

JEANNE MAMMEN EXHIBITION
IN THE GATEHOUSE OF THE
GREEN HEALTH CAMPUS
BERLIN-BUCH

CAMPUSart 



**JEANNE MAMMEN EXHIBITION
IN THE GATEHOUSE OF THE
GREEN HEALTH CAMPUS
BERLIN-BUCH**



Contents

Why art on campus?	5
The friendship between Max Delbrück and Jeanne Mammen	6
Who was Jeanne Mammen?	7
Phases of an artist's life	8
■ Early cubist influences	8
■ Early sculptures	10
■ Anonymous portraits	12
■ The tyranny of National Socialism	14
■ Later sculptures	16
■ Sculptural phase	18
■ Graphic phase	19
■ Abstract representations of nature	22
■ Late works: Cipher images	24
■ Late Works: Collages	26
Closing remarks	28
References	29
Imprint	30

Why art on campus?

The Health region Berlin-Buch lies to the northeast of the German capital. It has been known for its clinics, biotechnology companies and research institutes for over a century. Today the Campus Berlin-Buch is mostly known for its largest research institute, the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the Helmholtz Association. Less known are the artworks on the site. This brochure aims to provide a glimpse into this lesser known, but no less impressive part of the campus.

Visitors approaching from the Karower Chaussee will first notice a distinctive gatehouse, which was completed in 1916 and originally intended to host the entry and administrative offices of the central cemetery of the village of Buch-Karow. Instead of a cemetery, however, the grounds served as a campus for clinics and research and the gatehouse was used for other purposes. The upper floor was converted into apartments for visiting scientists. The left side of the ground floor hosts "Café Max", named for the biologist and physicist Max Delbrück, a name also borne by the campus' largest research center. Delbrück's groundbreaking work in genetics led to a Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1969. The right side of the gatehouse hosts the world's largest public exhibition of the works of the Berlin artist Jeanne Mammen.

The presence of her works on the campus is not a coincidence; instead, it reflects many years of friendship between the scientist and the artist, described in the next chapter.

Detlev Ganten, the founding director of the Max Delbrück Center, was responsible for establishing this exhibition. He considered the friendship between Max

Delbrück and Jeanne Mammen a model for promoting interactions between the arts and sciences. The Jeanne Mammen Room was established on the Campus Berlin-Buch through a close collaboration with the Jeanne Mammen Society e. V. The initiative was able to acquire paintings and sculptures from the artist's heirs thanks to the generous support of the LOTTO-Stiftung Berlin. Generous grants from the Jeanne Mammen Society permitted the expansion of the collection with works acquired from Max Delbrück's family. Thus over the years, the collaboration between the Society and the Max Delbrück Center created a site where Jeanne Mammen's creative work could be experienced, as a testament to the friendship between these two remarkable individuals.

In addition to the artist's atelier at Kurfürstendamm 29, since 1999 the campus gatehouse has served as one of the most important exhibition spaces for her work. Even more than her atelier, the Jeanne Mammen Room in the gatehouse is a memorial to the friendship between an artist and a molecular biologist. The room and the exhibition serve as a place where ideas can be exchanged, free from ideological boundaries – in a way that might have pleased them both.

The friendship between Max Delbrück and Jeanne Mammen

Max Delbrück and Jeanne Mammen first met in 1936. Delbrück had returned to Berlin in 1932 after completing his studies in physics; he worked as an assistant in the laboratory of Lise Meitner but quickly became immersed in biology upon the advice of Niels Bohr. Jeanne Mammen had been born in Berlin but was raised in Paris. Her family was forced to leave France when the First World War broke out; they returned to Berlin in 1915.

During his time in Berlin, Delbrück personally organized a series of informal get-togethers to develop contacts between physicists and biologists. They met evenings in various places, including the home of the Chemist Kurt Wohl and his wife, the pianist Grete Wohl. These social events were frequented by non-conformists – scientists, writers and artists who could exchange ideas free from Nazi ideology. It was here that an acquaintance was made between two individuals who looked at life and their fellow humans from two very different perspectives, at the same time sharing a profound curiosity.

Delbrück left Germany in 1937 for the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Pasadena (USA), on a Rockefeller fellowship. Throughout the war he continually purchased paintings by Jeanne Mammen, which helped support her. He continued his assistance after the war through CARE packages and other means. The relationship continued with visits and vacations with

Mammen, Delbrück and his wife Manny. They continued a lively intellectual exchange throughout their lives. Their correspondence, which has been preserved, reveals how important and fruitful this exchange was for both.

In 1978, in a text for the Jeanne Mammen Society, Max Delbrück wrote, "My friendship with Jeanne Mammen began in the 1930s, two years before I emigrated. Jeanne was in her mid-forties, had gone through an intensive phase of artistic production in the 20s, and had begun a bitter process of inner emigration. I was in my late twenties, at that point a nothing, and about to leave for the USA. We got to know each other at the homes of the biologist Hans Gaffron and in the apartment of Kurt and Grete Wohl on the Schlachtensee ... Jeanne was there. She didn't stand out: she was small, not very pretty, didn't call attention to herself, hardly said anything. I had heard that Jeanne was an artist and had seen some of her paintings at the Wohls', but at the time I didn't have any appreciation for painting, and for modern art none at all. I hadn't ever met a painter in person. When I saw paintings in exhibitions, I wondered what could be the point of such distortions of reality. Then once in the tram Jeanne showed me an image of a man who had black spots where his eyes ought to be. I asked her why she chose to distort, twist, falsify nature in that way. She looked up, and pointed out a person sitting on the bench across from us. "Look at him – aren't his eyes black spots?" And very surprisingly and convincingly, they were." ¹

Our exhibition begins with the portrait, "Young man with a scarf" from 1937, which probably is a depiction of Max Delbrück just before his departure.

Who was Jeanne Mammen?

Gertrud Johanna Luise Mammen, called Jeanne, was born in Berlin on November 21, 1890. She was the youngest daughter of Gustav Oskar Mammen, a businessman, and his wife Ernestine Juliane Karoline (maiden name del Haes).

The household Jeanne grew up in was wealthy, liberal and cosmopolitan. Her talent for art was evident early on. "From a very early age I drew on everything I could get my hands on. I always had a huge stack of paper that I painted on. Then we made up dramas with death and murder and love stories – it was terribly wonderful. I never wanted, wished for or did anything else – my path was as straight as a rocket's. I was very lucky; in spite of everything it was the best thing that could happen to me." ²

A great deal has been written about Jeanne Mammen's work: her studies in Paris, Brussels and Rome, the influence of Symbolism, the artistic phases she worked through – from naturalism to abstraction, from cubist-expressionist through sculpture and graphic to the representation of puzzling ciphers. The caricatures with which she began, capturing daily scenes and making her a chronicler of the Golden Twenties. Her life-changing experience at the World Exposition in 1937, where she saw "Guernica" by Picasso – whom she once called the "holy father". Her continual search to represent form and movement and not least her ability to cope with a lack of materials. She could make art out of wires, twine and candy wrappers because it was the only way she could exist with her "mania for painting". Those interested in learning more will find references to further literature at

the end of this brochure. Jeanne wrote about herself in 1974, two years before her death, as part of a vitae for a catalog for an exhibition of her works. She wrote:

"Short report of the facts: Carefree childhood and youth in Paris. Studies interrupted by the outbreak of the war in 1914, fled with the last train to Holland to avoid imprisonment. Half a year later relocation to Berlin, destitute (all of my possessions had been seized in France and were later auctioned off as war reparations). Minimal income from retouching photos, drawings of clothing, cinema posters, cobbling, etc. Followed by Ration cards (without food), English blockade, end of the war, inflation. Finally the situation improved a bit through collaborations with "Simpl" and other magazines.

With the beginning of the Hitler era, all of the magazines I had worked for were outlawed or drawn into the Party line. The end of my "realistic" period, move toward an aggressive, radical type of painting (in contrast to official art policy). Second World War: no oil paints, no canvas – all paintings from this era were made with poster tempera on cardboard. Ration cards, stamps, forced labor, bombing raids. Forced reeducation to become a "fireman": on fire patrol until 3am after the "all clear." No windows, no heating, no gas or electric light, no food. Paintings, lithographs, drawings, most furniture burned, flooded out, stolen. Three months of Russian occupation, and then the English at the Ku-Damm. Inflation, Russian blockade of Berlin, airlift, currency reform. In the 1950s move toward a looser polychrome style of painting, which gave rise in the mid-60s to "adhesive pictures" (scraps of paper and tinfoil on oil ground). And promptly enjoyed a third and hopefully last round of inflation." ³

To this, little can be added – except to explore Jeanne Mammen's artworks.

Phases of an artist's life

Early Cubist influences



Ca 1937
Junger Mann mit Schal
Painting, tempera on cardboard
100 x 69,5 cm

The painting "Junger Mann mit Schal" (Young man with scarf) demonstrates the influence of Pablo Picasso on Jeanne Mammen's work through a typical cubist manner of simplifying and abstracting forms.

She completed this work after her trip to Paris, where she saw and was deeply impressed by Picasso's antiwar painting "Guernica" at the World Exhibition.

A young man is turned in half-profile against a blue background. His head is slightly tilted and his gaze is directed downward. Around his neck is a scarf with blue and white stripes. His arms are crossed in front of his body; he is gripping his upper arms as if trying to hold himself steady. Notable are the white rims of his eyes and his nose, which Mammen has depicted as a white column that extends up to his forehead and beyond.

In his 1985 book "Light and Life", Peter Fischer posits that the painting represents the young Max Delbrück, although the abstraction of the cubist style makes it impossible to distinguish personal characteristics. Here the aim is not to depict individuals but characteristics. Here the pose of the head and body is often interpreted as reflective, typical of considering the pros and cons while making a decision. Which is the situation Max Delbrück found himself in as he left for the USA in 1937.



Ca 1940
Knabe mit Hund
Painting, tempera on cardboard
100 x 70 cm

Mammen's painting "Knabe mit Hund" (Boy with dog) depicts a street scene like many others she produced in her naturalist phase. Light beige and pastel hues emphasize the everyday, peaceful atmosphere in the image. There is a suggestion of the background, in which a door and stairway can be recognized. In the foreground sits a boy in shorts with his legs crossed. He is looking at the dog by his side. It, in turn, is facing the viewer with its ears pricked up and attentive. The boy's left arm is hanging, and his hand is touching the dog's flank. His right arm is bent and the hand moving toward the dog's head.

Here Mammen is experimenting with the dissolution of form and perspective typical of cubism. The right side of the boy's head is in profile, with the eye closed, while the left side faces the front and the eye is open. The dog's head is seen in multiple perspectives as well. The bodies of both the boy and dog are broken into abstract, segmented shapes.



Ca 1940
Nächtlicher Spaziergänger
Painting, tempera on cardboard
100 x 70 cm

The "Nächtlicher Spaziergänger" (Night walker) is a much gloomier image than "Knabe mit Hund". A man with a hat is passing a dark row of houses. Horizontal stripes pass through the fronts of the houses and parts of the face, hat, and clothing of the man. His face and chest are broken down into straight-edged forms and accentuated in lighter hues. They bear strong white, red and green tones, like the background. The man appears to stand in the light cast by a streetlamp. Green dominates his left side and red his right. His left eye has a green iris and is partially covered by a tired, drooping lid; his right eye is open, protrudes from his face and is looking to the right. The left side of his mouth is twisted upward, ironic. His collar is illuminated in red and partially obscured by a scarf or tie in white, red and green – also bearing the horizontal striped pattern.

The twilight and dark background create a creepy mood.

”

*You must always write: My paintings were achieved between 1890 and 1975. (...) Never ask when, because I live outside of time!*⁴

Early sculptures



Ca 1939

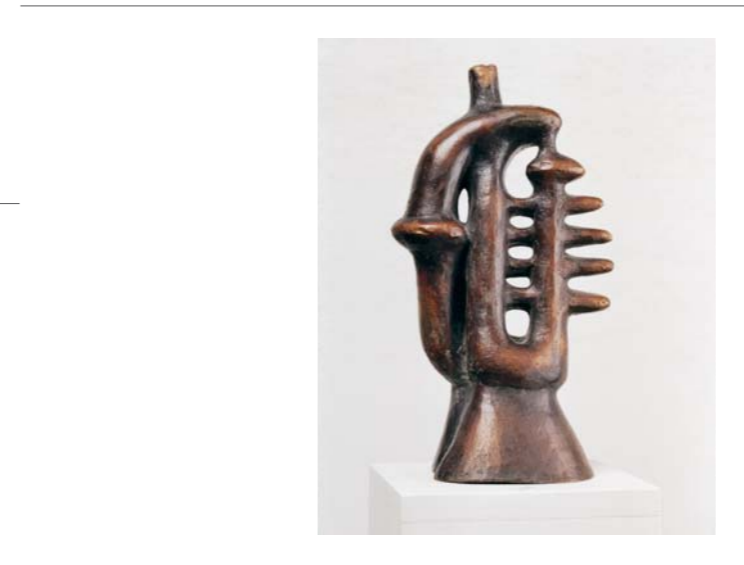
Frauenkopf

Sculpture, bronze

28 x 8 x 10 cm

The collection also contains sculptures. By the end of the 1930s Jeanne Mammen had made herself somewhat known as a painter. Her sculptural oeuvre remains almost unknown and consists of just a few pieces, but for her artistic development it plays an important role. Mammen always worked with whatever was at hand. At the end of the 30s paint was difficult to obtain, so she began working with clay and sculpted. During this period she lived mostly as a recluse, was no longer making drawings for magazines, illustrations for books or cinema posters. At the same time she was retreating from realistic forms of

expression. She experimented with motifs from outside the European art tradition, such as masks – as is the case with this "Frauenkopf" (Head of a woman). The mask motif can be found in her paintings into the 1940s – and bears influences from her Cubist phase, using masks or grimaces instead of faces. This piece was originally made in plaster, and like all of the rest of her sculptures was first cast in bronze after her death in 1976. The triangular relief of the clay mask is painted with stripes and columns. This also is a reference to African masks. The facial area is worked smooth, while the rest remains rough and uneven.



Ca 1940

Trompete

Skulptur, Bronze

33,5 x 18 x 13 cm

The "Trompete" (trumpet) is a work made of non-fired clay. It is one of the few sculptures by Jeanne Mammen that doesn't represent a person, but rather an everyday object. Made shortly after the outbreak of the war, the piece has a symbolic background. Here she has moved beyond the formal language of the "Frauenkopf", and is experimenting with open and disrupted structures.

”

*Does drawing require intelligence? "To draw well, one must know a lot, otherwise what you produce is just stupid stuff. The underlying passion involves penetrating the secrets of form. Here the master is Father Picasso: he knew everything and kept searching, searching, searching until the end of his life."*⁵

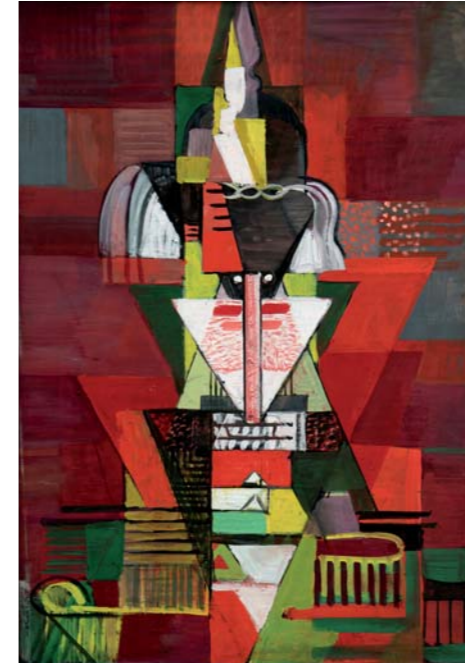
Anonymous portraits



Ca 1942
Gelehrte Herren
Painting, tempera on cardboard
100 x 70 cm

The painting "Gelehrte Herren" (Scholarly gentlemen) is one of a series of anonymous portraits that were completed during the National Socialist period. In these paintings, Jeanne Mammen was probably trying to capture types of people rather than specific individuals. She portrayed them as caricatures, using the styles of cubism

and expressionism, exaggerating single typifying characteristics. Here the image is constructed of mostly red and blue geometrical shapes that can be recognized as two men. The left is positioned frontally, the right in half-profile. The left wears a hat and his face is in subdued colors, as if he is partially fading into the shadows of the background. His hat is pulled down low over his face and his eyes are positioned so close to each other that his forehead seems to be wrinkled in a mixture of astonishment, wonder and doubt. His mouth is hidden by a thick mustache. In front of him is a sort of stack of books that he is holding in front of his chest. Perhaps he represents a bookworm, hiding behind his books without stepping forward. In the foreground is the man on the right, whose forehead, nose and beard are painted in lighter colors, as if illuminated. His eyes are rounder: the left is narrow and high, while the other eye is pointed downward and to the right. He appears clownish because his mouth is open and his tongue is sticking out, over a crooked, spotted bow tie. His open mouth suggests that he is the speaker and the other appears to be listening. One reading of the work is that the "scholars" who were speaking out at the time left a bad impression on Jeanne Mammen, while the voices of reason retreated into their learning and remained entrenched in silence.



Ca 1942
Der General
Painting, tempera on cardboard
100 x 70 cm

The painting "Der General" (the General) belongs to the same series as the "Gelehrte Herren". The cubist style with which Jeanne Mammen portrayed representatives of National Socialism made it impossible to recognize the identity of specific individuals. Instead, people were rendered in such abstract forms that here, it is almost impossible to recognize "Der General" as a human being. The background in the image is red. This creates an impression of blazing flames, emphasized by red and pink points near the right side of the head, which are reminiscent of sparks.

The upper area of the painting is dark and hints at the form of a spiked helmet. In the middle is a braided tassel, below a white, jagged line representing the tip. The face of the General is completely broken down into basic geometrical shapes to the point that there is nothing recognizable as human left. Two small white dots might represent eyes and a small, high rectangle the nose; it sits in front of the face like a board. The white triangle with red hatching, pointing downward, might be a mustache; below it the white rectangle with black horizontal lines and white spots might represent a mouth with teeth. More recognizable are his epaulettes, at the bottom of the picture, which are shoulder ornaments signifying a high-ranking military officer.

With "Der General", Mammen is dehumanizing the military. It is important for her to portray these powerful individuals as equally grotesque and dangerously incendiary.

”

*Father Picasso set the example: he had no fear, only courage. I don't have any completely abstract pictures – there is always the experience of a form in them.*⁶

The tyranny of National Socialism



Ca 1942
Der Würgeengel
Painting, tempera on cardboard
150 x 75 cm

“Der Würgeengel” (The strangling angel) is another work in which Jeanne Mammen confronts the tyranny of National Socialism. Depicted is a dramatic scene between two figures. The chest, head and one arm of one are visible, painted in strong colors. Of the other, only the arms and hands are visible, in black and white.

One of these hands is wrapped around the throat of the other in a strangle-hold, cutting off his air. The victim's mouth is open to scream; one arm and a blood-red hand are trying to ward off the attack. The other hand of the aggressor covers nearly the entire lower half of the image; its fingers are spread, as if reaching for the heart. Underneath can be seen the prominent ribcage. The small head of the victim reinforces the impression that this is an emaciated figure, and the face is presented from multiple perspectives, in cubist style. Above the open mouth there is an eye open wide in fear, while on the other side of the face are two eyes, half-closed, one of which has reddened lids. The viewer is offered several temporal perspectives. The hopelessness of defense, an announcement of the approach of death. And while the suffering of the victim is evident and his face is recognizable, the attacker remains anonymous, and the deadly violence of National Socialism has no face – represented only through a sharp black and white pattern in the background.



Ca 1943
Trompetender Hahn
Painting, tempera on cardboard
148 x 135 cm

The “Trompetender Hahn” (Trumpeting rooster) is yet another of Jeanne Mammen’s confrontations with the National Socialist period. The background is composed of dark earth tones. In the foreground, an apocalyptic figure with the head of a rooster rides a horse. Its body and uniform are broken into small, geometric facets. The arms are recognizable: the left holds a trumpet, which is being blown into; the right holds a saber. The horse is baring its teeth, with its tongue hanging out, and wears bull horns on its head. The image poses a riddle that can

be understood by its date. The rooster represents France, occupied since 1940 by the German army; the horse with horns stands for Europe, which was ultimately freed from Nazi terror by the advance of the Allies starting in August 1944.

”

I only ever really wanted to be a pair of eyes that could wander through the world invisibly, without being seen by others. Unfortunately, you end up being noticed ...⁷

Late sculptures



Ca 1944
Krieger I
Sculpture bronze
30 x 14 x 17 cm

Toward the end of the war and shortly thereafter, Jeanne Mammen produced another series of sculptures from plaster or clay. The reason might have been her inability to obtain paints, but sculpture gave her the chance to experiment with three dimensions. What she produced had a clear influence on her later works.

With "Krieger I" (Warrior I) Mammen is playing with aspects of mass and hollowness. The head is hollow and the surface is worked to a smooth finish, except for the cap of the skull. Only the left side of the skull, up to the hairline, has been worked over, bearing a recessed eye and ends at the front with the nose. In contrast, Mammen only formed the back side of the right half of the skull. Although there are gaps between the segments, the head seems compact and balanced. The sculpture opens and closes as one views it from different angles.



Ca 1945
Kleiner Kopf
Sculpture, bronze
13.5 x 7 x 9 cm

The "Kleiner Kopf" (Small head) is the smallest of Jeanne Mammen's completed sculptures. The subject is a head with a closed, smooth surface. The contours are clear and the form is closed. The chin pushes forward, while the mouth is only a scored indentation on the left side of the head. The nose is sharp. The left eye is a slit, the right eye is rounded. Above the face, the hair is shaped into a sort of helmet or cap. The sides are flat: the right side is even or lightly convex, while the left shows a bend that stretches from the forehead, over the eye to the neck.



Ca 1946
Krieger II
Sculpture, bronze
39 x 15 x 14 cm

"Krieger II" (Warrior II) is a tall, narrow sculpture in which Jeanne Mammen shaped an asymmetric head out of struts, arches, cavities, and protruding spikes. The mouth bulges; the left eye is recessed over the cheek, while the right eye is closed and the cheek is hollowed out. The left eyebrow is a bulge that protrudes to the left

over the head, underneath two smaller extensions cross over the head. They correspond to three structures that protrude diagonally to the left from the forehead. The nose is a straight strut positioned vertically. The head also is shaped as a contour when viewed from the side. There are two recesses in the protruding nose. A sort of helmet or headdress stretches over the head in a quarter circle that starts at the back of the head and crosses a centrally placed spike that points upward. In front and behind are two further spikes, which produce another three-pointed motif.



Ca 1946
Doppelprofil
Sculpture, bronze
35 x 23 x 4.5 cm

"Doppelprofil" (Double profile) is a disc-shaped profile sculpture that dates to about 1946. It was a period in which art supplies were hard to come by, so Jeanne Mammen worked with a lot of everyday things like bits of cable and twine. She used these materials not only in images but also in paintings and drawings from earlier dates, which contain the motif of the double profile and

probably motivated this work. In such images, Mammen was again working out the way Cubism permitted forms to be reduced and dissected. In the "Doppelprofil" she molds two flat profiles into a single plane in a way that their intersection forms the silhouette of each head. Both profiles can be perceived as distinct and yet merge into an inseparable unit.



Ca 1946
Männerkopf
Sculpture, Bronze
27 x 12 x 15 cm

"Männerkopf" (Head of a man) was also originally a plaster sculpture that was cast in bronze after Mammen's death. The forehead bulges forward and emerges from the nose, which points straight up, in a striking way. The same motif can be seen in the painting "Man with a Basque hat", from the same period.

”

Painting was just as much fun as drawing. It was the same thing, whether this way or that – it didn't make any difference to me... I made lots of paper sculptures – they couldn't take it. One thing remained. If you want to be lucky, you have to have some bad luck. ⁸

Sculptural phase



Ca 1946
Krankes Kind
Painting,
oil on cardboard
100 x 70 cm

The painting "Krankes Kind" (Sick child) belongs to Jeanne Mammen's material phase and was produced at the end of the war. In these paintings Mammen covered

the ground of her background with thick paints – undiluted and highly opaque. The figures are reduced to outlines but are still clearly defined. The person in the foreground kneels and holds the "sick child" in her arms; the one in the background is sitting. Their heads are tilted toward each other, united in their concern for the child. The composition is reminiscent of various depictions of the Pietà. The painting consists of earth and pastel hues. The feeling of depth comes from the stark contrast between light and dark colors, giving the impression of a sculpture or relief.



Ca 1946
Sulamithen (Tanzende Türcinnen)
Painting, oil on cardboard
100 x 70 cm

The oil painting "Sulamithen", painted at the end of the war, also counts among the works of Jeanne Mammen's sculpture phase. These works are characterized by warm colors applied impasto and figurative elements. It is evident that the artist had been working for a few years in spatial media, which she was now transporting onto the canvas to produce an impression of three dimensions.

In contrast to the "Krankes Kind", here Mammen is presenting a positive scene. Sulamith is a female name of Hebrew origin which means "the peaceful". The subtitle of the painting, "Tanzende Türcinnen" (Turkish women dancing) represents the theme of movement. Two dancers are in motion against a pink, blurry background. The figures are portrayed in yellow, orange and light earth tones. Between them is a light blue oval, like a cone of light which almost completely encompasses them. The dancers have no faces. Each is marked by two vertical black lines which turn to the right at the top, hinting at their backs and heads. The figures stand upright with their arms raised; their legs are slightly bent, suggesting dance movements.

The painting seems to express a dance of joy to mark the end of the war, expressed in the warm colors, the organic curves, the titles of the painting and its date.

Graphic phase



Ca 1949
Damengespräch
Painting, oil on cardboard
136 x 97 cm

This painting is an early example from Jeanne Mammen's "graphic phase", which began around 1949-50. These works are typified by a reduction of the movement, posture and gestures of figures, which are captured in just a few lines. In contrast to her "plastic phase", the artist has moved away from smooth strokes of the brush, which are now reduced to short strokes.

The background is light and marked by yellow and ochre layers. In the foreground are long, schematic figures in green, orange and white.

On top of the painting is a sketch in thin, reddish-brown lines. They add contour to the figures and hint at gestures.

A single wide brown stroke above the right figure that turns to the left suggests the head. The left figure seems to turn to the left, indicated by parallel lines. The title, "Damengespräch" (Conversation between women), clarifies the situation: the right figure is telling the left something, who turns away, perhaps in shock.



Ca 1951

Zwei Figuren, graphisch

Painting, oil on cardboard

141 x 99 cm

A striking aspect of this work is the pastel palette of blue, pink and green hues, which were commonly used in design in the 1950s. Here, too, Mammen has reduced the figures and their movements to a few reddish brown lines, composed of short brushstrokes against the background. The impression is that two figures are coming straight toward the viewer. The left figure is larger than the right. The left arm is bent and the hand rests on the hip; the left arm is swinging to the side. The right figure is smaller, skinnier and seems younger. In the middle is a white region, bordered by a half-rounded, stylized left hand. Mammen uses radial lines to direct the viewer's eyes toward this area. She uses parallel lines to hint at movement, suggesting a dance or a game with a ball. Here she is following the attempts of the Cubists and Futurists to display movement in time through multiple, simultaneous perspectives.



Ca 1951

Pluie au Kurfürstendamm (Noinširmjogi)

Painting, oil on cardboard

139,5 x 99,5 cm

The painting "Pluie au Kurfürstendamm" is considered a work from Jeanne Mammen's graphic period. Here the artist works color against a grey background and then spreads white over it using a palette knife. The breaks and gaps in the white impasto leave grey and colorful spots exposed. Mammen thus creates an effect of gloomy, wet weather. The scene is a rainy street. Black lines represent human figures sketched in the center of the image. Parallel hatching suggests motion. Above are

ovals and black lines, hinting at umbrellas that cover the figures hurrying down the Kurfürstendamm.

Max Delbrück purchased the painting at the beginning of the 1960s. Playing Scrabble, he invented the second title of the painting: "Noinširmjogi". Here the spelling "noin" for nine and "širm" für "Schirm" ("umbrella" in German) point to the international phonetic alphabet. In a letter to Jeanne Mammen from June 7, 1962, he wrote: "Dear Jeanne, I am starting English again. That's the result of the hectic situation everywhere. Please know that the paintings arrived safely with the bus, the conductor didn't bat an eye. There weren't any problems in the plane, either, although it was completely booked with 85 passengers and the huge picture blocked the way to the toilet. We also got it home from the Cologne airport in the car, although we had to tie it to the roof. The day after next we unveiled "NOINSIRMJOGI" in the presence of all those who contributed to this linguistic creation (along with lots of wine). On the occasion even more words were invented, but I won't share them because they might color your intuition." ⁹

Abstract representations of nature



Ca 1952

Am Seeufer

Painting, oil on cardboard

100 x 140 cm

In "Am Seeufer" (At the lakeside), Mammen leaves her impasto style for a gentler application of color. She uses thinner, more transparent layers of paint that she has diluted and applied with light brushstrokes, creating a shimmering background in red, pink and blue hues. This is interrupted by thicker accents in light blue and orange. On top of it all are drawings in black lines.

In contrast to works such as "Damengespräch" and "Zwei Figuren, graphisch", these can no longer be recognized as humans – instead, they appear to be plants on the shore of the lake. Together with the reddish circle swinging at the upper edge of the painting, which may be

interpreted as the setting sun, this lends to composition a mystical mood.



Ca 1954

Étoile du matin

Painting, oil on canvas

135 x 100 cm

The "Étoile du matin" is one of a group of abstract paintings in which Jeanne Mammen was experimenting with the material nature of her paints. Nothing is depicted here, which allows Mammen to place the focus on the depth created by the paint and varnish and the various techniques she has used.

The background is grey. Mammen then applied several layers of paint and varnish, dabbed, sprayed and dribbled. The center is dominated by an irregular pattern of black lines surrounded by smudged red-brown outlines. Orange, red, brown and light blue spots and sprayed areas of paint and varnish fill the entire painting with hardly any gaps.

The focus on materials and structure emphasizes the abstract character of the piece. The French title "Étoile du matin" refers to the "morning star", in English – the brightest body in the sky before dawn, which announces sunrise. The dark lines in the center of the painting may refer to the mythological significance of this celestial body. In antiquity, the morning star was also called the bringer or bearer of light – in Latin, Lucifer. In Christian mythology this is used to refer to the figure of light who, after refusing to serve man was cast by God down into the darkness of hell. This may account for the dark, mystic atmosphere of the piece.



Ca 1955

Fontaine de Vaucluse

Painting, oil on cardboard

135 x 100 cm

"Fontaine de Vaucluse" is an abstract painting like "Étoile du matin". The short, shimmering brushstrokes in blue-gray, orange, violet, and white and the black drawings drawn over them are still reminiscent of images from the graphic phase, but no figures are discernible here. The paint isn't applied impasto, but in thin layers. As in "Am Seeufer", this creates a shimmering mood. The parallel black strokes give an impression of movement. In the top right corner are blue and white colors that might be seen as the spray of the fountain referred to in the

title. The Vaucluse spring is located in Provence. Jeanne Mammen saw it on a trip with her friend Lothar Klünner, during a stay with the poet René Char.

”

*When asked whether she appreciated her representational or abstract works more, „I don't care“.*¹⁰

Late works: Cipher images



Ca 1962

Espagne

Painting, oil on cardboard

150 x 100 cm

The painting "Espagne" (Spain) is one of Jeanne Mammen's later works. Here there is a dominant, regular, mosaic-like structure of white lines and shapes, interrupted and partially covered by several layers of red, orange,

yellow, green and blue colored areas. In the center, two crossed lines and a superimposed oval may be interpreted as a human face. The entire painting is covered with a fine web of red-brown paint splashes. This "dripping" technique emphasizes the impression of space.



Ca 1965

Eins, zwei, drei, Dickbauch

Painting, oil on cardboard

148 x 100 cm

"Eins, zwei, drei, Dickbauch" (One, two, three, fatbelly) is considered one of Jeanne Mammen's late cipher images. The artist has further reduced her motifs to single symbols – here clear white lines on top of red, brown and green color fields. The circles and lines might represent a human form, which is stretching out its left arm with fingers spread, and the right pointing to the side, toward a rectangle. The lower part of the image might be a continuation of this figure, or an independent one.

"One, two, three, fatbelly" is also a cipher. It is unclear what the artist was specifically referring to, but from her correspondence with Max Delbrück we know she was visiting art exhibitions and had been particularly impressed by the work of Paul Klee.

Late works: Collages



Ca 1967
Photogene Monarchen
Painting, oil and tinfoil on cardboard
148 x 99 cm

In the 1960s Jeanne Mammen began working on a series of late collages using glossy paper, such as the "Photogene Monarchen" (Photogenic monarchs). The background is composed of red, blue and yellow colors.

Two figures are recognizable in the foreground. They are broken down into repetitive segments, which is reminiscent on the multiple perspectives of Cubist works. Here the repetition is directed upward, lending the figures a totem-pole like character. In the intervals Mammen has glued glossy paper; some are colorful, others painted over; they have patterns or texts from companies.

"Photogene Monarchen" thematizes a contemporary event. In June 1967, Iranian Shah Reza Pahlewi and his wife Farah Diba visited Berlin. Protests directed at his political actions led to violent confrontations between the police and the extra-parliamentary opposition. This occurred on the Kurfürstendamm, the street where Jeanne Mammen lived. The painting shows the Shah and his wife from the front; at the bottom short legs can be recognized, and in the bottom right half and the top left their arms are stretched to wave. The two figures are composed of stacked and nested elements. The Shah consists of five elements that resemble the skulls of goats with big eyes, scanning to the left and right. His wife's torso and head resemble vases, empty vessels – the top-most one holding two empty-looking eyes. Both are covered with bits of glossy paper, perhaps an allusion to the Shah's ceremonial uniform. It's Mammen's way of exposing the superficiality of the monarchs.



Ca 1971
Schaubude
Painting, oil and tinfoil on cardboard
150 x 100 cm

The last work of the collection, "Schaubude" (Show booth) is another piece in Mammen's series of collages; it can also be considered one of her cipher images.

The background of the painting consists of red, blue and grey areas that overlap with each other. Black lines and white fill are superimposed on this and create cipher

symbols that are partly covered with glossy candy wrappers. At the top right can be seen a human figure with its mouth opened in an "O" and a hat. Left of the center is a bird's head whose beak is open and pointed to the right; between them is a death's head. The rest of the painting is covered with other ciphers that lend the whole an impression of order.

”

*Why Mammen started making collages: "I had fallen in love with glass windows and colors from the tube seemed dirty somehow. At that point I discovered shiny candy wrappers and started gluing a few on, hesitantly at first. It's really messy work! I had everyone collecting candy wrappers for me. I have whole drawers full of them, which I'll never use because I'm not gluing any more. I never had the idea of combining tinfoil to a sense of the world: for a while, it was just enormous fun. But at the same time it was a huge amount of work, and a test of patience – patience is what you need the most of."*¹¹

Closing remarks

In her final years Jeanne Mammen devoted herself entirely to cipher images, such as the "Verheißung eines Winters" (Promise of a winter). White impasto covers the image, letting through impressions of light blue patterns. There are lines, in the middle a small death's head, below what might be an open bird's beak, and to the right a face. The rest of the symbols are unclear. On the back is a date: "October 6, 1975" – the only painting she ever dated. And it is her last; when she was finished, she gave away her easel. Jeanne Mammen died on April 22, 1976.



Near the end she passed judgment on her own artistic work: „There is nothing important to say – a totally unimportant mayfly.“¹²

She was always aware of her own impermanence in the face of time. Her works are her legacy, and they will remain.



I have developed an unhealthy preference for the color white. When I am feeling better again, I will make lots of white paintings. In a hundred thousand years they will have turned golden.¹³

References

With Excerpts from:

Jeanne Mammen und Max Delbrück – *Zeugnisse einer Freundschaft*, Berlin 2005

Jeanne Mammen. *Paris-Bruxelles-Berlin*, hrsg. Förderverein der Jeanne Mammen-Stiftung e. V., München 2016

Jeanne Mammen 1890 – 1976, hrsg. von der Jeanne-Mammen-Gesellschaft in Verbindung mit der Berlinischen Galerie 1978, Edition Cantz Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt

Jeanne Mammen 1890 – 1976. Ein Lebensbericht, zusammengestellt von Georg Reinhardt, 1991

Jeanne Mammen 1890 – 1976. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen Eine Ausstellung der Berlinischen Galerie, Wienand Verlag, Köln 1997

Quotes:

- 1 Quote according to: Jeanne Mammen und Max Delbrück – *Zeugnisse einer Freundschaft*, Berlin 2005, p. 64
- 2 Quote according to: Hans Kinkel, *Begegnung mit Jeanne Mammen*, in: *Jeanne Mammen 1890 – 1976*. Ein Lebensbericht, zusammengestellt von Georg Reinhardt, 1991, p. 81f
- 3 Quote from *Jeanne Mammen 1890 – 1976*, published by the Jeanne-Mammen-Gesellschaft in conjunction with the Berlinischen Galerie 1978, Edition Cantz Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt, p.17
- 4 *ibid.* p.97
- 5 *ibid.* p.99
- 6 *ibid.* p.102
- 7 *ibid.* p.97
- 8 *ibid.* p.97

- 9 Quote from Jeanne Mammen und Max Delbrück – *Zeugnisse einer Freundschaft*, Berlin 2005, p. 72
- 10 Quote from *Jeanne Mammen 1890 – 1976*, published by the Jeanne-Mammen-Gesellschaft in conjunction with the Berlinischen Galerie 1978, Edition Cantz Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt, p.102
- 11 *ibid.* p.100
- 12 *ibid.* p.100
- 13 *ibid.* p.103

Further information:

Biography and relationship to Max Delbrück:
<https://www.mdc-berlin.de/de/jeanne-mammen>

360° tour of Mammen's atelier:
<https://www.stadtmuseum.de/veranstaltungen/atelier-jeanne-mammen-13>

Tour of Mammen's atelier:

<https://www.stadtmuseum.de/atelier-jeanne-mammen>

Plan a visit

Directions to the campus can be found at:

www.campusart.berlin

Admission to all exhibitions is free.

Outdoor areas are accessible from sunrise to sunset.

To visit the Jeanne Mammen exhibition, the microscope exhibition and the campus museum, please register at:

info@campusberlinbuch.de

Imprint

Publisher: Campus Berlin-Buch GmbH, Robert-Rössle-Str. 10, 13125 Berlin-Buch,

www.campusberlinbuch.de

V.I.S.D.P.: Dr. Ulrich Scheller, Dr. Christina Quensel

Text: Dr. Jochen Müller

Editing: Dana Lafuente, Prof. Dr. Helmut Kettenmann, Annett Krause, Dr. Ulrich Scheller

Proofreading: Dr. Martina Weinland, Jeanne-Mammen-Stiftung im Stadtmuseum Berlin, Jutta Kramm

Translation: Russ Hodge

Fotos: David Ausserhofer

Layout: CCGB, Maria-Nicole Becker

Printing: Druckerei Braul, Berlin-Pankow

Contact: Telefon: +49 (0)30 - 94 89 - 29 20, E-Mail: info@campusberlinbuch.de

Published: Juli 2022

We thank the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the Helmholtz Association (MDC) for support and the LOTTO-Stiftung Berlin for funding.



