

Drawing as a Field for Experiment

Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948) is one of the leading protagonists of 20th-century art. He revolutionized the collage with his so-called *Merz* pictures, which he assembled from newspaper cutouts, advertisements, fabric, metal, and even rubbish. And furthermore, today we see in him a pioneer of contemporary installation art. The exhibition in the Kunstmuseum, however, testifies to another side of the artist – to the fact that Schwitters was also a highly innovative draftsman.

Kurt Schwitters' renown as an artist who produced collages and installations out of very diverse materials is widespread. In the case of *Ausgerenkte Kräfte (Dislocated Forces, 1920)*, the Kunstmuseum Bern can boast a key work of Schwitters' *Merz* art in its collection. The former director Max Huggler, in circumstances of great hardship, purchased the work in 1961 with his own savings – and donated the artwork to the Kunstmuseum Bern after its treasurer had thwarted the museum's attempts to purchase it. Today the picture is one of the highlights in our collection.

A surprising diversity

The exhibition offers the first overview of Kurt Schwitters' graphic work with around 100 selected drawings from the artist's estate as well as from private collections. His drawings received very little attention in the past because they, at least on the surface, appeared to have little in common with his *Merz* art.

Schwitters' drawing oeuvre can be divided into various styles: They range from dada and constructivism to realism, and can even display surrealist overtones. This great diversity illustrates decisive turning points in the artist's career and in his stylistic development. It lucidly demonstrates Schwitters' path to abstraction around 1918 as well as his experiments with a constructivist language of forms.

In 1937 Schwitters visited Norway and did not return to Germany. The Nazis classified him as a degenerate artist, and his work was confiscated and slandered. He was forced to flee to Scotland when German troops marched into Norway in 1940. He was interned there as a foreigner in different camps. Schwitters was able to establish a studio in Hutchison Camp on the Isle of Man, where he portrayed his fellow internees. Still today these portraits represent the culmination of his art in portraiture.

Schwitters' familiarity and affinity to nature is especially discernible in his drawings. Impressed by the mountain scenery in Norway and England he started drawing landscapes. Many of these are hurriedly sketched, almost abstract works, but also a number of realistic representations have survived.

The exhibition shows that Schwitters did not just choose to draw as a finger exercise but, in this art, found an important source of inspiration and a field for experiment his whole life long. As a way for exploring nature and versatile medium, through drawing he developed his own characteristic language of visual forms.

The inspiring Anna Blume

Again and again, Schwitters combined the traditional genres of painting, drawing, printmaking, poetry, and script. The exhibition title "Anna Blume and I" not only refers to Schwitters' dadaistic love poem dedicated to his fantasy beloved, but also to a water color in the show with the same name. Schwitters' Anna Blume likewise inspired the hip-hop group Freundeskreis to compose their song "A.N.N.A." – and additionally appears as a literary figure in several works by the American author Paul Auster.

The exhibition is a collaborative effort with the Sprengel Museum Hannover and the Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Foundation, which, based in Hanover, administers Kurt Schwitters' legacy.

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The Exhibition

Opening: Tuesday, September 22, 2011, 18h30

Duration: 23.09.2011 - 08.01.2012

Curator: Claudine Metzger

Entrance Fee: CHF 14.00 / red. 10.00

The Catalogue (in German)



**«Anna Blume und ich»,
Zeichnungen von
Kurt Schwitters.** Hrsg. Kurt
und Ernst Schwitters
Stiftung, Hannover, Isabel
Schulz. Texte von Matthias
Frehner, Claudine
Metzger, Isabel Schulz. Hatje
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The Poster



F4
(89,5 x 128 cm)
CHF 20.00

The Special Events (in German)

Öffentliche Führungen: Sonntag, 11h: 25. September, 16. Oktober, 6. November, 11. Dezember 2011, 8. Januar 2012 und Dienstag, 19h: 27. September, 11. Oktober, 22. November, 3. Januar 2012. Ohne Anmeldung, Ausstellungseintritt

Einführung für Lehrpersonen: Kurt Schwitters und "Rectangle and Square": Dienstag, 25. Oktober, 18h und Mittwoch, 26. Oktober, 14h. Anmeldung / Info: T 031 328 09 11 oder vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch. Kosten: CHF 10.00

"Man nehme kurz alles": Schwitters' Materialkunst als Kunstmaterial. Eine Live-Collage von Julia Haenni, Natalie Keppler, Micha Küchler und Thea Reifler; Sonntag, 12h: 6. November, 11. Dezember 2011, 8. Januar 2012. Jeweils nach den öffentlichen Führungen. Ohne Anmeldung, Ausstellungseintritt

"Zeitfenster Gegenwart": stukturelle Öffnungen - Performance von Heinrich Lüber: Dienstag, 29. November, 18h. Für den Künstler Heinrich Lüber ist das performative Sprechen ein wichtiger Aspekt seiner eigenen Auseinandersetzung. In installativen und performativen Projekten werden dabei oft Sprechsituationen thematisiert, aber aus ihren festen Bedeutungszusammenhängen gelöst. Die Artikulation wird nach aussen gesetzt wie eine umgestülpte Haut, um so mitunter die Frage nach dem „semantischen Überquellen im Kunst-Tun“ zu stellen. Im Rahmen der Ausstellung faltet Heinrich Lüber das Sprechen selbst in den Raum aus und entwickelt so eine Art gesprochene Architektur. Ohne Anmeldung, Ausstellungseintritt

The Exhibition is a collaboration with:

SPRENGEL MUSEUM HANNOVER

where the exhibition has been shown from 15.5. until 4.9.2011

KURT UND ERNST SCHWITTERS STIFTUNG

Isabel Schulz, curator Sprengel Museum Hannover and Kurt und Ernst Schwitters Stiftung, Hannover

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