



**FRANZ MARC AND AUGUST MACKE,
1909–1914**



PREFACE

This exhibition is devoted to two artists who shared ideas about art, and in the process helped create the movement known as Expressionism in early twentieth-century Germany. But it is really about the power of friendship.

Franz Marc and August Macke met as young artists in Munich in 1910. In the four years prior to Macke's untimely death in 1914 (Marc himself died in 1916), they wrote each other scores of letters, visited each other's homes, traveled together, and often discussed the development of their work. What grew out of this friendship were paintings and drawings of tremendous power, works that had the ability to challenge the primacy of French art in breaking boundaries and setting new directions. Seen side by side, the works seem to speak to each other, continuing this conversation even into the present day.

I first came across an exhibition devoted to these two artists at the Kunstmuseum Bonn in 2014, a show that traveled to the Lenbachhaus in Munich. It was very moving to think about these artists, whose work I had long admired and collected, and to understand them as two young men finding their way in the world.

I thought about the founding of the Neue Galerie New York, and how it had developed as a result of my friendship with the art dealer and curator Serge Sabarsky. What began as a series of freewheeling conversations about life and art eventually took root, and over the course of several years, the museum took shape.

So, in its own way, this exhibition is another form of tribute to my late friend Serge. It is also an opportunity to give wider exposure to two important German artists. Marc has received some acclaim, in particular for his images of animals, while Macke is barely known in this country, but both made important contributions to the art of their time.

I wish to thank Vivian Endicott Barnett, noted Kandinsky and Blaue Reiter scholar, for her great work in assembling this exhibition, as well as editing and contributing to the present scholarly publication. She did a wonderful job in curating the "Alexei Jawlensky" exhibition for the Neue Galerie in 2017, and has brought the same energy and intelligence to bear on the current project. Exhibition designer Peter de Kimpe, a frequent Neue Galerie collaborator, created the perfect backdrop for seeing the intensely colored paintings of Marc and Macke in a new light.

I also want to thank the staff of the Neue Galerie, led by director Renée Price, for realizing this stunning exhibition and catalogue. It is projects like these that make me so proud to have created the Neue Galerie, and so optimistic regarding its future.

RONALD S. LAUDER

President, Neue Galerie New York

Franz Marc, *The First Animals*, 1913, gouache and pencil on paper. Private Collection



ISABELLE JANSEN

“The Three Gentlemen Are Painters, and Cézanne Is Their God”: Marc, Macke, and French Art

On January 6, 1910, August Macke and his cousin Helmuth Macke—who was also a painter and who was visiting the Mackes in Tegernsee—and the son of the collector Bernhard Koehler noticed several lithographs of animals by Franz Marc at the Kunsthandlung Brakl in Munich [Cat. nos. 3, 4]. All three were enthusiastic about Marc's works, asked for the artist's address, and visited him in his studio on Schellingstrasse in the Munich neighborhood of Schwabing. In the letter that Marc wrote that same day to his life partner, Maria Franck, who was staying with her parents in Berlin, he described the visit as follows:

Now I must describe for you an experience that happened today which I believe promises to lead to some nice opportunities. There is a knock. Standing at the door are three very young and rather elegant gentlemen. They ask for me. They have seen two lithographs at Brakl (“under the table”), the horses and the bathing women, about which they are so enthusiastic that they want to meet me. [. . .] The three gentlemen are painters, and Cézanne is their God. And the father of one of them has a famous collection of Van Gogh, Cézanne, Maillol, etc. The three of them convey the impression of being more than just well-to-do. They have seen everything. I do not know their critical faculty very well yet. In any case, paintings cannot be bright and colorful enough for them. My sculptures pleased them almost more than anything. At the moment they are living in Tegernsee, and they urgently invite me to visit. *One* of them (not the son of the collector) himself owns a Maillol sculpture, Cézanne lithographs, etc. In any case, I will go out there sometime, with you—I spoke of you and your interest in these things. They know Paris, of course, and the collections there very well; one of them, Herr Macke is from Bonn. Perhaps I will find a circle of intelligent painters here. . . .¹

Helmuth Macke reported on the same event:

We came through a gateway into a dark courtyard, whose unwelcoming appearance was brightened by the existence of a large doghouse with a white Siberian sheepdog in front of it. After a brief wait, the doors opened, filled with a slender, broad-shouldered person, who bowed slightly to us and peered out at us from dark, serious eyes. My cousin explained briefly and quietly laughing, as was his way, the occasion for our visit and that we were from the Rhineland. A sonorous, friendly voice with a slight Bavarian accent responded in a likewise friendly way and asked us to step through the entryway, which was dark and filled with

¹
Franz Marc, *Cats on a Red Cloth*, 1909–10.
Deutsche Bank Collection. Photo: akg-images



simplified, stylized forms and a bold, symbolic use of colors in *Grazing Horses IV (The Red Horses)*. Its horses, now reduced to a group of three, are connected to one another and to the waves of the colorful landscape by means of a structure of parallel oscillations with which Marc increasingly sought to depict the “organic rhythm of all things.” This expression is a quotation from his famous first text on art theory, the essay “Über das Tier in der Kunst” (On the Animal in Art), which Marc wrote in 1910 for the eponymous book by the Munich publisher Reinhard Piper. He writes, “I am trying to heighten my sense of the organic rhythm of all things, trying to empathize pantheistically with the shivering and coagulating of blood in nature, in trees, in animals, in the air. . . . I see no happier means to the *animalization* of art than the animal painting.”⁷ In his late work it would become even clearer that by the term “animalization” Marc meant, to put it simply, an animation in art that was intended to depict the abstract forces in nature.

The hierarchical group of three in *The Red Horses* ultimately recalls, with its sacred effect, a triptych, a medieval altarpiece, and suggests the art historical concept of the triptych as a pathos formula. It can be mentioned only in passing here that with the central figure of the horse seen from behind and turned toward the landscape, Marc was taking a motif for desire found in the figurative painting of Romanticism and German idealism from Caspar David Friedrich to Anselm Feuerbach and applying it to the animal painting.⁸ The important thing to note is that Marc uses this increasingly anthropomorphic view of the animal to invite the view to identify with the creature in a way unprecedented in animal painting.

On January 6, 1910, Marc and Macke met for the first time; this would lead to one of the most fruitful friendships between artists in the twentieth century and would represent for Marc

a crucial step out of his artistic isolation. The previous autumn, Macke, who was just twenty-two at the time, and his even younger wife, Elisabeth, had moved from Bonn to Tegernsee for a year in order to work undisturbed there. This carefree sojourn on one of Bavaria's most beautiful lakes was made possible by financial support from Elisabeth's family, in particular from her uncle Bernhard Koehler, a wealthy manufacturer in Berlin, who built up a prominent collection of art and soon become one of the most important patrons not just for Macke but also for Marc. He purchased several works from Marc already at the latter's first solo exhibition at the Galerie Brakl in Munich in February 1910; an agreement with the collector made several months later considerably improved the artist's financial situation, enabling him to work independently in Sindelsdorf.⁹

More decisive than this, however, were the artistic impulses that Marc got from Macke. In particular, he admired the latter's ability to translate the sensory impression into a homogeneous entity, generously summarizing planar painting. Marc was thus able to assimilate in an autonomous way the experiences of the more recent French avant-garde around Henri Matisse and Paul Cézanne as well as his own more immediate approach to color. No other artist of German Expressionism wrestled in such a reflective, almost fussy way with employing pure, unmixed colors. Marc's encounter with Macke led to a turning point in his work. Especially in the winter of 1910–11, when Macke had already withdrawn to Bonn, Marc had intense discussions with his young friend concerning the theory of color and described to him in detail the process and the paths that had brought him to the coloration of, for example, his *Nudes on Vermilion-Sketch* and *Grazing Horses IV (The Red Horses)* [Cat. no. 15 and Fig. 4] of February 1911.¹⁰



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Franz Marc, *Grazing Horses IV (The Red Horses)*
1911, oil on canvas. Harvard Art Museums/
Busch-Reisinger Museum. Bequest in memory of
Paul E. and Gabriele B. Geier, 2014.301. Photo:
Imaging Department © President and Fellows of
Harvard College



1 Franz Marc, WILD RABBIT, 1909



2 Franz Marc, SIBERIAN SHEEPDOGS, 1909



16 August Macke, WHITE JUG WITH FLOWERS AND FRUITS, 1910



17 August Macke, WOMAN PLAYING THE LUTE, 1910



24 August Macke, LITTLE WALTER'S TOYS, 1912



25 August Macke, IN THE GARDEN: ELISABETH, LITTLE WALTER AND WOLF, 1911



32 Paul Klee, IN THE RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT, 1912



33 Paul Klee, YELLOW HOUSE, 1915



63 August Macke, TERRACE OF A COUNTRY HOUSE IN ST. GERMAIN, 1914



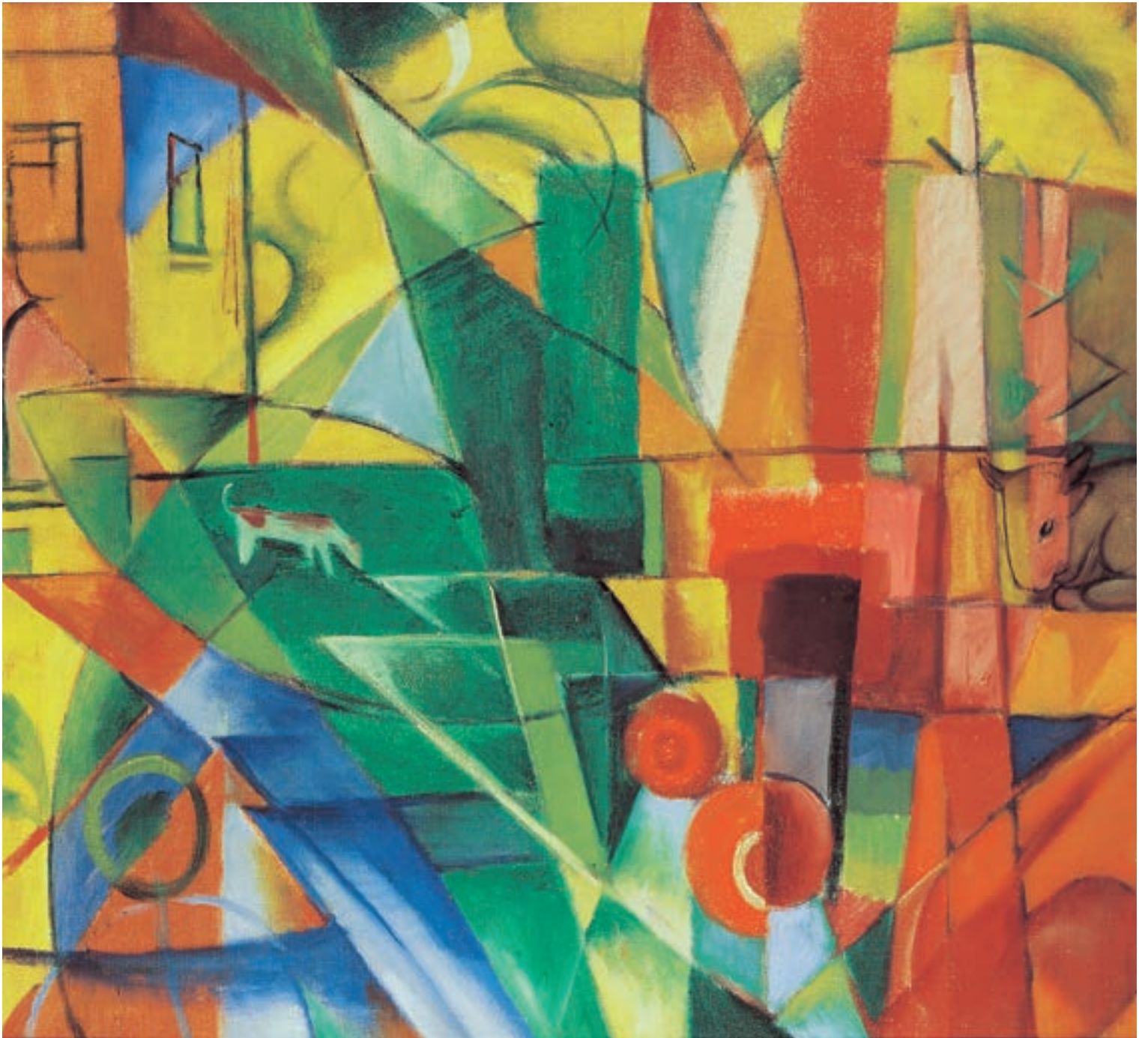
64 August Macke, VIEW OF THE MOUNTAINS (TUNIS), 1914



65 August Macke, DONKEY RIDER, 1914



72 August Macke, LANDSCAPE WITH COWS, SAIL BOAT, AND FIGURES, 1914



73 Franz Marc, LANDSCAPE WITH HOUSE AND TWO COWS, 1914