

this date (1920) have sat in a somewhat strained relationship with the more overtly left-wing elements of the post-war German avant-garde. Originally published in Edschmid, op. cit. The present translation is taken from Miesel, op. cit., pp. 180-1.

Work!

Ecstasy! Smash your brains! Chew, stuff your self, gulp it down, mix it around! The bliss of giving birth! The crack of the brush, best of all as it stabs the canvas. Tubes of color squeezed dry. And the body?

It doesn't matter.

Health?

Make yourself healthy!

Sickness doesn't exist! Only work and I'll say that again – only blessed work! Paint! Dive into colors, roll around in tones! in the slush of chaos! Chew the broken-off mouthpiece of your pipe, press your naked feet into the earth. Crayon and pen pierce sharply into the brain, they stab into every corner, furiously they press into the whiteness. Black laughs like the devil on paper, grins in bizarre lines, comforts in velvety planes, excites and caresses. The storm roars – sand blows about – the sun shatters to pieces – and nevertheless, the gentle curve of the horizon quietly embraces everything.

Beaten down, exhausted, just a worm, collapse into your bed. A deep sleep will make you forget your defeat. A new day! A new struggle! Ecstasy again! One day after the other, a sparkling, constantly changing chain of days. One experience after the other. That damned brain! What is it that churns and twitches and jumps in there? Hah! Tear your head off, or grab it with both hands, turn it around, twist it off. Then we'll scrape it out and scratch it out. Get rid of every last little bit. Sand! Water! Scrub it clean. There now!! Almost as good as new! an unused skull. Night! Night! No stars, pitch black. Without desire!

Tomorrow is another day.

### 13 George Grosz (1893–1959) 'My New Pictures'

Grosz had made a series of transitions, from an amalgam of Futurism and Expressionism to Berlin Dada, and to membership of the German Communist Party on its foundation in January 1919. By 1920 he had virtually abandoned painting and had produced several portfolios of prints attacking bourgeois society. These were published by the Communist oriented press Malik Verlag. The 'new pictures' to which he refers in this text of 1920 mark a resumption of painting in a style influenced on the one hand, ideologically, by the demands for a socialist objectivity, and on the other, technically, by the more traditional forms of pictorial space paradoxically exemplified in the concurrent work of conservatives like Carrà (III A4). Originally published in *Das Kunstblatt*, V, no. 1, Berlin, 1921. The present translation is taken from Miesel, op. cit., pp. 185-8. (For further texts by Grosz see IV B8 and IV C7.)

Today art is absolutely a secondary affair. Anyone able to see beyond their studio walls will admit this. Just the same, art is something which demands a clearcut decision from artists. You can't be indifferent about your position in this trade, about your attitude toward the problem of the masses, a problem which is no problem if you can see

straight. Are you on the side of the exploiters or on the side of the masses who are giving these exploiters a good tanning?

You can't avoid this issue with the old rigmarole about the sublimity and holiness and transcendental character of art. These days an artist is bought by the best-paying jobber or Maecenas – this business of commissions is called in a bourgeois state the advancement of culture. But today's painters and poets don't want to know anything at all about the masses. How else can you explain the fact that virtually nothing is exhibited which in any way reflects the ideals and efforts, the will of the aspiring masses.

The artistic revolutions of painters and poets are certainly interesting and aesthetically valuable – but still, in the last analysis, they are studio problems and many artists who earnestly torment themselves about such matters end up by succumbing to skepticism and bourgeois nihilism. This happens because persisting in their individualistic artistic eccentricities they never learn to understand revolutionary issues with any clarity; in fact, they rarely bother with such things. Why, there are even art-revolutionary painters who haven't freed themselves from painting Christ and the apostles; now, at the very time when it is their revolutionary duty to double their efforts at propaganda in order to purify the world of supernatural forces, God and His angels, and thereby sharpen mankind's awareness of its true relationship to the world. Those symbols, long since exhausted, and the mystical raptures of that stupid saint hocus-pocus, today's painting is full of that stuff and what can it possibly mean to us? All this painted nonsense certainly can't stand up to reality. Life is much too strong for it.

What should you do to give content to your paintings?

Go to a proletarian meeting; look and listen how people there, people just like you, discuss some small improvement of their lot.

And understand – these masses are the ones who are reorganizing the world. Not you! But you can work with them. You could help them if you wanted to! And that way you could learn to give your art a content which was supported by the revolutionary ideals of the workers.

As for my works in this issue, I want to say the following: I am again trying to give an absolutely realistic picture of the world. I want every man to understand me – without that profundity fashionable these days, without those depths which demand a veritable diving outfit stuffed with cabalistic and metaphysical hocus-pocus. In my efforts to develop a clear and simple style I can't help drawing closer to Carrà. Nevertheless, everything which is metaphysical and bourgeois about Carrà's work repels me. My work should be interpreted as training, as a hard workout, without any vision into eternity! I am trying in my so-called works of art to construct something with a completely realistic foundation. Man is no longer an individual to be examined in subtle psychological terms, but a collective, almost mechanical concept. Individual destiny no longer matters. Just as the ancient Greeks, I would like to create absolutely simple sport symbols which would be so easily understood that no commentary would be necessary.

I am suppressing colour. Lines are used in an impersonal, photographic way to construct volumes. Once more stability, construction, and practical purpose – e.g., sport, engineer, and machine but devoid of Futurist romantic dynamism.

Once more to establish control over line and form – it's no longer a question of conjuring up on canvas brightly coloured Expressionistic soul-tapestries – the object-

ivity and clarity of an engineer's drawing is preferable to the uncontrolled twaddle of the cabala, metaphysics, and ecstatic saints.

It isn't possible to be absolutely precise when you write about your own work, especially if you're always in training – then each day brings new discoveries and a new orientation. But I would like to say one thing more: I see the future development of painting taking place in workshops, in pure craftsmanship, not in any holy temple of the arts. Painting is manual labor, no different from any other; it can be done well or poorly. Today we have a star system, so do the other arts – but that will disappear.

Photography will play an important role: nowadays a photographer can give you a better and cheaper picture of yourself than a painter. Besides, modern artists prefer to distort things after their own fashion – and they have a peculiar aversion to a good likeness. The anarchism of Expressionism must stop! Today painters are forced into this situation because they are unenlightened and have no links with working people. But a time will come when artists – instead of being scrubby bohemian anarchists – will be clean, healthy workers in a collectivistic community. Until this goal is realized by the working class the intellectual will remain cynical, skeptical, and confused. Not until then will art be able to break out of its narrow and shallow confines where it flows anaemically through the life of the 'upper ten-thousand', not until then will it become a great stream capable of nourishing all of working humanity. Then capitalism's monopoly of spiritual things will be ended. –

And here also communism will lead to a truly classless society, to an enrichment and further development of humanity.

#### 14 Francis Picabia (1879–1953) 'Thank you, Francis!'

The author passed through a succession of avant-garde styles before becoming a leading figure in international Dada, moving between Paris and New York. He founded the Dada review *391* in 1917 and edited it until 1924. The present text, which includes a refusal of the then ascendant classicism, was originally published as 'Francis Mercil' in *Littérature*, new series no. 8, Paris, January 1923. The present translation is taken from Lippard, 1971, op. cit. pp. 171–2.

One must become acquainted with everybody except oneself; one must not know which sex one belongs to; I do not care whether I am male or female, I do not admire men more than I do women. Having no virtues, I am assured of not suffering from them. Many people seek the road which can lead them to their ideal: I have no ideal; the person who parades his ideal is only an arriviste. Undoubtedly, I am also an arriviste, but my lack of scruples is an invention for myself, a subjectivity. Objectively it would consist of awarding myself the légion d'honneur, of wishing to become a minister or of plotting to get into the Institute! Well, for me, all that is shit!

What I like is to invent, to imagine, to make myself a new man every moment, then forget him, forget everything. We should be equipped with a special eraser, gradually effacing our works and the memory of them. Our brain should be nothing but a blackboard, or white, or, better, a mirror in which we would see ourselves for a moment, only to turn our backs on it two minutes later. My ambition is to be a man sterile for others; the man who sets himself up as a school disgusts me, he gives his