

"Friends of Paul Goesch" announce the first book on Paul Goesch

Paul Goesch

Architect and Painter in Germany, 1885 to 1940



"Sketch of a Triumphal Gateway", also known as "Gateway". 1920 or earlier

Gouache and black ink over pencil on watercolour paper
24.2 x 32 cm; titled and signed

Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/
Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

Adolf Behne (ed.), "Ruf zum Bauen" (A Call to Build), Berlin 1920, fig. 1: "Komposition"

Paul Goesch, born in Schwerin/Mecklenburg in 1885 and raised in Berlin, was an architect and artist educated in the humanities. He was influenced by a close family connection with Käthe Kollwitz, a master-student relationship with Rudolf Steiner and a good relationship with his colleague Bruno Taut. In 1918 he became an active member in the following avant-garde artist associations, "Arbeitsrat für Kunst", "Novembergruppe" and the "Gläserne Kette (Crystal Chain)" initiated by Taut. Publication of his work was a matter close to the hearts of art historian Adolf Behne and art writer Paul Westheim.

Goesch and his work were thus highly appreciated during the early years of democracy in Germany around 1920; for instance, G. F. Hartlaub purchased several gouaches for the "Mannheimer Kunsthalle". However, during the National Socialist regime this appreciation turned into disdain and defamation, and Goesch came to be considered "degenerate". He was defamed by Wolfgang Willrich in his 1937 book, "Die Säuberung des Kunsttempels" (Cleansing of the Temples of Art), and that same year three of his works in the "Mannheimer Kunsthalle" were confiscated.

In 1908/09 Goesch had an encounter near Dresden with the psychoanalyst Otto Groß who conducted discussions and sexual experiments intended to be therapeutic. He gained new insights but also suffered a mental breakdown, which he was able to overcome. Goesch was not required to serve as a soldier during WWI. In 1917 he experienced a shock in Chelmno, West Prussia, after which he needed to be admitted as an in-patient to a psychiatric hospital for an extended period. Nowadays opinions differ as to the nature of his illness. Having returned to Berlin in 1919, he was apparently rediagnosed with "hearing

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voices" in the early 1920s, and it is possible that his condition grew worse as a result of the many years he spent in a Göttingen psychiatric institution. From the late 1920s the artist was isolated from cultural life. From 1934 he was also isolated from his family. He was interned in the clinic/camp at Teupitz near Berlin, where he appears to have been entirely unprotected and prevented from doing art work. On the basis of the so-called "euthanasia decree", Paul Goesch was murdered during "Action T4" in 1940 (probably in Brandenburg an der Havel). Following this, his life and philanthropic work were all but forgotten.

We owe the first major discovery of the artist's work in 1948 to the diligence of the Göttingen psychiatrist, Professor Hemmo Müller-Suur. Fortunately many other works have also survived. Several of them were rediscovered by Max Taut in 1963, and from the mid-1970s it was possible to discover or identify further works, such as those in the Heidelberg "Prinzhorn Collection". Today ca. 2450 works on paper are known, as well as the hall at Dresden-Laubegast which Goesch painted in 1908 (over-painting is currently being removed to expose his work) and a mural created in Göttingen in 1920/21.

His works were acquired by several museums; the Berlin "Kupferstichkabinett" was probably first, followed by the "Hamburger Kunsthalle" in 1975, an acquisition initiated by Hemmo Müller-Suur; the "Berlinische Galerie" in 1978, an acquisition initiated by Eberhard Roters and the "Erbengemeinschaft Paul Goesch (Paul Goesch's Joint Heirs)", who established themselves at the time; the "Centre Canadien d'Architecture", Montréal, in 1988 (see fig.); and the Berlin "Akademie der Künste" in 1994. The Dresden "Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten zur Erinnerung an die Opfer politischer Gewaltherrschaft (Foundation of Saxon Institutions to Commemorate the Victims of Political Tyranny)" joined their ranks in 2013.

It has been our long-cherished dream to publish Paul Goesch's oeuvre. The members of the "Freundeskreis Paul Goesch" (Friends of Paul Goesch), established in 2004 in Cologne, Germany, recognised the importance of publishing a book on Paul Goesch which will publicise his work beyond our website, be generally comprehensible and scientifically well-founded. (Decision by the annual general meeting, Dresden, 14th Feb. 2015)

Editor:

"Freundeskreis Paul Goesch e.V." (FPG), Cologne (www.freundeskreis-paul-goesch.de)

Title:

"Paul Goesch. Architect and Painter in Germany, 1885 to 1940"

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Language: German; English translation

Publisher: "Sax-Verlag", Beucha/Markkleeberg (near Leipzig) (www.sax-verlag.de)

Publication: Planned for late 2016

The publisher will be pleased to accept advance orders: info@sax-verlag.de

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February 2016

(Ill. by Photo CCA)