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### **Conflicting Legacies: An Exploration of the House of German Art**

The House of German Art, or the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*, was constructed in Munich from 1933 to 1937. Known as the first monumental structure of Nazi architecture and propaganda, it was built to showcase what the Nazi party determined to be proper art. Though the architect, Paul Ludwig Troost (1878-1934), would not live to see the completion of the building, the giant, neoclassical structure gave off a rigidity and power that perfectly encapsulated the values of the Reich.

In 1931, a fire in Munich destroyed the leading venue for the visual arts, the 19<sup>th</sup> century grand iron and glass exhibition hall *Glaspalast*. In 1933 Hitler took it upon himself to turn the fire into an example of the failures of the Weimar Republic while the new structure that would be erected there would become a pinnacle of National Socialist architecture.<sup>1</sup> To build a museum that would become the symbol for the assertion of National Socialist art policy, Hitler turned to his favorite master builder at the time, Paul Ludwig Troost. Of Troost, according to Nazi architect Albert Speer, Hitler frequently stated, "I first learned what architecture is from Troost," and he promised that when he came to power, Troost would be responsible for the design of a new gallery of German art.<sup>2</sup> Troost was highly opposed to an ornamental approach to architecture, and was known for a neoclassical style meant to reflect the true and eternal art of the German people. Modeled on Friedrich Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin, the building is rectilinear with large symmetrical columns adorning the front.<sup>3</sup>

The museum opened on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1937, with Adolf Hitler giving a ninety-minute speech on how the House of German Art would be an opportunity for the Reich to define itself through

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<sup>1</sup> Schlenker, Ines. "Hitler's Salon: The Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich 1937-1944." International Academic Publishers, 2007. Pg. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Zalampas, Sherree Owens. "Adolf Hitler: A Psychological Interpretation of His Views on Architecture, Art, and Music." Bowling Green State University Press, 1990. Pgs. 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> See the photograph: The House of German Art, Paul Ludwig Troost, Munich, 1937 from the US National Archives Collection of Foreign Records Seized (Group 242-HB).

the art it chose to display. Hitler noted, "For the first time in many decades, we are honoring not artistic fraud, but honest artistic achievement."<sup>4</sup> Art that was not nudes, genre scenes, realist paintings, or portraits of Aryan people would be classified as "degenerate" and were either destroyed, hidden from view across the Reich, sold abroad, or exhibited a day later at the Degenerate Art Show. Hitler's speech was meant to elevate art that he believed the Reich should perceive as genuinely "German" against the modern artworks he loathed and disparaged.

Around the nation and the world, people were paying attention to the opening of this museum and were quick to spread what Hitler had delivered in his speeches. In Germany, newspapers such as the *Berliner Boersenzeitung und Boersen-Courier* and the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* stated that "The 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 1937, will go down in German history not only as a new day for German art but for the German view of life in its entirety," and that Hitler was "the man who has been the 'soul-motor' of the German people." Moreover, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* commented that this was "the liberation of German art from the tyranny of sadism."<sup>5</sup> Across the Atlantic, the *New York Times* was not shying away from making sure the public was aware of Hitler's speech and the events taking place in Munich. Most of the page is dedicated to Germany, in hopes of informing the public. The large title of the article about the House of German Art is, "HITLER FORBIDS ART NOT OBVIOUS TO ALL." The usage of all capital letters grabs readers' attention before diving into an eleven-paragraph long summary of Hitler's speech on the museum opening and the suppression of "non-German" art.<sup>6</sup> While the United States publicized this grand opening, in England, the *Times of London* did not seem to advertise the building to the same extent. All that was mentioned about the speech came the day after the grand opening where it was written, "The Führer delivered a long speech in which he

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<sup>4</sup> Hitler's Speech at the Opening of the "Great German Art Exhibition" in the House of German Art, Munich (July 18, 1937), in *Völkischer Beobachter* taken from GHDI, July 29, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> The quotations from the German paper are taken from: Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES. "'DEGENERATE ART' DISPLAYED IN REICH." *New York Times*, July 20, 1937.

<sup>6</sup> Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES. "HITLER FORBIDS ART NOT OBVIOUS TO ALL." *New York Times*, July 19, 1937

repeated the claim...that the Nazis have effected a renaissance of German art.”<sup>7</sup> This nonchalant attitude by the *Times of London* is reflected several months later as well when it was reported that the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were taken to the House of German Art to see recent additions to the collection.<sup>8</sup> From this it may be possible to conclude that the *Times of London* was hesitant to write anything negative or give their readers a chance to think anything negative towards the Reich at this point in time, while the *New York Times* was providing in depth coverage of this event. Moreover, the *New York Times* referring to the leader of Germany as “Adolf Hitler” while the *Times of London* calls him “the Führer” seems to further solidify the potentiality that Britain was attempting to avoid any language that would insult Germany.

While the House of German Art was built as an icon of ideological power, from the end of the war, Germany, since it was under Allied forces through today has been trying to change the legacy of the museum. Though it was originally representative of what modernism is not, the building has been changed to a center for contemporary art.<sup>9</sup> In an effort to fulfil war reparations, the House of German Art, now known as the Haus der Kunst, borrowed the iconic Picasso anti-war painting *Guernica* as well as art by Kandinsky, Chagall, and other artists that would have been considered Bolshevik or Jewish. The building will always have that grand, neoclassical style rooted in a National Socialist past and a grand opening that revealed where countries stood, but today, the museum stands as a promise for change and an acknowledgement of the importance of legacy.

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<sup>7</sup> FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT. "House of German Art." *The Times of London*, July 19, 1937

<sup>8</sup> FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT, and OUR OWN. "The Duke and Duchess Of Windsor." *The Times of London*, October 25, 1937

<sup>9</sup> "Exhibition 'Histories in Conflict: Haus Der Kunst and the Ideological Uses of Art, 1937-1955.'" *Haus Der Kunst*, 2012, [hausderkunst.de/en/exhibitions/geschichten-im-konflikt-das-haus-der-kunst-und-der-ideologische-gebrauch-von-kunst-1937-1955](http://hausderkunst.de/en/exhibitions/geschichten-im-konflikt-das-haus-der-kunst-und-der-ideologische-gebrauch-von-kunst-1937-1955).

### Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

- Hitler's Speech at the Opening of the "Great German Art Exhibition" in the House of German Art, Munich (July 18, 1937), in *Völkischer Beobachter*, July 19, 1937  
Found on GHDI, this speech was delivered by Hitler at the grand opening of the House of German Art. The point of the speech was to elevate art that he perceived as genuinely "German" against the modern artworks that he loathed and disparaged as Bolshevik, Jewish, or simply not German. This speech was given exactly a day before the start of the "Degenerate Art" exhibition.



- House of German Art, Paul Ludwig Troost, Munich, 1937 from the US National Archives Collection of Foreign Records Seized (Group 242-HB).
- FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT. "House of German Art." *The Times of London*, July 19, 1937  
This brief article mentions the opening of the House of German Art from the *Times of London* Munich correspondent.
- Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES. "HITLER FORBIDS ART NOT OBVIOUS TO ALL." *New York Times*, Jul 19, 1937, Pg. 8.

Found through the UCSB library database, this article covers the speech that Hitler gave at the opening of the House of German Art. It explained how art that was not immediately understood by the average German would be suppressed and considered “artistic bolshevism.”

- Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES. "DEGENERATE ART' DISPLAYED IN REICH." *New York Times*, Jul 20, 1937, Pg. 15.

This newspaper article discusses the opening of both the House of German Art and the Degenerate Art shows. The writer cites multiple German newspapers in their coverage of the events and of important members of German society.

- “A Window on the World: Events at Home and Abroad.” *The Illustrated London News*, July 24, 1937.

Found in the British Newspaper Archive, this article talks about the founding of the House of German Art. It quotes Hitler’s speech and includes photographs from the event.

- FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT, and OUR OWN. "The Duke and Duchess of Windsor." *The Times of London*, October 25, 1937

This article documents the sites that the Duke and Duchess of Windsor visited on their trip to Germany, including the House of German Art.

- Werner, Alfred. "Hitler's Kampf against Modern Art: A Retrospect." *The Antioch Review* 26, no. 1. 1966, Pg. 56-67. doi:10.2307/4610739

This 12-page journal article from JSTOR was found when searching Hitler and Paintings. The article details the reasons behind Hitler’s dislike for what he considered “Degenerate art” and how it came to a peak in 1937.

- Zalampas, Sherree Owens. "Adolf Hitler: A Psychological Interpretation of His Views on Architecture, Art, and Music." Bowling Green State University Press, 1990. Pgs. 56-57. This book talks about Hitler's relationship to architecture and the arts. This specific chapter discusses the early stages of the construction and planning of the House of German Art.
- Schlenker, Ines. *Hitler's Salon: The Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich 1937-1944*. International Academic Publishers, 2007. This book documents the entire history of the House of German Art from its foundation through its role during the war.
- Van Dyke, James A. *Franz Radziwill and the Contradictions of German Art History, 1919-45*. University of Michigan Press, 2011. Found through google books, this monograph discusses what Nazi art really was and how what was considered degenerate art or modern art and what was a perfect piece that reflected National Socialism was based sometimes completely on contingencies.
- "Exhibition 'Histories in Conflict: Haus Der Kunst and the Ideological Uses of Art, 1937-1955.'" *Haus Der Kunst*, 2012, [hausderkunst.de/en/exhibitions/geschichten-im-konflikt-das-haus-der-kunst-und-der-ideologische-gebrauch-von-kunst-1937-1955](http://hausderkunst.de/en/exhibitions/geschichten-im-konflikt-das-haus-der-kunst-und-der-ideologische-gebrauch-von-kunst-1937-1955). Found on the House of German Art website, this article details an exhibition on the history of the building. It explains what became of the place after the defeat of the Nazis and how the German government has been changing what the museum represents.
- Itkin, Alan Joshua. "Restaging 'Degenerate Art': The Politics of Memory in the Berlin Sculpture Find Exhibit." *The German Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2014): 395-415. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24756521>. Found through JSTOR, this 21-page article explains how the Nazi denigration of modern art as a departure from classical tradition was closely connected to their racial policies.

The replacement of modern art with the neoclassical was an attempt to make the National Socialist version of art as visible as possible.

- El-Mecky, Nausikää, "Art in Nazi Germany," in *Smarthistory*, August 9, 2015, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://smarthistory.org/art-in-nazi-germany/>

This website article discusses the specific pieces that were on display in the House of German Art as well as the Degenerate Art collection. It also mentions how the architecture of the building reflects the characteristics of the Nazi party.

- "Paul Troost' on Revolv.com." *Revolv*, [www.revolv.com/page/Paul-Troost](http://www.revolv.com/page/Paul-Troost). Found on the internet by searching "Paul Ludwig Troost", this webpage dedicated to the biography of individuals throughout history has the biography of the architect who designed the House of German Art.