

PRESS CONFERENCE (in German) 07.11.2018, 11 am

11:10	Welcome reception Dr. Thomas Köhler Director of Berlinische Galerie
11:15	Introduction to the project "100 Years of Revolution – Berlin 1918–19" Moritz van Dülmen CEO of Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH

- 11:25–11:45 Introduction to the exhibition Dr. Ralf Burmeister Head of artists' archive and exhibition curator Dr. Janina Nentwig Exhibition curator
- 11:45-12:15 Tour through the exhibition with the exhibition curators

OPENING (in German) 08.11.2018, 7 pm

The admission to the event starts at 6 pm.

Speakers:

19:10	Dr. Thomas Köhler, Director of Berlinische Galerie
19:15	Dr. Klaus Lederer, Senator for Culture and Europe and Mayor of Berlin
19:25	Dr. Martin Hoernes Secretary General of the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung
19:35-19:50	Introduction to the exhibition Dr. Ralf Burmeister Head of artists' archive and exhibition curator
	Simultanous interpreting is provided in German Sign Language

Followed by music. Catering by Café Dix.



PRESS KIT

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BERLINISCHE GALERIE

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Berlin, 7th November 2018

FREEDOM

The Art of the Novembergruppe from 1918 to 1935 9 November 2018 to 11 March 2019

Press conference: 07.11, 11 am, opening: 08.11, 7 pm, children's opening: 11.11, 3 pm–5 pm Admission: € 10 (concessions € 7); opening hours: Wed.-Mon. 10 am–6 pm



Hannah Höch, Cube (detail), 1926 Copyright: VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018

Democracy and diversity. When the First World War ended and the Emperor abdicated, the doors were thrown wide open to freedom and justice in Germany. Things were not easy for the fledgling democracy. The Novembergruppe, an association of artists formed in Berlin during the revolution of November 1918, grew rapidly to become a strong, innovative player in the world of art and the public arena of the Weimar Republic. With its pluralist concept, the association benefited from the government's liberal policy on promoting the arts. Open to any style in the visual arts, as well as to architects, writers, composers and filmmakers, the Novembergruppe was a platform for freedom, democracy and diversity. Artists did not have to join in order to take part. A bold commitment to modernism was enough.

Between 1919 and 1932 the Novembergruppe staged almost 40 exhibitions (some outside Berlin and even in other European countries), published numerous magazines and books and regularly organised concerts, readings, parties and fancydress balls. In this way the Novembergruppe became a prominent vehicle for modernist art,

providing visibility and plenty to talk or argue about, not least among its own members. Radical aesthetics and the fun of experimentation were intended to broaden public perception, liberate art from its privileged milieus and support the new social order – but here the disruptive association seriously upset conservatives. When the Nazis took power, the Novembergruppe was finished. Not until 1969 were the achievements of the Novembergruppe rediscovered thanks to a book by the art historian Helga Kliemann. The group archives are still missing.



The exhibition now to be shown at the Berlinische Galerie is founded on painstaking research in posthumous papers and publications of the time by the curator team Dr Janina Nentwig and Dr Ralf Burmeister.

With 119 works by 69 artists, including 48 paintings, 14 sculptures, 12 architect's models and drawings, 27 prints and 5 films, the Berlinische Galerie is celebrating the centenary of this bestknown of unknown creative communities and its response to dramatic times. This is the firstever comprehensive retrospective devoted to this unconventional association of artists. Light is cast on the role it played in the Weimar Republic and how it engaged with democratic transformation within a deeply divided society. The exhibits (with a few exceptions) were either shown at Novembergruppe exhibitions or reproduced in its magazines. Alongside stellar avant-garde figures – Rudolf Belling, Otto Dix, Otto Freundlich, Walter Gropius, Georg Grosz, Hannah Höch, Paul Klee, El Lissitzky, Erich Mendelsohn, Piet Mondrian, Mies van der Rohe, Max Pechstein, Georg Scholz, Kurt Schwitters and others – Berlin's museum of modern art, photography and architecture has plenty of discoveries and rediscoveries in store, among them Max Dungert, Walter Dexel, Paul Goesch, Hans Siebert von Heister, Oswald Herzog, Issai Kulvianski, Emy Roeder, Georg Tappert, Karl Völker and Ines Wetzel. Many of the works on show have been chosen from the holdings of the Berlinische Galerie, which boasts the world's largest collection on the Novembergruppe.

Background to the birth of the Novembergruppe: "We stand on the fertile soil of the revolution. Our motto is: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!" declared the first few lines in a manifesto drafted by the Novembergruppe just after its foundation in the heady days of insurgency. The association owed its name to the epochal events of that November, while its slogan was borrowed from the French Revolution, invoked as history's crown witness to endorse the political upheaval in Germany. "The miracle was that, with few exceptions, everyone felt part of one community, morally committed to believing that there is good in people and to creating the best of all possible worlds" wrote the art historian Will Grohmann about the collective will to start afresh after the imperial monarchy collapsed. These painters, sculptors and architects wished to see the "closest possible mingling of the people and art" - and they threw their weight behind this task in numerous exhibitions. Although the group guidelines drawn up in early January 1919 did not call for reforms to the social fabric in general, the association did lay claim to an influence and involvement in public affairs wherever the arts were concerned, in particular the award of building contracts, the allocation of exhibition space and reforms to the colleges and museums and to art legislation. These demands were aimed at democratising the public world of art and dismantling traditional privileges, such as those granted under the Kaiser to the Prussian Academy of Arts, which had been placed in charge of managing official exhibitions under the Empire. Over time, the Novembergruppe did not sustain its pursuit of these cultural policy demands, especially as reforming the arts in the young republic remained firmly in the hands of civil servants and politicians. The practical activities undertaken by the association unfolded without party-political affiliations, and throughout its existence it refused to be exploited for such ends. In the period until 1932, the Novembergruppe presented some 3,000 works by more than 480 artists, including about 200 members.

The liberating energies of the new art – The Novembergruppe's first exhibitions reflected the euphoria of new beginnings, dominated by a mix of styles that had already emerged before the war: Cubism, Futurism and Expressionism. The provocative potential of this new art was reflected in, for example, physical attacks on exhibits by members of the public.

Dada and scandal – In 1920 Dadaist works incurred the displeasure of the press and political chain of command. The next year disputable works, including by Otto Dix, were removed from the Novembergruppe section. This prompted accusations within the association that it was tolerating censorship and betraying revolutionary aims. Despite resignations, the association emerged stronger from this crisis.

Abstraction and objectivity – From the outset the association sought to revive contacts with the European avant-garde that had been stifled by the war. From 1923 onwards its exhibitions placed a clear emphasis on the latest abstract trends and on ground-breaking figurative styles –



long before the celebrated exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Mannheim in 1925 where such works entered the canon as 'New Objectivity'.

New architecture – In 1924 the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe took over the chair of the Novembergruppe. In the next few years architects held sway in the association, presenting visionary projects and pioneering buildings in the new international style known in Germany as 'Neues Bauen'.

An enforced ending – From 1930 the Novembergruppe crumbled. In 1932, at the last exhibition before the Nazis seized power, only four artists took part. Most former members were later discredited as "degenerate" and their works removed from public collections. Many were persecuted and forced into exile, a few joined the Nazi party, some retreated into the solitude of 'inner emigration'.

Exhibition catalogue (Prestel Verlag): 272 pages, German or English, 269 illustrations. Price of museum edition: € 34.80 (ISBN: 978-3-7913-6857-3); price of bookshop edition: € 48.00 (ISBN: 978-3-7913-5780-5).

Audio guide (German/English): € 2 extra when purchasing an admission ticket, with descriptions of selected exhibits and tactile models for the blind and visually impaired

The patron of the exhibition is Michael Müller, Governing Mayor of Berlin. It is part of the winter festival "100 Years of Revolution – Berlin 1918 | 19" in partnership with Kulturprojekte Berlin: www.kulturprojekte.berlin/en/project/100-jahre-revolution-berlin-191819/

The exhibition and catalogue have been funded by the Capital Cultural Fund, Lotto-Stiftung Berlin, the Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung and the Förderverein Berlinische Galerie.

Exhibition architecture and colour design: david saik studio

The exhibition will be accompanied by an event programme. Details: https://www.berlinischegalerie.de/en/exhibitions/preview/novembergruppe/calendarnovembergruppe/

Press images: www.berlinischegalerie.de/presse/pressematerialien/pressebildernovembergruppe/

Online tickets: www.berlinischegalerie.de/en/service/online-tickets/

#novembergruppe #berlinischegalerie



EXHIBITION TEXTS

About the exhibition

In late 1918, amid the turmoil of the November Revolution, the Novembergruppe was formed in Berlin as an "association of radical fine artists". Among its members were painters, sculptors and architects, but also writers and composers. Some rank among the great names of Classical Modernism, while many others await rediscovery.

The group firmly believed in the power of art to help build a new society and foster a new kind of person. They staged nearly 40 exhibitions at home and abroad with works by about 480 artists. They also organised numerous evenings of music and film, acquainting the audience with the latest trends in these art forms. It was a crucial contribution towards establishing Modernism in Germany.

The association was open to all contemporary styles. It attracted Cubists, Futurists, Expressionists and Dadaists and champions of abstract art, New Objectivity and Functionalist architecture. This liberal attitude reflected the democratic underlay of the Weimar Republic. The demise of the republic also triggered the demise of the Novembergruppe.

To mark the centenary, this exhibition recounts the turbulent history of the Novembergruppe and investigates its pivotal role in the dynamic art world of the 1920s. Almost all the works shown here featured at exhibitions by the group or were reproduced in its journals.

Prologue

By the end of the First World War, more than two million people had perished on the German side alone. The war-weary population was suffering from hunger and deprivation. In autumn 1918 sailors in Wilhelmshaven and Kiel refused to put out to sea for an "honourable" last battle. This mutiny rapidly spread across the country. Workers' and soldiers' councils seized power in the big cities.

On 9 November the revolution reached the capital Berlin. Chancellor Max von Baden took it upon himself to declare the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II. A few hours later, the republic was proclaimed – twice, in fact: once by the social democrat Philipp Scheidemann and once by Karl Liebknecht, leader of the communist Spartacus League.

A Council of People's Deputies was installed as a transition government. The *Werbedienst*, the information unit of the "German Socialist Republic", was tasked with printing posters and leaflets urging people to vote for a National Assembly in January 1919 and to observe peace and order. Among the *Werbedienst* staff were members of the Novembergruppe."

Liberating energies of the new art"

With the German Empire consigned to the past, artists in the Novembergruppe sought to play an active role in defining a new society. The key, in their eyes, was the "closest possible mingling of the people and art".

A sense of euphoria at starting afresh permeated the association's earliest displays at the Great Berlin Art Exhibition. In 1919 this state-sponsored show opened up to the avant-garde for the first time. Until 1922 the Novembergruppe section was dominated by a mix of Cubism, Futur-ism and Expressionism. The "liberating energies of the new art" (Adolf Behne, 1919) were seen by many intellectuals as a powerful expression of the new era.

And yet most of the visitors who flocked in their thousands every year to the Glass Palace near Lehrter Bahnhof were disturbed by the art the Novembergruppe chose to display. The dynamic styles were associated with the chaos of the revolution and the crisis-prone republic. In terms of theme, however, these paintings and sculptures were primarily cosmic or religious.



Dada and Scandal

At the Great Berlin Art Exhibition in 1920 the Novembergruppe section included Dada. These works provoked a scandal. With their pasted press cuttings and everyday utensils, they constituted a radical attack on artistic tradition. Reviewers raged at this "dunghill art", all the more so as the exhibition was financed from the public purse.

In response to these accusations, the Ministry of Culture threatened to exclude the Novembergruppe in 1921. Under pressure from the exhibition managers, the association therefore removed two brothel scenes with socially critical content. Other provocative works like Georg Scholz's "Industrial Farmers" were kept in the show – and again prompted outrage. The concessions that had been made angered artists from the Dada entourage. They accused the group of caving in to censorship. In their eyes, the association was not political enough and so they resigned. It was an acid test, but the association emerged all the stronger: from 1922 onwards the press and public were more relaxed and increasingly positive about Novembergruppe exhibits.

Construction and Objectivity

The Novembergruppe was open to experiment and championed Modernist art in every variation. Its exhibitions were a major public platform for the ground-breaking trends of the times. The First World War had suspended interaction between German artists and the European avant-garde. The association therefore made every effort to revive international contacts.

From 1922 it attached clear priority to the latest abstract styles from Eastern Europe and the Netherlands. Regular exhibition guests were the Russian Constructivists and the Dutch De Stijl movement, whose radical rebuttal of figurative art provided important inspiration for German artists.

Styles at the other end of the spectrum were likewise welcome: many artists were moving on from Expressionist beginnings to a new kind or realism that was later dubbed New Objectivity.

Absolute Film

In May 1925 the Novembergruppe also became a forum for experimental film in Germany. Projects around moving images were shown to a full house in the 900-seat UFA cinema on Kurfürstendamm at an event called "Absolute Film". On the programme were abstract and surrealist avant-garde works by German and French film-makers, among them Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, Hans Richter and Fernand Léger. Absolute film dispensed with a narrative structure, relying entirely on the visual effect of rhythmic movements and abstract shapes and colours. The aim was to create "music for the eye" (Viking Eggeling) or "painting with time" (Walter Ruttmann).

There is a close affinity with abstract trends in the fine art exhibited by the Novembergruppe.

The New Architecture

From 1922 more and more architects joined the Novembergruppe, which became a key forum for *Neues Bauen*. This functional architecture favoured clarity and simplicity in its formal idiom. Designs and models for skyscrapers and road infrastructure were among the numerous projects exhibited by the association. The inflation years until 1924 meant that most of these ideas could not be implemented. The construction industry was in the doldrums and there was little work for architects. During this difficult phase Novembergruppe shows proved to be an important vehicle, allowing these architectural visions to maintain public visibility.

From 1923 the architects in the Novembergruppe even organised separate rooms in the group section at the annual exhibition. This enabled them to highlight their projects independently of the visual arts. The press was especially enthusiastic about these displays, but there were tensions within the association as a result. In early 1927 almost all the architects left. From this point on, the Bauhaus and the architects' association Der Ring provided a new home for Modernist ideas about building.

A Belated Revolution

From the mid-1920s the significance of the Novembergruppe gradually waned. There was growing public acceptance for Modernist art, which had gained many footholds in the lively Berlin art scene. To reassert its role as an influential association of artists, the group now



adapted its strategy. In the past it had always resisted co-optation for political ends, insisting that its only commitment was to revolution in art. Now it devoted more space to works with a critical social content and highlighted its roots in the November Revolution, the source of its programmatic name.

For its tenth anniversary in 1928 the association tried to muster all its forces again. With a copious publication and a big gala exhibition, it assertively took stock of its accomplishments and swore a new oath to the social impact of art. By this time, however, many of the Novembergruppe's objectives were widely considered to have been overtaken by history.

An Enforced Ending

From 1930 the Novembergruppe began falling apart and confronted financial difficulties. Fewer artists took part in its exhibitions as the Great Depression destroyed professional livelihoods. The works on show during this period reflect a detachment from reality and emotional with-drawal.

The circumstances that precipitated an end to the Weimar Republic did not renew the group's political spirit. Nor was the situation reflected in motifs or techniques. After the Nazis took power, the Novembergruppe was denigrated for "cultural Bolshevism". From 1933 it was no longer admitted to the Great Berlin Art Exhibition, and in 1935 it was struck from the register of associations at its own expense. The art of many former members was labelled "degenerate". Their works were removed from public collections.

Documentary records

The Novembergruppe set its stamp on cultural life in Berlin in a variety of ways. Throughout the Weimar years, the association was a constant presence in the city with numerous exhibitions, concerts, film screenings and fancy-dress balls. This energetic advocacy for the avant-garde carved a path to public visibility for the very latest in art. Documentary traces of this impressive wealth of activity can be found in archives and in the posthumous papers of the artists involved. These illustrate the tireless efforts undertaken by the Novembergruppe to represent diversity and to encourage an openness to all things new.



EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Parallel to the exhibition at the Berlinische Galerie (09.11.2018–11.03.2019) Prestel publishes its exhibition catalogue "Freedom. The art of the Novembergruppe 1918–1935".

Editors:	Dr. Ralf Burmeister, Thomas Köhler
Publisher:	Prestel
ISBN:	978-3-7913-5781-2 (BookTrade Edition) 978-3-7913-6858-0 (Museum Edition)
Authors:	Dr. Ralf Burmeister, Dr. Thomas Köhler, Dr. Janina Nentwig, Sara Beimdieke, Nils Grosch, Kristina Kratz-Kessmeier, Isabel Wünsche, Andreas Zeising
Format:	23,0 x 27,0 cm, Hard cover
Pages:	256
Illustrations:	220
Languages:	German, English
Price	34,80 Euro (Museum Edition) 48,00 Euro (BookTrade Edition)



EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Tours by the Curator (in German) Mon., 12.11., 26.11., 17.12., 07.01., 21.01., 04.02., 18.02., 04.03., 11.03. at 2 pm Included in museum admission

Public Guided Tour in English

Mon., 03.12., 07.01., 04.03. 3 pm every Sat. (10.11.2018–09.03.2019) 4.15 pm Every first Monday of the month at 3 pm and every saturday at 4.15 pm public guided tours in English are given by experienced museum's guides. Tour is included in museum admission.

Group Tours for groups of up to 22 people

Price: 60 \in for 60 minutes, 80 \in for 90 minutes plus admission to museum (individual tickets at concessionary rate). Tours can also be booked in English, French and Italian (10 \in extra).

Booking and further details: Museumsdienst Berlin at Kulturprojekte GmbH, museumsinformation@kulturprojekte.berlin Tel +49 (0)30 247 49 888

Further information: www.berlinischegalerie.de/en/education/

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#novembergruppe - the online campaign to go with the show

Throughout the exhibition "Freedom: The Art of the Novembergruppe 1918–1935" (9 November 2018–11 March 2019), the Berlinische Galerie will be running an online campaign about the Novembergruppe as the agent of the avant-garde. At #novembergruppe 12 stories will cast light on this best-known of all little-known creative communities and its dramatic origins: outra-geous, radical, modern. Themes include: Berlin in the 1920s, new art for a new world, sorrows and new tomorrows, yearnings and a quest for freedom.

An artists' association for the young republic

Germany, autumn 1918. Workers and soldiers marched in protest through the streets demanding an end to the First World War and the abdication of the Kaiser – and their calls were heeded: a republic was proclaimed on 9 November. For artists, the hour had finally struck to sweep away the moth-eaten, antiquated art world and to help build a democratic society. In pursuit of this aim, proponents of the avant-garde in Berlin came together to create the Novembergruppe. The painter Heinrich Richter-Berlin recalled the birth of this association amid the revolutionary upheaval:

"When the revolution was a few days old, a lot of people always gathered on Potsdamer Platz at midday to catch up with the latest news. Crossing the square, I bumped into Max Pechstein. He had a plan. He thought there should be a new start. I was to round up my crowd [...] and he would bring Brücke. He already had a name: Novembergruppe!"

Regular episodes at www.berlinischegalerie.de, on Facebook and on Instagram.

#novembergruppe #berlinischegalerie



PRESS IMAGES



Otto Möller, Straßenlärm, 1920 [©] Christoph Möller, Diessen / Ammersee, Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



Paul Klee, Architektur, 1923 [©] bpk / Nationalgalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders



Max Dungert, Turm, 1922 [©] Urheberrechte am Werk erloschen, Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



Issai Kulvianski, Mein Töchterchen Kiki, 1927, Berlinische Galerie [©] Nachlass Kulvianski, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin



Hannah Höch, Kubus, 1926 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



Hannah Höch, Der Zaun, 1928 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

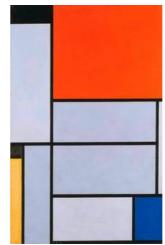




Karl Völker, Beton, um 1924 [©] Nachlass Karl Völker, Foto: Klaus E. Göltz



1922 [©] Moriz Melzer, Segliding, 1917– 1922 [©] Moriz Melzer, Rechtsnachfolger Moriz Melzer, bpk/Nationalgalerie, SMB/Volker-H. Schneider



Piet Mondrian, Tableau I, 1921 [©] Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln



Walter Dexel, Komposition 1923 IV, 1923 [©] Erbengemeinschaft Walter Dexel, Foto: Fotostudio Bartsch, Karen Bartsch, Berlin



Curt Ehrhardt, Um 12 Uhr Mitternacht, 1921 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



George Grosz, Stützen der Gesellschaft, 1926 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, bpk / Nationalgalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders



Otto Freundlich, Komposition, 1926 [©] Urheberrechte am Werk erloschen, Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



César Klein, Kreuz vor Barbaren, 1933 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



Conrad Felixmüller, Der Agitator, 1946, Neufassung des zerstörten Gemäldes von 1920 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, bpk / Nationalgalerie, SMB / Klaus Göken





László Moholy-Nagy, am 7(26), 1926 [©] Urheberrechte am Werk erloschen Foto: bpk/Sprengel Museum Hannover/Michael Herling/Benedikt

Werner/Aline Gwose



Arthur Segal, Helgoland, 1923 [©] Urheberrechte am Werk erloschen Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



Fritz Stuckenberg, Schwüle, um 1919 [©] Urheberrechte am Werk erloschen, Repro: Joachim Fliegner



Rudolf Belling, Erotik, 1920 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, Repro: Kai-Annett Becker



Rudolf Belling, Kopf in Messing (Toni Freeden), 1925 [©] VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, bpk / Nationalgalerie, SMB



Oswald Herzog, Genießen, um 1920 $^{\odot}$ Urheberrechte am Werk erloschen



Wassili Luckhardt, Volkstheater, vor 1921 [©] Adelheid Freese, Akademie der Künste, Berlin



Hans Poelzig, Hochhaus am Bahnhof Friedrichstraße, Berlin, perspektivische Ansicht Standpunkt D, Lösung B, 1921 [©] Architekturmuseum TU Berlin, Inv. Nr. 2809



Walter Gropius u. Adolf Meyer, Perspektive des Tribune Tower, Einsendung zum Wettbewerb für ein Bürogebäude der Chicago Tribune, Chicago, 1922 © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, Repro: Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, Foto: Felix Jork





Kunstausstellung Berlin 1920, Mitglieder der Novembergruppe in einem Saal der Vereinigung. V.I. n.r. stehend: César Klein, NN, Rudolf Belling, Heinrich Richter-Berlin, NN., Heinz Fuchs, Moriz Melzer; sitzend: Wilhelm Schmid, N. N., Emy Roeder, Herbert Garbe, © Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Reproduktion: Michael Setzpfandt, Berlin © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018, bpk/Nationalgalerie, SMB/Klaus Göken



Große Berliner Kunstausstellung 1928, Mitglieder der Hängekommission der Novembergruppe V. I. n. r. Moriz Melzer, Hugo Graetz, Ewald Mataré, Otto Möller, Georg Tappert, Max Dungert, Oswald Herzog, Walter Kampmann, Ines Wetzel, Arthur Segal, Repro: Anja Elisabeth Witte



Willy Römer, Ohne Titel (Rückkehr der Truppen. Die schaulustigen Berliner auf den Bäumen Unter den Linden vor dem Hotel Adlon), 10. Dezember 1918 [©] bpk, Markus Hawlik



Willy Römer, Ohne Titel (Vor dem Hotel Adlon, Volksmarinedivision zieht in Berlin ein), November 1918 [©] bpk, Markus Hawlik



Große Berliner Kunstausstellung 1921, Blick in die Abteilung der Novembergruppe, Saal 27 [©] Bundesarchiv/Scherl



Kunstausstellung 1919, Saal in der Abteilung der Novembergruppe [©] Bundesarchiv/Scherl