# Failed Canons

## Ferdinand Avenarius and Katharine Schäffner

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In the early twentieth century, critics writing about European modern art vied to categorize increasingly diverse artistic positions, name emerging artists, and define future directions. One such critic was Ferdinand Avenarius, who promoted Katharine Schäffner as the first artist to probe the possibilities of non-imitative art. Yet, despite his efforts, Schäffner finds herself conspicuously absent from the broader art-historical narratives today. This paper aims to explore the reasons behind this comparative neglect by examining a power struggle between Avenarius and Julius Meier-Graefe, influential critics who harbored conflicting visions of modern art.

Keywords: *modern art, abstraction, canon formation, Ferdinand Avenarius, Katharine Schäffner, Julius Meier-Graefe, Arnold Böcklin*

The art critic and poet Ferdinand Avenarius wrote in 1908 that drawings by Katharine Schäffner forebode an impending "new language" of forms.[1] He urged his readers not to assess these drawings on naturalistic accuracy but to sensitize instead to their ability to transmit affective states using "visual impressions" only.[2] In fact, as Avenarius had it, Schäffner was the first to probe the possibilities of non-imitative art, being at the forefront of contemporary artistic developments.

During the days of Wilhelmine Germany (1890–1918), critics vied to categorize and canonize new artists from an increasingly diverse range of artistic positions. Ferdinand Avenarius was an influential figure within this arena. Born in 1856, he was the younger brother of philosopher Richard Avenarius and the nephew of the composer Richard Wagner. He became a leading figure in the German cultural reform movements of his time. In 1887, he founded the widely read cultural review, *Der Kunstwart*, which emerged as a central node within a network of organizations and publications dedicated to creating a unified culture. The journal's focus spanned from reforming household consumer goods to art objects and their viewers.[3] Between 1908 and 1914, Avenarius actively promoted Schäffner's work as essential for the future of modern art. This advocacy started with the publication of a portfolio featuring forty-two of her black-and-white charcoal drawings, intriguingly titled *Eine neue Sprache?* (a new language?).

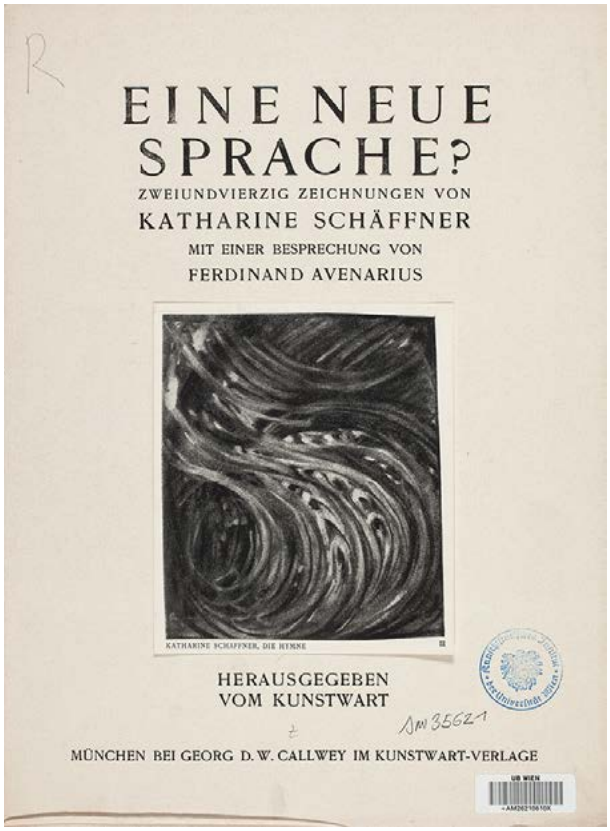



**Image 1.** Ferdinand Avenarius, Eine neue Sprache? Zweiundvierzig Zeichnungen von Katharine Schäffner. München 1908. University of Vienna, Art History Library. Image: Courtesy of Universität Wien, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, all rights reserved.

Katharine Schäffner's work was not unknown in the Bohemian fin-de-siècle art scene at this point: She regularly participated in the annual exhibitions of the Krasoumná jednota pro Čechy (*Künstverein für Böhmen*, or art union for Bohemia) in Prague with paintings, drawings, and design objects.[4] Born 1863 in Zbrazslav (near Prague), she studied in Munich and Berlin before training with Hermína Laukotová at the German art school for women (*Deutsche*

1 Ferdinand Avenarius, *Eine neue Sprache? Zweiundvierzig Zeichnungen von Katharine Schäffner* (München: Georg D.W. Callwey, 1908). The pages of Avenarius's text are not numbered; to aid the reader, I have here numbered them 1 to 5.

2 Ibid., [3].

3 Centrally among these organizations was the Dürerbund, founded by Avenarius in 1902. The main work on *Der Kunstwart* is still Gerhard Kratzsch, *Kunstwart und Dürerbund: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gebildeten im Zeitalter des Imperialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck/Ruprecht, 1969).

4 This is verifiable in the catalogues of the Krasoumná jednota exhibitions for at least 1889–90, 1896–1906, and 1914–15.

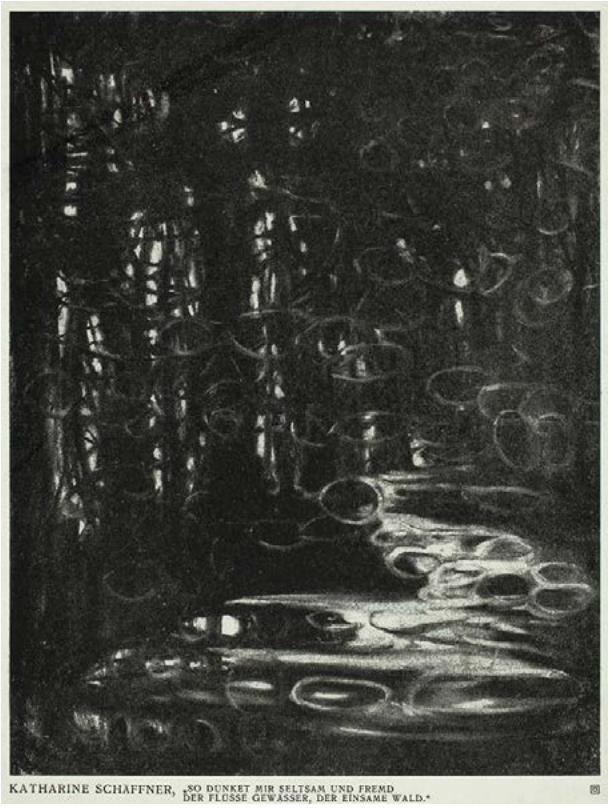



**Image 2**. Katharine Schäffner, "So dünket mir seltsam und fremd der Flüsse Gewässer, der einsame Wald," autotype, 201 × 154 mm, in: Ferdinand Avenarius, Eine neue Sprache? Zweiundvierzig Zeichnungen von Katharine Schäffner, München 1908. University of Vienna, Art History Library. Image: Courtesy of Universität Wien, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, all rights reserved.

*Kunstübungsstätte für Frauen*) in Prague.[5] Schäffner's choice of motifs and tendency towards Symbolism, exemplified by the drawing *Der Schlaf* (1900), connected her aesthetic to that of her teacher Laukotová, known today for her inclination towards "allegorical or mythological scenes and Symbolist expressivity," as Petr Šámal recently described it.[6] However, Schäffner's work was being framed differently in 1908, when Avenarius published forty-two of her black-and-white charcoal drawings, one dating from 1906 and another from 1907, under the title "a new language."[7]

Avenarius advocacy of Schäffner's "new language" has resonated in art historical literature, particularly since the 1960s, as scholars have explored the historical foundations of modernist abstraction.[8] However, despite Avenarius's efforts, attention shifted and Schäffner's place in the broader narrative of modern art remains contested. This paper aims to explore the reasons

5 For Schäffner's biography, see Graham Dry, "Die Darstellung von Seelenzuständen führt in die Abstraktion," in *Ab nach München! Künstlerinnen um 1900*, ed. Antonia Voit, ex. cat. Münchener Stadtmuseum (München: Süddeutsche Zeitung Edition, 2014), 117–19; see also Hana Rousová, ed., *Lücken in der Geschichte, 1890–1938: Polemischer Geist Mitteleuropas. Deutsche, Juden, Tschechen,* ex. cat. Praha: Městská Knihovna, 1994; Eisenstadt: Museum der Österr. Kultur, 1994 / Regensburg: Ostdt. Galerie, 1995 ([Prague]: Městská Knihovna et al. [1994]), 127. Schäffner's latest work, at least to my knowledge, is in the collection of the City Gallery Prague: Katharina Schäffnerová, *Hlava muže*, 1938, charcoal on paper, 136 x 228 mm, inv. K-0537.

6 For an illustration of *Der Schlaf*, see *Illustrierter Katalog der 61. Jahres-Ausstellung des Kunstvereins für Böhmen in Prag 1900* (Prag: Carl Bellmann's Verlag, 1900), cat. nr. 71; for the citation Petr Šámal, "Hermína Laukotová's *Evaporations," Ars Linearis* 11 (2021): 64–77, here 72.

7 The drawing from 1906, *Leidenschaft*, is kept in the collection of the Drawings and Prints department of the MoMA, object nr. 222.2023. With gratitude to MaryClaire Pappas. Today, four drawings from the 1908 portfolio are kept in the Collection of Prints and Drawings of the National Gallery in Prague. These are *Das gelobte Land, Leiden* (1907, possibly 1904), *Seufzer, and Zu Prometheus und Epimetheus*. The Modern Gallery – a precursor of the National Gallery – purchased them in 1925. I would like to thank Petra Kolářová, Markéta Dlábková, and Lenka Babická for allowing access to this material and help in clarifying its provenance. Prior to the acquisition, the works were exhibited at the Rudolfinum; see *Tři výstavy, I. Obrazy a plastiky Karla Holana, M. Holého, P. Kotíka a K. Kotrby, II. Výstava Kateřiny Schäffnerové, III. Daumier*, exh. cat. Výstava Krasoumné jednoty pro Čechy v Praze, Rudolfinum, 25.3.–13.4.1925 ([Prague]: [Krasoumná jednota pro Čechy], 1925).

8 See, for example, Arnold Gehlen, *Zeit-Bilder: Zur Soziologie und Ästhetik der modernen Malerei* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Verlag, 1960), 115–116; Otto Stelzer, *Die Vorgeschichte der abstrakten Kunst* (München: R. Piper, 1964), 115; Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 113–15; Susan Compton, "The Spread of Information Leading to the Rise of Abstract Art in Europe," in *Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art 1910–20*, ed. Michael Compton (London: Tate Gallery, 1980), 180.

behind this inconsistency and comparative neglect. It seeks to understand why Schäffner's work has remained in the margins of European modern art history, considering the dynamics of canon formation during a pivotal moment for modern art.

To further this analysis, a third figure must be introduced into the discussion: Julius Meier-Graefe. He, like Avenarius, was an influential figure on the terrain of art and cultural critique. Born in 1867 in Reșița (then part of the Hungarian region of the Austrian Empire, now Romania), he was a "transgressor of boundaries" in many respects.[9] He navigated between Germany and France, across various art forms, and from the nineteenth century to the twentieth. He was a conflicted defender of Art Nouveau and Jugendstil,[10] and among the earliest to seek to convince the German public of Impressionism and Neo-impressionism.[11] His magnum opus, the book *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst* (1904), is foundational for the narrative of the familiar canon of modernism, and it remains one of the most influential books in the early history and historiography of European modern art.

At this point in the early twentieth century, the trajectory of modern art was not yet clear, with alternative, competing visions for its direction. Indeed, both Avenarius and Meier-Graefe were competing to shape the contemporary art scene but had markedly different views of its developmental trajectory.[12] In the following, I intend to demonstrate that Schäffner was caught in the crossfire of their power struggle, receiving blows that turned out to be fatal.[13] Surprisingly, Schäffner involvement in their dispute has been overlooked, although its analysis is necessary if we are to understand the difficulty in situating her work in today's narratives of modern art. By reconstructing Schäffner's entanglement, I want to offer a new perspective on a crucial episode in the canon formation of modern art.[14] This perspective considers "failed" canons, emphasizing the role of art and cultural critique in establishing historical narratives, and questioning how to disentangle artists from the powerful pull of these narratives. The analysis unfolds in four steps: beginning with an examination of Avenarius's reading of Schäffner, followed by an exploration of his concept of modern art, attention then shifts to Meier-Graefe's polemical reaction and ends with a discussion of the functionality and limitations of categories, particularly the opposition of form versus feeling, in evaluating Schäffner's artistic position and significance today.

9 For this characterization, see Ingeborg Becker & Stephanie Marchal, ed., *Julius Meier-Graefe: Grenzgänger der Künste* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2017).

10 Cf. Christian Freigang, "Julius Meier-Graefes Zeitschrift *L'art décoratif*: Kontinuität und Subversion des Art Nouveau," in Becker & Marchal, *Julius Meier-Graefe*, 214–27.

11 Meier-Graefe co-edited the journal *Dekorative Kunst* and owned a boutique in Paris, *La Maison Moderne*. For Meier-Graefe's biography, see Kenworth Moffett, *Meier-Graefe as Art Critic* (München: Prestel-Verlag, 1973); and, more recently, Catherine Krahmer, *Julius Meier-Graefe: Ein Leben für die Kunst* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021).

12 For a discussion of the broader concern within art criticism at this time – specifically, the effort to identify and solidify cultural development through visual art, see Stephanie Marchal, Andreas Zeising & Andreas Degner, "Kunstschriftstellerei – die kunstkritische Praxis der Moderne: Eine Einführung," in *Kunstschriftstellerei: Konturen einer kunstkritischen Praxis*, ed. Stephanie Marchal, Andreas Zeising & Andreas Degner (München: Edition Metzel, 2020), 13–63.

13 For the role of "power struggles in the art field" in the formation of canons, see Gregor Langfeld, "The Canon in Art History: Concepts and Approaches," *Journal of Art Historiography* 19 (2018): 1–18, here 8–9.

14 This research significantly expands a chapter from my doctoral thesis, "Hypersensitivity: Universalist Strategies in Endell, Avenarius, and Kandinsky, 1890–1920" (University of Vienna, 2020). I am grateful to my supervisors, Raphael Rosenberg and Helmut Leder, for their support of this work.

## Avenarius's Reading of Schäffner

In the following passage, Avenarius describes his encounter with Schäffner's work in his typical art critical style:

> Water and forest and the moonlight in between, we know them, but where in any depiction of reality are there fog rings like these, which vibrate through the whole picture? We feel their magic as soon as we immerse ourselves in the work, which gradually becomes a dream experience for us. Awakened, we are certain that a completely subjective poetry was involved here, one which took as primal forms moods from the impressions of reality.[15]

Before the readers' internal eye Avenarius unfolds a scene, evoking a dream experience. He performs his contemplation as a process of viewing, exposing himself as a feeling subject receptive to Schäffner's impulses. He attempts to relate what captures his attention and describes how this unfolds a process of imagination—picturing to his readers something not immediately present to the senses.

Avenarius's monologue is not meant to digress from the work, however, with the work merely providing an occasion for imagination; rather, the work allows a specific experience of emotional immersion.[16] Yet, rather than explicitly stating this and describing it in terms of concepts and theory, Avenarius demonstrates the necessary

**Image 3.** Katharine Schäffner, Leidenschaft, 1906. Charcoal on paper, 27.6 × 21.3 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Jack Shear in honor of Agnes Gund, acc. no.: 222.2023. Image: Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence, all rights reserved.

mode of reception.[17] He is himself the viewer who is caried away by the play of lines and light. In his empathetic participation, he becomes fully immersed, not able to reflect what he is experiencing. By showing his work in the process of immersion, the poetic description results in an aesthetic judgement; thus, what Avenarius tries to demonstrate is the work's capacity to stimulate imagination.

Avenarius was not the first to address the topic of imagination in connection with Schäffner's work. In 1904, one critic described her graphic

15 Avenarius, *Eine neue Sprache?*, [3]: "Wasser und Wald und den Mondschein dazwischen, die kennen wir, aber wo sind in irgendeinem Wirklichkeitsbilde Lichtnebelringe gleich diesen, die durch das ganze Bild schwingen? Wir empfinden ihrer Zauber, sobald wir uns nun in das Werk versenken, das uns allmählich zu einem Traumerlebnis wird. Erwacht wissen wir nun bestimmt, hier war ein ganz subjektives Dichten dabei, das aus den Wirklichkeitseindrücken die Stimmungen als Urformen nahm." Translated by the author unless indicated otherwise.

16 See A [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Unsre Bilder und Noten," *Der Kunstwart* 24, no. 9 (1911): 229–31, here 230.

17 On this, see Jane Boddy, "Imagination as Evidence: Avenarius's Proposal for a *New Language* for Forms," in *Dialogical Imaginations: Aisthesis as Social Perceptions and New Ideas of Humanism*, ed. Michael Zimmermann (Zürich: Diaphanes, forthcoming).

work as assuming the form of "imaginative ornament"—the qualities that critic admired hovered between figuration and abstraction.[18] This promotion occurred within the context of formal experimentation characteristic of the widespread decorative arts movements in Europe.[19] Avenarius however framed Schäffner's work differently. When he published forty-two of her black-and-white charcoal drawings, he presented them as a "new language" for the communication of feelings and was at pains to convey its historical significance to his readers.[20] The drawings encompassed a range of subjects, from small animal caricatures to larger landscape scenes; each image is suggestively titled, such as *Schlummer* (slumber) or *Leidenschaft* (passion). Although Schäffner's drawings were not fully devoid of naturalistic reference, and while their titles gave them a particular meaning in place and time, Avenarius saw no reason why a non-imitative art could not be possible soon. His effort to position Schäffner's work as the newest phenomenon not only highlighted its current relevance but also its future direction in modern art. This emphasis on development must be seen in conjuncture with Meier-Graefe's polemic against *Phantasiemalerei* and the Böcklin cult, which will be the topic of the next two sections.

## Painting of the Imagination

Avenarius's reading of Schäffner was based on a specific conception of modern art, labelled *Phantasiemalerei* (painting of the imagination).[21] Although this term is hardly ever used today, it was widely theorized and employed by critics in *Der Kunstwart* (as well as other journals) in the late nineteenth century to advance a particular cultural political agenda in discussions about the place of art in society. This agenda promoted a strong, indigenous art, separate from French Impressionism and Neo-impressionism, which were perceived as something of a threat to German art. Despite the complex relationship between French and German art, they were often framed in simple opposition. As Meier-Graefe noted, "French art eo ipso is called that which is opposed to German art."[22] This opposition extended to the critics themselves, making the choice between French and German art seem like an existential decision. For every attempt to raise German readers' awareness of French modernism—notably by Meier-Graefe—there were rebuttals and counterclaims. *Phantasiemalerei* was conceived as the distinctively German version of modern art, used to describe the work of Max Klinger, Hans Thoma, Franz von Stuck, and, centrally, Arnold Böcklin.[23]

18 K.H.O., "Freie Ornament Motive von Katharine Schäffner – Prag," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 14 (1904): 468; on which, see Lada Hubatová-Vacková, *Silent Revolutions in Ornament: Studies in applied arts and crafts from 1880–1930* (Prague: AAAD, 2011), 51–52.

19 For discussions of Schäffner within this context, which has been recognized as canonical moment for modernism, see Italo Cremona, *Die Zeit des Jugendstils* (München: Langen Müller, 1966), 153–54; or, more recently, Lada Hubatová-Vacková, "The Silent Revolutions in Ornament (1880–1920)," *Umění/Art* 58 (2010): 403–23, here 412–13.

20 Avenarius, *Eine neue Sprache?*, [2].

21 Also *Phantasiekunst, Neuromantik, Neuidealismus.*

22 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Impressionisten: Guys – Manet – Van Gogh – Pissarro – Cezanne* (München: R. Piper & Co, 1907), 11: "Mann nennt französische Kunst eo ipso das, was der deutschen entgegengesetzt ist."

23 See Ingrid Koszinowski, "Böcklin und seine Kritiker: Zu Ideologie und Kunstbegriff um 1900," in *Ideengeschichte und Kunstwissenschaft im Kaiserreich*, ed. Ekkehard Mai, Stephan Waetzoldt & Gerd Wolandt (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1983), 279–92; Ingrid Koszinowski, *Von der Poesie des Kunstwerks* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1985), 68–85; Elisabeth Mylarch, *Akademiekritik und moderne Kunstbewegungen in Deutschland um 1900: zum Verständnis der ideengeschichtlichen, kulturideologischen und kunstmarktpolitischen Implikationen des Kunsturteils über moderne Malerei in den Kunst- und Kulturzeitschriften Gesellschaft, Kunstwart und Freie Bühne* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994); Beth Irwin Lewis, *Art for All? The Collision of Modern Art and the Public in Late-Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 78–82; Annie Bourneuf, *Paul Klee: The Visible and the Legible* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 95–104.

Within these broader contemporary debates, Avenarius used the term *Phantasiemalerei* in a way that promoted his own concerns. Since founding *Der Kunstwart* in 1887, he had been committed to raising awareness among readers about the imperative need for a modern style of art that would be "true to its time"—a style he felt was conspicuously absent.[24] He articulated this concern in his very first article for the journal, stating, "every style grows, ages, and dies; but we have no style that has grown out of our being."[25] The absence of style, he believed, posed a serious problem, because he saw style as a resonance phenomenon, an integral and indispensable part of emotional culture. What was urgently needed to create a foundation for individual and national emotional-spiritual renewal was art facilitating the "awakening of some content of consciousness in the viewer […] by stimulating their imagination."[26] Thus, the question becomes how Avenarius' conceived *Phantasiemalerei* as providing the foundation for a new style, setting a definitive trajectory for modern art.

We might advance this discussion with three interrelated observations about *Phantasiemalerei* as espoused by Avenarius. The first relates to the topic of a modern mythology. For instance, in Böcklin's 1883 painting *Im Spiel der Wellen*, Avenarius suggests the artist does not merely depict a mythological scene; rather, he creates a *new* mythology that penetrates the depths of the modern mind, unleashing imagination "beyond the limits of what is naturally real and possible."[27] Avenarius explains how ancestral sentiments, deeply ingrained in our subconscious, resurface through Böcklin, "as if, from the darkest depths of the Indo-Germanic race, the ancient myth-forming power once again bursts forth."[28] Many other critics echo this notion of a new mythology in Böcklin's work, linking past and present, emerging from the depths of cultural imagination.[29] The point was not Böcklin's portrayal of fantastic creatures, like centaurs and nymphs; what mattered was that his work facilitated imagination.

Second, critics writing within the framework of *Phantasiemalerei* tended to write narrative scenes based on the paintings, emphasizing their literary or anecdotal side. In doing so, their analysis tended to prioritize "content" over "form." This opposition was much debated within late nineteenth-century aesthetics and art criticism. While formalist critics emphasized the importance of visual structure in evaluating art, critics of Böcklin contended that content, or the "idea," held primacy. It stood for a focus on poetic content translatable across media, transcending the pictorial surface to evoke a multisensory experience. Avenarius, for instance, discussed Böcklin's *Heiliger Hain* (1886), asking: "Do we hear the mystical song [of the train of priests]? Or does the picture only seem to sound like a symphony of shadow and light?"[30] Notably, this description pertains not to the actual painting but to a black-and-white photomechanical reproduction of it, highlighting the effect of

24 Lewis, *Art for All?*, 69.

25 [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Unsere Künste: Zum Überblick," *Der Kunstwart* 1, no. 1 (1887): 1–4, here 2: "Ein jeder Stil wächst, altert und stirbt; wir aber haben keinen Stil, der aus unserem Wesen erwachsen wäre."

26 Ibid., 1: "irgend einen Bewusstseinsinhalt [...] durch Anregung seiner Phantasie zu erwecken."

27 A. [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Die Malerei auf der Münchner Ausstellung. III," *Der Kunstwart* 2, no. 2 (1888), 21–23, here 22: "über die Grenzen des naturgemäss Wirklichen und Möglichen hinaus."

28 [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Zu Böcklins Heimgang," *Der Kunstwart* 14, no. 9 (1901): 393–96, here 394: "Bei ihm [Böcklin] ist es, als bräche aus den dunkelsten Tiefen der indogermanischen Rasse noch einmal die uralte mythenbildende Kraft heraus."

29 For a psychological reading of Böcklin's mythmaking, see Wilhelm Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie: Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklungsgesetze von Sprache, Mythus und Sitte,* vol. 2, *Mythus und Religion*, part 1 (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1905), 282.

30 [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Zum Geleit," *Böcklin-Mappe* (München: D.W. Callwey, [1901]), n.p.: "Hören wir ihren [der Zug der Priester] mystischen Gesang? Oder scheint das Bild nur zu tönen wie eine Symphonie von Schatten und Licht."


**Image 4.** Arnold Böcklin, *Heiliger Hain*, 1886, in: *Böcklin-Mappe*, München, [1901]. Image: Courtesy of Universität Wien, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, all rights reserved.

"a non-medium-specific content accessible through imagination," to borrow from Annie Bourneuf.[31]

Third, a glance in the pages of *Der Kunstwart* soon reveals Avenarius's belief that "the true painting of the imagination" epitomized "the most German painting."[32] He attributes this quality to Böcklin, whom he regards as the embodiment of "true *Germanic* spirit."[33] Avenarius's words about Böcklin are unequivocal: "German art is all that he created."[34] This emphasis on national character should be understood against the backdrop of the art politics of the 1880s and 1890s, particularly as a reaction to the growing influence of French Impressionism in Germany's museums, galleries, and accompanying discourses. "The means of expression for the means of expression's sake—what nonsense!"[35] declared Avenarius in 1899, using the French slogan to dismiss Impressionist painting. Instead, he advocated for art to serve emotional culture through "the mediation of organized

31 Bourneuf, *Paul Klee*, 100.

32 [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Unsere Künste: Schluss des Überblicks," *Der Kunstwart* 6, no. 2 (1892): 17–20, here 18.

33 Ibid., 17.

34 Avenarius, "Böcklins Heimgang," 396: "Was Böcklin anrührte, das ward Geist, Kunst in diesem Sinne, nordische, germanische, deutsche Kunst ist alles was er geschaffen hat."

35 [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Was wir wünschen," *Der Kunstwart* 13, no. 1 (1899): 1–7, here 2.

feeling."[36] Such statements unmistakably echo the perceived dichotomy between "German feeling" and "French form," a persistent, clichéd idea of national rivalry.[37]

For Avenarius, Böcklin's paintings express deep emotional experience. The "how"—the mode of mediation—is crucial: Böcklin's work opens a space for imagination and emotional participation, similar to the way Avenarius later described Schäffner's work. By narrativizing the imagination inspired by the paintings, Avenarius not only presents his perspective but also seeks to create a relatable reference point. Understood in this sense, modern art functions as a shared reference point—potentially before everyone's eyes—for creating emotional community. This is also what Böcklin's work does for Avenarius; it creates an imaginative space for emotional connectivity.[38] And, writing in 1892, he saw great potential: "Unless all appearances deceive, we are now entering a flourishing period of the most German of all painting – *Phantasiemalere*i".[39]

While Avenarius did not write a full-scale history of modern art, he did attempt to canonize specific artists under the heading *Phantasiemalerei*, using art to gauge the condition of German society and to orient worldviews amidst national rivalries. Böcklin became pivotal for indexing *Phantasiemalerei*, with critics placing his work among the greatest achievements of the nineteenth century. Max Lehrs, director of Dresden's Kupferstich-Kabinett, even went so far as to say that "the fifteenth [century] gifted us with a Lionardo [*sic.*], the sixteenth Albrecht Dürer, the seventeenth the great Rembrandt. […] and the nineteenth gave us Arnold Böcklin."[40] However, admiration for Böcklin changed markedly from 1904.[41] This shift was catalyzed by Meier-Graefe's publication of *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst*, a developmental history of modern art, followed by *Der Fall Böcklin*, which aimed to shift readers' appreciation and alter critical coverage, ultimately seeking to vanquish *Phantasiemalerei* from the domain of modern art.

## The Case of Böcklin

Meier-Graefe had been one of Böcklin's admirers at first, but after 1900 he revised his attitude towards the artist. In his 1904 *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, Meier-Graefe had already written critically of Böcklin. Understanding art as a historical continuum, he complained that the artist obstructed its development, blocking the way to the future.[42] In the book that followed, *Der Fall Böcklin*, Meier-Graefe repeated this claim, now condemning Böcklin's works for disrupting the "only beneficial stream of art."[43] The argument of this polemical book is complex but, in essence, it revolves around the idea of medium-specificity as the kernel of modern art: Böcklin's work, after promising beginnings, progressively came to lack aesthetic unity, with compositions based on narrative and anecdotal ideas.

36 Ibid., 1.

37 For contemporary discussion on national rivalry as a dimension within art criticism, see Karl Scheffler, *Der Deutsche und seine Kunst: Eine notgedrungene Streitschrift* (München: Piper, 1907).

38 Ingrid Koszinowski noted that Böcklin and other proponents of *Phantasiemalerei* appealed not only for their contributions to modern art but, more importantly, for their role in the emotional education of the viewing public. Koszinowski, "Böcklin und seine Kritiker," 287–88.

39 Avenarius, "Unsere Künste," 18.

40 Max Lehrs, *Arnold Böcklin: Ein Leitfaden zum Verständnis seiner Kunst* (München: Photographische Union, 1897), 14–15.

41 See Elizabeth Tumasonis, "Böcklin's Reputation: Its Rise and Fall," *Art Criticism* 6, no. 2 (1990): 48–71.

42 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst: Vergleichende Betrachtung der bildenden Künste, als Beitrag zu einer neuen Aesthetik*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Engelmann, 1904), 452: "Wie ein Block liegt Böcklin vor der Zukunft."

43 Alfred Julius Meier-Graefe, *Der Fall Böcklin und die Lehre von den Einheiten* (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffmann, 1905), 170: "Böcklin unterbricht den einzigen segensreichen Strom der Kunst."

Within the framework of *Phantasiemalerei*, poetics was the model for the arts, as well as their critique, which was precisely not medium specific but centered on narrative scenes translatable across media via imagination. Using this idea as a negative foil, Meier-Graefe underlined that the effects of Böcklin's works were not specific to painting; in fact, what Böcklin painted could be said with words.[44] For instance, writing about *Self-Portrait with Death Playing the Fiddle* (1872), Meier-Graefe argued that "if one demands from the picture a closed, harmonious cosmos that […] gives a legitimate reflection of the artist's perception, then the self-portait with death is infinitely weak art."[45] He further explained how the painting appeals to the viewer's imagination, leading them to drift away from the work itself into the realm of speculation and thinking:

> the viewer mixes himself up in the matter; and one cannot blame him, for nothing in this picture but the symbolic really stands out. […] Is it not rather a fantasy (*Phantasie*) that is enticed here, a game whose flexibility makes one forget its aimlessness? Can this fantastic vein of the viewer not open up an infinite number of other things that are just as bizarre and just as little art?[46]

Meier-Graefe concluded that Böcklin's self-portrait simulates thought, but "the enjoyment of art has nothing to do with thinking."[47] Böcklin was not a real painter, as his work lacked painterly qualities; in fact, it did not fit into the category *art*.[48]

**Image 5.** Arnold Böcklin, Self-Portrait with Death Playing the Fiddle, 1872. Oil on canvas, 75 × 61 cm, Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin. Image: Courtesy Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie / Andres Kilger, Public Domain Mark 1.0.

Böcklin's alleged mistakes were not only aesthetic, however, but also of a fundamentally historical nature. "Every consideration," Meier-Graefe stated, "that is not satisfied with fantasies, always causes intimate connection with our great artists and warns against arbitrary changes to the course. But this is what Böcklin demands."[49]

44 Julius Meier-Graefe, "Der Fall Böcklin," *Die Zukunft* 52 (1905): 137–48, here 145.

45 Meier-Graefe, *Der Fall Böcklin*, 96–97: "Solange man vom Bilde einen geschlossenen, harmonischen Kosmos verlangt, der [...] ein gesetzmäßiges Abbild der Anschauung des Künstlers gibt, ist das Selbstporträt mit dem Tod unendlich schwache Kunst."

46 Ibid., 97–99: "der Betrachter mischt sich in die Sache; und man kann es ihm nicht verdenken, denn nichts anderes außer dem Sinnbildlichen tritt entscheidend in dem Bilde hervor. [...] Ist es nicht mehr eine Phantasie, was hier gelockt wird, ein Spiel, über dessen tatsächlicher Beweglichkeit man das mangelnde Ziel vergißt? Kann sich diese phantastische Ader des Betrachters nicht bei unendlich vielen anderen Dingen öffnen, die ebenso merkwürdig und ebensowenig Kunst sind?"

47 Ibid., 99: "denn Kunstgenuß hat nichts mit Denken zu tun."

48 Ibid., 91.

49 Ibid., 179–80: "Jede Überlegung also, die nicht mit Phantastereien genug hat, treibt immer wieder zu innigem Anschluß an unsere Großen und warnt vor willkürlichen Änderungen der Bahn. Das aber verlangt Böcklin."

Here, Meier-Graefe refers to the idea of the singularity of art's tradition, which Böcklin is accused of obstructing—his work "contradicts all history."[50] Within this conception, whether artworks belonged to the one historically significant tradition was verifiable.

In his *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, Meier-Graefe explained the history of art with the help of the metaphor of a colossal tree: Peter Paul Rubens stood at its base, which branched off in various directions.[51] Moving in one direction, there was a branch of French art that ran from Rubens via Antoine Watteau and Eugène Delacroix to Impressionism.[52] Moving in another direction, Rubens's stem led to Anthony van Dyck and Joshua Reynolds.[53] The image of a tree, also found in the Bible, was commonly used in evolutionary theory. The "genealogical tree of men" famously features in Ernst Haeckel's *Anthropogenie* of 1874, where the author argued that the history of the embryo is a condensed form of the history of the species and thus the development of the species entailed the reproduction of heritage and renewal.[54] In the hands of Meier-Graefe, the metaphor of the tree offered a framework for reconstructing the history of art via the idea of "aesthetic unities," which he understood as the non-changing essences or "molecules" of art.[55] What justified the historical connection from Rubens to Delacroix, for example, was the continuous development of these unities. They formed the common denominator that was reproduced in artworks and, moreover, certain artworks displayed evolutionary changes. In this manner, Meier-Graefe stipulated that the "evolutionary history" of art was organized around aesthetic unity.

Now, according to Meier-Graefe, aesthetic unity was perceptibly lacking in Böcklin's work. Thus, the logical conclusion was that it did not belong to modern art because it could not be accommodated within its historic narrative, in which artworks either contribute to or exemplify art's development.[56] If anything, Böcklin could showcase what is *not* art. Meier-Graefe was unapologetic in his judgement, writing that "Böcklin unites in one person all sins of the Germans against the logic of art."[57] In making such statements, he seems to suggest that the terms "art" and "*Phantasiemalerei*" are mutually exclusive, proposing a historical tradition for the former, while placing the latter outside its purview.[58] Within this reasoning, modern art is not a particular form of art practice, one among multiple synchronic types; it is the only historically significant form of art practice.[59] Meier-Graefe's attack drew numerous counter-attacks,

50 Ibid., 259: "aller Geschichte wiedersprechende Entwicklung."

51 Meier-Graefe, *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, 51.

52 Ibid., 51.

53 Ibid.

54 Ernst Haeckel, *Anthropogenie, oder Entwickelungsgeschichte des Menschen: Gemeinverständliche wissenschaftliche Vorträge über die Grundzüge der menschlichen Keimes-und Stammes-Geschichte* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1874).

55 Meier-Graefe, *Der Fall Böcklin*, 28. For a discussion of Meier-Graefe's ideas on the struggle to define a modern style, see Stephanie Marchal, "Julius Meier-Graefe: Vom 'Kampf um' zur 'Sehnsucht nach' dem Stil," *kritische berichte* 42, no. 1 (2014): 35–46.

56 On Meier-Graefe's idea of development, see also Catherine Krahmer, "Julius Meier-Graefes Denkweise: Entwicklung – Geschichte – Ästhetik," in Becker & Marschal*, Julius Meier-Graefe,* 34.

57 Meier-Graefe, *Der Fall Böcklin*, 197: "Böcklin vereint in einer Person alle Sünden der Deutschen gegen die Logik der Kunst."

58 Ibid., 270.

59 Markus Bernauer, "Der Klang als Vorgang des Bildes: Die Diskussion über Modernität und Konservatismus in der Kunstkritik seit Meier-Graefes *Der Fall Böcklin*," in "*Nichts als die Schönheit": Ästhetischer Konservatismus um 1900*, ed. Jan Andres, Wolfgang Braungart & Kai Kauffmann (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 2007), 298.

famously by Henry Thode.[60] In fact, it sparked broad discussion within the German art discourse, which there is no need to rehearse here.[61] Suffice it to say that while Meier-Graefe received severe blows, his argument against Böcklin proved effective. He offered another art-historical present and his formalist view of modern art quickly became canonical, even continuing to shape how European art history is narrated today.

Meier-Graefe's polemic against *Phantasiemalerei* and the Böcklin cult paved the way to exclude Schäffner from narratives of modern art. In his own words, the "eternal value" of specific artists is "foreshadowed by the developments they have instigated."[62] Following this line of thinking, relevance is predicated on relations and influence within developmental history.[63] It is probably no coincidence, then, that at precisely this historical juncture, Avenarius began to propagate Schäffner as the first artist to explore the possibilities of non-imitative art. Although Avenarius's interest in her work may not be self-evident, I would suggest it was motivated by the realization that he had to salvage *Phantasiemalerei* (without emphasizing that term). Thus, in his subsequent texts on Schäffner, he emphasized her non-imitative visual idiom as a "new language," employing a tree metaphor to illustrate the developments in modern art as the "branching off" of artistic strands from a shared base.[64] This metaphor allowed him to position Schäffner in relation to other artists and to place her at the forefront of the historical development. Even before Wassily Kandinsky, Avenarius emphasizes, Schäffner had "long anticipated the psychological possibilities" inherent in the qualities of line and light, independently of function or naturalistic depiction.[65]

As Avenarius turned against avant-gardist positions in a series of articles, he alienated himself from those who saw themselves as defenders of

60 This refers to Henry Thode, *Böcklin und Thoma: Acht Vorträge über neudeutsche Malerei, gehalten für ein Gesamtpublikum an der Universität zu Heidelberg im Sommer 1905* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1905). Avenarius responded too: "Meier und manch andere fühlen den Seelengehalt der größten Böcklinschen Werke nicht." Apparently, Avenarius did not need to give the title or even Meier-Graefe's full name for readers to understand which book was meant, see A. [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Worauf kommt's an?", *Der Kunstwart* 19, no. 1, 1905: 1–5, here 3.

61 Contemporary discussions are numerous, see, for example, A. H. Schmid, "Meier-Graefe contra Böcklin," *Die Kunst für Alle* 20 (1904–5): 432–36; Max Déri, "1. Julius Meier-Graefe, Der Fall Böcklin. 2. Adolf Grabowsky, Der Kampf um Böcklin," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaf*t 2 (1907): 128–42. For discussions of the reception of the case of Böcklin, see, for example, Tumasonis, "Böcklin's reputation"; Krahmer, *Julius Meier-Graefe*, 122–23.

62 Meier-Graefe, *Impressionisten*, 23: "Den Ewigkeitswert aber lässt die Entwicklung ahnen, die sie [Genies] zur Folge gehabt haben."

63 Cf. ibid., 19: "Und wie diese Meister, so hängen alle anderen, soweit sie Bedeutung verdienen, eng mit diesen und anderen Vorgängern und Nachfolgern zusammen, vermehren die Grade der Verwandtschaft und bestärken unseren Eindruck, in der französischen Kunst eine Familie vor uns zu haben."

64 Avenarius, *Eine neue Sprache?*, [2].

65 For the view that Kandinsky was the first to deliberately exhibit works of "abstract art," see Raphael Rosenberg, "Was There a First Abstract Painter? Af Klint's Amimetic Images and Kandinsky's Abstract Art," in *Hilma af Klint: The Art of Seeing the Invisible,* ed. Kurt Almqvist & Louise Belfrage (Stockholm: Axel/Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, 2015), 99. For the view that others actually exhibited abstract pictures prior to Kandinsky, see Raphael Rosenberg, "Ornamentale Buntpapiere und die Bildexperimente der Wiener Secessionisten / Ornamental decorated papers and the Vienna Secessionists' picture experiments," in *EPHEMERA. Die Gebrauchsgrafik der MAK-Bibliothek und Kunstblättersammlung / The Graphik Design of the MAK Library and Works on Paper Collection*, ed. Christoph Thun-Hohenstein & Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel (Vienna: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2017), 49. For the Avenarius quotation: *Der Kunstwart und Kulturwart* 26, no. 8 (1913): appendix: "Bei Katharine Schäffner, die man ignoriert, die aber die psychologischen Möglichkeiten der 'Ultramalerei' längst vorweggenommen hat."

"modern art."[66] Lines were being drawn, with Schäffner pulled firmly on the side of Avenarius. The consequences of his positioning of Schäffner should not be underestimated: this stance meant opposing modern art positions, such as those of Impressionism and Neo-impressionism, championed by Meier-Graefe specifically, as well as those of Kandinsky, the Expressionists, Cubists, Futurists, and others.[67] As Avenarius fell on the "wrong" side of the modern art debate, Schäffner also ended up outside the art historical narrative of European modern art.

## Repetition and Dissolution

This paper began with the observation that the work of Katharine Schäffner tends to be absent from wider narratives of modern art. My point was not to rehabilitate Schäffner's work, even though it is richer than the art historical neglect would suggest. My aim was instead to examine reasons for her absence by reconstructing her entanglement in the dispute between Avenarius and Meier-Graefe. In Avenarius's eyes, what mattered was not partisan camps or -isms, but art's role in the wider scheme of things, which entailed the development of spiritual-affective community and, more drastically, culture's survival. While the prominence of his notion of *Phantasiemalerei* has long faded, its association has cast a long shadow over Schäffner's work.[68] For her, too, attention soon fell away, while other artists with similar visual idioms, like František Kupka, have been recognized within the history of Modernist abstraction.[69] To try to position Schäffner among the historical avant-gardes now would be perverse.

Schäffner's visual idiom had become highly abstract around 1908–10. And as Meier-Graefe continued to rework his developmental history, adjusting his perspective and adding new artists, it prompts the question of whether Schäffner's work could, after all, be incorporated into his formalist version of modernism—a version that emphasizes Impressionism, and constructs an opposition between the imaginative and non-imaginative.[70] The opposition between a medium-specific aesthetic focused on visual structure, on the one hand, and elements of imagination and narrative, on the other, has been central to discussions of modern art. This was an important issue for a great many artists and critics, and it mattered to Schäffner's interpreters. Kurt Schwitters, for instance, developed his view of abstraction along the lines of this highly charged opposition. Not yet subscribing to any party line, Schwitters assessed Schäffner's visual idiom in 1910 for its potential as abstract art, contending that "she had dared [...] to emerge, first and alone, with

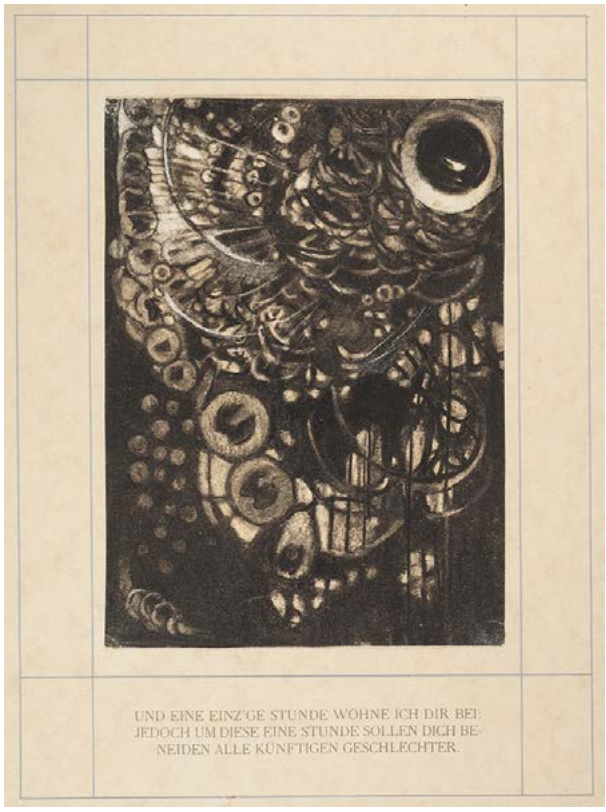
66 See A [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Futuristen," *Der Kunstwart* 25, no. 17 (1912): 278–81; A [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Des Kaisers neue Kleider," *Der Kunstwart und Kulturwart* 26, no. 8 (1913): 81–88; and A [Ferdinand Avenarius], "Chaos? An die Besucher der Kunstausstellungen," *Der Kunstwart und Kulturwart* 27, no. 20 (1914): 77–81.

67 On this, see Jane Boddy, "Ultra-Painting: The Polemics against Art Theory," in *Judgement Practices in the Artistic Field*, ed. Elisabeth Heymer, Hubert Locher, Stephanie Marchal, Melanie Sachs-Resch & Beate Söntgen (München: Edition Metzel, 2023), 109–24.

68 *Phantasiemalerei* was not part of the art historical trajectory of -isms proposed by Alfred Barr for the MoMA exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York, 1936).

69 Art historians have remarked that Schäffner's "abstract" visual idiom has not received the attention it deserves, unlike some of her peers such as František Kupka; see Dry, "Die Darstellung von Seelenzuständen," 119; Elke Frietsch, review of "Ab nach München! Künstlerinnen um 1900 (Münchener Stadtmuseum)," *kritische berichte* 43, no. 2 (2015): 127–29, here 128.

70 For a discussion of the repeated reworkings of Meier-Graefe's canon, see Jenny Anger, "Courbet, the Decorative, and the Canon: Rewriting and Rereading Meier-Graefe's *Modern Art*," in *Partisan Canons*, ed. Anna Bryzski (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Marchal, Zeising & Degner, "Kunstschriftstellerei," 35.



**Images 6–8.** Katharine Schäffner, Zeichnungen zu Prometheus u. Epimetheus, 1. Teil, v. Karl Spitteler. Charcoal on paper, sheet 1, 222 × 190 mm; sheet 10, 200 × 145 mm; sheet 15, 110 × 168 mm and 35 × 56, National Gallery Prague. Image: National Gallery Prague 2024, all rights reserved.

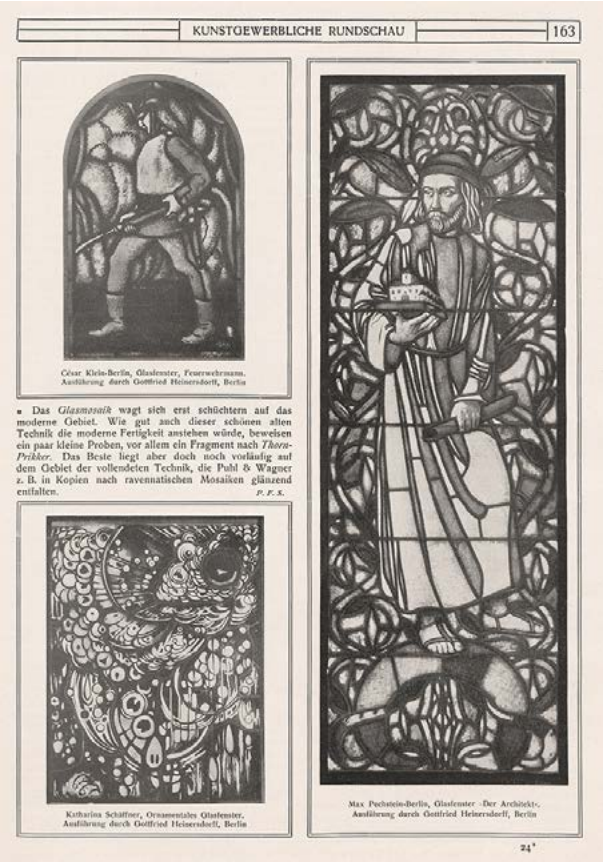



**Image 9.** Katharine Schäffner, ornamental stained-glass window, reproduced in Kunstgewerbeblatt NF 23 (1912): 163. Image: Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg / https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.4421#0170 / CC-BY-SA 4.0

abstract drawings."[71] His judgement nevertheless relegated her work to a subordinate position, as he deemed her treatment of form derivative, writing that she seeks forms "to capture 'feelings' more sharply," rather than using forms without reference to external signification.[72] For him, they were not sufficiently "visual" but were too much "thought." Later appraisals continued to position Schäffer's work as subordinate to artists like Kandinsky.[73] While we can only speculate on Meier-Graefe's interpretation, it seems likely that within the opposition between imaginative and non-imaginative art, Schäffner was seen as falling on the "wrong" side—her work was characterized by too much thought, association, and imagination. This opposition, however, does not seem to have been particularly pressing for Schäffner.

In a written statement published by August Brömse in 1909, presumably citing Schäffner, she referred specifically to her intention to convey emotions, observing how she began distilling emotive elements from her surroundings, employing, for example, circular shapes to symbolize "dissolution."[74] The metaphor of dissolution is revealing for probing a representation problem: in its figurative elusiveness, it meant a liberation from the constraints of old forms and prepackaged categories, opening to new affective and spiritual worlds. Schäffner's repertoire of predominantly spiraling forms seems to hover on the edge of signifying by resemblance and signifying by graphic expression. This can be observed—beyond Avenarius's 1908 selection

71 Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, ed. Friedhelm Lach, vol. 5, *Manifeste und kritische Prosa* (Cologne: DuMont, 1981), 35: "sie hat das Große gewagt, zuerst und allein mit abstrakten Zeichnungen hervorzutreten." Schwitters documented a visit to Galerie Arnold on December 11, 1910, where he saw the exhibition *Kath. Schäffner – Aug. Brömse*; on which, see Jane Boddy, "Empathie zur Überwindung der Einsamkeit bei Ferdinand Avenarius und Katharine Schäffner," *Dresdener Kunstblätter* 2 (2021): 32–39.

72 Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, 399: "[sucht] sie doch gerade durch die Körper die 'Gefühle' schärfer zu bestimmen."

73 Looking back in 1957, Johannes Eichner describes Schäffner's work as being "artig und zivilisiert". Johannes Eichner, *Kandinsky und Gabriele Münter: Von Ursprüngen moderner Kunst* (München, no date [1957]), 106. Or, for the view that Avenarius made a mistake by preferring Schäffner over Kandinsky, see Leopold Reidemeister, "Die 'Brücke' im Spiegel der Zeitschriftenkritik," *Brücke-Archiv* 1, no date [1967]: 41–54, here 50.

74 A. B. [August Brömse], "Katharine Schäffner," *Deutsche Arbeit* 8, no. 12 (1909): 843. For Brömse's relationship to Schäffner, see Gabriela Kašková, *Schattenseiten: August Brömse und Kathrin Brömse* (Regensburg: Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg, 2011), 77–78.

**Image 10.** Katharine Schäffner, ornamental decorated paper, circa 1910. Linocut, 650 × 455 mm, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Image: Kupferstich-Kabinett, SKD / Andreas Diesend, all rights reserved.

of drawings—in portfolios like *Zeichnungen zu Prometheus und Epimetheus* (circa 1909; images 6–8) and *Sechs Zeichnungen in dekorativem Stil* (1910).[75] These dynamic, spiraling forms must have been important to her, as she repeated and translated them across media. For example, they reoccur in stained-glass compositions (image 9) or undergo reinterpretation in ornamental decorated papers produced around 1910 (image 10).[76] Through repetition, these forms seem to construct a visual world of affectivity and feeling, reflecting the darker depths of human experience, and drawing on personal perceptions, emotions, and memories of death, suffering, or mourning, for example.[77]

Given the importance of media relations and the stimulation of associations and thoughts in Schäffner's work, do Schäffner's works, indeed, truly represent *Phantasiemalerei*? Her work, I would argue, embodies central elements of *Phantasiemalerei*, even though she does not explicitly thematize this concept. For example, the importance of the relationship between image and literature can be seen in her drawings to Carl Spitteler's *Prometheus und Epimetheus. Ein Gleichnis* (1880–81), a symbolist interpretation of the Greek mythical epic.[78] Spitteler's literary

75 The original drawings for the ensemble *Zeichnungen zu Prometheus und Epimetheus* are in Prague, see fn. 13; Katharine Schäffner, *Sechs Zeichnungen in dekorativem Stil* (München: Georg D.W. Callwey, [1910]).

76 Examples of ornamental decorated papers are kept in the Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

77 Brömse described Schäffner's work as "demonic", a predicate often linked to women in the context of Symbolist art.

78 Carl Spitteler, *Prometheus und Epimetheus: Ein Gleichnis* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, [1880–1881] 1911).

work is highly evocative, allegorical, and imaginative, which Schäffner translates into concrete visual form. Thus, we might see her drawings as exemplary of *Phantasiemalerei*, as they engage in media translations and involve imagination.[79] However, while I do not wish to suggest that such an interpretation is necessarily wrong, by promoting Schäffner's work as such, Avenarius pulled her into a polemic that ultimately harmed the critical reception of her work.

Schäffner's output (as far as it is available today) suggests that she worked on a type of graphic abstraction to convey feelings.[80] Historically, this aspect of her work has been largely overshadowed by the classification *Phantasiemalerei*—the antithesis of modern art. Even when critics considered her graphical expression of affective states, Avenarius's 1908 text remained the primary reference point. In fact, in the 1920s, Schäffner's work was re-examined on the borderline between art and psychiatry, with psychiatrists drawing parallels between Expressionism and schizophrenia and affirming its presence in her work.[81] Such dubious interpretations have not only further obscured her voice as an artist but also perpetuated the dominance of men speaking on her behalf, disregarding her own perspective. Equally, her recognition as an early proponent of non-imitative art has occluded the specifics of her graphic work, deeming it derivative when compared to other, mostly painterly, forms of abstraction.

To reassess Schäffner's place within the history of modern European art, I believe it is crucial that we shift our attention to practices and theories of graphic art centered on the transmission of affective states and other "invisible" felt subjects and consider its local Czech-German contexts.[82] Resurfacing this intellectual and artistic history of supposedly "minor" or occluded figures like Schäffner may help to establish broader intellectual genealogies in Modernist art.

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79 It should by no means be assumed that critical support of *Phantasiemalerei* disappeared after 1910. Avenarius continued to engage with the concept, and imagination (*Phantasie*) remained a topic of interest for artists, as seen in Max Liebermann, *Die Phantasie in der Malerei* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1916). Liebermann's essay, "Die Phantasie in der Malerei", was originally published in 1904.

80 For example, the 1925 exhibition at Prague's Rudolfinum had a section dedicated to Schäffner, listing 56 numbers: *Tři výstavy*, 7–10. Today, only a few of these works are still identifiable; see ft. 13.

81 An examination of Schäffner's reception in the 1920s goes beyond the scope of this paper; for discussion of her work by psychiatrists, see for example R.A. Pfeifer, *Der Geisteskranke und sein Werk: Eine Studie über schizophrene Kunst* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner, 1923), 9; or, Hans Prinzhorn, "Die künstlerische Gestaltungsvorgang in psychiatrischer Beleuchtung," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 19 (1925): 154–69, here 167.

82 For a discussion on the functionality of the categories of modern European art in the context of East-Central Europe, see Matthew Rampley, "Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe," *Umění/Art* 69, no. 2 (2021): 145–62.

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