

# ART OF DISSSENT



## Fact Sheet – The Cultural Scene up to 1937

14.7.1925 *Mein Kampf* by Hitler released. 250,000 copies sold by 1933

1928 *Art and Race* published. Its author Paul Schultze-Naumburg held that only “racially pure” artists could produce healthy art. Racially mixed modern artists demonstrated their inferiority by producing distorted art-work. He reproduced examples of modern art next to photographs of people with deformities and diseases to reinforce the idea of modernism as sickness

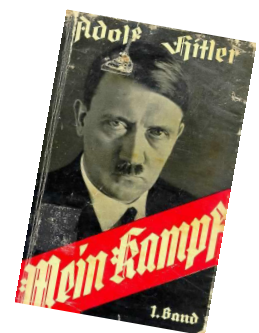
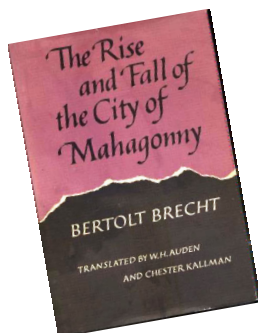
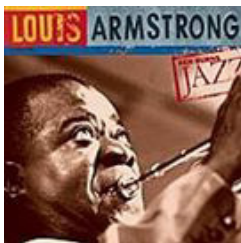
1929 The Combat League for German Culture founded in Munich by Heinrich Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg, Schultze-Naumburg and others to protect the arts from Jewish influence

5.4.1930 William Frick, then Nazi Minister of the Interior in Thuringia, enacted a restrictive *Ordinance Against Negro Culture*  
Schultze-Naumburg ordered works by Barlach, Kandinsky, and Klee out of Weimar’s Schlossmuseum; he ordered the effacement of Oskar Schlemmer’s murals in the Bauhaus

8.1930 Nazis used stink bombs to disrupt Frankfurt performance of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahoganny* by Bertold Brecht and Kurt Weill

*The Myth of the Twentieth Century* by Alfred Rosenberg released. More than one million copies sold by 1944

Rosenberg concentrated on the supposedly negative influence of the Jewish race in contrast to the Aryan race—the Nordic peoples of northern Europe. According to Rosenberg, Semitic influences corrupted modern culture producing degenerate modern art as well as moral and social degeneration. Rosenberg ascribed innate moral sensibility to Aryan peoples. He postulated that the higher races must rule over the lower and not interbreed with them, because cross-breeding destroyed the divine combination of physical heredity and spirit. He went on to argue that the Nazis had a duty to purify the race soul by eliminating non-Aryan elements in much the same way a surgeon would cut a cancer from a diseased body.



1931 Bertold Brecht, John Heartfield, Bruno Taut and Erwin Piscator left Germany

1932 Dessau town council voted to dissolve the Bauhaus

All teachers of the Folkwang art school in Essen dismissed



Georg Grosz

12.1.1933

Georg Grosz left Germany

15.2.1933

Kaethe Kollwitz, Heinrich Mann forced out of their positions at the Prussian Academy

12.3.1933

Josef Goebbels named Minister for National Enlightenment and Propaganda

6.4.1933 The German Student Association proclaimed a nationwide action against the "Un-German" spirit to climax in a purge by fire. In its *Twelve Theses* of 8.4.1933 the Student Association attacked "Jewish intellectualism" and demanded that universities become centers of German nationalism

8.4.1933 Otto Dix removed from his position at the Dresden Art School

14.4.1933 The Bauhaus, which had moved to Berlin, closed by the police by Goering's order

10.5.1933 Book burnings took place throughout Germany. 25,000 volumes of "un-German" books burned. Literary black lists created. Although not all burnings took place May 10th, 34 university towns across Germany participated

25.7.1933 Frick ordered the exhibition *30 German Artists* closed in Berlin. Artists included in the exhibition: Barlach, Beckmann, Nolde

22.9.1933 The Reich's Chamber of Culture created under the leadership of Goebbels. This multi-faceted organization developed total control over all arts in Germany. Department VII set up standards to which writers had to conform. Four approved categories: works stress-

ing the camaraderie of war; works reflecting the Nazi world view; works stressing the national mystique of German locations and works with the Nazi views on race

15.10.1933 Hitler laid the cornerstone for the House of German Art. The parade and pageant marked the day as the Nazi's first *German Art Day*

Artists who had left Germany: Grosz, Gropius, Kandinsky, Klee, Weill, Thomas Mann

Nazis removed the following from teaching posts: Baumeister, Beckmann, Dix, Hofer, Kollwitz, Pechstein, Schlemmer

12.12.1933 Hamburg artist/professor Hugo Meyer-Thur murdered by the SS; artists Fritz Schlulze, Eva Schulze-Knabe, Johnny Friedlander and Hans Ullmann arrested and detained

1933–34 Nazis cancelled concerts by Bruno Walter, conductor of Leipzig Symphony as "threats to public order". Hitler declared contemporary music, especially atonality degenerate

1933 Shaming exhibitions, in the Nazi spirit of the times, took place in Dresden (*Reflections of Decadence*); Karlsruhe (*German Government Art 1918-1930*); Stuttgart (*November Spirit-art in the service of decay*); Mannheim (*Cultural Bolshevism*); Nuremberg (*Horror Chamber of Art*) and Chemnitz (*Art that did not come from our soul*)

1.1.1934 Hitler named Rosenberg to head up intellectual and ideological training

10.7.1934

Writer Erich Muehsam murdered by SA in concentration camp Oranienburg. A prolific poet, dramatist and intellectual Muehsam had achieved international prominence for works which satirized Hitler and condemned Nazis before Hitler came to power



Erich Muehsam

- 4.9.1934 At the Nuremberg rally Hitler condemned modernism
- 24.4.1935 Publishers had to provide proof of Aryan heritage back to 1800
- 4.3.1936 The SS arrested Dr. Alois Schardt, author of a book on Franz Marc at the opening of a Marc exhibition in Hannover. Schardt's books were destroyed
- 25.4.1936 Dresden artist Hans Grundig was forbidden to work and arrested. Many artists faced *Arbeitsverbot*—being forbidden to work
- 30.10.1936 The Nazis closed the modern section of Berlin's National Gallery
- 26.11.1936 Goebbels banned art criticism
- 30.6.1937 Hitler ordered Goebbels to begin purging degenerate art from museums. (Post facto Legislation 31.5.1938)

August – November 1937

The Nazis removed and confiscated five thousand paintings and sculptures and twelve thousand graphic works from 101 German art museums



"The Eternal Jew" exhibition

November 1937

*The Eternal Jew* labelled as a degenerate art exhibition opened in Munich with antisemitic posters and propaganda. Rosenberg began publishing the periodical *Art in the Third Reich* and Wolfgang Willrich published *The Cleansing of the Temple of Art* listing names of artists whose works should be removed from art museums

1937 Beckmann, Feininger, Kirchner, Schwitters left Germany

A degenerate music exhibition took place in 1938



18.7.1937

Hitler's in his speech at the opening of the House of Art with its inaugural exhibition *Great German Art* proclaimed a cleansing war to combat modernist degenerate art



19.10.1937

The Nazi exhibition *Degenerate Art* opened across the park from the House of Art in Munich. 650 works by 112 artists were set up to be ridiculed. The exhibition attracted 3 million visitors (largest attendance ever for an exhibition) and another 2 million when it circulated to 18 locations—including Berlin, Leipzig, Duesseldorf, Weimar, Vienna, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Chemnitz and Salzburg. One newspaper commentator stated, "These artists should be tied to their paintings so as to provide every German with the opportunity of spitting in their faces."

## Prompts

- If the arts were ‘the canary in the mine’, why were the warnings not heeded?
- Clearly Hitler and the Nazis saw the arts as powerful. Are the arts powerful today? Why or why not?
- How were the arts made into instruments of propaganda?
- Who controls the arts today?
- Are the arts today propaganda?

## Extensions

- Barron, S. *Degenerate Art*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991.  
(excellent timeline for cultural and media events)
- “Culture in the Third Reich: Overview”  
[www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId+10005207](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId+10005207)
- “Culture in the Third Reich: Disseminating the Nazi Worldview”  
[www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId+10007519](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId+10007519)
- “Leni Riefenstahl”  
[www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId+10007410](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId+10007410)