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Hans Richter

(German Painter, 1888-1976)



"The life we led, our follies and our deeds of heroism, our provocations, however 'polemical' and aggressive they may have been, were all part of a tireless quest for an anti-art, a new way of thinking, feeling and knowing," Richter once said.

Hans Richter was a German painter, graphic artist, avant-gardist, experimental filmmaker and producer. Born Johannes Siegfried Richter on April 6, 1888 in Berlin, Germany to a wealthy Jewish family, he studied art as young man despite his father's misgivings. Richter copied paintings by Old Masters as well as academic paintings of the 19th century, before adopting a style more akin to that of Paul Cézanne. Richter's first contacts with modern art were in 1912 through the "Blaue Reiter" and in 1913 through the "Erster Deutsche Herbstsalon" gallery "Der Sturm", in Berlin.

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In 1914, he was drafted into the German military to fight in World War I, where he was injured in battle. Sent to recover at a medical facility in Zürich, Richter was put in touch with the Dadaists Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara, and Jean (Hans) Arp, by his friends in Berlin. During this period, he also befriended the Swedish filmmaker Viking Eggeling, with whom Richter collaborated on a number of pioneering abstract films. In 1916 he went to Zürich to join the Dadaists.

His first abstract works were made in 1917. Richter was co-founder of the Association of Revolutionary Artists ("Artistes Radicaux") at Zürich. Richter moved from Switzerland to the United States in 1940 and became an American citizen. He taught in the Institute of Film Techniques at the City College of New York. While living in New York, Richter directed two feature films in collaboration with Max Ernst, Jean Cocteau, Paul Bowles, Fernand Léger, Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, and others. Richter believed that the artist's duty was to be actively political, opposing war and supporting the revolution.

He spent his later years in Connecticut, returned to painting, and published the book *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* in 1965. Richter died on February 1, 1976 in Minusio, Switzerland.

Hans Richter's work may be found in the collections of The National Gallery, Berlin; Museum 20 Jahrhunderts, Vienna; Galeria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome; Musée National d'Arte Moderne, Paris; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others.