In the Network of Modernism: Kirchner, Braque, Kandinsky, Klee . . . Richter, Bacon, Altenbourg and Their Critic Will Grohmann

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KONSTANZE RUDERT, ED.
Im Netzwerk der Moderne: Kirchner, Braque, Kandinsky, Klee . . . Richter, Bacon, Altenbourg und ihr Kritiker Will Grohmann

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KONSTANZE RUDERT, WITH VOLKMAR BILLIG, EDS.
Will Grohmann: Texte zur Kunst der Moderne

Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, in association with Hirmer Verlag, Munich, 2012. 380 pp., 105 b/w ills., 2 audio CDs. 39.90 €

This deeply researched exhibition and publication project investigated and displayed in engrossing detail the "network of Modernism" with German critic Will Grohmann (1888–1968) at its center. Through his wide-ranging contacts, Grohmann successfully promoted "his artists," as they are often referred to in the literature, including those to whom he devoted multiple monographs and whom the Nazis declared "degenerate"—Willi Baumeister, Wassily Kandinsky, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Paul Klee. With the exception of the figurative Expressionist Kirchner, Grohmann's artists produced the abstract art that he was the key figure in reestablishing as the dominant tendency in West German art of the 1950s.

The Ferdinand Müller Foundation provided financial support for the exhibition and associated publications, which were largely researched in the Grohmann Archive housed at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. The network on exhibit in Dresden included works by about eighty artists—more than fifty of them German—whom Grohmann wrote about and in most cases with whom he had a personal relationship. Two extensive catalog volumes provide over four hundred pages of scholarly essays, illustrations, and apparatus and over three hundred pages of Grohmann's own writings. Online resources and public programs further made manifest Grohmann's networking, first and foremost with artists but also with other critics, curators, collectors, academics, and media outlets, especially newspapers.[1]

Unlike the Museum of Modern Art's *Inventing Abstraction, 1910–1925* (December 23, 2012–April 15, 2013), curated by Leah

Dickerman, or *Masterpieces of Modernism: The Haubrich Collection in the Ludwig Museum* at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne (August 4, 2012–August 31, 2013), the Grohmann exhibition, curated by Konstanze Rudert, did not have the benefit of a wall drawing that might have afforded a visual "hook," at once alerting viewers to the complex and often elegant extension of the network while also luring them in to spend the time discovering the depth of the critic's multiple synchronic interconnections, à la the work of the late contemporary artist Mark Lombardi, as described by Lombardi scholar Robert Hobbs. Rather, Grohmann's connections were made visible in a less compelling format, though with the benefit of being available in a variety of iterations, sorted by time period, on computer monitors available both within and outside the exhibition spaces of the renovated 1894 neo-Renaissance "Lipsiusbau." They were also indicated on each artwork's wall label, which offered a list of other artists and individuals associated with the piece's creator. Quotations from Grohmann and from others in his network were also placed on the walls, and a central station with seating presented a selection of Grohmann's writings.

The Lipsiusbau itself went up during Grohmann's childhood in Dresden. Designed as an exhibition hall by Constantin Lipsius (1832–1894), it is located next to the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts, also designed by Lipsius, and also built from 1887 to 1894. Both face the Brühl Terrace (Brühlsche Terrasse) at the northeastern edge of Dresden's inner old city, overlooking the Elbe. Badly damaged in the 1944 bombing, the Lipsiusbau reopened in 2005, renovated to reveal the scars of war and of time, as well as the original underlying structure. Its modest exhibition space is organized like an axial-plan church, with a tall and open central nave as the main, largest gallery and two double-level flanking aisles accommodating a series of smaller galleries.

As the exhibition and accompanying literature have shown, Grohmann's network was complex and multidirectional: he was not merely a champion of abstraction, as his aesthetic roots ran deep in prewar German modernism, particularly in the figural Expressionism of Dresden's Brücke, especially Kirchner. His ties to Expressionism also included the more political work and ideas associated with the 1919 Dresden Secession, for which he served as publicist. Late in his life and career, in 1963, Grohmann was also immensely impressed by the work of Francis Bacon that he saw in an exhibition in Mannheim and that convinced him that it was still possible to create effective—and *affective*—representational art. This experience opened him up to the work of contemporary West German representational artists, such as Konrad Klapheck and Horst Antes, and several who had recently fled west to the Federal Republic from the German Democratic Republic, Neo-Expressionist Georg Baselitz and Photorealist Gerhard "Gert" Richter among them, as well as other artists active in East Germany who eschewed Socialist Realism, for instance, Gerhard Altenbourg and Carlfriedrich Claus.

Further, Grohmann did not limit his supportive writing to modernists or to those whose art was or would have been deemed "degenerate" in Nazi Germany. His record as a correspondent—both for newspapers and journals and as a letter writer and discussion partner with many artists during the Nazi period—is, at best, "ambivalent," as Leipzig art history professor Martin Schieder terms it in his excellent catalog essay, " 'To Be on the Spot': Will Grohmann und der Nationalsozialismus" (pp. 34–41). Schieder's evaluation is somewhat at odds with the essay on the same period by the formidable Potsdam-based scholar Andreas Hüneke, "Sprechen vom Geheimen durch Geheimes? Grohmanns Publizistik in der *Deutschen Allgemeinen Zeitung* zwischen 1933 und 1945" (pp. 42–48). Hüneke presents a more sympathetic though no less nuanced reading of the some three hundred and fifty Nazi-era newspaper articles that Grohmann published, the majority of which are innocuous historical pieces, and some of which can be read "between the lines" as oppositional to the regime's policies. Others, though, are surely incriminating. Schieder, too, has Grohmann exhibiting "courage" (Baumeister's evaluation), particularly in writing a positive review for *Cahiers d'Art* of the 1938 *Exhibition of 20th-Century German Art*, held at the New Burlington Gallery in London, as a counter to the touring *Degenerate Art* exhibitions; providing private support in letters and discussions to "degenerate artists"—and denouncing no one. But he also produced writings that were at best opportunistic and strategic and at worst collaborationist with Nazi art policies. After the war he also testified on behalf of the art historian Hermann Voss, who was directly involved in Nazi art plundering, including seizures from Jewish collectors.

As this project's reconstructive efforts reveal, Grohmann's career—like the Lipsiusbau and so many structures and lives that traversed the shattering history of twentieth-century Germany—is complex, layered, and damaged. That he was politically liberal is well documented: he was a card-carrying member of the Social Democratic Party, which was the Nazis' official reason for his dismissal in 1933 from his high school teaching post; they also publicly attacked him during the "degenerate art" action that banished modern art from German museums, listing him as one of its critical propagators. His involvement with the Dresden Secession involved him in Leftist politics—and associated him with such Communist members of that late Expressionist group as Constantin von Mitschke-Collande and Conrad Felixmüller, as well as the Russian-Jewish and later Brazilian figural Expressionist Lasar Segall, who was his closest friend and most important conversation partner among the Secessionists. In 1928 Grohmann published a summary essay, "Ten Years of the November Group," that lamented the unrealized dream of utopian socialism that had animated artistic groups at the beginning of the Weimar Republic, such as the Dresden Secession and the broader November Group with which it was affiliated.

"Actually I wanted to be a painter," Grohmann wrote in 1947. "At around fourteen I drew, painted, and was already frequenting art exhibitions and the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden" (Rudert, "Das Phänomen Grohmann: Eine Annäherung," p. 22). When he made this statement, Grohmann was in the process of establishing himself as the most influential figure in the immediate postwar German art world, having just organized the *All German Art Exhibition* (*Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung*) in Dresden in 1946, which gathered and displayed works both abstract and representational from German artists residing in the Soviet, American, and French zones of occupation. While Konstanze Rudert points out in her catalog essay that these retrospective comments should be taken with a grain of salt, the show very interestingly confirmed that Grohmann drew competently as a youngster, as it presented several of his early landscapes and figure studies. He later continued to draw and paint as a component of his critical practice.

Grohmann's working method was empathetic: committed to close connection with the art and the artists he wrote about, he filled sketchbooks with drawings laying out the main features of the artworks he would later render in a prose that is long on evocative adjectives and philosophical references to, among others, Bachofen, Bergson, Cassirer, Freud, Husserl, Jung, and, especially, Schelling's Romantic, idealist philosophy of nature (a late reminiscence, the 1963 "Experiences of a Critic," though, also ends with a reference to Theodor Adorno quoting Walter Benjamin). Grohmann's writing is relatively short on the type of detailed formal description embodied in the drawings. Instead, his writing documented the emotional and intellectual connections unleashed by his intensive engagement with works of art.

As Volkmar Billig discusses in the catalog, Grohmann, influenced by Edmund Husserl and Henri Bergson, ascribed the artwork's power to its *Gleichniskraft*—its ability to create visual effects analogous to the artist's intuitive, inner tensions—"to make spirit into form" (" 'Wie Geist Form wird': Der Kunstschriftsteller Will Grohmann in der Weimarer Zeit," pp. 28–34). The exhibition included Grohmann's painting after a Ber-

lin-era Kirchner, *Frauen am Potsdamer Platz*, along with the Kirchner woodcut from which it derives. Although no one would mistake Grohmann's pastiche for a Kirchner—the figures resemble more the angular, cartoonish spirits in Lyonel Feininger's village scenes from about 1907–10 than Kirchner's gaudy, urban-Goth femmes fatales—one is still struck by Grohmann's compression of critical distance between himself and the artworks he wrote about, as if his greatest need was to inhabit them, to subordinate himself to them, rather than to pass critical judgment. The exhibition's research team, in contrast, delved deeply and critically into Grohmann's archives and into his networking with artists and others while maintaining an admirable scholarly and critical distance on their subject. In so doing they have gone much further than any previous analyses—many of which were written from more partisan perspectives, both pro and con Grohmann, abstraction, and modern art in general—to reveal his great significance and influence, without failing to bring to light his personal, political, and critical shortcomings.

Grohmann came of age just as the Brücke artists—including Erich Heckel, Kirchner, and Karl Schmitt-Rottluff—began exhibiting in the Galerie Richter on Prague Street in Dresden. He attended the college preparatory gymnasium and then studied in Leipzig from 1908 to 1913, with research trips to Paris, where he experienced the intense artistic ferment fomented by Fauvism and Cubism. He earned his doctorate in German literature with a dissertation on eighteenth-century German drama. He also attended art history, history, and philosophy lectures in Leipzig, studied Greek, Hebrew, and Sanskrit, and met the art historian and Expressionism advocate Eckart von Sydow, who ran the Leipzig Artist Association. According to Grohmann, when von Sydow showed him a portrait by the Blue Rider artist Alexey Jawlensky and referred to it as "my Holbein," the scales fell from his eyes and he knew his task would be to search for an understanding of the mysteries of modern art and to communicate his understanding of it to others.

Grohmann returned to Dresden following noncombat service in World War I and received an appointment as a gymnasium teacher (he had earned a teaching certificate in addition to a PhD), a position that would parallel his activities as an art writer: in both roles he reveled in the task of explaining, instructing, and guiding students, readers, or listeners to accept his catechism on the relevance to their lives of challenging, modern aesthetic experience. His pedagogic style is also indicated in the catalog in a feisty and irreverent August 2011 interview by Rudert with the painter Karl Otto Götz (b. 1914), a vital historical document that also provides insight into the cell of modern art devotees—a group including the soldier-painter Götz, collector Fritz Bienert, artists Otto Dix, Bill Lachnit, and Edmund Kesting, gallerist Heinrich Kühl, and Grohmann, that gathered to talk about art and listen to the music of Igor Stravinsky and Paul Hindemith in Dresden during the war years ("Erinnerungen an Will Grohmann: Karl Otto Götz im Gespräch mit Konstanze Rudert," pp. 68–73). In stating that Grohmann's wife Gertrud was at the least his intellectual equal (more on her below), Götz states, "but she had no chance, because Grohmann talked incessantly—in a refined Saxon accent that was very hard to interrupt. In Berlin they called him 'the Saxon nightingale' " (p. 68).

Dresden and Saxony remained Grohmann's locus until 1948, by which time it had become part of the Soviet zone of occupation, and he accepted a call to West Berlin to become professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst (College of Visual Arts). For the rest of his career he wrote for many German and international publications from his villa in the Lankwitz district of Berlin, the purchase of which was financed by the sale of a work by Klee, while also producing broadcasts on visual art for RIAS (*Rundfunk* [broadcast service] in the American sector). He died in Berlin in 1968.

Entering through glass doors from the Lipsiusbau entrance foyer into the central exhibition hall space, one was greeted by the draped, figural, female form of Henry Moore's 1957–58 bronze *Large Reclining Figure* (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart), one of the few sculptures in a show dominated by painting, as was Grohmann's criticism. The largest painting in the exhibition occupied the entire wall opposite the entrance, Ernst Wilhelm Nay's *Freiburg Painting* (8 ft. 4⅜ in. by 21 ft. 5⅞ in., or 255 by 655 cm), 1956, an allover composition featuring bright orbs of color, executed for a building at the Albert-Ludwigs University in Freiburg im Breisgau. The painting is historically significant, as it was given a prominent site at the second Documenta exhibition in Kassel in 1959. In that context it meant to signify the "triumph of abstraction" and equate contemporary German abstract painting with American Abstract Expressionism—the show included a Jackson Pollock room, for instance—and French Art Informel, and so to signify the Federal Republic's alignment with Western democracies and artistic experimentation and freedom. The artist Hans Haacke, then a student at the Kassel Academy of Fine Arts, worked as a guard, art handler, and guide at the exhibition and photographed its displays and organizers, the art historian Werner Haftmann, whose viewpoint the exhibition represented, and Arnold Bode, whom Haacke credits with "staging" the installation. Haacke has written that "we got a sense that this exhibition was not just an art event but had national and even international political implications."[2] With the reconstructive 1950s about to give way to the more deconstructive 1960s, Nay's anodyne style and implied affirmative political content also galvanized a younger generation of Fluxus, Pop, and political artists, like Haacke, to confront more directly a German and Western reality that was not as free—or as free of the past, as Nazi officials and collaborators continued to occupy positions of authority in West Germany—as it might have appeared on the surface. They rejected work like Nay's that came to be seen as "cosmic wallpaper" covering up the real texture of daily life and obscuring the continuing presence of brutal aspects of recent history.

In the Dresden exhibition, situated as if on a church's altar wall, Nay's painting appeared more pleasant than transcendent or provocative, a relic rather than a talisman. To its left, the first painting in a side alcove was Kandinsky's square-formatted *Several Circles*, 1926 (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York), which sublimely combines measured Bauhaus geometries with terrestrial motion and celestial emanations. Next to it hung Max Bill's 1947 attempt at a similar dialectic of form and color, measured space and infinite chromatics, *Unlimited and Limited* (*Unbegrenzt und Begrenzt*). The juxtaposition of these three works pointed to a key deficiency of much postwar European abstraction, as the utopian audacity of the historical avant-garde's experiments too often ossified into quasi-academic exercises, such as Bill's, or self-consciously grandiose and ultimately mannered attempts at "expression," such as Nay's.

The first of the three open alcoves to the left of the exhibition's entrance was devoted to "Will Grohmann and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner." It presented some of Grohmann's juvenile drawings as well as his painting hanging next to the Kirchner woodcut it copied, several of Kirchner's portraits of Grohmann, and the luxurious 1924 edition of Kirchner's drawings on which the critic and artist collaborated. Nine more small, historical "cabinet exhibitions" in the side galleries covered other important connections and eras in Grohmann's career.

The alcove with the Kandinsky and the Bill was one of two without a stated theme, in which the curators set up illuminating formal and historical juxtapositions. One such occurred in the middle-left alcove in an unanticipated triad: a beautiful 1926 Joan Miró landscape composed in matte red, black, yellow, blue, and violet hung next to a 1936–37 Baumeister biomorphic abstraction, *Figure in Movement*, also featuring commas and French curves in red, yellow, and blue, its white-gray ground helping to highlight the wormy little white cloud slinking across a patch of lemon yellow sky in the Miró. Next to the Baumeister came the unexpected revelation: a 1964 Klapheck

painting *Life in Society* (*Das Leben in der Gesellschaft*), in which brown, gray, and yellow shoe trees lay on and moved across and into a subtly modulated greenish blue ground. The connection between Miró and Baumeister is well known and apt: Baumeister was part of the Parisian art scene before, after, and even during the Nazi period. He moved from geometric to Miróish biomorphic abstractions in 1930, and he continued to produce such works as *Figure in Movement* in private during his Nazi-period "inner emigration." He did have one show of them, though: in Paris at the Surrealist gallery Jeanne Bucher in 1939, an exhibition the press was requested not to report on but that Miró visited, at which time he invited Baumeister to a studio visit. The insertion of Klapheck into this fecund context suddenly and surprisingly infused the forms in what generally passes for a mechanistic and pessimistic postwar Germano-techno-Pop with prewar primordial vitalism, surreal playfulness, and historical urgency: the machines came to life.

The three enclosed galleries along the ground floor's right aisle, opposite the open alcoves to the left, took Grohmann's career from the troubled start and through the hopeful progress of the doomed Weimar Republic and into its cataclysmic successor, the 1933–45 Nazi period, in galleries devoted to "Dresden Secession 1919," "Bauhaus," and "Between Persistence [*Beharrung*] and Accommodation [*Anpassung*]."

The Dresden Secession hoped to use art to build community and lead the new Germany into a more spiritually elevated and socialistic future.[3] The Secession's works were filled with late Expressionist pathos, often containing hortatory though very generalized political messages, as in Mitschke-Collande's woodcut *Freedom*, which was on view in Dresden, featuring an angular speaker extolling a rally to move as one through a Cubistic urban landscape and toward the shining heavenly bodies in the distance. Dix's crisp lithographic poster for the group's 1919 exhibition at the Galerie Richter in Dresden also brought Cubist faceting and Expressionist yearning together in its image of a half-dozen figures merging and ascending into the cosmos.

This gallery also included Dix's and Segall's drawn portraits of Grohmann and several photographs of the young critic. Grohmann's image, in fact, permeated the exhibition, including three of Kirchner's portrayals: a grimacing 1923 drawing; a 1924 drypoint presenting him as puffy-cheeked and fatuous; and a primitivist red, black, and white woodcut bust portrait of the same year, showing him with arms crossed over his chest, clothed in jacket and tie, and flanked by two female figures who rise up behind his shoulders, one nude, appearing as wispy apparitions framing his large head. Between 1924 and 1926, when Grohmann visited often with Kirchner in Davos, Switzerland, and collaborated with him to produce two monographs as well as other publications and exhibitions, the two had an intense, productive, but not unproblematic relationship.

Other images of Grohmann propagated by the exhibition included Kesting's multiply-exposed, neo-Romantic, post–World War II photographic portrait, which also served as the catalog's and anthology's cover images, and in the "Between Persistence and Accommodation Gallery," his Nazi-era *Reichsschriftumskammer* (Imperial Writing Chamber) ID card that allowed him to publish extensively from 1933 to 1945—mostly apolitical book reviews and pieces on the decorative arts. Some of his essays, though, are rather incriminating. One such, characterized by Schieder as the "low point" of his Nazi-era journalism (p. 37), provided a positive review of a 1937 book by Wilhelm Westecker which, as I wrote over twenty years ago, "sings a song of praise to Adolf Hitler's effects on German art."[4] In his ID portrait Grohmann's pursed and crooked mouth and furrowed brow reveal a degree of unease, or perhaps cunning concentration.

In the 1920s Grohmann exhibited little interest in the New Objectivity to which, for instance, Dix turned (two of his pencil portraits of Grohmann from 1927 represented this tendency in the exhibition), preferring instead to champion artists at the Bauhaus, particularly those, such as Kandinsky, Klee, and László Moholy-Nagy, who were taking abstraction into new and more analytic, geometric directions, offering the potential for architectural application. These artists were all represented in the Bauhaus section of the exhibition, as was Feininger. Piet Mondrian, about whom Grohmann wrote for a 1925 Dresden gallery exhibition, could be seen in an architectural plan to redecorate a salon in the villa of the Dresden collector Ida Bienert, executed in his characteristic primary colors along with black, white, and gray. An unexplained oval at the center of the study for this unrealized project, though, intrigues, as it breaks from Mondrian's and De Stijl's programmatic rectilinearity—perhaps indicating an existing window in the villa.

In February 1937, as we learn from the catalog entry on Mondrian, the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett visited Grohmann in Dresden, and together they went to Bienert's and studied her Mondrians. Schieder adopted as the motto for his critical essay on Grohmann's activities in Nazi Germany a passage from Beckett's diary notes regarding his impression from visits with non-Nazis in Nazi Germany, such as Grohmann, which could serve as a credo for this entire phenomenon: "It is more *interesting* to stay than to go, even if it were feasible to go. They can't control *thoughts*. Length of the regime impossible to estimate, depends on economic outshot. If it breaks down it is fitting for him & his kind to be on the spot, to go under or become active again" (p. 36).

Grohmann's complex position under National Socialism was the subject of the last gallery on the right-side, ground-floor gallery. Filled mostly with works by the "degenerate artists" with whom he continued to correspond, consort with, and write about in foreign publications until 1938, it featured at its center one of the entries of Nazi sculptor Arno Breker in the art competition staged in connection with the 1936 Olympic Games, the female nude *Die Siegerin (Olympia)* (*The Victor [Olympia]*). Grohmann mentioned Breker in passing in a summary article on German sculpture written before the Nazi period and published in Italy in early 1933. Breker's Nazi-period commissions, when he ascended to tremendous authority and wealth as Hitler's favored monumental sculptor, were a key component in a positive review essay on German "Sculptors and Painters of Our Time" that Grohmann published in the propagandistic Viennese journal *Die Pause* in 1941. The catalog authors, though, still deem it possible to find traces in this and other compromising pieces of Grohmann "before" and "after" the Nazi period. The exhibition might have done better to represent Breker with reproductions from publications of the 1940s, such as his fully fascist muscle-bound figures for the new Reich Chancellery, designed by Albert Speer, or the gargantuan and intimidating works intended to decorate the boulevards of Speer's redesigned Berlin as *Germania*. The transitional Olympic figure predates Breker's large-scale party commissions and, indeed, the total Nazification of this former modernist's art, as it does Grohmann's collaborationist writings.

From this problematizing display one ascended a winding staircase to find quotations on its walls from Grohmann and Richter, whose Photorealist 1967 portrait of Grohmann's terrier, *Jockel*, painted from a wedding announcement postcard, hung in a niche halfway up the stairwell. Exiting the stairwell, one proceeded through a sequence of three more thematic galleries: "The All-German Art Exhibition of 1946," "Abstraction vs. Figuration," and "Modern Expressive Dance." This last gallery revealed a side of Grohmann's career, professional and personal, lesser known than his championing of abstract painting: his interest in and involvement with Dresden-based expressive dancers and teachers Mary Wigman and Gret Palucca (who had been Wigman's student, became her rival, and was the daughter-in-law of Ida Bienert, as wife of Fritz Bienert from 1924 to 1930). Palucca's bodily movements were documented in sepia-toned photographs of 1925 by Charlotte Rudolf, which were fascinatingly juxtaposed with line drawings by Kandinsky of the same year that reduced the poses down into their

essential arcs and angles. The design for a poster, *Palucca Dances*, executed in 1929 by Bauhaus artist Marianne Brandt brought an element of collage into a show that otherwise sadly lacked this technique, and also was one of the few creations there by a woman of Grohmann's generation.

During the Nazi period, Grohmann wrote about Palucca, his lover, under a pseudonym, Olaf Rydberg, and sought to defend the dancer—daughter of Hungarian Jew Rosa Paluka—and modern, expressive dance as "German" (Schieder, p. 38). The volume of Grohmann's writings also includes an essay written as a dialogue on modern dance, published here for the first time, as Grohmann's former student Bruno Werner, an influential art writer and editor in Nazi and postwar Germany, declined to publish it in 1934. In it, Grohmann explicitly celebrated the eroticism of modern dance as part of its aesthetic allure. Indeed, Grohmann, as the painter Karl Otto Götz also alludes to in the Rudert interview, continually linked the personal and professional. In this connection catalog editor and author Rudert finds it "irritating" that Grohmann never acknowledged the large contribution to his publication program made by his devoted and accomplished wife Gertrud (for whom Kirchner seems to have harbored misogynistic disdain), who translated one of Amédée Ozenfant's books into German, and whose language, writing, and organizational abilities aided Grohmann's career immensely, especially in advancing his important connection to the French art scene through Christian Zervos, editor of *Cahiers d'Art*. Rudert also alerts us to the important role, beginning in 1946, played by his assistant Annemarie Zilz, thirty-four years younger than Grohmann, whom Rudert characterizes not only as an adept researcher and networker but also as the third member in a Grohmann ménage à trois. Grohmann and Zilz married a year after Gertrud's death in 1965: this was the marriage announced in the *Jockel* postcard that inspired Richter's painting. Grohmann's womanizing may have been alluded to in a humorous drawing by Miró placed in the 1933–45 gallery, featuring a critical, stern-faced, naked, erect, and ejaculating male figure in pursuit of a bare-breasted, striped female nymph, inscribed "pour monsieur Grohmann, affectueusement, Son ami, Miró II-36" (p. 234).

Descending from the dance gallery, one entered again the Dresden Secession gallery, passed through the main hall, and ascended to the second-floor galleries to the left, which marched visitors rather quickly, too quickly, to the show's conclusion. The particularly cramped space of "Abstraction as a World Language?" could contain too few works—one painting each by K. R. H. Sonderborg, Emilio Vedova, and Jean Dubuffet, as well as a sculpture by Bernard Heiliger—to make its or Grohmann's case for the transnational triumph of abstraction in the 1950s and early 1960s. "Co-existence in the 1960s," one of the visually richest displays in the exhibition, presented the reconciliation in Grohmann's sensibility between abstraction and representation inspired by his Bacon experience. It showed works by German-American Alcopley (a charming 1967 calligraphic scroll, *Little Promenades with My Friend Will*), the German-French Informel artists Wols and Hans Hartung, younger figurative German painters Antes, Baselitz, and Richter (his portrait of 1959 Documenta impresario Bode), Bacon himself, and the fantastic graphic imaginings of the East Germans Gerhard Altenbourg and Carlfriedrich Claus. The final gallery was devoted to some of the winners of the Will Grohmann Prize, which has been awarded by the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts since 1967, supported by a bequest from the Grohmann Estate, where one saw works by two women artists: the Louisville native Mindy Shapero and the Bulgarian Sophia Schama. Altenbourg was the first winner of the prize, nominated by Grohmann himself before his death in 1968. In 1975 it went to the Dresden-born A. R. Penck, who was represented in the exhibition by *Ur End TR* of 1976, featuring a fractured stick figure holding a blackened torch, flanked by three variations on the peace symbol floating on a pink ground of paint dripping down a board support. A space on the wall was left open for the winner of this year's prize.

In the 1950s the network with Grohmann at its nexus was extremely effective in promoting the idea that German art and the German art world had been internationally recognized and connected before the Nazi devastation, and could be once again. His project was to reconnect German art of the postwar period to European late modernism.[5] By the 1960s, with the advent of Pop and the revival of Dada-inspired critical performance practices such as Happenings and Fluxus taking art out of its idealist studio and gallery isolation and into the messy commercial, social, and political worlds, Grohmann's conceptions and network came to be viewed as the quasi-official art policy of the Bonn government and the occupying powers, especially the United States, and as both elitist and authoritarian.

Grohmann's tendency, certainly grounded in the Romantic philosophy he admired, to probe art for signs of "national temperament"—even as he promoted internationalism—links his thought to discredited aspects of nineteenth- and early to mid-twentieth-century theory, history, and practice. Even when claiming that Klee transcended nationality, Grohmann at least partially attributed his "exceptionalism" to his "mixed" German-Swiss parentage and heritage. Writing about Matisse in *Cahiers d'Art* in 1931 he stated: "The loose quality of his southerly hymns, his almost oriental foundation . . . remains foreign to us. . . . for us, the southerly is always classical, tending to the archeological but never the African. . . . France is open to the south, Germany to the north; maybe that's why Matisse's realized paintings have been less moving for us."[6]

Such convictions must have motivated and been influenced by an unfinished project Grohmann undertook from 1942 until the end of the Nazi state: the editing of a collection of the writings by the racialist—and anti-Semitic—Vienna school art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941); this manuscript was seen in Dresden in the gallery devoted to the Nazi years. Grohmann's search for national expressive temperaments was not unusual. Hüneke makes the point, as has Margaret Olin, that racialist and nationalist thinking permeated nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art historical discourse.[7]

While his methodology was fundamentally formalist, Grohmann's criticism was not based on a particular developmental formal theory, like Clement Greenberg's, or, as in Roland Barthes, on an investigation of the deep imbrication of form in the socially and politically determined imaginary. Rather, his was a search for the artist's personal "experience" and "temperament," often defined in national and quasi-racial terms, as communicated in the artwork's line, color, shapes, and allusions to things seen, felt, and thought. The effectiveness of this approach was ultimately dependent on the reader's subjective response to the songs sung by the "Saxon nightingale" and served to limit the historical impact of many of the artists and the art he championed most consistently, such as the postwar work of Baumeister, Nay, and Fritz Winter. Their specific, historical contribution to Germany's artistic revival—the younger generation certainly built on their legacy, even when rejecting it—was often obscured by Grohmann's vague metaphysical claims. Also, as Götz points out, Grohmann's antipathy to both Cubism and Surrealism caused him initially to miss the real importance of both Art Informel and Abstract Expressionism as they emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Grohmann himself late in life lamented his dismissal of Kurt Schwitters—but not of Dada's game-changing tactics in general.

While for many in his generation the advent of abstraction seemed to be the hallmark and apogee of twentieth-century art, from the present distance collage, montage, the readymade, and performance come more sharply into focus as signposts leading into current practices. That Grohmann missed these also led to striking lacunae in the roster of German twentieth-century art on display in Dresden: no works by Schwitters, George Grosz, Hannah Höch,[8] or Hans Bellmer, Joseph Beuys, or Wolf Vostell to

represent Dada, Surrealism, and their heritage. And also no Max Beckmann or Käthe Kollwitz to argue for representation before and alongside Kirchner and Bacon. In making a fundamental and complex contribution to our understanding of Grohmann's specific role in twentieth-century art history, the exhibition and its research apparatus also indicated that all critics, and all networks, after all, at some point reach their limits.

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Notes

1. See Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, "Im Netzwerk der Moderne," http://www.skd.museum/de/sonderausstellungen/archiv/im-netzwerk-der-moderne/index.html.
2. Hans Haacke, "Lessons Learned," *Tate Papers*, no. 12 (October 1, 2009), http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/lessons-learned (accessed January 17, 2013).
3. Founding members were Dix, who tended more toward an anarchist position, Felixmüller, the youngest member and also leader, Wilhelm Heckrott, Mitschke-Collande, Lasar Segall, Otto Schubert, and the publisher Hugo Zehder. By the time of its first exhibition, the group had added artists Peter August Böckstiegel, one woman, Gela Forster, Otto Lange, the writer Walter Rheiner, and Oskar Kokoschka, who taught at the Dresden Academy from 1919 to 1924. Kokoschka was absent from the Grohmann exhibition; on the Dresden Secession, see Peter Chametzky, "Dresden Secession Gruppe 1919," in *Sources and Documents of German Expressionism*, ed. Rose-Carol Washton Long (New York: G. K. Hall, 1993), 222–36.
4. Peter Chametzky, "Autonomy and Authority in German Art: The Art and Career of Willi Baumeister, 1889–1955" (PhD diss., City University of New York Graduate Center, 1991), 28–29.
5. And especially French late modernism, as Schieder has shown elsewhere, in his essential study *Im Blick des Anderen: Die Deutsch-Französischen Kunstbeziehung, 1945–1959* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005).
6. Will Grohmann, "Henri Matisse," in *Will Grohmann: Texte zur Kunst der Moderne*, p. 166.
7. On Strzygowski, see Margaret Olin, *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 18–24.
8. Grohmann wrote about Höch exhibitions in 1949, in connection with her sixtieth birthday, and in 1964 on the occasion of her seventy-fifth birthday exhibition at the Galerie Nierendorf. Will Grohmann, "Maler von Gestern, Heute und Morgen, sieben Ausstellungen," *Die Neue Zeitung*, 1949, clipping in Hannah Höch Archive, Berlinische Galerie, Galerie Franz exhibition file. He provided a text for the exhibition catalog, *Hannah Höch zum 75. Geburtstag*, Galerie Nierendorf, Berlin, 1964–65, and wrote about her and the show in "Hannah Höch," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 12, 1964.