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DEGENERATE ART -
THE JEWISH INFLUENCE
BY
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GENICORMS

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Glencormac

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Pharmacology

INTRODUCTION

Coming from A Dutch Jewish background I have always had a strong interest in the history of Germany before and during the Second World War. Many of my grandmother's family were sent to Auschwitz during the deportations from Amsterdam in the autumn of 1942. My grandmother left Holland nine months before the deportations and has aided me greatly in background knowledge of life for Jews in wartime Europe.

Anti Semitism was always present in Germany, but during the Third Reich it was cultivated to new levels in preparation of the final solution of the Jewish problem. This solution was clearly indicated in the book *Mein Kampf*, written by Hitler in 1924 while he was imprisoned in Landsburg prison. Another conflict which was also stated in *Mein Kampf* was modern art and its place in German society. Hitler had an obsessional hatred of modern art which he felt was another crime committed by the Jews. He felt that their influence in art, literature and music was all part of an international conspiracy to achieve Jewish domination over the world.

"The fact that nine-tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account of a people constituting hardly one-hundredth of the country's inhabitants could simply not be talked away, it was plain truth". (Grosshans, 1983, p. 37)

It is this relationship that I would like to discuss, the connection between modern art and Jewishness.

Hitler himself survived during his early years as an artist and the influences he came in contact with will be examined closely in chapter I. His concepts of the Aryan and the Jew; 'good' versus 'evil'; will also be analysed in relation to the images in art used by the Nazi Regime to project these ideas.

Just as there were restrictions and persecutions on Jews, artists also suffered greatly under the third Reich. Chapter II will deal with the ways and means in which the National Socialist Party succeeded in eliminating modern art from Germany.

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The final chapter will discuss the ultimate assault on Modern art - the Exhibition of Degenerate art in 1937. This exhibition was paralleled with the Great Exhibition of German art in which Hitler tried to show the supremacy of this government approved art which was free from racial impurities.

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CHAPTER I

Between 1933 to 1937, Germany witnessed the most brutal attack on modern art by the Nazi Regime. Well respected artists had no option but to flee their country or to produce art under the regulations of the state. This corruption of art was brought about by the Chancellor of the N.S.D.A.P. Adolf Hitler, who realised early on in his career the full extent culture could be used to reinforce the party's political policies. But the Third Reich had only room for one kind of art, an art that totally excluded all forms of modernism. Why were the Nazis so anti-modern art, and how did they succeed in achieving their aims of eliminating modern art completely in full view of the public eye ?

At the turn of the century modern art was flourishing in Germany. The content and style of German paintings were developing new directions, truth rather than beauty became the preliminary concern in contrast to romanticism and idealism which had dominated painting for the greater part of the nineteenth century.

As this new art grew so did the groups and organisations to promote these new works. In 1905 -1906 Die Brücke was set up in Dresden and then moved to Berlin. They were strongly influenced by Van Gogh and Munch and were greatly interested in African and Polynesian art, and included members such as Enrich Heckel, Fritz Bley, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Max Pechstein.

The New Artists Association was founded in 1909 in Munich followed by the first Bleue Reiter (Blue Rider) exhibition two years later. The Bleue Reiter group was started by Franz Marc in the same city. They were particularly influenced by French art.

One event, which must have given the modernists encouragement and credibility was the opening of a modern art section in the Berlin National Galerie under the authority of Ludwig Justi in August of 1919. (Davidson, 1992, p.26)

General Office

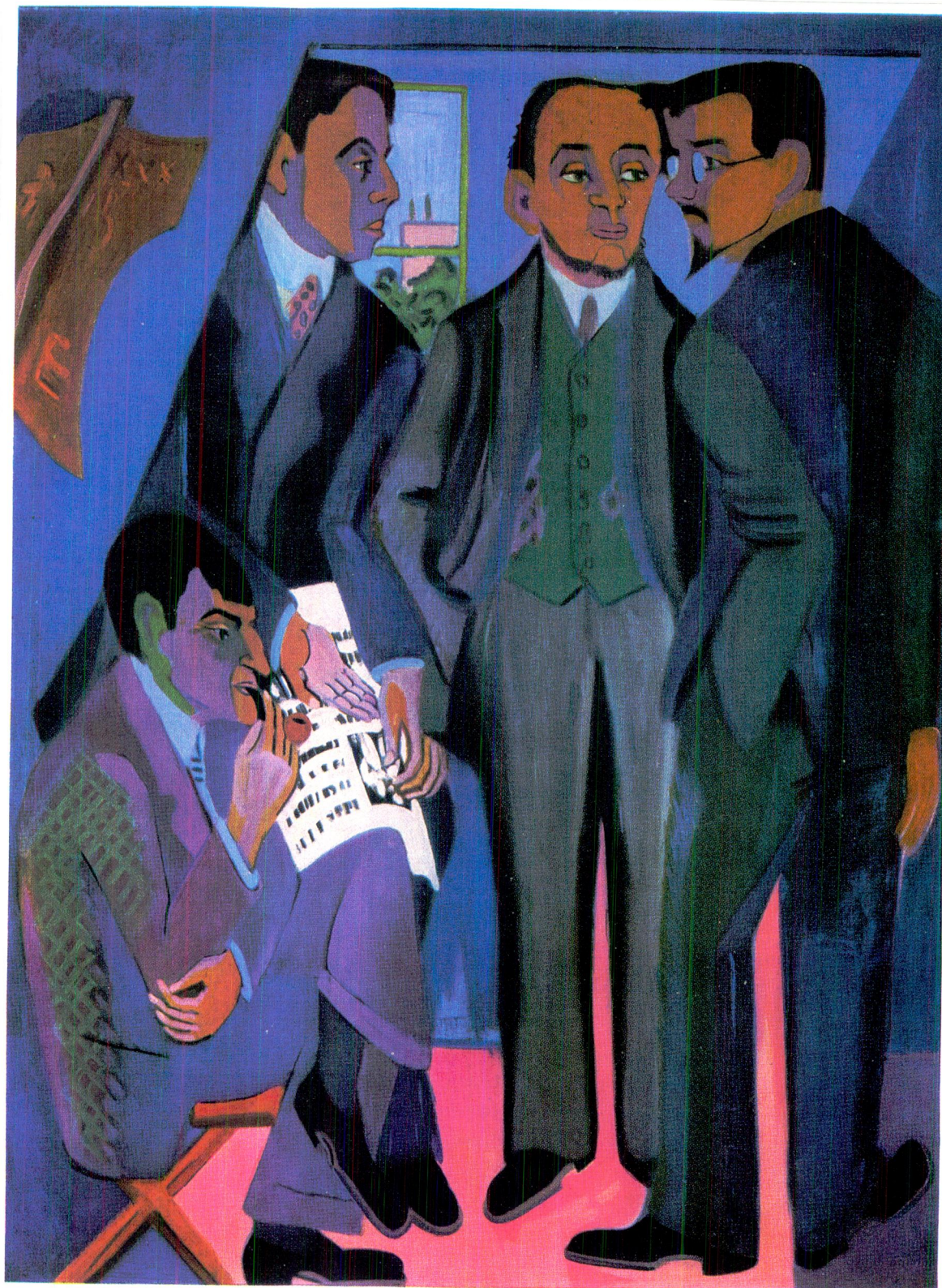


Fig. 1. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Die Meister der Brücke
(The masters of Die Brücke) 1925/26, oil on canvas 168 x 126 cm.



A huge upsurge of art criticism also took place in Germany as critics tried to analyse modern art and to review its role in society. Julius Meier - Graefe in 1904 published The Development of Modern Art. This was the first comprehensive history written on the subject. Many other books and periodicals followed suit e.g. Herwath Walden's Der Sturm (The Storm) which strongly supported the modernists from the years 1910 to 1914, and the weekly Die Aktion which was edited by Franz Pfemfert. This publication also reproduced the works by Kirchner, Marc and Schmidt-Rottluff. Despite these progressions in modern art there was also considerable opposition. Not everybody appreciated and understood this form of art. A review of a show by the Bridge group in a Cologne newspaper described such paintings as :

"nothing but games played with shouting colours by a group of cannibals. If viewed as paintings they are the end of all art; a gross misdemeanor, but they show an aspect that is even more evil". (Grosshans, 1983 p.43)

This was precisely the opinion that Hitler shared. He was to connect modernity with political decline.

"One of the most obvious signs of decay in the old Reich was the slow decline of the cultural level. Even before the turn of the century an element began to intrude into our art which up to that time could be regarded as entirely foreign and unknown. To be sure, even in earlier times there were occasional aberrations of taste, but such cases were rather artistic derailments, to which posterity could attribute at least a certain historical value, than products no longer of an artistic degeneration, but of a spiritual degeneration that had reached the point of destroying the spirit. In them the political collapse, which later became more visible, was culturally indicated". (Manheim, 1969, p. 234)

Hitler was radically anti-semitic and a hater of modern art. It was Hitler's belief that art was diseased and if left un-restricted it would contaminate the cultural life of Germany. The "germ carriers" responsible of course were the Jews.

Most of Hitler's views on art and anti-semitism were both formed in his early years. As a child Hitler had a fairly typical upbringing. He attended a secondary school in Linz, as was his father's will, where he would be trained for a technical or business career. But Hitler was both indifferent and insolent and wanted in contrast to become a painter. In Mein Kampf Hitler wrote that his family and friends at that time had not influenced him to any great extent. His friend August Kubizek stated otherwise.

Glencorrie



Fig. 2. Kokoschka, Die Heiden (The heathens) 1918/19, oil on canvas, 75 x 125 cm.

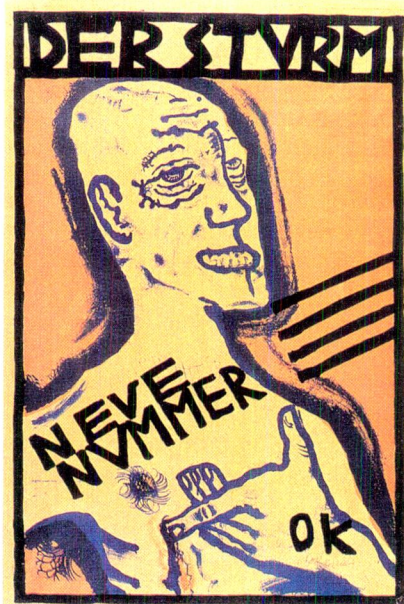
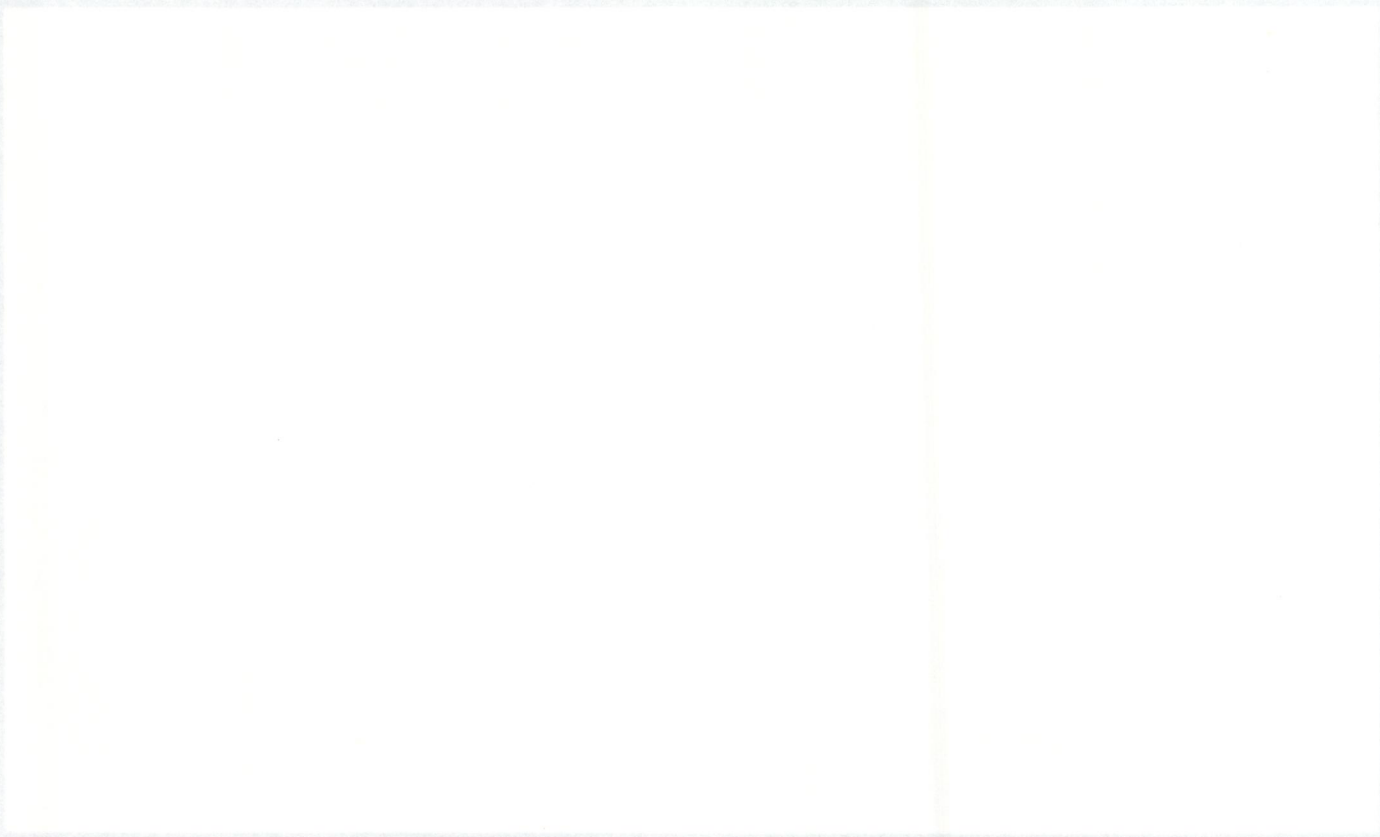
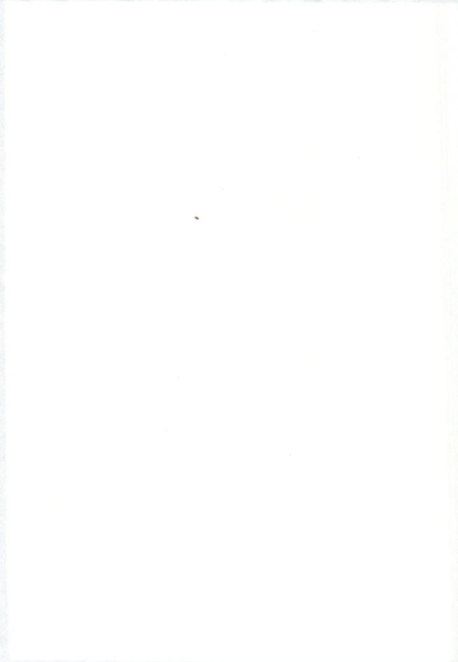


Fig. 3. Kokoschka, Sturmplakat.
This was a poster designed for Der Sturm, 1910.



Pharmacology



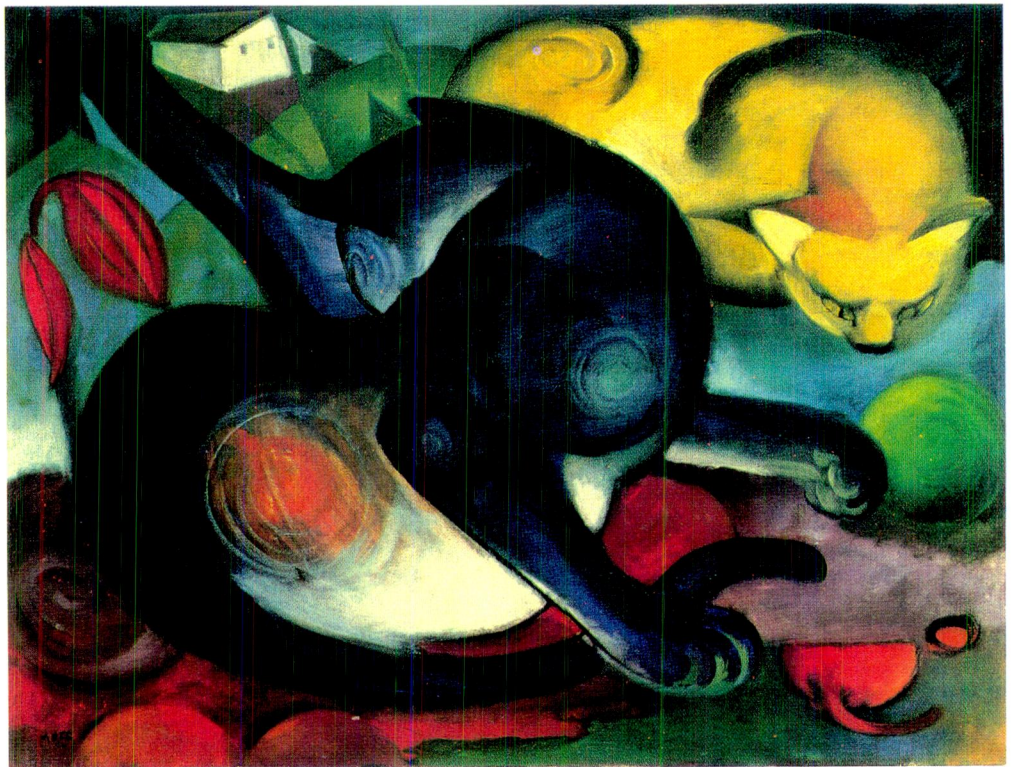


Fig. 4. Franz Marc, Zwei Katzen Blau und Gelb. (Two cats blue and yellow) 1912, oil on canvas, 74 x 98 cm. Marc was one of the artists whose works were reproduced in Die Aktion.



He said Hitler was a supporter of Georg Von Schonerer, a Pan-German Nationalist and an anti-semite. At the secondary school Realschule, at Linz he read the local anti-semite paper, Linzer Fliegender Blatter and had several teachers with open anti-semitic views. It was in Linz he discovered Wagner, and quite probably read Jews in Music and Decay and Regeneration. Later on Hitler was to write : "Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner".

(Dawidowicz, 1975, p. 31)

After visiting Vienna in 1906 Hitler convinced his mother to finance a trip so he could fulfill his ambition to become a painter. He attempted to enter the Academy of Fine Arts in 1907 but was refused. The same happened the following year when he applied again.

Hitlers next few years in Vienna are obscure. His mother died in 1908 and his father had died five years earlier. After he had spent his small inheritance and his orphans pension he ended up in the doss house. Here Hitler survived by painting postcards, copying views of Vienna which were sold for him by Reinhold Hanisch who was also resident in the doss house. Not much is known of Hitler during the next three years except that he had the same impoverished existence.

While in Vienna Hitler had his first confrontation with East European Jews which he dramatised in

Mein Kampf.

"Once I was strolling through the inner city I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew was my first thought". After observing the man his next question was "is this a German"?

These years of hardship were some of the most formative years for Hitler. Vienna was, he wrote, the hardest most thorough school of his life where he got

"the foundations for a philosophy in general and a political view in particular which later I only needed to supplement in detail, but which never left me".
(Manheim, 1969 p.125)

STENOGRAPHIC
SHERIDAN

Anti-semitism thrived at that time in the city taking the forms of organisations, literature and propaganda. Despite his miserable existence Hitler was quite observant of much of the anti-semitic goings on. He was very interested in the publications of Lanz von Liebenfels. Between 1907 and 1910 Lanz published pamphlets called Ostara : Briefbuchherei der Blonden Mannesrechtler (Newsletters of the Blond Champions of Man's Rights) in which he depicted the struggle between the blond Aryan heroes and the dark hairy ape men representing the lower races.

"All human existence revolved around this struggle whose central burden was to preserve the purity of the Aryan women from the demonic sexuality of the ape-men". (Dawidowicz, 1975, p.33)

Hitler was very disturbed by the fact that Viennese Jewish males were at this time marrying Gentile girls. He felt that a person with even one Jewish grandparent was still considered a Jew.

"the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl, whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her family". (Manheim 1969, p. 325)

The family was to become an important theme in the "true" German art.

Hitler also read the writings of another racist pamphleteer, Guido Von List whose work praised the ancient Germanic past and believed that the way to restore the true German life force was through the deciphering of ancient runic symbols and scripts. List also regarded the swastika as one of the Teutonic mystic symbols and gave political expression to his radical occultism (Dawidowicz 1975, p.35)

By the time Hitler left Vienna in 1913 he was to write that he had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and had become an anti-semitic.

The opinions Hitler formed in Vienna which he later wrote down in Mein Kampf were a prophetic warning of what was to come. Hitler's hatred of Jews and modern art turned into an obsession which was to torment him for most of his adult life. He believed that the Jews had no culture or language of their own and that they survived by draining other cultures and races of theirs.

Genesee

"The Jewish people with all its apparent intellectual qualities is nevertheless without a culture of its own. For the sham culture which the Jew possesses today is the property of other peoples and is mostly spoiled in his hands. When judging Jewery in its attitude towards the question of human culture one has to keep before one's eye as an essential characteristic that their has never been, and consequently that today also there is no Jewish art; that above the two Queens of all arts, architecture and music, owe nothing original to Jewery. What he achieves in the field of art is either bowdlerization or intellectual theft". (Adam, 1992, p.10)

At the National Party meeting in Nurembury 1938, Hitler stated that if a Jew could understand German Aryan art, then he must have a drop of German blood in his body by mishap or accident.

The vileness of the Jew, Hitler claimed was to be found in the blood of the race and was aparent in the Jews physical, mental and cultural being. This vileness he declared, had infiltrated nearly every aspect of modern society. (Adam, 1992, P. 11)

He constantly referred to Jews in terms of filth and affal. "Was there any form of filth and profligacy particularly in cultural life without at least one Jew involved ? In Mein Kampf Hitler highlighted the conflicts of the Aryans and the Jews.

"Two worlds face one another - the men of God and the men of Satan! The Jew is the anti-man, the creature of another god. He must have come from another root of the human race. I set the Aryan and the Jew over an against each other". (Manheim, 1969, p.47)

The Aryan he believed was the bearer of human cultural development and that world civilization depended on maintaining and safe-guarding the purity of the Aryan race. The dark Jew or "demonic ape-man" was an image used by the National Socialists to contrast the "Shining Aryan". The idea of the Jew as a parasite, diseasing everything from the economy to defiling young women was used for propaganda purposes. The poster in particular was most effective for illustrating this message.

The new German art of the Nazis was also a vehicle for propaganda but the function of this art was "to create images which represent Gods creatures not miscarriges between man and monkey".

Glencormac

Hitler stated that :

"Art must be the Prophetess of Sublimity and Beauty and this sustain that which is at once natural and healthy. The cult of the primitive is not the expression of a naive, unspoiled soul, but of utterly corrupt had diseased degeneracy".

Hitler strived for a beautiful and unambiguous art. He was particularly interested in classical art which he felt could be used to protect culture from the confusion and turmoil of modern art. Classical art was heroic and monumental and could be used as the perfect vehicle for his political themes.

"Volk" and "Volkdom" were important re-occurring ideas in this new "true" German art. The word "Volk" was used to describe a particular type of Nationalism. "Volk" was not a new idea conceived by the Nazis. As early as 1810 a German patriot Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778 - 1850) wrote a book Dentsches Volkstrum (German Volkdom) on the concept of "Volk".

"A state without Volk is nothing, a soulless antifice; a Volk without a state is nothing, a bodiless airy phantom, like the gypsies and the Jews. Only state and Volk together can form a Reich, and such a Reich cannot be preserved without Volkdom". (Dawidowicz, 1975, p.55)

In this book John uses the word Volksthumlichkeit (quality of Volkdom) to express his glorification of the simple people and the qualities connected to them. This new government approved art showed families working in the fields, up-lifting images of strong blond men toiling for the good of Germany, and depicted homely mothers with bright healthy "aryan" children. The mystic relationship between man and the land was highly romanticized. The simple life was illustrated as free from the contamination of the evils of civilization.

"German art represents homeland and longing for the home. In landscape paintings the soul is expressed. It is the language of the homeland which speaks even in an alien atmosphere or in foreign lands ... When one speaks German, then the soul speaks. If one speaks with an alien tongue, a cosmopolitan, fashionable Esperanto, then the soul is silenced". (Adam, 1992 p.129)

Stencorano

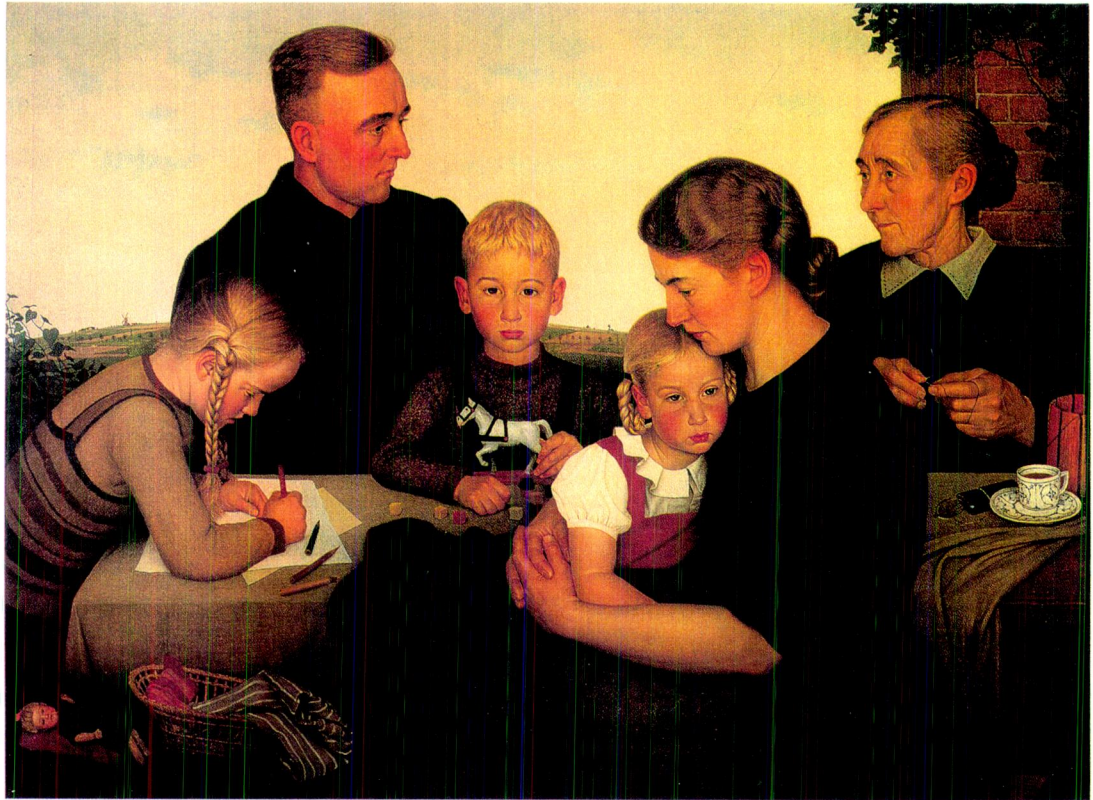


Fig. 5. Adolf Wissel. Farm Family, 1939.
An example of government approved art highlighting the importance of family life.



Other themes used were the power and strength of the army. Great battles in Germany's history were glorified and images of storm troopers in action or participating in marches were common. These paintings were to prepare the German people of the importance of war and to re-affirm the strength and might of the Third Reich.

"The ethical and brave ideals of the SS, the highest volkish values honor and faithfulness, find here their artistic representation. In this way the visitor not only experiences an art exhibition, but conceives the character of the SS". (Adam, 1992 p.164)

Only certain themes were approved of by Hitler, which were adhered to strictly. Although Hitler thought the Jews were responsible for much of the modern art in Germany this was not the only reason for his hatred of this art. He believed that art reflected the moral character of the artists.

Hitler described modern artists as "incompetants, cheats and madmen" and he had no intention of letting these loose upon the people. (Grosshams, 1983, p. 88)

He promised he would wage an "unrelenting war of purification against the last elements of putrefaction" in German culture which was achieved through a series of Government bodies set up for this purpose. (Grosshams, 1983, p. 103)

Guernsey



Fig. 6. Arnold Waldschmidt, *Soldiers*. This was a detail of a mural which had great propaganda value for the Nazi Regime.



CHAPTER II

On January 30th, 1933, Hitler became Chancellor and immediately set about suppressing his enemies. The Ministry of Popular Enlightenment was started under the direction of Josef Goebbels on March 13th. Its main function was to control the press, and all other forms of expression such as art, literature, film and radio. This was the first Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and propaganda in Germany or any other country.

Hitler felt that propaganda was important enough in itself to merit its own government department. He realised early on in his career of the power of propaganda and manipulated it to serve every political advantage, in doing so this became one of his deadliest weapons in his fight for supremacy. Hitler felt that propaganda must appeal to the emotions of the people, not to the intelligence. Propaganda consisted in attracting a crowd and not in educating those who are already educated. He said that the man who controlled the masses would control the state. In Mein Kampf he expands this idea.

"The psyche of the masses is not receptive to anything that is weak. They are like a woman whose psychic state is determined less by abstract reason than by emotional longing for a strong force which will compliment her nature. Likewise the masses love a commander and despise a petitioner". (Rhodes, 1976, p.47)

With Hitler in this role of "commander" he now had the power and authority to stop the "degeneration" of art in Germany.

One of the initial warnings of what the modernist artists were to expect was the Deutscher Kunstbericht (German art report) in March 1933. This was a five point manifesto issued by the Fuhrer Council, called "What artists expect from the New Government". This was not an official document but it was a relatively accurate account of what was ahead for the art world for the next decade. It stated that the only guide-line from now on is

"A philosophy drawn from a passionate national and state consciousness anchored in the realities of blood and history" !

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Reformation

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Fig. 7. Franz Triebsehl, Hitler, 1939.
One of the many portraits of Hitler.



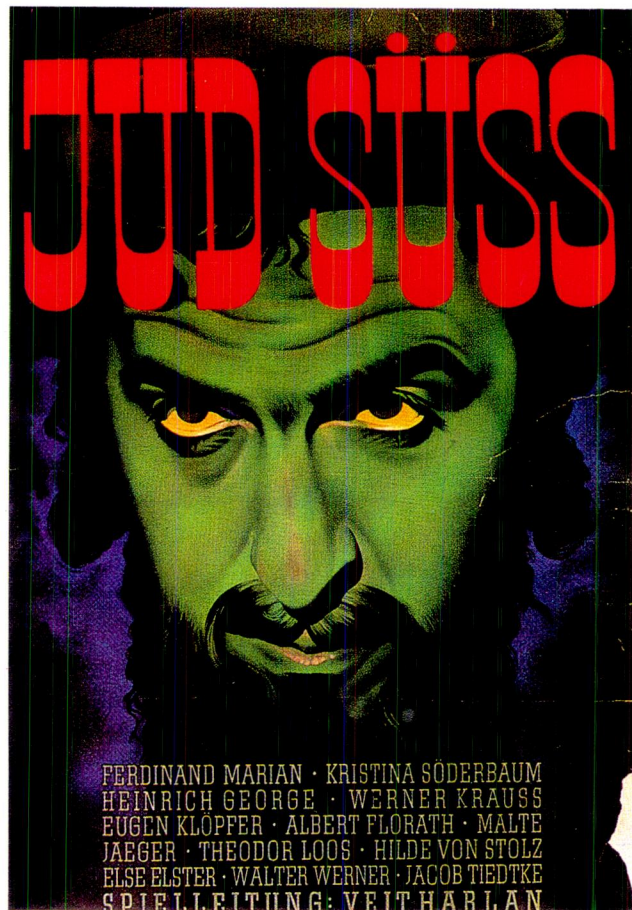


Fig. 8.

Poster for Veit Harlan's film Jud Süß. ca. 1940
Example of Nazi propaganda.



This would be achieved by the following means. Firstly all products of a cosmopolitan or Bolshevist nature were to be removed from German museums and collections. They should be brought together and shown to the public, and the public should be informed how much these works cost and which gallery officials and ministers of culture were responsible for buying them. Then the only useful function left for these works was to serve as fuel for heating public buildings.

Secondly the report stated that all museum directors who :

"sinned against a needy nation by their shameless waste of public funds who opened our art galleries to everything un-German to be immediately 'suspended' and be declared unfit forever for public office".

Next it said that from a certain date on the names of all artists subscribing to Marxism and Bolshevism no longer appear in print and that in the future the German people would not have to look at apartment blocks or churches that look like "greenhouses with chimneys or glass boxes on stilts". A way would be found to stop these "criminals who grew rich from perpetrating such insults against our native culture" ^{ref.}

Finally, it finished by saying that sculptures that are offensive to the national sensibility and that still desecrate public squares and parks disappear as quickly as possible, regardless of whether these works were created by "geniuses" like Lehmbruck or Barlach. They must give way to the scores of artists loyal to the German tradition.

"The conscientious care and nurturing of all existing impulses toward a new flowering of art will have to go hand in hand with the radical negation that will free us from the nightmare of the past years". (Hinz, 1980, p.27,28)

This manifesto received immense support from the traditionalist who had felt up to this that they had been overshadowed by the avant-garde artists. This tactic was frequently used by the German fascists who manipulated the negative feelings that some members of a profession or group felt towards the more successful ones.

These radical traditionalists were not necessarily products of the Nazi regime. As early as 1920, the painter Bettina Feistl -Rohmeder formed an art group called the Deutsche Kunstgesellschaft (German Art Society). This group was modelled on the theories of Paul Schultze-Naumberg.

It only allowed artists who had pure German blood. Jews no matter what their artistic tastes were not allowed to become members.

The German art report left much controversy and confusion as to what the party's official policy was to be. This conflict was centered around Rosenberg and Goebbels. Alfred Rosenberg was trained as an architect and in August 1927 founded the National Socialist Society for German Culture. In 1928-1929 this changed to the Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur (League for the Defence of German Culture). This organisation was set up to stop the corruption of art, and to illustrate the connection between race and artistic values.

Rosenberg went on to become the director of the office of Supervision of Cultural and Ideological Education and Training of the Nazi party.

The controversy was based on whether or not certain forms of modern art; the expressionists and artists like Nolde and Barlach would be considered as reflecting "indigenous Nordic" art. Goebbels argued they should be, but Rosenberg believed in preserving folkish ideology of art and tried to bring the party's policies in line with his own thinking.

At the end of 1933, Goebbels started an official Chamber of Arts and Culture. This consisted of several sections designated for art, literature, film and music. From this point on all artists were forced to join a government sponsored professional organisation and only such members were now permitted to exhibit. All public art showings had to have official approval. This was a severe blow to the modernists.

These disputes continued over control in cultural matters until September 1934 at the party's convention in Nuremberg, where Hitler himself decided that only he would possess that authority.

He said there were two dangers to overcome. First were the "saboteurs of art", which were the "Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists and others", which he felt were disrupting the development of "true" German art.



Fig. 9. Emil Nolde, Blumengarten X (Flower garden X) 1926 oil on canvas 72.5 x 88 cm.
Nolde was one of the artists in the centre of the conflict between Rosenberg and Goebbels.



"These charlatans are mistaken if they think that the creators of the new Reich are stupid enough or insecure enough to be confused, let alone intimidated, by their twaddle. They will see that the commissioning of what may be the greatest cultural and artistic projects of all time will pass them by as if they had never existed". ^

Hitler went on to say that the other danger which faced the government was "the sudden appearance of those retrograde types who think they can make an 'old fashioned German art' concocted from their own romantic visions of the National Socialist revolution into a binding legacy for the future".

(Hinz, 1980, p.36)

Despite this condemnation from the government the modernists attempted to defend their art. The magazine Kunst der Nation, which started in October 1933, tried to present modern art without deliberately offending the Nazi government but it was forced to stop publishing in early 1935.

During the summer of 1933 the National Socialist Students association in Berlin organised an exhibition to illustrate the union of Nazism and Modern art. It included works by artists such as Pechstein, Schmidt-Rottluff, Nolde and Barlach. The exhibition was short-lived, it was closed after only three days by the Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick. All the students involved in the exhibition were expelled.

To highlight the standard of German art, an exhibition of modern art was arranged by the director of the National Gallery in Berlin. This exhibition was completely banned and the director was instantly dismissed. The National Gallery, which at that time housed the best collection of Modern art in Germany, was closed in October 1936.

The only way open to the modernists now to exhibit their work was through privately organised showings by gallery owners who supported the modernists.

The next stage in the Nazi program started in November of the same year. All unofficial art criticism was forbidden. Like all public art exhibitions, any art criticism now needed authorisation before publication, from the minister for Popular

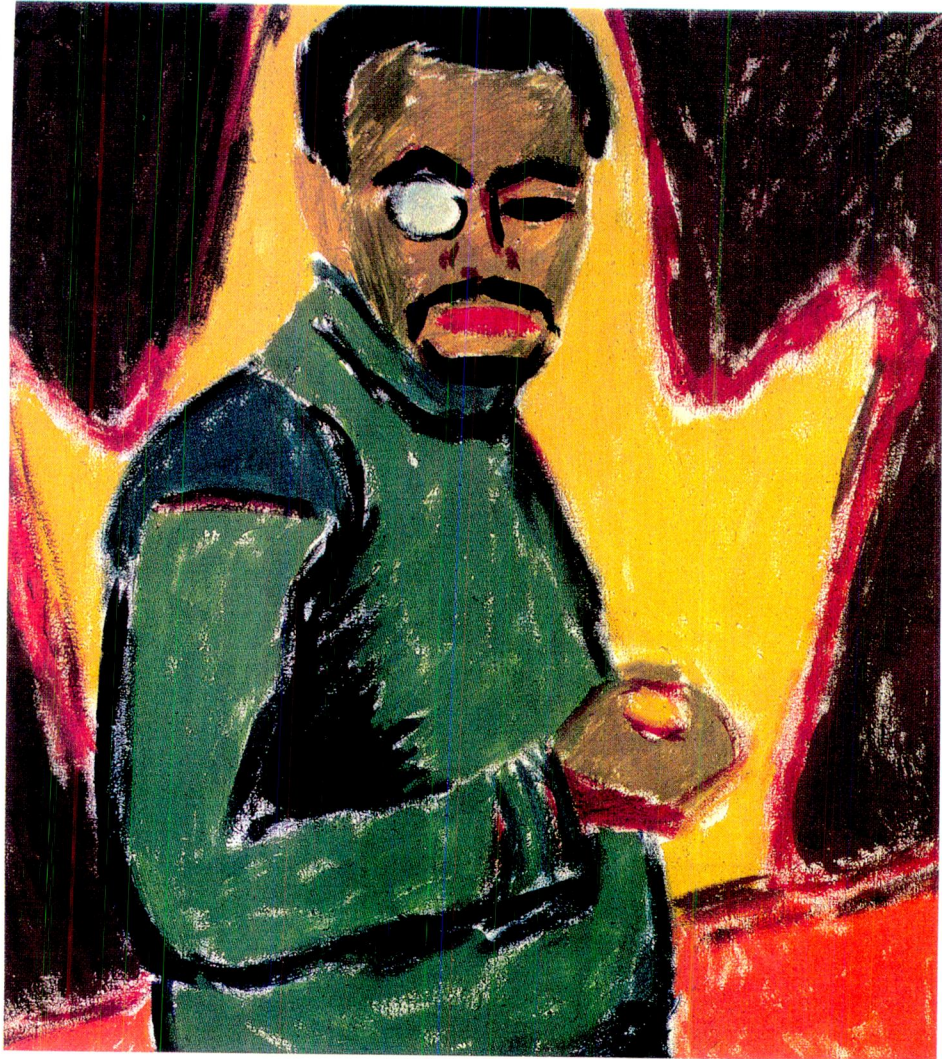


Fig. 10. Schmidt-Rottluff, Selbstbildnis mit Einglas (Self-portrait with monocle) 1910.
Schmidt-Rottluff exhibited in the exhibition organised by the National Socialist Students association in the summer of 1933.



Enlightenment and Propaganda. A decree from Goebbels stated very clearly what was to be expected in the future.

"I granted German critics four years after our assumption of power to adapt themselves to National Socialist principles. Since the year 1936 has passed without any satisfactory improvement in art criticism, I am herewith forbidding from this day on the conduct of art criticism as it has been practised to date. From today on the art report will replace art criticism which during the period of Jewish domination of art totally violated the meaning of the concept of criticism and assumed the role of judging art. The art critic will be replaced by the art editor".

This decree now meant that art as a means of discussion and communication was forbidden. The art report would be :

"less an evaluation than a description and appreciation The art report of the future presupposes reverence for activity and creative achievement. It requires an informed sensibility, tact, purity of mind and respect for the artists intentions. In the future only those art editors will be allowed to report on art who approach the task with an undefiled heart and Socialist convictions".

It would be necessary in the future for every art report to be signed with the authors full name. The professional regulations of the German press would require a special approval for the position of art editor and this approval would depend on proof of truly adequate training in the art field in which the editor in question would work. (Hinz, 1980, p.37)

To further discredit Modern art, special exhibitions were arranged in towns and cities around the country, for the purpose of offering these works up to public ridicule and condemnation. To illustrate the 'degeneracy' of the modernists, the art was often contrasted by works conforming to National Socialist sensibilities. Visitors were encouraged to ridicule these works, and reviews of such exhibitions drew comparisons between the works of the mentally ill and the avant-garde.

Although these were individual and isolated events they set up the frame work for the Exhibition of Degenerate Art in 1937.



Fig. 11. Poster for the exhibition "The External Jew". Vienna, 1938, an exhibition of "shame".



The next assault on the artists were art confiscations which were carried out publicly on all German museum collections and galleries. Such attacks were legitimised by a decree issued by the Third Reich Chamber of culture. This decree stated that :

"On express authority of the Fuhrer, I hereby empower the President of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts, Professor Ziegler of Munich, to select and secure for an exhibition, works of German degenerate art since 1910 both painting and sculpture, which are now in collections owned by the German Reich, by provinces, and by municipalities. You are requested to give Professor Ziegler your full support during his examination and selection of these works, Dr. Goebbels".

(Hinz, 1980, p.38)

Adolf Ziegler had been relatively unknown before Hitler came to power. On the 30th June 1936, he was appointed President of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts. He chose a commission to help in his selections, which consisted of Count Klaus Baudissim, Hans Schweitzer and Wolfgang Willrich. Within only two weeks they had managed to collect over seven hundred works from twenty five museums. No records were kept of these confiscations but it is possible to make a rough estimation by calculating the loss from the most important museums. This number came to 15,979.

One hundred and twelve artists were selected in total for the Exhibition of Degenerate Art.

CHAPTER III

From 1933 to 1937, Hitler had planned building a new temple of modern art. The city he chose was Munich. In Mein Kampf Hitler described Munich as the Metropolis of German art. Some of the most respected artists had worked in Munich and this tradition of nationalist realism still continued.

Paul Ludwig Troost was the architect who was selected to design a building worthy to house this Nazi art. It was a large monumental building intended to compliment the works it housed. Despite its classical exterior the House of Great German Art had the latest of modern equipment, although the aesthetic of this building was its main concern.

On the 18th of July, 1937, The Exhibition of Great German Art was opened. It was launched with an elaborate parade consisting of 26 floats, 426 animals, and 6,000 people in period costume with the theme of two thousand years of German culture.

The exhibition contained eight hundred and eighty four paintings and pieces of sculpture and included artists such as Josef Thorak, Richard Klein, and Adolf Ziegler. All these works gave an impression of an idyllic existence free from the concerns of modern life. A Cologne critic gave his account of the exhibition.

"A walk through the exhibition proved that the principles of clarity, truth and professionalism determined the solution. The heroic element stands out. The worker the farmer the soldier are the themes Heroic subjects dominate over sentimental ones ... The experiences of the Great War, the German landscape, the German man at work, peasant life The life of the state with its personalities and developments. These are the new subjects, they demand new expressions and styles In accordance with the subject, the style of the works is clear, strong and full of character There is a whiff of greatness everywhere. Healthy, fresh, and optimistic artists are showing their work with manifold individuality. A new era of art has begun".
(Adam, 1992, p. 95)

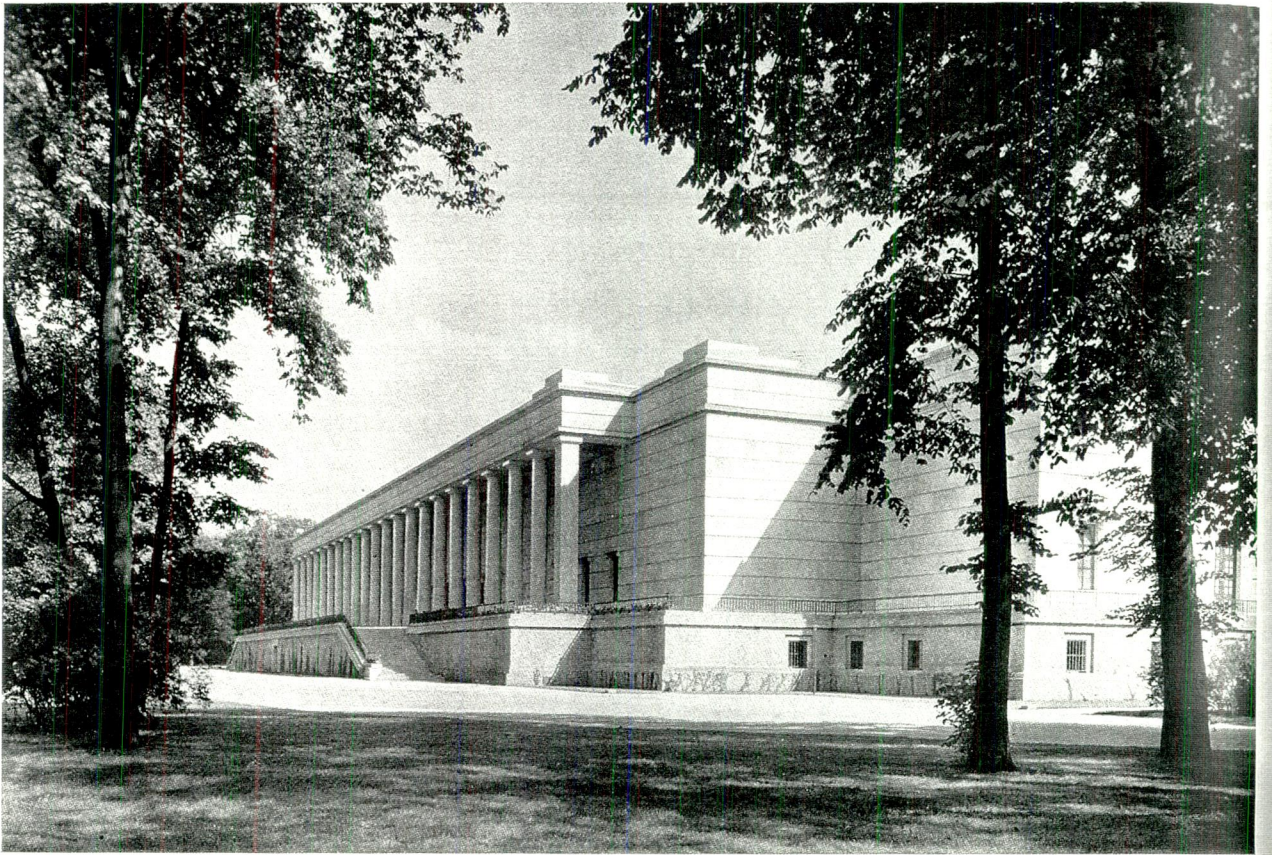


Fig. 12. House of German Art.
Munich Architect; Paul Ludwig Troost.





Fig. 13. View of the pageant for the Day of German Art 1939, Munich.

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Not all the artists who exhibited at the Great German Art Exhibition were supporters of the National Socialist ideals. Many of these artists continued working by refraining from confrontation and tried to compromise their artistic values and ideas. Artists who were willing to use their art for propaganda purposes sometimes only needed to place the word 'German' in the title to make them acceptable.

The exhibition had for Hitler two main aims; its first was "to give the honest German artist a platform on which to exhibit", and the second was "to give the German people a chance to see and purchase these works". (Adam, 1992, p.94)

Hitler felt that German art was not every work of art made in Germany; German art was art made by German artists.

In the opening speech Hitler issued yet another attack on modern art. He said that art could not serve the same purposes as fashions. "Every year something new. One day Impressionism, then Futurism, Cubism, maybe even Dadaism". He felt art was not founded on time but only on peoples. The Germans demanded "an art that reflects their growing racial unification and thus the portrayal of a well rounded total character".

Hitler went on to highlight what he considered the principal characteristic of true German Art :

"The most beautiful law which I can envisage for my people "is" to be German is to be clear. Other races might have other aesthetic longings; but this deep inner yearning for a German art that expresses this law of clarity has always been alive in our people".

He continued that he had come to the "unalterable decision to clean house just as I have done in the domain of political confusion, and from now on to rid German art life of its phase mongering".

He went on to state that the opening of this exhibition would be the end of German art foolishness and the destruction of German culture. (Grosshans, 1983, p. 105)

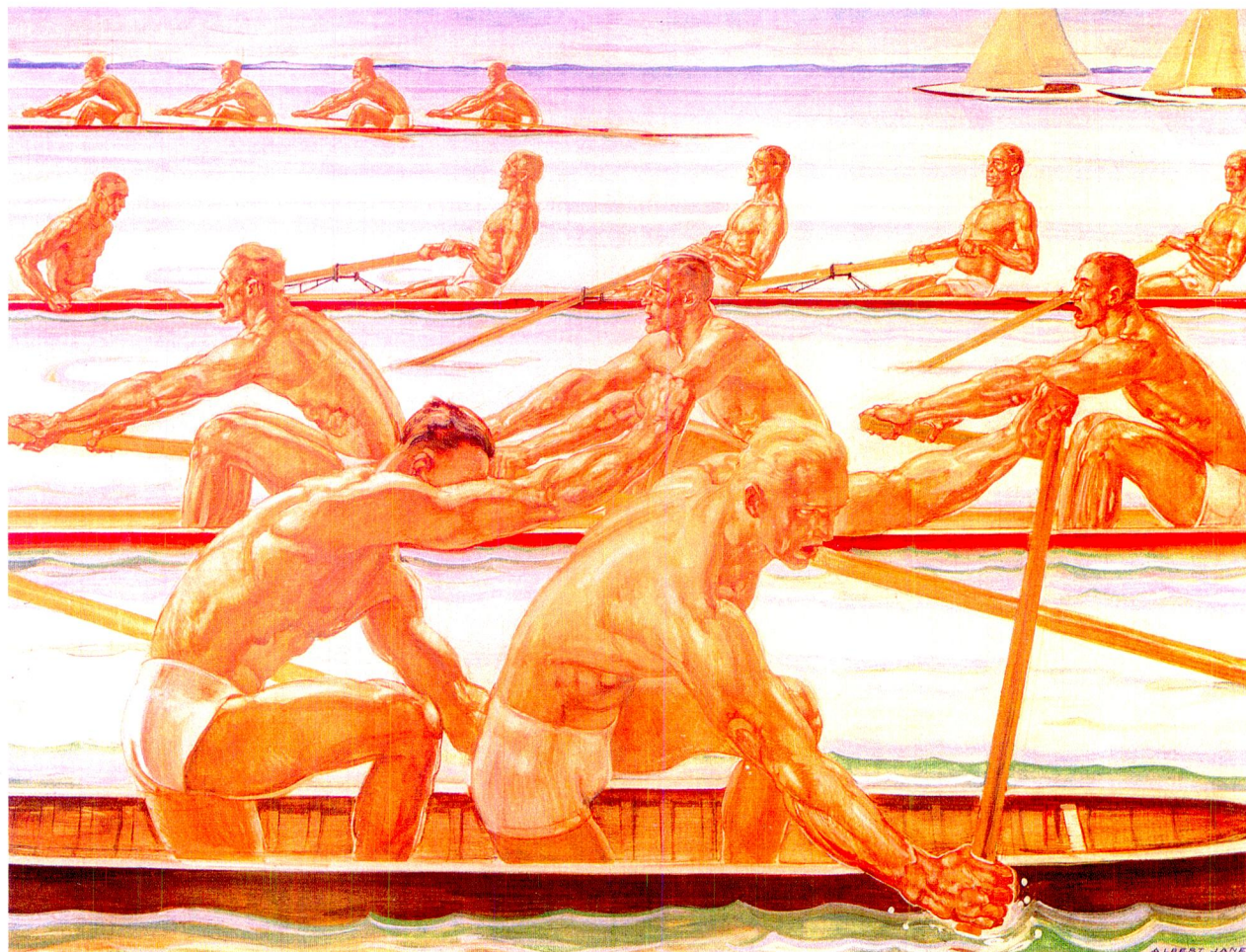


Fig. 14. Albert Janesch, Water Sports, 1936.
This was the type of painting exhibited in the Great German Art Exhibition.





Fig. 15. Hitler visiting the "Great German Art Exhibition 1939".



The very next day saw the opening of the Entarte Kunst (the Exhibition of Degenerate Art). It is quite ironic that this exhibition was also housed in Munich because only three decades before the modernist movement was going from strength to strength in the same city. This exhibition was the final blow to the modern artists.

The exhibition itself was staged in the annexes of the Municipal Archaeological Institute. It was the responsibility of Adolf Ziegler to set the tone, which he did to great effect. Temporary partitions were erected on which the works were displayed. The arrangement of the paintings was detrimental to the works. They looked crude as some paintings even had their frames removed, they were tightly packed and the lighting was terrible. Each work had the title of the work, the artists name, the museum from which it was taken and generally the year of acquisition and the amount paid. But the positioning of these labels were inaccurate. In many cases wrong titles and artists names were given to paintings to add further confusion to the Exhibition. Red stickers were placed on many works which said. "Bezahlt von der Steuergras des arbeitenden deutschen Volkes" (paid for by the taxes of the German working class). The reason for this was to cause anger at the apparent waste of public money by institutions and by their directors.

The curator of the Berlin National Gallery since 1934 gave an account of the exhibition set up.

"In the relatively narrow rooms trelliswork structures covered with burlap have been erected along the walls. The paintings are attached to the partitions, while the inscriptions are written on the burlap. The paintings hang close to one another generally in two superimposed rows. The windows which are immediately above the partitions, and the narrowness of the rooms make it difficult to view the works on display". (Barron, 1991, p.89)

The contrast between the Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung (Great German Art Exhibition) and Entarte Kunst was enormous. The Great German Art Exhibition was brightly lit in vast rooms with ample space for each exhibit. The "degenerate" works were exhibited in sub-standard conditions to further highlight the complete "worthlessness" of the pieces.

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Fig. 16.

Entrance to the exhibition.

Entarte Kunst, Archaologisches Institute, Munich, 1937.



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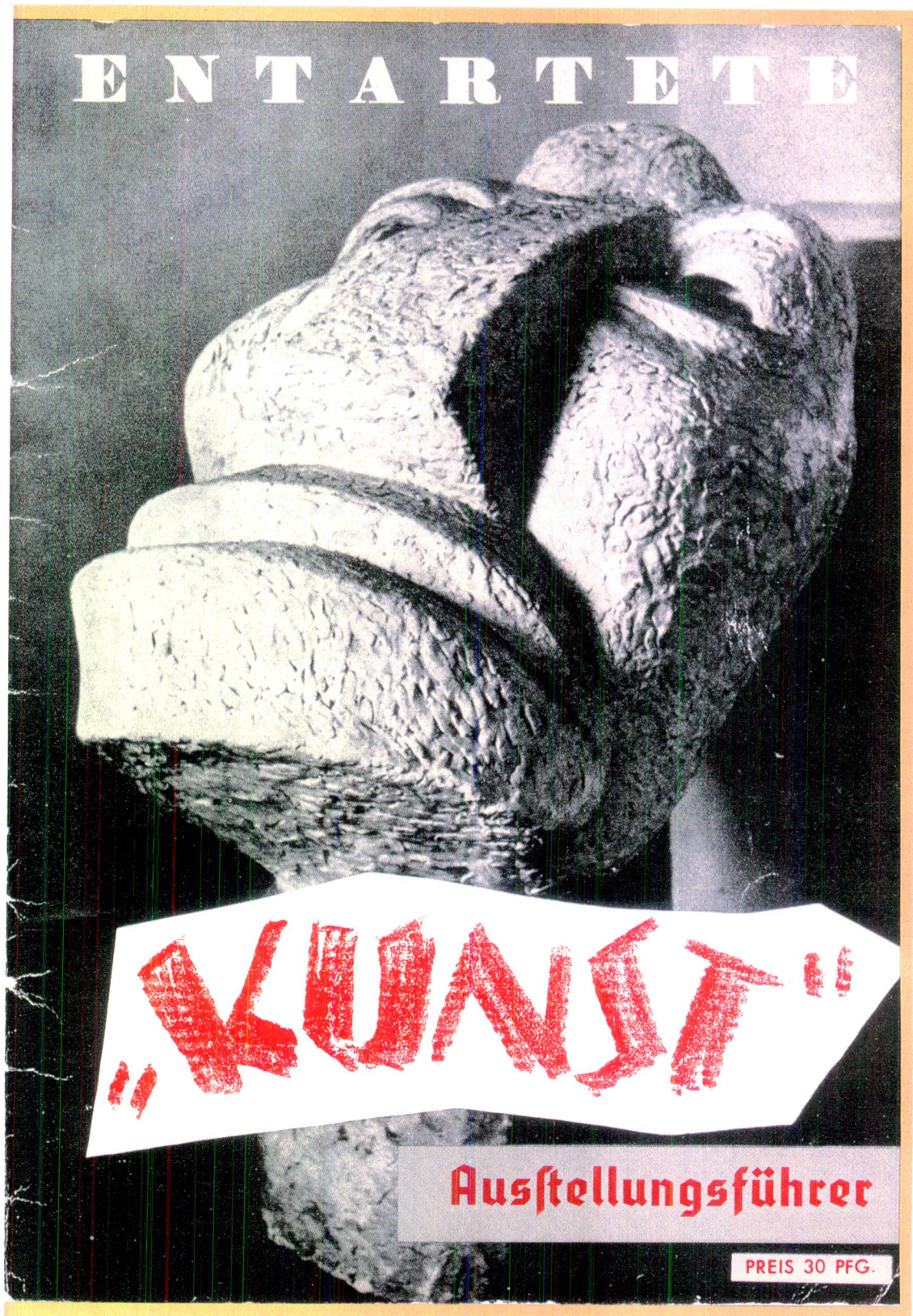


Fig. 17. The cover of the Entarte Kunst catalogue which featured a reproduction of "L'homme Nouveau", a stone head by Otto Freundlich.



At the opening Goebbels stressed his opinions on "Degenerate Art".

"How deeply the perverse Jewish spirit which has penetrated German cultural life is shown in the frightening and horrible forms of the 'Exhibition of Degenerate Art' in Munich this has nothing at all to do with the suppression of artistic freedom and modern progress. On the contrary, the botched art works which were exhibited there and their creators are of yesterday and before yesterday. They are senile representatives, no longer to be taken seriously, of a period that we have intellectually and politically overcome and whose monstrous, degenerate creations still haunt the field of the plastic arts of our time". (Adam, 1992, p. 123)

A catalogue was published to compliment the exhibition and featured a reproduction of "L'homme Nouveau", a stone head by Otto Freundlich and carried the title "Degenerate Art". The exhibit was broken down into nine groups.

Group 1 was a "general survey from a technical point of view of barbarous methods of representation." It showed "the progressive destruction of sensibility of form and colour". Included in this group were the works by Otto Dix, Oskar Schlemmer and Ernst Ludwig, Kirchner and others.

The works in group 2 were primarily concerned with religious themes. "These horrific objects once described in the Jewish press as 'revelations of German religious feeling'. This section was dominated by the works of Emil Nolde.

In group 3 the graphic works were "conclusive proof of the political basis of modern art. The methods of artistic anarchy are used to convey an incitement to political anarchy". This section portrayed many of the social problems of Germany, hunger and misery, and illustrated caricatures of those who profit from the misfortunes of others.

Group 4 had works that "enters the service of Marxists draft - dodging propaganda". The catalogue stated that the viewer was meant to see the soldier either as a murderer of a victim. German soldiers were also seen as drunkards and simpletons. Otto Dix and George Grosz were focused on in this section.

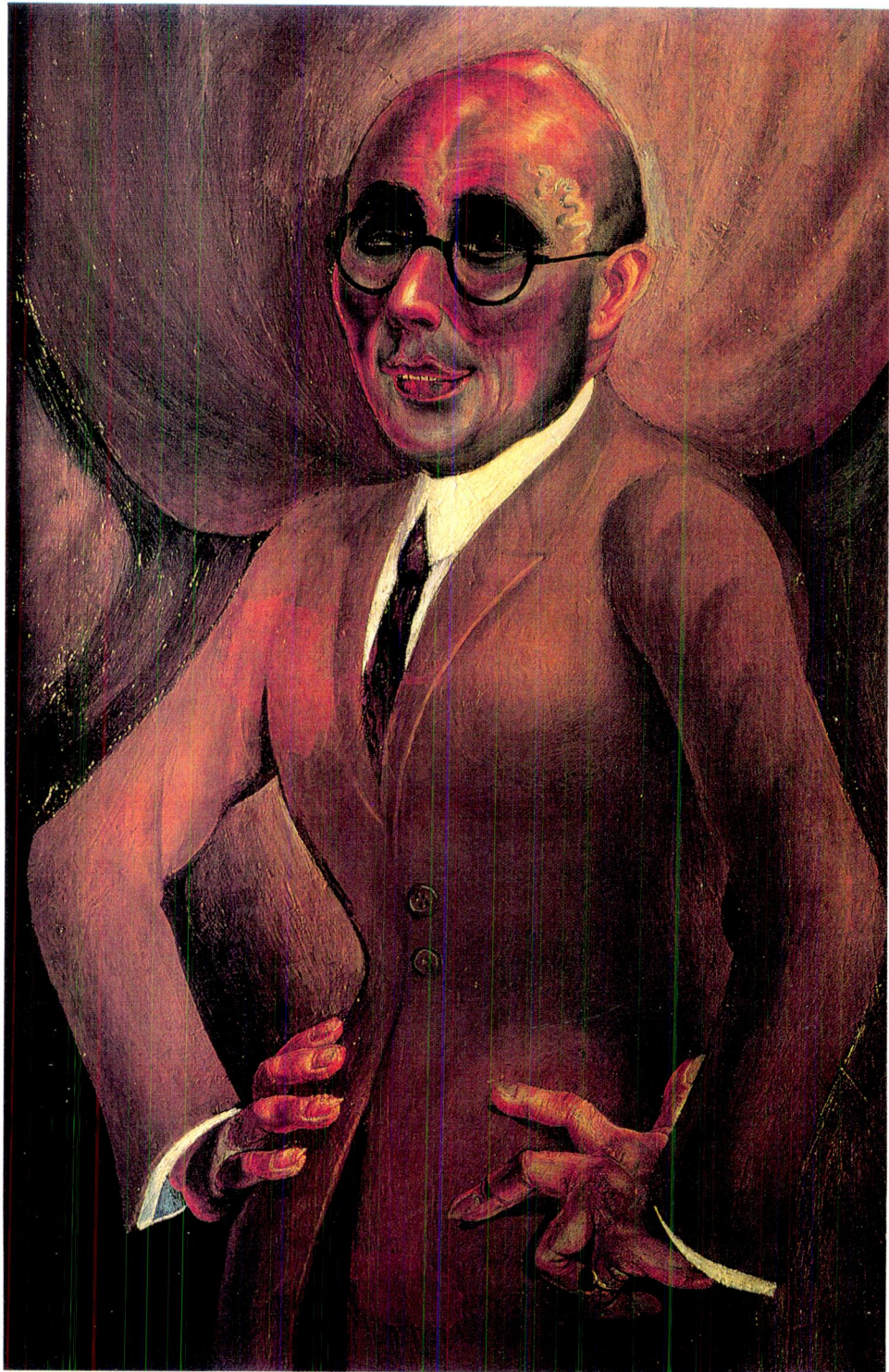


Fig. 18. Otto Dix. Bildnis des Juweliers Karl Krall (Portrait of the jeweler Karl Krall) 1923, oil on canvas 90.5 x 60.5 cm. Room G1 of the Entarte Kunst Exhibition.



Group 5 was described as a "survey of the moral aspect of degeneracy in art". It said that these artists presented a world that was no more than a brothel, and that the human race was exclusively composed of harlots and pimps. Expressionist works were featured in this section.

The objectives of the artists in group 6 was the "systematic eradication of the last vestige of racial consciousness". It presented the 'negro' and the 'south sea islander' as the racial ideal of modern art. Expressionist sculpture was predominant in this group.

Group 7 showed "that what used to call itself modern art in addition to presenting the Negro as the racial ideal also worship its own special spiritual ideal namely, the idiot, the cretin and the paralytic. It went on to say that the human figures in these works had more resemblance to gorillas than to human beings.

Group 8 was reserved for only Jewish artists. It was a "tiny selection of the numerous examples of Jewish trash that the exhibition had to show".

The last group in the catalogue illustrated total madness which represented the height of degeneracy. This group consisted of highly abstract and constructivist pictures by Willi Baumeister, Jean Metzinger, Johannes Molzahn, Kurt Schwitters and others. (Adams, 1992, p.366,368,370,372)

The Entarte Kunst was extremely popular and was viewed by more than two million people. It was due to close in September but because of the great demand it didn't finish until November. The exhibition moved around Germany, and during the next three years it was seen by another million people.

In 1938 and 1939, three large exhibitions were held in the House of German art. Hitler opened all three shows. Even after all modern art had been banned, Hitler still felt it necessary to demonstrate his approval and support and also to highlight the importance of this Nazi art.

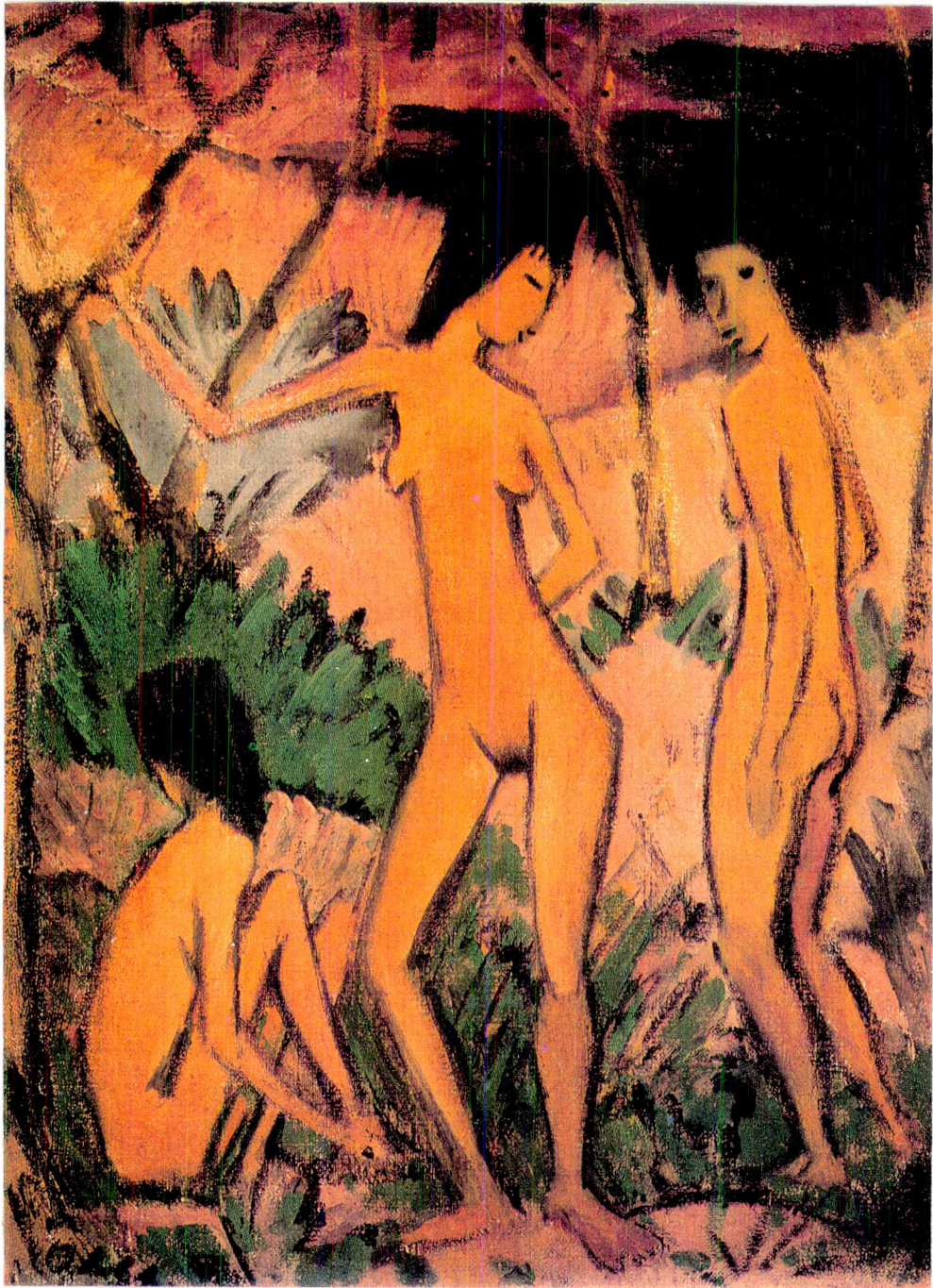


Fig. 19. Otto Mueller, *Drei Frauen*, (Three Women), 1922, Tempera, 119.5 x 88.5 cm. This was exhibited in room 3 of the Entarte Kunst Exhibition.





Fig. 20. Installation view of the "Degenerate Art" Exhibition.

The wall statement reads :

"The 'niggerizing' of music and theatre as well as the 'niggerizing' of the visual arts was intended to uproot the racial instinct of the 'volk' and to tear down blood barriers".





Fig. 21. Kirchner, Strassenzene (Street Scene) 1913/14, oil on canvas, 120.5 x 91 cm. Exhibited in room 4.





Fig. 22. Beckmann Selbstbildnis mit rotem Schal (Self portrait with red scarf), 1917, oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm. Exhibited in Room 4.



In an opening speech in 1938 Hitler stated that :

"The German people of this twentieth century, is a people of a newly awakened affirmation of life seized with admiration for strength and beauty and therefore for that which is healthy and vigorous. Strength and beauty - these are the fanfares sounded by this new age. Clarity and logic dominate its effort".

Again he repeats what he expects from German artists :

"I therefore decide to make a clean break and to set one task and one task only for our new German art. I would force it to hold the new national existence It is as difficult to know now as it has always been whether we have artistic geniuses of lasting stature working among us But we do know that we have created conditions under which geniuses can flourish".... (Grosshans, 1983, p.115)

After such detrimental criticism the artists did try to protect and fight back against this treatment. Kirchner, after he was made resign from the Prussian academy argued that he was neither a Jew nor a social Democrat, and that he would continue struggling for a real German art. This would not be an easy goal for the modernists to achieve. They were prohibited from exhibiting, teaching and accepting commissions without government approval. Barlach felt that the position of artists had sunk so low in German that a pimp or a murderer would be better off, as he would at least get a legal hearing and be able to defend himself.

Many modern artists in particular complained at being branded as Jewish. they felt their art was a German art that reflected the social and political climate of the time and was not foreign or degenerate. In a letter published in a newspaper Carl Hofer stated that the Jews had exercised little influence upon modern art.

Even as early as 1933 Slemmer wrote to Goebbels to complain that modern artists "have been branded as alien, un-german, un-worthy and un-natural. The political motives ascribed to them in most cases totally inappropriate".

The situation was even more desperate for Jewish artists. Before his death in 1935, Libermann wrote of what he visualised as the only ways open for German Jewish artists :

"There is no other salvation than Emigration to Palestine, where they can grow up as free people and escape the dangers of remaining refugees".
(Grosshans, 1983, p.80)

Many artists also felt that Emigration was the only solution for Jewish and non-Jewish artists. For the ones that remained in Germany survival continued to be very difficult.

CONCLUSION

The National Socialists under the authority of one man, between the years 1933-1937 had tried to systematically eliminate modern art from Germany - and succeeded. These acts of persecution and oppression were carried out publicly and had little resistance from the German people.

Hitler constantly referred to modern art as Jewish and un-German. This title alone was one important element in the failure to gain support for the avant garde. On April 1, 1933, Hitler declared the first economic boycott. This was an extensive propaganda campaign under the direction of Goebbels. The Nazi government issued instructions on the boycott saying "The boycott must hit the Jew where it hurts most. A good German will no longer buy from the Jews". Although this was an economic boycott by 1937 anti-semitic feelings had reached such heights, these sentiments overlapped into the art world.

Hitler worked entirely through a "legal" frame work, which made opposition and objection almost impossible. During the "Exhibitions of Shame" which lead up to the Degenerate art exhibition, some visitors to these showings who attempted to defend Modern art were in some cases even arrested to quell their protests.

Through a series of decrees and these exhibitions by 1937 Hitler had totally abolished modern art from Germany so the modernists would "never again find their way to the German people". (Barron, 1991, p. 378)

This continued until after the Second World War. Although many works were burned after Entarte Kunst, many masterpieces still existed as testament to the commitment and courage of the modern artists.

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INTERVIEWS

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