

The Rider and the Dream

The relationship between Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky through the works they exchanged¹

Marta Ruiz del Árbol



Franz Marc
The Dream, 1912
(detail)

fig. 1

Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky with the cover woodcut for *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac, Munich, 1911
Photograph by Gabriele Münter, Gabriele Münter- und Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, Munich



It is terribly difficult to present one's contemporaries with spiritual gifts.

Franz Marc, 1912²

Like many other artists before and after them, Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc sealed their friendship by exchanging their works. Along with paying tribute to each other in this way, they may have used their canvases to make a statement about the artistic aspirations that spurred them to create *Der Blaue Reiter* (*The Blaue Reiter Almanac*) [fig. 1]. To what extent did they take up their brushes to express their principles? Do their brushstrokes conceal underlying stories of common yearnings and dreams? Are these works anecdotes of competition or even rivalry? This essay sets out to analyze the context in which the editors of the almanac exchanged these works and attempts to ascertain how far the decision to present them as gifts made them particularly significant within their respective oeuvres and, in a sense, a declaration of intent for *Der Blaue Reiter*.

1

This text was originally published in Ulf Küster (ed.): *Der Blaue Reiter* [exh. cat. Riehen-Basel, Fondation Beyeler]. Riehen, Fondation Beyeler, 2016, pp. 158-63.

2

Franz Marc. "Geistige Güter". In *Der Blaue Reiter*. Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, eds. Munich, 1912, p. 1. English ed.: "Spiritual Treasures". In *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, eds., documentary edition, ed. and with an introduction by Klaus Lankheit, trans. Henning Falkenstein with the assistance of Manug Terzian and Gertrude Hinderlie. London, 1974; repr., Boston, 2005, p. 55.

The Origin of the Almanac and a Rider for Marc

fig. 2

Wassily Kandinsky
***Improvisation 12*, 1910**
Oil on canvas, 97 × 106.5 cm
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen.
Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich,
inv. 11249



“Dear Kandinsky, your painting arrived safely, it came, was hung, and conquered. Many thanks!”³ Marc informed his friend on a postcard dated July 31, 1911. Although the artists had known each other for just somewhat longer than half a year, the Russian painter sent his colleague a canvas at a time when the rapport between them had reached its height. Indeed, since they first met in January 1911, not only had Marc joined the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists’ Association Munich) –of which Kandinsky was a founding member– but, in particular, Kandinsky had recently outlined the concept of the almanac.⁴

The work in question was *Improvisation 12* [fig. 2], of 1910, a canvas that Kandinsky had classified in accordance with the categories he had begun to establish for his oeuvre in 1909. The *Improvisations* –a name borrowed from musical terminology– stemmed from his wish for paintings to be “chiefly unconscious ... expressions of events of an inner character, hence impressions of ‘internal nature’”.⁵ The work symbolized his desire to capture man’s “internal nature” through an artistic process that shunned Western models of pictorial representation. Although certain

3

Franz Marc, postcard to Wassily Kandinsky, July 31, 1911. In Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc. *Briefwechsel: Mit Briefen von und an Gabriele Münter und Maria Marc*, ed., introduction, and annotation by Klaus Lankheit. Munich, 1983, pp. 48-49, here p. 48.

4

Wassily Kandinsky, letter to Franz Marc, June 19, 1911. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.

5

Wassily Kandinsky. *Über das Geistige in der Kunst: insbesondere in der Malerei*. With an introduction by Max Bill and a foreword and annotation on the rev. new ed. by Jelena Hahl-Fontaine. Munich, 1912; 5th ed. Zurich, 2016, p. 146. English ed.: “On the Spiritual in Art”. In *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, eds. Boston, 1982; new, repr. ed., New York, 1994, p. 218.

6

Wassily Kandinsky, letter to Franz Marc, June 19, 1911. In Kandinsky and Marc 1983 (see note 3), p. 40. English trans. in Klaus Lankheit. "A History of the Almanac". In Kandinsky and Marc 2005 (see note 2), pp. 15-16.

7

On the importance of the rider in Kandinsky's oeuvre and the almanac, see for example Kenneth Lindsay. "The Genesis and Meaning of the Cover Design for the First 'Blaue Reiter' Exhibition Catalogue". *The Art Bulletin*, 35, no. 1, March 1953, pp. 47-52; Johannes Langner. "Improvisation 13: Zur Funktion des Gegenstandes in Kandinskys Abstraktion". In *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg*. Berlin and Munich, 1977, no. 14, pp. 115-46; Eberhard Roters. "Wassily Kandinsky und die Gestalt des Blauen Reiters". In *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 5, 1963, pp. 201-26; and Peg Weiss. "Kandinsky und München: Begegnungen und Wandlungen". In *Kandinsky und München: Begegnungen und Wandlungen, 1896-1914*. Armin Zweite, ed. [exh. cat. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich]. Munich, 1982, pp. 29-83.

8

Wassily Kandinsky. "'Der Blaue Reiter' (Rückblick)". In *Das Kunstblatt*, 14, 1930, p. 59. English trans. in Lankheit 2005 (see note 6), p. 18.

9

In particular, associations with the concept of the blue flower (*Blaue Blume*) of Romanticism. See for example, Peter-Klaus Schuster. "Vom Tier zum Tod: Zur Ideologie des Geistigen bei Franz Marc". In *Franz Marc: Kräfte der Natur: Werke 1912-1915*. Erich Franz, ed. [exh. cat. Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst, Munich; Westfälisches Landesmuseum Münster]. Ostfildern, 1993, p. 183.

10

Wassily Kandinsky, letter to Franz Marc, September 18, 1911. In Kandinsky and Marc 1983 (see note 3), p. 59.

elements of the composition are still recognizable, such as the horse and rider and the three small figures on the left, the scene is not set in a landscape. Instead, Kandinsky dispenses with any references to visible reality in order to situate the main figures in a sort of color storm. Emerging from the upper right corner, a burst of color looms above the horseman" and spreads across the entire upper half of the canvas.

The fact that Kandinsky should have decided to give Marc a painting of a rider is highly significant, because when he sent it the almanac did not yet have a title. Indeed, the only name the Russian painter had suggested for the publication was "*Die Kette*" (The Chain), as he intended it to be "a link to the past as well as a ray to the future".⁶ The gift not only further confirmed the importance he attached to this motif, but also heralded the prominence the figure of the rider would soon take on in his collaboration with Marc.⁷ To what extent was *Improvisation 12* a determining influence in the final choice of the almanac's title *Der Blaue Reiter*?

In 1930, Kandinsky retrospectively explained that the final name arose one day over coffee at Marc's house: "We both loved blue, Marc liked horses, I riders. So the name came by itself".⁸ This mythdestroying clarification has sparked much controversy among historians, since Kandinsky is considered to have consciously ignored the deep symbolism and many associations implicit in this choice.⁹ Even so, it is likely that the Russian painter's account of the context is truthful, and that it was indeed during that hot summer of 1911 when, together in Sindelsdorf and gazing at Kandinsky's painting, they came up with the name of *Der Blaue Reiter*, which reflected their artistic longings so well.

By mid-September, the title for the almanac had been firmly decided upon and Kandinsky had prepared several cover designs to show the publisher Reinhard Piper.¹⁰ Many of his sketches featured a figure on horseback moving upward across the composition [fig. 3]. Although Kandinsky's vocabulary never allows for categorical statements or unilateral interpretations, these riders seem to hail from a legendary fairy-tale world that is present in many of his works

fig. 3
Wassily Kandinsky
Study for the cover of *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac, 1911
Watercolor, India ink, and pencil
on paper, 277 × 219 mm
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus
und Kunstbau München, Munich,
inv. GMS 605



fig. 4
Wassily Kandinsky
Final study for the cover of *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac, 1911
Watercolour, Indian ink and pencil
on paper, 277 × 219 mm
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus
und Kunstbau München, München,
inv. GMS 608

from very early on. Linked to an iconography related chiefly to his childhood and native Russia, the figures in these preparatory drawings are connected with the main motif in the work Kandinsky had given Marc not long before. The most anecdotal elements, such as the tiny figures –lingering remnants of narrative, still found in the 1910 canvas– have disappeared, and the figure on horseback has become a kind of ethical symbol of the triumphant power of the spirit over the materialism that had pervaded art since the nineteenth century.¹¹ Could a parallel be drawn between Kandinsky's gift to Marc and the initial idea the Russian artist explored for the cover of the almanac?

As is well known, the rider they finally adopted as the publication's emblem is far removed from the initial design recalling Kandinsky's gift and closer to the iconography of Saint George. The Christian knight slaying the dragon –a motif that gained prominence in the Russian painter's iconography around this time– thus took the place of the horseman in his early sketches, apparently at Marc's wishes [fig. 4].¹² The choice of the saint on horseback –an allegory of the triumph of good over evil– as the cover image for the almanac imbued the modern artist with the saint's virtues. In Marc's words, penned in his essay "Die 'Wilden' Deutschlands" (The "Savages" of Germany), his weapons were the "new ideas" that "kill better than steel and destroy what was thought to be indestructible".¹³

It should be pointed out that *Improvisation 12* was again specifically mentioned in the many letters the two artists exchanged during the autumn of 1911. Both painters, busy preparing the almanac, attached great importance to the illustrations that were to accompany the publication. During their discussions, Marc proposed including a reproduction of *Improvisation 12* to "complete the fantastical illustration".¹⁴ This idea, which seems to have originally come from the German painter's then companion, Maria Franck, underlines the importance of the canvas and corroborates the fact that –at least for Marc and Maria Franck– it evoked a mythical iconography linked to fable. Kandinsky, however, was not entirely convinced, since he feared that it would encourage an overly fanciful interpretation of his work, and in the end the painting was not included.¹⁵

11
Langner 1977 (see note 7), pp. 130-31.

12
Schuster 1993 (see note 9), p. 183.

13
Franz Marc. "Die 'Wilden' Deutschlands". In Kandinsky and Marc 1912 (see note 2), p. 5; English ed.: "The 'Savages' of Germany". In Kandinsky and Marc 2005 (see note 2), p. 61.

14
Franz Marc, postcard to Wassily Kandinsky, November 10, 1911. In Kandinsky and Marc 1983 (see note 3), p. 76.

15
Wassily Kandinsky, letter to Franz Marc, n.d. In Kandinsky y Marc. In *ibid.*, pp. 76-77.



fig. 5

Franz Marc**Portrait of Henri Rousseau, 1911****Oil on glass, partly glazed, underlaid with tin foil, 15.3 × 11.4 cm****Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, Munich, inv. GMS 723****16**

Franz Marc, letter to Wassily Kandinsky, December 23, 1911. In *ibid.*, p. 88.

17

Katherine Kuenzli. "Grenzerweiterung der modernen Kunst: Der 'Blaue Reiter: die Pariser Moderne und Henri Rousseau'". In *Expressionismus in Deutschland und Frankreich: Von Matisse zum Blauen Reiter* [exh. cat. Kunsthaus Zürich; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal]. Munich, 2014, p. 98.

18

Wilhelm Uhde. *Henri Rousseau*. Paris, 1911.

The First Exhibition and a Slight Foretaste for Kandinsky

The next gift came a few months later, at the end of 1911, following a busy autumn devoted to preparing the almanac as well as the discussions among members of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München, which prompted both Kandinsky and Marc to leave the group in early December. "If I may hope to offer you a token of Christmas joy, please accept the small portrait of Rousseau I made—I wish I had something better to give you at the moment" [fig. 5], Marc wrote in a letter of December 23, 1911.¹⁶ He felt indebted to Kandinsky for the gift of *Improvisation 12* and offered his colleague his interpretation of the French artist Henri Rousseau's self-portrait *Portrait de l'artiste à la lampe* (*Portrait of the Artist with a Lamp*), of 1900-03. Yet Marc went on to explain in the letter that he would have liked "to have something better to give you," as he did not consider it a fitting exchange compared to Kandinsky's work. The "something better" finally came halfway through the following year.

Nevertheless, Marc's *Bildnis Henri Rousseau* (*Portrait of Henri Rousseau*) illustrated another of the decisive moments in his relationship with his colleague. It coincided precisely with the first *Der Blaue Reiter* exhibition at the Galerie Thannhauser, which ran from December 18, 1911 to January 3, 1912. In fact, this glass painting hung in pride of place in the landmark exhibition, although it was not included in the catalogue's list of works. Marc is documented as having given Kandinsky the portrait on December 23, 1911—that is, after the opening of the first *Blaue Reiter* exhibition. The description of the work in the correspondence and its presence in Gabriele Münter's photos of the exhibition [fig. 6] also confirm that it is indeed his copy of Henri Rousseau's portrait. These circumstances raise the question of whether Marc's work was only featured in the exhibition during the first days of the show. Or, alternatively, did Kandinsky decide to include it after receiving it from his friend?

The painting was the expression of what was perhaps the greatest discovery for Marc and Kandinsky during the months prior to the publication of the almanac. Although Kandinsky had seen Rousseau's work during his trip to Paris in 1906-07, he did not become aware of its significance until 1911, when he read the French artist's first monograph.¹⁷ Published that year by Wilhelm Uhde,¹⁸ it marked a veritable revelation for the editors of *Der Blaue Reiter*, who immediately decided to

fig. 6

First Exhibition of the Editors of *Der Blaue Reiter*, Galerie Thannhauser, Munich, 1911-12
Photograph by Gabriele Münter, Gabriele Münter- und Johannes Eichner-Stiftung, Munich



include the French painter's work in the almanac and sought out images to illustrate it.

In his essay "Über die Formfrage" (On the Question of Form) in the almanac, Kandinsky, who divided art into "Great Abstraction" and "Great Realism," responded to Uhde's text by referring to Rousseau as the epitome of the second type.¹⁹ *Le Douanier* perfectly exemplified the Russian painter's theory that form ought to conform solely to each artist's "internal necessity." This made it not only possible but also necessary for many different and equally valid forms of representation to coexist: from Rousseau's jungle scenes to children's drawings, along with African sculptures and his own nonfigurative compositions.

Marc reacted to the discovery of Rousseau by setting about copying the French artist's self-portrait reproduced in the monograph. His use of the Bavarian technique of glass painting (*Hinterglasmalerei*) –which Gabriele Münter and Kandinsky had first employed in Murnau– imbued the tribute to Henri Rousseau with a specifically German flavor. With a certain amount of irony, Marc painted a halo over the head of this newly discovered father of modernity, transforming him into a modern-day equivalent of the saints who populated the works on glass in Bavarian folk art.²⁰

19

Wassily Kandinsky. "Über die Formfrage". In Kandinsky and Marc 1912 (see note 2), pp. 82, 94 and note 1. English ed.: "On the Question of Form". In Lindsay and Vergo 1994 (see note 5), pp. 242, 252, and note.

20

See the analysis in Angela Lampe. "Realistik = Abstraktion oder Kandinskys 'Neuer Realismus'". In *Der Grosse Widerspruch: Franz Marc zwischen Delaunay und Rousseau*. Cathrin Klingsöhr-Leroy and Franz Marc Museumsgesellschaft, eds. [exh. cat. Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See]. Berlin and Munich, 2009, pp. 42-45.

The Publication of the Almanac and a Dream converted into a Canvas for Kandinsky

fig. 7

Franz Marc

***The Dream*, 1912**

Oil on canvas, 100.5 × 135.5 cm

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza,

Madrid, inv. 660 (1978.15)

[\[+ info\]](#)



“The overall effect of the book is marvelous. What a delight to see it completed before me. I am sure of one thing: many silent readers and young people full of energy will secretly be grateful to us, will be fired by enthusiasm for this book and will judge the world in accordance with it,” Marc wrote in May 1912.²¹ The almanac at last saw the light of day at a time when, according to Klaus Lankheit, the artist was painting *Der Traum* (*The Dream*; fig. 7).²² This was the canvas with which Marc finally settled his outstanding debt to Kandinsky, as it was a worthy exchange for the *Improvisation 12*²³ the Russian had sent him nearly a year earlier.

Unlike Kandinsky’s present, which he had selected from among the pictures he had painted before he and Marc had met, Marc set about painting this one after he and Kandinsky had been working together intensely for months. Whereas the first gift marked the start of *Der Blaue Reiter*, this one seemed to celebrate the end of a lengthy collaborative effort that resulted in the almanac. Did Marc intend this work to sum up in the ideas they had discussed during the previous months? To what extent does it reflect their shared yearning for a new, spiritual art?

In the center of the composition, a nude woman sits with her legs crossed and eyes closed. Nearby, several animals—a lion and four horses—gaze at her, stressing her importance. This

21

Franz Marc, letter to Wassily Kandinsky, May 11, 1912. In Kandinsky and Marc 1983 (see note 3), p. 169. English trans. in Annette Vezin and Luc Vezin. *Kandinsky and the Blue Rider*. Paris, 1992, p. 150.

22

Klaus Lankheit. *Franz Marc: Sein Leben und seine Kunst*. Cologne, 1976, p. 84.

23

Unlike the other gifts, the arrival of this one is not recorded in the correspondence. It is nonetheless reflected in Kandinsky’s hand-written lists and also featured in all the catalogues raisonnés. See Klaus Lankheit. *Franz Marc: Katalog der Werke*. Cologne, 1970, no. 172, p. 60; Annegret Hoberg and Isabelle Jansen. *Franz Marc: The Complete Works*. 3 vols. London, 2004-11, vol. 1, no. 175, p. 196; Hans K. Roethel and Jean K. Benjamin. *Kandinsky: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil-Paintings*. 2 vols. London, 1982-84, vol. 1, no. 354, p. 332.

enigmatic painting is one of the few compositions featuring human figures that Marc produced during his mature period. The German artist, known for his very early preference for animals as the main subjects of his works, decided to give Kandinsky a canvas that was unusual in his output. This rare inclusion of a human in the animal world so predominant in his oeuvre raises the question of whether his choice was somehow influenced by the intended use of the work and the recent publication of the almanac. According to Klaus Lankheit, the fact that it “was given to his friend cannot have been a coincidence” and signaled the possibility that it was a type of Orphic rhapsody –an allegorical transcription of the ideas that sparked the almanac’s genesis.²⁴

Despite the inclusion of the female figure, the work exudes the Arcadian spirit that Marc sought to achieve in his painting and described in what is held to be his first theoretic text, entitled “Über das Tier in der Kunst” (On the animal in art, 1910). In it the artist confessed that he was trying to achieve a heightened “awareness of the organic rhythm of all things, a pantheistic identification with the trembling and flowing of the blood of nature, in the trees, the animals, the air”.²⁵ The female figure appears to be part of this primeval world, which in Marc’s view belonged solely to animals, as humans had been banished from it. The work seems to embody his aspiration to “create a new paradisiacal realm in which man could achieve perfect harmony with nature”.²⁶ What has enabled the woman in *Der Traum* to enter this territory that is the exclusive preserve of untainted beings? The key may lie in the title of the canvas.

Sleep and dreams are a recurring subject in Franz Marc’s artistic production. We find sleeping beings in many of his works, such as *Liegender Hund im Schnee* (*Dog Lying in the Snow*), of 1910-11, and *Der Stier* (*White Bull*), of 1911. In these scenes, the earth welcomes and protects the placid animal. Indeed, unlike other artists, Marc does not associate sleep with nightmares. For him, slumber is the moment when we glimpse the most authentic side of things, the most intimate reality. These scenes thus represent moments of a purity and at-oneness with nature that are almost paradisiacal.²⁷ Like Kandinsky, Marc seeks the spiritual regeneration of society through art, and seems to present this moment as a remnant of what can be regenerated

24

Lankheit 1976 (see note 22), p. 84.

25

This text is taken from Franz Marc, letter to the publisher Reinhard Piper, April 20, 1910; Piper then published it as *Das Tier in der Kunst*. Munich, 1910, p. 190. Reproduced in Klaus Lankheit, ed. *Franz Marc: Schriften*. Cologne, 1978, p. 98. English trans. in Vezin and Vezin 1992 (see note 21), p. 101.

26

Paloma Alarcó. *Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza: Pintura Moderna*. Madrid, 2009, p. 188.

27

See Mark Rosenthal. *Franz Marc*. Munich, 1989, p. 28; and Volker Adolphs. “Seeing the World and Seeing through the World”. In *August Macke and Franz Marc: An Artist Friendship*. Volker Adolphs and Annegret Hoberg, eds. [exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Bonn; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau, Munich]. Ostfildern, 2014, p. 13.



fig. 8

Franz Marc
The Waterfall (Women under
a Waterfall), 1912
 Oil on canvas, 164 × 158 cm
 Private collection



fig. 9

Franz Marc
The Shepherds, 1912
 Oil on canvas, 100 × 135 cm
 Bayerische
 Staatsgemäldesammlungen.
 Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich,
 inv. L 1728

28

Peter Vergo. *Twentieth-century German Painting: The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection*. London, 1992, p. 264.

29

Isabelle Jansen. "The Yearning of an Unspoiled World". In *Franz Marc: The Retrospective*. Annegret Hoberg and Helmut Friedel, eds. [exh. cat. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau, Munich]. Munich, 2005, p. 86.

in human beings. In *Der Traum*, nature shelters not only animals but also humans, albeit sleeping. It is a Garden of Earthly Delights, a recoverable Arcadia. There is still hope.

This painting Marc gave Kandinsky was not his only work to include a human figure. It is usually related to another two paintings, also dated to that spring of 1912: *Der Wasserfall (Frauen unter einem Wasserfall) (The Waterfall [Women under a Waterfall])*; fig. 8) and *Die Hirten (The Shepherds)*; fig. 9). Similar in format to *Der Traum*, they evoke the pastoral tradition and the iconography of the Garden of Earthly Delights. This theme, which also interested Kandinsky,²⁸ is conveyed by men and women –always accompanied by animals– who are not ashamed of their nakedness. Portrayed before the Fall, the figures' bodies are folded in on themselves and adapt to the structure of the composition in order to accentuate, also formally, the sensation of their communion with nature. They are beings who sleep or are at least in a state of self-engrossment that isolates them from their surroundings. The solitary woman in *Der Traum* stands out among all the figures, as she seems to be meditating rather than sleeping or dreaming.

Marc showed an interest in non-European cultures from a very early age. He was not only familiar with the ethnological museums in Munich and Berlin but also collected small Asian art objects and prints.²⁹ This concern with the artistic

expressions of other continents is reflected chiefly in his sketchbooks, which provide insight into the extent to which foreign sources influenced his own painting. The position of the woman in *Der Traum*, for instance, is probably inspired by Buddhist works. Two earlier drawings bear this out. As early as 1907-08, Marc made a quick sketch of what appears to be a female figure [fig. 10]. Two years later, he drew a male figure, which, according to the work's title in the catalogue raisonné, adopts "the position of a Buddha" [fig. 11].³⁰ Could, correspondingly, the figure in the canvas he exchanged with Kandinsky be an allusion to Buddhism?

Isabelle Jansen, who has analyzed the references to non-Western art in Marc's painting, argues in her study that his interest in Buddhist art was not limited to merely imitating formal aspects. He owned German translations of various Buddhist publications in his library,³¹ whose influence probably supplemented the impulses he received from Kandinsky. Although some of his drawings of Buddha were made at an earlier date [fig. 12], it was precisely during the height of intensity in the relationship between the two artists, starting in 1912, that the German painter developed a greater interest in this religion. The close communication between the two artists must have brought Marc into contact with the heavily Eastern-influenced theosophical ideas that greatly concerned the Russian.³² The wish to add a spiritual component to art, via the association with Buddhist iconography, conveyed the transcendental meaning Marc desired for the gift that was to symbolize his friendship with Kandinsky.³³ As is often the case with Marc, however, we are not dealing with a literal transcription of his source of inspiration. Marc did not reproduce an orthodox position in *Der Traum*, but freely interpreted the representations of Buddha with which he was familiar [fig. 13], rendering them first in his sketchbooks and later on canvas. In the final painting, he made a few alterations to the previously drawn versions. The woman's head is tilted slightly to the right and her torso leans slightly forward, so that her crossed arms rest on her knees. The result is a huddled figure of a woman who appears to be embracing herself. The dream would make it possible to again see the world through the untainted gaze of animals. But humans could only achieve the innocent and pleasurable rest of beasts through a conscious exercise such as meditation.

30

The first of the drawings is found in sketchbook VI, 1907-08, p. 1a, and reproduced in Hoberg and Jansen 2004-11 (see note 23), vol. III, with the title "Sitzender Akt mit gekreuzten Armen und Beinen" (*Nude, seated crossed-legged on the ground with arms crossed*), p. 57. The second is found in sketchbook XIX, 1910, p. 8, and reproduced in Hoberg and Jansen 2004-11 (see note 23), vol. III, with the title "Männlicher Akt in der Haltung eines Buddhas" (*Male nude in a Buddha pose*), p. 153.

31

Jansen 2005 (see note 29), p. 86, lists the books on Buddhist themes in Marc's library. It should be stressed that the full bibliography mentioned by Jansen was published in 1911. It is likewise interesting to note that Reinhard Piper, the publisher of the almanac, also published a translation of Buddhist texts.

32

Ibid., pp. 86-87.

33

In a lecture on Franz Marc's *Der Traum*, Guillermo Solana established a possible link between the iconography of this work and Buddhist art and the lotus position. Guillermo Solana. "Franz Marc: El sueño:" lecture in Spanish delivered on November 14, 2013, at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza auditorium, Madrid; <http://www.museothyssen.org/thyssen/videoplayer/156> (accessed March 1, 2016).

fig. 10

Franz Marc
Nude, seated crossed-legged on the ground with arms crossed, 1907-08
Pencil on paper, 198 × 135 mm
Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, inv. 6361



fig. 11

Franz Marc
Male nude in a Buddha pose, 1910
Pencil and chalk on paper, 209 × 167 mm
Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, inv. 6374



fig. 12

Franz Marc
Composition sketch: exotic figure seated like a Buddha, 1909
Gouache and pencil on paper, 130 × 105 mm
Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, inv. 6367

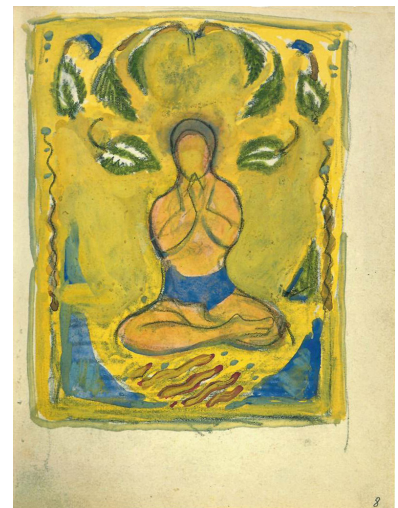


fig. 13

Buddha courtyard at the Japan und Ostasien in der Kunst (Japan and East Asia in Art) exhibition, Munich, 1909
Postkartensammlung, Stadtarchiv München, Munich

“Art is but the expression of a dream-the closer we come to it, the more we devote ourselves to the inner truth of things,” Marc wrote in 1907 to Maria Franck, the woman who would become his second wife.³⁴ In that early letter, the German artist likened life to a parody that concealed the real truth-which for him was the moment of the dream. The role of art was to evoke this other reality, which emerged during the act of sleeping, when all of one’s barriers were down. Years later-specifically in May 1912-the painter returned to this concept to explain the stage he was at in his art to Kandinsky. This time he used it to compare the creative process with a memory that lingers on in our minds after we awaken. “We are tortured by an enormously precise idea,” he commented, “but we do not know what it is ... (as in a dream: it is perfectly sensed on awakening, but we don’t know how to tell it)”.³⁵ The creative process is therefore similar to a dreamlike state in which reason does not dominate the mind; rather, it is a trance in which the soul is liberated and achieves a new vibration that is not limited to the artist himself, but designed to appeal to those who view the work. Artistic expressions capable of illustrating what Kandinsky called an “internal necessity” return humans to this primeval state, which is represented allegorically by the subject of *Der Traum*, the canvas Marc gave the Russian painter.³⁶

Epilogue

In 1916, after Franz Marc died in the Great War, his widow wished to organize an exhibition in his honor. She contacted Gabriele Münter, who had been looking after Kandinsky’s possessions since he departed for Russia.³⁷ After the exhibition ended, Maria Marc kept *Der Traum* for at least four years and displayed it in her home at Ried alongside *Improvisation 12*, the painting Kandinsky had given to Marc.

34

Franz Marc, letter to Maria Franck, May 10, 1907. In Alois J. Schardt. *Franz Marc*. Berlin, 1936, p. 28.

35

Franz Marc, letter to Wassily Kandinsky, n.d. [May 11, 1912]. In Kandinsky and Marc 1983 (see note 3), May 11, 1912, p. 169.

36

Franz Marc, subscription prospectus for the almanac, mid-January 1912. In Kandinsky and Marc 2005 (see note 2), p. 252.

37

Maria Marc, letter to Gabriele Münter, July 15, 1916. In Kandinsky and Marc 1983 (see note 3), pp. 280-83.