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Max Pechstein: The Rise and Fall of Expressionism

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Cover image:

Max Pechstein in front of his painting *Nude with Umbrella and Fan* (1912/47) in his apartment in
Offenbacher Str. 8, in autumn or winter 1913/14. Photograph. Waldemar Titzenthaler, Berlin

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für Lux und Sophia

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Frontispiece:
Max Pechstein, 1910.
Photograph: Minya Diez-Dührkoop, private collection

Preface

Max Pechstein's life overlapped with the most dramatic decades of modern German history. He grew up in an age of empire and colonies, fought in the trenches of the First World War, participated in the revolutionary activities of 1918/19, and was part of the vibrant cultural scene during the allegedly 'roaring Twenties'. He experienced the totalitarian dictatorship of National Socialism, survived Allied air raids on Berlin during the Second World War, narrowly escaped execution by the Red Army in 1945, and, during the last ten years of his life, witnessed the division of Germany and the emergence of the Cold War. In short, Pechstein's life – like that of many others of his generation – was shaped by what Eric Hobsbawm appropriately called the 'Age of Extremes'.¹ What sets Pechstein apart from most of his contemporaries, however, is the fact that throughout this period he produced art: his was quite literally a colourful life. And yet this in itself is not sufficient justification for writing a biography of Pechstein. After all, there were tens of thousand of other visual artists in Germany who lived through the same period.² Why, for example, not study the life of Alexander Hubert Law von Volborth? Four years younger than Pechstein, Volborth was born into a family of German-Russian nobility in St Petersburg, and studied at art academies in Stuttgart, Düsseldorf and Berlin with some of Germany's leading artists at that time, like the Prussian court painter Anton von Werner, the historical painter Arthur Kampf, and the Secessionist Max Slevogt.³ As far as we know, Pechstein and Volborth never met: but in 1912 Volborth played Pechstein a practical joke when sending him a letter with a few caricaturist drawings held in a fake mod-

1 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London, 1994).

2 In 1936 the Nazi Reich Chamber of Visual Arts, in which all non-Jewish artists were organized, counted around 50,000 members, see Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill, 1993), 97.

3 Charlotte Fergg-Frowein (ed.), *Kürschners Graphiker-Handbuch. Deutschland – Österreich – Schweiz. Illustratoren, Gebrauchsgraphiker, Typographen* (Berlin, 1967), 311; Arthur Adams, *Living descendants of blood royal* (London, 1959), vol. 2, 789. Additional information on Volborth's life was helpfully provided by Dr Uwe Degreif, Museum Biberach.

ernist style, asking for guidance on getting these published. The fact that Pechstein failed to spot the joke greatly amused conservative art critics at the time.⁴ Of course, it is easy to claim that Pechstein eventually had the last laugh: today, his works are displayed in major museums around the globe and fetch up to seven figure sums at international auctions, whereas Volborth's oils change hands for a few hundred Euro and are on display only in one small local museum, in Biberach in southern Germany. Yet there was nothing inevitable about this outcome, and it would certainly be too simplistic to assume that this development was preordained by the respective 'quality' of their artistic output. As Klaus von Beyme rightly observed, artistic careers do not grow organically out of a lonely genius.⁵ By tracing how Pechstein became one of the most prominent artists of his generation, this book asks for the conditions of artistic success, and how and why these changed over time. It is thus a history of reception, and aims to contribute to a better understanding of the emergence of a canon of modern art.

Max Pechstein's place within the canon of modern art is largely based on his involvement in the artists' collective *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), and his contributions to the breakthrough of German Expressionism in the years prior to 1914. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of Expressionism within the wider history of modern German culture. Expressionism came to be described – by contemporaries of Pechstein as well as later art and cultural historians – as a quintessentially German form of artistic modernism. The defamation of Expressionism in the course of the National Socialist Degenerate Art campaign only helped cement this view: official condemnation by the Nazi regime meant that Expressionism could be presented as 'good' German art in the wake of the German catastrophe.⁶ Curating exhibitions with Expressionist art after 1945 thus became part of a larger project of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, of coming to terms with the Nazi past, and of cultural rehabilitation. Like in the period before 1933, some German art historians felt the urge to point out that by 1910/11 German Expressionists – and the *Brücke* artists in particular – 'had reached a level which secured them a premier position within European art, equal

4 See chapter 2.

5 Klaus von Beyme, *Das Zeitalter der Avantgarden. Kunst und Gesellschaft 1905–1955* (Munich, 2005), 235.

6 According to Sachrendt, the *Brücke* group became 'once more the cultural showpiece of democratic Germany', in Christian Sachrendt, *"Die Brücke" zwischen Staatskunst und Verfemung. Expressionistische Kunst als Politikum in der Weimarer Republik, im "Dritten Reich" und im Kalten Krieg* (Wiesbaden, 2005), 82.

to that of the French Fauves'.⁷ Even art historians who could not be suspected of indulging in cultural patriotism were making grand claims about the cultural significance of Expressionism: it was 'the first form of rebel art' according to Maurizio Calvesi; Donald E. Gordon, one of the first American scholars of Expressionism, called it 'a movement essential to an understanding of modern art'.⁸ And yet such claims need to be taken with a pinch of salt. They are usually to be found in exhibition catalogues, and serve to legitimize a particular exhibition project and the selection criteria that come with it. Art historians and curators are connoisseurs and taste-makers, and operate as gatekeepers: they decide which artistic objects should be presented to a wider public as particularly valuable, and they come up with the plot lines which help establish the cultural significance of the objects on display.

This book's subtitle – The Rise and Fall of German Expressionism – draws the reader's attention to the importance of such plot lines. It is a variation on a well-established art historical trope, of artistic genius and originality overcoming material obstacles and external opposition, and finally winning expert and public recognition. This narrative certainly works for Expressionism: inspired by a variety of aesthetic influences – Vincent van Gogh, Edvard Munch and French post-Impressionism, medieval German wood cuts, African and Pacific tribal art, to mention just a few – a number of young artists came up with a form of visual expression which flew in the face of officialdom in Wilhelmine Germany, and which was also rejected by the standard-bearers of artistic modernism at the time, the Berlin Secession in 1910.⁹ However, encouraged and supported by open-minded gallery owners and progressive art collectors, these young artists organized a series of exhibitions which slowly won them art critics' respect. With the end of monarchy in 1918, museum curators embraced Expressionism as a legitimate and valuable aesthetic manifestation of German culture, and began including Expressionist art works in public collections. But Expressionism fell from grace in the 1930s, when Hitler and other National Socialist tastemakers decried it as 'degenerate' and ordered such works to be purged from German museums. And by the early 1950s, Expression-

7 Martin Urban, 'Zur Geschichte der Brücke', in Museum Folkwang (ed.), *Brücke 1905–1913: eine Künstlergemeinschaft des Expressionismus* (Essen, 1958), 14.

8 Maurizio Calvesi, 'German Expressionism and Italian Art', in Stephanie Barron, Wolf-Dieter Dube (eds.), *German Expressionism: Art and Society* (London, 1997), 59; Donald E. Gordon, *E. L. Kirchner. A retrospective exhibition* (Boston, 1969), 9.

9 Stiftung Brandenburger Tor (ed.), *Liebertmanns Gegner: Die Neue Secession in Berlin und der Expressionismus* (Cologne, 2011). For a critical analysis, see Helen Boorman, 'Rethinking the Expressionist Era; Wilhelmine Cultural Debates and Prussian Elements in German Expressionism', in: *Oxford Art Journal* (1986) 9 (2), 3–15.

ism was rejected as 'bourgeois' and 'decadent' in Eastern Germany, and spurned by young artists in Western Germany who preferred abstract art: Expressionism was now relegated from the ranks of progressive contemporary art, and elevated into the confines of museums' holdings of classical modernity.

There are good reasons to elucidate the trajectory of Expressionism through a biography of Max Pechstein. Born into a provincial Saxon working-class family and brought up in poverty, Pechstein became one of the shooting-stars of the art world in the late Wilhelmine period. Hailed by many contemporaries as *the* leading member of the *Brücke* group, Pechstein played a central role in the German avant-garde during the first decades of the twentieth century. He was the best-selling member of *Brücke* and a decisive catalyst for the group's development. Through his involvement in the foundation of the New Secession, he also became an important player in the world of art politics. After the First World War, he became one of the founding members of the Workers' Council for Art and was actively involved in the November Group. He was the first Expressionist to join the ranks of the Prussian Art Academy and executed several state commissions in the Weimar Republic. After Hitler's rise to power, Pechstein walked a tight-rope: he was accused of Jewish origins and attacked as a 'degenerate' artist, yet he was also the first 'degenerate' artist to be allowed a public exhibition again, in 1939, and remained a member of the Reich Culture Chamber until 1945. In the post-war period, he was showered with honours, and simultaneously attacked by proponents of Socialist Realism in the East and Abstraction in the West. Pechstein's life is thus a window onto the world of early twentieth-century avant-garde art, and Expressionism's place within it.

A biographical approach also allows us to see beyond Expressionism. All too often, art historians have typecast Pechstein simply as an Expressionist, and have chosen to highlight those art works of his that share certain stylistic and thematic similarities with that of his *Brücke* colleagues and other selected Expressionists. Yet this tends to ignore the huge variation within Pechstein's oeuvre, and throws into relief the simplification inherent in any art historical or cultural categorization. To a large extent this is the result of an imperfect knowledge of the artist's oeuvre: until very recently, there existed no catalogue raisonné of his paintings, and there is still no such overview of his drawings. Ever since Pechstein's death in 1955, the vast majority of exhibitions which have featured his works have framed him as an Expressionist and have drawn on a relatively small sample of perhaps at most around one hundred of his works. In other words, only those works were included and reproduced in the accompanying exhibition catalogues which fitted into a particular art historical narrative: those

which did not fit the Expressionist mould were usually not made visible. Arguably, many scholars of Expressionism have not sufficiently reflected on how their own methodology has contributed to the creation of that particular phenomenon. Because art works – as indeed all other images – do not speak for themselves, art historians have often inscribed them with meaning of their own, often fusing their observation of stylistic developments with their readings and interpretations of literary Expressionism. Hence there are countless references in the literature to Expressionists as art revolutionaries antagonistic to bourgeois Wilhelmine society, part of a wider ‘generation in revolt’.¹⁰ In the case of the *Brücke* artists, the nudes produced in Moritzburg near Dresden in 1910, for example, are stylized as ‘a way of overcoming social restraints’ and ‘a liberation of eros, the release of the physical from the confinement of hypocritical bourgeois moral notions.’¹¹ Not only do such interpretations skate over incidents of pedophilia at Moritzburg, they also exaggerate the degree of rebelliousness that allegedly inspired such paintings. As we show in Chapter Two, Pechstein applied for a well-paid teaching position at the Düsseldorf School of Applied Arts just before leaving for Moritzburg; and he submitted a design for a national Bismarck museum shortly after his return. Viewing Pechstein’s art works simply through an Expressionist lens necessarily distorts our understanding of the complexity of artistic production after 1900.

Clearly, to reconstruct authorial intentions in the case of a work of fine art is even harder than in the case of literary texts.¹² And for Pechstein, it is almost impossible because – unlike many other avant-garde artists of his time – he produced hardly any commentaries on his own works.¹³ But although we are sceptical of both grand and very specific claims that are sometimes made about the social, meta-physical or ideological dimension of certain art works, this biography emphasizes the significance of such external interpretations. Artists in the early twentieth century operated in a mass media society and were faced with an army of art critics and commentators. In order to carve out an existence in the contemporary art market it was imperative to attract critics’ attention, through individual

10 E.g. Bernard S. Myers, *The German Expressionists: A Generation in Revolt* (New York, 1957); Jost Hermand, ‘Expressionismus als Revolution’, in Jost Hermand, *Von Mainz nach Weimar* (Stuttgart, 1969), 298–355.

11 Wolf-Dieter Dube, ‘The Artists Group *Die Brücke*’, in Solomon Guggenheim Foundation (ed.), *Expressionism: A German Intuition 1905–1920* (New York, 1980), 98.

12 For a discussion of this revolving around W. K. Wimsatt’s and Monroe Beardsley’s notion of ‘Intentional Fallacy’, and Roland Barthes’ 1967 article ‘The Death of the Author’, see Noël Carroll, *Beyond aesthetics: philosophical essays* (Cambridge, 2001), 157–180.

13 For an analysis of artistic self-interpretations in the avant-garde, see Beyme, *Zeitalter der Avantgarden*, 221–235.

and collective strategies of artistic 'self-fashioning'.¹⁴ As evident from Pechstein's and the other *Brücke* artists' intense interest in reviews of their exhibitions, they were acutely aware of their dependence on critics' elaborate and often contrived construction of artists' reputation. The writings and interpretations of critics obviously did not always please artists, but sometimes they offered narrative or analytical templates that artists were only too ready to accept. It is striking how impressed Pechstein was with the results of the biography written by his friend, the art critic Max Osborn, published in 1922. To an important extent, he was simply pleased with the attention devoted to him. Having his own biography published by one of Germany's most prestigious publishers at that time – Ullstein's Propyläen Verlag – was evidence of having secured a place within Germany's artistic establishment. But the biography also presented an authoritative account of how his art and life were intertwined which Pechstein embraced wholeheartedly, as evident in his autobiography which he wrote in the late 1940s and in which he modelled many passages closely on the corresponding sections of Osborn's biography.

Our own Pechstein biography is very different from Osborn's, and would probably have impressed Pechstein less. The reader will look in vain for poetic images of Pechstein as an artist 'who with strong hands opened the gate to an unknown country', as presented by Osborn in his introduction.¹⁵ Our approach owes more to the works of Francis Haskell and O. K. Werckmeister who were among the first to point to the symbiotic relationship between artists, and taste-makers and opinion leaders, and who emphasized the wider cultural, commercial and media context of artistic production.¹⁶ Our book draws on an wide range of textual and visual primary sources. Pechstein was a prolific writer, leaving more than 1,000 unpublished letters and postcards spanning his entire life, which have been traced in numerous state and private archives, in Europe, South Africa and the United States. We use them to give the biography texture, and hope that they will allow the reader to enter into the painter's worlds as he lived in them and through them. Additionally, the private papers, memoirs and diaries of fellow artists, art dealers and critics provide insights into the artistic, social and financial context of Pechstein's life. Newspaper articles,

14 Ibid, 245–250; Uwe Fleckner, Thomas W. Gaethgens (eds.), *Prenez garde à la peinture: Kunstkritik in Frankreich, 1900–1945* (Berlin, 1999), 8.

15 Max Osborn, *Max Pechstein* (Berlin, 1922), 12.

16 Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters. A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque* (New Haven, 1980 [1963]); Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (Ithaca/ New York, 1976); Otto Karl Werckmeister, *The Making of Paul Klee's Career 1914–1920* (Chicago, 1989).

contemporary exhibition catalogue entries, and sales prices give an idea of Pechstein's public standing during his lifetime. Documents from archives of the Prussian Academy of Art and the Nazi Reich Culture Chamber shed further light on Pechstein's involvement in the artistic politics of his time. The book interweaves these textual sources with a rich selection of Pechstein's art works, covering the entire range from drawings, graphics, wood prints, paintings, sculpture, wall paintings, stained glass windows, and illustrated letters. Obviously, there is a limit to which individual art works can be analysed in great detail, and those readers expecting to find elaborate discussions of formal, stylistic, and technical developments will be better served by sampling some of the many exhibition catalogues which are included in our bibliography. Also, like all biographers, we are all to aware that the picture we construct often remains sketchy. His relationship to fellow members of art groups and organizations like *Brücke*, the New Secession, the November Group, and the Prussian Academy of Arts had to be reconstructed on the basis of a few individual postcards and letters, and the same is true of his relationship to art critics, curators, and gallery owners. For example, we lack detailed information on Pechstein's commercial relationship to the influential Berlin art dealer, Wolfgang Gurlitt, whose private house and art gallery were destroyed in the course of the Second World War, just like Pechstein's Berlin home base at that time, Kurfürstenstrasse 126. It is therefore impossible to tell whether specific themes were negotiated between the artist and his dealer, or how Pechstein's contractual agreement compared to those of other artists of this time. And the constraints of the source base apply not only to the professional dimension of Pechstein's life, but are even more acute when trying to recover some of his private life. We would have liked to write more about Pechstein's interactions with other family members, especially his wives Lotte and Marta, but also his parents and siblings, yet hardly any written sources have survived. We can deduce from his letters and the accounts by some of his contemporaries that Pechstein was an easy-going, fun-loving and very amiable personality, who was fully integrated into the bohemian coffee house circles in Berlin – yet the world of oral debates and casual conversations, of rowdy drinking sessions and chance encounters is largely beyond reconstruction by the historian. All translations of quotations from Pechstein's correspondence or his memoirs are ours and try to do justice to the original idiom; occasionally we give the German original to allow readers to appreciate Pechstein's originality as a wordsmith. We realize that some scholars would have preferred the inclusion of the original German in every footnote, but unfortunately publishers have strong views on manuscript lengths. Also, as much as we would have liked to include illustrations of works by some of Pechstein's contemporaries, the costs of reproduction and

copyright fees are prohibitive. We are extremely grateful to the Max Pechstein Urheberrechtsgemeinschaft for waiving copyright fees for Pechstein's works, and for providing financial assistance with the costs of including many colour illustrations.

This book could not have been written without the help of many individuals. Julia Pechstein and Alexander Pechstein, two of Pechstein's grandchildren who are the representatives of the Pechstein Estate, proved crucial to the project in providing access to the substantial private archive built up by Pechstein's descendants over the decades. The late Günter Krüger, author of the catalogue raisonné of Pechstein's graphic work, encouraged us as long as he lived, and his widow, Friedlinde, generously allowed us to use his private papers after his death. Archivists, librarians, curators, private collectors, and local historians in many places have gone out of their way to provide us with material and to help with information. It is impossible to list all all of those who contributed in one way or another to helping our project along the way, but we would like to use this opportunity to thank Javier Arnaldo, Jörn Barfod, Gabriele Baumer, Irene Below, Birgit Dalbajewa, Sabine Block David, Uwe Degreif, Ulrich Drumm, Angelika Enderlein, Michael S. Ewer, Stefan Frey, Winfried Gensch, Klaus Gier, Isabel Greschat, Margitta Hensel, Almut and Rolf Heym, Meike Hoffmann, Andreas Hüneke, Lydia Icke-Schwalbe, Ralph Jentsch, Wolfgang Knop, Petra Lewey, Christoph Lichtin, Anke Matelowski, Wolfgang Mecklenburg, Magdalena M. Moeller, Veronica Puchner, Thomas Rudert, Elisabeth Scheeben, Werner Schweiger (†), Silvia Teichert, Andreas Timmler, Petra Winter, Wolfgang Wittrock, and Indina Woesthoff. We are very grateful to New Hall, and Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, for awarding us Research Fellowships which supported us through the early stages of our research. Our colleagues and students at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and at ECLA of Bard: A Liberal Arts University in Berlin, have helped by providing a friendly and extremely stimulating environment in which this project was able to develop and reach completion. Finally, to the editors of De Gruyter's Interdisciplinary German Cultural Studies, Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos, we express our sincere gratitude for adding this volume to their series: we could not have wished for a more appropriate home for this monograph.

CHAPTER I

An Artist in the Making

1881–1906

“The pressure to earn money turned out to be a blessing,
because it prevented me from working on paper only.”
(Max Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 19)

Max Pechstein was born on New Year's Eve 1881 in the industrial town of Zwickau in Saxony, at the edge of the Ore Mountains. Later in life, when the National Socialists' obsession with racial purity forced Germans to research their ancestry, Max Pechstein took great pride in the fact that he was able to trace his father's family back to the early sixteenth century. For centuries, his paternal ancestors had been blacksmiths in Trünzig, a little village twenty-five kilometres east of Zwickau. Max Pechstein's grandfather, Johann Gottfried Pechstein, born in 1816, had become a blacksmith, as well, but as the smithy always went to the eldest son, he – as the youngest of six brothers – had to move on and finally found work in a textile factory in Werdau, close to Zwickau. There he married Wilhelmine Schubert, the daughter of a local shoemaker. Their son Franz Hermann was born in 1857. He was apparently very talented and there was some discussion about sending him to university, but the family's financial situation did not allow for such ambitious plans. Franz Hermann followed in his father's footsteps and eventually worked as foreman in the Kammgarnspinnerei Petrikowsky & Co., a big textile factory in Schedewitz, a small town just south of Zwickau. In 1879, age twenty-two, he married Lina Richter, a girl from Reinsdorf, a neighbouring village. The following year their first son, Richard, was born, followed by Max and then another five children: Walter, Gertrud, Irma, Ernst and Hugo.¹

1 See 'Abstammungsnachweis' Max Pechstein in Bundesarchiv Berlin (BArch), ex-BDC files, Pechstein file, f. 574. For Pechstein's pride in his father's family history, see his letter to George Grosz, Berlin, 10 May 1933, in Houghton Library (HL), though note that 'father' should read 'grandfather' – see Max Pechstein (ed. Leopold Reidemeister), *Erinnerungen* (Wiesbaden, 1960), 8. See also the biographical information given by Pechstein on the 'Personalfragebogen Magistrat von Gross-Berlin', 6 April 1949, in Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB), B Rep 080, no. 78, f. 1–6.

Zwickau, in the western part of the Kingdom of Saxony, not far from the border with Bohemia, was a town with a long tradition of mining and cloth making. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, both the textile trade and silver mining had made the town prosperous, resulting in the construction of the magnificent late Gothic St. Mary's Church, the Cloth Hall and the City Hall. At that time coal mining was already practised but it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that it became the dominant industry in the region. In the 1840s and 1850s, numerous local mining companies were founded and began exploiting the vast reserves of coal underneath Zwickau and its surrounding villages. Over the following decades, annual production increased from just over 20,000 tons in 1840 to 2,5 million tons in 1900.² The ancillary buildings of the deep shaft mines, huge spoil heaps which accompanied these and smoking chimneys of the coking plants became Zwickau's most prominent landmark features. There was so much coal in Zwickau, Pechstein used to joke, that one could sniff it up for free out of the air.³ In fact, even Pechstein's family name gave evidence of the region's long tradition in coal mining: it described 'the thirteenth state of coal in the Ore Mountains', or so Pechstein claimed later in life.⁴ The boom in coal mining radically transformed Zwickau in other respects, too. In the decades after Pechstein's birth the city grew from some 35,000 inhabitants in 1881 to nearly 70,000 in 1905.⁵ Housing shortages soon became one of the most pressing social problems, with an average of five to six people living in a single room. In 1888, the town council had to pass a decree stipulating a minimum of four square metres and nine cubic metres of airspace for each sleeping berth.⁶

Industrialisation turned Zwickau into one of the centres of the emerging trade union movement. According to August Bebel, one of the founding fathers of German Social Democracy, the Zwickau Miners' Association, established in 1863, was the first modern miners' organisation in Germany. In 1876, the Association of Saxon Miners and Steelworkers was founded in Zwickau; by 1895, when it was forcibly dissolved by the Saxon government, it had grown to include almost 10,000 members, making it one of

2 See Steinkohlenbergbauverein Zwickau e.V. (ed.), *Der Steinkohlenbergbau im Zwickauer Revier* (Zwickau, 2000), 508.

3 See letter Pechstein to Paul Fechter, 8 October 1925, in Getty Research Library (GRL) Los Angeles, Special Collections, 2001.M.19.

4 Copy of letter Pechstein to Professor Staritz, 27 September 1933, in Preussische Akademie der Künste (PrAdK) 1104, f. 122. In fact, Pechstein is the term for a particular sort of volcanic stone, a glass-like silicate rock with a bitumen-like shine.

5 For 35,005 inhabitants in Zwickau in 1880, see Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt (ed.), *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 3 (Berlin, 1882), 11; for 1905, see Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt (ed.), *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 30 (1909), 7.

6 Steinkohlenbergbauverein Zwickau e.V. (ed.), *Steinkohlenbergbau*, 193–194.

the largest regional trade unions in Germany.⁷ Saxony was also one of the electoral strongholds of the newly founded Social Democratic party. At the Reichstag elections in 1890, the SPD won over 42 percent of the votes in Saxony, more than twice as many than on average throughout Germany. In 1903, the SPD won nearly 60 percent of the votes in Saxony. In Zwickau, the Social Democrats were the dominant party right from the foundation of the German Empire in 1871; already at the Reichstag's election of 1877, they received over 60 percent of the votes cast.⁸ When writing his memoirs in 1946, Pechstein described the electoral successes of the Social Democrats in 'Red Saxony' with some sympathy, and called them 'a powerful expression of will by the people'.⁹ But this might well have been an attempt at emphasizing his working-class background and his left-wing credentials at a time when these were expedient in Allied-occupied Berlin after the end of the Third Reich. Although it is likely that Pechstein's father was one of the many supporters of the Social Democratic party in this period he was most probably neither a party member nor actively involved in the trade union movement. Pechstein's memoirs make no mention of such activities, apart from one episode:

Once my father was elected by his working peers, with two other colleagues to go to the factory owner as speakers, to explain the economic demands of the workforce, and to ask for improvements. The conversation ended with a curtly no and the booting out of the three representatives. At the same time, the mood among the miners [in the city] was so strained that groups of them joined up with the factory workers and marched to the city hall. The father went along, and I followed suit. At the Mulden Bridge mounted policemen charged the demonstrators with bright drawn sabres so that they retreated in huddles. What the result was, if they were granted better pay, I do not know because Father never talked about these things with us children around. But I was greatly stirred, and feared from then on that there was no longer any justice in this world.¹⁰

Unfortunately no primary material has survived to corroborate this anecdote but it is certainly very plausible. Industrial action was a recurrent

7 Ibid., 202–208, for the history of the Zwickau miners' associations.

8 Gerhard A. Ritter, Merith Niehuss, *Wahlgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch, Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreichs 1871–1918* (Munich, 1980), 41, 89; for the results of the Zwickau electoral district between 1871 and 1907, see 'Die Wahlen zum Deutschen Reichstag im Königreich Sachsen von 1871 bis 1907', in *Zeitschrift des Königlich Sächsischen Statistischen Landesamtes* 54 (1908), 178.

9 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 8–9. The German reads 'eine machtvolle Willenskundgebung des Volkes.'

10 See Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 9. Pechstein used an earlier draft of this section in a letter to his son Mäki in December 1945, which included the sentence: 'Obwohl er keiner Partei angehörte, wurde er zum Sprecher für die Sozialdemokratie.' Letter reprinted in *Berliner Zeitung*, 21 May 1946: 'Max Pechstein an seinen Sohn Mäcky.'

phenomenon in this period; and in May 1889, at the occasion of the great miners' strike, the military was called in to deal with the situation in the Zwickau area.¹¹

For much of Max Pechstein's childhood, the family lived in a small flat in a tenement block, Bahnhofstrasse 36, in the working-class area around the Zwickau train station, round the corner from the Bahnhofsschacht, one of the city's big mining shafts. In the late 1880s, the family moved into a bigger flat, first in Hermannstrasse 30, then into nearby Spiegelstrasse.¹² The father had to work hard to keep up the family. He always left home at five in the morning and walked for three-quarters of an hour before reaching his workplace at the textile factory. According to Max Pechstein's memoirs, his father earned a weekly salary of fourteen Marks; slightly less than a miner in the coal mines which he passed on his way to work. After subtracting tax and annual expenditures like clothing, rent and school fees, the family was left with around 1,25 Marks per day for food and heating.¹³ To get by, Franz Hermann Pechstein often worked double-shifts throughout the night, and his wife Lina took up ironing other people's laundry. Despite their hard work, Pechstein's parents seem to have been cheerful people: they both liked singing, and Pechstein's mother often told her children stories in a happy mood. In his memoirs, Pechstein described his father as a committed family man, eloquent, thoughtful and able to get enthusiastic. He apparently loved doing handicrafts and looking after his canaries, goldfishes and rabbits in the precious spare time he had. On Sundays, he often took Max and Richard on hiking tours through the villages and forests surrounding Zwickau.¹⁴ One of these trips probably led them to Eckersbach, a small town just opposite of Zwickau on the eastern side of the river Mulde. Pechstein's father fell in love with the place, and over the years managed to save enough money to buy a small house with a garden, Trillerstrasse 30. The family moved to Eckersbach around 1900.¹⁵ The Pechstein children inherited their father's love

11 Zwickau, *Steinkohlenbergbau*, 206. See also Ernst Heilman, *Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung in Chemnitz und dem Erzgebirge* (Chemnitz, 1911), 224, for a reference to a textile workers' strike in nearby Chemnitz in October 1889.

12 A search of the official Zwickau address books gives Bahnhofstrasse 36 as the address of Franz Hermann Pechstein until the 1885/86 edition, then Hermannstrasse 30 for 1888, followed by Spiegelstrasse 53 between 1890 and 1895, and Spiegelstrasse 50 from 1895 to 1896/97. See letter Silvia Teichert (Stadtarchiv Zwickau) to authors, 26 June 2006.

13 See Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 9; for the salary of Zwickau coal miners and a tabulation of their annual expenditure in 1882 (on which our calculation of the Pechstein family budget is based), see Steinkohlenbergbauverein Zwickau e. V. (ed.), *Steinkohlenbergbau*, 195.

14 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 9.

15 The last address entry in the official address books for Franz Hermann Pechstein is given in 1896/97. Eckersbach did not become part of Zwickau until 1905, and only in 1906/07 does Franz Hermann Pechstein reappear, with an entry for Trillerstrasse. See letter Silvia Teichert (Stadtarchiv Zwickau) to authors, 26 June 2006.

for the countryside. ‘Actually we were not particularly suited for city life, [we] were more peasant children than workers’ children’, Pechstein reported many years later. ‘In spring the flowering meadows were waiting, in summer the fields, in autumn the fruit trees, in winter the snow, the [river] Mulde that one could cross by jumping on floating ice floes, ice skating, skiing.’¹⁶ In his memoirs, Pechstein described his childhood years as a happy and untroubled period. He obviously revelled in memories of brook-jumping competitions and of battles between hordes of children dressed up as Apaches. He was regularly beaten by his parents for his pranks and misdeeds – like deserting the pram with his youngest sister when called away by friends for play – but he seems to have accepted this as an appropriate punishment for his behaviour.¹⁷

Max Pechstein went to the Einfache Bürgerschule III on Georgenplatz in Zwickau. The massive expansion of Zwickau’s population meant that schools were overcrowded; it was not atypical to find more than fifty pupils sitting in one class-room.¹⁸ At least in the first few years, Pechstein was not a particularly diligent pupil, and prone to playing truant. Things started to change at age ten when drawing lessons were introduced into the syllabus. ‘At first I only learnt to connect two points by miserable line drawings, then drawings of Greek vases watercoloured with coffee water, then light- and shade-drawings from plaster figures’, Pechstein recalled his introduction to the world of art. ‘But all of a sudden I was sitting as if mesmerized in the classroom and could not avert my eyes from the possibility that my hand should be able to reproduce something.’¹⁹ His enthusiasm and talent came to the attention of one of his uncles who was a wood turner and himself an amateur artist who painted in every spare minute he had. He lived on the top floor of an old inn in the city centre. His flat, according to Pechstein, smelled of oil paint, turpentine and wood, and was a feast for the eyes. ‘The walls were covered from floor to ceiling with paintings, of big and small format. Everything there is, animals, flowers, landscapes, genre paintings, were on display’, Pechstein wrote in his memoirs.²⁰ From his uncle, he re-

16 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 11.

17 Ibid., 10–11. See also his mention ‘von den glücklichen Tagen meiner Kindheit’ in letter Pechstein to Zwickau Town Council, 17 July 1947 (Stadtarchiv Zwickau, no inv. no.).

18 See ‘Personalfragebogen Magistrat von Gross-Berlin’, 6 April 1949, in LAB, B Rep 080, no. 78, f. 1. For the size of school classes, see Angelika Winter, ‘Aspekte der Entwicklung Zwickaus zur Industriestadt im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert’, in *Cyanea. Schriftenreihe des Stadtarchivs Zwickau* 4 (2006), 13.

19 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 11. For a discussion of the syllabus for art classes in late nineteenth-century German elementary schools, see Reiner Hespe, *Der Begriff der Freien Kinderzeichnung in der Geschichte des Zeichen- und Kunstunterrichts von ca. 1890–1920* (Frankfurt/Main, 1985).

20 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 12.

ceived brushes, paint and wooden panels, and was introduced in their use. The earliest surviving oil painting by Pechstein probably originated under the tutelage of his uncle. It showed a dramatic mountain scene: a young woman clinging to a steep rock face, removing a young eagle from his nest, whilst being attacked by its parents. Based on a true incident in Tyrol in the mid-nineteenth century and popularized by the best-selling novel *Geierwally* by Wilhelmine von Hillern in the 1880s, it was an image that was reproduced in many variations in these years.²¹ It was only a small work, 30 by 40 centimetres, held in the naturalist style popular around this time, but an impressive achievement for a fourteen-year old.

Around the same time Pechstein also joined the choir of Zwickau's cathedral, the Marienkirche. This was not an unusual thing to do; indeed choral singing was an immensely popular pastime in nineteenth-century Germany.²² But the fact that Pechstein joined the choir of his local church instead of one of the many secular choirs that existed in Zwickau at the time indicates that for the Pechstein family, church rituals – rather than religion, one suspects – were still of major importance. Pechstein himself was baptised, and his family regularly attended Sunday service in the Marienkirche. In his memoirs, Pechstein recalled his first participation in Holy Communion at the occasion of his confirmation, age fifteen, and that he was thus 'accepted among the circle of adults'.²³ The experience of singing and the cathedral's architectural setting made a great impression on the young teenager. 'All this lifted me up beyond myself, and my entire being underwent a change', Pechstein wrote.

With shaking limbs I finally stood above [on the gallery] among the choir, eyes fixed like everyone else on the baton of the cantor. Joining the sound of the organ and of the women's and men's voices our boys' voices jubilated towards the altar the psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!" Truly, I too had to become an artist.²⁴

It is very likely that this moment of epiphany was as much the product of literary stylisation in Pechstein's memoirs as it was grounded in his aesthetic experience of singing in Zwickau's cathedral. But there is little doubt that his interests really shifted considerably. 'The wild and wonderful tus-

21 See Helga Reichart, *Die Geierwally: Leben und Werk der Malerin Anna Stainer-Knittl* (Innsbruck, 1991).

22 See Dietmar Klenke, *Der singende deutsche Mann. Gesangvereine und deutsches Nationalbewusstsein von Napoleon bis Hitler* (Münster, 1998).

23 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 13–14. The fact that Pechstein was baptised is evident from a letter in which he requests a copy of his baptism certificate: letter Pechstein to Gertrud, 11 November 1936, in *Städtische Museen Zwickau* (SMZ), 60K y 2(1).

24 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 12.



Fig. 1.1: Geierwally, ca. 1896, oil, on canvas/cartoon, 48 × 32 cm,
Städtische Museen Zwickau, Kunstsammlungen

sles were a thing of the past, like the hours of angling trouts in the Marienthal brook, the illegal fishing in the Mulde or even in the carp pond of our neighbour, peasant Ehrlich', Pechstein recalled in his memoirs. 'I was no longer a weak pupil, I soon became one of the best, and eventually I became the best.'²⁵ He now spent most his time reading, in open air, 'dreamily watching beetles and butterflies, or hiding in the branches of a rowan tree, sketching the ideas that came into my head whilst reading into the margins of the book.'²⁶ Pechstein's new-found ambition and passion was also testified by a friend who visited him at home:

Near the window stood a simple easel with a drawing bloc, on which one was able to discern the sketching of a flower piece. The morning sun [...] made an amaryllis that stood on the window sill glow in a wonderful burning red. "If only I managed to recreate the red that this flower is displaying in the sunlight, I would be happy", exclaimed the fourteen-year old.²⁷

Pechstein's friend was somewhat taken aback by this zeal because he himself had never been concerned with such things. Pechstein's mother agreed with the friend's embarrassed attempt at praising the work and commented that Max was never satisfied with his work, always wanting to do better. 'Yes, it is not enough for me, not by far, I will and have to get there still!' Pechstein is said to have replied almost angrily.

Pechstein's determination to become a proper artist was put to the test over the following years. When he left school after Easter 1896, age fourteen and a half, it had long been decided by his parents that he would train as a decorative painter. His father had already signed a four-year apprenticeship contract with master Rönna, the head of a big local painting company. For the first three years, Pechstein was to attend vocational school on Sundays and the local guild school twice a week during winter. As was usual, it was an exploitative arrangement: Pechstein did not receive any money from his boss, while his father was to pay for all his living expenses, including clothes, working utensils and school books. Only in his final year was Pechstein to receive some minimal pay, of 50 Pfennig per week. He started his apprenticeship in early April 1896. An average working day started at half past six in the morning and lasted thirteen hours; in summer, it started already at six and lasted until dusk. Especially in his first year, it was hard physical labour and had precious little to do with learning to paint. 'We apprentices had to cart the needed working utensils to and from the place of work', Pechstein wrote in his memoirs.

25 Ibid. See also the transformation described in Pechstein's first biography, Max Osborn, *Max Pechstein* (Berlin, 1922), 24–25.

26 Ibid., 13.

27 *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 21 October 1945: 'Mein Freund Max Pechstein'.

In my first year, as the junior apprentice, I was never able to leave the cart shaft because at that moment they were lacking a dog, unless the boss ordered me to clear away the dirt scraped off at some place of work, or told me to paste wallpapers. We were also not allowed to dispose of our working clothes, however dirty they were. No wonder that passers-by gave way by themselves when they spotted us in our smudgy outfits. [...] I was never able to believe that through pulling a cart, fetching breakfast and dinner, sometimes for twenty journeymen on a building site, [or] wallpapering and cleaning of dirt-besmeared walls one would become a painter.²⁸

There was little he could learn from his master, whom he never saw holding a brush. Worse still, Pechstein was repeatedly insulted and beaten for no obvious reason. It was a thoroughly disillusioning year in which the young teenager often had to suppress his desire to cry.

At the end of his first year he confided in his father who arranged to see his master. The discussion earned Pechstein some jeering words by his boss, but at least the master now acknowledged Pechstein's desire to learn something, and as he had just admitted two new apprentices Pechstein was relieved from his previous duties. Among the over forty journeymen working for the company were some who had acquired real skills during their travels and who were happy to pass them on when they thought it was worth their while. Pechstein recalled:

Among them were specialists for the painting of flowers, for landscapes, for baroque ornaments. They taught me the distribution of light and shade and the effects of theatrical perspective. One of them was particularly skilled in the imitation of wood and marble.²⁹

Pechstein's talent was quickly noticed, and it did not take long before he was given tasks not normally delegated to apprentices. He took considerable pride in the fact that during his third year he was asked to complete the decorations in a well-known Zwickau coffee-house when the senior journeyman who had started on them had fallen ill.³⁰

At the beginning of his final year as an apprentice, Pechstein accentuated his special position by starting to wear the white trousers and overall which traditionally were the prerogative of journeymen. Although his cockiness earned him some disapproving glances from his colleagues no-one openly challenged him. Rather than pulling the cart to their place of work, as apprentices usually had to do, he now swung his box on top of the stack of ladders and only laid a symbolic hand on the cart from behind,

28 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 14.

29 Ibid., 14–15.

30 See *Sächsische Volkszeitung*, 21 October 1945: 'Mein Freund Max Pechstein'.

like journeymen did.³¹ As was to be expected, this behaviour was resented by some of the other apprentices. One of them secretly destroyed the works which Pechstein had produced over the years for his vocational school. The misdeed only came to light when Pechstein's works were meant to be sent to an exhibition in Dresden. Pechstein was devastated. 'Still today, when writing this down, I feel hurt by the destruction of these works which I had created taking great pains', Pechstein wrote in his memoirs.³² The only good that came out of the incident was a change in attitude in Pechstein's master. 'All of a sudden it was as if all the insults which I was used to and all the beatings which I had swallowed defiantly were to be made up.'³³ There were other improvements, too. Pechstein graduated from vocational school after three years with honours and now had Sundays off at his free disposal. He was also able to save a little money from the 50 Pfennig which he received as weekly pay. He mostly used it to participate in the excursions of the local gymnastics association which he had joined. Soon he was put in charge of one of their youth groups.

At Easter time in 1900, exactly four years after starting his apprenticeship, Pechstein passed the guild examination and received a glowing letter of reference. He worked for his old master for another week to earn his travelling money, then, with 20 Marks in his pocket he set out for Dresden. 'There I could see art, there I was able to learn', Pechstein later explained his move in his memoirs.³⁴ He had only once been to Dresden before, but the visit had clearly left a deep impression on him.³⁵ Dresden, the capital of the Saxon kingdom, was a spectacularly beautiful city. Rebuilt in the early decades of the eighteenth century, it was a showcase of baroque architecture. The beauty of the architectural ensemble in the city centre, composed of the Royal Residence Palais, Frauenkirche, Zwinger and the Brühlische Terraces on the banks of the river Elbe led nineteenth-century contemporaries to gush about 'music turned into stone', and to label the city 'Elbe Florence'. But it was not just the cultural riches that drew Pechstein to Dresden. Over the preceding decades, the city had expanded dramatically and was now the fourth largest in Germany, with over half a million inhabitants.³⁶ For a young journeyman looking for work as a decorative painter, Dresden was an obvious destination. His first visit was to the local labour

31 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 15.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 16.

35 See Osborn, *Pechstein*, 36.

36 See Holger Starke, 'Grundzüge der Wirtschaftsentwicklung in Dresden', in Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden Kunstgewerbemuseum (ed.), *Jugendstil in Dresden. Aufbruch in die Moderne* (Dresden, 1999), 18–30.

exchange where he was given the name of a local master who was looking for help decorating a ballroom. In his memoirs, Pechstein described this as ‘unbelievable luck’.³⁷ Different from Pechstein’s former master, his new employer regularly worked on his projects himself, and was widely revered amongst journeymen for his artistic skills as a decorative painter. Pechstein soon earned his respect and was trusted with designs and their executions, and he was put in charge of supervising up to twenty other journeymen.

At some point during the summer of 1900 Pechstein decided to apply to the Royal School of Applied Arts in Dresden, one of Germany’s most renowned teaching institutes for the arts and crafts. It is very likely that this decision was influenced by his new friend, Alexander Gerbig, whom he got to know during one of his many painting projects that summer. Gerbig, a Thuringian from the gun-making town of Suhl, was three years older than Pechstein and had a similarly poor family background. The two young men quickly became close friends, and once Gerbig decided to sign up for School of Applied Arts Pechstein soon followed suit.³⁸ Pechstein passed the entrance examination with flying colours which allowed him to skip the two- to three-year preparatory course which normally preceded participation in any one of the School’s ten different art courses. Together with Gerbig, Pechstein joined the course for decorative painting in October 1900.³⁹ Their course-work was very time-intensive: every week they had to participate in sixteen hours of ‘nature painting’, ten hours of ‘ornamental and still-life painting’, and another ten hours of ‘figure painting and drawing’, as well as more than twenty hours worth of lectures on art history, anatomy, sketching of plants, and stylistic exercises in ancient, medieval, Renaissance and contemporary art. Despite this workload, Pechstein often worked much longer than the official course hours, together with Alexander Gerbig, to acquire ‘as much knowledge and as many skills as possible’, as he later recalled.⁴⁰

The two young men shared a room in a so-called ‘artists’ quarter’ on Annenstrasse, not far from the city centre.⁴¹ However, it soon became ob-

37 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 16.

38 See Wolfgang Knop, *Schaut her – ich bin’s! Der Maler und Grafiker Alexander Gerbig (1871–1948)* (Suhl, 1998), 155, 195, fn. 492.

39 For the School’s course structures etc, Max Creutz (ed.), *Kunsthandbuch für Deutschland. Verzeichnis der Behörden, Sammlungen, Lehrveranstaltungen und Vereine für Kunst, Kunstgewerbe und Altertumskunde* (Berlin, 1904), 425–426. Pechstein first appears in the School’s students list for the year 1900/1901, as number 99, as a full-time student for winter and summer term, under the heading ‘Dekorationsmaler’; see *Bericht über die Königlich Sächsische Kunstgewerbe-Schule und das Kunstgewerbe-Museum zu Dresden auf die Schuljahre 1899/1900 und 1900/1901*, copy in possession of the authors.

40 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 17.

41 Ibid. For the address see Knop, *Gerbig*, 156, 195, fn. 495.

vious that they would have to interrupt their studies the following summer to work and earn enough money to get through the next winter term. Somehow, the School's Director, Karl Ludwig Graff, learned of this plan and promised Pechstein to exempt him from school fees if only he continued with his degree. He also provided Pechstein with a reference and encouraged him to apply for a scholarship from his home-town Zwickau. After the end of his first term, during the Easter vacation, Pechstein travelled home and discussed his options with his family. His elder brother Richard offered to send him fifteen Marks per month to cover his accommodation. His meeting with the mayor of Zwickau, however, resulted in a great disappointment. After questioning Pechstein about his family background, the mayor declared that considering the lack of family resources it looked unlikely that Pechstein would be able to complete his degree. The city's scholarships were primarily used to provide assistance to university students who had at least some means of their own, because no scholarship was sufficiently large to serve as scholars' only source of income. 'I called attention to the fact that I intended to work in parallel but I had to realize with annoyance that he was not in the least interested in my situation', Pechstein recalled bitterly in his memoirs. 'He was going to send me 40 Marks once, end of story. With that the son of a small worker was shown to the door. With anger in my heart I vowed: once and never again!'⁴²

This episode left a deep impression on Pechstein who later in life repeatedly harked back to the rejection he had experienced by his home-town. In fact, Zwickau was a little more generous than Pechstein later made out in his memoirs. Records in the city's archives show that Pechstein eventually received a payment of 90 Marks which would have covered three terms worth of school fees; four years later he received another 100 Marks.⁴³ But not only did the first payment take over half a year before it got through to Pechstein, it still left him desperately short of money. In summer 1901, once Gerbig had left the city to find work, Pechstein reported to his friend in a letter of how he was getting along on his own:

There are a number of new [arrivals] upstairs, but mostly porcelain painters, and I was not able to bond with any of them because none of them had much in common with me, and then I still suffer from this chronic shortage of money and [hence] these mommy's boys consider themselves superior, naturally [...].⁴⁴

⁴² Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 18.

⁴³ See Petra Lewey, 'Zwickau und *Die Brücke*. Zum 100-jährigen Gründungsjubiläum der Künstlergruppe', in *Cyanea. Schriftenreihe des Stadtarchivs Zwickau* 3 (2005), 56. For the fees of the Dresden School of Applied Arts, see *Bericht 1899/1900 und 1900/01*, 8.

⁴⁴ Letter Pechstein to Alexander Gerbig, 9 June 1901, in private collection; partly quoted in Knop, *Gerbig*, 156.

He had taken on some odd jobs, Pechstein told Gerbig, to pay off his rent arrears, but he had already run out of money again. Even more than four decades later, when writing about his difficult times as a student in his autobiography, the financial plight suffered that summer still loomed large on Pechstein's mind: 'Often, the bread roll that my landlady delivered constituted my entire daily ration. I had to divide it into three pieces: breakfast, lunch and supper. A cup of tea or thin coffee replaced hot food. I hardly remembered the taste of meat.'⁴⁵

Undoubtedly, Pechstein often went hungry during his first years at the School of Applied Arts, and yet one should be careful not to exaggerate his plight. The passage from his autobiography quoted above is modelled closely on the corresponding section in Max Osborn's biography of Max Pechstein, published in 1922.⁴⁶ Osborn was a close friend of Pechstein, and many of the anecdotes in his book would have been informed by first-hand accounts by the artist. But Osborn, an art critic and writer, was also well versed in the literary theme of the poor artist, a cultural stereotype popularized by the Biedermeier artist Carl Spitzweg and immortalized in Puccini's opera *La Bohème* from 1896. Osborn's skilful narrative of the rise of a young artist, of true genius overcoming material obstacles, owed as much to literary traditions as it did to Pechstein's circumstances at the time, and Pechstein was only too ready to follow Osborn's example when setting pen to paper himself in the 1940s.

The summer of 1901 saw the creation of Pechstein's first major work. During the School's summer vacation he made his way to Goppeln, just south of Dresden, and stole an armful of giant sunflowers from one of the village's fields at night time.

[T]he janitor let me into the School's studios', Pechstein reminisced in his memoirs, 'and so I painted all on my own these gorgeous leaf-reed-pyramids with their flaming flower heads, just like they had towered on the fields. [...] I worked like a maniac for one week. And with the end of the vacations my painting was finished, too.'⁴⁷

It gave him a first taste of success: the big painting attracted considerable attention at one of the School's exhibitions and was bought up by the State Museum of Applied Arts in Stuttgart. There it came to the attention of the publisher of the journal *Dekorative Vorbilder* (Decorative Examples) who published it as a full-page colour illustration in 1905.⁴⁸ Pechstein's biogra-

45 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 18.

46 See Osborn, *Pechstein*, 39.

47 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 19.

48 See *Dekorative Vorbilder* 16 (1905), 4. For the School's exhibitions in 1902 and 1903, see

pher, Osborn, mentioned that Pechstein liked to define this painting as the starting point of his artistic production.⁴⁹ Osborn also struggled to dispel the impression that with his sunflowers Pechstein had simply imitated Vincent van Gogh. Although van Gogh was later to exert a huge influence on Pechstein, at this point in time he was still blissfully ignorant of the Dutch artist.⁵⁰ Instead, Pechstein's work was clearly influenced by the naturalist style taught in the nature painting classes of Richard Mebert in the School of Applied Arts.⁵¹

The Dresden School of Applied Arts was one of Germany's most renowned teaching institutes for the arts and crafts. The School's syllabus was steeped in the ideas of the art nouveau movement which had emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century, with an emphasis on working in a range of different media and a style characterized by organic, ornamental decorations.⁵² Some surviving early sketches of plants and flowers by Pechstein show how through stylization and increasing abstraction he tried to reach ornamental patterns suitable as decorative elements.⁵³ Pechstein thrived in his new environment, and he soon became one of the School's best students, not least because of his regular outings into the world of commercial decorative painting. 'The need to earn money turned into a blessing', Pechstein recalled in his memoirs, 'because it prevented me from sketching only on paper. The fact that I executed many of my designs in practice provided me with an eye for the essential. I learned to pay attention to practicability, technique, [and] material, and this stood my entire artistic development in good stead.'⁵⁴ Easter 1902 Pechstein was among the six students who received a Bronze Medal for their performance.⁵⁵ The

Bericht über die Königlich Sächsische Kunstgewerbe-Schule und das Kunstgewerbe-Museum zu Dresden auf die Schuljahre 1901/02 und 1902/03, 17.

49 Osborn, *Pechstein*, 43.

50 According to Jill Lloyd, the first reproductions of works by van Gogh were only published in 1904. See Jill Lloyd, *Vincent van Gogh und der Expressionismus* (Ostfildern, 2006), 19. Other scholars also emphasize that the reception of van Gogh only began to take off after 1904, see Ortrud Westheider, 'Bekenntnis zu Vincent van Gogh', in Heinz Spielmann (ed.), *Die Brücke und die Moderne, 1904–1914* (Munich, 2004), 140–141; Magdalena M. Moeller, 'Van Gogh und die Rezeption in Deutschland bis 1914', in Georg-W. Koltzsch (ed.), *Van Gogh und die Moderne, 1890–1914* (Essen, 1990), 312–316.

51 On some of those naturalist painters, see Ulrich Thieme, Felix Becker (eds.), *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1933), vol. 27, 546; and Thieme, Becker (eds.), *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1913), vol. 9, 255.

52 For a comprehensive discussion of the significance of the art nouveau background to the emergence of modernist art, see Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden Kunstgewerbemuseum (ed.), *Jugendstil in Dresden. Aufbruch in die Moderne* (Dresden, 1999).

53 Ibid., 400, illustrations 641 and 642.

54 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 19.

55 See *Bericht 1901/02 und 1902/03*, 22.



Fig. 1.2: *Sunflowers*, 1901, gouache, measures unknown. Published in *Dekorative Vorbilder*, 1905. Photograph: bpk / Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / Dietmar Katz.

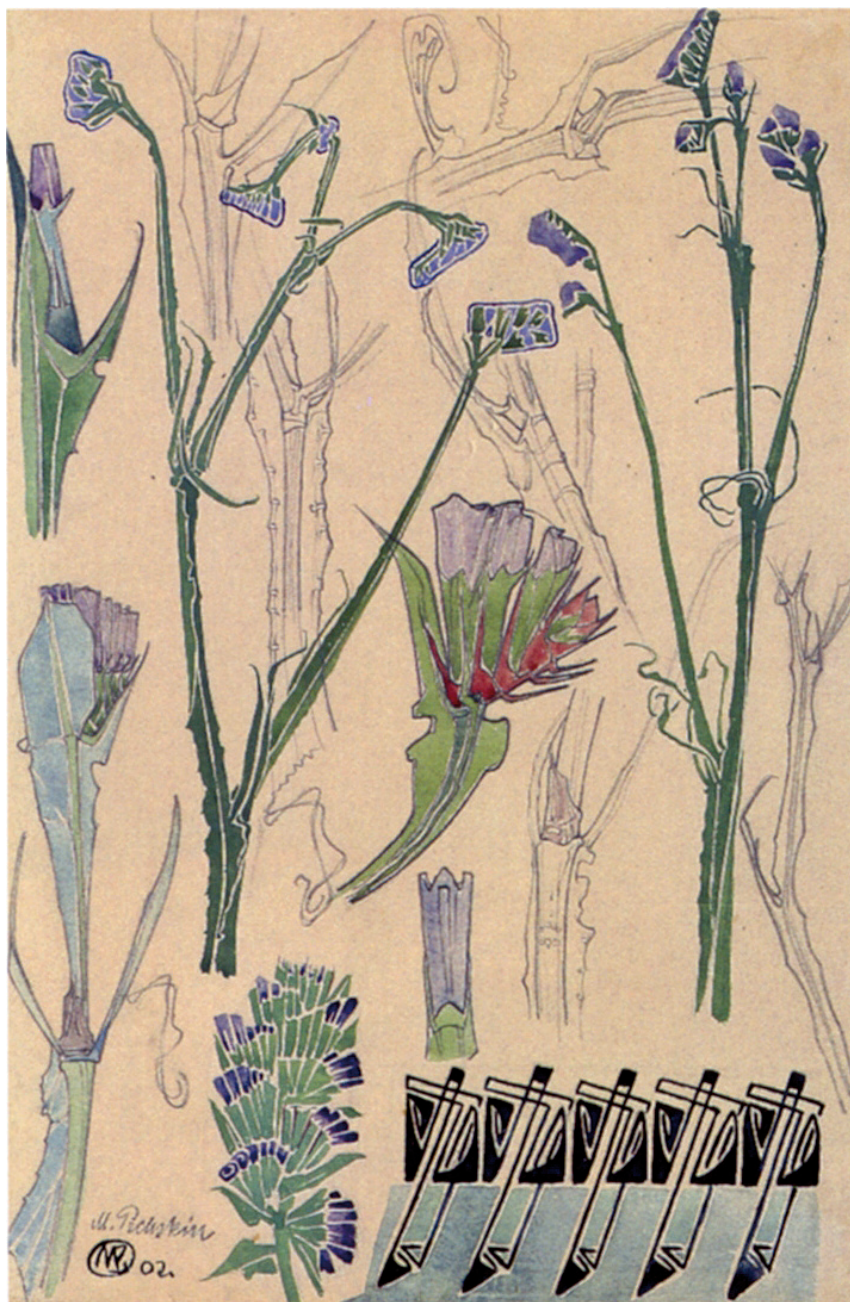


Fig. 1.3: *Study*, 1902, watercolour, 64 × 47 cm, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz.

following year he participated in the competitions of each of the School's specialist departments. 'The success was astounding', he wrote with considerable pride in his memoirs.

I owed it to my knowledge of every practice. In the furniture-, sculpture-, textiles-, Raumkunst- and interior design-competition I received the first prize, only in graphic art I received the second. Five first prizes and one second – I was taken aback myself and did not trust my own eyes when the cohort of my peers let me through to the notice board to read the published results. To get back to my studio felt like running the gauntlet.⁵⁶

He also participated in a national competition for book cover designs, and two of his designs were published in Germany's leading arts and crafts journal, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*.⁵⁷

Pechstein's career took a decisive turn once the young architect Wilhelm Kreis was appointed as one of the School's professors in September 1902. Kreis was one of the dynamic young reformers of the German Arts and Crafts movement, and he set up a new department called Raumkunst (spatial art), open to all of the School's advanced students. The aim of the subject was to learn how to 'create an overall composition of surface and space decoration'.⁵⁸ While taking on board the art nouveau principle of creating an artistically shaped environment comprising not only architecture and walls but also individual objects, Kreis was also sharp critic of art nouveau's stylistic excesses. 'Everything shakes and rattles with ornamentation', he wrote in one of his early articles.⁵⁹ The Dresden Raumkunst movement aimed to design interiors which could be produced with mechanical assistance and bought at reasonable prices. It was part of a wider attack on the ivory-tower aestheticism of Jugendstil that intended to replace its 'overheated luxury art' with an affordable art characterised as '*sachlich-*

56 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 20. The School's report son 1901–1902 and 1902–1903 apparently lists only those School competitions which awarded money prizes; for January 1903 it reports a design competition for a brochure cover illustration, in which Pechstein won both the second and the third prize. See *Bericht 1901/02 und 1902/03*, 27.

57 For Pechstein's book cover designs, see 'Bucheinbände moderner Art', in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 11 (1903), 202, 206.

58 See Gisela Haase, 'Institutionen des Kunstgewerbes in Dresden', in *Jugendstil in Dresden*, 45. For the importance of the *Raumkunst* movement for *Brücke*, see Aya Soika, 'Malerei im Dienste der Architektur: Die Brücke-Künstler und die Dresdner Raumkunst', in Birgit Dalbajewa, Ulrich Bischoff (eds.), *Die Brücke in Dresden 1905–1911* (Cologne, 2001), 272–277.

59 Wilhelm Kreis, 'Moderne Versuche', in *Deutsche Bauhütte* (1900), 175; published and translated in Mark Jarzombek, 'The Discourses of a Bourgeois Utopia, 1904–1908, and the Founding of the Werkbund', in F. Foster (ed.), *Imagining Modern German Culture 1889–1910* (Washington, 1996), 133.

bürgerlich (objective-bourgeois).⁶⁰ Together with Fritz Schumacher, one of Germany's leading architects and another proponent of Dresden's Raumkunst movement who taught at the city's Technical University, Kreis was later to become one of the founding members of the Deutscher Werkbund, an association of German architects, artists and industrialists acting as early promoters of industrial design.⁶¹

Pechstein joined Kreis's Raumkunst class in the winter term of 1902/03, and quickly earned his professor's respect. When the School moved to into new buildings Kreis asked Pechstein to execute the interior decorations of his studio. More importantly, Kreis acted as a door-opener for Pechstein. He introduced him to a range of other architects for whom Pechstein began to produce water-colours of their projects, and interior designs for the completed buildings. In early 1903, one of Pechstein's works for the architect Johann Schaudt, a room design for an exhibition of Raumkunst, attracted the attention of Otto Gussmann, a thirty-four year-old professor and head of decorative and mural painting at the Royal Academy of Art in Dresden.⁶² Gussmann was another supporter of the Raumkunst movement, and he was a very versatile artist himself. He designed many decorative schemes for murals, mosaics, windows and furniture, and even for textiles, wallpaper and jewellery which were displayed at public exhibitions and reproduced in periodicals.⁶³ Kreis realized that Gussmann's interest in Pechstein was a unique opportunity for his star student to develop further, and asked Pechstein if he would be interested in joining the Academy as a student of Gussmann. Pechstein did not hesitate for a moment. For the entrance examination he submitted a portfolio of works which so impressed the selection committee that he was allowed to skip not only the preparatory course but also the drawing and painting classes and was admitted directly as a master student of Gussmann, and entitled to his own studio.⁶⁴ Upon leaving the School of Applied Arts Pechstein received the School's highest prize and was told by the Director that the faculty had considered

60 Igor A. Jenzen, 'Jugendstil – Zur historischen Begrifflichkeit', in *Jugendstil in Dresden*, 200–201.

61 See Frederic Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven, 1996).

62 In Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 20, the artist refers to an International Exhibition for *Raumkunst* in 1902. The authors have been unable to find any historical evidence for such an exhibition that year. Pechstein might have referred to the International Art Exhibition of 1903, organized by Gotthard Kuehl. This would make more sense, because 1903 was also the year in which Pechstein became one of Gussmann's *Meisterschüler*. For Dresden exhibitions around this time, see Petra Hölscher, 'Dekorative Kunst auf Ausstellungen in Dresden – nur Dekoration?', in *Jugendstil in Dresden*, 60–64.

63 For Gussmann, see *Jugendstil in Dresden*, 431–432.

64 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 20.



Fig. 1.4: *The Royal Academy of Arts, Dresden*. Postcard, c. 1900, private collection.

offering him a teaching position. ‘I felt quite nostalgic when taking my leave from my teachers of which I had become very fond’, Pechstein wrote later.⁶⁵

The Dresden Art Academy which Pechstein joined at Easter 1903 resided in a brand-new and imposing historicist building on the banks of the river Elbe, right on the Brühlische Terrassen.⁶⁶ For a twenty-one-year-old from a working-class background who only seven years earlier had been pulling the hand-cart of a decorative painter in Zwickau, gaining entry to the Art Academy signified a huge achievement. Gussmann was aware of the unusual circumstances of his precocious student, and often helped him out financially. Even decades later, Pechstein was still full of gratitude towards his old mentor.⁶⁷ Gussmann was not the only one to take a liking to the young artist. ‘The custodian, a usually grumpy former constable, favoured me’, Pechstein recalled in his memoirs. ‘He lent me working utensils and repeatedly slipped me the one or other Mark coin. The most

⁶⁵ See *Bericht 1901/02 und 1902/03*, 22; and Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 20.

⁶⁶ See matriculation lists of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden, Easter 1897–1907, in Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden (SHD), 11126 (Akten der Kunstakademie), Nr. 111 (unpaginated). Pechstein had the matriculation number 285.

⁶⁷ ‘In his kindness, my venerated Professor employed me as his assistant, and sometimes he handed me a twenty-marks coin from his waistcoat pocket.’ See Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 21.

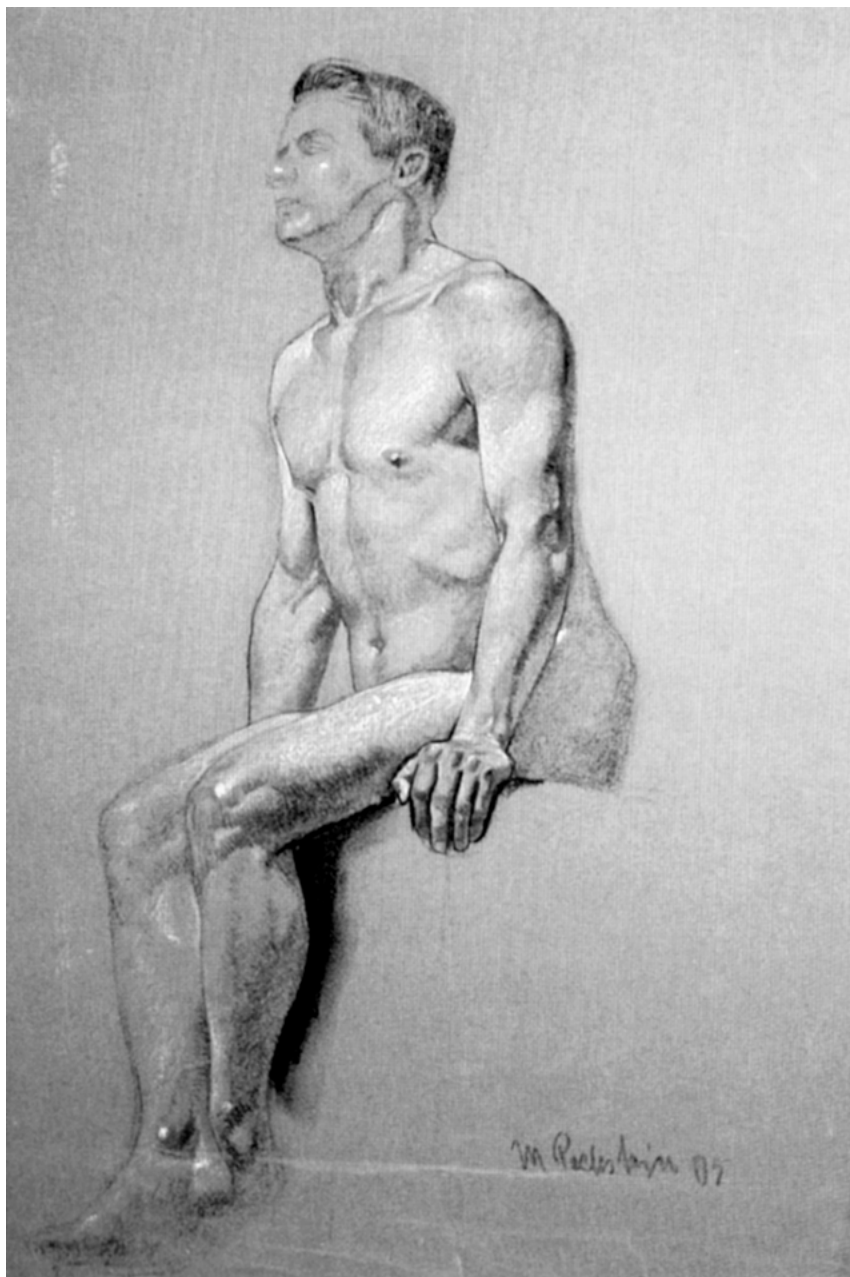


Fig. 1.5: *Sitting male nude*, 1905, drawing, 40 × 29 cm, private collection.

beautiful models I got first. I was able to work until late at night and even on Sundays in my studio because he entrusted me with the key to the back gate, and I was thus able to save light and heating in my small rented room.⁶⁸ Pechstein continued to share his accommodation with his friend Gerbig who transferred to the Art Academy the following year.⁶⁹ By this stage, Pechstein had already earned his first prize for one of his works produced in Gussmann's class in monumental painting. 'I had designed the interior decoration of a cathedral, and had painted one of its details in full-scale in tempera, three metres high, [and] two metres wide. For this work the Academic Council awarded me the Silver Medal at the distribution of prizes', Pechstein noted with considerable pride in his memoirs.⁷⁰

Those studies and sketches which have survived from Pechstein's time at the Dresden Art Academy demonstrate the influence of his new environment. His life-drawings from this period show nudes in the carefully arranged poses so characteristic of academic studio art. Although traditional in many respects, the Dresden Art Academy was also open to new artistic developments. Among the professors were many who had spent time in France and who enthusiastically adopted the technique of plein-air painting as practiced by the French impressionists. Different from Berlin and Munich, where critics of the academic style had formed so-called Secessions in the 1890s which went on to dominate the modern art scene in these cities, in Dresden the most outspoken critics, Gotthard Kuehl and Carl Bantzer, had been appointed to professorships at the Art Academy and the Dresden Secession was formally dissolved in 1901. Kuehl, an impressionist landscape painter, had a great impact on the Dresden art world by organizing big national and international art exhibitions which exposed local audiences to recent trends in contemporary art. Among the exhibited artists were many of the major French impressionists, but also some of the leading Secessionists from Berlin, Munich and Vienna, like Max Liebermann, Franz von Stuck, Max Slevogt and Gustav Klimt.⁷¹

Yet the most powerful stylistic influence on Pechstein in these early years was that of his teacher, Otto Gussmann. This was also a consequence of the medium and techniques in which Pechstein worked during these

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., and Knop, *Gerbig*, 195, ftns 485, 495. See also Wolfgang Knop, *Meine Suche nach dem Maler Gerbig – Bilder, Bekenntnisse, Interpretationen* (Suhl, 1989), 19.

70 Pechstein, *Erinnerungen*, 21. This work was part of a Pechstein exhibition staged by the Kunstverein Zwickau in November 1905, see the review in *Zwickauer Zeitung*, 26 November 1905: 'Studien-Ausstellung Max Pechstein, Dresden'. As far as the authors are aware, the design has not survived.

71 See Annegret Laabs, 'Malerei in Dresden – Eine Kunst im Aufbruch?', in *Jugendstil in Dresden*, 147–154.

years. As Gussmann's student and assistant, he was primarily concerned with monumental mural designs that had to be integrated into architectural spaces – often churches, or public buildings – which in turn necessitated a completely different approach from small-format easel painting. Just how close the relationship was between teacher and student is demonstrated by the stylistic influence of the Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler. After the critical acclaim which Hodler enjoyed at the Vienna Secession in 1904, leading art journals published lengthy articles on him, richly illustrated with reproductions of his monumental murals and paintings. A genuine Hodler craze followed.⁷² Pechstein's design for a ceiling painting, *Culture*, from 1905, clearly followed in Hodler's footsteps, and was probably designed as part of Gussmann's decoration of the great assembly hall in the Saxon State Chancellery in Dresden which was also influenced strongly by Hodler. Similarly, Pechstein's only surviving oil painting from 1905, *Old Age*, bears striking resemblance to some of the figures created by the Swiss artist. Related to that painting was the first woodcut which Pechstein is known to have produced, entitled *Coming and Leaving*.⁷³

Pechstein also continued to participate in design competitions, mostly for commercial products, which again influenced his choice of stylistic elements. One of his prints from 1905, a design for an advertising postcard for Rudolf Ibach, the world's oldest piano producing company, shows a rather striking composition drawing on James McNeill Whistler. Pechstein was well acquainted with Whistler's works: the Dresden Print Cabinet owned many of his graphics, and Whistler had often been exhibited by the gallery Arnold. After Whistler's death in summer 1903, the art journal *Kunst und Künstler* devoted a long article to the American-born artist, including a reproduction of Whistler's painting *Piano Lesson*.⁷⁴ Pechstein obviously fused this work with Whistler's iconic painting of his mother, decorated the scene with a row of winged heads of little cupids – hugely popular at the time – and submitted his design to the competition. It was

72 See Franz Servaes, 'Ferdinand Hodler', in *Kunst und Künstler* 3 (1904–1905), 47–60; Hans Rosenhagen, 'Ferdinand Hodler – Genf', in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 14 (1904), 281–307. On Hodler's influence on both Pechstein and Gussmann, see also Günter Krüger, 'Ein Bildnis des jungen Kirchner von Max Pechstein im Kupferkabinett', in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen Neue Folge* 16 (Berlin, 1966), 1, 30–31.

73 For Gussmann's design of the Saxon State Chancellery, see Katja Margarethe Mieth, 'Im Dienste der Architektur – Dekorative Malerei in Dresden um 1900', in *Jugendstil in Dresden*, 160–161, esp. fig. 8. For Gussmann generally, see Adolf Smitmans, Anne Peters (eds.), *Otto Gussmann 1896–1926* (Reutlingen, 1992). Pechstein's design, *Culture*, is reproduced in Soika, 'Malerei', 273.

74 See Harry Graf Kessler, 'Whistler', in *Kunst und Künstler* 3 (1904–1905), 445–466, esp. 455. For the collection of Whistler's works by the Dresden Print Cabinet, see 'Dresden', in *Kunst und Künstler* 1 (1903), 111; on exhibitions by the gallery Arnold, see Ruth Negendanck, *Die Galerie Ernst Arnold (1893–1951) Kunsthandel und Zeitgeschichte* (Weimar, 1998), 364–386.



Fig. 1.6: *Old Age* (1905/1), oil on canvas, 110 × 45 cm, private collection, Germany.



Fig. 1.7: *Coming and Leaving (Childhood and Old Age)*, 1905, colour woodcut, 18.5 × 18.5 cm (Krüger H 1).

awarded a fourth prize and 80 Marks, and was reproduced in the art journal *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* in summer 1905.⁷⁵

Pechstein drew his artistic inspiration not only from his teacher at the Art Academy and the works on display in the city's museums, but also from the exhibitions organised by commercial art galleries like Ernst Arnold and Emil Richter which made a significant contribution to the progressive artistic climate in Dresden at this time. In May 1905, for example, the gallery Arnold showed paintings of Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter;

⁷⁵ See *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 16 (1905), 581. Rudolf Ibach was also a collector of modern art, and some years later bought several of Pechstein's works, see Werner J. Schweiger, *Rudolf Ibach – Mäzen, Förderer und Sammler der Moderne 1875–1940* (Wuppertal, 1994).

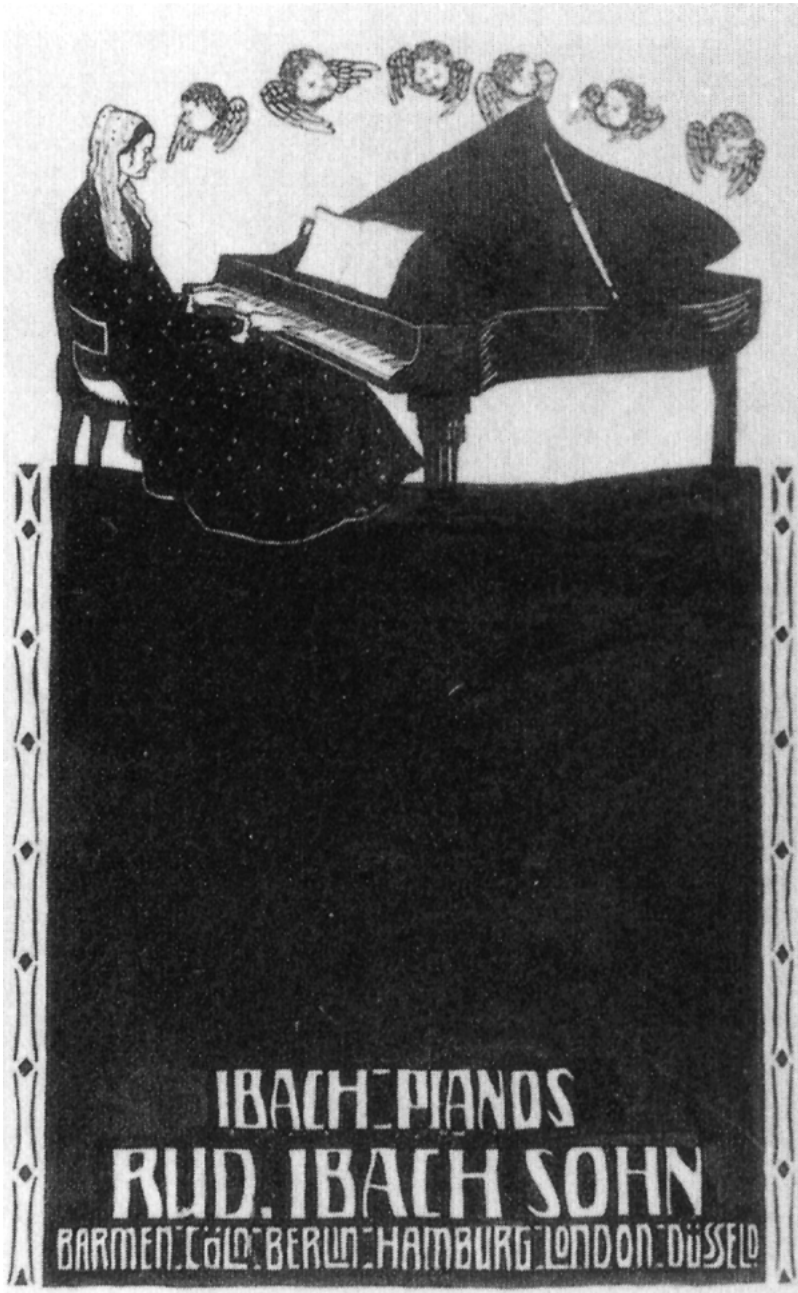


Fig. 1.8: Design for an Ibach Piano advertisement, 1905, zincograph, measures unknown (Krüger L 1). Published in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 16 (1905), 581.

in November 1905, Arnold hosted the first major exhibition of van Gogh paintings in Dresden, organized by Paul Cassirer in Berlin.⁷⁶ It was the first opportunity to experience van Gogh's paintings in their full colourful glory. Until 1904, when Julius Meier-Graefe, the pope of German modern art criticism, published his enormously influential monograph on the history of modern art in which he devoted a lengthy passage to van Gogh, the Dutch artist had been practically unknown in Germany. Some of van Gogh's works were reproduced together with excerpts from his correspondence in the art journal, *Kunst und Künstler*, in 1904, but only in black and white.⁷⁷ The more than fifty paintings by van Gogh on display in the gallery Arnold deeply affected some of the young students who saw the show. According to the recollections of Fritz Schumacher, Erich Heckel, one of his architectural students at the Technical University and later to become a close friend of Pechstein's, began to draw 'extremely disorderly' in the wake of the van Gogh exhibition, and replied to his teacher's exhortations that he was concerned only with capturing the 'overall expression'.⁷⁸

It is very likely that Pechstein, too, visited this van Gogh exhibition. His oil painting from early 1906, *Physalis and Chili Peppers*, was visibly influenced by van Gogh's brushstroke technique, though at this point still only moderately so. Pechstein was clearly taken with his own achievement and submitted the painting to the jury of the Berlin Secession's summer exhibition.⁷⁹ The Berlin Secession, led by Max Liebermann, Lovis Corinth and Max Slevogt, was Germany's most prominent and controversial association of contemporary artists, and widely perceived as the bastion of German Impressionism. By 1906, nearly all major German artists and sculptors whose work did not toe the traditional academic line were ei-

76 See Negendanck, *Galerie Ernst Arnold*, 406–407. Dresden was the first station of the travelling exhibition organized by Paul Cassirer, after the initial exhibition in Berlin, the first major van Gogh exhibition in Germany. See Walter Feilchenfeldt, *By Appointment Only. Schriften zu Kunst und Kunsthandel, Cézanne und van Gogh* (Wädenswill, 2005), 59.

77 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst. Vergleichende Betrachtung der Bildenden Künste, als Beitrag zu einer neuen Ästhetik* (Munich, 1914 [1904]), vol. 3, 597–606. See also Lloyd, *Vincent van Gogh und der Expressionismus*, 19; and 'Aus der Correspondenz Vincent van Goghs', in *Kunst und Künstler* 2 (1903–1904), 364–368, 417–419, 462, 493–495.

78 See Fritz Schumacher, 'Aus der Vorgeschichte der Brücke', in *Der Kreis. Zeitschrift für künstlerische Kultur* 9 (1932), no.1, 8. See also Fritz Schumacher, *Stufen des Lebens. Erinnerungen eines Baumeisters* (Stuttgart, 1935), 283.

79 See Georg Reinhardt, *Die frühe Brücke. Beiträge zur Geschichte und zum Werk der Dresdener Künstlergruppe Brücke der Jahre 1905 bis 1908; Brücke-Archiv* 9/10 (1977–1978), 171, fn. 333. The fact that it was not listed in the exhibition catalogue and the high entry number (1356) suggest to us that it was among the many works rejected by the jury. The 1906 Berlin Secession summer exhibition contained less than 370 paintings, graphics and sculptures in total, see Peter Paret, 'Historischer Überblick', in *Neuer Berliner Kunstverein* (ed.), *Berliner Secession* (Berlin, 1981), section IV (unpaginated).



Fig. 1.9: *Physalis and Chili Peppers* (1906/1), oil on canvas, 65.5 × 70.5 cm, Sprengel Museum Hannover.

ther regular or corresponding members of the Berlin Secession; and its small and highly selective summer exhibition had become one of the most important exhibitions of contemporary art anywhere in Germany.⁸⁰ Although the jury eventually rejected Pechstein's painting, the submission was a significant act on the part of the young artist. The fact that Pechstein considered his own work worthy of inclusion in this elite group of modern artists gives a taste of his self-confidence at the age of twenty-four, and was a strong indication of Pechstein's longer-term artistic aspirations.

For the time being, however, Pechstein could not afford the luxury of focusing on painting van Gogh-inspired works. His financial situation

80 See Peter Paret, *Die Berliner Secession. Moderne Kunst und ihre Feinde im kaiserlichen Deutschland* (Frankfurt/Main, 1983), 229–230.



Fig. 1.10: *Zinnwald church*, 1906, watercolour, measures unknown.
Published in *Moderne Bauformen* 6 (1907), no. 7, figure 51.

necessitated more pragmatic artistic projects. The most important source of income for Pechstein at this time was his work for a variety of Dresden architects. Schumacher later remembered meeting Pechstein as a ‘tender stripling’ in Gussmann’s studio, and he was so impressed with Pechstein’s ‘extraordinary formal proficiency and surety’ that he began relying on him to colour his architectural sketches which strongly depended on colourful effects.⁸¹ Other architects also began to seek out Pechstein’s help in translating their technical drawings into attractive perspective views. Unfortunately, only few of these works by Pechstein have survived. A watercolour from 1906 of a church in Zinnwald, a little Ore Mountains village fifty kilometres south of Dresden, planned by the architects Losow and Kühne gives an impression of what Pechstein delivered to his clients: an idyllic image of a church with ivy climbing up its walls, next to ripe cornfields and with flowers in the foreground. In this case – as in many others – Pechstein’s work helped to sell the architects’ project: construction started in 1908, and the church was consecrated the following year. Postcards with photographs of the completed building show a striking similarity to Pechstein’s original image, yet his watercolour was considerably more pleasing to view. This was certainly the opinion of the editors of Germany’s leading

⁸¹ Schumacher, ‘Vorgeschichte’, 9.

journal for modern architecture, *Moderne Bauformen*, where Pechstein's work was published as a full-page colour illustration.⁸²

Pechstein's artistic qualities made him an obvious choice for projects relating to the great 'Third German Decorative Arts Exhibition', taking place from May to October 1906 in Dresden. This show was widely anticipated as the year's exhibition highlight. Unlike other arts and crafts exhibitions, the Dresden show was organised not by industry, but by artists, architects and interior designers, and aimed to promote the ideals of the Raumkunst movement, of marrying artistic quality and functional design. Even before the exhibition opened, the show generated such widespread interest among artists throughout Germany that the organisers decided to expand the exhibition's scope considerably. Eventually, the exhibition grounds covered over 20 acres and featured a huge purpose-built exhibition palace, an art industry hall with machines and serial products, a model village including several detached and semi-detached workers' houses, a school building, a cemetery and a chapel, as well as shops, garden pavilions and guest houses. It was also decided to construct an additional building, the so-called 'Saxon House', a three-wing country house dedicated exclusively to Saxon and specifically Dresden examples of Raumkunst interiors.⁸³

A number of Pechstein's teachers and commissioners were involved in the organisation of this major exhibition: Gussmann was in charge of the Fine Arts section, Schumacher headed the Raumkunst section, and Kreis was commissioned to build the 'Saxon House'. The architect William Losow, of the Losow and Kühne architecture office, was the exhibition chairman; his colleague, Hans Max Kühne, won the competition to design the cemetery chapel and various rooms within the Saxon House. Consequently, Pechstein was commissioned to produce several murals and paintings to be incorporated in the model interiors, as well as the cover design of the weekly exhibition paper.⁸⁴ Kühne asked Pechstein to contribute a painting to be installed in tiles above a fountain niche in the conservatory of the Saxon House, the so-called 'Winter Garden'. Executed by the ceramics producer Villeroy & Boch, Pechstein's work depicted a seated nude woman facing the viewer with her arms wide open. The fountain niche of which the painting formed part was reproduced often in the various art journals

82 *Moderne Bauformen* 6 (1907), no. 7, figure 51.

83 See Jutta Petzold-Hermann, 'Die Dritte Deutsche Kunstgewerbeausstellung Dresden 1906', in *Jugendstil in Dresden*, 65–79.

84 *Ausstellungszeitung der Dritten Deutschen Kunstgewerbe-Ausstellung 1906* (Dresden, 1906). See Günter Krüger, *Max Pechstein. Das graphische Werk* (Tökendorf, 1988), H2–H6. For a survey of Pechstein's works produced for this exhibition, see Aya Soika, 'The Public Face of German Expressionism. A Study of the Brücke Artists' Interior Designs', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge 2001, 31–35.