

# *Pittura Metafisica* and the "New Man" in Weimar Art of the Early 1920s

Maria Belikova

Department of Modern and Contemporary Western Art  
State Institute for Art Studies (SIAS)  
Moscow, Russia  
E-mail: belikovamaria@yandex.ru

**Abstract**—The presented article deals with ideological and stylistic interrelations of Weimar art of the early 1920s with Italian metaphysical painting. The author examines in details the texts and manifestos of Italian and German artists, revealing the general theoretical views on the art of both sides. The author focuses on the image of the "new man" in German art, which originated in the context of expressionism, and received a different expression and meaning in the early 1920s. With the help of stylistic principles of *pittura metafisica*, as well as its main character – dummy – German artists have come up with their own version of the "new man". Berlin Dadaists and the representatives of the new objectivity leave behind the metaphysical meaning, that originally laid down in C. Carra's and G. de Chirico's mannequins, and put the "new man" in Weimar socio-political realities, thus creating an art of highly topicality.

**Keywords**—German art; Berlin Dada; new objectivity; *pittura metafisica*; "new man"

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1920s, mysterious characters – mannequins, robots, automatons – have been steadily appearing in German art, the presence of which cannot be fully comprehended if one remains exclusively within the art context of Weimar Germany. Researchers have already noted that the formation of new aesthetics of the interwar period in Germany was influenced by Italian metaphysical painting [1], [2], and in this regard, the greatest interest among German artists was caused by works of two Italian masters – Giorgio de Chirico and Carlo Carra. Via using impersonal mannequins of Italian *pittura metafisica* German artists tried to represent the so-called "new man" – a typical hero of the interwar era, the image of which could vary from a philistine, who had no opinion of his own, to an engineer, constructing in his drawings a new world of the future.

The "new man" of the Dadaists was a direct opposition to the "new man" of the expressionists, who advocated the spiritual renewal of man and dreamed of a new world, building utopian idylls of universal brotherhood and boundless love of people for each other. Such ideas can be found, for example, in the article of a writer, director and artist Lothar Schreier "The New Man", published in the expressionist magazine "Der Sturm" in 1919 [3]. Researcher

Michael Stark emphasizes that the Dadaists denied almost religious worship an abstract "new man", and they commented on expressionists' statements "with sarcastic irony and cynical controversy" [4], offering the society their own version of the "new man", more mundane, but more suitable, in their opinion, the realities of the time.

The article will analyse theoretical texts of Italian artists, as well as articles and manifestos of Berlin Dada in order to compare the worldview of both sides, as well as identify similarities and differences in views regarding the purpose and essence of art. Understanding the theoretical basis will allow us to move to the next stage of analysis and to consider in details the stylistic and thematic influence of *pittura metafisica* on German art of the 1920s. The article will attempt to depict the peculiarity of the "new man" in the German painting and graphics of the period under study, as well as what its image owes to the Italian metaphysical school.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FROM TEXT TO TEXT

The influence of Italian metaphysical painting in the early 1920s on German artists was significant. Reproductions of works by Carlo Carra and Giorgio de Chirico were published at a regular basis in the magazine "Valori plastici" and were well known in Germany. Berlin Dadaists repeatedly mentioned the names of Italian artists in their articles and manifestos. The reason, for which the German artists were more receptive to *pittura metafisica* than any other modern art movement, should be sought in the cultural context of the period in question. On the art scene of Germany, since the beginning of the XX century, dominated the avant-garde movements, led by expressionism. In the interwar period, however, it was side-lined by Dada and then new objectivity, most of whose representatives had behind them at an early stage of work expressionist experience. As a rule, these young people either took an active part in the military events of the Great War, or somehow saw its devastating consequences for the individual, society and the country as a whole. In this regard, the new generation of artists can be characterized by a clear anti-militaristic position. Sobering military experience, as well as the difficult socio-economic and political situation in the country contributed largely to the fact that expressionism was

perceived by a number of young artists as inappropriate and ridiculous anachronism of the pre-war era.

Here the role of the main offenders of expressionism took over the Berlin Dadaists, as evidenced by the numerous attacks on it in articles and manifestos of G. Grosz, R. Schlichter, R. Hausmann and J. Heartfield and others. Thus, for example, the collective article of the above-mentioned authors "The laws of painting" of 1920 (unpublished during the life of the authors) states the following: "the materialistic picture is based on plasticity and accuracy and not on the indecision of subjective impressions or spiritual vibrations" [5]. And further: "Painting is a collective phenomenon" [6]. By materialistic painting artists meant the work, which is based, in fact, on the academic drawing, made with an understanding of the form, perspective, light and shadows, coupled with a competent painting component – knowledge of the vast range of colours. Artists, referring to Leonardo da Vinci himself, called again their colleagues to learn to be attentive observers of the surrounding reality, and not to be like the expressionists, whose art, in their opinion, is "arbitrariness and loss of form" [7].

Richard Hülsenbeck, one of the founding fathers of Dadaism, wrote that expressionism is "a gesture of tired people who want to get out of themselves to forget time, war and suffering" [8]. In his article "Return to objectivity in art" Raul Hausmann calls expressionism "the art of lingering stupidity" [9], "disgusting darkening of things" [10]. "Expressionism, which arose abroad, has become in Germany according to the good old tradition, in a well-fed idyll and waiting for a decent pension..." [11], - stated in one of the Dada manifestos. Moreover, one of the joint articles of John Heartfield and Georg Grosz, in which the authors, among other things, attacked expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka, appeared in print under the title of "The Art scab" [12], which expresses their straightforward attitude to expressionism.

There is no end to the reproaches, accusations and malicious ridicule of the Dadaists against expressionism, and the list of such quotations can be continued if desired. Paradoxically, it was the Dadaists who were the first who in the post-war period began to advocate for a return to the academic tradition in painting, arranging at the same time on Berlin streets and public institutions provocative performances, shocking the public, as well as creating photomontages and collages (a new art form at the time), in which they depicted the absurdity of social development. Dadaists' outrageous appearance, it would seem, was in complete contradiction with the academic tradition of the past, and, at first glance, their anti-modernist position may seem strange and unexpected. However, a scrupulous study of the Dadaist texts in conjunction with the historical context of the period under study makes it clear that the Dadaists built almost all their judgments on the opposition to expressionism, which by its nature was alien to academism.

One thing is clear from all this: the generation that saw the war could no longer find adequate forms of artistic expression, using the style and aesthetics of expressionism with its interest in the inner life of an individual, exaltation,

mysticism and hyperbolized forms. A significant part of the German artists now tended to the reflection of real life, with its many twists and turns, giving impetus to their oeuvre. Some of them could be ironic and scoff at the realities of the Weimar Republic, as did the Dadaists, while others sought to record the true, "objective" reality through the naturalistic interpretation of objects, which distinguished the representatives of the "new objectivity" (some of which were former Dadaists). One way or another, the focus of the artists' work in the early 1920s was aimed at the current events of public life, and, consequently, the artists were searching for new means of artistic expression. It is important to understand that it is in this ideological and artistic context that the genuine interest of German artists in modern Italian art is born, which attracted by its classic rigor and clarity, and most importantly, by the appeal (albeit well-veiled) to modernity.

In his famous article "Return to the craft", published in 1918 in the journal "Valori plastici" [13], Giorgio de Chirico appears to the reader as a conservative, lamenting that the avant-garde negated the value of drawing in painting, as well as all the traditional studies necessary in the past to create a decent work of art. De Chirico feels nostalgic for art workshops and guilds, where the quality of a work was controlled at several levels, excluding unworthy samples, as well as those times when the creation of an art piece took at least a few months. De Chirico is convinced that the future of all art will be impossible without a return to the craft, assuming the presence of the artist's academic skills and knowledge of the entire technological process in detail. He also criticizes the commercialization of art and the dealers' work, which is based on the production line approach, which significantly reduces the technical quality of works and makes artists adapt to market conditions. The article was published 2 years earlier than the above-mentioned collective article of the Dadaists "The Laws of painting", and therefore the ideological influence of Italian artists on the German artistic context are obvious.

Similar views can be found in Georg Grosz's texts, in particular, in the article "About my new paintings", which was published in 1921 in the magazine "Das Kunstblatt" [14], he writes about his interest in Carlo Carrà's works, although at the same time recognized that he was sceptical about "excessive metaphysics and bourgeois formulation of the problem"[15]. The ideological similarity can be traced in Grosz and de Chirico: in the article "A few words about German tradition" [16] he criticizes the contemporary realities where commercialization of art took place and avant-garde trends put artists in a certain style framework, if they wanted to be commercially successful and popular. Here Grosz adheres to the position that "it is better to be an artist of the second echelon, but to express in his work the national identity" [17] and encourages his colleagues to turn to the masters of the Northern Renaissance in the person of Bosch, Bruegel, Altdorfer and Dürer to revive "a worthy tradition of drawing and painting" [18].

It is also noteworthy that the curator of the first exhibition of new objectivity G. Hartlaub in the preface to the catalogue in 1925 also noted the fact that the distinctive

feature of post-expressionism artists is the desire for truth and craft [19].

Thus, the ideological echoes of the Dadaists with representatives of metaphysical painting confirm the thesis about the similarity of the artistic context of the two countries, where a conservative reaction to the avant-garde trends was quite clearly manifested. The researchers here noted the international trend of "call to the order" [20], which is especially clearly manifested itself in France, Italy and Germany in the early 1920s.

### III. ART PRACTICE: FROM MANNEQUIN TO MANNEQUIN

The influence of Italian art on German art was not limited only to the ideological aspect, but also manifested itself in compositional, stylistic, and plot borrowings. The images of impersonal mannequins, the main characters of metaphysical painting, were transferred by G. Grosz, R. Schlichter, R. Hausmann to their own works to demonstrate their views on social development. If in the Italian *pittura metafisica* mannequins served as a metaphor for the alienation of the individual, his endless loneliness against the background of dead architectural side-scenes, in German painting and drawing the image of a dummy is already used to express other ideas and is filled with acute social meaning.

Both in German and Italian art of those years, the main space for the deployment of the plot is a city. A variety of muses, mythological characters, interpreted as mannequins, as well as sculptures, standing alone on the stage – all of them are located at Carra and de Chirico in the urban industrial space (hence the constant attribute of the new world – a chimney of a plant, present both in Italian and later in German art), to emphasize the inconsistency of modern life with the images of the "La Belle Époque" – antiquity and Renaissance ("Fig. 1"). Grosz's and his friends' nostalgia for a bygone era hardly ever worried much, however, that German artists were interested, so it is a problem of mechanization of social life, on the one hand, and on the other – a mass industrial society in which a human is leveled to a puppet or a robot. As noted by the German art historian Wieland Schmidt: "de Chirico's and Carra's mannequins he (Grosz) placed in the system of public relations..."[21], and thus their metaphysical meaning is replaced by social. The researcher of Dadaism Hannah Bergius also states the following: "Under the influence of the metaphysical school of de Chirico, the mannequin symbolized both the established social realities and the radical widespread deindividuation of the "new man" [22].



Fig. 1. G. de Chirico. The Disquieting Muses. 1918 Oil on canvas. Private collection.

In the above-mentioned article "About my new paintings", which was accompanied by illustrations of new works by the artist, Grosz explains to readers the purpose of his work in the new realities that create the "new man". He notes that the person in his works "is represented not for the sake of research of his psychological state, but rather as mechanical, collective concept" as "the individual destiny doesn't matter today" [23]. Here Grosz admits that he seeks "to achieve a simple and clear style" [24], as well as "to be clear to everyone" [25].

However, paradoxically, Grosz's oeuvre, which was created under the influence of Italian painting turned out to be the most ambiguous in terms of its interpretation. The main characters of this series are depersonalized figures constructed from the primary forms – a circle, a cylinder, a cube. The colour palette is also reduced to a few muted tones. Grosz cuts off the metaphysical meaning inherent in the works of Italian contemporaries, using only stylistic and compositional techniques of Italian artists: so on the German streets with buildings built in the style of functionalism walk impersonal puppets dressed in modern costumes watercolours "Berlin C" ("Fig. 2"), "Jacobstrasse" ("Fig. 3"). There is a feeling that the space seems to be compressed around the characters who are deprived of their will and aimlessly, as if by inertia, wandering lost on monotypic and dull streets of the city.

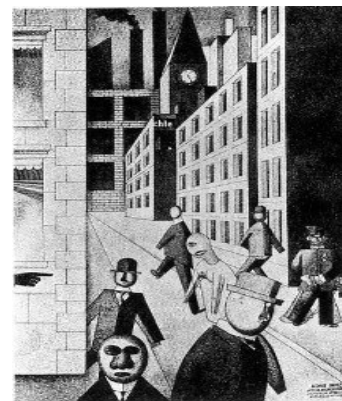


Fig. 2. G. Grosz. Berlin. 1920 Paper, watercolor. Lost.



Fig. 3. G. Grosz. Jakobstrasse. 1920 Paper, watercolor. Lost.

Political references can be traced in "the Republican automatons" ("Fig. 4"), which shows two faceless prosthetic robots. One of them wears an iron cross - the distinctive emblem of a war veteran, next to his body the gears operating and forcing out of his empty head to the words "1,2,3. Hurrah". The second character – a dressed in fashion bourgeois with a bowler hat on his head, with prosthetic limbs, a serial number on his face and the flag of Germany in the right prosthesis. Both characters stand on a city street with functional buildings, in the background one can see again a chimney. Here Grosz ridicules in the face of prosthetic robots philistines who have become victims of political media propaganda, as a result of which they mechanically chant flag-waving slogans, not understanding the real political situation.



Fig. 4. G. Grosz. Republican automatons. 1920 Paper, pencil, watercolor. New York. Museum of Modern Art.

Thus Grosz deals with the problem of deindividuation, domination of the collective principle over the personal, philistine conformism. A series of watercolour works on the semantic principle closes the picture "Untitled" ("Fig. 5"), which crowns the artist's reflections on life in a modern city.

The torso of a mannequin with amputated limbs, dressed in a man's suit stands on a pedestal in the middle of a deserted street, being a kind of monument to a resident of the metropolis: his disability is a consequence of his intellectual inferiority. Cold and strict geometry of the city dominates the character, emphasizing his helplessness and hopelessness of the whole situation.



Fig. 5. G. Grosz. Untitled. 1920 Oil on canvas. Dusseldorf, Art collection of the land of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The other two Grosz's watercolours "The new man" ("Fig. 6") and "Diabolo player" ("Fig. 7") are ambiguous. The new man is depicted by Grosz as an engineer who in his sterile workshop cheerfully goes to the board with an image of the drawing of an engine. The engineer is constructed from stereometric parts and shown with his back to the viewer. In the workshop one can also see in addition to technical equipment (a winkel, protractor) also a punching bag – a sign of a healthy body and spirit of the engineer, the builder of a new society. Here the artist's fascination with the theories of the socialist reconstruction of the world is manifested, and the anonymity of the engineer is interpreted in this case in a positive way as an example for others to follow.



Fig. 6. G. Grosz. The New man. 1921 Paper, watercolor. Lost.

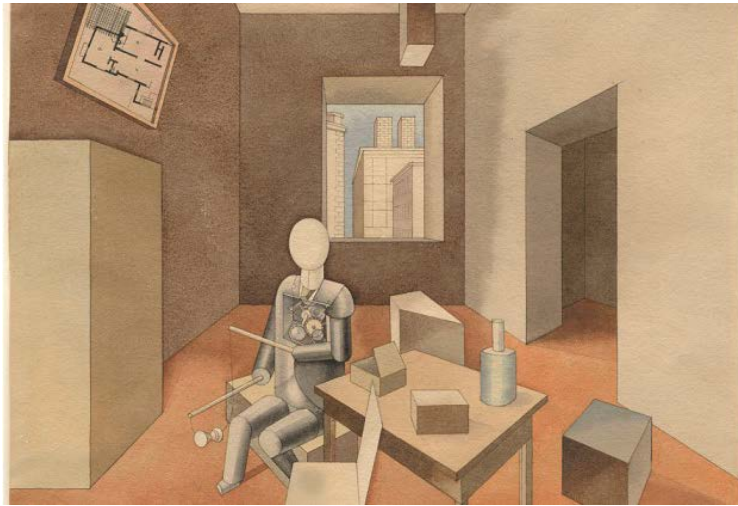


Fig. 7. G. Grosz. Diabolo player. 1921 Paper, watercolor. Private collection.

"Bright healthy worker of collective society" [26], - so characterizes Grosz heroes of the works in article. Nevertheless, some researchers note that despite the author's stated program optimism, it remains unclear whether the "new man" is a hero of the new society or a victim of civilizational progress [27]. The scepticism of scientists is not unreasonable, given the fact that the "new man" is formally interpreted by Grosz in the same way as his puppet inhabitants of the metropolis. However, for Grosz this "hero/victim" opposition was not probably relevant, because its artistic logic, relying at that time on Dadaism, involves the fixation of the events with a considerable degree of irony and sarcasm, in which roles of "heroes" and "victims" were greatly exaggerated.

The last work of this cycle – "Diabolo player" also does not inspire a sense of optimism to the viewer. The player is presented as an impersonal robot with gears spinning inside. He sits on the floor in a room filled with all sorts of geometric objects. The window offers a "picturesque" view on the typical functional buildings of the city. On one wall hangs a scheme, which reminds once again that everything happens not for a random hero's will, but according to a prearranged plan. The diabolo game is by nature a game with thousands of possibilities, but here we see the opposite: the mechanism inside the robot player moves his hands, and – the dull game begins. Thus, the idea of spontaneity and freedom of choice inherent in the game is completely leveled to an automated process.

Thus, Grosz's aspirations to be understandable and accessible to the mass audience, which were stated in his program article, in the considered series did not find the proper embodiment - instead, the artist created works that cannot be unambiguously interpreted. They should be seen rather as an expression of the ideological views of the artist and his reflection on the contradictions that were fraught with social life in the early 1920s. Confirmation of this fact can be found in his autobiography, where he writes from the height of time about his past, when he was fascinated by left-wing theories: "According to this theory, all I had to do was to spread knowledge and watch how the unenlightened

became enlightened. My friends were determined to eradicate everything irrational, mystical, foggy or sentimental and replace it with their statistical explanations of history and dialectical materialism. They were thoroughly rationalists with an unwavering belief in the reasonableness of the masses. And they completely with the blessing of Marx denied the fact that the masses tend to believe legends, not numbers and pure reason" [28].

Perhaps the only example when Grosz quite straightforwardly expressed his views, using stylistic techniques of *pittura metafisica* – two watercolour sketches for painting the gym of the Working Sports Union, which were published in the magazine "Der Ararat" in 1921 [29]. The first is called "Cycling and weightlifting" ("Fig. 8"), and the second "Rhythmic renewal through boxing and baseball" ("Fig. 9"). It was assumed that both paintings will be opposite each other in the gym. The first sketch is devoted to proletarian sport - it depicts two athletes engaged in outdoor sports in urban space (cycling and weightlifting, respectively). Athletes appear once again as impersonal characters, personifying that type of "the healthy worker of collective society" about which Grosz wrote in the above-mentioned article in 1920.



Fig. 8. G. Grosz. "Cycling and weightlifting". Sketch. Watercolor on paper. Lost.

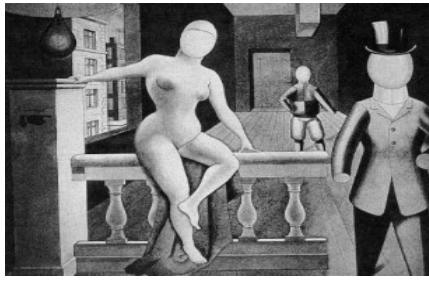


Fig. 9. G. Grosz. Sketch. "Rhythmic renewal through boxing and baseball." Watercolor on paper. Lost.

The second sketch is related to bourgeois sports, which take place indoors - baseball and boxing, the fashion for which came to Germany, like many other things, from the United States. The heroes of the sketch are also interpreted in an extremely generalized way: an athlete in the background in the hall, a rich bourgeois in a tailcoat and a cylinder in the foreground, who apparently is a spectator and thus occupies a passive position of an observer, and next to him on the balustrade sits a nude model with a drapery - all these are attributes of the world, gradually disappearing into the past. These works, despite their ideological straightforwardness, still cannot be taken seriously and seen as keynote statements of the artist - they rather express author' irony, who "dialectically" divides the sport into "proletarian" and "bourgeois".

It is noteworthy that the theme of sports appeared a little earlier in Carra's works: for example, in his "Daughter of the West", "Metaphysical Muse" ("Fig. 10") one can see a female mannequin with a tennis racket, which mocks the image of the modern emancipated woman ("new muse"), which echoes the Anglo-Saxon fashion for playing tennis and leading an active lifestyle [30]. Thus, the irony manifested in the works of Grosz and Carra on the sport

theme brings their works together not only thematically, but also ideologically.



Fig. 10. C. Carra. Metaphysical Muse. 1917 Oil on canvas. Pinacoteca di Brera. Milan.

Similar images of anonymous characters, inspired by Italian paintings, one can find in Grosz's colleague works - Raul Hausmann. His watercolour of 1920 "Poet Kutschenbauch composes" ("Fig. 11") shows a poet who, as if in a trance turns the grinder on and, apparently, composes poems. In the background, Hausmann depicts a headless mannequin in front of a large scheme-drawing. The body of the poet also seems to be constructed from the primordial forms and is characterized by geometry. Like Grosz's "new man", the poet is interested in the mechanics of the world, and he finds inspiration in the monotonous mechanical sound of a coffee grinder. "The poetry of the present has found a new objectivity of things in the living space" [31] - Hausmann wrote in one of his articles. One way or another, this work reflects Hausmann's experiments in the field of phonetic poetry and sound, and the dummy with the drawing emphasizes the idea of automatism of creativity, which will gain special popularity among Surrealists.



Fig. 11. R. Hausmann. Poet Kutschenbauch composes. 1920 Paper, watercolor. Museum of Industry and Art. Saint-Etienne.

Another work of the artist of the same year "Engineers" ("Fig. 12") even more consistent with the style of Italian painting: Hausmann transfers almost unchanged de Chirico's and Carra's heroes in his watercolour painting, wearing them, however, in modern business suits with ties. Three impersonal engineers stand on the medieval square, immersed in their technical calculations: one of them holds a long ruler and stands on a box as if on the stage. The distorted perspective of the drawing, the enclosed space of the square, the depersonalization and the mystery of the figures presented depict all clear traces of Italian influence. However, despite the apparent stylistic similarity, in this work, again, there is no metaphysical meaning and nostalgia for the past because its main characters are engineers, "new people", and builders of the future. This watercolour reflects Hausmann's interest, as well as his fellow Dadaists, in engineering. "The expediency of the engineer's drawings is a much better model to follow than the uncontrolled medley of Kabbalah, mysticism and ecstasy." [32] – it says in the article of his closest ally Grosz. Thematically, Hausmann again builds opposition to expressionism, because the image of an engineer, implying clarity, technicality and dryness, would never have attracted expressionist artists.



Fig. 12. R. Hausmann. Engineers. 1920 Paper, watercolor, ink, collage. Jerusalem museum.

It is impossible not to mention Rudolf Schlichter's famous work "Dada-studio on the roof" ("Fig. 13") of 1920, which also reflects the artist's interest in metaphysical painting. This watercolour is still controversial concerning its way of interpretation. There is a strong possibility that the artist deliberately filled the picture with ambiguous characters, thus preserving the spirit of mystery inherent in *pittura metafisica*. Schlichter depicts a workshop on the roof of a house overlooking a typical big city. The composition of the picture also violated the traditional linear perspective and there are several points of view. The alleged artist sits in a white robe and a gas mask in front of an empty easel, on a pedestal is a model, and next to her sits a mannequin with amputated hands. In the workshop there is another transparent torso of the dummy, which shows the internal organs of the person. Other visitors of the workshop – two of wealthy bourgeoisie and a lady, and one of the men is missing a hand. On the left is a confused girl with a bucket and in the foreground one can see a figure of a man whose face is completely covered with a gas mask. The viewer sees only the torso of a mysterious person. The workshop is filled with drawing rules, as well as geometric objects, which can also be found in the above Grosz's watercolours. It seems that all the characters are frozen in theatrical poses so that artificial bodies can be easily confused with the living ones. Some researchers see in the watercolour a parody of Gustav Courbet's painting "The artist's studio" [33], referring to their compositional similarity. In any case, whatever the author encoded in this work, its careful study suggests that Schlichter was concerned about the problem of the close interweaving of natural and artificial principles in modern life, as well as the moral inferiority of the individual, whose physical shortcomings are only indicators of the inner emptiness. The presence of mannequins in this work carries again the social meaning, leaving behind their metaphysical aspects of the original Italian painting.



Fig. 13. R. Schlichter. Dada-studio on the roof. 1920 Paper, watercolor. Gallery Nirendorf. Berlin.

A new type of a human was represented not only by the Dadaists, for example Cologne artist Anton Räderscheidt in the early 1920s demonstrated his version of this image. His young man in a black suit and a hat on the background of a dead, deserted city is a typical character for the artist in the 1920s. The portrait of a young man is both a generalization, as it conveys the general mood of the young generation at that time, and a reference to the artist himself, since the physical resemblance of the author with the hero of his paintings is obvious. In the works of Räderscheidt of this period, one can also recognize the stylistic influence of *pittura metafisica*: for example, in the painting "Young man with yellow gloves" ("Fig. 14") one can see the distorted perspective of space, adherence to the strict geometry of forms, restrained muted colour. References to Italian painting can be traced and thematically – deserted, like an extinct city, empty squares and streets. This character of Räderscheidt can also be called a kind of the "new man", a typical inhabitant of the metropolis of the 1920s, as the feeling of endless loneliness, the homelessness of the world and the alienation of people from each other found here quite different expression than in expressionism. A young man left to himself, as if in social vacuum, reflects an expression of a new post-war worldview that bears the stamp of pessimism and melancholy. No dummies or puppets can be found at Räderscheidt's paintings, but his characters seem to transfer into them - frozen, limp, endlessly lonely (even if they are not alone ("Fig. 15")), they embody a new type of people who no longer scream in horror as heroes of expressionist paintings did, but they cut off from the world and retreat into themselves forever.

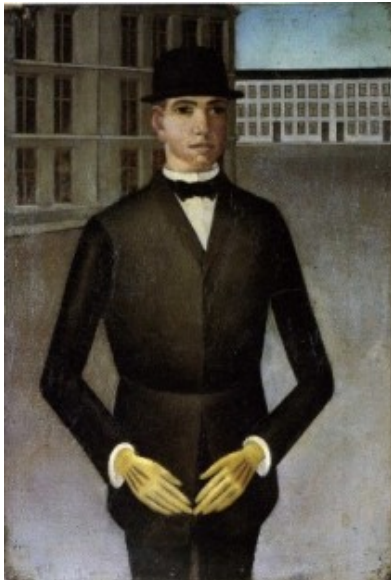


Fig. 14. A. Räderscheidt. Young man with yellow gloves. 1921 Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 15. A. Räderscheidt. Meeting. 1921 Oil on canvas. Lost.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the analysis revealed ideological, stylistic and thematic similarities between the German art of the 1920s and the contemporary art of the metaphysical school. It is no coincidence that one of the first researchers of the art of the 1920s Franz Roo, in 1925 gave a common name to the stylistic trends of a number of European artists' work under the title "magical realism" [34]. In his book, Picasso, Derain, de Chirico, Carra, Räderscheidt, Russo, Grosz, Dix, Schlichter and many other European artists found side by side, as Roo depicted common traces of neo-naturalism in their works. Such international exhibitions as "Tendencies of the 1920s" of 1977 [35], "Realism: 1919 -1939. Between Revolution and Reaction" of 1981 [36], and the most recent "Surreal objectivity", took place at the Berlin National Gallery in 2016-2017 [37], also integrate German art in international context and reveal common features of the entire era of the "call to the order".

For the Italian and German art of the period under study, the common characteristics were based on drawing, technical performance, general principles of space composition, sober colours, unreal and mysterious atmosphere of works. Both sides showed interest in the artificial, urban environment, which is the main living space for the heroes of the paintings. In the above-mentioned works there is no place for nature, - the natural habitat of man - such an environment becomes the "second nature" - a cultural space created by a man, which completely replaces the original one.

The place of human in this space is also changing: in Italian painting he fits into the world of things and acquires the ontological status of a thing, which is now equalizes with other artefacts. On the basis of German art, a person turns into a faceless mannequin, representing a type of the "new man", which, unlike the expressionists' "new man" no longer embodies the utopian ideal. Here he either does the will of the "other" (Grosz's puppets), or as a machine fixated on performing specific, precise tasks (Grosz's engineer, Hausmann's poet and engineers), or converted into weak-willed, apathetic, looped on itself of the character (Räderscheidt's hero). Unlike the works of Carra and de Chirico, which though refer somehow to the present, but are still more speculative and timeless in nature, German art is



characterized by an acute political engagement, topicality, craving for left-wing ideas and theories on the reconstruction of the world (Grosz was a member of the Communist party for some time).

As for the conservatism of the German and Italian sides regarding the development of modern art, a thoughtful viewer will comprehend that no matter how hard the artists tried to return to the craft and tradition, their oeuvre shows that their works have created a new artistic reality, radically different from the art of the past. Both German and Italian artists have created their own version of the world vision and man's place in it via reflection of the processes of social development in crisis moments for European civilization.

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