

# SCHWITTERS @ NEWCASTLE



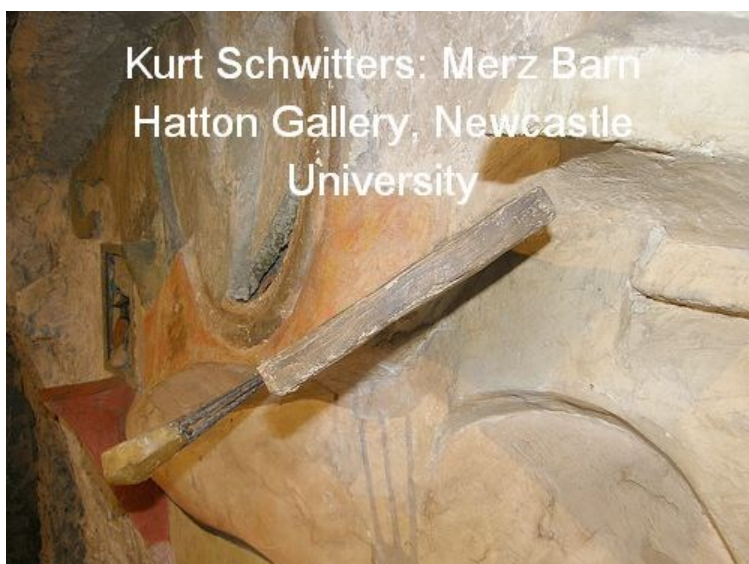
**28/2/13 - 19/5/13**

**at the Hatton Gallery**

# SCHWITTERS@NEWCASTLE

**Schwitters@Newcastle** is a project run by the German Section of the School of Modern Languages. It is dedicated to the German artist, writer and performance musician Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) whose best-known work, the *Merz Barn*, is exhibited at Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery.

**Schwitters@Newcastle** is part of a wider interest of Newcastle University in highlighting the importance of the *Merz Barn* and its location in Newcastle.



In the first half of 2013 the project hosted a range of events including...

- ♦ **WRITE LIKE SCHWITTERS!** A creative writing workshop inspired by Kurt Schwitters' poem "An Anna Blume"
- ♦ **JUMBLE ART.** A Kurt Schwitters-based art and German competition with schools from across the North East
- ♦ **ART IN EXILE.** A project with university students taking part in the translation and journalism workshops. **Art in Exile** engages with Kurt Schwitters in the context of exile and shows unpublished letters from the Kurt Schwitters Archive/Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany
- ♦ **EXHIBITION** of the works of **Schwitters@Newcastle**, **Hatton Gallery**

**Schwitters@Newcastle** also co-ordinated talks given by **Emma Chambers** (Tate Britain), curator of this year's "Schwitters in Britain" exhibition in London, and **Ben Read**, art historian and son of Herbert Read, one of Schwitters' key contacts in the British art scene.

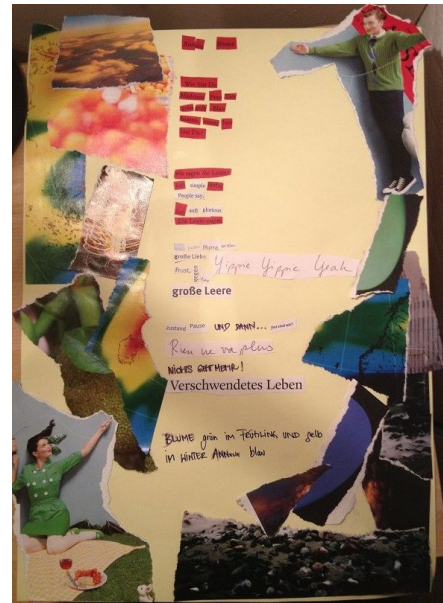
# WRITE LIKE SCHWITTERS!

## CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

### “SCHREIBEN WIE SCHWITTERS”

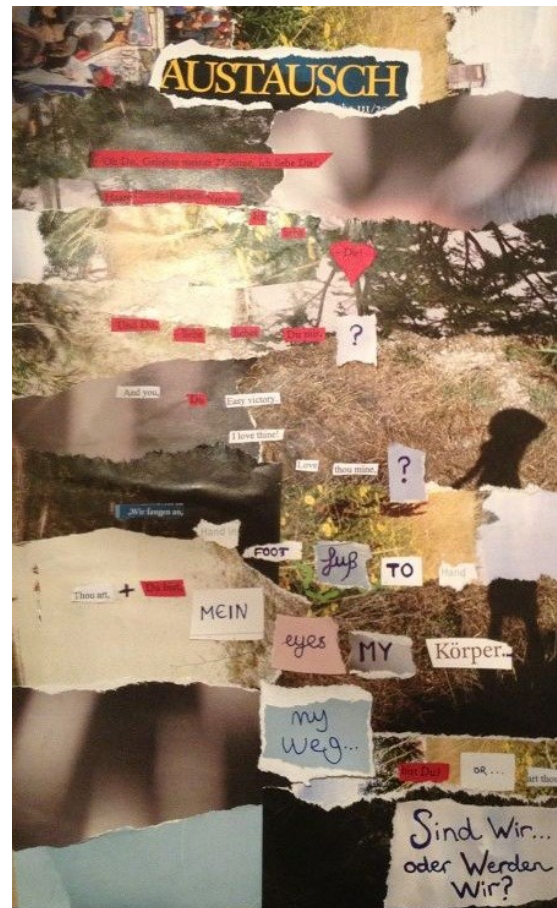
In the creative writing workshop “Schreiben wie Schwitters” students and staff from the German Section at the School of Modern Languages wrote poems in the style of Kurt Schwitters.

The participants produced their own pictures and poetic texts by using the technique of collage. Words and lines cut from Schwitters’ poems “An Anna Blume” and “Eve Blossom” are mixed together and create new stanzas. Magazine snippets form new lines.





The participants' own writing rounds off the poems and shows the creative use of various modern languages. Words and phrases from German and English to Dutch, French and Chinese are combined to create a montage. It is "Schwitters meets the School of Modern Languages".



The workshop was hosted by the German Section, School of Modern Languages, with Sascha Stollhans, DAAD-Sprachassistent, and Aletta Rochau, Leonardo da Vinci-intern, who co-ordinates the programme with Professor Henrike Lähnemann.

## “AN ANNA BLUME” AND “EVE BLOSSOM”

Kurt Schwitters' poem “An Anna Blume” (1919) represents the Dadaistic challenge of traditional norms of literature, relishing linguistic experiments and turning standard grammar on its head. The poem “An Anna Blume” and the artist's own translation of it, “Eve Blossom”, are part of Schwitters' holistic approach to art which he termed “Merz”, meaning his specific technique of collage.

Schwitters applies similar principles to his literary texts as to his visual artwork. The poems show this in the combination of text elements that differ in style, language and content. Elements of love poetry are interspersed with grammatical exercises (“Du, Deiner, Dich Dir”, “thou, thee, thee, thine”), ungrammatical constructions (“Ich liebe Dir”, “I love thine”) and idiomatic expressions (einen Vogel haben).

Visual elements add to the sense of collage – words are written in capital letters, numbers are used, the names Anna and Eve are spelled out. Textual elements are written as if they are cut from magazines (“PRIZE QUESTION”).

“An Anna Blume” was originally published in Schwitters' first poetry collection *Anna Blume. Dichtungen* (1919) and was then recycled by himself and others in a number of other anthologies and poems. It not only became his best-known literary work but also an iconic text of experimental modern literature.

# AN ANNA BLUME

Oh Du, Geliebte meiner 27 Sinne, ich liebe Dir!  
Du, Deiner, Dich Dir, ich Dir, Du mir, ---- wir?  
Das gehört beiläufig nicht hierher!

Wer bist Du, ungezähltes Frauenzimmer, Du bist, bist Du?  
Die Leute sagen, Du wärest.  
Laß sie sagen, sie wissen nicht, wie der Kirchturm steht.

Du trägst den Hut auf Deinen Füßen und wanderst auf die Hände,  
Auf den Händen wanderst Du.

Halloh, Deine roten Kleider, in weiße Falten zersägt,  
Rot liebe ich Anna Blume, rot liebe ich Dir.  
Du, Deiner, Dich Dir, ich Dir, Du mir, ----- wir?  
Das gehört beiläufig in die kalte Glut!  
Anna Blume, rote Anna Blume, wie sagen die Leute?

## *Preisfrage:*

- 1.) Anna Blume hat ein Vogel,
- 2.) Anna Blume ist rot.
- 3.) Welche Farbe hat der Vogel.

Blau ist die Farbe Deines gelben Haares,  
Rot ist die Farbe Deines grünen Vogels.  
Du schlichtes Mädchen im Alltagskleid,  
Du liebes grünes Tier, ich liebe Dir!  
Du Deiner Dich Dir, ich Dir, Du mir, ---- wir!  
Das gehört beiläufig in die --- Glutenkiste.

Anna Blume, Anna, A----N----N----A!  
Ich träufle Deinen Namen.  
Dein Name tropft wie weiches Rindertalg.  
Weißt Du es Anna, weißt Du es schon,  
Man kann Dich auch von hinten lesen.  
Und Du, Du Herrlichste von allen,  
Du bist von hinten, wie von vorne:  
A-----N-----N-----A.  
Rindertalg träufelt STREICHELN über meinen Rücken.  
Anna Blume,  
Du tropfes Tier,  
Ich-----liebe-----Dir!

# EVE BLOSSOM

Oh thou, beloved of my twenty-seven senses, I love thine!  
Thou thee thee thine, I thine, thou mine, we?  
That (by the way) is beside the point!

Who art thou, uncounted woman, Thou art, art thou?  
People say, thou werst,  
Let them say, they don't know what they are talking about.

Thou wearest thine hat on thy feet, and wanderest on thine hands,  
On thine hands thou wanderest

Hallo, thy red dress, sawn into white folds,  
Red I love eve Blossom, red I love thine,  
Thou thee thee thine, I thine, thou mine, we?  
That (by the way) belongs to the cold glow!  
eve Blossom, red eve Blossom what do people say?

## PRIZE QUESTION:

1. eve Blossom is red,
2. eve Blossom has wheels
3. what colour are the wheels?

Blue is the colour of your yellow hair,  
Red is the whirl of your green wheels,  
Thou simple maiden in everyday dress,  
Thou small green animal, I love thine!  
Thou thee thee thine, I thine, thou mine, we?  
That (by the way) belongs to the glowing brazier!

eve Blossom, eve, E - V - E, E easy, V victory, E easy,  
I trickle your name.

Your name drops like soft tallow.

Do you know it, eve? Do you already know it?

One can also read you from the back

And you, you most glorious of all,

You are from the back as from the front,

E-V-E. Easy victory.

Tallow trickles to strike over my back

eve Blossom,

Thou drippy animal,

I— Love – Thine! I love you!!!!

# JUMBLE ART

## **Kurt Schwitters art and German competition. Exhibition by Year 8 to 10 students from across the North East shown at the Hatton Gallery.**

Over 60 students from eight schools across the North East handed in an amazing range of original artworks for **Jumble Art**, a combined art and German competition run by **Schwitters@Newcastle**. The participants turned rubbish into art, as Kurt Schwitters did, and proved their German skills in a creative way. The task was to create a collage in the style of Kurt Schwitters using everyday materials and used items, and combining them with German words and phrases inspired by Schwitters' poem "An Anna Blume".

### **FIRST PLACE**

The collective winners of first place are the students from **Ian Ramsey Church of England School**. The year 9 students impressed with their ambitious artistic compositions shown through the use of different printing techniques and a wide range of everyday items (keys, screws, buttons) as well as Schwittersesque material (newspapers, tickets, strings, natural objects). They further showed a very creative use of Schwitters' poem "An Anna Blume" and the German language. The best collage from this class (pictured above) received the first prize of the competition – a trip to London





with the chance to visit the exhibition "Schwitters in Britain", at the Tate Britain. The collage convinced the jury with its overall composition and its coherent visual interpretation of the lines in "An Anna Blume" that describe the dripping of the name "Anna" with "Rindertalg" (beef tallow). This was represented by the use of wax.



#### The jury for **Jumble Art**

From left to right: Aletta Rochau, M.A. (Project Manager for Schwitters@Newcastle), Sascha Stollhans (DAAD-Sprachassistent), Professor Henrike Lähnemann (Head of German at Newcastle University) and Nicholas Johnston, M.A. (Project Manager for Routes into Languages North East).

## SECOND PLACE

The runner-up is a collage made by a year 8 student from **Valley Gardens Middle School**, exhibiting a

very good use of material (magazines, packaging material and items like travel tickets). Originality presents itself by the use of a heart-shaped mirror and words formed with letters cut from magazines.



These give a new variation of lines found in "An Anna Blume" and prove the student's German language skills.

## THIRD PLACE

In this collage, created by a year 8 student from **Chantry Middle School**, cut-outs from Schwitters' poem are creatively arranged and combined with the student's own words in German and English. A bird's feather ties in with the use of the word "Vogel", and newspaper clippings as well as handprints round off this beautifully composed collage.



## SPECIAL PRIZE

This year 8 student from **Valley Gardens Middle School** has won a special prize with this artwork - a piece of driftwood which completely flouted the criteria of the competition and therefore proved a very Schwitteresque approach to art! Schwitters' name and the title of the poem are carved into the wood and lines from "An Anna Blume" are arranged in a crossword-like manner on a piece of cardboard attached to it. A highly original and outstanding interpretation of the task!





## AWARD CEREMONY FOR JUMBLE ART

On Thursday, 18th April 2013, the winners of Jumble Art received their prizes in an award ceremony right next to the *Merz Barn* at the Hatton Gallery. The ceremony was well received by the school students who had arrived in great numbers with their families and teachers. The winners of first prize, from Ian Ramsey Church of England School, were awarded with various prizes, among them the trip to London for two people to see the "Schwitters in Britain" exhibition. Waleed Sheikh, a teacher at the school, expressed how enthusiastically the students had engaged in the task and explained how the students analysed Schwitters' poem first before basing their collages on it.



The collective winners of first prize from Ian Ramsey Church of England School with their teacher Waleed Sheikh in front of Kurt Schwitters' *Merz Barn* wall at the Hatton Gallery.

The winners of the second, third and special prizes received catalogues of the "Schwitters in Britain" exhibition so they could take the newest compilation of Schwitters' works home. Asked about how he came up with the idea for his artwork, the winner of the special prize said that he found the driftwood at the beach and immediately thought to himself - "that's something Schwitters would have used."

The School of Modern Languages would like to say **a very big thank you to all students** from the following schools for taking part in the competition and for submitting such excellent work!

Chantry Middle School, Morpeth  
Ian Ramsey Church of England School, Stockton-on-Tees  
Marden High School, Cullercoats  
Newminster Middle School, Morpeth  
Ponteland High School, Newcastle  
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle  
Valley Gardens Middle School, Whitley Bay  
Washington School, Washington



The Jumble Art exhibition at the Hatton Gallery.

The prizes were sponsored by  
**Europe Direct North East**  
and **Crossroads Languages**.





# Benedict Read (Leeds): Herbert Read and Kurt Schwitters

**SML Research Seminar Series**

**18 April 2013 - Hatton Gallery**

As part of **Schwitters@Newcastle**, Benedict Read, Senior Fellow in Fine Art at the University of Leeds, talked about his father Herbert Read and his contacts with Schwitters as well as other German artists as early as the 1930s. Read's talk took place in front of the *Merz Barn* wall at the Hatton Gallery.



Photograph: Hulton Getty: Herbert Read, poet, writer, philosophical anarchist, critic and founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts. He was one of the first interpreters of contemporary art in the early 20th century and one of the main supporters of Kurt Schwitters.



Kurt Schwitters. *For Herbert Read*, 1944 (© DACS, 2013)

Herbert Read (1893-1968), philosopher, poet and leading British art critic, was one of Schwitters' most important British contacts and instrumental in securing the MoMA grant which enabled Schwitters to work on his third Merzbau, the *Merz Barn*.

# Emma Chambers (Tate Britain): Migrations: Kurt Schwitters, Oskar Kokoschka and British Art

**SML Distinguished Speaker in conjunction with  
Schwitters@Newcastle - 9 May 2013 - Hatton Gallery**

Emma Chambers, curator of the major Kurt Schwitters exhibition "Schwitters in Britain" at the Tate Britain in London, gave a talk at the Hatton Gallery as this semester's Distinguished Speaker Lecture of the School of Modern Languages. Her talk focussed on Kurt Schwitters and his interaction with British art in comparison with Oskar Kokoschka. Dr Chambers discussed how different the impact of Britain was on the work of these two exile artists who had been

labelled as "degenerate artists" by the Nazi government and had fled to England. She showed how Schwitters and Kokoschka interacted with the British art scene and how British culture and materials influenced their work.

One of the major differences pointed out in the talk was that Kokoschka's art became more overtly political in Britain while Schwitters' work was "shaped by his engagement with British material culture". Emma Chambers explained further that Schwitters' work responded specifically to changes in his environment "since the materials collected from the streets around him changed according to the place where the work was made."



Kurt Schwitters, *EN MORN*, 1947. © DACS, 2013

The different response of Schwitters and Kokoschka to British cultural politics became particularly visible during the time of the Second World War. Emma Chambers illustrated this by comparing Kokoschka's work "What We Are Fighting For" and Schwitters' collage named "En Morn" which features a variation of this phrase taken from war-time language ("these are the things we are fighting for").



After the talk (left to right): Hazel Barron-Cooper (Learning Officer, Hatton Gallery), Rob Airey (Keeper of Art, Hatton Gallery), Emma Chambers, (Curator: Modern British Art, Tate Britain) and Julie Milne (Chief Curator of Art Galleries, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums).

While Kokoschka's work is political in its denunciation of the war, "En Morn" gives "a very different perspective, intertwining the politics of civilian resistance with consumer goods rather than articulating a critique of the complicity of business and finance and militarism as Kokoschka had done."

In the discussion later on Emma Chambers mentioned plans of the Tate Britain to make Kurt Schwitters' work part of the permanent display in the British hang of the gallery and that the Tate Britain hopes to also build up the collection of Schwitters' British period.

The talk was followed by the launch of exhibition "Art in Exile" at the Hatton Gallery.

# ART IN EXILE

## Exhibition at the Hatton Gallery

The exhibition **Art in Exile** of the project **Schwitters@Newcastle** was launched on 9 May at the Hatton Gallery after Emma Chambers' talk on Kurt Schwitters' and Oskar Kokoschka's British exile period. The project **Art in Exile** looks at Kurt Schwitters' art and life in the UK during the 1940s and the broader issue of emigration from Germany to the North of England during National Socialism.

Completing the **Schwitters@Newcastle** exhibition at the Hatton Gallery, **Art in Exile** showed the works produced by students of the School of Modern Languages who took part in the Kurt Schwitters **journalism and translation workshops**.



The students transcribed and translated original letters provided by the **Kurt Schwitters Archive/Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany**. Schwitters wrote these letters in the internment camp on the Isle of Man and in the Lake District, the birthplace of the *Merz Barn*. The participants of the journalism workshop provided the historical and personal background and also introduced the life stories of other World War II German refugees who settled in the UK - Newcastle University's famous archaeologist Brian Shefton and renowned Shakespeare scholar Ernst Honigmann.



Unpublished letters by Kurt Schwitters were on display in the exhibition (see next page for one of these) and can be accessed together with the background stories on:

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/about/events/item/Art-in-Exile>

**Schwitters@Newcastle** would like to thank all students of the School of Modern Languages who contributed to **Art in Exile**:

Marnie Allen, Rosie Anderson, Liliana Dalbins, Jack Deverson, Christopher Envy, Marcus Forrester, Laura Germaney, Rachel Guntrip, Lucinda Hall, Katie Hampson, Adam Lambert, Josephine Leung, Cara Malarkey, Chrystina Martel, Rebecca Mayhew, Aaron Myers, Julia Niemann, Gemma Nolan, Alice Quinn, Rhiannon Robertson, Ian Robson, Anastasia Rydaeva, Hannah Sharratt, Rachel Stanfield and Thilo Zerbini.



Student contributors of Art in Exile with Hazel Barron-Cooper, Aletta Rochau and Emma Chambers (centre, left to right).



Launch of Art in Exile.



Looking at Schwitters' letters in front of the *Merz Barn* (left to right): Henrike Lähnemann (Chair of German Studies), Jack Deverson (student contributor of *Schwitters@Newcastle*), Aletta Rochau (curator of *Schwitters@Newcastle*) and Hazel Barron-Cooper (Learning Officer, Hatton Gallery).

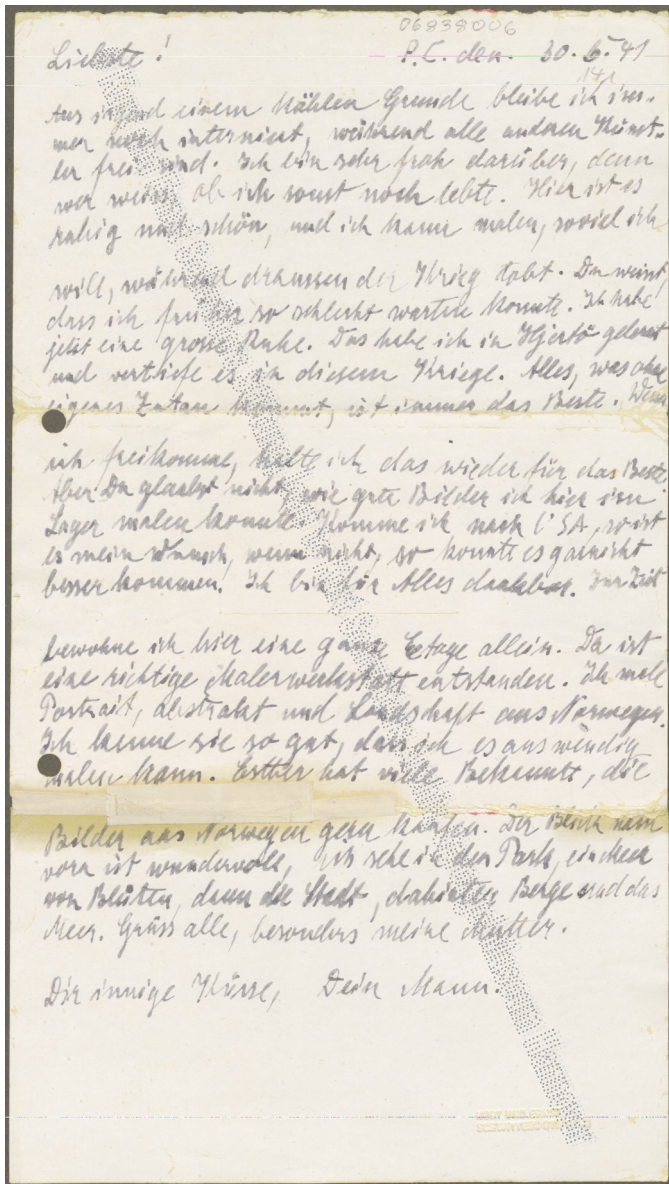
30 May 1941

## Kurt Schwitters writes about his life and art in the internment camp

(Jack Deverson, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, SML, Newcastle University)

This letter gives an insight into Schwitters' artistic activity during his internment on the Isle of Man. The outside of the letter reveals the laborious route the letter took before it arrived. On its way from the camp, it was first examined by censor 4120 in England who "opened" it, only for it to be opened ("Geöffnet") by the "Oberkommando der Wehrmacht", the German military authority, sealing it again with another paper-strip over it and stamping it first with a red, then with a black eagle cum swastika before it reached "Frau Helma Schwitters, Hannover, Waldhausenstrasse 5ii, Germany". Helma was one of the few addressees to whom Schwitters continued writing in German, a fact which the remark "w. i. German" signalled to the censor.

**MERZ**



Liebste!

P.C. den 30.5.41

Aus irgend einem kühlen Grunde bleibe ich immer noch interniert, während alle anderen Künstler frei sind. Ich bin sehr froh darüber, denn wer weiss, ob ich sonst noch lebte. Hier ist es ruhig und schön, und ich kann malen, soviel ich will, während draussen der Krieg tobt. Du weisst, dass ich früher so schlecht warten konnte. Ich habe jetzt eine grosse Ruhe. Das habe ich in Hjertö gelernt und vertieft es in diesem Kriege. Alles, was ohne eigenes Zutun kommt, ist immer das Beste. Wenn ich freikomme, halte ich das wieder für das Beste. Aber du glaubst nicht, wie gute Bilder ich hier im Lager malen konnte. Komme ich nach USA, so ist es mein Wunsch, wenn nicht, so konnte es garnicht besser kommen. Ich bin für Alles dankbar. Zur Zeit bewohne ich hier eine ganze Etage allein. Da ist eine richtige Malerwerkstatt entstanden. Ich male Portrait, abstrakt und Landschaft aus Norwegen. Ich kenne sie so gut, dass ich es auswendig malen kann. Esther hat viele Bekannte, die Bilder aus Norwegen gern kaufen. Der Blick nach vorn ist wundervoll, ich sehe in den Park, ein Meer von Blüten, dann die Stadt, dahinter Berge und das Meer. Grüss alle, besonders meine Mutter.

Dir innige Küsse, Dein Mann.



Dearest!

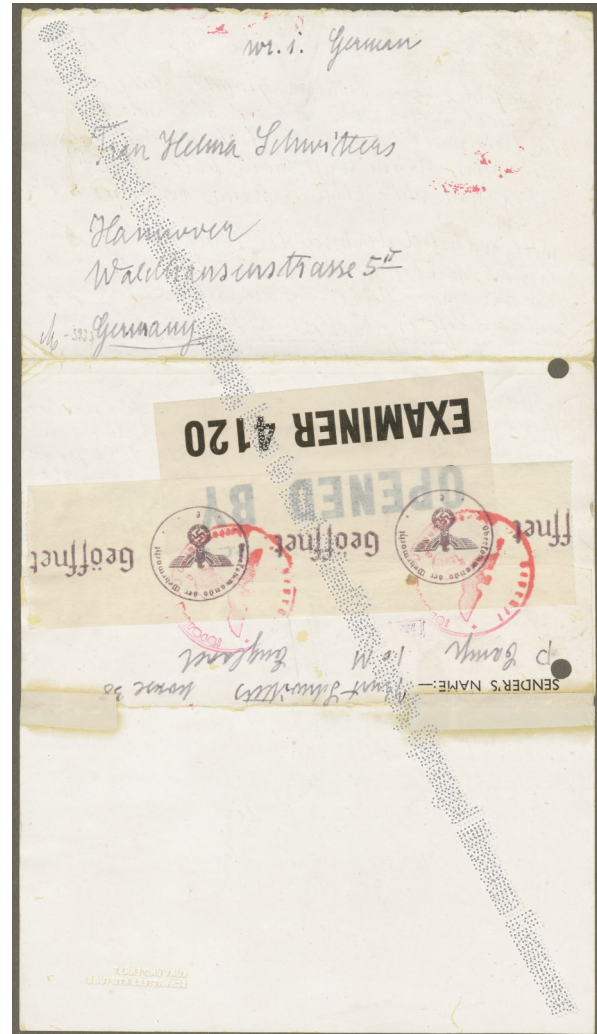
P.C. [Hutchinson Camp],  
30th May 1941

For some unknown reason I am still interned, while all the other artists are free. I am very happy about this, for who knows whether I would still be alive otherwise. It is peaceful and beautiful here, and I can paint as much as I want whilst the war rages outside. You know that I was terrible at waiting before. Now, I truly feel peace. I learned to do this in Hjørtøya [island in Norway], and I'm becoming even better at it during this war.

Everything that happens of its own accord is always the best. When I am released, I will think that is the best thing as well. But you wouldn't believe what good pictures I've managed to paint here in the camp. If I get to the USA, then that's my wish; if not, then it couldn't possibly have worked out better. I am thankful for everything.

At the moment, I have a whole floor to myself here. That has become a real painter's studio. I paint portraits, abstracts and landscapes from Norway. I know them so well that I can paint them from memory. Esther has many acquaintances who like to buy pictures of Norway. The view from the window is wonderful; I see into the park - a sea of blossom - then the town and behind that, mountains and the sea. Best wishes to all, especially my mother.

With tender kisses to you, Your husband.



# Schwitters@Newcastle

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Hatton Gallery, Newcastle University.



School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University.

**Schwitters@Newcastle** was initiated by Henrike Lähnemann and  
curated by Aletta Rochau

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For more information visit: [www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/german](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/german)