DEGENERATE ART: NAZI IDEAS ON ART

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Degenerate Art: Nazi Ideas on Art

- Degenerate Art Exhibition
- Roots of Anti-Modernism
- Art as Propaganda: Good German Art Vs. Degenerate Art
Degenerate Art Exhibit

- Entartete Kunst Ausstellung
- July 19, 1937 – November 30, 1937 in Munich, Germany
Degenerate Art Exhibit: The Artists

- 650 works of art by 117 artists
- 17,000 works of art confiscated from German museums
- Only six artists were Jewish
Degenerate Art Exhibit: The Artists

- Artists on display included:
  - Marc Chagall
  - Wassily Kandinsky
  - Paul Klee
  - Emil Nolde
  - Georg Grosz
  - Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
  - Karl Hofer
  - Paul Kleinschmidt
  - Max Beckmann

- Otto Mueller
- Otto Dix
- Oskar Kokoschka
- Ernst Barlach
- Franz Marc
- Lyonel Feiniger
- Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
- Christian Rohlf
- Piet Mondrian
- Oskar Schlemmer
Degenerate Art Exhibition: The Artists

Artistic movements condemned as degenerate:

- Dada
- Cubism
- Expressionism
- Fauvism
- Impressionism
- New Objectivity
- Surrealism
- Bauhaus
DEGENERATE ART EXHIBITION : PURPOSE

“We now stand in an exhibition that contains only a fraction of what was bought with the hard-earned savings of the German people and exhibited as art by a large number of museums all over Germany. All around us you see the monstrous offspring of insanity, impudence, ineptitude, and sheer degeneracy. What this exhibition offers inspires horror and disgust in us all.”

Alfred Ziegler, organizer of the Degenerate Art Exhibition
**Degenerate Art Exhibition: Purpose**

- “The works were assembled for the purpose of clarifying for the German public by defamations and derision exactly what type of modern art was unacceptable to the Reich and thus ‘un-German.”

  - Stephanie Barron, “Degenerate Art” *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*
DEGENERATE ART EXHIBITION: INSIDE THE EXHIBITION
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Degenerate art exhibition: after the exhibit
ROOTS OF ANTI-MODERNISM: INFLUENCES

- Max Nordau, *Entartung*, 1892
- Paul Schultze-Naumberg and Hans Prinzhorn
- Realism vs. Modern Art
- Cultural Unity
- Elitism, Intellectualism, and Internationalism
- Controversies
ROOTS OF ANTI-MODERNISM: NAZI TIMELINE

- April 7, 1933
  Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbemachtigungs
  (Professional civil service restoration act)
- November 1933
  Establishment of the Reichskammern
  (Reich Chambers)
- 1932-1937
  Schandeausstellungen/Schreckenskammer
- 1936
  Banning of art criticism
  State sanctioned art only
- May 1938
  Expropriation law
ROOTS OF ANTI-MODERNISM: NAZI TIMELINE

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ROOTS OF ANTI-MODERNISM: OTHER EXAMPLES OF CENSORSHIP
How to Depict a German Woman

“The prostitute is extolled as the moral ideal.”

“An insult to German womanhood”

“Ideal Cretin and Whore”

_Gelbe Tänzerin_ (Yellow dancer)
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1913)
HOW TO DEPICT A GERMAN WOMAN

“The mission of a woman is to be beautiful…The female bird pretties herself for her mate and hatches the eggs for him. In exchange the mate takes care of gathering the food, stands guard, and wards off the enemy.” Joseph Goebbels, Michael: Ein Deutsches Schicksal, 1929

Three Women in Church
Wilhelm Leibl (1878-82)
HOW TO DEPICT A GERMAN SOLDIER

“...The intention is manifest: the viewer is meant to see the soldier either as a murderer or a victim...Above all, people are to be deprived of their profound reverence for all the military virtues: valor, fortitude, and readiness for combat. And so, in the drawings for this section, alongside caricatures of war cripples expressly designed to arouse repulsion and views of mass graves delineated every refinement of detail. We see German soldiers represented as simpletons, vile erotic wastrels, and drunkards. That not just Jews but “artists” of German blood could produce such botched and contemptible works, in which they gratuitously reaffirmed our enemies’ war atrocity propaganda--already unmasked at the time as a tissue of lies--will forever remain a blot in the history of German culture.”

Reichspropagandaleitung, 12-14.
HOW TO DEPICT A GERMAN SOLDIER

“Deliberate sabotage of national defense”

“An Insult to the German heroes of the Great War.”

From the War Triptych
Otto Dix (1920-1923)
HOW TO DEPICT A GERMAN SOLDIER

“Mal halten und weiter dienen”
(“Shut up and do your duty”)
Georg Grosz (1927)
HOW TO DEPICT A GERMAN SOLDIER

World War I Soldier
Elk Eber (unknown)
EXPRESSIONISM: PORTRAITURE

“Nature as seen through sick minds”

“Madness becomes method”

“Crazy at any price”

*Alter Man* (Old Man)
Oskar Kokoschka (1907)
“When I paint a portrait, I am not concerned with the externals of a person -- the signs of his clerical or secular eminence or his social origins. It is the business of history to transmit documents on such matters as posterity. What used to shock people in my portraits was that I tried to intuit from the face, from its play of expressions, and from gestures, the truth about a particular person, and recreate in my own pictorial language the distillation of a living being that would survive in memory.”

Oskar Kokoschka
EXPRESSIONISM: PORTRAITURE

General Field Marshal Hermann Göring
Conrad Hommel (1939)
“I wish to prohibit such unfortunates, who clearly suffer from defective vision, from trying to foist the products of their faulty observation on to their fellow men as though they were realities, or indeed from dishing them up as 'art'. “ Adolf Hitler
“...the genre in which the German soul could be best expressed.”

Peter Adam

Harvest
Karl Alexander Flügel (1938)
“...Fascism did not address its propaganda to the young, the educated and the refined ‘connoisseurs d’art’...it addressed its propaganda to the masses...”

Grasskamp, Walter. _The divided heritage: themes and problems in German modernism_.

_Improvisation Nr. 10_  
Wassily Kandinsky (1910)
“Inferior” Inspiration: Primitivism

Mutter (Mother)
Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1916)
“Inferior” Inspiration: Primitivism

*Mulattin* (Mulatto Woman)
Emil Nolde (1913)
“INFERIOR” INSPIRATION: PRIMITIVISM

“The Jewish longing for the wilderness reveals itself—In Germany the negro becomes the racial idea of degenerate art.”

“The ideal-cretin and whore”

An insult to German womanhood”

Zigeuner vor dem Zelt
(Gypsies in front of a tent)
Otto Mueller (1925)
der Sieg des Glaubens

der Film vom Reichsparteitag der NSDAP

Künstlerische Leitung: Leni Riefenstahl
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