**Introduction**

In July 1937, Germans celebrated *Tag der Deutschen Kunst* (German Art Day), in Munich, the birthplace of *Nationalsozialismus* (National Socialism). The celebrations included two art exhibitions: the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (the Great German Art Exhibition) and the *Entartete Kunstausstellung* (the Degenerate Art Exhibition). In 1933, the Nazi party had released ordinances that halted art production that conflicted with National Socialist (Nazi) ideology. A new art movement was created from the Nazi ideology, known as the National Socialist Art Movement. The two shows on German Art Day demonstrated the differences between art that was acceptable to the Nazis and art that had been banned.

The exhibits of 1937 offer an example of Nazi indoctrination of the German people that would lead to national tolerance of the violent suppression and elimination of all so-called enemies of the National Socialist State. This paper compares works from the two shows and focuses on the representation of three subjects: women, the soldier and religion. I argue that these examples promoted the Nazi vision where women were confined to the limited role of procreation, where the death of soldiers in war was glorified, and where Hitler replaced Jesus as the religious leader of the "Aryan" German people. In the end, this vision of the National Socialist Art Movement played a significant role in legitimizing the marginalization and ultimate destruction of all elements of German society that contradicted Nazi ideology.

Beginning its reign in 1933, the National Socialist Party, led by the newly elected Chancellor, Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), commenced the redefinition of German culture. The new National Socialist government aimed to replace the existing German culture with one imbued with Nazi ideology. According to Nazi propaganda and the constructs of Social Darwinism, the so-called Aryan Germans were entitled to *Lebensraum* (living space) and needed to eliminate
inferior races competing for territory and resources. To make this new culture more attractive, the National Socialists continued their propaganda campaign to delegitimize the government of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) and to denounce opposition or minority groups that were inherently irreconcilable with Nazi ideology. This would include social communities that the Nazis blamed for the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles that was signed in 1919 after the close of World War I.

The Nazis believed that the Treaty of Versailles wrongfully placed all the responsibility for World War I on Germany. The Weimar government was associated with the treaty and was therefore also to blame for its part in Germany’s humiliation. Despite the successful efforts of Gustav Stresemann, the German foreign minister from 1923-1929, and others at rebuilding the German economy and reducing war reparation payments (i.e., the Dawes Plan of 1924; Young Plan of 1929), the Nazis put the responsibility for Germany’s economic failure on the Weimar government. Yet the German economy, like that of other European countries and the United States, was derailed in 1929 because of the Stock Market Crash and the resulting Great Depression. Nevertheless, the National Socialists propagated the idea that the Weimar Republic had been inept and that Hitler was needed to rebuild Germany. The Nazis promised to restore Germany to its former economic and military superiority in Europe. Hitler claimed that he could achieve these goals and manipulated the hopes of those dealing with the harsh economic struggles of daily life during the Great Depression.

In 1935, new laws, which became known as the Nuremberg Laws, stripped Jews of their citizenship and prohibited Jews from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of “German or related blood.” Hitler took the government jobs of Jews and gave them to unemployed non-Jewish Germans. In 1937 and 1938 further laws “Aryanized” Jewish businesses
by placing them in “Aryan” German hands. Eventually, even non-Jews found it difficult to find or keep employment without Nazi party membership. Germans joined the party for this reason and because many were impressed by the self-proclaimed economic success of the National Socialist policies. During the Great Depression the unemployment rate was about one third; by 1937 there was almost full employment among the Aryan German working population, although this statistic would have been considerably lower, if it had included all of those, such as Jews, who had lost their jobs and their citizenship because of the Nazi policy.

In their efforts to create a Nazi culture and control all aspects of life in Germany, the Nazis established agencies for everything from colonial affairs, domestic affairs, racial policies, as well as an agency that completely controlled the production of all art in Germany. In 1933, the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Reich Chamber of Fine Arts) was established in order to ensure that only art approved by the Third Reich would be sold or displayed. Only artists that belonged to the chamber were lawfully able to continue their work. All other artists either had to leave the country or continue working in secret. Artists were closely monitored; those who were not members of the chamber were not even legally allowed to buy art supplies. Many of Germany’s great Expressionist artists from the first three decades of the twentieth century lost their livelihoods and were forced to flee Germany. For those that remained in Germany despite persecution by the Nazis, life was grim. For example, the German expressionist, Ernst Barlach (1870-1938), remained in Germany although he was persecuted by the Nazis and his art was condemned. He wrote the following about his situation:

A pimp or murderer has it much better; he enjoys the benefit of an orderly trial and even has a chance to clear himself. We were simply repudiated

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1 Aryanization meant that the Nazis reorganized Jewish businesses as exclusively German, with no Jewish influence.
and if possible destroyed. In this respect, my condition is more disastrous than that of an actual exile.\footnote{Mary-Margaret Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” \textit{Art Journal} 50, no. 4, Censorship II (December 01, 1991): 89.}

The stress of living under the Nazis caused Barlach’s health to deteriorate and he died five years after the Nazis came to power.

The Nazis forced the famous \textit{Bauhaus} school of Art and Design to close in 1933. The great German artist, Käthe Kollwitz, who in 1932 had become the first woman to be accepted into the Prussian Academy of Arts, was expelled from the academy in 1933 and was barred in 1936 from exhibiting her art. Some artists remained in Germany perhaps thinking that fascism would come to a swift end. Others continued to work as anti-fascist artists but lived in constant fear.\footnote{Schoenbener, \textit{Artists Against Hitler}, 63.}

As an artist, albeit an unsuccessful one himself, Hitler placed particular importance on communication through art. Some artists inspired by the Nazi movement turned from the hated “prewar experimentalism” and “embraced the heroic human figure and rational organization.”\footnote{Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. "Exhibition Examines The Return To Classicism In Europe Arts And Culture Between Destruction Of World Wars." News release, August 5, 2010. Guggenheim Media. http://media.guggenheim.org/content/New_York/press_room/presskits/Chaos_PressKit.pdf.}

This trend of shifting artistic styles was not confined to Germany. World War I greatly impacted the art world. After the war, there was a shift in France from Cubist to anti-Cubist art; in Italy many artists turned away from Futurist to anti-Futurist art. In Germany, there was a conversion from Expressionism to \textit{Neue Sachlichkeit} (New Objectivity) between 1919 and 1933. As the Nazis invaded Germany in 1933, they also infected the art scene with their ideology. The National Socialist Art Movement grew out of Nazi ideology and publicized a Nazi aesthetic.
The Reich Chamber of Fine Arts played an integral part in constructing a new German culture through the implementation of Nazism as both a belief system and a political party. Art was one of the primary avenues that Hitler used to present the image of a unified and superior German culture. On the one hand, the Great German Art Exhibition provided examples of the beliefs to which every German should aspire. On the other hand, the Degenerate Art Exhibition provided examples of everything the new Nazi Germany rejected.

Four years before these exhibitions, the Nazis held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Haus der Kunst (House of Art, Art Museum) in Munich. At the gathering, Hitler delivered a rousing speech on culture, in which he ultimately gave artists four years to adhere to Nazi cultural policy. Admission to the Chamber of Fine Arts would be impossible for nonconformists, and without membership, they would lose their legal ability to work as artists. Contemporary artists were forced to adapt their styles to the Führer’s aesthetic because the display and purchase of art that was not congruous with the National Socialist ideology was banned. The Third Reich reserved the right to authorize the work of art brokers, curators, architects, and any profession related to the arts, not just that of artists.

The architect of the Haus der Kunst, Paul Troost (1878-1934), designed the building to glorify the products of the new National Socialist Art Movement. The Haus der Kunst had expansive rooms and fourteen-foot ceilings. The museum’s curatorial staff was faced with the challenge to fill the museum with art adapted to German National Socialism. This new house of

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6 At the same time that “degenerate art” was confiscated by the Nazi government, it also banned the display of “degenerate art.” In order for “degenerate” artists to make a living from their art, they had to conform to the Nazi aesthetic or they would not be able to sell or to display their art. This new policy inspired the National Socialist Art. Barron and Guenther, Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991), 17.
7 Barron and Guenther, Degenerate Art, 18.
8 Barron and Guenther, Degenerate Art, 17.
art had to be filled with art that followed the Nazi aesthetic as a means to claim validity through a homogenous culture.

On German Art Day, it was the tradition that state museums would hold competitions for local artists. The artists submitted their best work, and the museum’s curator chose only the most outstanding pieces to be exhibited. Then the museum’s patrons would have a chance to purchase these works. The *Haus der Kunst* in Munich followed this custom by holding its own competition in 1937. The competition was centered around the theme of “Two Thousand Years in German History,” and was overseen by Adolf Ziegler (1892-1959), who managed to secure a place for a few of his own pieces in the show.\(^9\)

Contemporary artists participated in this competition by sending over 15,000 pieces to the new museum. The staff was overwhelmed by the demands of the process. When Hitler visited Munich he found that the staff had been accepting pieces that were “unfinished,” or categorized as Expressionist, which was offensive to his aesthetic.\(^11\) While in Munich he took a keen interest in the curatorial process. He eventually developed criteria for the selection process for the Great German Art Exhibition.

The works of art that ultimately comprised the Great German Art Exhibition were contemporary, but drew inspiration from the Germanic past, which included a revival of Greco-Roman Classicism; the Nazis aimed to legitimize their claim to rule through the glorification of

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\(^9\) Barron and Guenther, *Degenerate Art*, 17.

\(^10\) Adolf Ziegler was a professor at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. Moreover, he was revered as a fine arts connoisseur in the Third Reich. He was one of Hitler’s favorite artists, however, in 1943 after openly stating that he believed Germany would lose the war, he was detained for six weeks. Barron and Guenther, *Degenerate Art*, 17 and 403. Zwick, Tracey. "Art In America." "Degenerate Art" Exhibition of Nazi-Era Modern Work Opens at Neue Galerie. March 12, 2014. http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/previews/degenerate-art-exhibition-of-nazi-era-modern-work-opens-at-neue-galerie/.

\(^11\) This was intolerable to Hitler, as he hated “unfinished” works of art. Barron and Guenther, *Degenerate Art*, 17.
Germanic history. The art works of the National Socialist Art Movement were characterized by dull, earthy tones. The Nazis were obsessed with gender and sexual identity, so their paintings and sculptures often showed figures in the nude and demonstrated an emphasis on politically conservative sexuality. The paintings generally communicated a sense of singular German greatness. The National Socialist artists never explored the realities of human weakness, but rather exploited the pride that was growing within German society.

Mary-Margaret Goggin has created an outline of what the National Socialist Art movement entailed. The Nazis celebrated the German roots of the National Socialist artists. National Socialist art had to “develop from the collective soul (or the Volk) of the people and express its identity.” Modern Art was characterized as hard to interpret, so it was imperative that the common man understood Nazi art. Even more, the Nazis validated their aesthetic not through finite trends but through imitating the “eternal,” by reviving the styles of Antiquity and the Northern Renaissance. Fundamentally, Nazi art could not criticize German society but render only a positive interpretation of Nazi culture. In the same vein, the art had to “...represent the good, the beautiful, and the healthy.” The Great German Art Exhibition was of the utmost cultural importance because through this show the Nazis developed a framework for the German people to visualize and embrace "Aryan" culture.

12 The Nazis were known for the plunder of art not only in Germany but also internationally as well. From the Louvre they stole the Bayeux tapestry, which depicts the Norman invasion of Great Britain. In Hitler’s mind this legitimized their aggression because it had been done in the past. The Nazis relied on the past heavily to define their identity and to create legitimacy for their reign. Edsel and Witter, The Monuments Men, 132.
13 Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” 84.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
In the early nineteenth century, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778 – 1852) introduced the concept of the Volk. Originally the concept was meant to unify the German people in the prospect of creating a German nation. The Nazis abused this current of thought to advance the idea of German grandeur. Although Volk literally translates to English as “people” or “folk,” in German, the word carries an almost spiritual quality. The Nazis used the term to emphasize the importance of belonging to the German nation. National Socialists applied Volk ideology to fit their terms of what it meant to be German and that there was something special about the German people. While Jahn had not meant the term to exclude specific minorities, the Nazi repurposed the term for their agenda. This is a prime example of how the Nazis reclaimed and rewrote history to fit their ideology. National Socialist Art used this concept of Volk to glorify a united German people under the Nazi’s redefinition of culture.

Hitler, in Mein Kampf, promoted an image of Jews as cultural thieves, because they were supposedly incapable of forming their own culture and had misinterpreted “true” German culture. He wrote, “No, the Jew possesses no culture-creating energy whatsoever, as the idealism, without which there can never exist a genuine development of man towards a higher level, does not and never did exist in him.” With the desired war imminent, there was an urgent need to unify the Volk against its perceived enemies. The Great German Art Exhibition emphasized this racist, anti-Semitic version of the Volk by displaying only contemporary works that honored the Volk ideology from National Socialist artists. While National Socialist Art elevated and focused on the Volk, the works of art also revealed the contentious nature of this artificial ideal.

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19 Hitler, Mein Kampf, 418.
The National Socialist Art movement, as a creation of his own design, pleased Hitler. Hitler took enormous pride in the exhibit, and he attended the Great German Art Exhibition with other important Nazi officials (Figure 1). Nazi ideals were manifested throughout the exhibit. He had a specific view of art that fit his criteria of the Nazi archetype that was in turn displayed at the Great German Art Exhibition.

In order to indoctrinate the German people in National Socialist ideology, there also had to be a guideline as to what was distinctly not Nazi ideology and succinctly what to avoid. The Degenerate Art Exhibition was hosted in Munich, in conjunction with the Great German Art Exhibition, and served to express clearly the qualities that were alien to National Socialist culture. Nazi art had no room for the creativity and the raw human emotion that demonstrated perceived weakness in Modern Art. The Modern Art that was most prevalent in the Degenerate Art Exhibition was typified by bold, contrasting colors. There was often a lack of perspective and order in the paintings. The National Socialists understood these aesthetic elements as chaotic and that therefore had no part in the new Germany they were building.

The National Socialists saw Degenerate Art as actually rotting German society from within, hence the name degenerate. Modern historians suggest the Nazis believed that “Modern Art was a threat to German morality.”20 In an address at the opening ceremony of the Degenerate Art Exhibition, Hitler became fiercely passionate as he bellowed,

He who paints our youth as wasted idiots, and the German mother like a Neanderthal woman, has shown undeniable proof of his degenerate character, and he who submits a bad, mediocre or unfinished work to such a perfect House of Art, proves that he has not understood the cultural demands of our time.21

20 Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” 86.
Adolf Ziegler, the curator of the Art Exhibitions, also gave a speech at the Degenerate Art Exhibition, in which he stated:

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 [has] offer[ed] inspires horror and disgust in us all.22

The photographs from the 1937 exhibitions are illuminating. One such photo shows a crowd of people lined up outside the Degenerate Art Exhibition on a typical day for this show (Figure 2). The Degenerate Art Exhibition was popular in Nazi Germany. In fact, ticket sales for the degenerate show exceeded those of the Great German Art Exhibition.23 Nevertheless, the Degenerate Art Exhibition accomplished several goals for the Third Reich. First, it shamed the artists whose works were displayed in the show. Second, it fostered a hatred for non-Nazi characteristics. Third, it generated some revenue for the German government, as they sold the pieces from the show to buyers from international markets.24

A study comparing and contrasting selected works of the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition demonstrates the differences between the ideal Nazi culture, and the alternative subcultures that the Nazis aimed to obliterate in order to create a more unified nation. While the pieces in the Great German Art Show were hung straight and given ample

22 Barron and Guenther, _Degenerate Art_, 45.
23 Nicholas, _The Rape of Europa_, 20-21.
24 Ideally, all works from the Degenerate Art Exhibition would either have been destroyed or sold to buyers outside of Germany, so that they would not be influencing German society anymore. There were some cases, however, where core members of the Third Reich kept pieces for themselves. The works of Nolde, a German Expressionist artist, which were confiscated from the state museums of Germany, were particular favorites of Goebbels. Albert Speer, the party’s architect, knew of Goebbels’ taste. When Speer found some Nolde water colors in the Nationalgalerie, he “lent” them to Goebbels, who displayed them prominently in his living room. When Hitler came to visit Goebbels, he was so appalled by the art, he told Goebbels to remove them. A few years earlier, in 1935, Hitler had gifted a Spitzweg, his favorite artist, to Goebbels for his birthday. Needless to say, Hitler had significant sway in the personal aesthetic of the party members. Nicholas, _The Rape of Europa_, 10-11. Jonathan Petropoulos, _Art as Politics in the Third Reich_ (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 48-49.
space on blank white walls, the work in the Degenerate Art Exhibition, shown down the street, was hung lopsided and framed with humiliating, sarcastic messages written on the walls. The rooms had no organizing themes. The Nazis displayed the art in a manner that emphasized their judgment: this art represented disorder and chaos. Hitler and the Chamber of Culture spent significant time and money to further popularize understanding and acceptance of Nazi culture, thus advancing the government’s legitimacy. This in turn gave the government more power to do what it would. These exhibitions established a culture in that the German people empowered their belligerent government first, to unify them in culture, and second, to act as a reactionary Volk in destroying its perceived enemies. To clearly define what was and what was not the German ideal, the two exhibitions focused on several major themes. This paper analyzes three of these themes: the role of women in Nazi Germany, the role of the soldier in Nazi Germany, and the role of religion in Nazi Germany.

The Role of Women in Nazi Germany: the Cult of Motherhood

The role of women in German society had become more complex after World War I. During the war, in the absence of their brothers, husbands, and fathers, women had formed a larger part of the working class. The Nazis were opposed to this and were determined to re-domesticate women. Through art, the Nazi artists glorified the state of domesticity by comparing women to Venus, the Greek goddesses of love, beauty, and reproduction to underscore the importance of motherhood.

In contrast to the idealized figure type of antiquity, Modern artists were interested in human realities. They explored the sexual freedom women experienced when they left their domestic chores for paid employment in factories and worked alongside men. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) developed this idea in his painting, Tänzerin mit gehobenem Rock.
Woman with Raised Skirt features a woman sitting with her skirt pulled up to reveal her undergarments. Behind the woman is a large grouping of flowers. A darker patch of coloring by an intense use of line calls attention to her groin. Her feet point in almost impossible directions alluding to the lack of perspective commonly found in Modern Art. Her face is long and narrow. The painting is easily classified as Expressionist because of Kirchner’s passionate use of line, typical of the style. Unfortunately, his choice of color may never be known, as the only record of this painting is a black and white image.

As a means of shaming the artists, the Third Reich produced a pamphlet that served as a guide for the Degenerate Art Exhibition (Figure 5). One page, titled Die Dirne wird zum sittlichen Ideal erhoben! (which translates as “The Harlot [prostitute] as a moral ideal!”) highlights Kirchner’s painting, Woman with Raised Skirt. The paragraph on the bottom left of the page goes on to state:

What the Bolshevik Jewess Rosa Luxemburg loved most about Russian Literature [was that it] ‘...ennobles the prostitute, makes amends for her for the crime that society has committed against her..., lifts her out of the purgatory of corruption and mental torment to the heights of moral purity and female heroism.’ Rosa Luxemburg in “Action” [1921].

Although, Kirchner was neither a Jew nor a Bolshevik, he was grouped with these social outcasts in German society because he was a German Expressionist painter, who did not alter his style for the Third Reich. This type of generalization is typical of the commentary found in the

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25 Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, is seen wearing a light jacket to the left of Hitler.
26 This was finished after the completion of the show in Munich but it traveled with the exhibit to major German cities.
27 Barron and Guenther, Degenerate Art, 375. Translated by David Britt, 375.
Degenerate Art Exhibition. The Nazis hated the Bolshevik Party of the Soviet Union. Jews and Soviets were often grouped together as objects of loathing. Like many other messages in the Degenerate Art Exhibition, the quote above expressed the Nazi view that Jews, Bolsheviks and Modern artists, in particular the women in these groups, alike all had loose morals. In essence, the Nazi propagandists communicated the idea that both Jews and Bolsheviks regarded loose women or prostitutes as an example of perfection in womanhood. It rejects the idea that German society needed to be more forgiving or understanding of prostitutes. Kirchner, the artist, and his work were basically distasteful according to the National Socialist view.

As curator of the Degenerate Art Exhibition, Adolf Ziegler was responsible for the confiscation of at least 16,000 pieces of “Degenerate Art” from German public museums; Ziegler included many of these pieces in the Degenerate Art Exhibition.\(^{28}\) Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), the Minister of Propaganda, released an edict that allowed for this confiscation. It read:

> On the express authority of the Führer I hereby empower the president of the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste [Reich Chamber of Visual Arts], Professor Ziegler of Munich, to select and secure for an exhibition of works of German degenerate art since 1910, both painting and sculpture, which are now in collections owned by the German Reich, individual regions or local communities. You are requested to give Prof. Ziegler your full support during his examination and selection of these works.\(^{29}\)

Nazi party officials outlined the criteria for Degenerate Art as any work that was insulting to the new German image of strength and perfection. According to the Nazi aesthetic, German Expressionist paintings were offensive. Kirchner’s *Woman with Raised Skirt* was one such morally offensive painting. The Nazis originally confiscated this work from the *Städtisches Museum für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe* (Municipal Museum for Fine Arts and Decorative Arts) between the years 1936 and 1937. The *Einsatzkommando* (Operations Command) renamed the

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\(^{28}\) Ibid.  
\(^{29}\) Barron and Guenther, *Degenerate Art*, 19.
piece *Gelbe Tänzerin* (Yellow Dancer). The Nazis often renamed the confiscated pieces in the Degenerate Art Exhibition with more sexually provocative titles. For example, another piece by Kirchner, *Self Portrait as a Soldier* (1915, Figure 6), was renamed *Soldier with Prostitute*. The new names often elicited more sensual connotations, like a dancer, or prostitute.

Of the 16,000 pieces that were confiscated from German museums, only a small percentage of the works was included in the Degenerate Art Exhibition.\(^\text{30}\) Those pieces not included in the show were sold as quickly as possible to buyers from international markets. The Third Reich wanted the paintings to benefit the government and thus the profits were used for the German war effort. As the pieces came to the warehouse, auctions would be held simultaneously; they were often sold in selected groupings to facilitate their liquidation. For example, one lot of works that sold in total for $2,190, included: five oil paintings by Kirchner, three by Lyonel Feininger, three by Paul Klee, one by Karl Hofer and one by Oskar Kokoschka, along with two watercolors by Klee, and one hundred drawings by Kirchner.\(^\text{31}\) While the Third Reich took freely from their own museums, they asked for what they believed was a fair price for the pieces they had confiscated. There was a selling frenzy during the time of confiscation from 1936 to 1938, but by the fall of 1938 sales at auctions had slowed to a halt. Around one thousand paintings, sculptures and almost four thousand drawings, watercolors and graphics remained unsold and were deemed “unexploitable.”\(^\text{32}\) Those adhering to Hitler’s cultural policies strictly advocated


\(^{31}\) This price was in American dollars in contemporary currency, circa 1937. Barron and Guenther, *Degenerate Art*, 130.

\(^{32}\) Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 25.
for the total destruction of these works of art and as a result they were burned on March 20, 1939 behind a fire hall in Berlin.\textsuperscript{33}

The location of \textit{Woman with Raised Skirt} is unknown today; it was most likely burned in Berlin. It is possible, however, that it sold without a record. If that is the case, then it has likely remained on the black market or hidden. While 639 of Kirchner’s pieces were confiscated from German state museums, only 32 of them were used in the Degenerate Art Exhibition.\textsuperscript{34} Once the pieces were removed from the museums where they had been housed originally, their subsequent exhibition was banned, except for the few pieces included in the Degenerate Art Exhibition for the purpose of discrediting them. Through the rise of the Nazi aesthetic, Kirchner lost his livelihood. As a direct result of the humiliating experience and resulting shame, the artist took his life in Switzerland only one year later in 1938.

Kirchner had been a forerunner of German Expressionism. In 1905, he helped found the group, \textit{Die Brücke} (The Bridge). The artists of \textit{The Bridge} rebelled against the artistic traditions dominant in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. The group worked to break the artistic constructs of past centuries and exhibitions throughout Germany were showing their work.\textsuperscript{35} Kirchner’s work is still admired in the art world today.

In juxtaposition to the “degenerate” view of women, Adolf Ziegler (1892-1959) offered the German audience a contemporary example of the ideal image of womanhood in Nazi Germany. One example is his 1937 painting entitled \textit{The Four Elements} (Figure 7), which measures nearly 5 meters by 4 meters. These godlike women in the nude represent fire, water, earth, and air (from left to right); each of the women sports an attribute as to their element. They

\textsuperscript{33} Foreshadowing the “final solution” flames of 1942-45. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Barron and Guenther, \textit{Degenerate Art}, 269.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
are placed outdoors, seated on a gray marble bench, with a sky blue background. The floor is black and white checkered.

As curator, artist and politician, it seems clear that Ziegler perceived himself as a fine arts aficionado, specifically of the National Socialist Art Movement. Promoting his support for Ziegler, and his appreciation, Hitler purchased The Four Elements for his personal collection; it later hung over the mantel in his home.³⁶

This painting is clearly influenced by artists like Lucas Cranach the Elder (c.1472 – 1553), one of Hermann Göring’s favorite artists. Ziegler’s nudes recall Cranach’s painting, The Three Graces (1531). The Nazis placed importance in recreating the style and images of great Germanic artists of the past, and thus manipulated the past to fit their ideological aspirations.

In The Four Elements, the viewer is reminded of art as a rendition of the classical past yet at the same time is forced to reconcile the traditional idealized styles with modernity. Ziegler chose to paint with subdued colors, as though they were faded. The black and white tile flooring is a reference to the prevalent use of mathematical perspective in art during the Northern Renaissance, as seen in Jan Van Eyck’s The Virgin Chancellor Rolin (1435). Although Van Eyck was Dutch, the National Socialist Art Movement claimed him as a predecessor for two reasons: first, they considered the Dutch as Germanic in descent and also because Van Eyck was already established as a great artist. By using Van Eyck as an example, the Nazis were confident that this new movement would be equally esteemed. The National Socialist Artists were inspired by the Germanic heritage of the Northern Renaissance, and yearned for the admiration that these paintings already had in society. In Mein Kampf, Hitler explains, “For also the human mind is not able to climb the heights without steps; for every step forward he needs the foundation of the

past, and, moreover, in that comprehensive meaning that can be revealed only through general culture.”

In addition to the Northern Renaissance influence, *The Four Elements* draws upon the techniques of the Greco-Roman past. The Greeks never portrayed women in the nude except for Aphrodite (or Venus), who was the goddess of love, beauty and procreation. Ziegler’s depiction of these women, though representing goddesses, is distinctly and realistically human. The folds of the women's skin at the midsection call attention to the abdomen, which serves as another reminder of women’s reproductive function in nature. Ziegler’s figures closely resemble the Greek sculpture by Alexandros, *Venus de Milo* (3-1 centuries BCE), which represents the Greek goddess as the ideal woman. Since Ziegler’s figures are not confined by the social construct of wearing clothing, it can be assumed that they represent deities. The women are colossal in stature, again signaling the divine, ideal status. As a result of recalling the classical goddesses, there is a marriage between reality and the idealistic form. The audience would have applied this synthesis to the Third Reich, it was the most ideal reality that could be obtained, or so they thought.

*The Four Elements* was painted only one year after the great Olympic games were hosted in Berlin. The Olympics, as well as Ziegler, emphasized the importance of the ideal human body. Here these four women are shown as ideal, yet distinctly realistic human bodies. They have supple, impossibly buoyant breasts and child-bearing hips that underline the role of women in the Third Reich as solely reproductive beings. Goebbels affirmed, “the mission of woman is to

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37 There was a pervading belief in western culture that each generation built off of the last generation so that the present generation is the pinnacle of human development. This in combination with Social Darwinism made for a lethally proud Nazi Germany. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim, 412.
be beautiful and to bring children into the world.”\textsuperscript{38} Even if Ziegler personally did not agree with Goebbels, his style of art most certainly did. The role of women as reproductive beings was heavily pushed because the Nazi Party was preoccupied with the idea of creating the next German generation that would be dedicated to Nazism. \textit{The Four Elements} played an important role in the propagation of German ideas about the role of women. Fire, Water, Earth and Air are the examples of a nearly realistic role model for all German women to emulate. For example, the figure of Earth holds a sheaf of wheat, stressing the reproductive aspects of women. Ziegler’s female figures are the consummate Aryan woman: they are fair of skin and hair, they are strong like athletes, and they are fertile German women.

\textit{The Four Elements} is one example of how the Third Reich used art as a cultural tool to influence the German masses. Thousands of Germans would have seen this painting before it was ultimately placed above the Führer’s mantel. Through Ziegler’s work, the Third Reich broadcasted the message that women are meant to be beautiful, strong and, moreover, to reproduce.\textsuperscript{39}

These paintings address some of the central issues discussed in the German Art Day Exhibitions. The women depicted contrast sharply with each other. The “degenerate” woman is depicted in a much harsher way. She is drawn with bold, sharp lines, which stand in strong

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\textsuperscript{39} In the recent past, \textit{The Four Elements} has been on tour with several different exhibitions, including \textit{Geschichten im Konflikt} (Histories in Conflict), October 2012, at the \textit{Haus der Kunst} in Munich. \textit{The Four Elements} was originally exhibited in the Great German Art Exhibition, 1937. Another show, \textit{Chaos and Classicism: Art In France, Germany and Italy 1918-1936}, also chose to include Ziegler’s masterpiece. This same exhibit continued on to the Guggenheim Museum in 2011. \textit{The Four Elements} was also recently exhibited the Neue Galerie in New York in March 2014, as a part of the show \textit{Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937} (Figure 8). All three of these shows attempted to compare and contrast the National Socialist Art movement to the contemporary Modern Art movement. \textit{The Four Elements} is part of the permanent collection at the \textit{Pinakothek der Moderne}, in Munich. Haus der Kunst. \textit{Histories in Conflict-Booklet}. Munich: Haus der Kunst, 2012. http://issuu.com/haus_der_kunst/docs/121010.hdk.gik.booklet/15?e=0 Neue Galerie. “Neue Galerie.” Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937. http://www.neuegalerie.org/content/degenerate-art-attack-modern-art-nazi-germany-1937.
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contrast to the dull colors of the National Socialist paintings. Obviously, she is not the Aryan ideal; she has dark hair and is ill composed. She is sensual for the sake of pleasure, not for the purpose of reproduction. The Nazis would have liked to identify their aesthetic as conservative toward women but in reality, and ironically, the women depicted in National Socialist Art represented sex objects for the pleasure of men.\(^{40}\)

The women in *The Four Elements* are soft and supple, but Kirchner’s woman is thin and crude. The image does not recall reality but rather a disorganized chaos without perspective. Women in Nazi Germany were meant to be reserved, unlike Kirchner’s image of a woman who is clearly open to the world. These two paintings represent the dichotomies of Nazi Germany: the ideal versus human reality. Nazism expressed an interest in an ideal that was possible for humans to attain. Kirchner’s art contrasts with the Nazi view by stressing the realities of a broken world.

*The Role of the Soldier in Nazi Germany: Nazi Masculinity and Weakness*

Another focus of the German Art Day exhibitions was the role of the soldier in German society. While the National Socialists defined the soldier as an aggressive national hero without fear of conquest, the German Expressionists were more concerned with the human experience of war. Modern artists were profoundly shaped by their personal experiences in World War I. They wanted to question the purpose and social injustices of war, while the National Socialists were more interested in justifying war.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s painting, *Selbstbildnis als Soldat* (Self Portrait as a Soldier, Figure 6), from 1915, captures the human reality of a weak and broken soldier.\(^{41}\) The National

\(^{40}\) Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” 86.

\(^{41}\) Kirchner's *Self Portrait as a Soldier* was confiscated from the *Frankfurt Städelisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie*. Its current location is the Allen Memorial Art Museum in Berlin.
Socialist curators chose this piece to display at the degenerate show because they wanted to make the degenerate artists look like weak cowards. Kirchner realistically depicts the vulnerability of the German soldier. It was this weakness that the Nazis were not willing to accept. By including this piece in the Degenerate Art show, they shamed Kirchner, to the point of driving him to suicide.

In World War I, Kirchner had volunteered to serve in the army as a driver so that he could avoid the draft and a more dangerous assignment.\textsuperscript{42} Artistically, Kirchner was paralyzed by the fear that the war would ruin him. The war immensely fatigued Kirchner as an artist. This painting encapsulates the fears Kirchner had concerning the war: that as an artist he would lose his livelihood but more importantly his means of communicating through art. Ultimately, the war proved too taxing on his creative spirit. After serving for a short period, he was declared unfit for service. While he was recuperating, he painted this self-portrait.

In the direct foreground of the painting is an image of Kirchner as a soldier. He is dressed in a gray uniform, with bright red decoration. He holds his amputated right arm up to the audience, which functions as a shock factor. Behind him are two canvases: to the left is a seemingly non-representational painting of red on a white background and on the right is a nude woman on a black canvas. The distinction between foreground and background is ambiguous, creating a warped sense of perspective.

Compared to Kirchner’s other self-portraits, there is little to no “erotic tension” between Kirchner and the nude woman on the canvas in the background.\textsuperscript{43} She is not the focus of the painting but rather an element of the painting. There is a distancing effect between the two

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
figures. They have no interaction through gaze or touch, but because the distinction between Kirchner and the woman is unclear, she remains a secondary focus of the painting. This suggests that the woman is a part of Kirchner’s past, but he is left disillusioned about passionate love or even sexual desire after the war, which is likely a signal of his growing depression.

The canvas in the left background further emphasizes this disillusionment. The loss of the soldier’s right hand metaphorically symbolizes his inability to paint or at least to paint like he had before the war. Just as the passion of love belongs to his past so too does his creative ability, severed by the emotional turmoil of war. As a result of the war, he has lost his identity and became depressed.

In this painting, Kirchner is departing from the traditional and accepted realist school. His color choice is bright and disharmonious. This discontinuity can be interpreted as the disassociation between Kirchner’s present and past. The face of the soldier is long and emaciated. His gaze is empty and dissatisfied. The soldier symbolizes human weakness.

The Degenerate Art Exhibit was meant to provide to the German public with examples of what is not Aryan, not Nazi, and not ideal. The profoundly human fear Kirchner expresses in this painting does not embrace the Nazi ideal. The Nazi soldier is meant to be strong and unwavering, not fearing the advancing enemy but rather confronting him. Kirchner’s portrait shows a soldier who is not only physically maimed but also psychologically wounded. He does not embody the drive for German victory that the Nazis wanted to inspire through art.

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44 Art historians argue that there was a shift in his style after his service. Peter Sal, “Kirchner’s Self Portrait as a Soldier in Relation to Earlier Self Portraits,” 95.
45 World War I significantly altered the geopolitical climate. The world, which was once dominated by Europe, felt its shackles fall off as the age of imperialism came to an end. Still the impacts of globalization remained keen in Europe. Art Historian Sherwin Simmons says Kirchner displayed elements of globalization through the imitation of the tribal masks on his figures, an example of this can be seen in Self Portrait as a Soldier. This use of mask imagery may reflect the split personality of the soldier. Sherwin Simmons, “Split-Identity in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Woodcut Cycle ‘Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte’” Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, 3rd ser., 70 (2007): 409.
What Kirchner’s art lacked, the work of Elk Eber (1892-1941) fulfilled in Nazi ideology, which can be seen as an example in his 1937 painting, *Die letzte Handgranate* (The Last Hand Grenade, Figure 9). Eber reached maturity in his artistic career in a militarized Germany. Like many men of his generation, Hitler too came to maturity during the war. The prevailing Nazi belief was that there was no greater sense of a man’s purpose than serving his country through war. Hitler felt purpose and even a heightened sense of awareness in World War I.  

At the seventh annual Great German Art Exhibition in 1943, Joseph Goebbels claimed in his opening remarks, “We have become richer, more fulfilled, and better as a result of the war.” This illustrates that the role of the Nazi soldier was actualized through war.

The vast majority of Eber’s work is related to both of the World Wars. His work recalls the time when he and his fellow trench-mates reveled in the fulfillment and glory of war. Seemingly, unlike Kirchner’s experience, Eber depicted only the glory of war, and never the broken man within the soldier. Eber was a prolific artist. Due to the advancements in mass production, many of his works were used as postcards and posters for Nazi propaganda.

In trench warfare, the enemy generally was never close enough to warrant using a hand grenade unless the enemy was advancing. In *The Last Hand Grenade*, the soldier is depicted in his trench, standing behind a boulder. He has put aside his rifle, indicating that the enemy is possibly too close for using a gun, or perhaps that the soldier has ran out of bullets. In any event, the soldier is evidently determined to fight until the end. Eber’s image is compositionally dynamic. He has captured the veins and muscles in the man’s hand as he pulls the pin of his “last hand grenade.” Behind him smoke billows and the neutral grays set a somber tone. The soldier

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looks off toward his enemy who is not depicted in the pictorial space. A sense of resoluteness settles in the soldier’s face. He is holding out hope for German victory.

This is the type of image that Hitler wanted to display in the Great German Art Exhibition. Eber’s soldier differed distinctly with Kirchner’s self-portrait as it portrayed confidence, strength and bravery. The Third Reich was not interested in human weaknesses. Rather it pushed the idea of strength through unification and, specifically through National Socialism. While Modern artists were banned from museums during the Third Reich, National Socialist artists like Eber took their place in order to communicate Nazi culture through art. This was the method by which the German people were unified. The Volk had a responsibility to support their brothers, fathers, and husbands in war.

The Role of Religion in Nazi Germany: Perversion versus the Sacrilegious

Religion was another theme that the National Socialists addressed through their exhibitions on German Art Day. As is still the case today, Germany at that time was an overwhelmingly Christian nation, and the Third Reich, aware of this predisposition, used religion to manipulate its people. The government even went so far as to create a department of religion within the Nazi Regime. Hitler himself held no reverence for Christianity; rather, he replaced Christianity with Nazism in the Third Reich, and the Führer imagined himself as the leader of this new “religion.”

In the Degenerate Art Exhibition the curators chose to show a painting by Emil Nolde (1867-1956), entitled Kreuzigung, Mittelteil des Altars "Das Leben Christi" from 1912
Nolde was from northern Germany and is considered a German Expressionist. He was raised in a Christian family, which is expressed through many of his Christian-themed paintings. He was an active member of The Bridge, which formed in Dresden, Germany. During his time in The Bridge, Nolde individualized his style of painting. In 1933, the National Socialist government collected 1,500 of his works that were then labeled as “degenerate,” including Crucifixion. After he was declared a degenerate artist, he was unable to join the Chamber of Fine Arts, and thus was not able legally to continue painting. The ironic part is that Nolde had joined the Nazi party in 1921. Unfortunately, the purported chaos of his expressionism did not fit the strict National Socialist aesthetic. Nevertheless, Nolde stayed in Germany and continued his work, in his personal style, exasperated by the Nazi aesthetic policy.

Joseph Goebbels appreciated Nolde but upon the recommendation of Hitler, Goebbels removed Nolde’s paintings from his home. Hitler then replenished Goebbels' barren walls with National Socialist art. Another high ranking Nazi official, “Alfred Rosenberg acknowledged that [Emil Nolde was] talented, but asserted that [he] did not seek the Nordic ideal of physical beauty necessary to the development of a National Socialist aesthetic.”

Nolde’s human figures did not portray the Aryan or Greek ideal forms that were embraced by the National Socialists.

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48 It was confiscated from the Museum Folkwang in Essen. It is currently in the Nolde Stiftung in Seebüll. He was actually born in a town called Nolde, his real name was Emil Hansen, but he became known as Emil Nolde. Detroit Institute of Arts, “Emil Nolde 1867-1956,” Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts 45, no. 3/4, German Expressionist Prints, Drawings and Watercolors: Die Brücke (January 01, 1966): 63.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 This case study is what Hitler did throughout Germany. He took the “degenerate” art out of the view of the public and replaced it with National Socialist art, which conveyed his propaganda. Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” 88.
53 Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” 86.
54 Ibid.
The Nazis were not blaspheming Christianity by including this painting but rather disgracing Nolde’s interpretation of it. This led the audience to believe that the degenerate artists (Jews, Bolsheviks and minorities) were all heathens. All Modern Art was “rotten” by the Third Reich’s standards, so that even the image of Christ in German Expressionism would be perceived as profane to the Germans.

For the *Crucifixion* work, Nolde’s choice of color fills this painting with contrast. It is vibrant yet dark, in the typical German Expressionist style. Nolde highlights the grotesque nature of Jesus’ death by contrasting Christ’s bright red blood with his dull golden skin. There is little perspective in the piece; the figures exist on a two-dimensional plane. Although some overlapping is seen in the three Marys creating a degree of depth, the lack of depth is typical of the modernist style.

The forerunner to the revival of the typical Nazi Neo-Classical movement can be seen in particular Modernist paintings. Although Nolde is strictly an Expressionist, he also invokes a typical North Renaissance rendition of Christ’s crucifixion. These figures had been painted several hundred times by bygone Germanic artists such as Matthias Grünewald (1470-1528) and others. In Northern Renaissance paintings of the crucifixion, there are generally characters identified with specific attributes. For example, three women grouped together are often recognized as the three Marys, a man with a spear is Saint Longinus, and the soldiers with dice are the men gambling for Jesus’ robes. In Nolde’s *Crucifixion*, the three Marys are simply identified as the three women at Jesus’ feet near the bottom left edge of the painting. Their eyes are dark, with dark-tear stained cheeks. Their gaunt faces have no relation to the supple women of *The Four Elements*. One scholar has suggested that “[h]is [Nolde’s] human figures… are…

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morbid exaggerations of the conflicts they symbolize.” The three Marys are cast as weak and helpless, rather than as monumental goddesses. The woman in the green dress shrugs her shoulders passively. She is powerless in the face of her circumstances. She and the other women do not resemble beauty, but rather serve as a signifier of sobriety in Christ’s death. They are not merely reproductive beings but express the complex emotions following Christ’s death.

Another recognizable character in Nolde’s Crucifixion is Saint Longinus with the spear, who, according to legend, stabbed Jesus in the chest to ensure his death by the flow of water and blood, and was later canonized after his miraculous conversion to Christianity. The men beneath him are the soldiers who gamble for Jesus’ robe.

As curator, Adolf Ziegler chose Nolde’s Crucifixion to demonstrate the belief that the degenerate artists bastardized religion. The Nazis believed this piece was disrespectful to Christianity, and that the Germans had been taught to allow “undesirables” to mock their Christian beliefs. The Nazi aesthetic argued that “Degenerate Art” wrongly portrayed Christ as non-German. The National Socialists glossed over the reality that Jesus was a Jew and not German at all.

In the Great German Art Exhibition, an image of Hitler as religious leader is exemplified in Hermann Otto Hoyer’s (1893-1968) painting, Am Anfang war das Wort (In the Beginning was the Word, 1937, Figure 11). In Nazi Germany this may not have been seen as sacrilegious, but certainly in today’s culture comparing Christ to Hitler is sacrilegious. In a public speech in 1941,

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57 “Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.” NIV Bible Gateway, “The Death of Jesus,” John 19: 34, John.
Hitler said, “The best thing is to let Christianity die a natural death.” While the Nazis pointed to how minorities and their subcultures undermined the fabric of Christianity in Germany, the Nazi government was also taking measures to do the same. As Hitler gained popularity, his influence over the churches and his ability to manipulate the German people also grew. Through this he gained even greater control of Nazi Germany.

Hoyer borrowed the opening lines from the Gospel of John for his painting, *In the Beginning was the Word*, which alludes to Hitler as a Christ figure. The next lines of the verse in the title of this painting are as follows: “and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The title alone only alludes to the idea that Hitler was divine, but the attentiveness of the audience in the painting and the composition reaffirm this idea.

In 1923, three years after the Nazi Party was formed, Hitler and his cohort attempted to overthrow the Bavarian government through what became known as the Beer Hall Putsch. A typical prison sentence for a coup would have been life in prison or capital punishment for treason. Hitler, however, was sentenced only to five years in jail, and was let out after one year for good behavior. During that year in prison he wrote *Mein Kampf*. Hitler’s arrest and imprisonment only added to the myth of the man.

The Nationalist Socialist artists used religious icons to spread their ideas. Christianity became a political tool under the Nazis to unite the German peoples under Nazism. In Hitler’s

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60 The Catholic Church made no formal stance against the National Socialist party in Germany, not even during the Holocaust. Individual Catholic organizations did provide some aid to Jews in the Third Reich and occupied territories. Individual Protestant leaders also took a position in resistance, but generally speaking the Christians in Germany did not oppose Hitler or his policies.

61 The coventness of Christian motifs related through the title is quoted from the Gospel of John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Bible Gateway, “The Word Became Flesh,” John 1, John 1:1, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2B1.

62 Ibid.
ideal future, the German people would accept Nazism not only as their party but also would accept it as their belief system.

Hoyer’s painting *In the Beginning was the Word*, mimics a traditional Last Supper scene. National Socialist artists used “easily identifiable figures” to communicate the divinity of the Führer. Religious Nazis typically sanctioned art that put Hitler in the place of the divine authority. The core members of the Third Reich were even called apostles. Often Hitler was referred to as the Savior. Hitler himself relied on this image. At the 1936 Nuremberg Party Rally he exclaimed, “Not all of you can see me, and I cannot see all of you. But I feel you and you feel me!” In the 1935 film “Triumph of Will,” directed by Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler was also portrayed as a religious, authoritative figure. Hoyer’s painting was distributed throughout Germany on postcards and in magazines propagating the image of Hitler as the Savior.

This painting depicts the Führer gathering his first disciples. The swastika flag behind Hitler has a star like quality, as though the illumination of the room comes from the symbol of newly formed party. The small crowd gathered around Hitler listens intensely to his message. Hoyer highlights the rhetorical power of Hitler through the keen interest displayed by the crowd.

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64 The depiction of political figures as other characters was not a new idea. Winston Churchill was once painted with a Tommy Gun as a traditional Chicago mobster. The enemies of the state were painted as gangsters, people that broke the law. James P. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power: The Art of Strategic Communication* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 85, accessed March 15, 2015.
67 Specifically he was referred to as the Savior of the Western World from Sovietism. Working Towards the Führer: Essays in Honour of Sir Ian Kershaw, 100.
The painting is primarily comprised of cool colors with the exception of the flag that is bright red. While the crowd is largely composed of men, there are a few women attending. The audience shows that Hitler is able to garner the support of women, but women for the most part were at home supporting their husbands domestically and politically. The blond, fair woman who sits at the end of the table is illuminated by separate light. She calls attention to the importance of the Aryan woman as a representation of the future Aryan race.\(^{72}\) Her presence alludes to a relationship between the movement to which Hitler gave birth and the next generation of Aryan children she will produce.

After Hoyer’s painting was displayed in the Great German Art Exhibit in 1937, Hitler moved it to Linz, Austria, where the work was stored for the future \textit{Führermuseum}.\(^{73}\) At the end of the war, the U.S. Army confiscated controversial Nazi art. Among many other paintings, \textit{In the Beginning was the Word} was confiscated and is still kept in the basement of the Army Art Collection at the US Army Center of Military History Museum Support Center in Washington D.C.\(^{74}\)

These two paintings by Nolde and Hoyer express two currents of thought in Nazism: first that National Socialism will replace Christianity; and second that “degenerate” art perverts Christianity. While the Nazis awaited the “natural end,” of Christianity, they still used German Christian sentiment to underscore the distortion they saw in Modern Art. At the same time, they manipulated German Christian emotion to demonstrate the savior like qualities of Hitler.

\(^{72}\) Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” 85.
\(^{73}\) Galleria D'arte Thule. “Hermann Otto Hoyer.”
Conclusion

Understanding these six paintings is essential to recognizing the structure and establishment of Nazi culture that contributed to the indoctrination of the German people. The Third Reich readied Germans, already primed as belligerent toward Jews, to hate Jews and disregard their contributions to German culture. The Degenerate Art Exhibition and the Great German Art Exhibition made the exclusion of Jews and all other "non-Aryans" from German society even more final. The Nazis saw degenerate art as “undermining traditional values.” In an effort to protect those values, the National Socialist artists responded to the Modern artists but created art that contradicted Modern aesthetic and propagated the Nazi ideal. In order to unify the country, the National Socialists addressed German people in an intimate way through art. These exhibitions were part of the foundation that changed German culture, which and prepared the way for the horrors of the Holocaust and World War II.

Through these shows and other venues, the Nazis convinced the people to embrace Nazi ideals and values. First, they redefined the role of woman in the complexity of post-World War I Germany. They made it clear that women were meant to fulfill a domestic role within the Third Reich. Women were not permitted to live freely outside of the home. Those who did, according to the Nazis, were either Jews or Bolsheviks, and thus had loose morals as identified in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s Woman with Raised Skirt. Second, the returning soldiers needed an identity. The Nazi party was more than willing to provide this identity for them. Kirchner offered the truth: soldiers were broken humans who were fundamentally and forever altered by war. Elk Eber offered a soldier who lived in a moment of heroism. The Nazi party was much more

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75 Goggin, “‘Decent’ vs. ‘Degenerate’ Art: The National Socialist Case,” 89.
interested in this stronger ideal form of man. Finally, religion in the party was used only to the advantage of the Nazis, to lure the followers of Christ into the worship of Hitler.

These two art exhibitions, the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art Exhibition, helped to create a cultural climate in which the Second World War and the Holocaust became a social possibility. The German people became apathetic about the future of the Jews, of other minorities and those critical of the government due to the bombardment of propagandist messages. Their apathy toward the fate of the Jews and other "non-Aryans" was a result of years of such indoctrination. The ideology expressed in these exhibits gradually redefined German culture. Through the exhibition of art and other efforts, Nazism became the dominant ideology in Germany. As the new National Socialist culture was defined, it would not be long before other hated relics of the former Germany, the Jews, the creative artists, and other free thinkers would soon disappear into the clutches of the Holocaust.
Figure 1

Hitler attending the Great German Art Exhibition.

http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/133c/133cproj/cprojimages/GrosseDtAusstellungHitlerVisit600pxw.jpg.
Figure 2

An image of the lines outside the Degenerate Art Exhibition.

Figure 3
*Woman with Raised Skirt*
Ernst Kirchner
1913
Oil on Canvas
150 x 70 cm 1913.

This image was taken from the Degenerate Art Exhibition Pamphlet, no other photographic record remains of this painting.

Figure 4

An image of Hitler and Goebbels visiting the Degenerate Art Exhibition.

http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/133c/133cproj/cprojimages/GrosseDtAusstellungHitlerVisit600pxw.jpg
Figure 5

An image out of the Degenerate Art Exhibition Catalogue.

Figure 6
*Self Portrait as a Soldier*
Ernst Kirchner
1915
Oil on Canvas
69.2 x 61 cm

Figure 7
*The Four Elements*
Adolf Ziegler
1937
Oil on Canvas
Triptych
(From left to right) 170 cm x 85 cm, 1.7 m x 1.9 m, 171 cm x 77 cm

Figure 8
An image of Figure 7 on display at the Neue Galerie.


http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5459984ae4b08b58f1c8df7f/t/54c93a06e4b0fd6b907d7273/1422473736174/.
Figure 9

*The Last Hand Grenade*

Elk Eber

1936

Oil on canvas

79 x 81 cm.


Figure 10
Crucifixion
Emil Nolde
1912
Oil on Canvas
220.5 x 193.5 cm

Figure 11
*In the Beginning was the Word*
Hermann Otto Hoyer
1937
Oil on Canvas

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