

E. L. Kirchner, Czech Cubism and the Representation of the Spirit in Portraiture, 1915-1918

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The German Expressionist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner painted the nightmarish vision *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* in Berlin in 1915 while on leave from artillery training in Halle (Figure 1). This infamous painting has been interpreted primarily as an indication of his growing anxiety brought about by the outbreak of World War I and his enlistment as an “involuntary volunteer,” as he described himself.¹ Although he never saw active combat, during his brief stint in military training Kirchner’s growing fears of being sent into battle led to a partly self-induced emotional collapse. As a result of the beneficence of his overseeing officer, the *Brücke*-supporter Dr. Hans Fehr, and several genuinely concerned patrons, Kirchner spent time convalescing at various sanatoria in Germany and Switzerland from 1915 to 1918. The facts surrounding these circumstances are now widely recognized, as are Kirchner’s efforts to maintain appearances of suffering a nervous breakdown in order to avoid being sent back to the military.²

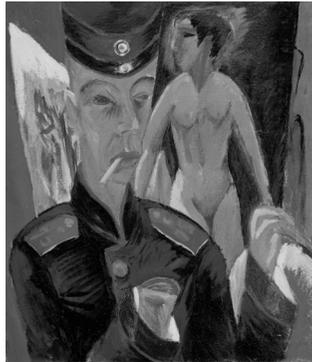


Figure 1: Kirchner, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*
(*Selbstbildnis als Soldat*), 1915.

Yet in spite of scholars’ recognition of his agency in presenting signs

of war-related neurosis, Kirchner's grisly self-portrait continues to serve as an unsuitable lens through which other works from the same period are interpreted. Scholars writing in the years following World War II used it unquestioningly as a tangible marker of the artist's destabilized mental state, reading into the style of Kirchner's Berlin works of the immediately preceding years to define them as symptomatic of frail nerves. These accounts mistakenly regard the artist's move to Berlin in October 1911 as the signal moment when his mental condition began deteriorating.³ Such interpretations are informed in part by emphasizing one vein of modern urban theory that fit the widespread existentialist mood in postwar Europe. Such explanations focus on negative forces within the city, thereby eliding the dialectical complexity of urban experience as discussed by writers including Georg Simmel (West 52-53). In his much cited 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" Simmel explained the urban tendency toward a blasé attitude and reserved social interaction as resulting from overwhelming stimuli and the "intellectualism" fostered by a money economy. And yet he also described this metropolitan sensibility as allowing for a new freedom of individual expression that would be impossible in the stricter environment of rural communities where behavior is regulated by conventional expectations and policed by close social interactions (47-60). This second component tends to be overlooked when Simmel's essay is invoked to explain Kirchner's Berlin works, perhaps because this dialectical experience of the city makes straight-forward interpretations of painted imagery difficult. Such selective reading of early urban theory results in unbalanced explanations of Kirchner's relationship to the city. As former Kirchner-Museum director Roland Scotti has observed, conventional interpretations of Kirchner's work have had remarkable, if unjustified staying power, a phenomenon that persists in part because of the repetition of deeply entrenched assumptions in spite of evidence made available through new research ("Kirchner Rezeption" 7-8, 11-12).

Recent interpretations suggest that even in *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* Kirchner was not guided solely by his undeniable anxiety about the war, but was also quite savvy in choosing his subject matter and pictorial style. Peter Springer, for example, reexamined this fantastical image in relation to Kirchner's choice of the severed hand as a motif prevalent in the context of contemporary anti-French propaganda. His study reveals how Kirchner made deliberate reference to the issue of nationalism and concomitant fears of identity-loss during times of war. Furthermore, on the basis of his analysis of Kirchner's own writings, Charles W. Haxthausen has demonstrated persuasively that no textual passages exist to indicate the artist's anxiety about the city and the street walkers who populate his famous street scenes. On the contrary he celebrated the "vitality" of urban life in all its complexity (Haxthausen 62), including as I have argued elsewhere, prostitution as an antidote to bourgeois morality (Moseman 159-228).

In keeping with these recent studies of Kirchner's "Berlin style" works, I will make a case in this essay for a contextual reconsideration of a set of artworks made during the artist's wartime convalescence. Several factors coalesce in shaping Kirchner's pictorial language during these years, one of which I explore here in an

effort to broaden the current understanding of the many factors that contributed to changes in the artist's style. What interests me specifically is how his use of geometric form to focus attention on the head in his *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, as well as a set of woodcuts and paintings made in 1917-18 depicting what Kirchner called "Heads," can best be understood against the backdrop of his engagement with the cubist paintings of his colleague, the Czech artist Bohumil Kubišta. Kirchner's experimentation with Kubišta's variant of Cubism in these works with their emphasis on the head allows the artist to make visible the sitter's spirit conveyed through "transcendental" geometric forms. I argue that by recognizing the richness and complexity of Kirchner's stylistic synthesis of various contemporary and historical styles, we can extend our understanding of this series beyond the conventional belief that the images merely reflect the artist's psychological state projected instinctively onto available subjects. As I will demonstrate, the subtle impact of this stylistic synthesis on his portraits marks the culmination of Kirchner's intensified interest in expressing the spirit of his subjects, an interest that emerges out of his adaptation of Czech Cubism in formulating his personal style.

The artistic exchange between Kirchner and Kubišta originated during Kirchner's sojourn to Bohemia in summer 1911. During his two-week stay, his host reportedly arranged for him to visit Kubišta at his studio in Prague several times (Formánek n.p.), the last of which is documented by a postcard dated 3 August. Kirchner immediately sensed an affinity with the Czech painter's pictorial language, as evidenced by his enthusiastic postcard message, declaring Kubišta to be "the most interesting Prague painter."⁴ As a result of Kirchner's visit, Kubišta became the final artist to join *Die Brücke* as a so-called "active member."⁵ The Czech painter benefited from contact with the *Brücke*-artists by gaining access to potential patrons and exhibition venues in German cities and in turn he helped facilitate an invitation for *Die Brücke* to exhibit with Czech Cubist painters in Prague in autumn 1912. Kubišta's manner of fusing Expressionism and Cubism to achieve an emphasis on the spiritual essence of his subjects had a clear impact on Kirchner's regard for the expressive potential of Cubism. Indeed Kirchner's experimentation with cubist form began soon after returning from Bohemia (Moseman 96-156).

It is worth pausing here to consider the dual meaning of the term "spirit" as it was understood by these two artists and their contemporaries. In October 1912, Kubišta published an essay entitled "On the Spiritual Essence of the Modern Age" in which he declared that "... what we demand of new art, and what can bring us the ultimate satisfaction, is a transformation of its inner intellectual essence."⁶ This statement gets at the core of his thoughts on the relationship between art and the modern spirit, Kubišta's representation of which evidently appealed to Kirchner. This passage also points to a linguistic duality that informs my discussion of the affinity between these two artists: both the Czech word *Duch* and the German word *der Geist* refer to "spirit" and "intellect" as two indivisible aspects of the mind. While not interchangeable, these two terms are inextricably linked as dual components of one concept. As the Brothers Grimm indicate in their lexicon of

the German language, this understanding was established by the Enlightenment as the opposite of the material, the bodily, and the sensual.⁷ Hence, to Kubišta and Kirchner the notion of the spirit bore with it an insistence on the workings of the intellect.

In their own ways both artists sought to draw out the spiritual through their art, a concept with widespread appeal in Central and Eastern Europe in the years leading up to World War I.⁸ Kirchner embraced the dual nature of the mind as spirit and intellect as being separate from the sensual, although for him the relationship between the mind and the body remained one of more balanced counterparts. Kubišta's preference for the spiritual/intellectual over the physical is exemplified by his 1912 painting *St. Sebastian* (Figure 2). He incorporated into such compositions elements that he called "transcendental forms," by which he meant fundamental geometric shapes as well as "surfaces, lines and their interrelations."⁹ These forms are significant to his embrace of Cubism, with its focus on the linear fracturing of geometrically shaped planes.



Figure 2: Kubišta, *St. Sebastian* (*Svatý Šebestián*), 1912.

This emphasis on the "transcendental" can be seen in Kubišta's analysis of his own preparatory drawings in which he traced a web of lines connecting the features of the composition in an effort to situate the spiritual intensity of his subjects (cf. drawing in Svestka and Vlček 17). He would then incorporate these lines into the resulting paintings, for example in *St. Sebastian*, where lines of faceted planes enhance the impact of this "spiritual self-portrait," as the painting was later called by the artist's close friend Jan Zrzavý (Zrzavý 129; Srp 346). The illusionistic depiction of the green leaves in the painting enhances the artifice of fractured planes of the head, which Kubišta carefully modeled to reinforce concentration on the locus of the spirit/intellect. This emphasis on the head is consistent with Kubišta's interest in psychological themes that explore the workings of the mind. Here he creates a modern version of a saint popular in Renaissance and Baroque altarpieces,

which draws attention to the power of the mind to defy death and overcome intense suffering, both physical and spiritual. The practice of inscribing “transcendental form” in compositions such as this relates to Kubišta’s consistent emphasis on the “content” of his subjects in an effort to express his own understanding of how the spiritual is manifested in the contemporary age.¹⁰

As I will demonstrate, Kubišta’s emphasis on “transcendental form” held appeal for Kirchner, encouraging his adaptation of the Czech approach to cubist form. Kirchner’s perception of Czech Cubism—rather than its French antecedent—as amenable to his artistic aims results in part from the early twentieth-century tendency to categorize art according to nationality, whereby artists were grouped together by nation rather than by stylistic commonality. This practice had been prevalent in the German art market and exhibition practices since the nineteenth century, even while avant-garde artists and critics avidly followed international developments by pouring over art journals widely available at galleries and cafés (Friedrich 85-89). Additionally, Kirchner may have been conditioned to be wary of French art, or at least of revealing his considerable debt to it, given contemporary arguments by provincial artists about the danger posed by the infiltration (and imitation) of French artworks in German collections and exhibitions.¹¹ In his history of the Berlin Secession, Peter Paret addresses the complicated relationship to French art in the cultural climate of Wilhelmine Prussia, in which the hegemony of Parisian art was variously embraced and bemoaned.¹² As Rose-Carol Washton Long has noted, those who embraced Parisian art belonged to a progressive-minded group of internationally oriented artists and supporters of the avant-garde whereas those who expressed animosity toward the influence of French art in Germany tended to evince a provincial mindset at odds with the embrace of international artistic currents (“National or International?” 521-34).¹³ This mixed reception of French art was transformed into a public debate in 1911, when artists from opposing camps issued statements responding to the anti-French essay “A Protest of German Artists” penned by Carl Vinnen. At the center of this discussion was the acquisition of French modern art by curators of German museums and galleries.¹⁴ The coexistence in German circles of arguments embracing and rejecting international art in the first decades of the twentieth century demonstrates the impossibility of neatly defining artists’ attitudes according to national sentiment. At the same time, when considered against the backdrop of the disagreement over the role of French art in Germany, the Czech artists’ modifications of Parisian Cubism as an aide to spiritual expression offered Kirchner an artistically stimulating tool that conveniently circumvented the question of French influence by adapting cubist form filtered through a Central European sensibility.

In Central Europe a widespread stereotype posited French art as inferior given the assumption that the French were satisfied to delve no deeper than superficial treatment of form, whereas for Czechs and Germans alike, conveying spiritual content was regarded as the ideal goal of art.¹⁵ As curator Jaroslav Andel explains,

Czech Cubism, or more exactly, Cubisms were very different from the French prototype. The existential concerns expressed in the themes of death, pain, and suffering as well as in the dramatic conflict of light and darkness were unthinkable in French Cubism. Also, the Czech Cubists often emphasized the interplay between form and content. Taking Cubism as a point of departure, some Czech artists attempted to develop “the spiritual content of the new form.” (22)

In this way, the Czech Cubists’ transformation of a French style by means of its reception in a Central European cultural context offered a “safe” conduit through which Kirchner could assimilate cubist form into his art, freed from potential accusation by conservative voices in Wilhelmine Germany of imitating the French. In Anel’s explanation, the phrase “the spiritual content of the new form” quotes Kubišta’s letter of March 18, 1915, to Zrzavý. There he wrote, “My main concern is the spiritual content of the new form. [Picasso’s contribution] is by now a fact of common knowledge, . . . on the grounds of which [we] should proceed on, into the spiritual sphere.”¹⁶ This comment reveals that for the Czechs, the Cubism of Picasso and Braque served as the point of departure, rather than the variant practiced in Paris by the so-called Puteaux-Cubists. This choice results in part from the travels of Kubišta and his friend Emil Filla, who both studied in Paris in 1909-10 at a time when the two pioneers of Cubism were beginning to show their work publicly. Furthermore, the advocacy of the Prague-based art historian Vincenc Kramár, who began collecting Picasso’s work in May 1911, served to support the young Czech artists’ embrace of this variant of Cubism. Indeed, one of the first cubist works to enter Kramár’s collection was Picasso’s 1909 sculpture *Head of Fernande*. As Vojtech Lahoda explains, the Czech artists were fascinated by the system of “excoriated planes” that comprise the head in this piece, in particular in the area of the cranium. This detail also serves as an early indication of the Czech adaptation of cubist form to emphasize the head as the seat of the spirit (92-103; see also Brilliant 56).

Emphasis on the head as the locus of the spirit is one of the defining features that Kirchner adapted from the Czechs to underscore his aims in portraying respected individuals while convalescing during the Great War. As he wrote in response to sketches, made by his faithful patron Gustav Schiefler, that describe a set of the artist’s woodcuts: “[your] drawings are so interesting for me because they show me that it is indeed possible to convey to another person *the psyche of a head through a woodcut*.”¹⁷ This comment furthermore reveals that Kirchner is fully aware of his technical means to assist in conveying meaning. His adaptation of cubist form and technique to emphasize the workings of the mind is evident in a series of woodcuts and paintings in which he portrays acquaintances and fellow sanatorium patients, a selection of which I explore here.

Before departing Davos in September 1917 for Sanatorium Bellevue in

Kreuzlingen on the Swiss shores of Lake Constance, Kirchner created a pair of woodcut portraits of the renowned architect Henry van de Velde. As a result of the first meeting between the artist and architect earlier that summer, Van de Velde, who was on an official mission to assess the general welfare of exiled artists living in Switzerland, encouraged Kirchner to enter the care of Dr. Ludwig Binswanger at Bellevue. The artist's ten-month stay there was enabled by Van de Velde's sympathetic intervention and financial sponsorship.¹⁸ Kirchner brought these two portraits of his benefactor with him to Bellevue, along with a portfolio of other prints; he hung one of the Van de Velde prints in his room alongside a woodcut portrait of his dear friend Professor Botho Graef.¹⁹ In the first image, *Head of Van de Velde, light* (Dube H311), Kirchner presents the architect with an elongated face and exaggerated cranium, set before an alpine landscape. The texture of gouges in the woodblock creates linear patterns on the head, which fills the vertical sheet leaving just enough space flanking the figure to suggest the setting. In the pendant woodcut, *Head of Van de Velde, dark* (Dube H312), Kirchner experiments with both the relief techniques of woodcut and the intaglio methods typical of drypoint etching to create a strong contrast between the light background and dark head. The reduction of background elements to abstract curvilinear patterns—Kirchner later referred to the background as “the heavens”²⁰—focuses attention on the elongated head and finely grooved facial features. The pair together, light and dark, reveals Kirchner's attempt to capture the spiritual essence of his sitter through differing technical approaches to visual form.

The geometric distortions of the head in these woodcuts can be attributed in part to Kirchner's adaptation of the pictorial treatment of the head by Kubišta and the Czech Cubists, whereby the elongation of the cranium calls attention to the locus of the spirit. In this way, the Van de Velde pendants declare Kirchner's focus on the spiritual essence of the sitter rather than outward appearance. This focus not only underscores his self-declared heritage as the artistic descendent of the German Gothic,²¹ but also squarely declares his position as an artist whose work derives from “dream, life and cognition, or if you will, imagination, sensuality [and] the psyche” in contrast with the widespread, albeit false accusation of French artists' “superficial” concern with form at the expense of content.²² Kirchner himself declared the former effect as his aim when he wrote to Eberhard Grisebach in December 1917 of his desire to capture not only the individual personality, but also the universal spirit of the sitter instead of his physical likeness.²³ Ten years later, he reiterated this belief in his *Davoser Tagebuch*, where he wrote specifically about the expression of character through the rendering of the head. While reflecting on the impossibility of rules to govern the use of color, he drew a parallel with the variability of the face in representation. In April 1927 he observed that:

For me there is no strict form for beauty. Beauty in humans comes solely from the spiritual expression of a face, respectively the whole body. [...] Through the centuries, the construction of the face itself has

not become so different such that we can define any measurable or representable forms. The difference lies solely in the expression. [...] The nervous face of the person of our time reflects every little stimulation. So it acquires lines and colors that are entirely absent in the old figures, although the form and musculature are the same. I see in a head many [lines and colors] that are independent from the anatomical construction. Hence, the dissimilarity of my heads to the original. And yet they are in a greater sense much more similar [to the original] than even the photograph, for they convey the character and sensory perception in enhanced form. (*Davoser Tagebuch* 153-54)

Kirchner's observations here reveal his familiarity with physiognomics, and yet he is not invested in categorizing figures through the repetition of "types," as in physiognomics;²⁴ instead he uses line and color to express his perception of the individual's spiritual essence. Nor is he interested here in physical ugliness or beauty, but rather in drawing out the vitality of the personality which cannot be conveyed through a photographic likeness. Thus his observation, that his "heads" capture more than the visible appearance of a figure, underscores his effort to reveal the inner spirit of the sitter.

While others have acknowledged Kirchner's effort to convey the spirit of the sitter, my research on his adaptation of Czech Cubist strategies demonstrates how he used technical aspects of style to achieve this aim. In addition to emphasis on the head, he also applied "transcendental form" to his figures, as he observed in Kubišta's paintings and drawings. Indeed, Kubišta served as a model for Kirchner in how to add a spiritual dimension to his subjects through the strategic use of form. By applying techniques of Cubism to his expressionist style, as seen in the faceted planes of the head in his first cubist painting, the 1910 *Self-Portrait as a Smoker* (Figure 3), Kubišta was able to extend his expressionistic use of color he had been developing since 1906. By infusing into his coloristic method an emphasis on line and fragmented planes, he underscores the spiritual dimension he had been aiming for in his earlier works. Kubišta adapted the French Cubists' reduced palette, although instead of taking up the neutral hues of Picasso and Braque, Kubišta chose to maintain the expressive power of contrasting colors. In this pivotal self-portrait, he juxtaposes shades of blue against mauve, accented by glimpses of white ground beneath the hatched brushwork. A similar reduction of palette to a set of two or three hues is evident in Kirchner's works from 1912-1913, for example his *Portrait of Dr. Alfred Döblin* (1912), which echoes the hues Kubišta used in his cubist self-portrait.



Figure 3: Kubišta, *Self-Portrait as a Smoker* (Kurák, *Vlastní Podobizna*), 1910.

Kirchner had several opportunities to see Kubišta's paintings first hand, including visits to the artist's Prague studio, as mentioned above, and to exhibitions of the New Secession in Berlin where several of his cubist works were shown, such as his *Self-Portrait as a Smoker* in winter 1911-1912.²⁵ Kirchner reveals not only an interest in color juxtapositions and hatched brushwork in Kubišta's self-portrait but also an emphasis on geometric planes of the head. Similar to his Czech colleague's use of cubist form to reveal the spiritual intensity of his subjects, Kirchner adapted comparable techniques to express the character of his conversation companion at Bellevue, Marie-Luise, widow of Dr. Robert Binswanger and stepmother of Kirchner's doctor, Ludwig. This 1917 portrait, entitled *The Visit, Mrs. Binswanger* (Figure 4), uses extreme simplification of plane and contour akin to Kubišta's notion of "transcendental form" to capture the essence of Marie-Luise's spirit. Her half-figure fills the visual field, the dark hues of her dress and hat against the vibrant reds, yellows and oranges drawing the eye to the center of the composition where she stands in three-quarters' view, her head turned to meet the viewer's gaze. The extreme sharpness of her chin and nose are echoed in the acute angles of her hat brim, shoulder and elbow as well as by the exaggerated angles of the door held open by a secondary figure standing in the background. Another look at Marie-Luise's face reveals Kirchner's care in emphasizing geometric shape, given his retouching of the paint to enhance the dark contours and glowing yellow eyes. The eyes oriented frontally call attention to the profile view of the nose and chin, a conflation of planes that recalls cubist pictorial strategies he had already used to great effect in his 1914 *Portrait of Oskar Schlemmer* (Gordon 416).²⁶ Kirchner's remarkably neat signature below the curving petals of Marie-Luise's yellow bouquet declares the work complete.



Figure 4: Kirchner, *The Visit* (Mrs. Binswanger)
[*Der Besuch* (Frau Binswanger)], 1917.

Albert Schoop records that Marie-Luise temporarily took over observation of Kirchner's situation while his doctor was away on a research sabbatical in Solothurn (32). Kirchner evidently developed a deep trust and admiration for Maria-Luise, with whom he reportedly had long conversations that certainly included issues of art. She even transcribed a handwritten manuscript on Kirchner's work that the artist's late friend Botho Graef had written in his honor (Schoop 32). She urged Kirchner to reinvigorate his artistic practice and, as Kirchner reveals in a dictated letter of August 1918, she encouraged him to send a portfolio of his recent woodcuts to the collector Georg Reinhart, who had visited the artist at Bellevue earlier that spring.²⁷ These details of Kirchner's encounter with Marie-Luise indicate the artist's admiration for her. Infusing her image with "transcendental" geometric form enhanced with vibrant color, he reveals the spiritual intensity resonating in the subject. He explained the connection between form and content in a letter to Reinhart of March 1918, stating that, "the ultimate in art is indeed the psychic element"; he goes on to say that "the authentic in art is indeed feeling, which is pressed into a form through a certain ecstatic process of living."²⁸ For him lived experience inspires form expressed through technical means, which in turn inflects the visual manifestation in his work of the mind as both spirit and intellect. This paradigm, which he had been developing over the previous half decade, informs the representation of Marie-Luise here, where "transcendental form" signals the spiritual impact of her compassionate character. Hence formal emphasis adapted from cubist models combines with Kirchner's broad stylistic and technical interests to draw out the spirit of his sitter.

During his convalescence at Bellevue, Kirchner also cut three portraits of his doctor. In the first woodcut, *Head of Dr. Ludwig Binswanger* (Dube H316), geometric simplification of facial features and an emphasis on the cranium conveyed by elongation and exaggeration of the forehead contribute to the spiritual impact of the portrait. Kirchner employs rectilinear hatchwork to suggest volume and discrete planes while simultaneously creating the effect of flatness, a technique he had been developing in Berlin. In the second woodcut, *Head of Dr. Ludwig*

Binswanger before Shrubbery Leaves and Blossoms (Dube H319), Kirchner presents the face with more naturalistic, curvilinear contours, but extends the forehead through elongation and parallel hatchwork. The nearly abstract organic forms in the background call attention to the geometric flattening of the forehead and underscore the exaggerated proportions of the head. The multiple views of the sitter's eyeglasses recall Kirchner's experiments with Futurism in Berlin, as for example his painting *Friedrich Street, Berlin* (1914; Gordon 367) where a string of identical suitors gravitates toward the two coquettes in the foreground, reminding us of the artist's omnivorous appetite for a variety of artistic impulses he employed in combination.

This futurist repetition has its origins in cubist conflation of views, a detail that connects the second woodcut to another portrait of the doctor, *Head of Dr. Ludwig Binswanger and Little Girls* (Figure 5; Dube H320). Not only does Kirchner make extensive use of linear hatchwork to



Figure 5: Kirchner, *Head of Dr. Ludwig Binswanger and Little Girls* (*Kopf Dr. Ludwig Binswanger und kleine Mädchen*), 1917/18.

suggest flattened planes of the face, but he also presents two views of the head: one in three-quarters' view and one in profile. This profile view of forehead, glasses, nose, moustache and mouth visually links the doctor to the girls occupying the background. The orientation of the two conflated views also emphasizes the flattening of space inherent in the dramatically contrasting scale between these secondary figures and the doctor's head that consumes the vertical space of the woodblock. In summer 1919 Kirchner explained to Schiefler the technical and conceptual aims of collapsing space, stating that "with my creations today, I use the entire surface of the plate for representation without regard for the reality of things. The arrangement obeys only the rhythm derived from the corresponding stimulation."²⁹ Hence, for Kirchner images employing conflated planes and multiple views, such

as the Binswanger portrait and even *Head of a Caretaker* (Dube H324) with its multiple noses and moustaches, relate directly to the workings of the mind in an effort to draw out the spirit resonating in the subject.

As early as 1912, Kirchner's work clearly demonstrates his recognition of the expressive potential of Cubism's simultaneous views. He had observed how Kubišta could delve into the spirit of his subjects through the cubist practice of conflating multiple views, as in the 1911 drawing *Studie k Obrazu Pierot (Study for Pierot)* exhibited in Berlin at the Fifth New Secession exhibition in March 1912. Kirchner experimented with this technical method of conflating views, as evidenced by his 1912 painting *Street by Schöneberg City Park, Innsbruck Street* (Gordon 292). He reveals his interest in the geometric structure of the scene with its sharply receding block of houses and presents four simultaneous viewpoints conflated onto the two-dimensional canvas. Over twenty years later he diagrammed this composition for his patron Carl Hagemann and proudly described the painting as follows: "...the picture 'Innsbruck Street' ...has much to do with the problems of the effect of depth in the plane [or] surface. In it I tried to neutralize perspectival plasticity through a perspective with four viewpoints, which with the help of color succeeded, in my opinion. ... It deals with the whole melancholy of the big city streets."³⁰ Kirchner derives satisfaction from his ability to convey the emotion resonating in his subject by employing a reduced palette and simultaneous viewpoints, hence using a formal technique to convey lived experience. In this way he has adapted cubist principles for his own expressive purposes, following a model offered by the Czech Cubists. Recognition of this stylistic adaptation recasts the conventional interpretation of overwhelming alienation and nervousness ascribed to this painting and other works by Kirchner from the years leading up to the first World War. With awareness of Kirchner's interpretation of Czech Cubist use of form to enhance spiritual expression, these paintings and prints become more meaningful as markers of cross-fertilization in the visual arts of the international avant-garde. Indeed, Kirchner continued to play with the visual tool of conflated views until the end of his life.

Kirchner's respect for Dr. Binswanger, Marie-Luise, and Henry van de Velde is matched by his fascination with the exiled German novelist and playwright Leonhard Frank. Frank registered as a patient at Bellevue on two different occasions in 1915 and again in spring 1917, returning as a guest of Dr. Binswanger in November 1917, which is when Kirchner met him (Schoop 48, 71). Comparison of a full-length portrait of Frank with two portrait "heads" reveals Kirchner's emphasis on the seat of the spirit, akin to the works discussed above. In the first woodcut, which he referred to as *Frank im Mantel (Frank in an Overcoat; Dube H318)*,³¹ the exiled author strides toward a band of secondary figures at the right edge of the sheet while a bird-like form hovers behind his head. These details provide scale for the main figure, whose head is disproportionately enlarged. As *Brücke*-connoisseur Hermann Gerlinger has observed, the exaggeration of the head in this woodcut emphasizes the spiritual presence of the writer (13). This print later acquired the

title *Der aufgeregte Dichter Leonhard Frank (The Nervous Poet Leonhard Frank)*, a change that misconstrues the original context of the image. Considering Kirchner's subjects in his Dresden and Berlin years, he must have admired Frank's ability to work within bourgeois society to critique its morals and social structures through his choice of themes in his early narratives. As Schoop's investigations have revealed, the outspoken pacifist chose exile upon the outbreak of war rather than risking conscription, registering at Bellevue to circumvent inquiries about his fitness for duty (47), details that made Frank seem to Kirchner like a kindred soul. Labeling Frank as *aufgeregt* (agitated/nervous) in the later title unfairly guides the perception of the simplified, geometric forms in this woodcut as signs of Frank's, and by extension Kirchner's, purported psychological state.³²

In a second portrait that Kirchner entitled *Frank mit schreiendem Weib (Frank with Shouting Female)*; Dube H321), Kirchner repeats the geometric simplification of the head using planes of hatchwork gouges. This portrait, which is now known by the title *Head of Poet Frank I*, focuses attention on the head by filling the visual field with the image of the author's visage comprised of "transcendental" geometric shapes and flattened planes. The secondary figures give visual form to Frank's anti-war sentiment, rather than serving as screaming harpies as one might be prone to infer, if the image is taken out of context. Considering Frank's sympathetic portrayal of women in his novellas written in exile, these shouting women may be decrying the horrors of war that widows and mothers are left to bear.³³

The spare contextual details in the composition of a third portrait of Frank, *Head of Poet Frank II* (Figure 6; Dube H322), cause the style of the print to come into sharper focus.³⁴ This woodcut echoes most closely



Figure 6: Kirchner, *Head of Poet Frank II*
(*Kopf Dichter Frank II*), 1917/18.

the cubist forms of Kubišta's painting style, as seen in the angular faceting of the head. The "transcendental" geometric forms employed in this representation stand out boldly when the print is considered alongside the relatively naturalistic drawing, executed full-scale and inscribed with the title *Kopf Frank*.³⁵ In contrast with the drawing, the parallel hatchwork in the woodcut accentuates the darker facet lines delineating the geometric planes of the face and defining the exaggerated forehead. Here the reduction of the image to just the head set against an indeterminate background also recalls the ancient tradition of commemorative portraits, the arc at the lower edge of the sheet framing the disembodied head (Brilliant 27). This arrangement, together with the dedicatory title Kirchner originally assigned to the print (*Frank Weihnachten 1917*), underscores the respect Kirchner pays to Frank in producing this cubist-inspired woodcut. The "transcendental forms" he uses to compose this commemorative head serve to deepen the association of the author's monumental spirit with the abstracted form of his image.

The form of a disembodied head crops up again in a self-portrait Kirchner produced around the end of his stay at Bellevue.³⁶ The enigmatic woodcut *Self-Portrait with Dancing Death* (Figure 7; Dube H333) sets the head of the artist in profile against a landscape with fading flowers, conflating a skeletal figure with his own head. Here, he devotes himself entirely to the realm of the spirit and intellect. This emphasis on both aspects of the mind stands out even more given that Kirchner and his *Brücke* colleagues primarily represented subjects with origins in the visually and sensually perceived world. The skeleton becomes the substitute for the visual boundaries of the artist's body, whereby the skeletal arm becomes the jaw, the bony hand



Figure 7: Kirchner, *Self-Portrait with Dancing Death* (*Selbstbildnis mit tanzendem Tod*), 1918.

the chin, the bent legs the neck, and the curvilinear aureole the back of the head. Formally, the parallel lines of the artist's forehead create the effect of flatness, while

the crystalline surfaces of the cheek suggest volume. It is precisely in this area—where the head melds into the vision of Dancing Death—that cubist fragmentation occurs. These cubist-inspired forms mark the junction between the real and the imaginary and reveal Kirchner's exploitation of the expressive potential of cubist principles adapted from the Czechs.

In this visionary image, Kirchner not only reveals his indebtedness to the focus on the spirit prevalent in Czech Cubism, but also returns to the medieval and Renaissance tradition of representing the "Dance of Death," a tradition that Kirchner certainly knew from the series of forty-one woodcuts by the Augsburg-born artist Hans Holbein the Younger. Kirchner's woodcut self-portrait can be considered together with his macabre *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* (Figure 1), a painting that, as Peter Springer has convincingly argued, reflects his engagement with a range of imagery to convey both his fears of war as well as his mastery over his visual surroundings by means of metaphor. In a similar way, the image in the woodcut marks the print as a reinterpretation of another pictorial precedent, namely the German Romantic era woodcut cycle by Alfred Rethel called "Another Dance of Death" (1849). According to Peter Paret, this cycle depicts the skeletal figure of Death as seducing the working-class populace into the senseless maelstrom of a destructive war. At the beginning of the narrative death is not depicted as imminent; rather it is the townspeople's misguided enthusiasm for revolution that hastens their demise (*Art as History*, 79-92, 104-30). Given the enduring popularity and widespread circulation of Rethel's six woodcuts, it is likely that Kirchner knew the series and would have sensed a parallel to the contemporary context. But rather than depicting the image of Dancing Death as inciting social upheaval leading to revolution as Rethel did, Kirchner instead references the challenge to individual autonomy posed by war. In this remarkable self-portrait, as in the painted *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, Kirchner concentrates the visual field on the head and lays bare the workings of the mind by portraying himself as a seer of imagined war wounds and as mocked by Death.³⁷ In both images he emphasizes the head to convey his defiance of death and emotional and physical suffering parallel to Kubišta's "spiritual self-portrait" as St. Sebastian (Figure 2). Indeed the eyes of the artist in Kirchner's woodcut stare in the opposite direction from the skeletal messenger, defying his sinister entreaty and gazing resolutely toward the alpine landscape which after 1918 became his permanent home.

By eliminating the contextual details beyond the landscape features, the skeletal figure in Kirchner's woodcut loses the moralizing impact inherent in its historical antecedents in Holbein and Rethel and becomes instead a refusal of insanity and death, two prevalent themes in the early narratives of Kirchner's new acquaintance, Leonhard Frank. For example, in his prize-winning 1914 novel *Die Räuberbande*, the much-admired "American" brother of Oscar Benommen returns to Würzburg deranged and soon thereafter dies in a local insane asylum, where he was admitted by his concerned family. Similarly a young female artist whom the main character Michael Vierkant meets in Munich is taken away due to her uncon-

ventional behavior; she dies soon thereafter. In the end Vierkant himself succumbs to enduring self-doubt when betrayal by a friend and the resulting pursuit by the authorities unleash a rapid downward spiral ending in the young man's suicide. Hence, insanity and institutionalization are directly linked with death in this early work by Frank, a work that Kirchner surely knew given its popularity in German literary circles, with whose members the artist collaborated in Berlin.

Doubtless, the connection between war, insanity, and death weighed heavily on Kirchner's mind during his convalescence. This connection, however, only describes one portion of the artist's complex self-definition as a member of the international avant-garde. The adaptation of cubist form in his woodcut self-portrait reveals the artist's refusal to be overwhelmed by these forces, instead continuing his drive toward synthesizing form in his visual work and not succumbing to his very real fears. While the image acknowledges implicitly that both a return to military duty and his self-propelled downward spiral may lead ultimately to death, it also demonstrates Kirchner's tenacity in remaining active in his pursuit of technical innovations to express lived experience. Taking these factors together, Kirchner's *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* and *Self-Portrait with Dancing Death* serve as metaphorical bookends to his wartime experience through the implication of the artist's resolve not to surrender to the psychological effects posed by living under threat of being sent into war. Rather than lose his bearings in a vortex of suffering and fear, Kirchner uses technical and pictorial experiments to tether himself to his artistry, a choice that ultimately enabled him to devote another twenty years to productive artistic activity, against the odds.

In conclusion, my interpretation of these wartime portraits and self-portraits as part of Kirchner's continual effort to give visual form to spiritual essence broadens conventional readings of these works as symptomatic of his nervous state and the curtailed use of his hands. Kirchner was undoubtedly sensitive and highly perceptive, but these qualities do not equate with a loss of control over the practice of his craft, as has been claimed even recently in spite of studies that dispel this myth. Indeed, in his diary and letters Kirchner repeatedly states his desire to express the energy contained in the subject, a fact that contradicts the common post-World War II notion that these portraits exclusively convey Kirchner's purported psychological fragility. As a skilled innovator Kirchner was capable of utilizing various technical and intellectual skills in exploiting a range of formal techniques, including actively adapting other artistic models to enhance and advance his own art and deepen his ability to express lived experience, as has been readily accepted in relation to Post-Impressionists whom the *Brücke*-artists adopted early on as artistic models.³⁸

Rather than frame Kirchner as a weak, overly impulsive man, who by conventional accounts reflexively projected his anxieties onto the paper or canvas, he should be understood instead as a highly skilled and strong-willed artist who was able to harness both his own sensitivity and the energy he perceived emanating from his surroundings and translate these aspects into visual form through strategically

applied techniques. By extension, the technical and conceptual virtuosity of the paintings and woodcuts discussed here underscores the need to regard these images as a continuation of Kirchner's life-long exploration of stylistic possibilities rather than as purely symptomatic of debilitating anxiety as proposed by conventional accounts. This recognition is significant because it permits a historically situated interpretation of the conceptual tools he utilized in expressing his chosen subject matter. By acknowledging Kirchner's creative process in light of his interest in cubist techniques and emphasis on the head in portraiture, we discover how Kirchner was able to convey his fascination with the spiritual aspect of his subjects, as epitomized by the synthesis of styles in his wartime works.

Figures

1. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier (Selbstbildnis als Soldat)*, 1915. Oil on canvas, 69.2 x 61 cm (Gordon 435). Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio. Charles F. Olney Fund, 1950. (© [for works by E. L. Kirchner] by Ingeborg & Dr. Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern).
2. Bohumil Kubišta, *St. Sebastian (Svatý Šebestián)*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 98 x 74.5 cm. National Gallery, Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague, 2008.
3. Bohumil Kubišta, *Self-Portrait as a Smoker (Kurák, Vlastní Podobizna)*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 68 x 51 cm. National Gallery, Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague, 2008.
4. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *The Visit (Mrs. Binswanger) [Der Besuch (Frau Binswanger)]*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 89 x 61.3 cm [35 1/16 x 24 1/8 in.] (Gordon 497). Milwaukee Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William D. Vogel M1969.33. Photographed by P. Richard Eells. (© [for works by E. L. Kirchner] by Ingeborg & Dr. Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern).
5. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Head of Dr. Ludwig Binswanger and Little Girls (Kopf Dr. Ludwig Binswanger und kleine Mädchen)*, 1917/18. Woodcut, 32 x 40 cm (Dube H320). Photo: Städtische Galerie Delmenhorst. (© [for works by E. L. Kirchner] by Ingeborg & Dr. Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern). Photograph by Thomas Beck.
6. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Head of Poet Frank II (Kopf Dichter Frank II)*, 1917/18. Woodcut, 42 x 22.3 cm (Dube H322). Photo: Städtische Galerie Delmenhorst. (© [for works by E. L. Kirchner] by Ingeborg & Dr. Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern). Photograph by Thomas Beck.
7. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait with Dancing Death (Selbstbildnis mit tanzendem Tod)*, 1918. Woodcut, 50 x 34 cm (Dube H333). Photo: Städtische Galerie Delmenhorst. (© [for works by E. L. Kirchner] by Ingeborg & Dr. Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern). Photograph by Thomas Beck.

Notes

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1. See for example Masheck (56-61).
2. Several scholars have posited that Kirchner feigned illness in order to be discharged and permanently excused from military duty. Letters between Karl Osthaus, Ernst Gosebruch, Botho Graef and Dr. Oscar Kohnstamm suggest that Kirchner was encouraged by these respectable men to exaggerate his ailments as a means to give him a short break from training in September-October 1915 and again in December 1915 and eventually to help him relocate to Davos to avoid having to return to the military. Albert Schoop records Kirchner's efforts to feign illness, noting Dr. Lucius Spengler's observation that Kirchner "is not severely ill, but he does not eat" (Davos, May 1917); Schoop also notes that Prof. Hans Fehr (Kirchner's military supervisor and *Brücke* passive member) knew Kirchner was intentionally not eating in order to fool the doctors. See Schoop (13). It is clear that Kirchner suffered from anxiety related to his military service, but the extent and intensity of the real physiological ailment was exaggerated by Kirchner and went uncorrected by his friends. By abusing sleeping pills (Véronal), alcohol, drugs (including morphium), and even strong coffee as attested by Helene Spengler and Hans Mardersteig, Kirchner undoubtedly made himself physically sick and caused the lameness in his limbs (see Schoop (13); Grisebach (59); and Joelson (88)). His diagnoses, however, (for example, "inflammation of the spinal cord" or "tubercular brain tumor resulting from syphilis") never reflected his true, self-induced condition. See Hesse-Frielingshaus (40-50) and Schoop (13). See also Guratsch and Röske.
3. Werner Haftmann's widely read survey of European modern art, first published in 1954, seems to be a key source for propagating this misinterpretation. His characterization of *Brücke* artists according to (assumed) temperament and his discussion of Kirchner's style oversimplify the artistic aims and techniques of the artist. See Haftmann (1: 88-89, 1: 230-31). To his credit, Haftmann does acknowledge Kirchner's interest in Cubism as evidenced in his work of ca. 1912, although he does not pursue the dynamics of this connection (Haftmann 2: 55).
4. The postcard reads "Bohumil Kubišta / Herzliche Grüsse Willi Nowak"; verso

text: “Lieber Erich, Hier eine Postkarte für den interessantesten Prager Maler. Habe 4 Bilder für Brücke von ihm bekommen sehr gut. Dein Ernst / Wir kommen schon heute nach Dresden Herzliche Grüße M Mueller / Freuen uns sehr auf Wiedersehen Ihr Otto M.” Published in Hedinger, 180, item 165 (no illus.; Hedinger attributes the drawing to Kubišta); illustrated in Nešlehová, figures 13-14.

5. An important exhibition catalogue on *Die Brücke* that includes Kubišta among the group’s “active members” is *Die Brücke in Dresden, 1905-1911*. Kubišta is also mentioned in the catalogue to the recent monographic exhibition *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner 1880-1938*; see Lloyd and Moeller (234). In recognition of the international outlook of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, the connection between German and Czech artists is discussed in essays in Benson as well as in Clegg (164, 200).

6. Bohumil Kubišta, “O duchovním pokladu moderní doby” (1912), translated as “The Intellectual Basis of Modern Time” (Benson and Forgács 99). As an indication of the dual meaning of the Czech word *duch* (adj. *duchový*), it is noteworthy that the same essay has also been translated with the title “On the Spiritual Essence of the Modern Age” (Freimanová 61-63). This linguistic duality is borne out through the choice of English equivalents throughout both translations. Compare to the original Czech in the posthumous anthology of Kubišta’s writings, *Předpoklady slohu* (86-92).

7. *Duch* is translated in standard lexicons as spirit, genius, mind, intellect, wits and notably (now obsolete) as “breath,” an early meaning that parallels the Reformation period meaning of the German word *der Geist*. See Grimm, column 2623-2741 (*Geist*) and 2771-2775 (*geistig*). This range of meanings underscores the complexity of the notion of the spirit and intellect as dual aspects of the mind in the Central European context.

8. Of course, Kandinsky springs to mind here. His treatise “On the Spiritual in Art” was published already in December 1911 (with a date of 1912, a common strategy used by publishers to appeal to readers’ interest in “new” material) and made available at the Fourth *Neue Secession* exhibition in Berlin (November 1911-January 1912; see Daemgen 156, note 87) where Kirchner and Kubišta both showed a set of paintings. Correspondence by both artists indicates that they both visited the exhibition and one can safely assume that they would have noticed Kandinsky’s treatise set out for perusal in the exhibition antechamber. The treatise was discussed in the Czech avant-garde journal *Umelecký Mesicník (Arts Monthly)* in May and June, 1912. Kandinsky’s ideas on the spiritual in art were indeed taken up by both artists, a commonality that underlies much of their written work.

9. “Geometrical figures such as prisms, pyramids, cylinders, cones, polyhedrons, polygons, surfaces, lines and their interrelations . . . [have] nothing in common with man’s environment, but express an intellectual relationship with infinity and hence rest, in [their] geometrical and symbolic essence, on a rational basis.” Bohumil Kubišta, “O předpokladech slohu” (“On the Prerequisites of Style”) (Freimanová 60).

10. In four of the twenty-five critical essays and reviews he wrote between 1909 and 1914, Kubišta attempted to define the modern spirit and its relationship to creative production. His definition embraced the spiritualization of form and the contemporary era with its proliferation of new technologies and social change. In these essays, he argued for the validity of all artistic styles outside the bounds of an artificial hierarchy of “-isms” proposed by some of his Czech contemporaries.
11. See Saehrendt (59-63, 85-125) and Long, “National or International?” (521-34).
12. The embrace of French art is exemplified by Paul Cassirer’s exhibition agenda for his gallery whereas a concurrent sense of competition is exemplified by imperial policies regarding the selection of works for the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. See Paret, *Berlin Secession*.
13. Long addresses the complexity of nationalist and internationalist sentiment in early twentieth-century Germany in her corrective study of the critical writings of four major advocates of international Expressionism before and after World War I. My thanks to the author for directing me to “National or International?”.
14. Portions of Vinnen’s 1911 essay, along with responses by art historian Wilhelm Worringer and the Blue-Rider artist Wassily Kandinsky, are translated in Long, *German Expressionism* (5-13, 38-41). The nationalistic context for this artistic debate is discussed in West.
15. This historical prejudice is demonstrated by Ruth Florack in her introduction to an anthology of German and French literature spanning the sixteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries (4, 45 and passim).
16. Quoted after Mahulena Nešlehová, “Bohumil Kubišta. Painter and Theorist,” in Freimanová (19).
17. My emphasis. “[Deine] Zeichnungen sind deshalb für mich so interessant, weil sie mir zeigen, daß es tatsächlich möglich ist, die Psyche eines Kopfes einem anderen Menschen durch einen Holzschnitt zu übermitteln.” Letter from Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler dated 11 July 1919, nr. 118 in Henze, Dube-Heynig, and Kraemer-Noble (132).
18. See for example, a letter from Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, dated 12 July 1917, indicating Van de Velde’s facilitation in Grisebach (71). References to Van de Velde’s visits with Kirchner at Bellevue include a letter of 5 January 1918 (nr. 130 in Delfs, von Lüttichau and Scotti 93-4).
19. Bettina Gockel convincingly frames this arrangement in conjunction with Kirchner’s desire to position himself in the spiritual milieu with these two respected individuals (50).
20. Letter from Kirchner to Schiefler, dated 6 June 1919, nr. 115 in Henze, Dube-Heynig, and Kraemer-Noble (129). In the same letter, Kirchner describes his experiments with new techniques of reversed color in a contemporary woodcut entitled *Kopf Dr. R* (Dube H314, correctly identified as Dr. Heinrich Reese).
21. See Reisenfeld (299); see also Bushart. Long takes issue with Bushart’s characterization of national identity as the central concern to artists in this context; see

Long, “National or International?” (522).

22. Kirchner explains these three aspects as a corrective to Eberhard Grisebach’s informal essay on the artist’s work; see letter from Bellevue dated 31 January 1918 in Grisebach (79-81). The stereotype of French art as superficial in contrast to German “inwardness” is repeated by Grisebach in a letter dated 20 November 1917, at a time when he and Kirchner were engrossed in a lively exchange of ideas; see Grisebach (76).

23. Letters from Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, dated 1 December and 30 December, 1917, in Grisebach (76-77, 78). See also Schoop (50) and Gerlinger (12).

24. Gockel argues that Kirchner’s series of portrait “heads” made in Kreuzlingen and Davos (1917-19) derives directly from Lavater’s physiognomic types (49-52). I believe that, while Kirchner was clearly familiar with physiognomics, his statement quoted above indicates that he did not espouse the underlying principles of physiognomy.

25. Kubišta showed at several New Secession exhibitions in Berlin including the fourth (November 1911-January 1912; five paintings: *Harlequin and Colombine*, *Circus/Acrobats*, *Landscape near Prague*, *Quarry in Branik* and *Self-Portrait as Smoker*; for a good color reproduction of the latter, see Svestka and Vlcek 119), fifth (March 1912; one drawing: *Study for Pierot*, now at the Altonaer-Museum, Hamburg) and sixth (December 1913; three paintings: *Still Life*, *Sailor* and *Coastal Artillery Fighting with Navy*), as well as a New Secession exhibition hosted by Herwarth Walden at *Der Sturm* in Berlin (December 1912; seven paintings: *Kiss of Death*, *Murder*, *Quarry*, *Waterfall in the Alps*, *Old Prague Motif*, and two still lifes identified by Nešlehová as *Still Life with Vases* (MN 226) and *Still Life with Skull* (MN 246). See Nešlehová 206).

26. Gockel acknowledges the conflation of frontal and profile views of Schlemmer’s facial features as a point of origin for the Kreuzlingen woodcuts, but does not connect this to Kirchner’s adaptation of Cubism; see Gockel (56). Heike Laermann notes that it is first in Kreuzlingen that Kirchner transfers into woodcut his conflated views of the face evident in the Schlemmer portrait, noting the dissenting views of Donald Gordon and, thirty years later, Gerd Presler regarding the influence of Picasso on Kirchner’s early work; see Laermann (82) and notes 676-77 (202).

27. Item nr. 15, dated 1. August 1918 from Kirchner at Bellevue to Georg Reinhart in Winterthur, accompanied by a list of woodcuts and lithographs for the collector’s review, in Joelson (38-43). As part of Dr. Binswanger’s treatment plan for Kirchner, the artist resided in relative isolation at Bellevue to ensure quietude in an undisturbed setting where he could regain his strength and his desire to make pictures (Schoop 28-29). Van de Velde supplied the artist with materials so he could resume painting (Schoop 28), while several guests, including Grisebach, Edwin Redslob, Carl Georg Heise, and Hans Mardersteig, brought Kirchner books to rekindle his enthusiasm for art (Schoop 32, 48, 50. See also Gockel 48, note 7).

28. “...aber das letzte in der Kunst ist doch das Psychische...” Further below in the same letter: “...das eigentliche [sic] in der Kunst ist doch das Gefühl, das durch

einen gewissen extatischen Lebensprozess [sic] in eine Form gepreßt wird." Letter nr. 13, dated 21 March 1918 to Georg Reinhart (Joelson 37).

29. "Es ist bei meinem heutigen Schaffen so, ich benutze ohne Rücksicht auf die Realität der Dinge die gesamte Plattenfläche zur Darstellung. Die Anordnung gehorcht lediglich dem aus dem betreffenden Anreiz entsprungenen Rhythmus." Letter dated 11 July 1919, nr. 118 in Henze, Dube-Heynig, and Kraemer-Noble (132).

30. Letter dated Davos, 23. Dez 35, document nr. 655: "Gerade das Bild: 'Innsbrucker Strasse' von dem Sie schreiben, dass es zum Verkauf steht beschäftigt sich viel mit den Problemen von der Tiefenwirkung in der Fläche. Ich versuchte darin die perspektivische Plastik durch eine Perspektive mit 4 Augenpunkten aufzuheben, was mir auch mit Hilfe der Farbe gelang, meiner Meinung nach gelang [sic]. ... Es enthält die ganze Melancholie der Grossstadtstrassen" (Delfs, von Lüttichau, and Scotti 512-13).

31. See nr. 14 of a list of titles accompanying Kirchner's portfolio of prints sent in August 1918 to Georg Reinhart (Joelson 40).

32. Gerlinger, for example, refers to the "verkrampft wirkenden Hände und die weit ausholende Schrittstellung" which he claims "deuten die Erregung des Dichters an" (13). In her discussion of the woodcuts from Kreuzlingen, Laermann inadvertently reinscribes the perception of the artist's agitated state in the style he selected for these representations (82-83).

33. For example, "Die Kriegeswitwe" and "Die Mutter" first published in René Schickele's *Die Weißen Blätter* and as part of a collection of novellas entitled *Der Mensch ist Gut* (1917). See Schoop (47). Gerlinger mentions *Der Mensch ist Gut* in passing in his discussion of this woodcut (13). For analysis of themes, motifs, and structure in these novellas, see Glaubrecht.

34. In 1908 Waetzoldt identified three psychological responses to portraiture: "one stimulated by the actual appearance of the human original, the second by its artistic treatment, and the third by the attitude of a disinterested viewer" (Brilliant 32; he refers to Waetzoldt 1). Given the extensive art historical component of Kirchner's library, it is remarkable that he owned no works specifically on the subject of portraiture. The acknowledgement that the "artistic treatment" can affect a psychological response is significant for my discussion here.

35. Kirchner-Museum Davos, inv. no. 1994/Ben 4-333/00902/Z. Reproduced as cat. 271 in Scotti, *Katalog der Sammlung* (159).

36. Laermann implies a possible dating of February 1918, by association with a pessimistic letter to Schiefler dated 7 February 1918 (Laermann 175).

37. In his introduction to a facsimile edition of Holbein's 1538 *Dance of Death*, Gundersheimer observes that Death "mocks the living person, while summoning him to die" (xii).^v

38. Among others, see for example Jill Lloyd, "Vincent van Gogh and Expressionism" in Lloyd and Peppiatt (11-28).

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