Latvian Academy of Art • Institute of Art History

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JOHANN WALTER
(Walter-Kurau)

1869–1932

Summary of the Doctoral Dissertation

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Riga
2010

The dissertation was completed
at the Institute of Art History
of the Latvian Academy of Art,
published as the monograph
JOHANS VALTERS
(Johann Walter (Walter-Kurau),
Riga: Neputns, 2009)
and submitted for examination
to the Doctoral Council
of the Latvian Academy of Art
on 23 November 2009

Publisher of the summary
Latvijas Mākslas akadēmijas
Mākslas vēstures institūts
(Latvian Academy of Art • Institute of Art History)
Akadēmijas laukums 1–160, LV–1050 Riga, Latvia
T. +371 67227852
www.lma-mvi.lv

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ISBN 978-9934-8038-7-1

INTRODUCTION

RELEVANCE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER

In the late 19th and early 20th century art developments in the Baltic Provinces, like in other national periphery areas of the Romanov and Habsburg empires, caught up with the pace of the neighbouring art centres to such an extent that the delay of innovations sank to a decade or, in some aspects, disappeared at all. The modernising of art in the situation of the region's economical rise coincided with the social and national emancipation of the local nations.

One of the classic masters whose talents, at this turn of times, raised Latvian painting to a previously unseen level of quality, was Johann Walter (1869–1932, so far predominantly called Jānis Valters in Latvian texts), a fellow student of Janis Rozentāls (1866–1916) and Vilhelms Purvītis (1872–1945). Walter's oeuvre ranges from the academic realism of the 1890s, that he mastered at the St. Petersburg Imperial Academy of Art, to the modernist visual idiom in the 1920s. The profoundly musical painter interpreted elements of Impressionism, Art Nouveau and Symbolism in the Neo-Romantic atmosphere of the turn of the 20th century, but later he came close to the verge of abstraction, elaborating a peculiar non-objective vision of nature.

Although the three above-mentioned artists have continuously held the place of honour in the permanent exhibition of the Latvian National Museum of Art (further LNMA) and in numerous books, the representation of their work in the research history of Latvian art has not been equally adequate. Still at the end of the 20th century Walter's work, despite the uninterrupted presence of his masterpieces, meant comparatively little to Latvian public and even art historians did not have enough material for a convincing reconstruction of his biography. The portrayal of Walter's personality and art was not only too fragmentary, but also very distorted both in Latvia and abroad. None of the publications about him reached the level of a standard monograph. The state of research was precisely summarised in Eduards Kļaviņš' statement that Walter is "the most mysterious top figure of Latvian art – more questions than answers" (1995).

The peculiar situation can be partly explained by the fact that Walter was a hybrid personality in regard to his ethnic background, national self-awareness and the geography of his life. Having acquired German education in a mixed family that belonged to the German citizenship of Jelgava (German Mitau), Walter came so close to Latvian national efforts of his St. Petersburg fellow students that he joined the group *Rūķis* ("Gnome") there and even was its chairman for some tome. Subsequently in Jelgava, however, he had closer contacts with ethnic fellows of his Baltic German

mother. At the turn of the 20th century Walter stood out as one of the most important personalities on the scene of Latvia's new painting, but in 1906 he left for Germany to work in Dresden (1906–1916) and Berlin (1916/ 1917–1932) as *Walter-Kurau*, this double-barrelled *Künstlername* made of his late parents' family names *Walter* and *Kurau*.

Therefore Walter's work did not fit into the narrow frame of ethnic Latvian or Latvian-based art from which a good quarter of a century of the painter's stylistic development could be excluded. Even though LNMA in its single artist collections used to treat every individual heritage as an indivisible whole, the available factual information about Walter's emigration life, due to inevitable obstacles, lagged far behind its pictorial evidence and could not provide it with adequate commentaries. Regarding the consolidation of a national school of art as a metanarrative, Latvian authors used to stop the discussion of Walter's painting on the "break (..) after 1906". It was impossible to bridge this gap of knowledge before the fall of the Iron Curtain, whereas in the 1990s a profound research into Walter's life and work became one of those Latvian art history issues that were to be solved using the constantly increasing possibilities of international cooperation.

AIMS AND TASKS

This summary describes results of a research project started in 1997 in order to produce a comprehensive monograph about Johann Walter's art in the context of local and international artistic developments. It was to be expected that the realisation of this intention would not just give a detailed picture of a painter of importance, but also add to the general knowledge about an eventful turn of art and history periods in the former Baltic Provinces and still beyond across a broader section of Europe's cultural map where St. Petersburg of the 1890s, turn-of-the-20th-century Jelgava, Dresden during the *Belle Époque* and Berlin in the Weimar Republic years stand out as the key places of the artist's biography.

The author was well aware that this assignment requires:

1) investigation of Walter's artworks in museums and private possession in Latvia and abroad;

2) collection and critical examination of information, obtained from published sources and archive materials, as well as from evidences left by the artist's contemporaries and descendants about him and members of his closest social circle (relatives, colleagues, friends, students);

3) identification and interpretation of analogies and influences that would be important for the description of Walter's art; it was necessary to explore the varied appearance of turn-of-the-20th-century stylistic idiom

and the following transition to manifestations of early Modernism in the work of his contemporaries from diverse European countries with particular focus on verifiable or very probable instances of direct artistic contacts or borrowings.

The available "starting capital" of knowledge did not allow to anticipate, whether the resulting coverage of information will be sufficiently uninterrupted. It was impossible to predict what kind of discoveries will be made and how much every group of sources will contribute to the entire picture. It seemed, however, important to achieve balance between the relatively better explored pre-emigration period and the much longer emigration period, whose representation in Latvian and German art history literature previously was limited to combinations of few facts and misconceptions. In the course of investigation the scope of actual tasks ramified and expanded, because findings posed new questions and brought to the fore unexpected problems.

TERMINOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The full initial title of the research project at its proposal to the Latvian Academy of Art Doctoral Council in 1997 was phrased as "The Creative Evolution of Jānis Valters (Johann Walter, 1869–1932) in the Context of the Latvian and European Art of the Late 19th and Early 20th Century". This highlighted the aspect of "creative evolution" in relation to the "context of Latvian and European art". Later on the author gradually realised that the term "evolution" refers too directly to a progressive, upgoing change, a process of improvement, in which something "acquires a new, usually more complex or better form" than before. Thus this term would interfere with the basic assumption that Walter, having reached professional maturity in the late 1890s, created high-quality artworks in every stage of his stylistic journey and it would be therefore wrong to base their comparison on merely axiological criteria. Nevertheless even without a deliberate and possibly misleading emphasis in the headline key words of the monograph, the continuous transformation of Walter's art in a dynamic interplay of outer and inner impulses stands out as its central theme, defining standpoints in the interpretation of sources and materials.

Another modification in the process of work affected the spelling of the artist's name. When speaking and writing about him in German or English, the author has constantly preferred the original form *Johann Walter (Walter-Kurau*), whereas her Latvian publications until 2003 were about Jānis (Johans) Valters (*Johann Walter*), documenting an effort to combine the Latvianising tradition in *Jānis* and the historical truth in *Johans* (*Johann*). Yet this compromise seemed increasingly awkward and made her think,

that the artist would rather deserve that his native country ultimately accepts his real first name, even if the use of it would undermine the foundations of an ethnocentric art history, cemented by several generations of Latvians. A figure named "Jānis Valters" in a Latvian way was a perfect match for the role of one of the three protagonists who were given the following description by Latvian art historian Jānis Siliņš in 1940: "By their freshness, the healthy vigour drawn from the unspoilt reserves of the new peasant nation, these masters stirred the Baltic German provincial languor at the beginning of the century. It was a thunderstorm of creative joy and daring." Instead of this, the author wished the circulation of such nationally romantic "thunderstorm landscapes" in Latvian art history slow down and her compatriots stop believing in the ethnic homogeneity of the country's artistic modernisation.

Considering the range of professional methods applied in this study, it is possible to discern between techniques used in the empirical investigation practice to obtain and select the necessary information, and those methodological interpretation aspects that complement each other in the story of the monograph. The first ones are outlined right away in the survey of research directions and materials, whereas the last ones are essential in the further description of narrative peculiarities.

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS AND MATERIALS

Materials for the monograph were collected in Latvian and foreign museums, art galleries, private collections, libraries and archives. Invaluably gainful activities were research trips to Walter's main foreign places of residence (St. Petersburg, Dresden, Berlin) and several other locations of his heritage and biographic evidence (Bielefeld, Verden, Haselund, Milan), as well as contacts with numerous art experts and unprofessional informants in Europe and in the USA. Year by year a growing amount of useful reference information was found in the Web resources. In the final stage of working on the book (2008–2009), the author made use of international internet-based second-hand bookshops as the best source for efficient acquisition of various prints (books, catalogues, postcards) for publication purposes. The whole body of materials can be divided into several relevant groups of sources.

Walter's art works: originals and reproductions

The most important public collection of Walter's art can be studied in LNMA, where 128 items (including 3 probable misattributions) are registered on his name in the subcollection "Painting (18th cent.–1st half of the 20th cent.)" and 22 drawings and watercolours belong to the subcollection

“Graphic Art (18th cent.–1st half of the 20th cent.)”. Individual paintings were examined in other Latvian museums (Ģederts Eliass Jelgava History and Art Museum (JHAM), Liepāja Museum, Riga History and Navigation Museum, Tukums Museum) and found in Germany (*Neue Nationalgalerie SMPK*, *Vorderasiatisches Museum SMPK*, *Akademie der Künste* and *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* in Berlin; *Städtische Galerie Dresden*), Italy (the private *Museo d’Arte e Scienza* in Milan), Sweden (*Malmö Konstmuseum*) and Ukraine (Odessa Museum of Eastern and Western Art, holding a presumable painting by Walter). His altarpiece from the destroyed Irlava Church was discovered in the prayer house of Liepāja Ev. Luth. Brethren Community.

The research was supported by helpful descendants of the artist’s family, collectors, gallery workers and antiques experts, helping the author to first-hand or mediated knowledge about the largest – privately owned – part of Walter’s art in originals and reproductions. At the turn of the 21st century several tides of previously unknown Walter’s paintings from foreign private collections reached Latvian art market and museums. This powerful surge extended the local experts’ vision of his artistic scope and, last but not least, urged them to puzzle over tricky questions of authorship that could not be solved without exploring the work of his German students. Since then, many ideas have been shaped in exchange of information and opinions with Latvian painting restorers from the Association of Art and Antiques Experts, Latvian Academy of Art and LNMA. It has become a mutually observed cooperation practice investigating any newfound artworks of Walter that keep appearing before the horizon of researchers.

Published or filed reproductions helped to gain a fragmentary insight into the plentitude of those artworks that were missing or destroyed, had unidentifiable owners, or were unaccessible temporarily. Useful images of uneven print quality were published irregularly since 1894 when the first free competition of the St. Petersburg Academy was documented in an album of graduation pieces, until 2008 when previously unknown Walter’s paintings were included in some Western auction catalogues, finding owners outside Latvia. The largest number of later lost artworks can be studied in Ernst Zierer’s book *Objektive Wertgruppierung: Kunstmonographische Übersicht über das Werk von Walter-Kurau* (1930). Excluding some lists of works for solo exhibitions, this was the only particular edition about Walter’s art during his lifetime. The Information Centre of Latvian Academy of Art stores a photo documentation of Walter’s centenary exhibition (1969) that helped to learn the range of now partly missing private loans.

Walter's theoretical legacy

At the outset of work, the few relevant sources for the study of Walter's aesthetic ideas were digests of his lectures (1903–1904) in the Jelgava newspaper *Mitausche Zeitung* and several pages in Zierer's book with Walter's proposal for his artistically educational treatise *Das Lehrbare in der Malerei* ("What Can be Learned in Painting"), a manuscript he was working on in the last years of his life. Latvian researchers believed that the unpublished treatise, a copy of which was reputedly owned by Vilhelms Purvītis in Latvia, was lost in WWII. The scene of the research changed radically as art collector Jürgen Lüder-Lühr from Wiesbaden (1997) and art dealer Ulrich Gronert from Berlin (2001) entrusted the author with voluminous, unidentical typewritten transcripts of Walter's manuscripts. The first one, according to the owner, was made by his father, collector Heinrich Lüder-Lühr. The second one had the title *Schöpferisches Malen* ("Creative Painting") and informed that it has been copied from the original manuscript by the painter's son Hans Leonhard Walter in Riga in 1935. These sources could be supplemented with notes of Walter's statements, made or preserved by his student Minna Köhler-Roeber, and a selection of aphoristic expressions, extracted from their authentic context and published in the catalogue of Walter's memorial exhibition in Berlin in 1933. These discoveries revealed Walter's intellectual horizon in his emigration period and showed the artist's own vision of his late painterly quests. The texts compiled for the unpublished book were written in German since the 1910s and, in most cases, initially used in lectures held for Walter's students. The author decided to avoid discussing these extensive aesthetic statements separately from Walter's painting. Instead, they are merged into a story about a versatile but integrated personality, in the structure of which an outstanding painter was assisted by a theoretician and not the other way. As some German art historians, due to their insufficient expertise in Walter's art, assumed that his painting has almost no reference to his theories and is of lesser importance than his ideas, it was necessary to object to this opinion by selecting relevant accents of interpretation.

Other archive materials

Walter's personal archive as does not exist anymore. His heirs in the 1930s and 40s were able to preserve only few photographs and some documents of legal importance. Most of them are archived in the LNMA Centre of Scientific Documents as a donation of Walter's grandchildren Irene Jess, Sigrid Nahnsen and Wolfgang Walter (1999). All biographic materials that were assembled by Heinrich Lüder-Lühr in West Berlin until his death in 1973, are lost for investigation, fortunately unlike his collection of Walter's artworks and the above-mentioned copy of the artist's manuscripts. In the contrary to Walter's unpublished theoretical writings, the

range of other archive materials, including his autographs, is relatively humble and dispersed. Nevertheless fragments of professional, private or bureaucratic information about Walter's life and fortunes of his works, as well as photo documents were found both in private ownership and in various archives: Latvian Academy of Art Information Centre, having a photocopy of St. Petersburg Academy student's dossier from the now Russian State History Archive; LNMA Archive and the above-mentioned LNMA Centre of Scientific Documents; Foreign Art Museum (now LNMA Foreign Art Department) Archive; Latvian State History Archive; Latvian State Archive; Research Archive of the Çederts Eliass Jelgava History and Art Museum; Writing, Theatre and Music Museum Archive (now the Repository of Writing, Theatre and Music Collections); *Zentralarchiv SMPK* (Berlin); *Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg*; *Sächsisches Staatsarchiv*; *Stadtarchiv Dresden*; *Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek – Handschriftenabteilung*. A separate group of archival sources consists of author's research notes and correspondence with her informants.

Published sources and literature

Johann Walter was working in a period when the resonance of the printed word was very strong in the society. Thus a particularly voluminous part of research materials is made of published information and descriptions since 1894 when the young painter began to participate in exhibitions, exciting the interest of art critics. For a possibly comprehensive picture, the author collected every fragment of Walter-related information, found in the periodical press (reviews of art events, diverse advertisements, announcements and notices, journalistic disputes, obituaries, anniversary articles, monographic essays, memoirs, surveys of broader art history themes etc.), catalogues and guides of exhibitions, auctions and collections, general and art reference literature (address books, directories, dictionaries), memoir and correspondence publications of Walter's contemporaries, lifetime and later academic and popular writings of art historians more or less concerning aspects of his life and work, as well as elsewhere beyond these source categories. Bibliographic *in situ* discoveries outside Latvia were made in: *Sächsische Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek, Dresden*; *Kunstbibliothek Dresden*; *Kunstbibliothek Berlin SMPK*; *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin PK*; *Kunsthistorisches Institut der Freien Universität Berlin*; *Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin – Zentrum für Berlin-Studien*; *Archiv der Akademie der Künste Berlin*; National Library of Russia and Research Library of the Russian Academy of Art, St. Petersburg; Art Library (*Konstbiblioteket*) and Royal Library (*Kungliga biblioteket*) in Stockholm; Tallinn University Academic Library (*Tallinna Ülikooli Akadeemiline Raamatukogu*); Archive Library of the Literature Museum (*Kirjandusmuuseumi Arhiivraamatukogu*),

Tartu; private libraries in Germany and Italy. It was necessary to capture and consider every mention of the artist, because it could point towards still unknown materials and reveal a biographical fact or at least a link in a chain of misconceptions. The most unexpected research surprises include e. g. the detailed representation of Walter's work in Dresden papers and the range of late 20th and early 21st century publications about his German students. Historically and geographically determined features of the whole body of literature are explained in the subchapters of the historiographical overview.

Secondary literature and visual reference materials

No less varied in terms of contents, form and informative efficiency are publications that do not contain information about Walter himself, but were either studied deliberately in order to understand the context of the investigated developments, or unwittingly helped to strike a sought-for key of interpretation and relate some episodes of the narrative in a more convincing way, thus deserving a reference in the monograph. A prominent part of this group manifests the aesthetic opinions and artistic intentions of Walter's contemporaries and recent predecessors that could be and in some cases were familiar to him with great certainty, or even inspired the development of his own ideas. Furthermore, the secondary literature, providing matter for comparative examination, includes much of the visual reference material that was necessary in order to consider Walter's painting as part of mutually interrelated artistic phenomena in defining variously graded analogies, sources of inspiration and traces of his own influence. The study of analogies was facilitated by: Walter's statements regarding the creative principles of his colleagues and self-made references to his reading matter; comparative records about his works in writings of contemporaries and later authors; documented exhibition or reproduction facts of possibly related art works within the supposed field of his experience; the writer's general visual expertise in the heritage of late 19th and early 20th century art. Several episodes confirmed the necessity to take immediate notice of all such parallels that initially seem to have no biographically possible connection, because the future may prove the opposite.

PRACTICAL RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The beginning of the research coincided with a spectacular rise in the field of Latvian art history seeing the emergence of cultural editions and events in which it was soon possible to expound discoveries about various aspects of Walter's life and work, its periods and source groups (see the lists in the appendix "Publication and Presentation of Research Results").

Numerous occasions gave chance to present and discuss his heritage in international conferences on Baltic history issues, and in the German-language academic literature of the Baltic Sea Area.

Unintended en-route discoveries provided matter for separate publications about Walter's contemporaries Petras Kalpokas and Jakob(us) Belsen; Walter himself was a key figure in the writer's articles about the perception of nature and the influence of music in Latvian painting at the turn of the 20th century, the interrelation of national issues and territorial identity on the art scene of that time, history of Riga Art Society (*Riga(sch)er Kunstverein*), art life of Jelgava etc. The continuously extending picture of reconstruction inevitably changed, requiring to correct the location and significance of certain elements. The writer's first publications in the late 1990s were filled with joy about every new-discovered fact and detail that helped to dip into the world of Walter's emigration. Subsequently these puzzle game pieces lost their initial exceptionality in order to find a relevant function in a vast panorama.

Research achievements enabled LNMA in Riga and JHAM in Jelgava to receive donations of Walter's works from foreign private collections, as well as promoted investigation and popularisation of museum collections and their latest acquisitions. In Walter's 140th anniversary year 2009 the writer helped to organise the visiting exhibition "Between Baltics and Berlin: Painter Johann Walter-Kurau (1869–1932) as Artist and Teacher", brought by the German *Sabatier Galerie & Kunsthandel KG* from Verden to JHAM, where Latvian public had the first opportunity to see works by six German students of the former Jelgavan in his native country. Together with art historian Aija Brasliņa, she curated the anniversary exhibition of Walter's painting in LNMA, and the opening of this event on 20 November 2009 was marked by the release of her monograph *Johann Walter* (*Johans Valters*, Riga: Neputns, 2009) which is the major result of the whole project. During the work on this exhibition, the LNMA Research Board, considering the latest discoveries, decided to give up using the Latvianised form "Jānis" as the painter's first name.

PECULIARITIES OF THE NARRATIVE AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

With a reference to the subtitle given to one of the writer's first articles about Johann Walter, the whole series of them, too, could be described as "close-up studies for a forthcoming biography". Ultimately the materials of these studies had to be reworked into the story of a single book. Although this publication is already described as a manifestation of the radical principle of the "total monograph" (Eduards Kļaviņš), actually it is not so

meticulously comprehensive and many discoveries (Walter's artworks, biography details etc.) are just considered without making their presence obvious. Furthermore, some problems and source groups in the writer's previous publications were discussed more in depth than in the monograph. Otherwise the book would become like a static inventory of facts and images, but would not allow to sense the pulse of Walter's fate, art and time to a sufficient extent. The narrative combines alternating viewpoints; panoramas are succeeded by differently focused close-ups, thematic cross-sections and excurses elucidating Walter's personality, painting and cultural milieu in various connections. In her work as a biographer, the writer agrees with Marcel Proust that "even in the most insignificant details of our daily life, none of us can be said to constitute a material whole, which is identical to everyone, and need only be turned up like a page in an account-book or the record of a will; our social personality is a creation of the thoughts of other people". The study evolved empirically, and material-based interpretation possibilities led to the use of several art history methods and their elements with shifting accents of comparatively stylistical, typological, iconographical, sociological of psychological analysis without the prevalence any preconceived schemes.

While tracing and describing artistic connections, it was important to observe the scale of probability (hardly–perhaps–probably–most likely–certainly) and not to omit the relevant particles, in order to avoid getting trapped in the "mythological realism" of art history. In this trap the truth becomes unwittingly seen in a knot of real and invented facts, resulting either from embellishments of reality or, on the contrary, from simplification and neglect of nuanced attitudes. Somewhere specifying discoveries allowed to change supposition for assertion, while elsewhere the level of probability remained low or even decreased. Episodically the story is spun around the axis of some hypothesis without leading to an unequivocal solution but helping to reveal otherwise hidden aspects of the subject. As the ideas summarised in the book greatly developed in an illusory dialogue with opinions of its protagonist and other persons, these references are given a due place in the structure of the text. The author's training in art historical writing was somewhat influenced by that tradition of at once syntactically accurate, richly comparative, evocative and nuanced expression, which is exemplified a. o. by Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand's many-volume work *Deutsche Kunst und Kultur von der Gründerzeit bis zum Expressionismus* (1959–1975).

The introduction is followed by a historiographical overview "Johann Walter in the Art Criticism, Art History and Art Collections", which also includes a critical survey of the author's own research activities. Generally the whole overview can be read as an often paradoxical case study about Latvian, Russian and German art history in the situation of different regimes

and states from the late 19th century to the early 21st century as mirrored in the reception of Johann Walter's art. In the meantime, an important function of the historiographical analysis is to show the complex historical background of the work in a chronological and territorial section, in order to relieve the following portrayal of the artist's life and work of the assignment to unravel chains of errors. The basic division of the book's main part "The Artist's Way" emphasises the factor of place. Centres of events in the period from his birth until leaving the Baltics (1869–1906) are Jelgava and St. Petersburg, but after his emigration – Dresden (1906–1916) and Berlin (1916/1917–1932). The conclusion of the story is merged with a retrospective glance at those recurrent motifs of Walter's destiny and art which help to delineate his place on the international cultural scene and grasp the continuity of his artistic efforts.

The volume of 400 pages is designed by the artist Juris Petraškevičs and contains 417 images: Walter's own works, analogies from the heritage of Latvian and foreign artists, photos of the painter, his friends and relatives, as well as various other visual supplements to the story, including postcards with views of German landscapes in the 1st third of the 20th century, used by the writer for identification of the scenery depicted in Walter's paintings. Numbers of images referred to in particular paragraphs are given in red print on column margins. The book has a number of appendixes: references of the story; a chronology of Walter's works in art exhibitions and auctions with bibliographical notes; a general bibliography with c. 900 titles; a full documentation of images; a summary and a list of images in Walter's native German; an index of persons; a list of abbreviations.

SUMMARY OF THE MONOGRAPH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. THE PRESENT STRANGER

Part 1
JOHANN WALTER IN THE ART CRITICISM, ART HISTORY AND ART COLLECTIONS: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW AND HISTORY OF THE RESEARCH WORK

1894–1906: Baltic Artist in the Mirror of Periodical Press in his Homeland and St. Petersburg

1906–1933: Johann Walter-Kurau within the Horizon of German Art Critics

1906–1932: The Memorial Counterpart of a Living Contemporary in the Early Phase of Latvian Art Historical Self-Reflection

1933–1990: The Fortunes of Walter's Heritage and Fluctuations of its

Interpretation in the World Split by the Totalitarian Regimes
The 1990s and the Early 21st Century: Walter Studies in the Independent Latvia and the Reunited Germany
History of the Research Work

Part 2

THE ARTIST'S WAY

I. 1869–1906. Between Jelgava and St. Petersburg

The First Generation Jelgavan
In St. Petersburg, Academy and the Students' Group "Gnome"
"Everything is Light and Life"
Walter and the Baltic Art Life at the Turn of the 20th Century
Impression, Mood and Melody. Walter's Painting in his Jelgava Period
At a New Threshold

II. 1906–1932. In Dresden and Berlin

The Artistic Scene of Elbflorenz
The *fête galante* of Colours and Sounds
"That Violinist", the Aftermath of War, Berlin and the Cézanne Factor
Reflections of *malbares Dasein* in their Late Orchestrations

CONCLUSION, RETROSPECTION AND ECHOES

APPENDIXES

References
Johann Walter's Works in Art Exhibitions and Auctions
Bibliography
List of Images
Johann Walter (Johann Walter-Kurau). Zusammenfassung und Abbildungsverzeichnis
Index of Names
Abbreviations

INTRODUCTION. THE PRESENT STRANGER

The introduction of the book shows Johann Walter as a continuously present stranger on the cultural scene of Latvia – generally known yet insufficiently familiar. The writer points to a gap that exists in the minds of Latvian people separating the shell of the co-founder of the national painting school from the rest of his life, and resolves to bridge this gap, transcending the traditional limitations of an ethnocentric art history.

Part 1
JOHANN WALTER IN THE ART CRITICISM, ART HISTORY AND ART COLLECTIONS: A HISTORIOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW AND HISTORY OF THE RESEARCH WORK

No period of time since the 1890s up to our days has seen Walter's name disappear completely from Latvian writing on art. The painter's bibliography is very great in number, but the mass of publications gives a dispersed, fragmentary and in many ways distorted picture of his creative biography.

The interpretation of Walter's work was the concern of art criticism first in the Baltic provinces and in St. Petersburg by 1906 and thereafter in changing intensity in Germany until his memorial exhibitions in 1933. For the native country, his painting turned into a retrospective subject of the local art history already before WWI. Therefore assessments by German critics who were hardly familiar with the art of his earlier period coincide with his becoming part of a canonical picture of Latvian turn-of-the-20th-century art, described by people who came to know his emigration work only after the painter's death. More than fifty years from the beginning of the Third Reich until the dissolution of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin Wall belonged to the next historiography period, in which the formation of a comprehensive picture was hindered by destinies of countries and nations in a world split by totalitarian regimes. Still as late as in the 1970s and 1980s neither Western, nor East European researchers could ignore the Iron Curtain, and the cooperation between the two parties was an exception. The 1990s, in turn, marked the beginning of a continuous period whose contribution to the research and popularisation of Walter's art must be considered in the light of new possibilities after the reestablishment of Latvia's independence, gradually open by the international academic exchange, travel freedom, globalisation of the art market and the rise of information technologies.

1894–1906: Baltic Artist in the Mirror of Periodical Press in his Homeland and St. Petersburg

Published references about and evaluations of the still little professional accomplishments of the St. Petersburg academy student began to appear in 1894. Most of these publications were exhibition reviews in St. Petersburg, Jelgava (Mitau), Riga, as well as occasionally Liepāja (Libau), Tallinn (Reval) and Tartu (Dorpat) newspapers by 1904. Today they enable researchers to grasp the context of ideas and developments, in which his painting was seen by contemporaries, help to identify some pictures by details mentioned in descriptions and offer comparisons that not only demonstrate the visual expertise of writers but also point to plausible sources of inspiration.

Beyond the field of journalism, Alexandr Benois (*Александр Бенуа*) in his "History of Russian Painting of the 19th Century" (1901) mentioned Walter and Purvītis together with Ferdynand Ruszczyc, Mikhail Latri (*Михаил Латри*) and Konstantin Bogayevsky (*Константин Богаевский*) as Western-oriented contraries to uncountable heartfelt painters of the native scenery. In 1903–1904 the first published evidence of Walter's aesthetic views appeared in the German press of Jelgava as digests of his educational lectures given at the Jelgava Trade Society (*Mitauer Gewerbe-verein*). When Walter after Purvītis expanded the Western direction of his exhibition geography, their addresses and short biographies were included in the *Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* in Berlin (1902–1903). Walter's glory in the homeland, however, was not shining so bright as that of Purvītis. Art historian Wilhelm Neumann in his volume of biographical essays *Baltische Maler und Bildhauer des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (1902) only made a brief mention of Walter and Rozentāls as promising members of the growing "herd of the young". In the meantime, the satirical poem "Vernal Dream" (*Ziedoņa sapnis*, 1901) by Fallijs (Konrāds Bullāns) already configured the leading triad of painters in the same way as it later became proverbial in the national art history.

Walter's reputation among connoisseurs was high, while the tendency of the public opinion can be better described by a press publication of 1905 stating that "critics recognise Walter's paintings are very "modern", although as an artist he does not reach the level of Rozentāls and Purvītis and wider audiences of Latvians have little idea about his art". This neglect had to do with the ethnic background of the artist ("at least close-standing persons claim that the Walters have been Germans already since olden times"). The cited expressions represent a group of sources from the area of socially political journalism that closed the first stage of Walter's historiography in the red-hot atmosphere of the 1905 Revolution. An epilogue to the resonance of Walter's early biography in the local press was written in January 1906 by the Jelgava reporter of the *Düna-Zeitung* who bewailed "our domestic artist" going to leave the Baltics.

1906–1933: Johann Walter-Kurau within the Horizon of German Art Critics

In May 1906 Walter's first Dresden solo exhibition in the *Emil Richter's Kunstsalon* made journalists notice a new participant of the art life in Saxony, who was becoming known as *Walter-Kurau*. The following decade had a better coverage in press than any other stage of the artist's career. About 150 publications found in periodicals of this time contain information about Walter's works in exhibitions, representation in collections, organising and teaching activities. The scene is complemented by exhibition catalogues and some published reproductions. Contemporary

reviews help to reconstruct the chronology of Walter's creative biography by 1916 and delineate his place in the Dresden art panorama from standpoints of different opinions. Already in 1907 the painter's *Künstlername* was included in general reference guides and since 1909 – in the art directory *Dresslers Kunstjahrbuch*. Willy Doenges in his Dresden monograph of the series *Kulturstätten* named him among the most talented artists of the city. The historiographical discoveries from the Dresden years, however, do not comprise any illustrated biographical articles reaching beyond the limits of a review.

The frequency of press references decreased in the Berlin period (1916/1917–1932). The painter almost did not appear in the focus of journalistic attention, because he neither staged new solo exhibitions, nor showed large groups of his works to the public. Wider audiences only could episodically judge his art from some paintings in mega exhibitions. At the end of 1930 *J. J. Ottens-Verlag* in Berlin-Frohnau published Dr. Ernst Zierer's essay *Objektive Wertgruppierung: Kunstmonographische Übersicht über das Werk von Walter-Kurau* as a book also containing 48 reproductions, a very short biography of the artist, a list of his paintings in private collections and an abstract of the treatise Walter was working on. The art historian Zierer was a peculiar theoretician, who used every research material for projecting his ideas on it. Still this publication has not lost its importance as a document of Walter's work in art and art theory.

The abstract of the painter's ideas ended on a promise to expound them in a separate book coming soon, but this project remained impracticable. In December 1932 some Berlin newspapers published brief obituaries for Walter, and the news of his death had more resonance in Saxony, recalling how "his style created a school in Dresden". In the spring of 1933 Walter's memorial exhibition in Berlin was discussed by at least 12 reviewers, who in their most part made their first acquaintance with his art. The most radical suggestions about the value of this heritage were diametrically opposed. Kurt Glaser claimed that "Walter's art rises and falls together with its creator who was not able to distance himself from his works so much as to let them gain a life of their own". Kurt Kusenberg, on the contrary, recognised the exhibited paintings as important expressions of contemporary art and believed that "Walter-Kurau in his spiritual position is close to the artists of *Die Brücke*".

In the meantime the Fine Arts Section of the National Socialist German Workers' Party Saxon Department already called to a "purge" in the modern art collections of museums. In the autumn of 1933 Walter's memorial exhibition in the *Galerie Arnold* in Dresden took place simultaneously with the local show of "Degenerate Art" (*Entartete Kunst*), including a painting by him. Germany saw the beginning of a destructive period that must be discussed in the subchapter about Walter's heritage in the world

split by totalitarian regimes. Until then on the other side of the emigration threshold Walter's *temps perdu* had become part of the art historical canon in his abandoned fatherland.

1906–1932: The Memorial Counterpart of a Living Contemporary in the Early Phase of Latvian Art Historical Self-Reflection

In the beginning of Walter's absence periodical press in Latvia sometimes informed about his activities on the German art scene. Afterwards the initial interest of Baltic journalists in tracking the emigrant's achievements decreased. The brief entry on Walter in Wilhelm Neumann's *Lexikon baltischer Künstler* (1908) said in the end: "Numerous portraits and several landscapes in Baltic private ownership. Currently working in Dresden." The foundations to the representation of Walter's art in a public collection of his fatherland were laid by the Latvian Society for the Promotion of Art (further LSPA) that purchased nine works of his Jelgava period from his ex-wife in 1914. In the inventory of LSPA Art Collection (1915) the painter is named *Jānis Valters*. The earliest instances for the usage of this Latvianised name-form in press are a digest of Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš' lecture about Latvian art history (1912) in the newspaper *Latvija* and the full version of this survey "Our Art" (1914). A retrospective image of Walter emerged to be considered as part of a closed historical period during the last twenty years of the artist's life. By the outbreak of WWI LSPA had detached the short yet growing ethnic Latvian line from the body of the Baltic art, put it in the centre of its efforts and integrated Walter's early work into this concept. On one hand, this over-emphasis on Latvianness segregated the image of the painter in a particular "national preserve" and came in conflict with reality. On the other hand, the status of a Latvian value turned out to be a powerful factor saving much of Walter's heritage from oblivion and destruction in critical moments of history. Among his contemporary painters with roots in the German culture of Latvia, he is the only one whose art after all 20th-century collisions can be examined in many originals.

In the new Republic of Latvia in the 1920s the Latvian State Art Museum (further LSAM) and the Riga City Art Museum (further RCAM) began to collect Walter's paintings. Impressions in these two museums and in the collection of LSPA, deposited in LSAM, were the basic sources for those writers of the 1920s and early 1930s (Jānis Dombrovskis, Visvaldis Peņģerots, Romans Suta, Boris Vipper), who summarised Latvian art history in their books, drawing different conclusions about the nature of Walter's art and its place in the general scene. These statements were more or less permeated with the striving to specify the national identity of every feature, typical of Latvian art history writing in the interwar period. Texts about Walter in these publications, however, were limited to several

paragraphs – unlike Alberts Prande's biographical essay "Jānis Valters" (1925) in the art and literature monthly *Ilustrēts Žurnāls*. Seven years later it was Prande that conveyed the message about Walter's death in Berlin to Latvian compatriots. In the obituary, he expressed doubts about prospects to study Walter's heritage more extensively. This note of uncertainty in 1932 concluded a period in which the living artist Johann Walter-Kurau in Germany and his memorial image Jānis Valters in Latvia were counterparts on parallels which did not meet.

1933–1990: The Fortunes of Walter's Heritage and Fluctuations of its Interpretation in the World Split by Totalitarian Regimes

The resonance of Walter's memorial exhibitions in Germany in 1933 did not open a new and active period in his historiography, but only marked an expressive finale of the previous one under the pressure of the constantly intensifying Nazi dictate. The presence of Walter's "Wine Hill" next to paintings by celebrities of 20th-century modern art in the Dresden version of the *Entartete Kunst* was to become an absurd peak of his reputation.

The artist's son, Latvian citizen Hans Leonhard Walter with support of his father's friends in Germany strove to find buyers for the inherited art works, and many of them remained in private possession or storage in Walter's adopted homeland still after the two exhibitions in 1933. Ernst Zierer and his wife Edith took a number of Walter's late paintings and drawings on their flight from the Holocaust to the USA. Walter's son and divorced wife brought some 200 or more of the art works to Latvia, where the prevailing traditionalism of the 1930s was not the most appopriate context for the first acquaintance with the final stage of Walter's creative biography. The aesthetic priorities of that time intensified the interest in the achievements of his Jelgava period that were described ever more accurately and recognised as indisputable values by art lovers. An important result of source studies was the article "Notes on Art Life and Artists in Jelgava since the 19th century" by Jānis Siliņš (Senatne un Māksla. – 1937. – No. 3), who portrayed Walter as the key figure in the art of his native town and integrated his biography into a meticulous reconstruction of the local cultural scene. Siliņš' attitude in regard to Walter's emigration period, however, conformed to the prevailing opinion: "Having lost contact with his native country, (..) he could not be anymore so truthful as in the first period."

Nonetheless it was important enough that Latvians could gradually learn the full spectrum of Walter's heritage. The first one to make the stylistic diagnosis was Uga Skulme whose entry "Latvian Art" in the national encyclopedia *Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca* (1934–1935) contained a note that "Walter became Expressionist in the last stage of his life". Visvaldis Peņģerots wrote in his overview of 19th- and 20th-century

painting in Latvia for the Purvītis-edited "Art History" that Walter, while living in Germany, "brought his painting to absolute abstraction, to ornamentation and colour game" (1935). Latvian public could follow this transformation in Walter's memorial exhibition (1939) that took place in RCAM short before the owners of works joined the stream of Baltic German "repatriants". The frequently criticised lack of homelandness and traditionalism did not restrain experts from appreciating Walter's paintings of his emigration period as precious acquisitions for Latvia's largest art museums which started to collect his late oeuvre. Thereby the exhibition was essential for the preservation of Walter's heritage, but the historical situation on a local and international level was not beneficial for further research activities, while Latvia was standing on the verge of totalitarianism imposed by two alternating invasive regimes.

During WWII the only substantial supplement to Walter's bibliography in the capacity of an important source was published in Leipzig in 1942. The biographical entry about Johann Walter-Kurau in the authoritative dictionary *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* or the so-called *Thieme-Becker* was the basic generally available confirmation of this artist's existence until the boom of electronic information systems at the turn of the 21st century. In the course of the war, hostilities modified the dictionary information about Walter's art in German museums, and air raids also destroyed important private collections.

The official attitude of Latvian SSR art historians regarding Walter in the 1940s and 1950s until the so-called Khrushchew Thaw is summarised in a single sentence by Arturs Lapiņš and Arturs Eglītis in their little monograph *Jānis Valters* (1953): "Living in Germany, Valters gradually goes completely over to the Modernists' camp, gets stuck in the deadlock of art and dies in Berlin in 1932." It was no more the leading of Latvian art to the "roads of European development", but the becoming part of the "community of Russian Realist painters" that was proclaimed as the foremost achievement of Purvītis, Walter and Rozentāls. The "progressive and valuable" part of the art heritage in Soviet Latvian concepts gradually increased, until the evolution of views among professionals found its brightest expression in Walter's centenary exhibition (1969), showing lots of his late works from the meanwhile replenished funds of the Latvian SSR Art Museum (now LNMA) and private collections. German Expressionism was already recognised as the most progressive movement in the art of its time, and Walter's late stylistic quests acquired visual topicality, corresponding with tendencies in the new Latvian painting, such as the rising level of abstraction, decorative stylisation and lyrical expressivity. A unique chapter of international contacts in Latvian art history under Soviet rule at the turn of the 1970s was the cooperation of Latvian culture officials with Heinrich Lüder-Lühr, in the result of which the Latvian SSR Ministry of Culture

managed to purchase a precious selection of Walter's paintings from this West Berlin based art collector of Baltic German origin.

Heinrich Lüder-Lühr, who saw himself as an amateur collector, was the best connoisseur and promoter of Walter's art in Germany after WWII. He organised Walter's centenary exhibition in West Berlin (1969). Unfortunately this enthusiastic man exceeded his authority in what he imitated signatures and dates on a part of his collectibles, thus hindering any future investigation of authenticity. Generally the third quarter of the 20th century in the split Germany passed almost without mentioning Walter in serious art history literature. The most important exception was made possible by his former student Walter Hess, whose book *Problem der Farbe in Selbstzeugnissen moderner Maler* (1953), based on a PhD thesis, included a chapter discussing Walter's ideas in the context of contemporary concepts for the first time.

In the early 1970s the art of the little-known painter aroused the interest of a young art and antiquities dealer Ulrich Gronert in West Berlin, who included some of Walter's artworks in the exhibition "Painters of the 1920s", staged in his gallery as part of the 15th European Art Exhibition satellite programme in 1977. The resonance of this event reached Soviet Latvia, and Rudolf Mayer's little monograph about Walter's student Otto Manigk, published in East Germany in 1978, too, became available there. Afterwards, however, the flow of information from Germany to be used in the research of Walter stopped for many years. Largely based on materials once supplied by Heinrich Lüder-Lühr, the monographic album *Jānis Valters* by Kārlis Sūniņš with an introductory essay by Miķelis Ivanovs (1978) revealed Walter's creative biography in greater detail than before. The quality of the introduction suffered from superficiality combined with a more provincial than Soviet pathos of expression. The most regrettable shortcoming of the illustration part with far-going consequences was the reproduction of 15 works from the secondary collection of the now LNMA ignoring the negative conclusion of the museum's commission in regard to Walter's authorship.

A reference to this Riga publication is given in the list of sources and literature after the chapter "Jānis Valters" in the 2nd volume of the monumental reference work *Latvijas māksla*: *1800–1914* ("Art of Latvia: 1800–1914", 1980) by the USA-based emigration scholar Jānis Siliņš. Except for some lack of qualitative uniformity, this text was far more detailed and comprehensive than that of Ivanovs. Siliņš now sought to be possibly accurate also in describing Walter's emigration period, and other researchers contrived to contribute significant additions to this survey of the artist's life and work only after the fall of the Soviet empire. Meanwhile in Soviet Latvia the ambition to study Walter's emigration period, born in the atmosphere of the artist's centenary at the turn of the 1970s, fizzled out. Some

publications gave the impression that even the recent experience is either forgotten or discarded as unsubstantial. The most prolific writers on Latvian painting history, Skaidrīte Cielava and Rasma Lāce in their works of the 1970s and 1980s basically reproduced certain interpretation schemes without making relevant discoveries or extending the range of sources. This stagnation was counteracted in the academic studies of Tatjana Kačalova, who is primarily famed for her biography of Purvītis, and since the 1970s, first of all, in the publications of Eduards Kļaviņš who elaborated on various aspects of late-19th and early-20th-century Latvian art (portraiture, contacts with other national schools, style and iconography) and produced a particular article on Walter's aesthetic views in his Jelgava period. All the same Eduards Kļaviņš was right, when he, having described the turn of the 20th century as the most frequently interpreted period in Latvian art history, pointed out that "the amount of factual information collected about the third most prominent painter of the period, J. Walter is relatively small" (1983).

Fragmentary information about Walter in the 1980s was given in some East and West German archaeology and museology publications. Kuno Hagen's biographical dictionary *Lexikon deutschbaltischer bildender Künstler. 20. Jahrhundert* (1983) contained an entry about Johann Walter (Walter-Kurau) with a note that "Latvian art history counts him as [an ethnic] Latvian artist". A future surge of publications about Walter's students was preceded by Heinrich Wolter's catalogue book about Hans Zank and Willi Gericke in Verden an der Aller (1987). Wolter had found accurate information about their studies with Walter and suggested that teacher's influence must have been rather strong, bet he still had no idea how much the most expressive part of the reproduced Zank and Gericke's works reflect the style of Walter's painting in the 1920s. The problematic situation became increasingly typical, as different German art historians, dealers and collectors ever more often discovered works by artists whose education history contained the obscure name of Walter-Kurau. Generally it was so unfamiliar that Roger M. Gorenflo's bio-bibliographical index *Verzeichnis der bildenden Künstler von 1880 bis heute* (1988; 2nd ed. 1989) listed Johann Walter (1869–?) and Johannes Walter-Kurau (1869–1932) as two persons with no hint to their interconnection.

The 1990s and the Early 21st Century: Walter Studies in the Independent Latvia and the Reunited Germany

In the 1990s, the integration of Latvian modern painting heritage into the international scene and its juxtaposition with simultaneous developments elsewhere in Europe inspired Latvian art historians to reconsider also Walter's "imported" oeuvre from these viewpoints. In 1991 the researcher of Latvian Modernism, Dace Lamberga authored the first article

about Walter's contacts with German expressionism. In that time, however, she still had to make shift with defining general analogies and differences and could not unravel biographically well-founded connections with certain phenomena of German art.

The painter's 125th anniversary exhibition in the State Museum of Art (now LNMA) in 1994 had inventorying importance, because it urged to question ourselves, what and how much we could relate about these works and their author. Surprisingly little was discovered since 1939, when Anšlavs Eglītis wrote: "The life of Jānis Valters has been strange and rather mysterious. His biography has many gaps, periods, in which there is no information about his life." The historiography of the artist contained totally unexplored layers, and even Jānis Siliņš had not enough expertise to grasp the real dimensions of biographical sources. Eduards Kļaviņš in his lectures about Latvian art in the context of international contacts at the Latvian Academy of Art described Walter as the "most mysterious top figure of Latvian art – more questions than answers" (1995). For the first time, the situation allowed to hope that this proportion can be changed.

Since the mid-1990s, Latvian art history saw the publication of three books that interpreted Walter as a turn-of-the-20th-century portrait painter, landscapist and early-20th-century modernist. Eduards Kļaviņš' treatise " "Latvian Portrait Painting: 1850–1916" (*Latviešu portreta gleznieciība: 1850–1916*, 1996), regardless of its author's excuse that "Walter as a portraitist is less apprehensible than Rozentāls", made his early accomplishments in this genre the best explored part of his heritage for some time. Tatjana Kačalova's vision about the representation of nature in the heritage of Walter's Jelgava period was revealed in her book "Latvian Landscape Painting at the Turn of Centuries (1890–1915)" (*Latviešu ainavu gleznieciība gadsimtu mijā (1890–1915)*, 2004). Dace Lamberga in her monograph "Classical Modernism: Early 20th Century Latvian Painting" (*Klasiskais modernisms: Latvijas gleznieciība 20. gadsimta sākumā*, 2004) did not forget the "convincing Expressionist Jānis Valters", whose landscapes and still-lifes of the Berlin period she ranged as expressions of "moderate Modernism". Ideas and discoveries of eventual importance for Walter studies were expounded in articles and book chapters by Eduards Kļaviņš, Stella Pelše, Edvarda Šmite and Aija Brasliņa. In the 2nd part of the 1990s, the investigation of many turn-of-the-20th-century developments in all areas of Latvian art merged into quests of Art Nouveau elements. LNMA regularly included Walter's paintings in local and international exhibitions to show the artistic heritage of the previous turn of centuries in terms of Symbolism, Art Nouveau and national art emancipation.

The time had arrived for two counterparts – Jānis Valters and Johann Walter-Kurau – wander figuratively through the exhibition halls, galleries, auction houses and book publications of the free, post-totalitarian world,

transcending the historically regional linguistic usage traditions. As they converged in the appearance of a two-faced Janus, Jānis as one of Latvian national painting classics won for his German counterpart Johann a place in the authoritative Macmillan/Grove *Dictionary of Art* (1996) with a biographical entry by British art historian Jeremy Howard and in American scholar Stephen A. Mansbach's monograph *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890–1939* (1999).

Howard and Mansbach based their selection on nationally approved art values. On a quite opposite way, an obscure figure named Johann Walter-Kurau since the turn of the 1990s was discovered by German resarchers interested in the so-called lost generation of artists who were born around 1900 and right after the beginning of their careers experienced restrictions of their creative freedom imposed by Hitler's regime, because it was the destiny of nearly all Berlin students of Walter. Publications revealed ever new students' biographies, and their investigation was motivated not only by traditional professional and private factors, but also and especially by the appearance of various little-known artist collections in the art market after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The continuity of his traditions allowed to associate Walter with the painters' community on the Island Usedom. Two of writers were art historians Nicole Seidensticker-Delius and Ingrid von der Dollen, who looked for information about the influential teacher of their protagonists in cooperation with Heinrich Lüder-Lühr's son collector Jürgen Lüder-Lühr. He did much to reduce Walter's obscurity in German art history and contributed to the interpretation of Walter's school in authoring an impressive book of polygraphic excellence (1998).

Experts of cultural tourism make no secret that "the manufacturing of experiences typically involves distortion, myth and fabrication in the social construction of tourist assets to ensure that the message is received". Changing the name of the discipline, the same would be true about some tendencies in the construction of Walter's image in Germany of the 1990s. A real collection of implausible art historical fairy stories was the textual part of the album *Johannes Walter-Kurau und seine Schule* (c./by 1997), representing most of the former Lüder-Lühr Collection under new ownership. Painting professor Jānis A. Osis from the Latvian Academy of Art was deceitfully set up as its co-author together with Zank and Gericke's biographer Heinrich Wolter. Real details of Walter's biography were deliberately mixed with geographically and chronologically plausible history facts, creating a specific masterpiece of a falsified art history. Around 2007–2008 myths about his friendship with Wassily Kandinsky etc. already could look back at a telling tradition of some ten years, defining key words of Walter's "legend" in catalogues and gallery websites, but stirring mistrust among those experts who suspected some fabrication in such tales about the artist's life.

Several signs showed that the image of Walter in his adopted homeland in the beginning of the 21st century was not yet become unmistakably clear. The latest edition of the *Deutscher Biographischer Index* (2004) continued to duplicate him as Johann Walter and Johann Walter-Kurau. The catalogue of Otto Manigk's centenary exhibition (2002) voiced the opinion that "Manigk already soon proved to have surpassed his teacher in terms of artistic capacity and stylistic originality". An exemplary mistake on a global scale was the transformation of Walter's landscape (1914) into American painter Walt Kuhn's "Ocean Cliffs", that the New York gallery *Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts*, having misread the signature *Walter-Kurau* as *Walt Kuhn*, reproduced in their *Art News* advertisement (2008). Against the dense background of such oddities it was especially important to achieve that the story of Walter's life could be learned from reliable sources and his reputation could acquire a firm foundation irrespective of any art market fluctuations. Interests of Latvian art history and some German art dealers met in the wish to improve the situation. German gallerist and collector Torsten Sabatier, intending to celebrate Walter's 140th anniversary with an exhibition of his treasures in the painter's native town, decided for an accurate publication of the author's latest biographical discoveries, and so their compendium was made available to German readers in a catalogue edited by Ralf F. Hartmann in 2009.

History of the Research Work

To fill one of the most obvious gaps in the history of Latvian artistic culture was a fascinating research task, but simultaneously it was necessary to make room for the new biographical reconstruction, destroying the decorations of misconceptions and fabrications that were built on the both sides of the Iron Curtain and renovated in the post-totalitarian Europe. This required to spread and strengthen the belief that the increasingly accurate picture of Walter's life and work in its verified details is more impressive and from every standpoint more useful than any props of deliberate of unwitting fictions.

In the course of her research project since the turn of the 21st century the writer enjoyed the opportunity to witness many events related to Walter's heritage and take active part in them. The last chapter of this part in the book illustrates the sources of research and problems associated with them, outlines the main directions of professional cooperation, as well as contains acknowledgements to all institutions and persons whose informative support has helped to accomplish this investigation. Of the whole extensive list, a special mention should be made of: German art collectors and/or gallerists Jürgen Lüder-Lühr (Wiesbaden), Ulrich Gronert (Berlin) and Torsten Sabatier (Verden); Walter's grandchildren Sigrid Nahnsen (†), Irene Jess (Erkrath) and Wolfgang Walter (Stuttgart); Gottfried Matthaes

(Milan) and Marjorie Jelinek (Powis, Wales) as family descendants of Walter's second wife; David Finn (New York) as a family friend of Ernst and Edith Zierer and executor of their will; relatives of some Walter's students in Germany and Switzerland.

Part 2
THE ARTIST'S WAY

I. 1869–1906. Between Jelgava and St. Petersburg

The First Generation Jelgavan

WWII brutally changed the face of all fateful cities of Walter's life. On the cultural map of Latvia Jelgava was bound to suffer the most heavy destructions, and now only the street name *Svētes iela* helps to locate the place where Johann Theodor Eugen Walter was born on 22 January (3 February) 1869 in the family of the local shopkeeper and later town councillor. In the second half of the 19th century the house No. 13 (later 9) was the home of two newcomers who had begun their life each in a different ethnic group and social class. The history of their family can be traced back to 8 (20) January 1855 when Catharina Pauline (1835/1836–1900), the daughter of Riga German master ropemaker Leopold Christian Kurau, was married by Jelgava shopkeeper and householder Georg Wilhelm Theodor Walter (1824–1902) whose first names seem hardly compatible with the information about his parents, Latvian farmers Ansis and Grieta from the Viļņi or Veļi homestead (*Welle Gesinde*) in Bērzmuiža that was part of the Dobele Church Parish. Between 1855 and 1875 pastors of the German Town Parish of Jelgava Lutheran Holy Trinity Church christened nine children of the couple, and Johann was the seventh of them. Theodor Walter held different municipal offices during the last twenty-five years of his life, working as councillor, assessor of the Tax Board and its chairman.

Two months before Johann's birth a railway line between Riga and Jelgava began to operate, later extending to Liepāja and Mažeikiai. This achievement of the technical progress gradually deprived the town of its monopoly in the grain trade with Lithuania and farther countries. Jelgava lost its previous source of wealth almost completely, and at the turn of the 20th century the centre of Gouvernement Kurland was described as a "still provincial town, something like a suburb of Riga". The growth of Jelgava in demographic and economic terms could not be compared with the great leaps of Riga and Liepāja. Many Jelgavans thought of their town with nostalgia about the times of the Dukes, *Academia Petrina* or the recent commercial prosperity. The specific milieu of Jelgava, however, could evoke overwhelming aesthetic experiences, and impressions about them often combined visual and acoustic imagery.

After attending a private school, Johann obtained his secondary education in the Jelgava Real School (*Mitauer Realschule*, 1880–1888). Drawing teacher Kurt Wießner inspired his pupil for further art studies, and the first opportunity to improve his skills was in private lessons with Julius Döring from Dresden, who right after studies at the academy of his native city had moved to Jelgava in 1845 to become the key figure of the local art life and cling to the traditions of German painting of the 1st half of the century with a life-long steadiness. In the retrospective and conservative art world around Döring where Walter prepared himself for academy studies, there was nothing to show that French painters already in the first year of Johann's life had come very close to the verge of Impressionism. Nearly a quarter of a century was to pass since the first exhibition of the Impressionists, until Jelgava, too, due to Walter's efforts, saw the rise of painting where "everything is light and life". In the late 1880s the young man set out for entrance examinations of the St. Petersburg Imperial Academy of Arts, still equipped with a store of Döring's instructions, and Walter's earliest works, according to sculptor Gustavs Šķilters, were permeated by "shallow Romanticism, the character of German tales" – features that he soon eradicated for good.

Walter's road to the academy was smoother than for most of his fellow students. He was raised in such circles of townspeople, in which the promotion of children's talents was becoming part of an urban middle-class lifestyle. Döring must have helped Walter to learn the art collection of the Kurland Province Museum (*Kurländisches Provinzialmuseum*) and probably also some of the local private collections. Johann was seventeen, when the town residence of the Count Medem family housed the Kurland Culture-Historical Exhibition (1886). The second important talent of the future painter, too, showed up in the Real School years, because St. Petersburg fellows already came to know him as a refined violinist. For the whole life long, the musical instrument in Walter's hands was intrinsic as much as his painting tools, providing matter for his unfading experience-based preoccupation with reciprocity of painting and music.

In St. Petersburg, Academy and the Students' Group "Gnome"

In 1889, Johann Walter entered the St. Petersburg Imperial Academy of Art to major in painting. Döring's foundations were appropriate for the teaching system that until its reform in 1894 still preserved traditions of Neo-Classicism. In the last quarter of the 19th century and at the outset of the 20th century the St. Petersburg diaspora of Latvians was yearly revitalised by a new surge of students from the Baltic provinces, and the national self-awareness was running high in this community. At the turn of the 1890s, the spirit of Latvianness there was encountered by Walter, who, according to Šķilters, "would rather speak German and look towards the

art of Germany in the first time in St. Petersburg". Ādams Alksnis, Arturs Baumanis, Jānis Staņislavs Birnbaums, Janis Rozentāls and Pēteris Balodis already were Academy students; a year after Walter his closest academy friends Vilhelms Purvītis and Jakob Belsen joined them. A number of other Latvians studied a the Stieglitz Central School of Technical Drawing. Since 1889 or 1890, the soil of Latvianness in this community was cultivated by the group *Rūķis* ("Gnome") with students of the Academy, Stieglitz School and Conservatoire as its active members. When Šķilters entered the Stieglitz School in 1893, the meeting place already was a photographer's studio on Sadovaya Street, shared by Alksnis, Rozentāls and Walter. It was a joyful commune, where friends "painted and talked about art", posed for each other's works and Alksnis kept his fellows abreast of the latest publications, stirring up absorbing discussions. In many aspects, Latvianness for them all was a new utopia to be built by common efforts. The conformity of these to the persistent aspiration of young people for something entirely new helped to attract and integrate those contemporaries, who lived in parallel national worlds more than the rest of their company and saw their Latvianness firstly as part of a youthful fraternity. For some time, the "Gnome" associated native speakers of Latvian with those who, like Johann Walter, learned to experience it as their "homeland tongue" (*Heimatsprache*), realising, however, that the actual mother tongue (*Muttersprache*) cannot be an arbitrary choice.

Walter's new-discovered Latvianness found expression in the allegorical drawing "Dailes" (*The Arts* or *The Muses*) for the Riga Latvian Society's 25th anniversary album (1893). At the same time, the student community was never predominated by a formal "folk-style". Šķilters remembered Walter as "a very sociable, well educated, fluent speaker and organiser". As the "Gnome's" ideological leader Alksnis returned to Latvia (1894), Walter was to become his successor, and this "interesting personality with its deeply intelligent and aesthetically illuminated world of thoughts" attracted those young people who were looking for emotional inspiration. Walter's influence enriched Teodors Zaļķalns' "first enthusiastic experiences on the road to art". When Walter's Academy studies were coming to a close, the membership of the "Gnome" gave opportunities to nurture his educational ambitions, teaching empathy with nature and its creative absorbtion.

In 1893, Walter accomplished the compulsory study programme, and in the following year he took part in the first free competition of the reformed Academy, associating some fify participants, among them Rozentāls, Belzēns, Balodis and Julius Blumenthal. All of them were educated in the old system, but now were allowed to "paint (..) whatever they want and can". Many of the degree candidates showed interest in genre painting from anecdotical scenes (e. g. Balodis, Blumenthal) in the spirit of the late

Peredvizhniki to a monumental folk life panorama (Rozentāls, "From the Church", LNMA). Walter expanded this spectrum by a simple working-class milieu representation "At the Harbour" ("Little Anglers", reproduction exists), which surprised the critic Julius Norden by its qualities of a very "sound *plein-air* painting". The fragment of a shore with children figures and the water surface with rippling reflections are recurrent motifs that in their transformations can be traced throughout the whole course of Walter's creativity up to the early 1930s. Even if Šķilters was right that Walter "began to paint portraits, genre scenes and studies of Latvian nature" just under the influence of Alksnis, Rozentāls and Purvītis, by 1894 he had abandoned the "shallow Romanticism" and the "character of German tales" more completely than some of the presumable inspirers and the informant himself. The "most serious study of nature" (*strengstes Studium der Natur*) was chosen to be the permanent prerequisite of Walter's art both in his turn-of-the-century search for optical impressions and Neo-Romantic moods and later, as he turned his focus on to non-objective rhythms of the visible world. Having won the right to enter the Higher Art School of the Academy, Walter became master student of Aleksey Kivshenko, but after professor's death he changed for the genre painting studio of Vladimir Makovsky.

Walter's second stage of Academy studies (1895–1897) was the time of a rapid growth, stimulated by a number of enabling factors: the art life of St. Petersburg with his own contribution and increasingly inspiring exhibitions of foreign art; westward extension of the intellectual horizon by means of German latest art literature; growing interest in a pictorial representation of the native nature and life; encounter with his ideal teacher, landscapist Arkhip Kuinji, who was the professor of Walter's friend Purvītis. The preliminary groundwork for adopting Impressionism could be aided by the actual reading matter. Thanks to Alksnis, the "Gnome" community studied the first edition of Richard Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert*, that was to become the cult book of young artists in many countries. The chapter "Let there be Light!" about Impressionism affected them like a manifesto. Muther's descriptions also revealed many other influential phenomena and personalities they derived inspiration from in the nearest future: Japonese art, the rustic "peasant genre" of the French Naturalists, James Whistler, Scottish "Glasgow Boys" etc.

The academic youth from the Baltics cherished the dream that the name of their homeland, too, would eventually appear in such art histories. In the Academy years, the contacts of the young painters with their native parts basically took place in the form of summer outdoor painting trips. Their impressions were reworked into their first important canvases, but the practice of *plein-air* painting was gradually joined by organising efforts in order to win public attention and lay foundations for a modern art life in

the centres of the Baltic Provinces. Some of Walter's works were part of a large painting exhibition in the *Stadpalast Medem* in Jelgava in 1894. The honour of staging the first Latvian national art exhibition ever was earned by Riga, as the "Gnome" painters were invited "to give (..) an artistic touch" to the Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition 1896. Walter's participation in all activities for and of this event has been with good reason considered as important expressions of his Latvianity or his sympathy for Latvianness.

On that occasion, *Rigaer Tageblatt* announced him "a real and genuine modern artist". In the reviews of *St. Petersburger Zeitung* Walter was described as the "most diligent and modern in his perception" among Makovsky's students, as the one whose works, due to metropolitan exhibitions of foreign artists, echo influences of such "important and tasteful" contemporary masters as Frits Thaulow (Norway/France), Albert Edelfelt (Finland), or Jean-François Raffaëlli (France). Some landscapes of the mid-1890s still appear to belong to the age of the generation older Latvian painter Jūlijs Feders in terms of representation and form. Walter, however, changed, resorting to lyrically contemplative depiction of folk life and its environment, evident already in his first graduation piece and manifested in drawings, water-colours and oil studies from around the time of the Ethnographic Exhibtion. In the 2nd half of the 1890s he explored the technique of water-colour, looking for similar effects in oil painting. Many impulses for this practice must have been given by moody impressions at the exhibition of English, Scottish and German water-colours (1897), where the art lovers in St. Petersburg enjoyed their first opportunity to see some of Whistler's pieces in original.

In Russia of the 1890s the increasingly atmospheric representations of humble surroundings, shifting the emphasis from a socio-critical or vulgarly anecdotic narrative to moods evoked by real conditions of light was an alternative to outspoken illustrations and affected academism. At that time, Walter seemed to contemplate the countryside, village and provincial town scenery as if from the backyards, revelling in the poetry of out-of-the-way corners. Some depictions of country folks in their activities anticipate his future interests: e. g. the spinning peasant woman, silhouetted in the shadow against the source of light can be considered as the prototype of his later images of reading or sewing women, immersed in twilight.

An impressive evidence about this time of the Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition with its national patriotic idealism in Walter's oeuvre gives the painting "Girl with a Rake in front of a Farmhouse" (1896, private collection) with a little, lively girl in a sunlit April landscape. The joyfulness makes this child differ from the *Pauvre Fauvette* (1881) of the period's most popular painter of country life, Jules Bastien-Lepage. In Finland, Scotland and elsewhere within the sphere of this French celebrity's international influence since the 1880s, there were, however, quite a few

pictorial representations of children which are closer to this brisk and curious peasant's daughter. As one of Walter's earliest depictions of country people in their native surroundings, it gives the first reason to consider him as a remote counterpart of the above mentioned "Glasgow Boys" – Scottish colourists with their preference for vernacular imagery and the art of moods.

Walter's work showed the formation of new emotional quality that Paul Schultze-Naumburg would have called *Heimatlichkeit* ("homelandness"). The Neo-Romantic spirit of homelandness united the whole core of the "Gnomes" in their first generation, and a static or dynamic image of a child in a landscape setting became one of its utmost embodiments for Rozentāls and Walter. Nonetheless the same date "1896" can be noticed on a painting where Walter has portrayed the little descendent of a noble Russian family in a riding suit, borrowing much from the Old Masters. The simultaneity of these radically different works delineate the situation of the 1890s, when the young painters began their careers, hoping that the coexistence of conventional commissions and free self-expression would not inevitably mean the prevalence of the first ones. Moreover, during the next years already back in the Baltics the parallel interest that some of the most influential of the "Gnome" artists took in motifs of peasant, bourgeois and aristocratic milieu, predominantly did not originate in artistic compromises, but was provoked by "searching for lyrical image in the visual reality" (Eduards Kļaviņš). The ideal of empathic observation made these artists outpace the greatest part of the Baltic society in their disregard of national and social segregation.

"Everything is Light and Life"

The studies of open-air impressions brought Johann Walter to the verge of late 19th century modern art, and this transition from old values to new ones has found its most impressive expression in his master class graduation work "Market in Jelgava" (1897, LNMA). This proverbial gem of Latvian artistic heritage was greeted by Rozentāls as such a "piece of a real life, and exactly that of Jelgava", where "everything (..) is life and light". At that time, the market was a rather popular subject for Russian painters of the older as well as the younger generation, allowing them to compose scenes with numerous lower-class figures in the spirit of the 19th century democratic Realism. Nevertheless Walter pushed the theatrical "gallery of folk types" that would have attracted his professor Makovsky away to the background where its descriptive prosiness is softened by the atmospheric perspective. The mood of the picture is defined by the promenade of two young *fin-de-siècle* beauties who seem to float along the foreground before the trivial backdrop of the market bustle, while Impressionist-like patterns of light and shade play on their white dresses, and thus the provincial

market appears transformed into a place of leisured gatherings à la Albert Edelfelt's *Le Jardin du Luxembourg* (1887).

When Walter and Purvītis after the summer of work on their graduation pieces showed the results to Jelgavans, Walter's part in the improvised exhibition also contained views of the town and its surroundings, portrait studies and scenes with beautiful ladies playing piano or dwelling in artificially illuminated boudoirs, thus representing a trend that is perfectly exemplified by his study "Two Women under the Lamp" (late 1890s, LNMA). Domestic life themes of refined feminine intimacy corresponded to internationally wide-spread tendencies in the art of the late 19th and early 20th century, epitomised e. g. in paintings of Franz Skarbina (Germany). The background of analogies helps to appreciate Walter's particularly serene and unobtrusive attitude towards his object of representation as part of the visible world, painted just for the sake of painterly joy and emotional experience.

The artist Greta von Hoerner, looking back at the exhibition of the two master students as her most lasting youth impression from the native town, wrote that the "both Baltic artists were trained by the influence of the French Impressionists as well as the wide-ranging and marvelously harmonious colour of Russian painters of that time" (1937). It may well be that she could then see the vernal "Jacob's Canal in Jelgava" (c. 1897, Tukums Museum), showing a typical arrangement of Impressionist landscape elements which are reminiscent of river and canal bank scenes in the works of the famous French masters and British colourists. Every object is visible only fragmentarily, and the overlapping of forms adds to the casual, coincidental look of the whole.

In early 1898 Purvītis and Walter triggered controversial acclaim as they contributed several mood landscapes with musical titles to the Spring Exhibition in St. Petersburg, joining a trend that was initiated by Whistler already before their birth. For the Russian capital Walter's *Prélude Chopin op. 28. Nr. 6* (reproduction exists) still on the eve of the 20th century was a daring act to be condemned as impudent by the conservative wing of art critics. Although Walter later abandoned the use of so literally musical titles, these experiments also had enthusiastic admirers. The general meeting of exhibitors elected him, just as Purvītis and Rozentāls, to membership in the jury of the Spring Exhibitions.

The spring 1898 had crucial importance in opening new horizons to these three leading turn-of-the-20th-century Latvian painters. Professor Kuinji sponsored a study trip for the master students of his landscape class to Western art centres, so that all these young artists could see the same as the academy's official travel grant winner Purvītis, and Walter and Rozentāls in spite of their majoring in genre painting were invited to join the group. Travellers visited Berlin, Dresden, Cologne, Stasbourg, Munich,

Vienna, Northern Italy and, certainly, Paris, where the fascination of French Impressionist masterpieces in the *Musée du Luxembourg* affected them with a power of a revelation.

Walter's following return to his native town, where he opened his studio, marked the beginning of a continuous presence of modern painting in the cultural scene of Jelgava that was simultaneously influenced by two other events of 1898. Döring's death concluded the "reign" of academic art traditions, whereas the opening of the Kurland Province Museum building was an important step in the development of the municipal cultural infrastructure. It was not just the national patriotism that attracted Walter and Purvītis to their homeland, but also their romantic feelings towards the two young German ladies of Jelgava, who were represented in Walter's graduation piece and later became their wives. In 1900, Walter married Meta Feldmann (1876–1956), who appeared in his paintings as a reading or sewing woman, absorbed by the intimacy of her domestic occupation. She would perform piano accompaniment to her husband's violin and, in 1903, bore their son Hans Leonhard († 1945).

Walter and the Baltic Art Life at the Turn of the 20th Century

The hopes of "Gnome" members that Baltic centres on the eve of the 20th century can give a number of professional painters possibilities to earn their living by their work, were not quite utopian, but they materialised with uneven success.

In December 1898, the Riga Art Society (*Riga(sch)er Kunstverein*, further – *Kunstverein*) inaugurated its salon by staging an exhibition of Baltic painting with the newly made Rigan Purvītis and Jelgavan Walter as its key exhibitors. Since a part of the public was disappointed by the so far unaccustomed manner of painting, the *Kunstverein* activists assumed the responsibility to explain the basic principles of this actually moderate and poetically delicate painting of *plein-air* moods to their fellow citizens in daily newspapers, gradually teaching them to such artistic values that arise in departing from clichés in the vision of nature. In contrast to aesthetically educational German reviews, Latvian papers at that time often gave greater weight to issues of ethnic identity and called their readers to disapprove of their fellow nationals not being sufficiently marked off from "our compatriots" and "Baltic artists". The status of a compatriot or countryman, although unwelcomed by Latvians, was more adequate for Walter with his ethnic ambiguity. Eventually the general concern of the society with boundaries between territorial and national identity clouded his reputation to a certain extent and reduced the popularity of his work. In the Baltics, it was growing increasingly hard to stand apart from the transformation of the art life into a battlefield of national rivalry and political fight, that, on one hand, strengthened Latvian and Estonian cultural self-consciousness on the

way to their national independence, but, on the other hand, helped to reduce the social role of art to a vulgar scheme.

In early 1901 Walter exhibited in the salon of the *Kunstverein* together with his former "Gnome" fellows Rihards Zariņš, Jānis Lībergs and Jūlijs Madernieks, and at the turn of 1902 his solo exhibition was organised in the same place. The attendance statistics of the salon show that Walter's art in the biggest city of the Baltics attracted a much smaller number of admirers than that of Purvītis, whose landscapes came to epitomise "a genuine *Heimatkunst*" to his contemporaries. Walter's commercial success, too, was rather poor, and Purvītis painting turned out to be ten times more profitable for the *Kunstverein*. Despite the high appreciation among connoisseurs the financial background of his existence was shaky, even if the native Kurland rewarded its son more generously than Riga. In 1904, the painter broke his earlier promise to stage a new solo exhibition with the *Kunstverein*, considering the previous losses caused by unfavourable terms of cooperation.

A painful sacrifice for the sake of professional self-determination was the old students' solidarity beginning to crack as soon as the study friends had to share the art market of their country between themselves. Walter and Purvītis obviously kept supporting each other until they were separated by borders of states. In autumn 1898 Walter, however, was deeply annoyed by Rozentāls' arrival in Jelgava in order to establish his "reputation as a portraitist with the local gentry". During the 1900 Spring Exhibition in St. Petersburg, when Purvītis and Walter were invited to become permanent exhibitors of the "World of Art" (*Мир искусства*) and received Benois' praise whereas Rozentāls was just reprimanded by Sergei Diaghilev for banality, the deeply injured painter changed the enthusiastic tone once paid to the "light and life" of Walter's graduation work for an outburst of indignation.

This fear of competition culminated in 1904 as eight Riga artists, with the exception of Purvītis and Walter, associated to protest against the idea of Roderich von Engelhardt, who was the most influential patron of Purvītis, to inaugurate the new rooms of the *Kunstverein* in the new building of the Riga City Art Museum with an international Nordic Exhibition, showing the local art along paintings by Scandinavian, Finnish and Russian masters. The group of opponents attained the rejection of the already ratified project, but in 1905, when the winners realised their intention to consecrate the new Temple of the Muses with the art of the Baltic Provinces alone, Purvītis and Walter refused to participate in this event. The outlined collisions help to guess how acutely important the intensity of art exhibitions had become for the formation of relationships between artist and public even in the Romanov Empire in the late 19th and early 20th century. The first tour of the Baltic Society for Wandering Exhibitions (1900–1901) made some of

Walter's paintings seen not only in Riga and Jelgava, but also in Tartu and Tallinn. His work was represented in a large art exhibition in Liepāja (1900), the Exhibition of Works by Baltic Artists of All Times, dedicated to the 700th anniversary of Riga (1901), and ultimately in a genuine attempt of bringing art closer to country people in Koknese (1904). Important achievements for Walter were both his participation in St. Petersburg art events up to the 1902 exhibition of the "World of Art" and the first steps westwards after the turn of the centuries, contributing to exhibitions of the *Berliner Secession* (III, 1901; IX, 1904).

More directly and continuously than elsewhere his activites affected Jelgavans, and in early 1906 their representative wrote to the *Düna-Zeitung* that Walter's departure means a nearly irreplaceable loss for the Baltics in general just as for the art and music of the native town in particular. The basic instruction in various arts at the turn of the 20th century in Jelgava could be received also from Oskar Felsko, his wife Johanna Felsko, and Martha Unverhau. However, their workshops on the map of th town's artistic highlights were less important than Svētes Street 13, where "Walter's lodgings and studio quickly grew into a place of pilgrimage for Jelgava art enthusiasts".

Thanks to Kuinji's inspiration, Walter early came to teaching as an inner necessity, not just a source of living. Former students and friends from the Jelgava period described him as "an admirably brilliant artistic personality whose irresistible educational suggestive power was intensified by his very refined musicality". Walter was, since his young years, a pronounced ladies' man, an *homme à femmes*, and this quality influenced the contingent of his studio, although only some names of his Jelgava women-students can be retrieved today (the sisters Irmgard and Greta (Margarethe) von Hoerner), Alice von Birkenstädt, Margarethe von Hüllessem). Walter was the teacher of Herbert von Hoerner, Petras Kalpokas, Sigismunds Vidbergs and Alfrēds Purics (Purītis) as well as advised Ģederts Eliass. The first art teacher of his own, Wießner, did not shame to exercise in Walter's studio together with the young generation of the Real School boys. Indoor classes alternated by outdoor courses near Jelgava and elsewhere in the Baltics. The Manteuffels hosted Walter in Kazdanga (Katzdangen), the Birkenstädts – in Bēne (Behnen) and the Mensenkampffs – in Tarvastu near Viljandi (Tarvast bei Fellin). Representatives of these and some other families of the Baltic gentry are mentioned by Zierer as owners of Walter's works in the list that gives some idea about his customers. Besides the artistic assignments given to the "Gnome" members by the Riga Latvian Society in the year of the Latvian Ethnographic Exhibition, Walter is known to realise only one public commission in Latvia – tha altarpiece for Irlava Church (c. / by 1904, now in the prayer house of Liepāja Ev. Luth. Brethren Community). His educational activities reached their public consummation in a series of lectures

on painting at the Jelgava Trade Society (*Mitauer Gewerbeverein*) in 1903–1904. Walter highlighted the revolutionary importance of Impressionist discoveries, taught to see not individual shades, but their harmonies in nature and pointed to parallels between musical and pictorial creativity. The presented ideas were not entirely self-invented and unique, but Walter had considered them thoroughly and accepted as inspiring for his artistic and teaching practice. Three times (1899, 1902, 1904) his studio was transformed into a temporary exhibition hall. After the last of these events, Latvian public had no more opportunities to see an equally wide range of Walter's paintings on display during his lifetime, and his next solo exhibition in 1906 already took place in Dresden.

Impression, Mood and Melody.
Walter's Painting in his Jelgava Period

During his Jelgava period, Walter presumably found important sources of inspiration in German and Russian art journals and books, as well as in exhibitions in Riga and especially in St. Petersburg. Around 1900 the painter, however, was already mature enough to arrive at many modern qualities quite independently, letting them evolve from his observation and interpretation of the reality impressions. At the turn of the centuries, all the borrowings were merged with his own ideas in a very personal rendering to manifest "musical sensibility and masculine power of expression" – two hallmarks, the telling combination of which was wisely recognised in the art of this "delicate colourist" by Friedrich Groes (code *F-s*) from the *St. Petersburger Zeitung* in 1899. Walter produced landscapes, paintings with figures in *plein-air* surroundings or interior fragments, as well as had success in portraiture. Nowadays available works of the period are painted in oil on canvas or wood, although Walter also showed some pastels at the *Kunstverein* (1901/1902) and several examples along with episodes noted in memories attest to his habit of water-colouring. A prominent part of his oeuvre, both in number and artistic quality, consists of small studies that were exhibited to win sometimes even more eager acclaim than large-scale paintings.

It is hard to agree with Uga Skulme's assumption that the non-receipt of the academy's travel grant for the "Market in Jelgava" killed "that daring, that free flight of the spirit, which reveals itself in this powerful, innovative work". A multi-figured *plein-air* Realism in the scale of the famous market scene later did not concern the painter so much as to define the basic developments of his art. Of all the efforts summarised in this picture, he choose to continue those which brought him close to Impressionism and most often found more intimate expression. Around 1900 the experience of Impressionism in a good part of Walter's landscapes was merged with the seeking of Neo-Romantic emotionality that made him enter harmoniously

into the area of turn-of-the-20th-century art of moods. At that time Walter, as well as Purvītis and Rozentāls, were attracted by the ability of the "Glasgow Boys" to combine the accomplishments of the French Impressionism with the delicacy and elegiac lyricism of Whistler's nuanced half-tone painting. Furthermore, the open air painters of the Northern Europe in their native countries were raised to become Neo-Romantics by the mysterious spell of the light summer nights and long twilight hours, that reigned in the Baltics, too. Similar inclinations greatly united the whole young generation of artists participating in the St. Petersburg Spring Exhibitions on the eve of the 20th century. In Walter's painting, enthusiasm for sunshine colours and interest in dusky greyscale shades were mutually interactive lines. The experience in tonal studies helped him to harmonise the multicoloured impressions, whereas in the greyish scale of twilight moods he was looking for diversity of nuances.

Until Walted later in Germany decided that the optical aims of Impressionism are unattainable, its echoes had tinged his painting with lightness and painterly ease that made countrymen in the early 20th century praise him as the "finest colourist and greatest poet among the artists of our country". Walter in his outdoor studies already in the late 1890s often sought after something beyond the poetry of a humble or, to the contrary, noble-looking scenery. Quoting from his own later writings, "the painterly joy at nature itself begins as soon as the eye starts to discern the melodious arrangement of colours and the delicate interrelations in the architecture of forms behind the objects". As a musical artist who was constantly concerned with the perception and expression of his synaesthetic experiences, Walter grew increasingly conscious of an underlying abstract rhythmic pattern that intensified the impact of many Realistic or Impressionistic turn-of-the-century paintings. They already could illustrate Stella Pelše's statement about the "inseparable unity of the Impressionistic sense of presence and the abstracting stylisation of Art Nouveau" in Latvian painting around 1900. Together with "impression" and "mood", it is "melody" that comes as the next keyword to be highlighted in a story about Walter's painting. Melodiousness in his works predominantly appears as an illusion of a gentle movement, evoked by the interplay of colours, lines and light effects.

Most continuously, Walter's development towards these qualities was influenced by motifs of water surface. By analogy with Lionello Venturi's and Oskar Reuterswärd's statements about the decisive role of rippling reflections in the formation of Impressionism around Walter's birth-time, one could claim that Walter's own painterly style of his Jelgava period reached its maturity in studies of reflections in the water. An Impressionist chaos of visual sensations in his "Rippling Water" (c. 1898, LNMA) and "Seashore" ("Still Sea", c. 1900, LNMA) is already transformed into exquisitely fragmented compositions visualising the ephemeral harmony

between light and shade, stillness and movement, or – in terms of acoustic associations – sound and silence. Depicting the ripple or flow of water, the artist studied the overlapping and interchange of forms that he, after several decades, stylised in his late expressive landscapes and still lifes.

Here and there, water expanses in Walter's paintings showed the appearance of water birds looking like floating reflections ("Ducks", c. 1898 (study) and 1898, both in LNMA) and around 1900 – laconic images of bathing boys ("Bathing Boys", c. 1900, LNMA; "Boys near Water", c. 1900, Tukums Museum, a. o.) that are reminiscent of "ephemeral concentration points of light (..) in a nearly abstract fragment of the outdoor world", as Richard Hamann wrote about similar motifs in Max Liebermann's art. Simultaneously with movements of water and light, a delicate life seems to pulsate in these paintings, and the images of children suffuse them with a sense of warmth. Thereby these refined studies manifest a specific turn-of-the-20th-century fusion of Impressionism and the so-called Biological Romanticism.

"It seems that Walter selects from the rich chords of nature a particular sound that he then makes ripen, grow and die away," an unidentified Latvian art critic wrote in 1902, considering elements that, in the years to come, manifested the increase of selective stylisation. From around 1903 until his departure from Latvia Walter created a number of tonally and linearly refined landscape paintings that often looked like moderately decorative patterns of lines and planes with delicate accents of surface treatment. In his landscape painting, this consequent development, on one hand, endowed the formal structure of works with increasing autonomy, what was an achievement of far-going importance for Walter's future work; on the other hand, however, it brought about the hazard of exaggerated schematisation and aestheticisation in the rendering of impressions and moods, something of which can also be sensed in describing him as an "unrivalled poet of bliss". Exploring the possibilities of decorativism, Walter in these years sometimes was lingering close to a refined, but shallow expression. Nevertheless the interplay of the delicate lines in the most popular example of his decorative landscapes, "Forest" ("Morning Sun", c. 1903–1904, LNMA) is so moving that one tends to dismiss any thoughts about the critical edge. Selecting the motif for his composition, the artist joined those many contemporaries, who were fascinated by the polyphonic verticality of forest scenes, their structural clarity and moods evoked by the distant glow of morning or evening sun. Walter's counterparts in this range of analogies were so different masters as e. g. Isaak Levitan (Russia), Gustav Klimt (Austria), Prins Eugen (Sweden) and even the young Piet Mondrian (the Netherlands).

The forest haunted the imagination of turn-of-the-century people as a temple of nature, where some artists, certainly, were more interested in the

“architecture of the cathedral” and others – in the mysterious and extraordinary experience. The fragile pillars of Walter’s “sanctuary” suggest maiden-like delicacy, but first of all he was fascinated by the abstract melody of the upward movement. This work opens one of the most important “musical” themes of his painting, anticipating the representations of dawns and sunsets in variations of “Raising Rhythms” and “Fading Rhythms” of the 1920s.

In landscapes painted around 1903–1904, the impact of compositional arrangements is defined by patterns of lines and planes, whereas light most often has lost the role of an active and dynamic element. Previously, around 1900, however, a peculiar “dramaturgy of light”, derived from the Impressionistic vision, but deliberately organised and delicately stylised, played a significant role in another important group of Walter’s works. He painted twilight scenes with one or at times two people, most often young women either contemplating nature on a river bank, in a boat, in a park, under a tree or elsewhere in the open, or immersing themselves in some everyday occupation or silent *tête-à-tête* privacy in the setting of an actually just suggested interior fragment. Walter’s oeuvre let us trace the roots of this imagery in the representations of spinning women from the 1890s, as well as in a directly opposed, anti-rustic area of interests that is exemplified by a nocturnal vision “Lady in Black” (2nd half of the 1890s, private collection), inspired by Whistler’s portraits of *beau monde* ladies. The following turn to impressions observed in Walter’s closest everyday surroundings presumably was inspired not only by the presence of his bride in the Jelgava studio, but also by the Scandinavian Art Exhibition in October 1897 in St. Petersburg, where Whistler’s admirers discovered for themselves another “one of the finest artists of our time” – the Danish “painter of stillness and light” Wilhelm Hammershøi. It is quite possible that exactly Hammershøi’s interiors with figures, in which he “broke completely with the narrative tradition”, and the soulful twilight-enclosed portraits helped the Jelgava artist to open an important new page of his work. In the crepuscular figure pieces, the flow of light seems to select accents, directing the compositional rhythm and even extending it in time. Furthermore, Walter’s attention in the outdoor scenes next to reflections in the water was often attracted by silhouettes and cast shadows. The latter ones as expressive, mysterious, dynamic and completely non-objective counterparts of figures and objects contributed to the arrangement and mood of the work, sometimes acting as carriers of a suggested message.

Significantly enough, the Realist figure painting of the late 19th century was greatly covered by an elusive veil of metaphoric allusions. Close to the turn of the centuries, the role of Symbolist moods increased, present in implicit hints, intimations and evocations. The symbolic meaning was not something immanent, but rather that sudden revealing “impression and that

feeling which an object in its casual situation and its relation to the surroundings leaves in a sensitive beholder" (Augusts Ģiezens). The background of such interpretative possibilities can be of use in the discussion of the so-called folk life scenes of the Jelgava period, in which Walter more often emphasised not the process of work itself, but the way of the represented person across the pictorial space with or without hints to parallels between the depicted course and the passage of life. These paintings sometimes were titled as times of day ("Evening", by 1898, reproduction exists; "Night", by 1900, description exists). Apart from these "walker" pieces, the folk life imagery in Walter's art includes paintings with a single, prominent figure on (or close to) the foreground. Their ancestry in his oeuvre goes back to the little raker of 1896. A step towards a more outspoken "picture of mood" (*Stimmungsbild*) was made in Walter's painting "Evening Rays", reproduced in the 1899 Spring Exhibition catalogue in St. Petersburg. In the second half of the 1890s, Walter's efforts to visualise the resonance of the passage between day and night times in the human soul could find an adequate source of inspiration, if he happened to see something like "The Song of the Lark" (1884) by the French genre painter Jules Breton whose works allegedly were represented in nearly all exhibitions of French art in Russia at that time. After such still greatly descriptive pieces the painting "Peasant Girl" from Walter's last Jelgava years (c. 1904, LNMA) is hallmarked by an unusual structural clarity and acoustic intensity. The psychologically charged juxtaposition of the human figure and its landscape setting invites a comparison with Edvard Munch's "Inger on the Beach" ("Evening", 1889), where the static image of the artist's sister staring vacantly before her has made Scandinavian researchers remember Bastien-Lepage's prototypes. To a certain extent, Walter's picture works as a silhouette-portrait, enclosed by a landscape, and the seeming extension of the figure by addition of the distant forest mass heightens its monumentality. In a some of Walter's portraits (1905–1907) and somewhat earlier paintings of Valentin Serov (*Валентин Серов*) the same function of silhouetted "wings" is given to prominent backrests or cloaks, so that the human figure seems simultaneously imposing and small.

At a New Threshold

In 1906 and 1907, when Walter was painting his most expressive silhouette-portraits, the Jelgava period already was a closed chapter in his biography. Although a number of countrymen cherished the memories about Walter's world of painting and music from their youth as a great gift of fortune, the artist himself in time could start longing for "a stronger movement in his field of art" (Greta von Hoerner). His life in the native town, though, perhaps even would continue for good, eventually finding new impulses on trips to foreign countries, but for the 1905 Revolution,

that shook the economical basis of Walter's living, because the interest of his previous customers in acquiring works of art was inevitably suppressed by other troubles. Moreover, the cruel reality probably shattered the rest of the artist's social and national-patriotic illusions. Walter's own ethnic ambiguity made his existence in the situation of sharp ethnic confrontation very difficult, and he, without doubt, longed to escape the topical requirement "to make it out with the national" for good. On 20 January (2 February) 1906, the *Düna-Zeitung* published a report from Jelgava that "our domestic artist Mr. Johannes Walter is going to set out for Dresden in these days in order to organise an exhibition of his paintings in the Richter's Kunstsalon with some 100 works" . The author *n.*, *Düna-Zeitung's* reporter in Jelgava, noticed that the local society would be happy about this project if not for Walter's idea to settle abroad permanently, caused by "the inevitable decline of interest in art and artistic education under prevailing conditions".

This step was inspired by Baron Paul von Schlippenbach – a Dresden-based painter, *Doctor iuris* and patron of arts, who was born as Walter's age-mate and countryman in Olaine (Olai). The new emigrant proved to be one of those people who either cannot return to places of lost happiness, or let things turn out so that coming back becomes impossible. Walter's participation in the art life of Dresden began by exhibiting works brought with from the Baltics, and it might well be that some paintings were started in Latvia and finished in Germany. In his second year of emigration, Walter signed a painting, where the transformation of landscape elements into a stylised pattern served to express a dramatic and painful experience. It is his "Spring" ("Orphan Girl", 1907, LNMA), where the depiction of the human way is combined with an unusual vision of changing seasons. It is getting on for spring awakening, but the fleeting, distorted figure of the girl reads as an integral part of the undulating black-and-white pattern of landscape areas, so that the lonely child by then even could vanish together with remnants of the melting snow forever. Thus the retreat of the winter does not evoke the feeling of satisfaction with a new beginning, but highlights the ambivalence and uncertainty of any changes in life. This work distantly anticipates that variation of a poetic Expressionism which, in the 1970s, began to manifest itself in the art of Latvian painters Edvards Grūbe and Inta Celmiņa, acquiring the force of a local tradition. The particular place of the "Orphan Girl" in Walter's oeuvre is defined by the derivation of the visual metaphor from a delicately abstracted impression. The interplay of 19th-century Realism and turn-of-the-century Symbolism in his art found a powerful final chord in this painting.

In his lectures at the Jelgava Trade Society in 1904, Walter described different methods of colouristic nature studies, and the published digests show that the artist's mind was preoccupied with chords, scales and intervals of shades, and their subjective transformations. The readiness to

explore such rules and principles was among Walter's assets, when he left the Romanov Empire for that of Wilhelm II and discovered that world of 20th-century cosmopolitan modernism where, as Ekaterina Degot (*Екатерина Деготь*) writes, "artists and information about them ceaselessly migrate in different directions, and international trends overshadow local schools". In many ways, however, Walter remained a truly turn-of-the-century artist who continuously returned to interests and problems originating from the rhythmical and colouristic arrangements of the "Rippling Water", "Bathing Boys", "Seashore", "Forest" and other paintings of his Jelgava period.

Although Walter initially may have planned to go to Dresden with his family, the departure coincided with the break-up of his marriage, and Meta Walter with their son stayed in Latvia. They were legally divorced by the Livonian Ev. Luth. Consistorium in the artist's absence as late as in 1914, when Meta wanted to become another man's wife. The painter had left many of his early works in her possession, and LSPA, LSAM and RCAM purchased a good part of them for their collections. Already in the autumn of 1906, Walter's ex-studio saw the foundation of the Jelgava Society of Art Friends (*Verein der Kunstfreunde zu Mitau*) that resided there until 1909, using this space for artistic practice, exhibitions and other events. The Jelgavans hoped that the gap in the art life of their town after Walter's departure will be filled by two other close countrymen, who failed to meet these expectations to a full extent. They were the Naudīte-born Ernst Hermann Gaehtgens, who settled in Jelgava in 1907 after his art studies in Berlin, and the lyrical Aleksandrs Romans, who arrived from St. Petersburg and lived there in 1910–1911 until his death, producing a. o. several landscapes of summer nights, marked by Art Nouveau stylisation and Neo-Romantic moods. Already Peņģerots and Siliņš paid attention to echoes of Whistler's and Walter's art in these works, and, according to sources, early-20th-century Jelgavans identified Romans' "soft undertones" with "very subtle gradations" as a hallmark of Walter's style resounding in the produce of his followers. Nonetheless, the stylistic dependence of students on their teacher's art in the Jelgava period was not so pronounced as later in Dresden and Berlin, because the Svētes Street studio was not the peak of professional education for those young turn-of-the-20th-century people who choose to pursue an artistic vocation. Around 1910 the art exhibition scene of the Baltics unwittingly reached the point, when the epigonism of "light mists" *à la Walter 1900* was juxtaposed by works in a different style, painted by people, who, without the knowledge of reviewers, had practised under the guidance of the fatherland's "prodigal son" in Germany.

II. 1906–1932. In Dresden and Berlin

The Artistic Scene of Elbflorenz

The current state of research requires to discard misconceptions about an artist who allegedly:

– left for Germany following his second wife;
– decided to settle in Dresden on Kandinsky's advice;
– just in the new environment got Germanised and started using the German form of his name;
– very slowly got some recognition as painter, initially earning his living as violinist in the Dresden Opera orchestra, or even continued to paint only "next to the main source of living – music".

On his arrival in Saxony, Walter found his first refuge in Loschwitz, a picturesque suburb of Dresden, where he, according to his own statement, was welcomed by Paul von Schlippenbach on 22 February of 1906. Until then Walter was not personally acquainted with his host, although they were born in a distance of just two and half months and some twenty versts from each other. Perhaps the readiness of Walter and Schlippenbach to join their efforts thirty-seven years later in a foreign country was supported not only by the community of their professional interests, solidarity of countrymen and the nobleman's fancy of patronage, but also by the simultaneously ruined family lives of the two age-mates.

Walter's first encounter with the Saxon capital and its art treasuries took place in the spring of 1898, when the participants of Kuinji's tour bowed before the "Sistine Madonna" of Raphael and were fascinated by the outstanding monuments that had earned the reputation of Elbflorenz (Florence on the Elbe) to their city. The presence of the royal court set a seal of leisured elegance and some theatricality on turn-of-the-century Dresden. In 1806, the Electorate of Saxony was decreed a kingdom, and in this capacity it was part of the German Empire from 1871 until 1918. In 1907, Walter was one of the 220 Dresden-based Baltic emigrants listed in the directory *Die deutschen Balten: Adreßbuch für die außerhalb ihrer Heimat lebenden Balten*. The highest authorities in art issues among them were directorate member of the Dresden Royal Collections, art historian Dr. Woldemar von Seydlitz and director of the Royal Sculpture Collection, archaeologist Dr. Georg Treu. Schlippenbach referred to them as eventual experts, when he tried to make RCAM aware of Walter's latest achievements in 1910.

Against all previous misconceptions, the Dresden decade stands out as the most socially active period of his life. The specific scenicality of this time certainly could become boring, but it was transient and ultimately disappeared together with the whole so-called *Belle Époque* – the luxurious Indian summer in the aesthetic culture of the upper classes. Its atmosphere in Dresden got mixed with currents of another kind, streaming from fresh

sources of the Reform Movement and modern art. The Expressionist painting of *Die Brücke* group recorded the name of Dresden in first pages of 20th-century avant-garde chronology.

Walter joined more than half a million Dresdenians, whose city was the fourth most populated German metropolis after Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. Nevertheless, the art of Dresden by the early 1890s was dominated by a historicised Academism, permeated by echoes of the Nazarenes, late Romanticism and the Düsseldorf School. Almost simultaneously with the rise of the Latvian "Gnome" group in St. Petersburg, Dresden saw the appearance of the so-called Goppeln School or Goppeln Group. These artists admired French Realism and Impressionism, longed to get rid of academic stiffness and sought for a way out in outdoor painting. This rather late awakening of a moderate modernisation, just a little earlier than in the Baltics, was artistically and administratively promoted by townscape painter Gotthardt Kühl, who acquired professorship at the Dresden Academy in the mid-1890s. Dresden was gradually acknowledged as an important art centre where artists can enter a productive exchange of professional impulses, as well as make their own living.

In the second half of the 1890s, one of those painters, who found Elbflorenz good for their activities, was Paul von Schlippenbach, who turned to painting, having obtained his doctoral degree in laws in 1896, and went to study in Paris for three years. At the turn of the centuries, Schlippenbach still was bound to Academic and Realist traditions of the by-gone age more closely than Walter. Among Dresden artists, the Baltic baron most likely was one of the many second-raters and he began to distinguish himself against this background already *au pair* with the former Jelgavan. Schlippenbach's social connections, experience and ingenuity enabled him to support a brighter talent on its way to recognition. At the same time, he obviously wanted to follow some developments of Walter's art in his own practice. The patron introduced Walter to a particular cultural milieu that is reflected e. g. in press reports about the "music salon of the local Baron Dr. von Schlippenbach". Since Walter in the field of performing arts was more of a chamber musician, it is easier to imagine him playing his violin not at the Opera but in such private home concerts.

Around the time of Walter's arrival one of the decisive factors in the art life of Dresden was the activities of two private art galleries with versatile exhibition programmes. Around 1905, manager of the *Galerie Arnold* (*Sächsisch-königliche Hofkunsthandlung Ernst Arnold*) Ludwig Gutbier moved from a traditional local patriotism to an increasing focus on modern art from Munich, Berlin, Vienna and Paris. Thanks to his activities, the *Galerie Neue Meister* in Dresden acquired precious gems of German and French Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism. Guest exhibitions of late-19th-century modern masterpieces was the alternative "real academy" for

the young Dresden Expressionists, and they did the work of further training courses for Walter as well.

The second important private venue of art exhibitions was *Emil Richter's Kunstsalon*, managed by Hermann Holst, who next to showing the art of foreign celebrities saw one of his aims in "supporting young, not yet established artists". In the history of German Expressionism *Richter's Kunstsalon* is the place of three *Die Brücke* exhibitions (1907–1909), and in Dresden of 1906 Walter, too, was such a "not yet established artist", who could be a good match to the gallery's practice of discovering new talents. Leaving from Jelgava, he already knew about his forthcoming debut at *Richter's*, and in May the visitors there had to learn a previously unheard double-barrelled name *Walter-Kurau*. The painter composed his *Künstlername* by attaching his mother's maiden name to his paternal surname, and this combination most likely was something of a tribute to the memory of his parents who were buried in Jelgava. For Dresdenians, *Kurau* probably rhymed with *Kurland*, Walter's native Baltic province. Some paintings in 1907 and 1908 still were signed with *Walter*, but the date *09* already was combined with the signature *Walter-Kurau* that in its full form or as a monogram *W-K* was used as his trade mark for the rest of his life.

The first solo-exhibition was well received by critics, many works were sold, and the interest of visitors inspired the gallery to extend it. Dresdenians recognised the newcomer as a refined painter of the native Baltics with very slight echoes of French Impressionists, the "Glasgow Boys", or perhaps Ludwig Dill, the moody master of Dachau Moor landscapes. In portraiture, he already had begun to study the local aristocracy, a. o. representing Count Wolf von Baudissin, whose stately image (1906, LNMA) until lately did not wake any suspicion that this anonymous bearded man has been a very popular early-20th-century Dresden humorist under a pen-name *Freiherr von Schlicht*.

Richard Stiller from the *Dresdner Anzeiger* mentioned Walter's refined taste of colour, but was critical about his use of a reduced palette and close shades what made many works look like decorative wall paintings or tapestry designs. Even ten years later similar references with no regard to Walter's stylistic turns show that the emigrant in his adopted homeland was continuously acknowledged as a specific cultivator of aestheticised decorativism. Thereby German art criticism and the general public came to face that "peculiar combination of lyricism and decorative aestheticism which was firmly established at the turn of the centuries and which (..) has been constantly present in Latvian art", as stated by Eduards Kļaviņš, up to our days. In Latvia, Walter was among the very pioneers of this development, whereas in German painting it did not form permanent features, but remained in the shade of other trends.

At the outset in Dresden, Walter stylistically stood approximately on the same level as the artists of the former Goppeln School, who had reached their creative maturity. Their painting was widely recognised and seemed acceptable to the majority of art lovers, whose modernising ended up on the verge of Expressionism at the values of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. In some ways, the contribution of the recent newcomer inspired to immerse oneself in the world of delicate nuances even deeper than the works of the local champions of the "Dresden sense of harmony". When sixty of Walter's paintings at *Richter's* in November 1907 were helding sway in an exhibition, that, in a month's distance, followed the gallery's first effort to show the art of *Die Brücke*, Willy Doenges from the *Dresden Journal* claimed to enjoy walking through rooms whose previous exhibits were met with general disgust. Nonetheless, the challenging inspiration of the Expressionist breakthrough left its mark even in the art of the academy professors, and the aspect of this reciprocity also helps to a better understanding of Walter's painterly transformations.

Already since the arrival year, he may have felt himself being caught up in a whirl of exhibitions, but hardly had any serious need and chance to make money with his violin. Even if the extensive list of exhibitions with Walter's works in his Dresden decade still is not complete, the map of events includes Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Karlsruhe, Königsberg, Leipzig, Munich, Rome and Weimar. In the *Große Kunstausstellung Dresden 1908* Walter's paintings could be seen in the Dresden section of the *Allgemeine deutsche Kunstgenossenschaft*. Since 1909, the directory *Dressler's Kunstjahrbuch* also recorded his membership in the *Deutscher Künstlerbund*. In 1912, Walter was elected board member of the *Dresdner Kunstgenossenschaft*. When Willy Doenges, in an overview of the city's cultural scene, enumerated the brightest talents of this organisation, Walter-Kurau was second on the list, after Georg Lührig whose name to contemporary Dresdenians is more familiar than his. In 1910, Walter, Lührig, Schlippenbach and a number of other artists formed the group *Grün-Weiß* as a section of the *Kunstgenossenschaft*, and Walter himself was the leader of the *Dresdner Künstlergruppe 1913* that came onto the scene with an exhibition shortly before the WWI. These were temperate "middle-of-the-road" efforts to generate greater dynamism in the conservative structure of the *Dresdner Kunstgenossenschaft*.

Such activities seem to have revitalised that fluent "speaker and organiser", who, according to Šķilters, "properly represented the "Gnome" at all official events". Proper representation in the Kingdom of Saxony meant the presence of royal family members that reporters did not fail to notice at the opening previews of Walter's exhibitions. A peculiar evidence of his social reputation is his name on Hugo Erfurth's list of the portrayed celebrities *Photographische Bildnisse: Ein Verzeichnis von Bildnissen bedeutender*

Persönlichkeiten, aufgenommen von Hugo Erfurth (1913). The famous Dresden photographer as well as other prominent private collectors acquired Walter's paintings for their art treasuries. In 1910, the main ground for Schlippenbach to praise the art of his friend as being represented "in some of the foremost private galleries of Germany" must have been a version of *Bathing Boys* in the collection of Adolf Rothermundt that displayed the history of Impressionism in significant masterpieces.

Walter's success in Dresden was based on the combination of his talents in painting and teaching. In 1932 the *Dresdner Anzeiger* in his obituary wrote that "his style created a school in Dresden", recalling "the rather close circle of like-minded artists and art lovers" that once grew to enclose this painter. In addition to that, the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* reported that this "typical Walter-Kurau style" still in the early 1930s was evident in paintings of many local women artists. In November 1907, when the *Richter's Kunstsalon* showed the exhibition of art works by Walter, Schlippenbach, Belsen, Kalpokas and Dresden sculptor Fred Voelckerling, its catalogue advertised a painting school in Grünberg near Dresden under the guidance of the first three afore-mentioned exhibitors. The description promised "teaching in objective and subjective study of nature in the light of individual inclinations until the level of complete artistic self-dependence". This school or studio must have functioned according to similar principles as the typical Parisian private academies that were reproduced by many German artists. The individual particularity of this version of the model, however, most likely was the transformation of the studio into an informal association of like-minded colleagues, and its atmosphere made the Dresdenians remember the Walter-Kurau circle.

Along youngsters who learned the basics of painting, the group was joined by people who practised painting as their hobby, and colleagues, for whom this cooperation with Walter was becoming a necessary part of their lifestyle for some time or for good. Although Schlippenbach and Belsen were announced as teachers, too, the Dresden press began to write about "Walter-Kurau students", and Willy Doenges even assigned this label to Schlippenbach. Summer trips from St. Petersburg to the former fellow student in Germany between 1906 and the outbreak of WWI were instrumental in the painterly revival of Belsen, who was grateful to Walter for "an entirely new vision of nature and understanding of art". Two years in Walter's class in Dresden marked the culmination in the study trips of Riga German painter Sophie Ljubow Grimm who remembered him as the "fine artist and teacher of genius". Other identified names of Dresden students, whose attendance could last from a single outdoor course up to long years of companionship, include Ilse Gayer-Lazard (later Heller-Lazard), Eva Langkammer (later von Weltzien-Langkammer), Annie Schade van Westrum (later Baldaugh), and Minna Roeber (later Köhler-Roeber),

Alexander Bertelson from Riga, Otto von Kursell from Estonia, Maximilian Nötzold, Fritz Sprandel, the Jelgavan Aleksandrs Strekāvins and even the actor Otto Gebühr. In May 1910, the *Richter's Kunstsalon* staged the exhibition of Grimm, Nötzold and Schade van Westrum's works. Nötzold, Sprandel and Roeber kept up with Walter's further stylistic quests in the 1920s, when their "apprenticeship" already was a distant past.

Although the advertisement promised a yearly summer semester in Grünberg, the geography of outdoor courses expanded, allowing to study landscape colours and rhythms both in the mountains and on the seashore, where Walter observed the waves breaking at the steep cliffs of Ahrenshoop and Rügen, or the undulation of sand dunes. In 1910, Walter, Schlippenbach and Belsen, perhaps with their younger companions, spent several months painting in Moravia, whereas the luminosity of some 1913 works was influenced by the brilliant light of Côte d'Azure in Southern France, where Walter produced five wall paintings for the palace of some Mr. Fleury in Toulon. Adaptation to travel conditions could lead to the use of a standartised study format and material. Throughout the Dresden period, most of Walter's outdoor impressions are painted on similar grey cardboard pieces of c. 22 x 26 cm in size.

In 1907, hardly anyone knew who is responsible for Belsen's sudden rise as one of St. Petersburg's "most subtle landscapists". When the works of Belsen, Bertelson and Grimm before WWI were exhibited in Latvia, the local public reacted very much like those of 21st century Germans who would look at the art of painters from Walter's circle with regard to alleged prototypes in the classical heritage of Post-Impressionism, but cannot identify the real source of inspiration. Now it is possible to get better informed, following the course of transformations in Walter's painting during his Dresden period.

The *fête galante* of Colours and Sounds

In Walter's Dresden period, the increasing plastic modulation of paint and optical vibration of brushwork soon gave the impression that the previous atmosphere of silence or the rise of the single sound "from the rich chords of nature" in the pictorial space with no regard to subject and colour scale is replaced by a cheerful bustle. The artist ever more often focused on the "living flesh" of the painterly substance that preserved the imprint of the visual impression. To a certain extent, Walter's works resonated with researcher Axel Schöne's description of those developments in the art of Dresden around 1910 that remained unaffected by the Expressionism of *Die Brücke*. However, unlike those Dresden artists who, according to Schöne, differed from the Expressionist practice in that they muffled "strong sensual impressions", transforming them into "light, elusive and aesthetically distilled images", Walter in 1912 made the critic

Camill Hoffmann to express his disgust about the fact that his colour "does not dematerialise, does not become spiritual and illusory". Walter valued the materiality of colour at least as much as the visual reality, and thus he improvised exercises in painterly "performing techniques" more than ever before and after.

In addition to landscapes and portraits, Walter began to paint nudes and still-lifes, as well as impressions of artificial light in theatre performances, concerts and crowded parties, that was a specific branch of his Dresden period art. The work of the first emigration decade basically fascinated that part of the public which could enjoy something like the sway of a dancing hall full to brimming, without getting disappointed that this inner life of the picture is not a real event. Sceptics, however, rejected it as a sort of decorative "drawing-room Pointillism" (*Salonpointillismus*). Neither one, nor the other opinion contradicts to the writer's current wish to interpret Walter's Dresden period as his *fête galante*, staged in the world of colour directly and in the world of sound figuratively by a colourist *par excellence* – too refined for plunging right into the "vortex of Expressionism", later attributed to him by some Latvian authors, but creative enough for persistent professional self-perfection and change.

One of the first experimental roads in the new life evidently was leading to increasing condensation of atmospheric illusions. Now the artist more frequently made the elusive vapour of the earth and the veil of the night materialise into thickly layered impasto that, despite its tonal paleness, seemed heavy and strained. Bright examples of learning to work with thickly applied, textured colours in a limited range of close shades are Walter's paintings "Morning Mist" (c. 1907, private collection) and "Portrait of Minna Köhler-Roeber" (1909, Verden, *Sabatier Galerie & Kunsthandel*).

As suggested in press reports from 1907, Walter already realised that exact imitation of nature colours in painting is impossible, but an artist can observe and reproduce the interrelations of colour shades in order to transpose the visual "music" into another key according to the specific properties of the material. So the master of decorative stylisation, what he seemed about to become, could change, for instance, the pitch of the key, painting everything darker or lighter, more greenish, reddish or yellowish than in nature without breaking with the visual impression. Although such tonally sophisticated exercises involved certain schematism and didacticism, Walter did not get stuck into the routine of these improvisations for long. Previously, the field of his interests ranged between the Impressionistic perception and the abstracting stylisation of Art Nouveau. When he in the new place found it for himself explored, a peculiar and at the same time reasonable change took place. The painter returned to the first crossroads of his stylistic journey to the once already overcome chaos of

Impressionistic sensations in order to look for another way out of it, drawing inspiration from the colouristic discoveries of the Post-Impressionists. Probably it was the experience of these efforts that later made Walter declare that painting can retain its vitality and avoid becoming infamously shallow only in alliance with nature.

Characteristic examples of Walter's "second Impressionism" include townscapes "The Marienstraße in Dresden" (1911, *Städtische Galerie Dresden*) and "The Hauptstraße in Dresden with the Monument to Augustus the Strong" (c. 1909–1911, private collection). The Marienstraße view in some way can be seen as a sequel to such early-20th-century impressions of the Jelgava period as "Alley on the Driksa" (JHAM). At the same time, the Dresden painting draws on such prototypes that were not topical in Walter's earlier work: it evokes Camille Pissarro's townscapes of the 1890s ("The Boulevard Montmartre on a Winter Morning", 1897, etc.). The Hauptstraße scene brings out a new peculiarity in Walter's painting technique: the most expressive lines actually appear as a *trompe l'oeil* in places where the previous layer shows through; the seeming contours are not overpainted, but emerge as exposed fragments of the darker underpainting.

Quite in conformity with the conclusion of Frank Whitford in his biography of Gustav Klimt that nature is more amenable to the tyranny of decoration than even the most extravagantly dressed human beings, the basic testing ground in Walter's stylistic quests was country landscape. Decorative exaggeration or practically densification of the Impressionistic vibration of air and light found expression in several privately owned landscapes painted in some seaside resort around 1909. After living in a flat country, Walter in Saxony and elsewhere in Germany loved to explore the mountainous scenery in its variety of vantage points and sense the surface texture of the terrain that he had not experienced in the past. The new impressions of nature and art urged the emigrant to invest his "masculine energy of expression" into loose, impastoed brushwork, treating the picture surface as a fabric of interlacing strokes. Walter's learning of this "dialect" of Post-Impressionism, until it could become the language of personal discoveries, must have been supported by guest exhibitions staged at *Arnold's* and *Richter's*. He could receive his first considerable dose of Pointillism in November 1906, when Neo-Impressionism prevailed in the travelling exhibition "French Artists". Walter, however, did not adopt the classically Neo-Impressionist juxtaposition of pure colours, but studied the optical interplay of mixed hues, applied to form decoratively expressive textures. Therefore even those paintings, which would surprise every expert of Walter's crepuscular turn-of-the-century moods with a considerable rise of colour intensity, could be qualified as "landscapes in grey, overcast tones" by their German viewers. Camill Hoffmann declared that Walter only poses in the suit of a Pointillist and would achieve better

results in a different manner of painting. Nonetheless the coarse painterly weave of landscapes in "broad colour strips", that, inspite of press references, actually were just very distantly reminiscent of Paul Signac and Theo van Rysselberghe's prototypes, suffused the whole latter half of the Dresden period, until the patterns of this decorative texturing around the middle of the 1910s gradually left the foreground of his interests.

In 1906, Walter probably was not yet quite ready to practise the technique of loose striations, but relevant impulses for this preoccupation were available quite regularly, allowing to study how his contemporaries and already classical masters of the recent past have accomplished tasks that were close to his own pursues. In the galleries of Dresden, he could see works of the famous French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, the most important German Pointillists Kurt Herrmann and Paul Baum, the Paris-based Belgian Neo-Impressionist van Rysselberghe and the Hungarian artist Józef Rippl-Rónai, presumably learning the mosaic-like style of his "maize period" at *Richter's* in 1910. The personal importance of studying Neo-Impressionism is revealed in a writing from c. 1913–1916, where Walter considered this stage in the evolution of pictorial expression both generally and with regard to his own experience.

Looking for points of intersection between the chronology of Dresden art events and steps of transformation in Walter's painting, it is, however, greatly possible that the development of his painterly vision and style was especially influenced by a rich exhibition of Vincent van Gogh's heritage at *Richter's* in May 1908. The relevance of this source was invariably high, when the *Galerie Arnold*, in February and March 1912, exhibited still 40 of van Gogh's works, inviting to pursue "the whole development of the artist". In lesser quantities, paintings of the Dutchman were present in a number of other guest exhibitions as well as in shows of the local private art collections, where Walter's works could be viewed, too. According to references in materials for Walter's unfinished treatise, van Gogh was one of the crowning figures in his pantheon of authorities, together with Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin. Like three planets of an artistic universe, the work of these masters successively influenced the climate and developments in the world of Walter's painting. The Dresden period was greatly marked by the "sign" of the Dutchman, and Walter even asked himself rhetorically: "The question arises now, where will the road of painting further go, since van Gogh has created his dazzling masterpieces." Critic Paul Friedrich in Berlin remarked about Walter's memorial exhibition: "Here and there, he is somewhat like van Gogh, just having varied the Dutchman's manner of brushstroke." (1933) Both opportunities to examine large groups of van Gogh's works in Dresden obviously supported the eventual creating of bold textures by means of striated brushwork and increased Walter's interest in the expressive properties of green and yellow.

If the influence of van Gogh's painting at the cradle of *Die Brücke* lit the torch of colour expression, Walter's way from the same source of inspiration led to a task that critic *h. g.* described in the *Dresdner Nachrichten* as tonal harmonisation of the landscape with reference to a single local colour (1914). The Dresden reporter of the *Kunstchronik* wrote that he paints in "matte, balanced tones with the dominance of the greenish" (1916). The first signs of growing verdancy can be traced in the titles of Walter's landscapes from the catalogue of his and Schlippenbach's joint exhibition in 1909. The greenness increased in the next painting season in Moravia and, to a different extent, preserved its importance throughout the rest of the Dresden period. Walter's new colour schemes were often derived from luminous tones in bright sunlight. Expansion of the "green areas" all over the picture surface was combined with effects of decoratively applied brushwork, and Richard Stiller disliked that Walter's "landscape (..) is transformed into tapestry". The generalised Post-Impressionist intensification of the Impressionist-like idyll reached the stage where the nature impression turned into a brilliant and nearly abstract mosaic.

The degree of stylisation varied from work to work, and Walter may have been quite deliberate in choosing every single step between impression and abstraction, mimetic representation and decorative interpretation. Generally, the basic area of his creative experiments was the treatment of picture surface that could simultaneously be explored as part of the visible world, observing the furrowed brushwork as a terrain in itself with hills and valleys, tangles and networks. Unlike the German Expressionists in the height of their movement, Walter did not want to extract the optical power of colour from the materiality of texture. In this aspect, he unwittingly stood closer to his French colleagues – the Intimists during the Dresden years and the Fauves at the end of his career.

Mosaic-like arrangements of colour patches and dots can be seen sprouting in three landscapes with foothill meadows and orchards in different seasons (c. 1908–1910, all in private collections). Moving along this line, Walter came very close to an explicit "maize-style", the term borrowed from publications aboud Rippl-Rónai's art, in several forest landscapes of the early 1910s. Elsewhere, however, he would use long, broad and wavy movements of brush to underline the decorative peculiarity of some other scenery impressions, and the rhythm of these painterly gestures was subtly multiplied in countless bristle-marks.

Landscapes of the Dresden period attest to Eduards Kļaviņš' statement about decorativity derived from "the fragment of the sensuously tangible reality" as a touchstone of Walter's oeuvre. This meant painterly intensified disclosure of the motif's decorative peculiarity, stylistically conforming to this task in every work anew, what also defined the pictorial functions of the few human figures. A meagre clown of a travelling circus (c. 1910,

Guntis Belēvičs Collection, Riga), Moravian girl in a folk costume (1910, private collection), or an old, pious country woman evoking rustic wood carvings (c. 1910, private collection) – they all had to be interesting in a decorative interplay with their fragmentary setting. Actually one might describe these images as "born of the feeling that the landscape with its material shapes and colours has evoked" (Janis Rozentāls), just as their ten-to-fifteen years older predecessors. The decorative intensification of this feeling, however, has made them appear like characters of some performance or fancy-ball, enclosed by matching decorations.

To some extent, the expressive gradations of Walter's landscapes were motivated by the visual sensations in his self-organised *plein-air* painting trips. At the same time, the aspect of pedagogical experimentation obviously acquired more importance than formerly in the Baltics, inspiring the artist to invent painterly exercises and test them first on his own canvas or cardboard in order to see what can be achieved by means of this or that device. Even the stylisation of recurrent motifs varied from season to season, showing ever new traits.

The linearly radiant vault of heaven in the "View of Dresden with the Zwinger" (c. 1914–1916, private collection) and in some other landscapes of the mid-1910s certainly was one of those symptoms which German critics in similar cases would diagnose as mutations of the so-called "van Gogh epidemic". Having gone so far in the use of striated strokes, Walter partly abandoned the boldly impastoed manner of painting and gradually regained interest in transparent glazes that slightly recalled his misty water mirrors from Zemgale meadows and Jelgava parks, but were supported by later experiences. Possibly enough, this change originated in Southern France, where Walter worked in the summer of 1913, enjoying the Mediterranean interplay of water and light. Visual documents of this fascination include the study "In the Harbour" (LNMA), showing how vibrant reflections reappear in Walter's pictorial idiom. From then on up to the turn of the 1930s, combinations of objects and their reflections often played rhythmically important role in his work and were not discarded during the transformation of reality motifs into abstract signs. Walter's "Southern Harbour with Fishing Boats" (private collection) and "Harbour in Toulon" (*Sabatier Galerie & Kunsthandel*, Verden) mark the transition from bold overall texturing that was generally typical of his Dresden period, to compositions divided into painterly active and neutral areas, relieving dense colonies of rippling details by stiller expanses. On one hand, these solutions implied retrospective references to their author's painting at the turn of the 20th century. On the other hand, the interplay of details and their context in these comparatively conventional works already anticipates the vigorous orchestrations of visual sensations that were quintessential for Walter's art in his forthcoming Berlin period. Mediterranean paintings

show that his partly return to glazing initially was inspired by the observed nature effects, outpacing the austere war and postwar economy measures, when many canvases of large impasto paintings had to be reused for new pictures painted on their back side in thinner layers and more smothered tones than before.

For some time in the prewar years, however, the sea in Walter's pictures predominantly was not light and translucent, but rather so rough that it visualised the rage of storm even more distinctly than the craggy shores and the wild sky. The greenish hues there adopted tinges of seaweeds, mud, wet sand and wet stone. The water had to be choppy, and piles of brushstrokes in expressively rhythmic arrangements seemed to materialise violent and Post-Impressionistically supple plastic force.

Surprisingly close affinity associates the bodies of sea-shore cliffs as well as rocks of the Elbe Sandstone Mountain valley with the best of those nude paintings that made up an important branch of Walter's art in the latter third of his Dresden period (1913–1916). There is at least one study (LNMA) and one painting (1916, private collection) to confirm this interconnection by a quite literal combination of motifs – two vigorous women bathers against the background of a steep coastline. Scaled to the larger dimensions, their tough, sharp-cut vitality attests to getting some inspiration from the art of Ferdinand Hodler. According to references in Walter's writings, he really studied paintings of the Swiss Symbolist in the *Große Kunstausstellung Dresden 1912* and afterwards compared these observations with statements from art historian Fritz Burger's treatise *Cézanne und Hodler: Einführung in die Probleme der Malerei der Gegenwart* (1913).

What makes the large "Bathers" of 1916 a compromise piece, is not only its Hodler-like modelling, but also the fairly artificial juxtaposition of nude figures and their landscape setting. Unlike the line of bathing boys that evolved within its authentic context of *plein-air* sunlight and water, the female nude in Walter's art appeared as a studio genre. In 1907, Walter and Schlippenbach announced nude, together with portrait and landscape, in the programme of their new painting school, but actually it must have been a field of *docendo discimus* for Walter, who showed his first personal results to the public in 1909. Still greatly a trial work, the "Nude in the Studio" (private collection) points to his short-term drawing on the manner of Adolf Münzer, Leo Putz and some other German Impressionists whose nudes and half-nudes show them as openly sensual gourmets of colour and flesh. These artists often painted their nude models acting with mirrors, jewels and toys in the solitude of staged boudoir scenes. Walter's contribution to this pictorial game on the verge of salon art includes nudes with princess-like dolls (1913, private collection and reproduction). There is not a spot of flat surface and straight line in these works, where everything seems to meander, undulate and crawl away somewhere as if resounding

with the cat-like grace of the nude figure. The overall undulation interweaves colours and patterns, and the whole is softened somewhat like the manner of the French Intimists.

This stage in the evolution of Walter's nudes is marked by strong parallels with his same time still-lifes, another genre he had not worked in before Dresden. The series of available originals begins with the "Still-Life with Primroses" (1913, LNMA) where Walter pursued Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard's way of typically French sensual decorativity. In his treatment, however, the Intimist echoes were charged with greater dynamism and tension than in their origins. Walter's 1913 "Nude with a Doll" and "Still-Life with Cherries" (c. 1913–1915, private collection) appear like veritable genre-mates, because in both of them the artist has staged a decorative semblance of some performed activity within a setting of draperies. The next pair of nudes (1913, Riga History and Navigation Museum; 1914, LNMA) is rid of any puppet theatre elements, and the focus there is moved to the arrangement of colour fields. Walter is no more preoccupied with emulation of skin or textile effects, but makes the very substance of his impasto prevail, increasing the expressive force of his painting. The physical appearance of the female model is marked by some elongation of forms, angularity, vigour, resilience and sharp turns, all of what Walter in a similar way was looking for in zigzagged shorelines and craggy rocks.

The unclassical vitality of this line culminated in 1915 model paintings, represented in the LNMA by three so-called "yellow nudes". The setting of these figures contains not a single trace of bedroom or studio attributes, and the draping seems transformed into something like sandstone rock outcrops that resonate rhythmically with the movement and shape of the sitter, as if she were a rock formation come to life. Walter marked the rapidly changing relief by light-green shading and performed the best of his skill to suggest contour lines by making some of the preceding layer shine through. Loosely coated with dry overpainting strokes, these irregular grooves evoke the sensation of a sandstone- or sandpaper-like surface.

The task of painting a yellow nude against a yellow background basically coincides with Erich Heckel's efforts in his "Young Man and Girl" (1909). Walter's Post-Impressionist stylisation, however, was very different from the Expressionist's freely distorting treatment of human forms. Walter's approach comes especially close to that of Rippl-Rónai in his "maize-style" painting "Two Nudes on the Red Sofa" (1910), although the Hungarian artist's technique in this mosaic-like picture is less intricate. Nude retained some importance in Walter's imagery throughout the rest of his life, but the group of 1915 paintings, bathed in delusive sand coating and permeated with tense plastic vigour, stands out as the consummation of his work in this genre.

Colour hues, their intensity and the modelling of light imply that the artist created these illusory sandstone reliefs by artificial light. As reported by the *Mitausche Zeitung*, Walter was fascinated by the glow of colours in artificially illuminated rooms already in 1897. Later in Dresden, he made this line of his interests rise to full bloom and maturity in depictions of party scenes, theatre interiors and musical performances. This preoccupation associated Walter with that refined branch of German Impressionism whose forefather was Adolf von Menzel and the key living figure – Dresden artist Robert Sterl.

Describing the German department of the 1911 International Art Exhibition in Rome, Burkhard Meier from *Die Kunst für Alle* praised Walter's "Fifth Circle in the Dresden Opera" – "a painting that merits to be compared with Menzel's *Théâtre Gymnase* in the retrospective section". Around the same time, the same source for the development of this "particular chapter" in Walter's art was recognised by Paul Fechter: "It is perhaps the most beautiful of Menzel's works, *Théâtre Gymnase*, that stands behind his scenes from the Dresden Opera." Fritz Löffler analogically referred to the *Théâtre Gymnase*, writing about Sterl's contribution in the book *Gemütlichkeit und Dämonie: Dresdner Malerei in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. By 1906, this 1856 masterpiece belonged to a private collection in Dresden. Furthermore, the modern successors of Menzel's tradition probably had some opportunity to get inspired from the views of the orchestra and stage fragments in Edgar Degas' painting of the 1870s.

Sterl arranged his place of work down in the orchestra pit, but Walter's traditional observation post in the Opera was the fifth circle. The way how he visualised the glow of colours in the interplay between a dark hall and an illuminated stage can be best explored in first-hand studies of the typical 22 x 26 cm size and still smaller formats from private collections in Germany and Latvia. The almost abstract patterns of colour patches in these works are reminiscent of old stained-glass windows and Rippl-Rónai's pictorial mosaics of colour dots, as well as carpets of autumn leaves in Walter's own Baltic landscapes from the pre-emigration period. His paintings refer to their visual source much more directly than, for instance, Kandinsky's same time "Impression III (Concert)" (1911), but they imply some similarity with an earlier episode in which the future founder of the Abstract Art between 1904–1907 adapted borrowings from the Divisionist technique for mosaic-like painting on black backgrounds that were generally atypical of the Neo-Impressionist practice.

Unlike Sterl's paintings, Walter's impressions were described by critics as tapestries in delicate colours or coarse fabrics of coloured stripes. Camill Hoffman found Walter's refined decorativism less appropriate for visualising musical sensations than his counterpart's passionate gestures.

Nonetheless, it is parallels with Sterl's work that specify Walter's position in the art scene of Dresden most precisely and show his work as the *altera pars* of a locally important trend. In this branch of his oeuvre, Walter gave a brilliant pictorial interpretation to the doomed-to-perish glamour of the *Belle Époque*, translating its alluring visual sensations into a high level of abstraction. Paraphrasing Löffler, Walter's study "At a Party" (c. 1910–1912, private collection) might be considered as the "last consequence" of Menzel's *Ballsouper* (1878). The power of painterly expression there is merged with the atmosphere of the outgoing epoch just before the end of the so-called *long century* (1789–1914).

Walter was not yet taken his last leave from it, when he painted the "Home Concert" (1917, private collection) and used the back side of the 1910 "Moravian Girl" for an opera scene without his lush prewar impasto (1918, private collection). Around that time, the painter was preoccupied with marriage plans and establishing himself in the capital of the collapsing empire, where he presumably arrived already in the autumn of 1916. Therefore a "Dresden Letter" of the *Kunstchronik* about Walter's solo exhibition at the *Sächsischer Kunstverein* in April and May 1916 unwittingly summed up the whole Dresden decade. The unidentified correspondent was not original in writing that "an extraordinary fine sense of colour and noble taste prevail in this tone and plane painting, obviously reaching a tapestry-like impression", but it is important to consider his conclusion that "this way, too, is leading to artistic results and Walter-Kurau has pursued it ever more convincingly".

"That Violinist", the Aftermath of War, Berlin and the Cézanne Factor

At the Dresden Opera, Walter worked with his painting equipment but there is no tangible proof to the legend about him playing in its orchestra. Something about the character of Walter's performing practice can be more veritably made out of Strekāvins' reference about Walter playing chamber music in a quartet with his friends on Wednesdays and Sundays of the 1912 summer semester. The *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, however, recalled in the obituary that in Dresden he had been more associated with musicians than with his craft-brothers. These contacts undeniably helped to increase the number of portrait commissions. Publications about the 1909 exhibition of Walter and Schlippenbach refer to portraits of Count Nikolaus von Seebach, who was the intendant of the Dresden Opera, and "violin virtuoso Miss Gertrud Matthaes", whose name there indicates that Walter has already made acquaintance of his wife-to-be.

Her portrait was still exhibited at *Richter's* when the press made notice of her first solo concert. Gertrud Matthaes (1883–1932) was the eldest child in the family of tobacconist Arthur Matthaes. She inherited her talent

as a violinist from her father and perfected it at the Dresden Conservatoire. The most likely place of the first encounters between the professional virtuoso and the refined amateur musician can be judged from the Dresden address directory for 1910 saying that the violinist Mattahes lived in the same house at Schnorrstraße 27 which was the home of Paul von Schlippenbach and venue of his music salon. Somewhat later, Walter, too, moved in there, and the chain of his Dresden dwellings ends on different floors of this building.

Latvian suspicion that Walter perhaps might have returned if not for a new family binding him to the foreign country gave rise to a myth about Gertrud as the cause of his emigration. Furthermore, some of his women portraits have been continuously misattributed as representing his second wife. Photo documents of the Matthaes family from foreign private archives now cast new light on two LNMA paintings. Purvītis identified Walter's "Pianist" ("Portrait of a Woman in front of a Piano") as "that violinist who carried him away to Berlin", whereas Jānis Siliņš and Eduards Kļaviņš supposed that the sitter might have been Meta Walter. The writer of this proposes a new suggestion that it rather is a portrait of Gertrud's sister, pianist Dora Matthaes (married Jelinek) around 1909, but readers are invited to examine the similarities and differences independently. With much greater certainty, the Matthaes family photographs ruined the assurance of Latvian art historians that an expressive painting of the mid-1910s, once acquired from Heinrich Lüder-Lühr as a portrait of the artist's wife, really shows "that violinist". In this case the sitter probably was one of Gertrud's fellow musicians.

Purvītis' phrase about the violinist "who carried him away to Berlin" actually referred not to Walter's departure from Latvia but to his ten years later move from Dresden to the imperial capital which already was the residence of Schlippenbach since 1912. In June 1916, Walter still participated in the 1st exhibition of the *Dresdner Künstlervereinigung* as a Dresden-based artist, but in October the name *Walter-Kurau* in the 29th exhibition of the *Berliner Secession* was followed by the name of his last metropolis. Since 1919, Berlin address directories could help to find Walter's dwelling at Gervinusstraße 4, where he lived and worked until his death. The artist got married in the second half of 1918, after 30 June, when the Livonian Consistorium in Riga issued the long-expected license. On 3 February 1919 Walter turned fifty, and it may have been a good ground for students to improvise a photo session that is documented in Else Lohmann's album. The artist's remaining lifetime after fifty coincided almost precisely with the term of the Weimar Republic in German history (9 November 1918 – 30 January 1933), allowing him to experience the Golden Twenties and die just six weeks before the beginning of the Nazi dictatorship.

In 1922, Strekāvins conveyed him Purvītis' invitation to professorship of the Latvian Academy of Art. Walter declined this proposal under the excuse that "he and his wife have many students and interesting job in Berlin", as well as Gertrud "is not renowned in Riga and her work would be hindered by the lack of Latvian language skills". When the tide of refugees from the Bolshevist Russia whipped Jakob Belsen off to Berlin, his family found its first lodging in Walter's "spacious studio flat". Although Walter's influence in the 1920s had lost its previous stylistic importance for Belsen's art, they embodied living memories about their study years for each other and made friends with art historian Ernst Zierer. Nothing suggests that Walter would have become involved with nostalgic activities of "old Baltic" or "old St. Petersburg" enthusiasts. Nonetheless he never ceased to venerate Arkhip Kuinji as his very model of teaching excellence, whose rank in Walter's hierarchy of values probably rose with the ongoing sublimation of his natural charm into a specific pedagogical charisma.

Walter's reputation in Berlin was almost exclusively based on his teaching authority casting an undue shadow on his work as a painter. Ingrid von der Dollen's research shows that all his students "unanimously attest to the powerful charisma of his personality". After the first emigration decade when Walter had quickly made name on the art scene of Elbflorenz, relations between the painter and the new social milieu changed so radically that memorial publications by Berlin journalists later gave him out as a very solitary and still artist. This turn was possibly stimulated by the interaction of general and personal factors in the context of a changing social environment, historical background, course of life, professional priorities and family situation. Developments that were met with immediate response in the *Belle Époque* Dresden, could go unnoticed in the avantgarde metropolis of the 1920s. Around that time the artist had, as it seems, crossed "in glad progression" the hall of his *fête galante* and behind the next door given up wasting his energy in extensive public activities in order to concentrate instead on purely pictorial and pedagogical assignments. Results of this practice immediately affected a relatively narrow circle of students and friends, but beyond it they remained almost completely unknown until the time when admirers of his talent took charge of his commemoration. The nearly sectarian feeling of awe with which apprentices looked at Walter's art contrasted to the lack of recognition in the Berlin art life, where his contribution was not generally approved.

Walter maintained close relations with musicians and kept attending concerts up to the last days of his life, but his participation in exhibitions was much more occasional than before. Therefore even many fellow artists had no idea about the intense artistic quests in the Gervinusstraße studio and on Walter's *plein-air* trips towards abstraction resulting from "the

most serious study of nature". It was in the Berlin period that the artist phrased most of his theoretical statements and they correspond to the development of his painting in the 1920s. Furthermore, painter Luise Grimm (née Paetow) remembered her teacher relying on the help of his violin and playing a musical analogy to the visual assignment when it seemed necessary to evoke some subtly differentiated relationships.

Walter's withdrawal from the public life presumably was greatly self-chosen in order to observe contemporary art events from a somewhat obscure vantage point and establish a little oasis of painting and music, permeated by the interaction of these two arts as well as fusion of two personally important professional representations of the Wise Old Man. The ideal of the generous professor Kuinji merged with another figure of decisive importance – the "hermit of Aix" Paul Cézanne pursuing dramatically charged study of nature.

In the first year of Hitler's Reich, when it was still possible to stage Walter's memorial exhibitions, several critics agreed about the crucial role of Cézanne's influence upon his development. They stated that Walter has followed in Cézanne's footsteps where the "right path" means "the concrete direct study of nature"; that "at first he certainly clung to Cézanne's hand but, initiated into the mystery, made his way further so independently as hardly anyone"; that "Walter-Kurau in his best paintings came excitingly close to the divine creative mystery of the great master". These reviewers had identified the main artery of Walter's late work, recognising the source that helped his painting turn into a field of restless tension. To avoid the onset of lethargy after the end of the *Belle Époque*, Walter, as it turns out, needed inner drama, hidden fight, ceaseless balancing of opposites that could seem fabricated to detached observers but allowed to create effects which make his paintings interesting still today.

Walter's earliest statement of respect for Cézanne is documented in an essay or lecture, where he, not before 1913, refers to the *Große Kunstausstellung Dresden 1912* and Burger's 1913 treatise paying particular attention to "such essential personalities as Cézanne, Hodler and Hettner". The German Cézannist Otto Hettner was renowned in the 1910s for very turbulent and decoratively expressive compositions on particularly dramatic mythology and biblical subjects which influenced the art of Latvian painter Eduards Lindbergs. Walter did not reach the stage of such apocalyptic stories, but his portrait "Lady in Black" (1916, private collection) attests to his interest in creating exalted images which are treated as arrangements of triangular and trapezium-shaped facets. The indentation of forms and the angular interchange of strokes and compositional elements together with increasing solidity of modelling imply that the painter is forcing his way through superficial effects towards painting where the chaos of visual sensations every time anew with great efforts is transformed into order.

This preoccupation came to possess Walter in a time that he saw as the verge of life and death for art's existence: "The destructive work of the war (..) brought about a strong hunger for the bare reality. Art seemed nearly excessive, it was close to extinction." First symptoms of Cézanne-like changes in Walter's "Landscape with Houses and Clouded Sky" (by 1918, private collection) appear in the sky area. The green-grained hills beneath still are painted in the Dresden-period manner with exposures of the under-painting as illusory contours, whereas the bluish pink flakes of clouds consist of thin, short strokes laid against the direction of the forms and creating the impression of many overlapping transparent layers in a simultaneous sliding movement to all sides. Learning from Cézanne, Walter discovered his own way of visualising a sum of varied yet organised movements with emphasised trajectories. Unlike those colleagues who moved along Cézanne's path towards static geometry, he found increasing interest in the kinetics and thereby the fluent streamline in nature attracted him even more than the cylinder, the sphere and the cone. The Cézannesque phase in Walter's oeuvre is represented e. g. by views of Hildesheim (1918–1919, LNMA; *Sabatier Galerie & Kunsthandel*, Verden; Zosēni Civil Parish, etc.) with a body of water dimly reflecting somewhat glassy coulisses of trees and bushes, inseparable from the old town walls looming fragmentarily in the distance. The beginning of the Gervinusstraße period in Walter's work is marked by three stylistically interrelated 1919 paintings in his studio genres: "Portrait of Gertrud Walter-Kurau with her Violin" (Matthaes Collection, Milan), "Nude from Behind" (Gronert Collection, Berlin) and "Still-Life with Tulips and Hyacinths" (Gronert Collection, Berlin).

Neither by 1919, nor later Walter was a doctrinaire Cézannist who borrows and emulates the principles of his pictorial expression. Walter's practice also contradicts to the statement of 20th-century art historian Paul Vogt that Cézanne's idea about art as a harmony parallel with nature remained generally unacclaimed by German artists who "did not conceive of the form as a symbol for the highest laws of the pictorial organism, but merely as a servant and carrier of expression, as a way to reveal the "inner universe" in a painting". The emigrant tirelessly explored the relationships between the visible world and its pictorial translation. In the 1920s, he made his art become a continuous struggle with the figurative vision seeing and interpreting the visual reality as a "paintable existence" (*malbares Dasein*) in terms of abstract colour chords. Results of these efforts can be discussed in the context of interesting analogies that show parallels with certain aspects in the work of his contemporaries and allow to appreciate Walter's own pictorial discoveries, but in terms of the method he remained the heir of Cézanne – explorer of interrelations who is conscious of the restrictions imposed on his discipline and observes them. His clinging to

"Cézanne's hand" that was important in the second part of the 1910s helped to build the foundation for his later quests of the "missing link between the Impressionism and the Abstract Art" of his time, in which the influence of the Aix master was no more conspicuous.

Reflections of *malbares Dasein* in their Late Orchestrations

The collocation "paintable existence" (*malbares Dasein*) is so relevant to Walter's art and views in his late period, conveying his attitude towards the visible world, that it becomes part of the story as a notion of deeply personal importance. Walter referred to the requirement "to look at nature so as if it were a paintable existence" (*die Natur so ansehen, als ob sie ein malbares Dasein wäre*) as a quotation from Immanuel Kant read "somewhere years ago". Actually he had adopted and adapted a passage from philosopher Leopold Ziegler's essay *Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zur Natur* (1910): "*Er [the artist – K. Ā.] gewahrt sie, wie sie aussehen sollte um seinen Mitteln beherrschbar zu werden. Oder um mich kantisch auszudrücken: er schaut Natur an* ***als ob*** *sie ein malbares Dasein wäre,* ***als ob*** *bei ihr die Farben zugleich Raumwerte bedeuteten.*" Walter misread the end of this as a Kantian statement and memorised it transforming into a "must" form of strong recommendation. For Ziegler, however, Kantian was merely the formula *so anschauen als ob*. The publication of Walter's own contemporary escaped his memory, but the "paintable existence" acquired the importance to an inner imperative on his way towards the ideal abstracted vision of nature.

Walter had realised that the limited means of expression disable painters to emulate the force of colour and light of the visual reality. The aims of Impressionism that he was formerly clinging to with great enthusiasm, had turned out unattainable, he rejected Naturalism as inartistic kitsch, whereas the new abstract painting caused anxiety that the free imagination is about to run short of its possibilities. Also Purvītis in Latvia stressed at that time that even the "most free and unbounded fantasy without reference to nature (..) cannot create anything". Their actual teaching practice *en plein-air* was different: Purvītis instructed his students "how to render grey and sunny days", and "always insisted on (..) truthfulness in the depiction of the milieu", while Walter worked hard to eradicate descriptive vision of nature inventing such exercises as execution of the work in a certain chord of three colours etc.

The painter elaborated abstracted pictorial idiom, where breaking with descriptive elements enabled him to create an autonomous colouristic and ornamental structure that visualised the interrelations, melody and inner rhythm of the landscape, still-life or nude, – namely those qualities that he found within reach of painterly expression. Nature was necessary as a reference point and an inexhaustible source of creativity, but the elements

of its pictorial representation won increasing self-dependence.

Formerly, in the Dresden period, line had not been an autonomous tool of Walter's painting. Although he made frequent and varied use of long striations, improvised the illusion of dark contouring, as well as occasionally imitated textures of striped materials, the linear strokes were integrated into the interlaced overall pattern. Now the role-play of colour and line saw their mutual emancipation, making them free and equal companions whose interaction brings into motion the inner dynamism of the picture. The result of this transformation is best revealed in Walter's statement: "The more abstract – stylistically intense – becomes (..) the colour scheme, the more abstract – ornamental – must become the drawing. The effect of an artwork is enriched by colour occasionally acting without reference to drawing. It means that the drawing of an object is not always filled by its colour. This brings about interaction and depth, the pictorial surface comes to life, and the eye is not forced to knock against some firm, coloured surface."

The utmost quality of line was its "formal suggestive power" that Walter admired e. g. in the cave art and drawings of French sculptor Auguste Rodin. The painter confronted the line resulting from an intense observation that evokes the feeling of the observed form with the line as a copy without a background of personal perception. It is perhaps no coincidence that we do not know any drawings made in Walter's Dresden period, whereas in the second part of the 1920s and turn of the 1930s he visualised many of his landscape and still-life ideas not only in oils, but also in charcoal, producing both little compositional sketches and drawings on large sheets that matched the scale of his canvases. Working on these expanses, the black stick presumably was aided by the artist's palm. His fingers ever more often touched the surface, and he increasingly relied on the movements of his hand, driven by a sum of knowledge, skill and feeling.

It is easier to realise why this experience and practice could become very important exactly at that time, if we consider not only stylistic impulses but also the factor of deteriorating eyesight, pointed out in some resigned sentences by Cézanne (1905). Close to the age of sixty, Walter, too, most likely faced increasing difficulties in distinguishing borders of objects, but he found a solution: if eyes show that "planes are running into each other" (Cézanne), it is not necessary to try and stop them, but rather to follow this flow in order to visualise its melody and let the drawing of the object not always be filled by its colour. Walter began to use dark lining that, however, did not enclose colour areas but got separated from the relevant forms and transformed into ornaments which seem to be floating or tossing in a still or stormy sea of colour like elusive patterns of reflections.

The aged Walter in Berlin would have not been able to paint with such accuracy of tonal gradations as his young predecessor in Jelgava. But the old man grew ever more sensitive to the abstract musical flow of the

observed phenomena that was in interpreted in forceful and profound orchestrations of visual sensations. The process of stylistic transformation did not allow Walter to grow old in efforts to emulate his previous discoveries, but helped him to finish his artistic progress in a fruitful stage of pictorial achievements that were described by the modern art editor or the *Weltkunst* magazine Kurt Kusenberg in the following way: "A thoughtful and steadily advancing painter has built step by step a clear and complete world of ideas, whose expressive power moves every sensitive eye. (…) His utmost efforts were about colour as a means of expression; the rich and sonorous colour of his rhythmically flowing compositions is something unusual for German painting." (1933)

In early-20th-century Latvia Walter selected "from the rich chords of nature a particular sound" that gave rise to an art of moods evoking lyrical songs. Having abandoned the former intimacy, his Dresden successor seemed to play his painterly instruments at a banqueting party where sounds of music mixed with the babble of voices, clink of dishes, and rustle of garments into an unforgettably festive atmosphere. In Berlin it turned out, however, that the painter is still going to act as an orchestra and its conductor in one, elaborating polyphonic compositions of visual music. Every painting of this time can be considered as an orchestra rehearsal in which the artist experiments with combinations of different instrumental groups (painterly and graphical means of expression), frequently starting anew to treat the same theme with slight variations. The heritage of the Berlin period to a greater extent than Walter's previous work can be divided into groups of closely related compositions, and every of these pieces with no regard to their usually no more recoverable sequence is a new attempt to reach the unattainable horizon, interpreting the music of nature colours and lines.

The chosen path, on which a "far-going abstraction" had to result from relationships explored in an intense study of nature, was realised in the continuously prevalent genre of landscapes, as well as in still-lifes, set up to evoke the flow of musical compositions. More open to artistic compromises was the field of portrait, and Jānis Siliņš was generally right writing that "the arrangement of colour fields (..) includes conventionally stylised drawing in order to preserve the necessary outer likeness". In some portrait commissions of the 1920s the artist acted like an emulator who has adopted the modern means of his creative seeking counterpart, adapting them to the requirements of representation.

The hatching of Walter's late ornamental style out of his Cézannism can be best observed in mountain landscapes of the early 1920s (c. 1920–1923) with motifs of the so-called Franconian Switzerland. In these works Walter made his third and last departure from a diversely achieved illusion of space to decorative thinking within the boundaries of planar effects. The

first occasion is represented by Art Nouveau landscapes of the Jelgava period around 1904, and the second – by paintings of the Dresden period that were marked by all-over activated texturing and compared with tapestries, mosaics or embroideries. On the third occasion the visible world seems transformed into patterns of reflections on the changing level of water, were Walter was happy to find no "firm surface" and discover the sought-for "interaction and depth". This realm of reflections could be inhabited also by imaginary figures resulting from visual sensations – e. g. by looming athletes born of the rugged Franconian rocks in the picture "Movements of Bodies" (c. 1921, LNMA).

The first enthusiasm for the graphical peculiarity of every ornamental element gradually gave place to a skill to associate them in a dynamic interplay that melted the schematism of the initial combinations. The arrangement (grouping, balancing, repeating, juxtaposition, condensation, expansion etc.) of patterns helped to render the rhythms of the landscape and transform them into a new melodious structure. The parallel ranges of the painting "Boots" (1923, LNMA) are undulating concordantly like in a polyphonic piece of music. Every small and large form in the water and beyond it is a modulated reflection of another one, but none of them has weight and colour of its own, because everything is suffused with yellow, orange and red sunset hues with dark saturation that concentrates in black feather-like borders. Placed beside the variants of the "Harbour at Niendorf" (1927, LNMA and reproduction), this four years earlier composition of the same motifs still seems somewhat mottled and noisy. In the early 20th century the intuitively chosen instrument of play was that of delicate patterns of light ("Boys near Water", c. 1900, Tukums Museum), but in the second part of the 1920s the artist produced the LNMA painting in a manner close to charcoal drawing with dark colour over an underpainting in reddish-brown afterglow gradations, spotting where necessary the simple composition with cool, greenish-grey patches and highlighting a distant sail-boat, illuminated by the last sunrays and doubled in an elusive reflection.

In Latvian art, this facet of Walter's talent several generations later was unwittingly reanimated in Edvards Grūbe's paintings whose "expression is based on the abstraction and painterly interpretation of particular motifs of the visual reality" (Laima Slava) – very much like in the interpretations of Niendorf harbour scenes. In this phase of his work Walter came particularly close to Paul Gauguin's Synthetism as "a blending of abstract ideas of rhythm and colour with visual impressions of nature". Still during the 1933 memorial exhibition Berlin journalists described these arrangements, where "colour is active but never sharp", as painterly tapestries.

The water mirror was not the only recurrent motif that associated the Berlin artist with his Jelgava predecessor, rounding up his creative biography in elements of a circular structure and showing him as a master who at

first intuitively and later with great dedication pursued the way of pictorial-musical associations in order to visualise "the melody of colour and architecture of forms" from sensations inspired by nature impressions. Another group of Walter's turn-of-the-20th-century motifs that regained importance in his Berlin period was that of forest rhythms – deprived of their dim or golden Art Nouveau attire but endowed with Expressionist dynamism and brightness.

These forest landscapes from about 1923–1925, the earliest of which were exhibited at the *Juryfreie Kunstschau 1924* in Berlin, give the best possibble evidence that in the first half of the 1920s the time was rife for parallels with earlier and new paintings of the *Die Brücke* artists. Walter's "Forest Landscape with a Road" (1924, LNMA) seems to represent the same movement as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's iconographically and stylistically close "Landscape of a Ravine" (1919–1920), inviting to recognise Franconian mountain firs as the harsh inspirers of Walter's Expressionism, although he emphasised the linear ornamentalism of the scenery motifs more deliberately than the famous *Die Brü*cke artist.

Dramatic ravines with windfallen trees at sharp angles inspired to compose a nearly apocalyptic battle-field scene with some similarity to "The Fate of the Animals" (1913) of *Der Blaue Reiter* artist Franz Marc: the black verticals in Walter's "Expressive Fir-Trees" (1924, LNMA) are strung as chords, the diagonals are flashing like arrows and lightning, and the fir branches are tossed about, rolling the sky into Expressionist- and Futurist-like ball clouds. Walter perhaps imagined the forest as an instrument with many strings on which uncountable bows with sharp strokes perform a furious thunderstorm symphony. The tree for him is no more an indivisible entity – not only the "drawing of an object is not always filled by its colour", but also the parts of this object lose their mutual bodily interconnection and are abstracted to autonomous forces. Previously Walter could dematerialise or conceal the object, paint it as part of a mosaic-like pattern of brushstrokes or minimise it to a little spot of colour, but he never touched its construction in order to break and destroy it assigning new functions to the disintegrated elements.

His readiness to go in for this deconstructing practice that could have the purpose to suppress the imitation of nature is hardly possible without knowing the contribution of Cubism to the destruction of the illusory wholeness of the optical reality. The Cubist experience was not a model for emulation, but gave him more freedom in his pictorial manipulations with the impressions subjected to stylisation. In the 1920s Walter, however, never used this method for breaking up the contours that outlined transparent human figures, interwoven with the reflection patterns of his paintings. The contours of children in 1926 "Bathing Boys" (reproduced by Zierer) are cut off only by means of fragmented "snapshotting", thus

suggesting that the line would continue beyond the field of vision. In the depiction of foreground figures, the more or less frontal views of their dynamic postures are combined with the side view representation of heads, so that they seem to move not in a three-dimensional space but on a reflective surface. Walter's reduction of foreshortening was encouraged by principles of the Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian sculpture and painting that he studied a. o. in the *Propyläen-Kunstgeschichte* volume *Die Kunst des Alten Orients* (1925), authored by egyptologist Heinrich Schäfer and Walter's friend archeologist Walter Andrae.

Dace Lamberga wrote quite adequately that "the musically organised arrangement of colours and forms evokes peculiar melodious sonority in [Walter's] landscapes of fir forests, where the dark tree trunks are united into an ornamentally flattened composition". It only needs to be noted that the darkness of tree trunks is a generalisation of some occasional impressions, because the darkly outlined trees most often blaze in colours of the surrounding landscape, showing that the artists his late works regardless of their motifs considered as a space of reflections. In a quite different manner as in paintings of his Jelgava period with a dawn breaking through the veil of a morning mist, or in the brushwork mosaic of the Dresden period, Walter was again preoccupied with the movement of light in a choir of trees that was now assembled to perform variations of "Rising Rhythms" and "Fading Rhythms" in glowing colours and emphasised lines. The artistic summit of this group is the work "Fading Rhythms" (1923, LNMA) with trees apparently dancing in the afterglow of flashing and ardent sunset flames.

This painting represents the colouristically brightest stage of Walter's art that reached its greatest chromatic intensity in the mid-1920s and showed gradual reduction of polychromy afterwards. The energy of colour and simplification of form prevail in LNMA collection paintings "Tree Trunks and Foliage" (1925), "Wine Hill in Metzingen" (c. 1925) and "Mountain Landscape" (1925), their visual idiom both generally and in details corresponding to the language of Fauvism. Classifying Walter's late works according to the chronology of their stylistic changes, it becomes obvious that his Fauvist-like expression evolved on the existing basis around 1925 when the increase in colour brightness and contrast effects was combined with simplification and softening of forms, as well as their proportional enlargement against the picture size. An impulsive and sketchy manner of painting more than before expanded from studies to large-scale pictures, reducing the role of detailed preliminaries. At this moment Walter may have been acting like a person who begins to write in larger letters because of failing eyesight, but his profound sense of colour materiality transformed the probable defect into artistic effects, achieved by a painter who steadily explored and interpreted the rules of his changing visual

experience. The symmetrically sloping outline of the wine hill appears as a translucent vision floating in the sky – a scenery impression reflected in the flow of fragmentary contours. Here we see that colours of the represented objects can expand beyond them or even leave them and fly away somewhere, or the drawing elements – reverberate in other parts of the pictorial space, but the whole is suffused with the "melody" of the wine hill.

In the second part of the 1920s the artist moved away from the glare and contrariety of nearly spectral colours that were however always mixed on the palette; at the same time he intensified the plastic activity of texture. Walter took up working in the technique of loose brushwork and using uneven underpainting exposures, but he did it more freely, roughly and coarsely than in the Dresden period. The emphasised surface elements flew together into a powerful tide and most often gave the impression that everything in the picture is floating, rolling, trundling or forcing its way against the wind in several streams leftwards along the viewpoint of the spectator. Parallel layers, stripes and flakes seemed to sweep by each other and carry the figurative motifs of landscapes and still-lifes that sometimes were drifting in a slow, dignified procession but elsewhere appeared as merely associative reference marks in the mass undulating texture.

In those studies of this time where colour has not yet become completely neutralised but texture has already acquired the boldness of freshly ploughed or dug-up land Walter even approached Fauvism even closer than before. In terms of style, his "Orchard" (1928, private collection) can be paired with Maurice de Vlaminck's "Houses at Chatou" (c. 1905–1906). Walter's texture and compositional solutions often showed marked similarities with the vigorous expression of early-20th-century French Fauves, but his mixed shades in their tinges differed from the colour range of the Parisians. One of Walter's favourite shades of increasing importance in these years was teal and many of his landscapes from about 1927–1928 attest to his efforts to explore it in a changing intensity, variations and arrangements. The particular role of teal in Walter's colour composition provided him with extensive possibilities to reveal and combine its impastoed, vibrant, greenish, bluish and blackish variations. Saturated shades of dark teal were predominantly used in an interplay with ochre-yellow and brown hues with warmly orange or coolish red tinges. The energy of interaction seems to pulsate between the sky and a medieval town in a combination of bluish-green nocturnal teal and darkening red that Walter experienced on the Island of San Pietro near Sardinia in 1927 (private collection). The dark outlines of forms are blurred as seams where the pattern of the fabric is worn thin, and unlike the refined illusory contouring of the Dresden years that appeared in places of dark underpainting uncovered by the upper layer these new works give the impression that it is not colour itself that coats the surface so unevenly and the actual draughtsman here

has been the ravaging time.

The sense of sculptured relief in Walter's painting of the late 1920s and especially 1930 and 1931 characteristically manifested itself not so much in illusory modelling of space and volume as in an active, thick impasto or its impression. Somewhat resinous brown was raised to the rank of the prevailing colour with deviations into different directions and additional tinges of greyish or greenish earth shades, lightened or darkened variations of teal and most often lustreless cinereous black. The result was very similar to the Cubist "peculiarly harmonious key whose modesty and prevalence of dark, warm shades evoked the palette of the Old Masters in museums" (Eduards Kļaviņš). Certain areas of picture surfaces looked like knaggy wood, splints, shavings, engraving and overglaze painting; various impressed and stamped textures were used. A number of canvases from this phase can be paralleled with variations of the same compositions in charcoal drawings and simplified improvisations with a dry brush on absorbing surfaces that integrated the brownish colour of paper or cardboard into the colour schemes of these works (cf. examples from David Finn's donation to LNMA).

Walter often divided the motifs of the studied landscape into more or less geometrised elements and used their repetition composing its rhythmical structure. This Cubist-like "analysis" of nature in his late work went hand in hand with softness of painterly expression and the wish to unite the whole into a powerful, vibrant stream whose elements do not evoke alarming chaos but are rather inclined towards harmonious interplay. This plastic dynamism and painterly vigour permeate still-lifes from around 1930 in the collection of LNMA. In the context of Walter's stylistic turns in his Berlin period the traditional objectivity of the still-life is less important than the possibility to prearrange a three-dimensional visual score and then "play" it more or less accurately. Therefore one should not be surprised about the relevance of Walter's violin for the explanation of relationships in the setting, because the colour melody and achitecture of forms in still-lifes was deliberately composed already before he got to his easel. The "Expressive Still-Life" (c. 1930, LNMA) from the former Collection Heinrich Lüder-Lühr seems to epitomise, in terms of Walter's writings, the most demonstrative "missing link" no more between Impressionism and Abstract Art that was topical for himself but between his late work and the aesthetic conceptions in the painting of the 1970s and 1980s in his native country. The horizontally flowing composition with its many lanes shows some affinity with the already discussed harbour scenes of the 1920s. The whole picture vibrates in a massive wave of shades and strokes, and every element resonates elsewhere in the pictorial space. Even if this mighty, but finely nuanced stream of grey tinged with brown and green was not used as a direct prototype by other Latvian artists, its flow in the

art scene of the 20th century was later resumed in an important development of Latvian painting finding particularly bright expression in the art of Edvards Grūbe.

CONCLUSION, RETROSPECTION AND ECHOES

Much of Walter's brown impasto was used in Tirolian landscapes that he painted during 1930 and 1931 summer trips to the neighbourhood of Imst and Landeck in Northern Tirol. A typical motif of Landeck was transformed into the "Landscape with a Bridge" (1931, LNMA), previously possessed by Ernst Zierer. In the nearby Imst, the local writer Hermann Spiehs 1931 came to know Walter, surrounded by his students, as a "real East Prussian Eliseus" who, "despite his age, sparkles with the energy of art and youthful creative vigour". After the many years of regular summer travelling between the mountains and the sea, this turned out to be the last *plein-air* trip for the imposing guest of Tirol with his "clever faun's head" behind horn-rims.

On 6 November 1927 Walter was granted German citizenship for himself and his wife. At that time she was working with Terese Pezko-Schubert's string quartet, and in the late 1920s Walter repeatedly painted these four women musicians (private collection). After 1919, when the violinist was listed as Walter-Matthaes in the Berlin address directory, most of the later press publications and advertisements informed about Gertrud Walter-Kurau.

The short summary of Walter's theories in Zierer's monograph, published in the late 1930, ended with a promise that the painter's own book would be coming soon. The compilation of statements recorded in different periods, however, was not a simple task, and it preoccupied the artist at least until 12 December 1932 when he finished a letter to Else Lohmann with his resolution "to get down to the conclusion about colour composition ultimately". Late in the evening of 19 December Ernst Zierer phoned Jakob Belsen to inform him about the death of their mutual friend at his home in Gervinusstraße. The death was caused by an infarction resulting from *angina pectoris*, and the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* associated this accident with deep depressions that the artist was suffering from after the recent loss of his wife. Several letters confirm that the year was passing under the sign of trouble and sorrow. Gertrud had a chronic nephritic disease, and complications starting in February 1932 lead to the end of her final struggle early in the morning of 30 July in a health resort near Bayreuth. Sleepless nights at the sickbed of his wife exhausted Walter, but in September he forced himself to take up working and fell seriously ill himself. Just in December the widower turned to unanswered letters, sub-

mitted two large-scale landscapes to the exhibition of the *Berliner Secession* and hoped to get back to his usual work as soon as possible. Walter's life came to its end in the very moment when his pain was getting easier but the verge of the Third Reich's founding year was not yet completely reached.

The date 1932 in Walter's heritage so far is discovered on two different paintings. A stylised monogram *19WK◦32◦* decorates a panoramic depiction of the El-Kasr ruins in a hall of the *Vorderasiatisches Museum*, located in the south wing of the *Pergamonmuseum*. It is one of the commissions that Walter's studio carried out in 1931–1932 at request of the museum's director Walter Andrae. A different situation and atmosphere permeate the "Abstract Landscape" (1932, private collection) that the artist composed as an elaborate framework, transforming black strutting and colours of bonfire flames into a strange little town, marked by a combination of something like playing with toy blocks and acute expression. The prototype of this vision can be found on the map of Germany near Bayreuth, looking for the place-name from the inscription "buried in Berneck" after the date of Gertrud's death on the Matthaes family tombstone in Dresden.

Granting that Walter's existing undated paintings may include still other manifestations of his experiences in the last year of his life, the most suspicious in this regard are two portraits. The *Malmö Konstmuseum* in Sweden owns a late self-portrait of Walter, and its Fauvist expression suggests that the picture cannot be of an earlier date than the the second part of the 1920s. Unlike a series of other self-portraits (1914–c. 1930) that are discussed retrospectively in this chapter the painter is no more concerned with stateliness of his self-representation. To the contrary, it seems that he has plucked up his heart to look into the face of a broken and despaired man. This could possibly mirror the state of Walter after his return from Berneck into the empty home, where he realises his helplessness, confusion and pain. A juxtaposition with this self-portrait is necessary for the hypothesis that the "Violinist" in the collection of LNMA perhaps is not a study for the compositionally identical portrait of Gertrud in the Matthaes Collection in Milan (1919), but rather its much later intimate small-scale replica as a memorial sign, painted by the grief-stricken artist during his brief widowerhood, making his hand remember and most sincerely repeat the hallmarks of Gertrud's image in that appearance which epitomised her personality.

In a peculiar way, Walter's death removed the distance that had existed during his life-time and once again turned him into an important member of a German family in Latvia. The son and ex-wife of the painter were welcomed by such Berlin people for whom the influence and significance of Walter's personality was at least as great but actually still greater than in the society of Jelgava at the turn of the 20th century.

The interpretation of the teacher's artistic principles concerned a group

of young painters who identified themselves as his creative heirs and even engaged in organising activities in order to secure the continuity of his "school". A leaflet preserved together with other publications for the memorial exhibition in the *Kunsthandlung Viktor Hartberg* informs that "the Walter-Kurau Cooperative (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Walter-Kurau*) (..) continues the teaching practice of Walter-Kurau".

The catalogue of the memorial exhibition contains a promise that the Association of Walter-Kurau Friends and Students would publish a book of his theoretical legacy in the nearest future. It is hard to guess how sustainable would be the cooperative capacity of this association in a situation different from the rapidly rising repressive regime of the Nazis that wrecked artistic developments and human lives. To escape the Holocaust, Mr. and Mrs. Zierer as well as Jakob Belsen with his Jewish wife fled to the USA. The aspiration for "far-going abstraction" was made *non grata*, and its adherents had to accept the price of banishment from the official art life of Germany.

Succeeding the late teacher has been stressed in Otto Manigk's biographies, and these sources imply that until the outbreak of WWII he contrived to assemble like-minded enthusiasts, organising studio classes and *plein-air* courses that were held on the Island Usedom since 1933. Manigk propagated Walter's postulates among his colleagues and made efforts to maintain their spirit of fraternity. By the end of the 1930s the circle of active artistic participants perhaps shrank to the creative companionship of Manigk and the refined colourist Karen Schacht, and their oeuvre gives the most spectacular pictorial evidence about a dedicated continuation of Walter's traditions. Unlike those paintings that were created by students and other artists of his "circle" in a close proximity of their inspirer and, brought together, would render the art of his emigration period in pictures of a subjectively multifarious mirror gallery, the work of Manigk and Schacht marked an independent line of continuity. In their landscapes, still-lifes, nudes and genre scenes they remained true to the abstraction-oriented vision of the "paintable existence". Its expressions at times referred directly to the Walter's late fluently dynamic style of vigorously pulsating brushwork, in which the painter had lost the sometimes dryly constructive manner of the early 1920s but showed close affinity with the structure and motifs of Fauvist compositions.

To a certain extent it is possible to accpept the opinion, that the series of successive hindrances from Walter's death to the Nazi regime and ultimately the culture-political restrictions of East Germany impeded his school from a full rise and expansion. Nevertheless this fragile thread running through the art scene of Germany can be considered also from a different standpoint. Since the German history took a totalitarian turn, the young artists of Walter's school could not engage in a full-blooded professional

life whose tempo would keep them away from continuous lingering in the past. In the context of the harsh reality their practice with Walter acquired the shine of a golden age and was remembered as the prime of their life. The space of thoughts, quests and observations between the foreground of impression and the horizon of abstraction where he had been practising incessantly, could be now used as a half-secret pictorial refuge from the socially political disasters of the outer world.

The Walter-influenced artistic escapism of the Usedom painters is similar to the reaction of 20th-century Latvian art against collisions of the same kind. In the light of Ingrid von der Dollen's statement about Walter's choice to stop in the age of Cézanne it becomes obvious that the art of his native country for a number of reasons spent the whole 20th century in this area from Impressionism and Post-Impressionism to early Modernism, cultivating "moderate experiments, predominance of colourism, deep appreciation for professional skill, importance of still-life and landscape, as well as mixed genres" and even in an abstracting practice retaining "respect for the real environment as the source of impressions, associations, experience and knowledge" (Dace Lamberga). Although the Latvian "harmonious formalism", as it was phrased by Eduards Kļaviņš, could not share the whole of that the Cézannesque dramatism which had turned Walter's late painting into a sublimation of an objective vision of nature, the development of Latvian art in the 1960s and 1970s enclosed his nearly unexplored oeuvre into a context from which it cannot and should not be removed.

The plenty of expressions about "Walter's tragedy" that have been published since the 1930s is most radically contrasted by the *B. Z. am Mittag* that described his life as "if not entirely happy, then quite successful anyhow" (1933). The persistently careful attitude of Walter's students during his memorial exhibition made the journalist believe that the late artist would not be consigned to future oblivion: "He was enclosed by a circle of devote and assured students who care about the memory of their master in unfading love. And exactly this memory will guarantee that people will always look with respect and appreciation at any work of Walter-Kurau." This prediction did not come literally true, but it was not quite wrong, because the native country of the artist succeeded his German students in this mission.

Johann Walter in the history of art cannot epitomise devotion to patriotic and not in the least to national-patriotic ideals. But he was committed to the realm of visual relationships that rewarded its citizen with a permanent yet unattainable horizon of anticipated consummation and never-ending creative unrest. Mastering the pictorial idiom of various 20th century Modernist movements, he reworked it into such structures which still on the verge of the 1930s and in the very last paintings resound in waves of a rhythm that was developed at the turn of the 20th century and, rich in

repetitions and reverberations, ever more distinguished him from his Latvian and German contemporaries. Both the young painter in Jelgava as his aged successor in Berlin most convincingly visualised the musical dialogue of sounds and their reverberations in the frequent paintings of water reflections. The "musical sensibility and masculine power of expression", presciently recognised by St. Petersburg critic Friedrich Groes in 1899, were his instruments until the end of his road.

Western art histories do not include Walter in those constellations in which he appeared in the context of the *Entartete Kunst* or in Kurt Kusenberg's anticipation that, due to his spiritual position, Walter-Kurau would be eventually named togethe with *Die Brücke* artists. A conjunctive element that would, however, allow to integrate the whole oeuvre of Walter from his Jelgava period up to the latest works into the panorama of European art in the 20th century without discarding its canon is the subject of analogies between visual art and music that preoccupied him in every stage of his stylistic journey. The community of late 19th- and early-20th-century modern painters can be pictured as a big orchestra, and the violinist Walter who resorted to his instrument in order to elucidate certain visual relationships to his students has a place of his own in this international band.

REMARKS AND PERSPECTIVES

The given summary is based on the monograph published in November 2009. The single update that differs from this source is the later discovery that the full name of the art critic *F-s* who was writing for the *St. Petersburger Zeitung* and deserves a prominent place in Walter's historiography is Friedrich Groes, whose coded pen-name was not decrypted by the moment of publication. Complementary discoveries in various branches of an empirical study can continue to be made endlessly, but the available updates basically are minor details that would not radically change the expressed conclusions and suppositions, but occasionally would help e. g. to greater accuracy in the provisional dating of artworks.

The exhibition and the book inspired some owners of previously unknown Walter's paintings to inform experts about the values in their possession. Apart from this resonance, fragments of his oeuvre continue to emerge in the international art market and thereby in the focus of researchers. The writer of this summary keeps track of all events with some reference to Walter's heritage and collects facts and images that eventually may reveal certain aspects of his work in a new light and help to prove or decline some of the current versions with greater certainty. The monograph can provide material for the study of various so far not yet profoundly

interpreted aspects that may become topical in the context of broader art history issues and transcend the framework of a biography.

The most desirable prospects of this research would involve making Walter's art more popular outside Latvia, but the author is well aware that the realisation of this task will be greatly driven by the momentum of her previous work. Some metaphors referred to the preamble of this study from now on are no more usable in an unaltered form, because they have lost their relevance. The painter who was the "present stranger" and the "most mysterious top figure" of Latvian art history has turned into a relatively well explored personality, and his portrayal already contrasts with less investigated areas of the general scene, inspiring the writer to shift her focus of research.

PUBLICATION AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

I. Monograph

Johans Valters (= Johann Walter (Walter-Kurau)). – Rīga: Neputns, 2009. – 400 lpp; 417 il. German summary. ISBN 978-9984-807-53-9.

II. Published Articles

1. Jānis Valters latviešu mākslas vēsturē: Pētniecības problēmas un uzdevumi. Ieskats jaunākajos atklājumos // Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis. – 1998. – Nr. 1/2. – 69.–75. lpp.
2. Nepazīstamais Jānis Valters: Dažas tuvplāna studijas topošai biogrāfijai // Studija. – 1998. – Nr. 3/4. – 45.–55. lpp.
3. Ein Maler aus Mitau: Die Kunst Johann Walters um 1900 und ihr Forschungsstand in der lettischen Kunstgeschichte // Bildende Kunst und Architektur im Baltikum um 1900: Greifswalder Kunsthistorische Studien. Bd. 3 / Hg. von Elita Grosmane, Juta Keevallik, Brigitte Hartel und Bernfried Lichtnau. – Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999. – S. 144–159.
4. Petras Kalpokas and Latvian Art in the Early 20th Century // Acta Baltica '99. – Kaunas: Aesti, 1999. – P. 128–140.
5. Jelgavas periods Jāņa Valtera daiļradē // Letonica. – 1999. – Nr. 1 (3). – 25.–68. lpp.
6. Jauni materiāli par Jāņa Valtera daiļradi: Gleznotāja darbu izstāde Ivonnas Veihertes galerijā // Materiāli par Latvijas kultūrvidi: Fakti un uztvere / Sast. Anita Rožkalne. – Rīga: Zinātne, 2000. – 90.–111. lpp.
7. Jānis Valters Drēzdenē // Materiāli par kultūru mūsdienu Latvijas kon-

tekstā / Sast. Anita Rožkalne. – Rīga: Zinātne, 2001. – 134.–169. lpp.

8. 8.1. Rigaer Kunstleben um 1900 und erste Anregungen zur künstlerischen Entwicklung von Ida Kerkovius // Ida Kerkovius (1879–1970). Gemälde, Pastelle, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Teppiche: Retrospektive. Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg, 8. April bis 27. Mai 2001; Museum für ausländische Kunst Lettlands, 15. Juni bis 29. Juni 2001 / Bearb. von Gerhard Leistner. – Regensburg: Stiftung Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg, 2001. – S. 27–31. 8.2. Rīgas mākslas dzīve ap 1900. gadu un pirmās ierosmes Idas Kerkoviusas radošajai attīstībai // Ida Kerkoviusa (1879–1970). Gleznas, pasteļi, akvareļi, zīmējumi, gobelēni: Retrospektīva / Sast. Gerhards Leistners. – Regensburg: Stiftung Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg, 2001. – 27.–31. lpp.
9. Jāņa Valtera pedagoģiskā darbība un teorētiskie uzskati Berlīnes posmā (1917–1932) // Latvijas mākslas un mākslas vēstures likteņgaitas / Sast. Rūta Kaminska. – Rīga: Neputns, 2001. – 112.–129. lpp. (Materiāli Latvijas mākslas vēsturei.)
10. Jāņa Valtera dzīves un daiļrades liecības no Nānsenu ģimenes kolekcijas // Materiāli par Latvijas kultūru / Sast. Anita Rožkalne. – Rīga: Zinātne, 2002. – 100.–119. lpp.
11. Revealing a Hidden Life – Landscape as a Visual Metaphor in Latvian Art of the Early 20th Century // Koht ja Paik. Place and Location II / Ed. by Virve Sarapik, Kadri Tüür, Mari Laanemets. – Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, 2002. – P. 201–214.
12. Viens cilvēka mūžs jeb ieskats Rīgas Mākslas biedrības vēsturē (1870–1938) // Augusts Mencendorfs (1821–1901) un viņa laiks: Konferences materiāli. – Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes žurnāla "Latvijas Vēsture" fonds, 2003. – 83.–93. lpp.
13. "Peldētāji zēni" Jāņa Valtera gleznieciībā // Latvijas māksla tuvplānos: Rakstu krājums / Sast. Kristiāna Ābele. – Rīga: Neputns, 2003. – 66.–77. lpp. (Materiāli Latvijas mākslas vēsturei.)
14. Vom Impressionismus zur Moderne – Die stilistische Entwicklung von Johann Walter zwischen 1900 und 1930 // Studien zur Kunstgeschichte im Baltikum: Homburger Gespräche 1999–2001. Heft 18 / Hg. von Lars Olof Larsson. – Kiel: Martin-Carl-Adolf-Böckler-Stiftung, 2003. – S. 87–110.
15. Valters Jānis (īst. v. Johans Teodors Eižens Valters (*Walter*), no 1906 Valters-Kūravs (*Walter-Kurau*) // Māksla un arhitektūra biogrāfijās. – Rīga: Preses nams, 2003. – 4. sēj. / Atb. red. Anita Vanaga. – 16.–18. lpp.
16. Der heimatliche Vorfrühling: Zu Naturauffassung und Heimatvorstellungen in der bildenden Kunst Lettlands um 1900 // Literatur und nationale Identität IV. Landschaft und Territorium: Zur Literatur, Kunst und Geschichte des 19. und Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts im Ostseeraum: Finnland, Estland, Lettland, Litauen und Polen / Hg. von Yrjö Varpio und Maria Zadencka. – Stockholm: Historisches Institut der Universität Stockholm, 2004. – S. 125–150. (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia 25.)

17. Rigaer Kunstszene und ihre Protagonisten während der Zeit des Rigaer Kunstvereins (1870–1938) // Der ethnische Wandel im Baltikum zwischen 1850–1950: Neun Beiträge zum 13. Baltischen Seminar 2001 / Hg. von Heinrich Wittram. – Lüneburg: Carl-Schirren-Gesellschaft, 2005. – S. 23–52. (Baltische Seminare: Bd. 11.)
18. Latvijas mākslinieki Eiropas kartē 19. gs. beigās un 20. gs. sākumā: Ieskats migrācijas maršrutos, izpausmēs un rezultātos // Mākslas Vēsture un Teorija. – 2006. – Nr. 5. – 49.–59. lpp.
19. Tautieši un novadnieki: Nacionālais jautājums un teritoriālā identitāte Latvijas mākslas dzīvē 19. gs. beigās un 20. gs. sākumā // Māksla un politiskie konteksti: Rakstu krājums / Sast. Daina Lāce. – Rīga: Neputns, 2006. – 39.–63. lpp.
20. Jēkaba Belzēna odiseja: 1870–1937 // Mākslas Vēsture un Teorija. – 2007. – Nr. 9. – 5.–26. lpp.
21. Johans Valters-Kūravs: Biogrāfisks pārskats = Johann Walter-Kurau – Ein biografischer Überblick // Zwischen Baltikum und Berlin: Der Maler Johann Walter-Kurau (1869–1932) als Künstler und Lehrer. [Ausst.-Kat.] / Hg. von Ralf F. Hartmann. – Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2009. – S. 21–52 (LV), 55–90 (DE).
22. Johans Valters un vācu ekspresionisms // Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs: Muzeja raksti 2 / Sast. Dace Lamberga. – Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs, 2010. – 19.–27. lpp.

III. Conference Papers and Presentations

I – international conference / **A** – abstract

1. Jāņa Valtera mantojums Letonikas pētījumu lokā // Mākslas zinātne Latvijā un tās perspektīvas. LZA sēde 1997. gada 7. maijā.
2. The Painting of Jānis Valters (Johann Walter) in a Cross-Flow of Trends and Traditions // The Second Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe. Vilnius University, 20–23 August 1997. (**I, A**)
3. Petras Kalpokas and Latvian Art in the Early 20th Century // Lietuva un Latvija 20. gadsimtā: Starptautiska zinātniska konference Kauņā 1998. gada 22.–24. oktobrī. (**I, A**)
4. Jāņa Valtera pedagoģiskā darbība un teorētiskie uzskati Berlīnes posmā (1917–1932) // Latvijas mākslas un mākslas vēstures likteņgaitas: Sestie Borisa Vipera piemiņas lasījumi. Rīgā 1998. gada 6. novembrī. (**A**)
5. Jauni materiāli par Jāņa Valtera daiļradi. Gleznotāja darbu izstāde Ivonnas Veihertes galerijā // Meklējumi un atradumi: Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūta zinātniskā konference 1999. gada 20.–21. aprīlī.
6. "Peldētāji zēni" Jāņa Valtera gleznieciībā // Latvijas māksla tuvplānā: Septītie Borisa Vipera piemiņas lasījumi Rīgā 1999. gada 9. septembrī. (**A**)

7. Vom Impressionismus zur Moderne: Die Stilentwicklung Johann Walters 1900–1930 // Homburger Gespräch 1999. Bad Homburg vor der Höhe, 10.–13. Oktober 1999. (**I**)
8. Jānis Valters Drēzdenē // Meklējumi un atradumi: LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūta zinātniskā konference Rīgā 2000. gada 13. aprīlī. (**A**)
9. Revealing a Hidden Life – Landscape as a Visual Metaphor in Latvian Art of the Early 20th Century // Place and Location II – Culture and Landscape: International Seminar in Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn, October 13–14, 2000. (**I, A**)
10. Jāņa Valtera dzīves un daiļrades liecības no Nānsenu ģimenes kolekcijas // Meklējumi un atradumi: LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūta zinātniskā konference 2001. gada 24. aprīlī.
11. Jānis Valters un latviešu nacionālā glezniecības skola // Nacionālā skola 20. gadsimta Latvijas mākslā: Devītie Borisa Vipera piemiņas lasījumi Rīgā 2001. gada 5. oktobrī. (**A**)
12. Rigaer Kunstszene und ihre Protagonisten während der Zeit des Rigaer Kunstvereins (1870–1938) // Der ethnische Wandel im Baltikum zwischen 1850 und 1950: 13. Baltisches Seminar der Carl-Schirren-Gesellschaft e. V., Ost-Akademie Lüneburg, 9.–11. November 2001. (**I**)
13. Viens cilvēka mūžs jeb ieskats Rīgas Mākslas biedrības vēsturē (1870–1938) // Augusts Mencendorfs (1821–1901) un viņa laiks: Konference Mencendorfa namā Rīgā 2002. gada 16. maijā.
14. Mūzika 20. gadsimta glezniecībā: Jāņa Valtera gadījums // Latvijas mākslas un arhitektūras tematiskie un tipoloģiskie aspekti: Desmitie Borisa Vipera piemiņas lasījumi Rīgā 2002. gada 26. septembrī. (**A**)
15. Landscape in the Seaside Air – Some Aspects of the Nature Vision in Latvian Painting at the Turn of the 20th Century // Landschaften der Ostsee in Literatur und Kunst. Landscapes of the Baltic Sea in Literature and Art: Visby Symposium, Visby, 28 November–1 December 2002 (**I;** publ.: *www.balticwriters.org/landscape/abele.htm*).
16. Jānis Valters un mākslas dzīve Jelgavā 19. gadsimta beigās un 20. gadsimta sākumā // Jelgava: Arhitektūras un mākslas virtuālā rekonstrukcija. 11. Borisa Vipera piemiņas lasījumi Rīgā un Jelgavā 2003. gada 6.–7. novembrī.
17. Johann Walter-Kurau // Deutschbaltische Kunst – Malerei und Graphik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Seminar in Liepāja/Libau vom 16. bis 18. März 2004. (**I**)
18. Nacionālais jautājums Latvijas mākslas dzīvē 19. gs. beigās un 20. gs. sākumā // Māksla un politiskie konteksti: 12. Borisa Vipera piemiņas lasījumi Rīgā 2004. gada 4. novembrī. (**A**)
19. Johann Walter-Kurau // Deutschbaltische Kunst – Malerei und Graphik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Seminar in der Ostsee-Akadamie, Lübeck-Travemünde, 3.–5. Dezember 2004. (**I**)
20. Latvijas mākslinieki Eiropas kartē: Migrācijas maršruti, izpausmes un rezultāti // Letonikas I kongress Rīgā 2005. gada 24.–25. oktobrī.

21. Fünfzig Jahre Mitauer Kunstleben – Von der Gemäldeausstellung 1894 bis 1944 // Homburger Gespräch der Martin-Carl-Adolf-Böckler-Stiftung Mare Balticum in Bad Homburg v. d. Höhe und Marburg. 18.–22. Oktober 2006. (**I**)
22. Deutsche im Kunstleben Mitaus/Jelgavas in der Zeit von 1894 bis zur Umsiedlung // Baltische Deutsche: Der deutsche Bevölkerungsteil Rigas und anderer Städte von 1900 bis zur Umsiedlung. Deutsch-lettisch-estnische Begegnung vom 27. bis 29. April 2007 in Sankelmark. (**I**)
23. Johann Walter-Kurau (1869–1932) // Deutschbaltische Kunst – Malerei und Graphik im 19. und 20. Jhdt.: Seminar in Tartu/Dorpat, Estland vom 8. bis 10. Mai 2007. (**I**)
24. Autoru meklējumos: Baltijas vācu mākslas kritiķi 19.–20. gs. mijā un viņu ieguldījums latviešu mākslas popularizēšanā // Personība mākslas procesos: XV Borisa Vipera piemiņas lasījumi Rīgā 2007. gada 29. novembrī. (**A**)
25. Johans Valters un vācu ekspresionisms // Vācija un Latvija laikā starp diviem pasaules kariem: mākslas dzīves kopsakarības. Latvijas Nacionālā mākslas muzeja starptautiskā zinātniska konference Vācijas kultūras mēneša "O!Vācija" ietvaros Rīgā 2008. gada 28. maijā. (**I, A**)
26. Jugendstil, Freilichtmalerei und symbolistisches Naturerlebnis in Lettland um 1900 // Jugendstil im Baltikum: 20. Baltisches Seminar der Carl-Schirren-Gesellschaft e. V. im Brömsehaus, Lüneburg, 14.–16. November 2008. (**I)**
27. Acoustic Associations in the Visual Arts: The Latvian Experience at the Turn of the 20th Century // Between Silence and Sound: The Migration of Artistic Ideas in the Works of Čiurlionis and his Contemporaries. International Conference. Lithuanian Art Museum, National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, 22nd June 2009. (**I, A**)

IV. Exhibition

"JOHANS VALTERS / JOHANN WALTER. 1869–1932"
(curated by Kristiāna Ābele and Aija Brasliņa)
in the Latvian National Museum of Art
(20 November 2009–10 January 2010)

ABBREVIATIONS

JHAM – Ģederts Eliass Jelgava History and Art Museum
LNMA – Latvian National Museum of Art
LSMA – Latvian State Art Museum
LSPA – Latvian Society for the Promotion of Art
RCAM – Riga City Art Museum
SMPK – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz