

Otto Dix Recontextualised:
Temporality, Medium-Specificity and Reproduction
in the Portraits of the 1920s

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I, Anne Reimers, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

Otto Dix is seen as a leading figure of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting in 1920s Germany, and he is without a doubt the most studied and exhibited today. Although his work was created in the context of a rapidly expanding media culture, aspects of the relationship of his verist-realist paintings to this historically specific environment have yet to receive sufficient scholarly attention.

This study focuses on a small number of portrait paintings the artist created in the first half of the 1920s – some frequently discussed, others rarely mentioned or reproduced – and considers these works through the lenses of temporality, medium-specificity and reproduction. It will firstly investigate the way Dix engaged with fashion and celebrity culture; secondly how he responded to the challenge posed by photography and film; thirdly how he dealt with a situation where black-and-white reproductions were the most common way in which a diverse audience encountered his work; and finally the way in which Dix’s career development ran in parallel with the commentary on his work in journalistic and specialist media publications. Throughout the thesis, fashion in its different incarnations – as a temporal agent, artefact, and industry – is identified as an allegory, medium, agent of rupture, and directional force that connected Dix’s work in very specific ways to the visual culture of the 1920s.

The thesis draws upon letters, a broad variety of contemporary publications, and specific statements Dix made in interviews, that have previously not been considered.

While the writings of art critics are the main literary source, I will also consider how the artist’s output intersected with the concerns of leading cultural commentators and art historians of the time.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This thesis contributes new research to the field of Dix studies, to the field of interwar German art history, media history, and the study of modern art in general. It looks beyond the familiar horizons of existing studies of Dix's work and develops methods by which other structures of meaning could be revealed in his paintings, and it thereby seeks to close a gap in the research about the artist. By attending to the historical specificity of the media context in which Dix worked, while also locating aspects of their meaning in contemporary discursive contexts, it has sought to open up productive new avenues for further enquiry, mapping out a way in which the actions and artworks of other painters of the Weimar era could also potentially be explored. The thesis draws on archival material previously not discussed in relation to Dix and reveals new information about some of his most iconic paintings. Alongside this, it makes some new methodological propositions and challenges perceived boundaries in the way it evaluates the operations of realist painting in relation to temporality and to 1920s media culture. In particular idea that issues of reproduction are implicated at the inception of a painter's creative output has relevance beyond the Weimar era to the present day. In addition, the last chapter of my study adds to the study of arts criticism in the 1920s and beyond, and to art historical studies on the discourse about the relationship between fashion and art.

A version of the first chapter was published in 2018 in the journal *Art History* (vol. 41, issue 4) by the Association for Art History, an international forum for peer-reviewed scholarship and innovative research. The journal article was awarded an 'honorable mention' by the Association of Historians of German, Scandinavian and Central European Art (HGSCEA) Emerging Scholars Publication Prize in February 2019. Some

early research, developed further in chapter four, has been published in 2018 in the edited book *Signs and Symbols: Dress at the Intersection between Image and Realia*, edited by Sabine de Günther and Philipp Zitzlsperger (Berlin: de Gruyter). Between 2013 and 2016, research in progress on chapter one and four has been presented at a number of international conferences and public lectures in Prague, York (UK), Berlin and Bochum.

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Introduction

*Photography has supplanted painting.
Painting resists and does not wish to surrender.*¹
Ossip Brik, 'The Photograph versus the Painting' (1926)

*It is the destiny of everything living to become history one day;
but artistic effort and creation that cannot stop considering whether it will make
a good impression in the mirror of history, is already corrupted at its core.*²
Paul Westheim, *Für und Wider* (1923)

Otto Dix is seen as a leading figure of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting in 1920s Germany, and he is without a doubt the most studied and exhibited today. The dadaist work he started to produce after his return from the trenches of the First World War shocked with both its subject matter and visual means. Dix engaged directly with the dramatically changed cultural and social conditions in the post-war era. This was a time when art critics, such as Alfred Salmony in 1920, called for 'an active art [that] must be strongly figurative. With so much impact that the simplest man can understand it. So subversive and shocking that dangerousness and contempt cannot be further heightened.'³ And this is what Dix delivered. He produced '*Zeitbewusste Malerei*', as the art critic Willi Wolfradt described it in 1926, using a phrase that is perhaps most accurately translated as 'painting in touch with its contemporary context'.⁴ According to

¹ Ossip Brik, 'The Photograph versus the Painting', repr. and trans. in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*, ed. by Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989), pp. 213-218 (p. 213). First published in: *Sovetskoe foto*, 2 (1926), 40-42.

² Paul Westheim, 'Vorwort', in *Für und Wider. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Kunst der Gegenwart*, ed. by Paul Westheim (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1923), 11-15 (p. 14).

³ Alfred Salmony, 'George Grosz', *Das Kunstblatt*, 4 (1920), 97-98 (p. 97).

⁴ Willi Wolfradt, 'Otto Dix. Ein neuer Maler', *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 25.21 (23 May 1926), 669-670 (p. 669). This article has been overlooked by the research to date, with the exception of Andreas Strobl, who has listed it among the historical exhibition reviews. See Andreas Strobl, *Otto Dix. Eine Malerkarriere der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Reimer, 1996).

Wolfradt, Dix was the leading representative of an art that wanted to ‘leave the incest of the studio’ behind and ‘impact directly on man, to be relevant to him’.⁵

However, painters who decided to return to strong figuration during this period had to consider that this would put them into more direct competition with mechanically produced images which dominated the media landscape of the Weimar Republic, specifically with the other visual mediums of film and photography. Impressionism, Expressionism, and other avant-gardist styles of painting that are now seen as leading towards abstraction, had made the difference between painting and the mechanical reproduction of reality clear by developing a visual language more independent from external reality. It became a trope in contemporary writing that technological media culture and the ‘mass media, of which there was an unprecedented explosion during the era’,⁶ was transforming human perception, the processing of visual information and the understanding of temporal structures, and for Dix and many of his peers, the response was a ‘return to the object’.⁷ Dix will have been aware of the problem some commentators had with a type of painting that returned to a more mimetic relationship with the external world. As Devin Fore has contended in *Realism after Modernism*, commentators like Béla Balázs objected to this type of painting specifically based on its ‘reliance on particular artistic conventions that were taken from a bygone era and that were, therefore, manifestly inauthentic’, and there was a general concern that ‘the

⁵ Wolfradt, ‘Otto Dix. Ein neuer Maler’, p. 669.

⁶ Dorothy Price, ‘The Splendor and Miseries of Germany's New Woman’, in *Splendor and Misery in the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Ingrid Pfeiffer (Munich: Hirmer, 2017), pp. 152-181 (p. 154).

⁷ Fritz Schmalenbach, ‘The Term Neue Sachlichkeit’, *The Art Bulletin*, 22.3 (September 1940), 161-165 (p. 164).

reappearance of the same artistic devices found in the work of the previous century must necessarily be reactionary'.⁸

While some of the work Dix produced following his dadaist phase from around 1920 onwards may have used some aesthetic tools and conventions shaped by the German Old Masters, this thesis proposes that it is not just his updated subject matter that made his artworks innovative, but also the fact that it engaged, in not immediately obvious ways, with a rapidly expanding media landscape, specifically film, photography and print. The relationship of his paintings to this historically specific environment has yet to receive sufficient scholarly attention.

The issue of medium-specificity was raised due to the change in perceptual training attributed to photography and later also film, and became an issue central to debates about photography as a specifically modern medium during the 1920s. This thesis argues that there are ways in which Dix's paintings compete with photography that are specific to his work and set him apart from his painterly colleagues, that he devised strategies that could foreground painting's potential to offer perceptual possibilities different from – more importantly, in some aspects superior to – those offered by the photographic image. At the same time, I contend, Dix also considered in what way he could play an active role in harnessing the opportunities offered by the photographic reproductions of art works, disseminated through photographic positives and the print media. By expanding the field of my enquiry to include contemporary discussions about the work of Otto Dix, about *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting, and about issues of visual and terminological repetition and reproduction, this thesis recovers deeper

⁸ Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism. The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), pp. 9-10.

tensions between realist painting and the mass media in the 1920s, tensions resulting from the constantly evolving demands made of the older medium.

As Oskar Maria Graf observed, portrait painting was experiencing a ‘downright hectic increase’ in the 1920s.⁹ This thesis will argue that some of the portraits that Dix produced between 1922 and 1925 were tactical statements about the possibilities of portrait painting made by an artist facing a cultural paradigm that privileged the mechanically reproduced image. As Andrés Zervigón has explained: ‘Even at the dawn of the Weimar era, audiences found themselves inundated by a flood of photographic images *and* an equally cresting wave of critical attention paid to these prints.’¹⁰ Artistic photography and film, or dadaist collages – artworks that made direct use of technology – may have seemed more ‘appropriate for the time’, more *zeitgemäß*, than those executed in the traditional medium of painting. However, it is my contention that, although not immediately evident, the mechanical media played an important role in organising artistic vision in the paintings under discussion, that they bear the traces of a ‘reproductive optics’ – a term drawn from Erwin Panofsky’s 1930 essay ‘Original and Facsimile Reproduction’.¹¹ Panofsky did not write about Dix, but a ‘reproductive optics’, I contend, made Dix’s particular brand of realism *zeitgemäß*.

This thesis expands the scholarly engagement with Dix’s 1920s portraits beyond their contemporary subject matter and stylistic pluralism, which is the focus of much of the existing literature. Wolfradt, one of Dix’s earliest supporters, was the first to point out

⁹ Oskar Maria Graf, ‘Heinrich Maria Davringhausen’, *Der Cicerone*, 16 (1924), 59-63 (p. 60).

¹⁰ Andrés M. Zervigón, *Photography and Germany* (London: Reaktion, 2017), p. 114.

¹¹ Erwin Panofsky, ‘Original und Faksimilereproduktion’, *Der Kreis*, 7 (1930), 3-16, reprinted in ‘Original and Facsimile Reproduction’, trans. by Timothy Grundy, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 57/58, (Spring Autumn 2010), 330-338 (p. 332).

that Dix's version of 'Sachlichkeit' deliberately went beyond photography by offering – and he must have been thinking of contemporary portrait photography in particular here – a 'catalepsy of unretouched detailing'.¹² In an effort to defend Dix against his critics, he insisted two years later that the return to 'clarity, understandability, reality' was not 'a relapse into a banal copying of the external world'.¹³ Wolfradt proposed instead that Dix's brand of 'objectivity is not least inspired by photography and cinema, whose mechanically produced effects it aims to heighten through artistic energy'.¹⁴ But Dix's engagement with media culture went further than this, and there were specific tactical considerations at play, too. These are the focus of my enquiry.

Dix, Dada and Photography

Research into the relationship of Dix's oeuvre to 1920s media culture has thus far been largely limited to the discussion of his use of fragments of printed newspapers and magazines in collaged dadaist works, produced between 1919 and 1921, in which he 'allowed the visual codes of the present to collide with one another',¹⁵ and to rather brief and generalised statements about his desire to trump photography in its limited abilities to represent horror and destruction, not only due to its lack of colour. Dix's aim to upstage photography was in many ways the result of his experience of the war.

¹² Willi Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, Junge Kunst, 41 (Leipzig: Klinkhardt and Biermann, 1924), p. 9. I have used my own translation here instead of that provided in *Otto Dix*, ed. by Olaf Peters, exh. cat. Neue Galerie New York and The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (Munich: Prestel, 2010), p. 114, which reads 'the lockjaw of unretouched meticulousness'.

All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

¹³ Wolfradt, 'Otto Dix. Ein neuer Maler', p. 669.

¹⁴ Wolfradt, 'Otto Dix. Ein neuer Maler', p. 669.

¹⁵ Karsten Müller, 'The Charleston and the Prosthetic Leg. Dix and the Art of the Balancing Act', in *Otto Dix*, ed. by Olaf Peters (Munich: Prestel, 2010), pp. 165-177 (p. 166). See also Renate Heinrich, 'Material und Malerei: Dix und Dada', in *Otto Dix. Zum 100. Geburtstag 1891-1991*, ed. by Wulf Herzogenrath and Johann-Karl Schmidt (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1991), pp. 85-91. Heinrich focuses in particular on the work *Prager Strasse* (1920).

Newspapers, for example, did not print images other than those that preserved the ‘dignity’ of soldiers by showing the war as a heroic undertaking. In particular ‘photographs of soldiers with facial injuries were generally kept out of the popular press’, as Dorothy Price has recently written.¹⁶ Dix had gone into the war because ‘I am a realist [...] I had to see everything with my own eyes, to confirm: this is how it really is’, and he wanted to bring this reality into his pictures.¹⁷ Indeed, as Zervigón has pointed out, ‘the Weimar era became a time of potent photo-consciousness, of a reflexive aesthetic concern for photography based on an indecisiveness about the medium’s value and its ability to tell the truth’.¹⁸ Dadaists like John Heartfield, alongside whom Dix exhibited his own dadaist paintings and collages at the *Erste Internationale Dada-Messe* in Berlin in 1920, ‘had learned from the war “that you can lie to people with photos, really lie to them”’.¹⁹ Indeed, much of the recent research into the art of Weimar Germany and its relationship to visual mass media culture has focused specifically on Dada artists.²⁰

¹⁶ Dorothy Price, ‘Remaking Society’, in *Aftermath. Art in the Wake of World War One*, ed. by Emma Chambers (London: Tate, 2018), pp. 96-103 (p. 97).

¹⁷ Otto Dix, ‘Über Kunst, Religion, Krieg. Gespräch mit Freunden am Bodensee, Dezember 1963’, in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis* (Berlin: Henschel, 1981), pp. 255-260 (p. 255).

¹⁸ Zervigón, *Photography*, p. 84.

¹⁹ Zervigón, *Photography*, p. 92.

²⁰ These scholars have continued the ground-breaking earlier studies by Hanne Bergius, who published *Das Lachen Dadas. Die Berliner Dadaisten und ihre Aktionen* (Gießen: Anabas) in 1989 and *Montage und Metamechanik: Dada Berlin, Artistik von Polaritäten* (Berlin: Mann) in 2000, as well as Maud Lavin’s *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven: Yale, 1993). In more recent years, Matthew Biro’s *The Dada Cyborg. Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), Andrés M. Zervigón’s *John Heartfield and the Agitated Image: Photography, Persuasion, and the Rise of Avant-Garde Photomontage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), Michael White’s *Generation Dada: The Berlin Avantgarde and the First World War* (New Haven: Yale, 2013), and Sabine T. Kriebel’s *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) were published in quick succession.

In 1920, the director of the Dresdner Stadtmuseum, Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, described works by Dix that he had seen in an exhibition of the Dresdner Sezession, among them the dadaist paintings *Barricade* (1920) and *Prager Straße* (1920), as ‘cruel pictures of the time’, as ‘*grausame Zeitbilder*’, that ‘through the glaring immediacy of the hideousness of blood, misery, prosthetic existence and glued-on details’, achieved the ‘greatest possible attack on our senses’.²¹ With his paintings of war, the decomposing bodies of dead soldiers, and the violent attacks on women in his *Lustmord* images, the artist tried to show that painting could come closer to capturing reality and have greater visual impact.²² The best example of this was in his lost monumental painting of the war, *Trench*, a visceral painting that ‘incurred particular indignation’²³ from audiences. With this artistic strategy, Dix deliberately provoked controversy to heighten public interest. That he saw himself in competition with other artists in this regard, is evidenced by his painter friend Otto Griebel who recalled in his memoirs that both he and Dix were influenced in their turn towards a ‘dadaist, which meant at the time an art with a realist-political emphasis’ by the work of Berlin-based artists such as George Grosz, John Heartfield and Rudolf Schlichter, and that Dix made his intentions clear at a dadaist evening in Dresden: ‘We need to beat the Berliners!’²⁴ Peters writes that, struggling to sell his work around 1920, Dix was ‘jealous’ of the public interest they had achieved and that he claimed: ‘Either I will become famous or infamous.’²⁵ This thesis shifts the focus to Dix’s portraits, which engaged in a competitive relationship with mechanically produced images, too, but in a very different and less obvious way.

²¹ Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, ‘Ausstellung der Dresdner Sezession (Oktober - November bei Arnold in Dresden)’, *Der Cicerone*, 12.22 (1920), 826-827 (p. 826).

²² Olaf Peters, “‘Painting, a Medium of Cool Execution’: Otto Dix and *Lustmord*”, in Peters, *Otto Dix*, pp. 92-107.

²³ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, transl. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 116.

²⁴ Griebel, Otto, *Ich war ein Mann der Strasse. Lebenserinnerungen eines Dresdner Malers* (Frankfurt a.M.: Röderberg, 1986), p. 94 and 107.

²⁵ Olaf Peters, *Otto Dix: Der Unerschrockene Blick. Eine Biographie* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2013), p. 75.

In the last few decades, the intersections between different media forms have been studied within the firmly established field of media history, but further research into the relationship between painting and photography with a more integrated approach is still needed, not least because of a disproportionate focus on the nineteenth century and on France.²⁶ An important overview of the situation in Germany around the turn of the century was provided in 1986 by Enno Kaufhold in *Bilder des Übergangs. Zur Mediengeschichte von Fotografie und Malerei in Deutschland um 1900*.²⁷ Moreover, the majority of these studies often focus on how photography inserted itself into a visual culture that was up until this point dominated by painting and the graphic arts. Instead, my thesis looks at the context of Weimar Germany and considers how painting tried to reclaim some territory from photography by disrupting and de-centering narratives that posited the printed image as the by then reigning visual medium.²⁸

²⁶ For a recent example see *Photography and Other Media in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Nicoletta Leonardi and Simone Natale (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2018).
²⁷ (Marburg: Jonas).

²⁸ For an introduction to the media culture of Weimar Germany see in particular Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany. Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See also: *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. by Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). For a discussion of media culture with focus on photography, film and radio see: Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), which focuses on the time around 1931; Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Daniel H. Magilow, *The Photography of Crisis: The Photo Essays of Weimar Germany* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2012); *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945*, ed. by Malte Hagener (New York : Berghahn, 2014). Patrizia McBride has traced the engagement with mass media culture in the work of a number of Weimar-era artists, including those of the Neue Sachlichkeit, which resulted in new notions of storytelling in *The Chatter of the Visible: Montage and Narrative in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

Showcasing the Art of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*

In the last fifteen years, major exhibitions have brought the art of the Weimar Era and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* to broader audiences in the UK and the US, often accompanied by substantial catalogues that have furthered scholarly research on the subject. The exhibition *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, staged by the Metropolitan Museum in 2006/7, drew major crowds. In 2011, the MoMA followed with the overview *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*. In addition, the Neue Galerie in New York can be credited with expanding US audiences' access to German and Austrian artists from the turn of the century to the 1930s. In 2010, the museum staged a major Dix retrospective, co-curated by Olaf Peters, one of the leading scholars in the field, who also edited the accompanying catalogue. Earlier exhibitions at the Neue Galerie included *Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit* (2003) and *Portraits of an Age: Photography in Germany and Austria 1900 – 1938* (2005); recently it dedicated an exhibition to Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

In Germany, research on the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting has started to look with greater commitment beyond leading figures such as Dix and Grosz and beyond Berlin. Following important exhibitions such as *"Gefühl ist Privatsache": Verismus und Neue Sachlichkeit* at the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin in 2010, which focused on watercolours and gouaches, a particularly noteworthy exhibition that showcased lesser known artists and provided a platform for new research was *Neue Sachlichkeit in Dresden. Malerei der 20er Jahre von Dix bis Querner*, staged at the Kunsthalle im Lipsiusbau in Dresden in 2011/12. In London, the gallery of Richard Nagy has played a significant role in bringing German and Austrian art from the turn of the century to the

1930s to the UK. Nagy staged museum-quality exhibitions with work by George Grosz (2013) as well as of the important Silverman collection (2012), part of which is Otto Dix's *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* of 1923, which is analysed in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. In addition, it is worth mentioning a George Grosz retrospective, accompanied by a major catalogue, held at the Villa Medici in Rome in 2007.

In the last three years, a number of important international exhibitions on the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and the art of the Weimar Era have been staged in quick succession. The most important of these was *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic 1919 – 1933* in Venice during the 2015 Biennale at the Museo Correr, which travelled on to the LACMA in Los Angeles. The accompanying catalogue brought together research from leading scholars on Weimar art and culture, such as James van Dyke, Sabine Eckmann and Andreas Huyssen. In the UK, Tate Liverpool displayed works by Dix alongside photographs by August Sander under the header *Portraying a Nation: Germany 1919–1933* in 2017.²⁹ The following year, Tate Modern staged *Aftermath: Art in the Wake of World War One* in London. In Germany, the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main organised the popular exhibition *Splendor and Misery in the Weimar Republic* in 2017. Efforts were also made to pay homage to more female artists of the era, such as Lotte Laserstein with a major retrospective at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main (2018/19).³⁰ In 2003, the Berlinische Galerie organised

²⁹ The Dix-exhibition had travelled from the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein- Westfalen in Düsseldorf.

³⁰ Among the significant recent publications about female artists in the Weimar Republic are *Femme Flaneur: Erkundungen zwischen Boulevard und Sperrbezirk* (August Macke Haus Bonn, 2004), edited by Rita E. Täuber, and *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, edited by Christiane Schönfeld and Carmel Finnan (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006). Marsha Meskimmon laid some of the earlier foundations for this research with *We Weren't Modern Enough. Women Artists and the Limits of Weimar Modernism* (London: Tauris, 1999) and *Visions of the "Neue Frau": Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany*, edited with Shearer West (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995). Dorothy Price has

the retrospective *Hannah Höch: Aller Anfang ist Dada*, which was recently followed by a Jeanne Mammen exhibition (2017). There also seems to be a greater interest in how gender issues were negotiated by artists, an example being the upcoming major exhibition *Max Beckmann: Weiblich-Männlich* at the Hamburger Kunsthalle scheduled for April 2020.³¹

Otto Dix and the Neue Sachlichkeit

Dix's practice underwent many stylistic changes over the course of his career and even within the single decade of the 1920s. By the end of the war, he had already passed

contributed to our understanding of the position of a female magical realist artist within regional artistic networks with her book *After Dada. Marta Hegemann and the Cologne Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). Female artists and gender have also been a focus for recent publications on the Bauhaus. Here, Elizabeth Otto has been particularly prolific, publishing *Tempo, Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt* (Berlin: Jovis, 2005) and *Haunted Bauhaus. Occult Spirituality, Gender Fluidity, Queer Identities, and Radical Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2019), and editing (in collaboration with Patrick Rössler) *Bauhaus Bodies: Gender, Sexuality, and Body Culture in Modernism's Legendary Art School* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) and *Frauen am Bauhaus. Wegweisende Künstlerinnen der Moderne* (Munich: Knesebeck, 2019).

³¹ Among the important studies published in the last two decades on the subject of gender and sexuality in Weimar Germany are: Richard McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and New Objectivity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) and Dorothy Rowe [Price], *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (London: Routledge, 2003). Price examines how the representation of Berlin in text and image played a part in the construction a gender-specific version of the experience of modernity. Other important contributions have been made by Jill Suzanne Smith with *Berlin Coquette. Prostitution and the New German Woman, 1890 – 1933* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), Erik N. Jensen with *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), and Anjeana K. Hans with *Gender and the Uncanny in Films of the Weimar Republic* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2014). Katie Sutton has reconsidered the representations of and discourse surrounding the masculine woman in the print media between 1918 and 1933 in *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn, 2011). Barbara Hales discussed the New Woman and concepts of otherness in a number of articles published around 2010, while Camilla Smith, a specialist in the work of Jeanne Mammen, recently explored erotic print culture as well as sexual subcultures in articles such as 'Challenging Baedeker Through the Art of Sexual Science: an Exploration of Gay and Lesbian Subcultures in Curt Moreck's Guide to 'Depraved' Berlin (1931)', *Oxford Art Journal*, 36.2 (2013), 231-256. Together with Dorothy Price, Smith edited a special issue of *Art History* (August 2019) on 'Weimar's Others: Art History, Alterity and Regionalism in Inter-War Germany'. Both rightly point out in their introduction that 'art-historical research on inter-war Germany still has a long way to go if it is to take seriously the imperatives of intersectional thinking' (p. 636).

through phases of old masterly Naturalism, and Expressionism with futurist inflection. His practice in the 1920s is now commonly described in general terms as *Neue Sachlichkeit*, but his work in the first half of the 1920s is better described as ‘Verism’. ‘*Verismus*’ was the label used at the time by influential commentators such as Paul F. Schmidt for artists such as Dix, George Grosz and Rudolf Schlichter.³² And it was the term given by Gustav Hartlaub to one of the two strands of painting he summarised under the umbrella term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ in his seminal exhibition of the same name in 1925 in Mannheim.³³ Some Dix specialists, among them Dietrich Schubert, continue to insist that *Neue Sachlichkeit* was never a good fit.³⁴ Perhaps most accurately one could say that Dix’s development was characterised by a shift from dadaist Verism to verist Realism around 1923. It was at this moment that he abandoned his dadaist collage technique, but continued to employ strategies of distortions, exaggeration, and his work still contained elements of social critique. It was only around 1925 that he toned down these features and his works became more naturalist, old-masterly, and the description *neusachlich* fitted somewhat better.

The portraits discussed in this thesis are verist-realist works painted between 1922 and 1925, i.e. between his dadaist-verist phase and his conversion to a more old-masterly Naturalism. The thesis will, however, also use the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* where appropriate or employed by contemporary commentators. In terms of the developments

³² Paul F. Schmidt, ‘Die deutschen Veristen’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 8 (1924), 367-373.

³³ See also the exhibition review by Paul Westheim, ‘Kunst im deutschen Westen. II. Neue Sachlichkeit’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 9 (1925), 266-268. Paul Fechter described Dix’s work as ‘Neuer Naturalismus’ in his article ‘Die nachexpressionistische Situation’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 321- 329.

³⁴ Dietrich Schubert, *Otto Dix. Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1991), p. 59. Schubert also differentiates between Dix’s ‘critical Verism (Realism)’ on the one hand and the ‘uncritical objectivity (“*Neue Sachlichkeit*”)’ of Schrimpf and others on the other (p. 81). He argues that the Dix’s gradual shift away from verist realism starts in 1924. He describes his work from 1933-1939 as ‘phantastical Naturalism’ (p. 80).

in painting in the 1920s more generally, scholars generally agree that ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ as an umbrella term is problematic because of the wide range of very different artistic positions and styles it is supposed to summarise. In addition, the meaning of the term and what it was supposed to describe has changed over time. As Karoline Hille has convincingly explained, the term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ was originally only applied very generally to ‘German painting after Expressionism’ – just as the subtitle of Hartlaub’s catalogue that accompanied the ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ exhibition in Mannheim in 1925 suggested.³⁵ Hartlaub’s framing of this development in painting was therefore not that different to Franz Roh’s chosen term ‘*Nach-Expressionismus*’.³⁶ A comprehensive genealogy of the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* published in the English language was for the first time provided in 1999 by Dennis Crockett in his study *Post-Expressionism in Germany, 1919 – 1925*.³⁷

To this day, any serious exhibition catalogue about *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting, or about Otto Dix specifically, still has to clarify the meaning, history, and usefulness of the term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ in some way.³⁸ The perhaps best recent overview has been provided by Anita Beloubek-Hammer in the exhibition catalogue *Gefühl ist*

³⁵ See Hille’s commentary on Hartlaub’s 1925 exhibition in Karoline Hille, ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit. Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus*’, in *Stationen der Moderne. Kataloge epochaler Kunstausstellungen in Deutschland 1910-1962. Kommentarband*, ed. by Eberhard Roters (Cologne: König, 1988), pp. 131-150. And Gustav Hartlaub, *Ausstellung “Neue Sachlichkeit”. Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus* (Mannheim: Kunsthalle Mannheim, 1925).

³⁶ Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925).

³⁷ (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). Here Crockett also explains why he decided to settle on the term ‘post-expressionism’ The first author to reflect on the historic origins and the application of the term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ after the movement had run its course, published in English, was Fritz Schmalenbach in 1940 in his essay ‘The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*’, *The Art Bulletin*, 22.3 (September 1940), 161-165.

³⁸ Olaf Peters has provided an overview of the research and exhibitions on the ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ from the 1940s up to the late 1990s. Olaf Peters, ‘*Malerei der Neuen Sachlichkeit. Die Wiedergewinnung und Neubewertung eines Epochenstils*’, *Kunstchronik*, 8 (August 2000), 379-391.

Privatsache. Verismus und Neue Sachlichkeit (2010). She focuses on the shifts and differences between versions of *Neue Sachlichkeit* throughout the 1920s, and argues that the term ‘Verism’ should be used for the kind of works Dix, Grosz, and a few others produced in the first half of the 1920s, before their work became more *neusachlich*.³⁹ A very important suggestion has also been made by Sabine Becker in her study on *neusachliche* literature, a suggestion this thesis pursues in the arena of painting: she argues that key to the understanding of *Neue Sachlichkeit* more generally is the insight that ‘the emphasis was less on the increasing urbanisation and industrialization of life and of the *Lebenswelt* than on the industrialization of culture, or more specifically the development of modern mass media’.⁴⁰

Inscribing Temporality, Containing Fashion: Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* in the Context of 1920s Media and Celebrity Culture

The first chapter of this thesis considers Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* (1925), one of the most intense and well-known paintings in his oeuvre, which has been described as ‘without a doubt *the* icon of the Weimar Republic’.⁴¹ The portrait and its subject, its exceptional emotional charge and dramatic aesthetics, seen from the light of Berber's scandalous life and performances as well as her early death in 1928, seems to exemplify many cultural and social developments of 1920s Berlin. What deserves further attention, however, is the fact that this is a portrait unlike any other in Dix's

³⁹ Anita Beloubek-Hammer, “‘Gefühl ist Privatsache’— Zur Genese des Verismus und der Neuen Sachlichkeit”, in *Gefühl ist Privatsache. Verismus und Neue Sachlichkeit* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2010), pp. 10-20.

⁴⁰ Sabine Becker, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, 2 vols (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), I: Die Ästhetik der neusachlichen Literatur (1920-1933), p. 361.

⁴¹ Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 210.

oeuvre: the subject of this portrait was a famous dancer and film actress, a fashion icon and celebrity, whose mediated image was already widely distributed in a wider economy of images. This exposure made her image extremely unstable. In fact, Berber's popularity had been in steep decline for more than a year when the artist decided to paint her. The ways in which the painter negotiated the temporal dynamics of rise and decline that Berber – and by extension his painting – were caught in will be examined, and the relationship of Dix's work to contemporary fashionable tropes and images will be explored.

Using Kracauer's essay on photography, published in 1927, as a starting point, the chapter argues that Dix attempted to permanently inscribe into a portrait painting what Kracauer described as the historic 'truth content' photography was unable to capture.⁴² Artistic developments in a wider cultural field will be considered alongside this, with a focus on their currency at the time the painting was first displayed at the Neumann-Nierendorf Gallery in Berlin from February to April 1926.⁴³

The *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* is revealed as an exercise in containment through a strategy of temporal de-anchoring, and the painter as a 'synthesizer' of trans-historical temporal dynamics. The artwork can thereby be reframed as a pastiche that marks an endpoint in a chain of production and reproduction of images – from contemporary mass media culture to distant art history. It demonstrates the new openness of processes through which images from mass media culture enter art history

⁴² Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography' (1927), trans. and intr. by Thomas Y. Levin, *Critical Enquiry*, 19 (Spring 1993), 421-436.

⁴³ Strobl, *Otto Dix*, p. 247. The exhibition travelled to Galerie Tannhauser, Munich, from June to July 1926.

and functions as a display of the artist's mastery of a new temporal order. The chapter argues that Berber's portrait should therefore be understood as a very specific type of intervention in Weimar modernity's discourse about the relevance of painted portraits in an image economy increasingly dominated by photographic reproductions.⁴⁴

'Material Verism' vs Photography and Film: Medium-Specificity and Haptic Effects in Two Portraits by Otto Dix

The second chapter considers another arena where Dix tried to demonstrate that painting was still superior to mechanically produced images: in the representation of materials and surfaces, and the creation of haptic effects. The material qualities of Dix's Dada works have been discussed in some detail by scholars such as Renate Heinrich.⁴⁵ However, there has been no sustained discussion of the depiction of fabrics and of the relationship between plastic and haptic surface effects, which I argue here should also be considered on the level of an artistic programme in some of the portrait paintings the artist created around 1923. This is important because the *Neue Sachlichkeit* was seen by

⁴⁴ Gender is an aspect very relevant to Dix's portrait of Anita Berber (1925) and his *Self-portrait with Nude Model* (1923), discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Although I am approaching these paintings from a different angle, it is worth highlighting studies that have addressed gender issues in Dix's oeuvre and that of other painters associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Chiefly among them are: Eva Karcher, *Eros und Tod im Werk von Otto Dix. Studien zur Geschichte des Körpers in den zwanziger Jahren* (Münster, Lit, 1984); Jung-Hee Kim, *Frauenbilder von Otto Dix: Wirklichkeit und Selbstbekenntnis* (Münster: Lit, 1994); Manja Seelen, *Das Bild der Frau in Werken deutscher Künstlerinnen und Künstler der neuen Sachlichkeit* (Münster: Lit, 1995); Maria Tatar, *Lustmord. Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton University Press, 1995); Rita E. Täuber, *Der hässliche Eros. Darstellungen zur Prostitution in Malerei und Grafik 1855-1930* (Berlin: Mann 1997). Beate Reese touched on gender issues in her study *Melancholie in der Malerei der Neuen Sachlichkeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1998). In the last two decades, there have been no major scholarly publications entirely focused on how Dix represented women. Important to highlight is Dorothy Price's study *Representing Berlin* (2003), which contains a chapter that offered new insights into the gender politics inherent in Dix's work in the 1920s and identified male anxiety as a motivational factor in the way he painted female subjects. Recently, Kaia Magnusen has returned to the subject of women and prostitution in Dix's work in "'The Great Imitator': Syphilis and Clandestine Prostitution in Otto Dix's *Die Witwe* Watercolors", *New German Critique*, 42.2, 134 (2018), 33-66.

⁴⁵ Heinrich, 'Material und Malerei: Dix und Dada', pp. 85-91. The importance of the depiction of materials has also been pointed out by Strobl.

contemporary commentators as a return to plasticity, in the wake of the Italian movement *Valori Plastici*, but in Dix's work, plasticity and materiality intersected in a very unique way.

My analysis focuses on *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* and *Portrait Mrs Martha Dix*, both painted in 1923. The *Portrait of the Family Trillhaase* (1923) and the lost *Doubleportrait* (1922) of Dix and his wife as dancers will also briefly be considered. Temporal, behavioural, and stylistic dialectics between the male and female figure in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* will be identified, and the discussion of the *Portrait Mrs Martha Dix* with fashionable make-up centres around her contrived posture and the fact that her make-up imitates that worn behind the camera by film stars. By showing us what a film star's face looked like 'off-screen', in detail and in colour, Dix's portrait is able to raise the issue of the fictionality of the filmic image through a traditional visual medium that might at first sight seem less capable of reproducing reality than film technology. These portraits were set up to remind viewers of what mechanical images could *not* do, by employing strategies of haptic detailing, exaggeration and incongruence, and by pitting different visual effects against each other. Fashion as a medium that allowed the painter to insert temporal dialectics into the picture will also play a role in the interpretation.

According to Wolfradt, what had propelled Dix to engage a naturalist painterly idiom were his 'starved reality-instincts', his '*ausgehungerte Wirklichkeitsinstinkte*', which, by extension, one could posit as an affliction that was affecting society more generally. For Wolfradt, it was specifically Dix's choice of extreme subject matter that enabled his

paintings to go beyond the 'ideality', or '*Idealität*', 'of civilisation and studio'⁴⁶, to bring reality back into the picture. However, reading the idea of 'starved reality instincts' differently, I argue here that Dix might also have felt that people's 'reality-instincts' were starved due to an excess of colourless mechanical reproductions of external reality. These could also not (yet) adequately represent space relations and surface details. These developments occurred in parallel with painting's turn away from reality and towards abstraction. Importantly, Dix turned his attention towards materiality just before photography would do so from the mid-1920s onwards, specifically Bauhaus photographers and in particular Walter Peterhans.

The term 'material Verism' will be put forward as an appropriate description of Dix's practice, a term Carl Einstein introduced in 1920 for dadaist collages produced by Dix's fellow verist Rudolf Schlichter, where 'the fabric of a suit is represented by the fabric of a suit'.⁴⁷ This term, I argue, can encompass both Dix's dadaist works *and* some of the paintings that followed as a form of resistance against the photographic image. From a broader perspective, the portraits under discussion can be understood as theoretical objects that simultaneously engaged in current, wide-ranging art historical debates and contemporary mass media culture.

⁴⁶ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, p. 5. This is translated in Peters, *Otto Dix*, as 'starved-out reality instincts' (p. 113).

⁴⁷ '*stofflicher Verismus*'. Carl Einstein, 'Rudolph Schlichter', *Das Kunstblatt*, 4 (1920), 105-108 (pp. 107-108). Schlichter did, however, not continue to produce collages, although his interest in dress styles remained, not least due to his fetishism for high, laced boots.

Reproductive Optics:

Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* and Painting in Reproduction

The third chapter, 'Reproductive Optics. Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg*', considers painting's position within a wider image economy from yet another angle. In contrast to the previous two chapters, where the artist took an antagonistic stance to mechanical image production and multiplication, Dix also found a way to harness the opportunities mechanical reproduction offered for the promotion of his work, while simultaneously insisting on medium specificity and protecting his original artwork from being 'tainted' by its reproduction. The chapter will start by demonstrating why photographic reproductions of artworks were so important to painters more generally at the time, and why it mattered how the original artwork would translate in the reproduction. The contemporary art historical discourse on reproductions will then be introduced, with reference to well-known historians and critical thinkers such as Heinrich Wölfflin, Richard Hamann, and Walter Benjamin. The chapter will also draw on a lesser known essay by Erwin Panofsky, published in 1930, which deserves more scholarly attention than it has thus far received.⁴⁸ Finally, I will introduce the art historian Oscar Schürer as an important contributor to the debate who has been entirely absent from any scholarly engagement with the discourse on the subject.

A portrait by Dix thus far ignored by research published to date, not least because it has been lost, will be at the centre of the enquiry: the *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg*, painted in 1925. Rather than offering an analysis of the artwork's function as a portrait, I will investigate issues of authorship and the problem of reproducibility as

⁴⁸ This is surprising since it has been available in English translation since 2010. 'Original und Faksimilereproduktion', *Der Kreis*, 7 (1930), 3-16, reprinted in 'Original and Facsimile Reproduction', trans. by Timothy Grundy, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 57/58, (Spring Autumn 2010), 330-338.

fundamental to the painter's decision making processes and at the root of the artwork's aesthetics. The chapter argues that in an era when, as László Moholy-Nagy put it, 'an almost imperceptible shift towards colourlessness and towards grey'⁴⁹ had occurred, Dix began to engage with photographic positives and reproductions in printed mass media publications. The chapter will demonstrate that Dix mocked the bad quality of, and bourgeois taste for, mass produced coloured oil print reproductions of famous paintings in some of his works, and that at the same time, he took an active role in the reproduction and distribution of his own paintings, demonstrating his engagement with yet another area of contemporary mass media culture.

Otto Dix with 'retrospective flavour': The Language of Temporality and the Temporality of Language in the Print Media.

While the first chapter reveals how Dix tried to harness the power of fashion, while also containing it for his own career ends, the final chapter looks at the area of written discourse with focus on art journals that engaged with and ran alongside Dix's career and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting. The focus will be on the second half of the 1920s, the period of time when the artist's career and the painterly movement he was seen as part of had been firmly established. It will consider two aspects of this discourse: the *language of temporality* art writers employed, specifically references to the German fashion industry, *Konfektion*, and the issue of the *temporality of language* as something that art critics became increasingly aware of. Their discussions centred around the issue of *Schlagworte*, catchwords conceived to describe artistic developments, and on the term '*Zeitgemäßheit*', 'appropriateness for the time'. It is my contention that, compared

⁴⁹ László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei-Fotografie-Film*, Neue Bauhausbücher, 7 (Passau: Passavia, 1927; repr. with an afterword by Otto Stelzer, Mainz: Kupferberg, 1967), p. 13. The book was first published in 1925 in the previous series of Bauhausbücher, 8 (Munich: Langen, 1925). The version used here is a facsimile of the 1927 edition.

to previous decades, art writers changed the way in which they employed ‘fashion’ as a critical concept to discuss developments in fine art, and that this was owing to a greater awareness of the power of their own medium and vocabulary.

The chapter will first demonstrate that critical terms used by art history had become suspect, and that this required art critics writing about contemporary art to develop a somewhat different language and to coin new terms. However, in order to make themselves understandable, writers could not use an entirely idiosyncratic vocabulary either. In addition, writers were also concerned about what they perceived to be an increase in the number of artists who were more interested in quick career success than originality and innovation. The term ‘*Konfektion*’ emerges as a tool writers used to address the relationship between stylistic developments and fashions in art production in a new way.

In the art historical writing of the era, the discussions had previously centred around the question of the logic and reason behind the developments of visual form, and the desire to organise historical forms into stylistic groupings in order to place them within an organic visual narrative over time, while excluding expressions that were deemed to have been short-lived ‘insignificant’ fashions.⁵⁰ In design theory before the First World War, exemplified in and led by the debates of the Werkbund, the issue of fashion revealed the tension between individual artists’ and designers’ desire for creative freedom and individuality, and the industry’s demand for *Kunstgewerbe* to provide

⁵⁰ See Frederic Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth Century Germany* (London: Yale University Press, 2005).

prototypes.⁵¹ My thesis argues that, in the 1920s, the focus of the discourse about fashion shifted again, that it moved on from the concern about the behaviour of form in distant art history, and about *Kunsth Handwerk* under the conditions of capitalism, to: firstly a much stronger focus on contemporary fine art and on the behaviour of artists rather than their output, and secondly to a more pronounced look inwards at the discursive tools and language employed by the writers themselves to discuss these issues.

In addition, this chapter will bring together writers who tried to assess whether Dix's oeuvre would stand the test of time or whether it would ultimately be dismissed as superficial fashion. For Paul Westheim much of contemporary artistic production was in danger of limiting its future significance by 'too much contemporaneity', by 'something too bound to time, too time-limited'.⁵² As Walter Georgi reflected in his review of the 'Frühjahrsausstellung der Akademie der Künste Berlin 1926', *Neue Sachlichkeit* 'was for large factions of our youth fashion and recipe [...] one follows the tip-off just like when gambling on the stock exchange'.⁵³ Popularity posed a problem for one's reputation in the artworld in the present and potentially also in the future, when the art historical canon would be shaped. Here my study also picks up a thread that Crockett ends his books with: the decline of *Neue Sachlichkeit* at the same time as it became a formula adopted by broad swathes of artists, not least Dix's pupils at the academy in Dresden, where he had taken up a professorship in 1927. I will demonstrate how the fate

⁵¹ See Frederic Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

⁵² Paul Westheim, 'Kunst in Frankreich. L'Esprit', *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 8-25 (p. 13).

⁵³ Walter Georgi, 'Frühjahrsausstellung der Akademie der Künste Berlin 1926', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 58 (1926), 298-305 (p. 299).

of an artist's career was almost inextricably bound to the currency of the labels used to describe his work.

Fashion

Throughout the thesis, fashion in its different incarnations – as a temporal agent, artefact, and industry – is identified as a metaphor, medium, agent of rupture, and directional force. It is evident from biographical anecdotes, from the construction of his artist persona in his self-portraits, and the detailed description of clothing in his paintings, that Dix had a strong interest in fashion.⁵⁴ However, it is only recently that this has been more fully addressed by Änne Söll.⁵⁵ Söll's angle is different to the one taken here because she does not consider fashion as a disruptive force to inscribe dialectic temporal dynamics in the very image itself. She focuses on Dix's construction of a masculine fashionable persona as a tool to signal that he 'takes part in fashion and consumer culture without being dominated by it'.⁵⁶ This aspect of Dix's self-presentation is, one could say, taken as a point of departure in the first chapter of my thesis. Söll further argues convincingly that Dix used his own fashionable outfits and

⁵⁴ See for example gallerist Johanna Ey's anecdote about Dix, quoted and translated in Müller, p. 165.

⁵⁵ Änne Söll, 'An die Schönheit. Selbst, Männlichkeit und Moderne in Otto Dix Selbstbildnis von 1922', in *Der schöne Körper, Mode und Kosmetik in Kunst und Gesellschaft*, ed. by Annette Geiger (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009), pp. 149-166; Änne Söll, "'Neue Männlichkeit". Die Matrosenbilder von Otto Dix', in *Das Auge der Welt. Otto Dix und die Neue Sachlichkeit*, exh. cat., Kunstmuseum Stuttgart (Ostfildern: Hatje, 2012); Änne Söll, *Der Neue Mann? Männerporträts von Otto Dix, Christian Schad und Anton Räderscheidt* (Paderborn: Fink, 2016).

⁵⁶ Änne Söll, *Der Neue Mann?*, pp. 202-206.

styling to show that he was able to retain his masculinity despite the association of fashion with femininity.⁵⁷

One of the ways in which my study differentiates itself from other academic studies on *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting is by addressing the temporal dimensions fashion adds to these works, and the way in which fashion, in its different incarnations, could provide a mechanism for painting to intersect in more than one way with the visual and written discourses and cultural arenas of a time. This study seeks to redress the recurring problem in scholarly investigations of fashion and modernity described by Leila Kinney as studies that are ‘deeply engaged with the temporal problematic of creating a modern style’, but ‘betray an interesting conflation of clothing as artefact and fashion as a process’.⁵⁸

The scholarly thinking about the ephemeral nature of sartorial fashion and its role in society, particularly its ability to visualise gender relations, predates the nineteenth century. However, the foundations for the discussion of the relationship between fashion and modernity, and fashion’s ability to express contemporaneity as a visible sign of modern life, were first laid in Charles Baudelaire’s essay ‘The Painter of Modern Life’ (1863). This was followed by publications that are now part of the academic canon of fashion studies, in particular Thorstein Veblen’s socio-economic study of the role consumption played in establishing class hierarchies, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), and Georg Simmel’s influential ‘Fashion’ essay of 1904/5, which

⁵⁷ Susan L. Funkenstein also considers Dix, fashion and masculinity in two essays published in 2005: ‘A Man’s Place in a Woman’s World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany’, *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies and German Culture*, 21 (2005), 163-191; and ‘Fashionable Dancing: Gender, the Charleston, and German Identity in Otto Dix’s Metropolis’, *German Studies Review*, 28.1 (2005), 20-44.

⁵⁸ Leila Kinney, ‘Fashion and Fabrication in Modern Architecture’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 58.3 (1999/2000), 472-481 (pp. 473-474).

expanded the understanding of the role fashion change played in class relations. However, it is Walter Benjamin who first attempted to develop a comprehensive philosophy of fashion that addressed the interrelationship between fashion as sartorial expression and as a temporal agent in *The Arcades Project*, written between 1927 and 1940.⁵⁹

Ulrich Lehmann has explored the work of these leading thinkers, alongside others, in an attempt to present a philosophy of fashion that acknowledges it as a force in its own right rather than a mere reflection of change in *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* (2000). Lehmann focuses predominantly on a French cultural context, and he explores in particular Benjamin's model of history as cyclical. A historical overview of the thinking about fashion in Germanic literature has been provided by Julia Bertschick in *Mode und Moderne: Kleidung als Spiegel des Zeitgeistes in der deutschsprachigen Literatur, 1770-1945* (2005).⁶⁰

In art history, the symbolic meaning of items and styles of clothing worn in painted portraits has been the subject of much research. Clothing fashions have also been an important means for art historians to date an artwork, since 'sartorial display was the ideal vehicle through which contemporaneity could be represented'.⁶¹ But it is in the study of Impressionism, with its particular interest in temporality, and its cultural

⁵⁹ For an introduction see Doris Kolesch, 'Mode, Moderne und Kulturtheorie – eine schwierige Beziehung. Überlegungen zu Baudelaire, Simmel, Benjamin und Adorno', in *Mode, Weiblichkeit, Modernität*, ed. by Waltraud Lehnert (Dortmund: Ebersbach & Simon, 1998), pp. 20-45. And Peter Wollen, 'The Concept of Fashion in the Arcades Project', *boundary 2*, 30.3 (2003), 131-142.

⁶⁰ Historical texts on fashion have also been republished and discussed in *Die Listen der Mode*, ed. by Silvia Bovenschen (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), and Daniel Purdy, *The Empire of Fashion: A Reader* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2004).

⁶¹ André Dombrowski, 'The Emperor's Last Clothes: Cézanne, Fashion and "L'année terrible"', *The Burlington Magazine*, 148.1242 (September 2006), 586-594 (p. 593-594).

context of rapid industrialization and the accompanying preoccupation with the accurate measuring of time, that the most interesting recent research is being undertaken. Here André Dombrowski has to be mentioned, as well as the ambitious exhibition project *L'Impressionisme et la Mode* (2012), which also resulted in a sumptuous catalogue publication.⁶²

Nancy Troy's pioneering study *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion* (2003) introduced new ways of thinking about fashion and art because it addressed the way in which the couturier Paul Poiret, in the 1910s, tried to align himself with the figure of an artist, and his garments with artworks, for the purpose of self-promotion. Troy demonstrates that both modern art and modern fashion were linked to discursive frames that shared fundamental aspects, such as the concept of originality and creative genius, and the concerns about issues of appropriation, standardisation and circulation as a result of their domination by the requirements of commodity capitalism. While my study overlaps in some areas with the discursive frame that Troy has first mapped out, it explores the inter-relationship of art and fashion from the perspective of painting in terms of representation, mediation, and discourse in the decade that followed the reign of Poiret.

Chiefly among the scholarly books on Weimar visual culture that have addressed the history of sartorial dress in the context of Weimar Germany, the importance of being fashionable and the promotion of fashionability in 1920s culture more generally is Mila Kaneva with her study *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German*

⁶² André Dombrowski, 'Instants, Moments, Minutes: Impressionism and the Industrialization of Time', in *Monet and the Birth of Impressionism*, ed. Felix Krämer (Frankfurt a.M.: Städel Museum, 2015), 36-45.

Culture, 1918-1933 (2008). Ganeva looks at fashion in journalistic writing and fiction, as well as fashion displays in film, and the figure of the mannequin. Janet Ward dedicated a chapter of her book *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (2001) to shop window displays of sartorial fashion and mannequins. Patrice Petro's study *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (1989) includes a chapter on the representation of the fashionable woman in the fashion magazine *Die Dame* and in the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*. Finally, Sabine Hake has provided the perhaps most focused discussion of women and fashion in 1920s Germany in her essay 'In the Mirror of Fashion', published in Katharina von Ankum's edited volume *Women in the Metropolis. Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (1997). Worth mentioning here also is Sherwin Simmons' essay 'Expressionism in the Discourse of Fashion', where Simmons pointed out that 'while the relationship between French avant-garde art and fashion has received some scholarly attention, the issue's relevance to developments in Germany [...] has scarcely been raised.'⁶³

Fashion has posed difficult conceptual problems for art historians and art critics. While this thesis will touch on this aspect in the last chapter, the focus is firmly on how one particular artist dealt with it in painting, and how it affected his career.

While the writings of art critics are the main literary source, I will also consider how the artist's output intersected with the concerns of leading cultural commentators and art historians of the time to trace out a more substantial intellectual framework. Based on

⁶³ Sherwin Simmons, 'Expressionism in the Discourse of Fashion', *Fashion Theory*, 4.1 (2000), 49-87 (p. 51).

material previously undiscovered, disregarded, or not discussed in relation to Dix, and by paying attention to precise nuances of the time period, I will demonstrate the way in which Dix inserted his work into media culture in the broadest sense rather than trying to work from an autonomous position. In response to a specific historical milieu, he devised complex, interconnected artistic strategies to demonstrate, with a sense of triumphant critique, that painting could still have abilities and functions different to mechanically produced images.

The perhaps central question that motivates my approach is which strategies artists can engage to establish themselves as leaders within their field – a situation made more challenging in Dix’s case by the fact that his chosen medium was one that seemed to continue to lose ground. What was ultimately at stake for the artist with every painting he produced, with every reproduction of his work in journals and newspapers, every decision by curators and collectors, with every word writers employed to describe it, was the level and the duration of his success. Walter Benjamin saw this, in agreement with the art collector Eduard Fuchs, and quoting him here, as one of the most ‘important questions which [...] attach themselves to art’.⁶⁴ It is this historically specific constellation, unique to every artist and even every individual artwork, that would determine the way in which both would enter and continue to be considered in art history – or whether they would do so at all. This line of questioning is not least motivated by my work as an art market journalist over the last fourteen years, which has given me a specific, perhaps somewhat cynical, view of the art world and shaped my interest in the question how artists achieve commercial and critical success, and what

⁶⁴ Eduard Fuchs, *Gavarni* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1925), p. 13, cit. and transl. in Walter Benjamin ‘Eduard Fuchs: Writer and Historian’, trans. Kurt Tarnowski, *New German Critique*, 5 (1975), 27-58 (p. 29).

strategies can they engage to maintain it. It has also shaped my interest in the role the discourse surrounding an artist can play in this.

This study seeks to contribute new insight to the field of Dix studies specifically, and the study of modern art and media culture more generally. It challenges perceived boundaries by exploring the intersections between a specific version of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting and the themes of temporality, medium-specificity, reproduction and contemporary discourses. The paintings discussed here interfaced with mechanical image technologies and print culture in a variety of very specific ways, and my study makes a contribution the continued examination of the resistances that photography, since its emergence in the mid-1900s and other reproductive image making technologies have provoked in painting. My thesis puts forward new methodological and theoretical ideas while also revealing a shift in an artist's attention in the way he addressed his painterly task and audience expectations, and I argue that this meant a greater acknowledgement of the centrality of his choice of medium. A critique of the artist as conscious of the instability of his position and the new demands made of his medium will reveal the intellectual and painterly challenges that a new, heightened form of commodification in tandem with an expanded media culture posed for an artist of the interwar avant-garde.

Chapter 1

**Inscribing Temporality, Containing Fashion:
Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* (1925) re-contextualized**

*This is what the film diva looks like.
She is twenty-four years old, featured on
the cover of an illustrated magazine, [...] Time: the present. The caption calls her
demonic: our demonic diva. [...] Everyone recognises her with delight,
since everyone has already seen the original
on the screen.*⁶⁵
Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography' (1927)

Siegfried Kracauer and the 'Truth Content' of Photography

In his well-known essay on 'Photography' (1927), quoted above, Siegfried Kracauer points out photography's limited indexical powers, using as an example the picture of an unnamed 'demonic diva' on the cover of an illustrated magazine: as her photograph ages, her demonic quality will be lost. Following Kracauer, this attribute is only accessible to a contemporary audience that has experienced her performances and is able to ascribe her demoniacal presence to the photograph: 'the demonic is less something conveyed by the photograph than it is by the impression of cinemagoers who experience the original on the screen'. As Kracauer explains, 'the demonic belongs to the still-vacillating memory-image of the diva to which the photographic resemblance does not refer'. In the photograph as optical sign, he contends, 'the truth content of the original is left behind in its history; the photograph captures only the residuum that history has discharged'.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography' (1927), trans. and intr. by Thomas Y. Levin, *Critical Enquiry*, 19 (Spring 1993), 421-436 (pp. 422-23).

⁶⁶ Kracauer, p. 429.

Anita Berber, described by the fashion magazine *Elegante Welt* in 1920 as ‘the demonic dance virtuoso’ (figure 1), was one such ‘diva’. With his painting *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* (figure 2), who had been celebrated for her beauty, talent, and transgressions in the immediate past, Otto Dix, I shall show, attempted to permanently inscribe this fugitive content, capturing and bringing to the fore both Berber’s ‘demonic’ qualities and simultaneously accelerating her trajectory of decline. Dix wanted to demonstrate that his specific style of painting, which did not idealise but instead heightened and distorted the features of the portrayed, could not be ‘emptied’ like a photograph. His portrait of Berber would be able to rescue and continue to transmit some of the diva’s ‘memory image’, the historic ‘truth content’ of the original. What is more, Dix’s portrait of Anita Berber became so iconic that it acquired generative powers: in a reverse action, it is able to pull the ‘demonic’ qualities of the dancer into our present and to transfer them to her photographs for those viewers who have experienced the painting. At the same time, by firmly situating her in the past and stripping her of what might have been left of her beauty and volatile fashionability, the painter found a strategy to stabilise his artwork, to strengthen its temporal anchoring in order to ensure its future positioning within art history.

In his essay Kracauer explicitly linked photography to fashion, since a photograph is ‘bound to time in exactly the same way as fashion’. Referring here to fashion as artifact, he put forward the idea that an outdated dress in a photograph ‘protrudes into our time like a mansion from earlier days that has been marked for destruction’.⁶⁷ This is what was at stake for the portrait painter: by painting fashionable women, he would risk exactly that for his art. Not just the appearance and identity of the portrayed subject, but

⁶⁷ Kracauer. p. 430.

the artwork itself would lose its power not long after its creation. Therefore, an awareness of the temporal dynamics of continuity and contingency had to become intrinsic to the creative process, since, as Sabine Hake writes, drawing on Georg Simmel's conception of fashion: 'If things are perceived as fashionable because of their ephemeral status, then fashion consciousness is always guided by an acute sense of temporality.'⁶⁸ Thus, in the following attempt at historical retrieval the portrait of Anita Berber is revealed as the result of a complex dialectical maneuver that required an awareness of the destructive temporal qualities of fashion.

Anita Berber – Dancer, Fashion-Icon, Celebrity

Anita Berber was one of the Weimar Republic's 'it-girls' and sex symbols, famous for her fashionable dress-sense and expressionist dance from 1917 onwards.⁶⁹ Berlin's dance culture had exploded after the war. Small cabarets and large revues staged popular performances of nude and semi-nude women, and Berber became a cult figure. Paul Nikolaus described her in his slim publication on dancers *Tänzerinnen*, published in 1921, alongside Hannelore Ziegler as the most important expressionist dancer of the era.⁷⁰ Nikolaus's assessment was however ridiculed in the daily newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* by a reviewer of the book who dismissed Berber as a 'pretentious Variété-

⁶⁸ Sabine Hake, 'In the Mirror of Fashion', in *Women in the Metropolis. Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 197.

⁶⁹ Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 86. For further information about Berber's life see: Leo Lania, *Der Tanz ins Dunkel. Anita Berber. Ein biographischer Roman* (Berlin: Schultz, 1929); Lothar Fischer, *Tanz zwischen Rausch und Tod. Anita Berber 1918-1928 in Berlin* (Berlin: Haude und Spener, 1996); Susan Laikin Funkenstein, 'Anita Berber: Imaging a Weimar Performance Artist', *Women's Art Journal*, 26 (2005), 26-31; Mel Gordon, *The Seven Addictions and Five Lives of Anita Berber* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2006).

⁷⁰ Paul Nikolaus, *Tänzerinnen* (Munich: Delphin, 1919).

dancer'.⁷¹ Ernst Bloch dedicated a chapter to the emergence and popularity of a new kind of expressionist dance in the Weimar era in his book *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, written in America between 1938 and 1947. For him, it was only the dancer Mary Wigman who had developed a form of true Expressionism in her performances. He wrote in 'New Dance as Formerly Expressionist Exoticism' that among these new dances were 'strange formations, flat and certainly also confusingly irrational, in which a relationship to uncontrolled otherness, with uncivilised foreignness was sought'.⁷² Anita Berber was one of those dancers, and she positioned herself increasingly at the extreme end of the spectrum. This uncontrollable otherness is what impressed Dix's painter friend Otto Griebel when he saw Berber for the first time as part of the new Nelson Revue *Bitte zahlen!*, and he credited his colleague with having captured it. 'Unforgettable', he wrote, 'was Anita Berber, who, just like Dix painted her later, appeared on stage and performed an ecstatic dance'.⁷³ She divided contemporary opinion, but more recently Karl Toepfer has contended that 'as a bizarre exponent of Expressionism' she represented 'perhaps the most complex, significant, and memorable relation between nudity and dance to emerge between 1910 and 1935'.⁷⁴ Berber's image was disseminated across a wide range of what would today be described as 'media platforms', from newspapers, to cabaret and film posters, postcards, cigarette cards, even Rosenthal figurines.⁷⁵ The *Vossische Zeitung* alone mentions her twenty-one times

⁷¹ 'Tänzerinnen', *Vossische Zeitung, Abendausgabe*, 21 July 1921, p. 3.

⁷² Ernst Bloch, 'Neuer Tanz als ehemals expressionistische Exotik', in Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1959), pp. 460-462 (p. 462).

⁷³ Otto Griebel, *Ich war ein Mann der Strasse. Lebenserinnerungen eines Dresdner Malers* (Frankfurt a.M.: Röderberg, 1986), p. 135.

⁷⁴ Toepfer, p. 83.

⁷⁵ For examples see the publications by Mel Gordon and Lothar Fischer (footnote 7) and the historical material collected on Anita Berber in the Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln, file 226 [DTA]

between 1918 and 1927.⁷⁶ An early review, published in the paper in January 1919, is full of praise:

Anita Berber, who was dancing in the Blüthner-Saal, has acquired her own, large congregation, among which not just the young ballet dancers from all the ballet schools in Berlin and environs are enthused. She deserves this affection, since she possesses a splendidly controlled body and is one of those rare dancers who have a natural sense for elegance and tasteful theatrical effects.⁷⁷

She was, like many other dancers, also photographed regularly for upmarket fashion magazines such as *Elegante Welt* and *Die Dame* (figure 3) as well as drawn and painted by a number of artists and illustrators.⁷⁸ She did not follow, but instigated new trends. By 1922, however, scandalous reports of her outrageous bohemian lifestyle, which included drug and alcohol addiction as well as open sexual transgression, from bisexuality to suggestions of prostitution, had become almost as important as her performances. Her arrest for nude dancing at the Ronacher-Theatre in Vienna was widely reported in the German press, including her ensuing supposed nervous breakdown, which involved her trying to smash the windows in order to throw herself out of a rolling police car.⁷⁹ Her whole persona was built around excess and decadence. Even her cocaine-use was fashionable at a time when the upmarket Berlin fashion house Valentin Manheimer was displaying ‘cocaine outfits (a dress with matching long jacket) in muted colors in its shop windows’.⁸⁰ Klaus Mann, who spent some time with her, described her status and influence on the zenith of her fame:

⁷⁶ Some of these relate to adverts for her shows.

⁷⁷ ‘Konzerte’, *Vossische Zeitung, Morgen-Ausgabe*, 25. January 1919, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Fischer and Gordon include art works by Charlotte Behrend-Corinth, Harry Täuber, János Vaszary, Rolf Niczky among others. A portrait drawing by Rudolf Grossmann is reproduced in *Die Dame*, 50.15 (1923), p. 5.

⁷⁹ ‘Anita Berbers Verhaftung’, *Vossische Zeitung, Morgen-Ausgabe* (29 December 1922), p. 2.

⁸⁰ Uwe Westphal, *Berliner Konfektion und Mode 1836-1939. Die Zerstörung einer Tradition* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1992), p. 83.

It was the year 1924 and Anita Berber was already a legend. She was only really famous for two or three years by then, but had already become a symbol. Depraved bourgeois girls copied Berber, and every slightly more ambitious cocotte wanted to look exactly like her. Postwar-erotic, cocaine, Salomé, ultimate perversity: such terms formed the sparkling crown of her glory.⁸¹

To paint fashionable women could be a dangerous occupation for any painter who wanted to be taken seriously by the art world elite. Kees van Dongen, one of the most popular portraitists of fashionable Parisian society, is a case in point. He ‘was destined to be a great modern painter’, wrote an art critic in the upmarket fashion magazine *Elegante Welt* in November 1925, but he only became ‘a great painter of fashion’.⁸² Van Dongen should be pitied since fashion’s allure threatened his talent and future position in art history, despite the fact that the artist tried to ‘protect himself with his strong, daring – at the same time refined painterly style’.⁸³ What is more, a painting could be doomed in two ways: not just the work’s subject and his or her appearance would inevitably go out of fashion, this could also apply to the painterly idiom – even if it was as ‘refined’ as that of van Dongen.

In his famous ‘Fashion’ essay, published in 1904, Georg Simmel described fashion as an abstraction because of its indifference to form, as ‘the total antithesis of contents’.⁸⁴ Anything could be caught in its dynamics. For Simmel, the allure of fashion lay in the ‘simultaneous beginning and end’, its positioning on ‘the dividing-line between past and future’, because ‘as fashion spreads, it gradually goes to its doom’.⁸⁵ Charles Baudelaire had already recognised fashion’s paradigmatic role in contemporary aesthetics in ‘The

⁸¹ Klaus Mann, ‘Erinnerungen an Anita Berber’, *Die Bühne. Wochenschrift für Theater, Tanz, Mode*, 7 (1930), 43-44.

⁸² Pawel Barchan, ‘Van Dongen’, *Elegante Welt*, 14.22 (1925), 23-25 (p. 25).

⁸³ Barchan, ‘Van Dongen’, p. 25.

⁸⁴ Georg Simmel, ‘Fashion’, in *The Rise of Fashion. A Reader*, ed. by Daniel Purdy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. 289-309 (p. 298).

⁸⁵ Simmel, p. 295.

Painter of Modern Life' of 1893, and around the same time cultural critics and innovative art historians made efforts to integrate fashionable clothing into the analysis of historic styles to help identify synchronic aesthetic correspondences, chiefly among them Heinrich Wölfflin in his study of the Gothic.⁸⁶ By the early 1920s the issue of fashion had become a widely debated concern in contemporary arts criticism – more specifically a theme through which an artwork's relationship to time and its status as a commodity could be negotiated. Painterly idiom, subject and content of a painting could be the result of fashions in wider visual culture, and potentially undermine its credibility. As a result, art critics (commonly trained art historians) saw it as one of their tasks to identify and dismiss short-lived fashions in order to contain creative production within a logical line of stylistic development. As Paul Westheim, the editor of the influential, elitist art journal *Das Kunstblatt* explained in 1923, the art critic's goal should be to identify 'the actual art of the present, the authentic, the creative and therefore the lasting' and 'not the new per se'.⁸⁷ Emerging artistic positions had to be protected against the 'art business and mere followers, who will just elegantly play along with the next fashion'.⁸⁸ Elsewhere, Westheim expressed sympathy for people who believed art to be undermined by 'too much contemporaneity', by 'something too bound to time, too time-limited'.⁸⁹ Along with many of his fellow critics, Westheim struggled to verbalise the effect of complex cultural changes on the way art engaged with the external world, and on the criteria for the appraisal of artworks.

Even if an artist did not paint fashionable women, he and his work could become

⁸⁶ See Frederic Schwartz, *Blind Spots. Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth Century Germany* (London: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁸⁷ Paul Westheim, *Für und Wider. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1923), pp. 32-33.

⁸⁸ Westheim, *Für und Wider*, p. 32.

⁸⁹ Paul Westheim, 'Kunst in Frankreich. L'Esprit', *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 8-25 (p. 13).

fashionable, trapping him within the same dynamic of decline Simmel had identified for fashionable clothing – that it ‘gradually goes to its doom’. That painters might actively respond to this problem is suggested by Paul Westheim in 1922, in an article on artistic developments in France. In order to explain the speed of stylistic change in Picasso’s work he suggested that the painter consciously and strategically responded to dynamics of fashion:

When looking for an explanation for the question why Picasso paints in this way or that, the so-called ‘Ingres-fashion’ is certainly the most stupid and most easily refutable. [...] For Picasso, I believe, it would be easier and more convenient to start a ‘Picasso-fashion’. Perhaps behind his effort is even the intention to avoid a Picasso-fashion.⁹⁰

An awareness of fashions in art production and reception was intrinsic to the creative process, but even artists themselves expressed their concern about how influential fashion had become. In 1925 George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde conceded sarcastically in their essay ‘Art is under Threat’:

Formal revolution lost its shock effect a long time ago. [...] Today’s young merchant is [...] ice-cold, aloof, he hangs the most radical things in his apartment. [...] Rash and unhesitating acceptance so as not to be ‘born yesterday’ is the password. [...] he understands only his merchandise, for everything else – including the fields of philosophy, ethics, art – for all culture there are specialists, they determine the fashion, which is then accepted at face value.⁹¹

Fashionability forced change, directed artistic agency and amplified the modernist imperative for innovation and originality. Art critics demanded that art should be ‘zeitgemäss’ – appropriate for the time – but that it should not merely fit into an established fashion. For figurative painters who considered themselves part of the

⁹⁰ Westheim, ‘Kunst in Frankreich’, p. 15.

⁹¹ George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde, ‘Art is in Danger’, repr. and trans. in *Art in Theory 1900-2000. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 450-454 (p. 453).

avant-garde⁹² who had to evade mass appeal while simultaneously gaining approval from art world insiders, the navigation of these dynamics was as necessary as it was challenging. Trapped within an ideology that privileged newness, but working in the traditional medium of painting, they had to deal with fashion as an agent of ‘contamination’⁹³ through mass culture in some way – ideologically or aesthetically – in order not to undermine their own status.

The Painter as Arbiter of Style

A painter who changed his painting style as frequently as Otto Dix and was also a keen observer of clothing fashions in both his own appearance and his work, could find himself in a problematic position. Instead, one of his supporters, the influential art writer, and until 1924 director of the Dresdner Stadtmuseum, Paul F. Schmidt, celebrated Dix for this capriciousness, by claiming in the catalogue of the artist’s major solo-exhibition at Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin in 1926: ‘No contemporary artist has gone through such a multifarious and contradictory development; none has such an excessive variety in his production, such a multitude of unprecedented identities.’⁹⁴ Rather than merely duplicating fleeting surface phenomena or adopting existing trends in art production, Schmidt contended that Dix excavated what lay underneath; he could

⁹² To clarify the contested relationship of new realist positions to the historic avant-garde, Olaf Peters has described the *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a ‘conscious reaction against the art of abstraction’ and ‘in this respect a kind of antagonist, counter-avantgardist avant-garde’. Olaf Peters, ‘Eine demokratische Kunst? – Aspekte der Neuen Sachlichkeit seit 1930’, in *Zeitnah Weltfern. Bilder der Neuen Sachlichkeit*, ed. by Beate Reese (Würzburg: Städtische Galerie Würzburg, 1998), pp. 21-28 (p. 26).

⁹³ Huyssen has argued in that the historical avant-garde was defined by ‘an anxiety of contamination of its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture’, but does not include realist painting or single out fashion. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), p. vii.

⁹⁴ Paul F. Schmidt, ‘Otto Dix’, in *Otto Dix. Katalog der Gesamtausstellung 1926. Mit Verzeichnis der gesamten Grafik bis 1925, Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf* (Berlin: Kunstarchiv, 1926), pp. 5-7 (p. 6).

‘see through his time’, providing ‘an intersection of our time’ through his work.⁹⁵ Dix was ‘a Proteus himself, he changes objects, viewpoints, techniques’, Schmidt contended; ‘he is the shaper of our time’.⁹⁶ Dix, who became one of the most celebrated painters of the so-called verist wing of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, is set up as protean – shape-shifting and prophetic both in his identity and his painterly style; a characterisation closely aligned with fashion’s intrinsic futurity and instability. Schmidt had already singled out Dix in 1924 in a programmatic article about ‘The German Verists’ in the *Kunstblatt* as having ‘the eye for life and its present-ness’.⁹⁷ His stylistic pluralism was seen as a sign of his great talent. Having closely studied the Old Masters during his formative years in Dresden, he used their formal vocabulary in some of his early paintings, but then made works in an impressionist, then an expressionist idiom, inflected with futurist elements. Around 1920 he went through a short Dadaist phase, before developing the old-masterly Verism he became most famous for. In 1925 his work was included in the famous *Neue Sachlichkeit*-exhibition in Mannheim, which confirmed the term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ as the new leading painterly style in Germany as well as the, since then, most commonly used to label it.⁹⁸ The art critic Curt Glaser described him in 1924 as an artist with ‘a lot of skills, but probably too many, because he can do everything’.⁹⁹ Before Dix had firmly established himself as one of the leaders of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, one of his early critics, Franz Servaes, had expressed concern

⁹⁵ Schmidt, ‘Otto Dix’, p. 5-6.

⁹⁶ Schmidt, ‘Otto Dix’, p. 7.

⁹⁷ Paul F. Schmidt, ‘Die deutschen Veristen’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 8 (1924), 367-373 (p. 373).

⁹⁸ The new painterly movement was originally tentatively described as ‘Neuer Naturalismus’ (‘New Naturalism’), for example by the *Kunstblatt* in 1922, and employed by writers such as Hans Curjel who wrote in 1923 in the *Kunstblatt* about ‘the “New Naturalism”, as one calls the movement directed towards figuration in the latest art for now, for want of a more indicative [bezeichnenderen] term’. In Hans Curjel, ‘Zur Entwicklung des Malers Georg Scholz’, *Das Kunstblatt*, (1923), 257- 264 (p. 257).

⁹⁹ Curt Glaser, *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, 4 December 1924, cited in Andreas Strobl, *Otto Dix. Eine Malerkarriere der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Reimer, 1996), p. 98. Glaser was also the director of the Berliner Kunstbibliothek from 1924 onwards. He had gained his doctorate with Heinrich Wölfflin in 1907.

at his fickleness, which he saw as indicative of the general lack of direction among a new generation of artists. In his article ‘Results of Expressionism?’ (*Ergebnisse des Expressionismus?*), published in the newspaper *Die Woche*, he contended in 1920:

Otto Dix, very talented and equipped with skill, belongs to those who have to watch themselves. He is inclined towards the most hideous crudities, and with his collages [*Stoffkleberei*] he will soon end up with the most blatant naturalism. Particularly this example reveals, the lack of direction among our young artists. At times, they copy each other in the most basic, formulaic fashion [*bald pinseln sie in billigster Rezeptmalerei hintereinander her*], so that one cannot tell one from the other. At times, they go off on completely undisciplined tangents and frivolously question everything they have previously claimed to fight for with the greatest spirit of sacrifice.¹⁰⁰

Otto Dix was an enthusiastic consumer of the distractions of Weimar Modernity’s mass culture, from cinema to cabaret shows, fairgrounds and dance halls, and had a particular interest in the grotesque.¹⁰¹ Although his work engaged with social issues of the post-war era such as crippled soldiers, poverty and prostitution, he assumed, as James van Dyke writes, ‘the amoral habitus of the observant but uncommitted, critical but apolitical flâneur’.¹⁰² Dix admired fashionable and creative women. Two of his early girlfriends were fashion designers, and his wife Martha, whom he had met in 1921 and married in 1923, had many creative talents and shared his love of dancing, fashion and music. In his paintings of anonymous women, fashionable adornment was commonly used to caricature aging or unattractive bodies, or to highlight vanity, such as in *Lady with Mink and Veil* of 1920 (figure 4). In his early paintings of Martha he expressed admiration for his fashionable wife (figure 5). One critic was almost serious when he described the more attractive and naturalist among Dix’s paintings, in particular those of

¹⁰¹ See also Karsten Müller ‘The Charleston and the Prosthetic Leg. Otto Dix and the Art of the Balancing Act’, in Peters, *Otto Dix*, pp.164-177.

¹⁰² James van Dyke, ‘Otto Dix’s *Streetbattle* and the Limits of Satire in Düsseldorf, 1928’, *Oxford Art Journal*, 32 (2009), 37-65 (p. 49).

women in watercolor, as ‘an accident, an embarrassing lack of consistency’.¹⁰³ The artist Ilse Fischer wrote in her essay ‘Der Dadaist (Otto Dix)’ of 1922, which was designed to promote the artist’s career and set him up as a fashion conscious amalgam of dandy and macho, that Dix was ‘a slave to appearances’ who loved ‘anything eccentric’ with a passion: ‘eccentric women, eccentric dances, eccentric art’.¹⁰⁴ Fashionability played an important role in constructing Otto Dix’s professional habitus, from his daily appearance to his staged self-portraits.¹⁰⁵ In this regard, too, he went through many transformations: from the romantic bohemian as a teenager, to the intense artist-dandy in the early 1920s. By the mid-1920s Dix had adopted the pose and appearance of a concentrated, but distanced, cool observer, smartly dressed and perfectly groomed ‘American style’ (figure 6). As Ilse Fischer already observed in 1922:

He has something American about him, [...] in the cut of his suit: excessively wide, short trousers, padded upper sleeves, gratuitously high waist. Apart from that his wardrobe is a conglomerate of hand-me-downs

¹⁰³ Alfred Salmony, ‘Dix als Porträtist’, *Der Cicerone*, 17 (1925), 1045-1049 (p. 1046).

¹⁰⁴ Ilse Fischer, ‘Der Dadaist (Otto Dix)’, *Das junge Rheinland*, 9/10 (June 1922), 23-28 (pp. 26-27). It has been suggested by Susanne Meyer-Büser that ‘Ilse Fischer’ was a pseudonym, based on ‘what can be gathered from the artist’s living conditions’. She argues that Viola Schulhoff, a painter with a studio in Dresden who was possibly Dix’s girlfriend before going out with Dix’s friend Kurt Günther (see Strobl, p. 39, note 113) may have in fact written the essay, and this already in 1919. While this may be the case, there is not enough evidence to establish beyond doubt that she wrote it. Susanne Meyer-Büser, ‘Otto Dix – Proletarian Rebel and Big-City Dandy’, in *Otto Dix: Der böse Blick / The Evil Eye*, ed. by Susanne Meyer-Büser (Munich: Prestel, 2017), pp. 24-37 (p. 28, note 12, and p. 30, note 13). However, there is evidence that Ilse Fischer could have been a real person since a painter with this name (born 1900, died 1979) lived and studied in Berlin in the 1920s, which means she could have been acquainted with Dix through artistic circles in Berlin. See *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler des XX. Jahrhunderts. Zweiter Band (E-J)*, Studienausgabe, ed. by Hans Vollmer (Leipzig: Seemann, 1999). An artist of the same name is also listed among the contributors of the exhibition catalogue *Die gestaltende Frau, Erste Ausstellung des Deutschen Staatsbürgerinnenverbandes e.V.* ex. cat. (Berlin: Deutsche Staatsbürgerinnenverband, 1930). The exhibition took place in Berlin from 17. October to 5 November 1930 at Wertheim in Leipziger Strasse. Since 2017 she even has a Wikipedia entry.

¹⁰⁵ On Dix’s self-stylization in *To Beauty* (1922) see Änne Söll, ‘An die Schönheit. Selbst, Männlichkeit und Moderne in Otto Dix Selbstbildnis von 1922’, in *Der schöne Körper. Mode und Kosmetik in Kunst und Gesellschaft*, ed. by Annette Geiger (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009), pp. 149-166.

from art-loving citizens or helpful friends, and a few individual pieces he bought himself and that betray a desire for extravagant elegance.¹⁰⁶

Dix self-portraits mirrored this external transformation of the artist's persona as well. The influential art critic Franz Roh, writing in his seminal overview of post-expressionist painting *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* of 1925, in which he categorised Dix as an expressionist turned verist, explained: 'What a transformation in the habitus of the artist himself, if we consider the self-portrait by Dix! Long gone the ideal of the velvet overcoat [Sammetjoppe] of the recluse, of the oversized floppy hat and curlyhead [Lockenhauptes].'¹⁰⁷

Struggling financially, Dix had even given his work *War Cripples* (1920) to Paul F. Schmidt of the Dresdner Stadtmuseum in exchange for an elegant suit from an upmarket menswear retailer.¹⁰⁸ In letters to his wife, Dix reveals himself as a keen observer of women's fashion trends as well. Writing in June 1924 from Berlin, he informs her that he has posted the requested fashion magazines and that 'fashion is nothing fancy at the moment, one wanders around dressed in a very banal way. I see a lot of skirts with

¹⁰⁶ Fischer, 'Der Dadaist', p. 23. For a discussion of Dix's interest in dance and fashion see Susan Laikin Funkenstein, 'A Man's Place in a Woman's World: Otto Dix, Social Dancing, and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany', *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture*, 21 (2005), 163-191.

¹⁰⁷ Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925), pp. 95-96. I do not agree with Dennis Crockett's strong criticism of Roh's attempt to set up a polarity Expressionism/Post-expressionism, which Crockett claims is at best 'narrow and strained', or that both types of painters were 'closely related' stylistically – even though that may be the case, to an extent, thematically. Nobody would confuse a still life by Cézanne with one by Kandlt, with its sharp linearism. Cézanne, might be a painter who prepared the ground for expressionism, but he was nevertheless more post-impressionist than expressionist in the way the German painters that followed were. While some *neusachlich* painters might have been expressionists before and some of the exalted sentiment and psychologizing remained, overall the movements can clearly be differentiated. See Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism. The Art of the Great Disorder* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press), p. 155.

¹⁰⁸ Dietrich Schubert, *Otto Dix. Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1991), p. 41. The retailer was a textile company run by Konsul Hermann Mühlberg.

slits'.¹⁰⁹ The following day he advises: 'Very modern are brocade jackets with fur application, but they have to be made to order.'¹¹⁰ Two informal drawings made in 1921 further underline the role fashion played in the couple's life, one showing them on a shopping trip, and in the other, Dix has designed an exaggerated version of a fashionable, high-waisted suit for himself (figure 7). Dix understood the importance of fashion as a tool to demonstrate an awareness of the latest developments in wider visual culture and his hairstyle played an important part in this. In 1919 the fashion magazine *Elegante Welt* had published 'The New Artist-Type', an article focused entirely on male artists' hair styling and facial features. Dix modeled himself on a type the article's writer, Paul Kraemer, had classified as the 'modern worker's head' with the hallmarks of an artist 'completely committed to his work'¹¹¹: beardless, combed back hair, intense gaze, sharp nose and thin-lipped determination.

Dix took many calculated decisions within a wider cultural field to strengthen his position within artistic networks, and his appearance and choice of fashionable subjects was just one of them. In 1922, during the difficult time of the hyperinflation in Germany, Dix had moved from Dresden to Düsseldorf, where he had already established connections within the local artistic community, because it had a stronger market of well-off collectors. By 1924 he had his eyes on Berlin, the rapidly growing center of Germany's art world, and he finally moved there in November 1925. His dealer Karl Nierendorf had transferred his business operations from Cologne to Berlin in 1925 and Dix's first major solo-exhibition was scheduled there in spring 1926. This exhibition was meant to demonstrate the artist's range of skills and to bring him and

¹⁰⁹ Otto Dix, *Briefe*, ed. by Ulrike Lorenz (Cologne: Wienand, 2013), p. 80.

¹¹⁰ Dix, *Briefe*, pp. 80-81.

¹¹¹ Paul Kraemer, 'Der neue Künstlertyp', *Elegante Welt*, 8.5 (1919), 4 (p. 4).

Nierendorf new business in portrait commissions.¹¹² Taking Nierendorf's advice, he had already started to create more portraits of people from the cultural world, since 'to paint an important personality from the Berlin scene meant to be noticed by this scene.'¹¹³ Anita Berber's portrait was most likely specifically created in preparation for this solo-show, based on considerations of its audience and locality.

During the hyperinflation between 1922 and 1924, Berlin had come to be seen as the center of a decadent, depraved culture and Berber one of its most provocative personalities. Klaus Mann remembers the inflation years in his memoirs *Der Wendepunkt*: 'Dance was a mania, an idée fixe, a cult. The stock market danced. [...] Anita Berber – her face frozen to a shrill mask, her hair all in horridly purple curls – does the keitus dance [...] Fashion becomes obsession and spreads like fever, uncontrollable, like certain epidemics and mystic compulsions of the middle ages.'¹¹⁴ After meeting the choreographer and dancer Sebastian Droste, who became her husband in 1922, Berber's self-presentation and expressionist dance performances, in which the dancer did not play a part but was the embodiment of emotions, became more extreme. Their program *Dances of Vice, Horror and Ecstasy*, which included her signature solo-dances 'Salomé', 'Morphium' and 'Cocaine', focused on abject themes of drug addiction, lust, murder, suicide, degradation, excess and madness. For her dance 'Salomé' (1921) she emerged, as Toepfer writes, from an urn filled with blood.¹¹⁵ Contemporaries saw in Berber an anomic figure: someone who did not just live in opposition to the rules of society but outside them. This must have appealed to Dix,

¹¹² Strobl, pp. 116-117.

¹¹³ Strobl, p. 114.

¹¹⁴ Klaus Mann, *Der Wendepunkt. Ein Lebensbericht* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1953), p. 132, cit. and trans. in Bernd Widdig, *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 207.

¹¹⁵ Toepfer, p. 85.

since, according to Ilse Fischer: ‘Whoever, like him, puts himself fearlessly outside of the law, can expect his unlimited admiration.’¹¹⁶

Berber’s outrageous behavior on and off stage had contributed significantly to her fame, and she ensured that scandal surrounded her. As Kate Elswit has argued, ‘Berber’s wildness coexisted alongside observations of how consciously aware she was of her effect.’¹¹⁷ She and Droste strategically chose the most fashionable commercial photographer of the time, Dora Kallmus’ Atelier d’Ora, to take new promotional pictures when their program premiered in Vienna in 1922. Berber was also in town because she was acting in the film *Die drei Marien und der Herr von Maranta* (1922) with Lya de Putti, directed by Reinhold Schünzel. The less daring of the photographs by Atelier d’Ora were published in *Die Dame* in January the following year. These images and a few others taken by another photographer in Berlin in 1923 are among the last promotional photographs taken of Berber at a time when she was (like Kracauer’s demonic film diva) only twenty-four years old.¹¹⁸

With the end of hyper-inflation, the stabilisation of the economy and the return of a more conservative morality, Berber had started to lose many admirers. Droste left Berber at the end of 1923, taking her jewelry and furs leaving her destitute, and emigrated to America.¹¹⁹ Her film career had gone from major to minor film roles because her drug and alcohol abuse had made her increasingly problematic to work with, perhaps also because her economic exchange value, based on her fashionability,

¹¹⁶ Fischer, ‘Der Dadaist’, p. 26.

¹¹⁷ Kate Elswit, ‘Berlin...Your Dance Partner is Death’, *The Drama Review*, 53 (2009), 73-92 (p. 86).

¹¹⁸ The material on Berber held by the Dance Archive in Cologne suggests that from then on the images of her used for promotional purposes and in press publications from then on were old ones, i.e. outdated.

¹¹⁹ Toepfer, p. 86.

was decreasing. Her function within the image and consumer economy slowly collapsed. In November 1924, a newspaper journalist commented on her lack of film roles: ‘Now Anita only dances, but when they engage her, the directors are always – as Berber reassures me – a little anxious.’¹²⁰ More and more negative scandalous stories circulated, and towards the end of 1924, Berber tried to reignite her career by marrying the young, up-and-coming American dancer Henri Châtin-Hofmann. A few months later, they left Berlin for a tour of the German provinces. Here she was mainly known through fashion magazines, films and postcards, rather than live performances. The decline of her status in the capital was less well-known there, and she could still trade on her remaining ‘fashionable capital’, but did so without reinventing herself. She still performed acts from her previous program, developed in 1922, which had become part of her brand.

Negative assessments of her behavior on- and off-stage were now not only published in conservative newspapers (which added piquancy and would have raised her status among artists), but increasingly came from within artistic circles. Film critic and theorist Béla Balázs used Berber as an example of vulgarity in his appraisal of the film star Asta Nielsen in *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films* in 1924: Asta Nielsen ‘is never shown unclothed; she does not show off her thighs like Anita Berber, (to the point where it is difficult to distinguish between face and backside)’.¹²¹ Klaus Mann remembers her declining popularity: ‘People were pointing the finger at her; she was outlawed. Even for post-war Berlin she had gone too far. One went to see her on

¹²⁰ Wallisch, ‘Anita Berber,’ *Neue Illustrierte Filmwoche, Berliner Ausgabe*, 21 November 1924, p. 751.

¹²¹ Béla Balázs, *Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. by Erica Carter, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (New York: Berghahn, 2010), p. 87.

the cabaret stage to get the creeps: apart from that, she was ostracised.’¹²² Early in 1925 Berber had turned up to artists’ party in Berlin. When she was refused entry, she gave the host a slap in the face. Shockingly, he slapped her back. This host was none other than the Weimar Republic’s foremost art dealer, Alfred Flechtheim.¹²³ This incident made the decline of her status all too clear, and in this transitional time Anita Berber met Otto Dix. This notoriety would have appealed to him, and many of the visitors of his exhibition in spring 1926 in Berlin would have been aware of this incident as well.

Rudolf Arnheim was less than impressed when he saw Anita and her partner Henri perform in the *Renaissance-Theater* in Berlin about a year after her portrait had been shown at Dix’s exhibition. In his review in *Die Weltbühne*, published in February 1927, Arnheim wrote: ‘Henri – a white, bloated body, the marzipan imitation of a fatty goose, a slightly odd profile, in short: the *Konfektion* on the beach. Anita Berber – the lady from the window display at the hairdressers.’¹²⁴ The whole show, he concluded, was ‘a senseless, unmusical muddle of conventional gestures without beginning and end’.¹²⁵

The Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber: An Exercise in Containment

It is generally assumed that Martha and Otto Dix saw Berber perform for the first time in the summer of 1925 while still living in Düsseldorf and that he painted her portrait there, before his move to Berlin.¹²⁶ A postcard and two letters sent from Berber to Dix,

¹²² Klaus Mann, ‘Erinnerungen an Anita Berber’, pp. 43-44.

¹²³ Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 210.

¹²⁴ Rudolf Arnheim, ‘Anita und Henri’, *Die Weltbühne*, 23.1 (1927), 277 (p. 277).

¹²⁵ Arnheim, p. 277.

¹²⁶ A letter, sent by Dix many years later in 1968 to a museum in Düsseldorf, in which he explains that both the Berber painting and his *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* were created during his time in the Rhineland, confirms this. Otto Dix, letter to Mrs. Dr. Markowitz at the Düsseldorfer Kunstmuseum, 16 April 1968, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 932.

often quoted in the literature about Berber, are evidence of the friendly as well as strategic relationship they had developed. In two of them she requests a photograph of her painted portrait to send to an American magazine, perhaps in preparation for an American tour that never materialised.¹²⁷ To send the reproduction of a painting that must be considered highly unflattering, rather than an attractive photograph, to a magazine seems unusual for a dancer previously celebrated for her beauty. Dix was not known to produce flattering portraits, quite the opposite, which distinguished his work from more popular portraitists and was, as Johann-Karl Schmidt has argued, a form of 'self-protection, a way of maintaining his artistic ambitions, in order not to slip into the illustrative, pornographic, photographic or purely artistic'.¹²⁸ The subjects of Dix's portraits were not always happy with how they were represented,¹²⁹ unless they were supporters of new developments in painting and wanted to show this on the walls of their homes. Berber, most likely aware of Dix's growing status in the art world, would have considered such a portrait as beneficial for her career. In one of her letters (this one undated) she confirmed her declining status, financial struggle and the lack of public interest in her artistic output, while also mentioning that Dix had posed for a photograph with her: 'Have you seen the picture of you and me in the *Illustrierten Blatt*? I was so happy! [...] We are screwed. No engagement, no money. That's why I wanted to ask whether you could maybe lend me 200 Marks?'¹³⁰ Public interest in such a photograph of the two of them would have been created as a result of the exhibition of her portrait;

¹²⁷ The event program for a show in Cologne in 1925 in the Berber materials held by the Dance Archive in Cologne claims this is Berber's last engagements before a tour in the US.

¹²⁸ Johann-Karl Schmidt, 'Otto Dix – Beruf Maler', in *Otto Dix. Retrospektiv. Zum 120. Geburtstag*, ed. by Holger Peter Saupe (Gera: Kunstsammlung Gera, 2011), pp. 127-137 (p. 132).

¹²⁹ One client refused to pay because the portrait of her daughter was not a faithful likeness. Dix's lawyer Hugo Simons argued on behalf of artistic freedom and won the case. See Anne Grace, 'Portrait of the Lawyer Hugo Simons (1925)', in Peters, *Otto Dix*, pp. 216-217 (p. 217).

¹³⁰ Postcard by Anita Berber, file 'Otto Dix'. [DKA]

and Berber's letter was therefore most likely sent in 1926.¹³¹ Dix himself mentioned the reproduction of her portrait in the *Frankfurter Illustrierte* (another name for *Das Illustrierte Blatt*) in July 1926 in a letter to his wife from Düsseldorf.¹³² Increased media interest might have been Dix's aim all along, particularly since he was also still facing financial difficulties – and it had succeeded. The artist and his subject were entangled in wider networks of exchange, connecting the painting structurally to a specific temporal, cultural and economic constellation. But can the painter's response to this constellation be identified in the painting itself?

The *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* shows a type of decadent beauty in decline, fashionable during 'that crazy, degenerate, fantastic Berlin immediately after the First World War'.¹³³ In one of the few pieces of sustained analysis of the Berber-portrait Susan Laikin Funkenstein has argued that Dix's portrait suggests a 'profound understanding of her artistic contributions' and 'meshes Dix's vision of the dancer with Berber's version of herself that she performed for Dix and the painting's viewers'.¹³⁴ The 26-year old icon is aged beyond her years, her haggard face with excessive make-up that of an old woman, while outdated photographs of her still circulated on postcards and event programs, creating problems of non-synchronicity.¹³⁵ Her face and blood-red

¹³¹ Funkenstein argued that a photograph of Berber and Dix 'in a mass-circulated paper implied the newsworthiness of the portrait and the fame of both artists and sitter.' Since the painting was first shown in Spring 1926 (an announcement by the Galerie Nierendorf-Neumann in the *Vossische Zeitung* suggest that the exhibition was staged in February and ended at the beginning of April) this letter cannot have been sent in the summer of 1925 as Funkenstein states. See Susan Laikin Funkenstein, 'Anita Berber: Imaging a Weimar Performance Artist', *Women's Art Journal*, 26 (2005), 26-31 (p. 29).

¹³² Dix, *Briefe*, p. 89.

¹³³ George Grosz, *The Autobiography of George Grosz: a Small Yes and a Big No*, trans. by Arnold Pomerans (London: Allison & Busby, 1982), p. 107.

¹³⁴ Funkenstein, 'Anita Berber', p. 26.

¹³⁵ This notion of 'non-synchronicity' is different from Ernst Bloch's use of the term '*Ungleichzeitigkeit*' in his materialist analysis of different stages of development between different locations (city/country) and between different classes and social groups, and the

nostrils suggest drug abuse – a theme in Dix’s work that deserves further critical attention. In 1922 Dix had already presented the portrait of a woman ravaged by drug abuse in the lost portrait known today as *Elsa, the Duchess*. In the 1920s it was simply described as *The Duchess (Die Gräfin)* or – more relevant to the Berber-portrait – as *The Coke-Duchess (Die Koksgräfin)*.¹³⁶ Paintings such as these prompted Paul Westheim to write in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1923 that Dix did not approach the great ills of humanity, rather ‘small time dealing in a cocaine bar, sailor’s pub, and drafty street corner’.¹³⁷ He believed his works of the early 1920s to be a strategy to gain attention through sensationalism, and referenced Dix’s *Lustmord*-images, his *Zirkusmappe* and his *Double-Portrait* (described by Westheim as *Self-Portrait as Groom*).¹³⁸ The art historian Alfred Kuhn, between 1925 and 1926 editor of the journal *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, also focused on Dix’s portraits of prostitutes and pimps in his review of the artist’s first solo-exhibition at the Graphisches Kabinett I.B. Neumann in Berlin in 1923, and singled out the recurring theme of ‘figures ravaged by terrible illnesses and poisons’, ‘the creature defiled, and defiling itself’.¹³⁹ Berber’s face in the portrait turns her into such a figure, although her actual appearance at the time is difficult to verify as no photographs made around this time were published in fashion magazines or on postcards. However, one pastel made by Dix as a study, and a photograph published alongside a newspaper article in 1924 suggest what her face might have looked like in 1925 (figures 8 and 9). In both her face is puffy and much wider than in the painting, her eyes small slits, the make-up similar to her portrait in oil.

problem posed by regressive ideological forms. Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Time*, trans. by Neville and Stephen Plaice (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

¹³⁶ The ‘Otto Dix’-file in the ZA contains an undated clipping (no source) with the reproduction of this painting with the subtitle: ‘*Die Koksgräfin* - Abbildung von Otto Dix aus *Das Kunstblatt* 1926’. However, the *Kunstblatt* 1926 does not actually contain the image..

¹³⁷ Paul Westheim, ‘Otto Dix’, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 604 (17 August 1923), p. 3.

¹³⁸ Westheim, ‘Otto Dix’, p 3.

¹³⁹ Alfred Kuhn, ‘Otto Dix-Ausstellung bei I.B. Neumann’, *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt: Wochenschrift für Kenner und Sammler*, 58 (April 1923), 515-516 (p. 515).

The photograph fits with a description by Klaus Mann around 1924: ‘I saw her without make-up for the first time. Her face was puffy, pitiable; but despite looking battered, it was still strikingly childlike.’¹⁴⁰

The delicate cabaret dancer, aged beyond her years, was a fashionable trope in contemporary novels and films, and Hermann von Wedderkop, editor of the magazine *Querschnitt*, provides one such example in his novel *Adieu Berlin*, published in 1927. One of the characters of the novel, set among holiday makers in a hotel in the northern seaside resort of Kampen, is a young female dancer from Berlin. Wedderkop describes her through the eyes of one of his male figures:

[...] the face of a child that had been dragged through all the cabaret dens; that had thus gently glided into the depravity of the profession. It was puffed up, betrayed the cigarette fumes and the night air of small, sunken music halls, [...] But a face that was young nonetheless, [...] merely the first signs of a milieu. [But] The complexion was blotchy, the skin bluish red, and especially the eyes were bleary and insecure, the pupil without pigment.¹⁴¹

Martha Dix later described Anita Berber’s private self as ‘charming’, ‘sweet’, ‘natural’ and ‘delightful’¹⁴², but such soft, fragile qualities are deliberately lost in the Dix’s programmatic oil painting. His approach to portraits was the heightening of features he perceived to be prominent or defining, while still capturing a likeness.

Although she has never been mentioned or listed among the cast, I believe that Anita Berber made a cameo appearance in the film *Variété* by E.A. Dupont with Lya de Putti, released in in November 1925 around the time Dix was painting her portrait. As

¹⁴⁰ Mann, ‘Erinnerungen an Anita Berber’, pp. 43-44.

¹⁴¹ Hermann von Wedderkop, *Adieu Berlin* (Berlin: Fischer, 1927), p. 104.

¹⁴² Martha Dix in conversation with Lothar Fischer, in Lothar Fischer, *Tanz zwischen Rausch und Tod, Anita Berber in Berlin 1918-1928* (Berlin: Haude and Spener, 1996), p. 52.

mentioned earlier, Berber and de Putti had appeared in the film *Die Drei Marien und der Herr von Marana* together in 1922; de Putti supposedly admired the star and they had become close friends. Perhaps de Putti helped Berber to get this small opportunity.¹⁴³ Her appearance in *Variété* (figure 10) reveals that Dix almost faithfully copied Berber's make-up (which looked unusual even at that time) very closely rather than altering or exaggerating it (figures 11 and 12).¹⁴⁴ However, there is a difference between Berber's haggard looking face in Dix's painting and her actual, more puffy, and still somewhat younger face in the film. Her film appearance betrays the loss of her beauty, and her excessive, eccentric make-up lacked subtlety, which indicated further that Dix did not paint a fashionable celebrity who was still widely admired, but a woman and a type that was already quite outdated. He could not be accused of being seduced by fashionable beauty like van Dongen had been – he painted her as an anachronism, while accelerating her projected future decline.

What is more, in his portrait of Berber, Dix captured Berber's face in a way similar to a filmic close-up to achieve a revealing effect. Paul Westheim pointed this out in his review of Dix's 1926 retrospective exhibition at Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin where the Berber-portrait was exhibited for the first time:

His portraits are, if you permit a filmic term: close-ups, recorded in close vision,

¹⁴³ See Fischer, *Tanz zwischen Rausch und Tod*, p. 44; and also Johannes Zeilinger, *Lya de Putti. Ein vergessenes Leben* (Vienna: Karolinger, 1991), p. 40. According to Fischer, Lya de Putti, Anita Berber and Marlene Dietrich were friends and together a common sight on the social circuit in Berlin.

¹⁴⁴ Klaus Mann described the effect of her make-up signature style as 'unsettling' when first meeting her in 1924, her face as a 'dark and evil mask': 'The strongly curved mouth was not her own, but a blood-red concoction out of the rouge-pot. The chalky cheeks had a violet shimmer. The eyes required at least an hour of work every day.' Klaus Mann, 'Erinnerungen an Anita Berber', pp. 43-44. Martha Dix also recalled a visit where she witnessed her make-up routine, which took about an hour, while she drank a bottle of cognac Martha Dix in conversation with Lothar Fischer, in Lothar Fischer, *Otto Dix, Ein Malerleben in Deutschland* (Berlin: Nicolaische, 1981), p. 62.

that bare the represented person. [...] he does not allow people, as is the norm in front of the arc lights [*Jupiterlampen*], to make themselves look more beautiful or more important with make-up.¹⁴⁵

This relationship between Dix's paintings and cinema is an aspect of his work that deserves further investigation.

The emotional charge of Dix's artistic output was perceived by many as an authentic visual response to the era, or so it seems. A 1925 exhibition review of the *Düsseldorfer Jubiläumsausstellung* called for more intensity in art in order to reflect the 'attitude of the time' and singled out Otto Dix as the strongest in the show, because his portraits 'align him with the great demon charmers in the history of art [...] Next to his obsessions, the diabolisms of others look like harmless play'.¹⁴⁶ The art historian and critic Alfred Kamphausen, setting out to offer a 'critique of his [Dix's] possibilities' in contrast to what he perceived as the exaggerated, affirmative rhetoric of Dix-supporters such as Willi Wolfradt, attested to Dix's work an 'unsettling demoniacal possession [*Dämonik*] with its crystalline, sharp-edged imaging aesthetics'.¹⁴⁷ In fact: Dix's painting picked up wider cultural trends of the previous inflation years, a fashionability of the 'demonic' among the 'caligarisms' of the era, mediated and disseminated through a range of mass-cultural products, predominantly film. The 'demonic' as a fashionable trope and term was at the same time employed in illustrated magazines that reported on the latest celebrity gossip, and even by serious art critics to describe qualities of the

¹⁴⁵ Paul Westheim, 'Dix', *Das Kunstblatt*, 10 (1926), 142-146 (p. 144).

¹⁴⁶ Heinrich W. Keim, 'Die moderne Kunst in der Düsseldorfer Jubiläumsausstellung 1925', *Der Cicerone*, 17 (1925), 811-816 (p. 815).

¹⁴⁷ Alfred Kamphausen, 'Otto Dix. Eine Kritik seiner Möglichkeiten', newspaper clipping, no source, no date. [ZA]

work of both expressionist and post-expressionist painters – aligning developments in fine art and mass culture that come together in Dix’s painting. The role and associations of the term ‘demonic’ within a wider discourse about artistic production is difficult to retrieve because it was employed in a highly plurivalent way for expressionist as well as Verist art works, ranging from descriptions of a work’s subject matter, its aesthetics, or an artist’s character. Franz Roh was among the writers who frequently employed the term in his writing throughout the 1920s.¹⁴⁸ Carl Einstein also employed the term ‘demonic’ in his *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, published in 1926 and written in the preceding years, to describe the work of painters as different as Picasso, Grosz, and Kokoschka, acknowledging it at the same time as an ‘embarrassing term’¹⁴⁹; and Ernst Kállai identified Dix’s ‘demonology’ in his 1927 essay ‘Dämonie der Satire’ as a key feature of his work.¹⁵⁰ Confirming the currency of the concept is also Alfred Döblin’s engagement of the term *Dämonie* in his attempt to explain the ontological relationship of art to the external world in his essay ‘Art, Demon and Community’ (‘Kunst Dämon und Gemeinschaft’) in which he defined artworks as ‘eruptions of the demonic into an evolved world’.¹⁵¹

In his 1925 overview of post-expressionist painting, Roh categorised the Verists as painters of a ‘demonic type’, who had taken on the task to ruthlessly reveal the

¹⁴⁸ See for example Roh’s articles ‘Georg Schrimpf und die neue Malerei: Zwei Bildanalysen von Franz Roh’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 9 (1923), 264-268 (p. 265), and Franz Roh, ‘Ausstellungen: München, Neue Sezession’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 254-255 (p. 254). Roh speaks here of ‘Neue Graphik von vier Dämonikern, von Meyboden, Dix, Grosz, Scholz’.

¹⁴⁹ Carl Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaethgens (Berlin: Fannei & Walz, 1996), pp. 130, 222 and 221.

¹⁵⁰ Ernst Kállai defined Dix’s vision – as exemplified in his *Schützengraben*-painting – as a ‘demonology’, a whole world view that ‘mythologized’ the object of the painting and revealed the artist as obsessed ‘by the power of the object’, an idea that Kállai then argued could be extended to other paintings, such as Dix’s portrait of an old man with nude model. Ernst Kállai, ‘Dämonie der Satire’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (1927), 97-104 (p. 98). The title could perhaps be translated as ‘The Demonic Quality of Satire’.

¹⁵¹ Alfred Döblin, ‘Kunst, Dämon, Gesellschaft’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 10 (1926), 184-187 (p. 186).

corruption of human life.¹⁵² In a 1928 essay, he might even have been thinking of Dix's portrait of Anita Berber specifically when he identified three key types of femininity in post-expressionist portrait painting in 1928: 'the innocent childlike, the absolutely demonic, as we encounter her in the work of Dix, and finally the crossing [...] of the shady animalesque with beauty bright as day'.¹⁵³ Dix's portrait radiates the threat of her performances and her excessive lifestyle, as Funkenstein has suggested, however, Dix's painting does not simply intimate admiration and familiarity, what she represented within the temporal order is key. Through its shock-aesthetics – the imposing composition and flaming red colors, her dramatic pose, snakelike surface, claw-like hands and deathly looking face – Berber is aligned with Expressionism, an artistic culture that was fast losing its appeal. The *Kunstblatt*, for example, dismissed it in 1923 as the 'spiritual pollutions of the hyper-expressive epoch'.¹⁵⁴ This brings in the issue of non-simultaneity: while the portrait of Berber conveys the decline of Expressionism, which she embodied, and therefore of her own fashionable capital, her photographs could not.

In Dix's painting, Berber's meticulously sharpened fingernails did not just signify her threat, but also her declining fashionability because vampire-like pointed fingernails had been *en vogue* in the immediate past, influenced by the release of expressionist horror films such as *Nosferatu* in 1922.¹⁵⁵ Dix confirmed in an interview in 1965 that he put particular effort into painting a hand because 'it corresponds in its expression

¹⁵² Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, p. 95.

¹⁵³ Franz Roh, *Der Maler Kurt Günther* (Berlin: Nierendorf, 1928), p. 8. By avoiding the terms commonly employed to describe fashionable female variations of the 'New Woman' – such as *Vamp*, *Bubikopf* or *Girl* – one could argue that Roh implicitly drew a line between the female types represented in the mass media and those in artworks, even though they usually showed similar types of women.

¹⁵⁴ H.H. Stuckenschmidt, 'Ausblick in die Musik', *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 221-222 (p. 221).

¹⁵⁵ Compare also the vampiresque dancers in Otto Dix's painting *To Beauty* (1922).

completely to the character of the portrayed'.¹⁵⁶ It is not just the position of Berber's left hand, but also the almond shape it forms around a fold of her dress that deserves attention. As Dix said in 1955: 'The folds in a person's clothing, his attitude, his hands, his ears immediately give the painter information about the soul of a model.'¹⁵⁷ Berber's hand gesture and positioning would perhaps not be particularly significant had Dix not used this gesture in a significant number of his works, from *Three Prostitutes on the Street* (1925), to his famous triptych *Metropolis* (completed in 1928) to *Triumph of Death* (1934). It also appears in two drawings of prostitutes posing as widows (or widows working as prostitutes) of 1922 (figure 13).¹⁵⁸ As a signal, it connects two qualities that define Berber's portrait: sexuality and deathliness. Dix employed symbolic formal strategies of the Old Masters and adapted their narratives for the culture and social realities of the Weimar era. As Olaf Peters contends, this type of *Neue Sachlichkeit*-painting combined 'a contemporary iconography, a modernized traditional vocabulary of form, and compositional tectonics of the Old Masters'.¹⁵⁹ The portrait of Berber is not just a prime example of this, it takes the temporal implications of this strategy and the employment of a 'contemporary iconography' – always subjected to fashion – to a new level.

To mythologise the dancer – a woman Dix personally admired – as attractive would not even have amounted to an 'illustration' of the present, but of the immediate past, since she had lost her desirability when he painted her. The 'demonic' femininity so seductive only a few years earlier could now only be satirised. Pawel Barchan, the art critic for the

¹⁵⁶ Interview Otto Dix in Maria Wetzel, 'Atelier-Besuche XX: Professor Otto Dix. Ein harter Mann, dieser Maler', *Diplomatischer Kurier*, 14.8 (1965), 731-745 (p. 736).

¹⁵⁷ Otto Dix, 'Gedanken zum Porträtmalen' (1955), cit. and trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 210.

¹⁵⁸ 'Widows veils were favourite modish accessories for prostitutes.' Sabine Rewald, *Glitter and Doom. German Portraits from the 1920s* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), p. 220.

¹⁵⁹ Peters, 'Eine demokratische Kunst?', p. 26.

fashion magazine *Elegante Welt* quoted earlier, seized on the declining fashionability of the concept of the ‘demonic’ in both popular language and visual culture in 1926:

We don't believe in the youthful folly of Modernity, we are embarrassed about the time when one indiscriminately used the pompous word demonic. [...] – the demonic disappears, the Desdemona-eque remains – only as an idea of an idea, a formula for venereal stirrings, a momentary snapshot of brooding rut, the desire to destroy and to be destroyed, finally something purely decorative.¹⁶⁰

When Dix mobilised a contemporary iconography that drew on existing images from celebrity and mass culture in his portrait of Berber, he may have also appropriated features of a photograph of another celebrity: Lya de Putti – the fifth most popular actress in Germany between 1923 and 1926, and therefore much more successful than Berber at the time.¹⁶¹ De Putti has never been mentioned in connection with Dix's portrait,¹⁶² but a photograph (figure 14), taken in June 1925 by the studio of Alexander Binder in Berlin, suggests that Dix may have been inspired by her image, from the pose to the gesture and position of her hands, rather than entirely inventing it. Dix painted Berber's portrait after seeing the dancer perform in the summer of 1925, therefore after de Putti's picture had been taken and distributed. Berber's portrait could therefore be

¹⁶⁰ Pawel Barchan, ‘Beltran-Massès’, *Elegante Welt*, 15.23 (1926), 26 – 28 and 53 (p. 26 and 28).

¹⁶¹ Joseph Garnarz, ‘Warum kennen Filmhistoriker viele Weimarer Topstars nicht mehr? Überlegungen am Beispiel Claire Rommer’, *montage/av. Zeitschrift für Theorie und Geschichte audio-visueller Kommunikation*, 6.2 (1997), 64-92 (p. 67).

¹⁶² The photograph is reproduced in Peter Herzog and Romano Tozzi *Lya de Putti. Loving Life and not Fearing Death* (New York: Corvin, 1993). Although dated March 1926 here this is unlikely since de Putti left for New York early in 1926. Two original postcards in my possession also show de Putti in the same outfit and are marked with the handwritten note ‘6/25’. One of them has the additional stamp ‘June 1925’ on the back, which confirms my dating of the photograph before Dix painted Berber. Alexander Binder ran the biggest photographic studio in Europe at the time and specialized in celebrity photographs. See Johannes Moderegger, *Modedefotografie in Deutschland 1929-1955* (Norderstedt: Libri, 2000), p. 179.

conceptualised as a pastiche based on mass media images from several sources in addition to the painter's familiarity with the actual person, combined with the pictorial vocabulary and techniques of the Old Masters to anchor his artwork outside a contemporary mass cultural realm. This will be discussed in more depth further on, but firstly the contemporary tropes employed by Dix to signal fashionability or outdatedness need further investigation.

The difference in the treatment of the same signifiers of fashionability between a self-portrait of Dix and his wife as glamorous dancers in 1922 and Berber's portrait exposes the decline of their exchange value, the painter's response to such processes, and complicates the indexical function of fashionable objects and appearances as markers of time in painting. The lost double-portrait *Double-Portrait (Doppelbildnis)* (figure 15), dated 1923 in most of the available literature, was most likely already completed by the end of 1922 since it was published in mid-January 1923 in the same edition of the popular fashion magazine *Die Dame* as the photographs of Berber taken by the Atelier d'Ora in Vienna, which is also an indicator of the artist-couple's own fashion and celebrity status.¹⁶³ In fact, *Die Dame* introduced it as a painting from the 'Juryfreie Kunstschau' in Berlin which had already open by October 1922. This means that it was completed much earlier than has thus far been assumed. In the *Double-Portrait* Otto and Martha mimic perfect shop window dummies, including the stiffened

¹⁶³ Evidence for the earlier completion date can also be found in Paul Westheim's book *Für und Wider. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Potsdam, Kiepenheuer, 1923), in which he dated the work 1922 and uses the title *Das Brautpaar [The Newlyweds]* in the caption (p.175). Kirsten Fitzke mentions the incomplete version of the painting we can see in the background of a photograph of the artist taken in July 1922 by Hugo Erfurth (see also chapter 2 in this thesis), and incorrectly claims the painting was only completed the following year, in 1923. She also uses the title *Selbstbildnis mit Martha* without explaining the source of this title. See Kirsten Fitzke, 'Eine Hommage an das Leben, den Tanz und die Liebe. Otto Dix' Gemälde *Selbstbildnis mit Martha, 1923*', in *Otto Dix retrospektiv. Zum 120. Geburtstag*, ed. by Holger Peter Saupe (Gera: Kunstsammlung Gera, 2011), 138-144, (p. 140). The recent catalogue *Otto Dix: Der böse Blick / The Evil Eye*, ed. by Susanne Meyer-Büser (Munich: Prestel, 2017) dates even the photograph of 1922 incorrectly to 1923 (p. 77).

hand gestures, with the same style of make-up and pointed fingernails Berber still sported three years later. Both stark make-up and sharpened fingernails were also key characteristics in Martha's large solo-portrait in oil *Portrait Mrs Martha Dix* of 1923 (figure 5), which plays with different surface textures. Commonly worn on stage and in films, the mask-like make-up is a signifier of artificiality and fashionability, while in Berber's portrait (and her actual appearance in *Variété*) it is not the contemporary fashion anymore, it does not follow her facial features and is exaggerated to the point where – in combination with her greenish, madly staring eyes and inflamed nostrils – it has become ugly. Martha's portrait shows fashionable beauty, but this extreme, 'demonic' look had lost much of its appeal as a style worn 'off screen' by the end of 1925 (a toned-down version of it still continued to be used in film and on stage).

Art critic and loyal supporter Willi Wolfradt praised *Doppelbildnis* in 1923 as important and programmatic, at the forefront of new stylistic developments in painting in the way it presented the two figures with 'linear rigidity' and adopted the 'heroifying style of advertising portraits'.¹⁶⁴ According to Wolfradt, the work showed representatives of an absolutely contemporary, extremely fashionable type, the product of an accelerated consumer society. He identified tropes created by the fashion, cosmetics and media industries, imposing an economic-political reading:

They are the typical vampiric people one encounters everywhere these days, automatons of want, polished and fitted out by ready-to-wear and cosmetics, heart-empty dolls with greedy instincts, representatives of a sphere where smart brutality counts as a badge of honour. [...] Their

¹⁶⁴ Willi Wolfradt, 'Ein Doppelbildnis von Otto Dix', *Der Cicerone* 15 (1923), 173-178 (p. 177). Fitzke interprets Willi Wolfradt's reference to vampires in her essay as a response to the impact of the film *Nosferatu* by F.W. Murnau (1922), which is relevant to my following analysis of the Berber picture and what might have influenced the Dix, too. See Fitzke, 'Eine Hommage', p. 141.

soullessness is expressed in the ornamental stiffening of their expressions.¹⁶⁵

Wolfradt specifically singled out features of their appearance, from the patent leather boots, to the silk stockings, the combed back hair, the perfectly pressed trousers, the ‘wooden’ hands, even the manicured finger nails, which give the overall impression of ‘the luxurious, the constructed, the automated’, and he linked them to shop window displays and shopping catalogues.¹⁶⁶ Wolfradt’s earlier review of the *Juryfreie Kunstschau*, published in December 1922 in *Das Kunstblatt*, but not cited in the research about Dix’s *Double-Portrait*, of which only black-and-white photographs have survived, must be referring to this painting in his discussion of Dix and conveys to us an idea of its aesthetics: ‘Especially a double portrait, in the “terrible beauty” of his painterly style a piece of social critique, practically hypnotises ... the more authentic art around it remains unimportant next to its shrill energy.’¹⁶⁷ Wolfradt speaks of ‘the stark smoothness of the facture’, the ‘crass sweetness of the colors’ in Dix’s works on display.¹⁶⁸ Although the painting can be read as a critical commentary on modern consumer culture, I argue that it was Dix’s strategy of ambiguity that these tropes and pictorial details could be read simultaneously as signifiers of fashionability and coolness in 1922, depending on the attitude and identity of the contemporary viewer. With his double-portrait Dix claimed to represent the contemporary, the modern, by styling himself and his wife according to the latest trends in artistic circles. At the same time,

¹⁶⁵ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Ein Doppelbildnis’, p. 177.

¹⁶⁶ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Ein Doppelbildnis’, p. 177. That the shaping of fingernails could be an important signal of fashionability is also indicated by Wolfradt’s characterization of a *Selfportrait* by Heinrich Maria Davringhausen painted in 1922, despite the fact that we cannot see the painter’s hands in the picture. Used in this case as a figure of speech, he describes the portrait as put together with ‘very obvious ingredients of the time. Modern into the fingertips, into the fingernails.’ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Heinrich Maria Davringhausen’, *Die Dame*, 50.24 (1923), 3-5, 26, 28 and 30 (p. 3).

¹⁶⁷ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Ausstellungen. Juryfreie Kunstschau Berlin’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 543-544 (p. 543).

¹⁶⁸ Wolfradt, ‘Ausstellungen’, 543.

he had developed a new painting style that corresponded in its restrained coolness to the smooth appearance and suggested character of the portrayed figures.

In the portrait of Berber, three years later, Dix used the new ‘objective’ style of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* to paint a woman who embodied Expressionism. Style and subject were now antithetical, creating an intense temporal dialectic between the parallel processes of rise and decline. Expressionism had been around for a considerable amount of time and had trickled down into commercial contexts, from shop window displays to spaces of commercialised leisure such as the expressionist rollercoaster ride in the Luna Park in Berlin. Although Expressionism flourished for a longer period of time in film and dance, it was falling out of favor with an increasing number of art critics from 1920 onwards, and with painters who, like Dix, abandoned it after the war, creating issues of non-synchronicity.¹⁶⁹ As Will Grohmann, in his programmatic essay ‘Die Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Bilanz’, published in the *Kunstblatt* in 1926, pointed out that Dix was an artist who had gone from being rejected to being celebrated by updating his style, shifting from one idiom to another: ‘Dix as an expressionist was the horror, the same Dix as *Neue Sachlichkeit* is accepted.’¹⁷⁰ The example of Dix showed, he argued, that the new could be made palatable by framing new art forms as revivals of old ones, specifically through the developments of labels that suggested recurrence, such as ‘new Romanticism’ and ‘new Classicism’.¹⁷¹ Grohmann returned to the importance of focusing on formal characteristics and shifts rather than labels in his exhibition review ‘Die Kunst der Gegenwart auf der Internationalen Kunstausstellung Dresden 1926’:

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of the issue of Expressionism as a fashion see: Sherwin Simmons, ‘Expressionism in the Discourse of Fashion’, *Fashion Theory*, 4 (2000), 49-88. On the decline of Expressionism see Crockett.

¹⁷⁰ Will Grohmann, ‘Die Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Bilanz’, in *Das Kunstblatt*, 10 (1926), 6-13 (p. 13).

¹⁷¹ Grohmann, ‘Die Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert’, p. 13.

‘Dix, the exponent of yesterday’s Expressionism is supposed to be a magic realist now?’¹⁷² For Grohmann, the art of Dix and George Grosz offered a ‘vision of a painful reality’ and ‘cruel analysis of the present’, but it was only valuable because it offered an innovative formal treatment of themes that would otherwise only be ‘documents of cultural psychology’.¹⁷³ In his portrait of Anita Berber, Dix pitted the two artistic styles he had himself gone through – Expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* – against each other, by playing with the tension created by the enforced hyperbolic emotionality of Expressionism at a time when a ‘cool’ persona became the new ultramodern pose. As a result, this portrait stands out among Dix’s oeuvre not just because it deals with fashion and celebrity culture, but also the actual and projected trajectory of wider cultural developments.

In his fictionalised and dramatised Berber-biography *Dance into the Dark*, published a year after her death in 1929, film critic Leo Lania describes how Anita and her partner Henri were perceived at the time Dix painted her portrait, commenting also on the role of fashion, and Berber’s association with an outdated cultural model:

Breslau, Leipzig, Hamburg, Dresden, Cologne – an endless string of scandals. ... Berlin – the new Berlin of 1925, showed them the cold shoulder. *Passé*, a long finished affair, believe me, nude is not modern anymore. ... Berlin: in no other city rise the waves of every new movement as high, nowhere is such little trace of them when the waves retreat. Here, you never have a new spiritual movement, only ever a new fashion. And fashions don’t emerge from any need, other than distraction. They are born to die. Cocaine was modern yesterday, and lesbian love, and nude dance and the erotic – now we had *Neue Sachlichkeit*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Will Grohmann, ‘Die Kunst der Gegenwart auf der Internationalen Kunstausstellung Dresden 1926’, *Der Cicerone*, 18 (1926), 377-416 (p. 384).

¹⁷³ Grohmann, ‘Die Kunst der Gegenwart’, p. 395.

¹⁷⁴ Leo Lania, *Der Tanz ins Dunkel. Anita Berber. Ein biographischer Roman* (Berlin: Schultz, 1929), p. 186.

A look at Berber's dress in the painting confirms her located-ness in the past. It is similar to the one she wore for her dance *Suicide* in 1922 and in one of the staged photographs taken in Vienna, published in the same edition of *Die Dame* (figure 16) in 1923 as Dix's *Doppelbildnis*.¹⁷⁵ In 1922 it had been absolutely up-to-date, as the fashion magazine *Die Dame* confirmed in October that year, advising that 'the shell embraces the body more closely again and thereby gives the figure something elongated, snakelike'.¹⁷⁶ If Dix was inspired by Berber's own dress then he would have used outdated photographs or she still wore the same outfit three years later when he saw her perform. In both cases, what is signified is outdated-ness.

Temporal De-Anchoring and the 'Nachleben' of Images

Dix also gives the woman in his portrait a different body from Berber's actual one. He slims and elongates it significantly and combines this with a belly and stance typical of German late Gothic and early Renaissance paintings and sculptures, further complicating the overlapping temporal and medial references constructed by the artwork. This anachronistic employment of the formal vocabulary of the late medieval period became itself a fashion that Dix's own success may have helped to popularise. He re-activated a painterly idiom that could claim survival through time and origins outside modern mass media culture. The Gothic had already been associated with Expressionism, and Paul Fechter observed in his popular book *Der Expressionismus*, first published in 1914 and reprinted in 1920, that 'the Gothic has come back into

¹⁷⁵ Funkenstein refers to another photograph in which Berber wears the same dress, however this picture was most likely not taken around 1925 as claimed by Funkenstein, since it features the same chair as a prop as other photographs taken by Alexander Binder in 1922. Funkenstein, 'Anita Berber', p. 29.

¹⁷⁶ 'Mode. Die neue Linie', *Die Dame*, 50.1 (1922), 9 (p. 9).

fashion' for a new generation of artists who were looking towards the 'true forefathers of German art, the *Gotiker* and the masters of the late fifteenth century, in particular Grünewald'.¹⁷⁷ And the same was true for many artists working in a naturalist ideom in the 1920s, such as Dix. For Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, writing in September 1928 in the short-lived, ambitious German edition of the high-end fashion magazine *Vogue*, architects and artists of the Gothic era had been 'rehabilitated as the great fashion of the twentieth century'.¹⁷⁸ By employing art historical references and stylistic tropes that signaled longevity, Dix attempted to ensure that his work would not be undermined by too much contemporaneity.

A cursory look into fashion magazines and art journals can confirm that the 'Gothic' was also a trend in wider visual culture at the time, from interior design, to art collecting and the topics and vocabulary of arts criticism.¹⁷⁹ Gothic art regularly featured in elitist art journals at the time and art critics used the term 'gothic' to describe qualities in expressionist art. The study of the Gothic had enjoyed increased popularity in academic art history from the 1910s onwards, and the influence of Wilhelm Worringer's widely-read publications *Formprobleme der Gothik* in 1911 and *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, published in 1908, continued long into the 1920s. Fashion magazines such as *Elegante Welt* and *Die Dame* published interior views of the apartments of well-known cultural figures that revealed them as collectors of gothic wood sculptures, for example the celebrated German film stars Asta Nielsen in 1925.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Paul Fechter, *Der Expressionismus* (Munich: Piper, 1920), pp. 33-34.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, 'Biedermeier-Bildnisse', *Vogue*, German edition, 1 (26 September 1928), 36-37 and 55 (p. 36).

¹⁷⁹ Funkenstein has further pointed out that Berber and Droste's expressionist performances and poems contained references to German and Italian Renaissance paintings. Funkenstein, 'Anita Berber', p. 27.

¹⁸⁰ Josef Melnik, 'Bei Asta Nielsen', *Die Dame*, 52.13 (1925), 5-7 (p. 7).

The influence of gothic sculpture specifically is evident in the exaggerated length of the lower limbs and the sculptural quality of Berber's body, the draping and twisted posture, all entirely covered in a glistening, red fabric. In his seminal book *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei*, published in spring 1925, therefore a few months before Dix created the portrait of Berber, Franz Roh outlined several possible aims of the recent post-expressionist movement in painting, one of which seemed to fit the portrait of Berber perfectly: to represent a 'certain kind of beauty of the sculpted [*herausgemeisselten*] form even in its most perverted state, when the surface sparkles with the iridescent sleekness of wet reptile skin'.¹⁸¹ Indeed, Dix would confirm such a programme decades later when he declared that one of the aims of this work in the 1920s had been to create sculptural effects in the manner of Mantegna.¹⁸²

Hanne Bergius has described the references to the Old Masters in Dix's work in 1991 as a 'strengthening of modern art through historic forms and myths' and compared this cultural 'memory-work' to the efforts of Aby Warburg to document underlying structures, the 'continuity and restitution of forms of expression'.¹⁸³ By aligning Berber with historic pictorial iconography Dix's portrait can also be read as an allegory or cautionary tale in the tradition of 'Eros and Death' – one of Dix's central themes throughout the 1920s. One could perhaps say that in her portrait 'Death and the Maiden' are merged into one. Berber herself had already introduced an anachronistic element when she performed her dance *Cocaine* to *La Danse Macabre Op.40* (1875) by

¹⁸¹ Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, p. 95.

¹⁸² Dix in Wetzel, p. 736.

¹⁸³ Hanne Bergius, 'Dix – Dionysos in der Kälte. Spuren von Mythen und Alten Meistern im Grossstadt-Triptychon', *Otto Dix zum 100. Geburtstag 1891-1991*, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath and Johann-Karl Schmidt (Ostfildern: Hatje, 1991), 219-227 (p. 225).

composer Camille Saint-Saëns¹⁸⁴ – linking both her performance and Dix’s painting to the medieval themes of the ‘Dance of Death’. More recently, Klaus Widdig has linked the figure of the medieval witches Sabbath more generally to the chaos, dancing and spectacle of the inflation years and the traumatic experience of the New Woman.¹⁸⁵ And Anita Berber, described by observers as a ‘very evil Eve’¹⁸⁶, personified this trauma. A photographed of her would not be able to convey such qualities to future viewers, but Dix’s portrait permanently inscribes these meanings – Kracauer’s ‘still-vacillating memory-image’ – and connects her to timeless tropes in art history, motifs with a Warburgian *Nachleben*, to ensure the survival of his artwork.

Paul Westheim, the editor of the *Kunstblatt*, confirmed the overall impression of an allegorical painting in his review of Dix’s retrospective in 1926. He complained that Berber’s portrait was not just too driven by ‘technical skills’, but that it also reminded him too much of the Austrian symbolist painter Franz von Stuck, presumably referring to the latter’s staple images of seductive but threatening female figures from Eve to Pandora.¹⁸⁷ With Berber’s picture, he warned, Dix was dangerously close to Academy painting.

¹⁸⁴ Elswit, p. 87.

¹⁸⁵ Widdig, *Culture and Inflation*, p. 196.

¹⁸⁶ *Frankfurter Zeitung, Stadtblatt*, 15 September 1925, cit. in Oliver M. Piecha, *Roaring Frankfurt. Mit Siegfried Kracauer ins Schumanntheater* (Frankfurt a. M.: Edition AV, 2005), p. 115.

¹⁸⁷ Westheim, ‘Dix’, p. 146.

Fashionability Controlled: The 1926 Exhibition at the Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf

The *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* draws on a wide range of images from both art history and the mass cultural sphere, each with their own with shifting exchange value. It is partially de-anchored from the present by turning a woman who had represented the height of fashion and beauty only a short time ago, whose images had been widely disseminated in mass media culture, into something threatening and ugly, combined with the traditional techniques of oil glazes on wood panel, compositional strategies, a body ideal and the allegorical narrative strategies of the early German Renaissance.¹⁸⁸ However, the full impact of these complex temporal and inter-medial dialectics in the portrait cannot be fully understood without considering how it was displayed in Dix's first retrospective exhibition: It was positioned to the left of his self-portrait *Self-Portrait on the Easel* completed just before the exhibition in 1926, which showed him as detached, focused observer – a pose that corresponded to his dissecting approach as a painter (figures 17 and 18). As Funkenstein suggests, as pendants these two portraits 'promoted each other's careers'¹⁸⁹, although the painting did not fulfill this promise for Berber. Such a hanging, also dramatised both protagonist's careful positioning within a temporal dialectic – a dialectic emphasised by the exhibition booklet where Berber's portrait was reproduced opposite Dix's self-portrait as well.

¹⁸⁸ Applying one of Nagel and Wood's arguments in *Anachronic Renaissance*, Dix had turned the fashion portrait into a 'structural object' that reflected 'on its own origins by comparing one origin myth to another' – but in quite different terms than in Nagel and Wood's study on the Renaissance, complicated and directed by the dynamics of fashion. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Zone, 2012), p. 17.

¹⁸⁹ Funkenstein, 'Anita Berber', p. 30.

In *Self-Portrait on the Easel* Dix has abandoned the make-up that he wore in 1922 in his previous persona as artist-dandy and socialite in both *Double-Portrait* and other works such as *To Beauty*. He is wearing a relatively conservative but contemporary suit and has abandoned the exaggerated style with excessive shoulder padding and high, narrow waist, which he had designed for himself in his informal drawing of 1921.¹⁹⁰ This style is still worn by his friend the jeweler Karl Krall in the *Portrait of the Jeweller Karl Krall* (figures 17 and 19), completed in 1923 and displayed on Berber's left in the exhibition. In Dix's self-portrait, the combination of objective painting style, cool expression and fashionable appearance (as a form of disciplining the self) demonstrated in a productive congruence that he and his art were *zeitgemäss*. As the fashion magazine *Elegante Welt* claimed in the feature 'The Elegant Gentleman on Stage and in Film' in 1920, the male artist's outfit functioned to underline his professional credibility. The article further argued that the contemporary focus on the silhouette created by clothing could be attributed to the influence of cinema. The writer and actor Robert Forster-Larrinaga was selected as an example of an artist who showed 'eccentricity not just in his poems. His way of dressing proves a strong personality that can create something original in every area it delves into'.¹⁹¹ Although one could not generalise this fashion, the writer advised, one should keep in mind that 'every elegant gentleman is keen to let the culture of his interior life be reflected in his suit'.¹⁹² Krall and Berber represented the past, a dying fashion and artistic idiom, decadent identities that were out-of-sync. In contrast, the painter presents himself as in control of modernity, his finger on the pulse

¹⁹⁰ In May 1920 *Elegante Welt* devoted a two-page spread to the high-waisted male suit: Wilhelm Clobes, 'Die hohe Taille. Ein Kapitel der Herrenmode', *Elegante Welt*, 9.11 (May 1920), 14 – 15. Note also Krall's pointed fingernails.

¹⁹¹ 'Der Elegante Herr auf der Bühne und im Film', *Elegante Welt*, 9.21 (1920), 12-13 (p. 13).

¹⁹² 'Der Elegante Herr', p. 13.

of the time not just in the way he fashioned himself but – by extension – in *what* he painted and *how* he painted it.

Franz Roh made clear that most of the leading Verists originally came from Expressionism in his 1925 book on post-expressionist painting, and argued that the most radical Verism was in many ways a response to and a rejection of the extreme emotionality of Expressionism. Verism, he wrote, ‘contains elements of sheer disgust [*Ekel*] towards the art of private pain, lyrism [*Lyrismus*] and “cosmic ecstasy”’.¹⁹³ George Bataille’s aesthetic of the abject, developed in his *Documents* (1929-1930), and analysed in Winfried Menninghaus’ critical and historical overview of the phenomenon of ‘disgust’ (*Ekel*), could be useful here: applying Menninghaus’ interpretation of Bataille, we could say that by dropping out of the parameters of contemporary beauty ideals, and as a personification of expressionist emotionality, Berber went through a process of a ‘declassification’, a ‘desublimation of the beautiful’ she used to denote, and her painting becomes a performative gesture that ‘defiles’ beauty (and fashionability, as the desirable).¹⁹⁴

As argued earlier, Berber’s portrait intersects with a wider visual economy, and in another twist, Lya de Putti – Berber’s good friend and admirer – wore a dress that resembled Berber’s outfit in Dix’s painting (even more closely than the one Berber herself wore in her dance *Suicide*) in publicity photographs for her film *The Prince of Tempters* (figure 20), which premiered in October 1926 in the America. Unfortunately, it cannot be verified whether de Putti’s dress may have been inspired by the painting,

¹⁹³ Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, p. 85.

¹⁹⁴ Winfried Menninghaus, *Ekel. Theorie und Geschichte einer starken Empfindung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 488-491.

whether she had seen Dix's it in progress before her departure to the US early in 1926 for the filming of *The Prince of Tempters*, or a photograph of it later. In Berber's portrait, the skin-tight, highly impractical evening dress signified her out-datedness, however: made of glittering lamé or shiny satin, as only a short time later worn by de Putti, this kind of outfit was starting to turn into a more stable filmic trope for Hollywood's *femme fatales*. In fact, by the 1930s the 'untranslatability' of spectacular female costume into mainstream fashion and its 'unwearability' had become a genre convention that transcended mainstream fashion trends, and now said less about what was fashionable or out-dated at the time of the release of a film.¹⁹⁵

After Berber's death one obituary attributed her decline to her 'libidinous creativity [that] could not be subordinated to the laws of rational economics without which lasting success cannot be achieved, even with great talent'¹⁹⁶. Instead it was the male artist who, in a calculated move, intervened by shifting her into to another site of the image economy. The loss of her 'fashionable capital' had made her less threatening as a subject for the ambitious painter, who aimed to situate himself within a line of historic artists that could claim timeless appeal. Ilya Parkins has argued in 'Fashion as Methodology,' that modernity's 'orientation to the present and to future horizons of experience functioned to disenfranchise women, by excluding the symbolic realm of the feminine from the possibilities for becoming that were seen to define the modern'¹⁹⁷.

¹⁹⁵ See: Jane Gaines, 'Wanting to Wear Seeing. Gilbert Adrian at MGM', in *Fashion in Film*, ed. by Adrienne (Munich: Bloomington, 2011), pp. 135-159. Because the portrait of Berber was exhibited several months before the release of *The Prince of Tempters* (filmed in the US in the summer of 1926) it is unlikely that Dix could himself been inspired by Lya de Putti's dress. However, the exact dates of de Putti's departure for America, the release of the publicity images for the film and the date when Dix finished his portrait of Berber cannot be confirmed.

¹⁹⁶ 'Anita Berber', *Die Filmwoche*, 47 (1928), no page.

¹⁹⁷ Ilya Parkins, 'Fashion as Methodology', *Time and Society*, 19.1 (2010), 98-119 (p. 101).

Was Berber paying the price for the male artist's fight for his position within the dominant temporal regime by being returned to an anterior temporal realm?

Breaking up the Surface: The Painter as a 'Synthesizer' of Trans-Historical Dynamics

Dix himself famously claimed in 1927 that painting could only be renewed through an expansion of the subject matter combined with the 'intensification of forms of expression already contained in the Old Masters'.¹⁹⁸ The result of this strategy has been defined perhaps most appropriately by Uwe M. Schneede as Dix's 'synthetic image practice'¹⁹⁹, developed out of his early Dadaist paintings with collaged elements. His Old Masterly technique functioned as a trap for perception Schneede argued, as a 'Wahrnehmungsfalle' that the spectator had to overcome to realize that the pictorial reality was 'put together, constructed, invented'.²⁰⁰ The temporal aspects of Dix's work have first been explicitly identified in 2005 by Frank Whitford, albeit only in a brief reference to Dix's engagement of the pictorial strategies of the Old Masters. Whitford concludes his essay on Dix with the observation that the references to the Old Masters were used by the artist as a 'temporal anchor, to find something to hold on to in uncertain times'.²⁰¹ Most recently Matthew S. Witkovsky has considered the temporal aspects in one of Dix's works in a little more detail in the exhibition catalogue *New*

¹⁹⁸ *Berliner Nachtausgabe*, 3 December 1927, cit. and trans. Matthew S. Witkovsky, 'Middle-Class Montage', in *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919 – 1933*, ed. by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (Los Angeles: LACMA; Munich: Prestel, 2015), pp. 105-113 (p. 108).

¹⁹⁹ Uwe M. Schneede, 'Wer war Otto Dix?', *Geisterbahn und Glanzrevue. Otto Dix. Aquarelle und Gouachen*, ed. by Ortrud Westheider and Karsten Müller (Munich: Hirmer, 2007), pp. 10-16 (p. 14).

²⁰⁰ Schneede, 'Wer war Otto Dix?', p.15.

²⁰¹ Frank Whitford, 'Dix und die Weimarer Republik', in *Welt und Sinnlichkeit*, ed. by Ulrike Lorenz (Regensburg: Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg, 2005), pp. 128 - 135 (p. 135).

Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919 – 1933. Witkovsky employs Dix's portrait of Max Roesberg (1922) in which the sitters appears aged beyond his years as an example to argue that Dix's portraiture blends 'three temporal frames: the present of their consciousness, the future of their appearance, and the Northern Renaissance past referenced compositionally and in Dix's chosen materials' ²⁰². Witkovsky further argues that Dix's image practice 'involved a construction of different temporalities, all conditioned by technological media, and tending toward fissured or multiple identities rather than a stable and singular self'.²⁰³ Taking a cue from Devin Fore's *Realism after Modernism* and his discussion of formalist experiments Witkovsky contends that Dix's work offers another version of the overcoming of the 'opposition of realism and montage' discussed by Fore, more specifically, that Dix's work is a revisiting of 'montage to force the collision of different temporalities, and to break the grip of an eternalised present tense in modern life'.²⁰⁴

Witkovsky's concept of three temporal frames is indeed useful when looking at Dix's major portraits, but I would argue that the temporal organisation of the artwork is exponentially more complicated when considering the referential palimpsest the viewer is faced with in the picture of former star Anita Berber. Fashion as an abstraction, temporal agent and as a critical term allows us to grasp the dynamics of simultaneous temporalities, and modalities of signification pulling into different directions in this painting. Dix's work addresses the problematic character of temporal experience in modernity and has captured and intervened in these processes, negotiating the painter's position within the temporal regime of art history in the making, thereby also

²⁰² Witkovsky, p.108. Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2012).

²⁰³ Witkovsky, p. 110.

²⁰⁴ Witkovsky, p. 108.

challenging the problematic position of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting and its return to figuration in relation to the historic avant-garde.

The *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* is a statement about the nature of painting in a transitional historical moment in which the future of portraiture was widely debated. In a late interview in 1955 Dix claimed: ‘That portrait painting has been replaced by photography is one of the modernist, arrogant and naïve errors. [...] A hundred photographs of one person would only give us one hundred different snapshots [...] Only the painter can see and give form to the whole.’²⁰⁵ This also found expression in the contemporary reception of Dix’s work. That there was a connection between the technological media and some of the paintings of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* was clear to critics such as Wolfradt, who wrote in a review of Dix’s 1926 exhibition at the Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf that what the new generation of painters had in common was ‘not least inspired by photography and cinema, whose effects, achieved with mechanical means, it aims to intensify.’²⁰⁶ And artist Iwan Puni had already singled out Otto Dix in 1923 as one of a number of painters who used photography in a new way by engaging it as a ‘spring board for the push away from photography’, by employing a strategy of heightening photography’s ‘static realism’, its ‘anti-artistic’ qualities to the point where they become a new ‘artistic canon’ for painting.²⁰⁷ Berber’s portrait claimed its position as an agent within this discourse because it demonstrated that painting was still capable of things the technological media were not. Kracauer had argued that ‘one day the diva will lose her demonic quality’, and what will be left is only her appearance as her

²⁰⁵ Otto Dix, ‘Gedanken zum Porträtmalen’, *Internationale Bodensee-Zeitschrift für Literatur, Bildende Kunst und Wissenschaft*, 3 (March 1955), 59-60, repr. in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis* (Berlin: Henschel, 1981), 224 (p. 224).

²⁰⁶ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Otto Dix. Ein neuer Maler’, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 25.21 (23 May 1926), 669-670 (p. 669).

²⁰⁷ Iwan Puni, ‘Zur Kunst von Heute’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 193-201 (p. 196).

photographs relay it, but they will be ‘alienated from meaning’.²⁰⁸ To invite a comparison with photographic practice and its lack of sensitivity to temporal and semiotic structures beyond what it could capture within one visual frame might therefore have been one of Dix’s concerns. Only painting could capture both developments across time and across different media in one single image, a world – as Kracauer had put it – not ‘accessible to the photographic apparatus’.²⁰⁹

Dix’s portrait of Berber demonstrated that painting could produce what photography could not: an image that did not just reproduce a subject with topical importance, but offered an aggregate of and a response to a plurality of external temporal structures, moments and media surfaces on one surface, within one field of the visual. Although the painting revealed the modern artist still suspended in a state described by Baudelaire in 1893 – ‘weighed down, every moment, by the conception and sensation of time’²¹⁰ – in his artwork Dix managed to achieve the opposite. As Paul F. Schmidt put it in 1927 in his essay ‘Artist-Portrait – or Resemblance’: ‘The true artist does not create for the point of view of his contemporaries. Only those works will last in time and have convincing truth that are not weighed down by temporal conditions.’²¹¹ Berber as a subject might have had a ‘contemporary constriction’, but her portrait – of that Dix tried to make sure – would not let her ‘diminish its artistic significance’²¹² – as the critic quoted above had claimed.

²⁰⁸ Kracauer, p. 435.

²⁰⁹ Kracauer, p. 432.

²¹⁰ Charles Baudelaire, ‘My Heart Laid Bare’, CXI, in Charles Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals*, trans. by Christopher Isherwood (London: Black Spring, 1989), p. 56.

²¹¹ Paul F. Schmidt, ‘Künstlerbildnis – oder Ähnlichkeit’, in *Das Problem der Bildnisgestaltung in der Jungen Kunst*, Veröffentlichungen des Kunstarchivs 43 (Berlin: Diel, 1927), pp. 2-5. Travelling exhibition organized by the *Hilfsverein für Junge Kunst*. The exhibition did not include works by Dix.

²¹² See note 156.

While Anita Berber and her photographic image were well on their way to become, in Kracauer's terms, 'powerless', a 'cast-off remnant [...] reduced to the sum of its details like a corpse yet stands tall as if full of life' by the time the painting was shown in 1926, this past-ness was already contained in her painted portrait as a repository of time. The artwork is a condensation of what Simmel described as 'life according to fashion': it 'consists of a balancing of destruction and upbuilding'.²¹³ Following Kracauer, only a painting as an 'object permeated by cognition', 'an artwork [that] also negates the likeness achieved by photography', could capture the 'consciousness' of this transitional historic moment.²¹⁴ As Kracauer concluded in his essay: 'In order for history to present itself, the mere surface coherence offered by photography must be destroyed.'²¹⁵

Dix both employed and controlled fashion in his own appearance, his self-portraits and his treatment of the *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber*. He did so to demonstrate his own position at the forefront of contemporary developments in art and wider visual culture, and to direct the portrait's reception when it was first displayed in 1926 while simultaneously aiming to ensure its future position within art history. By offering a trans-historical vision of events, Dix simultaneously liberated his painting from the temporal anchoring in the present and achieved what any of the many photographs of Anita Berber could not. The result is a painting on whose surface different temporal and medial planes converged in a pastiche, the visualisation of and itself a temporal configuration, a theoretical object in the discourse about the future of portrait painting.

²¹³ Simmel, p. 298.

²¹⁴ Kracauer, p. 430.

²¹⁵ Kracauer, p. 427.

Chapter 2

‘Material Verism’:²¹⁶

Haptic Effects in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model and Portrait Mrs Martha Dix*

*What was more, he found her much more beautiful in reality than on film, with the glued-on, blackened eyelashes. That she, someone he only knew from the flat plane, was exceptionally authentic and real, a three-dimensional body [...] particularly confused him.*²¹⁷

Vicki Baum, *Zwischenfall in Lohwinkel*, 1930

‘Just grab and hold on.’ Thus a sign pinned to the wall addressed visitors at the International Dada Fair held in 1920 in Berlin. Right next to it hung a dadaist ‘swing picture’ signed ‘Dix’, an artwork with three figures painted in a children’s toy-like manner. Each of the figures was cut out of plywood and pinned with a nail onto a board as a support so that each could be spun around: a woman in undergarments but with exposed breasts, her legs spread, a man in a suit and a bull with horns (figure 21). The female figure was placed on top of the other two, which turned the invitation to ‘grab’ into a sexual suggestion. Only a photograph of the work has survived, and it shows Otto Dix touching the nose of the female figure where the nail had been placed so that it could be spun around. The positioning of his arm was strategic in the photograph because it hid her, possibly exposed, crotch area from view.

In his dadaist works from around 1920, Dix’s interest in the tactile was clear. This chapter argues that Dix continued to pursue an aesthetic programme focused on engaging his audience’s haptic sense even after he had moved on from his Dada phase,

²¹⁶ I have adopted the term ‘*stofflicher Verismus*’ from Carl Einstein’s article on Rudolf Schlichter. Einstein is referring to collaged elements in Schlichter’s work, where ‘the fabric of a suit is represented by the fabric of a suit’ (p. 107). Carl Einstein, ‘Rudolph Schlichter’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 4 (1920), 105-108 (p. 108).

²¹⁷ Vicki Baum, *Zwischenfall in Lohwinkel* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930; repr. Vienna: Desch, 1954), p. 192.

but in a manner that would not require viewers to literally touch his artworks. Instead, Dix devised more complex conceptual strategies to create a range of haptic-optical experiences with the conventional artist's tools of canvas and paint.

Painting is becoming 'haptic' again

'Painting is becoming "haptic" again after it has been "optical" for centuries', claimed the Austrian art historian and writer Leopold Zahn in a short article published in the journal *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* in 1922.²¹⁸ What prompted his statement was the work of Munich-based painter Georg Schrimpf (figure 22), who was seen by critics as the first among a new generation of German artists to develop a new figurative style that defined itself in opposition to the distinctive optics of an absence of fully developed plasticity of form and a lack of spatial depth that characterised dominant avant-garde styles such as Cubism and Expressionism.

The way in which Zahn employed the term 'haptic' had a specific pedigree and meaning in German art historical writing. Contrary to what today's reader might expect, Zahn was neither referring to the mimetic depiction of textures nor the materiality of the medium itself, the *Faktur* of the painted support, although both appeal to our sense of touch. The term referred instead to an object's behaviour and expansion within a pictorial space rather than its surface qualities, and more generally to the amount of pictorial information provided to our spatial imagination. Another term was therefore closely related to the concept of the haptic. Zahn specified this as the 'fully developed plasticity' of the figures that populated Schrimpf's paintings, which he took as evidence

²¹⁸ Leopold Zahn, 'Georg Schrimpf', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 51 (1922/23), 86-90 (p. 87).

of a ‘reversal’ of the ‘painterly movement’ that, according to him, had dominated painting from Titian to Expressionism.²¹⁹ His use of the term ‘painterly’ was, of course, indebted to Heinrich Wölfflin’s division of art and architecture’s form systems into the ‘painterly’ and the ‘linear’ in his *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* published in 1915.

The semantic roots of Zahn’s terminology, and the visual qualities it tried to capture, must be traced back to Alois Riegl who was credited by his contemporaries and the following generation of art historians with introducing it in his influential text *The Late Roman Art Industry* (1901) as part of a dialectical pair of critical terms: ‘*optisch*’ and ‘*taktisch*’ (or ‘*haptisch*’), translated as ‘optical’ and ‘tactile (or ‘haptic’).²²⁰ Riegl further developed the concept specifically with regards to painting in *The Group Portraiture of Holland* in 1902, and his thinking about the haptic would influence the work of critical thinkers from Heinrich Wölfflin to Wilhelm Worringer and Walter Benjamin.²²¹ In his earlier text, Riegl’s ideas about vision and touch in art built on the highly influential study *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* by Adolf von Hildebrand, first

²¹⁹ Zahn, p. 87.

²²⁰ Riegl, Alois, *Die spätrömische Kunst-Industrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn im Zusammenhange mit der Gesamtentwicklung der Bildenden Künste bei den Mittelmeervölkern* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1901). Oskar Wulff for example credited Riegl alongside August Schmarsow’s *Plastik, Malerei und Reliefkunst in ihrem gegenseitigen Verhältnis*, Beiträge zur Ästhetik der Bildenden Künste III (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1899) with the introduction of the terms ‘*optisch*’ and ‘*haptisch*’ (or ‘*taktisch*’) into *Stilanalyse*. See Oskar Wulff, ‘Kritische Erörterungen zur Prinzipienlehre der Kunstwissenschaft’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 12 (1917), 1-34 (p. 9), footnote 2. For an introduction to the development of the concept of the haptic in Riegl’s work see: Mechthild Fend, ‘Körper sehen. Über das Haptische bei Alois Riegl’, in *Kunstmaschinen. Spielräume des Sehens zwischen Wissenschaft und Ästhetik*, ed. by Andreas Mayer and Alexandra Métraux (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2005), pp. 166-202.

²²¹ Most well-known is probably Benjamin’s reference to Riegl’s terms in his ‘Artwork’ essay where Benjamin writes about the tactile quality of the optical reception of film. For an analysis of the concept of the ‘tactile’ in Riegl and Benjamin see: Tobias Wilke, *Medien der Unmittelbarkeit. Dingkonzepte und Wahrnehmungstechniken 1918-1939* (Munich: Fink, 2010).

published in 1893.²²² Hildebrand had laid out a new doctrine for the understanding of creative processes and the problems posed by sensory perception, specifically the interplay between vision and touch to create the perception of space and depth – or the lack thereof. Hildebrand used the concepts of *Nahbild* and *Fernbild*. He aligned *Nahsicht* with sculptures and with the kinaesthetic aspect of touching, which also involved the synthesizing of close-up views all around the object, and seeing at a distance with the ‘purely visual’ character of a flat painting. For Hildebrand, only antique relief sculpture could resolve the conflict between both *Nahbild* and *Fernbild* because it contained figures on a planar layer that acted as a barrier to the visual suggestion of deep space. Riegl was building on Hildebrand’s concepts, when he described the path from ancient Egyptian art to late Roman architecture and relief sculpture as a development from *Nahsicht* to *Fernsicht*, and Riegl equated this with a movement from ‘haptic’ to ‘optical’ art. Although the optical was seen historically as the more developed mode of perception, the viewer needed a kind of tactile memory not only to get a sense of volume and outline, but also to achieve the optical impression of depth and space in an artwork, shaped by light and shadow as a kind of visual texture. Riegl’s text remained ambiguous, and the coupling of the two terms ‘*optisch*’ and ‘*taktisch*’ sparked some criticism in the debates that followed.

One such critic was the Austrian art historian Max Eisler, for whom the terms were not only ‘foreign’ and not in common use, but a rather ‘unnecessary leftover from our philological education’, which meant that they could not be replaced by ‘visible’, or

²²² Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1893).

‘*sichtbar*’, and ‘touchable’, or ‘*tastbar*’, either.²²³ For Eisler, the problem was precisely the ambivalence of Riegl’s account and paradigm: that ‘something objectively touchable can become something artistically optical’.²²⁴ For others, this was precisely the achievement of Riegl’s theory. The main issue was the term ‘*haptisch*’, which, for Eisler, lacked employability in the scientific context of art history and theory due to both changes that had occurred in terms of its meaning over time and its unscientific usage in daily life. For Riegl, ‘*taktisch*’ (used interchangeably with ‘*haptisch*’) referred not to strategy and tactics,²²⁵ as it did in common usage, but to the visual representation of the tactile qualities of objects represented in painting in close-up view and without the illusion of spatial depth, encompassing their material status, enclosed by outline or form, their opaqueness, and what Riegl called their physically ‘palpable impenetrability’.²²⁶ The greatest desire to appeal to ‘tactile’ or haptic perception was evident in ancient Egyptian art, Riegl contended, and this required an explanation of how the work related to the human vision: ‘The understanding of things, [...] is therefore a tactile one, and – insofar it is necessarily to a certain degree also an optical one – a close-view [*nahsichtige*] one.’²²⁷ It is in the second phase of Antiquity, in Classical Greek art, that Riegl identified the emergence of a more differentiated

²²³ Max Eisler, ‘Die Sprache der Kunstwissenschaft’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 13 (1919), 309-316 (p. 310).

²²⁴ Eisler, p. 310.

²²⁵ For a discussion of the concepts ‘tactile’ vs ‘tactical’ in Riegl and Benjamin see: Tobias Wilke, ‘Tacti(ca)lity Reclaimed: Benjamin’s Medium, the Avant-Garde and the Politics of the Senses’, *Grey Room*, 39 (Spring 2010), 39-55.

²²⁶ ‘*tastbare Undurchdringlichkeit*’. Riegl, *Kunst-Industrie*, p. 18. I am using my own translation here because the 1985 version by Rolf Winkes has problems, as reviewers of his English translation have pointed out. The significance and influence of Riegl’s differentiation between haptic and optical would later be the basis for Erwin Panofsky’s discussion of art historical terms, and Edgar Wind’s analysis of the epistemological status of these concepts in 1925. See Erwin Panofsky, ‘Über das Verhältnis der Kunstgeschichte zur Kunsttheorie’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 18 (1925), 129-161. Edgar Wind, ‘Zur Systematik der künstlerischen Probleme’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 18 (1925), 438-486.

²²⁷ Riegl, *Kunst-Industrie*, p. 20.

representation of surfaces. This allowed objects to start to expand into space through ‘projections’ [*Ausladungen*], but without losing touch with the flat ground, i.e. without full three-dimensionality. Here ‘tactile impenetrability’ remained the ‘condition of material individuality’.²²⁸

In his text on Schrimpf, Zahn employed ‘*haptisch*’ in the way Riegl’s terminology, based on earlier forms of image making, required it: a ‘haptic’ painting was one that foregrounded plasticity and solidity. In his essay on Dutch group portraiture, Riegl spoke of the ‘haptic linear constructions of the Italians’, again referring to form rather than surface texture, and tracing its employment in Dutch painting back to the classical roots of Italian artists’ ‘haptic-objective’ approach to composition.²²⁹ This was exactly the lineage that authors writing about the *Neue Sachlichkeit* would engage, too. Zahn saw Schrimpf’s new style of voluminous figures prefigured in the contemporary Italian movement of the *Valori Plastici*, which was itself rooted in the Classical Italian tradition of linearism. Linearism relied on precise drawing skills, and as art historian Oskar Wulff had explained in 1917, when discussing Heinrich Wölfflin’s *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*: ‘The linear is the plastic successfully captured in optical form [*optischer Erfüllungsform*], i.e. turned into graphic expression.’²³⁰

The Italian, classicist roots of the new type of naturalist painting that emerged in the 1920s were also acknowledged by Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, the director of the Kunsthalle in Mannheim. In his response to a 1922 *Kunstblatt* survey on the emergence

²²⁸ Riegl, *Kunst-Industrie*, p. 20.

²²⁹ ‘*haptische Linienkonstruktion der Italiener*’. Alois Riegl, ‘Das holländische Gruppenporträt’, *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 23 (1902), 71-278 (p. 226).

²³⁰ Wulff, p. 183.

of a 'New Naturalism', he famously identified two camps: a so-called 'classicist wing' and a 'verist wing'.²³¹ The following year, he would introduce the term '*Neue Sachlichkeit*'. Museum director Paul Ferdinand Schmidt had already spoken in 1920 of a new generation of painters' desire to break free from 'the most recent artistic fetters' through 'objectivity' in the way form was conceived, through a programmatic 'return to solidity and almost classicistic correctness of the plastic perception of form'.²³² When Schmidt described artists of the 'verist' wing of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* four years later as 'the vanguard [...] at the forefront of today's art', he again emphasised the shift 'away from the painterly and animated towards architectural rigour and plasticity; from the psychological towards factual statement'.²³³ The other key theorist of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting, Franz Roh, also identified Georg Schrimpf as probably the earliest representative of the new post-expressionist direction in art, and he argued in 1923 that one of the features that united Schrimpf's work with that of some of his peers was 'a new sense of depth, wrested from the density and solidity of vision, but particularly of production', linking the creation of form to perception in a somewhat awkward way in his choice of phrasing.²³⁴

Art historian Alfred Neumeyer was the only writer who dedicated a whole essay to the way space was represented in *neusachlich* paintings. In 'On the Psychology of Space in the *Neue Sachlichkeit*', published in 1927, he argued that the 'rehabilitation of an object as a plastic and spatial organism' was the central feature that united almost all artistic

²³¹ Gustav Hartlaub's response to the survey 'Ein neuer Naturalismus?', *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 369-415 (p. 390). See also Gustav Hartlaub, *Neue Sachlichkeit. Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus* (Mannheim: Kunsthalle Mannheim, 1925).

²³² Paul F. Schmidt, 'Die jungen Tschechen in Dresden', *Der Cicerone*, 12 (1920), 383-384 (p. 383).

²³³ Paul F. Schmidt, 'Die deutschen Veristen', *Das Kunstblatt*, 8.12 (1924), 367- 372 (p. 372).

²³⁴ Franz Roh, 'Georg Schrimpf und die neue Malerei. Zwei Bildanalysen von Franz Roh', *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 264-268 (p. 264).

positions within this movement.²³⁵ But for him, the effect of a distorted reality was more than anything created by the way in which specific ‘verist’ painters such as Dix and Heinrich Maria Davringhausen, and even a ‘classicist’ like Mense, painted space rather than objects or people. Their visual strategies were able to ‘confuse the viewer’, Neumeyer wrote, because one was confronted with ‘a precisely copied thing’ that ‘achieved, in secret ways that were not immediately obvious, the impression of reality’.²³⁶ Neumeyer contended that what seemed like an accurate representation of objects was combined with deliberate ‘errors’ in the construction of space and perspective, and he believed that exactly this quality could create a stronger effect of ‘reality’, of immediacy.

This chapter will consider two portrait paintings by Otto Dix, created in 1923: *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* (figure 23) and *Portrait Mrs. Martha Dix* (figure 5). The first painting has been much discussed, and it has been interpreted as a programmatic statement about a *neusachlich* painterly attitude, while the second work has received little scholarly attention. Neumeyer’s analysis cannot be applied here, because in both paintings, the figures are not represented in a deep space but in front of a blank background. However, Neumeyer’s observation that painters like Dix combined the impression of something ‘precisely copied’ with deliberate ‘errors’ is useful here, too. As we will see, Dix played with exaggerations and incongruences in another way, and his interest went beyond an investigation of the ‘object as a spatial organism’. It is my contention that around 1923 the ‘haptic’, both as plasticity *and* as texture (represented within the pictorial space rather than created on the surface of the painterly support as

²³⁵ Alfred Neumeyer, ‘Zur Raumpsychologie der Neuen Sachlichkeit’, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 61.3 (1927), 66-72 (p. 69).

²³⁶ Neumeyer, p. 69.

facture), became somewhat of an obsession for Dix. In doing so I will take seriously a claim made by Willi Wolfradt in 1924: that ‘the content of his paintings is subordinate to a critical meaning of his ultrarealism’.²³⁷ However, I will be shifting the focus from Wolfradt’s emphasis of the aspects of social critique in Dix’s work to formal features. This aspect of the artist’s work can also be seen as a form of engagement with the art theoretical discourse about vision and form in art history. More importantly for this thesis, it was part of Dix’s larger enquiry into the role and possibilities of painting at a time when film and photography had come to dominate wider visual culture.

What characterised film was not just the flatness of the screen, but also the fact that the filmic image could only provide an incomplete sense of plasticity and spatial depth due to the limits of the technology. There were also problems with sharpness, the issue of the lack of colour, and the still somewhat reduced gradation of grey tones. In her novel *Zwischenfall in Lohwinkel*, published in 1930 and quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Vicky Baum describes a public film screening in a small rural town that provides some insight into the way the filmic image may still have been perceived by some people in the 1920s. What Baum writes about the response of one of the male protagonists to the visit by a famous actress previously only known to him from the film screen points towards a strong awareness of the deficiencies, or the specific visual qualities, of how film conveyed reality. In the novel, the audience of the film has an acute sense of both the flatness of the screen and of the figures and bodies projected onto it. I would like to suggest that a heightened awareness of this deficiency among

²³⁷ Willi Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, *Junge Kunst*, 41 (1924), repr. and transl. in *Otto Dix*, ed. by Olaf Peters (Munich: Prestel, 2010), pp. 113-117 (p. 113).

audiences (and Baum herself) – a sensitivity that would slowly disappear with the improvement of the technology and regular exposure to filmic and photographic images – is what Dix attempted to exploit with some of his paintings in order to make a specific statement.

In the 1920s, cultural commentators were still keen to point out the deficiencies of the technological media, even though this debate had been going on since the middle of the nineteenth century. The essay *Das Kino in Gegenwart und Zukunft*, published in 1920 by Konrad Lange, professor of art history in Tübingen, is a case in point. It is also evidence of how the mechanical media forced a re-evaluation of the way in which recent art historical discourse had framed the relationship between form and vision. In line with the position of many of his colleagues, Lange rejected photography and film as art forms. Attempting to clarify the aesthetic differences between film, the more traditional visual arts, and reality, he argued that film was defined by *Flächenhaftigkeit*, or flatness, as an ‘illusion-preventing element’, not just in terms of the image’s support, but of the filmic image itself.²³⁸ The other, much more obvious features he named as preventing the illusion of reality were lack of colour and lack of sound. In accordance with Baum’s novel, Lange’s essay reveals how strong an awareness of the flatness of the filmic image may have been among contemporary audiences:

At every moment, i.e. at every stage of the movement [on screen], we only receive [*erhalten*] one image, which means that the perception of fully developed plasticity [*der plastischen Rundung*] is made impossible, i.e. the [viewer’s] awareness of flatness is therefore maintained. Most cinemagoers have this sense of flatness to a great degree. This is evidenced by the fact that, in the literature, one can regularly read the comment that the cinematic figures [*Kinofiguren*] “were rushing around on the flat plane”.²³⁹

²³⁸ Konrad Lange, *Das Kino in Gegenwart und Zukunft* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1920), p. 68.

²³⁹ Lange, p. 68.

While painting, sculpture, and works on paper did not even aim to create the illusion of something real, Lange argued, the aim of film to create exactly that, with the intention to deceive, excluded it from the realm of true art. And what was more, because this intention was so obvious, it re-enforced the audience's awareness of its failure to do so.²⁴⁰

A painter like Dix could try to capitalise on his audience's awareness of this lack by devising and foregrounding haptic qualities that the technological media were struggling to convey. Consequently, the shift from the optical to the haptic that Zahn had identified in Schrimpf's work did not solely relate to a diachronic development internal to the history of painting. It also constituted a dialectical relationship: between figurative painting as focused on the haptic and the mechanically produced image as optical. And only painting's return to representing what photography and film 'copied' as well – to a form of naturalism – could reveal the difference in ability between the two visual forms. Painting thereby engaged with a wider discourse about the reorganisation of apperception and the expansion of the abilities of what László Moholy-Nagy described in 1922 as the human, sensory '*Funktionsapparate*'.²⁴¹

Franz Roh highlighted in his article on Schrimpf that the stylisation of clothing was the most important element in his painting to provide the experience of touch for the viewer. In his description of the way dress was presented in two female portraits by the artist it was, however, not the fabric, but the sculptural shape of the clothing that Roh pointed out. 'Distributed in small intervals, palpability [*Tastbarkeit*] is set up: the sharply conceived edges of the clothing, even around the neck, and of the sleeves, that

²⁴⁰ Lange, p. 68-72.

²⁴¹ László Moholy-Nagy, 'Produktion – Reproduktion', *De Stijl*, 5 (1922), 98-100 (p. 98).

one can reach below.’²⁴² As in Zahn’s text, the thinking about the haptic referred exclusively to plasticity since Schrimpf’s paintings entirely lacked the description of detailed surface textures, leaving surfaces blank, so to speak. The apparel his heavy, sculptural figures are dressed in is plain and smooth. Clearly delineated areas are coloured in with limited modulation. What Schrimpf’s works did not relate to was the other meaning of the term ‘haptic’, another phenomenological aspect of how the viewer experienced the work: an appeal to the sense of touch, which the sculptural invites in form *and* texture.

As for Schrimpf, the line was Dix’s central means of expression. Willi Wolfradt described Dix as an ‘ironist of verist linearism’,²⁴³ due to the satirical edge of his works. Hans Kinkel would later summarise Dix’s oeuvre as his ‘linear lifework’.²⁴⁴ Writing in *Der Cicerone* in 1922, Paul Ferdinand Schmidt identified in the artist’s paintings a ‘haptic’ quality of Riegelian definition: ‘A perfect sharpness of drawing and plastic modelling elevates the experience of truth into a sphere of convincing actuality, which echoes the bitter grotesque of German painters of the Passion in the fifteenth century.’²⁴⁵ Key here is that Dix’s complex, synthetic formal approach did not exhaust itself in the focus on plasticity and formal solidity. Paul Westheim identified this in 1923, the year in which the two paintings that will be discussed in this chapter were created: ‘His way of painting is the perfect means of expression, [he] characterises the material [*das Stoffliche*] as well as static qualities [*das Statische*].’²⁴⁶

²⁴² Roh, p. 264.

²⁴³ Willi Wolfradt ‘Ein Doppelbildnis von Otto Dix’, *Der Cicerone*, 15 (1923), 173-178 (p. 1740).

²⁴⁴ Hans Kinkel, *Die Toten und die Nackten. Beiträge zu Dix* (Berlin: Hans Kinkel, 1991), p. 29.

²⁴⁵ Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, ‘Ausstellung der Dresdner Sezession’, *Der Cicerone*, 14 (1922), 483-485 (p. 484).

²⁴⁶ Paul Westheim, ‘Otto Dix’, in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 604 (17 August 1923), p. 3.

Neue Sachlichkeit paintings ‘played with surfaces’, as Sabine Eckmann writes, many simultaneously ‘suggested and denied tactility and embodiment’.²⁴⁷ The majority of *Neue Sachlichkeit* paintings were indeed characterised by a somewhat austere aesthetic. In his *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* and *Portrait Mrs. Martha Dix*, however, Dix provided an experience of abundance rather than lack through a broader variety of ways in which they provide the viewer with haptic experiences. Emil Utitz spoke of *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s focus on the ‘*Sinnenwirklichkeit*’, the external reality accessible via the human senses, on the ‘skin of things’ in contrast to Expressionism’s search for meaning and focus on emotionality.²⁴⁸ Before we turn to Dix’s paintings, however, it is worth establishing more firmly that an interest in both materiality *and* plasticity was a significant concern for the artist, and that his contemporaries also saw it that way.

Otto Dix: *Nahsicht*, Materiality and Plasticity

Statements made by Dix in an interview in 1965 with Maria Wetzel clearly indicate that an engagement with the issue of both aspects of the ‘haptic’ might have been central to his work of the 1920s. These have not been paid attention to in the literature about Dix to date, but I argue that they should be seen as key to a more comprehensive understanding of his art. Firstly, Dix declared in retrospect that his aim in the interwar years had been to capture ‘form like sculpture in the image – in the manner in which Mantegna presents it to the viewer, austere and solemn’, and that he wanted to present

²⁴⁷ Sabine Eckmann, ‘A Lack of Empathy. On the Realisms of New Objectivity’, in *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic 1919 – 1933*, ed. by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (Munich: Prestel, 2015), pp. 27-39 (p. 38).

²⁴⁸ Emil Utitz, ‘Der neue Realismus’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 21 (1927), 170-183 (p. 179). I disagree with Eckmann’s assumption that Utitz was referring to tactility specifically here and would argue that with the phrase ‘skin of things’ he was referring to a focus on optical information rather than an appeal to the sense of touch. See Eckmann, p. 38.

the human body as ‘dominating the pictorial space as if chiselled (almost airless in space): the form as such’.²⁴⁹ A successful example of such a programme, a merging of painterly practice with sculptural thinking, was his *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* and its affinity with German late Gothic wood sculptures. That Dix was perceived as particularly skilled in creating an effect of ‘solidity’ in the Riegelian sense is attested to by art critic Max Osborn, who reviewed his solo-exhibition at the Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin in 1926. Osborn described ‘portraits of heads and half-figures of a *Sachlichkeit* as if cut in marble’, alluding here to the ‘thing-ness’ in ‘*Sach*’-lichkeit, to a visual impression of precision and concrete objecthood. This is different to the more common interpretation of ‘*Sachlichkeit*’ as ‘matter-of-factness’ or ‘sobriety’ in the style of representation. Osborn admired how ‘every detail [is] filed [*durchgefeilt*] perfectly’ in Dix’s paintings, suggesting, in his choice of words, both a strong impression of relief plasticity alongside sharp linearism.²⁵⁰

In 1921, Max Doerner had published his highly successful book *Malmaterial und seine Verwendung*, which helped Dix to develop his old masterly technique. He started to work with a mixed oil-tempera technique, or ‘*Mischtechnik*’, on wood panel described by Doerner. It required a ground prepared with tempera and highlights before thin layers of oil paint were applied. This became Dix’s preferred method.²⁵¹ Paintings created with transparent oil glazes required a strong focus on form because the final outline had to be clear from the start. As Dix explained in his interview:

²⁴⁹ Interview Otto Dix in Maria Wetzel, ‘Atelier-Besuche XX: Ein harter Mann dieser Maler. Interview mit Otto Dix’, *Diplomatischer Kurier*, 14 (1965), 731-745 (p. 736).

²⁵⁰ Max Osborn, ‘Dix und Barlach. Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf - Salon Cassirer’, *Vossische Zeitung*, 10 February 1926 (morning edition), 8 (p. 8).

²⁵¹ See Ursus Dix, ‘Die Maltechnik’, in *Otto Dix. Zum 100. Geburtstag 1891-1919*, ed. by Wulf Herzogenrath and Johann-Karl Schmidt (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje, 1991), pp. 291-293 (p. 292). Ursus Dix also writes that what Doerner described as the ‘*Mischtechnik*’ of the Old Masters, which Dix applied into the 1940s, was actually not historically accurate.

Colour was not the only concern, but form and that it should be monumental and solid. And with the painterly technique I used at the time, the form is the first aspect that must be decided upon. Including the smallest detail, it lies underneath the layers of paint.²⁵²

Dennis Crocket has pointed out that Doerner's book was highly influential among artists of Dix's generation and that it also inspired the *neusachlich* painter Georg Scholz.²⁵³

In the only public statement he made in the 1920s, Dix connected the representation of form in an ambiguous way to both the characterisation of his sitters and the issue of perspective in his paintings:

For me the object remains primary, and form is created through the object. This is why the question of whether I can get as close to the object as possible has always been paramount for me, because what matters more to me than the "How" is the "What".²⁵⁴

Getting 'close' could be understood as the painter's attempt to understand the subjects of his portraits psychologically, and Dix was indeed often praised for his ability to identify and distil a sitter's typological or character traits. This found expression in the variety of artistic strategies he employed in his portrait paintings. This idea is commonly invoked in publications about Dix, but his statement can also refer to presenting his subjects literally in close-up view.

²⁵² Dix in Wetzel, p. 736.

²⁵³ Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism. The Art of the Great Disorder 1918-1924* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 19-20 and 120.

²⁵⁴ Otto Dix, 'Objekt gestaltet Form'. His response to the survey 'Gibt es neue Ausdrucksformen in der Kunst?', *Berliner Nachtausgabe*, 3. 283 (1927), 10-11 (p. 10).

In fact, Riegl had defined close-up view, or *Nahsicht*, as the condition for haptic perception. The heightened representation of materiality, surface textures (rather than plastic solidity), could for example be achieved through minute detailing. Dix himself alluded again to the significance of the choice of perspective in a conversation with Hans Kinkel in the 1960s, where he also revealed this as a visual strategy that was employed to move beyond the expressionist style:

One believed at the time that into the romantic pathos one had to inject the realistic: to see the object in close-up view [*die Sache ganz nah sehen*], almost without art. It was a counter position against the romantic-optimistic representation of life by the expressionists [...] the accuracy of the seeing is more important [for me].²⁵⁵

Dix's statement that his aim was to represent things 'almost without art' has been equated with his unflinching approach to the representation of difficult social realities to hold up a mirror to the era. However, the significance of his point about seeing (and painting) objects in 'close-up view' for the formal representation of objects in his pictures also needs to be acknowledged. One of the reasons why this point may not have been picked up by other writers is because he made a similar statement, but without the phrase 'close-up view', to Diether Schmidt. Here he used the phrase 'stripped naked' instead to make a similar point, and it is Schmidt's publication that scholars usually quote.²⁵⁶ Seeing things in close-up view allowed haptic-textural qualities to be foregrounded, and did not just refer to a revealing of underlying, hidden truth – the meaning emphasised the statement made in the conversation with Schmidt. When Willi

²⁵⁵ Otto Dix in conversation with Hans Kinkel. See Hans Kinkel, 'Otto Dix oder der unbestechliche Blick', in *Otto Dix, Protokolle der Hölle. Zeichnungen*, ed. by Hans Kinkel (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1968), p. xi.

²⁵⁶ It is more likely that Dix made almost the same statement to Schmidt and less likely that he was quoted incorrectly by Schmidt from Kinkel, in *Otto Dix, Protokolle der Hölle*, p. xi. Here is his full statement in Schmidt: 'The Expressionists made enough art. We wanted to see the things completely stripped naked [*ganz nackt*], clearly, almost without art. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* – I invented it.' See Schmidt, p. 279.

Wolfradt spoke in 1922 of ‘anti-artistic edginess’ or ‘sharpness’, of ‘*antikünstlerische Schärfe*’,²⁵⁷ he was, however, also referring to the way Dix represented controversial subject matter in an exaggerated, harsh way that amounted to an attack on the viewer’s senses and comfort zone, rather than the sensory qualities of the way form was represented.

While Dix claimed that he had ‘invented *Neue Sachlichkeit*’ in a conversation with Diether Schmidt, he was not actually keen on the term himself.²⁵⁸ The common interpretation of *Sachlichkeit* as ‘objectivity’, ‘matter-of-factness’ does not fit well with Dix’s verist Realism, as already suggested in the introduction to this thesis. It is therefore highly significant that the Dix himself interpreted ‘objectivity’ differently as a detailed focus on the object and materiality in his interview with Wetzel:

Objective? ... Who is ever objective? Of course, in contrast to Expressionism and the following abstract style, the world of figuration appears to be closer to the factual. At the time, what one could have found objective in my work, for example, is the strong emphasis on the material [*Betonung des Stofflichen*], on the tangible [*des Materiellen*]... materiality [*das Stoffliche*].²⁵⁹

There seems to be only one word in the English language for the German terms ‘*das Stoffliche*’ und ‘*das Materielle*’: ‘materiality’. However, there are subtle differences between the two. The first term emphasises haptic qualities with reference to ‘*Stoff*’ (translatable as ‘fabric’ or ‘cloth’) and the second implies something more solid and concrete, a specific constitutive material, tangibility. *Stofflichkeit* could, however, also

²⁵⁷ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Juryfreie Kunstschau Berlin’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 6.12 (1922), 543-544 (p. 543).

²⁵⁸ Schmidt, p. 279.

²⁵⁹ Dix in Wetzel, p. 739.

mean subject matter, which is why, I suggest, Dix added ‘*das Materielle*’ for clarification.²⁶⁰

The term ‘*Stofflichkeit*’ appears to have captured specific issues in the wider discourse about art in the interwar era, and Dix’s statements help to clarify these. As Andreas Strobl has pointed out, it was an ambivalent term also regularly employed in 1920s art writing. *Stofflichkeit* could refer to three different aspects of a painting: firstly, it could mean subject matter, as in *Stoffgebiet* (subject area); secondly facture, the materiality of the artwork itself; and thirdly the way in which material qualities of objects were represented. Today, one would naturally assume the second or third meaning was intended, but there are examples in the historic literature where it is clearly the subject matter that is referred to. What makes the term so significant for Dix’s work is that all three meanings relate to his way of working towards a heightened level of reality and immediacy. Indeed, Andreas Strobl has suggested that in some of his pictures, Dix did not just display a strong interest in materiality, but the ‘ambivalence of the term ‘*Stoff*’ is problematised in some of his pictures’.²⁶¹

In his review of the exhibition ‘Deutsche Kunst 1923’ in Darmstadt, art critic Wilhelm Michel tried to capture the ambivalence of the issue of *Stofflichkeit* (materiality) vs *Stoff* (subject matter) in Dix’s work when referring in a deliberately equivocal way to the ‘materiality of his contents’, the ‘*Materialität seiner Inhalte*’.²⁶² Michel alluded here to a viewer’s almost physical response to the shocking aspects of Dix’s pictures (by which

²⁶⁰ He did not say ‘*das Material*’, ‘the material’, hence my translation as ‘the tangible’ above.

²⁶¹ Andreas Strobl, *Otto Dix. Eine Malerkarriere der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Reimer, 1996), p. 134.

²⁶² Wilhelm Michel, ‘Ausstellung “Deutsche Kunst 1923” Darmstadt’, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 52 (1923), 175 -184 (p. 180).

most commentators meant his paintings of war, violence and prostitution) and their great visual intensity and immediacy: ‘His pictures describe a wild [*wüste*] reality [...] they are more illustration than painting, but they drag along life, existence’.²⁶³ This chapter contends that Dix also worked on the impression of physical or material immediacy in some of his uncontroversial portraits, such as those discussed later on in his chapter.

Dix’s Dada Practice, 1919-1921

Between 1921 and 1924, Dix’s artistic production underwent a significant transformation. Up until 1921 he produced dadaist works, many of which contained collaged elements, but by 1925 he had arrived at the old masterly style we see in the *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber*. Susanne Meyer-Büser has identified the years 1921 to 1924 as the period of his development ‘from an expressive-verist Dadaist to a New Objectivity portraitist’.²⁶⁴ Similarly, Birgit Schwarz identified Dix’s more decisive turn towards the aesthetic vocabulary of the Old Masters in 1924. Schwarz argues that this may have been in part motivated by the scandal surrounding the controversial canvas *Trench* (figure 24), completed in 1923, which was praised for its similarities to the style of Matthias Grünewald, but condemned because of the expressive way paint was applied to convey the raw visceral, physical experience of the war.²⁶⁵ If Schwarz’s suggestion is correct, Dix would have adapted his style in response to the demands of his audience.

²⁶³ Michel, p. 180.

²⁶⁴ Susanne Meyer-Büser, ‘Introduction’, in *Otto Dix: the Evil Eye/ Der böse Blick*, ed. by Susanne Meyer-Büser (Munich: Prestel, 2017), pp. 18-21 (p. 18).

²⁶⁵ After this scandal, ‘he turned ‘technically, in terms of subject matter, and of form’ more fully towards the German Old Masters. Birgit Schwarz and Michael Victor Schwarz, *Dix und Beckmann. Stil als Option und Schicksal* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1996), p. 62-63.

In his interview with Wetzel, Dix explained that the painting *Trench* had been oversized and the support was ‘patched together’ from different pieces of coarse gunny or burlap.²⁶⁶ Dix worked on the painting between 1920 and 1923, and perhaps one could say that he worked ‘upwards’ from a patched, coarse ground to a final image that relied solely on paint in its representation of intense plasticity and texture. The *Trench*, one could argue, captured in one artwork his transition from a dadaist ‘material Verism’, which used fragments of different materials, to what could be described as his ‘material Verism’ of 1923, as this chapter proposes. The final image shocked viewers, precisely because of the intense impression of different textures, material qualities and three-dimensional plasticity of destroyed nature and the pile of human bodies in a state of putrefaction. Alfred Salmony described ‘lacerated material [that] is merging with lacerated bodies’.²⁶⁷ The hands of dead soldiers are painted in such a way that they seem to be reaching out into the space in front of the picture plane. As Robert Breuer saw it, with his work *Trench*, Dix had returned to the ‘the actual means of a painter’, while his preceding Dada works had used what Breuer called ‘foreign objects’, ‘*Fremdkörper*’.²⁶⁸

Dix’s contemporaries did not see a clear break between his dadaist practice and the subsequent more old masterly paintings. What these artworks had in common was not just a verist attitude, but a very strong interest in materiality and surface texture. Art dealer and art historian Hildebrand Gurlitt, writing in 1924 for the *Vossische Zeitung* about a Dix exhibition in Dresden, was impressed by the artist’s wide range of skills that enabled him ‘to express what he had to say with all available means, to bring the

²⁶⁶ Dix in Wetzel, p. 742.

²⁶⁷ Alfred Salmony, ‘Die Neue Galerie des 17. bis 20. Jahrhunderts im Wallraf-Museum Richartz in Köln’, *Der Cicerone*, 16 (1924), 1-11 (p. 8).

²⁶⁸ Robert Breuer, ‘Dix und Barlach’, *Die Weltbühne*, 22.1 (1926), 263-264, (p. 263).

things in their full materiality into his pictures'.²⁶⁹ Referring specifically to his earlier dadaist works, Gurlitt described how 'Dix glued, employed different kinds of fabrics, even photographs' in his pictures.²⁷⁰ Just like Michel, quoted earlier, Gurlitt used the term 'wild', 'wüsst', to describe Dix's artistic production over the course of the early 1920s, and he meant this in terms of their subject matter *and* in their 'means of representation'.²⁷¹ Dix's dadaist works were also conceived under the influence of the Berlin Dadaists such as Raul Hausmann and his manifesto, originally entitled 'The New Material in Painting', which called on artists to reject expressionist spirituality and to re-engage with the physical world. As Crockett writes, 'in his search for a more immediate artistic experience, Hausmann sought to bypass traditional forms of representation' and this resulted in his collages that used fragments of newspapers, magazines and photographs.²⁷² I suggest that when Dix abandoned his dadaist collage practice, to rely solely on traditional painterly means, he continued nonetheless to pursue this agenda in some of his works.

In his autobiography, Dix's painter colleague and friend Otto Griebel wrote that some of the works Dix produced around 1920 featured 'flowers one glues into family albums, pieces of pornographic photography or additions of gauze and tinsel'.²⁷³ In *The Skat Players* of 1920 (figure 25), Dix attached actual playing cards and experimented with fabrics and metal foil. Dix collaged coarsely woven fabric that looks like hessian onto the body of one of the three card players. For the second card player's suit, Dix applied

²⁶⁹ Hildebrand Gurlitt, 'Otto-Dix Ausstellung' [Dresden], *Vossische Zeitung, Abendausgabe*, 275 (11 June 1924), 269-270 (p. 269).

²⁷⁰ Gurlitt, p. 269.

²⁷¹ Gurlitt, p. 269. The works Dix exhibited at the 'Kunstaustellung Dresden 1924' were not earlier, dadaist pictures, but the paintings *Elsa, the Countess* and *Portrait Fritz Glaser*. See the list of Dix's exhibitions in Strobl, p. 245.

²⁷² Crockett, p. 36-37.

²⁷³ Otto Griebel, *Ich war ein Mann der Strasse. Lebenserinnerungen eines Dresdner Malers* (Frankfurt a.M.: Röderberg, 1986), p. 90.

paint very thickly in order to create the haptic-optical impression of tweed fabric. The third card player wears a suit painted in a more delicate manner to create the impression of a smoother tweed fabric. The painted areas of many of the dadaist works were executed in a crude, flattened way. In other words, pieces of reality were combined with forms of abstraction. The overall impression was one of anti-illusionism combined with haptic appeal.

According to Griebel, Dix even used fluorescent paint in his self-portrait as *Lustmörder* of 1920 to make it glow in the dark.²⁷⁴ Art critic Max Osborn recalled artworks from the beginning of the decade in his review of Dix's retrospective exhibition in 1926 in Berlin when writing that in Dix's 'dadaist game', 'crudeness and kitsch itself were brought into the painting as it were; silly objects, shreds of fabric, veil, pieces of paper and similar stuff were crammed into it'.²⁷⁵ Dix also used strands of hair, newspaper clippings, fragments of glossy prints and postcards. Some had pop-up features or featured elements that could be spun around, such as the work mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. But, said Osborn, these dadaist experiments had only been a prelude.

Dix moved on to develop other strategies that engaged viewers in novel ways with the traditional medium of painting, and this not just through an expansion and updating of the subject matter. In the context of a wider discourse about medium specificity, he wanted to showcase new capabilities of an old medium, and of a naturalist approach to representation, by producing new visual effects that could only be realised in a hand-made artwork. What is less well-known is that Dix even created a three-dimensional,

²⁷⁴ Griebel, p. 95.

²⁷⁵ Osborn, p. 8.

dadaist self-portrait of himself. In an essay published in the short-lived journal *Der Stromer* in 1925, journalist Gerth Schreiner described a life-size doll made with collaged pieces as a ‘self-portrait with a real suit, shoes and a stiff hat’, entitled *Ich (Me)*.²⁷⁶ Otto Griebel was most likely referring to the same object when he described ‘a glued-on stiff hat and suit fabric’, and he also mentions a mask of Dix’s face.²⁷⁷ This demonstrates that Dix was pursuing his desire to provide a heightened form of reality compared to the mechanical media beyond the limitations of a two-dimensional support made of canvas or paper. The outfit could be folded back, and what could be seen underneath was, as Griebel writes, ‘extremely obscene and therefore had to remain concealed’.²⁷⁸ Based on a statement made by Conrad Felixmüller in his memoirs, Hanne Bergius has written that Dix may also have created a three-dimensional, life-size female doll, with ‘real accessories like cotton wool and lace’, that stood in his studio.²⁷⁹

Dix’s controversial painting *Barricade* (figure 26), painted in 1920, is worth mentioning here, a work Paul Fechter named in 1923 in the *Kunstblatt* as a prime example of a ‘fanatic naturalism’. Fechter described how Dix represented the ‘deadly wound of the sailor as a big black hole punched into the canvas’, and ‘the edges of the wound’ as covered in ‘thick bulges of paint like clotted blood’.²⁸⁰ He diagnosed a ‘fanaticism in the need to represent, to demonstrate’ for which ‘the most naked expression is more

²⁷⁶ Gerth Schreiner, ‘Otto Dix’, *Der Stromer. Blätter für junge Kunst*, 1 (1925), 109-113 (p. 112).

²⁷⁷ Griebel, p. 117.

²⁷⁸ Griebel, p. 117.

²⁷⁹ Hanne Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas. Die Berliner Dadaisten und ihre Aktionen* (Giessen: Anabas, 1993), p. 251. Conrad Felixmüller, *Legenden 1912-1976* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1977). However, in response to Bergius, Birgit Schwarz has argued that there is no evidence that this was also a three-dimensional figure, the available information only suggests that it was work with collaged elements that represented a woman and had three-dimensional breasts made out of cotton wool. Birgit Schwarz, ‘Vergessene Dadawerke’, in *Otto Dix: Retrospektiv. Zum 120. Geburtstag*, ed. by Holger Peter Saupe (Gera: Kunstsammlung Gera, 2011), pp. 97-100 (p. 99).

²⁸⁰ Paul Fechter, ‘Die nachexpressionistische Situation’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 321-329 (p. 324).

important than so-called art.²⁸¹ Upon closer inspection, the black-and-white reproduction of the *Barricade* also seems to show a flower and piece of fabric, possibly a tablecloth, attached to the bottom of the painting in addition to pieces of printed paper.

In an article accompanied by a reproduction of *Barricade* and published in *Die Woche* in 1920, Franz Servaes already acknowledged Dix as one of the most talented emerging artists at the time, but also warned: ‘He tends towards the most horrid tastelessness, and with his fabric-gluing he will arrive at crass naturalism soon enough.’²⁸² It turned out that this was an accurate prediction given Dix’s progression towards a verist realism, executed with painterly means, which ‘imitates detail and materiality with terrifying precision’, as Willi Wolfradt would describe it in 1924.²⁸³ In his 1925 article ‘Dix as a Portraitist’, Alfred Salmony confirmed in retrospect that the dadaist collages had been only a starting point before he arrived at ‘the most aggressively physical [*allerhandgreiflich*] description, precisely discernible’ with different, more conventional painterly means of canvas and paint.²⁸⁴ By employing the word ‘*allerhandgreiflich*’, Salmony tried to capture their strong appeal to the haptic sense. In the same year, Franz Roh, emphasised similar qualities in an article published in *Der Cicerone*:

Painting once again becomes the mirror of the tangible outside [...] A more comprehensive coexistence of colours, spatial forms, tactile ideas, smells, memories of chewing [*Kauerinnerungen*] conditions me. An in fact inexhaustible complex that we combine in the concept of the tangible ... Today it is above all the complex experience of touch that is evoked.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ Fechter, ‘Die nachexpressionistische Situation’, p. 324.

²⁸² Franz Servaes, ‘Ergebnisse des Expressionismus?’, *Die Woche*, 46 (1920) 1195-1197 (p. 1197).

²⁸³ Willi Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 115.

²⁸⁴ Alfred Salmony, ‘Dix als Porträtist’, *Der Cicerone*, 17 (1925), 1045-49 (p. 1046).

²⁸⁵ Franz Roh, ‘Gegenständlichkeit. Grundsätzliches zur Wendung neuester Malerei’, *Der Cicerone*, 17 (1925), 113-1120, cit. and transl. in Eckmann, ‘A Lack of Empathy’, p. 37.

Eckmann writes that for Roh the way post-expressionist painters presented objects was about the ‘dualism between the exterior world and the spiritual realm of the imaginary’. However, I

Roh recognised the intense struggle that had led painting to return to older aesthetic means, that these had been intensified and refocused to appeal to one specific human sense: our sense of touch. Photography may be conceptualised as the ‘mirror’ of the external visual world, but as Roh suggested above (without explicitly referring to photography): painting could hone in where photography was deficient, it could be the ‘mirror of the *tangible* outside’ [my emphasis]. It was not just Roh who used hyperbole when writing that Dix’s high-octane realism also suggested olfactory sensations. Fechter similarly claimed that ‘one even smells’ reality in Dix’s paintings, and Alfred Kamphausen suggested that Dix had glued his dadaist artworks together from things that ‘smelled disgusting and were inedible [*unriechbar und ungenießbar*]’.²⁸⁶ This was in line with Paul Westheim’s observation in 1922 that ‘one wants to “smell, taste” reality again’.²⁸⁷

Writing about Dix’s dadaist works, Alfred Kamphausen felt that while each individual part ‘announced already with its material its self-determination’, the artwork as a whole was limited by the fact that the ‘higher synthesis was effectively reduced to glue’.²⁸⁸ Interestingly, Kamphausen located the development of Dix’s later ‘sense for form’ in a dadaist practice. This practice was defined by a ‘hard’ and ‘analytical’ approach, Kamphausen said, with the coordination of elements without internal connection.²⁸⁹ Any organic relationship between the objects that may have existed in the external

am not sure Roh would have applied this to Dix’s work, which adds caveats to this reading of Roh.

²⁸⁶ Paul Fechter, ‘Die Juryfreie Ausstellung. Zur heutigen Eröffnung’, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Abendblatt*, 62.488 (20th October 1923), 2 (p. 2). Alfred Kamphausen, ‘Otto Dix. Eine Kritik seiner Möglichkeiten’, newspaper clipping, no source, no date, p. 232. [ZA].

²⁸⁷ Paul Westheim, ‘Kleines Kolleg über den “Naturalismus”’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 93-95 (p. 94).

²⁸⁸ ‘*die höhere Synthese sich faktisch auf Kleister beschränkte*’. Kamphausen, p. 232.

²⁸⁹ Kamphausen, p. 232.

world was ‘reduced to mechanics’.²⁹⁰ The paintings of 1923 discussed in what follows, however, did not contain any collaged elements, but they still surprised viewers with unusual visual and tactile effects. His dadaist thinking had been synthesised and absorbed into canvas and paint.

Self-Portrait with Nude Model (1923)

Dix’s work *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* of 1923 has been described as ‘one of Dix’s most important self-portraits’.²⁹¹ According to Olaf Peters, the work can be interpreted as ‘the painter’s self-stylisation as a distanced, disinterested observer who appears to be merely depicting faithfully what he sees’, and that the aim of this work was to showcase the artist’s technical skills.²⁹² Peters also contends that the sexualised woman is allegorised as muse or inspiration and that the painting confronts us with the truth of ‘prostitution as a phenomenon inherent in art’.²⁹³ According to this interpretation, the relationship between the two figures, the direction of the gaze of the painter and his habitus are supposed to tell us something about Dix’s artistic approach. In fact, it echoes what Willi Wolfradt described in 1924 as an attitude visualised when writing about this work: ‘In another painting he plunks himself down right next to the buck-naked [*splitternacktes*] model, with the cold expression of a vivisector and in absolute, unwavering objectivity.’²⁹⁴ Wolfradt’s choice of the term ‘*splitternackt*’ makes obvious that Dix had crossed the line from the tastefully nude to the crudely naked. There is something indecent, almost obscene about the way in which he has presented the

²⁹⁰ Kamphausen, p. 232.

²⁹¹ Olaf Peters, ‘Self-Portrait with Nude Model’, in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 201 (p. 201).

²⁹² Peters, ‘Self-Portrait’, p. 201.

²⁹³ Peters, ‘Self-Portrait’, p. 201.

²⁹⁴ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 113.

woman – a speciality of Dix, which had also brought him two court cases for immorality in 1923.²⁹⁵ Perhaps the painting also made a point to his detractors, that when Dix represented women in a sexualised way, he did so as a distanced observer rather than for titillation. Yet, while the idea that this painting announces Dix's unflinching approach has been well established, there are other questions to be asked about the way in which the two figures are depicted.

Self-Portrait with Nude Model has attracted much interest because it is a strange painting. Although we know that we are confronted with a painter and his model, we do not see him, brush in hand, in front of an easel and in the process of or about to paint her. Varying titles have been assigned to the work in German publications: *Maler und Model*, *Der Maler und sein Modell*, *Selbstbildnis mit Modell* and *Selbstbildnis mit nacktem Modell*. There is no question, of course, that it represents Dix. *Selbstbildnis mit Modell* was the title given in Willi Wolfradt's 1924 monograph on Dix.²⁹⁶ Today *Selbstbildnis mit nacktem Modell* is the title most commonly used in the German literature, and it is the basis for the established English title *Self-Portrait with Nude Model*.²⁹⁷ If *Maler und Modell* was the originally intended title, this would somewhat change the meaning of the work, indicating that Dix may also be standing in for the figure of a painter in general, which undermines the established interpretation that the work is a statement specifically about Dix's personal attitude.

²⁹⁵ For *Girl in front of the Mirror* of 1921 and the brothel scene in *Salon II*. See *Otto Dix. Welt und Sinnlichkeit*, ed. by Ulrike Lorenz (Regensburg: Stiftung Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2005), pp. 56-57.

²⁹⁶ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, p. 19. We do not know whether he consulted Dix. *Maler und Model* or *Der Maler und sein Modell* are the titles given respectively in the catalogue of the 'Internationale Kunstausstellung' in the Kunsthhaus Zurich in 1925, and in the catalogue of the 'Internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden' in 1926. In 1927 and in 1929 it is listed in catalogues for exhibitions in Thuringia and Zurich respectively as *Selbstbildnis mit Modell*. See the list of Dix's exhibitions over the course of the 1920s in Strobl.

²⁹⁷ It is likely that the more descriptive title *Selbstbildnis mit nacktem Modell* has been adopted from Diether Schmidt's book *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis* (Berlin: Henschel, 1981), p. 92.

Wolfradt described the painter's gaze in the picture as that of a 'vivisector', and there may have been a strategic reason why he used this particular term in the first monographic publication on Dix. One could even argue that Wolfradt borrowed it from an essay published by Paul Westheim the previous year in his essay collection *Für und Wider*.²⁹⁸ In this text, Westheim constructed a dialectic relationship between Max Beckmann and the German Old Master Hans Holbein. There is little doubt that both Dix and Wolfradt were aware of Westheim's programmatic essay, not just because they followed contemporary arts criticism, but specifically because Westheim discussed Dix's work in the same publication, which was also accompanied by reproductions of his work.²⁹⁹

Although Westheim's essay on Beckmann has not been mentioned in relation to Dix in the scholarly literature to date, I would suggest that Dix may even have conceived *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* with himself presented like a 'vivisector' inspired by it, and that this would have been in order to align himself with one of the most celebrated German Old Masters and as part of a specific genealogy. In another self-portrait, *Self-Portrait on the Easel* of 1926, Dix would quote one of Rembrandt's self-portraits, but here the inspiration would have come from a text written by an art critic. A look at Westheim's description of a 'Holbein-ian' type of artist reveals it to be a surprising match for the figure of the painter in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model*:

²⁹⁸ Paul Westheim, 'Beckmann: "Der wahre Expressionismus"', in Paul Westheim, *Für und Wider. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1923), pp. 98-104 (p. 100).

²⁹⁹ Dix mentions reading the *Kunstblatt* in a 1922 letter to his wife, for example, specifically an article about Hofer. See Otto Dix, *Briefe*, ed. by Ulrike Lorenz (Cologne: Wienand, 2013), p. 67.

In the case of the Holbein-type the uncanny is in the calmness, the rigid posture, the indifference [*Unberührtheit*], the equanimity [*Gleichmut*]; in the Beckmann-type the demonic is identifiable in the restlessness, the exaltation, the entrancement, the excitement. One presses the lips together (“the eye his consciousness”, says Suarès), the other screams, his weapon is pathos. Both despise the world. [...] One [the Holbein-type] is a mirror, determines what the nuisance is, detached like a vivisector who has his object under the knife; the other is beside himself [...]. Holbein says, this is how the world is, and because he says it clearly, tersely, convincingly, in simple terms, it seems uncanny; [...].³⁰⁰

In *Self-portrait with Nude Model*, the figure of the painter displays all of the qualities Westheim describes, from the tense posture to the cool composure. Dix’s painter presses his lips together, he is detached, while the visual language of the artwork is ‘clear’ and ‘terse’ to the point of uncanniness. Is it therefore just a coincidence that the shirt the painter wears is light blue, similar to the colour effect created with white highlights on the jacket worn by Hans Holbein in his famous self-portrait on paper (ca. 1542–1543) in the Uffizi (figure 27)? Even the angle in which Dix has positioned his upper body and head is the same as in Holbein’s self-portrait. There is a caveat, though, because in order for Dix to have completed the picture in response to Westheim’s text before the end of 1923, the book would have to have been published before the end of the year, and indeed it was in August that Westheim advertised the book in the *Kunstblatt*. It is also possible that the text on Beckmann was published as an article elsewhere before that.³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Westheim, ‘Beckmann’, pp. 99-100. Westheim would have been referring to Hans Holbein the Younger here. Westheim had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Beckmann and his work. See Lutz Windhöfel, *Paul Westheim und Das Kunstblatt, Eine Zeitschrift und ihr Herausgeber in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1995), pp. 314-318.

³⁰¹ More research would be required here. If the book was published before the beginning of August, this would have given Dix at least five months to conceive and complete the work, if it was indeed completed in 1923. It first appeared in public as an illustration in Wolfradt’s 1924 monograph, which remained, according to Strobl, the first and only time the painting was reproduced in print. It was only publicly exhibited in August 1925 in Zurich. See Strobl, p. 246 and 262.

Interestingly, Westheim contended that Beckmann's art was not strong enough to compete with Holbein's in direct comparison – an observation that must have read like an invitation to look towards the Old Master for competitive tools in the fight for artistic leadership. Dix was anxious to succeed, had already experimented with an old masterly naturalism before the war, in works such as his *Self-Portrait with Carnation* of 1912, and he had the necessary painterly skills. In fact, Westheim's appraisal of Holbein might have played a part in Dix's decisive turn towards an old masterly aesthetic from around 1924, whether it directly inspired the *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* or not.

Perhaps the painting was even meant, in part, to be a humorous reference to Westheim's text, one that art world insiders would have understood since the link seems quite obvious. In 1929 both Dix and Holbein would finally be mentioned in the same text, in the catalogue for an exhibition about Dix. Here, Rudolf Probst returned to tropes Westheim had set up in 1923: 'No artist since Holbein has ever looked reality, his human subject, so coldly and soberly, intensely in the eye.'³⁰²

In *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* the painter stands slightly behind the female model, but very close to her, confirming the impression that we are not witnessing a studio situation or actual encounter, which is further suggested by the lack of spatial context. Dix has eliminated environmental features that could give the image depth and atmosphere, forcing the viewer's attention on form and surface in *Nahsicht*. Both figures have been positioned in a blank space and in the foreground in such a way that

³⁰² Rudolf Probst, 'Introduction', in *Otto Dix* (Zurich: Kunstsalon Wolfsberg, 1929), p. 3.

the bodies only fit into the picture frame from the mid-thighs up. Neither responds to the other, whether with gestures or body language; neither clearly dominates the painting, although the painter is presented in a dominant position in relation to the model, while she seems oblivious to his gaze. The two figures do not seem to occupy the same space, suggesting that the painter represents his internal thought process or a mental image. In her role as a muse, the model can also stand in as a personification of artistic output.

In his essay 'Dix as Portrait Painter', published in 1925 in *Der Cicerone*, Alfred Salmony highlighted the most striking aspect of this portrait: the contrasting way in which both figures are presented. As stated in the previous chapter, an Americanised appearance and masculine habitus were the fashionable ideal that Dix had adopted to demonstrate his position at the forefront of artistic and cultural development, and Salmony picked this up when he described the male figure 'with determined jaw, knitted eyebrows, ice cold, American'.³⁰³ A cool and distanced, but perfectly coiffed persona was part of this image, but the female model fulfils a different role. Although perhaps not immediately obvious from today's perspective, her body shape represented an out-dated physical ideal. The magazine *Revue des Monats* put it thus in 1927: 'Previously a woman who was not laced was a scandal. Today the laced woman gives us a fright. What was formerly seen as tasteful is seen as shocking and as a torment today.'³⁰⁴ Trude John, writing in the same magazine later that year, described the 'modern female silhouette' of the 1920s as 'liberated from the obligatory corset, with

³⁰³ Salmony, p. 1049.

³⁰⁴ Anonymous, 'Monats-Revue: Hollywood', *Revue des Monats*, 1.5 (1927), 458 (p. 458).

the anamitic boy-hips'.³⁰⁵ A more shapely body had become unattractive and John warned: 'Woe to the fashion advisor, who "brings to the fore" those carefully concealed Venus-hips and breasts formed according to antique convention through the drapery!'³⁰⁶ The model in Dix's painting was not supposed to look desirable, she did not fit the current fashion. Salmony's harsh words implied a feeling of embarrassment, a lack of artfulness, and he suggested a strong effect on contemporary viewers: 'the nude, made disgusting by corsets, is simply stripped naked'.³⁰⁷

In the 1920s, new types of underwear, 'designed to suppress all shapeliness', were worn by trend-conscious women, as Anne Hollander writes, and painters 'tended to portray the female body as a single unmodulated shape, as did fashion illustrators'.³⁰⁸ The anachronistic female body in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* is evidence of the normative power of fashion on women's physical appearance. In contrast, the painter's slim, toned body, his cool composure and unfussy outfit signified his contemporaneity. In biographical terms, however, the model was a woman after the painter's personal taste, 'with ample cleavage, just as Dix liked them', as Otto Griebel revealed in his memoir.³⁰⁹ Although Dix-specialist Diether Schmidt has interpreted this work as a 'rational studio moment' that lacks any reference to a personal relationship between model and painter (even though there is no studio space suggested in the picture), he appreciated that the sensual representation of the model with the 'much-kissed lips' could be 'confessional simply through the choice of a model who derides conventional

³⁰⁵ Trude John, 'Stoffliche Visionen. Aus der Zauberwerkstatt Robert Delaunay's', Mit photographischen Illustrationen von Germaine Krull, Paris', *Revue des Monats*, 2.3 (1927-28), 280-283 (p. 283).

³⁰⁶ John, 'Stoffliche Visionen', p. 283.

³⁰⁷ Salmony, p. 1049.

³⁰⁸ Anne Hollander, *Fabric of Vision. Dress and Drapery in Painting* (London: National Gallery, 2002), p. 149.

³⁰⁹ Griebel, p. 251.

beauty ideals'.³¹⁰ Whatever Dix's preferences may have been, there is no nostalgia in the artist's vision; instead he gives the model an extra charge of confidence and sensuality, a desire to draw attention to her own nakedness. What matters ultimately for the reading of the model's looks here, however, is the response of his contemporary audience, and Salmony's judgment made it clear.

It is not just the model's body that is the opposite of the skinny, flat-chested and angular fashion models of the 1920s; she also lacks their cool demeanour, and their often averted and somewhat blank gazes (figure 28). The painter's muse is acknowledging us; she is trying to tempt the viewer with what Salmony described as her 'coquettish' smile.³¹¹ With her arms lifted above her torso she draws attention to her breasts. Her inviting gaze contrasts with the male's lack of engagement, her soft curves and lasciviousness with his rigid posture. There are further aspects that separate her from the look of the modern New Woman: her unruly, curly hair is the opposite of the short, highly styled haircuts fashionable at the time. Her face does not have the pale, perfectly powdered complexion and fine features of the faces chosen for film, fashion magazines and advertising. Her lips are swollen and appear naturally red rather than enhanced with lipstick, her face is flushed – suggesting bedroom rather than beauty salon. All of these qualities make clear: she is presented to us, like Anita Berber in her portrait, as an anachronism. While Salmony's statement about her unattractive looks has been noted in some of the existing research, no further attention has been paid to the temporal dimension that the relationship between the two figures inserts into the picture. This is similar to the dialectic between contemporaneity and past-ness created by hanging *Self-portrait on the Easel* and *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* next to each other in

³¹⁰ Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis* (Berlin: Henschel, 1981), p. 90.

³¹¹ Salmony, p. 1049.

Dix's 1926 retrospective exhibition at Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin, as discussed in the previous chapter. What is more, the model's protruding belly and curly hair could also be read as references to feminine beauty ideals of the Renaissance, as a merging of physical attributes from different periods of time, similar to Dix's strategy in his portrait of Anita Berber. Looking towards Holbein again, one could argue that her body, to an extent also her face and hair colour, are similar to those of the Virgin Mary in Hans Holbein the Younger's *Darmstädter Madonna* (figure 29), created between 1497 and 1498, of which the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden had a copy that had been the subject of a famous dispute in the nineteenth century.³¹² Only that in Dix's painting she is stripped naked. In *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* we encounter the painter with a posture and gaze that Westheim had attributed to Hans Holbein, but the way in which Dix looked at women was more brutal, more revealing. Could Dix be suggesting that this is how Holbein would have painted women in the 1920s, or that he, Otto Dix, was the more radical artist because he had stripped the Holbeinian woman of her clothes and finery?

Naturalism vs Sachlichkeit. Empathy vs Abstraction

Alfred Salmony seems to have missed an important point made by *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* when he called on Dix to provide a more authentic self-portrait: 'There is deceit in this double portrait. Dix choses the sporty look as a mask. Dix should admit his intentions and leave the sport out of it.'³¹³ The painter is perfectly groomed, with slick, combed-back hair, his face looks even as if covered with make-up. His facial

³¹² Following the so-called 'Dresdner Holbeinstreit', it was only in 1910 that the painting in Dresden was established as a copy by Bartholomäus Sarburgh, and the version in the Darmstädter Schloss as the original by Holbein. See Udo Kultermann, 'Der Dresdner Holbeinstreit', in Udo Kultermann, *Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte. Der Weg einer Wissenschaft* (Munich: Prestel, 1996), pp. 136–141.

³¹³ Salmony, p. 1049.

expression is controlled, almost inanimate, apart from the pulsating vein on his temple, indicating tense concentration rather than apathy. These features may have prompted Salmony to speak of a mask, but precisely the ‘deceit’ Salmony complained about could be seen as essential to be able to put pressure on the individuality of the painter, to represent him as a ‘type’ of artist, and to create the strong contrast between both figures. Again, Westheim’s characterisation of the Holbeinian artist type seems to fit perfectly:

When this man looks at another human face, he ceases to be alive himself: it becomes a thing: and without warmth, without visible ardour, without passion, he latches on to it, conquers it, pulls it towards him, until he owns it.³¹⁴

It is this tension between the artist and his model that is suggested in the picture as if to illustrate Westheim’s description. The contrasting or complementary abilities of the figures, their form and surface, require a still more detailed analysis, however, since we are, in fact, confronted with two different styles of realism: mechanistic, dehumanised ‘*Sachlichkeit*’ is pitted against a much more traditional naturalist and organic mimeticism – and it is clear what the painting suggests is the timely mode. Referring specifically to this painting, Wolfradt seems to describe the dynamic between the male and female figure when speaking of Dix’s ‘high tension realism [...] the irony the artist makes himself part of [...] Dix mercilessly objectifies himself in these portraits, as the partner of a life that has been radically disillusioned (through exceeding illusionism)’.³¹⁵ To put it indifferently: the double-portrait could be read as a dismissal of old-fashioned, illusionist naturalism and a demonstration of the skills required for it at the same time.

Dix was not the only artist who employed two different stylistic strategies for the representation of male and female figures at the time. Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius has

³¹⁴ Westheim, ‘Beckmann’, p. 99.

³¹⁵ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 113.

noted that George Grosz assigned the angle and the grid to male figures in his pictures, while women were given three-dimensional bodies that ‘cannot be contained in their plasticity by the structure of the grid’.³¹⁶ Dix used similar gendered strategies in some of his dadaist works, for example *Prager Strasse* of 1920 (figure 30), and in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* he developed this formal differentiation between male and female bodies further. Here *both* bodies are three-dimensional and contrasted through other formal strategies.

Underneath his clothing, the body of the painter remains strangely absent. The body of the model on the other hand is emerging out of the foreground of the painting with heightened plasticity, achieved not least through the modulation of her skin tone. She is more organic substance and form than inorganic surface. This quality is amplified by her presentation in close-up or *Nahsicht*, narrowing the focus on her physicality. As suggested earlier, there were others among Dix’s *neusachlich* painter colleagues who foregrounded plastic values, making this a key feature of a *neusachlich* aesthetic, but each artist was working on a different formula. Heinrich Maria Davringhausen, for example, had started his career as a sculptor, and so it came as no surprise for critic Leopold Zahn, writing in 1922, that Davringhausen’s ‘instinct for plasticity has translated into his paintings and lithographs’: ‘On the plane, he also emphasises the three-dimensionality of the body. His painted or drawn figures [...] have the rigidity of primitive sculptures.’³¹⁷

³¹⁶ Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, *Im Blickfeld: George Grosz. John der Frauenmörder*, ed. by Uwe M. Schneede (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1993), p. 40.

³¹⁷ Leopold Zahn, ‘H.M. Davringhausen’, in Curt Glaser, *Deutsche Graphik des Westens*, ed. by H. von Wedderkop (Weimar: Feuer, 1922), p. 69 (p. 69).

Self-Portrait with Nude Model is the perfect example of Dix's programme – as he explained it in retrospect in his 1965 interview – to put 'form like sculpture in the image – in the manner in which Mantegna presents it to the viewer', and to present the human body 'dominating the pictorial space as if chiselled (almost airless in space): the form as such'.³¹⁸ Paul Ferdinand Schmidt identified in some of Dix's work 'the greatest toughness in the plastic appearance', which the artist alternated, according to Schmidt, with 'more painterly' works.³¹⁹ Wolfradt in turn described Dix's paintings as 'dominated by a crude, strident Verism that isolates plastic values grotesquely and with metallic sharpness'.³²⁰ Importantly for this thesis, he identified a simultaneous focus on detailing and materiality – the other possibilities of the 'haptic': Dix 'imitates detail and material with terrifying precision [...] achieving an illusionism (nothing less than faithfully-naturalist) heightened into the fantastical, photographically smooth and inquisitorically severe, painful in its loud close-up [*laute Vordergründigkeit*]'.³²¹ Wolfradt combined three concepts relevant here: plasticity, haptic surface details, but this with a smooth facture that imitated the flatness of photographs. By not animating the surface of the canvas by attaching fragments of reality, as in his Dada collages, Dix demonstrated that within the parameters of a two-dimensional support, painting could bring to life both types of haptic qualities, making it superior to the mechanically produced image.

³¹⁸ Dix in Wetzel, p. 736.

³¹⁹ Paul F. Schmidt, 'Otto Dix', ed. by Galerie Nierendorf, *Ausstellung Otto Dix. Katalog mit Verzeichnis der gesamten Graphik bis 1925* (Berlin: Kunstarchiv, 1926), pp. 5-7 (p. 7).

³²⁰ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 115.

³²¹ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 115. He could also mean 'superficiality' with the term '*Vordergründigkeit*'. I favour 'close-up' because he also speaks of illusionism and naturalism.

Hildebrand's influential essay of 1893, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, included a brief reference to photography that is somewhat lost in the context in which it appears in the text, but it is one that was indicative of contemporary debates and those that followed. He compared the 'positivist' idea that sculpture only provided actual form, while painting only created the perception of form, to 'the inexperience of a newborn child' in terms of the level of development of its perceptive faculties.³²² For Hildebrand, 'in true Art the actual form has its reality only as an effect'; in both art forms, painting or sculpture, an artist needed to combine both visual impressions and kinetic ideas 'in a totality' to achieve a naturalist impression.³²³ However, according to Hildebrand, aesthetic positivism was based on the incorrect assumption that 'regards the sculptor's art as appealing exclusively to the tactual-kinetic sense [...]; the painter's art [...] as appealing entirely to the visual sense quite apart from the experience of form'.³²⁴ What is important here is that he suggested that the latter – the exclusive appeal to the visual sense – was a 'tendency [that] has been fostered through the discovery of photography'.³²⁵ Hildebrand, therefore, hinted at his concern about the effect of photography on perception, more specifically on the development of human spatial and kinetic, or haptic, perceptive faculties. Although the effect of photography served him only as an analogy, his statement suggests that he believed that photography had led to a withering of human spatial imagination. For Hildebrand, paintings produced with the exclusive aim to appeal to our visual sense, images 'where suggestions of spatial ideas are pitifully scarce', were 'dumb', or mute, 'because the capacity of appealing to our

³²² Adolf von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. by Max F. Meyer and Robert M. Ogden (New York: Stechert, 1907), p. 44. I am using this translation, because in the 1994 translation in *Empathy, Form, and Space. Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873 – 1893*, trans. by Harry F. Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikononou (Santa Monica, CA: Getty, 1994), the clarity and sense of the original German text in this section is lost. In this version, the translation of 'stumm' as 'mute' (p. 237), instead of 'dumb', is better though.

³²³ von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form*, p. 45.

³²⁴ von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form*, p. 44.

³²⁵ von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form*, p. 44.

idea of form has been artificially expelled from them'.³²⁶ They could not correspond to our highly developed level of cognition and expectation of form. The 'perception of spatial attributes' of the 'world of vision' was one of the abilities he considered to be 'one of the most important facts in our conception of reality of things'.³²⁷ Since Hildebrand had compared such paintings to photography, this applied by extension to photographs, too. Instead, he said, both a painter's and a sculptor's 'activity consists, then, in further developing such of his faculties as provide him with spatial perception, namely his faculties of sight and touch' since both of these senses 'are united in the eye'.³²⁸

It is my suggestion that, irrespective of whether he had read Hildebrand, an acute sense of this lack motivated Dix to identify areas where painting could still demonstrate capacities that were superior to photography.³²⁹ In *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* Dix eliminates spatial depth from the background, only to heighten the expansion of both bodies into a perceived three-dimensional space at a time when the ability of photographs to convey the depth of objects and space more generally was seen as still severely limited.

This was problematic for architectural photography in particular. In a 1929 article on 'Architectural Photography', published in *Die Form* in 1929, Wilhelm Lotz warned architectural photographers that the issue was not the photograph itself, but the way photographic positives were produced, or the transfer. Lotz recommended autotypes as

³²⁶ von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form*, p. 44.

³²⁷ von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form*, p. 17.

³²⁸ von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form*, p. 14.

³²⁹ It is likely that Dix, like many of his artist peers, was an avid reader of the latest books on contemporary art and art theory, as the library in his house in Hemmenhofen (now a museum) can attest.

the best option for this reason, since ‘in nearly all other printing processes, space and depth disappear’.³³⁰ Dix’s painting homes in on exactly these deficiencies. This also means that the issues Hildebrand had started to think about, the concepts he had developed and the debate he had initiated, seemed as influential and as relevant as they had been when he published his text.

The Painter’s Attire. Plasticity and Texture

The function of *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* does not exhaust itself in the creation of temporal, behavioural and stylistic dialectics between the two figures. Even within the painter’s body itself, we find contrasts and inconsistencies significant for the discussion of haptic visual qualities. Wolfradt saw Dix’s work as representative of a wider trend in the visual culture of the time and suggested that it ‘corresponds, furthermore, to the general preference for dissonances and contrasts’.³³¹ Although Wolfradt did not specify what these contrasting elements were, it is clear that Dix had found a way of providing a new form of visual indeterminacy to engage his audience. Kinkel has defined the ‘meaningful paradox of the antithetical’ as a being key to understanding Dix’s whole oeuvre, although he referred here to antithetical signifiers in terms of content (such as life and death, beauty and ugliness).³³² Instead, in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* Dix delivers two different versions of realism and this set the portrait apart from the work he developed from 1924 onwards.

³³⁰ Wilhelm Lotz, ‘Architekturfotos’, *Die Form*, 4.3 (1929), 69-70. See also the translation by Noam M. Elcott in *Grey Room*, 70 (Winter 2018), 102-104.

³³¹ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 114.

³³² Kinkel, *Die Toten*, p. 11.

The Shirt

The painter in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* is well-dressed in a modish sort of way. He stands upright, broad shouldered, with a rigid posture that emphasises motionlessness, while his light blue shirt – made of soft but heavy fabric – falls in excessive folds with deep arches that give an effect of dramatic drapery and fluidity. These curvilinear, although in some areas strangely angular, folds of the shirt and the body underneath do not add up, however, and the viewer is forced to question the fidelity of the representation. On the right side of the painter body, the drapes of the fabric of the shirt are more unlikely and almost crunched up in a manner one could describe as ‘gothic’. It is as an obvious reference to the formal vocabulary of late gothic and early Renaissance Northern European painting. In fact, they look strangely similar to the creases in the red cloak worn by the Virgin Mary in the famous *Marienaltar* (1437) by Jan van Eyck in Dresden (figure 31), where Dix had studied and still regularly spent time.

Birgit Schwarz has written that Dix’s engagement with the Old Masters ‘developed under the influence of contemporary art history’.³³³ The painter admired and was in contact with the art historian Wilhelm Worringer, whose book *Abstraction and Empathy*, first published in German in 1908, was one of the most influential texts among artists of Dix’s generation. Worringer had developed a theory of abstraction as a style that followed mechanical laws, a style he described as ‘inorganic’. It privileged geometric forms and regularity and was the opposite of organic, realist illusionism.

According to the criteria Worringer set out for figurative art, Egyptian and Gothic art

³³³ Birgit Schwarz, “‘Otto Hans Baldung Grien‘ malt die Grosstadt. Zur Rezeption altdeutscher Malerei’, in *Otto Dix. Zum 100. Geburtstag 1891-1991*, ed. by Wulf Herzogenrath and Johann-Karl Schmidt (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1991), pp. 229-238 (p. 236). Schwarz further writes: ‘Many contemporary art historians saw their research, which was based in turn on their experiences of contemporary art, as a reaction to the scientific positivism of the nineteenth century. Dix was in touch with followers, even the leading figures of this direction [in art history], such as Wilhelm Worringer and Curt Glaser’ (p. 236).

were connected as the beginning and end points of a historical, formal typology of art movements that followed the laws of what he defined as ‘abstraction’. In his only published statement from the 1920s, Dix, too, drew parallels between contemporary painting, the German late-gothic masters, and ancient Egyptian art, and this happened likely under the influence of Worringer. In the first part of Dix’s statement, made in response to a survey about whether there could still be ‘new forms of expression in art’ for the *Berliner Nachtausgabe* in 1927, Dix stated that, for him, the only area for innovation in painting ‘lies in the extension of its subject area, an enhancement of those forms of expression already present in essence in the Old Masters’.³³⁴ There is, however, another part to his response that is particularly relevant here, but missing in most reprints of his statement.³³⁵ Dix also questioned whether anything believed by an artist to be new was actually so and argued: ‘As proof may serve the paintings recently discovered during the excavations of mummies in Egypt which revealed a startling similarity with what is commonly described as a new form of expression in painting.’³³⁶ Dix must have been thinking of the discovery of the wall paintings in the tomb of Tutankhamun that had caused a great furore in 1922 and inspired a new trend in contemporary art, architecture, design and fashion. Within Worringer’s parameters, Gothic and Egyptian art had common features, and by extension they applied to Dix’s old masterly visual vocabulary, too. The lack of space, of *Zwischenraum*, between both of the figures in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* is part of this artistic programme, since it resonated with Riegl’s observations about Egyptian art where ‘space relations are

³³⁴ Otto Dix, ‘Objekt gestaltet Form’, p. 10..

³³⁵ For example in Uwe M. Schneede, *Die Zwanziger Jahre, Manifeste Dokumente deutscher Künstler* (Cologne: Dumont, 1979). See also Charles T. Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory, 1900-1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

³³⁶ Dix, ‘Objekt gestaltet Form’, in, p. 10.

avoided'.³³⁷ This aligns the portrait with Dix's contention that contemporary artists were concerned with similar aesthetic questions as the ancient Egyptians.³³⁸

Although the painter's face lacks expressiveness, it is still characterised by a tense energy and is 'alive' in that sense. For the body, however, Dix resurrected a lifeless version that matched Worringer's description of gothic sculptures with a 'realistic construction of the head [that] stood in abrupt contrast next to the entirely abstract and inorganic attitude of the rest'.³³⁹ Worringer identified 'Zwitterbildung', formal hybridisation in the art of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance in Northern Europe as a recurring motif that, he argued, was specifically designed to heighten emotional impact.³⁴⁰ Worringer's concept of the 'contradictory tendencies'³⁴¹ within an artwork or object would have appealed to Dix, who saw life as fundamentally determined by dualist forces, and whose paintings often dealt with subject matter such as eros and death, beauty and ugliness. The clothing worn on top of the inorganic body of the painter in Dix's portrait may have been animated, but it featured what Worringer described as the inorganic drapery typical of romanesque and gothic sculptures which 'suppressed all corporeality'.³⁴² Worringer described the formal characterisation of these artworks as 'disharmonious' since one could find in one object 'abstraction on the one hand and extreme expressiveness [*stärkster Ausdruck*] on the other' to achieve the

³³⁷ Alois Riegl, *The Late Roman Art Industry*, trans. by Rolf Winkes (Rome: Bretschneider, 1985), p. 27.

³³⁸ For an analysis of how the discussion of space and volume in Egyptian bas-relief sculpture in the work of Riegl, Worringer, Hildebrand, and Benjamin relates to the great efforts undertaken in some early twentieth century films to achieve an impression of volume on the screen when creating the historic Egyptian settings that were fashionable at the time, see Antonia Lant, 'Haptical Cinema', *October*, 74 (1995), 45-73.

³³⁹ Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung. Ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie*, 11th edn (Munich: Piper, 1921), p. 155.

³⁴⁰ Worringer, p. 154.

³⁴¹ Worringer, p. 155.

³⁴² Worringer, p. 155.

‘incredible pathos that comes with the animation of the inorganic’.³⁴³ Taking this formal analysis of Dix’s self-portrait one step further, there is also a clash between the dramatically animated shirt and the cool composure, or *Sachlichkeit*, of the male figure’s posture and facial expression, his smooth hair, and in particular the modernist simplicity and flatness of his fashionably slim and striped knitted tie. In a way, the modernism of the tie is keeping in check, or holding down, the gothic folds in the centre of the shirt.

The formal incoherence in the representation of the painter’s clothing, between the contemporary tie and the ‘gothic cloth’ of the shirt, inserts an element of non-simultaneity in addition to the anachronism of female figure in the picture, as discussed earlier. On the other hand, one could argue with Worringer that the gothic linearism of the shirt, in fact, shares the same drive towards abstraction as the modernist tie (and the flat trousers), which creates another layer of dialogue between different temporal and formal modes, between historical and contemporary figurative abstraction. The painting seems to give us a lesson in Worringer’s two versions of realism that demanded two different kinds of receptive engagement within one picture: empathetic, organic corporeality is assigned to the figure of the female model, while the painter is subjected to a re-modelling of Worringer’s concept of abstraction that had culminated in the gothic era. Two different aesthetic forms and modes of reception, assigned by Worringer to two different periods in art history, are presented in a single artwork and employed to reconfigure corporeal materiality.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Worringer, p. 142. Worringer cited puppets as an example due to their mechanical-inorganic mimesis of the organic.

³⁴⁴ As the discussion so far should have made clear, this goes beyond what Sabine Eckmann has recently described as the ‘disenchanted experiential world’ of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, filled with ‘artificial things, and detached people’, evidenced by ‘a focus on surface appearance as

In another interview, published in 1955 with the title ‘Thoughts on Portrait Painting’, Otto Dix specifically referred to the folds of a garment as a feature worthy of particular attention since the ‘soul’ of a portrayed person could be expressed in the ‘garment folds (*Gewandfalten*), the posture, the hands, his ears [...] the latter more than eyes and mouth’.³⁴⁵ What is more, while photography could only record a specific moment in time, it could not create a ‘specific and individual form’, Dix argued.³⁴⁶ In addition to clothing and posture, colour was a ‘tool to express the individual’: ‘every person has a very specific colour that has an effect on the whole picture’.³⁴⁷ Dix’s revealing statement about the appearance of garments could give a particular feature in many of his male portraits a special significance. He regularly painted the arms of jackets, coats and shirts in an excessively creased manner. While sleeves of suit jackets do crease in reality, in Dix’s male portraits the heightened relief-plasticity through folds along the arms creates a strong contrast to the flatness of the jacket around the torso. His 1925 portrait *The Photographer Hugo Erfurth with a Lens* (figure 32) could serve as an example, as could the artist’s *Self-Portrait on the Easel* and the portrait of art dealer Alfred Flechtheim, both completed 1926. The particular design of the creases in the painter’s shirt in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* remains, however, unique to this painting. There is another point that needs to be made here: the creation of the effect of strong relief plasticity through exaggerated folds in garments is a feature in portraits by some other *neusachlich* painters, too. It is, for example, particularly articulated in Herbert Ploberger’s *Self-Portrait with Ophthalmological Models* (1928-1930), in which the tight creases along the arm of the white lab coat worn by the male figure seem to

well as “thingness“, along with overly sharp, often microscopic simulations’ - observations that echo the critical debate in the 1920s. Eckmann, p. 27.

³⁴⁵ Otto Dix, ‘Gedanken zum Porträtmalen’, *Internationale Bodensee-Zeitschrift fuer Literatur, Bildende Kunst und Wissenschaft*, Amriswil (March 1955), 59-60; repr. in Schmidt, p. 224.

³⁴⁶ Dix, in Schmidt, p. 224.

³⁴⁷ Dix, in Schmidt, p. 224.

mirror the folds in the iris of the reproduction of a human eye in the foreground (figure 33). But as suggested earlier, a key difference between Dix's work and that of others was that he was simultaneously very interested in creating the impression of strong materiality and surface texture.

The Trousers

What contemporary commentators pointed out, however, was not the design of the shirt, but the impressive realism of the painter's tweed trousers in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model*. A review of Dix's 1926 exhibition at Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin by Robert Breuer speaks of a 'striking intensity' of the haptic visual effects.³⁴⁸ Writing in *Die Weltbühne*, Breuer found the artist's painterly skills in this area both impressive and potentially problematic: 'Dix shows the structure of the wood and the textiles, the wolly-ness and bobbly-ness of the fabric for male dress [...] This is where virtuosity lurks.'³⁴⁹ Mere mimeticism had become unpalatable, and this made Dix's strategy of altering or heightening reality, or inserting formal incongruence, crucial. Willi Wolfradt evidently approved when he found Dix's work to be 'outrageous in the sureness of the characterisation of the material' (without naming a specific picture), referring here to Dix's treatment of colour in the rendering of skin, make-up and cloth.³⁵⁰

Alfred Salmony was also receptive to the important role that the rendering of clothing and materiality played in Dix's painting, and he can give us a sense of what a contemporary audience might have found most interesting. Salmony highlighted in

³⁴⁸ Breuer, 'Dix und Barlach', p. 264.

³⁴⁹ Breuer, p. 264.

³⁵⁰ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 116.

particular the surplus of textural information, its haptic-optical effect, when admiring that ‘the home-spun suit can almost be touched [*befühlt*]’.³⁵¹ While texture is key to the design of the fabric of the trousers, they are at the same time oddly flat and characterised by lack of mobility. Dix again creates a silhouette that – like the overly animated pictorial stylisation of the shirt – defies the rules of real material and of tailoring techniques. The strangely wide, almost feminine hips, however, relate to an actual fashion trend at the time: the painter in the portrait could be wearing what a commentator described in a report on the latest menswear trends from London, published in the short-lived German edition of *Vogue*, as ‘peg-top trousers, which are wide and puffed up around the hips’.³⁵² Dix pits the two types of haptic effects introduced at the beginning of this chapter against each other. The shirt is foregrounding the haptic quality of plastic form, the trousers appeal to our sense of touch through the suggestion of surface texture.

Salmony deliberately used the English term ‘home-spun’ instead of ‘*handgewebt*’ for the fabric of the trousers to describe the impression of an animated surface. Further research into the term ‘home-spun’ reveals that it was a term used in the 1920s for fabrics with a very rough texture, possibly cloth that was not quite the same as tweed. Although the light coloured dots on the trousers are what viewers could easily discern, Dix framed each dot with a fine rhombus pattern. One might assume that the artist

³⁵¹ Salmony, p. 1049.

³⁵² The writer further advised readers in 1928 that the style had now gone out of fashion. No author, ‘Einige Winke für den Herrn. Bericht unseres Londoner Korrespondenten über die neuen Frühjahrsmoden’, *Vogue Germany*, 1.1 (1928), p. 49. Anne Söll has argued that in paintings such as *An die Schönheit*, which shows Dix fashionably dressed and with make-up, ‘fashion and cosmetics are instrumentalised for the presentation of a man who shows that he is in control of modernity and not the other way around’. Anne Söll, “‘An die Schönheit’ – Selbst, Männlichkeit und Moderne in Otto Dix Selbstbildnis von 1922’, in *Der schöne Körper. Mode und Kosmetik in Kunst und Gesellschaft*, ed. by Annette Geiger (Köln: Böhlau, 2008), 149-166 (p. 160).

invented this pattern due to the way in which its strict geometry does not seem to fit with the rough surface texture of the cloth. However, this textile design could be what *Das Magazin* called in April 1925 ‘the new birds-eye cloth, a hand-woven English home-spun with a lively pattern’.³⁵³ The photograph of a female model wearing an outfit made of the bird-eye fabric in the April 1925 edition of *Das Magazin* (figure 34) gives us only a vague sense of the material and design due to the quality of the image, but it is safe to say that the resemblance to an actual bird’s eye would have been minimal. Although used for womenswear in the magazine, which was – as readers were advised – becoming ‘masculinised’, a similar fabric could also have been used for men’s clothing. Indeed, Dix seems to be wearing a jacket made out of this type of cloth in a photograph (figure 35) The magazine described it further as the ‘a hand-woven fabric with a diamond pattern, featuring the bright eye of a bird’.³⁵⁴ Interested in fashion trends, a reader of fashion magazines and fan of tailor-made suits, Dix would likely have been aware of such a new, fashionable fabric, which means its role in the picture can be considered in temporal terms, too. It functioned as another sign that placed the painter as an early fashion adopter into the realm of the now.³⁵⁵

An article in *Elegante Welt*, published in 1927, confirms that this textile design was mainly used in menswear (figure 36). Although he was not a fan himself, the author Walter Becker provides us with evidence that the fashion for the birds-eye fabric was quite widespread in the first half of the 1920s, but Becker welcomed the recent, gradual return to simpler and more traditional woven patterns: ‘One has apparently seen too much of the attention-seeking and eccentric patterns [...] because, unfortunately, there

³⁵³ Anonymous, ‘Das Complet’, *Das Magazin*, 1.8 (1924/25), p. 85.

³⁵⁴ ‘Das Complet’, p. 86.

³⁵⁵ Recently Anne Söll has addressed fashionability in the style and dress of male bodies in the portrait paintings of Dix, Christian Schad and Anton Räderscheidt as a way of appearing in control of modernity and the issue of individuality vs type in the context of a crisis of masculinity. Anne Söll, *Der Neue Mann?: Männerporträts von Otto Dix, Christian Schad und Anton Räderscheidt* (Paderborn: Fink, 2016).

is a tendency to exaggerate with fabrics in particular.’³⁵⁶ In particular ‘sports fabrics’, or so-called *Sportstoffe*, offended him:

I am referring here to the well-known “Birds-eye” or “*Vogelaugen* pattern”, which one comes across constantly in Knickerbockers and *horrible dictum* even in day-time suits [*Straßenanzügen*]. This aberration is the result of the emulation of English sports fabrics, which have been completely misunderstood and are therefore evidently especially garish and indiscreet.³⁵⁷

Perhaps it was Dix’s trousers in *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* that prompted Salmony’s complaint, quoted earlier, that Dix had put on a ‘sporty’ look. In his fashion report, Becker described a number of the fabrics illustrated alongside his text and praised them as an improvement on the birds-eye material: ‘As you can see, the horrible, loud “birds-eye”-fabrics are completely missing here [...] I always thought that gentlemen in such suits looked impossible and completely unmanly. For me these monsters always had something of masklike costumes’.³⁵⁸ Of course, exactly this kind of attitude might have appealed to artists. It helped to construct a particular persona that suggested confidence and unconventionality. Indeed, a cursory look at photographs of leading male figures in the creative world of the time, from painters to writers and architects, suggests their desire to stand out with bold fabric choices for suits and coats: the fabric (especially for winter clothing) was often patterned and strongly textured; some wore knitted jumpers with interesting designs; ties and bow ties regularly featured abstract, artistic patterns.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ Walter M.F. Becker, ‘Herrenstoffe, die wir empfehlen!’, *Elegante Welt*, 16.17 (1927), 34-35 (p. 34).

³⁵⁷ Becker, p. 34.

³⁵⁸ Becker, p. 35.

³⁵⁹ Examples of this can be found in some of the portraits taken by photographers Hugo Erfurth and August Sander. Karl Nierendorf wears such a tie in Dix’s 1923 portrait.

As a painter and lover of fashion Dix would have carefully considered what kind of textile design would be best suited to his aims. In 1923, the year in which *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* was painted, he visited a tailor's studio in Dresden to order a new suit, as a letter to Martha attests:

Today I was [...] at the tailors and [I] have left money everywhere. The suit will be 'special, "*schnaffte*" [Berlin slang for "grand"] so to speak, the [Dix inserted a drawing of the chest area of a suit here] will be beautiful, with padding and the shoulders also broader. [...] I am looking forward to go dancing with you in Düsseldorf, Mutzlein in the red Itta, Jimlein in a Jimmy-style suit.³⁶⁰

One of Dix's notebooks, probably from 1925, contained a page headed 'Cloth Imitations' that featured rough drawings of six different types of woven cloth (Fig. x).³⁶¹ In *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* the lack of three-dimensional definition in the trousers focuses the viewer's attention more strongly on its texture which contrasts with the smooth fabric of the shirt. As Strobl has written, on occasion Dix even used actual pieces of fabric, pressed into the paint, as tools to create a subtle surface texture, for example for the suit worn by Alfred Flechtheim in Dix's portrait of 1926.³⁶²

To summarise, the qualities Dix has pitted against each other are: exaggerated plasticity combined with lack of fabric texture (the shirt) vs lack of plasticity combined with strong surface texture (trousers and tie). These challenges to the rules of naturalist representation can be taken as a sign that the garments were not just there in their function as mere clothing, but employed to make a statement. Dix created effects of

³⁶⁰ He is referring to her red hat. Dix, Letter to Martha, 1923, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 69.

³⁶¹ 'Stoffimitationen', in Ulrike Lorenz and Otto-Dix-Stiftung, *Otto Dix. Das Werkverzeichnis der Zeichnungen und Pastelle* (Weimar: VDG, 2003), p. 1300.

³⁶² Strobl argues that this mimetic strategy is employed in the Flechtheim portrait as a deliberate contrast to the abstract elements and cubist artworks represented in the picture. Strobl, p. 231.

extraneity, of superfluous detail and heightened naturalism, which the painting thereby proposed as weapons that could still distinguish painting from the mechanical media.

Considering more generally the radical change the new fashion styles of the 1920s had introduced, for women in particular, it is not unreasonable to assume that this encouraged a heightened interest in and awareness of the behaviour of dress in space among broader audiences, adding another layer to the inter-medial discourse that Dix's paintings were part of. There was, for example, the greater exposure of skin (whether legs, arms or back) and the simplified, geometric silhouettes and constructions of the new fashionable dresses alongside abstract patterns for surface decorations. An article in the fashion magazine *Elegante Welt*, published in March 1923 under the title 'Old wood sculptures are modern again' (figure 37), provides an example of the interest in the historical shift that had occurred in the design and silhouette of women's clothing.³⁶³ The photographs published alongside this article feature women in sleek, modern dresses standing next to medieval wood sculptures of female saints. Rather than being in stylistic and temporal accord, the aim of the photographs was, as the article's writer made clear, to highlight the 'marked, appealing contrast between the silhouette of an old, South-German sculpture of a saint and the figure of a woman dressed according to the latest fashion'.³⁶⁴ Here, the sculptures were not reduced to examples of historic dress styles and the living models were not merely marketing the latest fashion: contemporary

³⁶³ As I have suggested in the first chapter of this thesis, sculptures of the fifteenth and sixteenth century were fashionable collector's items in the 1920s.

³⁶⁴ Peka, 'Alte Holzskulpturen sind wieder modern', *Elegante Welt*, 12.7 (1923), 13-14 (p. 14). The photographs were taken in the antiques dealership 'Antiquitäten-Haas', run by Eduard Haas.

dresses were elevated to the status of objects of study that could illustrate historic difference in silhouette and construction, the manipulation and behaviour of fabric in space.

One of the fashion models is wearing a simple dress with contrasting stripes in the contemporary look, a style of dress that the German edition *Vogue* described in 1928 as ‘built with a ruler and dividers, based on the laws of statics and geometry’.³⁶⁵ In the photograph in *Elegante Welt*, the geometrical effect of the stripes is picked up by the metal casement window in the background but contrasts with the animated swirls of the dress worn by the figures depicted in the historic wood sculptures. As if to further draw attention to modernist simplicity and geometry, the model is holding a garment and rests her hand on the sculpture’s pedestal in such a way that the cloth is compressed into folds, mirroring those of the dress worn by the sculpted figure. In her other hand, the model is holding a twisted witch hazel branch. Such visual arrangements, apart from making fashion photography more interesting, encouraged a differentiated seeing and thinking in aesthetic contrasts and correspondences rather than merely presenting readers with a vision of a world based on analogous visual principles. The staging of two different types of garment styles in one picture incidentally also brings together Worringer’s abstract, but restless Gothic line with modernism’s version of abstraction. For a viewer with knowledge of Worringer’s work, or an advanced level of art historical education and perceptive faculties, this kind of set up could be interesting not in terms of fashion history specifically, but more generally in terms of innovation and circularity in aesthetic forms over time.

³⁶⁵ ‘Wie Vogue die Mode sieht’, *Vogue*, German edition, 1 (12 September 1928), p. 7 (p. 7).

To conclude, Dix's *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* encouraged a haptic-optical way of seeing. It substantiates Leopold Zahn's 1922 statement that art had become 'haptic again' in terms of plasticity, but adds surface texture in terms of representation (rather than facture) to the equation. *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* shows the highly skilled technician of paint who can mobilise plastic and textural effects not just better than the technological image, but also better than most of his painterly colleagues. This was not just meant as a demonstration of skill, but used to surprise viewer with a painting's ability to insist on the materiality of the world and to destabilise viewer's expectations of what a portrait could do.

Portrait Mrs Martha Dix (1923)

1923 was a decisive year in this respect. Dix also created the large and striking portrait of his wife *Porträt Frau Martha Dix* (figure 5). At first glance the painting appears to have little to offer for analysis because it seems to lack complexity with its undefined environment without any narrative clues. We immediately recognise its subject and the main aim appears to have been to impress his wife with a picture for private consumption. It celebrates Martha's good looks and may just show Dix as a sympathetic recorder of her fashionable appearance. Featuring a fur coat and leather gloves as status symbols, the portrait is a homage to Martha as the 'most beautiful woman' of an era in the tradition of Botticelli's *Bildnis einer jungen Frau Simonetta Vespucci*, on display in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, a painting Dix may even have seen together with Martha on one of their visits to the city.³⁶⁶ It also shares some similarities with other Old

³⁶⁶ Otto Griebel writes that during their time as students at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Dresden, there was 'a turn towards the masters of the early Italian Renaissance, especially Botticelli'. Griebel, p. 37.

Masters, such as portraits by Bartel Bruyn the Elder, examples of which Dix could have seen in Cologne while he was living in Düsseldorf (figure 38).³⁶⁷ Martha is not carrying out any particular activity in her portrait, although both her positioning and gesture should make us take note, since there is something contrived and unusual about them.

The extraordinarily real presence of the materials – the fur of the jacket or coat, the leather of the gloves, the skin and fingernails of the un-gloved hand – is contrasted with the lack of naturalism in Martha’s face, which is covered in thick make-up and powder. The modern, emancipated woman of the 1920s was wearing, even applying, powder and lipstick in public, but the amount and starkness of the make-up in this painting go beyond the mainstream beauty ideal of the time: it is the make-up worn by women styling themselves as ‘vamps’ in the years of the immediate post-war and inflation years, such as Anita Berber. Artificiality rather than natural beauty is celebrated here, just like in the 1922 *Double-Portrait* of Dix and his wife as dancers, but the picture is about more than merely representing a particular type of fashionable, edgy femininity.

Representing make-up and powdered skin, magnified and in close-up, creates a dichotomy at the heart of this portrait: we seem to be invited to get close to the portrayed person, but she remains unreachable under layers of facial paint. This is perhaps what Wolfradt was thinking of when describing ‘the ambiguity of artificial makeup’ as a recurring feature in Dix’s portraits of women.³⁶⁸ The enigmatic quality of the powdered face and skin covered in different materials (with powder acting like yet another type of fabric in the image) and the meditation on the confluence of make-up

³⁶⁷ For example, Bartholomäus Bruyn d.Ä. (Wesel [?] 1493 – 1555 Köln), *Bildnis einer jüngeren Frau mit Nelke*, around 1537-1539, oil on wood, 37 x 30 cm, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne.

³⁶⁸ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 116.

and paint are just the starting points for what has captured the artist's imagination here. In *Portrait Mrs Martha Dix*, a woman is presented to us as a fascinating figure on the edge between life and inanimate mannequin.

As Ludwig Reve claimed humorously in an article about women and make-up, published in 1924 in *Die Dame*, the role of make-up in a woman's life had drastically changed: 'The most important right that women still have to fight for today is: the right to create her own face.'³⁶⁹ In fact, this face could change depending on outfit, weather, occasion, location, as Reve explained: 'Today the woman creates the teint she fancies accordingly; she would never wear the same teint in sunlight as in electrical lighting.'³⁷⁰ Make-up, he said, was not just used to change the colour of one's face, but also its shape to make it appear longer or wider. In order to achieve the perfect outcome, Reve even jokingly suggested that women with the necessary financial means should 'keep a modern painter at hand for the production of an artistically faultless face at all times', providing further evidence of the celebration of the fabricated nature of beauty in the first half of the 1920s.³⁷¹

The powder deposited on Martha's face, the dark red lipstick reveal something we would not ordinarily see in such excruciating detail: it was a look worn (or assumed to be worn) by film actresses *before the camera*,³⁷² or of the fashionable vamp dragged

³⁶⁹ Ludwig Reve, 'Das wichtigste Frauenrecht', *Die Dame*, 51.1 (1924), 4 and 38 (p. 4).

³⁷⁰ Reve, p. 28.

³⁷¹ Reve, p. 28. For a discussion of the representation of skin in painting see also Mechthild Fend, *Fleshing Out Surfaces. Skin in French Art and Medicine, 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017) and Tamar Garb, 'Powder and Paint: Framing the Feminine in Georges Seurat's Young Woman Powdering Herself', in Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity. Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siècle French Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 115–143.

³⁷² Anne Söll briefly refers to Martha's portrait, highlighting that the heavy make-up of the face is emphasized by the more natural skin of Martha's hand and lightly powdered shoulders, and she has also suggested that Martha's look is 'akin to that of a film diva' and that her

into broad daylight, rather than softened by the flattering ambience lighting of a night club that it was intended for. While a screen actor has no direct connection to a corporeally present audience because he or she is only acting in front of the film camera and for the people directly involved in making the film (an important factor in Walter Benjamin's discussion of the screen actor in his *Artwork* essay), Martha, styled as an 'actress', is not present either: she is recomposed in another medium, on canvas. But surprisingly, rather than seeming more real in the painting that shows what her made-up face really looked like, she seems more alien to us than an actor on screen. The drama of her make-up is played out in colour when it was designed for reproduction in black-and-white.

The portrait of Martha contradicts a statement made by Paul Westheim about Dix's portraits more generally in his review of Dix's retrospective at Neumann-Nierendorf, published in the *Kunstblatt* in 1926:

His portraits are, if I may use a filmic term, close-ups, taken at such close distance that it practically exposes the represented [person]. Not least because he does not allow them – as is usually the case in front of the film lights – to make themselves look pretty or important with make-up.³⁷³

Interesting for our purposes is that Westheim connected Dix's portraits to the technological medium of film. But contrary to his statement, the artist has presented his wife with make-up, allowing her – in Westheim's terms – to look 'pretty' and 'important'. Film used strong make-up and lighting to achieve a specific effect on the screen. Dix engaged with this process, but overcomes the limitations of film by

presentation in the painting is like 'a performance in front of an audience'. Änne Söll, *Der neue Mann? Männerportraits von Otto Dix, Christian Schad und Anton Räderscheidt, 1914-1930* (Paderborn: Fink, 2016), p. 84. A chapter in her the book is dedicated to the representation of skin and make-up as a gendered surface in painting.

³⁷³ Paul Westheim, 'Dix', *Das Kunstblatt*, 10 (1926), 142-146 (p. 144).

presenting Martha in colour. In portrait photographs of Martha and Otto Dix, for example those taken by Hugo Erfurth and August Sander (figure 6), Martha did not wear any discernible, or only very subtle, make-up; and is thus *playing a role* in Dix's painting. A natural complexion would have been more difficult to paint, but Dix does not opt for a demonstration of his consummate skill in this area.

Perhaps one could call what Dix shows us a kind of 'photographic unconscious', something that could not be articulated by image technology at the time, as opposed to Walter Benjamin's 'optical unconscious', i.e. the ability of a photograph to capture what cannot be perceived by the human eye.³⁷⁴ A colourless photograph would have softened and filtered Martha's look, flattened the powdered surface of her face, and made the haptic quality of the facial powder almost disappear. The painting instead revels in this. The lack of truth-value of mechanical reproductions is exposed. The painting shows us something that cinema audiences were, in fact, not fooled by either: 'It is a well-known fact that the figures in cinematic images look as if covered in flour', wrote Konrad Lange, professor for art history in Tübingen, mockingly in 1921.³⁷⁵ As Dix shows us, photography and film images were adding to the deception of make-up by making the inauthentic seem more natural than it would in reality. The technical skills of the painter are instrumentalised for a form of media critique. Dix's portrait of Martha engaged the productive tension between the object and its depiction in a different medium than the one it usually inhabits. While staging and simultaneously celebrating artificial femininity, the artwork challenged viewers to question the assumptions made about the supposed 'transparency' of technological images. It suggested that the filmic image

³⁷⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Brief History of Photography', in Walter Benjamin, *One-Way-Street and Other Writings*, trans. by J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 173-192 (p. 176).

³⁷⁵ Konrad Lange, 'Bewegungsphotographie und Kunst', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 15 (1921), 88-103 (p. 100).

concealed something through its highly controlled and ritualised way of representing its protagonists. In a dialectical move, the deficient black-and-white image is implied by, and contrasted with, the excess of information the painting.

But I do not believe that the portrait of Martha is trying to break the spell, that it is a critique of the way actresses are made up for the screen, but a celebration of it, as if to say: look at what you are missing by only seeing the 'actress' in black-and-white (or the vamp only at night)! The painting of Martha revealed and simultaneously celebrated the way film and photography had changed how people looked, how they had adapted to camera technology, by creating a different persona before stepping in front of the lens. Film and photography were not able to reveal this intervention. Dix's portrait mocks the technological media's claim for exactness, and at the same time revels in the excitement of synthetically produced female beauty.

Dix does not just present the subtle visual differences between the skin of the bare hand, the (lightly powdered?) white shoulder and the heavily made-up face, he also goes to great length to imitate the texture of fur and leather. Fur appears repeatedly in Dix's work, wrapped around many of his female subjects in line with contemporary fashion. Art critic and dealer Hildebrand Gurlitt was an admirer of Dix's skill in painting fabrics and praised his ability to render animal furs in particular: 'It would be hard to find anyone who can paint fur like he does. Here an incredible knowledge of the material expresses itself.'³⁷⁶ Such materials are chosen to maximise the interplay of textures in

³⁷⁶ Gurlitt, 'Otto Dix-Ausstellung', p. 270.

the portrait of Martha, positing painting again as the medium that can operate with more differentiated visual registers than film and photography.

Returning to the interplay of surface texture and plasticity in Dix's work, another feature of the painting acquires importance: the positioning of Martha's right hand, un-gloved, pointing and seemingly emerging out of the picture. Here we encounter Dix as an admirer of the work of Mantegna again, the master of three-dimensional illusionism, who could, as Dix said in his interview, present 'form like sculpture in the image'.³⁷⁷ Since Dix does not provide any spatial context in his portrait of Martha, and she almost fills out the whole canvas. The 'optical', as defined by Riegl, is suppressed by limiting the pictorial information to the body.

By painting dark fur in front of an almost entirely black background – a representational void out of which Martha's red hat, face, hands, and jacket emerge with different intensities – Dix seems to have made his task deliberately more difficult. The fuzzy borders of the fur contrast with the stark outlines of the hat and face. Exactly these features allow the comparison with the abilities of the technological media because black fur in front of a black background would scarcely be distinguishable in a black-and-white photograph or on film. Painting could rise to the challenge; there is a clear suggestion of the haptic qualities of the hairs of the fur. Martha's left hand is resting on the material, directing us to its tactile appeal and drawing attention to the sense of touch, while her other hand is pointing towards us, seemingly emerging out of the picture frame, inviting us to simultaneously experience the painting's ability to construct three-dimensional form.

³⁷⁷ Dix in Wetzel, p. 736.

Both T'ai Smith and Antje Krause-Wahl have contended that it was only in the late 1920s that photographers and some Bauhaus artists associated with the *Neues Sehen*, as well as fashion magazines, started to focus their efforts on how to convey the tactile qualities of material surfaces. Walter Peterhans should be mentioned as a pioneer here, with his carefully composed and lit arrangements of fabric pieces and other objects in close-up view, which he produced from around the mid-1920s. Importantly, Dix's engagement with the haptic qualities of cloth preceded photographers' heightened interest their medium's ability to capture materiality. While T'ai Smith has focused on photographers from the end of the 1920s into the early 1930s and their efforts to represent optically, through close-up shots, what would be felt when touching actual fabric swatches, Krause-Wahl focuses on photographs in fashion magazines that show fashion models touching the garments to direct the viewer's interest towards their tactile qualities.³⁷⁸ At the Bauhaus, teachers such as Johannes Itten and Moholy-Nagy had started to include basic haptic exercises in their teaching practice before 1925. This makes Dix's concerns very timely, and it seems rather unlikely that, around 1923, he had detailed knowledge of the Bauhaus curriculum.³⁷⁹

The developing interest in photography's ability to capture textures and materials in the late 1920s is also evidenced by two influential texts published in French and German respectively in 1928: *Foundations of Modern Art* by Amédée Ozenfant and *The New Vision* by László Moholy-Nagy, both of which included reproductions of

³⁷⁸ T'ai Smith, 'Limits of the Tactile and the Optical: Bauhaus Fabric in the Frame of Photography', *Grey Room*, 25 (2006), 6-31. Antje Krause-Wahl, 'Mit sensibler Hand. Textilien in der Modefotografie der 1930er Jahre', *Fotogeschichte*, 146 (2017), 15-24.

³⁷⁹ Klemens Gruber, 'Taktile Medien: Theorien aus der Vorgeschichte', *Maske und Kothurn*, 62.2-3 (2017), 207-234.

photomicrography, a form of photography already developed in the 1850s for scientific studies.³⁸⁰ Three years after these books were published, Walter Benjamin would define photography's ability to reveal 'details of structure, cellular tissue', as more 'native to the camera' than the capturing of landscapes and portraits in his 1931 essay 'Little History of Photography'.³⁸¹

Two portrait photographs included in a different, earlier publication by Moholy-Nagy, his book *Malerei – Fotografie – Film*, first published in 1925, can illustrate the difficulty photography faced in the attempt to visually produce sharp plasticity and intense haptic effects without careful planning.³⁸² One is a picture of an unnamed woman, taken by Lucia Moholy and described in the caption as an attempt to create an 'objective portrait' (figure 39), as a photograph supposedly taken as if the person was a 'thing', without 'the subjective intentionality' of the photographer.³⁸³ The woman in the picture wears a very light coloured blouse and coat that blend into each other at the bottom of the picture. Her raised arm seems on the same plane as the body rather than in front of it, illustrating the flattening effect of photography. Although the fuzziness of the fur collar is conveyed subtly on the left side of the picture, it practically disappears on the right due to over-exposure of the photographic print. The woman seems to wear no make-up and her face, tilted slightly downward, is in the shade rather than brightly lit, which would have sharpened her features. In the areas where her dark short hair is in the shade, it merges with the dark trees in the background. Facing her on the opposite page

³⁸⁰ See Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (London: Lane, 1968; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 304-312.

³⁸¹ Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 2, 1927-1934, ed. by Michael W. Jennings et al., trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others (Cambridge MA.: Belknap, 1999), pp. 507-530 (p. 512). This translation works better than that by Underwood in 'Brief History of Photography', p. 176.

³⁸² László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting – Photography – Film*, trans. by Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphries, 1969), pp. 96-97.

³⁸³ Moholy-Nagy, *Painting*, p. 96.

of the book is a publicity photograph of Hollywood film star Gloria Swanson (figure 39).³⁸⁴ What Dix could provide in his painting of Martha is achieved in the photograph of Swanson only through painstaking effort and planning. In fact, the picture of Swanson seems an oddity among the other images in Moholy-Nagy's book, but the caption explains the choice: it was chosen as an example of an 'American culture of portrait taking' and demonstrated the 'sophisticated effect of lighting, materials, factures, plasticity [*Rundungen*] and curves'.³⁸⁵ This, Moholy-Nagy's comment implied, prevented the photograph from being 'objective'. However, not just the intention of the photographer would have determined Swanson's look in the picture. Clothing designers, stylists and make-up artists were likely involved in its creation, and these professionals would know how their choices would translate into a photograph. Irrespective of the photographer's own intentions, on Moholy-Nagy's terms, the result could therefore never be 'objective'.

The staging of Swanson in the image creates the impression of distance between her face and torso. Together, her light skin, dark curly hair (it appears to be a wig), the dark lipstick and eyeliner, the star painted on her chin and the sparkling accessories produce an effect of strong visual contrasts. There is the lace of her hat and the feather on her right shoulder: everything has been carefully planned to create the greatest possible diversity of textural and three-dimensional effects. In contrast, the 'objective' portrait of a woman by Lucia Moholy appears homogenous, it lacks depth, volume and a differentiated tonal register. It could be argued that this also had a lot to do with the clothing (presumably chosen by the sitter), the posture and lack of make-up, and not just with Lucia Moholy's 'objective' aesthetic programme. What László Moholy-Nagy's

³⁸⁴ Moholy-Nagy, *Painting*, p. 97.

³⁸⁵ Moholy-Nagy, *Painting*, p. 97.

image captions imply is that it would not even be possible to take an ‘objective’ photograph of Swanson because of the careful preparations that had preceded the taking of her photograph.

In Dix’s portrait of Martha, painting’s superior capabilities are demonstrated not just by the black fur on black background, but also by the four distinct whitish areas: the bare hand, the gloved hand, the suggestively emphasised shoulder and the powdered face with pale rouge on the cheeks. The differences between them would hardly be discernible in a photograph or on film.

For Alfred Neumeyer, the core of *Neue Sachlichkeit*’s aesthetic was the ‘rehabilitation of an object as a plastic and spatial organism’.³⁸⁶ But Dix’s work reasserts the supremacy of painting in achieving a wider range of visual effects. He was, however, not the only *neusachlich* painter interested in materials and surfaces. This is highlighted by a 1923 article by art critic Hans Curjel, who not just pointed out a ‘clear tangibility of the figures’ in the work of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painter Georg Scholz, but also a ‘heightened rendering of material (skin colour next to the colour of iron or stone etc.)’.³⁸⁷ This kind of heterogeneity was a key feature of Dix’s works, but with a much clearer emphasis on the haptic surface qualities of the represented materials.

Adolf Behne provided the perhaps earliest commentary on the relationship between Dix’s work and photography in November 1921 in a little-known newspaper article. In ‘Clear Distinction: Painting and Photography – Matisse – Kokoschka – Otto Dix’, Behne called for more *Sachlichkeit* in photography, making the case that a different

³⁸⁶ Neumeyer, p. 69.

³⁸⁷ Hans Curjel, ‘Zur Entwicklung des Malers Georg Scholz’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 257 - 261 (p. 261).

kind of ‘fantasy’ was required by photographers as opposed to painters.³⁸⁸ Referring to Dix’s portraits he contended: ‘Nobody can confuse the unsettlingly truthful likeness with actual photographs.’³⁸⁹ For Behne, Dix’s paintings were ‘cultural documents of the first order’ with different aims than photography.³⁹⁰ Even though he acknowledged that Dix’s pictures offered ‘shocking truths’, he took note of the formal strategies with which the artist achieved a ‘surprising, enthralling immediacy of almost medieval force’.³⁹¹ Dix could employ his painterly means in such a way that it ‘makes us believe we see the things themselves, not their painterly description, in front of us’.³⁹² His artworks were not aiming to imitate photography’s version of visual mimeticism they were comparable to photographs only in terms of ‘the forcefulness of their impact, but they operate with their own pictorial, constructive means’.³⁹³ Indeed, this thesis contends that to identify strategies that a naturalist form of painting could still claim exclusively for itself was perhaps the most consistent strand of Dix’s artistic programme in the first half of the 1920s.

This programme can also help to explain a painting that has been described as ‘one of Dix’s compositions that is most difficult to understand’.³⁹⁴ *Still Life in the Studio* (figure 40) completed in 1924, suggests that Dix’s agenda of ‘material Verism’ continued into 1924, although the painting may already have been conceived in the previous year. It shows an empty painter’s easel in the foreground and, sitting in the corner of the room behind it, a naked, living female model in a contrived posed and with frozen facial

³⁸⁸ Adolf Behne, ‘Reinliche Scheidung. Gemälde und Photographie – Matisse – Kokoschka – Otto Dix’, *Freiheit*, 4.529 (11 November 1921), n.p.. [DKA]

³⁸⁹ ‘*pfusche mit seinen Porträts dem Photographen ins Handwerk*’, Behne, n.p..

³⁹⁰ Behne, n.p..

³⁹¹ Behne, n.p.

³⁹² Behne, n.p.

³⁹³ Behne, n.p.

³⁹⁴ Strobl, p. 233.

expression. Next to her sits a life-size, headless doll, covered in decaying fabric with moth-eaten holes. While the picture may be a meditation on the inanimate nature of painter's models, human or artificial, what comes to the fore is the play with different surfaces, the contrast between smooth skin and fraying cloth. Dix also mixed sand into the paint used for the wall to create the visual and haptic impression of a rough surface.

The ability of painting to represent three-dimensional plasticity is emphasised by limbs of the doll and the raised arm of the model, protruding into different directions in a suggested deep space. Art critic Franz Servaes identified the aesthetic programme of this painting in his review of the 1926 exhibition at Neumann-Nierendorf when he highlighted the skillful 'play of lights on the warm body of the nude model next to the matte epidermis of the leather dummy'.³⁹⁵ Strobl notes the living model's 'tangible aliveness', created with transparent oil glazes, while the dummy has been given a tempera underpainting to suggest the brittle texture of the cloth.³⁹⁶ However, rather than emphasising this as a formal programme that mobilises a specific type of medium specificity, Strobl interprets the painting as an allegory of life and death.

Rudolf Arnheim, however, remained unconvinced. Arnheim had little regard for this naturalist direction in painting, and in his review of the exhibition 'Neue Sachlichkeit' at the Galerie Nierendorf in Berlin in 1927 he sarcastically suggested that although *neusachlich* painters had returned to local colour and a naturalist conception of form, they were not even able to represent materiality convincingly. He described how Dix painted 'brocade fabric, a face, a curly haircut with passion-less officiousness. Every

³⁹⁵ Osborn, p. 8.

³⁹⁶ Strobl, p. 233.

stitch, every eye lash is there, but nothing else'.³⁹⁷ What others celebrated as an innovation was a disappointment for Arnheim. The artworks on display, he complained, were more focused on the 'object itself than on the optical impression', 'every form is traced scrupulously'.³⁹⁸ The paintings could not convey 'the materiality of an object', he argued, this time citing as an example a still life by Georg Scholz. Here one could only identify with difficulty that one of the represented objects was supposed to be a *Kohlrabi* (a German turnip). Instead of looking like a vegetable, 'the thing could also be made of glass, of steel, of wood'.³⁹⁹ In the pictures by Carlo Mense, Arnheim wrote, 'female flesh feels the same as the black robe of a pastor', conflating seeing and touching.⁴⁰⁰ Arnheim had a point, of course, because Mense and Scholz, like most other *neusachlich* painters, were not aiming to convey texture. In fact, in 1926, when Dix painted the portrait of Martha that Arnheim was likely referring to (figure 41), he had moved on, too. His interest in surface textures, a heightening of haptic effects to create the impression of immediacy were abandoned around the same time as photography turned its lens towards this area of the external world.

The Family of the Painter Adalbert Trillhaase (1923)

There is one more painting that allows us to trace Dix's continuing investigation into haptic material effects, which he began with his dadaist works, into the 1920s: the portrait *The Family of the Painter Adalbert Trillhaase* (figure 42), completed in 1923, the same year as *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* and *Portrait Mrs Martha Dix*. Salmony

³⁹⁷ Most likely *Bildnis Frau Martha Dix* of 1926 (now Museum Ludwig Cologne), which fits Arnheim's description of the outfit and hair style. Rudolf Arnheim, 'Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn', *Die Weltbühne*, 23.1 (1927), 591-592 (p. 592).

³⁹⁸ Arnheim, p. 592.

³⁹⁹ Arnheim, p. 592.

⁴⁰⁰ Arnheim, p. 592.

has described the way Dix represented retired businessman and painter Trillhaase, his wife and son (his daughter is presented through her portrait on the wall in the background) as ‘corpses in grey-green, petit-bourgeois down to the bones’.⁴⁰¹ Scholars generally agree that, as Löffler writes, the picture is a ‘grotesque caricature’ of the painting style of amateur artist Trillhaase.⁴⁰² Alfred Salmony suggested a similar idea when he wrote that the objects of representation in Dix’s work ‘forced their own representation’.⁴⁰³ But Dix, I suspect, was pursuing another aim at the same time.

As Strobl has contended, among the works Dix created in 1923 this painting may be his ‘strongest attempt to describe the surface structure of the diverse materials and objects’.⁴⁰⁴ Dix applied the paint very thickly for the faces and the clothing of the Trillhaases, added incisions and scratches for the representation of hair, facial wrinkles, veins and the fabric of clothing to create strong tactile effects. Willi Wolfradt was intrigued. He identified ‘awful vigour to the optical and factual clarity [*Deutlichkeit*]’ and described ‘how eyeballs, cheekbones, skull are simply modelled forth, how every wrinkle is engraved, how small veins, bits of beard stubble and specks of dirt are characterised without dissolving the larger form or dissipating the intensity’.⁴⁰⁵ For the suit of Adalbert Trillhaase, Dix used actual fabric as a stencil to create a textured effect on an otherwise unstructured representation of the suit. The dress of the mother, in contrast, looks extremely creased and contributes other haptic-optical qualities to the picture. Interestingly what Salmony described as ‘grey-green’ faces could perhaps even

⁴⁰¹ Salmony, p. 1049.

⁴⁰² Fritz Löffler, *Otto Dix. Leben und Werk* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1989), p. 55. Trillhaase was part of the group Junges Rheinland, although not taken seriously by his colleagues. Dix knew Trillhaase since 1921 and lived in a house owned by the family when he moved to Düsseldorf. <http://www.remmertundbarth.de/trillhaase> [accessed 3 October 2018].

⁴⁰³ Salmony, p. 1049.

⁴⁰⁴ Strobl, p. 238.

⁴⁰⁵ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, trans. in Peters, *Otto Dix*, p. 115.

be seen as a reference to black-and-white portrait photography, but amplified with haptic surface texture. But Dix's aim to showcase the abilities of painting that differentiated it from photography went beyond the way in which he represented the figures in the portrait and the interior space in which they are placed.

What researchers have struggled with is another feature of the painting: the representation of a classicist, temple-like building in the background. Commentary is limited to the observation that it provides a sense of location because the building is the Ratinger Tor in Düsseldorf.⁴⁰⁶ But why is it rendered in black-and-white in contrast to the rest of the painting? And why is it not framed by a window, given that the family is presented in an interior space? The building in its outdoor setting takes up the right half of the background of the painting. It looks like an enormous photograph, stuck to the wall, partly covered by a finely painted, yellow net curtain. What is more, the represented building is set within a Mediterranean landscape with Italian cypress trees rather than surrounded by leafy trees as in historic photographs. This area of the painting is defined by a linear perspective, emphasised by the diagonal lines leading up to the building. It looks somewhat like the kind of photographs art historians commonly had to rely on in their study of (Greek and Roman) architecture, for example Riegl in his discussion of the Pantheon in Rome. Photography could provide a sense of space and plasticity, but only to an extent. As Willi Warstat had argued in 1909, there was a difference 'with respect to the reproduction of the third dimension, the dimension of depth',⁴⁰⁷ between how the eye perceived space in the real world compared to how a

⁴⁰⁶ Löffler, p. 27.

⁴⁰⁷ Willi Warstat, *Allgemeine Ästhetik der photographischen Kunst auf psychologischer Grundlage* (Halle a.S.: Knapp, 1909), p. 21; cit. and trans. in Claire Zimmerman, 'Photographic Modern Architecture: Inside "the New Deep"', *The Journal of Architecture*, 22.5 (2017), 968-991 (p. 971).

photographic plate captured and a photographic print relayed it:

It has certainly come to the attention of every photographer that the photographic camera doesn't handle distance as well as the human eye. Every photographer will have had the experience – sometime in the course of his career – that objects that seem not so far away from his eye, appear as if pushed disproportionately far back into the distance.⁴⁰⁸

This 'colourless' part of Dix's otherwise brightly coloured painting provided a strong impression of spatial depth, and it contrasts with the close-up view of the flowery wallpaper on the left and of the three, flattened bodies in the foreground. In other words, colour, *Nahsicht* and haptic-tactile effects are pitted against photography's colourlessness and ability to provide optical-spatial features, thereby engaging with concepts and ideas from academic debates about art. He contrasted two discursive models and two mediums, pitting them against each other. Adolf Hildebrand had defined an '*einheitliche Erscheinung*', a coherent visual appearance, as the fundamental quality needed to achieve a visual impression that corresponded with the viewer's expectations.⁴⁰⁹ For a painting to have a naturalist effect, Hildebrand argued, the most important aspect was continuity in the presentation of three-dimensionality and the overall arrangement. But in Dix's painting of the Trillhaases the two halves of the picture could not form a coherent totality. Dix employed a strategy of incommensurability here, too, creating another hybrid – a '*Zwitterwesen*', to use Worringer's term. He brought the mechanically produced image into his painting, so to speak, to force the viewer to engage with the question of medium specificity. Only painting was able to do this, thereby implying that his brand of high intensity 'haptic realism' was superior to the technological media.

⁴⁰⁸ Warstat, in Zimmerman, p. 971.

⁴⁰⁹ von Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form*, p. 16.

‘Just grab and hold on’

‘Art has not come to an end’, wrote art critic Curt Glaser, ‘in an epoch in which the engineer becomes aware of the duty to form, neither has painting, even if the concept of the painterly is changing once more.’⁴¹⁰ For Glaser, painting would remain relevant because ‘the eye of the painter adapts, just like the lens of the photographic apparatus does’, and what painting has adapted to was to human vision shaped by photography: ‘The eye does not see tonal values and the relationship of colours first, but all the details of the plastic form.’⁴¹¹ Writing in *Kunst und Künstler* in 1927, Glaser contended that since Impressionism, audiences had become used to the idea that painting and photography had different aesthetic aims and means. Therefore, he said, an audience whose ‘eyes [have] adapted to an impressionist way of seeing struggle to understand the value of plastic-graphic form’.⁴¹² This was the reason, according to Glaser, ‘why one rejects Dix today, because his paintings question the visual form [*Bildform*] the same audience had become used to, an achievement of decades of familiarisation’.⁴¹³

When Glaser wrote this article in 1927, the majority of Dix’s paintings did not shock anyone with their subject matter anymore, but what remained was a resistance to its form. Perhaps one could argue that Dix’s works remained so unsettling because they seemed to want to take on the same task as photography, to copy the external world, but the excess of information, the ultra-realism, the level of detail, intense colours, formal incongruences and contrasts in Dix’s works were too unsettling for the human gaze at a time when, as László Moholy-Nagy put it in 1925, an ‘interplay of various facts has

⁴¹⁰ Curt Glaser, ‘Otto Dix’, *Kunst und Künstler*, 25 (1927), 130-134 (p. 131).

⁴¹¹ Glaser, ‘Otto Dix’, p. 131.

⁴¹² Glaser, ‘Otto Dix’, p. 131.

⁴¹³ Glaser, ‘Otto Dix’, p. 131.

caused our age to shift almost imperceptibly towards colourlessness and grey'.⁴¹⁴ But it was only by returning to the object in external reality that Dix could try to 'beat', so to speak, the photographic image on its own terrain.

Dix responded, in the early 1920s, to a cultural context that had given rise to the general perception that the haptic sense was in decline, a concern Moholy-Nagy voiced a few years later when writing 'how neglected our tactile culture is' in his book *Von Material zu Architektur*, published in 1929, but based on earlier lectures delivered at the Bauhaus between 1923 and 1928.⁴¹⁵ Franz Roh, the early champion and surveyor of post-expressionist realism, was already thinking in the past tense when writing in 1928 about *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting that 'one wanted to let people sense the touchable, the palpable of external reality as if they were blind'.⁴¹⁶

Painting had become 'haptic' again, as Leopold Zahn, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, had put it, not (just) motivated by dynamics internal to painting, but external pressures, by a visual culture dominated by mechanical images, images that were black-and-white, that omitted details, spatial depth and volume – unless they were as carefully constructed as Gloria Swanson's publicity photograph.

⁴¹⁴ Moholy-Nagy, *Painting*, p. 15 (unnumbered footnote).

⁴¹⁵ 'wie vernachlässigt unsere Tastkultur ist'. László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur*, Bauhausbücher, 14 (Munich: Langen, 1928; repr. Passau: Passavia, 1929), p. 28. I have used by own translation here because in the English edition, entitled *The New Vision*, this has been translated as follows: 'how neglected our tactile education is'. This translation could be misunderstood as a reference to an educational context because Moholy-Nagy also linked this to a conversation with the director of a training school for healthcare professionals that also provided training in massage techniques. However, he was making a much more general point when speaking of 'tactile culture', or 'Tastkultur'. László Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist*, 4th revised edn (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1947), p. 24.

⁴¹⁶ 'Man wollte das Tastbare, Abfühlbare der Aussenwirklichkeit spüren lassen, wie etwa für Blinde.' Franz Roh, 'Ubaldo Oppi. Auf- oder Abstieg in der neuesten italienischen Malerei', *Die Dame*, 55.19 (1928), 7-10 and 31 (p. 7).

And perhaps we have now found a compelling interpretation for a hitherto unexplained aspect of a photograph taken by Hugo Erfurth of Dix sitting in front of his *Double-Portrait* of himself and his wife Martha in its unfinished state in 1922 (figure 43). The photograph was likely taken during the summer because the artist sent a postcard of it to his brother Fritz on the 8th of July that year.⁴¹⁷ While *Double-Portrait* has fascinated art critics who saw the original in the 1920s and researchers since, it is not only the final version of the painting but Erfurth's staged photograph of the incomplete work and its interplay with the artist in front of it that deserves our attention. Dix is sitting on a chair in an almost frontal position while turning his head by ninety degrees to present his face in sharp profile. It helped emphasise his persona of a focused, serious artist, with sharp facial features, thin-lipped, with a high forehead and protruding eyebrows. There is something very contrived about the way in which Dix has positioned his left hand that may be loaded with meaning: the index finger of his left hand is pointing at and touching a big protruding vein that is crossing his right wrist.

This little gesture directs our attention towards the three-dimensionality of the artist's body, its physical vitality and our sense of touch, while being acted out in front of a smoothly painted portrait of two bodies that lacked three-dimensional plasticity and looked lifeless like inanimate shop window dummies. The staged photograph contrasts the pulsating aliveness, the surface texture and plasticity of a real body, with the inanimate figures in the painting that appear flattened as if cut out from a printed fashion catalogue and somewhat ghostlike with their whitened, blank faces. Based on what this investigation has revealed, in this portrait of the artist in front of his painting,

⁴¹⁷ Dietrich Schubert "'Ein harter Mann dieser Maler": Otto Dix – fotografiert von Hugo Erfurth', in *Hugo Erfurth. 1874-1948. Photograph zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, ed. by Bodo von Dewitz and Karin Schuller-Procopovici (Cologne: Wienand, 1992), pp. 86-96 (p. 89). Schubert gives this work the title *Selbst mit Martha als Tanzpaar*.

Dix might be subtly pointing out his agenda to engage people's haptic-optical faculties. In a way, one could say that he forced Erfurth's photograph to show what it could *not* show: what the artist was pointing at and touching could only be relayed to a viewer of the photograph itself in shades of grey rather than in colour, flattened rather than with the degree of volume and surface texture in external reality. In a negative dialectical operation, this photograph offered a lesson in what exceeded its own medium specific capabilities.

The paintings discussed in this chapter engaged with the demands of a new mimetic task in the context of 1920s visual culture by providing greater immediacy through an engagement of a viewer's haptic-optical sense in terms of plasticity *and* surface textures. They instructed his audience, just as the placard at the Dada fair in 1920 had, to 'just grab and hold on' – only this time not literally.

Chapter 3

Reproductive Optics: Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg*

Over the course of the 1920s, two paintings by Otto Dix were reproduced more often than any others: his programmatic *Selfportrait at the Easel* of 1926 (figure 18) and the *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* (figure 44) completed in 1925. Between 1925 and 1930, the Eulenberg picture was reproduced in at least seven different publications, from newspapers to art journals such as *Das Kunstblatt* and *Der Querschnitt*, to illustrated magazines, an exhibition catalogue and a book on the theory of art history.⁴¹⁸ While the self-portrait of an artist may be of obvious interest to readers, one could explain the choice of the Eulenberg portrait by the fact that it showed a well-known personality. However, in this chapter I will argue that there were formal reasons, too, which did not just have to do with what the original painting looked like, but specifically with how it looked in black-and-white reproductions, that made the portrait of Herbert Eulenberg such a popular choice with writers and editors. These visual features could for example be the reason why the work was one of the very few illustrations of contemporary art included in art historian Hans Tietze's critique of his discipline in *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte*, published in 1925.

⁴¹⁸ Andreas Strobl has identified four reproductions of the Eulenberg portrait, all printed in 1925, in his comprehensive list of Dix works exhibited or published between 1916 and 1945. Andreas Strobl, *Otto Dix. Eine Malerkarriere der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin: Reimer, 1996). *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* was according to this list published in: *Große Düsseldorfer Kunstausstellung*, exh. cat. 1925; *Der Querschnitt*, 5 (July 1925), plate after p. 608; *Der Cicerone*, 17 (1925), p. 818; Hans Tietze, *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte* (Vienna: Krystall, 1925), after p 88. I have identified a further three occasions: *Uhu*, 5 (April 1929), p. 47; *Die Kunst für Alle*, 42 (1926-1927), p. 9, published alongside a review of the 'Internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden 1926' by Paul Schumann; and a newspaper clipping with a reproduction of the Eulenberg picture and *Der Fabrikant*, unfortunately without publication information, most likely published around the time of the 1926 retrospective because the exhibition is mentioned in the image by-line [ZA]. *Self-Portrait o the Easel* was also published at least seven times between 1926 and 1930.

Herbert Eulenberg was a figure not just well-known in intellectual circles, but among a wider audience, since he produced many different types of work, from poetry to essays about art. He was published across a range of popular as well as specialist media platforms, from illustrated magazines to the highly respected literary newspaper *Literarische Welt*, which counted Thomas Mann and Walter Benjamin among its regular contributors. Eulenberg's fiftieth birthday was celebrated by *Literarische Welt* with a significant lead article on his work. Eulenberg was a regular writer for *Der Querschnitt*, which also printed his portrait by Dix in 1925, the year in which a large edition of his works in five volumes was released, underlining his status as a prominent author. A number of different artists created drawings and caricatures of Eulenberg over the course of the 1910s and 1920s, among them Lovis Corinth and Max Pechstein, who each painted a portrait in oil in 1924 and 1923 respectively (figures 45 and 46). Pechstein's painting was displayed from May to June 1924 in the 'Ausstellung der Akademie der Künste zu Berlin' for which Max Liebermann had been able to secure the loan of Dix's controversial painting *War* from the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne. This is where Dix would almost certainly have seen Pechstein's portrait. Dix painted his version the following year, perhaps to join the ranks of artists who had painted Eulenberg, even to enter into competition with them as to who would succeed in capturing Eulenberg's vivacious personality best. Following its completion the painting was displayed in four different exhibitions between 1925 and 1927.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁹ *Selfportrait at the Easel* was only exhibited twice in the 1920s, in both legs of his retrospective exhibitions in Berlin and Munich in 1926. The Eulenberg portrait was bought by the Städtisches Museum, Düsseldorf after it had been shown for the first time in the *Große Düsseldorfer Kunstausstellung*, 30 May – 4 October 1925 (listed as for sale). The other three exhibitions of the Eulenberg painting were the retrospective at Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf Berlin, 8 February – April 1926 (listed as owned by the Städtisches Museum Düsseldorf), the *Internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden*, Juni – August 1926, and *Europäische Kunst der Gegenwart, Zentenarausstellung des Kunstvereins Hamburg* in 1927 (listed as owned by Städtisches Museum Düsseldorf). It is presumed to have been destroyed after being shown as part of the Nazi-exhibition 'Entartete Kunst' in 1937.

The portrait has received next to no critical attention in the academic literature about Dix to date, most likely because it has been lost or perhaps because it does not appear to be a very complex picture. It is not even included in the majority of exhibition catalogues and art historical books about his oeuvre. Dix, however, must have anticipated that it would be a work of particular interest for a wider contemporary audience because of its famous subject and therefore more likely to be reproduced in a number of publications. In this chapter, I will argue that this prompted him to take painterly decisions that took the way the painting would look in black-and-white reproduction, as well as the context of a historically specific media landscape, into account.

What is at stake here is transformation of the medium of painting not by an artist using technology directly in his creative process, as others did, but indirectly. It is my contention that the artist considered the ways in which the appearance of his painting would be affected by its transition from paint into print, from original to copy, and that this led him to make specific aesthetic decisions when conceiving the original artwork. As a consequence, Dix's portrait would be much more suited to colourless reproduction than the post-impressionist and expressionist portraits by Corinth or Pechstein. What is more, another dimension further complicates the way in which this painting engaged with the issue and aesthetics of mechanical reproduction. As a number of Dix's contemporary critics argued, some of his works had absorbed another kind of aesthetic of mechanical reproduction: that of commercially mass produced oleographs in colour, which were very popular and made famous paintings widely available in reproduction. In a kind of double-functioning, the Eulenberg picture – a painting that, with its old masterly style, looks at first sight like a backwards-looking antidote to a visual culture

dominated by technological images – will be revealed as one that was adapted simultaneously to artistic values that characterised both colourless graphic prints (such as lithographs or mezzotints) and photographic reproductions of artworks. Dix developed new visual strategies in response to what Walter Benjamin would go on to describe as the ‘age of the mechanical reproducibility of the work of art’.⁴²⁰ Through a specific form of adaptation, the image Dix had created in the medium of painting could, to a degree, withstand the pressures created by how artworks now travelled across, and were transformed by, what might be called different ‘media platforms’ today.

This chapter will firstly introduce the wider art historical discourse on the reproduction of artworks, and highlight overlaps, differences and gaps in these discussions. It will then move on to discuss which aspects in Dix’s oeuvre his critics already identified in the 1920s as evidence of his direct engagement with the issue of technological image production. Some of them saw clearly that this went beyond his dadaist paintings with collaged fragments of newspapers and magazines. The discussion will then draw on statements from letters and interviews given by the artist that help demonstrate that he did indeed take a great interest in the reproduction of his work and in the ways in which this could be important for an artist’s critical and commercial success. The *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* will be examined, alongside a brief discussion of two other paintings relevant in this context, paintings that have also been lost and are only accessible in colourless reproduction today. I will consider why these paintings may have looked so attractive and convincing in black-and-white reproduction, and whether there is evidence of specific painterly strategies Dix may have designed to achieve just

⁴²⁰ ‘The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version’, in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008), pp. 19-55 (p. 20).

that. The *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* will ultimately be revealed as a model for a mode of painting that could well withstand its own potential devaluation through reproduction.

Herbert Eulenberg lived in Düsseldorf, where Dix had arrived from Dresden in 1923, and they became acquainted since both moved in local artistic circles.⁴²¹ His portrait was completed in 1925, just in time for the ‘Große Düsseldorfer Kunstausstellung’. As with his *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* painted later that year, Dix had obviously considered his audience by choosing a local personality with a national profile. Perhaps more importantly, he was hoping that the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf would acquire this portrait of one of the city’s most famous inhabitants, and it promptly did so.⁴²² The Kunsthalle Düsseldorf also lent the Eulenberg picture for Dix’s retrospective solo-exhibition at the Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin in 1926, where it was displayed prominently. In fact, it hung to the right of Dix’s *Self-Portrait on the Easel* of 1926, with the *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* (1925) and the *Portrait Karl Krall* (1923) displayed to its left (see figure 17).

As argued in the first chapter of this thesis, one of the functions of the Berlin exhibition was to advertise Dix’s services as a portrait painter. Dix’s art dealer Nierendorf was pleased with the sales of Dix’s portraits in 1926, although he found his other work more

⁴²¹ Email communication from Herbert Remmert of Galerie Remmert und Barth, Düsseldorf (July 2018).

⁴²² The caption in Tietze’s book places it in the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, which means that it was either in the 1925 exhibition, where he could have seen it, or already in the museum’s collection. The same strategy would, however, not succeed again the following year, when he hoped that the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin would buy the portrait of Berber.

interesting. In a letter to the artist, dated 6th August 1926, he was somewhat dismissive, describing the Eulenberg picture and a portrait of Hugo Erfurth, which he had just sold, as ‘pleasing’. He told the artist that he was, however, struggling to sell his representations of challenging topics, highlighting two on the topics of war and prostitutes: ‘These pleasing [*gefällige*] pictures, including Eulenberg, Nelly appeal much more [...] I am sitting on *Trench, Salon* etc. etc.’⁴²³

In his retrospective at Neumann-Nierendorf, Dix had created a ‘celebrity’ wall of sorts, with three (four including Dix’s self-portrait) portraits of well-known, each in their own way somewhat infamous public figures: Krall for his provocative camp persona, Berber for her scandalous dances and self-destructive celebrity lifestyle, and Eulenberg for his self-stylisation as a bon vivant with a conceited sense of humour and an appetite for controversy. Four years after Dix’s portrait of Eulenberg was first displayed, it must still have been a relatively widely known painting, because art critic Robert Breuer referred to it in an article *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* without an accompanying reproduction.⁴²⁴

⁴²³ Karl Nierendorf, letter to Otto Dix, 6 August 1926 [DKA]. Also cited in Andreas Strobl, ‘Otto Dix und Hugo Erfurth. Der Maler im Zeitalter der Photographie’, *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 44 (1993), 181 – 199 (p. 190).

⁴²⁴ The article is written in the form of a humorous dialogue [between which two parties?] between a young woman who wants to have her portrait painted by one of the ‘uprooters, dissectors, soul-chemists, and enlightened *Pathetiker*’⁴²⁴, the challenging new generation of expressionist or verist painters. But she is warned by her male companion that being painted by Otto Dix could result in an unpleasant surprise. He refers to Dix’s Eulenberg picture as an example of a portrait that showed a ‘conceited and sensuous epicure, who reveals much merriness and some capricious vanities’⁴²⁴, and that being painted by him might be more revealing than the woman would be comfortable with. She insists, however, that this is exactly what she would be looking forward to.

A photograph of Eulenberg taken by Hugo Erfurth in 1925 presents the poet as a dandy, a flower in the breast pocket of his suit and a monocle on his left eye (figure 47).⁴²⁵ These details feature in Dix's portrait, only that here, Eulenberg also holds a tulip in his hand, as he might otherwise a glass of wine, which – as Breuer's article suggested – he was partial to. The art historian and writer Mela Escherich described Dix's painting as a portrait 'where subtle humour finds its apex in the tulip, which – with its flowerly innocence – imitates the contour of the embonpoint'.⁴²⁶

The above comment provides us with an idea of how the artist's contemporaries interpreted his skills as a portraitist, but instead of developing a more in-depth reading of the way in which Eulenberg is characterised, my analysis will focus on how it functioned as an object that constituted a crossing point of wider dynamics in contemporary visual culture, and germinated questions regarding the mechanical reproduction of contemporary paintings. Since this chapter contends that in the 1920s, it could matter enormously for an artist's success what his paintings looked like in black-and-white reproduction, the need for artists to keep such issues in mind will be further considered, before returning to the case at hand.

'An die jungen Maler!'

'To all young painters!' Thus *Das Kunstblatt* addressed the artists among its readership in January 1927 to invite those who had not yet been given any opportunity to exhibit their work, or otherwise been publicised in print, to submit work to a painting

⁴²⁵ Flowers, more commonly pinned on jackets, were a fashion for men and women at the time. As another example can serve a photograph of Edward Munch, also taken in 1926, with an unusual white dahlia in his button hole.

⁴²⁶ Mela Escherich, 'Otto Dix', *Die Kunst für Alle*, 41 (1926), 105-111 (p. 110).

competition organised by the journal.⁴²⁷ The *Kunstblatt* intended this to become an annual event, and in October 1927 it put out another call for a second exhibition scheduled for January 1928. The one-page announcement, placed prominently on the first page of the journal, outlined that three artists among those who had submitted work would be nominated as the jury. The prize was to be selected as one of one hundred artists who would have their work exhibited by the Berliner Kunstgemeinschaft in the Berliner Schloss from mid-February to mid-March 1927. There would even be a budget for the Kunstgemeinschaft to acquire some works. To make the event more interesting, the general public would be invited to vote for their favourite painting, and the winning work would be reproduced in the *Kunstblatt*.

In the February edition of the journal, Westheim followed up with a short update. The exhibition in the Berliner Schloss was by then open, and he reminded readers to cast their vote for the best work before the exhibition closed.⁴²⁸ Almost three hundred submissions had been received, according to Westheim, and although he did not make this clear, these submissions would have most likely been a mixture of original paintings and photographs of paintings. Paying for the transport of an oil painting, or travelling to Berlin to deliver one's work in person, would not have been affordable for some artists.⁴²⁹ Westheim promised a detailed written analysis and the reproduction of 'particularly noteworthy works' for the upcoming April edition of the *Kunstblatt*.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ 'And die jungen Maler!', *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (1927), 1 (p. 1). Artists were given little time to produce something new since the submission deadline was between the 21st and the 31st of January 1927.

⁴²⁸ Paul Westheim, 'Die Ausstellung der jungen Maler in der Deutschen Kunstgemeinschaft', *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (February 1927), 123 (p. 123). The artists that had been selected to form the jury were Nay, Schwarz and Wunderwald.

⁴²⁹ Others might have planned submit a work already sold into a collection and could therefore only send a reproduction. These artists could then request the work on loan should it be selected for the exhibition.

⁴³⁰ Westheim, 'Die Ausstellung', p. 123. Exhibition reminder.

As promised, a lengthy review of the exhibition appeared in April, accompanied by a number of reproductions, along with extracts from newspaper reviews and a summary of the data collected from the public vote.⁴³¹ On the frontispiece of the issue, a post-impressionist landscape by Karl van Appen took pride of place as an expensive colour reproduction (figure 48). The journal had only just started to occasionally add these colour reproductions, most likely because they had recently become more affordable. Although it was only a three-colour print, it looked attractive enough for readers to put it up on their walls, if they desired, using the elegant black cardboard support as a mount. However, what was odd about this choice of image was that van Appen had not been the winner of the public vote who had been promised the spot. Indeed, he had not even submitted an artwork to this competition.

The public's favourite had been Karl Zuckschwert's traditional, naturalist kitchen scene with children sitting around a table, *In der Küche* (figure 49). This genre scene was now only reproduced in black-and-white a couple of pages into the journal. Reading between the lines, this was a painting Westheim, unsurprisingly, did not seem keen to give pride of place in his elite art journal. As if to justify this, the summary of the results of the public vote revealed that it had mostly been people over forty years of age who had voted for Zuckschwert's traditionalist painting. What is important here is that Westheim felt it necessary to explain his decision to award van Appen's work the colour reproduction on the frontispiece, and of particular interest for my argument are the reasons he outlined for his decision.

⁴³¹ Specifically the age and profession of those who had voted for the winning picture, with some people also revealing their gender.

Van Appen had submitted a photographic reproduction of his landscape to a different, earlier competition organised by the journal *Literarische Welt*, entitled ‘Geschenk an die Jugend’, which had also been publicised by the *Kunstblatt*. For this competition, the prize had been Willy Jaeckel’s offer to show work in a commercial Berlin gallery as well as Westheim’s promise to reproduce several works both in the *Kunstblatt* and the *Literarische Welt*. The work of a few other painters ‘that would be identified as the best ones based on the submitted photographs’ would be published alongside those by the winner.⁴³² Westheim speaks of ‘submitted photographs’ rather than paintings. This suggests that this was either specified in the call for submissions, or that it was the usual – since most convenient – way to submit artworks for selection by a jury before sending any originals.

Westheim had been nominated as the main judge for this earlier competition by the *Literarische Welt*, and ‘after surveying the submitted photographs we unanimously agreed’, he wrote in the April edition of the *Kunstblatt*, that the street scene *Straßenecke* by Hermann Volz should win first prize.⁴³³ Ernst Thoms came second with his painting *Caféhaus*. While both competitions – the *Kunstblatt*’s ‘Ausstellung der jungen Talente’ and ‘Geschenk an die Jugend’ by the *Literarische Welt* – were reviewed by Westheim in the same edition of the journal, neither of the winners had their work reproduced in colour on the frontispiece. Volz’s work was – like that of Zuckschwert – only reproduced in black-and-white. The question remained: why was it van Appen who had been honoured with the colour reproduction?

⁴³² Paul Westheim, ‘Die Ausstellung der jungen Maler in der Deutschen Kunstgemeinschaft’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (April 1927), 129-144 (p. 136). Full review of the exhibition.

⁴³³ Paul Westheim, ‘“Geschenk an die Jugend”. Zum Ausschreiben der *Literarischen Welt*’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (1927), 147-148 (p. 147).

Westheim explained this potentially contentious editorial decision in his article. He first apologised to van Appen for not having been awarded the first prize in the competition of the *Literarische Welt*, and then explained that the reason for this was the fact that he had only seen the submitted photograph of the work. Westheim appears to have decided that this had been an unfair disadvantage for van Appen's subtly coloured, expressionist landscape, even though other artists had of course only submitted photographic reproductions, too. He elaborated on what had happened thus:

Among these photographs was a washed-out print that caught my attention. It was Appen's landscape. The picture could be very good, or not. It was impossible to say anything based on the – moreover deficient – photograph. But at least the case caught my interest. I wanted to prompt the painter to send the painting and made my vote dependent on a viewing of the original. The perfidy of the object, with which also *Auch Einer*-Vischer had to struggle with all this life, meant that Appen was in bed with flu when my letter arrived by express mail, and the poor devil of a painter also had nobody who would have paid for the transport of his picture to Berlin. When I finally saw it, the date by which the *Literarische Welt* was going to announce the result had passed.⁴³⁴

In addition to awarding van Appen the reproduction in colour, Westheim then also included the painting in the *Kunstblatt's* 'Ausstellung der jungen Talente' in the Berliner Schloss.

Although there must have been an awareness that artworks and artists could not be adequately judged based on black-and-white reproductions, and that it may privilege certain painterly styles over others, this does not appear to have prompted a broader, public discussion of the issue or a change of procedures at the time. The submission of

⁴³⁴ 'Die Tücke des Objekts, mit der *Auch Einer*-Vischer' is a reference to Friedrich Theodor Vischer's novel *Auch Einer. Eine Reisebekanntschaft*, I (Osnabrück: Kraemer and Hansen, 1879; repr. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1900). Paul Westheim, 'Die Ausstellung' [review], p. 136.

colourless photographic reproductions of artworks for competitions, and for selection for exhibitions, seems to have been a common occurrence in the 1920s, and it is an area that deserves further scholarly enquiry.

The issue of the cost of posting an original painting was more pronounced for artists in the first half of the 1920s, in particular during the time of hyper-inflation. In addition, between 1923 and 1925 there were restrictions as a result of the military occupation of the Ruhr and lower Rhine valley, including Düsseldorf, where many wealthy collectors lived. The latter is an issue mentioned in a *Kunstblatt* survey about the ‘The Economic Situations and the Prospects of the Art Market’ in 1923. Here, Berlin-based art dealers Goldschmidt and Wallerstein complained that there was a notable absence of these wealthy buyers ‘who are prevented by the ongoing traffic restrictions, or are worried about difficulties regarding transport of artworks even now, after they have been lifted’, and that this had hit their business hard.⁴³⁵

Even though the earliest colour photographs had already been taken in the mid-1800s, it took until the 1930s for colour photography to become more affordable and popularised. However, even then, reproductions of paintings remained crude in terms of tonal gradations, brightness or the temperature of the colours. It was only after the Second World War that the ‘mass production of colour photographs’ would commence.⁴³⁶ Painters may also have preferred to avoid having someone from a professional photographic studio hand-paint a photographic reproduction or an artist make a hand-

⁴³⁵ ‘Wirtschaftslage und Aussichten des Kunstmarktes’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 294-301 (p. 294). Also see the discussion of the survey in the introduction and final chapter of this thesis. This is an issue I have not seen mentioned in the art historical literature about the time.

⁴³⁶ Robert Verhoogt, *Art in Reproduction: Nineteenth-Century Prints after Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Jozef Israëls and Ary Scheffer* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p. 124.

coloured graphic print, an *Edeldruck*, because it could produce an image that looked quite different to the original artwork. Perhaps more problematically, it involved another person in the reiteration of the work in a kind of supplementary creative process. For juries, curators, museum directors or editors of art journals to consider photographic reproductions in black-and-white, then, was seen as a perfectly acceptable way of passing judgement. Perhaps these professionals felt that their eye was adequately trained through graphic prints on paper, through constant exposure to colourless photographic reproductions of artworks, and through the overwhelming quantity of black-and-white images in wider visual culture.

Indeed, in the January 1927 edition of the *Kunstblatt*, Westheim had dedicated a whole article to a painter he claimed to have discovered based on (black-and-white) photographs, before seeing any original paintings, and he reproduced one of them as a colour plate on the frontispiece: Gustav Wunderwald. This is how Westheim opened his article:

By accident I recently came across a few photographs, among them the Memel landscape reproduced as our colour plate. It seemed interesting and worth becoming more closely acquainted with the pictures of this painter by whom nothing could be seen in exhibitions, art journals etc..⁴³⁷

In a context in which many artworks could only be studied in reproduction, it is Wunderwald's and van Appen's cases that point towards a wider cultural issue. Contemporary art critics, often trained as art historians, may even have prided themselves on the fact that they were (usually) able to judge a painting adequately in this way. Westheim's revelation of the pitfalls of a selection process based on photographs would have made it abundantly clear to any artist among his readership

⁴³⁷ Paul Westheim, 'Gustav Wunderwald', *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (1927), 2-5 (p. 2).

that what photographic reproductions of an artwork looked like could decide success or failure when it came to gaining entry into exhibitions, access to the publicity that came with it, to potential clients and important curators, and occasionally even monetary prizes. As Westheim's decision to reveal the inadequacy of the selection process indicated, there was at least an awareness that to judge art by its black-and-white reproduction was not an ideal way of going about picking the 'best' original artwork among those the copies replicated.

Parity mattered even more when not just publicity through an exhibition or the reproduction of work in a journal was at stake, but a lot of money: 10.000 Reichsmark to be precise, the award promised to the winner of the 'Elida-Prize for the Most Beautiful German Female Portrait' of 1928, also known as the 'Georg-Schicht-Preis' after the president of the Elida company, famous for its highly successful beauty products.⁴³⁸ Elida had made an effort to be very precise in its instructions. It asked painters specifically to submit colourless reproductions, not originals, in its call, published in February 1928 in the journal *Kunst und Wirtschaft*, although whether an artist could afford a good quality photograph of his work was another issue:

Every artist living in Germany has the right to send in a monochrome [*einfarbige*] reproduction, produced with a photographic or other process similar to photography, of a female portrait created by himself. The reproductions must measure 18 x 24 centimetres and be glued onto a mount measuring 21 x 27 centimetres. Name and address of the artist must be clearly noted on the reverse.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁸ Susanne Meyer-Büser has researched this event and its context in detail, although without discussing the rules of the submission process in depth. She has pointed out that the prize money for such competitions was usually significantly lower, commonly between a few hundred and 1000 Reichsmark. Meyer-Büser, *Das schönste deutsche Frauenporträt. Tendenzen der Bildnismalerei in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Reimer, 1994), p. 26.

⁴³⁹ 'Georg-Schicht-Preis: 10.000 Mark für das schönste, deutsche Frauenporträt 1928', *Kunst und Wirtschaft*, 9 (1928), 174.

By specifying the size of the photograph, an additional effort was being made to increase parity.⁴⁴⁰ ‘Colourlessness’ was the more important rule, but it was a problematic one, because it did not suit all artistic styles equally well. This would have been an issue when making editorial decisions about illustrations in art journals and newspapers, and for curators selecting works for exhibitions as well.

While artists such as Otto Dix would not normally have taken part in such competitions, the large prize money attracted established artists such as Willy Jaeckel, at the time a teacher at the Hochschule für Kunsterziehung in Berlin, who also won the prize. In total, three hundred and sixty-five painters submitted work. Among those, twenty-six painters were invited to send in the original paintings and one of them would win the 10,000 Reichsmark. The remaining twenty-five – among them Christian Schad, who had only just started to receive critical attention as a painter of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and is today one of its most celebrated representatives – could still benefit from the publicity generated by the widely publicised touring exhibition and the accompanying catalogue with reproductions of the paintings in black-and-white. The question that thus presented itself was: How could a good painting stand out among other black-and-white photographic copies? And what could an artist do, when conceiving a painting, to take this issue into account without compromising his artistic integrity?

What follows is an introduction to the contemporary discourse about photographic and other printed reproductions of artworks. This is intended to provide some background on where art historians and cultural critics saw the problem with reproductions, and to identify aspects of the issue that writers before the 1920s had possibly not yet faced or

⁴⁴⁰ What would be accepted as a reproduction made with a ‘process similar to photography’ was not explained further.

may have overlooked. The focus here is not on the question of the adequacy and usefulness of photographs as a tool for research and analysis in art history,⁴⁴¹ but on the wider implications of the popularity of reproductions among the public and the significance of the emergence of new, better quality facsimile prints produced by Piper from 1923 onwards. The art historian Oskar Schürer will be introduced as a voice in the history of this discourse that has hitherto not been adequately considered.

Art History on Reproductions: Wölfflin, Hamann, Schürer, Benjamin

Photographic reproductions of artworks became a subject discussed intensively from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. By 1900, photography had overtaken hand-made graphic prints to become ‘the dominant reproductive technique’.⁴⁴² The most prominent art historian who addressed the issue in the late 1800s was Heinrich Wölfflin, who focused on reproductions of sculpture.⁴⁴³ Following him, Richard Hamann addressed the difference between photographic and hand-made (for example drawn) copies of artworks in two essays published in 1911. In ‘Zeichnende Künste und Photographie’ Hamann emphasized the limitations of photographic reproductions in

⁴⁴¹ For a wider range of essays with recent research in the subject, see for example *Photoarchives and the Photographic Memory of Art History*, ed. by Costanza Caraffa, *Italienische Forschungen des deutschen Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, I Mandorli, 14 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2011).

⁴⁴² Verhoogt, p. 130.

⁴⁴³ Heinrich Wölfflin, ‘Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll’, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 7 (1896), 224-8, and 8 (1897), 294-7; and Heinrich Wölfflin, ‘Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll? (Probleme der italienischen Renaissance)’, *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 26 (1915), 237-44. Heinrich Wölfflin, ‘How one Should Photograph Sculpture’, trans. by Geraldine A. Johnson, *Art History*, 36 (February 2012) 53-71. It is only in the essay of 1915 that he addresses the problem of lighting more fully. What is still missing here is a discussion of the different camera techniques and the photographer’s skill in the manual application of the paint onto the photographic plate, which both impacted on the lightness/darkness of the reproduced image.

comparison to copies made by hand.⁴⁴⁴ Although his focus was mainly on the possibilities for the study of architecture and sculpture, he also briefly considered photographic reproductions of paintings.⁴⁴⁵ Despite these early efforts, Geraldine Johnson recently pointed out that the issue of reproductions for the study of art history, of how art in general is photographed and reproduced, is still neglected in the academic research to date, even though it ‘can tell us a great deal about what one might call the “visual historiography” of art history as a discipline’.⁴⁴⁶

Although concerns about the issue of photographic reproductions of artworks were expressed, the availability of more accurate, and more cheaply and quickly producible pictures of artworks and of architecture, made possible with the invention and gradual improvement of photographic processes, had generally been celebrated by art historians. For a long time, these reproductions remained colourless, since, as Rolf Sachsse writes, colour photography was only adopted very slowly for art historical publications due to art history’s focus on formalism:

An important area of application for colour photography would be art history; calls for this emerged around 1910. Art historical books with printed colour

⁴⁴⁴ Despite setting up the ‘Lichtbildarchiv’ in Marbach, he only wrote three essays about the issue of photographic reproductions of art and architecture. Richard Hamann’s contributions to the issue of different media forms in the service of art history include ‘Zeichnende Künste und Photographie’, *Die Rheinlande*, 21 (1911), 30-33. Richard Hamann, ‘Bildausschnitt und Gesamtkunstwerk’, *Die Rheinlande*, 21 (1911), 279-283. Richard Hamann, ‘Wie kommt man an die Dinge heran?’, *Die Woche* 37 (1935), 26-28. On Hamann and the use of photography for the study of art history, and for an extensive list of the literature on the subject, see Angela Matyssek, *Kunstgeschichte als Fotografische Praxis. Richard Hamann und Foto Marburg, Humboldt-Schriften zur Kunst- und Bildgeschichte* (Berlin: Mann, 2009).

⁴⁴⁵ One of the first art historians to pick up the critical discourse after Richard Hamann was Heinrich Dilly, who published the seminal text ‘Das Auge der Kamera und der kunsthistorische Blick’ in 1981. Dilly’s influential argument is that photography shaped ‘art-historic vision’ that it produced a specific ‘*Wahrnehmungs- und Denkform*’ rather than being a neutral tool. In *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 20 (1981), 81-89 (p. 81).

⁴⁴⁶ Geraldine A. Johnson, ““(Un)richtige Aufnahme””: Renaissance Sculpture and the Visual Historiography of Art History’, *Art History*, 36 (2013), 12-51 (p. 13). For a recent discussion of sculpture and photography see also: *Photography and Sculpture. The Art Object in Reproduction*, ed. by Sarah Hamill and Megan R. Luke (Los Angeles: Getty, 2017).

photographs remained rare, however. The visual needs of a genuine science focused on the formal analysis of architecture and sculpture meant that there was little interest in expensive colour-photographic tools.⁴⁴⁷

In his 'Artwork' essay, Walter Benjamin similarly spoke of the focus of contemporary art history on 'the 'formal signature' of works of art, as developed by Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff.⁴⁴⁸ Another issue was that the discussion of technical aspects of reproductions and their visual effects had been conducted separately from the fundamental questions discussed by art historians and theorists, further holding back the analysis of these developments.

What is more, the choices made by, and options open to, a photographer regarding his mechanical and chemical tools could produce very different reproductions of an artwork – even if it was a 'just' flat painting, and not a sculpture that could be captured from different angles and dramatized through lighting. Despite this, in his 'Artwork' essay, Benjamin limited the involvement of the photographer to his operation of the lens, leaving out the manual and artistic skills involved with brushes, chemical solutions and other tools when developing the photographic negative and positive. While we might agree with Benjamin that 'what is reproduced is a work of art, while the act of reproducing it is not',⁴⁴⁹ artistic skill was required in the production of a successful photographic print of an artwork. Westheim's complaint about the poor quality of the photograph of van Appen's painting comes to mind here, and as we will see, Dix was

⁴⁴⁷ Rolf Sachsse, 'Das gedruckte farbige Bild', in *Farbe im Foto. Die Geschichte der Farbphotographie von 1861 bis 1981*, ed. Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle (Cologne: Schlink, 1981), pp. 207-218 (pp. 214-215).

⁴⁴⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version', in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008), pp. 19-55 (p. 23). He was referring specifically to the innovators of the Vienna School, whose new theories about perception were focused on form.

⁴⁴⁹ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 29.

aware of the importance of choosing a photographer who was highly skilled at doing more than simply pointing his lens at a painting.

Up until the First World War, hand-made copies, from drawings to engravings, had continued to be the preferred medium to illustrate publications with a large print run, from newspapers and art history books to art journals and portfolios, as well as individual art prints for display in private homes.⁴⁵⁰ From the turn of the century onwards, and particularly after the First World War, paper and printing techniques became cheaper, increasing the number of outlets, and making a greater number of reproductions of artworks in a lower quality of print than so-called ‘*Edeldrucke*’ more widely available. The media landscape changed significantly after the war, and particularly in Weimar Germany the number of printed journals as well as illustrated newspapers, tabloids, weeklies, magazines, and books exploded. The post-war press was more fragmented and included a wider range of voices and forms of presentation than ever before. This was also due to the wider uptake of new technologies that enabled photographs to be more easily printed and on more cheaply available paper. The previous increase of output had taken place in the 1880s after earlier improvements of the technology. By the 1920s, Berlin had the greatest number of news titles of any city in Europe with a total of 93 newspapers, not counting the papers published by political parties.⁴⁵¹ Furthermore, over the course of the 1920s, the so-called *Kino-*

⁴⁵⁰ Tom Gretton writes that: ‘Photomechanical lithography was confined to luxury reproductive printmaking (principally as collotype); offset lithography and the simplifications that would deliver photolithography from skilled craft processes and short print runs were still in their infancy in 1912. [...] the high-volume industrialization of intaglio-printmaking (as rotogravure) which had such an important role in expensive magazine printing from the 1920s onwards, was still in its infancy in 1912.’ Tom Gretton, ‘From *La Méduse* to the *Titanic*. Géricault’s *Raft* in Journalistic Illustration up to 1912’, 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 16 (2013), n. p.. Gretton relies here on Otto Lilien, *History of Industrial Gravure Printing up to 1920* (London: Lund Humphries, 1971).

⁴⁵¹ Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

*Wochenschau*en, weekly magazines on films and other cinema news, emerged, and illustrated newspapers now almost exclusively relied on photographic reproductions. It was only then that – alongside the changes in the film industry and advertising – a new and expanded visual culture developed. The graphic arts in particular were at a crossroads between the manual and photomechanical processes of reproduction. It is in this historic context that painters like Dix had to rethink the place of their work.

Considering the art historical writing about photographic reproductions of artworks in the 1920s, there appears to be a gap between Hamann's essays of 1911 and Panofsky's engagement with the debate in his 1930 essay 'Original und Faksimilereproduktion'.⁴⁵² When looking for other influential voices, László Moholy-Nagy's book *Malerei – Fotografie – Film*, first published in 1925, comes to mind, which addressed in other ways the relationship between painting and photography.⁴⁵³ Panofsky focused specifically on facsimile reproductions of paintings and sculptures, and this in a more differentiated way than had been done before, taking into account those aspects of colour reproductions of paintings that remained manual, and developing the idea of 'reproductive optics'.⁴⁵⁴ He clearly differentiated facsimiles on the one hand from photographic reproductions of paintings on the other, but without discussing the latter, even though this was the medium most commonly used in books, newspapers and journals. Panofsky's focus was on identifying the remaining formal differences between

⁴⁵² Erwin Panofsky, 'Original und Faksimilereproduktion', *Der Kreis*, 7 (1930), 3-16; repr. in 'Original and Facsimile Reproduction', trans. by Timothy Grundy, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 57/58, (Spring Autumn 2010), 330-338. Panofsky also made, like Hamann in 1911, a clear distinction between reproductions of sculptures and those of paintings, since the photographer had artistic choices in how to photograph a sculpture.

⁴⁵³ On this issue see for example Éva Forgács, "'This Is the Century of Light': László Moholy-Nagy's Painting and Photography Debate in *i10*, 1927", *Leonardo*, 50 (2017), 274-278. For an English translation of his text see László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting – Photography – Film*, trans. by Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphries: 1969).

⁴⁵⁴ Panofsky, p. 332.

the original and its best possible copy, and the question whether a facsimile could really be confused with the original or not.

The most influential text on the reproduction of images to this day is, of course, Walter Benjamin's 'The Artwork in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility', composed in several versions between 1935 and 1939. It is today seen by many to be the founding text on media aesthetics, and may, as Miriam Bratu Hansen has suggested, 'have been more often quoted than any other single text', at least in academic literature.⁴⁵⁵ However, a different essay, published a year after Dix painted the Eulenberg portrait, and before Panofsky and Benjamin entered the debate, offers some further interesting insight we should take note of.

In 1926, five years before Benjamin's essay '*Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie*' ('Little History of Photography') and almost a decade before his 'Artwork' essay would be published, art historian and critic Oskar Schürer, who had gained his doctorate with Richard Hamann in Marburg in 1920 and worked as an art critic from 1922 onwards, published a short article entitled 'Original and Reproduction' in the journal *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*.⁴⁵⁶ What was new and remarkable about it was that he did seem to surrender the original artwork's medium specificity in a way that went further than Hamann. Importantly, he was taking into account developments that had taken place in

⁴⁵⁵ Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema', *October*, 109 (Summer, 2004), 3-45 (p. 30).

⁴⁵⁶ Although never a party member, Oskar Schürer conformed to the Nazi regime and became professor for art history in Munich in 1939. Despite this, he was able to continue to teach after the war, and Hans Georg Gadamer delivered the eulogy at his funeral in 1949. See Trapp, Gerhard, 'Der Begeisterte. Der nur bedingt begeistert: Prag-Monograph Oskar Schürer', (2019) <<https://kulturportal-west-ost.eu/korrespondenzen/der-begeisterte>> [accessed 15 May 2018]. On his work as an art historian see 'Oskar Schürer', *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon. Zweihundert Porträts deutschsprachiger Autoren aus vier Jahrhunderten*, ed. by Peter Betthausen et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), pp. 375-378. This entry does not contain any information on his activities as an art critic in the 1920s.

the fifteen years since Hamann's essay had been published. And, as we will see, it is in the context of new technological achievements in the production of coloured oil prints that some of Dix's paintings constituted a significant response. Schürer wrote:

When we were young, the fight against bad quality reproductions had just started. Every type of "oil pigment print" [or "oleographs"] had been discredited, and not least we ourselves were among those who passionately supported the cleansing of rooms, the "Salons", of clichéd art history. [...] That dozen of years that has passed since has again brought a fundamental change. [...] Let's take a closer look. The same taste that had to condemn in the recent past can approve today. Not it, no: what is being judged has changed: the reproduction! [...] The exquisite quality-reproduction is an achievement of recent years.⁴⁵⁷

Hamann had already introduced the idea that the original might disappoint after viewing a copy in the medium of photography or photogravure. Focusing on sculpture, Hamann had argued that the original might seem less interesting than the reproduction, because of the ways in which sculpture could be dramatized by the choice of aspect, angle and lighting in a photograph or a drawing. He also had things to say about painting, where the case was somewhat reversed, suggesting that the viewer, having seen the artwork in reproduction first, might find the original too – rather than less – intense, specifically too aggressively colourful. Reproductions of paintings, therefore, had a softening, flattening effect which, he argued, did not challenge human perception sufficiently, and, even worse, they could prevent perception from fully developing.⁴⁵⁸ What Hamann could not take into account, however, were the new kind of colour reproductions of paintings that were much closer to the original than was previously possible, and that could now be produced on a larger scale.

⁴⁵⁷ Oskar Schürer, 'Original und Reproduktion', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 59 (1926/27), 174-176 (p. 174).

⁴⁵⁸ Richard Hamann, 'Zeichnende Künste und Photographie', *Die Rheinlande*, 21 (1911), 30-33.

The parameters of aesthetic judgement had shifted with gradual improvements in the technology, not taste itself, as Schürer argued in 1926. In this, he was referring specifically to the emergence of the so-called ‘Piper prints’ produced by Reinhard Piper since November 1923, which came in the same size as the original painting and included a facsimile frame, too.⁴⁵⁹ It is also important to highlight here that Panofsky would use watercolours by Cézanne as an example of an artwork transferred into a facsimile print by Piper in his essay, in other words an artwork and its copy that were both produced in the same medium – on paper – even though, of course, one was created by hand and the other (mostly) by mechanical means. This also raises the issue of the term ‘facsimile’, and how exact a copy had to be in order to be defined as such. It appears that for some art historians, the production of facsimiles of hand-made watercolours was acceptable because the copy was less ‘other’ than it would have been if the original had been an oil painting on canvas – something Piper also offered. This issue is highlighted by the falling out between erstwhile collaborators art historian Julius Meier-Graefe and entrepreneur Reinhard Piper because Meier-Graefe wanted to limit facsimile prints to copies of graphic works on paper. In his opinion, only artworks originally made on paper should be reproduced on paper, too.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ Publisher Reinhard Piper and the art historian Julius Meier-Graefe had founded the *Marées Gesellschaft*, a member-based association of collectors and art enthusiasts. It was founded in 1917 and originally produced high-quality portfolios and illustrated books alongside original graphics works and high-quality facsimile prints produced with an unusual attention to the quality of their manufacture. Piper explains in his biography that they had to set up their own press [*Lichtdruckerei*] because their obsession with the highest possible similarity of the colours between original and facsimile meant that commercial printers had quickly lost their patience due to their demands. However, Piper founded ‘Piper Prints’, to be able to reproduce oil paintings on paper, because Meier-Graefe wanted to limit facsimile prints to artworks that were works on paper in the original, too, such as drawings and pastels. Piper himself seemed to have wanted to mitigate the number of copies because he deliberately chose less popular and less well-known paintings. See: Reinhard Piper, *Mein Leben als Verleger: Vormittag, Nachmittag* (Munich: Piper, 1964), p. 372-80.

⁴⁶⁰ See above. Piper, p. 372-80.

In his autobiography, Reinhard Piper would many decades later emphasise that he had always made it clear to those surprised by the quality of his facsimiles that he was not using a new process, but that he simply produced them with unprecedented rigour by comparing the results with the original again and again until ‘the colours matched those of the original as much as humanly possible’.⁴⁶¹ It is exactly the superior facsimile reproductions sold by Piper that prompted Oskar Schürer to take on the issue again. Using some of the ideas developed by Hamann, and updating them for a new situation, he came to some further-reaching and deliberately more provocative conclusions.

Schürer argued that since the Piper prints had been launched, the quality of colour reproductions was such that the ‘the reproduction is not an allusion to the actual [artwork] any longer’: it made the original entirely superfluous.⁴⁶² The copy could now provide the same aesthetic experience as the original. However, in contrast to how Panofsky would approach the issue of the facsimile in ‘Original and Facsimile Reproduction’ in 1930, Schürer did not discuss or claim that these kinds of reproductions were deceiving the viewer into believing that he was actually looking at an original. What unites these scholars is that they were both pointing out that a new situation had arisen because of how ‘good’⁴⁶³ (to use the qualitative term Panofsky employed) the new Piper reproductions were.

Schürer’s thinking about the effect of reproductions in the context of a wider aesthetic economy was innovative because some of the conclusions he drew were based not on their increased number per se, but on a new quality certain types of prints could possess.

⁴⁶¹ Piper, p. 379.

⁴⁶² Schürer, p. 174.

⁴⁶³ Panofsky, p. 332.

Benjamin's 'Artwork' essay would not concern itself with the qualitative differences between photographic reproductions, such as the photographic positive and its reproduction in an illustrated magazine; instead he focused on the change in status that the original had undergone. He argued that under technological reproduction the 'aura' of the authentic work of art 'withered', and he made clear the relation between reproduction and original image: 'Uniqueness and permanence are as closely entwined in the latter as are transitoriness and repeatability in the former.'⁴⁶⁴ According to Benjamin, the artwork itself had changed fundamentally and irreversibly because of the possibility of its unlimited reproduction. This was not entirely negative, Benjamin suggested, because he saw great political potential in the liberation of the artwork from the 'criterion of authenticity'.⁴⁶⁵ While the level of quality and degree of similarity of the mechanical copy to the original artwork seems to have been a negligible detail for Benjamin because of how he conceptualized the issue, to Schürer – considering his arguments specifically applied to the new, high quality Piper prints – this aspect seemed very relevant indeed.

Benjamin argued that since 'from a photographic plate, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense'.⁴⁶⁶ However, mechanical reproductions could differ from each other. They could be based on different photographic plates or be produced using different mechanical and chemical processes and by people with different levels of skills. In 1926, the same year in which Schürer's essay appeared, Adolf Behne addressed the issue of the different stages of mechanical image reproduction in an article about illustrated newspapers. He said that

⁴⁶⁴ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 23.

⁴⁶⁵ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 25.

⁴⁶⁶ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', pp. 24-25.

what impacted on the qualities of a reproduced image were decisions made at two stages: both the technological process used to take the photograph and the technology used to reproduce it on paper.⁴⁶⁷ This is important because the reproductions of Dix's Eulenberg portrait in art journals and books may all have been based on the same photographic negative, but they were printed in publications that varied in terms paper quality and the refinement of the printing processes employed.

As Panofsky pointed out in regard to facsimiles, the 'incompleteness of colour photography requires the insertion of the human hand in the making of facsimile reproductions', more specifically, 'a human being needs to choose the printing colours that are applied to the printing plates and then modulates these until they reach the definitive tonal value'.⁴⁶⁸ According to Benjamin, mechanical reproductions were more 'independent'⁴⁶⁹ from the original than hand-made copies, such as lithographs or etchings – but Piper prints were hybrids. Furthermore, photographers who worked in black-and-white had to apply and modulate chemical solutions and paints, too. Some painters might even take photographs of their work themselves and produce photographic prints only in limited numbers. This complicates Benjamin's conceptualization of the issues of 'authenticity' and 'reiterability' further. What is more, some photographic plates were not very durable, limiting the number of prints one could produce, especially if this occurred decades later. This would become an problem for Dix in the 1950s when he wanted to order new prints from old photographic plates produced in the 1920s of paintings that had by then destroyed or lost – an issue we will return to.

⁴⁶⁷ Adolf Behne, 'Die Illustrierten', *Die Weltbühne*, 22.2 (1926), 187-189 (p. 187).

⁴⁶⁸ Panofsky, p. 333.

⁴⁶⁹ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 21

One significant aspect of the historical discourse about the reproduction of artworks has become clear: none of the authors discussed so far compared reproductions in different print mediums directly to each other in any detail, if at all. Behne focused on images in newspapers, Hamann discussed prints made after photographs and focused, like Benjamin, on photographic prints of artworks more generally. Benjamin only briefly mentioned illustrated magazines (and dedicated a large part of his essay to the discussion of film). All three developed their theories based on photographic reproductions that were almost exclusively black-and-white and that could reach a mass audience. In contrast, Panofsky and Schürer tried to conceptualize the effect of superior facsimiles, which were produced in colour in comparatively small quantities, on aesthetic judgement and perception. The reproductions of Dix's paintings to be discussed here, however, were printed in media outlets that occupied the middle ground in terms of quality and number of copies: art journals, cultural magazines and books.

In his article, Schürer made another daring claim concerning the viewer's perception of a facsimile reproduction. Rather than imbuing the original artwork with an 'aura' that, according to Benjamin, was the result of its history, the context of its display, historic ownership and location, its physical constitution and unique aesthetic qualities – features that could not be replicated – Schürer proposed something quite different. He pursued a point made by Hamann regarding the effect of seeing a reproduction *before* the original, specifically an extended exposure to a high-quality Piper reproduction

displayed in the home. This regular exposure, Schürer argued, could lead to a situation where ‘we hesitate when confronted with – the original’.⁴⁷⁰

Indeed, so completely did we give in to the pleasant illusion that we abandoned any thought of the original, that we denied the reality of the original [*entwirklichten*], and now, that it appears in front of us, it is almost alien to us in its factuality. This means: the reproduction is not the allusion to the actual any longer, as it was in the past, so that the encounter with the original seems to us like the longed for and pre-promised fulfilment. No, the quality of the reproduction has almost completely pre-empted this fulfilment.⁴⁷¹

Schürer suggested that the original artwork itself would have little to offer to this specific kind of viewer that he had not already experienced before, in other words, the painting he owned as a facsimile would not distinguish itself through an ‘aura’ for him. By speaking of ‘dematerialization’, he implied that the owner of a facsimile could almost forget that there was an original at all. His point here differs significantly from Benjamin’s position because the kind of reproductions Benjamin was focusing on did not look like originals, but were significantly inferior. In fact, when Benjamin argued that ‘in permitting the reproduction to reach the receiver in his own situation, it actualises that which is reproduced’,⁴⁷² this actualization could only be fragmentary. Benjamin focused primarily on the mobility of the image [*Bild*] based on its cheap multiplication and dissemination through mass media publications, on what could be transferred from the painted support into print.⁴⁷³ Schürer considered an entirely different situation when questioning the effect of long-term exposure to a facsimile that looked visually (as an image) and physically (as an object) almost the same as the original.

⁴⁷⁰ Schürer, p. 174.

⁴⁷¹ Schürer, p. 174

⁴⁷² Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art’, p. 22.

⁴⁷³ Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art’, p. 21.

Schürer's point did not concern the issue of the ability to judge quality, but a change in taste or personal preferences. Schürer did not address this further, but it is safe to say that the owner of a facsimile could still have an interest in the history of the original artwork and its creator when seeing the original on display, he could appreciate the age and changing ownership of the original, and he could enjoy the context of a museum, which also validated his own taste in art. Perhaps this is what Schürer was thinking of when suggesting that the original '*almost*' pre-empted what was expected from an encounter with the original, because – visually – it had little new to offer.

Particularly hard to digest for Schürer's contemporary peers would have been his contention that, for some, the facsimile reproductions could even be preferable to the original because of what they were looking for in an aesthetic experience once their perceptive faculties had been preconditioned by repeated exposure to the copy. The expectation of what an artwork should look like had thereby changed, and with this came – by extension – the fundamental change in the status of art, and of the way perception was organised, that Benjamin would later identify. Schürer's argument was different from Panofsky's contention that people not sufficiently trained to differentiate between an original artwork and a copy suffered from a 'bluntness of organ' and a 'lack of experience'.⁴⁷⁴ Indeed Panofsky would hold on to the belief that the original would always be preferable once identified by a viewer, while Schürer remained ambivalent.

Schürer concluded his investigation into the readjustment that human perception had undergone with a challenging proposition, stating that: 'To make our feelings about this crystal clear: the original, finally seen after exposure to many reproductions –

⁴⁷⁴ Panofsky, p. 332.

disappoints us.’⁴⁷⁵ Taking Cezanne’s *Young Man with a Red Waistcoat* at the ‘Dresdner Internationale Ausstellung’ as an example, he went even further:

The original seems almost superfluous to us after the excellent print by Piper. The multiplication of the original exemplar [...] has watered it down so to speak, has soaked up the values only the original is entitled to. The original, not the reproduction, is devalued.⁴⁷⁶

Unfortunately, Schürer did not elaborate on exactly what qualities the reproduction had absorbed from the original, but by arguing that ‘multiplication’ has watered down the original, he pre-empted, to an extent, Benjamin’s observation a few years later that the original artwork itself was denuded once it was endlessly reproduced. Schürer claimed that it would now take a conscious effort on the part of the viewer to appreciate the original, to find ‘authentic pleasure’, as he said, in looking at the original brushstrokes, at the canvas worked on by the painter himself.⁴⁷⁷ Towards the end of his essay, however, in a gesture of appeasement, he suggested that he had exaggerated his argument. But nonetheless, he had addressed questions that had gained a new dimension from around 1923 and would start to be more fully addressed in the 1930s by Benjamin.⁴⁷⁸ Key for this thesis is that the issues that concerned Schürer were exactly those that painters who had to promote their work using photographs had to engage with.

⁴⁷⁵ Schürer, p. 174.

⁴⁷⁶ Schürer, p. 174.

⁴⁷⁷ Schürer, p. 174.

⁴⁷⁸ While Moholy-Nagy, in contrast, did not address the issue of photographic reproductions of paintings in much depth in his book *Painting – Photography – Film*, first published in 1925, he did, however, suggest that there could be future image libraries in private homes with high quality copies of artworks, produced ‘with the aid of exact mechanical and technical instruments’ (p. 25), i.e. facsimiles. This could ensure a ‘wide dissemination of art’ and he embraced the idea that ‘we can today free ourselves from the domination of the individual hand-made piece and its market value’ (p. 25). See ‘Domestic Pinacotheca’, in Moholy-Nagy, *Painting – Photography – Film*, pp. 25-26.

Significantly, Dix explicitly addressed a similar issue with reproductions in a recorded conversation in 1963. He suggested that people could be either ‘delighted or disappointed’ when seeing the original painting after having previously seen its reproduction in colour in a book or other print publication.⁴⁷⁹ Dix even claimed that he himself was ‘always at first disappointed when I see the [original] picture. Because the reproduction is more digestible [*geniessbarer*]. Firstly it is small. Secondly it is so harmonious’, while the real painting ‘is much more chaotic and wild, much, much, much, much more unpleasant, much more random, much more diverse, much rougher’.⁴⁸⁰ Dix also had a very specific opinion of reproductions of his own work, which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Unlike in France, where Paris was the centre of artistic production, German artists were spread out across the country, living in many different cities. While the large number of group exhibitions staged across Germany helped many to find a national audience, artists from Dresden to Munich and Berlin still had to find additional ways to communicate with potential buyers or colleagues, to attract the interest of critics, editors and gallerists, who could not always easily visit the studio or an exhibition. Posting photographs of paintings and producing graphic works on paper were therefore useful and affordable ways to advertise works. Dix did both, never relying exclusively on the efforts of his dealer Karl Nierendorf.

⁴⁷⁹ *Otto Dix spricht über Kunst, Religion, Krieg. Gespräch mit Freunden am Bodensee* (St. Gallen: Erker, 1963) [LP recording]. Reprinted in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis* (Berlin: Henschel, 1981), pp. 255-260 (here p. 260).

⁴⁸⁰ *Otto Dix spricht*, in Schmidt, p. 260.

Art critic Curt Glaser contended in 1922 in *Deutsche Graphik des Westens*, referring to the first two decades of the twentieth century, that never before had so much graphic art on paper, from woodcuts to etching and lithography, i.e. art made for multiplication, been produced.⁴⁸¹ With the end of the 1910s, he warned, this had tipped over into overproduction. There were now ‘masses with which the market is flooded’, and the Expressionists had been particularly prolific.⁴⁸² This also had to do with the rising number of artists and their economic struggles after the First World War and the rapid inflation that followed. Works on paper were cheaper for artists to produce and for collectors to buy.⁴⁸³ Works designed for black-and-white reproduction, such as woodcuts, drawings, photographs of sculptures or architecture, were also still the preferred choice for illustrations in art journals and newspapers in the early 1920s. As Rolf Sachsse writes: ‘Colour printing was used very occasionally in magazines before the First World War, but was not employed widely because of its high cost.’⁴⁸⁴ When it came to black-and-white reproductions of oil paintings in art journals or elsewhere, neither Impressionism nor Expressionism had been particularly suited to it because only slow progress had been made to improve the quality of colour photography and of photographic prints in colour on paper.⁴⁸⁵ Although several methods of colour

⁴⁸¹ Curt Glaser, ‘Vom Graphik-Sammeln’, in *Deutsche Graphik des Westens*, ed. by Hermann von Wedderkop (Weimar: Feuer, 1922), 13-19 (p. 19).

⁴⁸² Glaser, ‘Vom Graphik-Sammeln’, p. 18. For an introduction to the role of print making Expressionism and its popularity until around 1923 see *The Print in Germany 1880-1933. The Age of Expressionism*, ed. by Frances Carey and Anthony Griffiths (London: British Museum Publications, 1984).

⁴⁸³ See Dennis Crockett, *Post-Expressionism in Germany, 1919 – 1925* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 28.

⁴⁸⁴ Sachsse, p. 211.

⁴⁸⁵ Among the photographers working in Germany on improving the quality of colour photographs on paper was Rudolf Dührkoop (died 1918).

photography had been invented since the mid-1800s, photography and print culture remained almost exclusively black-and-white into the 1930s.⁴⁸⁶

With the exception of one reproduction the painting *The Salon I* (1921) in half-tone colour print in Willi Wolfradt's monograph on the artist in 1924 (figure 50), Dix's works in art journals, books and magazines, were also usually printed in black-and-white in the 1920s.⁴⁸⁷ This colour reproduction illustrated the weaknesses of the medium with its clearly visible grid of dots and limited colour range, and its lack of ability to convey any surface qualities of the original painting. In fact, it is somewhat surprising that it was only very occasionally that an effort was made by writers to give the readers of art journals a sense of the colours, the medium, or the size of the artworks they were referring to in their writing. What is more, their analysis commonly focused on the work of an artist or his artistic personality in more general terms rather than on specific artworks. It was rare that a writer referred to any of the images reproduced alongside his article (as would be expected today). This is something an editor like Paul Westheim could do more easily, however, because he had control over what images would be published alongside his own texts in the *Kunstblatt*. One of the writers who seems to not only have been very aware of the deficiencies of reproductions (and the

⁴⁸⁶ Sachse explains: 'The time after the First World War represented a gap in the production of color printing and color photography, at least in the area of the production of new illustrated books in colour.' [...] Sachse writes that colour was not part of the 'discussion surrounding "neusachliche" photography and the "Neues Sehen" of the "Neuen Photographen" [...] [and that] if colour had been desired, these photographers would certainly have made every effort to work in colour.' Sachse sees the reason for this in the continuing influence of pre-war art photography 'which privileged the focus on detail as opposed to the reproduction of reality or the technologically achieved facture of the image (in print [*Edeldruck*]), and – by aligning photography with graphic art – did not need or miss colour.' Sachsse, Rolf, 'Das gedruckte farbige Bild', in *Farbe im Foto. Die Geschichte der Farbphotographie von 1861 bis 1981* (Cologne: Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle, 1981), pp. 207-218 (p. 213). Colour photography was introduced into the mainstream in the 1930s and, as a result, book publications in colour quickly increased in number.

⁴⁸⁷ Coloured half-tone print. Willi Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, *Junge Kunst*, 41 (Leipzig: Klinkhardt and Biermann, 1924), frontispiece.

lack of information given), but who also made an effort to connect the reproduction with the original, was Franz Roh. In his seminal 1925 book *Nach-Expressionismus*, Roh insisted on the importance of a specific choice of colour in a painting, highlighting for example the ‘cooled down, often magically shimmering colour not yet consistently without a hint of the toxic’ in Davringhausen’s work.⁴⁸⁸ Roh often described colours, occasionally even named the medium of an artwork explicitly and – even more unusually – the size of the works that were reproduced alongside his texts. Roh ended an article on Ringelnatz, published in 1927 in the *Kunstblatt*, with the statement: ‘All the reproduced works are oil paintings on canvas, on average 45 x 35 centimetres in size.’⁴⁸⁹

Another issue relevant to this enquiry also has to be addressed: the question of whether these developments had any *direct* effect on art making. It was again Schürer who also specifically addressed the repercussions with regards to the original artwork itself, and this was perhaps his most challenging point. He proposed that directed action on the side of artists was inevitable. In contrast, writers like Panofsky presumed that painters would not be engaged in these processes at all.⁴⁹⁰ When Benjamin wrote that ‘to an ever-increasing degree, the work of art reproduced becomes the preproduction of a work designed for reproducibility. From a photographic plate, for example, one can make any number of prints’.⁴⁹¹ By this Benjamin did not mean that a painting would now be conceived with reproducibility in mind; instead ‘a work designed for reproducibility’ was a photograph or a film. In other words he was referring to a cultural context in

⁴⁸⁸ Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus. Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt and Biermann, 1925), p. 78.

⁴⁸⁹ ‘Alle abgebildeten Arbeiten sind Ölbilder auf Leinwand, durchschnittlich 45x35 Zentimeter groß.’ Franz Roh, ‘Malereien von Ringelnatz. Ein neuer Beitrag zur Laienkunst’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 9 (1927), 63-66 (p. 66).

⁴⁹⁰ Panofsky, p. 332.

⁴⁹¹ Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art’, p. 24-25.

which creative production was shifting from hand-made artworks towards art made with reproductive technology.

Schürer therefore went further than Benjamin in his prediction about the future of art making in the age of its mechanical reproducibility by suggesting that an original artwork such as a painting may even have been adapted specifically to make a successful picture out of its inevitable reproduction:

Original as reproduction, that is their problem. This means: they want to let the process of creation feed into the technological transponents [*Transponenten*] from the moment of conception in order to ensure themselves – by avoiding anything manual – that the original has both the objective precision and the option for unlimited mass-production. [...] Success will depend on the development of a convincing type of image that corresponds to this form of [artistic] production.⁴⁹²

The problem with Schürer's statement is that he does not clearly explain whether he is referring to painting or other methods of image production. When writing that artists may be 'avoiding anything manual', he could well have meant that they avoided a hand-made aesthetic, for example obvious brush work, that would not translate well into a reproduction (rather than suggesting that the artwork itself was not made by hand, i.e. a photograph). It is not inconceivable that Schürer was thinking about the smooth application of paint and precise rendering of objects in *Neue Sachlichkeit* paintings when writing his article. He was still discussing a 'process of creation' that 'feeds into' the transfer into a reproduced image. What is unclear, however, is whether Schürer considered *neusachlich* paintings to be a 'convincing type of image'.

⁴⁹² Schürer, p. 176.

What I propose in this chapter is that Dix did exactly what Schürer may have complained about here: that he conceived the 1925 *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* in a specific way based on a consideration of how it would look in black-and-white reproduction, how it would be translated into print by what Schürer described as ‘technological transponents’ that feed into the ‘process of creation’. And that this had more to do with the fact that in reproduction, there was little trace of the kind of manual process Dix had applied when creating the portrait in oil on canvas. When Dix’s portrait of Herbert Eulenberg was reproduced in a newspaper or art journal, it looked exactly like the artist had anticipated it would look, calling into question, in another way, the supposedly clean-cut differentiation between genuine artwork and inauthentic copy.

Oil Print Aesthetics: Hans Tietze and Paul Westheim

The years 1922 and 1923 were an important moment not just in the development of Dix’s work, but also in his appraisal by critics. There were two influential writers who identified a specific aesthetic peculiarity to some of his artistic output: that it was appropriating the aesthetic specific to coloured, cheaply mass produced copies of paintings. These were Hans Tietze and Paul Westheim.

In 1922 Paul Westheim published a programmatic essay entitled ‘The Upstart Oleograph’ in the *Kunstblatt* which explored an idea that has received little attention in the research on Dix to date.⁴⁹³ Westheim first described the general public’s love of

⁴⁹³ Paul Westheim, ‘Der arrivierte Öldruck’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 344-348. While Erin Sullivan Maynes’ mentions this article in her thesis ‘Speculating on Paper: Print Culture and the German Inflation 1918-1924’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southern California, 2014), she is not discussing the issue the title refers to in terms of aesthetics, or its relationship to Dix’s paintings. I have adopted the translation of the title from Maynes’ thesis (see footnote 6 in her thesis). As Hans Wallenberg has explained, *Öldruck* (also *Ölfarbendruck* or *Oleographie*)

reproductions of famous paintings in coloured print or *Buntdruck*, citing an example of a painting ‘born’ to be an oil print, Gustav Richter’s portrait *Königin Louise auf der Treppe* of 1879, a work extremely popular at the time and available in a range of different types of colour reproductions.⁴⁹⁴ He also referred to the reproduction of popular commercial images, specifically a soap box design with a male figure he described as a ‘chromo-prince’, a *Chromoprinz* that could be found decorating the walls of many homes at the time. He thereby aligned cheaply reproduced artworks and commercial graphic design, and his biting description of the taste of ‘the masses’ in art was followed by his mocking advice for contemporary artists looking to reach a wider audience: ‘Let’s try it with the drastically figurative, with art that looks like an oil print’.⁴⁹⁵ Original paintings that adopted the aesthetics of mass produced oil prints, he suggested, would appeal to people who found pleasure ‘in the drastically figurative, crassly obvious and overly explicit, the spotlessly smooth, colourfully made-up, maudlin sentimentality’.⁴⁹⁶ Westheim had identified artists who had already started to apply this approach, specifically a new group of painters, many of whom would soon be described as ‘*neusachlich*’. These artists were Grosz, Schlichter, Scholz, Davringhausen and Dix, alongside Masereel and Max Ernst. That this was a programmatic essay for Westheim can be confirmed by the fact that he reprinted it a year later in a collection of

was a type of chromolithography. To more successfully imitate the look of oil paintings, printed colour reproductions of paintings were often additionally imprinted with an engraved plate to recreate the texture of canvas and the facture of brush strokes, and finally they were finished with varnish, making it difficult for some non-specialists to identify the reproduction as a copy. See Hans Wallenberg *Grafische Techniken. Eine Ausstellung des Neuen Berliner Kunstvereins in den Räumen der Kunstbibliothek* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1973), p. 164. See also Willi Stubenvoll, ‘Technik und Fabrikation des Öldrucks in Deutschland’, in *Elfenreigen – Hochzeitstraum. Die Öldruckfabrikation 1880-1940* (Cologne: Dumont, 1974), pp. 141-153.

⁴⁹⁴ See Andreas Büttner, ‘Der Schutzgeist Preußens in Köln, Anmerkungen zum Bildnis der Königin Louise von Gustav Richter’, in *Arbeitskreis Bild Druck Papier*, 9, conference proceedings, Ittingen 2004, ed. by Christa Pieske, Konrad Vanja, Detlef Lorenz (Munster: Waxman, 2005), pp. 161-193. Büttner writes that in 1910, there was a spike in the number of reproductions of her portrait on the 100th anniversary of her death. (p. 186)

⁴⁹⁵ Westheim, ‘Öldruck’, p. 348.

⁴⁹⁶ Westheim, ‘Öldruck’, p. 348.

his essays in *Für und Wider. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Kunst der Gegenwart*.⁴⁹⁷ Westheim proposed, with an ironic undertone, that they might have discovered the key to interesting more people in contemporary art: ‘It may be possible to bring art out of its studio problems; [it is] possible also that we will succeed in reaching the many, the broad mass.’⁴⁹⁸ He was only half-joking when contending that their style of painting would be accepted either based on aesthetics alone or – and here he must have been thinking of content as well – because ‘stimulated nerves can take delight in yet another sensation’.⁴⁹⁹ Westheim coined a term to best describe this kind of art, although it would not catch on and has played practically no role in the research on Dix and his peers since: ‘The Upstart Oleograph’.⁵⁰⁰ Perhaps the adoption of the aesthetics of low quality copies of paintings was one of the features that prompted Carl Einstein to write in the same year about Dix that he ‘responds to kitsch with kitsch’.⁵⁰¹ Einstein mocked the kind of visual culture, the images and objects, that were part of what he called a ‘bourgeois reality’ characterised by ‘borrowed imagination, nimble knickknack, and oppressive conventionality’.⁵⁰² His choice of the term ‘borrowed’, or ‘*geleiert*’, suggested something copied, inauthentic, and popular art reproductions were part of this bourgeois reality.

⁴⁹⁷ Paul Westheim, *Für und Wider. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1923). This time he chose Davringhausen’s *Sunday Morning*, but the rest were different paintings: Dix’s *Double Portrait* (1922) of himself and his wife as dancers, Rudolf Schlichter’s *Filmdiva* of 1922, Scholz’s *Hohenecken*, Frans Masereel’s painting *Die Familie*, Walter Spies’ *Das Karussell*, but also a colourless drawing by George Grosz.

⁴⁹⁸ Westheim, ‘Öldruck’, p. 348.

⁴⁹⁹ Westheim, ‘Öldruck’, p. 348.

⁵⁰⁰ Although Maynes refers to Westheim’s essay in her doctoral thesis on Dix’s graphic art, she does not connect it to her analysis of Dix’s work, or the kind of paintings the term ‘upstart oleograph’ was specifically meant to refer to, because her focus is on Dix’s portfolio of colourless etchings and aquatints, *The War*, created between 1923 and 1924.

⁵⁰¹ Carl Einstein, ‘Otto Dix’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 97-102 (p. 101).

⁵⁰² ‘*geleierte Vorstellung, flinker Nepp und würgende Biederkeit*’. Einstein, ‘Otto Dix’, p. 97.

Dix and, in particular, Georg Scholz mocked the aesthetics of oil print reproductions with an ironic, knowing form of appropriation. Displayed in an exhibition, their paintings could impress or challenge a broad audience, and at the same time amuse art world insiders who were in on the joke. Alfred Salmony also identified this feature in Dix's work around 1920 when suggesting that the painter was looking 'for his artistic means [...] in the oil print', and that oil prints were the 'closest' in character to his colorful and collaged dadaist works.⁵⁰³ Curt Glaser described it in 1921 as the fashionable new 'trendy fairground art that George Grosz invented, Rudolf Schlichter further developed and the Dresden-based Dix has now also adopted'.⁵⁰⁴

The artworks Westheim chose as illustrations for his polemic article on 'The Upstart Oleograph' were, however, not Dix's coloured graphic works of fairground folk and sailors, or his dadaist pieces, but his more substantial oil painting *Death and Resurrection* (figure 51).⁵⁰⁵ In addition, Westheim had selected Georg Scholz's *Wir Deutschen fürchten Gott, sonst nichts auf der Welt* of 1921 (figure 52) and two works by Heinrich Maria Davringhausen, both dated 1922: a self-portrait and *Sunday Morning*, the latter the scene of a large pig in an attic. Only the caption next to the reproduction of the work by Scholz specified the original medium as a lithograph. The reader had to assume that the other works were paintings. The challenge, particularly for today's reader of the article, is to understand in what way these artworks had adopted the aesthetics of coloured oil prints when they appeared to be so diverse in style and were only reproduced in black-and-white.

⁵⁰³ Alfred Salmony, 'Dix als Porträtist', *Der Cicerone*, 17 (1925), 1045-49 (p. 1046).

⁵⁰⁴ Curt Glaser, *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, 149 (1 April 1921), cited in *Otto Dix. Welt und Sinnlichkeit*, ed. by Ulrike Lorenz (Regensburg: Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2005), p. 51.

⁵⁰⁵ Although this painting was printed a few pages before Westheim's article, it is the only text it actually relates to in the magazine and was certainly meant to be one of the illustrations for this article.

The similarity Westheim saw between these artworks – he had presumably seen the originals – must have been based on both the artists’ choice of colours, the motifs, and the smooth application of the paint, which suggested a toying with the aesthetics of inauthenticity of oil prints. The oil print, the medium known for the mass reproduction of original artworks, was an ‘upstart’, it had ‘arrived’, he said, since respected artists now worked in a way that made the original painting look like its own, more colourful and shiny, oil print reproduction. Hans Curjel gave Westheim’s new term or catchphrase further credibility when suggesting in an article on Georg Scholz that ‘the upstart oleograph [*arrivierte Öldruck*] is [...] not a joke by witty political artists, but the result of an artistic development that draws on fundamental laws of figurative composition (compare also the technique of the German Old Masters)’.⁵⁰⁶ These paintings could also have a more ‘immediate impact on the people’ than the preceding abstract tendencies in art.⁵⁰⁷ Curjel identified ‘strict craftsmanship’ and ‘subtle and microscopic painterly technique (smoothly coloured surface, glazes), that prevents all silly nonsense [*Flausen*] from the outset’ as features of this new style, but made clear, too, that its character was very different from what he described as the conservative, materialist naturalism of nineteenth century.⁵⁰⁸

While the paintings reproduced alongside Westheim’s article in the *Kunstblatt* have been lost, other works by Davringhausen produced around this time, such as *The Prostitute* of 1921 (figure 53), can perhaps give us an idea of the smooth surface effects, and the kitschy, hyperreal colours that must have made Westheim think of oil prints.

⁵⁰⁶ Curjel, p. 263.

⁵⁰⁷ Curjel, p. 259.

⁵⁰⁸ Curjel, p. 263.

Critic Robert Breuer, writing in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, claimed dismissively that what defined oil print reproductions was ‘the sweet, the sugary, the smooth, the slick, the fruit drop’.⁵⁰⁹ The paintings Westheim would have chosen as illustrations for his article would have had a smooth and glossy surface similar to oleographs, perhaps with subtle traces of brush work. Upmarket oil prints were often finished with varnish and, in fact, often not entirely smooth because they were imprinted with an engraved plate to create the effect of the structure of a canvas and of brush work to better hide that they were mass produced prints. What united these new kinds of paintings by artists such as Scholz and Dix was that they were trying to make viewers unsure about whether they were looking at a unique original artwork because of the way in which they had very obviously adopted the aesthetics of mechanical reproduction – although the content or image represented in these paintings would at the same time make obvious that they were not oil prints of artworks popular with a mass audience, such as *Königin Louise auf der Treppe*.

When Willi Wolfradt published his review of the *Juryfreie Kunstschau* in December 1922 in *Das Kunstblatt*, he highlighted ‘the stark smoothness of the facture’, the ‘crass sweetness of the colours’ of Dix’s works on display, and made the link between form and content when writing that the treatment of colours and facture ‘corresponds to the represented fakeness’.⁵¹⁰ In his essay dedicated entirely to this *Double-Portrait*, Wolfradt contended that the automaton-like characterisation of the two figures corresponded to something machinelike in the painterly aesthetics:

⁵⁰⁹ Robert Breuer, ‘Wer soll mich malen? Ein Gespräch von Robert Breuer’, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 64 (1929), 6-14 (p. 14).

⁵¹⁰ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Ausstellungen: Juryfreie Kunstschau Berlin’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 543-544 (p. 543).

The machine-like becomes part form-creating principle, part allegory that denounces the automatism of a mechanised world. At the same, time colour-print [*Buntdruck*] effects and meticulousness serve the stylistic intentions, which are closer to those of a classicist cult of the line and a radical objectivism than they themselves might be aware of [...].⁵¹¹

Wolfradt highlighted the simultaneity of style and representation when he described the ‘machine-like’ as a ‘form-creating principle’ and ‘allegory’, linking this to *Buntdruck* (another term for coloured oil prints). In this artwork, Dix alluded to both the mechanisation of art through the smooth aesthetics of reproduction and the mechanisation of human beings through the mannequin-like poses, as well as the template-like fashionable clothing and make-up of the two figures. Both images and people had become reproductions. The way an object was represented and the way paint was applied converged in this painting to create a powerful allegory for the loss of originality and individuality of both artworks and people.

In August 1923 Westheim employed the term ‘the upstart oleograph’ again, this time in an article about Dix in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. He described his cultural context as a time ‘when there is so much talk about craftsmanship’, put into practice by painters like Grosz, Schlichter and Scholz, but in particular by Dix, ‘who employs the draughtsmanship of painting and etching like the precision worker of modern mechanical engineering [*Präzisionsarbeiter*]’.⁵¹² These works were, he said, ‘the type of Verism that is addressed to the ordinary man, for whom artistic enjoyment means cinema, Sherlock Holmes and oil pigment print, the kind of Verism that I usually describe as “upstart oleograph”’.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Ein Doppelbildnis von Otto Dix’, *Der Cicerone*, 15 (1923), 173 - 178 (p. 177).

⁵¹² Paul Westheim, ‘Otto Dix’, in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 17 August 1923, p. 3. [KA].

⁵¹³ Westheim, ‘Otto Dix’, p. 3.

Another distinguished commentator also made the connection between Dix's paintings and mechanically produced oil prints two years later: Hans Tietze, one of the few tenured art historians to engage with the latest developments in art, in his book *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte*. But rather than describing these works as 'upstart oleograph', as Westheim had, he labelled them the '*rehabilitierte Öldruck*', the 'rehabilitated oil print' (or oleograph). The most recent artwork of the sixteen reproduced in the book was, in fact, Dix's *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg*, completed in the same year the book was published, and the only example of the new verist or *neusachlich* style.⁵¹⁴ There was no reason why Tietze would have selected this painting for who it portrayed. Rather, it was most likely chosen for another, more significant way in which it related to the content of his programmatic book. Although Andreas Strobl has noted that this illustration had no connection to the text in the book, Tietze did indeed mention Dix, although not in the pages adjoining the image.⁵¹⁵

Tietze made a specific point about contemporary painting that only Dix's picture could be related to. Firstly, he argued that the new realist aesthetics of the 1920s were to a great degree the result of a desire to reconnect to a broader audience:

Dix, Grosz, and in some way also Beckmann, search, with full awareness, for the lost connection to the broader mass, the only basis on which a quantitative

⁵¹⁴ Only a few of the sixteen image captions named the photographer or source of the reproduction (one of them was the Marburger Seminar, the other the commercial photographic studio Anderson in Rome) respected for their photographic of sculpture and architecture), the photographer of the reproduction of the Eulenberg painting is not named.

⁵¹⁵ Strobl, *Otto Dix*, p. 265. Strobl does not discuss the text by Tietze, but the reproduction appears in a list of reproductions of Dix's work before 1945 at the end his book with the note that it had no connection to Tietze's text.

impact is possible; they are spitting on the snobbism [*Geschmäcklertum*] of the exhausted ten thousand aestheticians, they are searching for the triviality not yet deformed by education [*unverbildet*] and the raw power of the undiscovered millions.⁵¹⁶

He described this historical development as the ‘rehabilitation of the oil print’, in other words as a re-evaluation and elevation of a type of image that had previously been treated with disdain by artists and intellectuals. Although he did not analyse the question of quality or the aesthetics of prints, Tietze believed, like Westheim, that he had identified a new artistic trend.

For Tietze, this type of artwork was ‘the necessary consequence of forces that are among the most powerful of our time’.⁵¹⁷ Although he remained silent on what exactly these powerful forces were, he was almost certainly thinking of the onslaught of mechanically reproduced images, of what shaped the tastes of the ‘masses’ and was in turn produced for them. The context for this was a general perception among art world insiders that there was now a greater disconnection between contemporary art and the majority of society. Tietze even suggested that art historians should try to embrace, or at least accept, this development as part of fine art’s natural trajectory: ‘But has not all growth [*Weiterwachsen*] in art, what the historian calls progress and development, happened because pioneers [*Bahnbrecher*] have conquered for art what was previously not [part of] it?’⁵¹⁸

Although the reader of Tietze’s book could only see Dix’s painting of Eulenberg as a black-and-white reproduction (figure 44), it was the only artwork that related to his

⁵¹⁶ Hans Tietze, *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte* (Vienna: Krystall, 1925), p. 31. Eulenberg is reproduced on page 88.

⁵¹⁷ Tietze, p. 31.

⁵¹⁸ Tietze, p. 31.

point about the aesthetics of coloured oil prints. Significantly for this enquiry, the reproduction of the Eulenberg picture looked a lot closer to the original painting than the other contemporary works chosen as illustrations in his book. The expressionist paintings by Kokoschka, Schmidt-Rottluff and Munch looked drained and lacked visual impact while Dix's portrait of Eulenberg looked sharp, inviting the gaze to linger and trace the lines, to study the details of the clothing and facial expression, and to consider the engaging characterisation of the poet. One hardly missed colour, despite the fact that this picture was supposed to illustrate a point very much to do with colour. The visual effect of the reproduction of Dix's work in Tietze's publication is only comparable to the photographs of medieval sculptures that were also reproduced. Plasticity, outline, and psychological expressiveness were key features of these wood and stone sculptures, and their photographic reproduction was able to convey them.

This chapter will now consider further whether, without a caption to provide information about the medium of the original artwork, the viewer of Tietze's book would even have recognised that the image of Eulenberg was a painting. Indeed, it is only through the photograph of an exhibition display, references to the painting in print publications of the time, and through letters by Dix, that we know this was the case.

Otto Dix on Reproductions

The idea that a specific attitude towards reproductions may have shaped Dix's artistic programme is supported by statements the artist himself made retrospectively on the subject, and there is evidence of his active engagement with the role reproductions played in the promotion of his work in his correspondence, too.

As mentioned earlier, Dix explicitly laid out his thoughts on reproductions in the 1960s in a rarely referred to, recorded conversation with friends. Colour modulation and *Faktur*, he made clear, were so central to his work that colour photography and print could not reproduce it in an adequate way, even with the technology then available. As he explained it, this was due to the ‘interesting distribution of the colour values [which] can be very dynamic and lively’ in a painting. Crucially, he identified it as the ‘only’ (perhaps he also meant the last) feature that differentiated paintings from other images: ‘The only thing the paintings have, the exciting aspect of the [colour] values, right. And that is what, in my opinion, the most refined print works [*Druckerei*] cannot create.’⁵¹⁹ In contrast to what one might expect, the conclusion the artist drew from this was that one should not even attempt to reproduce his paintings in colour. Reproductions should not aim to be as close to the original as possible, since the available processes were so deficient. This constituted an embrace of the qualities and strengths of both mediums in which a painting could be encountered, the original in colour and the *colourless* reproduction:

Well, I am in favour of a black-and-white print that does not correspond to the original, but is created [with] strong [contrasts]. One should take almost black for the dark colours and almost white for the light colour to create a rigid contrast. Therefore completely different to the painting. It should be different to the painting!⁵²⁰

He also stated that giving the mechanically printed image a more independent status, by way of a stronger impact using its own means, would also help mitigate the accusation of inauthenticity: ‘This is why I say: much better black-and-white because it is a stylisation! It is a translation into another form. Into an abstract non-colour, into black

⁵¹⁹ *Otto Dix spricht*, in Schmidt, p. 259.

⁵²⁰ *Otto Dix spricht*, in Schmidt, pp. 258-259.

and white, or rather grey, grey nuances. You can imagine the colour yourself.’⁵²¹ Hamann, on the other hand, had argued that while all types of ‘reproductions are not copies, but transfers into a new language, from one in colour to a colourless one’, only the transfer of a painting into a graphic work on paper, and *not a photographic print*, could be considered to be ‘an artwork in its own right’.⁵²²

To back up his own claims, Dix made clear how specific this was to his own brand of realism by arguing that not all painting styles were unsuitable for reproduction in colour. Reproductions in colour were appropriate for impressionist works, in his opinion, and for some abstract paintings. ‘My paintings, which have a form, an object, a light and dark, for them black-and-white is good. [...] Beautiful black-and-white reproductions.’⁵²³ This insistence on divergent aesthetics, on a stylisation of the original in reproduction, is essential to understanding why the portrait of Eulenberg worked so well in print, why it could so successfully undergo what Dix described as the process of ‘translation into another form’. It is my contention that Dix tried to ensure that his artwork could successfully transfer across media platforms because he adapted the original painting to ‘reproductive optics’, that he worked indirectly on the appearance of the work in reproduction to mitigate the potential devaluation of the original.

It is not a stretch to argue that Dix’s preference for strong black-and-white contrasts was shaped decades before he made this statement by the historically specific media culture of the 1920s when black-and-white reproductions were the norm. It would also have been shaped by his own production of graphic works, such as woodcuts, etchings and

⁵²¹ *Otto Dix spricht*, in Schmidt, p. 260.

⁵²² Hamann, ‘Zeichnende Künste’, p. 33.

⁵²³ Dix, in Schmidt, p. 260.

aquatint. These were for example used for his portfolio *Der Krieg (The War)*, created between 1923 and 1924. He also regularly participated in the ‘Schwarz-Weiss’-Ausstellung at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, which exclusively showed graphic works. In 1924, for example, Dix participated with eight lithographs.⁵²⁴ He later explained that he often translated his paintings into etchings as well because ‘one can say things in an even more penetrating, immediate way with these more basic [*einfacheren*] means’.⁵²⁵

For Dix, it seems, small images in black-and-white, based on photographs and then printed on paper in a journal, book or newspaper, were so far removed from the original painting that they provided entirely different aesthetic experiences. And this was not necessarily a bad thing. It opened up a new possibility: Could a case be made that when one of his paintings was printed in black-and-white in a mass produced medium, the resulting image should not even be described as a ‘re’-production at all?

Dix would find the problem he had with colour reproductions, voiced in 1963, justified in the late 1960s when, as a result of revived public interest in his work, a number of illustrated scholarly books were published. Early in 1967 he wrote to Fritz Löffler, who was preparing an extended re-issue of his monograph about Dix, that ‘hopefully the images won’t be as bad as in the Hamburg catalogue. These are lousy [*saumäßig*]’.⁵²⁶ When the monograph by Löffler was released later that year, Dix wrote again, this time

⁵²⁴ Strobl, *Otto Dix*, p. 246.

⁵²⁵ Otto Dix in conversation with Diether Schmidt. Schmidt, p. 280.

⁵²⁶ Letter to Fritz Löffler, 2 March 1967, Hemmenhofen, in Otto Dix, *Briefe*, ed. by Ulrike Lorenz (Cologne: Wienand, 2013), p. 754.

to thank Löffler enthusiastically. He still expressed disappointment, however, with at least some of the colour reproductions:

The turquoise on the right panel of the war picture is bad of course, because the original was not available when making the proof. The colour of the family portrait (sleeve) seems too sweet [underlined in the original, A.R.] for me, but I can't remember it anymore. – The left panel of the war painting, too, is too nebulous, the middle section is magnificent. Very nice in terms of colour is no. 27 *Alter Arbeiter*.⁵²⁷

By the 1960s, colour reproductions were common and this brought with it a new complication not encountered with black-and-white prints. Print works struggled to reproduce the exact colours of the original, which remains a problem, albeit to a lesser degree (compare for example the reproductions of *Self-Portrait with Nude Model*, figures 54 and 55). In 1967, Dix was also in discussion with another historian supportive of his work, Otto Conzelmann, about the latter's forthcoming book. Referring to the book by Löffler, which had just been published, he complained to Conzelmann that the colours of the *War* painting, the *Kriegsbild*, were not correct because Ektachromes had been used rather than the original artworks as a basis for the colour reproductions: 'An Ektachrome is rarely correct in its colours', he stated, 'it tends towards green and red, and this can only be reproduced correctly if the printer mixes the paint based on the original.'⁵²⁸ It would 'not make sense to make Ektachromes', he wrote: 'The drawings that you want to print in colour have to be sent to the print works so that the colours will be mixed correctly based on the original.'⁵²⁹ Even more problematic was that copies were sometimes made based on previous copies,

⁵²⁷ He is referring to the large oil painting *War* (1929-1932). Otto Dix, letter to Fritz Löffler, 26 April 1967, Hemmenhofen, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 755. Fritz Löffler's *Otto Dix. Leben und Werk* had just been published by the Verlag der Kunst Dresden. In another letter to Löffler, written on the 29th March 1967, he nevertheless complained when a publisher did not use enough illustrations in monographs about his work (see Dix, *Briefe*, p. 755).

⁵²⁸ Letter to Otto Conzelmann, 3 May 1967, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 756.

⁵²⁹ Letter to Conzelmann, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 756.

i.e. based on other colour prints. The image in the book would thus be twice removed from the original.

Both Dix's interviews and his letters are evidence of the artist's strong engagement with the issue of reproductions. What has to be kept in mind here, however, is that the paintings he created in the 1920s, such as the portrait of Eulenberg, were made at a time when he could expect that they would likely only be reproduced in black-and-white, while the situation was different in the decades that followed.

Otto Dix and Hugo Erfurth

Between 1922 and 1925, during his time living in Düsseldorf, Dix worked hard to establish a viable career as an artist, not least because of the increased economic pressure after hyperinflation and because he now had a wife to support, too. The first articles about him had started to appear in art journals and some works were being sold by the small, make-shift gallery of Johanna Ey in Düsseldorf, before he would be represented by Nierendorf.⁵³⁰ He understood that these years were crucial; important decisions had to be made, and this included which works should be submitted to group exhibitions, or sent in photographic reproduction to editors, writers and journalists. Every publication that mentioned his name or reproduced his work was meticulously collected.⁵³¹ For evidence that Dix was aware that media exposure could play an

⁵³⁰ See Annette Baumeister, *Treffpunkt "Neue Kunst": Erinnerungen der Johanna Ey*, (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1999). Ey recalls how Dix sent her works on paper, which she started to sell, before sending her a photograph of himself and later coming to visit for the first time only after he had received the money from the first sale (p.78).

⁵³¹ Dix most likely engaged an agency for this, alongside the newspapers and journals he and his family and friends would have collected. (Conversation with Rainer Pfefferkorn, Dix Archive Vaduz, 2013). For analysis of the practice of collecting newspaper clippings see: Anke te

important role in his critical and commercial reception, and that he took active charge of this, it is necessary to explore his relationship with one of the most preeminent photographers in Germany at the time: Hugo Erfurth.

It is well known that Erfurth took many portrait photographs of Dix over the course of the 1920s and beyond, and that Dix in turn created two large portrait paintings, as well as many drawings, of Erfurth. What is rarely mentioned, however, is the fact that Dix had originally approached the photographer, probably around 1920, to commission him to make photographic reproductions of his work. As Stephen Bann has written: ‘The photography of paintings, and other works of art, has by the beginning of the twenty-first century been functionally inserted into the publishing process, so that we rarely venture to ask for the name of the photographer responsible for a particular print [...]’.⁵³² Erfurth did indeed produce photographic reproductions of Dix’s artworks well beyond the 1920s.⁵³³ There are still over a hundred photographic glass plates of paintings, taken by Erfurth, in the Dix archive in Vaduz.⁵³⁴ These would have been created and used by Erfurth to make the positives, or they could be stored to task someone else at a later stage with the production of new prints, as long as the plates were still usable. Unfortunately, image captions provided in art journals in the 1920s

Heesen, *The Newspaper Clipping: A Modern Paper Object*, Rethinking Art’s Histories (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

⁵³² Stephen Bann, *Parallel Lines. Printmakers, Painters and Photographers in Nineteenth Century France* (New Haven: Yale, 2001), pp. 210-211.

⁵³³ Only Schubert clearly states that Erfurth regularly took photographs of Dix’s work and discusses their relationship in detail in Dietrich Schubert “‘Ein harter Mann dieser Maler’: Otto Dix – fotografiert von Hugo Erfurth”, in *Hugo Erfurth. 1874-1948. Photograph zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, ed. by Bodo von Dewitz and Karin Schuller-Procopovici (Cologne: Wienand, 1992), pp. 86-96. There are also several letters sent between Dix and Karl Nierendorf that refer to Dix having paid Nierendorf in original graphic works for his services. In 1935 both complain in letters to each other that Erfurth was trying to sell some of Dix’s works and that he had threatened Dix with a court order should he not pay for the latest photographs with more artworks. See Dix, *Briefe*, p. 808.

⁵³⁴ See Strobl, ‘Otto Dix und Hugo Erfurth’, note 20.

only very occasionally named the photographer who created the photograph used for the reproduction on paper.

The photographic plates of Dix's work became very important for the reconstruction of his oeuvre after some works were destroyed by the Nazi regime. Throughout the 1950s, when public and scholarly interest in his work slowly resumed, Dix did not just try to locate many of his works, he also corresponded extensively with scholars who wanted to publish books about him. In many of these letters, he requests that the authors should confirm receipt of photographs or photographic plates that he had sent, to emphasize how important they were and that they should be sent back to him swiftly.⁵³⁵

Both Conzelmann and Löffler requested reproductions of artworks that had been lost, and of which only photographs and photographic plates remained, when preparing their respective illustrated books in the 1950s. Dix wanted to be involved. He pushed for high quality reproductions, complained about bad ones, and even wanted to discuss the arrangement of text and images.⁵³⁶ In 1957 Dix wrote to Löffler about the progress being made with the production of new photographic positives from Hugo Erfurth's old plates:

The local photographer here is constantly making prints. We are working through the box with the plates from the top, and we got as far as 1928. These are the really big original photographs by Erfurth. As soon as we get to the ones you have requested, I will send them to you.⁵³⁷

Dix had paid Erfurth, who also collected art, in graphic works. Erfurth ran a small gallery for graphic art in Dresden, too, through which he sold work by Dix from the

⁵³⁵ For example Letter to Fritz Löffler, 22 January 1956, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 658.

⁵³⁶ Letter to Fritz Löffler, 9 August 1959, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 688.

⁵³⁷ Letter to Fritz Löffler, 11 September 1957, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 668. Emphasis in the original.

second half of the 1920s onwards.⁵³⁸ The idea that Erfurth may not have just taken photographs of the painter and his family, but also of his artwork is mentioned by the photographer's son Gottfried Erfurth, too:

Hugo Erfurth and Otto Dix had a particularly friendly relationship, which also applied to the two families. This acquaintance was the result of a visit to Dix's studio, when he was still young and unknown. He had asked my father to make reproductions; he could not offer any money for this, but Hugo Erfurth could take a pick among his works.⁵³⁹

Although the exact date and circumstances cannot be established, this occurred around 1920, during Dix's time studying in Dresden at the Academy (incidentally alongside Erfurth's son). It seems likely that Dix deliberately chose one of the best photographers of the time who also lived locally. Erfurth was perhaps the most popular portrait photographer among artists and intellectuals, with an extensive list of clients from the cultural world, and Dix wanted to be one of them.⁵⁴⁰ This was another step towards establishing a strong artist persona, and Erfurth's portrait photographs of Dix have since become an important part of his image.

Erfurth had set up his studio in the late 1890s, quickly made a name for himself, and became one of the few portrait photographers whose work was discussed in art journals, where writers praised the fact that he did not retouch pictures and that he allowed each

⁵³⁸ Hans Ulrich Lehmann, 'Das "Graphische Kabinett Hugo Erfurth" in Dresden. Zur künstlerischen Situation von der Jahrhundertwende bis zu den 1920er Jahren', in *Hugo Erfurth. 1874-1948. Photograph zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, ed. by Bodo Dewitz (Cologne: Wienand, 1992), pp. 109-118.

⁵³⁹ 'Mein Vater Hugo Erfurth. Ein Interview mit Gottfried Erfurth, Gaienhofen', in *Hugo Erfurth 1874-1949. Der Fotograf der Goldenen Zwanziger Jahre*, ed. by Bernd Lohse (Seebuck: Im Heerling, 1977), pp. 9-29 (p. 26). Whether the relationship was more professional than friendly is debated by Schubert and Strobl.

⁵⁴⁰ 'One understands why poets, artists and actors, who come to Dresden, want to have their picture taken by him'. Camill Hoffmann, 'Bildnis-Aufnahmen von Hugo Erfurth', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 42 (1918), 28-35 (p. 29). Among the well-known artists and intellectuals who had become his clients were Franz Blei and the impressionist painter Gotthardt Kuehl.

subject an individual pose and character rather than creating ‘artistic’ photographs. Letters sent between Dix and Erfurth provide some evidence of a reciprocal relationship. In one such letter Erfurth wrote in December 1923: ‘I am happy to make the requested enlargements as well as the prints of the Rösberg picture’, referring to reproductions of the portrait of businessman Max Rösberg of 1922.⁵⁴¹ It is conceivable that Dix not only specified numbers and sizes of the reproductions, but that he also discussed his expectations with Erfurth – perhaps issues such as which parts of the painting should be emphasised, how light or dark the overall picture should be, the intensity of contrasts, and therefore how similar or different the reproduction should be to the original. We do not know the details of their conversations, but we can at least say that it is plausible that by regularly meeting the photographer the artist was in some way engaged in the process of making reproductions. He may have even rejected some prints and suggested alterations.

What impressed Erfurth’s contemporaries, including Willi Warstat, about his portrait photographs was ‘the strong tension between tonal planes [*tonigen Flächen*], the almost brutal restraint of characterisation’.⁵⁴² This visual vocabulary must also have appealed to Dix, whose portrait paintings were described in similar terms. Such features were not just the result of the way the photograph was taken, but also of the manual skill and aesthetic judgement applied to the process and technique employed in the production of photographic prints, which set Erfurth’s work apart. Warstat contended that in Erfurth’s photographs ‘the “Neue Sachlichkeit” has found its most accomplished photographic

⁵⁴¹ In Strobl, ‘Otto Dix und Hugo Erfurth’, p. 182. The painting is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

⁵⁴² Willi Warstat, ‘Die Wiedergeburt des deutschen Lichtbildes. Zum Mimosa-Wettbewerb der Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner’, in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 61 (1927/28), 139-140 (p. 140).

form'.⁵⁴³ Even though the creation of photographic positives was a manual process that required the application of chemical solutions (and in some cases also paint) by hand with a brush, Erfurth did not try to make his portrait photographs look like handmade artworks. In 1924 art critic Max Osborn advocated, as did an ever-increasing number of others, that 'photography is mechanical reproduction – it is not allowed to hide this'.⁵⁴⁴

However, it was not until the late 1920s that the change from artistic to photographic prints that remained true to the mechanical process gained ground in mainstream photography. By 1927, Robert Breuer believed to have observed that there was now significant resistance against the popular *Gummidruck*, also called *Gummibichromatverfahren* or gum bichromate,⁵⁴⁵ process in photography, against its lack of 'honesty' because photographers who worked with *Gummidruck* 'wipe away the essential from his photographic plate, to leave a supposed artistic idea'.⁵⁴⁶ On the other hand, photographer Hans Windisch still complained a year later that 'photographic exhibitions are made up by 60 percent' of pictures that had been 'influenced manually, which means styled [*zurechtfrisiert*] in accordance with graphic art'.⁵⁴⁷ Since Erfurth mostly worked with the bromoil technique, it is fair to assume that he may have used this for his photographs of Dix's paintings. Not only had Erfurth originally studied painting, it was his superior technical and artistic skills that had encouraged Dix as a client.

⁵⁴³ Warstat, p. 140.

⁵⁴⁴ Max Osborn, 'Karl Schenker, der Maler und Photograph', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 54 (1924), 273-282 (p. 273).

⁵⁴⁵ It is difficult to find scholarly sources that discuss this process, but it is mentioned in Richard Benson, *The Printed Picture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), p. 322.

⁵⁴⁶ Robert Breuer, 'Der Film der Tatsächlichkeit', *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (1927), 177-182 (p. 177).

⁵⁴⁷ Hans Windisch, 'Photographie: Ein künstlerisches Volksnahrungsmittel', *Das Kunstblatt*, 12 (1928), 65-75 (p. 68). Windisch edited the seminal and widely praised book *Das deutsche Lichtbild*, published in 1927.

In an essay on Erfurth, published in 1915, Willy Doenges argued that what set him apart was that he already took the necessary care when taking the photograph, demonstrating a superior sensitivity towards ‘the contrasts of light and dark volumes in the picture unique to him’.⁵⁴⁸ Both in the production of the negative through his ‘conception of the object’, and in his treatment of the positive print, Erfurth showed ‘the ability to find the tonal values of light’ in the same way in which ‘the painter had to take charge of the values of colours’ in the production of his work.⁵⁴⁹ Doenges was highly impressed, since Erfurth excelled ‘in rubber print, in the platinum, the coal, and the oil pigment print process he has achieved tonal effects on the same level as a painting’.⁵⁵⁰ Erfurth himself published several articles from the mid-1890s to the 1940s about the processes and techniques he employed.⁵⁵¹ He explained his preference for bromoil printing and highlighted its superior ability to produce an image with subtle tonal gradations:

Here I believed to have found everything that I needed to improve the quality of a photographic print. The most valuable aspect of a photograph, assuming a good overall composition and characterisation, is its richness of grey scales [*Grauskala*], of tonal gradation [*Tonskala*]. To fully exhaust the gradations of the brightest light and deepest shadow that are contained in the negative, the oil pigment print could not be surpassed.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁸ Willy Doenges, ‘Hugo Erfurth von Hofrat Doenges – Dresden’, *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, 26 (1915), 36-40 (p. 36).

⁵⁴⁹ Doenges, p. 36.

⁵⁵⁰ Doenges, p. 40.

⁵⁵¹ Among them Hugo Erfurth, ‘Der Ölpigmentdruck’, *Apollo*, 403 (1912), p. 74; Hugo Erfurth, ‘Wie ich zum Ölpigmentdruck kam’, *Die Photographie*, 3 (1949), 73; Hugo Erfurth, in *Meister der Kamera erzählen. Wie sie wurden und wie sie arbeiten*, ed. by Wilhelm Schöppe (Halle: Knapp 1935), p. 10; Hugo Erfurth, ‘Zur Geschichte der Bildnisphotographie’, in *Die Galerie. Monatsblätter der internationalen Kunstphotographie*, 3.4 (1933), n.p.. Pollmeier mentions a documentary film, probably made in 1927, in which Erfurth demonstrates his technique with working with bromoil: ‘Hugo Erfurth, *Der Lichtbildner bei der Arbeit*’ (2.33 mins), most likely Boehner Film Dresden (1927), 35 mm. See Klaus Pollmeier ‘Zur photographischen Technik Hugo Erfurths’, in *Hugo Erfurth. Photograph zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, ed. by Bodo von Dewitz and Karin Schuller-Procopovici (Cologne: Wienand, 1992), pp. 477-485 (pp. 486-487).

⁵⁵² Hugo Erfurth, ‘Wie ich zum Ölpigmentdruck kam’, p. 73. He also described the coal or pigment print in comparison as having ‘a rich, but somewhat flat grey scale because it lacks the juicy blacks of the oil paint of oil pigment print’.

Only oil pigment (or bromoil) print allowed him to ‘control all tonal values’ through manual work with the brush.⁵⁵³ Such a skill would have been essential to the production of high-quality reproductions of artworks, too. He could achieve images that relayed details in sharp relief, was able to produce a picture that suggested ‘truthfulness’ – an ability that could help provide a copy of an artwork as close to the original as possible without colour – or alter it according to his own or the artist’s preference.⁵⁵⁴ A photographer therefore had to ‘interpret’ a painting chosen for reproduction to a degree, ideally in line with what the artist had intended. What is more, this gave his photographs of paintings the ability to acquire specific aesthetic qualities. This worked in favour of Dix’s portrait of Eulenberg in reproduction, where the efforts and superior skills of painter and photographer created synergies.

In the introduction to *Painting – Photography – Film*, László Moholy-Nagy argued that painters could learn from the aesthetics of photography. ‘The delicacy of grey effects produced a sublimated value’, he said, ‘the differentiation of which can transcend its own sphere of influence and even benefit colour composition.’⁵⁵⁵ Photography may have been imitating painting for decades, but the younger medium could also impact on and benefit the older in return. Moholy-Nagy, however, limited his argument to the benefits for the production of original paintings, and did not consider the role photographic reproductions of paintings could play in revealing to the painter new information about how tonal values would translate from colour into colourlessness and – key to this discussion – potentially back again in a dialectical movement. As a result

⁵⁵³ Pollmeier, p. 481.

⁵⁵⁴ Further research would however be necessary to establish, if possible, what processes he used for the photographs and photographic prints of Dix’s paintings (beyond the fact that he used glass plates).

⁵⁵⁵ Moholy-Nagy, *Painting – Photography – Film*, p. 7.

of such a process, a painter would not just have to think in colour when working on his paintings, but also through an aesthetics of mechanical reproduction in grey scales. Artists were, like the rest of the population, surrounded by mechanically produced images, including reproductions of artworks, whether their own or that of others. The fact that his own work would be reproduced must have been on an artist's mind, even if he did not act on this knowledge. And if he did in some way, the challenge would be not to compromise artistic vision.

Interestingly, Oscar Schürer did not just mention Otto Dix in some of his exhibition reviews, he also wrote a whole article about Hugo Erfurt in 1927, which was accompanied by Erfurth's portrait photographs of Herbert Eulenberg and of Dix. Schürer was therefore not just interested in the issue of the Piper reproductions he discussed in his article 'Original und Reproduktion' of 1926, but had a broader understanding of technical processes used for the mechanical productions of images. In 'Portraits by Hugo Erfurth', Schürer argued that a 'great re-orientation [*Umorientierung*]' was taking place in contemporary art, in terms of both its aims and possibilities, and that this was a result of the 'techniques of reproduction of camera and printing press [which] enter with increasing independence into the realm of autonomous visual art'.⁵⁵⁶ Significantly, Schürer also differentiated between the two stages that occurred, and the different mechanical tools that had to be employed before a photograph appeared in a journal or newspaper: the processes related to photographic technology and those employed by the printing press. However, Schürer missed an opportunity when not connecting this observation about photography to his 1926 article on reproductions of paintings because he was considering facsimile prints only. While

⁵⁵⁶ Oskar Schürer, 'Bildnisse von Hugo Erfurth', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 59 (1926/1927), 237-238 (p. 237).

in art historical circles, *how* a photograph of a sculpture should be taken had been widely discussed, almost no attention was paid to the technical means engaged after that, to the different processes that could be used in developing a photographic print or its transfer onto paper. There could potentially be very different visual outcomes – an issue that Dix’s portrait of Eulenberg was curiously immune to.

Strategic Distribution: Dix’s Correspondence

Letters Dix wrote to collectors, curators, gallerists, editors and artist friends in the 1920s reveal further aspects of the important role reproductions played in his career, and that their quality mattered to him. Photographs of artworks were essential if an artist wanted to secure sales or commissions, have his work shown in exhibitions, discussed in articles or reproduced in print media publications. The first among only a handful of the letters that referred directly to the issue of reproductions was sent to Paul Westheim in December 1919. Westheim had evidently expressed an interest in publishing some of Dix’s work in the *Kunstblatt*, and the artist enquired whether Westheim would prefer photographs of paintings or alternatively recent woodcuts, in addition to those the editor and critic had already received:

Could you please let me know whether I should send you further recent woodcuts or photographs of paintings. Perhaps you could have clichés of the paintings made straight away in a *Kunstanstalt* here [...] I could also send you original wood blocks that correspond to the size of the *Kunstblatt*.⁵⁵⁷

Westheim opted for woodcuts, and among them were *Three Cats* and *Nocturnal Scene*, conceived between 1919 and 1920. These were published in the *Kunstblatt* in 1920

⁵⁵⁷ ‘*Kunstanstalt*’ refers here to printers specializing in photography and art prints. Otto Dix, Letter to Paul Westheim, 8th December 1919. Dix, *Briefe*, p. 456.

alongside an article about Dix by Theodor Däubler.⁵⁵⁸ In August 1920, while still living in Dresden, Dix corresponded with gallerist Johanna Ey in Düsseldorf regarding the reproductions that would be used as illustrations in the new, short-lived journal *Das Ey*. He explained that he would prefer the reproduction of a painting rather than a woodcut, even though she had already received woodblocks for the production of graphic works for sale through her gallery: ‘If you are doing image reproductions, I would prefer a painting and I would send you good photographs since I am actually more of a painter than a graphic artist’, he explained.⁵⁵⁹ Dix did indeed start to sell a few works on paper through Ey’s gallery, but the reproduction of a painting in her journal would have helped to both expand the circle of potential buyers and to bring him sales of paintings, which were more lucrative.

In January 1921, Dix wrote to his painter friend Otto Pankok in Düsseldorf, who had originally arranged the contact with Ey, promising to send drawings and prints to be sold through the gallery as soon as possible. He asked Pankok to thank Ey for the successful sale of a print of *Drei Katzen*. Perhaps the publication in the *Kunstblatt* had helped to secure this sale, and a copy might have been to hand in the gallery to show to potential buyers. Dix offered Pankok a pick from the graphic works on paper in the posted parcel, presumably as a reward for his help, and expressed his regret about not having been able to send a painting: ‘I would like to send oil paintings [*Ölschinken*]’, he wrote, ‘but the cost for the transport is too high and I usually have big stuff. [...] Will

⁵⁵⁸ A portfolio with nine woodcuts including these two, published by Heinar Schilling in Dresden, is in the collection of the MoMA in New York. Here the woodcut *Nocturnal Scene* is dated to 1919, *Three Cats* to 1920, and the portfolio to 1922, which means Dix must have been happy to keep selling his older expressionist work. According to the MoMA, some had already been published in 1919 in the periodical *Menschen*, vol. VIII, no. 62/65 (Nov 1919), which – with their expressionist aesthetics – would shortly after look outdated compared to what Dix’s was producing in 1920 for the Dada-Messe in Berlin. Westheim obviously did not request (or want to pay for) clichés of paintings and opted for the woodcuts instead.

⁵⁵⁹ Otto Dix, Letter to the gallery and journal *Das Ey*, 8th September 1920, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 775.

add some photographs of pictures next time.’⁵⁶⁰ Later that autumn, a disappointed Dix wrote to Pankok again, complaining that since the exhibition of his graphic work at the gallery Ey had already closed, there was no point in sending photographs anymore.⁵⁶¹ While Dix did not further elaborate on this, these photographs would have been intended for Ey to either select paintings for her gallery exhibition, or to show to collectors before arranging the costly shipment of an original. It could also prompt a visit by an interested collector to the artist’s studio where he would be able to see the original painting.

While Dix was very active in his correspondence throughout his early career, he also came to rely on the efforts of his dealer Karl Nierendorf. In 1922, Nierendorf, trying to secure representation of Otto Dix, outlined possible contract details, promising exhibitions in his gallery and other ways to promote the artist’s work: ‘I have enough connections to collectors who let themselves be advised by me to be able to guarantee steady and increasing sales, and would naturally achieve much with some fanfare through appropriate propaganda, the production of reproductions [*Klischees*], publications, etc.’⁵⁶² In addition, the gallerist promised to initiate essays in art journals and periodicals. Even after agreeing to be represented by Nierendorf, Dix continued to make his own efforts to secure sales and exhibitions. He frequently travelled to build and maintain useful relationships, and would certainly have had both works on paper and photographs of paintings in his suitcase. One of the gatekeepers Dix contacted was Hans Posse, then director of the Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Dix contacted him in 1926 in preparation of the *Internationale Kunstausstellung in Dresden*, of which Posse

⁵⁶⁰ Otto Dix, Letter to Otto Pankok, 15th January 1921, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 777.

⁵⁶¹ Otto Dix, Letter to Otto Pankok, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 775.

⁵⁶² Karl Nierendorf to Otto Dix, April 14, 1922 [DKA].

was artistic director, promising to send photographs of works he intended to exhibit, presumably to confirm which paintings should be shipped.⁵⁶³ Although more research is needed in this area, it appears that the early selection process and even final decisions of curators and museum directors may have routinely been made based on colourless reproduction, if seeing the original artwork was impractical. In the case of Dix, however, curators were particularly interested in the subject matter of the works he intended to show, because they wanted to avoid controversy and even potential censorship.

That reproductions of paintings were valuable property, even after Dix had become a professor at the academy in Dresden with a reliable income, is exemplified by two letters the artist sent to his collector, the lawyer Hugo Simons. The first was posted in September 1928, followed by a reminder in November, in which the artist requested the return of nine reproductions sent to him ‘a long time ago’.⁵⁶⁴ Dix even threatened to charge him for these, ‘in case you do wish to keep the photographs’.⁵⁶⁵ Dix also requested the return of the photographs of his work, since only a limited number of prints existed of each negative, and in a political climate that was turning against him, he had to intensify his efforts to sell work. He may have had to send photographs of the same painting to multiple places simultaneously. It would have been costly to obtain new prints, even if he did own the photographic plates. In addition, for paintings no longer in his possession costly new photographs would have to be arranged, making the

⁵⁶³ Otto Dix, Letter to Hans Posse, early 1926. Dix, *Briefe*, p. 856.

⁵⁶⁴ Among these works are the portraits of Anita Berber and two works described as *Familie des Malers* and *Maler S. mit Modell* in September 1928. (Perhaps this is *Self-Portrait with Nude Model*, in which case Dix might be describing it as a self portrait, as *Maler Selbst mit Modell*.)

⁵⁶⁵ The second letter is not included in the book of Dix’s letters, edited by Lorenz, but on a disc I was given by Rainer Pfefferkorn, who runs the Dix archive in Vaduz, during my visit. In this letter, Dix addressed the receiver as ‘Lieber Herr Dr.’, which is the way he addressed many letters to Simons, as the book publication of the artist’s letters can confirm. Dix speaks of nine reproductions in the second letter, too.

return of reproductions essential. In 1937, after he had had to leave his post at the academy in Dresden and moved south to the Swiss border, Dix also communicated with a contact named Schulz regarding portrait commissions in Athens: 'I will send you a number of photographs of my portraits for marketing [*Propaganda*] purposes.'⁵⁶⁶ He offered to travel to Greece himself should portrait commissions be secured by Schulz and instructed him: 'Could I kindly ask you to request the photographs be given back by any interested parties, because I only have one version of each photograph and the plates do not exist anymore.'⁵⁶⁷ Only a limited number of prints could be made from the delicate glass plates since they deteriorated over time, particularly if not properly stored. Dix's explanation makes the issues with the conservation of the plates (or their ownership) apparent.

Dix's letters attest to the value of reproductions for an artist dealing with a geographically dispersed set of contacts and the increasing difficulties in selling work in Germany. Dix, it seems, did successfully secure portrait commissions based on photographs of his work alone. In October 1935, he wrote to Nierendorf (who was by that point no longer his gallerist) that he had been asked to paint a portrait of a Dr. W. Zersch in Köstritz after the latter had seen photographs of Dix's work.⁵⁶⁸ In another letter to his daughter, sent the same year, Dix writes that he would like to show photographs of two portraits and two landscape paintings to a woman he had met on a trip to the Engadin and who must have been a potential client. Dix was obviously storing photographic prints in multiple sizes and numbers at home, since he specified

⁵⁶⁶ Dix, *Briefe*, p. 686. Ulrike Lorenz, the editor, was not able to identify the recipient any further.

⁵⁶⁷ Otto Dix, letter to Herr Schulz, 7th December 1937, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 868 and 870. The letter was posted from Dresden during a visit there.

⁵⁶⁸ Otto Dix, Letter to Karl Nierendorf, October 1935. Dix, *Briefe*, p. 803.

that small ones should be sent.⁵⁶⁹ Such a request demonstrates again the importance of reproductions because they could reach interested parties quickly and cheaply.

The issue of the quality and lack of colour of photographs taken in the 1920s created another, unexpected problem for Dix several decades later, when a collector contacted him in 1964 about a work bought at auction. The work in question was *Altar for Cavaliers*, a Dadaist painting on wood with collaged elements, created in 1920. It had several moveable parts, the window shutters of a house could be opened, and the bodies of two figures in the street in front of it could be folded back to reveal other parts underneath (figure 56). Of the five images that were concealed in the work's closed state, four showed naked women (one was a brothel scene inside the house, another a *Lustmord* in another room). The new owner contacted Dix with the request that the artist make some repairs and replace a missing piece. The head of one of the figures, was missing. However, Dix only agreed that he might paint the recto of the head again, but not the verso. As an explanation Dix wrote that he still had a photograph of the work, but that one could not see whether the verso was a collage or which material it was made of, and that he could not remember the colours either.⁵⁷⁰ The missing part was likely the head of the male figure, and Dix's refusal could also have something to do with the fact that this particular part of the work was not visible in the surviving photographic reproductions because the head was covered by the foldable part of the female figure. Dix further wrote that the quality of the photograph was poor and reasoned: 'I cannot just add something random [*irgendeinen Quatsch*]; to imitate myself badly so to speak'.⁵⁷¹ What is interesting here is that the artist himself had turned to a

⁵⁶⁹ Dix, *Briefe*, p. 156.

⁵⁷⁰ Otto Dix, letter to Florian Karsch, 28/05/1964, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 836.

⁵⁷¹ Letter to Karsch, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 836.

reproduction of his work to make up for his incomplete mental record. The reproduction, however, could not deliver because of the inadequacy of the visual data. It could merely attest to a lack: the previous existence of a now missing part. By using the word 'imitate' Dix made clear that once the artist had released the artwork he should not alter it, or at least not reassemble it differently. Dix needed the black-and-white reproduction *in tandem* with the damaged *Altar for Cavaliers* to get a more complete sense of what his artwork had looked like in its original state. The reproduction could fill in at least some of the missing information. Benjamin argued that the photographic lens could make aspects of a scene or an object visible that were otherwise not accessible to the human eye, in this case the reproduction in print was so deficient that the information of what the complete artwork had looked like had been irretrievably lost.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising that Dix even considered recreating the part of the work, even though he may have had qualms because of another issue he did not explicitly address in his letter: a sense that, as Benjamin described it, the most distinguishing quality of an artwork was that 'it bears the mark of the history to which it has been subject'.⁵⁷² Benjamin argued that the artwork's 'history includes changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together with any changes in ownership'.⁵⁷³ But could physical changes by the hand of the artist become part of the 'authentic' history of an original artwork, even though it would have produced temporal hybrid of sorts? What is more, the original photographs from the 1920s, the only records of the complete original work, have now acquired significance as historical records in their own right, and they can provide us with traces of some aspects of the 'physical structure of the work, at least in a visual (if not chemical) sense.

⁵⁷² Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 21.

⁵⁷³ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 21.

Adaptation: Otto Dix's *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg*

It is now time to consider in more detail the painting *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg*, or, rather, its black-and-white reproductions, since the original has been lost, in more detail.⁵⁷⁴ The portrait was first publicly shown at the 'Große Düsseldorfer Jubiläumsausstellung' in 1925 and several reviewers of the exhibition felt compelled to comment specifically on the display of his work there, such was the attention it attracted. Carl Georg Heise acknowledged Dix's dominant position in the broader context of the German contemporary art scene when describing him as 'the idol of a new fashion in German art', but acknowledged at the same time – implying that this could be seen as a contradiction – that the importance of his work was indisputable.⁵⁷⁵ Heise also provides us with information about some of the visual qualities of the Eulenberg painting:

But he is more: a draughtsman of unrelenting severity, a brave, if often dangerously experimenting colourist, and – as his Eulenberg portrait attests – a confident portraitist in his caricatural interpretation of people. However, one cannot help suspecting that his brutal realism is not rooted in an elementary strength, but decadent [*überreiztem*] aestheticism.⁵⁷⁶

With his comment on Dix's 'dangerous' experimentation with colour, Heise captured one of the artist's strategies to achieve a strong visual impact. Wolfradt described the effect as 'gaudily coloured super-kitsch [*knalligbunten Überkitsch*]' with the 'shrill conspicuousness of show-booths [*schrille Schaubudendeutlichkeit*]', thereby aligning Dix's work with the visual language of commercial mass culture and entertainment – a connection Westheim and Tietze had made in their reference to mass produced oil

⁵⁷⁴ And possibly as a photographic plate from the 1920s in the Dix archive.

⁵⁷⁵ Carl Georg Heise, 'Die Rheinische Retrospektive. Düsseldorf 1925', *Kunst und Künstler*, 23 (1925), 469-473 (p. 472).

⁵⁷⁶ Heise, p. 472.

prints.⁵⁷⁷ When reproduced in shades of grey, however, the danger was that the artist's paintings would lose some of their edge. Dix's old masterly style, which combined 'sharpened curvatures' with an 'almost crude Verism',⁵⁷⁸ as Wolfradt described it, also needed an acerbic choice of colours to help create the tension that made the return to an otherwise traditional formal vocabulary innovative and controversial.

There is only one source that can give us an idea of what the colours of Dix's portrait of Eulenberg were: Robert Breuer's review of the 1926 Dix-retrospective at Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin. Breuer praised it as a portrait that successfully avoided mere painterly virtuosity through strong characterisation and a clever choice of colours:

This reddened, epicurean head with the smugly twitching lips, this subtly caricatured drunkenness on girly blue ground, a coquettish tulip in hand, orange the waist coat, blue-grey the suit: it is a piece of painting that confirms the confident eye of the former barricade fighter, but also the internal focus of his temperament. This interrelation and this transformation can be transferred to the exhibition at the Salon Neumann-Nierendorf. ⁵⁷⁹

Breuer's description of the painter's personality as a former soldier aside, the information regarding the colour palette helps us understand why the painting looks so light overall in reproduction, with clear outlines and detailing, and subtle grey gradations. The reproductions suggest a fairly homogenous choice of colours, which is confirmed by Breuer's description of two light blue shades for the suit and background. While blue usually became lighter in black-and-white photographs, Dix chose a blue so light that it would reproduce almost white in some areas, although we don't know what colour the abstract pattern of the suit fabric had. Perhaps the blue of Eulenberg's suit is

⁵⁷⁷ Wolfradt, *Otto Dix*, p. 7 and 5.

⁵⁷⁸ Willi Wolfradt, 'Ein Doppelbildnis von Otto Dix', *Der Cicerone*, 15 (1923), 173-178 (p. 173).

⁵⁷⁹ Robert Breuer, 'Dix und Barlach', *Die Weltbühne*, 22.1 (January - June 1926), 263-264.

comparable to the colour of the dress in Benjamin Gordon's *Portrait of the Dancer Eva Boy*, which becomes as light as her white skin in the reproduction (figures 57 and 58), while the dark blue blouse worn by *Baroness Ludwig Hatvany* in Christian Schad's portrait of 1927 (figures 59 and 60) looks almost entirely black in reproduction. Both painters would likely have anticipated this. Eulenberg's orange waistcoat translated into an even lighter shade of grey than the suit. Although not quite as light as the buttons and the shirt, a viewer of the reproduction might assume that both shirt and waistcoat were different shades of white or cream in the original. The orange colour, however, befitted Dix's reputation as a daring colourist and perhaps Eulenberg's as an eccentric. He may have worn this exact outfit when sitting for Dix, although the artist was known to complete portraits without the sitter being present to make sure he captured the 'essence' rather than too many details, and to avoid his paintings becoming too naturalist.⁵⁸⁰ An element of visual stimulation that has translated well into the black-and-white reproduction is the abstract pattern of the suit fabric, the creases along the arm up to the shoulder and additional details of the outfit, such as the emphasised buttons of the waistcoat, the tie chain of the pocket watch, and the flower in Eulenberg's hand.

Dix is likely to have either invented or emphasised the bold pattern of the suit material, which could be a tweed fabric.⁵⁸¹ Significantly, the graphic pattern looks more printed than woven, even though such printed fabrics were not produced at the time, certainly not for menswear. This lack of a suggestion of a woven structure helps align the image

⁵⁸⁰ Interview Otto Dix in Maria Wetzel, 'Atelier-Besuche XX: Professor Otto Dix. Ein harter Mann, dieser Maler', *Diplomatischer Kurier*, 14.8 (1965), 731-745 (p. 738).

⁵⁸¹ A look at portrait photographs of artists and people moving in artistic circles suggests Eulenberg was fashionably dressed because strongly patterned tweed fabrics and eccentric ties seem to have been fashionable with men in the art world. Another fashion was flowers in button holes, and Eulenberg and – to name another example – the painter Edvard Munch posed with flowers in their button holes for Erfurth.

with graphic artworks designed for printing. In contrast, the suits worn by male subjects in other portraits Dix produced in the 1920s often lack any definition through distinctive patterns, such as in the *Portrait of the Jeweller Karl Krall* (figure 19) where the background is as plain and of a similar brownish colour as the suit. A reproduction of this painting would have looked dull - possibly one of the reasons why it was never reproduced in the 1920s.

The different areas of Dix's painting of Eulenberg remain balanced in the reproductions, no part of the painting becomes very dark so that details cannot be made out anymore. In comparison, reproductions of Old Master paintings were often poor in this regard, as Hamann pointed out when referring to a reproduction of a work by Rembrandt; 'a red robe, sparkling like a ruby [...] This most effective area of the painting apart from the female body [...] becomes dark, without tone, is not the effective accent anymore in the photograph'.⁵⁸² In fact, the question of how colours would translate into shades of grey in a photographic reproduction was the subject of much debate in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁸³ At that point it was still very difficult to reproduce blue in particular, because when using silver bromide emulsion, as was common, it would become very light, yellow turned almost white, while green and red appeared almost black. By adding different coloured filters when taking the picture, the photographer could darken

⁵⁸² Hamann, 'Zeichnende Künste', p. 33.

⁵⁸³ For a discussion of the material possibilities of photography in translating the colours of external reality into black-and-white reproduction and the expansion of the range of grey gradation see: Jan von Brevern, 'Die Wissenschaft vom Verzicht. Farbenlehren der Schwarz-Weiß-Fotografie im 19. Jahrhundert', *Bildwelten des Wissens. Kunsthistorisches Jahrbuch für Bildkritik*, 8 (2017), Sonderdruck 'Graustufen', pp. 54-64. Brevern explains that the photographic reproduction of artworks into black and white was appreciated for its ability to reveal aspects that were not visible to the eye original paintings, citing Delacroix as an example of a painter who saw photography not as an instrument for the translation of an artwork, but of interpretation. The discourse around the reproduction of paintings was focused on its tendency to suppress details visible in the painting to allow for a focus on the overall composition, von Brevern writes.

or lighten different areas with regards to how they would appear in the negative before making decisions regarding the techniques used to produce the positive and the final picture.⁵⁸⁴ Coloured oil paint could then additionally be applied to the gelatine image by hand, however, for the reproduction of a painting in a photographic positive this meant involving another craftsman or artist in the resulting image.⁵⁸⁵

The original painting of Eulenberg was well suited to reproduction in black-and-white on paper, even of relatively low quality. The defining feature of the work in reproduction is its precision, the impression of a strong exactness. While some reproductions of it may be slightly darker and have stronger contrasts, such as the copy in the magazine *UHU* (figure 61), the clarity and lightness of the image overall, is maintained. The highlights accentuating the shoulder and pocket of Eulenberg's suit remain delicate even in the less sophisticated reproduction on the low quality paper used by *UHU*. In Tietze's 1925 book *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft* (figure 44), the reproduction of Eulenberg's portrait, probably in a halftone print or photolithography, is as subtle as that in *Die Kunst für Alle* (figure 62), with the matrix of small dots typical of the mechanical transfer process only discernible from close up.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ Heinrich Kufahl, 'Vom Entwicklungsgang der photographischen Technik und Kunst', *Kunstwart und Kulturwart*, 37 (1924), 103-105 (p. 105). Some progress had been made with yellow filters, which could darken blue while brightening yellow, orange, red and green. While yellow remained the typical filter for black-and-white photography, a green filter could lighten green areas, a blue filter could lighten blues and darken yellows, oranges and reds, and finally a red filter could turn blue almost black, which then required the photographer to paint the blue areas after printing the photographic positive.

⁵⁸⁵ A cursory look through the art journals of the time can reveal that progress in printing photographs in colour was slow and not yet an established practice. Heinrich Kufahl praised recent improvements regarding the traditional process of colouring prints by hand, but there were still significant problems to be addressed when transferring a photograph onto paper: 'Lately the Agfa-Berlin [has invented] a perfected colour plate on improved raster basis. This is a pioneering success, but is not a satisfying solution yet. [...] a process to copy [the coloured glass plate] on paper or other top view has not yet been found.' Kufahl, p. 105.

⁵⁸⁶ A comparison of two different editions of Tietze's book reveals inconsistencies in the printing process, i.e. at times two reproductions in the same publication were not the same, (one reproduction has two light streaks across Eulenberg's body, altering the link with the original painting further). See the copies in the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin and the Warburg institute in London.

A hierarchy of the reproductions of the Eulenberg portrait based on the quality of image and paper positions those in the book by Tietze and *Die Kunst für Alle* first, followed by that in *Der Cicerone* (Figure 63), and at the lower end those in *Der Querschnitt* (Figure 64) and *UHU. Die Kunst für Alle* contains the only reproduction where, albeit only upon careful inspection, hints of brushstrokes and texture on the surface of the artwork can be made out and provide evidence that the original was a painting.⁵⁸⁷ The Eulenberg painting could also deal exceptionally well with deviations and irregularities. ‘A facsimile print lacks the homogeneity that gramophone records possess’,⁵⁸⁸ Panofsky wrote, but this was also true for copies of the Eulenberg painting in different media publications.

In the surviving reproductions of the Eulenberg picture, what comes to the fore and divides the grey blank spaces are the fine outlines, the sharp edges of the seams, the abstract pattern of the suit, the dense tangle of the fine hair beyond Eulenberg’s receding hairline, as well as the subtle accents to create the impression of three-dimensional plasticity of the body. However, the artist’s intentions may have gone beyond a consideration of ‘good’ reproducibility. All of these details contribute to a particular overall visual impression: at first sight the artwork could be a graphic work rather than a painting, i.e. a work conceived for colourless mechanical printing such as a mezzotint or very skilful lithograph.⁵⁸⁹ It was unusual for Dix to choose such light colours for a whole oil painting, which suggests a particular motivation, and it is

⁵⁸⁷ What could provide another clue to the careful reader could have been that, in the reproduction, the last digit of the year of completion painted in the bottom right corner(?) had been cut off and therefore part of the picture was missing – an error was more unlikely to occur in a work made for reproduction.

⁵⁸⁸ Panofsky, p. 344.

⁵⁸⁹ Mezzotint was seen as the best medium for the creation of subtle gradations of tone by 19th century graphic artists, etching as less suitable. Verhoogt, p. 111.

together with the fine linearism that the reproduction in shades of grey aligns itself with the graphic arts. In other words – and this is my central argument in this chapter – the medium specificity of the original artwork did not translate in the reproduction, and the viewer was left unsure about the materiality of the image. What was more, it remained unclear which mechanical processes had been engaged to create it. Was the source of the printed image a photograph of a painting or a plate created for a graphic work that could only be actualized in printed, multiplied form?⁵⁹⁰ As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, Dix would have expected this portrait to be reproduced because of its famous subject – and with his painterly wit, he had out-manoeuvred the ‘reliability’ of technological reproduction.

Death and Resurrection (1922) and The Widow (1925)

There are two other paintings among Dix’s oeuvre that were particularly suited to colourless reproductions because they could acquire some features of graphic works. Like the Eulenberg portrait, they have been lost and were chosen more often for reproduction in the 1920s than the majority of his other works, and more often printed than exhibited.⁵⁹¹ These paintings are *Death and Resurrection* of 1922 (figure 51) and *The Widow* of 1925 (figure 65).⁵⁹²

⁵⁹⁰ With the exception of the reproduction in *UHU* where the caption provided the information that the original was an oil painting.

⁵⁹¹ Apart from self-portraits and the portrait of his baby daughter *Nelly Among Flowers* of 1924, which was particularly admired because it was the closest approximation to the old masters in terms of style and detailing, and his most sympathetic and unchallenging oil painting up until then apart from portraits of his wife Martha.

⁵⁹² Both were reproduced at least six times in the second half of the 1920s. The Otto-Dix folder in the Zentralarchiv in Berlin alone contains five newspaper and magazine clippings with an image of *Die Witwe*, although some have no information about the source. In one publication, the title is *Dame in Trauer (Lady in Mourning)*. This means that there are likely more than the five instances Strobl lists in his 1996 book on Dix. He has, for example, not identified the one in the *Illustrierte Rundschau*, 40 (1925/26), p. 714 in the Zentralarchiv, which raises the number to

Death and Resurrection, was arguably the most impressively skilful painting in Dix's oeuvre at the time it was reproduced in 1922 in the *Kunstblatt* alongside Westheim's article 'The Upstart Oleograph' (figure 51). Although the original must have been visually impactful, it is the reproduction of *Death and Resurrection* that truly reveals Dix's painterly skills, particularly when compared to reproductions of paintings by other artists in the same issue of the journal. *Death and Resurrection*, like *The Widow*, deals with a subject matter already associated with black, with a draining of colour. The viewer of the reproduction might therefore assume that the painting itself was not very colourful. Unfortunately, there is no written evidence of what the colours may have been.⁵⁹³ But converted into a black-and-white image, the ghost of a dead woman floating above her coffin, carried by a group of people (among them the artist) through the foreground of the picture in front of a row of houses, has strong visual impact due to the incredible level of transparency the artist has achieved for her dress. What defines the work in reproduction are the strong contrasts between deep black and almost white areas, just as Dix preferred them. Perhaps the strong impact of the reproduction is one of the reasons why he offered a painting already in the possession of a collector, Max Grünbaum, for reproduction in the *Kunstblatt*, rather than one still unsold to secure another sale. Westheim must have chosen *Death and Resurrection*, among a number of options sent by Dix, for its visual impact (and because it supported his argument about

at least six. *The Widow* was exhibited three times in the 1920s according to Strobl's list. *Death and Resurrection* (1922) was reproduced six times in the 1920s, but only shown twice: in the seminal exhibition *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Mannheim in 1925, by which time it was held by a private collection, and again in 1927 at the *Jahresausstellung deutscher Arbeit. Graphische Ausstellung des deutschen Künstlerbundes*. See Strobl, *Otto Dix. Eine Malerkarriere*, p. 246 and 249. *Death and Resurrection* was also reproduced in Willi Wolfradt's 1924 monograph *Otto Dix*, *Junge Kunst*, 41 (Leipzig: Kinkhardt & Biermann, 1924), n.p.; and alongside the same essay text in Willi Wolfradt, 'Otto Dix', *Der Cicerone*, 16 (1924), p. 945; and in *Der Stromer. Blätter für junge Kunst*, 1. 2-3 (1925); *L'Esprit Nouveau*, 20 (1926), no page. I have further identified Paul Westheim, *Für und Wider* (1923).

⁵⁹³ The description of the image by Mela Escherich in *Die Kunst für Alle* does not refer to colour. Escherich, p. 110.

oil print aesthetics). That *Death and Resurrection* was an important work for Dix is also confirmed by a letter to Grünbaum in June 1923 in which the artist requested it as a loan for an exhibition.⁵⁹⁴ He explained that it had impressed Max Liebermann, the curator of the biannual exhibition at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, and he specifically asked for it to be included in the second leg of the spring exhibition in Nuremberg.⁵⁹⁵ However, one could argue that, upon closer inspection, in reproduction *Death and Resurrection* still looked more like a painting than a graphic work.

The Widow (figures 65 and 66) looks impressive in reproduction, too. Similar to the Eulenberg portrait, the overall impression of the reproduction is brightness. Here it is the transparent clothing and the veil presented in front of a solid brick wall (rather than a streetscape) within a tightly layered, compressed space that creates the exciting visual effect. *The Widow* again demonstrates Dix's great drawing and compositional skills with its sharp linearism, contrasts and contours, and *The Widow* could also potentially mislead viewers since it adopted the aesthetics of graphic prints in reproduction. A review of an exhibition by the Vereinigung für Junge Kunst in the Kunstverein in Düsseldorf in 1925, where a whole room was given over to Dix's work, provides somewhat unexpected information about the colours of *The Widow* in the original. It did not look drained in keeping with its subject matter, but was dominated by the garish colour of the brick wall that takes up the whole pictorial field. Luise Strauss-Ernst described a 'widow with low cleavage and a bunch of lilies in front of a bright yellow wall'⁵⁹⁶ in her review, and it is precisely this yellow colour that bewildered another

⁵⁹⁴ Otto Dix, Letter to Max Grünbaum, 28th June 1923, in Dix, *Briefe*, p. 465.

⁵⁹⁵ Liebermann could have seen the original or a reproduction, given that curatorial decisions were made based on photographs of artworks.

⁵⁹⁶ Luise Strauss-Ernst, 'Rheinischer Kunstbrief', *Der Kunstwanderer*, 7 (1925), 281-282 (p. 281).

visitor to the exhibition: Oskar Schürer. Schürer had to admit that this painting offered some great visual effects, ‘a high level of skill (the veil in front of the wall!); brutal addiction to form (not desire!: the windowsill in the bright yellow wall!) and so much romantic yearning in this whole “factual report” [*Tatsachenreferat*]’.⁵⁹⁷ It is again Dix’s odd garish colour choices that viewers were struck by, but the brightness of the background (just like in Eulenberg’s portrait) meant that *The Widow* translated into a harmonious, subtle and attractive picture in grey tones.

In his 1930 article on reproductions, Panofsky had argued that even if a high quality facsimile could suggest surface facture and brushstrokes, the viewer’s ‘senses react to the reproduction’s mechanistic quality’.⁵⁹⁸ What is more, he argued, when a painting on canvas was reproduced on paper, a ‘foreign material’ was used.⁵⁹⁹ When confronted with reproductions of Dix’s Eulenberg portrait, a viewer could be certain that he was looking at a page in a mass produced journal or book and not a facsimile, however: he was left in doubt as to whether there was a ‘foreign’ and ‘mechanistic quality’, which would have been in the nature of a graphic work.

According to Richard Hamann, photographs of artworks (which would be the basis for reproductions media publications) were very valuable because they could provide

⁵⁹⁷ Oskar Schürer, ‘Rundschau. Neuerwerbungen der Mannheimer Kunsthalle’, *Der Cicerone*, 19 (1927), 412-414 (p. 414). Schürer was covering recent acquisitions by the Mannheimer Kunsthalle under Hartlaub, and on display in the room on Neue Sachlichkeit were Dix’s *Arbeiterknabe* (1920) and *Die Witwe* (1925). Both had been acquired after the 1925 exhibition ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ of which they had been part. *Widow* was also one of the three paintings shown in 1931 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the exhibition *German Painting and Sculpture* before disappearing after the 1937 Nazi-exhibition *Entartete Kunst*.

⁵⁹⁸ Panofsky, p. 333.

⁵⁹⁹ Panofsky, p. 335.

‘reliable information about the represented objects, i.e. every material and factual aspect [*alles Stoffliche und Sachliche*], about the composition and even about the brushwork and technique’.⁶⁰⁰ But the reproductions of the Eulenberg picture could not because the brushwork and painted support remained practically invisible, unless a viewer cared to look very closely. A good example of a work by Dix that looked very clearly like an oil painting, even in reproduction in *Die Kunst für Alle*, is his 1924 portrait of his daughter *Nelly among Flowers* (figure 67). The facture of the canvas is clearly visible thanks to Dix’s choice of a comparatively coarse type of canvas, the quality of the photograph and of the printing process.

What we are dealing with when looking at reproductions of the oil paintings *The Poet Herbert Eulenberg*, *Widow*, and to an extent also *Death and Resurrection*, is therefore something extraordinary: artworks that could accommodate their transferal across a range of media through an aesthetic of ambiguity that only revealed itself when seen in reproduction. Dix engaged with and manipulated what Panofsky had termed ‘reproductive optics’ by designing visual qualities into the original that directed the viewer away from an expectation that a photograph had been the medium of transfer, i.e. mass media image technology, and towards the traditional medium of graphic prints, which was still more strongly associated with human labour. He utilized his knowledge of what contemporary reproductive technology could do, as well as its limitations, to direct the viewer of a black-and-white image away from what Panofsky had termed the ‘inorganic-mechanistic character traits’ imparted on an artwork in reproduction by the ‘determinants of the reproductive machines’.⁶⁰¹ Instead, reproductions of some of Dix’s

⁶⁰⁰ Hamann, ‘Zeichnende Künste’, p. 32.

⁶⁰¹ Panofsky, p. 332

paintings become images of a simulacral order because they posit the possibility that an ‘original’ artwork might not even exist.

In his essay ‘Little History of Photography’, first published in *Die Literarische Welt* in the autumn of 1931, Benjamin wrote that in the first portrait photographs, taken after the invention of photographic technology, the human face remained ‘uncaptioned’, and without the caption that identified the photographed person by name, a viewer was prevented from perceiving a ‘connection between actuality [*Aktualität*] and photo’.⁶⁰² He could therefore rest his gaze on the photographed face, because without the text that spelled out a name and connected the photograph to a real person, it came ‘wrapped in

⁶⁰² Walter Benjamin, ‘Brief History of Photography’, in Walter Benjamin, *One-Way-Street and Other Writings*, transl. J.A. Underwood, (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 177. In German he wrote: ‘*alle Möglichkeiten dieser Porträtkunst beruhen darauf, dass noch die Berührung zwischen Aktualität und Photo nicht eingetreten ist.*’ Walter Benjamin, ‘Kleine Geschichte der Photographie’, in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 7 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), II.I: *Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, pp. 368-385 (p. 372-373). I have chosen the translation by Underwood specifically, because a comparison of four different English translations of this section reveals that translators have real difficulty with Benjamin’s use of the German term ‘*Aktualität*’ in this section. When reading the whole passage in German, the translation by Underwood as ‘actuality’ is the most accurate, because the other two translators, Livingstone (whose translation is otherwise widely acknowledged to be the best) and Leslie, interpret the ambiguous German term in relation to its temporal rather than ontological meaning. Livingstone for example translates this as the ‘absence of contact between contemporary relevance and photography’ (p. 512), Patton as ‘the connection between actuality and photo had not yet been entered upon’ (p. 204), and Leslie as ‘the contact between the instant and the photo had not yet kicked in’ (p. 70-71). This passage in Benjamin’s text only makes sense if we consider what Benjamin is talking about in the preceding sentences. He argues that a caption identifies the photographed face as belonging to a real person which changes one’s experience of the image. When he speaks of the ‘*Berührung zwischen Aktualität und Photo*’, he is referring to the touching point between the ‘actual’ person [*Aktualität*] and his photograph, which results from the knowledge of the sitter’s name. Without a caption or name, the image remains silent. Compare Walter Benjamin, ‘Little History of Photography’, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al., transl. by Rodney Livingstone et al., 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999), II.1927-1934, pp. 507-530 (p. 512). Walter Benjamin, ‘A short history of Photography’, *Artforum*, 15 (Feb 1977), trans. by P. Patton, repr. in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. by Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, CT: Leete’s Island, 1980) pp. 199-216 (p. 204). Walter Benjamin, ‘Small History of Photography’, in Walter Benjamin, *On Photography*, ed. and transl. by Esther Leslie (London: Reaction, 2015), pp. 53-109 (pp. 70-71).

silence'.⁶⁰³ This effect of early photographs disappeared once photographs were routinely captioned to identify the photographed person by name. As Benjamin wrote elsewhere in the essay, a caption supported 'the viewer's association mechanism' (i.e. between the photograph and what it showed), and without it, photographs – those quickly taken in particular – would 'remain no more than an approximation'.⁶⁰⁴ Similarly one could perhaps argue that reproductions of the Eulenberg painting remained 'wrapped in silence' because, on their own and without a caption that identified them as oil paintings, they did not communicate enough information about the reality or the 'Aktualität' of the object that had been photographed. In the reproductions of the 1920s, only Eulenberg was identified by name in the captions, but the medium of the original artwork (and its size), i.e. what had been photographed, was not actualized through text. More importantly, 'actuality' and photo did not 'connect' because Dix had worked features into the original painting that challenged the viewer's 'association mechanism'. In other words, he had mimicked what Rosalind Krauss has described as one of photography's defining features: that it is 'the perfect instance of a multiple-without-an-original [...] in its structural status as a copy'.⁶⁰⁵ In the reproduction in a journal, the painting's commodity status changed from an object in the material world to an image of a simulacral order. This could also help explain Dix's strong preference for colourless reproductions. Copies printed in colour could only be inferior versions of the original, while in black-and-white the viewer was looking at an entirely different image. As Dix stated: 'This is why I say: much better black-and-white

⁶⁰³ Benjamin, 'Brief History of Photography', transl. J.A. Underwood, p. 177.

⁶⁰⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Brief History of Photography', transl. J.A. Underwood, p. 192. '*ohne die alle photographische Konstruktion im Ungefährn stecken bleiben muss*'. Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', p. 385.

⁶⁰⁵ Rosalind Krauss, 'Reinventing the Medium', *Critical Enquiry*, 25.2 (Winter 1999), 289-305 (p. 290).

because it is a stylisation! It is a translation into another form.’⁶⁰⁶ In its other form, as a reproduction without financial value, the artwork still remained a commodity for him, however, because it was the form in which people who wrote about, exhibited or bought his art encountered it.

When Paul Westheim conceded how misleading a black-and-white reproduction could be, and that this had cost the painter van Appen access to the exhibition and first prize, it was a rare revelation from a powerful gatekeeper in the art world. Dix, in response to a specific historical situation, conceived art that when reproduced could occlude its origins; it could be appreciated aesthetically in its own right and prevent the viewer from questioning the visual qualities of the absent original. And if the copy could be appreciated as a complete artwork, then a reproduction ‘not just enables the original to meet the recipient half-way [...] in the form of a photograph’,⁶⁰⁷ as Benjamin proposed, then the reproductions of the Eulenberg portrait we have access to today can hardly be described as mere ‘re’-productions at all.

⁶⁰⁶ *Otto Dix spricht*, in Schmidt, p. 260.

⁶⁰⁷ Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art’, p. 21.

Otto Dix with ‘Retrospective Flavour’: The Language of Temporality and the Temporality of Language.

Clara:

*‘I am emphatically only a contemporary [Zeitgenosse].
My particular being is rooted in the epoch. [...]
I am not attached to desires of the past. [...]*

The Professor:

*‘You perplex me. Faced with the inner turmoil of such patients,
I always saw them as people confused in their thinking.
Here it becomes apparent that they were intellectually healthy,
perhaps the first truly healthy in their relationship to time [Zeitgesunden],
and only the tendency to still think about the out-dated [Unzeitgemäßem]
had made them sick.’⁶⁰⁸*

Carl Sternheim, *Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse. Ein Lustspiel* (1920)

In May 1926, the influential art historian and director of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, Max Sauerlandt, wrote a letter to Hans Knapp, the chairman of the Kunstverein in Halle, in which he described the 1922 *Double-Portrait* of Otto Dix and his wife Martha as dancers as one of ‘the most significant portrait works by Dix, who is the leading figure of the latest painterly developments in Germany’.⁶⁰⁹ Sauerlandt had been asked by Knapp to provide his professional opinion about the artistic merit of the picture, because the latter was considering its acquisition for the Kunstverein. Contemporary artists needed supporters like Sauerlandt at a time when, as Andreas Hüneke writes, there were still ‘fundamental reservations among specialists about the acquisition of contemporary art for public collections’,⁶¹⁰ and Sauerlandt, who had seen the painting twice, expressed himself favourably in the most emphatic terms:

⁶⁰⁸ Carl Sternheim, *Der entfesselte Zeitgenosse. Ein Lustspiel* (Munich: Kurt Wolff, 1920), p. 28-29. All translations from the German original are my own unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁰⁹ Max Sauerlandt, letter to Hans Knapp, 3 May 1926, cited in Andreas Hüneke, *Das Schöpferische Museum. Eine Dokumentation zur Geschichte der Sammlung moderner Kunst 1908-1949*, ed. by Katja Schneider (Halle: Stiftung Moritzburg, 2005), p. 121.

⁶¹⁰ Andreas Hüneke, ‘Die lange Geschichte der Hallenser Fischer-Bilder’, in *Expressionismus und Exil. Die Sammlung Ludwig und Rosy Fischer, Frankfurt am Main*, ed. by G. Heuberger (Munich: Prestel, 1990), 81-93 (p. 81).

‘There is no doubt in my mind that the greatest achievements of this epoch – and I count Dix’s *Double-Portrait* as one of these greatest achievements – will have lasting significance.’⁶¹¹ He acknowledged, nevertheless, that one could not yet pass a final judgement on what he called the ‘latest painterly developments’. It appears that Sauerlandt deliberately remained unspecific in his choice of language by avoiding the widely-used term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, speaking of a ‘development’ rather than a ‘style’ or a ‘movement’.

The development in painting Sauerlandt was referring to was, of course, not really brand new. The *Kunstblatt* had already taken note of it in its early stages in its 1922 survey about a ‘New Naturalism’ that was seen as influenced by earlier developments in Italy and France. The survey had asked art world insiders whether new figurative positions in painting, only tentatively named, with quotation marks, ‘New Naturalism’, had any credibility. In his introduction of the responses to the survey, editor Paul Westheim explained that the aim was to establish whether ‘*Neuer Naturalismus*’ was just *Schlagwort*, ‘a buzz word such as “Expressionism” or even “End of Expressionism” [or whether it was] about something essential’.⁶¹² He claimed that what was at stake was ‘the insight, [into] what should be [...] recognised as an organic developmental imperative, and that which is just the allure of fashion’, a ‘*Modeallüre*’.⁶¹³

In a somewhat contradictory move, Westheim simultaneously ridiculed attempts to find a suitable umbrella term, even though that is exactly what he set out to do: ‘Among the

⁶¹¹ Hüneke, *Das Schöpferische Museum*, p. 121. As Sauerlandt confirmed in his letter, he had seen the original painting twice, in the house of a collector in Munster and in an exhibition in Berlin.

⁶¹² Paul Westheim, ‘Ein neuer Naturalismus? Eine Rundfrage des Kunstblattes’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 369 – 414, (p. 369).

⁶¹³ Westheim, ‘Ein neuer Naturalismus?’, p. 369.

circle of art specialists one is currently being reassured that Expressionism is finished [...] For those people, poor in spirit, a new *Schlagwort* and an easily learnable recipe will hopefully soon be found.’⁶¹⁴ The question was, then, how a new art movement could be talked about when an umbrella term for it should simultaneously be avoided. One might wonder, therefore, how clear it was to the respondents of his survey what kind of visual phenomenon in art they were being asked about. Indeed, their responses are evidence of the fact that there was not yet a coherent conception of the type of painting the term ‘New Naturalism’ should be describing. And the most successfully established buzzword for the new realist movement in painting would soon be not *Neuer Naturalismus*, but *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

While Sauerlandt might have avoided the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a wider audience did not. Dix was seen as a leading figure of a ‘movement’ that had been given a clear label since (if not before) the programmatic exhibition with the same title at the Kunsthalle in Mannheim in 1925. In this exhibition, which had travelled around Germany for a year and a half, Dix had been prominently represented with seven works.⁶¹⁵ When Sauerlandt wrote his recommendation in 1926, art journals, curators and gallerists had paved the way for decision-makers in major national museums to start to acquire the work of *neusachlich* painters for public collections. With influential figures such as Sauerlandt predicting the lasting significance of his work, it seemed that Dix was on track to achieve his goal of being written into art history.

⁶¹⁴ Paul Westheim, ‘Otto Dix’, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 604 (17th August 1923), p. 3.

⁶¹⁵ Gesa Jeuthe, *Kunstwerte im Wandel: Die Preisentwicklung der deutschen Moderne im nationalen und internationalen Kunstmarkt 1925 bis 1955* (Berlin: Akademie, 2011), p. 253.

Indeed, the year 1926 marked the height of Dix's success. He was by that time regularly shown in group exhibitions across Germany, important art journals were covering his work, and in that spring, he had his first major solo-exhibition at Neumann-Nierendorf in Berlin, which would travel on to Tannhauser in Munich. Sauerlandt's declaration of confidence may have been encouraged by this exhibition, which was framed as a 'retrospective' and accompanied by a small catalogue. This critical success and a continuously growing body of work confirmed that the by then 35-year-old painter could be taken seriously as an artist. In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, Paul F. Schmidt (until 1924 the director for contemporary art at the Stadtmuseum Dresden) described Dix in similar terms as Sauerlandt as 'without a doubt the representative painter of today's Germany – perhaps of today's Europe'.⁶¹⁶ Only people who 'did not understand the time', Schmidt contended, would reject works such as his controversial painting *Trench*, and it was specifically as a 'Mitlebender', as a contemporary of Dix, that Schmidt said he felt qualified to make this judgement.⁶¹⁷ He was even more confident than Sauerlandt in his belief in the future importance of Dix's work, for both art history and the study of history more generally: 'Already today, one can make the judgement that a cross-section of our time, with its highs and lows, is mirrored in his oeuvre exactly as it will appear to the objective future historian.'⁶¹⁸ Both Sauerlandt and Schmidt framed Dix's work within two different temporal parameters by simultaneously insisting on its significance in the present *and* its significance to history. Willi Wolfradt, alongside Schmidt the most fervent of Dix's early supporters, had already said as much two years earlier when writing in the first monograph published on

⁶¹⁶ Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, 'Otto Dix', in *Otto Dix. Katalog der Gesamtausstellung 1926. Mit Verzeichnis der gesamten Grafik bis 1925, Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf* (Berlin: Kunstarchiv, 1926), pp. 5-7 (p. 5).

⁶¹⁷ Schmidt, p. 5. Schmidt called it Dix's 'gewaltiges Kriegsbild' and must be referring to the 1923 canvas *The Trench*, since Dix only started work on the triptych *War* in 1929.

⁶¹⁸ Schmidt, p. 5-6.

the artist, which was designed to promote his career, that Dix was ‘without a doubt one of the history-shaping forces of the present’.⁶¹⁹

Art historian Alfred Kamphausen, on the other hand, had problems with Dix’s ‘biographers who worship him’ through mere ‘phraseology’, most likely thinking here of critics like Wolfradt.⁶²⁰ Kamphausen felt ambivalent about the work itself. However, he made clear, at least, that Dix had to be taken seriously, irrespective of the opinions of ‘academics trained in aesthetics’ who saw ‘in the Laokoon [...] the non plus ultra’ of artistic achievements and for whom Dix would ‘always remain a negative phenomenon’ because his work was not ‘a topic for afternoon tea’.⁶²¹

What had been tentatively labelled ‘New Naturalism’ by the *Kunstblatt* in 1922 had quickly acquired many followers, which prompted Ernst Kállai to declare, somewhat dismissively, in 1927 that ‘the new realism has become a broad mass movement in painting’.⁶²² Around the same time Paul Westheim gave voice to his suspicion that the way in which this development had been captured through language, more specifically, through a catchphrase, might have played a pivotal role in this expansion into a broad artistic movement that had attracted many followers: ‘That a contemporary concept [*Zeitbegriff*] like „new objectivity“, which has helped shed much ballast in architecture, would also become a „direction“ was of course inevitable’, he wrote in the *Kunstblatt*.⁶²³ Westheim’s comment shows an awareness that a catchy slogan, used repeatedly, could potentially turn individual occurrences into a ‘direction’ in art as a

⁶¹⁹ Wolfradt, ‘Otto Dix’, 1924, p. 15.

⁶²⁰ Alfred Kamphausen, ‘Otto Dix. Eine Kritik seiner Möglichkeiten’, no source, no date (probably mid-1920s), no page. [KA]

⁶²¹ Kamphausen [KA].

⁶²² Ernst Kállai, ‘Fritz Maskos’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (1927), 218-221 (p. 218).

⁶²³ Paul Westheim, ‘Ausstellungen. Berlin: Sezession’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 11 (1927), 202-203 (p. 202).

kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Such self-reflexive observations regarding his own professional tools and the influence one could wield with them are evidence of the greater awareness of the influence of the mass media on artists, on developments in the wider art world, and on public interest in art. This unprecedented power of a repeatedly employed ‘slogan’ was, in part, the result of the vastly increased number of printed media outlets after the war.

Contemporary commentators were preoccupied with concerns about how one could establish and verbalize what was ‘appropriate for a time’, or *zeitgemäß*, as opposed to just ‘contemporary’ – and the desire to separate the two. The discussion of these issues followed on from earlier debates about the relationship between *Style* and *Fashion* by German *Kulturkritik*, which had focused on creative output relevant to design theory, from *Kunsth Handwerk* to architecture, and had come to a head in the debates of the Werkbund.⁶²⁴ The two concepts had also been central to the art historical discourse about synchronic and diachronic stylistic correspondences between different forms of artistic expression in the decades leading up to the 1920s.⁶²⁵ In the wake of these debates, the commentators we will hear of in this chapter reveal that in the 1920s, there was greater awareness of the fact that the terms employed in these theoretical debates were themselves subject to temporal changes. What bothered many writers in particular was the influence of so-called ‘*Schlagworte*’ – catchwords, slogans, buzzwords – that were used to help categorise artworks and artists, but could acquire fashionable currency themselves.

⁶²⁴ See Frederic Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

⁶²⁵ See Frederic Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

When reading their texts, one gets a sense of their discomfort when having to use established categories. They used caveats and attempted to replace or avoid them, just as Sauerlandt had above with the terms ‘style’, ‘movement’ or ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’. Critics and authors knew that one of their tasks was to identify and label new developments in art, but the issue of labelling seemed to become a preoccupation almost as important as their traditional task of identifying relevant new artists and artworks among the mass of artistic production. It was felt that contemporary art, and the writing about it, needed new reference points and a new language. This is also evident in authors’ original style of prose and neologisms. Established vocabulary, such as the term ‘style’, was carefully avoided by many because of how its application had been defined by (formalist) art history. A new generation of writers was more self-conscious, more aware of the influence of discourse on artistic production, and of how they could influence the way that future art history would look back on the era.

This chapter adds to existing studies of the history and theory of art criticism and art history, while also situating the career development of Dix within another area of critical discourse. This analysis is not about the relationship between word and image, it is not focused on articles that describe and interpret individual artworks. Instead, it is concerned with the historical discourse about new models of conceiving and describing the artwork’s relationship to its own time, and how this was expressed in language.

The chapter will first set the scene by considering the relationship between art history and arts criticism, art historians and art critics. The chapter will then focus on the plight of *Schlagworte* as an issue that crystalized the problem of time-limited fashions in language. These ‘buzzwords’ and their power to construct and deconstruct artistic

careers by trapping artworks or artists within a terminological straightjacket, were designed to capture a whole movement or direction in art, but were themselves subject to the temporal dynamics of rise and decline and to the shifting appeal of what a word conjured up. The analysis will then move on to discuss the role of the art critic in determining what is innovative and to separate this from art that merely adopted existing – fashionable – formulas, from an idiom or ‘Ism’ already successful with institutions, critics and collectors. In order to verbally identify such derivative artworks, some writers used references to Germany’s hugely successful ready-to-wear clothing industry, *Konfektion*, to replace the concept of ‘fashion’, a more generalised critical concept that had been prominently employed in previous debates. *Konfektion* (and *Konfektionäre*, referring to ready-to-wear manufacturers) became important terms that combined issues of language, time, fashion and artistic production. By using the term *Konfektion*, writers aligned this kind of art for their readers with highly organized, and relatively easily understandable industrial production processes, rather than with the broader theoretical concept of ‘fashion’. I will then move on to look specifically at the umbrella term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ as a fashionable *Schlagwort*, one that subsumed Dix’s work under a stylistic grouping, which, as this chapter contends, meant that his art and the term to describe it came to share a temporal trajectory. Finally, the chapter will return to Dix to consider in what way the art critical discourse that accompanied his work throughout the decade shifted over the course of the second half of the 1920s, an aspect thus far neglected by the research on Dix.

Otto Dix had worked hard, and on many fronts, to achieve success. But his career encountered problems when respected writers such as Kállai and Westheim started to describe with some disdain his artworks and those of some of his peers, not as individual occurrences, but as mere examples of a broader ‘movement’ or ‘direction’ in 1927. As Georg Simmel had argued, fashion was positioned on ‘the dividing-line between past and future’, because ‘as fashion spreads, it gradually goes to its doom’.⁶²⁶ Around 1925/1926, Dix and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* were the height of fashion, and decline, the painter must have worried, was imminent. Following Simmel’s analysis, the quality of an artwork did not matter since fashion was ‘the total antithesis of contents’,⁶²⁷ and anything could be caught in its destructive dynamics, irrespective of whether an artwork had – to use Sauerlandt’s words – been deemed to be ‘significant’ or not by specialists.

At stake in this chapter is yet another way of understanding artistic agency and its limits. The work of Otto Dix will provide an anchoring point and concrete example of an artist and oeuvre caught up in the dynamics of the language of temporality and the temporality of language that was itself the result of the imperative for innovation in both modern art and in art criticism itself.

Art Historians, Art Critics, *Kunstschriftsteller*

Arts criticism and journalism in the 1910s and 1920s were highly sophisticated, and the art writer a figure with increasing importance in both the art world and the wider public

⁶²⁶ Georg Simmel, ‘Fashion’, in *The Rise of Fashion. A Reader*, ed. by Daniel Purdy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. 289-309 (p. 295).

⁶²⁷ Simmel, p. 298.

sphere. Art critics were gaining a more defined professional profile and art increased its visibility through an expanding number of exhibitions and art journals. The variety of writers of the Weimar era could not simply be summarized under the term ‘art critics’, and only a few were publishing articles in daily newspapers. The term ‘*Kritiker*’ was still rarely used for those who had made it their profession to write about art. Most commonly they were called ‘*Kunstschriftsteller*’ and many of them were art historians by training. Some regularly wrote for a specific journal, while others were very prolific and spread their writing across many publications, Willi Wolfradt being one such example. Wolfradt did not just write reviews for cultural journals such as *Der Cicerone*, *Kunst und Künstler*, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, and *Literarische Welt* among others, but also for the short-lived German edition of the fashion magazine *Vogue*. Some writers worked in museums or ran galleries and only occasionally published texts. There was also a significant number of artists very engaged in the written discourse about contemporary art, and they were not just writing about their own work but also that of others.

The fact that artists in particular often made efforts to avoid established vocabulary when trying to describe creative processes or aesthetic shifts, is indicative of an epoch described by Fernand Léger in 1923 as one shaped by ‘sharp-eyed specialists [...] an epoch of value determination, [...] an epoch of criticism freed from sensitivities’.⁶²⁸ The cause for this shift, he said, had been the war, ‘which has enabled a revision of all values’.⁶²⁹ Artists like Léger, who believed themselves to be under intensified scrutiny, were more motivated to get involved in the discourse about art since their desire to

⁶²⁸ Fernand Léger, ‘Kurzgefasste Auseinandersetzung über das aktuelle künstlerische Sein’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 1- 4 (p. 1).

⁶²⁹ Léger, p. 1.

position themselves at the forefront of artistic developments could not always be aligned with established criteria of approbation. Although what artists say about their own work has to be treated with caution, the mere fact that they were very engaged in the critical debates indicates a desire to break out of art historical frameworks and to have some sort of influence on the judgement of contemporary artistic production. By extension, they could thereby try to shape art's next direction not just through their creative work, but also through their published statements.

The major art journals of the Weimar Republic saw themselves as gatekeepers tasked with protecting the privileged status of fine art in the face of an expanding mass culture, and against what was perceived as the wide-reaching commodification of all aspects of life. Art history as an academic discipline had seen a flowering in universities around the turn of the century, and the ideas of the innovative academics of that period were still very influential in the 1920s.⁶³⁰ However, it appears that after the First World War, the centre of the debate shifted to the arena of the art journal for a wider public. A new generation of art writers, active in an expanding number different types of journals and newspapers, were using their new and loosely defined field of responsibility to engage in theoretical questions. They felt that the parameters and concepts established in art history and *Kulturkritik* were unable to account for some of the latest developments.

Art writing was increasing its profile at a time when art itself was feared to be in a state of crisis. Art writers were demanding new ways to conceive of and discuss art in responses to the changes they saw in art itself in the context of a visual culture

⁶³⁰ See Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979).

increasingly dominated by mass media publications, and affected by the widening of audiences for art and art writing. There was a struggle between art historians and art ‘critics’ for the authority, language and discursive tools to grasp these phenomena in art.

This was exemplified by the book *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft: Die Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte*, published in 1925 by Hans Tietze (born 1880), a relatively young Czech-Austrian art historian, art critic, and supporter of contemporary art who had studied art history in Vienna under Franz Wickhoff and Alois Riegl. As early as 1917, Hans Tietze mounted an attack on established art historical frameworks, accusing art history that it was suffering from a ‘false scholarliness that covers up purely subjective judgements with specifically developed theories’.⁶³¹ In the same year, Adolf Behne targeted the same problem in an essay on Expressionism, arguing that: ‘We have to liberate ourselves from the many established concepts if we want to do the new art justice [...] the concepts that stand in the way of experiencing these works are about five hundred years old.’⁶³² These concepts were historically conditioned, he argued, and could not ‘correspond’ to contemporary art because they had been coined for a different kind of artistic production and during another era.⁶³³

Writers with degrees in art history had been trained to devalue individual artworks and artistic agency, because it had largely been written out of the formalist frameworks developed by influential art historians, chief among them Alois Riegl’s study of the *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901) and Heinrich Wölfflin’s – one of Westheim’s teachers – *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915), both of which reduced style to a system of

⁶³¹ Hans Tietze, ‘Die Literatur über die jüngste Kunst’, *Kunstchronik: Wochenschrift für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe*, 28 (1917), 435-439 (p. 435).

⁶³² Adolf Behne, *Zur neuen Kunst* (Munich: Der Sturm, 1917), p. 31.

⁶³³ Behne, p. 31.

forms.⁶³⁴ However, concepts these authorities heavily relied on, such as the idea of a ‘spirit’, or ‘*Geist*’, of a time, had become highly problematic rather than merely outdated. Painter Iwan Goll even went a step further and mocked outdated *Kulturkritik* in 1923 in the *Kunstblatt* when suggesting that neither people actively involved in the contemporary art world nor intelligent art historians would use the word ‘*Geist*’, he wrote, since ‘only a furniture manufacturer or a hairdresser would speak of a „spirit“ in painting’.⁶³⁵

In 1928, Wilhelm Lotz, at the time editor of *Die Form*, dedicated a whole article to the issue of old vs new terminology. The belief that not just creative production, but also how it should be described was in flux, is evident here:

There is a lack of suitable and established words and terms to label and characterize the new forms that are emerging everywhere [...]. The vocabulary of nineteenth century art history has proven to be inadequate. There is a veritable aversion against these critical terms among the proponents of new art and design [*Gestaltung*], and it is very interesting to observe their attempts to introduce a new terminology.⁶³⁶

Established art historical terms were not only seen as unsuitable, they were also unfashionable. For Hans Curjel, contemporary art production itself, and not just the writing about it, was guided by a similar desire to overcome the limitations set up by art historical theories. He argued in an article about Georg Scholz that in order to reconnect with a wider audience, young painters had started to devise a realism where ‘all formal

⁶³⁴ The latter was so popular that by 1921 it was in its fifth edition. See Charles Haxthausen, ‘Paul Klee, Wilhelm Hausenstein, and the “Problem of Style”’, *Kritische Berichte*, 42 (2014), 47-67 (p. 58).

⁶³⁵ Iwan Goll, ‘Bitte Umsteigen’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 330-331 (p. 330).

⁶³⁶ Wilhelm Lotz, ‘Die “weltmännische Form”’, *Die Form. Zeitschrift für gestaltende Arbeit*, 3.4 (1928), 123-124 (p. 123). Lotz focused on the fashionable catchphrase ‘*die weltmännische Form*’, which may be best translated as ‘the cosmopolitan form’.

problems are switched off'.⁶³⁷ In Germany, painters were re-engaging with external realities, he argued, and this differentiated their work from the kind of realism dominated by 'formalist currents' that had recently developed in France alongside a revival of the work of Ingres.⁶³⁸

In the same year in which Lotz published his article in *Die Form*, Karl Scheffler, the editor of *Kunst und Künstler*, also observed in his review of new publications by Julius Meier-Graefe and Wilhelm Worringer that there was a desire for new criteria for the judgement of art. This was not only a rejection of the conception of organic movements of rise and decline in art that had dominated the last hundred years of art history writing, he said, 'this revalidation has also to do with the increasing resistance against idealist terms, against the German addiction to idealise individual artists or specific epochs of art'.⁶³⁹ Scheffler saw the developments he observed as 'part of the great global discussion of the re-evaluation' of the way art was conceptualized through specific *Kunstabgriffe*.⁶⁴⁰

How in tune a *Kunstschriftsteller* was with contemporary developments in art was judged by his vocabulary. Carl Einstein was a leading example of a writer whose inventive and original prose signalled his alignment with contemporary art. Einstein is particularly relevant because he saw himself as an 'avant-gardist of arts criticism who

⁶³⁷ Hans Curjel, 'Zur Entwicklung des Malers Georg Scholz', *Das Kunstblatt*, 8 (1923), 257-264 (p. 259).

⁶³⁸ Curjel, p. 259.

⁶³⁹ Karl Scheffler, 'Umwertungen. Zu Büchern von Julius Meier-Graefe und Wilhelm Worringer', *Kunst und Künstler*, 26 (1928), 120 (p. 120).

⁶⁴⁰ Scheffler, p. 120.

was identifying new criteria for a new art'.⁶⁴¹ However, the conundrum for Tietze was that art critics were not necessarily ready to replace trained art historians because the former 'believe they are listening to the pulse of the time, because they constantly talk about its vitality, which makes them feel endlessly superior to older critical art history'.⁶⁴² Art critics were becoming so influential that Robert Hedicke, professor in art history in Heidelberg, with a strong belief in the methodical approaches of his discipline, felt it necessary to warn his students against being guided by their judgement. In a book on the methods of art history, published in 1924, he dedicated two pages to the important but difficult task of the *Tagesschriftsteller*, the daily news journalist, to make objective judgements without the methodological tools of the historian:

The journalist stands in the middle of life, he works for life, he is not a purely historical human being, not a purely theoretical human being, but a purely contemporary human being. This is why we cannot expect and demand from him [to have] the same vantage point of timeless, objective understanding that the historical human being has.⁶⁴³

Hedicke recommended that art historians who engaged with contemporary art should do this in exactly the same way as they had been trained to approach historic art. This, according to Hedicke, would produce a reliable assessment of new artistic positions that were not influenced by the interests or success of living artists, contemporary audiences or the art market.

⁶⁴¹ Andreas Strobl, "Die ringende Empfindung der Augenblicks" – Carl Einstein und die Kunstkritiker seiner Zeit', in *Die visuelle Wende der Moderne. Carl Einsteins Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Klaus H. Kiefer (Munich: Fink, 2003), pp. 99-248 (p. 101).

⁶⁴² Hans Tietze, 'Verlebendigung der Kunstgeschichte', *Hochschulblatt der Frankfurter Zeitung*, 6 March 1925, repr. in *Wiener Jahrbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, 33 (1980), 7-12.

⁶⁴³ Robert Hedicke, *Methodenlehre der Kunstgeschichte. Ein Handbuch für Studenten* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1924), p. 34.

The perception that art history was out of touch with contemporary developments was mounting over the course of the 1920s. To some, it seemed paralysed by the perceived absence of a coherent style in contemporary art production. Art history was perceived as ill-equipped to discern which objects, out of a seemingly incoherent variety of directions and endless number of artworks, should be acknowledged and studied. Although art historians had traditionally been reluctant to engage with the latest art, they were reluctant to give over their authority to the art critic. Could a critic be an adequate replacement to survey and select what deserved critical attention and processing for future art historians? The issue was that the art critic did not yet quite enjoy the level of professional reputation that would qualify him in everyone's eyes for such a task. Art historians sought to dominate criticism as well as academia.

Scholars such as Wilhelm Hausenstein acted as art historians and critics. In 1917, Hausenstein published his essay 'Der Kunstschriftsteller' as a statement of intent in the *Kunstblatt*. Here he argued that the old 'art judge', who had looked at art through the lens of idealist principles and rigid theoretical frameworks, had been replaced by a new type of art critic. This new critic had made a step in the right direction by putting 'his effort into avoiding anything that could shape norms from his conversations and essays', but he was focusing too much on technical details and wrote in a jargon only specialists could understand.⁶⁴⁴ More recently, Hausenstein observed, some critics had started to reject this approach, too, as outdated art historical 'Spezialistentum'. Unfortunately this had not improved the situation, because, as Hausenstein saw it, the art object itself had disappeared from essays that now focused too much on the writer's

⁶⁴⁴ Wilhelm Hausenstein, 'Der Kunstschriftsteller', *Das Kunstblatt*, 1 (1917), repr. in *Die Kunst in diesem Augenblick. Aufsätze und Tagebuchblätter aus 50 Jahren*, ed. Hans Melchers (Munich: Prestel, 1960), 7-10 (p. 7).

personal perception and on the description of peripheral information. The true critic, Hausenstein believed, needed to accept that he had to serve the artwork rather than showcase his personality. In contrast to Tietze and Hedicke (as different as their positions may have been otherwise), Hausenstein advocated that art writers should avoid references to wider historical events as a crutch and engage with his own time and with the ‘present-ness of all art’ by ‘living alongside the painting’.⁶⁴⁵

The art critic had taken on a more important role because he was needed as ‘the guide for a mass of value-blind people’⁶⁴⁶, as Fritz Hoerber wrote in 1921 in *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*. The task of contemporary *Kunstschriftstellerei* was to navigate an expanding and highly diverse field in the context of a changing cultural landscape, and Hoerber called for the establishment of a university degree in arts criticism since only ‘the intuition of the art critic, which surveys and synthesizes the whole culture of our time’ could identify what exactly could be understood to be the ‘fulfilment of the will of the time [Zeitwillen]’.⁶⁴⁷ Employing the concept of the ‘will’ or ‘volition’ of a time in line with, but instead of, Alois Riegl’s concept of the *Kunstwollen*, but shifting the emphasis from a synthesizing of a cultural context towards a somewhat more neutral temporal concept, he had no confidence that an art historian could identify it: this could only be done by the art critic who – and here he echoes what Hausenstein had called for – ‘is constantly actively involved, who does not separate and specialize himself like the academic’.⁶⁴⁸ Hoerber criticized existing academic training and its lack of conscious engagement with wider contemporary

⁶⁴⁵ Hausenstein, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁴⁶ Fritz Hoerber, ‘Sachliche Kunstbetrachtung und persönliche Kunstpolitik’, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 15 (1921), 205-211 (p. 207).

⁶⁴⁷ ‘die Gesamtkultur unserer Zeit synthetisch umspannt’. Hoerber, p. 207.

⁶⁴⁸ Hoerber, p. 207.

culture, at a time when some eminent art historians were more influenced by nascent contemporary developments in art and culture than they might be ready to acknowledge.

Hans Tietze suggested as much about his teacher Alois Riegl in 1925: according to Tietze, Riegl had not been as objective in his judgement as he believed himself to be, because the ‘source of his intuitive understanding’ of historical styles hitherto neglected by other art historians ‘was his sensitivity towards living, still unborn values in art’.⁶⁴⁹ The way in which these writers attempted to re-evaluate, and to an extent to newly formulate, the established idea that the art historian’s temporality was that of the past, while that of the art critic was of the present (which would also determine the vocabulary and language of temporality they could employ), demonstrates that parameters of both professions had to be negotiated. And it is one of the reasons why we can find such rich intellectual discourse in the art journals of the time.

Writing in 1925, Max J. Friedländer offered another interesting perspective on the limits of the abilities of art historians in his essay ‘The Collector and his Future in Germany’. Here he claimed that they were not particularly suited to advising collectors of contemporary art, even though they were, in fact, influencing private art collecting a lot more in Germany than in other parts of the world, such as America. While historians as trained specialists had an important role to play in educating broad audiences, he contended, they were ‘aesthetic nihilists’,⁶⁵⁰ which disqualified them, to an extent, from advising private collectors (he did not comment on whether this also applied to public art collections):

⁶⁴⁹ Hans Tietze, ‘Verlebendigung der Kunstgeschichte’, p. 8.

⁶⁵⁰ Max J. Friedländer, ‘Der Sammler und seine Zukunft in Deutschland’, *Der Kunstwanderer*, 7 (April 1925), 253-255 (p. 254).

In Germany, the historians rule. The historian as such has no taste, no preference, no aversion, he does not love or hate, he understands and explains. Without prejudice and unscrupulously [*unbedenklich*] he recommends and brings everything to the collector, specifically where no tradition stands in his way.⁶⁵¹

Although Friedländer did not specify who might be better equipped to advise art collectors – and the general consensus seems to have been that they needed advice⁶⁵² – could we see this as an implicit appraisal of the art critic? Friedländer was simplifying the situation to make his point of course (because an art historian might indeed have personal preferences), but we could say that his arguments implicitly supports the view that the art critic, gallerist, or non-academic advisor capable of some sort of personal and instinctive reaction was better suited to assess the future cultural (and economic) value of contemporary creative production. Even though these advisors might have trained as art historians, they would have to leave any ideas of classical values behind and consider whether an artwork would be a good acquisition for an art collector by engaging with values specific to the tastes, developments in broader visual culture, and the value in the art market of the present.

Early in 1931, the debate about the role and abilities of the art critic still continued. Oskar Schürer conceived him as an important mediator who could draw attention to aspects art history had thus far largely neglected: reception history. Here is what Schürer had to say on the subject in his essay ‘Kunst und Zeitgenosse’, published in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*:

⁶⁵¹ Friedländer, p. 254.

⁶⁵² For an example of the view that art collectors were in need of advice see: Paul Fechter, ‘Zwischen Kunst und Publikum’, in *Das Problem der Bildnisgestaltung in der jungen Kunst, 1927*, Veröffentlichungen des Kunstarchivs, 43 (Berlin: Diehl, 1927), pp. 5-8. Fechter writes that among the general public, ‘taste’, a true sense for art [*Kunstgefühl*], was ‘withered, undeveloped, at best only existent in rudimentary form’ (p. 7).

The history of art has authority where the historian maps out the internal development of temporal and cross-temporal problems. As *Kulturgeschichte* it is in danger of ossifying, if it does not include in its observations the contemporary response to art. Alongside the history of art runs the history of the validity of art [*Kunstgeltung*]. And this validity is laid down [*fixiert*] by arts criticism. It is the mouth-piece of public opinion.⁶⁵³

As Schürer made clear, art history could not just rely on formalist frameworks that turned individual artworks into mere examples of wider cultural developments. Although Schürer saw value in the work of the contemporary critic, his preference was for art historians to engage with contemporary art. Critics, Schürer contended, were often merely voicing what their audience expected to hear, while the personal judgements made by art historians could claim authority because they were based on solid academic training. Implicitly, arts criticism was thereby appraised as a source by which to study historic audience responses to art, even though a critic might not actually be a mere ‘mouth-piece of public opinion’, as Schürer claimed.

As we have seen, while some commentators wanted trained art historians to engage with contemporary art in a different way, others did not believe they could be up to the task – what both sides agreed on, however, was that contemporary art should be engaged with on a broader scale and with fresh tools. Since the debate about the role of the art critic was mainly waged by trained art historians and not by journalistic art writers, it comes as no surprise that ultimately (under the condition that they updated their tools and methods) it was the trained art historian who was presented as best suited to directly engage with contemporary art and culture. In other words an academically trained art critic, was seen as the best possible option.

⁶⁵³ Oskar Schürer, ‘Kunst und Zeitgenosse’, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 67 (1930/31), 422-424 (p. 422).

From these arguments over the historian's and the critic's suitability to discuss contemporary art, I now want to turn to an analysis of the specific language and discursive tools employed in the discussion of art during this period, specifically the anxiety around the temporality of this language.

Schlagworte

Since the early 1900s the problem of language and terminology in art writing had been a topic in specialist art journals. In 1902, poet Rainer Maria Rilke had bemoaned the particular '*Kunstkritik-Stil*' that had become established in newspapers, but lacked rigour and credibility because it relied too much on 'speedily found buzzwords [*Schlagwörter*]', which, once they entered into common usage, were 'alienated from the actual meaning, lose through inflationary, hasty use what they were coined for, and appear in increasingly dubious contexts'.⁶⁵⁴ Ultimately they would be 'no more valuable than the platitudes of ancient art histories', meaningless and used by anyone.⁶⁵⁵ Writing in an article about the artist Heinrich Vogeler in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, Rilke established a close link between the media, time, and the judgement of artworks:

Through the newspapers, time itself has become the judge of artworks, and nobody is as little qualified as [time] to take on this difficult task. Artworks are in so many cases a contradiction against the time, and where they on occasion agree with it [the time], and go along with it, time [itself] has become un-timely [*unzeitlich*].⁶⁵⁶

The issue of language became a significant concern over the course of the 1920s. This was the same period in which art writing was reflecting more intensively on itself as a

⁶⁵⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Heinrich Vogeler – Worpswede', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 10 (1902), 301-330 (p. 301).

⁶⁵⁵ Rilke, p. 301.

⁶⁵⁶ Rilke, p. 302.

profession and artists started to engage more intensively with questions about the nature of the art work. Carl Einstein, for example, was one of the leading figures of a new generation of art writers who saw themselves in open competition, if not conflict, with established commentators. He attacked the eminent art historian Julius Meier-Graefe, a well-known supporter of French Impressionism, in 1923 in the *Kunstblatt* as a 'journalist' who should 'define his words properly'.⁶⁵⁷ But not just the vocabulary, the style and tone of writing was important to consider, since it directed audiences' perception. In the chapter he contributed to Hans Kraemer's ambitious book project *Das XIX. Jahrhundert in Wort und Bild*, Georg Galland warned in 1900:

The historian has to be careful not to describe every new direction in art as a significant phase in its development; [...] without being explicit, even the tone of the account and a more eloquent engagement with the latest fashion can prompt such a perception.⁶⁵⁸

The art historian covering recent developments in contemporary art would therefore be well advised to be careful to avoid the pitfalls of a carelessly chosen phrase.

For many writers, as Rilke had observed, the main issue were *Schlagworte*, catchphrases and labels to describe new directions in art. They were both problematic and necessary in order to situate artworks within broader developments in art, but, as was becoming clear, they also revealed the temporality of language because of their transience, their habit of quickly becoming fashionable only to turn stale. Language was not a value-free parameter and depending on when, in what context, and by whom a *Schlagwort* was used, a mark of critical approbation was given to a specific artwork, but

⁶⁵⁷ Carl Einstein, 'Meier-Graefe und die Kunst nach dem Kriege', *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 185-187 (p. 185). In fact, Meier-Graefe became an art critic for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1924, following Westheim's dismissal.

⁶⁵⁸ Georg Galland, 'Malerei und Plastik', in *Das XIX. Jahrhundert in Wort und Bild. Politische und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. by Hans Kraemer, 4 vols (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong, 1900), III, 303-334 (p. 303).

over time exactly this word would turn into a tool to dismiss it as a mere expression of a short-lived trend.

In 1926, the architect Alfred Gellhorn dedicated a whole essay, entitled ‘On Buzzwords’, to the problem of *Schlagworte*. ‘What can, it seems, not be separated from new movements,’ Gellhorn wrote, ‘is that their advocates intoxicate themselves and others with buzzwords’.⁶⁵⁹ He advised his readers to carefully consider each new term brought into circulation, because it could turn otherwise important new artistic expressions into fleeting fashions. What is evident in Gellhorn’s reasoning is the awareness that terms came with an expiration date, there was a temporality to the language of art critics, and it affected the artworks that the terms were attached to, since both could decline in the estimation of artworld insiders at the same time. As painter and photographer Hans Windisch sarcastically contended in a 1928 essay on photography, these were ‘good times for the inventors of a new vocabulary’.⁶⁶⁰ However, the issue with new buzzwords was that they were grouping potentially incommensurable artistic positions together, or even worse, they could veil qualitative difference.

For some writers, new terms could start out as legitimate and valuable tools to describe a style, they could be coined by respected people in the art world (such as the term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ by Gustav Hartlaub), and they were not necessarily just superficial *Schlagworte*. *Schlagworte* could manipulate contemporary audiences’ perception, but they also laid the ground work for future art historical writing. Indeed, Oskar Schürer

⁶⁵⁹ Alfred Gellhorn, ‘Von den Schlagworten’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 10 (1926), 223-225 (p. 223).

⁶⁶⁰ Hans Windisch, ‘Photographie: ein künstlerisches Volksnahrungsmittel’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 12 (1928), 65-75 (p.75).

saw the most important challenge and task of contemporary art criticism to be the clarification and selection of appropriate terms. In an essay about the fashionable buzzword '*Zeitgemäßheit*' he wrote:

One of the most urgent tasks of today's art criticism is to evaluate the mass of buzzwords emerging everywhere and whether they have a healthy core. [...] Because the introduction of buzzwords – if not always their complete pulping [*Vermanschung*] – has to be laid at its doorstep.⁶⁶¹

It is this obsession with *Schlagworte* as a problem that led editor Hermann von Wedderkop to jokingly take the opposite view in his opening statement for the first edition of art dealer Alfred Flechtheim's magazine *Der Querschnitt* in 1922, when declaring that the magazine was 'a fanatical supporter of the *Schlagwort*. We are looking for it as the most precise expression of this era'.⁶⁶² This polemic announcement was designed to signal the *Querschnitt's* difference from the traditional art journal, which Wedderkop dismissed as a 'sleep aid'.⁶⁶³ The key to a successful *Schlagwort* was that it needed to correspond to and map new forms of expression for which new terms were still under negotiation. New terms could not only be quickly replaced, there were cross-overs, muddy semiotic mixtures of new and old concepts, too. In addition, not every new word actually described something different or new. What is becoming clear, though, is that the discussions of such new terminology, whether it was appropriate and used correctly, took up a considerable amount of energy in the 1920s.

Writers had to be careful in their choice of language and hold back before engaging the label of a particular 'style' because it could gloss over artistic individuality and

⁶⁶¹ Oskar Schürer, 'Über die Zeitgemäßheit in der Kunst', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 58 (1926), 18 (p. 18). Alternatively 'mashing-up' to indicate a loss of meaning and overlaps.

⁶⁶² Hermann von Wedderkop, 'Standpunkt', *Der Querschnitt*, 3 (1923), 1-6 (p. 3).

⁶⁶³ Wedderkop, p. 1.

difference. The influential critic Curt Glaser advised in 1920 in *Kunst und Künstler*: ‘One has to be careful not to prevent the understanding through a carelessly coined word, not to start with a preconceived opinion contained in the stylistic term [*Stilbegriff*], instead of the phenomena of the art itself.’⁶⁶⁴ Glaser complained in particular about the broad application of the term ‘Expressionism’ and this, in his opinion, had a lot to do with the fact that ‘modern aesthetics is more focused on deducting the style of the new art based on the definition of a *Schlagwort* [Expressionism] than on the analysis of artworks’.⁶⁶⁵ He warned that ‘the battle about art cannot be reduced to a fight about words’.⁶⁶⁶ Kurt Pfister, writing in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, emphasized a similar issue. As a result of the written discourse about contemporary art, he said, there could be a ‘pressure of buzzwords and programs that believe a style can be distilled through enforcement’.⁶⁶⁷ Pfister’s somewhat snide comment is representative of the belief, shared by many of his peers, that it was futile and outmoded to attempt to identify a coherent ‘style’ for the era.

Carl Einstein dedicated a long essay to this issue of trying to capture the complexities of artistic and cultural developments through language and terminology and accused philosophical aesthetics of failing to do this adequately. He described the process of flattening difference and multiplicity through language as ‘death by conceptualization’⁶⁶⁸: ‘One tries to unify the mass of signs, meaning that one reduces the range of appearances and the threatening concrete experiences. To achieve this one

⁶⁶⁴ Curt Glaser, ‘Die neue Graphik’, *Kunst und Künstler*, 18 (1920), 53-72 (pp. 53-54).

⁶⁶⁵ Glaser, ‘Die neue Graphik’, p. 66.

⁶⁶⁶ Glaser, ‘Die neue Graphik’, p. 66.

⁶⁶⁷ Kurt Pfister, ‘Paul Elsas – München’, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 57 (1925/26), 257-259 (p. 257).

⁶⁶⁸ ‘Todesprozess durch Verbegrifflichung’. Carl Einstein, ‘Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns’, in Carl Einstein, *Werke*, ed. by Hermann Haarmann and Klaus Siebenhaar, 5 vols (Berlin: Fannei and Waltz, 1992), 4, Texte aus dem Nachlass, pp. 194-221 (p. 204).

adapts the unknown or new to fit with the already known.’⁶⁶⁹ A painting might be unique but if the vocabulary employed by art writers remained the same, this could prevent the new artwork from being recognised as different from what had already been given the same label.

Once a ‘New Naturalism’ in painting had been identified by art journals and newspapers around 1922, writers were both simultaneously wary and in need of a unifying term to connect these positions to a critical mass. This is evident in Hans Curjel’s acknowledgement in 1923 that the term ‘*Neuer Naturalismus*’ would most likely be only a temporary one, and that he was using it only reluctantly ‘for lack of a more indicative [*bezeichnenderen*] term’.⁶⁷⁰

But there was potentially an even greater issue than glossing over artistic difference: artists might feel that in order to be successful they had to adapt their work to fit into the aesthetic program delineated by a new term.

To ‘Dixify’: Otto Dix as *Schlagwort* and Recipe

Otto Dix’s success was evidenced by the increasing number of the exhibitions he participated in, the number of acquisitions by museums and collectors, and also the amount of critical and wider public interest, with all of these factors motivating and reinforcing each other. For Mela Escherich, writing in mid-1920 in *Die Kunst für Alle*, Dix had ‘gained popularity disturbingly, fabulously quickly, the effect of which is

⁶⁶⁹ Einstein, ‘Diese Aesthetiker’, p. 205.

⁶⁷⁰ Hans Curjel, ‘Zur Entwicklung des Malers Georg Scholz’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 257 – 264 (p. 257).

mostly felt in the Rhineland': 'There he is symbol and *Schlagwort*. Why? Because he gives people something to laugh about.'⁶⁷¹ Being labelled with a new buzzword gave Dix, as an early representative, recognition and greater exposure. It could also help curators to put together more coherent group exhibitions with artists whose work had prompted the development of the new term, as would be the case with Dix, who was prominently represented in the 'Neue Sachlichkeit' exhibition in 1925 in Mannheim and other related exhibitions. This was at a time when a common complaint about the increasing number of large exhibitions was that they contained too many works of differing quality and without a coherent artistic direction.

While the label may have helped his career, Dix was ambivalent about his place in a definable 'group'. Once Dix, and some of his critically acclaimed peers such as Grosz or Scholz, had acquired a certain level of success and fame, it was inevitable that his artistic 'formula' – the adoption of the formal strategies of the old masters applied to contemporary subject matter – would inspire other artists and shape a new trend in painting. It is worth considering that perhaps Dix purposefully chose a style that was hard to imitate because it required an extremely high level of painterly skill, which – as others have pointed out – he was keen to showcase.

As one of the leaders of the new direction in art, Dix attracted a large amount of critical attention in the reviews of the expansive 'Große Düsseldorfer Jubiläumsausstellung' of 1925, where his work was displayed. Writer Carl Georg Heise was torn. He urged caution because Dix had become 'the idol of a new fashion in German art',⁶⁷² thereby

⁶⁷¹ Mela Escherich, 'Otto Dix', *Die Kunst für Alle*, 41 (1925/26), 105-111 (p. 106).

⁶⁷² Carl Georg Heise, 'Die Rheinische Retrospektive. Düsseldorf 1925', *Kunst und Künstler*, 23 (1925), 469-473 (p. 472).

signalling to his readers (which likely included the artist) that a critical point may have been reached. ‘But he is more,’ Heise insisted, ‘a draughtsman of merciless rigour, a daring, if often dangerous colourist, and, as his Eulenberg picture attests, a portraitist with the certainty of a caricaturist in his psychological interpretation.’⁶⁷³ Although he warned that Dix’s ‘brutal realism’ may be ‘rooted in overwrought aestheticism,’ he also made clear: ‘One should stop questioning the relatively high status he has, without doubt, in contemporary painting.’⁶⁷⁴ Dix’s had become famous among broad swathes of German society, and inevitably young painters were following his stylistic lead. However, popularity beyond a certain point posed a problem for an artist’s reputation among people that mattered for his long term career success and his positioning within art history.⁶⁷⁵

Dix was not just associated with the Rhineland, but also with Dresden, where he had studied and would be offered a position as Professor in 1926, which he would take up the following year. The combination of these factors prompted a telling comment by Will Grohmann, who wrote in his review of the ‘Internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden’ in 1926, that the city could boast many talented emerging artists, ‘and they are not just little Dixes’.⁶⁷⁶ For Roland Schacht, Dix remained the reference point in 1928 when he reviewed an exhibition of young artists in Berlin. Schacht praised the overall selection of works in the exhibition and characterised a genre scene by the painter Wilhelm Heise (whom he did acknowledge as a talented artist nevertheless) as

⁶⁷³ Heise, p. 472.

⁶⁷⁴ Heise, p. 472.

⁶⁷⁵ As Alex J. Taylor has argued in his article on Alexander Calder, art historians have commonly omitted in their accounts that his work was responsible for a ‘fully-fledged fad’, a ‘craze’ for mobiles in the 1950s because it ‘tarnished’ his reputation. ‘The Calder-Problem: Mobiles, Modern Taste and Mass Culture’, *Oxford Art Journal*, 37.1 (2014), 27-45 (p. 29).

⁶⁷⁶ Will Grohmann, ‘Die internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden 1926’, in *Das Kunstblatt*, 10 (1926), 262-268 (p. 267).

‘monumentalized Dix, turned towards Neue Sachlichkeit’ due to its focus on detail.⁶⁷⁷ For Paul Westheim, writing in a review of an exhibition at the Deutsche Kunstgemeinschaft in 1928 in Berlin, Dix had lost his innovative leadership, he had become ‘academic’. Westheim claimed dismissively that the painter Georg Kinzer was merely following a fashion for shocking subject matter without introducing anything new that had not already been done by Dix, and even coined a verb to describe Dix’s stylistic influence on his followers: he accused the artist H. Fiedler of having decided to ‘dixify [*dixeln*]’ one his paintings.⁶⁷⁸ The *neusachlich* style of painting had become a formula, with the verb ‘to dixify’ to describe such derivative paintings. Dix had become a *Schlagwort*, and subject to the same temporality of language.

For the careful observer, these types of comments signalled danger: Dix was on the verge of being overexposed. The language art critics used to describe him and his position helped to make evident, but also to create and even accelerate such a process. Now that Dix was conceptualised as the leader of what had become a ‘broad mass movement’,⁶⁷⁹ as Kállai had put it in 1927, he was on a path from which there was no turning back. The only option to escape this decline, of the *neusachlich* fashion becoming outdated, would be to change his style frequently and radically, something Picasso was perhaps most famous for. Picasso, as Carl Einstein put it in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ‘uses up forms and inventions like dresses’.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁷ Roland Schacht, ‘Ausstellung junger deutscher Maler in der Galerie Rudolf Wiltschek Berlin’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 12 (1928), 136-140 (p. 138).

⁶⁷⁸ Paul Westheim, ‘Die Ausstellung der jungen Maler und Bildhauer in der Deutschen Kunstgemeinschaft, Berlin’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 12 (1928), 1-10 (p. 8).

⁶⁷⁹ Kállai, p. 218.

⁶⁸⁰ Carl Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Fannei und Walz, 1931/3), ed. by Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaethgens, in Carl Einstein, *Werke*. ed. by Hermann Haarmann and Klaus Siebenhaar, 5 vols (Berlin: Fannei and Waltz, 1996), 5, p. 280.

The 'Konfektionierung of Ecstasy'

What had happened to Expressionism must have been like a warning for Dix. After all, he had been one of those declaring its decline, mocking it with his portrait of Anita Berber in 1925, which positioned the expressionist dancer in an anterior realm, emphasised also through the dialectical arrangement of the painting next to his *Self-Portrait in the Easel* in his retrospective exhibition of 1926.

Dennis Crockett has charted the development of the post-expressionist movement in painting, and the written discourse in art journals that accompanied it, in his 1999 study *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918-1924*. Crockett recounts how an increasing number of commentators started to criticise what they perceived to be the commercial aspects of Expressionism. By 1920, 'for many within the movement, Expressionism seemed to have become fashionable [...] This sudden public success, however, displeased many former champions of Expressionism,' Crockett writes.⁶⁸¹ Among the influential commentators who whilst once supportive of leading expressionist artists, now voiced concerns that the movement was in a state of crisis, were Gustav Hartlaub, Wilhelm Worringer, the writer Kasimir Edschmid, Paul Westheim and Georg Biermann, the editors of *Das Kunstblatt* and *Der Cicerone* respectively. Worringer, of course, had been one of the most influential theorists of Expressionism, but he lamented in a public lecture in 1920 that it had become a formula and that many works were little more than 'peaceful wall decorations'.⁶⁸² In the same year, Wilhelm von Bode, who at age 74 very much represented the traditional

⁶⁸¹ Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918-1924* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 11.

⁶⁸² Crockett, p. 11.

establishment, complained that Expressionism had acquired too many ‘eloquent joiners and pace-makers’, too many ‘who went along with or followed it’.⁶⁸³ But it was Wilhelm Hausenstein’s declaration of Expressionism’s death that caused the biggest stir.⁶⁸⁴

It is not unreasonable to suggest that commentators were following each other’s lead to some extent, rather than forming such judgements purely based on the quality of recent artistic output. Writing under the pseudonym Viator in the *Salonblatt* in 1921, another critic drew attention to the limiting effect of the umbrella term itself: ‘In no time Expressionism had become a mass movement. [...] the negation of reality [in the art of Expressionism, A.R.], however episodic the program, has achieved infinitely more than the so misunderstood concept of Expressionism [*Expressionismusbegriff*].’⁶⁸⁵ He conjured up the image of a mass of mediocre artists who had simply been waiting for an opportunity to hide their lack of talent by jumping on the bandwagon of the latest fashion in art, and who saw in Expressionism ‘the most welcome possibilities’.⁶⁸⁶

Paul Westheim joined in the chorus of critical voices in 1922 by writing in his article ‘Understanding New Art’, published in the fashion magazine *Die Dame*, that he welcomed the ‘end of Expressionism’ because it had become a nuisance, in particular ‘the sort of Expressionism that bars and clubs think they have to use to update themselves, and the wonky doors and windows of our stage designers’.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸³ Wilhelm von Bode, ‘Die “Not der geistigen Arbeiter” auf dem Gebiet der Kunstforschung’, *Kunst und Künstler*, 18 (1920), 297-300 (p. 298).

⁶⁸⁴ Wilhelm Hausenstein, *Die Kunst in diesem Augenblick* (Munich: Hyperion, 1920). See also Crockett, p. 12.

⁶⁸⁵ Viator, ‘Moderne Graphik’, *Salonblatt*, 16.19 (24 September 1921), 2-3 (p. 2-3).

⁶⁸⁶ Viator, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁷ Paul Westheim, ‘Blaue Pferde, - aber das ist doch.... / Bemerkungen zum Verständnis der neuen Kunst’, *Die Dame*, 49.17 (1922), 2-4 (p. 4).

Expressionism was seen as an artistic idiom that could too easily be applied to a wide range of mass cultural products. Otto Griebel compared these developments to the fate of Jugendstil: all sorts of commercial businesses had tried to exploit it, and in the case of Expressionism, ‘even the travelling fairground merchants had started to have their stalls and carousels painted in a colourful expressionist way’.⁶⁸⁸ A reviewer of an exhibition of the *Berliner Sezession* admitted, however, that one had to differentiate between original and derivative works within the same stylistic bracket. He complained about ‘Ism-painters [*Ismenmaler*]’ whose work was based on ‘schemes [*Schemen*]’.⁶⁸⁹ He argued in defence of Expressionism that there were still ‘true expressionists’, and against those who wanted to portray ‘this artistic movement of our time as an arbitrary fashion [...] which interrupts the continuity of the development [of art] and disappears without a trace after a few excesses’.⁶⁹⁰ Here we encounter the idea again that the history of style should not include insignificant fashions, but despite the fact that Expressionism became a fashion in art and popular visual culture, that it was in Simmel’s words ‘doomed’ to disappear, it has become firmly established as an artistic style and as defining of an era. Just as Benjamin had argued in his *Arcades Project*, fashions did not simply disappear, they were always cyclical and would therefore never entirely be forgotten.

Curt Glaser was another writer who used Expressionism as an example to highlight how language and discourse conditioned the understanding of art. In his article ‘Die neue Graphik’ he called for ‘linguistic purity [*sprachliche Reinheit*]’, for unambiguousness,

⁶⁸⁸ Otto Griebel, *Ich war ein Mann der Strasse. Lebenserinnerungen eines Dresdner Malers* (Frankfurt a.M.: Röderberg, 1986), p. 208.

⁶⁸⁹ ‘Berliner Kunstausstellungen. Sezession. Munch. Valori Plastici’, newspaper clipping, no source, no author, no date, pp. 177-178, here p. 177. The article was most likely published in the first half of the 1920s. [KA].

⁶⁹⁰ ‘Berliner Kunstausstellungen’, p. 177. [KA].

instead of ‘names that have been adopted all too quickly’, leading to ‘misunderstandings’.⁶⁹¹ He argued that those who thought they could abandon ‘the stylistic term [*Stilbegriff*] Expressionism, which is now in common use, find [themselves] in the uncomfortable position of having to talk about a visual phenomenon which lacks a descriptive term’.⁶⁹² This was, according to Glaser, ‘because the meaning of the word contains a characteristic that is not applicable to all visual phenomena of the new artform’.⁶⁹³ Glaser’s chosen example of Expressionism shows a concern with epistemological questions and the limits of the concept of a coherent ‘style’, and the problems that arise when a term has become overused and unpalatable to the writers who first used it, affecting in turn the regard in which the art itself was held.

What is becoming clear, is that there was a perceived need for additional, descriptive terms that could help to explain similarities, but also to maintain differences, between individual artworks by different artists. Glaser’s essay touched on both the foundations of art historical periodisation and its relationship to language, while also highlighting that a term itself could become unpopular *before* all artworks that were still being produced had become mere regurgitation. Glaser’s comment is fundamentally about an awareness of the temporality of a specific vocabulary and the potential problem of non-simultaneity with the vitality of the type of art it was designed to describe.

Critics found it increasingly difficult to identify and openly support those artists described as ‘expressionist’ who were still innovating when the movement as a whole was falling out of favour among elitist art world circles. Pawel Barchan also had issues

⁶⁹¹ Glaser, ‘Die neue Graphik’, p. 53.

⁶⁹² Glaser, ‘Die neue Graphik’, p. 53.

⁶⁹³ Glaser, ‘Die neue Graphik’, p. 53.

with Expressionism and the number of artists claiming allegiance to it. Interestingly, the prolific art critic, who contributed to leading art journals, chose the upmarket fashion magazine *Die Dame* (just as Westheim had in the same year) to contend provocatively that Expressionism had descended into a '*Konfektionierung*, a mechanisation of ecstasy [*eine Mechanisierung der Ekstase*]', mere 'kitsch'.⁶⁹⁴ By aligning Expressionism with *Konfektion*, Barchan adopted a term and concept the readers of *Die Dame* would be most familiar with, since they were the main consumers of *Konfektion* and could read about it in every edition of the magazine. The main task of a fashion magazine was to report on the latest products of Berlin's ready-to-wear brands, its *Konfektionäre* who adopted the latest trends from Paris for a mass market. Barchan contended that there were now too many expressionist artists who 'aim to deceive when they go along with the fashion, [when they] model a fashion'.⁶⁹⁵ The 'true representatives' of his epoch, he said, were those 'ninety-nine percent' of modern artists who were 'the busy ones, dexterous ones, who don't want to miss the boom'.⁶⁹⁶ Barchan targeted such artists' motivation rather than their artworks when complaining that the artistic 'spirit' of his epoch, if there was such a thing, was defined by artists who relied on 'their ability to imitate, their entrepreneurial attitude, their "hard work", their craftiness, their opportunism'.⁶⁹⁷ For Barchan, in line with the avant-gardist imperative, only novelty and invention counted since 'a skilled artist can paint exactly like Matisse, exactly like Picasso'.⁶⁹⁸

In 1923, Carl Einstein also used a reference to the *Konfektion* when he sarcastically

⁶⁹⁴ Pawel Barchan, 'Die Rückkehr zu Ingres', *Die Dame*, 49.10 (1922), 5-8 and 12 (p. 5).

⁶⁹⁵ Barchan, p. 5.

⁶⁹⁶ Barchan, p. 5.

⁶⁹⁷ Barchan, p. 6.

⁶⁹⁸ Barchan, p. 6.

diagnosed an increase in the number of painters who merely applied an existing formula: ‘One has had enough of the peasant brothers-in-law of Gauguin and van Gogh drunk on colour. [...] [These artists can now only] excite remote girls’ chambers, or gather dust in the back corridors of middling *Konfektionäre*.’⁶⁹⁹ It appears that between 1920 and 1923, it had become fashionable to find Expressionism outmoded. For Einstein, what undermined art was not a lack of longevity and coherence, as it might have been for previous art historians and critics, but quite the opposite was the case. Einstein argued that longevity and coherence were the problems that contributed to a lack of originality and quality. This represented a shift in critical thinking around art at the same time as an acceleration and diversification of innovation in art making itself. Longevity resulted in products – whether art or clothing – that could not even be sold by ‘middling *Konfektionäre*’, by average ready-to-wear makers, anymore, as Einstein had put it. Niklas Luhmann would later argue in *Art as a Social System* that a new artwork must ‘deviate from existing examples of a style but reformulate it’, that it must play with ‘similarities and difference’, through what he called ‘recursive reconstruction’.⁷⁰⁰ And what lay at the heart of the fashion industry and of its product, *Konfektion*, were such processes of ‘recursive reconstruction’.⁷⁰¹ They helped to introduce and disseminate new clothing styles in gradual stages in order to help consumers accept change and in order to continue to sell new clothes. But Einstein would not have it: what others might describe as aesthetic congruence, was for him an unnecessary tautology.

In fine art, such processes undermined the credibility of the autonomous creative

⁶⁹⁹ Carl Einstein, ‘Otto Dix’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 97-102 (p. 97).

⁷⁰⁰ Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, transl. by Eva M. Knodt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 131.

⁷⁰¹ Luhmann, p. 131.

subject. Einstein (and many others would agree with him) insisted on the artwork as a container of the ‘concrete singular’, while its opposite would be ‘the repetition of form or the anchoring of aesthetic experience in a stylistic grouping’.⁷⁰² With this statement, Einstein aligned three aspects: form, perception and discourse. The visual experience of an artwork for its audience was directed by the words and labels provided by who had already written about the artist and assigned an umbrella term as an ‘anchor’ for this experience. But such a label also provided guidance for second-rate artists, the worst offenders among whom had turned creative production into ‘a playground for monkeys who exercise with a stolen muscle; in that case art degenerates into idiotic reproduction’.⁷⁰³ Einstein’s comments go to the heart of a problem that many of his contemporaries also observed: that fine art was now facing the same issues as *Kunstgewerbe* had before the war, which were expressed in the debates of the Werkbund.⁷⁰⁴ In the same way that the work of designer-artists and artisans was copied *en masse* by commercial companies, there were now individual artists whose recipe for success was to adopt a stylistic idiom that was already established as successful with collectors. Of course, most artistic movements and periods in art rely on a significant number of artists working in a similar aesthetic. But with the avant-garde imperative of novelty and innovation, in the context of a capitalist society with accelerating rates of consumption, these formerly apparently ‘natural’ periods of stylistic development had become unpalatable. Commentators were now continuously on the lookout for the next new thing.

⁷⁰² Einstein, ‘Diese Aesthetiker’, p. 216-218. ‘Formwiederholung oder die Fixierung eines Gestalterlebnisses zur Stilgruppe’

⁷⁰³ Einstein, ‘Diese Aesthetiker’, p. 218.

⁷⁰⁴ See Frederic Schwartz, *The Werkbund. Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale, 1996).

Einstein used the term '*Reproduktion*' to describe unique, hand-made artworks (and actual reproductions) which were made through a 'trickle down' process. These 'reproductions' were not copies produced by technology (as happened in fashion or interior design). Rather they were the product of a process in which new aesthetic ideas were introduced at the top of the artistic hierarchy, by a small number of talented artist 'geniuses'; opportunists then turned this new idiom into a template, creating highly derivative artworks. This had turned into a process worryingly similar to *Konfektions-*fashion, where original, innovative design was copied and reproduced in large numbers of identical mass-produced items. In painting or sculpture the process was more deceptive, because while the derivative artworks might be copying an innovative original, each of them was still unique because they were made by an individual artist. In this context, art critics were faced with the same task as fashion journalists. They had to provide their readers with the artistic provenance of these works and to map out the lineage from leading 'genius' or early innovator to the work that used the successful template.

In the case of Dix and the verist strand of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, practically everyone agreed that he was one of the leading innovators. Interestingly, it was in *Die Dame*, a magazine with content largely based on mass-produced consumer items, that art historian Lothar Brieger, well-known for his books on art collecting, contended in 1919 in his essay 'On Plagiarism in Painting', that 'increased and improved techniques of reproduction' were the reason for an increase in the number of painters who were almost directly copying existing unique artworks as a 'template', particularly the work of Goya.⁷⁰⁵ They did not have the talent and desire to develop and adapt an established

⁷⁰⁵ Lothar Brieger, 'Das Plagiat in der Malerei', *Die Dame*, 47.3 (1919), 3-5.

motif sufficiently, as was the established tradition, he wrote, and displayed a ‘disappointing contempt for their own profession’⁷⁰⁶. Brieger also identified another new phenomenon: painters who copied magazine covers, i.e. illustrations made by hand but for reproduction purposes, and then passed them off as their own original, unique artworks in exhibitions. One could perhaps say that in a kind of inversion of the temporal order, the reproduction came not after the artwork, but the artwork after the reproduction. Of course there were painters who copied the work of masters from reproductions, and made clear that this is what they had done, but now a commercial illustration designed for and consumed through (mass-) reproduction had created, through the hand of a plagiarising painter, what pretended to be the original, auratic and hand-made painting - *afterwards*.

For this discussion, I am focusing less on the issue of the reproduction of form itself, and more on how art critics dealt with this reproduction in their writing. For architect and interior designer Michael Rachlis the increase in the number of artists who were applying existing aesthetic ideas, rather than developing new ones of their own, required a verbal tool, a term that could help to divide cultural production into authentic and original art and its Other. Rachlis coined the term *Kunstkonfektion* for this purpose in his 1923 essay ‘Die Frage nach dem “Stil”’, published in the journal *Innendekoration*. His strong opinion on the matter is evident:

Next to real art there will always be fashions in art [*Kunstmode*], ready-made art [*Kunstkonfektion*]. Next to true artists [there will be] ‘makers of off-the-peg art’ [*Kunstkonfektionäre*], and it will always be only few people who can afford real art and not *Kunstkonfektion*; certainly not those who do not see and feel the difference! Those will and should be served by *Kunstkonfektion*, since

⁷⁰⁶ Brieger, p. 4.

Kunstkonfektion is more servile, galant, active, and certainly more entrepreneurial than art.⁷⁰⁷

The dialectic Rachlis set up here was directed at the core of the artwork and the causality of its surface aesthetics. The issue of replication had affected design, architecture, and *Kunsthandwerk* but now fine art – products that were unique – had also fallen victim to it. According to the architect Wilhelm Lotz, writing in *Die Form*, German *Konfektions*-clothing had become so good that it was more difficult to distinguish from the original, exclusive creation it was copying: ‘The cheapest ready-to-wear dress, made of silk or voile, one can buy today mirrors the best fashion creations more than was previously the case’.⁷⁰⁸ Standardisation through templates with small variations had always been the condition for mass production, and now it had affected hand-made, unique artworks, too. Just like successful *Konfektionäre*, second-rate or struggling artists were able to turn an art movement like Expressionism into a formula. The result, according to these critics, was more than just stylistic coherence, it was homogenisation.

In this context Otto Dix is an interesting example because he maintained a style, specifically a level of naturalist illusionism that required great talent and was hard to copy. Dix’s return to an old masterly aesthetic focused on skill and detailing, meant that few, if any, achieved his level of virtuosity and Dix was able to maintain a superior position, distinct from the rest of the artists that were following in his footsteps. He used the oil-on-tempera technique that Max Doerner had described in his popular manual *Malmaterial und seine Verwendung im Bilde (Painterly Tools and their Use)*, published

⁷⁰⁷ Michael Rachlis, ‘Die Frage nach dem „Stil“. Eine Antwort’, *Innendekoration*, 34.1 (1923), 4 (p. 4).

⁷⁰⁸ Wilhelm Lotz, ‘Schmuck und Maschine’, *Die Form*, 3.8 (1928), 226-239 (p. 232).

in 1921, as a historic technique used by the Old Masters. This book quickly became very popular with young painters. Georg Scholz also started to use this technique from 1922 onwards based on Doerner's handbook.⁷⁰⁹ Ursus Dix writes, however, that what Doerner described as the mixed technique of the Old Masters, which his father Otto used into the 1940s, was in fact not historically accurate.⁷¹⁰

Critics were subject to the same urge for novelty that artists were. They had to demonstrate with every article that they were at the forefront of new developments; that they could detect which painter was an opportunist and identify at what point the original leaders were no longer innovative. Karl Scheffler, the editor of *Kunst und Künstler*, was one of those who did not shy away from negative reviews, and he was quick to name and shame artists he felt had lost their edge. Scheffler also used fashion as an analogy when complaining in 1923, during the hyper-inflation: 'The old members of the Freie Sezession update their display in an expressionist manner, they pay their tribute to the younger way of seeing [*der jüngeren Sehform*] and arrange the cut of the dress according to the fashion of the day.'⁷¹¹ Of course, the idea that Expressionism was still the 'fashion of the day' would have been disputed by some. Scheffler was also clearly no longer a fan of Fernand Léger in 1928 when he dismissed Léger paintings on show at Alfred Flechtheim's gallery as 'crafted calculations', and the exhibition as 'old-fashioned, not ground-breaking; the artist is a follower of an out-dated fashion'.⁷¹² These reviews are evidence that critics like Scheffler could use the dismissal of widely

⁷⁰⁹ Crockett, p. 120.

⁷¹⁰ Ursus Dix, 'Die Maltechnik', in *Otto Dix. Zum 100. Geburtstag 1891-1919*, ed. by Wulf Herzogenrath and Johann-Karl Schmidt (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje, 1991), pp. 291-293 (p. 292).

⁷¹¹ Karl Scheffler, 'Die Ausstellung der Freien Sezession', *Kunst und Künstler*, 21 (1923), 211-218 (p. 212).

⁷¹² Karl Scheffler, 'Kunstaustellungen. Berlin', *Kunst und Künstler*, 26 (1928) 240-241 (p. 241). Scheffler, was a supporter of impressionist and expressionist art, and he negatively reviewed a number exhibitions at Flechtheim's gallery over the course of the 1920s.

admired artists for their own posturing; to position themselves at the forefront by criticising the old ones. It is easy to see, then, how artists could have changed their aesthetics in order to avoid ‘going-out-of-fashion’ with the critics.

The art critic’s task was to be actively involved, to be so close to the *Zeittendenz*, the ‘tendency of the time’, that he would be able to predict what could turn into a significant direction in art in the near future. The art journal was one of the mediums at his disposal and it functioned in similar ways to a fashion magazine. Interestingly, the art journal, *Kunst und Künstler*, explained the role of a fashion magazine in 1927: to evaluate the new designs shown in Paris and to promote a selection of them through articles, debate, drawings and photographs with the aim of trying ‘to provide a more clearly defined image of the future’ and of what would be available off-the-peg in store soon.⁷¹³ These functions mapped closely the functions of art journalism which validated selected artists, and in doing so influenced what galleries would sell, and museums would display, collectors would buy, and other artists might produce, thus shaping future artistic expression. When Walter Benjamin identified the temporal dynamics fashion commanded as one of its most powerful and intriguing qualities in his *Arcades Project*, he was thinking like Charles Baudelaire before him of the anticipatory qualities of fashionable clothing:

Each season brings, in its newest creations, various secret signals of things to come. Whoever understands how to read these semaphores would know in advance not only about new currents in the arts but also about legal codes, wars and revolutions.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹³ ‘Moden-Schau’, *Kunst und Künstler*, 25 (1927), 78-79 (p. 78).

⁷¹⁴ Benjamin, Walter: *The Arcades Project*, transl. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999), p. 64.

The art critic therefore needed similar skills to the fashion designer who created the new season's collections that contained these signals.

Ulrich Lehmann has argued in his ground-breaking overview *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity* that Georg Simmel had hoped it would be possible 'to counter the anti-individual dominance of prêt-à-porter clothing and return to subjective bespoke practice [...] to achieve a creative correspondence between the erstwhile estranged subject and object'.⁷¹⁵ Transposed into the context of fine art in the 1920s, the issue of made-to-measure vs prêt-à-porter acts as the perfect metaphor to highlight a lack of creative correspondence in the relationship between art collector and of-the-peg artworks, too. But the analogy of derivative art as *Konfektion* did not work entirely: because the ready-made-artwork was still a unique, hand-made item while the *Konfektions*-suit existed in potentially hundreds, even thousands of exact copies. The issue was aesthetics, and not the process of how the artwork was made.

Occasionally, attempts were made by art critics to explicitly point out types of art that had 'undeservedly' become unfashionable, in order to reveal that shifts in taste (always subject to fashion) made the evaluation of 'true' value difficult. Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub for example wrote in the catalogue of an exhibition of Japanese woodcuts in 1926 that 'the fashionable devaluation of Japanese folk art among certain collectors, researchers and connoisseurs needs balancing out [*Kompensierung*]. The correct, final criteria for its judgement still have to be found'.⁷¹⁶ Paying more attention to reception history gradually revealed to art critics that fashionability, or lack thereof, were too easily confused with legitimate criteria for aesthetic judgement. But it was difficult for

⁷¹⁵ Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung. Fashion in Modernity* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 136.

⁷¹⁶ Gustav F. Hartlaub, 'Zur Einführung', in *Meisterwerke des japanischen Farbholzschnittes*, ed. by Gustav F. Hartlaub (Mannheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, 1926), pp. 1-4 (p. 2).

them to abstract the influence of fashion from their own judgement of the quality and significance of art since, as Siegfried Kracauer warned in 1925 in his essay ‘Travel and Dance’, fashion ‘effaces the intrinsic value of the things that come under its dominion by subjecting the appearance of these phenomena to periodic changes that are not based on any relation to the things themselves’.⁷¹⁷ If this applied to everything, then value was not inherent in artwork.

Dix was no exception; he, like any other artist had to innovate constantly in order to be ahead of the *Konfektionäre* who were looking for market success. In 1923 Paul Fechter, reviewing the ‘Juryfreie Kunstausstellung’ in Berlin, turned his attention towards Dix and contended that one could detect in his works ‘the secret turn of the time’, towards external reality in painting.⁷¹⁸ Fechter also set up Dix as the leader that lesser artists had started to follow: ‘One room belongs to Otto Dix, the actual one (but fake Dixes are hanging in many rooms already).’⁷¹⁹ In other words, the *Konfektionierung* of Otto Dix was already under way.

The celebrated writer Franz Blei, writing in 1927 in the fashion magazine *Die Dame* made industrial society responsible for the processes others described with the reference to *Konfektion* in an essay about the artist Georg Kirstas:

An era that values norms and industrial unit types (which the art market is also interested in), in short, a time in which everything and everyone is expected to wear a clear-cut label, will prefer the unchallenging expressionist or a Picasso-

⁷¹⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, ‘Travel and Dance’, in Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament. Weimar Essays*, transl. and ed. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 65-73 (p. 67).

⁷¹⁸ Paul Fechter, ‘Die Juryfreie Ausstellung. Zur heutigen Eröffnung’, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Abendblatt*, 62.488 (20 October 1923), 2 (p. 2).

⁷¹⁹ Fechter, ‘Die Juryfreie’, p. 2.

follower who remains attached to cubism his whole life to the volatile Picasso.⁷²⁰

Blei also attacked contemporary art collectors, casting them as consumers who did not want to be challenged by daring, innovative artworks, but preferred predictable, diluted works. Dix himself commented on the issue of categorisation vs innovation decades later in an interview in 1965 where he complained about the audience's desire to be presented with 'make-shift terms [*Hilfsbegriffe*]'. 'One invents comfortable boxes, so to speak, which one can just open and find a specific type in there. Expressionist, realist, etc. But most of the time that is not accurate'.⁷²¹ These words demonstrate how the issue had become a pressing concern for artists. Looking back at how the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* had come to be the established label for what he was doing, Dix reflected somewhat resignedly:

Most [artists] let themselves be pinned down by such a label. They think, having been catalogued, they have to continue to work like this for the rest of their lives. That can of course be the easiest option, after one has been categorised, to remain in a drawer and to peacefully continue on this trajectory.⁷²²

Considering Will Grohmann's comment of 1926, quoted earlier, that the young painters shown at an exhibition in Dresden were not all 'little Dixes', leading figures in the contemporary art world contributed with their statements to the idea that Dix had first created and then been boxed in by such a label. He was not just boxed into *Neue Sachlichkeit*, he had created a box, all for himself, and had his own *Kunstkonfektionäre* – even if Grohmann claimed he did not see any.

⁷²⁰ Franz Blei, 'Aphorismen vor den Bildern Georg Kirstas', *Die Dame*, 54.16 (1927), 13-14 and 33-34 (p. 34).

⁷²¹ Dix in Wetzel, p. 740.

⁷²² Dix in Wetzel, p. 740.

Olaf Peters has put forward the idea that Dix may have even more fully embraced the style of the Old Masters from around 1926 in order to raise the level of his labour-intensive way of working to the point where it would become impossible to emulate by his followers, and that this may have been in an attempt to try and escape his own fashionability.⁷²³ Westheim, had claimed something similar for Picasso in 1922, as mentioned in chapter one, in order to explain the speed of stylistic change in Picasso's oeuvre by arguing that perhaps 'behind his effort is even the intention to avoid a Picasso-fashion'.⁷²⁴

In products described as *Kunstkonfektion*, the relationship between elements of production and reproduction had lost the delicate balance necessary for any sense of organic style development: if one looked closely, *Kunstkonfektion* was to a higher degree reproduction than production. An artwork that was *Konfektionsware* could not achieve what Carl Einstein formulated as the defining characteristic of a true artwork: the ability to stand outside existing categories, terms and ways of thinking – to offer a 'chance for freedom' and the 'destruction of continuity'.⁷²⁵ Ready-to-wear, the modified copy of a couture-original, relied on continuity, on measured evolution and predictable market success. Ready-to-wear could not risk 'freedom' or 'destruction of continuity'. In his essay 'The Literature about the Latest Art' of 1917, Hans Tietze described how innovation in art was always driven by a desire to succeed, to establish itself. Tietze also described the important role art writing played in preparing audiences to embrace innovation and to appreciate the importance of new art. To gain 'power', Tietze said, any new art form had several tools at its disposal: 'Scandalous exhibitions and noisy

⁷²³ Olaf Peters, *Otto Dix: Der Unerschrockene Blick. Eine Biographie* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2013), p. 148.

⁷²⁴ Paul Westheim, 'Kunst in Frankreich. L'Esprit', *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (1922), 8-25 (p. 15).

⁷²⁵ Einstein, 'Diese Aesthetiker', p. 220.

auctions, terrible reproductions that deform the artwork to the point where it becomes its own caricature, talentless imitations that turn what is valuable in the original into something easy to digest by broad swathes of society'.⁷²⁶ Tietze highlighted the role of reproductions in disseminating new art forms, but he also acknowledged the problem that the lack of quality of reproductions stripped the original artwork of its ability to provide aesthetic gratification.

In his book *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte* of 1925 (in which he also reprinted the essay quoted above), Tietze described the art historical concept of the *Spätstil*, to describe the organic decline of a style, and it was this concept that art critics were trying to avoid. Instead they used the mechanisms of *Konfektion* as an analogy. When a style had passed its zenith, Tietze argued, 'form will continue to grow following the direction of the last impulse it received, without inner direction, given over to a playful will to live'.⁷²⁷ But rather than describing a process entirely internal to art as his peers had done, Tietze also related this to public reception when writing:

For an artistic idiom to be used as a decorative form, either its intellectual content has to have turned into common knowledge, or the artist has to have the power to impose his vision without any resistance on the spectator's part.⁷²⁸

Tietze used the example of Expressionism to argue that there was a danger that the ideas of pioneers, in this case like Emil Nolde, would simply be turned into the production of decorative 'colourful paper'.⁷²⁹

⁷²⁶ Hans Tietze, 'Die Literatur über jüngste Kunst' (1917), repr. in Hans Tietze, *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Die Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte* (Vienna: Krystall.1925), 86-92 (p. 89).

⁷²⁷ Tietze, *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft*, p. 29.

⁷²⁸ Tietze names expressionist Emil Nolde's works as examples that had become a decorative style bei 1925, a *Schmuckstil*.

Resistance against Dix had almost ceased by 1925 with his inclusion in Hartlaub's seminal, travelling exhibition *Neue Sachlichkeit*; he had become 'the idol of a new fashion in German art', as Carl Georg Heise claimed in the same year.⁷³⁰ One of the reasons why Dix now had much broader public appeal may have been because he had toned down the more shocking and potentially political elements in his work in response to a situation, in the first half of the 1920s, where gallerists, curators and museum had refused to put on display some of his works on several occasion. An example is Hartlaub's 1925 exhibition on the '*Neue Sachlichkeit*'. In letters sent to Dix's dealer Nierendorf when first making preparations for the exhibition in 1923, Hartlaub insisted that he could not just show any of Dix's works unless he could see photographs beforehand and make his own selection, while it was also essential to him that Dix participated. Crockett has suggested that Hartlaub probably wanted to prevent the pictures *Girl in Front of Mirror* and *Salon II*, for which court cases had recently been brought against Dix, from being shown. Dix originally refused to participate in the exhibition for this reason, but did not object again when the exhibition finally went ahead with a comparatively tame selection of his works.⁷³¹ Dix's production had not descended into being what Tietze termed 'colourful paper' for Expressionism, but his work (and his posturing) was losing its edge.

The *Konfektions*-model of fashion was based on highly organised, predictable, industrial processes, on gradual change and wide dissemination, it created conformity in the way people dressed. Applied to the context of fine art, it described a lack of individuality and creative freedom. Therefore, *Kunstkonfektion* had, in fact, more in

⁷²⁹ Tietze, *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft*, p. 30.

⁷³⁰ Heise, p. 472.

⁷³¹ Crockett, p. 147-148 and 158.

common with the art historical concept of ‘Style’ than with the concept of ‘Fashion’. Its emergence in the critical writing about fine art, as opposed to design and architecture, indicated both the rejection of the term ‘Style’ and the need to find a better one. ‘Style’ implied the same lack of innovation as *Konfektion*, i.e. largely repetitive production *en masse*. Individual artistic expression was thereby liberated from the demand to fit into a style, as Carl Einstein had described it above, from ‘the anchoring of aesthetic experience in a stylistic grouping’. *Konfektion* helped differentiate between art deserving or undeserving of critical attention and of a place in art history. It is here that parallels to Theodor Adorno’s thinking about style and fashion in his *Aesthetic Theory*, and to his concept of the ‘culture industry’ emerge. As Frederic Schwartz has argued in *Blind Spots*:

Adorno points to the differences between fashion’s generation of ‘novelty’ to stimulate demand [...] and the modern artwork’s quest for the new in order to distance itself from works neutralized by the culture industry. At the same time, however, he shows that the logic of capital and that of freedom paradoxically coincide. Art mimics the unfree sphere of the commodity, but it does so on its own terms [...] and it doing so, it runs away from the standard ‘product line’ of culture.⁷³²

What the art critics discussed here were suggesting, in other words, was that originators of the new like Dix, like Picasso, were doing the running away, while the artists who painted in their manner to meet market demand were working on the production line of *Kunstkonfektion*.

Emerging trends in art became fully fledged fashions because they were somehow appropriate for the time, *zeitgemäß*, and captured by new catchphrases, *Schlagworte*. These trends captured something that resonated with their specialist and non-specialist

⁷³² Schwartz, *Blind Spots*, p. 30.

audiences, something contemporary and easily comprehensible. Even if the critic's task was supposedly to try and differentiate significant art from fashion, and serious art writing from fashionable slogans, they had no choice but to go along with them. Otherwise, if a new type of art was not successful with a few other artists or at least some audiences, how could it become a significant stylistic movement? And if there was no new, consistently used term to label it, who would understand what they were talking about?

The Art Market and Art Collecting

What impacted on the issues discussed above was also the state of the art market. The first half of the 1920s saw both periods of frenetic art buying and of an almost complete stalling of sales. O. K. Werckmeister has been pioneering with his study of how Paul Klee strategically responded with the subject matter and even the titles of his artworks to the historical context in which he tried to succeed as an artist.⁷³³ While my thesis has also considered the strategies an artist engaged to be successful, it is focused on the decade that followed, and the range of contextual aspects I have considered is somewhat broader, not least because Dix's work engaged with a wide range of discourses and phenomena in the history of painting, theories of art history, as well as contemporary visual culture.

Dennis Crockett, and particularly Andreas Strobl in his study on Dix's career, have both contextualised Dix's work in terms of the developments that occurred in the art market, and investigated the way he adapted to changing economic context during the years of

⁷³³ O. K. Werckmeister, *The Making of Paul Klee's career, 1914-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

hyperinflation. In Dix's case this meant a dramatic increase in the number of works on paper he produced in order to try and sell a higher volume of works at lower prices, as well as a focus on subject matter for which, his dealer Nierendorf had advised him, there was a market. Artists had to take every possible opportunity to sell work and it comes therefore as no surprise that at a 'Luxury Fair' in Westerland in the Summer of 1923, visitors could take their pick from 'a wealth of beautiful things for the spoiled taste [*verwöhnten Geschmack*], from the best Viennese shirt to an etching by Otto Dix, from a Caruso record to the pillow á la Dübarry'.⁷³⁴

The hyperinflation in the first half of the 1920s made commercial processes behind the production and dissemination of art more visible than they had been before, and thereby less easy to ignore by commentators. At the end of 1923, at the height of the inflation, the *Kunstblatt* published a special edition on 'The Economic Situation and Prospects of the Art Market'. In one of the articles, S.S. Birr tried to theorise the new relationship between the three agents 'Art, Artist, and Art Consumer in The Bourgeois Era'. It was only after the First World War, Birr argued, that the well-known processes set in motion by the French Revolution led to a situation where an original, hand-made artwork had been reduced to 'a commodity like any other, like cigars and cigarettes'.⁷³⁵ With the end of royal patronage and the establishment of a bourgeois society, art collectors now selected whatever appealed to them from a range of ready-made artworks. Birr used the fashion industry as an analogy to explain the shift: It is 'the difference between ready-to-wear and a bespoke suit for one's own body. The dialogue with the artist'.⁷³⁶ Birr

⁷³⁴ Pizzli Rosenthal, 'Kunstleben in Westerland – Sylt. Sommersaison 1923', *Der Querschnitt*, 3 (1923), p. 196.

⁷³⁵ Birr, S. S., 'Kunst, Künstler, Kunstkonsument. Das bürgerliche Zeitalter', *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 232-243, (p. 238).

⁷³⁶ Birr, p. 238

compared art patrons of previous eras to clients of tailors, while contemporary bourgeois ‘consumers’ of art bought ready-to-wear clothing and ready-made art. For Birr, the central problem for art was what he called the ‘de-personalisation’ of the art collector who ‘picks from an existing production [...] whatever appeals to his inclination at the time’.⁷³⁷ Edwin Redslob, the German Kunstwart, thought along the same lines when writing in 1925 in the *Kunstwanderer* that the art exhibition had become ‘the counterpart of the department store’.⁷³⁸

Walter Benjamin would not just link the anticipatory qualities of fashion to those of art, but the artist to the fashionable woman, too, and there was a clear hierarchical difference:

Moreover, the sensitivity of the individual artist to what is coming certainly far exceeds that of the *grande dame*. Yet fashion is in much steadier, much more precise contact with the coming thing, thanks to the incomparable nose which the feminine collective has for what lies waiting in the future.⁷³⁹

Benjamin set up a difficult dichotomy here. He saw fashionable women, as a collective, as more in touch with the future than the individual fashionable female and the rest of society, but the feminine collective was superseded by the individual (male) artist. In his 1923 article, Birr had also added a gendered layer to his analysis. Because of this power and influence, Birr believed that an art collector needed to acquire specific skills through training, and to have intellectual capacities that, in fact, a fashionable woman (with sufficient funds) already had. She was, for the time being, still more skilled in

⁷³⁷ Birr, p. 238.

⁷³⁸ Edwin Redslob, ‘Künstler und Auftraggeber’, *Der Kunstwanderer*, 7 (January 1925), 131-132 (p. 132). In his role as the federal arts commissioner, Redslob was responsible (from 1920 to 1933) for both the visual representation of the state (for example the design of official emblems) and the state’s engagement with and support of art and culture in general.

⁷³⁹ Benjamin, pp. 63-63.

making aesthetic decisions than a male art collector, based on a combination of personal taste, engagement with visual culture, and foresight:

Today's conignor [...] completely fails where individual volition, an act of definite decision-making is required. This ability to anticipate, the foundation of the process of ordering, is a skill – which, by the way, the woman who orders a dress after her own taste from a dressmaker certainly has – he entirely lacks.⁷⁴⁰

The temporal aspect is key here, a sense for what lay ahead in the future was required by a fashionable woman, and art critics and collectors needed to consider contemporary art production in a similar way. By doing so, the critic would be able to identify which new phenomenon might grow into viable artistic position. As Sascha Schwabacher wrote (somewhat dismissively) in 1923 in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*: 'There are sniffer dogs of [arts] criticism who, like a good tailor, feel the new direction of fashion in their fingertips before the season has started, and who praise or condemn it accordingly.'⁷⁴¹ Rather than comparing art critics to fashionable women, too, Schwabacher went straight to the source of men's fashion trends, since it was not male consumers who were acknowledged to have an interest in or sense for fashion. As Simmel had contended in his 'Fashion' essay of 1904, women had a much closer connection to fashion than men since they had to use dress as one of their few options for self-expression.⁷⁴²

⁷⁴⁰ Birr, p. 242.

⁷⁴¹ Sascha Schwabacher, 'Kunstströmungen', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 53 (1923/24), 61-62 (p. 61).

⁷⁴² Georg Simmel, Simmel, Georg, 'Fashion', in *The Rise of Fashion. A Reader*, ed. By Daniel Purdy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. 289-309. Note also Siegfried Kracauer's statement 'The new fashions also must be disseminated or else in the summer the beautiful girls will not know who they are.' Kracauer, Siegfried 'Photography' (1927), trans. and intr. by Thomas Y. Levin, *Critical Enquiry*, 19 (Spring 1993), 421-436 (p. 432).

The problem was that art critics could both influence their audiences, in terms of their response to art, and influence artists, which would undermine the independence of artistic vision. Interestingly, none of the writers quoted above considered or acknowledged fashionable women as good art collectors themselves despite their aesthetic training through fashion. Some acknowledged, however, that women constantly had to make aesthetic judgements. One of them was Hermann von Wedderkop:

One can readily admit that in artistic matters the women of today are much more likely to go with the flow. They are fresher, more flexible, more instinctive in their judgements. [...] Whether it concerns their own person, the furnishing of the house, or entertaining, questions arise constantly that at least require their taste to be engaged and can give it a sort of training.⁷⁴³

His statement is a mixture of stereotyping and fact since women indeed commonly had to make such aesthetic (and financial) decisions. It is significant that Wedderkop saw this engagement with consumer goods (which required her to consider what would be *zeitgemäß*) as a relevant training for a woman's engagement with 'artistic matters'.

⁷⁴³ Hermann von Wedderkop, 'Publikum und Kunsthändler', in *Beiträge zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts und unserer Zeit*, ed. by Paul Mahlberg and Galerie Paul Flechtheim (Düsseldorf: Ohle, 1913), 17-28 (p. 21). Published on the occasion of the opening of the Galerie Flechtheim.

The Temporality of *Neue Sachlichkeit*

*Wir stehn vor einer neuen Periode.
Die Sachlichkeit verliert an Sympathie,
Die kalte Schnauze kommt schon aus der Mode,
Zurück zur Seele, Herz ist dernier cri!*
Werner Fink, 'Neue Herzlichkeit', 1929⁷⁴⁴

As suggested earlier, art critics had to regularly review their own positioning with regards to their endorsement or rejection of specific artists and styles. The dismantling of the status *Neue Sachlichkeit* as the dominant movement in Germany in the 1920s happened not just based merely on time passing and art production becoming repetitive, but also through the actions of writers who had been instrumental in its public and critical success.⁷⁴⁵ As Dennis Crockett has argued, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* had been a 'movement' largely constructed by art critics.⁷⁴⁶

In 1927, the magazine *UHU* asked a number of preeminent figures to explain the correct use of new terms now in wide circulation, of specific *Schlagworte*, in their respective disciplines. The responses were published under the header 'Catchphrases of our Time: A Small Guide to their Correct Use'.⁷⁴⁷ As discussed earlier, concerns abounded about the inflationary use of terms originally coined to describe more or less clearly delineated phenomena in a specific area of culture, not least because their temporal specificity

⁷⁴⁴ Werner Fink, 'Neue Herzlichkeit', *Die Weltbühne*, 26.I.7 (1930), 260 (p. 260).

⁷⁴⁵ Sabine Becker has dedicated a chapter of her study of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in literature on the criticism put forward against the movement, which gained traction around 1929/30, therefore after the emergence of an increasing number of critical voices of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting. See Sabine Becker, 'Die Kritik an der Neuen Sachlichkeit', in *Neue Sachlichkeit*, 2 vols (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), I: Die Ästhetik der neusachlichen Literatur (1920-1933), pp. 257-357.

⁷⁴⁶ Crockett, p. 6

⁷⁴⁷ Hartlaub, Gustav F., 'Neue Sachlichkeit', in 'Schlagworte unserer Zeit. Ein kleiner Leitfaden zum richtigen Gebrauch', *UHU*, 4.10 (1927), 18-24 (pp. 18-20).

Among the other terms specialists were asked to comment on were '*Untergang des Abendlandes*' and '*Psychoanalyse*', '*Bolschewismus*' and '*Atonale Musik*'.

came with a sell-by-date. *UHU* introduced the results of its small survey thus: ‘Once coined, the *Schlagworte* are already out-of-date, the river of time flows along beneath them and they remain as formulas, as empty, soon not even comprehensible masks and shells [*Hülsen*].’⁷⁴⁸ One of the specialists asked to respond was none other than museum director Gustav Hartlaub, the initiator of the ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ exhibition in Mannheim. He, predictably, was asked to explain the buzzword ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’. Hartlaub claimed to have coined the term in 1924 and that it was designed to describe a development in painting that was already in full swing at that point. Shortly after that, the term had been accepted by specialists and then entered common use. But now, less than three years later, the art it was supposed to describe had already lost its edge, and so too did the term – at least for Hartlaub, as his somewhat disillusioned commentary makes clear:

The term *Neue Sachlichkeit* originally had a useful function. I coined it in 1924 with my first call for submissions to the exhibition that the Mannheimer Kunsthalle realised the following year under the same title, and which then travelled around the whole of Germany. The point was to define a change in attitude [...] for which painting just offered a specific, in no way exhaustive, outlet. [...] The movement thus characterised had a number of great talents – I remind of Dix, Grosz and others – who were carried by it or who carried it. In fact, it [*Neue Sachlichkeit*] was just a reaction, a backlash, a turn, which is, on the whole, over now. What has remained is the already empty word – and a host of misunderstandings.⁷⁴⁹

A word was a container, it summarised things, and made it possible to speak of a number of artistic positions as if they were a more or less coherent development in art. The slogan had helped to promote the artists, irrespective of how fitting the term was for their work or what exactly the criteria were that united them (indeed Hartlaub himself had differentiated two wings, ‘verists’ and ‘neo-classicists’, within it). But once

⁷⁴⁸ ‘Schlagworte’, p. 18-19.

⁷⁴⁹ ‘Schlagworte’, p. 20.

the innovative phase was over, there were too many artists adopting a *neusachlich* idiom and even the original innovators were losing their edge, and the term became unpalatable to critics. Crockett has carried out the important task of tracking the journey of Hartlaub's 'Neue Sachlichkeit' exhibition, and changes that were made to the title of the exhibition and to his catalogue, over the course of the year and a half that it travelled around Germany. And indeed, when it was finally shown at the end of 1926 in Essen, the title 'Neue Sachlichkeit' had disappeared entirely. The exhibition was simply titled 'Painting after the War'.⁷⁵⁰ Hartlaub had also made alterations to his original essay when the catalogue was re-issued for the exhibition's stops in Dresden and Chemnitz, and he had changed his text to clarify that the show was structured around leading figures, but that it also included *Mitstreben*, a term Crockett (understandably) simply translated as 'followers'.⁷⁵¹ However, it is not a stretch to argue that Hartlaub chose (even devised) the term '*Mitstreben*' very carefully to emphasise that both early and late representatives were united by the same goal in some way. It implied that these artists worked alongside each other, rather than that one group followed the other as *Mitläufer* or *Nachläufer*; in other words, he avoided the suggestion that his exhibition included or represented any kind of *Konfektionierung* of *Neue Sachlichkeit*

The decline – actual, perceived or even enacted by critics – of a type of art and of the terminology designed to describe it, reinforced each other. Rudolf Arnheim, who had little regard specifically for *Neue Sachlichkeit* in paintings, and even disputed that it could be considered 'art', felt compelled to address the issue of the terminology, too, and did so in 1927 in *Die Weltbühne*:

⁷⁵⁰ Crockett, p. 154.

⁷⁵¹ Crockett, p. 153.

Now that we can clearly see the damaging effects of a terminological confusion [*Begriffsverwirrung*], it is no longer enough to put the word ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ in quotation marks and to thereby signal one’s misgivings about the fashionable catchphrase [*Modeschlagwort*]. The question where this Sachlichkeit makes sense and where it does not, finally has to be addressed.⁷⁵²

Arnheim’s and Hartlaub’s commentaries are indicative of the fact that the debate about what *Neue Sachlichkeit* meant in painting that has continued to this day already started shortly after its inception. The history of the term was first investigated by Fritz Schmalenbach in his essay ‘The Term Neue Sachlichkeit’, published in 1940 in *The Art Bulletin*. Schmalenbach had corresponded directly with Hartlaub as part of the research for his essay. Although he did not reference Hartlaub’s statement in the *UHU*, cited above, Schmalenbach came to a similar conclusion that once the wider public had adopted the term, the slogan *Neue Sachlichkeit* had turned into ‘a dead shell, void of meaning, expressive of nothing but the concrete style itself, or a designation which indeed contains a meaning, but which remains conceptually false’.⁷⁵³ For Schmalenbach this was mainly because the original meaning, the capturing of a general change in attitude in society and a sense of disillusionment after the First World War, had been lost.

The debate about *Schlagworte*, which played out over the course of the 1920s, revealed that the language of art writing could itself be subject to temporal changes and to *Konfektionierung*. In his essay ‘Diese Aesthetiker veranlassen uns’, Carl Einstein

⁷⁵² Rudolf Arnheim, ‘Neue Sachlichkeit und alter Stumpfsinn’, *Die Weltbühne*, 23.1 (1927), 591-592 (p. 592).

⁷⁵³ Fritz Schmalenbach, ‘The Term Neue Sachlichkeit’, *The Art Bulletin*, 22.3 (Sept. 1940), 161-165 (p. 164).

claimed that aestheticians made the mistake of replacing the ‘dynamic element of time [*das Zeit-Dynamische*]’ and other factors with the ‘surrogate of terminological mechanics’.⁷⁵⁴ Einstein made a difficult truth explicit: that the complexity of artistic developments was curtailed by how it was captured through critical terms:

Our understanding [*Erkenntnis*] is confined to the convenient ‘abreviation’ [*Abbreviatur*], i.e.: here the functional [how something functions, A.R.] is contained and the temporal-dynamic curtailed; in its place appears the surrogate of terminological mechanics. [...] temporal qualities are reduced to allow for a comparison of what is conceived as simultaneous. [...] Wherever something is unified through terminology, temporal functions are sacrificed.⁷⁵⁵

An umbrella term made the non-simultaneous appear simultaneous, shortened and veiled the complexities of actual temporal developments and progressions in art, with the aim of being able to contain and package them for art historical periodisation. The capturing (or trapping) of a new artistic development under an umbrella-term and set period of time did not account for the actual development of a single artist’s work and for stylistic individuality.

It is my contention that this is what the deployment of the concept of *Konfektion* in contemporary arts criticism was meant to rescue. It was designed to rescue the particular among the generalising and reproductive tendencies of visual culture, to separate ‘authentic’ art from its replica. *Konfektion* contained the unique but derivative artwork in a separate discursive sphere in order to maintain ‘Art’ as a meaningful category. The texts discussed above show that some art critics had become acutely aware of the unresolvable dialectic they were caught in: to unify and isolate at the same time.

⁷⁵⁴ Einstein, ‘Diese Aesthetiker’, p. 202.

⁷⁵⁵ Einstein, ‘Diese Aesthetiker’, p. 202.

For art critics who were embracing the latest development in art, a fashionable vocabulary was also used as a tool to confirm their own status as ‘specialists’. The use of fashionable art ‘slang’ demonstrated the critic’s authorial agency and demonstrated that they were ‘in-the-know’, embedded in the world of young, fashionable artists, that they knew what was *zeitgemäß*. The temporality of language that art historians were so keen to avoid was, in fact, necessary for critics to fulfil their role as – to quote Schwabacher again – ‘sniffer-dogs’.

The employment of fashionable and new terms helped to anchor the artwork in time. For contemporary readers, this worked through a correspondence between aesthetics and language, enforcing now-ness, newness, and disrupting any relationship to historical ancestry. A fashionable term in common usage (such as ‘*sachlich*’ or ‘demonic’, as discussed in chapter one) often neither helped to describe specific formal aspects of a painting nor to make judgements about the quality of an artwork. Instead, the use of a fashionable term was a form of symbolic exchange in which the art writer showed off his ‘fashionable capital’ and transferred it to an artwork and artist. Once the artist was established as important and popular among art world insiders, both writer and artist could continue to reinforce each other’s fashionable status and perceived significance. The insistence on an artwork’s *Zeitgemässheit* simply by using contemporary, new vocabulary to describe it, could create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Otto Dix with ‘retrospective flavour’

While Dennis Crockett is the only writer who refers in any detail to the decline of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in popularity among specialists, little attention has been paid to how art critics reviewed specifically Dix’s work in the second half of the 1920s, and none at all to negative reviews.

In 1929, only a year after he had completed one of his best-known works, *Metropolis*, Willi Wolfradt, arguably Dix’s most enthusiastic early advocate apart from his dealer Nierendorf, took the unusual step of openly accusing Dix of having lost his edge (at least in his portrait practice). This review appeared in *Der Cicerone* – the same journal in which Wolfradt had sung Dix’s praises in January 1923. Wolfradt publicly questioned whether what Dix was producing now was still relevant and significant. What prompted this critical re-evaluation was a series of portraits Dix had completed of a number of local dignitaries in Danzig, such as Staatspräsident Dr. Sahn and Generaldirektor Prof. Noé (figure 68). Perhaps Dix had not expected that these portrait commissions would get much publicity, but Wolfradt was on his case. As a critic, he had to consider his own public image. Perhaps it was exactly because of his previous unreserved praise, that Wolfradt now had to be publicly seen to sever the ties between him and an artist who was going out-of-fashion. Wolfradt diagnosed in these portraits evidence of a ‘critical situation’ because they contained ‘warning signals’ (Wolfradt did not elaborate any further on this). They had a ‘retrospective flavour’; a quality that Dix had worked so hard to avoid until his success and income had been secured through his

professorship.⁷⁵⁶ With this term, Wolfradt seems to have expressed a sense of loss, the feeling that an era was coming to an end.

While Paul Westheim had never been a great fan of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting, he had nevertheless dedicated a significant amount of space to it in his journal, and written several articles on a number of the artists associated with it, including Otto Dix. In his review of Dix's retrospective at Nierendorf's gallery early in 1926 in Berlin, he reminded his readers that just because an artist cultivated a controversial persona, this did not mean his work was without importance.⁷⁵⁷ However, for Westheim, Dix's ongoing fascination with the subject of 'Eros and Death' was 'on the verge of becoming *genre ennuyeux*' – a genre in Dix's oeuvre, and an annoying one at that.⁷⁵⁸ While paintings like *Double-Portrait* (Westheim called it '*Brautpaar*') and the portrait of Eulenberg were evidence of his great talent, Westheim saw a danger of Dix becoming his own 'academician'.⁷⁵⁹ In fact, Westheim had turned 'genre ennuyeux' into his own catchphrase because he had used it already to describe Dix's work in a review of an exhibition at the Academy in Berlin in late 1925. Here, he had described Dix as 'talentless [...] despite the painterly qualities', because he perceived an increasing lack of originality in the artist's work, accusing him of 'repetitions' with regards to his gruesome subject matter, his *Schreckenszenen*.⁷⁶⁰ Despite this complaint about Dix, two months later he reviewed the 'Neue Sachlichkeit' exhibition in Mannheim favourably

⁷⁵⁶ Willi Wolfradt, 'Danziger Bildnisse von Otto Dix', *Der Cicerone*, 21 (1929), 136-139 (p. 139).

⁷⁵⁷ Westheim, 'Dix', *Das Kunstblatt*, 10 (1926), 142-146 (p. 142). The article was reprinted in 1931, suggesting that Westheim still found the contents relevant enough. Paul Westheim, 'Dix', in *Helden und Abenteurer. Welt und Leben der Künstler* (Berlin: Hermann Reckendorf, 1931), pp. 228-232.

⁷⁵⁸ Westheim, 'Dix', p. 144. Dix continued this with his representation of an old man with a young woman in *Unequal Couple* of 1925.

⁷⁵⁹ Westheim, 'Dix', p. 146.

⁷⁶⁰ Paul Westheim, 'Ausstellungen', *Das Kunstblatt*, 9 (1925), 217-218 (p. 217).

on the whole, underlining the anticipatory function of his journal by reminding his reader that the *Kunstblatt* had already identified this direction in painting in 1922 in its survey on the ‘Neuer Naturalismus’, and attesting that this ‘development’ in painting was still ‘quite alive’.⁷⁶¹

Several observers shared the belief that joining the academy would be bad for Dix’s reputation as an avant-gardist and his artistic output. Here we encounter Oskar Schürer again, who admired Dix’s portrait of Hugo Erfurth in the ‘Exhibition of the Dresden Academy 1927’, but also saw the danger that the traditional elements that were a signature feature in Dix’s work might come too much to the fore. Schürer noted that this development coincided with Dix having joined the establishment as a professor.⁷⁶² Schürer was neither a great fan of Otto Dix nor of the term ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’, and when he reviewed the exhibition ‘Europäische Kunst der Gegenwart’ in Hamburg (where the portrait of Herbert Eulenberg was exhibited, too) a month later in November 1927, he found that Dix’s works on display were ‘making a pretty poor impression’⁷⁶³ in comparison to those by Max Beckmann. He highlighted, however, the precision of Dix’s painterly style: ‘His precision will always fascinate, – but take the resentment [*ressentiment*] away and he will become an excellent bourgeois romantic.’⁷⁶⁴

Westheim, rather than conceding that Dix had secured his position as a significant artist, still shied away from definite judgement when he concluded his 1926 review of Dix’s retrospective at Neumann-Nierendorf with the statement that although Dix had

⁷⁶¹ Paul Westheim, ‘Kunst im Deutschen Westen. II. Mannheim: Ausstellung “Neue Sachlichkeit”’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 9 (1925), 266-268 (p. 266).

⁷⁶² Oskar Schürer, ‘Ausstellung der Akademie Dresden 1927’, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 61 (1927/28), 34-38 (p. 35).

⁷⁶³ Oskar Schürer, ‘Europäische Kunst der Gegenwart. Ausstellung des Hamburger Kunstvereins’, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 61 (1927/28), 101-111 (p. 107).

⁷⁶⁴ Schürer, ‘Europäische Kunst der Gegenwart’, p. 107.

unquestionably achieved a lot in a short period of time, one would still have to wait and see ‘whether Dix will fulfil people’s expectations’.⁷⁶⁵ By the end of the following year, Westheim did not see much innovation in this type of painting anymore. In review of a ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ exhibition at Nierendorf at the end of 1927, with the original rebels from Grosz to Scholz and Dix at the centre, he contended that only Dix’s portrait of the art dealer Alfred Flechtheim was ‘an achievement’ in contrast to the rest of his works on display. Westheim complained that the qualities that had made the new direction in art so intriguing in the first part of the decade had been watered down: ‘one has to be careful not to take the fake Biedermeiers that are already beginning to smuggle themselves in, as *Neue Sachlichkeit*’.⁷⁶⁶ Readers should remember, Westheim wrote, that ‘*Sachlichkeit*’ was not just about ‘oil print-like licked [*geleckte*] smoothness and an airless [*luftlose*] plasticity of the contouring lines’.⁷⁶⁷ Clearly what seemed like an innovation in 1922, when he had first written about the ‘upstart oleograph’, had not really turned into a viable artistic style for Westheim. Arnheim, who had written his attack against *Neue Sachlichkeit* in 1927 in response to the same exhibition, claimed that since the only effect on the visitor would be ‘boredom’, the paintings were already doing a better job at demonstrating their own irrelevance than any theoretical arguments could.⁷⁶⁸

In the early 1920s, when first establishing his reputation through his shock tactics, Dix had often been accused of being a painter of ‘actualities’. Critics warned that this would become his Achilles heel when the cultural context to which his work referred, changed. Karl Scheffler, who was never a fan of Dix (although he was supportive of George

⁷⁶⁵ Westheim, ‘Dix’, p. 146.

⁷⁶⁶ Paul Westheim, ‘Ausstellungen – Berlin: Sezession’, p. 202.

⁷⁶⁷ Westheim, ‘Ausstellungen – Berlin: Sezession’, p. 203.

⁷⁶⁸ Arnheim, ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’, p. 592.

Grosz), had already dismissed his work in several reviews from 1923 onwards. In one article he specifically attacked his colleague Paul Ferdinand Schmidt's assessment that Dix's work could be the starting point of a complete re-evaluation of artistic values, by arguing that his art was too bound to its time:

As a symptom of our time, Dix should not be underestimated; but his works will fade with time if he does not learn - when faced with the most depraved creatures in dens of vice - to see and shape the beauty that emerges from the foul-smelling ugly.⁷⁶⁹

Scheffler still wrote dismissively about Dix's work at the height of his success. In a review of the 'Herbstausstellung' at the academy in Berlin in 1925 he contended that, in contrast to Grosz and Beckmann, it was 'a mistake to glorify Dix' because he was only an 'artistically weak pre-Raphaelite', he would only be of temporary interest because his work expressed a new and surprising 'social attitude'.⁷⁷⁰ In another article, published later that year, Scheffler complained that 'the admiration he receives is a great error of judgment'.⁷⁷¹ As a particular weak point he identified a reliance on allegorical themes, and that his portraits and self-portraits did not support the 'social ruthlessness' that his extreme aesthetics suggested: 'Dix is playing a role, but his game will be over soon. [...] He has already arrived at the kind of allegory that is no different from the most meaningless allegory of conventional academics.'⁷⁷²

As I have argued in the first chapter of this thesis, Dix's strategy was to marry signifiers of longevity with absolute contemporaneity – to heighten what was already contained in

⁷⁶⁹ Karl Scheffler, 'Kunstaustellungen', *Kunst und Künstler*, 21 (1923), 242-246 (p. 244).

⁷⁷⁰ Karl Scheffler, 'Die Herbstausstellung der Akademie', *Kunst und Künstler*, 23 (1925), 89-94 (p. 91).

⁷⁷¹ Karl Scheffler, 'Kunstaustellungen. Berliner Ausstellungen im November und Dezember', *Kunst und Künstler*, 23 (1925), 147-150 (p. 148).

⁷⁷² Scheffler, 'Kunstaustellungen', p. 148.

the Old Masters, as he had put it himself – and to link his work to artists such as Baldung Grien and Matthias Grünewald, Pinturicchio and Mantegna, artists who had already entered the art historical canon.⁷⁷³ It was his subject matter as well as his style that demanded explanation, and the mixed reviews of his retrospective exhibition at Neumann Nierendorf in Berlin in 1926, which brought together 44 works,⁷⁷⁴ illustrate some of the issues that critics had with his work. Given that Scheffler was the editor of the journal, it is perhaps not surprising that another reviewer, writing under the pseudonym A.L.M. (perhaps Scheffler himself?) in *Kunst und Künstler*, took a negative stance, when writing:

One has seen pictures by Otto Dix regularly over the last few years, [...]. One can't say that has improved them. Nierendorf has brought everything together and displayed it for impact. The exhibition, as well as it has been done, did not convince. Dix has started as a labouring painter of allegories and that is what he still is, he expands ideas for illustrations into a grand format, stylizes modern hideousness, until they appear pre-Raphaelitesque and uses Old Masters in a much too obvious manner. [...] Personally Dix is not uninteresting; artistically he is a lost cause.⁷⁷⁵

Another commentator warned in a review of another exhibition that Dix ‘corners his work within tight contemporary parameters that give him current importance, but the artistic significance is suffering and will continue to suffer due to this’.⁷⁷⁶ It was Carl Einstein who formulated this concern perhaps most explicitly, both in his reviews in art

⁷⁷³ Otto Dix, ‘Objekt gestaltet Form’, in ‘Gibt es neue Ausdrucksformen in der Kunst?’, *Berliner Nachtausgabe*, 2. Beiblatt, 3. 283 (December 1927), 10-11 (p. 10). He was linked by his contemporaries to German artists such as Hans Baldung Grien and Matthias Grünewald, Dix himself also referred to Pinturicchio (he mentioned his the representation of skin) and Mantegna (Dix was impressed by his representation of form and plasticity) as inspirations.

⁷⁷⁴ Max Neri, ‘Otto Dix’, in *Berliner Zeitung*, Zweites Beiblatt, 57, n.d., n.p.. [ZA]

⁷⁷⁵ A.L.M., ‘Kunstaustellungen. Zu Otto Dix’, *Kunst und Künstler*, 24 (1926), 249-251 (p. 250).

⁷⁷⁶ no author, no title, no source, no date (review of an exhibition at Kunstsalon Trittlar).

[newspaper clipping]. [ZA] Unfortunately the newspaper clipping of the article is undated. Strobl does not list this exhibition at all, a date is therefore hard to establish.

journals and in his celebrated book *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, published in 1926.

Here Einstein warned in the section on Dix that:

This kind of work will be exposed as demonic genre painting when it is not defended by the actualities of the now anymore; otherwise the formal qualities would have to become stronger than the contemporaneity of intense reportage, with which one is protesting against deductive art. [...] current themes tire through old techniques.⁷⁷⁷

It was the employment of contemporary types and subject matter in Dix's work, his attempts to capture the era that could turn into a weakness according to Einstein. He thereby put a question mark over Dix's future position in art history. 'When we consider what is described as a *Zeitbild*,' Einstein contended more generally, using a German term that describes a picture that is of a specific era and simultaneously a visual condensation of it, 'we note that not the artist, but time and milieu are the creators; paintings are reduced to illustrations.'⁷⁷⁸

Each significant development in art was accompanied by a media discourse, played out in art journals, cultural magazines, newspapers and, as I have shown, fashion magazines. Each movement had its advocates and opponents who either openly rejected or ignored it. As this chapter has shown, supporters could turn into critical voices, before the artist would be ignored altogether. And this could also have to do with the art critic's own career concerns, rather than only being the result of a decline in the quality of the art itself. In Dix's case, however, his work did indeed change direction in the late

⁷⁷⁷ Carl Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Uwe Fleckner and Thomas W. Gaethgens, 3rd revised edn, (Berlin: Fannei and Walz, 1996), p. 232.

⁷⁷⁸ Einstein, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, p. 233.

1920s in a way that is still seen as an abatement of the artistic edge of his work. His early supporters, such as Wolfradt and Glaser, were agents within a whole apparatus of art critical discourse tasked with finding ways of establishing cultural relations of difference and sameness. I have argued that the value of an artwork was not evaluated solely on its meaning in relation to a specific cultural context, on what critics determined as *Zeitgemäßheit*, but also in terms of how art critical discourse constructed a career arc across time for artists *and* for artistic movements. Art criticism impacted on artistic production through its language of temporality and through *Schlagworte* that were different to established art historical periodisation and terminology, through a time-bound vocabulary. Art critics were active agents in accelerated processes of obsolescence that made any attempts to differentiate what was mere fashion, as opposed to what was *zeitgemäß*, futile.

Looking back at the tumultuous decade that had passed, the dramatic changes in art, and perhaps also sensing big political and social changes to come, many writers became retrospective in tone. In his article ‘Neue Kunst in Deutschland’, published early in 1931, Paul Westheim part lamented, part celebrated the speed of change and variety of artistic positions in art in the previous decade, and the difficulty for any observer to identify any kind of logical line of development. New developments now occurred ‘not quite with the speed with which pictures jump about in the cinema’, he said, but cultural change had dramatically accelerated:

Let’s take as a typical example the so-called ‘Neue Sachlichkeit’ or ‘Magical Realism’, as it has been called, too. The intelligently compiled book by Franz Roh, which aimed to outline its foundations and to summarise its beginnings had not left the printers yet when this ‘new *Sachlichkeit*’ was already over, and the

book that had wanted to signal a beginning seemed almost like historic review already when it was released.⁷⁷⁹

Westheim did not outline a general problem with the idea of artistic movements, but a recent phenomenon, of which the fate of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting was only the most recent and most prominent example. Now, he said, specifically referring to the relationship between avant-garde artists and their specialist audience, ‘artistic movements [are] usually already over, or at least suspect to the avant-garde, when the specialists and the artistic followers are only just becoming aware of it’.⁷⁸⁰

There is further evidence that by the end of the decade, Dix’s work from the early 1920s looked outmoded even to his strongest supporters. After having seen a special display of historic and contemporary works by the *Novembergruppe* at the *Juryfreie Kunstschau* in Berlin on the occasion of its tenth anniversary in 1930, Dix’s other great advocate Curt Glaser seemed surprised himself by how his perception of some of the works on display had shifted over a relatively short period of time. Glaser had to concede that the work Dix had created in 1920, when he had briefly been part of the *Novembergruppe*, now appeared very dated, and his judgement was harsh: ‘After only ten years, Dix’s *Barrikade* [1920], Grosz’s *Wintermärchen* [1918] have become curiosities that only have a place in a panopticon of the revolutionary era.’⁷⁸¹ Only three years earlier, Glaser had still described both Dix’s subject matter and style of painting as ‘revolutionary’.⁷⁸² In 1930, four years after Sauerlandt’s declaration that Dix’s *Doubleportrait* of 1922 would have ‘lasting significance’, Glaser worried that some of the artist’s work might

⁷⁷⁹ Paul Westheim, ‘Neue Kunst in Deutschland’, *Das Kunstblatt*, 15 (1931), 100-111 (pp. 100-101).

⁷⁸⁰ Westheim, ‘Neue Kunst in Deutschland’, p. 100.

⁷⁸¹ Curt Glaser, ‘Juryfreie Kunstschau’, *Kunst und Künstler*, 28 (1930), 75-76 (p. 76).

⁷⁸² Curt Glaser, ‘Otto Dix’, *Kunst und Künstler*, 25 (1927), 130-134 (p. 134).

only be fit for an entertaining display, as historical documents, which implied that they might not be worthy of a place in art history after all.

Conclusion

*I think, even this last remainder, however small, of the original work must be preserved at all costs, just as in general everything that in some way recalls the human hand and human labour, needs to be preserved.*⁷⁸³

Otto Dix

When Otto Dix made the above statement in 1962, he had just visited the workshops of the Staatliche Porzellanmanufaktur in Meißen, where he had admired the manual processes still involved in finishing mass-produced porcelain objects, and he emphasised the aspects that made Meißen a ‘manu’-facture and not a factory: skilled artisans hand painted mass produced objects, albeit based on existing patterns, and made casts by hand based on original creations and prototypes.

This thesis has argued that the relationship between the machine-made and the hand-made was at the core of some of Dix’s own creative practice in the first half of the 1920s. His competition, however, were image-making technologies: the camera and the printing press. I have put forward the idea that his interest in this relationship was not just about a demonstration of the abilities of the human hand to produce things a machine could not (yet), or about an aesthetic of the hand-made (which played a role in his Dada collages), but more than anything about the ability of the human imagination to outwit mechanical image production and reproduction. What is more, this study has sought to demonstrate that his was a more profound concern about medium specificity and contemporary relevance than the more general observation – often made in the literature of the era and in scholarly publications since – that *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting was about a return to painterly and manual skills in response to what was

⁷⁸³ Otto Dix ‘Conversation at the Staatliche Porzellanmanufaktur Meißen, 1962’, in Diether Schmidt, *Otto Dix im Selbstbildnis* (Berlin: Henschel, 1981), 253-254 (p. 254).

perceived, by some, as a lack of painterly skill in expressionist and more abstract tendencies in painting.

Each of the four chapters in this thesis has in some way dealt with the issue of ‘reproduction’ in the context of an expanded media culture in the 1920s: whether image reproduction through technology, the repetition of aesthetic formulas in painting, or the reiteration of specific claims in the discourse about art. And my study has identified several ways in which Dix responded to what he perceived to be the shortcomings, threats, but also the opportunities 1920s visual mass media culture could offer for a painter, thereby adding to and, in some areas, altering our understanding of Dix’s portrait practice.

One of the key aims of this thesis was to demonstrate that, beyond the contemporary subject matter of Dix’s paintings, his formal vocabulary cannot be framed as an anachronism. His paintings were, as Willi Wolfradt wrote about the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in 1923, defined by ‘the spirit of the machine [that] secretly weaves itself into the classicist tendency’.⁷⁸⁴ And as he later said specifically about Dix elsewhere, the foundations of his kind of ‘*Sachlichkeit*’ lay in the ‘mechanically produced effects of photography and cinema’ and which he ‘tried to heighten’.⁷⁸⁵ My study has proposed that the paintings discussed here have ingested processes and aesthetics of mechanical production, albeit each in different ways, making Panofsky’s concept of ‘reproductive optics’ particularly apt to describe them. In response to what Rosalind Krauss has described as ‘photography’s destruction of the conditions of the aesthetic medium in a

⁷⁸⁴ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Ein Doppelbildnis von Otto Dix’, *Der Cicerone*, 15 (1923), 173-178 (p. 174).

⁷⁸⁵ Willi Wolfradt, ‘Otto Dix. Ein neuer Maler’, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 23 May 1926, pp. 669-670 (p. 669).

transformative operation that would affect all arts',⁷⁸⁶ Dix developed dialectical strategies that could perhaps be described as 'containment' in the *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber*, as 'resistance' in *Selfportrait with Nude Model* and his 1923 portrait of Martha, and as 'adaptation' in the *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg*.

This study has sought to illuminate Dix's work of the 1920s by demonstrating that the artist took on the challenges posed by visual media culture in his artistic medium of choice and developed a new type of figurative art that allowed a 'transformative operation' rather than retreating from it. It has thereby identified other ways in which Dix's portraits subverted the conventions of portrait practice beyond, for example, his often cited 'embrace of ugliness',⁷⁸⁷ his preference for 'types', his foregrounding of specific individual characteristics, his fixation on sexuality, or his often problematic representation of women, which, as Dorothy Price has demonstrated, went hand in hand with a specific type of masculine consciousness.⁷⁸⁸ This study has attended to the historical specificity of the media context in which Dix worked, while also locating aspects of their meaning in contemporary discursive contexts, and it has sought to open up productive new avenues for further enquiry. It has considered biographical material and statements made by contemporary art writers previously not considered, and it has explored ways in which the artist's concerns intersected with those of leading cultural commentators and art historians of the time, some of which are little known today. It has looked beyond the familiar horizons of existing studies of Dix's work and

⁷⁸⁶ Rosalind Krauss, 'Reinventing the Medium', *Critical Inquiry*, 25.2 (Winter 1999), 289-305 (p. 290).

⁷⁸⁷ Sabine Rewald, 'I must paint you!', in *Glitter and Doom. German Portraits from the 1920s*, ed. by Sabine Rewald (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), pp. 3-12 (p. 6).

⁷⁸⁸ See: Dorothy Rowe [Price], *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (London: Routledge, 2003).

developed methods by which other structures of meaning could be revealed in his paintings, and thereby sought to close a gap in the research about Dix.

In some ways my study has followed in the footsteps of O. K. Werckmeister and his study *The Making of Paul Klee's Career, 1914 – 1920*, which has done much to demystify artistic creation by looking at an artist's response to market demands and preferences.⁷⁸⁹ My discussion of Dix's *Portrait of the Dancer Anita Berber* has added to Susan L. Funkenstein's analysis of this painting by proposing additional reasons for Berber's appearance, and this without wishing to question established interpretations of Dix's regular representation of women, including that of Berber, as misogynist.⁷⁹⁰ Gender is without a doubt one of the most important lenses through which to consider his work. My thesis has also expanded other scholarship on Dix, such as Anne Söll's analysis of Dix's attitude towards fashion and gender and Matthew Witkovsky's notion of divergent temporal planes, which he identified in Dix's portrait of Max Roesberg. The second chapter of this study took as a point of departure the established, generalised trope that painting saw itself in competition with photography since the mid-1800s.⁷⁹¹ It set out to investigate what specific form this response took in Dix's work, and I have proposed that some of his aesthetic strategies may be unique to him or even to

⁷⁸⁹ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). This is an approach to art history that is still occasionally met with some resistance as the recent example of Van Gogh scholar Wouter van der Veen can demonstrate. In his 2018 publication, widely discussed in the French, Dutch and German press, Van der Veen presents Van Gogh as an art market strategist and entrepreneur, who, in tandem with his brother, plotted his career success beyond his own life, revealing how much of the painter's efforts, were dedicated to and resulting from an in depth study, knowledge and manipulation of the art market. Wouter van der Veen, *Le Capital de Van Gogh. Ou comment les frères Van Gogh ont fait mieux que Warren Buffet* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2018).

⁷⁹⁰ See Susan L. Funkenstein, 'Anita Berber: Imaging a Weimar Performance Artist', *Women's Art Journal*, 26 (2005), 26-31; Maria Tatar, *Lustmord. Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton University Press, 1995); Beth Irwin Lewis, 'Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis', in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 202-232.

⁷⁹¹ See for example: Matthias Eberle, 'Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany: A Brief History', in *Glitter and Doom*, pp. 21-38 (pp. 34-35).

individual paintings. I have positioned Dix's interest in surface qualities, exemplified in his *Self-Portrait with Nude Model* and his 1923 portrait of Martha Dix in a red hat in relation to Antje Krause-Wahl and T'ai Smith's suggestion that photography only fully developed an interest in the representation of haptic surface qualities and textiles in the later part of the 1920s, which means that Dix's work preceded this turn in visual creative production.⁷⁹² My analysis of the *Portrait of the Poet Herbert Eulenberg* and its reproduction in photography and print expanded on scholarship by Tom Gretton and others who have investigated the relationship between fine art and mass print culture in the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe.⁷⁹³ While one would have to investigate further whether and how other artists took into account the potential reproduction and dissemination of their work through reproductions at the point of an artwork's conception, I believe it may be worth considering whether the fact that *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting in general lent itself more obviously to black-and-white reproduction played at least in part a role in why, whether consciously or not, so many artists returned to a realist style exactly at the moment where mass media culture and the opportunities to have one's work reproduced in a mass medium such as a magazine, newspaper or journal were greatly expanded. While Dix voiced his opinion on black-and-white reproductions and Ektachromes of his work in the 1950s and 1960s, he did not talk about facsimile reproductions, and one would have to investigate whether any Piper prints were ever made of his work for an audience with both an interest in his art and the means to buy these somewhat more expensive, upmarket reproductions. The third chapter also introduced Oskar Schürer as a writer who should be taken account of

⁷⁹² Antje Krause-Wahl, 'Mit sensibler Hand. Textilien in der Modefotografie der 1930er Jahre', *Fotogeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie*, 146 (2017), 15-24; T'ai Smith, 'Limits of the Tactile and the Optical: Bauhaus Fabric in the Frame of Photography', *Grey Room*, 25 (2006), 6-31.

⁷⁹³ See for example: Tom Gretton, 'Difference and Competition: The Imitation and Reproduction of Fine Art in a Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Weekly News Magazine', *Oxford Art Journal*, 23.2 (2000), 145-162.

by scholarship on the discourse surrounding the reproduction of artworks in the first half of the twentieth century.⁷⁹⁴

The final chapter of my thesis has investigated in more detail an issue first highlighted by Crockett – that the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in painting was losing important early supporters, such as Hartlaub, around 1927 and I have identified critics of Dix who, after looking at some of the portraits he started to produce in the last years of the decade, claimed that he had lost his edge and thereby further contributed to the artist's going-out-of-fashion. Indeed, in 1927, the year he started to teach as a professor in Dresden and became part of the academy, Dix still conceived two of his most important works: *Street Battle* (1927) and the triptych *Metropolis* (1927/8). However, in 1929 he arguably started work on his final masterpiece: *The War* (1929/32). In addition, the last chapter of my study has also added to the study of arts criticism in the 1920s and to art historical studies on the discourse about the relationship between fashion and art, building on existing work by scholars such as Frederic Schwartz.⁷⁹⁵

In *Art as a Social System*, Niklas Luhmann defined style as a form 'that processes the burden of innovation and along with it the temporality of all forms while casting a secret glance toward an eternal life beyond its own time.'⁷⁹⁶ Dix worked with an eye on audience impact, critical success, and sales, but also wanted to secure for his work a

⁷⁹⁴ See for example: *Walter Benjamin and Art*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin (London: Continuum: 2005).

⁷⁹⁵ Frederic J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth Century Germany* (London: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁷⁹⁶ Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 132.

permanent place in future art history, and I have argued that it was *both* the fear and creative potential of the contemporary, the fashionable, and of the outmoded, that motivated some of the formal strategies in the paintings discussed here, all created between 1922 and 1925 at an important time in the artist's oeuvre.

As Paul Westheim observed, a new kind of '*Kunstbetrieb*' was developing in the early 1920s, in which artists were more than ever 'tempted to evaluate the means with regards to their impact'.⁷⁹⁷ In the context of the rapidly expanding media landscape of the 1920s, this also meant artists had to identify new means of engaging both specialist and non-specialist audiences. What was at stake was the successful development of strategies that could harness both the opportunities and the limitations inherent in processes of mechanical reproduction for their own ends. Painters in particular needed to ensure that their original artworks could travel as successfully across different media platforms, and across time, as mechanically produced images, while simultaneously maintaining their difference. However, perhaps there was some truth in art critic Paul Fechter's claim that the new form of naturalism Dix and his contemporaries had developed, and that was characterised by 'an excessive intensification of the means of expression' where 'absolute immediacy is the aim', was ultimately 'rooted in the secret knowledge of the lack of power of this immediacy'.⁷⁹⁸

The idea that issues of reproduction through image making technologies and repetition in terms of vocabulary are implicated at the inception of a painter's and art writer's

⁷⁹⁷ Paul Westheim, 'Der Maler malt Kunstprobleme', in *Für und Wider. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Kunst der Gegenwart*, ed. by Paul Westheim (Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1923), pp. 17-25 (p. 24).

⁷⁹⁸ Paul Fechter, 'Die nachexpressionistische Situation', *Das Kunstblatt*, 7 (1923), 321-329 (p. 326). This article was accompanied by the reproduction of a fragment of Dix's painting *Trench* (1923), among other images, and Fechter referred to Dix's work *Barricade* (1920) in his text.

creative output respectively has relevance beyond the Weimar era to the present day. In addition, this thesis has mapped out a way in which the actions and artworks of other painters of the Weimar era could also potentially be explored. The close focus on one artist and only a limited number of paintings as case studies⁷⁹⁹ provided a clearly delineated project and has allowed me to draw highly specific conclusions. Their potential applicability to other artists' work would have to be tested. Indeed, the painterly strategies my analysis has revealed were difficult to identify precisely because they are so specific to individual paintings. However, it is the different approaches I have developed in each chapter that could find applications beyond the work of this particular artist, for example for the study of other realist painters working alongside Dix who engaged with fashion and celebrity culture or with the issue of reproduction and medium-specificity in ways thus far not identified.

Events Richard Hamann had described at the beginning of the 1920s, when commentators were declaring the death of Expressionism, were repeating themselves at the end of the decade with the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Hamann had pointed out that those who 'did not want to lose touch with the present' turned away from Expressionism precisely and 'strangely at the moment when one has started to separate the mass of followers from the productive and strong minds, when one recognises genius and authentic art' among the mass of expressionist artists.⁸⁰⁰ Significantly, Hamann contended that the artistic output of those who followed the original innovators and the resulting 'generalisation that had turned it into a mania' – a process described by others

⁷⁹⁹ A methodological approach taken in a number of publications by Dix-specialist James A. van Dyke, for example in 'Otto Dix's *Streetbattle* and the Limits of Satire in Düsseldorf, 1928', *Oxford Art Journal*, 32.1 (2009), 37-65.

⁸⁰⁰ Richard Hamann, *Kunst und Kultur der Gegenwart* (Marburg: Marburger Seminar, 1922), p. 3. Hamann wrote this as a follow-up to his study on Impressionism.

in this thesis as *Konfektion* – was the necessary ‘proof that it has succeeded and established itself’.⁸⁰¹ In other words, complaints about fashions in art were not just futile, they could be counterproductive.

Dix never claimed a ‘beginning from ground zero’, as Rosalind Krauss has described the relationship between avant-garde modernism and originality.⁸⁰² This also made *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Dix’s painting’s position in narratives of the avant-garde so awkward, since his was a synthetic image practice in which the traditional and the contemporary, different styles and techniques, were skilfully combined. While the Dada works he produced between 1919 and 1921, with their collaged fragments, or his works that imitate the aesthetics of mass produced oil prints, may more obviously lend themselves to the study of his engagement with image-making technologies and print culture, this thesis sought demonstrate that the verist-realist paintings he produced between the end of 1922 and 1925 also provide fertile ground for such an undertaking.

⁸⁰¹ Hamann, p. 3.

⁸⁰² Rosalind Krauss, ‘The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodern Repetition’, *October*, 18 (Autumn 1981), 44-66 (p. 53).

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