

FROM THE ARCHIVES

OSKAR SCHLEMMER

Text by Dr. Renate Wiehager

From classical modernism to recent art from the African diaspora: the Mercedes-Benz Art Collection gathers works that inspire. Director Dr. Renate Wiehager will highlight certain aspects of the collection in each issue of the *Mercedes me* magazine.



Oskar Schlemmer, Wandfries im Haus Mendelsohn Berlin, Wandbildentwurf [Wall frieze in the house Mendelsohn Berlin, mural design], 1930

Founded in 1977, the Mercedes-Benz Art Collection is one of the most internationally important corporate collections. No other automotive company has a similarly high-caliber selection of artworks. Crucial to its success are the quality and diversity of the works, which are selected with an eye to contemporary themes.

The task of corporate collections is to build a bridge for people who have little or no contact with art and culture in their everyday lives, giving access to a world that may seem inaccessible to many at first, but, at second glance, offers new perspectives and insights.

This is why I would like to present you with some highlights from the approximately 3,700 works of art in the Mercedes-Benz Art Collection, works spanning one hundred years. In each issue, I'll offer a brief history concerning the constant search for 'the New' in art. To begin, I would like to talk about a true visionary from the Stuttgart region.

OSKAR SCHLEMMER: VISIONARY OF A NEW HUMAN IMAGE

The multi-talented Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943) is considered one of the most adventurous artists of the early 20th century. Trained in Stuttgart as a painter and dancer, he went on to be active for three decades as a sculptor, draftsman, graphic artist, and stage designer. Through his teaching at the Bauhaus, which opened in Weimar in 1919, he influenced an entire generation of young creative people who carried on his spirit. The Mercedes-Benz Art Collection owns a representative group of the artist's works, including two mural designs in the large format of 110 x 326 cm from 1930 that Schlemmer originally created for the private Berlin residence of architect Erich Mendelsohn. Though the mural was never executed, the work depicted here shows Schlemmer's ideal of the 'new man' in a most beautiful way. Following models from Greek antiquity, here the pictorial space is structured by figures who divide up the space with horizontal or vertical gestures. "Space and man," Schlemmer articulated in 1930, "that is the general theme, large enough to make one's innermost being truly shudder. But at the beginning there is the feeling, the stream of the unconscious, the free, unbound creation." The Museum of Modern Art in New York had already acquired a painting by the artist by 1933, now considered one of the most outstanding works of German art from the early modern period.