





An impressionist painting of a park scene, likely by J.M.W. Turner. The scene is filled with people in 19th-century attire, trees, and a pink umbrella. The brushwork is visible and expressive, with a focus on light and color. The painting is the background for the entire cover.

# THE BLIND SPOT

BREMEN, COLONIALISM  
AND ART

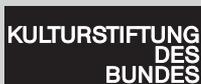
EDITED BY  
JULIA BINTER

KUNST  
HALLE  
BREMEN

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detail, oil/canvas,  
Kunsthalle Bremen –  
Der Kunstverein in Bremen

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Der Kunstverein in Bremen,  
Kupferstichkabinett

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Der Kunstverein in Bremen

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# Preface and Acknowledgments

The foundation of the Kunstverein in Bremen in 1823 and its prime around the turn of the century fall into the period of rapidly expanding intercontinental trade relations, the emigration of hundreds of thousands of people overseas and the colonial expansion of the German Empire. Among the founders and supporters of the Kunstverein in Bremen were many internationally active merchants who significantly contributed to the formation and growth of the collection. The exhibition *The Blind Spot* gives an insight into the interaction between colonial history, bourgeois patronage, art and collecting history from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. As the exhibition title suggests, the colonial traces in the collection of the Kunsthalle Bremen are barely visible. Non-European art and themes are rarely represented in the collection, one exception being the outstanding collection of Japanese woodcuts that were donated to the Kunstverein by the Director General of the North German Lloyd in 1905/06. In general, German art museums focused on European art, the Old Masters and France as the leading cultural nation of the nineteenth century. Also for these reasons, there has been little discussion about the ways in which colonial history had an impact on art museums in Germany.

The objective of the exhibition *The Blind Spot* is to question the connections between the economic and the cultural life in the Hanseatic city at the time of European colonialism. It also analyses how colonial images are being perpetuated in art and everyday culture to this day and discusses the ramifications as well as the potential of this colonial heritage for today's society.

*The Blind Spot* examines the colonial implications of works of modernist art, a key focus of the collection of the Kunsthalle Bremen, and shines a light on the ways in which modern artists engaged with and represented the Other. These European perspectives are set in dialogue with historical as well as contemporary perspectives of artists from Europe, Africa, Asia, the Pacific and South America.

The exhibition attempts to open a space for discussion and invites visitors to ask questions about the engagement with the Other against

the backdrop of the Hanseatic city's colonial heritage. Thus, the reflection on the historical legacy of the globally linked city of trade, emigration and industry is also a starting point to creatively engage with contemporary effects of globalisation and migration and to ask new questions about cultural difference and identity. The project not only offers new historical insights and initiates a change by consciously reflecting on the colonial past. It also opens up the museum to new perspectives and visitor groups.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the German Federal Cultural Foundation for their generous support of the project within the framework of the Fellowship International Museum. Julia Binter has spent the past eighteen months working and researching in the Kunsthalle Bremen and has made many new discoveries. We would particularly like to thank her for the energy, enthusiasm and intelligence with which she tackled this complex topic. Also in her name, we would like to warmly thank her mentors, Eva Fischer-Hausdorf and Anne Buschhoff, for their dedicated support. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the many cooperation partners, above all the Afrika-Netzwerk Bremen e. V., who accompanied and supported the project with great enthusiasm. Many colleagues in the museums, archives, libraries, the university and the Office for Cultural Affairs have generously supported the project and we would like to thank them for the inspiring cooperation. Moreover, we are very grateful to the many lenders who agreed to part with their precious objects for several months.

Last but not least, we would very much like to thank the artists Hew Locke and Ngozi Schommers as well as Fernando Bryce who have developed contemporary perspectives on the topic. While the exhibition *Fernando Bryce. Unforgotten Land* of the Supporters' Circle for Contemporary Art engages with the archival traces of colonialism in Bremen, Hew Locke has created a spectacular intervention in Bremen's Town Hall, replacing one of the historical Orlog ships with a ship sculpture by the artist. We would like to thank the Mayor of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, Carsten Sieling, as well as the Senate Chancellery and, in particular, Kornelia Buhr for allowing us to realise this installation and for the positive cooperation. The project sends a strong signal for raising awareness about Germany and Bremen's too-little-discussed colonial past.

Bernd Schmielau

Chairman of the Kunstverein in Bremen

Christoph Grunenberg

Director of the Kunsthalle Bremen



Wappen des Norddeutschen Lloyd



**ORTSBEVÖLKERUNG**

- über 100.000
- 50.000 - 100.000
- 20.000 - 50.000
- 10.000 - 20.000
- 5.000 - 10.000
- unter 5.000

**ABKÜRZUNGEN**

B. Stadt	St. Stadt	S. Stadt
City (Stadt)	St. Stadt	St. Stadt
St. Platz	St. Platz	St. Platz
St. Markt	St. Markt	St. Markt
St. Markt	St. Markt	St. Markt
St. Markt	St. Markt	St. Markt
St. Markt	St. Markt	St. Markt
St. Markt	St. Markt	St. Markt

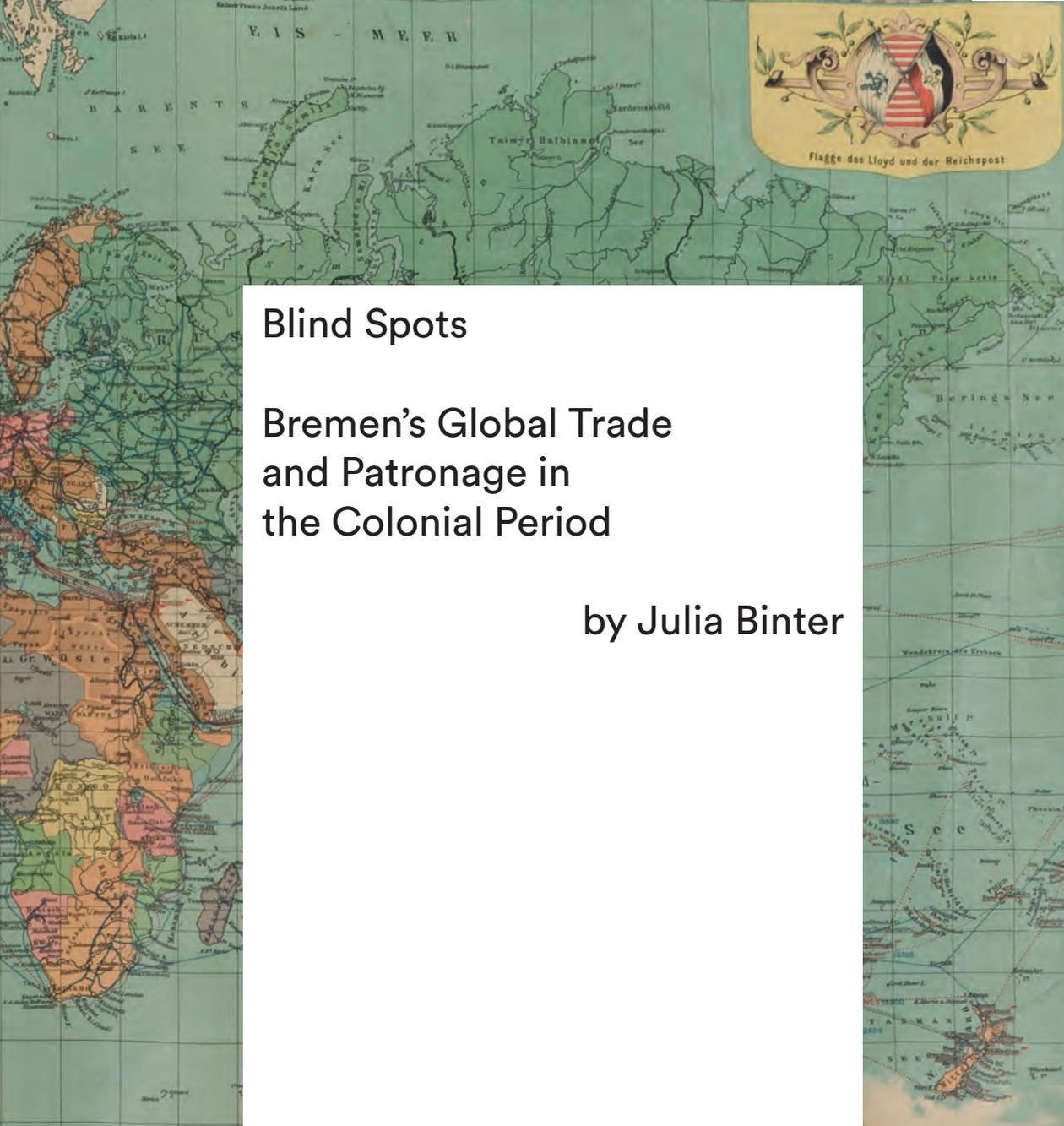


Kaiser-Wilhelm II.

# Welt der Schnell-und Post Norddeutschen

Vertrete

- Vom Norddeutschen Lloyd regelmäßig befahrene Linien
- ögl. bedarfweise befahrene Linien
- Fremde Anschließlinien
- Alle Anlaufhäfen des Norddeutschen Lloyd in rot
- Die Schiffbildchen zeigen den Typus der auf den betr. Lloydlinien verkehrenden Dampfer.



## Blind Spots

# Bremen's Global Trade and Patronage in the Colonial Period

by Julia Binter

## Karte Weltdampfer-Linien des Lloyd, Bremen

en durch:

- Häfen, nach denen der Norddeutsche Lloyd Güter in Durchfracht annimmt, sind rot unterstrichen
- Ausland Agenturen des Norddeutschen Lloyd
- Weltseisenbahnen, im Anschluss daran
- Welttelegraphen zu Lande und unter-See
- Grenze der Flußdampfschiffahrt
- Die Zahlen hinter den Hafennamen bezeichnen die Entfernung von Bremerhaven in Seemeilen.



Kaiser Wilhelm der Große

“Instead we made several excursions across the island [...] to the plantations of the Condé de la Réunion where we stayed for several days and had a wonderful time.”<sup>11</sup>

12

1



1  
Rudolph Suhrlandt (1781–1862),  
*Portrait of Alderman Friedrich  
Leo Quentell*, 1829, oil/canvas,  
bequest of Dr. jur. H. H. Meier  
1928, Kunsthalle Bremen –  
Der Kunstverein in Bremen

“He could also do other things than buying tobacco and fish oil and engaging in trade politics; he could also get enthusiastic about the arts of antiquity and the Renaissance, delving into them so deeply that he would begin to wonder and ask himself whether he was actually destined to be a merchant or instead should become a scholar of art.”<sup>121</sup>

Christian Heinrich Wätjen's (1813–1887) memories of his journey to Cuba in 1836 and Hermann Henrich Meier's (1809–1898) encounters with the art treasures of Rome in 1840 reveal the ambivalences that shaped the ways in which German and especially Hanseatic merchants cultivated both their taste and their international trade networks in the nineteenth century. They passionately embraced the fine arts and founded charitable foundations at home. At the same time, however, they were hardly interested in the living and working conditions of those people who produced the colonial goods. Wätjen's and Meier's travel accounts also demonstrate that the colonial contexts in which Bremen's merchants conducted their trade were characterised by a much wider time frame and range of territories than the German colonies overseas (1884–1919).<sup>13</sup> These colonial contexts are just one of the many blind spots in the history and collection of the Kunstverein in Bremen, founded in 1823. The hierarchical world view of the colonial period did not only influence practices of collecting and exhibiting material culture from all over the world. It also informed the work of modern European artists, a key focus of the collection of the Kunsthalle Bremen. In dialogue with Postcolonial Studies<sup>14</sup> and the demands of postcolonial activists,<sup>15</sup> the disciplines of history,<sup>16</sup> museology<sup>17</sup> and art history<sup>18</sup> have developed approaches to critically engage with these colonial entanglements and to make them relevant for future discussions.

The exhibition *The Blind Spot* aims to question the interrelations between the economic and the cultural life in Bremen at the time of European colonialism, to critically analyse the persistence of colonial images both in art and daily life and to discuss the consequences as well as the potential of this colonial heritage for the present. Especially the latter was only possible thanks to the collaboration with the Afrika-Netzwerk Bremen e.V. (Africa Network Bremen), and I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to its members.<sup>19</sup> The following introduction does not claim to be exhaustive or complete, but instead seeks to give an insight into certain trends, straddling the histories of trade, colonialism and collecting, and to promote further research into and discussion of this complex topic from a postcolonial perspective.

“Buten un Binnen, Wagen un Winnen”<sup>110</sup>

At the beginning of German colonialism, Bremen's merchants had been engaging in colonial trade via the Netherlands and Great Britain for centuries.<sup>11</sup> Their international trade network was based on widespread family relations and the merchants' success in global trade as well as in local politics depended on “tutelage and patronage”.<sup>12</sup> As the merchants of Hamburg dominated the trade with Great Britain, Bremen's merchants embraced the opportunity presented by the independence of the United States in 1776 and established trade relations with the now self-governed settler colony. In 1827, the year that saw the founding of the

new, man-made harbour of Bremen (Bremerhaven) on the North Sea coast, Bremen concluded its first trade agreements with the United States and Brazil. Among the first merchants to try their luck in New York was Hermann Henrich Meier (1779–1821), father of the eventual founder of the North German Lloyd. Together with his brother Caspar (1774–1839), he founded a New York branch of the family business in 1802, followed by a Bremen branch in 1805. Until the end of their business in 1905, they exported linen and imported “tobacco, coffee, tea, sugar, rum, cotton, logwood and yellow wood, fish oil, potash, sponges and fruits.”<sup>131</sup> Meier played a significant role not only among Bremen’s merchants but also in the beginnings of the Kunstverein in Bremen. In 1817, he and 64 other “Bremen art lovers” signed a “petition by F. A. Dreyer for financial support to both exhibit and expand his art collection”<sup>141</sup> and submitted it to the Senate of Bremen. The petition was rejected. Six years later, a similar petition by Hieronymus Klugkist (1778–1851), a senator and member of the Bremen Court of Appeals since 1815, was granted. The Kunstverein was founded, initially as a private body, for the purpose of “spreading and refining the sense of beauty.”<sup>151</sup> At an annual membership fee of five thalers, the number of members was first limited to 50, later 75 members. “Their meetings for viewing artworks took place every week in the upper halls of the stock exchange or private households”,<sup>161</sup> where they discussed the Kunstverein’s own holdings as well as the members’ private collections, mostly consisting of prints. The restriction of membership numbers was given up in 1843, which resulted in the number of members growing to 575 just three years later. The construction work for the first building of the Kunstverein began in Bremen’s rampart area in the district of Ostertor in 1847 and was completed two years later. Aside from a sales exhibition every two years and the annual lottery, where members could win works of art, the Kunstverein also endeavoured to compile its own collection. In 1851, Hieronymus Klugkist bequeathed his collection of early German art, including two panels with religious depictions and 47 watercolours and drawings by Dürer as well as an almost complete collection of Dürer’s graphic work, to the Kunstverein in Bremen. Klugkist had already established a foundation with 120 gold thalers for the Kunstverein in 1823. Another 100 thalers were donated by Johann Heinrich Albers (1774–1855) who had come to wealth by trading in indigo and other colonial goods in London between 1796 and 1816.<sup>171</sup> In addition, Albers provided 3,000 thalers for the construction of the Kunsthalle and bequeathed nineteen oil paintings, 15,000 graphic prints, and numerous valuable books to the collection.

Just as his father, the eventual founder of the North German Lloyd H. H. Meier (1809–1898) was an art enthusiast. After his years of apprenticeship in the United States, he took over and expanded their American business in the Southern States, before departing on a trip to Italy in 1840 to follow in Goethe’s footsteps. In Rome, he became acquainted with the

2



16



3

4



2  
Artist unknown, *World Map of the North German Lloyd*, ca. 1905, Übersee-Museum Bremen

3  
Photographer unknown, *Boxer Rebellion. – Farewell Address by Emperor Wilhelm II [Hun Speech] to the German Expeditionary Corps before their Departure to China in Bremerhaven, at the square between the Kaiserschleuse and the Hall of the North German Lloyd*, 27 July 1900, Bundesarchiv

4  
Photographer unknown, *The steam tanker Sioux (1912–1914) of the German-American Petroleum Company (DAPG), named after Native Americans*

German sculptor Carl Steinhäuser (1813–1879) who “opened his eyes to the sculptures of antiquity.”<sup>181</sup> Steinhäuser’s marble sculpture *Psyche* (1846) was acquired by means of a subscription list for the still-unfinished Kunsthalle in 1847.<sup>191</sup> On the occasion of the opening of the Kunsthalle, Henrich Schröder, Carl Hartlaub, Engelbert Klugkist and Friedrich Leo Quentell donated *Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery* (ca. 1658/59) by Luca Giordano. Quentell (1779–1852) <sup>(Fig. 1)</sup>, H. H. Meier’s brother-in-law, had a distinct affinity for art and had made the headlines due to his alleged involvement in the transatlantic slave trade eight years earlier. His ship, *Julius & Eduard*, had been captured by the British as a potential slave ship just off the West African coastal town of Cabinda, today’s Angola. The alderman <sup>1201</sup> Quentell was acquitted after twelve months of court trials in Bremen. <sup>1211</sup>

The professional career of H. H. Meier, who became a board member of the Kunstverein in Bremen in 1850, was likewise connected to the trade in colonial goods and ultimately to the colonial interests of the German Empire. In 1857, he founded the North German Lloyd (NDL) with the Berlin merchant Eduard Crüsemann (1826–1869). It was Bremen’s first shipping company which was organised as a joint stock company, transporting hundreds of thousands of emigrants from Bremerhaven to the United States. The route back across the Atlantic Ocean was profitable thanks to the import of goods such as tobacco and cotton which were produced by enslaved people in the American South. <sup>1221</sup> In 1872, Bremen established Germany’s first cotton exchange. In 1885, the NDL secured the contract for the imperial postal services to East Asia and Australia. It, thus, also provided the maritime infrastructure for the new German colonies in the Pacific Ocean. The NDL eventually became the world’s No 2 shipping company with 66 ships and 251,602 gross register tonnage – second only to the British Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company <sup>(Fig. 2)</sup>. Its success was also based on the support of Bremen’s private shipping companies which expanded the global network in their position as NDL agents. Among these companies was C. Melchers & Co. which had established a trading station in Hong Kong in 1866 and served as the NDL’s general agent in East Asia. On 27 July 1900, Emperor Wilhelm II delivered his so-called “Hun Speech” in Bremerhaven to bid farewell to the East Asian Expeditionary Corps which consisted of volunteers who were sent out on ships of the NDL to suppress the Boxer Rebellion in China <sup>(Fig. 3)</sup>: “No quarter will be given! Prisoners will not be taken! Whoever falls into your hands is forfeited!” <sup>1231</sup> “As we know, the East Asian Expeditionary Corps did not arrive in China in time to participate in combat. Thus, the German forces committed themselves even more eagerly to the brutal punitive expedition of the Allied Forces, which [...] were carried out in the province of Zhili around Beijing.” <sup>1241</sup>

Aside from cotton, tobacco was the most important colonial good for Bremen's economy. In 1850, one out of six of Bremen's 60,000 inhabitants, including many women and children, worked directly or indirectly "in tobacco".<sup>125</sup> The cultivation of the plant in North and South America as well as the Caribbean required less work compared to sugar cane or cotton. Still, it was based on the exploitation of enslaved human beings. Their families were torn apart, their bodies were maltreated and their rights to freedom and self-determination robbed or withheld.<sup>126</sup> Even though, as quoted in the beginning, Bremen's merchants such as Christian Heinrich Wätjen refrained from mentioning the suffering of the plantation workers in their reports, they were still very much aware of the contexts in which the colonial goods were produced. For instance, at the Exposition Universelle of 1867 in Paris, Bremen's tobacco merchants were awarded a bronze medal for their display<sup>127</sup> of an oversized figure of a Black man<sup>128</sup> in loincloth, balancing tobacco goods on his head (Fig. 5) (see Of "Savages" and "Advertising Efforts" in this catalogue).

The company of Franz Ernst (1836–1911) and Carl Schütte's (1839–1917) father was also specialised in the import of tobacco. In 1859, the year of the first "oil rush" in Pennsylvania, the two brothers were already transporting fossil oil to Bremen. Five years later, they had specialised in the new oil import business. In cooperation with Wilhelm Anton Riedemann (von Riedemann after 1917, 1832–1920), a shipping entrepreneur from Geestemünde (a part of Bremerhaven), they rose to Germany's most important oil trading company, mainly due to innovations in transportation. In 1886, the company sent the world's first steam tanker across the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 4). Four years later, the Schütte brothers, Riedemann, and the Standard Oil Company of the Rockefeller Group founded the German-American Petroleum Company (DAPG), which would later become Esso AG (today Esso Deutschland GmbH) in Bremen.<sup>129</sup> The DAPG was advertised using the portrait of a Native American with feather headdress – a bitter irony, as the Seneca people (own name Onöndowága) had already been driven out of those territories, which would later become the site of the first "oil rush" in Pennsylvania in 1859, in the eighteenth century.<sup>130</sup>

In their hometown, Franz Ernst and Carl Schütte distinguished themselves as patrons.<sup>131</sup> While Franz Ernst Schütte oversaw the construction of the Bremen Cathedral (St. Petri Dom) from 1881 onwards and served as chairman of the Bürgerparkverein from 1877 to 1911, Carl Schütte became a board member of the Kunstverein in 1879 and contributed 400,000 marks to support the extension of the Kunsthalle (1899–1902). In addition, the chocolate manufacturer Joseph Hachez (1862–1933) and the Asia merchant Hermann Melchers (1842–1918) donated 100,000 marks each. Furthermore, Carl Schütte co-funded the first journey of Hugo Schauinsland (1857–1937), the founding director of the Städtisches Museum für Natur-, Völker- und Handelskunde (Municipal Museum for

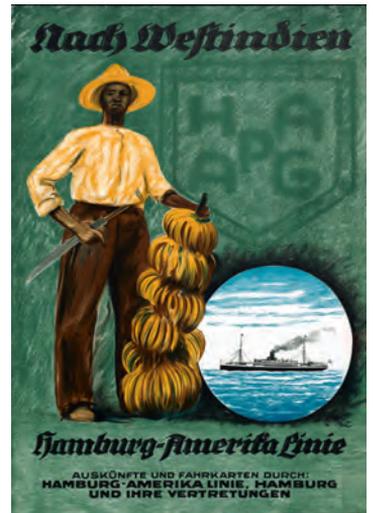
5



19



6



7

5  
Artist unknown, *Presentation of Goods by Bremen's Tobacco Merchants at the Paris World Fair 1867*, reproduction of an etching

6  
Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907), *Still Life with Apples and Bananas*, 1905, oil/canvas, gift of the Galerie-Verein 1908, Kunsthalle Bremen – Der Kunstverein in Bremen

7  
Ludwig Neu (1897–1980), *To the West Indies. Hamburg–America Line*, 1925, chromolithography, Deutsches Schifffahrtsmuseum Bremerhaven

the Study of Nature, People and Trade; today's Übersee-Museum Bremen/Overseas Museum Bremen), to North America, the Pacific and East Asia between 1896 and 1897.<sup>132</sup> Three years later, he presented the Städtisches Museum with 145 gold sculptures of the Chibcha and Quimbaya people from Colombia which he had received from the Colombian merchant Vicente Restrepo (1837–1899) and which presumably were the result of a grave robbery.<sup>133</sup>

Together with Gustav Scipio (1872–1949), Franz Ernst Schütte founded the “Fruchthandel Gesellschaft” (Fruit Trading Company) in 1902, which after 1908 became Germany's leading fruit trading company<sup>134</sup> with the trademarks “Jamaica” (1909) and “Chiquita” (1967)<sup>135</sup>. The bananas were not only imported via Bremerhaven but also via the free port of Bremen (Europahafen), built down the river from the city centre in 1887, and the Überseehafen (Overseas Harbour) which was opened there in 1906. As early as 1905, Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907), an important, Bremen-based representative of early German expressionism, painted a still life in dialogue with the work of Paul Cézanne (1839–1906)<sup>136</sup> by depicting apples and bananas on an elaborately draped brocade cloth (Fig. 6). The presence of bananas in Modersohn-Becker's still life not only refers to the central role of Bremen and Hamburg (Fig. 7) as trade centres for southern fruits and colonial goods, but also anticipates a turning point in German consumer behaviour. In 1906, the painting was acquired for the Kunsthalle Bremen by the Galerie-Verein which had been founded two years earlier for the purpose of supporting new acquisitions of modern art by Dr. Heinrich Wiegand (1855–1909), general director of the NDL and board member of the Kunstverein. At an annual membership fee of 500 or 1,000 marks<sup>137</sup>, the members of the Galerie-Verein also included Carl Schütte and his sister-in-law Meta Schütte (1855–1931).

The close network of merchant families as well as their diverse interests as patrons also influenced Bremen's most ambitious exhibition project of the nineteenth century. *The Northwest German Commerce, Industry, Trade, Naval, Deep-Sea Fishing and Art Exhibition* of 1890 combined the global trade ambitions of Bremen's merchants with their taste for art. The *Trade and Colonial Exhibition*<sup>138</sup> building presented a wide selection of import goods – tobacco, cotton, petroleum, wool, coffee, grain, indigo, rice, shellac, jute, coconut fibre, and tea – and added “local culture” through ethnographic objects from the respective regions of production. The *Art Exhibition* was organised by the Kunstverein and reflected the taste of its members, mostly by displaying objects on loan: aside from a small number of portraits, still lifes, animal pictures, marine and historical paintings, mythological and allegorical scenes and religious paintings, there were almost a thousand landscape and genre paintings as well as “sentimental snapshots from bourgeois life” on display.<sup>141</sup>

“Most of us came from bourgeois and merchant families [...] But art was something natural to us.”<sup>142</sup>

While merchants such as Lloyd founder H. H. Meier and the Schütte brothers had first and foremost been entrepreneurs with a special “love for the arts”<sup>143</sup> at the turn of the century, their sons and daughters were able to dedicate most of their time and effort to studying and promoting the arts – above all contemporary art. Magdalena Pauli (1875–1970), daughter of Asia merchant Karl Theodor Melchers (1839–1923) and wife of Gustav Pauli (1866–1938), the first director of the Kunsthalle Bremen, believed that “the wealth of the Hanseatic merchants [...] was not found in a bag of coffee, cotton and tobacco” but instead in the “artistic enrichment and adornment of Bremen”<sup>144</sup>. In response to the prevailing historicism and Wilhelmine style, Gustav Pauli was joined by the writer, architect and designer Rudolf Alexander Schröder (1878–1962) as well as the editor Alfred Walter Heymel (1878–1914) in founding the *Goldene Wolke* (*Golden Cloud*), a society of young art enthusiasts, with the aim of “increasing the intellectual level of society”<sup>145</sup>. Rudolf Alexander Schröder, son of Asia merchant and president of the North German Missionary Society, Johannes Schröder (1837–1926), and his cousin Heymel, adoptive son of merchant and consul Adolph Heymel (1822–1890), had just returned from Munich in 1903. There, they had founded the Insel-Verlag, a publishing house promoting contemporary literature, poetry and bookbinding art, in cooperation with Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865–1910).<sup>146</sup> True to Hanseatic iconographic tradition, they had commissioned Peter Behrens (1868–1940) to design the signet of the publishing house in the style of art nouveau: a ship under full sail. They were able to win over, amongst others, Max Slevogt (1868–1932), Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) and Heinrich Vogeler (1872–1942) as illustrators, and published works by Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) and Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929), who used to entertain the social gatherings of the *Goldene Wolke* in Bremen with private readings.

Especially Heymel (Fig. 8) had an international network thanks to his many journeys to Vienna, Paris, Dresden and Berlin which enabled him to compile an extensive private collection, focusing on French Impressionist and post-Impressionist art as well as Japanese woodcuts. The Kunsthalle received, amongst others, Edgar Degas’ *Dancer* (ca. 1895/99) and Paul Gauguin’s *Mask of a Tahitian Woman* (n. d.) from his collection as gift and bequest respectively. Moreover, he helped Gustav Pauli in indexing the graphic collection of the Kupferstichkabinett (Department of Prints and Drawings), which had been significantly expanded by 60,000 prints<sup>147</sup> – including works by Francisco de Goya, Adolph von Menzel, Max Klinger, Edvard Munch, Camille Pissaro and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec – thanks to the bequest of Dr. jur. H. H. Meier (1845–1905), son of the Lloyd founder.<sup>148</sup> In the same year, Dr. Heinrich Wiegand, a board member of the Kunstverein, initiated a collection of Japanese woodcuts of several

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8

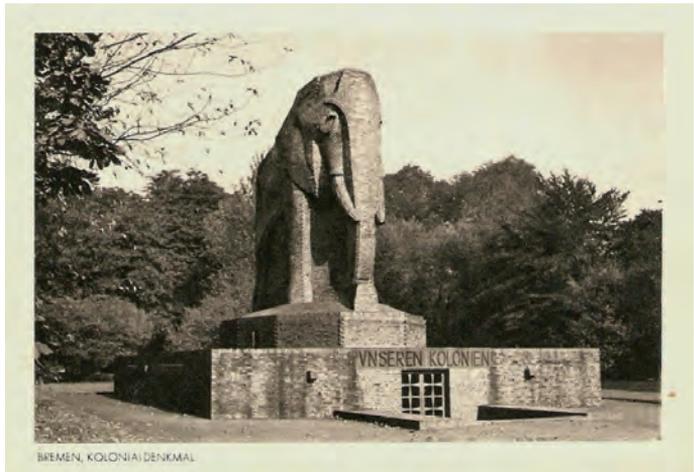
8  
 Wilhelm Trübner (1851–1917),  
*Portrait of Alfred Walter von  
 Heymel*, ca. 1908, oil/canvas,  
 bequest of Alfred Walter Heymel  
 1914, Kunsthalle Bremen –  
 Der Kunstverein in Bremen

9



9  
 Fritz Behn (1878–1970), *Standing  
 Maasai*, 1911, bronze, bequest  
 of Alfred Walter Heymel 1913,  
 Kunsthalle Bremen –  
 Der Kunstverein in Bremen

10



10  
 Postcard with the former  
 "Colonial Memorial" in Bremen,  
 between 1932 and 1945,  
 Joachim Zeller Collection

hundred prints. As director general of the NDL, Wiegand funded a two-year journey to Japan for Friedrich Perzyński, an art historian from Berlin, and provided free transport and cargo shipment on the steamers of the shipping company.<sup>149</sup> The fascination of Bremen's young art enthusiasts for everything foreign and exotic was fuelled by publications like Hofmannsthal's *The White Fan* (*Der weiße Fächer*, 1897) and by the mentioned additions to the collection of the Kunsthalle. The collection consisted primarily of woodcuts from the Edo period (1603–1868) – the period before the United States forced Japan to end its isolationist policy in 1853.<sup>150</sup> When the *Goldene Wolke* organised a “Japanese magical night” at the Club zur Vahr, they dreamed themselves into a “fairy tale [...] woven from the pink-colored sweetness of far-eastern flower-beds and the graceful masquerade of precious colourful kimonos”.<sup>151</sup> However, the few woodcuts in the collection of the Kunsthalle from the Meiji period (1868–1912), which commented on the political, economic and cultural changes of the island state in the context of globalisation, demonstrate that these “fairy tales” hardly corresponded to the reality in Japan in the early twentieth century (see *Dream and Reality* in this catalogue).

In 1912 and 1913, Heymel accompanied the Secretary of the German Colonial Office, Wilhelm Solf (1862–1936), on his travels to the German colonies in Africa,<sup>152</sup> and presented the Kunsthalle with the bronze figure *Standing Maasai* (1911) by Fritz Behn (1878–1970) (Fig. 9). Behn himself had already been in German East Africa several times and, drawing inspiration from big-game hunting, had specialised in animal sculptures. Behn aspired to “primitivise the arts”,<sup>153</sup> which amounted to the depiction of animals and people of the African continent – a racist fallacy based on the hierarchically conceived dichotomies nature/culture and Africa/Europe. Behn's representations of Africans reflect the racial theories of the time (see *Imagination and Violence* in this catalogue). In 1913, the same year in which Heymel presented the *Standing Maasai* to the Kunsthalle as a gift, Behn secured the contract for the creation of a colonial war memorial in Berlin which was not realised due to the outbreak of World War I. In 1932, it was unveiled in a slightly changed form as a “Colonial Memorial” in Bremen: a ten meter tall elephant made of red brick (Fig. 10).<sup>154</sup>

Germany's defeat in World War I (1914–1918) went hand in hand with the loss of its colonies and a serious blow to Bremen's economy. Many of Bremen's merchants lost their trading posts in the colonies and the Entente powers dispossessed the fleet of the NDL, with the exception of a few small steamers. The dream of an economically profitable colonial empire had been shattered.<sup>155</sup> What remained were the churches of German missionaries, thousands of acres of expropriated land in West, South West and East Africa and Oceania – which the Entente powers integrated into their colonial empires – as well as the devastation of numerous colonial wars<sup>156</sup> and the genocide against 80,000 Herero and Nama in the region of today's Namibia.

“This has nothing to do with the demise of the Western world”<sup>157</sup> |

The Kunsthalle, too, had to adjust to the consequences of World War I. As the expenses of rail cargo and insurances for paintings had increased considerably, it was impossible to organise the usual biennial sales exhibitions.<sup>158</sup> Emil Waldmann (1880–1945), the director of the Kunsthalle since 1914, attempted to compensate for this shortcoming by arranging exhibitions of the Kunsthalle’s own collection, which now had a considerable focus on modern art,<sup>159</sup> presentations of local artist associations and the display of local loans. The *Exhibition of Old Chinese Art* in December 1921, for example, showcased loans from the long-term head of the German medical department in Shanghai, Prof. du Bois-Raymond, and evoked “strong effects” with its “well-considered”, “grotesque-free” brushwork.<sup>160</sup> In contrast to this positively received display, the exhibition *Art of East Asia and the Peoples of Nature (Kunst Ostasiens und der Naturvölker)* in January of the following year divided the minds. It primarily displayed objects on loan from the Städtisches Museum (today’s Übersee-Museum) and encouraged visitors to consider non-European art not as ethnographic objects, i. e. as evidence of specific “cultures” or societies, but rather as individual artworks from an aesthetic point of view. The Kunsthalle’s collection of Japanese woodcuts was complemented with Buddhist bronzes from China, ceramics from Peru, wood and bronze sculptures from Africa and religious carvings from Oceania. No detailed loan records have survived. Nonetheless, the reactions in the local press make it possible to approximate artworks which were potentially on display (see *Art of East Asia and the Peoples of Nature* in this catalogue). Moreover, the press commentaries give an insight into the world view with which non-European art was perceived three years after the official end of German colonialism.

The title of the exhibition, *Art of East Asia and the Peoples of Nature*, already reflects the hierarchical world view of the time. While Chinese Buddha figures and Japanese woodcuts were celebrated as evidence of “advanced civilisations” of the same level as European art, African and Oceanian sculptures were associated with “primitiveness”<sup>161</sup> and a naïve connection to nature. This association of Africa and Oceania with nature and Europe with culture was not only based on the hierarchical classification of the world according to widespread racist ideology. It was also derived from the social Darwinist – and today obsolete – idea that all societies of the world developed from savagery to barbarism and, ultimately, to civilisation. According to this theory, Europe was situated at the top of this development.<sup>162</sup> The presence of African and Oceanian art at the Kunsthalle, the place where usually the taste in European art and culture was being refined, gave many visitors “a slight scare”<sup>163</sup>. The alterity of Self and Other, Kunsthalle and Übersee-Museum, the European and the non-European had been blurred, questioning the *white* identity of the visitors. Moreover, the criticism

of the exhibition was also linked to nationalist demarcations that had already been articulated in the course of the famous *Künstlerstreit* (*Artists' Protest*), which was caused by Gustav Pauli's acquisition of Vincent van Gogh's *Field of Poppies* (1889) in 1911.<sup>164</sup> It was now complemented by racist ideology from the colonial period. According to critical voices in the press, it was more important to ask "to what extent we Germans are blessed with an authentic talent for the arts"<sup>165</sup> than to appreciate non-European art. Emil Waldmann saw himself forced to defend the exhibition in the *Weser Zeitung*: African art was only marginally represented, solely for the purpose of demonstrating the inspirations that modern European artists had drawn from African sculpture. Its presence at the Kunsthalle had "nothing to do with the demise of the Western world"<sup>166</sup>.

Waldmann's apologia referred to the fear of an attack against *white* identity. Fifteen years later, this fear would be reflected in a colonial-revisionist manner: in the dispossession of "degenerate art"<sup>167</sup> and in the renaming of the Städtisches Museums to Deutsches Kolonial- und Übersee-Museum (German Colonial and Overseas Museum, 1935) under the National Socialist dictatorship.

### Blind spots in the collection of the Kunsthalle Bremen

The exoticist and racist ideas and perspectives of the colonial period survived for a long time after the official end of German colonialism. The authors of this catalogue offer insights into the genealogies of these perspectives, both in art history and in daily life, and provide the analytical tools for critically questioning these racisms and exoticisms in the present. By doing so, they illustrate different positions within postcolonial discourse. This is reflected in their different styles of using gendered<sup>168</sup>, political and ethnic terms and in their multiperspectivity and polyphony – as is required when putting postcolonial theory into practice. Their voices are complemented by interviews with contemporary artists who have developed their very own perspectives on (Bremen's) colonial heritage.

The research for this contribution was only possible thanks to the wonderful support of my colleagues from the various museums and archives in Bremen: I would like to especially thank Eva Fischer-Hausdorf, Anne Buschhoff, Brigitte Reuter, Kevin Fickert and Iris Graaf-Burkert of the Kunsthalle Bremen. I am also deeply grateful to Silke Seybold, Renate Noda, Hartmut Roder and Bettina von Briskorn of the Übersee-Museum, Jan Werquet of the Focke-Museum, Boris Löffler-Holte, Jörn Brinkhus and Marion Alpert of the Staatsarchiv Bremen, Uwe Bölz of the Archiv der Böttcherstraße, and Charlotte Colding-Smith, Ruth Schilling, Christian Ostersehlte and Talip Törün of the Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum Bremenhaven.

| 1 | Christian Heinrich Wätjen, quoted in Wätjen 1983, p. 29.

| 2 | Hardegen on H. H. Meier's journey to Rome in 1840; Hardegen 1920, p. 45.

- | 3 | The German overseas colonies included Togo, Cameroon, German South West Africa, German East Africa, Samoa, Kaiser-Wilhelmsland and the Bismarck Archipelago (New Guinea), the (north-ern) Solomon Islands, the Mariana Islands, the Caroline Islands, Palau, the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Kiautschou Bay.
- | 4 | See, inter alia, Steyerl/Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2003, Arndt/Eggers/Kilomba/Piesche 2005, Arndt/Ofuatey-Alazard 2011, Huggan 2013, and do Mar Castro Varela/Dhawan 2015.
- | 5 | See, inter alia, Ayim/Oguntoye/Schultz 1986, Hügel/Lange/Ayim/Bubeck/Aktaş/Schultz 1999, Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland e. V. 2006, Ha/al-Samaraï/Mysorekar 2007, Noah 2008, Kilomba 2013, Kelly 2016, and Ridha/Nkwendja-Ngnoubamdjum/Bergold-Caldwell/Wiedeneroth-Coulibaly/Haruna-Oelker/Digoh 2016.
- | 6 | See, inter alia, Osterhammel 1995, Berman 1998, Friedrichsmeyer/Lennox/Zantop 1998, Kundrus 2003, Zimmerer/Zeller 2003, Förster/Henrichsen/Bollig 2004, Mazon/Steingröver 2005, Zimmerer/Schaller 2009, Zimmerer/Perraudin 2011, Langbehn/Mohammad 2011, Zimmerer/Schaller 2009, Zimmerer 2013, Rosenhaft/Aitken 2013, and Osterhammel 2013.
- | 7 | See, inter alia, Price 1989, Hooper-Greenhill 2000, Heesen/Sparý 2002, Peers/Brown 2003, Edwards/Gosden/Phillips 2006, Karp/Kratz/Szwaja/Ybarra-Frausto 2006, Muttenthaler/Wonisch 2006, Berner/Hoffmann/Lange 2011, Boast 2011, Golding/Modest 2013, Bennett 2015, and Förster/Stoecker 2016.
- | 8 | See, inter alia, Schmidt-Linsenhoff 2005, Schmidt-Linsenhoff/Hölz/Uerlings 2010, Barson/Gorschluter 2010, Greve 2013, Smith/Brown/Jacobi 2015 as well as the sources and contributions in this catalogue.
- | 9 | I would like to warmly thank Elombo Bolayela, Virginie Kamche, Beatrice Karbaumer-Jones, Ulla Beckerhoff, Dr. jur. Godefroid Bokolombe, Lázaro Pérez Fraga, Ahmed Guled, Jolie Mtamack, Felix Ntamag, Asangire Oprong, Sodji Sanvi, Dr. Hella de Souza, Ohiniko Mawusse Toffa and Annette Wagner for many stimulating discussions.
- | 10 | The motto of Bremen's merchants "Buten un Binnen, Wagen un Winnen" in Low German (literally "Outside and in – risk it and win") was created by the journalist and eventual mayor of Bremen, Otto Gildemeister (1823–1902). It is inscribed above the entrance of the so-called Schütting, the guildhall of Bremen's merchants, at the market square in Bremen.
- | 11 | Cf. Christiansen 2000.
- | 12 | Original in German: "Vormundschaft und Protektion"; cf. Schulz 2002.
- | 13 | Cf. Hardegen 1920, p. 108.
- | 14 | Cf. Weniger 2016, Fig. 93–96.
- | 15 | Original in German: "den Sinn für das Schöne zu verbreiten und auszubilden"; Archive of the Kunsthalle Bremen, File No 1, Laws of the Kunstverein 1824.
- | 16 | Hansen 1997, p. 8.
- | 17 | Cf. Melzer 2016.
- | 18 | Hardegen 1920, p. 48.
- | 19 | Heidenreich 1993, p. 455.
- | 20 | Aldermen were merchants elected as representatives of Bremen's merchant guild who, aside from the Senate, controlled the fate of the city.
- | 21 | Cf. Rössler 2016.
- | 22 | Cf. Maischak 2013 and Ostersehle 2007.
- | 23 | Kaiser Wilhelm II quoted in Klein 2013, p. 164.
- | 24 | *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- | 25 | Burgdorf quoted in Hauser 1995, p. 242.
- | 26 | Cf. Fields 1985, Klein/Vinson 2007, Morgan 2016. After the abolition of slavery in the British (1833) and French (1848) colonies, the United States followed after the end of the civil war (1861–1865). The Spanish colonies Puerto Rico and Cuba abolished slavery in 1873 and 1886 respectively. Nevertheless, the working conditions of the formerly enslaved people hardly changed: their income was minimal, their access to education limited and they were subjected to discriminating legislation. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of people from India and China were brought to the Caribbean to compensate for the loss in work force and to work under conditions similar to slavery. Cf. Blackmon 2009, Sherwood 2007 and Temperley 2000.
- | 27 | Cf. Schwarzwälder 1995.
- | 28 | On the spelling and meaning of *white* and Black, see Greve in this catalogue, endnote 1.
- | 29 | Cf. Roder 2002.
- | 30 | Cf. Richter 2005.
- | 31 | Cf. Lutze 1955 and Kopitzsch 2002.
- | 32 | Schauinsland received additional financial support from the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin, the "Verein zur Errichtung eines Handelsmuseums" (Association for the Establishment of a Trade Museum) and the North German Lloyd, which provided free transport and cargo shipment. Cf. Abel 1970, p. 75. On Schauinsland's journeys, see Schauinsland 1999.
- | 33 | In the nineteenth century, grave robbers were primarily interested in the gold value of the figures instead of their artistic quality. Vicente Restrepo saved them before being melted down and left them to Carl Schütte who presented them to the Städtisches Museum as a gift; cf. Raddatz 1980, pp. 2–3.
- | 34 | Cf. Roder 1995 and 2002.
- | 35 | The trademark "Chiquita" was launched by the United Fruit Company which was founded in Cincinnati in 1899. Starting in 1967, the trademark was distributed by Atlanta Handels-AG, a successor of the Fruchthandel Gesellschaft, in Germany.
- | 36 | Cf. Buschhoff 2007.
- | 37 | Pauli 1936, p. 176.

- | 38 | *The Trade and Colonial Exhibition* was organised under the chairmanship of Gustav Pagenstecher and Professor Sombart, syndic of the Bremen Chamber of Commerce, as secretary with the support of numerous merchants (e. g. Hermann Melchers, Theodor Gruner, Carl Merkel, Christoph Papendieck), geographers (e. g. Alwin Oppel, Wilhelm Wolkenhauer, Moritz Lindemann), and scientists (e. g. Franz Buchenau, Ludwig Häpke, Otto Finsch, Hugo Schauinsland); cf. Lüderwaldt 1995, p. 36.
- | 39 | Cf. *ibid.*
- | 40 | The art exhibition was organised under the chairmanship of Dr. jur. H. H. Meier (1845–1905), son of the Lloyd founder. His father was an honorary chairman of the *Northwest German Exhibition*.
- | 41 | Original in German: “sentimentale Momentaufnahmen aus dem bürgerlichen Leben”; Brunzema 1995, p. 53.
- | 42 | Original quote in German: “Die meisten von uns kamen aus Bürger- und Kaufmannshäusern ... Aber die Kunst war uns allen Selbstverständlichkeit”; Berck 1954, p. 11.
- | 43 | H. H. Meier quoted in Hardegen 1920, p. 49.
- | 44 | *Ibid.*, p. 52
- | 45 | *Ibid.*, p. 12. The name of the newly founded society was derived from Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso* (1790).
- | 46 | Cf. Neteler 1995.
- | 47 | Cf. Buschhoff 2011, p. 9.
- | 48 | Cf. Der Kunstverein in Bremen 2007.
- | 49 | Cf. Kreul 2001 and Kreul/Schrader 2008.
- | 50 | Cf. Ritter 1968.
- | 51 | Berck 1954, p. 70.
- | 52 | Before his appointment to the position of colonial secretary, Solf had served as a judge in German East Africa and governor in the German colony of Samoa. His journeys to the German colonies in Africa in 1912 and 1913 were intended to initiate several reforms in colonial politics and administration, including the prohibition of so-called “mixed marriages”, the expansion of infrastructure and the restriction of physical punishment as well as the exploitation of the local population.
- | 53 | Zeller 2016, p. 29.
- | 54 | Cf. Zeller 2000 and Buschhoff 2017.
- | 55 | Cf. Kundrus 2003.
- | 56 | These colonial wars included the Hehe (1891–1894) and Maji Maji Rebellion (1905–1907) in German East Africa, the Herero/Nama War (1904–1908) in German South West Africa, the Bafut Wars (1891–1907), the Jaunde (1895–1896), Bule (1899), Bangwa (1899–1901), Anyang (1904) and Makaa Rebellion (1906–1910) as well as the Fulbe War (1899–1902) in Cameroon and the Boxer Rebellion (1900–1901) in China, cf. Bechhaus-Gerst/Zimmerer 2013.
- | 57 | Original quote in German: “Mit dem Untergang des Abendlandes hat dies nichts zu tun”, Waldmann 1922.
- | 58 | Der Kunstverein in Bremen 1922, p. 4.
- | 59 | Cf. Hansen 2011.
- | 60 | Dr. Sm. 1921.
- | 61 | Waldmann 1922.
- | 62 | Cf. Fabian 1983.
- | 63 | Cf. Hain 1922.
- | 64 | The Bremer *Künstlerstreit* used Pauli’s acquisition of van Gogh’s *Field of Poppies* (1889) as an opportunity to discuss the international market and, in particular, the acquisition of modern art from France all across Germany, with the supporters of avant-garde art on the one side and the supporters of Wilhelmine art on the other, cf. Herzogenrath and Hansen 2002.
- | 65 | Cf. Gerbes 1922.
- | 66 | Waldmann 1922.
- | 67 | Cf. Fleckner 2008–2017.
- | 68 | To write in a gender neutral or gender equal way has been a long-running discussion within feminist German linguistics.