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Museum and Exhibition Curation Techniques in Nazi Germany: An Analysis of Curation and Its Effects on Art, Artists, and the Public

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MUSEUM AND EXHIBITION CURATION TECHNIQUES IN NAZI GERMANY: AN
ANALYSIS OF CURATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON ART, ARTISTS, AND THE
PUBLIC.

by
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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Anthropology)

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ABSTRACT

Museum development in Europe changed rapidly from the middle of the 19th century through the end of World War II. This development included elements of exhibition design and curation techniques. The combination of these elements created a space for the changing public to acquire new opinions and knowledge of artworks. With the addition of governmental powers influencing the museum design, museums became buildings of education for many different purposes, at the government's disposal.

In Germany during World War II, the Degenerate Art Exhibition was designed as a counter exhibit to the Great German Art Exhibition. This exhibition's purpose was to give an approved Third Reich education to their public: the knowledge of identifying Aryan versus Degenerate Art. Curatorial techniques developed from the mid-18th into the 19th century were changed and manipulated to suppress the opinions of the public into a submission to the ideology of the Third Reich.

For Professor Brian Robinson,
For making me fall in love with artifacts, adventure and life.
Thank you

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List of Names and Terms

Adolf Ziegler (1892-1959) – Professor, artist, and museum curator of the German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition. One of Adolf Hitler’s favorite artists, Ziegler specialized in realistic full female nudes and landscapes. He was head of the Art chamber of the Reichskulturkammer.

Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946) – German theorist and writer influential in creating Nazi Ideology. His works such as *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* and *Blood and Honor* added to the anti-Semitic fuel of Nazism. After joining the Nazi party in 1919, he met Adolf Hitler. After Hitler became leader of the NSDAP, he often asked Rosenberg for help with the Third Reich propaganda, often rivaling Joseph Goebbels.

Bolshevik Revolution (1918-1919) – Occurred in what is now Russia by group of revolutionists to upheave the Czar and create a new government. The revolution was a success with the help of the Communists, and would create the Soviet Union. Communists and other sympathizers were often linked after to Jewish heritage, and so Germans became weary of the Jewish population after 1919.

Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter - Two modernists groups of artists that assembled together in the later 1910’s. Both of these groups created their own art exhibitions to show modernist works of art. Members of these groups included Wassily Kandinsky and Emil Nolde, among other influential modern artists. Many of these members were driven out of Germany by 1933.

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) – Reich Minister of Propaganda for the Nazi Party from 1933 to 1945. Known for creating propaganda dehumanizing the “degenerate” population of Jews, Jehovah witnesses, among other non-Aryan groups. Also had a heavy hand in the creation of the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition. He believed that these two exhibits could be used to exploit further propaganda against the “degenerate” population.

Modernism – movement of art created from the early 20th century as a revolt against the modernity of rapid technology expansion and other changes to traditional society. Seen as a “rebellion” against traditional realism, artists of modernism used abstract shapes, lines and colors to reflect their emotions towards society. Seen as primitive, modernism was attacked by those who preferred the traditional realism of the late 19th century. Art movements that are subsections of modernism are Dadaism, Cubism, Expressionism, and Futurism.

Nuremberg Laws - Established in 1935, these laws were outlines of who exactly was a Jew and wasn’t a Jew, as well as denying citizenship to people of Jewish decent. These included percentage of Jewish blood to Aryan Blood, among other identifiers of Jews in the new Aryan society.

NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) – Political party who was highly active between 1920 and 1945. Originally a small party, after the creation of the Weimar Republic, the party grew in its nationalism and eventually its anti-Semitism propaganda. This group would later form the Nazi Party, of which Hitler lead.

Paul Schultze-Naumburg (1869-1949) - Architect, writer and politician who joined the NSDAP in 1930. His criticism of modern art won rave reviews, and later published his well-known essay *Kunst und Rasse*. Naumburg and Rosenberg often worked together to create small art and propaganda exhibitions in the 1920's into the 1930's.

Reichskulturkammer – governmental structure built during the Third Reich to centrally control culture aspects of society (art, music, education, etc). Split into eight chambers.

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) – Composer and prolific anti-Semitic writer of the 19th century. Many of his writings and music dealt with issues such as racism and the need to return to the traditional past. He was a major influence in Hitler's later ideology of the 20th century German Utopia.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Because the psychic, emotional value of our [museum] environment and the spaces we inhabit is vague and understudied, it is too easily underestimated.” – Andrew McClellan

Museums are meant to create a world in which the visitor can fully appreciate the artworks, sculptures, and artifacts that lie inside. Rooms are meant to serve as an opportunity to travel in time, back to pre-historic cultures that one can primarily understand through their material goods. The art within each room allows for these cultures to express themselves to the viewer in a way that amplifies their significance and importance in history. However, the makeup, design, and execution of the exhibition layout is one world that most people do not see. When the public views a painting, they are unaware of the wall behind it, the lighting above it, and the space between this and the next painting. Curators, exhibition designers, and museum directors want the public to be unaware of these details for two simple reasons: 1.) it enables the viewer to fully appreciate the works in front of them, and 2.) it subconsciously allows the viewer to be swayed by the curator into a similar opinion of the same piece of art.

The atmosphere in a museum is a creation of the curator’s imagination and passion. A modern art curator would want the public to be delighted, curious, and intrigued by the artist’s work. To ensure that the public would be guided into thinking positively, the curator would design a room with little ornamentation and color on the walls, creating a peaceful room of contemplation. It is the museum’s job to make the public forget about the outside world and to be solely aware of the objects that lie in front of them.

These details, although seemingly insignificant when describing an exhibition, are the most important tools in making the space for the public to either like or dislike art.

The wrong paint color, lighting, or pedestal height detracts from the audience's appreciation of the artwork.¹ But when a museum curator purposefully misuses curation, the exhibition design and layout can create atmospheres of chaos and dislike.

This misuse (or mis-curation) of museums can be seen during the Third Reich era of Germany. Throughout the late 19th into the 20th century, museums grew from private collections to monumental structures of cultural appreciation.² With the museum becoming a part of into society, its curation adapted to both educate and please the multi-leveled educations of different social classes. But when Hitler came into power in 1933, he used and distorted the museum and art exhibition designs for his own plan of dehumanizing, and then eliminating, those who were deemed "Degenerate."

The climax in the distortion of curation came with the opening of two art exhibitions in July of 1937: The Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition. The Great German Art Exhibition was a picture of perfection in curation. Proper lighting, space, and wall color allowed German art to be appreciated and admired by the suppressed population living under the Third Reich's control. The Degenerate Art Exhibition was the polar opposite. Inside the cramped, narrow, dimly lit rooms hung paintings, crooked and on top of one another. In between the spaces, cruel remarks scribbled in bright red swirled around the artworks. People yelled, spat, and laughed at the artwork inside. Their reactions to the artwork were caused by the curation that Adolf Ziegler, the director, created.

¹ Yale psychologist Arthur Melton would test and prove this theory of curation. Please see chapter 5 for more information.

² One book which describes in better detail about the development in museums is *The Art Museum* by Andrew McClellan

The Nazis took something as simple as a painting and a wall and made it into a new kind of propaganda. By changing the curation in the Degenerate Art Exhibition, Ziegler made certain that the public's education was solely about the primitive and unhuman like "creatures" that made these artworks. By curving the public's opinion into what Nazi ideology preached, the Degenerate Art Exhibition manipulated a people into hating another group of humans. The hatred and discomfort caused by the atmosphere within the exhibition influenced people subconsciously to hate the artworks inside. It was that hatred for the Jews, the disabled, and any other non-Aryans that Hitler wanted, and it supported the later extermination of these "degenerate" people.

Museums are a powerful tool in changing public opinion. The Nazis, seeing this power, used and abused it for their own plans. The Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition are clear examples of exactly how powerful the tiniest of details in museum curation can actually be.

CHAPTER 2: MUSEUMS IN EUROPE

Private collections and displays of artifacts began before the early 18th century with the increase in both the wealthy's resources to travel and anthropological studies occurring in tribal societies. Due to the increasing size of private collections, the term "museum" was adopted in the mid-18th century. In more specific terms, "museum" was "to be adopted as the technical term for a collection of objects of art, of monuments of antiquity or of specimens of natural history."³ The Latin root *muse* also defines this space as a building devoted to the arts. However, From the 19th century on, the expansive development from private collections to public museums holds the most importance in terms of this thesis.

Early museums established in 18th and 19th century Europe were large collections of artifacts and ethnographic displays, with no formal organization.⁴ "Hence the museums had a tendency to represent the exotic rather than the normal, what was rare rather than what was common," inferring the use of museums as a collection of odd and particular objects, instead of the modern organization of artworks intermingled with artifacts.⁵

European museums during the early 19th century were "temples" for the upper class (scholars, royalty, etc.) to gather and appreciate artwork and ethnographic artifacts. The royal collection in Great Britain, for example, was a private collection gathered by

³ Murray, David. *Museums; Their History and Their Use, with a Bibliography and List of Museums in the United Kingdom*. Glasgow: J. MacLehose and Sons, 1904. Print. 35-36

⁴ Art museums were not established as separate museums until the later half of the 19th century.

⁵ Murray, David. *Museums; Their History and Their Use*. 186

and for royalty, but it became a national gallery in 1824.⁶ Early museums also contributed to the cultural and educational gap between the upper and lower classes. Early museums were designed for entertaining the highly-educated masses, while lower classes never saw or had the time to enjoy museums.

Museums specializing in certain arts (paintings, sculpture, etc.) were separated from those that held ethnographic collections (tools, cultural identifying objects, artifacts) during the 19th century. Since private collections were for the highly educated and usually organized in someone's private living quarters, privatized collections held no real identifying labels or formal layout. For example, material culture in Berlin's early ethnographic museums were merely separated by their origin or by the estimated date of creation.⁷ When collections began getting too large, the separation of owner's private collections into the ethnographic and the art museum occurred.

For ethnographic museums, collectors displayed their objects "not for this purpose of enabling the visitor to study the art...but to excite in the spectator a feeling of wonder and surprise."⁸ A museum's purpose during the 19th century was not to create a formal education for the commoners, but rather a cultural experience. The "shock and awe" experience was to entertain instead of educate the masses. Putting more weight on the "entertainment" factor decreased the educational experience. Educational experiences seen in modern museums such as the Boston Museum of Science were nonexistent in the early 19th century.

⁶ Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Walnut Creek, CA: Published in Cooperation with the American Association for State and Local History AltaMira, 1996. Print. 32

⁷ Murray, David. *Museums; Their History and Their Use*. 88

⁸ Murray, David. *Museums; Their History and Their Use*. 89

The establishment of the art museum occurred in the 19th century, giving this century more weight in the importance of museum development. Governments in the most powerful European countries (Great Britain, France, etc.) began seeing the relationship between culture and power:

In the mid nineteenth century – the relations between culture and the government [came] to be thought of and organized in distinctly modern way via the conception that the works, forms and institutions of high culture might be enlisted for this governmental task in being assigned the purpose of civilizing a population as a whole.⁹

European museums “following the French revolution served the public through their displays of beauty to ‘inspire and uplift’ the lower classes.”¹⁰ Through the cultural development of the lower classes, governments hoped to elevate all levels of their populations to a higher standard, making for a better, more highly educated, and more cultured society.

During the early to mid-19th century, some members of the European lower class began to evolve into a distinct social rank, known as the “middle class”. Originating from the lower working class, middle class citizens had a distinct privilege of having time and money for leisure. The technological and social revolution from the 19th into the 20th century aided those who lived below the upper class to gain more jobs, and eventually more income and leisure time. Due to the creation of a middle class, the upper class felt this new social level created an opportunity to engage more people in the “civilizing” event of attending museums. The upper class so defined the museum as a place for both relaxation and enculturation. Upper classes felt that “Museums might help lift the level of

⁹Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, Routledge, New York; London;, 1995.

¹⁰Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion*. 41

popular taste and design; they might diminish the appeal of the tavern...they might help prevent riot and sedition.”¹¹ Museums “provided a context in which the visitor might rehearse and recapitulate the ordering of social life promoted by those institutions of discipline and regulation which provided a new grid for daily life,”¹² which helped to “civilize” the middle class. During the middle 19th century, “the art museum became one of Germany’s ‘representative organizations’”, in which museums organized the interior space and its objects to reflect “society’s fundamental values, forms, and modes of behavior.”¹³

European governments in the mid-19th century saw the development of the middle class to strengthen the relationship between governmental power, control, and the museum. Museums and galleries opening for the public in the second half of the 19th century were:

involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains...into progressively more open and public areas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the message of power.¹⁴

By bringing the middle and lower classes into “civilization”, “the museum public was commonly represented as an idealized projection of what patricians and social critics hoped it would become.”¹⁵ The museum began to play “a pivotal role in the formation of

¹¹ Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum*. 21

¹² Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum*. 47

¹³ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world from the end of the old regime to the rise of modernism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000. 114-115

¹⁴ Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum*. 60-61

¹⁵ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 137

the modern state and are fundamental to its conception, as among other things, a set of educated and civilizing agencies.”¹⁶

Museums educated people in two different ways. The first was cultural: people were meant to learn proper behavior from those who were above them in social rank. The second was historical. People were to see and interpret the historical importance of artworks. Decorative paintings on walls of the museum showed the history of artists and artworks inside. Historical murals were seen in museums like the Alte Pinakothek, built in 1836 in Munich, Bavaria. Inside, the “decoration of the nineteenth-century museums usually emphasized the development and nature of the art itself.”¹⁷ Using the walls of the museums as a tool, museums educated the public about history. By using all aspects of the museum space, the government felt as though their populations were given the best possible chance of becoming highly educated and better “cultured.”

Out of the two museums mentioned, the art museum became the mecca of cultural and historical education, particularly in Germany.¹⁸ In the 19th century, the new term *Bildung*, roughly translated as “the formal education through the use of art”, gave museums a defined purpose in becoming a place of education for all class levels.¹⁹ From the new education of art, the power of public opinion sprouted. The public became aware of new styles and artworks, which stimulated them to form their own opinions. However, the public was unaware that they were continuing to be educated in what artwork was considered “good.” Most museums in Germany (and in Europe in general), housed large

¹⁶ Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum* 66

¹⁷ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 133

¹⁸ A side note is that during this period the country of “Germany” was not fully developed into the present day Germany. Munich was in Bavaria and Berlin was a part of the Prussian empire. It wasn’t until Hitler’s rise did Berlin actually become a part of the German country.

¹⁹ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 115

collections of ancient Roman and Greek art. The purposeful use of Greco-Roman artifacts in conjunction with the murals sub-consciously swayed the public's perception of their government's power and strength to equal these ancient empires.

Through a classical art education, the public found a better understanding of art, its historical background, and artists' aesthetics, so that "By their information and organization, museums could teach their visitors how to compare works of art, see how the artists expressed the views of different times, and understand their distinct craftsmanship."²⁰

The power of museums in their ability to create and shape public opinion became more apparent by the architectural development from small buildings into large, temple-like structures in the 19th century. Display through architecture was the first major transition from small collections to the expansive houses of artifacts. Before, spaces for museums "were housed in palatial or temple-like structures that made the man on the street uncomfortable and discouraged his attendance."²¹ However, the Glyptothek in Munich and the Altes Museum in Berlin showed a transition from the public's initial discomfort to acceptance of the monumental structure of museums.

The Glyptothek museum, created in 1830 by King Ludwig I of Bavaria, showed traditional and classical styles of art for the public's viewing, ranging from the Egyptian to the neo-classical, with particular reference to the classics of Rome.²² The exterior architecture emphasized the temple-like Greek and Roman architecture, which was used in sub-conscious manipulation. The arches and overall architecture of the front face of the

²⁰ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 115

²¹ Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum*. 9

²² Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German Art World*. 67

building showed “The relative size, and splendid articulation of the main entrance, therefore expressed the importance of the museums public face and civic purposes.”²³

Tony Bennett, in his book *The Birth of the Museums*, explained that large and impressive architecture allowed for people to both inspect the artwork while inspecting each other.²⁴ The act of “looking”, so to speak, refers back to the civilizing aspect of museums earlier in the 19th century. Mixing the public and the private spheres while intermingling the middle and upper classes, the middle class could look and mimic the more cultured and educated upper class. In a more defined term, the middle class can be educated by the upper class on proper behavior both inside and outside of the museum, making the museum space an etiquette class.

The architecture of the Altes Museum, also built in 1830, showed similar designs to the Glyptothek. Architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel purposefully created specific rooms within the museum to intensify the visual experience, while emphasizing the museum’s power over the public. The large rotunda in the center of the building opens “through a rather small doorway that serves to amplify the impact of the opposing scale and rich decoration.”²⁵ The smaller entrance way intensified the radical difference in small and large space, without the need for an oversized room. The manipulation of space and perspective by Schinkel reflected the government’s need to amplify its importance and power over the society.

Massive monumental architecture was also used in government buildings.

Museums were “interrelated in purpose, [and] grand public buildings shared much in

²³ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German Art World*. 66

²⁴ Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum*. 52

²⁵ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German Art World*. 76

design and visual effect.”²⁶ This inevitably created a “definition” of general public taste for building designs. Public buildings ranged from governmental to libraries, museums to even local police stations. The Rathaus in Munich, as well as other large buildings, were symbols of the old and new coming together to form a symbol of governmental power.

The Rathaus’s large, steeple-like pillars, as well as the size of the building, were



Figure 1: Rathaus, Munich Germany 1900

commonly seen in other government buildings (**figure 1**). All public and governmental buildings had one common thread in its architectural design: “Grand vistas bathed in radiant light, dizzying rows of columns, and

radical shifts in elevation and perspective gave [the] museum and related building types a

sublime and transcendent aura.”²⁷

The Pinakothek was such an ideal example of museum monumentality, that it became the exemplar standard for German museums. What was different about the Pinakothek, however, was that it anticipated the artifacts that would be placed within the museum. In other words, previous museums like the Glyptothek and the Altes museum created the space but not the proper atmosphere for its artifacts. By focusing on the artifacts first,

The elevations’ columns and pilasters correspond[ed] to the divisions of the cabinets and loggia, the extensions of the roofs provided overhead light for the

²⁶ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 60

²⁷ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 58-59

central rooms; the large windows on south expanded the space of loggia, and the smaller windows to the north were designed to light the cabinets.²⁸

The Pinakothek satisfied the preservation and curational needs of the artworks before even becoming part of the exhibition, thus eliminating problems with lighting and space, among other problems which occurred in other museums.

One of the most dangerous yet most common natural weapons against artifacts is light. Light becomes a problem in both illuminating the space and causing deterioration of particular works of art. The delicate balance of the museums during the developmental stages was done by the use of natural light and side windows, which became the most common display techniques throughout many of the more popular museums in Europe. Dr. A. B. Meyers, a museum specialist in the early 20th century, travelled throughout Great Britain and eastern Europe identifying crucial problems and how to help to alleviate them. One major point emphasized in his work was light and window placement: "In regard to lighting Dr. Meyer is emphatically of the opinion that the proper method is by side windows and preferably by windows on both sides of exhibition halls, in order to check the reflection from the glass in cases standing in shadow."²⁹

Although proper lighting techniques became common in museums, the initial development of display and exhibition techniques varied from country to country, until the start of World War II. In France, the Louvre museum was open to the public beginning in the late 18th century, where:

the gallery admitted the public four days a week, but the rooms were often dark because no artificial light was provided; on two days, not more than fifty students

²⁸ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 124

²⁹ L., F. A. "Dr. Meyer on Some European Museums." *Science* 16.415 (1902): 941-43. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 Oct. 2016. 941

were allowed to copy the pictures...Until after World War I, the pictures were crowded together from floor to ceiling.³⁰

The over-crowding of paintings, seen in Samuel Morse's Gallery of the Louvre (**figure 2**), was a common sight in many museums during the transitional period of private collections to public domains. This manner of display remained in place for a

long period of time, until the employees at the Louvre saw the restructuring of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts during the 1840s. The MFA had a "subtle but significant turn to lighter walls, a reduction in number of pictures, and more



Figure 2: Gallery of the Louvre, Samuel Morse 1831

intimate viewing, with the removal of guard rails," which became a growing display trend in Europe, especially in German museums.³¹ In a 1913 German museum survey, this cluttered display design was said to affect the visitor by having their "eye race from one object to another in crowded spaces, often captured by superficial things and overlooking what is significant until he is finally totally exhausted."³²

Organization of the exhibitions inside the Louvre also came from early developments in Europe:

the pictures were hung frame to frame from floor to ceiling by school (which were organized French, Italian, and Northern) but within schools, according to the miscellaneous principle, there were no labels, so that the museum was a confusing labyrinth for the untutored visitor.

³⁰ Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion*. 33

³¹ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 125

³² McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 126

Changes in exhibition execution took place in the main gallery of the Louvre in 1801, although wasn't fully finished until the 1840s. The gallery's first phase in reorganization went from an amalgamation of pictures to the "more rationally arranged on a chronological principle."³³ This chronological categorization lent itself to a furthering of organization based on artistic aesthetics:

At first the displays were arranged to benefit the aesthetic, the scholar, the collector... [in the 18th century] the collection usually was arranged wither aesthetically or according to the principles of technical classifications in chronological or stylistic orders.³⁴

The public adjusted to the hanging and organization of the museum quite well. After seeing the MFA in Boston, the Louvre and other "public art museums developed new forms of exhibition that 'involved an instruction in history and cultures, periods and schools.'" By removing the chaotic and claustrophobic ordering that the Louvre and many other museums exhibited in the early 18th century, the "hanging paintings in a row [became a common theme] so that 'the individual work is implied to be following this and leading to that.'"³⁵



Collections and exhibition displays

Figure 3: Interior of the Glyptothek

also changed in the Glyptothek of Germany (**figure 3**). However, museum professionals debated about a cultural or chronological organization of artwork. J.M. Wagner, the King's personal architectural agent in Rome, wanted the Glyptothek to have "a thematic

³³ This and the prior quote taken from: Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion*. 29

³⁴ Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion*. 9

³⁵ This and prior quote taken from: Bennett, Tony. *The birth of the museum*. 44

organization that would direct the visitor's attention to individual objects – not their aesthetics.”³⁶ The thematic organization held up in the Altes Museum. With much of the collection being purely Roman and Greek sculpture, visitors saw the timeless appearance of the classical period.³⁷ For Dr. Meyer, he saw “The arrangement of natural history collections on a geographical basis is also dwelt on in various places, and this has always seemed to the [best] ...method by far,” as supporting the geographical and cultural organization to be better suited for museums of natural history.³⁸

In opposition to this, the Glyptothek stayed with the chronological sequence, which allowed the “visitor [to follow] the development of art, sees their rise and decline, and always experiences the expectations of the next step and the memory of the last under the impression of the present.”³⁹ This is also seen in the room layout of the Glyptothek. By using the arches and domes inspired by Rome, architect Leo von Klenze:

Use[d] these elements to create divisions in the interior space, which he then reinforced by varying the designs of the floors and of the decorations stretching above the cornices across the ceiling...the decoration enhanced the distinctions between the various stages through which the visitor passed.⁴⁰

The Germanic Museum of Art in Nuremberg, established in 1832, also used the chronological organization for its artworks. Specializing in Roman antiquity, the museum was “arranged to tell the history of German land and the German people; chapter by chapter, and subject, from earliest period down to the present”.⁴¹ The chronological organization created a connection between the German people to the great empire of Rome. This was seen through illustrating “civil life and ecclesiastical science, [which] are

³⁶ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 69

³⁷ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 76

³⁸ L., F. A. "Dr. Meyer on Some European Museums". 943

³⁹ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 69

⁴⁰ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 67

⁴¹ Murray, David. *Museums; Their History and Their Use*. 235

set out in order, so that the student [had] everything grouped before him and the mere passer-by [could] read and understand their importance.”⁴² Similar to the Pinakothek, they “arranged the pictures historically but also divided them by size, so that the smaller works would not be overwhelmed by the larger ones.”⁴³ The Museums ability to connect political powers with past civilizations became a repeated theme throughout the 19th century and into the Third Reich.

The interior design of museums also changed in Europe during the middle 19th century. In the Glyopthek, “The separate artworks on display stood in front of plain walls, where they could be seen without distraction. Most of the objects were elevated on small platforms or pedestals; the larger pieces stood alone, usually in the center of the room.”⁴⁴ Artwork standing alone, dominating the center of rooms, or hung with space between became the most important trend of museums in Europe, which continued into the 20th century.

Art museums that developed during this period can be identified as aesthetic museums. With the beauty of the art and the building in mind, the exhibition had to provoke an emotional connection between the public and its art:

From the design point of view, in an aesthetic exhibition, objects will need to be presented sensitively, and in such a way that their particular visual qualities can be fully appreciated. This may well require an environment which is also aesthetically pleasing, thus heightening the emotive response in the viewer.⁴⁵

Museums in Europe became a place to culturally develop the countries’ soul and create a better sense of one, united nation. The use of power through these large

⁴² Murray, David. *Museums; Their History and Their Use*. 236

⁴³ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 124

⁴⁴ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art world*. 69

⁴⁵ Belcher, Michael. *Exhibitions in Museums*. Leicester: Leicester UP, 1991. 53-164. Print. 53

institutions can be later seen in the influential manipulation of the people's opinion on art style and different cultures. Museums "allow[ed] the objects on display to not just be seen but seen through to establish some communion with the invisible to which they beckon."

At the turn of the 20th century, museum development in Europe and The United States became even more evident. Museums no longer were just an established place to educate the population or to display a private collection of paintings. They became part of everyday life. By the 20th century, the museum had been a public space for approximately one hundred years. After one hundred years, museums established:

Popular service encouraging popular enjoyment and interest; effective appeal to the people by a constructive response to the demand of the public for better means of enlightenment, growth and profit – to encourage popular aspirations leading toward knowledge and culture and happiness – to serve the people by helping to elevate.⁴⁶

Museums were integrated into ordinary life, becoming places of entertainment and understanding, not just houses of education. Museums in the United States, like the St. Louis Museum of Art, began establishing lectures, special exhibits, and even impromptu free-admission days and other special events for museumgoers, which increased the "entertainment" and "value" factor for the museum. German museums became an important part of the increasing population in the early 1900s; "In Germany the museums have been central factors in an industrial revolution which has greatly modified German life and made itself felt whatever the products of the nationals compete."⁴⁷ No longer were museums primarily for scholars or people of the upper class;

⁴⁶ St. Louis Museum of Art. "the Modern Art Museum." *Bulletin of the City Art Museum of St. Louis*. 4

⁴⁷ St. Louis Art Museum. "The Modern Art Museum." 5

now were accessible for the average person in society. However, the power of museums over the population and their artifacts inside still held true:

The western museums have had a certain leadership in the democratization and popularizing of museum service, partly because the western community has awaked suddenly to the appreciation of values which only very gradually have become appreciated elsewhere, and, therefore, the western city inevitably has turned to the museum for services which in other places are scatted among various institutions that have gradually appeared upon the scene in response to a slower evolution of civic spirit.⁴⁸

Adding paintings from past empires, in accordance with the decoration of the walls in the museums themselves, museums became the center stage for cultural revolution and political control. Finer details in German museums, like that of wall decoration and frescos, revealed the inner details of government display at work:

Sometimes there were allegorical depictions of art developments in Leipzig Grosse represented architecture with Egypt, sculpture with ancient Greece, painting in Italy, and finally music – ‘the purest expression of the most comprehensive aesthetic sense’ – with Germany.⁴⁹

Museum directors began believing that pure culture and the most comprehensive form of art came out of Germany.⁵⁰ These beliefs allowed directors to tie Germany to great civilizations within the museum space, exhibiting the psychological power by manipulating the public’s opinion into forms of nationalism. Germany would be united through the Third Reich not only by government and politics, but also through culture. As the 20th century progressed, German culture would be forced into the creation of an “Aryan” race that was bolstered by the ideology of Hitler. With his new sense of the “German soul”, Hitler would identify art and museums as a new outlet for the NSDAP racial agenda to take place.

⁴⁸ St. Louis Art Museum. “The Modern Art Museum.” 6

⁴⁹ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German art World*. 133

⁵⁰ Sheehan, James J. *Museums in the German Art World*. 126-128

CHAPTER 3: HITLER THE ARTIST

German anti-Semitism began well before the 19th century, however with such works as Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man* in 1871, cultural and evolutionary based anti-Semitism began to separate into distinct sections of anti-Semitism. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin analyzed the evolution of the idealized man through the comparative evolution of animal adaptation. Early German authors and thinkers adapted this text to support their beliefs of a racially pure German empire. "The myth of the blond, blue-eyed Nordic hero as the embodiment of the Future of the Western Nation"⁵¹ was sprung from essays, novels, and other outlets from German thinkers such as Georg von Schonerer, composer Richard Wagner, and the essays of Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

The racially fueled anti-Semitism of the 19th and 20th centuries shaped Hitler's early political and ideological platform. In the 20th century, Georg von Schonerer, an anti-Semitic politician, proposed the idea that the two German "states" (Austria and Weimar Republic) should be turned into one unified Reich, claiming "anti-Semitism [to be] the 'main pillar of a true folkish mentality and thus...the greatest achievement of this century.'"⁵² Greatly influenced, Hitler would eventually use von Schonerer's greeting from "The Cult of the Führer" for his own reign: "heil".

But Hitler's obsession with a purified Aryan culture had already begun as a child. Born in the Austrian town of Braunau in 1889, Hitler was raised in a rigidly structured

⁵¹ This and information on Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man* found in: Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 3

⁵² Wistrich, Robert S. "From Weimar to Hitler." *Hitler and the Holocaust*. New York: Modern Library, 2001. 31-58. Web

and strict household.⁵³ Although sheltered, Hitler acquired some anti-Semitic and Christian based essays. His later obsession with Georg von Schonerer stemmed from his time in the Austrian city of Linz, where anti-Semitic papers were more readily available.

Hitler was also influenced by Karl Lueger, Vienna leader of the Christian-Social Party. Lueger “fused Catholic prejudice against the ‘Christ Killers’ with the more modern anti-capitalist resentments of a lower middle class facing economic crisis.”⁵⁴ The use of Christianity in Hitler’s propaganda would later be seen in his representation of pure Aryan art. Hitler’s attempt to connect himself and Aryan art to the divine Christ and Hitler’s delivery of salvation would also be derived from Lueger’s ideology.⁵⁵

Perhaps the most influential character in Hitler’s anti-Semitism was that of composer Richard Wagner. After seeing a performance of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, “His relationship with Wagner [became] an almost psychotic nature... he talked about the ‘hysterical excitement’ that overcame him... Wagner’s idea about blood brother-ship and his overt anti-Semitism found their way into Hitler’s ideology.”⁵⁶ Anti-Semitism was integrated throughout most of Wagner’s musical performances, as well as written essays dating back to the 1850’s. In these works, Wagner represented Jews as “the ‘evil conscience of our modern civilization’ or, in a phrase much repeated by the Nazis, ‘the plastic demon of the decline of mankind.’”⁵⁷

Wagner’s personal struggle between his longing for conservative traditionalism and his desire to develop modern music fueled his anti-Semitism. Although Wagner

⁵³ This and information on the Cult of the Fuhrer found in: Wistrich, Robert S. “From Weimar to Hitler.” 35

⁵⁴ Wistrich, Robert S. “From Weimar to Hitler” 36

⁵⁵ Please refer to Chapter 4 “German Art and Art Shows” for a further analysis of Christianity in Artwork.

⁵⁶ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. New York: H.N Abrams, 1992. Print.

⁵⁷ Wistrich, Robert S. “From Weimar to Hitler.” 37

longed for the traditional cohesion of German society's past, he was conflicted in his modern concepts of composition. Wagner revolutionized musical composition with his dramatic and emotional operas. In a time when "The widespread diagnosis of modernity [was] a heartless juggernaut", Wagner's operatic experience included "specific dramatizations of [the relationship between traditional and modernity], [which] were dedicated by the culture that received them."⁵⁸

Wagner's ideas on art and its ability to liberate one's soul would later influence Hitler to become an artist-dictator. In some of Wagner's earlier works, he described that "A true artist was thus necessarily revolutionary: the very exercise of this liberty as an artist implied a kind of negation of the real world that was reflected in his works." Essays such as *Art and Revolution* from 1849 expressed that: "If a Greek work of art contained the spirit of a fine nation, the artwork of the future would surely contain the spirit of a human race freed from all limitations of a national nature."⁵⁹ Spirit and art would later become adapted and inserted into the installation of the Great German Art Exhibition.

Wagner's earlier essays about the myth of the Jew and their capability of creating art showed another side of his anti-Semitism. In his texts, Wagner argued that "art is 'the presentation of religion in lively form'... The capacity of the Germans to make the Divine visible in nature, and to illuminate the sensuous with spiritual values, fulfills Wagner's demands for art to become religion."⁶⁰ Wagner supported the idea of building a relationship between art and Christianity. By creating a bond between these two ideas,

⁵⁸ Kramer, Lawrence. "Enchantment and Modernity: Wagner the Symptom." *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss*, 1st ed., University of California Press, 2004, pp. 107–127

⁵⁹ This and previous quote taken from: Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 9-10

⁶⁰ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 130

Wagner showed that the Jews could not produce art due to their lack of an “acceptable” religion.

Art and its relationship with religion was also fundamental in the works of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, a well-known British born German philosopher. In his essay, entitled *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, Chamberlain proclaimed:

And it is only now, in the light of our philosophy, that this inner meaning has become clear; it is only now – when the faultless mechanism of all phenomena is irrefutably proved – that we are able to purge religion of the last trace of materialism. But hereby art becomes more and more indispensable...it is something in the inmost recesses of our souls.⁶¹

Art and religion was not just bounded together, but became interlaced with one another. If someone had no soul, they could not produce art.

The Wagnerian terms “revolutionary” and “conservative” were also constant companions, much like art and religion. These terms would “characterize the ideological liberty of Nazism.”⁶² Revolution through conservative traditional culture became “without much difficulty...superimposed [as a] double nature, at once human and divine, that the Christian West had attributed.”⁶³ In Hitler’s life:

[He] worked as a veritable artist while making sure that the traditional fine arts – painting, sculpture, and architecture – on the contrary preserved their conservative (or as Hitler preferred to say, ‘eternal’) character, which underpinned his authority and legitimated his power.⁶⁴

Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s *The Foundation of the Nineteenth Century* also contributed to this aspect of Hitler’s ideology. In his 500 plus pages of text, Chamberlain outlines the Jew’s entrance into German society and the apparent “corruption” that

⁶¹ Chamberlain, Houston Stewart. *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. *Archives.org*. Web. 9 Feb. 2017.

⁶² Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 9

⁶³ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 9

⁶⁴ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 12

follows. When discussing Jews entering into Western History, Chamberlain explains that “I have brought forward neither the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Jew; ‘no one is good.’”⁶⁵

The Aryan soul and its connection to the German ideal reoccurs in Nazi lore. People such as Alfred Rosenberg, a German theorist and later a major influence in Hitler’s propaganda, believed that the reflection of the soul can be found in the capability of creating dreams. Rosenberg believed that “There were those that, having no dreams, [could allow] the reality produced by dreams of the superior race to disappear.”⁶⁶ Rosenberg’s reference to people having the ability to dream also aligns with the actual dream of the Nazi Party’s purified culture. By creating the stereotype that Jews and other undesirables could not produce dreams, the Nazi Party isolated these people from German society even more.

However, when looking at Hitler’s developing ideology, one must look at his earlier years as an artist. His love for the traditional art style stemmed from his youth as an avid, although unsuccessful, artist. After being rejected from the Vienna Art Academy twice, Hitler moved to Munich in 1913.⁶⁷ When living in Munich, “He made a modest, at times perhaps even meager, but nonetheless secure living through cheap sales of small-scale oil paintings and watercolors, steady work that continued to keep him busy and solvent.”⁶⁸ Unfortunately for Hitler:

⁶⁵ Chamberlain, Houston Stewart. *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. 485

⁶⁶ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 91

⁶⁷ His first rejection was due to failing his test drawings after the preliminary exams; the second was not being admitted to the exams for failing his portfolio. From Werner, Alfred. "Hitler's Kampf against Modern Art: A Retrospect." *The Antioch Review* 26.1 (1966): 56-67. Web.

⁶⁸ Werckmeister, O. K. "Hitler the Artist." *Critical Inquiry* 23.2 (1997): 270-97. Web.

Hitler the painter was hence no dilettante but a professional artist on the lowest level: without training, without colleagues, without dealers, without shows, with no artists' group to join, yet steadily at work and on the market and with a minimal but rising income.

Having a small, but acceptable career, Hitler found “several upper-middle-class customers who entrusted him with individually negotiated commissions,” creating minimal work, although not what Hitler had dreamed of.⁶⁹

After his second failed attempt to attend the Academy, the professors suggested a career in architecture based on Hitler’s extremely static and stiff portrayals of the human form, and his portfolio of art mainly being watercolors of architecture.⁷⁰ Hitler called this a disgrace. To cope with his rejection, Hitler reasoned that his artwork was not accepted because these professors could not comprehend art due to their Jewish heritage, resembling Wagner’s earlier statements concerning Jews, religion, and art. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler claimed that “What [Jews] do accomplish in the field of art [was] either patchwork or intellectual theft. Thus, the Jew lacks those qualities which distinguish the races that are creative and hence culturally blessed.”⁷¹

As Hitler continued to live as a starving artist, the 1910’s defined itself as the amplification of the distorted connection between race and art. In 1919, the term Jew morphed from identifying a religion to now meaning/including race.⁷² During that same time, Hitler began transitioning from a humble artist to a budding politician. His growing ideology of Jews and race was evident with his increased involvement in different racially and nationally centered groups. The largest and most prominent group that

⁶⁹ This and previous quote taken from: Werckmeister, O.K. “Hitler the Artist”. 277-278

⁷⁰ Werner, Alfred. “Hitler’s Kampf against Modern Art: A Retrospect.” 60

⁷¹ Gigliotti, Simone, and Berel Lang. "Nation and Race." *The Holocaust: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005. 66-80. Print.

⁷² Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 3

accepted Hitler was the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP) in 1919. At first the party was small, staying within the borders of Bavaria between 1919 to 1924, and continued to be a minor party in the Weimar government until the 1930 elections.⁷³ Nationalism was infused in the party's core beliefs. For instance, "Article 4 of the NSDAP program, which later inspired the 1935 Nuremberg laws, made it clear that only 'persons of German blood' could be nationals and therefore citizens."⁷⁴ Hitler's patriotic thirst for German culture was the perfect fit for the radical NSDAP, who "stood for 'the uniting of all Germans within one Greater Germany' on the basis of national self-determination."⁷⁵

Occurring simultaneously in Germany alongside the rise of NSDAP, Expressionist art created by such artists' groups like Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter made "publications of important radical periodicals to which artist contributed, and the intense response by artists and writers to the cataclysmic events of the First World War."⁷⁵ Essays and letters written to one another justified the artist's thought processes. For instance, Wassily Kandinsky, one of the founding members of Der Blaue Reiter, often wrote to Arnold Schoenberg, his friend and modern Jewish musical composer. In letters to each other, Schoenberg and Kandinsky wrote about their belief in dissonance: that colors connect to certain sounds and emotions. For Kandinsky, his belief was that:

⁷³ Wistrich, Robert S. "From Weimar to Hitler." 34

⁷⁴ Wistrich, Robert S. "From Weimar to Hitler." 32

⁷⁵ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 3

[dissonance] was of the greatest necessity for musicians at the time, it was for painters only a matter of secondary importance; and indeed, in music any deviation from traditional harmony was precisely definable by the prescribed rules, whereas no such code existed in painting.⁷⁶

These personal letters and other publications written by Kandinsky and Schoenberg made them targets for later abuse by NSDAP propaganda. The abuse would later force Schoenberg, among other modernists in both the music and art, to flee Germany.

Like Schoenberg and Kandinsky, other modern artists from their sub-sections of art movements (Futurists, Cubists, Expressionists) found their art to be a revolution; not like the cultural takeover the NSDAP claimed, but as an artistic expression. Their revolution hoped to boost German society into a new era of art. However, Hitler viewed any art called “modern art” as an opportunity for a similar event like the Bolshevik revolution of 1919 to occur in Germany. Modern art challenged “conventional culture as early as before the First World War, [they believed it] had heralded, anticipated, or even prepared the political revolution now in progress”, which made Hitler fearful of Germany’s future should modern art overtake traditionalism.⁷⁷ After the creation of the Weimar Republic and the defeat of Germany in World War I, Jewish involvement in modern art increased in areas such as critiques, dealers, and artists.⁷⁸

As modern art progressed in its development, anti-modernists began connecting Jews to these new avant-garde artists, with the assumption that Jews and avant-garde

⁷⁶ Hahl-Koch, Jelena: John C. Crawford; Arnold Schoenberg; Wassily Kandinsky. *Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures, and Documents*. Review by: Rudolf Arnheim. The Musical Quarterly Vol. 71, No. 1 (1985), pp. 92-95. Oxford University Press

⁷⁷ Werckmeister, O.K. “Hitler the Artist.” 282

⁷⁸ Levitt, Morton, P. “Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics.” 178

were both “insane”.⁷⁹ After World War I, early statements of the official Nazi party insisted that “Movements such as Expressionism, Cubism, and Dada were... intellectual, elitist, and foreign by the demoralized nation and linked to the economic collapse, which was blamed on a supposed international conspiracy of Communists and Jews.”⁸⁰

NSDAP propaganda created more tension in German society with “the intensive post-1918 propaganda of Volkish anti-Semitic organizations that branded Jews with the stigma of wartime profiteering...and responsibility for the defeat in war.”⁸¹ By the early 1920’s, Hitler and the NSDAP exploited the power art had on the population, and manipulated propaganda to aide in the growth of the party through the 2nd half of the 1920’s. This exploitation and expressive political jargon continued to solidify Hitler’s new position as head of the NSDAP: “He was unscrupulous in his readiness to seize every opportunity to enhance his position and to *destroy* – not defeat – his *enemies* – not opponents,” which created the political atmosphere of war against Hitler’s “enemies”.⁸²

The NSDAP’s racially fueled agenda furthered Hitler’s attack on modernist painters. Since these artists were supposedly connected to the Bolshevik revolution, modernists were attacked for their own “revolution” on traditional and academic art. The installation of these new ideas of art only added to Hitler’s hate of Jews. As Hitler climbed to the top of the NDSAP in 1921, in “His recorded speeches from the period between the autumn of 1919 and November 1923 he addresses art solely in the negative,

⁷⁹ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 3

⁸⁰ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 3

⁸¹ Wistrich, Robert S. “From Weimar to Hitler.” 32

⁸² Gole, Henry G., and Edward M. Coffman. “Hitler’s Germany.” *Exposing the Third Reich: Colonel Truman Smith in Hitler's Germany*, University Press of Kentucky, 2013, pp. 130.

as a target of his counterrevolutionary polemics, rather than as an ideal to suit his own political tenets and goals.”⁸³

After becoming the propaganda chief for the NSDAP in 1923, Hitler utilized his new position to attack modern art, which he deemed as “bad”. As the party grew in numbers, the:

Constant refrain of the political right was the singling out of radical socialists and Communists of Jewish origin for their roles in the abortive revolutions of 1918 and 19, thus accrediting the idea that Jews were inclined toward subversive activity and revolution.⁸⁴

Hitler’s thoughts on art and propaganda are seen in *Mein Kampf*, written while jailed in Munich for the failed Beer Hall Putsch on November 8-9, 1923. During his sentence, Hitler struggled with Germany’s “heavy burden” brought upon it by the Jews. His struggle was so immense that “Hitler labored to place art as he understood it at the very center of his state. His obsession with art was as all-encompassing as his anti-Semitism: not surprisingly, the two obsessions were often linked.”⁸⁵

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote his developing ideology as the proper solution to Germany’s problems following WWI. In the beginning of his essay, Hitler wrote that “In the course of the centuries their [Jews’] outward appearance had become Europeanized and had taken on a human look; in fact, I even took them for German.”⁸⁶ Hitler took this initial acceptance as both a mistake and a warning; Jews were becoming too much like his ideal Aryan race. His later observations saw the “true” Jew as being the cause of German cultural “decomposition.” Seeing beyond the Jews’ deception, Hitler thought

⁸³ Werckmeister, O.K. “Hitler the Artist.” 279

⁸⁴ Wistrich, Robert S. “From Weimar to Hitler.” 33

⁸⁵ Levitt, Morton, P. “Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics.” 176

⁸⁶ Giglotti, Simone and Berel Lang [Adolf Hitler]. “Nation and Race.” 68

“The fact that nine tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash, and theatrical idiocracy can be set to the account of a people, constituting hardly one hundredth of all the country’s inhabitants,” calling an end to the further destruction of German culture.⁸⁷ Hitler solidified his belief that “The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew.”⁸⁸

Mein Kampf became so influential that by the time the Nazis came to power that it had become Germany’s second Bible. By 1932, around 90,000 copies were sold, coming only second to the actual Bible. *Mein Kampf* grew into a standard part of ordinary life: “It was almost obligatory – and certainly politic – to present a copy to a bride and groom at their wedding, and nearly every school child received one on graduation.” And by the time World War II was declared, 6 million copies of the Nazi Bible (*Mein Kampf*) had been sold.⁸⁹

The visual arts were prominent within the pages of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. For example, Hitler “argued that art is a direct expression of a nation, and can therefore be only understood and valued by the people of that nation. ‘Modern art’ was to him a contradiction in terms, because true art is a timeless part of the universal essence of the people.”⁹⁰

The inclusion of modern art as a tool for racial segregation was effective later on in his rise to total control;

⁸⁷ Giglotti, Simone and Berel Lang [Adolf Hitler]. “Nation and Race.” 73

⁸⁸ Giglotti, Simone and Berel Lang [Adolf Hitler]. “Nation and Race.” 75

⁸⁹ Shirer, William L. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011. Print. 81

⁹⁰ Segal, Joes. “National and Degenerate Art: The Third Reich.” *Art and Politics: Between Purity and Propaganda*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2016, pp. 45–60

The campaign against modern art also served a political objective: the creation of a collective enemy. Exactly because many people found modern art difficult to understand, it was relatively easy to expose it as a fraud. As Hitler had written in his autobiography...true art will be immediately recognized and understood by the people.⁹¹

After being released from jail, Hitler's attack on modern art subsided from 1924 to 1927, as he strengthened his political position.⁹² Transitioning attacks on artists to attacks on political rivals made Hitler look more like a powerful politician, and less like a political artist. With the NSDAP rising in popularity, Hitler made the new-found spotlight a platform for his creation of one Reich, which was earlier inspired from Georg von Schonerer. During a speech entitled "National Socialism and Art Policy" in Munich on January 26th, 1928, Hitler used the "lack of appreciation for modern art on the part of a majority of the populace as a symptom of their alienation from an elected government that does not truly represent them," reestablishing the false accusation that modern art was connected to the failed Weimar Republic.⁹³ That connection showed the German people their "repressed" culture prior to the freedom the Third Reich promised.

Hitler's chancellorship in January 1933 allowed his power to grow over both the political and cultural realms of Germany. The newly powerful Third Reich began taking "anti-modern measures of cultural policy concerning the arts" within months after Hitler's win, beginning with the "dismissals of museum officials and art professors" and

⁹¹ Segal, Joes. "National and Degenerate Art: The Third Reich." 52-53.

⁹² Werckmeister, O.K. "Hitler the Artist." 283

⁹³ Werchmeister, O.K. "Hitler the Artist." 284

later creating “defamatory exhibitions of modern art [which] were urged upon the new government by this constituency.”⁹⁴

The new art policies lead to art and museum directors becoming some of the first victims of the non-Aryan purge. Causing the biggest change in museum directorships was the 7 April 1933 Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which served to fire individuals who were either “non-Aryan or politically ‘unreliable,’” and was also invoked in dismissing museum directors, and numerous professors of art academies.⁹⁵ Many people in the art and music world, such as composers, artists, professors and art critics, were affected by the April 1933 Law. Most of the musicians, composers, and artists were either victims of the later concentration camps or fled the country by the late 1930’s, leaving Germany with only “pure” German artists behind.

Some directors were appointed directly from the Nazi party, while others were dismissed straight away. Some directors tried to accommodate the Reich policies, but their love for modern art and the added pressure of the ever-changing public opinions towards art forced them out of employment. Two specific examples are of Ludwig Justi and Alois Schardt, two directors of Berlin’s Nationalgalerie. Before the war, the Nationalgalerie acquired one of the largest collections of modern art. After Hitler became Chancellor, he began his quest of creating stricter art policies. When Justi saw the tides turning for modern works, he tried accommodating new Nazi exhibition structures, which were inspired by J.M Wagner’s earlier desires for thematic organization.⁹⁶ For instance: “The chronological divisions were altered; for example, works by the French

⁹⁴ Werchmeister, O.K. “Hitler the Artist”. 288

⁹⁵ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. Cary, US: Oxford University Press (US), 2006. ProQuest ebrary.

⁹⁶ Please refer to chapter two about J.M Wagner’s ideas on cultural organization.

impressionists and the German impressionist Max Liebermann were returned to the main building and integrated into nineteenth century works.”⁹⁷ Themes, artistic styles, and other more culturally identifying subjects were the new way museums should be organized.

This type of display tried to impress the Nationalists while still holding onto the original essence of chronological organization, which helped the interpretation of art creation through time.⁹⁸ But the inclusion of modern artists (even though some were German) was still too much for some critics:

The target was no longer the work of individual artists nor the commitment of a handful of art lovers, but the artists’ continuous right to express themselves. The violence of the attack and the unfair means employed were clearly revealed in the Libelous and spiteful tone that underlay the criticism of Justi’s plan for the Nationalgalerie.⁹⁹

The climax that led to Justi’s removal occurred after much debate about the Nationalgalerie itself. After 1933, Jews and their artwork became a “threat” to the German people. German artists, included among them Fritz, Ulrich and Peter Weiss, began to complain that their artworks were displayed in the same rooms as Jewish artworks.¹⁰⁰ The June 13, 1933 decree by Hitler of the Kronprinzen-Palais museum decided that “the Kronprinzen-Palais should be purged in a sense outlined in his program, but that the works it contained should not be destroyed but preserved as documents of a

⁹⁷ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 105

⁹⁸ The use of chronological versus national identity was changed in museums. As nationalism grew, the chronological sequence of display was changed.

⁹⁹ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 106

¹⁰⁰ The full names of these artists are unknown due to their lack of popularity and overall collections.

somber chapter in German History.”¹⁰¹ That final blow to all modern and Jewish works was the last step in Justi’s removal a few months later.

Alois Schardt, an assistant to Justi, became the new director of the Nationalgalerie. The more conservative of the two, Schardt was given the opportunity for directorship due to his knowledge and opinion of German art. However, Schardt’s empathy for modern art (which was learned from Justi) remained deeply rooted in his director aesthetic. Schardt viewed:

The ‘new age’ demanded ‘clear and unambiguous statements, proceeding from characterful philosophical rights.’ He believed there were three basic trends in art that had run parallel throughout the millennia, and which he termed classicistic, naturalistic, and romantic.¹⁰²

Schardt’s preference to specific themes of art were closely related to the Nazi art aesthetic.¹⁰³ However, after giving a lecture where he didn’t attack modern art, Schardt was given a notice from the “kultursminister...forbidding him to make ‘any written or verbal statement in public.’”¹⁰⁴ In addition, after the 1933 Professional Civil Service Restoration act, Schardt was forced to sign a contract stating his Aryan origins, as well as to force *Mein Kampf* as required reading for all employees.

Schardt’s changed his curation and directorship of the Nationalgalerie as Nazi members began challenging his rights as a director. To satisfy the growing Nazi aesthetic, Schardt “began by closing almost every building...the exhibition rooms were painted using a process tested in Halle, tours of inspection were made all over Germany to gather information about new artistic trends.” Schardt did fold under Nazi pressure to secure his

¹⁰¹ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 107

¹⁰² This and previous quote taken from: Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 107-109

¹⁰³ See chapter 4 for a more detailed look at the styles of proper German art.

¹⁰⁴ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 109

job, however “he still tried to ensure that the work of modern artists was represented at the Nationalgalerie by arranging exchanges with the artists themselves: works representing the human figure, for example, were replaced by landscapes or still-lives.”¹⁰⁵

Schardt’s need to change exhibition design may have accelerated with the introduction of Nazi control, but artists and even museum directors before 1933 were still attacked for wanting pure modern art exhibits.¹⁰⁶ With the intense hatred for modern art, Schardt had to take into consideration the controlled opinion of the Nazi party influencing public taste. In a small exhibition on December 15, 1933, where “more than fifty of the most distinctive works of modern art remained in storage, so that the public’s perception of modern art was decidedly altered,” the Nazis triumphed in manipulating public opinion.¹⁰⁷ By working with artists to adapt with the new styles of German art, both Schardt and the Nazis made what they believed was proper “modern” art.¹⁰⁸ Soon after this exhibition, Schardt was ultimately removed, and by October 30th, 1936, the Nationalgalerie was closed.

With trained museum directors being removed from their positions, the role of artist and dictator for Hitler continued to grow stronger. During his time as the Führer, “Hitler saw himself, at least claimed repeatedly over the years of his dictatorship that he saw himself principally as an artist.”¹⁰⁹ Hitler was also influenced to take this role as both a dictator and artist from other political leaders who shared the same passion and belief

¹⁰⁵ This and the previous quote taken from: Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 109-110

¹⁰⁶ “Pure” in this case meaning only showing works of modern artists from the German Expressionism era and beyond.

¹⁰⁷ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 110

¹⁰⁸ See chapter 4 for a more detailed explanation of Aryan art

¹⁰⁹ Levitt, Morton, P. "Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics." *Journal of Modern Literature* 26.3 (2003): 175-178. *Project MUSE*. Web. 4 Sept. 2016.

that art held a higher meaning within the political spectrum. For example, Mussolini “Liked to emphasize the violent passion [which] inspired him by the masses he saw as his material. In his view, which likened him to an artist...was an essential feature of his political genius...it was also necessary for the masses to become an object for him.”¹¹⁰

Mussolini’s imagery of a single man molding the masses was one that Hitler often stole for his own use. This is found in a political cartoon of Hitler (figure 4) depicting him in an artist’s frock, smashing a clay rendering of a chaotic mass of people, into one majestic and strong, unified man. This image was Hitler’s ultimate dream: becoming the artist-dictator who created the new man

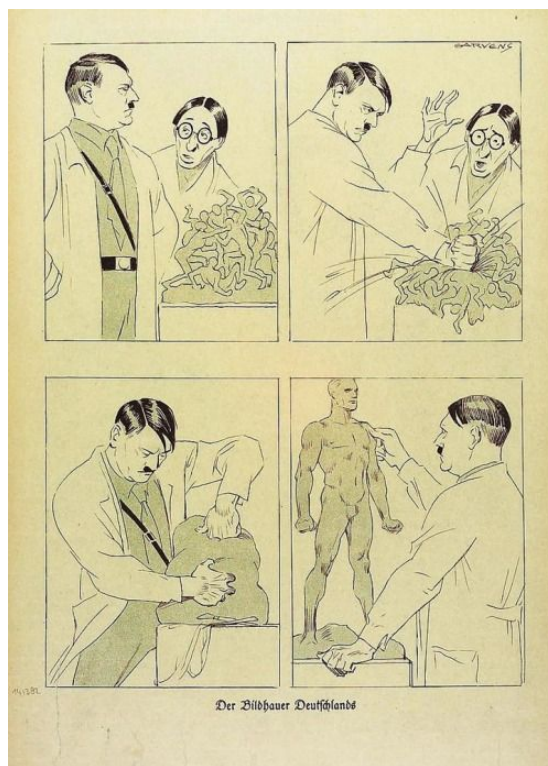


Figure 4: *The Sculptor*, 1933

of Germany. Thus “Molded by the hands of the artist-Führer, the people had finally taken the only form that could legitimate Hitler’s power, a form that roughly approximated the Greek classicism whose sole heir he believed the spirit of the German people to be.”¹¹¹

Maximilien Robespierre, leader of the French revolution, also inspired Hitler with utilizing artists in the political realm. Robespierre believed that “To be skilled in the arts,

¹¹⁰ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 4

¹¹¹ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 13

one must follow only one's passions, whereas to defend one's rights... they must overcome them."¹¹²

Combining his passion of art, and radical views of societies undesirable, Hitler furthered his political career through the symbol of purifying the German soul through prescribed artwork later seen in museum exhibitions: "The mission of art and of the artist is not simply to produce unity; it goes much further. It is their duty, to create, to impart form, to eliminate that which is sick and open up the way for that which is healthy."¹¹³

¹¹² Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 3

¹¹³ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 23

CHAPTER 4: ARYAN ART AND THE GREAT GERMAN ART EXHIBITION

Promotional art exhibits that supported the NSDAP appeared throughout Germany during the 1920's and into the 1930's. Alfred Rosenberg, who became leader of the Foreign Policy Office of the NSDAP, created some of the best known "positive" art exhibitions. These exhibitions were made as examples of appropriate German culture, manners and themes in art. In 1928, Rosenberg and Paul Schultze-Naumburg, a German architect and NSDAP politician, created the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* (KfDK), otherwise known as the Combat League for German Culture.¹¹⁴ The Combat League was composed of German artists and authors, who came together to create these "positive" art exhibitions. Two of the most well-known exhibitions were *Blood and Soil* and the *German Peasant-German Land*, created in the early 1930's.¹¹⁵

Rosenberg and Schultze-Naumburg were also known for the traveling exhibition *Reine Deutsche Kunst* (Pure German Art), which began on April 7, 1933.¹¹⁶ This exhibition "featured figurative art (that is, no abstraction), works with very multitudinous colors, and idealized subjects – features that would later characterize the Nazis' official sanctioned art."¹¹⁷ All of the positive exhibits emphasized two important aspects of the Third Reich belief system: German land and German workers. Overall, the positive exhibitions became the basis for what would develop into its own exhibition, the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition, respectively.

¹¹⁴ Michaud, Eric, and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2004. Print. 127

¹¹⁵ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. New York: H.N Abrams, 1992. Print. 66

¹¹⁶ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 1996. Print. 33

¹¹⁷ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 33

In addition to Schultze-Naumburg and Rosenberg, The Germany Art Society also helped create the first travelling exhibition for German art in 1933.¹¹⁸ Originally a part of the 1927 art journal *Deustches Bild Kunst*, the German Art Society established itself as a stand-alone review group in 1933. This group, led by Hans Adolf Bühler from 1927 to 1934, was comprised of German artists and writers. During the Society's existence, they covered much of the press dealing with the negative critiquing of modern art during the late 1920's up until the opening of the Great German Art Exhibition.¹¹⁹

From 1934 to 1944, the journal *Das Bild* (the main publication of the Society), became "a forum for German art society members and supporters to promote their vision of pure German art and to represent themselves as cultural experts." The journal's ongoing promotion of German art later inspired the Third Reich's own definition of good, Aryan art, that coincided with their racist views on society. An article written in *Das Bild* argued that "German art was vital to the life of the Volk. Racially pure art expressed the eternal characteristics of the German people and offered the best medium to affect the unity of all Germans."¹²⁰ *Das Bild* was one of the most read art journals in the country, becoming widely popular throughout the 1930's.

With the featured articles dedicated to the removal of modern art, The German Art Society in a way destroyed itself. After Goebbels's modern art removal decree in 1936, and in conjunction with the opening of the Degenerate Art Exhibition, the need for a medium to express its opinion of what was considered "good" and "bad" art was no

¹¹⁸ Schoeps, Karl-Heinz, and Dell'Orto Kathleen M. "Literature and Cultural Policies in the Third Reich." *Literature and Film in the Third Reich*. Boydell and Brewer, 2003.79

¹¹⁹ Schoeps, Karl-Heinz, and Dell'Orto Kathleen M. "Literature and Cultural Policies in the Third Reich." 80.

¹²⁰ This and prior quote taken from: Schoeps, Karl-Heinz, and Dell'Orto Kathleen M. "Literature and Cultural Policies in the Third Reich." 80, 82-83

longer viable. After the opening of the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition, the German Art Society dwindled away after 1938.¹²¹

The atmosphere generated from these early positive smaller exhibits eventually led to the birth of the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition. These two exhibits opened just one day apart, with the Great German Art Exhibition on July 18th, 1937 and the Degenerate Art Exhibition on July 19th.¹²² The Great German Art Exhibition first began with a ground-breaking ceremony on Oct. 15th, 1933, where Hitler named architect Paul Troost as the head designer of the Haus für Deutschen Kunst, later becoming the site of the Exhibition.¹²³

Finding the art to fill the halls of the museum took artist and museum director Adolf Ziegler, and propaganda Reichminister Joseph Goebbels, four years to collect. To attain new, “Aryan” artworks, Goebbels and Ziegler created a contest where Germans could enter their art for exhibition, all which would be approved by Hitler after submission. Due to the popularity of modern art up until the rise of the Third Reich in 1933, the quantity and quality of traditional German art during the early 20th century was small and slightly underdeveloped, making the total number of entries into the exhibition contest lower than expected.¹²⁴ Between the ground-breaking ceremony and the opening of the exhibition, nine-hundred pieces of art were initially found qualified to become a part of the Great German Art Exhibition. After a final selection, only around six-hundred

¹²¹Schoeps, Karl-Heinz, and Dell’Orto Kathleen M. “Literature and Cultural Policies in the Third Reich.” 91

¹²² Levi, Neil. “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle”. “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle”. *Modernist Form and the Myth of Jewification*. Fordham University, 2014. 50–89. Web...

¹²³ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991): 9-23.

¹²⁴ Werckmeister, O. K. "Hitler the Artist." 289.

were let into the halls.¹²⁵ Hitler, who oversaw the final selection, was greatly disappointed in the outcome of the final round of competition. An account by Hitler's photographer Heinrich Hoffmann tells of Hitler's disappointment over the paintings chosen:

‘It was not a pleasant spectacle that presented itself to our eyes...Hitler went through the various rooms, and I could see that he was not particularly edified by what he saw...Disappointed and angry, he suddenly declared: ‘There will be no exhibition this year! These works which have been sent in show clearly that we still have in Germany no artists whose work is worthy of a place in this magnificent building.’¹²⁶

Hitler never fully resolved his issues over the paintings in the art exhibition.

However, his feeling to “save” his people from the “degenerate souls” (non-Aryan races) eventually led Hitler to accept these paintings as “pure” and “true”.

At the opening ceremony, Hitler revealed his masterpiece of the Great German Art Exhibition. During the opening speech, Hitler remarked:

‘But the opening of this exhibit is also the beginning of the end of the stultification of German art and the end of the cultural destruction of our people. Many of our young artists will recognize the path they will have to take; they will draw inspiration from the greatness of the time in which we all live, and they will draw the courage to work hard and will in the end complete the task.’¹²⁷

The task of defining Aryan art is not the same as creating one, solid definition, but rather a means of specifically analyzing the broad and ambiguous traits of “Aryan” art. For instance, Aryan art had to be developed “from the collective soul of the people”: that “collective soul” being purely and wholly national. The artworks must also be comprehensible (non-abstract). Art could not be a passing “fad” or movement, and had to

¹²⁵ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 9

¹²⁶ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 58

¹²⁷ Benjamin Sax and Dieter Kuntz, eds., *Inside Hitler's Germany: a Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich*. 1st edition. Lexington, MA, and Toronto: D.C. Heath & Company, 1992, pp. 224-32.

be positive about society, with no negative critique about German society.¹²⁸ *Das Bild* commented that:

Art has no prerequisites like science; with [art], there are no laypersons or initiates. Similarly, it is shared by the poor and the rich, the ‘educated’ and the ‘uneducated’... There is no more moving language than the language of art – there is no stronger enticement or more powerful compulsion as the spell of art for good or for bad – because sensibility and the soul are one in a work of art.¹²⁹

This complicated definition of art is both broad and very thin. However, historians and art historians have decided that Aryan art can be boiled down to nine simple categories: landscapes, peasantry, family, motherhood, The German Worker, idealized men, war, Hitler portraits, and nationalism/ Nazi party portraits.¹³⁰

The first theme of the Nazi Party was the depiction of the German worker, a symbol originally used in the 1910s to ignite Germany’s industrial revolution. Its original use was seen in the exhibition *Deutsche Werkbundesstellung* (German Worker Exhibition), held in Munich in 1914, which displayed artwork depicting German workers and other German developed technologies.¹³¹ After World War I, the German worker morphed into the symbol of the public’s contribution towards the revival of Germany. However, during the rise of the NSDAP, the German Worker changed again into a symbol of total domination over the country’s largest threat: Jews. “The portrayal of work as a chore, as seen in paintings by modern artists...is almost totally absent. National Socialist artists depicted a world ennobled by hammers and muscles, not a world of

¹²⁸ Goggins, Mary-Margaret “‘decent’ Vs. ‘degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case” 84

¹²⁹ Schoeps, Karl-Heinz, and Dell’Orto Kathleen M. “Literature and Cultural Policies in the Third Reich.” 83

¹³⁰ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 130

¹³¹ Although seen in 1914, the German Worker was still a national symbol of the technological expansion of Germany prior to World War I. The symbol was given a new life as the German Worker Party claimed the strong worker as their own symbol.

exploitation and exhaustion,”¹³² which made the persona of the strong German worker portray the NSDAP desire to “help” Germany to a better future. The fact that this exhibition was shown in 1914 shows the importance art and German purity had prior to Hitler’s rise to power.

The use of nature and natural landscapes reflected Hitler’s developing ideology. Although this theme of nature was used extensively in the Romanticism of the early half of the 19th century, the Third Reich used this theme for a different reason. For the approved artists of the Third Reich, nature and landscape “represented the German’s *Lebensraum*, their living space.”¹³³ The depiction of large landscapes created Hitler’s internal idealization of reoccupied territories for the Aryan race. For the Third Reich, the conquest of lands Germany lost after World War I was pictured in these landscapes.¹³⁴

Another featured category was country and peasant life. The imagery of traditional lifestyle was used by the NSDAP to give a picture of hope to the public; that through the NSDAP the people would transition back to earlier German traditions. Artists

“pictured peaceful country life, uncomplicated

Figure 5: Family in the Third Reich,
Adolf Wisser



decent people, clean and earthy,”¹³⁵ creating the image of Germany’s rebirth of “purified” culture.

Family was another important theme of the Third Reich. Adolf Wisser’s Family in the

¹³² Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 167

¹³³ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 167

¹³⁴ After a humiliating loss in World War I, Germany lost large amounts of territories to France and other Allies. *Lebensraum* would be Germany retaking what they believed was theirs to begin with.

¹³⁵ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 133

Third Reich (figure 5), is an example of this theme. With its depiction of a family sitting with each other, the mother holding her child close, Wisser's family resembled the traditional Aryan family Hitler strived all of Germany to be. However, families were "more than just individual children and parents. The German people as a whole was seen as an interlacing of all German families of the same race."¹³⁶ The family became the symbol of the unification of the German nation under one "father": Hitler.

The depiction of motherhood was considered another valuable form of Aryan art, which symbolized the literal creation of the future Aryan race.¹³⁷ In some later approved artwork for German museums, portraits of women were painted feeding their children: a literal interpretation of feeding the future Aryan race.¹³⁸ Even more common was the idyllic housewife, which became a representation of a women's place in the Third Reich;

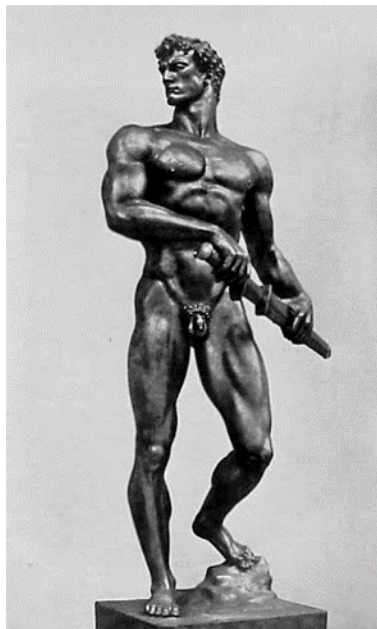


Figure 6: Bereitschaft, Arno Brecker

in the home.¹³⁹ With women placed back in the home, their sole purpose was to raise strong, Aryan children; the idealized picture of family was reestablished, portraying the longing for German culture to return to its traditional past.

The symbol of the idealized nude male was used prominently in the Third Reich's art, particularly with the Prometheus of Arno Brecker's Bereitschaft

(Readiness) created in 1937 (**figure 6**). The idea of

¹³⁶ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 138

¹³⁷ Goggin, Mary-Margaret. "'decent' Vs. 'degenerate'" Art, 85

¹³⁸ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 150

¹³⁹ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 156

“beauty”, and how to define it, was often contested between art critiques and eventually the Third Reich. Bereitschaft defined the Nazi definition of beauty, in which “the male body had to be carefully prepared before it could be offered to public scrutiny: the skin had to be hairless, smooth and bronzed.”¹⁴⁰ The similarities in Bereitschaft to other nude male statues in the exhibition, like that of Josef Thorak’s Kameradschaft (Comradeship) (**figure 7**) are noticeable. These similarities include posing, nudity, and stoic facial expression, which showed a growing trend of idealized nude male sculpture in Germany. These two-specific works were inspired by Renaissance sculptors like Michelangelo and Raphael, which connected the Third Reich back to a



Figure 7: Comradeship, Josef Thorak



Figure 8: Der Führer, Heinrich Knirr

time of a literal “rebirth” of society.

The best-known theme of Aryan art was war, which included party portraits, portraits of Hitler, and paintings of other SS officers. These paintings were hung proudly throughout many different exhibitions, with Heinrich Knirr’s Der Führer (**figure 8**) greeting the public in the entrance of Great German Art Exhibition.

The most important aspect of wartime art was the look of

¹⁴⁰ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 28

strong German soldiers, portraying victory over their enemies. For example, Paul Mathias Padua's The Tenth of May (**figure 9**), which was exhibited in the 1940 Great German Art



Figure 9: The Tenth of May, Paul Mathias Padua

Exhibition, depicts the idealized portrayal of comradeship and dedication of soldiers working towards the purification of Germany.¹⁴¹

Another central theme

of Third Reich approved art was

Christianity. “Identity Christianity”, which developed within the later 19th to early 20th century, promoted racial separation between Jews and Christians. Identity Christians followed “‘True Christianity’ ...’ [which] seeks above all the preservation and increase of Aryan man, a noble and unique creature which, by God’s grace, has been given to the earth.”¹⁴² These beliefs in racial separation between Aryans and Jews stemmed from the “two-seed” theory; that all Aryans were fathered by Adam, and all other races, particularly the Jewish one, were fathered by the serpent.¹⁴³ The Platform of the Aryan Nations, the principal society that followed Identity Christianity, stated:

¹⁴¹ There were a total of eight Great German Art Exhibitions that took place every year from 1937 until 1944.

¹⁴² Cowan, Douglas E. "Theologizing Race: The Construction of “Christian Identity”." *Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity: An Introduction*. Ed. Craig R. Prentiss. NYU, 2003. 112-23. Web. 117

¹⁴³ Cowan, Douglas E. “Theologizing race.” 117

That the Canaanite Jew is the natural enemy of our Aryan (White) Race. This is attested by scripture and all secular history. The Jew is like a destroying virus that attacks our racial body to destroy our Aryan culture and the purity of our Race. Those of our Race who resist these attacks are called “chosen and faithful.” . . . We believe that there is a battle being fought this day between the children of darkness (today known as Jews) and the children of light (Yahweh, The Ever living God), the Aryan race, the true Israel of the bible [*sic*].¹⁴⁴

Christianity in the Third Reich both bolstered the ideas about the separation of Jews from Christians while simultaneously creating the image of Hitler transforming into the new savior:

The same concept of the Church as a mystical body of Christ that had been perpetrated in the dynastic concept of the church as the European monarchies had now reappeared in the National Socialist Idea, which was embodied in a Fuhrer-Christ and his mystical body, the *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹⁴⁵

This was the basis of the Third Reich’s “Idea”: a plan for German Christianity which used Hitler as a later symbol of art and its relationship to God’s own power within Hitler:

Unless it communicates with the eye, all art remains unsatisfying and therefore unsatisfied and unfree. So long . . . as it is not fully communicated to the eye, it remains an art that can do no more than *wish* and that as yet lacks full *power*; but art must possess power, for in our language it is precisely from *power* [Konnen] that art [Kunst] derives its name.¹⁴⁶

The resemblance of king and God was similar to earlier French kings who believed they were descended from the heavens.

This version of German Christianity was seen throughout much of Hitler’s campaign. Hitler’s many references of Christ reflected how he saw himself: a savior of the Aryan race. “At once the Christ and the artist, he was the incarnation of the Volkgeist and the image of its divinity, bringing salvation to his people through his example and

¹⁴⁴ Cowan, Douglas E. “Theologizing Race”, 117-118

¹⁴⁵ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 57

¹⁴⁶ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 54

art”.¹⁴⁷ The Volkgeist became the symbol of the new “holy spirit” for the German culture, which transformed Hitler the “person” into Hitler the “Volkgeist”:

The Volkgeist God, embodied in the person of the Führer at the head of a government of artists and what would soon be a people of artists, offered salvation through art and culture. This was a salvation far more tangible than that of the good God whose religion was disappearing.¹⁴⁸

Christianity in Hitler’s rise to power was also apparent in the artwork within the Great German Art Exhibition. The “cleansed” version of Jesus had facial features similar to Hitler’s, which connected his power on Earth to that of God.¹⁴⁹

Richard Wagner’s opera *Parsifal* fulfilled Hitler’s desire for a new religion dedicated to the Third Reich, with Hitler being the leader. The opera, based on the German epic poem entitled *Parzival*, describes the tale of Parsifal and Gurnemanz, two men who interwind their stories around objects of the Holy Grail (the chalice, the spear that killed Jesus). Throughout the story, Parsifal is faced with many challenges, in which both he and Gurnemanz must use these Holy objects to defend themselves against various “sinning” characters. At the end, it is Parsifal who is anointed and baptized, becoming a king with powers of God.¹⁵⁰ Inspired by the character of Parsifal, Hitler stated that “I have built my religion out of *Parsifal*. Divine worship in solemn form...without the product of humility...One can serve God only in the garb of a hero.”¹⁵¹ With inspiration from *Parsifal*, Hitler created his idea of a racially pure society through creating the relationship between art and religion:

¹⁴⁷ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Germany*. 80

¹⁴⁸ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 56

¹⁴⁹ Jews, art and history, 70

¹⁵⁰ Anonymous. “Parsifal”. *Naxos*. Naxos Music Groups, 2017.

¹⁵¹ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Germany*. 53

In *Parsifal*...he recognized the eternally German principle of life. His principle can be found in the young German who, with the straightforward assurance of a sleepwalker that characterizes the original naïve man, radiant and happy...once again arouses an important world in chains and propels it forward. Advancing against him comes the dark and negative of egotistic man, who is separate from the community.¹⁵²

Hitler and his new Germany came out of the “darkness” of artistic ignorance.



Figure 10: The Haus für Deutsches Kunst, July 1937

After four years of building, the Great German Art Exhibition was opened to the public. This exhibition was meant to end the “cultural decomposition” of the Germans, while allowing the German race to “draw a sigh of relief and joyously express its

agreement with this purification of art”.¹⁵³

The halls inside were called “spacious”, and the overall atmosphere was to be a place for great German art to be exemplified and appreciated.¹⁵⁴ The building was a tool in manipulating the way the art was to be perceived by the public (**figure 10**). Hitler used references to neoclassicism and classicism intentionally as symbols of the purification of German art and culture. The call back to these art movements can be seen with the neoclassic design of the pillars, as well as the classicism of the temple-like building design. The architecture of the building complimented the classic nude male sculptures and the traditional paintings inside, bringing to life the reincarnation of the classics into

¹⁵² Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 59

¹⁵³ Benjamin Sax and Dieter Kuntz. 2

¹⁵⁴ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* 9

modern Germany. Hitler's own salute is also taken from the times of Caesar: the right-hand salute was adopted to greet emperors. With these references to classical Rome and Greece, Hitler created a bridge between these ancient empires, to the new and purified Aryan soul.

Peter Guenther, a seventeen-year-old who travelled to Munich to see this and the Degenerate Art Exhibition, remembered his first impressions:

Viewing the building's long rows of columns stretching along the street, I suspected that there was not much room behind this façade, which was clearly meant to be a dominating feature. Its imposing height and cold symmetry created a monumentality that dwarfed the visitors, an impression that accompanied me into the galleries themselves.¹⁵⁵

The exhibition design of the Great German Art Exhibition also used curation techniques for propaganda. The museum served as the example of how all other German museums were to be oriented. The standard of museum organization developed in the late 19th century had displayed artworks chronologically and stated where the art was produced. The Great German Art Exhibition argued instead:

‘There will be no more museums in Germany that do not display German art prominently and centrally...the new museum will separate clearly the national-stylistic from the national-sociological. The senseless mixture of art groups which confuses the visitor is no longer possible. German art is not every work of art made in Germany. German art is art made in Germany by German Artists.’¹⁵⁶

For German museums, this new style of curation was to be more accessible to the public. By separating by art style or art depiction, the rooms were given specific themes to follow. For example, “At this exhibition, as in the others to follow, the pictures were displayed by subject...all neatly categorized” roughly by the nine categories mentioned earlier. To look at the space more closely, **Figure 11** shows the interior design of the

¹⁵⁵ Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 34

¹⁵⁶ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 94

building, large space was used as well as advantageous seating arrangements and neat, orderly display of the paintings. In total, forty percent of the exhibition was dedicated to the landscape portraits, while thirty percent made up the other categories.¹⁵⁷

The entrance into the museum demonstrated the power and might of Hitler over



Figure 11: Main gallery of the German Art Exhibition

art. At the start of the exhibition, the public was greeted by the large portrait of Hitler in the previously mentioned Der Führer by Knirr. Although the dimensions of the portrait are now gone, descriptions of the portrait “looming” over the entrance

emphasizes the grandness in scale. Not only that, but other Knirr portraits of Hitler ranged

in dimension from five to seven feet tall.¹⁵⁸ The striking image of Hitler as a victorious leader and the size of the portrait forced people to stand back and admire the great man, as well as the time and effort it took to make such a large painting. The painting can also be used as a tool for propaganda: showing the power of Hitler through the massive size of his portraits.¹⁵⁹

That use of power in party portraits, with the layout of the new building, formed an idyllic scene for German art to be displayed and purchased. For Peter Guenther, he recalled that:

¹⁵⁷ This and prior quote taken from: Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 97

¹⁵⁸ Anonymous. "Page 5: Knirr Portraits of Hitler 1935, 1936, 1937." *Page 5: Knirr Portraits of Hitler 1935, 1936, 1937*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Mar. 2017.

¹⁵⁹ It is also noted in the *Virtual Reconstruction* video that each room housed either a portrait or bust of Hitler.

The entrance hall was impressive in size...I was impressed by the silence; everybody whispered. It was obviously due to the semi-ecclesiastical atmosphere created by the size of the rooms, their décor, the impressive lighting, and the careful placement of the exhibits.

The atmosphere created in this room and throughout the exhibition, stood out in Guenther's mind. In **Figure 12**, the floor layout of the museum is shown. In total, forty rooms were created, mostly equally spaced, with rooms measuring anywhere from six-hundred to eight-hundred seventy-five meters squared.¹⁶⁰ The interior decoration of the galleries were described as having “marble, [an] abundance of red flags, the laurel trees in large pots, the bust and pictures of Hitler.” This spacious and welcoming area allowed the guests of the museum to move freely without overcrowding, allowing them to appreciate artworks individually. Guenther explained that:

the over-sized works fit well into the scale of the large galleries and even sculptures...some of whose works I knew from illustrations, seemed to gain in dimension in these surroundings and made an impression that was quite different from what I had expected.

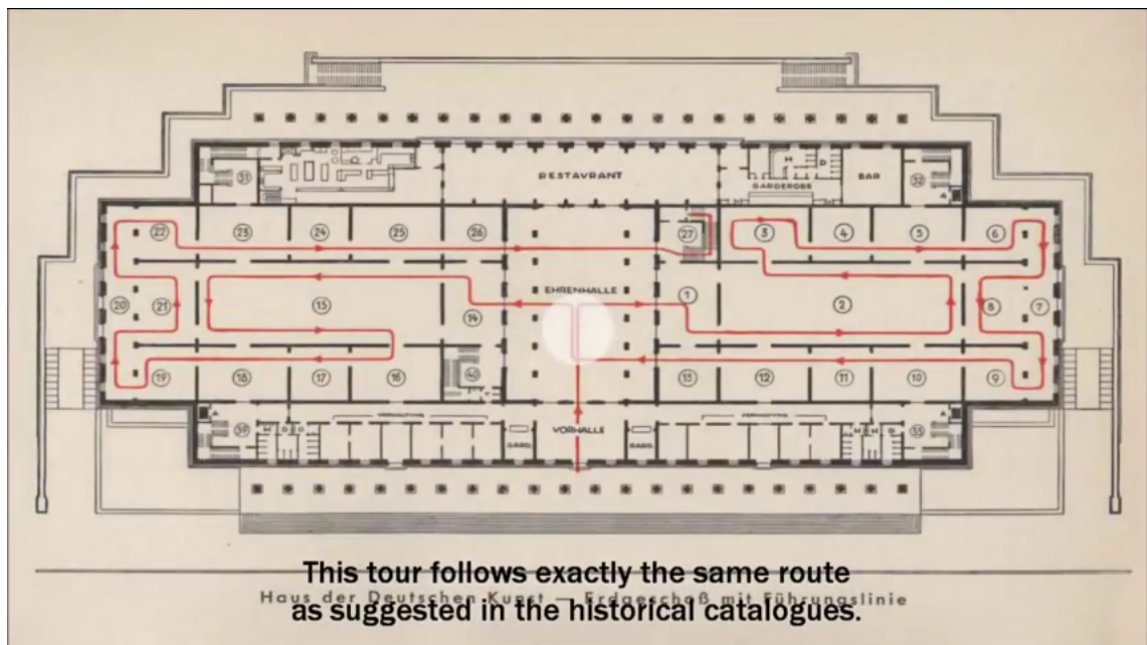


Figure 12: Floor plan of the Great German Art Exhibition. The red lines indicate the proper way the public should proceed throughout the museum.

¹⁶⁰ *Virtual Reconstruction Haus Fur Deustches Kunst. Mainstream.* Youtube, n.d. Web. 3 Jan. 2017.

The whispering Guenther heard also explains the museum-goers feelings towards the artwork:

I became aware of the whispered comments around me that people admired works of this type because they depicted ‘so realistically’ what was beautiful and good, which included quite a number of portraits of Hitler and prominent Nazis and soldiers in various uniforms.¹⁶¹

The acceptance of Third Reich-approved styles of artwork further emphasized the rapid political takeover, which ultimately helped the Third Reich towards fully controlling public opinion. Through creating space that allowed for movement and thought, Ziegler and Troost accomplished the task of creating areas for people to feel calm, reflective, comfortable, which subconsciously made them more appreciative towards art.

Soon after the Great German Art Exhibition, museums in the Third Reich began to organize their galleries according to artistic themes and categories instead of the classic chronological timeline structure. Because the House for German Art resembled the common museum layout and design, the public felt more at ease with accessible space for contemplation. However, the exhibition design also began to instill the cultural and racial separation that the Nazi’s frequently stated. Writing for the newspaper *Deutsches Volkstum*, Otto Klein stated in his article “Das Deutsche Volksmuseum”:

Our museums too will have to be restructured...It is not enough to remove a few dangerous paintings. We must change the old principles of cool distance and bring true popular art to the people...Our museums must once more become museums for the people. Places of national and racial consciousness, not just places to study commercial values. Never again places for the virus of decadence.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ All quotes on this page taken from: Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 34-35

¹⁶² Adam, Peter [Otto Klein]; *Art of the Third Reich*, 67-68

Emphasizing the racial background of artwork, while deconstructing the importance of modern art, the Nazis were able to create a new space for the true German art to be seen:

The idea was not to fill it with great works from the national patrimony... Rather, by gathering together there each year, in a vast exhibition, works selected for their authentic 'Germany'... his [Hitler] purpose, however, was also to draw the German people there, so that, by coming face to face with the most noble part of itself, it would at last awaken to its eternal creative essence.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Michaud, Eric, and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, 101

CHAPTER 5: DEGENERATE ART. MANIPULATED CURATION

The term *entartete*, which in German means “Degenerate”, came from Jewish writer Max Nordau’s *Entartung*, written in 1892. In *Entartung*, Nordau proposed that the degeneration of culture was ultimately caused by the rapid urbanization of cities: his conclusion being that modernity of the 20th century inevitably destroyed all art, literature, and music.¹⁶⁴ More specifically, “Nordau claimed that pressures of society produced artists who exhibited the same degenerative characteristics as criminals.”¹⁶⁵ On Nordau’s dedication page, he states “Degenerates are not always criminals, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics; they are often authors and artists.”¹⁶⁶ These “degenerates” ranged from novelist Emile Zola to philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. When originally published, *Entartete* defined degenerates not as a particular race or religion, but simply as modernists in German cultural development.

Like Aryan art exhibitions, degenerate art exhibitions began taking place during the early 1920’s, where they purely mocked Expressionist’s artwork and taste. One of these early exhibitions was *Regierungskunst 1918-33* (Government Art 1918-33), which “included the work of Max Liebermann, Edvard Munch, and various painters from the Expressionist group *Die Brücke*.” *Regierungskunst* had one goal in mind; to sell the false facts that the art of *Die Brücke* had contributed to the humiliating loss of World War I.

¹⁶⁴ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 4

¹⁶⁵ Maik, Linda L. "Nordau's Degeneration: The American Controversy." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50.4 (1989): 607-23. Web.

¹⁶⁶ Nordau, Max Simon. *Degeneration*. New York: D. Appleton, 1895. Web. 19 Sept. 2016.

Similarly, the exhibition *The November Spirit – Art in the Service of Decay* “drew the connection between modern art, the Weimar Republic, and cultural decline.”¹⁶⁷

Essays like *Kunst und Rasse* by Paul Schultze-Naumburg in 1928, used aggressive attacks on modern art as a basis for later racial fueled propaganda and eventual degenerate art exhibitions.¹⁶⁸ Before *Kunst und Rasse*, Schultze-Naumburg was also a leader of the Combat League for German Culture” and eventual leader of the cultural movement for the Völkisch.¹⁶⁹ His attention to traditional art and undying hatred for modern art caught the eye of Alfred Rosenberg. For Schultze-Naumburg, “his objective was to develop, by means of examples and counterexamples, the visual judgments of Germans as to what was ‘beautiful, ‘good’, ‘and practically useful’ for the preservation of the future of their race.”¹⁷⁰ To educate the public about proper German art and the “inferior” art of non-Aryans, Schultze-Naumburg juxtaposed “examples of modern art and photographs of deformed or diseased people to suggest that they were models for [modernists]...He railed particularly against the Expressionists, whom he felt represented the inferior aspect of modern German culture.”¹⁷¹

Schultze-Naumburg also used Expressionist’s new, more abstract view of the world as an attack on the artist’s own mental health, a point which Hitler and Goebbels utilized later. In *Kunst und Rasse*, Schultze-Naumburg suggested that “if one leaves [the Expressionists] the task of building the future world, then its appearance will be the same

¹⁶⁷ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 83

¹⁶⁸ Levi, Neil “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle”. 50

¹⁶⁹ Michaud, Eric, and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, 127

¹⁷⁰ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 127

¹⁷¹ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 4

as that of his pictures.”¹⁷² In completely altering the true intentions of Expressionistic paintings, Schultze-Naumburg highlighted the abstraction as symptoms of mental unstableness, which furthered people’s opinions of Expressionist painters as “deranged”.¹⁷³

Race-influenced degenerate art exhibitions called *Schandausstellungen* (shame art exhibitions) took major form beginning in 1933.¹⁷⁴ These exhibitions included *Kunst, die nicht aus unserer Seele kam* (Art which Has not come from Our Soul), *Schreckenskammern der Kunst* (Horror Chamber of Arts) and *Spiegelbilder des Verfalls in der Kunst* (Reflections of Degenerations in Art), which opened in various German cities within 1933 to 1937.¹⁷⁵

The 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin slowed the expanse of “shame art” exhibitions. The importance of making a good impression with the world came first, so the Third Reich’s domination of culture was put on hold. During the year 1936 and throughout the Games themselves, only two known degenerate art exhibitions were established: *The Antikomintern Kunstaussstellung* (Anti-Comintern Exhibition) and another small *Schandausstellung*. As the world watched Germany during the Olympics:

Art exhibitions... including the special ones organized for the Olympics, were nationalistic and even National socialistic (presenting) artworks with traditional aesthetics, styles and themes such as those that glorified the German *Volk* and

¹⁷² Long, Rose-Carol, Ida Rigby Katherine., and Stephanie Barron. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. 300-301

¹⁷³ Please continue reading to understand Expressionism and its own definition of art

¹⁷⁴ This information and previous two quotes taken from: Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Art in the Third Reich*. 32-33

¹⁷⁵ Petropoulos, Johnathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 33

their leaders, but explicitly negative productions were pushed to the sides until the foreigners had departed.¹⁷⁶

The Nazi defined “positive” growth of German culture and nationalism took center stage, which lulled the world into a less anxious and concerned state about Hitler’s rise in power. The goal of the Third Reich was accomplished: they created the false persona of a new developing power rather than a state of suppression.

Shortly after the Berlin Olympic Games, Goebbels signed the November 26, 1936 ban of modern art in all German museums, which simultaneously banned art criticism. Many art critics during the early 1930’s were of Jewish descent or avid fans of modernist artwork. Within the National Socialist group, “they believed that Jews controlled the media prior to the Third Reich, and that Jews had intentionally duped the German people into embracing nontraditional aesthetic styles.”¹⁷⁷ Goebbels believed that eliminating art criticism would “save” the German people from the hateful remarks of art critics towards “pure” art.¹⁷⁸ By 1937, most modern artworks were removed, destroyed, or prepared for exhibition in the Degenerate Art Exhibition.

The opposing exhibition to the Great German Art Exhibition was the Degenerate Art Exhibition, which was used “as a pendant and contrast – an ‘exorcism of evil’ – to the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung*.”¹⁷⁹ The exhibition housed a total of six-hundred fifty works of art, coming from thirty-two different museums, in which director Adolf Ziegler

¹⁷⁶ This and information about the other degenerate art exhibitions take from: Petropoulos, Johnathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 52

¹⁷⁷ Petropoulos, Johnathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 54

¹⁷⁸ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 91

¹⁷⁹ Barron, Stephanie and Mario-Andreas von Luttichau. *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 45

wanted the German population to judge these artworks for themselves.¹⁸⁰ This exhibition was to educate the public about improper and indecent artwork that once mingled with “good” art. Ziegler wanted the public to learn and become more aware of the dangers of degeneration. Should these artworks stay in society, the environment for political anarchy within the country would develop.¹⁸¹

Ziegler, along with a number of SS officers, collected artworks purged from museums across Germany for the Degenerate Art Exhibition. This occurred simultaneously with the final selections for the Great German Art Exhibition.¹⁸² Due to a decree made by Goebbels on 30 June 1937, Goebbels “set Ziegler and his commission loose on German state museums”, allowing for any work to be taken without hesitation.¹⁸³ The official decree states that:

On the express authority of the Führer I hereby empower the president of the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste, Professor Adolf 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 owed by the German Reich, individual regions, or local communities. You are requested to give Prof. Ziegler your full support during his examination and selection of these works.¹⁸⁴

Zeigler wanted the exhibition to be transformed into space that “properly” showed degenerate works. To showcase Ziegler’s opinions of these arts, the exhibition became “about communication. For it is content that drives the organization of the space, the

¹⁸⁰ "U. Ginder: Two 1937 Art Exhibitions in Munich." *U. Ginder: Two 1937 Art Exhibitions in Munich*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2016. 1

¹⁸¹ Quoted Goggin, Mary-Margaret. ““decent” Vs. “degenerate” Art: The National Socialist Case”. *Art Journal* 50.4 (1991): 88-89. Web... ““to indoctrinate the public about its dangers, and to demonstrate that this ‘corruption’ of art was not just an aberration or experiment, but an organized attempt...to create cultural and political anarchy”

¹⁸² Wistrich, Robert S. "From Weimar to Hitler." 47

¹⁸³ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 55

¹⁸⁴ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 19

selection of media, and the design of the total experience.”¹⁸⁵ Ziegler communicated his opinion of art in such a way that it would inevitably change the public’s opinion of both art, and the artists that made them.

The Degenerate Art Exhibition took a mere two weeks to install, versus the three and a half years of preparations for the creation of the Great German Art Exhibition.¹⁸⁶ It was even noted that on the opening day “the paint...was indeed still wet when Hitler trooped through the doors on 19 July.” The lack of real time used to create the space symbolized the lack of respect Ziegler had for the artists and artwork inside. Though he himself was a prominent artist, Ziegler was disrespected for his artworks and aesthetic, being nicknamed “The King of Pubic Hair” by fellow artists, especially those in the modernist fields.¹⁸⁷ Ziegler’s revenge against these modern artists who both taunted and attacked his traditional styles drove him to detest all modern art, which sparked Ziegler’s expedition to expand his degenerate art collection for his exhibition.

Although the time given for the creation of the exhibition was done in haste, the exhibition idea was pre-planned; with this being a counter-exhibition to the Great German Art Exhibition, the need to create the distasteful atmosphere was more important than putting in effort of caring for the artworks. Taking random artworks off the walls of other museums made Ziegler ignorant of the artwork’s true purpose and meaning, which allowed his and the public’s freedom of interpretation to run wild.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Dean, David. *Museum exhibition: theory and practice*, Routledge, New York;London; 1996. 8

¹⁸⁶ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 12

¹⁸⁷ This and previous quote taken from: Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 55

¹⁸⁸ Barron, Stephanie [Luttichau]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 45

After taking over at the Museum Folkwang, count Klaus von Baudissin allowed all of the modern works to be taken from the museum in the effort to purge the area of “bad art.”¹⁸⁹ The rest of the art that was acquired came from other German museums, where curators ready to acquiesce to government dictates had taken over.

Even before entering the exhibit, Ziegler and Goebbels began to deter the public from liking the artworks. The cover of the exhibition guide (**Figure 13**) is of Otto

Freundlich’s statue Der Neue Mensch (the new man).¹⁹⁰ The harsh lighting underneath the statue accented the abstracted face, while the word “Kunst” (German for art) was written in large red writing and quotation marks. These elements of font color, the lighting and even the quotation marks are all propaganda techniques. Stephanie Barron suggests that “By printing ‘Kunst’ to look



Figure 13: Cover of the Degenerate Art Exhibition catalogue

as if it had been rudely scrawled in red crayon and by enclosing it in quotation marks, the National Socialists clearly made the point that although they considered this material degenerate, they certainly did not consider it art.”¹⁹¹

The propaganda that Goebbels created against Jews and others classified as “degenerates” made their appearance unhuman-like. Examples include equating Jews

¹⁸⁹ See appendix two. Information taken from: Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* .11

¹⁹⁰ Anonymous. "Histories in Conflict: Haus Der Kunst and the Ideological Uses of Art, 1937-1955." *Haus Der Kunst - Histories in Conflict*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2016.

¹⁹¹ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Gard in Nazi Germany*. 13

with vermin or even to viruses. Considering that at this time symbolic thought was seen only in humans, by adding the quotations around Kunst, the pamphlet showed that these works can't even be called art because these "degenerates" were not even human.

Within the guide, writer Fritz Kaiser, who agreed with Hitler's stricter art policies, wrote:

It wants also, however, to thereby show precisely how dangerous a development directed by a few Jewish and politically unequivocal Bolshevik spokesmen was, when it could also enlist such a people who perhaps would have stayed far away from the party-political belief in Bolshevism.¹⁹²

While the Great German Art Exhibition had forty rooms with an area of at least six hundred square meters, the ground floor of the Degenerate Art Exhibition was only four by thirteen meters wide, with the top seven rooms mirroring the narrowness of the ground floor. These top seven rooms were originally used for storing plaster casts from the Archäologisches Institut (Archaeological Institute) collection. However, these casts were removed and replaced with temporary "movable screens... to cover the windows, existing murals, and plaster casts."¹⁹³ Paul Ortwin Rave, the curator of the Berlin Nationalgalerie in 1934, commented on the layout at the opening of the exhibition. He noticed that:

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 partitions hang close to one another, generally in two superimposed rows.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Long, Rose-Carol, Ida Rigby Katherine., and Stephanie Barron. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. 309

¹⁹³ This and floor measurements taken from: Barron, Stephanie [Mario Andreas von Luttichau.] *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 45

¹⁹⁴ Barron, Stephanie [Christoph Zuschlag]. "Degenerate Art": *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 87

Peter Guenther also noticed that “The rooms were quite narrow, as were the openings from one room to another, and the ceilings much lower than in the Haus für Deutsches Kunst. In some areas peoples pressed up against one another to see badly lighted works; the atmosphere was dense.”

The narrow stairway and darkly lit entrance disoriented the public right away, until they were greeted with Ludwig Gies Kruzifixus (**figure 14**) atop the stairs.

In Stephanie Barron’s collection of documents in *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, Peter Guenther recalls the moments upon entering the exhibition:



Figure 14: Kruzifixus by Ludwig Gies

I do remember well the impact of the frightening *Kruzifixus*...the way in which the work was displayed caused it to lose its impact...There was also a shorter note explaining that the work was hung as a war memorial in the cathedral of Lubeck...I could easily understand that many visitors, if not most, would react negatively, either because they could not accept the unconventional figure of Christ or because they felt that war memorials [were to] present only the idealized heroism of those who had died.¹⁹⁵

Ziegler knew that the abstraction and contortion of Christ’s body would shock the public, and so purposefully used this sculpture to elevate the uncomfortable atmosphere of the exhibition. To

emphasize the abstract and grotesque body form of Christ, the sculpture was “hung with red cloth. Beneath the sculpture, which had been so theatrically endowed with a quality

¹⁹⁵ This and previous quote taken from: Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-garde in Nazi Germany*. 36

of menace, was a cloth-covered plinth onto which was tacked a photograph of the interior of Lubeck Cathedral.”¹⁹⁶ Kruzifixus’s extreme abstraction shocked those who did not fully understand the concept of Expressionistic painting. Through abstraction, artists like Gies were classified as “Expressionist” due to their interpretation of the world through their inner state. The public’s innocence of the intent behind Expressionist painting was fully exploited in the first room, and this misuse continued into each part of the exhibition.

Ziegler promoted Hitler’s ultra-racism by organizing each room with its artworks “theme”. A similar categorization was used in the Great German Art Exhibition, which familiarized the public with the new standard of museum organization. Rooms were separated by categories such as “political anarchy, against military conscription, mocking religion, immoral art, nigger art, [and] total insanity.”

To distract the eye from being focused on one painting, they were purposefully



“hung haphazardly” and “too closely together.”¹⁹⁷ Seen in **figure 15**, the paintings hung around and above the entrance from room three into room four were hung awkwardly, with some overlay in the frames. The lack of space between each artwork made it hard for the audience’s eye to move

Avant-garde in Nazi Germany. 49
Margaret. ““decent” Vs. “degenerate” Art: The

National Socialist Case” 88
Figure 15: Hallway from room three into room four with mislabeled paintings and crooked artwork

easily from one artwork to another. The mass amount of artwork also gave the room a more claustrophobic and chaotic feel. The cluttered walls caused the public to become frustrated and confused by the large amounts of images, which inevitably distracted the public from focusing on one painting. This style of exhibition organization forced people to digest multiple Expressionist or Cubist paintings at one time.

Although **Figure 15** can be seen as a callback to the earlier curations of museums like the Louvre, the purpose behind the two curational methods are entirely different. During the 1800's, museums were transitioning from private to public collections, hence no real museum was established or proper curational methods were developed. What is seen in this image is the purposeful triple-layering of paintings to distract one's eye from interpreting a single work of art.

People's misconception of the art was also created by the mislabeling and miscommunicating about the actual facts of the artists. The identification labels next to the "works [were] incorrectly attributed...quotations from the artists and critics are displayed without regard for either their accuracy or their original context."¹⁹⁸ Outside the Degenerate Art Exhibition, the public was forced to see only the appropriate German style of art. Due to their lack of knowledge, the public submissively took the word of the Nazi party. In a speech written in March 1933, Goebbels stated that "The best propaganda is that which, as it were, works invisibly, penetrates the whole of life without the public having any knowledge of the propagandistic initiative," showing that Goebbels and Ziegler promoted the use of misinformation to sway people into an opinion that aligned with their own.

¹⁹⁸ Levi, Neil. "Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of "degenerate Art" as Historicopolitical Spectacle." 54

Unlike a portion of the German public, Peter Guenther and his family accepted modern art, and his perception of the exhibition showed this prior knowledge. When entering rooms dedicated to the mockery of modernism (specifically expressionism), Guenther “could understand their reactions, especially since the people around [him] appeared not to be the type who would normally have gone to museums or exhibitions of modern art and therefore must have been shocked.”¹⁹⁹ Ziegler’s purposeful exploitation of the people’s ignorance by the labels and now by promoting the hatred of Expressionism created a new image of what “Expressionism” was about. However, it was only Ziegler’s definition of Expressionism that was to be seen by the public: an art movement created by “degenerates”.

The first room, entitled *Insolent mockery of the Divine under Centrist Role*, Fritz Kaiser’s guide to the exhibition described the paintings as “barbaric representation from

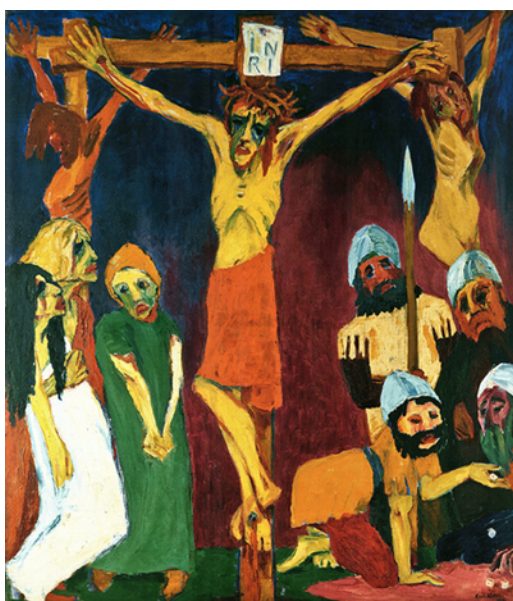


Figure 16: Kreuzigung by Emil Nolde

the standpoint of craftsmanship...destruction of feeling for form and color...the absolute stupidity of choice of materials.” Within this room were the artworks of famed German Expressionists and New Objectivists such as Emil Nolde, Max Beckmann, and Christian Rohlf, whose abstraction of Christ’s body apparently mocked Christ. To emphasize the “mocking” factor of the paintings, Fritz Kaiser holds the sentence “no matter which religious

¹⁹⁹ Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 49

confession he belongs, he feels them to be a shameless mockery of every religious concept.”²⁰⁰ In Nolde's painting Kreuzigung for example (**figure 16**) his depiction and abstraction of Christ's body is similar to that of Kruxifixus, which Ziegler claimed was a disgrace to Jesus rather than Nolde's original interpretation of Christ's pain and suffering.

The work of German Expressionists like Nolde was never to be a literal translation of a scene, but an interpretation of emotion and angst. These artworks, created in the 1910s, were a critique of the changing world; the change of society into modernity, into the unknown. For Expressionists, their paintings were medias in which they were able to express their inner emotion and psychotic state. Their evocation of their inner state was done through abstraction of colors, lines and shape, which allowed for the artist's emotion to become the center of the painting.²⁰¹ For Hitler, this abstraction was not seen as the angst of modernity, but as a rebellion against the traditional. Moreover, Expressionism was not literal, but interpretive. As Aryan art had to be understood by both the educated and uneducated, art must be representative of its title and must be naturalistic: a tree must be a tree and a person must look like a person.²⁰²

However, Goebbels had his own inner struggle with Expressionism. Before the major take-over of the Nazi party, Goebbels found love for the Expressionist painter Emil Nolde. Goebbels proudly hung watercolors by Nolde and statues by Ernst Barlach in his first office.²⁰³ Goebbels went as far as even publishing an article called *Die Norden*,

²⁰⁰ This and previous quote taken from: Long, Rose-Carol, Ida Rigby Katherine., and Stephanie Barron. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. 309-310

²⁰¹ H. H. Arnason and Elizabeth C. Mansfield. *History of Modern Art. Volume I*. Seventh edition. Boston: Pearson, 2013. 116-118

²⁰² In reference to chapter 4 and *Das Bild* definition of Aryan art, found on pg 83 of Schoeps, Karl-Heinz "Literature and Cultural Policies in the Third Reich."

²⁰³ Cuomo, Glenn R. *National Socialist Cultural Policy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002. Print. 123

which supported Nolde's work within the German Expressionists.²⁰⁴ In one of his early speeches, Goebbels declared that "[E]xpressionism harkened back to the medieval gothic, and conveyed the profundity of the German Soul." It wasn't until Hitler's public denouncing of all Expressionism during a cultural address in September 1934 that Goebbels turned away from Expressionism. After being harshly accused of poor artistic views by Hitler, Goebbels terminated his relationship with Expressionism completely.²⁰⁵ To strengthen his relationship with Hitler, Goebbels would later explain that the state is above art, and that "logically therefore an artist who is personally hostile to the state will be deprived of all support from the state, however artistically valuable his work."

The second room was a "dedication" to or mortification of Jewish artists and art critiques. There the audience learned about "the great 'gains' of the Jewish spokesmen, dealers, and promoters of degenerate art."²⁰⁶ Not a lot is known about this room, only that the artwork inside referred to art critics and dealers before 1933, since after 1933 Jewish men could not hold their employment in these fields.

Room three was the "political background of the degeneration of art" and exhibited the "pornographic" images of Expressionism. This room also housed Marxist propaganda where "the German soldiers represented as idiots, vulgar erotic libertines, and drunks." Although praised in the Great German Art Exhibition, the nude form here was a disgrace. In Aryan art, the female nude referred to the classical Greek and Roman

²⁰⁴ Levi, Neil. "Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of "degenerate Art" as Historicopolitical Spectacle". 58

²⁰⁵ This information and prior quote taken from: Cuomo, Glenn R. *National Socialist Cultural Policy*. 123-124

²⁰⁶ Long, Rose-Carol Washton., Ida Rigby Katherine., and Stephanie Barron [Kaser]. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. 311

nymph, whose nudity reflected their immortality and beauty. The lack of naturalism, and the extreme erotic nature of some of the sketches, made the nudes in this room utterly “distasteful.” This room held the most written wall text and a handful of German Expressionist paintings too. Some texts on the walls included “The Jewish longing for the wilderness reveals itself in Germany; the negro becomes the racial ideal of a degenerate art.”²⁰⁷

The fourth room displayed artworks and their “purchase prices [which helped to prove that] such horror-pieces still demanded and received the highest prices a few years ago.”²⁰⁸ Ziegler showed the prices of what previous museum directors paid for the artwork by displaying large, red stickers, meticulously placed for the viewer to be distracted by the price and not at the artwork behind it.²⁰⁹ “The prices of the pieces, often at the inflationary levels of 1923... listed adjacent to the paintings,” were purposefully used to exaggerate the prices.²¹⁰ Room four also had no additional wall texts. This was deliberately done to enhance the importance of the price, and not to distract the public with any additional wall writings.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Barron, Stephanie [Mario-Andreas von Litchau]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 56

²⁰⁸ This and the two previous quotes taken from: Long, Rose-Carol Washton., Ida Rigby Katherine., and Stephanie Barron [Kaser]. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. 310-311

²⁰⁹ Levi, Neil. “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle”. 62

²¹⁰ Petropoulos, Johnathan. *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*. 32

²¹¹ The Inflation of 1923 was extremely hard. The exchange rate was 1 US dollar = 18,000,000 German Marks.

The fifth room presented the “insight into the moral side of the degeneration of art...the moral program of Bolshevism cries out.”²¹² This room housed one of the most extensive collections of Expressionists, Dadaists, and other artworks defined as “modern art.” A subsection of the room, entitled “Consummate Madness,” advertised the “sick” mental health of these abstract modernists in connection to their abstract art. Modernists like the Expressionists and Dadaists, and their so-called “mental disability” were a threat to the Aryan existence. If these artists stayed in society, Fritz Kaiser warned that “one can no longer laugh; then one can only fight one’s rage over the fact that such a fraud could ever have been perpetuated on so decent a people as the Germans”.²¹³ These artists and their work were classified as the controlled ridicule of Bolshevik-revolution-themed paintings. They were placed here because of their own doctrines and manifestos bellowing their beliefs in their “revolution.” Their revolution, however, was unlike the political upheaval wrought by the Bolshevik revolution, but against traditional art.

Another modernist group, the Futurists, created more abstraction in their art through using different materials and through their interpretation of lines and colors. They bluntly attacked traditional art for its ties to its past rather than trying to propel itself into the future. In their book *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, Eric Michaud and Janet Lloyd commented that the Futurists:

²¹² Long, Rose-Carol Washton., Ida Rigby Katherine., and Stephanie Barron [Kaiser]. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. 310

²¹³ This and the quoted “Consummate Madness” taken from: Long, Rose-Carol Washton., Ida Rigby Katherine., and Stephanie Barron [Kaiser]. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. 311

prided themselves on setting forms and colors free...But they did so in order to dominate better a public to which they denied all ‘freedom of comprehension’ and which, they insisted, should ‘completely forget its intellectual culture in order not to take possession of the work of art, but to surrender to it utterly.

Michaud and Lloyd described a similar idea in the artwork of the Cubists:

In opposition to the crowd, which always clung to conventions, they set the genius to the painter, who considers ‘all objective knowledge...to be a fantasy...’no laws other than those that rule over colored form...There is only one truth, ours, when we impose it upon everyone.²¹⁴

The Cubists and Futurists were a constant threat to the Third Reich because of their abstract freedom. These particular artists were free of all natural elements of art, shape and design, and moved from the traditional representational to pure abstraction of form. Their “rebellion” against the traditional was seen as a potential revolt against the Third Reich. In order to stop any chance of a political revolt from occurring, the Third Reich stopped Cubists and Futurists by removing all of their works from museums and displayed examples of them in this section of the exhibition.

Room five has an added benefit of Arthur Grimm’s photography. Grimm, an exhibition photographer, was called upon by Ziegler to take pictures of the exhibition. One of his most famous pictures of the exhibition (**figure 17**) was in this



Figure 17: Arthur Grimm’s photograph of room five. Wall text starts “Crazy at any price.”

room, which showed the closely hung and overlapping frames of the artwork, similar to the other eight rooms of the exhibition. By being a photographer, Grimm “document[ed]

²¹⁴ Both blocked quotes taken from: Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 7

the push and pull between the creative agencies represented by the artworks and museums, or, put another way, they capture[ed] the interaction between the artists and the curator's authorship."²¹⁵ In his photographs, Grimm captured the push and pull between Ziegler and the artists. Ziegler's hateful writings on the wall such as "Nature seen by sickened minds" or "Madness becomes method," retaliated against the artwork to create the tension filled environment found in room five.²¹⁶ Contrasting the wall text with the modern art aesthetic, Grimm strengthens the argument that curation is a tool in undermining the artwork's true value.

As Peter Guenther walked through room five, he saw: "The strong colors of the paintings, the interfering texts, the large wall panels with quotations from speeches by Hitler and Goebbels all created a chaotic impression."²¹⁷ Ziegler used the abstract coloring and distortion of the paintings to create this negative atmosphere, which left the viewer anxiety-riddled and frustrated in trying to merely view the paintings. The frustration and confusion only added to the success of what the exhibition was meant to do: lull the public into hating the works by hating the environment the art was shown in.

²¹⁵ Floyd, Kathryn M. "Moving Statues: Arthur Grimm, the Entartete Kunst Exhibition, and Installation Photography as Standfotografie." *Exhibiting the German Past: Museums, Film, and Musealization*. Ed. Peter M. Isaac and Gabriele Mueller. U of Toronto, 2015. 187-208. Web.187-188

²¹⁶ This and the previous quotes of hateful writings taken from: Barron, Stephanie [Mario-Andreas Von Luttichau]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 61

²¹⁷ Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 38

Room six was a smaller room, unfinished, and had no real works of propaganda.

Arthur Grimm's picture (**figure 18**) is of the room's centerpiece entitled Die Kniende by



Wilhelm Lehmbruck. The angle and the lens that Grimm used made the statue appear larger and more distorted, making it seem more shocking and intimidating for the viewer looking at the photograph.²¹⁸

The seventh room was left unfinished, and was closed to the public soon after opening.²¹⁹ There is little evidence to what exactly was in this room, although it appears that it was used primarily for storage.

Figure 18: Die Kniende by Wilhelm Lehmbruck

The final two rooms remained closed until July 22nd, 1937, and were located on the ground floor of the building, later becoming the entrance to the exhibition.²²⁰ Ziegler in no way changed the format or layout of the already confined area of this section of the Archaeological Institute, and so “made use of the existing glass-topped vitrines...leaving only a narrow passage, and there were signs instructing the public to keep to the right.” These two rooms served as space for the overflow of confiscated artwork, so no real theme categorized the space. Rather, only some of the artworks were labeled, and “far

²¹⁸ Floyd, Kathryn M.. “Moving Statues: Arthur Grimm”. 204

²¹⁹ Barron, Stephanie[Mario-Andreas von Luttichau]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 64

²²⁰ This and the previous quote taken from: Barron, Stephanie[Mario-Andreas von Luttichau]. *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 66

more than half of the objects displayed in *Entartete Kunst* were crammed into these two catacomb-like chambers,” adding to the cramped and claustrophobic environment of the exhibition. Peter Guenther commented that “I felt an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia. The large number of people pushing and ridiculing and proclaiming their dislike for the works of art created the impression of a staged performance intended to promote an atmosphere of aggressiveness and anger.”²²¹ In short, the Great German Art Exhibition held six hundred works of art in forty rooms, whereas the Degenerate Art Exhibition held over six hundred fifty artworks within nine rooms.

Ziegler wanted the public to “judge for themselves” whether these works of art were in fact, art. To remind people of their task, “judge for themselves” was written repeatedly throughout the exhibition.²²² For both Goebbels and Ziegler, “The project of ‘Degenerate Art’ in short, [was] to teach the Germans to accept that the price of emancipation from the purportedly foul abjection of modernist art will be *their own destruction*.”²²³ Ziegler and Goebbels created these exhibitions not only to educate, but to “save the souls” of the German people through the elimination of any un-Aryan works of art, to keep and grow the purified nation.

Through the use of wall writing, purposeful misuse of curation, and the creation of distracting atmosphere, museum and exhibitions became a new form of propaganda that aided in the Third Reich’s racially fueled government.²²⁴ David Dean, exhibition designer and author of *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice* states that “Designers

²²¹ Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *Degenerate Art: The fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 42

²²² Levi, Neil. “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle”. 53

²²³ Levi, Neil. “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle”. 89

²²⁴ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain : The Art World in Nazi Germany*. 61

must be sensitive to the character, volume, and configuration of the exhibit space because it will dictate to a large degree what the character and flow of the exhibit can be.”²²⁵ By choosing to make this a negative space, Ziegler took an exhibition layout and made a new environment for the public to view artwork. The end result was that:

The notorious Degenerate Art Exhibition staged by the Nazis in Munich in 1937 inverted the established conventions of display precisely to undermine the creditability of modern art. By means of crowded, asymmetrical, out-of-kilter arrangement, despairing wall graffiti...and poor light, the organizers aimed to create an off-putting environment in which the artworks shown seemed anything but masterpieces.²²⁶

To support this claim that people art in fact responded better to a limited offering of art, in 1935, a Yale psychologist named Arthur Melton analyzed the public within museums and found:



Figure 19: Opening day of *Entartete Kunst*. Crowds are forced into small, narrow passageways in order to see the artwork inside room six.

²²⁵ Dean, David. *Museum exhibition: theory and practice*. 18

²²⁶ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 131

that the average visitor unschooled in art history had a limited attention span, suffered from museum fatigue, paid little attention to underlying systems of classification, and responded better to a limited offer of art that really mattered. Selectivity and presentation were of the greatest importance... because most visitors were easily seduced by display conventions and would ignore a masterpiece poorly hung in favor of a poor painting prominently displayed.²²⁷

Although the museum itself might have looked like a lack of effort in design by hanging paintings too closely together or hung awkwardly, in reality the lack of curation was a tool in manipulating the atmosphere of the exhibition. Referring to Peter Guenther's first-hand, he described that: "The atmosphere was also quite different [to the Great German Art Exhibition]. People talked, some loudly, and made comments to one another, even to strangers."²²⁸ The Great German Art Exhibition had no talking, only whispering. In the Degenerate Art Exhibition, the crowds were larger, more vocal, and more aware of other comments (**figure 19**). The atmosphere allowed others to be more vocal in their opinions, while listening and being persuaded by those who sounded like they knew more about the work. The atmosphere within the Degenerate Art Exhibition gave freedom of opinion, while the grandness of the Great German Art Exhibition persuaded the public into silence.

The knowledge of how display changes the audience's experience within a museum demonstrated the clear persuasion of Ziegler in his attempt to change the opinions of the public. Demonstrating proper care and technique in the Great German Art Exhibition, Ziegler was able to create the perfect environment for the ordinary population to become accepting of the new Aryan art. In contrast, the use of deliberately chaotic techniques in the Degenerate Art Exhibition changed the public's opinion about the art and the artists subconsciously.

²²⁷ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 128

²²⁸ Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 36

Another propaganda aspect of the exhibition was the use of quotations and racial slurs written on the walls, which were meant to both annoy and create disgust for the artwork. This was “very much an exhibition of quotations, most often extracts from works of art criticism that are meant to be revealed as false or absurd, when compared with the artworks to which they refer”. One example is the wall text surrounding the Kruxifixus which stated that “This horror hung as a war memorial in the cathedral of Lubeck”.²²⁹ The quotations swirled around the artwork, forcing the public’s eye to focus on the quote rather than the actual artwork it was mocking. In **Figure 20**, the south wall of room three has text waved behind the artwork, creating a hard motion on which eye would focus on.



Figure 20: example of scrolled text wrapped around sculptures to deter the eye of the public. The text reads “we act as if we were painters, poets, or whatever, but what we are is simply and ecstatically impudent. In our impudence we take the world for a ride and train snobs to lick our boots” from anarchists of the Bolshevik revolution. Found in room three.

²²⁹ This and the previous quote taken from: Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 60

Labeling for any exhibition should be a well sized and spaced text, in order not to frustrate the people when they are trying to read for more information. The text written on the walls in the Degenerate Art Exhibition were written large, close together, in a curly manner, and also (for the wall texts specifically) written non-linear. Paul Ortwin Rave mentioned that “Captions and pictures, juxtaposed or arranged in order-less confusion, are intended to stir the viewer’s emotions, triggering feelings of repulsion and indignation.”²³⁰ These elements made the text harder for the public to read, prohibiting them from fully understanding the painting. Combined with the crooked paintings and the racially powered slogans, the public was engulfed in this sea of miscommunication and chaos. Since “the way of hanging the pictures, the aggressive slogans resembling graffiti on the walls... the whole idea of wanting to shock” was the planned outcome of the exhibition, these elements created the environment that only became more stressful and disorienting for the public.²³¹ Peter Guenther explained:

For the types of works selected, their hideous hanging and placement, the graffiti-like inscriptions on the walls, the notations of price, and the use of truncated quotes by Museum directors and art historians was not intended to introduce people to modern art but to inflame them against these works. It was a blatant attempt to discredit everything on view.²³²

Because of the misinterpretations created from these curation techniques, the public succumbed to being manipulated by the atmosphere of unseen propaganda, unable to tell truth from false facts. Paul Ortwin Rave commented that “The propagandist aim of the exhibition seemed to be best served by the numerous inscriptions. The guiding

²³⁰ Barron, Stephanie [Christoph Zuschlag]. *“Degenerate Art”: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 89

²³¹ Levi, Neil. “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle” 66

²³² Barron, Stephanie [Peter Guenther]. *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 36

principles are written up in large letters in the individual rooms or on sections of the wall, while some of the individual works had special captions added to them.”²³³

For Ziegler, the environment created through the use of quotations was not suitable for the younger generation of Germans. To keep the future of the Aryan race pure from both the “degenerate” art and the cruel remarks, “Young people were barred from the show so that organizers could underline the obscenity of the exhibit...many even wanted to go as far as to place museum directors and artists next to the work ‘so that the public could spit at them.’”²³⁴

With the combination of all museum curation techniques discussed, Ziegler created the ability for people to hate artworks they never fully understood. With the use of the human subconscious and the natural deterrence of enclosed space and written cues through the wall texts, Ziegler and the creators of the Degenerate Art Exhibition supported the hatred of modern art and the people who made it. Race and art, and their relationship to one another, which only added to the fire that would become the beginning of the extermination of Jews and other undesirables. In Nevi’s article *Jews, Art and history* article, he sums up the purpose of this connection of race and art as:

[A] condemnation of modernism as the wrong kind of representation of the wrong kind of bodies; a racial, eugenic, and bio-political notion that take us directly from the expropriation and destruction of paintings and sculptures deemed degenerate to the elimination of life deemed unfit to live.²³⁵

The two exhibitions discussed used manipulated curatorial methods to create two different atmospheres: The Great German Art Exhibition showed the new and culturally

²³³ Barron, Stephanie [Christoph Zuschlag]. “*Degenerate Art*”: *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 89

²³⁴ Adam, Peter. *The Art of the Third Reich*. 123

²³⁵ Levi, Neil. “Jews, Art, and History: The Nazi Exhibition of “degenerate Art” as Historicopolitical Spectacle”. 50

driven way to exhibit pure art through clean walls and spacious rooms, while the cramped and racially driven division of rooms and themes allowed Ziegler to translate the art policy of the Third Reich into an easier language for the people to digest:

In this sense, art and propaganda constituted one aspect of the Nazi politics, they were designed to render visible the protected God who would make it possible for the body of the German race to live eternally. Its other aspects were that of extermination. It had to reduce to silence... all bodies that harbored the invisible, resistant part of the spirit that resides solely in language.²³⁶

Paul Ortwin Rave understood that the manipulated curation created these feelings of distress and hate for modern art, and in return “these feelings... like the opinions expressed in the captions... encouraged a sense of satisfaction at the demise of this type of art and ultimately to inspire agreement with the revolutionary new beginning and political succession.”²³⁷

In the years following the Degenerate Art Exhibition, the hatred of degenerate art transitioned from a hate of art into the hate for the people it symbolized: degenerates. Combining museum curation as propaganda with the rapid production of other forms of mass media, the hatred created became an important catalyst behind the mass extermination of the Jews and other undesirables in 1940.

On March 20, 1939, after years of Nazi looting, one-thousand paintings and almost four-thousand watercolors, drawings, and other forms of artwork from the Degenerate Art Exhibition with other art stolen during the early 1930s were burned in Berlin in front of the Nationalgalerie.²³⁸

²³⁶ Michaud, Eric and Janet Lloyd. *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*. 23

²³⁷ Barron, Stephanie [Christoph Zuschlag]. “*Degenerate Art*”: *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 89

²³⁸ Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. 124

CHAPTER 6: THE AFTERMATH IN MUSEUMS

Museums continuing through and beyond World War II were deeply scarred by the effects of Nazism. By the start of the war “scarcely a museum could be found that had not culled its collection, adopted simplified display techniques, and embraced public participation as an ideal.”²³⁹ But as Nazi beliefs strangled the museum system, these ideals were manipulated and distorted to create an atmosphere of hatred and confusion by using curation techniques that the public was familiar with against them. Museums saw Hitler’s total control as a betrayal of their ideas in promoting any and all art. Based on this, museums became emotionally hardened by the cultural shell-shock of the detrimental policies on both Jews and the modern arts.

After the denazification process of 1945-46, American and European military powers gave museum directorships to men untainted by a connection to Nazi ideology. However, most were only partially trained in the museum world. These new directors held jobs as collection managers or even volunteers prior to their appointments.²⁴⁰ A few, Ernst Buchner for example, were trained curators. These men retained their positions because they were found innocent at their denazification trials.²⁴¹

The struggle facing these new museum directors was inevitable. These men had to simultaneously transition into daunting and unknown positions as museum directors, while figuring out how to put the museum back into its original state before Nazi reorganization. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, a museum director and German scholar,

²³⁹ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 170

²⁴⁰ Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. "German Museums at the Crossroads." *College Art Journal* 7.2 (1947): 121-26. Web. 122

²⁴¹ See appendix two.

traveled to many German museums post World War II, and recorded these different changes in museums. During one visit, Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt noted that:

I turned to the director...who was showing me around, and who anticipated my question by whispering: 'Monumental painting of the time our artist was an apprentice.' 'But why not tell this to your visitors,' I asked, 'Why not put up a sign?' He looked at me with amused astonishment: 'Strange that you should suggest this. It's the sort of thing Nazis always did.'²⁴²

Every move the directors made were plagued with questions: what can we as directors do to move away from Nazism? How can we give the museum back to its people? The fear and submission the public felt throughout the Third Reich reign was felt in the soul of the museum. Everything related to Nazis, Hitler, and the Third Reich had to go. If that meant even taking away labels for the artworks, then museum directors sacrificed the education of the public in order to cut off the connection to their Nazi past. The labeling system, as mentioned in the quote above, tried to prevent any resemblance to the detailed Nazi labeling systems by eliminating all information besides title and artist, a direct contrast to the mislabeled artworks found in the Degenerate Art Exhibition.²⁴³

As museum directors continued to struggle to find a balance between past and present curation techniques, they were given two options:

They [could] either go out of their way to explore the very real needs of their communities and plan for an active participation in their physical, intellectual and emotional reconstruction. Or they [could] continue in their once aristocratic aloofness and social indifference, maintaining cultural class distinctions and an intellectual inbreeding which is one of the hereditary evils of Germany.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. "German Museums at a Crossroads." 122

²⁴³ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 176

²⁴⁴ Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. "German Museums at the Crossroads". 121

Reconstruction of the museum occurred in two different ways. The physical reconstruction of museums began with the re-collection and dispersion of artworks either moved out of the museums or taken from occupied Europe. However, the psychological reconstruction of museums and its curation required the most attention. The director's attitudes towards previously illegal modern art were altered tremendously. Directly after the war, directors, who were once supporting modern art movements, were hesitant to install modern artworks back into museums. The hesitation created "This type of shyness and reluctance [which was] a very natural result of the experiences in the Third Reich."²⁴⁵ Fear of modern art was seared in the minds of the German people and in museums, making the reacceptance of modern art that much harder to achieve.

This was felt in the music world as well, in a letter by composer Karl Amadeus Hartmann to conductor Hermann Scherchen, Hartmann noticed that "the audience has totally lost its understanding of modern music and in any event the musicians are helpless in coping with the strange sounds."

Display organization was also a victim from the Nazi era. In a postmodern world, classification systems should be constructed in a simpler, more neutral manner, so "that collections ordered in [this] space [should] tell stories that carry significant ideological implications."²⁴⁶ During his travels, Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt wrote of the psychological scar placed on museums by the Nazis. In his art journal article, he found that:

Preoccupation with German art is another heritage of the Third Reich. An unconscious nationalism, the result of years of inbreeding and isolation from the rest of the world is something one must always count with... This latent nationalism even governs the revival of modern art and is the reason why the

²⁴⁵ Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. "German Museums at the Crossroads". 122

²⁴⁶ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 107

more extreme forms of German Expressionism are in the foreground of public consciousness.²⁴⁷

Some German museums, as Lehmann-Haupt notes, were not afraid to take risks in re-entering modern art into the German art world. “The Berlin Magistrate too has come to the fore with city wide exhibitions of current art in the various municipal district offices, the Kunst-Ämter. Here the artists not only show their latest paintings, but also receive their artist’s materials.”²⁴⁸ Small but important modern art displays popped up in museums, which slowly integrated modern art back into the public’s eye. Ludwig Justi, who was reinstated at the Nationalgalerie after the war, created one of the first post-war modern art exhibitions there. In 1946, Justi:

organized the first survey of [modern] works, in the rooms of the Schlossmuseum. Entitled *Wiedersehen mit Museumsgut* (Reunion with museum pieces)...it provided visitors with their first opportunity for many years to see works by artists who had been vilified.²⁴⁹

Although museums began to reorganize themselves, Lenhmann-Haupt concluded that:

the U.S and British Military Governments have been prompt and efficient in setting up a responsible German museum administration and in actually returning legitimate property to the museums. But they have been slow to realize the importance of cultural reorientation or to build effective channels and media.²⁵⁰

Modern art’s reentrance into society occurred rapidly post WWII, although its acceptance was a slower process. With the Nationalgalerie opening their exhibition in 1946, a string of small exhibitions of modern art opened up until 1950. French postimpressionist exhibitions were opened between 1946 and 1947 in Berlin, which

²⁴⁷ Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. “German Museums at the Crossroads”. 123

²⁴⁸ Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. “German Museums at the Crossroads”. 124

²⁴⁹ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 114

²⁵⁰ Lehmann-Haupt, Hellmut. “German Museums at the Crossroads”. 126

consisted of works by Paul Gauguin and Paul Cezanne, who were originally defined as “degenerate.”²⁵¹

As the United States continued to help Germany with its “re-acculturation” back into a globalized society, from 1946 onwards began a “cultural exchange program” that attempted “to exhibit the work of artists who had been vilified by the Nazis as well as young artists promoting what was to become the new artistic perspective,” which began in 1946.²⁵²

But more than anything else, it was the ideological atmosphere created by the Third Reich that penetrated the museum to its core. People under the threat of the Nazi regime were restricted in voicing their own opinions or even formulate their own ideas of good art; the display and curation of the Degenerate Art Exhibition forced people to hate new forms of artistic expression, while the Great German Art Exhibition showed people the art they were supposed to like. To mend the wounds of suppression, museums and other art exhibitions became more than just a building; “After [World War II], museums and exhibitions were asked to help rebuild the human spirit.”²⁵³ For instance, the Nationalgalerie was “severely damaged...but as soon as hostilities were over, the task of rebuilding began with great enthusiasm....People were rid of their fears and...full of hope.”²⁵⁴

Museums became places of humanism. Specifically, “During the Cold War decade of the 1950s, art museums in the west supplemented the rhetoric of universal

²⁵¹ Steinkamp, Maike. “The Propagandistic Role of Modern Art in Postwar Berlin.” *Berlin Divided City, 1945-1989*, Edited by Philip Broadbent and Sabine Hake, NED - New edition, 1, Berghahn Books, 2010, pp. 23–33

²⁵² Steinkamp, Maike. “The Propagandistic Role of Modern Art in Postwar Berlin. 25

²⁵³ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 37

²⁵⁴ Barron, Stephanie. *Degenerate Art: the fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. 114

humanism by promoting art as the embodiment of freedom.”²⁵⁵ Shying away from the past, “[W]estern museums countered the heavy-handed ideological use of text and interpretation in Soviet and Nazi museums and art exhibits before the war by minimizing wall labels and interpretation and allowing works of art ‘to speak for themselves.’”²⁵⁶

Curation of museums in America influenced German museums before post WWII American support. Museums, like the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, are similar in interior design to that of the Great German Art Exhibition. Labels and wall coloration changed from bright and vibrant colors, to white, which created the “white-cube” effect most modern art museums now use.²⁵⁷ The white-cube design helped audiences to “block out the external world and concentrate the beholder’s gaze, the white cube encouraged the drive toward self-sufficiency, flatness, and purity that we now associate with high modernist paintings.”²⁵⁸ The MoMA, built in 1929, adopted the white-cube form in 1934. One museum director, Philip Youtz, professed that “The interior of the museum needs no ornamentation, for the purpose of the building is to display highly decorative objects.”²⁵⁹ Youtz’s thoughts on ornamentation (or lack of) reflected the interior atmosphere for the Great German Art Exhibition. The clean walls displayed proper German art in all of its glory with nothing in its way to stop people’s admiration was a common sight for proper museum curation. In complete contrast, the Nazis created the Degenerate Art Exhibition, with an atmosphere of chaos and corruption, in order to show how the artwork was deemed “unacceptable.”

²⁵⁵ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 37

²⁵⁶ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 41

²⁵⁷ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 74

²⁵⁸ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 126

²⁵⁹ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 74

Museums from the 1940s to the 1960s used their past experiences with display clutter and disorganization, into developing a new standard of museum curation: isolating artifacts and artworks on walls and pedestals. John Coolidge, director of the Fogg museum in the United States, stated that to “isolat[ing] the object... is at all times to the greatest advantage...so arrange the gallery [so] that the visitor can sit comfortably in front of it and lose himself in the communion of the work of art.”²⁶⁰

In order to isolate the artwork, museums directors shifted into the more modern museum exhibition technique. This was the “introduction of single-row hangs, controlled lighting, and the elimination of architectural distraction [which] all favored the easy visual consumption of select masterpieces.”²⁶¹

The freedom that museums had over their own curation became clearer when entering into the 1950s. Once museums established a standardization of display along with a minimization of ideological views, art and the public began a new relationship, “Where art had been the propaganda under fascist and communist regime, in the West it became the embodiment of individual freedom, and this freedom extended to the public to enjoy a museum’s content.”²⁶² Furthermore, by the early 1950s “the promotion of modern art reached a new dimension. It was no longer solely concerned with demonstrating liberty and the variety of artistic work after twelve years of Nazi dictatorship, but with aiding the formation of new cultural identities.”²⁶³

²⁶⁰ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 175

²⁶¹ McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 176

²⁶² McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum*. 177

²⁶³ Steinkamp, Maïke. “The Propagandistic Role of Modern Art in Postwar Berlin. 23

Museums, with their freedom from government control, allowed any artwork to be seen, and for any curation to compliment the artworks, without the threat of immediate closure. Museums were able to return “to what had previously been dismissed as so-called degenerate art, [the directors] removed any lingering vestiges of Hitler’s influence on art. By [the 1950’s], the first signs of a new cultural and political course could already be seen.”²⁶⁴

The name change of the Haus der Deutsches Kunst was a step for museums in accepting their new-found release from the Nazi past. To include all art, the building’s name was changed to the House of Art.²⁶⁵ Although the Great German Art Exhibition was closed shortly after the war, the building reopened less than one year later. Being unscathed from the war, the House of Art was used for a variety of events, such as an American casino and even a nightclub. In 1946, as a way to bring life back to modern art, the west wing of the museum was opened for modern art exhibitions, such as one focused upon the *Blaue Reiter* in 1949. It is noted that “the art historian Ludwig Grote shaped the profile of Haus für Kunst as a site of Modernism in the first years after the war.”²⁶⁶

Museums learned that the heavy ideology of Nazis effected German culture greatly. That ideology penetrated the many layers of culture and ended up manipulating it into submission. With humanism as a new perspective for museums, directors became more interested in showing the Nazi era as extreme cultural discontinuity. Some Western museums purposefully:

²⁶⁴ Steinkamp, Maike. “The Propagandistic Role of Modern Art in Postwar Berlin. 27

²⁶⁵ Anonymous. *Haus Der Kunst - Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Dec. 2016.

²⁶⁶ Anonymous. *Haus Der Kunst – Home*.

installed a racist, sexist, and Eurocentric conception of the modern again which we are not obliged to agitate from the disqualified margins of race, class, gender, and sexuality, i.e. what was placed categorically outside what the museum defines alone as art worthy of being part of the canon.²⁶⁷

Directors were no longer afraid to reflect on the Third Reich and Soviets during World War II. Museums did not attack them, but showed the aftermath of the extreme society that the Nazis wanted to create. Museums educated the public about the amazing diversity of cultures and the need for cultural acceptance, while also looking at the past to help with potential problems of the future.

But how was a museum to look at the past, embrace it, but also fight the urge to memorialize or force its viewers to see what should not be seen? The atmosphere and collections of wartime memorabilia is something to consider when discussing the effects of World War II on museums. In their book, *Museums after Modernism*, Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans suggest that:

Such realities present the museum after modernism – after Auschwitz...with real moral responsibilities. Our cities are new homes to the refugees of these violations, our cultures called upon us to be permeable and responsive to sufferings that, as trauma, have no time and are not confined in space to ‘over there’ or in time to ‘back then’.²⁶⁸

By looking at the past, displaying these tokens of sadness and despair are the most important yet cautious tasks. Museums must allow the artifact to speak for itself without overwhelming the audience with its emotional impact or the museum’s space high-wired displays. Here is where museums utilize all their past knowledge of curation and use it to their advantage. By the development of the museum curation from the German museums in the 1930s through the 1940s, museums use the lessons of the past in combination with

²⁶⁷ Pollock, Griselda, and Joyce Zemans. *Museums after Modernism: Strategies of Engagement*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007. Print. 10-11

²⁶⁸ Pollock, Griselda, and Joyce Zemans. *Museums after Modernism*. 32

modern technologies to keep the audience in constant connection with a history that should be shared with everyone.

CHAPTER 7: EPILOGUE

Writing about museum curation and its effects on art and the public has had a profound effect on me. I began this process with one idea: a historical perspective on one particular time in Germany and how museums developed. But growing from this idea came the intricate understanding and gathering of knowledge about museum curation, exhibition design, and collections management. My thesis is a combination of many ideas from scholars that extended from the early introduction of the museum in the 18th century, into the present. But only a few have suggested that the Nazi's put more effort into the "mis"-curation of the Degenerate Art Exhibition. Seeing that there was little in the field about the mis-curation of Degenerate Art, I wanted to proclaim that Adolf Ziegler purposefully used the proper museum curation methods in the Great German Art Exhibition and turned curation upside down for the Degenerate Art Exhibition.

After reading both modern and older versions of exhibition design, I put together this compilation of sources, all complimenting one another, to create an original idea that developed in this thesis. I opened with the Andrew McClellan quote because it laid out my idea perfectly: the understudied art that is museum curation. By using the Degenerate Art Exhibition as my example, I made an argument that states that as a public we should be more aware of museum curation because it is understudied, and so is underestimated.

Museums today grapple with these problems of curation and attracting the population in different ways. In Nazi Germany, it was to facilitate the indoctrination of the Aryan population into the acceptance of the government views pertaining to what constitutes good art. With the Degenerate Art Exhibition, it was to change people's opinions of "modern" art (Expressionism especially) to align with the Nazi ideology. If

people go the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, they would receive an education not about good or bad art, but of different cultures and interpretations of art. We take a simple education like this, of cultures and of the world, for granted. The ability for us as a public to see and understand those who are different from us was not always the case, and the Third Reich is a prime example of this time of suppression.

But museums today are not totally different from ones like the Degenerate Art Exhibition. As I mentioned in my introduction, museum curators want their audience to be swayed into an opinion similar to the curators. No modern art curator would purposefully want their audience to hate the artwork. The manipulation of museum space then is exactly what it was in Nazi Germany, only today museums want people to like (or at least not fully dismiss) the exhibition.

Opening up the world of curation became the spotlight in this thesis. The smallest details of light, color, or space can change the mood of the exhibition drastically. Before, I didn't think much of these details. But looking at images of the Degenerate Art Exhibition, of the mismanagement of paintings, showed me how important it is to discuss the care of display of all artworks. The Degenerate Art Exhibition blew open the doors to this new world of museum curation and display, and its effects on the population were more pronounced than I would have thought. My sources allowed me to interpret their knowledge, and create an original idea of curation becoming another tool in the propaganda toolbox of the Nazis.

My thesis started as one idea, and ended up as original thoughts on curation. My belief in the importance of proper museum care, display and organization drove my thesis from many outlets to one solid path. Understanding the extreme of museum curation

shows the necessity for a better overall education of museum exhibition design. Learning from a time like Nazi Germany provided me with a solid base in trying to teach my public (the reader) how exactly museums can be used as propaganda. Nazi Germany, with its many demons, gives audiences of today many ways to be educated about history, genocide, and now, even museums.

APPENDIX 1: ART EXHIBITIONS IN PARIS

Germany is a special case when dealing with opposition to modern art and the creation of negative art exhibits. In 1937, France had a special exhibit in the Museum Jeu de Pomme in July 1937.²⁶⁹ Here, “some of the painters who were being shouted down by fanatics in Munich were being glorified, at about the same time, in Paris.”²⁷⁰

APPENDIX 2: COUNT KLAUS VON BAUDISSION

The most famous Nazi placed into a leading museum director position was Klaus Graf von Baudissin, the antimodernist director who replaced Gustav Hartlaub at the Folkwang museum in Essen.²⁷¹ Once in his new office, Baudissin had one of the largest purging of modern art in the country, with most ultimately placed on display in the Degenerate Art Exhibition. At this museum, Baudissin installed a new exhibit, entitled *The Spirit of November: Art in the Service of Decay*, in which he used works of German artists, such as George Grosz, Otto Dix and Man Beckmann as central artists in his negative art exhibition.²⁷²

Baudissin was also “engaged by Reich Education Minister [Bernhard] Rust in 1937 to oversee museum policy.” In essence, Baudissin was in control of the educational system within the Folkwang museum, while also holding the power to change the education system in German schools. With Baudissin holding two positions such as these, the Third Reich could manipulate the youth’s perception of art.

²⁶⁹ Feliciano, Hector. *The Lost Museum: The Nazi Conspiracy to Steal the World's Greatest Works of Art*. New York: Basic, 1997. Print. 105

²⁷⁰ Feliciano, Hector. *The Lost Museum*. 106

²⁷¹ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. Cary, US: Oxford University Press (US), 2006. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 29 August 2016. Copyright © 2006. 57

²⁷² Refer to chapter 4 “Aryan and Degenerate Art” for defining negative art exhibits.

The identity of German art was so strong within Baudissin, that even other Nazi members thought some of his ideas on “degenerate” art became too extreme. For example, at a conference in Berlin, Baudissin suggested that classic paintings done by Vermeer and other Northern Renaissance painters were also to be defined as degenerate, due to their lack of German nationalism.²⁷³

APPENDIX 3: ERNST BUCHNER

Ernst Buchner, the director of the Bavarian State Paintings collection, served in the German forces during World War I. As a child, Buchner grew up in a family dedicated to art.

His specialty in German art and its history ultimately saved Buchner’s job during the reformation of civil services because “His specialization in German art not only reflected his nationalist orientation, but was also a calculated decision that would position him well.” To seal his position at the Paintings Collection in Munich, Buchner became a member of the Nazi party on May 1st, 1933, after a critical attack by the party of his Jewish origins. The induction to the Nazi party was one that Buchner did not plan on attending. He removed himself from talks of race and other conversations pertaining to Jews, while also refusing to greet with “Heil Hitler”. Buchner also “refused to wear the Party pin on his lapel, and occasionally elicited substandard evaluations from Party functionaries.”

Buchner’s attitudes against the Nazis were muddled by his acceptance of some of the Third Reich’s art policies. Due to his fame in exhibition planning, Nazi members

²⁷³ This and previous quote taken from: Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. 58

utilized Buchner for their own use in museums and art exhibitions. For example, “prior to the opening of the House of German Art in 1937, [Buchner] succumbed to political pressure and provided space in the Neue Pinakothek for the work of living, officially approved artists.”²⁷⁴ He was also included in the providing and locating of artworks for smaller exhibitions that popped up in Germany in the early 1930s, such as the *Blood and Soil* and the *Volk und Familie*.

Providing insight and assistance for the Nazis gave Buchner the opportunity to use their power for his own agenda. The blurred lines of Buchner’s true intentions are one to consider when dealing with museum directors during this time period. Although he was opposed to the Nazi party and some of their beliefs, Buchner utilized their powers to grow his collection at the museum. For example, “by the late 1930s, he had become involved with the artworks taken from local Jews by the Gestapo – first as a response to emigration, then as part of the more extensive Aryanization measure.” Buchner also “took the initiative and tried to induce Jews to sell their artworks to him at bargain prices, lest they be seized.” The most prominent event in Buchner’s life was stealing the Ghent Altarpiece in France. With the belief that this artwork was originally stolen by France, Buchner created exhibition plans and designs for its once back in Germany. It is noted that “Over the course of 1938-1944, his collection grew from 10500 to 12000.”

Buchner’s ability to fight for particular modern art and artworks, as well as his courage in standing up to other Nazi party members, made Buchner a contested member of the Nazi party. For instance, Buchner stood directly up to Adolf Ziegler, refusing to allow certain artworks to be taken from his collection for the Degenerate Art Exhibition

²⁷⁴ All quotes and information on page can be found in: Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. 17-23

as well as “vehemently opposed proposals to destroy the purged art, though he was unable to protect works from being burned.”²⁷⁵

There are some instances where Buchner stood up against Hitler himself. When discussing purges and the Aryanization of art, Buchner was initially accepted by Hitler because “he shared with Hitler the notion that German art of past epochs was under appreciated and undervalued and that greater recognition would come with time.”²⁷⁶ But due to his disapproval of purging and destroying modern art, Buchner opposed Hitler and the Nazis.²⁷⁷

During his denazification trial in 1948, Buchner believed himself innocent of taking Jewish and modern art, seeing his acts as a means of saving them from destruction. He explained that his work with the taking of the Ghent Altarpiece was “not being confiscated by the German Reich, but was being put out of danger from air attacks.”²⁷⁸ A lack of evidence of his support for the Nazi party that led to Buchner’s freedom and he eventually received his job back at the Bavarian Archives. Buchner’s relationship was similar to many directors that were not fired in Germany: “The directors of the top museums in the Reich...all made accommodations with the Nazi leaders. Like Buchner, they began their collaboration with the regime by implementing the prejudicial personnel policies that applies to all branches of civil services.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ All quotes and information can be found in: Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. 25-29

²⁷⁶ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. 32

²⁷⁷ No known evidence of if Buchner was effected by this difference is recorded.

²⁷⁸ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. 35

²⁷⁹ Petropoulos, Jonathan. *Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany*. 52

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