



The Aesthetics of Loss: German Women's Art of the First World War

Claudia Siebrecht

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The Aesthetics of Loss is a cultural history of German women's art of the First World War that locates the artists' rich visual testimony in the context of the civilian experience of war and wartime loss. Drawing on a fascinating body of visual sources produced throughout the war years, Claudia Siebrecht examines the thematic evolution of women's art from expressions of support for the war effort to more nuanced and ambivalent testimonies of loss and grief. Many of the images are stark woodcuts, linocuts, and lithographs of great iconographical power that acted as narrative tools to deal with the novel, unsettling, and often traumatic experience of war.

German female artists developed a unique aesthetic response to the conflict that both expressed emotional distress and allowed them to re-imagine the place of mourning women in wartime society. Historical codes of wartime behaviour and traditional rites of public mourning led female artists to redefine cultural practices of bereavement, question existing notions of heroic death and proud bereavement through art, and to place grief at the centre of women's war experiences. As a cultural, aesthetic, and thematic point of reference, German women's art of the First World War has had a fundamental influence on the European memory and understanding of modern war.

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