

Broken Art:
The Impact of Nazi Cultural Policy on
Art

Senior Honors Thesis

Lee Bowles

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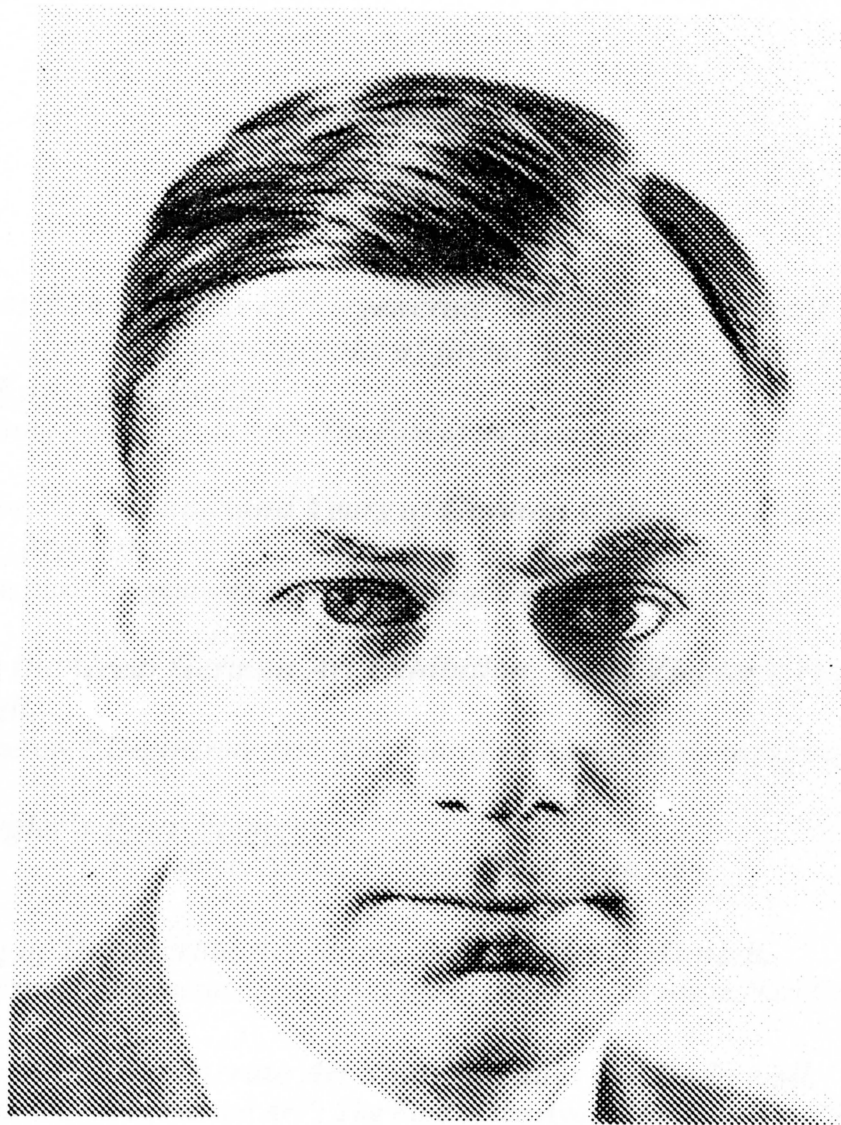


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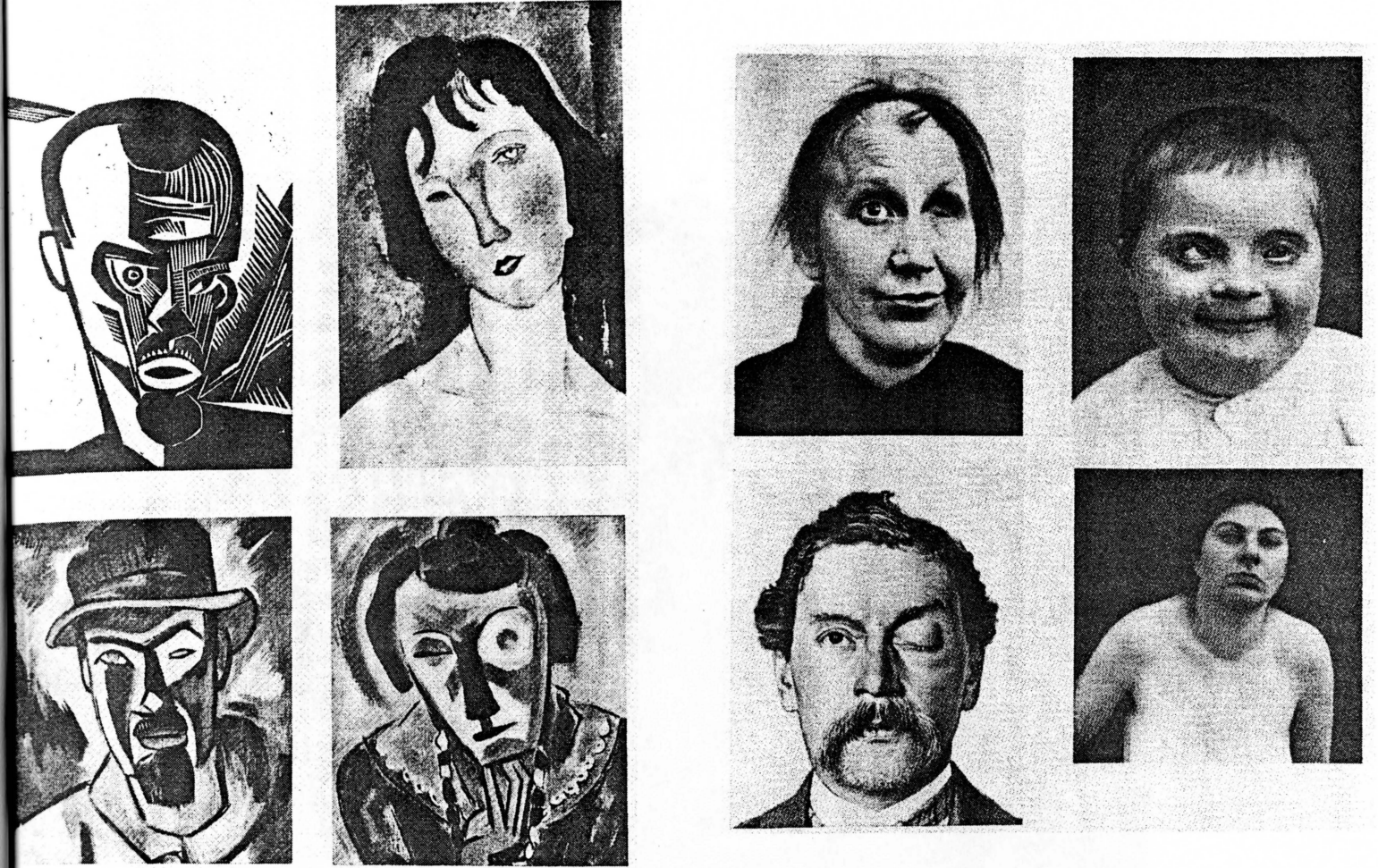
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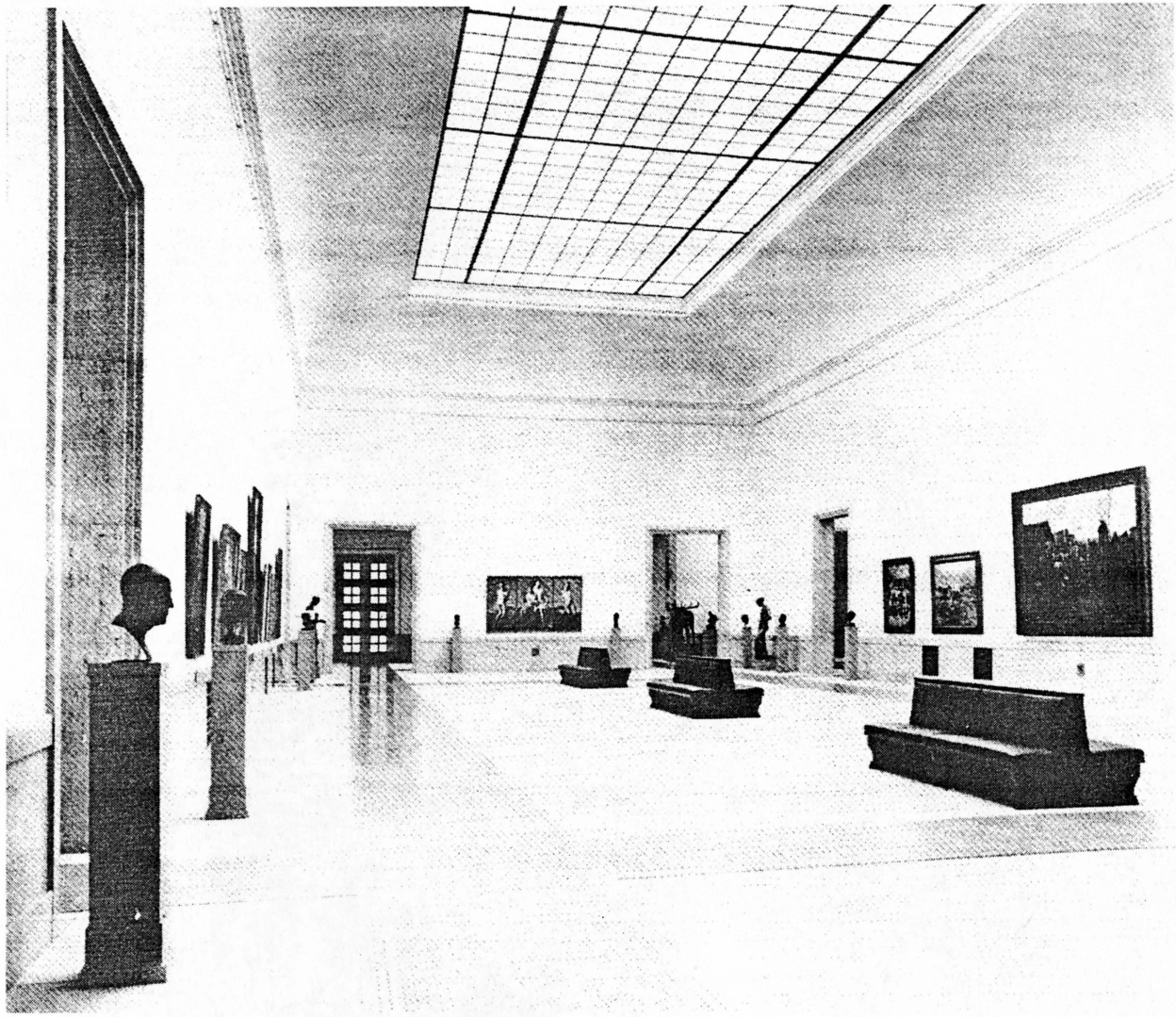
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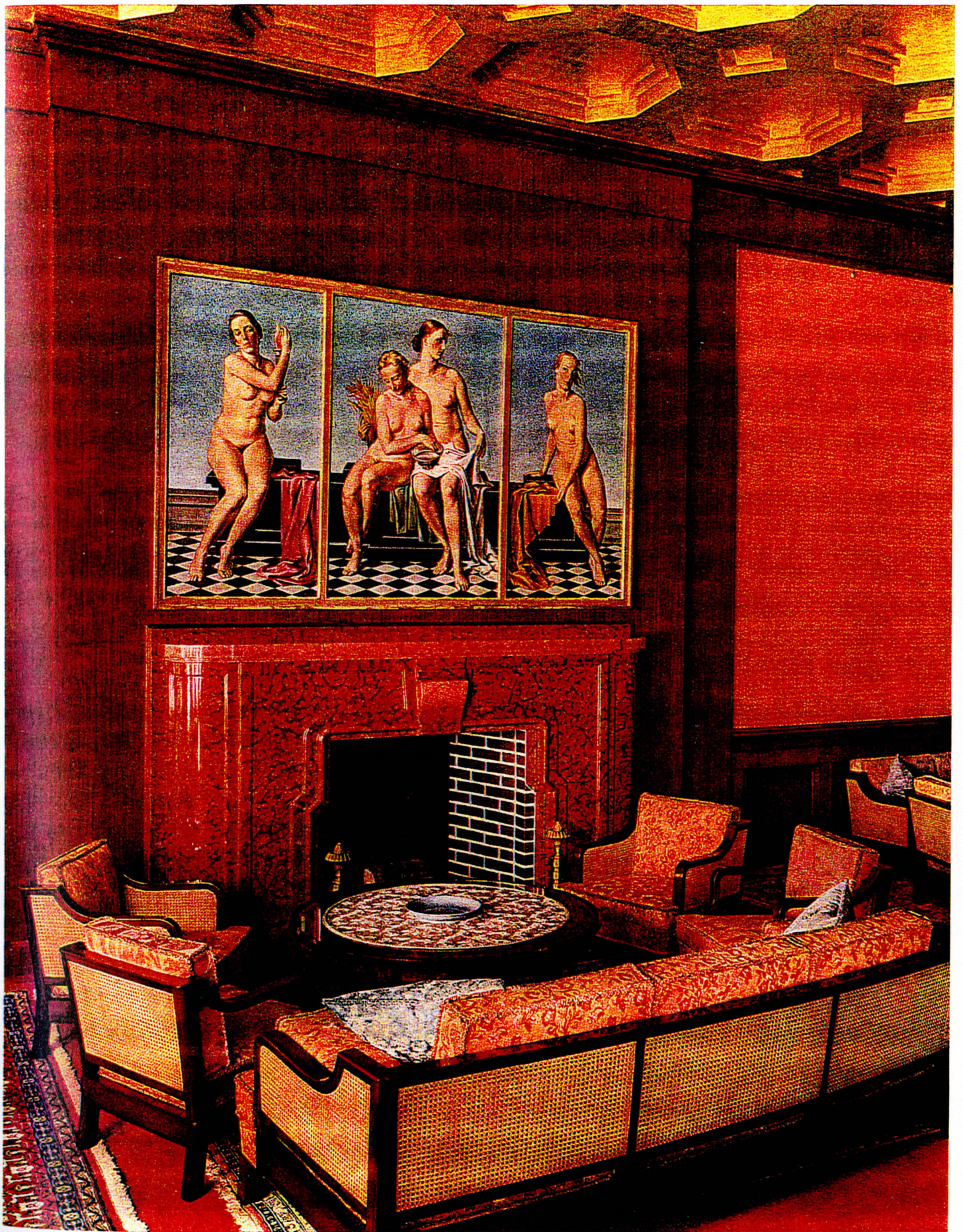
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Ausstellung "Entartete Kunst" Eintritt frei



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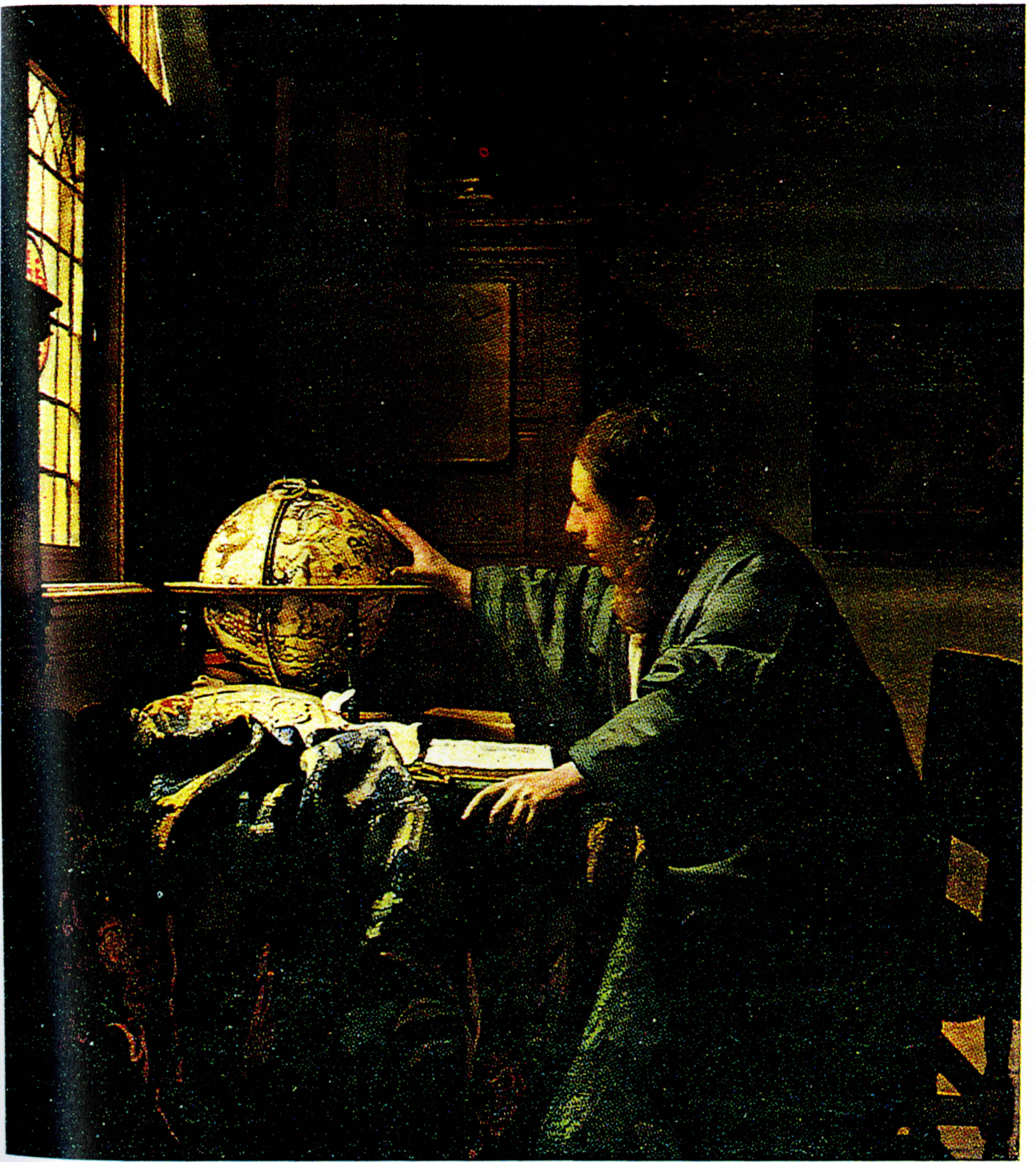
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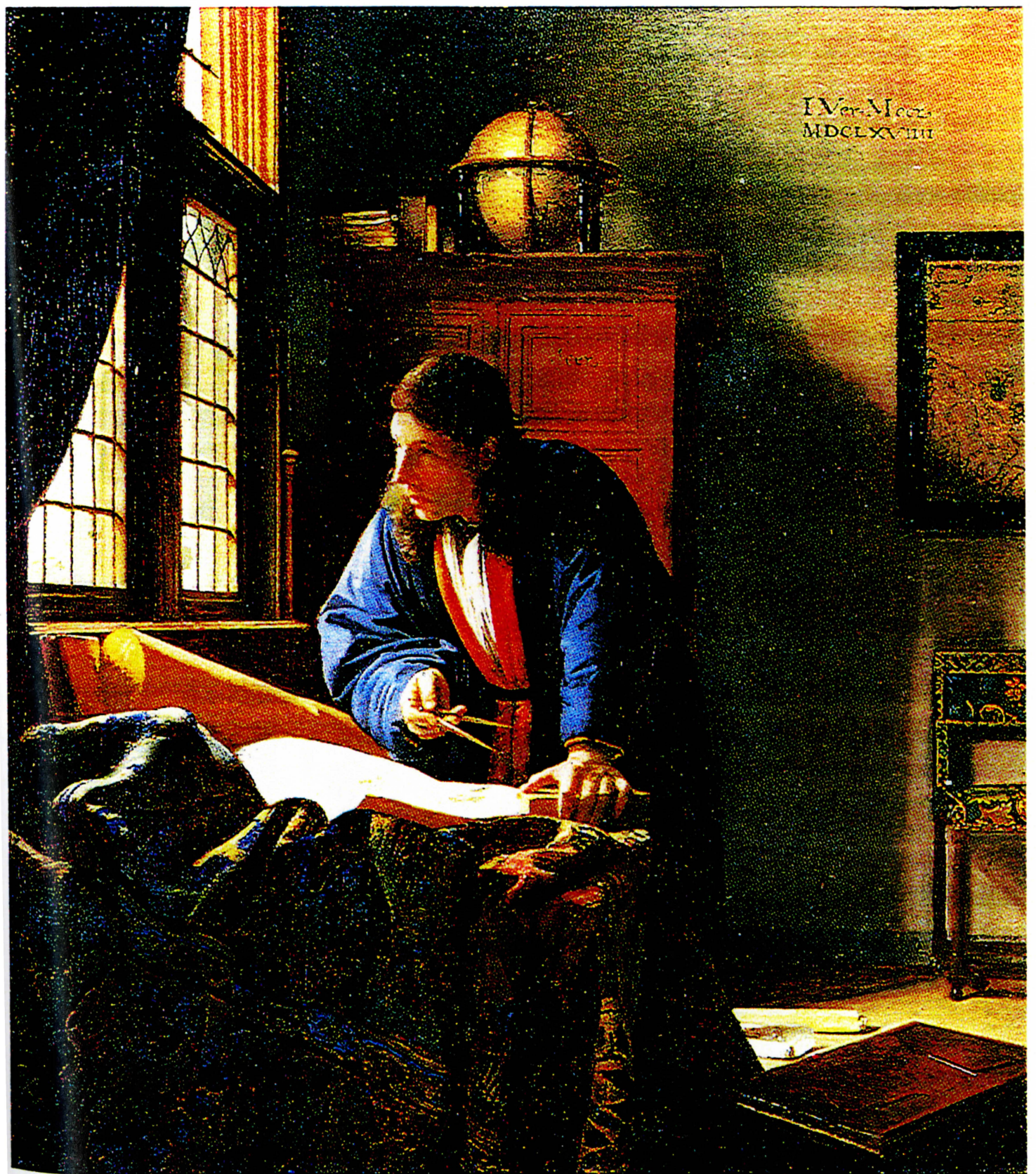
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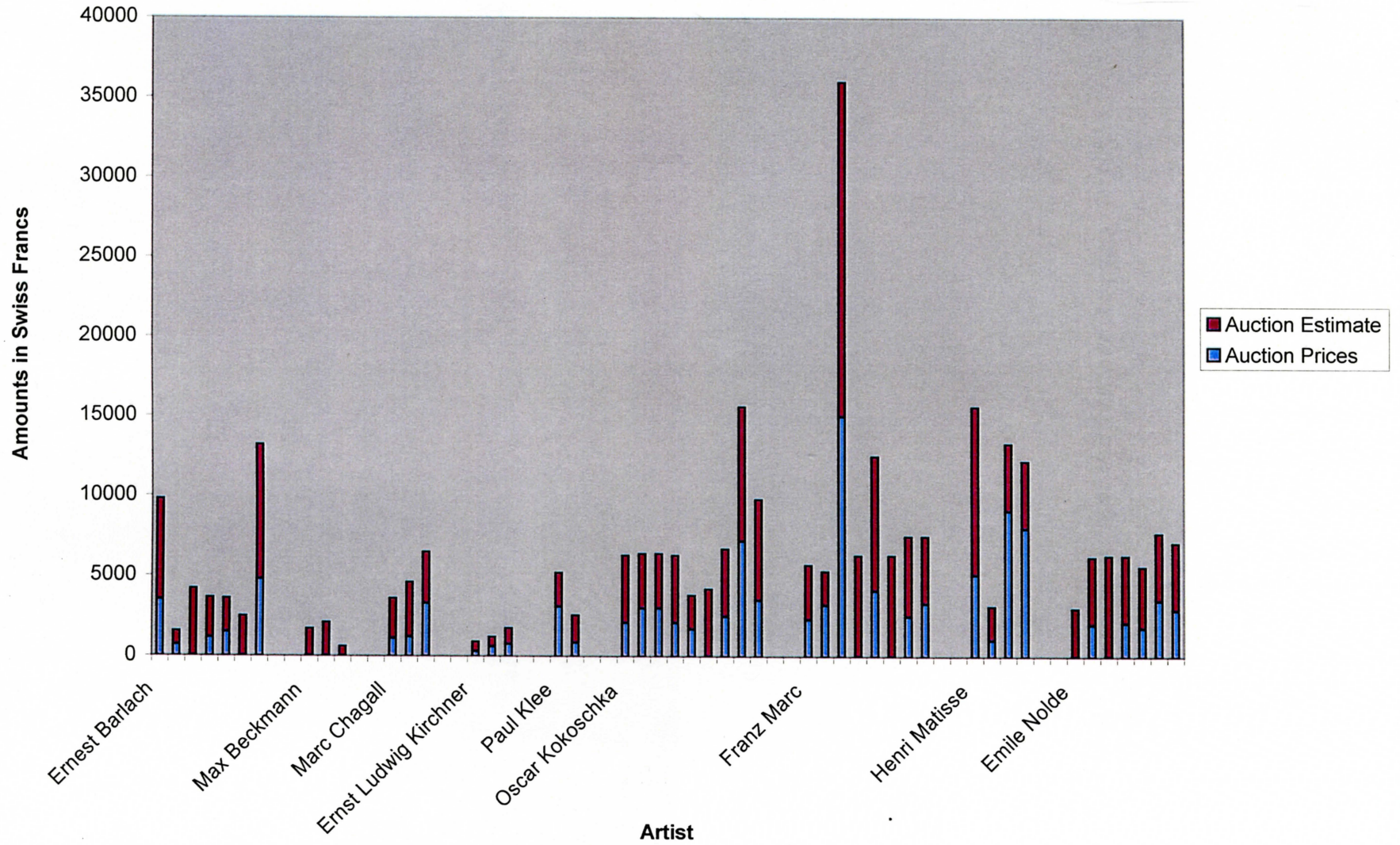


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I

Introduction

The Blitzkrieg, the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the memories of veterans and the monuments throughout Europe, Japan, and the United States provide us with images of WWII. History books record the war that began in Europe in 1939 and ended in the Pacific, halfway around the world, in 1945, by discussing powerful alliances, political figures, and military strategy. However, in the late 1930's another war commenced and its aftermath is still felt today. It was a war on modern art that began in the late 1920s in the writings and thoughts of Adolf Hitler. It found expression in the 1930s and 1940s as official Nazi Party Policy and its legacy today can be found in art that continues to be recovered and repatriated. The victims in this art war are too numerous to count. Art criminologist Sol Chaneles asserts that perhaps 16 million works of art were "lost".¹

From the moment when Hitler became chancellor in 1933, the Nazi party and the German government began a program in which art would serve their political ends. Hitler was appointed chancellor during the failure of the German economy in the wake of the Great Depression, a time when German citizens felt unfairly treated by the Treaty of Versailles (1919), and Europe was searching for an alternative to Stalin's spreading communism. Hitler believed and convinced Germany that that he was the answer, the solution to the unacceptable condition of Germany in the early 1930s.

¹Richard B. Coffman, "Art Investment and Asymmetrical Information," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 15, no. 2 (1991): 89.

Hitler's answer was a policy of strong central control and a glorification of Aryan virtues. Every element of the Nazi Third Reich focused on collective strategy and conformity. Hitler reorganized the military, the government, and culture itself to create his new vision of a unified Germanic people. Disillusioned with the Weimar Republic and their post-World War humiliation, the people were willing to go along with him. The search for something collective, organized, and solid led them to Hitler and eventually to his Fascism, where conformity, political and cultural, was the strength of the government.

As a man already interested in art, Hitler was quick to apply his policies to the visual arts. He believed that art contributed to culture by virtue of its role as part of a collective whole. Hitler saw art as a means of legitimizing the German people in European and world history. Dr. Joseph Goebbels helped him substantiate the ideology.

Together these two men developed the cultural institutions that governed the production, exhibition, and sale of art in the Third Reich. Stratified and run with military precision and organization, these cultural institutions worked together to promote an art policy that furthered political goals.

This synthesis of cultural and political institutions had far reaching effects. The cultural institutions oversaw the planning and the content of exhibitions that defined the difference between "accepted art", the art that conformed to the Nazi image of Nordicism, and "degenerate art", which was modern, avant-garde and tinged with unacceptable racial and political associations. Artists who failed to conform were banned from exhibiting their work. Degenerate artworks were confiscated from German museums and were sold or burned.

Hitler, also, created a special collection of works that mostly reflected his own taste. Called the Linz project, it was compiled throughout the late 1930's and the war years, with the confiscation of works from public and private collections both in Germany and in the occupied countries.

Nazi policies wreaked havoc on the international art market. Black market sales, exchanges of "degenerate works" for "accepted works", auctions, and outright destruction of work, including the purging of museums, all affected the pricing and valuation of art. Such practices also resulted in the gaps in provenance that are still being sorted out today.

The importance of individual works as contributions to a greater collection is a tenet present through every level of the Nazi cultural system. The power of art and the fear of individual expression is a continued theme. All of this offers a fascinating opportunity to look at the power of visual images in politics and the power of politics over the perception and acceptance of art.

II

Ideology: The Inspiration Behind Nazi Cultural Policy

Art, often seen as tangential to politics, power, and government, played an important political role in the Nazi rise to power. Through the organization of art collections the Nazis made important political statements. The actions of the Nazi party and the ideology of its members were paralleled in both art and politics. One Nazi official exclaimed, "It is a mistake to think that the national revolution is only political and economic. It is above all cultural."² As the Nazi party gained strength, party members consistently used art as a tool of political propaganda and ideological conformity. The parallel paths of art and politics began early in the century in the vision of one man, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)(Figure I). Hitler's attitudes towards art resulted from his experience as an art student, his rejection of Marxist theory, his reversal of the liberal cultural policies of the Weimar republic, and his confiscation of art as military retribution. In later years, Dr. Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) (Figure II), the Reichminister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, expanded Hitler's ideas and used them as a framework for the development of cultural institutions and policy. These two men created and propagated the Nazi artistic ideology.

Hitler had been fascinated with art since his early schooling. His most direct statements on art are preserved in *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), published in 1928, in which he discussed his early fascination with art. He claimed that the only scholastic

² Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: the Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 6.

activities that he was interested in were “principally things I thought I should need later as a painter. Whatever I thought unimportant in that connection, or whatever failed to attract me, I sabotaged altogether.”³ Hitler’s interest in art became a priority to the future Fuhrer. At the age of nineteen, he traveled to Vienna to pursue his art education. He described his entrance examination for the Academy in Vienna: “armed with a thick bundle of drawings, I had set out, convinced I would find the examination mere child’s play.”⁴ Hitler was disappointed. The Academy decided Hitler was a much better draftsman than a painter and denied him admission.⁵ For Hitler, the dream of a career as a painter ended in Vienna in 1907, but his interest in painting and visual art continued the rest of his life.

Hitler’s writings in *Mein Kampf* demonstrated his tendency to personalize his political ideology. He began with his autobiography and then applied his experiences to the development of the Nazi ideology. In the case of art, he saw it as a contributing element of the cultural decay that ultimately caused the collapse of the German Empire. In particular, he blamed Futurism, Cubism, and Dadaism as examples of this decay.⁶ Hitler criticized “bolshevized states, which can admire with horror, as officially State-recognized art, those morbid excrescences of lunatics and degenerates which we have become acquainted with since the turn of the century under the general names of Cubism and Dadaism.”⁷ He discussed the “duty of the state and of its leaders to prevent a people from falling under the influence of spiritual madness.”⁸

³ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf: The First Complete and Unexpurgated Edition Published in the English Language*, trans. Ludwig Lore (New York: Stackpole, 1939), 25.

⁴ Hitler, 33.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hitler, 253.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hector Feliciano, *The Lost Museum: the Nazi Conspiracy to Steal the World’s Greatest Works of Art*,

Later scholars commenting on *Mein Kampf* dismissed Hitler as a pseudo-expert on culture, a man pretending to understand the context of art without the knowledge to support his opinions.⁹ Hans Frank, the appointed governor-general of Poland under the Third Reich, once stated of Hitler, "He played art-and-music lover, but he had no conception of art. He liked Wagner, naturally, because he could see himself playing God with dramatic splendor. And his adoration of the nude! To him the nude represented merely a protest against convention which he was able to understand."¹⁰ It is a mistake, however, to ignore Hitler's ideas on art because he later used them as a means to a political end.

His artistic ideas were tied to his political ideas. One example is Hitler's rejection of the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883). A native of Germany, Marx developed the basic political and economic theory of Communism. Marx also underscored the importance of the contextual meaning of art. Marx studied German classicist aesthetics and focused his art philosophy on Ancient Greece and the Italian Renaissance.¹¹ He wrote,

It is a well-known fact that Greek mythology was not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also the very ground from which it had sprung. Is the view of nature and of social relations, which shaped Greek imagination and Greek [art] possible in the age of automatic machinery, and railways, and locomotives, and electric telegraphs? All mythology masters and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in and through the imagination; hence it disappears as soon as man gains mastery over the forces of nature.... Greek art presupposes the existence of Greek mythology, i.e., that nature and

trans. from the French (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 21.

⁹Koppel Shub Pinson, *Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization*, With Chapter 23 by Klaus Epstein, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 481. In his book *Modern Germany*, Koppel S. Pinson describes Hitler as "semi-educated and sufficiently cultured to make a pretense of profound interest in art and music but he was a dilettante in everything from art and architecture to politics and military strategy" (Pinson 481).

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Hellmutt Lehmann-Haupt, *Art Under a Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 7.

even the form of society are wrought up in the popular fancy in an unconsciously artistic fashion. That is its material.¹²

Regardless of later interpretations and usage, Marx tied the intrinsic meaning of an artwork to its production and encouraged critics and historians to seek out information about the origin of art to explain the "material" from which art is made.

Contrary to Marx's ideas, Hitler believed that art achieved political meaning when placed in a collection or an exhibit. Meaning did not come from production. At the opening of the House of German Art in 1937, Hitler rejected "works of art that are not capable of being understood in themselves but need some pretentious instruction book to justify their existence.... [These] will never find their way to the German people."¹³ Hitler wanted art to be understood based on subject and aesthetic message. Dismissing modern art, Hitler said:

All those catchwords: "inner experience," "strong state of mind," "forceful will," "emotions pregnant with the future," "heroic attitude," "meaningful empathy," "experienced order of the times," "original primitivism," etc.-all these dumb mendacious excuses, this claptrap, or jabbering will no longer be accepted as excuses or even recommendations for worthless, integrally unskilled products. Whether or not anybody has a strong will or an inner experience, he will have to prove through his work, and not through gibberish. And anyhow, we [the German people] are all much more interested in quality than in so-called will....¹⁴

He cared very little for modern art that required "gibberish" or art criticism to justify and

¹² Karl Marx, "Production and Consumption," in *Marxism and Art: Writings in Aesthetics and Criticism*, eds. Berel Lang and Forrest Williams (New York: McKay, 1972), 38.

¹³ Education Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Entartete Kunst" *Curator* 40 (June 1997) (journal online); available from Art Abstracts on First Search <<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/WebZ/FSQUERY?sessionid=sp02sw15-33553-ceyy3sm9-eyz8ip:ent>> (part 1 of 2) (accessed 10 October 2000).

¹⁴ Herschel Browning Chipp, *Theories on Modern Art; A Source Book for Artists and Critics*, With contributions by Peter Selz and Joshua C. Taylor (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1968), 480.

explain its aesthetic appearance. Hitler felt that ordinary people should not need elitist art criticisms in order to understand art.¹⁵ He condemned the modern artist's lack of realism:

The eye shows things differently to certain human beings than the way they really are, that is, that there really are men who see the present population of our nation only as rotten cretins; who, on principle, see meadows blue, skies green, clouds sulphur yellow, and so on, or, as they say experience them as such.... I want to forbid these pitiful misfortunates, who quite obviously suffer from an eye disease, to try vehemently to foist these products of their misinterpretation upon the age in which we live in, or even to wish to present them as art.¹⁶

Because Hitler gained power from the middle and lower classes, who largely shared his preference for realism and rejection of modernism, it was in some way easy to form an art policy that had mass acceptance.

The Nazi rejection of the cultural policies of the Weimar Republic represented a second example of Hitler's connection between art and politics. Hitler exploited art to complement his growing political power. On February 28, 1933, the year he was elected Chancellor of Germany, Hitler and the Nazi party overturned many of the civil rights granted to the German people by the Weimar Republic. Among these were laws allowing and encouraging the freedom of the arts.¹⁷ While some art censorship existed in the Weimar republic, policies concerning artistic freedom were much more liberal than those found in the Third Reich.¹⁸ Hitler and the Nazi Party realized that control over the

¹⁵Stephanie Barron, ed., *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 11.

¹⁶ Chipp 480.

¹⁷ Christoph Zuschlag, " 'Chambers of Horrors of Art' and 'Degenerate Art': On Censorship in the Visual Arts in Nazi Germany," in *Suspended License: censorship and the visual arts*, ed. Elizabeth C. Childs (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1997), 210.

¹⁸ One case of censorship during the Weimar Republic included an incident where "In Berlin in 1928, a local court filed charges of blasphemy against George Grosz for several drawings published in an album titled *Hintergrund* (backdrop). Although originally found guilty, Grosz was ultimately acquitted on appeal. The most provocative of these drawings was one of Christ wearing a gas mask and boots captioned 'Keep

criticism and presentation of art equaled control over the German people's interpretation of art. Controlling art was another means to the legitimization of the Fuhrer and the defeat of the Republic. Thus, art was an "ideological vehicle" that provided another example of what had "been wrong with the culture and politics of the Weimar Republic."¹⁹

A third example of the Nazi connection of art and politics is found in Hitler's interest in art as retribution for past military defeats. In 1940, Hitler commissioned Otto Kummel, the director of the Reich's museums, to produce a list of German art placed in foreign museums and collections.²⁰ The desire to regain lost works of German art reflected Hitler's desire to erase the humiliations of the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and to regain the German heritage lost in past wars. For Hitler control over art became a symbol of political triumph. The failed artist exploited art as a necessary means to an end, a stepping-stone for political control.

Although Hitler was the moving force behind the artistic ideology of the Nazi party, Dr. Joseph Goebbels supported Hitler's belief in the political power of art. Goebbels provided the content behind Hitler's ideology; he gave it credence through philosophical study. He took Hitler's ideas and validated them. A man of education and culture, Goebbels studied philosophy and literature and in 1921 was awarded a doctorate in Romantic Drama from the University of Heidelberg.²¹ Like Hitler, Goebbels' ambitions were never achieved under the institutions of the Weimar republic. His literary

your mouth shut and do your duty.'" Mary-Margaret Goggin, "'Decent' vs. 'Degenerate' Art: the National Socialist Case," *Art Journal* 50 (Winter 1991): 84.

¹⁹ Emily Braun, "Return of the Repressed," *Art in America* 79 (October 1991): 118.

²⁰ Feliciano, 24.

²¹ Harald Steffahn, "Joseph Goebbels", in *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, eds. Christian Zentner and Friedemann Bedürftig, trans. from the German by Amy Hackett (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1991), 348.

efforts were rejected repeatedly from newspapers and publishers. He achieved praise for his intellectual endeavors only through political involvement in the Nazi party. He excelled as a political orator and nationalist writer.²² In exchange for Hitler's patronage, Goebbels supported him without equivocation.

Goebbels' greatest contribution to Hitler's artistic ideology was the development of the idea of the Nazi aesthetic state. Goebbels promoted "aestheticized politics" according to essayist Walter Benjamin.²³ In 1936, Benjamin wrote, "Fascism is out to organize the newly arisen proletarianized masses.... It is sold on allowing the masses to have ornamental representation, but not justice.... Fascism amounts to the aestheticism of political life."²⁴ Goebbels believed in an aesthetic state that allowed Hitler to "mechanize" the German people.²⁵ Goebbels promoted aesthetic conformity to ensure national allegiance to the Fuhrer.

The idea of the aesthetic state embodies a fundamental principle of the Nazi party: civil liberties will be, in all things, subordinated for the benefit of the state. Goebbels believed that the state, like art, could be aestheticized through collective perfection: "The statesman is an artist too. For him the people are neither more nor less than what stone is for the sculptor.... Politics are the plastic art of the state, just as painting is the plastic art of colour. This is why politics without people...is sheer nonsense. To shape a People out of the masses, and a State out of the people, this has always been the deepest intention of

²²Harald Steffahn, 349.

²³Brandon Taylor and Wilfried van der Will, eds., "Aesthetics and National Socialism" *The Nazification of Art: Art, Design, Music, Architecture, and Film in the Third Reich*, Winchester studies in art and criticism (Winchester, England: Winchester School of Art Press, 1990), 249 n.1.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ian Mackenzie, "Terrible Beauty: Paul de Man's Retreat from the Aesthetic," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (Fall 1993): 558.

politics in the true sense.”²⁶

Goebbels' aesthetic state substantiated the fundamental artistic ideology of Hitler. Hitler and Goebbels both believed that individual works must be secondary to the power of the whole. The collective statement was more meaningful than individual works or individual interpretation. Goebbels' ideas about the aesthetic state and the Hitler's ideas about the power of art to serve political ends guided the creation of Nazi cultural policy and the classifications of art in the 1930s and early 1940s.

²⁶Mackenzie, 557.

III

Institutions: The Administrators of Nazi Cultural Policy

The artistic ideology developed by Hitler and Goebbels mandated the formation of cultural institutions that allowed them to control and influence art. Hitler's interest in art resulted in three outcomes: an increase in the quality of both private and public collections in Germany, the development of stratified cultural institutions, and the passing of cultural laws to control the interpretation of visual art. These outcomes changed the art world both inside and outside the borders of Germany. Hitler saw himself as both a cultural and military leader.

Hitler's ideology concerning art and race was one aspect of his policy. His stylistic preferences and racial prejudices tied Aryanism to classical art and Judaism to modern art. In *Mein Kampf*, he wrote “culturally he [the Jew] infects art, literature and theater, makes a mock of natural feeling, overturns all ideas of beauty and nobility, of the exalted and good, drags people down into the sphere of his own base nature.”²⁷ Hitler's associations of art with race began early in his political career. He asserted that the Aryan race was the “Prometheus of Humanity” and the “Founder of Culture.”²⁸ As the ruler of the Aryan race, he charged himself with the task of cleansing racial impurities out of Aryan culture. Hitler realized that both art and ethnic cleansing were critical means by which to achieve his political ends.

Unlike other modern political regimes, the unique and essential role of art for the

²⁷Hitler, 317.

²⁸Pinson, 494.

Nazis required cultural institutions to govern the ideology of censorship and the practical details of confiscation. Confiscation was a priority for the Third Reich. While Hitler, however, was interested in creating a great public collection, many of his subordinates were more interested in their own private collections. Chief among them was Reichmarshall Hermann Goering (1893-1946) (Figure III), Hitler's second in command.

As a young man, Goering was part of the military elite. He was the son of the first imperial Reich commissioner in German southeast Africa. During his years in his father's house, Goering developed a taste for wealth and ostentation.²⁹ Goering joined the military and fought in World War I in the German air force. He became associated with Hitler in 1922 and remained his powerful counterpart through the duration of the Third Reich. As his political power grew, Goering pursued his interest in art. He commissioned the confiscation of several works of art. While supervising the Nazi military occupations of other European countries, especially France and Poland, Goering collected for his famous country estate Karinhall. Another member of Hitler's inner circle, Albert Speer (Figure IV), described Goering's home: "The halls and rooms of Karinhall were sheathed with valuable paintings hung one above the other in three and four tiers. He even had a life-size nude representing Europa mounted above the canopy of his magnificent bed. He himself dabbled in art dealing: The walls of one large hall of his country estate were covered with paintings. They had been the property of a well known Dutch art dealer who after the occupation had been compelled to turn over his collection to Goering for a ridiculous price."³⁰ Goering's ostentatious taste demanded the best art for his estate. Goering unabashedly used his military position and power to intimidate citizens of

²⁹ Steffahn, 354.

³⁰ Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich: Memoir*, with an introduction by Eugene Davidson, trans. from the German by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 214.

occupied countries in order to attain valuable works of art through what were often illegal transactions.

While Goering's art collecting practices were less than honorable, Hitler collected for Germany alone. Hitler began plans to amass what he considered to be a matchless national art collection. The majority of the works collected by Hitler would be sent to Linz, Hitler's birthplace in Austria, to be placed in a museum never completed due to the onset of World War II.³¹ Hitler chose Hans Posse (Figure V), the former director of the art museum in Dresden, to curate and select the works for the Linz project.³² All art confiscated in Hitler's name was placed in the Führervorbehalt (Führer's reserve) and kept in storage for placement in Linz.³³ Speer described the difference between the collecting practices of Hitler and Goering: "Hitler did not use his authority for his private ends. He did not keep in his own possession a single one of the paintings acquired or confiscated in the occupied territories. Goering, on the other hand, went about increasing his art collection by any means whatsoever."³⁴

Regardless of their differences, both Hitler and Goering faced legal problems with confiscation. They realized that in order to retain international and domestic respect they would have to justify confiscations. The Third Reich's tool of justification became censorship. Stratified cultural institutions were designed by Hitler, Goebbels and Goering to control censorship. Confiscations were legalized; and opposing opinions on art were neutralized. On March 11, 1933, Goebbels was named as the Head of the Reichministerium Völkeraufklärung und Propaganda (Reich Ministry of Public

³¹Nicholas, 44.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Speer, 214.

Enlightenment and Propaganda) (RMVP). As the Reichminister for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, Goebbels controlled all cultural institutions under the guidance of Hitler. On June 30, 1933 Hitler decreed "the Reichminister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda has jurisdiction over the whole field of spiritual indoctrination of the nation, of propagandizing the nation, of cultural and economic propaganda, of enlightenment of the public at home and abroad; furthermore, he is in charge of the administration of all institutions serving this purpose."³⁵ Hitler placed Goebbels in charge of German culture. Because Hitler believed that art symbolized power, he devoted a significant amount of resources and time towards ensuring this end. For Hitler, art and the German spirit were the same; the control of art collections equated the control of the German spirit.

Hitler and Goebbels' first step towards the control of art concerned the management of artists and consequently their output. On September 22, 1933 the Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture)(RKK) was born. The RKK was broken up into seven chambers designed to cover all areas of culture. The chambers were separated into art, music, literature, film, the press, radio, and theater.³⁶ Each chamber had its own bureaucracy with local and national levels. Membership was required in order to work in the arts.³⁷ Close to the beginning of World War II, 42,000 members were registered at the RKK.³⁸ Although membership levels were high, members had doubts about the benefits of membership. Albert Speer, a trained architect and member of the chamber of architecture, criticized the chamber system: "The professional organizations to which everyone had to belong were called chambers...and this term aptly described the

³⁵Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 22.

³⁶Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 26.

³⁷Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 28.

³⁸Goggin, 84.

way people were immured in isolated closed off areas of life.... What eventually developed was a society of totally isolated individuals. For although it may sound strange today, for us it was no empty slogan that 'the Fuhrer proposes and disposes' for all."³⁹

In particular, the Chamber of Visual Art encouraged conformity to the aesthetic ideal of the Nazi Party. Adolf Ziegler (1892-1959) (Figure VI), a right wing conservative Nazi party member and artist, was chosen by Goebbels and Hitler to preside over the Chamber of Visual Art from 1936 to 1943. As an artist, Ziegler painted classical, naturalistic nudes. He had been appointed professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich from 1933-1934.⁴⁰ Hitler liked Ziegler's works and owned a number of them, including the *Four Elements* (c. 1936) (see Chapter 4). Ziegler's painting was housed in one of Hitler's favorite residences, the Braun Haus, in Munich.⁴¹

One duty of the Chamber of Visual Art, the RKK, and the RMVP was the creation of cultural policy that would ensure conformity to the Nazi ideals. As men who had conformed to Hitler's preferences, Ziegler and Goebbels led the policy initiative. Hitler's ideology demanded that conformity override individualism. He believed in a German people, and a German art. Art exhibited under the aegis of the Third Reich was executed in one style, the Führer's style.

In 1933, Goebbels issued the *Deutschen Kunstbericht* (German Art Report), which included the five points of Hitler's cultural purification policy. These five points included: (1) the removal of degenerate works from all museums and their condemnation and destruction; (2) all museum directors who supported the purchase of

³⁹Speer, 39-40.

⁴⁰Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: the Art World in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 255.

⁴¹Peter Adam, *Art in the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 119.

modern art would be fired; (3) in order to work in Germany, all artists must conform to the Nazi cultural policy and aesthetic; (4) architectural projects must also follow the Nazi aesthetic ideal;⁴² and (5) only sculpture that has been approved by the Nazi party and German people would be placed in a public area.⁴³ An excerpt from this pamphlet read,

What German artists expect from the new government! They expect that in art there will be only one guideline for action from now on, and that guideline is a philosophy drawn from a passionate national and state consciousness anchored in the realities of blood and history! Art should serve the growth and strengthening of the folkish community.... They [artists] expect not only that materialism, Marxism, and Communism will be politically persecuted and outlawed, and eradicated but also that the spiritual battle...will now be taken up by the people as a whole and that Bolshevist nonart and nonculture will be doomed to destruction.⁴⁴

Hitler wanted control over the content of exhibits. In order to ensure that, Goebbels and Ziegler were responsible for eliminating individual interpretation and art criticism. On November 26, 1936 Goebbels passed a law to censor art writing.⁴⁵ The decree read, "Only art editors may discuss artistic accomplishments."⁴⁶ Under the rules of RKK, art editors and the press must be licensed. The RKK thus ensured Hitler's control over art through licensing and bureaucratic control.

Besides censorship, Hitler and the Nazi party also passed laws intended to facilitate and legalize the removal of works. Within Germany, numerous laws were passed to legalize past and future confiscations. The first laws targeted Jewish-owned art

⁴²Boxlike structures were outlawed because of their stylistic association with the Bauhaus (Barron 13).

⁴³Barron, 13.

⁴⁴Berthold Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich*, trans. from the German by Robert and Rita Kimber (New York, Pantheon Books, 1979), 27.

⁴⁵Peter Selz, "Degenerate Art Reconstructed," *Art Magazine* 66 (September 1991): 59.

⁴⁶Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 53.

in Germany. Hitler's association between ethnic cleansing and art justified the early seizure of art from Jewish citizens. In September of 1935, the Nuremberg Laws reduced the civil rights of Jewish-German citizens. On April 26, 1938, the Nazi government passed the Ordinance for the Registration of Jewish Property, requiring the registration of all Jewish-owned assets, including art.⁴⁷ In June of the same year, Nazi officials commandeered the registered art.⁴⁸ Nazi officials eventually expanded their confiscations to include all Modern or Post-Impressionist art. Because of the potential revenues from foreign art sales, on May 31, 1938, the Nazi government legalized the appropriation of all works of art that failed to conform to the conservative, accepted Nazi style.⁴⁹ This art, colloquially called "degenerate art" (see Chapter 4), was sold to foreign museums and collections. The proceeds benefited the Nazi party. As confiscation practices increased, the need for cultural organization grew. On November 4, 1941 the Reichminister for Finance ordered: "Works of art (pictures, sculptures, etc), which are not clearly objects of no value, are not to be sold. They are to be stored in a proper manner and reported to the local representative of the Reichs Chamber of the graphic and plastic arts [Chamber of Visual Arts]. He will say within one month whether these objects have museum value. In that case special instructions will be issued. The rest can be sold."⁵⁰

Within Germany, from collection to censorship to confiscation, a strict cultural bureaucracy ensured Nazi control over the arts. Outside the borders of Germany, art was strictly tied to military action. For centuries rulers have legitimized governments through

⁴⁷Pinson, 509.

⁴⁸Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 84. The Nazi party justified anti-Semitic confiscation as necessary for the purification of the Aryan race. The Nazi party believed in the racial inferiority of Jewish-Germans. Therefore, the taking of assets could be justified by social Darwinism (Pinson, 487).

⁴⁹Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 60.

⁵⁰ Wilhelm Treue, *Art Plunder: The Fate of Art in War and Unrest*, trans. from the German by Basil Creighton (New York: John Day, 1961), 238.

the seizure of art. Like many of his predecessors, Hitler realized the power achieved from spoils of war; war booty helped establish Nazi leadership and erase the humiliations of past military defeats. Hitler used the Napoleonic wars as the primary justification for his confiscations outside of Germany. On August 13, 1940 Hitler instructed Goebbels "For various reasons it is necessary to determine all artworks and historically important objects, which, over the course of time, have found their way into the hands of our present enemy [France]. Furthermore, it is necessary to study whether in the conclusion of upcoming treaties, all the conditions of a lawful change of ownership are feasible."⁵¹

Goebbels collaborated with Otto Kummel and produced a report to determine three stages of confiscation: (1) the return of works taken by the French from Germany during the Napoleonic wars, (2) the removal of German artwork placed in French collections, and (3) the taking of any artworks that upheld the aesthetic ideals honored in German collections.⁵² Goebbels and Kummel expanded the confiscation criteria to include almost any work of art. The only requirement for the seizure of art was agreement that the work conformed to Nazi aesthetic policy and fit into the growing collections of the German Reich.

As the Nazi forces began to invade other European nations, Goering took over expansion of the confiscation of art. He used military force in his art purges. These purges were often justified by the idea of "Germanization." It meant that Nazi agents were placed in the government, economic, and cultural office of the countries that Germany occupied.⁵³ Art confiscation systematically targeted the elite. Nazi officials realized by targeting the elite, aristocratic control was destroyed and culture, along with

⁵¹Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 125.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 101.

economics and politics, was placed in the hands of the Nazis.

Goering supervised art purges outside of Germany, the most important being those in France. Germany invaded France on April 23, 1940, and Goering's involvement in foreign art confiscations supported his private collecting practices and his economic policies. Goering was the architect of the famous "Four Year Plan" (1936), which laid out a path for German economic and military readiness for war by 1940.⁵⁴ By targeting the art of the French elite, Goering placed art confiscation under the umbrella of his economic interests. In the fall of 1940, Goering charged Alfred Rosenberg (Figure VII), a loyal Nazi party member and extremely conservative traditionalist, with organizing the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (Special Staff of Reichsleiter Rosenberg; ERR).⁵⁵ The ERR worked with the army under Hitler's decree that Rosenberg was "entitled to transport all German cultural goods which appear valuable to him."⁵⁶ Hitler and Goering made Rosenberg the sole authority and filter of what art and from whom art was seized outside of Germany.

Cultural institutions carried out the art ideology of Hitler. While different motives for collection and confiscation developed within the Nazi party, the effect of the cultural institutions remained the same. Censorship was the preferred mode of cultural control. As the Nazi conformity swept over the art world, artists and artworks were affected both economically and stylistically. Within the Nazi art world, in an art world controlled by government bureaucracy, the economic and stylistic value of a work of art was based on its placement within a collection. All material and economic value for individual works was replaced by its significance as part of the collective whole.

⁵⁴ Pinson, 516.

⁵⁵ Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 25-30, 127.

⁵⁶ Nicholas, 125.

IV

The Art: The Victims of Nazi Cultural Policy

Under the censorship policies of the RKK, curators classified all artworks in their museums as either accepted or “degenerate” works. The RKK identified most modern art as “degenerate”. From 1937 through 1945, museum exhibitions, art sales, and personal collections were built according to these classifications. Under the cultural policies of the Third Reich, the conservative art of 1930's Germany was elevated to a new level as “accepted artwork” which followed the stylistic guidelines of Nazi censorship practices.⁵⁷ The RKK opened exhibitions for the sole purpose of classifying art through the comparison between accepted and degenerate works. The primary purpose of these exhibitions was to illustrate the easy comprehension of accepted art and to condemn degenerate art as unnatural and impure.

In the 1920s, a group of conservative writers hypothesized that the race of an artist was intrinsically tied to the style of art that the artist produced.⁵⁸ Some promoted the connection of modern art with non-Aryan culture. Max Nordau's 1892 book *Entartung* (Degeneration) discussed “degenerate art” as the anti-art. Ironically, Nordau was a Jew. Immediately after World War I, Dr. Hans F. K. Guenther published *Rassenkunde* (A Study of Race)⁵⁹ in which he stated, “The Hellenic image of beauty is absolutely Nordic. Greek Sculpture shows again and again the pure Nordic race.... One

⁵⁷Goggin, 84.

⁵⁸Barron, 11.

⁵⁹ Translation by Professor Roger Crockett, German Department, Washington and Lee University, May 2, 2001.

could demonstrate the history of Greece as the conflict of the spirit of the Nordic upper stratum with the spirit of the lower stratum of foreign race.”⁶⁰ Probable influences of Nazi anti-Semitism also appear in Guenther's *Rasse und Stil* (Race and Style)⁶¹ (1926) a book that outlines the connection between race and artistic style.

In 1928, architect and advisor to Hitler, Paul Schultze-Naumburg, wrote *Kunst und Rasse* (Art and Race) a book that compared medical photographs of physical deformities with modern artworks (Figure VIII).⁶² Schultze-Naumburg believed that physical appearance and race dictated all aspects of the person: creativity, spirituality, and thought. He wrote “Every living being strives with all its means in its power to propagate its kind and to manifest its kind also in art. Art is capable of expressing not alone its physical principle, but it also tries to secure supremacy in every way for its own spiritual law.”⁶³ Hitler studied the writings of both Guenther and Schultze-Naumburg and had Schultze-Naumburg's book in his personal library.⁶⁴

A cultural advisor to Hitler and the head of the ERR, Alfred Rosenberg wrote *Der Myths des 20: Eine Wertung der Seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe* (Myths of the 20th Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-intellectual Confrontations of our Age).⁶⁵

Rosenberg described:

Three organic conditions upon which in future all genuine aesthetics of Europe must rest, if art is to become a serving

⁶⁰Lehmann Haupt, 37.

⁶¹ Translation by Professor Roger Crockett, German Department, Washington and Lee University, May 2, 2001.

⁶²Goggin, 85; Braun, 118.

⁶³Lehmann-Haupt, 40.

⁶⁴Lehmann-Haupt, 48-50. Hitler's interest in art history was centered on architecture. Out of the sixteen art books in his personal library, thirteen are architecture books. Only one book refers to modern forms of architecture. (Lehmann-Haupt 50).

⁶⁵Barron, 11-12.

member in the life of the awakening Nordic Occident: the Nordic racist ideal of beauty, the inner dynamic of European art, and hence content as a problem of form, and the recognition of aesthetic will.... The claim of 'general validity' if a verdict and taste can be based only on a racial, folk-determined ideal of beauty and it applies only to those circles, which, consciously or unconsciously, carry in their hearts the same idea of beauty.... With this fundamental discovery all other still existing 'general' aesthetics have forever lost their justification.⁶⁶

According to Rosenberg, Nordic beauty is and always has been the ideal in European art. When artists depicted members of non-Aryan ethnicity, Nazi cultural officials charged these artists with the degeneration of beauty. Through propaganda, the Nazis placed these artists in a separate and degenerate subset of society and culture. Rosenberg used non-Aryan representations of beauty as an indication of degenerate art and artists.

Inclusion of art in avant-garde literature and exhibitions also condemned it to the classification of degenerate art. Being mentioned in radical, avant-garde periodicals such as *Kunstblatt* (The Art Paper), *Die Aktion* (The Action), or *Der Sturm* (The Storm) was enough to make the art suspect.⁶⁷ Before the Nazis gained control of the German government in 1933, the liberal attitude of the Weimar Republic had encouraged the growth of modernist groups.⁶⁸ These included the German Expressionists: Die Brücke (The Bridge) and Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), which would later be the core of the Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art Show).⁶⁹

There was controversy within the Nazi party over the definition of degenerate art. Initially, this was especially true for German Expressionism. The core of the debate was

⁶⁶Lehmann-Haupt, 42.

⁶⁷Barron, 9.

⁶⁸Braun, 117.

⁶⁹Barron, 11.

over the 'Germanic and Nordic character of German Expressionism.'⁷⁰ Because it flourished in the early part of the 20th century, German Expressionism was one of the most visible painting styles in Germany during Hitler's rise to power.

The German Expressionists persecuted were mainly members of Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter. Emile Nolde, a member of Die Brücke and a strong supporter of the Nazi party, had the largest number of works included in the Degenerate Art Show of 1937.⁷¹ Even with the Nazi emphasis on party allegiance, Nolde's art and the art of Die Brücke were condemned. A 1911 review of a Die Brücke exhibit reveals the roots of the Nazi rejection of German Expressionist work: "The modern thought that the object of art is of no importance is here maliciously applied. Even last year we remarked in the face of these Russians that they portray an infamous concept of women in their paintings. This applies even more to the German artists. What we are shown reeks of pestilence from the darkest recesses of vice of some big city and reveals these artists to be in a state of mind which can only have a pathological explanation."⁷²

In this same review the writer criticized the international tendency of German Expressionism asserting that the style was strongly tied to French and Russian art of the same period. The focus on emotion was tied to Fauvism, the movement in France begun by Matisse in 1905. Expressionism, like Fauvism "sought an art that went beyond visual expressions to express emotions, experiences and spiritual values."⁷³ Expressionists used Fauvism's vivid color combinations to depict emotion. In light of the Nazi emphasis on German nationalism and naturalism in art, the international influences of German

⁷⁰Goggin, 86.

⁷¹Selz, 60.

⁷²Henry Grosshans, *Hitler and the Artists* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), 42.

⁷³Sam Hunter and John Jacobus, *Modern Art from Post-Impressionism to the Present: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1976), 95.

Expressionism justified, to a degree, the Nazi rejection of modern art as being non-German.

The key figures in the debate over German Expressionism were Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the leader of the RMVP and Alfred Rosenberg, the “self-proclaimed ‘party philosopher.’”⁷⁴ Goebbels was a man who initially supported modern art, and particularly German Expressionism. He found the emotional quality of expressionism comparable to “vitality” of the Nazi Party.⁷⁵ He particularly favored Barlach and Nolde.⁷⁶ On one occasion, Albert Speer hung Nolde watercolors in Goebbels' home after he had finished remodeling the building. Hitler disapproved and Goebbels quickly removed the works.⁷⁷ At one time, Goebbels owned several works by Kathe Köllwitz and Ernst Barlach's *Man in the Storm*.⁷⁸ Goebbels was more liberal in his earlier years. During his failed literary career he sometimes wrote in an expressionist style. From 1933-1935, he even sponsored several expressionist exhibits.⁷⁹

Many Nazi supporters, including Goebbels and the National Socialist League of German Students in Berlin, believed that expressionism and the Nazi party were connected by a shared interest in German nationalism.⁸⁰ Both focused on the importance of the German spirit. This similarity became a heated topic in intellectual circles.

Goebbels used his position as the head of the RMVP to support modernism through the endorsement of articles written in the liberal periodical, *Deutsche Allgemeine*

⁷⁴Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 23.

⁷⁵Braun, 122.

⁷⁶Goggin, 88.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 25.

⁷⁹Selz, 58.

⁸⁰Braun, 122.

Zeitung (German General Newspaper)⁸¹, and through rallies for the art students and more liberal-minded Germans. On May 8, 1933, Goebbels spoke out in support of German Expressionist works done under the Weimar Republic. Goebbels called New Objectivity “the German art of the next decade.”⁸²

Alfred Rosenberg was far more conservative. He was in charge of the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* (Combat League for German Culture) organized in February of 1929. The Combat League for German Culture (KfdK) focused on demonstrating “the interdependence between race, culture, science, morals, and soldierly virtues.”⁸³ The KfdK developed out of a faction of the Nazi party called the *völkisch* group. In the German language, *völk* is translated as people. Rosenberg believed that the *völkisch* group was the portion of the Nazi party dedicated to the people.

Many people referred to the conservative views of Rosenberg and the KfdK as “radical traditionalism.”⁸⁴ The conservative views of the *völkisch* faction were promoted through the *Völkischer Beobachter* (People's Observer)⁸⁵, the official Nazi party newspaper. Rosenberg and the *völkisch* supporters promoted an image of Germanic culture that promoted the condemnation of modern art and the connection between modern art and the non-Aryan race.⁸⁶

Rosenberg merged the KfdK with the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labor Front), or DAF. Together these two groups formed the *NS- Kulturgemeinde* (National Socialist - Cultural Community), or NS-KG. This organization was created by Rosenberg

⁸¹ Translation by Professor Roger Crockett, German Department, Washington and Lee University, May 2, 2001.

⁸²Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 24.

⁸³Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 29.

⁸⁴Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 28.

⁸⁵ Translation by Professor Roger Crockett, German Department, Washington and Lee University, May 2, 2001.

⁸⁶Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 28-29.

to compete directly with Goebbels' RKK. Because the NS-KG was a party institution and not a government institution, Rosenberg hired officials for the NS-KG based on party loyalty. Skill and experience in the arts was of limited interest to Rosenberg's institutional goals.⁸⁷

Rosenberg sponsored a number of propaganda events to forward völkisch views. Among these programs, was a lecture by Paul Schultze-Naumberg, the author of *Rasse und Stil* a book that influenced the definition of degenerate art. The inclusion of racist philosophers, writers, and art historians in his propaganda events, made clear Rosenberg's rampant conservatism

Both Goebbels and Rosenberg were members of Hitler's inner circle. The controversy over German Expressionism erupted because of Hitler's own artistic preferences and the desire of both Goebbels and Rosenberg to obtain the Führer's approval. During his Nuremberg address in 1934, Hitler denounced modern art as anti-Nazi and anti-German.⁸⁸ Hitler's lack of support for modern art changed the liberal views of Goebbels. Because Goebbels' priority was nationalism, he moved quickly through the Nazi party ranks. By 1935, after Hitler's condemnation of modern art at Nuremberg, Goebbels was more than willing to change his preferences for modern art to suit his Führer.

Goebbels changed because of Hitler but also because of the activities of Rosenberg in 1935. Rosenberg wanted to move beyond his party position as the head of the NS-KG. In fact, he wished to have the same authority as Goebbels. Through a series of art exhibitions in 1935, Rosenberg threatened the authority of Goebbels over the

⁸⁷Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 36-37.

⁸⁸Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 23.

exhibition of art. Reviews of the NS-KG sponsored exhibits appeared in Rosenberg's periodical the *Völkischer Beobachter*. One reviewer summed up an exhibition opening speech given by Rosenberg: "The speech reiterated the wish for a unified, simple but monumental art."⁸⁹ Rosenberg was a faithful supporter of Hitler's aesthetic conformity.

Because of Hitler's rejection of modern art and the pressure of Rosenberg's ambitions, Goebbels became more conservative in his acceptance of art, and German Expressionism fell into the degenerate art classification. Like Rosenberg, Goebbels began to appoint men to the RKK based on their allegiance to the Nazi party. He stepped up his confiscation and censorship practices and conformed his artistic ideology to that of Hitler.⁹⁰ Immediately after Goebbels became more conservative in his cultural approach, Hitler ended the Rosenberg opposition. Goebbels was declared head of the Reichskultur Senat (Reich Cultural Senate), or RKS, a position coveted by Rosenberg.⁹¹ Even though Rosenberg lost in competition with Goebbels, he did have an enormous effect on the Nazi cultural system. He altered Goebbels' views and together with Hitler is responsible for the exclusion of German Expressionism from accepted art.

The liberalism of the Weimar Republic that allowed German Expressionism to flourish ended with the censorship of the Nazi party.⁹² On October 30, 1936, Goebbels made his attack on modern art public with the closing of the modern section of the Crown Prince's National Gallery in Berlin, referred to by the Nazis as "The Chamber of Horrors"⁹³ Goebbels chose the period after the summer Olympic games of 1936 in Berlin because foreign attention would then be shifted away from Germany; controversial

⁸⁹Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 47.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 49.

⁹²Lehmann-Haupt, 63.

⁹³Trueue, 232.

cultural policies could be enacted with less international criticism.

The year 1937 marked the tightening of Nazi censorship. On July 18, 1937, the Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung (Great German Art Exhibition) opened in the newly erected Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art) in Munich. A day later, on July 19, 1937, the Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art) show opened across the park from the Great German Art Exhibition. The Degenerate Art show was placed in a building that previously housed the Institute of Archeology in Munich. The geographic and stylistic opposition of these two exhibitions illustrated the distinction between accepted and degenerate art.

The Great German Art Exhibition was the definition of Hitler's "new art". Extensive planning and propaganda were involved in the completion of the new museum and exhibition. On October 15, 1933, Hitler presided over the groundbreaking for the House of German Art and four years later it was completed. The Neoclassical structure of the museum represented the preferred style of Nazi architecture in the mid-1930s. When the museum opened, the entire city celebrated. Eight hundred thousand spectators flooded the streets to watch the German Art parade filled with floats of Roman gods and goddesses, Vikings, and Christian pageantry. The theme was "Two Thousand Years of German Culture."⁹⁴ (Figure IX) In the dedication of the House of German Art, Hitler spoke of "degenerate" art contrasted with art that " will impress you as being beautiful, and, above all, as decent, and which you will sense to be good."⁹⁵ Hitler felt that superficial, aesthetic beauty equated with cultural enjoyment. The contrast of accepted art with degenerate art was a contrast of decency with indecency. Hitler declared, "From

⁹⁴Selz, 59.

⁹⁵Goggin, 88.

now on we are going to wage a merciless war of destruction against the last remaining elements of cultural disintegration.”⁹⁶

The Great German Art Exhibition contained contemporary German artworks produced by artists licensed by the RKK. Adolf Ziegler held a competition for artists to produce works for the first Great German Art exhibition and chose the winning artworks himself.⁹⁷

The art exhibited in the House of German Art was exhibited collectively and was divided by subject matter, not by artists or style.⁹⁸ (Figure X) This prevented any temptation to interpret the art in the context of the artist or the stylistic period. Accepted art was removed from its context. Along these same lines, Ziegler emphasized the titles of works hung in the House of German art because he believed that the title created a painting's function.⁹⁹

Accepted art represented a variety of past art styles that all embraced representationalism. Neoclassicism, German 19th century romanticism, and realism dominated the Great German Art Exhibition.¹⁰⁰ Many paintings were nudes; naturalism was the dominant mode. In 1942, Adolf Feulner, one museum director under the RKK, stated: "The longing for calm, realism, earthiness has permeated the arts. The essence of this change is the turning away from the pessimistic negation and abstraction and the return of the simple world and to humanity.... Not only must artists solve artistic problems, they must also solve the problems of life.... The form must be universally

⁹⁶Lehmann Haupt, 76.

⁹⁷Barron, 17.

⁹⁸Barron, 18.

⁹⁹Adam, 116.

¹⁰⁰Braun, 119.

understood and clear. Content must speak to all."¹⁰¹

Hitler's favorite artist, Adolf Ziegler, the head of the Chamber of Visual Arts, was responsible for the prototypical painting of the Great German art Exhibition, the *Four Elements*.¹⁰² (Figure XI) Hitler owned several of Ziegler's artworks including the *Four Elements*, which he loaned to the German Art Exhibition in 1937.¹⁰³ Ziegler was sometimes referred to as the "master of German pubic hair" because of his tendency to paint "hyperrealistic nudes."¹⁰⁴ Like Goebbels, Ziegler had favored modernism prior to his association with Hitler. Hitler and the Nazi party's emphasis on party allegiance and artistic conformity quickly changed Ziegler into a stiff classicist.¹⁰⁵ A fellow German museum director, Alois Schardt, described Ziegler as an artist "whose name and works became so very important in the New Germany (Nazi Germany), (who) was in former times a modern painter and a zealous admirer of the works by Franz Marc.... His transmutation proceeded by slow degrees.... Before he took his position, he was one of the most extreme modern painters, but one of inferior rank."¹⁰⁶ When faced with conforming to Hitler's artistic ideology, Ziegler quickly complied and was honored as Hitler's favorite contemporary German artist.¹⁰⁷ Hitler praised Ziegler as "the best flesh painter in the world."¹⁰⁸ Ziegler's style is described as "pseudo-neoclassicism."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ Adam, 110.

¹⁰² George L Mosse, "Beauty without Sensuality," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 29.

¹⁰³ Peter Guenther, "Three Days in Munich," in *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 35.

¹⁰⁴ Petropoulos, *Faustian Bargain*, 255.

¹⁰⁵ Petropoulos, *Faustian Bargain*, 256.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Petropoulos, *Faustian Bargain*, 258.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid..

Ziegler's painting of the *Four Elements* is an allegorical representation of fire, water, earth, and wind. The elements are depicted as four classically nude women in a domestic setting. The painting is straightforward and readable; one woman holds a burning torch, the next a bowl of water, the third holds grain, and the fourth is being blown by the wind. The triptych format is reminiscent of Renaissance compositions, as is the depiction of the women who appear as goddesses.

While the Great German Art Exhibition focused on contemporary works, Hitler's confiscated collection for Linz set the standard for accepted art of past centuries. Hitler confiscated over 3,423 works, the best of which were intended for Linz. Out of all of these works contemporary artists did only 24.¹¹⁰ The common subject matter for accepted art included paintings of peasants at work, mothers and children, landscape, nudes, and heroes, including Nazi heroes, politicians, and portraits of Hitler.¹¹¹ For the Nazi party, 19th century realistic genre painting represented the height of Aryan creativity.¹¹²

Hitler believed that the superiority of accepted art was strengthened through comparison with degenerate art. On July 19, 1937, across the street from the Great German Art Exhibition, the Degenerate Art Show opened (Figure XII). Despite Hitler's goal of destroying all interest in modern art, more Germans saw the shocking Degenerate Art show than any other exhibit in the history of art. Over two million people attended the art show in just 4 months; the attendance at the Great German Art Exhibition was one fifth that of the Degenerate Art Show.¹¹³ The Degenerate Art Show included over 650

¹¹⁰ Adam, 119.

¹¹¹Goggin, 85; Selz, 59.

¹¹²Barron, 11.

¹¹³Braun, 119.

paintings, sculptures, and graphic works most of which had been confiscated under the confiscation policies of Goebbels and Ziegler. Expressionists, Cubists, Dadaists, and the Bauhaus artists were amply represented.¹¹⁴ The attraction of scandal is one explanation for the overwhelming interest in the Degenerate Art Show.

Artworks in the Degenerate Art show were divided into 9 categories; a negative statement concerning modern art denoted each category.¹¹⁵ Some rooms were entitled “Insolent mockery of the divine”, “Revelation of the Jewish racial soul”, “An insult to German womanhood”, and “Madness becomes a method.”¹¹⁶ Ziegler ordered many of the frames removed from the paintings. The prices that each museum had paid for the work were written at the base to condemn the museum directors for the “misuse” of tax revenues. Interestingly, the Nazi curators failed to note that many of the prices listed were recorded during the hyperinflation of the 1920s when a dollar was equal to 4.2 billion marks.¹¹⁷ This intentional oversight illustrates the negative propaganda value of the exhibit. The degenerate art show was organized to create an atmosphere of chaos, disorganization, and scandal. Graffiti and writing flowed through the walls of the exhibit condemning the artworks included in the exhibition (Figure XIII). One graffiti statement read, “The Jewish longing for the wilderness reveals itself - in Germany the Negro becomes the racial ideal of degenerate art.” This statement was included on a wall which also included the work of Max Pechstein, Emile Nolde, and Otto Mueller.¹¹⁸

The criteria for degenerate art were broad. Ziegler's RKK and Goebbels' RMVP determined what was degenerate art for both exhibits and international art sales. Art

¹¹⁴Braun, 117.

¹¹⁵Goggin, 89.

¹¹⁶Education department LACMA: 2 of 2.

¹¹⁷Barron, 20.

¹¹⁸Braun, 118.

produced by Jewish artists and art depicting Jewish subject matter were the first to be called degenerate. Following this initial distinction, all art that promoted pacifism or anti-Nazi war subject matter was confiscated. Eventually the definition of degenerate art expanded to include depiction of subjects whose race was other than Aryan. It also included German Expressionism, abstract art, and art of the Bauhaus.¹¹⁹

Cultural institutions condemned both modernist style and liberal subject matter. The compositional distortions seen in expressionism and cubism were targets of Nazi censorship. When the artist's subject was non-Aryan, the Nazi party condemned the work with racial and anti-Semitic criticism. One example included the classification of African and South Sea Islander subject matter as “nigger art.”¹²⁰ In turn, modern art was attributed to “Semitic inspiration”; and as Kulturbolchewismus (Cultural Bolshevism).¹²¹ The Nazi government hated any Communist influence in Germany because they believed it to be a threat to their political power. Hitler in particular believed that Judaism and Communism should be blamed for the modern art movement; Nazis considered modern art to be the downfall of German culture.¹²² Censorship alienated many modern artists. German artist and member of the expressionist group Die Brücke, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, revealed his feelings about the purification of German museums; “I am deeply disturbed by the German events, but still I am proud that the brown ‘picture stormers’ hunt down and destroy my works too. For me it would be a disgrace to be tolerated by them.”¹²³

¹¹⁹Lehmann-Haupt, 79.

¹²⁰Goggin, 89.

¹²¹Goggin, 86.

¹²²Hitler, 35.

¹²³Jaqueline Guigui, “‘Degenerate Art’: A Munich Exhibit Honors Modern Artists Persecuted by the Nazis Fifty Years Ago,” *Art Magazine* 62 (Summer 1988): 29.

The model example of degenerate art for Nazi cultural officials was Marc Chagall's *Rabbiner* (1923) (Figure XIV). *Rabbiner* depicts a modern rabbi reading with the Star of David hung on the wall behind him. Although the star was an accepted Jewish symbol, the modern identification of the star to symbolize Judaism came about in large part because of German persecution. Jews were forced to wear the star and to label their businesses with the symbol to promote anti-Semitic discrimination.¹²⁴ Understandably, the Chagall painting provides a powerful statement about the style and content of degenerate art. Based on the Nazi's understanding of cultural degeneration, Chagall's piece represented the icon of cultural impurity. Both a Jewish-Russian immigrant and a modern artist, Chagall painted in a fantasy style influenced by cubism in the avant-garde salons of Paris in the 1920s.¹²⁵ Jewish subject matter, depicted by a Jewish artist born in Russia, in a cubist style fulfilled every Nazi criterion for degeneration in art. The Nazi cultural officials realized the propaganda value of this work. In 1934, *Rabbiner* was removed from the Mannheim Art Museum and was prominently displayed in a store window in Mannheim with a sign under it that read: "Taxpayer, you should know how your money was spent."¹²⁶ In July of 1937, the work was placed in the Degenerate Art Show in Munich under the category "Revelation of the Jewish Racial Soul."¹²⁷ However, the RKK realized the monetary value of Chagall's work. In September of 1938, *Rabbiner* was seized from the Degenerate Art Show and returned to Berlin because of its potential

¹²⁴ Nancy Frazier, "Judaism," in *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed. Helene E. Roberts (Chicago, Illinois: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998), 451.

¹²⁵ Hunter and Jacobus, v 154; Zuschlag, 214.

¹²⁶ Barron, 16.

¹²⁷ Mario-Andreas Von Lüttichau, "Entartete Kunst, Munich 1937: A Reconstruction," in "Degenerate Art": *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 52.

auction value.¹²⁸

Chagall did not intend that viewers "read" too much information into his paintings. He wanted the feeling and emotion of the viewer to be the interpretation; he painted emotional subject matter that signaled individual interpretation. Chagall explained, "I don't understand them [his paintings] at all. They are not literature. They are only pictorial arrangements of images that obsess me.... The theories which I would make up to explain myself and those which others elaborate in connection with my work are nonsense.... My paintings are my reason for existence, my life, and that is all."¹²⁹ Chagall's work lacked the literal simplicity of accepted works. It represented emotion on a personal level for both the artist and the viewer. *Rabbiner* is a work of individual expression and interpretation; it is not useful for collective representation and national aestheticism.

The contrast of degenerate and accepted art represented the primary instruments of propaganda of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts and Adolf Ziegler. The condemnation of modern art drew people to see the exhibit. The scandal created by the Nazi propaganda machine was more exciting than accepted art. Within the censored environment of Nazi Germany, a new use for art was developed and implemented. Art not only created propaganda images, it became a tool of propaganda. The collections of degenerate and accepted art became statements of what depicted Nazism and what represented non-Nazi and anti-German attributes.

¹²⁸ *Rabbiner* was sold in 1939 to the Basel Art Commission (Barron 140).

¹²⁹ Hunter and Jacobus, 154.

V.

The Perfect Collection: The Outcome of Nazi Cultural Policy

While the 1937 Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Show exhibited the works of contemporary Germany, another type of artwork was also of interest. That was art made prior to the 20th century. Hitler, himself, oversaw the confiscation of acceptable masterpieces from collections throughout Europe for his own project, the art museum at Linz. Based in his hometown in Austria, the collection housed under the name of Führervorbehalt (Führer's vault) was meant to be the greatest art collection ever amassed. Because of Hitler's direct involvement in the Linz project as well as in the Nazi's ideological emphasis on cultural conformity, there has been a great deal of interest in this collection and its seeming inconsistencies.

The Linz collection was mostly compiled through confiscations both inside and outside of Germany. Hitler placed Hans Posse, a loyal supporter of the Nazi party, in charge of the project. Posse was a distinguished figure in the European art world and a recognized art scholar and museum curator. In 1910, he was appointed as the director of the Dresden Gemäldegaleris. Like Goebbels and Ziegler, Posse too was confronted with a choice between pro-modernism or party allegiance and promotion. He chose to further his career in the service of the Nazi party.¹³⁰ In 1939, Hitler chose Posse to head the Linz project.

Posse was a ruthless and competitive art liaison for Hitler. He often used military

¹³⁰ Petropoulos, *Faustian Bargain*, 52.

force in confiscations and the Aryanization of museums and art galleries as a means to obtaining works without purchasing them.¹³¹ Aryanization was a policy whereby galleries owned by Jews were taken over, and Nazi supporters were put in charge. Alfred Rosenberg's ERR also became involved in the Linz project since Hitler and Posse handpicked 53 works from the 21,000 works confiscated in France.

Posse, who died in 1942, and his successor Hermann Voss spent over RM 100 million and purchased or confiscated over 8,000 works. As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, the works were stylistically focused on "paintings of peasants at work, mothers and children, landscape, nudes, and heroes, including Nazi heroes, politicians, and portraits of Hitler."¹³² A significant number of the works was taken from the French-Jewish collections of Baron Édouard de Rothschild, Paul Rosenberg, the Bernheim-Jeune collection, the David-Weill collection, and the Schloss collection.¹³³ The Paul Rosenberg collection and the Bernheim -Jeune collection were examples of Aryanized or Germanized art dealerships, while the Rothschild, the David-Weill, and the Schloss collections were privately owned.¹³⁴ In the 1940 Linz collection annual report, Posse accounted for 465 works confiscated during the previous year. In this report, works by Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vermeer were still needed to fill the gaps in the Linz collection.¹³⁵ When the cost of war escalated, Hitler continued to increase the budget for the Linz project showing that it was a priority for Hitler and the Third Reich. From 1940 to 1944 the budget increased from 10 million marks, the equivalent of \$85 million

¹³¹ Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 186.

¹³² Goggin, 85, Selz, 59.

¹³³ Feliciano, 3.

¹³⁴ Feliciano, 43-102.

¹³⁵ Feliciano, 22.

dollars, to 70 million marks.¹³⁶ By 1944, 8,000 works were stored in the Linz project storehouse.¹³⁷

One of the inconsistencies that has fascinated scholars is the presence of Jewish imagery in a number of the 17th century Dutch works that were among the Linz collection. Historically, of course the Christian Biblical cycle grew out of the tradition of Hebrew pictorial cycles.¹³⁸ After the Counter-Reformation of the 1550's, Biblical imagery became popular as the "Church used art to encourage piety among the faithful."¹³⁹ Furthermore, during the 17th century, Dutch people exhibited tolerance towards other religions, namely Judaism.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the proliferation of Biblical art and the religious tolerance of the Dutch made this subject matter acceptable. According to one analysis, "Rembrandt stands alone with Biblical imagery and Biblical painting."¹⁴¹

Rembrandt translated Jewish subject matter into other approaches to art. The art of the 17th century Dutch genre style under the influence of Rembrandt took on a new iconography derived from Rembrandt's Biblical focus. *The Jewish Bride* (c. 1665) and the *Old Rabbi* (1642) illustrate the merging of religious history painting into the genre scenes of the bourgeoisie and daily life. While these were not included in the Linz collection, they do provide a contextual background for Rembrandt's work and subject matter. *The Jewish Bride* depicts the union between Don Miguel de Barrios and his wife Abigail.¹⁴² An assumption can be made, based on the title, that this is a Jewish couple. The painting can also be interpreted in a more historical sense as an allusion to Isaac and

¹³⁶ Feliciano, 22-23.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Kevin Madigan, review of *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, by Heinz Shrenkenberg and Kurt Schubert, *Church History* 64, no. 1 (1995): 105.

¹³⁹ Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, revised ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 751.

¹⁴⁰ Stokstad, 798.

¹⁴¹ Miklos Mojzer, *Dutch Genre Paintings*, trans. Eva Racz (New York: Taplinger, 1967), 12.

¹⁴² Stokstad, 791.

Rebecca.¹⁴³ Similarly, in the *Old Rabbi* Rembrandt uses light and background to create a "Biblical atmosphere".¹⁴⁴ The halo of light surrounding the aged head of the wise Rabbi creates an ethereal, holy effect. Furthermore, the image of an older, knowledgeable man propping himself up on a cane, surrounded by well-read books and a used candle for studying, could be tied to the historical painting of saints or even Biblical scholars. The title suggests the religious and historical allusions.

Jewish subject matter was commonplace in many 17th century Dutch genre and Biblical scenes; Judaism was viewed as a predecessor to Christianity, not as a separate religion. The artwork of Rembrandt both in history and genre painting was acceptable under these terms. The Nazi art collectors viewed Rembrandt as a historical painter, not as a Jewish or non-Aryan painter. Hitler studied Rembrandt's art in his youth and must have understood the painter's ties to Judaism.¹⁴⁵ Rembrandt's biographers describe his visits to the Amsterdam ghetto and his portraiture of Dutch Jews, such as publisher Manasseh ben Israel, now located in the Israel Museum, and Dr. Ephraïm Bueno now located in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.¹⁴⁶ During the 17th century, Holland had just gained independence from Spain and the Dutch welcomed many Portuguese Jewish exiles.¹⁴⁷ The tolerance for Jewish custom and culture was mirrored in the art produced.

While modern artists who depicted Jewish subject matter were rejected from the art world of the late 1930s and early 1940s, Rembrandt was revered and coveted by many

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Mojzer, plate 27.

¹⁴⁵ Hitler is known to have read *Rembrandt as Teacher* by Julius Langben. This was a biography of Rembrandt but stressed his "natural Aryanism". Hitler's knowledge of this book influenced his oversight in the matter of Rembrandt's Jewish subject matter. (Feliciano 18).

¹⁴⁶ Feliciano, 20.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

Nazi art collectors, including Hitler himself.¹⁴⁸ Hitler's focus on pure aestheticism was an important element of propaganda and cultural conformity. Hitler was particularly interested in the writings of Julius Langben. In his book, *Rembrandt as Teacher*, Langben describes Rembrandt as an Aryan hero; and "a model for the Germanic culture and Aryan Race."¹⁴⁹ In the early 1920's on a visit to Berlin's National Gallery, Hitler stood in front of Rembrandt's *Man in a Golden Helmet* and said, "There you have something unique. Look at that heroic, soldier-like expression. It proves that Rembrandt, in spite of the many pictures he painted in Amsterdam's Jewish Quarter, was a true Aryan and a German."¹⁵⁰ Hitler based his acceptance of Rembrandt's work on its conformity to his ideas and thus could ignore the context of the Jewish subjects.

Hitler's most prized artwork in the Linz collection was Jan Vermeer's *The Astronomer* (1668) (Figure XV). Vermeer's paintings were prized by all the upper ranks of the Third Reich.¹⁵¹ Goering had wanted to purchase *The Astronomer* for his own collection, but it belonged to the Führer.¹⁵² Confiscated from Baron Édouard Rothschild's collection and placed in the Führervorbehalt to await the completion of the Museum in Linz, it was a painting admired for its composition and detail. The geographic and cosmic subject matter could be tied to Hitler's desire for world domination. He identified with the astronomer as someone reaching out and controlling the globe. One scholar, Hector Feliciano, refers to *The Astronomer* as "Hitler's Blind Spot."¹⁵³ The composition of the painting includes a man dressed in blue, studying at a desk, placing his hand on a celestial

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas, 47.

¹⁴⁹ Feliciano, 18.

¹⁵⁰ Feliciano, 18-19.

¹⁵¹ Nicholas, 110.

¹⁵² Nicholas, 128.

¹⁵³ Feliciano, 13-23.

globe. He is looking out the window across from him as he touches the globe. On the desk in front of the man are an astrolabe, a compass, and a well-known 17th century book on astronomy and geography.¹⁵⁴ The book is a reference to the Old Testament and the creation of the universe. Vermeer, like Rembrandt, was referring to the Old Testament and Judaism through the open book. A more obvious reference to the Old Testament and to Judaism is the painting on the wall behind the man, the *Finding of Moses* (Exodus 2:1-10).¹⁵⁵ The celebration of this Jewish subject matter was either acceptable to Hitler because it was a precursor to the Christian New Testament, or it was simply something he chose to overlook. Feliciano suggests that Hitler's attraction to the sheer beauty of Vermeer's work was justification for ignoring the Judaism of the subject matter.

Vermeer's *Astronomer* was also a much-desired work for the Linz collection. After all Hitler already possessed the complementary work, the *Geographer* (1668) (Figure XVI), which he had acquired prior to 1940. Regardless of the Jewish subject matter, this work filled a gap in a collection and contributed to the whole. It was a part of the Nazi collection and even today, hanging in the Louvre in Paris, a swastika remains stamped on the back of the painting.¹⁵⁶

Hitler believed that Germany, as the ruling nation of Europe, should become the cultural capital as well. The Linz collection would have been the jewel, which the high culture of Germany would have framed. Hitler never admitted that he collected for his own glory; he always said that he collected for Germany. However, he chose the curators, the collectors, and the works. He allowed the military seizures, the Aryanization, and the Germanization of businesses. He commissioned his good friend Albert Speer to design

¹⁵⁴ Feliciano, 13.

¹⁵⁵ Feliciano, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Feliciano, 14-15.

the museum in Linz, his place of birth. The collection fit Hitler's aesthetic taste. In the case of Rembrandt and Vermeer, he completely ignored the overt Jewish subject matter. In the end, the museum was never completed and the thousands of confiscated works remained in the storehouse awaiting the allied redistribution.

VI

The Art Market: The International Effects of Nazi Cultural Policy

Hitler went to great lengths to establish Germany as an international cultural center. Through the cultural bureaucracy, the Linz collection, the Degenerate Art Show, and the Great German Art Exhibition, Hitler and the Nazi party demonstrated the importance of art to their political movement. Art had an impact on politics; however, the political state of Germany also had an impact on art. During the Third Reich, the cultural policy of the Nazi party that subordinated modern works to accepted art collections changed the demand, supply, and market for art.

Art can be described as a "prestige good" that enables the collector to signal to others that he is a person of both wealth and good taste. One obtains satisfaction "from admiring the work hanging in his living room, but also from believing that other people envy or admire him because he owns it."¹⁵⁷ For many collectors, paying an exorbitant amount for an artwork establishes their wealth and status and proves that their art is a "prestige good."¹⁵⁸

The 18th century philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, developed a theory on the art market, making a distinction between it and markets for other items.¹⁵⁹ Rousseau proposed that markets differ between necessities and luxury goods. The market for

¹⁵⁷ William Landes and Richard Posner, "The Economics of Legal Disputes over the Ownership of Works of Art and Other Collectibles," *The Economics of the Arts*, eds. Victor A. Ginsburgh and Pierre-Michel Menger (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier, 1996), 181.

¹⁵⁸ Raymond Moulin, *The French Art Market: A Sociological View*, trans. from the French by Arthur Goldhammer (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 87.

¹⁵⁹ Bertil Friden, "The Problem of Unique Goods as Factors of Production: Rousseau on Art and the Economy," *Economic Engagements with Art*, eds. Neil De Marchi and Crauford D.W. Goodwin, *Annual Supplement to Volume 31: History of Political Economy*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999), 41.

necessities is characterized by a demand that is insensitive to changes in price. Because the demand for necessities is relatively constant, (even in the harshest times demand will still exist for things necessary to sustain life), price has very little effect on the quantity demanded. Luxury goods, like art, are also characterized by a demand that is relatively insensitive to changes in price. But due to the preferences of the rich, those who can afford the high prices of art at auction, the exorbitant prices for art can actually add to the satisfaction of the art consumer. Rousseau explained, "The rich think so much of these things not because they are useful, but because they are beyond the reach of the poor. I only want the goods as long as people envy them."¹⁶⁰

Changes in art prices are usually a function of changes in the tastes and preferences of art collectors. However, these are difficult to measure. Renowned economist, William J. Baumol has analyzed the impact of fluctuations in tastes and preferences of the demand for art. Baumol asserts, "Prices of noted works of art fluctuate randomly. Supplies of such works are fixed, while demand fluctuates unpredictably as taste changes. Since taste changes appear random, art prices also appear random."¹⁶¹ Baumol's studies find that because of the unpredictable fluctuation of art prices, art is not a sound financial investment. Baumol further suggests that art markets fail to "possess anything like long-run equilibrium prices, let alone...reliable forces that drive market prices toward them."¹⁶²

However, the case of the art market in Nazi Germany challenges Baumol's findings. Rather than being constant, the supply of modern art increased dramatically

¹⁶⁰ Friden, 41-44.

¹⁶¹ Coffman, 83-84.

¹⁶² O. Chanel, L.A. Gerard-Varet, and V. Ginsburgh, "Prices and Returns on Paintings: An exercise on how to price the priceless," *The Geneva Papers on Risk and Insurance Today* 19, no. 1 (1994): 9.

when Goering and others began to clear out hundreds of "degenerate works" for auction. There was a large increase in supply as the ownership, exhibition, and production of these works were outlawed within the German art market. The cultural policy of Nazi Germany that fueled the purification of museums, the confiscation of collections, and the destruction of several thousand works had an impact on the supply of and the demand for art within Germany as well as in the international art market.

Once the Nazi forces invaded France in 1940, the Nazis realized that they now controlled another vast resource of art. Confiscations, collections, sales, and black market trading boomed.¹⁶³ In order to facilitate the confiscation or seizure of work from Jewish collectors, the Nazi party introduced a number of anti-Semitic laws based on the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. Jewish-French aristocrats were forced to surrender their art collections early in the occupation.¹⁶⁴

Subsequently, because these works were involuntarily transferred, they were not valued in the transaction; no price was set in a market and consequently many works have gaps in their provenance. Jewish-French art galleries and museums were Germanized. Jewish owners and art experts lost their positions through Aryanization and it affected the quality of the French art market.¹⁶⁵ The war, on the other hand, was a boon for the Paris Art Markets. After struggling through the Depression, French dealers were happy to sell to the cash-laden Germans. Dealers were quickly able to liquidate their assets.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Nicholas, 153.

¹⁶⁴ Moulin, 21.

¹⁶⁵ Feliciano, 124.

¹⁶⁶ Feliciano, 123.

The German purchases as well as the barter agreements made by the Nazi art experts evidence the artistic tastes of the German party. No degenerate art works were transported into Germany, but 19th-century French paintings were exported to Germany by the dozens. Delacroix, Courbet, and Renoir were among the Nazi favorites.¹⁶⁷ Degenerate works found in France were stored in the Jeu de Paume, part of the Louvre. Some were sold and some were burned. When the Nazi government, in many cases the ERR, decided to dispose of goods through purchasing channels, there were three ways of accomplishing this. The first was a black market, the second, an exchange market, and the third, the art auction.

Because of the closed economies of Germany and the occupied states, a black market quickly developed for the trading and movement of modern works out of Germany, and old master paintings into Germany. Because of the careful attention that U.S. officials were paying to the arrival of works from Germany for dealers in the United States, the dealing base shifted to Central and South America. In particular the cities of Havana, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires became hot spots for art trade outside of Germany. Auction and price data are scarce for this black market trade. Worried about the possibility of a Nazi base in these regions, U.S. treasury officials put together a report that described sales records as "a long letter filled with confusing accounts of business deals shares of profits, ownerships, disputes, etc....and various juggling of citizenships as occasions suggest."¹⁶⁸

With US treasury officials closely monitoring the South American black market, an exchange market for art in Germany and Europe emerged when transatlantic trading

¹⁶⁷ Feliciano, 130.

¹⁶⁸ Nicholas, 165.

and sales faltered. Reichmarshall Goering, the military leader in France, decided to go through the confiscated art works in the Jeu de Paume.¹⁶⁹ These collections had never been "purified." One of the initial problems was that all post-impressionist styles were prohibited from being sold or exhibited in Germany. Discreetly Goering took confiscated works back into Germany in order to sell them or trade them for old masters and other accepted works. Because these works had been confiscated, there was no auction price to establish their value.

From March of 1941 to November of 1943 at least twenty-eight recorded exchanges of modern art for accepted art occurred. The Reich promoted these black market dealings as a way to "acquire for the German Reich...important paintings without spending foreign currency."¹⁷⁰ Gustav Rochlitz, an art dealer who worked down the street from the Jeu de Paume in Paris (Figure XVII), assisted Nazi confiscators in the exchange market. One of Rochlitz' exchanges occurred on July 24, 1942. An unknown Nazi official traded Gauguin's *Yellow Christ* and two Matisse paintings for a painting depicting the Three Graces attributed to the Fountainbleu School.¹⁷¹ Rochlitz later sold one Matisse to collector Isadore Rosner.

By contrast with the underhand practices associated with the exchange and black market art trade, the Swiss auction system provided a legal way for the Nazi government to receive foreign currency and dispose of degenerate works. The first of these auctions occurred prior to World War II. The Galerie Fischer auction was conducted at the Grand Hotel National in Lucerne, Switzerland on June 30, 1939. One hundred and twenty six works were auctioned. These works had been displayed in Zurich and Lucerne for weeks

¹⁶⁹ Nicholas, 126-131.

¹⁷⁰ Nicholas, 166-167.

¹⁷¹ Feliciano, 118.

prior to the auction. The auction attendance was international, even though the auction was Nazi-run. The pictures and sculptures had been confiscated from German museums, citizens, and exhibitions because of their auction value.¹⁷²

The prices that these works brought were affected by two conflicting forces: first, there was a stigma associated with buying art in an auction that benefited the Nazi government; second, there was a perceived need to buy art in order to preserve, or "save" it from Nazi destruction. The international art world was aware of Hitler's purging of museums and private collections within Germany. They also feared that the proceeds would be given to the Nazi party rather than the German museums.¹⁷³ These were the two forces that guided the preferences of international bidders and their desire to purchase works. One bidder, Joseph Pulitzer, explained why he bought: "to safeguard this art for posterity, I bought - defiantly!"¹⁷⁴ For others, the horror of dignifying these sales with high prices and encouraging Nazi confiscation from Jewish collectors and museum purging of modern works within Germany was a negative factor. The auctioneers who ran the Fischer auction realized this and tried to persuade the dealers and collectors that all proceeds would be sent to German museums.¹⁷⁵ Still, most of the work sold below the estimates (Figure XVIII) and a number of works, twenty-eight in all, remained unsold. Van Gogh's *Self Portrait* (1888) was confiscated from the Neue Staatsgalerie in Munich and sold at the Fischer auction (Figure XIX) for a price well under its estimated value. Its estimated selling price was 250,000 Swiss Francs.¹⁷⁶ It sold for 175,000 to an agent for Maurice Wertheim of New York. Artists included in the auction were Ernest Barlach,

¹⁷² Nicholas, 3.

¹⁷³ Nicholas, 4.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid..

¹⁷⁶ Barron, 155.

Max Beckmann, Marc Chagall, Ernst Kirchner, Paul Klee, Oscar Kokoschka, Franz Marc, Henri Matisse, Emile Nolde, Vasily Kandinsky, and Pablo Picasso, among others.

The works the Germans sold at auctions were classified as degenerate. If they failed to sell, many were destroyed. Prior to the Fischer auction, on May 20, 1939 1,004 paintings and sculptures and 3,825 drawings, watercolors, and prints were burned.¹⁷⁷ Unlike the public book burnings, the burning of art was conducted in private. Nazi officials feared the negative propaganda of this destruction. However, the international art world was becoming aware of the destruction.

Nazi cultural policy affected the German art markets and the value of art. Supply was significantly increased as German museums were purged for works that could be sold in international auctions. Black market channels of distribution disregarded the importance of auction values for artwork. Modern works were commodified or monetized in terms of "accepted" works in an exchange market. Each one of these events shifted the European art markets towards inefficiency and criminal activity. The international demand for art was caught in a tug-of-war between saving the art put up for auction and funding the Nazi regime. The Nazi goal of purification and collectivization of art came at a price; all too often this price involved the destruction of art.

¹⁷⁷ Nicholas, 25.

VII

Conclusions: A Broken Collection

The cultural policies of the Nazi party had widespread effects on the art world. From the classification of style to the exhibition and sale of art, Nazi policy dictated what happened to art. Adolf Hitler and Dr. Joseph Goebbels were the key figures behind the ideology that inspired cultural policies and the development of the institutions that enforced it. Alfred Rosenberg, Adolf Ziegler, and Hermann Goering among others helped control the specifics of confiscation and exhibition. The Degenerate Art Show, the Great German Art Exhibition, and the Linz collection were the manifestations of the synthetic operations of Nazi ideology, institutions, and policy.

The effects of Nazi art policy continued for many years after the Reich fell in 1945. Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide on April 30, 1945 while living in a bunker under the Reichchancellery. About a month and a half before his suicide, Hitler moved into the bunker. Among the few possessions he took with him was the final architectural model for the museum at Linz.¹⁷⁸ Within the confines of his bunker, Hitler explained to his Gestapo chief, "My dear Kaltenbrunner, if both of us were not convinced that after the victorious conclusion of the war we would build this new Linz together, I would shoot myself today."¹⁷⁹ In 1944 when an allied invasion seemed possible, Hitler ordered many of the Linz collection works hidden in the Steinberg salt mines in Alt Ausee,

¹⁷⁸Nicholas, 315.

¹⁷⁹Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, 311.

Austria.¹⁸⁰ The dream of owning the world's greatest art collection was a priority to the Fuhrer even at the end.

The other great art collector of the Third Reich, Hermann Goering, lived to see the end of the war, although he eventually committed suicide following his trial at Nuremberg on October 16, 1946.¹⁸¹ Before abandoning his beloved estate Karinhall, Goering toured his collection deciding what he would take with him to his other estates. Karinhall was blown up in the first few months of 1945.¹⁸² In 1946, during the Nuremberg trials one of the accusations brought against him by the French government involved his role as an art criminal. An eyewitness to the proceedings on February 7, 1946, noted " (Hans) Fritzsche¹⁸³ and (Albert) Speer¹⁸⁴ showed that Goering's stealing of art treasures was really the damaging accusation in German eyes. 'They didn't even mention the worst part of it', Fritzsche pointed out, '-that he even *sold* the stuff he stole.'"¹⁸⁵

Other high-ranking Nazis art officials were punished for their actions. Alfred Rosenberg, the radical traditionalist and head of the ERR, was also found guilty of war crimes and executed on October 16, 1946 at Nuremberg.¹⁸⁶ Gustav Rochlitz, the art dealer who was notorious for trading modern art for accepted art, was taken into custody in Germany, tried in France, and placed in prison. After the war was over, many of the works owned by Rochlitz were never recovered. Matisse's *Oriental Woman Seated on*

¹⁸⁰Feliciano, 166.

¹⁸¹Feliciano, 167.

¹⁸²Nicholas, 318-319.

¹⁸³ Hans Fritzsche was an aide of Dr. Goebbels. He was not a "major' war criminal" Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 62.

¹⁸⁴ Albert Speer was "Hitler's favorite architect and, subsequently, director of the armaments program." Taylor, 25.

¹⁸⁵ Taylor, 305.

¹⁸⁶Feliciano, 167.

Floor, one of the works involved in the Rochlitz exchange the Three Graces for two Matisse paintings and Gauguin's *Yellow Christ*¹⁸⁷, was still missing until 1997, when it was finally returned to the descendants of Paul Rosenberg. It had been taken on September 5, 1941.¹⁸⁸

In the years that followed the war, "lost" artworks were found in basements, bombed out buildings, and abandoned railroad cars. The people responsible for the recovery and restitution of these lost works operated under the name of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historical Monuments in War Areas, a program authorized by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on June 21, 1943.¹⁸⁹ The members of this commission, together with their British counterparts, were called Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Officers (MFAA).¹⁹⁰ Art historian Frederick Hartt was a member of the MFAA. In his book, *Florentine Art Under Fire*, Hartt explained that many of the works of art removed from Florence were intended for the Linz collection. He also refers to the discovery of Hitler's hidden collection found in the salt mines in Altausee. Among the works found in the remnants of the Linz collection were, "the Ghent Altarpiece, the Bruges Madonna of Michelangelo, the Lobkowitz Breughel, the Czernin Vermeer, the Altdorffer St. Florian Altar" and a few Rembrandts.¹⁹¹ After the end of the European war, the Rosenberg and Rothschild families, among others, began to use the service of the "Monuments men" to restore the collections that had been confiscated by the Nazis years before.¹⁹² French cultural officials recorded that 61,000 works were

¹⁸⁷Hector Feliciano refers to this painting as *Crucifixion* (Feliciano 169).

¹⁸⁸Feliciano, 168-169.

¹⁸⁹Nicholas, 222.

¹⁹⁰ Frederick Hartt, *Florentine Art Under Fire* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949), 5.

¹⁹¹ Hartt, 100-101.

¹⁹²Nicholas, 407-444.

returned to France in the postwar years. Out of these works, 80 percent were supposedly returned to their owners. Even though this number far exceeds the 21,903 works reported by the ERR, this number includes all confiscations, both official and non-official.¹⁹³ Thus, the 61,000 works include works from Germanized and Aryanized businesses, exchanges, and black market dealings.

Regardless of the astounding number of works that have been found, some works remain missing even today. Due to a lack of interest in the 1950's, as Europe and the United States focused on economic recovery instead of asset restitution, the existence of sealed and destroyed records within Europe and behind the Iron Curtain, and the unknown whereabouts of missing works, serious gaps in the provenance of many artists' bodies of work persist.¹⁹⁴ Only in the past decade and a half with the raising of the Iron Curtain, have records and access been opened to new commissions of "Monuments men".¹⁹⁵

Hitler's attempt to hide the accepted collections and burn the degenerate works not sold at auction created problems with the recovery and restitution of these works.. Works are still being taken from museums in order to be restored to the families and descendants of their pre-WWII owners. Perhaps Hitler's most enduring legacy was his war on individualism in the visual arts. Even today, works are traded between collections and stored while lawyers squabble over their incomplete provenance due to confiscation, seizure, and disbursement policies under Hitler's regime.

Hitler made art a priority. Art mirrored politics at every step of the way for the Third Reich. In the end, art historians, museum curators, and art collectors are left to pick

¹⁹³Feliciano, 222.

¹⁹⁴Nicholas, 442.

¹⁹⁵Nicholas, 443.

up the pieces of the German art world left broken by Hitler and the Nazi cultural officials.

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