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BEFORE *FILM UND FOTO*: PICTORIALISM TO THE NEW VISION IN GERMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS FROM 1909-29

by

VANESSA ROCCO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York

2004

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Abbreviations

Exhibitions

Iphad: Internationale Photographische Ausstellung, Dresden, 1909

Werkbund Exhibition: Deutsche Werkbund Ausstellung, Cologne, 1914

Kipho: Kino-und-Photoausstellung, Berlin, 1925

DPA: Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung, Frankfurt, 1926

Pressa: Internationale Presse-Ausstellung, Cologne, 1928

Neue Wege: Neue Wege der Photographie, Kunstverein Jena, 1928

Gegenwart: Fotografie der Gegenwart, Essen, 1929

Fifo: Internationale Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbunds Film und Foto Stuttgart, 1929

Groups

GDL: Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner (Society of German Photographers)

VDAV: Verbands Deutscher Amateurphotographen Vereine (German Amateur Photographer Association)

SPD: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

Note on Capitalization

Official section headings of exhibitions will be capitalized; e.g: Amateur Photography section, Science/Technical section, etc.

Chapter 1

Introduction to *Film und Foto*'s Historical Importance to the New Vision Movement and the History of Literature Concerning Early Twentieth-Century German Photography Exhibitions

Exhibitions have become *the* medium through which most art becomes known¹

Exhibitions are among the best ways to study the many layers of a collective artistic moment. They assist the (art) historian in grasping the dialectic of artistic practice, of movements rubbing against each other, with some trends emerging with more traction. Social realities are also absorbed into the amassed material of an exhibition, and historicization emanates from exhibitions through popular and critical reception. Exhibitions function dialectically through visual juxtapositions that convey to the spectator the complexity of art historical and social shifts. This dissertation offers a case study from a transitional period in early German modernism to illustrate in detail that dynamic of exhibition and curatorial practice—a dynamic still relevant today, as the recent quote above about the public's exposure to art demonstrates, but underexplored in the academic field of art history.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Germany burgeoned into an important center of photographic advances. Photo-technology progressed at a rapid pace in Germany during this period as local companies led the way in pioneering mobile and versatile camera equipment like the flexible-plate Linhof (1910), the easily transportable

¹ Reesa Greenberg, et al., eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions* (New York: Routledge, 1996), frontispiece.

Ermanox (1924), and most importantly, the affordable Leica (1925),² which revolutionized the nature of photojournalistic, documentary, and amateur photography. After World War I, an increasing number of German photography exhibitions became vehicles for establishing a dominant mode within modernist³ photography, culminating in a spate of such exhibitions in the late 1920s.⁴

By the end of the 1920s, a new direction that would come to be known as the “New Vision”⁵ had emerged in modernist German photography and photography exhibitions, and was on its way to becoming an international style. The New Vision advocated the potential of the camera to create a new way of looking at the fast-moving, modern, urban world through the use of dynamic camera angles, inventive framing of

² These cameras are described and illustrated in Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), 606-608.

³ In defining the use of the terms “modernism/ist” and “modernity” throughout this dissertation, I relied heavily on Eleanor Hight’s study of Moholy-Nagy’s Weimar photography, *Picturing Modernism*, for the former and Weimar historian Detlev Peukert for the latter. Hight used her study to debunk the pervasive formalist interpretation of Moholy-Nagy’s work and place it firmly in the context of *Modernismus*, “the condition of modernity and contemporaneity in Weimar Germany’s urban life.” Eleanor Hight, *Picturing Modernism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 3. She referred to the wresting of the term “modernism” away from “programmatic aesthetic modernism” by Andreas Huyssen and David Bathrick in their study *Modernity and the Text*, allowing the term to apply to “the experience of modernity,” and encouraging the truths of modernism itself to come forward: “the plurality, the heterogeneity of its response to the maelstrom of modernization” in all areas of life. David Bathrick and Andreas Huyssen, “Modernism and the Experience of Modernity,” in David Bathrick and Andreas Huyssen, eds., *Modernity and the Text* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 8. In sociopolitical terms, the German historian Detlev Peukert outlined a wide-reaching definition for what he called “modernity” in his historical study of the Weimar Republic years in Germany (1918-33). Peukert acknowledged that the concept of modernity was taken from the history of art, but considered it a useful way of, as he expressed it, “labeling the social and cultural character of our entire epoch”: “Let us, therefore, take the term ‘modernity’ to refer to the form of fully fledged industrialized society that has been with us from the turn of the (twentieth) century until the present day.... As far as culture is concerned, media products dominate; continuity with traditional aesthetic principles and practices in architecture and the visual and other creative arts is broken, and is replaced by unrestricted formal experimentation.... abrupt changes and sectoral imbalances can be expected to occur as the complex set of modernization processes unfolds.” Detlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989), 81-82.

⁴ “No country had as many diverse photography exhibitions in the 1920s as Germany,” Ute Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography in Germany Between the Wars,” in *Avant-Garde Photography in Germany 1919-1939* (San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 35.

⁵ *New Vision* was the title of the 1930 English translation of László Moholy-Nagy’s 1929 Bauhaus book *Von Material zu Architektur* (From material to architecture) (Munich: A. Verlag, 1929). Prior to this translation, in May 1929, Moholy-Nagy used the term “neue Sichten,” or “new sight,” in the didactic text accompanying the introductory room of *Film und Foto*. See “Werkbund-Ausstellung ‘Film und Foto,’ Stuttgart 1929,” *Photographische Industrie* 27 (28 August 1929): 911.

subjects, and bird's eye and worm's eye views. The Hungarian émigré László Moholy-Nagy spoke of the effectiveness of these techniques, which he thought could lead to an "objective" vision, understood by all, in his 1925/27 Bauhaus book *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (Painting, Photography, Film):

The secret of their effect (the view from above, from below, the oblique view) is that the photographic camera reproduces the purely optical image and therefore shows the optically true distortions, deformations, foreshortenings, etc., whereas the eye together with our intellectual experience, supplements perceived optical phenomena by means of association and formally and spatially creates a conceptual image. Thus in the photographic camera we have the most reliable aid to a beginning of objective vision. *Everyone* will be compelled to see that which is optically true.⁶

However, the conditions of modernity were just as important to Moholy-Nagy as honing photographic techniques, and he posited the role of the photographer far beyond the apparatus, as an arbiter of social change: "The creative work of the artist, the scientist's experiments, the calculations of the businessman or the present-day politician, all that moves, all that shapes, is bound up in the collectivity of interacting events.... The technician has his machine at hand: satisfaction of the needs of the moment. But basically much more: he is the pioneer of the new social stratification, he paves the way for the future."⁷ He viewed photography as the means for the artist to capture such social dynamism: "no manual means of representation (pencil, brush, etc.) is capable of arresting fragments of the world seen like this; it is equally impossible for manual means of creation to fix the quintessence of movement."⁸

⁶ László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film (PPF)*, trans. Janet Seligman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 28. There is a Publishers' Note on the copyright page which explains that the typography and make-up of this edition "adhere as closely as possible" to the make-up of the second German edition of the book from 1927. When I refer to the first German edition in Chapter 3, it will be cited as László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Photographie, Film (MPF)* (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925).

⁷ *PPF*, 38.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

In its emphasis on the properties of the apparatus, as well as on urban and contemporary subjects to create a modern photographic language—buildings, streets, cafes, industry, as well as images that celebrated the public’s rapidly expanding knowledge of science—the New Vision paralleled the preoccupation with technology as it related to a rapidly industrializing environment. Germany’s unification as a nation took place a century after Britain and France had industrialized as nation-states. The consolidation of the power of large industrial textile, iron, and steel firms took place concurrently with the political consolidation under Otto von Bismarck in the early 1870s.⁹ Rapid industrialization was accompanied by rapid urbanization, as agricultural workers flocked to Berlin at a rate that pressurized social systems in the capital.¹⁰ The aftershocks of these intensified social shifts were still being absorbed during the Weimar period, just over two generations later. Modernist photographers and critics expected art to confront these social realities.

The New Vision rejected the dominant prewar mode of Pictorialist photography with its reliance on static subjects and methods borrowed from nineteenth-century painting. It encompassed the dynamism that Moholy-Nagy and others considered necessary to express realities of modern social existence. The New Vision was a movement that, in retrospect, seems to have dovetailed with the social environment, but it was also prodded and pushed to the forefront by exhibition organizers, ambitious artists, and enthusiastic critics.

⁹ See Gordon Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 86.

¹⁰ Alexandra Comini discusses the lingering social impact of German population shifts in the nineteenth century in her essay, “Kollwitz in Context: The Formative Years,” in Elizabeth Prelinger, *Kollwitz* (Washington: National Gallery of Art), 94.

The Critique of Pictorialism

In the years just before and after the turn of the twentieth-century those striving to elevate photographs to the status of a fine art, particularly in Europe and America, were known as Pictorialists. The name derived from Peter Henry Emerson's 1886 lecture to the London Camera Club about the superiority of photography as a visual art, "Photography: A Pictorial Art."¹¹ The Pictorialists relied largely on the established motifs of academic painting: historical subjects, including tableaux of religious and mythical themes, portraits, landscapes, and the still-life. On a technical level, the Pictorialists attempted to negate the perception of photography purely as a way to record.¹² The French Pictorialist, E.J. Constant Puyo, for example, clearly stated in a 1904 essay that aesthetic and documentary qualities "are opposite ones, and to want to unite them on an equal footing in the same work is to be engaged in a vain endeavor."¹³

A Puyo landscape such as *Summer*, 1903 (fig. 1-1), demonstrates the inclination of art photographers to turn to methods of painting in order to achieve this difference. Puyo printed this photograph as a green pigment ozotype—a carbon process in which

¹¹ It was also published as an essay. Peter Henry Emerson, "Photography: A Pictorial Art," *The Amateur Photographer* 3 (March 19, 1886), 138-39, reprinted in Beaumont Newhall, ed., *Photography: Essays and Images*, 5th ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 159-162. Newhall discussed how Emerson's Pictorialist followers ignored his advice about clarity of subject and fell into producing "fuzzygraphs." Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 5th ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982), 142.

¹² Peter Bunnell, who brought together many original essays about Pictorialism in a groundbreaking 1980 study, defined Pictorial photography as that which "is frequently interpreted as the attempt by photographers to dissociate their work from the look of applied photographs, and to make photographs which mimic works of art in other media," in *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889-1923*, ed. Peter C. Bunnell (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1980), 1.

¹³ E.J. Constant Puyo, "Synthetic Photography," *La Revue de Photographie*, (April 15, 1904): 105-110, in Bunnell, 169.

pigmented paper was put into contact with a negative exposed over sensitized paper¹⁴— for a softened image similar to the loose facture of an Impressionist landscape. Upon examining *Summer*, I noted that a hazy green color permeated the entire print, but close inspection reveals the daubing (a method of applying paint associated with Impressionism) of white highlights in the women’s hats, in the clouds, and on the surface of the water. Sadakichi Hartman, an early twentieth-century critic who urged photographers against attempting to obtain results of the painter or etcher, specifically spoke against “daubing” in his 1904 essay, “A Plea for Straight Photography.”¹⁵

The gum bichromate process, which also softened the photographic image, was a popular technique in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photography, mastered by another Frenchman, Robert Demachy (see *A Ballerina*, 1900, fig. 1-2). The gum process involved a solution of gum arabic, pigment, and potassium bichromate. Brushing a sheet with this mixture before development of the negative provided a surface that could then be manipulated for painterly effects, such as rich tonalities or heightened textures.¹⁶ Puyo praised the invention of gum as an important event because “for the first time we were able to escape the automatism of the procedure.”¹⁷

The photographers of the New Vision repudiated such practices. This 1927 statement from László Moholy-Nagy, pioneer of the New Vision, demonstrated his intense aversion to Pictorialist practice:

¹⁴ Luis Nadeau, *Encyclopedia of Printing, Photogenic, and Photomechanical Processes* (New Brunswick: Atelier Luis Nadeau, 1997), 353.

¹⁵ Sadakichi Hartman, “A Plea for Straight Photography,” *American Amateur Photographer* (March 1904): 101-109, in Bunnell, 167.

¹⁶ Bunnell on gum bichromate printing: “...what were termed the ‘vulgar’ characteristics of the documentary photographic print were abandoned in favor of effects gained through the manipulation of the printing medium by selective development, dodging and burning, hand-coating on rough papers, and the use of platinum and gum bichromate. Bunnell, 2.

¹⁷ Puyo, “Synthetic Photography,” in Bunnell, 168.

In today's photographic work, the first and foremost issue is to develop an integrally photographic approach that is derived purely from the means of photography itself; only after a more or less exact photographic language has been developed will a truly gifted photographer be able to elevate it to an "artistic" level. The prerequisite for this is: no dependence on traditional form of representation! Photography has no need for that. No ancient or contemporary painting can match the singular effectiveness available to photography. Why the "painterly" comparisons? Why Rembrandt—or Picasso—imitations?¹⁸

Moholy-Nagy approached photography as a way to promote awareness and celebration of dynamic urban life; in other words, to promote "photo-literacy." Examples of the subjects he sought out were: radio towers in Berlin, the frenetic activity of his students at the Bauhaus, contemporary architecture, broken dolls, drains in the Paris streets (*Gutter*, 1925, fig. 1-3), and cropped angles of friends frolicking on the beach.

Moholy-Nagy and others were deeply committed to the idea that the camera could "complete or supplement our optical instrument, the eye," to make visible to all existences which cannot be perceived or taken in¹⁹; but also to concentrate on subjects that fit Moholy-Nagy's concept of *Modernismus*—"the condition of modernity and contemporaneity in Weimar Germany's urban life from the vogue for Einstein to women's liberation"—the subject of Eleanor Hight's 1995 book, *Picturing Modernism*.²⁰ In reaching this, the followers of the New Vision felt that both the subjects and the approaches, needed to be more active, like the constantly moving camera, to express modernity. The objection the New Vision proponents had to Pictorialist practice was not simply that it was misguided in regressing to techniques of painting, but that it was, in effect, socially backward. This social critique of Pictorialism actually predates the New

¹⁸ László Moholy-Nagy, "Unprecedented Photography" (Die beispiellos Photographie), *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* 1 (1927): x, in Christopher Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1929-1940* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989), 84.

¹⁹ PPF, 28.

²⁰ Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, 3.

Vision, and was expressed by both pre- and postwar critics in response to large photography exhibitions.

Film und Foto: The Exhibition

In order to chart the emergence of the New Vision as the dominant mode in photographic modernism, I plan to use three of the highest-profile exhibitions from 1909-29 as case studies of its rising influence: the *Internationale Photographische Ausstellung* (International Photographic Exhibition) in Dresden, 1909, where the Pictorialists dominate the art photography section; the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung* (German Photographic Exhibition) in Frankfurt, 1926, where Pictorialists and the future New Vision photographers are displayed together; and the *Fotografie²¹ der Gegenwart* (Contemporary Photography) in Essen, 1929, where photographers practicing Moholy-Nagy's New Vision dominate the exhibition. These exhibitions are constellations of intense activity within a twenty-year art historical shift and they comprise a missing background story of the New Vision's eventual success as a movement.

The organization and content of these three exhibitions, among others, laid the groundwork for the watershed *Internationale Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbunds Film und Foto* (May 18 – July 7, 1929) which opened in Stuttgart at the Neue Städtische Ausstellungshallen and traveled in varying forms to venues in Zurich, Berlin, Danzig, Vienna, Agram, Munich,²² Tokyo, and Osaka. *Film und Foto*, or *Fifo*, as it is referred to, is considered, still in recent scholarship, as “arguably the most important photography

²¹ One sees the spellings “Photographie,” “Fotographie,” and “Fotografie” in German texts, with the “Fotografie” spelling preferred by contemporary artists and typographers beginning in the mid- to late 1920s.

²² The Munich version of *Fifo*, *Das Lichtbild*, would then go on its own regional tour, to Essen, Dessau, and Breslau.

exhibition ever held.”²³ Even in its own time, the exhibition was being historicized. As the critic Franz Roh stated in his trilingual 1929 book *Foto-Auge/Oeil et photo/Photo-Eye*, co-authored by Jan Tschichold, it was “the most important event in the visual field in the last few years.”²⁴

Fifo was a vast exhibition of over one thousand photographs²⁵ with a separate film program organized by Hans Richter. The event was organized by Gustav Stotz, managing director of the Württemberg section of the German Werkbund, an institution founded in 1907 to stimulate a better dialogue and working relationship between the arts and industry. The exhibition had an international selection committee that included established modernist artists Moholy-Nagy and Jan Tschichold representing Germany, El Lissitzky from the Soviet Union, Edward Steichen and Edward Weston from the United States, and Piet Zwart from Holland. The emphasis in content on New Vision experimental techniques and *Modernismus* can be seen in the twenty-three images selected for the catalogue, which included a Moholy-Nagy portrait of Oskar Schlemmer with sunlight filtering onto his body through a metal fence, a Hannah Höch photomontage (*Le Coquette*, 1924, fig. 1-4), a Man Ray photogram, a film still from one of Hans Richter’s avant-garde pieces with numerous pairs of superimposed eyes, a cropped portrait of a girl’s face by Max Burchartz, a Werner Graeff distortion, and several compositions of modern architectural structures.

In Room 1, the largest of thirteen rooms and the one through which all visitors had to pass, Moholy-Nagy arranged chemistry professor Erich Stenger’s historical

²³ Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, 6.

²⁴ Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold, *Foto-Auge/Oeil et photo/Photo-Eye* (Stuttgart: Fritz Wedekind & Co., 1929), 14.

²⁵ Inka Graeve approximates the total at 1200. Inka Graeve, “Internationale Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbunds Film und Foto,” in *Stationen der Moderne* (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1988), 237.

collection in juxtaposition with science photography, news photography, advertising photography, and artistic photography. The photographs were provided by press agencies, scientific institutes, state archives, and by photographers like Moholy-Nagy and his wife Lucia Moholy, Karl Blossfeldt, and Francis Bruguière. This mixing was central to Moholy-Nagy's experimental approach, and the deterioration of hierarchical systems in displaying photography. He applied this to strategies of display as well as art making and book design, and it attests to his expansiveness.²⁶ Stenger was pleased to have his historical collection, which ended around 1870, exhibited with contemporary photography. It was his opinion and, he stated, the opinion of those he observed walking through the exhibition, that photography in the 1920s was getting back to its original task: "the objective natural depiction of whatever is showable;" Stenger felt that the recent tendency toward retouching had "stolen precious value from the photographic portrait."²⁷

Other notable rooms included Room 4, El Lissitzky's design for the display of Soviet photography. Lissitzky collaborated with the filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein on the installation, and the room included the most inventive integration in the exhibition of actual film material—strips of celluloid and viewing stations—with photographs (fig. 1-5). Ulrich Pohlmann's essay on El Lissitzky's exhibition designs ("El Lissitzky's Exhibition Designs: The Influence of His Work in Germany, Italy, and the United States,

²⁶ Moholy's approach was essentially inclusive, despite rival photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch's complaints, for example, that only a certain type of photographic "effect" was fully embraced at *Fifo*—many of these photographs were not making use of oblique angles; he wasn't fanatical simply about view points; he included a variety of things which he believed needed to be seen all together

²⁷ "Bis Retusche und künstlerische Kopierverfahren dem photographischen Porträt diesen, seinen unschätzbaren Hauptwert raubten....Die neuzeitliche Photographie besinnt sich auf ihre ureigene Aufgabe, auf die objektive, ungekünstelte Wiedergabe alles Schaubaren, sie nähert sich wieder der Darstellungsweise der Frühzeit." Erich Stenger, *Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatt* (29 May 1929), in Ute Eskildsen and Jan-Christopher Horak, eds., *Film und Foto der Zwanziger Jahre*. (Stuttgart: Württembergischer Kunstverein, 1979), 73-74.

1923-1943”)²⁸ is extremely useful in clarifying certain details relating to the exhibition and design of the Soviet section of *Film und Foto*.²⁹ Room 5 was Moholy-Nagy’s homage to himself; it contained ninety-seven of his own photographs including photograms—objects exposed onto light-sensitive paper which Moholy-Nagy also called “camera-less photography”—and “fotoplastiks,” his version of photomontages. Although Stotz was the overall organizer of *Fifo*, there is no question that Moholy-Nagy wielded enormous influence over the exhibition’s message to the public and critics, given his role on the selection committee, and as organizer of both the historical section and his own large mid-career retrospective.

Fifo has been credited with solidifying the dominance of the experimental New Vision photography championed by Moholy-Nagy in Europe, a platform from which it also strongly influenced photography throughout North America and Asia.³⁰ The movement’s influence was particularly apparent once Moholy-Nagy arrived in the United States in 1937 to start the New Bauhaus,³¹ where he continued preaching the New Vision approach, as did his successor Arthur Siegel after Moholy-Nagy’s death in 1946.

Beaumont Newhall’s position as the first curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and later as Director of the George Eastman House, also facilitated Moholy-Nagy’s influence in the United States. Newhall was committed to

²⁸ In *El Lissitzky: Jenseits der Abstraktion*, ed. Margarita Tupitsyn (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1999), 52-64.

²⁹ Pohlmann notes this point that the Soviet section was the only one that succeeded in showing the close relationship between film and photography (“Der sowjetischen Abteilung gelang es auf der “Fifo” als einziger, diese enge Verbindung zwischen Film und Fotografie darzustellen”), by displaying them materially together, in *Jenseits*, 55.

³⁰ The New Vision greatly impacted Asia in the 1930s after *Fifo* traveled to Tokyo and Osaka, albeit in reduced form, and influenced photographers like Kozo Nojima and Yoshio Watanabe. Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), 413 citing John W. Dower, *A Century of Japanese Photography* (New York, 1980).

³¹ The new Bauhaus closed after one year. Moholy-Nagy’s renamed School of Design survived until his death in 1944, and was again renamed, this time the Institute of Design. See Victor Margolin, *Struggle for Utopia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 216.

promoting photography that adhered to its own inherent qualities and laid this out in his 1937 exhibition at the Modern, *Photography, 1839-1937*. This exhibition was described in detail in Christopher Phillips' 1982 essay "The Judgment Seat of Photography," which examined the policies at the Museum of Modern Art, the leader in establishing the history of photography as an artistic medium. As Phillips noted, "Newhall's exhibition follows precisely along the lines of the series of large photography exhibitions held in Germany from 1925 until the early 1930s... These joint showings of scientific, commercial, and creative 'new vision' photography and film placed the camera at the center of the postwar technological aesthetic in Germany, and should be seen as forming part of the background of Walter Benjamin's writings during this period."³² Phillips pointed to Newhall's choice of Moholy-Nagy for the committee for this exhibition, as mentioned earlier, after they worked together on the international committee of *Fifo*, and after Moholy-Nagy relocated to Chicago in 1937. Unfortunately, many of the socially engaged aspects of Moholy-Nagy's New Vision and Weimar *Modernismus* were lost in Newhall's interpretation, which emphasized technical prowess. Phillips and Hight explored this problem, as did Douglas Nickel in his essay, "History of Photography: The State of Research,"³³ which focused on Newhall's emphasis on photographic technique and how the "art-nonart" debate in photography has had a stranglehold on photographic research since the 1930s.

³² Christopher Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," *October* 22 (Fall 1982): 33 n. 9. Regarding the reference to Benjamin, Phillips analogizes the famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," to the urgent project of the New Vision photographers in wresting photography away from painting. At this time, Benjamin saw great potential in photography and film as the antithesis to the unique object (painting) available only to the bourgeois consumer. Unlike painting, photography could be an art form for the masses. This view of technology mirrored Moholy-Nagy's optimism that technology could create a universal language.

³³ Douglas R. Nickel, "History of Photography: The State of Research," *Art Bulletin* (September 2001): 548-558.

Allison Bertrand has written a thorough historiographic account of how the Newhall MoMA exhibition and the book that came out of it effectively “wrote” the history of photography in the English-speaking world: “...few of the critics who reviewed it or the viewers who enjoyed it imagined that it and the catalogue it spawned would define the history of the medium for the rest of the century.”³⁴ She also laid out Newhall’s definition of photographic art as a “technologically determined product of the camera and, at the same time, the unique creation of an autonomous author.”³⁵ His emphasis on these qualities led to the suppression of the political ethos Nickel outlined above. The exhibition did contain the expansive selection of photography that Moholy-Nagy favored. Bertrand suggests that his use of x-rays, advertising images, and material from mass media in the eventual exhibition was inspired not only by *Fifo* and the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne, but also by the *DPA*.³⁶ However, the impact of the catalogue “did not end when the exhibition closed.”³⁷ It was revised as a book four times in the next forty-five years,³⁸ and by the 1982 edition, almost all of the scientific and anonymous material had been edited out in favor of individual achievement.

Rather than a development only of the late 1920s, the new ways of exhibiting photography which fed into the New Vision’s expansive and non-hierarchical approach can be traced through large photographic exhibitions taking place at intervals from as early as 1909, although at that time Pictorialism still appeared at the apex of its influence.

³⁴ Allison Bertrand, “Beaumont Newhall’s ‘Photography 1838-1937’: Making History,” *History of Photography* (Summer 1997): 137.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, n48: “In particular, the inclusion of photographs from many non-aesthetic sources linked Newhall’s 1937 exhibition to ‘Film und Foto’ and other German exhibition of the 1920s and early 1930s such as ‘Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung’ which opened in Frankfurt in 1926 and ‘Pressa’ mounted in Cologne.” *Gegenwart* deserves a mention here, but does not get one.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

³⁸ The *History of Photography* was revised in 1938, 1949, 1964, and 1982.

The shift from Pictorialism to the New Vision involved a long process of cohabitation, debate, and jockeying for influence. Since little in German or English has been written on these major precursors to *Fifo*, I plan to reconstruct three of the most ambitious exhibitions, in Dresden, Frankfurt, and Essen, to the extent possible through brochures, catalogues, installation shots, and published critical reception. In doing so, I will confront the developmental roots of many elements of the New Vision and its display before it gained international prominence at *Fifo*, including the gradual acceptance of its practitioners, the mixing of scientific and artistic photography in exhibitions, an interest in photography defined as “objective,” and an end to the Pictorialist stigmatizing of documentary photography. The methodology I will employ is historiographic, relying on careful analysis of primary documentation related to the three installations and a close reading of their critical reception to construct a narrative of the New Vision’s orchestrated rise as the dominant photographic art form of the late 1920s. Consequently, all material aspects of what comprised these major exhibitions will be fleshed out, including the organizers, the correspondence, the machinations of inclusion and exclusion, the design, and the press, to answer the questions: what photography was shown as the shift away from Pictorialism and toward New Vision was taking place, and how was it shown? And what was the position of influence of these exhibitions in the critical literature as it was in the process of trying to create the historiography of photography?³⁹

³⁹ International exhibitions were not only playing a key role in the developing historiography of photography during this twenty-year period, they were also becoming a place of confrontation between the avant-garde, the public, and social issues during a time of political turmoil. For more on this, see Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 8.

Film und Foto: The Literature

Despite the size and scope of these earlier exhibitions in Dresden, 1909, Frankfurt, 1926, and Essen, 1929, much of the existing literature on the subject of twentieth-century German photography exhibitions through the 1920s focuses almost exclusively on *Film und Foto*. A vital component of the lasting influence of *Fifo* was the publication of three books in 1929 directly related to the exhibition: Werner Graeff's *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!* (Here Comes the New Photographer!); Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold's *Foto-Auge/Oeil et photo/Photo-Eye*; and Roh's *László Moholy-Nagy: 60 Fotos*. Graeff, a photojournalist, was encouraged by Stotz to produce a book to travel with *Fifo*. He gave preferential treatment in his book to other photojournalists like Umbo (Otto Umbehers) and Sasha Stone. Stone had sixteen illustrations in *Es kommt*, more than any other individual, followed by Graeff himself, who had fourteen.⁴⁰

The critic Franz Roh also contributed to two publications connected to *Fifo* that year: a collaboration with typographer Jan Tschichold published in three languages, *Foto-Auge/Oeil et photo/Photo-Eye*; and Roh's *László Moholy-Nagy: 60 Fotos*. In both, Roh celebrated the same innovative diversity Moholy-Nagy used in displaying photographs, and he adhered largely to Moholy-Nagy's technical categories in organizing the books. In the short essay preceding the photographs in *Photo-Eye*, Roh periodically used bold typeface for the categories of photographs that fit his idea of the New Vision. The

⁴⁰ However, Ute Eskildsen makes the important observation that photographers primarily known as photojournalists were largely excluded from *Fifo*; Umbo and Sasha Stone, regular contributors to weeklies like the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* and *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*, had prints in *Fifo*, but they were taken out of context, and not noted as commissions. Renowned photojournalists like Erich Salomon and Felix Man weren't included in *Fifo* at all, yet anonymous news photos and police photos had an important place in the show, even singled out by Stotz as a particular interest of his. I have been unable to substantiate this with Moholy-Nagy's current biographer, Dr. Lloyd Engelbrecht, or his daughter, Hattula Moholy-Nagy, but I suspect a rift between Stotz and Moholy-Nagy or the latter and Graeff. Stotz commissioned *Here Comes the New Photographer*, and there are no Moholy-Nagy photographs included.

photogram, perspectival experiments, the reality-photo, the negative print, the photomontage, and cinema were the methods he endorsed in the book. They were direct parallels to Moholy-Nagy's categories of photographic achievement: enlargements, microscopic images, x-rays, mechanical distortions of reality, photograms, and photomontages.

In the late 1970s, the fiftieth anniversary of *Fifo*, several publications came out in a cluster. Two reprints of the *Film und Foto* catalogue were produced in 1979: one by Arno Press in New York, and another with supplemental material produced by Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt GmbH in Stuttgart.⁴¹ Both include the twenty-three photographs from the show which illustrated the original. *Germany: The New Photography, 1927-33* (1978), edited by David Mellor, surveyed material related to the movements that fell under the umbrella term "New Photography," including *Fifo* and the New Vision, Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity), Worker Photography, and Photojournalism. Mellor's selections include an excerpt from a contemporaneous review of *Fifo* by Andor Krasznakrausz, in which the reviewer noted the ambitions of Moholy-Nagy and other photographers: "One saw the collected work of those who assert themselves to belong to photographic production that is consciously modern.... the final conclusion of the whole is that the task of photography of today is to devote its specific technical means to the

⁴¹ The Arno press reprint was taken directly from an original *Film und Foto* exhibition catalogue in the Harvard University Library, according to the frontmatter of the copy at the New York Public Library. The Library also has an original copy of the 1929 catalogue that belonged to the Czech artist Karel Teige, who was included in the show. I will refer to the Stuttgart reprint throughout the dissertation. All participating artists are listed alphabetically with their included works numbered after each name. The final tally was 947, including "late additions" (Nachtrag), although the number cannot be considered definitive because Soviet artists are only listed by name, without works, and Moholy-Nagy included a room with ninety-seven of his own photographs which are not figured into the tally.

active service of the present time.”⁴² In other words, they were embodying *Modernismus*, linking technique and contemporaneity.

Mellor’s collection additionally included retrospective examinations of *Fifo*’s influence, such as Beaumont Newhall’s 1977 reminiscence, “Photo Eye of the 1920s: The Deutsche Werkbund Exhibition of 1929.” In Newhall’s opinion, the exhibition marked the end of a period, because it was a summation of photographic activity that had taken place the previous decade. But a summation of the New Vision was seen en masse at the 1929 exhibition for the first time—which would then travel extensively and generate extensive press coverage. The reverberations of its influence were just beginning, particularly Moholy-Nagy’s articulation of the argument to assert the camera’s potential as something particular unto itself in order to create a widely understood, relevant photographic language.

In 1979 the definitive re-examination of *Fifo* was published, *Film und Foto der zwanziger Jahre* (Film and Foto of the 1920s), edited by Ute Eskildsen and Jan-Christopher Horak. The book included contextualizing essays about *Fifo*’s influence in Germany and internationally, a section of original press reaction to the exhibition, and articles by critics and contemporaries like George Heise, Lux Feininger, and Roh.⁴³ Eskildsen’s essay for this publication, “Fotokunst statt Kunstphotographie,” was later translated as “Innovative Photography in Germany between the Wars,” for a 1981 exhibition catalogue at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art entitled *Avant-Garde Photography in Germany, 1919-1939*. This essay still contains the most useful survey in

⁴² Andor Kraszna-Krausz, “Exhibition in Stuttgart, June 1929, and its Effects,” *Close Up* (December 29, 1929): 457. This review was considered so valuable for its full listing of the film program that it was included as a supplement in the back of the 1979 reprint of the *Fifo* catalogue.

⁴³ The back matter of this book is indispensable, and includes installation shots, reproduced covers of related and accompanying books, and a list of reviews of the exhibition.

English on twentieth-century German photography exhibitions before World War II. Although Eskildsen traced the lineage of modern, international German photography exhibitions back to the Dresden exhibition of 1909, which is the first subject of my study, her primary focus was between the wars, so the pre-World War I shows she mentions are only sketched rather than thoroughly explored. Because she covered so many exhibitions, even major interwar shows like the second and third exhibitions, *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung*, in Frankfurt, 1926, and *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, Essen, 1929, which I will discuss, were only given a few paragraphs in her essay. The innovative ideas introduced in these shows—the development of documentary and objective photography as categories worthy of exhibition—were so far-reaching, they warrant exploration in greater depth.

Although Eskildsen's essay is the point of departure for my goal of supplementing existing scholarship on the exhibition history of photography from 1909-29, substantive scholarship on *Fifo* has continued since 1979. Inka Graeve's essay, "Internationale Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbunds Film und Foto," in the 1988 catalogue *Stationen der Moderne* provided an overview of the entire exhibition and film program, and included several installation shots.

Eleanor Hight's aforementioned book *Picturing Modernism* presented a clear and succinct treatment of *Fifo*. The exhibition was relevant to both her discussion of Moholy-Nagy's concept of *Modernismus* and her exploration of how his emphasis on photography's potential for expanding visual perception was often misunderstood as a purely formal concept as it was received and popularized. Hight's book was significant in following the path of the New Vision's and *Fifo*'s influence from Europe outward, as

she analyzed to various degrees the importance of Moholy-Nagy's writings, books about him, his participation in exhibitions, and his influence on photography curators in the United States like Beaumont Newhall. She also provided a crucial distinction between the New Vision's expansive social goals, and *Neue Sachlichkeit* photography, which I will use throughout the dissertation: "While *Neue Sachlichkeit* photography stressed the formal beauty of a given object . . . Moholy's 'New Vision' had a higher aim. . . . it addressed the role art could play in the renewal of perception."⁴⁴ Hight pointed to the aestheticization of objects in Renger-Patzsch's photography as the fullest realization of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*Blast Furnaces*, 1927, fig. 1-6).⁴⁵

More recently, the Swiss scholar Olivier Lugon has produced numerous insightful essays concerning German photography exhibitions from the mid-twenties through World War II by focusing on the ability of display to influence public understanding of photography at the time, including "Photography Arranged in Space: German Didactic Exhibitions, 1929 – 1945."⁴⁶ However, he posited that neither *Film und Foto* nor *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, the 1929 exhibition in Essen, were revolutionary in their didacticism, arguing that they were still attached to certain traditional modes of hanging graphic art.⁴⁷ I would disagree with this conclusion, as Moholy-Nagy's hanging in Room 1 of *Fifo*, for example, was informed by his belief in the "typophoto," a merging of

⁴⁴ Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, 97-98. Eskildsen's 1978 essay "Photography and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement," in *Germany: The New Photography, 1927-33*, ed. David Mellor (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 100-112, referred to both Moholy-Nagy and Renger-Patzsch under the photographic category *Neue Sachlichkeit*, albeit acknowledging their very different approaches. Hight's interpretation contributes more clarity to the terminology.

⁴⁵ Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, 99. Mellor limited the category of *Neue Sachlichkeit* to Renger-Patzsch, and the Professor Karl Blossfeldt, who specialized in close-up views of plants.

⁴⁶ Olivier Lugon, "La photographie mise en espace: Les expositions didactiques allemandes 1925 – 1945," *Études photographiques* (November 5, 1998): 97 – 118.

⁴⁷ . . . Les secondes au contraire même les plus modernistes d'entre elles, come "Film und Foto ou "Fotographie der Gegenwart," se montrent encore majoritairement attachées aux mode traditionnels d'accrochage des arts graphiques. *Ibid.*, 101.

photographs, bold text and graphic elements on a page, as a dynamic new way to teach people to *read* photography (fig. 1-7).⁴⁸ The Lugon essay most related to my project is “The Marcher: Pedestrians and Photographs in the Bosom of the Avant-Garde.”⁴⁹ Lugon used a common trope from the New Vision photographers—that of anonymous walkers on the street—to explain the dynamist tenets and contemporary engagement of the New Vision: “Each of their plunges, each of their counter-plunges, each of their diagonal frames, is considered like a fixing of real movement of the body and of looking in space, like testimony of physical engagement about the world, like the product of action.... In this way, photography will be less a graphic art than, as in the freedom of dance or movement, an art of time and space.”⁵⁰

The “New” Vision Developed Over Time

Fifo acted as a catalyst for the New Vision’s international influence through the traveling exhibition, related publications, curators influenced, and criticism generated. But what was it that made the very modern format of *Fifo* possible; that is the mixing of science, photomontage, x-rays, police and Bauhaus photography, hung in grids with graphic elements and bold typography on the walls? Gustav Stotz had pointed to the need for a

⁴⁸ An additional essay by Lugon on this subject is “The Progressions of Thought: Management of Circulation in Didactic Exhibitions (Des cheminements de pensée: la gestion de la circulation dans les expositions didactiques),” *Art Press*, 21 (2000): 17-25. The article charts the flow of spectators through various exhibitions (with an emphasis on Herbert Bayer’s *Road to Victory* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1942).

⁴⁹ Olivier Ligon, “Le marcheur: Piétons et photographes au sein des avant-gardes,” *Études photographiques* (November 8, 2000): 69-91.

⁵⁰ “Chacune de leurs plongées, chacune de leurs contre-plongées, chacun de leurs cadrages diagonaux est à considérer comme la fixation d’un mouvement réel du corps et du regard dans l’espace, comme le témoignage d’un engagement physique du sujet dans le monde, comme le produit d’une action. En cela, la photographie serait moins un art graphique que--à l’égal de la danse ou de la promenade--un art du temps et de l’espace.” Ligon, “Le marcheur,” 74-75. It is also interesting the way he links Benjamin’s interests to the banality of the street on page 73.

comprehensive overview of current trends in Stuttgart, but it was just that—an overview of trends that had been accruing, not just in the photography, but also in the display of it.

The three key exhibitions I will examine in Dresden, 1909, in Frankfurt, 1926, and in Essen, 1929, fundamentally changed the way photography was shown, and brought the social potential of photography into the wider public's and critics' imagination.⁵¹ The primary criteria for choosing these photographic exhibitions as case studies, beyond Eskildsen's emphasis on them, are their comprehensiveness, their international scope,⁵² substantial critical reception at the time, and a self-consciousness of *being* comprehensive.⁵³ Important, smaller displays of photography, such as the 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, or the 1928 Jena *Neue Wege der Photographie* (New Paths in Photography), which included only eight individual participants (the Moholy's, Peterhans, Umbo, Errell, Renger-Patzsch, Hannah Reeck, and Erfurth), are important linchpins but will be given less attention.

The first German exhibition that played a role in calling the Western world's attention to advances in twentieth-century photography was a pre-World War I installation, the *Internationale Photographische Ausstellung (Iphad)* in 1909 Dresden. The Dresden exhibition was primarily focused on scientific and technical advances in the medium, but there was also an art photography section organized by the German-born Austrian resident Heinrich Kuehn. The Dresden exhibition was an early example of a

⁵¹ Oliver Botar's unpublished dissertation contains useful discussions of the relation between art and scientific material in the three exhibitions, among others, but is more focused on theoretical developments in the artists' writings, and does not illustrate the three shows, or the works in them. Oliver Botar, "Prolegomena to the Study of Biomorphing Modernism: Biocentricism in Moholy-Nagy's New Vision and Kallai's *Bioromantik*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1998).

⁵² Although the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung* was an overview of German photography, journals documented a large international audience attending the exhibition, which I will discuss in Chapter 3.

⁵³ The types of institutions presenting the exhibitions varied: *Iphad* was held in an exhibition hall, *DPA* was held in a trade fair building, and *Gegenwart* was held in a museum.

key organizational strategy of shows like *Fifo* and one which would characterize Moholy-Nagy's New Vision: the dismantling of hierarchies in displaying photography so that scientific photography, art photography and technological advances could co-exist in the same presentation, even if not yet in the same room. Still, Kuehn worked in the Pictorialist tradition, and the art section of the exhibition was dominated by Pictorialists like Demachy, Edward Steichen, Alfred Steiglitz, Frank Eugene, Adolf de Meyer, Alvin Langdon Coburn, and Clarence White.

Hugo Erfurth, prominent in other sections of *Iphad*, would be the most notable former Pictorialist included in both *Fotografie der Gegenwart* and *Fifo*, as the other practitioners were phased out. We will also see the concerted effort to outfit these photographs in heavy, gilded frames, and place them in bourgeois settings with ornate tables and chairs (see fig. 2-21), desks with books, and potted plants. In the later exhibitions of the 1920s, frames would become much less obtrusive and more standardized, and the environments started taking on the clinical feel we associate today with the "white box" of the modern gallery.

The Pictorialists dominated international exhibitions of photography until World War I: the critical Cologne *Werkbund* exhibition, which opened in the summer of 1914, one month before war was declared in August, included a photography section organized by curator and author Friedrich Matthies-Masuren (1873-1938), who had published a book entitled *Bildmässige* (Pictorialism) in 1905, illustrating the Pictorialist approach. In this book Matthies-Masuren wrote about his support for Pictorialism, reflecting the views of many early writers, such as Peter Henry Emerson, A. Horsley Hinton, and H.P. Robinson, concerning the nature of art photography, or rather, the nature of what

photography should be, and its distinction from science. Among the key criteria of art photography for Emerson, Hinton, Robinson, and later Matthies-Masuren, was the manipulation of the negative that distinguishes photographs as works of art. In a foreword to the 1898 exhibition catalogue *Secession*, Matthies-Masuren discussed the need to inject handwork into photography, by wrapping it in an “Arts and Crafts” concern about photography losing all sense of beauty and humanity through mass production.⁵⁴ He later devoted an entire room in the 1914 Werkbund exhibition to Kuehn’s work.

All of these authors were included by Peter Bunnell in his 1980 anthology of writings about Pictorialism, *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889-1923*. Although Bunnell’s primary point was to create continuity between the Pictorialists and the modernists by defining their common principles as an “embodiment of subjective intelligence” and a drive to “reveal truth beneath appearances,” many of the writings he included instead highlight the rupture between those who advocated the manipulation of prints and those who opposed it.⁵⁵ Indeed, Bunnell described the New Vision as a direct descendant of Pictorialism,⁵⁶ an interpretation negated by the writings of New Vision photographers and the critics who supported them. I will be actively quoting from those writings throughout the dissertation. In a 1984 essay, Abigail Solomon-Godeau created a similar linkage between European Pictorialists, American Photo-Secessionists, and American modernists of the 1920s, but for the purpose of levying a general critique

⁵⁴ Friedrich Matthies-Masuren, “Secession,” *Offizieller Katalog der Internationalen Elite-Ausstellung Künstlerischer Photographien* (Munich: Verlag des Vereines bildender Künstler, 1898), ix-xvi, in Bunnell, 91. Matthies-Masuren’s fear about mass production in art photography relates to other debates that raged at the Cologne exhibition, the site of the famous rift between Hermann Muthesius, who insisted on an uncompromising embrace of standardized types in art, and others in the Werkbund, who sympathized with the more individualistic artistic concerns of Henry Van de Velde and the Jugendstil

⁵⁵ Bunnell, “Introduction,” *Pictorial Photography*, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

against the “parochialism, insularity, and conservatism” of “art photography.”⁵⁷ She does not, however, address the European modernists, such as Moholy-Nagy, who actively worked against such insularity.

During World War I and in the years after, there was a lull in large, comprehensive photography exhibitions, although there was a prelude to *Fifo* in 1925: the *Kino und Photo Ausstellung* (Kipho) in Berlin. But the 1926 *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung* in Frankfurt was described as “covering all regions and techniques” for the first time in a German show since the 1909 Dresden exhibition in the influential journal *Die Form*, published by the Werkbund.⁵⁸ The Frankfurt exhibition still had a predominant emphasis on the Pictorialists such as Franz Grainer, who was the primary organizer, Erfurth, and the *Kleeblatt* group which Heinrich Kuehn had formed with two other Viennese photographers, Hugo Henneberg, and Hans Watzek; but, the exhibition had a so-called “amateur”⁵⁹ section which included modernist photographers such as Moholy-Nagy who would commit themselves to New Vision techniques, and “professional” photographers such as Franz Fiedler who would come to embrace New Vision practices. The show also included a large number of scientific and applied photographs.

⁵⁷ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Winning the Game when the Rules have Changed: Art Photography and Postmodernism,” *Screen* 25, no. 6 (1984), in *The Photography Reader*, ed. Liz Wells (New York: Routledge, 2003), 163.

⁵⁸ “Deutschland hat seit der internationalen Ausstellung in Dresden 1909 keine alle Gebiete photographischer Technik und lichtbildnerischer Darstellung umfassende Übersicht mehr besessen.” Eugen Claassen, “*Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung*,” *Die Form* 12 (September 1926): 275.

⁵⁹ In art photography lexicon at this time, there had long been an understood split between the artist amateur and the mass amateur. Bunnell described it as such: “The popular or mass amateur has always sought memorabilia; the professional has been for hire to provide images which were also personally important to a client. But finally, and most significantly, the class of amateur who could aspire to be an artist, as many did, would willingly accept the attendant responsibility...the aesthetic idea of their pictures...with the intention and hope that viewers would not only be informed by them but would be changed by their contemplation.” Bunnell, “Introduction,” 4.

A subtle but crucial stylistic and generational shift took place at the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung (DPA)*. Further evidence of the shift was the contest to design the poster for the exhibition, held in the pages of the journal *Das Atelier des Photographen*. Photographers as diverse as Grainer, Erfurth, and August Sander submitted entries. Many designs were outmoded and included images of classically muscular nudes like the one by W. Siemssen (see fig. 3-6), but Erfurth and others experimented with more inventive designs (see fig. 3-10). Erfurth's was one of the winning designs, and it would prove to be a harbinger of ascendant New Vision principles.

The Frankfurt exhibition and the accompanying catalogue were given credit by Eskildsen in her 1980 essay for introducing a new attitude toward "objective" photography, the definition of which she took from a 1929 Moholy-Nagy statement in which he advocated using the camera to create "unadulterated documents, stationary, and kinetically moving forms in variable light intensities. Plus new vision, enlargements, microscopic images, x-rays, mechanical distortions of reality, direct light manipulations (photograms), and simultaneous projections, of which photomontages are a preliminary stage."⁶⁰ However, it is important to remember that "objective" photography was not a term used by Moholy-Nagy to connote strictly formal qualities, nor a fixation on the object being photographed, but rather a way to move away from individualistic subjectivity and toward a modern truth available to all. Eskildsen also claimed that the catalogue initiated a discussion of the far-reaching implications of documentary

⁶⁰ Ute Eskildsen, "Innovative Photography in Germany Between the Wars," *Avant-Garde Photography in Germany, 1919-1939* (San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art, 1981), 35 citing *Photographische Industrie* (August 28, 1929): 911. This article quotes from Moholy-Nagy's wall text in Raum 1 of *Ffio*. See note 5 above.

photography, a form earlier reviled by Pictorialists as the very opposite of art. She failed to give examples to illustrate this point, and I will analyze the catalogue closely as it relates to these issues.

By the time of the 1929 exhibition *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, organized by the curator at the Museum Folkwang in Essen, Kurt Wilhelm-Kästner, the Pictorialists had been almost completely phased out of the checklist in favor of a selection of Europeans and Americans working with New Vision tenets, including the Surrealists, Bauhaus photographers, and Soviet filmmakers. *Fotografie der Gegenwart* opened just a few months before *Fifo*, which, as a traveling exhibition that included an international list of participants practicing the New Vision, set the stage for *Fifo*.

Thematic Junctures Within the Chapters

I have singled out several issues that were claimed as seminal developments of *Film und Foto*, but which were actually in development in earlier German exhibitions: the domination of the practitioners of the New Vision, the mixing of scientific and art photography in exhibitions, an interest in photography defined as “objective,” and an end to the Pictorialist denigration of “documentary” photography. These issues will be highlighted in the following three chapters which have been divided by exhibition. The most self-evident is the claim that the approach of the artists invited to participate in major exhibitions of photography in Germany changed radically in the twenty years from 1909-1929. In 1909/prewar, the most elite section of the exhibition was comprised entirely of Pictorialists. In 1926 there was still a Pictorialist, Grainer, in charge, showing the movement’s resilience, but a separate section for amateurs was included, with the

New Vision as an emergent mode. Finally, in the 1929 Essen exhibition, opening just months before *Fifo*, nearly all the photographers could be categorized as practicing the New Vision.

The second issue mentioned was the importance of mixing art and science photography in display. This was also a gradual development. In Dresden, there were sections for art photography, professional photography, science, and technical photography. The art and technological advances were separate, but it was significant that they were shown in the same venue. Most art photographers at this time would never have accepted their work hanging directly next to science or police photography as would be done later—they were still adhering to fine art hierarchies and were actively engaged in trying to elevate photography's status. But avant-garde principles that were gaining momentum in 1909—the Futurists published their first Manifesto three months before *Iphad*—contributed to the dismantling of perceived hierarchies between fine art and mass media, “high” and “low.” In fact, the Futurists used the mass media (newspaper articles, dropping pamphlets in public spaces) to reach out to a wider audience. They wanted their vision to appeal beyond the confines of the upper-classes. In the interwar period, artists like Moholy-Nagy began taking advantage of these breaches to create their all encompassing approach to art's activating potential. The effect of this breakdown was evident by the time of the 1929 exhibition in Essen where all types of photographs are actually shown next to each other on the wall as part of a new approach.

The third major theme was the development of what Moholy-Nagy referred to as objective photography. Eskildsen describes this objectivity as an “attitude,” one that was *introduced* in the 1926 Frankfurt show and, along with the influence of documentary

photography, became clear in *Fifo*. And in a heated 1929 exchange of letters with the writer and photographer Hans Windisch, Moholy-Nagy explained how strongly he felt about the potential of objective photography: “Objective photography must teach us to see. We do not want to subordinate the lens to the insufficiencies of our faculty of seeing and perceiving: it must help us to open our eyes.”⁶¹ Moholy-Nagy was incensed by Windisch’s proposal that manufacturers should be required to insert lenses that would keep the background in photographs fuzzy, to echo more closely the way a human eye perceives space and therefore to limit the realm of possibilities for the camera. A similar desire to limit the amount of focus the photographic lens could achieve had been expressed by the Pictorialist Puyo in 1904 in discussing deficiencies of the photographic process.⁶²

I will examine these issues related to artist inclusion and exclusion in the three major exhibitions from 1909-1929, the mixing of avant-garde and scientific approaches in the installations of the exhibitions, and the concepts of the objective and documentary photography closely in the next three chapters. In each chapter I will examine the organizers, the participating artists, the installation, and the reception of each exhibition, to show how exhibitions were becoming increasingly important vehicles for shaping the discourse around modernist photography; how the organizers, artists, and critics exerted their influence to gradually eliminate the Pictorialists, whom they perceived as an inhibition to photography reaching its true social and artistic potential; how the

⁶¹ László Moholy-Nagy, “Sharp or Unsharp? A Reply to Hans Windisch,” *ifo* 2, no. 20 (1929), in Christopher Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture: 1989), 136.

⁶² Puyo, “Synthetic,” in Bunnell, 169. On his desire for reversing the ongoing perfection of lens development: “One might ask if this particular aspect of photographic images which displeases us so might not be due to the very perfection of the lens systems which produce them; if the vision of the single lens might not possibly more closely resemble the vision of the human eye; and if these aberrations, far from being our enemies, might not serve us as aids.”

exhibitions changed, in both content and design; and finally, how this shift that had already taken place led to the watershed that was *Film und Foto* which then spread the New Vision around the world. The final chapter will explore the influence of German photography exhibitions from this period of 1909-29 on the historiography of photography to this day. Much of that influence, however, is based on a misreading of the initial goals of the New Vision and its tenets of display.

To give an example of how dominant the New Vision was perceived to be as a result of *Film und Foto*, see the frustrated words of New Vision detractors in a 1929 essay for the journal *bauhaus*, an essay which has been attributed by Christopher Phillips to former Moholy-Nagy collaborator (and editor of the journal) Ernő Kallai and Moholy-Nagy's competitor, photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch:

In the fashionable photography—with a few exceptions—affectedness and craving for originality are coupled with a lack of aesthetic standards and of craft. A blatant example: the Stuttgart exhibition, a selection of photographic ephemera in pretentious get-up. Not the kind of thing that should be shown in such an exhibition, namely, a cross section of international photography, measured by the best that can be found between the poles. Instead, it was a random heap of photos with only one common denominator: their mediocrity. In place of quality, quantity. Proof: the almost unanimous enthusiasm of the press. The recipe for success: shoot from above or below. Enormous enlargements or reductions, the trash can as the most satisfying motif. Send negative prints to the press, the monster eats everything. (Motive: new, interesting visual effects) Take pictures at night, underexposure has the most interesting effects. And then: let chance work for you, it'll do the job. That's how modern photos are made, health food for magazines and conversational fodder for the culture-mongers, to the job of their creators.⁶³

The resentment in this review was motivated by the alliance between Kallai and Renger-Patzsch. The latter regularly contributed articles to the journals *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* and *Das Kunstblatt*, positing his ideas of strict photographic realism as the only

⁶³ "Postscript to Photo-Inflation/Boom Times," *Bauhaus* 3 no. 4 (October-December 1929): 20, in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 141.

legitimate path for serious photographers, in opposition to Moholy-Nagy's support for photographic experimentation. Despite being included with fourteen photographs at *Fifo*, Renger-Patzsch was bitter at the perceived overshadowing of his methods, which emphasized photography's role more as a close observer to study objects in isolation, rather than as a method for opening up possibilities of vision as Moholy-Nagy viewed it. As Kallai commented, in *Fifo* there was an overwhelming emphasis on views from above or below, enlargements, and positive/negative images, the principle techniques of Moholy-Nagy's New Vision—although he missed the point of dynamic subject matter. Kallai and Renger-Patzsch did understand that the perception of who was or was not included in *Film und Foto* could potentially carry great historical weight, and it disturbed them. They understood the power of exhibitions.

The Current Relevance of this Historical Study

Anne McCauley wrote the following description of the state of historiographic studies in photography in the introduction to her guest-edited special issue of the journal *History of Photography*, published in the summer of 1997:

Given the primitive state of (historiographic) studies within the history of photography (and the equally primitive state of historiographical studies within all the visual arts)... The next stage... would be to suggest the causes for photography's shifting social roles, which entails a much more profound awareness of a tiny medium's contribution to a much larger field of human activity, a kind of sociology of photographic knowledge. It is this kind of integrated history of photography that awaits a new generation of scholars.⁶⁴

The introduction outlined a very broad need in the field; in McCauley's longer essay for the special issue, "Writing Photography's History before Newhall," she identified a more

⁶⁴ Anne McCauley, "Guest Editorial," *History of Photography* (Summer 1997): 86.

specific lack in the historiography of photography, that of documenting the historical developments in German photography. She attributes this lapse to the dominance of Beaumont Newhall's book *Photography 1839-1937*—initially written as a catalogue for an exhibition of the same name at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1937—in dictating photography's history to the present: “German photographic history...was arguably more developed than that of any country, in terms of specialized regional histories, the inclusion of photographs in art museums and private collections, and the appreciation of photography's social functions. Its exclusion from Newhall's catalogue and subsequent book was all the more noteworthy.”⁶⁵ She proposed reasons for this, ranging from political realities in Germany during his research phase in 1936, to “Anglophone hostility to German culture,” and the lack of German reading knowledge by British and American critics.⁶⁶ McCauley pointed most specifically to a total lack of knowledge of nineteenth-century German photographers, but she was detecting a general direction in photographic history in the United States post-Newhall as focusing primarily on works from the States, France, and Britain, a direction which “has yet to change significantly.”⁶⁷

Although McCauley did not include exhibition practices among the examples of Germany's sophistication in photography, it was arguably the most developed country in this area as well. The overlooked “appreciation of photography's social functions” can

⁶⁵ Anne McCauley, “Writing Photography's History before Newhall,” *History of Photography* (Summer 1997): 99, n20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 90-91. Although McCauley's essay was written six years ago, it still has yet to change significantly, judging by Eleanor Hight's 2003 CAA session. It was entitled “New Histories of Photography,” which she introduced by stating that “the canon of the history of photography was firmly established in the late 1930s by Beaumont Newhall's catalogue for the exhibition *The History of Photography 1839-1939*. It has changed very little since that time.” *College Art Association 2003 Abstracts* (New York: CAA, 2003), 94.

be crystallized through close analysis of the many photography exhibitions that took place in that country immediately before and in the decade after World War I, as well as the critical response to them. This study aims to undertake this analysis, and in so doing contribute to the expansion of historiographic studies in photography, by showing the complexity of arguments about photography as they were emerging in response to large-scale exhibitions in Germany between 1909-29.

In the years before World War I, a growing desire to use artistic photography for sociocultural and sociopolitical ends increasingly led critics, curators and artists away from the painterly Pictorialist style of photography that dominated late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century critical discussions, as well as exhibitions, which during that period were most often done at small camera clubs and salons. As the exhausted Pictorialist idioms of romanticized landscapes, still lifes, and portraits outlasted their usefulness in the rapidly modernizing environment of early twentieth-century Germany, new approaches surfaced that would culminate in the dominance of the New Vision by the late 1920s.

The major surveys of photographic histories previously favored by scholars—particularly Newhall—presented the New Vision critique of Pictorialism as technical: that the latter's soft-focus technique and manipulated prints stand against the inherent laws and means of the camera. The progressive photographers did indeed repudiate Pictorialist technique, but that is only half of the story. The critique of Pictorialism emanating from the New Vision photographers, as well as the critics and curators who promoted it, was deeply sociocultural in character. I will demonstrate how the debate about Pictorialism extended far beyond the apparatus during the 1920s and before. Five

years prior to World War I the reviews of *Iphad* covered subjects extending from the Pictorialist's disregard for the potential of photography as an art form for the mass population, to the need for photography to confront the social problems of the modern world. After the war the Pictorialists in Germany, who still had considerable institutional support in journals and exhibitions, were accused by many critics of insularity and provincialism, and of ignoring the potential for international influences to revitalize German artistic photography.

From 1928-29 interest grew in the didactic potential of the "New Photography," and the inability of Pictorialism to meet modern challenges. Although not specifically interpreting these exhibitions, cultural critics such as Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer spoke of a dishonest inwardness in art for art's sake techniques that needed to be jettisoned in the modern world. Critics of the interwar shows, as they regarded the onslaught of Pictorialist portraits and landscapes being exhibited, described this same inwardness. The lurking Pictorialism nearly overwhelmed that which was new before it was finally allowed to breathe, and there was a profound awareness of this. I will show many examples of the regressive Pictorialism that lingered prominently until the later 1920s in large exhibitions, and how it co-existed with the New Vision until the latter finally gained preeminence beginning in 1928.

Through analysis of exhibitions and their critical reception from 1909-29, this study will demonstrate that the photographers who confronted contemporary realities were motivated by an interest in photography's "social functions." The result aims to reveal previously overlooked exhibitions in Germany, and a previously overlooked socially based critique of Pictorialism. It further aims to clarify an episode in the

historiography of early twentieth-century photography as well as in German modernism: how the shifting analysis of photography's artistic and societal potential was taking place *then*, knowledge which is still relevant now. These exhibitions absorbed "photography's shifting social roles," a revelation which, if we excavate, will entail, as McCauley suggests, "a much more profound awareness of a tiny medium's contribution to a much larger field of human activity."⁶⁸

⁶⁸ McCauley, "Guest Editorial," 86.

Chapter 2

Internationale Photographische Ausstellung in Dresden, May – October 1909. The First Modern Photography Exhibition of the Twentieth Century: The Masses Invade the Garden

Introduction to *Iphad*

Ute Eskildsen began her survey of interwar photography exhibitions in Germany with a section about an earlier event, the 1909 *Internationale Photographische Ausstellung* (International Photographic Exhibition) in Dresden, also referred to as *Iphad*. She considered it the first important photography exhibition of the twentieth century, particularly given Germany's world predominance in promoting the medium:

German photographic exhibitions played a major role in calling the world's attention to the technical and artistic advances in twentieth-century photography. The first of these exhibitions took place in Dresden in 1909. The *International Photographic Exhibition* was largely a trade exhibition which demonstrated scientific and technical applications of photography, with specific reference to industrial products. Dresden was chosen as the site because it had become the center of the photographic industry in Germany.⁶⁹

In addition to Eskildsen's mention of *Iphad*, Ulrich Pohlmann's "In Harmony with the Enormity of the Times: Remarks on the Reception History of Erfurth's Portraits in Exhibitions and Publications,"⁷⁰ contains a three-page section on the Dresden exhibition,

⁶⁹ Eskildsen, "Innovative Photography," 35. Four of the largest houses in the "photographic trade" (or Industrial) section were based in Dresden. "*Iphad*: A First Impression," *British Journal of Photography* (21 May 1909): 396. Extensive articles analyzing various parts of *Iphad* were published for seven successive weeks in the journal, from May 21 through July 2, 1909. They were anonymous, using the collective "we."

⁷⁰ Ulrich Pohlmann, "Im Einklang mit den Großen der Zeit: Anmerkungen zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Erfurthschen Porträtwerkes in Ausstellungen und Publikationen," in Bodo von Dewitz, *Hugo Erfurth: Photograph Zwischen Tradition und Moderne* (Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 1992), 125-128.

the longest treatment of any of the three focus exhibitions in this study. Pohlmann's work must be expanded in depth to understand this complex event, especially the waning of Pictorialism's relevance. A longer analysis has allowed me to move beyond a monographic approach towards a broader examination of the display of Pictorialism alongside photography that embraced scientific and technological advances. In addition to closely analyzing many of the individual works exhibited at *Iphad* and their installation, I will discuss readings of German reviews and their English-language counterparts, as they are an important part of the story of photographic exchange at the turn of the twentieth century.

The initiative to hold the monumental exhibition came from the German Photographic Association (Deutscher Photographen-Vereins), the photographic industry, and the Dresden Society for the Promotion of Amateur Photography.⁷¹ Pohlmann cited a review of *Iphad* in *Die Woche*, written by the pioneering photography historian Joseph Maria Eder, which declared photography to have now succeeded in proving itself “a cultural factor of the highest priority.”⁷² Other contemporaneous reviews, in *Dekorative Kunst*, and *Camera Work*, described photography as a contemporary superpower,⁷³ and said the exhibition showed “the extent to which photography has ramified in modern civilization.”⁷⁴ These are some of the broad statements that convey the excitement about

⁷¹ Ulrich Pohlmann, “Im Einklang,” in von Dewitz, *Hugo Erfurth*, 125.

⁷² “Kulturfaktor von höchster Bedeutung...” Joseph Maria Eder, “Die Internationale Photographische Ausstellung in Dresden 1909,” *Die Woche*, number 18 (1909): 740, quoted in Pohlmann, “Im Einklang,” in von Dewitz, *Erfurth*, 125. McCauley discusses Eder's training at the University of Vienna, and the various editions of his *Geschichte der Photographie* (1905-32) at length in “Writing Photography's History,” 89.

⁷³ “Die Internationale Photographische Ausstellung...entwirft ein wahrhaft imponierendes Bild von dem Kulturfaktor Photographie. Sie als solche und als technische Großmacht der Gegenwart hingestellt...” Erich Haenel, “Die Internationale Photographische Ausstellung Dresden 1909,” *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 7 (August 1909): 474.

⁷⁴ Charles H. Caffin, “Some Impressions From the International Photographic Exposition, Dresden,” *Camera Work*, no. 28 (October 1909): 33.

photography's potential reach at the time, social, as well as artistic. It was an excitement that coalesced at *Iphad*.

The quotes from contemporaneous reviews, as well as Eskildsen's analysis, illuminates some of the main tensions running through this exhibition of photographic trends in the early twentieth century, tensions that make the show such an interesting subject of study. Eskildsen interprets that the 1909 exhibition was created largely as a trade show, but it is important to point out that distinct sections were maintained (Science and Technical photography, Professional photography, Amateur photography, Industrial photography, etc.). These divisions, while useful organizational tactics, also served to differentiate the more artistic work, represented at *Iphad* by the International Group of Art Photographers,⁷⁵ installed in its own space called the "Hall of Honor." Unlike the rest of the sections, it was not juried but selected by one organizer, the Pictorialist photographer Heinrich Kuehn. Having a distinctive place of honor may have persuaded Kuehn to acquiesce and participate in a "trade show."

Despite this spatial attempt to distinguish the art photographers, many of the established Pictorialists whose works were *not* included in this elite section (including Hugo Erfurth, Nicola Perscheid, and Gertrude Käsebier), were still displayed in grand, decorative frames, and placed in lavish interiors in other areas of the exhibition, such as "The Hall of Princes" ("the Fürstensaal") and the Professional section. This visible yearning for artistic legitimacy was prevalent through much of the Pictorialist period in

⁷⁵ Pohlmann cites a 1905 founding statement by an International Society of Pictorialists, but many of those included in Kuehn's *Iphad* installation were not signatories. Ulrich Pohlmann, *Frank Eugene: The Dream of Beauty* (Munich: Nazareli Press, 1995), 113, n144. Paul Schumann's claim in his *Camera Work* review that this International Group was assembled specifically for the Dresden exhibition seems to have merit. Dr. Paul Schumann, "The 'International Group' at the Dresden Exposition," *Camera Work*, no. 28 (October 1909): 45.

photography and was discussed in Chapter 1. But at *Iphad*, outmoded “high” artistic ideals and rapidly expanding technology were forced to confront each other—and not long after Pictorialist photographers and supportive critics were enjoying the fruits of their efforts to establish respect for photography as a fine art. The Pictorialists did not have much of a chance to hold photographic art in its grasp, as the medium’s technical ability to interest a mass audience cheaply and easily created inevitable barriers to maintaining elitist aims.

The 1909 exhibition was a departure from what had been the primary vehicle for exhibiting art photography in the late nineteenth century—exclusive photo salons and camera clubs, which focused almost entirely on accomplished amateurs.⁷⁶ Examples of “elite photo salons” were listed in Matthies-Masuren’s “Introduction” to the Secession catalogue in 1898: “Societies dedicated to the cultivation and advancement of artistic photography ... London and Paris Salons, the Viennese Camera Club, the Hamburg Kunsthalle, and others.”⁷⁷

Iphad was also unusual in combining the display of industrial products alongside exhibitions of various “types” of photography. This is not to claim that there was not a history of photographic trade shows by the early 1900s, but they were generally not on the art photographers’ exhibition circuit of European salons and clubs. Combining industrial photography and art photography was riskier for the participating artist than a Universal Exposition juxtaposing, for example, paintings by Impressionist artists in one

⁷⁶ Pohlmann argues that the idea of *Iphad* was “to have a large event of all professionals, which meant the end of the separation of amateurs and professionals as practiced in the elite photo salons” (Die Idee zu einer Großveranstaltung sämtlicher Fachkreise, die das Ende den in den elitären Photosalons praktizierten Trennung zwischen Amateur-und Berufsphotographie). Pohlmann, “Im Einklang,” 125. In his unpublished dissertation Oliver Botar lists a handful of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century exhibitions that featured both art photography and scientific photography in Paris, Vienna, Hamburg and Berlin, but he accedes that *Iphad* was the most important of these. Oliver Botar, “Prolegomena,” 506.

⁷⁷ Matthies-Masuren, “Secession,” in Bunnell, 91.

room and cotton looms in another; the ability to maintain any illusion of a visual division or hierarchy was more easily challenged when the medium was identical. Photography's struggle for its identity and the resulting tensions between art and populism, commerce and industry were played out in this exhibition. This struggle would intensify and continue to evolve through the 1920s.

Organization of *Iphad*

There were nearly 1700 exhibitors at *Iphad*.⁷⁸ The organizers took advantage of the ample financial support for the exhibition from the city of Dresden and the photographic industry, allowing the event to be exhaustive, sprawling, and to include large walking gardens that recalled the layouts of the nineteenth-century world expositions of industry (fig. 2-1). The aristocracy sanctioned the spectacle with a lavish opening ceremony attended by the King of Saxony (fig. 2-2). As noted by Professor George Emmerich of the College for Photography, Chemistry, Printing und Engraving in Munich,⁷⁹ one of the organizers of the Professional section, as well as the author of an article about *Iphad* in the journal *Photographische Kunst*, the planning meetings for the event began three years in advance and the juries met dozens of times.⁸⁰ The board of the exhibition, led by Oscar Seyffert and G. Kuhfahl, had access to the most illustrious craftsmen and architects to help them renovate the complex of buildings that had previously been used for painting

⁷⁸ Pohlmann, "Im Einklang," 126. One version of the catalogue goes to 1589. These are only the names of photographers and organizations. Beneath each heading are lists, sometimes long, of photographs. The total number of works is unimaginable—in the tens of thousands.

⁷⁹ "Direktor der Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie, Chemigraphie, Lichtdruck und Gravüre, München." Pohlmann, *Eugene*, 93.

⁸⁰ George Emmerich, "*Iphad*," *Photographische Kunst*, no. 5 (15 June 1909): 62.

and sculpture, and from which would emerge—rather symbolically—a space for photography.⁸¹

I will focus on relationships amongst four of the sections: Professional photography (including the Hall of Princes); the International Group of Art Photographers, who were indirectly linked to the Amateurs in the catalogue;⁸² Science and Technical photography; and an Industrial section with the accompanying Atelierhaus, a studio where visitors could see the various techniques used in development; photographs resulting from those techniques were displayed on the wall (fig. 2-3 shows the five sections of the ground plan). Erfurth was the “Master” of the Atelierhaus, where photographers rejected by juries for the other sections could have their work seen.⁸³ There was additionally a cinema within the exhibition compound, claimed as “the first of its kind” (fig. 2-4).⁸⁴ The pairing of photography and film in large exhibitions would continue after the war, at the 1925 *Kipho*, through *Film und Foto* in 1929.⁸⁵ The two mediums were considered so interdependent in the early twentieth century, it was deemed useful to appraise their advances simultaneously.

The organizational structure which permitted fluidity between types of photography is critical to my thesis concerning the struggle for photography’s identity

⁸¹ Haenel, “*Iphad*,” 478. Both Pohlmann, “Im Einklang,” 126 and Rosenblum, 308, have discussed photography’s early lack of self-confidence by noting that jurors for photography exhibitions before 1900 were usually accomplished in painting and sculpture, in order to elevate the status of photography. By the time of *Iphad* in 1909, photographers judged other photographers.

⁸² The catalogue contains the notation “Amateurgruppe” along the margin of the International Group’s listings. *Internationale Photographische Ausstellung Offizieller Katalog*, 200-202. However, different parties organized the two sections, and as mentioned above it was noted in one of the *Camera Work* reviews that it was in its own Hall of Honor. Dr. Paul Schumann, “The ‘International Group’ at the Dresden Exposition,” *Camera Work*, no. 28 (October 1909): 49.

⁸³ Fritz Hansen, “Wanderungen durch *Iphad*” (“Rambling through *The International Photographic Exhibition*), *Der Photograph*, no. 37 (1909): 146. Erfurth was also on the selection jury for Professional photography and the Industrial section.

⁸⁴ Haenel, *Dekorative Kunst*, 478.

⁸⁵ And again in the 1936 all-German *Film und Foto*, organized by the National Socialist Propaganda Ministry in Dusseldorf, see Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 45.

during this period of 1909-29. Both the breaking down of barriers, one of the primary characteristic of modernity, and the intrusion of mass culture upon the art for art's sake approaches like Pictorialism, were inherent in the presentation of photography in Dresden.

Artists and Works at *Iphad* and Design of the Exhibition

From the descriptions of *Iphad* published in a series of articles in the *British Journal of Photography*, the rooms containing the amateur groups seemed endless to the visitor.⁸⁶

They also had some of the most mind-numbing room configurations. As one example in the "Dresden Amateur" room (fig 2-5), the installer's scattered photographs around a space decorated for a bourgeois couple about to sit down for a meal. The chairs were pulled out, and the white-lace tablecloth had been laid. An armoire contained knick-knacks, with a photograph hung above it, ornately framed as a nineteenth-century landscape might be, and either a baroque gold-leaf mirror, or coat of arms, above that. A pedestal in the corner held a purely decorative sculpture. The selection of photography in this oppressive atmosphere included almost exclusively landscapes, and seemed chosen as an afterthought to the room's decor.

The most prominent art photography section in *Iphad* was the International Group of Art Photographers, officially part of the Amateur section, but existing in its own realm. In the skeptical words of contemporaneous American critic Charles Caffin, they were "all of them, professionals, but distinguished as a group presumably, by the principle at least,

⁸⁶ "If ever a cult or a craft suffered by being presented in too liberal a measure, the so-called pictorial photography of the present day has suffered at the hands of the Dresden organizers." "The Dresden Exhibition: IV," *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 471.

of subordinating commercial to artistic considerations.”⁸⁷ This would be in keeping with the definition of an “artistic amateur,” in contrast to the “professional for hire.”⁸⁸ The German-born Austrian resident Kuehn, who also dictated the number of prints each photographer would be allowed, chose the participants. Matthies-Masuren was given a credit as Director (“Leiter”) alongside Kuehn in the catalogue, so he must have consulted on some level. Kuehn usually received sole organizational credit in reviews.⁸⁹

As discussed in Chapter 1, Matthies-Masuren championed Pictorialism in his writings. It is not surprising that Kuehn would collaborate with him, as Kuehn and his fellow *Kleeblatt* members Henneberg and Watzek had been singled out for praise in Matthies-Masuren’s introduction to the Munich Secession’s *International Exhibition of Art Photography* in 1898. Matthies-Masuren lauded photographers who tried to reduce “photographic sharpness, that is the clear and disturbing delineation of details.”⁹⁰ He disparaged direct manipulation and scratchings on negatives, but supported the tactile gum-bichromate process that Kuehn used so effectively.⁹¹ As a curator and critic, Matthies-Masuren advocated “intellectual reworkings of nature,” rather than “colorless mirror images of nature, produced by purely mechanical and physical means.”⁹² He would later give Kuehn the most prominent position in the photographic section of the

⁸⁷ Charles H. Caffin, “Some Impressions From the International Photographic Exposition, Dresden,” *Camera Work*, no. 28 (October 1909): 34.

⁸⁸ See note 59 above for the distinction defined in Bunnell, “Introduction,” 4. In addition to Bunnell’s definition, Matthies-Masuren described the artistically gifted amateurs—who established photography as a legitimate medium—as working “free from outside influences.” Matthies-Masuren, “Secession,” in Bunnell, 91.

⁸⁹ *Offizieller Katalog der Internationalen Photographischen Ausstellung Dresden 1909*, 200. In Schumann’s review: “The pictures of this group were collected by Herr Heinrich Kuehn, of Austria, at the invitation of the exhibition authorities. The Hall of Honor was placed at Mr. Kuehn’s disposal, and the 250 pictures housed therein. The collection was universally conceded to have deserved this distinction and to have been the keynote of the entire pictorial section.” Schumann, “International Group,” 49

⁹⁰ Matthies-Masuren, “Secession,” in Bunnell, 91.

⁹¹ Kuehn essentially gave himself credit for the first fully realized (“double-layered”) gum print in 1897. Heinrich Kuehn to Erich Stenger, 3 October 1940, Stenger Archive, Agfa Fotohistorama, Cologne.

⁹² Matthies-Masuren citing the painter Wilhelm Trübner in “Secession,” in Bunnell, 92.

1914 Werkbund exhibition, which will be discussed briefly at the start of the next chapter. Matthies-Masuren and Kuehn consistently reciprocated favors for nearly two decades.

There were 244 works included in the International Group (fig. 2-6)⁹³ by eighteen photographers: Annie W. Brigman (six photographs), Alvin Langdon Coburn (seventeen), F. Holland Day (four), W.B. Dyer (one), Frank Eugene (seven), Herbert G. French (four), Joseph Keiley (six) also an important publicist and critic for the Photo-Secessionist movement, George Seeley (six), Edward Steichen (thirty), Alfred Stieglitz (fourteen), Clarence White (twenty-three), J. Craig Annan (seven), George Davison (five), Robert Demachy (ten), Kuehn himself (twenty-three), Baron A. de Meyer (eight), Friedrich Spitzer (six), plus thirty-seven autochromes by Kuehn (fig. 2-7), de Meyer, A. Personnaz, and Steichen. Several German art museums purchased prints from this display, a direct example of the exhibition's influence.⁹⁴ More than half of the photographers who received the distinction of appearing in this display were Americans (eleven of them, including Brigman, Coburn, Day, Dyer, Eugene, French, Keiley, Seeley, Steichen, Stieglitz, and White), while just a few artists from the United Kingdom (Annan, Davison, de Meyer), France (Demachy, Personnaz), and Austria (Spitzer and Kuehn) were also included. The Photo-Secessionist group founded by Stieglitz in 1902 was especially prominent, with himself, Coburn, Day, Eugene, Keiley, Steichen, and White all members. The review in *The British Journal of Photography* claimed this emphasis

⁹³ Schumann's count of "approximately 250 works" was more accurate than *The British Journal*, which stated: "The International Union has the place of honor. Its works are shown in a room of noble proportions, where two-hundred works are hung with plenty of space between them." "The Dresden Exhibition IV," *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 471.

⁹⁴ Schumann, "The International Group," 49.

on Americans to be both “curious” and “something of an embarrassment.”⁹⁵ It should have been considered more of an embarrassment to the Germans than the British. Only two participants had peripheral claims to being German; Kuehn was born in Dresden but resided in Innsbruck, and Eugene was an American living in Munich.

The work of Brigman, the sole female participant in the International Group, is a good starting point for analyzing the type of photograph considered worthy of inclusion to this elite section. *The Bubble*, 1905 (fig. 2-8, cat no. 678/12), is allegorical in nature, composed in a stagey manner, with a nude woman partially submerged in a lake and reaching for a transparent orb.⁹⁶ The contrasts of light to the primarily dark photograph are subtly gradated rather than stark, creating an overall sense of gloom and foreboding. The gelatin silver print is extremely grainy, which shrouds the “photographic-ness” of the image. The barely visible rocks and branches in addition to the lake that dominates the composition’s lower half make it clear—to the trained eye—that the woman’s body should be equated by the viewer with the natural elements in the photograph; to the untrained eye, this was probably perceived as impenetrable esoterica. Despite the image’s bleakness, there are smatterings of contrasts that soften the flesh of the nude, sensualizing and idealizing her body. The mood of *The Bubble* is darkly romantic; however, the equation of the female nude with water, symbolically the source of life, in an allegorical setting also recalls more classicized works of art from the nineteenth

⁹⁵ “The Dresden Exhibition IV,” *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 473. This was an ongoing point of discussion. Newhall made reference to a Linked Ring exhibition in London, 1908, where outrage was expressed that over half of the participants were Americans. It led to the demise of that salon group. Newhall, *History of Photography*, 162-63.

⁹⁶ The bubble in the photograph is reminiscent of the orb that reflects the universe in Vermeer’s *Allegory of Faith*, c. 1671-74; see Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., *Johannes Vermeer* (Washington, D.C: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 192. The Pictorialists often borrowed already well-established references from the history of painting.

century, such as Ingres' *The Source*, 1856 (fig. 2-9), a title Brigman gave to another one of her photographs included at *Ipahd*.

Through its subject and execution, Brigman's work contains the yearning for painting and artistic legitimacy. *The British Journal* reacted against the forced appearance of her exhibited works:

The nude studies of Miss Annie Brigman are, we think, too ambitious in their literary interest. She is too anxious to tell a story, with the result that her figures are combined in an uncomfortable way with various natural objects, and the legitimate interest of nude studies—namely, beauty of form and modeling—is dissipated in far-fetched ideas of the romantic, where nudity seems to be forcibly imported.⁹⁷

Stieglitz's entries in the International Group also displayed their constructed lineage to the subjects of nineteenth-century painting, particularly the striking *Netmender*, 1894 (fig. 2-10, cat 692/177). Stieglitz named this as his own favorite "picture" in an 1899 article, in which he described the poetic qualities of the woman's labor as she toils in the harsh, unfolding dunes of Holland.⁹⁸ The placement of the working-class figure in the foreground of a vast landscape—in a manner which allows her to dominate that space—provokes comparison with the mid-to late nineteenth-century Realist painters: Jean Millet, Gustave Courbet, and Max Liebermann all used similar compositional tools to heroicize working people and their relationship to their crafts and the land (e.g. Liebermann, *Woman with Goats in the Dunes*, 1890, fig. 2-11). The *Netmender* was hailed in reviews for its large size, showing the critics' susceptibility to wooing through the grandiosity they equated with painting. An example is Paul Schumann's in *Camera*

⁹⁷ "The Dresden Exhibition IV," *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June, 1909): 473. They proceed to align Coburn's work with Brigman's flaws: "Coburn's work suffers from a similar striving. His faculty of beauty-perception seems to become atrophied at times."

⁹⁸ Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 156, citing Alfred Stieglitz, "My Favorite Picture," *Photographic Life*, vol. 1 (1899): 11-12.

Work, where he lavished praise on “the superb picture of *The Netmender*, one of the few pictures of large size in this exhibit.”⁹⁹

Although *The Netmender* clearly fit into the iconography of nineteenth-century art as typically associated with painting, Schumann interestingly singled it out for its “precision of form” while concomitantly praising its achievement of “artistic” results; Schumann found this particularly impressive in light of the fact that “the present tendency is toward vagueness.”¹⁰⁰ Unlike Matthies-Masuren and Puyo, he did not believe the exactitude of photography had to preclude its artistic potential.

Edward Steichen, with thirty photographs included in the exhibition, was the most esteemed member of the group. Steichen was already well-known in European art circles because of his Luxembourg birth, as well as his residence in Paris from the turn of the century through the years before World War I, where he spent most of his time painting.¹⁰¹ Among his pieces in the Kuehn display was the portrait, *Rodin*, “*The Thinker*” (Rodin, le penseur), ca. 1902 (fig. 2-12, cat. no. 691/133). Steichen arranged Auguste Rodin theatrically, the master with his masterpiece. The celebrated sculptor turns toward his work in dark profile, echoing its pose, as if we have interrupted a moment of self-admiration and self-identification. Steichen used the gum bichromate process in printing his series of Rodin portraits. As mentioned earlier, brushing a sheet with this chemical mixture before development of the negative provided a surface that

⁹⁹ Schumann, “International Group,” 47. Although to be fair, he makes the argument that the larger the print, the more difficult the execution. There are other examples of this attitude: *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 473: “So much for the composition of the International Union. We hasten to add that the contents of its gallery tower above the other pictorial collections largely because of Steichen, White, and Kuehn, the bigness and certainty of whose work impresses on one the mastery of his art possessed by each author.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ His residence was listed as Montparnasse, Paris, in the *lphad* catalogue, 201, and he was still spelling his name “Eduard.”

could achieve the level of rich tonalities seen in *Rodin*, “*The Thinker*.” The malleability of gum-bichromate printing allowed Steichen the freedom to cast the lighting in an atmospheric manner to further romanticize Rodin’s sculpture, with glints of light emanating from its musculature. This image strives for a mystification of genius.

Clarence White, along with Kuehn himself, had the second largest number of photographs at *Iphad* (twenty-three), including *The Orchard*, 1902 (fig. 2-13 cat. no. 693/189). Newhall wrote a general analysis of White’s routine procedures of creating *mise en scènes*, which is applicable to this photograph: “White ... sent portraits distinguished for their sense of light; his platinotypes of genre groups of young ladies, dressed in costumes he had designed and carefully posed in the soft light of early morning or late twilight, often had a lyric quality.”¹⁰² The passage describes almost exactly *The Orchard*, a group of three such “young ladies” in lyrical poses distributed gracefully in the landscape. The photographs thus far analyzed from the International Group all followed conventions of painting, particularly in the theatrical arrangement of figures and gestures. The frozen poses negated the sense of dynamism for which photography would be promoted as new approaches emerged after World War I. Another of White’s included images, *The Mirror* (*Der Spiegel*), ca. 1909 (fig. 2-14, cat. No. 693/200), embodied the same spirit of Brigman’s nudes that had been described by the *British Journal* as “dissipated in far-fetched ideas of the romantic.” The reflection in the mirror epitomized the surface beauty and enclosed self-referentiality the Pictorialists often emphasized.

As Schumann’s review stated, “The International Society (sic) is really nothing more than a group of American workers who have admitted a few distinguished

¹⁰² Newhall, *History*, 158.

foreigners into their ranks;”¹⁰³ although two of them, Coburn and Frank Eugene, claimed residences in both the U.S. and Europe, Coburn in New York and London, Eugene in New York and Munich. One of the British participants in the exhibition, Adolf de Meyer, had mostly portraits included, but also still-lives, including one entitled *Water Lilies*. In an example of a de Meyer *Water Lilies* from 1906 (fig. 2-15), the transparent and glistening bowl casts a reflection below itself, and refracting rays of light which seep into all corners of the photograph dematerializes the subject. The print as a whole has a gauzy effect, a feeling of unreality, and hence a lack of concreteness or gravity.

Eugene was a Pictorialist who practiced extremes of print manipulation. The *Iphad* catalogue listed two of Eugene’s works which were included in the International Group (one was listed as *Profil*, another *Alfred Stieglitz, Esq.*). In analyzing a portrait of Stieglitz entitled *Alfred Stieglitz Esquire: Photographer and Truthseeker*, 1899 (fig. 2-16),¹⁰⁴ one sees the dramatic etches which were Eugene’s signature technique, striating Stieglitz’s face and the wall behind him. Eugene used embellishment to heighten the symbolic nature of his portraits, attempting to convey some quality about the sitter pictorially. In a portrait shown in the section of *Iphad* devoted to photography schools, *Hortensia*, 1898 (fig. 2-17), the dematerialized flesh and clinging drapery is echoed in the soft-focus background wall. In viewing the Stieglitz at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the lines are also softened—they almost appear swabbed on. But the technique does not

¹⁰³ Schumann, “International Group,” 45. The “Internationale Vereinigung” is translated as International Group, Society, or Union depending on the review, with “Group” used most consistently.

¹⁰⁴ I cannot be sure this is the exact portrait, although it has the same title as the listing in the *Iphad* catalogue. The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s catalogue of this work does not list *Iphad* in the work’s substantial exhibition history, which includes Munich 1908 and New York, 1909 (a show at the National Arts Club in February). Weston Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Viking Press, 1978), 354.

succeed in making him seem anymore the “truthseeker.” It has little effect, except perhaps to improve the look of Stieglitz’s skin, as a glossy Hollywood shot might do.

The photographer Paul B. Haviland wrote a piece in *Camera Work* referring to Eugene’s intrusion into the print: “Frank Eugene was the first of pictorial photographers to take liberties with his negatives, using the etching needle where he felt it necessary to *correct* the values given by ‘straight development.’”¹⁰⁵ Once again, similar to previously mentioned passages by Puyo and Matthies-Masuren, there is clear sense that the proponents of Pictorialism viewed the exactitude of photography as its primary burden or flaw. Haviland asserted that Demachy, the master of the gum bichromate process, was influenced by Eugene in his early efforts to make his prints look like “lithographs, etchings, or works in other media.”¹⁰⁶ Although techniques like those used by Eugene would be heavily criticized by the more forward thinking critics who wrote about *Iphad*, he was highly decorated with awards for his exhibited work at the exhibition, including the Medal of the City of Dresden.¹⁰⁷

Demachy himself was very concerned with the display of Pictorialist photography. His short review of the “Paris Photo-Club Salon” followed one of the many *British Journal* reviews of *Iphad*. Demachy used it to construct arguments around elitist attitudes towards other photographers and the public. He emphasized the need for more exclusivity in such exhibitions, noting the hanging committee at the Photo-Club could not give “proper spacing.”¹⁰⁸ In describing the Americans, Demachy disliked their

¹⁰⁵ Paul B. Haviland, “The Accomplishments of Photography and Contributions of the Medium to Art,” *Camera Work*, no. 33 (January 1911): 67. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Schumann, “International Group,” 48.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Demachy, “Paris Photo-Club Salon,” *The British Journal of Photography* (4 June 1909): 435.

“disregard—or is it contempt”¹⁰⁹ of qualities cherished by artists in other mediums. He equated their “strangeness of arrangement” with the youth of the American school, and seemed disturbed by a flat patterning in their work that reminded him of design.¹¹⁰ He admitted to being biased toward “old-time methods...of rendering Nature” that were not so removed from “the French conception of art.”¹¹¹ Finally, he expressed his disappointment with the Autochrome (color photography) section. Although Autochromes excited the visitors to the Salon, Demachy disparaged the crowd-pleasing novelty of their appearance, stating that an “unfavorable verdict has been quite unanimous on the part of the painters.”¹¹² He created an antagonistic relationship between unnamed painters and the viewing public in this essay: “...on the side of the public, visitors are interested, astonished, and often enthusiastic, but their enthusiasm goes toward glaring colors; the two or three plates which have found some favor with the painters being overlooked by them.”¹¹³

The Pictorialists photographers not invited to the elite International Group, including Erfurth, and, interestingly, the American Käsebier, who remains a touchstone in the canon of Pictorialism, were divided into the Professional and Amateur sections, which flanked the International Group.¹¹⁴ Eugene was the only photographer in this German professional section who was also singled out for inclusion in the Kuehn

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 436. He further criticized the big black framing and gray mounts around Steichen’s dark prints, disliking their inconsistency with the lighter mounts of the other Photo-Secessionists, who surrounded their leader.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid. Demachy’s enthusiasm for the painterly was noted critically in the British Journal’s review of the International Group: “His work is incompatible with the American products surrounding it. As oil prints these pictures require to be seen in a class with others of their kind, where their painter-like qualities would not clash with the smoothness of photographically derived prints.” “Dresden Exhibition IV,” *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 473.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Caffin described the International Group as “sandwiched” between the Amateurs and Professionals. “Some Impressions,” 34.

installation. Eugene, Erfurth, Rudolph Dührkoop, Grainer, and Ruf had their own small rooms within the Professional section. Although Erfurth did not participate in the International Group, he had considerable power to shape *Iphad* as a juror for the Industrial and Professional sections, and as director of the Atelierhaus.¹¹⁵

The Hall of Princes subdivision of the Professional section was intended to demonstrate that photography had “established and gentrified itself among the noble part of society as an accepted means of expression.”¹¹⁶ Professor Emmerich arranged the Hall, with depictions of European aristocrats and heads of governments, and furnishings from the Dresden royal palace.¹¹⁷ The classical architecture of the Hall signified its visual attachment to the traditional rather than the new (fig. 2-18): Roman arches framed groups of photographs, and alternated with pilasters and gilt-edged chairs; elaborate clocks were wedged into each of the corners, and an ornate eighteenth-century table was placed squarely in the middle of the room. Two of the Erfurth portraits in the Hall, visible through the arch on the right, depicted the Saxon princesses Maria Alix and Anna Pia Monica, both 1909 (figs., 2-19 and 2-20, cat nos 486-487). The photographs of the princesses followed conventions of portrait painting from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The girls enacted self-conscious poses in three-quarter position with visible but out-of-focus impressionistic landscapes as backdrops. Their high social

¹¹⁵ Pohlmann, “Im Einklang,” 126.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. “Eine Salonschau mit Arbeiten von aristokratischen Amateurphotographen auf der Dresdner Ausstellung sollte demonstrieren, daß sich die Photographie auch als ein in gesellschaftlich ‘vornehmen’ Kreisen akzeptiertes Ausdrucksmittel nobilitiert hatte.”

¹¹⁷ Identified in *Iphad* catalogue as “Bearbeitung des Fürstensaales durch Professor Emmerich.” “Raum 11,” *Offizieller Katalog der Internationalen Photographischen Ausstellung Dresden 1909* (Dresden: Wilhelm Baensch, 1909), unpaginated. This is a different version of the “official catalogue” than the one cited earlier. Emmerich helped Eugene get a job at the same school in Munich. Pohlmann, *Frank Eugene*, 93. This school had its own exhibition space at *Iphad* with works by Eugene and his students.

status was indicated to the viewer in each portrait by a prop, a doll in elaborate, virginal white clothing, echoing that of the princesses.

Erfurth functions as an evocative example of photography's identity struggle at this moment of the 1909 exhibition and beyond into the further reaches of this study. His work was not included in the highest echelons of Kuehn's International Group of Art Photographers. He was, however, esteemed as an exponent of a conservative style, as evidenced by his work in the Hall of Princes, and by having been given his own well-appointed room for a one-man exhibition in the Professional Photography section (fig. 2-21), complemented by a plush rug, couch and table. And yet at the same time, he was in charge of the Atelierhaus or "sample studio" for artistic professional photography (fig. 2-22), located in a small, self-contained building. As mentioned earlier, the building contained both a model studio and a darkroom, which allowed for a personalized view of the everyday realities of the practicing photographer, with attendant photographs hung on the wall. Erfurth and other organizers of *Iphad* simultaneously romanticized photography as art, by aggrandizing it through portraits of the aristocracy in plush rooms—yet puncturing any veneer of the elevated nature of photography by bringing its practices down to a level that all visitors to the exhibition could see and comprehend.

The *British Journal* account of the Science/Technical section revealed another parallel to this tension in what was "undoubtedly the chief interest of the Exhibition,"¹¹⁸ and a section of "great popular and educational character."¹¹⁹ One of the science rooms opened *directly* from Kuehn's International Group and accommodated forty-four cabinets containing cameras and instructions on methods of use, each described as an "apparatus

¹¹⁸ "The Science and Technical Sections," *The British Journal of Photography* (28 May 1909): 417.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 418.

for a demonstration of some basic fact of photography or vision in such a state that pressure on a button, or turning of a handle, allows the observer to perform the experiment himself.”¹²⁰ In effect, visitors to the elite section of art photography would then confront the demythologization of those same photographic processes in the next room. The differentiation was aural as well as optical and haptic;¹²¹ the journal described the attraction of the sounds in the room next to Kuehn’s installation: “In a room opening out from that in which the pictorial work of the ‘International Vereinigung’ is shown there is a sound of light-running motors: the whirr of the wheels is just enough to remind the observer of the American photographs that Art is not everything.”¹²²

The Science/Technical section was filled with the type of material that the Pictorialists tried to separate from their enterprise. Further, it was the identical material that modern photographers after the war would use in combination with their own experimental work to empower the photographic audience by disjuncting their everyday visual perspective. Karl Weiss reproduced a selection of this material in a book published concurrently with the exhibition, *Iphad: In Wort und Bild (Iphad: In Word and Image)*.¹²³ The selection included experiments in “fish perspective,”¹²⁴ distorted views from below subjects including suspension bridges and a group of workers standing in a circle above a hole in the ground (fig. 2-23). Aerial shots of Dresden were installed, allowing the viewer an alternative experience of the city where he/she was standing (fig. 2-24). Stop-action photographs of lightning unattainable by the human eye were

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ This offers an alternative to Janet Ward’s recent interpretation of large-scale exhibitions at the turn of the century: that they conditioned crowds to the principle of advertisements and the fetish of commodities through a “look, but don’t touch” policy. Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 21-22.

¹²² “The Science and Technical Sections,” *The British Journal of Photography* (28 May 1909): 418.

¹²³ Karl Weiss, *Iphad: In Wort und Bild* (Dresden: Wilhelm Baensch, 1909).

¹²⁴ “Aufnahmen aus der Fischperspektive.” Ibid., 50.

included (fig. 2-25), as well as x-rays which displayed to viewers how their own bodies could be penetrated by light (fig. 2-26). All of these images elucidated unfamiliar and exciting views of the material world, and the modern world, in a manner that the Pictorialists in the next room were completely detached from.

A selection of reproductions from the Institut Marey was installed in the Science/Technical section (fig. 2-27). The dissemination of experiments by Jules-Etienne Marey was deeply influential on both painters and photographers of the prewar avant-garde, especially the Futurists, as well Marcel Duchamp and František Kupka. All incorporated the dynamism of Marey's sequential chronophotographic studies of human and animal movement into their paintings and photographs (see the Bragaglia brothers, *The Smoker*, 1913, fig. 2-28). The reproductions demonstrated how silver threads were attached to bodies to record their motion in a darkened room. The loans also included reproductions of the photographic "gun," which made the successive images possible—Weiss described the device as taking a "cinematographic" depiction of movement.¹²⁵ The image of a more advanced prototype to cinema, the zoetrope, was part of the display as well, allowing the public to grasp the perceptual phenomena that made cinema possible.

Photographs were not yet categorized as "documentary" in this exhibition, but the photo-as-social-document was in evidence in other images from this vast section. The photograph of three Japanese women possesses casualness, honesty, and spontaneity (fig. 2-29), as well as a realistic sense of localized context, with an absence of the patronizing over-exoticization that characterized many Pictorialist images of the Far East. Fig. 2-30 shows an example of the latter, albeit ca. 1926, a Perscheid photograph of a young

¹²⁵ Ibid., 51.

European girl in Japanese kimono and sandals, an Asian doll and the shadow of a Japanese tree in the background. The childlike innocence is equated with idealized and untouched faraway lands. An image of birds in flight (fig. 2-31) demonstrated a growing interest in nature photography and zoology. Other categories expanded the knowledge of functional uses of photography; the head of the Dresden Police Service, Herr Koeltigg, organized three large rooms called “Detection of Crime,” which exposed the public to the growing uses of photography in areas of criminal surveillance (fig. 2-32). Koeltigg was even invited to write a three-page introduction to these procedures in the catalogue.¹²⁶

The overlapping of “high” and “low” at *Iphad* continued through the Industrial section, located in a different building than the Professional, Amateur, and Science/Technical photographs. In the Industrial Hall, the photographic paper and camera industries showcased their technologies through examples of photographs by Erfurth and Perscheid, among others (fig. 2-33). It is useful to directly compare the installation design of the Vereinigte Fabriken Photographischer Papiere Dresden (United Photographic Paper Fabricators of Dresden) room in the Industrial Hall with that of the Hall of Princes (cf. fig. 2-18).

On the wall to the right of the entrance to the Fabriken Papiere room, one sees a cropped three-quarter portrait, taken in the same style as the larger-scale aristocratic portraits in the Hall of Princes, like those of Princesses Maria Alix and Anna Pia. However, in this “industrialized” space, many small works were hung together, creating an overall graphic jolt. The frames were considerably less ornate than in the royal room— simple white frames which created a contrasting optic sensation against the dark wall, similar to the effect of the black and white striated wallpaper visible through the

¹²⁶ “The Science and Technical Sections,” *The British Journal of Photography* (28 May 1909): 418.

doorway to another room of the section. The photographs were much more accessible to the viewer, in the way the hanging brought attention to the wall's flatness, in contrast to the majestic architectural recession present in the Hall of Princes space. The viewer was not forced to walk through arches to communicate with the photographs in the fabric room, nor experience a divan or a chair between themselves and the image, nor a bulky frame.¹²⁷ As will be discussed later, in the critical response to *Iphad*, there would also be an awareness of how the design techniques met or did not meet needs of the spectator, an awareness that would develop into a primary concern to the avant-garde of the 1920s.¹²⁸

The industrialized space of the Fabriken Papiere room jettisoned the use of luxurious décor. The architectural elements were simple, and harmonized with the photographs, creating a rhythm reminiscent of the integrated arts and crafts interiors like those that Peter Behrens, who was considered a master of spaces for which the objects within “would invite use.”¹²⁹ The one distraction in the paper fabric room was a plant placed in the center, but it was set on a simple platform, ornamented with carved rectangles within rectangles, a staid furnishing when compared to the undulating cabriole legs of the round table in the Hall of Princes, or the plush bourgeois couch in Erfurth's solo exhibition within the Professional section, or the overly-pruned, hothouse garden configuration of the International Group. There was an acknowledgment in the Industrial

¹²⁷ Strategies of composing the surface of a wall to visually engage spectators would later be a particular focus of the 1920s avant-garde exhibition designers like El Lissitzky in what he called his “demonstration rooms” and Moholy-Nagy and Lissitzky at *Fifo*.

¹²⁸ Pohlmann cites a 1911 reviewer who is already demanding sensitivity to the spectators' needs that a show either be small enough to be taken in easily, or if it is large that it provide a jolt to the brain: “So blieben also nur zwei Auswege: entweder kleine Ausstellungen zu arrangieren, die der Gast mit der Masse bei einem einzigen Rundgang durchforschen kann, oder aber grossen Ausstellungen solche Anziehungskraft zu verleihen, dass das ermüdete Hirn einen nachhaltigen Eindruck empfängt.” Pohlmann, “Im Einklang,” 128, citing Müller-Heim, “Die Kunst auszustellen,” *Der Photograph*, 21 (1911): 218.

¹²⁹ Alan Windsor, *Peter Behrens: Architect and Designer* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1981), 24.

section that photography could be the symbol, or vehicle, of something useful and practical, as well as sell products. Placed behind the central building of the exhibition containing the pretentious displays of amateurs and professionals, the straightforwardness of the Fabriken Papiere presentation must have provided a stark contrast to the visitor. To underscore even further photography's role in conflating the line between arts and commerce in this exhibition, there was a camera displayed in the section of the Industrial Hall given to the Goerlitz company of Ernst, Herbst and Fihrl, built according to Erfurth's "artistic" specifications.¹³⁰

Many experimental installation techniques were tested in the Industrial Hall. In the "Room for the New Photographic Society in Berlin-Steglitz" (fig. 2-34), the stacks of small photographs to the left, and the installation of other photographs on cylindrical printing rollers, tied photography to something modern and mechanistic, and overwhelmed the viewer from all viewpoints, high and low. Another pummeling visual experience for the visitors was installed in the rotunda at the center of the Industrial building, where the Kodak Company had its wares (fig. 2-35). A frieze of enlarged photographs of the company's headquarters in various world capitals encircled the top of the room. On the walls were "numerous specialties of the company in apparatus and materials."¹³¹ Systems of developing plates and films were demonstrated at the tables so the viewers could experience the technical functions of photographic apparatuses as they did in the Science section. The *British Journal* oddly celebrated the white and gold fabric wall covering and the floor covering of Japanese matting as providing a "light and

¹³⁰ "Iphad," *Photographische Kunst*, no. 7 (1909/10): 98.

¹³¹ "The Trade Section," *The British Journal of Photography* (25 June 1909): 497.

refreshing”¹³² feel to the room. It would seem impossible for a viewer to exit a room such as this feeling light and refreshed.

It is somewhat disconcerting that the more radical attempts to move away from the falsity of bourgeois and aristocratic living room interiors at *Iphad* were to be found in the places designed to help sell consumer goods.¹³³ However, this example of tensions in Dresden between high art, commerce, and broad social appeal to the masses—something that was clearly detected by the critics as we will see below—would ferment and become an issue of enormous import in organizations like the Werkbund and the Bauhaus that counted craftsmen and architects as well as photographers among their members. Confronting the reality that photography could and should be accessible to many, both in purchase and practice, would bring forth fruitful and even radical debates after World War I about photography’s role in society.

Critical Reception of *Iphad* and the Debate About Photography’s Definitions and Roles

An awareness of disintegrating barriers at *Iphad*, between professional and amateur photography, between industrial and art photography, permeated the critical response to the exhibition. Although physical walls still remained between those sections, the fact

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ The bourgeois living room as avant-garde anathema to be cast aside was troped by Marinetti in “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” *Le Figaro* (Paris), 20 February 1909: “We had stayed up all night, my friends and I, under hanging mosque lamps with domes of filigreed brass... for hours we had trampled our atavistic ennui into rich oriental rugs... ‘Let’s go! Friends, away!’” R. W. Flint, ed. and trans., *Let’s Murder the Moonshine, Selected Writings, F.T. Marinetti* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Classics, 1991), 47. The manifesto was published in February 1909, three months before the opening of *Iphad*. Similar imagery was even used by the Pictorialist Käsebier in her expressed intolerance for painted studio backdrops: “paper maiché accessories, high-backed chairs, the potted palm, the artificial flowers, Turkish cushions, the same muslin rose and ...soft-lighting that gives neither an indoor or out of door effect...who has educated the public to a false standard on photography?” Gertrude Käsebier, “Studies in Photography,” *Photographic Times* 30 (June 1898): 270, quoted in Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz*, 83. However, it should also be noted that it is difficult to discern in the reception whether these living room interiors as exhibition constructions were effective in the public’s eyes: i.e., whether they were considered inviting and accessible.

that they were all shown in one venue—and the fluidity with which artists were assigned to the sections—began to raise questions about how the future role of artistic photography in society would be claimed. Because American photographers had such a prominent position in the exhibition, it is useful to closely examine the reception of *Iphad* in one of the premiere forums for photographic criticism in the United States at the time, *Camera Work*, edited by Alfred Stieglitz. European photographers also read *Camera Work*, and Kuehn is known to have been a subscriber until 1914.¹³⁴ Two reviews appeared in the October 1909 issue of the journal, exposing the readership to different points of view; one written by an American critic, the other a translation of a German critic's review from a Dresden newspaper.

The American Charles H. Caffin's review of *Iphad* for *Camera Work* began with a metaphor of how painting and sculpture “made way” for photography in this space.¹³⁵ The grounds had previously been used for exhibitions of the more established fine arts, but the statement also made a more symbolic point of painting and sculpture yielding to photography as an emergent art form. Caffin seemed awed by *Iphad*'s achievement in promoting photography:

The exposition excelled anything of the kind previously attempted. For it represented in panoramic review... the developments which the craft itself has attained... It was indeed the first thoroughly organized effort to show... the extent to which photography has ramified in modern civilization ... So enlightening was its evidence of the far reaching possibilities of photography that the example set by Dresden will necessarily be followed in other progressive communities.¹³⁶

But Caffin went on to criticize many of the “pictorial photographers” for seeming “distrustful” of science: “Instead of jealously preserving the integrity of the photographic

¹³⁴ This is according to correspondence with Richard Whelan, Stieglitz's biographer. Richard Whelan, New York, to author, 2 September 2003.

¹³⁵ Caffin, “Some Impressions,” 33.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

record, they adopt endless devices to elude it”; and that “they resort to the slipshod of accident and to the trickiness of personal interference. In their eagerness to be artists they disregard in their art what the scientists most highly prize (the scientific precision of the medium).”¹³⁷ He pointed to those qualities as the essentially scientific nature of the process and of the precision of the photographic record: that it was the “arbitrary interference with the latter and an ignorance of the former, which are responsible for so much that is tediously commonplace in ordinary commercial photography and so solemnly inefficient in the work of the ambitious pictorialist. *It was this that the Dresden Exposition so impressively emphasized.*”¹³⁸ This extraordinary summation looked to *Iphad*'s scope to encourage a debate about photographic technique, and the implications of technique in the medium's broader uses. Rather than solidifying the aspects of Pictorialism that mimicked other arts, the exhibition laid bare that photography could assert itself successfully through the display of achievements in sections other than “art photography.” The words of this contemporaneous critic allows *Iphad* to be interpreted concurrently as an exhibition that promoted the Pictorialist style which later photography exhibitions would then react against, as well as representing the first highly visible break with Pictorialism in the twentieth century.

Rapturous remarks about photography as educator punctuated Caffin's review, particularly in relation to science and photography's didactic role in modern life: “with the possible exception of that of steam, no discovery has so affected the surface and depths of modern civilization. And the nucleus of its influence is that in an age newly and more profoundly awakened to the scientific aspects of existence, photography itself

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 34. Emphasis added.

is a scientific process, lending itself at every turn to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge”¹³⁹ Caffin did not believe that science and good picture-making needed to be mutually exclusive, rather that artists should take advantage of the science of photography by harnessing it: “graphic art has been enriched by a scientific process.”¹⁴⁰

Caffin was utterly uninspired by the Pictorialist sections of the exhibitions, detecting “conventional trickery” and “flip flops of personal expression.”¹⁴¹ He seems to have been a populist as well as a polarizer: he claimed that those who wished to lift the level of popular appreciation of photography battle those who mimic the other arts, elitists who “imitate tricks of some other of the graphic mediums.”¹⁴² His formal analysis of the visual impact of a work, *Photographer of Men*, in Dresden (uncredited) reveal an interest in the potential of photographic visual arrangements to shock the eye of the viewer that would be echoed by avant-garde artists and theorists in the 1920s:

He had arranged his group of portraits, so that big prints alternated with small ones, the whole forming a kind of chequer board of very and less emphatic spots; so that the general effect was one of a series of detonations, due to the explosion of a gigantic firecracker. It was impossible not to be violently impressed.¹⁴³

Caffin’s populist interpretation of the technology of photography was unfortunately undercut by his gendering of the more scientific photographic approaches as male¹⁴⁴ while he aligned an unnamed Pictorialist as inclined “toward the fairer sex and whose specialty consists in making his prints counterfeit the appearance of an Eighteenth

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid, 35.

¹⁴³ Ibid. Explosions and violence to the senses would become a goal of Moholy-Nagy’s and Lissitzky’s in their photography and exhibition spaces in the 1920s.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid: “aggressively upholding the unadorned virtues of one’s own sex in face of the trimmed and tricked out vanities of the other.”

Century mezzotint.”¹⁴⁵ His description of the feebleness of this “Fifth Avenue” (most likely Clarence White)¹⁴⁶ photographer’s use of light, and the sentimental prettiness of superficial accidents, artifice, coyness, and general sweetness all directly relate to this accusation of femininity.

Caffin criticized another unnamed photographer from Boston (F. Holland Day’s home city) for imitating “the arrangement of an old-English painted portrait,” and was particularly offended by the practice of painting on a negative.¹⁴⁷ One aspect of these painterly practices that seemed the most detrimental to Caffin was their influence on magazine editors, whom he felt were cheating the public, because they refused to familiarize themselves with print qualities that were “... most worthily photographic.”¹⁴⁸ Magazines were beginning to become a greater source of information for the public in these years. August Sherl, owner of the German magazines *Die Woche* and *Der Tag*, showed that photography had taken over the illustration of “newspapers,” by arranging hundreds of magazine illustrations in large frames for the Science section of *Iphad*.¹⁴⁹ Although the true explosion of photography in news magazines would occur during and after World War I, Caffin thought the use of “bastard” photogravure prints was prolonging the “ignorance of the public as to its [photography’s] real value.”¹⁵⁰

Caffin pushed for mass photographic literacy, which he clearly believed magazines would foster. He was rhetorically technocentric about the medium, believing “a thorough familiarity with the technicalities of the craft of photography must precede

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. Despite this invective, Caffin’s review would later praise the skills of prominent female photographers like Gertrude Käsebier, who was also an award winner in Dresden.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Clarence White had moved to 31st and Fifth Avenue in 1907. Marianne Fulton, ed., *Pictorialism into Modernism: the Clarence H. White School of Photography* (New York: Rizzoli, 1996), 40.

¹⁴⁷ Caffin, “Some Impressions,” 36.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ “Press Photography,” *The British Journal of Photography* (28 May 1909): 420.

¹⁵⁰ Caffin, “Some Impressions,” 36.

any satisfactory artistic use of it.”¹⁵¹ With this familiarity, the photographer who possessed artistic talent would develop it quickly. Like Moholy-Nagy, who would be interpreted posthumously and unfairly as focused solely on technique, Caffin possessed a belief in the potential of photography’s broad social reach through its technique, and he viewed this exhibition as a way to promote that point of view.

Caffin went on to praise American professional photographers for reaching this level of achievement. But, in keeping with his criticism of manipulation, he noted that Gertrude Käsebier was not at her best, that “her experiments with Japanese tissue printing and with the gum-process were more than a little distressing.”¹⁵² His highest praise for professionals was reserved for the Germans, whose work he described as the “least hackneyed” and versatile, not based on extraneous devices, but upon the essential resources of the medium.”¹⁵³ Dührkoop, Erfurth, and Grainer, who had the larger rooms in the Professional section, were all praised, although they often used heavy manipulation in their prints. It seemed Caffin would accommodate manipulation in his criticism, if he saw that the artistry of a work did not depend solely on it, and particularly if he believed the photographer had mastered their chosen processes. Throughout the concluding page of the review, Caffin asserted that the talents of these German photographers were of a national character, in part due to cultivated minds “characteristic of a German education.”¹⁵⁴

In the final paragraph Caffin warned the “art for art’s sake” principles that had failed in painting threatened photography unless the Secessionists (Stieglitz, Steichen,

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵² Ibid. It is an interesting criticism of her, as *Camera Work* printed its illustrations on Japanese tissue paper.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

White) continued nourishing themselves. He feared their current work had “a certain exhaustion of vitality.”¹⁵⁵ A similarly negative physical reaction, this time of “nausea” caused by a Pictorialist “out-of-focus photograph,” was noted by the *British Journal of Photography*.¹⁵⁶ Caffin’s physical response is also reminiscent of an earlier critic’s struggle with academic art: Baudelaire’s “uneasiness, boredom and fear” (inconnues, du malaise, de l’ennui) caused by the “rarefied air” of the sanctuary “consecrated” to the works of Ingres at *The Exposition Universelle* of 1855 in Paris.¹⁵⁷

In contrast to Caffin’s review, Dr. Paul Schumann’s review in *Camera Work*, translated from the *Dresdner Anzeiger*, focused solely on Kuehn’s exhibition of the International Group and was more positive in tone. He noted that Kuehn was given domain over the Hall of Honor for his show, stating that it was “universally conceded to have deserved this distinction and to have been the keynote of the entire pictorial section.”¹⁵⁸ Schumann observed that Kuehn chose only one “German” for the International Group, the American expatriate Frank Eugene. Kuehn’s relationship to Stieglitz helps to explain his slant toward the Americans. Stieglitz, the clear leader of American Pictorialism through his founding of the Photo-Secession, *Camera Work*, and Gallery 291, had spent nine of his prime working years based in Germany (1881-90), from the time he was thirty-two years old until he was forty-one. He studied techniques

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 39. Considering that Caffin was writing this review for Stieglitz’s journal, this was a bold statement, although apparently Stieglitz admired Caffin for his candor. As relayed by Nancy Newhall to Thomas F. Barrow, after Caffin wrote “a scathing criticism of Stieglitz” in *Harper’s Weekly* about the first Philadelphia Salon of 1898, Stieglitz recommended him for a writing job. Thomas F. Barrow, “Introduction,” in Charles H. Caffin, *Photography as a Fine Art* (1901; repr., New York: Morgan and Morgan, Inc., 1971), unpaginated

¹⁵⁶ “The Dresden Exhibition IV,” *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 471, quoting Sir William Abney, who described an earlier display of Pictorial photography that “produced in him an absolute sensation of nausea.” They parallel his experience to that of the galleries of ‘amateurphotographie’ at Dresden.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Baudelaire, *Art in Paris 1845-62: Salons and Other Exhibitions*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), 130.

¹⁵⁸ Schumann, “International Group,” 49.

alongside Kuehn, and was even photographed doing so (Frank Eugene, *Eugene, Steichen, Stieglitz, Kuehn*, n.d., fig. 2-36).

Schumann had a tendency similar to that of Caffin, of making gendered analogies regarding the techniques of the Pictorialist photographers, although he was not as derogatory in his comments about those tending toward the “feminine.” Steichen, celebrated by Schumann as having “perfect mastery of technique,” was given credit for his “powerful” handling of contrasts, and avoiding crude theatrical effects.¹⁵⁹ According to Schumann, Steichen carefully considered the limitations of photography—he did not reach beyond his medium, but excelled within its confines. Clarence White’s art, on the other hand, despite being celebrated in this review for its excellence, was labeled by Schumann as “gentle and feminine,” with small prints and mostly indoor views.¹⁶⁰ Schumann argued that artistic results were indeed obtainable by precision of form as seen in the efforts of Stieglitz’s *The Netmender*, and the Scottish photographer J. Craig Annan’s *Sterling Castle*—he opposed “vagueness,” although not as vigorously as Caffin.¹⁶¹ Masculinity, clarity, and mastery of photographic technology were being set up as tactics to triumph over Pictorialism, and the latter two would be used by the proponents of the New Vision for that purpose with success. Unfortunately, these paradigms would overshadow the more important aspects of the New Vision’s social activism as it came to be received in the years after its public emergence in the 1920s.

Fritz Hansen targeted a more specialized audience than Schumann in his review for the journal *Der Photograph*. He began “Rambling through *Iphad*” almost wistfully, narrating a stroll through the exhibition’s enclosed gardens. He then digressed into

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Although White’s *Orchard*, as described earlier, was an outdoor view

¹⁶¹ Schumann, “International Group,” 47.

metaphor, recalling attempts by Italian noble families to escape the plague by locking themselves into private gardens. Hansen paralleled this to his current social environment: the world beyond the garden gate that the spectacle of *Ipahd*, like the Italian families, could not keep out: “the modern world, with its battle for existence, its contrast of poverty and wealth, and the modern plague: the hateful fight of one against the other.”¹⁶² The reviewer sensed the larger social ramifications of this enormous consideration of contemporary photography: “thus modern exhibitions like these appear as serious festivities which should encourage the society collectively fighting for progress.”¹⁶³ The elite could no longer keep the masses out of the garden.

Hansen could only convey, as he said, “impressions” of the exhibition, because of the sheer size.¹⁶⁴ He favored the Professional section, where he viewed the exhibited objects and the design of the galleries as complementing each other. Hansen noted the jury’s propensity toward inclusion, selecting all but about one-tenth of the submissions.¹⁶⁵ He also explored some specifics of the mounting of the section, particularly that it was divided by country, including Germany, Switzerland, Holland, the United States, Sweden, France, Italy, Finland, Denmark, and Norway. In his review in the journal *Photographische Kunst*, the “Hall of Princes” curator and Munich professor Emmerich mentioned that colors in the Professional rooms varied according to nation, providing a psychological differentiation among them: the Swiss room was painted brown, Holland in silver gray, America in grayish brown, and Sweden in yellow.¹⁶⁶ *The*

¹⁶² “...die moderne Welt mit ihrem Kampf ums Dasein, ihren Gegensätzen von Not und Reichtum, und die moderne Pest: der haßerfüllte Kampf des einen gegen den anderen.” Hansen, “*Ipahd*,” 145.

¹⁶³ “So erscheinen moderne Ausstellungen wie diese als ernste Festlichkeiten, welche auf die an Fortschritt mitkämpfende Gesellschaft ermutigend wirken sollen.” Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Emmerich, “*Ipahd*,” 64.

British Journal observed the psychological effects of the colors used in the installation, that the “vivid contrasts” between floors and walls sent “an aesthetic tonic to the visitor making a conscientious tour of the galleries.”¹⁶⁷

The review in *Der Photograph* was sensitive to the design of *Iphad*. Hansen foregrounded the exhibition design and presentation of the works in the review, avoiding the easier crutch of relying solely on descriptions of the photographs. He focused on *how* the works were displayed. As an example, Hansen commended the layout of the Professional exhibition in its ability to allow the works to correspond with the intimate character of the furniture, despite the number of photographs; he also said the photographs themselves succeeded as “wall decoration,”¹⁶⁸ equating them with décor in a surprisingly complimentary way.

Hansen was aware that the international scope of an event like *Iphad* brought into relief the influence between nations; he singled out the Americans as having a particular influence in portraiture, attributing that influence to the “perception and presentation of the pictures.”¹⁶⁹ The only American he singled out from the Professional section who remains a significant member of the photographic canon was Käsebier.¹⁷⁰

Hansen attuned himself to the individual experience of the spectator. As he continued describing the parade of national pavilions, he observed an interruption of what he called “the picture salons,” an interval which he described as “a room with fewer photos and rugs with harmonized colors to provide rest for the eyes of the viewer.”¹⁷¹ He

¹⁶⁷ “The Dresden Exhibition IV,” *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 471.

¹⁶⁸ Hansen, “*Iphad*,” 145. I would argue that Erfurth’s room is “intimate” only in an over determined bourgeois manner.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* “Auffassung und Aufmachung des Bildes.”

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* The other names mentioned were MacDonald, Caro, Bradley, Goldensky, Core.

¹⁷¹ “Wie fein berechnend man bei der Organisation dieser Gruppe war, zeigt insbesondere die Unterbrechung in der Reihe der Bildersalons durch einen Raum, in dem nur einige wundervolle

allowed himself to explore the content, design, and their potential effects on the spectator. It was an ambitious and—judging by his opening paragraph about the battle between poverty and wealth outside the garden gates—socially engaged critical response. An article immediately following “Rambling then underscored the social engagement Hansen displayed” although it was unrelated to the exhibition.¹⁷² “Another Song” was a tentative appeal for the masses to have greater access to inexpensive forms of photography, and the author advocated the potential for photography to be a medium for the masses. This noble plea was qualified, however, by his/her aside that he/she did not necessarily subscribe to those forms of photography that would be considered of mass appeal. Such intellectual ambivalence expresses the very tensions about photography that inflected the *Iphad* display.

The *British Journal of Photography*'s successive weeks of *Iphad* reviews from May to June 1909 achieved an even deeper awareness of methods of display, and the impact of those methods on the spectator. They emphasized the Science/Technical section as the chief interest of the show, praised the apparatus demonstrations as providing a display of “great popular and educational character,”¹⁷³ and noted the incongruity of the push-button demonstrations adjacent to the art photographers. In the opening lines of the last of the reviews, on the subject of Kuehn's International Group and other amateurs, the author noted the responsibilities inherent in mounting a public display of *Iphad*'s magnitude, and the need for an awareness of display strategies:

As we wrote in the first article on the Dresden Exhibition, the most striking feature of interest within its many galleries is the one to be found and studied in

handgeknüpfte Teppiche ausgestellt, an deren harmonischen Farbenkompositionen das Auge des Beschauers gewissermassen ausruhen kann.” Ibid.

¹⁷² “Ein altes Lied,” *Der Photograph* no. 37 (1909): 146.

¹⁷³ See pp. 52 above.

all of them—namely, the art of arranging and mounting a whole series of collections of photographs. That impression remains one of the most persistent of those formed, and on that account alone, a visit to the exhibition comes near to being an education for those who may be entrusted with the duties of supervising the display of photographs for public inspection.¹⁷⁴

Hence, the *British Journal* looked to *Iphad* as an educational tool to teach teachers—i.e. curators—who carried the responsibility of exposing the public to photographs through chosen arrangements. This mandate exceeds any definition of exhibitions as aesthetic escapes. In the 1920s, the avant-garde photographer/exhibition designers would take such “entrusted” responsibilities very seriously. Lissitzky would proclaim that his exhibition designs were his “most important work as an artist.”¹⁷⁵

Conclusions about *Iphad*

Despite the fact that photographers affiliated with the Pictorialist movement dominated the art photography section of *Iphad* in the International Group, as well as the Professional section, and even some of the industrial sections, the tension of the uneasy relationships between art and industry, art and science, and art and the mass audience were apparent both in the presentation and the criticism of this spectacle. The content of most of the photographs in all sections was still largely academic: portraits, landscapes, still lifes and allegories. But dynamic concepts of presentation, including the Atelierhaus, or “sample studio,” the proximity of the hallowed International Group and the Science/Technical section in the main building, the participation of some photographers in more than one “type” of section, and simplified design techniques, as in the Fabriken Papiere room of the Industrial Hall, stimulated the critics to think

¹⁷⁴ “The Dresden Exhibition IV,” *The British Journal of Photography* (18 June 1909): 471.

¹⁷⁵ El Lissitzky, “Autobiography” in *El Lissitzky* (Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum, 1990), 8. He wrote this in June 1941, six months before his death.

synergistically about connections amongst the sections, rather than adhering to arbitrary divisions. The presentation also led critics, including Caffin and the writers of the *British Journal*, to note how Pictorialist photography had already calcified by 1909, and to question its usefulness to the public.

A growing awareness of the difficulty in claiming photography is embedded in the reception of *Iphad*. The narrative provided by Emmerich in *Photographische Kunst* did not mask his contempt for the pretension inherent in dividing off the “Professionals” from the “Artists.” He was compromised as a critic by his involvement in the former section—as organizer of the Hall of Princes, which as discussed, was conservatively installed—yet his critique was still provocative: “No one understood the art photography sections, because they (the artists) had not paid attention to developments within professional photography for fifteen years, and yet the art photographers won all the awards.”¹⁷⁶ Emmerich’s accusation was presumably based on his perception that most of the visitors preferred the professionals and were perplexed by the art photographers. When he wrote that “no one understood” the art photographers, it was unlikely that he was speaking of reviewers; reviews like Schumann’s claimed that the art section had fully earned all the laurels bestowed on it.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ “Die ‘Photographische Kunst’ wills mit keinem dieser halten; im Grunde genommen ist von Allen die Gruppe nicht verstanden worden, denn sie Alle kennen den Werdegang der Berufsphotographie der letzten 15 Jahre wenig oder gar nicht...” Emmerich, “*Iphad*,” 63. It’s not accurate to say, though, that the art photography section won “all the awards.” They were officially “not in competition.” He may have been referring to art photographers in other sections like Erfurth and Eugene, or the critical accolades the International Group received.

¹⁷⁷ Schumann, “International Group,” 49.

Emmerich's critique of the artists rested on the fact that they were divided from the real world, that they were insulated from the realities of encroaching modernity, like the Italian aristocrats in Hansen's review. The end of the separation between art, the masses, and technology in twentieth-century photography began in many ways at *Iphad*. The conflicting methods, uses, and claims of the medium came to the fore, as critics and viewers were bombarded by thousands of objects. The friction would continue as photographers, scholars and critics kept pushing to define photography as an art form, to create its lasting identity, and to write its history. The photographers were pushing art into life, and the masses were invading the aristocrats' garden.

Chapter 3

Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung, Frankfurt, August 14 – September 1, 1926: The Impatience of the Interwar Photographers and Critics

The First Large-Scale Attempts to Exhibit Photography After World War I

Franz Grainer summarized the war's silencing effect on years of German exhibition activity in his introduction to the catalogue of the 1926 *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung (DPA)*, explaining that after some final exhibitions in 1914, "the world stood still."¹⁷⁸ The last significant prewar exhibition of photography, a component of a large overview of the Deutsche Werkbund in 1914 in Cologne, was interrupted by the outbreak of hostilities. Although posters for the event (fig. 3-1) proclaimed the span of the Werkbund exhibition to be May through October, it opened later than originally planned, in July, and closed in mid-August, when the war began. The intrusion of life into art was swift and harsh: "in August, war broke out. The exhibition closed, and within a few weeks the halls and pavilions were temporary hospitals, full of wounded soldiers from the Western Front."¹⁷⁹

The content of the Werkbund exhibition still emphasized Pictorialism. Matthies-Masuren returned once again as the curator of the photographic section, and included a room devoted to the work of Kuehn with eighty-four photographs. Eskildsen wrote an essay about the photography section in a 1984 catalogue that reconsidered the Werkbund

¹⁷⁸ "Dann trat der Stillstand ein." Franz Grainer, "Die Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung Frankfurt a.M. 1926 und ihr Wert," (The *DPA* and its worth), in *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung: Aussteller-Verzeichnis* (Frankfurt a.m Main: Druckerei R. Th. Hauser & Co., 1926), 20.

¹⁷⁹ Windsor, *Behrens*, 141.

exhibition in its entirety.¹⁸⁰ She related the selection of work to the increasing nationalistic fervor in German cultural life immediately before the war. American, French, and British photographers were no longer shown. The inclusion of Austrians and Hungarians with the Germans was the extent of internationalism in the exhibition, and all those countries fell within the Hapsburg Empire's sphere of influence. However, Eskildsen's point is mitigated by the fact that the exhibition was organized by the *German Werkbund*, an organization that was not yet as involved in international endeavors as it would be in the 1920s. Eskildsen also argued that this display of photography extended Pictorialism's influence far beyond the point at which it should have ended: there had been "hope" that through the "dissolution of the concept of art photography which had happened before everyone's eyes at Dresden (meaning *Iphad*)," photographic exhibitions would now look to the future.¹⁸¹ But five years later this was not the case, and Eskildsen attributes this to Matthies-Masuren fundamentally excluding all aspects of documentary photography, and assuming a "unilateralist" point of view.¹⁸² It was a wasted opportunity for other definitions of photography to come forth before the war.

Masuren's reluctance to move beyond Pictorial approaches was palpable. In the catalogue for the Werkbund exhibition, when referring to all genres other than portraits—landscapes, architecture, and industrial photographs—descriptive terms associated with Pictorialist technique were attached to listed works, including "artistic," "painterly

¹⁸⁰ Ute Eskildsen, "Die Abteilung Fotografie," *Der westdeutsche Impuls 1900-1914: Kunst und Umweltgestaltung im Industriegebiet--Die Deutsche Werkbund-Ausstellung Cöln* (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1984), 317-18.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 317, citing "Photographische Ausstellung in Dresden," *Das Werk* 11 (1909).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

rendering,” or “pictorial,” as if to promote a correlation.¹⁸³ Kuehn’s photographs inevitably became the main focus of the photography section due to the sheer number of his works. His photographs had arrived in Cologne first, he was the only one who did not have to go through the jury, and all works that came in for consideration by the jury were compared to his pieces.¹⁸⁴ Matthies-Masuren ensured dominance by a major Pictorialist at a major exhibition, one last time before the wounded soldiers started coming through the doors.

When the war ended in 1918, exhibiting practices took several years to re-establish a rhythm. Eskildsen narrated the re-emergence briefly in “Innovative Photography in Germany Between the Wars,” listing the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung* in Stuttgart in 1920 as the first national photography exhibition after the war.¹⁸⁵ The photographic industry supported this show as they had done at *Iphad*, but in contrast to Dresden, off-site local museums were expected to exhibit the more artistic photographs. The members of the Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner (Society of German Photographers, or GDL), a professional organization founded in 1919 and headed by Grainer from 1922-48, dominated those off-site displays.¹⁸⁶ Five years later in 1925, a forerunner to *Fifo*, the *Kino-und-Photoausstellung*, or *Kipho*, was held in Berlin (fig. 3-2). The exhibition took place in a hall near a radio tower, the ideal example of a

¹⁸³ “Wo Landschafts-, Industrie- und Architekturaufnahmen aufgeführt werden, findet sich der Zusatz ‘künstlerisch,’ ‘malerische Wiedergabe,’ oder ‘bildmäÙig.’” Eskildsen, “Die Abteilung Fotografie,” 318, citing *Katalog der Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbunds* (Köln, 1914): III.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹⁸⁵ Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 35.

¹⁸⁶ The bylaws of this organization did not alter from its founding until 1983, and this resistance to change was apparent throughout their Weimar period activities. Erfurth was the head of the jury of the GDL, making decisions about membership and participation in shows, from 1919 until its activities tapered off at the start of World War II. Although his style demonstrated more openness to New Vision influences, he generally had to acquiesce to Grainer’s conservative policy decisions. Lothar Kräussl, “Hugo Erfurth und die GDL,” in von Dewitz, *Hugo Erfurth*, 70-74.

modern structure and a symbol of the changed environment in which photography would now be shown.¹⁸⁷ The emphasis on the “productive” and expansive aspects of photographic and filmic media which would come to define Moholy-Nagy’s writings of the early to mid-1920s could be seen in this exhibition through its attempts to demystify and democratize its subject.¹⁸⁸ In her book *Film und Foto der Zwanziger Jahre*, Eskildsen published an illustration (fig. 3-3) of the film studio set constructed at *Kipho*, unveiling the collective process of filmmaking to the general public. A short film promoting the exhibition was shown at movie houses, to attract a broad and diverse audience to the exhibition.¹⁸⁹

Erich Stenger, whose extensive historical collection included over 500 daguerreotypes, and nineteenth-century prints by William Henry Fox Talbot, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, and Julia Margaret Cameron (fig. 3-4 is a sampling from his collection),¹⁹⁰ organized the Historical section of *Kipho*, the first large exhibition he had lent to, and later described his own contribution:

Rich material from the history of cinema should be rounded out by historical photographic contributions. I was implored here for this purpose and I selected for each vitrine and glass case beautiful works. It soon became clear, that I could show things worth seeing, and so I have yearly since the *Kipho*, interrupted by the beginning of the second world war, and in years since several more times.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ According to Stenger’s unpublished manuscript, the Funkhalle am Ausstellungsgeländes am Kaiserdamm where *Kipho* was shown burned down one year after the exhibition. Erich Stenger, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Sammlers* (Recollections of a collector) [Unpublished Manuscript], Collections, Agfa Fotohistorama, Cologne, 306.

¹⁸⁸ “Creative activities are useful only if they produce new, so far unknown relations.” László Moholy-Nagy, “Production/Reproduction,” *De Stijl*, no. 7 (1922): 97-101, in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, trans. Kenneth McRobbie and Ilona Jánosi (New York: *Thames and Hudson*, 1985), 289.

¹⁸⁹ Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 35.

¹⁹⁰ Bodo von Dewitz, “Erich Stenger und seine Sammlung zur Kulturgeschichte der Photographie” (Erich Stenger and his collection of historical photography), *Kölner Museums-Bulletin*, no. 1 (1997): 18. His historical collection focused on material up until the early 1870s.

¹⁹¹ “Ein reiches Material aus der Geschichte der Kinematographie sollte durch geschichtliche-photographische Beiträge abgerundet werden. Man hatte mich hierzu gebeten und ich füllte einige Vitrinen und Glaskästen mit ausgesucht schönen Bildern. Es sprach sich bald herum, dass ich Sehenswertes zeigen konnte, und so habe ich seit der *Kipho* fasz ununterbrochen bis zum Beginn des zweiten Weltkriegs jährlich

The following year Stenger would also develop the historical section of the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung* in Frankfurt. The works he displayed were similar to those at *Kipho*.¹⁹² The *DPA* was held from August 14 – September 1 1926 in two halls of the Haus der Moden (House of Fashion), a new building for the fairgrounds designed by Peter Behrens (fig. 3-5),¹⁹³ although preliminary poster designs indicate that it was originally planned at the “Haus” Werkbund. Similar to the radio tower setting of *Kipho*, the Behrens sketch for the building reveals the more contemporary settings for photography exhibitions in the 1920s, with its simplified, intersecting masses and a discarding of the ornamentation found in the beaux-arts structures at *Iphad*.

The Frankfurt exhibition was the pivotal post-World War I photography show. The author and book publisher Eugen Claassen began his review of *DPA* in the Werkbund journal *Die Form* by linking the exhibition historically to *Iphad*, naming it the first comprehensive assessment of techniques and depictions since the 1909 Dresden exhibition.¹⁹⁴ One of the exhibition board members, Frankfurt City Council member Ernst Otto Sutter, and *DPA*'s primary organizer, Grainer, both ignored the 1920 exhibition in Stuttgart and the *Kipho* in their introductory essays in the *DPA* catalogue, evidence that those shows were likely considered regional undertakings.

ausgestellt, in manchem Jahre sogar mehrmals.” Stenger, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 306. A more specific idea of the juxtapositions he arranged for these exhibitions can be found in a letter from Moholy-Nagy to Stenger in December 1930 regarding material the latter had lent to *Fifo*, including a daguerreotype (“the man with the silk scarf”), a calotype, a Hill, an Auguste Salzman (“landscape with building”), and a Cameron. László Moholy-Nagy, Berlin, to Erich Stenger, Charlottenburg, 22 December 1930, Collections, Agfa Fotohistorama, Cologne.

¹⁹² “Im Jahre 1926 fand in Frankfurt-Main eine Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung statt; ich war ähnlich wie vorher in Berlin vertreten.” Stenger, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 306.

¹⁹³ Hans-Joachim Kadatz, *Peter Behrens: Architekt, Maler, Graphiker und Formgestalter 1868-1940* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1977), fig. 99, 101.

¹⁹⁴ Claassen, “*DPA*,” 275. “Deutschland hat seit der internationalen Ausstellung in Dresden in 1909 keine alle Gebiete photographischer Technik und lichtbildnerischer Darstellung umfassende Übersicht mehr besessen.”

Eskildsen claimed in her “Innovative Photography” essay that the *DPA* introduced a new attitude towards “objective” photography that would reach fruition at *Fifo* in 1929. Quoting a 1929 review of *Fifo*, which in turn quoted Moholy-Nagy’s wall text from Raum 1 of that exhibition, she defined objective photography as “the possibility of creating unadulterated documents, stationary, and kinetically moving forms in variable light intensities; plus *new vision*, enlargements, microscopic images, x-rays, mechanical distortions of reality, direct light manipulations (photograms), and simultaneous projections, of which photomontages are a preliminary stage.”¹⁹⁵ This definition seems purely formalistic, but Moholy-Nagy’s interest in objective photography should be interpreted as dovetailing with his interest in the truth value of photography for everyone, which he emphasized in his crucial text on photography published the year before the *DPA*, *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (1925). In this text, he equated the objective with the mechanical,¹⁹⁶ and postulated that the camera’s effectiveness lay in its ability to show the “optically true,” which included the “oblique view” and “distortions, deformations, foreshortenings, etc.”¹⁹⁷ He further argued that through photography in books, papers

¹⁹⁵ *Photographische Industrie* 27 (28 August 1929): 911: “In großen Wandinschriften gibt Moholy-Nagy Geleitworte: ‘In diesem Raum werden die wesentlichsten Etappen aus der Geschichte der Photographie gezeigt. Das Hauptgewicht ist auf die Darstellung der photographischen Elemente gelegt. Ihre Beherrschung kann zu einer synthetischen photographischen Leistung führen. Diese Elemente sind im wesentlichen: Die Möglichkeiten, unverfälschte Dokumente zu schaffen: statisch stehend, kinetisch beweglich in der Variabilität der Lichtintensitäten, *neue Sichten* (emphasis added), Vergrößerungen, mikroskopische Aufnahmen, Röntgenaufnahmen, mechanische Verzerrungen der Wirklichkeit, direkte Lichtgestalten (Photogramme), Durchdringungen, Simultanprojektion, deren Vorstufe die Photomontage ist;” quoted in Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 36. Van Deren Coke mistakenly implies that this statement defining objective photography was in response to the *DPA* exhibition in 1926. Moholy made the statement three years after the *DPA*. Coke misinterpreted Eskildsen’s essay, upon which he based his work. Van Deren Coke, *Avant-Garde Photography in Germany, 1919-1939* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 10-11.

¹⁹⁶ László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925), 10. Unless noted, all subsequent references to *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (MPF) in this chapter will be from the first edition in 1925.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22. In the second edition in 1927, Moholy-Nagy was more specific in equating this truth value with what he called “objective vision:” “everyone will be compelled to see that which is optically true, is

and illustrated magazines, “the unambiguousness of the real, the *truth* in the everyday situation is there for *all* classes.”¹⁹⁸ The means listed above—distortions, scientific photography, photomontage, all illustrated in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*—and the end goals of accessibility and awareness of the modern world, comprise the New Vision.

Objective photography, in terms similar to those used by Moholy-Nagy, would be directly addressed in one of the *DPA* catalogue essays, which will be dissected in a section below. Eskildsen also noted that the potential impact of documentary on all branches of photography was explored in depth in the *DPA* catalogue for the first time. Documentary photography had a subtler presence in the exhibition, making its way—at least as an approach—into some of the works and discussions in the catalogue.

Those radical contributions of the *DPA* touched on by Eskildsen will be fleshed out in this chapter of the dissertation, as she did not detail the ways in which they were manifested. Yet in an essay nearly contemporaneous to “Innovative Photography Between the Wars,” entitled “Photography and the Neue Sachlichkeit movement,” Eskildsen made reference to the extent in which the *DPA* was concurrently still dominated by outdated Pictorialism; again she showed no examples.¹⁹⁹ Those coexisting, but conflicting, interpretations of the photographic display at Frankfurt provide insight into the mixed messages the public was receiving in 1926. It functions as a valuable supplement to the historiography of photography in Germany during this period of 1909-29, and how photography was received in the particular context of the political and economic situation in Weimar Germany. Many of the contemporary critics

explicable in its own terms, is objective, before he can arrive at any possible subjective position.” Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film (PPF)*, 28.

¹⁹⁸ *MPF*, 30.

¹⁹⁹ Ute Eskildsen, “Photography and the Neue Sachlichkeit movement,” in Mellor, 110.

began to sense a link between regressive Pictorialism and a conservative social perspective. They crystallized these thoughts through responses to the few breakthroughs of New Vision tenets at the *DPA*, as well in their responses to the sheer variety of material shown. Claassen noted “breaches” in his *Die Form* review of the *DPA*, despite what he sensed as an attempt to present a disciplined impression: “breaches are inevitable, in a time in which a highly efficient precisely focused, scientific and technical photography *is in competition* with a refined photo-art that pretends to be artistic.”²⁰⁰

The *DPA* was an overdue opportunity for progressive photography to create a new relationship between photographic art and a mass audience in a large venue. At *Iphad*, critics had sensed that Pictorialism was exhausted, that the science and technical sections were more successfully engaging the public than the art sections. Claassen went further in 1926, proposing that the *DPA* was inherently defined by ruptures and conflicts resulting from the encroachment—not just the proximity—of the tools of mass culture, i.e. science and technology, upon art which attempted to be refined. Some critics did not see those breaches, and continued to abide by simplistic divisions between types of photography, but others noted what a productive influence such overlaps could have on expanding the vocabulary of modern photography.

The Old Guard and The First Breaches: The Poster Competition for the *DPA* in *Das Atelier*

Various committees involved in the *DPA* were listed in the catalogue.²⁰¹ The honorary committee (“Ehrenausschuss”) seem to have been figureheads, allowing a list of well-

²⁰⁰ “Bruchstellen sind in einer Zeit, in der eine hochgesteigerte, rein auf präzise Zwecke eingestellte wissenschaftliche und technische Photographie mit einer raffinierten sich ‘künstlerisch’ gebenden Lichtbildkunst konkurriert, unvermeidlich.” Claassen, “*DPA*,” 275. Emphasis added.

²⁰¹ *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung: Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 7-16.

known names in the front of the catalogue; members of note on the honorary committee included Julius Meier-Graefe, art critic of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and the photographer Nicola Perscheid. The jury (“Jury der Deutschen Photographischen Ausstellung”) selected the works to be exhibited, and the work committees (“Arbeitsausschuss”) installed the show. The exhibition had its own official press unit (“Fachpresse”); many of the *DPA* reviews were written by this corps, just one of several conflicts of interest apparent in this show’s organization. Other conflicts included the organizer, Grainer, placing his own photographs in the show, the jury members writing most of the catalogue essays, Matthies-Masuren being on the jury and holding editorial positions on the photographic journals promoting the show, and Grainer and Erfurth winning the poster competition for the exhibition.

The work committees and juries for the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung* included several of the same photographers and critics who had prominent positions at *Iphad*, despite it being nearly a generation later. As mentioned, Grainer, who had his own room at *Iphad*, was the primary organizer of the *DPA*. Erfurth led the overall jury (“Vorsitzender der Gesamtjury”), and was also on the jury and the work committee for Professional photography. Finally, Matthies-Masuren was on the jury and work committee for Amateur Photography, which, not surprisingly, included a sentimental look back at the careers of the *Kleeblatt* group of Kuehn, Hennenberg, and Watzek, the photographers on whom he had focused throughout his career. This “retrospective” allowed Matthies-Masuren to supply models to a new generation of Pictorialists.

Matthies-Masuren also had ongoing editorial positions with various photographic journals, including *Die Photographische Rundschau* and *Das Atelier des Photographen*;

the latter published the design submissions for the exhibition's poster competition.²⁰²

Matthies-Masuren continued to have a hold on many of the outlets in which art photography was shown, but he could not repress the “inevitable breaches” coming through in the Frankfurt exhibition of which Claassen spoke. The poster competition, as a prologue, exposed those breaches.

Three of the designs in the competition betrayed both the lingering yearning for fine art legitimacy and a reliance on symbolism discussed in the previous chapter on *Iphad* and Pictorialism. In W. Siemssen's *Empor zum Licht* (Upwards to the Light), a muscular male nude reaches up, presumably to the heavens, which bestow the “light” of photography upon him from parted skies (fig. 3-6). An anonymous submission with the title *Kondensator* (Condensor) shows another chiseled male nude, kneeling and bowing his visage behind a reflective glass representing the lens of the camera (fig. 3-7). The title of the exhibition encircling him evokes carved stone, as he morphs into the personification of an ancient coin or medal. In Grainer's submission, *Sonnenstrahl* (Sunbeam), a female nude, also endowed with rippling muscles, holds a lens in her outstretched arm to manipulate light effects on the wall (fig. 3-8). All three designs nullify photography as an activity based in the concrete world; these figures are god-like or muse-like creatures embodying an Art—the art of photography—or the symbols of that Art—light, reflectivity—and assuming a worshipful stance towards it.

In complete divergence from these otherworldly idealizations, the designs influenced by avant-garde techniques instead show what one could *do* with photography, or foregrounded the camera itself. Franz Fiedler constructed his winning design, *Schwarz/Weiß* (Black and White) around an aspect of the photographic developing

²⁰² *Das Atelier des Photographen* 33, no. 5 (1926), illustrations not paginated.

process, depicting a woman half in positive and half in negative (fig. 3-9a was the submission and fig. 3-9b was the final version with the corrected venue). Erfurth collaborated with W. Petzold on an abstract design, *2 x 2=5a*, which originated as a photogram (fig. 3-10), and submitted another individually, a montage of a cropped-off hand removing the “eyelid” of the camera (*Hand*, fig. 3-11); Meta Wendt’s design humorously synthesizes photography and expressionist theater, with two costumed players enacting a scene in the spotlight, their shadows thrown dramatically to the left, and framed within the shape of a camera (3-12). And August Sander used a silhouette of the photographer at work in his submission (fig. 3-13).

Photographische Rundschau published the four designs that were selected to represent the exhibition, choices that continued the stylistic clash apparent in the poster competition as a whole: both of Erfurth’s submissions were published, as were Grainer’s *Sonnenstrahl*, and Fiedler’s *Schwarz/Weiß*.²⁰³ In general, the journal still reproduced mostly Pictorialist works. The jarring contrasts of Fiedler’s poster, the last page of the contest spread, is increased by its placement next to a fuzzy landscape with sailboats by W. Kamphausen (fig. 3-14).

The more progressive designs in the poster competition used mechanical distortions of reality, photograms, and photomontage, techniques that were core elements of Moholy-Nagy’s New Vision. He promoted those techniques in the organization of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Although he did not yet employ the term “New Vision” in the text, the book is filled with phrases equating the camera’s potential to push the boundaries of awareness, through “*new, previously unknown relationships*,” “new

²⁰³ *Photographische Rundschau* 63 (1926): 263-266.

exposure,” and “new creative experiments.”²⁰⁴ Before the large section of illustrated photographs in the book, Moholy-Nagy offered an interpretive list of his inclusions: “records of situations, of reality ... combination, projections of images on top of one another, side by side, penetration, compression of scenes to make them manageable, superreality, utopia and humour... *objective* but also expressive portraits... publicity, poster, political propaganda [under which he categorized photomontages]... creative means for photo-books, i.e. photos in place of text, typophoto... simultaneous cinema.”²⁰⁵

The emphases of Moholy-Nagy—who was included in the Amateur section—were starting to infiltrate the content of the *DPA*. Although he was marginalized in many ways at this exhibition, certain aspects of the installation, the language in the catalogue, and the critical reception would all prove the relevance of his concept of photography and the irrelevance of Pictorialism to contemporary photographic developments.²⁰⁶ Even the publication *Das Atelier*, the organ for the conservative GDL, indirectly acknowledged Moholy-Nagy’s influence by “recommending” *Malerei Photographie Film*. Matthias-Masuren wrote the disparaging blurb about two abstract photograms Erfurth had contributed to the *DPA* (fig. 3-15), images that were very similar to Moholy-Nagy’s first experiments with his wife Lucia in this format beginning in 1922²⁰⁷ (fig. 3-16): “Both so-called ‘abstract’ depictions by Erfurth which were exhibited in Frankfurt are positioned

²⁰⁴ *MPF*, 23. Emphasis Moholy-Nagy’s.

²⁰⁵ “Festhalten von Situationen, von Realität; durch Zusammenfügen und Aufeinander- und Nebeneinanderprojizieren-organisierbare Überrealität, Utopie und Scherz (hier ist der neue Witz!); objektive, aber auch expressive Porträts; Werbemittel; Plakat; politische Propaganda; Gestaltungsmittel zu Photo-Büchern, d.h. Photographien an Stelle des Textes; Typophoto; Gestaltungsmittel für flächige oder räumliche gegenstandslose absolute Lichtprojektionen; simultanes Kino.” Moholy-Nagy, *MPF*, 29.

²⁰⁶ However, the designation of Amateur should not necessarily be seen as a slight in this exhibition as Van Deren Coke characterized it, Coke, *Avant-Garde*, 10. The worshipped elders like the *Kleeblatt* were still in this section. The greater marginalization came from Hübsch’s dismissive tone in the catalogue essay, and the fact that Moholy-Nagy was a last-minute addition, relegated to the “Nachtrag” of the catalogue. “Nr. siehe Nachtrag,” *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 94.

²⁰⁷ Lucia Moholy, *Marginalien zu Moholy-Nagy: Moholy-Nagy, Marginal Notes* (Krefeld: Scherpe, 1972), 54. Their collaboration will be discussed further below.

outside of our true tasks. It would lead too far to go further into detail. Who wishes to get explanations should refer to the writing by the Hungarian Moholy-Nagy: *Malerei Photographie Film*.”²⁰⁸

The Impetus for, and Organization of, the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung*

Several issues of the journal *Das Atelier des Photographen* in 1926 carried illustrations or articles related to the *DPA*. The articles functioned more as press releases for the exhibition organizers than as a vehicle for criticism. As noted above, Matthies-Masuren was one of the editors of the journal, which was moreover published in association with the GDL, so it is an opportunity to examine the message that the exhibition’s insiders wanted conveyed to their readers—especially those who might not have an opportunity to visit the exhibition. They were in a position to shape the views of a broader audience. The journal provided background details of the exhibition’s organization. Two of the four articles related to the *DPA* were not credited to an author: there was a “Welcome to Frankfurt,” (Willkommen) an overview of the purpose of *DPA* (“Frankfurt am Main”) by Emmermann, a member of the Fachpresse (no first name provided), and “Questions of the Day” (Tagesfragen) related to the exhibition.²⁰⁹

In a subsequent issue of *Das Atelier*, an article by a W. Eck described the Professional Photography section. There could be no mistaking his piece for a neutral critical essay. Eck described the organizer Grainer as “our friend,” and refused to negatively criticize any of the work: “it would be senseless to specifically mention at this

²⁰⁸ “Die beiden sog. ‘abstrakten’ Darstellungen von Erfurth, die in Frankfurt ausgestellt waren, liegen abseits unserer eigentlichen Aufgaben, auf die einzugehen hier zu weit führen würde. Wer Erklärung wünscht, möge zu der Schrift des Ungarn Moholy-Nagy: *Malerei Photographie Film* greifen.” Unknown author, “Zu unseren Bildern,” *Das Atelier des Photographen* 34 (May 1927): 60.

²⁰⁹ *Das Atelier des Photographen* 33, no. 8 (1926).

point what is to be rejected in this exhibition. The attentive visitor... would know anyway.”²¹⁰

According to Emmermann’s overview, “Frankfurt am Main,” the *DPA* was considered a great risk in an atmosphere where people were “ausstellungsmüde” or “tired of exhibitions.”²¹¹ However, they presumably saw the need for a large photographic overview to transcend the numerous regional exhibitions taking place, and an opportunity to ensconce a large spectacle in an overarching national context. In the opinion of the authors, “those who don’t go to Frankfurt are missing something unrepeatable.”²¹² The author posed questions about what the exhibition contributed and what it wanted. A manifesto-like statement about photography followed, tying it to larger social issues that would also thread through the catalogue essays. He claimed that the Frankfurt exhibition *embodied* the transformed life of German photography in the postwar era: “long live the German photographers and the industry! No one can push us down in times of uncertainty! Look here what we create and what we mean!The inner context between photography on the one hand, and industry, science, technique, and *no less than our entire cultural life* on the other, is made clear.”²¹³

²¹⁰ W. Eck, “Berufsphotographie,” *Das Atelier des Photographen* 33, no. 9 (1926): 104.

²¹¹ Emmermann, “*DPA*, Frankfurt am Main, 1926” *Das Atelier des Photographen* 33 (1926): 85. Janet Ward includes an interesting discussion of German “ausstellungsmüde” in *Weimar Surfaces*, 50-51. A national exhibition organization was formed in 1927, and one year later arranged a total of 249 fairs and exhibitions. She cites a 1928 article by Mies van der Rohe, in which he observed that only if the many exhibitions addressed the central issue of “the intensification of life” would they succeed in fulfilling their role as “transformative indicators of the modern world.” Ward, citing Mies van der Rohe, “Zum Thema: Ausstellungen,” *Die Form* 4.1 (1928): 121.

²¹² “Dann dürfte es denen, die nicht nach Frankfurt gingen, zum Bewußtsein gelangen, daß sie Unwiederbringliches versäumt haben.” Emmermann, “Frankfurt am Main,” 85.

²¹³ “Wir, die deutschen Lichtbildner und die deutsche photographische Industrie, wir leben noch! Wir lassen uns nicht niederringen von der Zeiten Ungunst! Seht her, was wir schaffen und was wir bedeuten!....In diesem Rahmen werden den Besuchern die inneren Zusammenhänge zwischen der Photographie auf der einen, der Industrie, der Wissenschaft, der Technik und unserem ganzen kulturellen Leben auf der anderen Seite klargelegt werden.” *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

The exhibition catalogue for the *DPA* immediately foregrounded the meshing of exhibitions, politics, and economics. Councilman Sutter boasted in the foreword about the fact that in Frankfurt, the *bourgeoisie* provided the financial support for the exhibition, as opposed to places like Dresden where they “relied” on the *state* to support their major art events.²¹⁴ The Dresden 1909 exhibition was not specifically named here, but the comparison could be inferred, as Grainer would go on to mention it in the next essay in the catalogue.²¹⁵ The thinly veiled capitalist versus socialist argument, parading as the different approaches to supporting the arts between Dresden and Frankfurt, was a fertile topic in the newly democratic Germany struggling to establish itself between factions of the left and right.

The tension between capitalistic and socialist political structures in various regions of Weimar Germany dated back to the first days of the Republic. In November 1918, after the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm, the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or SPD) formed the Council of People’s Representatives. They were initially optimistic that they could govern successfully from the center-left, but their dependence on the former imperial military for security purposes undermined the new government’s credibility with the far left. The deaths of two radical left leaders from the offshoot Spartacus party, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, at the hands of soldiers associated with the monarchy in January 1919, exacerbated the

²¹⁴ Otto Ernst Sutter, “Das mainische Frankfurt,” in *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 4.

²¹⁵ Grainer also followed Sutter’s theme by explaining that Frankfurt’s “citizens” had heard the “desperate shriek of the photographic society” and they had provided the needed assistance and exposure: “Frankfurt a.M. hat den Vorstellungen des Reichsverbandes der deutschen Photographen in großzügiger und weitestgehender Weise Gehör geschenkt und sich der Erkenntnis nicht verschlossen, dass der vor einem Jahre in Königsberg gefaßte Beschluß dieses Verbandes der Notschrei eines Berufes ist, der gebieterisch nach Hilfe verlangt.” Grainer, “*DPA* und ihr Wert,” 17.

tension.²¹⁶ From that early point on, the SPD struggled to reach consensus on social and economic issues, destabilizing the government before it solidified.²¹⁷ The SPD leadership was criticized with increasing volume from the left for not following a Soviet system more closely in economic policy, and the “moderates,” representing democratic capitalism, were continually on the defensive. Sutter’s choice of words seems to reflect some of this defensiveness of the political center.

In his introduction, Grainer echoed the *Die Form* reviewer Claassen’s and others’ assessment that the *DPA* was the first broad postwar overview of the medium.²¹⁸ Grainer referred to *Iphad* as the previous touchstone for the development of German photography, its science and industry.²¹⁹ However, his ardent emphasis on the Frankfurt exhibition as “*The First German Photography Exhibition Since The War*”²²⁰ was not entirely accurate, as the 1920 Stuttgart exhibition had been, at least in title, a “national” photography exhibition.

Nationalist sentiments permeated Grainer’s introductory essay, particularly when he correlated “an enlightening wind over the Reich,” with the “construction of images, their inner truth and the sincerity of the technique of materials” of “Pictorialist

²¹⁶ Peukert detailed the main divisions in the group that had once comprised the SPD group in the German parliament: the Majority Socialists, the Independents, and the Spartacus group. By January 1919, the Spartacists were trying to set up their own party, the KPD, or Communist Party. See Peukert, *Weimar*, 26-32.

²¹⁷ Peukert, *Weimar*, 36, and 112-114. Also see 217 for an account of political party struggles in late 1920’s Weimar.

²¹⁸ W. Eck named the *DPA* as the first overview since *both* the war and *Iphad*. Eck, “Berufsphotographie,” 101.

²¹⁹ Grainer, “*DPA* und ihr Wert,” 19-20. Although he erroneously wrote that the Dresden exhibition took place in 1910.

²²⁰ “...*die erste Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung nach dem Kriegsende.*” *Ibid.*, 18. Emphasis Grainer’s.

photography.”²²¹ Grainer also equated professional photographers, with whom he had been affiliated at *Iphad*, and the Pictorialists, who wanted nothing to do with the professionals at *Iphad*. According to *Der Photograph* this new relationship was also promoted in the installation didactics that presented amateurs as “the guests of the professionals.”²²² Grainer claimed there had been nearly a thirty-year fight since 1899—his starting point is late by a decade—to establish the legitimacy of “artistic” photography, which was now “followed by associates, schools, professionals, societies.”²²³ He connected himself with a “Revisionisten” movement, a position that he probably considered necessary to articulate given that Pictorialism had long ceased to engage in a discourse of any currency.²²⁴

In addition to his classical nude poster submission, Grainer’s photographs at the *DPA* betray his nostalgia. They included numerous portraits of wealthy women (fig. 3-17, and fig. 3-18), described in *Das Atelier* as “cool, elegant nobility of old culture.”²²⁵ Aside from trends of fashion, the works show a negligible difference from his portraits of luxuriantly clad women shown in 1909 (e.g., fig. 3-19), with light effects enhanced to reflect the plushness of their dress. This *sameness* existed despite the turbulence of war, economic collapse, and political revolution, as well as the technological advances in photography during the interim years. Grainer’s nostalgia, as well as Matthies-Masuren’s continued organizational presence, contrasted with the extreme stylistic differences in the

²²¹ “Befruchtend ging ein sicherer Zug über das ganze Reich und Vereine und Presse wetteiferten, all die Jahrzehnte, das Konstruktive des Bildes, seine innere Wahrhaftigkeit und das Materialechte seiner Technik, die Bildmäßigkeit der Photographie zu heben durch Wort und Darstellungen.” Ibid.

²²² Emmermann, “*DPA*,” 86.

²²³ “Ihm wird heute mehr denn je nachgestrebt auf allen Veranstaltungen, in Schulen, durch Vereine und in Fachblättern.” Grainer, “*DPA* und ihr Wert,” 18.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ “Und Grainer darf mit vollem Recht in diesem Sinne reden. Seine Bildnisse der Dame der Gesellschaft sind bis in das kleinste für ihren Zweck, kühle, elegante Vornehmheit von alter Kultur darzustellen, abgestimmt.” Eck, “Berufsphotographie,” 103.

poster contest in *Das Atelier* and the awareness of “breaches” in the *Die Form* article reveal how this large group of assembled works negated the possibility of uniformity. Conservative elements in the photography world and bureaucrats in Frankfurt organized it, but modern approaches broke through.

Grainer’s rhetoric demonstrated how psychologically important this exhibition was considered, an urgency that emanates from many of the other essays in the catalogue, and statements from reviewers such as Emmermann that photography represented Germany’s entire cultural life. Whereas the display of photography at *Iphad* was earlier contrasted by the critic Hansen with the battle of mankind beyond its gardens, Grainer paralleled the supposed goals of the *DPA*— i.e. bringing forth photography’s accomplishments despite the averse conditions of post-World War I Germany— to the “passionate desire” of the public for ideals, “despite gray sorrowful days and decline from all authority.”²²⁶ In 1909, Hansen had pressed photography’s obligation to immediately acknowledge and encourage urgent social change, whereas Grainer in 1926 still expected photography to strive for lofty ideals and provide escapism.

Included Works and their Installation in the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung*

There are two main sources of illustrated works that were included in the *DPA*. The exhibition’s official catalogue reproduced twenty-three works—only a tiny fraction of the thousands of photographs,²²⁷ but nevertheless representing a good cross-section of genres, at least from the Amateur and Professional sections. There were no scientific,

²²⁶ “Das heie Verlangen, wieder an die Oeffentlichkeit zu treten, im ideellen Wettbewerb sich zu messen, konnte nicht mehr zurckgehalten werden, trotz grauer Alltagssorgen und Niedergang auf allen Gebieten.” Grainer, “*DPA* und ihr Wert,” 20.

²²⁷ There is no official count of the number of photographs, but nearly five-hundred individuals or groups were listed in the catalogue, nearly all with more than one submission.

technical, or historical images reproduced in the catalogue. The issues of *Das Atelier* devoted to the exhibition included twenty-five illustrations of works from the exhibition, but only three were *not* portraits, a notable bias in their presentation of the show.

Franz Fiedler, designer of the *DPA* poster with the positive/negative portrait, also had the most striking photograph in the catalogue's illustrated section (fig. 3-20; the catalogue is neither paginated nor numbered). It was published without a title in the catalogue, but *Das Atelier* reproduced it as one of the only non-portraits in their issue and titled it *Marktszene* (Market scene). The photograph recorded a bustling street market from an aerial view, and was created in a moment encompassing the New Vision in its composition and subject, and Pictorialism in its blurred printing. Such bird's eye views were advocated in the New Vision to make use of one of photography's unique traits: an ability to expand the perception of the viewer through means available only to the camera. The scene also illustrated the startling "experience of the oblique view and displaced proportions"²²⁸ that Moholy-Nagy advocated in photography to jolt the viewer.

Marktszene was grabbed from everyday life; it is not aggrandized, ennobled, or oversimplified. The scene was composed in a way that removed it from the way viewers would normally have encountered it. Fiedler objectified it in a manner that allowed the viewer of the photograph to think about the subjects of markets, streets, purchasing, goods, and frenetic crowds in new ways. The exchange of goods on the street was a social reality, and the photograph captures the dynamism of the scene. Although Fiedler still utilized an out-of-focus technique, the blurring in this case added to the sense of movement of the objects, as do the thrown shadows.

²²⁸ *MPF*, 49.

Pohlmann argues that in the midst of so much largely conventional photography, the only works that stood out were Erfurth's photograms and Moholy-Nagy's photomontages, or "fotoplastiken" (fig. 3-21 of *Kino im Parlament*, 1924).²²⁹ An analysis of the catalogue plates, excepting Fiedler's *Market Scene*, Erfurth's flamboyant portrait, *Franz Blei*, 1914 (fig. 3-22), and Richard Worshing's nearly abstract nature study of birds in trees (fig. 3-23), supports this view. Sentimentalized portraits, still lifes, and romantically lit landscapes dominated the rest of the catalogue: the portrait of a young girl, whose face appears to have been oiled for softened effects, by Erna Lendvai-Dirksen—a photographer later admired by the Nazis—was typical (fig. 3-24). Erich Angenend's dematerialized objects and glinting glass are nearly carbon copies of the objects in a Heinrich Kuehn prewar style still life (fig. 3-25 and fig. 3-26). A costumed, blonde, blue-eyed "peasant" child submitted by Augsburg-based photographer Hans Siemssen, cradles a piece of fruit as if it were freshly plucked from the land (fig. 3-27). A. Rower's basket weaver is so recessed into darkness, it could be mistaken for a chiaroscuro painting (fig. 3-28). In the midst of this maudlin material, any of Moholy-Nagy's work from the mid 1920s, which will be contextualized below, Erfurth's two included photograms, and the transition from the Pictorialist photography into the scientific and technical sections must have provided a substantial shock to the viewer.

²²⁹ Pohlmann, "Im Einklang," 129. Pohlmann did not name his source for the fotoplastiks being included. It is extremely difficult to know exactly what was shown. The catalogue does not specify the type of Moholy-Nagy works chosen, and the reviews bypass him. None of the collections that have substantial fotoplastiks holdings, including the Getty and the Eastman House, have the *DPA* in their exhibition histories, and Moholy-Nagy's daughter Hattula has no correspondence related to it. The major books published on the subject, Irene Charlotte-Lusk's *László Moholy-Nagy: Fotomontagen und Collagen, 1922-43* (Giessen: Anabas, 1980), and Julie Saul's *Moholy-Nagy Fotoplastiks: The Bauhaus Years* (New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1983), do not reference the *DPA* in their exhibition histories. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that either photograms or photomontages were included. Moholy-Nagy included only his photomontages and fotoplastiks in the first edition of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. None of his photographs were included until the second edition in 1927, signaling an early lack of confidence in the latter.

The layout of the exhibition was described in limited detail in *Das Atelier*. Hall 1 of the Haus der Moden was filled with objects of industry— cameras, machines, and something that sounds similar to telegraphed photography, translated as “far-picture transmissions;”²³⁰ Hall 2 was dedicated to photographs and films. The photographs were divided into four groups: Pictorialists and Professionals were now placed together as one group, although they were still divided in the catalogue; photographic art schools; scientific photography; and finally, reproduction techniques and historical photography.

The article “A Tour Through the German Photographic Exhibition Frankfurt 1926” published by Emil Schönwald in *Der Photograph* provided a more detailed, room-by-room commentary on the hanging of the exhibition.²³¹ He began the report at the central intersection in Hall 2, with the Professional Photography section, where he said visitors would be “drawn” to a foundational group of pictorial photographers.²³² The Hall to the left began with the GDL, which he described as a very conventional presentation with mostly landscapes and still lifes.²³³

To the right of the cross section was Grainer, called here the “Vater” (father) of the Pictorialist section; large format photographs, “taste culture,” and a decorative style were noted here.²³⁴ In the middle of the corridor, “we meet” Fiedler, and the reviewer admires his ability to express details without neglecting the arrangement of masses, skills he displayed in the *Marktszene*.²³⁵ Schönwald praised Erfurth’s portraits, including one of Sutter, the council member who wrote the foreword. He claimed that opinion

²³⁰ “Fernbildübertragungen.” Emmermann, “DPA,” 86.

²³¹ Emil Schönwald, “Ein Rundgang durch die Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung Frankfurt a.M. 1926,” *Der Photograph*, no. 72 (1926): 285-287

²³² *Ibid.*, 285.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ “Geschmackskultur.” *Ibid.*, 286.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

unanimously interpreted “peace and harmony” in Siemssen’s works, and he noted that many large-format works still used pigment printing.²³⁶

Two issues later in the continuing series of the exhibition “tour,” Schönewald explored amateur, historical and scientific photography. Within the Amateur Photography section, a “total development of uniform beliefs was lent...by large numbers of connoisseurs of photography.”²³⁷ In other words, the section of works lent by private collections, which included the retrospective of the *Kleeblatt*, strove for the uniformity Claassen had commented upon in *Die Form* as ultimately unsuccessful. Schönewald chose to focus on the works lent by private collections and city collections, the “pearls of the art photographers,” including Kuehn, who was represented by large-format photographs.²³⁸ It is difficult to believe that other unnamed “amateurs” in the section, such as Moholy-Nagy, would have contributed visual conformity.

After leaving the Pictorialist galleries, Schönewald described a demonstration space for slow-motion photography, which must have been a jarring visual experience after the “peace and harmony” of the previous works.²³⁹ Schönewald later expounded in greater detail about audiences sitting “astounded” for a “nature film” donated by E.G. Farben, which depicted a four years of a blossoming plant into one hour.²⁴⁰ He had made no such reference to any audience response or excitement when discussing the Pictorialist retrospective in the previous room, nor the GDL portraits and landscapes.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ “Gesamtwirkung durchaus einheitlich die Ueberzeugung verleiht, daß auch eine recht große Zahl von Liebhaberphotographen.” Emil Schönewald, “Ein Rundgang durch die Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung Frankfurt a.M. 1926,” *Der Photograph*, no. 74 (1926): 293.

²³⁸ “Perlen photographischer Bildkunst.” Ibid.

²³⁹ “Demonstrationsraum für Zeitlupenaufnahmen.” Ibid.

²⁴⁰ “Die Zuschauer des Ausstellungs-Kinos sitzen vor der Leinwand und wohnen staunend....” Emil Schönewald, “Ein Rundgang durch die Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung Frankfurt a.M. 1926,” *Der Photograph*, no. 75 (1926): 299.

Moholy-Nagy's New Vision circa 1926: Path to the Bauhaus and *Malerei, Photographie, Film*

Moholy-Nagy's entry in the *DPA* catalogue listed his Dessau street address, but did not mention his affiliation with the Bauhaus.²⁴¹ There were only three other photographers included in the Amateur section as individual participants: Hans Bohm from Vienna, Th. Heuss from Munich, and Dr. Arthur Sauer, from Darmstadt. All remaining participants were either members of regional branches of the Verbands Deutscher Amateurphotographen Vereine (German Amateur Photographer Association), or VDAV, or shown as part of the Pictorialist retrospective of work from state and private collections. The retrospective focused on the photography of past masters, including Henneberg, Kuehn, Spitzer and Watzek, as described by Schönwald above. They had all been participants in Kuehn's room at *Iphad*.

As there is a complete lack of details as to what exactly Moholy-Nagy exhibited in the Amateur section of the *DPA*, I will devote the next several pages to contextualizing his work of that year and the years immediately preceding. One must imagine the radical nature of the work in the midst of this onslaught of repetitive Pictorialist photography. The period from 1924-26, shortly after his arrival as a teacher at the Bauhaus, was one of the most productive of Moholy-Nagy's career as a photographer and a theorist of photography.

Moholy-Nagy arrived at the Bauhaus in 1923, at the invitation of Walter Gropius, succeeding Johannes Itten as teacher of the preliminary course and becoming Master of the metal workshop. The invitation was the culmination of an extraordinary period of

²⁴¹ Burgkühner Allee 2. This could be considered an omission, as places of business are listed for others. *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 94.

productivity for Moholy-Nagy. He settled in Berlin in January of 1920, having fled his native Hungary—as did many leftist intellectuals—after the fall of the short-lived proletarian Council of Soviets government.²⁴² In July of 1922 he published the essay “Production/Reproduction,” in the journal *De Stijl*, the beginning of his theoretical fostering of a modern New Vision, achievable through the reproducible technologies of photography and film: he considered these media capable of producing “new, so-far unknown relations,” the only useful undertaking for creative activities.²⁴³ The publication was accomplished with the help of his wife Lucia Moholy, a Czech whose command of German was far superior to his.²⁴⁴ Lucia has described an intensive period of collaboration and experimentation during the summer of 1922 leading to their first photograms, abstract photographs produced by exposing objects on light-sensitive paper.²⁴⁵ She insisted that the photograms were produced completely devoid of knowledge of the earlier photogram experiments of Christian Schad (beginning in 1918) or Man Ray (beginning in 1921), a claim vociferously disputed, particularly by El Lissitzky.²⁴⁶

In the fall of 1922, Moholy-Nagy continued to establish himself among the international avant-garde. He collaborated on the publication of the *Buch neuer Künstler*

²⁴² For Moholy-Nagy’s involvement with Hungarian Activism, a group that supported the proletarian revolution, see Passuth, 10-16. She described the main feature of Hungarian Activism as the inextricable link between artistic revolution and the idea of political change. Although he was not a member of the Communist party, Moholy-Nagy signed their joint revolutionary statement in March 1919.

²⁴³ Moholy-Nagy, “Production/Reproduction,” in Passuth, 289.

²⁴⁴ Rolf Sachsse, “Notes on Lucia Moholy,” in Jeanine Fiedler, ed., *Photography at the Bauhaus* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 25.

²⁴⁵ Lucia Moholy, *Marginalien zu Moholy-Nagy: Moholy-Nagy, Marginal Notes* (Krefeld: Scherpe, 1972), 54.

²⁴⁶ See El Lissitzky’s letter dated September 15, 1925, where he documented his introduction of Man Ray’s “Rayographs” to Moholy-Nagy in 1921-22. In Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*, trans. Helen Aldwinckle and Mary Whittall (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1968), 66-67. The nineteenth century photographic “drawings” of William Henry Fox-Talbot were also not mentioned by Lucia.

with Lajos Kassák, a fellow Hungarian émigré and publisher of the Hungarian Activist journal *Ma. Buch neuer Künstler* was heavily illustrated with Cubist, Futurist and Russian Constructivist paintings and sculptures, with documentary photographs of modern architectural sites and industrial machines scattered throughout the book in direct juxtaposition with the art.²⁴⁷ A particularly interesting sequence of images included one of Alexander Rodchenko's spatial constructions from 1920-21, an installation shot of the 1921 *Obmokhu* exhibition in Moscow where they were first shown, and an early Moholy-Nagy painting, *Composition 19*, ca. 1920 (fig. 3-29). Through this juxtaposition, Moholy-Nagy visually aligned himself with Russian Constructivism, a movement comprised of members who had renounced purely aesthetic pursuits for the purpose of creating designs, architecture, photography, and utilitarian objects that would assist social change in the new Soviet Republic.²⁴⁸

Moholy-Nagy continued fostering this alliance by attending the Dada-Constructivist Congress in September 1922, also attended by the Russian ambassador of international Constructivism, El Lissitzky.²⁴⁹ Concurrent with this flurry of activity, Gropius was searching for new blood for his Bauhaus faculty, particularly in the form of

²⁴⁷ One example included a Boccioni painting next to an AEG machine called a "Dynamo." Lajos Kassák and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Buch neuer Künstler* (Vienna: Elbemühl, 1922).

²⁴⁸ The First Working Group of Constructivists was formed at the Institute of Artistic Culture (Inkhuk) in Moscow, in March 1921, with the members Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Konstantin Medunetskii, Georgii and Vladimir Sternberg, Aleksii Gan, and Karl Iogonson. See Christina Lodder, "The Transition to Constructivism," in *The Great Utopia: Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1992), 266-281.

²⁴⁹ For an in-depth discussion of Lissitzky's complicated relationship with Constructivism vis-à-vis Rodchenko's First Working Group of Constructivists and utilitarianism, see Christina Lodder, "El Lissitzky and the Export of Constructivism," in *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow*, Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed, eds. (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003), 27-46. She explains how Lissitzky's formulation of Constructivism, especially in the years 1922-27, was linked to politically progressive artistic activity, but not explicitly Marxist, and not limited to utilitarian output. However, as Nancy Perloff points out in her essay, "The Puzzle of El Lissitzky's Artistic Identity," he was "dispatched" by the Soviet government in 1921 with a platform to make contacts between Soviet and German artists. *Situating El Lissitzky*, 7.

an artist aligned with Constructivism. As Hight has described it, Moholy-Nagy had become the most “visible and vocal” candidate aligned with this new art in Berlin.²⁵⁰

Shortly after his arrival at the Bauhaus, Moholy-Nagy and Gropius initiated a series of books, called the “Bauhaus Books.” In the summer of 1924 he compiled the material for the first edition of *Malerei, Photographie, Film* which was published as the eighth Bauhaus Book in 1925. The second edition of the book would follow quickly in 1927 with the more modern spelling of “Fotografie,” and included some additions to the text, additional images, many more captions accompanying the illustrations, and some minor adjustments to the typographic layout.²⁵¹ In comparing the 1925 version with the 1927, Moholy-Nagy removed certain photographs, including one of an airport in Iowa City, and two Citroën montages, and replaced his politically satirical fotoplastik *Kino im Parlament*, with the more esoteric *Leda and the Swan*, ca. 1925 (fig. 3-30).²⁵² He also added more of his and Lucia’s photographs. The second edition will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Moholy-Nagy opened the illustrated section of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, by criticizing the Pictorialist aspects of a Stieglitz cityscape in New York, describing it as the “triumph of Impressionism or photography misunderstood.”²⁵³ His visual methodology for enriching and expanding human vision and perception in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, can be viewed as an intensification of the heterogeneity present at

²⁵⁰ Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, 34.

²⁵¹ HM Winger’s described the evolution of the book in his “Editor’s Note” to the 1969 MIT reprint of *Painting, Photography, Film*, 143, which was based on the 1927 edition.

²⁵² Moholy-Nagy captioned *Leda and the Swan* only as “the myth inverted,” *PPF*, 113. For viewers unfamiliar with the Greek mythology of Zeus, who “mated” with Leda disguised as a swan, the image would have been inscrutable.

²⁵³ *MPF*, 40.

the *Iphad* in Dresden. Moholy-Nagy finally collapsed the wall described by the *British Journal* in 1909 as permeable between “Art,” and the Science/Technical sections.²⁵⁴

There are particularly strong visual parallels between *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, and the Science/Technical material included by Karl Weiss in the précis of the Dresden exhibition, *Iphad: In Wort und Bild* (see figs. 2-23 through 2-31). Moholy-Nagy included an anonymous photograph of nearly identical flying birds as found in the Zoology section of *Iphad*, as a document and an “organization of light and shade”²⁵⁵ (fig. 3-31); he also included a study of lightning, depicting its sequence of action (fig. 3-32); *Iphad* included the prototypes of modern cinema from Marey’s studio, and Moholy-Nagy composed a filmic work, “Dynamic of the Metropolis” in the pages of the book (fig. 3-33);²⁵⁶ similar to the x-ray of the child in *Iphad*, Moholy-Nagy reproduced an x-ray of a frog (fig. 3-34).²⁵⁷ Moholy-Nagy also chose an uncaptioned photograph of a Japanese woman, strangely akin to the documentary photograph of the three Japanese women in Weiss (fig. 3-35).

The crux of the book’s vision lay in two spreads depicting x-rays of shells facing Moholy-Nagy’s photograms (fig 3-36 and 3-37). The ability of an x-ray to challenge human perception about the external world, and the enterprise of the artist to do the same, were conflated on these pages. The expanding public interest in science paralleled Moholy-Nagy’s increased interest in x-rays, infrared technology, and positive/negative imagery.²⁵⁸ The potential of the technical material at *Iphad* to directly inflect upon the

²⁵⁴ See page 53 above.

²⁵⁵ *MPF*, 42.

²⁵⁶ *MPF*, 116-129.

²⁵⁷ In the second edition, he would caption the x-ray of the frog as describing it in a caption as “one of the greatest visual experiences.” Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film*, 69.

²⁵⁸ Hight parallels the artistic and general public interest in science, which Einstein’s theory of relativity spurred in Berlin of the 1920s. Albert Einstein and Max Planck both developed their theories there: “Most

artwork in the next room was realized seventeen years later. This complete lack of hierarchy between art and science is typical throughout the illustrated section of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, with numerous anonymous, archival photographs interspersed with photographs by Man Ray, Renger-Patzsch, Hannah Höch,²⁵⁹ and other international contemporary artists.

Moholy-Nagy's New Vision circa 1926: The Photographs and "Fotoplastiken"

In 1926, the year of the *DPA*, the Bauhaus was in transition. The director Walter Gropius moved the Bauhaus to Dessau, necessitated by antagonism toward the school from Weimar's politically conservative environment.²⁶⁰ For the first time, a darkroom facility was included in the Masters' house, although an official photo program would not be instituted until after Walter Peterhans arrived in 1929.

Many of Moholy-Nagy's most iconic photographs—and those most illustrative of his theories of experimental photography and expansive vision—were produced during the years 1925-26, immediately before and during the year of the *DPA*. These included his continued production of photograms; photographs such as *Gutter*, 1925, (see fig. 1-3); *Dolls*, 1926²⁶¹ (fig. 3-38), which combined his favored photographic elements with a

of the artists of Moholy's circle turned to the newer definition based on theoretical physics....By the 1920s Einstein had obtained a kind of cult status, and his 'General Theory of Relativity' was popularized in the press." Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, 73.

²⁵⁹ The Höch montage included in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, 94, entitled *Hochfinanz* (High Finance), 1923, was signed by her to Moholy-Nagy. See the reproduction in Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 69.

²⁶⁰ Dessau was a welcoming city, due to the Social Democrats' "unassailable" majority in local politics. Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 154.

²⁶¹ Hight dates the *Dolls* from the Eastman House collection 1926. This makes sense, as the photograph was taken in Ascona, Switzerland, on a trip with the Oskar Schlemmer family in 1926. However, the Getty dates the *Dolls* from their collection 1926-27; see Weston Naef, ed., *In Focus: László Moholy-Nagy Photographs from The J. Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu, Calif: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1995), 48. There are many discrepancies in the dating of Moholy-Nagy's photographs. I generally rely on Hight, the most

avored subject of the Surrealists (light effects, the modern structure of a grated fence, and the deformed doppelgänger doll); and one of the worm's eye views of the *Bauhaus Balconies*, 1926 (fig. 3-39).

This was a particularly fertile period for Moholy-Nagy's fotoplastiks. His fotoplastiks provide a stark contrast with the painterliness of the Pictorialist work that dominated the *DPA*, and show evidence of his earlier engagement with the Berlin Dadaists Hannah Höch and Raoul Hausmann, and Lissitzky. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers described how Lissitzky would meet up with Moholy-Nagy and Lucia in their studio and how Hausmann, Höch, the filmmaker Hans Richter, and Werner Graeff, would all congregate there.²⁶² In their search for a provocative, anti-bourgeois aesthetic, Höch and Hausmann had been experimenting with photomontaging disparate visual material from mass media sources since 1919. Their technique and immersion in mass culture coalesced in an attempt to reach a broad audience with familiar material, transformed and embedded with messages of social change.

Höch explored male-female relationships through her imagery, concurrently with themes of gender politics, sexual freedom and the "New Woman" (see fig. 1-4 from Chapter 1). The New Woman of the Weimar Republic was a post-suffrage, working woman and independent consumer of pop culture and fashion.²⁶³ Moholy-Nagy often included images of the New Woman in his fotoplastiks. Moholy-Nagy's compositions were also similar in "whimsicality" to El Lissitzky's photomontages that illustrated Ilia

recent scholarly text on his photographs. I also consulted Passuth, and Andreas Haus [*Moholy-Nagy: Fotos und Fotogramme* (Munich, 1978)] for works not reproduced in Passuth.

²⁶² Lissitzky-Küppers, *Life, Letters, Texts*, 26. She is not specific about the chronology of these visits, but she places it in the context of Lissitzky's Berlin activities in 1922.

²⁶³ Lavin discusses Höch's identification with, and use of, images of the New Woman in her book, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*.

Ehrenburg's book *Six Tales with Easy Endings* (fig. 3-40), published in 1922.²⁶⁴ This was one of Lissitzky's first projects after his arrival in Germany in December 1921. Due to his documented visits to Moholy-Nagy's studio during the next year, it is reasonable to assume that Moholy-Nagy would have been familiar with Lissitzky's method of combining dynamic and geometricized design elements with photomontaged figures before he began creating his own in 1923.

Moholy-Nagy began using the term "photoplastik" (before the "f" replaced the "ph") in *Malerei, Photographie Film*, as a way to distinguish his method from the "collage" and "montage" practices of his peers.²⁶⁵ Fotoplastiks by Moholy-Nagy which could have been in the *DPA* include *Kino in Parliament*, mentioned earlier as appearing in the 1925 edition of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Politics and a sports spectacle intertwine in this montage, with the members of Parliament seemingly engrossed in a film of female divers and boaters projected on a huge screen at the front of their chambers. Lusk has observed that the scaffolding to the left of the seated members connotes both a diving platform and a speaker's rostrum, a metaphorical conflation of politics and entertainment.²⁶⁶ *Structure of the World*, 1925, (fig. 3-41) also weaves humor with an underlying critique, this time of the sexual voyeurism and consumerism rampant in modern industrial societies. Moholy-Nagy reproduced this fotoplastik prominently in his final book, *Vision in Motion*, describing it as a "satirical montage

²⁶⁴ The complementary nature of Lissitzky's early photomontages and Moholy-Nagy's fotoplastiks is discussed in Matthew Drutt's essay "El Lissitzky in Germany, 1922-25," in Tupitsyn, *Lissitzky*, 9-24.

²⁶⁵ Lucia Moholy discussed Moholy-Nagy's wish to discriminate his montages from those of his colleagues through this special designation in *Marginal Notes*, 70. Julie Saul has defined fotoplastiks strictly as photographs of the original collages. See Julie Saul, "Social and Political Themes," in *Moholy-Nagy Fotoplastiks: The Bauhaus Years* (New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1983), 10.

²⁶⁶ Lusk, *Montagen ins Blaue*, 70.

making fun of the fright of the monkey and the quack-clacking super-geese who discovered the simplicity of the world constructed as a leg show.”²⁶⁷

Behind the Back of God, also known as *Between Heaven and Earth*, 1925-26 (fig. 3-42), is a multi-layered work, with “heaven” populated by a tribal “other” and twins—touched by the hands jutting out of the tribal figure— with the fashionable black bob haircuts that signified the New Woman.²⁶⁸ These twins have similar features as the Dolly sisters, Berlin dance hall queens, gamblers, and celebrity consorts who, according to Lusk, were the subject of another Moholy-Nagy fotoplastik, *Olly and Dolly Sisters*, 1925 (fig. 3-43).²⁶⁹ An athletic-looking woman is midway in her fall to earth, blown by a tribal blowpipe into a trampoline held by an ominous-looking army of dehumanized men around a firefighters’ rescue net. Her pose echoes a stop-motion photograph of the dancer Palucca that Moholy-Nagy included in *Malerei, Photographie, Film* (fig. 3-44). The artist portrays heaven as an amalgam of a “freer” past and the fantasy worlds depicted in jazzy movies and women’s magazines. Yet, the realities on earth jeopardize those romanticizations, and the woman is caught squarely between these worlds. Perhaps Moholy-Nagy viewed the moment of 1926 as a kind of purgatory—or a moment pregnant with possibility.

Hight interprets *Between Heaven and Earth* as related to his marital problems, partially based on Roh’s placement of it opposite a photograph of Lucia’s face in his

²⁶⁷ László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 212.

²⁶⁸ The twins were an addition to the second version of this fotoplastik, now in the Collection Marzona, see Drutt, “El Lissitzky in Germany, 1922-25,” in Tupitsyn, *Lissitzky*, 12. However, he dates that work very early, 1923. Hight, 139, and Lusk, 123, both date the work without the twins 1926; that is version I at the Getty. However, the Getty dates it 1925: *In Focus*, 34, and Roh dates it 1927: Franz Roh, *L. Moholy-Nagy, 60 Fotos* (Berlin: Klinkhardt & Biermann), figure 22.

²⁶⁹ Lusk, 120.

1930 book *Moholy-Nagy: 60 Fotos*.²⁷⁰ Roh placed the negative of that portrait opposite another, less difficult to decode fotoplastik, *The Shattered Marriage*, 1925.²⁷¹ Although Moholy-Nagy integrated personal material into the fotoplastiks, they were also his most candid works of contemporary social engagement, and of Modernismus, with their swirl of sporting events, trains, New Women, and political critiques. In summation, at the time of the *DPA* in Frankfurt, Moholy-Nagy was engaged in a variety of photographic experiments that pushed photography in new directions and continued his engagement in modern subject matter.

Essays in the *DPA* Catalogue and their Social/Political Relevance

As with the two introductory pieces by Sutter and Grainer, the bulk of the *DPA* catalogue essays meshed photographic issues with Germany's then current social and economic challenges. The catalogue authors wrote from a variety of political positions regarding photography's role in relation to those challenges.

Carl Hübsch, President of the VDAV, contributed the essay "The German Amateur at the *DPA*."²⁷² He directly paralleled the rise and fall of the photographic society's fortunes with that of the deutsche mark's value,²⁷³ which had experienced varying degrees of inflation from 1914-24 before stabilizing:

When the leadership of the (amateur photography) society, founded in 1908, was handed over to us in Munich in 1923, it seemed again to fail. Along with the currency, organizations that served idealistic purposes were doomed. Once the currency fall was halted, an exhibition in Nuremburg was organized by the

²⁷⁰ See Hight, 138, and Roh, *60 Fotos*, figures 21 and 22.

²⁷¹ Roh, *60 Fotos*, figures 47 and 48.

²⁷² Carl Hübsch, "Die Deutschen Amateure auf der Deutschen Photographischen Ausstellung 1926," *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 21-23.

²⁷³ Peukert distinguished three phases of inflation during this period: war inflation, 1914-18; demobilization inflation, 1919-21; and the "catastrophic hyperinflation" that led to the collapse of the mark in 1923. The mark was stabilized by early 1924. Peukert, *Weimar*, 61-62.

society leadership. It was a full success and once again, proved that courage and self-confidence could take the place of pessimism so that the common efforts received the recognition of the public.²⁷⁴

Using a similar tone as Grainer's, Hübsch related current exhibition practices to the German socioeconomic situation. And like Grainer, rather than challenging his group's photography to face those realities, he spoke of leading the public back to ideals. In his view, the stabilization was a chance to *return* to something rather than move on to a new stage of awareness as the New Vision sought. For Grainer and Hübsch, once the economy was restored, ideals could be restored.

Hübsch's main aim here was advocating for the society of which he was president, and he specified that within the Amateur section the VDAV had 150 works, as well as their own jury and installation commission.²⁷⁵ They were given their 200 square meters of space free of charge.²⁷⁶ He did not specifically address the contemporary photographers outside the purview of the society, namely the independent four individuals, including Moholy-Nagy, aside from one dismissive sentence that those outside the society had found their vision in "gewerbliche Abteilung," or craft-like work.²⁷⁷ He did, however, delve into the retrospective that included Kuehn and his *Kleeblatt* group at length. Their section was deemed a "retrospective exhibition

²⁷⁴ "...als die Leitung des im Jahre 1908 gegründeten VDAV im Juni 1923 uns Münchnern übertragen wurde, da schien alle Mühe wiederum vergebens zu sein. Mit der Währung waren offenbar in Deutschland auch alle idealen Zwecken dienenden Organisationen dem Untergang geweiht. Als dem Währungsverfall Halt geboten werden konnte, schrieb sofort die Leitung des Verbandes eine Ausstellung für 1924 in Nürnberg aus. Es war ein voller Erfolg und wieder einmal ein Beweis dafür, wie in einer ganzen Gruppe von Menschen an die Stelle des Pessimismus wieder Mut und Selbstvertrauen treten, sowie einer gemeinsamen Anstrengung die Anerkennung in der Öffentlichkeit zu teil wird." Hübsch, "Die Deutschen Amateure," 21.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁷⁶ "Der Gruppe Amateurphotographie, die dem VDAV unterstellt ist, sind 200 sqm kostenlos überlassen worden." *Photographische Rundschau*, "DPA," 63 (1926): 280.

²⁷⁷ Hübsch, "Die Deutschen Amateure," 22.

connected to the space of the collective exhibition” of “amateurs...already deceased or no longer interested actively in exhibitions and competitions.”²⁷⁸

A funereal yet worshipful tone permeated Hübsch’s description of this section, as if the younger generation should enter the crypt of the old “masters of photography” to learn from the “originals.”²⁷⁹ The phrasing is not surprising from a leader who considered bromoil—an improvement of the oil-pigment process—to be the work of “progressive” amateurs. One of Hübsch’s vaporous landscapes in the exhibition seemed a simplistic homage to photographers deceased, or otherwise experiencing an “exhaustion of vitality,” and hopelessly behind the times (fig. 3-45). That he essentially ignored the individuals producing the work that confronted contemporary subject matter and used contemporary techniques points to a certain anxiety and discomfort. His essay contained no discussion about subject matter, no prescription for which subjects the contemporary photographers should be pursuing in light of the economic convulsions he described.

Hübsch concluded his essay about the amateurs in a manifesto-style, italicized statement. He emphasized that in addition to industrialists and representatives of trade enthusiastically supporting the *DPA*, the city of Frankfurt and its “masses” had supported it.²⁸⁰ And, in the final sentence, he spoke of the current moment as an important stage in

²⁷⁸ “Retrospektiven Ausstellung die sich auch räumlich der Kollektivausstellung anschließt. Hier sind aus staatlichem und Privatbesitz einige der besten Bilder vereinigt, die von Amateuren geschaffen worden sind, welche bereits verstorben sind oder sich nicht mehr aktiv an Ausstellungen und Wettbewerben beteiligen.” Ibid. Indeed, although Kuehn lived until 1944, his style “changed little after 1912.” Elizabeth Pollock, “The Biography of Heinrich Kuehn,” in *Eine Ausstellung von hundert Photographien von Heinrich Kühn* (An exhibition of one hundred photographs by Heinrich Kühn) (Munich: Stefan Lennert, 1981), 13.

²⁷⁹ “...hier Bilder von Meistern der Photographie einmal im Original genießen zu können, die sie nur aus mehr oder minder gelungenen Reproduktionen kennen.” Hübsch, “Die Deutschen Amateure,” 22.

²⁸⁰ Although in his foreword, Sutter had only mentioned the support of Frankfurt’s bourgeoisie for the exhibition, so it is unclear what Hübsch considered to be the “support of the masses.”

uniting those with interest in photography as an “art, science, and craft.”²⁸¹ The *DPA* seemed to have extended the steps taken in Dresden to penetrate the separations between elitism and populism in photography, at least in language, even for figures like Hübsch; they needed economic support from the industrial firms to hold the exhibition. But his work showed no interest in the intersection of art with science, or with craft.

As mentioned in the introduction of the dissertation and the beginning of this chapter, Eskildsen’s pointed emphasis on the *DPA* as the first exhibition to introduce objective photography and documentary photography provided compelling reasons to make it the centerpiece of this dissertation. However, she did not explain in any detail *how* this was so. The most revealing references to those issues are found in the catalogue essay by an obscure professor, Dr. Seddig, entitled “Scientific Photography.”²⁸² He explored definitions of objective photography as a means to expand the possibilities of vision for all, and the plurality of photographic applications to achieve those ends. Many points in the essay paralleled Moholy-Nagy’s vision and interests, particularly what the artist expressed as the “mechanical means of representation and their as yet unpredictable possibilities of extension.”²⁸³

Dr. Seddig defined the scope of scientific photography through various types of application. First, he described the actual recording of objects and appearances. He used the documenting of hieroglyphics by Egyptologists as an example, which could not have been accurately depicted by hand drawing. The librarian, the art historian, the geologist,

²⁸¹ “...und daß sie dabei nicht nur von einer Reihe einsichtiger Industrieller und Händler der Photobranche, sondern vor allem auch von der Stadt Frankfurt und ihrem Messeamt tatkräftig unterstützt worden sind. Dies wird und muß der Photographie neue Freunde gewinnen und bedeutet eine wichtige Etappe auf dem Wege des Zusammenschlusses aller derjenigen, die am Blühen und Gedeihen der Photographie als Kunst, Wissenschaft und Gewerbe interessiert sind.” Hübsch, “Die Deutschen Amateure,” 23.

²⁸² Dr. Seddig, “Wissenschaftliche Photographie,” in *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 38-40.

²⁸³ *MPF*, 11.

and zoologist, geographers, and botanists, among others, now depended on photography to document material faithfully.²⁸⁴ He specified stereoscopes, cinema, color photography, and microscopes as the means to these documentary ends. Second, Dr. Seddig emphasized “*the procedure by which photography becomes an extension of the senses*. Photography records light for which the human eye is blind to determine its appearances and to study them.”²⁸⁵ He listed spectography (the study of the color spectrum through infrared), x-ray photography, stereoscopy, and cinematography—both “regular” cinema that allowed “the study of movements too fast for the human eye,” and slow motion cinema, making “manifold movements directly accessible, which without these aids would be impossible.”²⁸⁶ These precedents revealed “that through photographic methods the area of our sense perception is extended,” and that the *DPA* exhibition supplied a “progression of good evidence” to support these claims.²⁸⁷

Each of the photographic methods Seddig outlined in this theoretical and didactic essay reverberated in the more strictly expository essay that followed it, “Applications of Photography in Science,”²⁸⁸ by a Dr. Popp, who also discussed the utilization of photography in astronomy, nature, cinematic slow motion, ethnology, art history,

²⁸⁴ “Der Bibliothekar, der Kunsthistoriker, der Geologe, Zoologe, Geograph, Botaniker usw. sammelt auf diese Weise sein Material bildlich in urkundlicher Treue.” Dr. Seddig, “Wissenschaftliche Photographie,” in *DPA*, 39.

²⁸⁵ “Eine zweite Gruppe der wissenschaftlichen Photographie bilden die Verfahren, bei denen die Photographie als *Mittel zur Erweiterung unserer Sinne* dient. Mit Hilfe der Photographie gelingt es Lichtarten, für die das menschliche Auge blind ist, wahrnehmbar zu machen und ihre Erscheinungen festzustellen und zu studieren.” *Ibid.* Emphasis Seddig’s.

²⁸⁶ “Das Studium von Bewegungsvorgängen, die zu rasch verlaufen, als daß das menschliche Auge ihnen folgen könnte, wird möglich mit Hilfe der Kinematographie; teils mit dem gewöhnlichen Kinematographie, der in der Sekunde 16-25 Bilder aufzeichnet, die dann einzeln oder im langsamen Ablauf beobachtet werden, oder mit Hilfe der ‘Zeitlupe.’ ...wodurch vielerlei Bewegungsvorgänge direkt anschaulich und erkennbar werden, die ohne dieses Hilfsmittel nur schwierig oder garnicht bemerkbar sind.” *Ibid.*, 39-40.

²⁸⁷ “Diese Beispiele mögen genügen um zu zeigen, wie durch photographische Verfahren das Gebiet unserer Sinnes-Wahrnehmungen erweitert wird...Auch hierfür gibt die gegenwärtige Ausstellung eine Reihe guter Belege.” *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁸⁸ Dr. Popp, “Die Anwendung der Photographie in der Wissenschaft,” in *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 41-44.

medicine and law. Dr. Popp moved into a more theoretical realm only when discussing the equation of photography and truth. He seemed to be recalling Plato's cave in the second paragraph: "In former times we (scientists) had to rely on drawing... It has been proven... that things and appearances were falsely seen and falsely depicted which expressed too intensely the subjective moment, and therefore resulted in error."²⁸⁹

Seddig made no mention of Moholy-Nagy, or any other individual photographer. But his areas of emphasis and those that Moholy-Nagy chose for the illustrations of the *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, and the essay from the later *Photographische Rundschau* (1929) that Eskildsen plumbed to define objective photography are nearly identical: cinema, x-rays, infrared, stereoscopy, and studies of light. These branches of photography, and the vocabulary used by Dr. Seddig, directly corresponded with Moholy-Nagy's development of the New Vision as a concept that could extend and expand vision for all human beings. Dr. Seddig indicated that it was *through* the Frankfurt exhibition that the public could absorb the evidence of the expansive potential of photography. He saw that the exhibition could shape knowledge of these methods.

Fritz Goertz's essay, "Reproduction Section of the *DPA*," confronted the social impact of photographic developments in more specific terms.²⁹⁰ In his eyes, the administrators of the *DPA* were "seeing into the future" when they decided to exhibit photographic products alongside modern prints, demonstrating the advancement of

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 41. "Es hat sich aber im Verlauf des weiteren Ausbaues fast aller Zweige wissenschaftlicher Betätigung erwiesen, daß Dinge und Erscheinungen falsch gesehen und infolgedessen auch falsch dargestellt wurden, also das subjektive Moment allzusehr zum Ausdruck kam, und dadurch Irrtümer hervorgerufen wurden."

²⁹⁰ Professor Fritz Goertz, "Die Reproduktionsabteilung auf der Deutschen Photographischen Ausstellung," in *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 48-50. A "Dr. Goertz" was mentioned in the 1910 volume of *Camera Work*. He was described as a friend of Eugene's, an originator of the three-color process, and the head of F. Bruckman Verlag in Munich. *Camera Work* (month 1910): 59.

photographic technology.²⁹¹ Goertz viewed the display as crucial to the education of the visitor in understanding the “utilization” of photography: “without this production, the highest existence of the cultural man could hardly exist.”²⁹²

Goertz seemed to give the administration too much credit of foresight here. The organizers still gave “art photography” a more central location in the installation, and separated it from technical and scientific photography in the catalogue. The material rose above the structure and intention. The most substantial differences between *DPA* and *Iphad* were twofold: first, that a few artists like Erfurth, Moholy-Nagy, and some of the poster designers started combining elements of art and technology in their imagery, therefore inherently resisting hierarchy within the work; second, critics writing reviews and scholars writing for the catalogue responded directly to the subversive potential of the conglomeration of material. Their overall *impression* led them to believe they were seeing amateur and professional photography “next to science and trade.”²⁹³ And they were not only taking specific note of the stimulant of this varied material in the same venue, but were seeing how “types” could modulate and invigorate one another, and have a social impact on the public. At the time of *Iphad*, many critics were drawn to the more utilitarian photography and repelled by the art photography, but were not yet expressing an interest in seeing them intersect. The reception of the *DPA* was also much more specific in relating this potential of photography to the particular class tensions of

²⁹¹ “In dankenswerter Weitsicht hat die Ausstellungsleitung den Entschluß gefaßt, neben den Erzeugnissen von in sich abgeschlossenen rein photographischen Techniken, auch eine Sammlung auserwählter Spitzenleistungen der verschiedenen modernen Reproduktionen, bzw. Drucktechniken mit auszustellen.” Goertz, “Reproduktionsabteilung,” 48.

²⁹² “Damit wird der Besucher der Ausstellung auf ein Verwendungsgebiet der Photographie geführt, das, vor noch kaum fünfzig Jahren urbar gemacht, gegenwärtig schon die ganze Welt umspannt und ohne dessen Produktion der heutige Kulturmensch kaum mehr existieren könnte.” Ibid.

²⁹³ “Neben der regen Beteiligung der Wissenschaft, Industrie und des Handels, wird sie eine umfangreiche Bilderschau von Berufs- und Amateurphotographien bieten.” *Photographische Rundschau* 63: 280.

Weimar. This will be discussed in greater detail in the section devoted to critical reception of DPA below.

Throughout his essay on reproduction techniques, Goertz emphasized the potential of photography, particularly the potential for mass production and general distribution. He explained that initially photography was “welcomed and applied” only as a producer of portraits, before the development of new printing techniques expanded its mandate; the simplification in the production of print plates as the shift from manual to mechanical prints took place allowed “all kinds of pictorial prints” to give way “to the enormous masses of print products of our time.”²⁹⁴ Goertz’s language recalls Caffin’s demand in *Camera Work* that prints in magazines stop acquiescing to fuzzy gravure printing, and start taking advantage of the clarity of mass printing techniques for their readers. His language also recalls the enthusiasm Moholy-Nagy expressed in *Malerei, Photographie, Film* about the “vast potentialities” of modern illustrated magazines which not yet been met: “And what educational and civilizing work they could and should perform! Impart the wonders of technique, of science, of the intellect.”²⁹⁵

Goertz celebrated the superior simplicity of photography’s reproducing abilities over the complexity of the artist’s interpretation. He proclaimed that photography was not “only the founder of mass production which we just got accustomed to,” but also the “keeper of absolute truth” in the reproduction of originals.²⁹⁶ This is reflective of photography’s truth value described in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Moholy-Nagy

²⁹⁴ “...alle Arten des Bilddruckes gab dann auch den Ansporn zu den enormen Massen von Druckerzeugnissen unserer Zeit.” Goertz, “Reproduktionsabteilung,” 49.

²⁹⁵ *MPF*, 27.

²⁹⁶ “Die Photographie ist aber nicht allein die Begründerin der Massenproduktion, an die wir schon so sehr gewöhnt sind.” Goertz, “Reproduktionsabteilung,” 49.

would develop this idea further, in relation to the objectivity and subjectivity, in the second edition of the book in 1927:

“Everyone will be compelled to see that which is optically true, is explicable in its own terms, is objective, before he can arrive at any possible subjective position. This will abolish that pictorial and imaginative association pattern which has remained un superseded for centuries and which has been stamped upon our vision by great individual painters. We have—through a hundred years of photography and two decades of film—been enormously enriched in this respect. *We may say that we see the world with entirely different eyes.*”²⁹⁷

Although Hight has rightly called into question Moholy-Nagy’s lexical acceptance throughout *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, of photography as a beacon of absolute truth,²⁹⁸ the artist made it clear that his excitement was based in the possibilities of liberating “subjective” artistic positions from the realm of the individual in order for knowledge to spread to the masses. Goertz was just as impassioned as Moholy-Nagy in speaking about photography’s larger social mission in relation to the masses, information, and affordability. For Goertz, photography was clearly the most democratic art form:

Since a mass (production) also indicates cheap press or at least affordability to those less wealthy, so it is obviously clear that photography through the above named facts became the bearer of an entirely important cultural mission. By being able to raise the quality of picture prints through its collaboration to an entirely higher step of completion, it undoubtedly has a taste creating effect on the broad masses of people.²⁹⁹

Karl Weiss, author of the book *Iphad: In Wort und Bild* discussed in Chapter 2, contributed to the *DPA* catalogue as well, exploring the economic minutiae of German

²⁹⁷ *Painting, Photography, Film*, 28-29, emphasis Moholy-Nagy’s.

²⁹⁸ Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, 182.

²⁹⁹ “Da aber Masse stets auch den Begriff von Billigkeit, zum mindesten aber der Erschwinglichkeit für den weniger Begüterten in sich birgt, so ist es ohne weiteres klar, daß die Photographie durch die genannten beiden Faktoren zum Träger einer ganz bedeutsamen Kulturmission geworden ist. Indem sie die Qualität des Bilddruckes durch ihre Mitwirkung auf eine wesentlich höhere Stufe der Vervollkommnung zu erheben vermag, wirkt sie zweifellos auch geschmackbildend auf die breiten Schichten des Volkes ein.” Goertz, “Reproduktionsabteilung,” 49.

photographic technology. His essay “Photographic Industry at the *DPA*,” was devoted to statistics about the dependency of the entire foreign trade balance of Germany on photographic and film technologies, a consequence of the intertwining of photography and other industries such as optics, chemistry, glass, paper, wood, and metals.³⁰⁰ Weiss explained that one of the special economic factors of the industry was its ability to achieve “high value market materials from low value raw materials.”³⁰¹ In other words, the Germans were becoming masters at making highly valued products from materials that cost little: “a number of items gained world renown and ruled the international photo and movie market as a German trademark.”³⁰² This was in addition to the burgeoning camera industry in Germany that, the year before the *DPA*, had introduced the Leica camera at a 1925 fair in Leipzig.³⁰³ The Leica would promote a boom in photojournalism and further the ability of documentary approaches to make a genuine impact on modernist photography, particularly in dynamic images of street activity and social gatherings from a variety of visual perspectives.³⁰⁴ Weiss noted the *DPA* displayed the huge technological achievements, and the pictorial results of those achievements, to a large public for the first time in western Germany.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁰ Karl Weiss, “Die Photographische Industrie zur *DPA*,” *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 51-53.

³⁰¹ “...die photographische Industrie im vollsten Sinne des Wortes eine Veredelungsindustrie darstellt, indem sie aus relativ geringwertigem Rohmaterial hochwertige Markenartikel erzeugt.” Weiss, “Die Photographische Industrie,” 51.

³⁰² “Dazu kommt noch die Tatsache, daß vermöge einer sehr guten technischen und wirtschaftlichen Durchbildung der Fabrikation eine Anzahl Artikel Weltruf erworben haben und als deutsche Markenware den internationalen Photo- und Kinomarkt beherrschen.” Ibid.

³⁰³ Coke, *Avant-Garde*, 54.

³⁰⁴ For more on the influence of documentary approaches on photographic art, see Olivier Lugon’s published dissertation: *Le Style documentaire. D’August Sander à Walker Evans, 1920-1945* (Paris: Macula, 2001) (the dissertation was completed in 1995).

³⁰⁵ Weiss, “Die Industrie,” 53. “Es war jedenfalls eine dankbare Aufgabe für die Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung in Frankfurt anlässlich der Tagung der verschiedenen photographischen Fach- und Amateurorganisationen seit Kriegsende erstmalig wieder eine Schau größeren Umfanges im Westen des Reiches zu veranstalten, um der großen Oeffentlichkeit nicht nur die Qualitätleistungen der Industrie, sondern auch die damit hergestellten Bilderzeugnisse vorzuführen.”

Erich Stenger's Essay on Portraiture at *DPA*

As stated earlier, Stenger contributed the historical photographic display at the *DPA* and was on the jury for the Science section.³⁰⁶ He also wrote an essay in the catalogue about portraiture, "The Photographic Portrait around 1840."³⁰⁷ Stenger was an unusual choice of author for the "Portraits" essay, as most of the portraits represented conventional Pictorialist technique. He was not a supporter of Pictorialism and would go on to write about how Pictorialist technique "stole precious value" from photography's technical perfection in *Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatt* in 1929.³⁰⁸

Before right-wing political affiliations darkened Stenger's status as an historian,³⁰⁹ he actively contributed to the historiography of photography through his participation in large-scale exhibition. His curated vitrines, filled with mid-nineteenth century material, gave audiences a sense of history as they absorbed the more recent trends displayed around them. He also tried to bring the public's attention to the history of writing about photography, explaining his dedication to collecting early books about photographic processes in the above-mentioned essay, published at the time of *Fifo*.³¹⁰ He considered knowledge of the reception of photography to be as important as knowledge of the images.

³⁰⁶ "Gruppe IV: Wissenschaft und historische Photographie" has "Prof. Stenger, Historische Sammlung." (Halle II, Nr. 161). *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 102.

³⁰⁷ Erich Stenger, "Das photographische Porträt um 1840," in *DPA Aussteller-Verzeichnis*, 45-47.

³⁰⁸ "Bis Retusche und künstlerische Kopieverfahren dem photographischen Porträt diesen, seinen unschätzbaren Hauptwert raubten." Erich Stenger, "Historisches in *Film und Foto*," *Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatt* (29 May 1929): 2, in Eskildsen, *Film und Foto der Zwanziger Jahre*, 73.

³⁰⁹ Bodo von Dewitz, "Erich Stenger und seine *Geschichte der Fotografie*" (Erich Stenger and his history of photography), typescript of lecture at the fourth Fotosymposium, Stadtmuseum München, 26 October 1996, Collections, Agfa Fotohistorama, Köln, 13. Von Dewitz notes that Stenger was never a member of the Nazi party. He was, however, a member of the National Socialist "lecture group," (NS-Dozentenbund) from 1941-44 and the Reich's civil service (Reichsbund der deutschen Beamten) beginning in 1940. Von Dewitz explains this as necessary to maintaining his professional status.

³¹⁰ Stenger, "Historisches in 'Fifo,'" 73.

In his *DPA* essay, Stenger detailed early photographic technology, and charted how the technical challenges of creating Daguerreotypes intersected with the artistry of evocative portrait photography. He also included little-published material about the relationship between the French and German developments of the practice, crediting a Berlin newspaper article from January 15, 1839, with confirming that Daguerre was the first to experiment with a living subject—there had been some argument that the first portrait had been taken in New York by John Draper.³¹¹ Stenger’s exploration of international cross-pollination in photography would change by the time of his 1938 history of photography, *Photographie in Kultur und Technik*, translated into English in 1939, where a German nationalistic emphasis and German contributions to the field dominated his historical discussions.³¹²

Stenger primarily documented the mundane details of preparation for a Daguerreotype: that it usually took around 10 minutes, that the eye would often wander because of the time lapse, that the sitter could not place their hands on their chest, would sometimes need a head bracer, and how the colors of their clothing would affect the eventual outcome of the photograph. Subsequent to the droning of facts, as Sutter, Grainer, and Hübsch did in their essays, he (melo)dramatically widened the breadth of his discussion, stating that once certain problematics could be ironed out, photography “could begin its victory through all the lands.”³¹³

³¹¹ Stenger, “Das photographische Porträt,” 45-46.

³¹² Erich Stenger, *The History of Photography: Its Relation to Civilization and Practice*, trans. Edward Epstean (Easton, Pennsylvania: Mack Printing Company, 1939). There is a note in the front matter by Epstean about the publisher disavowing sponsorship of the book due to political conditions in Europe.

³¹³ “Und nun, nachdem die größte Schwierigkeit beseitigt war, konnte die Porträtphotographie ihren Siegeszug durch alle Länder beginnen.” Stenger, “Das photographische Porträt,” 47.

Critical Reception of the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung*

Some critics noted an overemphasis on portraits at the *DPA*; it seemed to be the genre through which the Pictorialists thought they could most easily continue their influence. Portraiture constituted an area where the goals of certain professionals and regressive amateurs met, and the professionals involved in the organization of the show used the genre to stamp an identity on the show. As mentioned, portraits had a strong presence in the illustrated section of the catalogue, and portraits by GDL members completely dominated the *DPA* issue of *Das Atelier*. Out of twenty-five images from the exhibition reproduced in the journal, only three were *not* portraits, two landscapes and Fiedler's *Market Scene*.

Most of the portraits were banal, gauzily lit, and devoid of environmental context or details. Max Halberstadt's portrait of a young girl in her white nightgown embodies sentimentalized innocence and longing (fig. 3-46); the female generations in Herm Bähr's portrait embody domestic simplicity and harmony (fig. 3-47); and Grainer's seated portrait of a fashionable school girl seems the adolescent version of one of his inaccessible society ladies (fig. 3-48). One daring photograph by Carl Siemssen stands out, the subject asserting herself as a New Woman with her short haircut, stark makeup, aggressively chic clothing and self-confident pose (fig. 3-49)—the photographic equivalent of Christian Schad's *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting, *Sonia*, 1928 (fig. 3-50). Schad, however, succeeded in creating a deeper societal portrait of city nightlife, by placing his subject in a crowded café space. Gustav Hartlaub, who organized the first *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting exhibition, expressed the group's concerns as "a characteristic

mark of concreteness, in itself purely external,”³¹⁴ an externality that most of the Pictorialist photographers at the *DPA* avoided.

In Claassen’s review of the *DPA* in *Die Form*, he accused the bourgeoisie of laziness in accepting romanticized Pictorialist landscapes and portraits of themselves as cheap escapist aggrandizement in difficult economic times: “the upper and lower middle-class wishes the privilege of the rich on a genuine art portrait, on landscape seen through the glasses of ‘perception.’ The photographic technique broadens the right of those authorized significantly.”³¹⁵ This tendency was interpreted in retrospect by the Marxist critic Siegfried Kracauer in his post-World War II opus, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Kracauer, who considered himself a cultural philosopher,³¹⁶ posited that in the face of economic desperation, the middle-class in Weimar Germany had clung to the ersatz manifestations of their status even as they were slipping closer and closer to lower bourgeois and working-class status.³¹⁷ Romanticized portraits provided perfect mirrors for their self-deception.

³¹⁴ G.F. Hartlaub, “Preface,” *Neue Sachlichkeit: German Painting since Expressionism* (Mannheim: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1925), in Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 291.

³¹⁵ “Das große und kleine Bürgertum wünscht das Privileg der Reichen auf ein echtes Künstlerporträt, auf die durch die Brille der ‘Auffassung’ gesehene Landschaft zu stürzen. Die photographische Technik verbreitet den Stamm der Berechtigten beträchtlich.” Claassen, “*DPA*,” 276.

³¹⁶ Thomas Levin, “Introduction,” in Siegfried Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 3.

³¹⁷ Similarly, the petit-bourgeoisie, the “shopkeepers, tradesmen, artisans,” and the new class of urban workers with “white-collar pretensions” yearned for bourgeois security and chose to dream of the impossible rather than acknowledge their own station. Kracauer believed these secret dispositions of the German people could be disclosed by analyzing the films they produced and watched, and by exposing recurrent themes and fantasies of otherness, unrealistic social mobility, the ornamental, the authoritarian, the threat of women and communism, and fear of modernity. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 11. Kracauer had explored the desperate need of the middle-class to differentiate themselves from the proletariat in his earlier book, *Die Angestellten* (White-Collar Workers), published in 1930 when he still lived in Germany.

In addition to criticizing the “receivers” of such portraits, Claassen criticized the professional purveyors of “bombastic ‘studios,’ from which the tricky technique of photographic reproduction possibilities has created a typical bourgeois portrait art.”³¹⁸ The desire to support these studios likely motivated *Das Atelier*, essentially the journal of professional studios via its affiliation with the GDL, to be overstuffed with mediocre portraits. However, Claassen was sensitive to other startling juxtapositions the exhibition offered, and it seemed to excite him about possible directions away from this stagnation:

From the historical daguerreotype to the modern academic photo technical school. From the criminalistic, the medicine, astronomy, topography and cartographic aeronautics to the art historical inventory making. From the dove mail carrier system as a “Liliputgabe” (tiny exhibition), to an enlarged Hindenburg sculpture—a mammoth arrangement within this exhibition— friends of the old Frankfurt state are also thrown in, the fame corner, navy pictures and maneuver photographs enrich the substantial plurality by emotional nuances. Such a conglomeration that unites the industrial and art dealer interest and the idealistic achievement of the amateurs, lay in the nature of contemporary trade fair and exhibition organization. They, on their part, are logically and strongly interested in advertising to the visitors. The colorful presentation diminishes in no way the *merit of the mass direction*, to have created an undoubtedly liberally constructed exhibition.³¹⁹

Claassen’s tone is critical when describing the exhibition’s function as a display of commodities, but more tempered in his assessment of the “merit of mass direction.” He continued: “The actual contradiction that the exhibition awakens comes from the fact that it shows a *range of possibilities*. The Frankfurt exhibition is representative enough to give a valid scale for evaluation of important facts of this case.”³²⁰ The plurality enriches what would otherwise comprise a kind of sale to the bourgeois consumer—a display of

³¹⁸ “... von den graphischen Gewerben bis zu den bombastischen ‘Ateliers’, die aus der diffizilen Technik der photographischen Reproduktionsmöglichkeiten heraus eine typisch ‘bürgerliche’ Porträtkunst geschaffen haben.” Claassen, “*DPA*,” 275.

³¹⁹ Ibid. Emphasis added. For German, see appendix A.

³²⁰ Ibid. “Der eigentliche Widerspruch, den die ‘Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung’ erweckt, kann ganz im Gegenteil durch die hier gebotene Möglichkeit einer prinzipiellen Überschau überhaupt erst laut werden. Die Frankfurter Ausstellung ist repräsentativ genug, um gültige Maßstäbe für die Beurteilung allgemein wichtiger Tatbestände abzugeben.”

industrial products and mediocre portraiture. The heterogeneity of objects at least created a potentially useful tension, which interrupted the objects' function as commodities.

In describing the hanging of the exhibition, Claassen explicated some of its strategies; for instance, the manner in which photographs with artistic "pretension" were made central to the installation, with more purely technical pieces grouped around the edges. He viewed the configuration as a dangerous attempt to veil craftsmanship, by the very means of fine technical knowledge of photographic technique:

It [studio photography] resolved itself away from the factual task that it was given by the reproduction technique, represented by an objective duty, and claims with unrestrained naiveté the necessarily unjustifiable position of a sovereign. It limits the means and neglects yet flatters the object... A still and rosy, light happiness intoxicates the photographer... oil, gum and pigment prints rule the situation.³²¹

Later in the essay, Claassen described the Impressionist "fleeting moment" and "pure opticality" as having "a disastrous effect as a model for photographs. It will have been reinterpreted as...illegitimate cheap propaganda."³²² The onslaught of portraits reproduced in *Das Atelier* and the catalogue were products of enclosed studios. Claassen characterized the photographers as ignoring their duty and neglecting the object, correlating this approach with authoritarianism. He also accused them of victimizing the public: "The dependence on publicly known and ordinary conscious taste of typical painting schools defeats the visitor to this exhibition."³²³

This defeat seems analogous to the Baudelairean ennui described by critics of the Pictorialist photographs at *Iphad*. But Claassen also sensed the destabilizing potential of

³²¹ Appendix. Ibid.

³²² "Der Impressionismus, flach gefaßt, als das Flüchtige, rein Optische hat als Vorbild der Photographen verheerend gewirkt. Er wird in peinliche und äußerliche Stimmungsmache umgedeutet." Ibid., 276.

³²³ "Die Abhängigkeit von bekanntesten und im durchschnittlichen Geschmacksbewußstein typisch gewordenen Malschulen erschlägt den Besucher dieser Ausstellung." Ibid.

combining disparate elements. As a counterpoint to that which “intoxicates,” Claassen looked to the “modest” professional, much as Emmerich did in his review of *Iphad*, and Erfurth was one of the few photographers he praised.³²⁴ Claassen alluded to the difficulties for some photographers to push the boundaries of modern photography beyond a kind of slavery to painting: they needed the money that the bourgeoisie was willing to spend on the one art form they could still afford to buy, especially if it embodied the luxuriant look and feel of escapist nineteenth-century paintings. Yet he yearned for the bourgeoisie to allow a more honest self-depiction, and for the photographer to provide it. With that yearning for symbiosis he concluded his review:

A special photography branded by a skillful mixture of photographically reachable effects to a unique artwork is a fully legitimate ersatz. Plus, one can afford to buy it. Modern photography is civilized and sociologically artificial-- a bourgeoisie which has been forced to reduce an aristocratic inclination and longing to a rational form, economically, technically and spiritually. The photographic technique is sufficient for all demands, which a broader consumption and willingness for an art ready to create illusions could ask from a rational and rationalizeable art. The artistic photographer and the public dupe each other reciprocally. The responsibility is on the photographer, education has to start with the masses. They must learn, to be more self-aware and to let someone portray them as themselves. Only that would justify the photographic technique and the mediator position of photographers again. This is how the path to a well-deserved and sociologically justified rationalization and bourgeois self-depiction would start.³²⁵

Claassen’s plea here was not only directed at the “masses” he denoted as working class. Like Kracauer, he sensed the urgency for the threatened middle-class to confront themselves and their imminent economic slippage, and not allow themselves to glide into a haze of aristocratic fantasies.

³²⁴ Ibid. He also praised Walter Hege, one of the only *DPA* photographers other than Erfurth and Fiedler that would be seen in the New Vision exhibitions of the late-1920s.

³²⁵ Appendix A. Ibid.

If the critical reception of the *DPA* bared a longing for the use of photography in class self-awareness, there was also a desire for the re-injection of international influence on photographic developments and trends. Dr. Willi Warstat,³²⁶ a member of the *DPA* selection committee, was nonetheless critical of the exhibition and called for a reinvigoration of photography in his review, “Where do We Stand?” Dr. Warstat lamented “that the eager international relationships before the war have not been reinstalled:”

The foreign people did not get... obstacles in the same sense as we Germans. What we got to see in journals and yearbooks of foreign pictorial photograms here and there allowed us to assume that something new and beautiful had been created. It would be extraordinarily desirable if these new works of our German photographers would also be made accessible at one point so that also from here new inspirations and new ideas could penetrate the country.³²⁷

Warstat was anxious about the level of “inbreeding” (Überzüchtung) he detected in the stylistic development of German photography.³²⁸ He was convinced that re-establishing links with the international community would avoid further calcification. His anxiety conveyed the fear of exhausted vitality that Caffin had sensed in aesthetic photography at *Iphad*. His insistence that new ideas be allowed to “flow into” German culture provides a contrast to the more Reich-centric essays in the catalogue.³²⁹

³²⁶ Warstat had written a book about photography in 1909: *Allgemeine Ästhetik der photographischen Kunst auf psychologischer Grundlage*, (Halle: Knapp, 1909), but there was no direct reference to *Iphad*.

³²⁷ “... vor dem Kriege so ausserordentlich regen Beziehungen zum Auslande noch immer nicht wiederhergestellt sind. Das Ausland hat in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit die oben geschilderten Hemmnisse bei weitem nicht in dem Maße zu fühlen bekommen, wie wir Deutschen. Was wir in Zeitschriften und Jahrbüchern von ausländischen Bildnisphotogrammen hier und dazu sehen bekommen haben, berechtigt zu der Vermutung, daß dort mancherlei Schönes und Neues geschaffen worden ist. Es wäre ausserordentlich wünschenswert, daß auch diese neuen Werke unseren deutschen Photographen einmal zugänglich gemacht wurden, damit auch von hier neue Anregungen und neue Ideen befruchtend in unser Land fließen können.” W. Warstat, “Wo stehen wir?” *Der Photograph*, no. 72 (1926): 285.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ “...neue Anregungen und neue Ideen befruchtend in unser Land fließen können.” Ibid.

Warstat closely analyzed details of the exhibition that he noted might slip by novice visitors as superficial, but which he viewed as important, including the continued use of heavy gold and wooden frames, the use of gigantic formats as if to beg for legitimization, and the continued use of toning in the prints— he considered these “errors in taste” (Geschmacksverirrungen).³³⁰ He noted that *most* photographers had “rightly” converted to using very simple calico or wooden frames, and he hoped the more provincial and inward-looking tendencies were fading: “It is about time that this tasteful utilization gets fully acquired by pictorial photographers down to the last village.”³³¹ Indeed, by 1928, these heavy frames had been eliminated in high-profile photography exhibitions.

Yet, another reviewer from the same journal makes clear why this exhibition must be interpreted as embodying conflicting points of view in a conflicted time. In his “tour” of the *DPA* for *Der Photograph*, Emil Schönwald referenced arguments taking place over whether large-format photographs like Kuehn’s were “justified”: photographs “as large format wall decoration are rejected by some sides...nevertheless...some large formats by Kuehn are justified as such decoration. How you’re doing work is more important than what you’re doing.”³³²

Professionals and Amateurs in 1926

The breakdown of barriers between amateurs and professionals that continued at the *DPA* indicated larger trends. The disintegration of a hierarchical system had already been

³³⁰ Ibid. As he went on to argue: “Photography should and could not compete with wall painting. Times are over when one created giant multicolored gum prints as a mural design.”

³³¹ “Es ist nunmehr hohe Zeit, daß diese einfache, aber gerade deshalb geschmackvolle Zweckhaftigkeit in der Ausstattung der Photographen selbst bis in die kleinsten Ortschaften hinein wird.” Ibid.

³³² Schönwald, *Der Photograph*, no. 74: 293.

inferred by reviewers of *Iphad*. Secondary sources such as Pohlmann's and Eskildsen's subsequently noted, regarding both *Iphad* and the 1914 Werkbund exhibition, that among other fluidities at this time, the line between professionals and amateurs was blurred by showing in the same venue.³³³ Many of the professionals were either equaling the amateurs or surpassing them in skill and an expressive ability to connect with their audience. In the wake of the *DPA*, *Das Atelier* claimed that the term "amateur" had outlasted its usefulness, if only the viewer would pause to reflect on the issue: "It's true when one strolls through the exhibition and then later, tired and drunk from all the beauty that one had seen, settled in a still corner, then can one indeed reach the conviction that a distinction between amateur and professional photography regarding achievement hardly exists anymore."³³⁴ The progressive and regressive existed in both "categories" throughout the exhibition.

The *DPA* was looked upon in many ways as a prism, absorbing and refracting larger social issues—the stabilization of the German economy, the indomitable spirit of the photographers, the integration of the professional and artistic. Warstat's "Where do We Stand?" confronted the issue of professionals and amateurs: "One must offer that the economical pain of the postwar on pictorial photographers made unachievable one of the most important ways to further develop one's own abilities for the search of new expressive means and for the evaluation of new ideas, namely the free independent work

³³³ See Pohlmann, "Im Einklang," 125, and Eskildsen, "Die Abteilung Fotografie," 318.

³³⁴ "Tagesfragen" (News of the Day) *Das Atelier* 33 (1926): 86. However, this journal targeted professionals, hence a bias could be inferred: "Es ist wahr, wenn man durch die Bilderschau, schlendert und dann später, müde, und trunken von all dem Schönen, was man gesehen hat, sich in einer stillen Ecke niederlässt, dann kann man durchaus zu der Ueberzeugung, gelangen, daß ein Unterschied, zwischen Liebhaber- und Berufsphotograph hinsichtlich der Leistungen kaum mehr besteht."

alongside the work for hire.”³³⁵ During the economic hardships of the late teens through the early 1920s, the photographers had to focus almost completely on the work for which they could make money and could not take the time to develop artistically. Even professional work dried up massively during the years of economic instability. By 1926, Warstat viewed these large national and international exhibitions as the primary vehicle through which all of those passionate individuals could actually create ideas to directly affect the “masses,” and saw the need for the line between the professionals and artists to end.³³⁶

Conclusions about the Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung, its Correlation to the New Vision’s Development, and the Social Environment of its Reception

Die Photographie Industrie published a short article about the success of the *DPA*. Fifty thousand people came during its two-and-a-half week run, with many visitors from abroad as well as from Germany. It was a “spiritual” success as well as a “material success”: the audience responded well, and the businesses involved “expressed satisfaction.”³³⁷ *DPA* proved that Pictorialist photographers—whose styles had not changed significantly from the prewar period—still held enormous influence at this late date in deciding what the general public would see as photographic achievement.

However, in analyzing the material facts of the *DPA*, I have attempted to emphasize that

³³⁵ Warstat, “Wo stehen wir?” 285. “Man muß bedenken, daß die wirtschaftliche Not der Nachkriegszeit dem Bildnisphotographen einen der wichtigsten Wege zur Weiterentwicklung seines eigenen Könnens, zum Suchen neuer Ausdrucksmittel und zur Auswertung neuer Ideen fast völlig ungangbar machte, nämlich das freie, selbständige Arbeiten neben der bezahlten Alltagsarbeit.”

¹⁵⁴ “Nationale und internationale Ausstellungen sind diejenigen Gelegenheiten, bei welchen das, was der Einzelne in heißem Bemühen und unermüdlichem Streben Neues und Vollendetes schafft, auf die große Masse wirken kann.” Ibid. There will be no such division in the subsequent exhibitions of discussion.

³³⁷ “Sie hatte zweifellos einen hohen ideellen Erfolg; der Gesamtbesuch betrug 50,000 Interessenten aus Deutschland und dem Ausland....Auch der materielle Erfolg der Ausstellung ist gut ausgefallen. Viele Firmen der Aussteller-Industrie äusserten jedenfalls grosse Befriedigung.” “Unter uns,” *Die Photographische Industrie*, no. 38 (20 September 1926): unpaginated.

in its staff, its catalogue essays, its layout, and its chosen photographs, there were ruptures and breaches. Defined by the nature of juxtaposition, exhibitions rarely succeed as smooth and unified packages. The spectacle was further nuanced by the ruptured socio-cultural realities of Weimar, and how the participants and critics interpreted those ruptures.

I have also tried to bring some figures out of the shadows and into bolder relief, along with their agendas. Matthies-Masuren for example, is consistently overlooked in English-language encyclopedic overviews of photographic history.³³⁸ Yet, as explored in both the previous and current chapters, he was an omnipresent and pervasive curator, author of books, and editor of numerous photographic journals, and his positions supporting Pictorialism remained consistent from the last decade of the nineteenth century through the 1920s. In contrast were critics like Warstat and Claassen, who celebrated the heterogeneity of materials and stripped-down installation methods of the *DPA* in their reviews, as well as supporting a vigorous engagement in international influences, and the hope that artists and audiences would use the exhibitions for societal self-reflection and self-criticism. Whereas Grainer and Hübsch expressed photography's "social role" in terms of recapturing lost ideals and nationalist pride, the critics above supported its potential to enhance awareness of external realities and more socialist concerns.

Other contributors to the *DPA*, such as the author Goertz, realized how the juxtaposition of the scientific applications of photography with the artistic material could function as a didactic tool to instruct the masses. Moholy-Nagy had already begun

³³⁸ Matthies-Masuren is not indexed in any of the most prominent overviews of photography currently in use: Newhall, Rosenblum, or Michel Frizot, *The New History of Photography* (Cologne: Könemann, 1998).

utilizing those juxtapositions to develop his New Vision in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, the year before. The year after, he would revise the book before further printing. And he was determined to participate in large city-sponsored exhibitions, as well as in the more avant-garde venues affiliated with the Bauhaus and its student/faculty shows, in order to reach larger audiences. In 1927, he would be included in two more broad overviews of photographic trends, in Basel and Cologne. He progressed despite the attempts to marginalize him, apparent in comments such as those in *Das Atelier*, describing Erfurth's photograms at the *DPA* as peripheral to the main tasks of photography. In fact, Moholy-Nagy's strategies were proving the conventionality of Pictorialism to be irrelevant in the turbulent times of Weimar.

Within two years of *DPA*, it would become apparent in exhibition strategies that the anxiety about science expressed by the early Pictorialists in relation to photography had subsided, as the modernists embraced mass media and scientific images for the purpose of empowering their audience. Moholy-Nagy considered the trepidation about equating science and art to be a waste of energy: "the fact of photography does not grow or diminish in value according to whether it is classified as a method of recording reality or as a medium of scientific investigation or as a way of preserving vanished events, or as a basis for the process of reproduction, or as 'art.'"³³⁹

The *DPA* demonstrated the impatience of the interwar artists and critics. Through their poster submissions (Fiedler, Sander, Wendt), the use of their ideas in the vocabulary of the catalogue (Goertz, Seddig), their sometimes marginal but important presence in the show (Moholy-Nagy and his influence on Erfurth's photograms), and their insightful criticism (Claassen and Warstat), they demanded that photography be removed from

³³⁹ Moholy-Nagy, "Unprecedented Photography," in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 83

ornate frames, that it shake off outdated symbolism, that it embrace the modern world, and that it confront social issues. In addition, the attempts at over-classification running through these German exhibitions were breaking down. In the public display of photography during the next few years after the *DPA*, more barriers would come down, and experimental techniques would be undertaken, before Germany again descended into complacency, nationalism, and closed-thinking instead of openness. *Das Atelier* summarized the dialectic taking place: "Photographic exhibitions always give occasion to a lot of reflection, which to a certain extent depicts the reaction to that which is shown."³⁴⁰

³⁴⁰ "Tagesfragen," *Das Atelier*, 86: "Photographische Ausstellungen geben eigentlich immer Anlass zu allerhand Betrachtungen, die gewissermassen die Reaktion auf das Erschaute darstellen."

Chapter 4

Fotografie der Gegenwart, Essen, January 20 – February 17, 1929: The New Vision Ascendant

Introduction to *Gegenwart*

The artists who comprised Moholy-Nagy's international circle in Berlin and his colleagues at the Dessau Bauhaus, none of whom were included in the *DPA* in Frankfurt in 1926, would become the core of the *Fotografie der Gegenwart*. *Gegenwart* opened at the Museum Folkwang in Essen in January 1929, and traveled in different manifestations throughout Germany, and to London, until the end of the year. Organized by Kurt Wilhelm-Kästner, a curator at the Folkwang, the exhibition included an international selection of photographers, mostly Pan-European, with a mix of German, British, and French and Russian artists. Associations with Pictorialism had been largely severed except for the continued inclusion of Erfurth. The New Vision, with its themes of urbanity and contemporaneity, its experimental techniques, and its interest in the mix of modernist, scientific, and technical photography, was now ascendant. *Gegenwart* was a decisive turning point, especially in showing this contemporary photography in a museum setting.

In addition to numerous examples of Moholy-Nagy's photograms and photographs (including *Dolls* and *Bauhaus Balconies*, see figs. 3-38 and 3-39), *Gegenwart* featured Lucia Moholy's portraits of Bauhaus colleagues, the work of the

Dada filmmaker Hans Richter, photograms by Man Ray, and photographs by El Lissitzky.³⁴¹ Included from the Bauhaus were typography teacher Herbert Bayer—who, like Moholy-Nagy, had left the school in 1928, and French-American student Florence Henri.

Many of the other artists included in Essen qualified as doing work that embraced the New Vision or functioned as a source for it: Berenice Abbott, Eugene Atget, Aenne Biermann, Karl Blossfeldt, Max Burchartz, Andre Kertész, Germaine Krull, the siblings Leistikow, Eli Lotar, and Umbo. Russian film stills were included from the Woks Soviet-Film-Fotos in Moscow. Most interesting about this exhibition is proof that art and science finally coexisted on the same wall in a major photography exhibition. Photo agencies with large collections of technical and scientific photographs, particularly the Fotografische Lehranstalt des Lette-Vereins in Berlin, fostered the mix of anonymous technical photography with modernist photography.

The artists listed above would eventually be exhibited in *Film und Foto* in Stuttgart, which opened five months later while *Gegenwart* was still traveling. Despite the fact that *Gegenwart* preceded *Film und Foto* as a representative of the New Vision's ascendancy, attracted large audiences to its venues, and provided early international exposure for its practitioners in London, *Fifo*'s extravagance and tremendous press overshadowed the reception of the earlier show. Several identical or near-identical photographs were shown at *Gegenwart* before *Fifo*. As mentioned above, the *Dolls* were shown at *Gegenwart*, and Moholy-Nagy's portrait of *Oskar Schlemmer*, 1926, taken in the same position under the grated fence, would be reproduced in the *Fifo* catalogue (fig.

³⁴¹ It is not certain that Lissitzky was included in the Essen venue of *Gegenwart*, but he is listed in the brochure for the venue following, in Hannover, from March 10 – April 7. *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, 1929, brochure, Hannover, Kestner-Gesellschaft, Collections, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

4-1). Lissitzky's *Self-portrait (The Constructor)*, 1924, in which he identified himself as an artist-engineer through a montage of his face, his hand, and a design tool over architectural paper, was included in both shows (fig. 4-2).³⁴² Also appearing in *Gegenwart* and *Fifo* were material studies by Hans Finsler (fig. 4-3 from *Fifo*,³⁴³ compare with fig. 4-15 from *Gegenwart*), Aenne Mosbacher's studies of shells and plants (see figs. 4-36 and 4-37),³⁴⁴ and Henri's mirror studies, one of which would be illustrated in the *Fifo* catalogue (fig. 4-4).³⁴⁵ Although it is not certain which Henri mirror photographs were shown at *Gegenwart*, they garnered a special mention in a review in the *Essener Volkszeitung* as going in a new direction.³⁴⁶ These images, presented in both exhibitions, encompassed the great variety of the New Vision as elucidated in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*: unexpected angles, photomontage, close-ups, science/nature images, and distortions.

Internationalism in photographic exhibitions had returned to Germany after a twenty-year absence. The stated focus of the 1926 *DPA* in Frankfurt had been to bolster the pride and confidence of German photographers, and the emphasis was on national achievement. In contrast, Moholy-Nagy's New Vision had always striven for an international scope, an extension of his activities among the international avant-garde in Berlin from the early 1920s. The *Gegenwart* in 1929, along with the *Pressa* in Cologne one year earlier, were the first major international photography exhibitions of German

³⁴² The *Constructor* was illustrated in the *Fifo* catalogue (see *Fifo* reprint, 36) and described in a review of the Hannover venue: "*Photographie der Gegenwart*," *Hannoverscher Anzeiger* 16 March 1929, "Aus der Stadt" section.

³⁴³ *Fifo* reprint, 27.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁴⁶ Agnes Waldstein, "*Photographie der Gegenwart: Ausstellung im Folkwang-Museum*," *Essener Volkszeitung*, 27 January 1929, unpaginated: "Florence Henri neue Wege geht in der Verwendung von Spiegeln."

origin since *Iphad*. Yet *Gegenwart*'s place in the history of the New Vision's rise has been lost in the glare of the larger and more publicized *Fifo*. The shift that finally led to prominence for the modernists in large-scale German photography exhibitions began to solidify in 1928.

Photography's New Paths in 1927-28

In 1927, the year after the *DPA*, several photography exhibitions took place in and on the border of Germany, including one in Cologne (*Photographische Ausstellung in Köln*), and a retrospective of a hundred years of photography in Basel (*Hundert Jahre Lichtbild*). Reviews of both exhibitions in *Photographische Rundschau* reveal that the perception of change in photography continued to be slow. The reviewer of the Cologne exhibition was perplexed enough by Moholy-Nagy's use of the term "cameraless photography" in describing his photograms to insert a question mark after the phrase in his review.³⁴⁷

They opined that Moholy-Nagy's photograms were interesting but overrated photographic experiments.

In Basel, contemporary photography was represented in a section that included Lendvai-Dirksen, Moholy-Nagy, Frank Eugene Smith and Erfurth, who contributed two more photograms.³⁴⁸ In other words, similar to the *DPA*, it combined academic GDL members and old Pictorialists with Moholy-Nagy as the token experimental photographer and Erfurth as the bridge figure.³⁴⁹ The practice of including a scientific section

³⁴⁷ "In den "kameralosen" Aufnahmen (?) des Ungarn Moholy-Nagy vermochten wir, trotz aller Schreiberei wie z.B. über die "Hier verabsolutierten Elemente der Lichtbildkunst", nicht mehr zu sehen, als höchstens ganz interessante Versuche, mit Teilelementen der Photographie eigenartige Gebilde zu erzeugen." "Photographische Ausstellung in Köln," *Photographische Rundschau* 64 (1927): 180.

³⁴⁸ Pohlmann, "Im Einklang," 129.

³⁴⁹ Attributed to "S," "Hundert Jahre Lichtbild," *Photographische Rundschau* 64 (1927): 202.

continued, and audiences continued to be drawn to those sections. The reviewer of the show in Cologne commented that the flower close-ups and underwater scenes were widely admired for their beauty as well as their technical perfection.³⁵⁰

Exhibitions devoted to New Vision photography, as well as the techniques for exhibiting it, were finally achieved in 1928. Two influential exhibitions organized in Germany are fundamental to understanding the critical coalescence around the new approaches. The first, an exhibition of photojournalistic techniques called the *Internationale Presse-Ausstellung*, known as *Pressa*, was shown in Cologne from May through October. *Pressa* has been written about extensively in numerous articles³⁵¹ and in monographic studies of Lissitzky,³⁵² a result of his famous wall-sized montage of Soviet photojournalism (fig. 4-5).³⁵³

Contemporaneous criticism crystallized how other pavilions were considered far inferior to Lissitzky's dynamic design, and that the Soviet Pavilion wielded "the strongest power of attraction for the public."³⁵⁴ In his 1923 essay "Proun Room, Great Berlin Art Exhibition" Lissitzky explained his desire to move away from exhibition spaces that evoked the feel of a "living room," an implicit critique of previous attempts we have seen to decorate exhibition spaces with furniture.³⁵⁵ In his mind, exhibition spaces were "demonstration rooms," created to activate the viewer, not lull him or make him feel cozy. The *Pressa* photo frieze is an ideal example of this, where enlarged photographs of

³⁵⁰ "Photographische Ausstellung in Köln," 180.

³⁵¹ Including Benjamin Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* (Fall 1984) no. 30: 82-119.

³⁵² Most recently Pohlmann's essay on Lissitzky's exhibition designs. See description, page 10 above.

³⁵³ The accordion foldout brochure for *Pressa* has been prominently displayed in design exhibitions, most recently in the Bard Graduate Center's examination of German graphic design in 2001: *Print, Power, and Persuasion: Graphic Design in Germany, 1890-1945*, Bard Graduate Center (May 24 – August 26, 2001).

³⁵⁴ Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*, trans. Helen Aldwinckle and Mary Whittall (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1968), quoting a review from the *Paris-Midi*, June 11, 1928.

³⁵⁵ El Lissitzky, "Proun Room, Great Berlin Art Exhibition," *G* (July 1923), in Lissitzky-Küppers, 365.

Lenin, workers, photographers and demonstrators were arranged in a dynamic rhythm, designed to engage and excite the audience.

The GDL also used modernized exhibition techniques in their room at the *Pressa* exhibition (fig. 4-6). It did not approach the radical engagement of Lissitzky's photomontage. However, Warstat, so critical of the GDL's outdated use of heavy frames and large formats at the *DPA*, wrote a review praising the clarity of the presentation in *Das Atelier*, stating, "the strong objectiveness of the rooms yields to the effects of the exhibits with an admirable self-understanding."³⁵⁶

The other key exhibition of 1928,³⁵⁷ *Neue Wege der Photographie* (New Paths in Photography), was held at the Kunstverein Jena from March 26 through May 6, 1928. *Neue Wege* has not been examined in great detail, though Eskildsen included a few paragraphs describing the exhibition in her "Innovative Photography" essay.³⁵⁸ It is an important precursor to the *Fotografie der Gegenwart* in Essen, and warrants a few pages of discussion.

Neue Wege, organized by the designer Walter Dexel, displayed the work of eight photographers: Erfurth, Errell, Moholy-Nagy, Lucia Moholy, Peterhans, Hannah Reeck, Renger-Patzsch, and Umbo, in addition to the collection of the Prussian Ministry for Trade and Commerce, and two private collections.³⁵⁹ Dexel was a member of the utopian

³⁵⁶ "Die strenge, schlichte Sachlichkeit der Räume... ordnete sich der Wirkung der ausgestellten Bilder mit einer bewunderswerten Selbstverständlichkeit." Dr. Willi Warstat, "Rückblick auf die Ausstellung der Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner bei der *Pressa* in Köln 1928," *Das Atelier des Photographen* 35 (1928): 128.

³⁵⁷ Botar has an extended discussion of a third exhibition that took place in 1928 at the Itten Schule in Berlin (*Foto, Malerei, Architektur*, opened February). The exhibition was not devoted to photography, but Botar suggests that its combination of scientific material and modernist photography in the same space influenced Dexel. Botar, "Prologemena," 520-523.

³⁵⁸ Eskildsen, "Innovative Photography," 36.

³⁵⁹ Sig. Marianoff and Sig. Gorodiski. "Neue Wege der Photographie," 1928, brochure, Collections, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

neue werbegestalter or New Advertising Designers, a group of established designers founded by Schwitters in 1928. The mission of the *neue werbegestalter* has been described as applying “the ideal of rationalized production” to modern seeing, with Drexel particularly interested in rapid communications to the viewer.³⁶⁰ Advertising methods were also of great interest to avant-garde photographers like Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy, as it helped them study the ability to reach mass audiences with loaded messages and points of view.³⁶¹

Eskildsen positioned *Neue Wege* as groundbreaking, stating that the “Jena show marked the beginning of a new concept in photographic exhibitions.”³⁶² The crux of her assessment relies on the exhibition’s methods of juxtaposition, with “creative” photography shown *alongside* industrial and scientific photography, and new technologies in the medium. Although the content of the 1926 *DPA* exhibition had captured a similar mix— one perceived by critics examining the show— the organizers there persisted in dividing photographs into groups based upon stylistic similarities, and remained obsessed with hierarchy, attempting to place “artistic” photography in the center, with technical photography ringing it on the fringes. In *Neue Wege*, the organizer

³⁶⁰ Lavin’s most recent book includes a chapter devoted to this group. Maud Lavin, *Clean New World: Culture, Politics, and Graphic Design* (Cambridge: MIT, 2001), 26-47. The *neue werbegestalter* included Willi Baumeister, Vordemberge-Gildewart, Cesar Domela, Jan Tschichold, Max Burchartz, Georg Trupp, Hans Leistikow, Robert Michel, Piet Zwart, and Paul Schuitema.

³⁶¹ Maud Lavin discussed the seeming contradictions of these left-leaning artists engaging in advertising practices. Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, 62-63. She separated the purely political poster work of Kollwitz and Heartfield from the work of Schwitters, Lissitzky, and Tschichold, who were interested in the dynamics of mass communication, whatever their source.

³⁶² Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 36.

employed a more egalitarian approach to all the branches of photography, a point made clear in Dexel's statement about the show in the newspaper *Das Volk*.³⁶³

Eskildsen interpreted one of the benefits of juxtaposition at *Neue Wege*, stating: "the industrial visual documents became less functional when seen within the context of creative formalism."³⁶⁴ However, I would propose a different interpretation, one related to my exploration of *Iphad* and *DPA*. Hanging "artistic" photographs next to (or near) "industrial" images did not simply make the latter seem more creative, it also called into question why artistic photographs should not be put to practical uses, as Moholy-Nagy and Lissitzky were attempting to do. These artists were not aestheticizing science and technical photography; they wanted to welcome those methods into the photographic discourse of expanding vision.

Despite his direct engagement with advertising practices, the language in Dexel's statement about *Neue Wege* placed more emphasis on didactic uses of photography than on any commercial purpose. About the contemporary photography in the exhibition, Dexel claimed that one could not imagine "a better wall decoration of a classroom or a children's room than these realistic large photographs that inspire fantasy to the highest degree."³⁶⁵ Contrary to negating imagination, as the Pictorialists Puyo, Matthies-Masuren, and others had proposed, Dexel believed that recording reality would stimulate the imaginative faculties. At the conclusion of the statement, Dexel called out to teachers

³⁶³ Dexel wrote this statement after he had been relieved of his duties as honorary business manager of the Kunstverein, apparently due to his bias in choosing photographs for the exhibition. Eskildsen, "Innovative Photography," 36.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ "Man kann sich für Schul- und Kinderzimmer keinen besseren Wandschmuck denken als diese realen und dabei die Phantasie aufs Höchste anregenden Grossphotos." Walter Dexel, "Neue Wege der Photographie," *Das Volk*, 14 April 1928, unpaginated. There is a lack of evidence that the anonymous material was hung next to the avant-garde photography, but Dexel's approach to the statement effectively equalized the components.

and schools to use the exhibition as a tool for education, and underscored the potential public interest in the Jena exhibition for the people employed in the local photography industry.³⁶⁶

Dexel drew distinctions between the new kind of photographer and those of the past who tried to “reproduce with his camera the portrait, the landscape, the city-panorama, and most of all the genre picture and make them painterly.” Answering his own question, “what is photography?” Dexel stated: “the exact reproduction of reality, not the copying of art.”³⁶⁷ Dexel’s distinctions continue to show the disenchantment with Pictorialist techniques and subject matter as a pervasive and genuine subject for the curators, critics, and photographers. Dexel supported the documentary and “objective” photographic impulse, and described the recording of nature and culture using examples of a blossoming plant, the play of light, working hands that spin pottery, and parts of machines, as “mechanical, completely *honest*, and completely objective.”³⁶⁸ I emphasize that when Dexel referred to “objective” photography, like Moholy-Nagy’s “unadulterated documents,” he was not defining this simply in techno-formalist terms, but in terms of “truth,” and comprehending, confronting and celebrating the material world in new ways, opening up to this vitality rather than closing it off: “we do not have to see things any

³⁶⁶ “Auch Lehrer und Schulen seien besonders darauf hingewiesen.” Ibid.

³⁶⁷ “Was ist Photographie? Genaueste Wiedergabe der Wirklichkeit, nicht Nachahmung der Kunst. Der Photograph suchte bisher mit der Kamera das Porträt, die Landschaft, das Städtebildchen und vor allem das Genrebildchen in der Art des Malers wiederzugeben.” Ibid. Dexel uses the word “new” at least seven times in this fairly short essay to describe a variety of things, including effects, photography, the world, and technical possibilities.

³⁶⁸ “Wir erleben neu den Anblick von ein paar Grashalmen, die Blüte einer Pflanze, das Antlitz einer Frau, arbeitende Hände, die ein Gefäss aus Ton drehen, Teile von Maschinen, Brandung des Meeres, Spiel des Lichtes. Die Wiedergabe aller Dinge ist mechanisch, vollkommen ehrlich, vollkommen sachlich.” Ibid.

longer through the lens of borrowed art, fake and imposed; discoveries unheard of in the huge empire of reality are standing in front of us.”³⁶⁹

This search for truthful expressions of the external material world coincided with a generation of Marxist-influenced sociologists and philosophers who were moving toward more cultural criticism and analyses of art works. Kracauer’s writings of 1926-27, highly prolific years for him, are especially applicable to the strivings of progressive photography and exhibition practices, although he was much more convinced of the social potential of cinema.³⁷⁰ Kracauer was sensitive to the lulling potential of filmic works, especially if their creators allowed “distraction” to be an end in itself, but he admired their “sincere” celebration of the external world, and their repudiation of the dishonest “inwardness” of the traditional arts. His choice of words in the 1926 essay, “Cult of Distraction,” manifested the same desire as the new photographers to leave old forms behind, forms that were socially bankrupt in the modern world:

This emphasis on the external has the advantage of being *sincere*. It is not externality that poses a threat to truth. Truth is threatened only by the naïve affirmation of cultural values that have become unreal and by the careless misuse of concepts such as personality, inwardness, tragedy, and so on—terms that in themselves certainly refer to lofty ideas but that have lost much of their scope along with their supporting foundations, due to social changes. Furthermore, many of these concepts have acquired a bad aftertaste today, because they unjustifiably deflect an inordinate amount of attention from the external damages of society onto the private individual. Instances of such repression are common enough in the fields of literature, drama, and music. They claim the status of high art while actually rehearsing anachronistic forms that evade the pressing needs of our time—a fact that is indirectly confirmed by the artistically derivative quality of the respective works.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ “Wir brauchen die Dinge nicht länger durch die Linse geborgter Kunst, verfälscht und in Pose zu sehen und unerhörte Entdeckungen im unermesslichen Reich der Tatsachen und der Wirklichkeit stehen uns bevor.” Dixel, “Neue Wege,” unpaginated.

³⁷⁰ In 1926-27, Kracauer published all three of the essays that relate most directly to exhibitions under discussion in the “Feuilleton” of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*: “Photography,” “Cult of Distraction,” and “Mass Ornament.”

³⁷¹ Siegfried Kracauer, “Cult of Distraction,” in *Mass Ornament*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 326. Emphasis Kracauer’s.

The “bad aftertaste” of outdated cultural values creates yet another interesting parallel to the “nausea” and “exhaustion” experienced by the critics of Pictorialist photography in 1909. Writers often responded to these dissipated art forms with references to physical ailments.

This same dishonest inwardness impugned by Kracauer prevailed in much of the Pictorialism in the *DPA*, photography that embodied Grainer’s “lofty ideas,” and the social self-delusion, particularly in portraiture, that the critics Claassen and Warstat decried. Those works nearly suffocated the glimmers of the new directions in that exhibition. In 1926, the marginalized functioned as quietly subversive. By 1928, the “New” was announcing itself loudly in Jena. Kracauer was quite critical of photography in his 1927 essay “Photography,” considering it limited as “mere surface coherence,” a medium that simply “stockpiles the elements.”³⁷² But he could have found much in both the worn-out idioms of Pictorialism and the new photographic repudiation of them to substantiate his developing social critiques.

In the absence of installation shots of *Neue Wege*, the Dexel statement is particularly useful for its walk-through of the exhibition, in which he described the installation as “very knowledgably compiled.”³⁷³ He described Erfurth in the first room, showing what he called the “highest completion” of painterly photography, before moving on to celebrate Renger-Patzsch’s photography as the “New,” extolling his

³⁷² “Photography,” in *The Mass Ornament*, 52.

³⁷³ “Die Ausstellung ist sehr lehrreich zusammengestellt.” Dexel, “Neue Wege,” unpaginated.

truthfulness and ability to “see.”³⁷⁴ Dixel had thus organized the exhibition to allow the new photography to visibly overtake the old (i.e. Erfurth). He then went on to describe Moholy-Nagy’s angled photographs of architecture and his photogram experiments. Signifying the plurality of the show, in one sentence he listed Lucia Moholy’s portraits and documentation of the Bauhaus, airplane photographs from the Prussian Trade Ministry, film stills from the Ufa studios in Germany, Russian film stills, and advertising photographs, which were probably by Errell (Richard Levy). Errell became best known for his montaged and odd-angled advertising photographs for products ranging from perfume to cars (fig. 4-7). The spatial juxtaposition of this varied material is the key to understanding exhibitions as a powerful format for promoting New Vision photography over outmoded forms, and even over the *Neue Sachlichkeit* which was just as celebrated at this point but would soon be subordinated. The New Vision defined itself as a means to stimulate the viewer through dynamic visual combinations, and exhibitions were an ideal vehicle for this dynamism.

As evinced by its title as well as its content, *Neue Wege* was a self-conscious break with the past. Although Dixel privileged Renger-Patzsch, he was likely inspired to call the show *Neue Wege der Photographie* by an article of the same name published by Moholy-Nagy in *Photographische Rundschau* just two months before the Jena opening. Following his usual mantra, Moholy-Nagy listed the photographic techniques he considered key to expanding sense perception: photomontage, camera obscura, and photograms.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ “Der nächste Raum bringt vor allem Renger-Patzsch. Hier nun wird das Neue, das Erstmögliche in voller Ursprünglichkeit spürbar, höchstes Können und letzte Wahrhaftigkeit. Worauf kommt es an? Auf Beherrschung der Technik und auf das “sehen“-Können.” Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Moholy-Nagy, “Neue Wege in der Photographie.” *Photographische Rundschau* 65 (1928): 33-36.

Dexel's inclusion of portraits, architecture, photograms, films stills, advertising work, and airplane photos from the Trade Ministry spoke to those new aims. Pictorialism had lingered for nearly twenty years past its usefulness, and at the Frankfurt *DPA* it co-existed with new knowledge, new theories, and new approaches. Frankfurt witnessed the last gasp of photography in heavy gold frames at contemporary exhibitions. Kurt Wilhelm-Kästner, who curated *Fotografie der Gegenwart* at the Folkwang Museum in Essen just half a year after *Neue Wege*, disavowed the attempts at "unified" photographic exhibitions that Claassen had claimed impossible in a time of so much plurality in photography. Wilhelm-Kästner curated *Gegenwart* to show "a number of parallel moving streams,"³⁷⁶ in order to acknowledge the complexity of the historical moment. Exhibitions were now embracing Modernismus, the conditions of urbanity and contemporaneity, rather than fighting it, or cloaking it, or creating false hierarchies to marginalize it.

Fotografie der Gegenwart: Organization and the Curatorial Statement by Kurt Wilhelm-Kästner in Photographische Rundschau

Fotografie der Gegenwart was a much larger museum exhibition than *Neue Wege*, with between forty and eighty photographers, depending on the traveling venue. This gave museum audiences their first opportunity to analyze the New Vision in depth. Whereas Dexel used a newspaper as his outlet, Wilhelm-Kästner laid out his curatorial intentions for the exhibition in a specialized journal. The curatorial statement in *Photographische Rundschau* provides insight into a curator's process as he pondered the significance of

³⁷⁶ Eskildsen, "Innovative Photography," 36.

the ascendant New Vision. He began the article, “Principles of the Exhibition at the Museum Folkwang, Essen,”³⁷⁷ sounding more conflicted than Dexel, who had begun with a searching question about the meaning of photography and then attempted to answer that question. In contrast, Wilhelm-Kästner had “no doubt” about a “crisis” in the development of photography.³⁷⁸

Wilhelm-Kästner, however, was optimistic that new developments could ease the crisis, announcing that “decisiveness for the forthcoming photography is the new vision!”³⁷⁹ He shared didactic goals with Dexel, wanting to use the exhibition as an opportunity to illuminate photographic developments for his audience, including “pictorial” photographs, realistic object-reception, technical, artistic, photograms, photomontage, and film.³⁸⁰ Wilhelm-Kästner believed he was responding to a “critical constellation” (kritische Konstellation) of new developments.³⁸¹ He sensed that continuing developments in photographic technology would allow photography to assert itself and turn away from the previous temptation to rely on the painterly. He considered this reliance a result of the rapid perfection of photographic technology—what he called the “materialistic” development of photography—before a vision or purpose for it had been fully developed:

Such a materialistic point of view had to seduce or mislead it [photographic representational activity] to look for an imitation due to the lack of one’s own artistic representational fantasy. The result was a strong need of support from the *modus operandi* of paintings. The technical skills pursued to the highest .

³⁷⁷ Kurt Wilhelm-Kästner, “Grundsätzliches zur Ausstellung im Museum Folkwang, Essen.” *Photographische Rundschau* 66: (March 1929): 93-96. The month was given for this issue, but not other bound issues cited.

³⁷⁸ “Die Entwicklung der Photographie steht im Zeichen einer Krise; darüber herrscht kein Zweifel.” *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁷⁹ “Entscheidend für die kommende Photographie ist das neue Sehen!!” *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

perfection offered the opportunity to retrieve painterly effects in almost the exact imitation of painting: colored tints contributed even more to this impression.³⁸²

Wilhelm-Kästner seemed to partially excuse photographers' initial dependence on methods drawn from other media while their "representational fantasy" incubated. However, he went to say that as a consequence of such reliance, photography eventually became "no longer a servant, no, it became a slave...a feeble imitation-method."³⁸³ Kästner's criticism of "art prints" (Kunstblatt) in promoting this exclusively Pictorialist point of view—due to the difficulty of distinguishing between gravure printing and painting—recalls Caffin's excoriating of magazine editors in 1909 for keeping photography of mass interest out of their pages.

Wilhelm-Kästner included examples of Pictorialism beside those of the New Vision in order to promote an historical awareness on the part of the viewers, similar to Drexel commencing *Neue Wege* with Erfurth: "the Essen exhibition shows the new development next to a number of examples of a technically painterly direction."³⁸⁴ The crux of the show, however, revolved around presenting "parallel streams" of *new* developments to avoid a "homogeneous picture" of those developments.³⁸⁵

Wilhelm-Kästner's historical strategy was to crystallize photographic history around layers and constellations, rather than in an unwavering linear progression:

³⁸² "Zugleich mußte solche materialistische Einstellung dazu verführen, für die mangelnde eigene künstlerische Bildphantasie Ersatz zu suchen. Ein starkes Anlehnungsbedürfnis an die Gestaltungsweise der Malerei war die Folge. Das zur höchsten Vervollkommung getriebene technische Können bot ja die Gelegenheit, malerische Effekte in ziemlich getreuer Nachahmung der Gemälde herauszuholen: farbige Tönung trug noch ein weiteres zu dieser Wirkung bei." Ibid.

³⁸³ "Die Photographie...ist nicht mehr Dienerin, nein, sie wird zur Sklavin...sie wird zum billigen Ersatzmittel." Ibid.

³⁸⁴ "Die Essener Ausstellung zeigt neben einer Anzahl von Beispielen der technisch-malerischen Richtung in sehr vielen Blättern die neue Entwicklung." Ibid.

³⁸⁵ "Es ist aber durchaus noch kein einheitliches Bild, das sich hier bietet, es sind vielmehr mehrere nebeneinander herlaufende Strömungen zu beobachten." Ibid.

“Several single appearances are to be observed which only in their synthetic constellation will show a new way.”³⁸⁶ He captured and concretized the “parallel streams” into an exhibition, even as they were still in flux. Wilhelm-Kästner conceded the necessity of considering the roots of photography, explaining that “a recall of the original mission of photography and of its particularity” was necessary.³⁸⁷ But these were displayed as points of departure and historicization, not as worshipful retrospectives of old masters to emulate as was encouraged at the *DPA*.

Wilhelm-Kästner also identified the new “inverted” (umgekehrtes) relationship between painting and photography, with *Neue Sachlichkeit* paintings striving for the hard edges of photography, rather than photographs striving toward the blurriness of paintings.³⁸⁸ He noted that landscapes were now repudiated as subjects, as photographers focused everyday objects, and objects of serial production, relating this pursuit of clarity to the external influences of applied photography.³⁸⁹ Wilhelm-Kästner did not appear to criticize this trend as pandering to commercial influences, but rather presented it as a practical, and even vital, result of external influences affecting photographic development.

In the industrialized environment of Weimar, the numerous fuzzy landscapes at *Iphad* and *DPA* no longer made any sense. Wilhelm-Kästner noted how the “painterly

³⁸⁶ “Verschiedene Einzelercheinungen treten auf, die erst in ihrer synthetischen Zusammenfassung den neuen Weg ergeben werden.” Ibid.

³⁸⁷ “Ein Besinnen auf die ursprünglichen Aufgaben der Photographie und auf ihre Eigenart ist daher naturnotwendig gegeben.” Ibid.

³⁸⁸ “Analog zur Malerei könnte man auch hier von einer ‚Neuen Sachlichkeit‘ sprechen, wobei allerdings das Verhältnis zwischen Photo und Gemälde eher ein umgekehrtes im Vergleich zu früher ist, insofern die neue Sachlichkeit in der Malerei eben mehr die photographische Treue in der gegenständlichen Bildwiedergabe erstrebt.” Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

blurriness” of Pictorialism would turn an image into an “indistinguishable foil.”³⁹⁰

Indeed, the Pictorialist photographs in evidence at *DPA* thwarted and deflected the viewer in their cloudy hazes and inward looking, art for art’s sake subjects. Their feigned tactility masked the distance interposed between the photograph and its viewers.

Although they seemed to invite absorption, those images encouraged inaccessible fantasies of the aristocracy and the countryside, lacking any productive engagement.

Despite the fact that it was mechanically produced, Pictorialist photography fit the criteria of Benjamin’s “aura,” a concept he explored at length in the essay “Little History of Photography,” written in 1931. Benjamin introduced the “aura,” as he celebrated the ways in which the photographer Eugene Atget worked against it in his photographs of turn-of-the-century urban Paris, against the “exotic” and “romantically sonorous;” the aura was a ruse, the unique “semblance of distance,” no matter how close an object might be.³⁹¹ In his later essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” 1936, he equated the distant object with “unapproachability.”³⁹²

The concept of unapproachability was still a seductive one to the interwar Pictorialists. Grainer used this terminology in 1927 to describe prewar portraits of women, very much like his own subjects: “The silence, dignity, and honor of prewar-time

³⁹⁰ “Der malerischen Verschwommenheit, die das eigentliche Bild zur unbestimmten Folie werden läßt.” *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁹¹ “Little History of Photography,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1927-34*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 518. On 517, Benjamin discussed how photographers after 1880 “saw it as their task” to simulate aura by retouching, especially through “the so-called gum print.” He further stated that the “new way of seeing” stood to gain the least where there had been the “greatest self-indulgence: commercial, conventional portrait photography,” in the manner rife at the *DPA*.

³⁹² Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), n5, 243.

created an unapproachability...leading to the ‘true woman.’”³⁹³ He contrasted the relative ease of such photography, in which the photographer was assisted by “uniforms” of class, to the challenge of portraying contemporary women in their “liberal fashions.”³⁹⁴ Although this statement was published in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, along with Moholy-Nagy essay, “Unprecedented Photography,” which railed against Pictorialism, and a dynamic mix of scientific and avant-garde photographs, Grainer’s words betrayed his nostalgia for the lost glamour of the prewar period.³⁹⁵

Following his analysis of Pictorialist motifs that had fallen out of use, Wilhelm-Kästner defined the criteria for the “new vision”: how an object is apprehended, and its position toward the apparatus, i.e. the photographer’s point of view, and how out of a given situation “lay so many fundamental innovations, that through it a whole new photographic picture arises.”³⁹⁶ *Through* the innovations brought on by contemporary demands the new subjects were pursued, creating the new realities. Again, even language that appears strictly formal and apparatus-driven cannot be dislodged from situational realities in these New Vision treatises. Outmoded techniques were no longer functioning with any purpose, and “retouching,” in Wilhelm-Kästner’s words, should no longer be the means of achieving pictorial arrangements; its only remaining use was to correct errors.³⁹⁷

³⁹³ “Das Ruhige, Vornehme und Würdige der Vorkriegszeit hatte durch seine Unnahbarkeit in Kleidung und Lebenshaltung einen Frauentyp geschaffen oder doch wenigstens betont, den wir landläufig als ‘Dame’ bezeichneten und bezeichnen.” Franz Grainer, “Das Neuzeitliche Damenbildnis” (The new female portraits), *Das Deutsche Lichtbild Jahreschau 1927* (German photography yearbook) (Berlin: Robert and Bruno Schultz, 1927), XIV.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Erfurth negotiated a deal with the publishers of *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* whereby the GDL would get ten percent of the space in each issue. Kräusl, “GDL,” in von Dewitz, *Erfurth*, 72.

³⁹⁶ “In diesen Forderungen liegt so viel grundsätzlich Neues, daß dadurch ein ganz neues photographisches Bild entsteht.” Wilhelm-Kästner, “*Gegenwart*,” 94.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

Wilhelm-Kästner was wary of certain New Vision practices such as “artificial framing” stating that simply distorting and twisting perspective through unnatural viewing positions did not prepare the way for the new directions.³⁹⁸ He considered photograms useful, for the way they clarified principles of pictorial composition and material effect, although they seemed at times like exercises in “technical aesthetic playfulness.”³⁹⁹ The danger of the New Vision sliding into art for art’s sake tendencies caused Wilhelm-Kästner much anxiety, which will be discussed further below. His preferences explain why, in the installation of *Gegenwart*, photograms dominated the wall of Moholy-Nagy’s on the right, with only a few heavily angled photographs to the left of them, including *Dolls*, and *Bauhaus Balconies* (see fig. 4-8 and details 4-9 and 4-10). While noting the productive potential of photograms, Wilhelm-Kästner did not mention Moholy-Nagy’s primary goal in using angles in his other photography: to allow the viewer to have the transformative experience of the “oblique view and displaced proportions”⁴⁰⁰

Wilhelm-Kästner did, however, express interest in the “fertile” synergistic potential between photography, typography, and photomontage, a commonality between his “new vision,” and Moholy-Nagy’s desire to increase photo-literacy through applying “typophoto” to the design of books and spaces.⁴⁰¹ The installation shot of *Gegenwart* demonstrates how the room resembled one of Moholy-Nagy’s “typophotos.” With typophotos, Moholy-Nagy merged photographs, bold text and graphic elements on a page, as a dynamic new way to teach people to *read* photography and help stimulate mass

³⁹⁸ “Gewollte, gekünstelte Bildausschnitte, vollkommen entstellende und verzerrende Perspektive durch unnatürliche Blickstellung bereiten den neuen Weg nicht vor.” Ibid.

³⁹⁹ “Technischästhetische Spielereien.” Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ *MPF*, 49.

⁴⁰¹ Wilhelm-Kästner, “*Gegenwart*,” 94.

photo-literacy; he considered it the “visually most exact rendering of communication,”⁴⁰² describing typophoto as that which contains “strongly optical tangibilities by means of which they can render content in a directly visible fashion.”⁴⁰³ *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, included a section on typophoto, and concluded with a composed typophoto/film proposal, “Dynamic of the Metropolis,” demonstrating the inspiration he gleaned from the “simultaneity of sensorily perceptible events”⁴⁰⁴ in urban environments, with photographic fragments of streets, neon lights, and angular views of industrial structures (see fig. 3-33). The visual style of typophoto translated spatially in *Gegenwart* through irregular grids of photographs on white backgrounds, with heavy black lines forcefully slashing through the configuration. The print sizes also varied wildly, from enormous to small, creating optical surprises all along the wall.

Wilhelm- Kästner continued to pepper the essay with warnings of photography gravitating toward a solely “aesthetic, purposeless art,”⁴⁰⁵ and that the perfection of photographic techniques would lead from the earlier detrimental temptation of the painterly to the “great danger” of “technique becoming an end to itself, a self-purpose.”⁴⁰⁶ Wilhelm-Kästner feared—deeply feared, judging by his repeated use of the word “danger” to describe the potential technocentric interpretations of the medium—a different type of “inbreeding” than Warstat had earlier sensed from the lingering Germanic Pictorialism, devoid of vital outside influences. His anxieties were more rooted in photography turning inward on itself and producing purely ornamental objects.

⁴⁰² *MPF*, 31.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁰⁵ “Auch hier liegt die Gefahr der extremen Gestaltung zu nur ästhetischer, zweckenthebener Bildart vor.” Wilhelm-Kästner, “Gegenwart,” 94.

⁴⁰⁶ “Andererseits birgt diese Erscheinung aber auch zugleich die tatsächlich große Gefahr in sich, daß die Technik zum Selbstzweck wird.” *Ibid.*, 93.

1927: The Ornamental, Moholy-Nagy, and the Second Edition of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*

Wilhelm-Kästner's anxieties anticipated Benjamin's of the mid-1930s,⁴⁰⁷ but Benjamin had the discomfort of already seeing the fascist use of aesthetic, functional, photographic propaganda, which allowed the audience to revel in the surface technical perfection of Nazi mass media. The Nazis used magazines, particularly the *Illustrierte Beobachter*, to photographically document their choreographed visual spectacles, as in the story "Political Leaders on the Zeppelin Field," September 24, 1936 (fig. 4-11).

Wilhelm-Kästner had great apprehension about photographic propaganda in 1929, four years before the official rise of Hitler, and his preparations for the *Gegenwart* exhibition enabled him to crystallize those fears in his curatorial statement. His early trepidation is reminiscent of Kracauer's even earlier arguments in 1926-27, regarding the ornamental in works of art and other cultural products—the negative flip side of what he considered the useful strategy of "distraction." Patrice Petro explored the two sides of Kracauer's distraction theory vis-à-vis cinematic images in her 1989 book about Weimar cinema, *Joyless Streets*: his belief that the use of distraction in art forms had a "potentially progressive" effect through a "sensory, perceptual discourse," which allowed spectators to recognize the need for collective action within the changed conditions of modern social reality; yet, Kracauer also discerned "reactionary tendencies" in cinematic distraction.⁴⁰⁸ As Kracauer stated in his 1927 essay "Mass Ornament," "Physical training expropriates people's energy, while the production and mindless consumption of ornamental patterns divert them from the imperative to change the reigning order."⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ See "Epilogue," in "Work of Art," 241-242.

⁴⁰⁸ Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 64.

⁴⁰⁹ Kracauer, "Mass Ornament," in *Mass Ornament*, 85.

Moholy-Nagy expressed his own reservations about the ornamental in 1927. Continuing his prolific photography activities, he became film and photography editor for *i10* that year, and published articles in the photographic journals *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* and *Photographische Korrespondenz*, among others. In *i10* in 1927 he made his oft-quoted statement concerning photo-literacy of the masses, a quote included in Benjamin's "Little History:" "those with no knowledge of it [photography] will be the illiterates of the future. In the coming age photography will be a basic subject like reading and arithmetic."⁴¹⁰ Moholy-Nagy's concerns about the ornamental were expressed in that same essay, a published debate with his former collaborator Ernő Kallai. Kallai viewed photography as inherently lacking a satisfying pictorial effect due to its lack of facture, or surface texture. Moholy-Nagy found him to be confusing facture with tactility, and considered this a transparent yearning, "a veiled attempt to rescue craftsmanly, representational painting."⁴¹¹ Kallai's overemphasis on facture, in Moholy-Nagy's view, was counterproductive: "when facture becomes an end in itself, it simply turns into ornament."⁴¹²

Moholy-Nagy's photography, and the New Vision he promoted, negated the purely ornamental. Although Kracauer viewed the "fragmented sequence" of film to be integral to the jarring sense impressions that would reveal to the audience "its own reality,"⁴¹³ he overlooked the possibility that New Vision photography could stimulate similar sensory reactions. Benjamin was more attuned to these possibilities in his

⁴¹⁰ László Moholy-Nagy, "Response to Ernő Kallai's 'Painting and Photography,'" *i10* 1, no. 6 (1927), in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 102. Benjamin uses the quote on page 527 of 'Little History.' Interestingly, he does not acknowledge Moholy-Nagy, just stating "someone has said..." This, despite the fact that he used the quote previously in his 1928 review of Blossfeldt's "Urformen der Kunst." Mellor, 20.

⁴¹¹ Moholy-Nagy, "Response to Kallai," in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 101.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴¹³ Siegfried Kracauer, "Cult of Distraction," in *The Mass Ornament*, 326.

concept of “Dialectical Images,” or “Dialectics at a Standstill,” picture-puzzle images he began employing in his book *One-Way Street*, written in 1926.⁴¹⁴ Richard Wolin wrote a lengthy discussion of these images in his 1994 book, *Walter Benjamin, An Aesthetic of Redemption*. He defined Dialectical Images and Benjamin’s use of them: “by wrenching elements of everyday life from their original contexts and rearranging them in a new constellation, Benjamin hoped to divest them of their familiarity and thereby stir the reader from a state of passivity into an active and critical posture.”⁴¹⁵ Benjamin pointed to the camera, portable and affordable in the mid-1920s, ready to capture images with a “shock effect” to paralyze the normal functions in the beholder.⁴¹⁶

In the “Little History,” Benjamin used Moholy-Nagy’s statements about the “creative potential” of new technologies in *Malerei, Photographie, Film* as a departure point to describe the need for modern artists to establish a “living and unequivocal relationship with modern life.”⁴¹⁷ Moholy-Nagy also connected photography and film to humanity’s modern impulse to engage in the world, stating: “man’s interest in getting to know the whole world has been enlarged by the feeling of being— at every moment— in

⁴¹⁴ Wolin illustrated the concept with a passage from *One-Way Street* called “Costume Wardrobe.” Benjamin described the effect of actors entering the stage “fleeing,” in Shakespeare and Calderon, bringing them “to a standstill” for the audience, allowing them to “bathe in new air.” Wolin subsequently interpreted the passage: “when the stream of life’s movement is brought to an abrupt halt, the customary and familiar are viewed in a radically new light.” Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 125, quoting Walter Benjamin, “Einbahnstraße,” *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, IV:I, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), 143. Benjamin used the phrase “Dialectics at a standstill” in his “First Sketches” of the *Arcades Project*, sketches he worked on from 1927-30. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 865.

⁴¹⁵ Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin*, 124. Wolin later reiterates the position of the viewer vis-à-vis Dialectical Images as one that stimulates him “to take an active and critical role versus his environment and fate,” 159. In Moholy-Nagy’s *PPF*, a captioned image of a motorcycle rider could be interpreted as an example of “Dialectics at a Standstill”: “Racing tempo immobilized,” 55.

⁴¹⁶ Benjamin “Little History,” 527.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 523.

every situation—involved in it.”⁴¹⁸ In the extended introduction added to the 1927 edition of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, he opened with the “amazing possibilities” of the camera, in its unprecedented ability to arrest “fragments of the world.”⁴¹⁹ Moholy-Nagy’s caption for one of his photographs in this edition, *In the Sand*, ca. 1927 (fig. 4-12), taken from an oblique angle, could be directly paralleled to Benjamin’s interest in activating the viewer’s awareness of their surroundings: “Formerly regarded as distortion, today a startling experience! An invitation to re-evaluate our way of seeing. This picture can be turned round. It always produces new vistas.”⁴²⁰

In 1927, Moholy-Nagy increased the emphasis on oblique framings in his photographs, and a variety of modern urban settings. He added many of his own photographs to this edition of the book, including the *Dolls*, *Bauhaus Balconies*, *In the Sand*, a view of a man at an outdoor café taken from above (*Belle-Ile-en-Mer*, 1925, fig. 4-13), and Lucia’s portrait of *Julia Feininger*, ca. 1927 (fig. 4-14). And he continued his quest to translate the contents of this book into exhibition spaces. As mentioned above, the *Dolls* and *Bauhaus Balconies* would be included in *Gegenwart*—as would the portrait of Feininger. Active and open images of this nature responded to the very concerns Wilhelm-Kästner voiced about leaving closed photographic forms behind while moving forward with productive imagery in *Fotografie der Gegenwart*.

⁴¹⁸ *MPF*, 11.

⁴¹⁹ *PPF*, 7.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

Works from the Exhibition *Fotografie der Gegenwart* Published in *Photographische Rundschau*

Wilhelm-Kästner chose not to analyze specific images from *Fotografie der Gegenwart* in his curatorial statement, but *Photographische Rundschau* reproduced many images from the exhibition in the pages preceding and following his text. Two images appeared within the body of his essay; a cropped, abstract photograph of fabric incorporating the play of folds and lights and darks by Hans Finsler (fig. 4-15), and a cityscape by Germaine Krull, *Amsterdam Roofs* -- an evocative contrast representing both an indoor studio composition and one of the outside, urban world (fig. 4-16).

Many of the other reprinted images from the exhibition contained more social context. They included *Kumpels* (Miners) by Anton Meinholz (fig. 4-17), who had been included in the *DPA* Amateur Photography section, and *Avenue Junot* by Andre Kertész (fig. 4-18). These photographs highlighted the role of the human presence in New Vision photography, an aspect that is often overlooked in discussions of jarring angles and unusual compositions. The Meinholz depicts three miners holding the tools of their trade while one lights another's cigarette. A wrought iron structure cuts through the background, underscoring the men's location in an industrialized space, but the photograph is also masterfully arranged, with the narrowing diagonal of the curb slashing through the composition. *Kumpels* synthesizes a moment of modern life and labor; with its balance between compositional technique and subject matter, it seems to hover between the New Vision and a purely documentary style.

Kertész's *Avenue Junot* further emblemizes how the content of high-profile photography exhibitions had changed in the three years since 1926. He utilized the position of the aerial view to show a Parisian avenue, not idealized in any way, but rather

scarred, torn, and being readied for modern upgrades. Like Meinholz, Kertész showed his prowess in framing images, with the curved gash cutting through the center. Yet, the artistry of the composition does not dilute the impact of the humans below, shown working on the street.⁴²¹ He provided a view of the physical process of modernization that the audience would not otherwise have.

Additional images from *Gegenwart* were reproduced on the pages of *Photographische Rundschau* preceding Wilhelm-Kästner's statement. They included a nature study by Renger-Patzsch, *Kurbis* (Pumpkin) (fig. 4-19), a straight still life by Elizabeth Heddenhausen (fig. 4-20), one of the few contemporary German photographers that would be included in Newhall's MoMA show in 1937, and another study of the contrast between varied textures by Finsler (fig. 4-21). Although connected to the material world, these images aestheticized and decontextualized their subjects, a tendency of *Neue Sachlichkeit* photography. Renger-Patzsch wrote an essay, "Aims," in which he explained the photographer's task as the pursuit of "perfection" in natural and man-made structures, and the "absolutely correct rendering of form."⁴²²

The dynamic studies of industrial life included in this group of illustrations were more indicative of the New Vision. Eli Lotar's *Der Angler* (fig. 4-22), displays a worm's eye view of a fisherman with his line, a position that creates a visual relationship between a haphazard man-made structure and one's natural surroundings. The rough dock and the angler's tools jut out onto the smooth surface of the water, an individual impacting his environment through work.

⁴²¹ Matthies-Masuren (credited in this article as "M.M") noted these images from the exhibition were reproduced as close to actual size when possible, somewhat enlarged when not possible, on glossy paper. Friedrich Matthies-Masuren, "Kleine Mitteilungen" (Little notes), *Photographische Rundschau* 66 (March 1929): 101-102.

⁴²² Albert Renger-Patzsch, "Ziele," *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* (1927): xviii, in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 105.

Im Bau (In the building) (fig. 4-23), by E.O Hoppé, displayed a structure in the process of being built, with a worker in mid-task, and tools and ladders strewn about the space. The photograph showed a new phase in this former Pictorialist's career. Hoppé was born in Munich in 1878, but moved to London by 1900 and established a society portrait studio there. He helped organize the British contribution to *Iphad*, but beginning in the early 1920s he grew tired of producing Pictorialist studio photography, and began to focus more on photojournalism.⁴²³ In 1927, he briefly moved back to Germany, doing some work for Ufa film studios in Berlin. His books of late portrait work, *Taken from Life*, 1922, and *London Types Taken from Life*, 1926, emphasized representations of workers, flower sellers, and vagrants.

One portrait spread from the exhibition was included in the group of *Photographische Rundschau* illustrations, both strong images of women. Umbo's *Die Hand*, 1926 (fig. 4-24), shows its subject wearing graphic makeup and a New Woman haircut. *Portrait Kollwitz*, by Erfurth (fig. 4-25), depicts the Expressionist artist who had been appointed the first female member of the Prussian Academy.⁴²⁴ Kollwitz is not in the least idealized here; she has the appearance of a hard-working woman, with mussed hair, tired eyes, and a slightly askance pose. These were vastly different representations of women than the Pictorialist portraits of aristocratic women, passive profiles by Lendvai-Dirksen, and idealized domestic scenes seen in the *DPA* three years earlier.

Mario von Bucovich's image entitled *Schatten* (Shadow) (fig. 4-26), was the final work in this group of reproductions. Von Bucovich had published the work in the 1928 book *Paris*, which contained diverse views of the city. They ranged from New Vision

⁴²³ Terence Pepper, *Camera Portraits by E. O. Hoppé* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1978), 7.

⁴²⁴ Kollwitz was asked to leave the Academy in February 1933 because of her vocal opposition to Nazism. "Käthe Kollwitz, Excerpts from Diaries and Letters, 1933" in Long, *Documents*, 297.

angled shots to straight views, beaux-arts buildings to de Stijl buildings, and included many images of workers on the streets.⁴²⁵ A visual subtext runs throughout von Bucovich's book, that streets, buildings, and workers are the subjects that best represent the modern Paris. *Schatten* applies the principles of distortion discussed by Moholy-Nagy, but also engages the viewer in a visual game of discerning the primary subject from a mysterious setting. Upon careful analysis, a worker grasping a shovel emerges, shown in shadow profile. Features of everyday work are wedged into the corner, including a pair of beat-up shoes and wooden measuring tools. The horizontal shadow challenges the viewer to differentiate where the shadow ends and the material world begins.

This selection from the *Gegenwart* exhibition directly confronted the urbanity and contemporaneity of Modernismus. Aside from Renger-Patzsch's nature photograph and the still lifes by Finsler and Heddenhausen, the photographs were interpretative approaches to clearly contemporary topics. Several of the compositions made a point of focusing on working people engaged in their trade. The Kertész, Meinholz, Lotar, Hoppé, and von Bucovich images were divested of enough familiarity in their angles and framing to encourage the viewer to engage in what he was seeing, to see new relationships between man and the street, man and his co-workers, man and nature, man and structures, man and his tools. Concurrently, the subject matter would have been recognizable to the *entire* audience, in contrast to images of wealth, or pristine landscapes that no longer existed. Although Wilhelm-Kästner had been concerned about oblique angles leading to shallow aesthetic playfulness, he demonstrated, through his selection

⁴²⁵ Mario von Bucovich, *Paris* (Berlin: Albertus, 1928).

for the *Gegenwart* exhibition, how unexpected views could dynamically transform images from modern urban life.

Design Innovations in *Fotografie der Gegenwart*

Fotografie der Gegenwart forcefully promoted the idea of the New Vision as having arrived. Direct links existed between *Gegenwart* and the movement's nascent development at the *DPA*, including Erfurth's Dresden poster for *Gegenwart* (fig. 4-27), based on a photogram as was his submission for the *DPA* poster, and Dixel's poster for the Magdeburg venue of *Gegenwart* (fig. 4-28), which embraced the same positive/negative design in its textual matter as Fiedler's poster for the *DPA*.

In addition to the numerous photographs reproduced in *Photographische Rundschau* with Wilhelm-Kästner's statement, additional photographs can be identified through installation shots. A detail (fig. 4-29) shows Lucia Moholy's portrait *Walter Gropius*, 1927 (fig. 4-30), with his head resting on his hands, the lines and ridges of his face expressing a playful grimace. Lucia described to her biographer Rolf Sachsse that she photographed the architect with the same distance she would use to photograph a house.⁴²⁶ Two other graphically striking portraits by Lucia were included: *Florence Henri*, ca. 1926-28 (fig. 4-31), which showed the French-American Bauhaus student, and made dramatic use of Henri's severe black bob, graphic makeup and optically contrasting dress; and Julia Feininger, wife of Bauhaus master Lionel Feininger, included in the

⁴²⁶ Rolf Sachsse, *Lucia Moholy* (Düsseldorf: Edition Marzona, 1985), 36.

second edition of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, captioned as an attempt at an “objective portrait.”⁴²⁷

The Moholys dominated the right half of the room. To the right of the row with Lucia’s portraits hung many of the photograms on which they collaborated, although only one is readily identifiable, *Photogram*, 1922-26 (fig 4-32). The wall mixed portraits, photograms, and Moholy-Nagy’s experiments in light effects (*Dolls*), perspective (*Bauhaus Balconies*), and urban environments (both), as Moholy-Nagy did in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Moholy-Nagy’s influence on this room radiated from the photographs to the “typophoto” installation layout. His typographic style emerged in the brochures designed for *Fotografie der Gegenwart* as well (fig. 4-33), an early example of exhibition organizers attempting consistency in both the spatial and graphic identity of an exhibition.⁴²⁸

In his essay about didacticism in German photography exhibitions, Olivier Lugon suggested that neither *Fotografie der Gegenwart* nor *Film und Foto* were revolutionary, but were rather attached to certain traditional modes of hanging graphic art.⁴²⁹ I would argue, however, that the concept of “typophoto” contradicts this interpretation of *Gegenwart* and *Fifo*. *Gegenwart* and Moholy-Nagy’s hanging in Room 1 of *Fifo* (see fig. 1-7), a widely discussed configuration, was informed by the visual effectiveness of the typophoto that he developed in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Eskildsen has stated, “the photography section of Moholy-Nagy’s book...could be read as a rough draft for Room 1

⁴²⁷ PPF, 96.

⁴²⁸ For an in-depth examination of how typophoto was applied to posters, magazines, and advertising as well as brochures and exhibition spaces, see Ute Brüning’s essay “Typophoto,” in Jeanine Fiedler, ed. *Photography at the Bauhaus* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 204-219.

⁴²⁹ “...Les secondes au contraire même les plus modernistes d’entre elles, come ‘Film und Foto’ ou ‘Fotographie der Gegenwart,’ se montrent encore majoritairement attachees aux mode traditionnels d’accrochage des arts graphiques.” Olivier Lugon, “La photographie mise en espace: Les expositions didactiques allemandes 1925 – 1945,” *Études photographiques* (November 5, 1998): 101.

at the *Fifo* exhibition.”⁴³⁰ The typophoto format was a radical rethinking of how to present photographic and textual material in an integrated and graphically stimulating manner, particularly considering less than three years earlier Warstat had been complaining about the continued use of heavy gold frames in photography exhibitions.

The installation photograph of the “Man and Nature” section (fig. 4-34) is the best visual example of coexistence between science photography and artistic practice at *Gegenwart*. Photographs and x-rays of shells, starfish, and other animals filled the right-hand side of the room, while the left side focused on architectural photographs and architectonic models. The latter are reminiscent of exercises Moholy-Nagy assigned his students in the preliminary course at the Bauhaus, in which he taught them to understand architecture through exercises in the balance and construction of experience. Marianne Brandt’s *Study in Balance*, 1923 (fig. 4-35), shows how the students would achieve this through small-scale sculptures. He wanted students to have, as he expressed it, a “direct experience of space itself; that is, how you live in it and how you move in it.”⁴³¹

Anne Mosbacher produced at least two of the nature photographs, the *Elsterschnecke*, 1926-29 (fig. 4-36), and the *Koralle*, 1926-29 (fig. 4-37). These studies of the graphic elements of nature seem most concerned with the compositional effects of lights against darks. As objects in close-up, and with their abstract patterning, Mosbacher would be aligned with Renger-Patzsch and Blossfeldt’s oeuvre (fig. 4-38 from Blossfeldt’s book *Urformen der Kunst*, 1928).⁴³² But analyzed as a whole, the room

⁴³⁰ Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 40.

⁴³¹ Moholy-Nagy, “The Concept of Space,” in *Bauhaus 1919-1928* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 122.

⁴³² Walter Benjamin celebrated the revelation and scientific interest of Blossfeldt’s plant forms in two essays: “A review of Karl Blossfeldt, *Urformen der Kunst*,” 1928, in Mellor, 20, and the “Little History,” 526. In contrast, he excoriated Renger-Patzsch’s beautification of his subjects in the “Little History,” 526, and again later in his 1934 essay “Author as Producer,” in *Selected Writings*, volume 2, 775.

expressed the heterogeneity of Moholy-Nagy's New Vision through its juxtaposition of science, perspectival views of architecture, and documents of didactic exercises. The effect of the combination is less about the aestheticization of nature photography, to which Renger-Patzsch's photograph *Kürbis* subscribed, and more about the varied uses of photography to interact with the material world.

The Films of *Fotografie der Gegenwart*

Wilhelm-Kästner ended his curatorial statement in *Photographische Rundschau* asserting that films should be considered alongside the other pioneering developments of modern photography, but that they often suffered from kitschiness, the subject matter not having caught up to their "astounding" photographic elements.⁴³³ One reviewer of *Gegenwart*, Agnes Waldstein of the *Essener Volkszeitung*, had the opposite interpretation. She argued that film's ability to combine artistic vision with the clarity, precision, and framing necessary to achieve a clear narrative for the audience led the way for photography to emerge from the misguided blurriness of Pictorialism.⁴³⁴ Moholy-Nagy, who made several short films in the 1920s, expressed the dialectical relationship between the two media more in terms of its synergistic effect, as a "reciprocal laboratory: photography as an investigatory field for film, and film as a stimulus for photography."⁴³⁵ He insisted that composed light, visual tempos, and spatial motion would trigger charges

⁴³³ "Erstaunlich." Wilhelm-Kästner, "Gegenwart," 96.

⁴³⁴ Agnes Waldstein, "Photographie der Gegenwart: Ausstellung im Folkwang-Museum," *Essener Volkszeitung*, 27 January 1929, unpaginated.

⁴³⁵ Moholy-Nagy, "Unprecedented Photography," in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 85. Benjamin related the reciprocal relationship of film and photography in his "Work of Art" essay to the crumbling hierarchies between art and science in modern photography, a role which these exhibitions had already been playing: "to demonstrate the identity of the artistic and scientific uses of photography which heretofore usually were separated will be one of the revolutionary functions of film." Benjamin, "Work of Art, in *Illuminations*, 236.

to the brain, sensations that provided the potential for “the strongest visual experiences that can be granted to man.”⁴³⁶

Waldstein described the skylight hall of the Folkwang as dedicated to film images.⁴³⁷ Stills from German films stood next to those from Russian and French works, including abstract films by Viking Eggeling, Richter, and Man Ray, microscopic films, trick films, artistic films, and travelogues.⁴³⁸ Waldstein broke the stills into two groups: cultural films, and “tendency” films, focused on political or other events. She specifically mentioned the animation of Lotte Reininger, the French film *Joan of Arc*, “still unknown in Germany,” which revealed “in the few shown pictures...masterly film expression,”⁴³⁹ and Eisenstein’s *General Line* (1928-29), also known as *Old and New*, about the collectivization of the Soviet farming system (fig. 4-39). Waldstein was strongly impressed by the Russian filmmakers in their ability to match populist themes with strong artistic expression, both in narrative and documentary films.⁴⁴⁰ Eisenstein had a following in Germany from the time *Battleship Potemkin* premiered in Berlin in 1926—called the crucial year for great cinema in Germany—to huge crowds and effusive critical reception.⁴⁴¹ The *Hannover Kurier* concurred with Waldstein in singling

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Waldstein, “*Gegenwart*.”

⁴³⁸ “Unter uns,” *Die Photographische Industrie*, no. 5 (30 January 1929): 101.

⁴³⁹ This is most likely Carl Theodor Dreyer’s film, “La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc,” 1928, although there was an earlier French version “Jeanne d’Arc” by Méliès in 1899. Dreyer’s film built the narration of its martyrdom story around extreme close-ups of the suffering lead, played by Maria Falconetti.

⁴⁴⁰ Waldstein, “*Gegenwart*.”

⁴⁴¹ John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety, 1917-33* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 143. Willett pinpoints 1926 as the great year for critics and the public due to imports rather than German film production: *Battleship Potemkin* and as well as Charlie Chaplin’s *Gold Rush*. He quotes Lunarcharsky as saying that Russians were unaware of the advanced stage of their cinema until it caused such a stir in Germany. He also includes an extended discussion on page 146 of how filmmakers like Richter, who was often referenced only as a filmmaker interested in formalistic abstraction, exposed the German avant-garde to films from Russia, France, and the United States by organizing programs like a Novembergruppe-UFA documentary department collaboration in 1925.

out the “new Russian films,” and “the much talked-about French film *Joan of Arc*.”⁴⁴² The reviewer expressed the hope that *Joan of Arc* would soon be brought to Hannover, revealing the museum as the first venue for this audience to be exposed to certain European avant-garde films.

Waldstein’s excitement about *Gegenwart*’s film program extended to the evening screenings, which she said were attended by students at various levels. They included gymnasium students, as well as evening school students, interesting in that the latter were probably comprised of a more working-class population. She also mentioned attendance by member of cultural associations in Essen. Throughout the student population, “especially among the youth, these films created great excitement!”⁴⁴³

***Fotografie der Gegenwart*’s Tour**

Correspondence mentions twelve potential venues for the traveling exhibition component of *Fotografie der Gegenwart*; convincing proof exists that it went to at least eight locations after Essen. Those venues were Hannover (Kestner-Gesellschaft, March 10 – April 7), Berlin (Galerie Neumann-Nierendorf, April 20 – May 20), London (Whitechapel Gallery, June 6-June 29), Frankfurt (July 7 – August 8), Leipzig (August 18 – September 8), Dresden (Saxon Landesbildstelle, September 15 – October 6), Rostock (Kunstverein, October 20 – November 10), and Magdeburg (Ausstellungsamt, November 28 – December 19).⁴⁴⁴ Magdeburg seems to have been the most expansive of the venues,

⁴⁴² “...der vielbesprochene französische Film von der ‘heiligen Johanna’...” J.F., “*Photographie der Gegenwart*,” *Hannover Kurier*, 15 March 1929, unpaginated.

⁴⁴³ “Besonders bei der Jugend haben diese Filme große Begeisterung erregt.” Waldstein, “*Gegenwart*.”

⁴⁴⁴ Kaiserslautern (Kunstverein, January), Vienna (Museum in Belvedere, Feb/March), and Breslau (? , March/April), are also mentioned in correspondence from the Museum Folkwang archives, but there is no

with more than eighty artists, and the brochure specified that the venue supplemented the Essen exhibition.⁴⁴⁵ According to their brochures, Berlin, Hannover, and Dresden each had nearly fifty artists.⁴⁴⁶

Hoppé wrote the one-page preface to the exhibition's London catalogue, which combined two exhibitions, the "Exhibitions of Czechoslovak, Industrial Art," and "International Photographs." Hoppé actually argued that the internationalism of *Gegenwart* was overstated, disavowing the exhibition as one of an international nature, "a title frequently misapplied by the promoters of exhibitions, photographic and otherwise."⁴⁴⁷ Perhaps he had hoped for more British participation. It is difficult to know exactly what was in the London venue, as the Whitechapel only published a preface to the exhibition. Correspondence reveals that there were twenty photographs by Ewald Hoinkis—known for his advertising and magazine work (fig. 4-40)—lent to the Whitechapel, so it must have been a similar size as Essen, to accommodate that many images from one photographer.⁴⁴⁸

However, judging by the list of artists from the United States, France, Germany, and Russia to the other venues, the emphasis of the film program on the interrelationship among nations, and the exhibition's venue in London, the internationalism of this

corroborating evidence that *Gegenwart* traveled to those locations, and it almost certainly did not travel to Vienna, as the Belvedere has no proof of it. "Wanderausstellung 'Fotografie der Gegenwart,'" 28 August 1929, memo, Collections, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

⁴⁴⁵ These names were taken from the Magdeburg brochure, which I viewed at Swann before it was sold at auction, May 7, 2001. Alain Weill, "Fotografie der Gegenwart brochure," *Modernist Posters* (New York: Swann, 2001), lot 50. Magdeburg was the most comprehensive of the traveling venues and the brochure stated that it "supplemented" the exhibition organized by the Folkwang in Essen. August Sander and Kurt Schwitters are among the names that do not appear until the Magdeburg venue.

⁴⁴⁶ *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, 1929, brochures for Berlin, Hannover, and Dresden venues, Collections, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

⁴⁴⁷ E.O. Hoppé, "Preface," *International Photographic Exhibition* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1929).

⁴⁴⁸ Ewald Hoinkis, Görnitz, to Museum Folkwang, Essen, 7 June 1929, Collections, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

exhibition was a significant factor, especially compared with earlier German exhibitions of photography in the postwar era. *Gegenwart*'s probable contribution to the spread of the New Vision beyond the European continent has been overlooked. In his 1978 essay about the reception of the New Photography in England, and the “breakthrough” of German-themed exhibitions, Mellor did not mention *Fotografie der Gegenwart* at the Whitechapel—instead, he began with a Blossfeldt retrospective and a show in 1930 at the Camera Club called *German Advertising Photographs*, which included Finsler and Sascha Stone.⁴⁴⁹ This may be due to the fact that contemporary critical literature completely ignored it as well. *Gegenwart* garnered no mention in *The British Journal of Photography* in 1929, despite exhaustive lists of other worldwide photographic exhibitions. The *British Journal* may have missed the exhibition because it was held at a museum. As will be discussed below, reviewers of *Gegenwart* took note of how rare it still was to see photography exhibitions in a museum.

Despite his comments undercutting the internationalism of *Gegenwart*'s content, in his preface Hoppé acknowledged the significance of the tour coming to London: “the resulting collection forms the exhibition which met with such a success at the Folkwang Museum in Essen, that it was followed by requests for its transfer to many important cities of which London is one.”⁴⁵⁰ Hoppé discussed the criteria of the exhibition and justified it in terms of viability for new directions in photography:

The fact that photography is showing signs of reaching a turning point in its history has aroused considerable interest and led to an organized effort on the part of a group of German Municipal Museums to probe into the possibilities of its future, in an attempt to define on what lines it is definitely developing. For the past year or two a close watch has been kept on the output of those who work

⁴⁴⁹ David Mellor, “London-Berlin-London: A Cultural History. The Reception and Influence of the New German Photography in Britain 1927-33,” in Mellor, *New Photography*, 127.

⁴⁵⁰ Hoppé, “Preface.”

came into prominent notice as being of an outstanding novel conception and *vitality*.⁴⁵¹

He thus pinpointed the period from 1927-29, “this past year or two,” as the turning point in the collecting and showing of photography in museums, and went on to say that if the *Gegenwart* could “arouse constructive criticism, leading to an intelligent understanding of the possibilities of the medium essentially fitted to express the present-day outlooks, it will have fulfilled its mission.”⁴⁵² Hoppé emphasized the need for photographs to confront contemporary experiences, equating photography and its new approaches with a distinctly modern vitality. He also placed the exhibition in the role of catalyst, to help the public understand what the contemporary photographers were trying to accomplish. Even Matthies-Masuren affirmed the importance of publicizing German photography abroad in a short essay about *Gegenwart* in *Photographische Rundschau*. Due to *Gegenwart* being shown in other cities, its task was to “contribute essentials for the benefit of photographs, generally speaking, and also to clarify the striving of a closer circle of our amateurs.”⁴⁵³

The exhibition’s tour took it not only abroad, but also to regions throughout Germany. Dresden was its easternmost venue, and the photographer Walter Mobius recorded the installation at the Landesbildstelle (fig. 4-41). Few images are identifiable, but the document still conveys an aggregate sense of the show. The organizers inserted sheer, temporary walls, rather than trying to hang modern photography directly onto the beaux-art structure as had been done at *Iphad*. The front walls were divided between

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ “Da die Sammlung auch in anderen Städten gezeigt wird, ist sie berufen, Wesentliches zum Nutzen der Photographierenden im allgemeinen und auch zur Klärung der Bestrebungen des engeren Kreises unserer tätigen Amateure beizutragen.” Matthies-Masuren, “Kleine Mitteilungen,” 101. He remains preoccupied with distinctions between professionals and amateurs. Wilhelm-Kästner did not mention either word in his curatorial statement for *Gegenwart*.

expressive shots of animals on the left, and human portraits on the right, a strategy of humor that would be used in later years for its satirical potential in magazines. The Hoppé photograph *Im Bau* is visible on the wall behind the animals. The left-most wall included Lucia Moholy's *Florence Henri*, ca. 1926-28 (detail, fig. 4-42). Advertising posters that made use of cropped images and skewed typographics were hung on the back wall, including one with the logo "Odeon," and a double portrait of a woman, using superimposition, was installed on the wall in front of the posters (detail, fig. 4-43).

Animals, conventional portraits, superimposed portraits, advertising, studies of industry, and avant-garde figures all shared a continuous space. The front enclosure included bird-eye shots of streets from buildings, an enormous geographic aerial shot amassed into an irregular grid,⁴⁵⁴ and magazine spreads (fig. 4-44). Although the "typophoto" design of the Essen venue was more visually stimulating, the plurality of scientific and artistic material was maintained in Dresden.

Willi Warstat, the critic who wrote about lingering Pictorialist tendencies, inbreeding, and provincialism at the *DPA*, but also about the importance of a new, pared-down installation approach in certain areas of the show, gave a lecture at the Dresden venue of *Fotografie der Gegenwart*. The title of his talk renewed the Moholy-Nagy/Dexel theme "Neue Wege der Photographie."⁴⁵⁵ It was also in 1929 that Warstat acknowledged Moholy-Nagy's book *Painting, Photography, Film as the crucial influence on the "New Photography."⁴⁵⁶ His was one of many lectures listed on a program of a*

⁴⁵⁴ This may be the aerial depiction of the Ems lowlands, described in the *Hannover Kurier* review as one of many images (including x-rays) that demonstrated the "manifold tasks of photography in the service of today's science (die mannigfachen Aufgaben der Photographie im Dienste heutiger Wissenschaft)."

⁴⁵⁵ "Unter uns" (Among us), *Die Photographische Industrie*, no. 39 (25 September 1929): unpaginated.

⁴⁵⁶ Eskildsen, "Innovative Photography," 42, citing Willi Warstat, "Die entfesselte Kamera und die produktive Kamera" (The provoking camera and the productive camera), *Deutscher Kamera Almanach*, 19 (1929): 44. One year later, he wrote an essay for the same journal about his surprise that it had taken so

three-day symposium in conjunction with *Gegenwart* in Dresden (fig. 4-45).⁴⁵⁷ Moholy-Nagy was the keynote final speaker, and his speech, “Photography and Film of the Future” was announced in bolder text than all other speakers, punctuated by exclamation points. The art historian George Heise had earlier lectured about the historical development of photography and its contemporaneous goals at the Hannover venue.⁴⁵⁸

Moholy’s prominence had risen dramatically in 1929,⁴⁵⁹ due to a combination of exhibition participation, lectures, and articles during the three years since being relegated to the “Nachtrag” of the *DPA* catalogue, ignored in the essay section, spoken of as an afterthought by Erfurth’s peers in *Das Atelier*, and overlooked in reviews of the exhibition. Renger-Patzsch was celebrated in the exhibition reviews and curatorial statements as well, and Waldstein mentioned the success of his 1928 book, *Die Welt ist schön* (The World is Beautiful). He had lived in Essen since 1928, and would later teach briefly at the local Folkwangschule, so these favorable mentions are not surprising.⁴⁶⁰ But Renger-Patzsch’s activities were not as frenetic or diversified as Moholy-Nagy’s, and he had a much more dogmatic interest in a single “type” of photography, that of “photographic realism.” Renger-Patzsch vocally disapproved of the experimental techniques that Wilhelm-Kästner included in *Gegenwart*, including photograms, oblique

long for advertisers to start utilizing photography to its full potential, stating: “since the *qualities* that predestine it [photography] to technical advertising applications have been known and, in other contexts—particularly the sciences—emphasized and exploited for a long time. Among these qualities, the most immediate is its *objectivity* in the *representation of things*.” Willi Wartsat, “Photography in Advertising” (*Die Photographie in der Werbekunst*), *Deutscher Kamera-Almanach* 20 (Berlin: Roth & Co., 1920), 85-98, excerpted in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendburg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 651. Empahses Warstat’s.

⁴⁵⁷ Other speakers included a Dr. Goldberg on possibilities of projection techniques, Dr. Joachim on cinematography in schools, and Dr. Luther on developments of applied photography “today.” According to Eskildsen, Moholy-Nagy gave this talk during the Essen venue as well. Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 36.

⁴⁵⁸ “Photographie der Gegenwart,” *Hannover Kurier*, unpaginated.

⁴⁵⁹ At the time of the Dresden venue of *Gegenwart*, *Fifo* was about to close in Zurich and travel to Berlin, so the avalanche of press it received would have had time to filter through the photography world.

⁴⁶⁰ Coke, *Avant-Garde*, 35.

angled shots, and photomontages.⁴⁶¹ Moholy-Nagy's theoretical premise supporting a plurality of photographic production provided a more radical modernity and a compelling foundation for modern display. That premise began to dominate German photography exhibitions in 1929, and caused the bitterness expressed by Renger-Patzsch in his published response to *Fifo*, "Boom Times," which belied an elitism as he criticized the "random heap of photos."⁴⁶²

Critical Reception of *Fotografie der Gegenwart*

Photographische Rundschau published the most substantive material on the show, including Wilhelm-Kästner's statement, the numerous reproductions, and Matthies-Masuren's "Little Notes" on the exhibition. Matthies-Masuren extolled the Folkwang for acknowledging photography, something museums had been largely unwilling to do up to that point.⁴⁶³ The institutions were responding to the public's desire to understand genuine current developments in the medium. However, the journal's coverage of *Gegenwart* was followed by a blurb about *Fifo* in the same issue, naming it as the trailblazer of many methods *Gegenwart* had in fact first utilized: "collectively showing, as everybody knows, the first work of many personalities domestic and foreign, having shown new paths in photography as well as film."⁴⁶⁴ Beyond the articles in *Rundschau*, the coverage of *Gegenwart* was largely limited to reviews in newspapers local to each of the venues, although *Photographische Industrie* had some details on the film program,

⁴⁶¹ See quote from "Boom Times," page 30 above.

⁴⁶² "Postscript to Photo Inflation/Boom Times," in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 141.

⁴⁶³ "In contrast to earlier rejections," was how he phrased the museums' purchases. "Im Gegensatz zu früheren Ablehnungen." Matthies-Masuren, "Kleine Mitteilungen," 102.

⁴⁶⁴ "Die internationale Werkbund-Ausstellung Film und Foto Stuttgart 1929 wird im Mai eröffnet werden. Diese Ausstellung will bekanntlich zum erstenmal Arbeiten derjenigen Persönlichkeiten aus dem In- und Auslande zusammenstellen, die der Photographie sowie dem Film neue Wege gewiesen haben." "Film und Foto," *Photographische Rundschau* 66 (March 1929): 104.

and a pregnant remark about the photography component, perhaps pointing to lacks in previous exhibitions, that *Gegenwart* confronted “*actual problems* of photography.”⁴⁶⁵

The *Essener Volkszeitung* recorded that attendance at the opening venue of *Gegenwart* overwhelmed the museum and the exhibition organizers. The opening was filled to capacity, and those who could not get in to the opening found a similar situation when they returned in the following days; as the paper noted, the museum staff even said “we don’t know what is going on here.”⁴⁶⁶ The *Volksmacht* theorized that the Folkwang had built a loyal audience by paying attention to the needs of the visitor—they took time to organize coherent exhibitions rather than unfiltered, massive displays. And, as Agnes Waldstein had described in relation to the film program, a substantial educational outreach program was in place. As a result of their built-in community audience, they had attracted a large numbers of visitors to *Gegenwart* without relying on heavy advertising.⁴⁶⁷

Waldstein wrote a substantial review of the exhibition in the *Essener Volkszeitung*. She commenced by asking a series of provocative questions, pointing to them as justifications for an overview of contemporary photography. They included the question of whether photography could be considered part of “modern art life,” and what its position was therein; whether it has an artistic point of view; and whether photography should be viewed “only as a technical procedure which pairs with the personal view of the exercising person, or can one show certain laws, which make artistic efforts

⁴⁶⁵ “In der Ausstellung sollen die aktuellen Probleme der Photographie gezeigt werden.” *Die Photographische Industrie*, no. 5 (30 January 1929): frontispiece. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶⁶ “...hatten die Folkwang-Angestellten nur die Antwort: ‘Wir wissen auch nicht, was los ist!’” “*Photographie der Gegenwart*,” *Essener Volkszeitung*, 27 January 1929, unpaginated.

⁴⁶⁷ “*Photographie der Gegenwart*,” *Volksmacht*, Essen, 28 January 1929, unpaginated.

recognizable?” Finally, she asked, “Who are the pioneering representatives?”⁴⁶⁸ She then supplied another possible clue to the unusually high attendance at the Folkwang:

One could possibly say that the area of photography was too minor to stand as an exhibition theme next to the two others [i.e. exhibitions the previous year on painting and architecture]. But that is a mistake, since photography today is probably the most popular of pastimes, in which all classes participate, who usually do not have any relationship to architecture or any other art. In addition photography became an important part of the press. It became a transmitter for news and events, which made it a strong competitor to the printed word.⁴⁶⁹

This responsibility as a new addition to the press was to be a “perspective transmitter in the general sense.”⁴⁷⁰ As a local newspaper noticing a clear shift in the public’s relationship to photography, the *Essener Volkszeitung* was a more reliable pulse-taker than a photographic journal. In many museums, photography was still considered too minor to warrant a thematic exhibition, especially in comparison with the two more standard thematic shows the year before of painting and sculpture. But the author understood that photography was becoming the great equalizer in the arts, the one which people felt communicated directly to them, especially if they found painting, sculpture and architecture intimidating. Waldstein also implied a certain responsibility on the part of the intelligentsia to analyze the issue of photography’s unique visual qualities as it intersected with social realities. Photography was not perceived in this review as lessened as an art form because of its position as a communicator to all. Waldstein built

⁴⁶⁸ “Gehört die Photographie überhaupt zum modernen Kunstleben, und welche Stellung nimmt sie in ihm ein? Hat sie eine Bedeutung für die Weiterentwicklung künstlerischer Anschauungen in bisher unbeteiligten Volksschichten? Handelt es sich beim Photographieren nur um ein technisches Verfahren, das sich mit der persönlichen Anschauung des Ausübenden paart, oder kann man Gesetze aufzeigen, die hier künstlerisches Bemühen erkennen lassen? Wer sind die wegweisenden Vertreter? Diese Fragestellung hat das Folkwang-Museum zu seiner Ausstellung ‘Gegenwart’ veranlaßt.” Waldstein, “*Gegenwart*.”

⁴⁶⁹ “Nun könnte man vielleicht sagen, das Gebiet der Photographie sei zu nebensächlich, um als Ausstellungsthema gleichberechtigt neben den beiden anderen zu stehen. Aber das ist ein Irrtum, denn Photographie ist heute vielleicht der verbreitetste Volkssport, an dem alle die Kreise teilhaben, die sonst häufig weder zur Architektur, noch zu einem anderen Kunstgebiet Beziehung haben. Die Photographie ist weiter ein wichtiger Teil der Presse geworden, sie ist eine Nachrichten- und Ereignisübermittlung geworden, die dem gedruckten Buchstaben ernstlich Konkurrenz macht.” Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

its legitimacy on those qualities and celebrated them, as Moholy-Nagy had in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, when he noted the “the unambiguousness of the real, the *truth* in the everyday situation is there for *all* classes.”⁴⁷¹

The insistence that photography break free of expectations of the painterly model persisted, and after making the point that photography’s broad appeal should allow it to coexist productively with other arts, Waldstein’s argument begins to overemphasize technique. She postulated that one set of laws for a specific technique could not be schematically transferred to another medium, and that the attempt to do so had pushed photography into “unnatural paths” (*ungemäße Bahnen*).⁴⁷² Her tone scarcely masked impatience as she described lingering Pictorialist methods: “it was still recently tried, and sometimes even until today, to prefer those blurry, soft, shady tones which one called Rembrandt tones.”⁴⁷³ Moholy-Nagy had spoken to these exhausted practices two years before in his essay “Unprecedented Photography” about “painterly” comparisons to photography: “Why Rembrandt—or Picasso—imitations?”⁴⁷⁴ Waldstein attributed the shift that had occurred in “recent years” away from this blurry photography to the influence of films. For narrative purposes, depiction had to be clear in films, an opportunity to combine clarity with artistic purpose.

The main goals are no longer technical tricks or ‘beautification’ during the copying but rather framing, sharp focusing, elaboration of the characteristics of the material and their shape, which require the talent of a true photographer. A never-ending enrichment of the motifs comes in addition which is desirable for the camera.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ *MPF*, 30.

⁴⁷² Waldstein, “Gegenwart.”

⁴⁷³ In der Bildnisaufnahme und in der Landschaftsphotographie hat man noch bis vor einigen Jahren—und sogar manchmal auch heute noch—jene verschwommenen weichen, halbdunklen Töne bevorzugt, die man als ‘Rembrandttöne’ bezeichnet hat.” *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ Moholy-Nagy, “Unprecedented Photography,” in Phillips, *Modern Era*, 84.

⁴⁷⁵ “Nicht mehr die technischen Kniffe und ‘Verschönerungen’ beim Kopieren sind das Ausschlaggebende, sondern Bildausschnitt, scharfe Einstellung, Herausarbeiten des stofflich Charakteristischen und der

Waldstein commented on the excitement of seeing this new photographic art displayed with scientific material; this included x-rays and the plates used to make them, allowing the process itself to be examined and understood by visitors. She credited the Essen health authorities as well as the Berlin Lette-Verein, a photography educational institution, for providing this material. She also used this opportunity to compare the Bavarian educational institution for photography unfavorably to Berlin's institutions--although there is no evidence the Bavarians participated in *Gegenwart*--describing Bavaria's emphasis on soft tones and refined prints; these techniques did not comply with "modern strivings," Waldstein argued.⁴⁷⁶ Waldstein equated the heterogeneity of photographic material and its accessibility with modernity. As Dixel did in 1928, Waldstein made a point of aligning broad public educational initiatives with the New Photography, which had the concomitant effect of underscoring the inherent elitism that had emanated from displays of the Pictorialist photography that was now being so actively disparaged.

Waldstein made positive mention of many photographers, beginning with Renger-Patzsch, describing him as a local celebrity; she subsequently described the photography of influential schools that stood next to Renger-Patzsch, "most of all" the Dessau Bauhaus and Moholy-Nagy's row of "very effective photograms."⁴⁷⁷ She commented that photographs from the Dessau Bauhaus, particularly those of Moholy-Nagy and Bayer, had the "ability to see independently" and were not "drawn back by any

Formgestaltung bedingen das Können des wahren Photographen. Eine unendliche Bereicherung der Motive kommt dazu, die für die Kamera erstrebenswert sind." Waldstein, "*Gegenwart*."

⁴⁷⁶ "... modernen Bestrebungen." Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ "... wirkungsvoller Photogrammen." Ibid.

tradition.”⁴⁷⁸ Furthering her discussion of schools, she also singled out the advertising graphics of the Essen art school under the supervision of Burchartz.

The strangeness of the French photographers surprised Waldstein, particularly the use of mirrors by Henri and the compositional choices of Krull.⁴⁷⁹ She grouped Hoppé and von Bucovich with an older, soft and blurry approach to photography, failing to address how thoroughly modern their latest subjects were.⁴⁸⁰ Waldstein concluded her treatment of individual works by making a point that Man Ray’s photograms were shown as the possession of a museum, a revelation of the increasing, but still rare, collectibility of photography at the time.⁴⁸¹ Most of the *Essener Volkszeitung* review was an exercise in optimism about the possibilities of contemporary photography.

Reception of *Gegenwart* varied, even within the region of the venue. Two articles published in local newspapers in response to the show in Hannover (at the Kestner-Gesellschaft, March 10 – April 7) had views of *Gegenwart* that strongly contrasted with one another. The *Hannover Kurier* extolled the sobriety of Renger-Patzsch’s photography, and compared the “foreigners” (Ausland) unfavorably to the German work.⁴⁸² About Kertész and Lotar, the author described a “remarkable sensitivity for fine and quiet nuances, but there is too much playing involved. Security, the tight grip, the sense of necessity and order in their entirety were not discernible.”⁴⁸³ This reviewer did,

⁴⁷⁸ “In ganz ähnlicher Art arbeiten L. Moholy-Nagy und Herbert Bayer mit der Kamera. Sie alle kennzeichnet ein ausgesprochenes formales Sehen, ganz gleich, ob es sich um Menschen-oder Dingaufnahmen handelt.” Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. Krull was German by birth, but had lived in France since 1924.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² J.F., “*Photographie der Gegenwart*,” *Hannover Kurier*, 15 March 1929, unpaginated.

⁴⁸³ “Die Pariser Andre Kertész und Eli Lotar zeigen zwar in einigen Aufnahmen sehr amüsanter Detail, in anderen eine bemerkenswerte Empfindsamkeit für feine und leise Nuancen, aber es ist viel Spielerei dabei, und die Sicherheit, der feste Griff, der Sinn für Notwendigkeit und Ordnung im Ganzen werden nicht fühlbar.” Ibid.

however, extol Robert Petschow's aerial shots of balloons in the air (see example fig. 4-46), calling it a "scientific effort to elevate the artistic work" through the warmth of a personal detail, superior to the cold, sober, topographical panoramas in other parts of the show.⁴⁸⁴

While the *Kurier* preferred Renger-Patzsch, and claimed German works to be "one step ahead of all foreigners,"⁴⁸⁵ the *Hannover Anzeigere* was more supportive of the international scope and New Vision aspects of *Gegenwart*. This was particularly true of the French photographers' ability to grab and fix contemporary motifs— Krull's image of a train track divider was supplied as an example. The reviewer also noted the "playfulness" (Spielereien) of Moholy-Nagy's Bauhaus photographs and photograms, playfulness in this review being a positive trait, and described the compositional flair and strange effects manifested in El Lissitzky's *Self-Portrait (The Constructor)*.⁴⁸⁶ The *Anzeigere* promoted awareness of *Gegenwart*'s internationalism in its travel as well as content, stating that its various venues in Hanover, Berlin, Dresden, and London made it an opportunity for a "unique study of contemporary art reception."⁴⁸⁷ While Hoppé may have considered the internationalism of *Gegenwart* limited, it was considered crucial exposure to outside sources of photography for regional audiences.

Conclusions about *Fotografie der Gegenwart* and Overlaps between *Gegenwart* and *Fifo*

The photography exhibitions examined in this chapter, *Neue Wege* and *Gegenwart*, like those in the previous chapters, were the stage upon which shifting social struggles of

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ "Photographie der Gegenwart," *Hannoverischer Anzeiger* 16 March 1929, "Aus der Stadt" section.

⁴⁸⁷ "...in Hannover nach Berlin, Dresden und London weitergehen, um auch hier als geschlossenes Dokument zeitgenössischer Kunstauffassung zu wirken." Ibid.

larger import played out: elitism versus art's approachability, international engagement, and the pedagogical role of art. Photography provided a powerful filter for each of these struggles due to its particular accessibility, and it resisted any single agenda. Its plurality kept it vital and dynamic between the late 1920s and the early 1930s. The postwar Pictorialists had tried to retain influence, but by 1927-28 they were finally, and visibly, failing. For a few years, evidenced by statements written by the curators Dixel and Wilhelm-Kästner, and the photographer Hoppé, as well as the critical reception of *Gegenwart* in certain local newspapers, optimism prevailed that through exhibitions photography could reach a broad audience in ways that fostered both an artistic and socio-cultural discourse of currency. Moholy-Nagy and Warstat further represented this optimism in lectures emphasizing the "future," and the "new." *Fifo* would further solidify those hopes.

The practices introduced in *Neue Wege* and *Gegenwart* were fine-tuned at *Fifo*. Gustav Stotz overreached in his introduction to *Fifo* that a thorough investigation of the medium was long overdue. Even in the same issue of *Photographische Rundschau* that published Wilhelm-Kästner's statement and images from *Gegenwart*, *Fifo* was announced and described as a trailblazing show. *Fifo* was much larger, had international pavilions, and an international selection committee. Indeed, Americans, particularly Steichen and Edward Weston, played major organizational roles in *Fifo*, which would be crucial for the spread of the New Vision. But the struggle to bring new photography into foreground, and push regressive Pictorialism into the background, had been waged for years. The methods of dispensing with outdated hierarchies— by breaking down barriers in display, and by displaying clear prints of dynamic, urbanized subjects, dramatically

foregrounded and cropped, with simple black frames—were already solidly formulated before May 1929. One can imagine how the visible prints in the installation shots of *Gegenwart* would have fostered an atmosphere of approachability, particularly Moholy-Nagy's *Dolls*, *Bauhaus Balconies*, and the architectural exercises. They brought a concretization of contemporary life directly into the viewer's spatial plane. They were the opposite of "cult" images—they emphasized the external world.

The New Vision embodied the experience of modernity through its plurality. The movement addressed the social functions of photography that the critics and curators were calling for, and did so in the most public forum available: the didacticism Dixel yearned for, the combination of press imagery, films, and artistic photography that Waldstein outlined, and the movement away from the bankrupt forms of Pictorialism, without succumbing to the ornamental, that Wilhelm-Kästner called for. Moholy-Nagy, and many other photographers included in *Gegenwart*—Lotar, Kertész, Meinholz, and Krull—who successfully combined fragments of daily life with oblique views and new perspectives were also meeting the call of the cultural critics.

Fifo opened in May 1929. Stotz contracted Moholy-Nagy to help him program the exhibition when the latter was freelancing in Berlin.⁴⁸⁸ Stotz laid out the program in an article in *Kunstblatt*; it included most of Moholy-Nagy's concept of the New Vision as described in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, including the "objectivity" of photography, the jettisoning of impressionistic sensations in photography, the focus on serial materials of everyday life, the "fixing" of time, the dynamism and excitement of life, and the need to

⁴⁸⁸ Karl Steinorth, "Die Internationale Werkbundaussstellung 'Film und Foto' und ihre Organisatoren" (*Fifo* and its organization), in *Fifo*, reprint, vi. This is an essay that was added in 1979. Steinorth credits the influence of Dixel's *Neue Wege* exhibition over *Gegenwart* as an influence on *Fifo*, iv.

explore the plurality and heterogeneity of photographic applications.⁴⁸⁹ Stotz referred to the enormous variety of anonymous photography he planned to install, including photoreportage, sports photography, war photography, criminal photography, zoology, botanics, and x-rays. His conclusion further emphasized the central juxtaposition that was the key to the modernity of these images and the installation as a whole: “Next to the achievement of anonymous photojournalists, the work of pioneers in the area of modern photography will be seen.”⁴⁹⁰

Fifo closed in July 1929, three months before the American markets crashed in October. Beginning in the mid- to late 1930s, the Americans, led by Newhall, took over many of the New Vision exhibition strategies of assertive graphics and mixed sources of photography, which he knew about from *Fifo*—although, as mentioned earlier, Newhall was more interested in the techniques of the New Vision than in its social functions. Newhall may not have realized it at the time, but as the battle for the New Vision, with its repudiation of Pictorialism, its mix of modernist photography, anonymous photographs, and science, its internationalism, its themes of modernity and urbanity, had taken place through *Iphad*, *DPA*, and *Gegenwart*, he was just as indebted to those exhibitions as to *Fifo*.

New Vision photographic exhibitions would continue in Germany through the early 1930s, but many of the experimental techniques that were intended to engage the viewer in a dialogue with modernity would be co-opted to promote a nationalist agenda.

⁴⁸⁹ Gustav Stotz, “Der Plan der Stuttgarter Veranstaltung...” (The plan of the Stuttgart arrangement), *Kunstblatt* (1929): 154, in *Fifo*, reprint, vii.

⁴⁹⁰ “Neben den Leistungen anonymer Reporterphotographen werden die Arbeiten der Bahnbrecher auf dem Gebiet moderner Photographie zu sehen sein.” *Ibid.*

By 1933, photography would be serving propagandistic purposes, both in mass media outlets and exhibiting practices.

Chapter 5

Positioning German Exhibitions in the Historiography of Early Twentieth-Century Photography and Summary of the Dissertation

It is not only hindsight that makes that exhibition seem so important. Almost from its first day, it was recognized as significant, even though so many disliked it and thought it a counterpart to the anarchism that they saw about them in political society. It was the challenge of a new world, a new reality.⁴⁹¹

The historian Peter Stansky is *not* referring to a German photography exhibition in this quote from his 1996 book about the Bloomsbury circle. Rather, he refers to the Post-Impressionist exhibition, organized by Roger Fry in London in 1910, which led Virginia Woolf to proclaim that human nature had changed “on or about December 1910.”⁴⁹² The relevance of Stansky’s work to my dissertation lies in his conviction that exhibitions can both embody dramatic historical shifts, and influence the perception of them.⁴⁹³ Stansky identifies a belated shift in England towards continental European modernity in 1910, and interprets it in the context of “a very special quality”: increasingly vulgar opulence

⁴⁹¹ Peter Stansky, *On or About December 1910* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3.

⁴⁹² According to Stansky, Woolf was “no doubt remembering” the impact of the exhibition. Stansky, 3, citing Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” (London, 1924): 4-5.

⁴⁹³ Stansky attempts to understand how exhibitions can concurrently encapsulate an historical moment, but also contribute materially to perceptual shifts taking hold: “The exhibition—when it was absorbed, when the exposure to these pictures had been assimilated—was a major reason that Woolf should decide that human character had ‘changed’ and the English would allow themselves to be ‘modern.’” *Ibid.*, 211. Two more points in this chapter on the Fry exhibition compel comparisons to the New Vision’s attempts to vanquish Pictorialism: “The aim was to get at the roots of reality rather than the superficial appearance of nature presented in traditional pictures.” *Ibid.* And Arnold Bennett, a Francophile and writer for the progressive periodical *New Age*, was embarrassed by the vociferous negative reactions to Fry’s show: “the attitude of the culture of London towards it is of course merely humiliating to any Englishman who has made an effort to cure himself of insularity.” Stansky, 226 citing Arnold Bennett, *New Age* (December 1910).

alongside continued poverty.⁴⁹⁴ The “challenge” facing the new world was that of loosening social strictures, growing social awareness, and the tensions resulting from those changes.

Fry’s attempt to use exhibitions to democratize art, and his resistance to sentimental ennui, are analogous to those of the New Vision photographers battling Pictorialism in the mid to late 1920s. Stansky speculates about political overtones in Fry’s rebellion: “in a way, Fry was in rebellion against the cultivated amateurism... He became aware of the aspects of social veneer of cultivation, the class aspects of taste, and the possibility that this new art might be more ‘democratic’ in its appeal.”⁴⁹⁵ Fry also saw the opportunity to undermine the market, as Stansky described it, “for pictures that catered to ‘sentimental longings.’”⁴⁹⁶ It was the same social struggle, “society collectively fighting for progress,” that the critic Fritz Hansen had insisted exhibitions illuminate in his review of *Iphad* a year earlier, and one which permeated the *DPA*, *Gegenwart*, and other major German photographic exhibitions from 1909-29. But much of the progressive social impetus that these exhibitions and their techniques had achieved by 1929 were drained out of them as their innovative design elements were appropriated by various organizers with conflicting intentions in Europe and the United States throughout the 1930s. These manipulations of the New Vision would show how the meanings of socially engaged techniques can change according to political climate, audience, and subsequent events.

⁴⁹⁴ Stansky, “Bloomsbury,” 1.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

Post-Fifo: The Shifting Uses of New Vision Exhibition Techniques in Germany

Fifo traveled in Europe through 1930, to Zurich, Berlin, Danzig, Vienna, and Agram (now Zagreb, Croatia). In 1931 part of the exhibition was renamed *Das Lichtbild* and supplemented with the work of additional photographers, including Bill Brandt, Walker Evans, Lotte Jacobi, Hein Gorny, and August Sander.⁴⁹⁷ Burchartz and Wilhelm-Kästner contributed to the organization of *Das Lichtbild*, which traveled to Munich, Essen, Dessau and Breslau. The two perhaps realized that their efforts in the *Fotografie der Gegenwart* exhibition had been utterly overshadowed two years earlier. Christopher Phillips, in his 1989 exhibition catalogue, *The New Vision*, pinpointed 1931 as the year in which the energy of the “new photography” began to wane, due to increasing opposition from both the fascist right and the Communist worker-photographer movement.⁴⁹⁸ Wilhelm-Kästner would be dismissed from his post in 1933, as were so many in cultural leadership positions after the Nazi ascension. Before his dismissal, he managed to organize the first solo exhibition at the Folkwang Museum, one devoted to Florence Henri.⁴⁹⁹

The worldwide depression following the 1929 market crash hit the fragile German economy particularly hard. Peukert described the spread of political radicalization in the German countryside—which reflected the falling prices of grain, milk and meat after 1927-29—as growing out of the same middle-class that Kracauer would later focus on in

⁴⁹⁷ Eskildsen, “Innovative Photography,” 44.

⁴⁹⁸ Christopher Phillips, “Resurrecting Vision: The New Photography in Europe Between the Wars,” in *The New Vision: Photography Between the World Wars*, ed. Maria Morris Hambourg and Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 93. However, 1931 was also the year that a component of *Fifo* traveled to Tokyo, leaving a lasting impression on photographers there, so the New Vision’s influence continued to spread, even as it waned in Germany. See the discussion of *Fifo* in Japan, and the translation of *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, into Japanese in 1930, in Anne Tucker, *The History of Japanese Photography* (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 2003), 145-146.

⁴⁹⁹ Ute Eskildsen, *Die Fotografische Sammlung im Museum Folkwang* (The photographic collection in the Folkwang Museum) (Essen: Museum Folkwang, 2003), 259.

his studies of Nazism's rise. As Peukert stated, "not only farmers and agricultural laborers but shopkeepers and craft tradesman in villages and small towns...went over to the NSDAP."⁵⁰⁰ In March 1930, the last of the parliamentary governments under the Social Democrats fell. Shortly after that, the chancellor Heinrich Brüning began scheming with President Hindenburg as to how to best suppress the power of the Social Democrats. This led to various alliances, including the eventual alliance with Hitler's party, which solidified at the end of 1932. Hitler was named chancellor, and formed his cabinet on January 30, 1933. Less than a month later, individual constitutional rights were suspended by emergency decree, following a fire at the parliamentary Reichstag building for which the Communist party was scapegoated.

The Nazis moved rapidly to harness the power of photography exhibitions to convey their social and economic propaganda, and a group of government agencies (German Workers Front, the Ministry for Education and Propaganda, and the Berlin Fair and Tourist Committee) organized the first of the Nazi photographic exhibitions, *Die Kamera*, held in Berlin from November 4-19, 1933.⁵⁰¹ *Die Kamera* opened just ten months after the Hitler cabinet was formed, and nine months after the suspension of constitutional rights. Herbert Bayer, formerly of the Bauhaus, designed the catalogue which included a foreword by the Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels. *Die Kamera* utilized the same type of large photo-blow ups in its entrance hall that Lissitzky had used at *Pressa* in 1928 to stimulate the spectator, but the strategy was now inverted and used to overwhelm and overawe (fig. 5-1). Ulrich Pohlmann has contrasted Lissitzky's multilevel frieze (see fig. 4-5) with *Die Kamera*'s perspectival illusionism of lock-step

⁵⁰⁰ Peukert, *Weimar*, 235.

⁵⁰¹ *Die Kamera*, November 1933, press release, Collections, Agfa Fotohistorama, Cologne.

marches and mass meetings, noting how the Nazi images absorbed the viewer into a fantasy of mass rituals, leading them to become an “ornament of the mass.”⁵⁰² He briefly examined the history of the use of enlargements in exhibitions since 1902, noting the enormous blow-ups of mountains that were used in the Industrial section at *Iphad* in 1909 (fig. 5-2).⁵⁰³

Erich Stenger, who had contributed to many progressive exhibitions on the 1920s, including *Kipho* and *Fifo*, was also a contributor to *Die Kamera*. In Chapter 3, I noted Stenger’s affiliation with Nazi professional groups in the 1940s as a means of maintaining his professional status. However, as early as 1933, he was writing one of the four essays in an extended *Die Kamera* press release, about the historical and research aspects of the exhibition. His vocabulary became starkly hygienic and health-obsessed in its nationalistic references, and showed how the new regime intended to make use of photographic imagery as “proof” of progress to the audience: “The national state, in its goal-oriented work of the nation’s improvement through physical leadership and training, and racial purity of the single individual, utilizes photographic proof in its scientific and propaganda activities. Example and counterexample deliver an inside look to the spectator into the straight goal of these unique strivings serving the nation’s health.”⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² Pohlmann, “El Lissitzky’s Exhibition Designs,” in Tupitsyn, 61.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 53. Pohlmann describes the placement of the mountain blow-ups in *Iphad* as being in the Hall of Honor, but it is important to note that they were in the Industrial Hall of Honor, not in Kuehn’s Pictorialist Hall of Honor, the subject of Chapter 2 of this dissertation. In other words, they were likely shown as an example of certain enlarging techniques.

⁵⁰⁴ “Der nationale Staat in seiner zielbewußten Arbeit der Volksverbesserung durch körperliche Ertüchtigung und Emporführung und durch rassenbedingte Reinhaltung des einzelnen Individuums verwendet fotografische Bildbeweise in seiner wissenschaftlichen und propagandistischen Tätigkeit. Beispiel und Gegenbeispiel vermitteln dem Beschauer Einblick in die geradlinige Zielsetzung dieser der Volksgesundheit und dem Neuaufbau dienenden einzigartigen Bestrebungen.” Stenger, “Anlage 3: Fotografie und Forschung,” in *Die Kamera*, press release, 9.

A further passage from Stenger's essay demonstrates how avant-garde strategies were perverted to suit Nazi propaganda purposes. He discussed the ability of photography to replace words in the education of the masses, but only if easily digestible descriptions were provided and the hanging done in a way to allow viewing photographs one at a time.⁵⁰⁵ The utopian photo-literacy of Moholy-Nagy was usurped, not in order to activate viewers, but to lull, patronize, and promote a single point of view. Stenger also created a German-centric historical timeline of photographic invention in this essay—unlike his more international view in the 1926 “Portraits” essay he wrote for the *DPA*—drawing its lineage back to Johann Heinrich Schulze's experiments in 1727, in which he filled a bottle with silver nitrate, applied stencils to it and watched as they appeared in negative.⁵⁰⁶ A similar German lineage of photography would later permeate his 1938 history of photography, *Photographie in Kultur und Technik*, in which Stenger named *Die Kamera* as the greatest of all exhibitions.⁵⁰⁷

In the late 1920s, members of the conservative professional group, the Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner (GDL), had begun clamoring for more openness in the procedures of exhibition and membership acceptance. Lothar Kräussl, in his 1992 essay “Hugo Erfurth und die GDL,” in which he examined documents from GDL

⁵⁰⁵ “Die Ausstellung soll dem Besucher klar machen, daß das fotografische Bild auf dem Wege ist, in Volksaufklärung und Propaganda das gedruckte Wort in vielen Fällen abzulösen. Nach den vom Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda für unsere Ausstellung gegebenen Richtlinien soll dieses Ziel durch eine ausgewählte Bilderschau von Spitzenleistungen und durch entsprechende leichtverständliche Beschriftung der Bilder erreicht werden. Es soll vor allem vermieden werden daß eine erdrückende Fülle von Bildern die Beschauer ermüdet und von der Einzelbetrachtung abhält. So ist es keineswegs die Aufgabe dieser Ausstellung, auch jedes letzte Forschungsergebnis bildlich zu zeigen, sondern es sollen in einer eingeschränkten übersichtlichen Auswahl die wichtigsten Aufgaben der Fotografie umrissen werden.” Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ For more on Schulze's experiments, as well as Joseph Maria Eder's privileging of them in his 1890 *History of Photography*, see Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 24-26.

⁵⁰⁷ Erich Stenger, *The History of Photography: Its Relation to Civilization and Practice*, trans. Edward Epstein (Easton, Pa: Mack Printing Company, 1939).

meetings, has suggested that the tensions within the GDL resulted from the democratization of photographic developments signified by *Fifo*.⁵⁰⁸ Unfortunately, these short-lived progressive tendencies were lost through the growing dominance of the “Führerkult” within the GDL. As the 1930s progressed, the GDL leaders Grainer and Erfurth began participating in exhibitions of Nazi photographic propaganda, although Erfurth was not a member of the Nazi party. The Pictorialists in the GDL officially followed a Nazi program by 1935.⁵⁰⁹ The German Amateur Photography group VDAV also organized shows that celebrated Nazi policies. The leader, Paul Lüking, explained in the foreword of the 1936 “International Amateur Photography Exhibition,” that the promotion of German amateur photography was necessary for “our” National Socialism.⁵¹⁰

Erfurth’s portfolio of Reich leaders (*Unknown Officer*, 1936, fig. 5-3), apparently undertaken on the advice of Grainer, was installed in Berlin as part of a 1937 exhibition, *Gebt mir vier Jahre Zeit!* (Give me four years time!), a well-known Hitler promise of economic renewal to the German people.⁵¹¹ Pohlmann has analyzed the continued use of enormous photographic enlargements in *Gebt mir vier Jahre Zeit*, to nurture the “cultic mystification” of the Führer.⁵¹² The scale of Hitler’s image was immense, surrounded by smaller-scaled workers, factories, and a model of a busy highway (fig. 5-4). Unlike Lissitzky’s frieze at *Pressa*, in which Lenin was scaled on par with a plurality of

⁵⁰⁸ Kräussl, “GDL,” in von Dewitz, *Erfurth*, 71.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ Paul Lüking, “Foreword,” *Internationale Schau der Amateurfotografen* (Frankfurt am Main: VDAV, 1936), 4.

⁵¹¹ Kräussl, “GDL,” in von Dewitz, *Erfurth*, 73, quoting Grainer, GDL Rundbrief (1 July 1937), 3. “Im Jahr 1937 folgte er der Aufforderung des Vorsitzenden Franz Grainer, der von Erfurth die folgenden Bildleistungen erwartete: ‘5 Erfurth Porträtleistungen von führenden Männern, die sich im Dritten Reich hervorgetan haben.’”

⁵¹² Pohlmann, “El Lissitzky’s Exhibition Designs,” 63.

photographers and workers, Hitler dominates the frieze. Pohlmann summarizes the crucial difference: “One characteristic of the photomontages used for the NS [National Socialist] exhibitions is that dialectical relations no longer existed between individual, heterogeneous, pictorial fragments, having been replaced by affirmative pictorial statements.”⁵¹³ One could also say the plurality and modernity of avant-garde techniques were replaced by *absolute* pictorial statements.

The appropriation of avant-garde techniques like photomontage for the purpose of authoritarian propaganda was not limited to German fascism. As the 1930s progressed, Lissitzky and Rodchenko’s work in the Soviet Union would also take on a more singular dimension in the service of a cult of personality. This is particularly clear in their work for the mass publication *USSR in Construction*, which was published in Russian, French, German and English, in order to publicize Soviet achievements to an international audience. Lissitzky’s 1932 spread, “The Current in Switched On,” embeds the message that Stalin is single-handedly responsible for spreading electricity throughout the Soviet Union (fig. 5-5). Rodchenko and his wife Varvara Stepanova’s well-known spread for an issue on Soviet parachuting in 1935 places Stalin at a heroic angle in the center of the spread (fig. 5-6).⁵¹⁴ Large-scale photo friezes in exhibitions served the Stalin cult just as they did the “Führerkult.” Gustav Klutssis’ final work was a photo frieze, installed over a door in the Soviet pavilion at the Paris World’s Fair in 1937 (fig. 5-7). It depicts the people of the USSR voting for Stalin’s constitution, visually submitting themselves to his

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ See Margolin’s chapter on Lissitzky and Rodchenko’s work for the regime in the 1930s, and the apotheosis of Stalin imagery: “Representing the Regime: Lissitzky and Rodchenko, 1930-41,” in *Struggle for Utopia*, 162-213.

will. Ironically, the frieze was Klutis's last major work before he was detained by Stalin's police after he returned from Paris, and killed shortly thereafter.⁵¹⁵

New Vision Exhibition Techniques in the United States

Fifo's influence was also substantial in the United States, where Beaumont Newhall used many of its techniques in his 1937 exhibition *Photography 1839-1937* at the Museum of Modern Art. Doug Nickel has pointed out that "Newhall's formulation of the project followed closely the schema inaugurated by Continental antecedents of the previous decade, such as *Fifo*."⁵¹⁶ This was most clearly articulated in Newhall's inclusion of both fine art and applied photography, as well as in his tapping Moholy-Nagy as an adviser to the exhibition. However, Nickel also points out Newhall and MoMA director Alfred Barr's omissions in their use of European avant-garde strategies, in favor of a more formalist and individualist approach: "Barr and Newhall were each aware of the revolutionary political ethos informing this approach to display in Europe, but in New York the radical motives of the avant-garde were by and large suppressed."⁵¹⁷ The "political ethos" at *Fifo*, i.e. that the exhibition techniques were formulated specifically to activate the consciousness of the largest possible audience, was jettisoned in favor of an approach that emphasized individual artists and their mastery of photographic techniques. In fact, Newhall seems to have suppressed this ethos even more in the resulting book than in the show, a canonical book that Newhall revised four times until 1982.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵ See Margarita Tupitsyn's upcoming exhibition catalogue, *Klutis and Kulagina: Photography and Montage after Constructivism* (New York: International Center of Photography; Göttingen: Steidl, 2004), 71-73.

⁵¹⁶ Nickel, "History of Photography," 550.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 551-552.

⁵¹⁸ Newhall's *History of Photography* was revised in 1938, 1949, 1964, and 1982. The chapter "In Quest of Form," which had a more evocative title, "Experiments in Abstraction," until the 1949 edition, hews most

Newhall was officially the museum librarian when Barr offered him the chance to organize the photography exhibition, the fourth in a succession of ambitious overviews organized between the years of 1936-38.⁵¹⁹ Barr had traveled extensively in Germany and Russia in 1927-28, and was familiar with the advanced exhibition design techniques being practiced there. In her article about Newhall's development of the photography exhibition, Alison Bertrand surmises that Barr probably saw the *Pressa* exhibition, as he was in Germany in the spring of 1928.⁵²⁰ Newhall went on to hire Herbert Matter, a Swiss designer, to install the MoMA exhibition. Matter would have had an opportunity to see *Fifo* when it traveled to Zurich, and he used some of the same stimulative techniques, particularly large, jarring photo blow-ups (fig. 5-8). In his autobiography, Newhall described other ways that he attempted to dynamize the space and the display of the 841 pieces: "We solved the problem of framing such a great number of photographs by grouping them on large panels, with cutout window mats. In place of glass we used clear plastic. By using colored mats and various sizes of panels we were able to avoid the monotony of row upon row of frames."⁵²¹ The installation of a room-size camera obscura at the opening of the exhibition⁵²² so that people could physically experience the

closely to the New Vision tenets. It contains the largest number of artists who worked primarily in Germany, including Bayer, Moholy-Nagy, Schad, and the Dadaists Höch, Hausmann, and Heartfield. There is an extensive but primarily technical discussion of the evolution of the photogram from Talbot to Schad to Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy. There is no discussion of Moholy-Nagy's theory that the photogram represented a proactive form of photography. Although Newhall mentions Moholy-Nagy's appreciation for scientific and utilitarian photographs, he limits that interest to the context of the artist's "quest for form" and "extending vision," not *expanding* it, which was Moholy-Nagy's primary emphasis. "Extending" vision denotes a strict adherence to the qualities of the apparatus. As discussed earlier, Moholy-Nagy explained that the photographer could not stop there: "the technician has his machine at hand: satisfaction of the needs to the moment. But basically he is much more: he is the pioneer of the new social stratification, he paves the way for the future." *PPF*, 38.

⁵¹⁹ The other exhibitions were *Cubism and Abstract Art*, *Fantastic Art*, *Dada*, and *Surrealism*, both in 1936, and *Bauhaus: 1919-28* in 1938, Bertrand, "Newhall," n43.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, n45.

⁵²¹ Beaumont Newhall, *Focus: Memoirs of a Life in Photography* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1993), 52.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 51.

basic functions of photography—light, reflection, inversion—linked *Photography* to some of the earlier installations I have discussed, including the demonstration cases at *Iphad* in 1909, and the simulated film production studio at *Kipho* in 1925. Newhall installed other types of demonstrations in the exhibition, including one illustrating the optical function of depth of focus (fig. 5-9).

However, as Susan Noyes Platt has explored in her 1999 book, *Art and Politics in the 1930s*, Barr's exposure to political extremism in Europe made him intensely averse to allowing politics into exhibitions at MoMA. Although he had been exposed to the social engagement of the avant-garde in 1927-28, in the 1930s he was primarily driven by the fear that Hitler was annihilating modernism.⁵²³ He witnessed the exile of progressive artists, collectors, and curators firsthand as he convalesced from nervous exhaustion in Stuttgart in 1932-33. The deep anxiety about Hitler's actions energized him to "save" modernism in the United States by popularizing its aesthetics, and making it accessible, but, as Platt states, he "skillfully directed that energy toward a sanitized interpretation of modern art."⁵²⁴ The political subjugation of modernism in Germany influenced Barr as he organized two canonical shows in 1936, "Cubism and Abstract Art," and "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism." The central focus of Cubism in Barr's interpretation became the movement toward abstraction, rather than the radicality of its combination of high and low, its integration of newspapers and everyday objects in paintings and sculpture.

⁵²³ Susan Noyes Platt, *Art and Politics in the 1930s: Modernism, Marxism, Americanism* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1999), 202.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

Similarly, the Marxist and Communist affiliations of many of the leading Surrealists were largely suppressed, in favor of an emphasis on playfulness in their abstract work.⁵²⁵

Newhall also had personal issues that relate to the dearth of photographs from Germany for the 1937 photography exhibition. He had a preference for France over Britain, and especially over Germany. When he and his wife Nancy went on his research trip in 1936, which doubled as a honeymoon, he went to Paris first, stayed longer there than anywhere else, and ended up skipping Berlin altogether. Although he stated that he did not want to enter Germany while Hitler was in power,⁵²⁶ he apparently had established contacts that would have allowed him to enter and leave easily.⁵²⁷ Reflecting the path of the research trip, the number of French photographers far outweighed any other in the show except Americans: the exhibition checklist contained fifteen Germans, eighty-four Americans, and eighty-seven French.⁵²⁸ Newhall also elided mention of Stenger and his active program of developing historical sections for exhibitions. Stenger's affiliation by that time with National Socialist exhibitions (i.e. *Die Kamera*) would be the likely rationale for this.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 213. Platt phrased Barr's suppression as "cleansing" the movements of "political affiliations," a gesture which then itself became political, given the recent (1920s) history of anti-Communism in the United States.

⁵²⁶ Newhall, *Focus*, 49.

⁵²⁷ Bertrand, "Newhall," 146, n.68.

⁵²⁸ Ibid, n70. Regarding the exhibition catalogue, even in the latest revision involving Newhall, in 1982, less than ten percent of the images were German, although he had expanded the discussion of them.

⁵²⁹ However, there are some alternate views as to why he has no place in Newhall's histories: Bodo von Dewitz has spoken about the influence of Heinrich Schwarz, an art historian and curator at the Albertina-- who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the origins in lithography at the University of Vienna under Dvorak and Schlosser-- on Newhall's thinking which led to Stenger being bypassed. Schwarz and Stenger had both written publications on David Octavius Hill. But Schwarz was an academic intellectual, and as a technical schoolteacher, Stenger's status was not considered as highly. Schwarz's monograph on Hill set a precedent for studies on historical photographers, yet he apparently felt threatened by alternate points of view. See "The History of *D.O. Hill: Master of Photography*, by Heinrich Schwarz," in Bodo von Dewitz and Karin Schuller-Procopovici, eds., *David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2000), 45-52.

A misreading of Moholy-Nagy's original formulation of the New Vision also filtered into the subsequent traveling component of *Photography 1839-1937*. Newhall made clear in his catalogue introduction to the version that traveled to the Addison gallery in Andover, Massachusetts, that his negative view of Pictorialism in favor of the New Vision revolved around issues of technique. He did not consider the social basis for the critique of Pictorialism that had been rife in the critical literature in Europe in the 1920s: "some cameramen turned their backs on this amazing ability of the camera; there are still photographers who deny this unique characteristic, and with 'soft-focus' lenses and coarse-textured paper destroy this wondrous precision of detail."⁵³⁰ And then regarding the New Vision: "when tilted up or down, the camera reveals a new vision, emphasizing the wonderful pattern of the world that surrounds us."⁵³¹ But to what ends? What is missing is Moholy-Nagy's photographer statement that the technician has his machine, but that he is so much more; as a pioneer of the new "social stratification" he paves the way for the future.⁵³² In fact, Newhall has quoted Moholy-Nagy as stating about photography in 1946, "I am not a good technician.... I wanted to open up the field, to show the possibilities."⁵³³ He wanted to use the experimental techniques of the New Vision to expand the perception of modernity for all.

Summary of the Dissertation

Gustav Stotz argued in his introduction to the catalogue for *Film und Foto* that an overview of new developments in many areas of photography was desperately needed:

⁵³⁰ Beaumont Newhall, "Introduction," *Photography 1839-1937* (Andover: Addison Gallery of American Art, 1937), unpaginated.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

⁵³² *PPF*, 38.

⁵³³ Newhall, *Focus*, 170.

“This development [photography] happened so surprisingly fast that strangely enough, until today, no one has made the attempt to process this field in its entirety, to demonstrate its sphere of activity clearly, or to clarify its potential.”⁵³⁴ On the contrary, we know that such attempts had been made. Stotz was likely thinking of how his essay would become an historical document of import, and how the show would become a landmark historical event, and he was correct.

The purpose of my examination has been to show how complex and socially engaged art historical shifts are, and how exhibitions, including those previously under the radar, can often hold a key to understanding these complexities. Photographers and critics had been actively trying to push art photography away from elitism and into new areas since 1909. But a vast network of institutional support for Pictorialist photography lingered as late as 1927, through professional groups like the GDL, photographic journals like *Das Atelier*, and curatorial appointments like those that Matthies-Masuren obtained at *Iphad*, the *Werkbund*, and the *DPA*. Those invested in the “institution” of Pictorialism continued fostering tired formats and escapist subjects. Although *Iphad* in 1909 should have been Pictorialism’s last gasp of air, Matthies-Masuren deliberately made the Austrian Pictorialist Heinrich Kuehn the overwhelming focus of the *Werkbund* exhibition in 1914—a missed opportunity on the eve of World War I to diversify exhibited photography.

The GDL was founded in 1919, the year after the war’s end, to maintain the interests of the old Pictorialists like Grainer. They joined with “amateur” societies like

⁵³⁴ *Film und Foto* (reprint), 1979, 11: “Diese Entwicklung kam so überraschend, dass merkwürdigerweise bis heute noch nirgends der Versuch gemacht wurde, dieses Gebiet in seiner Gesamtheit zu bearbeiten, seinen Wirkungsbereich klarzustellen und seine Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten an Hand der besten und neuesten Leistungen aufzuzeigen.”

the VDAV headed by the Pictorialist Hübsch, and organized the enormous *DPA* in central Frankfurt in 1926, proclaiming it a “revival.” Grainer and Hübsch both acknowledged the tumultuous economic realities of the postwar era in their *DPA* catalogue essays; yet their photographic solutions entailed female portraits invoking the aristocracy of the prewar era, and cottages in landscapes. These atrophied images expose the heart of a debate at the time concerning photography’s social role: whether it should provide an escapist balm, or instead encourage an honest engagement with the facts of modernity.

The academicized Pictorialists were unable to keep the strange inconsistencies of the included scientific and technical material from leaking out and capturing the attention of sharp-eyed critics like Claassen. In addition, Erfurth was somewhat interested in progressive photography, even while he appeased the GDL and Grainer’s conservatism, and he learned from Moholy-Nagy ideas of expanding photographic vision into new areas. He contributed two abstract photograms to the *DPA* that seemed to surprise his colleagues at *Das Atelier*, who described the works as outside their main tasks. Moholy-Nagy’s inclusion in the Amateur section of the *DPA*, albeit marginal, gave him exposure as a photographer in a mainstream exhibition, expanding the more niche reputation he had established as a master at the Bauhaus. Just over two years later, in January 1929, Moholy-Nagy would be in a dominant position in a major museum exhibition of New Vision photography, the *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, at the Museum Folkwang in Essen.

Although reviewers, for example one in *Photographische Rundschau* writing about an exhibition in Cologne, were perplexed by Moholy-Nagy’s techniques through 1927, by 1928 he had published an article, “Neue Wege in der Photographie,” in that

same journal espousing his experimental techniques, and the potential for “everyman” to find his creative powers in photography.⁵³⁵ Dexel copied the title “Neue Wege,” for his exhibition in Jena in 1928. “Neue Wege in der Photographie” was additionally the title of a lecture in early 1929 given by Willi Warstat in connection with *Fotografie der Gegenwart*. Moholy-Nagy headlined the same lecture series, and the momentum of his influence was increasing rapidly. The *Essener Volkszeitung* provides written proof that the *Fotografie der Gegenwart* in 1929 attracted unexpected crowds to see truly modern photography. There existed a tentative but genuine optimism about the potential of the new directions. A large public subsequently responded to the launching of *Fifo*, but it had taken many years of effort to get this combination of “photographies,” devoid of implied hierarchies, into a public arena of that size.

Fifo took place twenty years after the critics Caffin and Hansen’s stated goals in the wake of *Iphad*, of overcoming elitism in magazine photography, of embracing science and technology in photography, and especially of promoting large exhibitions that *encouraged* the contemplation of the struggles of society. This delay had much to do with personal agendas and manipulations. And yet, when analyzed as multifaceted events, these exhibitions prove to be suggestive constellations of their social moments beyond the manipulations of any single person; all the pushing and pulling for photography’s identity reveals itself.⁵³⁶ Exhibitions are often able to demonstrate the

⁵³⁵ Moholy-Nagy, “Neue Wege in der Photographie,” 34.

⁵³⁶ Mary Anne Staniszewski referred to the “political unconscious” of exhibitions in her dissertation about the history of MoMA installations: “Exhibitions, like the artworks themselves, represent what can be described as conscious and unconscious subjects, themes, and ideological agendas. These unconscious, or less obviously visible, aspects can be understood as manifestations of historical limitations and social codes.” Mary Anne Staniszewski, *Designing Modern Art and Culture: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Ph.D. dissertation., CUNY Graduate Center, 1995), 3.

tensions in art historical shifts more starkly than most historians' tools, through the nature of multiple visual juxtapositions as well as overlapping and coexisting trends.

It is tempting to suggest that the shift in style coincided with pre- and postwar periods; doing so creates a neater historical timeline. But as this dissertation has tried to show, dramatically differing techniques, those with a Pictorialist heritage and those with the elements that would form the New Vision, co-existed in an uneasy tango during those years from 1909-29. They clashed most visibly in the poster competition for the *DPA* in 1926, with submissions ranging from classicizing nudes to photograms, photomontages, and positive/negative juxtapositions. Furthermore, the conservative nature of much of the publicly displayed photography in Germany through and beyond the mid-1920s should facilitate a rethinking of accusations made in previous scholarly literature that the New Vision lacked radicality.⁵³⁷

The contrasting approaches of Pictorialism and the New Vision absorbed the social tensions that threatened to fracture the reality of everyday life in pre- and postwar Germany, among conservative elements that still longed for the aristocracy, and within the left, splintered between the center-left SPD, and the far-left Communist Party. For that reason, as well as in order to buttress the argument against New Vision as a purely formalistic style, I have tried to focus attention on the *social* basis for the critique of Pictorialism in the exhibition literature, and to add it to the existing criticisms of its technique. Moholy-Nagy, the critics Caffin, Warstat, Claassen, the curators Dixel,

⁵³⁷ Hight has also argued against the interpretation of Abigail Solomon-Godeau and others of the New Vision as an ideologically bereft art, albeit on different grounds relating to Moholy-Nagy's active engagement in the ideas of Russian radical formalism. Hight, *Picturing Modernism* 10. Moholy-Nagy had to contend with accusations that he was merely a formalist in his own time as well. In his anger over the perceived plagiarizing of Man Ray's photograms, Lissitzky accused Moholy-Nagy of merely creating "abstract light patterns." See Lissitzky-Küppers, *Life Letters Texts*, 67.

Wilhelm-Kästner, the newspaper reviewer Agnes Waldstein, Benjamin, and, indirectly Kracauer, all rendered critiques in which the sociocultural implications of Pictorialism were inextricable from the technical critique.

As described in Chapter 2, Caffin saw a deliberate attempt at *Iphad* ingrained in the pursuit of fuzzy, out of focus photographs, to both blur the visible distinctions between painting and photography and to keep a mass audience from understanding the potential of photography. The elitism was untenable to the exhibition's critics. *Iphad* displayed its art photographers on a kind of pedestal, yet in the next room reached out to the common man through push-button and scientific demonstrations of the medium. Critics, such as those writing collectively for the *British Journal*, noticed the incongruity.

Warstat, in his review of the 1926 *DPA*, accused the lingering Pictorialists of sabotaging photography through provincialism and inbreeding. His critique of the outdated style was anchored by his push for internationalism, in his mind the key to revitalizing German photography. He also viewed the continued use of heavy gold frames on photographs to be representative of this provincialism. *Die Form* critic Claassen directly aligned the overemphasis on Pictorialist portraits at the *DPA* with the bourgeois refusal to embrace the mass potential of photography, which he saw in the more scientific and technical sections. He went so far as to equate the painterly style with "illegitimate" propaganda. In an essay on cinema, "Cult of Distraction," published the same year as the *DPA*, the German cultural philosopher Siegfried Kracauer also explored how previously accepted qualities of "high art"—personality, inwardness, tragedy—had lost their ability to achieve sincerity due to dramatic social changes, and

how the terms of cultural output needed to change in tandem, in order to achieve new expressions of truth.

1928 brought forth an increasing emphasis on educational reasons for embracing a “New Photography” in the public sphere. Although Walter Dexel celebrated Renger-Patzsch’s precise photographic realism, as well as Moholy-Nagy’s experimental approach, his numerous references to abandoning painterly approaches in order to educate an audience about the “empire of reality” in his curatorial statement for *Neue Wege* more closely paralleled Moholy-Nagy’s stated goals. Renger-Patzsch was also a teacher, but unlike Moholy-Nagy he rarely spoke of his audience in his writings.⁵³⁸ In her review of the 1929 *Fotografie der Gegenwart* in the *Essener Volkzeitung*, Waldstein expressed a similar devotion to using contemporary photography for educational purposes, both in schools and in the press, explaining that clarity in photography, and an abandonment of attempts at painterly “beautification” allowed it to embrace its role as a transmitter in the broadest sense.

Wilhelm-Kästner’s somewhat ambivalent curatorial statement for *Fotografie der Gegenwart* had criticisms all around, for Pictorialism, on the one hand, in which “painterly blurriness” turned an image into an “indistinguishable foil;” and, on the other hand, for the New Vision photographers’ infatuation with twisting angles. At both extremes he warned of the danger of a photo-aesthetic fetishization of the object. However, he embraced the terminology of the New Vision, and saw great progress in its fusion of photograms, typophoto, and cinema, with its potential to astound the audience

⁵³⁸ I surveyed three essays by Renger-Patzsch from 1927-1929, reprinted in Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era*. In “Aims” (104-105), “Joy before the Object” (108-109), and “Photography and Art” (142-144), he failed to address his potential audience. He emphasized the photographer’s needs, technique, and inward imagination.

through its photographic elements. Finally, Benjamin, in what Richard Wolin refers to as the “pedagogical-political aims”⁵³⁹ of his later phase, levied the critique against the pursuit of “aura.” The critique fits the Pictorialist emphasis on the manipulation of prints into seemingly unique artistic objects. In his 1931 essay “Little History of Photography,” he noted the potential of photography and film to confront the world, create a vital relationship with modern life, and defeat the aura. Unfortunately, by the time Benjamin wrote a later essay about the aura in 1936, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” he had also seen the realization of Wilhelm-Kästner’s fears, the abuse of photography’s potential to suit purely propagandistic purposes.

Aside from the social critics Kracauer and Benjamin, who were more general in their writings, the other critics, curators, and artists depended on the exhibition format to elucidate their points and set new directions for photography. The scope and depth of *Iphad* convinced Caffin and Hansen of the superiority of the photographic medium as a method for confronting modern life. The perceived encroachment by technical and applied photography on the Pictorialist sections of the *DPA* led Warstat and Claassen to point out how anachronistic the latter style was by 1926. And the didactic potential of the New Vision revealed itself to Dixel and Waldstein through the organization of *Neue Wege* and *Fotografie der Gegenwart*.

The New Vision met the challenges of the social critique of Pictorialism. It confronted the dynamism and tensions of urban living, it embraced internationalism, it shed the ruse of ornate frames, it appreciated the juxtaposition of science and art rather than suppressing it, it revealed in its own pedagogical potential, it embraced films,

⁵³⁹ Wolin, *Benjamin*, 108. Specifically, he posits that Benjamin launched an urgent appeal for the necessity of a direct surrender of art to the imperatives of political-pedagogical aims.

photograms, typography, it repudiated art for art's sake inwardness, it realized the didactic potential of exhibition strategies. Many of its practitioners—Moholy-Nagy, Umbo, Kertész— contributed to mass magazines and magazine spreads were included in the New Vision shows. In both the heterogeneity of material advocated by New Vision display, and the dynamism and openness of the photographs themselves, it answered the critics of lingering Pictorialism cited above. Moholy-Nagy, Lotar, Kertész, Krull, Hoppé, Henri, and other internationally diverse artists visually transformed the fragments of an industrialized world in flux and change.

It is undeniable that *Fifo* played a huge part in the historiography of photography of the twentieth century. But *Fifo* would not have been possible without exhibition strategies that had been developing over time. I have attempted to fill in that background story through the analysis of large exhibitions with high profiles and a solid cross section of press from both mainstream and specialized publications. We also know that these exhibitions attracted large audiences, hence engaging a mass of people in these visual “debates” as they unfurled in public. My purpose has been to illustrate the central role of exhibitions in the shift of influence from Pictorialism to New Vision from 1909-29, and to demonstrate how exhibitions illuminate the shifting social functions of photography as perceived by the proponents of those movements.

On or about 1909, something in both art and photography changed, and it is discernible in the historical records of exhibitions. Painters and sculptors—Futurists, Orphists, Cubists—would soon be looking to photography, technology, and the mass media to get away from the idioms of academic, nineteenth-century painting; they would break new ground, exposing the oddity of Pictorialist photographers that were looking

backward. From that point and throughout the 1920s, with a break for the war, the tensions between elitism, ennui, and academicism in photography on the one hand; and that which would confront the world more honestly—in order to stimulate an awareness of modernity—on the other, would define the many German exhibitions that took place. Germany was the locus of photographic technology, the exhibiting of photography, and thus, in many ways, the historiography of photography. Comprehending German photography exhibitions in all their complexity during this twenty-year period meets Anne McCauley's challenge to young scholars: to understand the history of photography's shifting social roles, and thus a much larger field of human activity, one that encompasses politics, economics, and art.

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Appendix A

Eugen Claassen's Review of the *Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung*, Frankfurt, 1926,
as Published in *Die Form*

Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung 1926, Frankfurt a.M.

Deutschland hat seit der internationalen Ausstellung in Dresden 1909 keine alle Gebiete photographischer Technik und lichtbildnerischer Darstellung umfassende Übersicht mehr besessen. Frankfurt ist dieser Tage in größtem Stil an ein derartiges Unternehmen gegangen. Die „Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung“ die das Haus der Moden in zwei großen geschlossenen Gruppen dicht füllt, darf der minutiösen Vorarbeit und der Beteiligung aller kompetenten Gruppen wegen den Anspruch auf eine prinzipielle Auseinandersetzung mit den Absichten, dem Geist und dem Können der Aussteller und damit der deutschen „Photographie“ erheben. Es soll hier nicht behauptet werden, dass die verschiedenen Darstellungsformen, deren sich die Ausstellung bedient, sich stets glücklich zu einem einheitlichen Eindruck zusammenfügen. Bruchstellen sind in einer Zeit, in der eine hochgesteigerte, rein auf präzise Zwecke eingestellte wissenschaftliche und technische Photographie mit einer raffinierten sich „künstlerisch“ gebenden Lichtbildkunst konkurriert, unvermeidlich. Der ausstellungstechnischen Ansatzpunkte sind daher viele. Sie verraten die große, gewichtige und sehr differenzierte Zahl der mehr oder weniger berechtigten Interessen an einer Ausgestaltung und Verwendung der photographischen Mittel: von den graphischen Gewerben bis zu den bombastischen „Ateliers“, die aus der diffizilen Technik der photographischen Reproduktionsmöglichkeiten heraus eine typisch „bürgerliche“ Portraitkunst geschaffen haben. Von der historischen Daguerreotypie bis zur modernen akademischen

Photofachschule. Von der Kriminalistik, der Medizin, der Astronomie, der topographischen und kartographischen Aeronautik bis zur kunsthistorischen Inventarisierung. Brieftaubenleistungen sind als Liliputgabe, ein vergrößerter Hindenburgkopf als Mammutangebinde noch eingestreut. Frankfurter Altstadtfreunde, der Eckenerruhm, Marinebilder und Manöverphotographen haben die sachliche Vielgestaltigkeit zudem um gefühlsmäßige Nuancen bereichert. Ein solches Konglomerat, dem sich industrielle und händlerische Interessen und die idealistischen Leistungen der Amateure noch beigesellen, liegt im Wesen zeitgemäßer Messe- und Ausstellungsorganisationen, die ihrerseits an der Kundenwerbung logischerweise stark interessiert sind. Die bunte Darbietungsweise schmälert das Verdienst der Messeleiter, eine zweifellos großzügig aufgebaute Ausstellung zustande gebracht zu haben, in keiner Weise.

Der eigentliche Widerspruch, den die „Deutsche Photographische Ausstellung“ erweckt, kann ganz im Gegenteil durch die hier gebotene Möglichkeit einer prinzipiellen Übersicht überhaupt erst laut werden. Die Frankfurter Ausstellung ist repräsentativ genug, um gültige Maßstäbe für die Beurteilung allgemein wichtiger Tatbestände abzugeben. Der schärfste Einwand konzentriert sich auf die in Gruppierung, Aufmachung und Bilddarbietung an dem falschen Maßstab von Kunstaustellungen orientierte – man möchte fast sagen – Tafelbildnerei, die von „Gruppen“ wie der Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner und analogen Verbänden repräsentiert wird. Die Prätention, mit der diese räumlich zentrale und sachlich wichtige „künstlerische“ Ausstellung aufgebaut ist, um die sich die übrigen rein funktionalen technischen Teildarbietungen gruppieren, ist symptomatisch für die falsche Einstellung, die sich scheinbar aller Künstler unter den

Berufsphotographen bemächtigt hat. Der flüchtigste Überblick über diese Abteilungen zeigt, dass die Atelierkunst, die Porträt, Landschaft und Studie pflegt, einem gefährlichen Ehrgeiz erlegen ist. Sie benutzt die oft verblüffende Kenntnis der photographischen Technik und der erreichbaren Einzeleffekte, ihre gute, aber unbestreitbare handwerkliche Position zu verschleiern. Sie mimt mit allen Registern des Routiniers Kunst. Sie glaubt, das kunstanalytische Wissen um die Problemstellungen und um die gröberen und feineren Reize der Malerei der letzten Jahrzehnte genüge, es ihr gleich zu tun. Sie entbindet sich von der ihr durch die Reproduktionstechnik gestellten sachlichen Aufgabe und maßt so sich mit hemmungsloser Naivität die notwendigerweise unverantwortliche Stellung eines Souveräns an. Sie verabsolutiert die Mittel und vernachlässigt schmeichlerisch das Objekt. Das Licht ist nicht Medium und wohlverstandenes Mittel der Darstellung, sondern selbst Objekt. Es rieselt spielerisch und effektbeflissen um die ihm gleichgültigen Gegenstände. Es erzeugt allenthalben Dunst und Nebel und legt sich um die Dinge dienstfreudig als Draperie. Das Schlaglicht, die verwischte Kontur, der dämmerige Hintergrund, alle Valeurs eines farbigen Grau verhüllen die oft mehr als banale Realität und steigern die dürftige Attrappe zum Interessanten empor. Ein stilles und rosiges Lichtglück berauscht den Photographen. Kein Glanzbild, Öl-, Gummi- und Pigmentdruck beherrschen die Situation.

Das „Objekt“, der widerborstige unauflösbare Rest an Realität, der sich gegen die künstlerische Effektzerlösung stemmt, bedarf der Nachhilfe. Das Objekt wird in langwierigen Vorbereitungen bearbeitet, frisiert, bis es der Kunst des Scheins erliegt. Die Pose kommt dem souveränen Gestaltungsdrang des Lichtbildners am stärksten entgegen. Seine freibeschwingten Absichten bewegen sich einem gefälligen Partner gegenüber auf

der Bahn des geringsten Widerstandes. Der photographische Künstler braucht notwendig ein nachgiebiges, plastisches Modell. „Corriger la nature“ lautet die Formel! Man gruppiert das Milieu um und wieder um, bis es den Gesetzen einer kunstgerechten Komposition genügt. Man eliminiert das Element des zufälligen Bildausschnittes, den die Kamera aus einer verteuft weitschichtig aufgebauten Welt abgrenzt, und legt auf eine geschlossene Bildwirkung, einen natürlichen Rahmen, einen organischen Aufbau der zu fixierenden Gegenstände den höchsten Wert. Man erstrebt durch disproportionierende Nahwirkungen, künstlich im Atelier erzeugte Flächenschatten und die Retusche des Wattebauschens eine Monumentalität die täuscht, täuschen soll, und unterlässt getrost die Suche nach d e r Monumentalität, die eine von Sachkennern umworbene Natur nicht immer schamhaft verbirgt. Das Resultat dieser erschreckend geschlossenen und in ihren verfälschenden Zielen selten eindeutigen Kunstbemühung liegt auf der Hand. Die offizielle Atelierkunst in ihren technisch vollendeten Repräsentanten, die sich der umstrittenen Beherrschung der modernsten Errungenschaften mit Recht rühmen darf, macht in großer Kunst. Sie übersieht, dass sie sich gerade auf diesem Wege einem Schattendasein überantwortet, dass sie notwendig zweitrangig ist, dass sie fertige künstlerische Modelle kopiert, kopieren muss, da der Stoff nichts weniger als souverän in ihre Hände gegeben ist, dass der scheinbaren „Auffassung“ keine Möglichkeit einer zentralen und auf das Wesentliche eingestellten Umstrukturierung der Gegenstände zu Hilfe kommt. Sie erkennt mit wenigen Ausnahmen nicht das verlogene Fassadenspiel, dass sie treibt. Sie modelt an der Hülle und will einen neuen Kern vorzeigen. Die Abhängigkeit von bekanntesten und im durchschnittlichen Geschmacksbewusstsein typisch gewordenen Malschulen erschlägt den Besucher dieser Ausstellung.

Renaissanceallüren à la Lenbach konkurrieren mit der sozialen Note von Uhde bis Zille. Leibl und die Dachauer wetteifern mit Boecklin und den Stilleben der Caspar-Filser. Der Impressionismus, flach gefasst als das Flüchtige, rein Optische hat als Vorbild der Photographen verheerend gewirkt. Er wird in peinliche und äußerliche Stimmungsmache umgedeutet. Was bleibt? Einige Köpfe Hugo Erfurths, die Plastiken Walter Heges und die sachlich leidenschaftliche Kunstliebhaberschaft der Marburger Schule Hamanns. Genug um die vielen sonstigen verpassten Gelegenheiten zu ernster Arbeit zu dokumentieren. Die Namen der Gerügten tun nichts zur Sache. Die generelle Fehleinstellung pointiert zu beleuchten, ist der Sinn dieser Zeilen. Sie rufen ein Handwerk mit großen und ernsthaften Aufgaben zur Besinnung auf: Das Gegenbeispiel, das Positive, vermag, wenn auch veränderten Zwecken dienend, die bescheidenere Fachphotographie zu geben.

Die Lösung des Dilemmas, in das die Lichtbildkunst unweigerlich gerät, ist allerdings verzwickter Natur. Mit dem Beweis einer vergeblichen und widersinnigen, weil sachlich widerspruchsvollen Arbeit, ist erst ein Teilproblem berührt. Die Gesinnung des Photographen ist trotz der im Bilde vorgespiegelten künstlerischen Souveränität letzten Endes gar nicht entscheidend. Der allgemeine Geschmack und die persönliche Eitelkeit seiner Klientel gibt den Ausschlag. Die Kundschaft nährt und stärkt die verfänglichen Instinkte, die sich der anerkannten Kunst so nachgiebig bemächtigen. Widerstand des Photographen bedeutet wirtschaftliche Selbstaufgabe. Das große und kleine Bürgertum wünscht das Privileg der Reichen auf ein echtes Künstlerporträt, auf die durch die Brille der „Auffassung“ gesehene Landschaft zu stützen. Die photographische Technik verbreitert den Stamm der Berechtigten beträchtlich. Eine

originelle und durch die geschickte Mischung photographisch erzielbarer Effekte zum einmaligen Kunstwerk gestempelte Photographie ist vollgültiger Ersatz. Zudem, man kann sie sich leisten. Das moderne Lichtbild ist zivilisatorisch und soziologisch der Kunstersatz eines Bürgertums, das gezwungen ist aristokratische Neigungen auf eine rationelle Form zu bringen. Wirtschaftlich, technisch und geistig. Die photographische Technik genügt allen Anforderungen, die ein breiter Konsum und eine illusionsbereite Kunstfreudigkeit an ein rationelles und rationalisierbares Kunsthandwerk stellen können. Die Künstler-Photographen und das Publikum düpiieren sich wechselseitig. Die Verantwortung liegt beim Photographen, die Erziehung hat bei der Masse einzusetzen. Sie muss lernen selbstbewusst zu sein und sich als sich selbst darstellen zu lassen. Damit kommt die photographische Technik und die Mittlerstellung des Photographen allein wieder zu ihrem Recht. Damit ist aber auch der Weg einer sachgerechten und soziologisch berechtigten Rationalisierung des bürgerlichen Selbstdarstellungsbedürfnisses beschritten.

Eugen Claaßen, Frankfurt a.M.

Appendix B

English Translation of Claassen's Review of the *DPA*

Germany had not held an exhibition, since the international exhibition in Dresden 1909, covering all regions and photographic techniques and depictions. Frankfurt is having such an enterprise in large style right now. It is the "DPA" which filled the Haus der Moden in two large closed groups. Due to the detailed preparation and participation of all competent groups, it may claim a principle discussion with the intention, the spirit, and the skill of putting it up for the elevation of German photography. It should not become alleged here that the different forms of representations that the exhibition utilizes will all make up a uniform impression. Breaches are inevitable, in a time in which a highly efficient precisely focused, scientific and technical photography is in competition with a refined photo-art that pretends to be artistic. There are many points of departure referring to exhibition techniques. They reveal the large, ponderous, and very different numbers of more or less legitimate interests in an arrangement and utilization of the photographic tool: from graphic crafts to the bombastic "studios", which out of the difficult and differentiated technique of the photographic reproduction possibilities created a typical bourgeois portrait art. From the historical daguerreotype to the modern academic photo technical school. From the criminalistic, the medicine, astronomy, topography and cartographic aeronautics, to the art historical inventory making. Achievements of the dove mail carrier system as a tiny exhibition to an enlarged Hindenburg sculpture as a mammoth arrangement within this exhibition are also thrown in, friends of Frankfurt's old center, the Eckenerruhm, and navy pictures and maneuver

photographs enrich the substantial plurality by emotional nuances. Such a conglomeration which unites the industrial and art dealer interest and the idealistic achievement of the amateurs, lay in the nature of contemporary trade fair and exhibition organization, who on their part are logically, strongly interested in the visitors advertising. The colorful presentation diminishes in no way the merit of the trade fair direction, to have created an undoubtedly liberally constructed exhibition.

The actual antagonism that the exhibition awakes comes from the fact that it shows a range of possibilities. The Frankfurt exhibition is representative enough to give a valid scale for evaluation of important facts. The keenest objection concentrates on the picture arrangement oriented on the false scale from art exhibitions—one must almost say—stiff pictures, which are represented by groups like the society of German photography and similar associations. The pretention, with which this spatially central and objectively important artistic exhibition is constructed, around which the other remaining, purely functional technical parts of the presentation are grouped, is symptomatic for the false motivation, which itself apparently seized all artists among the professional trade photographers. The superficial survey over these divisions shows that studio art, which encompasses portrait, landscape, and still life, is seized by a dangerous ambition. This studio product uses the often amazing knowledge of photographic technique and the accessible single effects, in order to veil its good, but incontestably craftsman like, position. It mimics the art of the routine with all its power. It believes the art-analytical knowledge of the Problem constellation and around the large and fine stimulus of painting of the last decades is enough to be at the same level as painting. It resolved itself from the factual task, which it was given by the reproduction technique

represented by an objective task or mission and claims with unrestrained naiveté the necessarily unjustifiable position of a sovereign. It limits the means and neglects yet flatters the object. The light is not a medium and well-intentioned means of representation, but the object itself. It distills playful and assiduous effects around the indifferent objects. It creates haze and mist and lies down around the object happily as drapery. The strong, effective light, the smudged contour, the gloomy background, all shades of a colored gray all cover the often more or less banal reality and increase the meager props to something interesting. A still and rosy-pink light happiness intoxicates the photographer. No glossy picture, but oil, gum and pigment print rule the situation.

The “object:” that resisting, irresolutionable, leftover of reality that stems against the artistic-effect solution, requires an intellectual brush up. The object is worked on in a long, pre-operational process; it gets remodeled, until it surrenders to the art of “want to be.” The pose comes closest to the sovereign urge to impose of the photographer. His free spirited intentions move toward a willing partner on the road to lowest resistance. The photographic artist requires an unresisting plastic model “to correct nature;” that is what the formula is! One regroups the milieu again and again, until it complies with the laws of an art-like composition. One eliminates the moment of coincidental representation fragment, which denotes the camera to a diabolic far seeing built-up world and one puts emphasis on a closed picture impression, a natural frame, an organic structure of the objects fixated upon. One longs for disproportionate after-effects, artificially studio-created flat shadows, and through the retouch of a cottonball, monumentality is reached, and should give an illusion, and easily refrain from the search for monumentality, (to) which a nature yearned for by specialists not always shamefully

covers. The results of these horrifying closed art efforts which are rarely clear in their faking goals are obvious. The official studio art in its technically most perfected representation, which claims rightfully the undisputed most modern achievement, makes the “big art.” It overlooks, that it surrenders, especially in this way to a shadow, which is necessarily second-rate, that it copies ready artistic models, and has to copy them, since the material has been given into its hands less than sovereign, that the illusionist “perception” does not get help from a central and a restructuring that is focused on the essentials of the objects. It does not recognize, with few exceptions, the mendacious facade play that it drives. The official studio art models at the surface and wants to show a new core. The dependence on publicly-known and ordinary conscious taste, typical of painting schools, defeats the visitor to this exhibition. Renaissance allures, a la Lenbach, compete with the social mark from Uhde to Zille (Berlin cartoonist who drew satire around turn of century of the working poor). Leibl and the Dachauers (Munich school) compete with Böcklin and the still lives of Caspar-Filser. The Impressionists, flat, composing the fleeing moment, the pure opticality, had a disastrous effect as a model/example for photographs. It is reinterpreted as embarrassing and superficial propaganda. What remains? Several portraits of Hugo Erfurth, the sculptures of Walter Heges and the objective ardent art enthusiasts of the Marburg school of Hamman’s. Enough, about the many other missed opportunities to document serious work. The names of the criticized are not important. To highlight the general misconception, that’s what these lines are for. It appeals to the handiwork/craft to reflect with a large and serious mission: the counterexample, the positive, may be the more modest professional photography, even though serving alternative purposes.

The answer to the dilemma, which photography gets into inevitably, is of a wicked nature. The evidence of fruitless and absurd work, because it is objectively full of contradiction, touches only a first part of the problem. The political orientation of the photographers is not at all decisive despite imagined artistic sovereignty in the picture. The general flavor and the personal vanity of its clientele—that's what counts. The customers feed and strengthen the compromising instinct, on to which the recognized Art so pliantly seizes. Once again, the resistance of photographer would mean economic self-destruction. The upper and lower middle class wishes to overthrow the privilege of the rich on a genuine art portrait, on landscape seen through the glasses of "perception." The photographic technique broadens the right of those authorized significantly. A special photography branded by a skillful mixture of photographically reachable effects to a unique artwork is a fully legitimate ersatz. Plus, one can afford to buy it. Modern photography is civilized and sociologically art- —ersatz of a bourgeoisie which has been forced to reduce an aristocratic inclination or longing to a rational form, economically, technically and spiritually. The photographic technique is sufficient for all demands, which a broader consumption and willingness for an art ready to create illusions could ask from a rational and rationalizeable art. The artistic photographer and the public dupe each other reciprocally. The responsibility is on the photographer; education has to start with the masses. They must learn, to be self-aware and to let someone portray them as themselves. Only that would justify the photographic technique and the mediator position of photographers again. This is how the path to a well-deserved and sociologically justified rationalization and bourgeois self-depiction would start.

Appendix C

Kurt Wilhelm-Kästner's Curatorial Statement for *Fotografie der Gegenwart*, Essen, 1929, as Published in *Photographische Rundschau*

Photographie der Gegenwart
Grundsätzliches zur Ausstellung im Museum Folkwang, Essen
Von Privatdozent Dr. Wilhelm-Kästner

Die Entwicklung der Photographie steht im Zeichen einer Krisis; darüber herrscht kein Zweifel. Verschiedene Momente tragen dazu bei, dass gerade jetzt diese kritische Konstellation erreicht ist. Man braucht nur einmal das Resultat der Ausstellung im Museum Folkwang, Essen, zu betrachten, um die einzelnen Faktoren zu erkennen. Soll man mit Schlagworten diese Situation beleuchten, so genügt die Gegenüberstellung folgender Begriffe: Malerische Bildphotographie – sachlich-gegenständliche Aufnahme, technische Routine – künstlerisches Sehen, Photogramm – Photomontage – Film.

Entwicklungsgeschichtlich ist der Wendepunkt in der Photographie dadurch bedingt, dass auf Grund der ständig gesteigerten technischen Möglichkeiten eine Richtung eingeschlagen wurde, die vom rein Photographischen immer mehr abwich und zu einer malerischen Bildgestaltung im Sinne eines impressionistischen Gemäldes hinführte. Das heißt also zu nächst, dass jene materielle Voraussetzung photographischen Schaffens, die Beherrschung der rein technischen Arbeiten, jetzt bis zu einer gewissen Vollkommenheit erreicht ist. Andererseits birgt diese Erscheinung aber auch zugleich die tatsächlich große Gefahr in sich, dass die Technik zum Selbstzweck wird. Die Wirkung des Bildes wird in den reichen technischen Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten gesucht, dass photographische Bildschaffen wird zur Routine. Zugleich musste solche materialistische Einstellung dazu verführen, für die mangelnde eigene künstlerische Bildphantasie Ersatz

zu suchen. Ein starkes Anlehnungsbedürfnis an die Gestaltungsweise der Malerei war die Folge. Das zur höchsten Vervollkommnung getriebene technische Können bot ja die Gelegenheit, malerische Effekte in ziemlich getreuer Nachahmung der Gemälde herauszuholen: farbige Tönung trug noch ein weiteres zu dieser Wirkung bei. So entstanden denn und entstehen noch heute vermittels raffinierter Umdruckverfahren jene sog. Kunstblätter, die oft von einer guten Gavüre nach einem Gemälde dem allgemeinen Eindruck nach kaum zu unterscheiden sind, zumal natürlich Bildausschnitt und Komposition der Figuren und Gegenstände durchaus der künstlerischen Auffassung der Malerei und Graphik entsprechend gewählt sind.

Und was ist nun das Ergebnis solcher technisch vollendeten Bildgestaltung? Die Photographie verliert ihre Unmittelbarkeit, sie ist nicht mehr Dienerin, nein, sie wird zur Sklavin einer ganz anders gearteten Kunstgattung; sie wird zum billigen Ersatzmittel. Das photographische Bild ist hier letzten Endes zum Plagiat gemalter Bilder herabgewürdigt. Damit verliert die Photographie aber ihre ethische Berechtigung. Es mag dies harte Urteil manchem einseitig erscheinen; die vielen Versuche, Zwischenstufen zwischen der Photographie und der Zeichnung (Skizze) und Malerei zu schaffen, beweisen das Vorhandensein dieser Tendenz aber zur Genüge. Außerdem handelt es sich hier ja um die grundsätzliche Stellungnahme.

Es ist notwendig, sich einmal auf die Anfänge der Photographie zu besinnen. Wir erleben dann die überraschende Tatsache, dass sich hier eine Bildwelt feinsten Reize offenbart. Gewiss, das Technische ist als spröde, noch nicht ganz bewältigte Materie noch deutlich zu spüren, besonders bei den Daguerreotypen, aber dafür ist die Bildauffassung von solch köstlicher Unbefangenheit und Unmittelbarkeit, dass man heute

wieder mit größtem Entzücken die Porträts der guten alten Zeit betrachten muss. Die Ursache hierfür liegt in der Wahrnehmung des reproduktiven Charakters der Bilder. Ohne Künsteleien wurde – lediglich vom Standpunkt der naturgetreuen Bildwiedergabe aus – das Objekt erfasst. Man sah eben gerade diese neue Möglichkeit des exakten Abbildes durch die Photographie erschlossen und pflegte sie. In der Art des Bildausschnittes, in der Einstellung zum Motiv beruhte hierbei allein die persönliche Note.

Ein Besinnen auf die ursprünglichen Aufgaben der Photographie und auf ihre Eigenart ist daher naturnotwendig gegeben. Der Zeitpunkt einer Umkehr ist sogar schon erreicht. Die Essener Ausstellung zeigt neben einer Anzahl von Beispielen der technisch-malerischen Richtung in sehr vielen Blättern die neue Entwicklung. Es ist aber durchaus noch kein einheitliches Bild, das sich hier bietet, es sind vielmehr mehrere nebeneinander herlaufende Strömungen zu beobachten. Verschiedene Einzelercheinungen treten auf, die erst in ihrer synthetischen Zusammenfassung den neuen Weg ergeben werden. Als Reaktion zur bisherigen Einstellung muss zunächst die sich fast allenthalben ausprägende Neigung zur klaren, streng gegenständlichen Bildauffassung angesprochen werden. Analog zur Malerei könnte man auch hier von einer „Neuen Sachlichkeit sprechen, wobei allerdings das Verhältnis zwischen Photo und Gemälde eher ein umgekehrtes im Vergleich zu früher ist, insofern die neue Sachlichkeit in der Malerei eben mehr die photographische Treue in der gegenständlichen Bildwiedergabe erstrebt. In der Photographie äußert sich diese Sachlichkeit in der scharfen Wiedergabe des Objekts in einer klaren Hervorhebung, ja fast Isolierung gegenüber der Umgebung und dem Hintergrund, in der durchdringenden, allseitigen Beleuchtung, die möglichst die Schatten

ganz verbannt oder sie als fest umrissene Bildelemente verwendet, und vor allem in der Bevorzugung fester, deutlich erfassbarer Gegenstände von übersichtliche formaler Struktur als Bildmotive. Der malerischen Verschwommenheit, die das eigentliche Bild zur unbestimmten Folie werden lässt, wird die zeichnerische und plastische Exaktheit und technische Präzision entgegengesetzt. Hieraus erklärt sich auch, dass die Landschaft jetzt wenig Vorliebe findet, dafür aber die einfachsten Objekte, vor allem Gebrauchsgegenstände möglichst serienmäßiger Herstellung und in einfacher gestaffelter Anordnung (im Gegensatz zum malerischen Stilleben) vorherrschen. Damit ist die Umstellung von freischaffender, rein künstlerischer Bildgestaltung im Sinne der Malerei zur angewandten Photographie im Dienste der Werbung gekennzeichnet, -- eine Umstellung allerdings mehr oder weniger rein äußerer und motivischer Art. Jedenfalls ist eine grundlegende Wandlung so noch nicht herbeigeführt.

Entscheidend für die kommende Photographie ist das neue Sehen! Wie ein Objekt erfasst ist, in welcher Stellung sich dazu der Apparat befindet, d.h. also von welchem Blickpunkt aus gesehen und wie aus der tatsächlichen, gegebenen Situation heraus die Bildwirkung gewonnen wird, darum geht es jetzt. Das erfordert aber keine technische Routine, sondern einzig und allein einen Blick für die Dinge, für ihre Materialwirkung und ihre bildmäßige Erscheinung. D.h. also, dass eine ausgesprochene Begabung in dieser Richtung vorhanden sein muss. All diese Elemente können sich jedoch im photographischen Sinne nur dann richtig auswirken, wenn hierbei das Licht in seiner letzten Endes ausschlaggebenden Bedeutung berücksichtigt ist. In diesen Forderungen liegt so viel grundsätzlich Neues, dass dadurch ein ganz neues photographisches Bild entsteht. Vor allen Dingen ist wesentlich, dass auf diese Weise das

eigentliche Bild von vornherein festliegt und Apparat und Platte nur mehr rein reproduzierende Funktion ausüben. Selbst der simpelste Abzug muss die Bildwirkung voll widerspiegeln. Retouchen auf der Platte und auf dem Papier sind nicht mehr Mittel zur Erhöhung der bildhaften Gestaltung, sondern dienen lediglich der Beseitigung von Material- und technischen Fehlern. – Erkennen wir es recht, so offenbart sich hier in solcher photographischer Tätigkeit ein neues schöpferisches Moment. Die hohe ästhetische Leistung wird zur künstlerischen. Und wenn je die Photographie ernsthaft in das hohe Gefilde der Kunst eindringen will, dann nur auf diesem Wege künstlerischen Sehens.

Natürlich gibt es auch hier zunächst einseitige Lösungen. Gewollte, gekünstelte Bildausschnitte, vollkommen entstellende und verzerrende Perspektive durch unnatürliche Blickstellung bereiten den neuen Weg nicht vor. Wohl aber dienen extreme Erörterungen, wie sie die abstrakte Photographie, das sog. Photogramm, darstellen, der allgemeinen, prinzipiellen Klärung in bezug auf Bildkomposition und Materialwirkung, mögen auch diese Versuche an sich nur mehr als technisch-ästhetische Spielereien angesprochen werden.

Ein besonderes Gebiet ist die Verbindung der Photographie mit der Typographie und die Photomontage. Es ist dies in der normalen Form eine einfache Nutzanwendung der photographischen Aufnahme zu Werbezwecken in der plakathaften Gestaltung, -- eine äußerst fruchtbare Auswirkung photographischer Tätigkeit. Im Sinne unseres technischen Zeitalters eröffnen sich da reiche Möglichkeiten. Auch hier liegt die Gefahr der extremen Gestaltung zu nur ästhetischer, zweckenthebener Bildart vor. Die

prinzipielle theoretische Blickschulung für die Flächenaufteilung und Materialwirkung ist das wertvollste an derartigen einseitigen Versuchen.

Schließlich gehört auch der Film zum photographischen Problem, wenn schon er sich zu einer eigenen selbstständigen Gattung erhoben hat. Darum sei hier nur auf ihn hingewiesen und seiner hohen Bedeutung für die allgemeine neue photographische Entwicklung gedacht. Es ist nicht zuviel gesagt, wenn den Filmaufnahmen, die ja vom Gesichtspunkt der Bewegung aufgenommen wurden, eine sehr starke Anregung für die neue photographische Bildgestaltung zugeschrieben wird. Mag die Filmhandlung oft noch so kitschig sein, die photographische Leistung ist oft geradezu erstaunlich. Der Hemmschuh traditioneller Bindung ist hier viel eher überwunden worden, der Blick ist schon früh frei geworden für die Erscheinung der Dinge. Insofern gehört der Film mit zu den Wegbereitern moderner Photographie.

Appendix D

English Translation of Wilhelm-Kästner's Statement

The development of photography shows signs of a crisis; no doubt about it. Several moments contributed to the fact, that this critical constellation has been reached now. One need only to consider the result of the exhibition in Folkwang, to recognize individual factors. In order to illuminate the situation, it would be sufficient to point out the following terms in the exhibition: 1) painterly pictorial photographs; 2) realistic-object reception, technical routine; 3) artistic eye, photogram; 4) photomontage; 5) film.

Historically, the developmental turning point of photography has been reached due to constantly rising technical abilities; direction has been taken which is more and more deviated from the photographic aspect and turned to the painterly, pictorial design in the sense of an impressionist painting. This therefore commands above all, that the material requirement of photographic creation, the domination of pure technical work, has until now reached up to a certain perfection. On the other hand, this appearance simultaneously bears indeed a great danger in itself, that the technique becomes an end in itself, or turns to self-purpose. The impression of representation was searched for in the passing technical expressive possibility, that photographic representational activity becomes too routine. At the same time such a materialistic point of view must seduce it, to look for an imitation due to the lack of one's own artistic representational fantasy. The result was a strong need of support from the *modus operandi* of paintings. The technical skills chased to highest perfection offered the opportunity to retrieve painterly effects in the considerable exact imitation of painting; colored tints contributed even more to this

impression. So, this is how those so-called art prints were created and are still created by the means of a refined, reprint procedure which were often hard to distinguish between gravure and painting, according to their appearance. Especially since framing and composition of figures and objects were picked according to the artistic impression of painting and graphics.

And what is now the consequence of such consummate absolute painterly picture creation? The photograph loses its immediacy, it is no longer a servant, no, it becomes the slave to a whole different kind of art form, it becomes a cheap imitation-method. The photographic picture is disguised finally here as a plagiarized painted picture. By doing this though, photography loses its ethical justification. This hard judgment may appear too unilateral. But the many trials to create intermediate levels between photography and drawing/sketching and painting gives sufficient proof to this tendency. In addition we are dealing here with fundamental positions.

It is necessary, first of all, to consider the beginning of photography. We then experience the surprising fact that a picture-world offers its finest charms. Certainly, the technique can be felt as brittle, still not completely mastered as material, especially by the daguerreotype, but therefore the pictorial reception is of such delightful impartiality and immediacy, which man today must observe again the portraits of good old times with immense joy. The reason for this lies in the protection of the reproductive character of pictures. Without superficial frills the object was received solely from the standpoint of exact nature image-reproduction. One could see this new possibility of an exact image open up through photography and one cultivated it. In the way of image extraction, the position toward the motif only depended on the personal mark.

A recall of the original mission of photography and of its particularity is therefore necessary. The moment is already reaching a turning point. The Essen exhibition shows a number of examples of the technically painterly direction next to the new development in many prints. It is indeed throughout still not a homogenous picture which we see here, but rather several parallel streams are observed. Several single appearances are to be observed which only in their synthetic constellation will show a new way. As a reaction to contemporary positions, one has to mention first of all the tendency toward clear austere, concrete picture reception which is visible almost everywhere. Analogous to painting one could also speak here of a "New Objectivity", keeping under consideration that the proportion between photography and painting is rather inverted in comparison to former times, in so far as the new objectivity in paintings strives towards more photographic fidelity in pictorial reception. New objectivity is expressing itself in photography in the sharp reproduction of objects, in its clear emphasis, yet nearly isolated toward the environment and the background, in the penetrating, all around illumination, which bans the shadows as much as possible or uses them as sharply outlined picture element, and above all in preferring solid, clearly perceptible objects of oversee able formal structure as picture motif. The painterly blurriness, which turns the literal picture to the undistinguishable foil, becomes a contrast to the graphic and plastic Exactness and technical Precision. This also explains that the landscape as of now finds little preference, instead the most single objects, above all everyday objects of possible serial production and in a simple order—contrary to the painterly still life—are predominant. With it, the rearrangement is switched from freelancing, pure artistic picture arrangement in the sense of painting to applied photography in the service of advertisement—a switch though of

more or less a purely external and motivated kind. In any case a basic transformation is still not yet carried out.

Decisive for the forthcoming Photography is the new vision! In whatever way an object is apprehended, in which position it can be found toward the apparatus, i.e. from which point of view and how out of the real given situation the pictorial effect is gained, that's what its all about. This requires however no technical routine, but only an eye for those things, for their material effect and their pictorial appearance. This means, hence, that an outspoken talent in this direction must exist. All these elements can themselves in the photographic sense only then have the right affect, when here by the light in its decisive significance is taken into account. In these demands lie so many fundamental innovations, that through it a whole new photographic picture arises. Above all it is essential, that in this way the true picture is from the start fixed and apparatus and plate exercise simply a clear reproduction function. Even the simplest copy must fully reflect the full picture effect. Retouching on the plate and on the paper are no longer the means to raise the pictorial arrangement, but serves merely the elimination of material and technical error. If we identify it correctly, then a new creative moment offers itself in new photographic activity. The high aesthetic performance becomes artistic. If photography ever wants to penetrate seriously the high fields of art, then it can do so only on the path of artistic sight.

Naturally there are some unilateral solutions. Wanted, artificial framing, entirely distorting and twisting perspectives through unnatural viewing position do not prepare for the new path. Nevertheless extreme arguments, as the abstract photography, so called photogram, do definitely serve the common principle clarification in reference to picture

composition and material effect, even though these trials are seen as rather technical aesthetic playfulness.

A particular region is the link between photography with typography and photomontage. In its normal form it is a simple utilization of photographic depiction for advertising functions in the poster-like arrangement--an extremely fertile consequence of photographic activity. In the sense of our technical age many possibilities open themselves. In it also lays the danger of extreme arrangement for solely aesthetic, purposeless picture types. The principal, theoretical training of the eye for the surface distribution and material effect is the most valuable in this kind of unilateral experiment.

Finally also films belong to this photographic problem, if one already elevates it to its own independent genre. Therefore, I only want to refer to it in its high importance for the general new photographic development. It is not said too much if we put a strong inspiration for new photographic picture arrangement on movies which of course were taken from the point of view of movement. Even though plots are still kitschy, the photographic element though is often astounding. A hindrance of traditional binding has been overcome here much earlier, the view became clear much earlier for the appearance of things. Thus movies belong to the pioneers of modern photography.

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