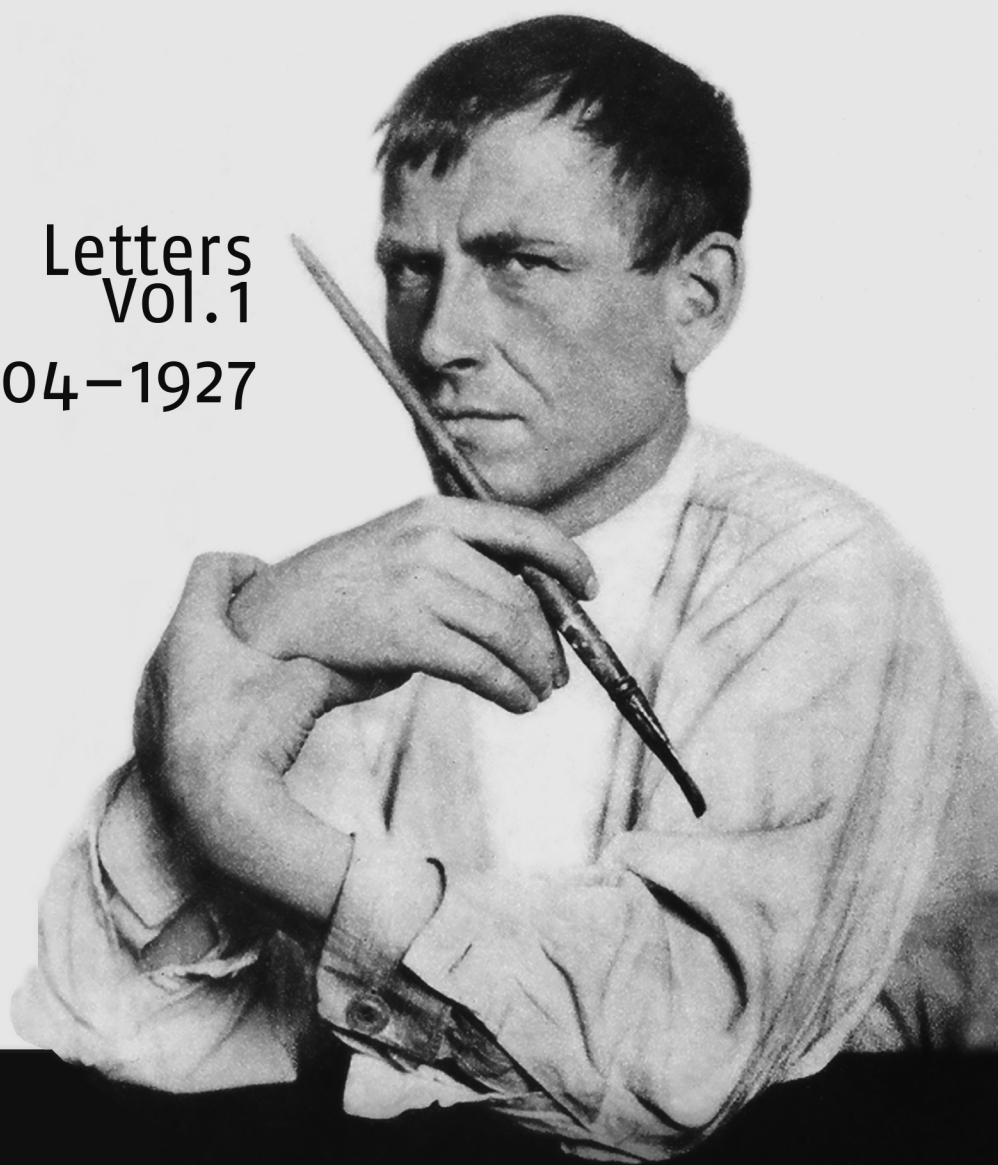


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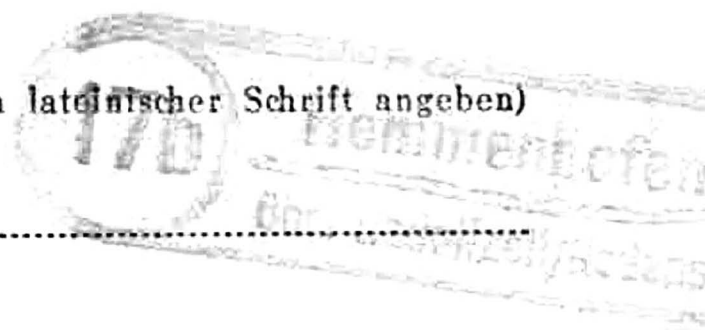
Letters
Vol. 1

1904–1927



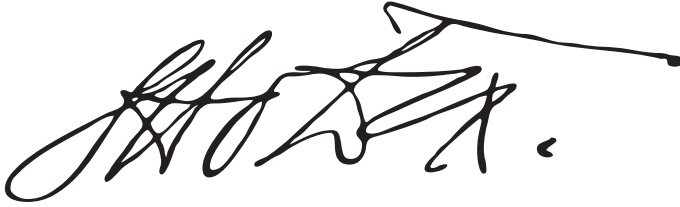
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DIX



OTTO
DIX





Letters
Vol. 1
1904–1927

Translated by

Mark Kanak



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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ulrike Lorenz', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Introduction

Ulrike Lorenz

An Artist's Life in Letters

"I've never written confessions since, as closer inspection will reveal, my paintings are confessions of the sincerest kind you will find, quite a rare thing in these times."

— Otto Dix to Hans Kinkel (March 29, 1948)

An Artist without Manifestoes

A man of words, this letter writer never was. In response to art critic Hans Kinkel's request to contribute to a collection of self-testimonials of German painters, Dix gruffly rebuked him, surly calling such pieces nothing but "vanity, subjective chatter."¹ And this in the precarious postwar situation, as the 57-year-old — after years of isolation under Nazi dictatorship, prisoner-of-war captivity, and a recent artistic liberation — painfully wrestled once again for recognition and the ability to eke out a living in the German art world, employing critical allegories in an expressive formal language that no one had expected, & no one wanted to see. "Also, I am not willing to reveal the depths or shoals of my soul to astonished citizens and contemporaries. Whoever has eyes to see, look!" Dix further responded to Kinkel. No more than a year earlier the Cultural Office of Dix's East Thuringian hometown Gera had received a similar sharply-worded refusal from the artist to put his paintings and drawings up "for discussion":

We have now for many years in Germany heard the voice of the people with respect to artistic things [...]. Discussions boil down to the fact that each and every bourgeois type and every blind man wants to voice his little desires. Everyone thinks they know what art should be. Yet few have the sense that belongs to the experience of painting, namely *the sense of sight*. Indeed, a sense of the eye that sees colors and shapes as a living reality in the picture. [...] For what is explicable in artwork is sparse; the essential thing about it cannot be explained, only observed. (July 25, 1947)

In no less than six brief words of gratitude for the honorary GDR citizenship granted in 1966 at his birthplace, Dix succinctly stated his personal vision of the role of the artist in the world: "Painter, do not talk, paint. Dix!"²

In living according to this maxim, Otto Dix differed from many of his contemporaries in this respect, hence he had no need to regularly comment on events as most others did throughout the 20th C, so anxious to make declarations about one -ism or another, fighting their culture battles in the process, quite often with the pen. In fact, Dix left neither any sort of manifesto or collected writings after his death in 1969. Apart from some fragmentary lines recorded in a notebook from WWI and some handwritten CVs, one barely finds evidence of any private records and diaries, nor public lectures or articles. Dix consistently and vehemently avoided expressly stated interpretations of his works or systematic self-portraits of any sort throughout his life. He preferred to keep his inspirations and intentions strictly private. Being pigeon-holed into one category or another by outsiders is something he steadfastly rejected. He even maintained a cool

distance from his two biographers in East and West Germany, Fritz Löffler, an art historian in Dresden, and Otto Conzelmann, a Stuttgart middle school teacher; when writing back and forth with them, he employed, as with practically all letter-writing partners, a reciprocal formal “Sie” in the exchanges.

Conversely, Dix was a painter who imbued his work with his conceptual reflections, as well as artistic speculations, and a secret longing for transformational transcendence in the “magical realism”³ of his pictures, a resilient, indestructible “lust for grotesques,”⁴ and, depending on the piece, sober or sentimental, often boastfully undaunted, sometimes despondently losing touch in means and methods, and certainly occasionally failing, too, in some instances utterly. That says much about the personality of an artist who — repeatedly walking a fine line between the boundaries of the cultural zeitgeist and the political climate — reacted with imagery infused with corrosive sharpness and implacable stubbornness, reflecting Dix’s own ebbs and flows in weathering the cæsuras and upheavals of the 20th C. This absolute temerity ultimately also affected the reception of his art, both in Germany and internationally, in both the artistic & academic worlds.

For this son of a principled iron worker and dedicated Social Democrat from the central German provinces, during his own life, only one thing mattered: the image & the work done to realize it. “Set your ass down and paint, even if the Kaiser should happen to come along.”⁵ This is one of several curt, succinct mottos that accompanied the man, and not only throughout his own early *Sturm und Drang* years. After almost four incessant, brutal years on the frontlines in WWI, Dix was a belated

entry but rapid success in the Dresden and Dusseldorf art scenes, full of “dry hemp, sugar, & water,”⁶ a dadaist attitude, and actively networking and employing power slogans à la Nietzsche: “In sexual intercourse one finds the highest increase in the world of consciousness, & so it is with art, ecstasy, coitus; the product of highly strained senses and muscles. [...] Art is amoral, anti-Christian, illogical, anti-pacifistic, anti-ethical.”⁷

Accordingly, the laconic artist was only ready in the rarest of instances to make fleeting statements about himself, or even public statements. In one of his most important working periods, the era of the Weimar Republic, we have only one single text that has come to posterity. In 1927, under the title “Objekt gestaltet Form” (Object Shapes Form),⁸ the Berlin evening paper published a skeptical piece by Dix on the question of what could be considered “New” in the art of the present. In the article, Dix naively labeled himself “a well-known expressionist painter,” having long-since advanced from the status of a contemptible personality for the conservative Weimar Republic establishment to a protagonist for New Objectivity. “Anyway, what’s new for me in painting lies in the broader use of materials, in an intensification of those forms of expression that existed precisely with the old masters in their forms of expression.” Dismissed from his position at the Dresden Academy in 1933 & ostracized as a “degenerate artist” during the Nazi dictatorship, he fled to the extreme southwest, to Hemmenhofen, officially condemned to silence.

It was only in a divided postwar Germany that the media and public urged Dix to make more & more statements about his work & era. As he wrote in a letter to the editorial office of the *Badische Illustrierte Zeitung* in 1948:

“Thanks to the philistines, I’ve already become unpopular enough through my paintings, and the Nazis’ biggest annoyance of all was that my talent could not be denied, so it does not matter if by your publication I happen to become even more unpopular.”⁹ As skeptical and resistant a contemporary witness as ever, he did however occasionally expound his views on art & the world, both in the GDR and in the Federal Republic, though often through gritted teeth, and in terms of tone and tendency, clearly differently. Whatever he did write was published in the daily press of his old and new homeland: in the West at his home near Lake Constance, and in the East behind the Iron Curtain, in Dresden and Thuringia. A rare exception was the one longer interview in the Cologne *Diplomatischer Kurier* in 1965 with Maria Wetzel,¹⁰ in which he made key statements about his work and techniques, worldviews & life, in vivid retrospect. In the post-war years, however, Dix had really only written three independent texts about art. In 1955, he had penned some thoughts on portrait painting in the *International Bodensee Journal of Literature, Visual Arts and Science*; and in 1958 — quite directly from studio praxis — two longer technical instructions for art students in the publication series “Washington School of Art” about painting and composition and the painting of a figurative composition in tempera and oil.¹¹ Lastly, in 1966, his hometown Gera finally elicited an endearing memoir about his childhood for the exhibition catalog on the occasion of his 75th birthday.¹²

An Edition of Letters

Apart from the meritorious publication of a colorful, infrequent list of self-examining treatments in journals, letters, conversations & memoirs by Dieter Schmidt in the *Verlag der Kunst* (Dresden), and intermittent, occasional original pieces scattered in print throughout the German-speaking world,¹³ with the appearance of this methodically assembled edition of letters, we now have the most extensive collection of original Otto Dix texts ever published. This English edition also includes a translation of the aforementioned “Object Shapes Form.” Well over a thousand letters to addressees ranging from friends and family to artists, collectors, colleagues and critics & biographers, cultural administrators and art historians, and academy presidents amongst others, were tracked down by German researchers and Gudrun Schmidt in archives, estates, and museums, supported by the Dix Foundation.

The most comprehensive and intimate collection of letters, spanning 46 years of marriage with Martha Dix, with whom Dix had raised three children, is preserved in the artist’s estate. What Dix himself documented & kept (or what survived) — whether professional correspondence or material received from his contemporaries — was left by his widow to the Archive of Fine Arts at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg in 1977. Dix himself burnt important documents in his first refuge at Schloss Randegg after the National Socialists took over, while another cache of papers were destroyed by Martha Dix in 1938 out of concern for the fate of family and friends after an unexpected house search by the local SS in Hemmenhofen. The letters that were mailed

to others, of course, remained in the possession of the respective addressees and ended up, in best-case scenarios, in private estates & public archives. Much of this is being published here in English for the first time. While not a small amount has imaginably been destroyed or lost, or remains undiscovered, other correspondence could not be located, or was unavailable for publication. The greatest and most regrettable gap in the letters is comprised of those from the long-standing close relationship Dix had with Käthe König & their common daughter Katharina, with whom Dix found an existential refuge in postwar divided Germany.

The artist's correspondence is characterized by randomness, depending on its internal structure, the personal attitude to the addressees, and according to external circumstances & events. Some letters strive to overcome distances and speak of the agony of absence from family, working conditions, and related matters. They range the entire spectrum of the present publication — the first of three volumes — and provide a particular, though incomplete panorama of German history & culture. The jagged inner frontiers of a cliffhanging artistic existence become tangible, revealing how Dix braved almost all the fundamental perils in a century of extremes. Growing up as worker's son at the edge of the German Empire, in WWI Dix formulated his individual identity as an artist, "One that has the courage to say yes."¹⁴ Dix's artistic emergence in Dresden, his first successes in Düsseldorf, the peak of his career in Berlin, & his second professorship in Dresden all ran parallel to the rise and fall of the Weimar Republic. Under National Socialist dictatorship he was defamed as an "entartete" Künstler (degenerate artist) & responded physically by retreating

into internal exile at Lake Constance. After WWII, the division of Germany became a private burden for him, but also the impetus for a singular East German / West German cross-border existence.

The letters of this edition are divided into three volumes and establish relationships as well as a chronological course of events. In a sense, one might refer to these divisions as in some ways reflecting Dix's "three wars," covering the periods of 1904–1927, 1928–1946, and 1947–1969. The most extensive series of letters are addressed to Dix's wife Martha and to family, including parents, siblings, and children, and we have the artist's friends, art historians, collectors, and brokers, with one of the most important external correspondents being the Ernst Bursche family, who became indispensable to the Dix's survival in the aftermath of the war in the late 1940s. There were vital contacts in Dresden, too, and the two most important interpreters of his work: Otto Conzelmann and Fritz Löffler. Two additional, narrow categories of letters — historically work related, yet still culturally and politically interesting — include Dix's letters to his art dealers, especially to Johanna Ey in Dusseldorf, Karl Nierendorf in Berlin, but also to Israel Ber Neumann in New York, and after WWII, to Florian Karsch and Hans Klihlm in Berlin & Munich, and lastly, commercial correspondence with institutions: civic and governmental authorities, cultural offices and art academies and their separate institutions in West & East Berlin, art museums and graphic arts publishers.

Writing Letters in a Century of Extremes

"Secrets should not be spoken aloud."

— Otto Dix to Lotte Simon-Eckener (early 1945)

Whoever expects to read in Dix's letters programmatic confessions and secret messages, or broad statements of artistic beliefs and philosophical reflections, will search in vain for such. Private tendencies reveal themselves at best as declarations of temporary love and rare expressions of friendship. Obsessive extravagances are certainly not disclosed. Even in private letters, the artist seldom or never revealed anything. It is as if his "inner demon" had ordered him not to utter a single thing, to remain silent, where he himself could not hope for a true understanding of his art. "I am delighted that you have guessed something of what lies as the innermost sense in my paintings," he wrote to Lotte Simon-Eckener — the daughter of the much loved Friedrichshafen airship pioneer Hugo Eckener — at the beginning of 1945, shortly before his mobilization in the Volkssturm. "It is that for which the artist himself is neither responsible, nor what he can cause by his own volition. Because in the deepest heart of it all the artist himself is merely a tool of demonic or divine powers that lie entirely outside of his personality."¹⁵ As he only ever rarely did in any other written documents, unusually, Dix expressed himself in a most explicit way in two letters to Lotte Simon-Eckener:

I have no 'world view' that can somehow be defined. All I know is that I know nothing and that I have a lot of chaos within me. [...] I'm so confused, uncertain, an ignorant man as a thinker, and when I write

you these things it's already saying too much (because everything goes terribly wrong when one speaks it, or writes it down). Secrets should not be spoken aloud, or only in paradoxes. Anyway, the 'Guardian of the Threshold' warns me with every sentence I write.¹⁶

Dix wrote letters to his contemporaries mainly by hand, in his sovereign "prole's claw." These were very often difficult to decipher, employing a broad script, with characters and lines flowing between changing pieces of paper. Exceptions can be seen in Dix's early phases when his inner exuberance flowed forth with surprising eloquence, for example, in letters in this first volume, such as the 1911/12 letters to Gera friend Hans Bretschneider, or a decade later in the 1921–22 correspondences with his beloved and future wife, Martha Koch. In the early years, Dix mainly wrote only when absolutely necessary: in times of separation, to gain understanding and information, to maintain connections or clarify business, for settling artistic projects and discussing quotidian affairs. The monosyllabic artist never wrote pointless letters. The illustrated letter comments of the early 1920s to friends and the family of Martha Dix shine a light on Dix as a humorous merry-maker; those in the 1930s reveal a caring father writing out of affectionate kindness for his own children.

Dix had begun writing letters in 1904 — and first attempts at graphic arts work — at the age of twelve, & the first extant correspondence we have from him is a silhouetted postcard to his father. His final letter came 65 years later in 1969 with brief personal & business notes to Fritz Löffler and a graphic arts publishing house. In the decades between, an alternating current of written

exchanges flowed freely. Of course, the correspondence of the later years is substantially less full of gaps than those from the period of the Weimar Republic, or even before, which comprise this first volume. Only a few artists or critics of note were sporadic contacts who occasionally received letters: Kurt Günther, Conrad Felixmüller and Arthur Kaufmann from the early years in Dresden and Dusseldorf, later also George Grosz. Franz Lenk, with whom Dix corresponded freely about fears & plans, proved a helpful friend during the Nazi era. At the same time, Dix exchanged letters with collectors who had become friends, and art connoisseurs, especially with pediatrician Otto Köhler, and margarine producer Fritz Niescher in Chemnitz. The friendship with mill owner Fritz Bienert in Dresden began in 1927 and continued well past WWII. Letters to Niescher became greater in number as the latter fled to the Federal Republic in 1951 and took care to ensure the delicate transfer of an important collection to the West; Niescher later returned the favor with supplies of lithography paper from the Netherlands. Commercial relations with the Old Master collectors in eastern Thuringia, brewery owner Wilhelm Zersch, & especially the royal Reuss family, are available from only one side, or indirectly through third parties.

On the art market, Dix was especially successful with his impressive portraits of celebrities from bohemian life & culture, and then later those from the world of business & politics. Letters join him temporarily with models or their clients, the Jewish lawyers Fritz Glaser & Hugo Simons, and later with Sylvia von Harden, the scandal-journalist who the portraitist famously "gleaned" on the street in 1925, immortalized on the canvas, and who unexpectedly much later called upon Dix again from her exile.

Art and History

Before 1945, museum directors and art historians such as Ludwig Justi and Werner Haftman appear only sporadically in the correspondence. In 1933, both respond in the most insightful manner possible to the Nazis' defamation of Dix.¹⁷ In 1946, Will Grohmann, the agile art dealer and Saxon Minister of Culture, officially reestablishes contact between Dix and Dresden before transforming into an apologist for the abstractionists in West Berlin and the Federal Republic, something for Dix tantamount to a betrayal. In 1947/48, the comparatively extensive correspondence with the later biographers Löffler (who had already been in touch with Dix as early as 1933, informing the escaped painter of cultural-political happenings in Dresden) and Conzelmann begins. Dix only occasionally supplied both with general observations on historical contexts; when it came to spiritual backgrounds and artistic intentions, he said virtually nothing. Only seldom are personal beliefs casually expressed, such as his inveterate dislike of abstract painters, or the demand for emotional empathy in his art, which Dix called "Look" (February 1, 1954). More paper was used — on both sides — in the years of struggle surrounding the monographs. Conzelmann's compact book on Dix was finally published in 1959 in Hannover, one year earlier than the basic Löffler compendium in Dresden,¹⁸ which has since undergone several expansions and improvements. Along with and in addition to Dix's Dresden artist friend Ernst Bursche, Löffler himself developed into a faithful factotum in the GDR art world. He managed not only to sell the lithographs and maintain the corresponding accounts, but was also responsible for exhibition concepts

and mediating loans, catalog texts & newspaper reviews, and also for providing reliable information on life and politics in the enigmatic land behind the Iron Curtain. Unlike Conzelmann's eloquent apologetics, Löffler's academic approach proved more enduring, and he himself was a diligent worker in Dix's world; contact with the remote painter intensified in the 1960s. It was also the East German art historian that finally established what to date has proved to be the indispensable catalog of works of a West German publisher.¹⁹

For the artist's biography, what is of particular interest are those rare documents concerning his desired goals in life, compelled life changes, or plans that might have failed, for whatever reasons, & how those failures were viewed. In these letters, we for example read of the frustrating 1924/25 studio search in Berlin, the 1933 dismissal from his position, the discharge from office and honors in 1947–1950, & the failure (for political reasons) of the Academy calls in Dresden & Dusseldorf, all of which were expressed in different tones to multiple addressees. For the elites in the East, the critical realist's adamant, steadfast indifference to their points of view in his public statements and his late expressive work was deemed politically suspect. Those in the West possessed the opposite ideological mistrust: In his early 1920s work, as well as in his postwar statements, Dix's eastern zone, socialist inclinations were considered highly suspicious. Thus the correspondence with official figures and public institutions in the Federal Republic and the GDR after 1945 provides important insights into the cultural-political & historically relevant personal area(s) of conflict in which Dix was moving. Above all, the various efforts made by the GDR surrounding the artist in the ice age

of the formalism debate reveal that the eminent painter from the West was much too valuable as a figurehead for the GDR to ignore, and both officials & friends were all-too-happy to bask in the sun of his growing fame. In 1947, his native town of Gera eagerly discovered the great artist for itself, dedicating regular birthday anniversary exhibitions to him, and even eventually naming him an honorary citizen in 1966. In East Berlin, the Akademie der Künste elected Dix a Corresponding Member, & a year later the first major retrospective was organized and some publishing projects realized. Dresden, the second home, takes center stage in a large amount of the business and private mail. The work stays in the eastern zone and later, the GDR consistently posed travel, passport, and customs difficulties. Currency reform and currency problems were part of everyday life with friends and his second family, as well as the production & sales of lithographs, but the failure to receive a (re)appointment to the newly constituted Hochschule der Bildenden Künste on the Brühlische Elbterrassen and the complicated acquisition history of the *War* triptych, which took many years, also proved difficult. This edition of letters reveals how profoundly this process affected Dix, which, after all, concerned a key work of his oeuvre and at the same time was a model of self-understanding for the GDR.

The signing of the contract in Hemmenhofen in September 1968, as well as the (finally) successful purchase of the antiwar panoramic triptych for the Galerie Neue Meister in Dresden was treated like a state secret until 1990. The painting had been installed in Dresden since the artist permanently loaned it to the museum in 1957. Even then, through Fritz Löffler, Dix had offered the piece for purchase at a price of 50,000 marks. When the sale

did not happen, he made repeated attempts to terminate the loan agreement. In negotiations, by the mid-1960s, Dix was insisting on a purchase price of 500,000 marks in foreign currency. (In 1973, Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart would end up acquiring the *Metropolis* triptych for one million German marks.) In this way, valuable portfolio holdings of the state-held art collections had be put up for sale on the Western art market through the East Berlin foreign trade company VEH Antiquäten, which in this case advanced the purchase price as a loan. In return, Dix gave the Dresden Kupferstich-Kabinett (Cabinet of Prints) 44 drawings worth 100,000 German marks.

One of the most important external correspondents is Ernst Bursche, Dix's former master student, who held a fort for him in Dresden during the Nazi years and in the GDR in the rented Dix-studio in the workers' suburb of Löbtau until ultimately fleeing to the West in 1962. The letters to Bursche, which are characterized by great openness and which were conducted employing the informal "Du" starting in 1940, involve especially personal references to current affairs and living conditions, Käthe & Katherina König included, and above all the most substantial statements regarding painting technique, subject matter, and the crucial last turn in his late work to "a new way of seeing, [...] a kind of unleashing" (September 16, 1944).

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "A. Einstein", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Letters
Vol. 1
1904–1927

1904

To Franz Dix

7.23.1904 [PM] [PC]

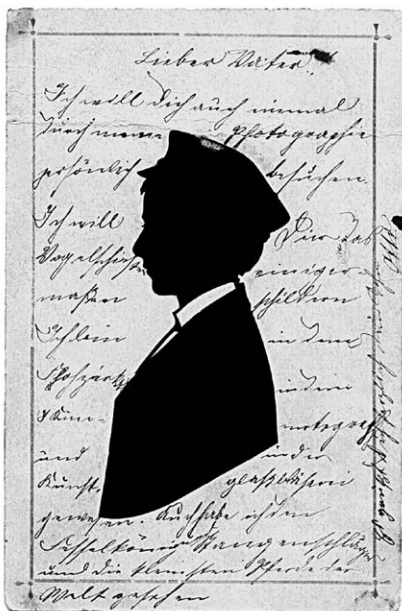
Dear Father!

I should like to visit you once again personally, with a photograph. I would like to show you the bird-shooting. I visited a flea circus, the cinema, and the glass blowing demonstration. I also saw the contortionist and the strong man, along with the smallest horse in the world.

Warm regards Your son Otto

GNM, DKA, NL Dix, Otto II, C 1

Card to his father, Franz Dix ("To Herr Franz Dix c/o Christoph Wehner Salzungen am Mühlberg") who was most likely visiting the spa in Salzungen. Dix was 12 years old at the time.



Postcard to his father, 7.23.1904

1911



To Franz & Louise Dix [PM '11'] [Dresden] [PC]

dear parents!

Received your package. Many thanks for everything.

Hopefully things are going quite well for all of you.

Regards Otto

Have gone into the reserves.

Private collection



To Hans Bretschneider [early 1911 | Dresden]

Dear Hans! In your letter I truly see a child of our times. I am one, too, with respect to my view of art. What is individual? The involvement of the ego in nature. Our whole time is egoistic. From the lowest pupil to the greatest Master. And you hold my striving for nature, for pure nature without heroic bombastic bragging, for affected? Shouldn't it be considered a thousand times nobler, greater, to master oneself and only see nature rather than bringing the "I" into it all? (I mean only seeing the material side of nature) Of course every nature study I undertake ends up being a personal experience. Yet one ought not experience so much, but rather take it all in, Nature, much like a dilettante. You will no doubt misunderstand, because you yourself are not an artist. What I'm saying is that

sometimes you've got to have a firm foundation before you can begin building the house. —

With respect to our lifestyle, you write that "we've been frauds." Are we that no longer, then? It may be the case that, when expressing myself in my letters, one point of view consumes the next. At the moment, I haven't got a single idea in my head. You seem to suffer from the imagined misapprehension that your opinions are set in stone and that you are already a man. Then you accuse me of disgusting myself with some truths. This is absolutely not the case. To the contrary, I am in fact trying to hurt myself somehow in everything I do and am seeking unpleasant truths. I'm now taking care of myself better, more than usual because in a healthy body, I also see the vehicle of healthy knowledge. I'm a vegetarian, even if not completely. I don't enjoy any alcohol, either. I just have to wean myself off smoking. Sports I ought to do more of, dangerous, yet healthy sports. First the body, then the spirit. One should first nourish the body, then the spirit. Oh, what a formidable group the Spartans must have been! What is our art, as compared to that of the Greeks? Diseased, rich in spirit (mine, as well). — Do you think it sinful if one studies the countenances of great men? Or if one wants to be scientific? Nietzsche tells artists "Can you not keep the watch with me just for an hour?" — ¹

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* II, § 29.

dear Hans! You write that I should come visit you, but unfortunately, I hardly have any time to do so. And only if it weren't so expensive! Your illness has both simultaneously thrown me into amazement and horror. How did you catch it? I advise you to become a vegetarian, too, and to disavow alcohol if you really want to get completely well. For every poison that you put in your body when it comes to meat or other spirits will just cause illness to return. — I'm not much of a writer, so you'll have to technically decrypt my letters yourself. Write again soon. Get well soon, from the bottom of my heart Your Otto.

Private collection

ALSA.

To Hans Bretschneider

[early May 1911 |
Dresden]

dear Hans!

Finally I've found a way to write you once again. But there really wasn't any helping it. How's it going, old man?! Would love to see you again, but when?

Do come visit me in Dresden. Things are really happening here at the moment. Dresden is fully consumed with the Hygiene Exhibition. A few [days] ago, it was Margerittentag. The whole thing seemed like an exercise in begging to me, "the State goes begging." I had to buy about 10 daisies, couldn't avoid it. Most of the students were buying and you can't opt out. Last night was a lovely night for love.

There is a young girl sharing my place with me. I am really fearful that the whole thing could have consequences.

I'm not going to travel home for Pentecost. The large 1911 watercolor exhibition has opened now in Dresden where one can see a huge range of original art. You have to see this exhibition; there are original pieces by Liebermann, L. Corinth, Weisgerber, and reproductions by the early advocates of impressionism, Monet, Manet, Meunier, etc. Make it happen and come to Dresden. Many greetings Your loyal friend Otto.

p.s. Please forgive the barren style. I'm not capable of writing a proper letter. More later. Otto

Private collection

The International Hygiene-Exhibition was held in Dresden from May to October 1911, as was the large watercolor exhibition at Brühl's Terrace. — Margerittentag (literally, "daisy day") was a day that was organized by clubs (Vereine) from late 1910 and was especially popular until the beginning of WWI. It took place in many German cities, with the goal of raising money by selling flowers (daisies in this case, but also other kinds of flowers in other German cities) to support local children's hospitals.



To Hans Bretschneider [1911 | Dresden] [PC]

Dear Hans! In the interim I'm sending this postcard. Letter follows right away. On Saturday I'm moving.

Regards

Otto

Private collection



Selbstporträt als Wanderer, 1911

ADXX.

To Hans Bretschneider [summer 1911 | Dresden]

My dear Hans!

Apologies for the long delay in sending you my letter. I moved on the first. I now live at Elisenstraße 45 IV, left, and have a lovely, large place.

You ought to be here; then you could study, too.
There are people here from all the major countries.
— I'm sitting in my place here and writing letters
in all directions, all over Germany, to friends, to
try to get some jobs. I've sworn to myself that I'd
not pick up any large brushes [drawing] in my hand
during this break. People are active at school and
want to include me in a club (in plain German, a
drinking club), but they won't have any luck with
that. Write again soon.

[drawing]

Many greetings — Your Otto

How do you like the included sketches?

Private collection

Drawings: Lorenz FW 4.1.4

Friend Kroll: Rudolf Kroll, a fellow student.



To Hans Bretschneider [late 1911 | Dresden]

My dear Hans!

It's really stupid that I haven't written sooner, but
until now I've had little time and also have terribly
little time at the moment. Competitions (which I
regularly win, of course), private work, and school
always keeps me from it. It's exactly 1:30 P.M. I just
came home from school and at four I've got to
head back to the old hellhole again. I'm attracted,
unrestrainedly, constantly, to perishing nature.
Thus I always waver between obligation and feel-
ing, the latter nevertheless a thousand times more
sacred to me. The work for the Bauernball is already
well underway here; I got saddled with a job as a
worker in charge of decorating.

I've made a lot of enemies at school because of my incessantly rebellious spirit, but I nevertheless seem to be interesting to people. For a long time I'd noticed that I'm not cut out for applied arts. I simply have much too much respect for nature. I have "private work," but what a load of "kitsch" — You can't believe how much it pains me, if one must deceive oneself & paint kitsch just to make money. But you can't talk anyone into anything; it's as if you're talking to idiots. I have long given up on the point of view that art is for the people & is meant to educate them. Such thoughts are lost on these spiritual fools. Art is only for artists. You could actually come down here; we can help each other out. I've got credit everywhere. With respect to your lines, I'm really not the one to judge, at all. I understand nothing of writing poetry. Seems like a mix of crass naturalism and sentimentality. You write like a fried fish. I also write poems occasionally; I've included one of my latest poems. Please write me your opinion about it, but a wholly honest one. — I find the depiction & mood in the infirmaries of the night better and more artistic; these things are really sensed. You won't be able to impress me with wine and Havana cigars, nor with sausages. I feel much better when eating bread, fruit, & cream. I do have to smoke though, sometimes, to help inspire the spirit. I can, for example, inspire my spirit through special nutrition, so that it can work day and night, without tiring, remaining fresh and at a high level. This, for example.

I have to close for now, for I really lack the concentration to write letters at the moment.

Autumn

- 1) You call Autumn the
death of nature.
And what a joyful, light dying it is, however!
Not black and clad
in gloomy mourning vestments
No, colorful and diverse,
blue and red
Thus dies nature!
- 2) You people, linear in
narrow houses
dusty corners of your culture
break free from the product
of your hands
Die happily and joyfully
proud and strong
just as nature does!

Please write me what you think about all this. —
Just come down to Dresden when you are capable
of working again. (Of course you must adapt your-
self to my methods of nutrition) then we'll get along
just fine until you are fit again. Write again soon.
Get well soon Your Otto. Please excuse my foolish
criticism, but I can't really see it any other way.

Private collection

Bauernball: Peasants Ball.

Fried fish (Backfisch): slang for "little girl" or "teenager."



To Hans Bretschneider [1911 | Dresden]

dear Hans!

You know how rarely the need overcomes me to write to you (rather than conversing with Nietzsche, the Dionysian leisure). You, my only true friend (without flattering you). But since today is just such a rare day, I still have to make the most of it, although it's almost 11:15. I've just come from a woman that I previously had before, but who now inspires more horror than respect in me, more loathing than love. You would not believe how much I despise everything now, even the money work that the philistines & socialists consider the only true work. My work is now of idleness, not the clumsy proletarian sort, but a much finer, nobler one. Three books are the treasure trove of my knowledge (i.e., science): the Bible, Goethe, and Nietzsche. But the source, the eternal source of all these products of knowledge, is nature. I've almost become a child again. What an idiot I seem to be as compared to my three holy books, and I stand before nature, like a newborn (oh, if I only possessed the naiveté of a newborn). There's a gaping void in my head. I can sit for hours without thinking. But emptiness is an impossibility in nature. So it could be a maximum of unfinished thoughts that want to develop (I fear too much, these will be premature births). I'm trying with all my strength to render nature as it is, even if it is ugly (that is, nature's rarely ugly, but more so when contributed to by human hands). I am not seeking heroic or romantic motifs anymore, either. I love the sleek, and simple, which to your

eye may sometimes seem naive. Unfortunately, I have an inclination to the Romantic, still. Well, even whipped cream, when enjoyed in moderation, can't hurt anyone. — As for my spiritual, artistic work, I want to paint a Christ figure, indeed, as a warrior for those poor in spirit, with a sword and shield. How do you like that?

You'll have to forgive me the sparseness of the style and the contradictions in thought that may occur, you do know my Janus-head character, which can be forgiven thanks to its immaturity. — You'll have noticed that the teachings of the mind are creeping into the narrative, therefore I have to close for now and not write some tasteless stuff. Do write me again soon, regards, your friend, Otto.

Private collection



**To Hans Bretschneider | Fragment, with poem
[around 1911 | Dresden]**

Heroic Onomatopœia
From Kypros to Golgotha

From beyond the night rise up
my giant demon wings
and my passions' choir.
Charging forward without reins,
stallions equal, in the morning mist
storming past, with fluttering manes,
mad with lust, neighing,
their nostrils flaring. —

And again the wild scene pulled
 me down into the deep valley of sin.
 O' my senses flourished.
 From the heat of fire in the morning breeze.
 This young body's splendor,
 white as the brightness of *sumptuous roses*
 that do cling close, in the soulful summer's night,
 with *moonlight aflame*. —
 I was full of young wine,
 sparks danced before my eyes and
 every *fiber of my being* trembled,
 drunk with lust!
 And my trembling eagerness blazed,
 in wild flames.
 They flickered high, and above me,
 sizzling, joined together. —
 You have burned my heart.
 When I left the mounds of Venus,
 walking wearily through grey sands,
 broken were my wings.
 And slowly they ascend, higher & higher,
 reaching higher,
 penetrating deeper and boldly further —
 waves borne, disgusting, sluggish —
 and I went so long in that valley of sin,
 the giant flowers' sultry vapors
 stunned me like an *abyss spoiled*
 with purple mirage fantasies.
 The bats choir swarmed
 'round my weary head
 in the great flight and dark poison
 my mouth drank drops with every breath. —

And that height I so far,
 my dear, would have come
 because if not my star,
 my lonely star in the pale mist would glow,
 if your love had not died
 as a wisþ of pale light!
 O that you never saw the tears
 dampening my cheeks each night. —
 Perhaps you will feel a shudder
 of the hopeless longing power
 when the waves gently rinse
 my dead body at the shore.
 I am so tired, so bitterly tired.
 All my castles become ruins,
 through my soul resound the songs
 of those who die in the spring! —

Write me and give me your opinion. I must close.
 It's already 12:30 A.M. Many greetings
 Your friend Otto.

p.s. I've underlined those parts that I especially like.

Private collection

Dix here copies verbatim a love poem by Marie Madeleine (Marie von Puttkamer, born Günther) from her book *Auf Kypros* (Berlin: 1910) 117–120. Madeleine (1881–1944) achieved notoriety for her erotic lyric poetry, and the poem quoted here is drawn from a book that was already in its 37th printing. Following her husband's death, Madeleine proceeded to lead a rollicking, lavish lifestyle, travelling extensively, then finally died after 30 years of morphine addiction in 1944.

1912



To Hans Bretschneider [early 1912 | Dresden]

Mon cher ami

Your last letter left a truly listless impression. You seem to be becoming more and more sentimental. Must be the effect of your love, eh? Haha. You clearly have the so-called “lovesickness.” You should be ashamed. If you don’t learn how to renounce this sort of thing, you won’t learn how to fight, either. You envy me here in Dresden. Do you perhaps think I am sitting around eating sugar peas? I have to fight, starve, and renounce everything. And this is precisely what makes me steadfast & resistant. You think, perhaps, I am in good standing with the Herr Professors. Some opinions about me.

Ornament-Prof. Hfr. [Hofrat] Rade: Yes, Dix, you can scrawl, and therefore, I can’t teach you nothin’ more. You are the second coming of Slevogt or Rembrandt, but you simply can’t paint.

Flower-Prof. Mebert: There is much that is personal in your work, the color schemes are good, but draw better, draw better. It exhibits fine taste, but don’t smear the paint like that. This all means, in other words, “Be good and don’t be unusual, yet you are no tradesman and you have to be liked by the people!”

Yet the fact that someone might actually want to achieve something greater in the end, well, none of them think much about that. But I have to.

Our great Master, Böklin, was of no use (in the professors' opinions, with reason) for the Academy. And Menzel had to have a word with Valet in the A.D.B.K [Akademie der Bildenden Künste] sculpture class, "because he couldn't draw." Such nonsense!!! These two Masters could perhaps draw better, second to none, but — they were not good. That's the cause. Everything by the template, tradesmen!!!

That's the mantra. But you see, that's why I'm complaining. Naw, that just strengthens my convictions. Be a man, an artist, and not some sentimental, average guy. You are, by the way, becoming more and more sweet. Regards Otto Dix

Private collection

MDXII.

**To Hans Bretschneider [after 1.19.1912
|Dresden] Fragment**

My dear Hans!

Finally I have found a way to write you once again. 1. Do excuse the fancy stationery (I am starting to take your lead). The Bauernball on January 19 went absolutely splendidly. My decorations for the champagne tent were the best and most original of all the Bauernball. I took biblical events as themes because farmers know nothing but the Bible. An unspoilt rural baroque. In every niche, an image

and indeed
the lost paradise
of the prodigal son
Susanne in the bath

David and Bathsheba
 the men of Jericho
 Joseph and Potiphar
 Samson and Delilah

I'll send you the sketches next time. Then I must confess to you that I'm drop dead in love with a wonderful girl, a student here, her old man is an editor and art critic. She is slender as a pine tree, blond, has as wonderful a profile as I've ever seen, a noble Roman nose like a goddess. Her clothes are as exquisite & tasteful & simple as I've ever seen. But that's not all. She is incredibly intellectual and understands me completely, and my art. When I visited her this week, showed her my work and she asked to pick one out for herself, seeing as how I was indebted to her from the Bauernball, she chose the best of my pieces, that is, what I found best, and you know what acerbic taste I have. I got to know and love her at the Bauernball. I'll have to tell you the whole story in person. My written language fails to express it properly. You cannot imagine how happy I am, finally a woman that understands me, really through and through, and a beauty, too! She is open in thinking & feeling [*continuation missing*]

Business is business, who knows how long it will take before I finally sell something again. I'm sending you another good piece. — I was selected for the committee and submitted my sketches, 3 in number. All 3 and one from Baumgärtl were selected as best, that is, by the committee. Yet this was done without the consent of Wirt, who was standing in for the Director. This fellow found 2 of my

pieces offensive, one (the selection of the Israelites from Egypt) because it was against the Jews & the other (the demise of the Egyptians on the Red Sea) was offensive to the politicians. Since the students are celebrating here in Dresden with a grand parade, we had also intended to partake in it. The thing was too red. The third Esperanto Congress or [*continuation missing*]

Private collection

Dix relates above how he met Marga Kummer (1892–1950), his first love, at the Kunstgewerbeschule (school of applied arts) in Dresden where Kummer was studying fashion under Margarete Junge. The letters between the two were passed as “Künstlerpost” [artist’s mail] and are very sought after by collectors today.



To Hans Bretschneider [early 1912 | Dresden]

My dear friend Hans!

I’ve had your monstrous letter for some time, but I kept hesitating to answer because I really did not know where to begin. Your love story was sentimental, touching. I’m enthralled at present with a fellow student of ours, a lovely creature! But only clandestinely. This Dix, otherwise so brave, doesn’t have the courage in this one. It is Professor Hermann’s daughter. My lady from the Bauernball. We all had our pictures taken and will receive the photographs soon. Maybe I will send them to you, i.e., the photographs. But you will have to send them right back to me.

You ask whether or not I believe that you can become a poet, I can’t possibly know this; it rests

with you. I don't know either whether or not I'll become a painter. But I am "hoping & working" and tell myself, you must become something great. Do you understand, I have to, and even if I lose everything in the process. I presently have all my colleagues in the department under my scepter, i.e., I'm spiritually higher than they are. I am now taking French. When I've learned a bit, I'll write you a letter in French. On Saturday, I'm going to see the opera *Salome*. [*Continuation missing*]

Private collection

Professor Herrmann was the instructor for figure and structural drawing.



To Hans Bretschneider [early 1912 | Dresden]

My dear Hans!

You've written me a short and long letter about your love story and think I can advise you on it. Well, mon cher, I don't like advising people in such things, it's dangerous. If I were you, I would simply write the girl a cool, polite letter and invite her over one evening to return your books personally. I would then act proud and part ways. If the girl is guilty in the rift and loves you, then she won't be able to find a moment's peace. If it's your fault, then you have to ask her pardon. Incidentally, it's your own fault either way, for you're the one that taught her how to think. In my view, the girl is exceedingly brilliant, is funny, [but] can't keep up with your deep, spiritual sensitivity. I consider the words of our great Nitsche [sic] to hold true:

“women rarely think, and when they do, it’s not worth a thing.”² Despite your greatness you’re still a bit petit bourgeois and cannot detach yourself from the “Gretchen affair.” If you have the will to be great, then have the will to renounce —. I advise you to put an advertisement in the Dresden *Neueste Nachrichten* and then come to Dresden. You have to get out of Gera! Regarding what Hemann-Jüdemann is looking for, I have to tell you (discretely) that I really have no time for such useless ventures. I’ll write to Jüdemann, I haven’t located the woman. My friend, do you think you could help me with a job? Hopeless. The man is unpredictable. At the moment, he is in Halle, with his wife. You needn’t follow criticism from the likes of him. He’s much too stupid for that. What is it you keep writing about my love? I’ve no idea what you mean. Now follows the “opera singer” story. You are completely, utterly meschugge. I’m quite enthused, for her sake, but relationship! “Don’t even think about it.”

As for the critique. As you suspected yesterday, I like the psalm best of all, it is great & powerful, I like the “I flame” part as well. But the third, while reading it, I had a taste in my mouth like Anis.

- 2 This is a close approximation of a line from Nietzsche’s *Nachlaß*, hence Dix is probably quoting from memory. As Dix writes: “selten denkt das Frauenzimmer, wenn es denkt, dann taugt es nichts.” The original: “‘Selten denkt das Frauenzimmer, / Denkt es aber, taugt es nichts!’” (NF-1882, 19[10] — Nachgelassene Fragmente Frühjahr 1882). For one translation in English of the complete poem, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Peacock & the Buffalo*, tr. by James Luchte (2010) 110–112.

Terribly sweet! Man, take my advice, give up on the love poetry stuff, that'll do absolutely nothing at all for you! The themes should be powerful, & sublime. In order to give you a sample of what I consider finer modern poetry, I'm sending you a poem by Marie Madeleine.

I really like the poem "Verirrt" [Astray], but it seems to me that you've already cast a sideward glance at Madeleine. You especially don't like the poem. But I do. I understand nothing of writing poetry. In writing a poem, in my view it depends not so much on the external, but rather on the internal worth of a thing. The words simply don't add up if you read them by themselves, but rather in a poem. You say, "I would like to leave Gera, but I can't." That's not true.

Everyone can do so, if he wants to. People do not lack the strength, but rather the will. A firm, unshakeable will is the foundation of happiness. I don't know what else to say, just come to Dresden.
Write again soon. Regards Otto

p.s. I'm sorry I didn't write sooner. I had the time, to be sure, I just didn't take any to do so.

p.s. This nice little lie, I have no time, I hate it, but people always say it "out of habit."

Private collection



To Hans Bretschneider [possibly Easter 1912,
beginning of the semester | Dresden]

dear Hans!

I received your letter. From this I see that you are not only physically ill, but also spiritually not quite healthy. Does vegetarianism have anything in common with dancing and sex? Or do you think that vegetarians are priests that want to deter people from every human need? Do you think these are people that mortify their own bodies through every imaginable self-denial? Do you think that your viewpoint, full of resignation, is correct, arising only from having to deny oneself, not from an overcoming? You pessimists are no better than any priest, not one single bit. You assert that "every kind of sexual intercourse is damaging in our era." That's complete nonsense! — Further, regarding your "strokes of Fate." Do you think that "changing your position" is also a stroke of Fate? — Ascribe everything to Fate (Christians call it God), this unknown Something, so that you all mustn't be compelled to bear the responsibility! Your illness is not even close to being a reason to despair of life and to allow yourself to be cast about by Fate. —

But you still feel well enough to express some divine humor? I don't see any of it. How is this divine humor in harmony with the "insults of your ill compatriots"? Do you think that a divine humor will be victorious there too? — Enough of the spite.

My vegetarianism is not something that is forced where I firstly have to "overcome" myself and fight hard, no; my body quite willingly comes along

with my spirit without revolting. That's the first sign of *healthy vegetarianism*. Don't hold it against me, Hans! But you are still terribly pedantic. You want to come to the big city but lack the money for 1 (one) month's living expenses. — What do you think credit is for? Then you want to fall back on burdening your old pals and the guys'll say, "see, he's back there with mommy." — —

It's slowly getting dark in my place & night is emerging from all corners. I'll have to pick this up later. —

So, I ate dinner, lit the lamp, & now I'll continue — —.

I simply wish you would just once be able to come into a circle like the one I'm in so that you can have a chance to think other thoughts. There's a joy, happiness, and levity here. Money worries, food worries, are trivialities to Bohemians; they are well past this idea that only a proper life (as the bourgeois types say), i.e., always having enough to eat, to drink, is the only thing that will make you happy. You'll no doubt assert that "the nation has to sustain that kind of people, they are the cancer of the nation." I assert the opposite. They are the bearers of culture. In all the hustle and bustle of modern life, they maintain the old joy, strength, and steadfastness. This is worth more than all the fat privileges of a good conscience and a full belly. They are people with their own point of view, with them, one cannot say, like Rideamus, "Whoever is nothing, and has nothing, usually becomes a Social Democrat." — —

So you're still seeing "Goscherl"? Man, you really have patience. Committing yourself so soon is really pointless. You'll end up being a homebody. Or do you think that you can still live it up? From the bourgeois point of view, you have to be "solid" as well when she's your woman. Have you really found the "wife"? — — Well, I don't want to harass you about it. I wish you all the best with her. Hopefully you won't be disappointed later. — Today was admission, school begins tomorrow; I have to work and learn a lot this semester. I've had my fill of lazing about over vacation. I submitted to the "Meppendorfer Blätter"; my work was politely returned to me. Do you happen to know a really stupid, naive joke that I can maybe do an illustration for? But it can't be in *demand*.
Write again very soon. Your Otto

Private collection

Fritz Oliven, also known as Rideamus (1874–1956), was a German lawyer and writer who was born in Breslau and died in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Under the pseudonym Rideamus, Oliven wrote lyrics, librettos, and other works.



To Hans Bretschneider [1912 | Dresden]

My dear Hans!
Pardon my laziness; I really haven't any excuse for not writing other than there isn't much to say. What should I write every time? You have to write me first and give me something to say. Sometime in the next few weeks I'll be traveling back home, I have some business to attend to there. Are you healthy again or have you at least recovered

somewhat? Does your old man know about the girl? I sent my friend around to see you; maybe he'll come visit you sometime. I went dancing the last 3 days, on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday I had a very sweet girl. But actually I'm just in love with her body and her little breasts. Too bad. After I've enjoyed her, my "love" disappears in a heartbeat. You'll probably tell me "he's talking to me like Hans Liederjahn." It's all the same, for "the woman that isn't loved has failed to make her mark" — "that's all nonsense," eh, but what else can I write, if I don't have anything else to say anyway?
Many greetings Your Otto

Private collection



To Hans Bretschneider [mid 1912 | Dresden]

My dear Hans!

Many thanks for your letter. First just let me ask if you need any ink. If so, then I'll send you a bottle. There is so much here, that it has to be sold, just to get rid of it. You seem to be slowly becoming a homebody, a philistine. Necessity has compelled me to become a completely different person.

I no longer play the bohème anymore, running around in modern half-shoes, with bows, multicolored socks, and an ultramodern sports hat. I am, thank God, long since past the time where I need to display my individuality; only blockheads, fatheads, do that. I've given up the long hair, cheap coat, and artist's tie as well. It disgusts me now to

have people stare at me; in short, *externally* I've become an everyday man, but inside I'm still the same hard-headed guy who, thank God, still has a healthy mind. I have even changed my view of women. Now it's me they're chasing, and so much so that even I find it annoying. I am living well, & happy. As for savings, I'm doing none of that. When my monthly money is gone by the 15th, I know for sure that I'll sell a painting on the 16th. Or get a well-paid job to do. Financial worries only create gloomy thoughts and prevent work getting done. An old student song goes

Whatever the world brings tomorrow,
Whether it brings me pleasure or pain,
come what may come, rain or shine,
tomorrow is another day.
Today is today. —

I have to laugh about your ideal love. Nothing like that happens around here. Wild, I storm out into this roaring life and let people do what they want, to each his own. This one today, that one tomorrow. Being an artist means being a man and being a man means having good & bad sides. — Aw, why philosophize when you are much more mature than me and know it all anyhow. I would, however, advise you to seek out a friend who is more mature than you, for I can't be of any help to you on this one —. You wave all sorts of nonsense in my face; I know nothing of that. You're a doom-sayer, and to the highest degree! If you write me again, write me letters that you've composed in a more sane moment, not a crazy one. Nothing

will come of the trip to Gera, of course, what can I do there, anyhow, let myself be browbeaten by these proletarians? I am not longing to see my kin, either. At most I'll travel there on business for a day since I have to go to Schloß Osterstein anyhow. "I love the life of a fella..." Thus begins another Lied. Near the bird meadow lies for many years an old barge in the Elbe. Green are its cabins-walls painted. On the roof of the barge is a garden, red geraniums & yellow cress bloom there. A narrow path leads from the land to the ship. In the warm summer nights, cheerful and fiery songs ring from this boat. Accompanied by a lute. Up & down the Elbe, state steamships or black coal barges move slowly past, northward lies the noisy city with its Florentine lighting — —. Clinking of glasses, merry laughter from below. Dreamily, the lute rings out again, the sounds echoing quickly: "Sons of the Muses, let the rounds be sung happily" etc. Just now comes the verse:

Sing and joke,
kiss and embrace.
For humans, God created wine,
he has given us women,
to bless our lives,
and to gladden us through love. —

At the round table they all sit around, young & old, scholars and tradesmen, the famous and the unknown, all happy, all the brothers amongst themselves, and all looking at life from the bright side. And the next day they're all back fresh at work in the studio or sculptor's rooms or in the

sculpture class. That's life; that creates the courage in one to work that goes along with it, so as not to become some sort of animal. So now you know my opinion. I send you my greetings. Otto.

Private collection



Selbstbildnis mit Wanderhut, 1912, painting

MSA.

To Marga Kummer 4.10.1912 [PM] [Dresden?]

[Drawing]

I've been sitting now the whole afternoon at home,
brooding dully & smoking Vienna ornaments.....
[verso:] Oh, if only I had stylized today! [Drawing]

SLUB Dresden, Mscr. Dresd. App. 2581, 14a and 14b

Drawing: Lorenz FW 4.1.7

Vienna ornaments: Dix is referring to his smoking self-rolled cigarettes with newspaper that had been used to make ornamental designs for a school assignment on ornament and stylization. Thanks to Gudrun Schmidt for this elucidation.



Postcard to Marga Kummer



Handwritten signature

To Otto Baumgärtel

4.11.1912 [PM] [Dresden] [PC]

To Otto

[Drawing]

Elbe landscape on Apr. 10. Morning, 10–11 o'clock.

The man with the jacket in the foreground has a cold and is continually grumbling to himself:

Goddamn 'tis bad, ah slab, etc. O

Museum Haus Dix, Hemmenhofen, permanent loan from the State of Baden-Württemberg



Selbstporträt vor Elblandschaft [Self-portrait in Elbe landscape], drawing, Lorenz FW 4.1.9

OT.

To Otto Baumgärtel 9 [?] 1912? [PM | Kamenz] [PC]

dear Otto! Since I've no money here at the moment, I ask you to please go to my landlady and tell her that 3 10 mark notes are in a sock in the wardrobe drawer. She is to give you one. Do you think that on Saturday the stipends [*illegible*] come? Because I still have to pick up mine, too. I feel like going on a hike next month. Do you feel like coming, do you have money? Otto

Private collection

1913



To Otto Baumgärtel 10.21.1913 | Dresden [PC]

Hurrah! Bauernball poster, First Prize Your Dix

Museum Haus Dix, Hemmenhofen, permanent loan from the State of Baden-Württemberg



To Otto Baumgärtel 10.21.1913 | Dresden [PC]

My dear Otto!

Hurrah. First Prize. 50 M. So I can claim, according to our agreement, 20 % of the prize, i.e., 10 M. When it is done, then you will receive 20 % of the money. Of course it is clear that I will sign the poster (also as per the agreement), since the original idea and sketch is from me. Your poster is included, behind. I ask you to please not tell a soul about it. You know that I could not work at the Kunstgewerbeschule. It would be disastrous for you and for me. You needn't tell the secretary anything about it, either. Don't be shy about your work. As soon as I receive the money, I will send it to you. Your Otto

Private collection

On the situation and the possibilities for additional earnings, as well as Dix's participation in contests, see Ulrike Lorenz (ed.), *Dix avant Dix. Das Jugend- und Frühwerk 1903-1914* (Jena: 2000) 57.

– From the 1914 draft, the earliest known color lithographs, *Einladung zum Bauernball* [Invitation to the Peasants Ball] (Karsch 129), and *Plakat zum Bauernball* [Poster for the Peasants Ball] (Karsch 352), the annual student's celebration at the Kunstgewerbeschule at the beginning of the year, served to finance internal school stipends.



Bauernball poster, color lithograph, 1914



To Franz and Louise Dix 10.29.1913 [PM]
[Dresden]

dear parents!

Please send me 50 marks immediately. You will receive my laundry next week; send me back my pictures. Otto

[picture opposite: *The Lovely Cats*]

Kunstsammlung Gera, Dix Archive

During these years, Dix's parents supported him as a student in Dresden whenever possible with produce, laundry, and money.

1914



To Marga Kummer [1913/1914] [Dresden]

dear little one! Herewith I send you a number of flowers. They are better thought than drawn. By this, I mean, almost all are physical (three-dimensional), perhaps too difficult to render for you. Please write me again what you think about all this. I received both your letters. If you are making sculptured, three-dimensional flowers, you can allow yourself to use strong color surfaces & spots that can also be deconstructive. In plain German, the colored spots do not need & should not be parallel to the form.

Big kiss

Otto

SLUB Dresden, Mscr. Dresd. App. 2581, 24



To Otto Baumgärtel 7.3.1914 [PM] [PC]

Is the Nietzsche capable of developing. If yes, then
send it to me. If not — — then t[urn] the whole
thang pro pro [plus] 75° Your Dix

Museum Haus Dix, Hemmenhofen, permanent loan from the State
of Baden-Württemberg

Drawing: *Weiblicher Akt* [Female nude], Lorenz FW 4.1.26

As supported by documents in the Marga Kummer Estate, in the spring of 1914, Dix made a life-size plaster bust of Nietzsche, his only known sculpture. Paul Ferdinand Schmidt purchased the work in 1923 for the Stadtmuseum of Dresden, but in 1937, it was confiscated by the Nazis and offered at an auction of forbidden works in Lucerne on June 30, 1939. Its whereabouts remain unknown, though it may have been destroyed. In a 1939 letter (month unknown, but conjectured to be July) to Otto Köhler, Dix mentions the sculpture being listed in a German art catalog, *Die Kunst*, Bruckmann Heft № 10, for 400 English pounds. Exactly what Dix is referring to in the above letter is however not evident.



To Otto Baumgärtel October [1914 | Dresden]

dear Baumgärtel! I've been a soldier 5 weeks and haven't heard anything from you for quite a while. Why don't you come to Dresden before we move out. The service is interesting (i.e., even the most interesting thing is boring), but also very difficult, if we have to move 5 cannoneers for example, the heavy artillery are set in motion at the command "battery move out" and must make their way up the grenadier's hill. There's no cause for complaint. That's a "lousy edge." Otherwise, everything is bene, just no money (as ever). I've had a terrible cold since I signed up and the mess hall bread doesn't help either. Interestingly, "something new" was read to us in training yesterday. When fatigued, you are supposed to cross your arms for one minute.

This is refreshing, or one can push upwards forcefully (in the event of leg fatigue) exerting energy against the upper arm, causing one [to work?], thus defeating the tiredness. I'm in my quarters now. It's 9:45, at 10 I have to be back, take care and write soon. Your Dix
4. Field art. Reg. 48 Dresden 1. reserve inf.

1915



To Marga Kummer

Jan. 26, 1915 [Dresden
or Bautzen]

dearest!

In spite of the fact that I'm a soldier now, I still keep to my high-falootin' plans for art. For example, I intend to immortalize you in sculpture. For this, you absolutely have to sit for me [drawing] or similar [drawing] or the like

I myself am not quite sure as of yet. I painted today.


SLUB Dresden, Mscr. Dresd. App. 2581, 20

Drawings: Lorenz FW 4.1.27 and 28

26. June 1918

liebe!

es geht mir in der
in einem sehr
kleinen Stübchen
zum Beispiel geht es
vor mir in einem
Kloppich zu kommen
Vier auf der
mit einem kleinen
1/2 auf Sie



Marga als Aktmodell [Marga as a nude model], 1915





COLOPHON

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