

"P.S. Last night I dreamt of a bluetit that stared at me for a few minutes and then, without a twitter, flew away. As I turned around to speak to you, instead of words, a melodic twitter of a bird emitted from my mouth." (Walt Kuhn to Vera Kuhn, October 1912)

The discovery of a 100-year old letter, found lodged between the marble slabs of the gallery space (formerly a residential villa), brought about the initial idea for 'Die Marmory Show'.

This unsent letter, dated 24.10.1912, was, with the highest certainty, written by Walt Kuhn; painter, organiser and promoter of the Armory-Show in 1913, and is addressed to his wife Vera Spier Kuhn. During his extensive travels through Europe between September and November, he remained in close contact with her. This unofficial correspondence gives a rich and detailed insight into the thoughts and planning that went into the realisation of the first Armory Show.

In October 1912, Walt Kuhn spent a week in Munich, putting together a list of artists for the planned commercial exhibition. This list reads like a directory from a 'Who's Who' of Classic Modernism. The Armory-Show introduced the European avant-garde to New York and acted as the catalyst for the onslaught of Modernism in the USA.

In this letter, Walt Kuhn tells of unusual and intense encounters with nature, which he experienced together with Kandinsky under the influence of Helena Blavatsky's writings.

His surprising and progressive thoughts, regarding the incorporation of such experiences into the curatorial concept of the Armory-Show, never materialised. One can only speculate about the reasons as to why this was so. Possibly, the turbo-avant-garde works of that time were already too much of a mental overload for the American public, so much so that it was presumably better to spare them the curatorial, experimental concepts. It seems more plausible to us that the scientific-cultural understanding of 'nature' at that time clearly did not allow such a curatorial approach.

The recent developments in art are confirmation of our intent to address and realise Kuhn's vaguely formulated exhibition concept that focuses on experiences of nature. We observe, in the social, as well as in nature, that art's aim is the direct transformation of realities. Artists blur the boundaries between that which is animal/human; human/plant; managing to acquire an anti-essential perspective, suspending hierarchies of androcentric, scientific principles and prompting new questions with regards to nature and the responsibility thereto. The exhibition aims to find a temporal form for this status of the plant-human-animal-relationship.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE FOUND LETTER

24th October, 1912

Dear Vera,

On my last evening in Munich I was witness to an extraordinary experience. Concerning this I can recount only vaguely, before I must leave to Paris. Please deal with this information with the utmost discretion – in the wrong hands it could be used as an endless excuse for scorn and derision.

Yesterday afternoon on my way to the hotel I met Kandinsky, who convinced me to take part in a meeting of the theosophically-interested. He said that they met regularly to read from Helena Blavatsky's books and practice applying her theories. Today was to be one of those evening's of praxis.

These people, seven including me, assembled - Marianne von Werefkin, amongst others - in a bleak villa only a few streets from my hotel. I was welcome, however, I was requested in a serious tone of voice, only to speak if absolutely necessary and otherwise see to that I quickly adapt to the proceedings. It all began with an instructed exercise in concentration: on a snowflake obsidian. In the mean time, the outside strangely seemed to melt into the inside. Somehow, it was as if I were this stone or as if I had the same frequency as it.

The next thing I remember is that everyone was eating a very small piece of mushroom and that now we were outside, in a forest-like park. Although the whole thing contradicts any kind of common sense, it very much seemed as though it were reality. I connected with a beech (yes, a tree). This is definitely, and in no way comparable, to the contact with another human being. I increasingly found myself in the tree's field of energy; 'in its aura', as I was told later on. Via an ethereal energy system the tree's strength seemed to enter into my body, but in an unbelievable correlation my strength also entered into that of the tree. By attempting to capture these sensational energies and vibrations with words, I know I can only fail: tree, train, trap, tie, tremble, thank... Do you think it would be possible to recreate these kind of experiences in the exhibition ? Alongside a comprehensive collection of radical European art. Let's see, maybe I will manage to come up with a suitable form for this soon.

Love, W

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