

PURGES, EXCLUSIONS, AND LIMITS: ART POLICIES IN GERMANY 1933-1949

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During the period 1933-1949 Germany experienced two massive art purges. Both the National Socialist government and OMGUS (Military Government in Germany, U.S.) were highly concerned with controlling what people saw and how they saw it. The Nazis eliminated what they called "Degenerate art," erasing the pictorial traces of turmoil and heterogeneity that they associated with modern art. The Western Allies eradicated "Nazi art" and excluded all military subjects or themes that could have military and/or chauvinist symbolism from pictorial representation. Both the Third Reich and OMGUS utilized the visual arts as instruments for the construction of new German cultural heritages. The fact that such dissimilar regimes used visual strategies both for political education and for the construction of new national identities and collective memories, highlights the importance of images in modern mass politics. It also underlines the importance of the political control of the visual sphere in situations that call for the creation of new paradigms of normalcy and self-understanding.

In this paper I will discuss OMGUS art policies in the post WWII period (1945-1949). Painting, at least as much as film, was conceived as a strategic element in the campaign to politically reeducate the German people for a new democratic internationalism. Modern art allowed the establishment of an easy continuity with the pre-Nazi modernist past, and it could serve as a springboard for the international projection of Germany as a new country interacting with its new Western partners. In the rhetoric of the period, painting emerges as an escape from time, a way to bypass the period 1933-1945. However, I will begin with some preliminary remarks about National Socialist art policy. This seems necessary not only to give a context --OMGUS actions were in many ways reactions to the policies of its predecessors, but also in order to introduce some ideas about the Nazi use of art as a political tool for the construction of a new German cultural patrimony.

ART POLICY IN THE THIRD REICH

To create a single Nazi cultural heritage, Hitler imitated Bismarck's *blitzkrieg* industrialization in the cultural sphere. Hitler tried to construct in record time a comprehensive German national heritage equivalent to what France and Great Britain had developed through the centuries. He focussed his *passion de reenracinement* (re-rooting), to use Francois Furet's expression, on the

construction of an invented memory of an invented past. For the creation of the Nazi Myth of a unified and eternal Germany with its associated cultural heritage, the National Socialist leaders played all the classic nationalist, racist, and imperialist cards, although with unparalleled violence. [Anderson] [Clark]

National Socialist art policy was designed to create the outlines of a new German cultural heritage. [1] Starting in 1933, the National Socialist government began its war against modern art in general and German modern art in particular. The Nazis purged the German museums of what they called "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art). Many works of art were destroyed, others were stolen and stored in the vaults of Nazi leaders, and still others sold in public auctions in Switzerland. The museum directors and curators that had bought and supported modern art were dismissed, the art galleries that traded and showed modern art closed, and the faculty of the art institutes that taught and/or created modern art fired. The Nazis abolished independent art groups and created the "Reichskulturkammer" (National Chamber of Culture) under the guidance of Goebbels, Minister of Enlightenment and Propaganda.

Although it is agreed upon that the Nazi effort to eliminate the aesthetic avant-garde was thorough and impassioned, the reasons behind the antagonism remain under specified. The usual explanations posit that the rejection of the avant-garde was based on purely aesthetic considerations, --er.g.. Hitler's dislike of "unfinished" works. The Nazi leadership used both aesthetic and racist arguments to condemn modern art, claiming that modern artists were of Jewish, cosmopolitan, international, or communist tendencies, and that these faults were reflected in their art, --described as gross, dirty, incomplete, brutal, confused, and nihilistic.[2] Moreover, I propose that the Nazi's obsession with eliminating the avant-garde transcends purely aesthetic arguments, and that the zealotry and brutality that they exhibited against modern art and modern artists has important philosophical and political motivations. The existence of art movements separate to (and contrary to) Nazi art threatened the all-encompassing nature of the National Socialist visual meta-narrative. The war against modernism in the plastic arts was a way to eliminate visual alternatives of representation and wipe the slate clean in order to begin the production of a systematic and self-referential mode of Nazi art. The State leaders and its potentates became the patrons of the New Art, commissioning *oeuvre* in an unprecedented scale for Germany history, but much in the same way as Louis-Phillipe d'Orleans did in France during the 1830-1848 period. [Marrinan] "New German Art" was interspersed with Durers and Holbeins, that were used to establish a continuity with the great "Germanic" tradition. Art served to articulate a new narrative of collective identity.

The art purge of gigantic proportions was accompanied by the production of a new set of works of art, a restricted set of new narratives in an academic style. Albert Boime characterizes academic art as well finished, in the sense that it shows the least traces of the brush, defines contours, and uses small tonal

shifts from light to shadow to model volumes. Although it is mimetic and figurative, using a standard set of colors and a repertoire of easily identifiable figures, National Socialist art was not an attempt to pictorially represent the German reality of the 1930s. "The Nazis themselves claimed that their paintings had nothing to do with Realism," [Adam] and the images of Hitler in shining armor, the depictions of bare-foot peasants marching under rainbows, or the bloodless renditions of battle scenes, are obviously not realist renderings of Hitler, German rural life, or the battlefield. Far from describing people, things, and events of the real life in life-like scenarios, Nazi artists specialized in the rendering of theatrical scenes where people, alone or in groups, adopted attitudes (in the Didero sense) and proclaimed their patriotic, racist, and partisan slogans in carefully prepared stages. Nazi art was allegorical, emblematic, and pedagogic. It served to delineate boundaries, outlining the accepted parameters of the community and creating a clear distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" (the prototypical "other"). "New German Art" became the medium for a new narrative of German self-understanding, a means by which to create and consolidate a new conception of the German past, present, and future. Hitler was very concerned with permanence, and Nazi art --like Nazi architecture-- sought to eternalize the Nazi narrative through representation.

The visual arts played a key role in Nazi politics, and by 1937 the art budget was the largest it had ever been in Germany. [Adam] Not only were new museums built, but their architectural models were paraded through towns like religious icons and a "National Day of German Art" was established. Top National Socialist leaders were involved in the creation and implementation of the art policy. Rosenberg, Goebbels, and Rust were officially in charge of cultural affairs, but Goring, Himmler, Speer, Ley, Frick, Darre, and Bormann participated in the discussions about art and its role within National Socialism. Neil Levi has pointed out that the Nazis did not attack museum as such, but rather "they attack[ed] museums only in so far as museums [were] not National Socialists 'art temples.'" [Levi] The leaders of the Third Reich used the visual arts in their attempt to construct the new Nazi German patrimony.

ART POLICY IN THE AMERICAN ZONE, GERMANY (1945-1949)

Although much of Germany was in rubble, centers of artistic activity quickly emerged. Since the heavily damaged museums were closed, art galleries became the centers of the new art world. On August 9, 1945, three months after the end of the war and nearly four months before the start of the Nuremberg Process, the first art gallery the *Galerie Gerd Rosen*-- opened in the American sector of Berlin, and by 1946 there had been over 70 art exhibits in the city. There were over 1,100 art exhibits in Germany during the period 1945-1949, more than at any other equivalent time interval in German post-war history.

What sort of styles and thematics predominated in the art exhibits of the US zone of occupation? Three categories can be discerned: (1) classical art, (2)

European modern art, with emphasis on German art categorized as Degenerate Art by the Nazis, (3) German abstract art, which by the early 1950s was to dominate the art scene. The common denominator of these three categories with a few exceptions-- was the absence of any political commentary or social references about the immediate past or the contemporary German situation. The overwhelming majority of German painting exhibited during that period in the American zone made no reference to National Socialism, the war, the concentration camps, the ghettos, and the situation in post-war occupied Germany. [3] [Held]

In the immediate postwar period (1945-1949), the American intervention -- covert and overt, governmental, institutional, and private-- was a fundamental, although hitherto ignored, aspect of the process of visual reeducation and visual reconstruction. OMGUS obliterated the visual culture of the Third Reich, while creating, negotiating, and imposing, a radically new set of cultural, aesthetic and political values. Although the aim of occupation was the radical transformation of the country, OMGUS did not transplant and impose a package of American ideals into a passive German population. What OMGUS did was to select which elements of "German-ness" were appropriate for the induction of a new democratic German collective identity, and to catalyze their diffusion in Germany.

The Purge

The prevailing accounts attribute to OMGUS one main objective in terms of art: the restitution of works stolen by the Nazis from German and European museums and collections. This process, carried out by the Museum, Fine Arts, and Archive Division (MFA&A), involved complex strategies for finding the art (often hidden in salt mines or deposits), and difficult processes of restitution. OMGUS was involved in other aspects of postwar German art and art policy, however. In keeping with the aim of the Joint Chief of Staffs Directive 1067 (1945), the American Army had as its objective the "...elimination of Nazism and militarism in all their forms." In terms of art, this translated into the removal of Nazi, militaristic, and chauvinistic images from the public sphere.

"All archives, monuments and museums of Nazi inception, or which are devoted to the perpetuation of German militarism, will be taken under your control and their properties held pending decision as to their disposition by the Control Council" [Directive to the Commander in Chief of the United States Forces of Occupation regarding the Military Government of Germany, 1945]

Other directives reinforced these instructions. The Title 18, Military Government Regulation, OMGUS, 18-401.5, states that:

"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." [Gilkey]

This called for the confiscation or destruction of all items of art "which might tend to revitalize the Nazi spirit or German militarism."^[4] [Gilkey] Thousands of paintings were destroyed and 8,722 were shipped to military deposits in the U.S. (Historical Properties Section, Office of the Army Headquarters Commandant, the Pentagon). [Gilkey]

Repression and Policing

Not only did OMGUS perform an extensive exercise of iconoclasm, but it also repressed the exhibition of new art either nostalgic of, or glorifying the Third Reich. It is taken for granted that no new "Nazi" art was made, as if this were an automatic German reaction to liberation by the Americans. Yet all the opinions polls conducted by OMGUS in the immediate post-war period indicated that nostalgia for the National Socialist past was still high in the German population. [Merritt & Merritt][Breuer] Defeat, misery, and occupation did little to mitigate the anti-democratic opinions of a people indoctrinated for so long and so thoroughly against the idea of freedom and diversity. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there were artists who would have continued to use their art to express their adhesion to National Socialism had they been allowed to do so.

OMGUS regulated and censored the art world, however. German artists, as was the rest of the German population, were politically screened by the Information Control Branch of OMGUS to determine their past allegiances. They had to complete *Fragebogen* (political questionnaires) and be exonerated (from the status of Nazi) in order to be able to receive the *Erlaubnis* (authorization) necessary to register as an artist, to have access to art supplies, and to exhibit. Nazi art could not be exhibited and Nazi artists, at least at the beginning of the occupation period, could not work. OMGUS was setting explicit political limits on art and representation. The "total freedom" of German art highlighted by most commentators of the post-war scene [Held] [Krause][Damus] is in fact a misconception. A more realistic account of the art scene in 1945-1949 would show that the German art of the period was the result of the work of a certain number of the artists (those who were not excluded explicitly by OMGUS) that were allowed to perform within strict limits of representation.

Once the limit was clearly established, OMGUS payed little official attention to the German visual arts of the period. It gave its officers considerable leeway in their connections and interactions with German artists, and did not object to the quality and the content of the art that was emerging from the ruins and filling the voids left by the war and the requisition of Nazi and militaristic art. The only official restriction that stood in place was Directive 1067.

The strict limits forbidding any reference to militarism and Nazism automatically restricted the representation of World War II, the Holocaust, and the Allied occupation of Germany. The **other** absences--the lack of pictorial references to Jews, displaced persons, people crippled by the war, extreme poverty, the exuberant cultural life, the Black Market, and the ethnic diversity introduced by the occupation--were the result of limits self-imposed by the artists. Several plausible explanations can account for these self-imposed limits: (a) the post-war intensification of religiosity and mysticism; (b) the fact that many of the artists had been soldiers and prisoners of war and may not have wanted to recall their experiences or to confront their victims; (c) the refusal to engage in political commentary and social criticism after the Nazi politicization of the visual arts; (d) the pressure exerted by the American officers that acted officially and "non-officially" as patrons of the new German art. In what follows I examine the later, which has received no scholarly attention although it is politically the most relevant.

The OMGUS regulars

Carl J. Friedrich, writing about his experiences in Military Government, commented that the American occupation had been more humane than the Nazi regime, but just as "totalitarian."^[5] Friedrich explained that the Information Control Division (ICD, the key structure in the political control of post-war German culture in the American zone) was a non-violent version of the *Reichskulturkammer*: "with its subdivisions [the ICD] neatly replaced the Reich Chamber of Culture with its seven chambers of press, literature, radio, film, theater, music, and art." [Friedrich] In fact, the ICD was modeled on its predecessor:

"In the military control of occupied Germany the ICD has established through its various Sections a system of licensed activity, with screening and vetting by Intelligence to exclude all politically undesirable people. This is precisely the plan on which the Reichskulturkammer was patterned." [Heinz Roemheld, Chief-Film, Theater, and Music Section, 1945]

Friedrich's 1948 opinions on the ICD are interesting, but his statement about the seven chambers is --according to official records-- incorrect. The ICD did not have seven chambers like the Reich Chamber of Culture, but only six: press, literature, radio, film, theater and music. Art (*bildende Kunst*), was omitted. Why? It could be argued that the omission of an art chamber simply shows the lack of OMGUS interest in the visual arts. However, this interpretation is not consistent with the evidence. The ICB may not have had an explicit section dedicated to the control of the fine arts, but such control existed. In order to work in the US zone, artists had to register and obtain permits from OMGUS. This registration, if authorized, gave them the right to solicit space and art materials. In order to open a gallery, publish art journals, publish exhibition brochures and posters, and even publish invitations for art showings, it was first necessary to obtain permission from OMGUS. Before an art exhibit

could take place, it had to be judged to be acceptable by the Information Control Division, and granted the *Erlaubnis*. Proposals were presented and judged before the events actually could occur. The ICD Section "Film, Theater, and Music Department" handled these requests and granted these permissions.

By putting the "Film, Theater, and Music Department" in charge of the censorship of the visual arts, OMGUS achieved a propaganda victory, for it could claim that it was leaving the visual arts "free" of political control. It was crucial for the American occupation government to demonstrate that the German visual arts were the apolitical product of apolitical artists, a cultural manifestation that developed freely, independent from any political agenda. The freedom of artistic expression became a symbol of the American political philosophy that stressed the difference with the Nazi past and the Communist alternative, both notoriously involved in the political control of the visual sphere.

By 1948, though, painters were writing letters directly to OMGUS asking for economic support and American sponsorship. The pressure on OMGUS escalated significantly when a group of over 1,500 German artists appealed to OMGUS together, claiming that if they did not receive support from the American Occupation Government they would have to accept, albeit unwillingly, the Soviet offer of monetary and artistic aid channeled through the "Free Trade Union," the Soviet-licensed official artist organization. The artists' position was clear and amounted to a *chantage*: either OMGUS provided the goods, or Berlin's non-Communist artists would join the Soviet controlled art union, thus shifting political allegiance:

"...I beg you to send...urgent relief program for educating artists. All the artists are now in great distress on account of the currency reform...All members of this profession are in great distress since the currency reform. In addition they have to suffer from political events, for instance the blockade. [The artists will] try to disassociate themselves from the FDGB (Free Trade Union, Russian licensed)...[but] the FDGB is ready and in a position, for reason of their exchange at a rate 1:1, to put at the disposal of the artists a sum, that however is made dependent on terms endangering democratic freedom...Politically they make use of the fact that the Western Allies did not do anything to assist the needy artists. The reason of our application is to ask you to put at our disposal a larger account, not connected with any political terms or links..." [August 1948, in English]

While the letter maintained that accepting Soviet assistance would amount to a political decision with important ideological consequences, the eventual OMGUS aid was "intended to found an independent professional union to be based on democratic views and representing an unpolitical union, with no political connection to one of the Allied Powers or one of the political parties." OMGUS support would guarantee the artists' anti-Communist and pro-democratic commitment, while simultaneously preserving the appearance of

artistic independence in the Western sector of Germany.

OMGUS reacted immediately to the impending threat. The risk of losing control over German artists in the Western sector of Berlin was considered a major blow to their cultural policy, and a meeting was held on August 9, 1948, in order to discuss the question. In that meeting, "some upper-bracket artists and art patrons of Berlin," a group of Germans and Americans all with close connections to OMGUS,^[6] convened to take action. The outcome of the meeting was a list of proposed solutions, which ranged from providing exhibition space in OMGUS buildings to paying for loyalty with cash, "furnish[ing] counter-inducement that would more than offset the FDGB offer of 24 marks per artist." [Political Project, OMGBS, 16 August 1948] These policies, all part of the OMGUS strategy to maintain control over visual representation in Western Berlin, were to be *covert*, as is clearly indicated in the memo itself, which states as a condition, "that Military Government remain in the background, our sponsorship known only to a small committee which has been checked." [Political Project, OMGBS, 16 August 1948]

The operation, referred to in the OMGUS files as the "Political Project: Graphic Artists in Berlin," developed with great speed, the emphasis shifting from an economic policy to a key political one. Hutton considered that the August meeting had been eminently political, and summed up the gravity of the situation in an internal memo for the Director of OMGUS Berlin:

"Strong UGO movement is developing among the 1600 graphic artists members of the FDGB--controlled artists' Union...The FDGB has made a tentative offer of 24 marks per artist for those remaining in the organization after an undetermined date...As previously reported, several representatives have contacted me with a request for help in making possible (1) a break with the FDGB and (2) opportunity to merchandise their products...These individuals have been checked for background on political association, and a study has been made of their economic problem. It appears that they need little more than interim assistance to achieve both important economic and *political* objectives." [my italics. memo from Tom Hutton to the "Director" of OMGUS Berlin, 1948]

Why did OMGUS pay up? The notion of freedom was the core of the American value system exported to Germany. "Free" artists producing "free art" was one of the most powerful symbols of the new Germany, the answer to the politically controlled art of the Third Reich. It would have been a huge blunder to lose over 1,500 people en masse to the Soviet side, but it was immediately apparent to OMGUS that the loss of the artists would have additional symbolic value. The US position pivoted on the notion that freedom of expression was the central tenet of democracy, and the massive flight of artists to the East would have come as a disastrous embarrassment, for it would most likely have been used by the Soviets to prove that the intellectuals preferred life in East Germany because only there were they truly free. Conversely, giving the petitioning artists

financial and institutional support would be a way to appease them and guarantee that they stay in the Western zone, which would serve to boost the appearance of personal freedom and intellectual opportunities in the American zone. As Hutton argued, "this easy method of taking the graphic artists of Berlin out from under Soviet influence would help strengthen our public opinion." [Tom Hutton, August 1948]

Why did OMGUS keep its sponsorship covert? Paying artists for their loyalty went against the OMGUS official stance. If this move were known, it would have endangered the idea that in a democracy there is free art, uncontrolled and independent from politics and political maneuvering. Secondly, it would have destroyed the claim that OMGUS' ways were different from those employed by the USSR and the Third Reich. Admitting that the American Occupation Government was "furnishing counter inducement" to the artists --i.e. playing exactly the same game as the Soviets were by using exactly the same rules (bribery)-- would show not only the similarity in their policies, but also that modern art was not linked to capitalist democracy by some mystical power uniting aesthetics and ideology, but rather relied on political connections between the funding organization and a subset of artists committed to the same ideological and aesthetic principles. Keeping the "counter inducement" measures quiet, it was possible to criticize the Soviet strategy and to distort facts in the context of deepening Cold War tensions, leading to propaganda barrages of this sort:

"The Russians are trying hard to win Berlin's artists over to their camp. They try to bribe them with fantastic offers, make unlimited promises and finally threaten them and their families. They invariably receive icy refusal. Berlin's artists are realistic; they cannot be bought. Although poor, often in debt, they refuse to accept promises of financial assistance by the Communists." [Charlotte Weidler]

While sponsorship was an essential political move that ensured that artists would remain loyal, a covert policy was essential in order to leave the ethical and moral position of the American's intact.

Did OMGUS covert sponsorship for German artists in West Berlin assure them freedom of representation, as Hutton implied when suggesting that backing German painters was crucial because "free graphic arts constitute a powerful weapon of democracy"? [1948] In other words, was American support a case of no-strings-attached aid? OMGUS did not act like a conventional funding agency for the support of the arts, i.e. it did not select artists on the basis of a proposal that fit into their strategy of artistic development. The artists did not approach OMGUS with regular grant applications, presenting the granting agency with an artistic project. The request was political, not artistic. OMGUS promised more and better benefits than the Soviets were willing to offer, but in return they asked for "free" art. By 1948, in the American jargon, being free and being on the U.S. side were synonymous. Being "free," for artists on the

OMGUS payroll, did have certain fundamental restrictions. It automatically eliminated the possibility of close association with East Germany.

The new visual culture

Simultaneously, OMGUS introduced the conception of a German national culture that was inclusive and permeable. The new German culture was framed as a return to "*humanitas*," an appeal to harmony and to pluralism uncontaminated by the notion of German particularity. In a rather uncanny choice of words, the humanistic ideal translated into the formula "*Bildung macht frei*." [7]

From the very beginning of the occupation period, American art policy in Germany was discussed as a fundamental aspect of the political re-education and re-orientation program. Edith Appleton Standen put it succinctly when she wrote that,

"the most valuable work now being done is summed up in the word 're-education.' To 'observe, report and advise' are said to be the duties of Military Government; the future of the world may depend on the advice. In the art field, America has much to offer...Every step taken which tends to re-open the closed German mind, to make the German once more European, a citizen of the world, is a contribution to world peace. Such activities as the joint German-American exhibitions at the Wiesbaden Collecting Point are potent weapons in the long struggle for the re-building and re-orientation of Germany." [College Art Journal]

The American art advisors assisting OMGUS believed that art would "be of great value in widening the outlook of the Germans." [memo from Constable to Dr Alonzo Grace, 1949] William Constable, curator of paintings at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and expert consultant of the Cultural Affairs Branch, OMGUS (1949), recommended that classics of non-German painting be shown "in order to correct the violently nationalist emphasis in the arts given by the Nazis." Art was seen as a way to break down provincialism:

"breaking down nationalist bias of German museums, and emphasizing that works of art transcend national boundaries and are part of the common cultural heritage of mankind...[and] every opportunity should be taken to emphasize the importance of non-German work. This can be done either by exhibitions of non-German work, notably French or Italian..., or by choice of subject (er.g. eighteenth century arts, illuminated manuscripts, textiles, printing and book illustrations) in which Germans work can be compared with that of other countries. Particular strength might be laid upon French nineteenth-century painting, which was played down by the Nazis." [Constable. p 16]

The systematic showing of international art, that included not only European art but also non-Western art, played a key role in expanding the aesthetic universe. American art experts believed that these visual experiences would change German self-understanding by making the beholder feel like a part of larger humanity. Works of African, Asian, and Mexican pre-Colombian art were reproduced in art journals, and OMGUS organized art exhibits of non-Western art throughout the American zone.

German modern art also played a function. It served to link the post Nazi present to a retrievable past, bypassing the war and the Holocaust, while simultaneously facilitating a departure from Germany's cultural isolation and provincialism. Modern art linked Western Germany to Western Europe, separated the new West German aesthetic and politics from that of the Nazi era, the U.S.S.R., and East Germany, and suggested an "authentically" German identity. Modern art served as a quasi official visual symbol of democracy and the new Germany. Dr. Dieter Sattler, *Staatssekretar fur die Schonen Kunste im Bayerischen Staatsministerium fur Unterricht und Kultus*, claimed that art was a bridge extending from Germany to the international scene: "It is art, both the old and the new, that opens up the door for us into the world, even before politicians and economists can rebuild the broken bridges between us and the other peoples." [Sattler 8] Modern art served two different aims simultaneously: it helped to establish the feeling of a German cultural continuity between the pre-Nazi and the post-Nazi periods, and was a spearhead of the Europeanization (Western integration) of West Germany.

American art was to play a special role in the reorientation of Germany. Constable advised the exhibition of contemporary American painting and graphics arts, indicating that "the selection of those should be put in the hands of competent and authoritative museums. He proposed "a nationwide drive to enlist support of US cultural institutions for the German reorientation effort," and suggested the American museum directors should be contacted. Constable argued that American universities, museums and other cultural centers "must regard the program in Germany as an integral part of America's own cultural and educational responsibility." [Public Information Office. Bad Nauheim, June 10, 1949] The German-American connection was also fostered by other means, such as inviting American art scholars to lecture to German audiences, and through the US Information Centers --the Amerika Hauser that served as art galleries as well as reference centers on American art. Exhibits of American art were used (a) to reacquaint the German public with modernism, (b) to advertise American achievements abroad, and © (later) to counter Soviet propaganda.

What type of German art did Constable suggest that the Americans should back? What was the selection criteria that determined what a good artists was? For one, the emphasis was placed on the new generation of young German artists. Moreover, artists supported by the Americans had to be open

to the American political and aesthetic vision. In his final report written from Germany, Constable advised that OMGUS had to support artists with "progressive, liberal" agendas, for the "moral backing of those progressive elements is essential to the achievement of American aims in Europe." [Public Information Office. 1949]

However, OMGUS did not seek either the straightforward Americanization of Germany, or to eliminate all aspects of German "indigenous" culture. The Joint Chiefs of Staff Directive 1779 (1945) made this clear:

"there should be no forcible break in the cultural unity of Germany...; the manner and purposes of the reconstruction of the national German culture have a vital significance for the future of Germany...[The US must] make every effort to secure maximum coordination between the occupying powers of cultural objectives designed to serve the cause of peace. " [Joint Chiefs of Staff Directive 1779 (1945)]

The OMGUS consultants continued to emphasize the importance of creating a sense of cultural continuity by making constant references to the indigenous German cultural tradition:

"[OMGUS must] select and emphasize those elements in the German tradition which are most in consonance with American aims. I have found, for example, in trying to drive a point home that to quote the example of (say) Duerer, Bach or Goethe, or even the Behest, changes the whole atmosphere of discussion... [democratic and liberal ideas] can be profitably grafted on to the German tradition as a logical means of strengthening its best elements...The German people have a long and vigorous cultural tradition of their own. To attempt to substitute for it an American or any other tradition is impossible, and will only stimulate refusal to learn, and lead to ultimate rejection."[Constable]

The new German visual culture was created from a selected combination of the old and the new, the national and the international.

Some OMGUS art irregulars

OMGUS officers and consultants worked not only in their official capacity, but also privately, to foster the emergence of German art. It was not uncommon for American OMGUS officers and German intellectuals to form discussion groups. "Prolog" was one such group, an "informal" organization of Americans living in Berlin who met regularly with a select group of German artists. It was formed by OMGUS officers Paul Lutzeier and Beryl McClasky, neither involved in their official capacity in art policy, but both central to the development of German modern art in the period. Lutzeier was OMGUS (Berlin) Chief of Employee Utilization, and McClasky was an OMGUS Information Control Officer who in 1948 worked with Dr. Wells, then Adviser to the Military

Governor on Educational and Cultural Affairs. Lutzeier's and McClaskey's homes became art salon, where they entertained German artists and exhibited their work.

The Americans involved in the German art scene became aesthetic (and political) arbiters of what was deemed to be worthy of American support. They discussed specific artists among themselves and decided who to sponsor. Their opinions often translated into policy. Following a "most pleasant evening" at his home with a select group of artists, Paul Lutzeier wrote:

"At the close of the day, after I'd said "Auf Wiedersehen" to the Hartungs, the Jaenischs, Troekes, Klatt, and the rest of the group that was there, I reflected on the discussions of the day and decided that it was the time somebody did something about it. That night I roughed out an outline of a plan I had in mind for some time and gave it the next day to Dr. Grace [OMGUS culture and education expert], who chanced to be in Berlin... It recommended that more emphasis be placed on the spiritual and economic needs of living artists in Germany and suggested that in the few months it still has to run, Military Government, or its State Department successor build as many "bridges" between the United States and Germany as possible so that the flow of ideas, materials, and men will go on uninterrupted long after all of us on overseas missions have returned to our native land." [letter from Paul Lutzeier to Constable]

OMGUS was not ready to back just any German living artist, however. Lutzeier explained that his proposal "would also seek to bring to the attention of interested institutions in the United States the names and work of promising, politically clear young German artist."^[8] OMGUS officials and advisors selected groups of artists that they felt represented what new German art should be and what new Germans should be, and laid out a system of contacts to provide them with financial, social, and academic support. The artists "chosen" by OMGUS not only received CARE packages and other incentives to produce, but they were advertised both in Germany and in America, through articles and reviews in art journals and through exhibits of their work.

Certain thematics did not fit within the preferences of the "Prolog" organizers. In the "Prolog Portfolio" published in 1947, for instance, there is no work making any sort of reference to the Holocaust. This tends to fit in within a larger trend of making the Holocaust invisible. Artists that dealt with concentration camps and ghettos, for instance, did not receive the attention or support of the American art establishment. The American art critics response to Henry Koerner's work exemplifies this reluctance. Koerner, a Viennese who emigrated to New York in 1939, returned to Europe as a member of the U.S. Army (Office of War Information). He was a painter --a surrealist expressionist-- and had an exhibit at the *Haus am Waldsee*, Berlin, in 1947. His work included both depictions of Nazism and its devastating effects on Germany, and social critique. He was, in fact, one of the very few artists that painted scenes of the

deportation of Jews, and made direct references to anti-Semitism in his work. These themes did not fit into the mold that the American advisors were recommending for Germany. Helen Boswell, art critic stationed in Berlin and married to an OMGUS officer, summed up the attitude by explaining that Koerner would become a good artist only once he "...gets off his hysterical I-told-you-so path and settles down..." The issues Koerner brought up in his paintings were not the ones that the people involved either officially or para-officially in OMGUS art policy were interested in recalling or discussing.

By constructing a narrative about Germany that eliminated the recent German past from the discussion of the German future, American commentators and art critics succeeding in making art that dealt explicitly with the Holocaust seem both irrelevant and incomprehensible. Thus it was possible for Kaye Reed in 1950, for instance, to claim that Koerner "...creat[es] what seem to be illustrations to a lost text." Obliterating the memory of Holocaust immediately transformed the possibilities of a new German identity, because a Holocaust-free German history was no more and no less terrible than the history of any other country. German Artists that dealt with political themes not only received at best mixed reviews from American art critics, but they were also often attacked for their political beliefs. Figurative artists dealing with political thematics ran the risk of being labeled Nazi or Communist. Such labels translated into being automatically eliminated from the OMGUS support structure, since being liberal and democratic were the basic criteria of acceptability, as outlined most explicitly by Constable in his 1949 program for new German art.

The period 1945-1949 in Germany seems like an extended magical-hat trick. A country that was America's arch enemy became, in just a few years, its main ally in the Cold War. The trajectory from enmity to comradeship was accompanied by changes in the representation of the German past. While the emphasis was at first placed on the unsavory characteristics of Nazism, this gave way to a highly sanitized narrative of events, where the horrors and "excesses" of the Third Reich were attributed to individual actors, in the process exculpating the German population at large. Obliterating the memory of the Holocaust immediately transformed the possibilities of a new German identity, because a Holocaust-free German history was no more and no less terrible than the history of any other country.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Abstraction via CARE packages

Although abstract art became hegemonic in postwar Western German exhibits, to assume that this was imposed (and reigned unchallenged) in Western Germany because of the deft execution of a master plan designed by the OMGUS intelligence community, would incur in a gross oversimplification. The

reintroduction of modern art in West Germany was the result of the activity of a small group of individuals and institutions, some governmental and some private, sometimes working together and sometimes proceeding along independent lines, and animated for different (and not always intersecting) motivations. There is no doubt that political intentions, personal agendas, and chance, all played a part in this process.

The role of Hilla von Rebay in the introduction and dissemination of abstract art in postwar Germany is a mixture of the three. Rebay was an Austrian expatriate who founded and was the first director of, the Museum of Non-Objective Art, the forerunner of the present Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. She was influenced by a mixture of Christianity and Buddhist mysticism, and believed that art was a form of religious expression. She was convinced that "true" artists received inspiration directly from God to create hitherto unknown forms without any "immediate reference to objects seen in nature." [Lukach] Her artistic philosophy and tastes were simple and straightforward: "true" art did not need a known object or subject, but rather beautiful rhythmic colors and a pleasing composition that appeases the soul. ["*Gegenstandlose Malerei*" in *Kunst*] Rebay claimed that abstraction was the art of the present and the future, the final stage of aesthetic development and the highest point of artistic achievement.

Not surprisingly, it was non-objective art that she helped, both in America and in Europe. Rebay herself saw her activities in Germany as fundamental for shaping the country's artistic future. She created "centers of non-objective painting," and sent a steady and significant stream of material to struggling artists, in order to "create interest among people [towards abstraction], to enlighten them." [Luckach] The German artists considered her efforts a key element for the construction of art in a positive and future-oriented Germany. [Damus]

Rebay's involvement in Germany is most often remembered because of the CARE aid packages that she sent (through the Guggenheim Foundation) to certain painters. By 1948, close to 150 European artists, art historians, dealers, critics, and collectors received CARE (Co-operative for American Relief to Everywhere) parcels from the Guggenheim Foundation. Throughout Germany artists who expressed interest in non-objective art were offered food and art supplies. This transformed Rebay into the patron saint of German abstract artists.

Rebay's "art policy" was clear: she and the Guggenheim Foundation helped shape artistic development in Western Germany by funding only the artists that she approved of. Rebay mobilized her extensive connections with the art world to help organize art exhibits in Germany, always emphasizing the need to support abstraction. In 1949, for instance, she organized an exhibit of fifty works from the Museum of Non Objective Painting that toured Europe. Rebay had close personal ties with MFA&A, that she also relied on for logistical

support. Kurt Martin, her second cousin, was an art historian who was the director of the Staatliche Kunsthalle in 1934. After the war he was recruited by the MFA&A, and through him Rebay was able to communicate her ideas to OMGUS.^[9] In 1948, Rebay sent to Martin the exhibition of non-objective painting that she was showing in the Salon des Realites Nouvelles in Switzerland. Thus, in April 1948, Martin installed in the Karlsruhe Staatliche Kunsthalle the first exhibition of American painting to be seen in postwar Germany. The exhibition, called *Zeitgenossische Kunst and Kunstpflege in U.S.A.*, traveled to Munich, Stuttgart, Mannheim, Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Braunschweig, Hannover, and Hamburg. "Martin had interested the American authorities in the exhibition, and as a result it was discussed on the radio, a film of it was made and shown in the theaters of the American zone, and it received a good deal of publicity in the newspapers." [Rebay] Lehmann-Haupt, OMGUS, referred to this art show as a "valuable experiment with popular art education." [Ar under a Dictatorship, 199] Not surprisingly, in 1950 the United States Information Center (U.S.I.S.) took over the administrative side of the exhibit, sponsoring further show in other German cities.

The German spokesman for the *Zeitgenossische Kunst and Kunstpflege in U.S.A.*, Franz Roh, was a recipient of food packages and art aid. Roh was an art historian and philosopher who had been expelled from his post by the Nazis, and was later re-instated by the Allies. Roh became one of the most important and influential art critics of post-war Germany. He lectured on modern art at the University of Munich, was the head of the Munich cultural league and editor of their magazine, was the editor of *Halbjahrbuch fur Alte und Neue Kunst*, and was also the editor of the Munich based art magazine *Kunst: Malerei, Plastik, Graphik, Architektur, Wohnkultur*. A prolific commentator, he wrote regularly for the *Neue Zeitung* and had a radio program in the Bayerischen Rundfunk called "Kommentare zur Kunst." Roh first wrote to Rebay in January 1947, asking for color slides for his courses. She agreed to send him the slides, and asked in turn for "a short list of talented non-objective German painters." It was precisely in this way-- by asking her contacts for connections-- that Rebay was able to create a group of young abstract artists to support through her patronage.

In 1948, when Rebay visited Germany, Roh took her to the *Moderne Galerie* recently opened by Otto Stangl, a collector of German abstract art. Stangl was incorporated into the CARE package list, and Rebay asked him as well for a list of names of non-objective German painters. Stangl gave her the names of the painters in his monthly discussion group, and she contacted them. These were the artists that formed ZEN 49, the most influential abstract art movement in Southern Germany, in 1949.^[10] The group included Baumeister, Geiger, Fietz, Hempel, Werner, and Winter, and its intellectual/political supporters (the "Friends") included John Anthony Thwaites --the British Consul in Munich who was to remain in Germany and became a prominent art critic--, art historians Roh, Grohmann, and Grote, and Stangl. Rebay, who "offered material and spiritual support" through the Guggenheim Foundation, was invited to become

an honorary member of ZEN 49.

Rebay's indisputably strong influence on German art had political implications. She considered figuration and realism to be old obsolete and aesthetically problematic, and took it as her mission to support abstraction and make it prevail over all other artistic currents.

CONCLUSION

OMGUS was confronted with a similar problem as the Nazis had faced in 1933, i.e. the need to build a new patrimony for Germany as rapidly as possible. For the Reich, this implied the elimination of memories of defeat, social turmoil and class confrontation. For the US, paintings served as a powerful link between Germany's present and a retrievable past, while simultaneously facilitating a departure from Germany's cultural isolation and provincialism. The visual arts played a political role in the construction of a new German national heritage, a sanitized and acceptable (both to the West Germans and to the rest of the Western world) meta-narrative of the German past. The visual arts served to negotiate the difficult passage from international conflict to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation.

NOTES

[1] The Hoffmann photograph of Hitler showing architectural details of a church to a group of Brown Shirts is not a simple allegory of the *Fuhrer* as Teacher, but of the *Fuhrer* as Teacher of German Architecture. The *autobahns* built by the Nazis had obvious military purposes, but they also served as a means to unify the German population within its territory, allowing the Germans to reach previously forgotten and/or poorly accessible regions, and actively incorporate landscapes and buildings into their collective memories.
[Klemperer][Michau]

[2] Much of post-World War I art in Germany was explicitly and consciously political, carrying social messages and prescriptions for societal change. As Grosshans explains, "in subject and tone, painting and sculpture illustrated the violence and disorder introduced into German life by the events of 1914-1918."
[Grosshans] The German avant-garde used its art as a medium through which to depict terror, emptiness, and destruction, while denouncing injustice and exploitation. The institution of war and the war that had just ended, the defeat, militarism, the capitalist exploitation of the working class, and human suffering, were often portrayed.

[3] There are other striking absences in post-war German art. On the one hand, there are scarce pictorial references to the ten millions of "displaced persons" that roamed the German cities (in particular, in Berlin), many of them bearing the harsh physical scars of combat. On the other, there is no record of the

extremely active cultural life, the revolutionary ethnic diversity brought by the thousands of soldiers of the occupation forces, and the intimate "fraternization" spirit that pervaded Berlin in the "Golden hunger years." While the photographic record shows both the signs of misery--er.g. poor and neglected children, amputees, displaced persons, concentration camp inmates, the *Trummer-frauen*-- and a raucous Berlin--er.g. people in theaters, cabarets, jazz-clubs, prostitution, art shows, gallery openings, smiling children playing baseball with soldiers, women and soldiers dancing, dating, and flirting--the art of the period is particularly silent.

[4] Of course, deciding what was or was not "Nazi" or "militarist" art was not an exact science. Among the sequestered militaristic paintings still held at U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington, D.C. there is an oil painting depicting a couple of middle aged women talking in a sunlit street in a small town. The "Russian farmland near Kremenschung" by Theo Sharf, a watercolor, 7" x 10 1/4," also held at the U.S. Army Art Collection in Washington, D.C. is peculiarly innocent looking. George Clare, in "Before the Wall" describes how the application of the Control Council Directive #24 and the Allied Kommandatura Order # 10 resulted in the labeling of a cigar box of a traditional brand showing a "lonely sentry in early-nineteenth-century uniform and the caption underneath, taken from a German nursery rhyme, ...'Lippe-Detmold eine wunderschone Stadt, darin ein Soldat," as German military propaganda. [Clare]

[5] Carl Friedrich, a Harvard political scientist, co-founded in 1940 the *Council for Democracy*, that later turned into the *Committee for National Morale* [CNM]. The CNM had about 20 subcommittees, including one for "art and media." The objective of the CNM was to reach an understanding of Nazi propaganda. Their first task was the compilation of a bibliography on German Psychological Warfare.

[6] Dr. Redslob, Frau Sintenis, Herr Seegers, Dr. McClaskey, Mr. Ritter, Frau Maximowna, Herr Hartmann, Herr Gaedike, Professor Grohmann, Mrs. McKnight, Herr Buchholz.

[7] In a certain sense, this culminated with the Goethe Week (1949) celebrating the 250th anniversary of the philosopher, an event organized by Edwin Redslob (Free University) with full backing of OMGUS. Two years later, in 1951, the United States High Commissioner for Germany remarked that the decision to rebuild the Goethe House in Frankfurt was a "rededication to what is finest in German culture." Goethe represented both a pre-Holocaust Germany and a return to an ideal of cosmopolitan and inclusive Germany. This ideal Germany had to be the opposite of the racialist, isolationist, and chauvinist Hitler's Germany. Goethe was the ideal role model because he united two essential characteristics: he was German and he was a man of the world, a champion of humanism. The return to the ideals espoused by Goethe made it necessary to leap over Nazism and recuperate a lost Germany and revitalize those "liberal

and non-nationalist elements in German culture" that were erased by Nazism.
[Constable] [Gillen]

[8] The case of the sculptress Renne Sintenis exemplifies the ideological and political considerations driving the American selection of German artists. Lutzeier recommended Sintenis as the ideal candidate to be sent to the United States on an exchange, mentioning that "a large bronze 'Daphne' of hers (which is about the same size as her donkey in the Detroit Institute of Arts) was shipped to Missoula, where it will grace the campus of the University of Montana." Why was Sintenis, a little known sculptor, selected? She was a member of "Prolog" and participated in the August 1948 meeting "Political Project: Graphic Artists Berlin," where the decision was made to covertly transfer OMGUS funds into Western German art organizations. OMGUS records describe her as "perhaps the most distinguished sculptor in Germany-- a fine lady--very quiet." [1948-- classified OMGUS Berlin] This "fine lady" evidently was an OMGUS political asset.

[9] Rebay's personal connections, as well as her institutional clout, served her often. Through her cousin Mimi Killian Koch, wife of art scholar Carl Koch, Rebay established contact with a small group of painters and art dealers in Berlin, such as Lotte Konnerth, Gerd Rosen, and Wolfgang Frankenstein.
[Rebay 285]

[10] The group was called ZEN 49 because the members, influenced by Zen Buddhism, allegedly communicated between themselves through signs, like Buddhist monks.

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