

mass media, modernism, & the avant-garde

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One of the predominant features of everyday life during the Weimar era was the experience of modernization. Almost no chronicle of the period failed to note or recall the sensations of life being speeded up and profoundly transformed. Everywhere one experienced new technologies, whether riding a trolley car on the street or watching the latest Charlie Chaplin movie in a film palace or working in a newly rationalized factory. *Modernity*
In Germany in the 1920s, modernity meant experiences of speed, technology, consumerism, economic flux, fragmentation, urbanism, industrialization, and rationalization. The combination of the new modes of existence and the new form of government, combined with periods of extreme economic fluctuation, gave those who described the times feelings of instability, excitement, and fear.

Mass media both participated in and responded to the process of modernization. Film, photography, and photomontage represented the most up-to-date media available to depict new experiences and perceptions. As an organizing structure, montage was thought to echo the pace, the multiplicity, the disorientation, the thrill, and of course the fragmentation of modern everyday life. *Montage is inevitable phase in modernity*
Montage in particular – whether in film, *Illustrierte* layout, or photomontage – *was* considered a skillful reflection of the urban scene and the new means of transportation. The designer Max Burchartz, for example, chose to use photomontage in his mass-produced prospectus for the city of Dortmund to combine scenes of the intersection of the railroad with the urban landscape. His expectations for the ability of montage to encapsulate modern, kaleidoscopic experience were ambitious, as he

described his railroad montage: "The eye does not control perspectival directions, rather receives only impressions of near, of far, of brightness, of dark, over and under, movement and quiet, diversity or simplicity."¹

The *Illustrierte* celebrated photography's ability to grab a moment of stillness from the modern rush and also its potential, through montage layout and serial photography, to give the reader a multiplicity of impressions, reflecting the daily, distracted experience of modern life. The photoweekly *Weltspiegel* ran a typical montage page in 1929 entitled "... And this all happened in $\frac{1}{100}$ of a second!"² From one long shot of a city intersection, a montage of five enlargements of details was offered to the reader. In one one-hundredth of a second, the time it supposedly took to snap the photo, people alighted from a trolley car, a bicyclist overturned in the gutter, a policeman gave advice, someone ran across the street, and two women stopped to talk in the middle of traffic. The marvel was not only that so much could happen so fast on the city street, but that photography could expand visual perception — offering multiple viewpoints of a scene whose details could not all be absorbed in one glimpse by the unaided human eye.

The avant-garde contributed to the images of modernization propagated by mass media. The disorienting viewpoints of New Vision photography, for instance, transformed the appearance of photojournalism and, in the increasingly popular photoweeklies, had tremendous influence in attracting readers and selling products. As free-lancers, Bauhaus instructor Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and the French artist Man Ray were among the photographers employed by Ullstein Verlag, and Bertolt Brecht was among the writers.

Therefore, one can argue that, in Weimar at least, the mass media was not just a source for avant-gardists. There was a reciprocal influence, although certainly the media had greater power. Literary critic Peter Jelavich's recent work on modernism suggests that we should consider different types of cultural production — say, an avant-garde photomontage and an illustrated newspaper photograph — as different aspects of a common culture joined by common questions.³ Both the media organs and the avant-garde were products of modernization and both responded to its pressures and its pleasures.

So how can the terms *modernism*, *mass media*, and *avant-garde* be constituted to represent the historical situation in the twenties accurately and allow for an understanding of the relationship among them? Such theoretical clarification is particularly necessary to determine the negotiations between avant-garde art and mass culture. In fact, literary theorist Andreas Huyssen usefully differentiates between *modernists* (modern artists) and *avant-gardists* precisely according to the relationship of each group to mass culture. Huyssen defines "modernists" as those (like Kandinsky) who wished to keep art pure from "the encroachments of urbanization, massification, technological modernization, in short, of modern mass culture."⁴ He contrasts these modernists with avant-gardists who desired to reintegrate art and life, for example, to involve art with mass culture, in order to make art more socially and politically viable.

Although Huyssen's categories are useful to distinguish these radically different types of artists working in the first decades of the century, I want to complicate how we use the term modernist. Most commonly, modernist is used as a narrow description of small groups of artists focused on formal concerns specific to various artistic media such as painting and sculpture. I would broaden the term to reconnect modern artists with the experience of modernity itself. For it was exactly the idea of linking modern art production to the representation and effect of modern life that was so empowering to artists in the twenties.

In the Weimar years, the term *moderne*, meaning that which is modern, contemporary, and fashionable, was associated with the conditions of mass communication and the sociology of urbanism. In cultural criticism, in particular, the word *moderne* alluded to that which was absolutely of the moment. Thus, in his famous 1927 essay on photography in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Siegfried Kracauer used *moderne* to signal the superficial and fragmentary aspects of contemporary life: "Photography's boundedness by time expresses precisely that of *fashion*. Since it has no other meaning than that of the contemporary human mask, what is modern [*moderne*] is transparent and what is old is left behind." Elsewhere in this essay it is clear that for Kracauer *moderne* also connoted an assault on memory and history, typified by the leveling of "high" and "low" cultures in illustrated newspapers: "If [images in illustrated newspapers] offer themselves as support for the memory, then the memory must determine their selection. But the current flood of photographs sweeps away its barriers. So powerful is the assault of collections of images, that it perhaps threatens with destruction decisive traits of present consciousness. Works of art also meet with this fate through their reproduction."⁵

Modernism, the cultural representation of modernity, signified the collective social response to the culture created by capitalism after the Industrial Revolution. *Modernism*
It must be emphasized, however, that each industrialized country's pace and experience of modernization was quite different, so that, as a cultural response, modernism developed rather unevenly throughout Europe. In Weimar Germany, the process of modernization was greatly intensified by the penetration of American finance into the German economy. This had the immediate effect of stimulating the growth of consumerism and monopoly capitalism, but it also resulted in such unpredictable alterations in the way of life as the common use of electricity. Unlike elsewhere in Europe, businesses were larger and the state's role more pervasive when rationalization took place. Yet, while modern industrialization was occurring on a massive scale, many people lived in marginal economic situations — that of the small businessman or even the peasant farmer. Citing Bloch's concept of nonsynchronicity (*ungleichzeitigkeit*) to describe the coexistence of different modes of production in modern Germany, historian Jeffrey Herf reminds us of Weimar's "selective embrace of modernity."⁶

In the cultural world too, the relationship to modernization was not a uniform one. "Selective embrace" is a key phrase in describing the relationship between the international avant-garde centered in Germany and modern culture. While liberal

or radical members of the avant-garde celebrated certain aspects of modernization, particularly a fostering of utopianism, often but not always predicated on technological romanticism, they were also often engaged in a critique of the bourgeoisie from within.⁷

Any recognition of the avant-garde's fascinated exploration of the boundaries between high art and mass media culture in Weimar demands a redefinition of what we have come to think of as the historic antagonism between the artistic avant-garde and the bourgeois organs of mass culture. My thesis is that the majority of both mass media and avant-garde production at this time is concerned with crossing these supposed boundaries and addressing contemporary social issues – such as those arising from rationalization and urbanism. Accordingly, I consider Peter Bürger's theory of the interwar avant-garde to be historically inaccurate and hermetic in its concern with defining the avant-garde exclusively in relation to earlier artistic movements.⁸

In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Bürger defines the European avant-garde of the 1920s by contrasting them to the previous artistic tradition of aestheticism, represented by such movements as Art Nouveau and Expressionism. He calls this aestheticism "modernism." By the twenties, however, particularly in Germany, the meaning of the term modernism was no longer restricted to a hermetic aestheticism. In Weimar Germany, the term *Modernismus* had more powerful connotations due to its association with the words *moderne* (modern, contemporary, fashionable) and *Modernität* (modernity, the experience of modernization). Although *Modernismus* could refer to an art movement such as Expressionism, it could also mean the culture of contemporary life, including representations of the experience of technology, electricity, urbanism, speed, mass media, and consumerism. For our purposes in considering the relationship between artists and mass culture, this multiple use of the term is significant. As literary critics Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick have recently pointed out, Bürger's theory "represses the largest truth about modernism itself . . . namely . . . the heterogeneity of its response to the maelstrom of modernization."⁹

Still, Bürger is correct when he contrasts an avant-garde group like Berlin Dada with earlier aesthetic movements. Or, to be more precise, his definition echoes their intentions. The goal of the avant-garde, Bürger claims, was to rebel against the institutionalization of art in order to reengage art with life, for example, to break art away from its ghettoization in museums and galleries and redirect it toward mass media and performance. If one attempts to apply this definition to the localized activities of the Berlin Dadaists, one finds it an apt, if incomplete description.

After Berlin Dada dissipated as a movement, however, that is, after 1922, the chief priority for the German avant-garde was no longer to separate art from art institutions. Instead, the avant-garde began to ask how it might intersect with and participate in the institutions and forms of mass culture. A principle topic of debate among these artists was how to respond to commerce, politics, and new forms of mass communication, and with which appropriately modern styles. So, Bürger misses the point when he associates modernism solely with an art world aestheticism against which the avant-garde is in constant rebellion. This reductive concept of the

cross
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culture + address
contemporary social
issues

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tensions surrounding the acceptance of modernist culture glosses over the prevailing, historically specific circumstances.

Bürger's definition of artistic modernism conforms to a 1960s model of the avant-garde and tends to obstruct our understanding of the complexity and variety of responses to modernization in the twenties. In Weimar, the notion of modernity was tied less to the latest advances in studio painting than to factories, speed, movies, newspapers, cars, urbanism, and internationalism, in short, the representation and experience of modernization. Such images of modern life were to be found more often in mass culture than in high art. The burning issue for the German avant-garde from 1922 until Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 was not a rebellion against art institutions at all, but rather a serious and prolonged negotiation with mass culture, an engagement emboldened primarily by the practices of the much-admired Russian Constructivists.¹⁰ Instead of regarding the avant-garde as Bürger does, as a collection of artists committed primarily to "the dismantling of the false autonomy of the institution of art," we must see the 1920s avant-garde more broadly as an international group centered in Germany involved with a "selective embrace" of modernity, in various ways more affirmative than critical.¹¹ While this makes it less easy to transform avant-garde artists into revolutionary heroes, this approach redefines the avant-garde as a bourgeois subculture struggling to explain their own engaged but ambivalent experience of modern, industrialized capitalism.

what 20's modernism was - experience of - more often found in mass media, not high art
- a negotiation w/ mass culture

Above all, the relationship between modernism and the avant-garde was mediated by the institutions of the mass media. The magazine and newspaper publishers, radio stations, film studios, and book companies that proliferated during the Weimar era signaled a completely new formation of production and spectatorship. In the area of illustrated newspapers alone, there was an explosion of new and popular publications. Following the success of the prototype *BIZ* (its circulation was already one million by 1914), *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* was founded in 1923 and *Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung* in 1926, among many others. After the German economy stabilized in 1924, domination by and experimentation with photography characterized all the leading newsweeklies. There was a mass media boom in Weimar, and a cultural history of its images and their reception requires an understanding of the institutions that produced them.

Mass media boom

The most emblematic institution of modern German print media was the massive Berlin publishing conglomerate Ullstein Verlag. By the time of the Weimar Republic, Ullstein was the largest publishing empire in Germany, with a mass-market book division, nineteen newspapers and magazines, a large advertising department, and a profitable sewing pattern business. Ullstein Verlag was by far the most popular – and the self-described most modern – press in Weimar Germany, and its best-selling *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* had a circulation of approximately 1.85 million in 1930, at least twice the circulation of its nearest competitor, *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*.¹² As such, Ullstein clearly emerges as a key institution within the public sphere.¹³

Significantly, Ullstein Verlag's institutional identification, which can be found throughout its many publications as well as in its promotional and advertising

Embrace Modernity

materials, was directed toward an association with liberalism and modernity.¹⁴ A 1928 issue of *BIZ*, for example, included an advertisement for the Ullstein family weekly *Die Grüne Post*, which aligned the magazine's reader firmly with the modern masses.¹⁵ A full-page photograph of a crowd of people milling outdoors is cropped so that the crowd seems to continue in all four directions; the caption reads: "Scarcely 500 people wait here – 750,000 readers wait each week for *Die Grüne Post*." This huge, urban crowd massed outdoors would have been read as a quintessentially modern scene. Ullstein demonstrated its self-consciously modernist position in its support of the Republic, its embrace of American culture, its moderate reformism, its progressive stance, and its devotion to the most advanced means of communication.

Ullstein Verlag was founded in 1858 by Leopold Ullstein, a wholesale paper merchant who had built a successful business supplying paper to the growing newspaper industry. He was a liberal, a term whose meaning varied at different stages of German history; in the late 1850s it meant that he was against the Kaiser and for the formation of a democratic republic.¹⁶ For Ullstein, liberalism was not merely a political stance but a cultural and deeply personal position as well. As a Jew concerned with the survival and prosperity of his children, he raised them as Christian and assimilated his family as much as possible into mainstream German bourgeois culture.¹⁷ The Ullsteins moved in social circles that were comprised, however, almost exclusively of Jews (or assimilated Jews) and that remained their family identity.¹⁸ Beginning in 1867, the ownership and management of Ullstein Verlag was passed on to Leopold's sons: from eldest to youngest, Hans, Louis, Franz, Rudolf, and Herman. In the 1920s, Herman Ullstein was responsible for the magazine division and the house's publicity, the two areas most concerned with photography.¹⁹ He also oversaw Ullstein's profitable *Schnittmuster* (sewing pattern) business; the patterns were advertised in *Die Dame* and *Blatt der Hausfrau* and sold in department stores in Germany and throughout the world.

An alignment with Weimar modernism, particularly through the mass media, was integral to the self-image and newly increased power of the Jewish bourgeoisie after World War I. Historians have argued that Jewish involvement in German mass media was initially motivated by Kaiser Wilhelm II's ambivalent attitudes toward Jews in the late nineteenth century, particularly as Wilhelm succeeded the more tolerant Friedrich III, who had insisted on maintaining full civil rights for Jews.²⁰ In fact, Wilhelm II was considered a potential threat to the Jews' citizenship status, and the mass media provided a public arena for Jews to voice criticisms of the Kaiser while still patriotically supporting the nation.²¹ In the specific case of the Ullstein family, their self-definition and claims to empowerment derived from their strong allegiance to progressive modernism and to the reformist potential of outsiders now invited inside. For instance, when Ullstein Verlag acquired *Vossische Zeitung*, the oldest and most prestigious German newspaper, Herman Ullstein recalled, "We Ullsteins, heralded by our reputation for modernism, were welcomed as liberators."²²

Like the New Women of the Weimar era, Jewish liberals tied their self-identity to a utopia of a technologically superior, rationalized, capitalist, consumerist, and

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more equitable society.²³ Both women and Jews had previously been barred from the privileges of a bourgeois identity to greater or lesser degrees. But during Weimar they could suddenly imagine occupying positions within bourgeois society – and sometimes actually achieve them. Because of the relative newness of this possibility and the fact that it occurred during the twenties, at the same time as intensified modernization, both groups chose to identify with modern elements of German society. Propagating modernity, even representing it, provided the opportunity to negate or repress the sometimes painful contradictions of assimilation into a still inequitable society.²⁴

During Weimar, Ullstein published a wide range of newspapers and periodicals. Most were daily newspapers; the others included: *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, a photoweekly; *Die Dame*, an "ultramodern social magazine of women's fashions," as Herman Ullstein described it;²⁵ *Blatt der Hausfrau*, a housewives' magazine; *Die Grüne Post*, a petit bourgeois Sunday photoweekly; *Koralle*, a magazine covering science, technology, and nature; *Uhu*, an urbane culture and humor magazine; and *Querschnitt*, an intellectual culture magazine originally published by Alfred Flechtheim. Kurt Szafranski was the manager of the magazine department, and the various editors under Szafranski also served as picture editors of their respective publications. Along with the artistic directors (*künstlerische Beirats*), the editors did layout as well. Kurt Korff, the top-ranking editor (*Chefredakteur*) of *BIZ* and *Die Dame*, and his artistic director Karl Schnabel were perhaps the most influential editor/art director team at Ullstein during Weimar.

In her autobiography, novelist Vicki Baum, who worked as an editor at Ullstein from 1926 to 1931, describes the idealism, energy, and optimism of the Verlag.²⁶ But more important, she insists that these qualities influenced the content of the periodicals and the photo selection. Both she and Eva Noack-Mosse, an editorial staffer on *Uhu*, recall with some irony Herman Ullstein's insistence that all photos represent *Lebensfreude* (joy of life).²⁷ And for Baum, as for many others who wrote memoirs of Weimar and possibly for many readers of Ullstein publications as well, *Lebensfreude* truly did seem to reflect the exhilaration of living in twenties Berlin – in spite of material hardships and severe economic fluctuations. As Baum writes about the Verlag and Berlin: "Somehow the demand for *Lebensfreude* and optimism gave the Ullstein house its good atmosphere, releasing in each person an inner momentum . . . Berlin was so marvelously lively, so charged with a strange electricity. . . . For us though it was exactly the freedom that we wanted and needed."²⁸

This ineffable *Lebensfreude* was, of course, well suited to the concrete demands of the market and its promotions. The desire for optimism on the part of consumers helped determine the nature of the photographic representation in the advertisements as well as feature photographs. Modernity itself was a sign of optimism, specifically representing the new with the most up-to-date techniques and styles of photography. Accordingly, photographs commissioned and selected for the *Illustrierte* and magazines were to represent the best in modern photography. As a mode of representation, photojournalism – particularly that in the *Illustrierte* – was virtually

synonymous with modernity. Although photojournalism had been common as early as the 1890s, it was the founding of the trade union Verband Deutscher Illustrations-photographier in 1908 and its institution of minimum fees for photographs that established photojournalism as a force in the modern news business. In the prewar years, picture agencies were also founded, beginning with Zander and Labisch in 1895.²⁹ However, it was not until 1923–24, when the German mark was stabilized by American penetration into the economy, that photojournalism fully established itself as a profession. At the same time, the Weimar *Illustrierte* achieved their standard format, with the successful *BIZ* as the acknowledged prototype. Established practice for the illustrated weeklies was to use free-lance photographers and to commission them either directly or through photo-agencies such as *Dephot* (*Deutsche Photodienst*, founded in 1928) or *Wide World* (the Berlin office of the *New York Times* photo service).³⁰ Ullstein had some in-house photographers and a studio, used primarily for advertising produced by the Verlag; but more often, and particularly for feature photography, the house repeatedly employed certain free-lancers.³¹

The free-lance structure of the photojournalists' profession discouraged explicitly political content; photographs or photo-stories were often shot without the assurance of a commission, and apolitical material could be sold either to the liberal magazines (such as those of the Ullstein press) or to the more conservative ones (such as those of Alfred Hugenberg's right-wing Scherl House). The communist-affiliated *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* was not so adaptable; in *AIZ* there was a direct relationship between image, form, and text.³²

Technical developments in cameras and film in the twenties enabled photographers to take pictures in low-light conditions (the small Ermanox camera, invented in 1924, allowed Erich Salomon to take candid photographs of diplomatic and state occasions) and in serial format (the Leica, which used 35mm film, was produced as early as 1925 but was in widespread use only after 1930).³³ Most photographers, however, still worked with large-format cameras on tripods, so the Leica alone cannot be credited with the development of the picture story, as often is stated in photography histories. Instead, *BIZ* editor Kurt Korff relates the rise of the picture-story layout to the concurrent popularity of film, a significant analogy.³⁴ The montaging of images wrenched from their temporal sequence as well as from their spatial context corresponds to the Weimar viewer's desire to extend the powers of the eye through the camera in the *Illustrierte* as in film.³⁵

The analogy between film and *Illustrierte* photography is also useful in speculating about who actually read the illustrated newspapers. Although we can extrapolate the existence of a large female readership for Ullstein publications from the regular presence of feature and advertising photographs aimed at women, it is difficult to characterize readers in terms of class. Mass media historian Wilhelm Marckwardt hypothesizes that "the *Illustrierte* in the twenties were bought predominantly by white-collar workers and civil servants, and hardly at all by workers . . . while the majority of the audience for cinema came from the proletariat."³⁶ Such tidy class divisions for the different media, however, are unlikely. Film historians Sabine Hake

and Miriam Hansen have illustrated that before World War I film spectatorship was primarily a proletarian activity, whereas after the war it spread through all classes.³⁷ Middle-class acceptance can be documented, for example, by the new cinema architecture, the "palace" structures imitating deluxe stage theaters. We can speculate, then, that the readership for mainstream *Illustrierte* was also multiclass. In the case of *BIZ*, the readership was so large that it could not have been confined to one class: In January 1931 Berlin's inhabitants between the ages of twenty and sixty-five numbered 2,775,296; *BIZ*'s circulation that month was 1,753,580.³⁸

For the most part, market surveys identifying different categories of newspaper readers did not yet exist in the 1920s. Only *AIZ* polled its readers – and the results are hardly the conclusions of a disinterested survey. In 1929, when its weekly circulation was 350,000, *AIZ* found that 42 percent of its readers were skilled workers, 33 percent unskilled workers, 10 percent white-collar workers, 5 percent youths, 3.5 percent housewives, 3 percent self-employed, 2 percent independent, and 1 percent civil servants.³⁹ This does not mean, however, that workers did not read such mainstream press as *BIZ* and *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*. Prices were low due to competition, despite the tendency towards monopolistic concentration in the newspaper industry during Weimar.⁴⁰

Although the Ullstein Verlag has been described as a bourgeois press, it is difficult to define with any precision the class of its readership based on the content of its publications. The fact that *BIZ* showed innumerable images of foreign countries does not mean that its readers were only those who could afford to visit them. By the same token, though *Die Dame* frequently illustrated upscale fashion, it was not read by only bourgeois women. Such a reductive treatment of what were, after all, vehicles of fantasy and entertainment would be useless. Again I would draw a parallel between the *Illustrierte* images and contemporary film in terms of the multiclass appeal of technical innovations (such as serial photography), novel points of view, access to unfamiliar worlds (aerial shots, glimpses of exotic lands, enlargements through a microscope), dazzling montage layouts, and the general sensuous appeal of the images. In the case of the *Illustrierte*, the seductive nature of the photographs was meant not only to entertain readers but to sell newspapers and the products they advertised. Photohistorian Herbert Molderings has argued that, particularly in the context of the ongoing monopolization of industry accelerated during Weimar, "the constant renewal of things from within is a structural principle of advertising as it is of . . . [New Vision] photography."⁴¹ So at the time of monopolization there was increased pressure on advertising to achieve instant recognition for brand names by constantly striving to renew its enchantment of the (primarily female) consumer.⁴² Photography contributed new subjects, new angles, and new layouts to this shifting appeal.

reductive photos for both entertainment + profit

In 1926, Ullstein Verlag began to publish its circulation figures for its advertisers; this publication, called *Ullstein Berichte*, was an early example of self-promotion through reporting of notarized circulation levels. In a full-page ad for *Die Dame* on September 6, 1926, the *Berichte* emphasized the importance of female readers as

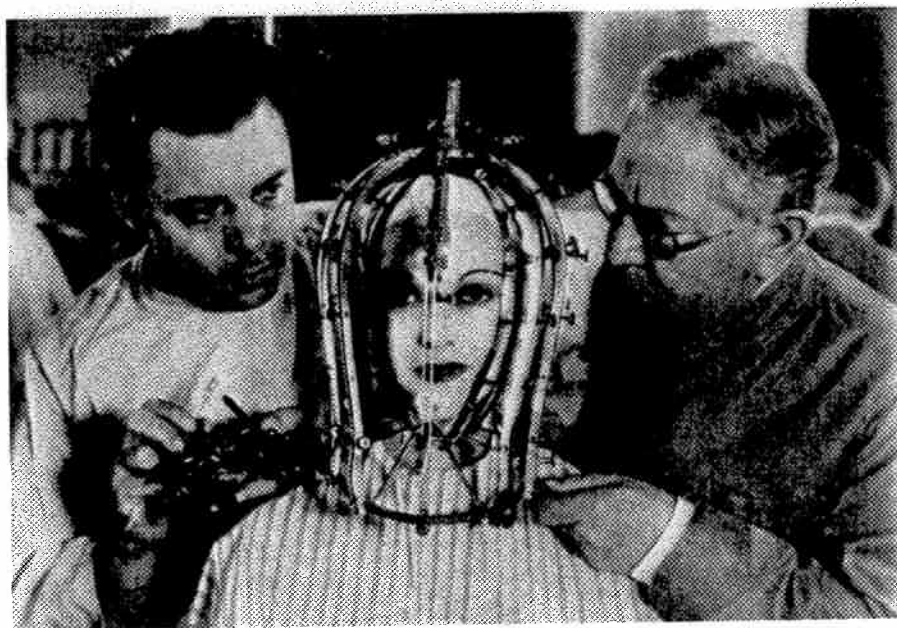
buyers, explaining that not only were women responsible for the daily shopping, but they also gave advice to men on their personal purchases, and in general had the last word on all buying decisions. As the *Berichte* reported in January 1927, Ullstein circulation levels ranged from the ever-popular *BIZ* (1,563,880), to the housewife's *Blatt der Hausfrau* (146,400), to the witty, urbane *Uhu* (170,360), to the elite cultural journal *Querschnitt* (13,000).⁴³

It is important to consider the appeal of *BIZ* in terms of consumerism. Because about ninety percent of the advertisements were produced in-house,⁴⁴ a feature photograph from *BIZ* could reappear, some time later, as a photograph in an advertisement. Approximately half the income generated by *BIZ* came from ads (the rest derived from newspaper sales), usually for cosmetics, food, cigarettes, automobiles, and toiletries.⁴⁵ Advertising maintained its importance even during the Depression. Due to its high circulation *BIZ* could command steep prices for its advertising space: 12,646 RM per page as compared to the bimonthly *Die Dame* (2,200 RM) and the monthly *Uhu* (1,200 RM).⁴⁶

The commercial success of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* can also be measured by the percentage of the photoweekly's pages filled by advertising. The German historian Otto Löffler, in a 1935 doctoral dissertation on the advertising market in newspapers, computed that on average, in the years 1926–32, *BIZ* devoted 35.4 percent of its space to advertising, as compared to 27.3 percent for the *Frankfurter Illustrierte Zeitung* and 19.3 percent for the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*. He noted the prevalence of consumer goods advertisements: perfumes, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, homeopathic medicines, and tobacco products.⁴⁷

Given the close relation between the modernist identity of *BIZ* and its consumerist function (to bring in profit from sales and advertising), it comes as no surprise to see equivalences in the feature and advertising photography and the high numbers of images of women, particularly the modern New Woman, in both. For example, a feature photograph of the dancer Maria Leiser doing a leg-lift in the water in the August 14, 1921 issue reappeared later in advertisements.⁴⁸ Other images of modernity, such as those involving technology as prosthesis – photographs of zeppelin travelers and deep-sea divers, for example – also appear frequently.⁴⁹

It is even possible to see the evolution of images of woman-as-commodity occur hand-in-hand with the rise of advertising expenditure in the photoweeklies. As Löffler demonstrated, the newspaper advertising market in Weimar peaked in the years 1928–29, the same period that mannequin imagery (connoting woman as machine-made commodity) became prevalent. While I do not want to suggest a simple cause and effect relationship, suffice it to say that by 1928 connections between femininity, consumerism, and the *Illustrierte* were highly visible and integral to the photoweeklies on several levels. One *BIZ* feature photograph represents the myriad examples of the bizarre appeal to female consumers through images of women depicted as modern, rationalized commodities. In a 1932 issue of *BIZ*, an American woman (the very emblem of modern rationalization) was shown with her face encapsulated by a wire cage designed to measure beauty scientifically (fig. 30). The caption attrib-



30 "Eine Maschine, die die Schönheit misst" (A machine that measures beauty), *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 41, no. 46 (1932): 1531

uted both beauty and efficiency to this contraption, describing it as: "A machine that measures beauty. With the help of this apparatus invented in America, one can check the facial measurements exactly and determine how far they deviate from the ideal."⁵⁰ In Weimar Depression-era advertising, women were frequently encouraged to aspire to the status of mannequins. The commodity itself was offered as an ideal with which to identify. *commodity offered ideals by which to identify*

Throughout the Weimar period there was an increase, though not a precisely linear one, in the influence of consumerism on the representation of women in the Ullstein press. In *Die Dame*, for example, early photographs of expressive dancers were replaced around 1924 (the beginning of economic stabilization) by images of women with their cars. Throughout the twenties, there was a continued preoccupation with female film stars, themselves figures of conformity, but in late Weimar, around 1930, in *Die Dame* and *Uhu*, there was a sudden proliferation of woman-as-mannequin images, inflected by a homogeneity measured by a particular fad for "looking Greek" (fig. 31).⁵¹ A similar trajectory can be traced in *BIZ*, which provided a much wider range of images. For instance, mid-twenties photographs in *BIZ* showed a noticeable preoccupation with androgyny and mass ornament.⁵² After 1928, the celebration of technology and modernism intensified; in 1928 and 1929, *BIZ* seemed to have a virtual editorial mandate that there be a picture of a zeppelin in every issue. *after 1928 - an intensification of Modernism + the celebration of technology*

It is no accident that so many images in Höch's photomontages were taken from Ullstein press periodicals, particularly *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, *Uhu*, and *Die*



**Zieh und
Dich Du
aus - bist
Grieche**

Ein verblüffendes Experiment

Herbert Bayer



Harris, Frederick, gædige, Fæm, de 18. november
 i en Mængde af en Mængde og Hænderne
 i strålende Gæde

Die Vorstellungen, die wir von Grundsätzlichkeiten haben, sind die sogenannten Klassewörter.

Als in den neunziger Jahren durch die Ausgestaltung Schopenhauers das allgemeine Interesse des breiten Publikums an Grundsätzlich und die Grundsätze erhöht wurde, fing man an, die Begriffserweiterung für das Klassewort zu gebrauchen. In den Wissenschaften wurden hiesige Sachen bezeichnend Grundsätze in einschlägiger Art ausgedrückt. In-

Am Ende des Jahres wird der Herr
Inhaber der alten Gasse wieder so reich
Sein als ein neuer Mann.

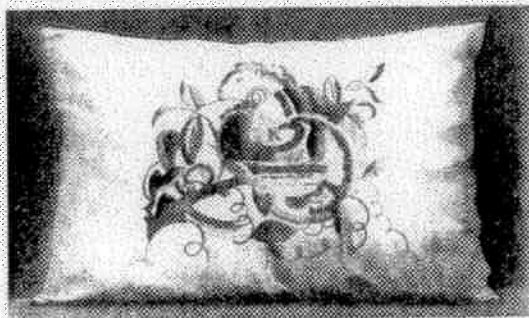
Meinung des Fürsten, Sohns des Apoll zum Vortrage
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und heute mit Theodor Kersch und Fritz Schöper, zwei
Sachverständigen aller Richtungen, vertrat und auch einen
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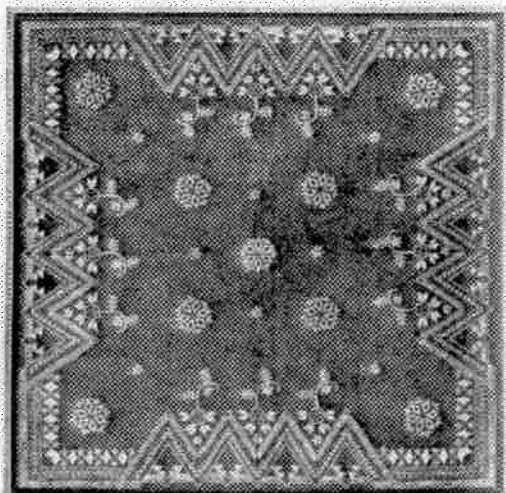
zuerst wieder Sokrates mit seiner Anspielung in einem zweifachigen Gespräch dargestellt, und immer wieder konnte man die geistigen Mängel sehen. Diese Richtung wurde unterstützt von den Oberflächlichen Theosophen „Die Schöne Helena“, Orpheus in der Unterwelt usw. Man hatte sich in diesem Zeitalter der Humanität einfach etwas übernommen mit Griechenzersetzung, Griechenzehrung und Griechen- Nachäferung, und es kam die gesamte

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31 Herbert Bayer, "Zieh Dich aus und Du bist Grieche" (Undress and you are Greek), *Uhu* (Sept. 1930): 28–29. Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin



32 Hannah Höch, "Rechteckiges Leinenkissen" (Right-angled linen pillow), *Die Dame* (mid-Feb. 1924):
20. Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin



33. Hannah Höch, "Viereckige Decke mit reicher Tüllstickerei" (Square cover with elaborate tulle embroidery), *Die Dame* (late June 1923): 21

Dame. Ullstein Verlag (and the assimilated Jewish family who owned and managed it) promoted a modernism typical of Weimar not only through the content of its periodicals but also in its business practices, particularly in its devotion to high-quality technical production and innovative sales and subscription methods. Indeed, this identification with modernity may have been responsible for Ullstein's success. As an institution, Ullstein best exemplifies how the mass media of the period represented women, how photographs of the New Woman participated in allegories of modernity, and how these allegories in turn were consumed by women who read the *Illustrierte*. Höch was associated with Ullstein in several ways: from 1916–26 she was employed there as a handicraft designer. But as a reader, Höch was also part of the large urban constituency served by the press, sharing to some extent Ullstein's attitudes characterized by its promotion of technology, modernism, and utopianism.

Despite her work for Ullstein, Höch's participation in mass culture was less direct and active than that of many of her male colleagues who worked as designers, illustrators, and commercial photographers (although she did design a few book jackets in the early thirties). In fact, her experience at Ullstein was somewhat mundane. Höch started in 1916, working three days a week while she was enrolled in Emil Orlik's graphics classes at the Kunstgewerbemuseum. She was a pattern designer for handicrafts such as embroidered tablecloths and children's stuffed animals. These were sold through Ullstein's *Schnittmuster* outlets in department stores and separate Ullstein pattern shops. Until 1929, prototypes of some of the patterns were made, photographed, and displayed in two-page spreads in the glossy *Die Dame*, a magazine that catered not only to wealthy bourgeois women but also to many others who identified with modernity. Typically, the July 1929 cover of the magazine boasted a self-portrait by the Art Deco painter Tamara de Lempicka (a frequent *Die Dame* contributor), showing her flamboyantly posed at the wheel of her sports car, sleek in her aviator's racing cap and leather gloves.⁵³

Despite the magazine's highly selective appeal to New Women, traditional handicrafts were also presented, yet another example of the coexistence of different modes of production in Weimar and the ease with which these were incorporated into even *Die Dame*'s highly tailored definition of the New Woman. Höch enjoyed handicrafts herself. She did needlework and designed patterns throughout her life, and she saved many of the patterns she created for Ullstein. Unfortunately most were not credited in the magazine, so one can only guess which patterns in her collection were designed by her. Going by the few that are identified as hers in *Die Dame*, her patterns are sometimes recognizable by the presence of abstract folk motifs.⁵⁴ In turn, Höch used materials from the Ullstein handicraft designs in several early montages in which she dealt with the abstract qualities of the patterns themselves.

More important, perhaps, in terms of Höch's attitude towards the mass media, is an early Höch work published by Ullstein, an *Aprilscherze* or April Fool's joke from *BIZ*, April 1, 1921 (figs. 34, 35). Such *Aprilscherze* jokes were a tradition at Ullstein and the *BIZ* versions always turned on the credibility of the photograph. Höch's example is photographs of two plants made of cloth and other materials. One is



34 Hannah Höch, "Interessante Neuerwerbungen des Botanisches Gartens" (The Botanical Garden's interesting new acquisitions), *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 30, no. 14 (April 1, 1921): 200

Biesen Bobelchew, des Vaters des Bolschewismus, sei

Vieles von dem, was die „Illustrierte“ als phantastischen Apokalypse ihren Lesern versetzte, ist im Lauf der Zeit Wirklichkeit geworden. Wenn der Flughafen am Tempelhofer Feld mit seinen zahllosen Luftschiffen und seinen Flughäfen im Jahre 1909 nur eine unmögliche Utopie schien, der Flughafen in Staaken mit

seinen regelmäßig abgehenden Post- und Passagierfliegern hat ihn übertrumpft, und selbst die Straußenrennen, die der Photograph im Jahre 1907 nur durch kalte Retouche konstruieren konnte, wurden im vergangenen Sommer nicht nur ehrlich photographiert, sondern auch mit allen Zwischenfällen, die es bei diesen sportlichen Ereignissen in Wien gab, geführt.



35 Hannah Höch, "Fleischfressende Pflanzen" (Carnivorous plants), *Uhu* (April 1925): 96. Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin



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sitting down to dinner at a table with a plate of food and a saltshaker; the other is just resting decoratively on a surface. The caption describes the first as a flesh-eating plant from Java, "*carnivora maxima smithsonii*," and the other as female, "a vacuum plant from Burma that collects the pollen of nearby flowers." In addition to this pseudoscientific take on romance, Höch is also parodying one type of photographs that appeared in *BIZ*, the positive, encyclopedic survey of wonders found in zoos, parks, and foreign lands, since her caption begins in typical *BIZ* style: "Interessante Neuerwerbungen des Botanischen Gartens in Dahlem bei Berlin" (interesting new acquisitions of the Botanical Garden in Dahlem near Berlin).⁵⁵ The image so pleased Höch's close friend Kurt Schwitters that he reproduced it as a postcard.⁵⁶

And this Aprilscherze is illustrative both of the lack of mystique newspaper photographs had for Höch and the ease with which she and her avant-garde circles of the mid-twenties traveled between the arenas of the art world and those of mass culture. Clearly Höch felt no awe for photographs in the mass media even though she was enraptured by many individual images. In the letters she kept from friends and in her own calendars and notebooks, material now in the Höch Nachlass at the Berlinische Galerie, there are remarkably few references to Ullstein. She later referred to her job at Ullstein as *Broterwerb* (a way to earn a living), and it is clear that she kept the job primarily out of financial necessity.⁵⁷ She was one of some ten thousand Ullstein employees, and she never had much power in the elaborately hierarchical and male-dominated institution. (She did not even eat lunch in the same place as the magazine editors). Yet it is most likely that because of her proximity to the entire process of publishing, she felt free to cut out, manipulate, and re-present photographic images in her photomontages — all in a day's work, so to speak. Not only her Dada critical faculties exercised in her Dada views of the world but also her quotidian commercial work made this possible.⁵⁸

While still working at Ullstein (but after the breakup of Berlin Dada and her split with Hausmann), Höch became a key figure in the European avant-garde network loosely called International Constructivism. In fact, if Höch were to be identified primarily with one segment of the avant-garde, this is perhaps more appropriate a designation than Berlin Dada (where she remained on the periphery). As she later recalled, it was not until after 1922 when she was on her own that she established lasting bonds or strengthened existing ones, both personally and professionally, with such artists as Kurt Schwitters, Theo and Nelly van Doesburg, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and Hans and Sophie Täuber Arp.

In the 1920s, avant-garde institutions in Germany attracted an international community of artists, among them the Hungarian Moholy-Nagy, the Russian El Lissitzky, and the Dutch Theo van Doesburg; there they collaborated with such German artists as Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus, Kurt Schwitters, who created his Merz productions in Hannover, and Hans Richter, who published the periodical *G. International Constructivism* included a wide variety of artists who worked with planar abstraction, aspired to the status of designers/engineers, and, most important,

*International
Constructivism*

Tech. progress - cornerstone
of societal improvement

International Constructivism
focus on interchange
& communication
rather than group
identity
offered design to
state & tech
progress toward
utopia

- Inherent contradictions
caught between communist
ideologies & Weimar
capitalist commissions
of modernism
of tech

8. 12. 1922

shared a faith in technological progress as a cornerstone of societal improvement. The vagueness and elasticity of the term "International Constructivism" is appropriate because what was important to this network of Dutch, German, Soviet, and Eastern European artists was the communication and interchange among associates rather than a coherent group identity, the sharing of certain interests and questions rather than a formation of a monolithic group or style.

Russian Constructivists defined their purpose in utilitarian terms as that which best served the new communist order, whereas the political positions of the European Constructivists were much more ambiguous. Like the Soviets, they stressed the need for functional, efficient design to best serve contemporary technology the Europeans also created images intended to inspire progress toward a utopian society. But instead of a clear affiliation with communism, most of the European artists tended to describe their utopian visions of the future in vague, often quasi-spiritual, "socialist" terms. Typically oblique was the manifesto issued by Moholy-Nagy in 1922 in which he tried to align his abstract art with the fight for a classless society: "We, who today have become one with the necessity and the condition of class struggle in all respects, do not think it important that a person should find enjoyment in a picture, in music or in poetry. The primary requirement is that those who have not yet reached the contemporary standard of mankind (. . . the standard of the living artist . . .) should be enabled to do so as soon as possible through our work. . . it is our duty to open all the channels of intuition so that we may influence the maximum number of people."¹⁹

Still, major contradictions arose between the European Constructivists' ideological conceptions of the future and their artistic practices in the present. Often, the same aesthetic principles used for socialist projects were employed in the posters, advertising, and typography designed for capitalist industry. The German leftist avant-garde in particular was caught between its admiration for the Russian-Constructivist vision of communist society and its commissions from Weimar businesses. As a result, a particular hybrid image of a technological utopia was generated by these artists, one that tended to subsume the revolutionary potential of utopianism within messages of continuity, tradition, social stability, and corporate power.

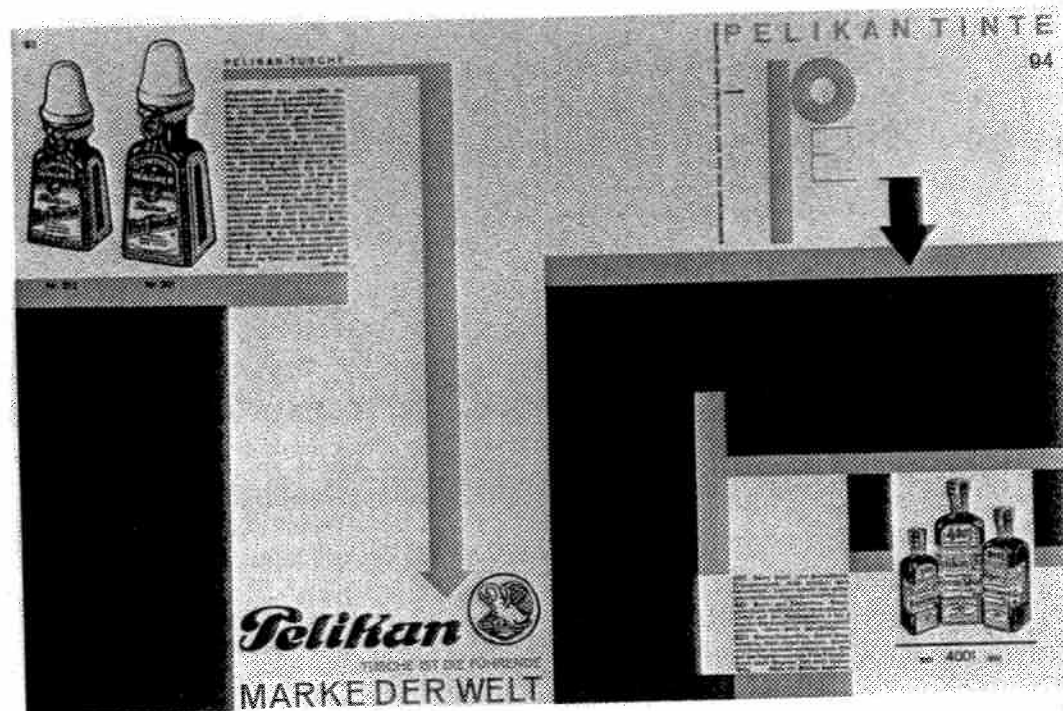
In this regard, we might consider the advertising and promotional graphics produced in the mid-twenties by one of Höch's closest friends during these years, Kurt Schwitters. Although Schwitters is known today primarily as a fine-art collagist, in the twenties he was one among many modernists who believed in advertising with a reformist, pedagogical zeal. In Hannover in 1924 Schwitters founded his own advertising agency, the *Merz Werbezentrale*, and he operated it for the duration of the Weimar Republic, until 1933. This was by no means only a money-making sideline for the artist: Schwitters was a prolific commercial designer in the twenties, and he considered his publicity work central to his role as an artist. Using a consistent Constructivist style Schwitters created modern, clean-cut designs for subway notices, stationery, and other graphics for the municipalities of Hannover and Karlsruhe; advertisements for Hannover companies; letterheads for doctors; business cards for

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36 Kurt Schwitters, "Typoreklame," Merz 11, 1924

salesmen; and, with a somewhat more dramatic flair, publicity material for himself, his *Merz Werbezentrale*, and his publishing house Aposch Verlag (fig. 36).⁶⁰

Schwitters was no Heartfield and no Kollwitz. If they turned to mass-produced means to send an explicitly political message to a broader audience, Schwitters was more entranced with the modernity of the means of communication itself, the ability to persuade great numbers of people with great speed. Even El Lissitzky and Jan Tschichold, two of Schwitters's design colleagues publicly identified with communist politics, expressed enthusiasm not about the context of graphic messages but about the formal possibilities of the new media of photography and film and of an expanded press.⁶¹ The avant-garde's writings on advertising in the twenties make surprising reading in their almost complete refusal to question the capitalist ends their work was serving. Manifestos published in such magazines as *G*, *ABC* (Zurich), *Merz*, and *Typographische Mitteilungen* were concerned less with what advertising sold than how – with the persuasiveness and popularization of modern form in and of itself. Schwitters's manifestos on typography put forth clarity and persuasion as his goals.⁶²

Not the political aspect but the possibilities of mass media communication i.e. Propaganda

Like Höch, Schwitters operated very much in the context of an international community. In 1927, for example, he co-founded the ring "neue werbegestalter," the circle of new advertising designers. The ring united designers from Germany, the Netherlands, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland in group exhibitions and

publications. Such internationalism was of particular importance for Germans who had been so cut off during World War I and its immediate aftermath.⁵⁵ As Höch recalled, "We were among the first German artists to develop contacts after the war with like-minded avant-garde groups in New York, Paris, and Moscow. In 1922 the German Dada group even held an international conference in Weimar, at which El Lissitzky represented the Moscow Constructivists, Theo van Doesburg and Cornelius van Eesteren [represented] the Mondrian de Stijl group, Tristan Tzara and Hans Arp represented Zurich and Paris Dadaists."⁵⁶

Höch was invited to but did not attend the 1922 conference as she was in southern Germany at the time.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, she had regular interchanges with many of the participants in subsequent years. In 1923, she joined the Arps and the Schwitterses for a vacation in Sellin on the island of Rügen. Hans Arp visited her shortly afterward in Berlin and remained there for a time working in Höch's studio. During a 1923 visit to the Schwitterses in Hannover, Höch created the first of two of her grottos in the Merzbau, since destroyed. This one, incorporating photomontages, was described by Schwitters as "das Bordell mit einer Dame mit 3 Beinen" (the bordello with a woman with three legs).⁵⁸

When Höch later wrote notes on her memories of the time, each friendship (fig. 37) naturally triggered the thought of another: "In 1925 I was in England, finally with Theo van Doesburg and Nelly on Belle Isle in the Atlantic. From his time in Weimar until his death I maintained a warm friendship with Doesburg. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy also remained a close comrade for me until his departure from Germany. Together we watched the first elaborate documentary films, saw Nurmi race, and heard the first jazz concerts. . . . Otto Freundlich was another of my oldest friends."⁵⁹ Höch continued her collaboration with Schwitters during 1925; with the composer Hans-Heinz Stuckenschmidt, they worked on producing an *Anti-Revue* (never accomplished) for which Höch drew the set and costume designs. In 1925 Höch also built her second grotto in the Merzbau. In this creative international community Höch was not the lone female artist; Nelly van Doesburg performed music and Sophie Täuber Arp was active in design and fine artwork.

Höch continued to show mainly paintings in the large Berlin group art exhibitions: She participated in the Novembergruppe from 1920–26, at the Juryfreie Kunstausstellung in 1923 and 1925, and at the Deutsche Kunstgemeinschaft (in the Berliner Stadtschloss) in 1925–26. She also sent two paintings to a 1924 German art exhibition in the Soviet Union. As a direct homage to Russian Constructivism, Höch painted and collaged a number of works in the mid-twenties using a Constructivist grid format and repeating geometric shapes, such as *Collage (Dada)*, 1922–24 (fig. 38), a grid composition of multicolored pasted papers forming a field around the word "dada" in the left-center. It is significant that Höch continued to exhibit paintings in the mid-twenties while she also produced more radical photomontages and worked at Ullstein designing handicrafts. This mixture of commercial and fine art venues was shared by Schwitters, Moholy-Nagy, and other colleagues.

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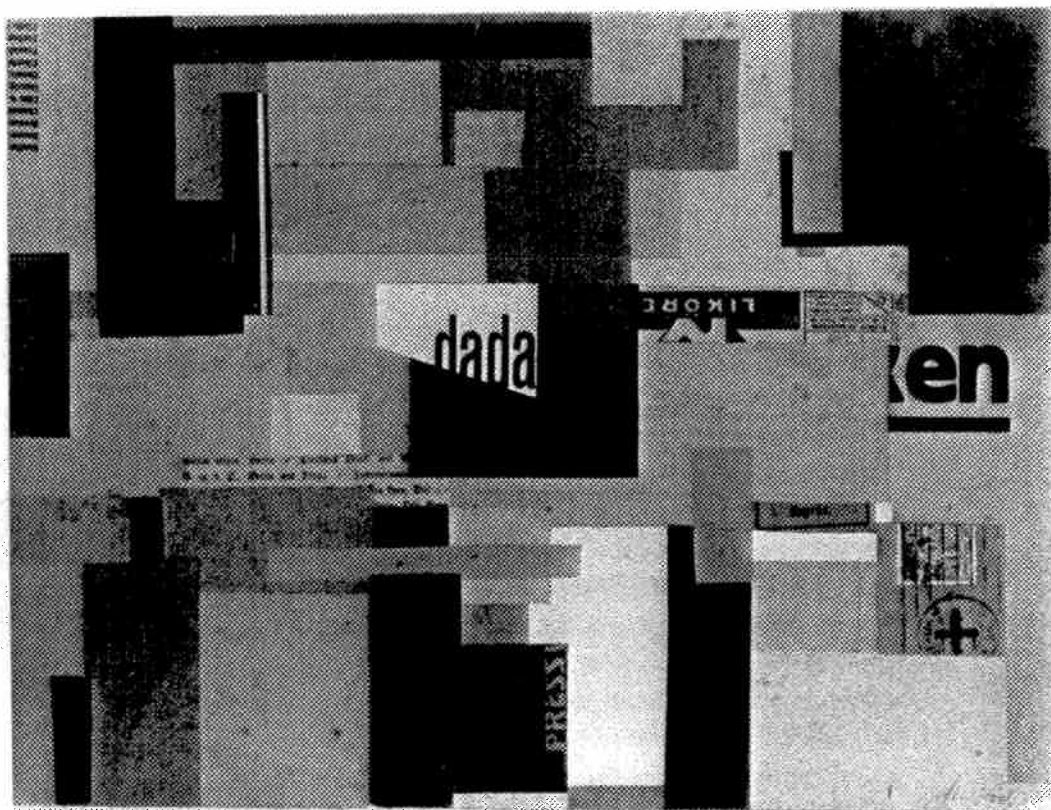
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37 Nelly van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian, and Hannah Höch in Theo and Nelly van Doesburg's studio in Clamart near Paris, 1924



38 Hannah Höch, *Collage (Dada)*, 1922-24, 24.7 × 32.8 cm., collage, Merrill C. Berman, Scarsdale, New York

duced her to the writer Til Brugman, architects J. J. P. Oud and Gerrit Rietveld, and other artists.⁶⁸ From 1926 to 1935 Höch lived with Brugman, who was also associated with International Constructivism. Brugman's earliest published writings, sound poetry, appeared in the journals *De Stijl* (May–June 1923) and *Merz* (October 1923). The *De Stijl* poem, entitled "R," was presented in a complex Constructivist grid format.⁶⁹

During her years in Holland, 1926–29, Höch's international visibility as an artist increased. She had her first one-person exhibition in 1929 and others thereafter (see chronology). In late Weimar, she was also included in several major international group shows. This intensified exhibiting can be attributed in part to need; she and Brugman were always short of money, and, after moving to Holland, Höch no longer had the security of her Ullstein job. So Höch actively pursued gallery exhibitions and sales in the Netherlands, showing watercolors, paintings, and photomontages.⁷⁰ In general, photomontage was widely represented in the major photography exhibitions of the late 1920s, and Höch was often included as a principal innovator in this genre.

Höch's work was well represented in the Werkbund's Film und Foto exhibition of 1929–31 and in the 1931 Berlin Fotomontage show, as well as in important photography exhibitions outside Germany – Brussels in 1932 and 1933 and Philadelphia in 1932. Photomontage no longer connoted revolutionary politics but had become an accepted advertising design tool equated with consumerism and modernity. The medium of photomontage was specifically adaptable to the single-impact demands of poster and advertising design. Such commercial photomontages were produced both by those who self-consciously defined themselves as avant-garde, such as Herbert Bayer or Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and by those who identified exclusively with advertising, publishing, and industry, such as Vilma Frielingsdorf, photo-editor at Ullstein's *Grüne Post*.⁷¹

Photography and design exhibitions of the period reflected an easy mix of fine art and mass culture, celebrating the formal qualities of the commercial designs as well as the affinities of fine art with mass-produced design. Film und Foto, a major international exhibition that traveled for two years (1929–31), presented posters, advertising, scientific photography, abstract photography, fine art photomontages (including seventeen montages by Höch), portraits, fashion photography, and, at some locations, photojournalism. Many montage artists of late Weimar relinquished the complexity of Dada photomontages for a simplified, high-impact format that focused on a single, highly legible message. This more direct approach typified montages produced as commercial posters and advertising images, as well as (though less frequently) overtly political photomontages, such as John Heartfield's photomontages for the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*.

During mid- and late Weimar, Höch also participated in the group periodicals of International Constructivism.⁷² Her correspondence shows that she was regularly invited to contribute to various group publishing ventures. Höch even provided an illustration for Ernest Hemingway's "Banal Story" in the New York-based *Little Re-*

1932
Photomontage no longer
associated w/ politics
but w/ consumerism
and modernity

commercial high-impact
+ ad. or photojournalism

Abandon complexity
for direct, highly
legible message

view in 1926. Schwitters published one of her drawings in *Merz* 1 (January 1923) and her collage *Astronomie* in *Merz* 7 (January 1924). Lissitzky and Arp included one of her oils in their 1924 book, *Die Ismen*, and Moholy-Nagy reproduced a photographic self-portrait and one photomontage, *Hochfinanz* (mistitled by Moholy-Nagy as *Der Milliardär*), in his 1925 Bauhaus book, *Malerei Fotografie Film*.⁷³ Later, Höch was included in Franz Roh's *Foto-Auge* of 1929, the *Photofreund Jahrbuch* 1930–31, *Berlin* 1930, and *Merz* 21, as well as important catalogs for the Film und Foto and Fotomontage exhibitions. A one-person exhibition of Höch's work was planned to open at the Dessau-Bauhaus in 1932, but it was cancelled due to local National-Socialist pressure.

In the Netherlands, Höch received collegial support from the design-oriented *de Stijl* group, whose members were also associated with International Constructivism. She painted in a studio in Brugman's apartment designed by Vilmos Huzár with furniture by Gerrit Rietveld (fig. 39). The modernist architect Jan Buijs, along with J. B. van Loghem and Ditte van der Vies, arranged Höch's first solo exhibition, at van der Vies's avant-garde gallery, De Bron, in The Hague in 1929. The exhibition traveled to Rotterdam and Amsterdam but received poor reviews: "These *Fotoschnipsels* have nothing to do with art," snapped one Rotterdam newspaper critic.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, Höch's associates in Holland — architects, designers, and artists — continued to support her work. Her one-person exhibitions in 1934 and 1935 at Kunstzaal d'Audretsch were more favorably reviewed, including an article by van Loghem in the avant-garde architectural periodical *De 8 en Opbouw*. In praising the disturbing and "spiritual" qualities of Höch's montages, van Loghem noted, "While she discovers the limitations of photography, she has cut up and put the images together in such a way that suddenly a new image and a whole new world appears."⁷⁵

Höch's post-Dada work and the efforts of the International Constructivists in general tend to refute claims that the avant-garde was resistant to the culture industry. This supposed polarity is clearly anachronistic to the situation of the European international avant-garde engaged with design, advertising, and the mass media of photography and film. Their strategies, while sometimes critical, were more often additive and reformist — specifically, based on a belief in avant-garde designs as carriers of utopian messages. In her photomontages of the mid-1920s Höch actually remained closer to the overtly political strategies of Berlin Dada than did her International Constructivist colleagues such as van Doesburg, Schwitters, and Lissitzky. These strategies coexisted, however, with the representation of pleasure connoting a celebration of modernity and a reworking of its terms.

One of Höch's most explicit societal critiques, *Hochfinanz* (fig. 40), subtitled "Das zwiefache Gesicht des Herrschers" (the two-sided face of those in power), was reproduced in Moholy-Nagy's Bauhaus book.⁷⁶ *Hochfinanz* was created in 1923 and referred to the exploitative behavior of financiers during the war and the subsequent inflation that peaked in that year. In this photomontage, two giant financiers stroll through an urban landscape; arching over their heads are parts of two huge cocked



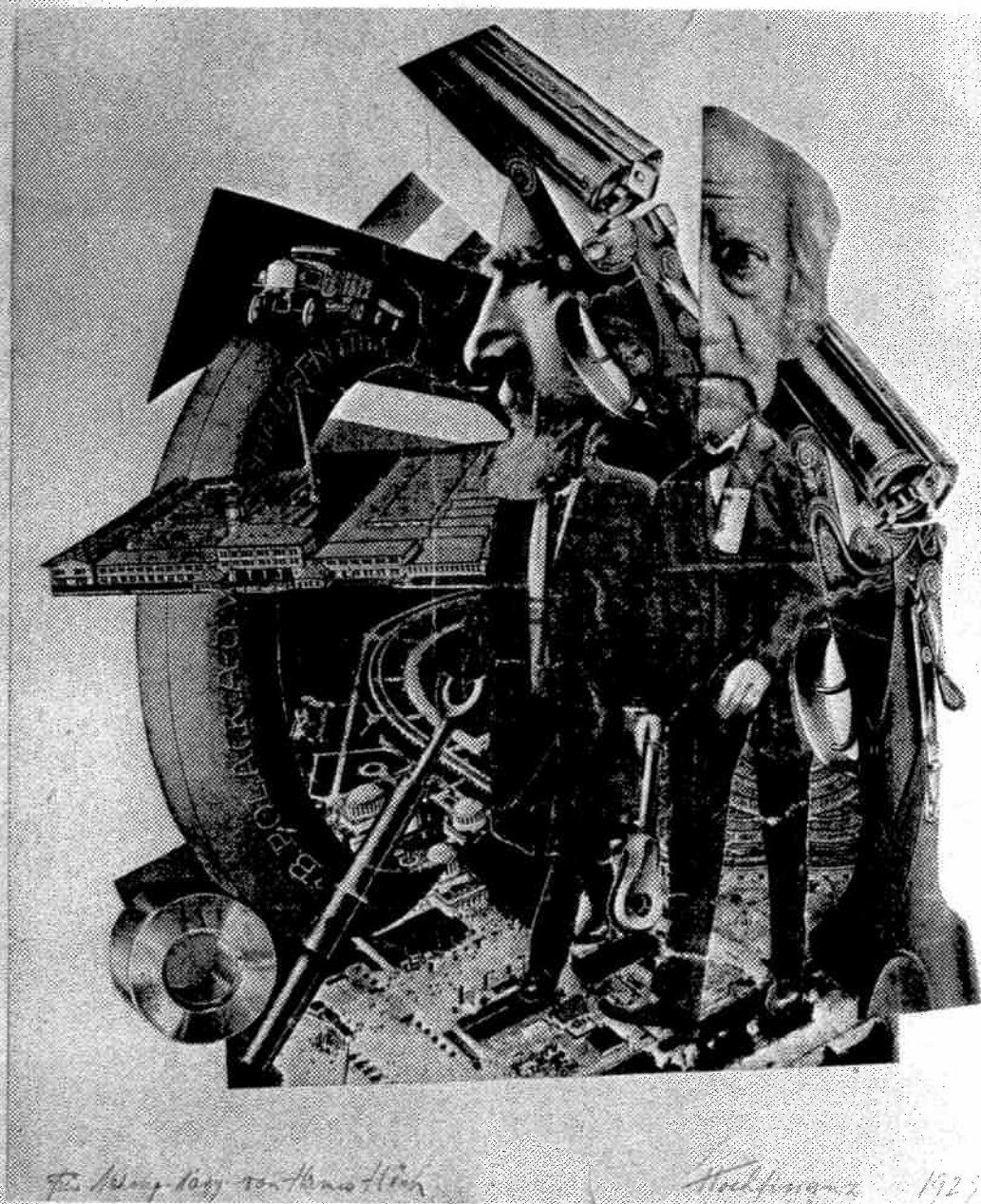
39 Hannah Höch and Til Brugman's apartment on Lagustersstraat in The Hague

rifles. The financiers hold tools and are thus associated with industry and technology. Next to them is a large tire that partially frames the composition. A truck rides on it; a factory overlaps it; and a roller bearing borders it. A series of curves interlaced with diagonals suggests movement through and around the tire. This movement signals the widespread enthusiasm in the twenties for technology and its representation in the media. But this excitement was not deemed incongruous with a caricature of two industrial financiers implicitly linked to arms profiteering and runaway inflation.

Such ambivalence toward industrial capitalism provokes several key questions about Höch's representation of the New Woman in her photomontages. Did her works in any way resist or critique the stereotypical Weimar mass media characterization of woman as commodity, the equation of woman and machine, and the use of the New Woman image to transcend and elide class distinctions? Or did Höch selectively embrace the image of the New Woman, inflecting her representations with personal concerns, directing her images away from the consumerist, "progressive" ones of the media? What was Höch's own contribution to the utopian myths of modernity and *Lebensfreude*? How much was her response determined by the mass media archive, its commodified representation of the New Woman, its preoccupation with modernity? And how much was she able to disrupt, to reshuffle and reconstruct that archive, even on an individual level?

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40. Hannah Höch, *Hochfinanz* (High Finance), 1923, 36 × 31 cm., photomontage, Robert Hughes, Shelter Island, New York