

Circumstances of the discovery of the works and analysis by P. Polar
(2008 and regularly indexed or completed)

This report concerns the study of the works of "Karl Waldmann", and we give a brief account of the elements in our possession:

- discovery of about 1,000 works signed "KW" in the autumn of 1989, some (about 20) bearing the full signature "Karl Waldmann", undated, in the region of Dresden in former East Germany,
- our research has not yet enabled us to identify the artist in a precise manner (date of birth, where he lived, family relations etc.). This research has proved to be very arduous, as several pieces are missing from the puzzle and basic information is very vague. It is rather like searching for a needle in a haystack.

The works were discovered in Dresden in 1989, all together, in a single lot. To this day, no other work has been "discovered" or identified outside this lot.

We set off from one certainty, one of the only ones we have: the discovery of about 1,200 works signed "KW" in Dresden in November, 1989, at the time of the fall of the wall of Berlin.

Let us briefly recall the circumstances of this discovery narrated by the journalist-discoverer :

A French journalist (his name can be given to the reader if he contacts the museum by e-mail) was present at the fall of the wall of Berlin and in the days that followed. A so-called "Polish" market (cf. text on East European migration PDF) appeared in Berlin where people from the East (Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, East German) came to sell various items (watches, communist emblems, porcelain, military equipment etc.) to make some money. It was the first time they had been given this opportunity since 1945. One of the dealers was selling, among a multitude of objects, "Constructivist" porcelain and two works on paper by KW. The journalist, not motivated by any commercial interest, but a chance interest in an object which had caught his eye, asked him if he had any more. That evening, he was taken by the dealer to the suburbs of Dresden, to an apartment with piles of porcelain, German Expressionist paintings of quality but without any recognizable signatures, and, in a corner, cardboard boxes full of works on paper by KW. "Who is he?" asked the journalist. "Aah ! Der Verrückte (the madman)," exclaimed the dealer. He said that he was a distant cousin who had left a long time ago with his Russian wife, and that they disappeared, without any further details. He attached no importance to these "cards", but rather to selling his porcelain and other objects, more attractive commercially from his point of view.

Given the difficulty of passing the borders, an appointment was made later on between the dealer and the journalist, who took away all the boxes containing the KW works.

This journalist curated an exhibition in 1990 titled "Berlin-Berlin" in partnership with the French Ministry of Culture, it lasted three weeks and took place in AUBETTE in Strasbourg. In the exhibition were showed paintings from the two Germanies (East and West) including works from K. Waldmann.

Before the year 2000, the journalist contacted the Dudoignon art-gallery in Paris, specializing in photography. Mr. Dudoignon exhibited KW collages twice in Paris Photos (2000 and 2001) and an exhibition was held in an Italian art-gallery (Galleria Carla Sozzani, Milan) with Mr. Dudoignon acting as intermediary.

In 2001 In Brussels Pascal Polar told the journalist he will show him some of KW works. It was the very first time that Mr. Polar came into contact with Waldmann's work. He quickly noticed the political content of the works and asked to see more, not knowing at the time that there were 1,200 in the journalist's possession. A relationship of trust developed between the journalist and Mr. Pascal Polar who, through his training as a researcher in Physical Science, was keen to undertake research on the artist and comparisons between the various works.

The works were transferred to the Karl Waldmann Museum which was set up with the aim of studying the works and conserving them. They were authenticated by the Museum and stamped for the purpose of authentication. The Waldmann Museum is a virtual museum, a kind of descriptive catalogue, which places at the disposal of the public, researchers and historians, all the information they require and contact

with the works held by the museum.

Our study began with research on the first elements in our possession (the works), but also on the man himself. Our initial intuitive approach was to contact the authorities in Dresden (museum, commune, archives, library etc.). I remind the reader that, at many levels, the archives are not complete and that many items of information are missing in other fields or for other individuals, who are nevertheless known (like a Kurt Waldmann, talked about by the philosopher Klemperer in his memoirs). Given that this initial research, carried out very quickly, had produced no results, a question came to mind and was, in fact, asked by third-parties: were we not dealing with a set of works "fabricated" in retrospect, for financial gain? This way of looking at things *a contrario* seemed interesting, precisely in order to undertake a study of the work and also, afterwards, without any bias, to abandon it, given the falsity of its premise, which proved unfounded after a study of the basic material: the works themselves.

In the absence of determining truths, our scientific expertise was thus carried out on the basis of probability, as is the case in exact science. And to guide us in this approach, we adopted an antithesis as a basis, to which we would no longer subscribe in the future.

The antithesis that we proposed for authentication was as follows: we are dealing with a "fabrication" of works inspired by Constructivism by an unknown person, not motivated by any desire for (artistic) creation, at a time preceding the fall of the wall. We demonstrated that this thesis is invalid, at several levels and degrees of comprehension.

The motivation of a "counterfeiter" can only be for financial gain, that is common sense. Historically, it will be recalled that, in 1989, no-one foresaw the fall of the wall, nor the possibility of commerce being opened up between East and West. The only easy possibility for such commerce is for the borders to be opened. The counterfeiter must thus have prepared his "coup" and have been aware of this political event, which is highly improbable.

Furthermore, the very large number of works, which simply have to be seen for the viewer to recognize a long period of production, negates this possibility.

The number was thus a decisive factor in our feeling, our intuition, that we were dealing with a real artist (by comparison, K. Schwitters produced about 2,000 collages throughout his entire artistic career (cf. Dr. Karin Orchard, Kurt Schwitters Archiv, Sprengel Museum, Hannover). We can go back in time, from November 1989 (the certain date of the discovery), and imagine the time it would take to produce such a quantity of works, which require materials so diverse that its realization is only possible over several dozen years, especially as the works are full of significance and meaning.

A financial motive could not exist either, as no significant financial transaction took place between the seller, a cousin of the artist (his family tie has not been established in any certain manner), and the buyer, the journalist whose acquisition was impromptu and "on an impulse".

It is evident that the notion of "counterfeit" does not make sense, and is even dishonest on the part of anyone using it in connection with the works signed "KW", as there is no appropriation of the signature of a celebrity in the art world (K. Schwitters, Haussmann, Rodchenko etc...) and there is no value that could become the subject of lucrative business! In 1989, there was no (or very little) interest in Constructivism, and works belonging to this trend had no real monetary value.

If we address the work from the angle "in the manner of", not only did the motive of financial gain not exist in 1989, but this would be a rapid, fortuitous, and even malicious judgement, as the works are, precisely, not "in the manner of" anyone else. A simple iconographic study, based on a review of 1,200 works by KW, and preceded by in-depth knowledge of the History of Art (1915-1960), both in Germany and the East, shows that the works could not be identified as being by any known artist. While the subjects addressed (politics, cinema etc.), the technique employed (ie. photomontage), the icons used (monkeys, babies, boxers etc.), and the iconographic aspects (red line, colours etc.) are very common in this period, and the artist is therefore truly of his era and influenced by the trends of the time, he is nevertheless no less original due to his manner of "gluing", his combination of the use of newspapers or

photos and gouache, his character, more political and even more anarchistic than that of others, his highlighting of "women", which is certainly one of his characteristics; the work in its entirety has its own undeniable identity. One can also refer to the analysis of [Mr. JP Cazier](#), who sets forth the notion of the artist's reappropriation of "signs" (sickle, swastika, drum, flag, quotations) to denounce political regimes. No collagistes, either Russian (often sympathizers with the communist regime) or German (of whom Heartfield is the best-known in the political field), have followed this path, while certainly being propagandists and denouncers, but in the manner of political "demonstration".

I take this opportunity to note that, at this point in the expertise, due to the lack of verified dates, no-one can claim to have identified the totality of the work of KW. The fact that 1,200 works were found in a single place could lead one to suppose that we are dealing with a specific period in the artist's life.

Several hypotheses were available to us regarding the artist's identity: 1) either he was indeed called KW, 2) or it was a pseudonym, 3) or a name attributed by a third party on his own initiative (no stone must be left unturned, even though the "cousin" referred to "Karl Waldmann" with regard to the works contained in the cardboard boxes).

In the first hypothesis, we came up against his place of residence, as no research in the Dresden archives has allowed us to identify a KW who would correspond to him (we should point out that not everything has been done in this field, nor in a more extensive region than that of Dresden). No-one, however, has confirmed that he was born in this city. Knowing that the writing, sensitivity and newspapers of Ukrainian and Russian origin are to be found in numerous works, they could very well have come from elsewhere, and been taken to Dresden by the seller.

So maybe he came from somewhere else: the German part of Poland, for example, or he was an immigrant in Ukraine. An enormous amount still remains to be done in this field, and in the archives of different places, before throwing in the towel.

But how does one then explain the discovery of the works in Dresden? It cannot be denied that KW had some relationship with this town, its region, influence, political and esthetic roles, without, however, explaining the presence of the works in this place. There is no certainty that he was from Dresden, even though several works clearly make allusions to it in their content or material. It is also evident, on reading their content, that they represented huge potential danger for their creator, living under a communist regime.

We can assert that they were created by the same individual, thanks to observation of the works which are of very great artistic unity. They all rely on the same "mastery" of cutting, and an identical conception of the use of space. For the time being, nothing allows us to assert scientifically that we are dealing with the entirety of the artist's production. It would seem to have extended from the pre-war years to around 1958. In fact, following analysis of all the documents contained in the works, none was produced after 1958. There was also a single canvas (inventory n° [0136](#)), of which we have a photo, but which was accidentally destroyed after the discovery, and whose masterfulness allows us to suppose that it was not the artist's first and only canvas, but was the result of evolution in canvases that preceded it, of which, however, we have no trace or knowledge. Other works by KW could thus exist, unknown because they have been destroyed or not yet discovered.

According to the second hypothesis, it goes without saying that if the artist used a pseudonym, research on the artist's identity becomes extremely difficult as we are cruelly lacking in a point of departure from which to advance: the "name" itself being the line of all research in such a daunting case.

As for the third hypothesis, the existence of a great number of unsigned artworks in Dresden at a given time prior to 1989, signed by a third party after the artist's death, is not to be excluded either, and certainly does not detract from the undeniable quality of the work, recognized by all. This hypothesis of works signed posthumously is, however, highly unlikely. We base this assertion on the graphological study of all the signatures on the works, which show an evolution, different moods, different tools, and specific characteristics such as signatures on the back, to the right, left etc., and thus without any systematization.

It should also be noted, as regards hypotheses, that those suggesting KW may have been a woman, or an artist recognized in a particular genre other than this one, and that he could have produced this work without showing it for political and security reasons, have not been excluded.

It is important to draw the reader's attention to the fact that many "artists", mostly in the East, in this period from 1933 to 1989, did not sign or date their works for reasons of personal safety. And even without pointing this out, the History of Art is punctuated with important works whose authors' identities remain unknown. One example among hundreds of others is that of Agueev, to whom KW alludes in the work [0665](#). We hardly know anything about the Russian author of "Novel with Cocaine". His biography is written in the conditional: he would seem to have left Russia after the October Revolution in 1917, may have been seen in Germany, then in Turkey, from where he sent his manuscript to Paris, which was initially published in the review "Nombres", an organ of the first wave of emigrants to Paris, in 1934. People played the guessing game, hastened to attribute the novel to a secret agent, a certain Mark Levi, and even Vladimir Nabokov. Then all trace of him was finally lost, in 1934, the date on which the review "Rencontres" published his short story entitled "Un Sale Peuple"; a few inquiries were held later on, but nothing further was ever heard of him. His biography was strangely similar for its non-existent content to that of Waldmann, until the recent confirmation (10 years ago) that the author was indeed Mark Levi.

One can also cite the cases of writer Sigismund Dominikovitch Krzyzanowski and artist Ladislav Kroha, among many others. (the mysterious artists: Nous connaissons leurs œuvres mais en savons peu sur leur vie : Madame Beccari (Philosopher), Martinus Gallus (Historian), Laurens Van Kuik (Artist), L'Astronome (Auteur) , John Webster (Playwright), Homère (Writer), Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (Composer), Charles Dellschau (Artist), Banksy (Street artist), Anna Kagan (Artist), Fulcanelli (Writer), Sigismund D. Krzyzanowski (Writer), Shakespeare (Playwright), Thomas Kyd (Playwright), Venus de Milo'sculptor(s), Wieniawski, Henryk (Composer).

The Czech artist-photographer Miroslav Tichy, born in 1926 and living with very few resources, was only discovered by the public in 2004 at the Biennial of Seville, presented by curator Harald Szeemann. Without him, his work may very well never have been known, as the artist burnt his photos in particular, to keep himself warm, and had had a radical desire to remain outside society since 1948. Like Waldmann, perhaps, he perfectly embodies the outsider and underground artist. (Recently discovered artists : Their Works has been discovered after their death or vanishing or at the end of their life: Henry Darger (Artist), Philadelphia Wireman, Viviane Maier (Photographer).

All these questions which have never received sure answers do not, however, take us away from our expertise which cannot, at the moment, be brought to a close on the sole basis of a name, identity or date. Let us explore the content of the works, at semantic level, as well as that of the materials used.

A semantic analysis is fundamental for a thorough expertise and seems to us to be the only one currently possible. One cannot get bogged down by intellectual laziness which would attest to the existence of an artist on the sole basis of an existing bibliography, legal or administrative traces, but would not address real questions beyond "what is written". We will set forth observations which will throw light on our previous hypotheses or counter-hypotheses.

In the process of studying the works, we observed that they have a strong political significance in the broadest sense of the term. It is not a matter of making something "nice" nor of Constructivism "in the manner of...". Though they reveal, denounce, talk about precise and sometimes insignificant historic facts (a few examples off the cuff: works [0246](#), [0281](#), [0897](#), [0470](#), [0757](#), [1056](#)). They do not only illustrate general themes such as the Shoah, war, fascism, Hitler (sources of inspiration within everyone's reach a few years after they happened), but also highlight very precise facts, which did not have much importance at the time they occurred, and were forgotten almost immediately, except perhaps by a few very thorough historians.

This gives credibility to the thesis that the works were perhaps produced around the same time as the events themselves, or at most a few years later. While no dates were given at the same time as the signatures, there are nonetheless dating factors which are perfectly clear in the works themselves, through the presence of a figure corresponding to the events illustrated by the work (ex: [0501](#), [0779](#)). On the back of certain works, there are also figures or annotations such as "Angel 42" (0509) in pencil, which add nothing to the work unless it is its title, and a link with other works in which the world "Angel" reappears.

This confers coherent significance, preoccupation with a given theme, as here, with reference to the angels of the Kabbalah.

Throughout the 1,200 works, there are also "series" (either by theme, or by support), easily recognizable, attesting to a desire for creation and, above all, a kind of temporality which constitutes an artistic process ([0200](#), [0259](#), [0360](#), [0870](#), [0100](#), [0328](#), [0002](#), [0704](#), [0378](#), [1002](#), [0751](#) etc.).

Several works in which swastikas appear frontally demonstrate the non-commercial aspect of the works (like those in which emaciated Jews appear) and make them difficult to sell ([0376](#), [0377](#), [0378](#), [0379](#), [0381](#), [0420](#), [0007](#), [0121](#) etc.). It is obvious that the "swastika" took on a painful and even unbearable connotation after the war and that its graphic use alone, if it is not for partisans of the order it represents, implies a reaction, meaning, as well as danger. On the one hand, it would be ridiculous to use it to produce appealing and saleable Constructivism (here again, the thesis of "later fabrication" makes no sense); on the other hand, it implies recognition of the danger faced by the artist, even if its use is critical with regard to Nazism, in an East Germany which does not go into details nor subtle interrogation. Especially as KW's critique of Nazism is not like Communist anti-Nazi propaganda, but subtle, veiled, suggestive, metaphorical and necessarily incomprehensible for an agent of the Stasi, who would only see a dangerous neo-Nazi agitator behind the work, simply through the regime's iconic emblem (ex: [0596](#), [1055](#), [0818](#) etc.).

The backs of the works also show KW's maniac-like obsession: on the backs of several works, one finds annotations, other collages, precisions regarding what the work reveals on the front ([0303](#), [0393](#), [0439](#), [0799](#), [0480](#), [0551](#), etc.). It also seems evident to us that a man with no desire for creation would not bother with the back, his sole aim being to produce a "fine" commercial piece of work. On the contrary, this particular aspect reveals a facet of the personality of KW who, precise and meticulous, will not produce a collage without any "meaning". It is precisely this semantic analysis of the works that demonstrates both the truthfulness of the work and its authenticity.

And undoubtedly at a later point its beauty, as we do not believe in empty beauty but in a match between "truth" and "beauty", though this is a subjective appraisal that is not part of our expertise.

The diversity of the materials used to produce the collages is quite substantial. They are not solely newspapers (Italian, Russian, German, and from various towns in Ukraine, France, Austria, America etc.), but also photos, postcards, postmarks, stamps, bank shares, technical handbooks, magazines on ethnography and the cinema, propaganda and other documents, sometimes rare. He used, for example, a postcard of the village where Hitler was born, and the postmark is the anniversary of Hitler's birth (April 20th, 1938, work [0380](#)). I would point out that this postcard alone is already worth quite a lot of money on the market for collectors of old documents, today as it was 20 years ago. There are thus better things to do than produce a "fabricated" work: I am here addressing those who subscribe to the thesis of fabrication. The diversity of these documents is so vast and their use so precise in terms of meaning, that only "the Genius of Laplace" could reunite them and keep them all together in a cellar for the purpose of producing the unthinkable: a total, evolutive, complete work of art, raising questions, making sense, a finality in itself, a testimonial to creative ideas, a rebellion, a silent scream in the abysses of the "extinction" orchestrated by totalitarian States. Several of these documents became rare after the 1950's. It seems clear to us that these ones were gradually collected, during years of creative activity, selected to convey the message that the work was intended to deliver. Owning old materials and sticking them together with gum Arabic could be done today, but that would not take the diversity, meaning and unity into account. We should mention here that there is no document in these works published after 1958: the production of 1,200 collages "at a later point" would inevitably give rise to errors or blunders regarding the date of the materials used, yet this is not the case. We continue to insist on a semantic analysis because we also know that the age of the materials is not an argument per se and that, although they and the supports are old, contemporary elements (dating from 1989 onwards) were unfortunately used rather carelessly by the discoverer to "preserve" the works (fixative, lacquer, glue etc.) before entrusting them to us in the year 2002. A chemical expertise, especially that for glue, has been polluted in the case of certain works by this unfortunate undertaking, external to us, and post-1989. This type of expertise should be performed not on a single work, but on several, but would not teach us anything certain, especially as several works were most probably produced between 1945 and 1958, given their content. Nevertheless, an expertise of the spectral type, which would combine elements on different materials, could reveal the

following periods: creations dating back to the 30's or 40's (to be tried on certain works without pre-judging the result), the 50's (definitely, as it is clearly visible to the naked eye.

in 2015, an analysis carried out on three artworks by [the PTS laboratory of Munich](#), showed that the works were done prior 1958 and did not have any synthetic component existing before 1958.

Our opinion is that the work of KW is enthralling and will remain so, I might almost say, regardless of its date of production. But I then add that the stupid and ridiculous thesis of a counterfeit artist, a sort of fictional artist, within the paradigm of contemporary art, is to be totally ruled out.

Conclusion

The work towards comprehension of these works is far from complete, especially as they seem to us to resemble a Rebus puzzle from which one has to extract the story and which will then confirm the meaning of the work.

Since the launch of the website, publication of books, several exhibitions (at art fairs in Paris, Brussels, Cologne, the Museums of Salzburg, St Gallen, the Museum of Dr Guislain in Ghent, the Kunsthal in Rotterdam, the MAC Museum in Le Grand Hornu, the Espace d'Art Concret in France etc...), a great number of articles in the press (including publication in May 2005 by Le Monde Diplomatique of a sort of "lost from sight" article with reproduction of about ten of the works in all its French and foreign editions), together with research in various archives, nothing has been discovered about the man and his life. The enigma thus remains intact, and the hypothesis that seems to us to be the most realistic is that KW was not an "artist" under a declared social regime, with a desire to exist as an artist, with all that this implies with regard to the Ego, his evaluation, his situation "within the world", his acceptance of the "world" as an active and dissenting artist, marginalized or not. The result is that we have found no trace of him nor any exhibition with him as an "artist".

We think today, a posteriori, that he lived within a total and radical "fringe", though we do not know whether it was thought out or how it was lived. Whatever this desire and no matter the way we see it, we can establish a link between the truth of an artistic creation and the truth of a life. He would have produced this work for himself, while maybe pursuing another activity. Referring, for example, to medicine, architecture, the cinema and literature, the richness of his work could suggest that he actively pursued one of these disciplines, though we think he was first and foremost surrounded by paper, books, publications, that he could obtain very freely. His presence in a publishing house, a printworks, or a library, would seem realistic, and our research is heading in this direction.

A recent lead (2015) has indicated the existence of a cameraman working for German newsreels by the name of Karl Waldmann, which has a definite link with the works. In fact, there is an abundance of references and objects or their representations relating to the cinema in the work of KW. Furthermore, this cameraman worked in all the Eastern countries during the war, and in direct contact, as part of this organ of propaganda, with the international press, and with documents easily accessible to him, free of charge. It would still be unscientific, even in the conditional, to write that "KW could have been a cameraman", as a great deal of information, difficult to obtain, will have to be cross-checked. Research is, however, underway, and this is a serious lead. Given this new hypothesis, a second analysis has been made of the works relating to the cinema, and this has given rise to very interesting discoveries about the meaning of certain works which had, until now, escaped us.

In 1989, KW was not rediscovered, but discovered. Much remains to be done to encompass the work in its entirety and depth, to compile a biography of the man and pursue research on his identity, as not everything has been covered in this field.

The enigma surrounding him has not prevented [numerous collectors](#) or players on the art market (galleries, auction-house directors, curators...) throughout the world from acquiring his works since they emerged as from the year 2000.

Despite this interest, there are still people from the art market who have done no research work on KW, have seen none of the works (except for reproductions), have never held an unframed work by KW in their hands, who make defamatory statements. These people have sometimes succeeded in manipulating journalists who, they neither, have never seen any of the works, and even if they did, are only interested

in anecdotes or sensationalism, exactly as for Miroslav Tichy (one hears about his old camera, his shabby clothes, the unfolding of his career in the media which he despised, anything but his photography, his beauty, his place in history, his radical approach which produced hundreds of photographs, unsigned, undated, made for him alone and his enjoyment of "egocentric" creation, in Nietzsche's sense).

"Wenn wir über das Kunstwerk den Künstler vergessen können, damit ist dieser am feinsten gelobt."

"An artist is only then truly praised by us when we forget him in his work."

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729 - 1781), German writer, Enlightenment philosopher.

This quotation is to be found in a work by KW (N° [0646](#))

Nudelholz Simone (Lawyer): I do not know who wrote that Shakespeare never existed but that his plays and poems have been written by a writer of genius who was also called William Shakespeare.

Waldmann's work exists and is impressive