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May 20, 1947
Frankfurt a/M, Germany

REPORT FROM BERLIN, May 1 to 7th.

There are many art galleries in Berlin but the Gerd Rosen gallery seems to be the best known to the Americans. If more time had been available I certainly would have looked up some of the other good galleries. But I, like most visitors to Berlin, found myself restricted in enough minor unavoidable ways to leave the city with only a good report on the Gerd Rosen to pass on to friends contemplating a trip to Berlin. And so the circle goes. One difference does exist in the local American paper. In Berlin ^{se}ven or eight exhibitions are listed in the "where to go for art", whereas in Frankfurt practically no mention is ever made in our local paper about art galleries other than an occasional mention of the curant exhibit at the State Museum.

I arrived at the American Berlin stop at a little country station called Wannsee. When the other Americans piled out of the train I followed but was very doubtful that this could be Berlin until I saw my smiling hostess, Ruth Christian. No one seemed to know just why we debarked in the middle of a pine woods, 20 minutes from the outskirts of town, but a good guess is that the main station is smack in the middle of the Russian Sector. I may be wrong.

Ruth was very helpful with a car and driver and a determination equal to mine in visiting as many artists as we could crowd into a short week. A few hours after my arrival we headed for Max Peckstein at 18 Hubertus Allee, Grunewald, Berlin. He lived in a big square cream-colored house, but it can be assumed that many others lived in the house as well as he and his wife and son. He came to the door to speak to me but did not invite me in. Instead he asked me to come at noon on Sunday. The meeting, however, was pleasant and we exchanged business cards. Young blond Joachim acted as interpreter. As the day progressed he liked his job as driver more and more. He was nineteen, his father a painter, and he had never had such an opportunity to see so much art in his life. That may sound odd but one cannot forget that the best in creative modern art had been forbidden by law to be exhibited for twelve years in Germany.....Our next stop was at the Gerd Rosen Gallery at 215 Kurfirstendamm Strasse, a big boulevard street near the center of town. The two big windows displayed old prints and books, but inside a fresh clean feeling of a green tree growing in a desert filled me with wonder and appreciation. Neat gray cases displayed new illustrated books, one wall was lined with books and the other held quiet unaggressive abstract watercolors, mostly in blues, by a young painter in his 20's, named Frankenstien. His first name is Wolfgang. This was his first one-man show. He was born in Berlin, May 5, 1918. In 1942 he was forbidden to paint in any place or school and was put in prison by the Gestapo in 1944 till the end of the war....A handsome open steel and glass staircase led me to the second floor. On the landing a nicely shaped piece of pink stone with gray and white streaks in it attracted my eye. It was a mother and child by a sculptor unknown to me, Lidy von Luttwitz....the gallery on the second floor held the rest of the Frankenstien exhibit. I liked it but made no purchase because I felt that equally fine work and better was made by young American artists. The two sculpture cases held work by Luttwitz, Uhlmann and Hartung. Uhlmann worked in metals and Hartung in wood. The Luttwitz white stone shape was so simple and softly rounded when held in the hand that I knew I wanted it. The next day I purchased both the white and the pink stones from the gallery.

I returned to the first floor and inquired about prints and was led into a small curtained room where I spent two hours browsing thru portfolio after portfolio. All the Bauhaus group were represented, Kandinsky, Klee, Chagall, Mücke, Marc, Grosz, Heckel, Beckmann, Peckstein, Schmidt-Rottloff, ... it was like a dream to me, to be able to see, feel and handle so much fine work after eight months of waiting in a vacuum of misery and destruction which is what Germany is today. Berlin itself is such a bombed out mess that the impact of finding this early flowering of the German modern art movement in the midst of destruction, left me with wonder that anything had survived. Most of these men today are either dead, left the country, or have finished producing, their fire burned out.... For sure, it will be at least 25 years before indigenous creative art will be felt outside of this country again.... There was so much to see that it was difficult for me to decide just what I wished to have and returned the next afternoon.... However, my day was not quite finished, there was still enough time to pay a short visit to Schmidt-Rottloff at 136 Schuetzallee, Zehlendorf, Berlin. He lived in a small apartment within walking distance of Ruth's home. Joachim went up the stairs with me and again acted as interpreter. Frau Schmidt-Rottloff came to the door, a lovely whitehaired, blue-eyed woman. I introduced myself and explained that Frau Hanna Bekker had asked me to visit the professor. She was very cordial and called to her husband that an American was here with news of Hanna Bekker of Hofheim. We were led down a dark hallway and into a small sitting room. Schmidt-Rottloff rose slowly from his chair to shake hands and asked us to be seated around the big table. I spoke to him the best I could and finally fell back on Joachim for help. Apparently these charming old people had had too little contact with roving Americans to watch the hang of our manner of speaking their language. So Joachim told them that their old friend, Hanna Bekker hoped to get her pass in time to leave for Berlin on the 15th of May and arrive on the 17th. They had not seen her since she left Berlin in 1943. At that time she had won the admiration and respect of painters by holding a rather clandestine, private exhibition of forbidden German artists in her Berlin apartment, right under the Nazi's noses.... I could not stay long since Ruth was waiting for me in the car, and I asked for another appointment to see the artist's work. We agreed on Saturday afternoon at 4 PM. And thus I closed my first full day of painter hunting in Berlin. I carried in my mind a vivid picture of the professor and his study. Big brilliantly colored landscapes were on the walls, a small stove jutted into the room with a two foot primitive colored wood relief carving leaning against it on the floor. On his desk, loaded with papers and objects a small bronze figure stood out. The Professor, to me, was a big man, reserved and stooped with age. He wore dark rimmed glasses and a gray short pointed beard. He still had a twinkle in his eye despite the ups and downs forced upon him in his late years.

On Friday I returned to the Gerd Rosen Gallery with Ruth. This time I met Mrs. Vogel who runs the print department, owns much of the work in stock and jointly arranges the exhibitions with Mr. Rosen. I never did meet Mr. Rosen as he was away at the time. Mrs. Vogel was a very attractive blond woman, about my age. When she realized that I knew a little about contemporary art, we got quite friendly and she took Ruth and I into the back office and had a very interesting and informative discussion about the young German painters today. She seemed very fair about all the painters not connected with the gallery and showed me their photographic record of the 14 who are known as the Gerd Rosen Group and whose show I

now on tour in cities in the British zone and will come to the American zone as well. I promptly spoke of Mrs. Bekker and told about her new gallery in Frankfurt which was opening on May 11th with a Kathe Kollwitz retrospective, and suggested that she might be interested in showing the group from Berlin. And since I promptly visited Mrs. Bekker upon my return from Berlin and gave her all the information I had gathered about the Berlin artists before she left herself for Berlin, perhaps something might come of it....Mrs. Vogel gave me catalogues of all the exhibitions held during the past years and it is quite impressive the variety of talent they are encouraging and showing today. Those listed in the group catalogue are: Alexander Camaro, Edgar Eises, Wolfgang Frankenstein, Karl Hartung, Werner Heldt, Juro Kubicek, Jeanne Mammen, Luise Sophie Stomps, Paul Strecker, Christian Theunert, Hans Thiemann, Heinz Trokes, Hans Uhlmann, and Mac Zimmermann. The sculptors were Hartung, Stomps and Uhlmann.... Mrs. Vogel told of the fun the gallery had in showing extremely modern work and the public reaction. Some artists make fun of the group and disparagingly call it the Gerd Rosen gang as tho they were trying to foist something on the public and call it art. But they are bravely sticking their necks out and going ahead with their shows and I am sure that they are doing the right thing from what I have seen. I was able to make a few purchases of prints with my limited funds. It is an expensive gallery. Mrs. Vogel put me on her mailing list so that I can be informed of her new shows.

On Saturday we visited Karl Hartung. I had first seen his work at Mrs. Bekker's home in Hofheim. She had a lovely white plaster shape reminiscent of Brancusi's Bird in Space. I asked about the sculptor and Mrs. Bekker said that she did not know just where he lived but that I might ask Gerd Rosen. At Rosen's I saw a good piece of abstract sculpture in wood which I knew Hartung had made and they, the girl in charge at the gallery table, gave me his address in Berlin. He lived in a large apartment at Stierstasse 21, Friedenau, Berlin. I never did get to meet Lidv von Luttwitz who lives at 12 Moltkestrasse, Hermsdorf, Berlin.....Hartung is a nice looking black haired man who also sports a decorative hair growth above and around his lips ending in a little pointed beard. His thinning hair was covered with a beret. His wife was a charming blue eyed large woman with auburn hair. She had just returned a few days previously from the hospital with their new son, a fine baby...The big room was very restful in color, tan walls and green rug. The simply designed chairs had been made by a friend for them. The walls were mostly covered with non-objective pale watercolors by Mrs. Hartung. I was reminded of the work of Lucia Stern's in Milwaukee, only Stern's is better. Hartung opened a sliding door which led to his studio. There the shelves were loaded with plaster models which he had no way of enlarging in his limited space. Two big charcoal sketches of proposed work were tacked on one wall. They were good. He also had stacks of drawings, sketches in pencil and ink, and a good series of gouache paintings which he was making ready for a show at Gerd Rosen, also a few woodblock prints and etchings. The last two mediums seemed to best express his sculptural approach and style...He moved a modeling stand into the main room and one by one displayed his wood carvings. They were splendid, all of them. He also showed some beautifully formed bronzes of animals. I was really impressed with Hartung's work. He respected his various mediums so completely and abstracted his forms each into an object of beauty, and when held in hands, the shapes and forms flowed so delicately to the touch. He is the German Henry Moore on a smaller scale. Give him time, he is a young man.

One wood carving about 14 inches wide of a horizontal floating figure pleased me most. It was his latest work and he had not signed it yet. When I returned to Hartung the following Tuesday I took a photograph of the Hartungs seated at their table with this carving on the table. I later saw that I had focused the camera too high and only got part of the carving in the picture...Hartung was very interested in American art and what kind of work was being done across the sea. In fact, all the artists I saw asked me the same questions and seemed quite starved for news of what was going on in the art world outside of Germany. I was very sorry that I had no catalogues and pictures of exhibitions with me. I had carefully left all my files in the States, never dreaming of the interest they would have created over here. They had been given one catalogue of the Encyclopedia Britannica collection. The painting by Julio de Diego was the only one they commented on favorably. When I turned to George Grosz' painting in the book, they shook their heads and said "that is not the Grosz we knew, he is so sentimental now". They could not understand the change in his work. Hartung was particularly curious about Henry Moore, and I told him about his ~~current~~ ^{CURRENTLY} successful touring exhibition in the States, and also that the British Council or Govt. had loaned Gunther Franke a collection of Moore drawings which he exhibited ⁱⁿ a few months ago in his Munich gallery. (~~I think he would have thumbed a ride to Munich if he had known about the show and could have gotten out of Berlin~~)...Hartung expresses a quiet sophistication in all of his work. His student days of working with Maillol and Despiaux in Paris in the early thirties and a year in Florence are well behind him and now I can see nothing but progress result from his work. He is a sensitive man with the true soul of the artist. He has already exhibited in the States, only drawings, I believe; and a California Museum has purchased some of these, possibly the San Francisco Museum, I do not remember...He told me that he intended to have larger studio quarters so that he can develop the numerous studies he has made. I certainly hope that he can get started on his larger work while I am still in Europe so that I can witness my private convictions come true. As an artist he is sure of himself and the path he is taking and showed touching concern for the talented lesser known sculptors in Berlin, and suggested to me that I visit Hans Uhlmann...The Hartungs seemed very anxious to see more of me so that we could discuss painting and painters but I had to explain the great difficulty for Americans to get into Berlin. I was both touched and amused to have them tell me that they knew several American families in Berlin and that they would arrange for me to stay with one of them whenever I wrote that I could come to the city again. Perhaps I will be able to make another visit because of the Hartungs.

Late Saturday afternoon Ruth and I returned to the Schmidt-Rottloffs. This time I was expected and a very large stack of watercolors was in the room for me to see. The work was recent, 43 thru 46, full of good color, shapes and design. It was the mature, finished work of a successful German painter who was one of the leaders of German impressionism 25 years ago. There were two watercolors in the entire bunch which would have liked to own, but none of the work was for sale. He showed me a few wood carvings of figures in relief and a few bronzes made in his early days. This work is, perhaps, the best known outside of Germany. The period when he was interested in African negroid sculpture as were most of the early experimenters in Europe before and after the first War. These few bronzes were just about all he salvaged from the cellar of his bombed out Berlin home.

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