WILLI BAUMEISTER

THE UNKNOWN IN ART

Translated and edited with an introduction by Joann M. Skrypzak
and with an essay by Tobias Hoffmann

The Unknown in Art

Willi Baumeister

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The material is visible to everyone
The content is only discovered by those
who have something to contribute
And the form is a secret to most
—Goethe

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For all who have suffered

—Willi Baumeister

To Felicitas Baumeister

With heartfelt birthday greetings and
tremendous gratitude for her unflagging
engagement for the work of her father,
Willi Baumeister

—Stuttgart, April 2013

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Willi Baumeister's *The Unknown in Art* in Historical and Cultural Context

Joann M. Skrypzak

Originally published in 1947 as *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst,* Willi Baumeister's *The Unknown in Art* is one of the most important writings on art in postwar Europe.[1] Best known in English-speaking countries for the nonrepresentational paintings he produced following World War II, Baumeister (1889–1955), like many of his fellow contemporary artists, frequently wrote and published on art throughout his career. His early writings often appeared in avant-garde art, architecture, and design journals dealing with constructivism among other subjects, such as *ABC, Das Werk, Die Form, L'Esprit Nouveau,* and *Pasmo*. Of his written works, *The Unknown in Art* is certainly the most ambitious and comprehensive. Although Baumeister does not address his own works of art in it, the format—a text accompanied by an extensive picture section—is akin to that of his montages, thus arguably making it one of his works of art, or an artist's book in the tradition of the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* (1912).[2] Together, the text and images present Baumeister's principles of nonrepresentational art. For him, these are based on the notions that art should be perceived according to its visual components and that the artist is not a copyist of material reality but the inventor of new values, his works of art adding something previously unknown to our visual repertoire. The content of the text developed from Baumeister's long and intense commitment to the artistic tenets of constructivism, which he expanded in the course of the 1930s, stressing the vital role of intuition and the nonrational in both art and life, and that nature is the origin of all art. *The Unknown in Art* is a constructivist response to the question of modern art's relationship to life and, with it, Baumeister joins in the discussion on modern art as presented in the writings of his fellow artists, such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Theo van Doesburg, and El Lissitzky, offering a fuller picture of the development of theories of modern art in the twentieth century.

[1] The present English translation is based on the fourth, edited edition of the German text, published by DuMont in 1988.

[2] I would like to express my gratitude to Peter Chametzky for kindly reviewing this essay and making several helpful suggestions for improvement, including drawing my attention to this fact.

As a theory of art, *The Unknown in Art* represents a form of artist's writing that emerged in the Renaissance[3] and proliferated particularly in the twentieth century, with countless books, articles, and manifestos disseminating artists' theories of and reasons for producing art. What is unusual about Baumeister's work is that he wrote it during the last years of World War II, from 1943 to 1945, while in "inner emigration" in Nazi Germany. At the time he had been denounced by the National Socialists as a "degenerate artist" and officially banned from painting or exhibiting his works. Yet, he continued to work—by and large clandestinely—in spite of the Nazi regime, and even discussed publishing his manuscript with Karl Gutbrod as early as August 1944,[4] although it was not clear that the text would actually ever be published or have an audience.

Despite these circumstances, *The Unknown in Art* should not be seen solely as a response to the conditions of Nazi Germany and the restrictions imposed on artists during that period. The situation certainly did make it increasingly difficult for Baumeister to maintain his artistic autonomy and to continue painting. It also ultimately prompted him to express himself in writing and provided the impetus to present his views on art, which were—even if not explicitly part of an antifascist movement—opposed to those espoused by the Nazi regime. But the content of *The Unknown in Art* was first and foremost inspired by Baumeister's wide-ranging experience as an avant-garde artist concerned with the principles and aims of nonrepresentational art and extending back to the short-lived Weimar Republic.

The Background of and Conditions under Which *The Unknown in Art* Was Formulated

Born in Stuttgart in 1889, Baumeister was apprenticed as a commercial painter and decorator in his early years and, beginning in 1909, studied under Adolf Hölzel at the Stuttgart Academy of Art, where he befriended Oskar Schlemmer and Otto Meyer-Amden. He first gained recognition for his art in 1913, when he showed at "Der Sturm" gallery in Berlin, prior to being drafted into the army in 1914 and going on to serve as an airman

[3] In this connection we might recall, for instance, Albrecht Dürer's *Four Books on Human Proportion* (1528).

[4] Willi Baumeister, journal entry of August 29, 1944, reproduced in Felicitas Baumeister and Jochen Canobbi, "Biografie," in Gottfried Boehm, *Willi Baumeister* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1995), 221.

in the Balkans and the Caucasus in World War I. Following the war, he worked in the styles of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new objectivity) and constructivism, producing works such as his wall pictures and machine and sports paintings that reflected his fascination with the era's technological advances as well as his interest in the life-reform movement. Like many of his fellow constructivists, he embraced constructivism's rational, objective approach to making art, shunning the emotional, subjective qualities of expressionism, while embracing its utopian aim to synthesize art and life. Baumeister also exhibited widely, such as at the Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart; with Fernand Léger at "Der Sturm" gallery in Berlin; and at the Galerie von Garvens in Hanover, all in 1922. In 1924 he traveled to Paris, where he met Léger, Le Corbusier, Amédée Ozenfant, and the art critic and painter Michel Seuphor. In 1927 he had his first exhibition in the French capital, at the Galerie d'art contemporain. That year he also designed all the printed matter for the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* (The residence) at the model housing settlement in Weissenhof, Stuttgart.

Active in the areas of stage design and typography as well, Baumeister, along with Kurt Schwitters, César Domela, László Moholy-Nagy, Jan Tschichold, Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart, and others, cofounded the Ring Neuer Werbegestalter (Circle of new commercial designers) in 1927. The following year he began teaching commercial art, typography, and textile printing at the Städelsche Kunstschule in Frankfurt am Main, which was modeled on the Bauhaus. From 1930 to 1932 he designed the cover and typeface of the periodical *Das Neue Frankfurt* (The new Frankfurt) founded by architect and city planner Ernst May in connection with a large-scale, progressive housing-development program for the city begun in 1925.[5]

Even as Baumeister's success as an artist continued—in 1929 he had solo exhibitions at the Galerie Flechtheim in Berlin and the Galerie Kahnweiler in Frankfurt am Main—scathing public criticism in Frankfurt following the Städtische Galerie's purchase of his constructivist painting *Atelierbild* (Studio Painting, 1929) signaled the growing intolerance of modern art in Germany.[6] The conservative *Frankfurter Nachrichten* newspaper sharply

[5] On this subject see Birgit Sander, "Buchstabe und Ideogramm—Figur und Zeichen: Willi Baumeister als Typograph und Maler," in *Willi Baumeister, 1889–1955: Die Frankfurter Jahre 1928–1933,* exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main: Museum Giersch, 2005), 37; and Boehm 1995 (see note 4), 203.

[6] This painting was also called *Atelier* (Studio) and *Bild and Telefon* (Painting and Telephone). For a reproduction of the work see Peter Beye and Felicitas Baumeister, *Willi Baumeister: Werkkatalog der Gemälde,* vol. 2 (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2002), fig. 317, 139.

denounced the work as "proof of the spiritual and artistic aberrations of a period without discipline and culture."[7] The increasingly conservative and fascist climate in Germany ultimately led to Baumeister's summary dismissal from his teaching post at the Städelsche Kunstschule by the National Socialists on March 31, 1933, a fate shared by the school's director, Fritz Wichert, and other faculty members, including Max Beckmann. Shocked and troubled by this turn of events, Baumeister returned to Stuttgart, where he earned a living primarily with commercial graphic art; censured as a "degenerate" artist, he continued to paint in a locked room.[8]

For Baumeister, the remainder of the 1930s and indeed the next twelve years became a period of gradual withdrawal from his previous life as an artist freely active in the public realm. Abroad, he certainly remained a presence—Eduardo Westerdahl, for instance, published a monograph on Baumeister in 1934—and he was able to exhibit works in Zurich (1934), Milan and Rome (1935), Paris (1937 and 1939), and London (1938) up to 1939, when Germany entered World War II.[9] Showing his work in Nazi Germany became unthinkable, however—even if it was not until 1941 that he was officially banned from exhibiting by the Reichskammer der Bildenden Künste. In 1937 four of his paintings were included in the National Socialists' notorious *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate art) exhibition in Munich—which Baumeister visited—and the regime eventually seized fifty-one of his works.[10] Baumeister not only became increasingly restricted by his status as an ostracized artist during this period of inner emigration; once Germany entered the war, his artistic activity was also limited by state police surveillance, shortages of paint and canvas, and the danger of being bombed.

[7] *Frankfurter Nachrichten* 28 (January 28, 1930), cited in René Hirner, "Anmerkungen zu Willi Baumeisters Hinwendung zum Archaischen," in *Willi Baumeister: Zeichnungen, Gouachen, Collagen,* exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1989), 47.

[8] These developments are also discussed, in greater detail, in Peter Chametzky, *Objects as History in Twentieth-Century German Art: Beckmann to Beuys* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 2010), 113–17.

[9] The exhibitions held in those years were: *Neue deutsche Malerei* in Zurich (1934); a solo show at the Galleria Il Milione in Milan and at the Casa d'Arte Bragaglia in Rome (1935); *Origines et dévelopment de l'art international indépendant* at the Jeu de Paume in Paris (1937); *Twentieth Century German Art* in London (1938); and a solo show at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher in Paris (1939), marking Baumeister's fiftieth birthday. On this last occasion the press was asked to refrain from reporting on the show for reasons of the artist's safety.

[10] See Pamela Kort, "Willi Baumeister," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany,* ed. Stephanie Barron, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991), 201.

Even so, Baumeister seized the opportunity to explore new artistic concerns, making the period quite fruitful for him as an artist. Since the time he had begun teaching in Frankfurt, he continued to engage in avant-garde developments, cemented his international contacts and reputation, and embarked on a phase of artistic investigation of biomorphic surrealism as well as prehistoric and non-Western sources of art that lasted until his death in 1955. Although Baumeister remained committed to the constructivist concern of enhancing the physical and intellectual needs of society and using objective, elemental forms in art, around 1929 he turned from a precise, geometric formal language inspired by the modern machine age to a more painterly, biomorphic one. He wanted his works to be "closer to nature" and to have a more direct impact on the viewer's perception but be just as anchored in an elemental formal syntax. As he explained, "the geometric is certainly original [primal], but the organic is no less so."[11]

As part of this new exploration, Baumeister joined Cercle et Carré (circle and square) in April 1930, an artists' group founded in Paris in late 1929 by Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García and French writer Michel Seuphor. Aimed at broadening the formal language of constructivism, the group also stood in artistic opposition to the strict commitment to the unconscious of the dominant surrealist movement led by André Breton. Seuphor explained that the square and circle symbolized the "totality of things," the rational and sensuous worlds, "rectilinear and curvilinear geometry, man and woman, Mondrian and Arp."[12] Cercle et Carré's members, abstract artists active throughout Europe, included Hans Arp, Kandinsky, Le Corbusier, Léger, Piet Mondrian, Ozenfant, Antoine Pevsner, Luigi Russolo, and Georges Vantongerloo. That spring in Paris Baumeister participated in the group's first exhibition, at Galerie 23, and had a solo show at the Galerie Bonaparte. While in the French capital he visited Arp, Ozenfant, Corbusier, and Léger—whose works had become markedly more "organic"—as well as the art critic Carl Einstein and the editor of the periodical *Cahiers d'art,* Christian Zervos.

In February 1931 Baumeister became a member of the international artists' association Abstraction-Création, which succeeded the short-lived Cercle et Carré and was likewise devoted to nonfigurative art, even equating "abstraction" with "freedom"—suggesting a response to the increasing

[11] Willi Baumeister, "Zimmer- und Wandgeister: Anmerkungen zum Inhalt meiner Bilder," ed. Heinz Spielmann, *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 12 (1967), 153.

[12] Michel Seuphor, "Cercle et Carré," in *Le Style et le Cri* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), 113.

ban on abstract art in the totalitarian regimes in Stalinist Russia and, later, Nazi Germany.[13] During this time he also became better acquainted with and interested in surrealist art through the Parisian art journals *Documents* and *Cahiers d'art,* the latter of which published articles on prehistoric cave paintings and contemporary surrealist artists such as Joan Miró, André Masson, and Arp.[14]

As part of a dominant international avant-garde trend, Baumeister's reappraisal of constructivism (see Tobias Hoffmann's essay in this volume for an illuminating comparison of this aspect of the *Unknown* with that in Klee's and Kandinsky's writings) and his exploration of biomorphic abstraction and prehistoric art were less concerned with surrealism's automatic methods of production than with using organic forms to render his painting materials more expressive and his works more lively.[15] He surely did not regard himself as a surrealist; he avoided surrealism's firm dedication to the unconscious and criticized its "morbid" tone and concern with violent, destructive forces.[16] Rather, he seems to have been attracted to the movement's critique of rationality, its belief that existence manifests a sense of mystery, or what he called "the unknown," that cannot be explained by rational thought alone. Baumeister's forays into the unconscious and forms of art derived from the primordial past were part of his aim to forge a new visual language that affirmed fundamental human experiences and thus could be readily understood by all.[17] As he argues in *The Unknown in Art,* "The special task of all painters is to discover new zones of seeing that were previously nonexistent, that were suspended in the unknown, and now can be grasped by their values and thus moved into the visual repertoire of mankind."[18] In his art Baumeister endeavored to

[13] Felicitas Baumeister and Jochen Canobbi, "Biographie," in Boehm 1995 (see note 4), 204; "Abstraction-Création: Editorial Statements to *Cahier* nos. 1, 1932 and 2, 1933," in *Art in Theory, 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas,* ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 357–59.

[14] Peter Chametzky, "Autonomy and Authority in German Twentieth-Century Art: The Art and Career of Willi Baumeister," Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1991, 293, 304.

[15] Martina Padberg, "'Nichts ist abstrakt gemeint', Positionsbestimmung in Frankfurt: Anmerkungen zu Kontinuität und Innovation im Werk Willi Baumeister," in Sander 2005 (see note 5), 59–60.

[16] Chametzky 1991 (see note 14), 293–94.

[17] Cf. Baumeister on discovery and new awareness in art in Willi Baumeister, *The Unknown in Art,* in the present volume, 153.

[18] Baumeister, ibid., 43.

formulate a universal syntax that made the unknown—such as the imaginable, invisible, unconscious, or unfathomable—visible.

During the time he taught in Frankfurt, Baumeister also came into contact with prehistoric art through ethnographic lectures and exhibitions at the Leo Frobenius Institute. In November 1931 he attended a lecture on the Altamira cave paintings in Spain held by Swiss art historian Hans Mühlestein at the Frankfurt University. Baumeister and Mühlestein met and remained in contact after the former was dismissed from the Städelsche Kunstschule and returned to Stuttgart.[19] At this time Baumeister took part in seminars and excursions of the Verein der Freunde des Naturalienkabinetts (Society of friends of the cabinet of natural curiosities) in Stuttgart; sought out prehistoric works in museums such as the Musée de l'homme in Paris; and began acquiring books on prehistoric rock and cave paintings in Spain, Mesopotamian art, African and Egyptian sculpture, and ethnographic art; and collecting prehistoric, ethnographic, and Asian art.[20] In 1934 he also participated in excavations of prehistoric sites in the Swabian Alb.

Particularly serendipitous at this juncture was Baumeister's employment at Kurt Herberts's paint factory in Wuppertal beginning in 1937, which had come about through the agency of Baumeister's friend architect Heinz Rasch. Active there alongside the likewise ostracized artists Franz Krause, Alfred Lörcher, Georg Muche, and Oskar Schlemmer as well as art historian Hans Hildebrandt and his wife, artist Lily Hildebrandt,[21] Baumeister began researching ancient and modern painting methods. Between 1939 and 1944 he contributed to several publications on the factory's research, which appeared—for reasons of the artists' safety—under Dr. Herberts's name, and also developed a series of panels of wood, cardboard, metal, and other

[19] On Baumeister meeting Mühlestein and attending his lecture, see Chametzky 1991 (see note 14), 303n23; Will Grohmann, *Willi Baumeister: Life and Work* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1963), 56.

[20] Baumeister's library includes Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro, *La Sculpture nègre primitive* (Paris, 1929); Hugo Obermaier and Paul Wernert, *Las Pinturas Repestres del Burranco de Valltorta* (Madrid, 1919); Christian Zervos, *L'art de la Mésopotamie* (Paris, 1935); and Abbé Breuil and Hugo Obermaier, *The Cave of Altamira at Santillana del Mar, Spain* (Madrid, 1935). *The Unknown in Art* reproduces images from all four volumes. Baumeister's collection of objects includes hand wedges, stone axes, casts of prehistoric small sculpture, and African, Oceanic, and Asian art. Boehm 1995 (see note 4), 25. See also René Hirner on the objects Baumeister acquired from the Naturalienkabinett (Cabinet of natural curiosities) and Völkerkundemuseum (now the Linden Museum, a state ethnological museum) in Stuttgart, and literature on related topics he collected for his library. Hirner 1989 (see note 7), 48–49.

[21] See Chametzky 2010 (see note 8), 120.

materials demonstrating various painting techniques.[22] This research not only furthered Baumeister's investigation of prehistoric and non-Western visual-culture sources in his art; it also contributed significantly to his view that artistic form and style develop from a particular use of artistic media and techniques, which thus play a primary role in what shapes and gives meaning to art. We see this notion reflected in his formulation of the term *Formkunst* (form art) in *The Unknown in Art* to designate non-naturalistic, nonrepresentational art that was made, as he put it, ". . . without a model. . . . Its process of origin is thoroughly comparable to the creative act of nature. Nature and form art do not copy; they do not form according to a model but, rather, form."[23] Here, many readers will clearly recognize the ideas of Paul Klee in Baumeister's centrally held principle of nature as the model of artistic creation. Klee also believed that true art does not copy or reproduce that which already exists in our visual repertoire, but makes things visible for the first time.[24] This connection is echoed several times in *The Unknown in Art* and, as Hoffmann discusses in his essay, also demonstrates Baumeister's conscious desire to respond to Klee's 1920s writings critiquing constructivism.

In March 1943 Baumeister's working and living conditions experienced another upheaval, and new limitations led to him turning to other expressive forms. While he was in Wuppertal, his home in Stuttgart was partially destroyed by a bomb, whereupon he moved with his family to Urach, a small town in the Swabian Alb. He maintained his Stuttgart studio but it was eventually completely plundered. A few months later, the research studios at Herberts's factory were also destroyed, leading Baumeister secretly to continue his work with limited means in a small room in the Gasthof Krone in Urach. It was here that, out of severe space and material restrictions, he began producing vast drawing cycles of literary sources such as the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh,* Old Testament texts, and Shakespeare's *Tempest,* which were published for the first time after the war, in 1947.

[22] These texts included: *10.000 Jahre Malerei und ihre Werkstoffe* (1939), *Untersuchungen über die Anwendbarkeit historischer Malverfahren* (1940), *Dokumente zur Malstoffgeschichte* (1940), *Lackierkunst im technischen Zeitalter* (1940), *Anfänge der Malerei—die Fragen ihrer Maltechniken und das Rätsel der Erhaltung* (1941), *Aus der Maltechniken geboren* (1942), and *Modulation und Patina* (1937–44). On the experimental panels produced by Baumeister, Oskar Schlemmer, and Franz Krause at Herberts's factory see *Laboratorium Lack: Baumeister, Schlemmer, Krause 1937–1944,* exh. cat. (Tübingen: Wasmuth Ernst Verlag, 2007).

[23] Baumeister, *The Unknown in Art,* 123.

[24] On Klee see Baumeister, *The Unknown in Art,* 123n4.

Baumeister also returned to manuscripts on art that he had begun earlier but discontinued because he considered them unfeasible. A champion of the autonomy of art and the artist and not interested in pursuing political themes in his art, Baumeister complained bitterly in 1941 that "the official exhibitions [of the Nazi regime] show nothing but illustrated broadsheets for the people. They lack any trace of artistic effort or design. There's no hint of the freedom of art or the artist."[25] He now aimed in his text to counter this objectionable deficit, explaining the essence of modern art, as well as how to approach and understand it, to a broad audience. Baumeister's extensive correspondence with Heinz Rasch during the war, in connection with his work at Herberts's factory, contributed significantly to the development of several ideas discussed in his manuscript, such as that of the unknown and the ethical responsibility of the artist.[26] The format of these letters also likely influenced the style of the text, which is brimming with visual descriptions, is occasionally sweeping, and makes idiosyncratic use of language that requires some "unpacking."[27]

In 1944, encouraged in his efforts by the publishers Karl Gutbrod and Curt Weller, Baumeister titled his writings on the principles of nonrepresentational art "Das Unbekannte in der Kunst." At the time he noted in his journal, "The previously unknown is made 'known' in the work of art. The artist is the inventor of new values. . . . The more he distances himself from the known, the more essential his artistic effort is."[28] Baumeister completed the text in Horn on Lake Constance, where, after fleeing Urach in the spring of 1945 to avoid his mobilization in the *Volkssturm,* he and his family were taken in by artist Max Ackermann and his wife. It was in Horn that they also witnessed the end of World War II.

[25] Willi Baumeister, journal entry of March 10, 1941, cited in Boehm 1995 (see note 4), 217.

[26] As Heinz Spielmann has written, Rasch encouraged Baumeister to publish their letters or the ideas on art discussed in them, which eventually became more focused on dealing with Baumeister's own painting and motifs. Preparations for publishing this manuscript, whose title "Zimmer- und Wandgeister" was suggested by Rasch, were discontinued in 1950. The uncompleted manuscript appeared posthumously in 1967, edited by Heinz Spielmann; see Baumeister 1967 (see note 11), esp. 121, 130.

[27] In this translated edition of Baumeister's text, I have inserted footnotes and added a glossary intended to explain some of the more unfamiliar terminology that he uses, such as *Formkunst* (form art) and *Mitte* (center).

[28] Willi Baumeister, journal entry of September 1, 1944, cited in Boehm 1995 (see note 4), 221.

The First Publication of *The Unknown in Art* and Its Reception

In the following months Baumeister and his family secured papers from the American cultural officer Lieutenant Robert Alan Koch in Stuttgart, allowing them to make the complicated journey from Lake Constance in the French *zone interdite* back to Stuttgart, then controlled by American occupation forces. Baumeister had maintained a rich and lively network of professional and social contacts both in Germany and abroad during his period of inner emigration. Now widely recognized as one of the country's most prominent representatives of modern abstraction, he was quickly able to rejoin public life as an artist.

In October 1945 Baumeister resumed exhibiting his work, taking part in the *Ausstellung Deutscher Kunst unserer Zeit* (Exhibition of German art of our time), the first German postwar show of artists who had been persecuted and labeled "degenerate" in the Nazi era, organized by Walter Kaesbach at the Museum der Stadt Überlingen on Lake Constance. In 1946 he participated in such exhibitions as the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (General German art exhibition), at the Military History Museum in Dresden from August to October 1946, the first major exhibition of German art since the war; and a group exhibition at the Galerie Rosen in Berlin in November 1946, one of the first galleries to show works by artists censored during the war.[29] This was followed by Baumeister's participation in *Moderne Deutsche Kunst seit 1933* (Modern German art since 1933) in the Kunsthalle Bern in the summer of 1947; an international show of abstract painting organized by the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (established by Fredo Sidès in 1946 and succeeding Abstraction-Création) in Paris; and the Venice Biennale, both in 1948; as well as solo shows in Munich, Braunschweig, and Stuttgart. Moreover, prior to Baumeister's return to Stuttgart, some of his colleagues there, such as Erwin Petermann, director of the Graphische Sammlung, and Heinrich Theodor Musper, director of the Württemberg Staatsgalerie, had begun campaigning for his engagement as director of the Stuttgart Academy of Art. On March 16, 1946, he received an appointment there as professor of painting, going on to influence an entire generation of young artists in Germany.

[29] On postwar exhibitions devoted to German artists censored in the Third Reich see Sabine Eckmann, "Ruptures and Continuities: Modern German Art in between the Third Reich and the Cold War," in *Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures,* ed. Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, exh. cat. (New York: Abrams, 2009), 48–63.

Parallel to this activity and also helping to cement Baumeister's prominence in Germany's postwar art scene, *The Unknown in Art* gradually made its way to press. After Baumeister revised the manuscript in 1945, it was typeset in March 1946 and, following delays caused by power cuts, published in March 1947 by the Stuttgart publisher Curt E. Schwab.[30] Based on an expanded understanding of constructivism, Baumeister's concept of art presented therein is one in which artistic form retains its fundamental importance but includes the organic as well as the geometric, and intuition and nonrational forces play an increasingly significant role.

The text is organized into three sections, titled in the original edition "Elementary Introduction," "Introduction," and "Main Component." The first part addresses the fundamentals of art, explaining its essential elements and how the viewer might approach a work of art. The second part presents the history of art, from prehistory to the modern era, as a transformative process in which art is liberated—or purified—from all nonartistic elements, ultimately arriving at abstract art, or "form art." The third section explores the unknown in relation to the artist and his working process. The book's fourth and final component is a picture section, the scope of which ranges from prehistoric artifacts and non-Western art, via folk and "high" art, to popular imagery and modern art. Rather than intending these images to be traditional text illustrations, Baumeister meant them to accompany the written text as well as to supplement it by forming an independent visual text, recalling André Malraux's celebrated book *Le Musée imaginaire (The Museum without Walls),* which was likewise published in 1947 and presents readers with a wide variety of artworks that might otherwise never be seen together.[31] On the one hand, several of the images in *The Unknown in Art* derive from Baumeister's personal collection of objects and library, thus providing us with a sense of what interested and inspired him as an artist. On the other hand, given that a great deal of such modern and non-Western imagery had essentially disappeared from public view during the Nazi regime, its appearance here reflects Baumeister's desire to make it available again in postwar Germany.

[30] Baumeister 1967 (see note 11), 129; edited editions of *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst* were published in 1960, 1974, and 1988, the last of which provided the basis of the present English edition.

[31] André Malraux's *Le Musée imaginaire* (translated as *The Museum without Walls,* 1967) appeared in 1947 as the first volume of his important series of books on art, *La Psychologie de l'art* (1947–49). In 1951 the series was published in one volume as *Les Voix du silence*.

In his preface to *The Unknown in Art* dated 1943–44, Baumeister offers insights into what it meant for him to present his theory of art as an artist in inner emigration in that highly fraught period of German history. He initially poses the questions of how such writings reflect on the perception of the artist and whether his artistic ability is drawn into question as a consequence. He then turns to address the question of which circumstances precipitated the "extraordinary action" of composing his text. It is here that Baumeister makes his most direct reference to his stance on the National Socialist regime, "the ill-omened star that arose in 1933," as he put it, "when Satan" swept "across the world"[32] and set into motion the upheaval of life as well as its values and conditions as they had been known previously.[33] His tone is sensitive and apologetic, keenly aware that the publication of a theory of art might appear inappropriate amid the suffering and devastation that Germany was experiencing as a result of the regime and World War II. At the same time he defends his undertaking as the irrepressible impulse, the inner necessity of a dedicated artist, one who is "constantly preoccupie[d]" with art and, despite the very real dangers of his circumstances and because of his opposition to what these dangers represent for modern art (at the very least), driven to express himself.[34]

Although Baumeister's commitment to the notion of the autonomy of art and the artist did not begin with his period of inner emigration, his championing of these freedoms certainly took on greater significance and shape in light of the threat to them during this time, as well as once they were restored in the postwar period. His foreword makes it clear that, for him, inner emigration did not signify a complete withdrawal of the artist from the circumstances surrounding him. Rather, whereas Baumeister's inner emigration represented a withdrawal from official artistic dictates, we should regard *The Unknown in Art* as also responding to that context.[35] In addition to being motivated by and supportive of the notions of the

[32] As Peter Chametzky has rightly suggested to me, given Baumeister's extensive familiarity with and esteem for the writings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, this metaphor for the Third Reich is very likely an allusion to the character of Mephistopheles from Goethe's *Faust*.

[33] Willi Baumeister, Introduction to *The Unknown in Art*, 33.

[34] Ibid.

[35] This is a point also asserted in Chametzky 2010 (see note 8), 105–7; on the subject of "inner emigration" during the Third Reich, see Sabine Eckmann, "Considering (and Reconsidering) Art and Exile," in *Exiles and Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler,* ed. Stephanie Barron with Sabine Eckmann, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997), 30–39.

autonomous artist working independently of official dictates, and of an autonomous, self-referential, and apolitical art, his undertaking was also a reaction to the real-world circumstances around him, including the actual attacks on him and his art. Like many of his fellow contemporary artists, Baumeister continued to fervently promote these notions of artistic freedom in the postwar period. This was particularly so as a prominent advocate of abstraction, a task that could hardly remain politically neutral in Germany after 1945.

Here it is important to remember that, whereas in Germany during the period following World War I many artists spiritedly and idealistically rejected the world that had been shattered and embraced rebuilding a better one, making a new beginning after World War II was much more complicated. Baumeister himself wrote in *Die Leistung* in 1952 that, "1945 did not bring the general artistic rebirth in Germany like it happened in 1919. The élan of artists was hampered by the many years of systematic deception and intimidation. . . ."[36] Germany had both to redefine its national identity in light of that asserted by the Third Reich and to reconcile itself politically and culturally with the Western world. Once the county was divided in 1949, West Germany also had to distinguish its national identity from that of East Germany. Artists as well as Allied officials played a crucial role in this context. Here, abstract art was perceived in ideological terms and increasingly promoted as a universal and, importantly, autonomous and democratic visual language that opposed the National Socialist past and connected West Germany with Western Europe and the United States, setting it apart from the totalitarian state and Socialist Realism of East Germany.[37]

Reviewers of *The Unknown in Art* recognized in it modern art's march toward abstraction; the majority responded positively whereas others were more skeptical of Baumeister's text and art. One reviewer called the book an important aid in comprehending the often misunderstood development of abstract painting, while another saw it as reflective of the times,

[36] Willi Baumeister, "Bekenntnis zur absoluten Malerei," *Die Leistung* (1952), 54, reproduced in Boehm 1995 (see note 4), 222.

[37] On this subject see Susanne Leeb, "Abstraction as International Language," in Barron and Eckmann 2009 (see note 29), 119–33.

[38] Friedrich Dittmer, "Neue Bücher," *Nordsee-Zeitung* (Bremen-Bremerhaven, June 14, 1948), Archiv Baumeister, review no. 24; Claire Brill, "Welt und Wort," *Literarische Monatsschrift* 12 (December 1948), Archiv Baumeister, review no. 29.

developing from the contemporary achievements of the natural sciences and psychology.[38] Critics praising Baumeister's notion of the unknown referred to it as something "accidental" that came to the artist like a gift, or an "essential wealth of human life," which superseded more fashionable trends in art.[39] Commenting on the role of the artist as an "eavesdropper of his time," Erhard Halbrehder gave voice to lingering doubts concerning abstraction in postwar Germany. He interpreted the "astonishing beauty but also the garish dissonances" of Baumeister's works of art as symptomatic of the unharmonious period, erroneously implying that representational art more readily prevailed in and was indicative of less turbulent times.[40] Similarly, whereas art historian Franz Roh saw Baumeister's most important contribution in his turn away from the rational in dealing with formal problems, journalist and publisher Kurt Fried criticized this aspect. He called contemporary abstraction "decadence" and Baumeister's works of art, developing from the unknown and, as Fried viewed it, lacking a unity of rational and irrational forces, "comparable to visualized chaos."[41]

To be sure, this sort of skepticism of abstraction did not first emerge in the postwar period and was not restricted to Germany, but was an international phenomenon, reflecting a widespread incomprehension of abstract art. Many viewers found the form and content of abstract art not only difficult to decipher but also to reconcile with that to which they were accustomed. In the United States, for instance, the painters of the New York School Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko, responding to art critic Edward Alden Jewell's remarks of "befuddlement" on their paintings exhibited at the Wildenstein Gallery in June 1943, announced their artistic beliefs in a letter to *The New York Times*. They declared that it was not possible to offer an explanation of their paintings because this "must come out of a consummated experience between picture and onlooker." The point at issue, they argued, was whether their pictures demonstrated their aesthetic

[39] KER, "Das Unbekannte in der Kunst," *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (January 21, 1948), Archiv Baumeister, review no. 19; "Ein Standard-Lehrbuch," *Badener Tagblatt* (March 5, 1948), Archiv Baumeister, review no. 20.

[40] Erhard Halbrehder, "Zwischen Natur und Abstraktion," *Fuldaer Volkszeitung* (May 11, 1948), Archiv Baumeister, review no. 22.

[41] Franz Roh, "Ein Künstler über Kunst," *Hessische Nachrichten* (October 27, 1948), Archiv Baumeister, review no. 27; Kurt Fried, "Der Reiz des Zufalls: Bemerkungen zur abstrakten Malerei," *Schwäbische Donau-Zeitung Ulm* (June 12, 1948), Archiv Baumeister, review no. 23. Somewhat perplexing in this context is that Fried went on to collect contemporary art, including works by Baumeister. In 1959, he opened his own art gallery, *studio f,* and in 1978, donated his private collection of twentieth-century art to the Ulm Museum.

beliefs, the first of which was that: "art is an adventure into an unknown world, which can be explored only by those willing to take the risks."[42] Gottlieb and Rothko's words seem to echo Baumeister's in *The Unknown in Art,* although it was precisely because of the situation in Germany, in light of the National Socialist past and the Cold War present, that debates there about the form and meaning of modern art were particularly charged and the very real threat to artistic freedom palpably present.

The best known and perhaps most vehement example of Baumeister's defense of modern art was at the first Darmstädter Gespräch (Darmstadt discussion), which took place on July 15–17, 1950. Organized by the Darmstadt Secession in conjunction with its exhibition *Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit* (The human image in our time), this three-day podium discussion, open to a keenly interested public and broadcast over the radio, was meant to address the issue of the human image in contemporary art. What followed was a heated debate about representational, nonrepresentational, and abstract art among the event's prominent participants, who included artists Johannes Itten and Willi Baumeister; philosopher Theodor W. Adorno; art historians Gustav Hartlaub, Wilhelm Hausenstein, Hans Hildebrandt, and Hans Sedlmayr; and psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich; among others.

To a great extent the discussion was dominated by Sedlmayr's talk "On the Dangers of Modern Art," which drew on the conservative cultural critique of modernity he had presented in his 1948 book *Verlust der Mitte* (Loss of the center).[43] Sedlmayr had been a professor of art history at the University of Vienna from 1936 to 1945; his membership of the NSDAP led to him losing this position after World War II, although he was appointed professor at the University of Munich in 1951, essentially the most important chair in Germany. Sedlmayr posited art as a "sign of the times," as a highly effective means of diagnosing the human condition. As such, he claimed that the shift of art—from its earlier tasks determined by Church and state to autonomization in the modern era—had had a negative effect on art and society, which had sunken into the realm of chaos, disintegration, and collapse. In

[42] Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko with Barnett Newman, "Statement," originally published in Edward Alden Jewell's column in *The New York Times,* June 13, 1943. Reprinted in Harrison and Wood 1992 (see note 13), 561–63. I thank Peter Chametzky for reminding me of this parallel.

[43] Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte: Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit* (Salzburg and Vienna: Otto Müller Verlag, 1948), published in English as *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center,* trans. Brian Battershaw (London: Hollis and Carter, 1957).

his talk he argued that the two main dangers of modern art were its lack of moderation ("center") and thus its lack of connection to humanity, and its turn away from representing a naturalistic image of the human being.[44] For him these dangers were symptomatic of modernity's devaluation of man's relationship to God, himself, others, and nature—a context in which man was deemed to be supreme among God's creations.

Baumeister was among the discussion participants who protested sharply against Sedlmayr's pessimistic evaluation of modernity and modern art. Originally invited to speak on the subject of nonrepresentational art's relationship to the human image, he instead gave an improvised talk defending modern art from what he saw as Sedlmayr's intolerance of not only modern art and modern humanity, but also the freedom of thought and creation, among other values.[45] Drawing on the ideas he presented in *The Unknown in Art,* Baumeister explained how artists throughout history had repeatedly discovered new ways of seeing—citing as examples Albrecht Dürer and Paul Cézanne—whose understanding demands an open-minded, naive approach of the viewer. As modern art became more concerned with creating with elemental artistic media and turned away from imitative, naturalistic depictions, the artistic motif, including that of the human being, lost its significance as a primary element of artistic expression. In this changed approach to artistic creation, Baumeister argued, the human being was not to be sought as a motif in art, but as an element of its creation, of the creative act. As he explained, again echoing Klee's view of the creative affinity between art and nature:

> Modern art does not render according to the appearance of nature, but like nature itself. Man is present in abstract painting as in every other form of painting. He inheres in it. Man is also in landscapes that do not depict any people. The painter is in the picture, just as man is present in nature.[46]

[44] Hans Sedlmayr, "Über die Gefahren der modernen Kunst," in *Erstes Darmstädter Gespräch—Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit,* ed. Hans Gerhard Evers (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, 1950), here excerpted in *Baumeister: Dokumente, Texte, Gemälde,* ed. Götz Adriani, exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1971), 197.

[45] Because Sedlmayr and Hausenstein were not present at the time of his talk, Baumeister decided to forego reading his prepared manuscript and instead gave an improvised presentation. Baumeister's drawing is reproduced in Willi Baumeister, "Improvisierte Abendansprache von Professor Willi Baumeister," in Evers 1950 (see note 44), 137; as well as in Peter Chametzky, "The Post History of Willi Baumeister's Anti-Nazi Postcards," *Visual Resources* 27, no. 4 (2001), 464.

[46] Willi Baumeister in Evers 1950 (see note 44), 144.

However, this response to the question of contemporary art's relationship to the human image (the topic determined by the event organizers) came late in Baumeister's rather sweeping talk. Conveyed in terms that apparently were too broad and indirect for many audience members to readily follow, the presentation elicited incomprehension and interruptions, so that it ultimately had to be discontinued.

In the manuscript that he had prepared for the event, which Baumeister did not present but was nevertheless reproduced in the published proceedings, he also challenged Sedlmayr's assertion of a "loss of the center."[47] Quoting from *The Unknown in Art,* he described the "center" as the fundamental, neutral, purified condition of the artist, attained by "emptying" himself of all preconceived notions and desires that distinguished him from all else and making him in essence "one" with *"Weltstoff"* (world material). As Baumeister put it, the center is "itself world material, and thus world conscience and responsibility as well" and could therefore not be lost.[48] It was in this empty, harmonious state—which simultaneously represented an ethical, metaphysical worldview—he argued, that the artist became receptive to natural, artistic forces and was prepared to pursue his creative activity. From this perspective Baumeister makes it clear that, in opposition to Sedlmayr's disparaging claims, he viewed modern art as reflective of an optimistic striving to forge a new sense of harmony and meaning from what might initially appear chaotic, foreign, or unknown.

"The optimism that contemporary art displays for the unknown . . ."

Willi Baumeister's *The Unknown in Art* is valuable and unusual precisely because it not only elaborates his concept of nonrepresentational art founded on an expanded understanding of constructivism, but also was formulated while the artist was in inner emigration and his artistic activities were banned by the National Socialist regime. Out of his frustration and disappointment at the insipidness of the official art exhibitions organized by the Nazis, Baumeister addressed his explanation of modern art and how to approach it to a broad public. Yet *The Unknown in Art* was not only a result of Baumeister's frustration and his shift to writing as

[47] Baumeister, "Verteidigung der modernen Kunst gegen Sedlmayr und Hausenstein, Manuskript der Ansprache, die Willi Baumeister für das Darmstädter Gespräch 1950 vorbereitet hatte," in Evers 1950 (see note 44), 146–55.

[48] Baumeister, *The Unknown in Art,* 120.

circumstances in Nazi Germany made it increasingly difficult, and dangerous, for him to continue painting. Though formulated in the mid-1940s, the text's championing of artistic autonomy and the belief that the artist's central task is to venture into the unknown and expand the visual repertoire of humankind represents a culmination of the artistic concerns that Baumeister began pursuing in the Weimar Republic and explored further during the Nazi era as well as in the postwar period. His undertaking grew out of his engagement in artistic discourses on modern art and its relationship to intuition, nature, and life that preoccupied many of his fellow contemporary artists throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. In this sense it exemplifies the intensity and optimism manifested in the momentum of this international discourse. Giving us a fuller, more complex picture of the legacy of constructivism and of the development of nonrepresentational art, *The Unknown in Art* is the result of Baumeister's profound and irrepressible urge to communicate his artistic convictions in the face of adversity.

The Unknown in Art

Introduction

Should an active artist state his opinion as a defined idea, fixed to a subject? Does he not succumb to pedantic theory as a result? Do not such writings create the impression that one's artistic oeuvre is accompanied by a feeling of inability? What particular circumstances gave rise to these extraordinary actions? They were physically hard circumstances, namely, the transformation brought about by the ill-omened star that arose in 1933, the reversal of all values and the last excesses, racing toward their end.

We refer to art reluctantly in the face of mankind's unspeakable suffering, when Satan sweeps across the world, when the city burns and ruins fly, when we "seek our nourishment in the debris" in the manner of the old prophets. Faced with the upheaval of all life's conditions, a cautious periscope rises, despite everything, out of the buried cellars of the spirit led by the pressure of accumulated, pent-up impatience.

Can the would-be painter find a loophole, an organ pipe from which to blow his last sound? Art is not an occupation; art constantly preoccupies the artist.

The causal trail on which an activity changes and continues is odd. From painting large pictures and then making small-format drawings and illustrating and ultimately in forced, utmost restriction, to writing. As the circumstances in principle bound me to a long-standing, extraordinary form of existence—the future appeared as eternal darkness, I was dismissed from my teaching position, denounced, and so on—the present product emerged in the end inevitably, in the winter of 1943, as a sign of a final virulence that had been nearly extinguished.

Urach, New Year's Eve 1943–44

The “unknown in art” treated here should be presented at this point as a general concept: the work of art offers the viewer a previously unknown value from which an artistic value also derives. Moreover, most importantly, we should emphasize that an artistic achievement results in generating a central value that was unknown beforehand, even to the engaged artist himself. Herein lies the comprehensive power of art in the form of a process of generation.

A second unknown, the future, which becomes known as time passes, is only occasionally touched upon. The third unknown, the riddle of art and life, is less emphasized, even if it is included in principle. In this sense, the unknown also takes on comprehensive importance in regard to human life.

Part I of the book should be seen as an as elementary introduction, Part II as an introduction, and Part III as the main component. Part I repeats a number of commonly known things, even if in a special way. A serious attempt was made to be easily understandable, although I felt that the finer divisions of art also had to be addressed. It was difficult to maintain the interconnections between them without a good deal of repetition. On the other hand, some subjects are only touched upon and unintentionally left unclear. “The unknown in art,” a way of seeing from a new perspective, possesses several risks, but also the advantages of freedom for the author.

Horn am Bodensee, April 1945

Numbers in the left margin of the text pages refer to the figures.

Stuttgart, March 1946

Preface

We come to understand a work of art, a picture, through the familiar manner of seeing. Opinions and judgments reveal, however, that misunderstandings emerge repeatedly, and that the contemporary art of a particular era is especially exposed to such errors—for several decades—until other judgments generally catch on. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said to Johann Peter Eckermann:

> The world does not arrive at a goal as quickly as we think and wish. Retarding demons are always there, intervening and resisting at every point, so that it certainly proceeds on a whole, but very slowly.[1]

We might think that introductory writings on art would suffice. Those who have attained the right point of view turn to these writings and find their confirmation. This is not the case for other individuals, whom we would like to offer eyes rather than writings. Moreover, since art changes constantly, it continually causes perspectives to shift as well. Thus if the new is a week old, we attain yet another connection to it.

I have tried, to the best of my ability, to contribute my own perspective to the discussion, in which I would like to see tradition, the known, and the new taken into account in the unknown. I have also tried to present a unity, from which point not everything is explained, but with which many things can still be illuminated. Overall, I have been encouraged by another sentence from Goethe: "We must always repeat the true because the error is also repeatedly preached around us."[2]

[1] Translator's note: to the extent possible, efforts were made to provide source information for the quotations that Baumeister included in his text. However, it was not always possible to determine the precise source that Baumeister used or to provide complete source citations. Unless indicated otherwise, the translations of quotations are mine. Conversation with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe from October 23, 1828, *Gespräche mit Goethe,* ed. Johann Peter Eckermann, 20th ed. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1923), 553.

[2] Conversation with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe from December 16, 1828, 239, Eckermann 1923 (see note 1).

Part I

State and Circumstance

The State of the Viewer

> Viewing art is a simpler process than is generally assumed. The viewer's state is his starting point, not his "opinion" or accepted "common sense." Both may be biased by the prevailing indifference of the times. On the other hand, viewing art is not a process like feeding a small child, who simply swallows the porridge spooned up to him. A work of art is not an entirely obvious platitude, but is rather more like a four-line verse whose last line is missing. The viewer takes in what can be naively registered. He can be led further on through the driving force of the work. The values unfold within the spectrum of the senses.

Arthur Schopenhauer says that we should approach a work of art as we behave toward a high-ranking person. That is, we must wait until the work begins to speak to us. The forces with which the artist imbues a work reveal themselves to the viewer who has rid himself of all tensions and renounced his will.

As Angelus Silesius says: "Only when a man is tranquil can he grasp the matter." Being in a state of tranquility is a preliminary stage toward that state of harmony the viewer should reach. The state of confrontation between the viewer and the work of art must be overcome. Here we can refer to the master of mysticism, Meister Eckhart, who aims to depart from the state of otherness and differentiation, and attempts to empty himself so utterly that not even God can have a seat within him:

> A man should be in such a poor state that he neither is, nor has within himself a place in which God might have an effect. As long as a man retains space within himself, he also maintains a differentiation, for which reason I ask God that my debts be settled with God! Because non-existing existence is beyond God, beyond every differentiation; since I was only I myself and wanted to be myself, and saw myself as he who had made this very person! I am thus the cause of myself [*causa sui*], according to my eternal and my temporal being. Only in this respect was I born. In my birth, all things were born. I was simultaneously the cause of myself and of all things. And if I so wished, neither I nor anything else would exist. If I did not exist, however, neither would God.[1]

[1] Johannes Eckhart von Hochheim (1260–1327), Sermon 52, "Selig sind die Armen im Geiste, denn das Himmelreich ist ihrer," in *Schriften und Predigten,* ed. Hermann Büttner, 2 vols. (Jena: Diederichs, 1934).

Eckhart's statement is a self-contained work of art. It does not become clearer with analysis. Eckhart opposes differentiation, thus he also opposes the subject-object division. In viewing art, every will, even the will to penetrate the work of art, should be put under lock and key. The viewer must feel that the shapes and colors came from him incidentally, that he painted the picture or formed the sculpture. It is quite absurd to place predetermined demands and desires on the work, which it essentially cannot fulfill in the least because these are not part of the work or they are unclear.

Painting is the art of the visible. From the painter's standpoint, painting is the art of rendering something visible, which becomes visible for the first time through painting and which previously was nonexistent, or not at hand, and belonged to the unknown. The viewer must reconcile himself with what has now been made visible. The purity of seeing, or, better, of looking, conveys the intrinsic powers of painting, which spread out across the plane of the image. What is perceptible to the eye is the concrete body of the artwork. Like warp and weft, the densely woven, built-up structure is a cellular body of surface components. Formed with artistic media, the painted surface presents a silent play, a drama of colors and forms, of lines, contrasts, influences, and relationships.

If the viewer is capable of taking in the elemental messages of the colors and forms in addition to the representational components, there is every hope that he will be able to profit from this, since the colors and forms contain elemental forces–primal impulses that are stronger than in any copied representations. These primal forces belong only to that which is visible and, by their very nature, cannot be captured in descriptive terms. They are the means to representations, but only relatively so; that which is depicted representationally is a masking of primal forces.

In all representational and nonrepresentational works, as well as in ornamentation and writing, there is something concealed that the viewer is meant to take in. It turns out that contemplation is necessary for this, which requires more time than is generally thought. If disparities and doubts appear, especially in works to which we would assign a high status, the beholder should give these disparities as much free rein as possible, as it may prove during the course of one's contemplation of the work that these actually play an essential role.

The Naive Viewer

The naive viewer possesses advantages. He comes with no excessive preexisting burdens from mental reflection. His prejudices are not deep-seated. Since he is preoccupied with looking, he makes far fewer demands. Thus, the thing viewed affects those zones of perception that it is meant to affect. It is this passive disposition that, in its persistent stillness, extends a readiness that would bar activism.[2] This is also largely the attribute of the artistic person, whose activity is not of a common sort, but rather includes a great deal of passivity, similar to the automatic act of breathing with all its two-sidedness.

The naive viewer does not allow himself to be forced to a judgment, to an immediate opinion that he forces on himself. Instead, this judgment matures. Above all, he lets be what he cannot intellectually grasp; for him, the work of art is a phenomenon, and thus, full of certain secrets. He senses the work as an allegory of everything hidden in the visible world.

The Prejudiced Viewer

This person arrives with his active disposition, which constantly drives him to immediately take a position, to judge. He is extraordinarily overburdened by traditional impressions, by the thoroughly familiar, which in this case suffocates him. He is also overburdened by purposive seeing, by the world of reason. Accordingly, he cannot get beyond the representational, and thus the artistic remains closed to him. He wants to "understand," but his mind is not called upon at all, or, only at the end, and here only relatively and conditionally. If he allowed more time for contemplation, he would have an opportunity to move beyond the merely representational impressions and let the artistic values emerge slowly as well. Instead, he is caught up in his demands, and his self-assertion ultimately gets the upper hand—that is, against the work. One of the most humiliating feelings is to encounter something we cannot grasp, cannot understand, and that we are incapable of relating to the otherwise seemingly fully comprehensible real world. Everyone has experienced such feelings, no matter who they are. We are suddenly put in an inferior position: by a page in a work by Immanuel Kant or by a little paint on a canvas.

[2] Baumeister uses the term activism *(Aktivsmus)* in the sense of goal-oriented disposition, action, or compulsion to activity on the part of a person or persons, or, as we will see near the end of the Chapter "Looking, Seeing," on the part of an artwork.

Since the Gothic and the Renaissance eras imitative art has predominated in Europe. While copying served its purpose for the masters, the highly visible production of their epigones contributed to the assumption that everything that reproduces is identical to an artistic statement.

What Does Nature Look Like?

> It is doubtful whether nature "looks" like anything at all. It is doubtful whether the world offers an unchanging perspective. It may be that the eyes cast a net out into the darkness, which allows a world to emerge that is comprehensible to humans through humans themselves. The objective substance of the world is not comprehensible to human beings in analogous terms.
> Painting is the canon of sight.

In reproductive painting, nature repeatedly appears in the most varied fashion. Whether we are dealing with works by Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer, very early or modern masters, other, new interpretations emerge again and again. Mankind believes it sees nature when it looks at it, and indeed does sees it, although with the gaze of the preceding manner of painting. Painting directs everything visible and continually guides it. The special task of all painters is to discover new zones of seeing that were previously nonexistent, that were suspended in the unknown, and can now be grasped by their values and thus moved into the visual repertoire of mankind. The master alone provides the model for everyone else for how nature should be seen. This is his exemplary act. It subsequently becomes the canon of sight for the general public.

The art of earlier times had its own ends and those set by the patron. But in itself, the act of giving form to something has no purpose. It is phenomenal. Still, we can draw values and derivations from it because it continues to be effective. The act of formal rendering, art, enables humans to make inroads toward clarity and perception.

It turns out that the advent of the first rendering of form in the Ice Age paved the way for another sort of looking and seeing (see Chapter "Looking, Seeing"). No art survives from prehistoric man *(Homo neanderthalensis,* Mousterian). Art did emerge (see Chapter "The Discovery of Art"), however, with the first phase of present-day man *(Homo sapiens)*. Through the tribe leaders' or magicians' creations of small sculptures and renderings
figs. 2–9 on cave walls, visual experiences were demonstrated along with the magical content. These artists alone were the "seers." The druids of the Celtic era were called seers. Such individuals also appear among the Greeks. The painted works on cave walls were perhaps accessible only to a few people. The range of the pictorial works' influence, however, increased in later epochs and cultures, as paintings and sculptures were loosened from their secrecy and protection–as was still greatly the case in Egypt–and became

generally accessible. Cave paintings were non-decorative, applied in hidden places. One had to partly crawl to reach the sites. They could only be seen by primitive torchlight. In Oceania, cult houses exist, "collections" with fashioned display objects to which adolescents and women are barred access. Since the time when historically or otherwise arranged collections (museums) presented works of art to the viewing connoisseur as an aesthetic ensemble and pleasant respite for the eye, the danger of driving out the mysticism, solemnity, and devotion increased. The increasing "enlightenment" and public participation had the effect that issues raised by the artist undesirably threatened the gentle sensibilities of certain museum visitors.

If we want to grasp the value of a masterly work from an older period in another sense, beyond the visual impression, we need to consider what the master's predecessors achieved, the manner in which he worked, and how the average art, typical of the time, was constituted. What did he come across that his predecessor had achieved, and what did he contribute by his work that was new? The master is fully capable of illuminating the distinction that develops between what he found and what he contributed, which must be stated clearly and essentially. He now clearly shows what he has contributed: his relative value establishes his absolute value. His inventions and his boldness are thereby revealed, as are new discoveries. He creates a new image of the view of nature, which then becomes the guiding principle for all other viewers.

Impressionism rigorously broke with its predecessors, and its importance is easier to grasp than earlier revolutions in painting. With greater temporal distance, these are laid one over the other perspectively, so that it is very difficult to unpack and reassess the corresponding circumstances.

Before the impressionists nobody had experienced the orange-colored light of sunspots on a park path or the shimmer of colors of a summer landscape. The same goes for the swarming of a surging mass in a lively street, the optical effect of the movement of a horse race, which came alive in the picture with the help of the brushstroke technique. In particular, an intensified coloration appears: colored shadows. All of these were feelings or discoveries that were created for the first time by impressionistic pictures. The effect then followed, and, as a result, people saw in nature around them what the painters had shown them through their paintings.

Auguste Renoir created the mother-of-pearl-colored flesh tones of the human body; Claude Monet the earth, water, and vegetation in the heat of

shimmering air; and Alfred Sisley, as it were, the red glowing roofs of a farm seen through chromatically moving tree branches. All the relationships of the local colors through the sun plus the atmosphere came to life.

From time to time, the viewer encounters works that do not correspond to his familiar impressions. Only his habits allow him to believe that the painter presenting the unconventional image left the—in the viewer's opinion fixed—impression of nature in a state of unreality. The approach, whose initial beginnings were already present in earlier times and which J. M. W. Turner and John Constable, for instance, further developed, reached its climax with plein air painting in France and thereby also its end. And indeed did so by way of a self-accelerated development (autocatalysis) that had not been seen before in the evolution of a period style. The chromatic in nature turns the earth's surface and its details not only into bearers of light but primarily into bearers of color—in other words, into color itself, in which every earthly substance is annulled and becomes colored substance.

In perhaps a certain dogmatic over-exaggeration, Claude Monet painted the same motif, haystacks (in his picture series *Haystacks,* 1890–91), up to fifteen times, each at another hour of the day and lighting. He was thus called the "painter of hours." With this approach, he demonstrated how "untrue" or "poor" the studio painters were with their artificial, permanently identical northern light.

In almost every respect, impressionism discovered something new. If we examine, for instance, the depiction of things in motion, the choice of corresponding motifs, and their translation in the work, the concept of *impression* gains its fullest meaning through the observation of the fleeting moment and its transposition into an art form. As is well known, movement cannot be represented in painting. If an instant is extracted from a movement by means of a photographic snapshot, for example, the result is the opposite of movement: an attitude, a pose, or even a grotesque rigidity. Impressionism touches the body of time: to evoke a sense of movement in the viewer, other means must be brought into play, namely, the media of the painter, which lie within the optics of painting. We mentioned above that colored masses become so active in impressionism through stroke or dot techniques (i.e., through a sum of small values) that they generate through the effort of the beholder's eye in viewing—such as a boulevard picture by
fig. 74 Monet—at least a sense of movement, without achieving the full illusion of it. The rendering of tree branches or leaves, of meadows or grain fields also

evokes such sensations through the accumulation of small color particles, which, being in direct juxtaposition, exhibit strong color contrasts. This is not that different from the mosaic technique. If we make this dot technique coarser and larger, in terms of pictorial composition, we arrive at the distribution of many identical values in the painting. In Monet's painting
fig. 77 *The Coal Workers* (ca. 1875), the almost even distribution of coal-carrying figures forces the beholder's eye into a sequential viewing of those figures. It thus generates a feeling of movement.

fig. 76 Edgar Degas's painting *The Curtain Falls* (1880) is a pictorial idea of the fleeting impression taken to its zenith. With its horizontal planar composition, it recalls the shutter-curtain system of the camera's so-called focal-plane shutter. The momentary action of the picture motif is conveyed by the picture caption and only to a small extent by the content. Sensations relating to the falling of the curtain are not conveyed in this way at all, because the curtain could also remain in the position depicted. The entire composition, especially the central, form-filled (turbulent) scene with the diagonals of the arms and the sketchy manner of painting, conveys a sense of movement.

At the same time, motifs and painting techniques always emerge along with new artistic discoveries. They form an inseparable complex together with the new total view. It is thus necessary, for a particular type of painting, for one to assume the standpoint that each painting specifically requires. Within this specific view, which the beholder must discover, he must also find the correct distance away from the picture. It turns out that viewing impressionistic paintings requires three more steps away than does viewing realistic paintings. On the other hand, connoisseurs have noted that the very closely viewed surface also triggers riveting sensations (as in Renoir's mother-of-pearl surface).

From the example of impressionism and its effects, an especially sensitive mind came to draw the corresponding discovery. In his *The Decay of Lying* (1889), Oscar Wilde wrote, "Life imitates art far more than art imitates life." Here we might add two further sentences from Wilde:

> All bad art has its origin in life.
> As a method, realism is a complete failure.[1]

[1] This second sentence from Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) is a direct translation of Baumeister's paraphrase of the quote, "Alle schlechte Kunst hat ihren Ursprung im Leben," whereas Wilde originally wrote, "All bad art comes from returning to life." Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying: a Dialogue," in *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review,* ed. James Knowles, vol. 25 (January–June 1889), 35–56 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co.).

In his work *Überlieferung* (Tradition, 1936), Leopold Ziegler deals with the same thought and generally takes it further. He places "making" ahead of "imitating," by which man shows nature what it should do.

What has been said here about impressionism applies to all forms of expression that appear or appeared new at their respective time. Nature offers no constant impression. It depends on painters.

Misunderstandings

> The average opinion is based on a sum of experiences. As such, it is nothing original, but a derivation. It is governed by the known and the useful.
> As artificial structures, laws, social conventions, and all habits of social interaction oppose the intrinsic power of life and the artistic.
> The artistic is boundless like metamorphoses in nature. It constantly sets itself above the average in feeling, thinking, and manmade social laws because it springs from original life.
> Art knows no experience and is not a derivation. It relates itself to the unknown.
> In naturalism, the secret hardly has a place and is difficult to find. In all form art, as in Egyptian art, in the geometric style of Greek vases, in Romanesque art, in expressionism, cubism, and in nonrepresentational art, the secret announces itself more clearly.

Individualistic art emerged in its pure form at the beginning of the last century. Isolated artists created works of personal, striking form. With the beginning of this era, an ongoing chain of misunderstandings developed, to which all artists of rank were subjected. Gustave Courbet and Wilhelm Leibl, as imitative painters with particularly sharply focused eyes, encountered the sort of rejection that hardly seems plausible anymore today. Leibl presented his native city, Cologne, with a painting. The gift was refused as being unacceptably modern. Not only was his alla prima painting style showing the brushstrokes rejected, but so were his motifs. The farmers, old people with the traces of life, were perceived as thoroughly unworthy of art.

fig. 72

Rembrandt van Rijn's late painting style and the drawing that Dürer made of his mother had been forgotten.

Leibl was perceived as a "socialist," just as Paul Cézanne was later seen as a "Communard."

With the departure from naturalism, the misunderstandings of this period also emerged as other demands were placed on the viewer. The representational and its illustrative interpretation, depicting with brush and paint were alone valued as ability and art. Yet, the works of Courbet and Leibl contained discoveries, that is, original achievements. By contrast, it is not art when imitative painters deal with the known. What they make can be cheaply taught and learned. All the recipes are known well enough. Presenting what is known is not art. Presenting the known is repetition. Artistic achievement is confronting the unknown.

The beholder treads a problematic path, especially if the images immediately steer him toward the original models that served the painter. The known world of reason suits the average viewer. From the original models, the posed—be it landscapes, fruit, or people—he develops a feeling for a flat reality; he withdraws from that which the artist meant, the world of art. The average viewer thus prefers art that is weaker and inherently contains such intentions.

Paintings that describe historical events exceed the boundaries of the painterly-artistic even intrinsically and tempt us to turn to the realms of the intellect and literature. History painting in its entire inferiority is derived from Eugène Delacroix. His works (on the Greek War of Independence and so forth), those by Édouard Manet *(The Execution of Emperor Maximilian,* 1867–68), and Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) are first-rate through their formal design.[1] At the same time, the first-rate quality of the creation reduces the event to descriptive representation. In the horror scenes by Francisco Goya (partly in his paintings and in the etching series *The Disasters of War,* 1810–20) the content is starkly reduced through deformation; it is blurred and veiled, so to speak, by which the artist paradoxically works toward his motif. He devalues the merely illustrative; the emotion emerges through the form. On Egyptian reliefs depicting how the pharaoh conquers his enemies, he bears such neutral, unconcerned, and as such, carefully rendered facial features that they become a mask. Visual artists who adopt the grimace from the realm of the naturalistic dramatic arts create the impression and the effect of a frozen moment rather than of life. As Friedrich Schiller put it in his letters *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen (On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* 1794):

figs. 68, 69

> The real artistic secret of the master thus consists in his obliterating the material by means of the form, and the more imposing, overbearing, and alluring the material is in itself, the more autocratically it obtrudes itself in its impact, or, the more the beholder tends to engage immediately with the material, the more triumphant the art, which forces back material and asserts its mastery over form.[2]

[1] Eugène Delacroix's (1798–1863) works on the Greek War of Independence (1821–29) include *Scenes from the Massacre at Chios* (1824, Musée de Louvre, Paris) and *Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Missolonghi* (1826, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux).

[2] Cf. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters,* trans. with an introduction by Reginald Snell (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, Co., 1981), 106.

The path to the works of the masters is obstructed by the viewing of shallow representations. Thus, as a result, individuals used to seeing this way are helpless when encountering the incarnations in original works, because artists who dilute exist in a quantitatively grotesque disproportion to first-rate artists.

The epigones presume that art must make everything as understandable as possible; for purposes of interpretation and explication they must reduce what is represented to a platitude. The best painters of imitative art and naturalism in the broadest sense always leave room in the artwork for the inexplicable. This has to do with an unknown that remains unknown for all time, and is always perceivable as such in works by the masters. The masters transform another type of unknown into the known through the "new" in their works. These are formal inventions, and these are what is lacking in the pictures by the epigones.

The state in so-called mental activity, or any activity at all, in which the intention for gain is replaced by dedication represents the prerequisite for the productive. The reduction to just "oneself," the sojourn in the desert, eliminates the foreign and the relationships to it. The original human being bears a quantity of solitariness in himself in all situations. The occasional resolute sealing off of connections that lead outward need not be detrimental to preserving the artist's humane relationships because the connections to life are not thus cut off, but instead more purified. As Gottfried Keller put it, "Calm attracts life; disquiet chases it away."[3] Besides this type of self-imposed isolation, however, there is another determined from the outside. The artist does not withdrawal from his audience but, rather, it from him. He regrets that what he is in the position to offer in terms of values is not desired at all. As Franz Marc put it in the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* in 1912:

> It is strange that people should value spiritual treasures so completely differently than material ones.
>
> If someone conquers a new colony for his country, the whole country rejoices for him and does not hesitate, even for a day, to take possession of the colony. Technological achievements are welcomed with the same rejoicing.

[3] Gottfried Keller, *Der grüne Heinrich,* vol. 3, chapter 1, 2nd ed. in Gottfried Keller, *Sämtliche Werke in acht Bänden,* vol. 4 (Berlin: Aufbau, 1958–61), 374.

> By contrast, if someone considers giving his country a new purely intellectual treasure, it is almost always rejected with anger and irritation; the gift arouses suspicion, and people try everything to do away with it. If it was allowed, the donor would be burned at the stake for his gift even today. . . . New ideas are only difficult to understand because they are unfamiliar. How often must we repeat this sentence until one person in a hundred draws the most obvious conclusions from it? . . . But we will not tire of repeating it, and will tire even less of expressing new ideas and of showing new paintings, until the day comes when our ideas are generally accepted. . . . The wind carries them across the world; it is useless to resist it. . . . People will not want to, but they will *have to* [accept it].[4]

Here the gift of the artist is meant for "all." But only a few, and these from all classes, want to receive it. As Goethe related to Eckermann:

> Dear child, he said, I want to confide in you something that should help you in many ways and benefit you throughout your life. My material cannot become popular. Those who think about it and strive for it are mistaken. They are not written for the masses but for individual people who want and seek something similar and are engaged along similar lines.[5]

Or Schiller, in "Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen" ("On the Reason Why We Take Pleasure in Tragic Subjects," 1792):

> But to many, as we know, the most true and the most exalted is exaggeration and nonsense, because the measure of reason that recognizes what is exalted is not the same in everyone. A small soul vanishes under the burden of such great prefigurations or feels itself torn asunder over its moral radius. Does not the common crowd often enough see the most detestable chaos, where the thinking spirit admires the most exquisite order?[6]

[4] Cf. Franz Marc, "Spiritual Treasures," in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac: Edited by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc,* ed. and with an introduction by Klaus Lankheit (new ed. New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 55, 59, 60.

[5] Eckermann 1923 (see note 1), October 11, 1828, 233–34.

[6] Friedrich Schiller, "On the Reason Why We Take Pleasure in Tragic Subjects," in *Friedrich Schiller: Poet of Freedom,* ed. Marianna Wertz and William F. Wertz Jr. and trans. George W. Gregory, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Schiller Institute, Inc., 2003), 279.

Schiller, from his ninth letter in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen:*

> The artist is certainly a child of his time; but woe to him if he is also its disciple, or even its darling.[7]

Friedrich Nietzsche, from "Von den Fliegen des Marktes" ("On the Flies of the Market Place"), in *Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* 1883–85):

> Little do the people understand what is great—that is, the creating element. But they have a sense for all showmen and actors of great things. Around the inventors of new values the world revolves: invisibly it revolves. But around the actors revolve the people and fame: that is "the way of the world."[8]

Cézanne, in his *Letters:*

> Art only addresses itself to an exceedingly small number of individuals.[9]

The inertness of perceptions and sticking to habit repeatedly oppose newly created forms and values. No sort of drastic experience helps. As Théodore Duret wrote in his survey work *Die Impressionisten (The Impressionists,* 1909):

> We will probably never again witness such a hate for painters as that which developed toward the impressionists. A similar phenomenon can hardly repeat itself. The experience in which the loudest insults give way to the greatest admiration admonishes public opinion to be cautious. It will at any rate serve as a lesson and prevent the sort of indignation that we experienced from ever again taking place against innovators and independent creators.[10]

Duret was too optimistic. Despite this harsh warning, everything repeated itself in exactly the same way. The hate, the crudest insults, and then—the admiration.

[7] Schiller, 2003 (see note 6), 51.

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1989), 45.

[9] Cf. Paul Cézanne, letter to Emile Bernard, Aix, May 12, 1904 (#168, 235–36), reprinted in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 19.

[10] Théodore Duret, *Die Impressionisten: Pissarro, Claude Monet, Sisley, Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Cézanne, Guillaumin,* trans. from the French (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1909), 188–89.

The values of art and their constant transformation cannot be completely understood conceptually. This makes them into sovereign authorities. The artist is the governor of a unity that makes the world capable of being experienced rather than making art explicable. That which holds value is never based in the imitative. Imitative striving reveals a preference for the known.

In sum, this means that the fissure between genuine works and the inartistic part of the public can essentially be understood in the following way. The value of the works lies in their making previously unknown forms of appearance visible; these, in turn, are stumbled upon by that part of the public that is only capable of coming to terms with the thoroughly familiar and only accepts what is customary and known. In this way, this segment of the public cuts itself off from all meaningful intellectual emotions and values.

The previously unknown are those strangely mysterious-appearing formulations in the work with which the viewer must deal in order to grasp the essence of an artistic statement at all. It is precisely in the hard nuts that we find the kernels. Art never consists in rules, but always in exceptions from the experiential standpoint. Yet experience can never be applied to art. The unknown represents the polar opposite of any experience. Art should be seen as metamorphosis, as constant transformation. Misunderstandings arise because the weak beholder vainly tries to gain an experiential foothold. The connoisseur, the initiated viewer, draws his emotions from the sort of formal rendering that runs counter to rational, experience-like perception. The obliging person and the ingénue allow such formal rendering to affect them and do not fend that affect off.

The viewer is recommended the following path: he should disregard the title and representational motif that he recognizes or believes he recognizes. (In modern painting, the title is a lingering vestige.) He is to expel both completely from the realm of feeling, as he should the search for representational clues that, even if hidden, he might nevertheless hope to find. He should not mentally reflect but be receptive to sensations alone. The mysteriousness and ambiguity of the forms (in partial abstractions or nonrepresentational paintings) provide a first stage from which he must arrive at a general impression. He is thus in a state in which he abandons himself entirely to the visible, which everyone can take in, whomever it might be. From this visible component, an unambiguous comprehensive entity will emerge in pictorial form: the optical picture, the viewing object.

This viewing object is the artist's statement. Depending on whether the picture is predominantly bright or dark, colored or chromatically nuanced, the viewer will perceive sensations as they are produced by the bright, dark, colored elements. Likewise, the shapes, lines, and so on, whether in motion or at rest, and the contrasts and harmony all cause sensations through the visible components. They are the primary elements in viewing. The picture emerges in the beholder. Later, suggestions or remembered forms of natural phenomena also appear, whose sensations are linked to the combination of pure color and form. A complete registration of the picture is thus achieved. Only some time afterward can the intellect flow in and be allowed to interact with what we took in. We can now bring the title into play as well. It is sometimes meant positively or negatively. It is meant positively if it (very roughly) characterizes the picture. It can also be negative if it derives from remnants of the motif, which were nothing but initial stimuli for the artist, from which he turned away (i.e., abstracted them).

Looking, Seeing

Human eyes require a certain amount of time to come to grips with an impression (at the moment of awakening, for example). The eye adjusts as it adapts to the intensity of light, contrasts, distances, and so on. A gradually stopping oscillation puts the eye in a position to see, thus creating the right circumstances for viewing. Such an adjustment by the eye is also necessary when looking at a work of art, particularly as each respective artwork requires a different kind of viewing.

Lower and blind creatures depend on touch, and the other senses assist them. A snail's feelers extend and withdraw as they record information about what is ahead. Just as one tilts one's head to incline both ears equidistantly toward the source of a sound and to indicate the direction for the eyes, both feelers and eyes are pairs consisting of two separate points in a symmetrical system that works as a unit. This simultaneous seeing from two unconnected points is the basis for spatial-physical seeing. Stereometric vision brings two images into alignment and focus (aided by the expanding or contracting of the pupils). Through the act of physical seeing, the eyes become instruments of remote touch. This is further developed when one experiences the interaction of touching and seeing. Light and dark and color forms are thus no longer understood elementarily as appearances, but are immediately reassessed as surfaces of physical objects and their spatial relationships. In this way, everything in the environment is registered or perceived by such "eye-touching," and colors are for all intents and purposes recognized as adherent surface qualities with their characterizing value. In early childhood, this kind of conceptual seeing is not yet developed. The viewing instruments are certainly present and fully matured, but still lack the practice and supplementary experience for both physical seeing and useful seeing.

An elementary state of seeing thus precedes physical and useful seeing; we could call this "looking." Looking supersedes reason and comprehends all appearances as pure visual phenomena; it does not make the least demand on the received images, on light and dark, or on colors and shapes. In this state, spatial-physical seeing is not very developed, and purposive seeing in particular does not exist. The sight of an orange, for instance, provides the viewer with only its lively color and form; its physical quality remains weak. By contrast, he who sees usefully, or "in an applied manner," does not stop at the purely optical impression. Rather, his experience and sense of practicality immediately assess the usefulness of the appearance, which

in turn alerts his desires and their concomitants. Useful seeing hastens toward the idea of purpose and benefit; the instinct of self-preservation and the taste reward combine into an impetuousness that completely cancels out "looking." The cat creeping up to the bird, for instance, has become all eye and greed.

This kind of interested seeing is opposed to looking. The artist "looks" more than he "sees."

The artist's eye, in itself trained for useful seeing, has simultaneously preserved the ability to look. Some art periods have developed and refined the act of seeing (Dürer) while others have favored looking (Romanesque art). But all periods of art have had to use looking in a certain sense, without expanding into useful seeing. Even the imitative painter, the naturalist, initially takes his forms from the model purely as such. He must translate and transfer by using these forms (and colors). He proceeds from his naturalistic standpoint through a valley of abstraction, because with pen and paint he can only render abstractions. In the process, however, he uses his technical means in such a special way that "the appearance deceives." He more or less appeals to purposive seeing. This is not the case with art that has a formal intention—this appeals to looking and incessantly calls into question the world of purpose and, with it, that of reason.

Distinctions must be made between infantile looking, the looking of prehistoric man, and the artist's manner of looking. Infantile looking is undeveloped, helpless, and vague; the two beams of sight are still sent out parallel to one another. Along with the full development of his useful seeing, prehistoric man had his own, original, pictorial kind of looking, which is evident from his cave and rock paintings. We must not assume, however, that he also saw things the way he painted them (a common mistake). This is only somewhat correct. Two reasons curb this presumption: in addition to what the artist really took in and transmitted, a superior, special force of existence (or mental attitude) was a determining factor, as it is in every individual and artist. Moreover, the circumstances of his craft—the ground, colors, and instruments and how he applied them—also played a role.

Along with useful seeing, the artist has the ability to see in a "dematerialized" fashion. He can see a hammer usefully, purposively, as a function or material, etc. However, he can also look at it as just a mere phenomenon of color and form, as a pure result of optics. He is thus ambivalently equipped, and elemental looking is the rule in the artistic process. This initial state

of the visual process—looking—bears opportunities for development that use-seeking seeing no longer has. Looking is the most important because it is the most comprehensive starting point for all artistic action. Returning to the example of the hammer, if we view form and color in a completely dematerialized fashion, they express nothing other than themselves. The rhythm and counter-rhythm of the formal, the corporeal, and the chromatic are enough to evoke sensations that are not abstract but, rather, clearly perceptible in terms of human feelings. They are experienced without representation. This manner of contemplating gives the world a rare depth and breadth, through a, so to speak, vast neutrality: existence, oneness. From here, we are at the liberty of our personal sensibilities to make a bird's head out of the hammerhead—that is, an entirely possible transubstantiation. More important, however, is the world of neutrality, of perceiving oneness.

The creative artist takes a neutral position. He departs from it only under particular circumstances or always carries a piece of it with him. It is his self-regulating "center," which, in turn, has a regulating effect on influences.[1] The artist's creations, his peculiarities, his perceptions, and his values come directly from it.

Seeing is linked to a calmness in our own body posture; the body forces the human being to remain at least in a brief state of contemplativeness.[2] This, now in the correct sense of the word, also requires inner tranquility; the condition of not willing, of idling: neutrality. Only in this state can looking, sharp observing, as well as completely aimless, form-oriented looking,

[1] The notion of the "center" was also particularly important for Baumeister in July 1950, at the first Därmstädter Gespräch (Darmstadt discussion). Here he presented a vehement challenge to Austrian art historian Hans Sedlmayr's (1896–1984) 1949 work of cultural criticism, *Der Verlust der Mitte* (The loss of the center). In his "Darmstädter Rede" (Darmstadt address) Baumeister responded to Sedlmayr's denouncement of modern art as symptomatic of a decline in social values and its refusal to depict to the human form as evidence of its contempt for human beings. In his prepared address, Baumeister described the center as "a neutral, purified, natural condition of the artist. . . . This center is achieved through an emptying out, whereby the natural and artistic energies can flow in at a given time. In this condition, there are no longer any questions, doubt, or decisions and no differentiation to anything but, rather, a connection to everything . . . in this condition there is no 'loss of the center.' The center cannot be lost. . . . This condition begins with relaxation and a stripping off of one's direct personal will, so to speak, with a reconciliation with everything and the neutralization of the subject-object relation." See Willi Baumeister, "Verteidigung der modernen Kunst gegen Sedlmayr und Hausenstein," in *Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit: Darmstädter Gespräche,* ed. Hans Gerhard Evers (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, 1950), 146–47. See also Baumeister's further description of the center on p. 78.

[2] Baumeister hyphenates the German term for "contemplativeness" *(Beschaulichkeit)* as *"Be-Schaulichkeit,"* emphasizing its relatedness to *"Schauen"* (looking) and the viewer's state of neutrality in the process of "looking."

develop. The latter is tied to a state of contemplation, which, in turn, can itself switch looking off; it can lead to contemplativeness and meditation. We are thus also able to rest our eyes while they are open, as occurs during an absorbing thought or a walk taken in a particular state through the countryside. Here we see no details, or what we *do* see does not enter into our consciousness.

Through sublimation, seeing and looking can in some respects have much in common with artistic experience. We take in painting primarily through such sublimation and through viewing pleasure: a picture first provokes the desire to look and then satisfies it. This satisfaction, however, is not complete or immediate. The "inner activism" of the work of art moves the beholder beyond this; he is borne by a clear-sightedness as if he were suddenly equipped with higher abilities. He gains distance from, and superiority over, everything.

As Delacroix says about this, "a painting is to be a feast for the eyes."[3]

[3] Eugène Delacroix, June 22, 1863 in *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix,* ed. Hubert Wellington and trans. Lucy Norton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

Viewing the Picture Arrangement

Every person possesses facilities beyond the rational with which he engages. This then explains the need for an ideal or ideal case for all eventualities. Decisions and resolutions based only on feeling, which are made concerning the gravest of issues, show that it is not the intellect but, rather, the "inner voice," the demonic, that aids us in making decisions. Such zones of the irrational take effect in the form of a readiness when confronting art, a willingness to take in extra-rational facts.

Seeing a representational picture nonrepresentationally—registering only its colors and forms—is not easy. The more the picture adheres in its way to the natural model, the more difficult the task. The corresponding genre, panorama, and history paintings are most often rendered with so much intention to deceive the eye that the viewer is completely at the mercy of the prettified lie. The more that creativity was at work, however, the easier we can arrive at "looking" from a pure manner of contemplating. Naturalistic works in the broadest sense, whose creators are important artists, possess through their creation a counterforce that accords with looking, despite the large degree to which they interpret nature. The formal design is intrinsically powerful and asserts itself in the representational as well. We have already mentioned that naturalist painters must also pass through a "valley of abstraction" in translating the forms of natural phenomena into a form of art. In significant works this formal phase remains perceptible.

The painted world is a special world, even if it to a certain degree pretends to be the "real world." This special feature facilitates looking to the same extent that it complicates "nature-seeking" seeing. Grisailles (relief-like pictures painted entirely in gradations of gray) are one example. Despite the naturalistic corporeal rendering of people or landscape components, the gray of the paint detracts from a consistent illusion. The effect is similar in all pictures that adhere to certain chromatic restrictions or peculiarities, such as Picasso's pictures of the so-called blue and pink periods, in which other values nonetheless also detract from the illusion of nature. A reduction of means, as with the modest media of black and white in graphics, in itself augments the degree of translation.

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit (Truth and Poetry,* 1811–33) Goethe demands: "The appearance . . . of a higher reality. It is a false striving, however, to realize the appearance for so long that ultimately only a common reality

remains."[1] He also does not necessarily get narrowly caught up in the understanding of art of his time.

Contemporary art has developed a specific manner that takes shape exclusively from the particular values of colors and forms, their relationships and contrasts (as in the works of Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian). This art has been called "abstract art" (and recently more correctly, "concrete art"). Without any representation or form recalling natural appearances, it becomes entirely an image arrangement or image ornament, whereby it goes beyond the usual notion of ornament. Leaving the decorative far behind, it seeks to become experience solely from what the media deliver. It achieves the ideal image of looking. Individual pictures can be completely taken in directly, since their values are based exclusively on visible values. No tensions arise from the joining together and resulting confrontation of abstract and representational elements in a picture. Such concrete phenomena demand that the viewer largely surrender to looking.

figs. 100, 107

To more easily attain a purely visual reception of a partly or fully representational picture it is recommended that the viewer turn the picture upside down to cancel out the representational. But this is only partly correct because what the painter distributes as light and heavy determines a fixed top and bottom, as well as left and right. If the image is inverted, many formal values and the entire compositional arrangement will strike us as being wrong. Interesting here is the fact that African primitives did not view according to the established top and bottom. Instead, they achieved a better impression, such as of a photograph, by laying the image flat and viewing it "all-around" from above. Thus, in this case, the sense of top and bottom is not developed (cf. the viewing of ceiling paintings).

What we gain from looking is the experiencing of elemental values of colors and forms. This is a fundamental component that precedes representational viewing. Not just works of art, but any object can be taken in, looked at, in this way. It becomes a chromatic formal value and is representationally dematerialized. The pieces of paper that were glued onto pictures in the third phase of cubism represent such dematerialized things for the painter.

fig. 93

It is doubtful that we can really do justice to the content of past art or that of distant lands, even with great empathy or with the appropriate historical knowledge. When examining an Egyptian, Peruvian, or Chinese work of art

[1] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Dichtung und Wahrheit,* pt. 3, book 11 (1811–33).

or the Sistine ceiling, the beholder remains in his time, and the work in its, and both remain within their particular cultural contexts.

Through specialized study, the contemporary beholder can acquire some knowledge, but it nonetheless remains vague since the fundamental information about distant living conditions can never be fully recovered. The pure visual content of the work, however, can by all means be perceived directly. Moreover, this should always occur at the beginning. The sensations released by this manner of viewing proceed directly from the form rendering forces, not from the representational content, which might be based on a weak convention or was defined by the corresponding conditions of a commission. The artistic, which lies in the rendering of form and is thereby grasped by looking at the formal elements, offers much more information than the representational components or the motif. The extra-optical, in other words, the content-related motif, the material including all the representational components linked with it, and perhaps the circumstances in which the work originated, questions concerning which period of the artist's life it derives from, and so forth, are extras that should not influence works of art. Still, they can probably be useful in another respect.

Viewing the picture as a joining of form and color leads to another essential component—besides drawing our attention to the effect of the forms' and colors' elemental forces, we become aware of the plane and therefore of the surface "of something." In representational viewing, the path to this is almost completely barred. This surface is the expression of something existing underneath. It is not just the visible joining; it harbors a "deeper" level. It is the inexplicable in its phenomenological existence, which in a work of greater significance is also the involuntary component, about whose origin and expression even the artist cannot make an interpretive statement. From its deeper lying standpoint, the inexplicable permeates the picture surface to the top or the front, as it were, and casts every visible thing in the picture under its omen. It is identical in character to that which takes effect in the making of a work, a previously unknown value that preserves its secret in its existence. It is also the expression of the artist's personal style and the fundamental supporting element in the artwork as a whole.

The Intrinsic Powers of Artistic Media

Color and form is everything.
Color and form is not everything.

The work of art as a phenomenon is a closed unit. Its details are suggestive of everything, so that it is only relatively correct to regard them as parts. But we can certainly comment on the roots. The primary root is to be seen in the genius of the artist, that is, in his eidological[1] and form-rendering state. The artistic media—plane, color, and so on—can be seen as the second root, and the so-called motif or predetermined idea as a third.

Since the turn away from imitative art, since Hans von Marées and Cézanne, another power relationship to the motif has emerged, in the sense of elevating the rendering of shape and form above the motif.

Konrad Fiedler (a friend of Hans von Marées), a brilliant figure among observers of art, formulated as early as the last third of the nineteenth century the notion that "the substance of an artwork is nothing other than the rendering of shape itself. The work of art has no idea, but is itself an idea" (cited in Hans Eckstein's edition of *Vom Wesen der Kunst* [On the nature of art, 1942]).[2] This expresses a very essential concept that characterizes more recent art up to the present.

Artistic media are closely linked with the rendering of shape. They are used to develop their powers, by which their intrinsic forces take on heightened importance. The intrinsic powers of expressive media are the actual fertile grounds of optical looking. The contemporary painter attaches paramount importance to them. They not only represent his keyboard, but are also, so to speak, independent carriers of expression and function. The forms, colors, light, dark, the line widths, exact or modulating, as well as the corporeal components in contrast to two-dimensional ones are the voices of the artist's composition. They emit their intrinsic forces for themselves alone, elemental and primary—that is, without having become an

[1] Baumeister also used the term *eidos* (= idea, form, essence; Grk. lit. shape, form) to name a series of his paintings from 1938–42. See Peter Beye and Felicitas Baumeister, "Eidos—Vorstufen, Hauptbilder, Nachklang, 1938–1942," in *Willi Baumeister: Werkkatalog der Gemälde,* vol. 2 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2002), 324–64.

[2] Konrad Fiedler (1841–1895) was a leading German art theorist of the nineteenth century. He championed the notion of the autonomous work of art, bound to the laws of art alone and not to those of reality beyond art, as was typical in official history painting at the time. He was a great source of influence for Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee and, among art historians, Heinrich Wölfflin. Konrad Fiedler, *Vom Wesen der Kunst,* ed. Hans Eckstein (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1942).

illustration of a natural phenomenon. A not insignificant relationship to a representational element that emerges in this structure, and which we first really perceive this way, appears far removed.

Color

For the painter, color possesses various values. One value lies in reproducing the local colors or colors influenced by the atmosphere, and building up the entire picture accordingly. Another value lies in making the logic of the world of art understandable on the painting surface, whereby a potential rendering of space or bodies is also facilitated by a mixture of light and dark. Furthermore, contrast and harmony can be achieved. The most significant value, however, lies in the unfolding of the intrinsic values of the colors. At one time, colors were understood only in aesthetic terms whereas today we mean their essential expressive power.

Just as the aforementioned "looking" is a universal, preliminary stage for seeing, the primary value "red" is a more comprehensive value than the red on a red-painted rose. Red is only a descriptive quality here. Red conveys essential forces of sensation (physiology of the senses, psychological effect) without being the descriptive illustrative quality (in a merely subservient position, so to speak) of a painted object. The symbolic value of a color is based on this fact of its intrinsic value. Assuming a symbolic value as a predetermined requirement, however, would be a highly questionable undertaking, since the symbolic value itself is a classification. The intrinsic value of color is confirmed in another way, by color therapy, a treatment with colors. Colors affect not only the psyche, but even our physical state of health. The warm colors, red, orange, and yellow, are activating while the cool colors, blue, green, and blue-violet, are calming and so on.

The stimulation from viewing color can be so strong that facial stimuli extend to other senses and that it triggers aural stimuli and smell stimuli (synesthesia).

The optical effects make the paint surface itself vibrate, since certain colors, accentuated by light and dark, appear to project toward or recede from the beholder. Notions of density, graspableness, or bodilessness can already be active in exact, pure color planes, without any support from the facture, or an impasto or very thin application.

In stained glass, pure color combined with the contrasts of colorless glass and dark lead cames has its special domain. Cathedral windows achieve a largely pure chromatic power by means of falling light. They banish the representational through the impression of the immaterial and bring it to a high level of dematerialization and transfiguration.

The character of a color results from the wavelength or the frequency of the light. Wavelength and frequency are inversely proportionate; the larger one is, the smaller the other.

The source of light rays and the rays themselves are not colored; rather, they produce particular colors first in the eye, according to their wavelengths. Processes must thus be at work in the human being that can be traced back to colors being part of the nature of the human organism. Analogously, we could quote Goethe: "If the eye were not sun-like, it could not catch sight of the sun."[3] Even Kant believed that the characteristics of things need more than just a single push from the outside for us to take them in. Everything—space, time, and colors—must newly arise in us. This can only happen through capabilities that exist in human beings.

The first true naturalist, Aristotle, concerned himself with colors, and color has repeatedly preoccupied individuals ever since. Sunlight or white light projected through a simple glass prism causes a dispersion of light, making the spectral colors appear that distinguish the rainbow. These are the cosmic, atmospheric colors. Isaac Newton invented the color wheel that is divided into seven spectral colors. A rapid turn of the circular disc was supposed to yield white as the sum of the colors, but it only produces a dirty white-gray. He also tried to create an analogy with the seven-note musical scale. Goethe, in the physical section of his color theory, advocated the point of view that light and dark must be mixed in order to produce color. In the physiological section, he takes his starting point from the stimulation of the nerves. If, for instance, we intensely view a red-colored form on a neutral ground and then direct our gaze toward an empty spot of neutral ground, Goethe's "afterimages" appear. In other words, the same shape that bore red color now appears green and after a while disappears from the eye. The eye thus develops the complementary colors automatically. A simple color triangle demonstrates this complementary process: red, yellow, and blue correspond to the corners of the triangle. The sides of the

[3] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethes Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe,* ed. Erich Trunz, vol. 1, *Gedichte* (Hamburg: Wegner, 1978), 367.

triangle should be imagined as the secondary colors green, violet, and orange and such that the red corner appears opposite the green line, yellow contrasts with violet, and blue appears opposite orange. Since the sum of the three primary colors produces light (not white), the primary color red, for instance, is missing in the sum of the other two remaining colors; that is, blue plus yellow equals green.

Tobias Meyer [*sic*][4] attempted to systematize the colors included in the white and black compounds, planimetrically and in triangular form.[5] Philip O. Runge proceeded on to the sphere, with the poles of black and white. More recently, Wolfgang Ostwald precisely determined color tones through color standardization.[6] Still, his interpretation in the realm of the artistic remains grotesque, even as an idea. As a researcher, Adolf Hölzel made discoveries about harmony and simultaneity.

A painting in only bright colors resembles an orchestra that consists of trombones and horns, and the eye soon threatens to become exhausted. Phenomenal effects in nature, the sunset, rainbow, as well as lightening and everything luminescent, are such strong effects, that even producing them approximately with the naturalistic palette remains a hopeless undertaking, since the paint color and paint ground have different densities than these appearances. Atmosphere painters must resort to strong transformations because light is contrary to the substance of the paint.

Permeating a colored picture with a light-dark scale yields a certain totality, whereas the colorful alone does not resolve an overactive tension and generates a certain blindness. Just as one color does not exist alone, neither does color exist without light and dark. Even in the cosmic sign of the colors—the spectrum—black is represented by the Fraunhofer lines. Furthermore, all life is governed by day and night. Light and dark also form the original basis of color sensations. On the path to dispersion and differentiation, violet was first developed and perceived quite late. It was considered sweet, dangerous—special among the light red tones. Many said: "It is still too new," and in this sense we could conjure up colors that we do not see yet, whereby we are reminded of ultraviolet.

[4] Tobias Mayer (1723–1762) was a German mathematician and astronomer.

[5] In 1758 Mayer attempted to define the number of colors that the eye can distinguish with accuracy. He first published his color triangle in 1775.

[6] Wilhelm Ostwald (1853–1952), a Nobel Prize winner for chemistry, compiled his *Die Farbenfibel* (The color primer) in 1916–17 with the aim of developing a better understanding of colors' perceived harmonies.

The incentive leading us to concern ourselves with color theories is an obvious one because the world consists of colors in many respects, and it seems as though an extremely positive life force wanted to develop in them, blossoming into the purely lyrical without being bound by the material.

Goethe tried to penetrate through the small and large "cord" into a color harmony. This is a realm that seems to bring color research close to the artistic. Here we could say that discoveries made by way of knowledge cannot be incorporated directly into artistic actions and, moreover, that the harmony of colors cannot be channeled into an absolute, unchangeable canon. Furthermore, the ascertainable value of colors and their mutual (simultaneous) influence are only roughly discernable, so that we do not register many contributing factors. What is more, the particular forms that are carriers of color result in respectively different colors.

The entire, imprecisely graspable circumstances that act on a painting surface contribute to making the color effects incomprehensible rather than comprehensible.

Each painter has had color experiences, but what supersedes these experiences is his predilection,[7] which we could contrast with experience and its application. If a work conceived in conscious color harmonies from experience becomes a respectable one, the recipe will be abandoned. "Application" never leads to superior values.

Every important artist and every era exhibit certain color uniformities, which stand out as new when compared to the previous era. In this, the favored binding agents and chief kinds of preferred painting grounds are relatively connected. The technique of oil painting has a very different effect than the techniques of the wall.[8] Pictures are always based on infinite relationships of contrast and harmony.

For some time now, a particular synthesis has emerged. It is "tension." This is not based on the color scheme alone, however, but also on an abundance of contributing circumstances. Chromatically, one or several primary colors are used in an almost pure, flag-like manner by being surrounded

[7] Baumeister hyphenates the German term for predilection *(Vorliebe)* as *"Vor-Liebe,"* underscoring the notion that this inclination toward something preexists. *Vorliebe* has several translations, including bias, liking, partiality, and preference.

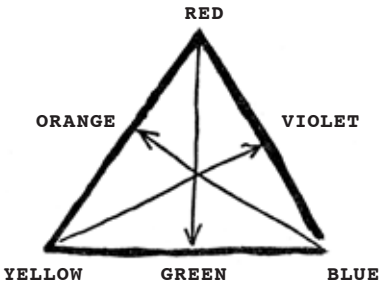
[8] Here Baumeister is likely referring to the techniques and corresponding formal qualities pertaining to both interior and exterior walls, such as mural and fresco painting, and to that of his own wall paintings *(Mauerbilder,* beg. 1920s), which include low-relief sculpture. See p. 95n2 in the present volume.

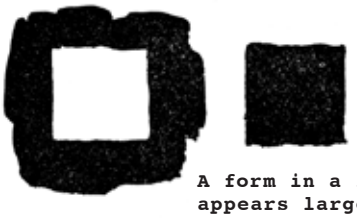
fig. 134 with white. Black also appears in small quantities (as in Fernand Léger's works). A number of color transitions reduced into the gray scale are added
figs. 107–10 to this. The so-called constructivists developed color tensions (like Mondrian).

This tension already begins in cubism, which prepares it with achromatic
fig. 93 tones. Pictures (from the third stage of cubism) with glued-on fragments, for instance, bear such color tensions, which can appear even in the finest nuances. The particular tone of, for example, a white paper patinaed over time or a similar material, cannot be achieved by mixing and paint application. Only the original material itself has this charm and value and the related tension of contrasts to very similar tones.

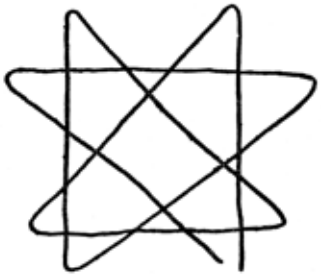
An artist can indeed construct a color canon by means of experiences, although this is only possible retrospectively. But he thereby constricts and denies himself possible inventions if he relies precisely on his canon.

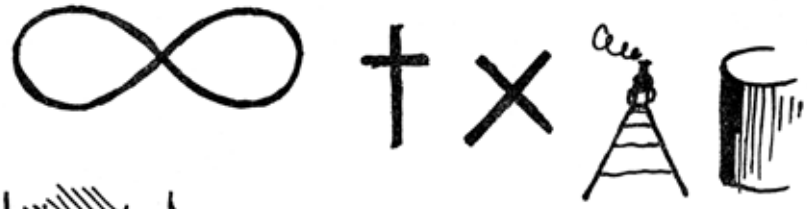
A disposition that excludes the unknown, in a calculation established at the outset by the application of experiences, relinquishes along with it the allure of the artistic. There may be instances, however, in which systems remain merely stimulating means and do not aim at venturing into the ultimate end of artistic results. In this case, the result is not anticipated. The artistic never depends on a presentation of evidence. In art there is no proof, and, especially in the realm of colors with their infinite simultaneity of values, none should be drawn.

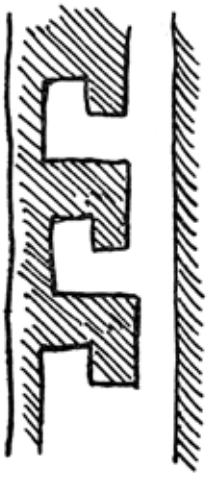


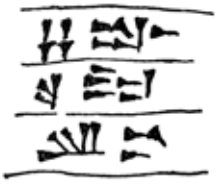


A form in a light color appears larger than the same form in a dark one









CUNEIFORM CHARACTERS

The interruped diagonal line appears in the lower right part not to be the continuation but to lie lower than that

Form

Color and form are the first and lasting results of a formal impulse, which is triggered by a once chaotic world. Form is the capturing of everything developing and deteriorating.

As much as color and form are separate notions, they in turn form a unity nevertheless, because without the one, the other is also not present—color emerges only through the colored form.

Just as the world of bodies, the stereometric world, is different from a world of pure planes, one could also not exist without the other because every body consists of surfaces that delimit and define it.

Even if we take tinted substances (glass and other things) into account, we can assign color in general to the domain of the surface as a field of influence, whereas form determines line and plane as well as the corporeal. The painter concerns himself with planes, with planar forms. Every painting takes shape at least initially from elemental forms through the traces of the application instruments, pen and brush. In many works of fine and applied art, the elemental traces of application remain visible in the completed work and are elements of the expression.

This is clear in simple examples of all direct painting and especially in that from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Crete, and Etruria, from the Romanesque period, from prehistoric painting, the art of primitive races, and all art of the handwritten line. But in complicated, illusionistic paintings (as in the works of Jan van Eyck, Leonardo da Vinci, and others), too, basic forms are elements of the picture, in both the defining initial stages and in the details. All forms, but especially backgrounds and architectural elements, are always initially planes, even if they shift through the perspective from a rectangle into a trapezoid, from a circle into a sphere, or from a sphere into an apple. Dots are perceptible in small-form complexes and lines in contours, garment folds, and other things.

Elemental forms not only play a role in the work but are its very cellular body, even if they are softened or veiled on the way to becoming a representational interpretation.

The elemental forms indicate the ground plane and elucidate the planar value, which is barely graspable beforehand.

Every form that is applied to a plane simultaneously generates a planar counter-form. (A black circle on a white rectangular plane, for instance, makes the remaining white plane surrounding the circle into the planar counter-form.) It is the simple play of positive-negative (as in the checkerboard).

Every form, including the simplest, influences its environment (simultaneous effect). The simultaneous effect, even in the simplest case, is an ongoing force, such as the echo to its sound source, the sound source to its echo, and so on.

A plane covered with uniformly distributed dots is an animated plane.

Even the simple means of dotting is capable of neutralizing the plane: in contrast to a loose scattering, an accumulation produces a dark complex, leading the eye into depth.

The dot has no direction.

From dots, the line emerges through movement. It has direction to both sides.

A multitude of uniformly contrasting lines neutralizes the direction.

The intersection of two lines yields a concentration in the area surrounding the junction. Furthermore, an effect of over and under one another emerges, which is equally strong and simultaneously neutralizes itself.

The line opens up a broad field of expressive possibilities: the straight, bent, jagged, dashed line, and so forth.

Through the line closed in on itself, the circular line, and others, the line becomes the boundary of a simultaneously emerging inner planar form. As such, the line becomes a contour line, an outline.

By overlapping one line, the infinity sign generates two inner forms.

The line is also capable of simulating space and bodies through its perspectival application (linear perspective). It thus loses its elemental character through an application.

If the line is thickened, a band emerges. It is the transition from the line to the planar form. A line or band can be achieved by a facture with the instrument of a broad pen.

The plane emerges with the broadsided movement of a line. The straight line becomes the rectangle.

If a color tone is imprecisely applied, it produces a plane in dispersions (as in indeterminate clouds in watercolor).

If these dispersions (divisions into several partial values) or modulations are systematized, so that the transitions to darkness and lightness are continued in one direction—by bleeding or uniform shading, for instance—an imaginary body or imaginary space emerges on the plane.

It is the expansion of elemental means into an illusion.

A cross made from two lines of equal length yields a different sensory impression than a cross in which one arm is longer. It upsets the overall symmetry.

A horizontally and vertically centered cross on a plane emphasizes the plane as well as the two diagonals. The planar forces become visible.

Even the particular size of a picture itself produces particular sensory impressions. The "formats," vertical, horizontal, or round formats, produce this to a heightened extent. In analytical cubism, in which horizontal and
fig. 92 vertical values prevail, Picasso and Georges Braque surprisingly chose round and oval boundaries in addition to the rectangular paint surface—presumably out of a need for contrast.

A stroke or a dot, like all elemental forms, conveys sensory impressions. So-called constructivism is based on these simple values and their implementation according to tension relationships. Impressions of sinking, floating, resting, or intense activity can be generated by means of a simple distribution of weight.

The dramatic cases of so-called optical illusions are not special cases or exceptions. Rather, they show very clearly the all-round influence of forms on one another. The same form put into a different relationship changes its impression accordingly. Gazing into a narrow, vertical mirror yields a considerably narrower face than gazing in the same mirror turned horizontally. Similar to the mutual influence of colors on one another, formal relationships cause a variability of form.

Besides their pure optical expression, simple signs can take on conceptual expression, like the shape of an arrow, for example. A completely abstract sign can become a symbolic sign.

The elemental forces of the black and white form are manifest in everything written and printed. Even if alphabetic characters are sophisticated developments, they nevertheless preserve all elements and original forms of the pictorial in their simplicity. Even before *Homo sapiens,* torchwood was blown onto cave walls and left behind the first drawings, the first facture of a hand.

The ideogram emerges from the hand of the artistic person. The beholder fills it with sensations.

The primordial drawings of tribes have a magical quality, like body painting. Image and communication also formed a unity in the cultic animal-picture. Pure communication with pictograms occurred late.

fig. 28 fig. 23 The hieroglyphs of the Egyptians were a form of communication with a naturalistic character whereas the cuneiform script of the Mesopotamians was an abstract, elemental type of forming. Cuneiform script, however, first developed its form from the naturalistic sign. Conversely, Egyptian hieroglyphs were transformed into italic script, into the hieratic and the demotic, which both approach an abstract elemental rendering of form, despite their being derived from the naturalistic picture of hieroglyphs. The writings we know of from Crete apparently largely derive from Egyptian writing. The Greeks report that Cadmus brought them the knowledge of writing from Phoenicia. The Greeks are the first European people from whom we know of a writing form. It is not known whether the writing that emerged around 800 BC in Greece, the Greek alphabet familiar to us, derives from the Phoenician or the Cadmium alphabet. It is certain that it is of Semitic origin. Its formal character is abstract.

The Far East developed the highest form of writing art, which was sometimes esteemed more highly than painting.

Similar to color, form affects certain stimulus zones in the beholder. Particular signs and simple shapes as well as rich formal renderings are capable of penetrating much deeper into the psyche than combinations already developed into an image of an object.

In essence, forms and colors, lines, light-dark, and all harmonies and contrasts in themselves and in the picture plane generate their own sensory impressions, which the beholder can grasp just as fully as something representational that these possibly depict. In a certain sense, nonrepresentational compositions are parallels to fugues by Johann Sebastian Bach

or concertos by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, to all pure music in general. In them, human feelings are not prescribed and fixed such that we must put ourselves at their mercy, as with a song overburdened with content. In formalist art (in music and painting) feelings and sensations are developed independently by the listener or viewer.

The sovereignty of forms is so neutral and pure that it does not tolerate any pinning down but, for its part, "everything is possible." Thus high, pure music (such as certain works by Bach, Händel, Gluck, and Mozart) can be played and listened to in instances of both celebration and mourning.

The sensory quality or the impression of a color form should not be quickly reinterpreted into the conceptual. The path that the beholder takes with it is, at the very least, an uncertain one, a path that can mislead him.

It was left to research in the field of depth psychology to make strides in this direction. A practice thereof has patients paint and draw "whatever occurs to them." By evaluating what has been painted, the doctor gains insight into what the patient consciously does not want to admit or unconsciously cannot provide. A direct path undoubtedly leads from these paintings to the fundamental substance of the respective patient. I call this fundamental substance of the individual his center, which holds its chief values constant and should be identical to all existence: the connection of the individual to "world life." The following quotation from Carl Jung might present a parallel to the Tao:

> Unfortunately, due to its lack of culture in this area (i.e., the effect of the unconscious, the irrational), our Western spirit has not even found a term, let alone a name, for the conciliation of opposites on a middle road—this fundamental core of inner experience—that we could set alongside the Chinese Tao with a sense of decency. At the same time, it is the most individual fact and the most universal, legitimate fulfillment of the senses of the living being.[9]

It has been said that every color floods its environment with its complementary color. Every form forces negative forms into its planar environment. Accordingly, the artist generates a plentitude of complementary effects with a color form. These effects cannot all be controlled. Some of them

[9] Carl Gustav Jung, "Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Ich und dem Unbewussten," in *Gesammelte Werke,* ed. Marianne Niehus-Jung et al., vol. 7, *Zwei Schriften über Analytische Psychologie,* 5th ed. (Düsseldorf and Zurich: Walter-Verlag, 1996), 213.

emerge unconsciously and also remain emotionally indistinctly comprehended. Accordingly, the picture is interspersed with complexes that cannot be accountably subsumed under either conscious critique or artistic sensibility. They simply emerge.

Form is just as cryptic as color. It would be presumptuous to want to sum them up. The picture of a written word, as well as that of a printed one, points to the world of formal phenomena. In painting, this world is called forth in a unique way.

The Extra-Optical

> Formal rendering in visual art contains the pictorial worldview within itself. Mental plans and real models (motifs) are stimuli and represent a certain contrast to rendering itself. What lies outside of form and color is extra-optical.

The effect of pen and paint in their primary expression on the plane is unmediated: the purely visible as result, devoid of connotations. Such primary, completely nonrepresentational statements by the human hand directing the instrument pose a contrast to formations in which something additional, coming from another side, participates, in which the media are directed such that something emerges pictorially as a copy of something. It had to be predetermined in order to be in a certain sense reconcretized by painting.

This predetermining of a memory-form of natural phenomena or an existence as an object, as a model, in order to create a copy—are facts that lie beyond the purely visible in painting. An appearance-form of nature certainly also belongs to the realm of the generally optical (because it is in general understood optically). But elevating the corresponding object to a model for painting, to a motif worthy of painting, is an extra-optical value that is resolutely engaged in advance of painting. The representational, the content-related, and the motif are thus primarily not optical values of painting. Painted creations predominantly contain these extra-optical values, chiefly in the type of painting that produces copies, but also in the formally creative sort. In it, these extra-optical representational values appear as fragments or memory-forms, or are formally created such that they have become a part of the nonrepresentational rhythm. Even so, their expressive value should be seen as thoroughly representational since they contribute particular content ideas to the equation.

In painting, this extra-optical, representational, content-related component in the picture becomes an optical value first through painting. At the same time, however, it also retains extra-optical, rational, conceptual, thing-describing values. The things are described and explained in the reproduction by means of forms and colors. Extra-optical sensations belonging to the aforementioned rational seeing also alight on this value during the viewing of art; the artist allows them to participate, albeit in a limited and relative manner.

A highly artistically, formally articulated tree will evoke “tree-like” sensations, even if of a special kind. The representational element is relativized,

but it still fills a position in the work. Here the artistic lies not in the cancellation of the representational, but in its degree of relation. This relation (the degree of abstraction) is based on a strong emphasis—rejecting the representational or making it ironic through its relationship to the elemental nonrepresentational.

The Picture Title and Motif

Every work of art is a self-representation of the artist, regardless of what is actually represented. In the era of copying, the self-portrait represents a document of special importance. It resembles the juxtaposition of two mirrors with their infinite depth. If the production falls short, this is also a psychological factor. Choosing the "self," even as an obvious motif, produces a synthesis of dense abundance in the work, like, for instance, the painter in his studio (Courbet) at work with his brushes and so on. Here we are reminded of "the stage on the stage" in *Hamlet* (1603); of Bach, fig. 52 who once used the notes b–a–c–h compositionally; and of *Lost Illusions* (1837–54) by Honoré de Balzac. The importance of this novel also lies in its motif component. Not only is the involuntary self-representation of the artist expressed but also the media of paper, the manuscript, the setting and printing of the book, the publisher, the sale—the poet and the journalist, the bookseller and the reviewer in all variations become artistic positions of the self-portrait.

It has been said that the representational in art is only one part. The title that a picture bears is less a part than an addition. In some cases, it does not derive from the artist himself. In other cases, he only invented it to aid his memory, or the title owes its existence to a vague connection with the work. In still other instances, the title plays a very particular and indispensable role. It either corresponds to the content-related component or to the result of the picture's overall optical expression, or it is intended to complement it in a certain respect, to create tension. Or the title forms a mode of abstraction.

It is sometimes difficult to reconcile the content (motif) and picture title with the perceptions we draw from the visual impression. One example in which the purely optical content of a picture cannot be reconciled with the fig. 68 motif and title is that of *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827) by Delacroix. The picture shows a centrally positioned, reclining man who appears to prop himself up comfortably and arrogantly surveys a surging wave of fig-

ures. The optical impression is formed by a sweep and color rhythm of the liveliest sort. Neither can be directly reconciled with the notion of death. At the same time, it is a work of high standard. The artist followed an inner primal impulse, which contains everything and unfolds regardless of whether the motif is an Arabic celebration or death scene. In all of Delacroix's pictures the same colors glow despite the darkening and patina. The same forms, relationships, and conditions recur. It is up to the beholder to resolve the tensions, the dissonance between the optical impression, motif, and title. It is a pleasure for the connoisseur to slowly bridge the initial dissonance. A strong substructure of artistic media upsets the representational, content-related component, which, in a history painting, threatens to topple into the literary. Artistic rendering maintains the upper hand, and the beholder who makes his demands chiefly on the narrative will not be satisfied. In this respect, Delacroix provides him too little.

All facts are mostly present in the artist's first idea, even in a complex manner. In this, however, pure formal rendering is still given precedence. Schiller, the classic metric, tells us that pure formal shaping, the tonal rhythm of speech, is there alone, before the motif as well as before the action to be represented (as in his ballads, for instance). Schiller seeks a representational motif for the existing formal tonalities. Moreover, we should mention that in his poem to artists, Schiller pronounces his evaluation of the "nonrepresentational" very clearly:

> . . . Still in those high realms
> where the pure forms reside . . . [1]

Peter Paul Rubens was interested in his pictures having iconographical and mythological things within the motif. The strength of his center, the instinct, however, pushed him away from his connectedness to the motif and commitment to the task. His agency as an artist predominated. His mental attitude, the deep-lying region of his personality, becomes visible; it centers less on the basis of the motif or the task.

fig. 56 There are Lucretia paintings by various artists in which a naked woman plunges the blade into her well-formed body. Despite a few painted tears, which bring to mind glycerin tears, a certain irony emerges in the unresolved tension between the motif (martyr) and the result.

[1] Friedrich Schiller, "Das Ideal und das Leben," in *Gedichte, Gesammelte Schriften* (1776–1805).

Almost all of the more important works in Europe, prior to the French Revolution, came about in relationship with a patron. Before this time, the representational, content-related element was of a contingent sort.

Great artists, who are simultaneously of an independent spirit, possess their own fundamental attitude. They are instinctive skeptics or optimists, that is, their basic attitude maintains an exceptional neutrality, against which the patron's outlook and request stumbles from the outside. Consequently, this supreme neutrality, the artist's center, unites passivity or activity with the content of all life. It is not the artist as a person, but the primal forces of world life that speak through him, comparable to the eternal surf of the sea, which constantly cleanses itself by expelling foreign bodies. The powers of the artist are those which manifest themselves primarily and unerringly in the aforementioned pure shaping of sight. If the artist ventures into the representational, into the imitative, he thereby enters into the realm of the patron's ideas and the mediocrity of his time.

fig. 62 *The Family of Carlos IV* (ca. 1800) by Goya, a painting at the Prado in Madrid, is large and rendered representatively in a manner fitting for the patron. Nevertheless, the contradiction between the patron and the artist remains evident. The king and especially the queen are depicted so unflatteringly as ridiculous human creatures that it seems baffling that no protest was raised. Whereas the pure optical creation belongs to the artistic realm, Goya grapples with the real human element on the same level as the actual human. He states his opinion here; he becomes moralizing, ideological, and socially critical. Goya, who in different works treads in this sense a risky path, is thus forced to give an etching series harmless titles, whose meaning can no longer be unambiguously understood today, but in his time was not exactly harmless.

With commissions, content is established in advance and, with it, titles are most often determined as well. In independent visual art, both remain the prerogative of the artist. This led to the situation in which the title itself takes on artistic character. This is initially not possible in landscapes, still lifes, and portraits. In Cézanne's time, however, figural compositions of a neutral kind were often given a mythological title. Similar to the representational mode of depiction, the lending of titles also became uncertain.

Later, in form art, we sometimes come to the conclusion that the artist, in his giving of a title, added an intellectual game to his work, even though
fig. 90 the optical result could stand alone. In cubism, the title (such as *Portrait*

of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, 1910) designates the starting point, not the resulting picture, which is not yet known during the work.

This title-giving measure is based on the intention to remove the ultimate artistic result, the picture, from a perhaps imitative starting point, from a conventional sort of painting in which the title and work totally correspond. The long path between the degree of abstraction and the representation of nature is important to artists. Not only this, but particular sensory impressions also emerge with it; the artists in question want to underscore the specialness of their interpretation. In contemporary art, such tensions occur in an unusual manner in the works of Paul Klee. He is not only a master of form and color but also a master of formulating titles. He emphatically poeticizes the work with his giving of titles. With them, he only seemingly interprets the pictures. In works by Klee and artists of the vanguard, the picture title emerges less often with the picture than afterward.

figs. 101, 102

In works by artists devoted to total abstraction, the picture titles often match the optical result. Jean Arp occasionally adds a not entirely definable, amusing and ironic ring to the title. In Kandinsky's works, the title also indicates the optical processes, with a brief hint that certainly characterizes the picture without exhausting it (such as *Black Center, Steep Forms,* and others).

fig. 124

fig. 100

Extra-optical, representational values in combination with optical ones lead to immanent values. The path to them, however, is not always easy for the beholder to traverse if he does not assign a lesser value to the representational motif and the title. The conflicted, the unrhymed, that which initially appears as a dissonance in the questionable relationship between the motif, formal rendering, and title, points to the deeper level of the non-comprehensible, the pure appearance. We cannot strive toward this; it emerges through the artist and in the beholder.

The Organism and the Absolute

> The organic is twofold: the absolute is part of the organic. Metamorphosis is part of the organic.
> The absolute appears in the idealities of the sphere and in all exact, crystalline bodies, and therefore in straight lines, the right angle, in the exact plane, regular structures, and in measure and number. By contrast, the transformation of form appears in dispersion or modulation; it is the eternal modification of the basic forms by life.
> (According to Schiller, Goethe's *Archetypal Plant* [1787] is not an opinion but an idea, an absolute form. Goethe later turned to the metamorphosis. Goethe's reply to Schiller: "It can be very dear to me that I have ideas without knowing it, and even see them with my eyes."[1])

Man has an ongoing need to make the world comprehensible. He attempts to link the forces that move everything and sets them before everything as an order of a higher degree. Since nature offers the eye an enormous variety of substances and forms of substance, of circumstances and movements, the human is somewhat compelled to isolate individual complexes, which becomes possible through division and graduation. If we consider that the spherical surface of Earth is finite on a practical level but, in its impression, offers an infinite number of segments that flow into one another, the need for dividing it up becomes understandable.

All units of measure, the meter, kilogram, degrees of heat, degrees of air pressure, electric measurements, light measurements, waves, and quanta, serve comprehensibility. They are less measurements than divisions.

The picture as a section of nature (as in realism, naturalism, and impressionism) is in a certain sense also a form of making comprehensible. Even if a summarizing view of the totality always retains its meaning, the need for classification and degrees of order is nevertheless present, just as the distinctions "good" and "not good" and the gradations between them are necessary for individuals in practical terms.

But also that which the individual draws near to himself, with which he surrounds himself, of which he makes use, he tries to contain in categories. It is not just a general need to see and understand. It is also a sober compulsion that the static law of gravity and the laws of environmental influences impose on him as soon as it concerns the interests of his civilizing needs.

[1] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Glückliches Ereignis, von Goethe am 22. Mai 1817 niedergeschrieben,* vol. 14 of the Schriften der Stadelmann-Gesellschaft (Leipzig: Poeschel & Trepte, 1934).

With every artificially produced object—a hut, canoe, pitcher, or shovel—he inevitably arrives at the perpendicular, that is, at the right angle, at the absolute plane (such as the bottom plane of a pitcher), at the straight angle (symmetry axis) of the tent pole or the arrow. These formal systems are the results of experience. Even in the period of prehistoric man, in the
fig. 1 pre-Chellean era, symmetrical strikes appear on artifacts in contrast to the amorphous hand axes of the eoliths.

The original form of everything corporeal is the sphere. This basic form is present in the macrocosm and in the atom. Its all-around axes yield a poly-symmetry. It is the symbolic form of the free-floating body since it is oriented uniformly toward all sides. If a sphere is brought to a halt within Earth's global system, the force of gravity must be in effect along with friction. The sphere must be brought to a halt by static. This roughly occurs by truncating one of its infinitely many poles. This way, the all-around-ness is neutralized, and symmetry takes its place. This becomes especially clear if we move from the sphere to the notion of the disc. It shows the axis of its two congruent parts more clearly than does the sphere. The tree, its trunk and leaves, and many other things in nature, grow according to this building structure: symmetry.

If someone shapes a water ladle, his hand, a skullcap, or a gourd shell might serve him as a model. He forms based on an archetype, and directs it as much as possible toward the endpoint of utility. If he makes a piece of branch into an arrow, he eliminates in the process all that which environmental influences have formed in deviations. Such formations are opposed to the structurally absolute system. They are the dispersive, the modulating element that is a part of organic life. What forms the sun and its course, the wind in connection with the instinctual juices inside an organism—that is, that which forms combinations of movement—is no longer absolute. Movement is contrary to the absolute static. It expresses itself in a variety of corresponding forms of becoming and decaying, in the eternal metamorphosis of life.

Man does not form purposive things freely but according to a model, experience, and in the direction of their usefulness. These features manifest the characteristic of the "artificial." A primitive hand ladle, a ladle wheel from ancient Egyptian times, and a modern machine are each products that had a definite goal. Knowledge, the model, and experience, purpose and the goal reveal the path of decisions.

A new, previously unknown formal development is produced by the engagement of ideas, which, however, turn immediately into the path of the useful. By and large, technical achievements remain hypertrophic forms of physical strength and other bodily organs (such as the relationship between the eye and microscope). They are prostheses based on human abilities. All these prostheses and their parts are shaped absolutely in the sense of statics (also with absolute surfaces). Such parts are only asymmetrical when they have a movement function diverging from the axis.

If we consider the artistic, the pictorially created, from the standpoint of the artificially produced, the differences between the two realms unfold. The core of the artistic is not derivation but the autonomous original force of forming. Artistic zeal does not steer purposive natural forces toward absolute form (such as a tool). Rather, artistic work is a direct part of the natural force itself. The core value of a work of art has no purpose or known goal.

Aside from that, there are features of the absolute within the complex of an artistic work as well. They lead our gaze to the ordering, dividing, and isolating mentioned at the outset, which the individual carries out in order to grasp nature. The rectangular border of the picture and its exact plane are absolute values. The base of the sculpture and the frame of the picture tend very much toward the absolute.

But signs of the absolute also appear in the work itself, especially in works that aim at being incorporated into architecture in the manner of mural. Here the architecture itself must demonstrate the austerity of statics (as in Egypt) rather than a tendency toward dissolution (as in the baroque and the rococo). In modern architecture, the absolute is forceful because its surfaces are free of decorative over-proliferation.

fig. 43 Byzantine paintings tend decisively to the absolute through axial arrangement and series of verticals (Ravenna mosaics, for instance). In Gothic
fig. 49 painting up to Jan and Hubert van Eyck, the absolute even becomes the carrier of all artistic shaping. Not only in the defining lines, in the representation of absolute spaces and bodies, but also in the smooth, absolute surface of the painting.

The cellular body of these pictures consists of absolute forms, in complete contrast to baroque painting or impressionism. Corporeal, exact components and their sharp borders (as in van Eyck) also belong to absolute painting form. But the absolute also appears in paintings from later

fig. 65 periods. The self-portrait by Nicolas Poussin is an acknowledgment of the straight line and right angle. What is not so clear in Poussin's large figural
fig. 64 compositions is revealed in his self-portrait by the exact planes of the panel paintings layered behind the figure of the painter. He contrasts the absolute of the plane with the absolute of the illusionistically painted physicality of the person set in front of it.

fig. 66 Jean-August-Dominique Ingres is also an exponent of the absolute to the point of becoming cold.

The straight line and the right angle are artistic means that draw the rectangular picture closure into the picture. These media become formal motifs within the design. All the horizontals in a picture are modifications of the upper and lower boundaries, and all the verticals those of the lateral boundaries. The verticals and horizontals form a transition from the boundaries. Moreover, they consolidate the picture structure because they simultaneously (unconsciously) radiate outward from a midpoint cross.

Impressionism seen as a whole lacks absolute values (as in Monet's works). Even the painting technique of the alla prima facture is disintegration, dispersion, a contrast to the absolute. The pictures' compositional tectonics are also barely noticeable. Composition exists only in the choice of the motif and, in that, how it is distinguished. The horizontal and vertical picture boundaries contain just the absolute. The compositional absolute is, as it were, shifted out of the picture into the boundary. For this reason, impressionistic pictures without frames are especially incomplete and unsatisfactory. Presenting a contrast to this are pictures of a tectonic, constructivist
figs. 44–48 sort, especially Romanesque works up to Giotto and later, after Cézanne.
figs. 107–10 Constructivist works and certain works of so-called concrete art contain so many absolute values that an emphatic framing would amount to overloading them with absolute facts.

fig. 78 The luminarist (pointillist) Georges Seurat, an artist who can hardly be overestimated, outstripped impressionism by especially distinguishing the absolute—not only with his methodically regulated technique but also with his clear compositional arrangements, with verticals, and other means.[2]

[2] Here Baumeister plays with the words regulated *(geregelt* = regulated, controlled) and regulations *(Regelungen* = regulations, arrangements), the latter translated here as "arrangements."

figs. 84–86 Cézanne, as an important synthetist, proceeds from elemental rhythms, which contain the fundamental absolute element through a scaffold structure of their own. The straight line and the right angle interweave with freer forms, which superimpose the organic over an austere structure. In this sense, his pictures are a hybrid. Generous defining rhythms take shape on Cézanne's absolute picture planes with their tectonic (absolute) picture structure. These rhythms evoke associations of picture meshes (a network belongs to the absolute). Further pictorial subdivision through the austere facture shows traces of the absolute, and leads to an incomprehensible dispersion that, like vegetal overgrowth, bark formations, incrustations, and humus formations, loosens up the absolute form of the globe in a metamorphosis-like fashion.

figs. 87–94 In its early stages cubism (Picasso, Braque, Juan Gris) appears to be an apotheosis of absolute means. Numerous picture sections show a marked penchant for absolute planes, with dispersive fragments set in contrast to them, while absolute elements also appear in the austere structures. The individual, dispersive brush application reduces the absolute in the first phase of cubism.

figs. 107–10 Constructivism (as in the works of El Lissitzky, Kazimir Malevich, Mondrian) brings the absolute itself to the design. Facture is avoided here as well.

fig. 109 In a few cases, artists used mathematics (such as Georges Vantongerloo, Max Bill).

Otherwise, the absolute values are the artistic expressive media of the picture structure. There are architectonic pictures, sublimated components
fig. 113 of absolute planes and walls (as in wall pictures). They are always outfitted with sculptural elements by which they develop into wall pieces as a station within the process of expanding from the plane to the third dimension.

The ne plus ultra of the absolute in painting is found in the works of
fig. 107 Mondrian. It is the art of tension, which expresses itself without any dispersion and is also seen to a degree in Léger's works. An example of a great
figs. 101, 102 synthesis of the absolute and metamorphosis is the work of Paul Klee, in which the two primal forces combine into the "organic."

Goethe is to have said of himself that he thought better than he spoke and spoke better than he wrote. Analogously, we would have to preface this by saying that he perceived and dreamt better than he thought.

These are comparative stations, which follow a continuous path from the amorphous to consolidated form. In art, there is nothing to lose on the path to becoming form.

The artist's doubt, which accompanies his self-assurance, appears as a reflection and conscious critique that he admits in doses. That is why the artist produces "conditionally" and hesitatingly—especially hesitatingly toward the end as well as in order to avoid exaggerating the final articulation. The final form must not become rigid; rather, it must guarantee the maximum life rhythm in freedom through the form.

In considering the organic, however, the notion of the "total" should not be overlooked. The system of relationships in the artwork is especially necessary for achieving a synthesis of the organic. The relationships produce an indivisible unity in the work of art.

It is oneness. All the frame-defined painting of naturalism, and especially that of impressionism, produces a glaring isolation from the environment through its composition and external frame. The work is constituted by isolation and takes pains to stress its difference from nature. The more the work is a copy, the more it must deny its dependence by isolating itself with a meaningful frame. Works of so-called form art need no isolation. They can exist without frames.

With a naturalistic picture, the frame has the task of being a defensive wall against the surrounding environment. With abstracting painting, as with completely nonrepresentational painting, the frame has much more the task of facilitating a connection to the environment.

What ensues impressionistically within the picture boundary is, so to speak, a fluid mass. Because all forms and colors come into existence with each other and through dependence on each other, a permanent fluctuation emerges. The eye is attracted by the strongest contrasts and must correspondingly adjust itself to admit finer nuances. The simultaneous effect holds our gaze in continuous movement. In the process, a fluorescence even develops; the individual parts of a multicolored picture take on different expression. The beholder needs a certain amount of time for his gaze to steady itself and come to an overall agreement that then, to an extent, conveys the picture to him unchangingly for all time. This constancy is not a complete stillness, however, but one in which a movement prevails that is simultaneously pleasant for the viewer. (See also the Chapter "Viewing the Picture Arrangement.")

This movement is comparable to the juices that create life in the organic world. Life, or what we subsume under the notion of the total here, is linked to movement and relation. With it, the element of time is also perceptible in painting.

The consequence of naturalism can in a certain sense be seen in the wax figure of the panopticon: the copy in life-size, in complete plasticity, true skin color with hair and inlaid eyes. Even so, the impression it makes on the beholder is not one of life but the horror of death! Why? Because it lacks the sublime movements of the blink of the eye and breathing that accompany life. With Cézanne, the rhythmization of picture objects, the outlines, the modulation of the entire picture plane get their start, and with this, the distancing from the deceiving copy also commences. Painting gains musicality! A process within the picture plane recalls the musical process. In cubism and especially through the means of Klee, through his formal themes, through repetition and variation, and through the line as flow, the substance of time in the picture becomes active.

Part II

The Transformation of Art

The history of art is the history of humanity in purified form. In their extraordinary concentration, individual works of art unveil that which history, conversely, joins together through a sum of all-too-human events. Excessive indulgence of the human will darkens those eras in which the brightness of culture and civilization might have otherwise prevailed. One looks in vain for intrinsic value in the interpretation of human unreason made image, or in the description or interpretation of events. In the centuries of copying, the reproductive exists within the work as a fugitive aside, since it is only via artistic means that the work transcends to a higher sphere.

Even if, in some cases, we are dealing with works that touch on positive motif elements, the illustrative or descriptive aspect never offsets the weight of form. Far removed from all this, and often standing in contradiction to the times, the works of art shine like beacons of human genius in a vast field of dross.

Pictorial insights from individual or anonymous collectives are heaped up in the art forms we understand at a glance. Rational intentions and aims are certainly decipherable, even in works from earlier eras—not just in craft objects, but in "high" art as well. Even the commissioning patron can be made out. Still, the work extends far beyond being a culturally civilizing exponent of its time and place, despite its (circumstantial) boundedness. On the whole, a work's purpose or motif is only a pretext for art. The course of its development shows that art vigorously began casting off all external ties and burdens at the turn of the nineteenth century. Particularly significant in this process are various tendencies, from which the general trend emerged. These tendencies are the following:

From applied painting to painting
Composition and decomposition
From the predetermined idea to the freedom of self-responsibility
Motif—motiflessness
Imitation and formal impulse as development processes
Rhythm and temporal body

From Applied Painting to Painting

If an object is made by human hand from some material, such as wood, stone, iron, etc. this is in itself an unambiguous process. The basic material unfolds as it is being worked on and is thereby exposed. A new value presents itself in the created object.

If paint is applied to an object, however, something intangible is produced through the complete or partial covering of the material, such as when we apply paint to a given natural product like a pebble (e.g., the painted pebbles from Mas d'Azil of the Mesolithic period).

If this painting is applied to an object that was made by a person (by working a material), such as a sculptural object, not only the material but also the artistic design is partially or completely covered by the application. Certain values disappear beneath the covering; they are subsumed by a masking. Even if the applied painting "serves" to highlight and strengthen forms already suggested, this painting is not unambiguous, but enigmatic. A complex interplay between being and seeming develops in the relationships, depending on how they present themselves. This dual interplay pertains to art, but is especially expressed in "applied painting."

Homo sapiens, who appeared in the last glacial period, the Wurm Ice Age, decisively distinguished himself from prehistoric man in that artistic activity began with him. According to the latest research by Hugo Obermaier, the bear-scratch marks found in cave loam were made with three fingers or a comb-like instrument. Rhythmically sweeping lineaments were produced this way in which we can discern fragments of animals, animal heads, contour lines, and so forth. This explanation is a rather technical one about the origin of all rendering of form. Even before *Homo sapiens,* Mousterian man [Neanderthal] sprinkled his dead with red ocher. We can assume that this body powdering led to body painting, and that this was the first sort of painting. A prehistoric version of René Descartes's phrase, "I think, therefore I am," could be, "I paint myself, therefore I am." This is not to say, however, that prehistoric man was concerned with particularly asserting his personal existence. He belonged to the community and used body painting to mask and emphasize the expressive forms of life. Since he was not aware of any differentiation between self and community, what he thereby was doing was natural to him. Being preoccupied with one's own body is "obvious," even from the most unfathomable perspective. And yet, man is *not* "the measure of all things." Rather, extending beyond that pale classical yardstick into the

river of life, through youth, old age, death, preexistence, and birth and into the annual rhythm, man is instead a metamorphosis-driven, partial value of being. Life—that which moves—the self-changing, stands at odds with the idea of absolute form. It is fitting to take body painting as the form that provides security for the human figure, in contrast to perpetual unrest, movement, and insecurity. As such, the painting would render the human being, at least on ceremonial occasions, into an expression of a steady, security-offering constant, unlike the everyday body beneath the painting, with all its variations and weaknesses—its changes. What is especially conspicuous in this difference is the relationship between art paint and natural paint. Painting the living body, or even tattooing it, is the first station of painting. It has a magical purpose. It takes art to capture it.

The path of sculpture also begins here. Clay, wood, or stone is carved, punched, sculpted in relief, and rounded, and thereby developed into independent, free imitative renderings of shapes, often comprising various substances.[1] They were developed further with the application of paint. In terms of its origin, sculpture possibly ranks before painting. It is physically more real than painting, more material and substantive, and also more static. Painting is considerably more sublimated: it is appearance without tangible substance.

figs. 36, 37 In magic cult practices, the painted body (tattooing, scarification) also aids the art form of dance and everything mimicked with masks and disguises, or is the basic form of this. Primitives painted themselves to fend off hostile forces, in order to deny them any point of entry for attack in military expeditions or in hunting. Matching forms and colors emerged, indicating an affiliation to a specific tribe. That the practice served such purposes is illuminating, but this applied intention still does not explain the nature of painting, because the source of art lies beyond all intention.

The "play impulse" undoubtedly comes closer to the source but also does not get to the core of the matter, which cannot be grasped conceptually since it lies in the very existence of all being and forming.

fig. 36 Body painting follows the forms of the body or attempts to negate them. It is derived from the given body. The small sculptures of the early Aurignacian
fig. 5 (such as *Venus of Willendorf,* 24,000–20,000 BC) were painted in the same way.

[1] Here Baumeister uses the term *Nachformungen* (lit. after-formings)—here translated as "imitative renderings"—again stressing the notion of an imitative or reproductive approach to sculpting.

figs. 6–9 The well-known cave ceiling of Altamira contains many animal representations of one to two meters in size and in at least two colors, ocher and black. It is significant, however, that they are not painted on even areas of
figs. 6, 7 the rock but on highly raised rock contours, whose given natural forms approximate the animals' forms considerably. With limited means of dyeing and painting, these natural rock contours were developed into kneeling or standing bison. The rock swell was dyed with red and yellow ocher. Eyes, hooves, mane hair, and a tail were also added with black. The painter let himself be guided by the shapes provided by nature, which he further articulated by adaptation. He possessed the ability to look, to perceive something pictorial in amorphous natural structures, in clouds, water spots on a wall, and other things, where the seeing individual notices only the reality of clouds and water spots. This sort of viewing corresponds to "seeing" in the forest and at night, to "hearing" the wind and the water. Examples of rock painting that proceeded from natural formations also exist in eastern Spain. A natural hole in a rock plate, for instance, led a painter to depict a honey harvest. People climb poles or rope ladders up to the hole, which became the entrance for the bees. If a painter had no point of departure to start with, he would establish one artificially, by sketching a contour line and, being guided by it, painting in the inner form.

The art of the ancient region near the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the art in Ur (modern Tell el-Muqayyar), Uruk (modern Warka), and Lagash (modern Al-Hiba), had painted sculptures and reliefs. The German excavation society made a surprising new discovery in the Enna
fig. 26 district of Warka in Sumer (modern Iraq): a life-size head of a woman in white marble, the oldest large sculpture in the world. The eyes and eyebrows were inlaid, and a wig made of a special material was added onto the head. The head form was additionally treated with colored stones and other things, which compensated for or even accentuated the paint application. Encrusting sculptures, reliefs, and flat paintings with various materials was typical in all regions and periods up to the icons.

This art of mixing materials, which combines the most diverse substances by handcraft into a sculpture, shows that the arts and crafts had not yet been split off from what is now called the fine arts. A magic of substances flourished here (e.g., the gold and ivory sculptures by Phidias). In more modern times, by contrast, there is generally only one material for a single work: a sculpture in marble or bronze or artificial stone, a painting in oil
fig. 93 or another binding agent. Only the montages in the third phase of cubism

return to making use of a mix of materials, which then plays a role in non-representational or strongly abstracted reliefs.

Our sensibility for substances is oriented quite differently today than in ancient times, in which, for instance, blue glass was ground up in order to obtain smalt to expand the ocher scale of the earth tones. Blue and green are later colors.

In Greece, sculptures were extensively painted, as were the temples, so that the architectural elements were "understood" chromatically (polychromy). Vertical elements like triglyphs were done in blue, and horizontal elements, the cornices, in red. Sculptures with heads made of different substances in various factures, structures, or modulations, with eyes of mother-of-pearl, wigs of gold braids, and painted skin components are simultaneously exceptional abstractions, which were turned into suggestive phantoms exceeding the natural (source) phenomena. This is especially the case for a work incorporated into the architectural elements and the space of the temple, where such a sculpture became the true body of a god, before which incense would be burned. On the other hand, the tendency toward illusion in the sense of imitating nature weakens the natural phenomena. This appears
fig. 15 later in the Hellenistic-period mummy portraits from Faiyum. These are life-size portrait panels of wood painted with hot-wax pigments (encaustic), which were inserted into the coffin as well as onto burial wrappings so that they created the impression of the dead individual gazing out "alive." The hot-wax pigment is finely modeled with instruments (the cystrum and cautery), and the naturalistic quality of the flesh tones is reinforced by the qualities of the wax. The mummy portraits thus illustrate for the first time a type of painting that is not applied painting.

The vast field of ceramics, especially within the ancient Greek period, exhibits an abundance of splendid examples of applied painting. The surface forms of amphorae and kraters and in some cases the circular underside of bowls included individual figures and compositions. Using the simple means of the line and plane, the craftsman exploited the ground planes relative to the vessel, following them to a certain degree in order to con-
fig. 20 versely create contrasts to them. The first pieces were painted black on a light ground. Unsurpassed is the geometric style, whose expressive power is by no means exhausted in the decorative. In contrast, the later dated
fig. 22 white lekythos (burial pitchers) exhibits very lively, handwriting-like painting. Perhaps the most beautiful vessel from the ancient period remains the

fig. 25 beaker found in Susa and now preserved in the Louvre, with its sensitive simplicity. The entire division of the surface through its painting shows the great, yet delicate, interplay between adapting and abandoning the adaptation. The painted-on ibex, with its oversized, broad horn and concave back line, is an exemplary image of an applied-painting form. The Minoan palace vases, on the other hand, sink into the decorative.

In ceramics we see a surface organization that in many respects is contrary to applied painting. This is the amorphous form and color that develop from the annealing paint. Here the artist allows the forming impulse of the substances to unfold and battle it out during the firing. In this, the form makes little allowance for the formal or functional construction of the vessel but, so to speak, boundlessly overruns the entire surface. Such formations also exist in the enamel-flux technique. Among the ancient ceramics of China, there are simple bowls that represent a pinnacle of sensible design, due to their restrained plastic form in comparison with the discrete flow of color or color nuances in a predominantly greenish tone. Here, man leaves the shaping to the nature of the substances. For the modern period, the enameled vessels by Hans Warnecke are exemplary.

From here on, it is understandable that the Viennese architect Adolf Loos began his polemic essay "Ornament and Crime" at the turn of the century. In it, he turned against decorating.

The vase painting of Greece to some extent allows us to appreciate the loss resulting from the destruction of Greek mural paiinting through weathering, wars, and plundering.

We can form a better opinion about Etruscan mural paiinting through the surviving burial chambers.

Mural painting developed primarily from painting architectural elements. If none were available, as in Egyptian and Etruscan burial chambers, they
fig. 19 were produced by dividing up planes. The frontal walls in Etruscan tombs provided pediment solutions with spandrels, whereas the sidewalls were limited to fields and bands. The figures are mostly primitive although others with delicate limbs and gestures also appear alongside these massive accents. Here we can trace the entire range of what is given and contingent, up to the unexpected fancy.

Murals on the whole must be regarded as applied paintings because they are dependent on spatial relationships and planar fields. Structural parts

such as beams and columns are also painted, as are intradoses, lintels, and cornices, whereby the decisive plane provides orientation.

Pompeian space was burst open by painting the entire wall plane, as the four successive styles reveal in slightly different variations. Trompe l'oeil architecture covers the walls. A feeling for the elemental aspect of smooth interior and rough exterior walls is no longer present.[2] This sort of wall decoration with figures scarcely has the character of applied painting any longer.

fig. 47 In Romanesque art, a dark colored contour line is especially prevalent. The inner elements of the figures were painted in and were given the defining values of eyes, hair, and so on as well as elemental forms, primarily by the
fig. 44 brush. Even in the Gothic period, in which pictorial tapestries, paraments, and stained glass were especially common, the contour lines and painting in remained prevalent as did colorful glass plane elements and lead cames.
figs. 47, 48 A significant break appears between Cimabue and Giotto. The contour line in painting became shadow; partly the shadow of the bodies and partly a spatial, depth-forming shadow that was meant to draw the bodies away from the picture plane and forward. With this, all previous planar painting with contour and filled-in areas was abandoned. The altarpiece, with mobile wings and its entire divided construction, forms the transition from mural painting to panel painting. The stages of development from applied painting to painting are still noticeable on the panels. The picture border of wood carved in relief or painted or gilded—the framing of the individual image—also emerges here.

Painting proceeds from the plane or the surface, from given realities such as edges, corners, and middle parts, as well as from preliminarily drawn forms and figures. The absolute of the surface always represents the precondition for painting. A given, complete form can be painted. The painting of van
fig. 49 Eyck and of Rogier van der Weyden is based on a spatial and bodily ideal with self-contained forms that can be traced back to the cube, sphere, or egg. These pictures came about through over-accentuating spatial and corporeal elements using linear perspective and were then produced by means of painting in layers. Only the shadows with their fine cast were exempt

[2] Here Baumeister uses the terms *Wand* (interior wall) and *Mauer* (exterior wall, as of masonry). Distinguishing clearly between the spatial qualities of the two, in reference to his own constructivist *Mauerbilder* (wall pictures) of the 1920s, he described the "*Mauer* as more corporeal than the smooth, polished *Wand*." Willi Baumeister, "Zimmer- und Wandgeister: Anmerkungen zum Inhalt meiner Bilder," ed. Heinz Spielmann, *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 12 (1967), 153.

from being rendered in pure color. In van Eyck's and Rogier's works, the figures and objects, including the rooms in which they are situated, were corporeally and spatially conceptualized to such an extent that they were depicted according to this sensibility as if it was a matter of painting real bodies. The artists painted the interior scenes—previously rendered with graphic media as a white world of bodies—two-dimensionally and then, layer by layer, developed the body- and space-rendering shadows. We sense that a colorless, spatial-corporeal world was a primary state, a world that recalls plaster casts standing before plaster walls, grisailles, which themselves are present in the *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432) and mediate the transition between framed architecture and painting. The charm of the chromatic element in these pictures lies especially in their relative unnaturalness, which developed despite the painter's striving for naturalness and emerges without his intending it. The illusion of the natural and the illusion of the artistically created lie characteristically close together in terms of their sensory impact. The substance of the skin tones, of garments, furs, carpets, jewelry, and gold embroideries, of furniture, marble columns, woodwork, and floor tiles is defined by an imitative manner of painting, which aims at creating a corporeal, material illusion. Nonetheless, this detailed painting attains a high, intellectual standard among the pictures of van Eyck, Rogier, and Jean Foucquet; the fresh, chromatic impression results from the comparatively thin mixture of oil, which distinguishes these pictures from later ones.

Leonardo da Vinci gave painting a decisive impulse with his sfumato and chiaroscuro. His painting ends in "perfection." He is a painter of bodies in space, but other new things appear that he derived from his scientific studies of natural impressions. He departs from the sharpness of van Eyck and Rogier, which remains constant into the farthest depth and distance. He already "knows" a great deal about gazing through atmospheric layers and writes several things about it, such as how to paint smoke and dust in the distance and other things. This is a first step in favor of the influence that layers of air have on local colors.

The history of chiaroscuro in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is one of the most interesting that art-historical research has investigated and uncovered in the history of artistic rendering (proceeding from Caravaggio
fig. 59 to the Utrecht school, Georges de la Tour, Rubens, and Rembrandt). Rembrandt became the outstanding master of chiaroscuro.

In Rembrandt's works the local colors are devalued by light and shadow. They become brilliance, a few mid-tones, and numerous shadow gradations ranging into black. Through extreme contrasts of falling light or lighting, his spaces also simultaneously convey the impression of dull, physical air that absorbs the light. He is thus no longer concerned with the airless spaces that thoroughly characterized Gothic painting. With his treatment of light, Rembrandt—especially in his mature and late works—belongs to the atmosphere painters. The impression of air becomes an artistic concern and, with it, so does the distance from the painter's eye to the individual models in space. In van Eyck's and Rogier's works, we have the impression that they zoomed in on everything they painted, even if it was situated far away. Under all circumstances, they wanted to have everything precise and everything identically precise. This is not the case with the atmosphere painter Rembrandt. He interpreted accuracy and faithfulness differently. He took another approach to nature by noting things in terms of impression. He also observed the fugitive in movements, lively gestures (as in *The Night Watch* [1642]). Fastidious accuracy and the pointed brush failed here, and the painting technique known as alla prima slowly emerged. A stroke of paint or several complementary, partly overlapping strokes deliver a sum of particle impressions.

As soon as the primary application of paint appears as a means of design, the alla prima technique is present. It provides not only color but also simultaneously form, which is dependent on the type and width of the brush. This painting technique leaves the facture visible as a new expressive means. Instead of the precise, the inexact emerges, which produces a thicker, mostly single-layer of paint, which is much more independent from an exact preliminary drawing than was necessary in layer painting.

Rembrandt (e.g., in his *Self-Portrait,* ca. 1668, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne) worked in this manner in his last creative period. It is not a naturalistic quality that we see here but an impressionistic one. Even so, alla prima painting has a further effect. The impasto paint application itself, or increased by two or three such applications, yields a rough, uneven surface with small shadows in the depressions. If the painter goes over this sort of rough, granular plane with a brush full of thick, pasty paint, the paint particles will only be transferred onto the raised areas, whereas the depressions will remain uncovered. In these depressions the previously applied paint remains visible. This so-called *granieren*[3] (dry-painting technique) results in

[3] The German term *granieren* derives from the Italian *granire*, both of which mean to granulate.

several color tones, which are further enriched and enlivened by the small shadows. The impression of this sort of paint surface differs extraordinarily from the precise painting of earlier periods. Here the beholder must gather his impression from the sum of various small particles. Through addition, an impression emerges that can simultaneously generate material surface impressions that correspond directly to perceptions associated with the model (cloth, fur, etc.), that is, in the sense of an illusion—but through direct painterly expression rather than through meticulous imitation. In so adjusting, the eye has the task of finding the standpoint that makes the work intuitively accessible.

fig. 58 These sorts of surface factures also appear in the works of Tintoretto and Titian. This type of painting is no longer applied painting because it causes us to completely forget the ground plane.

From this point on, a specific path leads into the modern period; an essential stretch of it runs from Diego Velázquez to Goya. Tintoretto, El Greco, and Delacroix point to impressionism and pointillism, to the dismantling of color. In Cézanne's works, the technical dispersion of paint goes beyond the impetus to interpret natural models and becomes a formal means unto itself; it becomes structural picture organization. The sketch becomes a painting through the form of the brushstroke. His sense of responsibility often induced him to leave areas unpainted because he was not yet certain of the form. In some of Cézanne's pictures, the famous white areas become carriers of expression. In his watercolors, the amount of ground plane is quantitatively greater than the applied paint. Qualitatively, the empty parts are equivalent to the other media.

The aforementioned dispersion also made its impact in cubism.

In the first phase Picasso and Braque used chiefly white, black, and ocher—a tone with either a yellowish tint or tending toward Terra di Siena (as in
figs. 87, 88 Braque's paintings of L'Estaque). This extremely limited scale yields numerous gradations, ranging to white or to black. It produces the corporeal-
figs. 90, 91 spatial world of cubism, which can be achieved only with a non-chromatic scale. Spatial-corporeal representation is based more on chiaroscuro than on color because color belongs to the plane. In the second phase of cubism, an extreme dissolution of the portrait subject (as in the *Portrait of Daniel-*
fig. 90 *Henry Kahnweiler,* 1910) emerges from the same scale by means of layers of strokes. The form dominates where color recedes. Here, the art form of cubism emerges in its purest expression, as corporeality and the depth ef-

fect are strongly minimized. This sets up the step to the third phase of cubism: the introduction of pure planes (in the period of the collaged pictures and great still lifes). Here the artist abandons the facture of the hand, and distances himself from the dispersive technique. The third phase of cubism develops based on an object model: the independent line, the independent color plane, and the independent parts of corporeal or spatial illusion. We notice a trend toward the absolute, toward the precise. The previous painterly zones become regulated structures of surface stimuli, of dotting, screen pattern, sand application, ornamentation on wallpaper, etc. In the third phase of cubism and especially in the period of the great still lifes, elemental media return, just as they dominate pure painting. Even so, these media are equipped with an autonomous life of a higher degree. Especially striking is how a line changes color when it runs across different exact planes of color. On a black plane, the line sets itself off in a light tone. If it continues across a white plane, the same line correspondingly takes on a contrasting color. Here, a subdued kind of simultaneity develops.

figs. 93, 94

From the naturalistic standpoint, the method of the cubist phases is a dismantling, but it yields a synthesis of a higher order.

Composition and Decomposition

Compositional rules in favor of pictorial expression originate in architecture. It is well known that the proportions of the Great Pyramid of Giza reveal such astounding regularities that many great minds have concerned themselves with investigating their meaning and purpose. We can thus presume that calculating with numbers and a pair of compasses, which was used in the service of practical building construction, became an aesthetic metric expression because they were intimately linked.

Mathematics is not only a means here, a servant of statics and mechanics, in the sense of practical building construction. Since science and art formed a single entity, the idea of the number, which produced a building, was intentional. All the measurements in Jewish temple building were given to Moses and the prophets by God.

Everything is linked to the number. Just as everything belongs to the world of matter and a specific substance world, it is through the number that this is made possible, through mathematical, geometric, and stereometric contingencies. As such, the number is one of the phenomena whose expressive values are not entirely rationally comprehensible.

As a ratio, the number is capable of guaranteeing uniformity in a building structure. As a measurement, it is also an expression of sensations that lend rhythm to the universe. Abandoning the units of the forearm and the foot and using the abstract measuring tape dehumanized building.

The dot as an element of expression is in a certain sense identical to the circle. Both are non-static and oscillate in themselves; both lie at the beginning of every development of form in art and nature (such as Radiolaria). The radial-symmetrical form of the star, which derives structurally from the circle, is diversely represented in the microcosm (starfish). The centered original force, on which the environment does not yet have a form-varying influence, expresses itself here. It is a primordial system.

Things behave differently in symmetry. It no longer possesses the all-around ability to expand. Symmetry is used for statically balancing things out, such as the human body.

Whereas the circle or star form is linked to a sort of floating or, rather, a horizontal swimming or possibly even a lying flat (starfish), forms reduced to a simple symmetry (the human being, vessels, and so on) are the ser-

vants of statics, of stability through balance, and contingent on the force of gravity.

But the symmetrical system is abandoned both in natural formations and in manmade products if a motion function emerges along with a direction linked to it. The railway train has a direction, hands and feet are asymmetrical, and the heart is not situated in the middle of the body. It thus follows that symmetry provides a structure of rough equilibrium, whereas motion, with its directional contingency, takes on other forms.

In architecture, symmetry provides the expression of enduring power in temples, cathedrals, and palaces. It even takes possession of the environment, which it correspondingly includes in its plan and forms (avenues, sphinx avenues, parks, axial streets, pruned trees). Today this rigidity reminds us of lying in state, of the immobile, of that which is dead. By contrast, everything that has function, movement, life, is asymmetrical. Greek buildings certainly demonstrate an exceptionally fine differentiation of measurements, but we can assume that geometric calculation and computed proportion were used here as well as in medieval cathedrals. This helps explain why in some periods, pictorial structure, even in mural painting, as a part of architecture and space, was given a calculated structure. In murals the structure should be seen as a static value, insofar as we can speak of statics in painting. Whether Renaissance painters made thorough use of structural methods has not been verified. What is certain is that a metric canon can be found in every important work. However, this also applies to the involuntary aspect of a consistently articulated, unconscious standard of measurement, which is repeated in every occurrence of handwriting and is linked to the individual.

For ages, individuals used and respected the right angle, triangular structures, sections of a circular arc, planar relations, and the golden ratio in the pictorial structure of painting. In general, however, the formal articulation of the pictorial structure and the planar distribution was left to the personal rhythm of the artist, especially since the beginning the nineteenth century. Picture centers shifted from the middle of the plane—just like free equilibrium—already verge toward decomposition. In impressionism
fig. 42 as well as in East Asian painting, we find such daring articulations—like mass contrasted with emptiness—that we can speak of decomposition.

figs. 74–77 Whereas impressionism composed only in the manner of a section of nature, subsequent picture compositions emerged intuitively, the same way

that compelling results also emerge from newer types of organization and not by a prescribed process. We trust our own rhythm. Later we notice a penchant for a course of action, for the sequence without a focal point, for apparent movement as an infinite continuation, as in modern literature and music, where the effect of the final crescendo is diminished. As a result, compositions become epic rather than dramatic. Apparent movement and the actual, real movement by mechanisms are signs of a tendency to introduce the substance of time. (Here we are reminded of Oskar Schlemmer's mural and figure of nickel-plated wire with its multiple shadow formations, and also of Alexander Calder's hanging mobiles, the color keyboard, *Mechano* [ca. 1922], the mechanical ballet, and the like.)

fig. 149
figs. 150–52

By excluding intent as much as possible, total decomposition is elevated to the next higher compositional form. Arp, for instance, presents us with an apt picture title: *Composition Arranged according to the Laws of Chance* (1816–17).[1]

Another type of composition emerges with the use of predominantly identical or similar forms. Mosaic, checkerboard, and weaving are the kinds of arrangements that we could refer to as a collective of form in certain pictures. There are no soloists or stars of form here. We find works by Paul Klee and also by Mondrian with this sort of composition. If we consider older art from this perspective, we rarely find this collective of form except in ornamentation. In a certain sense, apart from pictorial friezes, we can mention here *The Battle of Alexander at Issus* (1529) by Albrecht Altdorfer and the *Transfiguration*[2] by Tintoretto in the Doge's Palace. Still, a collective of form is present in a veiled manner in all large works.

[1] Baumeister is probably referring to Jean (Hans) Arp's (1886–1966) *Collage with Squares Arranged according to the Laws of Chance,* 1916–17, torn-and-pasted paper and colored paper on colored paper, 19 1/8 x 13 5/8 in. (48.5 x 34.6 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York.

[2] Baumeister likely means Tintoretto's huge, figure-laden *Paradise* (after 1588), said to be the largest painting ever done on canvas.

From the Predetermined Idea to the Freedom of Self-Responsibility

> In absolute freedom the higher laws reappear.
> In independent art the individual artist endeavors to make primordial forces visible at his own risk. He thereby leaves behind everything mediocre that has taken hold in the transient laws of society. He is the arbiter of higher laws.

Shortly following the death of Max Sauerlandt, one of his students published his lectures on modern art under the title *Die Kunst der letzten 30 Jahre* (The art of the last thirty years, 1935).[1] The book, which is a written apology, is borne by the strongest devotion to contemporary art and above all by Sauerlandt's penchant for German expressionism. The book closes [*sic*] with the motto of Prince William of Orange: "One must begin the work, even without the hope of success, and persevere, even if success fails to come."[2] The monograph is distinguished particularly by its offering a clear division of the history of art. It is the sequence formulated by Yvan Goll:

L'art pour Dieu,
L'art pour l'art,
L'art pour l'homme.[3]

In some periods there was no "independent" art but, rather, a highly predetermined one. In other words, extra-optical values determined it ideologically and in terms of content. For a long time this predetermined idea gave art the purpose of serving the reconciliation between God and man. Art was dedicated to God, as it gave his grandeur and distance tangible proximity through pictorial form. The tremblings of this incomprehensible phenomenon are treated in the text *Über das Heilige (The Idea of the Holy,* 1917) by Rudolf Otto.[4] He refers to values and makes them in a certain sense understandable although they are essentially incomprehensible. They

[1] Max Sauerlandt, *Kunst der letzten 30 Jahre,* ed. Harald Busch (Berlin: Rembrandt Verlag, 1935).

[2] The quote appears not at the end of Sauerlandt's book, but at the beginning of Chapter One. Prince of Orange, quoted in Sauerlandt 1935 (see note 1), 7.

[3] Yvan Goll, quoted in Sauerlandt 1935 (see note 1), 17. Baumeister appears to paraphrase Sauerlandt's text.

[4] The text's full title is: *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau, 1917). The first English edition was published as: *The Holy—On the Irrational in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923). Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) was a German Protestant theologist and scholar of religion.

are the "completely other," the numinous, the *tremendum* (the deepest trembling), the *fascinum* (the attracting and repelling), and the *majestas* (the overpowering). In his work Otto says, among other things, that sacred language—unintelligible to the general community—conveys the presentiment of something during divine services; it manifests promise. Generally comprehensible informal language cannot develop such qualities.

The ideas formulated by Otto also apply to art. It, too, is unfathomable and ultimately unfathomable as a primal phenomenon.

It is thus not surprising that art was able to link itself so closely with all sacred ideas and also with the devotional, cultic aspect of religious practice. God himself determined through the words of Moses and Ezekiel not only the structural parts of the temple but also the cult devices. The secret (the paradox is allowed) of the eternal mystery is manifested in Doric temples; in the divine image in the cella; in the chants and choruses of Egyptian, Greek, and Christian rites; in the paraments; in the Kyrie Eleison; in the masses of Bach and Mozart; and also in all works of art of high order, where at the same time the visible, audible, tangible, and legible are not "weakened by the paleness of thought," but form an indivisible unity with the secret of form. The simple and simultaneously bold sentence: form, like content, can gain notice if its secret is put on the same level with the secret in sacred art; in all art, form is always identical to a secret. In naturalism, these two values diverge completely. In nonrepresentational art, form (form and color) is once again equal to content.

The cave paintings of the Aurignacian epoch, the depictions of animals, which were not painted as decorative adornment, served magic cults. The representations show holes from arrows or traces from spears that were bored into them. In some cases, the weapons and throwing sticks are painted onto the animal's body. This had to do with to a magical hunting ritual that was performed before the hunt. Leo Frobenius (in his book on Eritrea) reports of a magic hunting ritual that was performed with a picture of a gazelle drawn in the sand. Primitive hunters refused to go on the hunt before they had sufficiently performed their magic. In the cave of Tuc d'Andoubert (Ariège) a sculpture was found of a wild boar pair mating. This represents a fertility charm.

All early art is linked to the cultic. The small sculptures of household gods from Near Eastern regions (called teraphim in the Old Testament) and the Greek islands (idols) lead to vase paintings in the geometric style, then to

figs. 27, 20

fig. 21 the large kouros statues of the archaic period *(Kouros of Tenea,* ca. 560 BC). The era of philosophers and naturalists worked counter to the mysteries and, at the same time, against formal art in that it abandoned form and the secret in favor of approximating nature. From a certain point on, the stele of Olympic champions were allowed to bear their features. This is the beginning of the weakness as it became palpable in the Hellenic period and in Roman art. Nevertheless, in the Hellenic-Roman era, in the Villa dei Misteri (Villa of the Mysteries) in Pompeii, cultic art (the mystery cult)
fig. 16 reemerges in a mural cycle of initiation rites, with scenes of whipping, the unveiling of the phallus, and so on.

As servants of faith, the visual arts developed into a power that was equal to the preaching of faith through the word. It is uncertain whether the effect of preaching was stronger through word or image. This leads to the question of whether pure formal creation as an independent, self-contained force transmits appreciable effects within religious art. Art and religion can reveal the great laws of the world with equal power.

The paintings of the first Christian communities in the catacombs are of a light, decorative kind. At the same time, however, they resort to the symbol, which, through its method of condensing alone, was capable of being a source of power for the new faith.

The sudden religious clash of the Semites in Arabia, aware of its dangers, rejected the representational, and instead extended its symbols and the written characters of the sayings of its Koran into lineaments, ornamentation, and abstract formulations, proceeding from the carpet to the wall. They became carriers of their inner powers.

Here we are reminded of Josef Strzygowski, who assigned all nonrepresentational art to a northern belt of the globe, which stands in opposition to a "power art" of the south, while there is a mixture of both types in the Mediterranean.[5] (Power art is representational and purposive and incapable of any evolution.)

In Europe, only the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) adopted the generative tradition of ancient Greece.

Here the iconostases emerged. Mosaic pictures (Ravenna), mural paintings, and pictorial carpets became condenser lenses, so to speak, which

[5] Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) was an art historian associated with the Vienna School of Art History. He is best known for advocating a comparative method of analysis and championing the peoples of the "North" and "East" over "Mediterranean" culture.

filtered in the supernatural forces of the individually represented saints of the community. The artist retreated behind his work, behind the summoning and glorification of the saint.

The transcendent forces manifested themselves in altar shrines and painted sculptures (they supported the word and simultaneously became the word itself); in the later period, by contrast, from the Renaissance to the rococo, in the era that rushed toward the Enlightenment, the cult picture sank into an illusion of a reality that emitted worldliness from every pore (as in works by Rubens). The authors of these works had already become skeptics. Moreover, in the Renaissance, prosperous citizens emerged as patrons alongside the Church and emperor. Along with the forces of the patron, the personal forces of the artist now also took effect more clearly than ever. Murals were conceived in highly decorative terms, and the portrait (panel painting), which both celebrated the person in the image and displayed the personality of the artist more than before, certainly still shows the element of servitude, but also the great leap toward the self-responsibility of the artist.

The eighteenth century reveals the first artist types (and thinkers) who were forced to develop their individuality in garrets (e.g., Rousseau) and who turned to profane motifs without commission, often in the guise of a study. They more or less contributed to the coming revolution, which was simultaneously primed by the "enlightened despots," through the freedom of their thinking and that of their social interaction (e.g., Voltaire).

The early nineteenth century gave rise to the aforementioned dilemma of the Spaniard Goya, who knew how to give shape to the commission and his own world in a purely artistic and content-stating manner. In the case of the
fig. 60 two Maja paintings, he proceeded by producing one according to the wishes
fig. 61 of the patron and prevailing convention. The other picture, *The Nude Maja*, (1798–1805) by contrast, emerged freely, contradicting convention. Whereas Goya knew how to surmount this dilemma, thanks to his great sense of self-responsibility, for another painter, whom we must certainly place chronologically later, this would have become the adversary of his abilities.

Adolph von Menzel, the court painter of the second German Empire, was a history painter and well known and esteemed as such during his lifetime.[6]

[6] Menzel's (1815–1905) activity as an artist of the Prussian court actually began in 1839, when he received a commission to produce illustrations for Franz Theodor Kugler's multi-volume *Geschichte Friedrichs des Grossen*. On Menzel's death, Kaiser Wilhelm II honored his service to the state of Prussia by giving him a state funeral.

Prevailing convention and especially that of the court overlay his purely artistic values. It left no room for formal design in the literature-packed motifs of his history paintings. After Menzel's death, small landscape paintings were found that he had painted after nature "for his pleasure," without a commission. By all appearances, he did not know what he was doing. He created his best pictures with these works, such as *Landscape with Railway Train*.[7] His inner discord manifested itself in a restless sketching of nature impressions, of working manual laborers, soldiers, and animals. They yielded a virtuosity of meager substance.

Ludwig Justi, in his guide through the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, describes the circumstances leading up to the nineteenth century as follows:

> This building of the old European society (up to the French Revolution) also determines the art adorning it. A few people are the patrons of the few artists; both those receiving and those giving are permeated by the same mentality, the same sense of form. The individual placing the order knows what he wants, and the one carrying it out knows what he is supposed to do. The wonderful certainty of the old works of art is based on the fixed certainty between giving and receiving, and on the calm, continuous development of this unity.[8]

Justi then shows the further development in which these circumstances are at work: the broad middle class, the salon exhibition establishment, the increasing number of painters and those taking up painting, the raffling off of pictures at art associations, the "sofa painting" (see Sauerlandt's text, *Das Sofabild* [The sofa painting, 1930]),[9] and finally the "freezer" of the art-purchasing commission, as Justi calls it. He goes on to conclude:

> Around mid-century, the pure artist sensibility came to openly reject the claims of the broad middle class; the clear formula for it, as for so much else, was established in France: *l'art pour l'art*—art should be only about art, and serve no other purposes; the content

[7] Baumeister is probably referring to *Die Berlin-Potsdamer Eisenbahn,* 1847, oil on canvas, 16 9/16 x 20 1/2 in. (42 x 52 cm). Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie Berlin.

[8] Ludwig Justi, *Deutsche Malkunst im 19. Jahrhundert: Ein Führer durch die Nationalgalerie* (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1921), 23. Ludwig Justi (1876–1957) was a German art historian and the director of the Berlin Nationalgalerie from 1909 to 1933.

[9] Max Sauerlandt, *Das Sofabild oder die Verwirrung der Kunstbegriffe: Original und Faksimilereproduktion. Die deutschen Museen und die deutsche Gegenwartskunst; drei Betrachtungen zur Stellung der Kunst in unserer Zeit* (Hamburg: M. Riegel, 1930).

> of the work of art is of minor importance, one disdains attracting customers by it—that which had previously determined such a pitiful retreat of form; form alone is now supposed to constitute value . . . We have thus returned to an interaction between a few who give and a few who receive, as in old times, except that it is no longer based on the external realities of guild and birth but on intellectual affinity.[10]

According to these considerations, Justi sees the most important difference in the art of the nineteenth century as being that between "creating from inner compulsion" and "creating for external purpose." He divides the works for external purposes into "museum paintings" and "salon paintings." But he begins the chapter on the works created from inner compulsion with the words: "We now step onto consecrated ground!"[11]

Instead of mural painting, the commencing art exhibitions now became a picture show on the wall through a sum of mobile panel paintings.

Art collections have their own historical development, which corresponded to the attitudes of the time. Thousand-year-old objects were collected by the daughter of King Dungi, the priestess of the moon temple in Ur, as early as 2280 BC. A later priestess, Bel-Schalti-Nannar, assembled a large collection with objects up to 2,000 years old that she had acquired from excavations. We know that the Ptolemies and the kings of Pergamum had collections. In ancient times, it was the temples as well as the Greek oracle sites that accumulated votive offerings, art objects in which material value also played a role. In Rome, there were already private collections accessible to the public. Christian churches housed treasuries and public altars. The display of the Veil of Veronica every fourth year at St. Peter's in Rome clearly refers to the sacredness of putting an object on exhibit, which we easily forget today. Later on, exhibitions with and without programs emerged, as did art associations mediating regional and international art production. Art production always relates to the economic structure of its time. In earlier times, production was controlled by the commission. In individual art, economic gain generally reaches the artist only after the work is rendered, through sale. The sale, however, is controlled by the artist. Still, this is difficult to reconcile with the nature of the artist, a situation demonstrated by almost all outstanding painters in the nineteenth century. Vincent van Gogh's ethical attitude prevented him from using his already

[10] Justi 1921 (see note 8), 28 and 30.

[11] Justi 1921 (see note 8), 59.

meager sales opportunities. Here we are reminded of the apt saying from Sirach (Ecclesiasticus, Apocrypha): "As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones; so doth sin stick close between buying and selling."[12] The art exhibitions and especially art dealers, supported by art magazines, took over as the bridge from the artist to the prospective customer. While supporting contemporary art in Germany was something also promoted by public museums very early on, in Paris, which had become the center of art, it was dependent on "private initiative." For the most part, art dealers developed out of collectors; they provided important groundbreaking work in which writers, art historians, and publishers participated. These methods also developed in England, the United States, and Switzerland.

What artists now paint without a commission they produce, so to speak, as reserve-supply and for selection. Studies as aids and preparatory works, which were used earlier in commissioned pictures and which the artist made in much greater freedom than the commission itself, demonstrate the basic attitude of the artist type that emerged.

We can see the first important exponent of this type in Eugène Delacroix.
figs. 68, 69 His pictures are large-format and do not fail to include an impressive, decorative gesture. His motifs bear partly historical, partly descriptive, "interesting" content (e.g., *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* [1840], *Liberty Leading the People* [1830], *Lion Hunt* [1861], and others). As such, they still have relationships to earlier commissioned pictures on the one hand, and awaken extra-optical interest within exhibitions on the other. Delacroix distinguishes himself as a romantic from the Napoleonic Empire, from neoclassicism. Blessed with an outstanding painter's eye, he is a bridge to *"l'art pour l'art"* and already senses the freedom of art.

Around 1850 the Goncourt brothers used the term *l'art pour l'art* in their journal to refer to art that made itself independent, free, through which the freedom of the spirit manifests itself through itself. The expression was coined in 1836 by the French philosopher and politician Victor Cousin.[13]

For Sauerlandt, the phrase that followed *l'art pour l'art, "Kunst für den Menschen"* (art for the people), introduces for its part an even broader

[12] Ecclesiasticus, Chapter 27:2, *Oxford King James Bible,* 1769, in the King James Bible Online, 2012, http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Ecclesiasticus-27-2/ (accessed June 25, 2012).

[13] The French philosopher Victor Cousin (1792–1867) may have coined the phrase *l'art pour l'art.* Théophile Gautier (1811–1872) developed the theory of *l'art pour l'art*—that is, of art that required no moral justification and whose creation was its own justification—in his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835).

notion of freedom for the artist and his forms of expression within his production. At the same time, however, the concept also manifests the obligation of the individual to guarantee the genuineness of the perceptions for themselves and for all, that is to say, to be an unerring membrane of world conscience.

Art had crossed the path from dependence to independence, from the commission to self-responsibility. The sovereign, independent artist receives his commission from himself, from his center, in which "everything is possible" again and again . . .

The period from Goya to Delacroix signifies a decisive turn. That which intelligence and artists had already prepared, became denser and increasingly tangible. Personal freedom was on the march. On this path, the visual arts, in a self-purification, rejected much of what had previously belonged to the creative process. Even in the Renaissance the artist was not only a painter, sculptor, or architect but also an artisan. The splitting off of handcraft art began, but a great deal of that which was produced on the wall, easel, or drawing board was now split off as well. The purposive, useful component in the work of art fell away. All descriptive types of representation and all special tasks were left to specialists: portraitists, illustrators, poster artists, graphic artists, and scientific draftsmen. As a result, a pure core of artistic practice became visible in "pure" painting. The sculptor also became speculative, although he remained more committed to the commission and dealing with heavy materials. Still, the conditions for commissions were less evident and no longer constricting. But purified painting now feeds all of its descendants and, indeed, the purer it is, the more it distributes forces in all directions. The applied arts must repeatedly return to their mother's breast in order to newly fortify themselves or they will otherwise devolve into repeating themselves and incur the death of mannerism, which threatens all specialists. The stage, dance, fashion, and even standardized industrial products are influenced by independent painting, as are many concerns of housing. Designers should not be divested of independent formal invention; this applies especially to the commercial artists of our time. With constructivism, the self-realization of all fields emerged. It is not really a model of form, but exemplarily shows what is analogous in each case.

Among the visual arts, painting is the one in which the speculatively bold and every immediate sensation can be realized directly, without much manual effort or assistance from other means.

The influence that painting exerts in its pure form is twofold. First of all, the forms and formulas (also with respect to the colored components) become so authoritative that they develop into a sort of general yardstick that is used in reference to everything visible, initially by those who become the first receivers. They pass on the new canon of form repeatedly until it becomes visible even at the lowest levels. This is the formalistic influence.

Even so, painting's second sort of influence is essential. This is the ideal of the basic attitude, which is exemplary. The purification of the art of painting exposes the very specific fundamental laws that exist in it alone. They originate partly from the technical, handcraft component and partly from elevated factors of an elemental sort (e.g., the interpretation of the plane, the sculptural, color)—that is, the fundamental. This basic attitude and independence also extend to the other arts, and each develops its own particular character.

In handcraft, forms emerge forcefully from the material and from the tools. In turn, formal inventions result from these, as seen in the devices and jew-
fig. 117 elry by Hans Warnecke.

Even impressionism, which developed in the realm of pure art (e.g., in the work of Manet, Monet, Renoir, and others), completely turned away from a connection with architecture, so that the original artist of this period had no aspirations for murals or content-laden decoration. The decorative arts, left to themselves, drew formal models from the Gothic period and the Renaissance (folk art was imitated later on), which were devaluated in the most senseless combinations. Masters of nineteenth-century naturalism and impressionism had deteriorated into illusionism.[14] Their works completely lacked the elemental forces of the plane, the colored plane, and the line, and thus completely lacked the absolute values (of the straight line, right angle, etc.) that yield picture tectonics. This explains the lack of radiance in the neighboring fields of the visual arts, such as architecture and the applied arts. They remained weak because naturalism and impressionism possessed too few absolute forces and, accordingly, transferred too little power onto architecture and handcraft.

This negative example clearly shows the power of painting. Important impulses appeared in Jugendstil, introduced in practical terms by English art-

[14] Here Baumeister uses the term *"verfallen,"* which has several translations, including to decay, decline, or, as used here, deteriorate.

ists of a handcraft bent (e.g., in the period of William Morris), who strove to abandon historical models but retained the decorative.

The controversy over mechanical mass production came to a head, and some of the applied arts that had split off from "independent art" were drawn into the dilemma. The "applied art schools," which had emerged alongside the art academies, supported the decoration that the leaders had overcome.

Subsequently, in postimpressionism original artists minimized the individual facture, the handwriting aspect, as an expressive value (e.g., Seurat, Gauguin). Formal developments reappeared in independent painting that tended toward the final, the absolute, and the handcrafted (e.g., Henri Matisse). Cézanne also integrated the final, the absolute, in his paintings and drawings, despite the externally individual component. This tendency proliferated further in certain works by Matisse (in his use of line, plane and color), and became even more pronounced in works by the formerly commercial painter *(peintre en bâtiments)* Braque and his fellow cubist Juan Gris.

figs. 78, 80
fig. 82

Here, after a long time, feelings for the plane, line, and for the illusion of certain picture sections reappear as individual values. Dispersion, the painterly, also lives on alongside them. The elemental handcraft component, however, owing to the new evaluation of plane and line, appears like a new birth within independent "high" art. The feeling for the elements, for surface values, for paint as a substance, especially in thick applications up to the relief-like, which extends painting into the realm of sculpture, are signs of the rediscovery of handcraft and, namely, within high, independent painting! With it, handcraft also received the signal to turn away from decoration and to remember the elemental aspect of its materials. The handcraft aspect of independent art had made the handcraft in handwork pure and alive again, as is demonstrated by interior decoration and furniture.

The original painters of cubism, constructivism, and all nonrepresentational art, as well as partly those of surrealism, worked not only with easily handled oil paints but also with many other substances.

In the second phase of cubism, painters used the realistic imitation (such as wood grain) and thus individual parts of their picture compositions verged toward the illusion of naturalism. That is to say, they brought into painting imitated wood grain, fragments of various objects or materials in stencil

technique, individual alphabetic characters, and word pictures. This also
fig. 94 applies to the fourth phase. These word pictures (dance, tobacco, etc.) introduce into the nonrepresentational structure notions of a scenario or an object as a kind of substitute for nature.

fig. 93 In the third phase, realism was taken even further as such fragments, material components, alphabetic characters, and word pictures were brought onto the picture plane, in other words, glued or otherwise attached in their original form as clippings. Sand and other thickeners like enamel were also used as contrasts for surface appeal. In this phase the picture is built up from such components. Constructivists and some of the nonrepresentational painters added another method to painting: picture construction through pure montage. Painters went on to design relief-like compositions and independent sculptures (such as those of Kurt Schwitters) with the help of substances that are difficult to form, such as metal and glass. Here we are reminded of the following anecdote: standing before Picasso's door, someone hears the loud booming of hammer blows and other noises from metalworking inside, which lasts a long time. In response to the fellow's inquiry, an initiate offers him the explanation: "Mr. Picasso is painting!" (Related by Gustav Kahnweiler.)

Uniqueness, the original as a concretization, dematerializes the pure material of the working substance. Its work lies in non-repeatability. The machine has played a disastrous role in the processing of materials for the applied arts since the nineteenth century. It served the degeneration of the applied arts and, as an instrument for the mass production of designs on paper and for "applied-art" mass products, counters everything qualitatively superior that is based on that which is individually created.[15] This kind of applied art has completely dispensed with artistic forming powers.

[15] In this sentence Baumeister uses the term *"Entartung"* (= degeneration, deterioration, degeneracy) in a manner consistent with the understanding of the term among followers of the Arts and Crafts movement to designate a general decline in the qualitative value of the applied arts. This was a concern held by many artists and designers in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries and fueled a new, reform-minded approach to the applied arts, such as that characterized by the Deutsche Werkbund or the Bauhaus' aim to unite art and industry. At the same time, Baumeister here was no doubt conscious of the National Socialists' use of the term *entartet* (degenerate) to designate supposedly inferior racial, sexual, and moral types. The Nazis applied the term to virtually everything that existed on the German modern art scene prior to 1933, as well as artists (including Baumeister), writers, and musicians themselves as part of their cultural policy to "weed out" cultural internationalism and "foreign influences" that they saw as embodying Semitic or Bolshevist (Communist) thinking. On this subject see, for instance, Stephanie Barron, "1937: Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany,* ed. Stephanie Barron, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991), 9–23.

They still exist only in the unique object of painting and sculpture created by hand. A seemingly unbridgeable fissure has divided high art from the applied arts since the nineteenth century. The machine stands against craftsmen-artists and therefore against man overall (creating social problems). With surrogate art values and by rehashing old forms, concessions are made to the lowest common denominator of the popular masses.

It remained up to constructivism to forge a new relationship to these things. It grabbed the bull by the horns. Initially, machine-like formal elements appeared in the pictures (as in works by Léger, Baumeister). The machine as a motif is not addressed naturalistically, only its elemental forms and sensory impressions matter. The nonstatic, the dynamic, the absolute is expressed in values of tension. The craft aspect of painting expresses itself in particular features that come very close to the final, the absolute (such as the precise application of paint and other things, as in Mondrian). The painterly has disappeared. The world of the machine is celebrated, poeticized, dematerialized, and thereby overcome. The typical, the repeatable emerges within independent painting. This is an apparent paradox.

Constructivism and nonrepresentational art emit strong forces. Since the inception of individual art, since 1800, power has been transmitted to the applied arts for the second time, by constructivism (the first time was by van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne, Jugendstil), leading them to turn away from copying. The applied arts are becoming independent. Constructivism thus also forms the support for architecture, which now deals with or develops out of the particular and the typical in contrast to the unique and the handcrafted. The insightful designer devotes his work completely to solving the task at hand. The superior is not excluded and form emerges.

A counteractive process developed parallel to this splitting-off process. It was the independent painters who once again approached the handcrafted, took it up again, among other things, in the form of a new processing of material—not in an "applied" manner but within the fine arts. What previously had been eliminated, the profound sense for material in artistic means, now reappeared and underwent a rehabilitation. The freedom of the artist raises artistic means to a higher level, which were otherwise present only in "applied" art media: metal, wood, glass, and modern materials. These materials became colored, sculptural, material, and weighted picture components. But the specific values of such substances also gain meaning as surface or tactile values, as values of structure, dispersion, and modula-

tion, as present in granular surfaces and wood grain, for instance. (They appear for the first time in cubism.) They are incorporated into the picture structure in the sense of the montage. The values of these substances are to be opened up and the forms emerge. It is not form, however, that is primarily striven for here, but an unknown, which only reveals itself in the final result as something that has become known. This artistic method can be referred to by the term "elemental creation." Here the artist summons the forming impulse of the material.

We might mention in closing that the emerging "independent" art also eliminates the "tendency." Specialized caricaturists and socially critical painters who serve an idea, now appear separate from high art. If they are not simultaneously formalist artists to some extent, their works suffer increasingly large losses over time.

Artists of pure art, when examined precisely, are neither entirely free of tendency at their core. They do not present any illustrative content in their works, however; their scope is much too broad for this. Their works are undeniably set against everything that has been overcome in all fields, against any reaction. As such, they contain a statement and in this sense are loaded. Every clear or even programmatic tendency in the work of art is timebound. Nonetheless, the actual artistic content remains constant through its unerring responsibility and through the invented and distinct form.

The general division and specialization, however, does not hinder independent artists from also actively appearing in one of the split-off sectors. Thus, immediately after 1918 independent, essential artists engaged in almost all areas of the neighboring fields: in stage and costume design, dance and ballet (as with Oskar Schlemmer, Picasso, and others), photography, film (Léger and others), illustration, interior decoration, textile design and pictorial tapestry (Pierre Jeanneret), cut glass, posters, typography, etc. We should note that understanding the elemental through fine art safeguards against one-sided specialized work in the split-off fields.

figs. 161–64
fig. 152

Painting as a weekend hobby, as a dilettantish, contemplative activity and exploration of the imagination, relieves tensions and opens up important forces that are useful to all specialists and every individual in general. The artistically active person liberates himself by participating in the unknown.

Motif—Motiflessness

> The artistic view of the world is comparable to physical matter and its compositional structure, just as science builds from the inside with quanta and atomic systems.

Elemental creation was superimposed by the purposive motif (as from religion) as early as the dawn of history. The motif defined art for a long time until it slowly lost its predetermining power.

The motif lost significance in literature as well. It nonetheless remains among the direct means, whereas in painting it belongs in the marginal regions.

The colored formal component can originally exist in the choice of the motif, although its articulation does not occur in the motif. If the artist proceeds from the given task (even if he has set it himself), the motif forms a predetermining factor whose status diminishes in the process of the work. (See Schiller quotation, p. 49.)

On the other hand, in the early painting of van Eyck, Matthias Grünewald, and Leonardo, we should not underestimate the importance of the motif as an artistic movement. With meaningful painters it is obvious that the motif was thought out and worked through in terms of perception. Even so, they left room for artistic freedom in order to realize an artistic result. They achieved an exceptional density of motif-based and painterly shaping qualities. The notion of a "meaningful manner of depiction" cannot entirely capture the product as a phenomenon. All later art that has not yet completely loosed itself from the motif (such as in expressionism and cubism) bears in its highest expression a similar relationship of forces. Other relationships exist in nonrepresentational art.

The process of self-liberation treated in the previous chapter can also be illustrated by changing motifs.

In the Renaissance, motifs intended for prosperous citizens were added to the religious ones and to those pertaining to secular rulers. The common man announces himself. The emerging portrait also has its history.

Among the first painted portraits are those of the dead. These are the life-size heads painted in encaustic (hot-wax painting) on mummy coffins. Most of them derive from the late Egyptian period. Since all of Greek painting has been lost, we have no precise idea of the portrait paintings mentioned

in the poetry. The self-portrait occupies a very special position because it demands a specific concentration.

Landscape appears in a decorative sense in Egyptian and Minoan mural paintings as well as in a few Egyptian reliefs. In principle, however, it has a more recent origin. It attained a slow but continuously increasing importance in medieval mural and panel painting. In the Renaissance, landscape first became worthy of being a motif (e.g., in the works of Titian and Giorgione), as figures became an organic part of the landscape, whereas previously it had been scenery or an addition to the motif. The open landscape (nature) is common property in contrast to the garden or park. Rembrandt, Hercules Seghers, and Rubens painted the landscape for its own sake. In this, Rubens is very closely linked with Giorgione and Titian. The Dutch had a strong landscape tradition as early as the late sixteenth century (such as Pieter Brueghel the Elder) as did the lesser Flemish masters.

The choice of motif illuminates various things concerning formal intention, but the content aspect also expresses more than we are generally inclined to admit, especially from the contemporary perspective concerning form. The motif can be a willing pretext for special formal tendencies, since through its deformation it is assigned only one part that accommodates the artistic creation. The artist's choice of motif can tell us something essential about his psyche. Even so, motif parts are also important as substances. The representation of the nude body has served as a contrast to the different substances in a picture such as garments, architectural elements, trees, and shrubs. Cézanne neutralizes the material variety of his objects completely. Their form and chromatic shading become homogeneous through the visible brush application.

A devaluation of the representational is expressed through this dematerialization. Cézanne devalues the motif in another respect as well. His models, be they figures, real or artificial flowers, or portrait models, are only present to be painted. The content is neutralized. It is the artist's urge to "create his work as an almond tree produces its blossom, as a snail produces its slime" (Cézanne).[1] His imitative work also becomes understandable this way. On the other hand, the copies by van Gogh refer to psychological backgrounds (as in his *Prison Courtyard* [1890] after Gustave Doré or *The Good Samaritan* [1890] after Delacroix). His paintings *Gauguin's Chair*

[1] Cf. the French text Joachim Gasquet, *Cézanne* (Paris: Les Éditions Bernheim-Jeune, 1926), 98.

(1888) and *Three Potatoes* [*sic*][2] also refer to his profound Christian social sensibility. Cézanne, by contrast, is all eye.

Picasso depicted people in his blue and pink periods as if models had posed for the task. In reality, these pictures were made without models. With them, we notice a characteristic method that comprised of imitative painting, memory work, and painting according to an independent idea: the method of pretended copying.

The repeatedly recurring still-life props of the mandolin, pipe, playing cards, and newspaper in the second period of cubism (in the works of Braque, Picasso, Albert Gleizes) reveal another strong decline in the value of the motif's content. These are motif remnants. A prevalent sort of formal intention results in the selection of objects of a simple, and in a sense, absolute kind of form. The choice of these type-objects is characteristic. They are form motifs and scarcely bear content any longer.

fig. 92

The motif of the human being, of the man, harlequin, fool, tragic buffoon, or of the woman, motherliness, or the feminine, are content motifs from which meaning cannot be eliminated, even in art whose form is predetermined. Contemporary artists often deal with content-laden motifs whose significance shimmers through all their formal rendering and conjures up the world as a whole. In the first period of cubism, the models were represented cubically: houses in landscapes, trees, and vanishing horizons. In depictions of people, a kinship with primitive sculpture appears, which, as is generally known, favors the cubic element. The second phase of cubism is characterized by the personal facture, which runs horizontally and vertically in layers of strokes. This feature disappears in the third phase, and the paintings thus lose their painterly quality. The painterly execution from the second phase led to the dissolution of the corporeal natural model. In the third phase, the uniform surface characterized by personal facture is replaced by a plurality: the line, the plane as individual expression, and single components with the suggestion of depth and relief toward the front. Only partial shading appears. From here on, these three main formal means prevail in painting as separate forces: the line, the color plane, and the partial rendering of illusion. The separate means establish a new picto-

figs. 87–89

figs. 90–92

fig. 93

[2] The catalogue raisonné of Vincent van Gogh's (1853–1890) paintings lists no work with the title *Three Potatoes*. Baumeister is probably referring to *The Potato Eaters* of 1885, which is preserved in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Cf. Louis Van Tilborgh et al., *Vincent Van Gogh Paintings: Dutch Period 1881–1885,* trans. Michael Hoyle (London: Lund Humphries, 1999).

rial unity. In naturalistic painting these elemental means are brought into alignment, as it were, and are unrecognizable, whereas in the third phase they are drawn out of the object. This also demonstrates that the model has been nearly abolished.

Otto Meyer-Amden says the following about the motif:

> The pictorial motif that we represent is not a "high" and distant idea but one that is close; it is the involuntary inner movement of the active artist.
> Sometimes it is promising harmony and sometimes trembling expectation, sometimes vehemence, sometimes the gentleness of conception, sometimes the luck of confidence, sometimes the power of certainty, and many other things. The artist may certainly believe in his involuntary, inner movements; they are the demonic, the inner voice, they are the image of "God's realm."[3]

Due to this external motiflessness, nonrepresentational art gains an "inner movement" and, with the aid of elemental expressive means, shape. The motif is generated and not predetermined. It only emerges through the working process. It cannot be understood conceptually because it is exclusively in the visible realm and appeals to sight alone. Description by painting falls away. In 1912 Kandinsky wrote about expressive means in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* but also about "inner necessity," which itself takes effect and puts artistic means into a certain logical consistency of their own. We also see this process in Paul Klee's work. His relative concreteness and the title "emerge" only during the production, or are recognized only in the completed picture.

In surrealist painting, content suddenly becomes weighty again. These are the imaginations of the intermediate realms, which swear by the tradition of Hieronymus Bosch and, later on, Odilon Redon, James Ensor, Alfred Kubin, and Paul Klee. The concretizing of magic substances simultaneously intersects with a forced cancellation of the rational and a dematerialization of palpable representations. This is often simply the paradoxical joining of individual naturalistic, material objects or parts of objects, the obscure representation of materialization processes. In some of Max Ernst's works the content, the motif, as in Klee's works, has "emerged" rather than having been predetermined (which distinguishes these pic-

figs. 55, 83
figs. 101–2, 111
fig. 118

[3] Oskar Schlemmer, *Otto Meyer-Amden: Aus Leben, Werk und Briefen* (Zurich: Johannespresse, 1934), n. p.

tures). Certain surrealist pictures are remarkable for their extended notion of freedom. In negative works, "exceptionism" washes genuine or fake sludge onto the canvases through confessions of the subconscious. The over-exaggeration of content is essentially the enemy of painting.
fig. 119 Joan Miró maintains a balance with a strong rendering of form. He unites the virtue of the media's direct expression with "self"-generating motifs. Simultaneously with the relinquishing of the predetermined motif, multiple meanings of an artwork emerge to the point of ambiguity. The depiction of the object becomes a "depiction of a perception," a depiction of the state of the artist.

The art lover used to a naturalistic way of seeing sees an ambiguity in a modern picture, which, compared to the precision and clarity of naturalism, appears chaotic to him. On the other hand, he believes that a naturalistically comprehensible motif is concealed in the chaos, like in a picture puzzle. But in fact, it is only that which is solely visible that counts; nothing is concealed optically, and the visible represents the starting point for the viewer's perceptions. The result of the work as a projection of the homogeneous condition of the artist is unambiguous.

He is not only "tied by an umbilical cord" to "world material." His center is itself world material, and thus world conscience and responsibility as well. This means that the "condition" is not a changing daily state or even a mood but—the neutral everything.

Imitation and Formal Impulse as a Development Process

The formalist artist is in nature, the naturalist outside of it.

The mass of art appearances is organized by art history in multiple ways. A division is especially fruitful for the present investigation of comparing imitative modes of rendering, or naturalism in the broadest sense, and art with a marked formal impulse, which asserts itself against forms of appearance based on a model. A naturalistic quality characterizes a re-presentation of art, but art based on a formal impulse characterizes a presentation.[1]

There are no utterly fixed boundaries between the two kinds of art. The
figs. 6–9 Franco-Cantabrian cave art is in a certain sense copying. The art of eastern
fig. 10 Spain (Valltorta Gorge) is form. After these beginnings of art, the form-rendering element prevailed up to the Gothic period (with the exclusion of the Hellenistic-Roman era). With it, the elemental expressive means, such as line and the color plane, were also included in the two-dimensional paintings of temples and cathedrals. The following applies to them: the more irrational a work is, the more the use of painterly means does justice to it and the more the work is simultaneously a lively component of an equally purely developed architecture and art of space. For the subsequent period, however, the following applies: the more oriented toward (visible) nature, or the more naturalistic a work is, the more the intrinsic forces of the media are killed off, and the less association it has with the wall surface and architecture. The line primarily drawn with a brush as a contour, or the color filling in a form does a work justice. Contour and color are the expressive means that form the painting of the plane. If dots also develop into eyes, lines into body contours and thereby into the representation of the body—all formal means that develop into interpretations of human ideas and images—nothing general or concrete results from it but, instead, a dematerialized world.

Imitative art is completely different. The media lose their direct language. The contour line is tortured with transitions until it becomes the shadow of a body, until it generates an illusion of a relief, an apparently round plastic body. Linear perspective, a true Trojan horse, tears the plane open into spatial depth. Heinrich Schäfer, in his book *Von ägyptischer Kunst (Principles of Egyptian Art,* 1919), established for the first time that all art prior to the Greek classical period was subject to the "frontal-view"

[1] Here Baumeister plays with the words "representation" = *"Nach-Stellung"* (lit. after-positioning) and "presentation" = *"Vor-Stellung"* (lit. pre-positioning).

(*"geradaufsichtig-vorstellig"*) form of representation, which Egyptian art had represented with particular purity.[2] That is, the free movement of the body and everything leading to perspective only appeared in visual art beginning with the classical Greek period. From here on, the western European's way of seeing was defined—by something that would actually be called naturalism.

Despite the suggestion of space, the optical illusion created by these means on the plane yields an absurdly thin projection on the resulting imaginary plane. The images produce a scenario with actors. Through their round physicality, they provide the scale of the space and enter into a relationship with the objects represented along with them. A Euclidean demonstration.

While man was earlier a part of the great rhythm, later on he stood outside of it. Nature became an object of observation. We can compare this with what Leopold Ziegler writes in *Apollons letzte Epiphanie* (Apollo's last epiphany, 1937):

> In two and a half millennia, the heart's arbitrariness and desire was certainly able to increasingly darken and even deny, but not annul this cosmological state of affairs. It is nonetheless thereby still tacitly recognized that in the age of much, much too much, as a substitute for a genuine, long-lost world possession, we invoke the so-called philosophy of life in the confident but treacherous expectation that it, for its part, will generate a *koinos kosmos* [shared world] and thus achieve what the Logos in its act of self-revelation achieves by its intrinsic laws alone.[3]

The awakening of science, to which imitative painting also belongs, is a reaction to the condition of a lost paradise. During the gradual departure from vast nature, a new desire for reentering it became simultaneously noticeable on every level. But even for masters like van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden this was limited to a devotion to details. Sharper receptors of observation were used at every step. People brought nature from the outside onto the body or even into the body.

[2] Heinrich Schäfer, *Von Ägyptischer Kunst, besonders der Zeichenkunst. Eine Einführung in die Betrachtung ägyptischer Kunstwerke,* 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1919); trans. into English as: *Principles of Egyptian Art,* ed. Emma Brunner-Traut (Oxford, 1974). The term "frontal-view" derives from the German word *"geradvorstellig,"* which itself is a common contemporary variation of the term *"geradaufsichtig-vorstellig,"* which Baumeister adopted from Schäfer (1868–1957) and uses in the first edition of *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst.*

[3] Leopold Ziegler, *Apollons letzte Epiphanie* (Leipzig: Jakob Hegner, 1937).

The achievement of individual painters was part of this scientifically advancing front, which is confirmed by the examples of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Dürer. A culminating point formed one time in the cultural history of mankind in the universal genius of Leonardo, who was born the illegitimate son of a notary and a peasant woman in Anchiano, near the town of Vinci, in 1452. He was the sort of figure "that nature does not have the power to create twice." A kind of synthesis that was only possible in that period of "scientific art."

Although facts of every kind are compiled in order to erect an edifice of intellectual evidence, the driving intellect remains helpless when dealing with causes such as those leading "to the impulse to give form or to the copy." The causes presumably lie in the condition of the first human beings. Waves ripple outward from this condition. We try to explain changes in fashion as a need for contrast, although it is not so easy to fathom the cause for the need for contrast. We must limit ourselves accordingly and turn to certain symptoms. We can examine certain structures, systems, and methods that are explicable.

Although the Renaissance masters, as they saw it, did not primarily copy but researched, they nevertheless thereby reinvented the art of copying, which had been forgotten since antiquity.

Form art, the making of an artwork without a model, represents a contrast to this. Its process of origin is thoroughly comparable to the creative act of nature. Nature and form art do not copy; they do not form according to a model but, rather, form.[4]

The *system* of copying, by which the original masters consciously and unconsciously proceeded, was a confrontation with an object that they saw as worthy to serve their investigation and its translation onto the plane or into the fullness of sculptural materials. It was a play of forces between the artist, model, and artistic media. The system used by formalist artists, however, is bipolar: personal genius and expressive means; the appearance of nature (the model) participates only up to a certain point.

The *method* of imitative artists was to find a key for transposition, with whose aid a real object in the fullness of its corporeal appearance could be

[4] In 1920 Paul Klee (1879–1940) argued in a similar fashion about the relationship between art and nature: "Art does not reproduce the visible but makes it first visible." Paul Klee, "Schöpferische Konfession," in *Kunst-Lehre: Aufsätze, Vorträge, Rezensionen und Beiträge zur bildnerischen Formlehre,* ed. Günther Regel (Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1987), 60.

translated into plane and color, along with an element of its spatial relationships. The visible had to be brought into accord with what could be represented. Bright and dark phenomena in nature are much stronger than are paint's capabilities. A specific scale of tones had to be found reductively in order to guarantee uniformity in the copy. The method of copying covers great distances by dismantling, whereas the developing of form strives for synthesis.

The *method* of the form-creating artist lies in the process of generation. Artistic talent is embodied in the expressive means. The developmental forces of these means are not used for anything, they do not serve anything, they are not violated with respect to anything (fakery). Rather, a unity of the artist's forming powers emerges with the forming powers of the material.

As a result, some issues are affected, signifying a break by imitative art into the development of form-rendering art.

Around 1920 Max Verworn, following Frederik Adama van Scheltema, compared the concepts "physioplastic" and "ideoplastic."[5] The first concept renders the formal depiction of the material world in its reality. A real model is set above art. The second concept says that an ideational, or conceptual, value is set above visual art, which deals with its reproduction. The ideational cannot be expelled from artistic perception and action. It exists in particular earlier periods of art. The contemporary artist has fewer ideational models, since he allows that which wants to emerge from the material to emerge in his hands. The ideational flows in. (See also the discussion on the devaluation of the motif in the Chapter "Motif—Motiflessness.")

Leopold Ziegler provides an excellent formulation of these differences in his work *Überlieferung* (Tradition, 1936). He compares the "mimetic" and the "poetic" and says:

> I mean the difference between a truly creative, in Platonic terms, "poetic" art, which realizes itself inventively in the geometrical ideogram, in the mathematical symbol; and a, in Aristotelian terms, "mimetic" art, which strives toward a graphic, pictorial, painterly reproduction of realities.[6]

[5] Here Baumeister refers to the German physiologist Max Verworn (1863–1921), who was active in the field of experimental physiology, and the Dutch art historian Frederik Adama van Scheltema (b. 1884).

[6] Leopold Ziegler, *Überlieferung* (Leipzig: Jakob Hegner Verlag, 1936).

Elsewhere he speaks of the late Greeks' "art of acting" in which he no doubt also includes sculpture. The German word *"mimen"* (to act) already contains the concept of *"nachmimen"* (lit. to copy-act; to mime something), the imitation of human body movements and gestures that become rigid poses in naturalistic sculptures. The poetic is creative rendering that fundamentally does not imitate. The poetic finds its basis in the eidetic, the ability to bring an earlier occurrence to mind again. It especially includes, however, the ability to allow independent ideas to appear pictorially. We find it in children, primitives, artists, and especially predestined individuals. "Eidos" belongs to a deeply based zone and is a prerequisite for artistic forming.

The dreamlike world of the child as well as that of an individual beginning to paint takes precedence over the knowledge of things. Even so, the will to live is so strong that it is thrust into the realities and its life resembles a voyage of discovery. The child is an explorer of his surroundings. He is thus not all that different from the researching painters of the Renaissance. On the other hand, his imaginary world is pictorial, not experientially rational. Children's paintings are ultimately formal and expressive, and we can divide them into the realms of that which is distant from nature and that which is close to form. It is therefore no coincidence that the art of children, prior to learning perspective, is also based on frontal images (*geradaufsichtig-vorstellig*).

It is incorrect, however, to believe that children's paintings are meant in formal terms. They exhibit much more a motivation to "copy," which for obvious reasons is not expressed. The pen led by a clumsy hand releases only elementary expressive impulses, which quite rightly delight those who have been visually prepared by expressionism. These expressive impulses result in deformations of the nature-copy, the tension that exists between naturalism and form. If the Renaissance and later naturalisms did not exist as comparisons, the core of children's art would presumably be interpreted as quite real. We know that this whimsical and wonderful kind of art comes to an end when the academic copying of models with perspective, the basis of naturalism, breaks into this magic world.

In the course of the history of art, the Ice Age forms the first climax. After the period of various degrees of contour drawings, the multicolored animal pictures found in the caves of the Franco-Cantabrian region can be assigned to the Magdalenian era. They are characterized by a great proximity to external reality (as in the Altamira cave).

figs. 6–9

Early man's conception of the world corresponded to his *"Da-Sein,"* his existence.[7] He was part of nature and directly linked to its forces. His conception of the world was dreamlike, pictorial. Accordingly, his artistic products must have been unrealistically formal. A reversal occurs, however, whose result is the mirror image of children's painting. For him, all appearances were initially pictorial complexes. But he was a hunter, an observer. In the cave he often painted by dim torchlight and on surfaces that were difficult to reach, partly lying on his back, partly in constrained bodily positions, producing memory pictures that were meant non-decoratively: ideal pictures of huntable animals. The goal was the ideal; the result is realistic, although we should not interpret this term too narrowly. This also applies to the remaining art production of this cultural group, which can be traced back to the Caucasus in incised drawings on bone and in small sculp-
fig. 5 tures, among which the *Venus of Willendorf* has become the most famous.

At the same time or shortly thereafter and not far away, a second, entirely
fig. 10 different sort of art appears: that of eastern Spain (Valltorta Gorge). Silhouettes of people in lively positions were painted under ledges of natural rock in the open. What is remarkable here are not the individual depictions as in the caves. Rather, human figures are set into relationship with one another, combined into compositions representing hunting, fighting, and dancing. The figures are elongated and thus originate from a homogeneous formal impulse. Whereas the realistic art of the Magdalenian quickly disappeared, the formally powerful art of eastern Spain passed on its forces in a tradition-forming manner, from the Strait of Gibraltar and northern
fig. 11 Africa (rock pictures) to the east, where they became the starting point for early Egyptian art.

fig. 26 The mosaic works of Sumer and the aforementioned head from Warka exhibit the multi-body and -material type of representation that is also expressed in the painting of sculptures in many early cultures. It is predominant in the art of the primitives. The unity of material is abandoned, as various, heterogeneous substances are used in a work. The eyes are characteristically inserted with a material that exhibits a certain similarity to natural eyes (such as enamel, glass, pieces of shell). The hair is provided by either real hair or fibers, or by wigs (i.e., twice removed). In this, the intent to represent "life" clearly betrays itself. Still, the result is not a typical naturalism and is completely different from the hairdresser's dolls of the

[7] Like many of his contemporaries, Baumeister is speculating here about prehistoric human beings' actual conception of the world.

recent past. Through the combination of naturalism and translation, as it also exists in surrealism, magic emerges.

Egyptian art shows, on the one hand, a general and essential feature of plane and body in its rendering of paintings and low reliefs and, on the other hand, their opposite in sculptures. The sculpturally rendered work is much closer to nature, such as in seated and standing portraits. Bodily volumes along with matter convey a material sensibility to the beholder, whereas representations on the plane are not graspable in either sense of the word. They are intangible, dematerialized. In a certain sense, this elevates every painting into an unreal zone and above sculpture. Flat representations, including Egyptian reliefs, display the human body from different views by avoiding perspective. All parts are rendered such that they are descriptively explained, the head depicted in profile, the eye frontally, the shoulders frontally, the belt and buttocks in profile, and the navel in three-quarter view. At the same time, this manner of representation follows the plane and conveys the corresponding sensory impression. It seems to manifest a conflict and yet there is none.

The representational principle on which this is based here is, as mentioned above, the frontal view (*geradaufsichtig-vorstellig*).[8] Exceptions demonstrate that Egyptian artists could represent movement as we understand it, such as turned limbs or a turn of the upper body.

We see this chiefly among the ostraca (sketches on stone or pottery fragments) and the small figures found as grave goods representing bakery shops, market or livestock-breeding scenes, rowing teams in boats, and the like. In high sacred art, the Egyptian would have perceived a deviation from the canon of frontal-view representation as blasphemous. A specific formal intention is thus undoubtedly present, even if it becomes evident only in the course of time.

The various aspects of an object recall certain periods of contemporary art that include a degree of movement (futurism in the broadest sense is based on a simultaneity of different aspects). Over the long duration of Egyptian art, the era of el Amarna is striking. Amenhotep IV [later known as Akhenaten] endeavored to introduce a monotheistic cult of the sun. The quite clearly portrait-like representations show, in sculpture, relief, and painting, a phthisic model with a heavy, hanging abdomen, bent-over posture, long face, and pronounced back of the head. We also notice liberties

[8] On *geradaufsichtig-vorstellig* see p. 122n2.

in the monumental art of this period, such as in the painted limestone relief from Amarna (modern Tell el-Amarna) around 1360 BC, with a very
fig. 14 freely moving depiction of King Amenhotep IV, whose wife, Nefertiti, offers him a mandrake. Such works are based on the observation of nature. They correspond to a feeling for nature, which is expressed in the sun hymn of Amenhotep and his cult of the sun. It is quite possible that the temples dedicated to the god Thoth, which were scientific institutes, came into use at the same time.

In Greece, the development of Western thinking emerged with the philosophers. Aristotle signified a comprehensive break into natural science in terms of viewing and observing nature. This is not to say that this influenced the art of the time but, rather, that all evolutions formed a common front in which the sectors of science and art were in play. The sector that appeared the most intuitively and speculatively mobile formed the head of the movement. Art and the observation of nature represented the counterparts of the observing subject and the object. There should be no doubt that the change in seeing, in observing, was also influenced by the public events of ancient life. Greek tragedy, as shaped by Aeschylus (b. circa 525), is, in its artistic form (such as clothing actors in long colored garments and cothurni, the wearing of masks, and the discontinuation of facial expression, speech, and response between the chorus and actor), very closely related to the form-oriented rendering intentions of archaic Greek sculpture and vase painting. The further development, especially in the fourth century, when the public agons, or contests, increasingly passed onto professional specialists, and in the Hellenic period, when the agonal spirit increasingly died out in Greek private and public life, represents a parallel to the suggested development in the visual arts. With it, Greek artists did not model directly after the live model, as art schools in the cultivated countries do today. Rather, the method was more of a permuting transfer of fragments to arrive at a whole of the human body. The imaginative power and the formal power were lost. The art of vase painting from the Homeric age contrasts with the beautified naturalism of degeneration (Hellenistic sculptures).[9]

Following the splendid form art of the Romanesque and early Gothic periods, a new type of seeing appeared. This manifested itself with increasing

[9] Baumeister uses the word *"Entartung"* (= degeneration, deterioration, degeneracy) here in a manner that reflects the traditional art-historical view that Hellenistic art represented a decadent style and "decline" from the ideal of the "Golden Age" of classical Greek art. Here, again, Baumeister's use of the term differs from that of the National Socialists. See p. 113n15.

clarity in the Early Renaissance from 1400 on and achieved its climax in the High Renaissance around 1500. That the discoveries of antique works of art also worked to reinforce this—characteristically mostly Roman works, at best copies of Greek and mainly Hellenistic originals—arose from the discoveries from the soil on which the *rinascimento* appeared.

The copy of an existing model became art in both senses of the word. The great achievement and discovery was that individuals sought a specific impression of nature and transmitted it much more precisely than before onto the plane. Dürer's repeatedly misunderstood expression: "Denn wahrhaftig steckt die Kunst in der Natur, wer sie heraus kann reissen, der hat sie" (For, verily, art is embedded in nature; he who can rend it forth has it), does not mean that we should tear art from nature.[10] *"Reissen"* (to tear) is an old expression for drawing or rendering. This interpretation, however, deals simultaneously with ongoing issues: along with the body, space on the plane.

Linear perspective was expanded. It preoccupied artists in previously unknown dimensions. It was necessary, using measure, the number, and a pair of compasses and with real models, cords, and other equipment, to make not only the corporeal but also the spatial elements convincing in the rep-
fig. 51 resentation of depth. Paintings and drawings became feats of perspective. Solutions were supposed to be demonstrated with tasks that were as complicated as possible. The human body was seen and measured anatomically. Individuals believed, on the one hand, that, without it, they would be incapable of transmitting the appearance of nature precisely enough. On the other hand, they hoped to find a universally valid, calculable canon of form in the relationship of measurements that could spare the artist formal effort. Antiquity has only a few ideally formed human types; in the Renaissance, the number of types expanded, and their shapes became more strongly differentiated.

Artists' anatomical studies worked into the hands of scientists. Artists delivered anthropological, anatomical, zoological, botanical pictorial models, and the way of seeing discovered by the artists became, as always, the model for the general public. Every master added new observations to those already known. Dürer's works such as *Little Piece of Turf* (1502), *Great Piece of Turf* (1503), *Young Hare* (1502), and many sheets of his production are striking examples of how nature was to be seen from then onward.

[10] Albrecht Dürer, *Hierin sind begriffen vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion,* book 3 (Nuremberg, 1528).

Over years of labor, Leonardo produced an amazing work with his portrait of *Mona Lisa* (1503–19), which left all subsequent naturalisms behind, especially in one respect. He attempted to extend optical illusion to the point of achieving a certain kinetics in the impression, using only the means of the painter on the immobile painting surface. He searched until he succeeded in finding the position of the mouth and cheek features that most closely conveyed the impression of movement. He sensed something of the substance of time in the work of art (see Chapter "Rhythm as a Temporal Body").

Leonardo: "Art is a science." All forces were applied to this sort of attitude and investigation. The overall composition of a work was very probably constructed with a network of auxiliary lines based on measure and number. Diagonals, circles, triangles, and the golden ratio presumably replaced the free perception of order (see Chapter "Composition and Decomposition").

How is it possible that there was still room in this art of nature research, which continued up to the realism of the nineteenth century, to accommodate what today deserves to be called art?

It is certain that the actual artistic values found their way in mostly involuntarily—that is, inadvertently. The creative emerges unintentionally. It is the special distinction of the high-ranking artist, including those with a naturalistic approach, that he is not completely capable of controlling his most innate intuitions. He remains ignorant about what, alongside his intention and determination, he educes in terms of unknown values. At this point we might already refer to something that will be explained later: a completely forgotten method of artistic production exits, which is of a more natural sort and in which the artist is only a vehicle. This method represents a contrast between what the artist creates consciously or according to perception, and what emerges in his works as a supreme artistic value. While the epigones, according to their tendency, turn off these incomprehensible values by setting themselves very clear goals, the original artist, who does not pursue any model of previous art, does not shy away from the unknown. Rather, he trusts himself to be incapable of completely controlling his formal will. Man proposes; God disposes. When an artistic person applies himself to any activity, art emerges involuntarily.

Much of what was created in the High Renaissance lies considerably distant from our contemporary point of view, since the untrained modern viewer

can no longer summon the primary sensations. Moreover, the circulation of bad reproductions (see Chapter "Rhythm as a Temporal Body") falsifies the expression of the original. It lies in the nature of painting, especially in that of this period, that a work must be seen in the original. Painting material, which is almost without substance in this art of illusion, possesses a certain expression in the original that is hidden only by the luster of the varnished surface. This perfected manner of painting and the intent to produce an optical illusion run up against the boundaries of the artistic. The extent to which the patina here has changed things cannot be measured since the changes from restoration also create uncertainty. The restorations carried out in Holland exposed such glaring colors that they consequently raised complex questions regarding restoration and today's assessment of it. It is clear that Rembrandt's famous chiaroscuro is accentuated by the darkening of the colors and the layer of dirt adhering to the varnish on the impasto layer of paint. One refrained from proceeding further, no doubt aware of the authority represented by habits to which public opinion succumbs, even the habits of some connoisseurs who are reluctant to abandon mistakes.

Rembrandt ventured into realism. At the same time, he developed a new
fig. 59 freedom in technical artistic execution. Especially in graphics, his expressive means extend beyond the programmatic and representational. (We might think of the almost absolute articulation in the etchings by Hercules Seghers.)

With Rembrandt the alla prima technique appears fully developed for the first time.

The graphics and outstanding studies of the naturalistic masters as well as details from their painted studies allow the artistic to shine through much more than some of their finished works.

In the German school an artist appeared after 1500 who discovered a synthesis that surpassed all others: Nithart, known by the name of Matthias
fig. 54 Grünewald. His is an expressive art of form and content. It is so form-oriented that in the *Crucifixion* of the *Isenheim Altarpiece* (ca. 1510–15) even different scales of figures appear. Even if the reason for this (similar non-naturalistic size relationships are also present in Egyptian, Greek, and medieval art) has to do with the motif, with the iconography, the artistic fact as such continues to exist alongside it, and must be evaluated as such. This includes the fact that Grünewald's unusual coloration, which undoubtedly exceeds what was iconographically required, is grounded in resourcefulness.

We are reminded that a parallel nonrepresentational art always exists at the same time, even in the Renaissance and in the periods of the subsequent naturalisms: ornamentation!

Tintoretto was able to draw out the strongest forces from form and color. His huge *Paradise* (after 1588) painted on canvas in the Doge's Palace is a rhythmically surging modulation of the surface achieved by the distribu-
fig. 57 tion of many focal points. The younger El Greco, who was associated with Tintoretto, adopted the form-rendering tradition from this perspective and used it to develop his own formal language.

A completely different approach to form is that of Poussin. He became an exponent of the neoclassical.

"I have neglected nothing."

fig. 65 He condenses his planes with a poetic geometry through a balancing of weights. With him, the absolute gains a special importance in form—in comparison to El Greco as a representative of that in motion. Poussin gathers the richer forms into a system of shape formulation using horizontals and verticals. He also disciplines the depth effect. He established a great deal that subsequently distinguished the French and Paris schools in terms of the moderate quality of Latin art.

Strong formal powers appear in Jean-Antoine Watteau's white *Pierrot* (ca. 1719; Musée du Louvre, Paris).[11] The subtlety of the painted garment modifies certain original surface values (such as the wrinkling of the surface).

The plane is expressed radically in Manet's works, whose figures, according to a contemporary objection, are as flat as playing-card figures. This initiates a new degree of abstraction through the plane.

Every artist pushes off from his predecessors. But he also adopts, particularly formal powers that go beyond the personal and temporal ones. They form bridges. The greatly successful French painting has a much-praised constant despite its evolutions. Rubens, Tintoretto, and El Greco as exponents of variable formal richness on the one hand, Poussin as an exponent of the absolute on the other, and the colors of impressionism form the weighty knapsack of Cézanne, who lost nothing on his way and contributed a great deal.

[11] Baumeister is referring to Watteau's (1684–1721) painting of the commedia dell'arte player *Pierrot,* ca. 1719, traditionally known as *Gilles*.

The modern history of painting has two turning points. The first lies between Cimabue and Giotto. It begins the pathway to the copy. The second turning point is represented by Cézanne. It begins the path to form. Some media that appeared prior to Giotto reappear in the Cézanne era in the works of van Gogh and Paul Gauguin; the plane, contour, and shadows reappear, not according to natural phenomena but "as the painter needs them."

figs. 79, 80

The epigones of imitative art do not create copies of nature; they constantly offer further reductions of the achievements of the masters. Their pictures barely distinguish themselves from one another because the vast number of influences levels them out.

We might notice that the naturalistic and the scientific consideration of time appear together in both the Late Greek period and the Renaissance, and that this parallel continues in the ongoing approach to nature in the nineteenth century. With Cézanne, a turn to the formal impulse appears while the scientific observation of nature continues in other fields. The naturalistic quality in painting came to an end. Why is science no longer able to accompany it? Why does naturalism degenerate?[12]

Every work that retains its value is based on the original discoveries of an artist. The intensity that keeps it alive is contained only in these discoveries.

The original artist displays the previously unknown in his works, whereas epigonic paintings adopt that which is already known. Their original contribution is seen only in a few personal things like handwriting, the brushstroke, or other small facts. Among them, the involuntary is blocked.

The question of why an original artist arrives at new forms, colors, and so forth is essentially unanswerable. (His methods will be dealt with later on.) The discovery of the observation of nature, on the whole, can be explained just as little as the departure from it.

As painting turned away from the observation of nature, it was handed over to science. The painter's eye no longer wants to observe scientifically. Observation adopts scientific research with scientific means and techniques.

[12] Here Baumeister uses the term *"degenerieren"* (= to degenerate) to signify the breaking down or progressive disappearance of naturalism in the evolution of modern painting toward the nonrepresentational. In contrast to the National Socialists, however, Baumeister did not see the avant-garde's turn away from naturalism or a realist style and toward abstraction as a negative development, as his entire discussion of "form art" reveals. See also p. 113n15.

It has been shown that the eye is no longer sufficient for this purpose. Photographic enlargement, the microscope, the X-ray, and slow-motion have intensified observation to such an extent that the unaided eye is no longer capable of making new natural observations and discoveries. Today's exciting observations of nature are the results of instruments. Modern scientific devices call for further divisions into specialties. Science has advanced to the point that optical devices are also no longer sufficient. The atomic system can no longer be grasped by observation, but by inferences of a scientific kind that extend micro-observations. Quanta also cannot be grasped by observation.

Despite this division between science and art, they appear to share certain connections. A homogeneous front of everything forming and seeking (such as natural science, philosophy, literature, art, and music) is present.
fig. 126 If we consider scientific photographs, photomicrographs, and diagrams, we notice a certain similarity to formal developments in modern art, a relationship. In this the independent formal inventions of modern art form, so to speak, the clarified final forms in the sense of absolute seeing. The external similarity between works of art and things that research and knowledge translate into something visible and tactile remains on the surface. The deep-lying relationships are thus not revealed, but only suggested.

Art lost the connection to the "observation" of nature and liberated itself from it, just as it loosed itself from other ties over the course of time. The more art liberates itself from all ties, the more it will become pure art. Even so, gaining purified intrinsic values brings it closer to nature. It forms—not after nature, but just like nature.

Naturalism is removed from nature. The more naturalistic a painting is, the more it becomes a wax corpse. It disregards the era.

Purified art acquires a relationship to nature itself. Although the contemporary artist is no longer occupied externally with the imitation of nature but generates works in a manner comparable to nature, his art will nevertheless remain predetermined by the general attitude: a model of everything visible.

Rhythm as a Temporal Body

> In contrast to naturalism, the rhythms of Cézanne contain the substance of time. In cubism it becomes even more pronounced. Futurism tries to represent it descriptively, drawing from photography, and thereby errs.

Rhythm and form variation have something in common: they are the substance of time in art.

Time is not an Apollonian weekly itinerary in which Dionysus takes a stroll. Time is presumably an elemental substance.

Time cannot be measured but, rather, only divided on its surface. It might possibly be measured from a standpoint lying outside of time, or from another sort of time.

Naturalistic painting endangers life through its rigid immobility. By contrast, all form art, the archaic Apollos, Romanesque figures, cubist representations, and so forth show the entireness of life in a neutral, nonmomentary stillness.

It is not possible to define time beyond the connection to real movement. In everything that happens, the human being is, so to speak, in the same moving car, which carries him along, like someone listening to a piece of music. The speeds are identical. Still, there are cases in which we seem to approach time more closely in terms of sensation, such as when comparing two speeds to one another. If we unhurriedly contemplate a stationary object, the element of time is abolished. Only the movement of our eyes remains. In viewing a painting, there is also only the two-dimensional surface. If a viewed object is taken away, so that we watch it grow increasingly smaller, or if an object comes toward the viewer, a heightened sense of movement emerges through the spatial element. These sensations are especially strong when we experience such movements in the rigid rectangle of a film projection.

The strongest optical sensations would emerge from contrasts of different speeds, but they have been used very little up to now (e.g., in artistic film).

If we compare the primitive delivery of news by runners or horseback riders with a modern type of delivery by truck or airplane, we notice in particular the advantage and the seemingly small expenditure of energy on the part of highly developed technical methods. However, if we calculate the consumption of energy by all the necessary installations and the consump-

tion of natural forces (energies) in the modern methods, a surprising relationship appears: the total output (expenditure of forces) required to fulfill a function is the same in all methods. The energy consumption is constant in the primitive and in the developed stage. (The energy consumption is presumably greater in modern times.)

Time is necessarily included as a substance in theater, acting, music, and film. By contrast, sculpture in the round, with its all-around articulation of the corporeal, requires movement on the part of the viewer. Painting requires only planar viewing time. In this respect, it is the most sublimated.

Photography and related printing reproduction processes (such as full-color printing and others) have made engaging with everything visible more fluid. They become memory-aids for something tangible, pictorial, for forms and colors. (Illustrated magazines, catalogues, and film are a few examples.) Besides the benefit of making present something that is long past, it offers pictorial communication of distant events and conditions. Through reproduction in writing and image, the strength of a memory is undoubtedly increased. Whether the absolute strength of one's memory is also increased remains an open question. Memory relativizes that which man experiences as eternal present and the concept of time associated with it. Memory offers an existence in different presents.

The photographer fundamentally transforms the movement of life into the stillness of form. For his part, the viewer of a photograph transforms the stillness of form into active life again through his imagination. Moreover, the development of reproductive techniques has extended sight: through astro- and photomicrography, through film using slow motion. The example of radiography demonstrates that a sought-for discovery can sometimes be accurately seen only with the photograph and not with the human eye alone. Together with photography, color film, and television, the reproduction has become an immense inventory of civilization. This inventory draws itself over everything real like a transparent skin because everything that exists also exists today in the world of reproductions. Just as this can serve to illuminate and clarify, it can also produce a murkiness, which is attached to everything merely reproductive, much in contrast to everything real and unique.

Reproduction in the sense of reproducing a copy after a model plays a large role within art making. Traces of it appear, to be precise, everywhere, even in works of art that greatly distance themselves from the copy. Excluded from this is purely nonrepresentational art.

Reproduction in the sense of multiple repetitions, and at the same time as a primitive printing process, appears in the form of human handprints in the caves of the Franco-Cantabrian period (Castillo, Upper Paleolithic era). Hands dipped in paint were printed on cave walls or held onto the wall and the surrounding area painted, so that light silhouettes emerged—probably along with the first formal statements by man.

Earlier, painting and hand drawing were documentarily descriptive. Dürer's portrait of Emperor Maximilian I was based on a purpose: the purpose of making the appearance of the head of government publically known. Especially since the advent of the woodcut, art has taken on the role of the pictorial report, which modern procedures have assumed today within the mass circulation of illustrated magazines. Reproductive copying and printing methods have a forerunner in the ancient Chinese procedure of rubbing or tamping stone reliefs. The stone carvings of the Han Dynasty are closely related to the subsequent woodcut block. Etching, engraving, and lithography followed wood engraving. We should also mention stenciling as a type of reproduction.

Photography can be documentary to a great extent. Still, like every procedure, it has elbowroom between the model (object) and the photographic copy.[1] This entails the many possibilities of a technical nature and of personal interpretation. If we consider how various results are achieved just by different exposure times, or how differently the one or the other negative can be exploited—we thus see that the photographic procedure does not automatically lead to fixed results. We also easily forget that the normal black and white photograph, because it is colorless and modified in terms of scale, is an abstraction, just like isolating a piece of nature as a detail of a picture represents an abstraction.

We notice a certain freedom in examining a collection of photographs that show the historical development from Daguerre, Talbot, Bayard, Nadar, Hill, Victor Hugo, and Lumière up to the present. Technical capabilities appear especially clearly in photographs on iron (ferrotype), which capture the unique with their sensory impressions. The silvery shimmer produced by the ferrotype technique distinguishes this process from later methods of reproduction on paper. Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre was a painter, and, following the initial period of invention, other painters also emerged who turned to photography, partly out of technical interest, partly out of a de-

[1] Here Baumeister plays with the words "model" = *Vorbild* (lit. before-image) and "copy" = *Nachbild* (lit. after-image).

sire to use their eye, sharpened by painting, and partly to use the invention as an abbreviated method of portrait art. Here we might mention that for ages irrational facts have been associated with the image of a person. Many believed that, in the hands of an unauthorized or hostile-minded person, such an image could awaken antagonistic powers. For this reason, people hesitated to pass on photographs in some cases, or primitives refused to have themselves photographed.

The sharpest rejection of and opposition to photography came from the mass of portrait painters aiming to eliminate an overpowering rival. Those painters who accepted progress recognized the difference between the two media. Some individuals probably recognized the documentary aspect of the new technique already at that time. Still, "beautiful" or "prettified" photographs were soon preferred over purely documentary ones. Whether portrait painting took direct practical advantage of photography in the period before 1875 is not known.

Later on, portrait painters appeared who certainly rejected photography as competition, but nonetheless incorporated it into their painting methods. They put a photographic enlargement or a tracing of one underneath their support to then simulate direct drawing or painting after a model, using a swift stroke in oil or pastel. A coat of varnish helped simulate painting in other "treatments." On the other hand, a naturalistic effect in painting became a surrogate for photography, and some painters tried to achieve photography's infinite shadow gradations in embarrassing imitation (both represent painting's dependence on photography). Painting as a surrogate for photography still exists today. Dilettantes often begin in this sort of manner or are not entirely free from such tendencies toward accuracy.

A technical lack of ability along with its inner regulator (the aforementioned *center*) nonetheless often leads dilettantes and autodidacts to results that should be set high above academic ability and the merely reproductive.

fig. 81 Henri Rousseau is the exemplar of how deeply and meaningfully this inner regulator can work against the will, and how a dilettante can rise to the highest artistic achievement. He wanted to achieve the model in its apparent reality. He measured the nose of the model he was portraying and transferred the actual length onto the picture plane, disregarding the perspective foreshortening. Perhaps he even wanted to achieve bad painting in the manner of oil prints, like they hung on the walls of the petty bourgeois. He only achieved this to a certain degree, but at the same time, important works of art emerged against his will.

But the opposite sort of influence also occurred.

figs. 98, 99, 158 Expressionism (as in the works of Marc Chagall and Franz Marc and Robert Delaunay's *Eiffel Tower,* 1910) visibly influenced photography, as did the dynamic element in cubism. Angularities that diverge from the classical horizon and a moderate perspective lent the photograph sensational and unusual aspects, which were perceived as "distortions" (such as a building fig. 159 photographed diagonally from below). Although we encounter such aspects every day, we do not register them as visual experiences. Painting deserves credit here, too, for having created a new realm of seeing. Photography followed.

Our eye is now so enlightened that only in dwindling cases of doubt are we incapable of distinguishing the model—photograph or painting—on which a printed image is based. In kitsch painting, however, there are cases of doubt.

Through painting, photography in the last twenty-five years has ferreted out strong impulses that exist only in photography. It was painters (such fig. 147 as Man Ray) who, aided by the eye, darkroom, and a specific photographic technique, strove to form the unknown by turning to the aforementioned fortuitous opportunities. What they discovered were less new zones of seeing in the sense of nature observations than abstractions. Effects radiated fig. 148 outward here, too. Documentary photography (Adolf Lazi) represents a contrast to this. The reproductive quality can be so significant that the productive finds a place in it.

Montage begins with gluing fragments of paper and other substances onto drawings that contain a specific fascination value (as found in cubism). We should stress that this fascination value of the substance fragments possesses a purely impressionistic, representational content value. A newspaper fragment, through the buzzing sight of the black alphabetic characters on white paper, yields an active gray that strongly distinguishes itself from a normal gray plane.[2] The white nuances in particular become active.

[2] In this discussion Baumeister emphasizes the expressive quality of written language's physical components—the interaction of the color of the letters and ground to produce a third and in this case active color, gray. He not only makes implicit reference to his activity in the field of typography but also to his work in the medium of collage, the beginnings of which were in part influenced by the important Austrian writer, publicist, and critic of the press Karl Kraus (1874–1936), whom Baumeister met in Vienna in 1915. Kraus's most significant work in this area was his epic collage-drama *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (The last days of mankind, 1915–22). See Dave Beech, John Roberts, et al., *The Philistine Controversy* (London: Verso Books, 2002), 204–5. I thank Peter Chametzky for drawing this connection to my attention.

The dispersion and modulation values of the surface factures (e.g., wood grain, sand, fabric) also have a great effect. The optical role of these fragments certainly dominates the picture, although the representational element has a psychological significance as well. Transferring such fragments onto the picture brings about a devaluation of their former rational meaning (such as that of a streetcar ticket) and corresponding sensory impressions. The power of the artist becomes thereby evident, who can devalue, revaluate, and dematerialize the work. The newspaper moreover remains simultaneously newspaper; the wallpaper, wallpaper; and the ticket, a ticket; with all their original defining values. At the same time, in their ambivalence, they assert their sensory value as a rational object and as pure form and color values.

The same applies to a montage with photographic elements, which begins with a section cut out from a photograph (such as a head, body, or other component). A fragment thus detached from its background, from its photographed environment, is placed in its isolation onto white paper. Although the work essentially remains in the plane, it takes on the impression of a spatial and corporeal phenomenon. It is vastly different from all familiar aspects of nature and impressions of a familiar naturalistic quality relating to perspective.

Whereas perspective in older paintings and in photographs begins with the picture plane, and recognizes only a development into depth, by which it is analogous to gazing into a mirror, in photomontage a complete reversal of the notion of space occurs. It yields a physical, sculptural fact as an illusion that emerges forward, toward the viewer!

The corporeal, spatial view in painting has its history. The illusion culminates in the ceiling paintings from the baroque and rococo eras (as in Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's works), which completely cancelled out the plane using the "worm's-eye view," which simulates gazing into an infinite sky animated by figures. In more modern times, Manet was the first to read-
figs. 79, 80 dress the plane. Van Gogh and especially Gauguin are painters of the plane;
fig. 78 Seurat embroiders, so to speak, with colors. Cézanne is bound to the plane by many facts, and cubism goes beyond the painting surface with nuances emerging forward. Following the collage works in cubism, we see an especially vital sensibility for the development of corporeality projected for-
fig. 113 ward into space in constructivism (wall pictures[3]) and in concrete painting.

[3] See p. 95n2.

In this respect montage corresponds to sculptural painting, which developed in the same period. Also the close-up as a photograph or in film shifts the illusion forward. The descriptive manner and effect of the photomontage makes the white paper surface, which enters into a relationship with a photo fragment, appear as an imaginary plane. If graphic lines are drawn on it in the manner of traditional perspective, a sense of depth also emerges. If the paper is grainy and thus endowed with light and shadow, the white surface simultaneously preserves the tangible character of the plane. Consequently, multiple viewing possibilities emerge overall, and the plane loses its unambiguous character. This quality also exists in contemporary painting. It is the quality of the possible and at the same time the impossible. The plane is jarred. Disrupting the plane is a chief characteristic of contemporary painting.

Presenting a contrast to these elemental effects of the simple montage is the combination of photographic components into a new comprehensive picture. This reduces the ambivalent effects of the plane by covering it completely. On the other hand, combining the most varied spatial imagery multiplies the spatial impression. We perceive the substance of time. *La femme cent têtes* (1929)[4] by Max Ernst presents a series of montages, made from fragments of illustrations from older books in the woodcut technique, with an amusing and ironic bent. Here the reproductive is likewise a means to achieve the productive.[5]

fig. 118

Within documentary photography, scientific photographs reveal certain processes, mostly in the form of photomicrographs or slow-motion shots in film. (We see natural processes in *Life in a Drop of Water,* for instance, or photographs of physics or chemical research.) They deliver strong pictorial impressions, which we register in a purely formal manner. It is remarkable that forms emerge in nonrepresentational painting that exhibit a good deal of similarity to scientific photographs. Together both fields produce

figs. 126, 127

[4] As noted about Ernst's work on the Web site of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National Library of the Netherlands: "*La femme 100 têtes* [Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1929] was the first collage novel. The title itself is a collage of meanings: *The woman a hundred heads* as well as *The headless woman*—and there are more possibilities than '100 têtes,' 'sans tête,' 's'entête' or 'sang tête.'" "La femme 100 têtes," Expositions and Collections, Koninklijke Bibliothek, http://www.kb.nl/bc/koopman/1926-1930/c53-en.html (accessed June 15, 2012).

[5] Baumeister's argument that the reproductive can be used to achieve something productive, or new and original, echoes the thinking of many of his fellow contemporary artists, including the Bauhaus instructor László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946), with whom he was acquainted. Moholy-Nagy thematizes this issue in his essay "Produktion-Reproduktion," *De Stijl* 5, no. 7 (1922), 98–100, published in English in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 289.

a panorama of forms that defines the condition of contemporary seeing as one of maximum sensory stimulation. In doing so, art provides the model of clarified form.

Film is inconceivable without painting as the basis of all seeing. As both a descendant of photography and as pictorial movement, film has its tradition in painting and especially in graphics. In addition to the pictorial series from Christian cult (e.g., the passion cycle in woodcut) and the panel series of the murder ballads, in the last century it has been the drawings of humorists, such as the Geneva painter Rodolphe Töpffer and Wilhelm Busch, who present a continuous event in series of illustrations.[6] They are the forerunners of cartoon films (such as of Mickey Mouse and Felix the Cat). Technically, flip books, whose pages are meant to be turned quickly, and the special-effect images of the magic lantern of the nineteenth century are the precursors to film.

figs. 153, 154

fig. 157

fig. 155

The average film uses all the means available to clearly represent a course of events as naturalistically as possible, which can result in platitudes. Thus for the interpretation of a conversation and its content, for instance, the situation, speakers, verbal content, and mouth positions, as well as the facial expressions of all the speakers and their gestures, including color and sound, are presented as completely corresponding to one another. A few or just one of these means would suffice and would yield true art forms (less is more). Here the optical would be a priority.

If we pursue the tendency in painting toward visual movement, we arrive, as with many fundamentals, at Cézanne. His picture structure is a consistent network of lines, even if with breaks or (geologically speaking) faults. His individual forms are placed into relationship with the surrounding ones, such that the viewer continually follows the formal processes more than is the case in viewing earlier painting. Through expanding and contracting, Cézanne generates a general surface agitation, a dispersion of the surface. Moreover, he plays up the dispersion of the contours by dissolving them in different strokes and the dispersion of color in blue, red, and ocher tones in the sense of a muted spectrum, which underscores the movements. Here the observer himself enters into a mobile seeing, which is further advanced by Cézanne's particular view of natural models. He often rendered his still lifes from above in a

[6] The Geneva painter Rodolphe Töpffer (1799–1846) was a French-speaking Swiss teacher and draftsman. He is recognized as a forerunner of comics at a time when the combination of images and subordinated text was still quite unusual.

way that had not been attempted before him. The pots thus offer a view inside from above, for instance, in which the round aperture diverges from the form of the narrow ellipse and approaches that of the circle. At the same time, he did not neglect the elongated or bellied profile lines of these same objects. He rendered them as they presented themselves, from a lower point of view. For the painter, their forms, seen from above in perspective, would be overly foreshortened. He thus presents two views of one object. We also see this practice in his figural pictures and portraits, which recalls the representational manner of Egyptian reliefs. Both offer stations of a movement. Expressionism and cubism took this movement in painting further, in which cubism in particular complemented the view from above and the profile view through diffusion. This is an enhancement of movement that introduces a substance of time as it were into the work of art. A descendant of cubism, futurism, attempted to solve the problem of movement in another way. It very clearly adopted photographic models, time exposures of moving things, and multiple stages of movement. Movement as an illusion was a predetermined agenda and photography the model. In painting, futurism was incapable of producing any results.

figs. 103, 104

Contemporary art undoubtedly has elements of movement. There have also been experiments for developing real mechanical movement as artistic expression: *Mechano,* abstract film, the color keyboard. With the moving illuminated advertisement, pictorial movement has come into use. Even so, as the form of captured movement, painting remains the core of formal development.

Film as a pictorial work of art is primarily movement with all possibilities. The documentary component represents the central point here as well. Every deviation from the documentary in art film retains the documentary component retrospectively as a comparative exponent. Tension and resolution emerge here from abstraction, as in contemporary painting. This is expressed in so-called avant-garde films (such as those by Alberto Cavalcanti and others) but not in representational films. They are unipolar. The thoroughly cinematic aspect and the personality of the director lend expressive power to the media.

Two features characterize the present state of civilization: increased movement and the pictorial. Communication is an intervening factor. Modern means of transportation, the telephone, radio, and television exhibit movement in the form of speed. The pictorial component is in

many cases set into relationship with movement. Metropolises are full of movement and at the same time full of pictorial impressions. Posters, traffic signs, and illuminated advertisements call, point, and explain through the pictorial or through writing containing a pictorial component. Typography is exploited in pictorial terms in order to make whole pages manageable, comprehensible. Typographical design is visual organization.

Typography begins with alphabetic characters, which are studied for the best legibility. Like every applied art, however, typography has a utilitarian as well as a formal component. There is an allowance for formal rendering in typography, which remains available to a conscientious typographer or commercial artist for artistic design, alongside the practical or useful task. Whereas earlier in typography the symmetrical axis was regarded as a thoroughly established norm (e.g., for inner and external book titles), contemporary artists see vitality in the series, in free balance. Symmetry is no longer binding for them.

Architecture, the so-called mother of the arts, earns this title because man needs a shelter from the wind, a cave, a dugout for living, a tent, or a dwelling in the contemporary sense in order to develop socially and culturally. The products of building contain civilizatory and cultural aspects. They are useful but also contain an artistic component. Their useful part derives from the cave, the net, or the protective dugout. The means of the builder are substances whose insulating and permeating qualities (like the wall and glass) relate to outside temperature and light. Constructive and insulating parts corresponding to purpose lead to the absolute, and accordingly also receive absolute forms and surfaces (orthogonality). The artistic, not a demonstrably necessary part of building, lies in the possibilities that remain within the useful. The builder brings art along in the process.

Useful building allows room for the unknown. Plans, models, and material samples are merely servants. The same goes for rooms drawn using perspective that, however, could never correspond to reality (a danger of overvaluing architectural models). The artistic element is included first in the realization; in contrast to the useful part, it does not allow for any experiential derivation.

Out of practical necessity we are most often forced to live in houses that are too old, whereas the needs of civilization nevertheless progres-

sively change. Simple renovations are incapable of bringing dwellings to the point where they satisfy new requirements. Preferable would be dwellings that are variable, somewhat comparable to Far Eastern spaces, which can be modified by folding screens and mobile walls. With this, we have not yet exhausted architectural, technical, or tectonic progress, since each new building material and every new installation site perceptibly influence the building structure. Contemporary architects are familiar with the issue of the "possibilities" and express this in their
fig. 144 spaces. Among the initiators are Le Corbusier, Richard Doecker, Cornelis van Eesteren, Richard Neutra, Hugo Häring, Jean-André Lurçat, Erich Mendelsohn, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud, and the entire younger generation. We notice a great deal already
fig. 145 with the older ones, too, with Loos, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Auguste Pérret. Architecture's practical task is to achieve the best possible fulfillment of needs, the fulfillment of function, the living machine. Spatial development is given first priority here. The external shape emerges. Le Corbusier invokes the comparison to a soap bubble, like children make with a straw. Within the house, there are no longer any closed-off living cells, unlike before, but instead communicative series of rooms, where the spaces have different heights as needed. The open ground plan and elevation are movement forms in contrast to symmetry. The juxtaposition of small and large rooms; the deviation from the axes; the illusion of the non-static; the light in contrast to the statically inert; and the connection to the outside world by means of terraces, roof gardens, and large openings, the connection to nature and the world; are an infinite sequence of movement that surmounts that which is closed-off in building. The building is a part of nature.

Regional features seem to have disappeared completely from contemporary architecture. Still, we occasionally notice them in nuances that distinguish the edifice for a tier of buildings that are constructed on a hillside and given a corresponding nuance of adaptation. Locally available materials also play a role. Types develop instead of the historically dependent buildings of the past with an individual character. Disciplining is a contemporary virtue.

Modern building is organ-like.

Modern architecture has drawn exceptional values from the previously unknown. Even if such a building seems to contrast with the landscape, a genuine intrinsic law nonetheless links it to nature, unlike buildings that

only outwardly seek a connection to the landscape. The regionally rooted farmhouse represents an antithesis to such sentimentally "costumed" houses. It earns the respect due to everything indigenous. Its form is by no means landscape romanticism. The farmhouse is a type, a regionally repeatable house type. In this sense, it can, like all architecture of value, be assigned to a realm in which repetition is a productive means.

It is significant that a few materials, a few forms, suffice for a building. Here repetition, and thus the reproductive, combines with the thoroughly productive and positive in the building process. Economy in art is sharply illuminated in architecture's practical and functional aspect; but economy through the repetition of building components and measures is also an essential factor in the realm of form.

The absolute in contemporary architecture heightens the life that takes place in and around it by a contrastive effect. Before simple, clear walls, everything comes into sharp relief. In the salons of the Makart era, rooms were "outfitted" and "decorated" in faux Renaissance and Gothic styles, such that they assimilated people in an accompanying subdued light to the point of indistinctness.[7] People, especially the women, were "costumed" and with their tasseled velvet gave the impression of sofas.

The absolute is the basic form, the screen for the unfolding. Not only in the sense that life stands out in front of perfect walls and furniture, but also in the other sense of devices that must always bear the tendency toward the absolute within them (such as a shovel, hammer, or fountain pen). This has less to do with unfolding than with the capabilities that lie within the material. The functional is highly developed in every device by its defining formation, which represents the antithesis to the amorphous.

fig. 143 Here we should also mention Le Corbusier's design for an art museum from around 1930, in which one enters the center of a building, arranged in the form of a snail, from below through a subterranean corridor. The structure is not visible from the outside; a long wall surrounds the building site. The snail of the building can be continuously expanded by adding modules ac-

[7] Baumeister is referring to Hans Makart (1840–1884), an Austrian academic history painter, designer, and decorator, who became a celebrity artist and the leader of artistic life in Vienna of his time. He is well known for his magnificent studio, which was opulently furnished in the manner of a salon with furniture, carpets, antiquities, and weapons and became a social meeting point in Vienna. It also served as a model for a great many upper middle-class living rooms. Makart decorated numerous public spaces of the day, and his work earned the title *"Makartstil"* (Makart style), which fully characterized the Ringstrasse era.

cording to the available means and as needed. Along with the primary creation of space we also notice: movement instead of symmetry, the repeating, the collective-anonymous in the sense of the impersonal, the social—and along with the absolute, in this case, also the natural and organic (snail form).

We should mention the ornament here as well. It appears as a precisely repeating link, a scattering, or series. It has a decorative character and has been eliminated everywhere, consistent with today's anti-decorative tendency. As the repetition of a form, however, it contains traces of movement, which are strongly articulated in the ornamental band, in the series. classical ornamentation, the meander and the simple derivation from it, the so-called "running dog," form a run, a movement to which we must devote ourselves in terms of impression. It departs from the merely decorative as do Oriental lineaments. Another advantage of these highly qualified ornaments is that the positive (black) lineaments simultaneously generate a negative on the light ground plane. Both negative and positive forms are entirely equal in the meander, whereby the eye has the choice to follow the one or the other form. The infinite run can also be used for linear star forms, which are developed from the pentacle and possess infinity.

Apart from exclusively mechanical reproduction, there are fields in which reproduction becomes the substance for an artistic work: architecture, theater, film. Transferred repetition allows the original to emerge. The artistic impulse includes model-like values in advance—in film these are the actors—in the form of their transformation. The work first becomes an original value this way, the work is created through reproduction.

The field of reproducing temporal sequences allows the most varied degrees for participating in the original. In the field of music, first the original composer makes his impact, and then it comes to the reproducing, original conductor, who is capable of translating his intentions onto the individualities of the orchestra.

In older drama, forceful directing was less present than a comprehensive focus on the main actor and his relationships ranging from the second and third-ranking actors to the extras. This produced a pyramid structure. The individual forces of the actors were defining. Contemporary theater disregards the dramatic culmination and the types of composition directed toward that culmination in favor of the collective. The Wagnerian "Gesamtkunstwerk" ("artistic synthesis": encompassing drama, music, stage set,

and directing) was bound to fail, since the sum of different kinds of art annuls art. The listener or viewer needs an unfilled space for perceptions that he can fill himself. In Richard Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk this space for perception is already "occupied."

In the visual arts, individual forces are not capable of collaborating on an individually constructed work. This is nonsense from Goethe's "king's lieutenant" *(Truth and Poetry)* who, as an art lover, issues commissions and in one case demands several painters to collaborate on a painting—a figure painter, a landscape painter, an animal painter, and a cloud painter.

In painting, the collective does not reveal itself in the collaboration on a work, but in the striving toward the same goal by individual leading artists. The so-called "isms"—impressionism, expressionism, and cubism—are groups of very similarly oriented artists.

Aided by its sub-forces movement and light, time determines the penetration of space and bodies, of the planetary and atomic systems. On the basis of the surfaces of bodies, penetrations and systems contain the means of the form art of "painting." The plane, color, and the line contain original substances of time. Depending on how the plane, color, and line appear, substances of time become perceptible, especially in rhythm and variation.

Part III

The Unknown

The Discovery of Art

> The discovery of art is twofold. 1. The discovery of the concept of art. 2. The discovery of works of art that were previously overlooked through the respective new emergence of works of art.

Paintings in caves and on cliffs corresponding to the cult of magic were elements of the imagination. In their real existence, they are impressionistically and technically also real elements of nature through their intimate interlocking with the living stone and because they are not differentiated from it.

Statues in the holiest area behind the peristyle or on the uppermost platform of the ziggurat (terraced towers), reliefs in burial chambers, mosaic pictures in basilicas, including cult devices, were not additions to but, rather, a part and expression of religious concerns.

The sculptures *were* deities. They took the name of the respective devotional figures as did the painted pictures. They were not symbols; they were the sacred itself. Cult figures and devices grew from within the realms of the sacred. The forces of the material and the forming hands were god-related. Production arose from craft procedures through mastery of the materials, which has hardly been expanded up to this day. Works were made collectively and anonymously in a community comparable to the *Dombauhütten* (cathedral mason's lodges), which united all formal powers, both intellectual and handicraft, to erect the temple, the cathedral.

Despite the patron and the collective, it is human genius that provided the design. The original impulse for shaping had to be there, without which these works would not exist at all. But it was visibly manifest only in relation to the grandeur, the glory of God and the temple. The architects, structural engineers, and material experts, the sculptors, painters, woodcarvers, mosaicists, enamel smelters, glassblowers, and weavers were only servants in a process. How did they rate their own forming powers? Did they know what they were doing? It was the period in which hardly any "art" existed. Art was not yet grasped conceptually, but probably existed as a germ in a larger complex.

There are few clues along the path that led to the discovery of art over the course of time, since the transitions were so imperceptible.

The first portrait busts and painted portraits, including the mummy panels and perhaps the Greek representations as well, which proceeded from

mythical battles to purely athletic ones, may have provided a loosening up. The surviving sketches that the Egyptian painters had painted onto potsherds (ostraca) may have made the artist more familiar with his powers. A long, slow path of the continuous, step-by-step discovery of art runs parallel to the path already described, leading from the dependence to the self-responsibility of the artist.

figs. 17, 18

In the course of Greek culture there is a specific point from which time it was permitted for the features of Olympic champions to be depicted on their herms, and another point at which the names of visual artists appear for the first time. This signifies a certain esteem for the individual artist. It conveys a recognition of the forming powers linked to this person. Even so, the concept for what these individuals produced was still not recognized, since otherwise a word for it would have to have existed as well.

The concept of "art" is embedded in the Greek word τεχνη, or *"techne,"* which means science, handicraft, arts and crafts, skillfulness, art, and many forming things. The Latin *"ars"* also contains the sum of these terms. In the fifteenth century, there was the then considerable "art of memory," *ars memorandi*. To a great extent the term *ars* contains the idea of skillfulness, and this is still embedded in the German term *Kunstreiter* (lit. art + rider) today, without us sensing the difference from *Kunstschlosser* (artistic metalsmith), for which, besides pure skillfulness, we also assume art in the contemporary sense. On the other hand, the contemporary term "artifact," with which we refer to stone tools from the prehistoric period, leads straight to artificial. The terms "artificial" and "artistic" are still closely related today. If we proceed from these terms we would arrive at a succession: natural, artificial, artistic. But this is a fallacy, since the artistic is a direct forming impulse of man and thereby nature, whereas the artificial is the opposite of nature. (Elsewhere everything made for practical purposes is called a prosthesis.)

The aforementioned splitting-off process showed that artists adhered to formal powers instinctively. They concentrated their forces on the essential, and step-by-step devoted themselves to this impulse with increasing decisiveness, until finally the concept for art was also clearly outlined in their works.

The path subsequently continued on to the concept of the freedom of the artistic person, and it has been shown that the trajectory of this trend inclined more steeply from the Renaissance on. The modern history of art

followed a similar path. With its knowledge and formulations it performed its part, by proceeding from thought to interpretation and vice versa. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe, artists like Delacroix, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cézanne, and art connoisseurs such as Fiedler contributed to the recognition of "art," right up to the clear statement and finite discovery of that which is outlined by the contemporary term "art."

In contemplating this path, we would like to believe in an increasing clarification. During this long period of evolution, however, paintings, sculptures, and design disappeared from view, while other things came to light. The following sketch is meant to suggest how the process of new discovery took place from today's standpoint.

Similar to how the artist draws new values from the unknown through his works, brings something new to awareness through his production, and discovers forward, so to speak, there is also a backwards or even sideways discovery. We discover what is already available on a practical level via the respective new point of view that art has created. We discover things running parallel through resonant tones, which suddenly ring out from a previously unnoticed object when the tone of its wavelength is struck. A discovery through the excavation spade does not entirely coincide with discovery in art-value terms. It is the task of artistic looking to assign to, or to deny, an object artistic value.

Around 1870 the Spanish count Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola saw Stone Age tools, hand axes and stone swords, in Paris for the first time. After returning home and inspired by the Paris collection, he dug up a small embankment niche on his country estate near Santander, came upon a cave, and occasionally found tools made of stone. One day, after having explored the cave, which proved to be quite large, for six years, he took his young daughter along. What took place is one of the greatest sensations in the fields of archeology and art. A child saw what her father had persistently not seen: strange pictures covering the rocks on the ceilings and walls of the cave. She brought them to her father's attention. The discovery of Ice Age art, which was completely unknown, took place through the eyes of a child! In this case, the gaze of a child was superior to the sharp eyes of her father. We should add that twenty-five years had to pass before the authenticity of the Ice Age paintings was recognized because specialists and archeologists had persistently denied it. The motive for recognizing the Altamira cave

was provided by the later discovery of other paintings in other caves with thousands of pictures.

The artist passionately accepts discoveries because the previously unknown stimulates his awareness for relationships between sensory impressions. Artists and a specific type of speculative person are the first collectors, insofar as they can acquire the objects. A documentary photograph often substitutes for the original object.

The artistic person does not judge according to rarity value, according to archaeological, ethnographic, or art-historical points of view. His interest proceeds from something entirely different, from the purely impressionistic. Forms and colors, even if they are inconspicuous, stimulate him, as do the new degrees of abstraction between reproductions of nature and formalist rendering. This makes the neutral type of looking possible.

The foreign and unknown have always attracted man. The discovering of distant lands is still perceptible in the desire to travel. Geographic research and colonization have a richly interconnected history, which relates not only to mercantile interests but to cultural ones as well.

Both far off in Asia and also in Hallstatt near Salzburg, Austria, Egyptian small sculptures were found. Relationships became increasingly close as history progressed. Charlemagne received gifts from the famous Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. Friedrich II was closely tied to the Orient, which was the reason why he refused to undertake crusades.[1] Relationships to East Asia were introduced for the first time by Marco Polo around 1270, and it is regrettable that his pronouncement on the art of China was not passed down more accurately.[2]

Those bearing arms at the time of the Roman campaigns had a great interest in Greek art. It was unfortunately of a more material nature. The works

[1] This is not entirely correct. After years of delay and a failed departure in 1227, Friedrich II (1194–1250), head of the House of Hohenstaufen and Holy Roman Emperor from 1220 until his death, embarked on a crusade to the Holy Land in 1228, which is described as more of a "successful state visit." Highly educated, a religious skeptic, and interested in Islam throughout his life, Friedrich secured Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem for the Holy Roman Empire by treaty rather than by armed force and left the Mosque of Omar in the hands of the Muslims. "Frederick II (Holy Roman emperor and German king)," *The Columbia Encyclopedia,* 6th ed., 2012, http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Frederick_II_%28Holy_Roman_Empire%29.aspx (accessed July 3, 2012).

[2] Although Marco Polo was not the first European to venture to Asia, the written account of his travels from 1271 to 1295, *Il Milione* (in English titled *The Travels of Marco Polo)*, was the first to make the region widely known, beginning in the thirteenth century.

of Phidias were made of gold and ivory; they partly survive only in small copies.

The conquistadors also had only a material interest in the splendid works of the Aztecs and Incas. They destroyed a good deal of what was destructible and melted down what could be melted down—for the sake of the gold. Few sculptures of this sort have survived from the pre-Columbian era besides a few stone sculptures, terracotta vessels, and textile remnants. A small
fig. 31 sculpture of gold, which recently entered the British Museum, testifies to the magnificent character of this art.

Goethe certainly studied and esteemed Asian poetry, insofar as it was known at the time, but dismissed the sculptures as "grotesques."

What sailors brought back from distant lands and offered in Southampton, Marseille, and Hamburg were grotesques and curiosities. Only foreign arms—that is, purpose-based items—were what generally interested people. The artistically valuable, however, was disregarded as monstrous. The neutral gaze (looking) of the artistic person, which on the whole passes over the purposive, elevates the object of consideration from the purposive context and is thus capable of recognizing what is valuable. In the paintings of van Eyck, Oriental carpets appear that are visible in the pictures of later Dutch painters (Pieter de Hooch, Jan Vermeer). This demonstrates the discovery of the value of Oriental carpets throughout the West. It is characteristic that in a figural painting by Manet, a Japanese woodcut appears reversed on the wall.[3] It is surely on the art studio's wall that the woodcut is allowed to appear the equal alongside European art (a reproduction after Velázquez)!

What moves the artist formally, his own rhythms, makes him aware of relationships. Indeed, it often seems as if the artist had instructed archaeologists and scientists to discover and obtain formally related things for him. This was also the case with the Japanese woodcut. The relationships between early impressionism (Manet) and the boldly cropped pictures of the East Asians are obvious. People appear cut in half vertically, such as in works by Manet (the lady powdering herself and the seated gentleman[4])
fig. 76 and Degas *(The Curtain Falls)*—just like in the woodcuts. Correspondences can also be demonstrated in the motif in representations of nature (snow landscapes, rain, clouds).

[3] Here Baumeister is referring to Manet's *Portrait of Émile Zola,* ca. 1868, oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

[4] This description refers to Manet's *Nana,* 1877, oil on canvas. Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

In Germany, a new awareness developed after Cézanne's pictures became
fig. 71 known. Thus works by the nearly forgotten Hans von Marées, whose masterpieces had sunken into oblivion in Schleissheim Castle north of Munich, were discovered and brought into the Staatsgalerie at Munich. Cézanne had woken up his somewhat elder German brother. Shortly thereafter, the most
fig. 54 important German painter of the past, Grünewald, was also brought to light after centuries. His expressive liberty had never been seen by eyes accustomed to the classical, neoclassical, and naturalistic. They were struck with blindness when faced with his works.

German expressionism looked back to the early Gothic period and its
fig. 45 woodcut, breathed new life into this extensive domain, and made it our own.

At the turn of the nineteenth century the highly commendable Heinrich Thode wrote a few sentences at the outset of his Giotto monograph in defense of his endeavor to appreciate Giotto. According to Thode, this painter certainly did not achieve the artistic quality of the High Renaissance, and especially not that of Raphael (!), but he was nevertheless a remarkable painter. The emergence of Cézanne changed opinions here, too, and Thode's service was highly valued.

The artistic appraisal of the works of the primitives is new. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, geographic trading societies decorated their offices with spears and shields by the Ashanti (ethnic group of Ghana). Elephant feet were made into umbrella stands. One never saw masks. Later on, when these were nevertheless occasionally brought from overseas, they served as lamps with the predicate: "bugbear." Then people began to collect ethnographically, and museums were established around 1900, but these objects only attained the status of interesting exoticisms *(curiosités)*.

fig. 35 When shapes recalling Congo masks appeared in Picasso's paintings around 1907, they aroused an interest in exotic products within painting circles. In this, the "art of primitive peoples" was discovered. The extraordinarily bold forms generated an odd tension between the natural appearance and deformation of, for instance, a human face. It manifests an archaic formal power that contains an enigmatic magic and makes much that is imitative, much that is cultural or has a civilizing effect, pale in comparison. Here the vitality of the world, the substance of the world, appears to speak with immediate purity and power.

The forms are original in the best sense, the colors raw and at the same time fine, and the patina, which can make good better, yields color tones as nascent cubism also produced. These objects emerged without a drawing board sketch on paper. The eternal artisan, the eternal autodidact, the eternal dilettante, and the anonymous collective are at work here. The cylinder of the tree trunk provides the lead of a large form for an upright sculpture. The wooden disc leads to the bowl, and the block to the stool or headrest. The formal powers of nature are preserved. Every "savage" was able to produce as long as civilizing influences, the impurity, the interested and purposive, remained at bay. On some islands it was customary that at a certain age everyone carved his own fetish—that is, was artistically productive. In a certain state, each of us is capable of making art.

The Romans' penchant for Greek art must have proceeded from a type of discovery, based in political interest, which culturally led the Romans into total dependence on everything Greek. The conquered triumphed over the conqueror.

The emergence of so-called chinoiserie in the rococo period must have been preceded by a discovery of a certain rendering of form within the art epochs of China. The eyes that preferentially seized on these forms from the great mass of China's art were predestined to be receptive to, to take in, only these forms.

The emergence of the neoclassical style must have been preceded by a marked inclination for Greek things. The Phrygian cap and loose garments were worn at the time of the French Revolution. But even if a political or other interest was present, the visual interests could only have been transposed into their own realm. Forces were repeatedly drawn from Greek architecture as well as from vase painting. Here the neoclassicists adopted the uncolored temple, without the layer of stucco, as the surfaces of the ruins appeared at the time.

The discovery of art is the elevation of previously unnoticed objects to works of art. It is essentially a perpetual emergence. It runs parallel to the production of art. A newly emerged work documents—therein its raison d'être among other things—that with its innovation, it makes things that are present, yet little noticed current, by the power of its expression.

Not all the credit should go to the artist. The history of art investigates the historical course of the visual arts, researches the relationships among

works of art and between artworks and other cultural expressions of the time, illuminates the lives and work of artists, describes form and content, and organizes the total mass of surviving artistic goods according to specific criteria. Today the establishment of art history as an autonomous discipline in the humanities is not yet evenly realized in all areas of its broad scope of responsibilities.

The term style has several applications in the history of art. There is an individual style, place style (geography of art), national style, period style, and material style. There are also the organizational laws of the individual forms of art, which are likewise examined under the term style. The art historian looks, works, and combines in his way when he pursues intuitive ideas along with scholarly conclusions. Through his discoveries and conceptual formulations he provides new knowledge.

The forms of art fluctuate in time and space, and affect other forms of art similar to them.

Searching, Finding

> Saul went out to search for his father's donkeys and found a kingdom.

It has been said that with the emergence of an art object and through the effect of its new formal expressive forces waves are sent out that descend onto all similar formations, such that everything related to the original piece suddenly comes to life. This applies not only to the work of art. Neither is the history of archeology just a succession of discoveries. It is also linked to a history of the effects of these discoveries.

Discoveries generate other discoveries. Instead of newly created works, the unearthed, discovered objects are at work here. But in order for these sources to take effect, they need an advocate who formally recognizes the found objects, evaluates them, and thus first brings them to light for good, to the artistic status that is due them, not just into scholarly repute but also into artistic repute.

The discoveries and excavations of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae, which began in earnest around 200 years ago, have a varied history. The slightly shimmering, well-preserved wall pictures have preoccupied researchers as well as painting technicians, chemists, and artists up to the present day. In neoclassicism, the strongest stimulus came from Pompeii. But influences repeatedly came from there later on as well, especially in the last third of the nineteenth century.

The discoveries of Late Greek sculptures, which mostly survive in the form of Roman copies (e.g., *Apollo Belvedere,* ca. 120–40), offered Renaissance masters a certain confirmation.

The more modern art cleansed itself of naturalism, the more we began to perceive it in formal terms. Even though formalist artworks were discovered before, it is nevertheless peculiar that at the time that the contemporary way of seeing began developing around 1905, excavators stumbled upon works and eras that had a much stronger formal character. Even so, these findings of more formally oriented objects might be linked to the practice of digging deeper and more systematically, and to the fact that almost everything more recent was already discovered and known. The discovery of naturalistic periods ended with the excavations of Babylon and Nineveh.

From this point on, interest turned away from red-figure vases and toward those of the geometric style. Parallel to this, attention shifted to early archaic sculpture. The excavations to which Heinrich Schliemann dedicated

himself as a dilettante in Troy, Mycenae, and Tiryns expanded the field of vision extraordinarily.

Schliemann was no specialist, and his work long went unrecognized. The consequences of his achievements were the English and American excava-
fig. 27 tions on Crete. The art of the Cyclades (island art) with its small sculptures (idols) has been evaluated only recently. The French dug near Susa and revealed the stele of Naram-Suen, among other things. At this point the chief interest turned to the excavations in Mesopotamia. English-American and German expeditions brought to light the ancient cities of Ur, Warka, Larsa, Nippur, and others. Warka was the location of the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (before 612 BC), and Ur the city of the patriarch Abraham.

These discoveries were initially concerned with locating a discovery site. Historical research provides clues as do the geographical and geological circumstances, site names, and myths. Treading the path from the known to the unknown this way resembles the method of solving a geometry problem, in which we advance from the known to the unknown. We attempt to zero in on the unknown as it were. The following are two examples of success in excavating:

> The story of the Pithecanthropus discovery almost verges on the miraculous, because this find was not made accidentally but was the crowning event of a systematic and persistent search by an individual who went from Europe to Dutch India influenced by the theory of evolution, with the conscious intent of finding the presumed "missing link" . . .
> (From Wilhelm Gieseler, *Abstammungskunde des Menschen* [Human evolution])[1]

[1] Wilhelm Gieseler, *Abstammungskunde des Menschen,* vol. 1 of *Abstammungs- und Rassenkunde des Menschen (Anthropologie).* Schriften des Deutschen Naturkundevereins 56 (Oehringen Rau, 1936), 80. The anthropologist and physician Gieseler (1900–1976) founded the Anthropological Institute at the University of Tübingen in 1934, where he was active until 1945 and later beginning in 1955. The title of Gieseler's book indicates that it deals with human genealogy *(Abstammungskunde)*, whereas the series in which it was published deals with genealogy and *Rassenkunde,* a now obsolete branch of ethnology that dealt primarily with the evolution of races. The National Socialists instituted an extreme form of racial-biological thinking, where it became a central point of their ideology and politics in defense of cultivating the so-called purity of the Aryan race. Gieseler joined the Nazi party in 1933 and in 1937 became a member of the SS; after World War II he was classified as a "fellow-runner" and rehabilitated. He himself apparently stated that the emphasis of his research lay "in the area of science itself and not in racial policy." See Uwe Hossfeld, "Wilhelm Gieseler," in *Geschichte der biologischen Anthropologie in Deutschland: von den Anfängen bis in die Nachkriegszeit* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 349–53. Baumeister's interest in Gieseler's text was no doubt part of his growing interest in excavations in the Swabian Alb, anthropology, and prehistoric art beginning in the 1930s.

Through extraordinary willpower and speculative inference, the Dutch anatomist Eugène Dubois succeeded in making the sensational find of the skull fragment belonging to the previously missing link between the ape and prehistoric man. Dubois gave it the species name *Pithecanthropus erectus* (upright ape-man).

The second example is Schliemann. He was an enthusiastic reader of the *Iliad* from early on, and spared no effort in finding Troy. Will, intellect, and method formed the basis of the search here.

Ingeniousness springs from the "center" of the respective person, almost like a tentative divining rod; causal thinking assists, and need not damage the ingenuity.

Though productive progress can be impeded by too much conscious reflection, it is still necessary (e.g., as self-criticism) for scientific research as well as for art. This also applies to the artistic process: intelligence has never harmed an artist. Intelligence must be employed at the right moment. Still, it is not critical for discovering new values.

In a brilliant state, everything becomes brilliant. As Goethe put it, "When Schiller cut his nails he was greater than these gentlemen."

Brilliant people are not just discoverers and inventors. The higher their interests lead, the more universal their behavior will also become in all matters and situations.

The fame of the great printer Johannes Gutenberg lies chiefly in the ethics of his handcraft approach, in the magnificence of his applied-art results. The use of mobile alphabetic characters instead of woodblocks for entire pages is only a part of the total work of an outstanding individual.

Here we should mention Marie Curie.[2] Antoine Becquerel discovered waves of radiation that were emitted by uranium. Marie Curie controlled this radioactivity and discovered the same radioactivity in other minerals as well. She concluded that an unknown, radioactive element must occasionally be in effect. She commented to her sister: "The element is there. Now we must find it."

Every true invention contains new possibilities. Accordingly, many later achievements were based on Heinrich Hertz's waves and on Max Planck's

[2] Baumeister gives her full last name: Slodowska-Curie.

developments in science and on those of Cézanne in art. These initiators had everything within themselves but they were not able to "know" which of their stages would lead further.

Marie Curie thus believed that her first stop, polonium, was the great result of her work. Cézanne's formal inventions lie in his middle creative period, but originality was already present in his beginnings.

Artists and scientists are identical in their method of discovery.

The Artist in Relation to the Unknown

> The original artist leaves behind what he knows and is capable of. He proceeds to point zero. Here begins his higher state.

The production of something original does not depend on appropriate abilities; an original artist has no control over this. He produces without learned knowledge, without experience, and without imitating. Only this way does he find the previously unknown, the original. Genius "knows" nothing and only with this nothing can do everything.

We divide the history of art into styles, corresponding to geographic regions and chronological periods. For periods dating further back and ethnological cultures in which artists are not discernable, these divisions are indispensable for understanding. For more recent epochs of European art, the individual artist moves into the foreground, and the stylistic label retreats. Inhibitions and biases are foreign to him. He trusts his center. The previously unknown, before which he stands at the outset of a work, does not throw him back but appears almost auspicious. Through boldness and invention, he isolates himself. Painters who were swept along by it without finding something reflect the initial values. Through these second-rate artists and their adherents, a style first becomes evident. It is characteristic of the second-rate artist that he sees the newly found values as a field in which to work.

The original artist does not actually see. Because as the first he pushes into the unknown with each work, he cannot predict what he will come across. He cannot foresee the final form of the individual work or survey his entire life achievement, even if he is certain of his ground. By contrast, the epigones know what they want and have to do because they have self-contained models before them.

Even if the artist, moved by an incomprehensible primal will and highly conscious of his actions, says his piece, chisels or paints, he allows himself to be surprised by what emerges in his hands. By trusting in his simple existence, he has the intensity that guarantees the outcome and leads him along the path of no compromise. Since he does not strive toward a tangible model and, at the same time, also believes in the preexistence of his works, the original, the unique, the artistic value thus succeeds.

Like a blind man, the artist initially grabs hold of strange-seeming expressions, which still seem to come more from his media than to be educed by

him alone. It is a high artistic state that leaves behind “experience” and keeps him away from all “application.” His own condition is perhaps the only one that he perceives; he can induce it to a certain extent when, among other things, he does not neglect anything: he never decides, but rather, his center induces maturity. Nothing is dissonant for him. He can wait until the dissonance of today becomes the harmony of tomorrow. In this, he senses and recognizes resistances that cause his result to become even denser. He is the organ of a universe to which he remains responsible. In the artistic zone, natural, generally regular becoming unites with the concept of freedom. Faced with resistance, freedom always renews itself.

Still, a final value revolves around the self-contained unity: the self-generated vision.

The Vision

The artist as a membrane of a community expresses himself totally in the work of art when he attempts to give his vision a congruous formulation in the unity of the artwork. His works ascend to a concentration that sheds off all the diversity of their construction. They appear as monumental symbolic signs, as mysterious ideograms that are no longer divisible and remain inscrutable in their content.

The artist proceeds from an idea, that is, from a vision. He does not weigh and select his media as much as they come to him. Like the hammering smith who takes a few practice swings in the air next to his work to get his rhythm, the artist lets his perceptions slowly develop against the resistance of the material. He leaves to his instruments what they are capable of giving. Before him he has a plane with its qualities. On the one hand, he is content with little but he also strives for the extraordinary while his vision gives him instructions. The first strokes document the plane, which was previously intangible; each form automatically yields negative forms in its surroundings. The artist increasingly draws the articulation of the plane with defining points, lines, and planar values into the sphere of influence of his expressive media and of that which is now becoming visible. That which he has brought onto the plane, he has in front of himself as a stage and a new starting point. At the same time, he is hardly capable of seeing his vision clearly; he must abandon himself to the expressive potential because this is all he has to arrive at a concretization. Each contrastive interplay, and especially that of the colors, has a manifold effect. Everything becoming visible enters into a force field of relationships. The plane lifts and lowers itself through light and dark areas of the colors. The plane is upset without in principle being cancelled out. By increasingly covering the plane, the artist is not concerned with completing but with amplifying. He does this not by correcting alone but, rather, by adding. Everything unnecessary is wrong. In this sense, he reaches a final stage by remaining committed to the notion of "for better or worse" with his media.

The vision grows paler the further the artist continues. He enters into a realm of forming with the artistic media alone. The vision disappears once the work is completed. At the outset, the form-rendering power and material means stood apart from one another. Through his action, the artist created a new unity.

Working without a model and leaving behind the vision itself as a last point of reference does not result in uncertainty. Freedom as maturity yields im-

perturbability. The artist's expressions have abandoned experience and application and are not subject to accountability. Just as life develops in uncertainty, works of art also unfold in uncertainty. The involuntary, the self-evident, the simplest decides. As Karl Friedrich Schinkel put it:

> We are everywhere only truly alive where we create something new. Everywhere where we feel very secure, the situation is already somewhat suspicious because we know something definitively—in other words, something that already exists is only dealt with or applied again. This is already a half-dead spirit. Everywhere where we are uncertain but feel the compulsion and have the presentiment of and about something beautiful, which must be represented, thus there where we search, that is where we are truly alive.[1]

[1] Alfred Freiherrn von Wolzogen, ed., *Aus Schinkel's Nachlass: Reisetagebücher, Briefe und Aphorismen,* vol. 2 (Berlin: Königlicher Geheimen Ober-Hofbuchdruckerei, 1862), 210–11.

The Unknown as a Central Value

> The connection with the unknown creates the constant and necessary unleashing and liberation of art and life. That which is in the future is, in subordination, a branch of the unknown.

The artist follows his vision—he believes he follows it, but the work begun under this star develops its own forces of increasing intensity as it emerges. Within the process of artistic action there is thus a point at which the vision intersects with the formal development in such a way that a reversal of the two intensities becomes noticeable. The effect of the vision decreases in proportion to the increasing formal powers. The vision acts as an impelling force, whereby the artist readily believes he is able to take its unsubstantial outward appearance as an immovable, high goal.

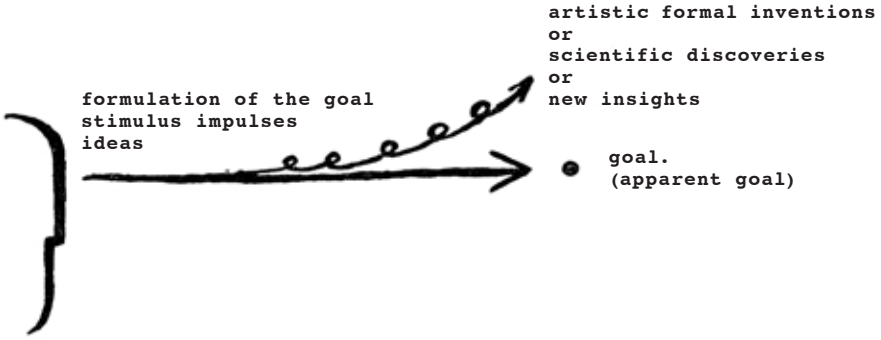
At the beginning, the vision is discharged from the artist's center and thus forms a comparison as soon as he uses it as a model. The strength of the vision is that it comes from his foundation; its weakness is that it takes up the position of a model. The vision-object is contemplated, creating a distinction—the comparison. This distinctness harbors weakness.

Form is developed without dualism. The forming powers from one's center take immediate effect. The substantial aspect of artistic expressive media is the natural component, which alone concretizes the work of art. The formal powers move the material substances; that is, they bring them out of their chaotic preliminary state, so to speak, into the state of artistic order.

We should bear in mind that a natural model chosen by the painter, such as in *Bunch of Asparagus* (1880) by Manet, never forms the basis for producing a work of art. In some sense it is even contrary to the work; it has been an inspiring stimulus. It subsequently becomes clear that the art in Manet's picture bears self-willed facts that reject the natural model—in other words they can never be brought into alignment with it. We know that a significant degree of empathy is necessary to see the seemingly slapdash brushstrokes as asparagus. The strength of the artwork lies in the weakness of its interpretation of the natural model. For the real connoisseur, the translation, the degree of abstraction, is the essential aspect. The abstractions are partially linked to the limitations stemming from the material and equipment (e.g., rough ground, oil paint, brush width). The model is devalued by the work; its value is upset, it is magically killed.

The vision should certainly be ranked higher than an actual, predetermined model, but it is not the source for generating new, previously unknown val-

ues. Entirely other forces are decisive here. While the artist believes that he is continuously approaching his vision as a final goal, the formal powers radiating from his center lead him imperceptibly in another decisive direction to an unknown place, to the previously unknown. This new direction deviates away from the vision (or from another model); it is the direction of infallibility and discovery. We might compare this deviation with refraction in water or a ray of light in "bent" space. It is the line of discovery in the sense of the creative angle.



No method of searching offers any clue, because we cannot close in on the totally unknown by means of hypotheses and searching. (In the cases of Schliemann and Dubois there was a local search for an actuality.)

It is crucial that the unflappable center steers the helm invisibly here. The models and examples, the intentions as well as the experiences, ideas, and visions are never so pure, much too burdened with dross, as to trace the line of discovery.

Despite all the experiments and research, despite the searching, all truly important values are discovered by chance or on detours—at any rate, in an uncontrollable manner. Even if certain manipulations, experiments, programs, plans, or constructions left their mark at the beginning, in the middle, or toward the end of the undertaking, the crucial point is that along the way, an involuntary and inexplicable path was taken that then led fundamentally to the discovery, to the find. The line initially directed toward the goal goes off course as the predetermined goal is devalued to an apparent goal.

Every activity requires a goal: there is no activity without a goal. Indeed, there is a highly superior and highly fertile state, the state of playing in

Schiller's sense. This is disinterested, without intention. It is an intermediate state that nonetheless has goals (albeit of a rather sublimated sort) the moment it is directed toward an actual activity. The discovering person needs a predetermined objective, idea, or vision for his activity. But since the unknown cannot be set as a goal in advance (it is completely inapprehensible and inconceivable), he adheres to his idea or vision as a goal. After the discovery, it turns out that realizing the predetermined idea was not essential at all. The preset goal acted only as a stimulus, which became a motivating force through enrichment and intensification.

This stimulus effect recalls the stimulus effects within so-called virgin birth (parthenogenesis) that has become known through modern biology. In artificial parthenogenesis, certain stimuli (such as saline solutions, radiotherapy, and temperature changes) suffice to cause the eggs of lower animals to develop that would otherwise need fertilization. Similarly, the process of discovery and finding does not need polar procreation but, rather, parthenogenesis, with the predetermined stimuli of the apparent goal. But this goal must fade away once the line of discovery points toward the germ of the new value.

In the second of his eighty-one sayings, Lao-tzu goes so far as to assert that a fully developed individual requires neither a goal nor a motive:

> The master acts without a motive,
> Creates without an object, and
> Conceives without a goal.[1]

Since for the fully developed person, an apparent goal does not even exist as an incentive, the power of the unknown already comes into play in advance of every activity. While a real goal, the action that is prompted by it, and the achievement of the known goal are present in the extreme opposite case, the rationally oriented person, the artist aims at an apparent goal and can generate a previously unknown value with it. A further intensification of the artist's qualities can be seen in the qualities of Lao-tzu's "master." In this ranking, artists and discoverers would occupy a middle level since they still need an apparent goal.

Let us recall the popular examples of Christopher Columbus and Johann Friedrich Böttger for a quick understanding. They too had goals and they

[1] Lao-tzu, *Tao Te Ching,* chapter 81, 6th century BC.

too found something else: Columbus wanted to find the Western route to India and instead discovered the new continent. Böttger wanted to produce gold and instead discovered European porcelain.[2]

It has been noted that brilliant people set themselves brilliant goals and that a good deal of what is unusual might exist in how we formulate our goals. The paths of methodical and constructive searching can nevertheless verge on the brilliant and should under no circumstances be reduced. We can often no longer ascertain the true situation, and discoverers are unreliable commentators and chroniclers. Kant says about this:

> It (the genius) cannot describe or scientifically demonstrate how it achieves its product but, rather, gives the rule as nature. Therefore, where an author owes a product to his genius, he does not know himself how the idea for it entered his head, nor is it in his power to envision it at will or methodically, and to communicate the same to others in such precepts that would put them in a position to produce similar products. The [German] word *Genie* thus presumably derives from genius, as the peculiar guardian and guiding spirit given to a man at birth, through whose inspiration the original ideas were obtained.[3]

It is certainly in the nature of the matter that the brilliant discovery is based on a characteristic that must deviate from all searching, from all striving toward a goal and all conscious intention. If determination and intention are in effect, as in the individual oriented toward activity, a self-regulating function arises in the deliberating person. This even works against the will of the artist. There are two currents: a manifest aspiration, which the artist considers and talks about when he describes his goals. He can be convinced to the point of obsession that all his potential for achievement culminates in this goal, which he set programmatically. But this sort of goal remains a phantom, a lure. Despite his efforts, the originally flowing forces in him lead him down another path by the regulating power of his center. Cézanne, for instance, repeatedly tried to gain entry to the official

[2] The German alchemist Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682–1719) is generally recognized as the inventor of European porcelain and credited with the industrial manufacturing process of Meissen porcelain.

[3] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlin: Lagarde & Friederich, 1790). First translated into English as *The Critique of Judgment,* trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911).

salon of Bouguereau with his pictures.[4] Public success appeared temporarily more desirable to him than that which we call artistic success. His entire field of perception was oriented in such a way that he had no clear idea of the conceptual process. Like most people, Cézanne strove for tangible success. (This is partly self-assertion and partly the preservation impulse.) His commentators Emile Bernard, Joachim Gasquet, and Ambroise Vollard mention this explicitly. Still, he did not succeed in making such superficial paintings that they guaranteed tangible success. His center, his regulator, prevented the fulfillment of his desire to find quick recognition and guided his production in the sense of the creative angle.

Cézanne often stressed "not being able to realize" because he did not see his ideas and desires realized in his results. He believed that this was a consequence of his inability, his impotence. In reality, he, like every true artist, could not achieve his results as planned, as desired. He found his unknown against his will.

We can assume that many talents failed because of their desire for success and the related embracing of the known. Indeed, we can assume that all bad art is based on this, that the unknown is left no room within the emerging work. The known goal contains the predetermination mentioned above: a model of some, even visionary, sort of intent toward success. The unknown cannot count on success because not everything relating to it can be calculated in advance. Since even original artists cannot envision the unknown, there is no way to seek it deliberately. We must limit ourselves to realizing that the path to discovery leads astray from the goal-oriented path.

In an artist's larger production, it is striking that a series of works is similar within certain sections. Even so, it is indicative of the artist that he does not even follow his own tradition, but repeatedly discards tradition, starts from zero, and awaits the unknown with confidence.

Here we could also mention the contradiction between that which an artist thinks and expresses about his subject, and that which he actually produces. In general we can say that statements represent a self-affirmation; they belong to the realm of self-preservation.

[4] Here Baumeister is referring to the major role played by the academic painter William Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905) in denying works by impressionists and other experimental painters access to the official Salon in Paris. Cézanne, like his contemporaries Manet (1832–1883) and Degas (1834–1917), expressed regret at being excluded from what many termed the "Salon de Monsieur Bouguereau." See Ambroise Vollard, *Cézanne,* trans. Harold van Doren (1937; New York: Dover, 1984), 29–37.

Many statements are similar to remnants of dross, to residue, rubbish that was eliminated on the path to production and to which the artist still feels connected. The majority of statements, however, revolve around the apparent goal. We have the impression that with these statements the artist releases a surplus of energy, which remains on the surface. It is impossible for the artist to comment on the most important aspect of his work since he does not know what it is. Neither can we ever verbally express in advance what belongs to the core realm of visual art. Artists express themselves incessantly nevertheless. If one has worked for years, he can comment retrospectively. The greater the distance, the more apt his comments can be, which are always offered in analogies, parallels, exaggerations, and paradoxes; in short, in a lyrical manner of expression. Such comments become independent forms of art. Retrospective interpretations are unproblematic in contrast to the matter in question here.

If a goal is announced at the outset of a planned project, it devalues the planned undertaking in such a way that it can often no longer emerge. The artist or scientist enters into certain conflicts when he abandons the impartiality of the forces. He is basically incapable of damaging himself because, ultimately, he cannot say anything about the essence of the work.

*

The relationship between teacher and student takes on a decisive bearing through recognizing the value of the unknown. The teacher acts on the assumption of a (to him) unknown. He wants to accomplish a task, to convey the teaching material he knows to the student, to achieve a goal with which he is familiar and which is unknown to the pupil. Two opposing rhythms thus develop from the different points of departure. The insightful teacher will allow room for the unknown, at least somewhat, by guiding the student, so to speak, on a loose leash. In learning to write, it has been demonstrated that copying alphabetic characters counteracts free, childlike forming. Academy and instruction counteract artistic action since teachers generally strive toward a known goal and encourage students to copy rather than create. This results in the training of epigones, a holding of court within the forms of the “master.”

Tradition can be taught retrospectively, but rejecting tradition can hardly be taught. It is not stationary. The art student must achieve the artistic condition; it is of primary importance and cannot be formally established.

The student does not come to the teacher naïve and raw but, rather, burdened with the banal, the average, and the known. Above all, the teacher is tasked with bringing the student into the artistic condition by purification, by emptying. The teacher's task is to empty the student out, not to fill him with his own formulas. He must lead the student to the pure, autodidactic condition, as it were. Once the student has achieved this condition, he no longer needs to be guided. From here on, his self-achieved gains appear when he includes the unknown in the creative process. Only self-achieved gains have development potential.

*

The viewer of a picture takes in the unknown by means of the visible component. It must move him. It is different in art forms that are based on the form of the process—drama, music, and film. The theatergoer is filled with a tension directed toward the unknown when, at the beginning, before the still closed curtain, he awaits the coming events. At every point, at every phase, over the course of the piece, new tensions are generated—tensions toward what is as yet unknown; they preoccupy the listener constantly, be they action-related, or of a formal, naturalistic or causal, artistically formal, or purely formal nature (Bach), or a mixture of these (as in Shakespeare, Hölderlin, Baudelaire). Typical for the qualities of a work in progress is that we can take it in repeatedly without ruining the pleasure. The listener can repeatedly perceive the inventive formulations of the artist-author as new and previously unknown and absorb them more deeply. The surprising effect of the unknown is switched off, and the artistic nevertheless remains in effect. This process also applies fundamentally to the repeated viewing of works of visual art.

*

It is wrong to prescribe the results of an artistic or scientific work. This has an especially insensitive and fatal effect when an official authority claims in a magnanimous act to grant creative freedom, but in the process prescribes an outcome out of consideration for the ordinary person.

*

Events that people experience or that an individual experiences and all the related perceptions of what is to come are partly known in advance and partly unknown. By contrast, works of art are not merely the expression of the present; they are more. The artist as an unerring membrane

of the "whole" comprises the preexistent. That which is in the future is an additional content of his work. It thereby distinguishes itself from the mediocre, so that this appears to be limiting. The work of art is capable of heralding and announcing simultaneously. The clear-sightedness of the work of art stands out from the constant battle against eternal mediocrity as well as from practices that fix (e.g., laws, customs) and gradually devaluate it. It even goes beyond "being first."

*

The work of art is a simple process from the point of view of the original artist. All the forces, the powers of the artist, those of the apparent goal and of the painterly means come alive by the magic emitted by the unknown as a magnetic force. Nothing can truly emerge without the magnet of the unknown. Only that which was previously unknown is and remains capable of life. It contains natural forces with which the artist is unfamiliar, but carries within himself all the more. The essence of every significant art phenomenon lies in the bursting forth of continually new formations, of which the visible world consists invisibly. The original artist eliminates the known and produces naturally. The similarity between individual works increases the further back the series of works dates. As soon as it emerges, the individual work displays new and surprising, original and unique character—much more than when it is considered retrospectively.

Considered at a later point in time, the individual works look very similar to one another, and the series and eras draw together as in a broad spatial perspective. The lifework, as it were, thus emerges through continuous addition. Time moves only forward. A tree blossoms and produces in its time, but can no longer become the seed—there is no moving backward.

The optimism that contemporary art displays toward the unknown also appears in the declining value of the sketch, the study that preceded a painting earlier on. The difference between preparatory work and painting is blurred, even erased. In a certain respect, we can speak of a reversal. Cézanne elevated the sketch to a painting. This way, all the initially flowing energy in the picture becomes visible; nothing is lost on the methodical path of production. If we consider the different versions of his large composition of *The Bathers* (beg. 1890s), the viewer never experiences the same sensation twice, despite the similarity in pictorial arrangement. Even if Cézanne had aimed at further developing and concentrating the second

picture based on the experience of the first, something entirely different nevertheless emerged with the second version. For the viewer, these differences between the various versions become increasingly evident: the now-famous areas that were left bare white might indicate the artist's lack of resolution, a hesitation, but also his instinctive exclusion of not entirely matured feelings, which would not have prevented another, less responsible, painter from painting the picture completely. Cézanne, by contrast, elevated the phase to the final phase.

The preparations that were necessary earlier—studies, sketches, preliminary drawings—provided certain opposing forces with an entry point into the work. Through transference and repetition, a coldness emerged that introduced skillfulness and mannerism. The preparations within contemporary methods of production are not shorter or more superficial. On the whole, however, they concern the condition of the artist to a greater extent. In the sequence of its development, the picture contains the preparation for many other possibilities, from which the next picture then emerges. The sketch is not so much a preparatory work; rather, it takes on stronger individual value—or becomes a simple form note from a repository of forms that exists unconsciously. Not even the format sizes offer clues about whether a work is more preparatory or a climax. The sequence of production certainly displays climaxes, although they are not conspicuous enough to be defined clearly.

In each case, the completed pictures invisibly contain all the stages that the sketch and picture displayed earlier on. The stages in the production process of the painting, the relief, and the sculpture become the continuous process of origin.

The flow of time, a permanency of eternal present and future, leads continuously toward the unknown; the unknown is an exponent that constantly leads and accompanies mankind. Through the unknown in art, art is able to make the passage of life a lasting experience. That which the artist draws from his center moves the world. It is more unexpected than all future events because it is creation.

This applies particularly to contemporary art, which is an art of movement from the fundamental current. Its masterpieces are simple, clear, and without pose. They do not look as if they were made by someone, but as if they emerged on their own. Nature has expressed itself. As Goethe put it:

> Supreme works of art are created simultaneously as the highest works of nature by man, according to true and natural laws . . . Every art demands the whole man, and the highest degree of art complete humanity.[5]

If man abandons the feeling-based current of nature and turns to the world of thought, he will be exposed to errors during production. Feelings and reflections are not necessarily opposites, however; they are merely different. Without a doubt, consciousness repeatedly monitors the purely handcrafted matters of its actions, but only free creation leads to significant values. As Goethe wrote to Schiller on March 6, 1800:

> I believe that everything the genius does as a genius happens unconsciously. The person of genius can also act sensibly, according to careful consideration, out of conviction; but all that just happens on the side. No work of genius can be improved by reflection and its nearest consequence, freed from its mistakes; but genius can gradually elevate itself through reflection and deed in such a way that it finally produces exemplary works.[6]

The present demands that the individual artist summon together all forces. The artistic person is the final human being, the ultimate human being. He is receptive to all stimuli, participates in them, is part of them. Since that which was unknown manifests itself most purely in form, the artist does not reveal its secret—even as that which has become known.

[5] Cf. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Zweite Römischer Aufenthalt," in *Goethes Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe,* ed. Erich Trunz, vol. 11, *Autobiografische Schriften* 3, 9th rev. ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1978), 395; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Introduction to the *Propyläen,* 1798, cf. *Goethe on Art,* selected, ed., and trans. John Gage (Berkeley: University of California Press), 15.

[6] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Letter to Schiller, March 6, 1800, from *Goethes Briefe in den Jahren 1768 bis 1832: Ein Supplementband zu des Dichters sämmtlichen Werken* (Leipzig: Julius Wunder's Verlagsmagazin, 1837), 178.

Part IV

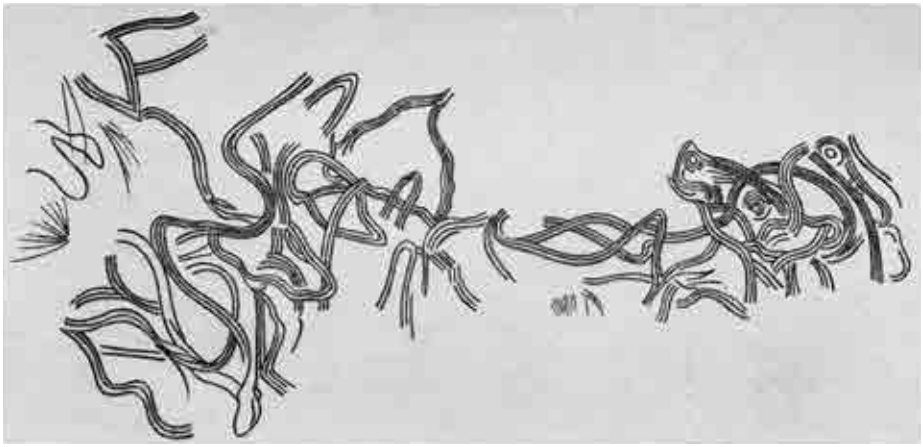
Image Examples

Image Examples

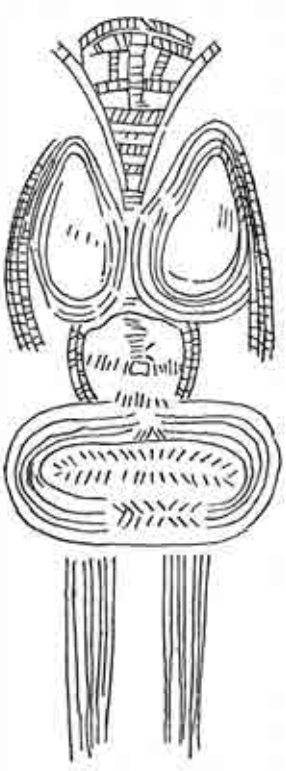
Whereas the text of the present English edition is based on the fourth German edition of Baumeister's *The Unknown in Art* (see Section "The Most Significant Changes from the Original Edition"), published in 1988, the presentation of figures in this section adopts both the model and the title used in the original 1947 German edition. Here Baumeister collected what he entitled *Bild-Beispiele* ("image examples") in the manner of an "imaginary museum." These 164 figures were arranged in roughly chronological order from prehistory to the modern period and according to their formal affinity, illustrating the historical range of Baumeister's notion of *Formkunst* ("form art"), or nonrepresentational art. As such, many of these works were made publically available again in Germany following the period of National Socialism and World War II; several of them also derived from Baumeister's own collection and library, and thus they offer a sense of his artistic affinities. Since Baumeister's text by no means refers to all the artworks for which illustrations were provided, and his remarks on them are most often brief and at times even oblique, it appeared most sensible to present the images in the manner that Baumeister had initially done so himself.

JMS

1 Hand axe, pre-Chellean, ca. 480,000–380,000 BC



2 Incised drawing, Cave of Altamira, ca. 15,000–10,000 BC

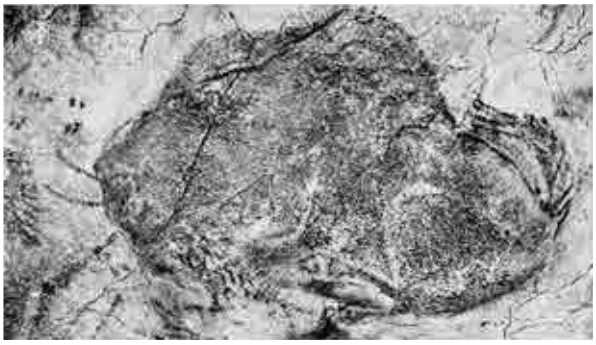


3–4 Incised drawing of a female figure, engraved on mammoth tusk, Early Aurignacian, ca. 35,000 BC

5 *Venus of Willendorf,* Austria, ca. 24,000–22,000 BC

6 Ceiling of the Cave of Altamira (Santander) with painted rock contour, ca. 15,000–10,000 BC

7 Detail from the ceiling, Cave of Altamira



8 Depiction of a kneeling bison, Cave of Altamira

9 Reconstruction from the Cave of Altamira (after Breuil)

10 Rock painting from Valltorta Gorge, eastern Spain

11 Pottery drawings, Predynastic Egypt

12 Drawing of a rock engraving in Fezzan, Libya

13 Drawing of an Egyptian relief

14 Relief *Walk in the Garden* from El Amarna, Egypt, Dynasty 18, ca. 1330 BC

15 Mummy portrait, 2nd century, encaustic

16 Wall painting from Pompeii, ca. 50 BC

17 Egyptian painting of a dancer, Dynasty 19, ca. 1300 BC

18 Willi Baumeister, photograph, late 1930s–early 1940s

19 *Musicians and Dancers,* Tomb of the Lionesses, Tarquinia, ca. 480–470 BC

20 Attic geometric krater, detail: funerary scene, 750–735 BC

21 Kouros, ca. 600 BC

22 Greek funerary vase painting (lekythos), 5th century BC

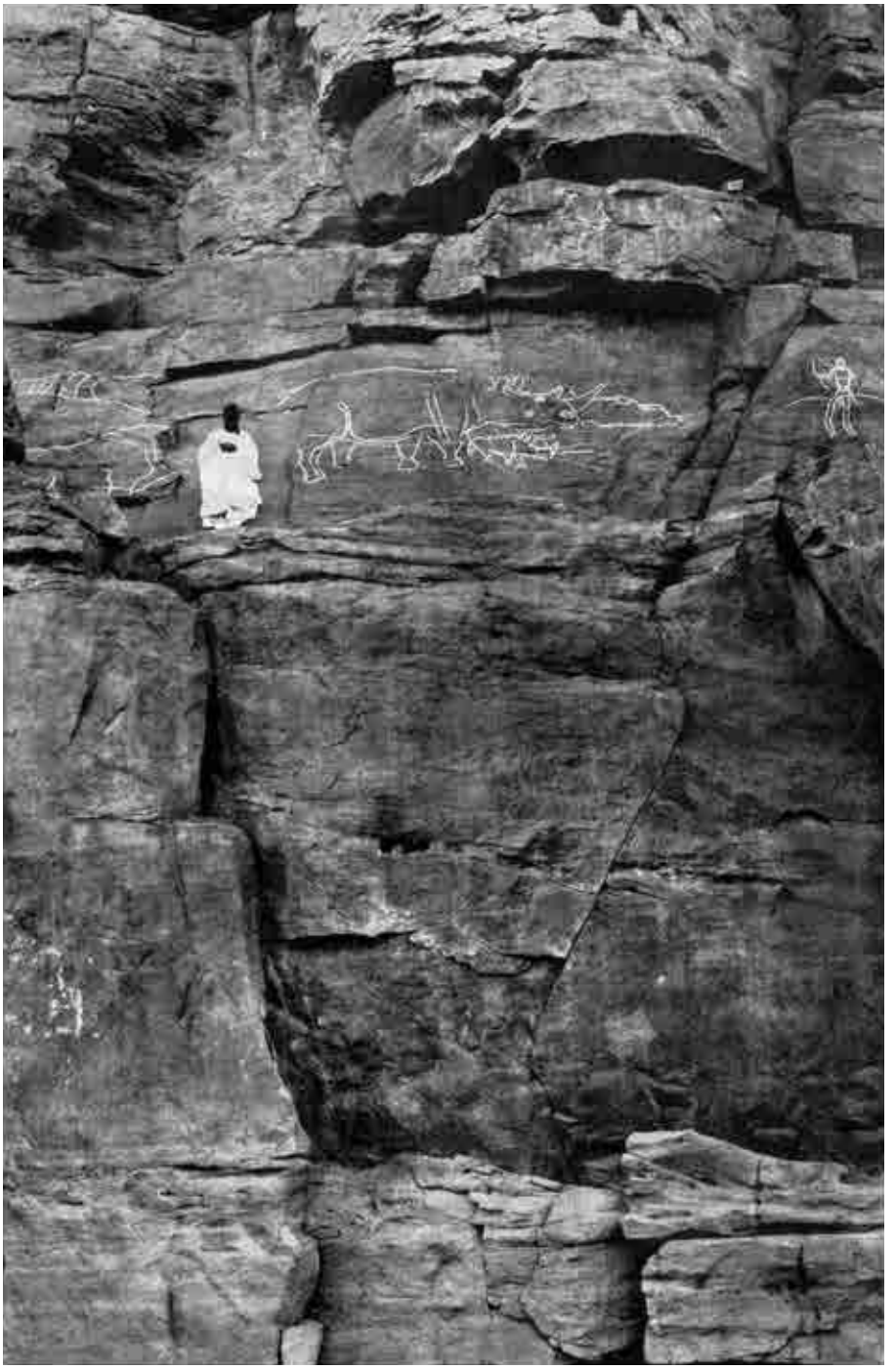
23 Clay tablet with cuneiform script, Mesopotamia, ca. 3000 BC

24 Impression of a cylinder seal from Ur (modern Tell el-Muqayyar), Iraq, ca. 2000 BC

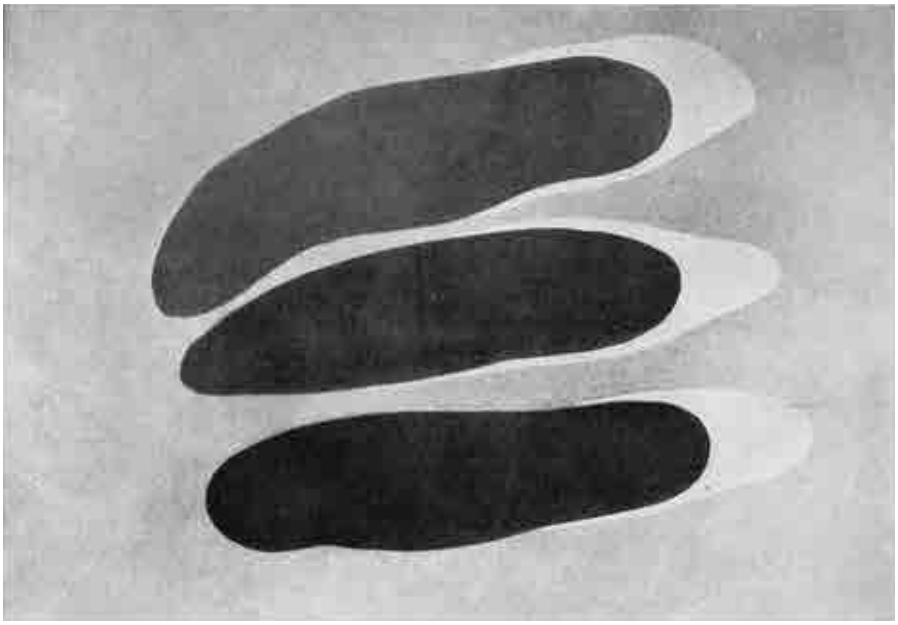
25 Beaker from Susa (modern Shush), Iran, ca. 4000–3500 BC

26 Head of a woman from Uruk (modern Warka), Iraq, ca. 3500–3000 BC

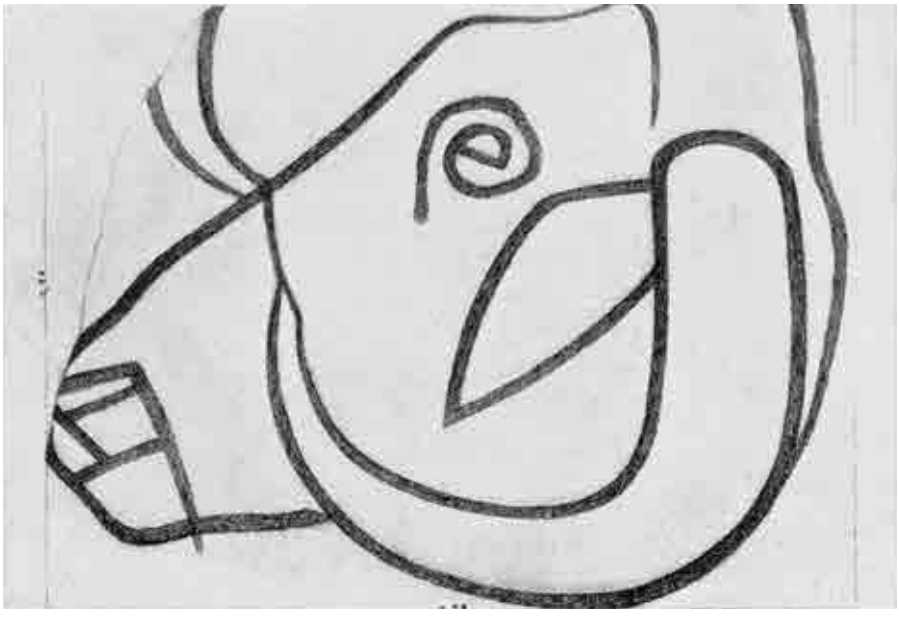
27 Figure from the Cyclades, 2000 BC



28 Rock picture at Fezzan, Libya



29 Rock picture from southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)



30 Rock picture from Fezzan, Libya

31 Brooch, god with a feather helmet, pre-Columbian era, gold

32 Bronze from early South America

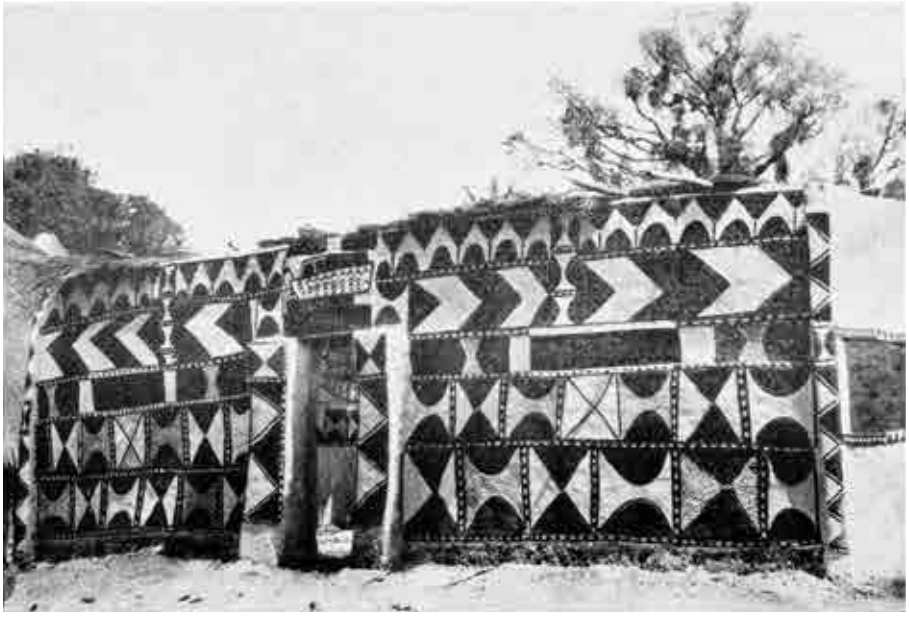
33 Crest pole of the North American Indians

34 Mythical figure painting with colored sand, Navajo Indians

35 Mask from sub-Saharan Africa

36 Woman from the Nuba Mountains, central Sudan, with festival decoration

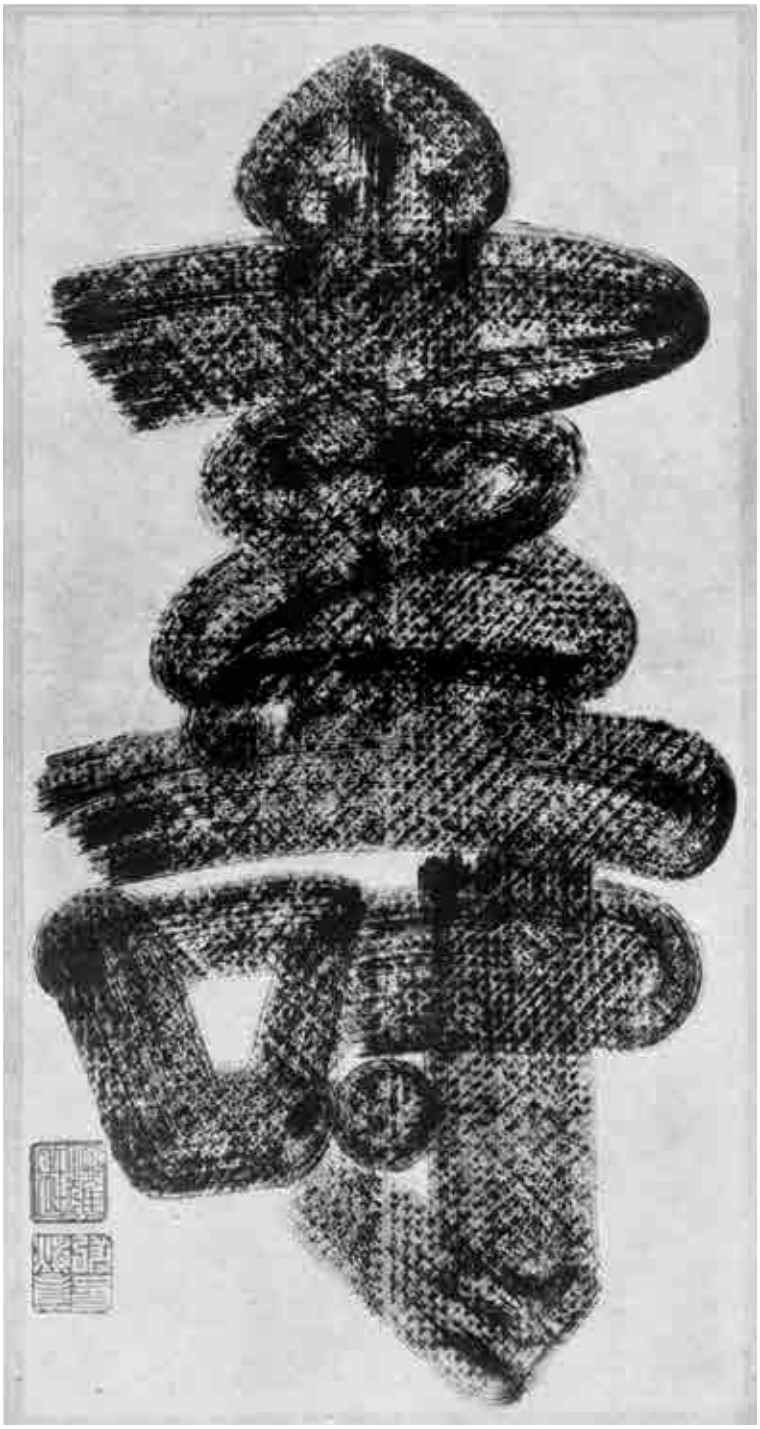
37 Girl from the Nuer people, southern Sudan, with decorative scarification



38 Temple for king's fetish, Republic of Guinea-Bissau

39 Chinese woodcut

40 Chinese brush position. Reproduced from Hu Zhengyan, *Shizhuzhai shuhuapu* ("Ten Bamboo Studio Manual of Painting and Calligraphy")



41 Symbol for happiness, Chinese scroll painting

42 Chinese scroll painting

43 Greek-Byzantine icon, 16th century

44 Medieval bell chasuble (detail)

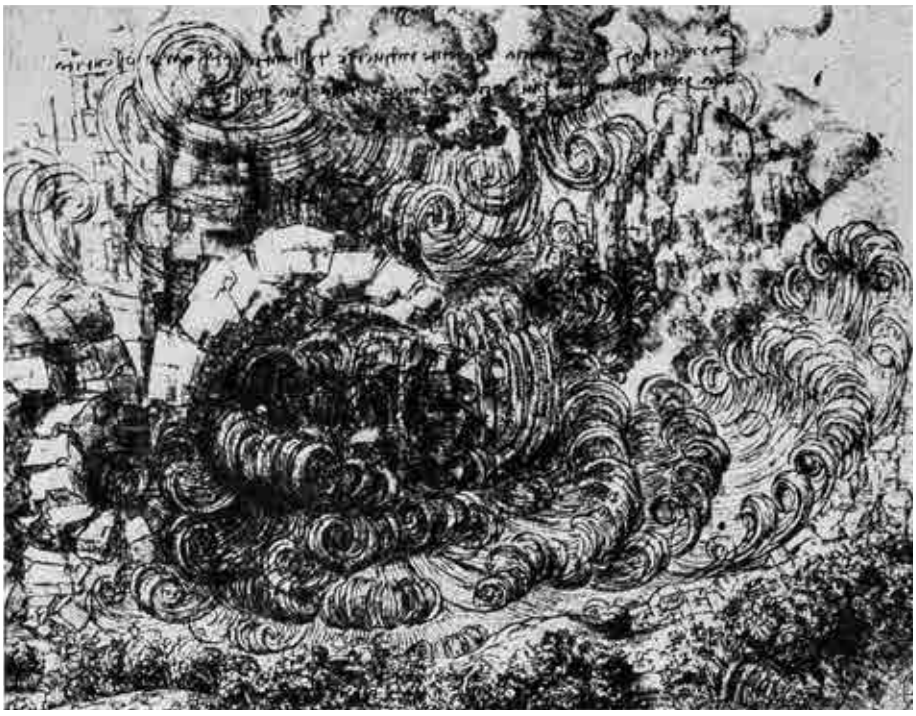
45 Medieval woodcut (detail), Netherlands, ca. 1450

46 Relief from the Extern Stone in the Teutoburg Forest, Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia, ca. 1115

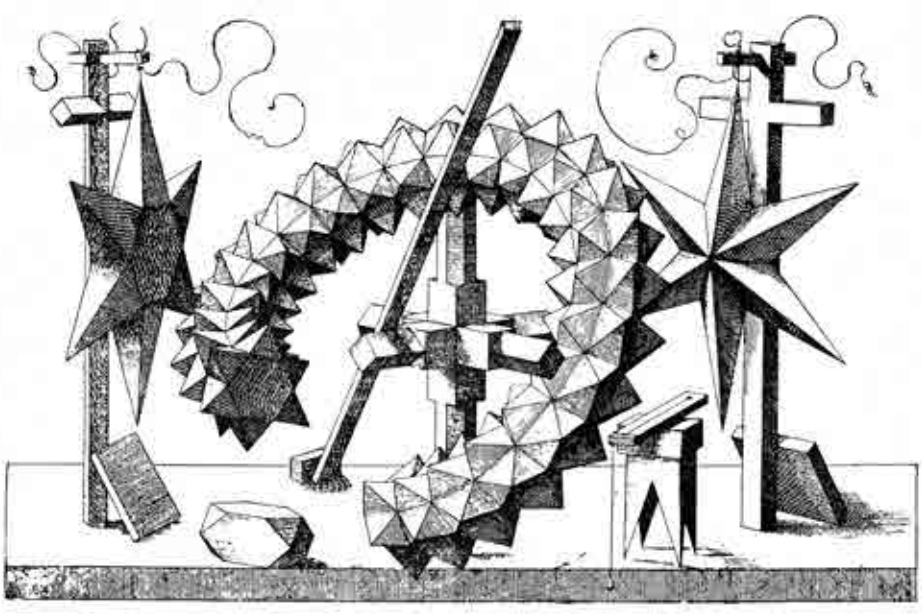
47 Duccio (formerly attributed to Cimabue), *Rucellai Madonna,* ca. 1285

48 Giotto, detail from *Lamentation,* 1305–6

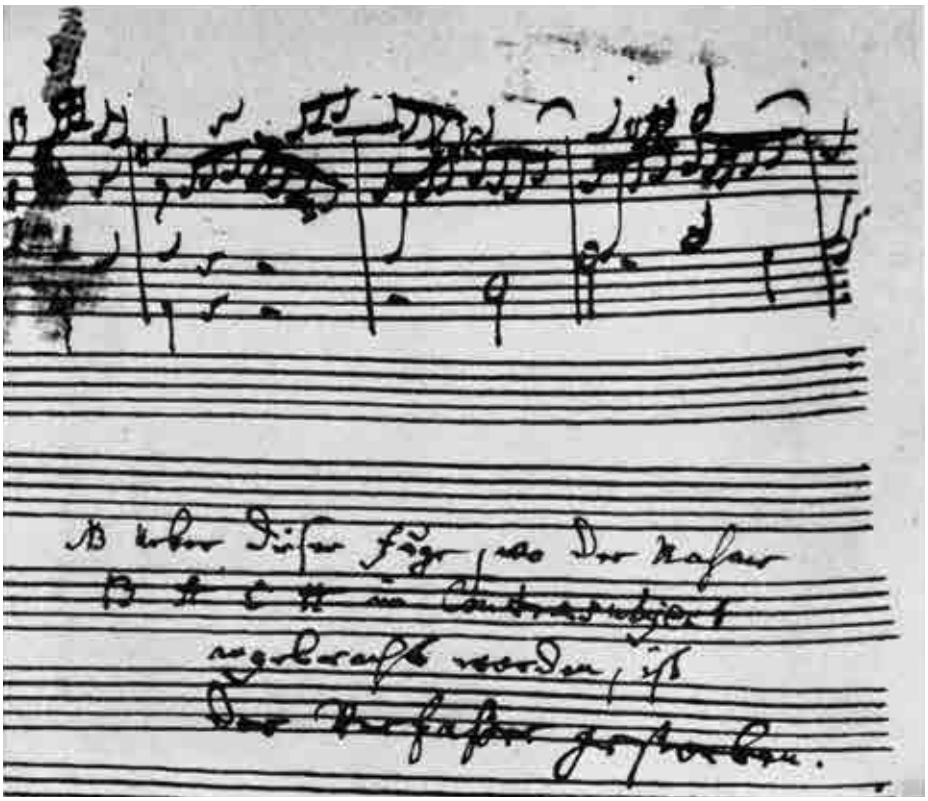
49 Hubert and Jan van Eyck, detail from the *Ghent Altarpiece,* completed 1432



50 Leonardo da Vinci, movement studies, scientific drawing, ca. 1510



51 Wenzel Jamnitzer, *Torus,* perspective study, 1568



52 Johann Sebastian Bach, manuscript of the *Kunst der Fuge* (Art of the fugue) with the theme b–a–c–h

53 Albrecht Dürer, detail from *Birth of the Virgin,* ca. 1503

54 Matthias Grünewald, Mary Magdalene from *Lamentation,* predella from the *Isenheim Altarpiece,* ca. 1510–15

55 Hieronymus Bosch, detail from *Garden of Earthly Delights,* 1500–1505

56 Lucas Cranach, *Lucretia,* 1533

57 El Greco, detail from *The Vision of Saint John (The Opening of the Fifth Seal),* 1608–14

58 Tintoretto, *Susanna and the Elders,* ca. 1555–56

59 Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Triumph of Mordecai,* 1641

60 Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *The Clothed Maya,* 1798–1805

61 Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *The Nude Maya,* 1798–1805

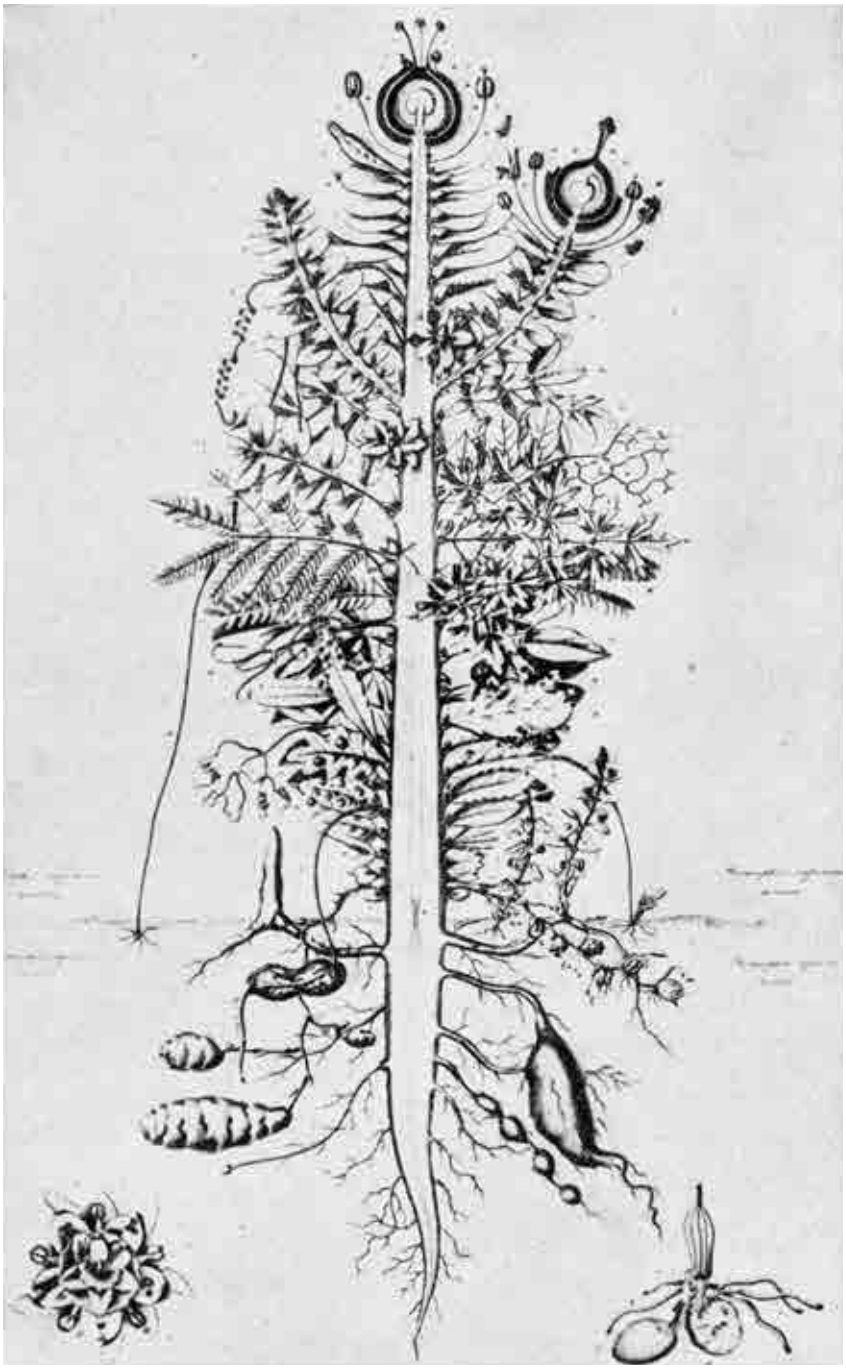
62 Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *The Family of Carlos IV,* ca. 1800

63 Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Can't Anyone Untie Us?,* etching no. 75 from the series *Los Caprichos,* 1797–98

64 Nicolas Poussin, *The Realm of Flora,* 1630–31

65 Nicolas Poussin, *Self-Portrait,* 1649

66 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, detail from *Jupiter and Thetis,* 1811



67 Goethe's *Archetypal Plant* after P. I. F. Turpin (1837)

68 Eugène Delacroix, *The Death of Sardanapalus,* 1827

69 Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People,* 1830

70 Joseph Mallord William Turner, *St. Benedetto, Looking toward Fusina,* 1843

71 Hans von Marées, detail from the fresco *Pergola,* 1873

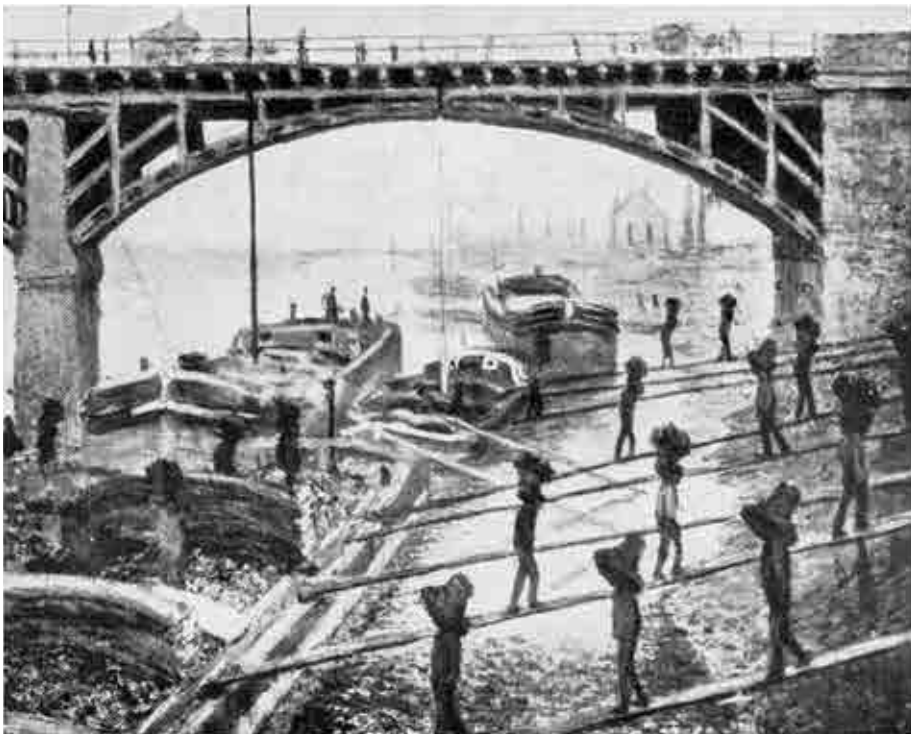
72 Wilhelm Leibl, detail from *Three Women in a Village Church,* 1878–82

73 Gustave Courbet, detail from *Young Ladies on the Banks of the Seine (Summer),* 1857

74 Claude Monet, *Boulevard des Capucines, Paris,* 1873

75 Auguste Renoir, sketch for *The Large Bathers,* 1884–85

76 Edgar Degas, *The Curtain Falls,* 1880



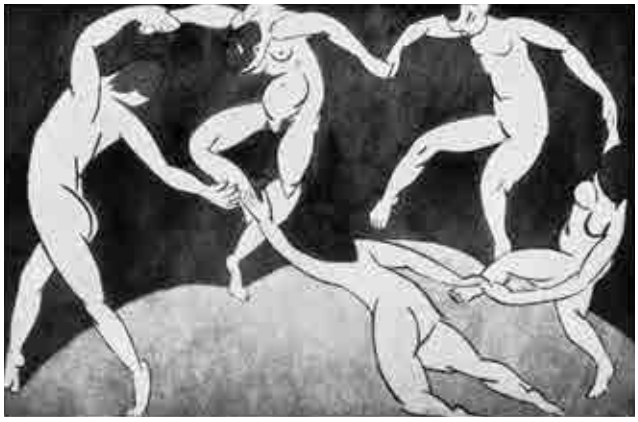
77 Claude Monet, *The Coal Workers,* ca. 1875

78 Georges Seurat, *The Models,* 1886–88

79 Vincent van Gogh, *The Postman Joseph Roulin,* 1888

80 Paul Gauguin, detail from *Two Tahitian Women on the Beach,* 1892

81 Henri Rousseau, *Scout Attacked by a Tiger,* 1904



82 Henri Matisse, *The Dance,* 1910

83 James Ensor, *Theater of Masks,* 1908

84 Paul Cézanne, *The Large Bathers,* 1898–1905

85 Paul Cézanne, *The Bathers,* 1894–1905

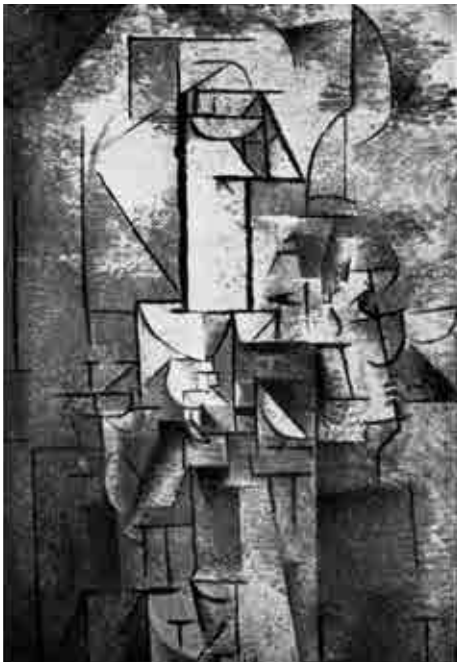
86 Émile Bernard, *Paul Cézanne in His Studio,* 1904, photograph

87 Georges Braque, *Houses at L'Estaque,* 1908. First phase of cubism

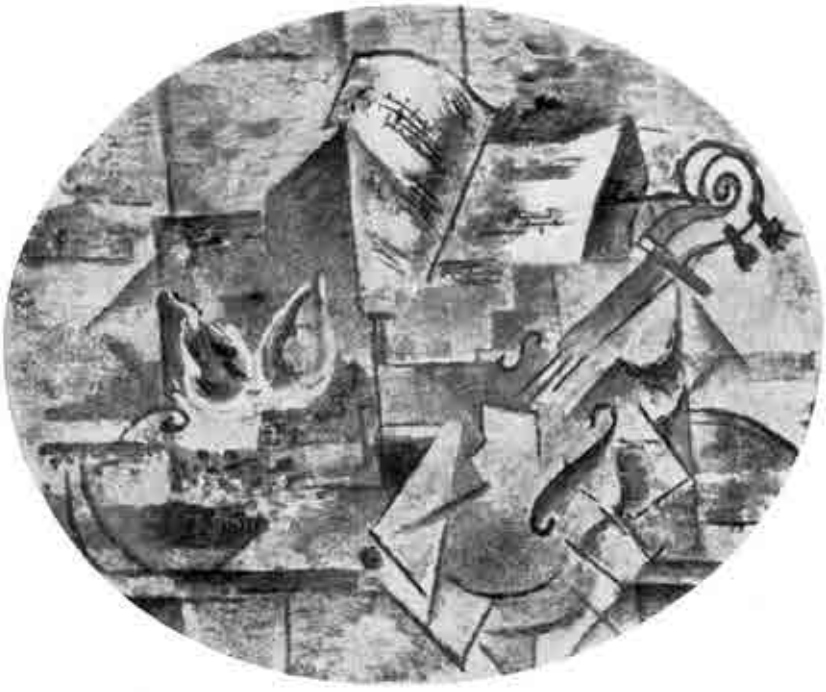
88 Georges Braque, *Château La Roche-Guyon,* 1909. First phase of cubism

89 Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* 1907. First phase of cubism

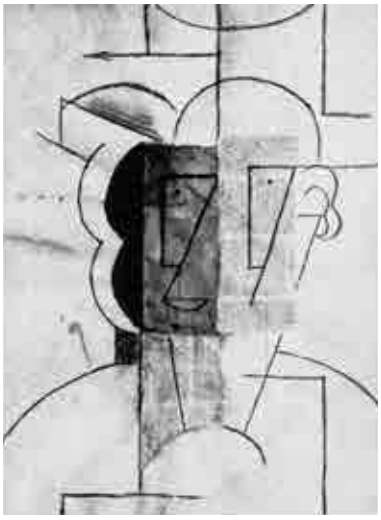
90 Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler,* 1910. Second phase of cubism



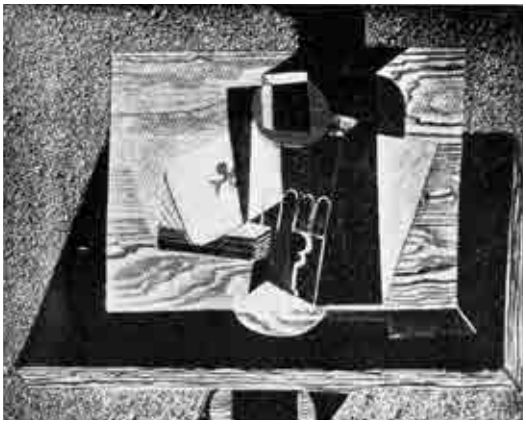
91 Pablo Picasso, *The Violinist,* 1910–11. Second phase of cubism



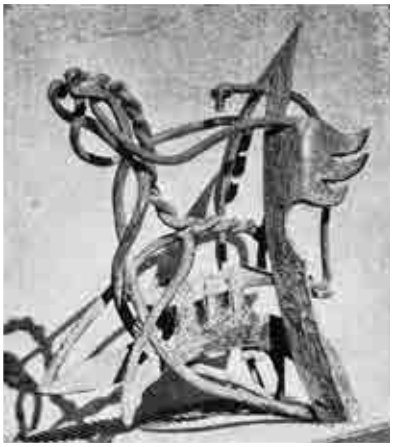
92 Georges Braque, *Violin and Pears,* 1911. Second phase of cubism



93 Pablo Picasso, *Man in Hat,* 1912–13. Third phase of cubism

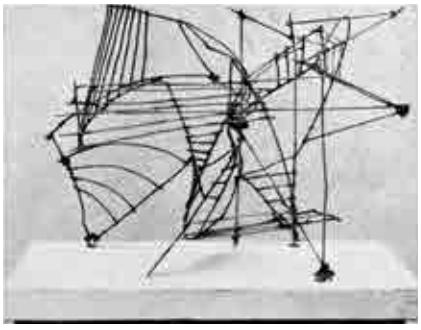


94 Pablo Picasso, *Glass, Ace of Clubs, and Bottle on a Table,* 1915–16. Fourth phase of cubism



95 Jacques Lipchitz, ca. 1928

96 Paul Klee, *Black Prince,* 1927



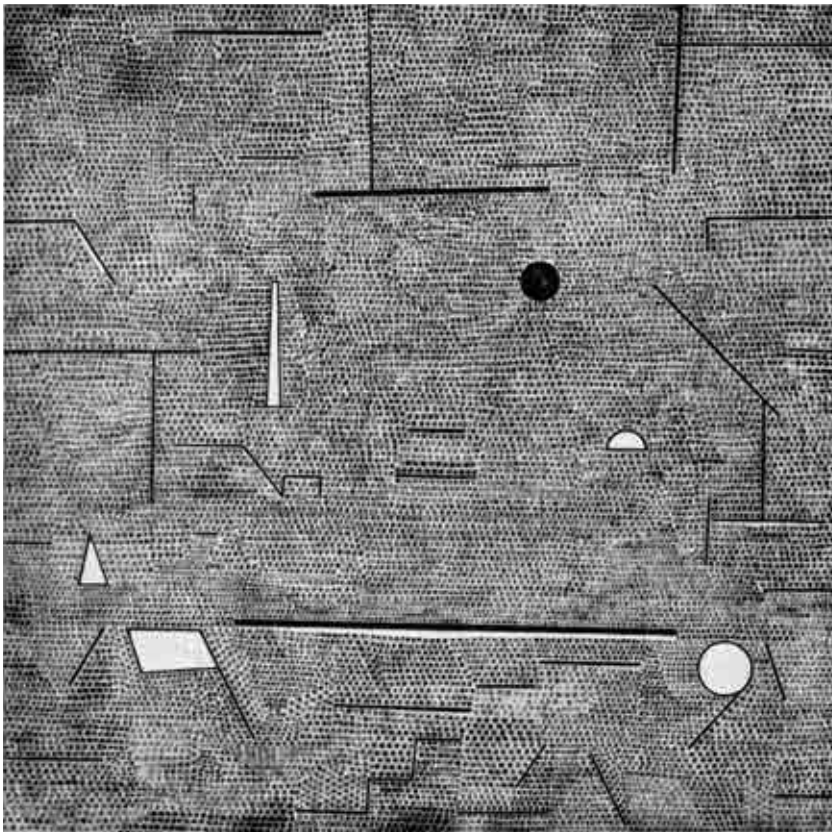
97 Walter Bodmer, wire sculpture, 1930s

98 Franz Marc, *Elephant, Horse, Cow,* 1914

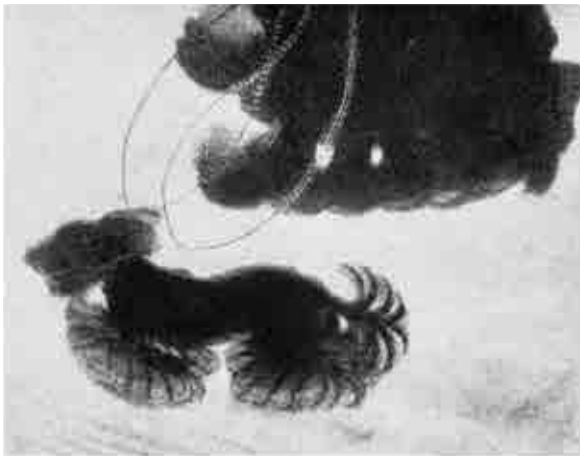
99 Marc Chagall, detail from *Reclining Nude,* 1911

100 Wassily Kandinsky

101 Paul Klee, *Comedy,* 1921



102 Paul Klee, *The Light and a Number of Things,* 1931

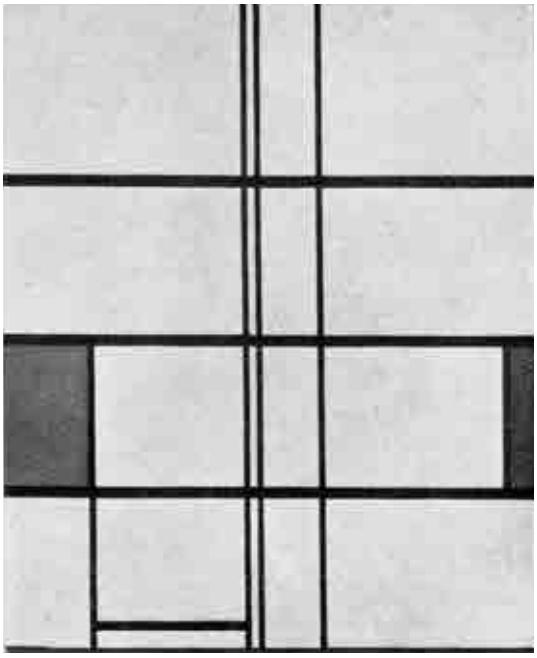


103 Giacomo Balla, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash,* 1912

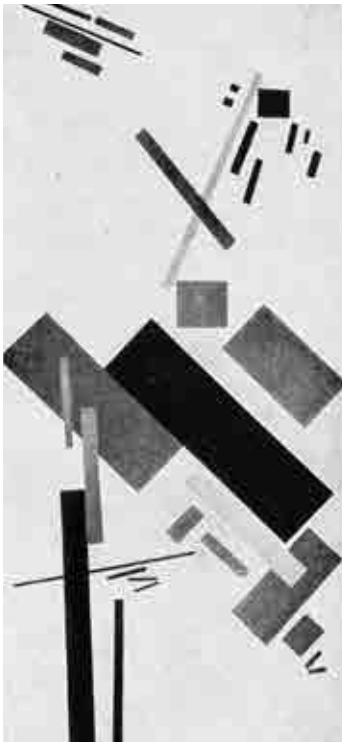
104 Luigi Russolo, *Plastic Synthesis of the Movements of a Woman,* 1913

105 Carlo Carrà, *Oval of Apparitions,* 1918

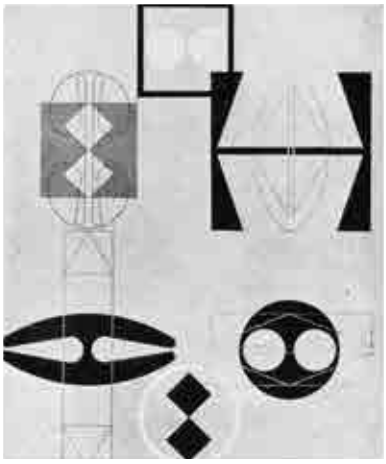
106 Giorgio de Chirico, *The Great Metaphysician,* 1917



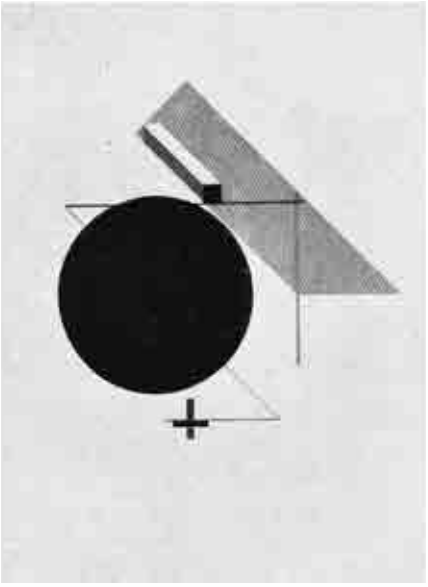
107 Piet Mondrian, *Composition in White, Red, and Blue, 1936,* 1936



108 Kazimir Malevich, *House under Construction,* 1915–16



109 Max Bill, *Variations,* 1934



110 El Lissitzky, *Proun,* 1923

111 Paul Klee, *Female Artist,* 1924

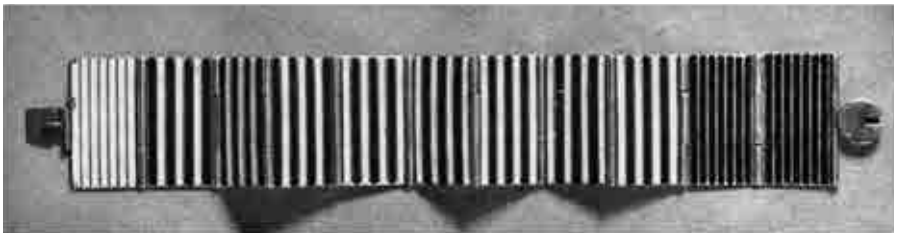
112 Otto Meyer-Amden, *Study on the Theme of Preparation,* 1929

113 Willi Baumeister, *Wall Picture in Space,* 1922

114 Oskar Schlemmer, *Concentric Group,* 1925

115 HAP (Helmut Andreas Paul) Grieshaber, from the *"Malbriefen"* (painted letters), May 30, 1938, woodcut

116 Willi Baumeister, *Illustration to a Greek Text,* 1942, collage

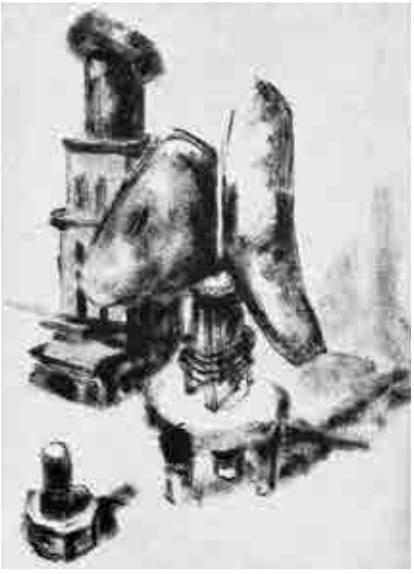


117 Hans Warnecke, bracelet with enamel inlays

118 Max Ernst, collage from *La femme 100 têtes,* Paris, 1929

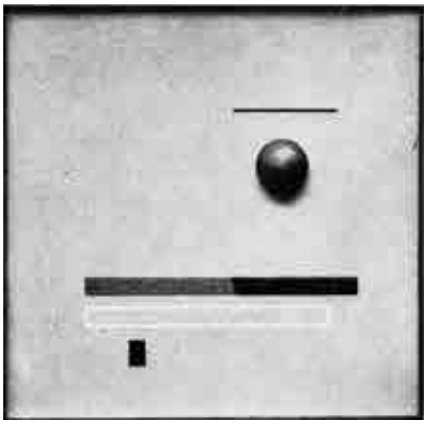
119 Joan Miró, *Landscape (The Grasshopper),* 1926

120 László Moholy-Nagy, 1923

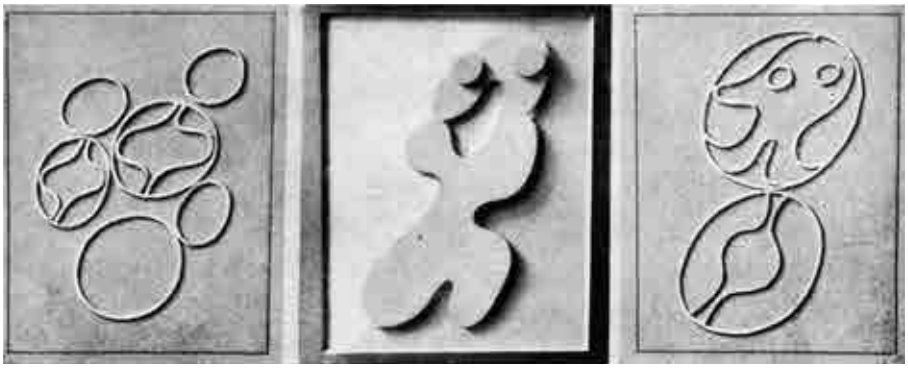


121 Julius Bissier

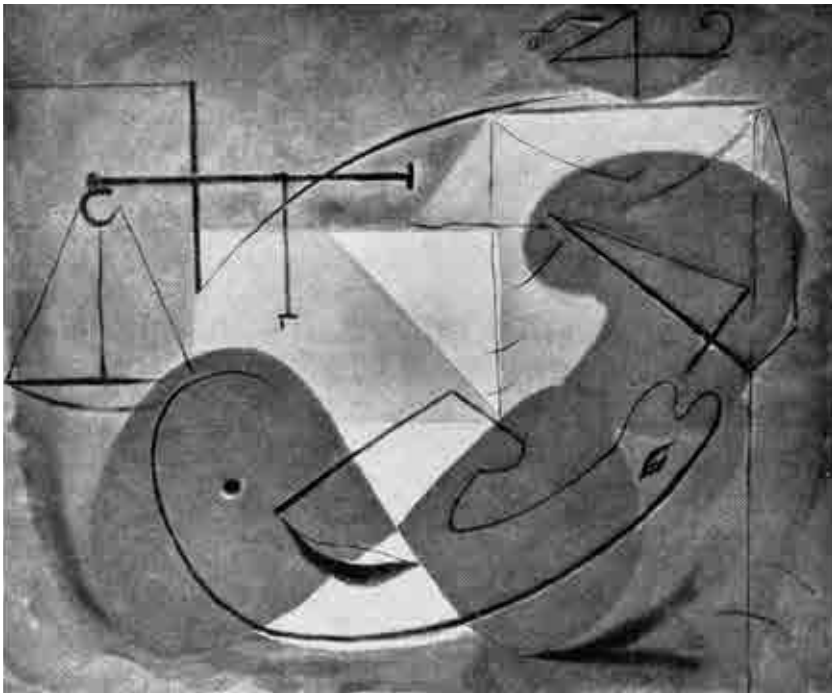
122 Yves Tanguy, detail from *Theory of Networks,* 1935



123 Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart, *Composition No. 84,* 1934



124 Jean Arp, reliefs, left to right: *Leaves and Navel,* 1929; *Torso and Mask,* 1928; *Head and Vase,* 1929

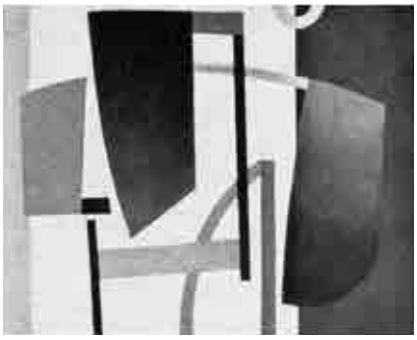


125 André Masson, *The Butcher,* 1929

126 Scientific diagram

127 J. Widmayer, oxalic acid, macrophotograph

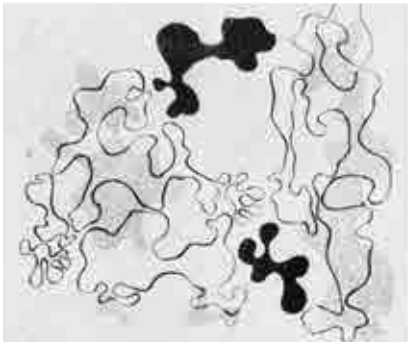
128 K. O. (Karl Otto) Götz, *Birds Encountering One Another,* 1942



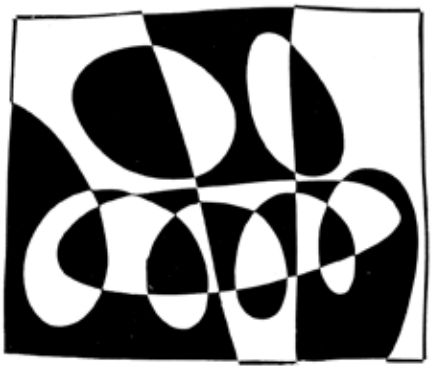
129 Jean Hélion, *Equilibrium,* 1934

130 Theodor Werner, *Birds,* 1935

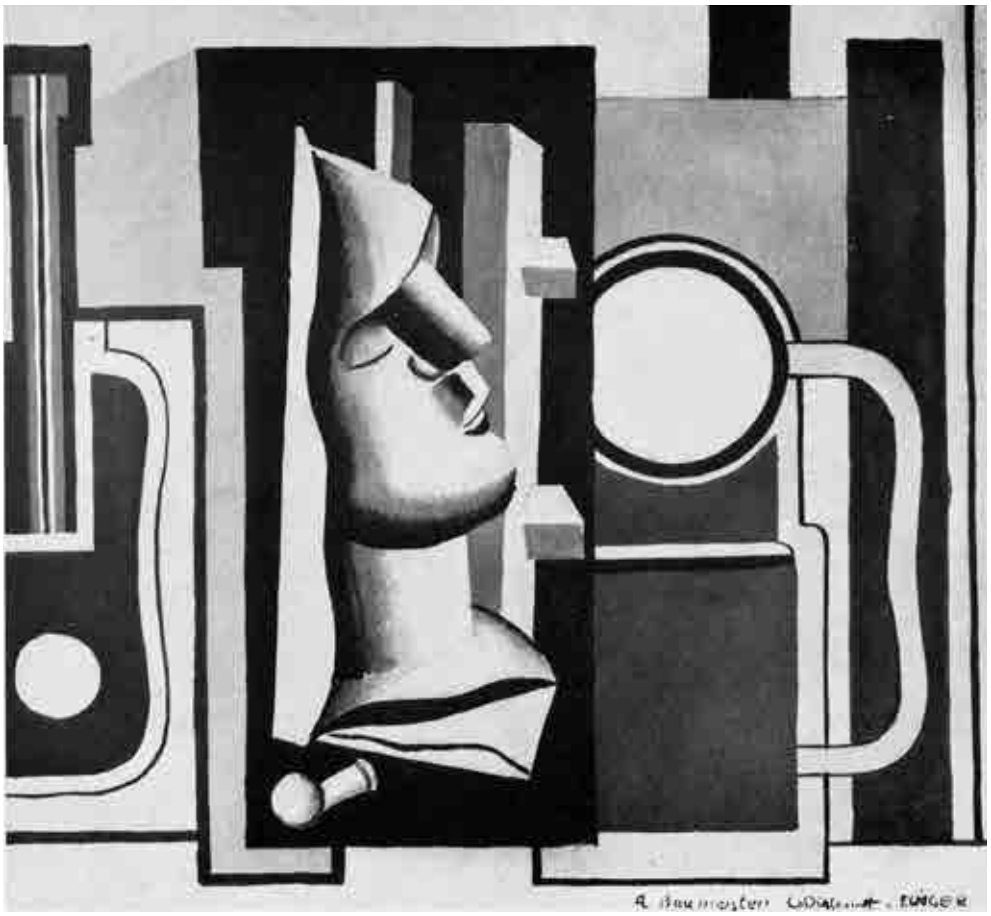
131 Max Ackermann, 1930



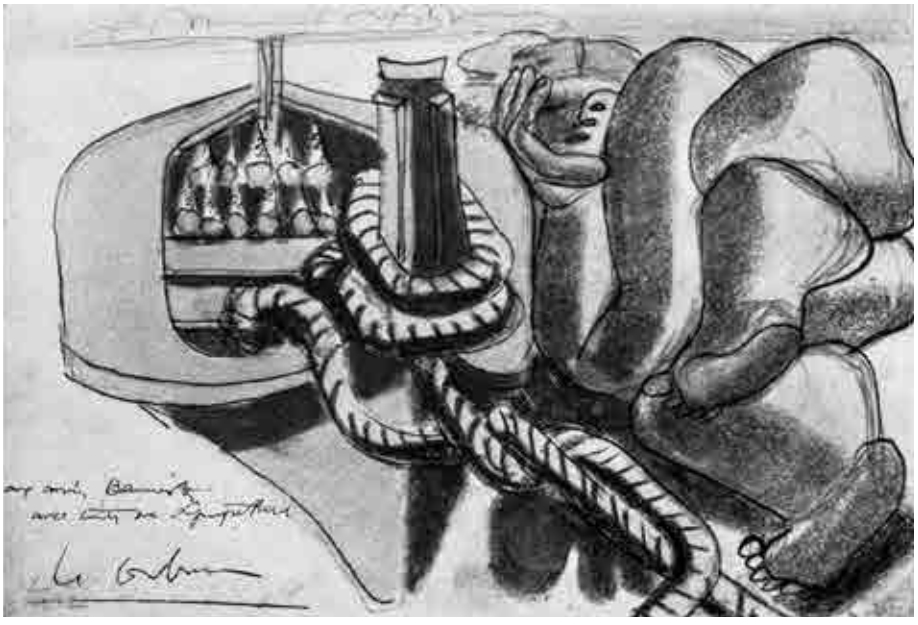
132 Vladislav Strzeminski, ca. 1936, color lithograph



133 Josef Albers, *Lookout,* 1933

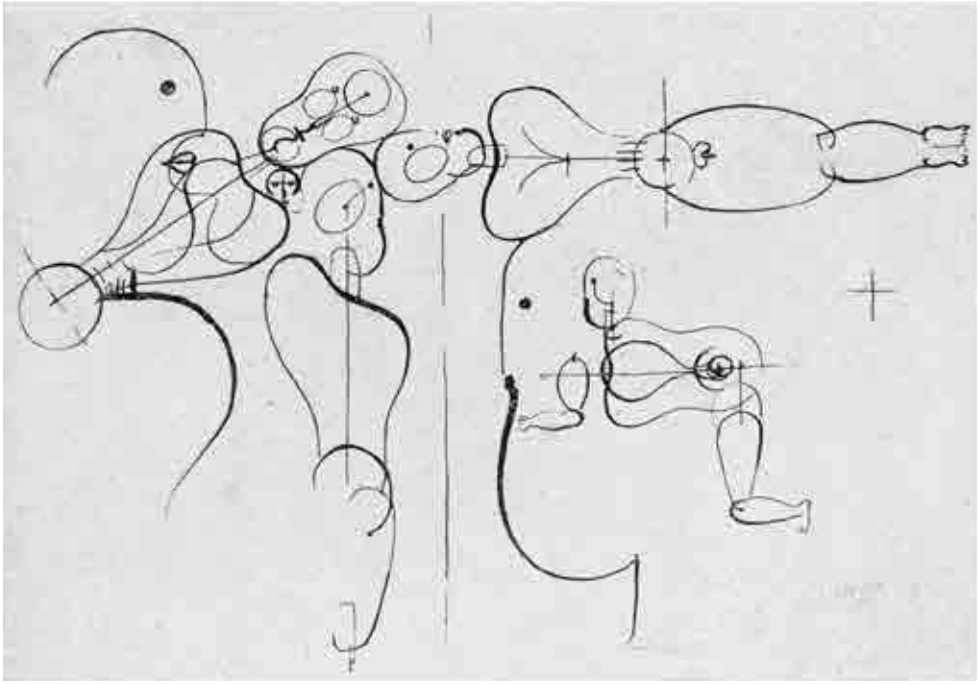


134 Fernand Léger, *Still Life with Plaster Mask,* 1927



135 Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret), drawing, 1930

136 Willi Baumeister, *Gray Relief Picture,* 1942



137 Oskar Schlemmer, *Figure,* 1919, lithograph

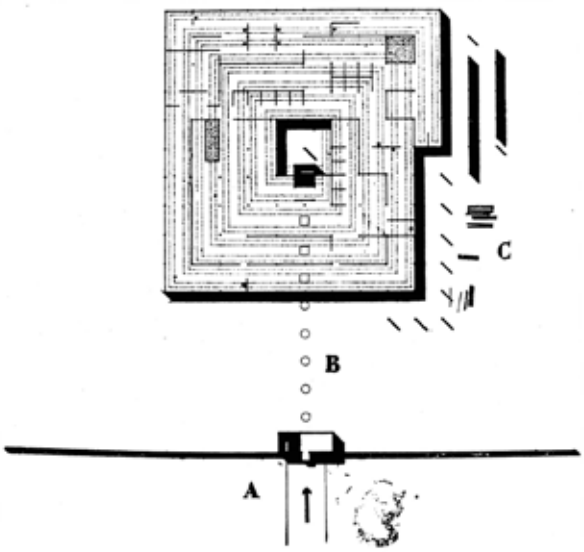
138 Willi Baumeister, *Three Ideograms,* 1946

139 Willi Baumeister, *Departure, Animated Landscape IV,* 1945

140 Willi Baumeister, *Two Comb-Technique Figures II,* 1946

141 Willi Baumeister, *Archaic Figures,* 1943–44

142 Joan Miró, *Persons Magnetized by the Stars Walking on the Music of a Furrowed Landscape,* 1939

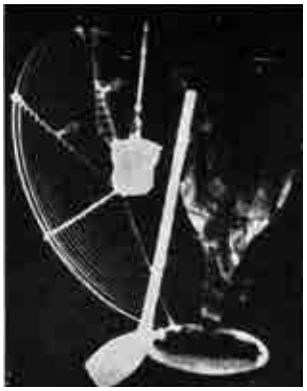


143 Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret), *Ground Plan for the Musée d'Art Contemporain Paris,* 1931

144 Richard Doecker, *Waiblingen Hospital,* near Stuttgart, 1927

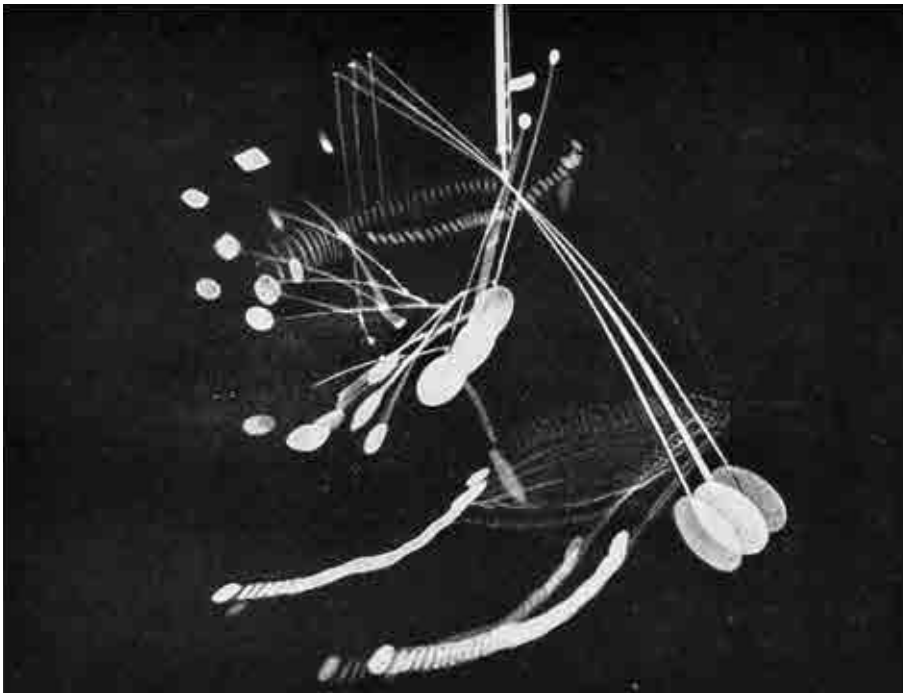
145 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Fallingwater* (Kaufmann House), Mill Run, Pennsylvania, 1936–39

146 Otto Baum, *Fruit,* 1940–41



147 Man Ray, photogram, 1921–22

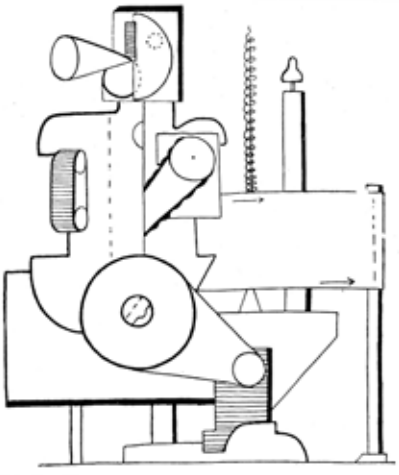
148 Adolf Lazi, commercial photography



149 Alexander Calder, mobile in motion, after 1930

151 Naum Gabo, *Kinetic Construction (Standing Wave),* 1919–20

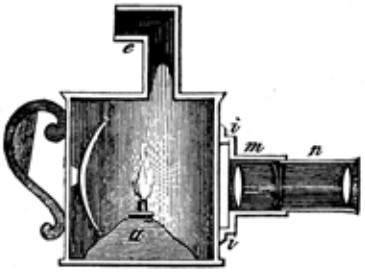
152 Oskar Schlemmer, *Disk Dancer* from the *Triadic Ballet,* 1923



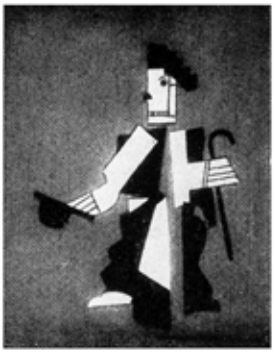
150 Willi Baumeister, *Cheerful Mechano,* ca. 1922

153–54 Wilhelm Busch, from "Ehre dem Photografen! Denn er kann Nichts dafür" (Honor the photographer! He can't help himself!), 1871

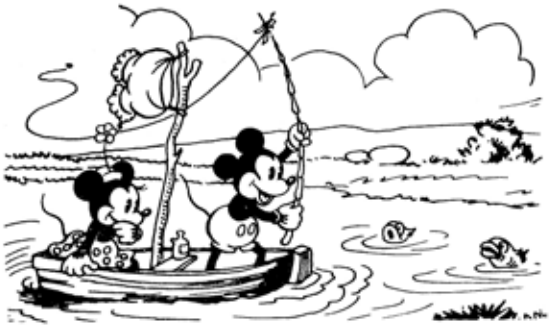
154 (see fig. 153)



155 Magic lantern



156 Fernand Léger, *Charlie Chaplin Figurine,* 1924



157 Mickey Mouse cartoon

158 Robert Delaunay, *Eiffel Tower,* 1910

159 Heinz Rasch, *Factory Plant in Wuppertal*

160 Still from a Russian film

161 Scene from *Forty-Seven Samurai,* Japanese Kabuki theater

162 Alexander Tairov (director), *Antigone,* 1927

163 Willi Baumeister, stage design, 1927

164 Willi Baumeister, stage design, 1919

The Most Significant Changes to the Original Edition

The Most Significant Changes to the Original Edition

Comments on the Text of the Present English Edition

This first English edition of Willi Baumeister's *The Unknown in Art* is based on the fourth, revised German edition of the book, published by DuMont in 1988 and like it, derives its text portion from the second, revised edition of the book, published in 1960. At that time and pursuant to Baumeister's request, the DuMont publishing house co-founder, publisher, and Baumeister friend Karl Gutbrod (1905–1984) revised the original text of *The Unknown,* which had been published by Curt E. Schwab in 1947. As René Hirner noted in 1988, Gutbrod's revision was at least partly motivated by Baumeister's desire that a number of linguistic and content-related corrections be made to the text, thus making up for the lack of having an editor at the time the original text was being finalized following the end of World War II.[1] I have chosen to translate the most recent, 1988 edition of *The Unknown* because it retains Gutbrod's revisions to Baumeister's text, which are discrete, largely preserving the original while pruning it somewhat and making it more easily accessible to readers; and because it reproduces in a separate section several of the text passages that had been revised or deleted.

For those readers interested in Gutbrod's changes to the original, I include below these passages representing the most significant content-related revisions that Gutbrod made to Baumeister's text. Translated from the fourth German edition of *The Unknown,* in which they were first published, the revised passages in the present edition appear along with those corresponding to the original text.

JMS

[1] René Hirner, "Die wichtigsten Abweichungen von der Originalausgabe," in Willi Baumeister, *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1988), 217.

The first page number refers to the present edition, whereas the abbreviation OE and accompanying page number refer to the text of the original 1947 edition. Text appearing in roman script indicates Gutbrod's deletions.

P. 37 *Part I State and Circumstance*

OE 13 *Part I State and Circumstance*—Elementary Introduction

P. 40 *The viewer must reconcile himself with what has now been made visible. . . . The purity of seeing . . .*

OE 16 The optical rays are the mediators. *The purity of seeing . . .*

P. 40 *They are the means to representations . . .*

OE 16 *They are* not the cloak of *representations;* rather, *that which is depicted representationally is* in a certain sense *a masking of the* intrinsic powers.

P. 44 *Impressionism rigorously broke . . .*

OE 20 *Impressionism rigorously broke with its predecessors,* and the relatively brief period of this revolution in seeing and looking makes its position in the times *easier to grasp than earlier revolutions in painting.*

P. 44 *. . . The effect then followed . . .*

OE 20 The eyes of humans are thereby taught how nature should now be seen. *The effect then followed . . .*

P. 48 Epigraph:*. . . Art knows no experience . . .*

OE 23 Epigraph: The average is based on experiences derived from the unknown. *Art knows no experience . . .*

P. 50 *. . . The epigones presume . . .*

OE 25–26 This is particularly noticeable today. From the first interpreters or those who influenced others, the number of diluters grows continually in the breadth of an increasingly shallow body of water, which threatens to bog everything down. This

applies to all pure sources of origin, in all areas, whether they have their point of departure in Buddha, Christ, Shakespeare, Leonardo, or Mozart. The imitative works mix among themselves and shimmer in every color and sound, in the view of the world, in the theater, in the concert hall, in the exhibition. To be sure, the tradition of values is retained through the masters, but they cannot prevent the emergence of a general slurry—one that seeks to elevate the generally popular to the generally valid. The pictures of the epigones contain only the known, which they draw and mix from many masters by means of influence; "showing ones true colors" is too dangerous for them. A personal weakness also hinders them. *The epigones presume that art must make everything as understandable as possible . . .*

P. 57 *. . . Seeing is linked to a calmness in our own body posture . . .*

OE 33–34 Within daily professional work, viewing ("seeing in itself") is diminished. Specialized seeing linked to the respective work develops with specially oriented viewing and has the disadvantage that general seeing is barely able to achieve a balance. He who has preserved a more comprehensive mode of seeing can, through independent seeing, shape a great deal of what is seen into an optical experience, particularly that which cannot attain any meaning at all for others. Like with an athlete whose entire life energy is concentrated in his muscles while training, the power of the optical person is concentrated in his visual organs. In contrast to others, he has the plus of "seeing experiences" and can therefore at times appear more modest. *Seeing is linked to a calmness in our own body posture . . .*

P. 61 *. . . The extra-optical, in other words, the content-related motif . . .*

OE 37 The latter are second-rate although they reveal certain connections that give them their distinctiveness. *The extra-optical, in other words, the content-related motif . . .*

P. 72 *. . . The elemental forces of the black and white form . . .*

OE 49 In patent law, an abstract, freely invented sign, which does not have the least to do with the respective factory, name, or production, ranks much more highly than a sign that proceeds

from these facts or even illustrates them (e.g., the shape of a fish for a fish shop). The distinction and classification are contained in the terms: strong sign—weak sign.
The elemental forces of the black and white form . . .

P. 79 *. . . In works by Klee and artists of the vanguard, the picture title emerges less often with the picture than afterward.*

OE 57 Title and picture often have contact with one another only in the most insignificant zone of the picture. *In works by Klee and artists of the vanguard, the picture title emerges with the picture* or is only found afterward.

P. 86 *In cubism and especially through the means of Klee . . . the substance of time in the picture becomes active.*

OE 64 *. . . the substance of time in the picture becomes active.* The triangular compositions of Leonardo and Raphael are of another sort. (Cf. Chapter "Rhythm as a Temporal Body".)

P. 87 *Part II The Transformation of Art*

OE 65 *Part II The Transformation of Art*—Introduction

P. 95 *This sort of wall decoration with figures scarcely has the character of applied painting any longer.*

OE 74 *This sort of wall decoration,* like figurative pictures as well, scarcely bears *the character of applied painting any longer.*

P. 99 *From the naturalistic standpoint, the method of the cubist phases is a dismantling, but it yields a synthesis of a higher order . . .*

OE 78–79 *From the naturalistic standpoint, the method of the cubist phases is a dismantling, but it yields a synthesis of a higher order . . .*

It has been mentioned that wall painting in general belongs to the realm of applied painting. The abrupt crash that it experienced in the last century was caused by frame-dependent painting and the possibilities of technical freedom related to it. We should note that we also find landscape paintings in

particular in mural painting, such as at Pompeii, which exhibit such a free brushstroke that we are reminded of much later appearances. The English watercolorists (e.g., Turner's *Venice)* are exponents of a surprisingly bold brushstroke that further neutralizes the connections to the painting ground. An alla prima technique exists within mural painting: in the fresco. Still, precisely this technique entails restrictions and thus also remains in the rough, to the extent that it bears no comparison to the techniques of panel painting. Mural paintings certainly exist today, but they are inconceivable without the passage through frame-dependent painting. Here the boldest combinations with plastic and material elements appear which blast away all that is conventional. In applied painting, the values of the plane continue to exist. By contrast, naturalism neutralizes the plane through its effect of illusion. Moreover, the plane and its painting are neutralized by facture and dispersion.

In art from Cézanne onward, the reopening up of the plane as an important factor in another interpretation of the new began.

P. 100 *. . . As a ratio, the number is capable of. . .*

OE 80 In a simple example, Strindberg attempted to refute mathematics and its logical construction. In the final scene of *Ein Traumspiel (A Dream Play)*, the master tests the officer, who here reappears as a student, with arithmetic problems.

The officer answers: "Yes, that's right, one should mature. Two times two—is two, and I will prove this with a proof by analogy, the highest of all proofs! Listen to me! One times one is one; therefore, two times two is two! For what is valid for the one is also valid for the other!" Through this compelling conclusion, the master is initially led ad absurdum.

As a ratio, the number is capable of. . .

P. 111 *Even impressionism, which developed in the realm of pure art. . .*

OE 92 With the first bourgeois culture in the last century, a professional branch emerged that developed between the "art painter and the house painter": the decorative painter. He was the typical phenomenon of decadence, since patrons of the period

were primarily concerned with superficial décor, which grew rampant over walls and furniture. *Impressionism, which developed in the realm of pure art . . .*

P. 111 *. . . They remained weak . . .*

OE 92 Leadership through painting was lacking. Architecture and the other handcrafts could not draw any strength from impressionism. *They remained weak . . .*

P. 116 *. . . All later art that has not yet completely loosed itself from the motif . . .*

OE 98 That is, both are qualitatively and quantitatively so pushed to the fore that an alignment and mutual penetration appear to have emerged. The artistic character of formally perfected naturalism is based in this relation. *All later art that has not yet completely loosed itself from the motif . . .*

P. 120 *The depiction of the object becomes a "depiction of a perception," a depiction of the state of the artist.*

OE 102 Along the way, *the depiction of the object becomes a depiction of a perception, a depiction of the state of the artist.* Masson and Lurçat are not programmatic surrealists.

P. 120 *. . . The result of the work as a projection of the homogeneous condition of the artist is unambiguous.*

OE 102 By projecting his state unconsciously, the artist has produced involuntarily. The motif or title should initially not be evaluated at all. The lines and colors are also ambiguous and intelligibly incomprehensible to the artist since he pays no particular respect to a possible residual motif but pushes away from it (abstracts). Even so, *the result of the work as a projection of the homogeneous condition of the artist is unambiguous.*

P. 120 *This means that the "condition" is not a changing daily state or even a mood but—the neutral everything.*

OE 102–3 *This means that the "condition" is not so* much *a changing*

daily state or even a mood but—the neutral everything. The severity of responsibility as a conscious type of reflection has become a part of one's center with all his other personal features. In contemporary art, the motif speaks first in the finished picture. It speaks of matter.

P. 121 Epigraph: *The formalist artist . . .*

OE 103 Epigraph: *The formalist artist is in nature, the naturalist outside of it.* The latter wants to reenter it.

P. 121 *A naturalistic quality characterizes a re-presentation of art . . .*

OE 103 *A naturalistic quality characterizes a re-presentation of art . . .* the naturalistic quality proceeds in a certain sense toward the reproduction of something. Nature as it is, or rather, as it appears to be, should be exhausted through artistic means.

P. 121 *There are no utterly fixed boundaries between the two kinds of art . . .*

OE 103 *There are no utterly fixed boundaries between the two kinds,* which nonetheless fundamentally oppose one another.

P. 122 *A Euclidean demonstration.*

OE 104 This is *a Euclidean demonstration.* At the same time, we can perceive the Platonic idealities in it.

The achievements of the masters of absolute space, van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Foucquet, Cranach, Dürer, and Altdorfer to de Chirico and Oskar Schlemmer, never make contact with the commonly real but are utterly in an elevated realm. The artistic notions of the aforementioned old and modern masters manifest themselves in a time-bound scenario (e.g., the cathedral, bourgeois spaces, the peasant milieu, etc.), or, with modern artists, in spatial inventions or in spatial metaphors.

P. 129 *Artists' anatomical studies worked into the hands of scientists.*

OE 113 Anatomical studies also became an object for science. They *worked into the hands of scientists.*

P. 134 *Purified art acquires a relationship to nature itself. Although*

the contemporary artist . . .

OE 119 *Purified art acquires a relationship to nature itself.* And as long as original artists concern themselves with the appearance of nature, it will be changed by art. This is the result of the respective manner of observation (copy) and artistic rendering impulse. *Although the contemporary artist . . .*

P. 136 *. . . Photography and related printing reproduction processes . . .*

OE 121 The copying of painting is certainly possible, but here the copying is correspondingly found on another level, or so to speak, on another wavelength. Here the reproduction must let the original have much more value than the work of time-based art. In painting, the reproduction is a substitute.

In completely nonrepresentational art, by contrast, there are works of such absolute formal rendering that their copies suffer no loss at all. In this case, essentially no original exists.

The illustrative painting of the Renaissance and all kinds of naturalism are so removed from today's standpoint because the reproductive still perceives copying as essential only when it appears purely as something merely reproductive and owns up to it, or the reproductive is compellingly linked to movement, as in the time-based arts such as theater, music, and film. Reproduction generates form here. It belongs to the existence of the work.

Photography and related printing reproduction processes . . .

P. 137 *. . . Reproduction in the sense of multiple repetitions . . .*

OE 122 In a direct sense, the reproduction is a substitute for the original through a material transformation. But if we visualize this transformation as arising from one of its own sources, the needed clarification occurs immediately. But even this realization does not prevent reproductions, and especially deficient ones, from generating or supporting a superficiality, by teaching wrongly (e.g., about works of art). Whenever a nonobjective hand is at work, it correspondingly continues to have an effect just as, in another instance, every quality continues to generate wherever it appears.

Reproduction in the sense of multiple repetitions . . .

P. 138 *. . . The sharpest rejection of and opposition to photography came from the mass of portrait painters . . .*

OE 124 Among other things, at the outset of photography, voices were also raised that even called the portrait a blasphemy. (In Islam, all portrait art, especially the image of the prophet, is forbidden.)

The sharpest rejection of and opposition . . .

P. 144 *. . . Whereas earlier in typography the symmetrical axis was regarded as a thoroughly established norm . . .*

OE 131 This does not serve an absolute purpose and cannot be established as necessary. It is always predetermined and adheres involuntarily to the craftsperson and his character. It is the superior formal impulse. The superior, without being clearly noticed at first, is always predetermined and set above, despite how much the fundamental aspect of the individual handcrafts and the practical-useful are valued as solutions today. Both parts, the superior formal and the functional, are united in the rendering of form.

Whereas earlier in typography the symmetrical axis was regarded as a thoroughly established superior form . . .

P. 144 *Symmetry is no longer binding for them . . .*

OE 131 *Symmetry no longer* applies to them.

In the superior formal impulse (in independent art) there is no evidence; by contrast, in the handcrafts there is partial evidence. Symmetry as that which is static and a directly intended, linked balance opposes the new compositional sensibility. The "process" can be understood as follows: reading is a movement from left to right, from which we could draw conclusive evidence for modern typography if the superior, inexplicable formal intention was not constituent.

P. 146 *The regionally rooted farmhouse represents an antithesis to such sentimentally "costumed" houses.*

OE 133 *The regionally rooted farmhouse represents an antithesis to such sentimentally,* historically, or rustically *"costumed" houses. It earns the respect due to everything indigenous.* In

functional requirements, its implementation is largely understood as purity, but the superior also takes shape in the sense of a genuine folk art.

P. 148 *. . . [t]ime determines. . .*

OE 136–37 Today the collective is a component in art involving movement in the sense of a temporal course of events on the stage and especially in film. Along with it, the anonymous also appears. Nonrepresentational painting and sculpture assume evident degrees of anonymity, whereby surrealism, which is contemporaneous with them today, is a highly individual art (that is also defined by metamorphosis). The nonrepresentational art of certain contemporary sculptors also contains metamorphic forces, although it distinguishes itself from surrealism through the signs of anonymity. In its way, it also forms the endlessly animated aspect of physicality along with striving toward the absolute of the exact surface (e.g., in the works of Brancusi, Arp, and Bill). Absolute forms in art approach reproduction.

Time determines. . .

P. 148 *Depending on how the plane, color, and line. . . especially in rhythm and variation.*

OE 137 *Depending on how the plane, color, and line. . . especially in rhythm and variation.*

In symmetry, the substance of time is strangulated (as in symmetrical typography, symmetrical façade in architecture). Feudal rule and despotism were largely expressed in the straightjacket of symmetry (e.g., the palace grounds of Versailles, etc.)

Wax figures and naturalistic painting *(nature morte)* lack the substance of time.

P. 149 *Part III The Unknown*

OE 140 *Part III The Unknown*—Main Component

P. 153 *. . . We should add. . .*

OE 144 In the coarse and fine debris, Sautuola searched for stones exhibiting minimal changes to the natural stone protrusions from traces of striking and so-called retouchings. They often measured only one to two millimeters. *We should add. . .*

P. 159 *But in order for these sources to take effect, . . . into artistic repute.*

OE 150 *But in order for these sources to take effect, they need an advocate who formally recognizes the found objects, evaluates them, and thus first brings them to light for good, to the artistic status that is due them, not just into scholarly repute but also into* formal *artistic repute,* which alone allows them to become experience and emits the activating radiance.

P. 160 *These discoveries were initially concerned with. . .*

OE 151 *These discoveries* by excavation are based on a relation to the "previously unknown." *This initially concerned. . .*

OE 152–55 *Treading the path from the known to the unknown this way resembles the method* of solving a puzzle or *of solving a geometry problem* and its proof, *in which we* are supposed to *advance from the known to the unknown.* Together with experience, the combinations yield much more of a probability calculation than a hypothesis. Ideas, intuitions should fundamentally not be excluded here because they help in arriving at bold conclusions. *We attempt to zero in on the unknown as it were.* The structure of the search reckons with an unknown, which is assumed to exist. It is like searching for something that exists but whose whereabouts have been rendered unknown by the circumstances. *The following are two examples of success in excavating:*

> *The story of the Pithecanthropus discovery almost verges on the miraculous, because this find was not made accidentally but was the crowning event of a systematic and persistent search by an individual who went from Europe to Dutch India influenced by the theory of evolution, with the conscious intent to find the presumed "missing link". . .*
>
> *(From Wilhelm Gieseler,* Abstammungskunde des Menschen *[Human evolution])*

P. 161 *Through extraordinary willpower and speculative inference, the Dutch anatomist Eugène Dubois succeeded in making the sensational find of the skull fragment belonging to the previously missing link between the ape and prehistoric man. Dubois gave it the species name* Pithecanthropus erectus *(upright ape-man).*

The second example is Schliemann. He was an enthusiastic reader of the Iliad *from early on, and spared no effort in finding Troy. Will, intellect, and method formed the basis of the search here.*

Following the example of searching and finding, Dubois and Schliemann preserved a remarkable core of an "uncanny" sort. In the predetermining of the fixed goal, that is, against all this rationality, we notice an unfathomableness here, whose emphasis was contained in the perseverance, in the belief in itself, in the methodology, and was not without intuition. Here
OE 153 we must bear in mind that a castle city like Troy was speculatively assumed to exist just like the *Pithecanthropus.* The goals were relative realities. The actual finding of the missing link and a castle city remained a great bonus. Overall, however, it was a location-oriented search juxtaposed with a much more spiritual activity.

Ingenuity springs from the "center" of the respective person, almost like a tentative divining rod, as a discharge, which *causal thinking* in a particular auspicious relation to ingenuity need not damage. The center as an overpowering neutrality, calm, and strength is capable of integrating the mind at intervals.

Though productive progress can possibly *be impeded by too much conscious reflection, it is still* an important factor (self-criticism) not only *for scientific research* but also *for art.* In contrast to reflection, which is more or less something stationary, finding is linked to a movement, to a movement toward a point that reveals itself later on as "forward." Incidentally, the following can also apply *to the artistic process:* as a complement to his perceptions, *intelligence has never harmed an artist. Intelligence must be employed at the right moment. Still, it is not critical for discovering new values.* Deep thinking can nevertheless meaningfully approach the artistic state, the highest state.

In a brilliant state, everything becomes brilliant. As Goethe put it, "When Schiller cut his nails he was greater than these gentlemen."

In all the achievements of mankind's luminaries, discoveries and inventions are not isolated complexes, as superficial thinking is generally used to assuming. Dispositions of an original kind must be present, even if in some cases they initially appear only hesitatingly. Still, they are latently perceptible on a broad basis in various statements and actions. Moreover, there is a fundamental component: a character complex is always attached to the identity of the inventor of new values, which undermines the ingenious, since ethical considerations accompany the intuitive—because that which helps bring the ingenious to light is also the exemplary aspect of the achiever's human personality. If, for instance, we read about the legendary events in the life of Buddha and Christ
OE 154 and in the behavior of both in all of life's questions, the totalities are thereby revealed that make them into culmination points of humanity. *Pars pro toto,* the part for the whole. The total becomes the unusually bold, it breaks every convention; at the same time, it becomes the self-evident, the most simple, the "natural," the exemplary. *Brilliant people are not just discoverers and inventors. The higher their interests lead, the more universal their behavior will also become in all matters and situations.*

In this respect, *the fame of the great printer Gutenberg lies chiefly in the ethics of his handcraft approach, in the magnificence of his applied-art results. The use of mobile alphabetic characters instead of woodblocks for entire pages is only a part of the total work of an outstanding individual.*

Here we should mention Marie Sklodowska-Curie. Antoine Becquerel discovered waves of radiation that were emitted by uranium. Marie Curie controlled this radioactivity and discovered the same radioactivity in other minerals as well. She concluded that an unknown, radioactive element must occasionally be in effect. She commented to her sister: "The element is there. Now we must find it."

Genius appears in the most simple, by building step-by-step and always using logic, hypothesis, deduction, practical research, and intuition at the right moment. It would be going too far to also report on the intuitions, thoughts, and paths

that were followed by individuals such as Broglie, Dirac, Edison, Einstein, Heisenberg, Jordan, Laue, Robert Meyer, Planck, Röntgen, Rutherford, Schrödinger, and Hahn. Even so, it is certain that the same circumstances were available to them.

P. 162 *Every true invention contains new possibilities* in itself. *Accordingly, many later achievements were based on Heinrich Hertz's waves and on Max Planck's developments in science and on those of Cézanne in art. These initiators had everything within themselves.* But *they were not able not "know" which of their stages would* develop as a stopping point, sideroad, or connecting thread.

OE 155 *Marie Curie thus believed that her first stop, polonium, was the great result of her work. Cézanne's formal inventions* are already stronger *in his middle creative period.* But *originality* also announced itself *in his beginnings* despite the traditional component.

Artists and scientists are identical in their method of discovery, their ingenuity.

We should incidentally note that there is no evidence in art, in contrast to science. Art demands a belief in art. Science seen from the outside as an entire complex, however, also cannot be proven. Science as an entire field presupposes a belief in science.

P. 163 *By contrast, the epigones know. . . because they have self-contained models before them.*

OE 156 *By contrast, the epigones know. . . because they have self-contained models before them.* The structure of their perceptions and how these come about and, linked to this, their technical method of painting for rendering a picture are completely different than those of the discoverer of new values.

P. 171 *. . . from the goal-oriented path. . . . In an artist's larger production, it is striking. . .*

OE 164 *. . . from the goal-oriented path.* With the result of his work, the original artist does not arrive at his predetermined vision. The stronger, the strongest, the unknown attracts the strongest.

In an artist's larger production, it is striking. . .

P. 171 *Here we could also mention the contradiction . . .*

OE 164–65 When we are dealing with weaker works, more of the known remains at play, a vague goal is achieved, experiences are applied. The unknown, fetched out of the void, is not preceded by any guiding principles; it cannot be sought, it can only be found.

Here we could also mention the comparison . . .

P. 172 *. . . it is of primary importance and cannot be formally established.*

OE 166 *It is of primary importance and cannot be formally established,* has no goals. The necessary space and rank for the unknown remain thereby secured in the process of production.

P. 174 *Considered at a later point in time . . .*

OE 168–75 *Considered at a later* time, *the individual works look very similar to one another, and the series and eras draw* optically directly *together as in a broad spatial perspective. The lifework, as it were, thus emerges through continuous addition. Time moves only forward,* and all developments grow along this course. *A tree blossoms and produces in its time, but can no*

OE 169 *longer become the seed—there is no moving backward.* Only the known retains that which pauses (even if with modifications via the changing connections), whereas the original artist repeatedly situates himself in relation to the unknown. The original values that become visible through the artist and the forces that he thereby produces are universally constant. Developments through the relationship to the unknown become aspermically generated products of life as it were through its power of attraction. (According to the latest scientific findings, the cosmos grows in the unknown.)

The optimism that contemporary art displays for the unknown also appears in a striking fact: *the declining value of the sketch, the study that preceded a painting earlier on. The difference between preparatory work and painting is blurred, even erased. In a certain respect, we can speak of a reversal. Cézanne elevated the sketch to a painting. This way, all the initially flowing energy in the picture becomes visible. Nothing is lost on the methodical path of production. If we* compara-

tively *consider the different versions of his large composition of* The Bathers *(beg. 1890s), the viewer never experiences the same sensation twice, despite the similarity in pictorial arrangement. Even if Cézanne had aimed at further developing*

P. 175 *and concentrating the second picture based on the experience of the first, something entirely different nevertheless emerged with the second version. For the viewer, these differences between the various versions* stand out, and their main values *thereby become evident. The now-famous areas that were left bare white might indicate the artist's lack of resolution, a hesitation, but* moreover, *also* the *instinctive exclusion of not entirely matured feelings, which would not have prevented another, less responsible, painter,* in favor of a completed painting, *from* perfecting the picture and covering the blank spots. *Cézanne, by contrast, elevated the phase to the final phase.* The white areas provided the plateau for the development of cubism.

The preparations that were necessary earlier—studies, sketches, exact *preliminary drawings—provided certain opposing forces with an entry point into the work.* They came *through transference and* thereby *repetition,* whereby *a cold-*

OE 170 *ness emerged that introduced skillfulness and mannerism. The preparations within contemporary methods of production* need not be *shorter,* smaller, that is, *more superficial. On the whole, however, they concern the condition of the artist to a greater extent.* What also develops *in the sequence of* emerging is that *the picture contains the preparation for many other possibilities, from which the next picture* can *then* be conceived. Consequently, *the sketch is not so much a* specially oriented *preparatory work; rather, it takes on* a *stronger* general *value* of its own—*or becomes a simple form note from a repository of forms that* otherwise *exists unconsciously. Not even the format sizes offer clues* that identify works as *more preparatory or* later on as *a climax. The sequence of production certainly displays climaxes, although they are not conspicuous enough to be defined clearly.* This sequence is especially remarkable in regard to small and large transformations and is traceable in works by those painters who make themselves noticeable productively. The individual pieces offer by no means only documents of a moment or even the "mood" and thereby the merely suggested or fugitive manner of painting. The pictures are solidly seen through to the end, be it in a thoroughly vis-

ible stroke or in a completely sorted out end-form development, which favors the absolute over the stroke-based and dispersive.

In each case, the completed pieces *invisibly contain all the stages that* differentiated the earlier division into *sketch and picture. The stages in the production process of the painting, the relief, and the sculpture become the continuous process of origin* by relying on the unknown.

The flow of time, a permanency of eternal present and at the same time the forward into the *future, leads continuously toward the unknown.* The empty calendar pages fill with the hieroglyphs of life's events. The dawning day is like the development of a work, stringing together the arabesques of art like colored moments. The mysteries of the world become pictorial in their emergence. Cronus devours his children, the days. Life is a passage. The events are the unknown becoming known, which automatically becomes active and then passes away as that which has become known. *The unknown is an exponent that constantly leads, accompanies,* and superimposes
OE 171 *mankind* and that, as a new birth in transformation, constantly forms new relationships to the new-existential. It is up to art to make *the passage of life a lasting experience* through the unknown in art, which, however, differs from unknown future events. *That which the artist* creates from the mass *moves the world* through its becoming known, as a force that defines through influence. *It is more unexpected than all future events because it is creation.* It is continued existence for those able to perceive time and movement in the stillness of forms.

This also *applies particularly to contemporary art, which is an art of movement from the fundamental current.* This is not to defend the affected gesture and every triviality of amazement. They do not contain what is original. Great works *are* always *simple, clear, and without pose. They do not look as if they were made by someone, but as if they emerged on their own. Nature has expressed itself. As Goethe put it:*

P. 176 > *Supreme works of art are created simultaneously as the highest works of nature by man, according to true and natural laws. . . . Every art demands the whole man, and the highest degree of art complete humanity.*

If man abandons the instinctive, *feeling-based current of nature and turns to the world of thought,* the conscience, *he will*

be exposed to errors during production. Feelings and reflections are not necessarily opposites, however; they are merely different, like mother and son. A natural balance occurs automatically since the human being cannot remain continually in a state of consciousness for a long time (Goethe). If the artist considers a beginning stage of his work and in the process develops a consciously scrutinizing, critical standpoint beyond the pure sensation-related component, then the directly following action comes into play from the conscious component, when continuing or pursuing an intention toward improvement. *Without a doubt, consciousness* also *repeatedly monitors the purely handcrafted matters of its actions* in contrast to the perceptual component of that based in handcraft. Conscious working always proceeds only piecemeal and opposes creation, which alone *leads to significant values.* As Schiller wrote to Goethe on January 2, 1798, in an exchange of letters:

OE 172

> Your own way of alternating between reflection and production is really enviable and admirable. These operations are completely separate in you, and that just ensures that both are carried out purely as operations. As long as you work you are really in the dark, and the light is in you alone; and when you begin to reflect, the inner light emerges from you and illuminates the objects, yourself, and others. In me, the two kinds of effect mix and not all that favorably.

As Goethe wrote to Schiller on March 6, 1800:

> *I believe that everything the genius does as a genius happens unconsciously. The person of genius can also act sensibly, according to careful consideration, out of conviction; but all that just happens on the side. No work of genius can be improved by reflection and its nearest consequence, freed from its mistakes; but genius can gradually elevate itself through reflection and deed in such a way that it finally produces exemplary works.*

Conscious work does not lead to artistic value, especially not the total result, which always surprises the artist. This surprise also occurs when the work emerges according to preparatory works, dispositions, or plans. We must point out, however, that the production process is movement, which possesses its specific qualities. The direction of the movement within the production processes is varied. The general flow

can result from main points. In literary works, those with a precise, content-related, or formal tension and final resolution are built up by this conclusion. By contrast, the contemporary play, lyric poetry, novel, and film (and musical works as well) have the same direction that the creator took during production: the prevailing, cursive movement and direction from beginning to end (without final effect), which now point beyond. The artist thus trusts much more in his genius and in the unknown.

OE 173 Within the artistic production process, reflecting can only capture the respective available stage of the product, not the larger process. In terms of art, a learned accountability is no doubt present, in the sense of the artist's critique of his work, or in the sense of a general view of art. This is an independent art.

It is a sign of artistic instinct when the artist discovers the constant values in the works of earlier masters in terms of sensations, once he experiences and recognizes them. Through his discovering them, through his being attracted to them, these values are certainly something related to him but at the same time are also something unknown. They excite him, they are a support, a model in the superordinated, in the intensity of and in the faith in his own strength. Once he has made this his own, he has his center, and his own strength pushes on toward self-representation. This individual, artistic power derives from a great universality and per se has an absolute connection to everything. It is based on a rank-related general layer, which earlier was clear and general and now is no longer visible in civilized countries: in the sort of natural action that belongs to general rendering activity and which is expressed in so-called folk art.

Folk art is based on comprehensive ties. They are ties to the tribe or the nation and thus to geographic, regional districts as well as to locally occurring materials. It is buttressed by the indigenous substance of the magical or religious. The rendering power is strong in the totality and lies in unity and purity, which must not be disturbed by anything foreign (e.g., the Great Wall of China). The art of primitive peoples was destroyed by the intrusion of foreigners from other levels of civilization, just as folk art was indirectly destroyed by the handcraft industry in civilized countries, which would not

have been possible without the preceding exponentiation of the art of the individual. Individual art is now entitled to all the powers to which folk art was entitled in earlier times. Individual art is not regionally restricted. It eradicates national boundaries: "All men will become brothers . . ." (Schiller)

The general idea of freedom is conjured up by that of individual freedom.

OE 174 Goethe has written:

> National literature does not mean much now, the epoch of world literature is near, and everyone must contribute to hasten the arrival of this epoch.

Contemporary circumstances *demand that the individual artist* absorb *all forces*. The rays of derivation must bundle, gather themselves together in the focus of the single individual, and it is not unusual that the individual artist often feels his aloneness quite bitterly. In folk art, by contrast, the same process of absorbing forces had a social effect.

In contemporary art, we can recognize a trajectory that strives toward universality. The relationships to everything are a certain fundamental tone: the state of being responsible toward everything. It is not autism, the exaggeration of the individual, that induces producing; only that which demonstrates a primeval fluidity is alive. The work of art can reveal little but contain everything.

Folk art demonstrates that everyone can produce art. The eternal handcraft, the eternal autodidact, the eternal dilettante, and the strength of the anonymous individual come into effect. A piece of visual art is the justness of the work, the handcraft, the feeling for the material and tool. We could say that the artist is the last craftsman in the civilized countries, in countries that now lack handcraft, even if he partially uses technically developed devices. Even if he enters into the realm of the machine world, the artist preserves in himself everything primary in his constant shifting between the elemental and the developed. A degree of communication is specially developed in this combination in the artist; everyone bears it in himself. It is the feeling for world matter, for its metamorphoses and morphologies. *The artistic person is the final human being, the ultimate human being. He is receptive to all*

stimuli, participates in them, is part of them. The reflecting conscious, the last human development, enables him, with the help of knowledge, to weigh things retrospectively, whether in general or in regard to the individual work. Making the unknown known, however, is left to other forces.

OE 175 The work of art bears qualities of mimetic, poetic, and above all eidetic origin. The harnessed value of what was unknown binds up the sheaf. *Since that which was unknown manifests itself most purely in form, the artist does not reveal its secret—even as that which has become known*. Art as an image of the flowing metamorphosis becomes art = a manifestation of nature.

From Constructivism to Form Art

The Unknown in Art as the Self-Positioning
of an Artist in Inner Emigration

Tobias Hoffmann

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The National Socialists' rise to power in Germany in 1933 signaled a decisive caesura in the development of European politics and art. Important centers of modernism—such as the Bauhaus; Das Neue Frankfurt; and the constructivist group Die Abstrakten Hannover founded by Kurt Schwitters, Walter Dexel, and Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart—were dissolved or lost their most prominent representatives through emigration. After the Soviet Union ceased to exist as a center of nonrepresentational modernism at the end of the 1920s, the Nazis' assent to power also marked the temporary end of modernism in Germany.[1] The outbreak of World War II in 1939 and the occupation of France in 1940 paralyzed the avant-garde throughout Europe.

Although Willi Baumeister's art had met with hostility even before the Nazi period and he was dismissed from his position as typography professor at the Städelsche Kunstschule in Frankfurt am Main at the end of March 1933, he nonetheless remained in National Socialist Germany, where he went into inner emigration. Interestingly, if we consider Baumeister's entire oeuvre, we discover that the period between 1933 and 1945 proved to be especially fertile and versatile. In these years he produced a great number of new and—at first glance—quite disparate groups of works that, compared to his art before 1933, reveal a decisive shift in and further development of his painting. In 1943, toward the end of this work phase, Baumeister began writing his manuscript *The Unknown in Art*, first published in Stuttgart in 1947.[2]

At the age of fifty-four Baumeister found himself in a seemingly hopeless situation in warring, NS Germany. In 1943 the outcome of World War II was by no means a foregone conclusion, and thus it was not clear whether constructivism or the project of modernism would ever be resumed in Europe. Neither was it clear whether Baumeister would ever be able to publish *The Unknown in Art*. During World War II, ten years after the Nazis' rise to power and thus the beginning of his inner emigration, Baumeister composed a comprehensive theoretical work. *The Unknown in Art* is the unique document of an artist who presents his position in this restrictive situation.

[1] After Stalin's rise to power in 1924, constructivism increasingly lost ground to state-promoted Socialist Realism.

[2] The second (1960), third (1974), and fourth (1988) editions were published in Cologne.

Baumeister's artistic career prior to 1933 was closely linked with the European-wide development of constructivism. Influenced by the Dutch de Stijl group[3] and the Russian suprematists,[4] the term "constructivism" was coined in the Soviet Union in 1921.[5] It quickly became a general term denoting all artists in Europe working nonrepresentationally whose work was based on a geometric formal language. Baumeister was a member of the constructivist avant-garde movement in Europe up to 1933 and participated in its most important events and meetings; his works were shown in the major exhibitions on the movement and included in the first publications on constructivism.

In 1928 Baumeister became professor of typography and graphic design at the Städelsche Kunstschule in Frankfurt am Main. Entirely in line with the ideals of constructivism, he considered the two disciplines of painting and typography to be equally important and did not distinguish hierarchically between fine and applied art.[6] Along with Jan Tschichold, César Domela, Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart, and Kurt Schwitters, Baumeister founded the Ring Neue Werbegestalter (Circle of new com-

[3] In 1917 the de Stijl artists' group emerged simultaneously with the founding of the journal *De Stijl* in The Hague, publishing its first manifesto in 1918. The group's members included painters, sculptors, and architects. Among its founding members were Theo van Doesburg, Robert van't Hoff, Wilmos Huszár, Bart van der Leck, Piet Mondrian, J. J. P. Oud, Georges Vantongerloo, and Jan Wils.

[4] The last futurist exhibition of paintings, *0.10,* presented in St. Petersburg in 1915, showed Kazimir Malevich's picture *Black Square on White Ground* (1913) for the first time and published his suprematist manifesto. Because this work was first exhibited in 1915, there is some confusion about its date. Often also referred to as simply *Black Square,* it is now preserved in the Tretyakov State Gallery in Moscow.

[5] See in this connection Christina Lodder, "Der Übergang zum Konstruktivismus," in *Die grosse Utopie: Die russische Avantgarde 1915–1932,* exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main: Schirn Kunsthalle, 1992), 95–108; and Hubertus Gassner, "Konstruktivisten: Die Moderne auf dem Weg in die Modernisierung," ibid., 109–49. "The word 'constructivism' had arisen around the beginning of 1921 in the Moscow Inkhuk (Institute of Artistic Culture). The group first exhibited at Obmokhu in Moscow on May 22, 1921. In March 1922 an installation photo was reproduced in *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet* as the 'konstruktivistische Raum' [Constructivist room], making the concept known in Germany. The concept was given theoretical explanation in a lecture at Inkhuk by Varvara Stepanova on December 21, 1921. A decisive presentation of Russian tendencies would occur six months after the Düsseldorf exhibition at the *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung* at the Berlin Galerie Van Diemen (October 15–December 1, 1922)." Timothy O. Benson, "Exchange and Transformation: The Internationalization of the Avant-Garde(s) in Central Europe," in *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation 1910–1930,* exh. cat. (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2002), 65n10)

[6] Lajos Kassák writes in the epilogue of *Buch neuer Künstler*: "It was the first attempt to demonstrate the close and mutually supportive connection between painting, sculpture, architecture, and technology." Lajos Kassák and László Moholy-Nagy, *Buch neuer Künstler* (1922; facsimile edition, Budapest: Corvina, 1977).

mercial designers)[7] in 1927. Like Baumeister the majority of this group's founding members were artists and illustrators. In keeping with the ideas of constructivism, they sought, as did the Bauhaus, to transform everyday life through applied art. In Frankfurt am Main Baumeister also collaborated on the Das Neue Frankfurt (The new Frankfurt),[8] next to the Bauhaus the most ambitious European-wide project of modernism at the end of the 1920s.[9] Supervised by the city planning commissioner Ernst May, a series of new settlements were built in Frankfurt from 1926 to 1931. May initiated a major housing program that redefined ideas about housing and design in the modern spirit. Baumeister participated in these developments[10] and for a period designed the journal published by May, *Das Neue Frankfurt,* through which the project achieved great prominence. At the outset of his inner emigration in 1933 Baumeister was deeply rooted in the concepts and formal language of constructivism. To date these circumstances, which were decisive for Baumeister's later oeuvre and especially for his theoretical work *The Unknown in Art,* have received little attention in studies on the artist. Scholars often use the text as a quarry for quotations, without more precisely illuminating the art-historical context of the writings.[11]

[7] See on this *"Typographie kann unter Umständen Kunst sein": Vordemberge-Gildewart, Typographie und Werbegestaltung,* exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Museum Wiesbaden, 1990).

[8] See on this Christoph Mohr and Michael Müller, *Funktionalität und Moderne: Das Neue Frankfurt und seine Bauten 1925–1933* (Cologne: R. Müller Verlag, 1984); and *Bauhausstil oder Konstruktivismus: Aufbruch der Moderne in den Zentren Berlin, Bauhaus, Hannover, Stuttgart, Frankfurt,* exh. cat. (Cologne: Wienand, 2008).

[9] In a letter dated November 24, 1927, the then Bauhaus director Hannes Meyer wrote to Baumeister: "I envy you regarding 'Frankfurt.' During our last visit there my wife and I really enjoyed the milieu. The spontaneity in [Fritz] Wichert's circle does one good, it's better than behaving like mummies. We were really reminded of the liveliness there in Frankfurt, how unchanging everything here is. We don't want to die in Dessau. So our most official congratulations on your new job." Letter in the Archiv Baumeister im Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

[10] See on this Viola Hildebrand-Schat, "Willi Baumeister: Die Frankfurter Jahre 1928–1933," in *Willi Baumeister: Die Frankfurter Jahre 1928–1933,* exh. cat. (Frankfurt am Main: Museum Giersch, 2005), 11–17; Wolfgang Kermer, "Willi Baumeister und 'Das Neue Frankfurt': Ein Beitrag zu Baumeisters Frankfurter Jahren (1928–1933)," in *Willi Baumeister: Typographie und Reklamegestaltung,* ed. Wolfgang Kermer, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1989), 212ff.

[11] Editor's note: this gap is filled by the dissertation by Tobias Hoffmann, "Formkunst und Konstruktivismus: Willi Baumeisters Schrift *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst* als Selbstpositionierung eines Künstlers der Moderne in der inneren Emigration," doctoral dissertation, Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart, 2007.

The Intellectual Background of Baumeister's Writings

Without addressing his own works of art in *The Unknown in Art,* Baumeister wrote what at first glance appears to be a general book on art, which presents his philosophy of art and is argued with the aid of numerous quotations. If we consider Baumeister's collection of historical ideas, we see that he primarily draws on texts by Immanuel Kant and Meister Eckhart, but also on writings by Friedrich Schiller, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Gustav Jung, Leopold Ziegler, and Rudolf Otto, all of whom Baumeister quotes in *The Unknown in Art* and who—in almost exemplary fashion—represent German intellectual history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Baumeister's ideas chiefly draw on German intellectual history and aptly exemplify the reception of philosophical positions from the nineteenth century to the modern era. Kant's concepts form the basis of German idealism and romanticism. We may regard Baumeister's interest in Meister Eckhart as an intellectual rediscovery of idealism and romanticism, of which Eckhart was a precursor. Nietzsche is the great critic of idealism. By contrast, Ziegler can be characterized as the beneficiary of this cosmos. Striking, however, is the absence of references to more progressive literature from the first half of the twentieth century—here we might mention, for instance, Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno.[12]

The quotations from Eckhart[13] and Kant are indispensable for understanding *The Unknown in Art.* Baumeister develops an extensive theory of perception that is in turn based on Eckhart's Neoplatonism and philosophy. With regard to the artistic act of creation and therefore the second decisive aspect of his art theory, Baumeister aligns himself with Kant's aesthetics of genius *(Genieästhetik).* Baumeister introduces his perception theory with a quotation from Eckhart. Meister Eckhart,[14] a fourteenth-century German Dominican monk, represents the tradition of Neoplatonic teachings.[15] For

[12] Beat Wyss refers to several similarities between Baumeister's and Adorno's approaches to art theory. There is no proof, however, that Baumeister ever read Adorno's work. Correlations, particularly regarding the concept of nature, can most probably be explained by their mutual reception of German idealism. Beat Wyss, "Willi Baumeister und die Kunsttheorie der Nachkriegszeit," in *Die Zähmung der Avantgarde: Zur Rezeption der Moderne in den 50er Jahren,* ed. Gerda Breuer (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1997), 55–71.

[13] Baumeister probably learned of Meister Eckhart through Leopold Ziegler. Ziegler refers to Meister Eckhart several times in his book *Überlieferung,* which Baumeister owned, although the quote Baumeister used is not found in Ziegler's book. He therefore must have used another Eckhart source outside his own library.

[14] Also often spelled—as Baumeister does—Eckehart.

him the aim of existence was the *unio mystica,* the "mystical union" between the believer and the most supreme and first principle, which is God in the Christian interpretation of Neoplatonism. But even the concept of God is seen as a restriction of the first principle, the *hen* (Greek "one"), which itself is beyond all other concepts. Baumeister underpins and legitimizes the process of artistic abstraction by drawing on the oldest form of an intellectual theory of abstraction, which was conveyed via Neoplatonism over the course of centuries. That is, he adopts thoughts and concepts that appear useful for his considerations. In Baumeister's abstraction theory, the artist liberates himself from the reality that surrounds him and reflects a transcendent reality in his art. Consequently, in *The Unknown in Art* he completely separates perception from the subjectivity of the human being and rejects all sensory perception as the basis of art. Therefore, art can under no circumstances be an illustration or a pastiche of objects in nature that have been perceived by the senses. Rather, works of art convey absolute knowledge, which the viewer can receive directly, at any time, without prior knowledge, simply through his readiness to engage with the work.

When Baumeister takes up the aesthetics of genius, his second important source of intellectual history, he reflects on the relationship of the artist to nature. Like Kant he argues here with two concepts of nature: one that can be perceived by the senses and one that lies below the surface of visible nature. For Baumeister, as for Kant, the true artist is "in nature" when he participates in transcendent nature. Baumeister understands this transcendent nature as a continual play of the modulation and metamorphoses of forms, which are always a modification of absolute, geometrical forms. What appears to us as visible nature is only the result of the actions of transcendent nature. In the unconscious creative act, genius plays a direct role in transcendent nature. The work of art emerges free from the subjectivity of the artist in the process of unconscious creation, guided by transcendent nature. Through its participation, the work of art is an element of nature. It is, however, superior to visible nature.

[15] In addition to Plato we should mention in particular Plotinus, Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Nicolaus Cusanus, and Giordano Bruno. See on this subject Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980).

Neoplatonism and Kant's Concept of Genius as a Means to a Higher Objectivity

For both Kant and Baumeister the artist is accorded a very special role. He is an exceptional human being who stands out significantly from the mass of simple people. At the same time, however, he loses all subjectivity in this elevated position—he becomes the "membrane" of a higher objectivity. In his reference to Kant's concept of genius Baumeister's artistic self-conception reveals a split between the elevated status and the total disappearance of the person of the artist as an individual. As in the theory of perception, this reveals a great distrust of subjectivity and individuality. In the unconscious creative act the artist becomes the tool of absolute objectivity. His work—art—is an expression and the only representable and intelligible form of this absolute objectivity. Through his works and actions the artist is a visionary who shows humankind new paths, who provides insights that can be conveyed only through art.

Baumeister saw, particularly since the beginning of the nineteenth century, an art gaining ground that was shaped by subjectivity and lacked any sort of objectivity. Here, the artist is isolated in his work and thus develops forms that are highly personal and eschew justification. It is an individual art that is defined exclusively by the artist's subjectivity; it can also only be understood by him alone and therefore has relevance only for him. Baumeister, on the other hand, aspired to achieve an objectivity that integrates the work of the artist into an absolute context. In his view works should no longer be the personal constructs of an individual, but part of a system of justification and legitimization. In this way the artist is never isolated, but in his unconscious work part of the objectivizing system. His works are expressions of absolute objectivity and contain no personally discernible forms, and are not products of an individual's imagination.[16] Absolute objectivity exceeds conceptual thinking and can therefore manifest itself in works of

[16] With this theoretical approach, Baumeister essentially turns around his personal situation of inner emigration, as this is precisely what the National Socialists accused the "degenerate artists" of: their works of art were the outgrowth of a sick mind and consequently something absolutely individual. Their art contradicted the legitimizing higher objectivity of the "*völkisch* [Aryan] spirit." The "popular sentiment," the "community of fellow Germans" would determine the kind of art that is acceptable. In the context of the "national community," the artist automatically created *völkisch* art. From the viewpoint of the National Socialists the modern artist was outside the objectifying and legitimating national community. Thus in the Third Reich in 1943 Baumeister was isolated with his art, and at this time, from the National Socialists' perspective, his art was deemed individual.

art since they can also be perceived beyond conceptual thinking. The works of art are thereby objective, although and precisely because in their origin and reception they are not dependent on rational thinking, thinking in concepts. The nonrepresentational creation is evident per se and must reject representational references because these would correspond to conceptual thinking.

This means that the reception of art can also only function antirationally. For the viewer the objectivity of the work is not to be approached rationally; he can, however, experience absolute objectivity through the work via sensory perception. For this purpose he must overcome conceptual thinking while viewing the work and attain a direct, if you will, mystical unity with the work.

A demand for objectivity is the core statement of the art-philosophical part of Baumeister's book. He arrives at this statement circuitously, drawing on the philosophies of Meister Eckhart and Kant, consciously choosing the philosophical positions of these two thinkers. Baumeister not only adopts them thoroughly, but also quotes them explicitly, citing them as guarantors. A transcendentally based, absolute objectivity is a fundamental idea in their thinking. Baumeister thus favors Kant's positions of the genius aesthetics above others in which a transcendent basis plays no part.

Objectivity in *The Unknown in Art* and Objectivity in Constructivism

In his categorical aspiration to objectivity Baumeister deals with an elementary principle of constructivism that from the start was crucial to the leading protagonists of the movement.[17] They rejected the artist as an independent individual and understood his work as part of a contemporary creative process, of "the principle of new art," which determines the form and method of art production. By participating in this process, the artist

[17] At the Düsseldorf Congress in 1922 Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky, and Hans Richter declared: "We define progressive artists as those who deny and contest the priority of the subjective in art, who construct their works not on the basis of lyrical caprice, but in accordance with the new formative principle, the systematic organization of means in the service of universally comprehensible expression." Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky, and Hans Richter, "Declaration of the International Fraction of Constructivists at the First International Congress of Progressive Artists" (May 30, 1922), published in *De Stijl* 4 (1923), 61–64, repr. in *Art in Theory 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas,* ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (1992; Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, new ed. 2003), 315.

loses his subjectivity and achieves an objective work.[18] This demand for objectivity in art long remained one of the uncontested tenets underlying constructivism and was reconfirmed in 1930 by Theo van Doesburg in his article "Commentaires à la base de la peinture concrète" (Comments on the basis of concrete painting).[19]

As a member of the constructivist movement Baumeister had certainly internalized this fundamental demand. Since he himself was directly involved in the movement's decisive developmental stages, we can assume that he was quite familiar with the texts quoted here. In *The Unknown in Art* he adheres emphatically to the objectivity of art. The "principle of new art" uniting all artists and generating objectivity, however, no longer plays a role. Instead, Baumeister now defines the artistic creative process transcendentally: without the constant reconnection to a transcendent principle, he writes, the artist would not be capable of going about his activities; it alone lends the work objectivity. In this way Baumeister argumentatively devises a double basis. The works of art per se are objective—if the means of creation is in doubt, however, the artist can always refer to his actions guided by the transcendent principle. The community of artists legitimized in constructivism, the principle of new art, is replaced by the new objectivity of the individual artist, by the aesthetics of genius. Baumeister re-

[18] "Constructivist: the new design of life according to our contemporary awareness using universal expressive means. The logically explainable use of these means of expression. As opposed to the production of all subjective, chiefly emotion-oriented art.

Constructive: the realization of practical tasks (including all questions regarding art). In the spirit of the modern working method. As opposed to creative, subjectively limited improvisation. . . . Creative: that which in its consequences essentially reshapes real life (including the invention and discovery of new materials). Every object a requirement." "Manifesto of the Constructivist International Creative Working Community" (Weimar, 1922), quoted and translated from *K. I. Konstruktivistische Internationale Schöpferische Arbeitsgemeinschaft 1922–1927: Utopie für eine Europäische Kultur,* ed. Bernd Finkeldey et al., exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1992), 307.

[19] "The spirit has achieved a state of maturity. It requires clear, intellectual means to manifest itself in a concrete manner. The big obstacles on the path to a universal art were always the predominance of individualism and the regionally bound mind. . . . Lyric poetry, drama, Symbolism, sensitivity, the unconscious, dream, inspiration, and so on are only inferior substitutes for creative thinking. In all areas of human action, only the intellect has ever mattered. The evolution of painting is nothing but the intellectual search for truth by means of visual culture. Beyond that which the mind creates, there is only the Baroque, Fauvism, animalism, sensualism, sentimentalism, and the hyper-baroque admission of weakness: imagination. The dawning age is by contrast the age of certainty and thus of perfection. Everything is measurable, even the mind with its 199 dimensions. We are painters who think and measure." Theo van Doesburg, "Commentaires à la base de la peinture concrète," *Art concret* 1 (April 1930), 2–4, quoted and translated from *Sind auf einer Leinwand eine Frau, ein Baum oder eine Kuh etwa konkrete Elemente? Konkrete Kunst, Manifeste und Künstlertexte,* ed. Margit Weinberg Staber (Zurich: Stiftung für konstruktive und konkrete Kunst Zürich, 2001), 26–27.

affirms the constructivist demand for objectivity, which the community of artists had formulated rather generally, using a double philosophical means—through Meister Eckhart and Kant.

Indeed we may understand this argumentation as Baumeister's adaptation of the constructivist demand to the personal circumstances of his life. International constructivism, the Europe-wide project of modernism, had been destroyed by the National Socialists. Baumeister was isolated and therefore attempted to reestablish constructivist concepts and to place them on foundations of intellectual history that were recognized by the educated middle class and socially accepted. Nonetheless, we can detect a critical attitude toward constructivism, whose claim to objectivity, in Baumeister's view, is not yet certain, but needs to undergo further investigation. Baumeister's turn to nature also suggests a clear distancing from constructivism. His artistic subjects are no longer the wonders of technology and the dynamism of modern life but, rather, nature. Yet this, too, manifests a striving toward objectivity. What becomes the focus of Baumeister's interest is not the relative, subjective, sensuous experience of nature and its exploration, but the eternally valid laws of *natura naturans* (Lat. "creative nature"), the objective nature that lies below the surface of apparent nature.

The Unknown in Art in Dialogue with the Art Theories of Klee and Kandinsky

With the pair of concepts "genius" and "nature" *The Unknown in Art* is unmistakably linked to the art theories of Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, both of whom critically explore constructivism, particularly in their writings of the 1920s. Both argue in favor of using the topos of the genius aesthetic and describe the special role of nature in relation to the artist and as the genesis of all art. For both Klee and Baumeister the exploration of nature is the starting point of art, whereby Klee also rejects the classic representation of nature, which merely depicts the surfaces of things. He strives instead for a holistic way of seeing, which loosens the gaze onto nature from the surface of things. Klee proceeds from a two-part perception of the world, which he defines using the pair of terms "seeing" and "looking." It is in this conceptual pair of "seeing" and "looking," and the demand for another perception of the world linked with it, that the concepts of Klee and Baumeister meet. In contrast to Klee Baumeister combines this demand with an extensively argued theory of perception whereas Klee leaves the question of how we can achieve an "inner view" of nature open-ended.

Baumeister places great importance on precisely the explanation of this inner view, since for him it plays a significant role in achieving a new objectivity, the objectivity of the unconsciously and therefore no longer subjectively creating artist. Klee, on the other hand, rejects objectivity and instead demands the intuition of the artist-individual. Klee formulates this in his essay "Exakte Versuche im Bereich der Kunst" (Exact experiments in the realm of art) of 1928, which can be regarded as a critical examination of constructivism.[20] He honors constructivism's efforts to overcome the "impressive" and its aim to arrive at the essential. But in his view constructivism is only an intermediate step, which is completed by intuition and thereby attains "totalization." Here, Klee links the terms "intuition" and "genius." Especially interesting in this context is that Klee resorts to the topos of the genius concept in his critique of constructivism. Without delving more deeply into the genius aesthetic and its concepts, he instead uses the term "genius" rather nonphilosophically, in the sense of its common linguistic usage to criticize constructivism and argue against constructivism's basic demand, objectivity.

Baumeister, by contrast, uses the genius aesthetic and its related concept of nature to reaffirm constructivism's central demand for objectivity.[21] With *The Unknown in Art* Baumeister almost seems to want to respond to Klee. He takes up Klee's nonphilosophical genius argument and counters Klee's writings with a truly philosophically based conceptual construct. To substantiate the seriousness of his philosophical argument, Baumeister now lets the philosophers have their say in extensive quotations and thus discloses the sources of his thinking—whereas Klee only refers to philosophers ironically. Klee's thoughts from the 1920s become relevant for Baumeister in 1943, since it is not until then that he also critically examines constructivism. Both artists recognize constructivism's achievements and nevertheless go beyond them in their understanding of art. In the art theories of Baumeister and Klee, the terms "objectivity" and "intuition" certainly contradict one another; at the same time, however, both artists attempt to overcome constructivism's strict formal language, for

[20] Paul Klee, "Exakte Versuche im Bereich der Kunst," *Bauhaus: Zeitschrift für Gestaltung* 2, nos. 2–3 (February 3, 1928), 17.

[21] Baumeister not only maintained close ties to the Bauhaus through his friend Oskar Schlemmer, who had been a Bauhaus professor since 1920 and in 1928 tried to bring Baumeister to Dessau as an instructor, but was also a good friend of the school's second director, Hannes Meyer (1928–30). In 1929, in response to an invitation from Ernst Kállai, the editorial director of the school's journal *bauhaus*, Baumeister contributed an essay titled "Bildbau" (Picture construction) to the magazine. We can thus presume that Baumeister was also intimately familiar with the Bauhaus texts by Klee.

which Baumeister also expressly praises Klee in *The Unknown in Art*.[22] The investigation of true nature is the basis of overcoming constructivism and simultaneously offers works of art a higher legitimation. We can thus presume that Klee also dealt extensively with the genius aesthetic, although he treats historical texts much more freely than Baumeister.[23] Proceeding from the same philosophical concepts, both artists arrive at a similar understanding of art in their art-theoretical writings.

As is the case with Klee, Kandinsky's time at the Bauhaus is also of particular interest to Baumeister in connection with his writings.[24] There, Kandinsky published *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche (Point and Line to Plane)* in 1926 as part of the series of Bauhaus books, following *Über das Geistige in der Kunst (Concerning the Spiritual in Art)* of 1911, his second important theoretical work.[25] Although in his preface Kandinsky characterizes this second book as an "organic continuation"[26] of his first, it posits a completely changed artistic position. Indeed *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* represents Kandinsky's most serious attempt to come to terms with constructivism. He attempts to define the pictorial means of the point, line, and plane and their respective relationships to one another. He thereby takes up the most important formal elements of constructivism and develops his own methodology for them. Like the constructivists, Kandinsky stresses the necessity of a theoretically based examination and the scientific objectification of these formal elements. At the same time he disputes the constructivists' theoretical interpretation and includes occasional jabs at constructivism.[27] Kandinsky certainly counted constructivism, like abstract art, among pure art, but he clearly prioritized abstract art since it is based on the laws of nature and thus offers room for both, for free and geometric abstract constructions. Kandinsky presents nature as a model for precisely this unity of free and geometric construction.

[22] Willi Baumeister, *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1988), 60; in the present edition, 84.

[23] In his texts Klee refers generally to "the philosophers," which indicates that he was acquainted with the corresponding philosophical texts.

[24] Baumeister maintained relatively close contact with Kandinsky that continued beyond 1933, which is demonstrated by a series of letters in the Archiv Baumeister im Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. In 1935 Kandinsky wrote a text about Baumeister for an exhibition in Milan. We can assume that Baumeister was also familiar with Kandinsky's ideas until far into the 1930s.

[25] Kandinsky was an instructor at the Bauhaus beginning in 1922.

[26] Wassily Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche,* ed. Max Bill, 7th ed. (Bern: Benteli, 1973), 11.

[27] Constructivism is understood as an art that solely develops objective laws for the formal elements.

In his 1935 essay "Die Kunst von heute ist lebendiger denn je" (Today's art is livelier than ever) Kandinsky quite openly attacks constructivism.[28] This text appeared almost ten years after *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* and is one of the important writings that Kandinsky produced in his new home of Paris following the dissolution of the Bauhaus in 1933.[29] Nature now plays a considerably greater role than in *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* and, as a new argumentative element, Kandinsky introduces the term "intuition," which Klee had already used in 1928. Kandinsky contrasts the intellectual manner of approach, which he closely links with a mathematically based art and therefore with constructivism, with "intuition" as a counter-concept: in "normal works of abstract painting"—that is, non-constructivist works—intuition plays a decisive role. Intuition opens up a new way of seeing the world, an "inner view." In this way Kandinsky links the term of "intuition" with the idea of unconscious creation. The artist is guided in the act of unconscious creation; his work is no longer an expression of the artist's independent intention but, rather, mediated through the higher authority of nature. It guides the artist and determines the development of his works. This is not nature as it appears, however, but the "laws of nature in their entirety."

If we compare *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* with Kandinsky's theoretical statements in the mid-1930s, we notice that he then not only quite openly criticizes constructivism, but also accords nature considerably more significance. Moreover, he adopts the term "intuition" from Klee and, in his explanations about the relationship between art and nature, uses some of the components of the genius aesthetic, such as the idea of the unconscious work or the two nature terms *natura naturata* (Lat. "created nature") and *natura naturans* (Lat. "creative nature"). If at the Bauhaus Kandinsky still tried artistically and theoretically to adapt to constructivism, in the mid-1930s he comes close to Klee's anti-constructivist position. Remarkable here is that all these arguments are expounded in the context of a process of rejecting constructivism. In the mid-1930s, after the strongholds of constructivism in Germany had disappeared and the last attempts to establish an international constructivism in 1930–31 in Paris had failed, the ideals of constructivism were still so alive that Kandinsky felt compelled to argue vehemently against them. Kandinsky was obviously in a dilemma: he reject-

[28] Published by Kandinsky in the magazine *Cahiers d'art* 1–4 (1935).

[29] Kandinsky refers several times to this essay in later texts. For instance, in an interview with art dealer Karl Nierendorf in 1937, in *Wassily Kandinsky: Essays über Kunst und Künstler,* ed. Max Bill (Bern: Benteli, 1955), 213.

ed constructivism and at the same time wanted to assert himself as a nonrepresentational artist. He wished to legitimize the nonrepresentational and under no circumstances be counted among the surrealists. Kandinsky's discussion shows that the term "constructivism" was quite virulent even at the end of the 1930s. We can thus presume that his writings also underlie Baumeister's thoughts articulated in *The Unknown in Art*, especially since Baumeister—unlike Klee and Kandinsky—was a member of the constructivist movement until 1933.

We can understand Kandinsky's texts of the 1930s as a link between Klee's and Baumeister's positions, which are similar in their argumentation. Klee indeed accepts some aspects of constructivism, but clearly distances himself from it with the positions he formulated as early as the 1920s. Kandinsky still attempted to adapt to constructivism in the 1920s and did not clearly reject it until the 1930s, when he made reference to Klee's theoretical positions. When Willi Baumeister as a constructivist artist, after ten years of inner emigration, examined this decisive concept for his artistic work, the art theories of the 1930s were naturally of great importance to him. Since he also judged constructivism rather critically in 1943, Klee's and Kandinsky's arguments were especially interesting to him. The genius aesthetic as a topos and the special role that nature plays in relation to the artist and as the starting point of all art were argued by Klee, Kandinsky, and Baumeister. *The Unknown in Art* is thus linked to Klee's and Kandinsky's artistic theories: on the one hand Baumeister deals with figures of thought from these texts and develops them further, and on the other hand his text shares their underlying constructivist tendency.

Constructivism and Form Art

Baumeister's approach in *The Unknown in Art*—to retain some of the ideals of constructivism but to reestablish them and, in this way, to seek a new formal language for painting—is not a unique phenomenon. The concepts of constructivism developed in the 1920s were comprehensively rethought by artists as early as the 1930s. On the one hand Theo van Doesburg's manifesto of concrete art reveals a rational tendency to systematize art to an even greater extent.[30] By contrast the Paris group Abstraction-Création, of which Baumeister was a member, aimed to broaden constructivism's strict

[30] Theo van Doesburg, "Base de la peinture concrète," *Art Concret* 1 (April 1930), 1.

formal language and to overcome the fissure between surrealism and constructivism. *The Unknown in Art* continues this content-related development of constructivist ideas at the beginning of the 1940s.

Here Baumeister not only reconsiders the art-theoretical and philosophical positions of constructivism but also takes the art-historical concept as his subject. He mentions the possibility that constructivist painting could lose its vitality and that its straightforward transfer to applied design could become decorative and a formalistic game. Drawing on Klee, he therefore advocates extending the formal canon through the metamorphosis and modulation of absolute forms. Baumeister's argumentation clarifies, however, that in 1943 he still regarded constructivist art as the culmination and termination of artistic development. On the other hand he cannot clearly decide in *The Unknown in Art* whether he should retain the term "constructivism" for the extended formal vocabulary of painting or use a new term, "form art." Here Baumeister disengages himself from his philosophical arguments and discusses his changed understanding of art vis-à-vis the pairs of terms "form"/"plane" and "composition"/"construction." The actual content of these analyses, however, becomes intelligible only when they are juxtaposed with works of art since he does not discuss his own artistic work in his writing. According to Baumeister's theory, form replaced the plane as the most important pictorial element. If in constructivism he still presumed organizational laws that were clear and obvious to everyone, he now rejected defined formal laws. For him, form art is a play of forms that mutually define one another. It can be controlled only to a certain degree, then becomes independent, and is guided by unconscious creation and objectified by its philosophical basis. In this way formal laws are visualized without having to make them intelligible. The interplay follows absolute laws that are unrecognizable to the artist in unconscious creation and that Baumeister does not explain more fully and—as he discovers—also cannot explain. The formal laws are fundamental and present in every era of art, which Baumeister demonstrates by means of a number of references in his text and especially by including a picture section. With his commentary on historical elemental forms Baumeister presents a virtual summary of his artistic and prehistoric studies of the 1930s and 1940s. With these text passages and the images, he clearly indicates the sources from which he derives the forms in his art, which, however, can be understood only if we compare his works of art with these statements.[31] *The Unknown in Art*

[31] Editor's note: for an example of just this sort of comparison, see Chap. 3, "Kunst und Mythos," in Hoffmann 2007 (see note 11), 103–49.

reveals that he turns to archaic art in search of elemental protomorphs and their laws and then makes these the basis of his own investigation of form. In contrast to "construction," the terms "composition" and above all "decomposition" stand for a much freer pictorial assembly. Baumeister strives for greater freedom in pictorial organization but, nevertheless, does not manage to free himself completely from constructivism and its concepts. His extensive theoretical discussions on the concept of nature and therefore on the aesthetics of genius serve him in establishing what in fact is a simple state of affairs. In form art, absolute forms—the formal repertoire of constructivism—are altered by metamorphosis and modulation. It is characteristic of Baumeister's relationship to constructivism that he has to construct such an extensive theoretical structure in order to justify and safeguard this step.

In summarizing we see in *The Unknown in Art* that Baumeister's approach to questions inherent to art about form, plane, construction, and composition is marked by the dualism of form art and constructivism. The theory of constructivism represents the starting point of his thoughts, whereby he vacillates between rejecting, broadening, and retaining the concept and term. Baumeister understands "form art" as a superordinate term that links the beginnings of painting with the present and under which he also classifies constructivism. In this way he creates a term for his new painting that includes his work phase before 1933 and thereby declares a continuity in his work. It consequently becomes superfluous to broaden the term "constructivism" or to interpret constructivism as a comprehensive term. Ultimately, however, Baumeister fails in *The Unknown in Art* to take a clear stance that would express his preference for a single valid term. Precisely this parallelism of terms reveals an uncertainty, which may have been a decisive impulse for writing *The Unknown in Art*. Baumeister attempts to gain certainty for himself about his position and to find a theoretical basis for his new painting. In his texts after 1945 he shows a clear preference for the term "form art." He defines form art as categorically nonrepresentational art that emerges either via abstraction—here mentioning the example of Picasso—or is self-referential and therefore concrete art—here exemplified by Kandinsky and Mondrian.

His argumentation and especially the image section in *The Unknown in Art* clarify Baumeister's understanding of the term "form art," which becomes a concept for his view of art history. For him form art was the essence of every work of art. After prehistoric art it was first the modern age that

again succeeded in taking form art undisguised as its subject, since it did not copy the appearance of nature, but simply depicted the laws of form. In this way form art became the criterion for art that overcomes all eras and "isms." With this concept Baumeister reveals himself to have been a child of modernism who also took up these positions in his art-historical views before 1933.

The Unknown in Art can be seen as the expression of a transformation process. Without dealing with his own works of art, Baumeister reflects, entirely beyond the continuity of his work, on the content of art, as it was relevant for him in the 1940s, but had been so as early as the 1920s as well. He deals critically with the constructivist movement that influenced him, and he attempts to modify its ideals such that they retain their validity and topicality. With his book Baumeister makes an important contribution to the discussion about the future of constructivism, a concern that had occupied a great number of artists since the 1930s. *The Unknown in Art* is a unique, individual document tracing this further development of former constructivist artists in the 1930s and 1940s.

Glossary

Glossary

The following are key technical terms and concepts used by Willi Baumeister—often in an idiosyncratic, literal manner—in *The Unknown in Art*. The English terms are accompanied by the German original.

activism / *Aktivismus* **1)** A goal-oriented disposition, action, or compulsion to activity on the part of a person or persons. **2)** A quality inherent to an artwork that provides the viewer with a sense of insight into its meaning and into the world around him. **3)** Baumeister's use of the term should be distinguished from the concept of an intellectual, expressionist "activist" vanguard advocated by the Jewish German writer and pacifist publicist Kurt Hiller (1885–1972). Involved in the activist wing of expressionism from its inception, Hiller initiated and led an activist-pacifist movement from 1914 to 1920 as part of his aim to create a socialist society.[1] In this context, art was seen as a "means both for expressing one's *freier Geist* [free spirit] and for realizing political goals."[2] Baumeister was likely familiar with Hiller's ideas, but his own concept of "activism" does not call for a political art.

center / *Mitte* The fundamental substance of the individual, which has a regulating affect on the self and on influences and leads to a natural, instinctual condition of supreme neutrality. The center is achieved by relinquishing one's personal intentions, neutralizing the subject-object relationship, and reconciling oneself with all existence, thereby making the individual or artist receptive to natural and artistic impulses and connecting him to his own peculiarities, perceptions, intuition, values, and creative energies.

contemplativeness / *Beschaulichkeit* Hyphenated in the German by Baumeister as *"Be-Schaulichkeit"* in order to emphasize its connection to *"Schauen"* (looking). A state of tranquility and above all neutrality when "looking" (*Schauen*)—that is, gazing without a purpose or goal—at an artwork or object. *See* Chapter "Looking, Seeing."

[1] Seth Taylor, "Nietzschean Politics: Kurt Hiller and the Philosophy of Goal," in *Left-Wing Nietzscheans: The Politics of German Expressionism, 1910–1920*. Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, vol. 22 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter Inc., 1990), 60–88, esp. 60–61.

[2] Barbara Drygulski Wright, "Sublime Ambition: Art, Politics and Ethical Idealism in the Cultural Journals of German Expressionism," in *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage*, ed. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Kellner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 92.

copy / *Nachbild* (lit. after-image) An imitation or reproduction of an original work, or an artwork based on or resembling a model in visible nature. Baumeister intentionally contrasts it with the term *"Vorbild"* (**model**) to underscore the difference between images that serve as a source of inspiration (model) "before" the creation of an artwork and those images that are produced "after" (copy) an object or artwork. *See* **model**.

degenerate, degenerating / *degenerieren* In the evolution of modern painting, the progressive dissolution of naturalism toward the nonrepresentational. In contrast to the National Socialists, Baumeister did not regard the avant-garde's turn away from naturalism or a realist style and toward abstraction as a negative development, as his entire discussion of **form art** demonstrates. *See* **degeneration**.

degeneration / *Entartung* **1)** In traditional art history, the notion that Hellenistic art (ca. 320–30 BC) represents a decadent style and decline from the ideal of the "Golden Age" of classical Greek art. **2)** In the Arts and Crafts movement beginning in England around 1860, the idea of a general decline in the creativity and quality of the applied arts, as well as a related decline in moral spirit and working conditions, due to industrial mass production. Following the ideas of the movement's forerunners John Ruskin (1819–1900) and William Morris (1834–1896), this view of degeneration preoccupied many artists and designers in Europe and North America into the early decades of the twentieth century and led to the emergence of a reform-minded approach to the applied arts. In Germany this approach was manifest, for instance, in the activities of the Deutsche Werkbund and in the Bauhaus' aim to unite art and industry. Willi Baumeister was thoroughly familiar with and championed these ideas. He was a member of the Werkbund and participated in its exhibitions in Cologne in 1914, in Stuttgart in 1922, and at the Weissenhof housing settlement in Stuttgart in 1927. He also had close ties with the Bauhaus and like-minded fellow artists and designers throughout Europe. **3)** In contrast to the above definitions used by Baumeister, for the National Socialists "degenerate" *(entartet)* designated supposedly inferior racial, sexual, and moral types—an understanding of the term derived from an anti-modern tradition dating back to the late nineteenth century. In Germany it was the Jewish Austro-Hungarian physician and conservative cultural critic Max Nordau (1849–1923) who, with his 1892 book *Entartung* (Degeneration), helped popularize the term and concept of biological degeneration as causing cultural decline, exemplified by modern art and literature, criminality, and mental illness. Drawing on

the psychiatric concepts of degeneracy from the French physician Bénédict Augustin Morel (1809–1873) and the Italian criminologist and physician Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), Nordau's study essentially defined "degeneracy as deviance from the aesthetic norms and sensibilities of the [educated middle class]" and deemed all modern art to be pathological.[3] The Nazis applied the term to virtually everything that existed on the German modern art scene prior to 1933, as well as to artists (including Baumeister), writers, and musicians themselves, as part of their cultural policy to "weed out" cultural internationalism and "foreign influences" that they saw as embodying Semitic or Bolshevist (Communist) thinking. Baumeister was certainly familiar with this derogatory use of the term, not least of all as he was dismissed from his teaching post in Frankfurt in 1933 and several of his works were included in the travelling exhibition *Entartete Kunst* ("Degenerate art") organized by the National Socialists, which opened in Munich in 1937. *See* **degenerate, degenerating**.

deteriorate / *verfallen* The German term *"verfallen"* has several translations, including to decay, decline, or deteriorate. Baumeister uses it to describe a weakening or decline in the pure art qualities of naturalism and impressionism as they tended toward illusionism and avoided absolute, architectonic formal elements such as the plane, straight line, and right angle, and thus lacked the structure and formal power provided by them.

eidos, eidological / *eidos, eidologische* From the Greek word meaning literally "shape" or "form," something that is seen or intuited; an idea, form, or essence. Baumeister uses it to refer to the "primary root" of an artwork: the artist in a state of genius—achieved through recourse to his **center**—in which he deals with mental imagery in the creative process.

form art, formalist art / *Formkunst* A term formulated by Baumeister in response to the absolute, geometric formal language and objective, rational approach of constructivism. Denotes a universal concept of art that allows for the metamorphosis and modulation of absolute forms and in which the artist retains his objectivity albeit via recourse not to his intellect but, rather, to his **center**, which mediates a connection to nature (see "transcendent nature" in Hoffmann, p. 275), the basis of all art and life.

[3] Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890–1930* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 38; on Nordau, see also George Mosse, Introduction to Max Nordau, *Degeneration,* trans. from the 2nd ed. of the German work (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), xiii-xxxiii.

Examples of form art can be found dating back to the earliest beginnings of formal rendering (i.e., in eras predating the concept of "art") and particularly in art of the modern period that is not based on a model and does not reproduce the appearances of visible nature but instead originates from the artist's creative impulses in connection with his use of and experimentation with materials and techniques. Echoing Paul Klee's (1879–1940) assertion in his 1920 essay "Schöpferische Konfession" (Creative confession) that "Art does not reproduce the visible but makes it first visible," Baumeister believed that art must continually transform conventional ways of seeing, leading viewers into realms of optical experience that were previously unknown and confronting them with aspects of knowledge that, by their nature, are beyond humans' ability to comprehend fully.

frontal-view / *geradaufsichtig-vorstelligen; geradvorstellig* An artistic language found particularly in representations of the human figure in ancient Egyptian art, in which each part of the body is depicted from its most characteristic angle, as such rendering the eyes and chest from the front. Baumeister adopted the term *geradaufsichtig-vorstelligen* from the German Egyptologist Heinrich Schäfer (1868–1957).

imitative rendering, reproduction / *Nachformung* (lit. after-forming)
A term used by Baumeister to stress the notion of art or design based on or reproducing a model, or aspects of it such as its form or surface texture. An imitative approach to art making or design.

mural, mural painting / *Wandbild, Wandmalerei*. *See* **wall, interior**.

model / *Vorbild* (lit. before-image) An object or person that serves as a pattern or source of inspiration for the artist. Baumeister consciously contrasts the terms *"Vorbild"* and *"Nachbild"* (**copy**), playing with the notions of an "image" or object that serves as a model for an original artwork and one that reproduces an original artwork. *See* **copy**.

presentation / *Vor-Stellung* Baumeister hyphenates the German word *"Vorstellung"* (which has several translations, including belief, conception, presentation, view, and vision) to denote, in literal terms, a pre-positioning. Refers to art based on and characterized by a formal impulse, that is, abstract or nonrepresentational art. Distinguished from "re-presentation" (*"Nach-Stellung"*), which refers to imitative art whose appearance is based on a model. *See* **re-presentation**.

re-presentation / *Nach-Stellung* Baumeister hyphenates the German word *"Nachstellung"* (recreation, reenactment) to signify, in literal terms, an after-positioning. A term used to characterize naturalism as a form of imitative art. Distinguished from "presentation" (*Vor-Stellung*), which Baumeister uses to describe art that follows a formal impulse and whose appearance is not based on a model—that is, nonrepresentational art. *See* **presentation**.

wall, exterior; wall picture / *Mauer, Mauerbild* A masonry structure typically built with resistant and textured materials such as brick, concrete, or stucco for use outdoors as, for instance, a fence or enclosure and having a rough and possibly uneven surface. Baumeister clearly distinguished between the surface and spatial qualities of the *Mauer* and the *Wand* (**interior wall**). In his 1940s writings on his art "Zimmer- und Wandgeister," he described the *Mauer* as "more corporeal than the smooth, polished *Wand*."[4] The low-relief constructivist *Mauerbilder* (wall pictures) that he began making in the early 1920s emphasize a fundamental relationship to their built environment and the viewer, with the aim of making the spatial relations palpable. As he put it, these works take "the wall surface as the axis of the picture's spatiality: actual additions project forward, organic shadows create an abbreviated spatiality into illusionistic depth, and other components maintain balance as pure surface values."[5] *See* **wall, interior**.

wall, interior; mural, mural painting / *Wand, Wandbild, Wandmalerei* A smooth, partitioning interior architectural structure typically with a smooth surface made of fine plaster. A smooth architectural surface used, for instance, for mural painting (*Wandmalerei*). In his writings "Zimmer- und Wandgeister" Baumeister contrasted the "smooth, polished *Wand*" with the "more corporeal" *Mauer*.[6] *See* **wall, exterior**.

[4] Willi Baumeister, "Zimmer- und Wandgeister: Anmerkungen zum Inhalt meiner Bilder," ed. Heinz Spielmann, *Jahrbuch der Hamburger Kunstsammlungen* 12 (1967), 135.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

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2 Incised drawing, Cave of Altamira, ca. 15,000–10,000 BC, earliest pictorial expression of prehistoric man. Reproduced from Abbé Breuil and Hugo Obermaier. *The Cave of Altamira at Santillana del Mar, Spain*. Madrid: Tip. de Archivos, 1935.

3–4 Incised drawing of a female figure, engraved on mammoth tusk, Early Aurignacian, ca. 35,000 BC, height 6 1/8 in. (15.5 cm). Přdemostí, Moravia

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17 Egyptian painting of a dancer, Dynasty 19, ca. 1300 BC, from a limestone fragment (ostracon), 4 1/8 × 6 5/8 in. (10.5 × 16.8 cm). Presumably an artist's sketch. Museo delle Antichità Egizie, Turin. Reproduced from James Henry Breasted. *Geschichte Ägyptens: Grosse illustrierte Phaidon Ausgabe*. Translated from the English by Hermann Ranke. 2nd ed. Vienna: Phaidon, 1936, 268.

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All figures not listed derive from the Archiv Baumeister im Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

Issued by

Copy edited by Michele Tilgner; Michael Hariton (for Mondo Agit)
Proofread by Hadwig Goez and Joann M. Skrypzak
Design by Anja Maria Schüßler
Printed and published by epubli GmbH, Berlin, www.epubli.de
Typeface: Times Ten LT Std

ISBN 978-3-8442-5100-5