

Kurt Schwitters: Texts and Letters

The Edition Project

The Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Foundation, Hannover, has set itself the goal of publishing the texts and letters of Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948) in a new critical edition. With a view to the project, the Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Foundation has financed the inventorisation and digitalisation of its holdings encompassing the artist's entire literary estate (since 2008 on loan as a whole to the Kurt Schwitters Archive at the Sprengel Museum Hannover) over the past several years. One of the project's aims is to initiate relevant scholarly research on Schwitters's written legacy.

The art historian and Schwitters expert Dr. Isabel Schulz from the Sprengel Museum Hannover (simultaneously the managing director of the foundation) and the literary scholar and edition philologist Prof. Dr. Ursula Kocher from the Bergische Universität Wuppertal are coordinating and supervising the project's contentual aspects. In July 2010, the joint research project dealing with how *Criticism Becomes Art. Kurt Schwitters's Strategies of Productive Reception* began its work. Financed for a period of three years by the Lower Saxon Ministry for Science and Art, the project will tap the artist's five notebooks from the nineteen twenties for the first time. To this end, research sites have been set at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal as well as at the Sprengel Museum Hannover.

An advisory board for the edition has been convened that includes the Schwitters authority and literary scholar Prof. Bernd Scheffer, Munich, the edition philologist and literary scholar Prof. Roland Reuss, Heidelberg/Berlin, and the jurist, author and Schwitters expert Klaus Stadtmüller from the foundation's board of trustees.

The new edition will differ in several significant aspects from the five-volume edition of the texts edited by Friedhelm Lach between 1975 and 1981. It is intended to present a critical, annotated study edition of all of Schwitters's texts and source material from his literary estate, thus making new insights into the author's working method possible. The prospective edition should equally serve as a reliable working basis for art and literary scholars. The present subdivision provides for ten loosely chronological volumes that are not structured according to generic terms, but oriented on the type of text. It is expected that a first volume [working title: *Dada – Criticism and Reactions (1919–1923)*] will be published in 2013. The volumes contain numerous recently discovered or previously unpublished manuscripts and letters.

A so-called "hybrid edition" is being planned: Along with books, digitalised images of typographically or artistically interesting documents that cannot be adequately represented in the printed edition will

be provided. The development of special edition forms conforming to the specifics of the source material is required in order to take the montage principle as well as the processual and media-oriented aspects of Schwitters's work into consideration and to do justice to his diverse intertwined activities as poet, author, critic, editor, typographer, elocutionist and collector.

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