"Grand Clearance sale":
Kurt Schwitters and the Dutch Dada Campaign

Preparation and organization of the Dutch Dada tour in 1923

Theo van Doesburg's attempts to be admitted as a teacher to the Bauhaus and to reform its program in accordance with the neoplasticist principles of De Stijl culminated in September 1922, in a conference in Weimar, on the doorstep of the Bauhaus. This conference was in part an invitation to resume the deliberations and exchange at another conference held earlier that same year. From May 29 to May 31, 1922, the Union Internationaler Fortschrittlicher Künstler (Union of International Progressive Artists) had organized a similar meeting. This congress in Düsseldorf had resulted in the foundation of a "Constructivist International."

The meeting in Weimar however, was not only a constructivist gathering. It was already in name an "International Congress of Constructivists and Dada in Weimar." Many (ex-)Dadaists and contributors to Mécano attended van Doesburg's congress: Hans Arp, Cornelis van Eesteren, Hannah Höch, László Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter, Peter Röhl, Kurt Schwitters, and Tristan Tzara (fig. 6.1). Part of the meeting was a Mécano soirée on September 25, 1922—a Dada manifestation with the collaboration of Tzara, Arp and van Doesburg's companion in life, Petronella van Moorsel. Tzara read his "Conférence sur Dada [à Paris]" (Lecture on Dada [in Paris]). Arp recited poems from his collection Die Wolkenpumpe (The pump of clouds). Van Moorsel—as Pétro van Doesburg—played compositions by the Italian composer, Vittorio Rieti (fig. 6.2). The program was extended with the declamation of Schwitters's Merz poetry when the evening was repeated a few days later as "Dada Jena" in the Kunstverein Jena (Art Society) on September 27, 1922 and in Hanover as "Dada Revon" on September 29 and 30, 1922.

The success of these evenings encouraged Vilmos Huszár, a Hungarian member of the Stijl group living in The Hague, to suggest the organization of a Dada manifestation in the Netherlands. Van Doesburg agreed and started planning a large Dadaist conference. As it became clear that such a conference wasn't feasible financially, it was
replaced by a plan for a large soiree. Intended collaborators for this first major Dada manifestation in the Netherlands were Arp, Pétro/Nelly and Theo van Doesburg, Raoul Hausmann, Schwitters, and Tzara. Apart from Hausmann, all had been involved in the Mécano soiree in Weimar. However, Theaterbureau de Haan, the theatrical agency commissioned for the practical organization of the Dada show, was not prepared to pay the fees and the expenses of so many people. In the end, instead of one show, a series of Dada evenings were scheduled, but with only with Schwitters as a foreign representative of Dada, rather than all the Dadaists originally invited by van Doesburg. Schwitters agreed that only his travel expenses would be remitted.6

II.

Schwitters had several reasons for a journey to the Netherlands. Van Doesburg's invitation to participate in a series of Dada soirees offered him the opportunity to present his Merz cause to a larger audience. He could bring the Merz program he had developed in the previous years for an "Anti-Dada" tour with Hausmann and for subsequent "Merz evenings" of his own. At the "Merz evenings," Schwitters recited his literary work, collected in the volumes Anna Blume (Ann Blossom) (first edition, 1919, second edition, 1922), Memoiren Anna Blumes in Bleie (Memories of Ann Blossom in Lead) (1922), and Die Blume Anna, Die neue Anna Blume (The Blossom Ann, The New Ann Blossom) (1922). A cross-section of these collections would be the pièce de résistance of the Dada soirees as well.7 At these soirees, Schwitters could promote his Ann Blossom books, which were on sale in the theaters. Besides, he could present his own new review, Merz, the first issue of which appeared on the occasion of the Dada tour. Furthermore, he could involve the audiences in the Merz project itself. Essential to Merz was the artistic “forming,” “valuing,” “matching,” and “balancing” of all kinds of “material,” initially in the setting of the visual arts.8 "Material" could be everything: not only conventional artistic materials, like paint or ink, but also “tramway tickets, checkroom numbers, pieces of wood, wire, bent wheels, silk paper, tins, glass splinters, etc.”9 The same approach was applied by Schwitters in the other arts as well. In literature, textual “material” of any thinkable provenance was submitted to the Merz principle. In Schwitters's conception of the Merzbühne (Merz theater), people—audiences as well as actors—were also regarded as possible material for forming and balancing. The “active as well as passive cooperation of the audience... has to be taken into account, so that it can collaborate as an art factor in the whole [project].”10 In a programmatic outline of the Merz project, written in 1920, Schwitters commented on the role of “people” as “material” in the Merz theater: “People
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nity to attract attention to his visual oeuvre (as he had previously in Hanover, where the “Dada Revon” soirées took place in the Gallery Von Garvens in September 1922, when Schwitters’s work was exhibited in this gallery). He strengthened his contacts with De Branding—in later years, Schwitters also participated in subsequent exhibitions of De Branding—as well as with other writers, artists, and art dealers in the Low Countries.

Schwitters already had several contacts before the Dada tour in 1923. The first appearance of Dutch material in his Merz collages in 1920 even suggests that he may have already visited Holland by that year (fig. 6.4). His network of friends as well as of artistic and commercial contacts were not confined to the Stijl circle. From the circle of De Stijl, Schwitters was or became acquainted with Theo and Nelly van Doesburg, Huszár, Til Brugman and her later partner Höch, Evert and Thijs Rinsema, Antony Kok, César Domela and Gerrit Rietveld. Schwitters also had contacts with other constructivist-oriented artists, like the Hungarians residing in Holland, Moholy-Nagy and Lajos D’Ebneth and the Dutch typographers, Piet Zwart and Paul Schuitema. From expressionist strata of the Dutch avant-garde, Schwitters stood in contact with, among others, Herman Bieling and De Branding. Furthermore, Schwitters was acquainted with representatives of the Nieuwe Zakelijkheid (New Objectivity), like Ben Stroman. Finally, contacts existed between Schwitters, Paul Citroen, and Hendrik Werkman.19

The appearance of Schwitters in the Flemish review Het Overzicht, with an original contribution on “national art” in 1925,20 and with a Merz painting on the cover of Michel Seuphor’s poetry collection, Wenduyne aan Zee (Wenduyne-on-the-Sea) (1924), suggests that he had contacts in Antwerp, too.21 The same seems to hold true for his presence in the proto-surrealist journal L’Oesophile.22

Apart from all artistic and business contacts, it seems as if Schwitters fostered a clear-cut affection for the Netherlands. This is well documented, at least for the period after 1923. Until his forced emigration to Norway in 1937, Schwitters remained a frequent visitor to the Netherlands. During the Dada tour, Schwitters had already begun to learn Dutch, and some Frisian as well, it seems.23

III.

All in all, Schwitters could only accept the poor offer by impresario De Haan to participate in the Dada soirées scheduled for January and February 1923. The other participants were Theo and Pédro van Doesburg,24 as well as Huszár—a curious party, since not one of them was still a genuine Dadaist.25 This non- or even anti-Dadaist background of the “Dadaist resident orchestra” was emphasized repeatedly
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by Schwitters: "May I introduce us? Look here, we are Kurt Schwitters, not dada but Merz; Theo van Doesburg, not Dada but Stijl; Pétro van Doesburg, you don't believe it, but she calls herself dada; and Huszár, not dada but Stijl."26

This, however, was not really a problem, since in Schwitters's Dada understanding, Dada wasn't a purpose in itself. Van Doesburg also began his contribution to the soirées by distancing himself from Dada as "someone innocent of Dadaism."27 Since 1920, though, he had considerable experience in playing his double role as van Doesburg and Bonset. It is difficult to say how Nelly van Doesburg and Huszár understood their part in the Dada campaign. Their stand on Dadaism in 1923 is not documented anywhere. For Nelly van Doesburg, a piano player by profession, the tour was certainly a major opportunity to present herself as a pianist of modernist and avant-garde music. The soirées enabled Huszár to give shadow-play performances of a "mechanical dance figure" he had developed some years earlier (fig. 6.5).28 This shadow-play figure was part of a plan for a constructivist (puppet) theater. Huszár had been working on this project for several years, thus the Dada tour could attract some publicity to this constructivist theater.29

Originally, the first soirée was scheduled for the last week of 1922, on December 27, in The Hague. Due to Schwitters's difficulties in obtaining valid travel documents for the Netherlands, his first public appearance had to be postponed until January 1923. As a stand-in, van Doesburg read poetry by Bonset.30

After Schwitters arrived in the first week of 1923, accompanied by his wife, Helma, the actual tour could start at last. All together, this Dada tour comprised a dozen performances in the western and southern part of the Netherlands, in a little more than a month's time:

- January 10: Haagsche Kunstkring in The Hague
- January 11: Zaal Rosehaghe in Haarlem
- January 16: Parkzicht in Amsterdam (cancelled)
- January 19: Zaal Bellevue in Amsterdam
- January 25: Luxortheater in Den Bosch
- January 27: Bestersds Belang in Tilburg
- January 28: Diligentia in The Hague
- January 29: Gebouw K & W in Utrecht
- January 31: Salon Doele in Rotterdam
- February 3: Gebouw K & W in Utrecht (cancelled)
- February 6: Salon Doele in Rotterdam
- February 8: Concordia in Bussum (cancelled)
- February 14: Leidsche Schouwburg in Leiden31

Not all members of the "Dada resident orchestra" participated in every performance. Nevertheless, in principle, the shows followed a fixed program (fig. 6.6 and fig. 6.7):
1. On a darkened stage, illuminated only by a small table lamp, dressed in a black costume with white socks, a white tie, and a pale face, van Doesburg started the evening with an "Introduction in Dadasophy." This introduction was either a lecture from *Wat is DADA?* or some alternative summary of Dadaist programatics, like "Karakteristiek van het dadaisme" (Characteristic of Dadaism).33

2. As "a gentleman with a very ordinary collar, an ordinary tie, and a very ordinary costume," Schwitters continued with the program of his Merz soirees: the declamation of poems "from abstract lyrics to elemental sound."35 He gave an impression of his literary development, from expressionist poetry in the style of August Stramm via his genuine Dadaist poetry36 to his more recent Merz poetry. He read several "elemental" sound and cipher poems, as well as the first drafts of his *Ursonate* (Elemental Sonata). As Schwitters suggested on the eve of the tour, these were easy for a non-German public to understand.37

3. Another recurring feature was Schwitters's reading of prose. The program comprised in particular the "Grosse glorreich Revolution in Revon" (Great Glorious Revolution in Revon) and the grotesque "Die Erdbeere" (The Strawberry) (fig. 6.8).38

4. Schwitters's contribution was interlarded with piano recitals by Nelly van Doesburg. As her standard repertoire, she played Erik Satie's *Ragtime Parade* (rebaptized as "Ragtime Dada" for the occasion) and the *Marcie per le bestie* (Marches for the Animals) by the Italian composer, Vittorio Rieti—*Marcia nuziale per un coccodrillo* (Wedding March for a Crocodile), *Marcia funebre per un uccellino* (Funeral March for a Little Bird), and *Marcia militare per le formiche* (Military March for the Ants). Sometimes her share in the evenings was extended with the recital of *Ragtime* by Igor Stravinsky, *Mouvements Perpétuels* by François Poulenc, and *Trois Pièces pour Piano* by Arthur Honegger.39

5. Schwitters also recited Heinrich Heine, accompanied by Nelly van Doesburg playing music by Frederic Chopin on the piano.40

6. Huszár followed with a shadow play of his constructivist "mechanical dance figure" performing a "simultaneist mechanical dance."41 Although Huszár's contribution may be regarded as the least Dadaist of the whole evening, the mechanical character of the puppet performance during his portion of the program related directly to Bonset's predilection for mechanics, as expressed in the title of the review *Mécano*.

The performing Dadaists alternately interrupted each others' contributions by shouting slogans, senseless "banalities," and aphorisms from French Dadaists (like Tzara and Francis Picabia), making animal sound from the back of the auditorium or, if possible, from the balcony, an
"Grand Clearance Sale" or "Introduction in Dadasophy"

I.

Initially at least, van Doesburg and Schwitters pursued different aims with the Dada tour. For van Doesburg, the Dada tour was originally intended as a comprehensive introduction of Dada to the Dutch public, especially to those interested in contemporary art. Most of the soirées were organized in collaboration with local art circles and associations of artists (for example, in Amsterdam, with De Onafhankelijken [The Independents], and in The Hague, with the established Haagsche Kunstkring [Hague Art Circle]). His brochure, *Wat is Dada?*, published on the occasion of the tour, was a genuine introduction to Dadaist programatics, offering a cross-reading through Dada theory.

Van Doesburg's account of Dada programatics is by and large a summary of considerations by Richard Huelsenbeck, Hausmann, and Picabia. A new element in his account, at least in the light of his own previous Dada reflections, was van Doesburg's combination of his own considerations concerning the fourth dimension with Salomo Friedlaender's notion of "creative indifference," as adopted in 1919-20 by the Berlin Dadaists. In *Wat is Dada?*, van Doesburg referred to the Dadaist insistence on Nothingness. He pointed at Huelsenbeck's conception that Dada transcends all "general acknowledged duality between matter and spirit, wife and man completely, thus creating a 'point of indifference'—a point, hence, above the human conception of time and space."42 This results, van Doesburg continued, in "the capability [of Dada] to *mobilize* the fixed eye- and fixed distance-point that keeps us imprisoned in our (3 dim.) delusions. Thus it became possible to envisage the whole world prism as a whole, instead of [focusing on] only one facet. In this regard, Dada is one of the strongest manifestations of the 4th Dimension, transposed in the subject."43

Nothingness is, however, also the essential quality of the current state of arts, as discerned by Bonset in the closing section of *Wat is Dada?* It is at this point that Schwitters began. Unlike van Doesburg, who apparently still believed in Dadaism and its theoretical particularities (at least, *Wat is Dada?* presents views that can be found in his and Bonset's programmatic deliberations as early as 1920-21), Schwitters had already abandoned Dada as a viable framework for his aesthetic ventures. His reflections on the Dada tour in early 1923 present a quite different understanding of Dada. As mentioned previously, Schwitters
had already publicly distanced himself from Dadaism in 1922.

II.

In 1919, Schwitters attempted to join Club Dada in Berlin. He was notably rejected by Huelsenbeck and George Grosz, who regarded him as too bourgeois to be admitted to their group. They argued that a bourgeois artist like Schwitters could not genuinely represent the anti-bourgeois Dada mentality at the core of the Berlin Dadaist program. Instead, Schwitters founded his own private movement, the Merz project. Thus, he avoided a conflict over the question of whether he was a Dadaist or not.

Essential to the Dadaist state of mind—at least in the Berlin version of Dada—was the concept that on the one hand, Dada and the Dadaists were anti-bourgeois, and as such, opposed to contemporary bourgeois society, yet on the other hand, were "indifferent" in their stand toward everyday reality, as well as "indifferent" in this reality. "Indifferent" was not meant in the sense of detached, impassive, or apathetic, but rather in the sense of "without a difference." As Huelsenbeck argued in his Dadaistisches Manifest, Dada "symbolized...the most primitive relationship to surrounding reality.... Life appears as a simultaneous maze of sounds, colors and spiritual rhythms. This life is unwaveringly adopted in Dadaist art with all sensational cries and fevers of its saucy everyday psyche and in all its brutal reality."

In short, according to Huelsenbeck (and other Berlin Dadaists), the surrounding real world had to absorbed in art, and it was absorbed in Dada, without any aesthetic mediating whatsoever.

When Dada in Berlin disintegrated after the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe in 1920, this mentality (or at least the understanding of this mentality) underwent a revision. Dadaist "indifference" was rejected by the Communist Dadaists such as Grosz and John Heartfield as an expression of artistic petty bourgeois decadence, and as a consequence, Dada was rejected as an essentially petty bourgeois phenomenon. From that point on, the Communist Dadaists advocated a proletarian-revolutionary art. Hausmann simultaneously distanced himself from Dada and began presenting his work under the new denominator, "PRÉsentism"—a kind of private constructivism, which he also expressly distinguished from Dada. Unlike Grosz and Huelsenbeck, Hausmann had a very good relationship with Schwitters (likewise, Schwitters had a cordial relationship with the Zurich Dadaist, Arp; poems by Schwitters were printed in Der Zeltweg). In part as a reaction to the rejection of Schwitters as a Dadaist, in part as an expression of their objective to develop a distinct profile of PRÉsentism and Merz, and, no doubt, in part as a practical translation of Tzara’s Dada credo "the true Dadas are anti-Dada," Hausmann and Schwitters organized an "Anti-
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Dada's tour in 1921—a series of soirées in Germany and Czechoslovakia. On the one hand, they profited from the reputation of Dada—Hausmann and Schwitters actually presented texts which they previously understood as Dadaist. On the other hand, they focused all attention on their own new art brands—PRÉsentism and Merz. This "Anti-Dada" venture was more or less the blueprint for the Dutch Dada campaign. At least, the core of Schwitters's contribution was identical with his part in the program of the anti-Dada tour. Furthermore, Schwitters's conception of the Dutch Dada tour as a "Dadaist Anti-Dada "campaign" was by and large an elaboration of the "Anti-Dada" profile of his tour with Hausmann.

A redefinition of Dada was fundamental to the "Anti-Dada" profile. In the course of the Dutch Dada tour, Schwitters presented this new, redefined Dada as "Dada complet, to some extent compatible with the revision of the Dada mentality by the Communist Dadaists in Berlin, yet in strong opposition to the politicization of Dada by these Hülsendadas (Hulls/Huelsenbeck Dadas). This "complete Dada" is to be distinguished from the aesthetic Dadaism in Zurich, as represented by Arp and Tzara—Urdada, (Elemental Dada), Kerndada, (Kernel Dada), or Spiegelgassendada (Spiegelgasse Dada)—and its politicized excavation in Berlin, Hülsendada. "Dada complet" was not a consciously developed artistic stand. On the contrary, it was the unconscious, unintended Dadaism of everyday, be it a ludicrous advertisement or (in an example given by Schwitters) a restaurant in Amsterdam with an interior design suggesting that its dining room was a stalactite cave. "Dada complet" was, in other words, the "face of our time," the incarnation of contemporary "stylelessness." As Schwitters wrote in an article in the Dutch weekly Haagsche Post (Hague Post) in January 1923, "Dada is the essence of our time. There was a classical antiquity, a Gothic age, a Renaissance, a modern Biedermeier period and our time is called Dada. Our whole time is called Dada."

A frequently used one-liner during the tour was "Dada is the moral solemnity of our time and prepares the road to the future."

The role of the Dadaist, of the acting Dadaist, and in respect of the Dutch Dada tour, the role of the "Dadaist resident orchestra," was not to participate in contemporary "Dada complet," but, instead, to act as a "mirror carrier" (Spiegelträger), who exposes Dada. The Dadaist made the Dadaist "stylelessness" of contemporary culture visible. In regard to the absence of any Dadaist on the stage at the soirées (except for Pétro van Doesburg), Schwitters responded to the question, "Why aren't Dadaists coming to show us how Dada ought to be?" as follows:

Look, that is precisely the subtlety of our culture, that a Dadaist, precisely because he is a Dadaist, cannot awaken and artistically purify the dormant Dadaism in the audience... We live in the Dada age. Because our culture is Dada. In no period whatsoever existed
as enormous tensions as in ours. There was no time that was as
styleless as ours. DADA is the CONFESSION of STYLELESSNESS.
Dada is the style of our time, which has no style. Do you know
what I mean? ... We who are responsible for the Dadaist movement,
try to confront the time with a mirror, so that the time can clearly
see the tensions. And now I explain why exactly we, who are no
Dadaists, are the most suited to be responsible for the Dadaist
movement. Our audience gave direction to the movement. We
mirrored and were the echo of the noisy audience in front of us, in
a state of Dadaist enthusiasm. And now you will understand, why
we don't want Dadaism. The mirror, which indignantly rejects your
precious countenance and mirrors it away, this mirror doesn't
want you, it wants the opposite. We want style. We mirror Dada
because we want style. For that reason, we are responsible for the
Dadaist movement. Out of love for style, we deploy all our force for
the Dadaist movement.3

To mention the other metaphor used by Schwitters in relation to the
Dutch Dada tour, the “Dadaist resident orchestra” was not Dada itself
(or at best, Dada in the sense of Zurich-based “Elemental Dada,”
defined by Schwitters as a congenial “reaction to art and a reaction to
stylelessness”).55 Rather, this “resident orchestra” interpreted and
solicited omnipresent “Dada complet,” setting to music this colloquial
“Dada complet,” making the audience dance to their own music. An
obvious example of such an evocation of “Dada complet” in the audience
was Schwitters’s declamation of Heine’s sentimental lyrics, to the
accompaniment of music by Chopin, played by Pëtro van Doesburg. The
combination of Romantic poetry and music by the canonical writer
Heine and the composer Chopin—two popular figures in early twentieth-
century bourgeois culture—caused as much upheaval in the audience
as did Schwitters’s earlier recitation of cipher poems at the soirée.

The role of the performing Dadaist required that the “mirror carrier”
himself be already aware of (and immune to) contemporary “styleless-
ness.” Hence, Schwitters and van Doesburg, as representatives of agencies
of “style” (the Merz project and De Stijl), were ideally prepared to fulfill
this duty. The Dadaist urge of “stylelessness” was, in turn, an essential
precondition for the advance of real “style.” At this point, Schwitters’s
therapeutic understanding of Dadaism converged with his conception of
Merz theater. As outlined previously, “people themselves” could be used
as material for Merz theater, too. In his recollections of the Dada tour,
Schwitters emphasized that “our activity in Holland” was an “essentially
artistic achievement through the forming of the Dadaist material.”
although he conceded that “our activity wasn’t always artistic, for
example, when we managed to elicit the uniformed Dadaism from the
public by means of stimulating, agitation, tranquillizing [Anregung,
Aufregung, Abregung]. In such instances we were most proximate to
elemental Dadaism and complete Dadaism.\textsuperscript{56}

In other words, the tour sometimes lapsed back into Dada and was no longer mirroring Dada. Among these relapses were the disturbances caused by the members of the “Dadaist resident orchestra” themselves, in an attempt to provoke similar behavior from the audience. Most of the work Schwitters presented at the soirées may also have contributed to a tremendous “Dada” mood. This work was, however, according to his own understanding, “Merz, not Dada.”

III.

During the Dada tour in January and February 1923, van Doesburg seemed to gradually assume Schwitters’s understanding of Dada and, more particularly, of the Dutch Dada campaign. Elements of Schwitters’s deliberations entered a series of outlines of Dada programmaties written by van Doesburg supporting clarifications of the campaign.\textsuperscript{57} In a footnote to one of them, “Karacteristiek van het dadaisme” (Characteristics of Dadaism), he described himself in the last issue of Mécano not as a “Non-Dadaist” (as in Wat is Dada?, written on the eve of the tour), but instead, as an “Anti-Dadaist” speaker at the “Non-Dadaist soirées in the Netherlands.”\textsuperscript{58} At the end of the tour, in early February, he explained in an interview with the weekly De Vrijheid (The Freedom), “[De] Stijl wants to build with all possible means. Dada wants only to show dormant humanity that the public has no conception of art. And...one cannot set up a new building before the old one is pulled down.”\textsuperscript{59}

Van Doesburg’s final account of the tour in Mécano also followed Schwitters’s line of reasoning. Schwitters typified the Dada campaign as a groote balansopruiming (grand clearance sale).\textsuperscript{60} According to Schwitter’s understanding of Dada, this “clearance sale” resulted in the exposure of everyday Dutch “Dada complet.” Likewise, van Doesburg/Bonset proclaimed on the cover of the final issue of Mécano, “The bankruptcy of Holland through Dada” and in the title of his summary of the tour and the public response, even referred to the “spiritual perdition of Holland.”\textsuperscript{61} He wrote, “In honor of Dada, it has spat and thrown mud... at its spiritual gods. Holland will receive a place of honor in the archives of Dada. The whole national character is engraved in the annals of Dada. No country managed to fling as much dung at the faces of its idols in such a short time.”\textsuperscript{62}

Whereas Schwitters was unambiguously attempting to provoke the respective audiences at these consecutive soirées, each evening, van Doesburg retained his posture as the non- or even anti-Dadaist bystander who gave a serious introduction in a relevant contemporary aesthetic movement. In this role, he did not tolerate any substantial intrusion by the audience. At several soirées, van Doesburg stopped the
program when the audience became too boisterous, and waited until
the audience calmed down and silence was restored. When members
of the local students' society intervened in the program at the Dada soirée
in Utrecht, van Doesburg rudely threw them off the stage (see below).
Likewise, at the soirée in Leiden, a soldier from the local barracks
having a "tremendously smashing break" was reprimanded by van
Doesburg for his "Dadaist whim." Van Doesburg remarked snappishly
that the soldier should repatriate to Endegeest, the proverbial local
psychiatric hospital.63 This seriousness may have been to some extent
part of the show. Van Doesburg's approach seemed to be dictated not
only by van Doesburg's personality—anything but frolicsome in com-
parison to Schwitters—but also by his different conception of the tour.

IV.

In the wake of the Dutch Dada tour of 1923, Schwitters and van
Doesburg suggested that Dada was omnipresent in Holland. However,
their claims of a Dadaist omnipresence, of an actual bankruptcy, or even
moral and spiritual perdition of Holland, were slightly exaggerated, to
say the least. Yet the tour was anything but unsuccessful. After the
"Dadaist resident orchestra" had managed to send the audiences of the
first soirées in The Hague and Haarlem into a state of ecstasy, the news
soon spread of the chaotic manifestations, resulting in police presence,
overcrowded auditoriums, idiocies on the stage, and lunatic behavior of
the visitors, trying to imitate the Dadaist performers and act like
Dadaists themselves by yelling, crying nonsensical slogans, blowing
their noses ostentatiously, producing animal noises (dogs barking,
roosters crowing, cats yowling), chanting "DA-DA," and declaiming self-
made "Dadaist" poetry.64 As a consequence, the audiences at subse-
quent soirées were already well informed of how to behave in a suitably
Dadaist manner. Upon arrival at the theater, many visitors were already
in a state of excitement and prepared to throw caution to the winds
Several were quite drunk,65 while some dressed up in carnival costumes.
Others took materials with them for their own acts, as in Utrecht, where,
as mentioned, a group of students thought it necessary to intervene in
the program on the stage. This incident was commemorated by
Schwitters after van Doesburg's death in the final issue of De Stijl:

As Doesburg was in the change room, some unfamiliar and dis-
guised men climbed on the stage to present to me a curious bouquet
and to take over the recitation, just when I recited "The Great
Glorious Revolution." The bouquet was approximately three meters
high and fixed on an enormous wooden skeleton. It was made of
rotten flowers and bones and was crowned with a sadly depotted
calla. Furthermore, they dropped a very large rotten laurel wreath
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from the Utrecht cemetery of bourgeois mentality at my feet, spreading a bleached ribbon. One of the gentlemen sat at my table and read something from a Bible he had brought along. Because I couldn’t understand him properly as a German, I believed it my duty to inform Doesburg, so that he could exchange a few friendly words with the gentleman.

All went differently. As Doesburg arrived, he saw and triumphed. That is to say, when he saw the man, he lingered for some time. Then, he threw him with Bible and bouquet in the orchestra pit, without even introducing himself and without any ceremony. It was an unprecedented success. Even though the man had disappeared, the audience rose as one man. The police cried and the audience came to blows with one another trying to get hold of a piece of the bouquet. Everywhere bloody bones were passed through. They were used [by members of the audience] to congratulate each other and us. It was an unprecedented Dadaist triumph.66

And Dada didn’t triumph at the soirées alone. The tour was widely covered in detailed reports and extensive commentaries that appeared in the Dutch press. In his report on the Dada tour in Mécano, van Doesburg claimed the publication of eighty-eight articles and the receipt of 133 letters from “the Dutch youth of both sexes expressing their worship of the Dadaist preaching.”67 Although neither van Doesburg’s collection of articles nor these letters seems to have been preserved, the number of articles mentioned by van Doesburg was no exaggeration. Like the audiences participating in the soirées, the Dutch press not only discussed Dada, but also appropriated it—if not Dada proper, then at least some features that were regarded as typical of Dada: nonsensical poetry and witticisms, as well as a dancing typography. Some papers, like the Haagsche Post (Hague Post), Het Vaderland (The Fatherland), and De Vrijheid (The Freedom), even offered van Doesburg and Schwitters space to articulate their own views.68 And there were other appropriations of Dada. As a practical joke, the filmmaker Otto van Neuenhoff compiled a nonsensical “Dada” film under the pseudonym Count Nebem de Wollerititi. After the premier in the Stadsdoelen in Delft on February 12, 1923,69 the film was shown in several Dutch cinemas. In the film, “everything was turned upside down. The houses stood upside down, the tramways drove backwards instead of forwards, like the pedestrians moving in a backwards direction, etc.”70 Popular singers like Kees Pruiss and Koos Speenhoff wrote Dada songs.71 Many papers published Dada epigrams. The social democrat satirical journal De Notenkraker (The Nutcracker) even adopted an apparent Dadaist style for its political commentaries.72 Allusions to Dada even appeared in advertisements announcing clearance sales with “Dada prices.”73 Conversely, at the same time, a Dadaist dimension was emphatically denied by an “Old Dutch puppet theater,” offering civilized family enter-
tainment, not "Dada." 74

All in all, the soirées had a substantial resonance, resulting to some extent in the temporary lifting of the Calvinist reticence and sobriety ruling "normal" Dutch public life. Dropping their inhibitions and normal down-to-earth attitudes, people ridiculed themselves by indulging in lunatic behavior. People did the same by jeering at the presentation of Heine and Chopin, and by misinterpreting the new "style" of De Stijl and Merz as an expression of Dadaism. At the same time, the claims of "an unprecedented Dadaist triumph" seem not completely justified. In part, the press may have been indulging in poor Dada imitations and feeble jokes. At the same time, most journalists and commentators took quite a negative stand. A general complaint concerned the high entry fees for the nonsensical charivari at the soirées. The comments by the film critic J. L. Jordaan in the popular illustrated magazine, Het Leven, were typical. According to Jordaan's account, the soirée in Amsterdam was just a "colossal bunk, crude rip-off and coarsely paid clowning," a "cheeky attack on your Dutch guilders." 75

As well, not every soirée was an unequivocal success. A soirée in Bussum, in the region of Gooi, where there was a large artists' colony, had to be canceled because no audience turned up. 76 At the last soirée in Leiden, three quarters of the auditorium remained empty. 77 Furthermore, it seems questionable whether the objectives set by van Doesburg and Schwitters were really met. Although Schwitters managed to use the audience as "material," he did not achieve an enduring transformation of the public. It would take some fifty years before the art he and van Doesburg had tried to promote was accepted on a broader scale. There is, furthermore, no sign that the Dada tour contributed substantially to a better understanding of Dada. In other words, the much vaunted success was limited.

Some clarifications and a political finale

I.

The Dutch Dada tour was not only intended as an exercise in Dadaist education or transformation, but also—and here all members of the "Dada resident orchestra" would certainly have agreed—as an opportunity to focus attention on their respective Stijl and Merz projects, as well as on modernist and avant-garde music. Since "we live at the end of an old and the start of a new age," not only was Dada needed to triumph over the old age, "construction" was needed as well for the new age—as a "consequently rigorous" contrast "to liberate us from chaos." 78 For this aim, an introduction to the principles of constructivism was needed as well. And while the Dada tour may have been a
success, van Doesburg and Schwitters weren't entirely confident that the soirées hadn't created some misconceptions about Dada and about De Stijl and Merz. Clarification seemed desirable. For this purpose, the Dada tour was flanked by several other public appearances. On January 22, 1923, van Doesburg and Schwitters participated as speakers at an evening of the Delftsche Studenten Debating-Club in the library of the Delft students’ society, De Phoenix. The handout, with propositions by Schwitters and van Doesburg, indicated that the evening wasn’t just another Dada soirée, as often assumed. The evening was, instead, an attempt to give an introduction to the Nieuwe Beelding and the real purport of the Dada tour. On February 25, 1923, Húszár gave a performance of his “mechanical dancing figure” and was given the opportunity to explain the purport and technicalities of his shadow play in the more serious setting of the Haagse Kunstkring, bolstered by the publication of his reflections in the established review, De Kunst. On March 12, 1923, a “Modern Soirée” was held in The Hague in the dance school of the expressionist dancer, Lily Green, as a “serious attempt to bring the public closer to the art of their time by explanation and exemplification.” Van Doesburg spoke about “the development of the new art directions from Impressionism to Dadaism.” Schwitters elucidated “Merz and Dada” as well. He spoke about the “construction of abstract poems” and the “essence of declamation.” Pétro van Doesburg eschewed her Dada repertoire and instead played “Honegger, Poulen, Hauer, Ruyneman and Wellesz etc.” Some other private sessions in the course of the tour may have had the same goal, as was the case with a lecture by van Doesburg in the Volksgebouw (People’s Building) in The Hague, on March 28, 1923.

II.

Van Doesburg’s lecture in the Volksgebouw addressed the question “What Wants Dadaism?” The evening was organized by the SAJO, or the Sociaal-Anarchistische Jongeren-Organisatie (Social Anarchist Youth Organization), which, in the early 1920s, was the most militant anarchist organization in the Netherlands. In November 1921, members of the SAJO had been responsible for the bombing of the home of H. D. R. Verspyck, a high-ranking army officer. Verspyck had been involved in the court-martial of the anarchist Herman Groenendaal, the first explicitly anti-militarist Dutch draft dodger who was a cause célèbre of the years 1921-22. While the bomb caused only minor damage to the facade of Verspyck’s residence, the involved anarchists were soon arrested. The SAJO and its organ, Alarm, were the only ones—even within the anarchist spectrum—to support the bombing and to stand up in defense of their arrested comrades, who received long jail
sentences for their “revolutionary deed.” But the SAJO was not only radical in political matters. The editor of Alarm, Anton Constandse, was very much interested in art and literature as well and it seems as if he and other members of the SAJO regarded Dada as an important ally in their revolutionary struggle—not only against capitalism and militarism, but also against reformist and indolent behavior in the workers’ movement, be it socialist or anarchist.

G. de Groot, a fellow anarchist and the author of rather conventional political verses, who regarded Dada as a danger to his cultural canon, wrote a letter (which has not been preserved). In response, Constandse wrote in Alarm, “Our compliments for your clear insight. Dada, namely, affects really your Authorized Version and your little bourgeois literary gods, your Goethe and Verneyle. The Dadaist shows the bourgeoisie how feebleminded, fumbling, ridiculous, stupid and insane they have become: how ‘dada’ they are. The bourgeois (and you as well) don’t want to believe this and start cursing at Dada, especially when ‘holy art’ is concerned. As if this art isn’t prostituted. The Dadaist is the spirit of the death-bound bourgeoisie that has attained self-consciousness. As a consequence, it is the nightmare of the commoner.”

On the invitation for van Doesburg’s SAJO lecture, sections of this commentary were quoted beside a remark by Bonset: “without a truncheon above our heads, the quietude, which we are enjoying, would be disturbed.” The flyer also paraphrased Mikhail Bakunin’s famous dictum: “The force of destruction is a creative force.”

Van Doesburg’s willingness to appear in an anarchist setting and his apparent readiness to associate himself, Bonset, and Dada with the radicalism of the SAJO was remarkable. He did so not only by his lecture: a special art issue of Alarm, published in December 1923, contained contributions by Bonset as well as by Mondrian. This association with the SAJO is particularly striking, as van Doesburg is generally regarded to be an artist who rejected any politicization of his aesthetic ventures.

As his participation in the SAJO manifestation indicates, this assessment is not completely accurate. In a series of articles entitled “Egoïsme, Individualisme, Anarchisme” (Egoism, Individualism, Anarchism), van Doesburg had already presented himself as a supporter of a radically individualist anarchism. This stand returned later in his characterization of Bonset and Mécarno as “ultra-individualist.” In this respect, van Doesburg’s appearance at the SAJO meeting was not as extraordinary as it initially may seem.

During the war, van Doesburg had become acquainted with the anarchist Protestant minister and anti-militarist, Bart de Ligt, one of the leading figures of the Dutch anarchist movement in the first half of the twentieth century. Their friendship contributed to van Doesburg’s involvement in the BRSI, or the Bond van Revolutionair-Socialistische Intelectueelen (Federation of Revolutionary Socialist Intellectuals). For a short time in the first years after World War I, this organization gath-
ered Dutch left-wing intellectuals from different provenances. Van Doesburg designed the stationery of the BRSI. De Ligt also allowed van Doesburg to experiment with his Stijl principles as an interior designer in two of his houses. Van Doesburg’s correspondence with De Ligt indicates that van Doesburg remained a Stirnerite anarchist for the rest of his life. A photo of the protagonists of the Dada tour in the headquarters of the campaign—the house of van Doesburg’s second wife, Lena Millius, in The Hague—depicts de Ligt and his wife Ina next to Kurt and Helma Schwitters and Theo and Nelly van Doesburg (fig. 6.9). Although de Ligt, as a radical pacifist, belonged to a rather different section of the anarchist movement, it may well have been de Ligt who, as an intermediary, precipitated van Doesburg’s appearance at the SAJO meeting in March 1923.

III.

The SAJO meeting was designed as an introduction to Dadaism and, at least as far as van Doesburg was concerned, as an attempt to clear away “some misconceptions, which originated from the press reports referring to the Dadaist soirées.” This was not without reason: van Doesburg was awaited by an audience expecting a hilarious evening. Half an hour before van Doesburg’s lecture started, the hall was already filled with “young anarchists” making a racket by rolling their feet on the wooden floor, one of them wearing a shako with the word “Dada,” another with what was apparently supposed to be a Dadaism dummy on a flagpole. Weighing in on the tour in Mécarno, van Doesburg thus concluded that the moral bankruptcy comprised “all parties”—“from extremely reactionary to extremely (bourgeois) anarchists,” all trying “to use Dada as a shield to protect their hobby-horse.”

Before van Doesburg started with his clarification of the real purport of Dada, he first presented something else. He read a programmatic text that had just been published in De Stijl: “Anti-Tendenzkunst. Een antwoord op de vraag: ‘Moet de nieuwe kunst de massa’s dienen?’” (Anti-tendentious art. An answer to the question: “Must the new art serve the masses?”) The same text was simultaneously published under a different title—“Manifest Proletkunst” (Manifesto Proletarian Art)—and with some slight deviations, in the second issue of Merz. “Anti-Tendenzkunst” in De Stijl was signed only by van Doesburg. In Merz, the text was signed not only by van Doesburg and his white square, but also by Schwitters, Arp, Tzara, and Christoph Spengemann. Although the manifesto is often attributed to Schwitters or even to Hausmann and Schwitters, a manuscript preserved by van Doesburg’s estate, certain obvious alterations in the German text, and the fact that van Doesburg first presented the manifesto solely
under his own name all point to van Doesburg as its actual author.101

The essential message of "Anti-tendenzkunst" is simple—art has to follow its own rules and not to be obedient to alien objectives, be they Communist, "religious or nationalist":

Art...has to strengthen the creative forces in man by its own means. Its aim is mature man and not the proletarian or the bourgeois. Art is no politics in painted condition, no more than nature in painted condition. Art...as envisaged by the whole avant-garde is neither proletarian nor bourgeois. It develops forces that are strong enough to influence culture as a whole, instead of being solely influenced by social relations....

Every "proletarian work of art" is essentially nothing more than a placard for the (future) bourgeoisie.

What we modern artists prepare instead is the monumental work of art, superior at large to all placards, whether made for champagne, Dada or Communist dictatorship.102

The manifesto is generally interpreted as a rejection of any political submission or political affiliation of art, in accordance with the assumption of an anti-political stand by van Doesburg and Schwitters. Reports of the SAJO evening suggest otherwise.103 Politics in general were not rejected, but Communism, in particular, Communist art politics, or to be more precise, a particular Communist art policy, was rejected. This policy demanded the instrumentalization and subordination of art for the advance of the proletarian cause as a means of communicating Communist opinions. In the publicized text, this policy is related to Leon Trotsky. At the SAJO meeting, van Doesburg referred to Henriëtte Roland Holst, a prominent figure not only in the Dutch Communist movement, but also in contemporary literature. Roland Holst was presented as an example of the proletarian left's preservation of bourgeois art practices and the presentation of radical content in a conventional form. Roland Holst had been one of the main figures of the so-called Movement of Eighty of Dutch impressionism in the last decades of the previous century. Herman Gorter was another representative of the Movement of Eighty who had placed his literary work at the service of the proletariat.

"Anti-tendenzkunst" aimed, thus, at the redemption of modern art from the nineteenth century and at the political instrumentalization of art by content. To attack Communists like Roland Holst, Gorter, or Trotsky in front of an anarchist audience—especially a SAJO audience—was like shooting into an open goal, since a critique of these Communist and Socialist "bosses" was at the heart of this group. From the start, a critique of authoritarian Marxism was a main feature in the historic anarchist movement, beginning with the conflict between Bakunin and Marx in the First International. The fact that van
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Doesburg presented "Anti-tendenzkunst" at the SAJO meeting, however, can also be regarded as an implicit warning and critique directed at the anarchist audience. Although the opinion that politics and aesthetics were separate spheres that should develop independently in a new society was a widely assumed position in the anarchist movement, the anarchist press offered countless examples of political propaganda art. The SAJO review *Alarm* also contained many examples, like poems by de Groot, caricatures by Grosz, or drawings by the Dutch art nouveau artist, Chris Lebeau.

IV.

Within the framework of De Stijl, "Anti-tendenzkunst" assumed further significance. In 1919, van Doesburg and De Stijl had been approached by the painter Chris Beekman, who was involved at that time in a solidarity campaign among Dutch intellectuals in support of the Russian bolsheviks. Initially, van Doesburg welcomed the activity of Beekman and another member of the De Stijl group, the painter Robert van 't Hoff. When Beekman circulated a petition urging the Dutch parliament to lift the postal boycott of Russia and allow the resumption of regular postal traffic between the Netherlands and Russia, van Doesburg signed the petition but failed to forward it immediately to his international contacts. Van Doesburg's apparent restraint annoyed Beekman and van 't Hoff and caused a rift between van Doesburg and van 't Hoff. Van 't Hoff broke with De Stijl and became for some time a collaborator for the Communist journal *De Tribune*. This row caused van Doesburg not to join the BRSI as a member, although he was closely associated as a designer of its stationery and collaborator of the semi-official organ of the BRSI, *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*. "Anti-tendenzkunst" could be regarded as a delayed response to van 't Hoff's accusation that van Doesburg had shown politically irresponsible—even counter-revolutionary—behavior.

"Anti-tendenzkunst" was, as mentioned, not only published in Dutch, but also in German and thus addressed a German and, more generally, an international audience as well. As such, the "Manifest Proletkunst" also assumed at least two other affiliations—constructivist and Dadaism. A recurring feature of international debate among constructivist artists was the question of the relationship between the aesthetic and political avant-garde. Were they to be regarded as two separate wings of a broad, innovative movement, as van Doesburg suggested in "Revue der Avant-garde," each following their own rules? Was the aesthetic avant-garde superior? Or did the aesthetic wing have to submit itself to the seemingly more general avant-garde in the socio-political sphere, as notably argued by many Russian constructivists?
As part of this debate, an attack on De Stijl had been launched in February 1923, in the Hungarian review *Egység* (Unity), published in Vienna. In a declaration signed by Ernő Kallai, László Péri, Moholy-Nagy, and Alfréd Kemény (of whom the last two had been present at van Doesburg’s meeting of Dadaists and constructivists in Weimar), De Stijl was sharply criticized for adopting bourgeois attitudes. The declaration stated: “We are aware of the fact that Constructivism becomes more and more bourgeois…a phenomenon of this process is the Constructive (mechanized) aestheticism of the Dutch group De Stijl…. All art that floats above social organizations, in the broad field of the aesthetic or cosmic, is situated on a bourgeois level, even when its supporters call themselves Constructivists.”

The Hungarians demanded instead that “artists fight together with the proletariat for a Communist society.” This collaboration with the proletariat could only be realized in the Communist party, they stressed, thus a new “Proletkult-organization” had to be founded under the leadership of that party. The “Manifest Proletkunst” maintained and repeated instead the stand taken by De Stijl in its third manifesto on Nieuwe Wereldbeiding (New World Construction). According to the third De Stijl manifesto, art had to rule supreme. A notable solution to social problems was expected from the advance and triumph of the Nieuwe Beelding. In this respect, “Manifest Proletkunst” can be regarded as an answer to the attack published in *Egység* in the previous month.

However, the manifesto, as published in *Merz*, wasn’t signed by constructivists alone. Tzara in particular, but also Arp, Schwitters, and his friend Spengemann were still regarded as representatives of Dadaism, and in a way, this accounts as well for van Doesburg. The second *Merz* issue, in which the manifesto was published, was still closely related to the Dada tour. Although the manifesto addressed avant-garde in general, the text can be regarded as another endorsement of the stand taken by Schwitters in his own conflict with Huelsenbeck, concerning the politicization of Dada. A parallel conflict can be made out between Huelsenbeck and Tzara as well. Whereas Huelsenbeck had refused to accept Schwitters as a member of Club Dada, he had been engaged in a continuous campaign against the apparently apolitical Tzara. Huelsenbeck suggested in several publications in 1920 (notably *Dada siegt!* and *En avant Dada*) that Tzara had perverted Dadaism into a regular art movement. Although Huelsenbeck withdrew from Dada in the meantime, he showed his willingness to continue his smear campaign against Tzara in Breton’s *Littérature* in September 1922. In *Littérature*, Huelsenbeck repeated his claim that Tzara had distorted Dadaism. As an internal Dadaist reproach to Huelsenbeck, the “Manifest Proletkunst” can also be regarded as a final manifestation of Dada as an international movement. It was the last collective manifesto before the demise of Dada at the *Soirée du coeur à barbe* (Soirée of the Bearded Heart) in Paris in July 1923.
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In a Dadaist setting, the "Manifest Proletkunst" may appear at last as anti-political. It should be noted, however, that the "new art" brought forward in the manifesto is intrinsically political. Since the stress lies on a critique of the politicization in a Communist direction, it may not be so obvious that at least one direct political stand is taken—be it in this manifesto, ex negatione. Not only proletarian, but also religious and—significantly—national art is rejected.

V.

In a way, "Manifest Proletkunst" returned to the Dadaist point of departure in Zurich in 1916-17, when a political engagement of the arts was opposed. In Zurich, using almost the same wording, Hugo Ball had dismissed Ludwig Rubiner's demand for a political art, stating that artists "cannot and should not be urged to paint propagandistic art [in plain German: placards]." The same can be said for the implicit internationalism of the "Manifest Proletkunst." Like Ball, who stressed the international dimension of *Cabaret Voltaire* in a short editorial of the anthology, on the cover of the second issue of *Merz* containing "Manifest Proletkunst," Schwitters summarized his *Merz* program as "Aims: DADA—MERZ—STYLE/Motive: WORLD NATIONAL SENTIMENT." He also announced that the fourth issue would be addressing Übernationalität (Transnationality). Although *Merz* 4 was profoundly international in content, due to the many different languages used and the many nationalities of the contributors, "transnationality" as such was not explicitly discussed in this issue. Schwitters, though, had apparently prepared a programmatic text on this question, which was published in 1925 by Seuphor in *Het Overzicht*, at a moment when Seuphor turned his back for good on his previous Flemish nationalism. Seuphor left for Paris soon after, to become a French writer and art critic. In his article in *Het Overzicht*, "Nationale Kunst," Schwitters elaborated on the argument of "Manifest Proletkunst" against "national art": "NATIONAL ART. Something like that doesn't exist. As there is no proletarian art. Art may exist and nations and proletarians may exist as well, but there exists no national or proletarian art. Unfortunately, there are nations. The consequence of nations are wars. National art should serve to enhance the sense of a common bond among people who call themselves a nation. National art helps to prepare wars."

In line with the "Manifest Proletkunst," yet in its turn, typical of Schwitters, "Nationale Kunst" continued by stressing that "the most important obligation of art" is the formation and education of men, "since [art] is the expression of the sense of humanity of the noblest among men, at least sometimes. This should be at least the duty of art. It is not intended here to be engaged in a polemic against wars, national
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hatred, discord, brutal violence, and all kind of battles. Only art should be protected here against being placed in the service of something. Art can and art should not serve. Because art has its obligations for itself. Its first obligation is loyalty to itself. The laws of art prescribe art not to have a God beyond itself. How can art emerge from love for the nation? This can only result in national sentiment. From love for art, however, emerges only a work of art.”

Notes

1. See De Stijl 5, no. 4 (1922) (“Kongres-Nummer”) and no. 8 (“Nummer gewijd aan de Konstruktivistische Internationale”).
3. See van Straaten, Theo van Doesburg, 106-09.
11. Ibid., 81.
13. Ibid.
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[Freiburg i/B: Walter Heinrich, 1922], 26.
21. See Henkels, Scaphor, 40. In 1922, Schwitters was already represented in the exhibition of the Second Congress for Modern Art in Antwerp, organized by Het Overzicht; cf. Melders, Jozef Peeters, 55.
23. At least one poem by Schwitters was published in Frisian; see Kurt Schwitters, “Die Zute Tute,” Merz no. 4 (1923): 37.
25. Since Theo and Nelly van Doesburg and Schwitters had been personally involved in Dadaist activities, Huszár may have been the most distant from Dada. However, it was Huzsár who actually proposed the organization of the tour. A hostile critique by Huszár of the expressionist tendency in the Bauhaus is strongly reminiscent of Huelsenbeck’s attack on expressionism in the “Dadaistisches Manifest”; cf. Dada-Almanach, 36-37, and Vilmos Huszár, “Das Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar,” De Stijl 5, no. 9 (1922): 135-38; cf. also Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes in Theo van Doesburg, “Rondblik,” De Stijl 4, no. 10 (1921): 152-53.
27. Van Doesburg, Wat is Dada?, 3.
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32. See van Doesburg and Schwitters, Holland’s Bankroet, 10.
34. L. W. Bierens de Haan in the Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant, citation in De Graaf, In Haarlem snoot ik mijn neus, 24.
35. See van Doesburg and Schwitters, Holland’s Bankroet, 10.
37. See Schwitters, Wir spielen, 71.
40. See Schippers, Holland Dada, 70-71 and 76. Another German popular song presented by Schwitters was "Wenn Du denkst der Mond geht unter...": cf. "Dada", Het Vaderland, January 11, 1923.
41. See van Doesburg and Schwitters, Holland’s Bankroet, 10.
42. Van Doesburg, Wat is Dada?, 10-11. Van Doesburg used the German term "Indifferenzpunkt" (point of indifference).
43. Ibid., 11.
44. Dada-Almanach, 38.
45. See van den Berg, Avangarde und Anarchismus, 368-75.
46. See Lemoine, Kurt Schwitters, 98.
47. In the commemorative dernier numéro of De Stijl, published after the death of van Doesburg in 1932, Schwitters called the Dutch Dada tour of 1923 a "Feldzug für den Dadaismus" (campaign for Dadaism); cf. Kurt Schwitters, [Theo van Doesburg], De Stijl, dernier numéro (1932): 55.
49. See Schwitters, "Merz (für den ‘Ararat’ geschrieben)," 5-6.
50. See Schwitters, "Merz (für den ‘Ararat’ geschrieben)," 5-6; Schwitters, "dada complet 1" and "dada complet 2."
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54. Schwitters, “De Zelfoverwinning van Dada.”
56. Schwitters, “Dada compleet 1.”
60. Pillango, “Wat is Dadaïsme.”
62. Ibid., [4].
65. A journalist of the Dutch daily *De Telegraaf* called these drunken visitors “Bolschedaïstern,” referring both to the - characterization of Dada as “cultural bolshevism” (quite common in the German conservative and fascist press) and to the brand name of the Dutch distillers Erven Lucas Bols; cf. “Dada te Amsterdam,” *De Telegraaf*, January 20, 1923.
68. See Schwitters, “De Zelfoverwinning van Dada;” van Doesburg, “Dadaïsme,” “Pillango,” “Wat is Dadaïsme.”
69. See De Graaf, *In Haarlem sneet ik mijn neus*, 38.
70. Van Doesburg and Schwitters, *Holland’s Bankroet*, 40.
72. See the regular column “Van Week tot Week,” *De Notenkraaker* 17, no. 4 (1923); as well as no. 11, no. 13, no. 18, no. 24, no. 26, no. 33, no. 40, and no. 46; all on the second page. In the same column were I. K. Bonset’s “X-beelden” already parodied in August 1920 as “IJ-beelden” in a satire on Hendrik van Ijsselsteyn (sic), the Minister of Agriculture, Industry, and Trade, under the slogan “Die, thou old
76. See “De Dadaïsten te Bussum Da-Da!,” Algemeen Handelsblad, February 9, 1923.
78. Schwitters, “De Zeloverwinning van Dada.”
79. See van Straaten, Theo van Doesburg, 115.
82. Program in van Doesburg and Schwitters, Holland’s Bankroet, 166.
83. Ibid.
87. Invitation for the SAJO meeting in van Doesburg and Schwitters, Holland’s Bankroet, 39; van Doesburg, Wat is Dada?, 13.
88. Invitation for the SAJO meeting in van Doesburg and Schwitters, Holland’s Bankroet, 39.
90. Cf. van Straaten, Theo van Doesburg, 90.
92. See van Straaten, Theo van Doesburg, 90.
93. See ibid., 90-91.
94. See correspondence with Bart and Ina de Ligt, Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague, Archive Theo van Doesburg, inv. no. 110.
95. See van Doesburg and Schwitters, Holland’s Bankroet, 40.
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100. See Den Boef and van Faassen, "Een vriendschap tussen concurrenten?" 46.

101. See manuscript in Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, Archive Theo van Doesburg, inv. no. 436.


104. See van den Berg, Avantgarde und Anarchismus, 302-17.


106. See van Straaten, Theo van Doesburg, 89-90.


109. Ibid., 234.

110. Ibid.

111. See Richard Huelsenbeck, "En Avant," Littérature, new series no. 4 (1922): 19-22. In this excerpt from En avant Dada, Huelsenbeck slyly concealed, though, another point of critique in his German polemics, namely that Tzara was too emphatically orientated toward France.

112. Ball, Die Flucht aus der Zeit, 163.


114. Back cover of Merz no. 2 (1923).


116. Ibid.