

ART OF DISSSENT



Deconstructing Willy Fick's Works: Teacher Resource

Willy Fick developed his own metaphoric language so that he could continue to express ideas which the Nazis wished repressed. His imagery captured the emotional impact of tyranny. Below are some ideas and images that recur as Fick tried to capture the atmosphere of apprehension that existed as the National Socialists gained, held and abused power.

- **Lack of grounding.** Figures, buildings and even natural features float in a world where nothing is grounded. The Nazis destabilized everything on which people could depend, bending even the laws to their own ends.
- **Partial beings.** People are masks, outlines, blocks, shadows, parts of humans. Fick shows the dehumanizing effect of people living in a void. Where Fick uses an entire human, such as in *Boxer*, *Nude* or *Girl in Hall*, the human is isolated or lacking humanity.
- **Games, sport and magic.** Fick uses the checkerboard theme as a style element but also to indicate the precarious game that the Nazis, who frequently changed the rules, were playing with life. He used the diabolo game to indicate much the same thing. *Boxer* shows sports as a game of life where the players and spectators alike are dehumanized by participating. In *Speaker*, the person avails himself of magic to trick an audience of masks and silhouettes—people who have given away their wholeness as they are taken in by trickery.
- **Truncation.** Fick cuts off his pictures taking the viewer into the image at a point where the viewer is left wondering—What's off to the sides? What's below? What would one see if one was further out? The truncation, or cutting off, of the image leads to questions of vantage or viewpoint. From where are we watching and are we now complicit?
- **Wood grain and architectural features.** Fick apprenticed as a cabinet-maker; he took courses in architectural drafting and design; he worked for the high rise division of the City of Cologne. These elements of his life find their way into Fick's works.
- **Transparency.** Fick's professor at the Cologne Arts School was the renowned stained glass artist Jan Thorn-Prikker. Fick's works often show traces of overlay and transparency—one reality within another.