

NEW WEIMAR

planning game



KLASSIK
STIFTUNG
WEIMAR

LITERATURE

Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Hrsg.):
Nietzsche-Archiv.
Berlin; München 2023

Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Hrsg.):
Neues Museum Weimar.
München 2019

Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Hrsg.):
Das Haus unter den hohen Pappeln.
Wiesbaden 2016

Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Hrsg.):
Krieg der Geister: Weimar als
Symbolort vor und nach 1914.
Dresden 2014

Päpke, Corinne; Becker, Ingeborg:
Hommage à Harry Graf Kessler.
Berlin 2007

Post, Bernhard; Werner, Dietrich:
Herrscher in der Zeitenwende.
Wilhelm Ernst von Sachsen-
Weimar-Eisenach 1876-1923.
Jena 2006

planning game
**NEW
WEIMAR**

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HENRY VAN DE VELDE

HENRY VAN DE VELDE

* 3 April 1863 in Antwerp, Belgium

† 25 October 1957 in Zurich, Switzerland



- Who was Henry van de Velde?
Why was he in Weimar?
What were his plans in and for Weimar?
What ideas shaped his understanding of art?



- From Henry van de Velde's point of view, think of some arguments for and against modern art in Weimar.

VAN DE VELDE

BIOGRAPHY



- Van Velde studied painting, but focused more and more on architecture and the arts and crafts after 1892. He became famous for his outstanding designs.
- In 1894, he married Maria Sèthe, with whom he had five children.
- He came to Weimar in 1902 as the arts and crafts advisor to Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst. In 1907, he became the director of the School of Arts and Crafts.
- Faced with growing hostility toward foreigners, he submitted his resignation to the Grand Duke in 1914 and recommended Walter Gropius as his successor.
- In 1917, he left Germany permanently and lived in Belgium and Switzerland in later years.
- In Belgium, he later became the director of the La Cambre school of design (in Brussels) and professor at Ghent University.



Van de Velde with his family in his Haus Hohe Pappeln, 1912

VAN DE VELDE INSTITUTION



- The duchy's arts and crafts trade was suffering from dismal sales. As the artistic advisor to the Grand Duke, Van de Velde was responsible for developing a modern design and improving production methods.
- In 1902, he founded the Arts and Crafts Seminar, and in 1907, he became the director of the Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts.
- Together with Harry Graf Kessler (an important patron of the arts), he wanted to transform Weimar into a new artistic centre of the avant-garde which would draw the attention of artists and intellectuals throughout Europe.
- In order to provide for his large family, he depended on the regular income generated by the School of Arts and Crafts, as well as private contracts as a designer.
- In 1906, Harry Graf Kessler was forced to leave Weimar. For Van de Velde, it was the loss of a long-time supporter and important ally.



The Grand Ducal Saxon Art School and School of Arts and Crafts (right), designed by Henry van de Velde

VAN DE VELDE

ART



- Henry van de Velde designed buildings, furnishings and consumer goods, like dishware and curtains, as well as women's apparel and advertising materials.
- In the process, he developed a unique style, characterised by clear forms and high functionality.
- In designing consumer goods, he hoped to use his artistic talent to positively influence as many classes of society as possible.
- He designed and built his own home, the "Haus Hohe Pappeln" in 1907/08. Soon it became a meeting place for avant-garde artists from all around Europe and culturally-interested individuals from Weimar.
- The plain and functional style of his house also evoked criticism in Weimar, as it clashed with the middle-class taste for more elaborate, decorative architecture.



Henry van de Velde:
Ceiling lamp (1903/1904) and vase (1904)

VAN DE VELDE

QUOTATIONS



“Art should penetrate all areas of human life and develop a new culture of form on the basis of very profane objects. Apartment and shop fixtures, furniture and lamps, windows and dishware should be designed to be functional, also when modern technical possibilities are applied.”

Henry van de Velde
Art and Crafts Sermons for Laypeople, 1902

“The idea was to initiate a new, third Weimar epoch, centred on the New Style to which I had devoted myself.”

Henry van de Velde
The Story of My Life, 1962

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY



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ELISABETH FÖRSTER-NIETZSCHE

ELISABETH FÖRSTER-NIETZSCHE

* 10 July 1846 in Röcken (Saxony-Anhalt)

† 8 November 1935 in Weimar



Who was Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche?

Why was she in Weimar?

What were her plans in and for Weimar?

What ideas shaped her understanding of art?



From Förster-Nietzsche's point of view, think of some arguments for and against modern art in Weimar.

Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche

BIOGRAPHY



- Förster-Nietzsche married the anti-Semite Bernhard Förster in 1885 at age 39 and followed him to Paraguay. Her husband committed suicide after realizing his concept of an “Aryan colony” had failed.
- She returned to Germany in 1893 and sought a new purpose in life.
- Her brother Friedrich Nietzsche (an internationally renowned philosopher) had suffered a nervous breakdown four years earlier.
- She began editing and publishing his works, founded the Nietzsche Archive, and later cared for her ailing brother.
- As the years went by, her activities became increasingly influenced by nationalistic ideas. She became a member of the right-wing DNVP, the German National People’s Party.



Elisabeth
Förster-Nietzsche,
1900

Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche

INSTITUTION



- She founded the Nietzsche Archive in Naumburg/ Saale in 1894 with the purpose of collecting and preserving Nietzsche's writings. Two years later, she relocated the archive in Weimar.
- A highly acclaimed Goethe and Schiller Archive had recently opened in Weimar. Förster-Nietzsche hoped to build onto the town's "glorious past".
- At the same time, she also tried to herald a new intellectual era with the publication of her brother's works: Like Goethe and Schiller in the period of Weimar Classicism, she wished to make Friedrich Nietzsche the defining figure of "New Weimar".
- She organised an internationally renowned "salon" - a meeting place for contemporary writers, artists and intellectuals.
- To increase the popularity of her archive, she fostered contacts with famous artists like Henry van de Velde in hopes they would form a long-standing relationship with Weimar.



Elisabeth
Förster-Nietzsche
with guests at the
Nietzsche Archive

Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche

ART



- Despite her politically conservative viewpoints, she was quite open to modern art.
- Together with Harry Graf Kessler (a wealthy patron of the arts), she convinced Weimar's grand duke to appoint the Belgian "all-round artist" Henry van de Velde as his artistic advisor.
- She commissioned Van de Velde to redesign the rooms of the Nietzsche Archive. She was very close to Van de Velde's family and his children even called her "Aunt Nietzsche".
- She always tried to present the archive and Weimar as the centre of the artistic avant-garde and convey the progressive spirit of the times through modern design.
- However, she was always careful to keep in good favour with Weimar's court, which, for the most part, viewed these avantgarde activities with scepticism.



The library
and lecture
room in the
Nietzsche Archive

Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche

QUOTATIONS



“Another life task is taking all my time and energy, namely, caring for my only and dear brother, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, conserving his works and describing his life and thoughts – therefore, I have little choice but to bid colonial matters farewell.”

Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche, 1894

“What I have always believed we need is the most basic consumer goods, produced according to solid, artistic principles, and especially inexpensive consumer goods, which the general populace would be able to afford and take deep joy in.”

Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's letter (1900), explaining why Van de Velde should be appointed artistic advisor to the Duke in Weimar

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WILHELM ERNST

GRAND DUKE

GRAND DUKE WILHELM ERNST
OF SAXE-WEIMAR-EISENACH

* 10 June 1876 in Weimar

† 24 April 1923 in Heinrichau, Silesia



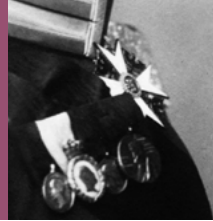
- Who was the Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst?
Why was he in Weimar?
What were his plans in and for Weimar?
What ideas shaped his understanding of art?



- From Wilhelm Ernst's point of view, think of some arguments for or against modern art in Weimar.

Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst

BIOGRAPHY



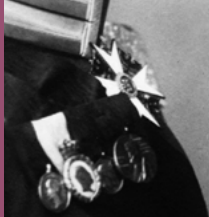
- As the eldest son of the Hereditary Grand Duke Carl August, Wilhelm Ernst had a happy childhood.
- He was sent to secondary school in Kassel in 1890 where he was supervised by a strict instructor.
- He had a good relationship with his father, whose upstanding, traditional character served as a role model for the young prince.
- After his father died in 1894 and his grandfather passed away in 1901, Wilhelm Ernst became Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach at the age of 25 without being sufficiently prepared for his duties as regent.
- Despite the heavy burden, he proved to have a talent for state affairs.
- The Grand Duke was forced to abdicate in 1918 to make room for a democratic state - the Weimar Republic.



Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst
of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach

Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst

INSTITUTION



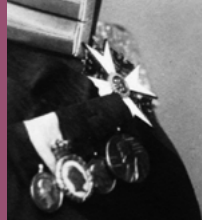
- As Grand Duke, Wilhelm Ernst was responsible for the welfare and reputation of Weimar. Promoting culture had always played an important role for the dukes of previous generations.
- Following a recommendation by Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche (sister of the great philosopher) and Harry Graf Kessler (an influential patron of the arts), he appointed the Belgian “all-round” artist Henry van de Velde to be his artistic advisor in Weimar in 1902.
- Van de Velde’s designs and ideas were supposed to revive the crisis-ridden arts and crafts trade in the region.
- One year later, the Grand Duke granted Harry Graf Kessler permission to supervise the „Permanent Art Exhibition” in Weimar.
- However, he tended to avoid becoming too involved in aesthetic matters so as not to evoke the ire of the Emperor in Berlin.



Grand Duke
Wilhelm Ernst
in the skylight room
in the Museum
of Art and Arts
and Crafts, 1903

Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst

ART



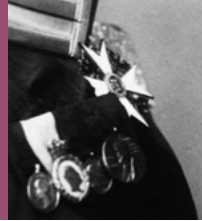
- When it came to matters of art, Wilhelm Ernst consulted with Harry Graf Kessler, who appreciated modern art very much.
- However, Wilhelm Ernst was increasingly confronted with resistance from conservative-minded citizens in Weimar, who deferred to the viewpoints of the Emperor in Berlin.
- The conflict reached its peak in 1906 in a scandal that resulted in Harry Graf Kessler's dismissal.
- From this time on, Wilhelm Ernst turned away from modernism, supporting instead conservative, local artists and their traditional art.
- He commissioned builders to expand the City Castle with a historic-looking south wing, which was completed in 1914.
- Despite his conservative views, he appointed the modernist architect Walter Gropius to succeed Van de Velde as the new director of the Weimar Art School in 1918. Later, Gropius established the Bauhaus.



South wing of the
City Castle in Weimar

Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst

QUOTATIONS



“The Grand Duke shall honour the memory of his grandfather by doing as he would and preserving and cultivating his heritage of his line as a valuable legacy.”

Wilhelm Ernst in his first government decree, 1901

“My dismissal is due to a shortcoming in the Grand Duke, a shortcoming in mind and heart that would ultimately sabotage my every effort. He is so below-average in both respects, i.e. in terms of mind and heart, that his own understanding of these circumstances will ensure that his occasionally honest endeavours can never be of lasting success.”

Harry Graf Kessler's description of Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst in a letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 1906

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HARRY GRAF KESSLER

HARRY GRAF KESSLER

* 23 May 1868 in Paris, France

† 30 November 1937 in Lyon, France



- Who was Harry Graf Kessler?
Why was he in Weimar?
What were his plans in and for Weimar?
What ideas shaped his understanding of art?



- From Harry Graf Kessler's point of view, think of some arguments for or against modern art in Weimar.

Harry Graf Kessler

BIOGRAPHY



- The son of a Hamburg banker and Irish noblewoman, Kessler studied law in Bonn and Paris, but was more interested in art and culture.
- In 1894, he began working for an avant-garde art magazine, through which he came in contact with many of Europe's leading intellectuals.
- This is how he met Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, the sister of the famous philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. He began actively supporting the Nietzsche Archive and eventually moved to Weimar himself.
- He advised the Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst in cultural matters and modernised Weimar's cultural scene.
- Following a severe dispute with conservative citizens and members of the court, Kessler lost the favour of the Grand Duke and almost immediately left town.
- Kessler emigrated to Paris in 1933 after the National Socialists seized power.



Edvard Munch:
Portrait of
Harry Graf Kessler,
1904

Harry Graf Kessler

INSTITUTION



- Harry Graf Kessler hoped that the young Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst was one, whom he could influence in matters of art and enlist as a supporter of modernism.
- Together with Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, he convinced the Grand Duke to offer the famous Belgian “all-around” artist Henry van de Velde a position in Weimar.
- Kessler himself assumed responsibility for the “Permanent Art Exhibition” in Weimar on a honorary basis. He modernised the collection by selling old works and purchasing modern ones.
- He replaced realistic works by regional artists with works of the European avant-garde, e.g. Manet, van Gogh and Cézanne.
- However, he overestimated his influence on the Grand Duke; his exhibitions provoked a backlash among Weimar’s conservative middle class.
- In 1906, he lost the favour of the Grand Duke, along with his job as museum director.



Opening of the exhibition of the German Artists' Association at the Grand Ducal Museum in Weimar, 1906

Harry Graf Kessler

ART



- Harry Graf Kessler contributed to New Weimar primarily as an art sponsor, theorist and critic.
- He mainly emphasised the educational dimension of art, namely, its ability to teach people how to achieve inner and outer perfection, thereby raising the standard of society on the whole.
- To do this, art would have to directly and critically examine society - something that only modernism could achieve.
- His first step was to introduce the social elite (nobility and middle-class) to modern art. He assumed that the lower classes would follow their example.
- At the same time, he regarded artists as “chosen ones” with unique “predispositions”.
- Despite all his attempts to promote modernism, he misjudged the potency of popular taste and mass culture in Germany.



Dining room in Harry Graf Kessler's apartment in Weimar (1903), designed by Van de Velde

Harry Graf Kessler

QUOTATIONS



I've been "pondering what means of influence I have in Germany [...]. My conclusion is rather surprising, and indeed extraordinary. No one else in Germany has a stronger, more multi-faceted position. To exploit this in the service of German cultural renewal - mirage or possibility?"

Diary entry, 1905

"There is a desire at this court to gradually attract outstanding individuals, permanently or temporarily, but continually, so as [to create] a cultural centre and intellectual atmosphere which could bear fruits in many areas of our life."

*Harry Graf Kessler to
Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 1903*

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CITIZEN OF
WEIMAR

CITIZEN OF
WEIMAR

GUSTAV W., CITIZEN OF WEIMAR

* around 1870 in Weimar

† around 1930 in Weimar



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- Who was Gustav W.?

Why was he in Weimar?

What were his plans in and for Weimar?

What ideas shaped his understanding of art?

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- From Gustav W.'s point of view, think of some arguments for or against modern art in Weimar.

Gustav W. Citizen of Weimar

BIOGRAPHY



- Gustav W. belonged to Weimar's upper middle class. He came from an esteemed family of craftsmen who had produced interior decorations for affluent citizens and nobility for generations.
- Like many of his fellow citizens, he also saw the rise of industrial production in other parts of Germany as an existential threat to his company and prosperity. These new methods made goods cheaper to produce, and his company's turnover was shrinking.
- Nonetheless, he was one of many distinguished citizens in town who were deeply committed to promoting Weimar's culture and history.
- He regularly attended the openings of new exhibitions, hosted by the art association and the Art School, and maintained close contact to Weimar's musicians, local writers, painters and conservative intellectuals.



Society
in the ballroom
of the Wittumspalais

Gustav W. Citizen of Weimar

INSTITUTION



- Like many people in town, Gustav W. regarded Weimar as a quiet contrast to the nation's capital Berlin with its hectic lifestyle and rapid technical innovations.
- But above all, he saw Weimar as a place of classical, traditional culture. It was important to him to keep the memory of Goethe and Schiller alive.
- He felt threatened by the far-reaching changes that were taking place around 1900. The past, however, was comforting to him, even though he realised that Weimar was losing its significance in the present.
- He understood that institutions like the Nietzsche Archive together with great artists and intellectuals could re-establish Weimar as a cultural beacon, yet somehow he couldn't warm up to modernism.
- The Emperor's rejection of modern art only confirmed Gustav W.'s opinion. He believed that the small duchy of Weimar depended on good relations with Berlin.



View of Frauenplan
from the Wieland
memorial, 1899

Gustav W. Citizen of Weimar

ART



- Gustav W. preferred entirely apolitical art, like landscape portraits, or historical paintings.
- He regarded modern art with suspicion, especially because most of it came from abroad. It put his long-held views in question and symbolised a new era of radical change - something that conservative middle class circles in Weimar rejected.
- However, he was open to new impulses in the field of arts and crafts. As a businessman, he had to respond to the changing tastes of his customers. He hoped that modern designs would improve the sales of his furnishings.



Two writing implements: on the left, from the second half of the 19th century, and on the right, a model designed by Henry van de Velde

Gustav W. Citizen of Weimar

QUOTATIONS



“Here among distinguished men and women worked the greatest poets and philosophers of modern times: Goethe, Schiller, Herder. At this place, a noble society of intellectuals gathered, to whom the name of Weimar had become a symbol of the finer arts and culture.”

Friedrich Lienhard, In: *Wege nach Weimar. Beiträge zur Erneuerung des Idealismus*, Stuttgart 1918

“It is deplorable that we should encounter pictures and illustrations in the exhibitions at the new museum on Karlsplatz which deeply hurt our feelings. It demonstrates an utter lack of morality on the part of the artists and a laxness of mind on the part of the exhibition committee that such exhibitions are presented to Weimar’s art enthusiasts, and is the cause of great outrage in all social circles.”

Herbert Behmer, letter to the editor, 1906

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