Gregory Maertz

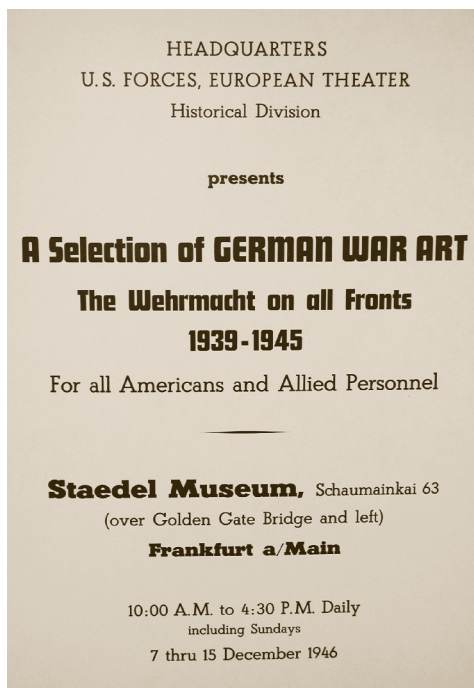## The Last Taboo: The Postwar Rehabilitation of Nazi Artists

The attitude taken by the Allied occupiers, especially the Americans, towards the cultural remnants of National Socialism in postwar Germany suggests an acceptance of the notion that art produced with the patronage of the Nazi Party, the Wehrmacht, the SS, and mobilised pre-existing organisations was inherently shameful, and that this quality was contagious, and thus might unavoidably be transmitted to successive custodians. Connected with this assumption was the idea that the artists themselves were tarnished by their collaboration with the regime, and thus incurred shame that was not to be expunged without extraordinary acts of intervention. It was thus the shame of collaboration that inspired the two-pronged American policy of expropriating publicly and privately held works of art associated with the patronage of the Third Reich, and implementing a judicial process of denazification for artists that held out the promise of clemency and a fresh start.

As we shall see below, the main problem with this policy was that only relatively few collaborating artists were Party members. In order to maintain a high degree of consensual participation in exhibitions, the regime lowered the bar for exhibiting in even the most prestigious art shows to mere membership of the Reichskammer der Kultur (RKK). Since all professional artists were required to join, this was an essentially meaningless credential, except for a relatively small number of artists purged for racial or political reasons. Despite the apparent regimentation of cultural life under Hitler, the new Nazi organisational apparatus had little measurable impact on exhibition practice in Germany. In fact, when all art exhibitions of the period are examined, and not simply the *Große Deutsche*

Kunstausstellungen (GDKs), the RKK, rather than restricting artistic production according to Nazi norms actually made possible the continuity and smooth working of exhibition machinery, patronage and sales. More importantly, the RKK facilitated the collaboration of artists, even those inclined towards dissent or inner emigration by channelling their efforts into the service of the state and the Party. The formation of units of combat artists in the Wehrmacht was another way of mobilising dissident and even 'degenerate' artists who had been rejected for membership in the RKK or purged. Thus, the RKK must be seen fundamentally as an enabling instrument of collaboration, rather than as a vehicle of censorship, surveillance and control, which has been the conventional position taken by historians of the period.

Radioactive Art

Attempts to control the postwar circulation of Nazi-era German art were undertaken by two units of the United States Army, the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Branch (MFAA), best known for its heroic efforts to salvage the artistic patrimony of Europe, and a second completely mysterious outfit, the German Wartime Art Project. Motivated by the association between contemporary German art and Nazi propaganda, the latter was led by Gordon W. Gilkey (1912–2000), a captain in the US Army Air Corps, who had failed in his efforts to be assigned to the MFAA; the latter was given its marching orders in the late

HEADQUARTERS
U.S. FORCES, EUROPEAN THEATER
Historical Division

presents

A Selection of GERMAN WAR ART

The Wehrmacht on all Fronts
1939-1945

For all Americans and Allied Personnel

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Staedel Museum, Schaumainkai 63
(over Golden Gate Bridge and left)
Frankfurt a/Main

10:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Daily
including Sundays
7 thru 15 December 1946

1. A poster advertising Gordon W. Gilkey's exhibition *A Selection of German War Art: The Wehrmacht on all Fronts, 1939–1945,* held at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, 7-15 December 1946

spring of 1946. After just six months, and with the help of a skeleton crew of German translators and American security personnel, Gilkey confiscated and then catalogued approximately 9,250 works of art. These ranged in size, from huge GDK canvasses intended for display in public buildings, to small-format woodcuts and lithographs suitable for modest private collections. Gilkey's mission culminated in an exhibition of selected pieces of confiscated art that opened at the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt on 6 December 1946 with a special viewing for VIPs in the occupation government (Figs. 1, 2). From their unveiling as war trophies in Frankfurt at the end of 1946 until their discovery by this author

2. The exhibition preview on 6 December 1946. USAAF Captain Gordon W. Gilkey (right) escorts USAAF General Joseph T. McNarney, commander-in-chief, US Forces of Occupation, Germany (middle), and Colonel H.E. Potter (left), leader of the Historical Division, Headquarters, US Forces, European Theater. They are looking at Emil Scheibe's painting *Hitler an der Front*, which is in the German War Art Collection, US Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C.

3. Page 12 of *Das Depotbuch der Bilder*, the record of Adolf Hitler's art purchases at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellungen*, 1938–1944

in various locations in the United States and Germany over the past ten years, the original objective of the American confiscation programme, keeping 'Nazi' art sequestered and thus incapable of exercising influence in postwar culture, had succeeded. Until now.[1]

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[1]   Truly irreplaceable though they are, Lynn H. Nicholas' *The Rape of Europa* (New York, 1995), Jonathan Petropoulos' *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, 1996), and Robert M.

A second collection of 775 paintings that Hitler and his agents had purchased for the Führer's private collection at the eighth annual *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellungen* held in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst was seized by members of the MFAA at the Central Collecting Point in Munich (Figs. 3, 4). Hitler's collection of GDK canvasses, upon which Alfred H. Barr Jr's influential essay of 1933[2] and all postwar scholarship is based, remained in American control until the late 1960s. In 1974 the first exhibition of a selection of these objects opened, coincidentally, also in Frankfurt. *Kunst im 3. Reich: Dokumente der Unterwerfung* coincided with the publication of Berthold Hinz's pioneering study *Die Malerei im Deutschen Fascismus: Kunst und Konterrevolution* (1974), which, in the absence of an expansion of the known pool of objects dating from this period, has functioned ever since as the standard treatment on the art of Nazi Germany. The synchronicity of the 1974 exhibition of long-suppressed works

4. Hubert Lanzinger. *Der Bannenträger*. 1937
Lanzinger's stylised portrait of the Führer was among the works purchased by Hitler at the 1937 Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung. It has the distinction of being the only contemporary German painting earmarked for inclusion in the Führer's planned museum in Linz. Confiscated by Gilkey before December 1946

Edsel's *Monuments Men* (Nashville, 2010) do not mention either Gilkey's or the MFAA's art confiscation programmes. For the first comprehensive treatment of Nazi art, and efforts to suppress its postwar influence, see my forthcoming books *Modernism and Nazi Painting* and *Nazi Art*, to be published by Palgrave Macmillan. In the meantime, see G. Maertz, 'The Invisible Museum: Unearthing the Lost Modernist Art of the Third Reich', *Modernism/modernity*, 2008, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 63-85.
[2] A.E. Barr, 'Art in the Third Reich – Preview, 1933', *Magazine of Art*, vol. 38, October 1945, pp. 212-222.

and the appearance of the first serious postwar scholarship on Nazi art led inevitably to an over-identification of Hitler's collection with Nazi art in general. Indeed, the contents of Hitler's collection have come to function as a metonym for the whole category of Nazi art, and the eight GDKs have come to stand for all exhibitions in Nazi Germany. Even without considering the 9,250 Gilkey objects and the thousands of exhibitions held outside Munich during the lifespan of the Nazi regime, at 775 out of 13,482 objects exhibited in the GDKs and their *Ergänzungen*, Hitler's collection represents just six per cent of the total number of objects exhibited between 1937 and 1944, and the disproportionate representation of certain artists and genres in the pictures purchased by Hitler has skewed our understanding of even the nature of the art exhibited in the regime's main art show.[3] Of course, such a close identification between the GDKs and Hitler's taste was in keeping with the jury's, and the Führer's, ambitions for the exhibitions, but assumptions about the other 94 per cent of the objects exhibited in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst should not be made on the basis of Hitler's purchases alone.

But it was Nazi aesthetics, a fusion of racism and 'neo-neo-Classical idealism' propounding a futural or proleptic aesthetic purity, that accounts for the toxicity that clings to the works of art in both confiscated collections of Gilkey's objects and Hitler's art purchases. It was precisely in recognition of the fact that the GDK pictures were seen as emblems of Nazi racial hatred and militarism that provided the MFAA with the chief rationale for confiscating pictures associated with Hitler's patronage. In addition, the American policy of confiscating contemporary German art was influenced by an exaggerated idea of NSDAP membership among the artists, and service by some of the artists in combat artist units that accompanied Germany's armies of conquest and occupation. The outlandish fact that the confiscated German art was for a time sequestered by German officials in an obscure sub-facility of Das Bundesamt für Strahlenschutz, located deep in former East Berlin, in Karlshorst, only underscores the status of these objects as relics of a pariah culture tarnished with the crimes of the Third Reich.

[3]   Historisches Archiv, Haus der Kunst, Munich.

The ideological and political toxicity of the objects confiscated by the Americans also inevitably clung to the artists who made them. And just as their toxicity had been conferred on objects and artists by occupation officials, it was therefore only the authority of the United States military government that could remove the radioactive taint. For this reason, a bureaucratic process was devised to afford artists the possibility to remove the shame associated with their cultural collaboration in Nazi Germany. The possibility of being rehabilitated presupposed crucial assumptions about the artists in question, especially concerning their representative status in the community of German artists. A review of the major annual exhibitions held in Munich prior to January 1933 suggests that, far from being marginal figures, the rehabilitated artists had been mainstays of the arts scene in the Weimar Republic, and that their return to respectability ensured that they would emerge from the ruins of the Third Reich to dominate the rise of postwar German art.

Collaboration

Apart from relatively few artists designated as *entartet* who were sent to the camps for reeducation or were slapped with *Mal-* or *Ausstellungsverbote*, the Nazis administered the arts with unexpected restraint. Of course, Nazi forbearance was not occasioned by any official tolerance of artistic pluralism, but was rather the result of the essential nature of Nazi control of the means of cultural production, which depended on a two-way relationship: the eagerness of artists to collaborate and to engage in *Selbstgleichschaltung*, or self-mobilisation, was matched by the regime's keenness for artists to participate en masse in its cultural programmes.[4]

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[4] Works by 112 artists (eight of whom were Jewish) were included in the *Entartete Kunstausstellung*. These figures do not, of course, include the number of artists purged from the Reichskammer der Bildenden Künste on racial or political grounds. By comparison, out of 14,000 card-carrying members of the Reichskammer, approximately 10,000 submitted works for inclusion in the GDKs. For more details on these figures, see *'Degenerate Art': The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. by S. Barron, Harry N. Abrams, 1991; A.E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology and Economics in Nazi Germany*, University of North Carolina Press, 1993, and I. Schlenker, *Hitler's Salon*, New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

When the average annual income of artists during the 1930s was between 4,000 and 6,000 reichsmarks, it is easy to see why participating in exhibitions (especially the GDKs, where prices paid for paintings could reach 60,000 reichsmarks per work[5]) was hard to resist for all but the most financially secure artists.[6] Collaboration also offered artists the promise of continuing to work as teachers.

Remarkably, as many artists make clear in their Fragenbögen (FBs), the denazification questionnaires that all adult Germans were required to fill out in the first years of the Allied occupation, collaboration also offered the possibility of 'helping' Jewish colleagues, 'degenerate' artists and dissidents, a major trope in denazification testimony, and of acting out the double-agent fantasy of impersonating a supporter of Nazi power who subverted its designs from within the belly of the beast. This is also a major trope in Holocaust-themed movies in which the dramatic climax is structured around the intervention of Aryan collaborators in saving Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. Salient examples of this kind of film include Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (2002) and Jan Hrebejk's *Divided We Fall* (2000). Both films, and the narratives appended to FBs and denazification court documents, exemplify the instrumentality of Jews in restoring collaborators to the moral certitude of 'inner emigrants' and converting them into 'good' Germans.

As we can see in these and other films of the postwar era, the choice between cultural collaboration and inner emigration during the Third Reich is primarily constructed as a binary that parallels the dualism of 'degenerate' art and 'official' art that was acceptable to the regime. According to this model, individual artists faced a stark choice: either to collaborate and thus validate Nazi cultural policy, including the persecution of *Kulturbolschewisten*, or to retreat into inner emigration, which required artists to eschew the creation of art and thus avoid functioning as enablers and beneficiaries of Nazi patronage. But just as the domi-

[5] Records of Hitler's Art Purchases, Historisches Archiv, Haus der Kunst, Munich.
[6] With a conversion rate of 2.5 reichsmarks to the US dollar in 1936, German artists' incomes, as reported in the FBs, averaged between $1,600 and $2,400. To put these figures into perspective, in 1935/1936 the median family income in the United States was $1,600.

nant binate model is inadequate in describing the art of Nazi Germany, a dualistic structure is also deficient in explaining the behaviour of artists coming to grips with Nazi patronage and the cultural institutions under Party and state control.

The phrase 'inner emigration' was coined by the anti-Nazi writer Frank Thieß (1890–1977), to describe writers and artists who elected to remain in Germany after 1933 rather than escape to sanctuary abroad. In an article published in *Münchener Zeitung* in 1945, Thieß famously criticised the exiled novelist Thomas Mann's (1875–1955) stance of outspoken moral superiority, taken without risk to himself or his family, while his brother and sister writers languished in the prison house of Hitler's Germany. However morally compromised inner emigrants might have seemed to German writers exiled in sunny California, the former were nonetheless genuine victims of Nazi repression and eyewitnesses to Nazi crimes. The most prominent 'inner emigrants' among Weimar Germany's cultural elite included former communists such as Erich Kästner (1899–1974) and Otto Dix (1891–1969), the *Bauhäusler* Oskar Schlemmer (1888–1943), and the conservatives Emil Nolde (1867–1956) and Franz Radziwill (1895–1983), all of whom were ultimately coerced into creative silence. In the case of purged conservative artists, absence from the public spotlight signalled a protest against the regime they once supported.[7]

Artists whose cultural activity in Nazi Germany does not fit so neatly into the binary of collaboration or inner emigration comprise a much larger group, which happens to include the names of several canonical artists who participated in art exhibitions from 1933 to 1945.[8] Their participation in Nazi-sponsored exhibitions demonstrates that in no realm of cultural activity were the categories of banned and approved works

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[7] See J. van Dyke, *Franz Radziwill and the Contradictions of German Art History, 1919–1945*, University of Michigan Press, 2011.

[8] Artists whose works were not suppressed by American authorities in postwar Germany include Rudolf Belling, Lothar-Günther Buchheim, Oskar Coester, Willi Geiger, Werner Gilles, Erich Glette, Erwin Henning, Tom Hops, Fritz Koelle, Georg Kolbe, Leo von König, Anton Leidl, Rudolf Nerlinger, Paul Mathias Padua, Wolf Panizza, Oswald Poetzelberger, Carl Theodor Protzen, Clara Rilke-Westhof, Christian Schad, Rudolf Schlichter, Georg Schrimpf, Ernst Schumacher, Carl Schwalbach and Max Unold.

more fluid than in the visual arts. Film, literature and music were different, as each was the product of complex and expensive industrial processes, or required the support of large organisations – publishers, radio stations, recording facilities and orchestras. Banned authors, composers and films merely had to be blacklisted in order to block performance or publication. By contrast, art exhibitions could only take place with the acquiescence of mobilised local, regional and national authorising bodies. Nonetheless, the binary categories of collaboration and inner emigration are inadequate to describe a situation that was constantly in flux, and only rarely produced results that could be seen as either consistent with the regime's vaguely stated aesthetic values or flaunting them utterly.[9] Such fluidity was, however, to be expected, when aesthetic expectations were never, aside from the false binary of 'degenerate' versus approved art, concretely manifested; but instead were presented, from exhibition to exhibition, in an endless variation of changeable forms. This dynamic situation was also consistent with Hitler's idea of 'proleptic representation', that is, a non-mimetic style that was intended to offer at the present moment idealised archetypes of the German *Volk* in a future state of racial perfection, which by its very nature presupposed an unstable, evolving mode of figuration (Fig. 5).

Non-conformity with the rhetorically ambitious but obscurely articulated standards and goals of Nazi aesthetics (which is not to be confused with conscious dissent) was also unavoidable, for reasons of deliberate government policy. In Nazi Germany, unlike the Soviet Union, the state 'did not attempt to achieve monolithic cultural authority'.[10] Apart from the annual GDK in Munich, which was intended to function as a showcase for Hitler's personal patronage of the arts, and was therefore carefully orchestrated by Heinrich Hoffmann (1885–1957), who headed the jury, the Nazi hierarchy preferred to influence the visual arts through the mobilisation of existing local organisations and their traditions through consent rather than through coercion. Thus, instead of replacing exist-

[9] Steinweis, op. cit., pp. 133-139.
[10] Th.R. Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss, 1914–1945*, Duke University Press, 1996, p. 141.

5. Johann Schult. *Aktbild einer jungen Tänzerin*. 1941
Exhibited in the 1941 *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung,* Schult's painting is emblematic of
Hitler's idea of 'proleptic representation', and Schult's works are well represented in Hitler's
private collection

ing arts administrative bodies with new, fully nazified organisations, it
was standard Nazi practice to extend legitimacy to organisations, with
their leadership intact, which pre-dated Hitler's appointment as Reich
chancellor in January 1933. This was as true in the Alt Reich as in the
'new territories' annexed by Germany, and in occupied countries, such as
Norway, where homegrown Nazis oversaw the mobilisation of existing
institutions to serve the 'new European order.'[11] As evidence of this prac-
tice, few leaders of local artists' organisations or juries were replaced after
1933, or even after the grand climacteric of July 1937 when the opening
of the *Entartete Kunstausstellung* announced closure to the ongoing row
between Joseph Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg as to the future of mod-
ernist art in Nazi Germany. Intriguingly, this practice of making collabo-
rators out of existing organisations suggests that artists' organisations,

[11] See Gregory Maertz (exhibition curator) Art or Non-Art in Norway and the Third Reich,
Bergen Kunstmuseum, Bergen, Norway (opening 2014).

6. Erich Heckel. *Pflüger*. 1930
Exhibited in the 1930 *Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Munich. Re-
production published in the exhibition catalogue. An excellent
example of Heckel's appropriation of *völkisch* iconography in
his work of the early 1930s

in accordance with *völkisch*, proto-Nazi taste and cultural values that had come to domi-nate the Weimar art scene well before January 1933, had been *pre-Gleichgeschaltet* or pre-mo-bilised before the *Machtergrei-fung*.[12] In fact, for individual artists as well as organisations, cultural collaboration with the regime presupposed a continu-ous, ongoing process of indi-vidual and group adjustment to aesthetic expectations that were constantly in flux.

Precisely because of the constant repetition of ritualis-tic rants against 'degenerate' art in the Nazi media, it is far from being generally understood that the anti-modernist attitude in cultural matters was largely a settled issue in Germany well before 1937. Indeed, far from being associated exclusively with National Socialism, *völkisch* pastoralist-agrarian conventions permeated mainstream art before 1933. Even leading avant-garde artists, such as charter members of *Die Brücke*, Erich Heckel (1883–1970), Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884–1976) and Max Pechstein (1881–1955), had already thoroughly and *völkisch*-ly self-mo-bilised in the late Weimar Period. Evidence for this is found in the an-nual Munich exhibitions from 1930 to 1932, in which Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff and Pechstein exhibited pictures that were fully *völkisch* in style and iconography (Fig. 6). In adopting *völkisch* conventions, these old warhorses of German Expressionism had perhaps assumed that they

[12] *Völkisch* might best be translated as 'conservative-nationalist-tribal-racial-organic romanti-cism', and conceptually it was commandeered and monopolised by the Nazis.

7. Bruno Müller-Linow. *Mein Sohn Markwart*. 1942 Exhibited in *Junge Kunst im Deutschen Reich* (1943) and reproduced in the catalogue. Müller-Linow also participated in Wehrmacht exhibitions from 1942 to 1944, and a number of his works were confiscated by Gilkey and were originally included in the US Army's German War Art Collection until their repatriation in 1986

would be safe from persecution as 'degenerate' artists, as such attacks against Expressionism had become commonplace at least since the publication of Paul Schultze-Naumburg's (1869–1949) *Kunst und Rasse* in 1928, and the formation of the *Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur* in the same year. Missing from the *völkisch* pictures of the Weimar era and the pre-1937 Nazi exhibitions (1933–1936) held in Munich, however, is an emphasis on the proleptic visualisation of the regime's racist utopia. Indeed, the pastoral and agrarian themes of *völkisch*-ly inflected art, despite being closely associated with proto-fascist nationalist politics in the 1920s, would have struck contemporary viewers as passé and far removed from Hitler's radical plans for the future orientation of the art of the Third Reich.

The fundamental conflict facing the founding members of *Die Brücke* was that they were identified with the historical avant-garde at a time when Hitler sought recruits for a completely new art that corresponded with the future ambitions of the regime. Thus, Heckel and his fellow Expressionists were little better than relics, rooted in the past, whose support for the regime was cause for embarrassment. Tellingly, when news reached Berlin on 6 February 1943 that the decidedly modernist exhibition *Junge Kunst im Deutschen Reich* had opened in Vienna's Künstlerhaus with the blessing of the *Gauleiter* Baldur von Schirach, Hitler's reaction revealed the generational bias that underlay his aesthetic vision: 'What does the work of all these old fogeys have to do with us?'[13] In truth, the conventionally avant-garde appearance of the vast majority of pictures in the Viennese show is consistent with the fact that their 175 creators were, on average, born before 1900 (Fig. 7). As representatives of an earlier phase of modernism, they were considered

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[13] H. Hoffmann, H. Picker, compiled by J. von Lang, *Hitler Close-up*, MacMillan, 1973, p. 97.

unmobilisable, and thus incapable of doing the future-oriented cultural work of the regime. For Hitler, avant-garde conventions were not merely decadent. They were sterile anachronisms.[14]

What the highjacking of the 1932 to 1936 annual Munich art exhibitions and their conversion into the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellungen* represents is not simply a power grab by cultural cretins, but a long-planned putsch aimed at overthrowing the authority of the entrenched arts establishment in Munich. This required crushing the decades-old monopoly of power exercised by the Akademie der Bildenden Künste and the artist organisations associated with both the avant-garde (*Münchener Secession* and *Neue Secession*) and the *völkisch* tradition (*Münchener Künstlergenossenschaft*). Again, rather than trying to mobilise the older generation of Secessionists and their more radical offspring in the Neue Secession, the Nazis instead disproportionately offered their patronage to younger artists who were neither beholden to the Munich Academy faculty nor had become invested in the academic style associated with Carl von Marr (1858–1936) and Karl Theodor von Piloty (1826–1886), or the avant-garde style that grew out of the teaching of Franz von Stuck (1863–1928), who mentored Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), Franz Marc (1880–1916), and other 'degenerate' artists.

According to Hitler, the function of the GDKs was chiefly to be pedagogical: the Party-sponsored exhibitions were to encourage a new generation of artists to create the art of the future, and to encourage the public to appreciate it as emblematic of a coming Nazi reality. Surprisingly, Hitler was also determined to make the annual GDK more broadly representative of 'German' art, by making it more accessible to artists from outside Bavaria, and not associated with Munich institutions. Designated by the Führer as the 'Reich Capital of Culture', Munich needed a more rather than less inclusive reputation if it was to emerge from the massive

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[14] Futural or proleptic representation is a type of modernist formalism. Since Nazi ideas of racial perfection were wholly idealised formal constructions, art that seeks to represent this perfection is not bad mimesis, as it is so frequently described by critics; it is not mimetic at all. The human subjects in Nazi paintings are closely related to the machines of Futurism and the Bauhaus, or the sculptures of Arno Breker and Josef Thorak, Georg Kolbe and Fritz Klimsch.

shadow cast by Berlin. The Prussian capital and seat of central government had come to dominate the German cultural scene during the short lifespan of the Weimar Republic. (Our previous failure to acknowledge Hitler's supra-regional plans for Munich and her art made it impossible to grasp Hitler's intentions for the art of Nazi Germany.) Consistent with the Nazi emphasis on youth, renewal and palingenesis, the outsiders who participated in the GDKs tended to be considerably younger than the established Munich artists whom Hitler sought to displace.[15]

Free of false binaries, the real history of German art in the years after 1930 reveals how avant-garde experimentalism associated with Dadaism, Expressionism, the Bauhaus and Neue Sachlichkeit evolved into figurative representation with a dominant *völkisch* tendency in the Weimar period that was carried over into the Nazi years. The great advantage of this style, generally described as 'Expressive Realism' by postwar art historians, was that it could be deployed as either a compliant, collaborative style or a dissident style associated with inner emigration or 'degenerate' art. In such circumstances, as, for example, former avant-garde artists *völkisch*-ly self-mobilised in advance of the Nazi takeover, cultural collaboration was neither a static nor a predictable process. From one exhibition to the next, artists could be perceived as collaborating to a greater or a lesser degree. Thus we must speak of degrees of cultural collaboration, or of what we might describe as relative 'collaborative distance', such as that, for example, separating the GDKs, liberalised Wehrmacht art exhibitions, and the modernist exhibition *Junge Kunst im Deutschen Reich* (Figs. 8, 9).

8. Adolf Hitler (left) visits a Wehrmacht exhibition of combat art in the company of Captain Luitpold Adam (far right), chief of the *Staffel der Bildenden Künstlern*, a Wehrmacht combat artist unit organised on the direct orders of Hitler and under the operational direction of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. Photograph dated January 1944

[15]   Denazification files, Bayerisches Hauptstaatarchiv, Munich.

9. Franz Martin Lünstroth. *Ärmelkanal*. 1940
Lünstroth participated in a number of Wehrmacht exhibitions, and this painting was confiscated by Gilkey before his Städel exhibition was held in December 1946

In addition, there is the collaborative distance between the GDKs in Munich and regional exhibitions in Berlin, as well as between exhibitions in the Alt Reich, in the Ostmark (Austria), and other annexed or occupied territories.

Despite the unremitting stream of propaganda devoted to demonising progressive modernist art and promoting the regime's notion of futural representation, the actual record of art production and distribution in Nazi Germany reveals very real divergences from what we have long considered (pace Berthold Hinz) to constitute the Nazi standard of taste. When viewed at close range, however, it is clear that no such monolithic aesthetic standard actually existed, and that local and regional variations, as well as blatant invocations of the work of banned artists, were not only tolerated but encouraged by leading voices in the regime as late as 1943 (as evidenced by the *Junge Kunst in Deutschen Reich* and Wehrmacht ex-

hibitions, and the 1944 GDK). If artistic conformity had been the goal of the regime, then it was not enough simply to rail against the evils of Jewish and American influence on German culture.

Denazification

The emphasis in postwar discussions of Nazi cultural life has been almost entirely focused on the artist victims of Nazi repression who suffered persecution, exile, and even death as a result of their political and cultural commitments.[16] And, aside from celebratory postwar affirmations of the central place occupied by the avant-garde in the 20th-century canon, we have no real understanding of the political and bureaucratic processes by which both purged and collaborating artists were rehabilitated in the postwar era.

To begin with, the legal definition of collaboration as practised by German citizens during Hitler's dictatorship, and the original impetus for censoring Nazi-era cultural artefacts, was defined in Section II, Subsection A, No. 3, Paragraph iii of the Potsdam Accords: 'To destroy the National Socialist Party and its affiliated and supervised organisations, to dissolve all Nazi institutions, to ensure that they are not revived in any form, and to prevent all Nazi and militarist activity or propaganda.' American art confiscations were also inspired by 'Directive No. 30: Liquidation of German Military and Nazi Memorials and Museums'. Under this ruling, which included the clause 'all collections of works of art related or dedicated to the perpetuation of German militarism or Nazism will be closed permanently and taken into custody', works of contemporary German art were suddenly subject to confiscation, sequestration, and, in the case of thousands of objects, destruction. Then, on 13 May 1946, the Allied Control Council issued a directive for the confiscation of all media materials that could contribute to Nazism/militarism (ACC Order No. 4: Confiscation of Literature and Material of a Nazi and Militarist Nature), which was valid in all zones and rescinded only in

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[16] Among the most prominent victims of Nazi persecution, Felix Nussbaum died in Auschwitz in 1944, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner committed suicide in 1938.

1950. Additionally, occupation directive JCS 1067 (valid until July 1947) was invoked to provide legal cover for all subsequent confiscations.[17]

The close identification of artistic practice and political collaboration that was commonplace in Nazi ideology was adopted by the American occupying authority as the guiding rationale for the denazification of German artists. A report published by the American Institute on Reeducation of the Axis Countries in June 1945 concluded that 'only an inflexible long-term occupation authority will be able to lead the Germans to a fundamental revision of their recent political philosophy.' Formal denazification began with the sweeping requirement that every German adult would complete a *Fragenbögen* (FB), consisting of six pages and 131 questions, that sought to collect data on educational attainment, financial records, and political activity from a population deemed to have been fully committed to 'working towards the Führer', and in any case fought well beyond their predicted capacity to do so.[18] In cases where individuals sought permission to resume their occupations, apply for a job, or to recover property, including works of art housed in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, evidence of Party membership as indicated in an FB triggered the next step in the process: an appearance before a special denazification court.

The denazification of artists who participated in the Nazi regime's annual showcase of approved art in Munich has not been previously examined, because the FBs submitted by 615 artists whose works were collected by Hitler remained hidden for more than 60 years in an obscure branch of the Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv. These questionnaires reveal the true face of cultural collaboration in Nazi Germany, and the extraordinary attempt on the part of the American occupying authority to mitigate the impact of Nazi culture in the postwar era.

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[17] In an act that led to German accusations that the Americans were little better than the Nazis, 30,000 book titles were confiscated and destroyed on their watch. This number was virtually identical to the number of books banned and burned under Hitler.

[18] The heart of the questionnaire was questions 41 to 95, which dealt with membership in Nazi Party organisations. By December 1945, completed FBs had been returned by 9,000,000 German citizens. As a consequence, 140,000 people were immediately removed from positions of responsibility, and 120,000 were temporarily interned in 11 American detention camps.

Structurally and ideologically, the denazification of artists was an oddly bifurcated process. The United States attributed such deep shame to contemporary German art that thousands of objects were subjected to confiscation. On the other hand, the artists who had produced the confiscated works were obliged to participate in an American-mandated and organised legal process whose stated purpose it was to eliminate any lingering moral or political taint attached to the artists' names and their work. Indeed, the high-minded but deeply inconsistent approach of the American occupiers was undermined from the inception of Allied denazification policy by the innumerable compromises that had to be made between the strict ideals of the Americans and the astonishing magnitude of the task of denazifying an entire nation.

In addition to its internal inconsistencies, there were also significant outside political factors that undermined the process of denazification. For example, in 1946, just as full-scale denazification was poised to begin, the Republican-controlled US House of Representatives drastically defunded the occupation of Germany. This action placed enormous pressure on the American occupying authority to speed up plans to transfer many tasks of the occupation, including denazification, to the Germans. In response to intense pressure from Washington, the American occupying authority adopted a bureaucratic strategy reminiscent of Nazi *Gleichschaltung*: rather than wholly cleansing German institutions and re-staffing them with denazified personnel, the Americans opted to mobilise and empower existing German institutions without substantially changing their leadership or rank and file before setting them to work. In practice, this meant permitting former Party members, with few exceptions, to resume positions of responsibility in German bureaucracies, the professions, and private industry.

Even though a classified report by the US Military Government released on 15 January 1946 aired concerns about the perfunctory nature of denazification under the Americans ('The present procedure fails in practice to reach a substantial number of persons who supported or assisted the Nazis'), on 1 April 1946 a new occupation authority law transferred responsibility for the denazification process to the 545 German civilian

courts (*Spruchkammern*) called for in the German *Befreiungsgesetz* of 1946, which placed 900,000 Party members in one of five categories:

    1) *Hauptschuldige* (major offenders)
    2) *Belastete* (offenders)
    3) *Minderbelastete* (lesser offenders)
    4) *Mitläufer* (followers)
    5) *Entlastete* (acquitted persons)

The *Spruchkammern* functioned according to the familiar structure of Anglo-Saxon judicial proceedings, with charges read, witness statements taken, court rulings filed, and penalties assessed. Perhaps what is most interesting about the workings of the *Spruchkammern* is that, in a large number of cases, the accused revealed that he had always been secretly opposed to the regime. The purpose of this ritual seems to have been to exculpate Germans generally by characterising the relationship between individuals and the regime as one of opportunism and expediency. Ultimately, corruption, even evidence of the most craven self-enrichment under the dictatorship, was deemed exculpable, while even the slightest trace of naive faith in the regime and conduct consistent with true believers were almost always punished as criminal behaviour.

Of the 615 GDK artists whose FBs survive, 133 who were Party members came before denazification courts. Of these, 79 were classed as *Mitläufer* and fined relatively small sums, while only two were classed as *Minderbelastete*. The latter were the painter Josef Waldemar Keller-Kühne (1902–1991) and the sculptor Kurt Schmid-Ehmen (1901–1968), who is most famous for his design of the Nazi eagle that was mounted atop the Reichstag. The remaining 52 were perfunctorily '*entlastet*' or '*nicht betroffen*'. Of this latter group, 25 were acquitted by means of blanket Christmas amnesties, which were made periodically to lighten the caseloads facing the denazification courts. A handful of lucky ones were exonerated by the *Spruchkammern* for reasons not specified in court documents.

In 1951, after five years of German-administered denazification, the American authorities declared that the programme had been a 'counter-productive witch-hunt'. By this date, with the Allied occupation ending, the Korean War under way, and West Germany re-arming and poised to

join NATO, there was no real hope of reversing more than a few high-profile judicial atrocities committed by the *Spruchkammern*. Thus, with few collaborating artists given more than a slap on the wrist, administered with the deepest cynicism, the arts bureaucracy in postwar Germany was permitted to continue virtually unchanged from its fully mobilised Nazi-era incarnation.

Rehabilitation

For artists who were Party members, submitting to the authority and judgment of *Spruchkammern* was only the first step in the process of rehabilitation. Eventually, they would have to submit work to postwar juries if they wanted to resume their careers. But before this could happen, artists first had to seek exculpation and purification through the system established by the occupying authority. Evidence of persecution presented by 'degenerate' artists in their FBs was, of course, genuine; but even Party members subject to denazification felt encouraged to blame their collaboration on victimisation by the regime. In many cases, the 'victimisation' cited in denazification documents takes the form of plaintiffs succumbing to peer pressure to join the NSDAP. However incredible or lacking in good faith the rationalisations offered by plaintiffs were, the dynamics of the *Spruchkammern* were already skewed towards leniency in judging plaintiffs. Panel members were, of course, aware that they too were subject to pending denazification. In addition, as Allied observers noted with concern, panel members were frequently subjected to harassment that included death threats. These factors combined to encourage plaintiffs and judges alike to view themselves as scapegoats for an Allied-imposed denazifaction process ('victors' justice') whose design flaws and faulty execution led to the disproportionate punishment of small offenders, while the 'big fish' evaded prosecution. In the context of 'collective guilt', the scapegoating of collaborators converted them into martyrs for the larger community. As compensation for such faux martyrdom, nearly every cultural collaborator subjected to formal denazification received lenient treatment.

10. Hugo Troendle. *Dorfschenke*. 1950
Exhibited in Große Kunstausstellung in 1950 and reproduced in the catalogue. Troendle also participated in Wehrmacht exhibitions from 1942 to 1944, and a number of his works were confiscated by Gilkey and were originally included in the US Army's German War Art Collection until their repatriation in 1986

Apart from levying fines in the debased currency of the Third Reich, which continued to circulate throughout the Allied zones of occupation until the currency reform of 1948, the *Spruchkammern* had no powers to impose additional sanctions on artists, thereby avoiding the embarrassment of restricting artists' postwar activity in the manner that 'degenerate' artists had been prevented from painting or exhibiting during the Nazi dictatorship.

In 1949, the first denazified *Große Kunstausstellung* (GKA) in the ideologically cleansed Haus der Kunst began accepting submissions from artists, both 'degenerate' and former collaborators, for the first time since 1932 (Fig. 10). Artists in both groups confronted a theoretically level competitive playing field, but much had changed since 1932, when the last *Münchener Kunstausstellung* (MKA) before the *Machtergreifung* was held. The most obvious of the transformations noticed by spectators to the first denazified GKA was the rebranding of familiar styles and iconographies by participants on both sides of the ideological divide. The omnipresent *völkisch* iconography, symbolising rebirth or palingenesis, that had done service for the agendas of the right, the left, and religious parties of the Weimar Republic, and then had been mobilised opportunistically by the Third Reich, was now recycled and reinterpreted by rehabilitated artists as heralds of the two new German societies that were coming into being, the West German Federal Republic and the East German Democratic Republic.

It was thus in the legitimising postwar rebranding of *völkisch* and Nazi iconography into images appropriate for democratic West Germany, and the rebranding of the GDKs into GKAs, that the reintegration of both formerly persecuted artists and their formerly privileged but tainted rivals into the postwar German art scene occurred, in what was essentially a reconstitution of the pre-1937 MKAs. This led to the remarkable side-by-side exhibition of works produced by artists identified with radically differing sensibilities, politics and experiences during the Third Reich: exile, inner emigration, and the regime's patronage. In addition, it was in the context of the GKAs that many important postwar reputations were made, including those of Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928–2000), Anselm Kiefer (b. 1945) and Gerhard Richter (b. 1932). This resulted in the simultaneous display, throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, of the work of the postwar generation of artists alongside that of surviving 'degenerate' and collaborating artists. Moreover, it was the Haus der Kunst juries, made up of artists in both categories, reunited for the first time since 1932, which selected the GKA participants, and thus demonstrated how the reconstituted status quo of 1932 influenced the development of German art in the postwar period.

With the recent discovery of the denazification files of artists whose works were collected by Adolf Hitler and later confiscated by American property control officers, it is now possible to describe the means by which the guilt and shame of cultural collaboration were expunged through a special process of postwar judicial decontamination. Once denazified, despite intensive American efforts at reorienting German cultural institutions along American and West European lines, German artists active during the Third Reich resumed their nostalgic march away from contemporary trends, and embraced an anachronistic but native tradition with Romantic and *völkisch* roots that was defiantly figurative and focused on evoking landscapes and sentimental scenes of rural occupations. The taboo on resuming their careers may have been safely removed, but such dangers as may be inherent in their Nazi-era works of art are kept safely invisible to us, because this body of art remains unaccounted for in the master narrative of 20th-century art history.

Gregory Maertz

Paskutinis tabu: pokarinė nacių dailininkų reabilitacija

Santrauka

Straipsnio tikslas – užpildyti iki šiol žiojėjančią istorinės atminties spragą, parodant, kaip Hitlerio režimo globojami dailininkai įgijo įtaką Vakarų Vokietijos dailės pasaulyje, atkūrus valstybės suverenitetą ir jai tapus NATO nare. Jonathano Petropoulo-so knygoje *The Faustian Bargain* (2000) pateikta Arno Brekerio pokarinės karjeros rekonstrukcija yra puikus modelis straipsnyje pateiktai analizei, tačiau iš tiesų nacių dailininkų reabilitacija Vakarų Vokietijoje buvo žymiai platesnis ir įtakingesnis reiš-kinys negu būtų galima susidaryti įspūdį iš vieno pavyzdžio, pristatančio Hitlerio la-biausiai pamėgto skulptoriaus atvejį. Nacistinėje Vokietijoje aktyviai kūrusių civilių ir karo dailininkų asimiliacija esmingai paveikė jaunos federacinės respublikos kul-tūrinį gyvenimą, atgaivindama skonio standartus ir estetinius kriterijus, įtvirtintus Hitlerio pomėgio – jo globotų didžiųjų metinių dailės parodų, vykusių nuo 1937 iki 1944 m. Miuncheno Vokiečių meno namuose.

Aštriausias, dar neištirtas pokario epochos skandalas yra ne tai, kad tarptautinės garsenybės, kaip Brekeris, arba tokie žinomi nacių epochos dailininkai, kaip tapytojas Hermannas Gradlis, galėjo atnaujinti savo karjerą Adenauerio laikais; jie turėjo mil-žinišką pasisekimą ir iki Veimaro Respublikos, ir po jos, gaudami kvapą gniaužiančius užsakymus ir apgaubti turtingų bei ištikimų rėmėjų dėmesiu ir tėvynėje, ir už jos ribų. Iš tikrųjų didysis kultūrinis pokario Vokietijos skandalas, kuris prašyte prašosi pavie-šinamas, yra tai, kad pirma – praktiškai visa nacių kultūrinė biurokratija išliko nepa-liesta ir buvo integruota į Vakarų Vokietijos muziejų administraciją, dailės mokyklas ir menininkų organizacijas, ir antra – pagrindinių pokario dailininkų organizacijų (t. y. *Neue Münchener Künstlergenossenschaft*, *Münchener Secession* ir *Neue Gruppe*) narių asmeninė sudėtis beveik nesiskyrė nuo *Reichskammer der Bildenden Künste* ir *Wehrmacht Staffel der bildenden Künstlern* narių sąrašų.

Be to, „Paskutinis tabu" padeda atskleisti, kaip pokarinė Miuncheno *Große Kunstausstellungen* palengvino persekiotų „išsigimusio meno" kūrėjų reintegraciją į pokarinės Vokietijos ir tarptautinę meno sceną. Šis procesas, žinoma, sutapo su nacių dailininkų pasirodymu legitimuojančiame „perkeistų" Meno namų (*Haus der Kunst*) forume, vienus greta kitų pristačiusiame darbus, sukurtus Trečiajame Reiche daili-ninkų, kurie radikaliai skyrėsi savo psichologija, politinėmis pažiūromis, karo metais išgyventa patirtimi, aprėpusia tokias skirtingas situacijas, kaip tremtis, vidinė emigra-cija ir režimo globa. Būtent Miuncheno Didžiosios meno parodos Meno namuose kontekste susiformavo daugelio žymiausių vokiečių ir austrų kilmės pokario meni-

ninkų, pavyzdžiui, Friedensreicho Hundertwasserio, Anselmo Kieferio, Gerhardo Richterio, reputacija, leidusi XX a. 7-ame, 8-ame ir 9-ame dešimtmečiuose viešumoje sugyventi pokario dailininkų kartai su režimą ir karą išgyvenusiais „išsigimusiais" menininkais bei nacių globojamais dailininkais. Kadangi pokarinė *Haus der Kunst* inkarnacija nepakeitė nacių laikais susiklosčiusios politikos reprezentuoti šiuolaikinius vokiečių dailininkus užsieniečių sąskaita, susiklostė paradoksali situacija: nacių laikų Didžiosios vokiečių meno parodos dalyviai, Vermachto bei SS dailininkai ir „išsigimusio meno" kūrėjai kartu eksponavo savo darbus, kartu posėdžiavo žiuri komisijų posėdžiuose, kartu vadovavo dailininkų organizacijoms, taip atstatydami tą vokiečių meno *status quo*, kuris egzistavo 1933–1937 m., o iš tikrųjų grąžindami Veimaro Respublikos meno situaciją, kurios pusiausvyrą suardė liūdnai pagarsėjusi 1937 m. „išsigimusio meno" paroda.