

## Short Biography of Kurt Schwitters

### 1887

On June 20 Kurt Schwitters is born in Hanover.

### 1908/1909

He studies two terms at the School of Arts and Crafts in Hannover.

### 1909-1915

Enrols at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden, studies painting with Carl Bantzer, Gotthardt Kuehl, Emmanuel Hegenbarth and attends lectures on literature given by Oskar Walzel.

### 1911

Exhibits for the first time in the August exhibition organized by the Kunstverein Hannover.

### 1913

Takes part in the "81. Große Kunstausstellung", organized by the Kunstverein Hannover.

### 1915

Marries Helma Fischer and settles in Waldhausenstrasse 5 in Hanover.

### 1915/16

Stays several weeks at Opherdicke in Westphalia.

### 1917

Military Service. Begins to turn away from figurative painting towards an expressionistic cubist style.

### 1917/1918

Studies architecture for two terms in Hanover.

### 1918

Exhibits at the Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin for the first time. Meets Hans Arp, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch. Birth of his son Ernst.

### 1919

Publishes his poem *An Anna Blume*, as well as numerous other poems, prose writings, polemic articles and ideas in the magazine *Der Sturm*, Berlin. Produces the assemblage *Das Merzbild* and exhibits at the Galerie Der Sturm. In the years to follow he participates regularly in the avant-garde exhibitions in the Galerie Der Sturm.

### 1920

His work is shown in the "Société Anonyme" in New York for the first time. Works on the Merz sculptures, which later become part of the *Merzbau*.

### 1921

Gives his first public performances in Dresden, Erfurt, Weimar, Leipzig and Jena. Travels to Prague on a lecture tour with his wife Helma, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch.

### 1922

Attends the International Congress of Constructivists and Dadaists in Weimar. First publication of his poem *i (ein Manifest)*.

### 1923

"Dada Tour" in Holland with Theo and Nelly van Doesburg and Vilmos Huszár. First issue of the Merz magazine. Begins to work on the construction of the *Merzbau* in his house in the Waldhausenstrasse 5 in Hannover, on which he continues to work for the next fourteen years.

### 1924

Sets up his own advertising agency, the "Merz Werbezentrale".

### 1925

Publication of the "scherzo" of the sound poem, *Ursonate*, on a record. First public performance of the *Ursonate* in Potsdam.

**1926**

One man exhibition in Prague.

**1927**

Touring exhibition "Grosse Merzausstellung". The group "die abstrakten hannover" is founded. Founding member of the Ring "neue werbegealter".

**1929**

Becomes the official typographer for the city of Hannover. First visit to Norway. For the next years, Schwitters returns regularly for a few months a year. Represented in the exhibition "Abstrakte und surrealistische Malerei und Plastik" at the Kunsthhaus Zürich.

**1930**

Exhibits with the group "Cercle et Carré" in Paris.

**1932**

Publishes in the magazine of the group "Abstraction-Création" in Paris. The 24th and last issue of the Merz magazine contains the complete sound poem *Ursonate*. Joins the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

**1934**

Spends the summer months in Norway, rents a stone hut on the island of Hjertøya.

**1935/1937**

Works are confiscated from German museums and four are included in the exhibition "Degenerate Art" which tours Germany.

**1936**

His work is included in both the "Cubism and Abstract Art" and "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

**1937**

Final emigration to Norway, settles down with his son in Lysaker near Oslo. Begins to work on the second Merzbau, the *Haus am Bakken*, in Norway which is destroyed by fire in 1951.

**1938**

Takes part in the "Exhibition of Twentieth Century German Art" at the New Burlington Galleries in London.

**1939**

Sees his wife Helma for the last time.

**1940**

When the Germans invade Norway, Schwitters escapes with his son and daughter in law Esther to Great Britain, where he is interned for the next 17 months, mainly at the camp in Douglas on the Isle of Man.

**1941**

He is released and goes to live with his son in London. Meets Edith Thomas, nicknamed Wantee.

**1943**

The *Merzbau* in Hannover is destroyed in an air-raid.

**1944**

He is half paralysed by a heart attack. Helma Schwitters dies in Hannover. One man exhibition at the Modern Art Gallery in London.

**1945**

His son returns to Norway, and Schwitters moves with Edith Thomas to Ambleside in the Lake District.

**1946**

Suffers from a stroke and breaks his tigh.

**1947**

Starts another Merzbau, which he calls *Merz Barn*, at Elterwater, supported by a scholarship from the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Suffers from a respiratory deficiency and an attack of haemoptysis.

**1948**

Dies on January 8 in Kendal and is buried at Ambleside.

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