

27.03. — 30.06.2013

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An Encounter  
of the Cosmopolitan  
Avant-garde

The

**Bauhaus**

in

**Calcutta**

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Weimar, den 5. Mai 22.

Inhalt  
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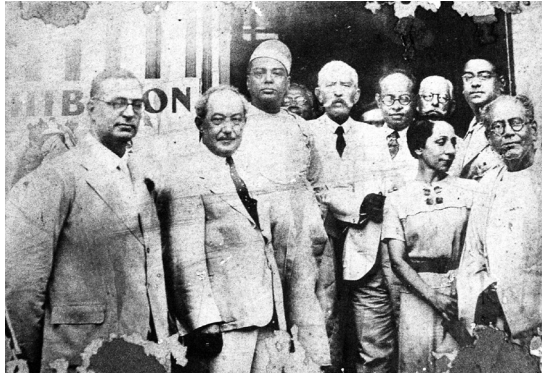
Sehr geehrter Herr Ippen!

Abanindranath Tagore of the Society of Oriental Calcutta planen für diesen Herbst eine internationale Ausstellung lebender Kunst, die jedes Land in seiner Kraft und Zukunftigkeit repräsentieren soll. Darf ich Sie bitten, einige Blätter Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, Lithographien oder auch Holzschnitte zu senden? Transport und Versicherungskosten deckt die Society von vorne herein. Die Verkaufspreise werden in Ruppes festgesetzt, (15 Ruppes = 1 englisches Pfund.)

Sehr dankbar wären wir, wollten Sie frühere und auch ganz letzte eigene Arbeiten senden und auch solche, die das gesamte Werk des Bauhauses darstellen, vor allem Arbeiten von Herrn Klee. Auch gute Schülerarbeiten wären sehr willkommen.

Bitte um bald möglichste Antwort, ob Sie geneigt sind unsere Einladung anzunehmen, wofür Blätter ungefähr wir erwarten dürfen und wie hoch Porto und Versicherungskosten kommen werden. Nach erfolgter Ausstellung werden die unerkauften Arbeiten selbstredend umgehend zurückgestellt.

Mit den besten Empfehlungen  
Stelle Kramarsch,  
Santiniketan, International University,  
Bengal, India.



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Pawini Betan, 12.11.22

Sehr geehrter Herr Ippen,

Vielen Dank für Ihre Zusage die Ausstellung in Calcutta beizufrieden.

Da Sie nicht erwähnten wie hoch Porto und Versicherungsspesen kommen würden, schickt die Society eine Anweisung für Pfund 2.-. Es ist schwer von hier deutsche Postgebühren zu berechnen. Im Fall einer Mehrausgabe kann diese mit der Society verrechnet werden. Die Kosten der Rücksendung trägt selbstredend die Society.

Die Ausstellung soll am 1.

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Es wäre gut die Bilder möglichst ungenutzt und unversehrt zu sein. Bitte ist es hier vor der Ausstellung besichtigt werden. Glas und Rahmen sind schwer zu packen und können während der Reise die Bilder beschädigen.

Schülerarbeiten sind nur sehr in Minderzahl. Wäre es möglich eine kleine Zahl von Bildern zu schicken die die Arbeit der Meister der Society soll kommen können, das heißt wir gerne, wenn möglich

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mehr gesehen. Bitte senden sie auch Plakat über großen Bildisten.

Es wäre gut wenn die Bilder vor Mitte Oktober hier ankommen, das heißt in München Mitte August aufgegeben werden. (Originalen in der Boxen Packung sein).

Die Adresse der Society ist:  
Dr. Abanindranath Tagore  
"Indian Society of Oriental Art"  
5, Dwarka Nath Tagore Street  
Calcutta, India.

Mit den besten Empfehlungen  
Dr. Helga Kramarsch  
Internat. Univ. Santiniketan  
Bengal

*Regina Bittner and Kathrin Rhomberg*

## The Bauhaus in Calcutta

### An Encounter of the Cosmopolitan Avant-garde

The Bauhaus exhibition held in the Samavaya Mansions in Calcutta in 1922 was a unique event on the international art scene with works by the Bauhaus artists Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger and Johannes Itten presented alongside paintings by modern Indian artists such as Nandalal Bose, Abanindranath Tagore, Sunayani Devi and Gaganendranath Tagore. This was also an encounter of artistic and intellectual affinities – between Western modernism searching for spiritual and artistic renewal after the First World War and Indian artists striving for cultural emancipation in late-colonial India. Little evidence of the exhibition's legendary status remains: The exhibition building was demolished back in the Forties; what is probably the only original exhibition catalogue is in Lahore in Pakistan and photographs of the exhibition are nowhere to be found. As such, the exhibition in the Bauhaus Dessau has evolved from a comprehensive search for evidence, for paintings, biographies, documents and testimonies to the era. It brings to life the transnational network of educational reform, urban cultures, media and protagonists between Berlin, Calcutta, London, Weimar and Vienna that yielded this exhibition, and establishes a new dialogue between a selection of the artworks shown in 1922 in the rooms of the Indian Society of Oriental Art and records of the event. In the process, the Calcutta exhibition is presented as an exemplary case of the re-orientation of a history of art that centres not on transmissions from West to East, but on encounters, affinities and shared visions.

#### Illustrations

- 1 Unknown, Stella Kramrisch and the members of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, undated, photography
- 2/3 Letters from Stella Kramrisch to Johannes Itten, 1922

## Schools of departure

As schools that heralded a new era the Staatliche Bauhaus Weimar and the world university Shantiniketan shared a drive for educational reform that from the early 20th century grew worldwide from an across-the-board criticism of civilisation and culture. This was about more than just a reform of the education system; it was also about a far-reaching redefinition of education and culture, the individual and society. This embraced a broad range of reformative approaches unified by the idea that education should be conducive to human creativity and re-establish the mislaid correlation between craftsmanship and knowledge acquisition. New types of schools were established with an emphasis on community spirit that also, with the sea change in life orientations, advocated a new image of humanity.

## Shantiniketan

In 1919 the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature Rabindranath Tagore founded the world university Visva-Bharati in Shantiniketan. Visva-Bharati is a Sanskrit word that, roughly translated, means “the universal presence in one place”. In the early 20th century here, 150 kilometres north of Calcutta, Tagore established a progressive school perceived as a counter model to the British education system. The educational reform put into practice here is explicitly linked with the Indian independence movement. This involved a return to reflection on India’s own rich cultural resources. Tagore likewise sought an intensive exchange with Western knowledge. Shantiniketan was characterised by a progressive educational approach: Lessons were taught through dance, theatre and play; learning was to be accomplished intuitively and in direct contact with rural life and the surrounding nature, usually outdoors in the “shade of the mango trees”. Sriniketan, one kilometre away from the Visva-Bharati campus in Shantiniketan, was an important part of Tagore’s programme for rural reconstruction. Work here focused on the cultivation of the land and, moreover, on the revival of rural crafts such as weaving and pottery. There was a close relationship between Shantiniketan and Sriniketan, quintessentially articulated by creative revival through integration in the everyday life of rural culture.

### Illustrations

- 4 Unknown, painting class at Silpa Sadan (Sriniketan), undated, photography
- 5 Unknown, painting class, undated, photography
- 6 Unknown, weaving class, undated, photography
- 7 Shambu Shaha, Udayana, 1939, photography
- 8 Samiran Nandy, untitled (spring festival in Shantiniketan), undated, photography

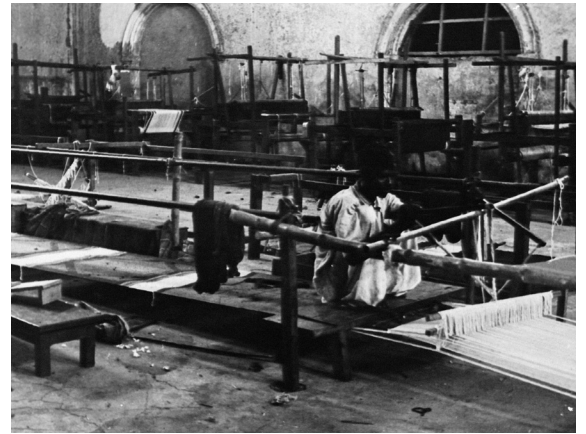




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Stella Kramrisch arrived in Shantiniketan on the opening day of Kala Bhavan in order to teach art history at the progressive school directed by Nandalal Bose. With its focus on craftsmanship, nature, rural culture and artistic interaction, this school set new benchmarks for art education in India. Many of the artists who worked here had previously studied at the Government College of Art & Craft in Calcutta under Abanindranath Tagore. In Shantiniketan the artists locked in to the creative quest, which proceeded from Calcutta, for a new visual culture that transcended British pictorial law. Here, Western art, local painting traditions and Japanese iconography presented a resource that the Indian artists transformed into an own artistic language.

### Bauhaus

The Staatliche Bauhaus Weimar was founded in 1919 from the merger of the Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts and the Weimar Academy of Fine Art. The director of this new school, Walter Gropius, and the international artists he appointed as masters shared the conviction that art education was in urgent need of reform in order to lift the separation between artistic activity and life in everyday society. The Bauhaus manifesto calls for a unity of all artistic activity as a counter model to a fragmented reality. In the search for cultural renewal in the wake of the First World War, craftsmanship offered an educational and ideological framework: the atelier was replaced by the workshop; lecturers became masters and students, apprentices. The anti-academic sentiment of the school was manifested in new models of education, collective living and community culture. At heart, this was above all about the evolution of a *neue Mensch* (new human being).

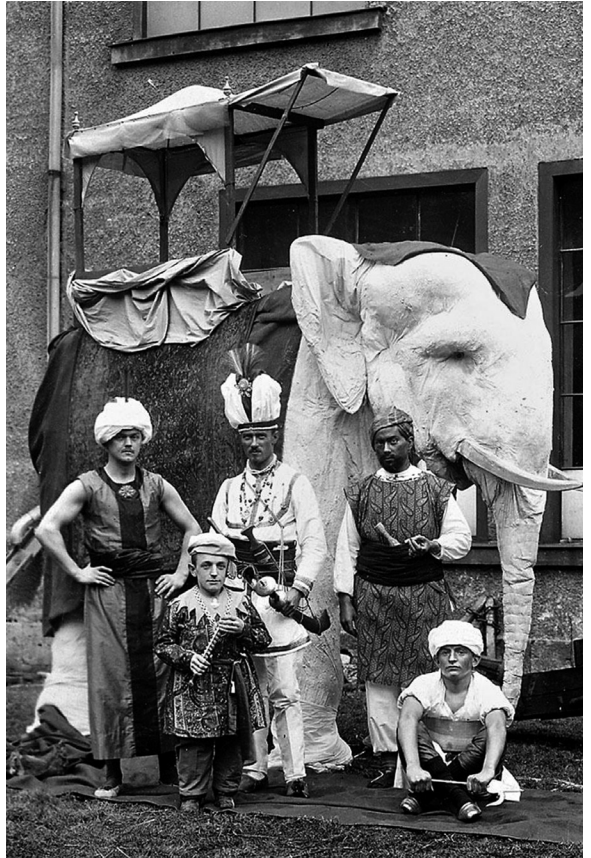
### India at the Bauhaus

As an offspring of the Weimar Republic the Staatliche Bauhaus brought together highly diverse currents of cultural renewal, which took the crisis

#### Illustrations

- 9 Unknown, Drachenfest in Weimar, 1921/1922, photography
- 10 Indian Festival in front of the Prellerhaus in Weimar, February 4th 1913, photography
- 11 Unknown, Live at the Bauhaus: Bauhäusler in front of the Weimar Bauhaus: unknown, Alexa Röhl, Peter Röhl, Felix Kube (oder Fritz Kuhr), Lou Berkenkamp (später Lou Scheper), unknown, Hinnerk Scheper, Käthe Reichelt, unknown, 1921, photography
- 12 Unknown / Carl Schlemmer (?), Live at the Bauhaus Weimar: Bauhäusler and guests; Bauhäusler: Oskar und Tut Schlemmer, Casca Schlemmer, Gunta Stölzl, Benita Koch-Otte, Marcel Breuer, Josef Albers, Josef Hartwig, Kurt Schmidt, Gäste: Willi Baumeister, Werner Gilles (?), 1922, photography





of meaning and orientation after the First World War as a starting point for new concepts of the world and doctrines of salvation. References to Eastern religion and philosophy were articulated in different forms, from theosophy to Mazdaznan: In the spiritual climate of a “decline of the western world” (Oswald Spengler) India became a place of longing, the organic culture of which had not yet been destroyed to the core by rationalisation and industrialisation.

Wassily Kandinsky’s book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* presented a programmatic script of sorts for many artists and intellectuals. The rejection of representations of nature in art that this text called for heralded an “intellectual shift”. Johannes Itten, who had met Gropius in Vienna through Alma Mahler, developed an early interest in theosophy and anthroposophy and his devotion to the Mazdaznan doctrine which grew from the study of theosophy informed his approaches to education at the early Bauhaus. Itten’s positions on art education and art theory found a solid sounding board in the pronounced enthusiasm for India that prevailed there.

### Cities of the world

It is the metropolitan centres that, as “cities of the world” in the early decades of the 20th century, yielded cultural modernities such as this first international appearance of the Bauhaus. The realisation of this exhibition has its roots in a far-reaching network of individuals, media and institutions between London and Berlin, Calcutta and Vienna. As early as 1900 the large cities were dynamic melting pots of industrial, cultural and political developments. London, Vienna, Calcutta and Berlin had evolved into world cities, centres that governed the global economy and hubs for the transfer of international artistic and intellectual movements. Their cultural and ethnic diversity was rooted above all in the imperial or colonial statuses of these cities in the early 20th century world order.

### Vienna

Alma Mahler instigated a social institution in Vienna with her salon, a meeting place for the city’s cultural and intellectual elite. Mahler, who was

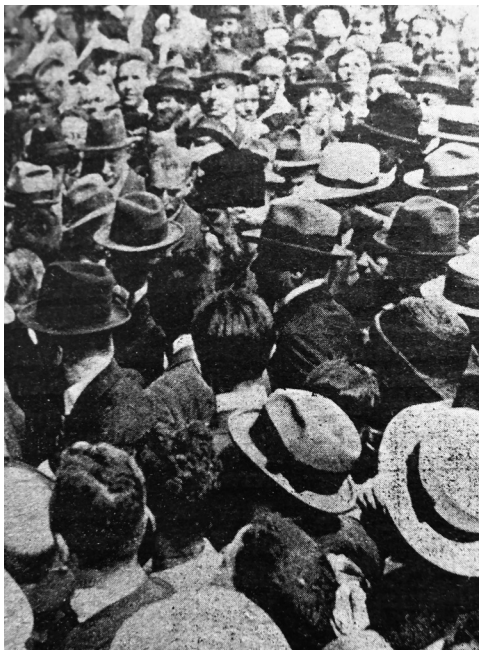
#### Illustrations

- 13 Eugen Stolzner, Stella Kramrisch, 1. Tanzabend des Anbruch, 9. Mai, Mittlerer Konzerthausaal, 1910–1919, poster
- 14 Letter from Stella Kramrisch to Josef Strzygowski, August 23th 1921
- 15 Rabindranath Tagore at the Berlin University. In: *The Modern Review*, August 1921, p. 258





13



15

52. Rhein-Terrace  
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Verehrter Herr Hofrat,

Mit gleicher Post sende ich 17 Reproduktionen indischer Miniaturen und Zeichnungen, Photos aus dem British Museum, South Kensington und Privatsammlungen (Thakur, Jessurun und Col. Hewley) sind mir für nächste Woche versprochen worden.

Tagore schreibt mir aus Serampore, daß er mich, sobald ich den Paß bekommen, erwartet. Ich bin Herr

Hofrat unendlich dankbar. Nicht nur für die Reproduktion mit Tagore sondern auch ich überhaupt das Glück Ihre Schülerin zu sein.

Meine Arbeit habe ich drei mal umgeschrieben und hoffe daß sie im Herbst erscheint. Ich bin eben dabei eine größere Arbeit über Rythuus und Raum in der Kunst des tibetischen Meditieren abzusetzen und habe eine vergleichende Studie über Puppenspiele angelehnt von Wajang vollendet.

Da das Verhältnis Indiens zur Regierung sehr kritisch ist und eine Verabreichung der Finances von 'ex-emeis' nach Indien für 5 Jahre nach dem Waffen-

stillstand verboten, ist es fraglich ob Ausnahmen gemacht werden. Sollte ich im Herbst fahren können, so würde ich mich in Wien aufhalten und mit Freunde im Juni fort zu fahren sein.

Ich Herrn Hofrat das Werk von Francois Valentyn - bekannt!  
Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien.....

(Dordrecht-Amsterdam 1724). Dort sind in Teil 4, Stück 2 Kupferstiche nach Nepal - Miniaturen. Die meisten gestal-ten sind ihre Gruppen umringt und malgen indisch, nur einen perspektiv sehen A Imbroglio mit 'Chinois eren'.

Immer Ihre  
aufmerksam ergebene  
Stella Kramrisch.

14

herself fascinated with theosophy, had already entertained the idea of following Annie Besant to India. Johannes Itten, who attended her salon, found a kindred spirit in Alma Mahler. His appointment at the Bauhaus in Weimar evolved from a meeting between him and Walter Gropius in Vienna. Itten had already opened a private art school here in 1916, in which he could put his theories on art education into practice.

Vienna was a breeding ground for educational experiments: In 1906 Frank Cizek had set up an experimental school at the School of Arts and Crafts, which aspired to reform children's education through art. In their art schools, both Itten and Cizek were focused on the discharge of spontaneous subjective expression in art.

Stella Kramrisch studied at the Institute of Art History in Vienna, which was directed by Josef Strzygowski. He was one of the first to represent the comparative study of European and Asian art in research and theory. In 1920, together with Alma Mahler, Strzygowski visited the Bauhaus, where he was an active member of its clique of friends and associates.

## London

The India Society was founded in London in 1910 in the home of E. B. Havell. The society was established as the result of a debate in the Royal Society of Arts, in which it was argued that India had no art tradition of its own. The argument rumbled on in *The Times* newspaper, whereby a number of artists and intellectuals who were active in India had their say on the matter. The officers of the India Society included W. Rothenstein, E. B. Havell, A. K. Coomaraswami and T. W. Arnold. The debate was associated with the return to the crafts as a model advocated by Williams Morris and John Ruskin for a harmonious integration of lifestyle and production methods, which also triggered a reassessment of Indian culture. The nomination of Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 owes much to the India Society, which instigated its publication in 1912. William Rothenstein was one of Rabindranath Tagore's greatest supporters and they shared a strong friendship. Stella Kramrisch, who spent some time in London on a study trip, was introduced to Rothenstein by Josef Strzygowski. Her acquaintance with Tagore also dates back to this period. Rothenstein's

## Illustrations

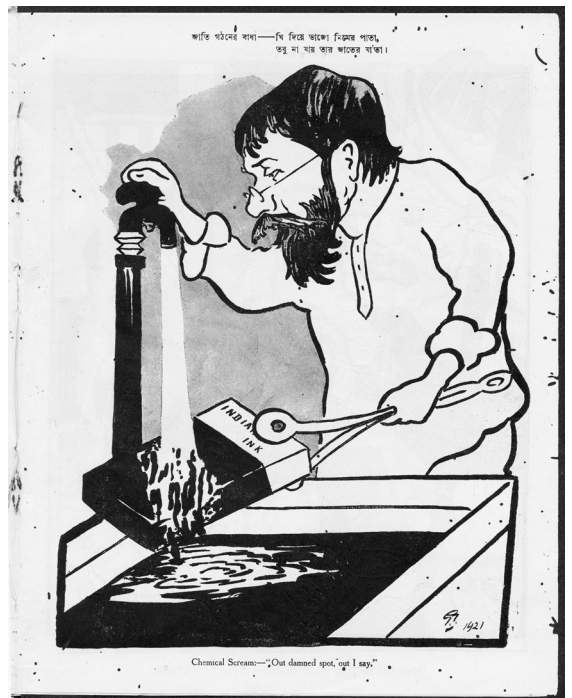
- 16 Samiran Nandy, untitled (Jorasanko) undated, photography
- 17 Gaganendranath Tagore, *Astronomical Scream. First Appearance of a Bengali Governor*
- 18 Gaganendranath Tagore, *Chemical Scream: »Out damned spot, out I say.«*
- 17/18 In: Gaganendranath Tagore, *Reform Screams. A Pictorial Review at the Close of the Year 1921*, Calcutta 1921



16



17



18



international network helped Stella Kramrisch to gain a visa for India in 1921, despite the problematic political relationship between India and the colonial power.

### Berlin

When Rabindranath Tagore held a lecture at the Berlin University in 1921 during his trip to Germany, he was met by an enthusiastic crowd. The reception of the first non-European winner of the Noble Prize for Literature oscillated between utter devotion and ironic distance. The satirical magazine *Simplicissimus* made fun of the German people's craze for Tagore, but thereby completely disregarded the enormous tension that existed between the Indian post-philosopher's pacifist sentiments and a German society shattered by war. Berlin also had a lively Indian diaspora. Here, Indian students who chose Berlin for its excellent university education and in order to distance themselves from the British education system came together with numerous figures, who were active in the anti-colonial national movement. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, the movement's leader, organised an exhibition of the Bengal School in collaboration with the German Oriental Society, which was shown in 1923 in the Kronprinzenpalais (Crown Prince's Palace).

### Calcutta

Jorasanko, home to the Tagore family, was at the heart of the new art movement in India, a meeting place for prominent literary figures, artists and intellectuals. But it was not this arts salon in Jorasanko as much as Indian Society of Oriental Art, founded in 1907, which supplied this new art movement with an institutional basis made up of a far-reaching network of cultural, political and intellectual groups and institutions. The exhibitions organised by the society did much to establish the reputation of the "new school of painting" that had formed at the Government College of Art & Craft under the leadership of E. B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore. This strove to depart from Western naturalism and to orientate art education along the lines of India's indigenous cultural traditions. Stella Kramrisch, likewise a member of the Indian Society of Oriental Art and organiser of the Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta in 1922, presented these new positions in art for discussion in *Rupam*, the journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.



### Picture of an exhibition

In December 1922 Stella Kramrisch urged visitors to the 14th annual exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta to study the works of the Bauhaus artists so that they could “see for themselves that European art is not to be equated with naturalism and that the transformation of the forms of nature in the work of an artist applies to ancient and modern India in equal measure.”

More than 90 years later the reconstruction of the exhibition at the Bauhaus in Dessau sheds light on what Stella Kramrisch meant by her challenge. The exhibition includes original works and works that refer to modern Indian artists and Bauhaus artists as well as reproductions of works by international artists from France, Italy and the USA, which were presented as a third component of the exhibition.

The exhibition shows how the Indian and European artists drew on a shared language of Abstraction, Primitivism and Cubism, despite their different backgrounds. In doing so together they distanced themselves from the academic naturalism that prevailed in the art schools. But while the Bauhaus artists associated artistic abstraction with concepts of a new unity of art and life, emotion and intellect, the Indian artists found their way to a language of resistance against colonial rule with a return to their traditional two-dimensional art.

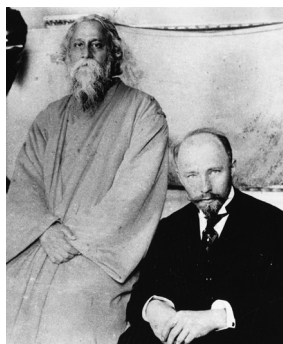
This new visual culture manifested itself also in magazines, institutions and art schools such as the Government College of Art & Craft in Calcutta or Kala Bhavan in Shantiniketan, where many of the artists represented in the exhibition studied. Abanindranath Tagore, who along with Nandalal Bose is one of the principal painters of the modern Indian art movement, was creator of the Indian Society of Oriental Art and the first director of the Government College of Art & Craft. In his painting he reverted to Indian and later Japanese traditions and developed from there a new visual language. His student Nandalal Bose directed the progressive art school Kala Bhavan, which was orientated towards nature, crafts and rural culture. In his work he searched for a synthesis of Eastern and Western art and developed in his murals an “indigenous” style with which he reinvented the Indian past suppressed by colonial rule. The exhibition in Calcutta also presented works by female artists such as Pratima Devi and Sunayani Devi, who explored the altered societal role of women in India. Alongside many works by young, now unknown artists, the exhibition also presents a series of Cubist paintings – quintessential works of modern Indian art – by Gaganendranath Tagore.



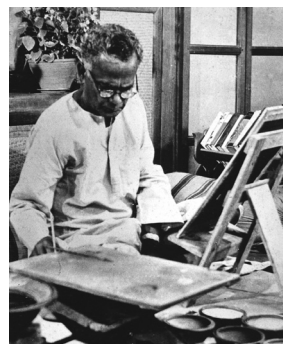
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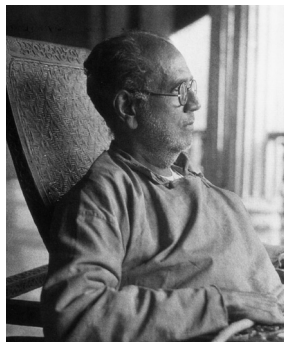
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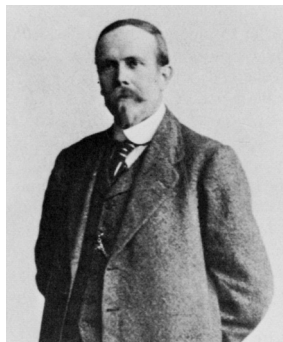
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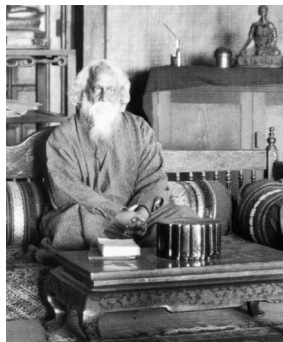
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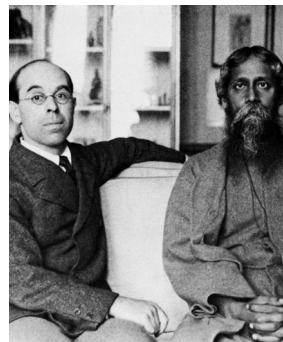
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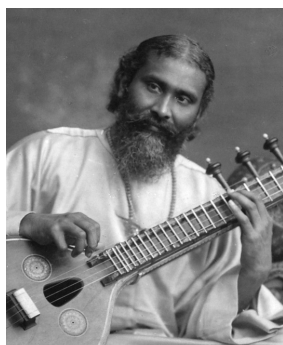
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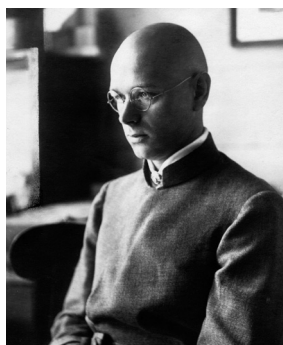
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27



28



29



30

#### Illustrations

- 19 Unknown, Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus Weimar, 1920, photography
- 20 Unknown, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, 1919, photography
- 21 Unknown, Graf Hermann Keyserling and Rabindranath Tagore, 1921, photography
- 22 Unknown, Nandalal Bose, undated, photography
- 23 E. O. Hoppé, Abanindranath Tagore, 1929, photography
- 24 Unknown, Ernest B. Havell, undated, photography
- 25 E. O. Hoppé, Rabindranath Tagore in his drawing room Udayana, Shantiniketan, 1929, photography
- 26 John Trevor, William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore, 1912, photography
- 27 Unknown, Josef Strzygowski, untitled, photography
- 28 Unknown, Portrait Hazrat Inayat Khan (Pir O Murshid), undated, photography
- 29 Unknown, Johannes Itten at the Bauhaus in Weimar, 1920, photography
- 30 Unknown, Stella Kramrisch, Calcutta (?), 1920, photography

*The Bauhaus in Calcutta*  
*An Encounter of the Cosmopolitan Avant-garde*

## Biographies

NANDALAL BOSE (1882–1966)

studied at the Government School of Art & Craft in Calcutta under Abanindranath Tagore and in 1922 became director of the art school Kala Bhavan in Shantiniketan. Bose not only motivated his students to intensify their focus on a study of nature, but also made room in his lessons for spontaneity and personal creativity. His art education aided the productive development of the Bengal School, which was being increasingly stereotyped as “Indian style”: With its anti-professionalism and avant-garde spirit, it also inspired other art schools in India. Bose, along with Abanindranath Tagore, is one of the most important exponents of a new Indian art, who shaped a new visual language based on their indigenous cultural traditions.

RAMENDRANATH CHAKRAVORTY (1902–1999)

born in Tripura, studied at the Government School of Art & Craft in Calcutta. He then went on to Shantiniketan to continue his studies at Kala Bhavana. Here, he learned the art of woodcutting from the French artist Andre Karpeles and developed his interest in Japanese and European art. Courtesy of the international teachers, he was able to broaden his range of artistic techniques, which led to his unique rendering of scenes of village life. He later continued his studies at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Chakravorty is one of the pioneers of printed graphics in India, who nonetheless endeavoured to combine Western techniques with local subjects and traditions.

FRANZ CIZEK (1865–1946)

studied from 1885 to 1895 at the Academy of Fine Art Vienna. After completing his studies he taught drawing at a middle school, going on to establish his own art school soon thereafter. Cizek was inspired by the international educational reform movement, driven by Ellen Key and Maria Montessori, which emerged around the turn of the century. This combined a departure from traditional educational methods with

a new interest in the child. The development of the creative powers of the individual defined the art education movement, of which Cizek was a pioneer. His youth art school, which was affiliated to the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts, became famous worldwide.

ANANDA KENTISH COOMARASWAMY (1877–1947)

born in Colombo, was the son of the Tamil scholar Mutu Coomaraswamy and his English wife Elizabeth Beeby. In 1917 he became the first curator for Indian art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Coomaraswamy was co-founder of the India Society in London. As an art historian and philosopher of Indian art he was one of the early interpreters of Indian culture in the West, who emphasised the spiritual element in Indian art. His numerous publications were widely read, especially in Western-Orientalist circles.

ABDUR RAHMAN CHUGTAI (1897–1975)

born in Lahore, he studied from 1911 at the Mayo School of Art where Samarendranath Gupta, a pupil of Abanindranath Tagore, was deputy director. In 1916 Chugtai’s first work in the “revivalist ‘oriental’ style” was published in the *Modern Review*. His first exhibition came about in 1920 for the Punjab Fine Art Society. In the same year, he exhibited at the Indian Society of Oriental Art. In the 1930s he made several study trips to London. Chugtai is considered to be one of the first artists to establish in his paintings an autonomous link between Mughal art, miniature painting and Islamic art traditions. With his comprehensive creative oeuvre – in addition to painting he also designed books, stamps and coins – Chugtai became one of Pakistan’s most important cultural representatives after partition.

SUNAYANI DEVI (1875–1962)

born in Calcutta, was a painter whose interest in the medium was initially awakened by her brothers Gaganendranath and Abanindranath Tagore. Her subjects referred to Indian epics and mythology; her style was influenced by the Bengal painting tradition. In

1908 she presented her work at the 12th annual exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. She was also represented at the Festival of Empire in London's Crystal Palace in 1911. In the 1920s Devi was invited to exhibit in numerous international exhibitions. She founded the art school Kala Bharati in Calcutta.

LYONEL FEININGER (1871–1956)

a German-American painter, graphic artist and caricaturist is, along with Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, one of the principal exponents of Classical Modernism in Europe. In the early 1920s Feininger, then a Bauhaus master, was already one of the most important contemporary painters in Germany. Having started out as a caricaturist Feininger turned to painting and developed, in an exploration of Cubism and a search for the best possible artistic expression of his visions of the "supernatural", of transcendence, a highly distinctive painting style: Clear image buildup, prismatic pictorial structure, intensity and transparency of colour. His work cannot be classified as belonging to one particular style. Feininger was a member of the Berlin Secession, the Workers' Art Council and the art group "Die Blaue Vier", and was active at the Bauhaus from 1919 to 1932 as head of the printing workshop. Feininger emigrated to the USA in 1936 where he lectured at Mills College in Oakland and at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. In the USA he was elected President of the Federation of American Painters und Sculptors; a year before his death, he was made a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

ASIT KUMAR HALDER (1890–1964)

born in Jorasanko, he studied under Abanindranath Tagore and Leonard Jennings at the Government School of Art & Craft in Calcutta. From 1909 to 1911 he accompanied Lady Herringham on an expedition to Ajanta in order to document the frescoes there. He too was represented in the Festival of Empire in London's Crystal Palace in 1911. From 1911 to 1915 he taught at the Kala Bhavan in Shantiniketan, where he became acquainted with Stella Kramrisch. In 1923 he toured Europe in order to study realism in Western art. Halder, in addition to being a talented painter, also wrote poems. In the late 1920s he was the first Indian artist to become Director of the Lucknow College of Arts & Crafts. In 1932 he became the first Indian Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London. Halder was represented in countless international exhibitions.

ERNEST BINFIELD HAVELL (1861–1934)

was Director of the Madras School of Industrial Arts and from 1886 to 1906 Director of the Government School of Art & Craft, Calcutta. Havell himself played a central role in the organisation of art schools on behalf of the British government in India, but was nonetheless one of the sharpest critics of these educational institutions, dominated as they were by the Western canon. In Calcutta he and Abanindranath Tagore worked together on the reform of art education. The Bengal School was associated with a new interpretation of Indian traditions in art. Havell's publications supported the international dissemination of the new art movements. He was a member of London's India Society, which supported his publications, e.g. the *Handbook of Indian Art*. Havell was also a member of the committee for the India section of the Festival of Empire 1911 in London's Crystal Palace.

JOHANNES ITTEN (1888–1967)

was a Swiss painter and art educator and founder of the preliminary course at the Bauhaus in Weimar. Itten had met Walter Gropius through Alma Mahler in Vienna. The realisation of the exhibition of Bauhaus works at the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta in 1922 may be traced back to Itten's acquaintance with Stella Kramrisch in Vienna. Itten had already fostered an interest in theosophy while studying under Adolf Hölzel in Stuttgart; he became familiar with the Mazdaznan doctrines in Switzerland in 1912. In 1917 he established a private art school in Vienna. His original positions on art and art theory led to his appointment at the Bauhaus Weimar in 1919. He outlined his belief in a rationally justifiable art theory in his book *Kunst der Farbe* (Art of Colour), which is a standard work of art education. In 1923 Itten left the Bauhaus to live and work in an international Mazdaznan Temple Community in Herlberg. In 1926 he founded a modern art school in Berlin, which was closed in 1934 by the National Socialists. In 1949 he became Director of Museum Rietberg, a museum of non-European art in Zurich, where his lifelong interest in the art and culture of Asia comes to fruition.

WASSILY KANDINSKY (1866–1944)

was a Russian painter, graphic designer and art theorist who lived in Germany and in France and who is viewed as an exponent of Expressionism and, above all, Abstract art. Kandinsky's art theory and practice was based on a complex colour-form theory and a



distinctive conception of synthesis. His design theory is a pioneering achievement in the field of rational penetration of the principles of design. His most influential books include *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* and *Point and Line to Plane*. After holding a position as director of the newly established Museum for Artistic Culture in Moscow and lectureships at Vkhutemas (Higher art and technical studios), he was called to the Bauhaus where he taught until its closure in Berlin, initially in the wall painting workshop, then on the preliminary course and finally in the fine art painting class. After 1933 Kandinsky emigrated to Paris and lived there until his death in the suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine.

PAUL KLEE (1879–1940)

is one of the seminal visual artists of 20th century Classical Modernism. His extensive oeuvre is associated with Expressionism, Cubism, Constructivism, Primitivism and Surrealism. His experiments with and exploration of colour in particular led to an oeuvre which was all his own, whereby the colourful oriental world formed the foundation of his design ideas. His creative output was based on the desire to create forms analogous with the formal principles of nature. Klee was a member of the art group “Die Blaue Vier”. From 1920 at the Bauhaus in Weimar he took over as head of the workshops for bookbinding and glass painting (but taught primarily on the basic course for elementary design), was head of a painting class and occasionally gave form classes in the weaving workshop. He then became a professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. He was dismissed when the National Socialists assumed power and moved to Bern, where he produced an extensive late oeuvre. In addition to his art, Paul Klee authored numerous texts on art theory.

SOFIE KORNER (1879–?)

was a painter and graphic artist who had studied under Johannes Itten in Vienna and followed him to the Bauhaus in Weimar. Rabindranath Tagore evidently acquired one of the works that Sofie Korner presented at the 1922 exhibition in Calcutta. From Weimar, she returned to Vienna and was deported in 1942 to Izbica ghetto, a transfer point for deportation to the extermination camps. It is probable that she was murdered in the Belzec extermination camp.

STELLA KRAMRISCH (1896–1993)

developed her interest in Indian art as a student of art history in Vienna, inspired in part by her professor,

Josef Strzygowski. In Vienna, she wrote a dissertation on early Buddhist monuments. In 1919, in light of the miserable situation in post-war Vienna and equipped with a scholarship to the University of Oxford, she decided to move to London. Here, she met William Rothenstein. Her acquaintance with Rabindranath Tagore also dates back to this period. With Rothenstein’s support she acquired a travel visa for India. From 1921 to 1923 she taught Indian art and European art history at Shantiniketan. In 1923 she took up a lectureship at the University of Calcutta. The Bauhaus exhibition in the 14th annual exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art may be traced back to Stella Kramrisch’s contact with Johannes Itten in Vienna. In 1950 she left India and took up an invitation from the University of Pennsylvania’s institute for the study of South Asia. Four years later she took up a position as curator of the Indian Art section at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art. Kramrisch was one of the pioneers of Asian art historiography, although she had specialised more in the early art of India in her time in the USA.

ALMA MAHLER-WERFEL (1879–1964)

was born in Vienna to an upper middle class family and received an extensive musical education, which also included composition. In 1901 she met Gustav Mahler, whom she married a year later. While staying at a health spa she met Walter Gropius, whom she married after Mahler’s death. While Gropius was fighting at the front she hosted a salon in Vienna, a meeting place for the Danube Monarchy’s artistic and intellectual milieu. This included Johannes Itten, with whom she shared an interest in theosophy. The young literary figure Franz Werfel also attended her salon. After her divorce from Gropius in 1920 Alma Mahler became Werfel’s companion and patron. After the premature death of their daughter Manon the pair left Vienna to settle near Marseilles. In 1940 they moved to Los Angeles. After Werfel’s death she moved to New York and began to write her autobiography. Imbued with anti-Semitic sentiments, the book initially met with hefty criticism. At the same, it demonstrated the depth of Alma Mahler-Werfel’s integration in the international networks of the 20th century cultural avant-garde.

KSHITINDRANATH MAJUMDAR (1891–1975)

born in West Bengal, began his art studies at the Government School of Art & Craft, Calcutta, where

he studied under Abanindranath Tagore. From 1912 to 1930 Majumdar worked as an art teacher and was an officer of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta. From 1942 to 1964 he took up a similar position at the University of Allahabad. In his art, Majumdar took up mainly mythological and religious themes. His work was exhibited in numerous international exhibitions of modern Indian art in Europe and the USA. Majumdar received a number of honours, among them an honorary doctorate from Rabindra Bharati University and the Merit Award of the Bengal Congress Committee 1963.

GERHARD MARCKS (1889–1981)

an eminent German sculptor, held a number of teaching positions at the Bauhaus, at the Burg Giebichenstein Academy of Arts and Crafts in Halle (Saale) and later at the Staatliche Kunstgewerbeschule (state vocational art school) and Landeschule (state art school) in Hamburg. His multifaceted oeuvre, which was denounced by the National Socialists as “degenerate art”, centres on the suffering, yet undaunted human being. It expresses in a humanist sense responses to the tensions and contradictions of human existence. Although far removed from social utopia and always based on nature and life, Marcks’ archaizing style is associated with contemporary manifestations of Cubism and Abstraction.

GEORG MUCHE (1895–1987)

after his graduation from a private art school in Munich, evolved into a renowned painter, graphic designer and university professor. His work was inspired by the Expressionist painters in the sphere of the group of artists “Der Blaue Reiter” and, later, Marc Chagall. Muche exhibited in Herwarth Walden’s avant-garde gallery “Der Sturm” in Berlin and taught at his art school. Familiar with Mazdaznan, a religious doctrine based on an Eastern health movement, he became the youngest Master of Form at the Bauhaus, head of the weaving workshop and intermittently head of the preliminary course. As a painter he was also involved in the design of housing, where he had a positive impact. Later, Muche became a lecturer at the Itten School in Berlin, at the State Academy of Art and Applied Arts in Breslau and at Hugo Häring’s art school Kunst und Werk. Dismissed from his post by the National Socialists, his work was denounced as “degenerate art”. He then took tenure at the School of Textile Engineering in Krefeld and at the Institut

für Malstoffkunde (institute of painting materials science) of the paint manufacturer Dr. Kurt Herbert. Muche is one of those artists who, owing to their didactic abilities as teachers, were able to combine the making of art with teaching throughout their lives, thereby having a lasting influence on subsequent generations.

WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN (1872–1945)

promoted the mediation of Indian art as an artist and cultural policy maker. He was one of the founding members of the London India Society, and travelled to India on a number of occasions. He was one of principal patrons of Rabindranath Tagore, with whom he shared a close friendship. His international network also helped Stella Kramrisch gain a travel visa to India, despite the problematic political relations between India and the colonial power. From 1920 to 1935 Rothenstein was director of the Royal Society of Arts in London. He was knighted in 1931.

DEVIPRASAD ROYCHOWDHURY (1899–1975)

was born in Rangpur. He studied in Calcutta under Abanindranath Tagore and worked as a teacher at the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta. Early on, Roychowdhury dedicated himself to sculpture as well as painting. During his later travels to Italy he was inspired by the Western techniques of sculpture. Although inspired by the Bengal School, in his sculptures and paintings Roychowdhury refers more than others to Western realism. In the process, he was able to independently combine the painting traditions of the East and the West.

LOTHAR SCHREYER (1886–1966)

was not only a doctor of law but also a dramaturg, author, playwright, novelist, essayist and lyric poet. He was the director of expressionistic theatres such as the “Sturmbühne” in Berlin and the “Kampfbühne” in Hamburg and head of the stage class at the Bauhaus Weimar. His path took him from the art schools in Berlin and Dresden to Hamburg, where he lived as a freelance writer and painter until his death. Schreyer was inspired by a new way of living that, defined by art and communal in nature, took a holistic approach to the human being. Over the years his path led him away from stagecraft, to religion and religious literature. The modern world as it was after the Second World War remained alien to him.

BIRESWAR SEN (1897–1974)

born in Calcutta, studied at the Indian Society of Oriental Art under Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose. Although he had gained a degree in English Literature, painting increasingly became his passion. In 1926 he began to teach art at the Lucknow College of Arts and Crafts. His friendship with the theosophical artist Nikolas Roerich influenced his landscape painting in particular.

JOSEF STRZYGOWSKI (1862–1941)

a Viennese art historian, was one of the first to represent the comparative study of European and Asian art in research and theory. From 1909 to his retirement from professorship he was Director of the Institute of Art History in Vienna. Stella Kramrisch studied art history under Strzygowski. Together with Alma Mahler, Strzygowski visited the Bauhaus in 1920 where he was an active member of its clique of friends and associates. Due to his friendship with Stella Kramrisch, on a number of occasions he received requests for articles from Ordhendra Coomar Gangoly, editor of *Rupam*, the journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Strzygowski had also endeavoured to find a teaching position in Shantiniketan. However, in the 1930s his theories became increasingly imbued with racist ideas that ideologically supported National Socialism in Austria.

ABANINDRANATH TAGORE (1871–1951)

is perceived as the most eminent exponent of the Bengal School. He was one of the first to take up Indian and later Japanese traditions in his painting, thereby developing a new visual language in response to the dominance of Western art during the British Raj. He was among the founding members of both the Bichitra Club in Calcutta and the Indian Society of Oriental Art. He was also Vice Principal and then, after Havell's departure, the first Indian Director of the Government School of Art & Craft, where he initiated the reorientation of art education towards an independent modern Indian idiom.

GAGANENDRANATH TAGORE (1867–1938)

was also one of the early modern Indian artists although he, unlike his younger brother, had had no formal art education. In the Jorasanko House of Rabindra Bharati University he designed a series of stage sets for theatrical productions. Inspired by Japanese art he moved on to Cubism in the 1920s. He is also one of the founding

members of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. His caricatures, which he published in the 1920s in magazines such as *Reform Scream* and *Play of Opposites*, delivered an ironic commentary on the erosion of social and cultural values under the British colonial power in Calcutta.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861–1941)

first Indian Nobel Prize Winner for literature, poet, philosopher, artist. He grew up at the Jorasanko House on Calcutta. Because his father wanted Rabindranath to become a barrister, Tagore enrolled a public school in Brighton in 1878 and read law at the University College in London. Back in Bengal he started to manage the rural family estates in Shantiniketan. Here he founded an experimental school, to test new models for education. Between 1878 and 1932 Tagore set his foot in more than thirty countries on five continents. In November 1913 Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature for "Gitanjali: Song Offerings". The English translation of the collection of poems was initiated by the India Society London. In 1921 Tagore was invited by Herman Graf Keyserling to visit Germany, his lecture in Berlin at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-University gained enormous public attention. In the same year Tagore founded Visva Bharati in Shantiniketan, a reform university, with the objective to combine the renewal of the British dominated education system with a progress in rural development. In the age of 60 Tagore started painting. Together with his comprehensive literary and philosophical works, his art contributes to his reputation as the outstanding creative artist of modern India.

MARGIT TÉRY-ADLER GESCH. BUSCHMANN (1882–1977)

was born in Hungary and studied under Johannes Itten in Vienna. After her marriage to Bruno Adler, author, editor and founder of the publishers Utopia in Weimar, she studied at the Bauhaus Weimar. She went on to teach visual theory for non-professionals and design classes for young people based on Itten's preliminary course method. She then relocated to Berlin where, after her marriage to Hugo Buschmann, she made films for workers' education and produced illustrations, *inter alia* for Heartfield's *Das Kapital*. After the war she focused on the realisation of Bauhaus ideas in her work as an advertising designer, colour designer, product designer and fine artist.

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#### EXHIBITION

The Bauhaus in Calcutta

An Encounter of the Cosmopolitan Avant-garde

Curatorial Team: Regina Bittner, Kathrin Rhomberg  
with Sria Chatterjee, Boris Friedewald and Partha Mitter

Exhibition Management: Katja Szymczak

Curatorial Support: Ranjit Hoskote

Academic Advice: Sanjukta Sunderason, Tapati

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Display: Nicole Six & Paul Petritsch

Press and public relations: Gesine Bahr, Ingolf Kern,  
Jutta Stein

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Philipp Oswald

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