

Fidus, Advertisement for a Vegetarian Restaurant (c. 1900)

Abstract

Germany industrialized rapidly during the latter half of the nineteenth century – between the 1870s and the early 1900s, an agricultural society built around small towns and villages had become an industrialized society focused in and around urban centers. The great speed at which these social and economic changes occurred led some Germans to embrace alternative lifestyles that focused on bringing people closer to nature. The *Lebensreform* [life reform] movement critiqued and rejected industrialization and urbanization, promoting a vegetarian diet, clothing reform to free people from physically constricting fashions, and *Freikörperkultur* [nudism], among other things. A new appreciation for communing with the natural environment led to the creation of hiking and nature societies such as the Wandervogel (founded in 1901 in a Berlin suburb). Some people even abandoned the Judeo-Christian religious traditions in which they had been raised in favor of a spirituality that venerated “Mother Earth” and the human spirit in the natural world.

The image shown here, drawn by the German artist Fidus (born Hugo Höppener, 1868-1948), is an advertisement for a vegetarian restaurant in Berlin. Vegetarianism was an important aspect of the *Lebensreform* movement in Germany, and became popular throughout western Europe during the nineteenth century. The image incorporates multiple aspects of the *Lebensreform* movement, such as nudism and communion with nature, and creates a connection between a vegetarian diet and the healthy, youthful bodies of the women and men depicted. Höppener, a devoted disciple of *Lebensreform*, was named “Fidus” (faithful) by his teacher, Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach (1851-1913), an artist and leading figure in the *Lebensreform* movement who preached about living in harmony with nature. Fidus’ art, which drew on the principles of Art Nouveau (*Jugendstil*), served as a direct inspiration for the psychedelic artwork of the 1960s.

Source



Source: "Menu of a vegetarian restaurant," woodcut after a drawing by Fidus, c. 1900.
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