

Ernst Neumann's "New Values of Visual Art": Design Theory and Practice in Germany at the Turn-of-the-Century

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Footnotes begin on page 64.

An exhibition entitled "Ernst Neumann and His School" held in 1910 in the library of the Royal School of Applied Art in Berlin provided an opportunity for reflection about Neumann's contributions to German art's development since the turn-of-the-century.¹ Paul Westheim praised him as a leader of artistic printmaking, known for his experimentation and innovative teaching, and also as the creator of distinctive posters, such as his large advertisement (figure 1) for an appearance of the dancer Sarahet in 1903 at the Wintergarten in Berlin.² Neumann was among the first German artists to apply his talents to commercial graphics, continuing the spirit of the great French poster art of the 1890s. Westheim suggested, however, that this inventive spirit actually restricted his success, for Neumann refused to follow the two trends that were coming to dominate German advertising—the "object poster" of Lucian Bernhard and the "prestige poster" of Ludwig Hohlwein.³

Figure 1
Ernst Neumann, *Wintergarten Saharet*, 1903,
color lithograph poster, 135 x 92 cm.



Fritz Hellwag, who also reviewed the exhibition, offered more insight about the specific visual quality of Neumann's posters by relating them to the "Americanism" of Berlin's variety theaters.⁴ Posters were like variety acts, he argued, since they had to capture the public's attention for brief spans of time, doing so with bursts of strong sensation that often had a distinctive, almost brand-like character. While this practice suited modern consumption, it posed a danger of creative stagnation for an artist like Neumann, who had built his early success on "the skillful importation of grotesque whims and tricks that have been proven in American advertising."⁵ Neumann escaped a creative dead-end, however, because he enlivened his posters with strong spatial effects, which were influenced by impressionist painting's ability to capture movement and life through light and color. The basis of Neumann's artistic success, Hellwag wrote, was his continued attentiveness to what Neumann had described as "a *panischen Schrecken* (panicked shock), produced by sudden spatial experience in nature."⁶

Just such a powerful effect characterized the Saharet poster. The popular Australian dancer looks out and down at her audience from the stage, her face seen beside her right leg that has been pulled vertical by her right arm, thus creating the "big split" that had become her brand-image. Colors swirl across the background, contrasting with rivulets of black, crimson, and gold that describe her costume's intricate layers, voluminous skirts and dangling pompons. All seems calculated to evoke her dance's dazzling effect, which one commentator described as "insane spinning, it is like some mysterious zephyr whirls around her and becomes a typhoon."⁷ After Neumann's poster appeared on the columns, however, it was quickly replaced by another poster (figure 2) that featured only Saharet's face—centered and framed within a hexagon, her name inscribed below in distinctive script.⁸ No artist's signature appeared on the poster, only the publisher's name—Hollerbaum & Schmidt—compressed into a square signet to the lower right of the image. It is likely that an association with the work of Franz Stuck was intended, for Stuck had exhibited a portrait of Saharet at the Munich Secession in 1902.⁹ This was shortly after the dancer wrote a letter to the *Münchener neueste Nachrichten*, announcing that Stuck had asked her to pose for him during the run of her act at a Munich theater.¹⁰ Her action repeated the way her manager had previously publicized Franz von Lenbach's sponsorship of her trip to Munich in 1899 to pose for him. The poster's script is exactly the same as the dancer's name painted on Stuck's portrait and the publisher's signet repeats the square shape of the artist's signature and date.¹¹ In addition, Stuck frequently used hexagonal frames for his portraits, that form had also enclosed the head of Pallas Athena in his famous 1892 poster for the Munich Secession. Saharet's frontal face with large staring eyes framed by twining tendrils of hair reminds not just of Stuck's female portraits, but also of his 1892 painting of Medusa.¹² Thus, while the



Figure 2
Hollerbaum and Schmidt, *Saharet*, 1903, color lithograph poster, 135 x 90.5 cm.

second poster advertised the dancer through a sexual frisson associated with Stuck's mythic paintings, Neumann's poster focused on the sensory shock produced by the frenzied movement and dazzling color of her variety act.

An essay published in 1903 by Hermann Eßwein, a Munich art critic who was Neumann's close friend and published a book about his art in 1905, reinforces the observation that the rapid-fire shock of attractions was what Neumann admired in variety.¹³ That essay satirized the new artistic cabaret that Ernst von Wolzogen had made fashionable in his Motley Theater in Berlin during 1901. Eßwein wrote that the appearance of "Genius" and "exalted Mrs. Pallas" on stage in Berlin had suffocated everything that was truly modern in variety and turned it into a type of Jugendstil comic opera for German philistines. Variety had become decorative and domesticated, Eßwein said, deprived of the movement and "the spontaneous shocks" that linked variety to "our materialistically brutalized, secularized, capitalistic age of machines."

This appreciation of that age's new forms of art was characteristic of a series of ten lectures entitled "New Values of Pictorial Art" that Neumann and Eßwein presented during 1902–03 at the School for Modern Graphic Arts that Neumann directed in Munich.¹⁴ The ideas expressed therein represent a forgotten effort to theorize how some saw the potential for technology to fundamentally change the practice of visual art at the turn-of-the-century, for Neumann and Eßwein asserted that easel painting was at a dead end in 1902.¹⁵ While impressionism had begun as a salutary effort to paint things in light and air, after achieving this it had turned from the object to an emphasis on painting as an expression of artistic subjectivity. Eßwein and Neumann believed that this was an unfruitful psychological development that eventually led many artists to seek consolation in symbolic-religious themes and archaic forms connected to art's past ritualistic function. Most significantly, this subjectivism pulled art away from the objective problems of modernity, breaking artists' connections to a mass public hungry for new visual experiences. The lectures identified three promising paths in contemporary visual culture.¹⁶ First was the growing involvement of artists with furniture design and other applied arts. A second direction was satirical illustration as represented by Thomas Heine's work for *Simplicissimus*. This was important because it involved artists with modern illustrated magazines and "represents a synthesis of the factual (drawing of forms) and the personal (painterliness), which is humanly necessary because this art is born out of the age's psychological struggle."¹⁷ The final area was original graphic art for a growing middle-class market. Eßwein and Neumann pointed to Felix Vallotton and William Nicholson as foreign models for printmaking, while mentioning Toulouse-Lautrec and the Beggarstaff brothers as stimuli for German artistic posters.

Neumann was a leading figure in this graphic arts movement. Born in 1871 the son of a painting professor at the Kassel Academy, Neumann pursued his father's profession, studying initially in Kassel and then in Munich. Little is known about his early paintings, however, he soon shifted his focus to drawing for the new satirical journals *Simplicissimus* and *Jugend* that began publication in 1896. Economic pressure led him to join with Heinrich Wolf to found a school for graphic art in 1900.¹⁸ In the lecture series presented at the school Neumann and Eßwein stressed graphic art's growing role in modern life and its alteration of existing artistic values. They praised art reproduction firms, such as Callweg, Bruckmann, and Hanftstängl in Munich, for broadening interest in art and even applauded photography's increasing use in pornography.¹⁹ Graphic art was leading a shift from "connoisseur value" to "use value" as the foundation of artistic appreciation.²⁰ The unrestricted possibilities of reproduction allowed the graphic artist to reach "not only the few museum visitors and wealthy connoisseurs, on whom the oil painter is dependent, but the whole of the educated class, every pedestrian (through the poster), every reader of illustrated newspapers and books designed in a modern way."²¹ Neumann began to explore applied graphic art, creating posters and programs for the *Eleven Executioners*, a cabaret founded in 1901 to forge a new relationship between art and variety theater. Frenzied dance was frequently the subject of this advertising for the cabaret, as seen in a program cover (figure 3) where a dancer's face looms against a middle-ground depicting the Sphinx. Printed in brilliant red, the dancer's ecstatic expression contrasts powerfully with the mute, dull green visage of the Sphinx.

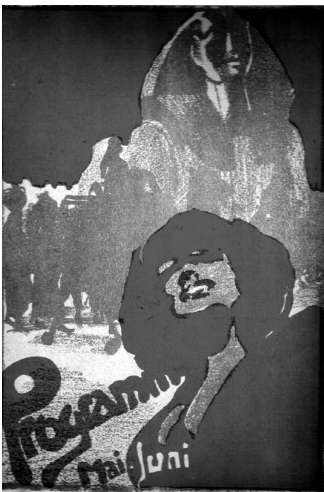


Figure 3
Ernst Neumann, Cover of program for *The 11 Executioners*, May–June 1902, color lithograph.

Neumann only vaguely alluded to the thematic contrast in such a work, but he did frequently use the phrase "panicked shock" to describe the expressive effect that he desired from such a spatial contrast, lived experience could produce shocking effects, making them a crucial component of graphic art, particularly advertising.

Sensational advertising isn't produced by ornamental surface decoration, but by the confrontation of things, by the oppositions of stillness and movement, by painterly factors, etc. [. . .] Contrasts, striking representations of situations, accidents, the most extreme and bizarre artistic effects, for which oil painting was never suited, exactly this ultimate artistic freedom will be welcome by the visual artist as an emancipation from the aesthetic of oil painting.²²

Arising from Greek mythology, the term "panicked shock" described the impact of Pan's appearance in the heat of mid-day on people and herds of animals—a moment when the normal sense of natural and human order was disrupted by a sudden event, producing disorientation and anxiety.²³ Arnold Böcklin had represented the effect in two paintings of 1860; and Pan's hybrid form, which forced

momentary awareness of the animal within the human, became a powerful symbol in artistic creations at the turn-of-the-century.²⁴ *Pan in the Bush*, a dance-play by Otto Julius Bierbaum, was one such work.²⁵ It opens with two groups of students, segregated by sex and accompanied by adults, entering a forest clearing on a hot summer mid-day. While picnicking, boys and girls began to mix in a dance that becomes progressively wilder, despite adult efforts to restrain it. Suddenly, the large figure of Pan rises from a rosebush, producing “a panicked shock” that only an older boy and girl resist, each captivated by Pan’s stimulation of sexual attraction. In subsequent scenes, all of the characters of Arcadian eroticism join with the young students in dances and pagan ceremonies that eventually include the adult escorts, who are also seduced by the pleasures of intensified life under the sign of Pan. The German forest and educational system were poetically fused with mythical Arcadia. Franz Stuck, Bierbaum’s artist friend, also populated his landscapes with centaurs, fauns, nymphs, and other mythological creatures, always hinting at the local and contemporary in the paintings.²⁶ Neumann, in contrast, refused any elision of the gap between contemporary visual reality and a mythical past, satirizing this fusion in a drawing (figure 4) for *Simplicissimus* that responded to Stuck’s poster for Munich’s VII International Art Exhibition of 1897.²⁷ It shows a contemporary woman stripping off the mask and garb of Athena Parthenos, Stuck’s symbol of the Munich Secession, and escaping from the exhibition hall.

Figure 4
Ernst Neumann, “Liberated Art (at the conclusion of the exhibition in the Glass Palace),” *Simplicissimus* 2:32 (1897):





Figure 5
Ernst Neumann, *New Subscription to Kladderadatsch at all Bookstores and Post Offices, 2.25 Marks per Quarter-Year, 1899*, 69.5 x 46.5 cm.



Figure 6
Ernst Neumann and Georg Braumüller, *Cover of The Serpent, 1903*, color lithograph.

The first work in which Neumann portrayed the exciting space and content of the modern city was a poster (figure 5) that he designed in 1900 to announce the entry of *Kladderadatsch*, one of Germany's oldest humor magazines, into the new century. Having been founded in Berlin at the time of the 1848 revolution, *Kladderadatsch* had grown both politically and artistically conservative.²⁸ Neumann altered its image by turning the mischievous boy's head that had come to identify the magazine into a fiery storm cloud looming over the city, its modern power embodied by the electric pole in the foreground. The electrical theme as well as the striving for instantaneous impact through spatial composition and direct address creates a shock effect. Neumann discussed this spatial effect in a lecture and essay entitled "Methodical Drawing," in which he called for a drawing style that would express the actuality of the twentieth century by being objective, essential and making creative use of perspective and movement like Japanese woodcuts.²⁹ Having a Hokusai print in mind, he stated that the objective-constructive drawing of a suspension bridge "must express the astonishment, the surprise, the shock, about the fact" that the bridge could carry the weight of the men crossing it.³⁰ Electric lines sag and stretch in Neumann's poster, indicating a spatial expanse that is countered by the looming demonic head.

Neumann believed that such montage-like contrasts were necessary to express the thrills and dangers of urban industrial life. This structure may have been stimulated by Neumann's enthusiasm for Japanese prints, particularly the way Ando Hiroshige had juxtaposed enlarged screening foregrounds with distant landscape backdrops to evoke collisions of rural and urban realms at Tokyo's edge.³¹ Neumann used a similar montage in his cover (figure 6) for *The Serpent*, a booklet about differences between the art worlds in Munich and Berlin.³² The representation of Siegfried slaying the dragon Fafnir in the background was created by Georg Braumüller, a friend of Neumann. Boldly printed in violet ink, it likely symbolized Munich's artistic backwardness. Thus, the background contrasts in style, technique, and content with the foreground composed by Neumann. It is printed in black with more tonal values and depicts not a literary serpent, but a snaking network of streetcar tracks, overhead trolley lines, and queues of Berliners. Neumann addressed his interest in combined print-making techniques by writing:

New forms that were suited to fully express modern feelings and concepts—thus distinguishing these from the non-modern, like the automobile from the stage-coach—could really not be grabbed out of the air or arise ex nihilo. Everything new is always just the old developed further, and to talk about creating the new is really nothing other than to observe the old from new points of view, to bring old elements together in new relationships, to put it succinctly: to combine.³³

He claimed that recent literature offered many examples of the ways that older forms and techniques could be combined in new ways, without concern about distinctions between high and low, to express modern experience. The cover's foreground-background montage seeks a similar expression, but the montage extends to foreground's figures, for they were gathered from other works. One senses that these figures were based on photographs, a quality addressed in Eßwein's book:

He finds a kinetic-psychological formula for the persons whom he represents, which is so essential, is present in such a pointed way, that we experience the same sensation as, for example, with those sudden events that cut off a movement and as a result first call attention to the phenomenon of movement: a horse that falls or pulls up in full stride, a person hurrying along stopped in his tracks by a sudden shock, surprise, etc. Neumann paints female dancers, who are caught motionless with mask-like faces in the middle of their strained positions, gestures that are grasped firmly with complete artistic consciousness, with exactly the same panicked and surprised effect that is offered in snapshot photography.³⁴

Neumann believed that snapshot photography could help the visual artist better understand the phenomenon of movement.³⁵ He also recognized that artists such as Lenbach and Stuck had made photographs taken of their models an integral part of the process they used to paint portraits, but argued that photography offered much more than just a means to naturalistic accuracy.³⁶ "The artist uses the photograph correctly, only if he employs it non-naturalistically, that means only as material, as raw material, as a model for an intensive creation of his own."³⁷ Neumann studied photographic contrasts, sharpening and enlarging them into more dramatic oppositions.³⁸ Poster-like immediacy, joined with the direct address and truth-value associated with snapshots, contributed to the shock effect of his works.

In a lecture delivered at Neumann's school, Eßwein identified similar qualities in the actuality films of early cinema.³⁹ He described a visit to a cinema and how he entered a simple small room, densely packed with an audience seated on benches that faced a screen. Suddenly the room darkened and a bright still image of a street appeared, but then, he wrote, "came an abrupt twitch and vibration, and this life moved." A fire brigade band marched by playing its music silently, then the image vanished, the lights came on, and the audience conversed while the reel was changed. Eßwein sat and considered the contrasts between the short films, while comparing his reactions to other audience members, in particular those of a young machinist and a German poet. Eventually a shout from the rear announced the next film: "Number thirty five! Hobboken-New

York! The longest bridge in the world! Filmed from the locomotive's front platform!" Eßwein then described the illusion of how the viewer seemed to move on the rails. A rapid montage of urban views began to flash by as the train built speed until it climbed the grade to the bridge, where he experienced a, "towering diminishing steel framework over our heads, strong and hard, confining us here, so that we feel rather than just see the depths into which we are traveling." Finally the train entered another city and halted at station platform where people stood waiting. Suddenly, the image vanished, the lights came on and a voice shouted "Remain seated!" A sudden panic pushed the audience to the exits. Someone speculated that a woman had fainted, to which Eßwein responded sarcastically that it was rather a "world-view" that had fallen and provoked the panic. Pleased that the German poet had left muttering "But my God, life that no longer has any ideals!" Eßwein shouted "Bravo!" and reseated himself to enjoy more of the program.⁴⁰

Technology produced effects that both constituted and corresponded to modern visual experience and signaled a shift in world-view. Art had to respond to the new spatio-temporal experiences of urban and industrial life, which Eßwein characterized in the following passage about Berlin:

Ours are lives uncannily fast in action:—On a sultry day in northern Berlin I passed a large storage area. On the enormous surface it contained nothing but rusting, discarded machine parts, boilers that were burst, all possible types of mechanisms, which had only a few weeks before traversed large areas of life. However, no poetic legend stood over the entrance, rather a somber company sign.⁴¹



Figure 7
Ernst Neumann, Poster sketch for Continental Tires, 1902–03, pencil and gouache.

The artist in Berlin only needed to pay attention to an "hour of our nervous life, on which metropolitan traffic certainly places great demands" in order to discover new values.⁴² Among the poster designs that Neumann and his students displayed in their 1903 exhibitions, hoping to elicit business commissions, many stressed urban-industrial experiences—onrushing locomotives, views from train cars, and furniture moving vans.⁴³ A boldly patterned and radically foreshortened racing car, which was depicted swerving through a curve and throwing up a dust cloud, dominated a design (figure 7) that Neumann submitted to a major poster competition that was held on behalf of a group of firms in Hanover at the beginning of 1903.⁴⁴ Measuring approximately 1.5 by 2 meters, it won third prize in the competition's section devoted to advertising for Continental rubber tires.⁴⁵ Unlike Robert Engels, who won first prize with a sentimental image of a young girl rolling a tire on the beach, Neumann developed his design from sensational images in newspapers and

magazines that illustrated stories about the attractions and dangers of the new sport of automobile racing.⁴⁶ Simplifying the forms to create a bold immediate effect, he created the most dynamic image of an automobile to that point in time.⁴⁷

This focus on the new experiences of urban-industrial life was paralleled at the turn-of-the-century by the investigations of sociologists such as Georg Simmel and Gustave LeBon who theorized that the modern world assaulted human consciousness with many new pressures and shocks. Neumann's and Eßwein's efforts to analyze and explore the centrality of "shock" in the artistic response to these conditions anticipated aspects of Walter Benjamin's and Ernst Jünger's cultural criticism during the 1920s. Eßwein's explanation of why people paid twenty pfennig to experience cinematic shocks was sociological, for, he wrote, that they "wanted here to forget their mushy, grim business and family for a moment" and to experience something beyond "the sole daily possibility to run around a treadmill to which they are harnessed."⁴⁸ Attending the cinema was an act of protest, but also a necessary exercise for becoming better able to absorb the shocks of modern life.

Neumann and his circle sought such shocks through mountain climbing, bicycling, and automobile racing. Reinhard Piper recalled how the group traveled to the Bavarian Alps in June 1902 to witness a stretch of the Paris–Vienna automobile race that was won by Marcel Renault.⁴⁹ Neumann developed a great enthusiasm for racing and had little patience with theories about speed's role in nervous degeneration promulgated by Max Nordau and other writers. For instance, Neumann and Eßwein answered statements made by French psychiatrists after a substantial number of deaths forced the suspension of the Paris–Madrid race of 1903 with an essay that rejected the idea that any mental disability could be caused by speed. Rather than causing degeneration of the nervous system, racing "demands a continual energetic disciplining of the sporting temperament by cool reflection and as a result produces that harmonic reconciliation of the intellectual and emotional aspects of the soul that is the trademark of the true sportsman."⁵⁰

Neumann believed that the creation of posters that served modern industry and utilized the spatio-temporal qualities of contemporary experience tore the artist "from the sterile isolation in which, without modern means of expression, he can only experience himself as a tragic-comic anachronism in our age of electricity and social problems."⁵¹ However, Neumann made important contributions to the Munich art world beyond his works and writings. He pressed for the inclusion of poster designs in Munich's art exhibitions, arguing that it would help reverse the city's loss of prestige if Munich became the first city to recognize applied graphic art as an equal among the other fine arts.⁵² He also proposed an organization that would help make artists aware of their rights within the existing legal code while also pushing for the expansion and improve-

Figure 8
Georg Braumüller, *Amelang's Art Gallery*,
1903, lithograph poster, 64 x 87 cm.



ment of their economic rights.⁵³ He and his students addressed such issues pictorially. For instance, Braumüller's poster (figure 8) for Amelangs Kunstsalon, which held an exhibition of Neumann and the Munich Association of Graphic Artists in 1903, represented an elegantly dressed woman and an artist carrying a portfolio and case, approaching each other on opposite sides of a steel bridge. The image can be read as a symbolic visualization of economic exchange within the contemporary art trade—it takes place in the modern city, involves unequal power relationships, and the commercial gallery mediates the relationship between producer and consumer. Neumann's sophistication about such issues was also manifested in his creation of a trademark-like sign during 1899, which he began to use to identify the authorship of his works.⁵⁴ He developed the sign from a Jugendstil design that depicted a man leaning back against a strong wind while his huge coat blows like a wave in front of him. He gradually abstracted the shape of the man into a distinctively dynamic image that was unified with his initials. While personally trying to protect his own economic rights, he also called for the creation of a new type of artistic institution that would help connect applied graphic artists with businessmen, answering thereby the businesses' advertising needs while also protecting the participating artists' rights.⁵⁵ In Fall 1904, after Neumann moved from Munich to Paris during 1903, Reinhard Piper opened a Central Distribution Office for Graphics, which focused not on the facilitation of advertising commissions, but on the marketing and distribution of collectable graphics.⁵⁶

Neumann's reasons for his move to Paris are not clear. He joined the approximately 500 German artists who had arrived in the city by 1907.⁵⁷ Although Neumann initially sketched in the variety theaters and on the streets and wrote reviews of French art exhibitions for German journals, his interest in the Paris art world

declined, as he sensed its refusal to reconsider artistic practice in the face of new modes of production.⁵⁸ A diary entry from December 1905 reflected about his apparent lack of realization of a flourishing artistic career that his Munich period had promised, but also went further in its judgment about visual art's future:

How old-fashioned I live here today in a secluded studio. A dealer asked me recently : What are you doing, do you have new things ready "for the trade" ? No, I have nothing ready. [. . .] The French of today want culture and can't, while over there, our, my Michel could and doesn't want to. Thus I don't believe that the Frenchman today is not capable of learning something from the Germans, he is too arrogant and without talent. French art has no future, one could expect it from Germany if Böcklin, Menzel, Lenbach and Stuck didn't stand in the way. *Simplicissimus* alone is the only spiritual protest. Sadly only the artistic formula of negative protest, which lacks positive, creative, and presentable power. We need people, who possess clarity like Th. Th. Heine, have pictorial ability like Wilke, coarseness like Paul, in addition to this are able to paint like none of these can and are artists in addition, then we would have a German art.⁵⁹

He began to associate primarily with commercial illustrators and motor sport enthusiasts, spending his time at the Café Excelsior rather than the Café du Dôme where German artists gathered. While living in Paris he traveled widely and became more intensely involved in designing and racing motorcycles.

He returned to Germany in October 1908, settling in Berlin after deciding that it was the center of modern life. Circumstances in the German art world had changed during his time in Paris. While Reinhard Piper had published Eßwein's eight volume series entitled *Modern Illustrators* during 1904–05, Eßwein had begun to despair about whether his espousal of an artistic practice based in mass culture would prevail over an emerging narrative about the necessity of modern art taking its lead from the formal values of French impressionism. Julius Meier-Graefe had voiced the latter view strongly in a series of books between 1902 and 1904.⁶⁰ Eßwein had reviewed his book on post-impressionism, rejecting what he saw as its lack of objectivity.⁶¹ However, he recognized in letters to Piper that the critic's argument was quickly winning followers in Germany.⁶² Moreover, Piper soon met Meier-Graefe and was won over, publishing a small book entitled *Impressionists* in 1907 and engaging him to write a major study on the work of Hans von Marées.⁶³

After his move to Berlin, Neumann no longer made any effort to engage the established institutions of "high art," following thereby the lead of other advertising artists who had developed their separate professional sphere while Neumann was in Paris. The

Association of German Advertising Professionals and the Association of Supporters of the Poster, producers and consumers of advertising art, formed in 1903 and 1905, both of which began publication of their respective journals in 1910. Contributors to these journals, like supporters of the new advertising art had begun to do around 1904–05, stressed the necessary division between the creative values and approaches of commercial and fine artists. They often pointed to Neumann as an early example of an artist who found an appropriate balance between creative innovation and the commercial interests that he served, Paul Westheim emphasized that these qualities were particularly seen in Neumann's continuing work as the advertising director for Sorge & Sabeck.⁶⁴ His advertising for this firm, which specialized in sporting goods and accessories for cars, motorboats, and airplanes, varied widely in style and concept, depending on whether it was for a product catalogue, a magazine ad, or a poster. His 1908 poster for Sosa tennis balls (figure 9) focuses the viewer's attention on a cluster of balls that lie on the court at the bottom of the net. While the upper half of the space is closed off by the net's interlaced cords, the viewer is drawn to that space by the suggestion of buildings and a tree line in the distance, while the tennis player's swing and stride provide a counter-movement, literally bursting through the net's surface. It is an irrational spatial effect, simultaneously calling attention to surface and depth. Drawing is both bold and subtle, while the color combinations—blue, light green, red-orange, grey and white—are unusual and striking. Neumann's design challenged the printers' professional skills, creating a poster whose artistic complexity was radically unlike any other poster. An

Figure 9
Ernst Neumann, *Sosa*. *Sorge and Sabeck*,
1908, color lithograph poster for tennis balls,
130 x 84 cm.





Figure 10
Ernst Neumann, Advertisement for Sorge und Sabeck automobile parts in *Motor*, a technological journal, ca. 1908.



Figure 11 (right)
Ernst Neumann, "Behind the Scenes of Modern Advertising," brochure for Neumann's advertising studio, ca. 1911–12.

advertisement in a technology journal (figure 10), however, was very different in approach, although equally unlike typical print ads. It combines extremely objective drawings of automobile parts with broader style above that caricatures two male heads, which are linked by heavy chains that are hooked to their ears and move to and fro in space—an extremely startling and grotesque image that seizes the reader's attention, while also linking the two pages.

Neumann opened an advertising firm—Ernst Neumann Studio for Modern Advertising—in October 1910.⁶⁵ A prospectus, which included a photograph (figure 11) of the work space, stressed the necessity for businesses to consult a professional who possessed proper budgetary and technical experience in order to develop a sophisticated advertising campaign that would be tailored to specific business needs. It also emphasized that the development of such a campaign was a collaborative effort, employing the skills of various types of professionals. Neumann repeated this stress on collaboration in statements he made later about a controversy that followed his sale of the firm in February 1913 to Alfred Braun, his assistant and former student. Neumann had employed his pictorial signet as the firm's logo. Braun considered it to be part of the firm's property and continued to use it after he had turned the firm into a G. m. b. H. Neumann objected and obtained a legal judgment in his favor. However, Braun continued to charge that for much of the time that Neumann had directed the firm, the real creative design had been done by Braun and Paul Neumann, while Neumann concerned himself primarily with business matters. Finally, in 1920 when Braun protested the association of Neumann's name with posters that he had designed as Neumann employee, Neumann responded with a letter in which he described himself as an *Industriegraviker*.⁶⁶ He wrote that the new profession of industrial graphic art had changed the relationship between hand and concept in art as artists had taken

on assistants and employed industrial processes. This division of labor led to increased anonymity and in reaction, Neumann said, artists developed an obsessive vanity about authorship and personal touch. Neumann believed those working in advertising art must realize that they were part of an industrial process which dictated many of the decisions. Traditional notions of authorship based on the previous mode of production were therefore outdated, because the hand execution of the design ready for printing was only part of the technology of reproduction. The head of the design firm who gained the commission, developed the concept, and dictated the technological processes to be employed was as much the creator of the final product as the drafter of the design.

Following his operation of the advertising studio, Neumann's focus turned increasingly to teaching and automotive body design. He was appointed in 1913 to the first chair of advertising art at the School of Applied Art in Charlottenburg.⁶⁷ He contributed an essay "The Architecture of the Vehicle" to the *Jahrbuch des deutschen Werkbundes 1914* and exhibited automobile and truck bodies (figure 12) at the Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne during the same year. Neumann termed such work a new realm of artistic expression:

The human eye doesn't want to only register the movement of vehicles optically, but it also wants to experience it, to grasp it in a demonstrative way so to speak. Thus the form should speak of propulsion. Body and motorized power should coincide within a unified complex of sensations. [. . .] The eye of the public must first "learn to see" air, for twenty years the painter already could.⁶⁸

Neumann remained primarily a car and motorcycle designer until his death in 1954; however, the Papler phaeton body that he exhibited in 1914 shared much with the artistic signet that he had adopted in 1899. Both sought to excite and activate the eye and body, emblemizing the accelerated life of a modern industrial age.⁶⁹ Like his posters' spatial and coloristic contrasts, they created and engaged an aesthetic of speed and shock.

The Cologne exhibition showed the world what the German Werkbund had achieved in the years since its formation in 1907. Its buildings and exhibits reflected the effort to produce works based on "New Values of Visual Art." While Neumann had been one of the first artists to engage the processes of industrial production and the rise of mass culture, his participation in the Werkbund exhibition marked the moment when his name began to vanish from the history of modern art and design. If one looks closely, however, at the photograph of his Berlin studio in his firm's prospectus, one finds a hint of his continuing influence on German graphic design. Examples of his early poster designs hung on the studio's walls. Neumann stood as the second figure along the right wall and above him hung a poster for a detective agency that had been exhibited

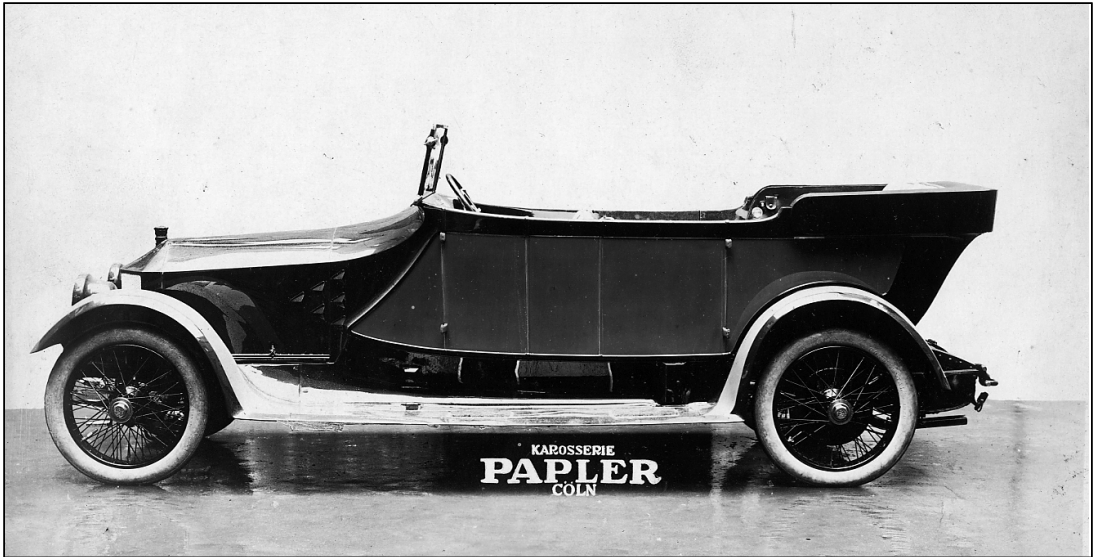


Figure 12
Ernst Neumann, Phaeton body designed for the Paper firm in Cologne, exhibited at the German Werkbund Exhibition in 1914.

at Amelangs Kunstsalon in 1903. Its title “Hands Up!” appeared in English in the catalogue.⁷⁰ It represented close-ups of two raised hands that were likely developed from a photographic source, the field behind divided symmetrically into squares of two colors on which each hand was centered. Texts overlay the hands’ images. It was a remarkable image for that date, radically unlike any other graphic design of the period. Its shocking, montage-like effect anticipates the famous “5 Fingers has the Hand” poster that John Heartfield designed for the German Communist Party in 1927.⁷¹ Yet, as this essay’s discussion of the 1902–03 lecture series has indicated, it was an image consistent with Neumann’s extraordinary effort to define “New Values of Visual Art” at the turn-of-the century.

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- 1 The exhibition included 200 works by Neumann and students whom he taught in a graphic arts class at Clara Fischer's art school. "Kleine Mitteilungen," *Mitteilungen des Vereins der Plakatfreunde* 1:2 (1910): 42.
- 2 Paul Westheim, "Ernst Neumann und seine Schule," *Archiv für Buchgewerbe* 47:2 (1910): 34–36.
- 3 For discussion, see: Hanna Gagel, "Studien zur Motivgeschichte des deutschen Plakats 1900–1914," Ph.D. dissertation, Freie Universität, Berlin, 1971.
- 4 Fritz Hellwag, "Ernst Neumann und seine Schule," *Kunstgewerbeblatt* 22:5 (1910): 93–95.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 95.
- 7 Alfred Walter Heymel, "Saharet," *Dekorative Kunst* 3:9 (1900): 373.
- 8 Walter von zur Westen, "Neue deutsche Plakate," *Archiv für Buchgewerbe* 42: 11–12 (1905): 492.
- 9 Heinrich Voss, *Franz von Stuck. Werkkatalog der Gemälde* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1973), cat., no. 234/534.
- 10 The letter appeared on April 17, 1902. See Brygida Ochaim, ed., *Franz von Stuck und der Tanz*, exhib. cat., Franz von Stuck Geburtshaus Tettenweis, 2000, 30–34.
- 11 It is possible that the poster's design was actually by Stuck, but unacknowledged because of the way Lenbach had been attacked for allowing his art to be exploited for advertising purposes. For an example of the attack, see: Paul Rieth, "Der Zauberlehrling," *Jugend* 3 (1902): 50.
- 12 Voss, *Franz von Stuck*, cat., no. 74/192.
- 13 Hermann Eßwein, "Variété," *Freistatt* 5: 15 (April 11, 1903): 292–293. His book on Neumann was the sixth in a series called "Moderne Illustratoren." Hermann Eßwein, *Ernst Neumann* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1905).
- 14 Some partial typescripts survive, but the ideas expressed therein were made more widely available in the more than 25 articles that Neumann and Eßwein published in various newspapers, art magazines, and cultural journals during 1902–1903.
- 15 Hermann Eßwein und Ernst Neumann, "Zum Probleme des Impressionismus," *Freistatt* 5:9 (February 28, 1903): 952–954.
- 16 Ernst Neumann und Hermann Eßwein, "Wege und Ziele der modernen Graphik," *Freistatt* 5:21 (May 23, 1903): 409–12.
- 17 Hermann Eßwein, "Neue Möglichkeiten und Neuwerte," *Freistatt* 5:28 (July 11, 1903): 555.
- 18 The *Münchener neueste Nachrichten* reported on March 1, 1902 that Wolff planned to accept a position in Königsburg, leaving Neumann as the school's sole director.
- 19 Semper idem. [Hermann Eßwein?], "Betrachtungen über die Reproduktionen von Kunstwerken," *Freistatt* 5:19 (May 9, 1903): 376; und Hermann Eßwein, "Photographische Pornographie," *Freistatt* 5:24 (August 22, 1903): 676.
- 20 Hermann Eßwein und Ernst Neumann, "Die Graphik—Bedarfskunst oder Spielerei?" *Kunst und Handwerk* 53: 3 (1902-03): 78–81; und "Die soziale Stellung des Künstlers," *Der Werkstatt der Kunst* 1:45 (September 8, 1902): 713–715.
- 21 Hermann Eßwein, "Die Graphik und ihre Bedeutung für die Neuzeit," *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* no. 19 (March 10, 1902): 296–297.
- 22 Ernst Neumann, "Über graphische Techniken," *Monatshefte für graphisches Kunstgewerbe* 2:2 (November 1903): 16.
- 23 For discussion, see Reinhard Herbig, *Pan: Der griechische Bocksgott* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1949), 18–19; and Philippe Boreaud, *Recherches sur le dieu Pan* (Rome: Insitut Suisse, 1979), 137–175.
- 24 Rolf Andree, *Arnold Böcklin. Die Gemälde* (Munich: Prestel, 1977), cat. no. 120 and 121.
- 25 Otto Julius Bierbaum, *Pan im Busch* (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 1900).
- 26 In his book about Stuck's work, which went through many editions, Bierbaum wrote: Whoever has an ear for the undercurrents of the modern soul, knows that a world view is emerging that strives for such goals, a world view again of an artistic type. Friedrich Nietzsche is its most powerful prophet and Franz Stuck now works with it in his art, because it has matured. Nietzsche's verse reverberates from his pictures:
Oh life of mid-day! Solemn time!
Oh summer garden!
The "innocence of the South" absorbed him.
O. J. Bierbaum, *Stuck* (Bielefeld und Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1899), 115–116.
- 27 Hollmann, *Das frühe Plakat*, cat. no. 3217.
- 28 Ingrid Heinrich-Jost, ed., *Kladderadatsch. Die Geschichte eines Berliner Witzblattes von 1848 bis ins Dritte Reich* (Köln: C. W. Leske, 1982).
- 29 This lecture was apparently presented on December 15, 1902, the fourth in the lecture series. Neumann published the lecture with credit to Hermann Eßwein as joint author. "Methodisches Zeichen," *Freistatt* 5:1 (January 4, 1903): 794–796.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 795. Also see Neumann und Eßwein, "Wege und Ziele der modernen Graphik," 410. The print was Katsushika Hokusai, *Suspension Bridge Between Hida and Echu* from the woodcut series *Rare Views of Famous Japanese Bridges*, ca. 1834.
- 31 For discussion of the overlay of spatial systems in Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, see Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1989), 53–73.

- 32 The booklet's planned content is indicated by an entry in the catalogue of the Schwarz-Weiss Ausstellung of the Vereinigung graphischer Künstler München which was held at Amelangs Kunstsalon in Berlin from May 24 to August 14, 1903. The entry concerned no. 41 of the works that Neumann exhibited. The booklet was to include an essay by Eßwein, that would have engaged an ongoing debate that had been first raised by Hans Rosenhagen's article "Münchens Niedergang als Kunststadt" that appeared in the newspaper *Der Tag* in April 1901. Neumann and Eßwein published a separate article about the issue: "München und Berlin," *Münchner Zeitung*, 28 June 1903.
- 33 Ernst Neumann und Hermann Eßwein, "Zum Thema 'Kombinationsdrucke,'" *Kunst für Alle* 17:22 (July 1902): 464–465.
- 34 Eßwein, *Ernst Neumann*, 30.
- 35 Hermann Eßwein und Ernst Neumann, "Die Bedeutung der Photographie für den bildenden Künstler," *Die Kunst für Alle* 18:3 (November 1902): 59–63.
- 36 For the use of photography by Lenbach and Stuck, see: J. A. Schmolgen. Eisenwerth, "Lenbach und die Photographie," in Rosel Bollek und Winfried Ranke, eds., *Franz von Lenbach 1836–1904*, exhib. cat., Lenbachhaus, München, 1986, 63–96; Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ulrich Pohlmann, and J. A. Schmolgen. Eisenwert, eds., *Franz von Stuck und die Photographie*, exhib. cat., Museum Villa Stuck, München, 1996.
- 37 Eßwein und Neumann, "Die Bedeutung der Photographie," 61.
- 38 Neumann's posters were color lithographs. Photography played no role in their physical production, but they were developed through the study of photographs. They do share some visual qualities with the exhibition posters that Georg Einbeck did develop as gum bichromate photographic prints. See Einbeck's poster for the Seventh International Exhibition of Artistic Photography held at the Kunsthalle in Hamburg in 1899, as reproduced in Fritz Kempe, ed., *Kunstfotografie um 1900 in Deutschland*, exhib. cat., Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, 1979, 5.
- 39 Eßwein presented "Grand Cinématographe International" at the second lecture evening held at Neumann's school on November 17, 1902. "Kunstchronik," *Münchner neueste Nachrichten*, 13 November 1902. He published it as "Grand Cinématograph International," *Freistatt* 5:5 (February 1, 1903): 872–875.
- 40 Tom Gunning has discussed the aesthetic of actuality film in early cinema: "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spector and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8:3–4 (1986): 64–70; "An Aesthetic of Astonishment. Early Film and the (In)credible Spectator," *Art & Text* no. 34 (Spring 1989): 31–45; and "Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions," *Velvet Light Trap* no. 32 (Fall 1993): 3–12.
- 41 Hermann Eßwein, "Berliner Bilder," *Freistatt* 5:38 (July 11, 1903): 551.
- 42 Hermann Eßwein und Ernst Neumann, "München und Berlin," *Münchner Zeitung*, no. 144, 28 June 1903.
- 43 See the reproductions in *Monatshefte für graphisches Kunstgewerbe* 2:2 (November 1903): 13–15.
- 44 Carol Hilarius, "Neue Künstlerplakate," *Monatshefte für Lithographie und graphisches Kunstgewerbe* 1:7 (April 1903): 53–54; and Erich Hafnel, "Der Plakat-Entwurf-Wettbewerbe vom 31 January 1903," *Dekorative Kunst* 6:8 (May 1903): 313–317.
- 45 The full scale version can be seen in a photograph of Neumann's studio in Berlin ca. 1912 that appeared on a prospectus for his advertising firm. It is seen among other poster designs along the rear wall in the photograph.
- 46 For discussion of the development of these sensational illustrations of speed and danger in the modern world, see Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 59–99.
- 47 For comparison to other automobile advertising, see Annette von Pelser und Rainer Scholze, *Faszination Auto: Autowerbung von der Kaiserzeit bis heute* (Berlin: Westermann-Kommunikation, 1994); and Daniel Bordet, Frédérique Decoudun, und Jacques Dreux, *Pneu Continental: Le temps des pionniers 1890–1920* (Paris: Somogy Éditions d'Art, 1996).
- 48 Eßwein, "Grand Cinématographe International," 873.
- 49 Piper joined Neumann's circle in early 1897 while working as an apprentice bookseller in Munich. Reinhard Piper, *Mein Leben als Verleger* (München: R. Piper, 1964).
- 50 Hermann Eßwein und Ernst Neumann, "Schnelligkeitswannsin?" *Freistatt* 5: 24 (June 13, 1903): 477.
- 51 Neumann und Eßwein, "Zum Thema 'Kombinationsdrucke,'" 465.
- 52 Hermann Eßwein und Ernst Neumann, "Zur Hebung der Plakatkunst," *Kunst und Handwerk* 53:5 (1903–04): 128–129.
- 53 Neumann organized the first meeting on June 4, 1902 about these economic issues. Hermann Eßwein, "Zu wirtschaftlichen Organisation der bildenden Künstlerschaft," *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* 1:35 (June 30, 1902): 551–553.
- 54 Dating of his use of the new signet is helped by the fact that the drawing he contributed to no. 15 of *Jugend* in 1899 has his previous initial signet, while no. 19 has the pictorial signet. This fact seems to contradict Neumann's assertion in the following source that he had begun to use the pictorial signet in 1895: "Neumann gegen Neumann," *Seidels Reklame* 1:7 (July 1913): 221. The uniqueness of his adoption of this trademark-like design is seen in the fact that James McNeill Whistler's butterfly signet is the only other pictorial signet found in a reference book of artist's signatures. John Castagno, *European Artists: Signatures and Monograms, 1800–1990* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990).
- 55 Ernst Neumann und Hermann Eßwein, "Kunstanstalt und Künstler," *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* 2:11 (December 15, 1902): 168–169; und "Zur Warnung für Plakatkünstler," *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* 2:31 (May 4, 1903): 488–489.

- 56 "Eine Vertriebs-Zentrale für Graphik," *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* 3:34 (May 23, 1904): 533–535; and Ernst Neumann, "Eine Vertriebs-Zentrale für Graphik," *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* 3:37 (June 13, 1904): 581–582.
- 57 "Ein Bund deutscher bildender Künstler in Paris," *Die Werkstatt der Kunst* 6:42 (July 22, 1907): 577–578.
- 58 Ernst Neumann, "Was die Kunst in Paris sagt," *Die Kunst-Halle* 9:19 (July 1, 1904): 290–293; and 9:20 (July 15, 1904): 309–311.
- 59 Typescript in Neumann archive.
- 60 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Manet und sein Kreis* (Berlin: Bard, 1902); *Der moderne Impressionismus* (Berlin: Baird, 1903); und *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst* (Stuttgart: J. Hoffmann, 1904).
- 61 Hermann Eßwein, "Besprechungen/ Julius Meier-Graefe," *Freistatt* 5:24 (June 13, 1903): 477–478.
- 62 See letters from Hermann Eßwein to Reinhard Piper on October 9, 1905; December 9, 1905; January 15, 1906; and October 19, 1906 in Ulrich Buegel-Goodwin and Wolfram Göbel, eds., *Reinhard Piper: Briefwechsel mit Autoren und Künstlern 1903–1953* (Munich Piper, 1979), 89–95.
- 63 After learning much about art publishing through working at the Callweg publishing firm and through his association with Georg Müller, who had worked for Bruckmann, Piper opened his own publishing house in 1904. Eßwein's series *Moderne Illustratoren* launched the venture. Twelve volumes were initially planned, but the series ceased with the eighth volume on Aubrey Beardsley. Publicity about the series claimed that it would "provide a complete and integrated picture of contemporary art, in so far as it illustrates modern life."
- 64 Paul Westheim, "Ernst Neumann, eine Reklamekünstler und Pädagoge," *Mitteilungen des Vereins deutscher Reklamefachleute*, no. 12a (1910): 9–14.
- 65 Neumann stated that he founded Ateliers Neumann in October 1910 and sold the firm to Alfred Braun in February 1913. See: "Neumann gegen Neumann," 221.
- 66 "Industriekünstler und ihre Gehilfen," *Das Plakat* 11:9 (September 1920): 440.
- 67 "Ein Lehrstuhl für Graphik und Reklamekunst," *Mitteilungen des Vereins deutscher Reklamefachleute*, no. 46 (November 1913): 389.
- 68 Ernst Neumann, "Die Architektur der Fahrzeuge," *Jahrbuch des deutschen Werkbundes* 1914, 48–49.
- 69 One of the strongest statements of this aesthetic is found in a passage from a Neumann letter ca. 1904 about a long-distance trip by motorcycle, which anticipates much that was expressed subsequently in F. T. Marinetti's "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" of 1909. The passage is quoted in Eßwein, *Ernst Neumann*, 45–51.
- 70 It was no. 14 in the catalogue.
- 71 John Heartfield came to Berlin in 1913 to study with Neumann at the Charlottenburg School of Applied Art. Wieland Herzfelde, *John Heartfield: Leben und Werk* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1970), 9–12; Stefan Heym, "Der tolle-Heartfield," *Wochenpost* no. 8 (June 1961): 16; and Hans Reimann, "John Heartfield," *Das Stachelschwein* 4 (June 1927), 37. Heartfield mentioned in a radio interview that Neumann helped him win a design competition sponsored by automobile manufacturers for a frieze in the Transportation Building. Radio interview in 1966 with Heartfield in Berlin. Peter Pachnicke and Klaus Honnef, eds., *John Heartfield*, exhib. cat., Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, Berlin, 1991, 391. This mural can be seen in a photograph in the Neumann archive. For discussion of Heartfield's 1927 poster, see Sherwin Simmons, "'Hand to the Friend, Fist to the Foe': The Struggle of Signs in the Weimar Republic," *Journal of Design History* 13:4 (December 2000): 319–339.