren Angaben er dann die Porträts der Dame übermalte. Allerdings war die Bezahlung auch eine sehr angemessen, denn als ihn die Dame fragt: ‘Wie viel bin ich Ihnen schuldig, lieber Meister?’ entgegnete er: “Soviel wie Sie für Ihr letztes Abendkleid und für Ihren letzten Hut bezahlt haben.” Ramon Gomez de La Serna, “Der Porträtist,” *Sport im Bild* 6 (March 22, 1929): 380.



In equating the cost of representing the garment and hat with the actual cost of purchasing these goods, the artist touches upon precisely that which has fueled critics' disdain for *Neue Sachlichkeit*. This objective mode of representation supposedly conflates the commodity as such with its image. *Modemaler* downplay their subjectivity and individual viewpoints in the pictorial reproduction of the fashionable commodity. Yet, artists like Schad and Dix emphasize objectivity in their portrayal of commodities and people so as to assess the highly objectified nature of life during the Weimar Republic.

Karl Marx's definition of the commodity fetish provides a useful foundation for this discussion about Schad's and Dix's representations of fashion. According to Marx, although material goods, like clothing, appear to be straightforward facts, they are imbued with "metaphysical subtleties" and conceal a complex set of social relations.<sup>205</sup> A "fantastic form of a relation between things," as Marx put it in *Capital* (1867), the commodity form eclipses the "social characteristics of men's own labor."<sup>206</sup> Moreover, the market's insistence on the perennial newness of fashionable goods veils the ever-the-sameness of the exploitive labor relations that spawn them. Sociologist David Frisby has identified this paradoxical nature of the new in Marx's explication of commodity fetishism. Rationalized modes of production impose uniformity, extinguishing real historical and local specificities, in order to perpetuate the holistic illusion of endless novelty from which capitalism profits. As Frisby concludes, "The capitalist society which Marx analyzed was, for him, doomed to be transitory."<sup>207</sup> It would seem, then, that to be fashionable is to be equally doomed.

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<sup>205</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1*, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review, 1976), 163.

<sup>206</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 164.

<sup>207</sup> David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 27.

Yet, a wholesale repudiation of fashion delegitimizes the unavoidable importance of commodities in everyday life, as the objects that fulfill desire and utilitarian needs alike. This idea was not entirely lost on Marx himself, who, in *Capital*, analyzes one sartorial commodity in particular, a coat. Starting with its production in a factory, Marx looks at the coat's circulation through the market, as it is transformed from cut and sewn cloth into a "supra-sensible" entity. This process of abstraction, as Marx points out, evacuates utility and the sensuous qualities from the object, replacing this lack with a quantifiable equivalent by assigning the commodity an arbitrary market price.<sup>208</sup> Scholar Peter Stallybrass has shown that Marx's analysis of the abstracting system of commodification is not at odds with the fact that commodities simply matter to individuals, writing, "For Marx, as for the workers of whom he wrote, there were no "mere" things. Things were the materials – the clothes, the bedding, the furniture – from which one constructed a life; they were the supplements the undoing of which was the annihilation of the self."<sup>209</sup>

Moreover, Marx's description of the commodity as a social hieroglyphic provokes, intentionally or not, the possibility of decoding its rich social meanings. He writes in *Capital*, "It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social product: for the characteristic which objects of utility have of being values is as much men's social product as is their language."<sup>210</sup> In other words, Marx argues that the metaphysical meanings derived from commodities are not inherent to them, but rather are the product of a socially constructed code that is dependent on a conflation of subjective and objective values. Although Marx's metaphor

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<sup>208</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 132-169.

<sup>209</sup> Peter Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat," in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, ed. Patricia Spyer (New York: Routledge, 1998), 203.

<sup>210</sup> Marx, *Capital*, 167.

is intended to emphasize the commodity's abstract incomprehensibility, it also alludes to its intrigue and potential for legibility.

A cartoon, published in the April 20, 1924 issue of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* depicts a commodity in the form of a literal hieroglyphic (Figure 34). It shows an old professorial-type stalking a slim young woman in a skin-tight column-shaped dress.<sup>211</sup> As he lifts his magnifying glass to the patterned fabric of the garment, she stops to ask why he is following her. The man replies, "Oh, I only want to decode the hieroglyphic script."<sup>212</sup> On one level, the cartoon conveys the elderly man's lecherous interest in getting a good look at her body by way of the curious pattern on her snug dress, but on another, it satirizes his not understanding the modern clothing of the New Woman. Deciphering the meaning of the hieroglyphic script on her dress may be distinct from deciphering her dress as a social hieroglyphic, but both tasks involve recognizing fashion as a coded visual and material language.

In their tantalizing and often conflicted portrayals of women and clothing, Schad and Dix treat fashion like a surface that reveals objective material realities as well as subjective emotional ones. The two artists revel in the artifice of fashion and, in turn, appropriate its visual language in their painting as a way to critique it. The hyperbolic appearance of dress in works by Schad and Dix makes the commodity status of fashion acutely visible. By emphasizing the tangible material qualities of fashion in their paintings, the artists complicate the notion of objectivity in realism, pushing it beyond a strict deadpan *Sachlichkeit*. Their pictorial strategies are, therefore, akin to the process of commodification, wherein goods are alchemized by socially constructed "metaphysical subtleties" and their value is thus arbitrarily determined. Hence, the representation

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<sup>211</sup> "Das Tutanchamun-Kleid," *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (April 20, 1924): 411.

<sup>212</sup> "O, ich will nur die Hieroglyphenschrift entziffern." "Das Tutanchamun-Kleid," 411.

of clothing in these portraits is also the representation of the capitalist fashion system as it collides with the identity politics of the New Woman in the Weimar Republic.

### **Painting Transparent Fabric: Schad, Dix, and *Lazurmalerei***

Before delving into the visual strategies with which Schad and Dix represent clothing in portraits of the New Woman, it will be useful to first establish a better understanding of their authorial claims through an analysis of the exquisitely rendered transparent fabric depicted in two self-portraits, namely, Dix's *Self Portrait with Muse* (1924) (Figure 35) and Schad's *Self-Portrait* (1927) (Figure 36). In the mid-twenties, Dix and Schad revived the painting methods of the Old Masters, and through this, they defined their contemporary art production in relation to a revered art historical past.<sup>213</sup> This strategy included implementing an old glazing technique found in Renaissance painting, called *Lazurmalerei*, which required the fine application of thin layers of tempera and oil paint. The method of painting, in fact, evokes the qualities of the transparent fabric in the works. Erasing all facture, the artists utilized this painstaking process to capture the diaphanousness of the fabrics featured both on and off their bodies. Through these self-portraits, Schad and Dix confront the technical challenge of painting transparent fabric and declare their virtuosity in realist painting.

The *Lazurmalerei* in these self-portraits from 1924 and 1927 creates a visual effect that is at once veristic and fantastical. Delicate and nearly transparent, the paint betrays no signs of touch, as if it miraculously arranging itself to resemble real fabric, flesh, and hair. Portraying their likenesses in this capacity, Schad and Dix declare themselves master manipulators of paint.

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<sup>213</sup> Conservator Bruce Miller has shown that Max Doerner's widely read *The Materials of the Artist and their Use in Painting* informed readers, such as Otto Dix, about the materials and techniques of the Old Masters. Ursus Dix, the son of Otto Dix, recalls his father owning a 1921 edition of Doerner's book. See: Bruce F. Miller, "Otto Dix and His Oil-Tempera Technique," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 74 (Oct., 1987): 350.

At the same time, they complicate this authority by suspending their likenesses in dreamlike spaces, whose atmospheres conjure a sense of uncertainty. The heightened presence of nude female bodies and fabric in these self-portraits work to both assert and challenge the painters' identities. During the execution of the works, the fabric and women took shape according to the will of the artists, submitting to their artistic prowess, but once finished, their presence begins to overwhelm the painters.

Dix's *Self Portrait with Muse* (1924) displays an erotic power struggle between the artist and his inspiration. Dix sets the two figures against a rough gradient that transitions from warm yellow to a dark, cool gray. The muse, an apparition with plump lips, and ample curves, raises her solid arm. Dominating the picture with a weighty corporeality, the red-brown-eyed woman, sports a faint mustache and a flowing mane of dark hair, her vitality diminishing the artist's compact body. Her diaphanous veil seems to be ever expanding, while Dix's stiff comportment and heavy blue smock occupy a smaller, limited portion of the canvas. The opaque splotches of paint that stain his smock further contrast the deliberateness with which he painted the transparent veil of the muse. This fabric, while attesting to his masterful skills in mimesis, also looms as a symbol that foreshadows danger. As if bewitched by the woman, the veil appears animate or phantom-like. Dix, occupying a more grounded space, purses his lips and remains fixated on his task to discipline this female figure and her unfinished veil, like the paint of which he takes control. Both are the objects of his testosterone-driven creativity.

In this fantasy, the fully clothed artist shapes the image of a fantastical nude woman that stands before him as a potential threat.<sup>214</sup> Dix cites Cranach's *Venus* (1532), where the goddess' fully transparent veil has been tamed by the skill of artist (Figure 37). Inviting a pleasant visual

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<sup>214</sup> Jung-Hee Kim, *Frauenbilder von Otto Dix: Wirklichkeit und Selbstbekenntnis* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1993), 34.

experience, the fabric there enhances Venus' soft appearance. Dix's scene takes a different turn, becoming a nightmarish Pygmalion scene, where the muse's veil remains incomplete and her hair unruly. Wielding two visually suggestive tools, the master compensates for this mismatched dynamic with his paintbrush and staff. Dix's placement of them in the composition forms dynamic diagonal lines that enrich an illusion of depth. While the staff receding into the blank backdrop delineates the space between artist and his muse, the thin brush draws them together. These objects signify the artist's desire to dominate her, in spite of her formidable appearance. For all that Dix lacks in physical stature, he proclaims his authority through the tools that reference the act of painting, his chosen mode of control.

Dix creates a self-reflexive painting that champions mimetic illusions, rather than the literal presence of paint on canvas. In 1927, the Weimar-era critic Curt Glaser commented on Dix's technique in a manner that is consistent with this idea, writing, "He lays layer after layer like the Old Masters had done. He makes an effort to rediscover ancient recipes in order to get away from the painterly surface, which has become discredited, since becoming all too cheap. The painting that Dix practices is a very complicated, technical procedure."<sup>215</sup> Glaser sets Dix's skillful figuration apart from the facture, fragmentation, and flatness of the avant-garde. By painting in this way, Dix distances himself from the aesthetic strategies exercised by the expressionists and dadaists, for instance, and aligns himself with figures such as Hans Baldung Grien, Lucas Cranach the Elder, and Matthias Grünewald. In that respect, Dix's painting was

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<sup>215</sup> "Er legt Schicht auf Schicht, wie die alten Meister es getan haben. Er bemüht sich um die Wiederentdeckung uralter Rezepte, um von der ‚malerischen‘ Oberfläche wegzukommen, die in Verruf geraten ist, seit sie allzu billig geworden. Die Malerei, die Dix übt, ist ein sehr kompliziertes handwerkliches Verfahren." Quoted in Dieter Buchhart, "Die Realität der Oberfläche als Beweis des Seins – ein künstlerisches Credo des Otto Dix," in *Otto Dix Zwischen Paradies und Untergang*, eds. Dieter Buchhart and Hartwig Knack (Munich: Hirmer, 2009), 27.

consciously anti-modern, a quality that was apparent to contemporary critics, who labeled his techniques “old German” and “old masterly.”<sup>216</sup>

Dix learned about the Old Masters when he moved to Dresden to study at the Academy of Applied Arts in 1909. There, he gained access to the collection at the *Königlichen Gemälde Galerie*, which included Italian and German masterpieces by Pinturicchio, Dürer, and Cranach. During his studies, Dix was also able to travel to France and Italy, but these formative experiences followed rather humble beginnings and years of training. Born in 1891 in Untermhaus, now part of present-day Gera, Dix was the son of the ironworker Franz Dix and the seamstress Louise Dix. As a child, Dix showed a talent for art in school, and under his mentor, Ernst Schuker, the young artist honed his skills in preparation for professional training. Dix’s parents were financially unable to support their son and pay for his tuition. So, the aspiring painter earned a scholarship from Heinrich XXVII, Prince Reuss to study at the art academy in Dresden under one condition – he had to study decorative painting.<sup>217</sup> For four years, the artist toiled under the supervision of the decorative painter Carl Senff, who was less than encouraging. He once told Dix, “You will never be a painter, you will stay a scribbler.”<sup>218</sup> Recalling this challenging time, the artist remarked, “From the ages of 14-18, I studied decorative painting, that is I studied clearing out chicken coops. Scraping roofs and walls, grinding colors. Painting floors, fences, & pedestals & cleaning boots according to instructions.”<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Buchhart, “Die Realität der Oberfläche,” 27. See Curt Glaser, “Otto Dix,” *Kunst und Künstler* 4 (January 1927): 130.

<sup>217</sup> Ulrike Lorenz, *Otto Dix: Welt und Sinnlichkeit* (Regensburg: Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2005), 19.

<sup>218</sup> “Du wirst nie Maler, du bleibst ein Schmierer.” Dieter Schubert, *Otto Dix in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt Verlag, 1977), 11.

<sup>219</sup> “Vom 14-18ten Lebensjahre lernte ich Dekorationsmaler, d.h. ich lernte Hühnerställe ausmisten. Decken & Wände abkratzen, Farbe reiben. Fußböden, Zäun & Sockel streichen & Stiefel vorschriftsmäßig putzen...” Otto Dix, “Lebenslauf,” in *Otto Dix Gemälde Zeichnungen*

The outbreak of the First World War halted Dix's studies. He volunteered as an artilleryman, but in 1915, he was assigned to a machine gun unit, fighting at the fronts in France, Flanders, Poland, and Russia. After his discharge in 1918, Dix returned to Dresden, where he attended the *Hochschule für Bildende Künste* and became a founding member of the Dresdner Secession Group of 1919. Through his connections in the Secession Group, Dix's professional networks in Düsseldorf, Dresden, and Berlin expanded. In 1920, Dix participated in the First International Dada Fair at the *Galerie Burchard* with the now lost work *War Cripples* (1920). By the mid-twenties, Dix jettisoned the montage aesthetic of his dada works and developed the polished illusionistic technique reminiscent of the Old Masters for which he is now known.

Of course, the formal skills exhibited in these historical masterpieces attracted Dix, but his interest in the techniques they displayed also informed a more conceptual aspect of his practice. In his 1927 text, "The Object is Primary," Dix associated innovation in painting together with the artistic practices of the past. For him, the visual languages evident in older styles of painting were exemplary because they enhanced the formal expression of content. He stated, "By all means, newness in painting for me lies in the broadening of the *Stoffgebiet*, through an escalation of forms of expression that was already extant in the Old Masters."<sup>220</sup> In order to intensify the *Stoffgebiet*, meaning the content and subject matter of his works, Dix borrowed Old Master techniques because they "escalate" the appearance of figurative representations. Objective in terms of mimesis, Dix's paintings also exhibit fantastical qualities

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*Druckgrafik*, ed. Ulrike Rüdiger (Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH, 1996), 57.

<sup>220</sup> "Jedenfalls liegt für mich das Neue in der Malerei in der Verbreiterung des Stoffgebietes, in einer Steigerung der eben bei den alten Meistern bereits im Kern vorhandenen Ausdrucksformen." Otto Dix, "Objekt gestaltet Form," in *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*, ed. Dieter Schmidt (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1981), 205-206.



that run contrary to strict objectivity. Innovation was consequently, for Dix, not a matter of novel techniques, but rather of rendering the world anew through techniques anchored in the past.

Like the muse with her veil in Dix's self-portrait, transparent fabric is prominent in Schad's 1927 self-portrait. In the latter, the artist depicts himself wearing an atypical tunic of diaphanous green fabric. The garment operates as a skin-tight envelope. It appears to stain the artist's skin, and its laces look like sutures closing an incision on his chest. At the collar and shoulder, the fabric betrays itself as fabric or a covering, which appears unrealistically stiff. Repeating the motif of transparency, Schad also separates the interior space from the exterior city scene with a dark see-through curtain. It filters colors of the night sky and softens hard architectural details of the cityscape. Folds in the fabric create a visual transition, guiding the eye over to a nude woman, who is situated behind the artist.

This woman half-reclines atop a mass of checked, striped, and plain white bedding. Her meticulously painted body creates a sharp contrast against the sheets, forming a clustered juxtaposition of skin, flatness, and pattern. Schad's figure obscures the complete view of her nude form, save for a sliver of her red stocking. Unlike Dix in his 1924 self-portrait, Schad gazes with his gray-green eyes directly at the viewer. The woman, on the other hand, stares out beyond the artist, and their psychological separateness undermines their close physical proximity. The artist commands attention with his large eyes and unconventional shirt, forcing the striking woman with the facial scar and jet-black hair to recede into the night sky. Tied with a black ribbon, her rigid hand disturbs her relegated placement at the back of the composition. It enables the figure to reclaim power over the scene, as it encroaches into the foreground. The only hand in the painting, it also prompts the eye to haptically experience the different textures of skin and fabric.

While the cloth of his tunic is revealing, the woman's bare skin and stitched scar establish a protective barrier. Waxing poetic on Schad's technique, Wieland Schmied describes the artist's handling of skin: "I see the way Schad paints this skin, and I think of alabaster, ivory, of mother of pearl and the veins of marble. That is skin painted for eternity. It appears sometimes transparent, it shimmers with sheens – but it is impenetrable."<sup>221</sup> Schmied concludes that the impenetrability of the skin symbolizes the psychological distance between the subject and the painter. Schad approaches his subjects, as Schmied put it, with an attitude of "neither cynicism nor sentimentality" in order to maintain their integrity as individuals.<sup>222</sup> Nevertheless, this ethos of emotional detachment, which is characteristic of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, reverses itself on the visual register, culminating in a deep engagement with dazzling, affect-inducing pictorial details.

Schad's picture caption of 1976-1977 provides some additional information about the unusual shirt. He writes that the scene conveys a "*moment après*," whose details are remembered fragments that he stitched together in order to emphasize their symbolic meaning.<sup>223</sup> For instance, the night sky, punctuated by chimneys "represent[s] a vague longing for Paris."<sup>224</sup> Schad recalls seeing "the woman's hand on a girl running a fairground shooting stall at the Prater in Vienna."<sup>225</sup> And regarding the nude woman with the scar, she "has had her face spoiled by a *sfregio*... a scar... inflicted by a jealous husband or lover," which she "display[s] with great

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<sup>221</sup> "Sehe ich diese Haut, wie sie Schad malt, so denke ich an Alabaster und Elfenbein, an Perlmutter und Marmoradern. Das ist Haut, für die Ewigkeit gemalt. Sie wirkt zuweilen transparent, sie schimmert von Reflexen – aber sie ist undurchdringlich." Wieland Schmied, "Menschen ohne Eigenschaften," in *Christian Schad: Texte, Materialien Dokumente*, ed. Günter A. Richter (Rottach-Egern: Edition G.A. Richter, 2004), 95.

<sup>222</sup> Schmied, "Menschen ohne Eigenschaften," 104.

<sup>223</sup> Christian Schad, "Picture Captions," in *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, ed. Jill Lloyd and Michael Peppiatt (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 230.

<sup>224</sup> Schad, "Picture Captions," 230.

<sup>225</sup> Schad, "Picture Captions," 230.

pride...as a visible sign of the passion she inspired.”<sup>226</sup> Commenting on the tunic, Schad writes, “And I supposed I found it more pleasing as a painter to show my naked body through a shirt of the kind woven in ancient times on the island of Kos, rather than painting one nude in front of another.”<sup>227</sup>

The antiquity of this reference could have connoted his “old masterly” style of painting, but to identify the source of the shirt in ancient Kos remains almost as puzzling as its appearance. Fashion magazines neither promoted transparent materials for men’s fashion nor did they publish images with garments remotely like Schad’s shirt. In reality, these magazines routinely coded diaphanousness as a sartorial trait that connoted femininity.<sup>228</sup> When he wrote his picture captions in the seventies, Schad had been married to his second wife Bettina, née Mittelstadt, since 1947. Schad met Bettina in Berlin when she was working as an actress and modeled for the painter. During the war, the two settled in Aschaffenburg, where Schad continued to paint and Bettina turned to illustration work. In the thirties, she produced costume illustrations for a stage production of Cinderella in a historicizing, fairy-tale aesthetic (Figure 38). In the fifties, Bettina conducted a study on the history of fashion, with extensive handwritten notes, outlining developments from the ancient world through the seventeenth century. A typed manuscript also suggests that she did or planned to deliver a speech on the history of fashion. Namely, the notes and newspaper clippings in her collection indicate a special interest in ancient Greece. Bettina’s research was likely motivated by her job to represent historical garments in her commercial

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<sup>226</sup> Schad, “Picture Captions,” 230.

<sup>227</sup> Schad, “Picture Captions,” 230.

<sup>228</sup> See: Gesa Kessemeier, *Sportlich, Sachlich, Männlich: Das Bild der “Neuen Frau” in den Zwanziger Jahren: Zur Konstruktion Geschlechtsspezifischer Körperbilder in der Mode der Jahre 1920 bis 1929* (Dortmund: Edition Ebersbach, 2000).

work. Perhaps through her interests, Schad retroactively identified the origin of his tunic in the seventies, looking back to the moment when he painted it in the twenties.

Admittedly, the image caption, which is supposed to aid in the deciphering of the symbolic meaning behind the work's details, should be regarded with some measure of skepticism. In any case, it remains plausible to interpret the transparent shirt as self-reflexive pictorial device, quite literally revealing the artist, his body, and his technical skill. Whereas Dix visually links the transparency to the feminine subject, Schad, by contrast, enables the transparent fabric to become the lens through which the viewer perceives him. The likely fictional tunic, thus, calls attention to Schad as a painter. Rather than picturing his paintbrush and palette, the artist allows the shirt to symbolize the act of painting with uncanny verisimilitude. With its green translucent surface, the tunic renders his otherwise naturalistically depicted body strange.

Exhibiting this high level of technical proficiency was a priority for Schad, and like Dix, he perfected these techniques after studying the Great Masters. Schad was born in August 1894 in Miesbach, Germany into a wealthy family, who supported his decision to leave high school and undertake a formal art education at the Münchener Academy. During this period, Schad experimented with impressionism and expressionism. At the start of the First World War, the artist, now a pacifist, fled to Zürich in 1915 with the financial backing of his father. There he befriended Walter Serner, a writer and co-publisher of the Expressionist magazine *Die Aktion*. Serner inspired Schad to work in the literary world, and the two founded the publication *Sirius* in 1915. Despite the magazine's short one-year run, they published contributions from Picasso,

Max Hermann-Neisse, Else Lasker-Schüler, Ludwig Bäumer, and Alfred Kubin.<sup>229</sup> Between 1916-1920, Schad produced his photograms, also known as *Schadographien*, and abstract prints while moving in Swiss dadaist circles. Feeling disenchanting upon returning to war-ravaged Germany in 1920, Schad wrote, “The political situation and the incipient inflation paralyzed every initiative.... Dada is dead. We had to try in a new way to find the new man.”<sup>230</sup> After trumpeting the death of Dada, Schad left for Italy, where he claimed he found a new way to paint.

Schad lived in Naples until 1921. After a brief interlude in Germany, he returned to Naples and Rome between 1923 and 1925. There, he studied the clarity and brushwork of the *Quattrocento* and *Cinquecento* masterpieces, insisting that it was in Italy, where he, “...had secured the right to paint well...”<sup>231</sup> On a trip to the Palazzo Borghese in Rome, Schad encountered Raphael’s masterpiece, *La Fornarina* (Figure 39) (1518-1520), another work famous for its represented transparent cloth. Schad’s experiences in Italy spurred a drastic stylistic shift in his oeuvre.<sup>232</sup> Much like Dix, he thought artistic traditions could be a source of renewal, or as he put it, “Art is old. And the old art is often newer than the new.”<sup>233</sup> The 1927 self-portrait confirms that painting well for Schad encompassed more than a demonstration of

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<sup>229</sup> Andrea Heesemann-Wilson, “Christian Schad Expressionist Dadaist und Maler der Neuen Sachlichkeit. Leben und Werk” (PhD diss., Georg-August-Universität, 1978), 35.

<sup>230</sup> Thomas Ratzka, “‘The Human Being is the Most Important and the Most Mysterious’: Christian Schad’s Artistic Development to 1945,” in *Christian Schad: Retrospective: Life and Work in Context*, ed. Michael Fuhr and Justine Lipke (Cologne: Weinand Verlag GmbH, 2008), 14.

<sup>231</sup> Ratzka, “Christian Schad’s Artistic Development to 1945,” 27.

<sup>232</sup> Matthias Eberle, “Das Individuum als Einzelner,” in *Christian Schad: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Schadographien 1915-1978*, ed. Matthias Eberle, Rudolph Pfefferkorn, Christiane Zieseke (Berlin: H. Heenemann GmbH & Co., 1980), 14.

<sup>233</sup> “*Die Kunst ist alt. Und die alte Kunst ist oft neuere als die Neue.*” Christian Schad, “Mein Lebensweg 1927,” in *Christian Schad: Texte, Materialien Dokumente*, ed. Günter A. Richter (Rottach-Egern: Edition G.A. Richter, 2004), 71.

skill. Good painting, rather, proclaims something of its own reality as a mediated truth. It straddles the fictitious and the real, blurring the line between past and present, just as his painted shirt did.

The striking appearance of fabric in these self-portraits exposes the paradox of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. While *Neue Sachlichkeit* works were associated detachment, clarity, and objectivity, they also exhibit the exaggerated and often fantastical qualities of material surfaces. This discrepancy is especially notable in paintings by Schad and Dix, who made *Stoff* (material or cloth) a crucial component of their paintings' *Stoffgebiet*, the work of art's thematic content or subject matter.<sup>234</sup> In her 1969 interview with Dix, Maria Wetzel landed on this point when she said, "The reality with you is perfectly clear – and thus at the same time carried out *ad absurdum*; your Realism is not *sachlich*. You are not *sachlich*. I could never see *Sachlichkeit* in your pictures."<sup>235</sup> To which Dix replied, "...*sachlich*... who is that already? I mean: which artist is that already? One could find with me back then for example the strong emphasis of the substance (*Stofflichen*), the material (*sachlich*)...the substance (*Stofflichen*)."<sup>236</sup> With this statement, Dix implies that *Sachlichkeit*, as a kind of objectivity, propels his work much less than the *Sache*, meaning the matter at hand or the substance. In this sense, the *Stoff* as a kind of *Sache* inflects the meaning of *Sachlichkeit* in Dix's artistic practice, which he defines not in terms of detachment or rationality, but rather in terms of his commitment to material things.

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<sup>234</sup> Andreas Strobl, *Otto Dix: eine Malerkarriere der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1996), 133-134.

<sup>235</sup> "Die Realität wird bei Ihnen überdeutlich – und dadurch zugleich *ad absurdum* geführt; Ihr Realismus ist noch *sachlich*. Sie sind nicht *sachlich*. Ich habe in Ihren Bildern nie *Sachlichkeit* sehen können." Otto Dix and Maria Wetzel, "Otto Dix – Ein Harter Man, dieser Maler," *Diplomatischer Kurier* 14 (1965): 739.

<sup>236</sup> "...*sachlich*...wer ist das schon? Ich meine: welcher Künstler ist das schon? Man könnte bei mir damals zum Beispiel die starke Betonung des *Stofflichen*, des *Materiellen sachlich* gefunden haben...das *Stoffliche*." Dix and Wetzel, "Otto Dix," 739.

In a similar vein, Hans Kinkel's characterization of Dix's painting articulates a characteristic that is common to both Dix and Schad: "What for the others is a plague – the academic, correct recording of anatomical matters of fact – means lust to him. In this sensually engaged Sachsen, an elementary hunger for reality, for material reality enjoys life."<sup>237</sup> Schad and Dix prioritized the task of accurately recording the objects of everyday life, but this pictorial correctness undergoes a metamorphosis in their hands. Through their exacting, academic techniques, the two artists recreate worlds that brim with hyper-realistic and sensuous material details. Their portraits of women showcasing racy chiffon dresses, animalistic fur collars, the silkiness of satin and the fuzziness of velvet demonstrate the ways in which their pictorial objectivity turns into a lustful obsession with surface, pattern, color, and texture. Together, their subject matter and techniques earn Schad and Dix the title of *Modemaler* in this assessment.

### **Fashion in the Lives of Schad and Dix**

Surviving letters, drawings, and documents suggest that Dix, Schad, and their wives were fashion-conscious. In the year 1923, Schad married his first wife Marcella, and Dix married Martha, his first and only wife. The following details the extent to which the two artists participated in the culture of fashion independently as well as the role it played in their relationships. For example, in the works *Portrait of Frau Martha Dix* (1923) (Figure 40) and *Marcella* (1926) (Figure 41), Dix and Schad manipulate the social coding and awareness of velvet, silk, and fur. Representing their wives in these materials, Schad and Dix deploy their uncanny abilities in picturing sartorial surfaces in paint as a means to exploit the social codes

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<sup>237</sup> "Was anderen eine Plage ist – die akademisch korrekte Erfassung anatomischer Tatbestände – bedeute ihm Lust. In diesem sensuell engagierten Sachsen lebt sich ein elementarer Hunger nach Wirklichkeit, nach stofflicher Realität aus." Hans Kinkel, *Die Toten und die Nackten: Beiträge zu Dix* (Berlin: H. Kinkel, 1991), 29.

circulating in advertising and fashion magazines that dictated standards of bourgeois femininity.

Velvet, fur, and silk were associated with feminine sensuality throughout the Weimar Republic. Consumers regarded daytime fashions, comprising cotton, wool, and linen to be *sachlich*, masculine, and utilitarian.<sup>238</sup> By contrast, more luxurious garments of silk, velvet, and fur carried explicitly feminine connotations and were better suited for the evening. In her study of Weimar fashion, Gesa Kessemeier analyzes this day-night dichotomy as it relates to gender. She cites a 1926 article from *Sport im Bild* that describes the ideal woman as being boyish during the day and a lady in the evening.<sup>239</sup>

Yet by the mid-twenties, critics already began calling for the end of sartorial *Sachlichkeit*'s androgyny, simplicity, and practicality. For instance, the fashion journalist Ola Alsen wrote in 1924, "The dream of simplicity is over. Everything wants to be more complicated and sophisticated."<sup>240</sup> And, as a 1928 article in German *Vogue* concluded, "One grew tired of the all-too masculine lines, but kept all of its good: simplicity, slimness, and respectability."<sup>241</sup> While bathing suits, tennis dresses, and driving clothes remained *sachlich*, gowns became increasingly feminine and fanciful as the decade progressed. This tendency accelerated through the early thirties, when Alsen explained once again, "The setting of the sun this winter means for

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<sup>238</sup> See chapter one for a discussion about the relationship between *Sachlichkeit* and daytime women's fashion.

<sup>239</sup> Kessemeier, *Sportlich, Sachlich, Männlich*, 107.

<sup>240</sup> "Der Traum der Einfachheit ist ausgeträumt. Alles will komplizierter, anspruchsvoller werden." Ola Alsen, "Die interessanten neuen Stoffe," *Elegant Welt* 21 (October 8, 1924): 20.

<sup>241</sup> "Der allzu männlichen Linien war man müde geworden, hatte aber all ihr Gute: Einfachheit, Schlichtheit, und Korrektheit beibehalten." "Wie Vogue die Mode sieht," *Vogue* (June 6, 1928): 7.



the *sachlich* dressed *Sportslady* the moment where she should transform herself into a lady.”<sup>242</sup>

To achieve this ideal, women were to wear evening gowns of shiny fabrics, like lamé, satin, chiffon, brocade, as well as costly furs and sumptuous velvets that contrasted with their sober and utilitarian daytime clothing.<sup>243</sup> With respect to both time and gender, Weimar sartorial codes decreed that *Sachlichkeit*'s sober masculinity was opposed to the femininity embodied in velvet, silk, and fur, which were best donned in the evening

Such values are evident in Schad's 1926 portrait of Marcella as a New Woman, who looks youthful and charming in a mauve silk dress worn over a transparent chemise that peaks through the neckline and accents her décolleté. Schad figures Marcella's demure expression and ladylike dress with the same exacting verisimilitude of the gritty buildings behind her. As a consequence, however, this treatment seems to soften the appearance of the architectural details, while hardening the sartorial ones. The cattleya flower, with its expertly formed, stiff edges, even begins to look mechanical. The living forms in the scene, like Marcella and the cat, appear less animate than the chimneys of the cityscape that stretch towards the sky. While Schad painted the portrait in Vienna, he situates Marcella in a room overlooking Montmartre. Echoing Schad's *Self-Portrait, Marcella* comprises disparate symbolic parts that the artist montaged together.

Art historian Jill Lloyd has shown that Schad used postcards and his own photographs (Figure 42) as source materials for many of his works, including the 1927 self-portrait.<sup>244</sup> The practice of appropriating photographic motifs for background imagery began in 1926 with this portrait of Marcella. For Schad, memory and imagination were instrumental in the construction

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<sup>242</sup> “*Der Untergang der Sonne bedeutet in diesem Winter für die sachlich gekleidete Sportslady den Zeitpunkt, wo sie sich in die Dame zurückverwandelt.*” Ola Alsen, “Sachlichkeit geht über Originalität,” *Elegante Welt* 1 (January 6, 1930): 21.

<sup>243</sup> “Wie hat sich die Mode seit dem Vorjahr geändert,” *Die Dame* 26 (September, 1926): 14.

<sup>244</sup> See: Enno Kaufhold, *Christian Schad Werkverzeichnis in 5 Bänden Band II: Photographie* (Aschaffenburg: Christian Schad Stiftung, 2013).

of the portraits, giving, as Lloyd put it, “another twist to the play between reality and illusion in [his] works.”<sup>245</sup> Regarding these portraits as painterly collages, Schad engineered the composition by suturing together remembered and imagined details in an artificial setting. From the romanticized cityscape to Marcella’s stiff clay-like hair and the perfectly modeled drapery of her dress, Schad forces these exceedingly specific details to operate together in one airless space. It is under the pretense of objective realism that the patchwork quality and pictorial artifice of Schad’s compositions become apparent.

The artist met Marcella in Italy, and by 1924, Marcella gave birth to their son Nikolaus. Shortly after his birth, they relocated to Munich, Rome, and finally to Vienna, where Schad painted the portrait. In his picture captions, Schad describes Marcella as an “eccentric woman”, a fact that “ultimately led to [their] separation in Vienna.”<sup>246</sup> Gazing through wide eyes, Marcella looks rather unemotional, with her small lips closed and stiff. She rests her hand on the cat that becomes another fashionable accessory. Schad gives the following explanation for the cat’s presence: “I love cats for their beautiful, self-contained movements. But when people become too much like them, then there is something amiss.”<sup>247</sup> By comparing Marcella to a cat, an attractive and graceful animal with willful independence, the artist intimates a reason for the couple’s 1927 divorce. In any case, the portrait illustrates a parallel between Marcella and the feline. Its captivating eyes echo Marcella’s and make hers appear even larger. The supple, yet defined folds of her clothing evoke the grace and precision of feline movements. And finally, the cat, resting on Marcella, forms a risqué visual pun. It gives Marcella a reason to place her hand

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<sup>245</sup> Lloyd, “Christian Schad: Reality and Illusion,” 22.

<sup>246</sup> Schad, “Picture Captions,” 225.

<sup>247</sup> Schad, “Picture Captions,” 225.

on her lap, perhaps suggesting her own erotic self-sufficiency. Through this, the otherwise prim image pushes the limits of the New Woman's acceptable coquettishness.

The portrait still passed in bourgeois circles, however. In 1928, a Dutch collector, Mrs. Kröller, purchased the work at the exhibition *Deutsche Kunst* in Düsseldorf.<sup>248</sup> It subsequently ran as the color cover of the Munich-based magazine *Jugend* in 1927 and was also printed in the women's magazine *Das Heft* in 1930.<sup>249</sup> Writing for the *Volkszeitung Wien*, journalist Max Roden mentioned the painting once in 1927 and again in 1930.<sup>250</sup> Several portraits by Schad served as covers of *Jugend*, *Das Heft*, *Moderne Welt*, *Sport im Bild*, *Uhu*, and *Die Dame* between 1926 and 1932. When the Ullstein Verlag editor Friedrich Kroner commissioned Schad to paint *Friends* (1930), Schad even worked from a photograph by the prominent fashion photographer Yva depicting his then-girlfriend Maika Lahmann and her friend in profile against a blank backdrop (Figure 43). This double portrait of the two modern women, *Friends*, ran as the color cover of the October 1930 issue of *Uhu* (Figure 44). That reproductions of portraits such as these were integrated alongside articles, photographs, and advertisements about fashion indicates that Schad's painting traded in a visual vocabulary and sartorial sensibility that was compatible with these popular publications.

Additionally, archival materials extant in the Christian Schad Foundation in Aschaffenburg, Germany provide more evidence of Schad's ties to the world of fashion. Together with Bettina's aforementioned fashion history research, the archive holds a customs receipt, detailing the contents of a package dating from around the mid-fifties that Bettina sent from Italy to her husband in Germany, which contained a pair of gloves, two caps, a sweater,

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<sup>248</sup> Schad, "Picture Captions," 225.

<sup>249</sup> See *Jugend*, April 4, 1927 and *Das Heft*, March 3, 1930.

<sup>250</sup> Max Roden, "Christian Schad," *Volkszeitung Wien* January 25, 1930; and Max Roden "Christian Schad," *Volkszeitung Wien*, January 25, 1927.

five blouses, three pairs of pants, two skirts, three dresses, and one jacket. Additionally, a 1912 edition of a Rudolf Hertzog Agenda, from the eponymous Berlin department store, is present in the collection, although it is unclear when the artist or his wife acquired it. The publication includes a text on the history of fashion and contemporary images of the retail spaces in the fashion emporium. Sometime in the fifties or early sixties, Bettina, perhaps with the help of her husband, produced sketches that would become an illustration or a mural for the *Kleiderfabrik Mathes*, a firm in the prosperous postwar textile industry of West Germany (Figure 45). In her drawings, Bettina illustrates dainty female textile employees working on the assembly line while sharply dressed tailors construct garments on a dress form. These materials, while not contemporaneous with his Weimar painting, indicate Schad's peripheral, if not direct involvement with fashion.

Another telling item is a rarely discussed photograph of Marcella, which Schad kept in his possession long after her death (Figure 46). After the couple divorced in 1927, Marcella returned to Rome, where she later drowned in 1931.<sup>251</sup> Following their separation, Schad went to Berlin, where he would eventually meet his second wife, Bettina. The photograph of Marcella was likely captured between 1923 and 1926. It shows the artist's wife, or soon-to-be wife, in an ornate coat with a luxurious white fur collar, and an oversized hat, which shades the mysterious eyes that Schad captured in the 1926 portrait of her. This photograph of Marcella is significant not just for documenting her chic 1920s fashionability, but also because it eerily resembles Dix's 1923 portrait of Martha, who also wears a large hat and fur coat.

In the painting, Dix heightens the material qualities of Martha's fur coat and velvet hat. She wears a white glove that touches the collar of the sable coat, setting off the peachy color of

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<sup>251</sup> Schad, "Picture Captions," 225.

her skin. With face, neck, and shoulders powdered, eyes lined, and lips rouged, Martha resembles a ghostly doll. The surface of the painting rumbles with the tense brushstrokes that comprise the fur, red velvet, and the darkness of the atmosphere that surrounds her. Extending the fur's haptic qualities beyond Martha's body, the background echoes the texture of her face and clothing, underscoring the sensuous allure associated with fur and velvet. Curator Karin Schick argues that the material extravagance of the work betrays Martha's "upper-class origins and her social image" and brings the viewer "into a play of deception and exposure."<sup>252</sup> The portrait shrouds Martha in mystery, who remains coy behind her red hat, as the lightness of her body pierces through the dark surroundings.

Three years later, Dix painted another portrait of his wife (Figure 47). Sitting on a woven stool against another blank backdrop, Martha holds a large branch from a flowering plant and wears an ornately beaded sleeveless dress. Dix depicts Martha's body and face in this portrait with much less detail as a means to accentuate the fanciful appearance of the garment. Contrasting the light blue fabric, swirling dark green, red, and pink details coordinate with the plant's organic forms. Whereas the earlier portrait conveys a sense of drama, this 1926 portrait situates the artist's wife in a decidedly lighter, more open environment. A deadpan sensibility defines the space, as Martha displays the botanical specimen before the viewer with a matter-of-fact expression. Martha's impassive face conjures the emotional detachment that Dix and his *Neue Sachlichkeit* contemporaries implemented alongside their objective realism. Accounting for each and every bead and stitch, Dix portrays Martha's embroidered silk dress with an obsessiveness that was anything but detached.

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<sup>252</sup> Karin Schick, *Otto Dix: Hommage à Martha: Homage a Martha* (Stuttgart: Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, 2005), 113.

Martha's garments and accessories are key to Dix's exacting mode of representation in both portraits, their differences notwithstanding. Schick would likely concur, observing that for Dix, "Martha's figure...seems to become the arena for the art of painting, a surface for the translation of reality into pictorial invention."<sup>253</sup> The elaborate surfaces of her clothing provided Dix the opportunity to exercise his skills and exploit the materialism that underpins his pictorial objectivity. As he emphasizes the material presence of fashion in these portraits, he creates an environment where intangible elements like psychology and emotion find expression through the physical world. The garments and accessories, which cover Martha, are in effect, also the means by which Dix exposes her to the viewer.

Dix painted Martha more than any other subject.<sup>254</sup> Martha Lindner, born in 1895, came from a wealthy family in Cologne, where she was raised by her liberal parents and educated by private tutors. Shortly before the First World War, Martha married her first husband Dr. Hans Koch, a dermatologist, urologist, and prominent art collector. Taken by Dix's *Salon I* and *Salon II* (1921), Koch purchased the works and invited Dix to Düsseldorf in 1921 for a portrait commission. At this point, Koch had already begun an affair with Martha's sister Maria, and upon meeting Dix, Martha was impressed with the young blonde artist, who could "dance insanely well."<sup>255</sup> That evening, Martha and Dix danced, while Koch "got plastered."<sup>256</sup> The couple divorced, Dix married Martha in 1923, and Martha Koch became Martha "Mutzli" Dix posthaste.

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<sup>253</sup> Schick, *Hommage à Martha*, 113.

<sup>254</sup> Karin Schick, *Otto Dix: Hommage à Martha: Homage a Martha* (Stuttgart: Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, 2005), 108.

<sup>255</sup> Lothar Fischer, *Otto Dix Ein Malerleben in Deutschland* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung 1981), 30.

<sup>256</sup> Fischer, *Otto Dix Ein Malerleben in Deutschland*, 30.

In addition to modeling for her husband, Martha sat for two notable Weimar photographers, August Sander and Hugo Erfurth. Martha, Dix, and their daughter Nelly appear in Sander's book *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Figure 48). Sander also published Martha's image in the book's third chapter as a maternal family figure and an "elegant woman."<sup>257</sup> Erfurth first photographed Martha in the early twenties and then again in the middle of the decade. Impressed with Erfurth's images, Dix called them "marvelous."<sup>258</sup> Erfurth's 1926 photograph of Martha even appeared in the November 1927 issue of *Die Dame*, whose color-cover was a painting by Tamara Lempicka. The image is consistent with fashion illustrations and photographs where a simple backdrop accents the subject's beauty and fashionable ensemble, and here, Martha sits in front of a white background and gracefully crosses her arms (Figure 49). As she slightly turns her head, she reveals a familiar ornate earring. This is the very earring that appears in Dix's portrait of Martha in the embroidered silk dress from that same year. Given the similarities between the hairstyles, facial expressions, and the earring in the two pictures, it is a possibility that Dix painted the portrait from Erfurth's photograph.

Drawings and letters between Martha and her husband also corroborate that fashion was a source of humor for the couple. Two drawings from 1922 illustrate Martha's fondness for finery. In the first, *Mutzli is Horrified at Jimmy's New Suit*, the chic Martha wears a fur-trimmed coat (as indicated by Dix's notes) and looks with disgust through her veiled hat at Dix, whose ensemble has given her cause for alarm (Figure 50). His short trousers expose the tops of his socks, and his unflattering oversized tailcoat distorts the broadness of his shoulders. In the drawing's inscription, Dix jokes that his sartorial faux-pas is actually *en vogue*: "Mutzli is horrified at Jimmy's new suit/ this is supposed to be fur /creases aren't straight (all the rage in

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<sup>257</sup> Schick, *Hommage à Martha*, 112.

<sup>258</sup> Schick, *Hommage à Martha*, 109.

fashion).” With *Tragic Event*, the second drawing, Dix shows himself pulling Martha, with her feet dragging, head turned 180 degrees, and neck stretched to take in the riches of a milliner’s display window (Figure 51). Already balancing a number of boxes and shop bags in his arms, Dix is impatient and tries to keep up the pace.

Although he teased her, Dix was actually fond of Martha’s fashion sense, especially of her love of *Ittas* or hats: “Hats – hats – hats – sand-colored. Art is actually hard. Money – contract – art is hard,” Dix wrote to Maria Lindner and Hans Koch in 1922. The letter continues, “While Jimmy ponders the deepest problems of life with furrowed, tormented brow, Mutz sits in an armchair munching chocolates and Easter eggs, occupied with the equally weighty question of *ITTAS* / That’s Life !!!!!” Dix illustrates the note with a sketch of himself toiling away at his easel in front of Martha, who sits contently with a bar of chocolate in her mouth (Figure 52). A reference to Martha’s hats appears in another letter, which was dated to the year the couple married. Writing his beloved in anticipation of an upcoming trip to Düsseldorf, Dix fantasized about what they would wear: “I am looking forward to when we can go dancing together in Düsseldorf, *Mutzlein* in the red hat, Jimmy in his stylish-jimmy-suit.”<sup>259</sup> The hat he references in this letter is presumably the red, wide-brimmed one pictured in Martha’s 1923 portrait. By the mid-thirties, Martha even trusted her husband with the task of picking out a handbag, though not without specific instructions. In a letter from 1936, she writes, “Please not a python bag, just bought one, but if you can find it, a *crocodile bag* + *gloves* in *this* color.” Drawing a line to a red-

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<sup>259</sup> “*Ich freue mich darauf, wenn wir in Düsseldorf zusammen tanzen gehen können, Mutzlein im roten Itta, Jimlein im Jimmystilanzug.*” Otto Dix, “1923 Düsseldorf An Martha,” in *Otto Dix: Briefe*, ed. Ulrike Lorenz (Köln: Wienand, 2013), 71.



brown splotch of watery pigment on the page, she continues, “Specifically like the pretty English shoes I have” (Figure 53).<sup>260</sup>

In *Self-Portrait with Wife* of 1923, Dix highlights the couple’s sense of style as a means to visually signal their union (Figure 54). Like his portrait of Martha in the red hat, the work shows both figures wearing a mask of white makeup. Dix portrays himself and Martha, dressed in their best dancing attire, standing upright with equal prominence in the composition. Their stiff comportment and the darkness of the picture are antithetical to the lively energy that would be expected of a couple so fond of dancing like the Dixes. The artist is dashing in his stylish suit with a thin necktie, while Martha wears a fashionable knee-length velvet evening dress with a floral accessory and strappy pumps. Together, the couple projects a modern metropolitan affectation.

By accentuating their stylish clothing, makeup, and accessories with striking precision, Dix professes his concern for material things as the matter at hand – the *Sache* of *Sachlichkeit*. The critic Willi Wolfradt, in his 1923 review of the work, recognized precisely this as the portrait’s strength.

What *Sachlichkeit* is called here and wants, is taught with a view of the slicked back hair, whose accurately modeled comb streaks are given with a view of the creases that have the rigidity of a display window, with a view of the attached silver plastic flower on the belt. The hands are well manicured, but unnatural; wooden; Dix puts a highlight on every polished nail and knows to put everything in the contour lines; the luxurious, the artificial, the automatic, the pseudo-grace of these people. Tie and collar are like out of a store catalog. So embarrassingly objective... In the materiality of such depictions, the materialism of an entire humankind is unmasked.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> “Bitte keine Pythonschlagentasche, hab grad eine gekauft, aber wenn du finden kannst Krokodiltasche + Handschuh von dieser Farbe. So hat ich nämlich noch schöne englische Schuhe.” Unpublished Letter at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Signatur DKA, NL, Dix, Otto, I, C – 161.

<sup>261</sup> “Was hier Sachlichkeit heißt und will, das lehrt ein Blick auf die glattzurückgelegten Haare, deren modalisierte Kämmsträhnen sorgfältig geben sind, auf diese Schaufensterharte Bügelfalte, auf die plastisch aufgesetzte silbrige Gürtelblume. Die Hände sind gepflegt, aber ohne Natur, hölzern; Dix setzt auf jeden polierten Nagel sein Glanzlicht und weiß in die Umrißlinie alles hineinzulegen; das Luxuriöse, Gemacht, Automatische, die Pseudograzie dieser Menschen. Kragen und Manschette sind wie aus einem Geschäftskatalog. So peinlich objektiv. ... In der

For Wolfradt, the *Sachlichkeit* of the painting is conveyed in the minutest details of the subjects' and their clothing, which Dix portrays as unnatural in their realism. From the ridges of the artist's combed hair and the couple's hands to Martha's belt, the critic catalogues the eerie appearance of every reified detail and comments on the pretension of the sitters. Dix's embarrassing objectivity, to invoke Wolfradt, is not simply his inability to edit out unnecessary elements in the composition. Rather, it is through this excessively realistic portrayal of fashion that Dix critiques the materialism of modern life.

Wolfradt's compelling assessment of Dix's critical insights aside, the artist was by no means political motivated. In fact, his contemporaries frequently noted his reputation as a dandy. For instance, the artist made quite the impression on the Düsseldorf-based gallerist, Joanna Ey, upon their first meeting in 1921. She recalled:

And he soon arrived, with flying cape a large hat, and greeted me by kissing my hand, something very unusual for me at the time [...] Mornings he unpacked his 'carton'; from it appeared: patent leather shoes, perfumes, hairnet, everything for beauty care. It was all so new for me, because other artists need the opposite of beauty care.<sup>262</sup>

Dix crafted this theatrical public image in opposition to his reputation as a bitter satirist of the bourgeoisie. Art historian Dietrich Schubert rightfully asserted that Dix juxtaposed his "grotesque-decadent demeanor of beauty" (*ein grotesk-dekadentes Schönheitsgebaren*) against his humble "proletarian origins."<sup>263</sup> Dix embodied two personas, one of which, as Ilse Fischer wrote in 1922, "hates the bourgeoisie...their conventions...and social dishonesty," while the

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*Stofflichkeit solchen Darstellens wird der Materialismus eines ganzen Menschengeschlechts bloßgestellt.*" Willi Wolfradt, "Ein Doppelbildnis von Otto Dix," *Cicerone* 4 (March 1923): 177.

<sup>262</sup> Karsten Müller, "The Charleston and the Prosthetic Leg: Dix and the Art of the Balancing Act," in *Otto Dix*, ed. Olaf Peters (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 166.

<sup>263</sup> Schubert, *Otto Dix in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, 60.

other harbored a “need for extravagant elegance.”<sup>264</sup> Dix even once received payment for his paintings from a Dresden businessman in the form of suits.<sup>265</sup> That fashion was important to Dix and his wife does not preclude the fact that he used his knowledge about it to and critique the materialistic culture of the Weimar Republic. Despite this, it would be safe to say that he probably had expensive taste.

This section, having outlined the ways in which Schad and Dix participated in the Weimar Republic’s culture of fashion, whether through consumption, the specialized treatment of sartorial objects and surfaces in their works, or the reproduction of them in popular magazines, further corroborates the assertion that fashion is a decisive subject matter for these *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters. Moreover, the recurrent representations of clothes made of luxurious and often expensive materials like silk, velvet, and fur in these paintings transmit commentary on the politics of dress at a moment when fashion was becoming increasingly democratized. Gilles Lipovetsky argues that the increased availability of fashion, thanks in part to widespread modernization, mass communication, and rationalized modes of production, shifted methods of signaling social distinction through clothes. He explains, “Social difference, no longer oversignified by dress, was now obscured by the decline in marks of visible sumptuousness.”<sup>266</sup> This relative uniformity and simplification did not, as Lipovetsky writes, make luxury “disappear,” but required that it be “treated euphemistically, as an irreplaceable value of taste

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<sup>264</sup> “*Er hasst die Bürgerlichen, er hasst ihre Konventionen und gesellschaftlichen Verlogenheiten.*” Ulrike Lorenz, “Maler ohne Muse? Anmerkungen zu Leben und Werk von Otto Dix,” in *Otto Dix Retrospektiv Zum 120 Geburtstag. Kunstsammlung Gera 3. Dezember 2011 bis 18 März 2012*, ed. Rainer Beck (Gera: Kunstsammlung Gera, 2011), 13.

<sup>265</sup> Fischer, *Otto Dix: Ein Malerleben in Deutschland*, 32.

<sup>266</sup> Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 60.

and class refinement.”<sup>267</sup> To put it bluntly, conspicuous consumption was out. Now, one communicated wealth and social standing through more understated visual and material codes, much in the manner of Coco Chanel’s classic, the refined and simple little black dress.

The aforementioned day-night dichotomy in fashion complicates this argument because eveningwear retained its luxuriousness, but was somewhat less ostentatious. Also conceding to this fact, Lipovetsky explains:

Alongside simple, lightweight daytime outfits, haute couture went on creating sumptuous, elaborate, hyperfeminine evening attire. The hundred years’ fashion deepened the gulf between the types of women’s clothing...The rejection of showy signs brought the feminine into the cyclic play of complete metamorphosis, the coexistence of disparate and sometimes antagonistic images.<sup>268</sup>

In their portrayals of women wearing silk, velvet, and fur, Schad and Dix reinstate what Lipovetsky calls “showy signs” of fashionable clothing in a pictorial domain.

Whereas the garments themselves, as they had presumably existed in the world, may very well have conformed to the sartorial rules of good taste that Lipovetsky describes, the methods that Schad and Dix conscript in their representation of them exaggerate and fictionalize their appearance. The heightened artifice of this objective realism pictures fashionable women’s clothing as commodities in the supra-objective sense, as socially constructed markers of gender and class. In this regard, Schad and Dix appropriate sartorial conventions with excessive objectivity only to violate them through the production of unnatural images of fashionable women. There is nothing euphemistic or restrained about the *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting by Schad and Dix. The following section, featuring a discussion of the erotic, borderline vulgar displays of women wearing and surrounded by sumptuous materials, proves this to be the case.

### **Hyper-Aesthetic: Representing the Eroticism of Clothing**

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<sup>267</sup> Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion*, 61.

<sup>268</sup> Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion*, 61.

Dix and Schad elaborate upon the sensuous qualities of velvet, silk, and fur not only in their spousal portraits, but also when depicting other women in salacious situations. In this latter group, the pictured garments are instrumental to the works' already overtly sexualized scenarios. Schad and Dix exploit the cultural associations of these materials with femininity, elegance, and luxury to subversive ends, making them accessories to eroticized and non-conventional female subjectivities. Mocking standards of good taste, these images flaunt sexuality through the pictorial representation of material excess. In spite of their bawdiness, they also boast exquisitely painted surfaces, whereupon the verism of the represented hair, fabric, and skin is mesmerizing. If the spousal portraits pushed the limits of commercially acceptable coquettishness and fashionability, these portraits exhaust them. Schad's and Dix's attentive handling of these sartorial materials expose the sexual taboos that underpin their social coding. In these paintings, Dix and Schad refuse euphemisms like feminine elegance and sensuousness in order to confront the topic of sex with an almost alarming matter-of-factness, abolishing the pretenses that control sexual expression in bourgeois society.

The eroticism of clothing was not an entirely forbidden subject in the Weimar Republic. Yet, any conversation on the topic in the fashion press needed to be contained within the parameters of good taste. In 1928, *Vogue* published a piece titled "The Eroticism of Clothing," which reviewed the psychological importance of clothing in relation one's emotions, desires, and ideals. The article proceeds from the notion that women enjoy the masquerade of fashion. A good dress can make them look younger, accentuate their favorite features, and disguise flaws.<sup>269</sup> The greater purpose of this masquerade, however, is to attract men. As the article states, women have fashion for the same reason that flowers have perfume and color, that is, for the "business

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<sup>269</sup> "Erotik der Kleidung," *Vogue* (August 1, 1928): 27.

of pollination.”<sup>270</sup> The text concludes that the most flirtatious women, who also happen to have the most experience, so to speak, are the best dressers:

But why is it always the coquettish woman, who knows how to dress herself the nicest? Because she has collected the most experience on the erotic effect of clothing, which she also knows how to use smartly...It is not always necessary to look into a woman’s face in order to know if she is sensual or cold, flirtatious or reserved, bold or coy, graceful or coarse. Because there is also something like a physiognomy of clothing.<sup>271</sup>

The author treats clothing as a direct extension of a woman’s internal state, like the pseudo-science of physiognomy. A well-dressed woman possesses a specialized knowledge about how to camouflage her flaws and play fashion’s sexualized game of masquerade. According to the text, clothing, which is external and changeable, is supposed to impart the essence of a woman, whether she might be frigid or flirtatious, for example. Predicated on the notion that women are inherently deceitful, the article holds that fashion, while enabling the trickery of men, provides an honest reflection of a woman’s psychology.

Triggering paranoid reactions about the depraved state of modern civilization, the New Woman, who worked outside of the home, had relationships outside of marriage, and was a savvy consumer of fashion and entertainment, challenged the societal expectation that women lived for the kitchen, church, and children (the infamous three Ks in German: *Küche, Kirche, Kinder*). Throughout the twenties, fashion provided a means for women to express alternative identities and reject such social conventions. Women crossed dressed, donning tuxedos and

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<sup>270</sup> “*Befruchtungsgeschäft*” *Erotik der Kleidung*,” *Vogue* (August 1, 1928): 27.

<sup>271</sup> “*Aber warum ist es immer die kokette Frau, die sich am hübschesten zu kleiden weiß? Weil sie die meisten Erfahrungen über die erotische Wirkung der Kleider gesammelt hat, die sie auch klug zu nützen weiß...Es wird nicht immer notwendig sein, einer Frau ins Gesicht zu sehen, um zu wissen, ob sie sinnlich ist oder kalt, kokett oder zurückhaltend, frech oder Schamhaft, graziös oder plump. Denn es gibt auch so etwas wie eine Physiognomie der Kleidung.*” *Erotik der Kleidung*,” *Vogue* (August 1, 1928): 27.

monocles, an accessory that signaled lesbianism.<sup>272</sup> They also cropped their hair and hemlines, baring more skin and adorning their faces with cosmetics. These developments in fashion became visual signifiers of the social changes that disrupted traditional gender relations in Weimar Germany.<sup>273</sup>

Schad's and Dix's paintings are antagonistic towards conservative views on sex and female identity. In the following works, *Two Girls* by Schad (1928) (Figure 55) and Dix's *Reclining Woman on Leopard Skin* (1927) (Figure 56), the artists construct images of non-traditional female sexuality through the artifice of painted fabrics and fur. Unlike the aforementioned *Vogue* article, these works complicate the affiliation between clothing and the subject's so-called essence. On the one hand, the harshness with which Schad and Dix portray the women exposes them to the viewer, furnishing a rather unsettling look into their personalities and appearance. This acute objectivity, on the other hand, also protects the women by creating a blockade out of represented material details, which, like a defense mechanism, thwart access to the individual beyond a superficial level.

To start, Schad's 1928 double portrait *Two Girls* is a sobering representation of non-heteronormative female sexuality. The work operates as an analog of his Marcella portrait. Resembling the painter's first wife, the central woman, with the bobbed raven hair and prominent eyes, performs an act of self-pleasure before the painter. She wears a transparent negligée and places her right hand where the cat sits on Marcella's lap in the 1926 portrait. The mounds of wrinkled bed sheets form a repeated anatomical motif that surrounds the woman and her female companion, who shows only one stocking. *Two Girls* also recalls the composition of

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<sup>272</sup> Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2011), 49.

<sup>273</sup> See chapter one for a more thorough discussion of the social status of the New Woman in the Weimar Republic.

Schad's self-portrait, where his body, enveloped in a transparent green tunic, obstructs the full view of his female bedfellow. In the composition, one female body blocks the other, fragmenting her figure. Against the soft abstract forms of the bedding, the women's thin bodies are inflexible with harsh outlines and shallow modeling. Schad negates the living corporeality of the women, representing their bodies like two wooden puppets.

Schad staged this scene in accordance with what he called the "irony of *Neue Sachlichkeit*," which refers to the way in which psychological detachment, coupled with a fixation on representing material details, enables his understanding of the subject.<sup>274</sup> As much as Schad and his pictorial objectivity offer the women's bodies up for viewing, the painter also obscures their legibility in the picture through his reifying treatment of clothing and fabric, which pulls attention away from the represented subjects. Schad's exaggeration of the textures of the juxtaposed fabrics creates a material sensuousness that outmatches the intensity of the sexual act on display, which, by comparison seems mechanical. The dispassionate expression on the woman's face, in fact, harkens back to Schad's unemotional and objective mode of painting.

In this picture, Schad prioritizes the drama of materials over emotional identification. At the same time, complicating this argument, the artist still acknowledged a connection between a person's exterior appearance and interiority, when he wrote, "The body is the casing for the secret behind it – not an anemic packaging. It is the casing, which has created the secret itself."<sup>275</sup> In using the German word *Hülle*, which means casing, but also jacket, sheath or covering, Schad constructs a metaphor of the body as a covering, much like clothing, that is inextricably linked to one's psychological state. This casing, however, lives, creates, protects,

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<sup>274</sup> Schad, *Texte, Materialien Dokumente*, 26.

<sup>275</sup> "Der Körper ist Hülle für das Geheimnis dahinter – keine blutleer Verpackung. Er ist die Hülle, die sich das 'Geheimnis' selbst geschaffen hat." Christian Schad, "Dada Surrealismus Neue Sachlichkeit," 89.



and importantly, may not always grant access to the interior. For Schad, the interior secret, as he put it, and the casing, whether skin or clothes, impress upon each other, mutually reinforcing the possibility of exposure and concealment. In *Two Girls*, the transparent lingerie enables an explicit, albeit superficial perspective on the body. The viewer's mode of accessing the subjects is, as a result, limited and strictly ocular. Likewise, the transparency of clothing and her action uncover next to nothing about the woman, who is ironically protected by the objectivity of the painting. What Schad considers to be the interior secret remains hidden behind the central figure's eyes. Whatever that secret may be, it is not to be revealed through her diaphanous garment alone.

In contrast to the woman in Schad's *Two Girls*, the central figure in Dix's *Reclining Woman* is more animated as she addresses the viewer. Even though she displays less of her body, the fierce figure in the scene is more sexually antagonistic than Schad's two girls. With this picture, Dix references the art historical tradition of boudoir scenes featuring reclining women surrounded by luxurious textiles. Olaf Peters has argued that Dix painted his reclining woman after Goya's *Clothed Maya* (1807-1808) (Figure 57). According to Peters, the work, like the *Clothed Maya*, conveys a "powerful sensuality" that Dix "achieve[s] by the soft forms in the foreground."<sup>276</sup> Lush furs and fabrics encircle her, as she wears a silk slip and red stockings. More compelling, however, is the argument that the work echoes the unsettling atmosphere of the iconic reclining female nudes by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres and Édouard Manet (Figures 58 and 59).

The woman claws at the leopard skin, props up her cat-like head, and is ready to pounce on her prey, embodying the antithesis of Fernand Khnopff's tender Sphinx of 1896 (Figure 60).

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<sup>276</sup> Olaf Peters, "Reclining Woman on Leopard Skin," in *Otto Dix*, ed. Olaf Peters (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 223.

As if the furs, her animalistic countenance and comportment were not enough, Dix, perhaps quoting Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781) (Figure 61), includes a demonic dog that stares out from the shadows with beady red eyes. Yet, here the woman, rather than succumbing to the nightmare, appears to be at home in her lair, dominating the space, the creature, and viewer alike. The work evokes the dark sensuousness of Dix's 1923 portrait of Martha, where she rests her hand on her black sable coat and wears the beloved red velvet *Itta*. With yellow-amber eyes concentrating on the viewer, the subject and her raging sexual appetite warn and entice the male viewer intruding onto the scene. Dix parodies the New Woman as a sexualized animal, waiting in her den that she has clad with the most sensuous of fabrics and skins.

Dix's representations of women challenge feminist scholars. Jung-Hee Kim has argued Dix's female portraits promote the stereotypical feminine values of "motherliness" (*Mütterlichkeit*) and "sensuousness" (*Sinnlichkeit*).<sup>277</sup> According to Kim, Dix viewed the woman as a "means for human reproduction or as a sex object," two roles that he pictured "through the figure of the mother or the prostitute, respectively."<sup>278</sup> In reality, the woman with the leopard skin is neither mother nor prostitute, but the actress and dancer Vera Simailowa.<sup>279</sup> Dix, however, pictures her so that she, at a minimum, resembles a prostitute. While he sexually objectifies her body in the image, he also objectifies the surfaces that surround her with equal intensity. Dix's painterly method heightens the haptic and visual qualities of these materials, making this process of objectification uncomfortably palpable to the viewer. Although Kim's criticism of Dix's stereotypes is not incorrect, it can also be argued that Dix exercises these

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<sup>277</sup> Kim, *Frauenbilder von Otto Dix: Wirklichkeit und Selbstbekenntnis*, 1.

<sup>278</sup> "Mittel für die Fortpflanzung des Menschen oder Geschlechtsobjekt und wir durch die Figuren Mutter oder Dirne bzw. Modell verkörpert." Kim, *Frauenbilder von Otto Dix: Wirklichkeit und Selbstbekenntnis*, 175.

<sup>279</sup> Olaf Peters, *Otto Dix: Der unerschrockene Blick. Eine Biographie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013) 125.

stereotypes as a means for advancing social commentary about the New Woman, whose sexuality threatened social conventions.

In the paintings, *Two Girls* and *Reclining Woman*, Schad and Dix question the reality of the New Woman's sexual emancipation, exposing the point at which female sexuality, no longer a tantalizing commodity for male consumers, becomes a discomforting display of material things and bodies performing erotic acts. While neither of these works is unequivocally progressive, each offering undoubtedly problematic images of women, they do enable more critical reflections on objectification as a force that shapes perceptions about female identity in modern society. Schad and Dix prevent the viewers' sentimental identification with or uncomplicated consumption of the female subjects by rendering strange these sexualized scenes. In reifying the women and fashionable materials associated with femininity, the artists expose the ways in which sartorial norms inform expectations about female identity. As Weimar fashion magazines dictated, in order to be a real elegant lady, a woman should wear fur, velvet, and silk. The women in these painting, surrounded by and wearing such materials, engage in behaviors that contradict precisely those social norms. With these works, Schad and Dix satirize this standard of feminine elegance, while representing the objectification of women through the aesthetics of objectivity.

Discussions about the psychological import of sartorial materials were not confined to the illustrated press. Since the nineteenth century, sex researchers and psychoanalysts also wrote about clothing and fabric in relation to eroticism, fetishism, and cross-dressing. A seminal text emerging from these circles was *Psychopathia Sexualis* of 1877, a groundbreaking study on, among other things, homosexuality, cross-dressing, and fetishism by the psychiatry professor Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Departing from essentialist views on gender that prevailed even

throughout the twenties and thirties, Krafft-Ebing advanced progressive theories for the time about sexuality and gender. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, Krafft-Ebing suggested that homosexuality was caused by “a form of gender variance,” meaning a gay man was more feminine, and a gay woman was more masculine than their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>280</sup> While his interpretation of homosexuality deemed it to be pathological, Krafft-Ebing promoted a more fluid understanding of gender as a spectrum in his research.

Like homosexuality, the psychiatrist also defined fetishism as a pathological condition.<sup>281</sup> Objects prone to fetishistic fixations were, according to Krafft-Ebing, the body parts, garments, or fabrics associated with the opposite sex.<sup>282</sup> He begins his explanation of fetishism with a so-called normal romantic scenario between a man and woman, the latter of whom initially attracts her male suitor by wearing clothes that enhance her figure. When the man and the woman are then intimately engaged, he notes, it can be “strange” (*befremdend*) for the man when the woman is undressed because these accentuated features fall away (*Wegfall*) with the clothing.<sup>283</sup> In other words, garments create an illusion of the sexually-desirable body of an era, while the actual body beneath the clothing may deviate from this idealized standard.<sup>284</sup> Krafft-Ebing then writes that the most extreme fetishist is not at all interested in the person, whether or not she is clothed, and the sole source of his arousal is her clothing itself. In less severe instances of fetishism, he adds, the fetishist will often prefer a clothed woman to a naked one. As Krafft-Ebing outlines the ways

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<sup>280</sup> Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, ed., *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21.

<sup>281</sup> Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis* (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1984), 176.

<sup>282</sup> Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 194.

<sup>283</sup> Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 194.

<sup>284</sup> This idea reverses Anne Hollander’s theory that the forms of fashion shape artistic representations of the body and subsequently naturalize the look of an epoch’s desirable body. See: Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), xii.

in which dress has a greater erotic effect on fetishists, he employs a provocative label, dubbing them “hyper-aesthetic individuals.”<sup>285</sup>

Another important figure contributing to scientific debates about fetishism was the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld. At the turn of the twentieth century, Hirschfeld forged new developments in the research of sex, while advocating for the rights of transgender people and gays. In 1897, he founded a pioneering gay rights organization and an Institute for Sexology.<sup>286</sup> Continuing his work well into the Weimar years, Hirschfeld, writing in 1930, cautioned against mislabeling a healthy person’s sexual attraction to clothing with fetishism:

Nothing would be more incorrect, than to refer to all flashy attire that eroticizes the sexual partner in the territory of fetishism. Blouses of a certain color, transparent skirts or skirts trim with lace, and those that that go with provocative sounds (Frou-Frou), perforated stockings of certain colors or with detailed pattern and many more or fewer individual emphasized characteristics in clothing, can also develop a strong sexual arousal in normal, healthy men.<sup>287</sup>

Such a misreading is not the intent here. As a rule, these scientific texts that explore the sexual charge of clothing should not be used to diagnose artists or their works of art. When taken with caution, however, they can furnish a set of terms and ideas that were contemporaneous with Schad’s and Dix’s lives and enrich a discussion of the psychosexual potential of clothing as it appears in their works of art. That being said, Krafft-Ebing’s term “hyper-aesthetic individuals” could very well describe Dix and Schad as the *Modemaler* of *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

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<sup>285</sup> “Bei psychopathischen, sexuell hyperästhetischen Individuen...” Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis*, 194.

<sup>286</sup> When Schad moved to Berlin in 1928, his friend and entomologist Felix Bryk introduced him to Hirschfeld’s Institute. See: Lloyd, “Christian Schad: Reality and Illusion,” 24.

<sup>287</sup> “Es wäre nun nichts falscher, als jede auffällige Kleidung, die den Geschlechtspartner erotisiert, in das Gebiet des Fetischismus zu verweisen....Blusen bestimmter Farbe, durchsichtig oder mit Spitzen besetzte, spitzenbesetzte Röcke und ihr beim Gehen hervorgerufenes Geräusch (Frou-Frou), durchbrochene Strümpfe bestimmte Farbe oder mit auffälliger Musterung und viele andere mehr oder weniger individuell betonte Eigenarten in der Kleidung, können auch beim normalen gesunden Mann eine starke geschlechtliche Reizung entwickeln.” Magnus Hirschfeld and Richard Linsert, *Liebesmittel: eine Darstellung der Geschlechtlichen Reizmittel (Aphrodisiaca)* (Berlin: Man Verlag, 1930), 318.

As if evoking this notion of “hyper-aestheticism,” historians and critics have continuously remarked upon the material fixation and eroticism evident in works by Dix and Schad. In 1926, Wolfradt, writing in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, noted that for Dix, “...this *Sachlichkeit* means extreme focusing (*Überschärfung*)...”<sup>288</sup> Sixty-five years later, Kinkel observed the eroticism and precision of Dix’s painting, “Erotic emanation encroaches upon the linear exercise.”<sup>289</sup> Similarly for Max Osborn, Schad’s *Sachlichkeit* meant that, “Every accessory in the background, every sharp edge, every surface is a calculated symbol. Clear, cool, and in addition charged with eroticism.”<sup>290</sup> Schad even used the word erotic to describe his own painting process: “Eroticism is the conscious sublimation of animalistic driving powers. Painting is like every impassioned conflict an erotic method.”<sup>291</sup> Finally, Roh described the amplification of details in *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting as the “certain beauty of the chiseled-out form in the most perverted condition, when the surface sparkles with the shimmering smoothness of moist reptile skins.”<sup>292</sup> Such characterizations of this objective mode of realism capture the heated fervor induced by the painters’ cool observations of modern life. As Schad and Dix bring

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<sup>288</sup> Willi Wolfradt, “Otto Dix, ein neuer Maler,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, May 25, 1926, 669-670.

<sup>289</sup> “*Erotische Emanation wirkt in das lineare Exerzitium hinein.*” Kinkel, *Die Toten und die Nackten*, 29.

<sup>290</sup> “*Jede Staffage des Hintergrundes, jede scharfe Kante, jede Fläche ist errechnetes Symbol. Klar, kühl und dazu mit Erotik geladen.*” Karl Paetow, “Der Maler Christian Schad, mit einer Einführung von Max Osborn. Erschienen bei Paul Steegemann, Berlin (Rezeption),” *Der Kunstwanderer* 1/2 (June 1928): 504.

<sup>291</sup> “*Erotik ist bewußte Sublimierung der animalsiche Triebkräfte. Das Malen wie jede leidenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung ein erotischer Art.*” Schad, “Dada Surrealismus Neue Sachlichkeit,” 89.

<sup>292</sup> “*Diese Ausführlichkeit kann aber auch einen dritten Sinn haben, den man seit beinahe hundert Jahren mehr in der malerischen Wirkung als in scharfer Durchzeichnung gesehen hatte: den gewisser Schönheit der herausgemeißelten Form auch im pervertiersten Zustande, wenn die Oberflächen in schillernder Glätte feuchter Reptilienhäute funkeln. Moralisch im eigentlichen Sinne ist der Bildausdruck dieser Künstler natürlich nicht.*” Franz Roh, *Nach-expressionismus: magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten Europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925), 95.

together the unlikely pairing of precision and eroticism, they render material through paint the psychosexual spells cast upon goods like clothing as they circulated through the market, both garnering desire and capital from consumers. Through their intense representations of material specificities, Schad and Dix show that to be objective in a world where anything can be commoditized means to be hyper-aesthetic.

### ***Neue Sachlichkeit* and Picturing the Naked Truth**

The proceeding discussion, closely tied to the analyses of *Two Girls* and *Reclining Woman* in the previous section, further explores the eroticism of clothing in Dix's *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* (1925) (Figure 62) and Schad's *Count St. Genois d'Anneaucourt* (1927) (Figure 63). The transparent and close-fitting garments represented in these paintings frame depictions of non-normative identities, as Schad and Dix enlist the sartorial codes of femininity as a means to undermine conventional understandings about gender and sexuality. In addition, these paintings, despite their presumptive objectivity, showcase the most fantastical of dresses. Looking more closely at this paradox will substantiate the argument that the revealing garments pictured in these works, in spite of their dramatic and rather expressive qualities, are crucial pictorial devices for Schad and Dix, who espoused the truth claims of objectivity in painting. Through their veristic representations of the tightness and body-conscious effects of silk, as well as silk's transparency in women's evening wear, the two artists situate these garments as though they were metaphors for *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a mode of pictorial objectivity that supposedly reveals the naked truth through tangible materials. In depicting the sartorial illusions of nudity in *Anita* and *Count*, Schad and Dix conjure the notion that the only naked truth in modern life is artifice. The naked truth is a surface like any other.

As the literary figure Karl Kraus observed in 1906, transparency is a central factor in the eroticism of clothing. For this reason, his aptly titled text, “The Eroticism of Clothes,” imparts a useful set of ideas for analyzing these works by Schad and Dix. In it, Kraus addresses the division between functional utility and the purposelessness of eroticism that structures society’s understanding of dress.<sup>293</sup> Promptly rejecting a philosophy of fashion that is rooted in the pragmatic and utilitarian, the author explains that objects, such as clothes, achieve their greatest potential when they are freed from practical determination. The eroticism of clothing, Kraus writes, is intensified by transparent fabrics, which “blur or disarray the contours of the body in order to arouse erotic fantasy, to re-create them with even greater boldness; they let nakedness glisten forth out of a delicate haze to make desire even more covetous of it.”<sup>294</sup> Yet, this revelatory dynamic is not limited to transparent fabric, for it also occurs with fabrics like silk satin that slither and slide over the body. As Kraus explains, it is the tension enacted by the partially covered body, no matter what the means, between nakedness and the state of being dressed, rather than the naked body alone, that catalyzes this heightened erotic response.

This partial covering that Kraus described in 1906 continued to be a sartorial tactic in the Weimar era. In *Sport im Bild*, for example, the fashion journalist Elsa Herzog stated, “...everything half-covered is more appealing than the naked truth (*nackte Tatsachen*).”<sup>295</sup> Remarking upon the charm of fashionable undergarments, she lists the most desirable materials for achieving this effect, including diaphanous fabrics, lace, crepes and georgettes, which create

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<sup>293</sup> See chapter one for an in depth analysis of the fashion’s relationship with Weimar-era discourses on functionality.

<sup>294</sup> Karl Kraus, “The Eroticism of Clothes,” in *The Rise of Fashion: a Reader*, ed. Daniel L. Purdy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 243.

<sup>295</sup> “Nicht nur von der Französin, die immer noch weiß, daß alles Halbverhüllte reizvoller ist als – *nackte Tatsachen*.” Elsa Herzog, “Transparente Gedichte,” *Sport im Bild* 15 (July 25, 1929): 1198.



an attractive illusion and blur any imperfections.<sup>296</sup> By the end of the decade, the designer Madeleine Vionnet popularized the use of these materials in bias cut evening dresses that resembled nightgowns and slips. Fashioning gowns from lightweight and fluid fabrics, Vionnet arrived at these silhouettes by cutting the fabric on the bias, or diagonally across the grain. This enabled the fabric to hug the curves of its wearer's body, creating elongated lines and supple drapery.<sup>297</sup> Through these means, journalists and designers promoted the sartorial illusion of nudity, while avoiding the harshness of the "naked truth."

As the twenties progressed, eveningwear became ever more revealing. The title page of *Die Dame's* first October issue of 1927 attests to this trend with a black and white illustration of bias-cut evening dresses featuring thin straps in varying configurations (Figure 64). For many critics, this marked the end of the boyish New Woman's reign, and the start of her metamorphosis back into a glamorous woman.<sup>298</sup> Nevertheless, the fashion press prescribed limits to this development. Utilizing some sexually charged wordplay, one journalist explained the need for such boundaries,

Every fashion needs the potential for escalation. When the climax is reached, then it is not fashion anymore. A few years ago one discovered once again the naked body. At first only a few spots were laid bare, then one went even further... The enthusiastically preached true nudity got boring when one made it into the naked truth.<sup>299</sup>

This passage, along with Herzog's remark, dismisses the "naked truth" as a banal state of literal nakedness, which is far less desirable than the tasteful suggestion of nudity. *Anita and Count*,

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<sup>296</sup> Herzog, "Transparente Gedichte," 1198

<sup>297</sup> Rebecca Arnold, "Vionnet, Madeleine," *The Berg Fashion Library*. 2005. <http://www.bergfashionlibrary.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/bazf/bazf00620.xml> (accessed 17 Apr. 2014). See: Betty Kirke, *Madeleine Vionnet* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998).

<sup>298</sup> See: Verena Dollenmaier and Ursel Berger, *Glamour!: das Girl wird feine Dame – Frauendarstellung in der späten Weimarer Republik* (Leipzig: E. Seemann, 2008).

<sup>299</sup> "Jede Mode braucht Steigerungsmöglichkeiten. Wenn der Höhepunkt erreicht ist, ist keine Mode mehr. Vor einigen Jahren entdeckte man wieder einmal eden nackten Körper... Die begeistert gepredigte wahre Nacktheit wurde langweilig, als man sie zur nackten Wahrheit machte." A., "Die unmoderne Nacktheit," *Die Dame* 7 8 (3rd December Issue, 1928): 17.

though representations of this trend, also seem to mock its prescribed limits of acceptability.

Through these works, Schad and Dix revel in the vulgarity of sartorial nakedness as a means to underscore the unidealized truths that emerge from their paintings

In 1925, Dix painted the famed Weimar dancer, Anita Berber, in a slinky red satin dress that exposes the contours of her chest and stomach. Her satin dress is a second skin that envelops her fleshy form, frozen as it would appear in her provocative movements. Dix portrayed her wearing copious amounts white makeup, which contrasts her eyes that glow with a green cast. Famed for her sensational nude stage appearances at the start of the twenties, Berber was dubbed the “naked dancer” by critics and fans.<sup>300</sup> In addition to her dance career, she appeared in films and modeled. Most notably, she worked for the fashion photographer, Madame d’Ora, whose images saturated fashion publications in the twenties. In fact, the dress that Dix represented in this 1925 portrait bears a striking resemblance to the one that Berber wore in a promotional photograph from the mid-twenties for the performance, *Dance into the Dark* (Figure 65), an image from which Dix likely painted in creating this work.<sup>301</sup>

The painter met Berber late in 1925, when the Dixes saw the dancer perform at Cabaret Jungmühle in Düsseldorf. Martha remembers how Berber “spent an hour putting on her makeup and drank a bottle of cognac at the same time.”<sup>302</sup> Elaborating upon Berber’s other sources of income, Martha recalled:

Yes, and the part about her walking the streets, that was par for the course. We went out for a walk in Wiesbaden, and she took advantage of every opportunity. Someone would approach her, and she would say

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<sup>300</sup> Lothar Fischer, *Anita Berber: Göttin der Nacht. Collage eines kurzen Lebens* (Berlin: Edition Ebersbach, 2006), 49.

<sup>301</sup> Susan Laikin Funkenstein, “Anita Berber: Imaging a Weimar Performance Artist,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 26 (Spring-Summer, 2005): 28.

<sup>302</sup> Eva Karcher, *Otto Dix 1891-1969 “I’ll either be famous – or infamous”* (Cologne: Taschen, 2002), 103.

200 marks. I didn't find that so very awful. She had to earn money somehow. She had to cover the costs of the expensive costumes that she wore for her performances as a dancer...<sup>303</sup>

In her discussion of this anecdote, art historian Susan Laikin Funkenstein astutely adds that Martha's statement does not indicate if "Berber completed the transaction" and that "it is possible that [she] may have consciously performed this behavior to keep herself in the tabloids."<sup>304</sup> Without necessarily selling her body as a sex worker, Berber commodified her image as a public figure, maintaining her market value with salacious rumors and performances such as these. The very media outlets that promoted Berber's celebrity also helped to perpetuate the standards of femininity, which Dix represents her so brazenly violating in the 1925 portrait.

Along with the popularity of dancing in the Weimar Republic came the celebrity status of dancers. Figures such as Berber, Grit Hegesa, and the actress/dancer Lya de Putti, who was also a friend of Berber's, were beloved faces in fashion magazines. A 1926 photograph of de Putti shows a long-sleeved satin dress that resembles Berber's, and Hegesa, as seen in photograph that ran in a 1925 issue of *Die Dame*, also wears a variation of the shiny silk dress (Figures 66 and 67). With its fluidity and luster, silk exemplifies the ideal qualities of a dancer, who moves with grace and allure. Recognizing this symbolism, Berber, Hegesa, and de Putti sport silk dresses in these promotional photographs. Images of dancers in Weimar fashion magazines represented the most fantastical examples of evening gowns and costumes made of silk, feathers, fur, and lace. What was impractical for the everyday woman was, in reality, for Berber and her colleagues, an everyday necessity.

The vibrant reds in Berber's portrait, in the background, the dress, and her hair, achieve that which the aforementioned black and white photographs of the dancers could not. Dynamism derives from the juxtaposition of the blue undertones Berber's red dress with the yellow-red

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<sup>303</sup> Eva Karcher, *Otto Dix* 103.

<sup>304</sup> Laikin Funkenstein, "Anita Berber," 28.

color of the space that surrounds her. An image gracing the 1926 cover of *Die Dame* similarly exploits the tonal variations of different reds in achieving a tension (Figure 68). It shows a woman, with tightly cropped red hair and highlights of yellow and orange, against a backdrop diffuse with splotches of indigo. Her pencil-thin red brows and lips frame her demure green eyes that accent a gauzy silk blouse of nearly the same soft color. Even as both images create visual interest through a play of tonal variations, the portrait in *Die Dame* is decidedly more naturalistic than the portrait of Berber, whose image, in presenting these clashing hues, creates a rather foreboding pictorial environment.

Reflecting on the importance of color in portraiture, Dix asserted the superiority of painting over photography in capturing the expression of the sitter. In this statement, the artist notes, more importantly, a connection between the sitter's interiority and her external appearance:

Everyone has a very special color, which has an effect on the entire painting. Color photography lacks an expression of the soul; it merely takes stock of the material and even that it does not do well. Every good portrait is based on a display. The essence of every person is expressed on his outside; the outside is the expression of the inside – that is, the outside and inside are identical. That goes so far that even the folds in a person's clothing, his attitude, his hands, his ears immediately give the painter information about the soul of a model; the last of these often more than the eyes and mouth.<sup>305</sup>

By focusing on exteriority and materiality, Dix makes it difficult for viewers to read the paintings as representations of easily resolvable and straightforward stereotypes. In this way, the conflation of interiority and exteriority that Dix proposes need not be entirely essentialist. As much as his statement, when taken at face value, contradicts the interpretive method undertaken here, it was also published thirty years after the artist painted Berber's likeness. Even though Dix asserts an essentialist view of identity through this statement, his representations of physical appearance and clothing suggest otherwise. If the outside and inside are indeed identical, as Dix

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<sup>305</sup> Olaf Peters, "Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber," in *Otto Dix*, ed. Olaf Peters (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 210.

contends, then the confluence of unsettling material details on the outside, which he represents in these works, reflect an interiority that is wracked with psycho-sensorial disturbances. Dix's portrait of Berber exemplifies this, as Funkenstein has correctly argued, "A double constructed artifice, the painting meshes Dix's vision of the dancer with Berber's version of herself that she performed for Dix and the painting's viewers."<sup>306</sup> The portrait, therefore, conveys the irreducible complexities of the subject's private self and public persona, sidestepping the notion of a singular, stable essence altogether.

Schad's *Count*, a depiction of woman and male-bodied subject wearing the nearly the same diaphanous gowns, similarly complicates the question of essentialism in relation to identity by muddling the relationship between exterior signs and an interior psychological essence. In his picture captions, published in 1976, roughly fifty years after *Count*'s creation in 1927, Schad referred to the transparency of the gowns as a solution, much as he referred to his tunic in the 1927 *Self-Portrait*:

So I painted him in a dinner jacket against the skyline of Montmartre between an older, rather masculine woman and a well-known transvestite from the Eldorado in Berlin – the latter are both wearing see-through dresses. Why? I thought it was right at the time, and even today would not be able to come up with a better solution.<sup>307</sup>

With this, Schad suggests that the transparent gowns are a pictorial counterbalance to the compositional weight of the work's more solid elements, like the expanse of opaque darkness engendered by Schad's minimal modeling of the count's black jacket. The other two figures, in the delicately painted transparent evening gowns, flank the count, whom Schad sets apart with the fine white line that highlights the edge of his tuxedo. Echoing the harshness of the count's jacket, the black hair of the figure on the right frames a face with kohl-lined eyes and heavily rouged lips and cheeks. In addition to providing a formal solution, the transparent dresses also

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<sup>306</sup> Laikin Funkenstein, "Anita Berber," 30.

<sup>307</sup> Schad, "Picture Captions," 228.

offer a thematic solution in the painting. By depicting two people of opposite biological sexes in diaphanous gowns, Schad connects virtually the same exterior sign to two very distinct subjectivities, emphasizing fashion's role in shaping identity as a performance, rather than reflecting a singular essence.

Appropriately then, Schad casts the scene in *Count* with remarkable characters. The artist was fascinated by the kind of society, which as he stated, "was ready to take in anyone, as long as they had something to offer: a name, a fortune, influence or fame."<sup>308</sup> According to him, the Count St. Genois was well known in Viennese society, but the Great War threatened the financial security of such aristocratic figures, like the Count, who was left penniless, yet still titled. The masculine woman to his right is supposed to represent Baroness Glasen, another moneyless aristocrat. The figure on the Count's left was a famous performer at a nightclub that catered to a growing gay community in Berlin. Here, the once rich, who project an untouchable status, intermingle with the outsiders of the urban metropolis. Through his objective mode of realism, Schad initiates the artificial union of the conservative old world glamour of Vienna with the roaring nightlife in the metropolis in one fictive scene.

Whether emulating the rich or slumming it with the poor, these figures are leveled equal by Schad's careful handling of their transparent gowns. The male-bodied person and the baroness wear dresses with the same slim silhouette, as the front and the back echo one another with deep V-shaped cuts. This V-shape points to the figures' markers of sex, as revealed through the transparency of the gowns. The figure on the right shows their masculine behind, and the baroness exposes her breast. She also holds an ostrich feather and rests her hand on her lap. This

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<sup>308</sup> Schad, "Picture Captions," 227.

gesture transforms the feather, from a fashionable accessory into a phallic sign.<sup>309</sup> Both figures' faces exude a masculine angularity, and their arms are almost indistinguishable. Schad paints both bodies to conform to the slim, ideal shape required by the fashions in the late twenties, irrespective of the figures' sexes. In this way, the portrait pictures non-traditional expressions of gender, while subverting conventional signs of female identity in evening dress. Schad utilizes the idealized forms and fabrics of femininity in the image of these two androgynous bodies, both masculinizing the feminine and feminizing the masculine.

A key text for this discussion about the ways in which fashion can actually blur the lines between masculinity and femininity is Hirschfeld's seminal book of 1910, *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress*. In it, Hirschfeld, analyzing fashion from a psychological standpoint, coined the term "transvestite." While acknowledging that the desire to cross-dress is, in fact, widespread, he expounds upon the symbolic potential of clothing for the population at large.<sup>310</sup> He begins the text with the notion that clothing is not a "dead thing" or "something arbitrary, and capricious, as lifeless fabric."<sup>311</sup> Consequently, Hirschfeld interprets clothes as "valid symbols" of an "inner striving."<sup>312</sup> Yet, this inner striving is not always actualized in accordance with the societal expectations that accompany one's biological sex. Suggesting all gender expressions are a synthesis of masculinity and femininity, he adds that it is a mistake to believe in gender as a rigid binary because "the core for the genesis and substance of the

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<sup>309</sup> Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, (London: B.T. Batsford LTD, 1986), 111.

<sup>310</sup> "In all cases we are clearly faced with the strong drive to live in the clothing of that sex that does not belong to the relative build of the body. For the sake of brevity we will label this drive transvestitism (from "trans" = over or opposite, and vestis = clothing)." Magnus Hirschfeld, *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross Dress*, trans. Michael A. Lombardi-Nash (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991). 124

<sup>311</sup> Hirschfeld, *Transvestites*, 124.

<sup>312</sup> Hirschfeld, *Transvestites*, 124.

personality” arise from the “merging of the two into one.”<sup>313</sup> Thus, the widespread perception that so-called normal men and women are “absolute representatives of their sex,” undermines the fluid nature of gender.<sup>314</sup>

Self-expression, for those people, whose identities veer from this false gender binary, must be carried out in secret. As Hirschfeld writes, “In these cases, there certainly is an extreme flagrant contrast between reality and the world of dreams.”<sup>315</sup> He continues, “The majority lead a peculiar double life, days at work and in society as men, at home and in the evenings as women.”<sup>316</sup> Hirschfeld’s description of the cross-dresser’s dual-identity as both man and woman, living in a world of dreams and in reality parallels the narrative promoted by fashion journalists in the Weimar Republic, wherein the woman was a boy during the day and a lady in the evening. Yet, this split was both socially and sartorially acceptable for women, while deemed deviant for men. In *Count*, Schad appears to narrow this gap between reality and dreams, by depicting both nontraditional subjects wearing similar fashionable gowns, which he rendered fantastical in full transparency through his realistic pictorial language.

Given the garments’ risqué appearance, it is not surprising that the kind of diaphanous and body-conscious dresses depicted by Schad and Dix were satirized in the illustrated press. By way of example, a cartoon from *Jugend*, called “At the Female Impersonator’s” (Figure 69), exhibits a performer addressing the crowd as they lift their transparent skirt. The caption, written in a Berlin dialect, reads, “You know, Emilie, this kind of thing should be banned, it’s just a

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<sup>313</sup> Hirschfeld, *Transvestites*, 17-18.

<sup>314</sup> Hirschfeld, *Transvestites*, 219-220

<sup>315</sup> Hirschfeld, *Transvestites*, 129.

<sup>316</sup> Hirschfeld, *Transvestites*, 126.



fake, and nothing but bad thoughts come into your mind.”<sup>317</sup> Mocking an up-tight reaction to the scandalous performance, the cartoon includes a clever pun with the word “bloß”, which can mean both “nothing but” as well as “sheer” or “naked.” Another satirical drawing from the *Jugend* portrays a group of women in an urban setting, all wearing short dresses that have been drawn to exaggerate their snugness and transparency (Figure 70). An older gentleman, carrying a cane, tips his hat, and asks, “Excuse me, Miss, I am nearsighted. Now are you actually wearing a dress, or has it been painted on?”<sup>318</sup> The punch line, though cheap, is suggestive alongside the consideration of Schad and Dix as *Modemaler*. The garments in *Count* and *Anita* have literally been painted on to resemble garments that *would* look painted on to this male bystander. Even as they recall the trends of the time, the dresses portrayed by Schad and Dix do more than give a socially acceptable or even tasteful suggestion of nudity. Rather, they reveal that the naked truth is ultimately a matter of dressing up and performing.

### **Conclusion: Objectivity in Fashionable Excess**

Marcellus Schiffer’s 1928 cabaret hit declared, “*Es liegt in der Luft eine Sachlichkeit.*”<sup>319</sup> Two years later, James E. Abbe, a journalist writing in *Die Dame*, conjured Schiffer’s famous phrase and cleverly rejoined, “*Die Mode liegt in der Luft.*”<sup>320</sup> The end of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties witnessed the re-feminization of clothing, especially of women’s eveningwear. As Abbe’s statement suggests, fashion critics pronounced this return to feminine

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<sup>317</sup> “*Beim-Damen-Imitator – Weisste, Emilie, so was müsste verboten werden, 's ist weiter nichts dran wie Attrappen, und man kommt bloß dabei uff schlechte Gedanken.*” Ernst Wallenburger, “*Beim-Damen-Imitator,*” *Jugend* 9 (1927): 214.

<sup>318</sup> “*Entschuldigen Sie, mein Fräulein, ich bin kurzsichtig! Tragen Sie nun wirklich ein Kleid oder ist es nur aufgemalt?*” Rud. Matouschek, “*Annäherung,*” *Jugend* 30 (1927): 666.

<sup>319</sup> “*Sachlichkeit is in the air.*” See: Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 192.

<sup>320</sup> “*Fashion is in the air.*” James E. Abbe, “*Die Mode liegt in der Luft*” Was ich in den Pariser Modehäusern erfährt,” *Die Dame* 2 (Second October Issue 1928): 6-9.

silhouettes a rejection of *Sachlichkeit*, which remained appropriate in the contexts of sports and work. By and large, the trend of *Sachlichkeit* had been replaced by fashion *par excellence*. Concomitant with this growing conservatism in fashion and the political climate at the end of the Weimar Republic was a palpable shift in the creative output of Dix and Schad.

Schad's artistic productivity declined around 1930 and the fashionability of his female portraits appeared on the surface to be evermore commercially affirmative. While his works were featured in Alfred Barr's 1936-1937 MoMA exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism," they were also on display in 1937 at the National Socialist sponsored show, "*Die Grosse Deutsche Ausstellung*" (The Great German Exhibition) in Munich. Robert Storr has pointed out that Schad's inclusion in the latter two exhibitions and exclusion from the infamous *Entartete Kunst Ausstellung* (Degenerate Art Exhibition) of 1937 was instrumental in shaping the artist's reputation in postwar art historical scholarship.<sup>321</sup> In a conversation with art historian Andrea Heeseman-Wilson, Schad recalled how the Nazi regime could have deemed his earlier works degenerate, even though they regarded him as a "non offender."<sup>322</sup> Having not been condemned by the Nazis, Schad was also written out of canonical narratives on modern art in the twentieth century.

It could be argued that Schad's subject matter was partially to blame for his fate. Already in 1930, a critic remarked upon the artist's penchant for picturing scantily clad female types, writing, "Christian Schad's *Sachlichkeit* has a sympathetic warmth and a painterly delicateness, he is a sovereign expert, whose female pictures always captivate, not only because he understands how to show them as partial nudes. Unfortunately sometimes one senses the routine

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<sup>321</sup> Robert Storr, "Of Talent, Ambivalence, and the Worst of Times: Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit," in *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit*, ed. Jill Lloyd and Michael Peppiatt (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 58.

<sup>322</sup> Heeseman-Wilson, "Christian Schad," 150.

already.”<sup>323</sup> His technical mastery aside, Schad was too formulaic for the reviewer, who regarded this pattern to be a gimmick. While not partial nudes, two works from that very year, *Portrait of a Woman from Berlin (Fräulein Schellenberg)* and *Portrait of Mulino von Kluck*, both of which ran as color covers of *Sport in Bild* and *Die Dame* respectively, epitomize this questionable moment in Schad’s career (Figures 71 and 72).

Hermine Schellenberg was a member of a prominent family that produced a well-known hair tonic. Schad met her at a party at the home of the prominent gynecologist Dr. Haustein, and according to Günter A. Richter, the fashion designer Jacques Doucet commissioned the portrait.<sup>324</sup> In it, Schad conveys Schellenberg’s vacant expression amidst an alien paradise with tropical flowers painted in under-saturated tones, set against a yellow-orange sky that dissolves to reveal patches of acidic gray clouds. The dramatic folds of Schellenberg’s orange dress and its floral accessory, along with the sunset scene and the foliage behind her, are forthright in their phoniness. Commissioned by a member of the Ullsteins, a family of publishing fame, the second portrait, *Mulino von Kluck*, is comparably saccharine. Von Kluck was the daughter of a Prussian General and used her friendship with an Ullstein brother, to advance her career as an actress.<sup>325</sup> In the portrait, the aspiring movie star wears an off-the-shoulder pink dress with a floral accent and a transparent silk shawl, which echoes the arid landscape of gently rolling hills behind her. Both of these portraits exhibit well-dressed sitters, whose over-the-top prettiness harmonizes with the cloying artificiality of their settings, but the overall result is notably not one of accord.

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<sup>323</sup> “Christian Schads Sachlichkeit hat eine sympathische Wärme und malerische Delikatesse, er ist ein souveräner Künstler, dessen Frauenbildnisse immer bestechen, nicht nur, weil er es versteht, sie raffiniert als Halbakte zu zeigen. Manchmal spürt man leider schon die Routine.” *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, Berlin Abend-Ausgabe, October 29, 1930.

<sup>324</sup> Günter A. Richter, “Berlinerin Fräulein Schellenberg,” in *Christian Schad* (Rottach-Egern: Edition G.A. Richter, 2002), 222.

<sup>325</sup> Matthias Eberle, *Christian Schad* (Berlin: Staatliche Kusthalle, 1980), 173.

Unsurprisingly, the question of taste frequently surfaced in reviews of Schad's painting. For example, after defining *Sachlichkeit* as an aesthetic of plastic clarity and adamant focus, a critic in 1929 wrote, "One calls it *Sachlichkeit*" and "it goes to embarrassment."<sup>326</sup> He continues, "Schad remains *sachlich* and just for that reason, he appears not infrequently doubly embarrassing...The eye however, which has adapted to this, does not find an easy entry into the pictures, whose horrid abrasiveness presents naked ugliness without a covering."<sup>327</sup> For this critic, nakedness refers not only to the frequent nudity in works by Schad, but also to his *Sachlichkeit*, or the laying bare of appearances to an embarrassing degree. The next year, another reviewer panned Schad with the following insult, "Christian Schad, who profits from the booming business of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and strongly perfumes his pictures. Most artists of this young age-group do not know such a cheap taste."<sup>328</sup> While humorous, the critics' comments are not off the mark, since the portraits of von Kluck and Schellenberg do indeed seem perfumed, as if wafting the dark, powdery sweetness of Shalimar. Reviewing Schad's exhibition at the Galerie Fritz Gurlitt, the critic Wolfradt questioned the tastefulness of the artist's painting: "The fantastical lies more in the working method than in the only sometimes sarcastic approach to the object...a tremendous master, but sailing close to the wings of what is bearable."<sup>329</sup> Later, in 1939, an anonymous right-wing critic attacked Schad's 1928 portrait of Egon Erwin Kisch, with

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<sup>326</sup> "Christian Schad bei Fritz Gurlitt," *Berliner Börsen Kurier* (December 18, 1929).

<sup>327</sup> "Schad bleibt sachlich und gerade darum wirkt er nicht selten doppelt peinlich...Das Auge aber, das an diese gewöhnt ist, hat es nicht leicht zu Bildern Zugang zu finden, deren grausame Härte, die nackte Häßlichkeit ohne Hülle darbietet." "Christian Schad bei Fritz Gurlitt," *Berliner Börsen Kurier* (December 18, 1929).

<sup>328</sup> "Christian Schad, der die Konjunktur der neuen Sachlichkeit nützt und seine Bilder stark parfümiert. Solchen billigen Geschmack kennen die meisten Künstler dieser jungen Jahrgänge nicht." Richard Biedrzynski, *Deutsche Zeitung* (October 26, 1930).

<sup>329</sup> "Das Fanatische liegt mehr in der Arbeitsmethode als in der nur zuweilen sarkastischen Entstellung zum Objekt...ein enormer Könnner, aber hart an der Grenze des Erträglichen." Heeseman-Wilson, "Christian Schad," 182.

an unfortunate attempt at humor, “I am called Egon Erwin Kitch. Forgive me, *pardon*, *beg your pardon* [italicized words appeared in English]: the letter “t” is naturally a typo.”<sup>330</sup> He continues: “Or look at the picture by the painter Christian Schad, who earlier – well – portrayed me for the Gurlitt art dealer shop.”<sup>331</sup> With this, Schad’s kitschy appeal even made him offensive to the most conservative of critics.

The artifice that looms in Schad’s portraits of Schellenberg and von Kluck is akin to the effect of Dix’s *Portrait of the Dancer Tamara Danischewski* from 1933 (Figure 73).<sup>332</sup> A dancer, Danischewski was affiliated with ensemble of the famed dancer Gret Palucca, and Dix even painted their mutual colleague, Marianne Vogelsang, in 1931.<sup>333</sup> In her portrait, Danischewski clutches the stem of an iris and gazes forward with feline-like eyes and a coy, but crooked smile. A spiraling grapevine covers the rough-hewn surface of the wall behind her, and its green tones, juxtaposed against the teal-gray color of Danischewski’s velvet dress, agitate the eye. The garment’s curious silhouette and leg of mutton sleeves were not commonly pictured in fashion publications, but Dix’s pictorial handling of it is highly sensitive, achieving through paint the way in which velvet both absorbs and reflects light. The construction of the sleeve enhances the material qualities of the velvet that Dix captures in its soft voluminous folds. The fabric’s partial darkness sets off the luminous luster of the dancer’s hair, polished nails, and pearl earrings.

Dix met Danischewski in Dresden when he was working as a professor of fine arts at the

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<sup>330</sup> “*Juden, die wir nicht vergessen*,” *Der Völkischer Beobachter* (January 7, 1939): 5.

<sup>331</sup> “*Oder scheuen Sie sich das Bild des Malers Christian Schad an, der hat mich für Gurlitts Kunsthandlung früher – na ja – porträtiert. Gutes Bild übrigens – von mir aus*.” *Der Völkischer Beobachter*, January 7, 1939, 5.

<sup>332</sup> Citing the dancer’s facial features and the abundant foliage behind the subject, art historian Silke Opitz interprets this painting as a reference to Cranach’s 1530 *Portrait of a Young Woman*. (Figure 74) Silke Opitz, “Un-Verblümt: Sinn und Sinnlichkeit floraler Motive im Werk von Otto Dix,” in *Un-Verblümt: Otto Dix Florale Motive im Werk des deutschen Meisters der Moderne*, ed. Silke Opitz and Holger Peter Saupe (Gera: Kunstsammlung Gera, 2007), 28.

<sup>333</sup> Opitz, “Un-Verblümt,” 28.

Dresden Academy. He held the appointment from 1927 until 1933, when the Nazis removed him from the position. James van Dyke has shown the ways in which Dix strategically negotiated between the autonomy of academic art and the political commitment expected of avant-garde artists in these years. According to van Dyke, “The appointment to the Dresden academy allowed him to return to the shocking themes of his glorious Dadaist and Verist years on a new scale, while ironically trumpeting his unlikely professional and social rise.”<sup>334</sup> This professional posturing arose from the charge that Dix, with his newfound professional success had betrayed the left.<sup>335</sup> For example, Carl Einstein had once praised Dix’s ironic portrayal of kitsch and bourgeois culture.<sup>336</sup> But, by 1926, the critic readjusted his appraisal of the artist and wrote, “Dix is the son of war and failed revolts, determined not to forget all too quickly; he dares topical kitsch, yet his painting can prove itself to be somewhat banal; one places too much faith in the provocative, interesting motif.”<sup>337</sup> For it appeared to Einstein that Dix had jettisoned the irony and was embracing the kitsch on its own.

The communist painter Hans Grundig responded similarly to Dix, who was now, in his eyes, more of a distinguished educator than a critical realist. After visiting an exhibition in 1932,

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<sup>334</sup> James van Dyke, “Otto Dix’s *Streetbattle* and the Limits of Satire in Düsseldorf, 1928,” *Oxford Art Journal*, 32,1 (2009): 65.

<sup>335</sup> Van Dyke, “Otto Dix’s *Streetbattle*,” 55.

<sup>336</sup> Einstein famously wrote of Dix, “The bourgeois gets kitsch back from him in sharp focus; he can do it because he paints very well, so well that his painting aborts kitsch, executes it. The time of the inoffensive portrait of wealthy gangsters and swindlers is over. Dix paints what is current and thereby knocks it down without the swollen solemnity of a prettifying dolt. Painting is a critical statement.” Carl Einstein, “Otto Dix,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 491. Originally published as Carl Einstein, “Otto Dix,” *Das Kunstblatt* 7, no. 3 (March 1923), 97-102.

<sup>337</sup> “Dix ist der Sohn des Krieges und vergeblicher Revolte, entschlossen, nicht allzu rasch zu vergessen; er wagt zeitsachlichen Kitsch, doch Malerei kann sich daran selber leicht banal erweisen; man vertraut zu sehr erregendem Motiv.” Quoted in Van Dyke, “Streetbattle,” 54. See: Carl Einstein, *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1926), 156.

Grundig wrote his wife:

You cannot believe how bad the works are...without a formulated point of view of any kind...vacuous and empty. The typical artist who doesn't think, who only makes experience the vehicle of his art. Once informed by the war and postwar, and because the experience was great, his art was too, since he's very gifted. But today ruined by a bourgeois life; today it's the petty individual experience of a degenerate class, so his art is too.<sup>338</sup>

As it has been shown here, Dix's connections to bourgeois life ran deep. For his critics, like Grundig, in the early thirties, however, the artist's critical capacity to comment upon the realities of class had been softened and diminished. In all likelihood, the portraits examined here contributed to this backlash against Dix, who has been, as Grundig claimed, "ruined by a bourgeois life."

To his credit, Dix denied neither his fondness for finer things nor his disdain for politics, and his portraits from the twenties and early thirties demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the visual and material languages of fashion. The appropriation of these sartorial codes in his works facilitated a mode of social commentary that co-exists with the very forces of consumer culture that Dix ultimately critiques. When he declared in the December 3, 1927 issue of the *Berliner Nachtausgabe* that "...the object is primary," he made it clear that material things, like clothing, inform not only his painterly process, but also his world view. "More important for me," Dix wrote, "is the 'what' than the 'how,'" since the object, he concludes, "develops the how."<sup>339</sup> If, for Dix, the object governs the mode of representation, then his exaggerated imaging of fashionable goods mimics the spectacular aura that consumer products acquire under capitalist commodification.

The same argument can be made of Schad's portraits, although few scholars have written

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<sup>338</sup> Frank Whitford, "The Revolutionary Reactionary," in *Otto Dix 1891-1969*, ed. Keith Hartley and Sarah O'Brien Twohig (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1992), 20.

<sup>339</sup> Otto Dix, "Objekt gestaltet Form," in *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis*, ed. Dieter Schmidt (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1981), 206.

about the representation of fashion as a link between the two painters. Already in 1928 the critic Karl Paetow, reviewing Max Osborn's monograph on Schad, noted that Osborn himself, perhaps "could have said more about the painter's relationship to Dix."<sup>340</sup> More recently, Ilka Voermann drew a parallel between the artists in an essay, calling both "witnesses of their time," while noting how infrequently the two are studied together.<sup>341</sup> Explaining the reasons for this, she writes, "Their painting styles, their themes, and their supposed political intentions are too different...It almost seems as if the two artists occupy the opposite poles of New Objectivity, and their many differences take in the entire spectrum of this style."<sup>342</sup>

A productive response to Voermann's comment should point out that an analysis of specifically how the artists witnessed their time would demonstrate the similarities between them. For Schad and Dix, the representation of material objects like clothing figure centrally in their depictions of modern life. The painters play with the sartorial signals that are supposed to communicate socially constructed values of identity by exaggerating the visual appearance of a garment's materiality, transforming dress into a material barrier that complicates the viewer's assumptions about the subject.

Nevertheless, contemporary art historians continue this tradition of mistrusting fashion, and they fail to perceive its importance in modern realist painting. Benjamin Buchloh, for instance, accused *Neue Sachlichkeit* painters, Schad in particular, of being "senile old rulers who refuse to step down," and "old painters" whose "stubbornness and spite...increase in direct proportion to the innate sense of the invalidity of their claims to save a cultural practice that had

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<sup>340</sup> Karl Paetow, "Der Maler Christian Schad," 504.

<sup>341</sup> Ilka Voermann, "The Artist as Witness: Otto Dix and Christian Schad," in *Otto Dix and the New Objectivity*, ed. Kunstmuseum Stuttgart in cooperation with the Chair for Medieval and Modern Art History of the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag 2012), 37-45.

<sup>342</sup> Ilka Voermann, "The Artist as Witness: Otto Dix and Christian Schad," 37.



lost its validity.”<sup>343</sup> For Buchloh, these artists, in imitating the ways of the Old Masters, fetishize art historical tradition of painting as a means to preserve the production of the “luxury products of a fictitious high culture.”<sup>344</sup> If anything, as their pictures show, Schad and Dix actually disrupt boundaries between high and low culture by representing clothes and other mundane objects of consumer culture through these old masterly techniques in highly polished oil and tempera paintings.

To repudiate *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting without attending to the visual representation of fashion in these works is to overlook their contribution to the history of art. As the preeminent artistic fashion of the Weimar Republic, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, in addition to providing critical representations of modern female subjectivities and dress, also exemplifies the uneasy-making relationship between art and fashion. In his *Aesthetics*, Theodor Adorno explicates the reasons as to why the art-fashion union is a thorny one, writing “Fashion is art’s permanent confession that it is not what it claims to be.”<sup>345</sup> For Adorno, both art and fashion are to blame for their “embeddedness in capitalist industry,” a state that “directly undermines autonomy.”<sup>346</sup> To distance itself from fashion, art must then always innovate. Yet, the perpetual novelty that defines fashion is also art’s strategy in maintaining the illusion that it is separate from fashion. In the end, Adorno writes, the two “stand in accord with each other.”<sup>347</sup> Recognizing this reality, Schad and Dix unabashedly represent art’s entrenchment in fashion.

Adorno writes that, “In the age of growing powerlessness of subjective spirit vis-à-vis social objectivity, fashion registers the alien excess of objectivity in subjective spirit, which is

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<sup>343</sup> Buchloh, “Figures of Authority,” 49.

<sup>344</sup> Buchloh, “Figures of Authority,” 50.

<sup>345</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 316.

<sup>346</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 315.

<sup>347</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 317.

painful yet all the same a corrective of the illusion that subjective spirit exists purely within itself.”<sup>348</sup> Schad and Dix employ a mode of realism that is objective, not in spite of, but because of its exaggerated visual vocabulary, which enables viewers to register precisely the “alien excess of objectivity” that hegemonic forces strive so relentlessly to naturalize. In these portraits of fashionable women, the painters make recognizable fashion’s excesses through their renderings of sartorial surfaces that operate as semblances of the alien objectivity in modern life under capitalism.

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<sup>348</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 317.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Neue Sachlichkeit, the Material Style: Lilly Reich and the Café Samt und Seide (1927)*

#### **Introduction: *Café Samt und Seide* and *Neue Sachlichkeit***

In 1928, László Moholy-Nagy photographed the Berlin Radio Tower from on high, providing an abstracted, geometricizing birds-eye-view of the grounds below (Figure 75). This was the site of a brand-new exhibition space that had opened to the public just the year before. In its inaugural year of 1927, the exhibition grounds of the Berlin Radio Tower housed the fashion and trade exhibition, *Die Mode der Dame* (Ladies' Fashion), which ran for less than a month, from September 21<sup>st</sup> until October 16<sup>th</sup> (Figure 76). Situated at the center of the exhibition space of *Die Mode der Dame* was a dressed-up and abstracted take on café design by the architect and exhibition designer Lilly Reich (1885-1947) and her collaborator Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) (Figure 77-79). They constructed this *Café Samt und Seide* (Velvet and Silk Café), as it would be known, by draping swathes of natural and artificial velvet and silk fabric over chromed metal rails to create both horizontally and vertically oriented enclosure panels, some of which were anchored to the floor, while others were suspended from above. Occupying 17.5 x 17.5 square meters, it also included two elongated half-circle panels that were placed diagonally across from one another, bifurcating the center of the café along a flowing S-curve – a form evocative of the female body and velvet and silk's supple materiality.

According to Philip Johnson, the velvet was black, red, and orange, while the silk was gold, silver, black and lemon yellow.<sup>349</sup> These textile walls functioned as a dynamic scaffolding that showcased variable juxtapositions of colors, forms, and textures. Within them, visitors to the exhibition could socialize in soft diffused light, while the café framed views of the installations featuring fashionable goods brightly illuminated (Figures 80-82). A critic writing in *Elegante Welt* remarked that the *Café* “created a sensation” and “was a delight for all of the exhibition visitors.”<sup>350</sup> Also praising the show, the journalist Elsa Herzog proceeded to declare that the “exhibitionary technique” of *Die Mode der Dame* was entirely determined by the principle of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a characteristic that she claimed revealed itself most distinctively through Reich and Mies’ *Café*.<sup>351</sup>

Employing Herzog’s declaration as a point of departure for this chapter, I will argue that the *Café*, specifically with its fashion exhibition context, is indeed an example of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Proponents of *Sachlichkeit* before the First World War, like *Deutsche Werkbund* co-founder Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927), as he demonstrated in his book of 1902, *Style-Architecture*, advocated for the expression of built form through its function and the stripping away of decorative ornaments. For Muthesius, *Sachlichkeit*, connoting “straightforwardness and a purity of artistic sensibility,” was a corrective to the rapid and superficial stylistic changes that fashion embodied.<sup>352</sup> During the Weimar Republic, the standard bearers of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a

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<sup>349</sup> Since the only contemporaneous accounts documenting the design of the *Café* are texts and black and white photographs, it is difficult to confirm Johnson’s observation. See: Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: Architektur für die Seidenindustrie* (Köln: Nicolai Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH, 2011), 71.

<sup>350</sup> “Samt und Seide Café,” *Elegant Welt* 21 (October 19, 1927): 40.

<sup>351</sup> Elsa Herzog, “Die Berliner ist Mode!,” *Berliner Nachtausgabe* (September 21, 1927).

<sup>352</sup> Hermann Muthesius, *Style-Architecture and Building Art: Transformations of Architecture in the Nineteenth Century and its Present Condition*, ed. Harry F. Mallgrave, trans. Stanford Anderson (Santa Monica: The Getty Center, 1994), 100.

purportedly rational and sober aesthetic mode that reigned during a brief period of economic stability between 1925 and 1929, adopted the simplification and reduction that pre-war *Sachlichkeit* exemplified.

In a letter to Alfred Barr dated July 8, 1929, Hartlaub defined *Neue Sachlichkeit* in both a negative and positive manner. Most scholarship on *Neue Sachlichkeit* dwells on its negative definition, which Hartlaub identified as, “resignation and cynicism after a period of exuberant hopes.”<sup>353</sup> Contrasting this definition, he explains:

...the positive side expresses itself in the enthusiasm for the immediate reality as a result of the desire to take things entirely objectively on a material basis without immediately investing them with ideal implications. This healthy disillusionment finds its clearest expression in Germany in architecture.<sup>354</sup>

Even though he originally devised the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* to designate recent developments in German realist painting, Hartlaub, writing five years after the term’s invention, deemed German architecture to actually be the best embodiment of the term’s positive definition. These qualities of *Neue Sachlichkeit* are indeed consistent with the goals of a modern architect and designer like Reich. Her *Café Samt und Seide* and other exhibition design projects from the twenties through the thirties demonstrate her treatment of the material itself as a vehicle to convey an immediate sense of reality, without the idealism associated with decorative ornamentation or staging narrative-rich exhibition settings.

Reveling in wealth and abundance of material as such, Reich, with the sumptuous and colorful *Café Samt und Seide*, transforms objectivity into a spectacle of material that seems to be at odds with the definition of *Sachlichkeit*. Regarding *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Ernst Bloch wrote in 1935, that it “makes an ornament out of having none,” and echoing him seventy years later,

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<sup>353</sup> Quoted in Alfred Barr, “Otto Dix,” *The Arts* 17.4 (January 1931): 237.

<sup>354</sup> Quoted in Barr, “Otto Dix,” 237.

Frederic J. Schwartz concluded that *Sachlichkeit* “fetishiz[es] the lack of ornament.”<sup>355</sup> Hence, as much as the *Café* refers to *Sachlichkeit*, it also eludes it by virtue of being a sensational example of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. The *Café* itself and *Die Mode der Dame* reveal a tension between the functional and the aesthetically pleasing. This balancing act made *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* useful terms for the promotion of distinctly modern consumer goods, but it was also deleterious for maintaining their critical rigor as reform principles in progressive art and design.

### ***Die Mode der Dame and the German Textile Industry***

The intended audience of the exhibition *Die Mode der Dame* included both the general public, especially women, and industry specialists. In the weeks leading up to its opening, the trade magazine *Seide* informed readers of the exhibition. One critic wrote in anticipation,

Next the products of the German silk and velvet weaving mills, as well as the fashion production industry will be displayed in small booths. Then an erection of a large tent of silk fabrics is planned in which a tearoom will be housed. From this tent, visitors will have a view of the exhibited objects. They will also be shown samples of the German fashion houses on models.<sup>356</sup>

The exhibition was openly propagandistic, a prideful undertaking that promoted the products, technical advancements, and good taste of German industry. The *Reichsverband der deutschen Modeindustrie*, the *Verein deutscher Seidenwebereien*, and the *Berliner Messeamt* sponsored the exhibition, which they marketed as a “*Qualitätsschau modischer Dinge*.”<sup>357</sup>

Representing producers of any fashionable materials and goods, such as textiles, clothing, hats, feathers, flowers, lace, jewelry, and shoes, the *Reichsverband der deutschen Modeindustrie*

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<sup>355</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of our Times*, trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Oxford: Polity, 1991), 199. Frederic J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 43.

<sup>356</sup> “Zunächst werden Erzeugnisse der deutschen Seiden und Samtweberei sowie der modeschaffenden Industrie in kleineren Kojen ausgestellt. Sodann ist die Errichtung eines großen Zeltes aus Seidenstoffen geplant, in welchem ein Teeraum untergebracht wird. Von diesem Zelt aus werden die Besucher einen Blick auf die ausgestellten Gegenstände haben. Ferner werden ihnen hier durch Vorführdamen die Modelle der deutschen Modehäußer gezeigt werden.” “Propaganda, Ausstellungen, Messen. Die Mode der Dame,” *Seide* 5 (1927): 181.

<sup>357</sup> “Propaganda, Ausstellungen, Messen. Die Mode der Dame,” *Seide* 5 (1927): 181.

sought to promote specifically German-made wares at *Die Mode der Dame*.<sup>358</sup> The exhibition and the *Café* represented ongoing efforts since the First World War to end Germany's dependence on the French fashion industry. Framing the goods on display as national accomplishments, *Die Mode der Dame* demonstrated not just the aesthetic refinement, but also the quality of these German goods, which were to rival products manufactured in France. It furthermore asserted the importance of German fashion in the life of the modern German woman. According Herzog, the *Berlinerin*, who best followed these sartorial principles, was one of the best-dressed types of women of the world.<sup>359</sup>

Mies and Reich's *Café Samt und Seide*, with its velvets and silks of red, gold, and black imparted a decidedly nationalistic tone to the exhibition. Surrounding it were booths that displayed textiles, umbrella fabrics, ribbons, and clothing of natural silk, artificial silk, and combinations of both in a variety of fabrications, from smooth and shiny to printed and textured.<sup>360</sup> Mies and Reich designed eight booths to the left and right of the centrally positioned *Café*. On the ground floor of the exhibition, visitors could admire the latest German fashions, as well as installations from the perfume and soap industries in the so-called "courtyard of beauty."<sup>361</sup> On the second level, Berlin-based retailers arranged goods and images in accordance with the theme of how to dress "from morning to midnight."<sup>362</sup> A writer in *Seide* concluded with

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<sup>358</sup> "Propaganda, Ausstellungen, Messen. Die Mode der Dame," *Seide* 7 (1927): 242.

<sup>359</sup> Herzog, "Die Berlinerin ist Mode!"

<sup>360</sup> "Die Ausstellung 'Die Mode der Dame' 21. September bis 16. Oktober im Funkhaus Berlin," *Seide* 10 (1927): 317.

<sup>361</sup> "Die Ausstellung 'Die Mode der Dame,'" 318.

<sup>362</sup> Herzog, "Die Berlinerin ist Mode!"

enthusiasm that the exhibition was “an altogether great, convincing image of German taste and German skill.”<sup>363</sup>

Shortly before the exhibition’s opening, Dr. Leo Zeitlin, *Präsident* of the *Reichsverband der deutschen Modeindustrie*, issued a statement to the press declaring fashion “a centerpiece of the German economy” that was competitive “with the creative work of other nations.”<sup>364</sup> As he convinced readers of the economic importance of German fashion, he also made a case for its intertwined relationship with the character of German women. According to Zeitlin, a specifically German fashion was necessary for the preservation of the German woman’s best qualities, inside and out.<sup>365</sup> Furthermore, the “uncritical” and “slavish copying” of French fashion compromised her German identity because these garments were supposedly designed with only the French woman in mind.<sup>366</sup> Zeitlin’s text reveals the economic and ideological incentives that propelled the exhibition. With both money and national pride on the line, *Die Mode der Dame* prompted visitors to recognize Germany, not France, as the best producer of the finest textiles and fashions.

In seeking greater profits and influence, the exhibition’s sponsors also sought to rebrand velvet and silk. To accomplish this, they needed to persuade consumers that velvet and silk were not prohibitively expensive and impractical for everyday use. Traditionally, velvet and silk were associated with the elegance and luxury of evening or special occasion dress. By the middle of

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<sup>363</sup> “... Alles in allem, ein großartiges, überzeugendes Bild von deutschem Geschmack und deutschem Können!” “‘Die Mode Der Dame’ in Berlin,” *Kunstseide* 10 (October 1927): 534.

<sup>364</sup> “Modisches Schaffen im weitesten Sinne des Wortes zu einem Kernstück deutscher Wirtschaft geworden ist, auf das sich Deutschlands Wirtschaft und Kultur verlassen können, wenn es gilt, im Wettbewerb mit der schaffenden Arbeit anderer Völker die deutsche Leistungsfähigkeit zur Geltung zu bringen.” “Propaganda, Ausstellungen, Messen. Die Mode der Dame,” *Seide* 4 (1927): 151.

<sup>365</sup> “Zur Ausstellung ‘Die Mode der Dame,’” *Seide* 9 (1927): 281.

<sup>366</sup> “Zur Ausstellung ‘Die Mode der Dame,’” 281.



the decade, however, the trend of *Sachlichkeit* in fashion inspired changes to both daytime and nighttime clothes, placing a premium on youthfulness and androgyny.<sup>367</sup> Journalists discussed *Sachlichkeit* in fashion along these lines and transformed the vocabulary used to describe women's clothing, which now included a concern for use value, comfort, and practicality.

This trend was a far cry from the “upholstery style” of women's nineteenth-century fashions and Walter Benjamin's portrayal of velvet in the anti-modern interiors of the bourgeoisie.<sup>368</sup> During the twenties, women continued to associate velvet and silk with the sartorial refinement of eveningwear. Yet, as the journalist Ola Alsen assured her readers in *Elegante Welt*, consumers have, in fact, begun to accept silk fabrics like crêpe de chine and crêpe georgette as sporty materials.<sup>369</sup> These materials still enhanced the allure of more mundane and plain styles, however. Writing in *Sport im Bild*, Herzog attributed the popularity of the *Smoking* and the *Jumperkleid* in eveningwear to the influence of sports on clothing for both day and night. According to her, women simply had their favorite *sachlich* styles remade out of fabrics, like silk and velvet, which were more appropriate for eveningwear.<sup>370</sup> At the time of *Die Mode der Dame*'s opening, velvet and silk continued to be prominent in formal dress, but the terminology employed in fashion magazines to address such styles now evolved in accordance with the modern sleekness associated with the principle of *Sachlichkeit*.

For textile and clothing manufacturers, the apparent shift in sartorial discourses towards *Sachlichkeit* presented a marketing opportunity not to be missed. Convincing consumers that

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<sup>367</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>368</sup> Freyja Hartzell, “The Velvet Touch; Fashion, Furniture, and the Fabric of the Interior,” *Fashion Theory* 13.1 (March 2009): 53.

<sup>369</sup> Ola Alsen, “Sportdress 1925,” *Elegante Welt* 17 (August 12, 1925): 29.

<sup>370</sup> “Dazu kommt, daß der Sport unsere Tages-, ja selbst schon unsere Abendkleidung beeinflusst, denn Smoking und Jumper sind so beliebte Formen, daß die Frauen sich nicht davon trennen wollen und beide auch im abendlichen Material nach Sonnenuntergang neu erstehen lassen.” Elsa Herzog, “Der Smoking von Morgens bis Mitternacht,” *Sport im Bild* 9 32 (April 1926): 395.

velvet and silk represented everyday elegance meant that these materials could be worn and thus purchased more frequently. Capitalizing on the trend of *Sachlichkeit*, journalists and manufacturers argued that practicality and luxury were not necessarily mutually exclusive. For instance, the stocking producer Bemberg published elaborate advertisements in illustrated magazines showcasing their products as, at once, desirable and functional. One such ad depicts a wide array of sports-beauties, all of whom wear Bemberg silk stockings as they look carefree and chic, while partaking in various activities like horseback riding, boating, gymnastics, and tennis (Figure 83).<sup>371</sup>

Ads like these affirmed the ubiquity of silk, demonstrating that all women could and should wear it, no matter what the day would bring. Accordingly, a writer in *Seide* explained, “nearly every woman of taste” wears silk, insisting that, “The lady and silk, well, fashion and silk [have] thusly become inseparable term[s].”<sup>372</sup> In *Seide*’s special issue devoted to *Die Mode der Dame*, Alsen wrote, “The multi-purpose application of silk has gradually penetrated all circles. The smooth, simple little dress must be fabricated out of silk, should it not otherwise appear too meager. Silk ceases to be a luxury article.”<sup>373</sup> Furthermore, the journalist explained, since it is “self-evident” that every woman owns silk stockings, silk lingerie no longer “counts as exaggerated or extravagant.”<sup>374</sup> Alsen, denying the luxury status of silk, only does so in order to advertise its diverse applications and ubiquity, alongside its fanciful material qualities that

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<sup>371</sup> “Zum Sport Bemberg Strümpfe,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (December 18, 1927): 2108.

<sup>372</sup> “*Dame und Seide, also Mode und Seide, ist also ein untrennbarer Begriff geworden. Die Frau von heute, und das ist das Eigenartige, fast jede Frau von Geschmack, kleidet sich heute in Seide.*” Robert Wecke, “Die Dame in Seide,” *Seide* 9 (1927): 311.

<sup>373</sup> “*Die vielseitige Verwendung von Seide drang allmählich in alle Kreise. Das glatt, einfach Kleidchen muß aus Side gearbeitete sein, soll es nicht gar zu ärmlich wirken. Seide hörte auf, ein Luxusartikel zu sein.*” Ola Alsen, “Die Große Mode,” *Seide* 9 (1927): 283.

<sup>374</sup> “*Jede Frau, jedes Mädchen besitzt heute ein oder mehrere seidenen Kleider, man trägt seidene Mäntel, selbst verständlich seidenen Strümpfe. Auch der Begriff der seidenen Wäsche gilt durchaus nicht mehr als übertrieben oder extravagant.*” Alsen, “Die Dame in Seide,” 283.

enhance the appearance of a “simple little dress.” As much as silk safeguarded against the meagerness of an all-too plain or practical garment, the use-oriented principles of *Sachlichkeit* were also rhetorically advantageous for textile manufacturers seeking to sell more silk, which could be worn during any activity from morning to midnight.

In addition to promoting natural silk, the organizers of *Die Mode der Dame* wanted to improve the public image of artificial silk or *Kunstseide*, the textile resulting from chemically treating cellulose or plant fibers to mimic the cellular structure of silk strands. During the First World War and the inflationary years that followed, *Kunstseide* offered an economical alternative to natural silk. With Germany’s international trade hampered, the textile industry produced artificial silk in response to wartime material shortages, supplying the military and civilians alike with much-needed cloth. In these earlier years, *Kunstseide* lacked the refinement of natural silk, due to its cold hand and glaring, metallic sheen. Yet, by the end of the twenties, *Kunstseide* manufacturers were keen to prove that their product was not as good as, but better than the real thing.<sup>375</sup>

Writers in the Krefeld-based trade publication *Kunstseide* were eager to assert this. Roughly four months before *Die Mode der Dame*’s opening, a commentator in *Kunstseide* praised the virtues of artificial silk as a superior textile due to its versatility, value, and quality. The author also underscored the importance of the press in shaping the image of artificial silk for the larger public:

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<sup>375</sup> For more on *Kunstseide*, see: Yvette Florio Lane, “No Fertile Soil for Pathogens:” Rayon, Advertising, and Biopolitics in Late Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Social History* 44.2 (Winter 2010): 545-562. Maria Makela, “Artificial Silk Girls: Rayon as Silk's Double in Weimar Germany,” in *The Doppelgänger*, ed. Deborah Asher Barnstone (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016), 205–35.

The press must play a role in eradicating the mistrust against the word *Kunstseide*, which still frequently persists: Today, artificial silk is not an inferior imitation of genuine silk, but rather a valuable chemical product, which can replace most textiles, and resembles natural silk in terms of value and quality.<sup>376</sup>

In this way, manufacturers devised marketing strategies to rehabilitate the reputation of *Kunstseide*, refuting the misunderstanding that it was a cheap imitation and justifying that it was a costly commodity in its own right. *Die Mode der Dame*, which promoted examples of artificial silk alongside its natural counterpart, was the result of these efforts to advertise the benefits of artificial silk. There, exhibition-goers could witness the beauty and quality of *Kunstseide* for themselves by relying on their own senses of sight and touch.

*Die Mode der Dame*, therefore, represented the organizers' interests in advertising the textile industry's technological advancements, its national economic importance, and the wide-applicability of silk in everyday life. The exhibition was a tremendous public relations undertaking that involved reforming consumers' associations with silk and velvet, both artificial and natural. In the case of *Kunstseide*, manufacturers sought to convince consumers that it was no longer the unsatisfactory ersatz product of the immediate postwar years. Within the same space, abundant samples of natural silk in various applications showed the same public that silk had been transformed from a once exclusive luxury into an elegant necessity.

The *Café Samt und Seide*, through its structure, materials, and spatial organization, complemented the goals of the exhibition outlined above. Coupled with Mies' pared-down chairs with a semi-circular chrome base, the installation of the *Café* conjured the sleek, functionalist aesthetics of modern twentieth-century design. The chromed rails and sumptuous swaths of

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<sup>376</sup> “Die Presse muß mithelfen, um das Mißtrauen gegen das Wort “Kunstseide”, welches noch vielfach besteht, zu beseitigen: Die Kunstseide ist heute keine minderwertige Nachahmung der echten Seide, sondern ein wertvolles chemisches Produkt, welches die meisten Textilien ersetzen kann und im Werte und Aussehen der natürlichen Seiden ähnelt.” Dr. Bodenbender, “Die 2. Deutsche Kunstseiden-Ausstellung. Rückblick und hoffnungsvoller Ausblick,” *Kunstseide* 4 (April 1927): 212.

fabric formed a disconnected set of literal curtain walls, a much-idealized architectural feat. Executed in this way, velvet and silk became the trappings of a technologically advanced architecture, not the nostalgic bourgeois interiors of the previous century. At the same time, these panels of boldly colored fabrics must have been undeniably sensuous, tempting visitors to caress, slide, or even peak through and around the panels. The *Café* made velvet and silk the material enclosure of an interactive social space, so as to symbolize the ubiquity of these fabrics in the everyday lives of German women. Most notably, the diagonal axis of the *Café* curved in the shape of a broken “S,” forming a logo for both *Samt und Seide*.

In their reviews of the exhibition, critics recognized the *Café* as the centerpiece of the show, embodying the united efforts of both artistic and industrial forces to promote specifically German-made fashionable goods as practical and functional, yet artful and tasteful. In the fashion publication *Elegante Welt*, a journalist emphasizes this point, writing “In this display, designed with the participation of other important artists such as Mies van der Rohe, Frau Oppler-Legband, Stephanie Hahn...it is clear what far reaching connection there are between fashion and various industrial groups...the displays have been grouped around an elegant café, which is part of the exhibition.”<sup>377</sup> Designers such as these, who contributed to *Die Mode der Dame*, understood that modern production methods, if taken under their guidance, could, in fact, curb the aesthetic ills and remedy the inorganic rates of stylistic change spurred on by industrialization. It was the textile industry leaders, who, while incentivizing these unruly changes of fashion, also hired Mies, the architect, and Reich, the architect, designer, and fashion reformer, to represent their modern, yet artful consumer goods.

### ***Modefragen: Lilly Reich, the Deutsche Werkbund, and Questions of Fashion***

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<sup>377</sup> Magdalena Droste, “Lilly Reich: Her Career as an Artist,” in *Lilly Reich: Designer and Architect*, ed. Matilda McQuaid (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 59, n. 70.

When compared to the copious amounts of literature on Mies, it can be said that studies of Reich's work have not reached coffee table book-level ubiquity.<sup>378</sup> Born in 1885 in Berlin unto a well-to-do family, Reich was educated in a Berlin Lyceum, learning embroidery and dressmaking. In 1908, she studied in Vienna under Josef Hoffmann at the *Wiener Werkstätte*, before returning to Berlin in 1911, where she would begin working with one of her most important teachers at *Die höhere Fachschule für Dekoration*, Else Oppler-Legband, the reform fashion- and shop window designer, who had previously studied under the *Deutsche Werkbund* co-founder, Henry van de Velde (1863-1943). In 1910, *Die höhere Fachschule für Dekoration* merged with the renowned *Kunstschule Reimann*, and there, Reich became acquainted with Hermann and Anna Muthesius (1870-1961), Julius Klinger, and Lucian Bernhard, the graphic designer who popularized the *Sachplakat*, or the objective advertising poster. Reich officially became a member of the *Werkbund* in 1912, and in 1920, she was the first woman to be elected to its board of directors.

Reich met Mies in 1924, and their first project together was the exhibition *Die Wohnung* of 1927 in Stuttgart (Figures 84-86). While Reich had established her own studio long before meeting Mies, which she maintained throughout their partnership, she carried out some of her most important design projects with him. Two years after Mies assumed the directorship of the Bauhaus Dessau in 1930, Reich was appointed head of its weaving studio and interior design

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<sup>378</sup> See: Esther da Costa Meyer, "Cruel Metonymies: Lilly Reich's Designs for the 1937 World's Fair," *New German Critique* 7 (Winter 1999): 161-189. Marianne Egger, "Divide and Conquer: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich's Fabric Partitions at the Tugendhat House," *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 16.2 (Spring-Summer 2009): 66-90. Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe & Lilly Reich: Furniture and Interiors*, trans. Allison Plath-Moseley (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006). Lange, *Architektur für die Seidenindustrie*, 2011. Matilda McQuaid and Magdalena Droste, *Lilly Reich: Designer and Architect* (New York: Museum of Modern Art). Sonja Günther, *Lilly Reich: Innenarchitektin, Designerin, Ausstellungsgestalterin* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988).

workshop. In addition to the *Café Samt und Seide*, Mies and Reich collaborated on the 1929 International Exposition at Barcelona, *Die Wohnung unserer Zeit* at the German Building Exposition in Berlin in 1931, and the Imperial Exposition of the German Textile and Garment Industry in Berlin, for which the pair contributed plans, but the National Socialist organizers rescinded their commission weeks before the exhibition's opening in 1937 (Figures 87 and 88).<sup>379</sup>

It was likely Hermann Lange (1847-1942), the factory owner, silk industry leader, and art collector, who approached Mies and Reich to work on *Die Mode der Dame*. Scholar Christiane Lange has traced the connections between art and industry that Lange fostered in the early twentieth century, showing that the collaboration between the *Werkbund*, the textile trade organizations in Krefeld, and the artistic avant-garde “were an important motor for the longtime collaboration with Mies and Lilly Reich.”<sup>380</sup> Lange was a regular client of the Berlin gallerist Karl Nierendorf, who represented Otto Dix, and in 1925, Lange contacted Nierendorf to commission a portrait of his mother by the artist.<sup>381</sup> Nierendorf, who in February 1927 was preparing to launch a Mies exhibition, later claimed he introduced Mies and Lange to one another for the first time.<sup>382</sup> In the summer of 1927, Lange commissioned Mies to work on the first plans for the houses *Lange und Esters* in Krefeld. At this time, the *Verein deutscher Seidenwebereien* and the *Verband der Samt- und Plüschfabrikanten* were also working together to plan the *Café Samt und Seide* as the centerpiece of the upcoming exhibition *Die Mode der*

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<sup>379</sup> Matilda McQuaid, “Lilly Reich and the Art of the Exhibition,” in *Lilly Reich: Designer and Architect*, ed. Matilda McQuaid (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 39.

<sup>380</sup> “Das Zusammenspiel dieser beiden Interessengruppen und die Überschneidung einiger ihrer führenden Vertreter waren ein wichtiger Motor für die langjährige Zusammenarbeit mit Mies und Lilly Reich.” Lange, *Architektur für die Seidenindustrie*, 10.

<sup>381</sup> Lange, *Architektur für die Seidenindustrie*, 13.

<sup>382</sup> Lange, *Architektur für die Seidenindustrie* 13.

*Dame* that autumn. In the following years, Mies and Reich would work together on nine or ten projects for silk industry bosses in Krefeld.<sup>383</sup>

Reich explored issues related to fashion and its production throughout her career. With her background in embroidery and dressmaking, she possessed a technical knowledge of fashion, which she leveraged as a professional designer. Already in 1911, she designed clothing displays for the Wertheim department store, and by 1914, Reich would convert her studio into a dressmaking shop for the duration of the war.<sup>384</sup> Having become a member of the *Werkbund* in 1912, Reich also took advantage of the organization's close ties to the German fashion industry, which dated back to its founding in 1907. For instance, Anna Muthesius, a reform fashion designer, had previously designed shop windows for Gerson's as well as the Wertheim Department Stores in Berlin.<sup>385</sup> The owner of Gerson's, Hermann Freudenberg, commissioned her husband, Hermann Muthesius, to design a house for him in 1907, and in 1917, Freudenberg became the head of the *Reichsverband der deutschen Modeindustrie*.<sup>386</sup> For Reich and her *Werkbund* colleagues, creating an alliance with the fashion industry was vital for tackling the problems of inauthentic style and deteriorating quality caused by industrial production. Forming this strategic collaboration, art and industry wielded nationalism as a weapon against the aesthetic ills of the modern era in their quest to achieve authenticity and quality in German design.

A group of projects from the teens and early twenties illustrates that Reich understood fashion's role in shaping wartime and postwar patriotism. With conflicts between France and Germany raging, the *Werkbund* announced in a 1915 newsletter that an exhibition organized by

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<sup>383</sup> Lange, *Architektur für die Seidenindustrie*, 48.

<sup>384</sup> McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 13.

<sup>385</sup> Günther, *Lilly Reich*, 14.

<sup>386</sup> McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 7.



Reich and Bernard with, as Magdalena Droste put it, “roughly one hundred selected fashions” would open on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March at the *Preussische Abgeordnetenhaus*.<sup>387</sup> Officially sponsored by the Imperial Crown, the exhibition resulted from the cooperation between leaders at the *Werkbund*, including Reich and Bernard, and key players in the German fashion industry, like Freudenberg, who also supported the show. Together, they incorporated fashion into wartime propaganda, calling for the end of Germany’s addiction to foreign goods, especially French clothing, as a matter of national importance.<sup>388</sup>

In 1920, the same year that Reich joined the *Werkbund*’s executive board, she planned two more fashion-oriented exhibitions. The first, *Kunsthandwerk in der Mode* (Fashion Craft) at the *Staatliches Kunstgewerbemuseum* in Berlin was sponsored by the *Reichsverband der deutschen Modeindustrie*, which elected Reich to be the head and artistic director of the show (Figure 89).<sup>389</sup> The exhibition celebrated handwork in German fashion and its rise in the postwar context, in shaping the image of the German woman. The second, entitled *Applied Arts*, opened at the Newark Museum in New Jersey in 1922, a sequel to the *Werkbund*’s international exhibition from a decade prior, *German Applied Arts* of 1912.<sup>390</sup> The 1922 show included more than 1,600 objects of German design, which Reich selected in collaboration with Otto Baur and Richard L.F. Schulz.<sup>391</sup>

In the mid twenties, Reich continued to gain recognition for her work in fashion. *Die Form* announced in 1925 that Reich would offer courses for students in pattern drawing and embroidery. This same year, she opened a studio for exhibition design and fashion in Frankfurt

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<sup>387</sup> Droste, “Lilly Reich,” 50.

<sup>388</sup> McQuaid, “Lilly Reich,” 14.

<sup>389</sup> Lilly Reich, “Die Ausstellung ‘Kunsthandwerk in der Mode,’” *Mitteilungen des Verbandes der deutschen Modeindustrie* 10 (1920): 208-11.

<sup>390</sup> McQuaid, “Lilly Reich,” 14.

<sup>391</sup> McQuaid, “Lilly Reich,” 14.

am Main, while also exhibiting a hand-made blouse at Monza's applied arts exhibition.<sup>392</sup>

Around this time, Reich became acquainted with Mies, and together they were both hired by Lange to plan the *Café Samt und Seide*, along with eight installation booths. By 1928, Reich had become a preferred contender for the directorship position of a fashion institute in Munich. She declined the job due to her unwillingness to move and constrict the scope of her work, however.<sup>393</sup> In 1930, she was denied the appointment as founding director of the School for Textile Arts in Krefeld because, as she wrote in a letter dated from 1930, "the municipal authorities and a sector of industry [did] not want a woman."<sup>394</sup>

Reich also documented her ideas about fashion, summarizing its core economic, social, and aesthetic issues, in the 1922 text "*Modefragen*," which appeared in the *Werkbund* magazine, *Die Form*.<sup>395</sup> The central question driving her analysis: Given the rapid growth of the postwar German fashion industry, why is it that its products are so unsatisfactory and inaccessible? The answer, according to Reich, lies in the preoccupation with supply and demand on the parts of both producers and consumers. She writes, "The atmosphere created by this business is electric, pulling everything into its rhythm."<sup>396</sup> Accordingly, manufacturers churn out garment after

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<sup>392</sup> Droste, "Lilly Reich," 52.

<sup>393</sup> "I can't consider it, not because I have no desire to move to Munich, but because I would have to limit the scope of my work considerably, which would be very difficult for me, especially now after the job in Stuttgart and before the work for Barcelona (Mies and I are in charge of constructing the entire German section for the international exposition there next year.) My real heart – or let us say one of my hearts – is in building, after all, and I am happy that I am still able to return to this love from time to time. I see the value of the job there, of course, and also value for the financial security, but my love is stronger, and there's nothing I can do about it." Droste, "Lilly Reich," 55.

<sup>394</sup> Quoted in Christiane Lange, "On the eternal understudy: Lilly Reich designed objects that were to make Mies famous," *Bauhaus* 3 (June 2012): 71.

<sup>395</sup> Lilly Reich, "Modefragen," *Die Form* 5 (1922): 7-9.

<sup>396</sup> Citing the translated version in Robin Schuldenfrei ed., "Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion," trans. Annika Fisher, *West 86<sup>th</sup>: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 21.1 (March 2013): 117.

garment, creating superficial changes with cheap decorations. Only the richest, most famous women can afford the finest garments from abroad, and it is, therefore, this small group that establishes trends in the domestic context, “set[ting] the conditions for national production.”<sup>397</sup> “All others,” Reich continues, “are shut out,” and left with insufficient mass-produced copies.<sup>398</sup> When financial motives become the primary catalyst behind production, stable, organic rates of stylistic change cannot be maintained. The result is fashion for fashion’s sake, or as Reich put it, “fashion today has no style; it is merely always fashionable.”<sup>399</sup>

The binary of interiority and exteriority that plays so centrally in the theme of fashion, with its covering and revealing of bodies, also recurs in Reich’s text. Decrying the superficiality of the contemporary situation, she critiques “purely external decorations,” which “serve only to encourage further masquerade” and result in a “momentarily diverting shell.”<sup>400</sup> Reich explains moreover that, while “the preciousness and beauty of the material is seductive...the creation is nothing but a vain exterior skin.”<sup>401</sup> Real style, however, has a greater resonance and arises from a harmonized unity of both the interior and exterior, she writes:

Clothes are objects of use, not artworks. They are subject to the requirements of the day. And yet clothes can produce metaphysical effects through their inherent orderliness, their peace and restraint, their coquettish gaiety and liveliness, their playful grace, their healthy simplicity, and their dignity. Clothes must and merge with their wearer to become an organic, inseparable whole. They can give a visual form to her spirit, be an expression of her soul, and enhance her feel for life. But this service that fashion can provide must adhere to the necessities of life and reflect the requirements of the time: fashion must have discipline.<sup>402</sup>

For Reich, discipline was necessary for the production of stylistically authentic clothing. It first had to be functional before it could complement the appearance and character of its wearer.

Although Reich stresses the utility of clothing, she still upholds its metaphysical and

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<sup>397</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 118.

<sup>398</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 118.

<sup>399</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 119.

<sup>400</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 118.

<sup>401</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 118.

<sup>402</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 119.

representational qualities. Through *Modefragen*, Reich asserts the dualistic nature of fashion, wherein the functional and fanciful are constituent elements of an organic, inseparable whole.

Reich maintained that sports and street clothes best embody this organic unity, since they “adhere to the same objective (*sachlichen*) prerequisites” and exhibit the principle of standardization (*Typisierung*) that Muthesius had been promoting since before the First World War.<sup>403</sup> She understood these categories of functional dress to be the logical conclusion of mass production, which represented the future of fashion. Her claims are consistent with the *Werkbund*’s ambitions to ennoble and integrate mechanized processes in design, rather than imitating the handiwork of the past through. For Reich, this mission was particularly pressing in the context of clothing because, as she saw it, there was a direct relationship between honesty in clothing design and the authenticity of the individual wearing said clothing. She writes, “In fashion, too, it will be essential that the spirit (*Geist*) of the woman comes to the fore: the spirit of she who wants to be what she is – and does not want to appear as what she is not.”<sup>404</sup> Even as Reich criticized the fashion system, the text reveals that she was by no means categorically against it. Instead, she upholds fashion’s subjective, romantic qualities and seeks to preserve them as positive outcomes of good design, which should reflect its own material truths, purpose, and production, all the while enabling a woman to represent herself as “what she is.”

Through *Modefragen*, Reich revitalizes the efforts of her colleagues van de Velde, Friedrich Deneken (1857-1927), and Anna Muthesius, to reform fashion by striking a necessary balance between beauty and utility. Like Reich, these figures also had strong ties to the fashion industry leaders in Krefeld, who would later commission her and Mies work on the *Café*.

Already in 1900, van de Velde announced in a lecture to a Krefeld audience that he would open

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<sup>403</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 120.

<sup>404</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 120.

the first exhibition for artistic dress in the city that same year. Asserting that dress is no longer “infinitely far from art,” he envisioned displaying clothes alongside paintings and sculptures.<sup>405</sup> Despite its artful qualities, van de Velde explains, dress should be subject to reform by artists, who have begun “to apply the same logic...used to reform other fields of the applied arts.”<sup>406</sup> In his lecture, he calls upon artists to eschew the “purely ornamental” as a means to rescue the art of dress from the commercial realm of fashion, which “has generated the decline of all the decorative arts and even the ‘grand’ art.”<sup>407</sup> Yet, he warns that successful design reform must not sacrifice beauty in the name of utility, as those who “[limit] themselves to advocating beauty...will find themselves as ill thought of as those who privileged only utilitarian demands in their attempts to reform dress.”<sup>408</sup> The Krefeld show of 1900 was intended to exhibit these efforts to reform fashion, bringing truth back to clothing through a negotiation between the ideals of beauty and utility.

Deneken, the director of The Applied Arts Museum in Krefeld, was another cofounder of the *Werkbund* and a central figure in establishing the reform dress movement’s relationship with German fashion and textile industries. The exhibition that van de Velde announced in 1900 became, according to Deneken, a pivotal moment for the expansion of this productive partnership. It also represented German achievements in counteracting, as he explained, the “arbitrary decision of a few Parisian haute couture firms.”<sup>409</sup> Nevertheless, Deneken’s campaign to advance the reform agenda within the textile industry was hardly successful. Since 1898, he

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<sup>405</sup> Henry Van de Velde, “The Artistic Improvement of Women’s Clothing (Krefeld 1900),” in *Against Fashion: Clothing as Art, 1850-1930*, ed. Radu Stern (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 125.

<sup>406</sup> Van de Velde, “Artistic Improvement,” 125.

<sup>407</sup> Van de Velde, “Artistic Improvement,” 127, 129.

<sup>408</sup> Van de Velde, “Artistic Improvement,” 131.

<sup>409</sup> Friedrich Deneken, “Artistic Dress and Personalized Dress (Krefeld 1904),” in *Against Fashion: Clothing as Art, 1850-1930*, ed. Radu Stern (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 143.

had tried to convince the Krefeld factories to produce reform designs by van de Velde, Peter Behrens, Otto Eckmann, and August Endell. His attempts continued until 1901, but the designs were neither possible to produce on a mass scale, nor popular with consumers. While their collaborations were a commercial failure, this group of designers did succeed in propagating theories behind reform fashion.<sup>410</sup> In the end, however, theories could do little to compensate for a lack of fashionable appeal.

Deneken, whose museum board of directors comprised textile industry leaders, expected Krefeld, as the “center of silk,” to take on a prominent role in the evolution of reform dress.<sup>411</sup> Following the exhibition of 1900, interest in reform clothing dispersed to select circles, and in 1903, the *Dilettantenverein*, a Krefeld-based women’s group, invited Anna Muthesius to deliver a speech on personalized dress for women at the Krefeld Chamber of Commerce.<sup>412</sup> According to Deneken, Muthesius presented her talk in a “subtle, lively and humorous way,” and it “helped spread the notion that a positive evolution of women’s clothing required the active contribution of women themselves.”<sup>413</sup> He believed Muthesius’ expertise as a clothing reformer would inspire women to undertake, as Deneken characterized it, the “very useful feminine activity” of making their own garments.<sup>414</sup>

For Muthesius, however, the act of a woman making her own garment was not just practical, but also a matter of personal freedom. In this spirit, Muthesius promoted the *Eigenkleid*, or individual dress, which was tailored to the individual taste, features, and needs of the wearer by the wearer herself. In the winter 1908/1909 special issue of *Renner’s Eigen-Kleid-*

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<sup>410</sup> Lange, *Architektur für die Seidenindustrie*, 28.

<sup>411</sup> Deneken, “Artistic Dress and Personalized Dress,” 143.

<sup>412</sup> Deneken, “Artistic Dress and Personalized Dress,” 144.

<sup>413</sup> Deneken, “Artistic Dress and Personalized Dress,” 145.

<sup>414</sup> Deneken, “Artistic Dress and Personalized Dress,” 146.

*Bericht*, Marianne Westphal praises Muthesius for being a leading advocate of reform dress.<sup>415</sup> Pointing out its social function, Westphal explains that through the *Eigenkleid*, “The woman emancipated herself from the paternalism of the artist and tried to make the familiar garment serve the practical, by virtue of her own experiences and according to her own taste...”<sup>416</sup> With this, the author reveals the emancipatory potential of Muthesius’ *Eigenkleid*, citing the relationship between the production of clothing and the personal freedom of its creators/wearers.

Muthesius publicly discussed her efforts to reform dress by uniting art and industry under the auspices of the *Werkbund*. She wrote in 1908, “Large-scale [women’s clothing] operations must, like in all other branches of the applied arts, work with artistic forces.”<sup>417</sup> She believed that industry must accept the artist as its ally in creating new motifs and protecting against the influence of “foreign intelligences and foreign taste.”<sup>418</sup> “In the very least,” she explained, “the female artist may prevent the follies of fashion.”<sup>419</sup> It was, for Muthesius, the female artist who best understood how to create functional clothing through an honest, yet artful formal language. Muthesius even suggested that the cost of the travel undertaken to acquire one Parisian hat could

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<sup>415</sup> “*Professor Mohrbutter und Frau Anna Muthesius sind wohl die ersten gewesen, die das Gesund, Lebensfähige des modernen Eigenkleides erkannten und nun jährlich so und so viele entzückende Modelle der deutschen Schneiderkunst schenken!*” Marianne Westphal, “Zur Geschichte des modernen Reformkleides,” *Renner’s Eigen-Kleid-Bericht* (Winter 1908/1909): 13.

<sup>416</sup> “*Die Frau emanzipierte sich davon der Bevormundung der Künstler und versuchte, das ihr vertraut gewordene Gewand kraft eigener Erfahrungen und nach eigenem Geschmack sich praktisch dienstbar zu machen...Das Eigenkleid der Frau entsteht, jenes Kleid, welches praktisch den Bedürfnissen des Lebens angepaßt ist...*” Marianne Westphal, “Zur Geschichte des modernen Reformkleides,” 11.

<sup>417</sup> “*Der Großbetrieb muß, wie in allen andern Kunstgewerbebezweigen, mit künstlerischen Kräften Arbeiten.*” Anna Muthesius, “Ausstellung von Kleidern in der Kölner Flora,” *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 21 (1907): 213.

<sup>418</sup> Anna Muthesius, “Ausstellung von Kleidern,” 213.

<sup>419</sup> “*Ginge es nicht ab ohne ewig wechselnde Moden, so sollte die Künstlerin Wenigstens vor Mode-Torheiten bewahren dürfen und helfen neue Motive zu erfinden.*” Anna Muthesius, “Ausstellung von Kleidern,” 213.

be better invested as the monthly wage of a female German artist, “who would sacrifice her soul for it.”<sup>420</sup>

Much as Reich would argue fifteen years later, fashion reformers believed that only through a disciplined collaboration between art and industry would aesthetically correct consumer products arise. An author writing in the aforementioned 1908/1909 issue of *Renner's* touches upon this very issue, reiterating the social function of reform fashion:

Meanwhile visionary spirits of both sexes agitated tirelessly through word and image, instruction and example for the idea of a reform dress. That they held their grounds first of all strictly outside of the predominance of French fashion, was only laudable, because reform dress is even today not a fashion, but a regime, whose highest sovereign, health care, the government today only shares with two not lesser wise and immense powers: noble art and practical utility.<sup>421</sup>

As the author remarks, these earliest reform efforts were successful because reform dress did not become fashionable per se. Unlike mainstream fashion, which reformers like van de Velde and Muthesius critiqued for being an unethical commercial realm of meaningless aesthetic speculation, reform fashion was intended to be a social good, promoting women's health and combining the ideals of beauty and utility for the sake of stylistic authenticity.

These debates about fashion, art, and industry were taking place just a few years before Reich joined the *Werkbund* after studying at *Die Höhere Fachschule für Dekoration* under van de Velde's former student, Oppler-Legband. While the writings of van de Velde, Deneken, and Muthesius undoubtedly shaped Reich's views on these matters, she also responds in *Modefragen*

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<sup>420</sup> “Teilt den Riesenpreis für ein einziges Pariser Hutmodell in einen Monatsgehalt für eine deutsche Künstlerin, die ihre Seele dafür hingeben wird.” Anna Muthesius, “Ausstellung von Kleidern,” 213.

<sup>421</sup> “Inzwischen agitierten weitschauende Geister beiderlei Geschlechts unermüdlich durch Wort und Bild, Belehrung und Beispiel für die Idee eines Reformkleides. Daß sie sich zunächst grundsätzlich außerhalb der tonangebenden Paris Mode hielt, war nur verdienstlich, denn die Reformtracht ist auch heute keine Mode, sondern ein Regime, dessen höchster Souverän, die Gesundheitspflege nur heute die Regierung teilt mit zwei nicht minder weisen und gewaltigen Mächten: der edlen Kunst und dem praktischen Nutzen.” v. Wegern, “Die Mode und Reformtracht,” *Renner's Eigen-Kleid-Bericht* (Winter 1908/1909): 24.



to the specific needs of the postwar context, when mechanized production had become even more predominant. This reality involved, for Reich, explicitly addressing the issue of *Typisierung*, which had been a point of conflict between Muthesius and van de Velde since the 1914 *Werkbund* exhibition in Cologne. Muthesius embraced standardized types as a means to protect the quality and stylistic integrity of consumer goods in an age of mechanized mass production, “finding,” as Schwartz put it, “an economic solution to a cultural problem.”<sup>422</sup> At the 1914 Cologne exhibition, van de Velde spoke out against *Typisierung* on behalf of a group of colleagues, including Walter Gropius, Karl Ernst Osthaus, Rudolf Bosselt, Endell, Hermann Obrist and Bruno Taut, who also opposed the principle. Their common goal to unite art with industry notwithstanding, van de Velde and the other *Typisierung* opponents argued that standardization in design impinged on the creative agency of the individual artist, who, as van de Velde asserted, “will never subordinate himself to a discipline that imposes a type upon him.”<sup>423</sup> Given Reich’s ongoing projects in the realm of fashion and the exhibition design of other mass-produced consumer goods, it is unsurprising that she would align herself with Muthesius by invoking *Typisierung* in her 1922 text “*Modefragen*.”

Accordingly, Reich employed the term in an article that was published in the *Werkbund*’s own magazine, knowing full well its contentious history within the organization. Yet, her specific usage of it attempts to address both sides of the debate, since, as she maintains, it is ultimately for the sake of the integrity of the individual that standardization and mechanization should be integrated into design and guided by the expertise of the artist. Even though she does not center her claims on the status of the artist as an individual, she did recognize the importance of “work by hand,” which, as she put it, “cannot be given up, especially in the field of fashion”

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<sup>422</sup> Schwartz, *Werkbund*, 128.

<sup>423</sup> Quoted in Schwartz, *Werkbund*, 148.

because, she notes, “it is precisely in this field that we find the highest caliber of handicraft today.”<sup>424</sup> Its prestige notwithstanding, Reich warns against upholding handwork for “sentimental reasons.”<sup>425</sup> Throughout *Modefragen*, the designer examines the industrialized conditions of clothing production in order to reconcile the need for clothing that is at once mass-produced and compliments the qualities of an individual. By including *Typisierung* in her discussion, Reich departs from the ideas of figures like van de Velde and Anna Muthesius, who promoted artistic dress and the *Eigenkleid* respectively, as a means to protest the erratic stylistic changes of the mainstream fashion system. In so doing, Reich confronts the questions of fashion on a much grander scale, incorporating industrial production, all the while mediating between the values beauty and function.

Her work in the years following “*Modefragen*” exhibits a continuation of these interests, as she frequently accepted positions involving the display of fashionable goods and materials.<sup>426</sup> With the exhibition of 1926, *Von der Faser zum Gewebe* (From Fiber to Textile) in Frankfurt, however, the focus of her work began to shift. For the first time in her career, Reich exhibited raw materials, namely cotton and wool, alongside the machines involved in their industrial production (Figure 90).<sup>427</sup> *Von der Faser zum Gewebe* consisted of three sections. The first “Textiles: Their Production and Trade,” presented fibers from animal, vegetable, and mineral sources, while the second and third were titled “Characteristics of Textiles” and “Examination of Textile Fibers, Yarn, and Weaving” respectively. In addition to witnessing various stages of the textile production process, from fiber to textile, visitors could also observe bolts of finished

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<sup>424</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 120.

<sup>425</sup> “Lilly Reich: Questions of Fashion,” 120.

<sup>426</sup> See pages 157-158 of this chapter.

<sup>427</sup> McQuaid, “Lilly Reich,” 21.

fabric.<sup>428</sup> A photograph of the exhibition's main hall depicts droves of men, women, and school children crowded in clusters around installations from regional weaving operations. Taken from the mezzanine of the *Festhalle* Frankfurt, the image captures the venue's arched ceiling and sweeping industrial iron elements. Rows of white, unadorned signs with clean, sanserif typography hang from the rafters, informing viewers about the different stages and the names of the businesses involved in textile production. In the foreground and on the left, white fabric is being extruded from machines and off-loaded for inspection by the exhibition-goers.

The first sentence of the exhibition catalogue's forward makes clear that the principle of *Sachlichkeit* guided the show's organization and methods of display. "The textile show 'Von der Faser zum Gewebe,'" it states, "would like to be counted amongst the exhibitions that build upon the sober ground of *Sachlichkeit*."<sup>429</sup> By the end of the text, the forward, conveying the organizer's confidence in achieving such a goal, concludes, "Without question, it [the exhibition] will have a lasting position in the annals of exhibition of *Sachlichkeit*."<sup>430</sup> Scholars Matilda McQuaid and Droste have shown that reviewers also associated the exhibition with *Sachlichkeit*. One writer at *Die Frankfurter Zeitung* praised its "exemplary objectivity," and another writing in *Der Konfektionär* noted: "This is a pioneering display of objectivity, one that had to suffer the mistrust accorded – justifiably, often enough – to exhibitions. It is all the more gratifying for the Frankfurt Board of Trade that it is able to present a complete, surveyable picture of the wool and

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<sup>428</sup> McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 21.

<sup>429</sup> "Die Textilschau „Von der Faser zum Gewebe“ möchte den Ausstellungen zugezählt werden, die auf dem nüchternen Boden der Sachlichkeit aufbauen." Forward to *Ausstellung vom 21. Sept. bis 10. Oktober 1926. Von der Faser zum Gewebe: Wolle und Baumwolle* (Frankfurt am Main: R. Th. Hauser & Co., 1926), 7.

<sup>430</sup> "Sie wird den Annalen der Ausstellung der Sachlichkeit ohne Frage eine bleibende Stellung haben." *Von der Faser zum Gewebe*, 8.

cotton industry.”<sup>431</sup> The clarity and precision with which Reich isolated the products, materials, and machinery in this exhibition would become a trademark of her design for roughly the next ten years, as critics, responding to her work, interpreted it as being both a product of *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

### **The Cladded Café: Precedents in Nineteenth Century Architectural Discourse**

Indeed, reviewers regularly invoked *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in their discussions of *Die Mode der Dame*. Underpinning these references is a recurrent tension between two disparate agendas, represented by values like beauty, elegance, and artfulness, on the one hand, and sobriety, functionality, and simplicity, on the other. For instance, when Herzog called the *Café* and larger exhibition examples of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, she also noted how the café chairs, designed by Mies, combine “functionality and beauty,” as they were arranged within an enclosure of silk that fell “simple and sober [*sachlich*]” from a shining structure.<sup>432</sup> In addition, a commentator in *Seide* began his review of the exhibition by describing Mies and Reich’s success in enhancing the functional with something more, something artistic: “Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich have let here a special show come into existence within the entire exhibition, which exemplarily unifies functionality with originality and artistic taste.”<sup>433</sup> The reviewer also remarked on the “astounding” transformation of the “sober radio hall” with fabric that veiled the otherwise “functional building,” praising, moreover, the exhibition’s “artful” creative direction.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Cited in Droste, “Lilly Reich,” 52. “Frankfurter Herbstmesse,” *Die Frankfurter Zeitung* (September 27, 1926) and *Der Konfektionär* 77 (1926): p. 5.

<sup>432</sup> Herzog, “Die Berliner ist Mode!”

<sup>433</sup> “Mies van der Rohe und Lilly Reich haben hier innerhalb der Gesamtausstellung eine Sonderschau erstehen lassen, die Zweckmäßigkeit mit Originalität und künstlerischem Geschmack in vorbildlicherweise vereinigt.” “Die Ausstellung ‘Die Mode der Dame,’” 317.

<sup>434</sup> “Die Ausstellung ‘Die Mode der Dame,’” 317.

These responses suggest that *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* involved balancing beauty and function, two terms with which *Werkbund* designers and architects alike grappled. In order to be commercially viable, functionality and simplicity in design rarely stood on their own, as these reviews suggest. Otherwise too harsh, cold, or sterile in isolation, *Sachlichkeit* required a manner of softening in consumer culture. By appealing to popular conceptions of beauty, artfulness, or good taste, writers, utilizing *Sachlichkeit*, summoned the kind of subjective stylistic benchmarks that proponents of *Sachlichkeit* had been weary of since the term's emergence as an antidote to fashion and its inauthentic styles. Even though *Sachlichkeit* had originally set itself against fashion's rapid stylistic changes, *Sachlichkeit*, which was now often used interchangeably with "*Neue Sachlichkeit*," had acquired a fashionability in spite of itself.

Also recurring in reviews of *Die Mode der Dame* was the theme of "dressing" or *Bekleidung*. Opening her review of *Die Mode der Dame* with this evocative statement, Herzog wrote, "The gigantic exhibition hall of the Radio Tower at Kaiserdamm has gotten a new dress."<sup>435</sup> A journalist at the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* also declared that the iron construction of the radio tower exhibition halls had been transformed, now unrecognizable, after being "*umgekleidet*" (sheathed) in 8,000 square meters of golden foil and 10,000 meters of tulle.<sup>436</sup> Another commentator, writing in an article that was published in *Seide* before the exhibition's opening, anticipated the erection of "a large tent of silk fabrics" that would house a tea room.<sup>437</sup> Although this description inaccurately characterizes *Café Samt und Seide* as a tent, it nevertheless approaches a crucial aspect about the *Café*'s structure and materials. An essential architectural form, the tent comprises a supportive skeletal frame and cladding of animal skins or

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<sup>435</sup> Herzog, "Die Berliner ist Mode!"

<sup>436</sup> "Die Mode der Dame," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* (September 21, 1927).

<sup>437</sup> "Die Mode der Dame," *Seide* 5 (1927): 181.

woven fibers that enclose the frame and create the interior space. To be clear, the *Café*, with its disconnected enclosures, was not a tent, let alone a singular structure, but it did conjure the notion of cladding, a quality that, in conjunction with its context in a fashion exhibition, prompted these writers to invoke “sheathing” and “dressing” in relation to the architecture of the Berlin Radio Tower.

Gottfried Semper’s (1803-1879) texts on architectural cladding are key for understanding the significance of *Café Samt und Seide*. In 1851, while visiting the Great Exhibition in London at the Crystal Palace, Semper was struck by a display of a Caribbean hut (Figures 91 and 92).<sup>438</sup> The Crystal Palace and the exhibited goods staged inside of it were products of new technological advancements. Built from a state-of-the-art prefab system that implemented cast iron and glass plates, the Crystal Palace housed a marvelous array of consumer goods and exotic imports from around the world. For Semper, these goods represented the inauthenticity of style in the modern era, where industrial production coupled with consumer demands resulted in fashionable goods, whose appearance and ornamentation no longer communicated anything of their construction, materials, or use. Yet the *uralt* form of the Caribbean hut that Semper confronted stood out from these examples of ersatz style. Like the Crystal Palace itself, the hut seemed to crystallize the medium specificities of architecture that he codified in *Four Elements of Architecture*, which include: the hearth (a building’s heating and cooling), roof (a component symbolic of the carpentry that provides structural support through framing), enclosure (the

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<sup>438</sup> Gottfried Semper, “The Four Elements of Architecture,” in *The Four Elements of Architecture and other Writings*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 74-129. Gottfried Semper, “Science, Industry, and Art,” in *The Four Elements of Architecture and other Writings*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 130-167.

material that wraps around said framing), and foundation (the ground).<sup>439</sup> While looking to the past, Semper outlined a bold and progressive schema, challenging the historically dominant system of ground-up masonry in Europe, just as the innovative framing of the Crystal Palace had done.

In addition to identifying these four parts, Semper launched a materialist and evolutionary argument on style, locating its origins in material and technical necessities.<sup>440</sup> To start, the need for shelter and spatial divisions resulted in enclosures of woven or braided fibers, which, as Semper asserts, are the progenitors of textiles. Thus, the artistic branch of textiles came into existence as a solution to a fundamental material need. For Semper, however, the manipulation of these fibers to address a material concern or a structural necessity was not an end in and of itself. Woven textiles qua architectural enclosures fulfill another more elevated, symbolic function as a dressing or *Bekleidung*, which is responsible for the building's representational and artistic program. A structure wrapped in woven materials, the hut therefore inspired Semper's theory of cladding, or *Bekleidungstheorie*. Conveying significance in both sartorial and architectural contexts, the German "*Bekleidung*" means cladding or sheathing as well as clothes or garment.

Semper expands on his *Bekleidungstheorie* in *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or, Practical Aesthetics* (1861), where he continued to examine the origins, functions, and artistic applications of cladding. Throughout the text, he scrupulously outlines the restricted role ornament is permitted to play in adorning surfaces. Any ornamentation evident on the cladding should be a necessary consequence of available techniques used to treat the raw materials

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<sup>439</sup> Semper, "The Four Elements of Architecture," 102.

<sup>440</sup> See: Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts, or, Practical Aesthetics*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2004).

employed in the building's construction, and it must not disrupt the unity of the surface as a whole. As Semper concluded, stylistic correctness depended upon the adherence to these basic principles.<sup>441</sup> Consequently, incorrect style also betrays itself on the surface, like a disruptive eyesore. Semper explains:

...the principle of *surface ornamentation* arises from the basic idea of the *surface* as such and accordingly reaffirms it. At the same time, however, it follows from the uniformity of what the dressing encloses as a unity and a whole. The cover cannot present itself as undisturbed if the ornamentation on the enclosing surfaces seemingly prevents it from being a continuous spatial enclosure... These properties should at the same time be easily depicted or produced and should derive from the techniques first used in the production of such surface dressings (namely, textiles.)<sup>442</sup>

According to the architect, surface flourishes, therefore, may never exist for their own sake, but should only arise as an honest manifestation of the technical and material conditions that necessitated the production of the surface in the first place.

Semper's writings shaped subsequent debates involving figures like Alois Riegl (1858-1905), Otto Wagner (1841-1918), Richard Streiter, and August Schmarsow (1853-1936), who also sought to define style and architecture's medium specificities during a period when architecture's very existence as the mother of arts was being threatened by the rise of industrial engineering.<sup>443</sup> Semper's analysis of the Caribbean hut, as a prelude to modern architectural theory, was far from the final word in debates about architecture's status in the rapidly industrializing nineteenth century. It did, nonetheless, shed light on the relationship between material-technical necessities and functionality versus artistic and representational elements.

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<sup>441</sup> Semper, *Style*, 170-171.

<sup>442</sup> Semper, *Style*, 127-128.

<sup>443</sup> For example, see: Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1992). Otto Wanger, *Moderne Architektur: seinen Schülern ein Führer auf diesem Kunstgebiete* (Vienna: A. Schroll & Co., 1902). Harry Francis Mallgrave, ed., *Otto Wagner: Reflections on the Raiment of Modernity* (Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1993). Richard Streiter, *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Aesthetik und Kunstgeschichte* (Munich: Delphin-Verlag, 1913). August Schmarsow, "The Essence of Architectural Creation," in *Empathy Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1993), 281-297.



These are precisely the disparate agendas that informed the critical reception of both *Die Mode der Dame*'s staging and the *Café*. Nearly eighty years after Semper published *Four Elements*, Mies and Reich executed the *Café Samt und Seide*, referencing through its cladded, roofless, and disjointed form, the textile-oriented conceptual underpinnings of Semper's *Bekleidungstheorie*.

Consistent misinterpretations of Semper's texts through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have contributed to his reputation as a crude technical materialist. Two contemporaneous responses to Semper's theories, published roughly forty years after *Style*, however, complicate this reading. The first is Riegl's canonical *Stilfragen* of 1893, and the second is Wagner's 1896 textbook, *Moderne Architektur*. Both of these texts contain discussions of Semper that challenge his supposed over-determined interest in the material motivations of style, but do so via divergent motives. Whereas Riegl attempts to rescue Semper from his materialist fate as he simultaneously challenges his theories, Wagner, advocating for architectural realism and pragmatism through the principles of construction, seeks to critique Semper, while cautiously building upon his ideas.

Riegl, whose rationale behind stylistic change in *Stilfragen* is the notoriously opaque concept of *Kunstwollen*, recognizes some idealism in Semper's theories.<sup>444</sup> Distinguishing Semper from his "numerous followers who subsequently modified the theory into its crassly materialist form," Riegl affirms Semper's ability to hold "truly artistic ideas" in tension with the

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<sup>444</sup> *Kunstwollen*, translated as artistic volition or will to art, refers to the creative will that defines formal and aesthetic developments of a given era and reflects the ideal relationships in a culture. See: Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993). Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). See also: Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations For a History of Ornament*, trans. Evelyn Kain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

“physical-materialist imitative impulse.”<sup>445</sup> He notes once, “It is nevertheless apparent from his wording that he was not discounting the intervention of a nonmaterialist factor.” And again, “The passages in *Der Stil* in which Semper stands in direct contradiction to the technical-materialist interpretation are, incidentally not at all rare.”<sup>446</sup> Riegl situates staunchly materialist readings of Semper in the context of a booming nineteenth-century scientific positivism, whose proponents, seeking to find “the causal relationship of all phenomena,” embraced a skewed version of Semper’s theories entirely at the expense of architecture’s artistic elements.<sup>447</sup>

By contrast, in the eyes of Wagner, Semper’s insistence on the art and the symbolic potential of architecture was in fact his downfall. *Moderne Architektur* contains a series of statements that embody the very stakes of Semper’s theories, but Wagner wields them against Semper for having not gone far enough in their application. Throughout the section on construction, for instance, Wagner aptly sums up the problems facing the modern architect in the industrial age. Before quoting Semper’s motto of 1834, “Art needs only one master: necessity,” as “ARTIS SOLA DOMINA NECESSITAS,” Wagner determines, “need, purpose, construction, and idealism are...the primitive germs of artistic life.”<sup>448</sup> Shortly thereafter, Wagner shifts the rhetorical balance of the terms comprising these primitive germs, with construction now rising to the top:

It is Semper’s undisputed merit to have referred us to this postulate in a somewhat exotic way in his book *Der Stil*. Like Darwin, however, he lacked the courage to compete his theories from above and below and had to make do with a symbolism of construction, instead of naming construction itself as the primitive cell of architecture.<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, 18.

<sup>446</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, 24.

<sup>447</sup> Riegl, *Problems of Style*, 18.

<sup>448</sup> Wagner, *Moderne Architektur*, 91.

<sup>449</sup> Wagner, *Moderne Architektur*, 93.

For Wagner, the issue with Semper was his insistence on what Wagner deemed the “symbolism of construction.” Rather than insisting on construction alone as the mechanism driving the development of style, Semper was satisfied with using construction as a symbol for his materially motivated theory of style. Wagner’s criticism represents an ironic backlash against Semper as an architect who was soft on construction, despite his reputation for being a crass materialist.

Riegl’s and Wagner’s references to Semper elucidate a key tension in contemporaneous thinking about the ideal balance between need and utility versus art and beauty in modern architecture. That Semper went too far for some and not far enough for others in his thinking about construction and art paints a picture of the crisis facing architecture as an art amidst the tremendous changes spurred on by the scientific spirit and technological advancements of the nineteenth century. From the end of the nineteenth century through the Weimar period, debates about the relationship between a building’s construction and purpose, along with its artfulness or decorative program, comprising its formal beauty, continued to rage under the auspices of terms like *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit*. In early twentieth century architectural discourse, the privileging of the functional or constructive elements in a building did not abolish artistic qualities, but rather reoriented aesthetics around the social and material realities of the building’s construction and use.

Similarly, Semper’s search for stylistic truth in technical, material necessities in the mid-nineteenth century did not result in the denial of the symbolic function of architecture as an art form. Through his *Bekleidungstheorie*, he expresses an idealistic attitude about art’s dependence on and transcendence beyond construction. The theory, after all, calls attention to the external dressing of the essential structure that communicates some symbolic value above and beyond its

material and technical requirements. The *Bekleidung* is the artful aesthetic layer that masks or veils tectonic necessities, but only when the use and manipulation of the materials is appropriate to its function and purpose in the first place. Herein lies Wagner's contention with the "symbolism of construction." Rather than emphasizing the tectonic core, and leaving it at that, Semper dresses it up. He likens the dynamic of *Bekleidung* to the spectacular installations of festive structures, whose decorations of tapestries, trophies, garlands, and festoons adorn scaffolding built for special occasions.<sup>450</sup> In an oft-quoted footnote from *Style*, Semper reveals the stakes of the communicative, fantastical role of *Bekleidung* through particularly evocative language:

Every artistic creation, every artistic pleasure presumes a certain carnival spirit, or to express it in a modern way, the haze of carnival candles is the true atmosphere of art. The destruction of reality, of the material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol, as an autonomous human creation. Let us forget the means that must be used to achieve a desired artistic effect, and not blurt them out and thus woefully forget ourselves.<sup>451</sup>

With this statement, Semper pronounces that art commands a spirit of fantasy and illusion, perceived in the gauzy light of carnival candles. Yet, this theatricality, wherein the material realities are downplayed for the sake of artfulness, requires the disciplined handling and appropriate application of materials. The result is paradoxical – material truth begets architectural artifice at its finest. Consequently, Semper's argument, at once revolves around and surpasses construction, the most essential part of the building.

The ongoing debate about a necessary structural core and its artful treatment did not begin with Semper. He appropriated the conceptual categories in his theory from the Berlin architect and archeologist Karl Bötticher (1806-1889) and his *Tektonik der Hellenen* (1844-

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<sup>450</sup> Semper, *Style*, 249.

<sup>451</sup> Semper, *Style*, 438-439, n. 85.

1852).<sup>452</sup> Taking the Greek temple as his primary object, Bötticher identified two main formal components of a building – the “core-form” (*Kernform*), which refers to the necessary, static constructive and functional aspects, and the “art-form” (*Kunstform*), meaning the aesthetic treatment of the core-form or its representational dressing. Bötticher and Semper both aimed to parse out the ways in which built forms express constructive truths through applied symbolically-charged formal languages. Semper, writing a few years after Bötticher, conceptualized this relationship with the terms “structural-technical” and “structural-symbolic,” the corollaries of *Kernform* and *Kunstform* respectively.<sup>453</sup> Accordingly, it is Semper’s notion of *Bekleidung* that functions on a structurally symbolic level, as it communicates the fundamental purpose of a vertical spatial enclosure, all the while veiling these base “structural-technical” obligations through art and representation.

Indebted to Bötticher’s theories, the bipartite structure of Semper’s arguments fell out of favor by the end of the 1800s. Turn of the century architects like Wagner, Streiter, Adolf Loos, and Muthesius theorized architecture in terms of need and function in order to formulate an architectural realism based in material realities, ridding, as a consequence, architecture of its unnecessary ornaments and superficial flourishes.<sup>454</sup> As architects struggled to justify their

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<sup>452</sup> Karl Bötticher, *Die Tektonik der Hellenen* (Berlin: Ernst & Korn, 1874). According to Mallgrave, Semper notes indicate that he read Bötticher’s *Tektonik der Hellenen* in December 1852. See Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 219-227.

<sup>453</sup> For example, Semper writes, “Among these ancient and traditional formal elements of Hellenic art, none is of such profound importance as the *principle of dressing and incrustation*. It dominated pre-Hellenic art and by no means lessened or languished as part of the Greek style, but survived in highly *spiritualized* fashion, serving beauty and form alone, in a sense more *structural symbolic* than *structural-technical*.” Semper, *Style*, 243.

<sup>454</sup> For example, see Loos’ response to Semper’s theories, as he comments on the crisis facing the architect conceived as an artist above his imitators, the surrogates of building, or mere architects. “The Principle of Cladding” *Neue Freie Presse*, September 4, 1898. Reprinted in

special status in the face of rising industrialization and its engineer aesthetic, it was difficult to defend a conception of architecture, like Semper's, wherein the critical intervention of the architect is embodied in a concept, *Bekleidung*, which connotes an external, symbolic dressing. Fin-de-siècle architects, who sought to come to terms with their changing professional landscape, thusly renegotiated the relationship between function and beauty. By focusing on function and structural necessities as the means through which the beauty of a building would emerge, these architects dispensed with the notion that artfulness was acquired by adding decorations.

August Schmarsow, one of the many Semper detractors in the late-nineteenth century, critiqued Semper's *Bekleidungstheorie* because it "lead[s] to superficiality."<sup>455</sup> In his 1893 text, "The Essence of Architectural Creation," Schmarsow abandons the tectonic/symbolic binary that Semper perpetuated in his writing.

We fare no better when we ask thoughtful architects; they call architecture an "art of dressing [*Bekleidungskunst*] and view their activity as little more than superficial composition of a purely technical and decorative kind, the pasting up of inherited styles on the framework of a functional construction, during which process even the best of them is at a loss to summon up any creative enthusiasm."<sup>456</sup>

Although Semper's *Bekleidungstheorie* proceeds from the appropriate use of materials according to a building's function and its context, for Schmarsow, the theory still holds the tectonic too much apart from the decorative, leaving the latter to be "pasted up" or added on like an accessory. The quest to define the essence of architectural creation reveals this weakness of Semper's formula, which, according to Schmarsow, results in another, even worse consequence. Semper's tendency to separate the structural-symbolic register of monumental architecture from

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Adolf Loos, "The Principle of Cladding," in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900*, trans. Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982), 66-69.

<sup>455</sup> Schmarsow, "The Essence of Architectural Creation," 282.

<sup>456</sup> Schmarsow, "The Essence of Architectural Creation," 282.

the Caribbean hut, for example, as a mere structural-tectonic solution, leads Schmarsow to conclude that Semper “throw[s] out the baby with the bathwater.”<sup>457</sup>

From the binaristic theoretical structure of Semper’s *Bekleidungstheorie* emerges a judgment that ultimately denies the evolutionary connection between, as Schmarsow put it, “the sultan’s monumental palace” and “the hastily pitched tent of his ancestors.”<sup>458</sup> Instead, he asserts that the common denominator of all built forms is architecture’s function as a *Raumgestalterin*, meaning a “creatress of space.”<sup>459</sup> This conceptualization of architecture, he explains, accommodates the fluidity of life, conveys “kinaesthetic sensations,” and challenges the notion that a built environment is a “cold, crystalized form.”<sup>460</sup> As Schmarsow embraces the more flexible concept of *Raumgefühl*, the sense of space that motivates all architectural creation, he attenuates anxieties about the rigidity and coldness of buildings theorized as pragmatic tectonic masses, which are then subsequently treated or dressed artistically. Schmarsow’s emphasis on the flexibility of space enables a holistic, human-centric understanding of the built environment.

Writing three years later, Streiter was the first to employ the term “*Sachlichkeit*” as a corrective to the faddish rotation of historicist styles in architecture and design.<sup>461</sup> Much like Semper with his materialism, Streiter locates the origins of form in rooted, community-based necessities. As a matter of fact, Streiter formulated his notion of architectural *Sachlichkeit* in

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<sup>457</sup> Schmarsow, “The Essence of Architectural Creation,” 284-285.

<sup>458</sup> Schmarsow, “The Essence of Architectural Creation,” 285.

<sup>459</sup> Schmarsow, “The Essence of Architectural Creation,” 287.

<sup>460</sup> Schmarsow, “The Essence of Architectural Creation,” 296, 291.

<sup>461</sup> Mallgrave cites Streiter’s 1896 essay “Aus München,” *Pan* 2.3 (1896): 249 – “*Realismus in der Architektur, das ist die weitgehendste Berücksichtigung der realen Werdebedingungen eines Bauwerks, die möglichst vollkommene Erfüllung der Forderungen der Zweckmäßigkeit, Bequemlichkeit, Gesundheitsförderlichkeit, mit einem Wort: die Sachlichkeit.*” See: Harry Francis Mallgrave, “From Realism to Sachlichkeit: The Polemics of Architectural Modernity in the 1890s,” in *Otto Wagner: Reflections on the Raiment of Modernity*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1993), 292, note 40.

1898 in a sixty-page critique of Wagner's *Moderne Architektur*.<sup>462</sup> For Streiter, Wagner's insistence on construction was too practical in its over-determined application of "straightforward *Sachlichkeit*."<sup>463</sup> While *Sachlichkeit* embodied restraint and functionality, it was, as Streiter promised, not at all incompatible with "artistic perfection."<sup>464</sup> Architects who adhered to *Sachlichkeit* safeguarded their work from the whims of fashion, but did not jeopardize the deeper resonances of architecture fulfilling one of its functions as an art form. Streiter, employing *Sachlichkeit* in opposition to the superficial stylistic changes of the industrial era, argued that the term conveyed a sense of practicality, sobriety, straightforwardness, and even realism. Underscoring the relationship between *Sachlichkeit* and realism, Streiter wrote:

*Realism* in architecture is the comprehensive consideration of the real constituents of a building, the most complete fulfillment of the demands of functionality, comfort, and health—in one word: practicality [*Sachlichkeit*]. But this is not all. Just as realism in poetry views as one of its central tasks the delineation of character in relation to its milieu, so the parallel program in architecture sees as its most desirable goal of artistic truth the development of the character of a building not only out of the determination of its needs but also from the milieu—from the qualities of local materials and from the environmentally and historically conditioned atmosphere of the place [*Stimmung der Oertlichkeit*].<sup>465</sup>

With this, Streiter assures that the application of *Sachlichkeit*, a principle of architectural realism, will not forgo artistic truths, as long as the built form is shaped by its local and historical conditions.

In his 1902 *Style-Architecture and Building Art*, Muthesius was also careful to distinguish between the strict *Sachlichkeit* of engineering and a kind of *Sachlichkeit* in the art of design and building that results from the correct usage of architectural forms according to use

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<sup>462</sup> See: Richard Streiter, "Architektonische Zeitfragen," in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Aesthetik und Kunst-Geschichte* (Munich: Delphin, 1913), 55-149.

<sup>463</sup> Mallgrave, "From Realism to *Sachlichkeit*," 298.

<sup>464</sup> Richard Streiter, "Das deutsche Kunstgewerbe und die englisch-amerikanische Bewegung," in *Richard Streiter: Ausgewählte Schriften zur Aesthetik und Kunst-Geschichte* (Munich: Delphin, 1913), 12. Also quoted in Mallgrave, "From Realism to *Sachlichkeit*," 294.

<sup>465</sup> Stanford Anderson, *Style-Architecture and Building-Art: Transformations of Architecture in the Nineteenth Century and its Present Condition*, by Hermann Muthesius, trans. Stanford Anderson (Los Angeles: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 16. Originally in Streiter, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 94.



and local necessities. Through the treatise, Muthesius voiced the architectural community's mounting concerns about the inauthentic styles of architecture and design in the age of industrialized production. The consumer goods of industry were poor imitations of historicist styles that evidenced no logical connection to local technologies or materials. Lamenting ornament for ornament's sake, Muthesius advocated for reform by collaborating with industry. His goal was to reintroduce quality and honesty in the creation of straightforward, *sachlich* design products. As Schwartz has shown, Muthesius' *Sachlichkeit* had less to do with functionalism and more to do with, "the avoidance of form as fashion."<sup>466</sup> Muthesius' analysis of *Sachlichkeit*, both as an aesthetic and ethos towards design, relegates fashion to the realm of falsification and "style mongering."<sup>467</sup>

The terms in the title of Muthesius's book "style-architecture," which he set in opposition to "building-art," reflect a conflict between historicism and the principle of *Sachlichkeit*. Whereas style-architecture, according to Muthesius, was fueled by an intoxicating "spell of historical styles, sustaining the pretensions of the bourgeoisie," building-art, on the other hand, embodied the simplicity and rationality of *Sachlichkeit*, resulting in built form for the honest man.<sup>468</sup> "Ban[ning] completely the notion of style," Muthesius maintained that *Sachlichkeit* would revitalize the fields of design and architecture, freeing practitioners from the superficial changes of the commercially-driven world of fashion.<sup>469</sup> "The goal," he explains, "remains sincerity, straightforwardness (*Sachlichkeit*), and a purity of artistic sensibility, qualities that

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<sup>466</sup> Schwarz, *The Werkbund*, 41-42.

<sup>467</sup> Muthesius, *Style-Architecture*, 81.

<sup>468</sup> Muthesius, *Style-Architecture*, 83.

<sup>469</sup> Muthesius, *Style-Architecture*, 81.

avoid all secondary considerations and superficialities, so that one can be fully dedicated to the real problem of the time.”<sup>470</sup>

Moving forward in time roughly twenty years, it is evident that the themes emerging from nineteenth-century architectural discourse informed Mies’ practices. In Semper-like fashion, Mies examined building types like huts and tents of indigenous cultures as a means to theorize the thoroughly modern “skin and bone” architecture of the glass skyscraper (Figure 93).<sup>471</sup> When he delivered the lecture “Solved Tasks: A Challenge for our Building Industry” in 1923, Mies implored his audience to embrace a “new attitude toward building” that foregrounded rationality, functionality, and truthfulness.<sup>472</sup> Rejecting historicism as “dishonest, stupid and insulting,” Mies instead proposes building in accordance with immediate needs as indigenous people who erected tents and huts of snow and leaves had done.<sup>473</sup>

According to Mies, these structures were exemplary because they revealed an immediate correspondence between form and function. They, furthermore, provided a model for his glass skyscraper and office building, where:

The materials are concrete, iron, glass.  
Ferroconcrete buildings are essentially skeleton structures.  
Neither pastry nor tank turrets. Supporting girder construction with a nonsupporting wall. That means skin and bone structures.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Muthesius, *Style-Architecture*, 100.

<sup>471</sup> Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, “Solved Tasks: A Challenge for Our Building Industry,” in *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, ed. Fritz Neumeyer, trans. Mark Jarzombek (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 243. As documented in *The Artless Word*, “This lecture was given at a public meeting of the Bund Duetscher Architekten, Brandenburg District (Berlin), on December 12, 1923.

<sup>472</sup> Mies, “Solved Tasks,” 243.

<sup>473</sup> Mies, “Solved Tasks,” 243.

<sup>474</sup> Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, “Office Building,” in *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, ed. Fritz Neumeyer, trans. Mark Jarzombek (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 241. Manuscript of August 2, 1923

Here “skin and bone structure” meant, for Mies, that a skeleton or frame, providing the structural support, is wrapped, clad, or enclosed in order to create non-supporting walls in the manner of a skin. His skyscraper is not fundamentally incompatible with Semper’s *Bekleidung*, the textile-inspired skin or wrapping of the structure. This motif is repeated in his and Reich’s *Café*, wherein a metal frame provided the skeleton that the architects hung with a skin of velvet and silk.

Three years after the exhibition *Die Mode der Dame*, Mies penned a response to a survey in the *Duisburger Generalanzeiger* regarding the question as to whether the “modern building style [will] be decorative again.”<sup>475</sup> His text, “Build Beautifully and Practically! Stop This Cold Functionality” refers to the very conflict that had been raised by architects like Semper, Wagner, and Streiter in the nineteenth century. In it, Mies addresses the crisis of *Sachlichkeit* that caused “the artistic,” to be “short-changed” by functionality.<sup>476</sup> He then explains that new conditions and technologies should shift modern notions of beauty away from idealism, and subsequently reorient them towards material realities instead:

...we will arrive at a new type of beauty. That we will ever again befriend “beauty per se,” however, I find unlikely. But how does a medieval sentence so nicely say it? “Beauty is the radiance of truth!” Yes, in the final analysis beauty is coupled to truth, it does not float around in the air but is attached to things and irrevocably connected to the forms of the real world. Real truth therefore will only be attained by those who work with a mind open to reality.<sup>477</sup>

For Mies, building directly in response to the practical needs of today was a means to a kind of architectural realism, whose beauty still required having “more than the immediate purpose in

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<sup>475</sup> Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, “Build Beautifully and Practically! Stop This Cold Functionality,” in *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, ed. Fritz Neumeyer, trans. Mark Jarzombek (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 307. Originally published in the *Duisburger Generalanzeiger* 49 (Sunday, January 26, 1930): 2.

<sup>476</sup> Mies, “Build Beautifully and Practically!” 307.

<sup>477</sup> Mies, “Build Beautifully and Practically!” 307.

mind.”<sup>478</sup> A solution to “cold functionality” could be found in the understanding that beauty and practicality were not necessarily mutually exclusive in modern architecture.

The *Café*'s form and appearance suggest that Reich and Mies, building upon these ideas, wanted to balance material beauty and functionality together. Rather than applying ornaments, they emphasized the materiality of the fabric and metal rails as serving both decorative and structural purposes. This allowed both the *Café*'s construction and its aesthetic qualities to be on display, while serving a socio-spatial function within the exhibition. The exhibited fabrics in the *Café Samt und Seide* and the larger exhibition *Die Mode der Dame* were supposed to offer visitors a real sense of their texture, appearance, and applications. Even as the textile enclosures of the *Café* were pragmatically cloaked over the sober metal supports, they also seem to be magically gravity defying. Avoiding the cold functionality that Mies would later decry, the *Café*, in its supposed truthfulness, was simultaneously seductive and fantastical.

Although the *Café* exhibits a straightforward use of materials, it also achieves a sense of theatricality, both revealing and hiding views of the exhibition. Art historian Marianne Egger has commented on the theatrical function of the *Café*'s curtains, writing that,

“...[it] initiated a new level of “peek-a-boo” in café society’s ritual of seeing and being seen... The curtains existed to be pulled—to be opened, and closed, again and again—in an action that transcends mere utilitarian function to enter the realm of ritual; their actual “functional” abilities to provide true privacy, particularly aural, are specious at best.”<sup>479</sup>

The curtains’ opening and closing evokes Semper’s ur-function of woven materials as spatial dividers. Similar to Semper’s *Bekleidung*, the curtain walls reference their essential functions as adaptable vertical enclosures, but they also mask this base purpose through their greater symbolic function, setting the stage for the scopophilic dynamics of consumption in the public

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<sup>478</sup> Mies, “Build Beautifully and Practically!” 307.

<sup>479</sup> Marianne Egger, “Divide and Conquer,” 77.

sphere. Even if the curtain walls of the *Café* could not actually be opened and closed, they were, nonetheless, materially flexible, countering the rigidity of traditional architectonics.

While these fabric enclosure panels indeed harken back to the notion of *Bekleidung*, they also resonate with the ideas of Mies and Reich's contemporary, Siegfried Ebeling (1894-1963). In fact, Mies owned a copy of Ebeling's 1926 book *Space as Membrane* in which the author conceptualized the "breathing wall skin," an inorganic membrane-like enclosure forming, as Spyros Papapetros put it, "a permeable contour that grants a body its form and regulates the exchange with its environment."<sup>480</sup> In advancing his biologically-defined architecture, Ebeling viewed enclosures as membranes, analogues or extensions of human skin, that filter and harness a dynamic flow of interior and exterior environmental conditions.<sup>481</sup> This theory, he explained, rejects the outdated representational drive of architecture, bound to concepts like "beauty, religion, the desire for power, civic authority" and reconfigures it around the "skin or membrane between the exterior space and the dimensions of the body" as a means to benefit "a flesh-and-blood human being who is in full possession of a boundlessly expanding sensuality."<sup>482</sup> Similarly, the curtain walls of the *Café* were both malleable and sensuous, shaping a dynamic, socially-charged space, whose membrane, velvet and silk, corresponds to clothing, which functions as the social skin of humans residing inside of it.

As modern architects in 1927, Reich and Mies inherited the terms of the debates outlined above. Much like the texts by these nineteenth- and twentieth-century figures, the *Café* itself exhibits an attempt on the part of Reich and Mies to articulate the core constructive elements of architecture without entirely sacrificing its artful and sensuous qualities. The *Café*'s abstract,

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<sup>480</sup> Siegfried Ebeling, *Space as Membrane*, ed. Spyros Papapetros, trans. Pamela Johnston (London: Architectural Association, 2010), XV, 8.

<sup>481</sup> Papapetros, Introduction to *Space as Membrane*, XV.

<sup>482</sup> Ebeling, *Space as Membrane*, 9-10.

barebones structure and suspended fabrics of velvet and silk render this history of architecture through the lens of Semper's *Bekleidungstheorie*. The cases of Semper and the others that followed him indicate a reorientation of values in building practices since the nineteenth century. By shifting their attention towards architecture's material necessities and functional concerns, architects upheld the higher function of architecture as an art in the age of industry. In this way, the *Café*, a pithy representation of *Bekleidungstheorie* embodies Reich and Mies' continuation of Semper's struggle to define authentic style by negotiating between the functional and the beautiful.

### ***Materialienschau: Lilly Reich's Material Installations, 1927-1934***

As much as Reich and Mies quote Semper's architectural elements in the *Café*, they also isolate them to the point that the *Café* itself evades the concreteness of architecture altogether. This disconnected abstract quality is consistent with aspects of Reich's work with Mies, including the *Werkbund* exhibition *Die Wohnung* at the *Weissenhofsiedlung* in Stuttgart (1927), the International Exposition at Barcelona (1929), *Die Wohnung unserer Zeit* (The Dwelling in Our Time) at the German Building Exhibition (1931), and *Deutsches Volk, Deutsche Arbeit* (1934). These projects further demonstrate Reich's distinctive strategies in displaying raw materials in sleek serial ensembles so as to convey their essential qualities. Keeping with her *Werkbund* training, Reich consequently rejected mannequins, narratives, and figurative elements staged in fictitious settings because these detracted from the realism of her displays.<sup>483</sup> Through her exhibition design work, Reich emphasized truth in materials to the point of an exaggerated abstractness. The notion of a material show or "*Materialienschau*," the title of her installation at the 1931 exhibition *Die Wohnung unserer Zeit*, therefore, best characterizes Reich's approach to

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<sup>483</sup> de Costa Meyer "Cruel Metonymies," 161-189.

design. In all of these projects, Reich, giving priority to the materiality of the objects on display, encourages visitors to take in their appearance and tactile qualities without the aid of narratives or additional props.

For example, Reich and Mies's first collaboration was the design for halls four and five at the 1927 *Werkbund* exhibition *Die Wohnung*, which housed the displays for the Cologne Plate-Glass Manufacturers and the German Linoleum Works. In the plate-glass displays of hall four, Reich installed examples of etched, clear, olive green, and gray sheets of glass in a living room, a dining room, and a workroom, distinguishing the spaces from one another through the use of different colors of linoleum floors and plate glass walls.<sup>484</sup> A photograph of hall five, solely dedicated to linoleum, depicts white walls with the words "DEUTSCHE LINOLEUM WERKE AG" extending past the corner of the room, whose bold upper-case typography had been designed by Willi Baumesister (Figure 85).<sup>485</sup> Below the text, samples of linoleum in various shades and patterns are mounted to the wall. On the floor, which was covered by three different types of linoleum, are stacks of more linoleum samples propped on wood blocks and concrete slabs, all of which sit atop a minimal black rectangular surface.

Two years later, at the International Exposition in Barcelona, Reich acted as the artistic director of twenty-five individual installations in nine exhibition halls that held an assortment of products from over 300 companies.<sup>486</sup> She and Mies were responsible for the displays of the chemical, book, and silk industries, as well Hackerbräu beer.<sup>487</sup> In the installation for the Munich-based brewery, Reich lined the center of the back wall, anchored by the text "ACTIENGESELLSCHAFT HACKERBRÄU-MÜNCHEN," with two rows of white shelves

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<sup>484</sup> McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 25.

<sup>485</sup> Günther, *Lilly Reich*, 23.

<sup>486</sup> Günther, *Lilly Reich*, 24.

<sup>487</sup> McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 26.

holding bottle after bottle of beer, extending to the end of the adjacent wall on the right (Figure 94). On the opposite wall, she installed two pairs of shorter shelves at different heights. The serial display of the beer bottles frames an arrangement of more bottles, kegs, mugs and glasses, accented by Mies's furniture – 2 MR 10 chairs and one MR 20 chair, replete with MR stool and table. With this display, Reich achieves a visually striking seriality, as she stages beer in a sterile, modernist environment, evoking the rationalized factory where it had been bottled. Yet, perhaps unintentionally, the Hackerbräu installation is also humorous for presenting an alcoholic beverage en masse through a sober aesthetic, in contrast to its intoxicating effects on people.

For the textile installation at the International Exposition at Barcelona, Reich appeared to have recycled the strategies she employed in two projects from 1927, *Die Wohnung* and *Café Samt und Seide*. Referencing these prior installations, the designer draped pieces of fabric over metal railings that stand before colored glass panels in chromed frames (Figure 95). One lower, horizontal glass panel stands perpendicularly to another taller vertical partition, and together, they frame the individual displays within the large room. Behind them are two familiar structures, comprising chrome rails draped with what appears to be a heavier fabric like velvet. The first structure on the left bends in a semi-circular curve reminiscent of the *Café Samt und Seide*, and within it, at least four metal racks are draped with more fabric. Next to the semi-circular installation is a pole, the tallest feature in the room, from which four shorter rails protrude and are draped with long swathes of velvet in both light and dark colors.

In his review of Barcelona Exposition, the critic Fritz Neugass lauded the artistic direction of these displays for uniting such various exhibition materials through a “purely *sachlich*” ordering.<sup>488</sup> By forgoing all decorative means, he added, the German exhibition

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<sup>488</sup> Fritz Neugass, “Die Weltausstellung in Barcelona,” *Kunst und Künstler* 28.3 (1930): 122.



designs achieved this sense of clarity and a purity of style.<sup>489</sup> Also earning his praise was Mies' Pavilion, which according to Neugass, "enhances the cool *Sachlichkeit* of the industrial buildings," in its display of "beauty and refinement of the most precious materials."<sup>490</sup> His review echoes the reception of *Die Mode der Dame* and *Café Samt und Seide*, whose critics also praised the *sachlich* use of materials, as they positioned functionality and *Sachlichkeit* in a discursive tandem with beauty and refinement. Prompting these critical responses was the straightforward formal language of purity and precision upon which Reich continually drew as a means to highlight the material truths of the goods on display.

In 1931, Reich designed twelve displays under the title *Materialienschau* at *Die Wohnung unserer Zeit* within the *Deutsche Bauausstellung*.<sup>491</sup> Situated in the mezzanine of the second hall, this "Material Show" comprised examples of home-décor furnishings such as marble, wood, metal, floor covering, carpets, textiles, clocks, mass produced furniture, and glass. With her textile display, Reich returned to the methods that she employed at *Die Wohnung*, *Die Mode der Dame*, and the International Exposition at Barcelona, draping an array of textiles over minimal metal frames of varying heights and widths that divide the space and call attention to the various weights, colors, and textures of the fabrics (Figure 87).

As McQuaid has argued, Reich's treatment of the materials gives them the dual function of being the installation's content and the means for its spatial organization. This is evident in the photograph of her design for the wood exhibit at the *Deutsche Bauausstellung* (Figure 96).

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<sup>489</sup> Neugass, "Die Weltausstellung in Barcelona," 122.

<sup>490</sup> "Der deutsche Architekt Mies van der Rohe hat hier die kühle *Sachlichkeit* der *Industriebauten ergänzt durch Schönheit und Raffinement edelsten Materials.*" Neugass, "Die Weltausstellung in Barcelona," 122.

<sup>491</sup> In addition to the *Materialschau*, Reich also directed four other installations, which included "Apartment for a Married Couple," "Apartment for a Single Person," "Ground-Floor House, and "Store and Exhibition Room for Apartment Furnishings" for A. Wertheim. See: McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 26.

Arranged on the floor and perpendicular to the back wall, a row of untreated wood planks is enclosed on three sides by three, slightly taller stacks of timber. Behind this installation, Reich mounted numerous samples of wood veneer on the wall, framing the text that names the wood producer, Karl Friedländer of Berlin. Staging a contrast to the roughness of the wood, Reich also installed a display of marble panels, which together form a small enclosure. Six vertical slabs of marble rest on the floor, leaning against the wall to which they are affixed, while facing three additional slabs that, having been secured upright by a support on either side, stand perpendicular to the wall, one in front of the other. Finally, enclosing the space are more marble slabs, anchored to the floor and facing the back wall. Through this technique, Reich activates a dynamic juxtaposition between smooth marble and rough wood, as the distinct qualities of these materials play off one another, all the while providing an illusion of segmented space.

In refusing to illustrate the application and uses of the materials in a narrative-providing context, Reich, instead highlights the aesthetic qualities of individual material types, which are ultimately tied into a larger taxonomy of materials within the exhibition. Writing in *Die Form*, the journalist and communist politician, Alexander Schwab “wholeheartedly” praised Reich’s displays at the “Material Show:”

Here, one is not overwhelmed by the material. Everything is set up rationally and beautifully. Air and space in between, so that you can comfortably go through and look at each piece with enjoyment, whether it’s the clocks in the vitrines, whether it’s the fabrics, whether it’s the veneers or marble slabs. In this way, Hall II is an exhibition in itself within the greater Building Exhibition, and it is a special merit that one will not only be interested here, but also come to genuinely enjoy the exhibition materials.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> “Eine Leistung, der man ganz rückhaltlos beistimmen muß, ist die Aufstellung der Materialien und der Wohngeräte auf der Galerie unter Leitung von Lilly Reich. Hier wird man nicht von dem Material erdrückt. Alles ist vernünftig und schön aufgestellt. Dazwischen Luft und Raum, so daß man bequem durchgehen und mit Genuß jedes einzelne Stück betrachten kann, ob es die Uhren in den Vitrinen, ob es die Stoffe, ob es die Furniere oder die Marmorplatten sind. So ist die Halle II eine Ausstellung für sich in der großen Bauausstellung, und es ist ein besonderer Wert, daß man hier nicht nur interessiert wird, sondern zu einem wirklichen Genuß des Ausstellungsmaterials kommt.” Alexander Schwab, “Anmerkung zur Bauausstellung,” *Die Form* 6 (1931): 218.

It is notable that Schwab cites both the rationality and beauty evident in Reich's installations. According to him, her technique yields a comfortable, even pleasurable experience, wherein, rather than being overwhelmed, visitors take in the subtleties of individual objects, while also considering the wider array of materials presented throughout the entire exhibition.

Voicing a more critical view of the show, Ferdinand Eckhardt argued that the *Bauausstellung* failed to fulfill its "pedagogical task" in teaching average people about modern dwelling solutions.<sup>493</sup> Instead of enlightening curious visitors, the show bewildered a startling number of them, who began to "wander about, shaking their heads."<sup>494</sup> According to Eckhardt, the problem was that the exhibition, which was funded largely by public subsidies, boasted apartments and designs, including a ground-floor house by Mies and Reich that catered only to the rich man, who Eckhardt noted, "has, since time immemorial, built his apartment himself, adapting it to his individual requirements and his personal taste."<sup>495</sup> For this reason, he implored, "We do not need a dwelling exhibition for people, who have too much money."<sup>496</sup> Throughout the text, Eckhardt returns to the problem of luxury, snobbery, and the useless decorative styling of the exhibits from leading figures like Mies, Reich, Marcel Breuer, and Gropius.<sup>497</sup> Even the statistics about housing costs at the show were unrealistic from his perspective, suggesting that a person with a monthly income of 225 Marks could afford a four-room apartment with adjoining

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<sup>493</sup> Ferdinand Eckhardt, "Epilog zur Bauausstellung," *Die Weltbühne* 31 (August 4, 1931): 195.

<sup>494</sup> "Die Bauausstellung hätte eine große pädagogische Aufgabe gehabt. Es ist fast erschrecken zu sehen, wie viel Menschen Täglich dorthin kamen, um sich belehren zu lassen, und wie sie kopfschüttelnd herumirrten." Eckhardt, "Epilog zur Bauausstellung," 195-196.

<sup>495</sup> "Der reiche Mann hat sich von jeher seine Wohnung selbst gebaut, angepaßt seinen individuellen Anforderungen und seinem persönlichen Geschmack." Eckhardt, "Epilog zur Bauausstellung," 194.

<sup>496</sup> "Wir brauchen heute keine Ausstellung der Wohnung des Menschen, der zu viel Geld hat." Eckhardt, "Epilog zur Bauausstellung," 194.

<sup>497</sup> Eckhardt, "Epilog zur Bauausstellung," 195.

rooms at 45 Marks per month.<sup>498</sup> The show's supposed focus on luxury leads Eckhardt to pose the question, with which he concludes the article, "And where is the faithfulness to work and *Sachlichkeit*, of which we read so nicely in books?"<sup>499</sup>

Eckhardt's question suggests that the goals associated with *Sachlichkeit*, to be faithful to function and social requirements in architecture and design had been forgotten at the 1931 *Bauausstellung*. It is, therefore, fitting that Wilhelm Lotz, writing that same year about the *Bauausstellung* in *Die Form*, observed that the days of *Neue Sachlichkeit* were over, "The eye was looking for a harmonious form, it sought ornament. The best indication, we saw that the movement of *Neue Sachlichkeit* is over, was at the *Bauausstellung* in Berlin. The ornament prevails again."<sup>500</sup> In these two reviews, the critics, invoking *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* respectively, remark upon the absence and end of the principles associated with these two terms, observing the prominence of luxury and ornament that had taken their place at the *Bauausstellung*. It is likely that the authors of these reviews, though employing different terms, were ultimately describing the same development – that the anti-decorative aesthetic and egalitarian ethos of *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* had not been represented at the *Bauausstellung*.

Yet, for the critic and architect Adolf Behne (1885-1945), *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* were indeed distinct from one another. Already in 1926, Behne explained that the difference between the terms came down, in part, to a matter of medium. Painters, conjuring

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<sup>498</sup> Eckhardt, "Epilog zur Bauausstellung," 195.

<sup>499</sup> "Und wo ist die Werktreue und Sachlichkeit, von der wir so schönes in den Büchern lesen?" Eckhardt, "Epilog zur Bauausstellung," 196.

<sup>500</sup> "Das Auge suchte nach einer harmonischen Form, es suchte das Ornament. Das beste Beispiel, daß die Bewegung der neuen Sachlichkeit vorüber ist, haben wir an der Bauausstellung in Berlin gesehen. Das Ornament herrscht wieder vor." Wilhelm Lotz, "Zur Abwechslung," *Die Form* 10 (1931): 399.

*Neue Sachlichkeit*, confused painterly concreteness (*Gegenständlichkeit*) of figural representation, with the objectivity of architectural *Sachlichkeit*, which follows a “push to the *Sache* (thing, matter, object) itself.”<sup>501</sup> At the same time, he concedes that there exists a *sachlich* painting, one that employs colors not to depict objects, but rather, as constructivist painting demonstrates, treats color itself as “an object of its work, by achieving arrangements of color, which fulfill the law of color.”<sup>502</sup> This notwithstanding, Behne’s main point is that “the *Neue Sachlichkeit* is the old *Unsachlichkeit*,” meaning that artists, who create *Neue Sachlichkeit* works miss *Sachlichkeit* altogether through naturalistic representation, effectively inverting its principles under the label, *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

Returning to Reich, it is possible to arrive at a similar conclusion in light of the designer’s “material shows” and Herzog’s praise of the *Café Samt und Seide* as an exemplary manifestation of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Although the *Café*’s design emphasizes the literal material qualities of its fabric curtain walls, their overall presence is rather *unsachlich*. Large in scale and ubiquitous in the space, the fabric possesses a heightened and even stylish appearance, evocative of Behne’s description of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, which was, according to him, “brightly polished, [with a] dustless varnish, and severely stylized.”<sup>503</sup> Reich’s straightforward insistence on the fabric itself was *sachlich*, but within the context of the fashion exhibition, this *Sachlichkeit* served to promote *unsachlich* values, like fashionability, sensuousness, and luxury, which the show underscored through its displays of sartorial goods. Thus, the *Sachlichkeit* of the *Café* was a means to its reversal as *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a feature that Herzog celebrated. With her installation designs, Reich isolates the materiality of the objects on display under the pretense of

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<sup>501</sup> Adolf Behne, “Rundschau: Anton von Werner – Renaissance,” *Die Form* 6 (March 1926): 130.

<sup>502</sup> Behne, “Anton von Werner,” 130.

<sup>503</sup> Behne, “Anton von Werner,” 130.

*Sachlichkeit* in a way that actually undermines strict objectivity and makes a spectacle out of so-called material truths, hence the term *Materialienschau*.

Architectural historian Esther da Costa Meyer has argued that the outcome of Reich's approach is "the illusion of mediated unreferentiality."<sup>504</sup> Through her abstract modes of display, Reich obscures the industrial origins and commercial context of the goods, and thereby, according to da Costa Meyer, distances her work from the Werkbund's "romantic critique of capitalism."<sup>505</sup> On the problematic nature of Reich's designs, da Costa Meyer writes:

Reich ostensibly cut off all moorings with history, labor, capitalism, choosing to privilege the object over context and production process. Fabrics are aestheticized and presented in isolation from any environment that might recall use-value. All traces of labor and the social relations of production are elided.<sup>506</sup>

The scholar's argument is that Reich's exhibition techniques elevate the exterior material truths of the objects above the pressing material realities that shape people's lives and made the production of the objects possible in the first place. As a result, she concludes, Reich, "putting the aura back into mass-produced goods," runs the risk of fetishizing consumer products.<sup>507</sup>

The ideological implications of Reich's methods, as characterized by da Costa Meyer, become all the more apparent in the context of the 1934 Nazi-sponsored exhibition *Deutsches Volk – Deutsche Arbeit*. In collaboration with Mies, Reich designed the glass, mining, industrial and domestic ceramics, tiled stoves, and sanitary equipment exhibits, though neither Reich's nor Mies' names are mentioned in the exhibition catalogue, which was designed by Herbert Bayer.<sup>508</sup> Of note is Reich's installation for the glass industry, due to its sleek modernist appearance (Figures 97 and 98). Consistent with her previous projects, the exhibit comprised different

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<sup>504</sup> da Costa Meyer, "Cruel Metonymies," 168.

<sup>505</sup> da Costa Meyer, "Cruel Metonymies," 166.

<sup>506</sup> da Costa Meyer, "Cruel Metonymies," 168.

<sup>507</sup> da Costa Meyer, "Cruel Metonymies," 169.

<sup>508</sup> McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 35.

variations of the same material – planes of clear, frosted, striped, textured, slightly curved, and semi-circular glass – anchored by chromed metal supports and installed in serial formation.

Printed throughout the catalog of *Deutsches Volk – Deutsche Arbeit* are slick photographs illustrating the monumental scale and modernity of technological advancements in German industry, transportation, infrastructure, and building, contrasted with photographs showing pastoral scenes of agricultural laborers, who work the land in plain traditional clothing.

Accompanying essays like “The Importance of the Imperial Food Office” and “The New Face of German Work,” these images, for all their supposed realism as documents of life under National Socialism, aestheticize labor and production for propagandistic ends. Set in this context, Reich’s emphasis on the material of glass itself, here, is at once disconcerting and at odds with the Nazi’s aesthetic and exhibition strategies, which privileged figuration and clear narratives. By de-contextualizing materials in her displays, Reich not only makes an evocative statement about their dazzling formal qualities, but she also leaves them open to numerous functions, like representing the triumph of German industry under the Third Reich. At this moment in 1934, Reich, an independent and successful career woman, was still able and willing to produce work for a Nazi exhibition, but by 1937, her last official commission, a textile show for the *International Exposition of Arts and Techniques Applied to Modern Life* in Paris, had been rescinded by the regime.

Reich stayed in Germany through the thirties and the Second World War, but there is no evidence indicating that she officially joined the Nazi party. Still, she was instrumental in the *Werkbund* undergoing the process of *Gleichschaltung* in 1933, helping to coordinate the Nazi’s takeover of leadership. That same year, she also failed to voice opposition to the “Aryan clause,”

which barred Jews from the organization.<sup>509</sup> Later, she maintained ties with Nazi figures like Ernst Neufert, the architect appointed by Albert Speer to design a new housing standard for the regime.<sup>510</sup> With her business suffering under National Socialism, Reich, now receiving only a few smaller commissions, turned to teaching interior design and fashion during the war years. She died in Berlin in 1947, at the age of 62, just two years after she joined forces with former *Werkbund* members to reestablish the organization in 1945.<sup>511</sup>

Reich's "material shows" from the late twenties through the thirties, including the *Café*, prompted reviewers to comment on the striking material beauty of her designs that, as they continually noted, also conveyed a sense of clarity, precision, truthfulness, and rationality. These works epitomize the ongoing attempts in modern architecture to achieve formal beauty through constructive truths, rather than ornamentation. Through them, Reich presents the materials of construction as the surfaces that communicate architecture's artistic and pragmatic functions. At the same time, in spite of their concreteness and objectivity, these supposedly decontextualized designs are undeniably abstract and dependent on their context to convey meaning. Herein lies the weakness of Reich's approach. That her strategies for revealing truth through surface materiality were applicable, if for a short moment, in socially progressive *Werkbund* shows and *Nazi* exhibitions suggests they were, perhaps, too ideologically malleable.

### **Conclusion: *Neue Sachlichkeit* as the Material Style**

Although Behne had already rejected the term "*Neue Sachlichkeit*" by the mid-twenties, his ideas about *Sachlichkeit*, which he documented in *Der Moderne Zweckbau* (1926), *Neues Wohnen – neues Bauen* (1927), and in his introduction to *Max Taut: Bauten und Pläne* (1927),

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<sup>509</sup> da Costa Meyer, "Cruel Metonymies," 179.

<sup>510</sup> da Costa Meyer, "Cruel Metonymies," 179.

<sup>511</sup> McQuaid, "Lilly Reich," 40.



are useful for concluding this discussion on the *Café Samt und Seide*, its heightened material presence, and its connection to *Neue Sachlichkeit*. In these texts, Behne romanticizes *Sachlichkeit* as a social good in architecture, specifically warning against its conflation with the pedantic exactness found in *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting. In so doing, he provides a framework for thinking about where a positive *Sachlichkeit* ends and where a negative *Neue Sachlichkeit* begins.

As Behne explains in *Moderne Zweckbau*, the works of figures like Hendrik Berlage, Wagner, and Alfred Messel constitute a negative *Sachlichkeit*, through which they emphasized function in order to avoid the *Unsachlichkeit* of historicism, but nevertheless continued certain formalist principles, like the symmetrical axes of a ground plan.<sup>512</sup> On the contrary, architects working with a positive *Sachlichkeit*, Behne writes, depart from this old “stable equilibrium” dictated by the plan and achieve new, dynamic forms that “correspond better to our essence.”<sup>513</sup> Quoting Mies’ rejection of “aesthetic speculation, all doctrine, and formalism,” Behne, likewise, advocates for an architecture that renounces aestheticism, but not aesthetic concerns altogether.<sup>514</sup> Moreover, he insists, even the most *sachlich* of functionalists is a romantic, unlike the utilitarian, whose obsession with “purpose in a commonsensical way” impoverishes the humanity and social function of architecture.<sup>515</sup>

Behne argues along these lines again in *Neues Wohnen – neues Bauen*, addressing the misconception that *Sachlichkeit* is synonymous with “dryness, sobriety, a solution from

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<sup>512</sup> Adolf Behne, “The Modern Function Building,” trans. Michael Robinson (Santa Monica: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1996), 100.

<sup>513</sup> Behne, “The Modern Function Building,” 120.

<sup>514</sup> Behne, “The Modern Function Building,” 144.

<sup>515</sup> Behne, “The Modern Function Building,” 122-123.

calculating minds.”<sup>516</sup> “Oh no!,” he contends, “*Sachlichkeit* means quite simply a solution adjusted to the *Sache* [matter, subject, question],” defining the *Sache* to be a matter of both material needs and social relations. He concludes that, “To build *sachlich* means therefore to build social.”<sup>517</sup> Additionally, in *Max Taut: Bauten und Plänen*, Behne again emphatically corrects the false definition of *Sachlichkeit* as the “counterweight to the fantastical [*Phantastische*].”<sup>518</sup> Maintaining that it “is not a constraint of imagination [*Phantasie*], but rather its stimulus,” Behne writes, “*Sachlichkeit* is what we call that imagination, which works with things [*Sachen*], with exactitudes, with realities.”<sup>519</sup>

Following Behne, it can be said that whereas a negative definition of *Sachlichkeit* would read as a “rejection of ornament,” a positive one conveys that which *Sachlichkeit* achieves in the absence of such ornamentation. The key terms of Behne’s positive definition of *Sachlichkeit* evoke certain aspects of the *Café Samt und Seide*. A fantastical, yet straightforward and precise arrangement of materials, the *Café* comprises a dynamic social space, which, as critics noted, demonstrates its creators’ successful negotiation between the functional and the aesthetic. Complicating this argument, however, is Behne’s statement that “The new beauty is the beauty of the *Sache* [thing] itself,” which ensures “the strengthening of the collective consciousness.”<sup>520</sup> While Reich’s projects encapsulate the notion that “the new beauty is the beauty of the *Sache* itself,” the purpose that this beauty ultimately serves is left ambivalently open to the commercial and nationalistic interests defined by their exhibition contexts.

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<sup>516</sup> Adolf Behne, *Neues Wohnen, neues Bauen* (Leipzig: Hesse & Becker Verlag, 1927), 32-33.

<sup>517</sup> Behne, *Neues Wohnen, neues Bauen*, 33.

<sup>518</sup> Adolf Behne, introduction to *Bauten und Plänen*, by Max Taut (Berlin: F.E. Hübsch, 1927), 22.

<sup>519</sup> Behne, introduction to *Bauten und Plänen*, 22.

<sup>520</sup> Behne, introduction to *Bauten und Plänen* 15, 16.

Tellingly, this was the case for the *Café Samt und Seide* and the glass installation at *Deutsches Volk – Deutsche Arbeit*. Regarding the *Café*, Herzog attributed its traits to *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Putting aside the very real chance that Herzog chose the term without attending to the differences between *Neue Sachlichkeit* and *Sachlichkeit*, since there was ultimately no consensus about their meanings, her choice is nevertheless provocative. Hypothetically speaking, if the *Café* were indeed an example of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, then it would also reverse the principles of architectural *Sachlichkeit* as had Behne defined them, exploiting the aesthetics of objectivity primarily for commercial gains, rather than social progress. That Behne was so insistent on defining *Neue Sachlichkeit* in opposition to *Sachlichkeit* was, in part, an attempt to maintain the credibility of objectivity in architecture, while responding to the fashionability that diluted its significance over the course of the Weimar Republic.

Two drawings published in *Das Leben* and *Simplicissimus*, mocking *Sachlichkeit* and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in relation to fashion and femininity, represent the public perceptions about objectivity that Behne sought to counteract. The first cartoon, dating from 1933, depicts the severity and snobbishness of *Sachlichkeit*, showing an authoritative man banishing a whimsical female intruder (Figure 99). The second drawing, published seven years earlier in 1926, illustrates the close ties between *Neue Sachlichkeit* and material display in the context of painted portraiture, satirizing *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s appeal to the bourgeoisie (Figure 100). While one addresses architectural *Sachlichkeit* and the other provides commentary on painterly *Neue Sachlichkeit*, these two images capture extreme applications of the terms, both of which, in the end, represent the misuses of objectivity that Behne countered in his writing.

The bespectacled and bow-tied man in the 1933 drawing dismisses a girlish personification of spring. In a Berlin dialect, he hollers from the raised foundation of his

towering modernist monstrosity, “You, Miss Spring! Kindly pack up all your kitsch again and scam.”<sup>521</sup> Miss Spring’s cornucopia of wildflowers and lingering trail of butterflies are about to contaminate the sterile environment surrounding the man and the members of his entourage, all of whom epitomize the stereotypes associated with *Sachlichkeit*. At the top of the house, an intellectual-type crouches behind the ledge of a walkway and peers out at the confrontation in paranoia. One level below, a tight suited, monocle-sporting snob proceeds to look indignant, as two nearly nude bathing beauties wearing lipstick and cropped hair lean over the railing. Behind him a New Woman, wearing an ankle-length gown, reads an illustrated magazine. Next to her, a fashionable couple with boxing gloves has ceased their sparring to take in the commotion. The self-serious man and his cronies, including their dapper bearded terrier, scoff at the naïve Miss Spring with her floral garland and curly hair for bringing a new season, for commencing change. He definitively states, “Strict *Sachlichkeit* rules here!”<sup>522</sup>

Set in a landscape of rolling hills, the house is an assemblage of modernist architectural clichés. The building boasts curved and hard-edged corners, some with windows, and stairs replete with railings that meander up the building to a lookout tower. Here the signifiers of streamlined *Sachlichkeit* become exaggerated decorations, a parody of themselves. Its plain white façade and streamline forms notwithstanding, the building is ornate, overwrought in its supposed simplicity. There is, indeed, nothing strict about the entire scenario. In adhering to the principles of *Sachlichkeit*, architects safeguarded against the aesthetic superficiality and perennial changes of fashion that Miss Spring embodies in the cartoon. Yet, the man depicted

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<sup>521</sup> “*Sie, Fräulein Frühling! Packen Sie jefälligst Ihren ganzen Kitsch wieder ein und verduften Sie!*” *Das Leben* 33: 10 (April 1933): 9.

<sup>522</sup> “*Hier herrscht strenge Sachlichkeit!*” *Das Leben* 33: 10 (April 1933): 9.

here is blind to the contradiction engendered by the absurd exaggeration of his self-proclaimed strict *Sachlichkeit*.

The second drawing illustrates why *Neue Sachlichkeit*, for better or for worse, is advantageous in the practice of display. It depicts a curvaceous, middle-aged woman wearing a revealing slim dress, elaborate jewelry, and a youthful cropped coif. Stretching her legs away from an ornately carved wooden chair, she sits in a grand bourgeois parlor in front of an artist at his easel. She extends a plump index finger to draw attention to the bracelets on her right forearm, while showcasing the rings that squeeze her flesh. Her equally well-endowed benefactor-husband watches with authority over the portraitist's shoulder. The caption below indicates his reaction to the artist upon seeing the work, "In the handling of the face, I rely on your artistic imagination – with the pearls and stones, I would have asked for *Neue Sachlichkeit*."<sup>523</sup> In other words, the woman's less-than-average looks benefitted from the painter's artful impression of her face and figure, softening her appearance and thereby flattering them both. Still, the bourgeois man wished he had requested *Neue Sachlichkeit* when it came to the pearls and stones since it would have provided an objective spectacle of his material wealth.

Without using the term "*Neue Sachlichkeit*," Walter Curt Behrendt (1884-1945), in his 1927 treatise *The Victory of the New Building Style*, summarizes recent stylistic developments that seem to be related to the bourgeois man's understanding of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting, for it furnishes a view of materiality for its own sake. Yet, Behrendt's description could have also readily characterized Reich's exhibition design strategies:

But what the new architecture loses in artistic charm, it will more than compensate by the exactness and precision of its execution, the sharpness and accuracy of its lines, and the smoothness and tension of its forms. One can truly say that the new style is in a very distinct way, a *material style*, that is, a style that

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<sup>523</sup> "Bei der Behandlung des Gesichts verlasse ich mich auf Ihre künstlerische Impression – bei den Perlen und Steinen möchte ich um neue Sachlichkeit gebeten haben." Th. Th. Heine, "Berlin WW," *Simplicissimus* 31:30 (October 25, 1926): 387.

uses the material – be it steel, glass, ceramics, and so on – for the sake of its materiality or refined material beauty.<sup>524</sup>

Rather than underscoring its social significance as Behne would have done, Behrendt defines the new style formally, lauding its “refined material beauty.” As the analyses presented here demonstrate, Reich achieved with her *Materialienschaun*, including the *Café*, which Herzog called an exemplary manifestation of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, just what Behrendt describes here, “a material style that uses material...for the sake of its materiality.”

Through her installations, Reich stages, with great precision, the material specificities of individual forms in serial ensembles, wherein the inherent subtleties of each part inform an understanding of the greater whole. The *Café Samt und Seide* and the larger exhibition *Die Mode der Dame*, furthermore, show that by the end of the twenties, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, having become the named principle behind this effort to promote ladies fashion, also became the inverse of *Sachlichkeit*, a movement specifically intended to lobby against fashion. Reich’s goal to extract the essence of materials leads her to elevate commodities above earthly concerns, all the while fetishizing their rich materiality. In staging a spectacle of materials as such, Reich generates a paradox, wherein the evocative display of material truths is severed from the realities of market capitalism. The question then becomes: does the material style reify materials or open them up before audiences to a multitude of possible applications? Like the *Café*’s curtain walls, we might say that the answer is suspended from the railing in the tension between function and fashion.

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<sup>524</sup> Walter Curt Behrendt, *The Victory of the New Building Style*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 2000), 129.

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of the appearance of clothing and fabric in works associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit*, namely paintings of the New Woman by Dix, Schad, and Laserstein, as well as the design work of Reich, most notably the *Café Samt und Seide*, leads to the conclusion that *Neue Sachlichkeit* is a material style. In emphasizing objects as they stand in the physical world, divested of ornaments and subjective viewpoints, these artists advanced a supposedly objective realism in architecture and painting through the Weimar Republic, known as *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Even though *Sachlichkeit* originated in discussions about architecture before the First World War, it was nevertheless influential in the debates about *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which originally centered on painting, but eventually became pervasive in all corners of Weimar culture. The argument presented here was that these two approaches to objectivity, while being rooted in different media before and after World War One, both constitute attempts to be consistent with and represent the tangible material realities of modern life. Recognizing this fundamental connection and using it to analyze Weimar-era works enables a better understanding of the prominence of fashion and the richness of materiality in them.

Dix, Schad, Laserstein, and Reich exaggerated the appearance of surfaces like clothing and fabric as a means to respond to life in Germany after economic and political turmoil, which precipitated a culture of objectivity. In this way, *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the Weimar Republic embodied a means of representing humankind's wounded psyche in a visual language that did not take for granted the validity of subjective emotional values, whose power had been tapped

out after the atrocities of war. Turning to objectivity instead, *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists represented life by focusing on the objects that accumulated in a society experiencing an economic upturn and a crisis of subjectivity. In these works, objects like clothing, in particular, supplicate human interaction, even as they stand as a physical barrier shielding the subjects from one another and the viewer. Their heightened visual and material attributes illustrate how artists pushed objectivity beyond a strict *Sachlichkeit* and towards a *Neue Sachlichkeit* – a spectacle of material details.

That fashion and the representation of its surfaces underpin the concept of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the Weimar Republic necessitates more scholarly attention. A closer examination of the visual and material particularities in both *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting and architecture advances debates on strategies of realism across media. This approach is an important step in further validating fashion’s critical role in modern art. It shows fashion to be not only an important thematic and formal element in the realism of the twenties, but also a theoretical undergirding for Weimar-era debates on *Sachlichkeit*, which can be traced back to the late nineteenth century. The treatment of surface materiality in works by Dix, Schad, Laserstein, and Reich demonstrate the connections that sustain *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s inextricable, yet ambivalent ties to fashion.

As I have shown, critics and scholars have been understandably wary of the ties binding together *Neue Sachlichkeit* and fashion. A fashion spread from German *Harper’s Bazaar* will help illustrate, from a contemporary point of view, why the fashionability of *Neue Sachlichkeit* has been so vexing. The feature from October 2014 reimagined famous paintings of 1920s Germany. “Go Cabaret,” the lead states, “Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Beckmann, Otto Dix in POISONOUS COLORS, the artists of the Weimar Republic created genre scenes of their time.



This fall, their paintings inspired many a collection in Milan, Paris, or New York. And, of course, us as well.”<sup>525</sup> A playful ode to these iconic paintings, the spread is an affirmation of *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s enduring fashionability. Yet, by reducing these paintings into a fashionable formula, the photographs unintentionally reveal, through their commercial context of a glossy magazine and the model’s flat pantomiming, the value of the original paintings as powerful historical documents that register the complexities of a past moment in time.

Three well-known paintings by Dix, *The Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden* (1926), *Frau Martha Dix* (1923), and *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* (1925) (Figures 11, 40, and 62), were restaged and photographed for the issue (Figures 101-103). In the photographs, the redhead model is seen wearing contemporary designs by Céline, Chanel, Schiaparelli, and Tom Ford that harken back to the represented garments in the paintings. With crimson lips, pale eyes, and a pinned-up faux *bubikopf*, she poses, mimicking the comportment and gazes of Sylvia, Martha, and Anita. As if following instructions from the shoot director, “Put your hand there and bend your wrist like this,” the model forces her delicate features into the correct position. The key light illuminates the details of her costly garments and accessories, as it also casts shadows behind her onto a boldly colored backdrop. The styling and editorial team capture the “look” of a Dix woman by translating the portraits’ dramatic mood and sartorially-conscious visual languages into a scene featuring prohibitively expensive modern-day clothing.

In his objective, yet highly stylized portraits, Dix made fashion and the female figure conduits to convey the contradictory truths of modern life during the Weimar Republic. As the *Harper’s Bazaar* images suggest, the fashion industry, responding to Dix’s uncanny ability to

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<sup>525</sup> “Go Cabaret. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Beckmann, Otto Dix in GIFTIGEN FARBEN schufen die Künstler der Weimarer Republik ein Sittenbild ihrer Zeit. Für diesen Herbst inspirierten ihre Gemälde so manche Kollektion in Mailand, Paris oder New York. Und uns natürlich auch.” “Mode à la Dix, Kirchner & Co,” *Harper’s Bazaar*, October 2014, 148.

capture the material qualities of clothing and the unconventional beauty of the modern woman, pays homage to his mode of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting. When compared to the *Harper's Bazaar* photographs, however, it becomes clear that the paintings by Dix, which some critics have dismissed largely on the grounds of their fashionability, operate on an entirely different level than the average fashion photograph. Objects of the external material world, such as clothing, provided the means for artists like Dix to comment upon the larger social issues of class, gender, and sexuality without falling back on the spiritually-charged pictorial vocabulary that the expressionists had previously employed. This imagery in *Harper's Bazaar*, on the other hand, reproduces the look of historical paintings in order to enhance the appeal of contemporary clothing.

Even though they are inspired by Dix's depictions of life in the twenties, as the spread's lead indicates, the photographs fail to exhibit the tensions and unease evoked by *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, where subjects are rendered stony and garments become expressive. In treating Dix's portraits as a style, the photographs reify not only the clothing and the model, but also the original works of art. They are then perhaps all too objective in their aim to showcase the garments, without complication, as actual commodities to be purchased from Céline or Chanel. The Dix-inspired fashion images illustrate the logical conclusion of what Weimar-era critics disdained about *Neue Sachlichkeit* ninety years later. Yet, the differences between the photographs and the paintings, in terms of what they ask of the viewer, could not be any more apparent.

The present critique of the *Harper's Bazaar* images is by no means a generalized approbation of fashion photography. For, there are many cutting-edge representations of fashion

that challenge sociopolitical norms and reflect critically on history.<sup>526</sup> This discussion should not be misunderstood as the assertion of painting's superiority over fashion photography. Instead, it is necessary to consider the divergent ways in which artists, whether photographers or painters, represent fashion and charge those representations with different kinds of sociopolitical, aesthetic, or even sartorial commentaries. The comparison between Dix's paintings and the Dix-inspired fashion photographs is a reminder that the representation of fashion in an image guarantees neither a critical nor affirmative function. Regarding other subjects like a nude or landscape, this simple point necessitates little debate because critics and historians have long since established criteria with which to differentiate a good nude from a bad one, for example. When it comes to fashion, however, critics, whether inhibited by elitism or sexism, have been reticent to grapple with modern art's fashionability, as well as its embrace of fashion as a compelling subject matter.

Fashion provides an important perspective on the cultural history of the Weimar Republic. In order to substantiate this and explore fashion's relationship to *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the architecture and painting of the twenties, I considered the information and perspectives offered in the fashion magazines of the period. These sources provide a privileged view of not only the customs, values, and aesthetics of the Weimar Republic, but also the emergence of fashion as a mainstream cultural force. For instance, as Barbara Vinken indicates in her review of the 2014 *Berliner Kulturforum* exhibition "*Krieg und Kleider – Modegrafik zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs*," journalists and scholars still reflect upon the time between World War One

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<sup>526</sup> See: Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

and the end of the Weimar Republic as a self-defining moment for fashion.<sup>527</sup> Specifically, the review, which was also published in the October 2014 *Harper's Bazaar*, details the impact of the First World War on the fashion of the period and beyond.

Vinken asserts that fashion is a realm not separate from, but absolutely intertwined with war and politics. In a moment of crisis and material scarcity, like the First World War, fashion did not cease to exist, but adapted to new conditions and needs. Fashion also embodied the push towards modernization spurred on by the War. As the daily requirements of women changed, so did their clothing, which became more functional, comfortable, and easier to maintain. Women dressed to meet the demands of everyday life, and this instigated a shift in representations of female identity. Already in the twenties, shorter hemlines and haircuts became symbols the new freedoms of the New Woman. Building upon this, the overarching argument advanced by Vinken and the exhibition is that in this period, fashion became modern. The sartorial advances during and after the First World War formed many of the practices and values that exist in contemporary fashion. These developments were novel then; yet they still inform our definition of what it means to be modern in the present day.

The culture of fashion and its publications offer a useful model for understanding the passage of time and its representation through images and text. It is the job of the fashion journalist to forecast sartorial changes, asserting that a trend is over or that the current season will witness the rise of an entirely new style. When reading issue after issue documenting sartorial prognostications, literally bound together in volumes spanning a decade or more, it is difficult to acquire a sense of the net change over time. Hemlines rise and fall – masculine styles for daytime – femininity reigns supreme in the evening – bows are out, but beading is in.

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<sup>527</sup> Barbara Vinken, “Als die Mode modern wurde: Wie der Erste Weltkrieg den weiblichen Look befreit hat,” *Harper's Bazaar*, October 2014, 88-90.

Isolating these individual representations of change may capture a brief moment in cultural history, but when taken together, they reveal the cyclical pattern of novelty, which has been cloaked by the ideological standard of history as a linear progression. It is the job of the historian to lay bare these illusions, no matter how objective they may seem.

The coda that follows, while not attending to the visual representation of clothing, provides a counter-image to the hasty tempo that shapes our perception of the roaring twenties to this day. In her 1930 painting *Evening Over Potsdam*, Laserstein pictures a critical juncture at the end of the Weimar Republic, where time appears frozen, but is nevertheless pregnant with a dialectic between past and present. Much like fashion reaches back into history and refigures phenomenon for the contemporary moment, Laserstein in this work quotes the history of art and creates an image of time that challenges the illusion of history's homogeneity that naturalizes teleology as an objective truth. The sensation of uncertainty that emerges from Laserstein's painting is then oppositional to the false promises of certainty ensured by the rising authoritarian right. The figures in *Evening Over Potsdam* then languish in solidarity with those who are victimized by this so-called progress.

## CODA

### Sobriety at a Standstill: Lotte Laserstein's *Evening Over Potsdam* (1930)

#### Potsdam

March 21, 1933 – The Day of Potsdam. This ceremonious day, directed by propaganda minister Goebbels, solidified an alliance between a newly elected Adolf Hitler and the 85-year-old *Reichspräsident* Paul von Hindenburg, a feeble-minded figurehead of an old militaristic guard. Soldiers from the *Reichswehr* and the SA guarded the streets of Potsdam, as Reichstag representatives accompanied Hitler and his cronies, including Joseph Goebbels and Vice Chancellor Franz von Papen, on their way from masses at the Evangelical Nikolai and Catholic Peter and Paul churches to the location of the union, the *Garnisonkirche*, a “cult site of the Prussian military monarchy,” the *Garnisonkirche*, which the Second World War would leave in ruins.<sup>528</sup> Writing in his diary, Goebbels identifies the radio’s role in facilitating the *Volk*’s participation on the monumental day.

The radio is broadcasting for all of Germany. The nation must take part in this day [...]. I [...] call upon the nation in a short address to participate and do everything possible to inextinguishably impress this ceremonious act of state in the memory of the living generation.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Klaus-Jürgen Müller, “Der Tag von Potsdam und das Verhältnis der preußisch-deutschen Militär-Elite zum Nationalsozialismus,” in *Potsdam: Staat, Armee, Residenz in der preußisch-deutschen Militärgeschichte*, eds. Bernhard R. Kroener and Heiger Ostertag (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1993), 435.

<sup>529</sup> “*Der Rundfunk wird für ganz Deutschland eingeschaltet. Die Nation muß an diesem Tage teilnehmen [...]. Ich [...] rufe in einem kurzen Aufruf die Nation zur Teilnahme auf und tue alles, um diesen feierlichen Staatsakt unverlöschlich in das Gedächtnis der lebenden Generation einzuprägen.*” Müller, “Der Tag von Potsdam,” 449, note 16. The text was originally published in Joseph Goebbels, *Goebbels Tagebücher. Sämtliche Fragmente, Teil 1: Aufzeichnungen 1924-1941*, Elke Fröhlich, ed., Munich, 1987, vol. 2, 394.

The radio transmitted the proceedings simultaneously across the country, making it possible that the events of the day could be preserved for the future. The Day of Potsdam was an orchestration by which the state engineered history, merging Germany's Nazi future with its Prussian imperial past.

On September 14, 1930, the National Socialists emerged as Germany's second largest political party. The stock market crash of 1929 in the United States resulted in grave consequences for the Germans, who depended upon financial support from the American-sponsored Dawes Plan and Young Plan. This economic strain and subsequent rise in unemployment destabilized the country; Hitler and his Nazis offered a panacea. In the November 1929 city elections, the NSDAP (National Socialists German Workers' Party) secured positions on the city council for the first time. The son of the last Kaiser, the former Prince August Wilhelm, helped to promote the party within pro-monarchist and conservative circles.<sup>530</sup> From 1928 until 1930, the number of Nazi-supporting voters in Potsdam rose from 553 to 9,610.<sup>531</sup> Meanwhile, *Sturmabteilung* membership in Potsdam also increased dramatically, from 36 people in the spring of 1930 to 110 in October of that same year, as the political climate in Berlin and the rest of the country also grew more conservative.<sup>532</sup>

In her painting, *Evening Over Potsdam* (1930) (Figure 104), the subject of this coda, Lotte Laserstein (1898-1993) represents a group of people on a terrace surrounded by the city's once famous *Dreikirchenblick*, a view of the three aforementioned churches. The landscape depicted in the work reflects the romantic panoramic views that Friedrich Wilhelm IV had envisioned for the city in the nineteenth century – a topography of parks, lakes, and rolling hills

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<sup>530</sup> Harald Müller, *Zur Geschichte der Stadt Potsdam von 1918 bis 1933*, no. 20 (Potsdam: Bezirksheimatmuseum, 1970), 56.

<sup>531</sup> Müller, *Zur Geschichte der Stadt Potsdam*, 56.

<sup>532</sup> Müller, *Zur Geschichte der Stadt Potsdam*, 56.

adorned with architecture that featured baroque, rococo, classicist, and neo-romantic historicist styles.<sup>533</sup> At the time Laserstein painted the picture, the baroque Garrison church was in the city west. Karl Friedrich Schinkel's neo-classicist *Nikolaikirche* was centrally situated in the *Altstadt*, and to the east of it stood the baroque *Heiligengeistkirche*. Until 1918, Potsdam was the location of the Prussian imperial residence. With its palaces and gardens, most notably Sanssouci, the city upheld conservative values as the "Prussian Versailles" through the Weimar Republic.<sup>534</sup>

Lotte Laserstein's favorite model and best friend, Traute Rose, recalled that the artist painted the backdrop of the work *en plein air* on a large wooden board. She transported it from her Wilmersdorf Berlin studio on a train to Potsdam where she boarded a horse and cart to her acquaintances' apartment that afforded the view depicted in the painting. Laserstein arranged her friends, including Traute and her husband Ernst, in their places on the terrace only to outline an initial sketch of their figures. She would first paint the cityscape on site, and then transport the panel back to Berlin, where she would later finish painting the people in her studio.<sup>535</sup> Laserstein exhibited the painting at the Gurlitt Gallery in 1931, which portrays as one critic wrote, responding to the scene's somber atmosphere, "an autumnal veil weav[ing] across the city."<sup>536</sup>

When compared to the avant-garde tendencies of her contemporaries, Laserstein's mode of realist representation seems conservative. Her treatment of time and space in *Evening*, however, complicates any easy alliance between conservatism and realism. The stages of the painting's material production and the political landscape of its setting activate temporal and spatial displacements, which challenge the presumption that realism is commensurate with a

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<sup>533</sup> Horst Drescher and Renate Kroll, *Potsdam: Ansichten aus drei Jahrhunderten* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1981), 12.

<sup>534</sup> Dirk Laubner, *Potsdam aus der Luft Fotografiert* (Berlin: Nicolai, 2002), 5.

<sup>535</sup> Anna-Carola Krause, *Lotte Laserstein: meine einzige Wirklichkeit / My Only Reality* (Dresden: Philo Fine Arts, 2003), 162.

<sup>536</sup> Krause, *My Only Reality*, 162.



stable and integrated aesthetic totality. In her painting, *Laserstein* develops a mode of realism in relation to *Neue Sachlichkeit* and through *Evening*, she grapples with the alarming political context of Germany in 1930.

While *Evening* delivers material details with striking specificity and exhibits the blasé attitude that typified *Neue Sachlichkeit*, it also holds up to critiques against *Neue Sachlichkeit* as being reifying. Analyses of Ernst Bloch's notion of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (non-contemporaneity, non-simultaneity, or non-synchronicity) and Walter Benjamin's dialectical image, a concept that emerged from his unfinished explorations into historical consciousness, when considered alongside *Evening*, further elucidate the picture's abstract handling of time and space.<sup>537</sup> Rejecting the stability with which realism has historically been associated, this essay demonstrates how *Evening* pictures a moment of crisis at the end of the Weimar Republic and calls into question post-Enlightenment ideas about history and progress. It therefore prompts a reconsideration of realism's critical function in modern art.

### **Großstadt / Altstadt**

During the Weimar Republic, *Neue Sachlichkeit* exemplified an unsentimental and rational approach to literature, fashion, journalism, architecture, and the visual arts. For the

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<sup>537</sup> For more on *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, see: Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-century Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 103-136. David C. Durst, "Ernst Bloch's Theory of Nonsimultaneity," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 77:3 (2002): 171-194. For more on Benjamin's dialectical image, see: Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989). Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). Rolf Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill: Approaches to the *Passagen-Werk*," in *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections*, ed. Gary Smith (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), 260-291. Jürgen Habermas, Philip Brewster, and Carl Howard Buchner, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin," *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1979): 30-59. Max Pensky, "Method and Time: Benjamin's Dialectical Images," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 177-198.

critics and artists of the era, the term connoted an eschewal of the subjectivities and abstracting tendencies of expressionism. In the context of painting, an appeal to *Neue Sachlichkeit* involved a return to figuration and a renewed interest in objectively representing the material realities of contemporary life. Despite this, the works produced under the auspices of *Neue Sachlichkeit* are not exactly rational or sober. Through *Neue Sachlichkeit's* aesthetic ethos of sobriety, artists like Otto Dix, with his 1928 *Metropolis* (Figure 105), depicted Weimar Germany's drunken indiscretions and social inequalities in compositions packed with harsh colors and even harsher contours. In *Evening*, Laserstein portrays the hangover that ensued.

Her painting is an ambivalent elegy to the frenzied debauchery of the golden twenties, a final farewell situated in Potsdam, just 15 miles southwest of Berlin. The cool autumnal air that envelops the terrace is a harbinger of uncertainty at a transitional moment between seasons and decades. Fragile but ominous, the sky casts splotchy light through gray clouds, which form a ceiling that expands outward into the distance. At the same time, the picture plane constricts the vertical headroom of the two women, who stand with bent necks. Each figure occupies a clearly delineated space, producing a regulated, if staccato compositional rhythm, with gazes never meeting one another or acknowledging the viewer. Remaking a history painting in the twentieth century, Laserstein depicts their prophetic Last Supper in Potsdam.

She presents the figures' detachment from one another as a caricature of *Sachlichkeit's* signature emotional coolness. A mood of detachment emanates from the painting, with each figure performing a psychological subcategory of this inactivity. The central figure appears bored, and the woman on the far left soberly gazes out into the horizon. On the far right, a woman is resolute in her concentration on a mundane task, and next to her, a man, with a furrowed brow and fingers clasped together seems both worried and resigned. Finally, the sixth

figure, a dog, rests there like an opportunist, waiting for a morsel of food to fall. Together, they emote the attitudes that were associated with *Sachlichkeit* during the Weimar Era.<sup>538</sup>

Even as the work's title and date of creation points to a singular moment and location, *Evening* encompasses a layered sense of time and place. In employing a set of art historical quotations, which will be discussed in the following section, Laserstein muddles the line between the past and present. And while Potsdam is clearly the singular setting of the picture, the town was connected to Berlin by electrified trains as early as 1928.<sup>539</sup> From her Wilmersdorf studio, Laserstein could have boarded the train at Ebersstrasse to the Potsdam ring. Due to this close proximity, *Evening* sets off a contrast between the frenetic tempo of Berlin, made palpable through its absence, and the stasis of Potsdam, as their actual backdrop. Laserstein's process of creating the painting furthermore underscores this aspect. At any rate, the figures remain alienated from the *Großstadt* and *Altstadt* (metropolis, old town) alike at a moment when their certain exclusion could have been perilous. Laserstein depicts these five alienated urbanites gathered together, while displaced from Berlin in a scene that is at once contemporary and historical.

In the mid to late twenties, Berliners were drunk on the shallowness of the contemporary culture to which *Sachlichkeit* lent its name. Béla Balázs, in his denunciation "*Sozialismus und Sachlichkeit*" of 1928, associated the term with a "Dionysian delirium" and the "masochistic intoxication of self-deception."<sup>540</sup> Bloch was also suspicious of *Neue Sachlichkeit* because of its

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<sup>538</sup> Helmet Lethen has discussed social types associated with *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>539</sup> Wolfgang Kiebert, *Die Berliner S-Bahn, 1924 bis heute: Geschichte, Technik, Hintergrund* (Stuttgart: Transpress, 2004), 31.

<sup>540</sup> "...wunderliche dionysische Taumel, dieser masochistische Rausch der Selbstverleugnung." Béla Balázs, "Sachlichkeit und Sozialismus," in *Neue Sachlichkeit Band 2: Quellen und*

rapport with capitalism and its fashionability, or “being merely up to date.”<sup>541</sup> He was not alone in voicing misgivings about *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Benjamin also expressed mistrust in his essay of 1931 “*Linke Melancholie*” on the poet Erich Kästner.<sup>542</sup> Benjamin concludes that the side effect of *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s detached observation is fetishization. This causes a retreat from political commitment and action into an undialectical state of melancholy. Considering the political ruptures that began in the late twenties and continued through the thirties, Balázs’, Bloch’s, and Benjamin’s critiques are valid in that they address concerns about the ideological implications of *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s detachment being a fashionable social manner throughout the Weimar Republic.

In “*Neue Sachlichkeit*,” Max Horkheimer, writing sometime between 1926 and 1931, calls the concept a fashion of concrete. He mocks *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s association with both the substance of concrete, referring to the unadorned façades of *Neues Bauen*, and its concreteness, meaning New Objectivity’s matter-of-factness. He then contends that *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s objectification of things and people removes them from a world of causal relationships and reduces them, as he put it, to “they themselves, their existence, their essence that is inquired into.”<sup>543</sup> This essentialism or concreteness is, for Horkheimer, akin to the positivism and objectivity of the sciences, which isolate objects of study from their “spatio-temporal nexuses.”<sup>544</sup>

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*Dokumente*, ed. Sabina Becker (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 398. Béla Balázs, “Sachlichkeit und Sozialismus,” *Die Weltbühne* 24, 52 (1928): 916-918.

<sup>541</sup> Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 195.

<sup>542</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Linke Melancholie: Zu Erich Kästners neuem Gedichtbuch,” *Die Gesellschaft: Internationale Revue Für Sozialismus und Politik* 1 (1931): 181-184.

<sup>543</sup> Max Horkheimer, “The New Objectivity,” in *Dawn and Decline: Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969*, trans. Michael Shaw (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 97.

<sup>544</sup> Horkheimer, “The New Objectivity,” 97.

With this criticism of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Horkheimer formulates a key component of his and Theodor Adorno's thesis in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944).<sup>545</sup> That is, the Enlightenment's project is the disenchantment of the world through the instrumentalization of scientific knowledge. It supposedly frees people from archaic animistic and chthonic beliefs; it justifies writing history linearly as a measure of humankind's triumphant progress; and it covertly enforces the modern myth of capitalism, camouflaging itself behind the covers of technology, industrialization, and information. The process begins with a mastery over nature, rendering it concrete or quantifiable, and leads to a similar treatment of humans as the next logical objects of this control. Horkheimer disclaims *Neue Sachlichkeit* because it disenchant objects and subjects alike by isolating them from the specificities of time and place that are inextricable to their lived, conflicted existence in the material world, and subsequently re-enchants in support of bourgeois culture.

For all that the representational mode of *Neue Sachlichkeit* lacked in sentimental attachment, it also resulted in a deliberate commitment to accumulating expertly depicted material details. Laserstein's representation of such details in *Evening*, as it is informed by *Neue Sachlichkeit*, does not in fact impair the legibility of what Horkheimer called "spatio-temporal nexuses." Rather, it is because of the dialogue enacted through the situational and material specificities of these pictorial details that meaning can unfold. Here, the spatio-temporal nexus between Potsdam and Berlin in 1930 is the painting's dialectical fulcrum, and much like the political situation at that moment, it cannot be ignored. Painted fourteen years before Adorno and

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<sup>545</sup> See: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Concept of Enlightenment," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Guzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1-34. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the picture offers a framework for a dialectical understanding of historical time that raises doubt about progress and problematizes the acceptance of a cultural heritage. In other words, *Evening* embodies the unresolved dialectic of history in an uncertain present.

### **Soil / Bread / Milk**

The figures in *Evening* are transplants, emblematic of the cliché of detachment that was made fashionable in Berlin and later circulated in the provinces. Laserstein's painting seems to illustrate Bloch's characterization of the small town: "...yesterday's cliché rules, and just as the shops have their tinned preserves, public opinion comes ready set-freshly churned, as dross from Berlin. An unspeakable sadness permeates the small town with the autumn."<sup>546</sup> The alluring distractions of the city migrate into the town, where, as Bloch pronounces, people "...are still only living from the viewpoint of yesterday."<sup>547</sup> With blank stares and bodies frozen in their inaction, the figures in *Evening* are nevertheless uprooted. As they sit and stand on a surface elevated above the ground, they are also detached from the panoramic view that appears to be artificially propped up behind them. Laserstein has, for good reason, only temporarily planted them in Potsdam, where, as Bloch would have it, folk memory gets preserved like tinned goods and served up for dinner with the *Führer* sitting at the head of the table.

According to Bloch, capitalism is responsible for the uneven rates of development in urban centers, smaller towns, and rural areas. In places like Berlin, for example, capitalism had already forced out folkish traditions and the cult of the soil. This process, the eradication of more traditional cultural forms, was slower to impact the town and country. Conjuring a common Teutonic heritage, a symbolism of rootedness, Bloch argues, brings people together in these

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<sup>546</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 23.

<sup>547</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 22.

more provincial parts, “as if the soil itself were still saturated with ancient earth cults and held...its inhabitants tight.”<sup>548</sup> He describes the towns of a secret Germany, “anti-Berlins” that are at home in the mythical soil of the past.<sup>549</sup> But the town and country have only an illusory opposition to the city. This is necessary for capitalism, which perpetuates their separation as a means of control. For preserving the myth that the town and country are romantic sanctuaries away from a dystopian life in the bustling metropolis also preserves the retrograde mentalities of obedient men and women.

Laserstein appeals to tradition in *Evening* not to uphold the continuity between the past and present, but rather to signal a sense of dissolution in modern society. Like Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* (1495-1498) (Figure 106), *Evening* represents a threshold of change and evinces an immanent betrayal. A visual signifier of betrayal, the man in the foreground, sitting at the front side of the table with his back to the viewer, echoes the Judas motif that recurs in numerous Last Supper paintings, while not present in Leonardo’s version. In the painting, two couples flank a central female figure, whose listless expression opposes the sunny color of her dress. An apathetic figure, the woman guards herself with folded arms, reversing Jesus’ open-handed gesture in *The Last Supper*. Her dress, mere painted yellow fabric operates as the honorific light source that conventionally distinguishes the Son of God from the Apostles. The meal they share is paltry, comprising some fruit and bread. These round shapes echo the small pieces of bread that punctuate the surface of the table in *The Last Supper*. There is beer at the table in *Evening*, but the figures do not imbibe. Laserstein replaces the room’s crisp perspectival lines and geometric order found in *The Last Supper* with an unfurling cloak of clouds shaped by the panoramic cone of vision in the Potsdam picture. By citing one of the most recognizable

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<sup>548</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 50.

<sup>549</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 49.

paintings in the history of European art, Laserstein reflects on historical consciousness as she employs historical motifs in the depiction of boredom and detachment, emotional conditions that shaped life under the Weimar Republic's regime of *Sachlichkeit*.

Leonardo's picture was not Laserstein's only historical citation. The woman pouring a glass of milk from a pitcher on the right recalls Johannes Vermeer's *Milkmaid* (1657-1658) (Figure 107).<sup>550</sup> Laserstein shows the modern type of the New Woman engaged in a mundane domestic task. The "new milkmaid" in *Evening* turns her back to the viewer and cautiously pours from her vessel. In Vermeer's depiction, liquid falls from the pitcher, indicating the passage of time and the progression of her task. By portraying the liquid at the edge, either leaving or returning to the mouth of the vessel, Laserstein decelerates time and delays the completion of the event, progress thwarted indefinitely. As time lags and the figures linger, the scene's solidity begins to crumble. *Evening* presents the illusion of a seemingly cohesive world in suspension, where past accomplishments guarantee nothing for certain. While the artist's allusions to the history of art testify to her cultural proficiency, a quality that was vital for the assertion of her professionalism, they also lend *Evening* a conceptual apparatus that challenges the acceptance of this very artistic heritage. Unsettling traditions of the past, these references simultaneously facilitate a critique of the present.

At a superficial level, the representational strategies employed by Laserstein in the painting appear traditional. Its colors naturalistically depict the subjects and setting; the space is organized through one-point perspective; and the texture of the blotchy brush strokes do not push the work into a realm of abstracting formalism. In these ways, *Evening* seems anathema to the electrifying pace of modern urban life. Seeking to capture the tumult of the everyday in the

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<sup>550</sup> Anna-Carola Krause, *Lotte Laserstein: 1898-1993: Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Reimer, 2006), 158.



metropolis, some of Laserstein's contemporaries across Europe exploited discontinuity and montage in photography and film, while others flattened, faceted, and spliced together surfaces in painting. In *Evening*, Laserstein achieves an equally compelling pictorial fragmentation through techniques that are less obvious by comparison. The subtle displacement between the foreground and the background, the overwhelming scale of the figures, along with their collectively disengaged comportments nevertheless signify the very social alienation that also concerned her more avant-garde minded counterparts. Rather than sensationalizing modern life, Laserstein, referring the history of art and staging a contemporary history painting outside of Berlin, effectively slows it down. Without the shock of the new, these maneuvers jostle *Evening's* otherwise plodding and unobtrusive content, revealing the insecurity and indifference that underpins the crisis of modernity.

### **Boredom and the "What-Has-Been"**

The affect registered in *Evening* is pertinent to Benjamin's discussions of boredom from just a few years later. In "The Storyteller" (1936), Benjamin describes the decline of the art of storytelling in an elegiac tone. Storytellers, unlike novelists or historians, are able to transmit history as a relatable, lived experience. Through them, stories embody the experiences "passed on from mouth to mouth," and storytelling facilitates their exchanges between people.<sup>551</sup> Embodied in archaic types like the peasant or the seaman, storytellers are the artisans of communication, whose craft is the transmission and interpretation of experience. Benjamin writes that this potent form of communication necessitates certain conditions that capitalism has

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<sup>551</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 83.

made increasingly rare. Strategic warfare, rationalized labor practices, and moral institutions impoverish the sharing and integration of these experiences.

Concomitant with storytelling's retreat is the advancement of verifiable knowledge that circulates in the service of capitalism. Benjamin situates the storyteller's social standing as a member of the artisan class, distinct from the middle-class consumers and agents of a newer information-based form of communication. In doing so, he discloses the revolutionary impulse behind the effort to preserve storytelling. For storytelling, an endangered conduit for communication, defies the capitalist transactions that trade myth as information in exchange for profits and power. It is for this reason that Benjamin positions storytelling in relief against the discipline of history more broadly. Inasmuch as the historian is beholden to explanation, the chronicler and his secular incarnation, the storyteller, with his "profane outlook," need only to interpret events and experiences not in relation to "an accurate concatenation of definite events," but rather to "the way these are embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world."<sup>552</sup> The historian's mode of representing the past empirically pronounces it a natural fact with an authority that also effaces the constructed reality of its chronology. The storyteller, as opposed to the historian, conveys the mysteries of the past through individual exchanges that preserve the past's connection to lived experience. This element of variance ensures an inscrutability that protects the past from its enchantment as modern myth.

Bourgeois urban culture, with its sheer abundance of commodities and information, has little if any use for storytelling. Experience and understanding do not manifest through interpersonal exchange, but are pre-packaged at the department store and purchased on the newsstand. Moreover, the necessary conditions of storytelling are a specific kind of boredom and

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<sup>552</sup> Benjamin, "The Storyteller," 96.

relaxation, which, as Benjamin observes, are in danger. He writes, “Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. A rustling in the leaves drives him away. His nesting places – the activities that are intimately associated with boredom – are already extinct in the cities and are declining in the country as well.”<sup>553</sup> Benjamin locates a potential respite from capitalism not in the town, country, or the city, but in a state of mind, one of boredom, which Laserstein also represents in *Evening*.

Even so, Benjamin still approaches the concept of boredom in *The Arcades Project* with caution. Exposing its insidious side, he explains how boredom is instrumental in conditioning false consciousness. Specifically, he argues that there is no escaping the eternal repetition of time that capitalism and its culture of boredom guarantees. While capitalism oversees the Sisyphean life of the laborer, it also enshrines its myths in traditions that are passed down from generation to generation, affirming the so-called natural order of things.<sup>554</sup> History through the lens of capitalism is then predetermined and causes tradition to “[assume] the character of phantasmagoria.”<sup>555</sup> In this way, boredom is a useful tool for those in power, as it lulls people into a state of inattention, distracting them from the injustices that history conceals beneath the cover of the Enlightenment and its ideals of progress. Granted, this did not stop Benjamin from considering how boredom might function dialectically in defiance of the status quo of bourgeois ennui. He writes that boredom arises “when we don’t know what we are wanting for,” and that certainty is the product of “superficiality or inattention.”<sup>556</sup> Hence, his conclusion that “boredom is the threshold to great deeds” is not an unambiguous approbation of boredom, but rather a

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<sup>553</sup> Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 91.

<sup>554</sup> Walter Benjamin, “D: Boredom, Eternal Return [D2a,4],” in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 106.

<sup>555</sup> Benjamin, “D: Boredom, Eternal Return [D8a,2],” in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 116.

<sup>556</sup> Benjamin, “D: Boredom, Eternal Return [D2,7],” 105.

provocation.<sup>557</sup> If approached dialectically, boredom, being the product of a skeptical and attentive uncertainty, could then have the potential to destabilize myth. This is where the storyteller returns.

Benjamin's discussion of storytelling is, all in all, about how to communicate past lived experiences without falling back onto a post-Enlightenment belief in history as progress. When Benjamin wrote, "boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience," he advocated for circumstances that are antithetical to capitalism and its profit-driven industriousness. This kind of boredom, however, has died out in urban environments and is under threat in the country too. The danger in Laserstein's Potsdam scene is precisely the rarity of the boredom depicted in it, which may render uncanny the conditions of capitalist modernity and sharpen an edge that has been otherwise dulled by distractions. As Benjamin writes in "The Storyteller," boredom facilitates a form of communication that runs counter to the trading of commodified information. Similarly, through its representation of boredom, *Evening* embodies a quiet, albeit powerful act of resistance. Even as it fails to convey a sense of urgency or a moment of sudden clarity, the picture signals a reawakening from the phantasmagoria of urban life, amidst the ideological haze that was permeating Germany at the time.

In the painting, this defiance reveals itself in the blank faces of the subjects, which are set in, yet spatially apart from the politically resonant setting of Potsdam. Here, the signage, traffic, and people of the city are conspicuously absent, and the town, a place between metropolis and country, cradles the figures on the terrace against a vast horizon line. Wholly unconvinced by the world around them, these figures suggest that boredom has a disruptive capacity. In their boredom, they sit idly together in opposition to the enthusiastic and mindless participation that

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<sup>557</sup> Benjamin, "D: Boredom, Eternal Return [D2,7]," *Arcades*, 105.

was presently enabling Hitler's ascent to power. Disquietude lingers in the air, as the picture, by virtue of its irresoluteness, fosters the critical function of boredom. And with *Evening*, Laserstein, drawing attention to the dialectical relationship between past traditions and present dangers, like the immanence of National Socialism, becomes a storyteller.

Seeking to represent the past effectively, like a storyteller, Benjamin devised a new methodology and concept, which he called the dialectical image. As he explains, its power derives from its temporal complexity:

In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural (*bildlich*). Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic – images. The image that is read – which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability – bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.<sup>558</sup>

The clearest example of the dialectical image is the structure of Benjamin's *Arcade Project*, which comprises a montage of fragmentary texts, quotations, and passages organized in folders with titles like "Fashion," "Boredom, Eternal Recurrence," and "Epistemology, Theory of Progress." Benjamin examines these subjects in discrete entries whose relationship to each other is never fixed, but they function instead like smaller modules, each individually containing the kernel of the work as a whole. This organizational system fundamentally rejects the illusion of wholeness and progress that traditional forms of history offer.

Utilizing the dialectical image, Benjamin believed that the best way to understand historical time was to grasp it imagistically, like a resurgence of memory in the present that, as he put it, "flashes up in a moment of danger."<sup>559</sup> It is the responsibility of those who represent the "what-has-been" to challenge the positivism of post-Enlightenment histories by seizing

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<sup>558</sup> Benjamin, "N: On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress [N3,1]," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 463.

<sup>559</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257.

dialectical images at the moment, “wherein,” Benjamin writes, “what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.”<sup>560</sup> The structure of Benjamin’s alternative to traditional history is indebted to montage, which brings together disparate materials by recontextualizing them. The juxtaposition of these components, along with their original meanings and the new ones that arise in their new contexts, set off a dialectical process. Therefore, dialectical images, owing to the anti-hierarchical structure of montage, abandon historical naturalism by redeeming historical objects from their anchored place in history.<sup>561</sup> This prevents their mummification as myth and reactivates them in relation to an array of lived experiences.

Although Benjamin’s model should not be mapped directly onto Laserstein’s *Evening*, it provides a conceptual framework with which to discuss the picture. For instance, the work resonates with what Benjamin called “dialectics at a standstill.” It is in this standstill that the historical materialist “recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening...or...a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past,” and “then blast[s] a specific era out of the homogenous course of history.”<sup>562</sup> The cessation of happening is the recognition that wrests historical materials from their deployment in the construction of history as progress. The refusal to move forward or contribute to the grand narrative of western civilization commands this cessation or standstill, wherein the past is then dialectically situated with the present.

The progression of the narrative in Leonardo’s, messianic scene, *The Last Supper* is dependent upon the representation of demonstrative expressions and gestures. Placed in groups of three, the apostles surround Jesus, who sits at the center of the table with his arms spread,

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<sup>560</sup> Benjamin, “N: On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress [N3,1],” *Arcades*, 463.

<sup>561</sup> Benjamin, “N: On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress [N11,4],” *Arcades*, 476.

<sup>562</sup> Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 265.

dividing the composition into two sections. In depicting the apostles' reactions to Christ's prediction that Peter will deny knowing him and Judas will betray him, Leonardo fills the work with incredulous hand gestures and surprised faces. He directs them inward toward the center of the composition, where Jesus will enact the ritual of the Eucharist with the breaking of the bread, establishing Christianity's ritual means of salvation. Following the convention that a subject's external appearance must indicate his internal character, the artist relies on this transparency to ensure the painting's persuasiveness and legibility.

Exhibiting a breakdown of communication, *Evening* complicates the affirmative application of *The Last Supper*, a historical depiction of Christian messianism, in the present. Rather, her painting is a vague Last Supper scene, where neither the betrayer nor the Messiah can be identified with certainty, the visual cues provided by the Judas motif and the woman in the yellow dress notwithstanding. Seemingly blocking access to their psychological interiorities, their deadpan facial features further erode the legibility of the connections between them and ensure a temporal standstill. Laserstein's appropriation of art historical imagery in her representation of modern detachment sets the "what-has-been" of art history in an imagistic relationship with the now, calibrating the past and present together in relation to the specific needs of the contemporary moment, not the predetermined narratives of post-Enlightenment history. Frozen in forms of the past, the figures, languishing in their boredom, await something amidst a disquieting stillness. The picture slowly casts doubt upon their salvation. As Benjamin would later underscore, boredom, a state of mind that Laserstein represents, can signal a paradoxically critical engagement with the now. This is crucial given the political climate of Germany in 1930, when Laserstein painted *Evening*. Only four years later, a false messiah would fly over Nuremberg in an airplane, dramatizing the redemption of his believers.

## Refusing to Dance

Even though *Evening*'s façade appears cohesive, it still exhibits some fissures. Namely, Laserstein emphasizes the separateness of the figures by delineating the spaces between them with vertical elements like buildings that jut out through the horizon and into the moody sky. The geometric pattern of the railing sequesters the figures in their monumental form away from the miniaturized perspective of the cityscape. As it divides the composition, clearly segregating the figures from their setting, the railing harkens back to the two phases and locations of the work's production in which Laserstein only sketched the people and painted the backdrop in Potsdam, before completing the work back in Berlin. More than a physical barrier, the railing is a temporal one that separates a deliberate standstill on the terrace from the eternal repetition of history in Potsdam. The painting, therefore, insinuates that not all spaces share the same temporality.

In *Heritage of Our Times*, Bloch explores the relationship between temporality – specifically, how one experiences the present – and different locations, like the city, town, and country. Clarifying the concept of non-contemporaneity or *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, Bloch explains that three main groups – the youth, the “immiserated” middle class, and agricultural workers in rural areas – have a tendency to lag behind the now.<sup>563</sup> The “Little Man,” Bloch's archetype of the middle class, was an easy target for ideologies that paint a pretty picture of the old days, when conditions were good and fair, identity was stable, and when time could be understood as homogenous. As he longs for a simple past, the Little Man shows symptoms of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, a condition that, according to Bloch, benefitted the expansion of National Socialism. Referring to the Day of Potsdam, Bloch even calls the “goose-step parades of Potsdam” a logical consequence of the “reactionary idealism” upheld by the “folkish doctrine of

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<sup>563</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 27.



family, caste and nature” that persists in the town and country.<sup>564</sup> On the Day of Potsdam in 1933, for example, the Nazis and their supporters were out of synch, despite their marching in unison.

A tomb of false consciousness buried deep in the myth of “home, soil, and nation,” the state of being non-contemporaneous is advantageous for both tyrants and capitalism.<sup>565</sup> Nostalgia for the past, a feature of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, diverts attention away from the conflicts that plague the current situation. Bloch asserts, “it uses the antagonism of a still living past as a means of separation and combat against the future dialectically giving birth to itself in the capitalist antagonisms.”<sup>566</sup> In other words, when people are trapped in an “unfulfilled fairy tale of the good old times,” as he put it, they are disempowered.<sup>567</sup> Their *Ungleichzeitigkeit* prevents them from wielding these conflicts dialectically against those in power, dismantling the myths that justify their hegemony. This static condition of non-contemporaneity emboldens capitalism and paralyzes revolutionary developments.<sup>568</sup>

The divergent ways in which different social groups in different locations experience the present moment influence how the past is represented and therefore understood. Multi-layered temporalities present an obstacle for Bloch, and for Benjamin, they become a revolutionary tool. Whereas Benjamin points to the dialectical image, with its the multi-layered temporalities, as a foil to the linear wholeness of history, Bloch deems multi-layered temporalities to be the result of unequal rates of development. As Bloch sees it, experience understood in terms of a “polyrhythmic and multi-spatial entity” is a problem when these various registers of time and

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<sup>564</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 53.

<sup>565</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 109.

<sup>566</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 109.

<sup>567</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 112.

<sup>568</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 112.

space are static or rigidly stratified.<sup>569</sup> Hence, in order to overthrow totalizing systems of control that profit from the manipulation of those who live non-contemporaneously, he advocates for “the materialistic analysis of the residual false consciousness by dissolving its appearance, unmasking its modern delusions throughout.”<sup>570</sup>

Here, the act of dissolution or unmasking is a kind of redemption, to summon Benjamin, where the present is rescued from the false consciousness that lingers in traditional economic and ideological forms. In order to affect this redemption, Bloch’s notion of non-contemporaneity requires a dialectical overcoming, in which the goal is to “release those elements even of the non-contemporaneous contradiction which are capable of aversion and transformation, namely those hostile to capitalism, homeless in it, and to remount them for functioning in a different connection.”<sup>571</sup> It is the recognition of these non-contemporaneous contradictions that brings the present up-to-date into the now. Conversely, the spatial and temporal multi-dimensionality in Benjamin’s philosophy of history is an imagistic intervention against history’s mythologized totality. Exposing myth for what it is, the dialectical image redeems historical material from the false consciousness of history, generating, instead, dynamic historical accounts that adjust to the changing conditions of the present and resist being fixed by the triumphant narratives of post-Enlightenment thought. Both Benjamin and Bloch identify multi-layered temporalities as decisive factors in the presentation of history and lived experience, but they do so via distinctive procedures. Benjamin argues that the multi-temporal dialectical image has the power to redeem the past from myth. And Bloch recognizes the multi-temporal state of non-contemporaneity as a

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<sup>569</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 62.

<sup>570</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 115.

<sup>571</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 113.

precondition for fascism, one that necessitates rescuing the present from the dangers posed by the past.<sup>572</sup>

Laserstein's *Evening* involves similar dynamics of displaced time and space that Bloch and Benjamin write about. "Brush[ing] history against the grain," as Benjamin once put it, Laserstein recontextualizes art historical forms in *Evening*, at once relying upon and altering their past significance in order to picture the now.<sup>573</sup> Through these means, she sheds light upon the contemporary issue of social alienation and undermines the apparent seamlessness of history. And while it hints at the growing tensions between town, country, and city, the picture is not *ungleichzeitig* in Bloch's negative sense of the word. Rather, Laserstein's depiction of these motionless figures, displaced from Berlin and withdrawn from Potsdam, through art historical quotations produces a multi-temporal image of the present at the precipice of change. The picture is an omen, sounding a warning about the end of Berlin's intoxicated golden age and the "beery haze" of the reactionary conservatism, as Bloch put it, that Potsdam represented throughout the Weimar era.<sup>574</sup> Thus, the figures, in their sobriety and stillness, refuse being swept away in the present moment, all the while existing firmly in the now.

Throughout *Heritage of Our Times*, Bloch's tone seethes as he describes the sinister faith in a mythical past that enabled National Socialism. In particular, he represents the condition of non-contemporaneity through imagery that calls to mind the unquestioning and enthusiastic participation that Laserstein's picture shrewdly protests. He declares that the symptoms of non-contemporaneity flare up like an "almost mysterious St. Vitus dance."<sup>575</sup> Otherwise known as the dancing plague, St. Vitus' Dance made its historic debut in Strasbourg on July 14, 1518 by

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<sup>572</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 115.

<sup>573</sup> Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 259.

<sup>574</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 58.

<sup>575</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 25.

claiming its first victim, Frau Troffea. According to chronicles dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she continued to dance for days, and by August up to 400 people had contracted the disease.<sup>576</sup> The most detailed surviving account was the 1532 text, *Diseases that Rob Men of their Reason*, by the alchemist and physician Paracelsus, who called the disease “chorea lasciva,” and labeled its sufferers “choreomaniacs.”<sup>577</sup> According to Paracelsus, Frau Troffea and the others were “whores and scoundrels” whose “voluptuous urge to dance” was caused by an impure mind with “free, lewd, . . . impertinent” and “lascivious” thoughts. The proper course of treatment, the chronicler wrote, included imprisonment in a “cold and unpleasant place,” as well as eating only “water and bread.” Finally, he recommended that choreomaniacs cast a sculpture of themselves in wax or resin, so that they may project their madness onto the representational object and then throw it onto a fire.

Bloch’s allusions to St. Vitus’ Dance are especially powerful in his text “Rage and Merriment” of 1929, a discussion of a dance marathon organized by the Ross Amusement Co., which he likens to a modern-day, corporatized form of gladiator combat. After reporting on exhaustion and various injuries incurred by the participating dancers, Bloch, permitting no residual doubt in the reader’s mind about the larger goal of his commentary, attests, “A third of the voters are Nazis today; here in the hall more than half of them must set the tone.”<sup>578</sup> Bloch’s numerous mentions of St. Vitus Dance reiterate that non-contemporaneity was a dangerous endemic, which the Nazis were all too eager to exploit. Promising to resuscitate an unfulfilled

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<sup>576</sup> Chroniclers of the time used the term St. Vitus Dance because they concluded an offended St. Vitus caused the illness contracted by Frau Troffea. See: Alfred Martin, “Geschichte der Tanzkrankheit in Deutschland,” *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, ed. Fritz Boehm 24 (1914): 113-134. Johannes Birringer and Josephine Fenger eds., *Tanz und WahnSinn: Dance and ChoreoMania* (Leipzig: Henschel Verlag, 2011). John Waller, *A Time to Dance, A Time to Die: The Extraordinary Story of the Dancing Plague of 1518* (London: Icon Books, 2008).

<sup>577</sup> Waller, *A Time to Dance*, 6.

<sup>578</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 43.

past, National Socialism appealed to the non-contemporaneous through nostalgia and fear. This, as Bloch explained, conjures “medieval lanes again, St Vitus’s dance, Jews beaten to death, the poisoning of the wells and the plague...”<sup>579</sup> With the rise of National Socialism at the end of the roaring twenties, the intoxicated craze of the Charleston had been ousted, in Bloch’s assessment, by the pathology of St. Vitus’ Dance.

Paracelsus’ characterization of choreomaniacs as whores and scoundrels recalls the cast of characters portrayed in Dix’s aforementioned *Metropolis*. The cacophonous masterpiece depicts the extremes of destitution and decadence in three panels, whose slick surfaces boast a jarring array of red, pink, and orange tones. A dancer himself, Dix represents the airless realms of the dance floor and alleys with suffocating details of fabric, fur, feathers, marble, wood, and brick. While the figures in the central panel are shown dancing in their brilliant garments, the other two panels reveal the deceit of drunken desires and the pain of the poor. Like the victims of the dancing plague, many of the figures in *Metropolis* are identifiable outcasts from proper society. Yet, the 1928 triptych is neither entirely moralistic nor celebratory. Through the amputee war veterans and the sex workers, Dix injects a disturbing mix of pathos and disgust into the painting. The wealthy dancers in the center are also grotesque in their opulence. Although Dix’s glazing technique and the large triptych format of *Metropolis* cite the past, the content and the dialogue it proposes forcefully confront the fashions and customs of 1928. The work is synchronized with the conflicts and material realities that shaped society at the end of the twenties.

The figures in Laserstein’s *Evening* are either awakening from a dancing craze or are abstaining from it all together. His lazy posture notwithstanding, the dog’s alert eyes reflect the

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<sup>579</sup> Bloch, *Heritage*, 56.

man's gaze, as they settle into a state of forlorn alertness and resign themselves to eventually confront a disruption that may loom in the distance. The man slouching in the foreground props up his head and tilts his glass in his other flaccid hand. Two of the women lean on the objects surrounding them in postures that indicate their commitment to rest there uncomfortably in inaction. Even the tablecloth, with its fossilized folds that mirror the linen cloth in Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, looks impervious to the movement of the autumnal air. The greatest sense of motion derives from Laserstein's rhythmic application of the paint, which makes these drab forms seem to quiver with agitation. Juxtaposed against this formal animation, the figures' stillness and distance from Berlin still catalyze a ponderous sensation of time.

### Question in Crisis

Laserstein's staging of uncertainty in *Evening* resonates with her relationship to *Neue Sachlichkeit*. From its onset, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was never a united cultural phenomenon, let alone a narrowly defined representational mode. Laserstein was not included in Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub's inaugural *Neue Sachlichkeit* exhibition of 1925, and she had few ties to figures like Dix, who are regarded as pseudo-representatives of the popular mode of realism. Even though she has not been considered a canonical figure of the (loosely defined) movement, Laserstein's proximity to the debates, people, and objects that constitute *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s history makes her exclusion from it untenable. But by the start of the thirties, when Laserstein painted *Evening*, *Neue Sachlichkeit*'s entire enterprise had become politically suspect to the left for the reasons named above. In addition, the boundaries between *Neue Sachlichkeit* and a burgeoning neo-romanticism were growing increasingly less defined.<sup>580</sup> Art historian Anna-Carola Krausse has shown how a return to naturalistically depicted idyllic scenes and emotional interiority offered a

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<sup>580</sup> Krausse, *My Only Reality*, 166.

sense of resolution at a moment of a perceived cultural degeneration.<sup>581</sup> Once in power, the Nazi regime implemented this naturalistic mode of realism because it offered an easily consumable ideology of the regime, as it wished to be represented. Sanctioned artists pictured life under the Third Reich as the fulfillment of a longed-for past where resolution and progress could be achieved through blind faith and hard work.

As a matter of fact, one of the earliest discussions about post-expressionist realism, which was foundational to the development of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, focused on the term naturalism. In 1922, Paul Westheim devoted an entire issue of *Der Kunstblatt* to the question of a “*neuer Naturalismus*.” Some of the artists, writers, and critics who responded to Westheim’s poll expressed hesitation regarding his terminology, for today’s naturalism was no longer a means of copying the world, but creating one.<sup>582</sup> Likewise, bad *Gegenständlichkeit* (objectivity), as George Grosz put it, would merely be a return to the *Biedermeiermode* of Poussin, Ingres and Corot.<sup>583</sup> Adolf Behne furthermore rejected the term altogether, contending, “only through abstraction does reality constitute itself anew.”<sup>584</sup> For them, a new naturalism needed to be distinguished from the naturalism of the nineteenth century. The term naturalism aroused fears that a return to this mode of mimesis would encourage a technically correct, albeit formulaic painting, which would dilute the power of art to intervene critically in reality.

These discussions of what would later be called *Neue Sachlichkeit* rehearsed longstanding debates on mimesis that have prevailed since the days of Plato and Aristotle.

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<sup>581</sup> Krause, *My Only Reality*, 166.

<sup>582</sup> Edwin Redslob, “Ein neuer Naturalismus??: eine Rundfrage des Kunstblatts,” *Der Kunstblatt*, 6:9 (January 1922): 375.

<sup>583</sup> George Groß, “Ein neuer Naturalismus??: eine Rundfrage des Kunstblatts,” *Der Kunstblatt*, 6:9 (January 1922): 382.

<sup>584</sup> Adolf Behne, “Ein neuer Naturalismus??: eine Rundfrage des Kunstblatts,” *Der Kunstblatt*, 6:9 (January 1922): 383.

Stephen Halliwell and, more recently, Alex Potts have shown that theories of mimesis have historically been aligned with the writings of Plato, on the one hand, and Aristotle, on the other.<sup>585</sup> Plato's conception of mimetic art proceeds from the idea that art reflects or imitates the world.<sup>586</sup> And Aristotle argues that mimesis is the creation of a world in itself that puts forward, according to Potts, "a compelling picture or fiction that echoed or evoked something significant about the real world, without necessarily copying it directly."<sup>587</sup> As a result, a naturalism of the twenties was no longer a means of copying the world, but creating one through pictorial means.<sup>588</sup>

Laserstein confronts the Platonic baggage of mimesis being merely world reflecting in *Evening*. With its softer mode of representation, the painting calls to mind a kind of naturalism. Yet, Laserstein's art historical references, along with her handling of time and space initiates more abstract, negative operations, which challenge the belief that a naturalistic realism is passive or stable. In *Realism After Modernism* (2012), Devin Fore interrogates the problems that realism posed for critics and historians. He disputes the "critical dismissal of interwar realism as merely an aesthetic restoration" because this charge "underestimates the degree to which the reappearance of older artistic devices in this period was an active and deliberate strategy to expropriate the capital of the cultural heritage."<sup>589</sup> Indeed, Laserstein's *Evening* operates within the parameters of Fore's argument to reconsider how the art of this period mimics the past in

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<sup>585</sup> Alex Potts, *Experiments in Modern Realism: World Making, Politics and the Everyday in Postwar European and American Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>586</sup> Potts, *Experiments*, 45.

<sup>587</sup> Potts, *Experiments*, 45.

<sup>588</sup> Edwin Redslob, "Ein neuer Naturalismus??: eine Rundfrage des Kunstblatts," 375.

<sup>589</sup> Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 10.



forms, which eventually reveal themselves, in Fore's words, "as citations that are framed by quotation marks."<sup>590</sup>

*Evening's* subdued color palette, softer contours, and setting outside of the bustling metropolis come close to the neo-romanticism that Krausse discusses. Contrary to neo-romanticism, however, the work does not quote the past to romanticize it or to uphold tradition for its own sake. Laserstein cites art history in *Evening*, instead, to question its place and purpose in the contemporary moment. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer consider art's conflicted relationship with tradition. They argue that this struggle is a necessary condition for the production of great art because, unlike inferior, inauthentic works of art, great art does not, "[rely] on its similarity to others, the surrogate of identity."<sup>591</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer thusly equate style and emulation with obedience.<sup>592</sup>

To be clear, the level of negation in *Evening* is not what Adorno, in particular – as a proponent of abstraction, non-referentiality, and artistic autonomy – would have advocated. In any case, the painting reveals the dire necessity of the failure to make positive declarations in 1930. She appropriates historical motifs to erode the belief in an indisputable past as well as the promise of a secure future. Laserstein's naturalist representational strategies are as much a requisition of aesthetic traditionalism as they are a disavowal of it. The Potsdam picture, accordingly, does not simply strike a triumphant chord with the venerated Leonardo or Vermeer. It is because of, not in spite of the work's referential qualities that *Evening* evades resolution and unity, and this is perhaps why the work is compelling. With it, Laserstein abandons triumph, and that failure is the painting's success.

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<sup>590</sup> Fore, *Realism after Modernism*, 10.

<sup>591</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 103.

<sup>592</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 103.

Two paintings exhibited in the Nazi sanctioned *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* of 1937 depict a familiar motif. In them, contemplative loved ones gather together in modest rooms around rather empty tables to share a large round loaf of bread. In Thomas Baumgartner's *Bauern beim Essen* (1937) (Figure 108), a father, with the bread, his knife, and bare feet, sits at the head of the table, which is situated in the corner of a room anchored beneath a window and a crucifix. The family waits patiently for him to supply their portions, as another adult male figure addresses them with patriarchal authority. In a similar fashion, the mother depicted in Constantin Gerhardinger's *Bäuerliche Brotsegen* (ca. 1937) (Figure 109) seems to embrace the bread with her body as she begins to slice it for her children, her husband, and the grandmother. As these families share their bread, they secure their salvation from a cosmopolitan modernity in their rustic pastoral homes. Both of these works present an unambiguous value system grounded in a land ruled by God, *Führer*, and father, where women and their vessels are mothers and servers. As artistic products of the German *Volk*, these paintings represent the cult of blood and soil that bolstered the barbarism of the National Socialists. In the same year these paintings were exhibited, Laserstein, deemed a half-Jew by the Nazis, left Germany for Sweden in exile, where she would live until her death in 1993.

A question – “And now what?” – appears before the atomistic faces of the figures in Laserstein's Potsdam picture. It was also this question that played a central role in Jean-François Lyotard's “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde” (1984).<sup>593</sup> Lyotard writes that regressive art “block[s] the negative dialectic of the question, ‘Is it happening,’ with the question ‘Is the Führer happening?’ ...”<sup>594</sup> In the context of Nazi painting, for instance, there is no question about the

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<sup>593</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” *Art Forum* 22.8 (April 1984): 37. Fore also discusses this essay in *Realism After Modernism*.

<sup>594</sup> Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” 42.

resolution that will come or to quote Lyotard that, “one day, the bread will not arrive,” as the paintings by Baumgartner and Gerhardinger illustrate.<sup>595</sup> Lyotard asserts that, by contrast, with avant-garde art, the question is pregnant with anticipation as a “predominantly negative value.”<sup>596</sup> In *Evening*, Laserstein similarly captures the power of this negative anticipation as a force of resistance against blind conviction during a moment of crisis in Germany in the year of 1930. As the picture represents that very question – “And now what?” – it also represents the danger of knowing its answer with an unwavering and all too positive certainty.

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<sup>595</sup> Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” 37.

<sup>596</sup> Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” 37.

## FIGURES



Figure 1: “The new practical tennis costume, whose general introduction in America is striven for.” In Sigfried Giedion, *Befreites Wohnen* (Syndikat: Frankfurt, 1929): 83. Originally published in *Illustriertes Blatt*: Frankfurt am Main 5 (1929).

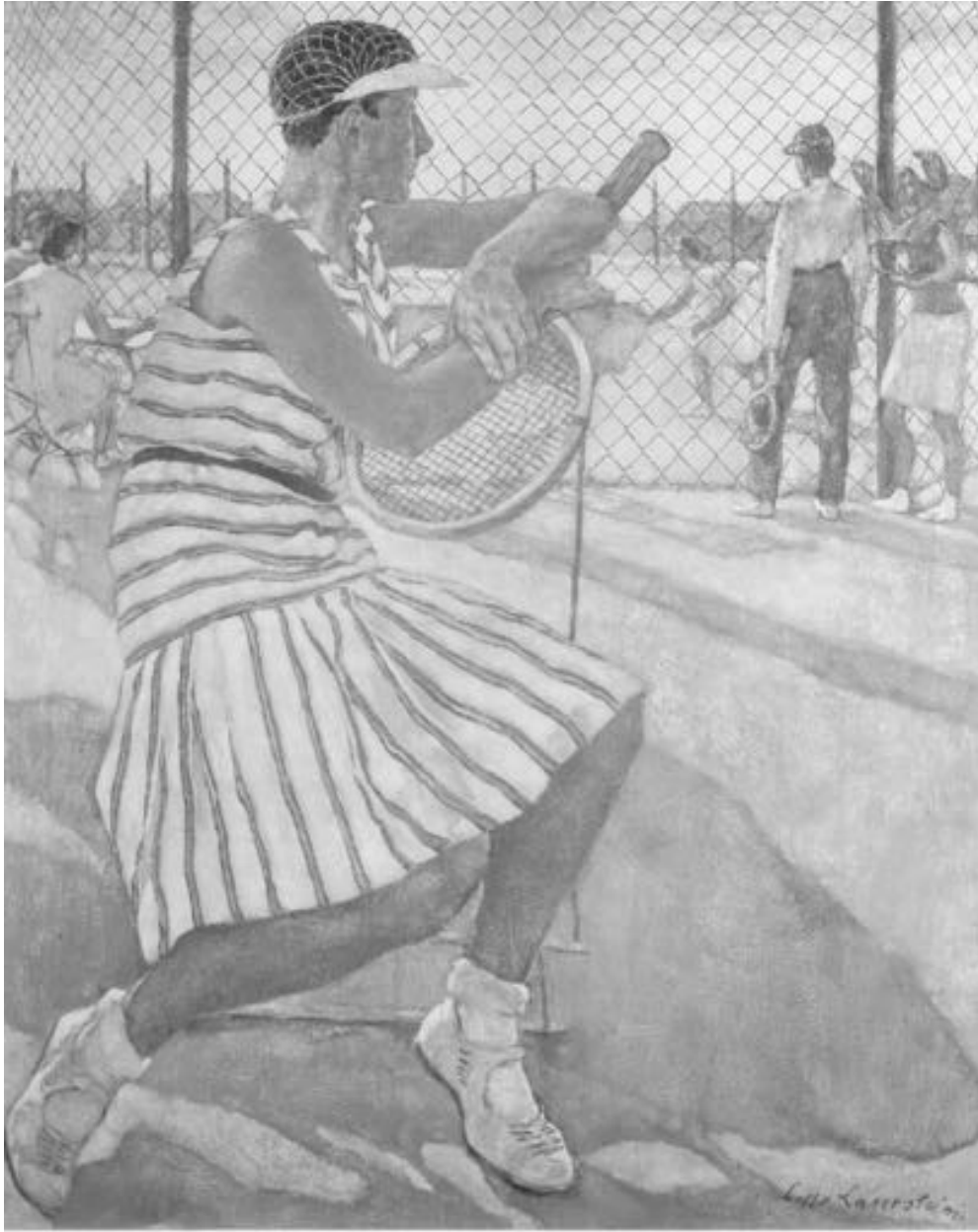


Figure 2: Lotte Laserstein, *Tennispielerin*, 1929, Oil on canvas, 110 x 95.5 cm, Private collection UK.



Figure 3: Lotte Laserstein, *Russian Girl with Compact*, 1928, Oil on wood, 31.7 x 41 cm, Nybro Kommun, Sweden.



Figure 4: Christian Schad, *Lotte*, 1927-1928, Oil on wood, 66.2 x 54.5 cm, Sprengel Museum, Hannover.



Figure 5: Willy Jaeckel, Standing Girl, Oil on canvas, 1928, destroyed.





Figure 6: Lotte Laserstein, *Traute Rose with Red Cap and Checkered Blouse*, 1931, Oil on paper, 92 x 69 cm, Private collection, Sweden.



Figure 7: Lotte Laserstein, *In the Tavern*, 1927, Oil, Berlin.



Figure 8: Grete Stern, *Porträt of Ellen Auerbach*, ca. 1930, 27.9 x 21.6 cm. Bauhaus Archiv Berlin.



Figure 9: "Schotten," *Elegante Welt* 24 (November 19, 1924): 25.



Figure 10: Cover of *Elegante Welt* 16 (August 3, 1921).



Figure 11: Otto Dix, *Portrait of the Journalist Sylvia von Harden*, 1926, Mixed media on wood, 121 x 89 cm, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'Art Moderne, Paris.



Figure 12: Christian Schad, *Sonja*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 90 x 60 (35 3/8 x 23 6/8 in.) Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie.



Figure 13: Coco Chanel, “The Chanel ‘Ford’ – The Frock That All the World Will Wear,” in *Vogue* 68, no. 7 (October 1, 1926): 69.





Figure 14: "Ford übernimmt die Herstellung von Tillergirls. Tagesproduktion: 15 000." *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 13 (March 28, 1926): 411.



Figure 15: Labels for Paul Poiret “genuine reproductions,” from inside wrapper for *Les Modèles de Paul Poiret, Printemps 1917, 1917*.



Figure 16: Lotte Laserstein, *Poster Design for the Exhibition Die gestaltende Frau*, 1930, Ink and watercolor on cardboard, 72 x 48.2 cm, Private collection Sweden.



Figure 17: Lucia Moholy, *László Moholy-Nagy*, 1926, Gelatin silver print, 22.3 x 15.3 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 18: Lotte Laserstein, *Self-Portrait with Cat*, 1928, Oil on plywood panel, 61 x 51 cm, New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester.



Figure 19: Lotte Laserstein, *Traute Rose with White Gloves*, 1931, Oil on paper, Mounted on cardboard, 94 x 65 cm, Private collection, UK.



Figure 20: Madame d'Ora, Fashion photograph in *Die Dame* 10 (1931): 11.



Figure 21: Man Ray, *Portrait of Elsa Schiaparelli*, c. 1930. Published in Klaus Jürgen Sembach, *Stil 1930* (Tübingen: E. Wasmuth, 1971).





Figure 22: "Schönheit im Winkel: Eine Entdeckungsfahrt des "Uhu" *Der Uhu* 2 (November 1928): 24-28.



Figure 23: Lotte Laserstein, *Traute Rose with Tie*, 1931, Oil and watercolor on paper, 43 x 49 cm, Private collection, Sweden.



Figure 24: Lotte Laserstein, *Russian Girl*, 1928. Oil on wood, 32 x 23 cm, Private collection, UK.

MODE AUS SEIDENSAMT

Neu-Typ ist sehr gut vorher, niemand hat heute die Schwachheit, die Rolle der unverständigen Frau zu spielen. Selbständigkeit in der Arbeit, Spazier alle Art schufen die unabhängige Frau, die in allem, was sie tut, eigenes Wesen äußert. Ich habe in meinem Buch „Jungfrauen, schlack“ (Verlag Dr. Eysler & Co., Berlin) gesagt:

Ein großer Teil der Menschen sträubt sich unüberlegt und in sinnloser Weise gegen alle jene notwendigen Dinge, die sich mit dem Begriff پوشecken. Es ist zwecklos, sich mit solchen Kampfzügen in Dingen einzulassen. Jede

Die Tänzerin Evi Evi in kirchrotem Seidenmantel



überlebten und verpöbelten Meinungen, die immer und immer auf Gabeln hochgehoben, lassen sich nicht aus der Welt schaffen.

Es ist natürlich das gelbe Gesicht und hat mit Anstand nicht gemein, wenn ein Dame vergisst auf einem Stuhl zu sitzen, daß man den peinlichen Eindruck nicht los wird, daß sie diese Stellung vor ihrem Backfischtag täglich vor dem Spiegel sieht. Daß sie als sticht oder unheimlich regiert, ist keineswegs ein Fehler. Der Fehler und die Unvollkommenheit besteht natürlich nur in dem Umstande dafolchenpuren

Immer spielen Taktos aus mit großer Agilität. Foto: Eysler & Co.



Die Tänzerin Irene Andersen trägt zu einem Mantel aus Seidenmantel mit reicher Fuchsvorhang eines jenseitigen Seidenmantel mit Strahlenverlauf.



Zu dem dunkelgrünen Seidenmantel mit Strahlenverlauf gehört eine schlichte kleine Glocke aus silbergrauer Seidenmantel mit schmalen Rippen aus glänzendem Seide. Foto: Andersen

Figure 25: Ola Alsen, “Seide und Samt – Die große Mode’ Sondernummer zur Ausstellung *Die Mode der Dame*,” *Seide* 9 (1927): 293.



Figure 26: Vicki Baum, “Welche Frau ist am begehrtesten?”  
*Uhu* 1 (October 1930): 71.



Figure 27: Lotte Laserstein, *Ola Alsen*, 1929, Oil and chalk on canvas, 66 x 63.5 cm, Private collection, UK.



Figure 28: Lotte Laserstein, *Polly Tieck*, 1929, Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 79 cm, Private collection, Sweden.



Figure 29: Lotte Laserstein, Fashion drawings, c. 1932, Graphite on Paper, 33x18 cm, Private Collection, Germany.





Figure 30: "Erwachen des Sports," *Elegante Welt* 9 (April 1924): 18-19, 54-55.

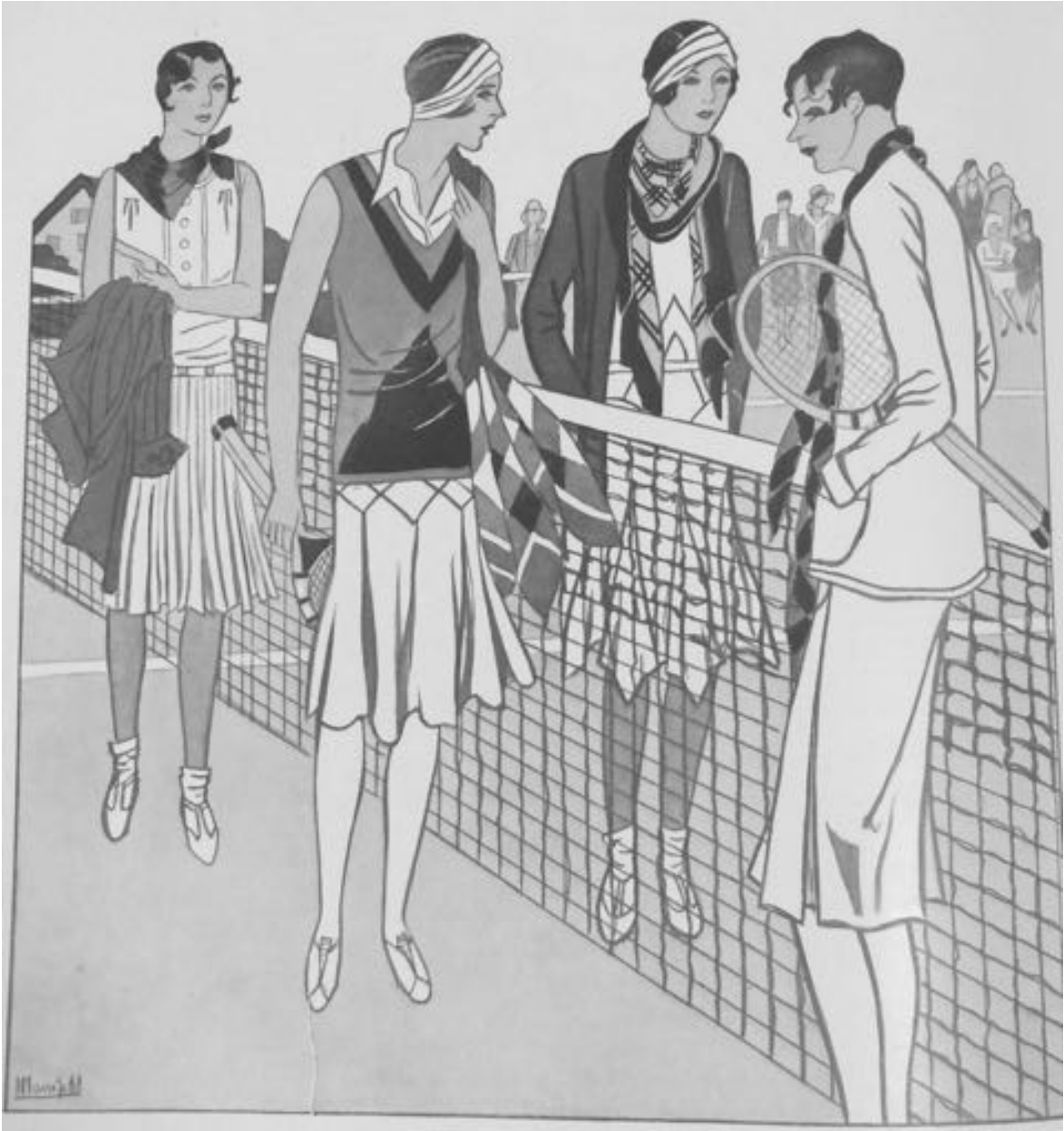


Figure 31: “Auf dem Tennis-Platz in Cannes,” *Elegante Welt* 7 (March 30, 1929): 44.



Figure 32: Eduard Thöny, 'Die Weltmeisterin', *Simplicissimus* 31 (June 14, 1926): 156.



Figure 33: Kobbé, *Die Modemaler*, *Die Dame* 4 (First November Issue 1925).



Figure 34: “Das Tutanchamun-Kleid,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (April 20, 1924): 411.



Figure 35: Otto Dix, *Self Portrait with Muse*, 1924, Oil on canvas, 81 x 94 cm, Karl Ernst Osthaus-Museum, Hagen.



Figure 36: Christian Schad, *Self-Portrait*, 1927, Oil on wood, 76 x 61.4 cm, Private Collection.



Figure 37: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Venus*, 1532, Mixed media on wood, 37.7 x 24.5 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.





Figure 38: Bettina Schad, *Aschenputtel*, 10.17.1936, Christian Schad Stiftung, Aschaffenburg.



Figure 39: Raphael, *La Fornarina*, c. 1518, Oil on wood, 85 x 60 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.



Figure 40: Otto Dix, *Portrait of Frau Martha Dix*, 1923, Oil on canvas, 69 x 60.5 cm, Private collection of Manfred Frank and Martina Rosenberg.



Figure 41: Christian Schad, *Marcella (Marcella Schad)*, 1926 Oil on wood 80 x 57.2 cm (31 ½ x 22 ½ in.) Private Collection.



Figure 42: Photographs of Paris taken by Christian Schad in the 1920s and hand-colored postcards of Paris in Christian Schad's collection.



Figure 43: Christian Schad, *Friends*, 1930, Oil on canvas, 31.5 x 23.4 cm, Richard Nagy, Dover Street Gallery, London.

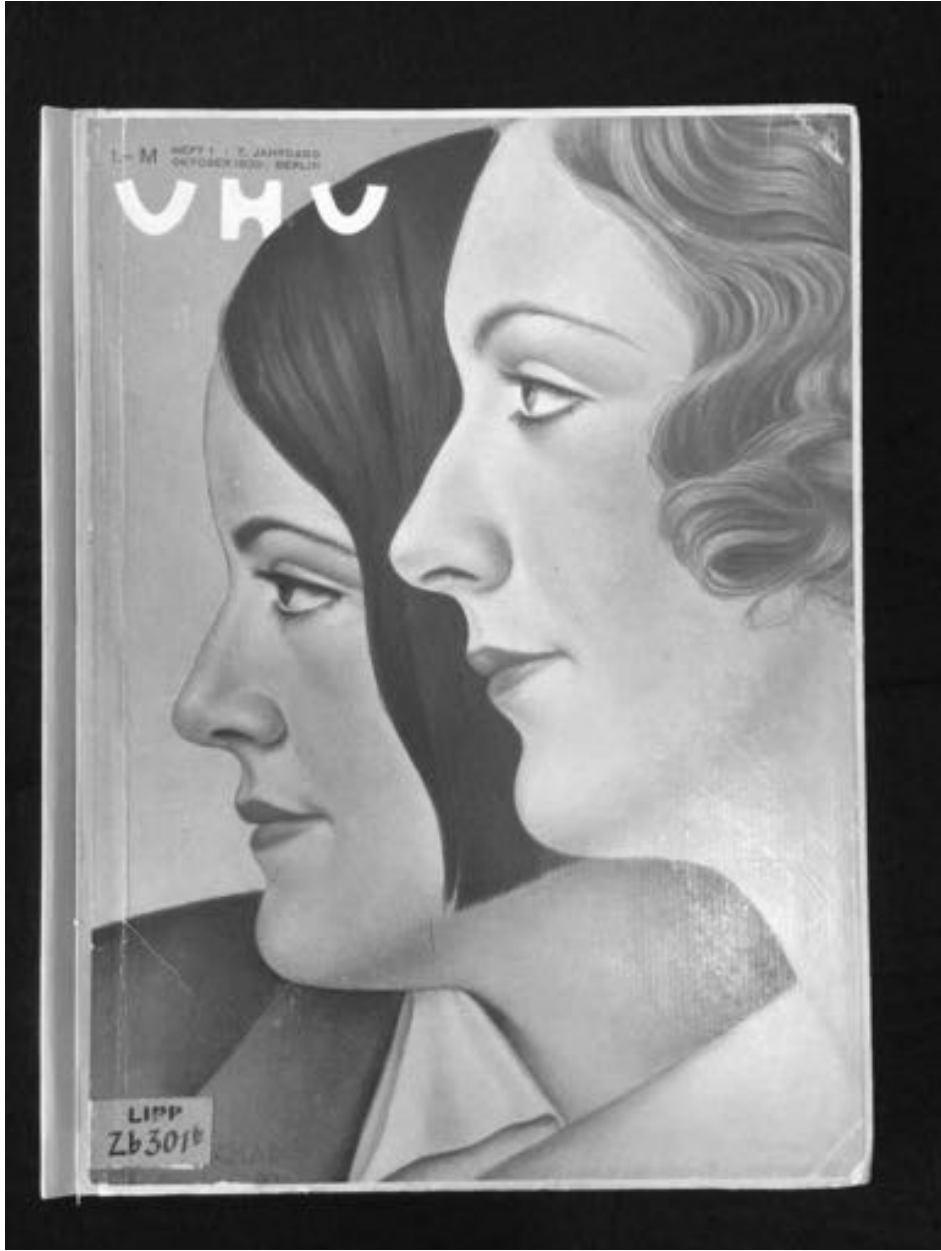


Figure 44: Christian Schad, *Friends*, in *Uhu* 1 (October 1930).



Figure 45: Bettina Schad, Sketches for Kleiderfabrik Mathes, c. 1950s, Christian Schad Stiftung, Aschaffenburg





Figure 46: Marcella Schad, c. 1923-1926, Christian Schad Stiftung, Aschaffenburg.



Figure 47: Otto Dix, *Portrait of Mrs. Martha Dix*, 1926, Oil and tempera on wood, 115 x 75 cm, Museum Ludwig, Cologne/Kasimir Hagen Collection.



Figure 48: August Sander, *Mother and Daughter (Martha Dix with Daughter Nelly)*, 1925/26, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.



Figure 49: Hugo Erfurth, "Frau Otto Dix, die Gattin des Malers," *Die Dame* 4 (Second November Issue 1927, 13.



Figure 50: Otto Dix, *Mutzli is Horrified at Jimmy's New Suit*, 1922, pen and ink, 28.9 x 18.9 cm, inscribed: "Mutzli is horrified at Jimmy's new suit/ this is supposed to be fur /creases aren't straight (all the rage in fashion)." "Mutzli ist erschüttert über Jimmys neuen Kott/ das soll Pelz sein/ Bügel falten schief (dieser Schrei der Mode)", Otto Dix Stiftung, Vaduz.



Figure 51: Otto Dix, *A Tragic Event*, 1922, pen and ink on notepaper, 18.9 x 29.8 cm, inscribed; “Mutzli Jimmy und der Itteladen ( a tragic event)”. “Mutzli Jimmy und der Itteladen (eine tragische Begebenheit).”, Otto Dix Stiftung, Vaduz.



Figure 52: Otto Dix, *OTTO DIX draws a Self Portrait at an Easel with Mutzli in Armchair*, April 12, 1922, pen and ink on paper, 28.5 x 22 cm, “While Jimmy ponders the deepest problems of life with furrowed, tormented brow, Mutz sits in an armchair munching chocolates and Easter eggs, occupied with the equally weighty question of ITTAS / That’s Life !!!!!” “Während Jimmy mit zerkümmelter zerquälter Stirn die tiefsten Probleme des Lebens wälzt sitzt Mutzli im Lehnstuhl mampft Schokolädchen und Ostereier und beschäftigt sich mit der ebenso schwerwiegenden Frage der ITTAS. So ist das Leben!!!!!!” Otto Dix Stiftung, Vaduz.

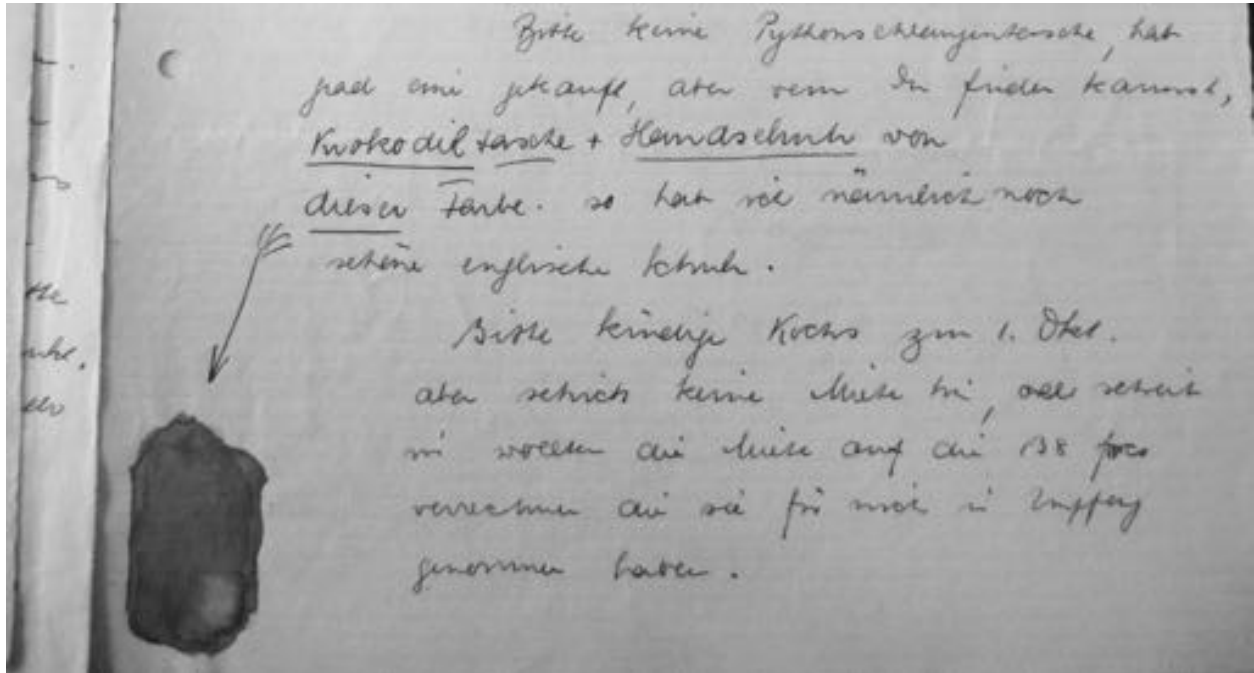


Figure 53: Letter from Martha to Otto Dix, June 25, 1936, Archive of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.





Figure 54: Otto Dix, *Self Portrait with Wife*, 1932, oil and tempera on canvas, location unknown.



Figure 55: Christian Schad, *Two Girls*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 109.5 x 80 cm (43 1/8 x 31 1/2 in), Private collection, New York.



Figure 56: Otto Dix, *Reclining Woman on Leopard Skin*, 1927, Oil on wood, 68 x 98 cm. Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Gift of Samuel A. Berger.



Figure 57: Fransisco Goya, *The Clothed Maya*, 1807-1808, Oil on canvas, 97 cm x 190 cm (38 in x 75 in), Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Figure 58: Jean August Dominique Ingres, *The Grand Odalisque*, 1814, Oil on canvas, 88.9 cm x 162.56 cm (35 in x 64 in), Louvre, Paris.



Figure 59: Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, Oil on canvas, 130.5 cm x 190 cm (51.4 in x 74.8 in), Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Figure 60: Fernand Khnopff, *The Sphinx, or, The Caresses*, 1896, Oil on canvas, 50 x 150 cm (19 5/8 in x 59 in), Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.



Figure 61: Henry Fuseli (Johann Heinrich Füssli), *The Nightmare*, 1781, Oil on canvas, 101.6 x 127 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts.





Figure 62: Otto Dix, *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber*, 1925, Tempera on wood, 125 x 65 cm, Otto-Dix-Stiftung, Vaduz, Dauerleihgabe Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart.

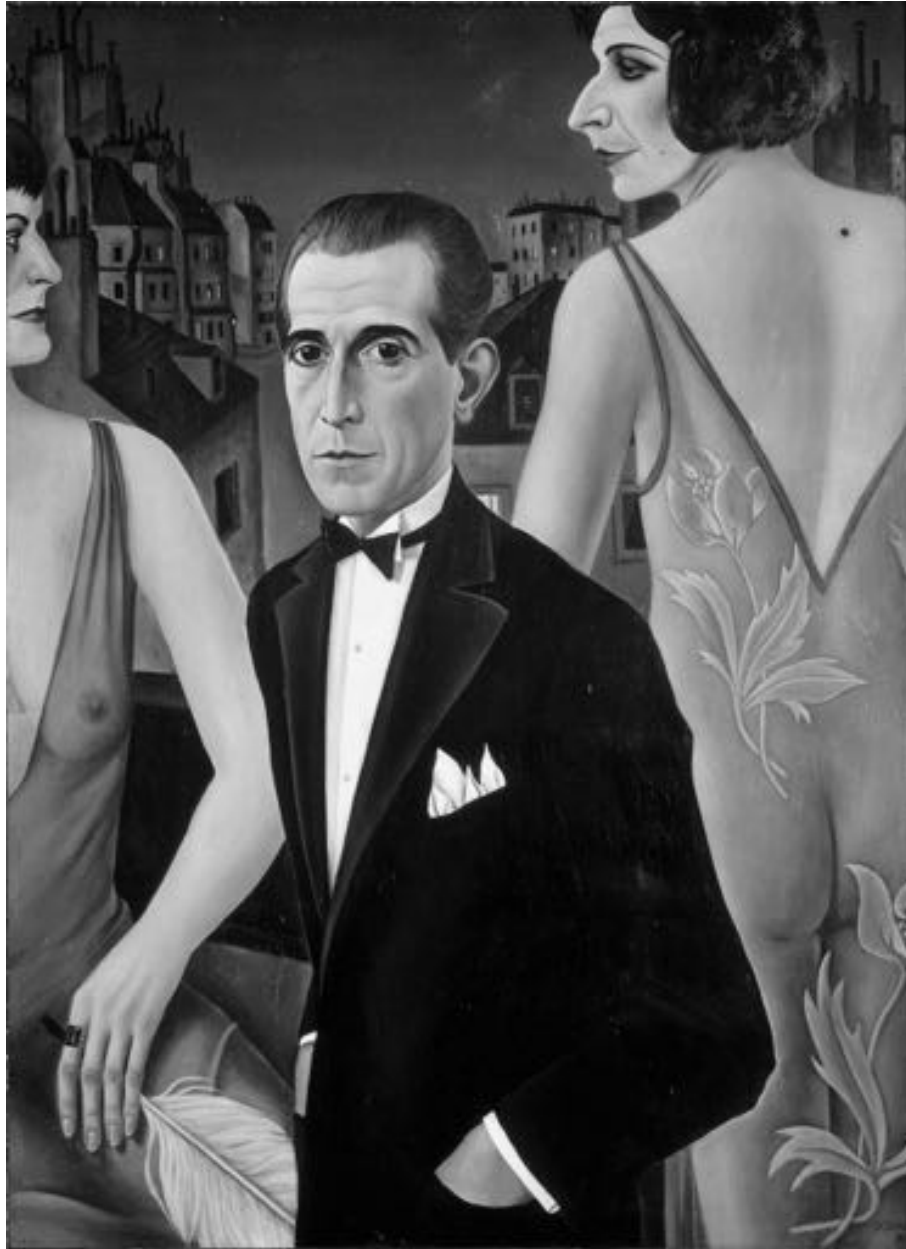


Figure 63: Christian Schad, *Portrait of Count St. Genois D'Anneaucourt*, 1927, Oil on wood, 86 x 63 cm (33 7/8 x 24 3/4 in.)  
Centre George Pompidou, Paris – Musée national d'art moderne /  
Centre de création industrielle.



Figure 64: *Die Dame*, 1 (First October Issue 1927).



Figure 65: "Anita Berber: Dance into Dark" (c. 1925). Lothar Fischer, *Tanz zwischen Rausch und Tod: Anita Berber 1918-1928* (1996), 15.



Figure 66: Lya de Putti (c. mid-twenties). Lothar Fischer, *Tanz zwischen Rausch und Tod: Anita Berber 1918-1928* (1996), 127.

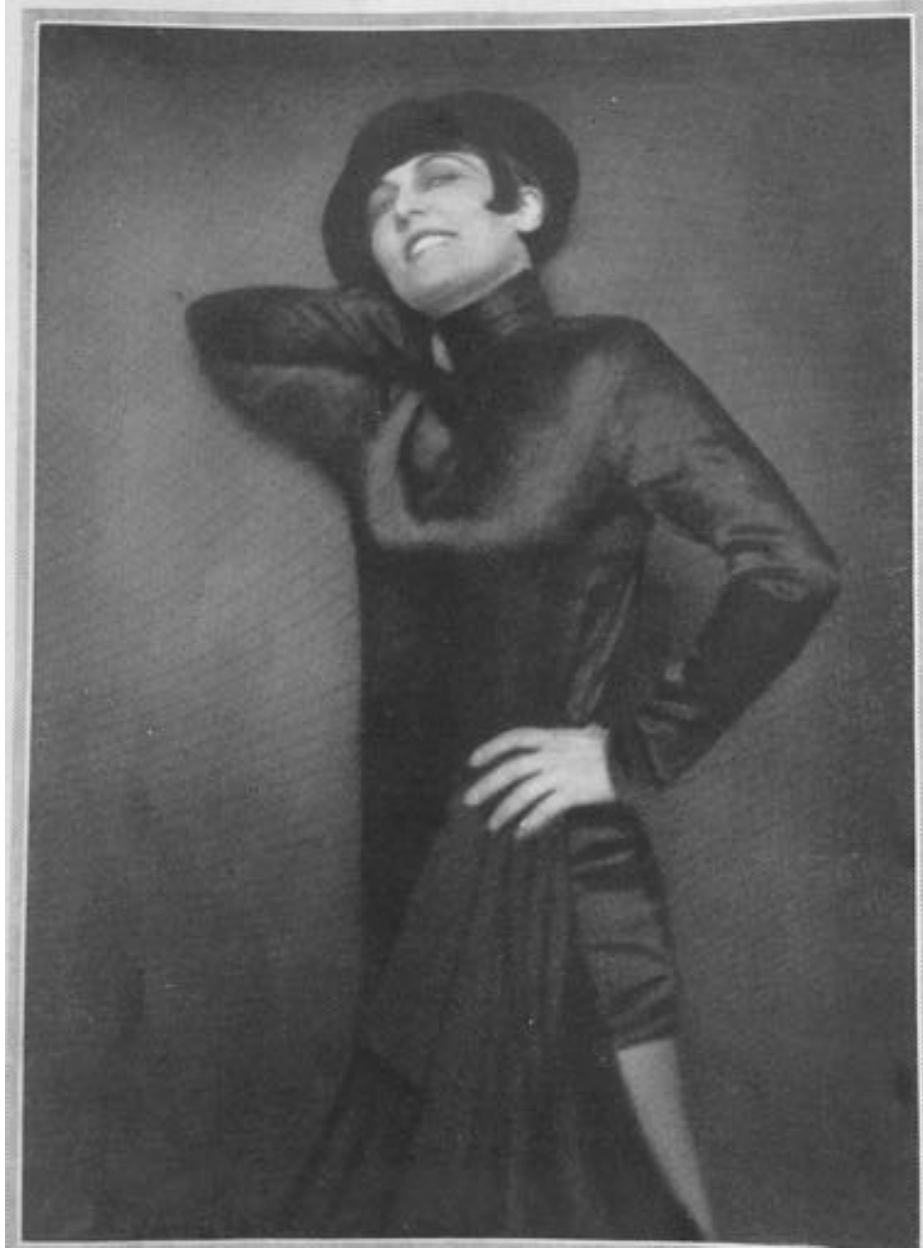


Figure 67: Schenker-Bucovich, The Dancer Grit Hegesa, *Die Dame* 7 (Second December Issue 1925), 32.



Figure 68: Ernst Klausz, *Die Dame* 16 (Third April Issue 1926).



Figure 69: Ernst Wallenburger, “Beim-Damen-Imitator,” *Jugend* 9 (1927): 214.



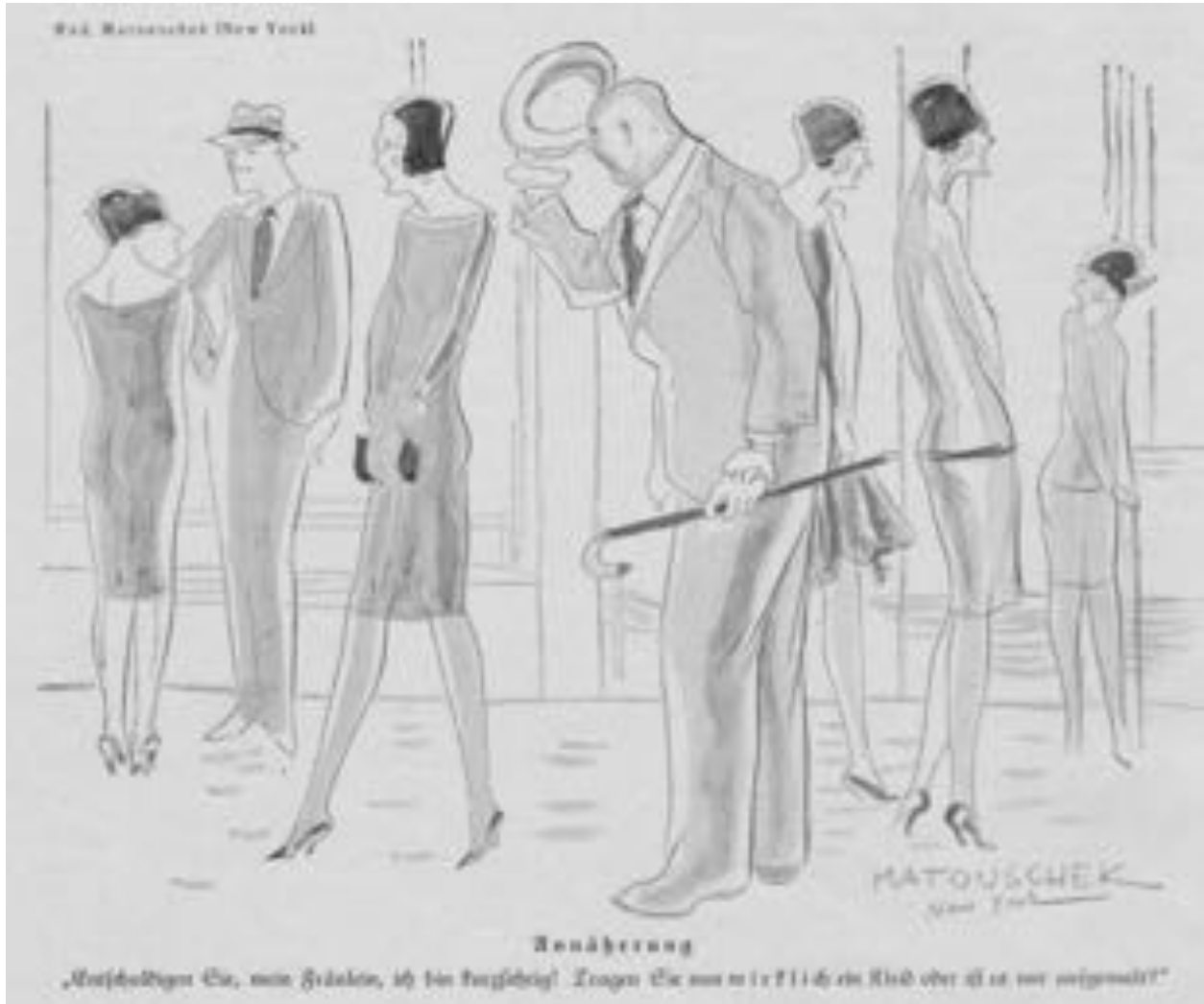


Figure 70: Rud. Matouschek, “Annäherung,” *Jugend* 30 (1927): 666.



Figure 71: Christian Schad, *Portrait of Woman from Berlin (Fräulein Schellenberg)*, 1930.



Figure 72: Christian Schad, *Portrait of Mulino von Kluck*, 1930, Oil on canvas, Cover of *Die Dame*, 18 (May 3, 1930).



Figure 73: Otto Dix, *Portrait of the Dancer Tamara Danischewski with Iris*, 1933, Mixed media on wood, 81 x 63.5 cm, Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart.



Figure 74: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1530, Oil on wood, 42 x 49 cm (16.54 x 19.29 in), Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



Figure 75: László Moholy-Nagy, *From the Radio Tower, Berlin*, 1928, Gelatin silver print, 28 x 21.3 cm, Private collection.



Figure 76: Lilly Reich & Mies van der Rohe, *Café Samt und Seide* (Velvet and Silk Café), *Die Mode der Dame* (Women's Fashion), Berlin, 1927, Mies Van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 77: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, View from *Café Samt und Seide*, Berlin, 1927. *Seide* 10 (1927).

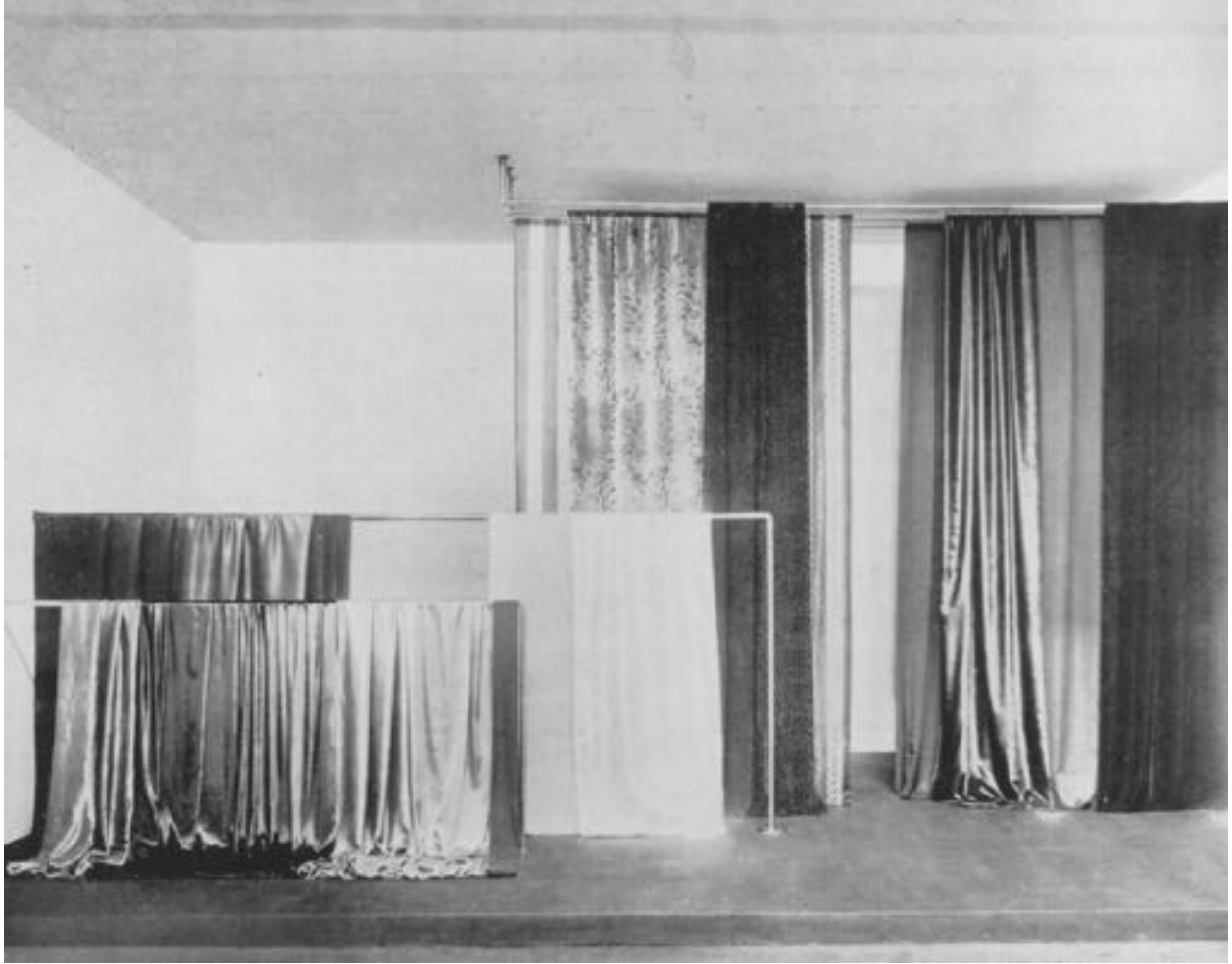




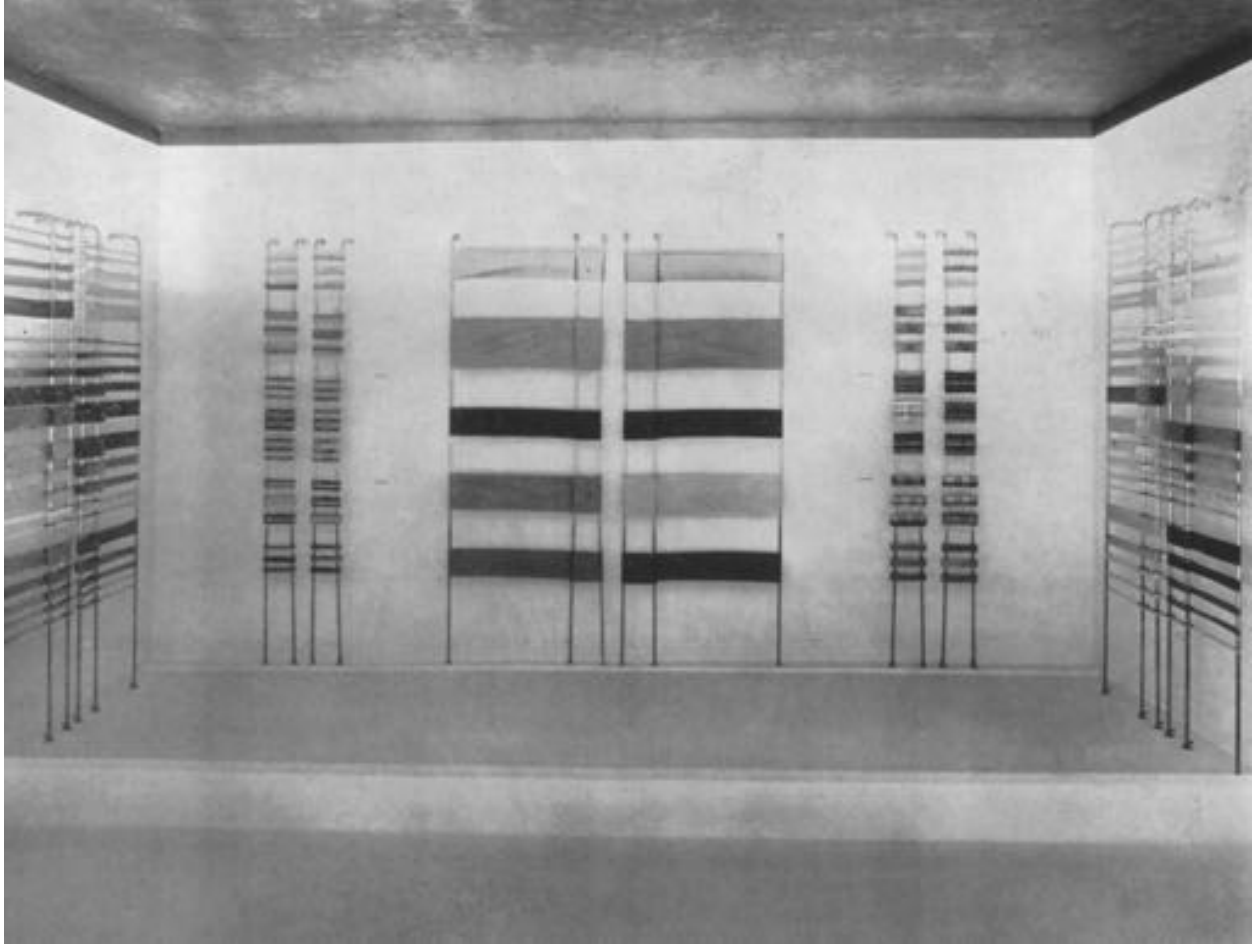
Figure 78: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, View from *Café Samt und Seide*, Berlin, 1927, *Cahiers d'Art* 3 (1928): 38.



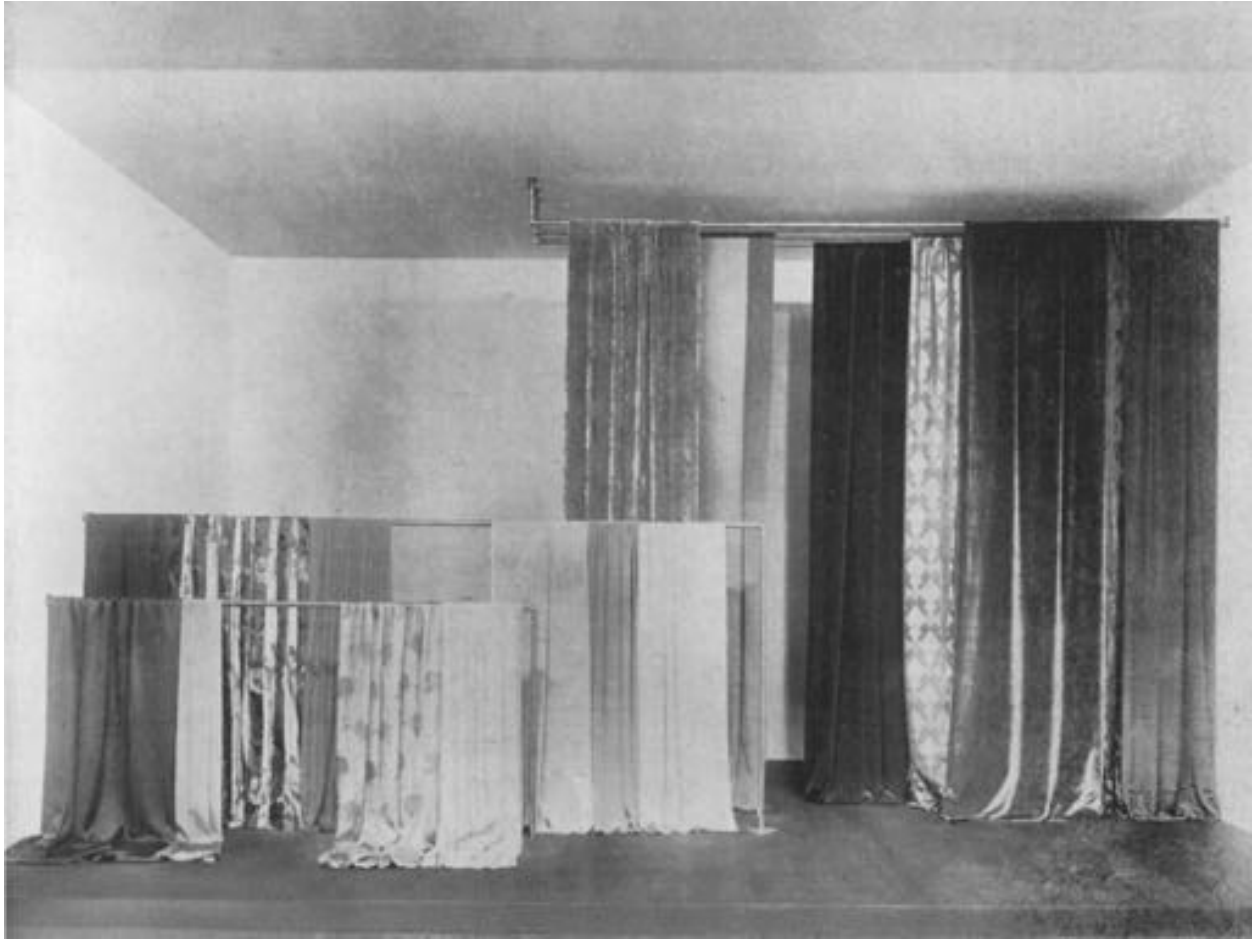
Figure 79: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, View from *Café Samt und Seide*, Berlin, 1927, *Seide* 10 (1927).



Figures 80: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, View from *Die Mode der Dame*, Berlin, 1927, *Seite* 10 (1927).



Figures 81: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, View from *Die Mode der Dame*, Berlin, 1927, *Seite 10* (1927).



Figures 82: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, View from *Die Mode der Dame*, Berlin, 1927, *Seide* 10 (1927).

*Zum Sport*  
**BEMBERG-STRÜMPFE**

FRÄU. RICHARDE JARACH, WISMAR-ZÄHNKUNST

FRÄULEIN HERTA PLATT, DARMSTADT

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FRÄU. META KLEIN, BADENAU-DRESDEN

FRÄULEIN MARGOT MENDELSON, BERLIN-SCHÖNBERG

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*F. Kirsch, Stuttgart*

Achten Sie beim Einkauf von Strümpfen aus Bembergseide auf den Bembergstempel. Anderwege. Ver-  
sicherungen beim Verkauf nicht gemessener kunstseidener Strümpfe gewährleisten nicht die Bemberg-Qualität.  
Für Bembergseide in einer Wahl trägt nur der Goldstempel. Die zweite Wahl trägt den Stempel Bembergseide in Silber. Die dritte Wahl hat in Metall den  
Aufdruck „Bembergseide ohne Wahl“

Figure 83: Advertisement for Sports and Bemberg Artificial Silk Stockings. “Zum Sport Bemberg Strümpfe,” *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (December 18, 1927): 2108.



Figure 84: *Die Wohnung*. Stuttgart, 1927. Plate-Glass Hall: living room, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 85: *Die Wohnung*. Stuttgart, 1927. German Linoleum Works exhibit, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Das ideale Heim 1* (1927): 535.





Figure 86: *Die Wohnung*, Stuttgart, 1927. Main Hall, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

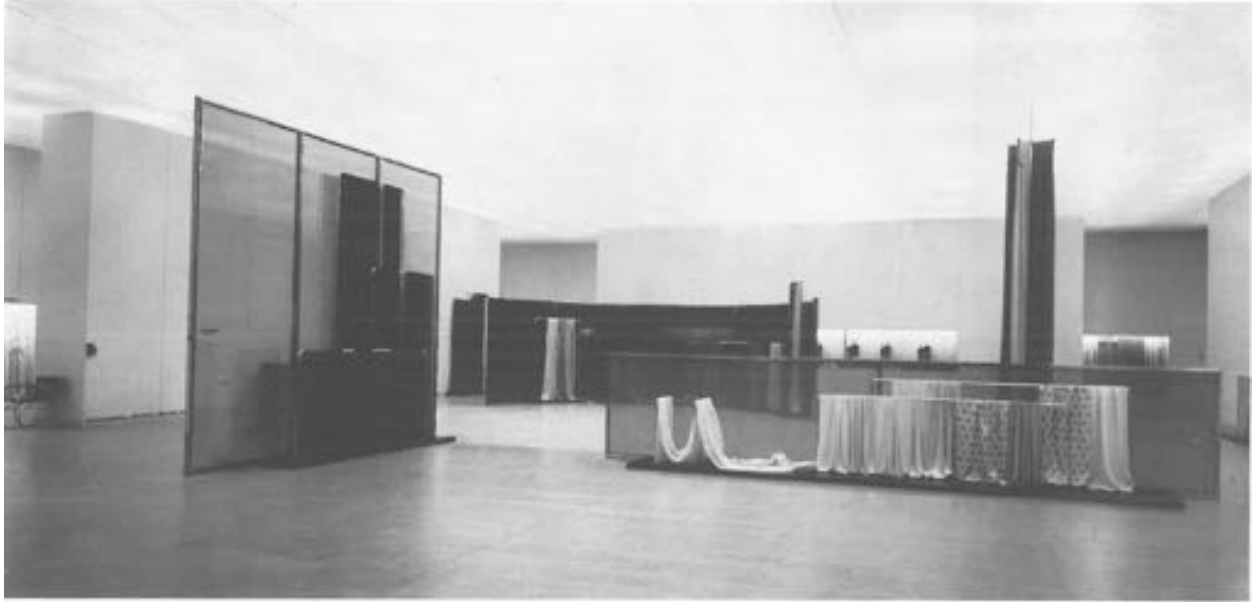


Figure 87: International Exposition. Barcelona, German textile exhibit, 1929, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 88: *Die Wohnung unserer Zeit*. Berlin, Textile exhibit from ground floor, 1931. German textile exhibit, 1929, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

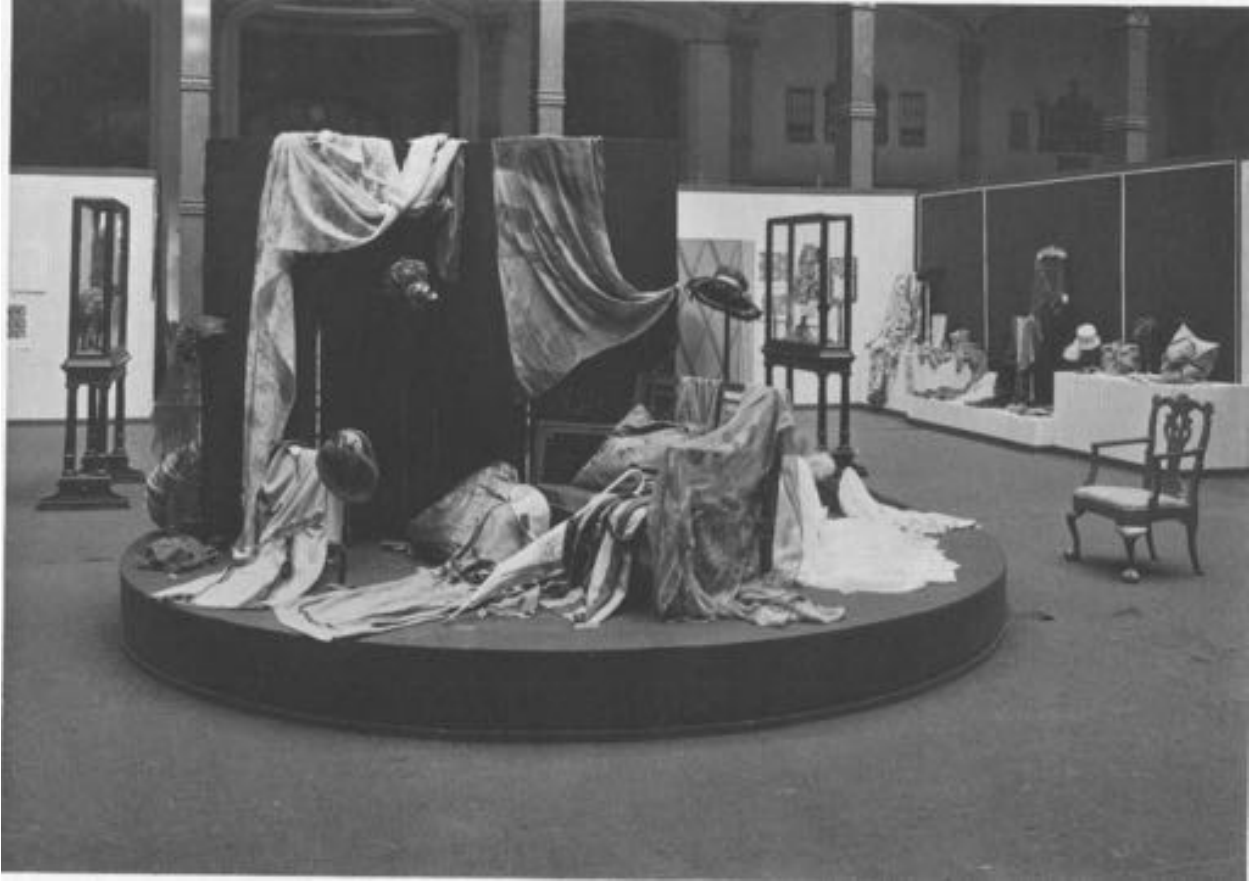


Figure 89: *Kunsth Handwerk in der Mode*. Berlin, 1920, *Die Bauwelt* 9 (January 21, 1911): 11.



Figure 90: *From Fiber to Textile*. Frankfurt am Main, 1926. View of the Main Hall, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 91: Transept of the Crystal Palace from the south entrance, London, 1851, From *the Illustrated Exhibitor: A tribute to the World's Industrial Jubilee 1* (1851): facing page 1, Getty Research Institute.

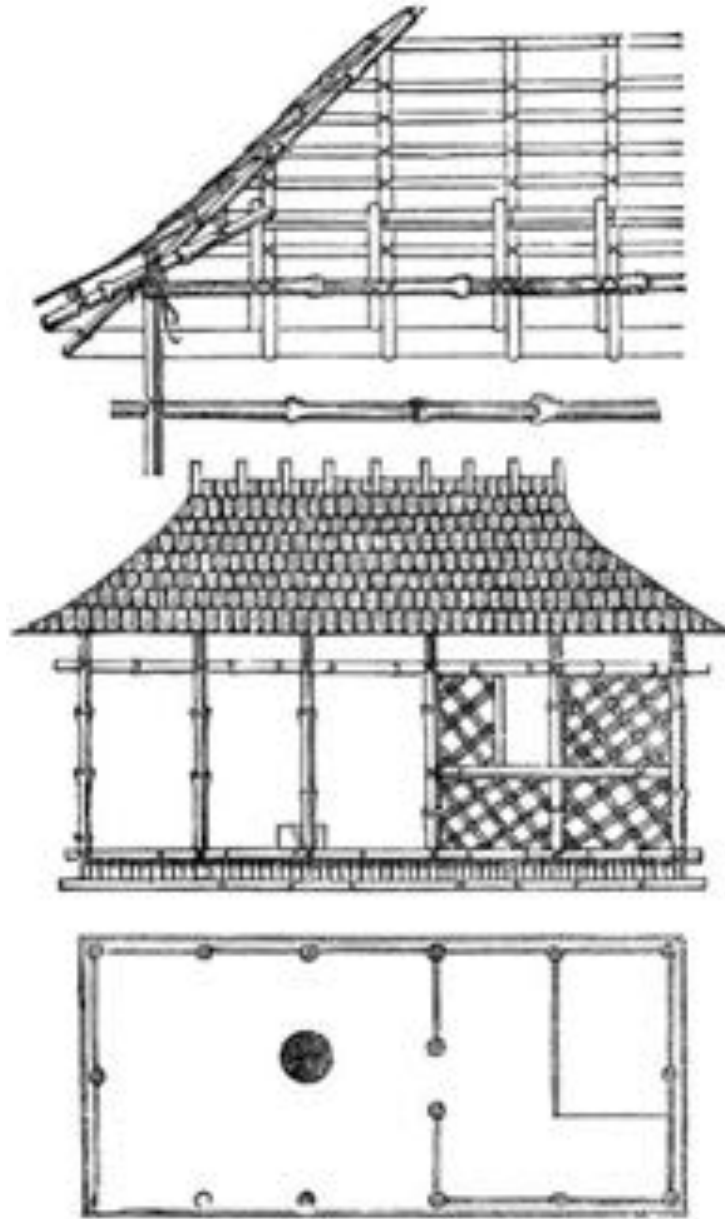


Figure 92: Caribbean hut, model on display at the Great Exhibition, London, 1851, From Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten...*, 2:276, Research Library, Getty Research Institute.



Figure 93: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper Project Berlin Mitte* (Exterior perspective from north), 1921, Charcoal and graphite on paper mounted on board, 68 1/4 x 48" (173.4 x 121.9 cm), Museum of Modern Art, New York.



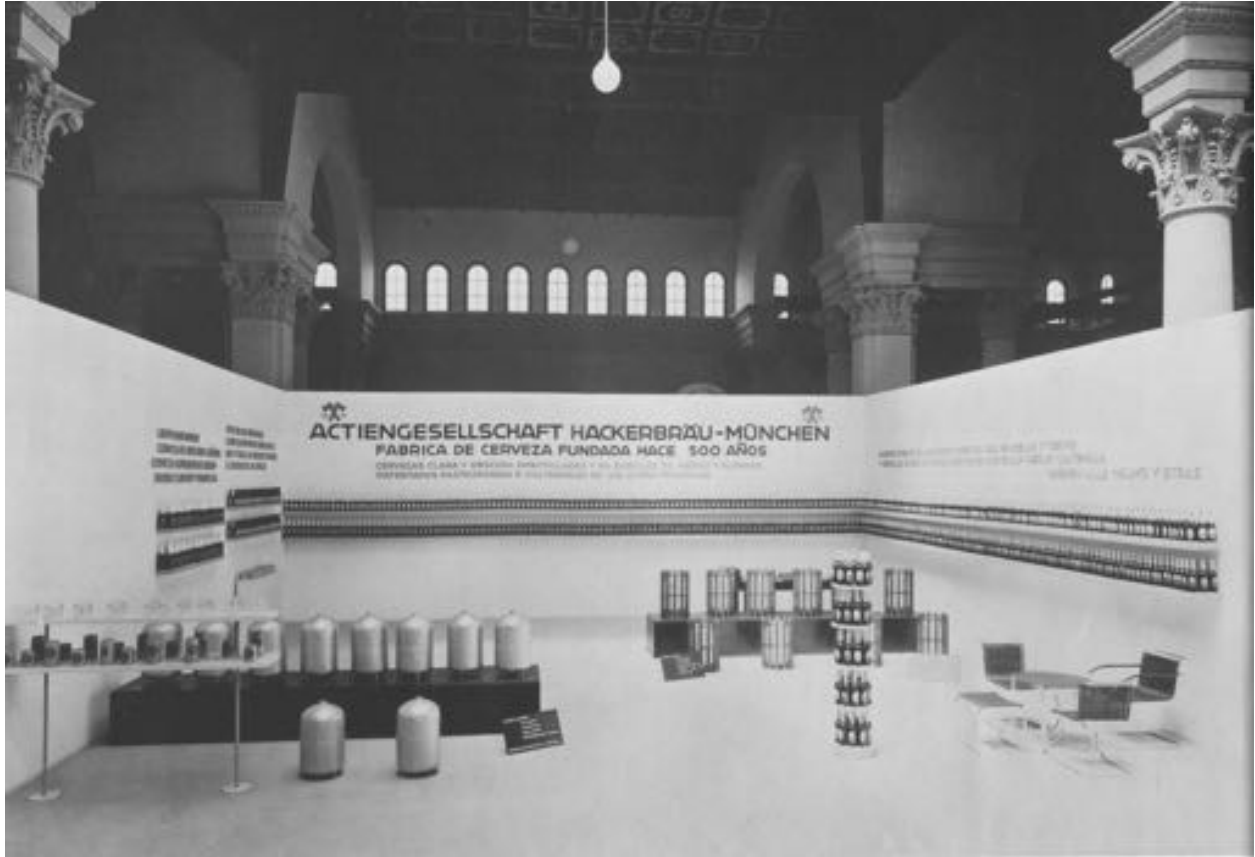


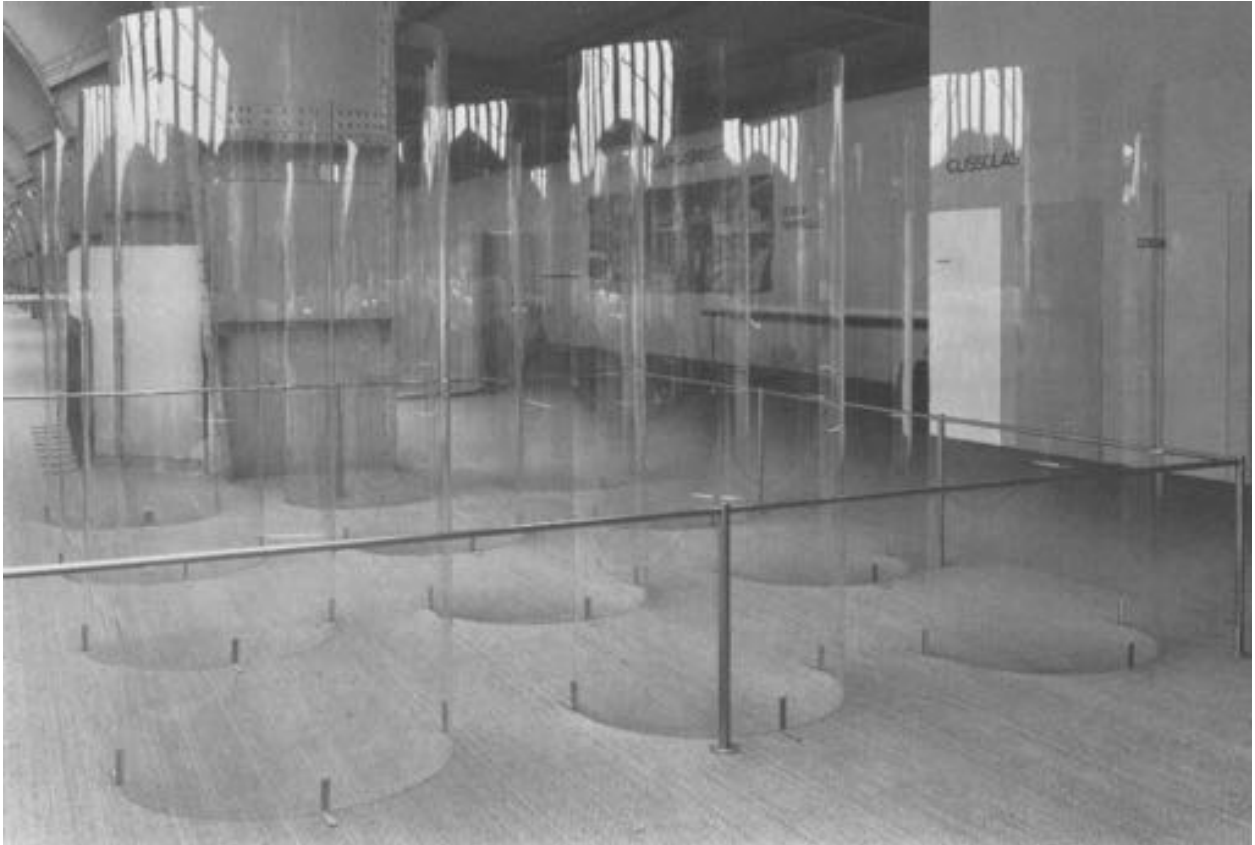
Figure 94: International Exposition, Hackerbräu beer exhibit, Barcelona, 1929, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 95: *Die Wohnung unserer Zeit*. Berlin, Textile exhibit from ground floor, 1931, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 96: *Die Wohnung unserer Zeit*, "Material Show": Wood exhibit, Berlin 1931, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figures 97: *Deutsches Volk, Deutsche Arbeit*. Glass exhibit, Berlin, 1934, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figures 98: *Deutsches Volk, Deutsche Arbeit*. Glass exhibit, Berlin, 1934, Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

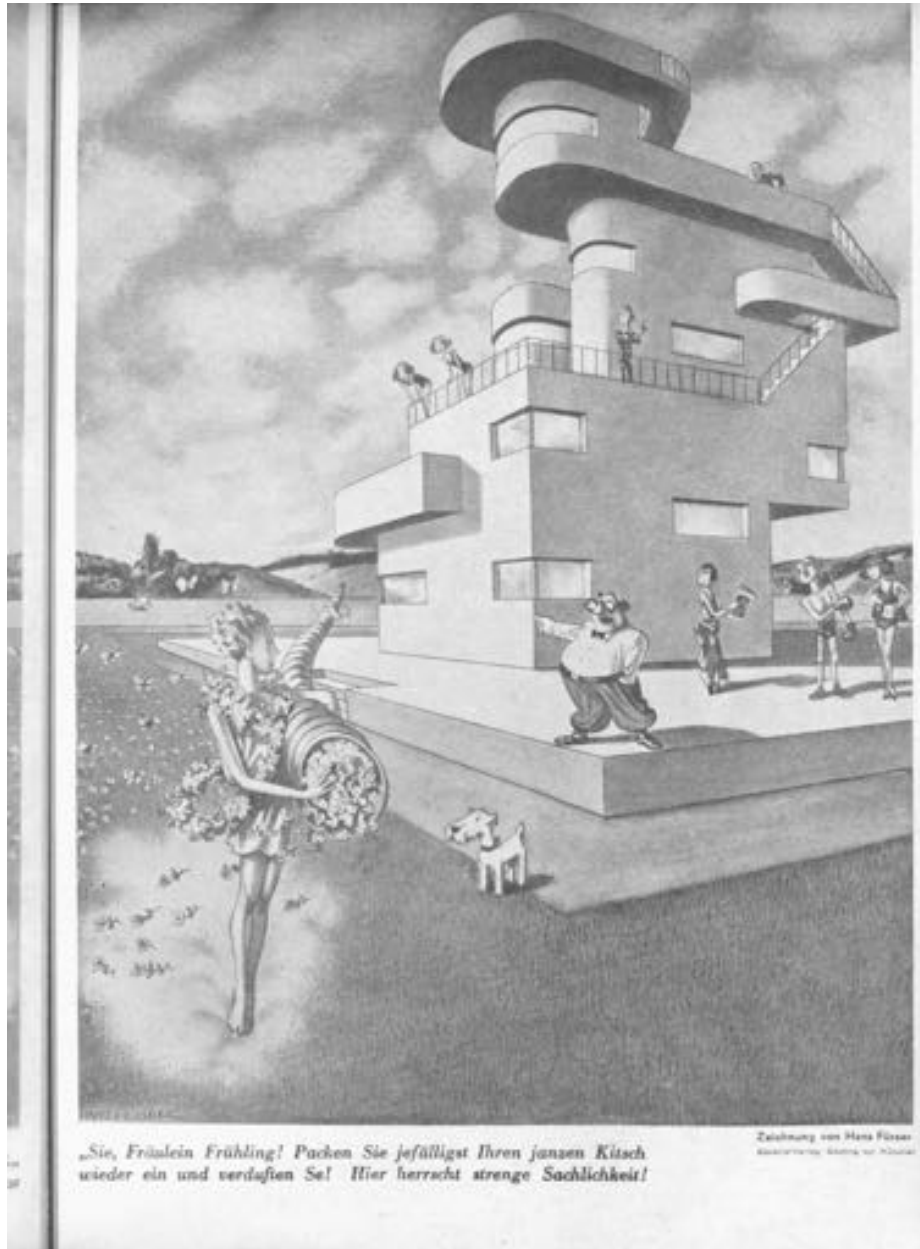


Figure 99: “Sie, Fräulein Frühling! Packen Sie jefälligst Ihren ganzen Kitsch wieder ein und verduften Sie! Hier herrscht strenge Sachlichkeit!” *Das Leben* 33: 10 (April 1933): 9.



„Bei der Behandlung des Gesichts verlasse ich mich auf Ihre künstlerische Impression – bei den Perlen und Steinen möchte ich um neue Sachlichkeit gebeten haben.“

Figure 100: “Bei der Behandlung des Gesichts verlasse ich mich auf Ihre künstlerische Impression – bei den Perlen und Steinen möchte ich um neue Sachlichkeit gebeten haben.” Th. Th. Heine, “Berlin WW,” *Simplicissimus* 31:30 (October 25, 1926): 387.



Figure 101: "Mode à la Dix, Kirchner & Co." *Harper's Bazaar* (October 2014): 152.





Figure 102: “Mode à la Dix, Kirchner & Co.” *Harper’s Bazaar* (October 2014): 153.



Figure 103: “Mode à la Dix, Kirchner & Co.” *Harper’s Bazaar* (October 2014): 155.



Figure 104: Lotte Laserstein, *Evening Over Potsdam*, 1930. Oil on wood, 110 cm × 205.5 cm. Nationalgalerie Berlin.



Figure 105: Otto Dix, *Metropolis - Triptych*, 1928, Mixed media on wood,  
Middle: 181 cm x 200 cm, Left: 181 cm x 101 cm, Right: 181 cm x 101 cm, Galerie der  
Stadt Stuttgart.



Figure 106: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*, 1495-1498. Tempera on gesso, pitch and mastic. 4.6 m x 8.8 m. Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, Italy.



Figure 107: Johannes Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*, 1657-1658. Oil on canvas, 18 in. x 16 1/8 in. (45.5 cm x 41 cm) Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Figure 108: Thomas Baumgartner, *Bauern beim Essen*, ca. 1937 (?). Oil. <http://www.gdk-research.de/de/obj19400022.html>



Figure 109: Constantin Gerhardinger, *Bäuerliche Brotsegen*, 1937. Oil. <http://www.gdk-research.de/de/obj19400199.html>



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