

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Shadow

PETER H. FOX

A major strength of the original Fred Grunwald collection is early twentieth-century German illustrated books. The resurgence of artistic interest in book design precipitated by Jugendstil is evident in Joseph Sattler's vision of Germanic myth in *Die Nibelunge* (The Nibelunge, 1900) and Oskar Kokoschka's fable *Die Träumenden Knaben* (The Dreaming Boys, 1908), while Expressionist impulses animate Wassily Kandinsky's mystical *Klänge* (Sounds, 1913), Max Beckmann's treatment of friend Kasimir Edschmid's novel *Die Fürstin* (The Princess, 1918), and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's design for poet Georg Heym's *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1924) (fig. 1). Kirchner created numerous illustrations to literary texts throughout his career, starting with *1001 Nights* in 1906–7, but his edition of *Umbra Vitae* is the most complete realization of his work in this genre. Unique to the Grunwald Center is a set of two bound volumes with 163 original woodcuts, drawings, and other illustrations by Kirchner, which were created from roughly 1919 to 1923 (figs. 2–3). Previously unaccounted for in the literature on the artist, these volumes present a new perspective on the significance of illustration for Kirchner's artistic project. This essay explores Kirchner's engagement with *Umbra Vitae* as a turning point in his oeuvre, a moment in which his desires to work through the trauma of World War I and control the reception of his art coalesced.



Fig. 1. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1924). Collection UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley I. Talpis



Fig. 2. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1919–1923). Collection UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum. Gift of Mrs. Fred Grunwald

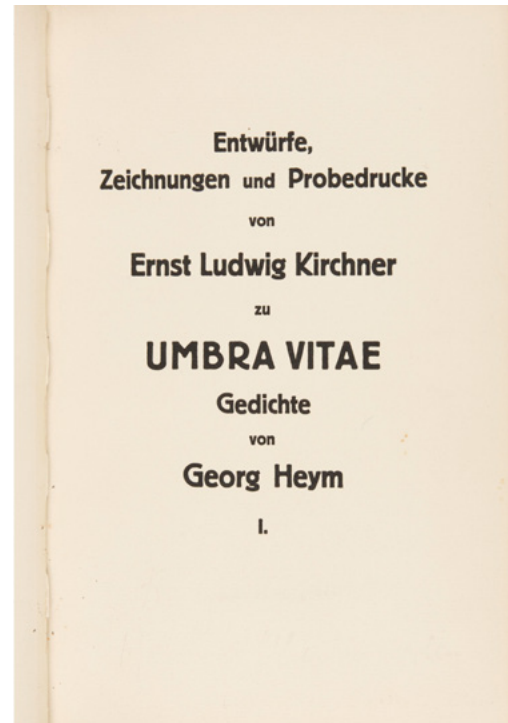


Fig. 3. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1919–1923), title page

The project's gestation was unusually long. Kirchner had moved from Dresden to Berlin in 1911, a year after Heym began giving public readings of his work at the Expressionist literary salon *Der neue Club*, where members of *Die Brücke*, the artists' group cofounded by Kirchner in 1905, were regular visitors. Heym had attained wide readership among the Berlin cognoscenti for his vivid and emotionally piercing poetry, but his fame skyrocketed in 1912, when he suffered a fatal accident at the age of twenty-four while ice skating outside of Berlin. A posthumous poetry collection, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life), was quickly assembled and published a few months later. It is unclear if Kirchner and Heym ever met personally, but Kirchner's friend Simon Guttman, a writer and prominent member of *Der neue Club*, facilitated the initial publication of *Umbra Vitae*, and Kirchner was doubtlessly familiar with it.

While Kirchner maintained a high level of productivity in Berlin, he had begun to chafe under the limits of working as part of an official group. This was due in large part to his antagonistic relationships with the editors and publishers already chronicling his career; he was aggrieved by incorrect image captions, poor-quality illustrations, and undue attention given to *Brücke* member Max Pechstein.¹ Kirchner attempted to set the record straight later that year by composing *Chronik der Brücke* (Chronicle of *Die Brücke*), an ostensibly neutral history of the group that ultimately catalyzed its dissolution. He sent the text to publisher Eugen Diederichs in February 1914, though Diederichs did not publish it.² When World War I broke out later that year, Kirchner wrote again to Diederichs about illustrating a new German

edition of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855); Kirchner felt that "this immensely spiritual depiction of the world and the battle cries suit our era wonderfully."³ Such a commission would have freed Kirchner from the collaborative ethos of *Die Brücke*, fostered by group exhibitions and print portfolios, and afforded him more leverage over the appearance of his work in print.

Kirchner's enthusiasm quickly waned as the war progressed. To avoid combat, he enlisted as an artillery driver in the spring of 1915 and was garrisoned in Halle an der Saale. By September he was granted a medical leave and was formally discharged in November after experiencing a nervous breakdown.⁴ Shortly thereafter, Kirchner completed a series of seven woodcuts to accompany Adelbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (Peter Schlemihl's Miraculous Story, 1814), a novella about a man who sells his shadow to the devil for a bottomless wallet, only to abandon it and seek sanctuary in travel and study. Kirchner's woodcuts, which featured figures partly inspired by masks held in German ethnographic museums, imbued the nearly century-old tale with contemporary urgency (fig. 4). As Sherwin Simmons has argued, Kirchner sought to renegotiate his own artistic identity by interpolating his biography with that of Schlemihl, a man who flew in the face of social convention to realize a higher purpose in life.⁵ Soon after completing this cycle Kirchner's mental state deteriorated further. In January 1917, at the suggestion of his friend, the philosopher Eberhard Grisebach, he sought treatment in the eastern Swiss hamlet of Davos, and settled there permanently in the fall of 1918.



Fig. 4. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (Peter Schlemihl's Wondrous Story, 1915), title page. National Gallery of Art. New Century Fund and Gift of Ruth and Jacob Kainen

It is unclear when exactly Kirchner began producing woodcuts to Heym's poetry. In a letter to his friend and patron Gustav Schiefeler from 1927, Kirchner dubiously claimed he started the woodcuts for a new edition in 1917.⁶ This would have been at the height of Kirchner's emotional distress. Looking back on his first visit to Kirchner in August of that year, Belgian artist Henry van de Velde described him as "a true victim of the war; the hellish delusion of being sent back into battle had deranged him and flung him helplessly onto the shabby bed of a third-class hotel. . . . In Davos I found an emaciated man with a piercing, feverish gaze, who saw imminent death before his eyes."⁷ In the wake of World War I, Heym had been transformed from a melancholic bohemian poet to a prophet of seismic catastrophe. Even in 1937, shortly before his death, Kirchner described Heym as "a [Walt] Whitman translated into the German psyche, who prophetically saw and wrote our age of the last decades."⁸ However, Kirchner first mentioned producing woodcuts for Heym's poems only in 1919, at which point his health was steadily improving. In September, he wrote to patron Gustav Schiefeler to suggest including the "small woodcuts" to *Umbra Vitae* in a catalogue of Kirchner's graphic work he was preparing at the artist's behest.⁹ A month later, Kirchner wrote to his friend Nele van de Velde, daughter of Henry van de Velde, describing the woodcuts to *Umbra Vitae* as "the accompanying melody to a song" and a respite from the overpowering beauty of Alpine scenery in his adopted home.¹⁰ Kirchner's enduring attraction to Heym's poetry was connected both to his personal trauma of the war and his desire to sidestep an unreliable art press.

The publishing world warily embraced Kirchner's newfound tenacity. In April 1921, following the sudden deaths of both his father and his patron Karl Ernst Osthaus, Kirchner wrote to editor Hans Mardersteig about illustrating a new edition of *Umbra Vitae*.¹¹ Kirchner first came into contact with Mardersteig while preparing an article about his drawings for a 1920 issue of the magazine *Genius*, which was published by the Kurt Wolff Verlag and coedited by Mardersteig. (This issue also contained numerous poems by Heym, illustrated with a single woodcut by the artist Max Kaus, a former student of Kirchner's in Berlin.) Kirchner used the opportunity to invent a fictitious French art critic, Louis de Marsalle, as the essay's author; by ascribing his views to a seemingly neutral third party, Kirchner could exercise even more control over his image and reputation. He felt no need to hide, however, when it came to approving reproductions of his work. His requirements for printing images in *Genius* were strict, and he insisted on assessing financial penalties for failure to meet contractual standards.¹² This move scuttled plans for Wolff to publish Schiefeler's graphics catalogue and delayed the production of *Umbra Vitae*; at one point, Kirchner claimed, the gallerist Alfred Flechtheim offered to step in and take over.¹³

If the woodcuts for *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* were a vehicle to refashion his artistic identity, Kirchner staked the illustrations to *Umbra Vitae* on his technical mastery. Mardersteig worked with him throughout 1922 on a second essay credited to Marsalle for *Genius* on Kirchner's graphic work (fig. 5).¹⁴ The essay is awash with hyperbole: Marsalle claimed that Kirchner pioneered the simultaneous printing of his plates with typeset text in an issue of *Der Sturm*, which unwittingly started a fad for books illustrated

with woodcuts. (This achievement was cast as ironic, as Kirchner had failed to attract commissions from publishers and thus failed to capitalize on his technical innovation.) Kirchner is also credited with being the first artist to assemble text and image into a discrete unit for printing, a feat illustrated by two woodcuts, so-called “title vignettes,” from a yet-to-be-published *Umbra Vitae*.¹⁵ Around this time, Kirchner produced at least one maquette of the book, which is now owned by the National Gallery of Art. Based on the 1912 edition of the book, this maquette included fifty woodcuts and an evocative binding depicting two figures (a woman on the front cover and a man on the back cover) bathed in green and black shadows against a gold background (fig. 6). This design was later used for the final version of the book.¹⁶

The volumes held in the Grunwald are quite different. Unlike Kirchner’s maquette, they contain only illustrations, suggesting that the volumes did not have a preparatory function but were more likely produced as a personal memento or collector’s item late in the production process. The prints are divided into two volumes with identical bindings that differ markedly from that of the maquette (fig. 7). There is no lettering, only the dark moss green of a thin layer of goatskin, which is accented on both sides by meandering bands of black sheepskin onlays, almost as if black lines from the figural binding of the maquette had expanded and slithered across the surface.¹⁷ The abstract design is unusual for Kirchner, in both the context of this project and his oeuvre more generally. A preliminary design for the book’s cover, which is included in the first volume, incorporates more familiar figural elements: the front features a man with his face partially covered by a pale green orb, facing a pair of figures on the back, flanked in the foreground by a pair of skulls, a prostrate body rendered in the same sickly mint hue, and a factory belching black smoke in the background (fig. 8). This design was jettisoned at the urging of Wolff and Mardersteig for being “too obvious.”¹⁸

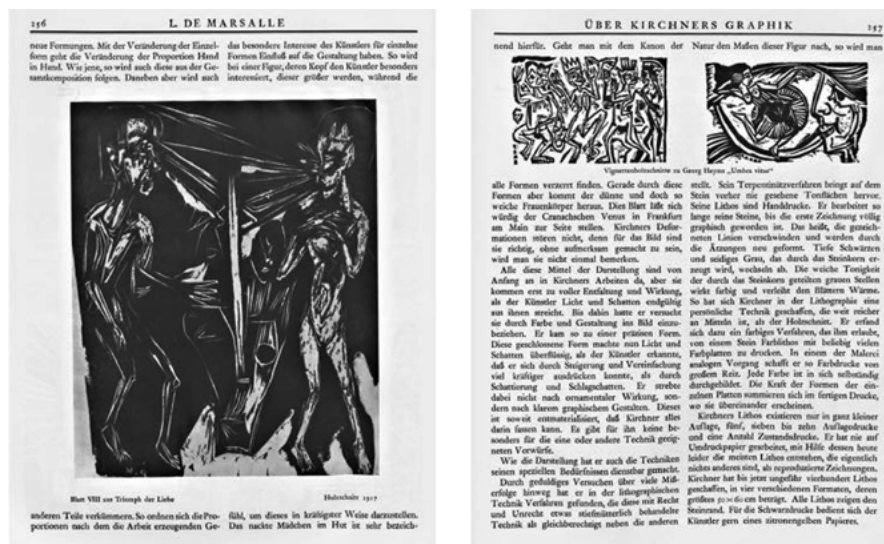


Fig. 5. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (as Louis de Marsalle), “Über Kirchner’s Graphik,” in *Genius*, 1922. Image from de Gruyter’s *Der Literarische Expressionismus Online* © K. G. Saur Verlag, an Imprint of Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG



Fig. 6 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, maquette for *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, c. 1922), binding. National Gallery of Art

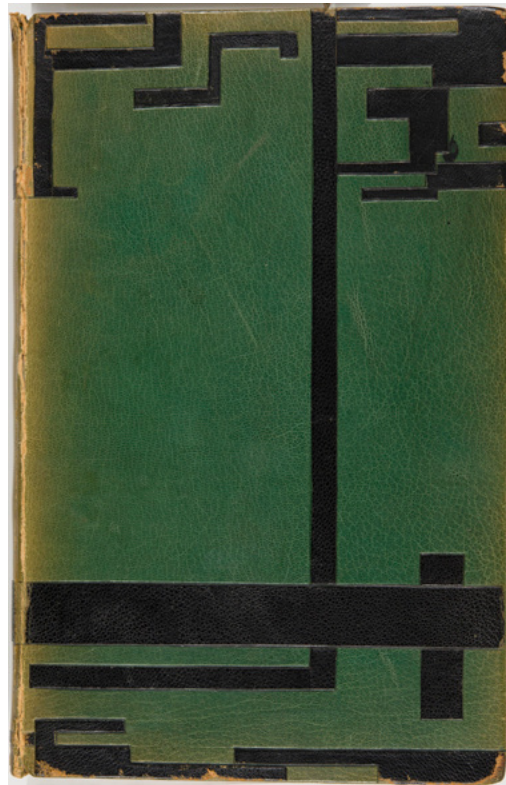


Fig. 7 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1919–1923), binding



Fig. 8 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1919–1923), preliminary cover design

In this case, Kirchner may have relinquished his obsessive need for control to someone else. A pen inscription (by an unknown hand) in the rear of the second volume describes it as “arranged by Clara Forrer” and credits the binding to “Marti & Forrer” (fig. 9). There is also a binder’s mark impressed into the lower right corner of the backboard that appears to be Forrer’s monogram (fig. 10). Forrer was an avid bibliophile who, in 1921 at the age of forty, traveled to Brussels to train as a bookbinder under Jacques Weckesser, whose colorful, abstract work for prestige French titles offers a suggestive comparison to the Grunwald volumes’ binding (figs. 11–12). Forrer then opened her own workshop in the Swiss capital of Bern, which she ran until her death in 1932. Remarkably, no other examples of her work are known.¹⁹

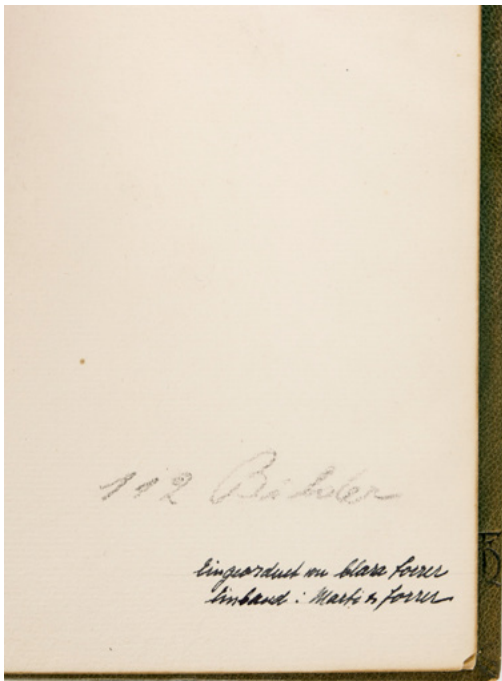


Fig. 9. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1919–1923), inscription



Fig. 10. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1919–1923), binder's mark



Fig. 11. Jacques Weckesser, binding for Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Les Diaboliques*, c. 1917. ©Musée royal de Mariemont—Photo M. Lechien. www.musee-mariemont.be



Fig. 12. Jacques Weckesser, binding for Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Le Bonheur dans le crime*, 1917. ©Musée royal de Mariemont—Photo M. Lechien. www.musee-mariemont.be

If Forrer was also responsible for the “arrangement” of the volumes’ contents, it may explain their unusual presentation. The prints (and a single drawing), which are of varying dimensions, are each encased in elaborately folded sheets of laid paper, cut to give the appearance of a window mat, emphasizing Kirchner’s prints as works of art rather than design elements. A page number and the name of the corresponding poem are printed in relief on the lower margin. This strategy renders Heym’s poetry palpably present by virtue of its absence; without accompanying text, the titles of Heym’s poems morph into the titles of Kirchner’s prints, perhaps nowhere more apparently than in the print for the title poem (figs. 13–14). The woodcuts are printed in red and black ink, as Kirchner requested, encompassing anywhere from one to six versions of each print, usually including a first state (*1. Zustand*), second state (*2. Zustand*), a proof sheet (*Probeblatt*), and in some cases a print made by the artist himself (*Handdruck des Künstlers*). The sequencing is often irregular; for example, various states of the print intended for the poem “Die Morgue” (The Morgue) alternate with those for “Die Seefahrer” (The Sailors) (figs. 15–17). Such placement emphasizes the cohesive function of Kirchner’s images, which unite otherwise disparate poems by providing a parallel visual world in which the leitmotif of the shadow encompasses both the form and the content of the book.



Fig. 13. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1919–1923), page 1



Fig. 14. *Umbra Vitae*, page 19

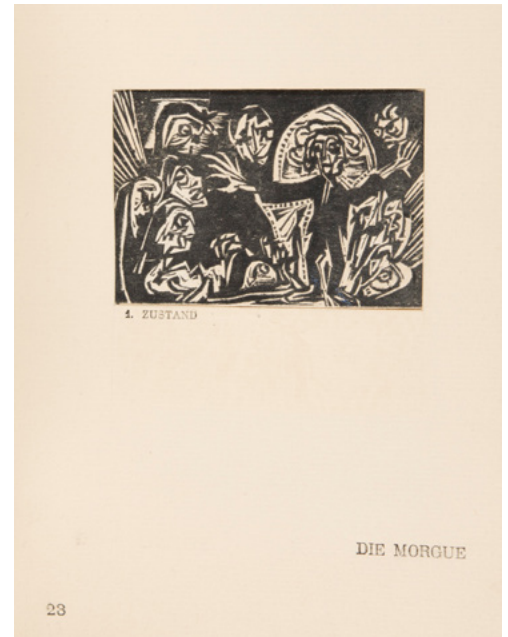


Fig. 15. *Umbra Vitae*, page 23 ("Die Morgue")

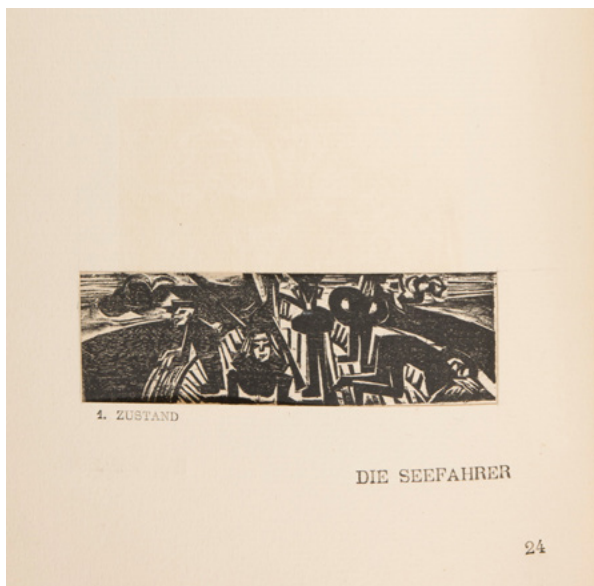


Fig. 16. *Umbra Vitae*, page 24 ("Die Seefahrer")

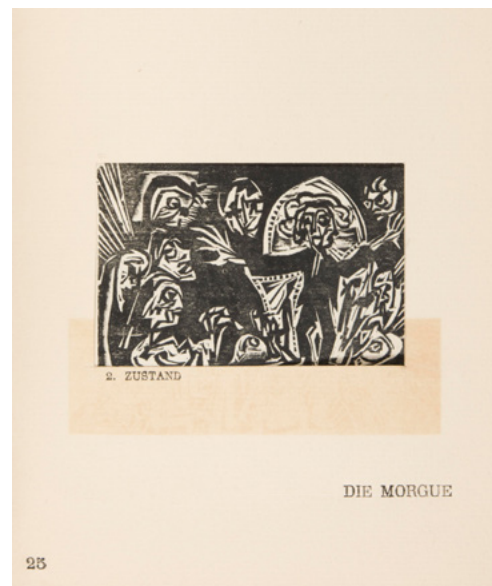


Fig. 17. *Umbra Vitae*, page 23 ("Die Morgue")

The collected states of each print do not vary drastically from one another or the published versions. Visually, they oscillate between moody atmospheric and something tighter and more streamlined, increasingly dependent on the contrast between black and white. The collected states of "Die Morgue," a medium-size composition, are differentiated by the richness of the black ink; the first state, for example, hews closely to the final print included in the book, with the second and third states increasingly hazy

and atmospheric (fig. 18). The artist's print goes some way in restoring the black pigment. Prints for "Die Seefahrer," an elongated rectangle that appears alternately at the top and bottom of the page, show a slightly different process. Once again, the first state shows the most concentrated use of pigment, while the final proof sheet and artist's print are much hazier, the latter printed on paper with a warmer tone than the early states (figs. 20–22).

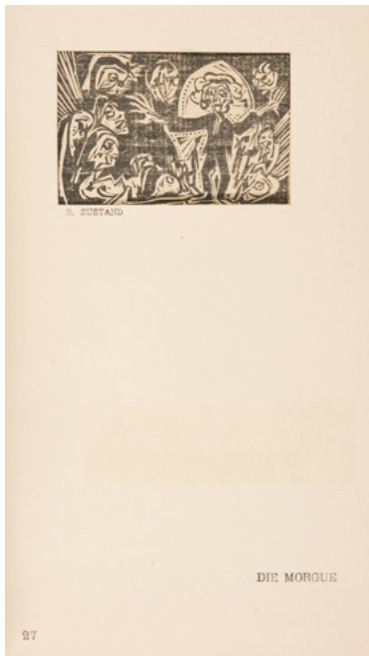


Fig. 18. *Umbra Vitae*, page 27 ("Die Morgue")

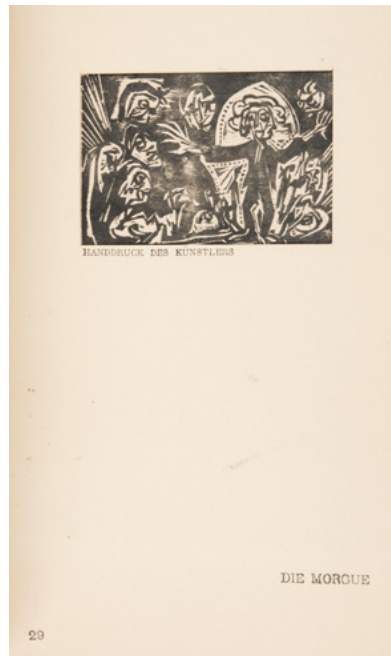


Fig. 19. *Umbra Vitae*, page 29 ("Die Morgue")

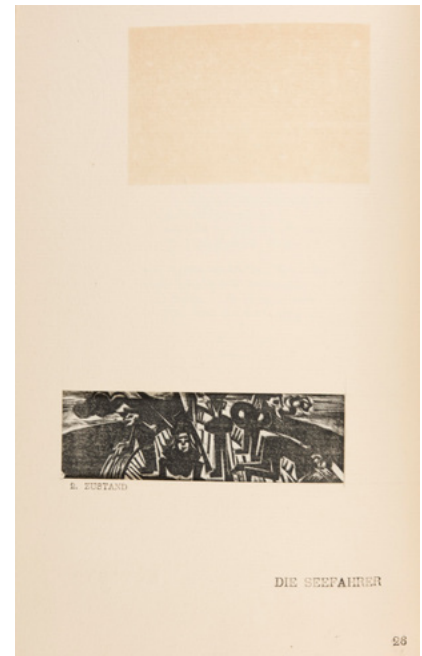


Fig. 20. *Umbra Vitae*, page 26 ("Die Seefahrer")



Fig. 21. *Umbra Vitae*, page 31 ("Die Seefahrer")

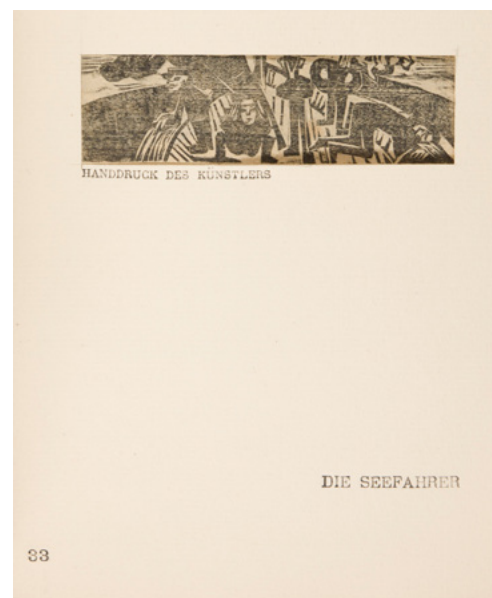


Fig. 22. *Umbra Vitae*, page 33 ("Die Seefahrer")

The woodcuts for *Umbra Vitae* diverge from Kirchner's earlier work in this medium. They lack the whimsy and planarity of his Jugendstil-inspired Dresden period, the urban frenzy of his work in lithography, etching, and drypoint after moving to Berlin, and the studied detail of his landscapes and portraits made after his abortive military service. The print for "Mit den fahrenden Schiffen" (With the Traveling Ships), for example, is tightly coiled and almost impenetrable, with stormy waves appearing to encircle the sailing couple, who in turn appear smaller in the second state than on the proof sheet (figs. 23–24). One of Kirchner's most affecting images is for the poem "Die Irren" (The Psychotics), a remarkably dense composition in which lines delineating faces and bodies converge to impart a vivid sense of claustrophobia. The central figure, a tall man in a tunic with a crucifix painted on his forehead, would be lost amid the din were it not for his shock of black hair. His eyes, though directed squarely at the reader, barely register, lost in the angularity of his gaunt face (figs. 25–26). Unlike Kirchner's earlier work, which celebrated the new forms of urban entertainment and perception, the prints for *Umbra Vitae* are more foreboding, calling attention to the misery and isolation Heym saw lurking in the city and countryside alike.²⁰ In contrast to "Die Irren," the second state of the print for "Mond" (Moon) relies on negative space. This is particularly true around the trees, where the white of the page gives them a halo-like glow, which appears muddled and refracted in the water in the foreground. The smudged surfaces of the white orbs, which were mostly removed in the final version, give those shapes a gritty, ominous edge (fig. 27).

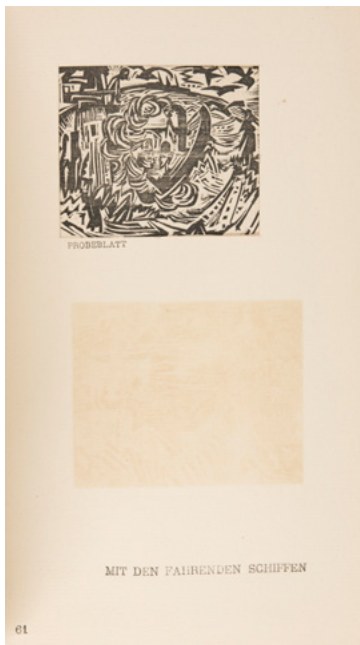


Fig. 23. *Umbra Vitae*, page 61 ("Mit den fahrenden Schiffen")

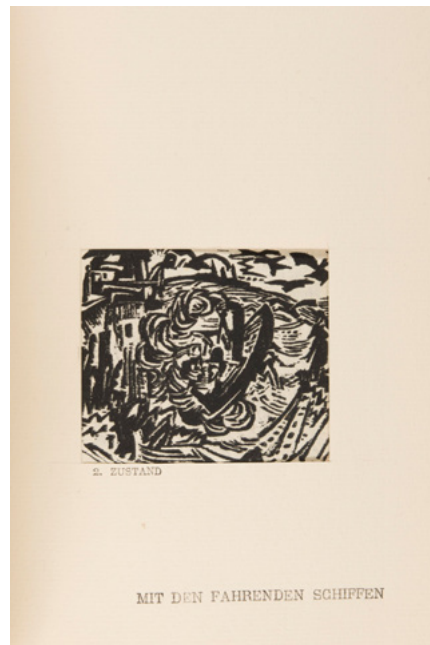


Fig. 24. *Umbra Vitae*, unnumbered page ("Mit den fahrenden Schiffen")

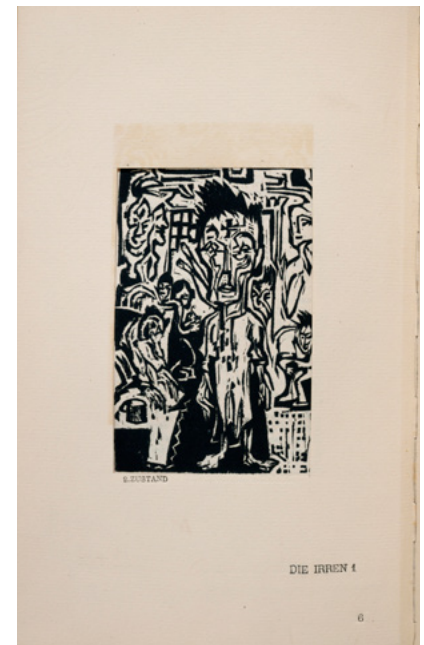


Fig. 25. *Umbra Vitae*, page 6 ("Die Irren")

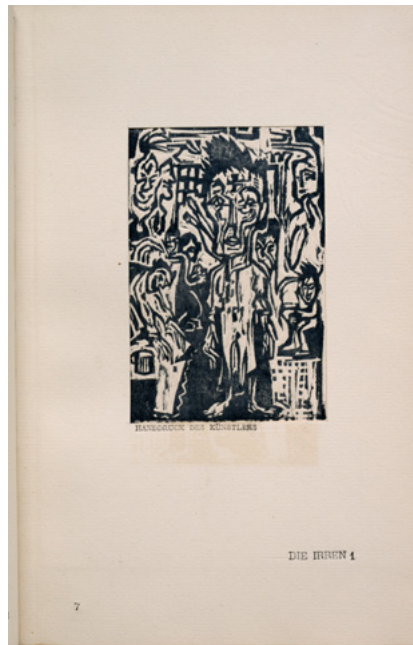


Fig. 26. *Umbra Vitae*, page 7 ("Die Irren")

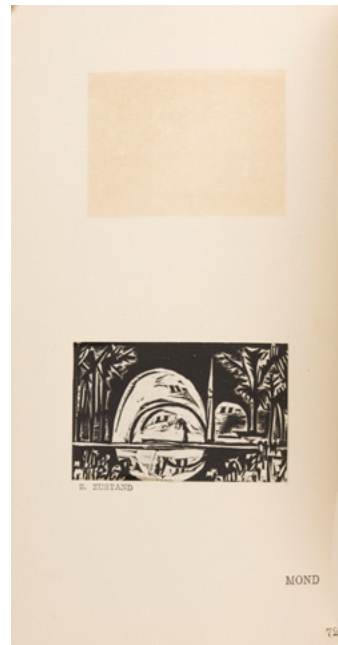


Fig. 27. *Umbra Vitae*, page 72 ("Mond")

While higher production costs precluded color printing, black and white may have struck readers familiar with Heym's work as unusual. "Mond," like many of the other poems in *Umbra Vitae*, is full of references to bright, often menacing colors, like red, gold, and purple. This is due in part to the poet's admiration of painters like Ferdinand Hodler and Vincent van Gogh, a feeling shared by Kirchner and his Brücke colleagues in their early years.²¹ In addition to the binding, only the frontispiece makes any notable use of colored pigment. The frontispiece is shown in five different states, each featuring a figure clad in black standing over his or her shadow, luridly rendered with a skull and claws (figs. 28–30). Behind them is a supine woman with her mouth agape and arms akimbo, seemingly in mid-free fall, rendered in hues ranging from pink to mauve to a deep purple. (The final edition would use a shade of bright red.) Unlike the shadow of Peter Schlemihl, a bourgeois burden he could cast off, this figure's shadow is inescapable, more a feature of the unconscious mind than a suffocating alter ego.

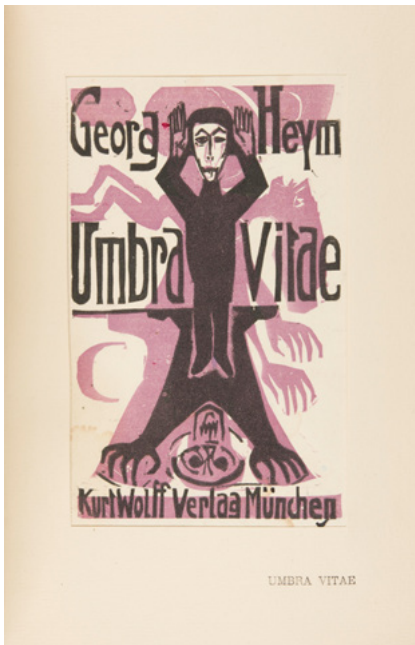


Fig. 28. *Umbra Vitae*, frontispiece



Fig. 29. *Umbra Vitae*, frontispiece

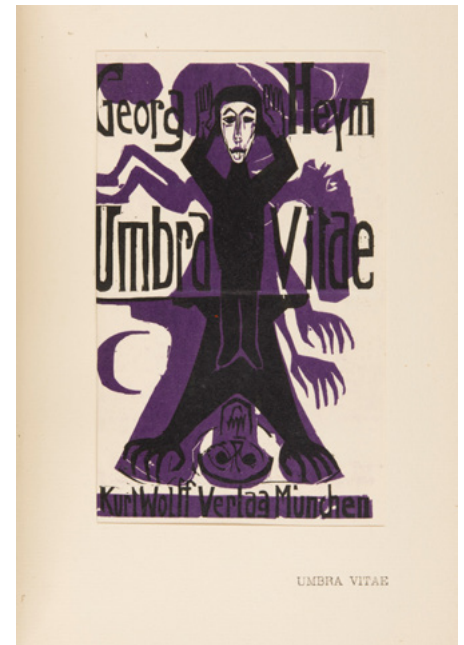


Fig. 30. *Umbra Vitae*, frontispiece

The impetus behind these volumes remains elusive. In the published correspondence of Kirchner and Wolff, there are no plans to produce a separate edition of the prints without text. In fact, Kirchner complained bitterly in letters to Wolff about the apparent difficulties German printers had in printing the images and text together, which for him was the most important rule for the book's production.²² In relaying his distress to Nele van de Velde, Kirchner wrote approvingly of recent artistic developments in Belgium, citing designs for the avant-garde magazine *Lumière*, but he did not travel there that year.²³ The inclusion of prints made by Kirchner makes it unlikely that the Grunwald's two volumes were produced without his knowledge. However, Kirchner had sent all of the woodblocks to his attorney, Ludwig Wertheimer, in Frankfurt in June 1922. By February of 1923 they had still failed to arrive at the Wolff Verlag in Munich, though Kirchner had requested their delivery twice, leaving their precise location unknown for several months.²⁴ The Grunwald volumes were almost certainly in the possession of Hans Fehr, a Swiss legal historian and friend of Kirchner's who secured his release from the military while teaching at Halle, but there is no evidence of his involvement in the project.²⁵

Kirchner's finished edition of *Umbra Vitae*, with a total of forty-seven woodcuts, was finally published in an edition of 510 copies (including ten "luxury" editions signed by Kirchner) in 1924 to middling financial returns, souring the potential of any further collaborations with Wolff. The text was entirely re-set from the 1912 edition in a sans-serif typeface, one Kirchner found particularly well suited to his woodcuts, nearly all of which were placed between the title and first stanza of each poem (fig. 31).²⁶ Nevertheless, by the mid-1920s, Kirchner's approach would have appeared out of sync with the bruising realism of

Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity), borne out by the pervasive cynicism of artists and intellectuals still working in Germany. A work like Otto Dix's *Der Krieg* (1924), for example, offered a much more direct confrontation with the lingering anguish of the war. Similarly, avant-garde experiments in photography and the advent of the New Typography quickly transformed book design: one thinks, for example, of László Moholy-Nagy's cover and design for Sigfried Giedion's *Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton* (Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete, 1928) or the first edition of Walter Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße* (One-Way Street, 1928), with its striking cover by Sasha Stone (fig. 32). The relevance of Heym and his prewar peers for parallel developments in literature had also diminished.

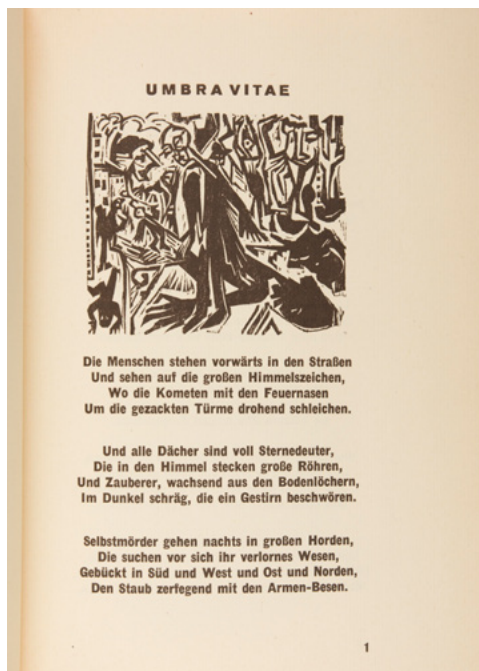


Fig. 31. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Umbra Vitae* (The Shadow of Life, 1924), page 1. Collection UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Hammer Museum. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley I. Talpis



Fig. 32. Sasha Stone, cover design for Walter Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße* (One-Way Street, 1928). Image courtesy of design-is-fine.org

The perceived anachronism of Heym's poetry, along with Kirchner's volatile relationship to the art press, may have guaranteed *Umbra Vitae* minimal critical attention upon its publication. One exception was the Swiss art historian Georg Schmidt, who noted that while many contemporary artists had taken to illustrating works of literature, poetry seemed to refuse such a strategy, premised as it was on the task of cultivating its readers' imagination through suggestion rather than detailed description. For Schmidt, Kirchner's design succeeded because he recognized this distinction.²⁷ His woodcuts drew out the imagistic qualities of Heym's verse without usurping them, visual fragments that did not augment the texts but rather revealed their structural logic. This approach offered a thread of continuity between disparate poems assembled only after the author had died. Though intended as a gesture to reassert

control over the production and dissemination of his art, the strange reciprocity between text and image inherent to the task of illustration productively challenged Kirchner's authority as an artist. Designing *Umbra Vitae* allowed Kirchner to revel in Heym's mythic status as a prophet of doom while refusing a direct identification with his nihilism. The volumes held in the Grunwald visually manifest this tension between text and image, isolating Kirchner's images as discrete works of art while announcing their complementary function to Heym's missing poems. Like a shadow, symbolic repository of drives and impulses, they linger in their absence.

-
- ¹ For example, Kirchner complained to the publisher Reinhard Piper about improperly attributed works by him and Brücke colleague Erich Heckel printed in a book by the critic Wilhelm Hausenstein. Letter, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner to Piper, probably January 1913, no. 177 in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Der gesamte Briefwechsel: "Die absolute Wahrheit, so wie ich sie fühle,"* vol. 1, ed. Hans Delfs (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spies, 2010), 77, hereafter cited as "GB." Kirchner scolded critic Paul Fechter for writing in his book *Der Expressionismus* (1914), the first dedicated to the movement, that the artist Max Pechstein had been the "leader" (Führer) of Die Brücke. Letter, Kirchner to Fechter, June 18, 1914, GB vol. 1, no. 212, p. 93. Fechter would later work with Pechstein to produce a catalogue of his works.
 - ² Letter, Kirchner to Eugen Diederichs, February 15, 1914, GB vol. 1, no. 206, p. 90.
 - ³ "...diese grossgeistige Weltschilderung und die Schlachtgesänge passen doch wunderbar in unsere Zeit." Letter, Kirchner to Diederichs, November 1, 1914, GB vol. 1, no. 218, p. 96. This and other translations are my own unless otherwise noted. In this letter, Kirchner repeats the initial enthusiasm of Expressionist poets for Whitman, whom they idealized as an unmatched exponent of subjective freedom, unencumbered by the shallow materialism of late Wilhelmine culture. See Walter Grünzweig, "Whitman in the German-Speaking Countries" in *Walt Whitman & the World*, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995): 160-172.
 - ⁴ Andreas Gabelmann, "Chronology," in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1880-1938*, ed. Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2003), 236.
 - ⁵ Sherwin Simmons, "Split-Identity in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Woodcut Cycle *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 70, no. 3 (2007): 409-32. As Simmons notes, Kirchner's prints were not related to a new edition of the novella, but he was likely inspired by a 1907 reprint. See also Thomas W. Gaehtgens, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: An Inner War" in *Nothing but the Clouds Unchanged: Artists in World War I*, ed. Gordon Hughes and Philipp Blom (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2014), 118-27.
 - ⁶ Letter, Kirchner to Gustav Schiefler, October 20, 1927, GB vol. 2, no. 411, p. 497. By this point Kirchner also balked at the label "Expressionist," adding a handwritten addendum to the letter: "It would be nice if you wouldn't call me an expressionist. I'm really not one." ["schön wäre es, wenn Sie mich nicht Expressionisten nennen würden. Ich bin wirklich keiner."]
 - ⁷ "ein wahre Opfer des Krieges; der höllische Wahn, in die Schlacht zurückgeschickt zu werden, hatte ihn verwirrt und hilflos auf das armselige Bett eines drittklassigen Hotels geworfen. . . . In Davos fand ich einen abgemagerten Menschen mit stechendem, fiebrigem Blick, der den nahen Tod vor Augen sah." Henry van de Velde, *Geschichte meines Lebens*, rev. ed., ed. Hans Curjel (Munich and Zurich: R. Piper, 1986), 391. As a foreigner working in Germany when war broke out, and thus classified as an enemy alien, van de Velde fled to Switzerland in 1917 before later returning to his native Belgium. He sought out Kirchner in Switzerland in memory of their mutual friend Botho Graef, a professor of classical archaeology at the University of Jena and founder of the municipal Kunstverein (Art Association) there in 1903, a contemporary art venue that gave Kirchner and several of his peers important exhibitions. Graef's sudden death from a heart attack in 1917 was a major blow to Kirchner's emotional stability.
 - ⁸ "ein Whitman in Deutsche Psyche übersetzt, der prophetisch unsere Zeit der letzten Jahrzehnte sah und schrieb." Letter, Kirchner to Curt Valentin, April 17, 1937, GB vol. 3, no. 3324, p. 1987.
 - ⁹ Letter, Kirchner to Schiefler, September 20, 1919, in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner/Gustav Schiefler, Briefwechsel 1910-1935/1938*, ed. Wolfgang Henze (Stuttgart and Zurich: Belsler Verlag, 1990), 138.
 - ¹⁰ Letter, Kirchner to Nele van de Velde, October 14, 1919, in E. L. Kirchner, *Briefe an Nele und Henry van de Velde* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1961), 23.
 - ¹¹ Letter, Kirchner to Hans Mardersteig, April 19, 1921 GB vol. 1, no. 953, pp. 492-93.

- 12 Kirchner eventually gave up this proviso but remained a difficult collaborator. For more complete narratives of the production process, see Wolfram Gabler, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner als Illustrator" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1988), 130–61; Bert Freund, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchners Illustrationen zu Georg Heyms 'Umbra Vitae': Zur Entstehungsgeschichte," *Imprimatur – Jahrbuch für Bücherfreunde* 14 (1991): 247–74.
- 13 Letter, Kirchner to Kurt Wolff Verlag, September 21, 1922, GB vol. 1, no. 1026, p. 541. Flechtheim was one of the most important dealers of modern art in Germany, at one point operating galleries in several cities, before fleeing to Paris in 1933 to escape anti-Jewish persecution. He then moved to London and died there destitute in 1937. Flechtheim's gallery inventory was liquidated by his erstwhile assistant, Alex Vömel, and paintings from his private collection were seized by the National Socialists. Curt Valentin, who organized a show of Kirchner's work in New York (see note 7), worked for Flechtheim in the 1920s and '30s. In early 1937, Valentin emigrated to the United States and received special permission from the Nazis to sell modern art there, including two paintings by George Grosz to the Museum of Modern Art that the artist's estate later claimed were stolen from Flechtheim, for the financial benefit of the regime. Fred Grunwald had purchased several prints from Flechtheim's Düsseldorf gallery in the 1920s and later relied on testimony from Vömel to secure financial restitution from the West German government for his confiscated art collection. For more on Grunwald's connection to Flechtheim and Vömel, see Leslie Cozzi's essay, "From Weimar to Westwood: The Print Collection of Fred Grunwald," in this digital archive.
- 14 During this year, Mardersteig moved from Germany to the Swiss canton of Ticino to set up his own bespoke printing business, Officina Bodoni. In 1927 he moved his business to Verona, Italy and re-christened himself "Giovanni Mardersteig." He remained there until his death in 1977.
- 15 L. de Marsalle [Ernst Ludwig Kirchner], "Über Kirchners Graphik," *Genius: Zeitschrift für werdende & alte Kunst* 3, no. 2 (1921): 251–263, here 253. Despite the issue's date, Kirchner and Mardersteig were still working on the article in mid-1922. For an English translation see Louis de Marsalle, "On Kirchner's Graphic Works" in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1880–1938*, 227–29. (The name of the translator is not provided.) Kirchner never revealed de Marsalle's true identity, leading to him to concoct elaborate stories to explain his absence from European art world circles. But Marsalle's writing became so popular that other artists began to clamor after him, leading Kirchner to later declare his "death" in 1933.
- 16 According to the National Gallery, Kirchner's copy (which he termed his *Modellexemplar* or *Vorlagenbuch* in surviving correspondence), was considered lost until it appeared at auction in 1985; it was purchased by the collector Ruth Cole Kainen, who donated it to the National Gallery in 2012. My thanks to curator Gregory Jecmen for furnishing me with images of the binding. The Kunstbibliothek in Berlin also holds preliminary designs for the book, though not as a bound volume, suggesting that Kirchner or one of his associates may have produced a second maquette.
- 17 My remarks about the binding's material are indebted to a condition report authored by Chela Metzger, head of the conservation center at the UCLA Library, in winter 2017.
- 18 Letter, Hans Mardersteig to Kirchner, June 30, 1922, GB vol. 1, no. 1011, p. 529.
- 19 The only source I have found about Forrer, who apparently suffered from severe health problems, is her obituary: Helene Marti, "Clara Forrer (1881–1932)," *Der Schweizer Sammler: Organ der Bibliophilen Gesellschaft und der Vereinigung Schweizer Bibliothekare* 6, no. 12 (1932): 197–200. Queries to the graphics collection of the Swiss National Library in Bern, the Museum of Design in Zurich, and the Swiss Bibliophile Society turned up no additional information about her life or examples of her work. Marti, whose name also appears in the above-cited inscription, became co-manager of the workshop at some point before Forrer's death. According to Marti, "From [Forrer's] hands came many an artwork, which the most fastidious bibliophile would, with pride, gladly call his own." (p. 197) ["Aus ihrer Hand stammt manches Kunstwerk, das der verwöhnteste Bücherfreund mit Stolz gerne sein Eigentum nennen würde."]
- 20 The classic study of Kirchner's relationship to the pessimism of early twentieth-century German cultural criticism is Charles W. Haxthausen, "'A New Beauty': Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Images of Berlin" in *Berlin: Culture and Metropolis*, ed. Charles W. Haxthausen and Heidrun Suhr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990): 58–94.
- 21 In a letter to his friend and writer John Wolfsohn, Heym wrote that "he [Vincent van Gogh] is closer to me than [Ferdinand] Hodler, for he sees colors as I see them. On reading [Van Gogh's letters] I have again and again said, Good Lord, that is just how you would make a poem. . . . The difference is that painting is very difficult, whereas writing poetry is terribly easy provided one has eyes to see it." Cited and translated in Patrick Bridgewater, *Poet of Expressionist Berlin: The Life and Work of Georg Heym* (London: Libris, 1991), 170.
- 22 Letters from Kirchner to Kurt Wolff Verlag, March 9, 1923, GB vol. 1, no. 1073, p. 583; and July 23, 1923, GB vol. 1, no. 1130, pp. 627–28.
- 23 Letter, Kirchner to Nele van de Velde, February 1, 1923, in *Briefe an Nele und Henry van de Velde*, 50.
- 24 Letter, Kirchner to Kurt Wolff, February 9, 1923, GB vol. 1, no. 1071, pp. 579–82.
- 25 The provenance of the volumes, which have been in the Grunwald Center's collection since 1965, remains incomplete. The Dube catalogue raisonné notes two *Konvolute* of illustrations for *Umbra Vitae* offered for auction at Gutekunst and Klipstein in Bern in 1949 whose whereabouts were, in 1980, "unknown." Annemarie Dube and Wolf-Dieter Dube, *E. L. Kirchner: Das Graphische Werk*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Prestel, 1980), 72. According to the auction house's successor firm, Galerie Klipstein, these volumes came from the collection of Fehr, who was also a onetime "passive member" of Die Brücke and a very close friend of Emil Nolde. The lot, however, went unsold, and was returned to Fehr, who died in 1961. Whether Fehr auctioned the works again or sold them privately is unclear, and the inheritors of his estate are unknown to me. It seems extremely likely that these are the volumes that ended up in the Grunwald Center, possibly purchased by Mr. Grunwald from one of the German print dealers he frequented after World War II.

- 26 Kirchner had advocated for a sans-serif font after learning the text would have to be re-set, as he felt this had served him well in an earlier exhibition catalogue for Die Brücke. A production assistant at the Wolff Verlag recommended the specific typeface that ended up in the book. Letter from Kurt Wolff to Kirchner, February 5, 1923, GB vol. 1, no. 1070, pp. 578–79.
- 27 Georg Schmidt, “Die Holzschnitte von E.L. Kirchner zu Georg Heyms ‘Umbra Vitae,’” *Das Werk* 12, no. 8 (1925), 241.