

Pedro Pousada

Merzbau: the interpretation of the world as a living form without first causes

Translated by Ana Carolina Azevedo

Abstract: This article gives further thought to the article “Merzbau, the grave of the logocentric self: He who screams becomes the space”, published in the *Porto Arte* journal, issue 34, 2015, presenting considerations on the Merzbau of Hanover as a “para-architectural” experience and as a doctrine of environmental comfort, linked to intense sensation and mnemonic relaxation.

Keywords: Merzbau. Kurt Schwitters. Modernism. Art. Architecture.

In the previous article, *Merzbau, the grave of the logocentric self: He who screams¹ becomes the space* (in *Porto Arte* n. 34), we talked about the work and figure of Kurt Schwitters, central personality of the German modernism of the 20's in the 20th century, and we focused our attention on his life project, Merzbau, autobiographical environment established in his family's house in Hanover. This second article is, therefore, an extension of this analysis, where we deal with the genesis, the different semantic possibilities, the dissociations between form and content that characterize this famous and strange accumulation of fragments of space-time.

The internal economy of Merzbau communicates us the action of different ideologies about the production and consumption of art; about the conservation of art as the appearance of a whole or its dissipation as duration. At the various stages of its interior, we can see divergent notions of taste of deposit and nativity nature that dominated the 20's, or the architectural sculpture of the 30's, that constitute distinct spatial settings; this work/experience is, therefore, a case of nuclear study to address the problem of innovation and of habit in the modernist field.

Being, in the words of Yves-Alain Bois, “*the entropic invasion par excellence*”² the Merzbau exposes modernism to the problems of mold and eternity, accentuating the homogenization processes

between ruin (the adamic regress anachronism that, in modernism, is placed as an opposing contraction of the unchanging everyday life) and superego (self-perfection as a guide for a “to be once again”), specific of the modernist conceptions of the subject creator.

Ironic in his unproductivity and his despise for finished artwork and proselyte in his redemptive vision of the new, he, the modern designer, puts himself as a switcher in the stream between the past and the present, interfering in relations between the two, sometimes accentuating what at present, the technology, comes out of the same, the tradition, sometimes incorporating the technology, its premature archaism and uneven development, in the technique of memory, back at doing it again, which is the tradition.

It is in this sense that the inversions of the dadaist collage from Hannah Hoch, Raoul Hausmann and Jean (Hans) Arp, the bauhausian culture (especially the Gropius-Hannes Meyer cycle when Moholy-Nagy also played a major role), the dutch neo-plasticism of Van Doesburg, J.J.P. Oud and even tatlinesque constructivism;³ that all *Kunstismus* of heroic modernism, find their common home in the environment of the Merzbau. Kurt Schwitters revisited and reinterpreted many aspects of the architectural parables of the poet Paul Scheerbarth, of the architect Bruno Taut⁴ and of the Glaserne Kette group (1919-1920) in particular the reactivation to the Expressionism of the Gesamtkunstwerk concept.

It is worth noting that 1927 – year that K. Schwitters's project consolidated his housing and sculpture identity – is also the year in which in the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition of Stuttgart seventeen architects mostly of Germanic origin (Mies, the Taut brothers, Behrens, Gropius, Hilbersmeir, Poelzig, among others) with a guest of exception, Le Corbusier, projected and built in Weissenhoff a showroom of modern housing consisting of 21 buildings and 60 housings. The impact of this experience was certainly significative to the imagination of modernists interested in relations between the realm of lived and the aesthetic and in particular that of Kurt Schwitters who knew personally most of the architects involved. It is, from the previous year, the number 18/19 of the *Merz* magazine (1923-1932) dedicated to the New Architecture, *Neu Architektur*, which constitutes the number 8/9 *Nasci* in 1924 two moments

1. “I felt myself freed and had to shout my jubilation out to the world... One can even shout with refuse, and this is what I did, nailing and gluing it together.” Kurt Schwitters, *Ich und Meine Ziele*, 1931. In Dietrich, Dorothea. *The collages of Kurt Schwitters: tradition and innovation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 206.

2. Bois, Yve-Alain, *Threshold*. In Bois, Yve-Alain; Krauss, Rosalind. *A User's Guide to Entropy*, October, Vol. 78. (Autumn, 1996), p. 55.

3. There was great significance to the visit K. Schwitters made in 1922 with El Lissitzky to the first Russian Exhibition at the Van Diemen Gallery in Berlin, or his presence in *grand assembly* of the constructivists in Weimar or the failed plan of a trip to the URSS in 1925 with Theo van Doesburg.

4. The publication in 1923 of his project model, *Schloss und Katedrale mit Hofbrunnen* (1921), in the Taut magazine, *Fruhlicht*, and his correspondence with Adolf Behne, are, in fact, symptoms of this connection.

of affirmation and extension, through editorial, of the constructivist plastic culture in the European artistic panorama.

Kurt Schwitters⁵ inserts himself in a vision shared by his friends and accomplices El Lissitzky (*Merz-Nasci*, 1924) and Adolf Behne (*Biologie und kubismus*, 1915) in which a scientific notion of shape and the commendation of the machine are just part of a whole in which prevails, especially since the 20's, the view that this new form/transformation of matter/cube-morphization of space is an extension of the natural world and not its rejection.

The study developed by Gwendolen Webster based on the collection of references of contemporaries and visitors of Schwitters (Richard Huelsenbeck, Hans Arp, Hanna Hoch, Kate Steinitz, Sophie Koppers, Wassily and Nina Kandinsky, Max Ernst), confirms the expressive and everyday character of a dialectic between possession (the accumulation of goods, the right to property, the patriarchal power) and privacy (the accumulation of secrets, of contracts and dominations).

On one hand, this is a subjective process of gathering-accumulation-construction that converges on a *symbiotic* object. In each correction, addition, collage and overlaps, it highlights and complicates the fortified determinism of paragraph #5 of *Waldhausenstrasse*. But, on the other hand, it is a migrant work inside the building itself in the first four years, 1923-1927, of residence in Hanover. The "*fear of emptiness*", which, according to Gwendolen Webster, is one of the driving forces of Merzbau was held always in a tense situation of lack of space.

In the light-dark of the caves the healing rest, the anonymity, the secret of presence associates with the eminence of extinction, the organic of the Self, to its the atomization into dust. The Merzbau appears then as the visible part of that atomism, as the modern monument in the slow crumbling of the great transcendence (the supreme being) and unifying wholeness (the social order); this monolith made with *mud from the heaven of culture*, this object of culture of crisis is in itself the finished product of the separation of all human activities. To live in freedom and at the same time at disguise, to open the doors and at the same time to protect themselves, seem to be antithetical companions in the Hanoverian studio.

The internal mechanics of the Merzbau triggers, as indicated at the beginning of this article, propositions and divergent interpretations. An *autobiographic environment*, a three-dimensional collage where he contrasted two instances – the work as a process and

ontological fragility and as a synthesis of creative diversity; diversity which is also provided by the conceptual opposition between two architectural forms present in the Merzbau: the cave and *the tower*.

The invasive housing of the cave is also the archetype of two essential space-moments of human life, the womb and the grave, birth and death. The tower is a recurring architectural element in medieval legends where it is an example of an air prison but also the dream of immortality. These two architectural bodies also essentialize the presence of two *Selbs* (Ich) in the transformed building. The *Self* of the conscious, rational and intentional self-image (clearly exposed clearly by k. Schwitters in his *Ich und meine Ziele* (1931) – me and my projects), of a *Self* in which the bourgeois-artist-clown is aware and respects the time limits of its cover and of its exoticism and a second *Self*, who hides in a cave, which turns inside out without prospects or desire to return: the "*regressive return to the social irresponsibility of childhood*". This second *Self*, which makes use of non-verbal language and mimicry, which overlaps the word-sound to word-sense, the non-objective image to narrative-image; that confronts, disrupts and sabotages the humanist self-image, that *Self* is the sum of "*to pretend play (with) doing over and over again*". A fake and a repeat⁶ that births the organic deterioration of memory and the effort to thwart the disease of forgetfulness, to remember, to secure through a montage at the same time beautiful and painful to the absence, to the genuine experience (of friendship, of artistic and existential communion, of fatherly love) but hopelessly passed.

The negative stress and the moralistic disbelief with which Alexander Dorner, the "*main promoter of the artistic avant-gardes of Weimar Germany*",⁷ points out the project of Kurt Schwitters⁸ as a conceptual antithesis of geometric rationalism and *para-architectural* of the *Prounraums* and of the *Cabinet des Abstracts* of Lissitzky serves, as will be noted later, to illustrate the analysis that Patricia Falguières makes of the Merzbau as a collection and not as construction. For our study, this regression, the return to the childhood, not only has this character of a sick and uncontrolled *Self*, but

6. Kurt Schwitters knows through his graphic work that the world of technical rationality, the bourgeois world, does not tolerate these irregularities, that it observes the disinhibition, the social incontinence with disbelief and suspicion.

7. Falguières, Patricia, op. cit., p.152.

8. He tells us that in the *Merzbau* "the free expression of a self devoid of any social control has crossed the line between sanity and madness [...] a species of fecal odor filtered, a sick and contagious relapse in the *social irresponsibility of childhood* that plays with the debris and the rubbish". Referenced by Falguières, Patricia. In *Kurt Schwitters: catalogue raisonné* (conception by Serge Lemoine). Paris: CNAM-Centre George Pompidou, 1994, p. 152.

5. Cf. Gamard, Elizabeth. *Kurt Schwitters Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000, p.189.

it also transports us to a hypothesis that associates the gestation of the Merzbau to “*transformation of the touching experience into habit*”.⁹ Our proposition is amplified by some of the comments made by Walter Benjamin in a text from 1928 (*Toys and Play*) about the *endless toy world* and the *dual meaning of the German games*.

Leah Dickermann¹⁰ recalls that the first *Merz-saulen* (Merz column) erected in 1923 as an autonomous object was surmounted by the memory of a tragic experience, perhaps the most painful of human experience, the loss of a son; the death mask of the first son of Schwitters, even though it appears as an anonymous icon (Patricia Falguières, for example, perceives it as the head of a doll) that quickly disappears under new images and objects, it may be the totemic *image* that made Schwitters want to remember everything, to save everything, to make the housing in “*a unrecognizable petrified form*” of small happiness and great grief.

This crypt that invades and colonizes a bourgeois housing from its underground cistern to the attic is, to Dietmar Elger¹¹, a power with architectural qualities. Qualities that are perceived not only formally (the space occupation) but at methodological level as well, at the level of the construction process; there is, he notes, a parsimonious distribution of the necessary and the accessory, of the intimacy and the public, of the beautiful and the ugly, of the explicit and the incommunicado.

Dietmar Elger's thesis is that the explosive concavity (in a sense of excretion) produced by Kurt Schwitters also resulted in a persistent interest in integrated architecture in which the masonic action, individualized and artisan, participates in a supra-individual project; there would be in the Merzbau, by influence of aesthetic and plasticity notions enunciated by expressionist architecture, the “*gothic of god killed*” as he calls Gabriele Bryant,¹² in particular the Glashaus (1914) by Bruno Taut or the ideology and the architectural work of Peter Behrens, a nostalgic and vaguely ethical spirit of *gesamtkunstwerk*, of the aesthetic transformation of everyday life and the life-affirming space, of the city and the housing.

Patricia Falguières¹³ disputes the possibility of becoming intelligible this “*daedalus of overprinted structures*” through the architectural lexicon and the euclidian and logocentric spatialization and logocêntrica that serves as support. We are, she insists, before a *palimpsest* with all the inherent symbolic and conceptual implications. An interior excretion of “*ridiculous, obscene, laughable, of forgotten material, null and void treasures*” that catastrophize the hypothesis of a systematic, of a plan. On her perspective, the arborescent proliferation, alluded by Hans Richter, doesn't mimic the gothic architecture. The Merzbau is not an envelope but a process, it is not a unitary structure but a reliquary that comes from numerous stratifications. P. Falguières gets to use the expression *the Merzbau feeds*, expression that you overdetermines the omnivore organism.

Dorothea Dietrich in her text *The fragment reframed: Kurt Schwitters's Merz Column*, develops the argument that the *discontinued composition of fragments* that Schwitters baptizes originally as a column is an symbolic analogy of the historical transformation of the cohesive and unbreakable realm of culture (the *Kultur* of Spengler) in the incomplete, abstracting and materialistic experience of civilization.

This initial polysemic *cephalopod*, is a continued, organized and conscious effort, she tells us, to overcome the fragmentation, the devastation of memory, the increasing strangeness and anonymity of individual experience that affects the human life in the period of modernization. Antinomy of the column as an architectural element – the *Merz column Merz* does not secure, does not support, does not metonymically represents the whole – it's still the sometimes ironic effort of complaining to the personal level, to the level of individual subjectivity a position in the world of men, in complaining, insists a Dorothea Dietrich, a personal totality in a world in which the most powerful image is the nonsense of an off-centered, unordered and unstructured form.

The refinement of form and the *constructivist* essentialisation of the Merzbau (integration of mirrors and variation in the sources of light, reduced chromatic range to white) that we can see in the most well-known photos of this project, take by Wilhelm Redeman, belong to a final stage of concealment and epidermalization of layers that made the history of the *Cathedral of Erotic Misery*.

This apparent *return to order*, to a sense of unity, has at least two readings. One, perhaps the most immediate relationship with

9. Benjamin, Walter, *Toys and play: marginal notes on a monumental work. In Sobre arte, técnica, linguagem e política*. Lisboa: Relógio d'água, 1992, p.176.

10. Dickerman, Leah, *Merz and Memory: on Kurt Schwitters*. In Dickerman, Leah (Ed.). *The Dada Seminars*. Washington: Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts of the National Gallery of Art, 2005, p.p.114-115; Dickerman ascribes John Elderfield the mortuary mask identification.

11. ELGER, Dietmar, *Merz ou dada ? In Kurt Schwitters: catalogue raisonné* (conception by Serge Lemoine), Paris, CNAM-Centre George Pompidou, 1994, p.145.

12. C.f. BRYANT, Gabriele. In *op.cit.*, p. 165.

13. FALGUIERES, Patricia, *Désœuvrement de Kurt Schwitters In Kurt Schwitters: catalogue raisonné* (conception by Serge Lemoine), Paris, CNAM-Centre George Pompidou, 1994, p. 152.

the German political environment of the 30's, the political death of the Weimar Republic with the appointment of Hitler to Chancellor of Germany and the declaration of war that the new Reich makes to various minorities that populated the German society, including that of the modernists. In the context of the miserabilization and criminalization of modernism this new epidermis would serve as armor; the Merzbau would appear as a reversed chrysalis, that never opens and which beauty and mystery would be hidden from a society that would only want to reify it if not expose it violently as an aberration of human culture.

It is necessary to make a digression to try to understand the incomprehensible: the permanence of Schwitters in Nazi Germany during 4 years. The artistic retreat had the same anthropological quality of religious retreats for K. Schwitters:¹⁴ art was the place where ideologies didn't enter, they stood at the door, and men who in the crowd were divided between comrades and enemies became just men (Gamard, 2000, p. 27-30).

This escapist conception, the art as a refuge, as a *temple* closed to the bitterness and violence of history, accumulates sufficient dilettantism and ingenuity, but does not explain or justify that K. Schwitters could ignore the signs of the fire of the Reichstag (February 1933) orchestrated by the fascist Germans that would lead to security measures and the ban on political activity (Reichstag Fire Decree, February 1933); that could overcome the end of the Bauhaus, then remit to Berlin in April 1933 and therefore the closing of doors of the pedagogical dimension of modernism; and that the burning of books by the nazis of the Humboldt University students on Franz Joseph Platz in Berlin, in May of the same year, the beginning of the literary purge against the "anti-German spirit" that would lead to the destruction of tens of thousands of titles from universal culture wasn't enough to convince him of the worst; or he did not observe the second part of the warning of Heinrich Heine ("where books are burn, very soon people will be burn too") to mirror the anti-semitic laws (the laws of Nuremberg issued in September 1935) which made it to a country where all areas of the German everyday life occupied; that is not disturbed with the hasty escape from virtually the entire intelligentsia (the intellectuals voted with their feet); that had news of political and racist sanitation in public administration and in teaching that emptied the Germany of its critical conscience, with the Germanisation of culture, with the

proliferation of shows and festivals of masses that rehabilitated old myths and gave a credible, aggressive and predatory scale to the utopia of *lebens raum*, where they fortified the Alliance of Prussian revanchism with the small anti-semitic and anti-communist bourgeoisie. Schwitters' belief system shielded him extraordinarily against this stifling, upside-down world. The world of terrorism turned into State and of Mack the Knife that the Great War bequeathed to German cities, stood in front of his eyes, but Schwitters could still go on a holiday to Norway as Alfred Barr witnessed when, in 1935, he visited him in Hanover and couldn't find him; his resilience didn't stop him, however, to feel the nazi war machine doing target practice on his generation.

Schwitters' hesitations and inertia are partly explained later by the widow of Moholy-Nagy¹⁵ who describes a bizarre dinner to which K. Schwitters and Moholy-Nagy would have been invited by Marinetti to visit Berlin Nazi; in this banquet, that would serve to honor Marinetti, attended all, except Hitler, the Nazi Party Eminences (Goebbels, Goering, the fat Rohm [head of SA and the days before], Rudolf Hess, former expressionist Gerhart Hauptmann that she describes as a fake and plaster version of Goethe, the President of the University of Berlin among other leaders of Nazi political-ideological folklore); we can imagine the buffoon Schwitters, the poet of Anne Blume, sitting at the table with these characters? According to Sybil M.-Nagy, Schwitters was drunk and made a sad figure by appealing to let him be who he had always been ("*I am aryan – the great aryan MERZ, I can think in aryan, paint in aryan, spit in aryan*" He desperately argued, "*You will not forbid me to MERZ my MERZ art, will you?*"). The late date of his departure from nazified Hanover relates, of course, with the umbilical sovereignty that his MERZian cocoon-crypt, his untransportable *portfolio*, had on his imagination.

K. Schwitters, very shortly after this incident in Hanover, fled precipitously with his son Ernst to Denmark and settled shortly afterwards in Norway. The reason was the fact that Ernst, then involved in antifascist activity, have been asked to appear in the local facilities of the Gestapo for statements (which usually meant the summary detention).

But anyway, it's inescapable that K. Schwitters was another of the forced recruits who were listed, to the exposure/manipulation by German fascism to humiliate avant-garde artists and intellectuals in 1937: the *Entarte Kunst* (degenerate art); the event was held first in Munich and then in Berlin with long lines of incredulous

14. On the transformation of art into a "secular form of belief", which extended to the modernist era, see Krauss, Rosalind, *Grids, October*, Vol. 9 (Summer 1979), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p. 54.

15. Apud Motherwell, Robert. *The Dada Painters and Poets – an Anthology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Press, 1981, p. xxix-xx.

and curious visitors; imagine that, at age 46, the good bourgeois Schwitters would not have felt, “*enjoying the stable income from his real estate and of his typographic work*” accustomed to social compensation (publicity, prestige with the vanguard, the petty-bourgeois envys) in the face of his involuntary participation in this infamous *Luna Park* of the anti-modernist propaganda of the Third Reich. He’d probably have found irony the fact that he was exposed alongside artists whose works he esteemed, or not, and of others who would refuse in different circumstances, if they were proposed, to appear in the same exposition as he, but what would have prevailed would have been the consciousness of an end. The propagandist Merz had no longer publicly heroized the nonsense when he realized that his reaction to his behavior changed radically: the *Thousand-Year Reich* had made a short circuit on the itinerary that characterized the weimarian authorities’ chronic hostility to the modernist initiatives – the seizure of the works exhibited and published, the censorship, the police invasion, the court, the conviction and the payment of a deposit or to fine. The modernist discovered that he was transformed, in fact, in a enemy of the State and that his new label, *degenerate artist*, stick to his skin as a death sentence (social and physical, too). For the Germany of the *Triumph of the will* (Leni Riefensthal, 1935) modernism is a metabolism that deconstructs, that slows the ideological and historic homogenization of the Germans, that counteracts the hypertrophy of society in a horrible monkish rant. That’s why, for the Nazis, the modernist does not represent nor have ever represented the values of the true aesthetic revolution (which speaks and thinks in German) or is welcome to a field of aesthetic realization in which the political objectives become the “*most artificial of all artistic works*”.¹⁶ For the ideologues of the German radical right-wing, the modernist was never a *Vorschein* (*aesthetic anticipation*), he should not be ennobled by his contemporaries but his influence in the world of the living should be corrected peremptorily: excising the modernist omens by pursuing, watching, interning its most coriaceous and charismatic activists and, when the political time for this expedient comes, eliminate them.

A second reading about the “purification” (decantation would be perhaps more appropriate) of the Merzbau indicates that K. Schwitters was a late constructivist (in the 30’s, the theoretical-practical breath of constructivism already had the empirical tones of productivism and of the factographism) who decided to

resolve the exhaustion of both the methodological process and the resulting form by embedding a cubomorphic coating. The language of nonsense was consolidated, garnished, and now had to be studded, protected or denied. After imitating the children who collect the most unlikely and insignificant objects as essential parts of their lives, after the childish and naive game of accumulations, of unlikely stories, after the columns, holes and arches of debris, of objects found, of obsolete objects, of objects of desire and of inestimable symbolic affection, there comes a time of amnesia induced, of concealment, erasure; we could suggest that, after the libertarian, almost anarchistic, unconcern about where origin and purpose are obscure, indefinite, indeterminate elements, the dreaded hour of social conventions, of shame, of learning, of punishment, the time this arborescent house, this surface of many skins and many organs have to hide¹⁷ their social futility, their dysfunctional orphan character in a material world replete with things and acts too serious and fearful.

Perhaps it was the logical culmination, the epilogue necessary for this authentic *hypertrophic trophy* (the term used by Max Ernst makes a lot of sense here: the remains collected in the daily *battlefield* develop like an uncontrollable totality) to bury in the poetic scarcity of its emptiness the primitive, primordial, irrational contours of a Self which the bourgeois life inhibited, forbade and punished. The Merzbau is the heteronomous incarnation made architecture so as not to have to respond to social laws.

The organicism of the Merzbau anticipates the state of disbelief that will dominate the post-war artistic activity, the permanence of the artistic sign as an experience of the natural and the tragic, as a crisis between the classical inclination towards organization and the mechanization of the creative impulse (or in the rationalism of Mondrian and European aesthetic purism, the “*unity between the expression of content and its appearance*”) and the romantic obsession with expression, the gesture as “*symbolic liberation of unconscious forces*”.¹⁸ Art is not, unlike the prime-modernist corollary, the aesthetic awareness of technology and science.

POSTSCRIPT: KDE CIRCA 1931

The name KdE (cathedral of erotic misery) is a simple title. It does not respect its content but it shares its destiny like all

17. This is also a reading hypothesis proposed by O’Doherty, Brian, *Inside the white cube*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 45.

18. Buchloch, Benjamin, *Richter’s Fracture: between the synecdoche and the spectacle*. In Papadakis, Andreas; Farrow, Clare; Hodges, Nicola. *New Art: an international survey*, London: Academy Editions, 1991, p.191.

denominations: for example Dusseldorf is no longer a village and Schonpenhauer is not a drunk.

It can be said that KdE is the synthesis, in a pure form, and with a few exceptions, of all the important things or not, carried out by me in the last seven years of my life but where a certain literary form has been sneaked. It had a size of 3.5 x 2 x 1 m and had at first a huge electrical installation that was destroyed by a short circuit: in its place now there are, everywhere, small Christmas lights that provide the construction and its veneer a clarity proper to dark places; but these lights are not an integral part of the composition. But anyway, when they are on, the lights lend to the set the appearance of a Christmas tree that looks unreal and illuminated at the same time.

[...] All the caves are characterised by essential compounds of varied origins: In that place we find the treasure of the Nibelungen with all its brilliant wonders, the Kyffhauser castle with its stone table, the Goetheana grotto with a Goethe leg serving as a relic accompanied by pencils used to the last by poetry; the town of the personal union having on it the shadow of Brubswick-Luneburg with houses of Weimar carried out by Feininger and the acronym of the city of Karlsruhe whose project was carried out by me; the sadistic grotto where the atrociously mutilated body of a young girl deserving of wailing rests; a colorful grove of tomatoes and rich offerings; the Ruhr region with its true lineage and the true coke of the gas factory; the art exhibition with paintings and sculptures of Michel-Angelo and mine and whose only visitor is a dog with a leash; the head of a dog with toilettes and the red dog, to the left the organ that we must touch so that it plays "sweet night, holy night", before it played "come my little ones"; the disabled by the war at ten per cent with his daughter who has no head but who still bears well; Mona Haousmann, composed by a reproduction of the Mona Lisa with the face of Raoul Haousmann which made her completely lose her stereotyped smile; a brothel with a three-legged lady conceived by Hannah Hoch, and the great grotto of love.

(Kurt Schwitters in *Merz* n. 12, 1931)

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