STREET VIEW: THE EXPRESSIVE FACE OF THE PUBLIC IN JAMES ENSOR'S

1888 *CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO BRUSSELS IN 1889* AND ERNST LUDWIG

KIRCHNER'S 1913-15 *STRASSENBILDER* SERIES

By

Patricia L. Bray

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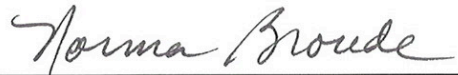
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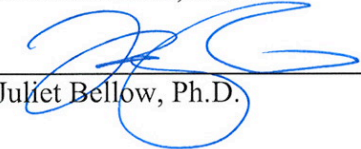
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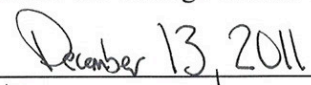
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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes in tandem James Ensor's 1888 *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's 1913-15 *Strassenbilder* series. Current interpretations of these paintings often emphasize a narrative reading of the artists' personal expressions of the struggle of the individual against the angst and dysfunction of society. I explore the artists' visualizations of the modern urban street and the individual in a crowd. In addition, I contextualize the environment of rapid modernization and fin-de-siècle anxiety, and the anti-institutionalism of Les XX and the Brücke. This thesis challenges the assumptions upon which current art-historical interpretations are constructed by examining the artists' work within contemporary cultural discourse, crowd theory, and sociological scholarship, and through close visual readings of the artists' formal strategies. I argue that Ensor and Kirchner deployed conscious aesthetic strategies in compositional distortion, antithesis and masquerade to explore the conflicting impulses, contumacy, and ambiguity of the modern moment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The works of the Belgian artist James Ensor and the German artist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner that straddle the turn of the last century are both frequently interpreted in relation to their urban environments of European social anxiety and modern struggles of individual identity. This paper intends to analyze the major street scenes of Ensor and Kirchner, Ensor's 1888 *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (Fig. 1) and Kirchner's 1913-15 *Strassenbilder*, or Berlin Street Scene series (Figs. 2-8).[1]

Although Ensor and Kirchner worked in two consecutive artistic eras and different European cities, their mutual attention to the subject of the modern urban street, their experimental modes of expression, and their complicated engagement with their socio-political moments make them a fruitful pair of artists to consider in tandem. As Ensor is typically credited as one of the fathers of twentieth-century expressionism, his artistic process and environment are worthy areas to consider in conjunction with the work of one of the first expressionists, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

Rather than approaching the development of expressionism in an exclusively linear progression in which later artists learn from, react to, and innovate beyond earlier

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1. *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (fig. 1) frequently appears with the alternate English title *The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889*. This paper will use the title preferred by the current owner of the painting, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

forbears, there are benefits to be gained from evaluating the art of Ensor and Kirchner from a parallel perspective. Addressing these artists and the surprising similarities between their cities, social epochs and artistic environments can yield further nuanced aspects of their artistic endeavors.

I intend to expand upon the existing Ensor and Kirchner scholarship and challenge the uniformity of some current interpretations. I do not intend to fully negate accepted interpretations as much as I hope to enrich and complicate accepted views by reevaluating some of the socio-historic assumptions upon which current reception is based.

The way that Ensor and Kirchner express the modern moment through the motif of the street will be explored in terms of the contradictions and opportunities for the individual and the collected group. Tensions surrounding individuality, loss of self, and the liberation of performance, as well as struggles between freedom and anxiety, optimism and fear may be evinced from the works of these artists in fin-de-siècle and pre-World War I Europe. Both artists' artworks appear to resist bourgeois social norms through personal expression, but their paintings present a number of contradictions that suggest a variety of ambivalent readings. Are their scenes stifling or liberating? To what extent are their paintings parody, revelry, projections of social angst at the modern condition, or projections of the audience reception? How do differing perceptions of menace or thrill associated with modern groups of people affect the understanding of the artists' works?

Formally these two artists of succeeding artistic generations offer interesting comparisons in their visual vocabulary of the public face. They employ modern

techniques of spatial manipulation by contorting and contracting the street space and disorienting the viewer. They both use flatly-applied, saturated pigments in adjacent juxtapositions that, along with patterned repetition, dynamic lines, or overlapping splotches, function to confound simple visual reading. Their techniques of distorting and compressing figures and faces into airless interlocking forms succeed in complicating interpretations about identity and meaning. The superficial nature of representation suggests that masking and performance provided visual strategies for both artists in addressing the particularities of modernity.

Are the works of Ensor and Kirchner a complicated mix of pleasure, critique, or exposé? Individually, the artists bring different sets of issues: Kirchner's street scenes are inseparable from consideration of gendered representation, prostitution, public morality and metropolitan modernity. Ensor's work combines religion, politics, moral hypocrisy and secular crowd behavior. Are these expressions of societal angst with attendant loss of self or Dionysian celebrations of human revelry and instinct? Both artists upend bourgeois propriety and provide ambivalent and contradictory renderings of the contemporary moment, prominently played out in the public street.

Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*, whether intentionally or not, impart a sense of human unity and companionship along with their typically perceived sense of alienation, while the chaos and anarchy in Ensor's *Christ's Entry* reveal an antithetical combination of disconnection with unity, menace and thrill. Singular interpretations are defied by the complexity of both artists' efforts. In both artists' work, an unmistakable frisson exists in defiance of established order and authority, communicated not only through content, but also through visual means.

Both artists betray a common feeling of pleasure in instability and the challenge to bourgeois decorum; however, Ensor's *Christ's Entry* seems somewhat bitter, while Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* appear more naïve. Both artists challenge accepted beliefs about human nature and behavior and the notion that public crowds are exclusively dangerous and alienating. While these works by Ensor and Kirchner participate intimately in the struggles of their historical moments, they also offer individual pockets of escape through participation in the crowd and positive alternatives that the crowd can yield: a sense of community, thrill of the unexpected, a feeling of liberation through anarchy, and the freedom of disguise and cover.

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Evolving Views of James Ensor's 1888
Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889

</div>

Some of the major contributions in the scholarship regarding Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* are introduced here. The earlier scholars, besides offering invaluable and extensively researched perspectives on Ensor's work, have had a lasting influence on the interpretation of Ensor's *Christ's Entry,* while later scholars both expand on established work and offer intriguing new angles of interpretation. Ensor's repeated crowd scenes are frequently viewed as the artist's comment on the modern world gone awry. A variety of opinions hold sway regarding the socio-political implications of Ensor's complex work. His frequent religious references are often interpreted as an affirmation of the transcendental in opposition to worldly corruption, and Ensor himself is often considered to hold a messianic view of his own artistic persona. Ensor's masks,

typically considered from a biographical perspective, are viewed both as revelations of true identity and as forms of escapism for hiding from one's genuine nature.

Diane Lesko's 1985 thorough monograph of Ensor's "creative years," one of the first important analyses of Ensor's work in the late twentieth century, addresses a number of the major themes in *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, and connects these themes to Ensor's larger oeuvre.[2] Lesko discusses Ensor's increasing fascination with the Belgian bourgeoisie, "his vivid and frightening depictions of a mob illustrate his fascination with the concept of the crowd and the psychodynamics of its power."[3] She alleges that Ensor sought to skewer not only figures of authority in his crowd scenes, but that Ensor also implicates the "gullibility" of the populace.[4] She sees the participants in *Christ's Entry* as a combination of the "good and evil" in society, supporting the idea that Ensor's masks are human vices transformed.[5]

Stephen C. McGough's 1985 dissertation is a frequently cited work for its comprehensive analysis of Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, its history, social and artistic background, meaning and formal execution.[6] McGough argues that *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* is a moralizing work that reflects Ensor's disillusionment with "doctrinal restrictions" of all parts of Belgian society, conservative and liberal.

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2. Diane Lesko, *James Ensor: The Creative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

3. Lesko, 126.

4. Lesko, 144.

5. Lesko, 145.

6. Stephen C. McGough, *James Ensor's "The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889"* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1985).

McGough claims to differ from popular interpretation by viewing Ensor not as an outsider who maligned his perceived enemies in paint, but as someone with an obligation to correct society; he contends that Ensor holds responsible any group or institution whose doctrinal obstinacy "[allows] them to strangle the individual."[7] McGough contributes a thorough assessment of the impact of Ensor's historical Flemish influences, not only for their grotesque motifs, but also for their moralizing subject matter.[8]

Susan M. Canning analyzes Ensor's depictions of crowds against fin-de-siècle concerns, arguing that Ensor's representations offer both contrasting views of the crowd from his contemporaries as well as widely parodying commentary on the Belgian bourgeoisie.[9]

Whimsy, mortality, black humor, and the absurd are foregrounded in the essay by Timothy Hyman, "James Ensor: A Carnival Sense of the World," in which Hyman traces Ensor's influence by artists associated with the European carnival tradition, explores Ensor's crowd experience in Brussels, and examines from a Bahktinian perspective the language of the carnival that Ensor deployed.10 Another Susan Canning essay, "Visionary Politics: The Social Subtext of James Ensor's Religious Imagery" probes

7. McGough, 193-94.

8. McGough, 195.

9. Susan M. Canning, "La Foule et le boulevard: James Ensor and the Street Politic of Everyday Life," in *Belgium, The Golden Decades: 1880–1914*, ed. Jane Block (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 41-64.

10. Timothy Hyman, "James Ensor: A Carnival Sense of the World," in *James Ensor 1860-1949: Theatre of Masks*, ed. Carol Brown, texts by Susan M. Canning et al (London: Barbicon Art Gallery and Lord Humphries Publishers, 1997), 76-86.

Ensor's use of Christian allegory in portraying themes concerned with anti-authoritarianism, temptation, liberation, and dissent.[11]

Stefan Jonsson's 2001 study argues that in *Christ's Entry,* Ensor used contemporary socio-political events in Belgium to construct his own "fantasy narrative" in which the artist upends all typical representational norms, asserting his invented "psychopolitical logic."[12] Jonsson proposes that historical notions about masses and insanity in European culture illuminate in Ensor's painting new layers of meaning and drastically unconventional views of the masses and of a "society diametrically opposed to the one inherent in mass psychology."[13] Jonsson offers an alternative to the typical reading that *Christ's Entry* represents "a statement about the sad fate of the individual"; he argues instead that *Christ's Entry* represents a view of the social body, as experienced briefly in late 1880s Belgium that is outside individuals or masses.[14]

Patricia Berman's 2002 thorough monograph of Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* for the Getty Museum reaffirms much previous interpretation, and asserts that *Christ's Entry* encompasses and parodies contested themes in 1880s Belgian society, constituting a total inversion of bourgeois ideals exemplified in Salon painting.[15]

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11. Susan M Canning, "Visionary Politics: The Social Subtext of James Ensor's Religious Imagery," in *James Ensor 1860-1949: Theatre of Masks*, ed. Carol Brown, texts by Susan M. Canning et al (London: Barbicon Art Gallery and Lord Humphries Publishers, 1997), 58-69.

12. Stefan Jonsson, "Society Degree Zero: Christ, Communism, and the Madness of Crowds in the Art of James Ensor." *Representations*, issue 75 (Summer 2001), 1-32.

13. Jonsson, 3.

14. Jonsson, 3.

15. Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002).

By contrasting Ensor's treatment of the individual in a crowd with other contemporary artistic and literary scenes of European cities, she concludes that Ensor's painting represents an "anti-urban vision."[16] Berman argues that, "In the tradition of Bosch, Bruegel and Goya, Ensor created this painting as an attempt to lampoon those institutions that confused authority with greater human laws."[17]

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Evolving Views of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's
1913-15 *Strassenbilder*

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Kirchner's 1913-15 *Strassenbilder*, or Berlin Street Scene series, are considered to be, like Ensor's *Christ's Entry*, a high point in the artist's career. The series is typically interpreted within a post-World War II framework that considers Kirchner's art to not only be reflective of his time, but often also suggests that the works represent larger themes that exceed its time.

The most enduring viewpoint is that the scenes represent streetwalkers on crowded urban streets as expressive symbols of early twentieth-century pre-war alienation and angst. The repetition of figures in the scenes is most often read as signifying the threat to individuality that the modern, crowded urban street posed.

The scholarship on Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* series can be divided into general camps—those that focus on the alienation of the modern individual in urban society, and those that complicate this view with differing, expanded or alternative readings. Prominent Kirchner scholar Donald Gordon's early reading of the *Strassenbilder* as

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16. Berman, 34.

17. Berman, 90.

"images of 'a lonely wasteland' " has had a prevailing influence on many later interpretations.[18] Following Gordon, Rosalyn Deutsche, Dorothy Rowe, Jill Lloyd and Norman Rosenthal tend to explore the *Strassenbilder* within a frame of modern urban alienation. Deutsche, writing in 1983, agrees with the reading of the *Strassenbilder* as images of "dehumanization" and links them to sociologist Georg Simmel's contemporary studies of modernity, society and the commodity culture expressed in prostitution.[19] Deutsche claims that Kirchner depicted people in the city crowd as commodities, asserting that Kirchner's expressionist style in the *Strassenbilder* is a "visual analogue for this process of thingification."[20]

Dorothy Rowe's study coincides in many ways with Deutsche's work, but she further ties Kirchner to pre-war anxiety.[21] Rowe tracks anxiety shifting from pre-war concerns about prostitution to perceptions of increased female participation in the public sphere after the war, and points out the manner in which many male modernists projected their anxiety into sexually objectifying imagery. She disagrees with Charles Haxthausen's argument that Kirchner's Berlin imagery is an "aestheticization of urban life" and argues that the only interpretation possible of Kirchner's prostitutes in paintings

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18. Charles W. Haxthausen, "Images of Berlin in the Art of the Secession and Expressionism" in *Art in Berlin: 1815-1989,* ed. High Museum of Art, 61-82 (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1989), 73.

19. Rosalyn Deutsche, "Alienation in Berlin: Kirchner's Street Scenes," (*Art in America*, January 1983), 65-73.

20. Deutsche, 69.

21. Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003).

like *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)* (Fig. 5) is that of "images of alienation."[22]

Rowe agrees with Jill Lloyd and Rosalyn Deutsche that the objectification of the women

is achieved formally through Kirchner's spatial fragmentation and geometric divisions.[23]

Charles W. Haxthausen and Sherwin Simmons approach Kirchner's

Strassenbilder with differing perspectives.[24] Haxthausen contests the long-standing art-

historical view of Kirchner's pre-war Berlin paintings as "virtual psychograms of urban

anguish."[25] Haxthausen elaborates, challenging Donald Gordon's 1968 interpretation that

Kirchner's "images of Berlin revealed 'better than…the vision of any other twentieth-

century artist…insight into a desperately diseased European society whose…days are

numbered.' "[26] He posits that Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* originated in a positive view of

modern urban vitality, similar to Baudelaire's Paris, that was closer to the Impressionists'

"aestheticization of urban life."[27] Ultimately, Haxthausen attributes Kirchner's focus on

specific motifs of urban Berlin--its pedestrian crowds, streetwalkers, and music hall

entertainment—to an interest in movement, not form, and vitalism, not moral critique.[28]

Sherwin Simmons's 2000 study, which focuses on the intersection of fine art, applied art

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22. Rowe, 150

23. Rowe, 152.

24. Charles W. Haxthausen, " 'A New Beauty': Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Images of Berlin," in *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, eds. Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidren Suhr, 58-94 (Minneapolis and Oxford: The University of Minnesota Press, 1990) and Sherwin Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913-16," (*The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 82, issue 1, Mar 2000): 117-48.

25. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 61.

26. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 61.

27. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 61.

28. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 86.

and culture in pre-war Berlin, argues that despite Kirchner's declarations that his street

scenes resulted from his spontaneous recordings of visual stimuli, Kirchner's artwork

nonetheless reflected his experience and "cultural mediation."[29] Simmons relates

commercial inventions such as the fashion display shop window to a new visibility of

public sexuality. Simmons examines public urban space along with the rising incidence

of censorship, state control, and concerns over public morality that, he argues,

contributed to Kirchner's artistic decisions.[30]

Pamela Kort and Deborah Wye, acknowledging the alternative views of

Haxthausen and Simmons, support nuanced readings of the series.[31] Wye, however,

largely continue mainstream interpretation of the *Strassenbilder* as general reflections of

alienation. In her 2008 MoMA catalog, Deborah Wye suggests that Kirchner's loss of

support from the 1913 disbanding of the Brücke and the impending war contributed to

Kirchner's production of the *Strassenbilder*.[32] Identifying the paintings as scenes of

"loneliness and alienation…agitation and danger," Wye connects Kirchner's "troubling

circumstances" to his subject choice of the prostitute in the *Strassenbilder*.[33] Like Rowe,

Wye characterizes the figures of streetwalkers as confrontational and decadent. She

echoes the longstanding majority view of Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* stating, "Kirchner's

scenes bring the viewer face-to-face with figures who symbolize the dehumanizing urban

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29. Simmons, 117-48.

30. Simmons, 121-124, 141

31. Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), and Pamela Kort, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Berlin Street Scene* (New York: Neue Galerie, 2008).

32. Wye, 18-19.

33. Wye, 17-19.

environment and its effect on the individual psyche."[34] Pamela Kort, writing recently in

2008, the same year as Wye's study, examines Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* in an exhibition

catalog occasioned by the acquisition by the Neue Galerie of Kirchner's 1913-14

painting, *Berlin Street Scene* (*Berliner Strassenszene*) (Fig. 3). Kort suggests neither a

negative reflection of the city nor a positive aestheticization of metropolitan life in the

metropolis is a likely reading.[35] She posits that Kirchner's six other large street scenes

offer clues to a more mixed reading, one that combines fascination with the sexuality and

commerce with an ambition to surpass old masters and "stake out a fruitful artistic

existence."[36]

In both Ensor and Kirchner scholarship, questions recur regarding whether and to

what extent their urban scenes are personal statements by the artists about the individual

in larger society. There remains no consensus, and the reception differs greatly depending

on assumptions scholars accept regarding the attitudes of the artists, and the degree to

which those attitudes coincide with or diverge from contemporary attitudes.

In the following pages, I will be exploring the assumptions behind the scholarly

literature on these paintings, examining the sociological and art historical bases upon

which art-historical interpretations are constructed. First, I will introduce the divisive

cultural environments of rapid urbanization in late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century

Belgium and Germany that colored associations of the city for Ensor and Kirchner, as

well as for later reception. I will explore Ensor's and Kirchner's artistic communities,

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34. Wye, 25.

35. Kort, 32.

36. Kort, 32

which challenged prevailing artistic norms. I will examine the assumptions of fin-de-siècle anxiety that contribute to interpretations of Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* and Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* as largely expressions of social angst. Through a close reading of nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultural theorists, especially crowd theory, and recent sociological scholarship, I intend to expand the possible interpretations of the groups of people in these canonical works of Ensor and Kirchner. Finally, through extensive formal analysis, I will explore the unconventional methods Ensor and Kirchner deploy to achieve their complicated mixtures of social and institutional critique, irreverence and visual expression.

CHAPTER 2

LE BOULEVARD AND DIE STRASSE: POLITICS OF PLACE

James Ensor: Background and Artistic
Community: Les XX

Despite local particularities, late nineteenth-century Brussels and early twentieth-

century Berlin shared issues common to many European metropolitan cities: rapid social

change, industrial growth, restive politics, and active artistic communities responsive to

modern circumstances. Both James Ensor and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, like many artists

in their respective days, were associated with organized artistic movements; for Ensor it

was the Brussels-based artist group Les XX and for Kirchner the Dresden-based Brücke.

Although indelibly linked to geographical places of origin, both movements shared

complementary interests and traits as well. While Les XX followed a period of Belgian

artistic nationalism and the Brücke contained elements of a *Volkish* nationalism, both

groups were also international in some respects.[37] The internationalism of Les XX

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37. Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 37-42, and Amy F. Ogata, "The Decorative 'Arts & Crafts' at Les XX and La Libre Esthétique." in *Belgium, The Golden Decades: 1880–1914*, ed. Jane Block, 67-93 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 75. Regarding International participation: Gauguin exhibited *The Vision of the Sermon, Jacob Wrestling with the Angel in 1889* and woodcuts, a sculpture, and vases with Les XX in 1891. Also, Alfred William Finch, founding member of Les XX, half-English/Belgian, 77. Berman writes that Les XX's international prestige inspired Gauguin, Whistler and Rodin to lobby for membership, 39.

involved recruitment of foreign artists; yet, at the same time, there remained within its agenda a nationalist interest in promoting Belgian art as cutting edge.[38]

Certain *Vingtistes* however, such as Octave Maus, were especially impressed with new trends in French art in the mid-80s; the pro-French zeal reached a height with Les XX's 1887 exhibition of Georges Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte.*[39] Ensor's personal response to the overwhelmingly positive reception of Seurat's divisionist masterpiece had a large impact on Ensor's work in 1887-88, but also highlighted a nationalist chauvinism in him and greater concern regarding the French influence in the art world.[40]

Les XX was founded in Belgium in 1883 and lasted ten years before its members voted to disband.[41] According to Susan Canning, the group considered themselves the "visual exponent of *La Jeune Belgique*"; the major contemporary literary journal devoted itself to "art for art's sake" and the promotion of original, new literary talent.[42] Following a recent Belgian tradition among new artistic and literary organizations, Les XX aimed to provide an alternative outlet to the official cultural apparatus of the annual Salon; the group of twenty were loosely organized, used a democratic selection process, and invited

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38. Susan M Canning, " 'Soyons Nous': Les XX and the Cultural Discourse of the Belgian Avant-Garde," in *Les XX and the Belgian Avant-Garde: Prints, Drawings, and Books ca. 1890,* ed. Stephen H. Goddard, 28-54 (Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 1992), 39-44.

39. Berman, 45.

40. Berman, 46-48.

41. Ogata, 67, 80.

42. Canning, "A History and Critical Review of *Les Vingt*," 27, 14. The original twenty included: Franz Charlet, Guillaume Vogels, Jean Delvin, Paul Dubois, James Ensor, Fernand Khnopff, Périclès Pantazis, Franz Simons, Gustave Vaniase, Théo Van Rysselberghe, Guillaume Van Strydonck, Theodore Verstraete, Willy Finch, Dario de Regoyos, Archille Chanaye, Jef Lambeaux, Willy Schlobach, Piet Verhaert, and Rudolf Wystman, with Octave Maus, an editor of *L'Art Moderne* as secretary, 27.

artists throughout Belgium.[43] Ogata claims the *Vingtistes'* only unifying stylistic

objective was "newness," and their major goals included, as for many avant-gardists,

challenging traditional artistic hierarchies of "high" or fine art and "low" or applied arts

by integrating arts such as painting, music, lectures, interior design, and crafts.[44]

Although eventually encompassing stylistic techniques of impressionism, divisionism,

synthetism and symbolism, Berman points out that the group's intention was to "embrace

eclecticism" and not any specific style.[45] Both Les XX and Kirchner's group, the Brücke,

were utopian in nature and conceived of integrated, comprehensive approaches to the

arts.[46] Despite the romanticizing of nature, the primitive and the handcrafted, the art of

both Ensor and especially post-Brücke Kirchner was also tied deeply to images and social

politics of the urban.[47]

<div align="center">Socio-Political Background of Les XX</div>

Amy Ogata writes, "From its inception, *Les XX'*s revolutionary stance was allied

with radical politics."[48] Curator Catherine de Zegher likewise states, "From the outset,

Ensor viewed his artistic activity in opposition to what he felt was an outmoded academic

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43. Canning, "A History and Critical Review of *Les Vingt*," 27-31, 31.

44. Ogata, 67.

45. Berman, 39.

46. Ogata, 67, and Reinhold Heller, "Brücke in Dresden and Berlin," in *Brücke: The Birth of Expressionism in Dresden and Berlin, 1905-1913*, ed. Reinhold Heller, 12-57 (New York: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009), 27-42.

47. Ogata, 67-93 and Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 21-49.

48. Ogata, 72.

tradition linked to conservative politics and the patronage of the Belgian monarchy."[49]

The political conscience of Belgian artists in the 1880s, exemplified in the art of Charles

de Groux and Léon Frédéric, followed a tendency since mid-century towards greater

concern for economic inequities between the working class and the bourgeoisie.[50] The

political interests of *Les Vingt* were complicated, however, as can be seen by its

involvement with rival literary movements with differing political points of view. Rather

than the didactic moralistic paintings accepted within the Academy, the cultural response

of Ensor's generation to social ills ranged from socialist radicalism to mystical escapism

and manifested itself broadly among arts and letters outside the Academy. Although Les

XX was originally associated with *La Jeune Belgique*, the Parnassian movement that

eschewed political activism for literary purity, the group elected from the outset a

secretary, Maus, who was an editor for the more activist journal *L'Art Moderne.*[51]

Ensor's early social and academic circles exposed him to a number of

contemporary political ideas. His commitment with Les XX in 1883 followed his

introduction as a student to anarchist theory and atheism in the gatherings of intellectuals

at the Brussels home of his friends, physics professor Ernest Rousseau and his botanist

wife Mariette Rousseau.[52] Themes of anarchy and religion would erupt in provocative

juxtapositions throughout Ensor's oeuvre, notably in *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*

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49. Catherine de Zegher, introduction to *Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor,* ed. Catherine de Zegher (New York and Minneapolis: The Drawing Center and University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 8.

50. McGough, 14-15.

51. Canning, "A History and Critical Review of *Les Vingt*," 13-15, 27.

52. Canning, "La Foule et le boulevard," 62, footnote 15.

(fig. 1). Like the inclusion and participation of women later in Brücke artistic and social

circles, the tacit inclusion of Rousseau, an educated woman as part of Ensor's circle of

theoretical influence, here speaks to more nuanced and positive roles played by women in

avant-garde circles than merely sensual muse. [53] Later, it is the liberated woman of the

early twentieth-century with whom some scholars posit Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* series

grapples.

Other prominent friends of Ensor's in his Belgian cultural circle were the

socialists Edmond Picard, Émile Verhaeren and Maus; Picard and Verhaeren collected

and supported Ensor's work, and Maus, an active anarchist, was also a member of Les

XX. [54] The *Vingtistes* were associated with radical Belgian politics during a volatile time

in Belgian history. Stephen C. McGough notes the breadth of contemporary social

conflict during Ensor's time, from working class unrest and demands for universal

suffrage to state-church educational conflict and the politically charged Flemish linguistic

movement. [55] These writers, politicians and artists within Ensor's circle were all involved

in inflaming the "political imagination" that Stefan Jonsson argues was critical to Ensor's

production of *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, the specific moment from 1886 to

1893, in which the country seemed poised on the verge of revolution. [56]

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53. Lesko, 150-51. However, Diane Lesko points out that late poetry of Ensor reveals that he developed a deeply misogynist attitude late in life; one particularly malicious poem in reference to the "Deceiving sex" concludes with, "The scourge of heaven and earth / Constant mask and endless smile." While Lesko locates Ensor's attitudes in 1925 most closely to 19th-century misogynist literature, she also notes the affinity of this point of view with contemporary fear of the 1920s liberated woman.

54. Canning, 63, footnote 15, and Ogata, 72.

55. McGough, 61-84.

56. Jonsson, 3.

Socio-Political Engagement of Ensor's Art

Catherine de Zegher, curator of a 2001 exhibition of Ensor's drawings at The

Drawing Center in New York addresses what she considers the marginalization of the

artist's "radical content" and "fierce social criticism" in conventional Ensor's

scholarship, which overestimates Ensor's expressionistic individualism.[57] She affirms

what most other scholars also believe, that Ensor's expressionism is key to his prescient

modernist contributions; yet, her 2001 catalog highlights the specificity and pointedness

of Ensor's political and social engagement with his cultural milieu.[58] De Zegher writes:

> In many studies of Ensor's career, his most challenging works are presented as prototypical examples of an expressionist mode—that is, made in the isolation of the studio and visualizing the alienated state of a tormented psyche. Even if this interpretation establishes the artist as a modernist, it serves to marginalize the radical content of numerous of his works and underestimates the impact of his political beliefs.[59]

Louis Marchesano, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Getty Museum, in

discussing Ensor's work in front of the iconic painting, *Christ's Entry,* suggested the

opposite view: that Ensor's actual politics are overestimated when trying to interpret his

work.[60] Clearly the political import of Ensor's work remains an open question, but the

socio-political content of his art need not have been an ideologically consistent statement

for it to reflect pertinently on himself or the concerns of his time. Indeed, Ensor's oeuvre,

for all its repeated motifs, is complex and deeply ideologically inconsistent.

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57. De Zegher, introduction, 8.

58. De Zegher, introduction, 8.

59. De Zegher, introduction, 8.

60. Louis Marchesano (Curator of Prints and Drawings, The J. Paul Getty Museum), in discussion with the author, Los Angeles, CA, June 1, 2011.

Political Iconography of *Christ's*
Entry into Brussels in 1889

Berman argues that Ensor took a critical stance not only against the current

Belgian King Léopold and the Catholic Church in *Christ's Entry,* but also against the

capitalist society about which his contemporaries, Edmund Picard & Maus write.[61] One

potential reason for the underestimation of Ensor's social criticism that De Zegher

perceives is most certainly the lack of clarity and the internal contradictions in Ensor's

iconography. McGough notes that besides the Bishop, it is difficult to find specific

portraits in *Christ's Entry*.[62] Yet, Berman notes that while Léopold is physically absent

from *Christ's Entry*, the secular and business institutions and classes that supported him

are clearly represented in the painting.[63] The front section of the painting includes an

"overly decorated" military officer in the center next to the drum; a bloated Catholic

bishop, that was transformed from an earlier drawing of the Anarchist Émile Littré; as

well as judges, doctors, lawyers and a military band.[64] Further, specific signifiers of the

King may be found in the triumphal entry of Christ into Brussels.

Both Berman and McGough point out that the street procession in *Christ's Entry*

makes reference to the historical tradition in Belgium of the *Joyeuse Entrée*, the symbolic

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61. Berman, 58.

62. McGough, 169.

63. Berman, 58.

64. McGough, 155, 157: "to picture Littré as a churchman carries even further irony in that in the eyes of many in intellectual and political life, Littré was the symbol of anti-conservative and anti-Catholic forces in France's" religious debates, and Lesko, 142-144.

reenactment of the affirmation of Belgium's ancient constitution.[65] Léopold, one of the few monarchs in Europe whose wealth and power was growing rather than decreasing, reenacted the *Joyeuse Entrée* for his inauguration, and continued the practice of frequent elaborate street spectacles during his reign.[66] Another support for Ensor's interest in criticizing the King and the society that supports him, is that Ensor's oeuvre seems to reveal a particular interest in monarchy, royalty, institutional power, and the distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate or spiritual and temporal power—such as will be discussed later in the works *Hop Frog's Revenge* and *The Lively and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* (figs. 9, 10, 11).

<u>Political and Social Clues to *Christ's Entry*</u>
<u>from Ensor's Graphic Works</u>

Two of Ensor's works on paper in particular provide further information about the socio-political content of Ensor's 1888 painting *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*: his 1885 drawing *The Lively and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* (1885) and his 1898 etching of *The Entry of Christ into Brussels* (figs. 11 & 12).[67] *The Lively and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem,* the third of his *Visions* series, is similar stylistically and in its content to *Christ's Entry*.

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65. Berman, 58 and McGough, 81. McGough notes that the constitution was violated in 1830 leading to revolt against the Dutch, and thus lent irony to the 1884 grand entry into Brussels of the Dutch King and Queen.

66. Berman, 58.

67. Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds. *James Ensor*, texts by Sabine Brown-Taevernier, et al (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 186. The series *Visions—The Aureoles of Christ or The Sensibilities of Light* was exhibited at the 1887 *Les XX* Salon.

McGough considers *The Lively and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*

to have functioned as a source of iconography for much of *Christ's Entry*.[68] The series,

which combined religious scenes from the biographical life of Christ with references to

current events, was very negatively received at the 1887 Salon of Les XX. Canning notes

that Salon reviewers largely ignored the social and political content of the series in favor

of criticizing Ensor's unconventional technique and aligning Ensor to Dutch artistic

traditions.[69] She cites one contemporary critic, however, A. J. Wauters, who realized the

references to current issues and the "inflammatory tone designed to *épater le*

bourgeois."[70] McGough, who notes that the drawings elicited "overwhelming" ridicule,

records that the Parisian *Moniteur des Arts* questioned Ensor's motives with the comment

that the drawings were " 'lucubrations of a sick mind and pretentious products of a man

who wishes to cause a scandal.' "[71] Even Ensor's supportive friend Émile Verhaeren

offered only qualified and faint praise of the *Visions* series: " 'They stupefy at first, then

they impress.' "[72]

The most visually obvious indication of controversial contemporary references in

The Lively and Radiant is the prominent collaged drawing in the lower right foreground

of Émile Littré in the role of parade director (fig. 11). In 1840, Littré, a positivist

philosopher and anarchist, translated David Friedrich Strauss's influential 1835 *Life of*

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68. McGough, 156.

69. Canning, "The Devil's Mirror," 42.

70. Canning, "The Devil's Mirror," 43.

71. McGough, 43.

72. McGough, 43.

Jesus, that reinterpreted the biography of Jesus using "facts" from the Bible rather than beliefs in metaphysics and spiritual divinity.[73] Littré's portrait references a contemporary debate in 1880s Belgium further inspired by Littré's 1852 book *Conservation, Revolution, and Positivism,* which viewed the traditional Catholic Church as an "institution that undermined Christian morality and promoted class stratification and oppression."[74]

Contemporary theologian Martin Kähler considered the debate a "collision between the 'Jesus of History' and the 'Jesus of faith' "; suggesting the positivists were being blind ideologues,[75] a criticism that Ensor seems to affirm in his satirical placard "Fanfares Doctrinaires" in *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889.* Inscribed on a man's hat in the center of the drawing *The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* is "Vive Anseele [et] Jesus"; the same inscription appears prominently on a placard held by the man in the foreground of the 1898 print of *Christ's Entry into Brussels.* The poster refers to the Ghent Socialist leader Édouard Anseele, who led the 1886 Socialist march.[76] McGough suggests, "It might have seemed particularly appropriate to Ensor to link Anseele to Jesus, in that each led a popular movement among the lower classes, and in that the Belgian Workers Party, which had a picture of Jesus in the main room of the Maison du People in Brussels, had identified Jesus as 'the first socialist.' "[77]

73. Berman, 82.

74. Berman, 82.

75. Berman, 83, written in 1892.

76. Pfeiffer and Hollein, 186.

77. McGough, 153.

Since Ensor doesn't avoid engagement with society, whether it comprises the ruling elite, the Church, new Socialist politics, or even the growing rigidity within Les XX, his aversion for "doctrinaire" systems conflicts with his own interests as a bourgeois member of many of these same groups. Ensor's identification of these groups as a threat to individual liberties aligns with an argument that Elias Canetti makes several decades hence. As will be discussed later, Canetti, in his 1960 study of crowds and power, argues that institutions evolved from "closed crowds," crowds that tend to renounce growth and desire to maintain control.[78] Despite Ensor's sympathy for oppressed classes and his involvement with the Socialist-leaning *Vingtistes,* his frustration with ideologues of all stripes is evidenced not only in the subject references in *Christ's Entry,* but also in the evocative collisions within his heterogeneous crowd and within the visual, compositional forms of *Christ's Entry*.

The other work that illuminates some of the social themes in Ensor's 1888 painting *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* is the colorized etching of *The Entry of Christ into Brussels* (fig. 12). Produced in 1898, the etching records in reverse much of the composition of the 1888 painting, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889.* While the etching is not an exact duplicate, the linear medium reveals details obscured by facture in the 1888 painting. Susan Canning notes that there are also significant differences between the two that provide further information about Ensor's social interests.[79] Many new slogans appear in the print that either were not in the original painting, or were possibly

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78. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1960), 21.

79. Canning, in Pfeiffer and Hollein, 186.

painted out at some time before 1929, such as the poster reading "Vive Anseele et Jesus,"

a banner stating "The Flemish Movement"; and one with "Long Live Denbijn," possibly

referring to another Socialist leader.[80] If the figure vomiting above the red double "X"s

on the balcony in *Christ's Entry* didn't clearly indicate Ensor's disillusionment with his

own group, Ensor has added an inscription to the balcony in the print that reads, "The

insensitive Belgian vivisectors Les XX."[81]

Canning states that both painting and drawing represent a procession that is "part

triumphal march, part carnival parade, part worker's demonstration" with an image of

Ensor as "Christ the spiritual and, in Socialist circles, revolutionary leader."[82] This

interpretation of Ensor as Christ, the Socialist, positions Ensor as someone occupying a

position that aligns with what Ensor may have considered were the authentic aims of

socialism versus the increasing dogmatic severity of his Socialist peers, Picard and Maus.

On the other hand, Berman concludes that Ensor's seeming political contradictions in

Christ's Entry indicate the artist's alliance with anarchism.[83] In this reading, the portrait

of the Anarchist Littré in *The Lively and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem,*

suggests the fine political lines that Ensor was trying to walk by distinguishing between

certain types of socialism in different expressions. Perhaps the lack of a clear translation

for the banner "Vive la Sociale" in the painting expresses the incompleteness of Ensor's

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80. Canning, in Pfeiffer and Hollein, 186. Canning suggests Denbijn is likely a misspelling of Célèstin Demblon.

81. Canning, in Pfeiffer and Hollein, 186

82. Canning, in Pfeiffer and Hollein, 186.

83. Berman, 90.

own political formulations, such that the solution years later further implies the philosophy of anarchy with the banner's removal. Ensor's conflicting visual solutions and verbal clues in *Christ's Entry*, such as the seemingly incomplete red banner language, suggest an artist attempting to embody more than one socio-political point of view, in much the same way as his painting employs multiple visual points of view.

Ensor's repeated visual references to controversial issues in his artwork reveal his precarious engagement with contemporary cultural divisions, but also the impulse to shock, innovate and instigate. Concurrently in Germany, philosophic and cultural debates were dividing contemporary social critics. The particularities differ, but as both societies grappled with social, political, and economic change, the impermanence of identifications such as conservative, Socialist, anarchist, nationalist, utopian and revolutionary reflect a common vicissitude in the cultures in which the artists worked. The artistic groups with which Ensor and Kirchner were involved, Les XX and the Brücke reflected and mirrored this changing environment in their internal shifts, their ambitions for change, and their challenges to institutions and orthodoxy.

<div align="center">
Kirchner and The Brücke: Internationalism,
Urban Brücke, and Motifs of Change
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Kirchner, like Ensor, is closely associated with the artistic group that he co-founded. *Die Brücke* or "The Bridge," was formed in Dresden in 1905 by the artists Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Fritz Bleyl.[84] While the movement

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84. Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1993), 21.

initially included only German artists, the Brücke often exhibited with a wider group of

Expressionists, and like Les XX, courted an international membership. In his 1913

"Chronicle of the *Brücke,*" Kirchner denied external influence, however, stating:

> The majority of the 'Brücke' members are now in Berlin. Even here the 'Brücke'
> preserved its intrinsic character. Inwardly unified, the group transmits its new way
> of working together to all modern art production in Germany. Uninfluenced by
> contemporary currents, Cubism, Futurism, etc., it fights for a humane culture,
> which is the basis of true art.[85]

While connected for perpetuity with Germany, the artists of the Brücke extended

invitations to non-German artists whose expressionistic work they admired, such as the

Norwegian artist Edvard Munch and the French fauve Henri Matisse.[86] Further, Brücke

artists were frequently invited to exhibit with other European modernists; Rose-Carol

Washton Long notes that a 1910 Sonderbund exhibit in Düsseldorf included French

painters Matisse, Braque, Derain, Vlaminck, Denis, and Vuillard along with members of

the Brücke, the Berlin New Secession, and the Munich *Neue Künstler Vereinigung.*[87]

"Expressionisten" itself was first coined by Lovis Corinth to describe a 1911 Berlin

Secession exhibition of work by including Derain and Vlaminck.[88] Long suggests that

despite the apparent rich cross-pollination within his artistic community, "Kirchner's

denial of influence from French Fauvism and Cubism and from Italian

Futurism…contributed to the paradoxical myth developed during the war that

Expressionism was primarily Germanic in origin rather than part of international

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85. Long, 25.

86. Victor Miesel, ed. *Voices of German Expressionism* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003) 1-2.

87. Long, 3-4.

88. Long, 3.

modernism."[89] Jill Lloyd asserts, "In German Expressionism conflicts between backward- and forward-looking attitudes, between, for example, nationalist and internationalist aspirations, generated much of the internal energy of the movement. This is nowhere more clearly expressed than in the crucial, pivotal dichotomy between the Expressionists' primitivism and their modernity."[90] And while the Brücke eventually rejected "*Jugendstil* aestheticism," this turn-of-the-century movement is a style that both links Ensor and Kirchner, and was international in nature.[91] Lloyd argues, "the principles underlying *Jugendstil,* such as anti-historicism, the cults of authenticity and renewal and the breakdown of traditional artistic hierarchies, were transformed in a general and particular way into Expressionist primitivism. The Expressionists' aim to equate art and life moved away…from *Jugendstil* ivory-tower aestheticism towards a new vitalism."[92]

Similar to Ensor's artistic opposition to the Belgian Academy and his apparent critique of the conservative Belgian state, Kirchner claimed in his 1913 *Chronicle* that Brücke objectives were to create a "new" German art.[93] The brief "Brücke Program" of 1906, written collectively by Kirchner and the other founding members, mentions no such nationalist goals, and rather focuses on the utopian and regenerative potential of youth:

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89. Long, 23.

90. Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), vi.

91. Miesel, 3.

92. Lloyd, 3.

93. Long, 23.

> With faith in evolution, in a new generation of creators and appreciators, we call together all youth. And as youths, who embody the future, we want to free our lives and limbs from the long-established older powers. Anyone who renders his creative drive directly and genuinely is one of us.[94]

Les XX and the Brücke were both devoted to the ideal of "newness," believing in its transformative potential. Each group also struggled with the impulse to define "new" in broad, international terms; yet, the desire to seize the "new" for regional pride in opposition to an "old" that was very local.

Brücke in the City

In order to analyze Kirchner's 1913-15 Berlin street scenes, it is necessary to consider the foundations of his art and the continuing impact of his prior experience in the Brücke. The name that Karl Schmidt-Rottluff coined in 1905, *Künstlergruppe "Brücke"* (Artists' group "Bridge"), according to Reinhold Heller, utilized a common metaphorical reference to the artistic link between the past and the future.[95] Although Heller suggests that a direct link to Nietzsche's text is "unlikely," the general assumption is that the name is taken from the prologue of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.[96] The segment considered to be Brücke's source is one in which Zarathustra speaks to a crowd gathered at a Market waiting to see a tight-rope walker:

> 'Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss.
> A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping.

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94. Long, 23.

95. Heller, 13-14.

96. Heller, 14.

'What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an *overture* and a *going under*.[97]

Erich Heckel recalled decades later, " 'Schmidt-Rottluff said we could call ourselves *Brücke*—that is a multi-leveled word and it would not involve a programme but, in a certain sense, would lead one from one shore to the other. It was clear to us what we had to leave behind—where we hoped to arrive was a lot less clear.' "[98] Heckel's observation is reminiscent of the unity with which the Brücke artists begin their experiment and the ultimate discord that accompanies the group's disintegration in 1913. Heller notes the Brücke viewpoint shared in the idealist German Enlightenment philosophical tradition of "subliminal conversion of consciousness engendered by the experience of art" rather than "violent political revolution."[99] The fundamental difference in Brücke artists' approach to the ideal of societal transformation from political activism reflects recurrent fin-de-siècle concerns. Decades earlier, Ensor's parody of social revolution in his monumental *Christ's Entry* appears to reject as laughably ineffectual the same revolutionary forces, yet without offering any philosophical life-line of hope.

Jill Lloyd records various ways the Brücke metaphor is construed; such as a "bridge between artist and public," or two shores—one signifying the conservative, bourgeois, and academic, and the other signifying "the renewal of art and life towards which *die Brücke* strove."[100] Lloyd points out Nietzschean motifs of recurring bridges

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97. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for None and All*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1962.), 14-15.

98. Lloyd, 238, fn 42.

99. Heller, 17.

100. Lloyd, 18.

and railway tracks in Brücke cityscapes by Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff, and Kirchner, such

as the railway bridge in Erich Heckel's 1910 *Landscape in Dresden* (fig. 13).[101] Heckel's

Landscape in Dresden employs a fauvist shard of intense dark reddish pink for the river

and a compositional structure that squeezes in the center reminiscent of Kirchner's 1913

Street, Berlin (*Strasse, Berlin*) (fig. 4). While Kirchner's *Street, Berlin* reverses the

emphasis to oversized figures with only hints of the city-scape, the slices of motorcar and

architecture remain elements of fascination with modernization. The Nietzschean bridge

allusion to which Lloyd refers appears doubly apt in *Landscape in Dresden*. The

insubstantial bridge is thinly limned, drawn from a straight-on perspective that reduces it

to a line, and thus it becomes visually evocative of Nietzsche's tightrope metaphor, while

the vividly contrasting blue foliage that splits the bright yellow sky emphasizes the

demarcation of two sides of the river. Kirchner produced a number of works of acrobats,

including actual tightrope walkers, such as the equally chromatic 1908-10 painting

Tightrope Walk (*Drahtseiltanz*) (fig. 14), demonstrating the extent to which Nietzschean

metaphors can be extended, possibly past the original point of reference.

Kirchner produced numerous works that explore the modern bridge motif, such as

a 1912 woodcut *Elisabeth Bank (Berlin) (Elisabeth-Ufer [Berlin])* (fig. 15) in which

distorted city buildings and water angle around a yet solid frontal bridge facade. The

importance of the large solid bridge to the stability of the structure certainly lends it a

metaphoric integrity; yet, unlike Heckel's *Dresden Landscape*, the merging background

denies any clear separation between the two banks. A Nietzschean evocation of "an

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101. Lloyd, 135.

overture and a *going under*"[102] relies on the sign of Kirchner's bridge itself, and the

oversized space and activity underneath the bridge span. Traversing, however, is not

emphasized, as even more than in Heckel's own painting, this woodcut underscores

Heckel's later observation that, " 'It was clear to us what we had to leave behind—where

we hoped to arrive was a lot less clear.' "[103]

Further obscuring clear points of origination and destination via a passage or

bridge, the 1915 lithograph *Tramway Arch (Stadtbahnbogen)* (fig. 16) shows a

precariously canted iron bridge in front of a heavy, yet leaning tram arch; the dense urban

scene is now crowded with a dark moving tram, stacked apartment balconies and small

black scurrying figures. While the active woodcut forms in *Elisabeth Bank (Berlin)* could

be read with hints of chaos or vitalist energy, the repeated downward tilting diagonals

and smudged black/gray effects of the lithograph in *Tramway Arch* are hard to read

optimistically. Lloyd suggests that while Kirchner's use of bridges and tracks is a

symbolic reflection of transformation, his intention is ambiguous. In *Bridge over the

Rhine at Cologne (Rheinbrücke in Köln)* (1914) (fig. 17), Lloyd suggests that Kirchner

uses motifs such as the train and bridge in Cologne to mediate between modernity and

tradition, writing, "Although both the figures and the train move forwards across the

bridge, Kirchner seems to question rather than affirm the value of 'progress', by

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102. Nietzsche, 14-15.

103. Lloyd, 238, fn 42.

contrasting as well as comparing the 'Gothic' cathedral with the modern machine and the fashionable pedestrians."[104]

With its electric lights and shadowy pedestrians, Kirchner's 1913 *Leipziger Strasse with Electric Tram* (fig. 18) shows a transition between the bridge and train emphasis of cityscapes and the emphasis on figures in his *Strassenbilder*. In its off-center diagonal cruciform composition, the receding orthogonal lines of the street and sidewalk in *Leipziger Strasse* echo the shape and location of the rivers in *Elisabeth Bank (Berlin)* and *Tramway Arch.* In each composition, there is a common sense of forms being cinched near, but off-center. A sense of distinct shores, as in Heckel's *Landscape in Dresden*, is no longer observed from the side, at a distance, but instead, as in Kirchner's *Bridge over the Rhine at Cologne,* the origination is in the distance and motion toward the destination appears to move towards the viewer, outside the canvas. The orthogonal lines in *Leipziger Strasse* now converge behind the heads of a cluster of four pedestrians—a pair of well-dressed women followed by a pair of top-hatted men.

In both paintings, vertical figures point directly into the perspectival center; yet, while the brilliant pink walking woman is isolated in *Bridge over the Rhine*, the four figures in *Leipziger Strasse* overlap the end of the tram car, visually merging in a blue-green contrast with the warm reddish city. In these street scenes, one can see Kirchner's repeated use of a similar structural formula, while changing the subject matter. Kirchner clearly placed decreasing importance in discrete banks between bridge spans and increasing emphasis on figures and fused architectural skylines; however, the massive

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104. Lloyd, 135, 58.

bridge supports in *Bridge over the Rhine* indicate that still in 1914, the bridge motif

remained resonant. Finally, in *Leipziger Strasse*, Kirchner carries his ambivalence in

bridge symbolism into street works which, like the *Strassenbilder* series, show a variety

in mood, some even seeming to display the vitalist spirit of early Brücke nudes.

<div align="center">Brücke: City vs Country</div>

The Nietzschean bridge metaphor was but one symbol of renewal in the visual

rhetoric of the Brücke. Vitalism, another essential component of their program,

exemplified in Kirchner's 1910 woodcut *Bathers Throwing Reeds* (fig. 19), links

Kirchner's early Brücke interests with the Dionysian and anti-academic elements of his

later *Strassenbilder*. Heller writes of Kirchner's idealistic objectives, "Kirchner sought to

transfer to his own work the aura of the primeval origins of art, uncorrupted by European

illusionistic academic practice, or indeed by 'civilization' in general."[105]

Associating utopian vitalism with cultures such as the Palau tribes of Micronesia,

Kirchner related his evolution to an angular style from a curvilinear Jugendstil style to the

Palau beam paintings he saw in 1910. He wrote that the Palau beams " 'demonstrated the

identical formal vocabulary as my own [work]…I sought to achieve form [i.e., a

consistently recognizable formal vocabulary or style] through the free observation of

nature.' "[106] In idyllic settings, such as the Moritzburg ponds outside Dresden, the Brücke

artists could practice *Freikörperkultur*, the "culture of free bodies," and paint visual

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105. Heller, 23.

106. Heller, 26.

testaments to "Nietzsche's maxim that culture begins not with the soul or spirit, but with the body."[107]

Dionysian aspects of Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* that conflict with their conventional reading as images of urban angst are related to early Brücke vitalism, such as a free attitude towards sexuality, unconventional mores regarding social relationships, and anti-institutionalism. At the same time, Kirchner's later evolution from rural to urban themes participates in a longer cultural debate that came to fore decades before Kirchner's work. Brücke interests in vitalism that relate to the interpretation of Kirchner's later Berlin *Strassenbilder* include issues within contemporary European discourse not only regarding industrial progress, but also nostalgic nature, primitivism, utopian rural renewal and urban decay.

Twenty years before the unification of Germany, historian Wilhelm Riehl began publishing a series of books called *Natural History of the German People* that influenced increasingly nationalist discourse, idealizing the natural landscape and rural tradition in opposition to the materialism and industrialization of the city.[108] In the same decade that saw prolific production by James Ensor and Friedrich Nietzsche, sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' 1887 book *Community and Society* divided people into two groups: community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*); the former was "rural, natural, based on kinship and family feeling" and the latter was "urban, individualist and mechanistic,"

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107. Heller, 27.

108. Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 34.

divisions that clearly had dangerous potential.[109] Shortly after Tönnies, Julius Langbehn,

the radical conservative author of the "bizarre and extreme" 1890 book, *Rembrandt as*

Educator, co-opted the Dutch artist for use as a "Germanic" model of anti-materialism.[110]

This selected group of cultural influences represents the type of rural-urban

debate that concerned fin-de-siècle Europe, and Germany in particular; yet, the polarities

established also reveal inherent contradictions in contemporary European viewpoints.

Tönnies' negative association of "urban" with "individualism" is both in accord and at

odds with the concerns expressed seven years later in *Psychologie des Foules*, by

sociologist Gustave Le Bon. Le Bon was obsessed with the preservation of races and

predicted an inevitable decline of civilizations as they reach an age of "decadence"; yet,

he was also concerned with the integrity of the individual in the midst of the collective.[111]

With the complexity of social thought at the turn-of-the-century, it is little wonder that

the reception of Brücke art and Kirchner's oeuvre is contradictory.

Artistic styles were used in the nationalist debate, such as the contrast between the

style of William Leibl, a popular nineteenth-century artist who focused on naturalistic

paintings of German peasants, and the French style of German peasants painted by Max

Lieberman.[112] Shearer West points out that the idealizing term for rural peasantry, *Volk*,

while embraced by nationalist conservatives with its ultimately devastating emphasis on

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109. West, 42. These divisions were exploited to promote nationalist aims in the twentieth century.

110. West, 47, and Christian Weikop. "Brücke and Canonical Association," in *Brücke: The Birth of Expressionism in Dresden and Berlin, 1905-13*, ed. Reinhold Heller, 103-127 (New York: Neue Galerie, 2009), 105-06.

111. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Atlanta, GA: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1982), 215, 217-18.

112. West, 37.

so-called "purity" in the twentieth century, was a term used in the late nineteenth century by "all political affiliations."[113] Jill Lloyd also points out that the artistic response and discourse surrounding idealized nature was complex and could be embraced by opposing political ideologies; she cites Paula Modersohn-Becker's paintings as an example of the mystical appeal of romanticized rural nature mixed with a "consciously international modernist style."[114]

Long writes that the Brücke artists were inspired by Nietzsche's "portrayal in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* of the artist as the belligerent leader of a new morality…"[115] The passage mentioning the bridge is part of a speech by Zarathustra in which he declares the death of God, and urges the people to, " '…*remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not…."[116] Nietzsche's anti-clericalism and the Brücke's anti-establishment views resonate with the anti-institutionalism and parody of religious and political hypocrisy in Ensor's *Christ's Entry.* The Brücke's desire for "a new morality" (in Long's words) is one that persisted in Kirchner's work past the Brücke years and informs his *Strassenbilder* series.[117] Exactly how the "new morality" is meant, if it is intended at all, in Kirchner's street scenes is an area of significant disagreement.

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113. West, 37.

114. Lloyd, 103, 106-07.

115. Long, 21.

116. Nietzsche, 13.

117. Long, 21 (see fn 52).

CHAPTER 3

ANXIETY AS A FIN-DE-SIÈCLE CONDITION

IN THE MODERN CITY

Identity Crises in Comparison with Paris

The city as a growing subject of interest in the arts as well as a locus of social

anxiety was reflected in nineteenth-century literature and visual art. The urban-rural

dichotomy, inflected with moral judgment, manifested itself in a visual vocabulary of the

city as a site of the negative effects of progress. The city as artistic subject matter in the

early twentieth century continues, with specific variations, such as larger concerns about

social change from the late nineteenth century, comprising concerns about population

increase, social and political unrest, and urban renewal projects.

Brussels and Berlin, in their art worlds as well as their urban self-images,

struggled with identity crises in comparison with Paris. Susan Canning notes that

Brussels, much like Paris during Haussmannization, evolved from of a city of narrow

medieval streets to one including new social utilization of broad boulevards and city

squares for entertainment, commerce, and political activism, as well as social

disruption.[118] Charles W. Haxthausen points out that in contrast to the grandly

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118. Susan M Canning, "*La Foule et le boulevard*: James Ensor and the Street Politic of Everyday Life," in *Belgium, The Golden Decades: 1880–1914*, ed. Jane Block (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 41-64.

re-organized Paris, Berlin was often perceived at the turn of the 20th-century as "second-rate as a European capital."[119] Müller notes contemporary criticism of Berlin's poor planning and pathological soul-less modernity reflected a "longing for a German Baron Haussmann."[120]

Similarly, Diane Lesko writes of Ensor's sensitivity to "the widespread belief that Belgium was a provincial backwater, that Paris was the center of political and cultural creativity and life elsewhere was but a second-rate existence."[121] She argues that Ensor shared the desire with many other young members of the Belgian art world to distinguish themselves both from the French and from their Flemish reputation for dismal and provincial art.[122] According to Lesko, Ensor's antipathy towards the positive reception of George Seurat's *Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte* at the 1887 Les XX exhibition resulted in the competitive drive to produce *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889.*[123] Ensor's goal, according to Lesko, was to "create a Belgian sensibility of radical modernity, one that would incorporate the influences of a great Belgian past and speak in a manner totally alien to the artistic sensibility coming from France."[124]

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119. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 59.

120. Lothar Müller, "The Beauty of the Metropolis: Toward an Aesthetic Urbanism in Turn of the Century Berlin," in *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, eds. Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidren Suhr, 37-57 (Minneapolis and Oxford: The University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 39.

121. Lesko, 51-52.

122. Lesko, 52.

123. Lesko, 52.

124. Lesko, 52.

The anxiety that Ensor felt was not entirely related to broader artistic nationalism and professional competition. By 1888, Ensor's increasingly imaginative visual style and radical subject choices affected his acceptance by both critics and peers in Les XX; he wrote years later about having to withdraw multiple works of art in 1888 " 'before a cabal fed by jealous peers.' "[125] Diane Lesko argues that Ensor's "feelings of persecution contributed to his personal identification with the figure of Christ" in *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889.*[126]

<div align="center">

The City: "Sexualized Symbol of
the Evils of Modernity"

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Dorothy Rowe notes that in the critical discourse about the negative effects of rapid urbanization, the city became "a sexualized symbol of the evils of modernity. The sexuality of Berlin in such discourses was invariably positioned as female."[127] Carol Duncan has connected late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century societal anxiety around modernity to a reflection in European visual arts of male artists' feelings of loss of power and autonomy.[128] Duncan cites the artwork of male symbolists, fauvists, and expressionists, including Kirchner's 1910 *Self-Portrait with Model* (fig. 20) and Edvard

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125. Lesko, 56.

126. Lesko, 56. Ensor's works were increasingly rejected by Les XX, leading Théo Hannon to defend Ensor in a review by calling into question their pretense and conventionality for a "a so-called intransigent and revolutionary organization…" note 77.

127. Rowe, 11.

128. Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting" (1973), in Broude and Garrard, *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 292-313.

Munch's 1903 *Salome* (fig. 21), as reflections of fin-de-siècle male insecurity and overcompensation through domination of the threatening femme fatale.[129] Kirchner's *Self-Portrait with Model* evinces the sense of gendered disequilibrium typical in the attitudes of many male artists towards their female subjects of the period.

Kirchner's overall oeuvre, however, of studio nudes, bathers and dancers during the Brücke years, such as *Striding into the Sea* (fig. 22), *Two Nudes and Two Sculptures* (fig. 23), and *Panama Dancers* (fig. 24) show a variety of attitudes towards his female subjects, in contrast to the less ambivalent attitudes and objectification of women by contemporaries Heckel or Van Dongen. While Kirchner is not on record as holding unusually liberated feminist views or other than typical attitudes of his day towards women, his embrace of Dionysian free love and naturism may thus prompt a more complicated interpretation of his approach to his subjects in the *Strassenbilder*.

It is with the onset of war that anxiety seems most overtly revealed in Kirchner's work, such as in his *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* (1915) (fig. 25) and *Artillerymen in the Shower* (1915) (fig. 26). In 1915, Kirchner also produced a series of explicit bordello lithographs, such as *The Breast Fetishist* (fig. 27), which contrast significantly with both Kirchner's vitalist Brücke work, as well as his *Strassenbilder.* Wye's reading of a tone of "negativity and depersonalization…[in] prints, with titles that identify sadism and various forms of fetishism" is a reasonable interpretation, yet one that calls into question a similar interpretation of the quite different contemporaneous *Strassenbilder* series.[130]

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129. Duncan, 292, 295.

130. Wye, 40-41.

The association of Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* with the contemporary anxiety and malaise of pre-war Europe is often made through emotional interpretations of Kirchner's expressive visual strategies and also through prior references that his works seem to evoke. An often-cited allusion is the close visual resemblance of Kirchner's 1908 *Street, Dresden* (fig. 28) (widely considered a precursor to the *Strassenbilder*) to Edvard Munch's 1892 *Evening on Karl Johan Street* (fig. 29).[131] Berman also compares the skull-like masks in *Evening on Karl Johan Street* with Ensor's *Christ's Entry* and the formal devices both Munch and Ensor use to render physical crowding. She notes "…the mindless and conformist crowd is suggested by the close proximity of bodies to one another, compressed so tightly that they appear as a sea of heads floating on a tide of barely undifferentiated figures . . ." adding that the ". . . forward motion of their human tides . . . [is suggested] by compressing the crowd into a sharply receding funnel . . ."[132] The mindless conformity and bodily compression resonate with many views of Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*, as does the compositional use of lateral compression.

Kirchner's 1908 *Street, Dresden* has less of a sense of pessimism and more formal resemblance with Munch's painting. The visual resemblance of *Street, Dresden* and *Evening on Karl Johan Street* is manifold; the faces in both have a certain similar ovular frontality, and Kirchner's Jugendstil lines share a curvilinearity with Munch's organic edges. The overall palette of both paintings employs a complementary dark blue/green contrasting with warm amber orange, red and purple pigments. The motion of the pedestrians is perpendicular to the picture plane causing, in both cases, a confrontation

131. Wye, 35.

132. Berman, 29-31.

for the viewer with the oncoming figures. There are compositional similarities in the division of space; a diagonally defined upper left quadrant of lighter warm amber hues of Munch's buildings vertically mirror the lower left quadrant of lighter warm hues in Kirchner's street surface. Both compositions have a distinct division between those who are coming and those who are going; yet, Kirchner's figures are in crowds on both sides, while Munch opposes a crowd on one side with a lone individual on the other.

Although the mood of *Street, Dresden* is far less negative than Munch's street, the uncanny resemblance between *Evening on Karl Johan Street* and *Street, Dresden* is part of the typical narrative in the anxious interpretation of Kirchner's later *Strassenbilder*. While there is a small amount of dissent regarding whether Kirchner knew of Munch's painting, the high esteem in which Brücke expressionists held Munch motivates scholars to find symbolic as well as visual relationships between the artists.[133] However, using Munch as a model for understanding the tone of Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* has a limited application, given that in contrast to the mix of vitalism and edginess in Kirchner's series*, Munch's painting seems to be unambiguously dark. As a model for fin-de-siècle anxiety, however, and the environment in which both artists and their contemporary critics were steeped, Munch's painting is particularly evocative.

From a formal perspective, while Munch's mask-like faces are often compared to the mask-like faces in Kirchner's paintings, there is a distinctly different quality to the two groups. Munch's are uniform, gaunt, and robotic.[134] Kirchner's vary; where the men tend to be uniform, the women show differing degrees of expression in the series of

133. Lloyd, 136-37.

134. Wye, 35.

paintings. The alienation apparent in Munch's scene works well, rather, with the theories that later art historians attach to Kirchner's *Strassenbilder.* While Munch's *Evening on Karl Johan Street* nonetheless captures a compelling visual reflection of some of the public angst in fin-de-siècle Europe; it can only offer a partial model for considering Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*.

<div align="center">Progress, Technological Change, and Multivalence
of the Political and Social Moment</div>

In addition to its avant-garde expressionist style, the subject matter in Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* is topical and contemporary. Kirchner depicts contemporary urban street scenes, with locations often specifically identified by name—*Strasse, Berlin; Strassenszene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin); Potsdamer Platz*. Most authors consider the subject of the *Strassenbilder* to be the city Berlin, but also to represent the modern metropolis generally. Pamela Kort details the provenance of *Berlin Street Scene (Berliner Strassenszene)* (1913) (fig. 3) including references from exhibition catalogues in 1933 and 1934 to the painting as *Strasse in Paris* and *Grosstadtstrasse Paris*, respectively. The accompanying catalog comments cited that, " 'The manner in which [Kirchner] conceptualized the *Street in Paris* in 1913, which could also be *Street in Berlin*, is as something fluctuating, full of people pushing through the crowd, which today is "anywhere street." ' "[135] The Jewish owner of *Berlin Street Scene*, Hans Hess, had lost his job in 1933 for, Kort quotes, " 'racial reasons' " and emigrated to Paris; the same

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135. Kort, 80, note 21.

year, Hess's mother, Tekla, the administrator of the Hess collection, moved the painting to Switzerland for safe-keeping.[136]

The flexibility of Kirchner's imagery is apparent from a 1933 Berlin review, when art historian Georg Schmidt wrote, "Kirchner's strongest painting in the exhibition is surely the street scene [*Berlin Street Scene*], in which the silhouettes of people, cars, and houses are endlessly layered over one another….It is….the big city around the year 1910, whose crisis is anticipated in such paintings.' "[137] The fate of *Berlin Street Scene* demonstrates in a particularly dark manner how political factors affect the reception of a work of art, in this case, the post-World War I desire to see prescient signs of the future in 1910, as well as the later pressures to obfuscate specific geographic details in avoidance of Nazi persecution.

In locating Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* in a particular time and place*,* further details such as the pair of workhorses in *Berlin Street Scene*, the headlamps of a motorcar in *Street, Berlin (Strasse, Berlin)* (1913) (fig. 4), and the green glow of electric light in *Five Women on the Street (Fünf Frauen auf der Strasse)* (1913) (fig. 2) reveal the moment as one of technological change. The figures that fill the canvases are wearing contemporary fashionable attire, and whether they are prostitutes and customers, men and women strolling through Berlin nightlife, window-shoppers on the street, or a mix, the social groups represented are all particularly modern.

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136. Kort, 79-80.

137. Kort, 80.

Contemporary discourse concerns itself with each of these groups of people, as well as a fascination and consternation with all aspects of industrialization, including the perceived benefits and incursions of the motorcar, train, and electricity. Prostitution was an increasing social concern, spawning new legal codes, police surveillance and midnight rescue missions.[138] With the increasing use of electricity, the growth of Berlin's commercial and entertainment activity was notable in the press, as indicated by contemporary reporters' comments: from 1895-1914:

> 'Berlin now wakes up, in a way, for the second time: in the morning for work, in the evening for pleasure!'; 'The sight of the unbelievable motion of people, lights and vehicles that now presents itself to the eye, that is Berlin!'; 'Berlin nights are so colourful, so strongly pulsating, so hot and so very filled with the constant hunt for pleasure and entertainment'[139]

In some respects, Kirchner's motifs, such as in *Berlin Street Scene* (fig. 3) and *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)* (fig. 5) repeat the types of subjects that Baudelaire identified with nineteenth-century Impressionism. Baudelaire's "The Painter of Modern Life" addresses the same prescribed subject manner for his protagonist, Constantin Guys—the dandy, the woman, artificial cosmetics, the prostitute and the carriage.[140] Although Kirchner's subjects update nineteenth-century transportation with engines and machine metal, he nonetheless presents a twentieth-century view that echoes a degree of Baudelaire's assessment of Guys: "He has everywhere sought after the

138. Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London 1840-1930* (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd, 1998), 192-3, 228-234.

139. Schlör, 257.

140. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York and London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1964, 1995), 26-41.

fugitive, fleeting beauty of present-day life, the distinguishing character of that quality which…we have called 'modernity.' Often weird, violent and excessive, he has contrived to concentrate in his drawings the acrid or heady bouquet of the wine of life."[141]

Baudelaire's reference to "fleeting beauty" includes a decidedly nineteenth-century judgment of women as an artist's subject; however, he makes no pretense of actual respect for women. Indeed, it is despite that she is, according to Baudelaire "stupid, perhaps" and because of her visual and fashionable allure that Baudelaire promotes her as a subject.[142] The prostitute, "protean image of wanton beauty," is appreciated by Baudelaire as a "pure art, by which I mean the special beauty of evil, the beautiful amid the horrible."[143] Kirchner's topical engagement with images of his urban modernity reflect the ambiguity of urban social change, without clearly indicating whether he too finds his subject a "protean image of wanton beauty," a talisman for his time, or a stimulating subject worthy of painting.

The widespread anxieties of fin-de-siècle European society might support the conclusion that Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* reveal the prostitute as an urban symptom of a morally struggling society; the images of prostitutes, the ultimate femme fatale, are often received in this way, as "figures who symbolize the dehumanizing urban environment."[144] It is ultimately variable and individual whether Kirchner's

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141. Baudelaire, 41.

142. Baudelaire, 30.

143. Baudelaire, 36, 38.

144. Wye, 25.

Strassenbilder paintings are read as symptomatic of moral decline, as bourgeois shoppers, or even as "a new Berlin type, the 'Tauentzien-Girls'…young women who…practiced a sexual freedom."[145] Indeed, despite the varying moods among the paintings, they are rarely considered separately with multiple valences within the group. However, the perception of the fin-de-siècle as an era of increasing anxiety has had an extensive impact on the late twentieth-century reception of the painting series as emblematic of the dark side of the modern city.

We don't know if Kirchner commented about specific subjects of the *Strassenbilder*; rather, he wrote obliquely. Haxthausen suggests that Kirchner identified in December 1915 with "prostitutes [he] painted," whom he considered "allies"[146] Simmons quotes a 1919 letter in which Kirchner reflected, " 'I allowed myself to be sufficiently pervaded by the whole inner manner of these types, in order to know them from the inside out and to be able to abandon them.' "[147] Despite the assumed sense of doom that has been attributed to Kirchner as motivation for the series, a presumed objective can only be conjecture. That in the instances quoted here, Kirchner has assumed the female role and attempted to understand the perspective of the possible subjects of these paintings is an effort that has not typically been considered in the series' reception.

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145. Simmons, 128-130. "…the street's [Tauentzienstrasse] display windows created a sexually charged atmosphere that formed a new Berlin type, the 'Tauentzien-Girls.' They were young women who, under the influence of luxury and 'irresponsible female agitators,' practiced a sexual freedom that had previously excluded the demimonde from proper society, but had now become commonplace."

146. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 78, 85.

147. Simmons, 132.

CHAPTER 4

THE CROWD AND THE PUBLIC: WHO ARE

THE PEOPLE ON THE STREET?

The Metropolitan Model of the Modern Public

Is the crowd a particularly modern condition? Or did the advent of modern social

sciences cause pathologizing of a human activity? Stephan Jonsson states that Giorgio

Agamben demonstrated that the term *the people,* especially as a political body,

"encapsulates the basic social division of modernity."[148] Indeed, the emergence of the

body politic, or *the people,* in revolutionary eighteenth-century France constitutes for art

historian T.J. Clark the very phenomenon that initiates modernism.[149] For Clark,

modernity is inseparable from the mutability of the public, its ambiguous constituents,

and its ever-shifting participation in the contingency of history. "Politics," Clark asserts,

"is the form *par excellence* of that contingency which makes modernism what it is."[150] In

taking the "material of politics" and failing to "transmute" it, Clark puts Ensor in the

company of David, Courbet and Picasso, arguing, "Modernism is about the impossibility

of transcendence."[151]

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148. Jonsson, 5.

149. T. J. Clark, "Painting in the Year Two," *Representations*, No. 47 (Summer 1994, 13-63).

150. Clark, 20.

151. Clark, 21. Specifically, David's *Death of Marat*, Courbet in 1850, and Picasso's *Guernica*.

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Sixty years after the French Revolution, the writings of poet, writer and art critic

Charles Baudelaire provided a characterization of the public as a source of entertainment

for his hero, the *flâneur,* for whom "it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of

the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the

infinite."[152] A century after the French Revolution, European social theorists, such as Le

Bon, no longer attracted to *the people*, felt rather the need to analyze and classify the

"unruly" mob to contain the power that collected or unregulated people may assert.[153]

But who constitutes the people on the modern street? In cultural representations of

late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European cities, certain tropes often repeat:

political or carnival crowds, *flâneurs*, and prostitutes. In addition, the consumer, whether

figured in the guise of *flâneur* or assumed within the throng on the commercial street, is

implicitly present. Charles Baudelaire and Georg Simmel offer models for these

constituents of the public from the nineteenth- to early twentieth-century. From

Baudelaire we inherit the *flâneur* and his anonymity, along with the possibility for female

flânerie in the unconstrained wandering of the prostitute.[154] Baudelaire distinguishes

between the "dandy," who is "blasé" and "aspires to insensitivity," and the poet's hero,

the *flâneur*, who "has a horror of blasé people" and is rather, "sincere without being

absurd….the passionate spectator."[155] The pleasure in the "fleeting moment" and the

transitory for Baudelaire's nineteenth-century *flâneur* is refigured in Simmel's early

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152. Baudelaire, 9.

153. Le Bon, 15-20, 157-219.

154. Baudelaire, 9, 12, 36-7.

155. Baudelaire, 9.

twentieth-century construction of the new "metropolitan type," and in the momentary experiences of the prostitute.[156]

Baudelaire's street is owned by the *flâneur*. Distance plays a significant part for Baudelaire, in that his *flâneur* can choose physical distance from other people or he can choose psychological distance and immerse himself "in the heart of the multitude."[157] In *Christ's Entry,* Ensor's street is owned by its diverse group of congregants, such that in their visual coagulation, they become the street. Some of its denizens are more comfortable on the street than others. Many faces in the section in front betray their discomfort, while others function as if oblivious of the throngs surrounding them. Further back, the crowds seem entirely in their element, their decreasing forms and slivers of barely-recognizable city features melting into an indistinguishable soup of pigment.

If there is a *flâneur* in this crowd, he does truly move undetected, maybe aided by a carnival mask. Or perhaps he (she?) is the unusually placid figure in the lower right corner—her distance from the surroundings emphasized by the thin, incomplete application of paint (fig. 30). McGough suggests she is a "psychological *repoussoir* figure," recently arrived, "not a part of the procession and has not suspended disbelief."[158] McGough likens her position to someone walking in front of the painting, threatened by the leering figure to her right to not "break the spell."[159] There is no

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156. Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 325-26, 121.

157. Baudelaire, 9.

158. McGough, 177. While many authors refer to the face as a man, McGough suggest she/he is either, but uses the feminine pronoun.

159. McGough, 177.

reason, however, to accept her somewhat more realistic rendering as reality. Ensor's tangibly material paint application and demonstrative expressions force the viewer to confront multiple realities or fictions, of which her face is but one, actually insubstantial, face in the crowd.

Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* figures also interact with the very stones they walk upon, fusing to some, levitating above others. Kirchner's crowds have different relationships with the street; they can appear monolithic, as the row of men in *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)* (fig. 5) or scattered, such as in *Potsdamer Platz* (fig. 7). For the most part, it is the women, visually distinguished from the others, who own the street with the confidence, but not the anonymity of the *flâneur*. And with a couple exceptions, the men are more possessed by than possessing of the street, yet they retain the freedom of movement that anonymity provides.

<div align="center">

Crowd Theory: How Were Collected Masses
Viewed in Contemporary Europe?

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The public scenes by Ensor and Kirchner and their reception participate in nineteenth- and twentieth-century social, political and philosophical debates. Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* preceded by seven years the publication of Gustave Le Bon's influential theories about the menacing crowd, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*.[160] Sociologist Georg Simmel produced several important essays in the early twentieth century addressing the individual and groups, social interaction, and

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160. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Atlanta, GA: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1982). Originally published in Paris in 1895 as *Psychologie des Foules*.

cosmopolitanism.[161] The issues of late nineteenth-century conservative sociologists such as Le Bon received renewed attention in the post-World War II work of Elias Canetti, resulting in a more complex interpretation of the crowd that allows for positive as well as negative potential for collective behavior.[162] Sociologist Christian Borch supports Canetti's theories and sees an affinity in them with the potential for positive social transformation in the physicality of crowds as expressed in Walt Whitman's poetry.[163] While philosophers and writers such as Nietzsche and Baudelaire are more commonly associated with art-historical interpretations of symbolism, impressionism and expressionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, crowd theory informs a number of the art-historical assumptions about the urban scenes of Ensor and Kirchner.

Originally published in 1895 as *La Psychologie des foules*, Gustave Le Bon's study has had enduring and far-reaching influence in psychological and sociological theory regarding crowds. Le Bon calls the present age (the late nineteenth century) the "era of the crowds"; he examines the phenomena out of concern for the growing, and in his opinion, threatening power of the modern crowd.[164] His study presents the characteristics of crowds, their beliefs, capacities and behaviors. He argues that collective

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161. Simmel, including "Exchange" (1907), 43-69; "Prostitution" (1907); "Sociability" (1910), 96-127; "Freedom and the Individual" (posthumous), 217-226;"Fashion" (1904); "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), 294-339; and "The Conflict in Modern Culture" (1918), 375-393.

162. Canetti, "Crowds," 15-90.

163. Christian Borch, "Body to Body: On the Political Anatomy of Crowds," *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 27, issue 3 (Sep 2009), 271-290.

164. Le Bon, xiii, xviii, "Crowds are only powerful for destruction. . . .When the structure of a civilization is rotten, it is always the masses that bring about its downfall."

and individual psychologies differ to the detriment of individual intelligence.[165] While Le Bon considers the crowd intellectually inferior to an individual, he can see both criminal and heroic potential in a crowd, depending on circumstance. Le Bon associates inherent values and characteristics with crowds of different nationalities based upon race; his position that "the most powerful of the factors capable of determining men's actions" is played by race reveals one of the attractions of his theory to twentieth-century Fascist regimes.[166]

Le Bon's study, concerned with "heterogeneous" crowds, focuses on several categories within this kind: criminal crowds, juries, electoral crowds, and parliamentary assemblies.[167] His analysis of criminal crowds reveals the extent to which his interpretations are influenced by enduring cultural memories of brutalities of the French Revolution. He argues that criminal crowds share certain features with all crowds, such as suggestibility, mobility and exaggeration of sentiments.[168] His analysis of parliamentary crowds extends his largely pessimistic view of collective human behavior. While Le Bon still sees parliamentary assemblies as the best-known forms of government, he ends with the judgment that many modern civilizations have reached the fatal phase that "preceded decadence."[169]

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165. Le Bon, 45-66.

166. Le Bon, 159-60.

167. Le Bon, 157-93

168. Le Bon, 163-70.

169. Le Bon, 193-219.

Another influential voice, Berlin-born sociologist Georg Simmel, published several essays in the early twentieth century that analyze the changing relationship between the individual and objective culture. Simmel examines the impact of capitalist exchange economies on human relationships, seeing the deteriorating effects of commodification on human community.[170] He sees the prostitute as a case study for the dehumanizing effects of modernity, in which a relationship is reduced to "generic content" defined by the fleeting momentary benefit gained through money.[171] Expressing sympathy for the plight of these women, Simmel's essentially nineteenth-century assessment of women as "closer to the dark, primitive forces of nature" informs his view.[172] In his 1903 essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Simmel addresses the challenge to individualism posed by contemporary society. Noting that the conditions of modern urban life result in an "intensification of emotional life," Simmel examines individual adaptations to cope with external pressure.[173] Simmel suggests that the "metropolitan type" learns to react rationally—leading to the modern urban blasé attitude of indifference.[174] Simmel's study has particularly impacted the scholarly assessment of alienation as a main theme in Kirchner's urban street scenes.

Elias Canetti's classic 1960 study, *Crowds and Power,* although not technically a sociology source, compellingly and comprehensively addresses human dynamics in

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170. Simmel, 41-127.

171. Simmel, 121-126.

172. Simmel, 123.

173. Simmel, 324.

174. Simmel, 326.

crowds in society, offering anecdotal studies taken from a wide swath of global history.

He examines crowd phenomena from a broad array of facets, identifying different types

of crowds and packs, and interrogating their relationship to power and societal rule. He

connects the power of crowds with the abstract impulse of *increase*; its applications range

from population to the desire of a ruler or socio-political system.[175] His book appears to

be a cautionary tale about the insatiable desires of ruling power and society's necessity to

keep this impulse in check. In this, Canetti locates more menace to human society in out-

of-control rulers, while Gustave Le Bon locates menace to societal order in out-of-control

crowds. While Canetti's book includes observations about negative crowd behavior that

overlap with Le Bon's, the breadth of Canetti's study presents a more complex and

diverse exposition of the dangers and transformative possibilities within crowds.[176] The

preceding studies provide an illuminating lens with which to consider the socio-political

content, aesthetic strategies, and reception of Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*

and Kirchner's *Strassenbilder.*

<center>Belgium, Ensor and the Crowd</center>

A striking feature of the 1898 etching *The Entry of Christ into Brussels* (fig. 12)

that illuminates certain aspects of the crowded scene is the distorted perspective view of

the parade route. In the 1898 print, no longer obscured by the large red banner in the

painting that reads "Vive la Sociale," the building facades of the boulevard converge in

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175. Canetti, 190-93.

176. Canetti, 15-30, 337-384.

steep orthogonal lines at a triangular slice of yellow sun. The inclusion of many more architectural details in the print leads to a greater sense of the composition as a city compared to the painting; this additional visual information helps to anchor the teeming masses slightly more, leading to a somewhat less overwhelming sense of a crush of people.

McGough has illustrated multiple perspective systems operating in the 1888 painting, with two vanishing points, that cause both the direction and timing of the parade marchers to appear confused and multiplied, resulting in "a sense of vibration and throbbing in the crowd."[177] By contrast, in the print, due to a cluster of tall buildings blocking the background, it is not clear if any street extends directly beyond Christ at the point where in the painting there appears a second vanishing point. The sense of distortion and perspective disequilibrium is different, though not much lessened in the etching, due perhaps to the excessive forward pitch of the boulevard leading to the sun and the lack of perspective or architectural clarity in the middle ground behind Christ. The middle ground behind and to the left of Christ is an area of distinct barrenness in the etching that underscores the presence of a discrete separation between foreground and middle-ground crowds in the painting as well. This separation between the two crowds in *Christ's Entry* has potent meaning when considered from the perspective of both classic nineteenth- and twentieth-century crowd theory.

Gustave Le Bon insisted that, "The instinctive need of all beings forming a crowd [is] to obey a leader," and further that, "Men gathered in a crowd lose all force of will,

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177. McGough, 186-88.

and turn instinctively to the person who possesses the quality they lack."[178] Borch notes

that the common view in classical crowd theory is that "crowds destabilize individuality"

as Le Bon and Tarde, but later on also Freud, suggested that crowds are constitutively

linked to the individuality of the crowd leader."[179] Who is the leader in Ensor's *Christ's*

Entry into Brussels in 1889? Christ? The bishop? Someone unseen? Some features of

Christ's Entry suggest that regardless of Ensor's attitude about the people within his

crowd, they may not entirely be blind followers after all. While the foreground figures in

the painting could be "instinctively" obeying the drum major, behind the foreground

group, the crowd splits its attention, and indeed direction, multiple times.

Certain elements in Ensor's *Christ's Entry* suggest that his viewpoints were to

some degree in line with nineteenth-century attitudes about the nature of crowds. The

unflattering, grotesque sea of masks, with their countless vacant stares, can easily be seen

to align with Le Bon's view of the "singularly inferior mentality" of crowds.[180] The

frightening faces in Ensor's crowd could almost illustrate Le Bon's fearful expression of

the capacity of crowds six years hence, "The crowd state and the domination of crowds is

equivalent to the barbarian state, or a return to it."[181]

The figures following Christ display an altogether different, mirthful mood

compared to the variety of mostly alarmed, agitated and indifferent visages in the lower

half of the painting. Canetti describes a category of crowd he terms a "feast crowd," in

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178. Le Bon, 112, and Borch, 282.

179. Borch, 271.

180. Le Bon, viii.

181. Le Bon, 161.

which abundance, equality, indulgence and pleasure abound, and "the arrival of the various contingents is vigorously acclaimed and each fresh arrival raises the level of universal joy."[182] In contrast to the group of frightful masks in front of the soldiers, the crowd behind Christ seems to have a bit more space to move (fig. 31). The foreground crowd, full of caricatures of society's elite, seems as frightened of themselves and the throng behind them as Le Bon would have been of both groups, conjuring as they would the "conservative fear of the revolutionary masses."[183]

Most frightening to conservative psychologists and sociologists like Le Bon, would be the imagery of an "irrational excitement of crowd behavior" that Borch, after Canetti, suggests reveals an equality with "liberating potentials" to generate "democratic transformation."[184] Where did Ensor stand? Did he unequivocally align himself with typical nineteenth-century attitudes, or does the rear half of *Christ's Entry* reveal that he held contradictory notions, or even unconscious support for the masses depicted there?

Le Bon's ideas almost take expression in the constitution of Ensor's crowd in *Christ's Entry*, including as it does representations of a number of the classifications that Le Bon characterizes as dangerously unstable, such as street crowds, but also parliamentarians, the electorate, and especially "reformers."[185] Is Ensor's purpose in gathering this hodgepodge group in *Christ's Entry* and his other crowd scenes to underscore the kinds of conclusions Le Bon will make six years later? While scholars do

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182. Canetti, 62.

183. Borch, 273.

184. Borch, 272.

185. Le Bon, vi, 158-161.

not agree on Ensor's purpose, it seems unlikely that Ensor, whose anti-institutional affiliations were discussed in Chapter II, would fully endorse views that come from an extreme conservative point of view. On the other hand, his views regarding the baseness of humanity did not completely differ from Le Bon's. Ensor's attitudes often appear to be conservative, except when he seems to want to appear rebellious. His self-image of outsider rebel was likely better fulfilled by alignment with usually more radical, and therefore liberal, sects of Belgian society.

Diane Lesko describes the formative influence of the views on humanity of fellow Belgian artist Antoine Wiertz for Ensor's attitude toward the crowd. The older artist published a brochure in 1859 including colorful criticism that, "viciously attacked humanity as a group and as individuals: 'Odious pile! Vile toads, vile serpents, packs of insects inflated with envy, of bestiality and meanness—stupid crowd, from what muck do you arise?...Don't do anything for this ungracious crowd…suffer this man and he'll spit in your face.' "[186] Lesko argues that Ensor's embrace of this descriptive pejorative thinking can often be seen in Ensor's own writing, such as the frequent inclusion of the following motto as the close of his essays and speeches: " 'The hot air of windbags always makes them burst like frogs.' "[187]

The evocative language of both Wiertz and Ensor becomes manifest in Ensor's artwork, which abounds with the scatological, bestial and the crowd. Lesko suggests the engorged parade leader at the base of *Christ's Entry* "gives visual expression to Ensor's

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186. Lesko, 63. From Wiertz's 1859 brochure, "Peinture mate par M. Wiertz." Lesko notes that a monograph on Antoine Wiertz was the only artist monograph found in his collection after his death.

187. Lesko, 63. " 'Les suffisants matamoresques appellent la finale crevaison grenouillère' " appears several times in Ensor essays dated 1896–1921 collected in *Mes Écrits*.

dictum about blown-up frogs."[188] Bloated figures and grotesque creatures appear

frequently, and appear to become a visual catalog from which Ensor could recycle figures

for his crowd scenes. Resembling candidates auditioning in an Ensor casting call, the

bizarre anthropomorphic ensemble in the 1891 painting *The Frightful Musicians* (fig. 32)

betrays Ensor's affection for the same menagerie of creatures he uses to satirize society.

The same year, Ensor painted *The Grotesque Singers* (fig. 33), revealing a seeming

distaste and revulsion for the particularly human; the contrast reveals a seemingly greater

pleasure in the grotesque animal and insect world that belies Ensor's use of these

creatures as metaphors for depravity.

An inflated green-faced insect-like figure on the left of *Christ's Entry* is

reminiscent of Wiertz's verbal imagery (fig. 34). The puffed-up figure stands out as one

of the crowd not processing forward; rather, garbed in an encrusted ovoid exoskeleton,

his alarmed beetle-like face with a bobble tassel on his nose peers up at the ochre-faced

figure above him. Berman and McGough identify the ochre profile with the conical red

cap overlooking the crowd as Ensor in a *commedia dell'arte* costume.[189] The capped

figure is one of the few figures in this section to have a torso and outstretched arm

visible; his posture is almost echoed, yet without the head turn, in the extended arm of the

green Pierrot figure to his lower left. The expansive posture, with a hand grasping a staff,

and the look of maniacal amusement on his face, suggests Ensor considers himself in a

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188. Lesko, 66.

189. Berman, 88. Berman discusses at length the importance of the *commedie dell'arte*, and Pierrot in particular, to artists in Les XX and to Ensor's literary peers at *L'Art Moderne*, and McGough, 174. McGough also identifies the pink figure behind the ochre one as a copy of Ensor's *Self Portrait in the Flowered Hat*.

role above the crowd—enjoying a greater consciousness, power, or devious involvement in the machinations of the day. McGough suggests that the ochre figure is mocking a "terrified" Christ, and in return that Christ's eyes are "riveted" on one the ochre Pierrot, to whom he raises his hands in salute.[190] It is hard to tell precisely where Christ's eyes are directed; regardless, the power wielded by the ochre figure is evidently feared, and perhaps held in awe or envy by the puffy costumed insect to his front. Further insect references have recently been found by Michael Draguet of the Getty Museum, who discovered the following slogan on the yellow banner behind these two figures: "*Inventeur des insects belges invincibles* (Creator of the Invincible Belgian Insects)."[191] Berman points out many scholars suspect that in the early twentieth century Ensor over-painted the slogan, which satirizes the Belgian national anthem.[192]

Ensor's motto, "The hot air of windbags always makes them burst like frogs," also calls to mind the title of his 1885 drypoint *Hop Frog's Revenge* (figs. 9 & 10), with the association of a frog and bursting heat. In fact, the frog is only a name in the gruesome print, which refers to an Edgar Allen Poe tale in which a court jester, Hop Frog, tricks a King and seven advisors to attend a masquerade ball, chained together in tar and feather orangutan costumes. Stringing the group up to the ceiling, and feigning curiosity about their identities behind their masks, Hop Frog peers closely with a torch,

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190. McGough, 174, 176. Most scholars also identify Christ as a self-portrait of Ensor.

191. Berman, 14.

192. Berman, 14.

which sets on fire the inflammable masks, the King and his advisors.[193] The composition

of *Hop Frog's Revenge* echoes many aspects of *Christ's Entry* in the vast, dense

masquerade crowd, multiple balconies filled with tiny spectators, and heraldic flags. In a

dark reversal, the unfortunate King and his advisors are at the center of both the

compositional emphasis of the print and the attention of the encircling crowd; while, in

Christ's Entry, Christ, the ostensible focus of the parade, is neither the focus of the

composition, nor heeded by the crowd. References to Christ as king are explicit in the red

banner on the far right that reads "Vive Jesus Roi de Bruxlles,"[194] which audiences would

recognize as a Biblical reference to INRI, the Latin inscription "Jesus of Nazareth, King

of the Jews" that constituted the legal charge hung above the crucified Christ's head.

Thus, in comparison of the two works, *Hop Frog's Revenge* shows a king avenged for

injustice, while *Christ's Entry* shows the return of a "king" unjustly condemned. In both

cases, Ensor shows a crowd that seems indifferent or helpless, whether warranted or not.

Was Ensor pointing out that regardless of the crowd composition or occasion, the people,

in their amorality are the same?

The compositional structure of *Hop Frog's Revenge*, its crowd, and its references

to royalty resemble another work discussed earlier from the same year, Ensor's *Lively*

and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem (1885), in crayon and collage (fig. 11).

While much of the subject is similar to the 1888 painting *Christ's Entry*--a diminutive,

barely visible Christ riding a donkey who enters a crowded city street, strewn with flying

banners—the composition is much closer to *Hop Frog's Revenge*. The vertical formats of

193. Pfeiffer and Hollein, 129-130.

194. Spelling of "Bruxlles" appears in the painting.

Hop Frog and *The Lively and Radiant* are both framed on nearly all four sides by architectural elements, and the foreground and sides are filled with a darker density of lines. The center of each composition is very light; in *Hop Frog*, the light silhouettes and highlights the burnt victims, and in *The Lively and Radiant*, the center of the canvas glows with a luminosity that resembles fire. The three images have different subjects, but they all share the crowd, banners of fanfare, and reference to royalty. Given Ensor's statements of revulsion towards the masses, what is one to make of where Ensor stands in relation to the crowd in these works? While Ensor's crowd in *Christ's Entry* includes socialists, soldiers, anarchists, judges, symbols for Les XX and even some of his own family members, the painting reflects groups and individuals with whom Ensor is likely *both* sympathetic and unsympathetic. The gathering is one that he is lampooning from within—he is a member as well as a critic of this crowd.

Catherine de Zegher writes that for Ensor, "…the crowd serves as a model of modern subjectivity"—a subjectivity that she opposes to Ensor's frequent emphasis on self-representation in his oeuvre.[195] Before moving to Brussels as a young man for art training, Ensor lived with his family in the small seaside tourist town of Ostend, Belgium, surrounded by the masks and bric-a-brac of his mother's family's successful carnival and souvenir shop.[196] Timothy Hyman notes that the Ostend carnival—"the most famous and elaborate in Belgium"—was, both for the town and Ensor's family, more than a pre-Lenten celebration; following the long off-season for the seaside town, Hyman writes that, "the days of carnival embodied the sudden collapse of the individual's social role,

195. De Zegher, introduction, 9.

196. Hyman, 76.

and of all convention, which was exchanged for the unregulated community of

the mask."[197]

Ensor's experience of the urban crowd in Belgium that influenced *Christ's Entry*

included not only the Ostend carnival, but also popular street demonstrations and riots in

Brussels in the mid-1880s, and local fishermen strikes.[198] In Ensor's 1886 etching, *The*

Cathedral (fig. 35), the first of Ensor's prominent crowd scenes, a sea of people floods

the street in front of a towering cathedral, divided into sections of rigid ranks of soldiers

and a heterogynous swarm of people.[199] Similar to the crowd distinctions Ensor will later

make in *Christ's Entry,* as if categorizing crowd typologies like Gustave Le Bon, Ensor

depicts an eerie distinction between the two different groups. The ordered rows of the

soldiers are no more comforting an image than the chaotic individualized crowd; the

soldiers' diminutive but spreading pattern beneath the towering edifice is as disconcerting

in its uniformity as the bizarre and motley throng. Hyman characterizes the carnival

crowd in Ensor's *Christ's Entry* as "fools and rascals…certainly not some noble Fourth

Estate striding toward the future."[200] In this observation, a different reception of crowd

type is revealed; where the nineteenth-century Le Bon would see the frightful specter of

revolution in the Fourth Estate, the twenty-first-century Hyman attributes a certain

nobility to the ideal Fourth Estate, an ideal he does not see represented in Ensor's crowd.

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197. Hyman, 77.

198. Hyman, 79.

199. Hyman, 79.

200. Hyman, 79.

Rendering Motion and Space: Anti-academicism,
Landscape Composition and the City View

Louis Marchesano pointed out an abstract similarity between the structure of Ensor's distorted cityscape and seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting.[201] With its multiple perspectives, rapid recession, and framing devices, Marchesano suggested that Ensor's interest in Dutch masters is evidenced in an unlikely formal manifestation for his urban panorama.[202]

What would be the purpose of using a Dutch landscape model as a compositional device in a city scene—what does it offer Ensor? For the seventeenth-century landscape artist, it was a method for bringing the viewer into the painting at an accelerated pace. Both the rapid recession and the multiple perspectives can be seen in paintings such as Meindhert Hobbema's *A Wooded Landscape*, (1663), and *A View on a High Road* (1665) (figs. 36 & 37). In *A Wooded Landscape*, multiple country paths act as entry points into the canvas, and their differing levels somewhat disorient the viewer's expectation of perspective. For Ensor, the rapid recession of perspective works as an effective method for implicating the viewer as a participant in the parade. Ensor's use of multiple perspective viewpoints, in their reference to Dutch landscape tradition, may refer to the practice of showing multiple moments in time concurrently, and at the same time subtly underscore the temporal ruptures inherent in the religious mystery of the Biblical Christ's return, yet entering Brussels a year hence from the date painted.

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201. Marchesano, in discussion with author, June 1, 2011.

202. Ibid.

As multiple perspective viewpoints destabilize the viewing position of the audience, the interplay of several moments in time and space evokes also the physical experience of being jostled in a crowd and the disorienting inability of assessing one's accurate location or physical circumstance. The oversized row of foreground heads cropped from their bodies tumble forward, nearly on top of the viewer. Simultaneously, according to Marchesano, the lack of accessible space in the near middle foreground of *Christ's Entry* echoes the dip of a hill in Dutch landscape painting that allows the viewer to traverse from the middle ground to the foreground in one quick hop.[203] Complimenting this path are the multiple directional cues in the composition that extend in strong diagonals from the foreground crowd towards the figure of Christ. Like transit tracks, the repeated slanted but vertical rows of hats, brass instruments, and colored swatches of clothing shuttle the viewer in a rush towards the center. To a differing extent and degree, Kirchner plays with these same visual effects. Evocative of Futurist simultaneity, Kirchner's repetition of forms and figures in his *Strassenbilder*, along with the distortion and warping of the perspective and scale of the city street has a similar effect on the viewer.

Both Ensor's and Kirchner's paintings share an ability to render the viewer uncertain in one's response to the crowded scenes, largely due to the destabilizing effects of their compositions. Ensor's reputation as a precursor to twentieth-century expressionism is largely due to his individualized visual style. Kirchner and Ensor share certain expressive qualities in their inventive interpretation of visible reality, such as

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203. Marchesano, in discussion with author, June 1, 2011.

distortion of traditional perspective systems, crowded compression of forms and figures in space, and emotionally heightened, vivid or extreme color choices.

A comparison of two specific paintings, Kirchner's 1913 *Street, Berlin (Strasse, Berlin)* (fig. 4) and Ensor's *Christ's Entry* (fig. 1)*,* is instructive. Among the formal qualities of Ensor's *Christ's Entry* and Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*, there is a striking difference in their facture. The surface of Ensor's vast panorama is notable for its extreme variability. Some parts are painted thinly, sometimes evenly and sometimes with a dry-scrubbed pigmentation; while other parts contain three-dimensional globs of excess paint, heaped dried color, seemingly oozed directly from a paint tube. In his coarse and variant facture, with its crusty excesses, crude stiffness, and character of distemper, Ensor exercises his deepest anti-academicism. While Kirchner's figural and perspectival distortions and color license place him firmly in the formal territory of the avant-garde, his facility with the brush and familiarity with artistic convention is betrayed by the smooth, finished surface of his canvases.

Kirchner's Street: Urban Darkness, Pessimism and Foreboding

The dark view of Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* is sometimes supported and extended by associating the series with urban expressionism, especially around World War I. Kirchner's style changed after his 1911 move from Dresden to Berlin. In addition to the crowded urban street and studio nudes*,* Kirchner's works evolved from Brücke nudes in utopian nature to urban scenes like the circus and cabaret, such as *Girl Circus Rider* and *Trapeze Acrobats in Blue* (figs. 38 & 39). Thus, several aspects of Kirchner's formative

Brücke thinking should cast doubt on interpretations of Kirchner's street scenes that would align Kirchner too closely with the apocalyptic visions of Expressionist peers such as Ludwig Meidner and Georg Grosz.[204] The easy dichotomy between rural and urban may render too easy assumptions of value judgments about the *Strassenbilder*, especially given the contemporary nationalist discourse in Germany idealizing naturalism and rural peasantry.[205] In the nineteenth century discourse of Wilhelm Riehl, Tönnies, and Langbehn, nature, the rural landscape, and the peasant farmer became synonymous with German national character and the authenticity of German *volk* in opposition to the inauthentic city.[206] In predictable rhetorical contrast, and coinciding with actual social challenges from industrialization, the city was positioned as the sinful "other," straining and threatening the moral fabric of society.

The interpretation of Kirchner's street scenes is not only affected by the rural-urban comparison, but also their temporal proximity to World War I. His Berlin street scenes are often grouped with cityscapes and urban motifs of other German Expressionists, such as Ludwig Meidner, Georg Grosz, Lyonel Feininger, and Otto Dix. The city scenes and urban interiors of this group of artists are typically read as reflecting modern anxiety and dystopia.[207] Dorothy Rowe expresses this oft-cited view when she describes Meidner's well-known 1913 painting *The City and I*, writing, "*The City and I*

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204. Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), and Beth Irwin Lewis, "Lustmord: Inside the Windows of the Metropolis," in *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, eds. Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidren Suhr (Minneapolis and Oxford: The University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 111-140.

205. West, 34-42.

206. West, 37-45.

207. Lewis, 111-36.

unambiguously and deliberately displays a sense of unease and egotism in relation to his experience of modernity in the city…he depicted many images of apocalyptic cityscapes in which human beings are shown to be powerless in the face of their surroundings."[208] Works such as Meidner's 1913 *Wögende Menge (Surging Crowd)* (fig. 40) and *Wannsee Bahnhof (Wannsee Train Station)* (fig. 41), and Lyonel Feininger's 1912 *Das Tor (The Gate)* (fig. 42) share features such as drastically tilted and distorted architecture and undifferentiated scurrying pedestrians. These city scenes of seeming anarchy with their indistinct masses appear in some respects more evocative of the crowd of Ensor than that of Kirchner.

Deborah Wye comments on the frequency in the literature of Meidner's and Kirchner's "shared perception of foreboding in the years before World War I"; however, she distinguishes between Meidner's "frenzied and explosive" renderings and Kirchner's "face-to-face" scenes.[209] Norman Rosenthal also refers to Kirchner's "sense of tragic foreboding and fear" about the pending war, although Rosenthal states the artist's view was "unlike many artists, including Ludwig Meidner."[210] Rosenthal does not link this pessimism to the *Strassenbilder,* and instead attributes the manifestation of this fear to 1915 works such as *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* (fig. 25) and *Artillerymen in the Shower* (fig. 26).[211] The distinction between works that follow the onset of war and those that

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208. Rowe, 148.

209. Wye, 25.

210. Norman Rosenthal, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Expressionist," in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years*, eds. Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, 9-13 (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003), 11.

211. Rosenthal, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Expressionist," 11-12.

preceded it is an important one that is less marked in the literature than perhaps it could be. That these latter works reflect dark contemporary social issues is straightforward; however, the association of the *Strassenbilder* to pre-war foreboding seems speculative and overly dependent on the timing of *future* events and stylistic similarities to Expressionist peers.

Considering that anxiety-laden interpretations of Kirchner tend to be supported by reference to fellow Expressionists like Meidner, opinions such as the following by Shulamith Behr are significant. Behr takes exception to the dystopian reading of Meidner's works, such as *The City and I* (fig. 43), arguing, "Rather than portraying alienation in the metropolis, the artist paralleled his creative powers with the chaos, dynamism and tumult of contemporary life, a view confirmed in his theoretical text 'Directions for Painting the Big City'…."[212] While Kirchner's growing disillusionment with contemporary events in 1915, his early war experience, and his dark prints of sexual violence would seem to share themes with Meidner, Dix and Grosz, the series of Berlin street scenes appears to be clearly different from the darker Expressionist themes of the teens and twenties.

A recent visit to MoMA's 2011 German Expressionist exhibit, *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*, is instructive in regards to potential pitfalls of reception.[213] The exhibit opened with early Brücke woodcut prints including the illustrated Brücke manifesto, with its utopian naiveté. Following a chronological

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212. Shulamith Behr, *Expressionism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55.

213. Museum of Modern Art, New York, *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*, March 27–July 11, 2011.

narrative, the MoMA exhibit traced a history of a variety of nationalities and branches of expressionism via prints, paintings, and books through the 1930s and the 1937-8 Nazi *Degenerate Art* exhibit. The early formal and social interests and concerns apparent in Kirchner's two major street scenes exhibited here, his 1908 *Street, Dresden* (fig. 28) and 1913 *Street, Berlin* (fig. 4) are nearly occluded by the overwhelming tragedy and pathos in the exhibition of works of ensuing years. In an impressive series of prints such as Käthe Kollwitz's 1923 woodcut series *War (Krieg)*, Max Beckman's 1919 lithographic portfolio *Hell (Die Hölle)*, and Otto Dix's 1924 fifty-print intaglio series *The War (Der Krieg)*,[214] the devastating and dehumanizing impact of World War I and its aftermath on all walks of life is evidenced in its excruciating darkness, brutality and loss. It is difficult to maintain an objective posture and return to considering pre-war works and concerns without the intellectual and emotional interference of the post-war imagery.

Dorothy Rowe presents Kirchner's 1913-15 street scenes within a similar chronology, but in a more limited narrative scope of city images of Berlin.[215] She follows the same sequential progression as the MoMA show, yet presents her point of view of Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* as misogynist and prescient of dystopia, likening Kirchner in direct sequence to sex-murder imagery such as George Grosz 1917 *Metropolis* (fig. 44).[216] Rowe's study offers perceptive insight into the types of pervasive negative attitudes towards women that contribute to cultural receptivity of later blatantly sadistic

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214. Museum of Modern Art, New York, *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*, March 27–July 11, 2011.

215. Rowe, 131-179.

216. Rowe, 156.

conflations of women with perversion, sexual violence and death in post-war imagery by

Grosz and Dix. In following the same type of sequential narrative as the MoMA show,

however, this approach may obscure the specific contemporary import of Kirchner's

1913-15 street scenes. While Rowe argues convincingly that post-war pressures reflect an

acute intensification of gender tension that existed before the war, the connection of these

tensions directly to Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* series is significantly less obvious than

with the art of other post-war urban expressionists.[217] When considering Kirchner's street

scenes, so chronologically near to the onset of World War I, a kind of possibly inevitable

regressive projection may play a part in modern reception.

<div align="center">Berlin: Articulation of the Street</div>

Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*, while a visually and thematically unified series, has

within it individual features that suggest manifold meanings, like the various personalities

that comprise any group of people. Rather than emphasizing one overwhelming

interpretation of alienation, similar to the actual constitution of a city street, Kirchner has

captured a few different moods. Numerous emotions, such as anxiety, frenzy, and

excitement may be evinced from the canvases; full of multiplied figures and vibrating

forms, they could be an illustration of the impulse of increase and the insatiable desire to

erupt and grow that Elias Canetti ascribes to crowds.[218] An overriding reading of

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217. Rowe, 131-140.

218. Canetti, 29, 190-91.

alienation in the *Strassenbilder* doesn't allow for the contradictory mix of the pleasure and loneliness of public spaces that Kirchner has translated into paint.

Le Bon's crowd theories emphasized the singularity of thought that can occur when individuals unite for a common cause. Singular interpretations of the *Strassenbilder* seem to rely on this same type of thinking, which assumes that the variety of people on the nocturnal Berlin street shared purposes or goals. In one scene especially, Kirchner creates this effect; certainly the line of men in *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)* (fig. 5), who multiply in Futurist fashion behind three women, appear to be a visual embodiment of a singularity of purpose or action. The interpretation that these are interested men, figuratively queued up for the services of streetwalkers, is particularly compelling given that *Friedrichstrasse* was a known site for prostitution.[219]

Interpretations that rely on the affinity of Georg Simmel's analysis of the metropolitan street and urban prostitution borrow both his condemnation, and his assessment of the source of urban psychological malaise; he states, "an immoderately sensuous life makes one blasé because it stimulates the nerves to their utmost reactivity until they finally can no longer produce any reaction at all."[220] Simmel's own background surely conditioned his point of view; a native Berliner, Simmel's family home was located in the center of Berlin at the corner of Leipzigerstrasse and Friedrichstrasse; the featured street in Kirchner's famed 1914 painting.[221] Dorothy Rowe noted that, "themes of isolation, alienation, social interaction and the city became staple features of Simmel's

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219. Rowe, 4.

220. Simmel, 329.

221. Rowe, 4.

writing….”[222] Yet, Friedrichstrasse was also known for its active nightlife,[223] thus, it may be presumptuous to apply the opinion of a Berliner disillusioned by and possibly jaded to the active Berlin street to the artistic intent of a Bavarian newcomer recently from Dresden and the lakes at Moritzburg.

Kirchner struggled with his own isolation after the break-up of the Brücke, which he reflected upon in a notebook from 1919, “They [the paintings] originated in the years 1911-14, in one of the loneliest times of my life, during which an agonizing restlessness drove me out onto the streets day and night, which were filled with people and cars.”[224] Deborah Wye considered this quote as support that Kirchner's isolation is reflected *in* his *Strassenbilder*; yet, Kirchner wrote that he addressed his restlessness with the diversions of the street, not that the streets caused or represented his loneliness. Could it be justifiably inferred that Kirchner’s *Strassenbilder* reflect his experience of the diversions of the street—not only women, but the pace and excitement of the crowds and cars—and not the imposition on those images of the feelings he was trying to escape? In 1916, Kirchner decried that, now in Jena “here everything is so calm. The most painful is this gradual self-disintegration and helplessness….The bourgeois life here is terrible.”[225] Even after the war experience that traumatized him, Kirchner appears to express a

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222. Rowe, 4-5.

223. Rowe, 4.

224. Wye, 29.

225. Simmons, 140. At this time, as opposed to the time period of the Strassenbilder production, Kirchner was struggling with significant war-time depression, and economic difficulties.

rootlessness and anxiety due to the contradictory, and possibly surreal, stresses of

bourgeois convention, rather than existential crises brought on by urban moral affronts.

In the typical interpretation of *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)*, what

appears to be borrowed from Simmel's essay on prostitution is a degree of judgment,

which it is not clear Kirchner shared. Even Simmel's obvious condemnation of the

practice of prostitution was less a moral judgment of the women than a sympathetic

concern for its harmful effects and the unfair power balance imposed on women

themselves.[226] Some scholars take the middle view, noting the ambiguity in his scenes,

such as Deborah Wye, who writes, "Kirchner's streetwalker, as representative of the

bustling modern metropolis, acknowledges negative forces without denying excitement

and allure."[227] Yet, she still retreats to earlier points of view when she notes that the

introduction of, "his jaded prostitutes…with a cold and calculated brand of

sexuality…may, in some part be a reflection of Kirchner's personal feelings of alienation

and estrangement."[228] Wye echoes a common body of thought in transferring presumed

judgments regarding Kirchner's attitudes towards the nighttime street, the morality of the

prostitute, and Kirchner's projection of personal anxiety; in sum, "Kirchner creates

figures who epitomize the anonymity, loneliness and disquietude of the urban street, as

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226. Simmel, 121-126.

227. Wye, 74.

228. Wye, 35.

well as its artificial veneer and sometimes tawdry glamour. He acknowledges predatory forces and injects an element of danger."[229]

Canetti's differentiation of types of crowds offers other suggestive modes of interpretation when considering a complex admixture of people on Kirchner's street. While acknowledging similar dangers that Le Bon saw in the rigidly shared thinking of certain types of crowds, especially closed assemblies, Canetti expands on the types of crowd behavior that may explain part of the attraction of nightlife itself—when strangers join one another on the street. Canetti argues for differing characteristics to crowds, such as *rhythmic,* and *quick* crowds; the first is epitomized by dancing, and is related to the satisfaction of the human gait.[230] Kirchner's explorations of Brücke Dionysian revelry and his cabaret dance scenes suggest he would be particular sensitive to the effects of the rhythm of nightlife on the street. The *quick* crowd is one that forms briefly, like at a sports event, in contrast to *slow* crowds with long-term goals, such as religious pilgrims.[231] The common goal of night revelers—short-term enjoyment of the atmosphere of the street—constitutes just such an informal assembly.

Simmel's observations about social fragmentation may be a fruitful way to look at Kirchner's paintings. Donald Levine describes Simmel's views: "The nature of culture, society, and personality is such that the most he attains are fragments of things. The

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229. Wye, 74.

230. Canetti, 30.

231. Canetti, 30.

separate and incommensurable worlds of culture make competing claims on his

attention."[232] Simmel explained,

> 'We are constantly circulating over a number of different planes, each of which
> presents the world totally according to a different formula; but from each our life
> takes only a fragment along at any given time.' The structure of social interaction
> displays a comparable plurality of claims on the individual. Individuals usually
> belong to a number of different groups; the person is caught in the intersections of
> their crosscutting interests and expectations.[233]

This observation could apply to the contradictions in Ensor's painting as well, but

for Kirchner, Simmel's insights suggest that experiences evoked in Kirchner's paintings

are antinomic, not only multiplied, but also simultaneously fragmented. The formal

effects of this, seen in the Futurist interpenetration of figures and cities in the

Strassenbilder that some critics attribute to a negative fragmentation of self, may in

addition suggest fragmentation of experience. Further, not all fragmentation is

experienced negatively. Canetti describes a dissolving of the individual in certain types of

crowds that can lead to a sense of freedom; the city street seems to offer both types of

experiences.[234]

Haxthausen compares Kirchner's Berlin style with contemporary Berlin

expressionist poetry, called *Reihungsstijl*, which "displac[ed] narrative or descriptive

continuity with abrupt, jarring sequences of fragmented, seemingly disconnected

images," suggesting that the distortion of the *Strassenbilder* was analogous to poetic

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232. Donald N. Levine, introduction to *On Individuality and Social Forms*, by Georg Simmel (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), xxxviii.

233. Levine, introduction, xxxviii.

234. Canetti, 15-16.

efforts to "render his experience in its fullness."[235] Haxthausen quotes Kirchner's third-

person explanation of his artistic process, which indicates an appreciation for multiple

social and visual experiences of the crowds on the street:

> He discovered that the feeling that pervades a city presented itself in the qualities
> of lines of force (*Kraftlinien*). In the way in which groups of persons configured
> themselves in the rush, in the trams, how they moved, this is how he found the
> means to capture what he had experienced. There are pictures and prints in which
> a purely linear scaffolding with almost schematic figures nevertheless represents
> the life of the streets in the most vital way."[236]

In a 2003 catalog about Kirchner's Dresden and Berlin years, conventional

observations made by Phillip King appear to leave little room for Kirchner's embrace of

the "vital" on the street itself. King writes of Kirchner's "prostitutes stalking the streets of

Berlin" in the *Strassenbilder*, and of his "threatening city crowds" and "angst-ridden

depictions of city crowds" as contrasted to "vital scenes" from circus and cabaret.[237]

King's division of Kirchner's outdoor street from interior spaces of entertainment into

"threatening" versus "vital" spaces oversimplifies both Kirchner's treatment of these

spaces, as well as the complex views of cities in Kirchner's time.

Haxthausen argues that assumptions regarding Kirchner's personal urban anxiety

have inspired "anxious" interpretations of his *Strassenbilder,* but that this view was not

widely held before 1933.[238] Rather, Haxthausen asserts an opinion he claims was also the

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235. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 65-67. Haxthausen follows literary scholar Silvio Vieta's 1974 study.

236. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 67. Kirchner, mid-20s, in "Die Arbeit E. L. Kirchner"

237. Phillip King, foreword to *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years,* ed. Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003), 7.

238. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 61, 70-71.

contemporary viewpoint: that Kirchner considered his art not as, "an expression of urban alienation and anxiety, but as a contribution to an aestheticization of urban life, a visual reality that most of the German art world still viewed negatively."[239] Unlike King, Haxthausen maintains that Kirchner's other urban motifs, such as the circus or cabaret, are not positive foils to the dark *Strassenbilder*, but that both result from the same aesthetic impulses.[240]

Indeed, comparison to experimental French post-impressionist Georges Seurat reveals very similar subjects were used to portray both the modern moment and display new artistic techniques. Seurat and Kirchner both painted cabaret dancers and outdoor street, park or crowd scenes, such as *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884-86). Kirchner's 1912 *Girl Circus Rider* (fig. 38) appears to be a direct homage to Seurat's 1890-91 *La Cirque*. In opposition to frenzied angularity as evidence of urban anxiety in Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*, one could argue that the stiff rigidity of the pedestrians in *La Grande Jatte* exudes an anxious, alienating loneliness, supporting that the objectives of artistic experimentation can not correspond to the reception of all viewers.

Pamela Kort asserts that Kirchner was "almost certainly familiar" with the influential writings of the early twentieth-century German architect August Endell.[241] In his 1908 book, *Die Schönheit der grossen Stadt* (The Beauty of the Metropolis), August

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239. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 61.

240. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 70-71.

241. Kort, 48.

Endell propounds a theory of aesthetic urbanism; basing his theory on the Parisian

flâneur, Endell challenges contemporary assessments of Berlin's comparative urban

"ugliness."[242] Endell suggests sensitive urbanites may experience visual appreciation of

Berlin's "fugitive charms" if they walk through the city with "the eyes of an

impressionist painter."[243] Lothar Müller notes that for Endell, "the crowd does not appear

as a threatening mass, but is seen from the perspective of a positive theory of

anonymity"; Endell describes the "charm of the moving crowd":

> All of the people are free from each other; now they move toward each other in
> dense groupings; now there are gaps; the articulation of the space is always
> changing. Pedestrians interpenetrate, conceal each other, detach themselves again
> and walk freely, each emphasizing, articulating, his share of space. The space
> between them thus becomes a palpable, vast living entity, which becomes all the
> more remarkable when the sun bestows upon each pedestrian an accompanying
> shadow or the rain spreads a glistening, unstable reflection at his feet.[244]

While Endell describes the effects of sunlight and rain on the moving crowd in

Impressionism, Kirchner's artificial light functions much the same way that Endell

describes, such as in *Five Women on the Street* (fig. 2) and *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse*

in Berlin) (fig. 5). Although one of the more sinister of the series, *Potsdamer Platz* (fig.

7) still pulses with echoes of a vitalist energy; yet, here, the evening has soured, and the

frenzy of the dispersing crowd provides a disorienting background to the two women on

the dais.

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242. Haxthausen and Suhr, xv.

243. Haxthausen and Suhr, xv-xvi.

244. Müller, 52.

Although issues of the urban crowd are frequently related to Kirchner's work via generalized connection to crowds as modern phenomena that challenge the individual, the function of the crowd in the *Strassenbilder* is not typically parsed beyond identification of the social status of the women and the assumption of the men as pedestrians or potential customers. The crowd appealed to Ensor as a site of confusion and potential confounding and thereby demonstrates the fragility of social and political positions. To both artists, the crowd offered the possibility of capturing the multiplication of effects of motion, compression and distortion and revealing expressions and glimpses of contradictory human behavior. The certainty that Gustave Le Bon and Georg Simmel express, typical of the scientific positivism of the age, in the inevitability and predictability of the negative potential of people in crowds may be challenged in the artworks of Ensor and Kirchner. While it's not clear how the artists felt from their complex works—indeed it is seemingly purposely unclear—the works call into question fin-de-siècle certainty about human behavior.

CHAPTER 5

AMBIGUOUS IDENTITY, ARTIFICIALITY, PERFORMANCE,

AND MASQUERADE IN THE CROWD

Streetwalkers: Ambiguous Practice

Most of the mainstream exhibition catalogs and late 20th-century Kirchner

scholarship is written with the assumption that the women populating Kirchner's

Strassenbilder are undoubtedly streetwalkers, a subject meant to represent moral decay.

Some recent scholars have suggested more complicated readings, including Charles

Haxthausen and Sherwin Simmons.[245] Deborah Wye uses a frequently repeated argument

to justify this claim: that Kirchner, in naming his own paintings, often used the German

term "*kocotten*" or "prostitute."[246] Yet, ambiguity surrounded the practice of prostitution

in Berlin; because of this, certain fashion codes were meant to signal the prostitute's

identity, such as the flamboyantly feathered hat.[247] Haxthausen-notes that Kirchner

"seems specifically interested in the disguises employed by streetwalkers."[248] Kirchner

shows his clear awareness of this code in his 1914 print, *Bar Dance*.[249] In the drypoint

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245. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 78-86, and Simmons,117-48.

246. Wye, 74.

247. Deutsche, 71.

248. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 67-8, 81.

image, amidst three dressed men and café tables covered with bar glasses, a woman with

drawn features is shown naked, wearing only a hat with a prominently extending feather.

Haxthausen and Simmons point out that the problem with such informal codes was the

borrowing of fashion trends among social groups, rendering, as Haxthausen explains, the

secure identification of a prostitute a dicey enterprise.[250]

Georg Simmel's 1907 examination of urban issues such as contemporary

prostitution takes a sympathetic viewpoint towards women pushed into exploitative

situations.[251] Simmel's writings work on the assumption that prostitution is inarguably

bad for women and society. While this assumption would find mainstream acceptance

today, it is not clear that Kirchner felt the same way. Further, ambiguity surrounds even

the women who were Kirchner's friends and models, such as Erna and Gerda Schilling,

one (and maybe both) of whom worked as nightclub dancer.[252] Erna and Gerda acted as

models for Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*, which emphasizes an aspect of the performance.[253]

Due to the particularities of the two women in *Berlin Street Scene* (fig. 3)*, Kort suggests

that they are a type of portrait of the Schilling sisters. Kort argues the women play a

"double role" as the representations of their own type—real working class women, as

well as prostitutes.[254]

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250. Simmons, 117, 132, and Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 79.

251. Simmel, 121-26.

252. Kort, 20.

253. Ibid.

254. Kort, 24.

Haxthausen argues that among some of Kirchner's (male) contemporaries, prostitution on the streets of Berlin was also viewed as part of natural human sexuality; he quotes Max Beckman's 1909 reaction to viewing prostitutes and clients on Friedrichstrasse, "…this urban manifestation of sexual magnetism, 'particularly on the street, always fills me with admiration for the immense splendor of nature.' "[255] To consider only certain male artists' perception of the erotic freedom of street prostitution ignores the perception and experiences of contemporary women. Rosalyn Deutsch's summoning of Simmel's observation of the power imbalance due to monetary exchange[256] is an apt reminder that the "sexual magnetism" perceived by the male artist is, of course, at least partly a function of professional performance by the woman. Indeed, we might say that Kirchner and Beckman, like other interested men are falling for the street performance. Yet, just as an audience member of a contemporaneous cabaret, Kirchner would know the streetwalkers are performing, and participates in the mutual complicity of that performance.

Nonetheless, it is the "conception of the erotic" that Haxthausen posits is critical to Kirchner's street scenes.[257] Is it conceivable that Kirchner and his friends from Brücke's libertine *freicorpcultur* could conflate the sexual freedom of the nudist colony and art studio with the seeming autonomy of the streetwalker? The issue of how much actual liberty female artist models exercised within the male-dominated social milieu, as well as Simmel's progressive concern in 1907 for the plight of female sex-workers, are

255. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 84.

256. Deutsche, 72.

257. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 84.

valid issues, though not apparently concerns for Kirchner at the time.[258] Haxthausen

identifies the women in the *Strassenbilder* as streetwalkers, but suggests that Kirchner

"would have seen them as allies in his campaign for the liberation of instinct."[259]

Haxthausen contends that Kirchner was communicating in the *Strassenbilder* paintings,

through formal means, the sexualization and sensuality of the street.[260] Likewise,

sociologist Christian Borch suggests consideration of "the socially integrating role of

urban sexuality," proposing that Canetti's theory regarding potentially positive social

forms from the "corporal dynamics" of crowds may correlate to everyday behavior.[261]

    As a numeric plurality, the "crowd" in the *Strassenbilder* comprises different

groups; in many, one could consider the entirety of figures depicted bustling along the

street, such as *Five Women on the Street* (fig. 2); *Berlin Street Scene* (fig. 3); *Street,

Berlin* (fig. 4); and *Women on the Street* (fig. 8). Another way to view the crowd is as a

separate entity to a pair of women, such as in the row of mostly men in *Street Scene

(Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)* (fig. 5) or the splintered crowd of mostly men in *Potsdamer

Platz* (fig. 7). To consider Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* from Christian Borch's perspective

of a liberated public dynamic, two assumptions are necessary for the scenes in which

discrete groups appear to be depicted. The first assumption is that Kirchner's

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258. Simmel, 121-126. Simmel objects to prostitution in moral, philosophic and economic terms: "Kant stated as a moral law that man is never to be used as a mere means, but is always to be perceived and treated as an end in himself. Prostitution represents behavior that is the exact opposite of this, and indeed, for both parties involved….[for women] We perceive here the most total and painful imbalance between performance and recompense…." (122), and concludes "…prostitution…leads to a terrible suppression of personal dignity" (126).

259. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 85.

260. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 86.

261. Borch, 287.

Strassenbilder may also represent more than prostitutes, and could signify individuals, male or female, who have freedom of movement and personal autonomy. The second assumption is that the women, not themselves a crowd, represent microcosms of a larger group, or of a larger community, with some similar or unifying interest.

Following Canetti's theory of a liberating potential in crowds, Borch suggests that joy and bodily aspects of crowd behavior have been neglected in classical crowd theory, arguing that such omissions miss that "crowd behavior may in fact arouse such irrational pleasures that cannot be reinterpreted in rational categories.[262] Instead of fearing the specter of sexuality in the public sphere, Borch argues that Walt Whitman's poetry, along the lines of Canetti, conceptualizes crowds as "socially important entities because they give vent to bodily impulses and sexual desires; because they initiate affective, physical contact in public space."[263] In direct contradiction to nineteenth-century crowd theory, Canetti wrote, "In the crowd the individual feels that he is transcending the limits of his own person. He has a sense of relief, for the distances are removed which used to throw him back on himself and shut him in. With the lifting of these burdens of distance he feels free; his freedom is the crossing of these boundaries."[264] Where Le Bon viewed the crowd as likewise removing individuality, Canetti found a transcendent relief that could be expansive for the individual, rather than limiting.

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262. Borch, 276.

263. Borch, 280.

264. Canetti, 20.

<u>The Face: Masquerade and Expression</u>

Ingrid Pfeiffer notes Ensor appropriated masks from the crowd in Goya's 1812-19

Funeral of a Sardine.[265] She includes an insightful quote from Goya regarding the world

as mummers' parade: "Face–dress–voice–everything is pretense" that resonates with the

Belgian artist's work.[266] Both Ensor and Kirchner, in their deliberate focus on pretense—

in costume, make-up and physiognomy—inherit an echo from Baudelaire's approach

towards appearances; in his musings on women's adornments and the merits of

cosmetics, Baudelaire reveals both keen awareness and pleasure in artifice.[267]

If figurative expression is defined as revelation made evident through gesture,

color, emphatic line, and facial features—what is shown in *Christ's Entry* is either

inauthentic or subterfuge. For Ensor, what is depicted is a display—dramatic, sometimes

declamatory, comic, frightening, or thrilling, sensational, perhaps histrionic and stagy.

Canetti notes that the mask itself, versus the motile face behind it, is rigid—it reveals

nothing, really: "The *mask* is distinguished from all other end-states of transformation by

its rigidity. In place of the varying and continuous movement of the face it presents the

exact opposite: a perfect fixity and sameness. Man's perpetual readiness for

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265. Pfeiffer and Hollein, 35.

266. Ibid.

267. Baudelaire, 30-34. "Fashion should thus be considered as a symptom of the taste for the ideal which floats on the surface of all the crude, terrestrial and loathsome bric-à-brac that the natural life accumulates in the human brain: as a sublime deformation of Nature, or rather a permanent and repeated attempt at her reformation….Woman is quite within her rights, indeed she is even accomplishing a kind of duty, when she devotes herself to appearing magical and supernatural….It matters little that the artifice and trickery are known to all, as long as their success is assured and their effect always irresistible,"33.

transformation is clearly expressed in the mobility of the face."[268] Thus, the inability to distinguish between face and mask in the figures in *Christ's Entry* is an especial challenge. For Kirchner, expression is contradictory--theatrical, but concealing. Indeed, Miesel notes that "Expressionism," intended to display the non-literal, spiritual, or inner self, is a "troublesome" term that was rejected by most Expressionist artists.[269] When one considers the seemingly masked faces on Kirchner's street, either those of the painted streetwalkers, or the unidentified men, Canetti's perspective is again provocative: "The wearer knows perfectly well who he really is; but his task is to *act* the mask."[270] For both Ensor and Kirchner, the ostensible content hides rather than truly expresses; it is their formal practice that reveals.

Certainly, there is physical expression in addition to intangible expression in Ensor's *Christ's Entry* and Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*. Despite the many masks and faces staring blankly, individual faces in *Christ's Entry* do respond and react. The most frequent expression beyond ennui or insincere cheer in the foreground group appears to be the startled sideways look. The bourgeois figure kissing the red-capped "Marianne" in the lower left has his multi-colored irises swinging upward in seeming shock.[271] The gray-haired, ruddy face second from the bottom right edge displays a distinctively angry grimace, with dark eyes sharply looking left under his furrowed brow. The object of his glower contains the most naturalistic features of the painting, resting in a placid contented

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268. Canetti, 374.

269. Miesel, 4.

270. Canetti, 377.

271. McGough, 154. Identifies the woman as Marianne, French republican symbol of liberty.

gaze (fig. 30). We know however, not to accept these reactions in *Christ's Entry* as straightforward revelation. Ensor, too early to be labeled a bona-fide expressionist, then seems to have license not to be literal. Why then, are Kirchner's figures in his *Strassenbilder* held to a literal standard?

How much can be interpreted about the *Strassenbilder* from the faces of the figures? Are the women and men in the *Strassenbilder* to be construed as images of alienation in comparison to Kirchner's more bucolic Brücke bathers or urban stage performers? In the facial expressions of contemporaneous bather images, such as *Two Bathers on the Beach* (1913) (fig. 45) and *Three Bathers in the Waves* (1914) (fig. 46), there is not always a great difference between the bathers and the street scene figures. More often there is difference in countenance between the circus performers and dancers, such as *Hamburg Dancers* (1910) (fig. 47) and the streetwalkers. Here, one can argue the smiles on the stage performers are due to the requirements of their performance; they reveal no more actual emotion on stage than would the professional demeanor "performed" by a streetwalker.

Wye notes the "blank, mask-like" faces, "aloof as fashion models," in the Berlin Street Scenes, connecting the mask to Simmel's concept of the "blasé" urbanite who must wear a disinterested expression in public to avoid the vulnerability of revealing emotion.[272] Is the look of alienation in the *Strassenbilder*, like the blasé affectation, mere performance? In characterizing Kirchner's figures as ones who "epitomize the anonymity, loneliness and disquietude of the urban street, as well as its artificial veneer,"

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272. Wye, 18, 75.

Wye emphasizes the threatening nature of anonymity and artifice.[273] Noting a mood

change between Kirchner's portrait-like pastel and its related painting, *Two Women on

the Street* (1914) (fig. 6), Wye concluded that the women "become ugly and threatening

in their anonymity."[274] Anonymity is not equally perceived, however. Baudelaire

described the stroller's blasé attitude in 1859, writing, "The distinguishing characteristic

of the dandy's beauty consists above all in an air of coldness which comes from an

unshakeable determination not to be moved…"[275] Compared to the freedom performed

by the *flâneur*, or the alienated sense of self experienced by Simmel's metropolitan type,

the anonymity of the female streetwalker is perceived to pose a threat to others. A

slippery instability of identity is precisely the effect of this mask. Alienated or liberated,

threatening or threatened, Kirchner's faces—of both his men and women—provide

exactly the type of cover an ambiguous identity needs for unencumbered movement.

<u>Masking, Antithesis, and Formal Contrasts</u>

Timothy Hyman's analysis of *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* from a

Bakhtinian perspective provides some interesting insight to Ensor's contradictions in his

painting. Hyman points out that the bending clown figure on the green platform to the

right features a smiling face in the star on his bottom, noting that, "as Bakhtin explains, in

carnival symbolism the rump is 'the back of the face', the face 'turned inside out' " (fig.

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273. Wye, 74.

274. Wye, 70.

275. Baudelaire, 29.

48).[276] Ensor's doubling and juxtapositions are repeated in the same bending clown

figure, as his dark red profile with blank black eyes fits, puzzle-like, into another pale

visage. The red profile functions as negative space; it defines the chin, mouth and nose of

the pink mask peeking out of the rear of the adjacent chinoiserie-garbed figure to the left.

The simultaneous occupation of visual space by two faces evokes the play of figure-

ground relationships that Cezanne and Kandinsky use to usher in modernist abstraction

only a few years later. Yet, Ensor uses this visual trick throughout *Christ's Entry* with

variations that suggest further meaning. The definition of faces and figural forms with the

seeming neat edge of an adjacent form defies the conventional rules of spatial

overlapping that creates volumetric distance.

Some of the faces in Ensor's *Christ's Entry* appear to be in flat relief, with

hollowed grooves, interstices of canvas or painting ground, outlining them. This effect is

surprising up close—it takes away some of the sense of a mass of faces without air, and

simultaneously reinforces it, as if they were flat books or cards laid out. The lack of

natural overlap of only certain figures, as would occur in a more realistic crowd, is

reinforced by the schematic order of the faces in rows, and even more so by their

physically grooved outlines. Some faces look as if they had been carved out of the paint.

The "jewel-like" effect in small reproductions of the painting produces a decorative

impact in nicely framed reproductions in books; yet, in person, the rawness of the

painting is strong. The energy of the scraffito, the tactile presence of the crusty built-up

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276. Hyman, 78.

paint, even in parts its luscious thickness and the slight glisten of oil paint contrast with the less covered parts, raw canvas and dull or acrid pigment juxtapositions.

Like abstract artists in future generations, Ensor appears to be playing with the viewer's perception of the visibly real by reversing illusions of depth, deploying color contrasts to confuse the location of forms in space. In other instances, Ensor rigidly follows rules of overlapping to suggest a depth of individuals in a crowd, yet undermines the illusion though facture. In a row of foreground figures in profile to the right of the band-leader, Ensor has sandwiched a dark blue profile brow and nose between a well-articulated powdered mask and an aged ruddy prominent nose such that the significant contrast between the deep blue and the adjacent lighter, pinker colors nearly cause the blue man to recede out of recognition. Likewise, the fourth face in the row seems to nearly disappear, as the delineation of his mask edge/hairline coincides too perfectly with the round outline of the fifth figure's bald head, creating a momentary illusion that the fourth face is translucent. More tricks like these abound. The blue hat of the second row jester simultaneously acts as the blue torso of the red-haired black devil behind him; the top curve of the hat/torso merges slightly with the chin of the black demon. In this case, the edge is not defined, but obscured.

The question is, why? Certainly these juxtapositions emphasize several features associated with crowds—they visually underscore physical crowding, and commensurate with Simmel's theories, they suggest a loss of recognizable individuality and the dissolution of self. Ensor's technique is more sophisticated than simply pressing too many forms into a space to communicate "crowd." As mentioned earlier, many scholars argue that Ensor's *Christ's Entry* was a competitive answer to Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon*

on the Island of La Grande Jatte. Ensor claimed to eschew the systems-based divisionist solution in the French artist's work.[277] Yet, Ensor, in attempting to create a bold-facedly anti-academic masterpiece, has harnessed optical illusion in a way that is also systematic in its regular application of his own anti-system. For example, Marchesano's proposal that Dutch landscape influenced the composition for *Christ's Entry*, suggests that Ensor, even in trying to be un-academic and unorthodox, couldn't resist repeating certain Dutch formulas for depicting space.[278] The conventional nature of Ensor's art-historical knowledge is also revealed in his painting by his obvious inversions of aesthetic norms, and thus locates him then within the larger system he is trying to defy. As Hyman points out, Michael Camille challenged Bakhtin's carnival theory by arguing Carnival's implication of itself in society: " 'We have to face up to carnival's complicity with the official order, played out in the supposed subversion of it.' "[279]

Antithesis extends to the ostensible subject of *Christ's Entry*. Among the many ironies of Christ entering modern-day Brussels in 1889 is the timing of the entrance. The day of arrival, Mardi Gras—the day of excess and sin prior to Ash Wednesday—is the wrong end of Lent. To depict Christ's prophesied second coming in Brussels, the choice of Easter, feast day of the resurrection, would have more symbolic religious logic. Yet, like so much in the painting, much is not simply distorted from the expected, but is often entirely turned around.

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277. Berman, 46-48.

278. Marchesano, in discussion with author, June 1, 2011

279. Hyman, 79.

Costume, Artistic Identity, and Caricature

Herwig Todts opens his essay on "The grotesque in Ensor's Oeuvre" with a

contemporary quote from 1890 in the Liège, Belgian daily newspaper, *La Meuse*: " 'Mr.

Ensor proceeds in a very suggestive manner, to the extent even that he masks the

characters in his works, so that behind the mask we can lend them any expression we

wish. His manner of proceeding has at least the merit that it is novel, and that it allows

the painter to use all the dazzling riches of the palette."[280] This contemporary comment in

a local daily suggests a certain comfort with ambiguity and the receptive prerogative of

artistic audiences. While the *Meuse* remark may be somewhat dismissive, perhaps even

insinuating an allegation of the decorative, the critic's observation also brings out the

self-conscious deliberation of the artist. Not only did Ensor exhaustively and richly

deploy the mask motif in his oeuvre, he appears to enjoy the masking and charade of his

own person. Ensor apparently relished the impact of his work and of his reputation as an

eccentric, reclusive loner. Diane Lesko writes that Ensor cultivated a "myth of insularity

and indifference, as when he observed, 'I have happily confined myself to the land of

mockery where everything is brilliant but violent masquerade.' "[281]

Diane Lesko notes that Ensor, notorious for hinting rather than explaining, wrote

statements about his work that were "calculated to confuse."[282] Writing to Octave Maus

regarding an 1898 article in *La Plume*, Ensor claims, " 'I have absolutely no idea why

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280. Herwig Todts,"The Grotesque in Ensor's Oeuvre," in *Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, (New York and Minneapolis: The Drawing Center and University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 203. The quoted author named as "R.L."

281. Lesko, 4.

282. Lesko, 4.

my work seems bizarre," and asks Maus to write in reference to his early works (such as the [1882] *Scandalized Masks*) that, " 'at that time Ensor's works were devoid of sarcasm.' "[283]

Ensor's attempts to obfuscate extend to the dating and changing surfaces of his artworks. Seemingly enjoying his personal contradictions, Ensor embraced the moniker "le peintre des masques" by appending it to some of his signatures, and also by literally masking some of his own artwork.[284] Todts credits Marcel de Maeyer with the discovery that over twenty of Ensor's works from the 1880s were altered or over-painted by the artist in 1888-90; works such as *Skeleton Looking at Chinoiseries* (1883), *Self-Portrait with a Flowered Hat* (1883), and *The (Old) Haunted Dresser* (1885) were embellished with masks, skulls and "weird attributes."[285] Ensor's works prior to 1900 display masks less than twenty percent of the time compared to fifty percent after 1900.[286] The timing of the 1888-90 alterations coincides with the production of *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, thus emphasizing the importance of masquerade as a critical creative development to Ensor at this moment.

Masking and performance imbue the self-identities of both Ensor and Kirchner. Among the masses in *Christ's Entry*, Diane Lesko has identified a profile self-portrait of

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283. Todts, 206.

284. Todts, 203, 206.

285. Todts, 206.

286. Todts, 203.

Ensor, "dressed as a clown with a scarlet dunce cap, directly above the kissing couple."[287] Kirchner's presence as one of the men on the street may be implied throughout the series if one accepts his identification in *Berlin Street Scene* (fig. 2). Kort suggests the man with the cigarette is a self-portrait of Kirchner, based on the frequency of a cigarette in his self-portraits, and the prominent placement of the only visible hand above the artist's signature.[288] Both artists stood somewhat outside the mainstream, critical of the artificiality of bourgeois society around them, but their artwork reveals a sense that they recognized their own implication and necessary participation in the same society they criticized.

Does Kirchner also identify with the crowd of top-hatted males that queue up behind the paired women in the 1914 *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)* (fig. 5) and the men rhythmically dispersing in different directions in the 1914 *Potzdamer Platz* (fig. 7)? Is he customer, companion, or disinterested pedestrian in the 1913 *Berlin Street Scene* (fig. 3) and 1913 *Street, Berlin* (fig. 4)? Can he identify with the confident, even challenging strut of the teal clad woman in *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin)* (fig. 5), or even simultaneously with the assured step of the central woman in green as well as the gray-coated male companion in the 1915 *Women on the Street* (fig. 8)?

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287. Lesko, 144.

288. Kort, 31-32.

<u>The Individual, Commodity, and Stereotype</u>

An evolving view of Kirchner's subject reflects the concomitant evolving view of himself. In trying to carve out a unique individuality for himself as an artist in contrast to his competitors, Kirchner apparently came to identify with the commodification of individuality that Simmel identifies as the essential condition of prostitution.[289] The identification of the working artist with the selling of oneself is not new, and in the 1916 letter to Schiefler, his comparison to himself as a prostitute "wiped away, gone the next time," conjures both the need to feign a pleasing identity for a potential customer, as well as the transitory nature of commercial relationships.[290] While both features involve the need to mask one's real identity, the mask has the added potential of allowing for fluid personal identification.

Like Kirchner's feathered women, feather iconography as a costume or sign features in Ensor's work as well, with different, but related valences. In Ensor's 1883 *Self-Portrait in a Flowered Hat* (fig. 49), the floral felt hat and pink-red feather were apparently added to the 1883 portrait in 1887 or 1888, during the time that Ensor painted *Christ's Entry,* suffered the death of his father, and experienced critical rejection by his peers.[291] Pointing out the sixteenth-century Germanic precedence of portraying Death as a skeleton with a feathered hat, Diane Lesko connects the floral and feathered hat to symbolic references of sexual maturity and death in the work of Rembrandt, Antoine

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289. Simmel, 121-22.

290. Simmons, 140.

291. Lesko, 80-82.

Wiertz, and Felicien Rops.[292] In Kirchner's paintings, the feathered hat as a signifier of

the prostitute can also be read with a connection to death at the turn of the century

because of the risk of venereal disease, and the concomitant fin-de-siècle association

of death, sexuality, and women.

The feather is a flexible sign, however, as Simmons makes clear in the

interchange of high fashion between stylish women and streetwalkers.[293] Diane Lesko

argues that the feathers in Ensor's self-portrait, "speak positively for his sexuality and

availability" despite its other implications.[294] Can the embellished headdress be read in

multiple ways for Kirchner's women as well? A prominent red feather also appears in

Ensor's *Christ's Entry*: above the small red sign for *Les XX*; the feather decorates the

turban headdress of a figure vomiting on the crowd; the feather's form, sprouting

vigorously from his head, echoes the spewing below (fig. 50). Considering Ensor's

resentment of Les XX at this time and his evident pleasure in the play of signs, the figure

seems to be yet another costumed stand-in for the artist.

Social critique is frequently enacted through stereotype in Ensor's masks.

Berman points out Ensor's use of the techniques of popular caricatural short hand in

physiognomic distortion in his masks, citing that, "the bloated visage of the Catholic

bishop, and the elongated noses and pointed chins of the priest and generals were the

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292. Lesko, 79-80. The hat flowers in Rembrandt's Flora and Antoine Wiertz's *Rosebud*; Grandville's *Death and the Woodcutter*; and Felicien Rops's *Diaboli virtus in lumbis*.

293. Simmons, 128-131.

294. Lesko, 82.

stock and trade of both caricaturists and the artists who made the marionettes for Brussels's famous satirical Toone Theater."[295]

Berman notes that the anti-Semitic hooked nose and distorted features of the prominently bandaged foreground profile on the lower right of *Christ's Entry* suggest Ensor's reliance on precedents such as Hieronymous Bosch's *Christ Carrying the Cross* (1510-16) in "encoding some of the masks as 'Jews'…exploit[ing] these myths and stereotypes to portray Belgium's ruling class as rapacious, alien, and dangerous to the nation."[296] While the new Socialist parties were concerned with the plight of the working class, anti-capitalist groups frequently resorted to anti-Semitism.[297] Ensor's use of anti-Semitic stereotyping in his masks aligned with the virulent writings of the Socialist politician and Les XX leader, Edmond Picard; who, along with Maus wrote articles in 1888 and 1889 in *L'Art Moderne* arguing that Jesus was Aryan.[298] McGough suggests that Ensor may have been trying to mock Maus and others who claimed an Aryan Jesus; however, Ensor's own anti-Semitic remarks indicate he was not opposed to anti-Semitism.[299] It appears Ensor was rather using the stereotyped visages to mock the positivist pseudo-science behind the views of Picard and Maus.

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295. Berman, 60.

296. Berman, 59, 62.

297. Berman, 59.

298. Berman, 59, and McGough, 94.

299. McGough, 94. Ensor published slurs at least twice, including writing in 1896 that the paintings of Arthur and Alfred Stevens "appealed to 'purulent Semites' and 'hook-nosed Semites,' and other lazy snobbish banking types."

Masking, Dissimulation, and Power

Canetti points out potential benefits of the crowd—the liberating ability to lose

oneself, the freedom of anonymity, the possibility for community.[300] Conversely, Canetti

also acknowledges the same negative potential of crowds that was a primary concern for

Le Bon and Simmel—the loss of individuality and danger of disconnection with the self,

the very threat to the individual that is often considered the major theme of the

Strassenbilder. The anonymity of the crowd that was exploited by Baudelaire's *flâneur*,

the ability to hide in plain sight, shares with masquerade a freedom of movement through

concealment. Canetti identifies this anonymity, a source of freedom and pleasure, as also

a threatening source of abuse of power: "duplicity is the extreme form of

dissimulation."[301]

This threat may be embodied in the repetitious doublings, homogenous clusters

and serial strings of male figures in dark, uniform attire that lurk in the backgrounds of

the *Strassenbilder*. Typically identified as the soul-less modern man whose identity is lost

in the crowd, there is an additional, more menacing possibility. Haxthausen and Schlör

describe the practices of the Morals Police (*Sittenpolizei*), mobilized to combat the rapid

increase of prostitution in Berlin, who patrolled the city in pairs.[302] The seeming male

pairs in the left rear of *Street, Berlin* (fig. 4), and the furtive-looking cluster of men in

profile in the right middle-ground have a sinister appearance that may convey

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300. Canetti, 29.

301. Canetti, 371.

302. Haxthausen, "A New Beauty," 79 and Schlör, 212.

surveillance. While prostitutes who copy the fashions of bourgeois women are carrying out imitation, the Morals Police practice what Canetti identifies as the darker transformation from imitation to dissimulation, "the hiding of a hostile figure within a friendly one."[303]

Canetti writes that, "No one knows what may or may not burst forth from behind the mask. The tension created by the contrast between its appearance and the secret it hides can become extreme. This is the real reason for the terror the mask inspires."[304] The simultaneous occupation of space by the jester's blue hat and the smiling red-haired demon in *Christ's Entry* illustrates this tension. Similarly, the multiplied simultaneity of figures in space that occurs in the *Strassenbilder* may evoke an analogous tension.

As T.J. Clark points out, the terrifying legacy from the French Revolution is the inability to know who the People are, because the people keep changing.[305] Such instability is more threatening to people in power, though Canetti points out the advantage that the powerful, such as the despot, always exercise over the less powerful, by being better at dissimulation and treachery.[306] The use of masking by Ensor and Kirchner plays with deep human fears, indeed, long-held fears that Canetti points out extend to an "age of myth."[307] The human desire and need to trust is related to the value of a recurring theme in both artists' works—authenticity. The reason that nature, the

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303. Canetti, 370-71.

304. Canetti, 376.

305. T. J. Clark, "Painting in the Year Two," Representations, No. 47 (Summer 1994, 13-63).

306. Canetti, 377-79.

307. Canetti, 374.

rural, and *"volk"* were so attractive and comforting to the fin-de-siécle German psyche is the belief that it was "real," in opposition to a mythic "other." The Other within *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* and the *Strassenbilder* is signified in the city, and at the same time presents the internal contradiction of representing the artists as well.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* and Kirchner's *Strassenbilder*
series, it is the street that emerges as the major modern protagonist (and antagonist). A
theme Baudelaire presciently mined years before, the public street offers to both artists
the critical space in which to present the contradictory nature of modern human behavior.
Genres that include the privacy of a domestic setting, or the romance of natural
environments lack the same degree of impetus to perform that the street accentuates. The
street is theater, shopping, darkness and anonymity, and bright lights and exposure. The
street, paved for traffic, recently renovated in the nineteenth century, and newly lit for
nightlife, is the equivalent of civilization, and thus the very physical condition of
modernity. The street is political, powerful and vulnerable; it is public. It is this very
public nature of the street that necessitates the mask. Simmel recognized this, which is
why he wrestled with its social dangers. Nietzsche recognized this, which is why his
Zarathustra sought meaning outside civilization. Le Bon and Canetti recognized this, and
their biases about who composed "the public" directed their reactions—xenophobic and
alarmist, or cautiously guarded and optimistic, respectively.

The street provided a space to wrestle with the ambivalence and contradictions of
the contemporary moment, and the hypocrisy of bourgeois propriety. While the

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expressionist nature of their works clearly relates the two artists formally, it is their contradictory relationship with the self and the masses that is as meaningful as a shared "modern" trait. Both artists are tied intrinsically to changing social and economic circumstances, and grapple with the ambiguities of a commodity society that both repulses and intrigues them. Both artists retain seeds of earlier utopian concerns from Les XX and the Brücke years. After their naïve and ambitious beginnings, the balance between utopian/Dionysian and disillusionment transforms in *Christ's Entry* and the *Strassenbilder* into an artistic antithesis.

Each artist identified with the outsider, and presented themselves at times as critics of the institutional, the approved bourgeois high culture, desiring to skewer the high-positioned and their hypocrisy; yet, at the same time they moved among this same culture. Is it not unlike Baudelaire's original *flâneur*, who wanted to be both a part of, but yet outside the stimulating throng? The motif of the carnival, with its duality of festivity and danger, Ensor's masked throng; or Kirchner's exaggerated and made-up pedestrians, their inexorable inscrutability, and the mercurial potential of the crowd—these intrinsically ambiguous motifs surely reflect much of the cultural tumult of the changing times, but they are also deliciously medieval.

For both artists, everyone is playing a role. Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* present a number of challenges to comfortable, even smug, bourgeois identification with authenticity. The ambiguity of the figures in the *Strassenbilder* can potentially threaten a viewer, inspiring distrust of their artifice. At the same time, the widespread nature of prostitution meant that a certain part of the artistic audience might recognize themselves in portions of Kirchner's paintings—the nighttime wanderer, or potential customer. The

real threat evinced from *Christ's Entry* is that the intended audience for "high art"—the elite class, the bourgeoisie—can't be sure who the people in the masks are. The shifting identities and destabilizations of reality undercut the comfort of the real, and in fact make plain that the "real" was never really fixed.

That Ensor and Kirchner seem to recognize at some level their complicity and participation in the present social conditions by displaying undisguised pleasure—even delight—in the "street" is part of the ineluctable allure of their pointed criticism. While Ensor tried to some degree to isolate himself as an exceptional figure apart from the fray, his frequent revealing self-portraiture indicates he knew this was a fantasy. In all its messy, overstated zeal, the satire wielded by these two artists is as precarious as it is trenchant—biting for certain, but biting in many directions. These complicated works, Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* and Kirchner's *Strassenbilder* series, represent moments of modernity that are neither fully relished nor fully condemned— indeed their challenge to the viewer may be less the direct address and more that they withhold any clarifying judgment of their own time.

APPENDIX A

ILLUSTRATIONS

The figures below are included in the hard copy of this thesis, but are not available in electronic or UMI versions because of copyright and reproduction permission expenses.

Figure 1. James Ensor (Belgian, 1860–1949), *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889,* 1888, Oil on canvas, 252.5 x 430.5 cm, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* [Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002], 1).

Figure 2. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (German, 1880–1938), *Five Women on the Street (Fünf Frauen auf der Strasse)*, 1913, oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm, Cologne, Germany, Museum Ludwig (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 3).

Figure 3. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Berlin Street Scene* (*Berliner Strassenszene*), 1913, oil on canvas, 121 x 95 cm, New York, Neue Galerie New York and Private Collection (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 4).

Figure 4. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Street, Berlin (Strasse, Berlin)*, 1913, oil on canvas, 120.6 x 91.1 cm, New York, Museum of Modern Art (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 115)

Figure 5. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Street Scene (Friedrichstrasse in Berlin) (Strassenszene [Friedrichstrasse in Berlin]),* 1914, oil on canvas, 125 x 91 cm, Stuttgart, Germany, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 130).

Figure 6. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Two Women on the Street (Zwei Frauen auf der Strasse)*, 1914, oil on canvas, 120.5 x 91 cm, Düsseldorf, Germany, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 6).

Figure 7. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Potsdamer Platz*, 1914, oil on canvas, 200 x 150 cm, Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 133).

Figure 8. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Women on the Street (Frauen auf der Strasse)*, 1915, oil on canvas, 126 x 90 cm, Wuppertal, Germany, Von der Heydt-Museum (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 7).

Figure 9. James Ensor, *Hop Frog's Revenge*, 1885, lithograph, 37.7 x 26.5 cm, Ghent, Museum voor Schone Kunsten (Robert Hoozee, "Drawings and Etchings," in *Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor*, ed. Catherine de Zegher, 15-39. [New York and Minneapolis: The Drawing Center and University of Minnesota Press, 2001], 32).

Figure 10. James Ensor, *Hop Frog's Revenge*, 1898, etching on Japan paper, heightened with watercolor, 35 x 24.2 cm, Ostend, Private Collection Ostend, courtesy Galerie Seghers (Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds. *James Ensor.* Texts by Sabine Brown-Taevernier, Susan M. Canning, Katharina Dohm, et al [Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005], 129).

As with Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*, Ensor continued to rework duplicates of this theme over a decade later in different media.*

Figure 11. James Ensor, *The Lively and the Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, 1885, black and brown crayon with pasted-on paper, mounted on canvas, 206 x 150.3 cm, Ghent, Museum of Fine Arts (Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* [Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002], 76).

Figure 12. James Ensor, *The Entry of Christ into Brussels*, 1898, etching, heightened with watercolor, 24.8 x 35.5 cm, Ostend, Museum voor Schone-Kunsten (Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds. *James Ensor.* Texts by Sabine Brown-Taevernier, Susan M. Canning, Katharina Dohm, et al [Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005], 187).

Figure 13. Erich Heckel, *Landscape in Dresden (Landschaft bei Dresden)*, 1910, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 78.5 cm, Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Reinhold Heller, ed. *Brücke: The Birth of Expressionism in Dresden and Berlin, 1905-1913*, [New York: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009], 132).

Figure 14. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Tightrope Walker (Drahtseiltanz)*, 1908-10, oil on canvas, 120 x 149 cm, New York, Neue Galerie New York (Reinhold Heller, ed. *Brücke: The Birth of Expressionism in Dresden and Berlin, 1905-1913*, [New York: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009], 137).

Figure 15. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Elisabeth Bank (Berlin) (Elizabeth-Ufer [Berlin])*, 1912, woodcut, 20.3 x 23.5 cm, Oregon, The Helen Thurston Ayer Fund, Portland Art Museum (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 49).

Figure 16. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Tramway Arch (Stadtbahnbogen),* 1915, lithograph, 50.5 x 59 cm, New York, Collection of Catherine Woodard and Nelson Blitz, Jr. (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 49).

Figure 17. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Bridge over the Rhine at Cologne (Rheinbrücke in Köln),* 1914, oil on canvas. 120.5 x 91 cm, Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 135).

Figure 18. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Leipziger Strasse with Electric Tram*, 1913, oil on canvas, 71 x 81 cm, Essen, Folkwang Museum. (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 118).

Figure 19. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Bathers Throwing Reeds*, 1910, woodcut, 20.2 x 29.3 cm, New York, The Museum of Modern Art (The Museum of Modern Art <http://www.moma.org/german_expressionism/images/themes/nature/01.jpg>).

Figure 20. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait with Model,* 1910*,* oil on canvas*,* 150.4 x100 cm, Hamburg, Kunsthalle (*Kuntshalle)* (JStor

<http://library.artstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9Nzld
LS1WEDhzTnkrX3ktfVh%2FcSg%3D&userId=hjRCfTQ%3D&zoomparams=>).

Figure 21. Edvard Munch, *Salome*, 1903, Lithograph, 40.5 x 30.5 cm, (JStor
<http://library.artstor.org.proxyau.wrlc.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9Nzld
LS1WEDhzTnkrX3greV59di0%3D&userId=hjRCfTQ%3D&zoomparams=>).

Figure 22. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Striding into the Sea*, 1912, oil on canvas, 146.4 x
200 cm, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds.
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years [London: Royal Academy of
Arts, 2003], cat. 87).

Figure 23. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Two Nudes and Two Sculptures*, 1910-11, pencil,
36.3 x 27 cm, Berlin, Brücke Museum (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst
Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts,
2003], cat. 62).

Figure 24. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Panama Dancers*, 1910, oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm,
Raleigh, North Carolina, North Carolina Museum of Art (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M.
Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal
Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 61).

Figure 25. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier,* 1915, oil on canvas, 69.2 x
61 cm, Oberlin, Ohio, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College (Jill Lloyd and
Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years*
[London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 159).

Figure 26. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Artillerymen in the Shower,* 1915, oil on canvas, 140 x
153 cm, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M.
Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal
Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 157).

Figure 27. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *The Breast Fetishist,* 1915, lithograph, 42 x 32 cm,
Bern, Collection E.W.K. (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig
Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat.
143).

Figure 28. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Street, Dresden* (*Strasse, Dresden*), 1908/19, oil on canvas, 150.5 x 200.4 cm, New York, The Museum of Modern Art (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 46).

Figure 29. Edvard Munch, *Evening on Karl Johan Street,* 1892, oil on canvas, 84.5 x 121 cm, Norway, Bergen Art Museum (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 35).

Figure 30. James Ensor, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889,* 1888 (detail), oil on canvas, 252.5 x 430.5 cm, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* [Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002], 1)

Figure 31. James Ensor, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889,* 1888 (detail), oil on canvas, 252.5 x 430.5 cm, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* [Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002], 1)

Figure 32. James Ensor, *The Frightful Musicians*, 1891, oil on wood panel, 16 x 21 cm, Private Collection (Ulrike Becks-Malorny, *Ensor: Masks, Death, and the Sea* [Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2006], 85).

Figure 33. James Ensor, *The Grotesque Singers*, 1891, oil on panel, 16 x 21 cm, Private Collection (Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds. *James Ensor,* Texts by Sabine Brown-Taevernier, Susan M. Canning, Katharina Dohm, et al [Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005], 190).

Figure 34. James Ensor, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889,* 1888 (detail), oil on canvas, 252.5 x 430.5 cm, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* [Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002], 1)

Figure 35. James Ensor, *The Cathedral*, 1886, etching, 1st plate, 1st state, 33.4 x 23.5 cm, Ostend, Private Collection Ostend, courtesy Gallerie Seghers (Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds. *James Ensor,* Texts by Sabine Brown-Taevernier, Susan M. Canning, Katharina Dohm, et al [Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005], 122).

Figure 36. Meindert Hobbema, (Dutch, 1638–1709), *A Wooded Landscape*, 1663, oil on canvas, 94.7 x 130.5 cm, Washington, DC, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art (National Gallery of Art <http://www.nga.gov/fcgi-bin/timage_f?object=68&image=471&c=>).

Figure 37. Meindert Hobbema, *A View on a High Road*, 1665, oil on canvas, 93.1 x 127.8 cm, Washington, DC, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art (National Gallery of Art <http://www.nga.gov/fcgi-bin/timage_f?object=69&image=478&c=>).

Figure 38. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Girl Circus Rider*, 1912, oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, Pinakothek der Moderne (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 79).

Figure 39. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Trapeze Acrobats in Blue*, 1914, oil on canvas, 119 x 89 cm, Düsseldorf, Kunstammlung Nordhrein-Westfalen, Private Collection (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 141).

Figure 40. Ludwig Meidner, *Wögende Menge (Surging Crowd)*, 1913, etching, 27.1 x 21.2 cm, Darmstadt, Stadtische Kunstsammlungen (David Frisby, "Social Theory, the Metropolis, and Expressionism," in *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy*, by Timothy O. Benson, et al, 88-111 [Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1993], 91).

Figure 41. Ludwig Meidner, *Wannsee Bahnhof (Wannsee Train Station)*, 1913, black ink heightened with white, 46.4 x 59 cm, Los Angeles, LA County Museum of Art (David Frisby, "Social Theory, the Metropolis, and Expressionism," in *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy*, by Timothy O. Benson, et al, 88-111 [Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1993], 86).

Figure 42. Lyonel Feininger, *Das Tor (The Gate)*, 1912, etching, 41 x 32 cm, Los Angeles, LA County Museum of Art (David Frisby, "Social Theory, the Metropolis, and Expressionism," in *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy*, by Timothy O. Benson, et al, 88-111 [Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1993], 93).

Figure 43. Ludwig Meidner, *The City and l*, 1913, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm, Frankfurt, Ludwig Meidner Archiv, Judisches Museum der Stadt Frankfurt am Main (Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003], 149).

Figure 44. George Grosz, *Metropolis*, c.1917, oil on Cardboard, 68 x 47.6 cm, New York, The Museum of Modern Art (Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003], 156).

Figure 45. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Two Bathers on the Beach* (*Zwei Badende am Strand*), 1913, woodcut, 50 x 37 cm, Wuppertal, Germany, Von der Heydt-Museum (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 58).

Figure 46. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Three Bathers in the Waves* (*Drei Badende in den Wellen*), 1914, woodcut, 40.5 x 27.3 cm, Frankfurt am Main, Stadel Museum (Deborah Wye, *Kirchner and the Berlin Street Scene* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008], 59).

Figure 47. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Hamburg Dancers*, 1910, pen, brush and black ink, 44.8 x 35 cm, Berlin, Brücke-Museum (Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller, eds. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years* [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003], cat. 59).

Figure 48. James Ensor, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889,* 1888 (detail), oil on canvas, 252.5 x 430.5 cm, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum (Patricia Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* [Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002], 1)

Figure 49. James Ensor, *Self-Portrait in Flowered Hat*, 1883/1888, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 61.5 cm, Ostend, Museum vor Schone Kunsten (Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds. *James Ensor.* Texts by Sabine Brown-Taevernier, Susan M. Canning, Katharina Dohm, et al [Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005], 49).

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