

“THE RESHAPING OF ONE’S OWN LIFE”

Kirchner’s Period of Crisis and Its Images

Thomas Röske



PLATE 113

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Speeches II

1914

Drypoint, 25.5 × 16.8 cm

Kirchner Museum Davos



PLATE 114

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

War Widows on the Street

1914

Drypoint, 25.3 × 19.5 cm

Kirchner Museum Davos

The First World War signified, if not death, then at the very least a traumatic watershed, also for many visual artists of Modernism. There was scarcely an artistic oeuvre that was not influenced by the experiences and fears of those years. In contrast to others, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner experienced his crisis not at the front but in the safety of the urban hinterland. After discontinuing his military training in Halle, a series of stays in various psychiatric hospitals began at the end of 1915, which continued until 1918. The type of mental and physical crisis he suffered still remains obscure today. What is only known meanwhile, is that it was largely self-imposed and occasionally even staged – and that it neither began during the war nor was the artist able to entirely recover from it afterwards. A significant part was played by the abuse of intoxicants and medications, which accompanied Kirchner's life from at least 1913 onwards. His suicide in 1938 was connected to this¹ as were health problems before the First World War. The artist only allowed himself to be treated in hospital between 1915 and 1918.

There is also consensus today that Kirchner sought by any means possible to avoid being sent to the front and take part in the fighting, fearing for his life and his art.² This fear continued until 1918, but his strategy was to change over the years. Indeed, it did so partially as a reaction to the course of the war – a fact that has not yet been considered. The following essay seeks to trace the development of Kirchner's crisis and the doctors' attempts at treatment during the war years. Examples of the artist's work produced during this period will be interpreted in this context. Its scope and quality are astonishing and cannot be explained purely by means of a psychodynamic form of expression but also by a desire for justification. Kirchner's work was meant to prove that "as a man and an artist" he was achieving something for the German people, something parallel to the achievement of other men with their weapons.³ What will however not be treated is the bewildering variety of activities that Kirchner and his partner Erna Schilling (1884–1945) deployed in order to publish and sell his works (also the newly created ones), as this has already been done by Titia Hoffmeister.⁴ Nor shall I go into greater detail about Kirchner's projects related to the war, all of them unsuccessful, which Aya Soika has presented in detail.⁵

The main source of my portrayal is the letters from, to and about Kirchner, most of which have been published.⁶ They contain a wealth of information but demand a critical reading. If one fails to differentiate between different correspondents one can easily draw mistaken conclusions.⁷ Thus, for example, it was wrongfully presumed that Kirchner was initially enthusiastic about the war.⁸ And a certain distrust is not only appropriate in the case of Kirchner himself, but also partially for his partner Erna Schilling, especially when she reports on Kirchner's condition during his stays in the sanatorium of Dr Edel in Berlin, and Bellevue in Kreuzlingen.⁹

Antecedents: Alcohol and Medication

The prologue to Kirchner's crisis began by 1913 at the latest, with his increased consumption of alcohol and medication. This had a long tradition. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century intoxicants had been taken by writers and visual artists to reduce inhibitions and increase receptivity to experience.¹⁰ The young men of the Brücke also certainly enjoyed an excess of alcohol. According to a doctor's interview with Kirchner's partner Erna Schilling,¹¹ who had, however, only known him since 1912, a change occurred in 1913. With his desire to set himself apart more distinctly from bourgeois society,¹² and even more so after the Brücke group's disintegration in May, the artist began to reduce his sleep, get drunk on rum and to increase his ability to work with the help of medication such as Pyramidon.¹³ Here the generally tense mood before the First World War – also expressed in the apocalyptic landscapes of the German Expressionist Ludwig Meidner (1884–1966) – becomes tangible in Kirchner.

Already by 1914, it was evident that Kirchner's reckless treatment of himself was affecting him mentally and physically. After he had refurnished the apartment in Berlin-Friedenau with Schilling, they travelled in July to the Baltic Sea island of Fehmarn, as they had done in previous summers. There, for the first time, Kirchner experienced weakness in his arms and legs, which made it difficult for him to carve a canoe, for example. At the beginning of the war on August 1, the island was declared a restricted military area and the couple had to depart in haste. Arrested twice on the way back to Berlin on suspicion of spying,¹⁴ and probably also as a result of his sustained nervous condition, the painter developed, by his own account, a "fear of uniforms".¹⁵ In Berlin he now drank increasingly, especially absinthe, and only left the apartment at night-time.

During this time *The Drinker* was produced (1914, pl. 58) – until 1916 it bore the title *The Absinthe Drinker*. It shows Kirchner with half-closed eyes sitting at a table in his studio, a large green glass in front of him, his right arm stretched out towards us.¹⁶ And yet this is not truly the image of an alcohol addict. Despite the dramatic spatial perspective typical of the time, Kirchner is celebrating himself here as a bohemian, who identifies with non-European culture, in a shirt and scarf with an 'African' or 'Asian' pattern and surrounded by 'primitively' decorated furnishings. The green of his face with its violet shadows caused by the electric light, together with the prominent mouth area and the large lips also lend the painter himself an African appearance.¹⁷

PLATE 58

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

The Drinker

1914

Oil on canvas, 119.5 × 90.5 cm
Germanisches Nationalmuseum,
Nuremberg

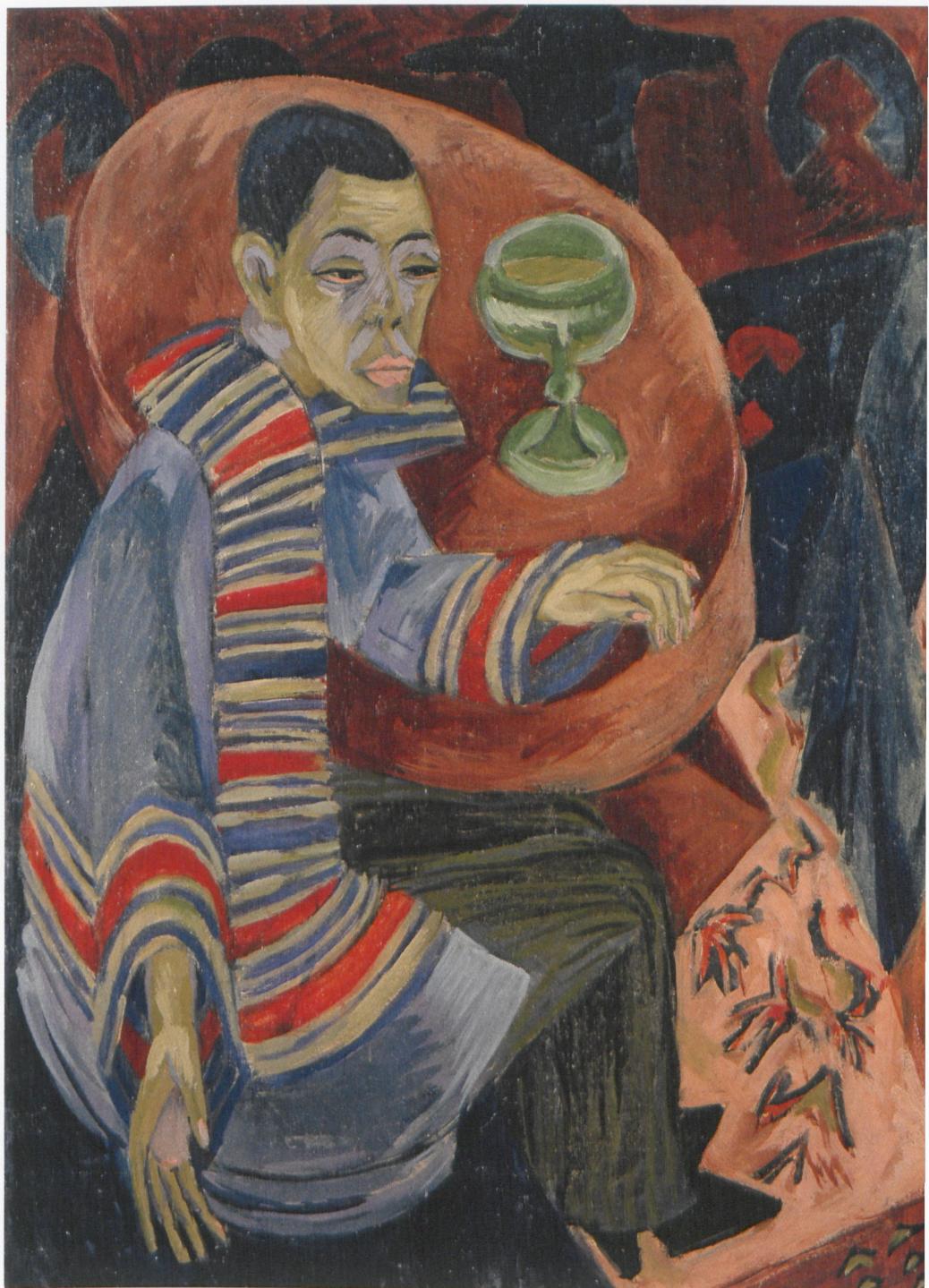




PLATE 115

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**Portrait of a Non-commissioned
Officer in Halle an der Saale**

1915

Glass negative, 24 × 18 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



PLATE 116

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Artilleryman in the Barracks
in Halle an der Saale

1915

Glass negative, 24 × 18 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos

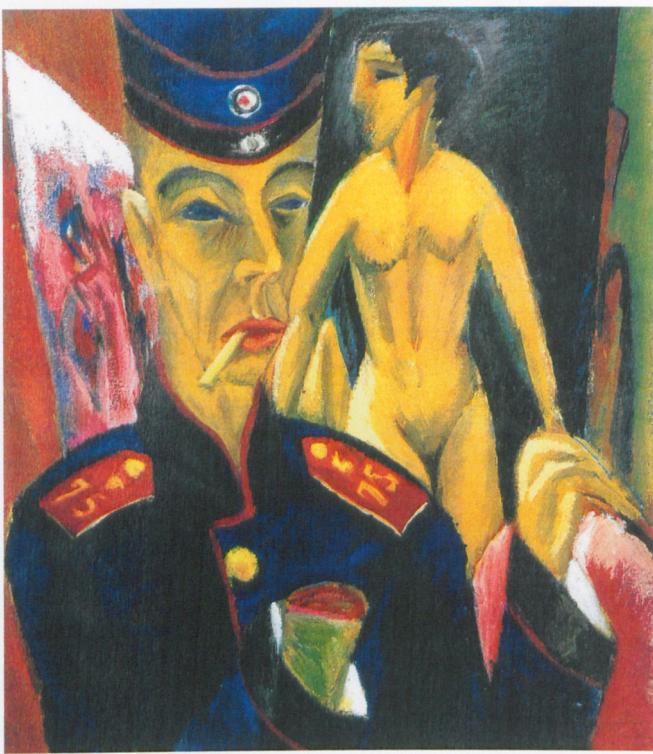


PLATE 117

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Officer Riding in the Barracks'
Arena in Halle an der Saale

1915

Glass negative, 24 × 18 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



1

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Self-Portrait as a Soldier

1915

Oil on canvas, 69.2 × 61 cm

Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin

In the Military

In the spring of 1915, Kirchner finally enlisted in the military as an “involuntary volunteer”,¹⁸ out of fear of being otherwise assigned to the Landsturm and immediately sent to the front.¹⁹ On 1 June he arrived in Halle an der Saale for training with the reserve unit of the Mansfelder Feldartillerieregiment (Mansfeld Field Artillery Regiment) 75.²⁰ From there, he was not “randomly [...] drafted”, since the Swiss lawyer Hans Fehr (1874–1961), whom Kirchner already knew from Jena, was serving there as senior lieutenant.²¹ But the artist could or would not get used to his tasks. And although he developed a close relationship to the horse entrusted to him, he did not cut a good figure as a horseman. But he did manage to ensure the good will of his superiors with his photographic portraits (pls. 115–117). From the middle to the end of August he was allowed to go to Berlin²² to make designs for the sculpture *Iron Blacksmith* for Hagen.²³ But the fear of military deployment retained its grip on him and his health deteriorated – above all due to a secret refusal to eat. Already by 16 September he was given convalescent leave until 16 October “due to a frail lung and emaciation”.²⁴

Paintings and prints of soldiers were produced during this time in Berlin. A revealing if complex expression of the artist’s fear is the painting *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* (fig. 1), a dark fantasy depicting Kirchner in uniform in his studio together with a nude model – without his right hand.²⁵ In two prints Kirchner even portrays war scenes,²⁶ but the rest all show peaceful motifs, such as the two lithographs (pls. 118–119), whose uniformed horseman recall his earlier dressage or circus images.²⁷

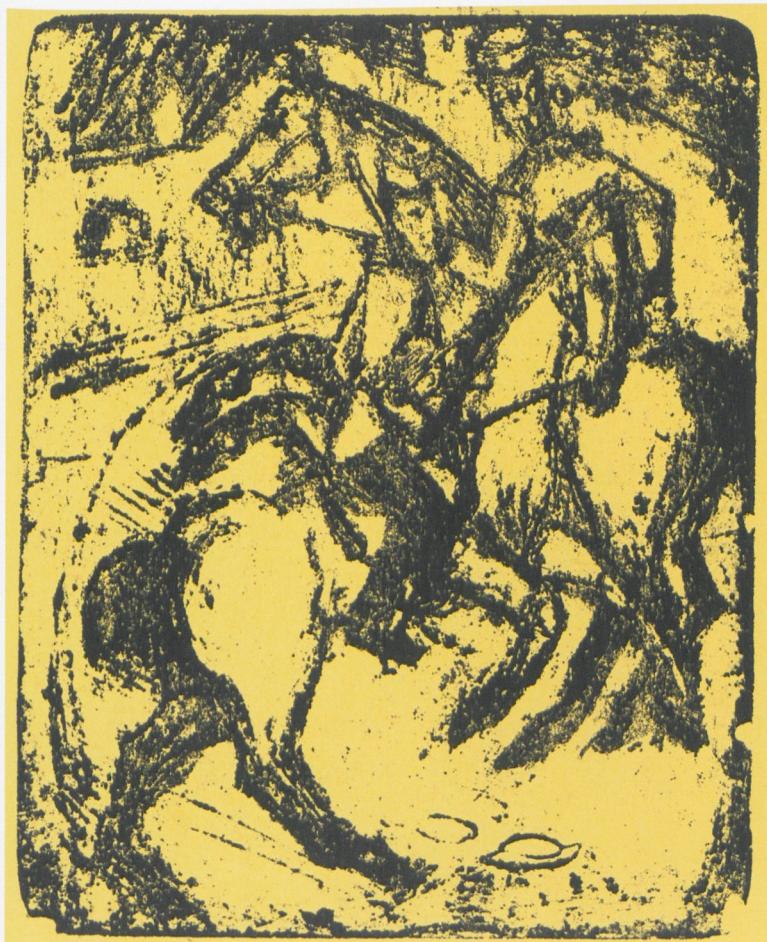
PLATE 118 (right)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Cavalrymen Riding through a Gorge
1915
Lithograph, 21.5 × 26.8 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



PLATE 119 (below)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Two Mounted Artillerymen
1916
Lithograph, 26.8 × 21.4 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos







2

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Dance between the Women

1915

Oil on canvas, 121.1 x 91.4 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen –
Sammlung Moderne Kunst in der
Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich

PLATE 103 (left)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Werner Gothein, Hugo Biallowons
(Ernst Ludwig Kirchner?),
and Erna Schilling (Kirchner)
in Kirchner's Studio,
Körnerstrasse 45, Berlin (detail)
1915

Glass negative, 13 x 18 cm
E.W.K., Bern / Davos

In Berlin, Kirchner immersed himself once again in the bohemian atmosphere of his live-in studio in Friedenau. Two photographs document an especially boisterous visit by his friend Hugo Biallowons (1879–1916), who had also been drafted (pl.103). The photo shows him dancing naked in a pose reminiscent of the planar figures of the ballet *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1912) by Vaslav Nijinsky (1889[?]–1950).²⁸ The figure of the dancer would become a starting point for one of the first of Kirchner's 'Sinnbilder' ('allegories'), which he created in various techniques until 1919, *Dance between the Women* (fig. 2).²⁹ Its meaning has not as yet been resolved: Is Kirchner here sublimating a life conflict that he had already overcome, the decision between the Schilling sisters' different personalities: Gerda and Erna (pls.120–121)? Or is the seemingly self-engrossed or 'spiritualised' dancer the expression of a fundamental transformation, after which no woman can physically reach him? In retrospect, Kirchner had already de-eroticised his partner in 1912, whom he henceforth referred to as comrade.³⁰

After returning to training, it did not take long before Kirchner was dismissed permanently from the military,³¹ – thanks to Fehr's idea of convincing the staff doctor by means of the gift of a work of art – but on the condition that he go to a sanatorium.³² The befriended Jena archaeologist and art historian Botho Graef (1857–1917), who was Biallowons' partner, arranged a place for him in Königstein in Taunus at the institution of doctor Oskar Kohnstamm (1871–1917), who was interested in art.



PLATE 120

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Head of Gerda, dark

1915

Lithograph, 42 × 31.5 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



PLATE 121

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Gerda and Erna

1912

Lithograph, 42.2 × 31.5 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos

But Kirchner delayed his departure. The strained situation led to a special enthusiasm for work: “[...] The allure of working on a few more things is too great.”³³ In these weeks, among other things, Kirchner produced the coloured woodcuts to Adelbert von Chamisso’s (1781–1838) fairy tale *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (*The Extraordinary Story of Peter Schlemihl*), which are among his most outstanding works, and which Kirchner finished on 9 December.³⁴ He had already designed illustrations, but these new prints would intentionally become symbolic of his own situation. The cycle revolved “around issues of self-determination, artistic genius and the rejection of love.”³⁵ In the male figure who sold his shadow to a little grey man, thus becoming a social pariah, Kirchner saw a “person who, through some sort of experience all at once becomes aware of his infinite smallness.”³⁶ He later wrote: “[...] the surrender of one’s own will in military service is for me the loss of one’s shadow.”³⁷ The fifth sheet shows how Schlemihl futilely attempts to steal the shadow from the small man. Here, the protagonist wears a military uniform, because “during this time I found myself in a similar psychic state. The sale to the little grey man was volunteering, which was my own fault.” Revealingly, Kirchner never succeeded in designing the final print, which was supposed to represent “the reconciliation with spiritual deficit” by walking around the world in seven-league boots.³⁸

Königstein, Dr Kohnstamm’s Sanatorium

In mid-December 1915, Kirchner finally set forth on his journey to the Königstein “High Altitude Resort”.³⁹ His stay in the private sanatorium was made possible by Ernst Gosebruch (1872–1953), the director of the Essen Museum, through a fund for artists in need, and by the art collector Carl Hagemann (1867–1940).⁴⁰ In 1894, the physician Oskar Kohnstamm had first set up business as an internist in Königstein. In 1905, he opened a “spa guesthouse” for “mental treatment” in particular, which, in 1911, due to great popularity was already extended by a large, multi-faceted building with “Swiss” wooden balconies, thus fitting into the city’s reputation as a “German St. Moritz”.⁴¹ Kohnstamm diagnosed Kirchner with a “condition of nervous excitation in which sleeplessness and the abuse of sleeping pills were of primary significance”, and initially considered the condition “curable, at least very much improvable”.⁴² Precisely how he wanted to cure Kirchner is unclear – weaning him from the sleep-inducing drug Veronal did not succeed.⁴³ What is clear is that the doctor had pledged himself to leading Kirchner back to his art. He thus allowed him to paint the walls of one of the sanatorium buildings.

The treatment at Kohnstamm’s lasted over seven months, but there were two lengthy interruptions of eight-and-a-half weeks and seven weeks (from 23 January to 23 March and from 18 April to the beginning of June 1916), which Kirchner spent mostly in Berlin. For the painter had soon developed reservations about his stay: It was “no recovery” for him “to live among the entirely different type of people”,⁴⁴ and he felt patronised by the doctor.⁴⁵ At the same time he was drawn to Berlin:



3

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
West Harbour, Frankfurt am Main
1916
Oil on canvas, 84 x 95 cm
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

"I'll probably still be here until Saturday – I won't be able to bear the separation from the studio any longer than that [...]"⁴⁶ But probably the war's unexpectedly strong aura in the sanatorium also drove him away. Kohnstamm, who had a son in the field, marked off the front lines every day on a map in one of the visiting areas. In addition, a portion of the building had been turned into a military hospital and many men in uniform were to be encountered there.⁴⁷ Kirchner returned in March only because in Berlin he had experienced "2 fainting spells due to nervous debility"⁴⁸ and in June because he wanted to execute the wall paintings.

Shortly after his arrival he actually felt artistically inspired and wanted "to see and create new things".⁴⁹ The Taunus mountain range delighted him: "The landscape is wonderful, it's only too bad that I still don't have enough strength to paint!"⁵⁰ In and around Königstein, but also in Frankfurt, a large number of sketches were thus produced, which Kirchner then later developed further in Berlin, such as *Königstein and Railroad Train* (pl.122).

Kirchner's early works sometimes already took a bird's eye perspective. But in 1916 the distance from the represented motif increased and became a dominant feature of a series of images, including for example *West Harbour, Frankfurt am Main* (fig. 3) and *Frankfurt Cathedral*⁵¹, which Kirchner at the time called *Frankfurt [as seen] from above*.⁵² Besides possible psychological reasons for this style,⁵³ this perspective could be traced back to the wide prevalence of images from airplanes, which played a role also in the war for the first time – it was possibly even intentional: Kirchner emphasised several times during the war years that he wanted to create "an image of the times".⁵⁴



PLATE 122

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Königstein and Railroad Train

1916

Oil on canvas, 85 × 95 cm
Private collection, on permanent loan
to the Kirchner Museum Davos

PLATE 123

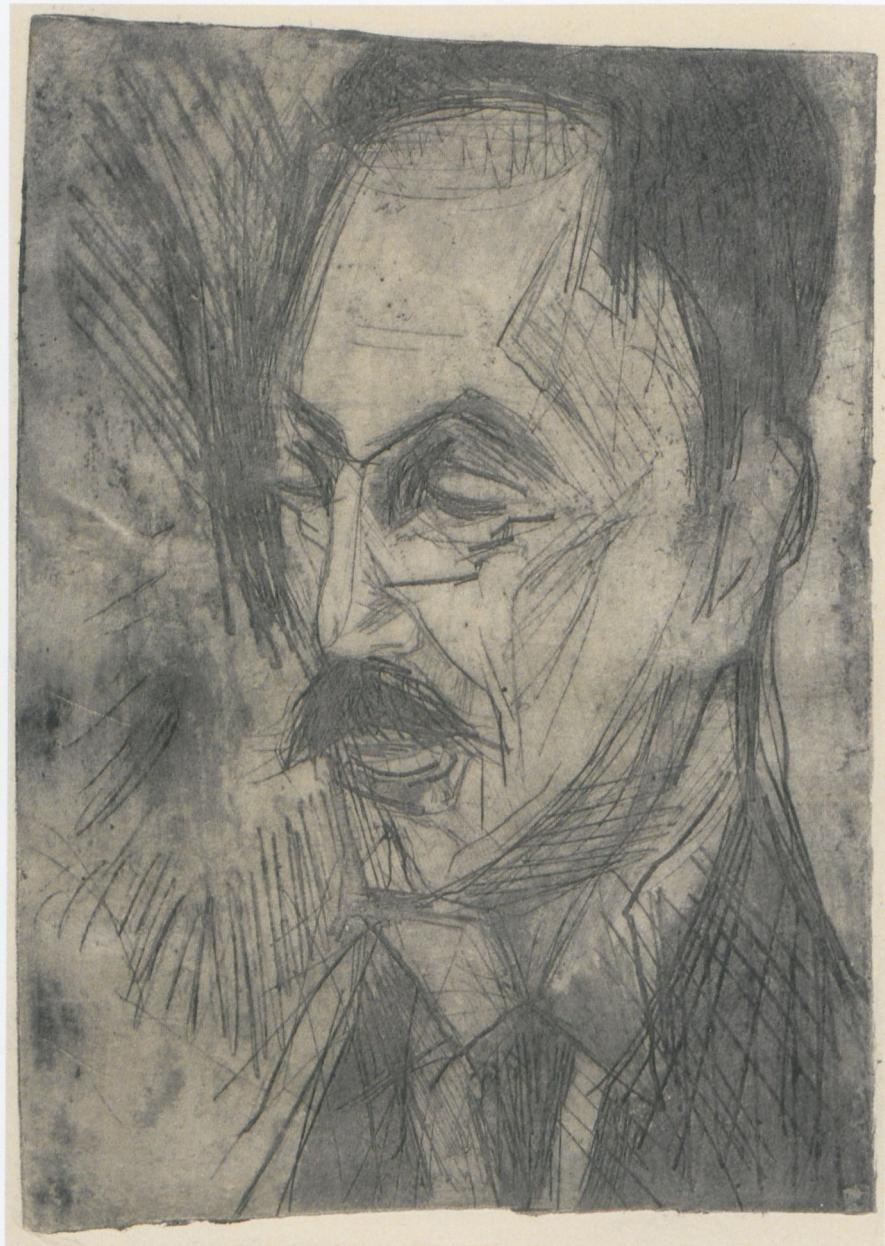
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Portrait of Kohnstamm

1916

Etching and aquatint on copperplate
printing paper, 18.2 × 13 cm

Kirchner Museum Davos



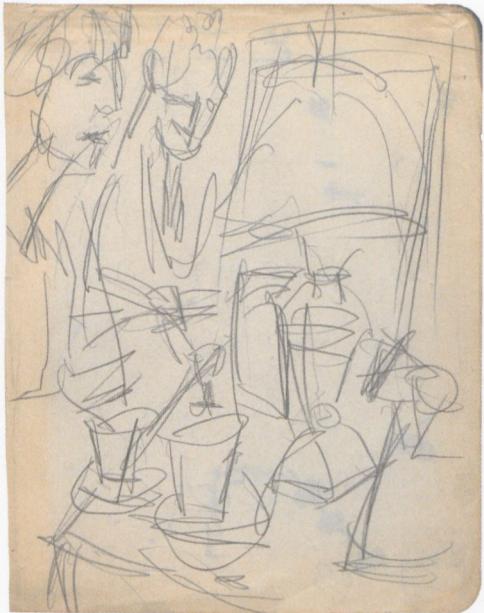


PLATE 124

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**Two People at a Café Table
(Nervous People)**

c.1916

Pencil on paper with red edge,
21.9 × 17.1 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



PLATE 125

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**Three Women at the Table
(Nervous People)**

c.1916

Pencil on paper with red edge,
20.6 × 16 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



PLATE 126

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**Three People at the Table
(Nervous People)**

c.1916

Pencil on paper with red edge,
20.6 × 15.7 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



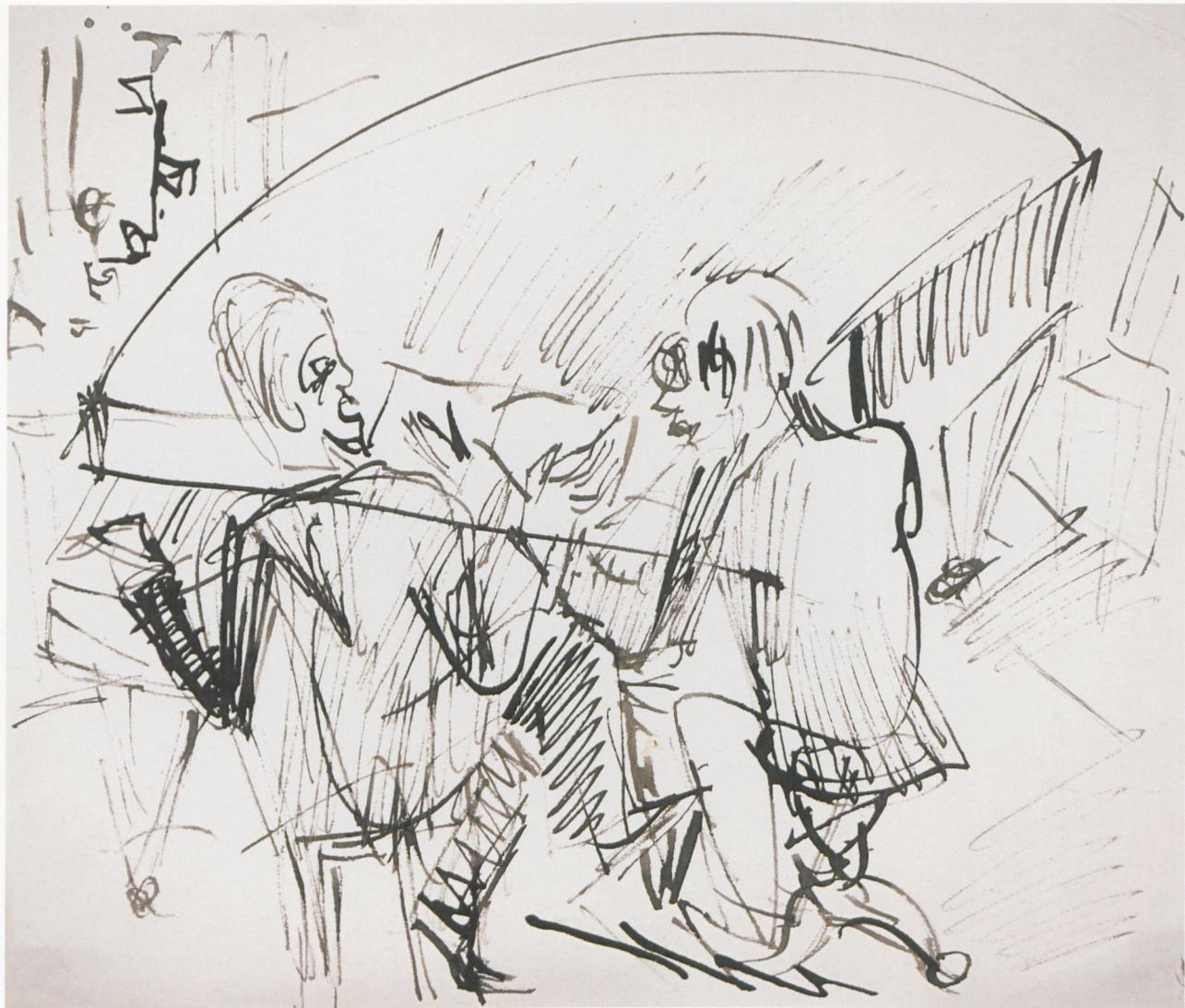


PLATE 127 (left)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Piano Player
(Composer Klemperer)
1916

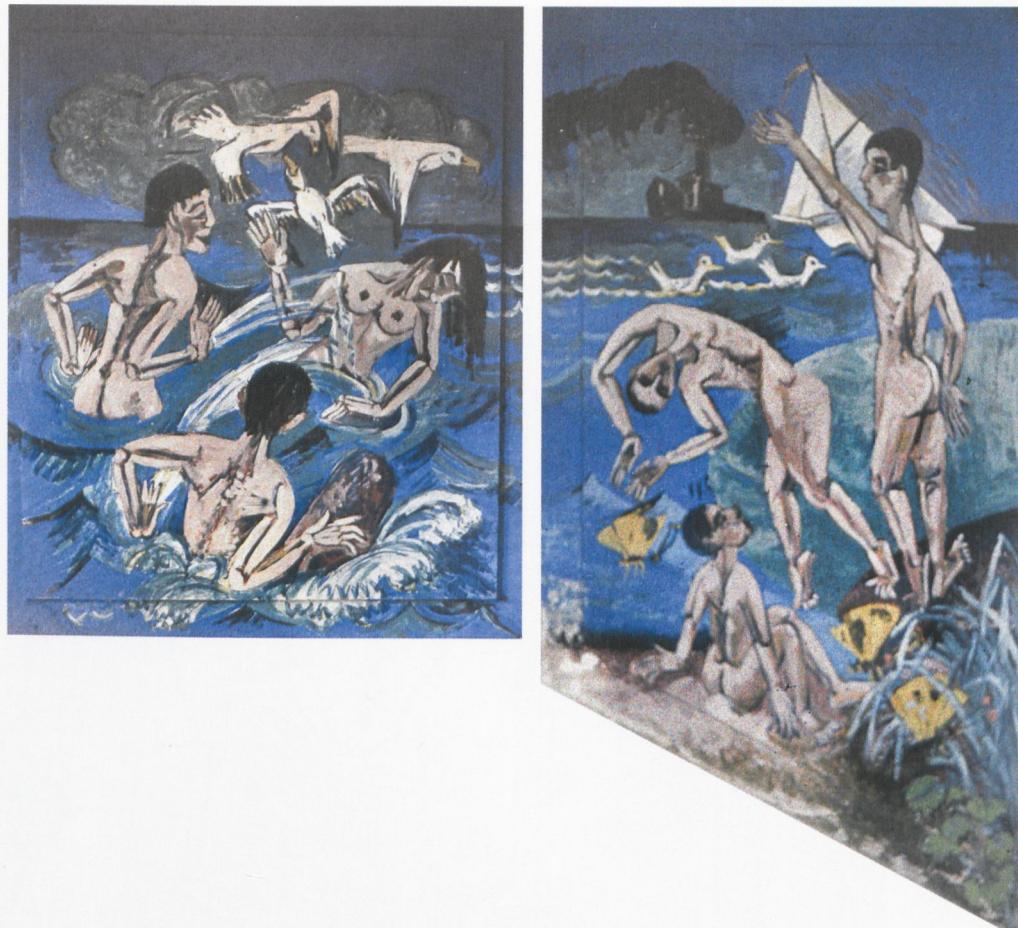
Woodcut, 52.3 × 41.5 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos

PLATE 128 (above)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Piano Players
(Otto Klemperer)
1916

Pen and ink on paper, 35 × 40.8 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**Bathing Scenes in the Pump Room
of the Sanatorium in Königstein**
1916
Wall paintings (destroyed),
Colour photography by Franz Schilling,
Königstein im Taunus, 1926
Height: between 220 and 440 cm
Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg



Kirchner also recorded people in the sanatorium. He portrayed Oskar Kohnstamm several times. The small etching with the bust facing towards the left (pl.123) seems particularly empathetic. Kirchner often sketched fellow patients, whom he referred to as "nervous",⁵⁵ with a rapid stroke during conversations (pls.124–126), as he had done earlier with café guests in Dresden or Berlin. He created prints almost only of people he had become closer to, for example the pianist, conductor and composer Otto Klemperer (1885–1973). Kohnstamm had encouraged this patient as well to return to his art. One woodcut (pl.127) thus shows Klemperer's head and hand just above a piano as if he were seeking to be as close as possible to the production of sound. The intensity is heightened by the female figure at the back, "a listener, one of the nervous patients."⁵⁶ In the pen drawing *Piano Players* (pl.128), by contrast, Klemperer can be seen at the concert grand piano in lively conversation with another person.



But the most important work of the Königstein period were the murals of the so-called pump room, a small staircase building with a fountain on the way to the sanatorium's baths.⁵⁷ Kirchner finished them during his last stay in Königstein. Washed off in the 1930s, an impression of them can be gained by photographs that the museum director Max Sauerlandt (1880–1934) took in 1926 (fig. 4). The subject was memories of bathing in the Baltic, which Kirchner longed for.⁵⁸ But he didn't seem to be too successful creating jaunty images: "[...] it is nice work but given the sad circumstances (one of the doctor's sons has fallen) I cannot be truly calm and happy."⁵⁹ The painter composed the upper and lower arms of his slim figures with two parallels and set the elbows off, so that the exuberant bathers recall skeletons in a Dance of Death. Also, three threatening black steamships appear on the horizon, which at the time inevitably called warships to mind.⁶⁰ Thus these wall paintings also became a complex "image of the times".



PLATE 129 (left)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Cocottes at Night
1914

Drypoint, 25.5 × 20 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos

Berlin

When Kirchner left for Berlin for the third time in the middle of July his plan was to return soon.⁶¹ As far as he was concerned, the constant alternation between the sanatorium in its inspiring landscape and the studio in Körnerstrasse could have continued until the end of the war, which one hoped would be soon. But Kohnstamm did not readmit him, because, as Botho Graef reported, he "did not obey, either concerning Veronal, nor concerning cigarettes nor concerning eating".⁶²

As always, the artist had a lot of distractions in Berlin, especially due to preparations for a large solo exhibition that took place in October 1916 at the Frankfurt gallery of Ludwig Schames (1852–1922). But he was soon shaken by "another great loss": At the end of April he learned that Hugo Biallowons had fallen on 9 April.⁶³ This also called to mind his own personal endangerment. Without medical treatment he was still at risk of being called up for war duty. Kirchner considered finding a neurologist in Berlin,⁶⁴ and then at the beginning of November, believed to have found a suitable one in Jena.⁶⁵ But his worries increased and in November the artist sounded desperate: "I am always under the impression of a gory carnival. How should this all end? One feels like the decision is imminent and everything's going up and down. Bloated, one sways in order to work, where any work [is] futile and the onslaught of mediocrity tears everything down. I have myself become like the cocottes I painted. Smeared on, next time gone."⁶⁶ Around this time he took steps for the first time to guarantee his estate and asked Botho Graef to administer it, if necessary.⁶⁷

Berlin, Sanatorium of Dr Edel

At the beginning of December 1916, his condition seemed to dramatically deteriorate. Due to threatened suicide he was taken to the private Berlin sanatorium of Dr Edel.⁶⁸ Erna Schilling reported on 8 December that the doctors had told her Kirchner was seeing fire everywhere.⁶⁹ But when Graef visited him two days later he found him "very, very languorous and weak but quite calm and completely clear".⁷⁰ At a later date the poet (and later psychiatrist) Karl Theodor Bluth (1892–1964), with whom the painter had had an intense exchange of ideas just that November in Jena, claimed to have taught the painter at the time how to "simulate madness".⁷¹ Possibly Bluth, the son of a Berlin medical consultant, even arranged for his admission to the private sanatorium.⁷²

With roughly five hundred beds, the Geheim-Rat Dr Edel'sche Heilanstalt für Gemüts- und Nervenkrank (Privy Councillor Dr Edel's Sanatorium for the Emotionally Disturbed and Mentally Ill) in Charlottenburg, founded in 1869 by Karl Edel (1837–1921), was one of the largest private clinics in the German Empire at the time⁷³ and included several buildings on the Berliner Strasse.⁷⁴ From 1911 Edel's sons Max and Paul had been in charge of it.⁷⁵ They diagnosed Kirchner with

a “tubercular brain ulceration” as a late sequela of syphilis.⁷⁶ Whether this was deduced from information supplied by Kirchner or from the “serological examination” that was carried out here routinely on all new admissions,⁷⁷ is unclear. The diagnosis of “tabes” evidently attempted to classify the signs of paralysis in the hands and feet, which at the time were considered a symptom of infection with the tuberculosis bacterium.⁷⁸

Although Kirchner had probably originally sought sanctuary in the sanatorium of Dr Edel, as soon as 14 December he already sought to be released.⁷⁹ He succeeded by Christmas with the help of his relatives, who first took him to Chemnitz.⁸⁰ Why this rapid change of heart? Was it because for the first and only time during his crisis he was in a secure psychiatric ward so that he later reported that he had been “interned in an insane asylum”?⁸¹ The dates cited can be conspicuously well correlated to war events. Whereas the situation of the German troops in 1916 had become increasingly desperate through the attrition warfare with their high losses at Verdun and on the Somme, suddenly at the end of the year a stop to the fighting seemed possible. Unexpectedly the German Imperial government made a peace offer to the Allies on 12 December. Like many others, Kirchner may have believed in this and thus suddenly seen his “internment” as a trap which he now sought to escape. But the elation did not last for long. On 30 December the Allies rejected the German offer, whose conditions – from a present-day perspective – were naïve and unacceptable.

Davos

After hopes that peace would soon be forthcoming went unfulfilled, Kirchner endeavoured to leave for Davos in Switzerland – it is not very likely that this was due solely to the advice of a doctor because of “lung catarrh”⁸². Eberhard Grisebach (1880–1945), a philosopher from Jena who was friends with Kirchner, and his parents-in-law who lived in Davos, the doctor Lucius Spengler (1858–1923) and his wife Helene (1869–1943), had all in fact already by November 1916 had the idea of curing Kirchner in the mountains there.⁸³ Kirchner would have liked this plan, because in Switzerland he was on neutral territory, far from German authorities and presumably also from the military. But a similar surprise awaited him there as it had in Königstein. When he turned up on 19 January 1917,⁸⁴ 1,300 uniformed soldiers were staying there.⁸⁵ He also found it too cold. At the beginning of February, he thus left again despite his poor condition⁸⁶ but no doubt with the intention of returning in the spring. On his way back, he almost ended up under a train in Gottmadingen and in Berlin he was hit by a car.⁸⁷

In March, Kirchner travelled briefly for recuperation to Attenhausen in Rhineland-Palatinate, on the invitation of his former student Werner Gothein (1890–1968).⁸⁸ At the beginning of May, he once again set out for Davos, this time together with



5

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Rising Moon on the Stafelalp

1919

Oil on canvas, 80 × 90 cm
Rosemarie Kettner Foundation,
permanent loan to the
Kirchner Museum Davos

a nurse.⁸⁹ She, like Lucius Spengler, soon saw through the artist's attempts at deception (ongoing since 1915) and how he maintained his piteous condition by secretly refusing to eat.⁹⁰ In addition the doctor discovered that Kirchner was not only taking alcohol and Veronal but also morphine in the meantime.⁹¹ The Spenglers helped him with hearty food and withdrawal attempts, but also with painting supplies, initially coloured pencils and watercolours.⁹² In continuation of his experience in Königstein, Kirchner soon even suggested wall paintings for a corridor in the doctor's house.⁹³ In June, the artist made the acquaintance of the architect Henry van de Velde (1863–1957), who recommended treatment at the private psychiatric sanatorium of Bellevue in Kreuzlingen on Lake Constance and made all the necessary arrangements.⁹⁴ But prior to going there Kirchner moved into a rented cabin on the Stafelalp, a half hour by car above Davos, and lived there for around eight weeks.⁹⁵ It was the overwhelming new impression of the mountain landscape that drew him up there. He later described his profound shock: "The entire Alpine world devastated me so much that I had to start completely from scratch."⁹⁶ In addition to a number of woodcuts, only a few paintings were produced during these weeks, including *Rising Moon on the Stafelalp* (fig. 5), a virtually cosmic visionary light phenomenon with the Tinzenhorn in the distance. The artist later wrote to Van de Velde's daughter Nele (1897–1965) about the moonlit nights in the mountains: "[...] often endless visibility. The cabins simply black, everything else yellow-green. I've never before seen such a fullness of light at night."⁹⁷



PLATE 130 (left)

Nele van de Velde

**View of the Ground Floor
of the House 'In den Lärchen'**

1920

Woodcut, 37.5 x 31 cm

E.W.K., Bern / Davos

PLATE 131 (below)

Nele van de Velde

**Sitting Area in the Upper
Floor Hallway of the House
'In den Lärchen'**

1920

Woodcut, 31 x 37.5 cm

E.W.K., Bern / Davos





PLATE 132

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Young Girl with Cigarette

(*Nele van de Velde*)

1918

Woodcut, 49.7 × 39.8 cm

Museum Folkwang, Essen

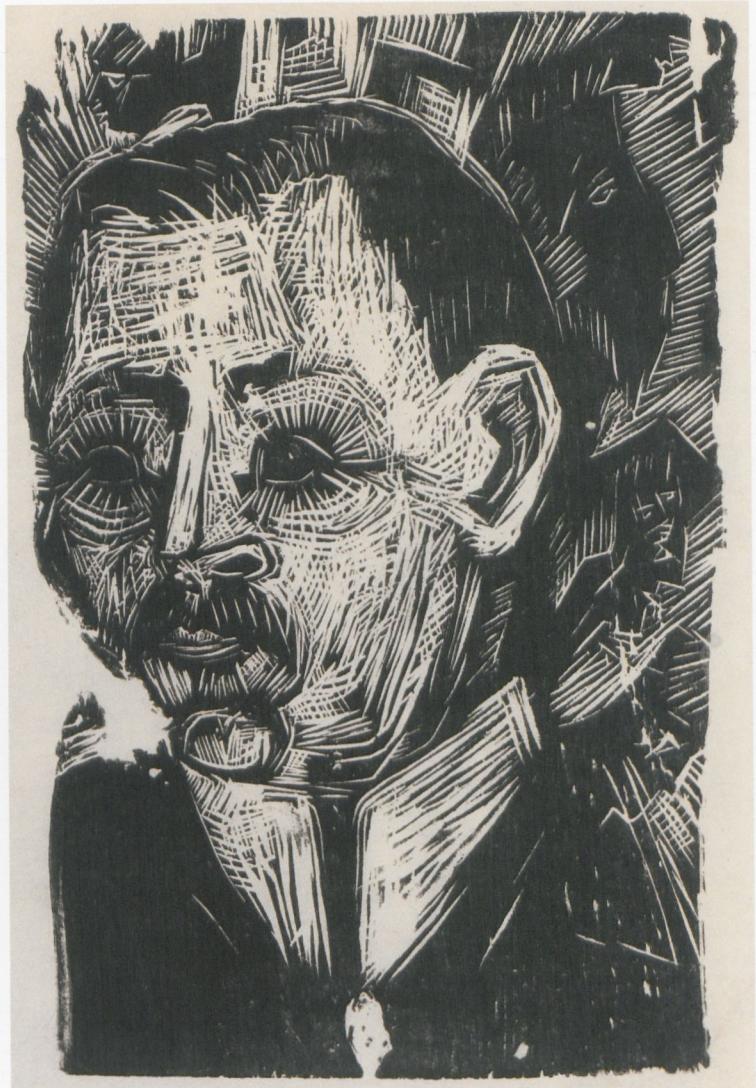


PLATE 133

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Head Butz (Head Hospital

Attendant Karl Butz)

1917/18

Woodcut, 43 × 28 cm

Kirchner Museum Davos



PLATE 110 (right)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**Head of Henry van de Velde,
dark**
1917

Woodcut, 49.5 × 39.5 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos

6

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Head of van de Velde (bright)
1917
Woodcut, 50 × 40.3 cm
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

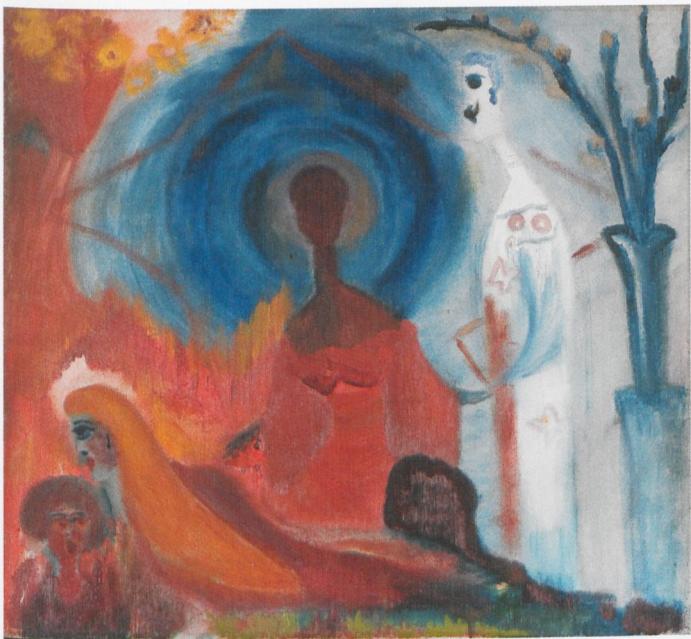
Kreuzlingen, Bellevue Sanatorium

On 15 September 1917 Kirchner arrived at Bellevue Sanatorium and moved into a room in the "Park House" there, which was not fully occupied and was located somewhat apart from the other buildings.⁹⁸ The sanatorium had been in the possession of the Binswanger family since 1857 as a private facility for curable patients and those needing care from the more affluent classes of Switzerland and other countries. The grandson of the founder, Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966), had taken over the sanatorium in 1910.⁹⁹ Kirchner stayed there for a total of almost ten months, until 9 July 1918, without travelling to Berlin in between. In fact, he actually felt comfortable there. One of the carers, Emil Brüllmann (1893–1937), went out on trips with him, they did embroidery together and he helped him in printing woodcuts.¹⁰⁰ Henry van de Velde and other friends and acquaintances visited Kirchner, and at the beginning of October, Erna Schilling was able to stay with him for a month, not least for some recuperation herself.

This time the doctors traced the numbness in Kirchner's hands and feet back to an "embryonic malformation of the spinal cord".¹⁰¹ Part of the therapy of the treating doctor Heinrich Reese (1879–1951) consisted of daily electrification.¹⁰² But at the beginning of March 1918 the Jena zoology professor Julius Schaxel (1887–1943), whose wife was a patient at Bellevue, reported to Eberhard Grisebach that Kirchner's mental and physical condition had not changed in the past five months, and that it had worsened by the end of the month.¹⁰³ Due to the condition of his hands, Kirchner dictated letters and other texts to his partner or carers during this time.







7
Else Blankenhorn

Untitled

c.1916

Oil on canvas, 38 × 42 cm
Sammlung Prinzhorn, Heidelberg

Despite his poor physical condition, Kirchner created a series of works also in the Kreuzlingen period. Above all he carved masterful portraits in wood, mostly of people in his surroundings: “In terms of prints, I still reach for the woodblock. It gives me the surest lines.”¹⁰⁴ There he produced portraits of the artistically talented Nele van de Velde (pl.132), who was at Bellevue for a few weeks from February 1918¹⁰⁵ as well as the head carer Karl Butz (1887–1962) (pl.133). To Kirchner the new prints seemed superior even to previous ones since they were “cut more loosely and generously”.¹⁰⁶ What he meant by this can easily be seen in the two portraits of Henry van de Velde. The clear likeness (fig. 6) was produced in 1917 on the Stafelalp. In contrast, the lines in *Head Henry van de Velde, dark* (1918) (pl.110, p.229), in which Kirchner sought to show the “mask that surrounds the man like a mussel shell”¹⁰⁷ are set down more freely and openly.

In addition to the impressions of nature, what inspired Kirchner to paint shortly after his arrival in Kreuzlingen were the images of a fellow patient, “who, with an extraordinarily fine feeling for the colours of her visions, paints here. [...] I want to get paints from Zurich in the next days and try to do something despite my hands”,¹⁰⁸ he wrote at the end of September. Two days later, he asked Henry van de Velde to get stretcher frames and paints for him, on 20 August the painting materials had arrived.¹⁰⁹ The fellow patient mentioned was Else Blankenhorn (1873–1920) from Karlsruhe, who had been living permanently in Bellevue since 1906 with her own nurse and created a diverse artistic oeuvre there (today in the Prinzhorn Collection, Heidelberg). Her paintings are colour-driven symbolist, at times Japonist fantasies, with puzzling figures in the foreground that can only be interpreted with difficulty (fig.7).¹¹⁰ Kirchner’s fascination is explicable not only by his personal situation; many Expressionist visual artists and writers identified with “the mad”.¹¹¹ Blankenhorn’s paintings may have emboldened Kirchner later to unusual colour combinations as in *Moonlit Winter Night* (pl.134). But the enthusiasm also had consequences for the Kreuzlingen works.

PLATE 134 (left)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

Moonlit Winter Night

1919

Colour woodcut, 30 × 29.5 cm
Museum Folkwang, Essen





8

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Photograph of a Painting
by Else Blankenhorn
1917/18
Binswanger-Archiv,
Universitätsarchiv, Tübingen

In Kirchner's letters the dissatisfaction with his new paintings is soon evident: "I'm having no luck with my pictures now. They look fairly raw", he wrote at the beginning of November.¹¹² At the end of the year he was somewhat more forgiving of the fact that he had not managed "anything finished" thus far: "My hands don't permit it. Maybe also because I have to start again from scratch. The illness and the powerful impressions have paralysed almost everything from my former self."¹¹³ It is therefore entirely credible to regard the open form of some of the paintings from this period as an attempt to see anew – inspired namely by Blankenhorn's similarly open treatment of form as well. But one should not believe Kirchner's self-critical statements only. What matters is that he kept these works.

PLATE 135 (left)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
The Hospital Attendant
1917/18

Oil on canvas, 80.5 × 70 cm
National Museum of Art,
Architecture and Design, Oslo

The most audacious is the painting of *The Hospital Attendant* (pl.135). The larger left-hand side of the canvas seems downright abstract.¹¹⁴ This is comparable to the aerial background in the dark woodcut portrait of Van de Velde. The formation of black lines at the upper right, which can be interpreted as black branches in a vase, could emphasise that Kirchner was here inspired by Blankenhorn's pictures. It seems like a quotation of a (lost) painting by his fellow patient, which was photographed by Kirchner (fig. 8).

The Patient's Bath (pl.137) clearly has more solid forms. Kirchner is lowered gently into the water by carer Butz. The bathtub, shown almost from above, forms a frame around Kirchner's figure, an image within the image, as Kirchner had also used earlier, for example in *The Drinker* (pl.58, p.116).



PLATE 136 (left)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

The Visit

(Mrs. Binswanger)

1917

Oil on canvas, 89.1 × 61.3 cm

Milwaukee Art Museum

PLATE 137 (right)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

The Patient's Bath

1917

Oil on cardboard, 53 × 39 cm

Private collection

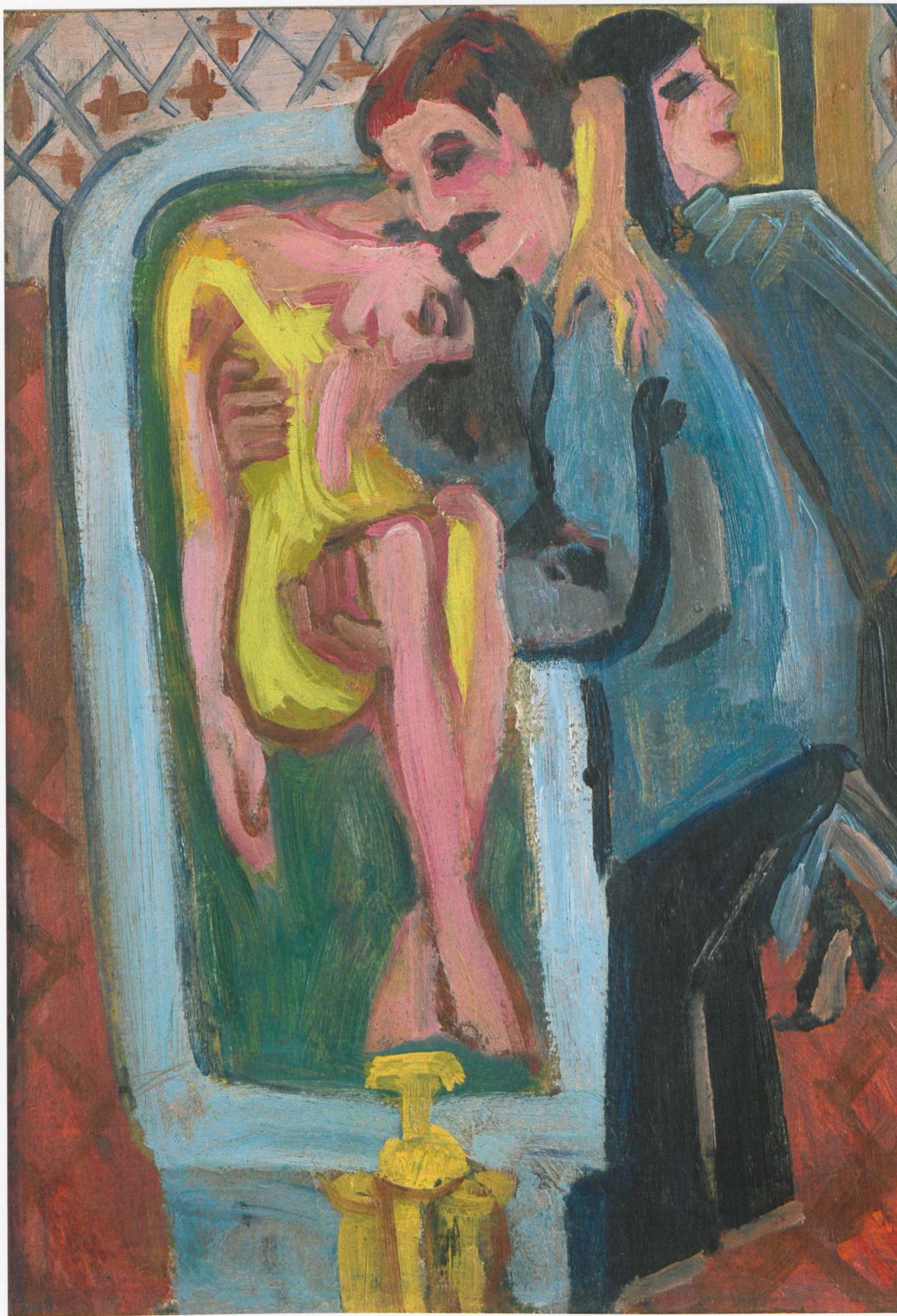


PLATE 138 (below)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**View of Lake Constance
at Kreuzlingen**

1917/18–1920

Oil on canvas, 71 × 81 cm
Vatican Museums, Vatican City

PLATE 139 (right)

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
**Portrait of Erna
(Artist's Wife)**

1917

Oil on canvas, 70.5 × 60.5 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos





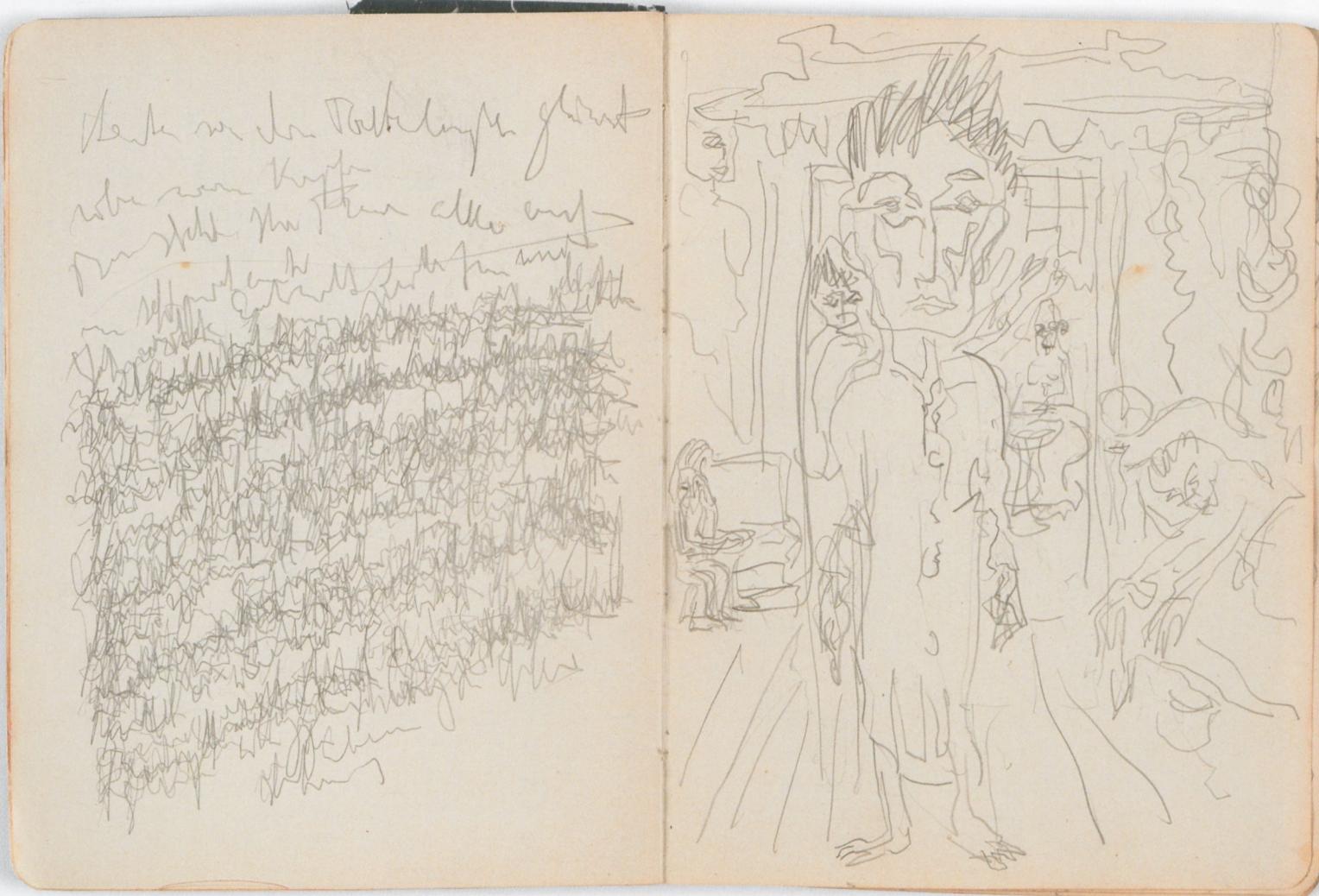


PLATE 140

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Sketchbook 054, Fol. 5:
**Self-Portrait at the
Kreuzlingen Sanatorium**

1917/18

Bound wax-cloth booklet,
pencil on paper, 31 x 20.2 x 0.8 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos

DIE IRREN



I.

Papierne Kronen zieren sie. Sie tragen
Holzstücke aufrecht auf den spitzen Knie
Wie Szepter. Ihre langen Hemden schlagen
Um ihren Bauch wie Königshermelin.

9

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

The Mad

1924

Woodcut, 115 x 75 cm,
illustration for Georg Heym,

Umbra vitae

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Kupferstichkabinett

In forms and composition, the portrait *The Visit. Mrs. Binswanger* (pl.136) seems almost like a picture from the Berlin period. It shows the stepmother of the sanatorium director, Marie-Luise Binswanger (1871–1941), who attended closely to Kirchner.¹¹⁵ It is not unlikely that even the painting *Portrait of Erna (Artist's Wife)* (pl.139) was produced during the time at Kreuzlingen,¹¹⁶ if possibly only during Schilling's second visit in June / July 1918.¹¹⁷ The blue-white figuration on the left and the doll-like figure in her hand could be quoting lost paintings by Else Blankenhorn,¹¹⁸ especially since her pictures must still have been in Kirchner's possession when he dictated a text about them to Schilling for one of his sketchbooks.¹¹⁹

Compositonally *View of Lake Constance at Kreuzlingen* (pl.138) also draws on earlier works such as *West Harbour, Frankfurt am Main* (fig.3). But the painting was probably heavily reworked later. The motif is difficult to localise.¹²⁰ We are probably looking at Lake Constance somewhat north of Kreuzlingen with the Inselhotel on Dominicans Island in the centre and the tower of the Konstanz Minster on the left.

To conclude the consideration of works from the Kreuzlingen period, we should also take a look at a drawing from a sketchbook kept at the time (pl.140). The drawing has for some time been published as a self-portrait of Kirchner. But if he were representing himself on this sheet, then not only the wide jaw deviates from the model (as it does from all other self-portraits). The scene is also surely not a depiction from his own experience. Neither the "park house" of Bellevue nor Kohnstamm's sanatorium in Königstein looked like this. Nor is there any question that this could be the secure ward at Dr Edel's private sanatorium. But is not at least the manner of drawing a direct, 'seismographic' expression of Kirchner's mental state? At first glance the execution seems unsure; on closer inspection it becomes clear that only the rendering of the paintings around the depicted doorframe is sketched in a somewhat agitated manner. The isolated, more energetic lines that have been added in and doubled were apparently done later: Kirchner reworked the drawing in preparation for the woodcut, which he used as an illustration for Georg Heym's poem "Die Irren" ("The Mad") in the volume *Umbra vitae* (1924) (fig. 9). Even if the artist did not originally have this use in mind for the drawing,¹²¹ he was nevertheless already thinking of a symbolic sublimation of his experiences in psychiatric facilities. The image undoubtedly belongs among the many typified representations of the 'mentally ill' and 'the mad' in Expressionism.¹²² It is not an expression of Kirchner's suffering but rather a distancing from it.

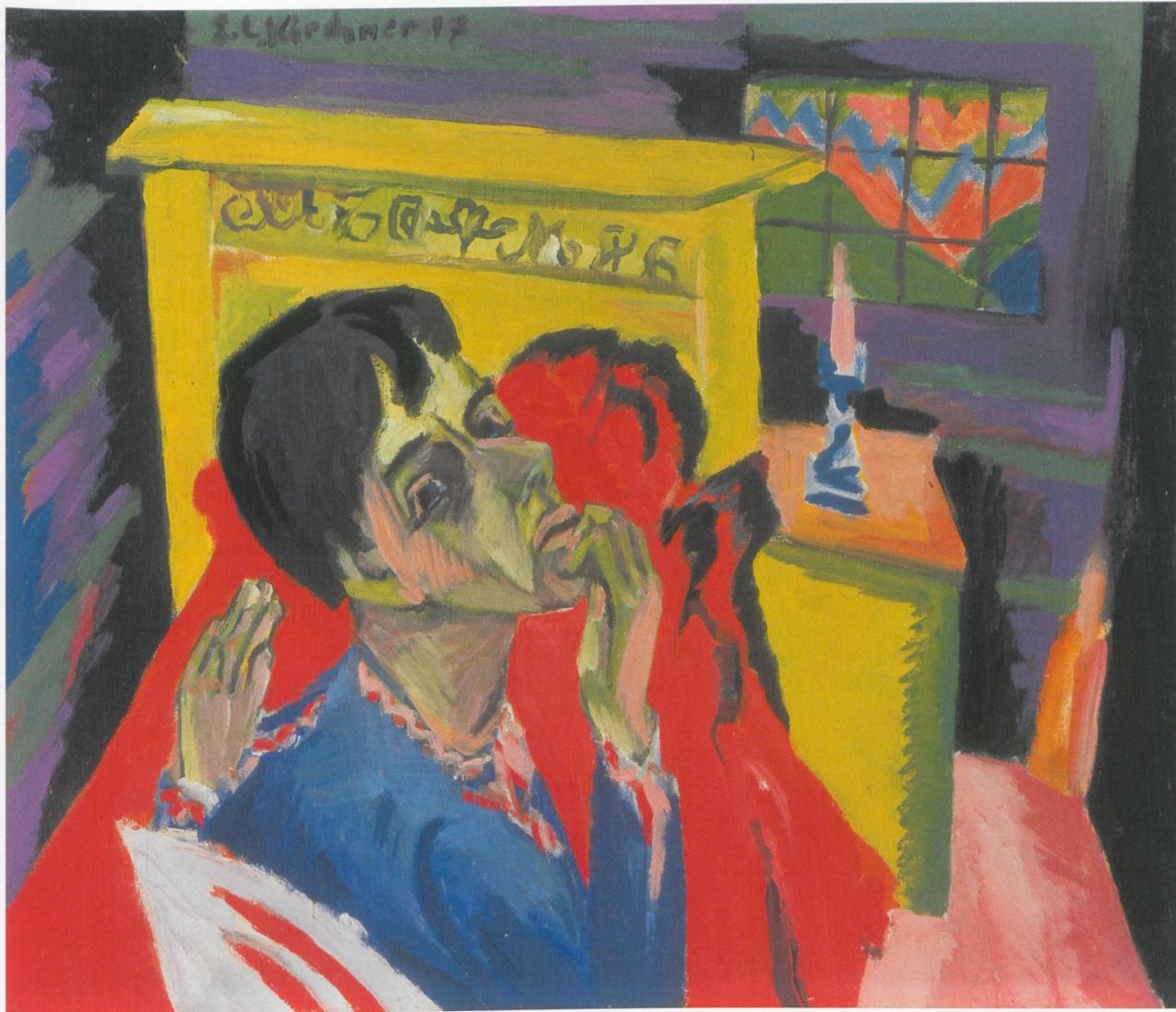
What was really new for the artist in Kreuzlingen were not the paintings and prints themselves but rather an intense reflection on his art. Together with Erna Schilling he began to organise his earlier work. He created an album for the paintings with photographic reproductions and for the catalogue of his prints he was able to enlist the print collector Gustav Schiefler.¹²³ Already at the beginning of the war, the artist had begun to exchange ideas about art with the Jena philosopher Eberhard Grisebach; in general, the circle of friends in Jena had been intellectually stimulating

in many ways. During his stays in Königstein Kirchner may also have spoken with Oskar Kohnstamm about the latter's theory of artistic expression. Beginning at Davos there were discussions with Henry van de Velde, and in Kreuzlingen with a series of visitors such as the intellectually inspiring Willem van Vlooten (birth-and-death dates unknown).¹²⁴ The artist owed many ideas to the philosophically and psychoanalytically oriented director of the sanatorium Ludwig Binswanger, whom he came to know better only in the final weeks of his stay;¹²⁵ he would later write that the doctor "understood the artistic life au fond".¹²⁶ Repeatedly he longed to publish texts or a book about his art and attempted to win the support of others, for example Van de Velde, for this idea.¹²⁷ It is noteworthy that in his own theoretical texts he reinterprets his earlier works in order to represent them as the substratum for the new ideal of planar "creations of pure imagination" to which he now aspired.¹²⁸ Soon thereafter he began reworking earlier paintings along these lines.

Davos

Kirchner left Kreuzlingen on 9 July 1918 to spend the summer in the mountains again. Earlier that year he had already envisioned how this time he would capture impressions of nature with oil on canvas.¹²⁹ He quickly left Davos behind and returned to the Stafelalp. The carer Brüllmann accompanied him for a few days and helped him get set up. Then he was alone with Erna Schilling.¹³⁰ "The mountain air is good for my hands. It is almost like a liberation", he wrote to Georg Reinhart (1877–1955).¹³¹ He probably also felt liberated from the supervision in the sanatorium, where he was most certainly allowed only small amounts of morphine.¹³²

A few weeks before the end of his time at Bellevue Kirchner had nevertheless considered returning in the autumn,¹³³ and even in October there was still a plan to return in the winter,¹³⁴ for "the uncertainty of remaining [in Switzerland] afflicted" him.¹³⁵ But on 20 September he had meanwhile moved into the house 'In den Lärchen' in Frauenkirch,¹³⁶ where he would remain for the coming years. And after the armistice between the warring countries on 11 November there was no longer any mention of a return to the sanatorium. Kirchner was now hopeful, also as far as his health was concerned. After the "unexpected revolution in Germany" for him, too, it was necessary "to adjust, as best as possible".¹³⁷ As Schilling had hoped, the peace "also had a beneficial [effect on] Kirchner's suffering".¹³⁸ More effort was required in fact to wean the artist from morphine, but this also seems to have been achieved in 1921. The actual core of the crisis had now been overcome, but its causes persisted, hidden away. When Kirchner later again fell victim to morphine it ended with his suicide.



10

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Self-Portrait as a Sick Man

1918 / 1925

Oil on canvas, 57 x 66 cm

Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,
Munich – Pinakothek der Moderne

A series of woodcut portraits he had begun in Kreuzlingen were finished with aplomb in the mountains with the portrait of his Frankfurt gallerist Ludwig Schames (pl. 141). It was produced on commission for the Frankfurt Kunstverein as their annual edition for 1918. In December Kirchner printed the large print run of over a hundred copies himself.¹³⁹

One of the most important paintings from the autumn of 1918 was *Self-Portrait as a Sick Man* (fig. 10). Because Kirchner dated it retrospectively to 1917, it had long been thought that it was produced during his first summer on the Stafelalp. But correcting the year of its production has not prevented interpreters from relating it to the artist's earlier distress and seeing for example in the green colour of the face and the hand on the chin signs of panic-fuelled fear of war.¹⁴⁰ But the colour probably shows the reflection of the naturally green nocturnal luminescence in the mountains, as described by Kirchner, and the hand on the chin traditionally stands for contemplation. Kirchner is probably representing himself here pondering the relationship between illness and life changes.

What was Kirchner's Crisis? Interpretation and Meaning

The diagnoses of the contemporary doctors in the years 1915 to 1918 do not conform. The only serious health problem that probably all perceived was the artist's dependence on alcohol, sleep-inducing drugs and painkillers. This very likely also explains the constant state of fear and the pain in his arms and legs. Everything else that was 'sick' about Kirchner's appearance and condition he probably – there is sufficient evidence of this – repeatedly caused by fasting and by simulation, in order to feign a diffuse mental affliction or even a psychosis. This was meant to safeguard him from being deployed at the front. At the same time, this was in keeping with a self-identification with 'the mad' on the part of artists that was typical of the time.¹⁴¹ Kirchner's flirtation with madness can be seen for example in his retroactively appreciative remarks about a group of drawings from 1916, which, according to him, stemmed "from the severe psychosis".¹⁴² The artist seems to have understood his crises at the time as an opportunity for transformation. Already from 1912, as discussed above, he regarded his artistic development as a shift towards spiritualisation and simultaneous renunciation of the sensual. This was evidently taken up in 1917 / 18 with his comments on the great inspiration the world of the mountains had given him, but also by conversations with Ludwig Binswanger,¹⁴³ which were especially important for the "reshaping of [his] own life".¹⁴⁴ Bettina Gockel attempted to show that here he was referring to the doctor's theories of the connection between genius and mental illness.¹⁴⁵

This may be correct, and yet even before 1923, when Kirchner tried to acquire possession of his medical records after the death of Lucius Spengler, the artist was already aware of the risks of a psychiatric diagnosis.¹⁴⁶ The episode in the sanatorium of Dr Edel would have made this acutely and finally clear to him. The disagreement among the medical opinions would have provided a certain protection. But the artist kept another back door open for himself throughout the war years – with complaints of a lung ailment. When in an essay under the name Louis de Marsalle, he later wrote that he originally went to Davos because "an old tuberculosis" had erupted,¹⁴⁷ this was not the first time he had thought this up. Indeed since 1915 he had been spreading hints of a lung ailment: Shortly before the beginning of his military training he ostensibly still had "blood poisoning with tuberculosis";¹⁴⁸ he was given convalescent leave at the end of October 1915, as he writes, "due to a frail lung and emaciation";¹⁴⁹ at the beginning of 1917 he declared that he had to go "back to Switzerland because of lung concerns";¹⁵⁰ and before going to Bellevue in 1917 he wanted "to use the warm days [on the Stafelalp] for the lungs".¹⁵¹ And in Bellevue Kirchner and Schilling wanted to counter the new doctor's opinion on the Tabes diagnosis from Berlin.¹⁵² The account of Kirchner's transformation from the sensual urbanite to the spiritually-minded mountain painter was allowed to incorporate a psychological crisis only in the subjunctive form.

PLATE 141

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Head of Ludwig Schames

1918

Woodcut, 26.7 × 26.8 cm
Kirchner Museum Davos



NOTES

- 1 Scotti 2004, pp. 15f.
- 2 A “war illness” was already presumed by contemporaries, see Kirchner to Lucius and Helene Spengler, 28 November 1918, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 153.
- 3 Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 14 October 1916, in: Henze 1990, p. 81 (no. 63). Already in January 1915 he had explained to Schiefler: “The career of these men [soldiers] and that of those who create is parallel, placing themselves outside of their own ego to fulfil a higher purpose”, Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 27 January 1915, in: ibid., p. 71 (no. 47). Apparently, Kirchner felt the need to explicitly justify himself in particular to Schiefler, who himself had a son in the war. (This and all the following German quotes in this essay were translated into English by the translator).
- 4 Hoffmeister 2000, pp. 91–109.
- 5 Soika 2014, pp. 59–83.
- 6 As far as possible I have tried to avoid quoting from Kornfeld 1979, since mistakes in dating repeatedly creep into the work.
- 7 See note 3.
- 8 Anita Beloubek-Hammer also pointed out this misunderstanding in Cat. Berlin 2004, p. 133; but see Arnaldo 2010, pp. 151–155.
- 9 Suspicion is raised for example by Eberhard Grisebach’s contradictory account after a talk with the doctor treating Kirchner in Bellevue: “But it is not tabes, and the mental clarity is not in danger”, Eberhard Grisebach to Helene Spengler, 17 October 1917, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 127, and the information by Erna Schilling shortly thereafter “The doctors told her it was a rare kind of tabes not caused by infection but with just as little prospect of cure as the more common kind”, Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 8 November 1917, in: ibid., p. 129.
- 10 Ten Berg 2004; Kirchner to Lucius and Helene Spengler, 28 November 1918, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 153.
- 11 The source for this account is information from Erna Schilling to Ludwig Binswanger, probably from September 1917, compiled in: Kornfeld 1979, pp. 103f.
- 12 Eberhard Grisebach reports in February 1914 of “the artist’s long hair” and in June felt, in comparison to the artist, “often too conventional and well-bred”: Eberhard Grisebach to Helene Spengler, 13 February 1914, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 73, and Eberhard Grisebach to Helene Spengler, 18 June 1914, in: ibid., p. 82.
- 13 Erna Schilling reports of the painkiller Pyramidon, according to Kornfeld 1979, p. 103; but probably Kirchner was also already using the sleep-inducing drug Veronal.
- 14 Kirchner 1925/26, here p. 337.
- 15 The term was used by Kirchner himself for example in a letter to Gustav Schiefler, 15 December 1915, in: Henze 1990, p. 73 (no. 50). On the effects of medication and drug abuse by Kirchner see Gabler 1980, vol. II, p. 19.
- 16 On interpreting this arm position as a mudra see Thesing 1984, pp. 256f.
- 17 For a detailed treatment of this subject see Christian Weikop, “Avatars and Atavism: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s Encounters with Africa”, pp. 99–135 in this volume. The ambivalence of the message of this image is also emphasised by Müller Hofstede 1989.
- 18 Kirchner 1925/1926, p. 337. See also Kornfeld 1979, p. 57.
- 19 Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 28 December 1914, in: Henze 1990, p. 68 (no. 45).
- 20 Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 25 July 1915, in: Delfs 2004, p. 106 (no. 234).
- 21 Fehr 1988, p. 68.
- 22 According to Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 15 August 1915, in: Delfs 2010, vol. 1, p. 107 (no. 236), he wanted to be in Hagen already “Wednesday morning” so the leave probably began at the latest on Tuesday, 17 August.
- 23 Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 20 August 1915, in: ibid., p. 108 (no. 237).
- 24 Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 17 September 1915, in: ibid., p. 111 (no. 244); see also Kirchner to Fritz Meyer-Schönbrunn, 16 September 1915, in: ibid., p. 110 (no. 242), and Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 25 October 1915, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 89.
- 25 Springer 2004.
- 26 Dube L 298 and 299.
- 27 Springer 2004, p. 46.
- 28 Röske 1993, pp. 87–93.
- 29 See also Schwander 1986, pp. 102–111.
- 30 Kirchner 1925, p. 78.
- 31 Kirchner writes from Friedenau again already on 16 November 1915 to Carl Hagemann, in: Delfs 2004, p. 42 (no. 32).
- 32 Fehr 1955, n. p.
- 33 Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 3 December 1915, in: Delfs 2004, p. 45 (no. 37).

- ³⁴ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 9 December 1915, in: Henze 1990, p. 72 (no. 49).
- ³⁵ Gercken, p. 19.
- ³⁶ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 28 July 1919, in: Henze 1990, p. 136 (no. 121).
- ³⁷ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 20 October 1927, in: ibid., p. 495 (no. 411).
- ³⁸ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 28 July 1919, in: ibid., p. 136–137 (no. 121).
- ³⁹ On the dating of his stays see Röske 1999a.
- ⁴⁰ Delfs 2004, p. 59 (no. 61), note 2.
- ⁴¹ Quoted from the brochure *Sanatorium Dr. Kohnstamm, Königstein im Taunus*, Königstein im Taunus, n. d. For more on this see Röske 1999a, p. 28, note 12.
- ⁴² Oskar Kohnstamm to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 23 April 1916, in: Hesse-Frielinghaus, Münster 1974, p. 41.
- ⁴³ Helene Spengler later believed that Kohnstamm should be held responsible for the dependence on Veronal, see Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 22 January 1917, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 99.
- ⁴⁴ Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 14 April 1916, in: Delfs 2010, p. 132 (no. 290).
- ⁴⁵ Kirchner to Ernst Gosebruch, 25 June 1916, in: ibid., p. 58 (no. 61).
- ⁴⁶ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, n.d. [early April 1916], in: Henze 1990, p. 76 (no. 53).
- ⁴⁷ Kohnstamm 1994, p. 27.
- ⁴⁸ Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 25 March 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 51 (no. 48).
- ⁴⁹ Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 3 January 1916, in: ibid., p. 48 (no. 41).
- ⁵⁰ Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 8 April 1916, in: ibid., p. 53 (no. 51).
- ⁵¹ G 471.
- ⁵² Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 29 September 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 67 (no. 78).
- ⁵³ Röske 1999a, pp. 24f.
- ⁵⁴ See e.g.: Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 12 November 1916, in: Henze 1990, pp. 83 / 84 (no. 65).
- ⁵⁵ “[...] the landscape in the Taunus mountains is very interesting and studying the nervous people is, too”: Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 20 May 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 56 (no. 56).
- ⁵⁶ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 13 October 1918, in: Henze 1990, p. 109 (no. 94).
- ⁵⁷ On this see Hoffmann 1999.
- ⁵⁸ Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 20 May 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 56 (no. 56); similarly, Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 20 May 1916, in: ibid., p. 135 (no. 298).
- ⁵⁹ Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 27 June 1916, in: ibid., p. 59 (no. 62).
- ⁶⁰ On this see also Röske 2010, pp. 223f.
- ⁶¹ “I want to be back here in 8 to 14 days”: Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 15 July 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 61 (no. 66); “My course of treatment is not yet finished, I am actually here against the doctor’s wishes”. – See also Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 17 August 1916, in: Henze 1990, pp. 79 / 80 (no. 60).
- ⁶² Botho Graef to Eberhard Grisebach, 18 March 1917, quoted from Wahl 1993, here p. 32.
- ⁶³ Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 24 July 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 61 (no. 67).
- ⁶⁴ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, n.d. [September 1916], in: Henze 1990, p. 81 (no. 62).
- ⁶⁵ Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 5 November 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 73 (no. 89).
- ⁶⁶ Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 12 November 1916, in: Henze 1990, pp. 83 / 84 (no. 65).
- ⁶⁷ Botho Graef to Eberhard Grisebach, 1 December 1916, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 95; he later appointed Carl Hagemann, Ernst Gosebruch and Erna Schilling: Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 1 November 1917, in: Delfs 2004, p. 90 (no. 124).
- ⁶⁸ Hans Delfs presumes a suicide attempt, see Delfs 2010, p. 151 note 2 to no. 345. But this is also already supported by the letter from Erna Schilling to Carl Hagemann, 14 December 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 74 (no. 93), according to which at the time Kirchner “had to be kept under constant surveillance to prevent a misfortune”.
- ⁶⁹ Erna Schilling to Carl Hagemann, 8 December 1916, in: ibid., p. 74 (no. 92).
- ⁷⁰ Botho Graef to Gustav Schiefler, 17 December 1916, in: Henze 1990, p. 84 (no. 67).
- ⁷¹ According to contemporary witnesses, Wahl 1993, here p. 28.
- ⁷² Ibid., p. 30.
- ⁷³ Edel 1921, p. 115.
- ⁷⁴ Kirchner was housed in the building on Berliner Strasse 17, see Erna Schilling to Carl Hagemann, 14 December 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 74 (no. 93).

- 75 Kreuter 1995, vol. 1, pp. 274f.
- 76 Kornfeld 1979, p. 79; unfortunately, the author provides no source for this information; see also Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 8 April 1917, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 116.
- 77 Bresler 1910, p. 564.
- 78 Nonne 1902, pp. 245–347.
- 79 Erna Schilling to Carl Hagemann, 14 December 1916, in: Delfs 2004, p. 74 (no. 93).
- 80 It does not seem very plausible that they did this against his will as Kirchner reported to Graef: Botho Graef to Hugo Hertwig, 25 December 1916, according to Wahl 1993, here p. 30; Botho Graef to Gustav Schiefler, 5 March 1917, in: Henze 1990, p. 88 (no. 71).
- 81 Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, n.d. [March 1917], in: Henze 1990, p. 87 (no. 70).
- 82 Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 15 January 1917, in: Delfs 2004, p. 76 (no. 97), and Kirchner to Irene Eucken, n.d. [beginning of January 1917], in: Delfs 2010, vol. 1, p. 154 (no. 349).
- 83 "Kirchner has to get off of Veronal", Eberhard Grisebach to Helene Spengler, 15 November 1916, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 93.
- 84 Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 20 January 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 98.
- 85 Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 5 February 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 102.
- 86 Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 1 February 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 101.
- 87 Hans Delfs, in: Delfs 2004, p. 79 (no. 103), note 1; Kornfeld 1979, p. 76.
- 88 Erna Schilling to Carl Hagemann, 5 March 1917, in: Delfs 2004, p. 81 (no. 108).
- 89 Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 9 May 1917, in: Grisebach 2010, p. 119.
- 90 Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 31 May 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 120; Hans Fehr records that Kirchner himself told him of these attempts at deception, Fehr 1955, n.p.
- 91 Kornfeld 1979, p. 79.
- 92 Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 31 May 1917, in: Grisebach 2010, p. 120.
- 93 Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 6 June 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 121.
- 94 Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 29 June 1917, in: Delfs 2010, p. 188 (no. 423), and Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, n.d. [beginning of July 1917], in: Delfs 2004, p. 87 (no. 117).
- 95 Kirchner to Helene Spengler, end of July 1917, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 125.
- 96 Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 21 January 1918, in: Henze 1990, p. 98 (no. 83).
- 97 Kirchner to Nele van de Velde, 23 August 1918, in: Kirchner 1961, pp. 8f.
- 98 Schoop 1992, p. 28.
- 99 *Ibid.*, pp. 18–24.
- 100 Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 21 January 1918, in: Henze 1990, p. 98 (no. 83); Schoop 1992, p. 42.
- 101 Kornfeld 1979, p. 104.
- 102 *Ibid.*, p. 101 – he quotes here from the postscript to a letter to Henry van de Velde of 2 October 1917, which is not printed in Kirchner 1961.
- 103 Julius Schaxel to Eberhard Grisebach, 1 March 1918, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 143, and 30 March 1918, *ibid.*, p. 145.
- 104 Kirchner to Nele van de Velde, 13 October 1916, in: Kirchner 1961, p. 10, see Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 21 January 18, in: Henze 1990, p. 98 (no. 83).
- 105 Van de Velde 1961, p. 5.
- 106 Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 28 November 1917, in: Delfs 2010, vol. 1, p. 222 (no. 492).
- 107 Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 16 January 1918, in: Kirchner 1961, p. 76.
- 108 Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 30 September 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 72.
- 109 Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 2 October 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 73; Kirchner to Helene Spengler, 20 October 1917, in: Delfs 2010, vol. 1, p. 200 (no. 453).
- 110 On Else Blankenhorn see Noell-Rumpeltes 2003, pp. 76–81; on Blankenhorn and Kirchner see: Röske 2001; Noell-Rumpeltes 2013.
- 111 See Rothe 1972; Anz 1977; Cat. Gottorf 2003; Eichhorn / Lorenzen 2017.
- 112 Kirchner to Helene Spengler, 7 November 1917, in: Delfs 2010, p. 203 (no. 458). See Kirchner to Irene Eucken, 13 November 1917, in: *ibid.*, p. 206 (no. 462).
- 113 Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 30 December 1917, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 136.
- 114 Nina Jaenisch called it "hallucinatory", in: Cat. Frankfurt 2010, p. 272.
- 115 Schoop 1992, p. 32.

- 116** Karin Schick wants to locate the motif in Königstein and change the date to 1916 / 17, in: Cat. Frankfurt 2010, p. 269. Stylistically the image could also fit the Königstein period well. But the fountain in Kohnstamm's sanatorium looks different than the fountain in the background to the woman, see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brunnenhof2,_Sanatorium_Kohnstamm.JPG (last accessed on 16 February 2018), and (if one keeps to the title) Erna never visited Kirchner in Königstein.
- 117** Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 7 June 1918, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 149.
- 118** Röske 2003, p. 160.
- 119** Döhmann / Presler 1996, pp. 407f. (Skb. 38).
- 120** Even alternative titles in letters such as *Bucht von Kreuzlingen* (*Bay of Kreuzlingen*) and *Runde Bucht Kreuzlingen* (*Round Bay Kreuzlingen*) do not help further, see Georg Reinhart to Kirchner, 20 March 1918, in: Joelson 2002, p. 34 (no. 12); Kirchner to Georg Reinhart, 21 March 1918, in: ibid., p. 36 (no. 13).
- 121** According to Gabler 1988, p. 135, Kirchner was made aware of Heym in 1917.
- 122** See Augat 2003, pp. 26–32.
- 123** Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, 16 November 1917, in: Henze 1990, p. 94 (no. 79).
- 124** On this see Röske 1999b, pp. 70–86.
- 125** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 28 May 1918, in: Kirchner 1961, p. 83.
- 126** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 30 August 1918, in: ibid., p. 89.
- 127** Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 5 January 1918, in: Delfs 2004, p. 9 (no. 130).
- 128** Kirchner 1925, p. 72.
- 129** “I would now also like to work with oils in Davos”, Kirchner to Helene Spengler, 3 April 1918, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 146.
- 130** Schoop 1992, p. 44.
- 131** Kirchner to Georg Reinhart, 14 July 1918, in: Joelson 2002, p. 46 (no. 17).
- 132** “[...] I believe he had pepped himself up with plenty of morphine”: Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 22 October 1918, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 152.
- 133** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 22 June 1918, in: Kirchner 1961, p. 85.
- 134** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 13 October 1918, in: ibid., p. 93.
- 135** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 17 August 1918, in: ibid., p. 85.
- 136** Kornfeld 1979, p. 120.
- 137** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, n.d., in: Kirchner 1961, p. 96.
- 138** Erna Schilling to Carl Hagemann, 27 December 1917, in: Delfs 2004, p. 92 (no. 128).
- 139** Laermann 2004.
- 140** Kaak 2003, pp. 15f.
- 141** Cat. Gottorf 2003.
- 142** Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 30 December 1917, in: Delfs 2010, vol. 1, p. 223; Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 24 January 1918, in: ibid., p. 237.
- 143** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 28 May 1918, in: Kirchner 1961, p. 83.
- 144** Kirchner to Georg Reinhart, 14 July 18, in: Joelson 2002, p. 44 (no. 17).
- 145** Gockel 2006, pp. 134–147; Gockel 2010, pp. 105–154.
- 146** Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, Davos Platz, 26 April 1923, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 245; Kirchner to Eberhard Grisebach, 4 May 1923, in: ibid., p. 246f. See also Kornfeld 1979, pp. 196f.
- 147** Marsalle 1933, here p. 15.
- 148** Kirchner to Karl Ernst Osthaus, 25 July 1915, in: Delfs 2010, vol. 1, p. 106 (no. 234).
- 149** See note 24.
- 150** Kirchner to Irene Eucken, 10 March 1917, in: Delfs 2010, vol. 1, p. 166 (no. 378).
- 151** Kirchner to Henry van de Velde, 19 July 1917, in: Kirchner 1961, p. 70.
- 152** Eberhard Grisebach to Helene Spengler, 17 October 1917, in: Lothar Grisebach 2010, p. 127, and Helene Spengler to Eberhard Grisebach, 8 November 1917, in: ibid., p. 129.