

LARGE PRINT



PORTALS

The Visionary Architecture
of Paul Goesch

EUGENE V. THAW GALLERY FOR WORKS ON PAPER

A century ago, amid the ruins of the First World War and the ferment that birthed Germany's first democracy, a generation of young architects sketched their visions for utopia. Paul Goesch (1885–1940) stands out among them for his formal inventiveness and range, his kaleidoscopic color sense, and his playful and pluralistic embrace of architectural history. He also stands out for his long struggles with schizophrenia, a condition for which he was institutionalized, and ultimately murdered by the Nazis.

While Goesch was a prolific artist of religious and mythological scenes, portraits, and landscapes, this exhibition focuses on his architecture—the discipline in which he trained, and about which he theorized, despite never realizing a building. The drawings shown here represent Goesch's fascination with portals and passageways, which provide the structuring metaphor for this exhibition.

The portal suggests both the metaphysical passages of Goesch the spiritualist, steeped in Christian theology and occultism, as well as the altered states of schizophrenia. The portal also evokes his liminal status between art and architecture, “sanity” and “madness,” the trained

insider and the institutionalized “outsider.” These confusions and biases have made Goesch difficult to categorize for historians and critics and may help explain why, though celebrated in his time, he has until recently been erased from history.

This exhibition, drawn primarily from the collections of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, is the first solo presentation of Goesch’s work in North America. The first two galleries contextualize Goesch in his time and place, among his artist contemporaries and then alongside his architect colleagues: at a moment when German Expressionists privileged intuition, feeling, and formal experimentation, Goesch was considered an exemplary Expressionist.

The final two galleries show a selection of Goesch’s drawings in gouache, graphite, and ink. They range from ornamental architecture to total abstraction and suggest Goesch’s power—undiminished in the intervening century—to envision new worlds even as he reenchants the existing one.

Portals: The Visionary Architecture of Paul Goesch is organized by the Clark Art Institute and curated by Robert Wiesenberger, curator of contemporary projects. This exhibition is made possible by Katherine and Frank Martucci.

EXHAUSTION AND RENEWAL:

Expressionism in Germany

Expressionism began in the first decade of the twentieth century as an attempt to create a new art for the future and escape the stifling culture of Imperial Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II. The young artists who formed associations like *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) in 1905 and *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) in 1911 preferred bright colors and distorted, dynamic forms. They looked inward, outward, and back for alternatives to academic conservatism: inward, to their emotions and subjectivity; outward, to the arts of Africa and Oceania that they saw in museums; and back, to medieval Germany, for its mysticism and tradition of woodcuts. Indeed, printmaking was a popular medium of artistic experimentation given its affordability of production and distribution and its graphic, emotional immediacy.

A second generation of Expressionists, shown here, continued their work in the Weimar Republic, Germany's first democracy (1918–33). Responding to the unthinkable horrors of the war, in which many of them served, and the deprivation in its wake, this art took a darker turn but was also, for many, more political—intent on

building a new social order. In the spirit of the November Revolution that birthed the republic, artists and architects formed radical associations with socialist aims: the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Work Council for Art) and *Novembergruppe* (November Group) sought a voice for art workers in the new government and were largely guided by architects and the utopian metaphors of architecture (Paul Goesch was a member of both). While their hopes for political agency were soon disappointed, their radical aesthetics continued.

Erich Heckel
German, 1883–1970

Portrait of a Man

1918

Color woodcut, over zincograph, in green, blue, ochre, and black on paper

This woodcut by Erich Heckel is a self-portrait, made shortly after he returned from serving as a medic in the First World War, though it could also represent the psychic state of many Germans at this moment. With deeply gouged lines, gaunt features, and sickly colors, Heckel depicts a human hollowed out by the traumas of war. His vacant eyes avoid ours and his hands are folded in a gesture resembling prayer. In 1905, Heckel founded the first Expressionist group in Germany, *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), along with three other architecture students in Dresden, to build a “bridge” to the art of the future. After the war, he would join the art workers of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Work Council for Art) and *Novembergruppe* (November Group), intent on realizing a progressive new society.

Lyonel Feininger
American, 1871–1956

Gelmeroda
1920

Woodcut (re-strike) on Sekishu Natural
Japanese handmade paper by Spiral Press, N.Y.

Lyonel Feininger made this modest, fourteenth century church in the town of Gelmeroda, outside Weimar, the repeat subject of his drawings, prints, and paintings. Abstracted, crystalline forms here thrust skyward in a woodcut influenced by the dynamism and dematerialization of Cubism in France and Futurism in Italy. Feininger was an American citizen who moved to Germany as a student in the late nineteenth century and remained there until the Nazis came to power. He first made this print as an instructor at the Bauhaus, a school established to unite the arts and crafts—and the classes—through the project of architecture. Woodcuts of radiant churches by Feininger introduce the Bauhaus's first publication and that of the Work Council for Art, both of 1919. This consistent subject matter was less about Christianity, or even religion, as such, and more about spirituality generally, as well as a faith in the symbolic power of architecture.

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Max Beckmann
German, 1884–1950

Cafe Music (Cafemusik),
from *Faces (Gesichter)*
1918
Drypoint

This dense, swirling scene captures the chaos and cacophony of the metropolis that Berlin had become by the early twentieth century. Max Beckmann's harsh, anxious lines—scratched onto a copper plate in the drypoint printmaking technique—present a social gathering populated by isolated individuals. The portfolio *Faces* includes nineteen prints, most of them depicting the banality or pain of human experience. Beckmann had made Impressionist paintings before seeing the work of Edvard Munch and then the horrors of the First World War: He served as a medic in Belgium and was discharged for a nervous breakdown in 1915. Overstimulating and sordid as it could be, Berlin in these years was also aflame with artistic energy.

Max Pechstein
German, 1881–1955

But deliver us from evil
(*Sondern erlöse uns von dem Übel*) from
The Lord's Prayer (Das Vater Unser)
1921

Woodblock on paper with hand-coloring

Each of the thirteen prints in this portfolio depicts a different verse from the Lord's Prayer. In a time of scarcity and suffering in postwar Germany, these petitions for divine deliverance were particularly resonant. Max Pechstein was a member of The Bridge, along with Erich Heckel (shown nearby). After the war, Pechstein became one of the most politically committed members of the radical artist associations the November Group and Work Council for Art, whose publications featured Pechstein's graphics issuing passionate calls for solidarity among art workers. Yet by the time he made this print, the artist had lost faith in the progressive potential of the new government and turned instead to religion.

Käthe Kollwitz
German, 1867–1945

Memorial sheet for Karl Liebknecht
1920

Woodcut on paper

The funeral of a leftist leader is here attended by a crowd of working-class supporters. In January 1919, Communist Party members Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg led a general strike and uprising against the ruling Social Democratic Party of which they had been a part, with the goal of establishing a soviet republic like that of the Bolsheviks. The strike was put down by government and rightwing paramilitary forces, who brutally murdered Liebknecht and Luxemburg. Käthe Kollwitz, who was the first woman to hold a professorship at the Prussian Academy of the Arts, and had spent her career depicting the poor and working class with dignity, presents Liebknecht here as a kind of martyr. The hopes of Germany's most progressive artists dimmed after what was known as the Spartacist uprising, and radical politics and aesthetics would begin to part ways. Kollwitz was, incidentally, related to Paul Goesch by marriage, and likely influenced his leftist leanings.

Wassily Kandinsky, Russian, 1866–1944

Untitled, 1924

Drypoint

In the first decade of the twentieth century, abstract art gained purchase in Europe and Wassily Kandinsky was its most prominent champion. His landmark book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911) argues for abstraction in terms of mystical experience. Showing his debt to the esoteric belief system of Anthroposophy, which was also influential for Paul Goesch, Kandinsky saw energies in all things and believed that forms, colors, sounds, and language all cause vibrations of the human soul and, indeed, emotion. That year, Kandinsky began exhibiting and publishing, with Franz Marc, as *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), a foundational Expressionist group. Kandinsky was a teacher at the Bauhaus school when he made this etching; there he taught students basic design as a universal grammar of expression. Even as the school had, by this time, turned away from Expressionism and mysticism and toward functionalism and rationality, the influence of Kandinsky's spiritualized abstraction would continue through the century.

BUILDING UTOPIA:

Paper Architecture and The Glass Chain

In the aftermath of the war, ambitious building in Germany was impossible amid material shortages, hyperinflation, and a lack of commissions. Under these conditions, the practical, physics-bound work of architecture was replaced by the speculative fantasies of “paper architecture,” in which anything was possible. Architecture assumed a leading place in Expressionist circles in these years: the Work Council for Art was co-founded by architects Walter Gropius and Bruno Taut and was guided by architectural metaphors. Taut agitated for public funding for experimental architecture and workers’ housing, the dissolution of the art academies, and the “destruction of artistically valueless monuments” to free up building material. He and his peers dreamt of formally inventive houses for the people that broke from the classical styles and elitist social structures of the past.

Disappointed by a lack of political agency in the new government, Taut took his activities underground and in 1919 established a group of architects around Germany who corresponded

via pseudonyms about the building of the future, sending each other theoretical texts and drawings by mail. Named the *Gläserne Kette* (Glass Chain), in homage to the material many of them favored in their schemes, the group included twelve architects, Paul Goesch among them. Some of the members went on to build signature modernist buildings in the years to come, while others became known for their unbuilt fantasies. Despite its secretive posture, much of the group's theoretical and artistic output appeared in Taut's journal *Frühlicht* (Dawn). Goesch was a highly valued contributor; in addition to his texts, more drawings by him appear in Taut's journal than by most any other member of the group.

Hermann Finsterlin
German, 1887–1973

Formal study

1920

Graphite and watercolor, with gouache

The painter, poet, architect, and toy designer Hermann Finsterlin considered buildings to be natural, living organisms. His unbuilt designs might resemble slugs, mushrooms, or geological formations in perspective or the chambers of seashells in plan (a reflection of the cavern-like interiors he imagined as an improvement on traditional, cubic architecture). While the titles of his drawings here are vague, he often identified specific programs for his designs—university, theater, house, cathedral, and so on—even when these functions were not obviously expressed or differentiated from one another. Like Paul Goesch, Finsterlin subscribed to the belief system of Anthroposophy, which saw energies in all things, and considered intuition and faith as powerful generators of form.

Hermann Finsterlin
German, 1887–1973

Left:

*Study for a building, series X,
no.7*

c. 1922

Pen and red and black ink, black wash, white
gouache, and traces of graphite

Study for a hall, series X, no.7

Pen and black ink and white gouache,
over graphite

Right:

Ground plan, series III, no.7

Pen and black ink and brush and black ink,
over graphite

Ground plan, series III, no.7

Pen and black, red, and blue ink, over graphite

Bruno Taut
German, 1880–1938

*Illustrated letter with a drawing of a project
for the monument to the dead*

December 23, 1919

Reprographic copy on paper

Drawing for the Crystal House Project

c. 1919–20

Reprographic copy on paper

Bruno Taut's vision of a crystalline architecture is vivid in these two prints. On the left is a monumental memorial that reaches toward the stars, inscribed with poetry and a Christmas greeting. Mounted on the tower are colored glass panels, illuminated by night, each inscribed with passages from deceased thinkers influential to the architect, among them Martin Luther, Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul Scheerbart, and Karl Liebknecht. The last, a leftist leader who had been murdered by far-right forces earlier the same year, is here remembered with the passage: "You may rob me of the earth, but not the heavens." On the right is a more realistic, though still unrealized, proposal for a school, dormitories, and workshop

intended for the city of Essen. This complex reflects Taut's idea of a non-denominational city crown (*Stadtkrone*), in which a major structure plays a central role, both spatially and spiritually, in the city (Taut cites Gothic cathedrals, Ottoman mosques, and Hindu and Buddhist temples as examples). This thinking would also inform much of the cooperative social housing Taut would go on to build in the years to come, especially in the cities of Magdeburg and Berlin.

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
DR1988:0023:003 and DR1988:0023:017

VITRINE 1

Bruno Taut, ed.,

Frühlicht

vol. 3 (Magdeburg: Karl Peters Verlag, 1922).

Bruno Taut's journal *Frühlicht* (Dawn) appeared between 1920 and 1922 as a clearinghouse for avant-garde architects' ideas and drawings, both practical and fanciful. It also surfaced many of the texts exchanged between members of the Glass Chain group. On the lefthand page here, Hermann Finsterlin presents his drawings for a *Stilspiel* (Style Game), intended for teaching and play. While the prior page showed the wooden toy blocks themselves, in a range of global, architectural forms—pyramids, domes, columns, and cupolas—this one presents some of Finsterlin's own organic designs.

On the righthand page, the journal reproduces two drawings by Paul Goesch, identified as “portal” and “room,” each one conflating interior and exterior space. Besides both holding esoteric beliefs and working in an intuitive fashion, Finsterlin and Goesch—unlike most of their avant-garde peers—also saw the forms of global architectural history as useful building blocks for a new architecture.

VITRINE 1

Artist unknown

*View of spiral staircase, Glass Pavilion,
Deutscher Werkbund Ausstellung, Cologne,
Germany*

*Rear view, Glass Pavilion, Deutscher
Werkbund Ausstellung, Cologne, Germany*

Between 1914 and 1916
Gelatin silver print

In 1914, Bruno Taut's Glass pavilion (*Glashaus*) opened in Cologne at an exhibition of the German Werkbund, an association of designers and architects working in collaboration with German industry. One of the first Expressionist structures built, the pavilion was sponsored by the German glass industry and used glass bricks, panels, and lenses in a range of colors and finishes to form its prismatic, pineapple-shaped cupola. The interior was a multisensory phantasmagoria that included an illuminated waterfall, a novel projector-kaleidoscope, and various glass artworks. Taut was inspired by the

Expressionist poet Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915), who dedicated his book *Glass Architecture*, of the same year, to Taut. Taut, in turn, dedicated his Glass pavilion to Scheerbart: As one photograph here shows, the frieze was inscribed with Scheerbart's rhyming aphorisms. The one partially visible reads "Light passes through the universe / And comes to life in crystal."

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
PH1982:0245 and PH1987:0178

OPENINGS:

The Brief Career of Paul Goesch

Born in 1885 in the city of Schwerin, Paul Goesch spent his childhood in Berlin. Though baptized Lutheran, he became devoutly Catholic in his teens, “overwhelmed,” as he recalls “by the stunning splendor of the church.” Goesch performed poorly in school, suffered from chronic illness, and was isolated from his classmates, retreating into himself. Still, tutored by an older student, he developed a love of art and literature, as well as architecture—which he went on to study.

At the age of 24, intrigued by the new possibilities of Freudian psychoanalysis, Goesch began a session during which he experienced his first psychic break, and entered a sanatorium for treatment. Returning to Berlin a year later, he received a diploma as a state construction foreman, a position in which he worked only briefly. Goesch’s curiosity about the world led him to the anthroposophic teachings of Rudolf Steiner, which emphasized the connections between the outer natural world and the inner spiritual one. During the First World War, Goesch

worked as a civil servant in the post office before again being institutionalized from 1917 to 1919 with the diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. Upon his release, he lived for two years in Berlin, during which time he was a member of the Work Council for Art, the November Group, and the Glass Chain. In 1920, Goesch's drawings were featured at the prestigious Galerie Flechtheim in Dusseldorf, which counted Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Pablo Picasso among its artists. By July 1921, however, Goesch was again institutionalized, as he would remain, with brief interruptions, for the rest of his life.

Most of the drawings shown here were made during Goesch's two years in Berlin, outside institutions. Some suggest commemorative arches or entryways. Others evoke architectural canopies, like the kind that cover altars in churches or thrones in palaces, expressing a divine or royal presence. Still others depict the facades of chapels, whose ornamental entries traditionally mark the transition from a profane to a sacred realm. While Goesch's drawings vary greatly in style and technique, and are ambiguous in scale and suggested material, they are metaphysically rich in their suggestion of passages to another state—whether holiness, enlightenment, or utopia.

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

Left to Right:

*Architectural composition (Triumphal arch) or
Visionary design for a gateway*

c. 1920–21

Graphite and gouache on watercolor paper

Visionary design for an arch

Graphite and gouache

Architectural fantasy

Gouache over pen and black ink

Visionary design for the facade of a chapel

Pen and black ink, watercolor, and gouache

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal

DR1988:0241, DR1988:0254, DR1988:0058, and DR1988:0108

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

Left to Right:

Architectural composition (Triumphal arch)
1921

Pen and black ink and gouache on wove paper

Visionary design for a gateway
c. 1920–21

Pen and black ink, watercolor, and gouache

Visionary design for a multicolored portico
c. 1920–21

Pen and black ink, watercolor, and pastel

*Architectural pyramid or Design for a three-level
arcade shaped like a pyramid*
c. 1920–21

Pastel over pen and black ink

*Architectural composition (Triumphal arch) or
Visionary design for a freestanding gateway*
1921

Watercolor and gouache over pen and black ink
on tracing paper

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

Left to Right:

Visionary design for a facade, possibly of a chapel

c. 1920–21

Black pencil, watercolor, and gouache

Architectural composition (facade) or Visionary design for the facade of a building

Graphite and pen and black ink, with colored gouache and colored pencil on wove paper

Visionary design for the facade of a building

Pen and black ink with blue, green, and orange pencil

Visionary design for a round temple

Watercolor and gouache over graphite

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
DR1988:0238, DR1988:0091, DR1988:0097, and DR1988:0077

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

*Visionary design for a temple, probably
after a dagoba*

After 1920

Pen and black ink and gouache

*Composition designed
around a Latin cross*

c. 1920–21

Pen and black ink, watercolor, and gouache

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
DR188:0105 and DR1988:0141

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

Architectural fantasy

January 1, 1921

Gouache, watercolor, and blue ink over pen
and black ink, with silver and bronze-colored
pigment

*Visionary design for the interior
of a building*

c. 1920–21

Gouache over pen and black ink

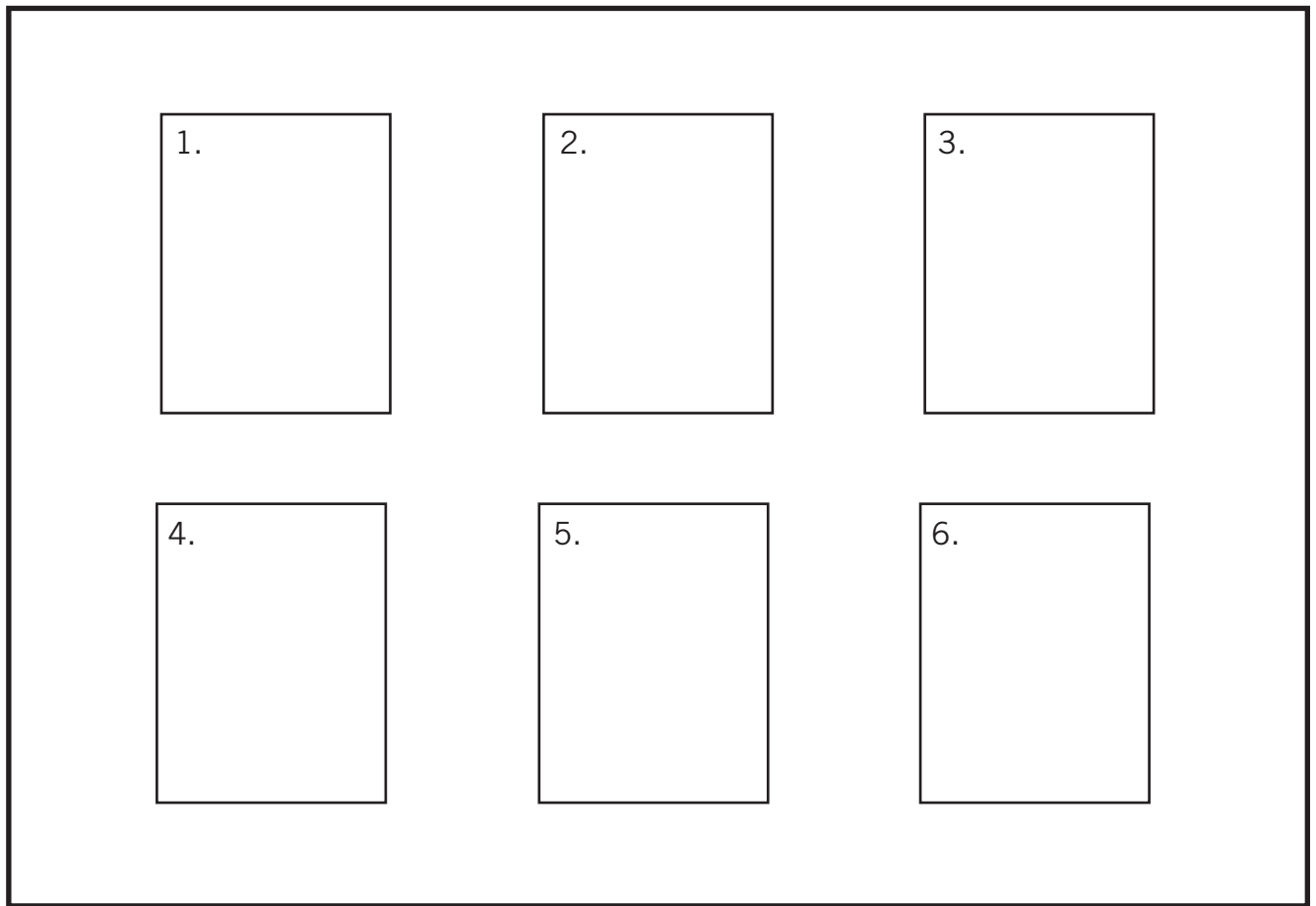
Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
DR1988:0057 and DR1988:0059

VITRINE 2

Georg Biermann, ed.,
*Der Cicerone: Halbmonatsschrift für Künstler,
Kunstfreunde, und Sammler*
vol. 12, no. 4 (Leipzig: Verlag von
Klinkhardt & Biermann, February 1920).

In this issue of the journal *Der Cicerone*, prominent art historian and critic Adolf Behne visits the Berlin studio of Paul Goesch (whose self-portrait appears on the righthand page) and writes approvingly of his work. Behne compares his subject to a monk who “lives withdrawn from the world” and cites Goesch’s own description of his architectural influences, from the Baroque palaces of Europe to the temple complexes of Cambodia. He also employs a trope typical of the reception of art variously labeled “naive” or “folk” at this time, observing that Goesch’s “drawings appear timeless....just as children’s drawings are timeless, as folk art is timeless—as art is timeless.” Behne concludes with soaring praise: “I can’t think of anyone besides Paul Klee who is as close to the creative source of ornament as Goesch.”

VITRINE 2



Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

1. *Visionary design for a
capital and column*
c. 1920–21

Graphite, watercolor, gouache, and yellow
pigment

2. *Visionary design for a capital
surmounted by a seated angel*

Probably December 6, 1920

Pen and black ink, watercolor, and medium
grey
and bronze-colored pigment

3. *Visionary design for a capital*

c. 1920–21

Graphite, watercolor, and gouache

4. *Design for a capital*

c. 1920–21

Gouache over graphite

5. *Visionary design for a tower
or capital*

February 21, 1921

Watercolor over graphite

6. *Design for a capital*

c. 1920–21

Gouache over graphite

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal

DR1988:0231, DR1988:0235, DR1988:0232,

DR1988:0031, DR1988:0068, and DR1988:0039

CLOSURE:

Expressionism, Functionalism, and Fascism

The conditions that enabled Paul Goeck's moment in the sun lasted only briefly. In 1919, Walter Gropius—a co-founder of the Work Council for Art and a member of the Glass Chain—had founded the Bauhaus, a school dedicated to uniting the arts and crafts under the sign of architecture. While the school began with a quasi-mystical, Expressionist character, inspired by the guild-based collaboration of Gothic artisans, by 1923, under the influence of Soviet constructivism, it committed itself to “a new unity” between art and technology. As the hyperinflationary Weimar currency stabilized in the same years, a sober and scientific functionalism took hold and glass and steel structures sprouted up across Germany. In 1925, Gustav Hartlaub, director of the Mannheim Kunsthalle—who five years earlier had acquired Goeck's drawings for his museum—would popularize the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) to describe a matter-of-fact, post-Expressionist tendency in art, with clear parallels in architecture. Expressionism, by this time, had run its course.

Yet these years of high modernism were also short-lived. Following its rise in 1933, the Third Reich either crushed or coopted various strains of the avant-garde, with dire consequences for artists and architects—and especially those deemed ethnically, sexually, or psychologically aberrant. Goesch's work appeared in the 1937 touring exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art), along with many of his Expressionist peers. After years of institutionalization, in 1940, Nazi doctors murdered Goesch in the former Brandenburg prison as part of the Aktion T4 involuntary euthanization program. The regime would also murder some 300,000 other patients with mental illness, whom they designated as “life unworthy of life.” Under fascism, Goesch's ungovernable visions became untenable; on paper, his unique way of building remains.

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

Left to Right:

Visionary design for a window and surrounding architecture, including moldings and a column

c. 1920–21

Pen and black ink

Architectural fantasy

c. 1920–21

Carbon copy

Design for the facade of a building with a portico

c. 1920–21

Pen and black ink

Design for a chapel using representations of human heads as decorative elements

1918

Pen and black ink on wove paper

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

Clockwise from Left:

Architectural fantasy

Probably March 19, 1921

Pen and black ink, watercolor, and gouache

*Imaginary view from one
building to another*

c. 1920–21

Watercolor over graphite

*Visionary design for a
temple complex*

c. 1920–21

Watercolor, gouache, and glaze, over pen
and black

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
DR1988:0244, DR1988:0142, and DR1988:0140

Paul Goesch
German, 1885–1940

Abstract composition

c. 1920–21

Pen and black ink with traces of graphite

Abstract composition

Pen and black ink with traces of graphite

Abstract composition

Pen and black ink with traces of graphite
on cardboard

Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal
DR1988:0250, DR1988:0249, and DR1988:0247

