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Manipulating Culture:

Hitler’s Agenda and the Looting of Paris

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“Divine destiny has given the German people everything in the person of one man. Not only does he possess strong and ingenious statesmanship, not only is he ingenious as a soldier, not only is he the first worker and the first economist among his people but, and this is perhaps his greatest strength, he is an artist. He came from art, he devoted himself to art, especially the art of architecture, this powerful creator of great buildings. And now he has also become the Reich's builder."[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Hermann Goering*

Article 46: “Family honor and rights, the lives of persons, and private property, as well as religious convictions and practice, must be respected.  
Private property cannot be confiscated.”

*From the Hague Convention of 18 October 1907: “Rules of Land Warfare”*

*Introduction*

Adolf Hitler’s one and only visit to Paris lasted three hours in the early morning on June 23, 1940. One day after France surrendered to the Nazi Occupation, Hitler decided to take a curated “art tour,” influenced by his extensive study of the city from afar. The group of Nazi dignitaries landed around 5:30 A.M. and headed straight to Hitler’s favorite Parisian building, the ornate Palais Garnier. They drove through a still-sleeping city, past the Madeleine, down the Champs Elysées, to the Trocadéro, stopping at the Eiffel Tower and later paused in a moment of silence at the tomb of Napoleon at Les Invalides. The tour ended at the church of Sacré Coeur on Montmartre (which his chief architect, Albert Speer, dubbed “a surprising choice, even given Hitler’s taste”). As Hitler reportedly commented on their way back to the airport, “It was the dream of my life to be permitted to see Paris. I cannot say how happy I am to have that dream fulfilled today.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Hitler asked to speak with Speer later that evening and instructed him to prioritize the continued reconstruction of Berlin. He went on, “Wasn’t Paris beautiful? But Berlin must be made far more beautiful. In the past I often considered whether we would not have to destroy Paris. But when we are finished with Berlin, Paris will only be a shadow. So why should we destroy it?”[[3]](#footnote-3) Hitler would change his mind four years later when he instructed the Nazi commander left in charge of Paris to reduce it to “rubble” as the Allies approached. Fortunately for all subsequent generations, General Dietrich von Choltitz willfully ignored the last-ditch order.

Paris would not be completely spared though. Following an old tradition of military occupiers who pillage, the Nazis looted the land they took control of. They looted bank accounts, books, manuscripts, jewelry, musical instruments, relics, furniture, clothing, houses, supplies, weapons, and more under the auspices of their campaign to wipe Europe free of “Judeo-bolshevist” influence and make possible the perfect Aryan race of “Nordic Germans.” But what the Nazis looted perhaps most disastrously out of Paris was fine art. Paris, then the unquestioned capital of the art world, would serve as a prime target of the Nazi cultural agenda, set by Hitler and his misguided thoughts on the art worth controlling. By the end of the war, France was the most-looted nation in Western Europe, and the Nazis had displaced one-third of all French art in private hands.[[4]](#footnote-4) As will be explained in this work, the deliberate and sometimes organized, sometimes thieving operation in France served as evidence of a larger matter at work in the Nazi regime: the foremost role of aesthetics and culture in Hitler’s agenda.

But Hitler was not the first to incorporate a cultural dimension into his military campaign. While the Louvre Museum opened in 1793, Napoleon developed his own grand plans for it. The new Musée Napoléon was to provide an overview of art history, featuring “masterpieces” gathered from around the continent to provide models for French artists. Napoleon secured unequal treaties with various conquered territories that dictated the relinquishment of cultural property to France, and he had his soldiers gather the loot throughout Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and Prussia. He intended to make Paris the new Rome, to ensure his empire would outshine the Roman one. His cultural designs directly affected his military strategy, because he would leave cities that had chosen to sign treaties with untouched. In July of 1798 he conducted the first victory procession through Paris, displaying the loot his troops had gathered from the Italian campaign. Banners on the crates proclaimed: “Greece relinquished them; Rome lost them; their fate has changed twice, it will never change again.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Ultimately, Napoleon and his armies would spend two decades plundering the art of the nations it occupied. Of course, the art’s fate would change again after Napoleon’s fall, when just some was returned. Regardless, the looting was an unprecedented example of cultural property displacement in modern history, but 150 years later, Adolf Hitler would follow Napoleon’s lead and challenge that record.

Hitler himself wrote, “How it happened I myself no longer recall, but one day I made up my mind that I would be a painter, an artist.” As he saw it, his talent in painting apparently “was overcome only by [his] talent as a draughtsman, especially in all fields of architecture.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Others did not seem to agree though, and both dreams of the young Hitler would flounder after his rejection from the Vienna Academy of Art and the School of Architecture.[[7]](#footnote-7) The young man did at one point support himself financially by his brush, selling mostly painted postcards of scenes from the city. However, as the daughter of a frame manufacturer in Vienna who sold Hitler’s work explained: “These were the cheapest items we ever sold. The only ones who showed any interest in them were tourists who were looking for inexpensive souvenirs.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Of course, an authentic “Hitler” would sell for tens of thousands of Reichsmarks by 1944.

These aesthetic tendencies never left him though. In Vienna he developed a love for Neo-Baroque and Neoclassical architecture. He admired everything epic and impressive: Rome’s Colosseum, Saint Peter’s Basilica, the Pantheon, and especially the dome of Les Invalides. He took inspiration from Emperor Franz Josef’s grandiose Ring Road in Vienna and Haussmann’s iconic wrought iron Paris for his own urban plans. His taste in art leaned towards clarity and monumentalism, preferring images and sculptures of the ideal “Aryan,” perhaps epitomized by favored sculptor Arno Breker (who accompanied Hitler on his tour of Paris), and late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realist painters like Carl Spitzweg, Wilhelm Leibl and Hans Thoma. Peaceful landscapes, domestic interiors, nudes, images of agriculture, and images upholding war were common themes. He came to consider the modernist and abstract movements on the rise at the time, like Cubism, Expressionism, Impressionism, and Surrealism, as “degenerate” elements to be purged from the Reich.

According to Hitler’s official photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, when Hitler was asked why he had not become an architect the Fuehrer replied, “I decided to become the master builder of the Third Reich.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Hitler often had himself photographed and painted with plans and models and became a dictator fixated on the aesthetics of his empire. The Fuehrer personally designed the early posters, flags and images of the National Socialists, and maintained a heavy hand in the political and military parades, uniforms and insignia as well as art and architecture.[[10]](#footnote-10) Videos of the party’s meticulous and impressive rallies epitomize how strongly presentation featured in the Nazi regime. As a result of Hitler’s priorities, the arts became a fashionable part of the Nazi regime. Its parvenu leadership, Alfred Rosenberg, Hermann Goering and Joseph Goebbels all considered, and publicly presented, themselves as art aficionados and demonstrated their cultural expertise in various ways as they accumulated power, one of which comprised the looting of fine art.

Not coincidentally, when the Nazis first gained political power in the German state government of Thuringia, their early policies involved among other things, managing the arts and art education. From the beginning, Hitler saw culture as an integral part of his political and racial agendas. As he announced in a speech in 1937, “During the long years in which I planned the formation of a new Reich I gave much thought to the tasks which would await us in the cultural cleansing of the people’s life: there was to be a cultural renascence as well as a political and economic reform.”[[11]](#footnote-11) These two elements reflect his bifurcated agenda. By first cleansing society of what he considered undesirable cultural elements (like abstraction and any Jewish or Freemason artists), Hitler intended to make way for a great cultural legacy for his Reich. Much like Napoleon, he looked to the ancient Roman and Greek empires as models, considering their iconic ruins and surviving sculptures as their most influential legacies.

As he considered the aesthetic legacy the most important, he considered a cultural cleansing and renascence as among the most powerful tools to accomplish his agenda, namely that of social reform. Indeed, in *Mein Kampf* he explained,“I perceived clearly that the social task may never consist of welfare work, which is both ridiculous and useless, but rather in removing the deep-seated mistakes in the organization of our economic and cultural life which are bound to end in degradation of the individual.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Therefore, the arts and what to do about them featured at the center of Hitler’s plans for domination of Europe.

With his cultural plans for the new Aryan race, Hitler developed a tangible culmination to his cultural policies: the ultimate monument to himself. This was to happen in his adopted Austrian hometown of Linz. Given Hitler’s desire to avenge Napoleon’s looting of Germany, he also wanted to one-up the French emperor with his own museum, bigger and better than the Louvre. By choosing such a personal site, Hitler also brought his own glory to the forefront. He saw the Alpine town as the future cultural capital of Europe, despite the fact that he had only lived there from ages 16 to 18.

As George L. Mosse, one of the first major historians to draw attention to the topic of the cultural dimension to Nazism, wrote of the historiography,

As historians we were not accustomed to give aesthetics much weight as over against economic or social forces. We failed to see that the fascist aesthetic itself reflected the needs and hopes of contemporary society, that what we brushed aside as the so-called superstructure was in reality the means through which most people grasped the fascist message, transforming politics into a civic religion.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

Mosse notes the belated recognition by historians of the crucial role of the aesthetic in Hitler’s dissemination of his message. It has become clear that the aesthetics contributed to the function of Nazism as more of a “civic religion” whose cultural utopian ideas appealed to its population through a vehicle other than money and war. As Mosse indicates, the issues with Jewish and Slavic “degeneracy” and an aversion to modernism played into broader trends in German society at the time. Thus, Hitler and his Nazis used culture as a way to propagate their political and racial ideology about themselves, to suppress those they considered their enemies, and sometimes, to simply accumulate wealth.

While the Nazi approach and justifications were distinctive, their acts of pillage and theft (under the guise of “safeguarding”) follow a grand and global practice of manipulating art during wartime. Museums around the world feature pieces of culture and art that were wrenched from their home nations under such circumstances. While the phenomenon is anything but new, the World War II disruption catalyzed a sense of urgency about international definitions of and laws pertaining to the subject. It led to the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property, which expanded upon the legal parameters regarding cultural property during that had been first articulated internationally in the 1899 and 1907 Conventions (to both of which Germany was a signatory).[[14]](#footnote-14) It was the first international treaty to focus solely on matters of wartime protection of culture heritage.

By the end of the war, the Nazi looting was so catastrophic that it comprised one of the indictments against the party’s leadership standing trial at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal in 1945 and 1946.[[15]](#footnote-15) But the Nazis’ treatment of art and cultural property was not uniform. In Poland and Eastern Europe it constituted malicious attempts to wipe people and their cultures off the face of the planet: the Nazis did not consider the art of Poland worth saving. These stand in stark contrast to the French and Parisian case. Many Nazis were Francophiles and deemed much of French culture and society worth control and “safeguarding.” Their structured and organized campaign in the City of Light reflected this mild level of respect, for lack of a better word. Therefore, how the Nazi government and its leadership manipulated the unparalleled cultural resources of Paris most dramatically shows what happened to art, beyond sheer destruction, under Nazi Occupation.

This work will follow culture’s persistent role throughout the Nazi rise and fall, in order to ultimately comment on the messy, if almost inescapable, presence of culture in war. By analyzing the development of the ideology used to justify their treatment of fine art and looking at what the Nazis did when they first gained power in Germany, we can survey the stage they set for their planned European dominion. A case study of the Nazis’ art looting in Paris, the capital of the art world, reveals one significant example of how foreign art was treated throughout the war’s trajectory. And the story of postwar Allied restitution follows the art full circle and provides other examples of management of culture during wartime. As we will see, art and architecture are present in Hitler’s agenda from the outset until his final moments, and they remain relevant to the war’s story far beyond the end of hostilities, and beyond Nazi Germany.

In a telling episode, nine months after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 he ordered construction of the first major public building of his tenure: Munich’s *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* (House of German Art). He called upon his favorite architect, Paul Ludwig Troost to design the replacement for an exhibition center, which had burned down two years earlier. Hitler’s decision to prioritize the House of German Art was by no means accidental. It marked the beginning of a power-fueled culmination of a lifetime marked by art and aesthetics. The *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* was designed to architecturally epitomize the Third Reich’s commitment to and mastery of art, as dictated by Hitler’s tastes (See Appendix 1).

At the ceremony to lay the cornerstone on October 15, 1933, Hitler used a silver hammer to strike it in place for the benefit of a propaganda film’s cameras. Unfortunately the hammer shattered, resulting in one of the Fuehrer’s infamous fits of rage, which had to be edited out of the final film.[[16]](#footnote-16) The ironically disastrous opening presaged what would ultimately be a failed project. Despite the Nazis best efforts, culture could not be engineered as they hoped. The modernist and “degenerate” art pieces they destroyed, derided, and tried to suppress remain among the world’s highest-valued today, and Hitler’s beloved Linz Museum never came close to construction. However, the landmark *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* still stands intact. Today though, it is known as the Haus der Kunst, ironically (or fittingly) filled with the sort of contemporary art that Hitler would have despised.

*Chapter 1*

*The Nazis on Art: The Development of an Ideology of “Degeneracy”*

In the early morning hours of April 29, 1945 Adolf Hitler dictated his final personal testament. The brief document explains why he and his longtime companion Eva Braun waited so long for marriage, names close colleague Martin Bormann as his Executor, and expresses his wish that his and Braun’s bodies be burned at the site of their suicide, a Berlin bunker (which is today a parking lot). He also includes one other unexpectedly specific instruction:

The paintings in the collections which I have bought during the years have never been acquired for private purposes, but always exclusively for the creation of an art gallery in my native town of Linz a. d. Donau. It is my heartfelt desire that this legacy shall be fulfilled.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Later that day he had his doctor successfully test cyanide capsules on his dog, Blondi. The next afternoon, on April 30, Braun took the now-proven poison, as Hitler shot himself through the head. Per his instructions, their bodies were taken outside, doused in petrol and burned almost immediately.

Initially it seems curious that this powerful politician, military commander, subject of intense admiration and controversy and source of arguably one of the strongest cults of personality of modern history would mention an art gallery in his dying wishes. But as mentioned above, Hitler’s first major action as Chancellor in 1933 was to break ground on a brand new art museum and his first career choice was that of an artist. Art, architecture, and culture were fundamental to his aims, not incidental; the new Reich was not just about power, but also about a culture that exhibited and strengthened that power. The Nazis planned to reclaim and reframe history on their quest for military and political dominance, and culture played a major strategic role in this agenda. As he said to the Nuremberg Rally in 1935:

At some future date, people will be astonished to find that at the very time when National Socialism and its leaders were fighting to finish a heroic struggle for existence—a life-and-death struggle—the first impulses were given towards a revival and resurrection of German art…there was yet found time, in spite of everything, to lay the foundations of the temple of the goddess of Art.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Hitler makes clear the centrality of art to his plans, and with the “temple” and “goddess” word choices references what becomes another major theme: classicism as the simultaneous aesthetic and racial ideal.

Hitler’s personal interest in art and his previous rejection by the art establishment perhaps fueled his commitment to cultural control, with a distinct disdain for the then-rising modernism. He saw a society’s art and architecture as critical to its status and reputation. To the Nuremberg Parteitag of 1935 he said, “If I continually put architectural problems into the foreground when I speak on cultural subjects, that is because they lie nearest my heart, since for us they are the most pressing.”[[19]](#footnote-19) As Albert Speer, the regime’s chief architect and later Minister of Armaments and War Production, reflected about Hitler, “He described his desire to see his buildings erected as his life’s greatest wish.”[[20]](#footnote-20) But where did the National Socialist theories about art, race, politics and architecture originate? How did they develop into such a powerful ideology? And what was the role of these concepts in the war the Nazis came to fight? The answer, ironically, begins with a Jewish doctor.

Max Nordau, the more German-sounding pseudonym of Simcha Südfeld, a son of a rabbi from Hungary, published a bestselling book in two volumes in 1892 and 1893: *Entartung* or *Degeneration*. He had studied under French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, famous for his work on hysteria, and while not the first to apply the term “degeneration” to art, Nordau was the first to popularize the concept. He argued that those considered the avant-garde, like the Impressionists, Friedrich Nietzsche and Charles Baudelaire, were in fact mentally and physically ill, as a result of the “degeneration” of the urban metropolis lacking nature and farmland necessary for good health.

He asserted that visual artists like the Impressionists were actually suffering from “*nystangmus*, or trembling of the eyeball.” Building on arguments by Cesare Lombroso and Benedict Morel, Nordau highlighted the physicality of this degeneration, explaining that it is indicated by

"stigmata," or brandmarks—an unfortunate term derived from a false idea, as if degeneracy were necessarily the consequence of a fault, and the indication of it a punishment. Such stigmata consists of deformities, multiple and stunted growths in the first line of asymmetry, the unequal development of the two halves of the face and cranium...further, squint-eyes, hare-lips, irregularities in the form and position of teeth; pointed or flat palates, webbed or supernumerary fingers….[[21]](#footnote-21)

Degeneracy thus becomes a physical, inherent, racial characteristic, as well as a mental and moral one, by Nordau’s rationale.

He explains that “Science…has found, together with these physical stigmata, others of a mental order,” allegedly indicated by measurements of a person’s cranium and earlobes. This kind of degeneracy also manifests itself in “mental faculties”: “that which nearly all degenerates lack is the sense of morality and of right and wrong. For them there exists no law, no decency, no modesty.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Here he dismisses the notion of “art for art’s sake” or the idea that a work of art exists almost in a vacuum, as the momentary self-expression of the artist that creates it, unaffected by outside agendas or influences. Nordau argues instead that a work of art cannot be separated from the inherent morality or immorality of its creator. Even though the “degeneracy” is not the original fault of the artist, to Nordau, the populace must be protected from its dangerous influences inextricable from the “degenerate’s” work. In turn, “Those who share the emotions of the author, and hence are with him attracted and pleasurably excited by what is repugnant, diseased and evil, are the degenerate.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

Applying these concepts to the avant-garde, he writes, “These cripples form, unfortunately, the majority of professional authors and artists, and their many noxious followers often enough stifle true and original talent.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Accordingly, Nordau argues that these modern artists need to be controlled, like criminals: “It never occurs to us to permit the criminal by organic disposition to ‘expand’ his individuality in crime, and just as little can it be expected of us to permit the degenerate artist to expand his individuality in immoral works of art.”[[25]](#footnote-25) He also discounts the idea of a self-regulating critical artistic environment: “The uncertainty of comprehension and taste among the majority of mankind, and the incompetency of most professional critics, allow these intruders to make their nest among the arts, and to dwell there as parasites their life long.”[[26]](#footnote-26) He does not consider humanity able to discern the quality of art. To him, the masses need protection and guidance from the poisonous influence of the degenerates: ideally, his.

Nordau’s argument thus entwines art, eugenics and the morality of artists. It was in this context that Dr. Hans F. K Guenther, eugenicist, race researcher, and one of the first Nazi theorists, published *Rassenkunde* or *Racial Science* after World War I. The Freiburg native had trained as a linguist before shifting his studies to race. His 1922, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes (The Racial Characteristics of the German People)* had 16 editions by the end of 1934, and his 1930 *Racial Characteristics of the Jewish People* was among the most referenced in Nazi Jewish literature.[[27]](#footnote-27) Picking up on Nordau’s racialization of art and dismissal of art for art’s sake, he clarifies the “Nordic” aesthetic: “The Hellenic image of beauty is absolutely Nordic. Greek sculpture shows again and again the pure Nordic race.”[[28]](#footnote-28) Soon thereafter, he published *Rasse und Stil* (*Race and Style*) in 1926 to prove that the style of a piece of art reflects its creator’s race. Guenther presented his findings with apparent scientific backing in a readable manner, and they served as foundation for Nazi racial arguments. Notably, in the above quote he explicitly connects classicism with the Nordic race and the Nazi ideal, a concept also espoused by Hitler and other Nazis.

Meanwhile, currents of anti-modernism in Germany and Berlin had been building, culminating in what became known as the Tschudi Affair around 1908. Hugo von Tschudi, forward-thinking head of the Berlin Nationalgalerie, had gradually been acquiring Impressionist and other avant-garde, French artwork since his appointment in 1896. He made the museum the world’s first to purchase a Cézanne, but his apparent preference for “pictures of modern taste, some of them of foreign origin” over the German works that had been hanging angered Kaiser Wilhelm II. In addition, Tschudi had overspent his budget. When he requested medical leave, the Kaiser reportedly did not intend for the director to return.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Wilhelm considered himself an art connoisseur, who had studied drawing as a child and maintained his own opinions about aesthetics. Like Hitler, he believed beauty only existed in classical works and disapproved of deviation from perceived reality. He saw modernism as a threat to the existing order in art as well as politics, namely the monarchy itself.[[30]](#footnote-30) In this context, Tschudi’s and other German museums’ foreign acquisitions sparked what became known as the Vinnen Dispute around 1910, an attack on modern European painting led by former artist Carl Vinnen, who argued in *A Protest of German Artists* that support for foreign works was financially threatening native German art and that German artists were being seduced away from their heritage by fashionable foreign movements.[[31]](#footnote-31) This prompted an organized response from a group of artists including Gustav Klimt, Alfred Lichtwark, Max Liebermann, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky. In fact, the Tschudi Affair ended up as something of a victory for modernism, since the popular uproar over the loss of Tschudi prompted the Kaiser to step more carefully to protect his already precarious reputation. Tschudi was reinstated in 1909, although he quickly moved away to Munich to become head of Bavarian state galleries. The successor Wilhelm did name ironically ended up continuing the foreign and modernist acquisitions. But the nation’s brewing antimodernist sentiments had revealed themselves.

While Dr. Guenther wrote as a scientist, Professor Paul Schultze-Naumburg published his 1928 *Kunst und Rasse* (*Art and Race*) as an architect and painter. To him, the artist has no choice but to express his race in his work, which also affects how an audience interprets the work.[[32]](#footnote-32) In his words,

Every living being strives with all means in his power to propagate its kind and to manifest its own kind also in art. Art is capable of expressing not alone its physical principle, but it also tries to secure supremacy in every way for its own spiritual law. The battle of ‘Weltanschauung’ [systematic ideology or total view of life] to a large extent is fought out in the field of art.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Schultze-Naumburg’s theories fall in line with Nordau’s, in that both saw anything other than traditionally classic beauty as evidence of the racial degeneration reflected in physical and mental defects. This professor would play an important role in the first official Nazi actions in the cultural sphere. In fact, a second edition of *Kunst und Rasse* in 1934 praised Hitler’s nascent cultural policies, particularly those against the Jews. He noted, “The eradicating of the inferior is no longer an ideology remote from reality but has been embodied in the laws and thus become reality.”[[34]](#footnote-34) To Schultze-Naumburg, the significance of art lay in its power over a deeper part of humanity. He believed that influence over this part was crucial to convey political, racial and “spiritual” ideas. He proclaimed in his lecture series, “The Struggle over Art:” “For, just as in German politics, a battle over life and death rages in German art today. Alongside the struggle for power, the struggle for art must be fought through with the same earnestness and the same decision, if we do not want to sacrifice the German soul.”[[35]](#footnote-35) To him, alleged health of the German art world reflected the health of the “German soul.”

The Nazi Party newspaper, the Völkischer Beobachter, People’s Observer, or VB, extensively covered Schultze-Naumburg’s speeches and books and came to take his positions on certain issues.[[36]](#footnote-36) He also became one of the Kampfbund f*ü*r Deutsche Kultur (Combat Association for German Culture)’s keynote speakers. Chief Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg had likely founded the Kampfbund in 1928 with the goal of educating Germans about culture’s role in Germany’s politics and nationhood.[[37]](#footnote-37) The association declared as its mission to “defend the value of the German essence” by promoting “authentic expression of German cultural life” and teaching the German people about the “connections between race, art and science” through lectures and publications.[[38]](#footnote-38) Chapter meetings also discussed topics like fears of “female emancipation” and the ultimate horror of “Americanization” or “unbridled materialism” which allegedly stemmed from the immorality and “unparalleled extravagance” of the female gender.[[39]](#footnote-39)

Alfred Barr, an art history professor and future director of the MOMA, managed to sneak into Stuttgart’s first Kampfbund meeting in 1933. In a 1945 article in the Magazine of Art he describes the reading of the group’s “politico-cultural faith” manifesto” to a large audience of “almost liturgical solemnity.”[[40]](#footnote-40) He quotes the meeting’s keynote speaker, Kulturminister Mergenthaler’s emotional conclusion:

Upon us falls the holy responsibility to clear for our people the pathways of the cultural realm. For this we live and strive. For this we fight, and we will leave nothing undone in order to make art in Germany German again…. And come what may, let this alone be our eternal watchword: Germany, only Germany, entirely alone![[41]](#footnote-41)

With a practically religious fervor, the *Kampfbund* propagated a mixture of German nationalism and art criticism and organized competitions and exhibitions to support the preferred kind of “German art.” As the Director of the Württemberg State Theatressaid to the group,

The National Revolution has stirred the deepest depths of our people. The reformation of the political life of Germany to its original condition has been achieved. Now will German art and science carry German culture deep into the spiritual life of our people. To build up this great cultural work, to watch over it, to guard its purest springs, is as I see it, the function of the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur.*[[42]](#footnote-42)

Barr’s report strongly evokes Mosse’s historiographical assertion about the Nazi aesthetic appeal as functioning as something of a “civic religion.”

Designed to encourage local discussions and activism with its division into fairly independent chapters, Kampfbund membership grew to 2,100 by January 1932.[[43]](#footnote-43) At first, the Kampfbund did not directly associate itself with party politics. For its 1930 three-day festival though, the association chose Weimar, the capital of the first German state under Nazi control.[[44]](#footnote-44) Weimar had fittingly played host to a German literary and cultural movement of classicism during the late 1700s, notably involving Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller and Johann Gottfried Herder. From then on the Kampfbund’s political agenda only grew clearer. By 1932, as a Nazi party document stated, the organization “struggles for the promotion of German culture as defined by Adolf Hitler, however it does not restrict its work to members of the Nazi party.” It apparently was tasked to “prepare them [non-members] for entry into the Nazi party.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

All the while, Hitler’s own cultural ideology continued to emerge, influenced in part by these other theories. As he said on the subject of modernist artists:

These fellows claim that they see nature that way. We should examine their eyesight. If they are really afflicted with defective vision, we can only be sorry for these poor creatures. We must make sure that they do not pass on this defect to their children. But if they only simulate this distortion, then it becomes a matter for the Ministry of the Interior, and steps must be taken to instigate prosecution against such individuals.[[46]](#footnote-46)

The suggestions that modernist artists need ophthalmologist help and deserve criminal punishment strongly echo Nordau’s arguments.

Beyond attacking the degenerates though, Hitler reveals his opinion on culture as central to his thoughts on the Aryan race, its legacies, and his arguments about German nationalism. To him, “No people lives longer than the evidences of its civilization (*Kultur)*!”[[47]](#footnote-47) He evoked the German situation after World War I and highlighted art and architecture as a crucial part of the nation’s comeback:

Through us and in us the nation has risen again. When we to-day summon German art to new, great tasks, we would conceive of these tasks not merely as the fulfillment of the wishes and hopes of the present, but in the spirit of a millennial inheritance. In doing homage to this eternal national genius we summon into our present world the great spirit of the creative force of the past.[[48]](#footnote-48)

The “new” German art would exist to Hitler, very much in opposition with its peers and rivals, notably, France. According to Hitler, a firm grasp on culture would solidify a nation’s historical prominence; the master artists and creators of history, mostly since the Renaissance, represented the pinnacle of artistic expression after which all others should model themselves. As he proclaimed at the opening of the *Haus der Kunst*, “I desire Germany’s cultural regeneration. A suppressed nation must show its oppressors its values, the highest of which are its cultural achievements.”[[49]](#footnote-49) He saw culture as a tool in his political battle, as well as his racial one. Germany’s cultural “regeneration” would comprise one of the most important components of the country’s international comeback.

Following the tradition of Nordau, Guenther and Schultze-Naumburg, the culture Hitler propagated featured constant allusions to classicism. As Albert Speer explained in postwar interrogations, “Hitler regarded the Greek culture and interpretation of life in every sphere as absolutely perfect. In his view, they were the highest ideal to which youth could aspire. This was also the reason for his exclusive taste in architecture and sculpture.”[[50]](#footnote-50) Hitler made clear that the human body should be artistically represented in its most “perfect” form. Just as the Nazis tried to engineer the ideal Aryan race, they tried to monopolize the ideal cultural aesthetic to match, by picking and choosing the “masters” to comprise their ideal. To Hitler, there was an “eternal” form of art: the Greek-Nordic kind. It was simply a matter of separating the wheat from the chaff to allow the “masters” to take their rightful place in the spotlight.

Naturally, all those masters were claimed as members of the Aryan race. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler wrote,

All that we admire on this earth—science, art, technical skill and invention—is the creative product of only a small number of nations, and originally, perhaps, of one single race. All this culture depends on them for its very existence. If they are ruined, they carry with them all the beauty of this earth into the grave. If we divide the human race into three categories—founders, maintainers, and destroyers of culture—the Aryan stock alone can be considered as representing the first category.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Hitler and other Nazi theorists argued that the best of European culture was in essence, “Germanic-volkish” or “Western-Nordic” in that the creators’ ideas matched those of the Nazi ideology. Given the Protestant Reformation’s strong influence on German nationalism, the Nazi newspaper VB also maintained that a self-conscious German political and cultural identity was, among other things, rooted in Martin Luther and the Reformation. As a result, it sought to appropriate the Reformation’s symbolism.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Inconveniently, the iconic painter of the Protestant tradition, Rembrandt van Rijn, was Dutch, not German. So the paper encouraged party members to read Julius Langbehn’s 1890 book, *Rembrandt as Educator,* which argued that Rembrandt was in fact quintessentially of the “southern German race” the model for Germany’s “third reformation.”[[53]](#footnote-53) This book, printed in 39 editions, went on:

The German wants to follow his own head, and nobody did more so than Rembrandt. In this sense, he must almost be called the most German of all German painters, and even the most German of all German artists. Needless to say, his outward importance does not yet accord with such an elevated and unique inner worth; he is appreciated, but not enough.”[[54]](#footnote-54)

To Langbehn, the fact that Rembrandt had been born in the Netherlands actually strengthens the case for his “volkish” essence: “It is revealing and an external confirmation of the eccentric character of the Germans that their most national artist is only inwardly part of them, but not also politically; the German national spirit had, so to speak, driven the national body apart.” [[55]](#footnote-55) Similar “volkish” claims were made about Shakespeare, Michelangelo, George Friedrich Handel, and Leonardo da Vinci.

Hitler was known to have read Langbehn, and a tale about Hitler the rising politician in the early 1920s indicates his opinions clearly. While visiting Berlin’s National Gallery with Ernst Hanfstaengl, the heir to an art publishing house in Munich, Hitler spent much time admiring Rembrandt’s *Man in the Golden Helmet*. As Hanfstaengl wrote later:

Hitler began to pontificate: “There you have something unique. Look at that heroic, soldier-like expression. It proves that Rembrandt, in spite of the many pictures he painted in Amsterdam’s Jewish quarter, was at heart a true Aryan and a German.”…Then, barely glancing at the Berlin Vermeers, we galloped in search of Hitler’s other artistic hero, Michelangelo.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Hitler’s artistic ideology clearly appears constructed by picking and choosing the information that served his purpose.

As Albert Speer wrote of Hitler’s taste: “in the realm of architecture, as in painting and sculpture, Hitler really remained arrested in the world of his youth: the world of 1880 to 1910, which stamped its imprint on his artistic taste as on his political and ideological conceptions.”[[57]](#footnote-57) In regards to the development of National Socialist style, Speer went on: “There was no ‘Fuehrer’s style,’ for all that the party press expiated on the subject. What was branded as the official architecture of the Reich was only the neoclassicism transmitted by Troost; it was multiplied, altered, exaggerated, and sometimes distorted to the point of ludicrousness.” Paul Ludwig Troost was an architect who proved very influential to Hitler’s early time in power. Hitler’s visits to Munich regularly began with trips to the architect’s studio to check up on the Fuehrer’s various building projects. His death in 1934 left a vacuum that Speer himself would fill. As Speer explained, Troost’s neoclassicism was key: “Hitler appreciated the permanent qualities of the classical style all the more because he thought he had found certain points of relationship between the Dorians and his own Germanic world.” [[58]](#footnote-58) The classical theme in his taste in art thus spread to his taste in architecture and mirrored the opinions of Guenther and Schlutze-Naumburg.

Another producer of Nazi philosophy, Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg, took it upon himself to become chief theorist of the Nazi ideology, eventually acquiring the title of “Deputy for the Supervision of the Total Spiritual and Political Indoctrination and Education of the NSDAP.” The son of a German shoemaker and an Estonian mother who grew up under the rule of the Russian tsar, he studied architecture and engineering in Riga and Moscow before joining the German forces in 1918 against the Bolsheviks, and joining the Nazi Party the year after. In 1930 he published his almost indecipherable *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, which despite its convoluted arguments became the second most popular book in Nazi Germany. (At the Nuremberg trials it became very clear that few Nazi leaders really understood the Reichsleiter’s opinions. [[59]](#footnote-59)) Around one-third of the book discusses the role of art in society, in particular how the National Socialists would rescue German culture from a dismal recent past. He details a tension between a lack of intellectualism after World War I, and a need for release, for empowerment: “The consequence of this great tension was the abortion called Expressionism. An entire generation cried out for expression but it had nothing at all to express. It cried out for beauty but it no longer had any ideal of beauty…inwardly undisciplined, ‘primitive’ art was swallowed up by a corrupted generation.”[[60]](#footnote-60) This plays into what became a common refrain of the Nazi approach to culture. As published in the *VB*, “Only National Socialism has the power to protect the cultural traditions of the nation and to secure the birth of a new Germany creativity.”[[61]](#footnote-61) The Party established its own monopoly over cultural criticism and assumed something of a rescuing position.

It is important to mention as well the anti-Semitism that played an increasingly prominent role in the dialogue, as it did in most Nazi arguments. The concept of the Jewish conspiracy in the art world, collectors, dealers and artists themselves, remained strong. One example is found in the *VB*, which warned its readers:

Now is revealed the picture of Jewish monopoly-art already only too well known: the unclean collaboration of certain branches of great industry, dominated by Jews, with the Marxist parties and with the fuzzy ideologues of certain bourgeois circles. The result: the proletarianization and nullification of the German man, his denigration to a domestic pet of the Jew.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Jewish or not, the undesirable modern art became known as evidence of “cultural bolshevism,” and as a result the art became a racial and political enemy of the state.

These various strains of ideological thought about art, culture, politics and German identity swirled together into what became a veritable Nazi agenda, with policies, and very real actions. As Joseph Goebbels said at the Reich Culture Chamber in 1933, “Revolutions are never limited to the purely political. They reach into every area of human interaction. Science and art do not remain unaffected. We understand politics in a higher sense.”[[63]](#footnote-63) Their understandings culminate in a few main coherent points: first, the racialization of art in a way that defines what constitutes “good” and “bad” art, and provides further justification for later eugenics policies and second, the use of classicism in a German nationalist discourse to model the state after the Greek and Roman empires,. Both involve the idea of Germany as a victim of sorts, needing to defend its cultural production from “degenerate” and foreign threats to its integrity, so that it may outshine everyone else, with a unique definition of this integrity. The Nazis quickly got to work, planning and implementing various schemes to protect its Reich from such threats, as outlined in the next chapter.

*Chapter 2*

*Words into Action: Nazi Germany’s Cultural Home Front and its Early Expansion*

The National Socialists won their first seats of political influence during the January 1930 elections in the German state of Thuringia. Dr. Wilhelm Frick was offered the two ministries of his choice, and chose both the Interior and Education, which provided control over education and thereby, the propagation of culture, and the police. Frick hired the familiar architect and theorist Professor Schultze-Naumburg as head of a new arts school for painting, applied arts and architecture and appointed Dr. Guenther, the racial and artistic researcher also mentioned in the previous chapter, as a professor at a local university. The milestone cultural policy of Frick’s tenure, the April 1930 “Ordinance against Negro Culture,” was designed to free the Thuringia from “immoral and foreign racial elements in the arts,” namely African-American influenced art and music.[[64]](#footnote-64) His policy would constitute the beginning of a long list pertaining to culture in Thuringia, ultimately spreading far beyond its, and Germany’s, borders. While the primary goal was the “cleansing” and “renascence” of Germany’s culture, the Nazi imperial agenda would ultimately ensure the expansion of these cultural policies in ways that exploited their foreign territories for the benefit of a regenerated *deutsche Kultur.*

Schultze-Naumburg soon oversaw the elimination of traces of the Bauhaus architecture movement, which was inextricably tied to the Weimar region. Bauhaus, a school founded in 1919 by Walter Gropius was one of the most famous in Europe and believed in teaching all of the plastic arts together. The line between “craftsman” and “artist” was to be blurred beyond recognition to escape the alleged snobbery between the two “classed” jobs. Hitler and Schultze-Naumburg found the concept un-German. The latter fired the school’s prominent architecture, painting and sculpture professors, in addition to removing the likes of Paul Klee, Otto Dix and Ernst Barlach from the state’s Schlossmuseum and forbidding the music of Stravinsky, all for fear of “Judeo-Bolshevist” influence.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Frick’s adviser, Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel, later explained that these politicians recognized they were not yet strong enough to make large outright political and economic changes, “but they were convinced that they had finally found the opportunity to turn this state into a cell…from which the forces of moral and spiritual renewal could reach out into the Reich.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Frick therefore used his position to make changes through culture, with police power to back them up. However, Frick and Schultze-Naumburg’s time in power in Thuringia did not last past April of 1931. Strong local opposition built up against the racist prayers instituted in schools, the unpopular university appointment of Guenther, and an unwelcome police purge. But these short-lived policies were just the beginning.

In 1933, Joseph Goebbels, the Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, founded the Reich Culture Chamber, which included the Reich Film, Music, Theatre, Press, Writing, Radio and Fine Arts Chambers. These organizations attempted to coordinate all forms of culture, and purge them of “all unwanted and damaging elements.” In addition, only members of the Chambers were “allowed to be productive in our cultural life” in the Third Reich. [[67]](#footnote-67) Permits were required for any exhibitions and performances.[[68]](#footnote-68) The Chambers yielded much propaganda for the empire, like films glorifying the Hitler Youth and justifying the Euthanasia Program, nationalist songs and National Socialist-themed theatre.[[69]](#footnote-69) The role of culture became one of political communication. By 1935, the Chamber boasted over 100,000 members.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Pretty soon, artists, art dealers, and museum officials known to create, sell or support modernist, “degenerate” art were attacked personally and many lost their jobs. After being falsely accused of Jewishness by Nazi students, the Bauhaus-affiliated Oskar Schlemmer lost his professorship in 1932 at the Berlin *Vereinigte Staatsschulen für freie und angewandete Kunst* (United State Schools for Fine and Applied Art). The renowned artist ended up working for a company that painted commercial murals, at one point painting camouflage on factories and military buildings.[[71]](#footnote-71) Expressionist Emil Nolde had been asked to submit a “voluntary” resignation to the Prussian Academy of Arts, as had Otto Dix, Max Lieberman, Mies van der Rohe and Erich Mendelsohn. Unlike the others though, Nolde considered himself a loyal Nazi who had joined the National Socialist Party and persistently refused to resign. He did not want to “stand aside” but rather wanted to open people’s eyes to art because “this sense is neglected, it is as if it must be born anew”[[72]](#footnote-72) He would maintain his membership to the Chamber of Culture even after hundreds of his paintings had been censured or burned. However, after fighting an apparently doomed fight, he was eventually expelled in 1941 “because of a lack of reliability.”[[73]](#footnote-73) As another Expressionist, Ernst Barlach said of artists under Nazi Germany, “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 and if possible destroyed.”[[74]](#footnote-74)

The great irony of Nazi art policy was that for all its rules, it never successfully seemed to clarify the specific “ideal art” that Hitler preached about and intended to epitomize the Third Reich. At least, very few people seemed able to completely understand it, let alone enforce it, particularly at the beginning. In his memoir, Albert Speer reflected how,

During those early months after the taking of power, a few, at least, of the schools of modern painting, which in 1937 were to be branded along with the rest, still had a fighting chance…. There was something fantastic about the absolute authority Hitler could assert over his closest associates of many years, even in matters of taste. Goebbels had simply groveled before Hitler. We were all in the same boat.[[75]](#footnote-75)

The groveling he referred to was reflected in the tale of Speer’s assignment to renovate Goebbels’ house in 1933. Speer explained that he had decorated the house with some Nolde watercolors borrowed from the Berlin National Gallery. Apparently, “Goebbels and his wife were delighted with the paintings—until Hitler came to inspect and expressed his severe disapproval. Then the Minister summoned me immediately: ‘The pictures have to go at once; they’re simply impossible!’”[[76]](#footnote-76) With similar irony, Hermann Goering had commissioned the “degenerate” Otto Dix to paint portraits of his children before Hitler’s rejection of the iconic German artist.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The effects of the confused vision of Hitler’s artistic taste can be seen most vividly in the organization (or lack thereof) leading up to the *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) to be held at the brand new *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* in Munich in 1937. The exhibition had been conceived, according to Hitler, “to give the honest German artist a platform on which to exhibit” and “to give the German people a chance to see and purchase this work.”[[78]](#footnote-78) All German artists at home and abroad were called to put forward their art. A jury of nine artists and an architect initially sifted through the submissions for the exhibit, but seemed unable to choose in the way Hitler wanted. As Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diaries:

We are looking at the selections of the jury. The sculptures are passable, but the paintings are in some cases outright catastrophic. They hung pieces that immediately produce horror. That’s what happens with a jury of artists. They all look at the school, at names and intention, and most of them lost any sense of the real art of painting. The Fuehrer is wild with rage.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Even though Goebbels apparently came around to understanding Hitler’s taste in the “real art of painting” the jury would not; it was disbanded and replaced by Hitler’s personal photographer and official “Photo Chronicler of the Reich,” Heinrich Hoffman. He rapidly chose about 1,500 of the about 15,000 submissions to comprise the Munich exhibit.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Beginning in May 1936, the relationship between the Nazi government and the German art world shifted even more drastically. A law went into effect authorizing the confiscation of all “degenerate” art in Germany’s museums. Not surprisingly, the exact meaning of “degenerate” was never explicitly defined, but loosely seemed to refer to any art created by Jews or with Jewish themes, art advocating pacifism, art with Marxist or socialist themes, images showing deformed people, and all Expressionist and abstract art.[[81]](#footnote-81) On July 6 the first purge happened at Karlsruhe’s Kunsthalle, which lost its entire 145-piece collection of modern art.[[82]](#footnote-82) Museums around the country scrambled to protect their art from this purge by returning loans and removing what they could from museum premises.[[83]](#footnote-83) Despite this, the state collections of cities from Cologne, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Essen, to Berlin, lost significant amounts of their holdings. By the end of the campaign, the confiscation committees had taken about 16,000 works of art from Germany’s public collections, ostensibly for an upcoming exhibition on “degenerate” art.[[84]](#footnote-84) Goebbels had approved the Reich Chamber of Culture to “select and secure for an exhibition, works of German degenerate art since 1910, both painting and sculpture, which are now in collections owned by the German Reich, by provinces and municipalities.”[[85]](#footnote-85) The exhibit would be educational, designed to show the German people just how dangerous art could be and how to identify undesirable art. Conceived as a juxtaposition with the “good” exhibition in the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*, the *Entartete* exhibit was supposed to show viewers just how problematic and dangerous modernism and other artistic trends had become.

In November 1936, Goebbels also forbade “the conduct of art criticism as it has been practiced to date…. The art critic will be replaced by the art editor…. In the future only those art editors will be allowed to report on art who approach the task with an undefiled heart and National Socialist convictions.”[[86]](#footnote-86) He asserted that he had “granted German critics four years after our assumption of power to adapt themselves to National Socialist principles”; they had apparently failed to meet the deadline and the Nazis had decided to take over. First articulated in Nordau’s writings, a monopoly over artistic taste was instituted in reality.

The ultimate display of “acceptable” culture would happen soon thereafter. The fifth annual “Day of German Art” celebrating the opening of the first Great German Art Exhibit at the *Haus der Kunst* took place on July 18, 1937 in Munich. (The first annual “Day” had happened at the ceremony laying the building’s cornerstone.) It featured a parade of about seven thousand, supposedly representing the history of “German” culture, from Viking ships to Charlemagne, Henry the Lion of Saxony to German Renaissance artists (See Appendix 2). It culminated in a passionate speech by Hitler in front of the museum. As Paul Ortwin Rave, then curator at the *Nationalgalerie* reported,

This ceremonial speech had a particularly frightening tone…in power-mad, overblown, scornful words came the true message. He forbade artists to use anything but the forms seen in nature in their paintings. Should they nevertheless be so stupid or sick as to continue their present ways, the medical establishment and criminal courts should put a stop to the fraud and corruption.[[87]](#footnote-87)

Hitler reportedly went on to exclaim: “We will, from now on, lead an unrelenting war of purification, an unrelenting war of extermination, against the last elements which have displaced our Art.”[[88]](#footnote-88) Painting the “true” German art as a victim to other “elements” which had dominated the art world, Hitler’s exhibit would allegedly elevate the Third Reich’s cultural achievements to their rightful place in the spotlight, alone. His reference to consequences for artists from the “medical establishment” also evoke Nordau’s argument and highlight the eugenic tone of his cultural agenda. The exhibit would also be annual.

There was tremendous nationalist emphasis on the exclusively German art: “The senseless mixture of art groups which confuses the visitor is no longer possible. German art is not every work of art made in Germany. German art is art made in Germany by German artists. Grown in Germany, not artificially raised.”[[89]](#footnote-89) In addition, art in the exhibit had to be “art that people can comprehend. Because only the art that the simple man can understand is true art.”[[90]](#footnote-90) This point about easy comprehension was a direct affront to the modernist approaches to art that were concurrently transforming the global art scene, characterized by a disregard for Hitler’s beloved realism. The argument also elucidated art’s new role as disseminator of Nazi doctrine: its meaning had to be accessible to all Germans so it could serve that purpose. The Exhibition was in part to teach the German people about “their” newly outlined culture and art. As a Nazi journal focused on politics and culture, *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* (edited by Rosenberg) reported of the exhibition:

The annual exhibition in the House of German Art is more than a display of art…. On its banner stand the words of the Fuehrer: “Art is a mighty and fanatical mission.” National Socialism has removed art for all times out of the sphere of individuality and has put it at the service of the community…. The artistic struggle is no longer an aesthetic one, but one for the mobilization of the German character. Artistic change is the symbol of political change.[[91]](#footnote-91)

As seen microcosmically in this ideology behind the official exhibition, the Nazi Party charged art and culture with race and nationalist politics and used it to convey these politics to the public.

The heralded Great German Art Exhibition was itself a failure from a business standpoint. Attendance was poor and Hitler ultimately bought most of the works on display for the government since no one else had. The *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibit on the other hand, which opened the next day, was a great success with around two million visitors, about three and a half times more than the exhibit in the *Haus*. Himmler was so upset by the public response to the Degenerateexhibit that he closed it early.[[92]](#footnote-92) It was to be the last public showing of modernist art under the Third Reich.

The organizers did everything in their power to make the works of art unappealing and to highlight their “degeneracy” by the presentation. They put the paintings in side rooms at the Archaeological Institute and hung the works haphazardly, with poor lighting, cramped them together on the walls, intermixed with insulting graffiti. Children were forbidden from the “obscene” exhibit, which had been advertised as: “Tortured Canvas, Spiritual Decay, Sick Dreamers, Mentally Ill Incompetents, Awarded Prizes by Jewish Cliques.”[[93]](#footnote-93) Even the catalogue Goebbels designed for the exhibit was printed in poor quality, with vulgar commentary on the “decadent” art pictured.[[94]](#footnote-94) The *Haus* would host eight Great German Art Exhibitions between 1937 and 1944 and the Degenerate Art exhibit would tour Germany and Austria for the subsequent three years.[[95]](#footnote-95) As mentioned above though, the lines between acceptable and not remained blurry: Cubist sculptor Rudolf Belling had a work of art in both the first Great German Art and the Degenerate Art Exhibitions (See Appendices 3 and 4).[[96]](#footnote-96) Because the curatorial decisions were left in the hands of a few subjective individuals without differentiated guidelines, this was almost bound to happen.

Hermann Goering, the perpetual art collector sent his agent Sepp Angerer to the “Degenerate” exhibition to pull aside certain pieces that he knew had great monetary value, despite Hitler’s aesthetic and moral problems with them. He used works by Cézanne, Munch, and van Gogh, among others, to garner capital to buy the Old Masters and tapestries more to his taste. This procedure became commonplace among Nazi leadership. In June of 1938 Hitler signed a law, which freed the government from all claims of compensation for the (ironically titled) “safeguarded” works. Goebbels reported in his diary that he hoped to “make some money from this garbage” and the Party leadership formed a Commission for the Exploitation of Degenerate Art.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Always cognizant of pretenses of legality, the Commission members themselves were not supposed to sell anything, but rather appointed four art dealers to market the works. Karl Buchholz, Ferdinand Möller, Bernhard Boehmer and Hildebrand Gurlitt were appointed for their experience with modern art. Notably, Gurlitt had been previously fired from the directorship of the art museum in Zwickau for exhibiting modernist art and having a Jewish grandmother.[[98]](#footnote-98)

In 1938 Karl Habertsock, Exploitation Commission member and dealer suggested the idea of a public auction for the confiscated art. Hitler and Goebbels agreed, and in June of 1939, over 100 of the pieces were sold in Lucerne, Switzerland. Joseph Pulitzer was present with other prospective buyers from around the world and reflected, “To safeguard this art for posterity, I bought—defiantly! …The real motive in buying was to preserve the art.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Prices were for the most part kept deliberately low as most in the audience assumed the proceeds would go to the German war cause; a Kandinsky oil painting now at New York’s Guggenheim went for approximately one hundred dollars.[[100]](#footnote-100) *Beaux Arts,* a French journal identified the atmosphere as “stifling,” and described how the auctioneer, Theodore Fischer, would “sneer” at certain “degenerate” pieces and smile when no one bid on them.[[101]](#footnote-101)

The auction served both for efficient financial gain and to relieve the bursting repository where the confiscations had been stored. However, the works did not sell as well as hoped, bringing in a total of a mere 516,397 Reichsmarks (35,000 pounds sterling).[[102]](#footnote-102) Contrary to the officially publicized story, the money was moved to accounts in London and none of the proceeds went to German museums. Franz Hoffman, chairman of the Committee suggested in desperation that the “undisposable remainder” be “burned in a bonfire as a symbolic propaganda action. I myself would be happy to deliver a suitably caustic funeral oration.”[[103]](#footnote-103) While others were shocked by the notion and tried to save as much as possible, Goebbels sanctioned the plan. On March 20, 1939, 1,004 paintings and sculptures and 3,825 drawings, watercolors, and graphics were burned in the courtyard of the Berlin Fire Department’s headquarters.[[104]](#footnote-104)

As his control over Germany’s art solidified, Hitler shifted his thinking outwards, to foreign art. More specifically, he had been eyeing the collections of Germany’s traditional rival, France. Given Napoleon’s own ransacking of Prussia in the 1790s to fill the Louvre museum, one political priority of Hitler’s became the goal of getting the German art back. With this in mind, Propaganda Minister Goebbels and Martin Bormann, on behalf of Hitler, discreetly instructed Dr. Otto Kümmel, director of the Berlin State Museums and some of his assistants to go to France to research and produce a comprehensive list of all the works of art Germany needed to take back. (In fact, the French had put together lists much like the Report during the First World War about the French works in Germany, although nothing much came of them.[[105]](#footnote-105)) From 1939, these art historians had posed as researchers of other topics in French museums and libraries and published a *Memorandum and Lists of Art Looted by the French in the Rhineland in 1794*. Their task soon expanded to all “works of art and valuable objects which since 1500 have been transferred to foreign ownership, whether without our consent or by questionable legal transactions” from anywhere in Germany.

What became a 338-page book entitled *Geraubt Kulturgüter* (Stolen Culture Goods) also outlined the historical circumstances of the looting from Germany, providing justification for reclamation as well as discussion of the supposed “French Psychology of Looting.”[[106]](#footnote-106) The scope of the report’s claims spread to the Hermitage Museum in the U.S.S.R. and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the United States, including everything from military banners from the Thirty Years War, to paintings that had been legally purchased to paintings from the private collection of the King of England. Some 1,800 works were demanded from all of France’s museums and major private collections. The particular targeting of “the main culprit, France,” Germany’s longtime enemy made sense given their tangled pasts. As Kümmel wrote, “It is questionable whether the entire French possessions would be enough to meet these claims. In view of the justification of these claims, even the most extreme ones, the French could offer no objections.”[[107]](#footnote-107) Interestingly, “degenerate art” pieces were also included in the Kümmel Report, even as they were being destroyed and sold in Germany.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Ultimately the Report was presented to the Reich’s Chancellery in January of 1941 but kept secret. Only five typed copies were made, and its conclusions were never actually applied. Nazi leadership worried that if made public the report would spark resistance in countries “which fought against Germany and are now or will be under our power.” They decided to keep it filed away in case of a future peace treaty, which would call for a proposal of specific reparations.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Like Napoleon’s looting and the Louvre, Hitler’s also had an ultimate goal: the Linz Museum. But Hitler intended for his museum to put Napoleon’s to shame. In an effort to make Linz the cultural capital of Europe and the world, Hitler made plans to reconstruct it just as he planned to reconstruct Berlin. The blueprints for what was at the time an industrial town featured an imagined opera house, large theatre, the Adolf Hitler Hotel, and a parade ground, with the *Fuehrermuseum* as the focal point.[[110]](#footnote-110) Hitler tasked Hans Posse, former director of the *Dresden Gemäldegalerie,* with assembling art from around the continent into the ultimate European collection. Posse had an initial budget of what is today $85 million for his project. He and his 1942 successor, Hermann Voss, amassed works of art through official acquisitions and seizures of confiscated public and private collections.[[111]](#footnote-111) Even as the Reich’s finances deteriorated throughout the war, the Linz budget multiplied by about seven, and the collection grew to an impressive more than eight thousand works, which were stored in the basement of Hitler’s headquarters in Munich.[[112]](#footnote-112)

A messier and all the more tragic side to the Nazis cultural policies found its setting further East. Here the bifurcated Nazi approach to art takes on another dimension. Much like they treated the “degenerate” art in Germany with contempt and disregard, the Nazis exploited and destroyed the art in the areas they occupied to the East. As Lynn Nicholas writes, “In these Slavic wastelands the National Socialist fanatics did not bother with velvet gloves.”[[113]](#footnote-113) In August 1939 Hitler had encouraged his highest commanders to “act brutally…be harsh and remorseless, kill without pity or mercy all men, women and children of Polish descent or language,” in what was to constitute an “invasion and extermination of Poland.”[[114]](#footnote-114)Poland’s cultural heritage was to be treated with similar contempt, as the Nazis planned to annihilate a people, in all their forms of existence. By the end of the war, the nation’s total population had decreased by about one-fifth, 40% of national property had been lost, and 75% of Warsaw had been destroyed. In fact, the responsibilities for the targeted destruction of specifically historical Warsaw buildings were intentionally delegated to certain more qualified individuals. As Dr. H. Frank, Hitler’s Governor in Poland wrote in his diary immediately after the seizure of Warsaw: “The Fuehrer has discussed with the Governor-General the general situation and expressed his approval of the latter’s work in Poland, in particular the destruction of Warsaw Castle, the decision not to reconstruct the city, and the removal of the works of art.”[[115]](#footnote-115)

Nazi engineers had drilled holes into the foundations of Warsaw Castle in 1939 in anticipation of demolition of the building, which, besides being a symbol of Polish national sovereignty served as the presidential residence. These were later stuffed with dynamite and blown up, following Hitler’s orders to destroy it. Even more painfully, the building had just been thoroughly refurbished with state and private funds. Poland’s holiest shrine and pilgrimage place, Our Lady of Czestochowa, was similarly destroyed, out of what appeared to be simple spite. It and other pillars of Polish cultural heritage, including art collections would fall victim to ransacking supervised by German soldiers and scholars. Given that all Polish universities had been closed and their staffs dismissed, Germans also helped themselves to now unguarded Polish collections, libraries and research notes to augment their own. German soldiers broke into and opened up repositories hiding private collections of art and valuables as they gained control of the country.[[116]](#footnote-116)

When the Polish State Museums began preparing for the impending Nazi invasion, they were working in Cracow, Warsaw and Katowice museums that had been recently redone after damage from World War I, and they were working with collections recovered from Russian seizure not twenty years earlier. Like Poland’s previous occupiers, the Nazis would not ignore the art once Poland had been conquered. Goering appointed Kajetan Muehlmann as Special Commissioner for the Protection of Works of Art in the Occupied Territories. He inventoried the state collections, and ultimately separated the most important works, stored the second class ones, and allowed the lowest group to be used in the redecoration of German offices and buildings. He even put together a catalogue for the “best” of the art, to help Hitler and other Nazis evaluate the loot.[[117]](#footnote-117) These probably came in handy when German museum directors later eagerly filled their own collections with pieces from Poland’s.

Hans Posse made an exploratory trip to the country in 1939, looking for things for the Linz Museum. He only explicitly selected a handful of works to “salvage for Germany.” But as he wrote in a report to Martin Bormann, “The inspection confirmed my suspicion that, except for the higher class works of art already known to us in Germany…and several works of the National Museum in Warsaw, there is not very much which could enlarge the German stock of great art.”[[118]](#footnote-118) He did not bother returning to Poland. The ultimate philistinism of the Nazis to Polish culture, particularly when compared with other countries,’ demonstrates how deeply racial ideology affected their actions.

Ironically, the deliberate and excessive destruction of Poland’s cultural heritage serves as further proof of the Nazi prioritization of culture. Like with the Party’s policies in Germany and other occupied regions, the inclusion of culture in their racial and political goals becomes clear. They were focused on monopolizing it: its creation, its exhibition and its destruction. But as we will see in the subsequent chapter, despite similar end goals of power and control, the Nazis approached the domination of France’s fine art in a very different manner. Regardless, one thing remains constant: art and the looting thereof served as an extension of a military campaign. The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 had recognized this by explicitly prohibiting the plunder of private property by military powers during wartime. But even though Germany had been a signatory, the Nazis did not feel the need to respect the rules.

*Chapter 3*

*Looting the Capital of the Art World: Paris’ Culture under Occupation*

Barely a year after beginning their cultural policies in Poland, the Nazis marched into Paris, where the other side of their cultural agenda would play out in a manner quite different than it had in the East. Hitler’s early internal goals, of cultural “cleansing” and “renascence” were taking on new meanings in new foreign theatres as the Nazis asserted their power internationally. As a French government commission studying the spoliation of French Jews put it, “the artistic pillaging did not arise out of the conditions brought about by the Reich’s victory, but was rather based on a well-planned and nurtured intention, one which was contingent on Nazi expansionism.”[[119]](#footnote-119) The Nazis purged the “degenerate” art of abstract artists and of places like Poland while crafting a new birth of German art using the “healthy,” coveted art masterpieces, of which Paris had many.

At the end of August 1939, the Louvre shut its doors to the public, but its staff did not go home. Instead, they worked twelve hours a day, wearing smocks and turbans to protect their clothes and hair. They were executing a meticulously planned packing process in order to transport nearly the entirety of the museum’s collections out of Paris, hopefully away from the impending war. The iconic “Winged Victory” had a special ramp built for her trip down the fifty-three stairs from which she typically stands (an incredibly dangerous maneuver given the fact that the reconstructed statue consists of pieces of marble held together with plaster). Ultimately, a total of thirty-seven convoys of five to eight trucks each departed the 1st *arrondissement* between August 27 and December 28 destined for châteaux throughout the Loire Valley, carrying almost all of the Louvre’s collection, one third of the contents of the Jeu de Paume and Cluny Museums, and one third of the other local Paris museums’ collections. Considering the enormity of the challenge, the staff worked remarkably efficiently.[[120]](#footnote-120)

These were not the only collections being packed up at this time. Most art collectors and dealers feared bombing above all, and hence tried to get their art away from the huge target of Paris. The French branch of the Jewish Rothschild family evacuated its extensive and enviable collections to châteaux in the countryside as well.[[121]](#footnote-121) Paul Rosenberg, of Slovakian and Jewish heritage and one of the world’s most important art dealers (in the “degenerate” art of Picasso, Degas, Monet, and Pissarro, to name a few) began moving his holdings to Tours in May 1940, before deciding that was too close to the front and transferring some 162 paintings to a vault in Libourne in southwestern France, advising his friend and client Georges Braque to do the same. (Picasso and Matisse already had secured Parisian vaults for their work).[[122]](#footnote-122)

Unfortunately, the Germans did not intend to let these collections, state and private, remain hidden. Barely a week after the armistice surrendering France to Germany and Hitler’s visit to Paris, on June 30, 1940, a message from Hitler came through General Wilhelm Keitel, the German army (*Wehrmacht)* chief of staff in Berlin. In a note to General von Boeckelberg, the military commander of Paris, he informed his compatriot that, “the Fuehrer, following a report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ordered the safeguarding, in addition to those of the French state, of objects of art and historic documents belonging to individuals, notably Jews. This act does not constitute an expropriation, but a transfer to our custody as security for peace negotiations.”[[123]](#footnote-123) This made for the first official step towards the plunder of Paris (and France), then widely considered the capital of the art world. Frederic Spotts calls it “the biggest art heist in history.”[[124]](#footnote-124) It was a process that would escalate quickly, ending in the dispersal of some one-third of all art in private Parisian hands. It was also a furcated process, fraught with overlapping jurisdictions, bureaucratic confusion, egos, and sheer greed.

Under the euphemism of “safeguarding” the French patrimony, the *Wehrmacht* had established the *Kunstschutz* (literally “art protection”) just before the armistice in Paris. Originally created during World War I, the office existed in name to “protect” the art, as called for by the Hague Convention of 1907. In reality, the Kunstschutz mostly inventoried and studied France’s culture. It had been approved to “carry out research into French art and its numerous close relations with German art” by photographing Occupied France’s architectural and artistic monuments, evaluating the existing photography in France, and identifying research topics regarding the relations between the two countries, especially surrounding German artists in France.[[125]](#footnote-125) The group of art experts and photographers also compiled lists of monuments and buildings to designate as off limits to the quartering of troops. The Kunstschutz’s leader and representative to the Army High Command, Count Franz Wolff-Metternich was a former art history professor specializing in medieval architecture and curator of local German historic monuments. By all accounts the self-declared “Francophile” seemed unaffected by greed or ambition in his task to inventory, guard and study France’s cultural heritage.[[126]](#footnote-126) While in power he was a reliable aid to the French, especially to Director of the French National Museums, Jacques Jaujard. When Hitler’s June 30 order came through, the Kunstschutz, as Wolff-Metternich later wrote, used the “provisions of the Hague Convention” as “the judicial basis for our actions and the starting point that, in all cases, should guide our efforts.”[[127]](#footnote-127)

However, Wolff-Metternich and his sincere vocation to safeguard France’s patrimony would soon face and be overshadowed by powerful competition with a different interpretation of “safeguarding.” The conclusion of the June 30 directive explained that art was to be taken into German custody as “security for peace negotiations,” a task that Foreign Minister Joaquim von Ribbentrop adopted seriously and entrusted to his Ambassador to Paris, Otto Abetz. (Perhaps contributing to his determination, decades before, Napoleon’s director of the Louvre had foiled von Ribbentrop’s own ancestor’s attempts to retrieve works of art looted from Prussia.[[128]](#footnote-128))

Abetz, a former drawing teacher turned Nazi had been expelled from France before the war for espionage and conspiring against the French government. The Francophile (complete with a French wife) wasted no time before beginning his newfound cultural task.[[129]](#footnote-129) He announced to the Army on July 1 that the embassy had been “charged with the seizure of French works of art owned by the State and cities, in the museums of Paris and the provinces…and with the listing and seizure of works owned by Jews.”[[130]](#footnote-130) (His sudden commandeering of the undertaking evidently raised some eyebrows. At one point the Army Supreme Command actually called von Ribbentrop to verify that the Ambassador did in fact have the authority he claimed.[[131]](#footnote-131)) This plan to seize art out of all of France’s museums never materialized completely; the only group with the resources to accomplish it, the army, did not answer to him, so he was forced to focus only on Paris.

Hitler later would limit his instructions to Jewish-owned collections, mostly sparing the museums.[[132]](#footnote-132) According to Speer, “This restraint was not so unselfish as it seemed, for [Hitler] occasionally remarked that in a peace treaty the best pieces from the Louvre would have to be delivered to Germany as part of war reparations.”[[133]](#footnote-133) The private collections of Jews, Freemasons and other “enemies” on the other hand, remained fair game.

Baron Eberhard Freiherr von Kuensberg, the chief of a special commando unit of the Foreign Minister’s, went to Paris on orders to help Abetz carry out his task with other Embassy employees. Kuensberg had worked on similar looting operations in the Hague and Brussels.[[134]](#footnote-134) The actual looting of Jewish, Freemason and “enemy” collections was done by a special commando unit (*Sonderkommando)* and accompanied by a team of art experts to determine which works were worth “safeguarding.”[[135]](#footnote-135) As Wolff-Metternich put it, “From the beginning, I was convinced that the enterprise of Baron von Kuensberg was illegal, and that it was for him a kind of modern filibuster.”[[136]](#footnote-136) In fact, in an official report from the Kunstschutz in September 1940 to the Military Administration of Paris, it is made clear that Kuensberg’s doings were “in contradiction with the law concerning the protection of works of art.”[[137]](#footnote-137) The *Sonderkommando* worked quickly though, targeting first the prominent Jewish collectors and dealers, like David David-Weill, Georges Bernheim, Jacques Seligmann, Alphonse Kann, Georges Wildenstein, and the aforementioned Paul Rosenberg and Rothschild family.

The task would not prove so difficult, thanks to a July 15 ordinance that had given all collectors, dealers and guardians a month to declare all cultural objects worth upwards of 100,000 francs.[[138]](#footnote-138) A July 23 Vichy law also stripped recent emigrants of French citizenship, leaving many of the departed owners’ collections completely vulnerable and legally ownerless. The law ordered that the property of these individuals be “placed under sequestration...in light of their situation.”[[139]](#footnote-139) In addition to the pillage of Jews, the *Sonderkommando* emptied the French Foreign office of statues, antique books and other objects for the Reich Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin.[[140]](#footnote-140) As a 1941 *Wehrmacht* report spelled out, in the summer of 1940, Abetz carried out his task greedily, by allowing “a series of collections from Jewish possessions to be brought to a house neighboring the German embassy on the Rue de Lille” with “the intention of examining the list of artworks himself, and from it, selecting approximately twenty to twenty-five outstanding pieces.”[[141]](#footnote-141) By the end of August 1940, after barely two months, fifteen hundred works of art had been taken and stored at this Embassy depot.[[142]](#footnote-142)

Wolff-Metternich, however, had not been kept abreast of these developments, nor had he had been informed of Joseph Goebbels’s art historians inventorying French art for the aforementioned Kümmel Report. The Count swung into action against the Ambassador as soon as he found out though. He reported Abetz’s intended violations of the Hague Convention to the *Wehrmacht,* and Commander in Chief, General Walther von Brauchitsch subsequently forbade the transfer of objects in French museum depots.[[143]](#footnote-143) The embassy was now only permitted to study the inventories of the national collections.[[144]](#footnote-144)

In a move typical of Hitler, he had distributed the responsibility for controlling Paris’s culture amongst various underlings. While Goebbels (through Kümmel), the army (through Wolff-Metternich), and Ribbentrop (through Abetz) already had been assigned involvement in the handling of French art, Alfred Rosenberg would soon join the fray. The theorist had received authorization from Hitler in January of 1940 to begin the process of founding a Nazified university system, *Hohe Schule* (literally “high school”)*,* which would propagate and legitimize Nazi ideology through ten envisioned institutions. On July 5 Rosenberg received official permission to collect and study the archives and libraries of the “enemies of National Socialism,” (Jews, Freemasons, socialists, Slavic cultures, etc.) which moved the project decisively into a plundering role.[[145]](#footnote-145) Rosenberg put together a staff to locate the archives and books they planned to seize, creating the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg für die besetzten Gebiete* or Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce for the Occupied Territories (ERR). One of Rosenberg’s top employees, Gerhard Utikal took administrative charge of the ERR at its Berlin headquarters and over the summer organized this new bureaucracy to gather mostly written work.

In general though, this shift in power dynamics seemed to constitute another example of Hitler’s characteristic “polycracy,” to quote German historian Martin Broszat. He would typically put several people or groups in charge of the same task at once, to ensure his ultimate personal control. As Jonathan Petropoulos explains,

Obsessed as Hitler was with amassing his mammoth art collection, it was of paramount importance to him that he alone determine the fate of the looted art. By making his underlings insecure and beholden to him, he assured himself this pivotal role. So essential was this polycratic arrangement to Hitler’s power that at no point during the war did one minister or agency have sole jurisdiction over the plunder.[[146]](#footnote-146)

Soon enough, clashes between the ERR and other Nazi authority structures seizing property developed.

On August 28, 1940, the ERR and the Military Administration met to clarify their respective jurisdictions, leaving the ERR with basically only the “protection of archives.’[[147]](#footnote-147) However, the modus operandi suddenly changed on September 17, when Field Marshal Keitel wrote to General von Boeckelberg in France that the Fuehrer personally authorized the ERR to confiscate all “ownerless” cultural property and transport what Rosenberg saw fit to Germany. The order also made vulnerable all private property given to the French state after the declaration of war. (The extra clause served to enable the usurption of certain libraries and collections whose guardians had tried to protect them from the Nazis by temporarily “donating” them to the French state.[[148]](#footnote-148)) Hitler’s reasoning for the transfer of power to Rosenberg is unclear, although it seems likely that Rosenberg’s personal persistence in gaining the authority and his opinion of Rosenberg as a “controllable” official swayed the Fuehrer.[[149]](#footnote-149)

In a report presenting the ERR’s ideological justifications, Utikal wrote that the looting clearly fulfilled a part of the Nazi agenda as it meant that “the German army [had] liberated the French state and people from the influence of the international Jewry,” specifically mentioning the Rothschild family as guilty of robbing treasures from all over the world, which the ERR was now “safeguarding.” By Utikal’s logic, “Thanks to the German army, the French people once again are masters of important Jewish properties.”[[150]](#footnote-150)

On the subject of the legality of the pillage, according to him, “The Jew and his property are outside the law because for millennia, he has held that all non-Jews lack all rights.” Dr. Hermann Bunjes, an art historian and eventual head of the German Institute in Paris reported on the same subject to Hermann Goering in 1942. He argued that the Hague Convention did not apply to Jews and Freemasons, because Hitler signed the Armistice at Compiègne in 1940 with the French state and French people, labels which, by his count, did not include those groups.[[151]](#footnote-151)

Rosenberg eventually appointed Kurt von Behr as head of the art staff of the Western Office of the ERR in the City of Light, who played one of the utmost roles in the intensity of the looting. U.S. Army Officer James Rorimer would later refer to him as an “overstuffed, dissipated and haughty dandy” and “the most despised of all the Germans implicated in the confiscation of works of art in France.”[[152]](#footnote-152) The egomaniacal World War I veteran had not had much of a career between the wars and was ironically ignorant about art. He was, however, a steadfast Nazi who served in title as a senior official of the German Red Cross and a liaison of sorts to Italy. Encouraged by Rosenberg to live a lavish social life to gain respect for the ERR among the Wehrmacht, von Behr gave expensive presents, threw many parties and always wore his ostentatious Red Cross uniform.[[153]](#footnote-153)

The art operation of the ERR office in France was first set up in part of the Louvre but later moved to the Jeu de Paume museum located across the Tuileries. The Jeu de Paume or the Museum for Foreign Contemporary Art Schools had been a tennis court for French nobility (*jeu de paume* means “palm game,” the original name for tennis) and later a gathering place for the French revolutionaries. Now it served the ERR as a more “independent” and “autonomous” alternative to the Louvre itself, essentially away from prying French eyes.[[154]](#footnote-154) Wolff-Metternich, always trying to keep the French in mind, initially assured Jaujard that a double inventory would be made of the objects moving in and out of the museum, one copy for the French and one for the Germans.[[155]](#footnote-155) Such lists would never actually come to fruition. And in June 1942, Wolff-Metternich would lose his position, officially because of his public opposition to the Nazi seizure of the Ghent Altarpiece, in reality after months of undermining by fellow Nazis. As Robert Edsel wrote of it, “the real problem was that Wolff-Metternich was not the man they wanted him to be. The Kunstschutz was supposed to provide a veneer of legality. They wanted a man who would bend the rules for the benefits of the Fatherland.”[[156]](#footnote-156) Wolff-Metternich’s apparently honest vocation to protect French patrimony seems an anomaly of the Nazi leadership in Paris at the time and would ultimately precipitate his downfall in the party hierarchy.

The ERR employed a team of German art historians who worked in the museum for up to sixteen hours a day cataloguing, sorting and documenting the truckloads of loot which were consistently offloaded from apartments and depots across the city. Once sorted in the Jeu de Paume, the art would be stored in rooms back at the Louvre until transport had been organized.[[157]](#footnote-157) The work within the museum was not easy, especially considering that the historians were working without a sufficient art library. Rosenberg also encountered difficulties securing funding and transportation from competing German offices.

One set of French eyes did remain on site at the Jeu de Paume throughout the Occupation though. Rose Valland was the only French national to witness much of what happened in the museum, and her work in the Resistance rendered her one of the most decorated French women in history. From a small village in southeastern France, she ended up with scholarships to the Écoles des Beaux-Arts in Lyon and Paris and earned degrees in art history from the École du Louvre and the Sorbonne in Paris, quite a feat for a woman at the time outside of the social elite.[[158]](#footnote-158) In 1932 she began a volunteer position at the Jeu de Paume Museum. To the Germans, she apparently seemed to pose no threat, and throughout the war Valland remained at the museum, serving as something of a spy for Jaujard, who asked her to document the ERR’s activities at whatever cost.[[159]](#footnote-159)

Even though she did not receive her first salary until 1941, she continuously monitored the works of art coming and going in the museum as best she could. This was often nearly impossible as amateur men were used to conduct the actual looting, and art was regularly deposited at the museum without any explanation of its origins.[[160]](#footnote-160) She exchanged information with loyal French guards, packers and drivers, and reported to Jaujard and his assistant often. Valland would stay up into the night copying information about works of art and their destinations, taking down names in the watchman’s logbook and sometimes smuggling German negatives home and making copies overnight. She went relatively smoothly about her daily duties of supervising the maintenance staff and ensuring the proper conditions for the art. Interestingly, the Germans asked her to leave four times, in conjunction with rumored Allied attacks. However, she persistently returned and maintained her position until Liberation.[[161]](#footnote-161)

As will be explained in the subsequent chapter, Valland’s notes and persistence proved invaluable in the efforts to recover and restore the art the Nazis managed to displace and scatter around the continent. James Rorimer, an officer in the US Army’s Monuments, Fine Arts & Archives Division called her a “rugged, painstaking and deliberate scholar” whose “blind devotion to French art made no allowance for any thoughts of personal danger.”[[162]](#footnote-162) It is in great part thanks to Valland that we know what went on inside the museum, and as the President of the later French Commission for Art Recuperation put it, “it is to her courage and her intelligence that we owe the first and most important elements that served” the French and Allied recovery efforts.[[163]](#footnote-163)

Unlike Hitler, who only felt the need to visit Paris once, *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Goering and other upper level Nazis could not seem to get enough of the city. Goering would regularly drop in at the Ritz Carlton for brief respites from work and the war.[[164]](#footnote-164) A self-proclaimed “Renaissance type” and connoisseur, the published novelist loved art. Goering had big plans for his growing art collection at Carinhall, the hunting estate near Berlin named after his Swedish first wife.[[165]](#footnote-165) He called his collection “perhaps the most important private collection in Germany if not in Europe.”[[166]](#footnote-166) He expressed to Rosenberg personally his hope to acquire “a small number of works from seized Jewish collections” from a special fund authorized by Hitler, about which he did not feel badly at all, since “unquestionably a large number of works were removed from hiding places because of my efforts.”[[167]](#footnote-167) An understanding with Hitler that the collection would ultimately be bequeathed to the German state legitimized his procurements. After his appointed art agents suggested he view some of the recently confiscated collections, and perhaps because he was looking for a stimulant after his first major defeat at the Battle of Britain, Goering made his first trip to the Jeu de Paume museum on November 3, 1940.

The space had been prepared extravagantly into a private art opening of sorts, with carpets, potted plants and champagne; Goering was not disappointed. He ended up spending the entire day with the art and extended his stay so that more could be brought up from storage a few days later.[[168]](#footnote-168) He immediately selected 27 works for himself, mostly from the Eduard de Rothschild and Wildenstein collections, thereby marking the beginning of a new chapter in the looting of Paris: one with Goering at the helm. According to Valland, “It is likely that if this first exposition had not dazzled the Reichsmarschall, the history of the ERR and confiscated works of art would have been different.”[[169]](#footnote-169)

He issued an order the afternoon of his departure announcing that the “saved” objects were to be divided into several categories. Of those acceptable to send to Germany, the art was divided between the Fuehrer’s collection, Goering’s, items “suitable” for Rosenberg’s anti-Semitic research, and objects for German museums. There were also those for the French museums and those that would sell well on the international market. He added at the end of the order, “I shall submit this suggestion to the Fuehrer, pending whose approval this procedure will remain effective.”[[170]](#footnote-170) With that, another of Hitler’s underlings had joined the polycracy. As the number-two figure in the Reich and head of the Luftwaffe, Goering was both more politically powerful than Rosenberg and able to dedicate a perhaps disproportionate amount of personnel and resources to the operation. While the ERR was by name headed by Rosenberg, a status quo ultimately emerged: if Goering kept the funding and transportation coming, he would have first choice of all the loot.[[171]](#footnote-171) As Goering wrote in a “personal” letter to Rosenberg on November 21, 1940,

I have especially welcomed that, after much vacillation, an authority for the collection of the articles was finally decided upon although I must point out that other authorities also claim to possess power from the Fuehrer [von Ribbentrop and Goebbels]…I have promised to support energetically the work of your staff and to place at its disposal that which it could not hitherto obtain, namely, means of transportation and guard personnel, and the Luftwaffe is hereby assigned to give the utmost assistance.[[172]](#footnote-172)

Rosenberg, von Ribbentrop and Goebbels all lost influence on the process to Goering. Von Behr reportedly came to answer almost entirely to the Reichsmarschall, who also employed art dealer Bruno Lohse as essentially his personal representative to the ERR.[[173]](#footnote-173) Lohse would make his way up to deputy director of the ERR in 1942.

Upon Hitler’s official approval of the removal of art from France on New Years Eve 1940, Goering organized transport of his and the Fuehrer’s pieces (chosen by Posse for the Linz Museum) on his “special” heated train in February. By the end of the war though, Goering gained some 700 works of art from the ERR’s loot, while Posse only selected 53 for the Linz Museum from photographs prepared by ERR staff. The staff also prepared around one hundred leather-bound volumes of photos of the loot and sent them to the Reichschancellery for review by Hitler. [[174]](#footnote-174) Goering insisted that the dealings maintain some semblance of legality, even hiring a lesser-known French artist, Jacques Beltrand to “evaluate” and price the objects, adjusted based on Goering’s wishes. Prices for works he planned to keep would be low, and for works he planned to sell or exchange would be high.[[175]](#footnote-175) Despite all that effort, there is no evidence of Goering actually paying the suggested amounts.[[176]](#footnote-176) Under the guise of gathering culture for the Fatherland, with permission from Hitler in the name of the Nazi cultural agenda, Goering effectively used Paris as his own personal art gallery, from which he chose the works for his personal art collection. The grandiose Nazi cultural mission seemed to have fallen second to Goering’s greed.

In another process approved by Goering and Rosenberg, much of the valuable “degenerate” art was exchanged, 28 times for the Old Masters and 19th century German and Dutch paintings that suited the Nazi taste.[[177]](#footnote-177) This was in part attributed to an organizational edict that prohibited the importation of such “degenerate” art into Germany. Even today the exchanges seem entirely imbalanced. To take one example, Paris art dealer Gustav Rochlitz received 18 paintings by Degas, Manet, Renoir, Cézanne, Picasso, Matisse, Braque and Toulouse-Lautrec (to name a few) in exchange for just one Titian Hitler especially had his eye on, “Portrait of a Young Lady” (See Appendix 5).

Given that the Wehrmacht’s directives included the protection of art and monuments, it decided to wipe its hands of the whole looting business in the first months of 1941. The army argued that Goering’s orders on November 5 nullified Hitler’s orders prohibiting the removal of art from France and therefore the military was exempt from any violation of the Hague Convention. Ignoring the Vichy government’s continued protests (much of which catalyzed by Jaujard), the military made known that the “clearing and settling of this issue…has become a political affair to be settled between the Reich and the French Government.”[[178]](#footnote-178) As already exemplified by Wolff-Metternich’s demise, the army was concerned with the “veneer” of legality, and while they did not stand in the way of Goering and his art collecting, they made sure to absolve themselves of any culpability.

With the new influx of transportation and funding from the Reichsmarschall, the art looting in Paris happened very quickly. Rosenberg reported to Hitler in March 1941 that around 4,000 pieces of art were in the ERR’s inventory.[[179]](#footnote-179) In fact, by the middle of 1941, about three-fourths of all fine art objects that would be looted had already been taken, although the task of processing all of it remained. It was so intense that several non-Jewish French collections were accidentally taken because their owners had questionable names. These were returned with letters of apology.[[180]](#footnote-180) However, the pillage did later expand past the wealthiest Parisian collectors in a less meticulous manner.

The second phase of looting began in early 1942 in tandem with the development of the Final Solution, in the form of *Möbel-aktion*, M-Aktion, or Operation Furniture. Another idea of Alfred Rosenberg’s, proposed in December 1941 (later approved from Hitler), the goal here was to distribute captured furniture, clothing, and other household items to Germans settling in the occupied territories in Eastern Europe, who had been in “frightful living conditions.”[[181]](#footnote-181) It mostly targeted less wealthy French Jews who had for the most part been arrested or deported. By order of German authorities, French moving companies emptied some 38,000 Paris apartments before Liberation.[[182]](#footnote-182) Rosenberg assumed responsibility of the task in his position as Reichsminister for the Occupied Territories of the East and gave von Behr direct control of it. The M-Aktion looting was much less “controlled” than that of the ERR, and in fact made use of a “little concentration camp in Paris.” Von Behr conscripted Jews to work sorting, repairing and packaging confiscated belongings throughout the operation.[[183]](#footnote-183) There are tales of people being forced to sort their own family’s belongings. Personal items, like family photos, or damaged goods were burned regularly at the Quai de la Gare.

Goering visited the Jeu de Paume museum for his private viewings some twenty times between 1940 and 1942, each time giving von Behr and his staff around forty-eight hours notice to throw together the latest show. Goering had been at the height of his power within the Nazi hierarchy in 1941, but afterwards he took to spending more and more time at his hunting estate. [[184]](#footnote-184) Economic troubles in 1942 led Hitler to instituting reprivatization and a decrease of military influence on production. Goering had been in charge of the four-year economic plan, so with reprivatization, his influence dramatically began to wane, something reflected in the looting process as well.[[185]](#footnote-185)

After von Behr moved to M-Aktion, responsibility for the ERR staff at the Jeu de Paume was given to Robert Scholz (who had been Rosenberg’s go-between to the Paris operation) and Hermann von Ingram. Interestingly, the two wrote in a “Revision” report to Rosenberg that the art staff’s actions, implicitly those encouraged by Goering, had harmed the Nazi reputation and threatened German prestige after the war. They recommended to Rosenberg that the ERR art staff shift their work to just cataloguing what they already had and controlling the M-Aktion looting.[[186]](#footnote-186) On June 18, 1942, apparently having taken the Revision report to heart, Rosenberg wrote to Goering explaining that the ERR would no longer be able to make art available to the Reichsmarschall.[[187]](#footnote-187) As the O.S.S.’s Art Looting Investigation Unit’s 1945 report on the organization put it, “In general, the work of the Einsatzstab assumed a more passive character following von Behr’s departure.”[[188]](#footnote-188) While, Goering continued to have access to the art through von Behr until the latter’s removal six months later, his idyllic months with his personal art gallery had largely ended.

In July of 1943, the Nazis conducted cultural procedures in France eerily similar to they had previously employed in Germany to purge the “degenerate” art. While their campaign in Paris had become one dominated by personal greed, the original cultural agenda did play its role occasionally. Evoking the scene at the Berlin Fire Department four years earlier, on July 23, 1943 Nazi agents spent four hours taking knives to canvases by the likes of Masson, Klee, Picasso, Miró and Kisling and burning them in the garden of the Jeu de Paume, “with the attentive care of a ritual sacrifice.”[[189]](#footnote-189) The head of caretaking staff for the national museums reported, “the vandalism of these masters was mainly exercised on the paintings representing people suspected to be of Jewish origin, without taking into account the artist…. The sorting will continue under the same conditions.”[[190]](#footnote-190) As Valland documented after the fact: “Impossible to save anything.”[[191]](#footnote-191) In her memoir she reflected,

The Jeu de Paume had been in effect a museum of the avant-garde, well known for the welcome it reserved for the most explosive of international art demonstrations. The demonstration that had just happened, with its hints of inquisition and iconoclastic fury, in the middle of the 20th century, could certainly never have been predicted, neither even imagined.[[192]](#footnote-192)

Scenes like this one become all the more sinister when one takes into account what and whom else the Nazis were burning across their Reich. It seems likely that this random act of destruction reflected rising frustrations as the tide of the war had turned against the Nazis with their official defeat at Stalingrad in February of 1943.

By their own counts, the ERR took 21,903 objects from 79 Jewish families’ collections in 203 locations throughout France, the plurality of which were in Paris. The Nazis reportedly seized 14 private collections from evacuation depots outside of Paris, and the Rothschilds alone lost 5,009 pieces to the ERR. About five percent of the art collectors provided 75 percent of the looted works.[[193]](#footnote-193) Ultimately, between March 1941 and July 1944, 4,174 cases filling 138 boxcars full of art that left France in 29 shipments for six German locations.[[194]](#footnote-194)

Looking at these Parisian structures of looting in depth tells much about the entire enterprise. First, despite Hitler and Goering’s strong speeches and leadership, the mission was neither clearly defined nor consistently implemented. Instead it relied upon the persistence of a few, like Goering, Abetz and von Behr who worked on the ground to ensure the art went where they wanted it to. Without these characters, the looting slowed, and in fact, as the Revision report to Rosenberg reveals, other people were able to undermine these schemes. Secondly, from studying the looting, internal bureaucratic disagreements like this one emerge, other examples being Wolff-Metternich’s protests and the *Wehrmacht*’s ultimate withdrawal from the phenomenon. And lastly, tracing the trajectory of the looting phenomenon and the shifting of power dynamics within Hitler’s polycracy reveals the parallels to the larger tides of the war.

But in the end, the pillaging bureaucracy worked well enough to evacuate hundreds of thousands of objects from France. A problem persisted for the Nazis though: where to put all the loot? Hitler himself selected Mad King Ludwig of Bavaria’s iconic Castle of Neuschwanstein near the Austrian border as the primary repository. But even its some 65,000 square feet proved insufficient, and objects were also sent to other castle depots in Bavaria, Austria and Czechoslovakia, until the end of the war, when much of the most important works were sent to salt mines for extra protection. It was scattered across these locations that the Allies would find the loot and begin the incomprehensible challenge of putting it all back together again.

*Chapter 4*

*Putting It All Back Together Again: The Allies and Art Recuperation*

About a week before the Liberation of Paris, French uprisings and general chaos had overtaken the city. The Germans filled the Tuileries with trenches and barbed wire. Nine Germans died trying to defend the Jeu de Paume, leaving brown stains on its stairs, per Rose Valland’s reports. About 350 Nazis ended up surrendering and were placed in a makeshift POW cage in the central *Cour Carrée* of the Louvre. Director of French Museums Jacques Jaujard had to stop his staff from prematurely raising the French flag over the museum. Throughout the heated confusion Free French troops mistakenly suspected Jaujard, Valland and other museum staff of collaboration. At one point a group forced Valland at gunpoint to prove she was not hiding Germans in the basement of the Jeu de Paume. On August 26, 1944, the German POWs became so afraid of the apparent delirium of their French captors that they broke the windows of the Louvre and scattered themselves throughout the museum’s ground floor, hiding behind statues and in Egyptian sarcophagi. After a final German air raid that night though, it was all over. Having survived four years of Nazi occupation, Paris was *liberée.[[195]](#footnote-195)*

After the initial elation of victory came the hard realities of an enormous catastrophe left to the Allied governments to clean up. Nearly 600,000 French citizens and soldiers had perished. Around 76,000 French Jews had been deported to Nazi concentration camps. Over 1,000 of the bronze statues that had characterized prewar Paris were conspicuously absent; they had been melted down for Nazi munitions. And some 100,000 works of art were reported missing from France alone. Righting the upturned cultural worlds of Paris, France and Europe happened immediately in several ways. In Paris, one of the first things to happen after Liberation was an exhibit on the Occupation in Paris’s *Musée Carnavalet* on November 11, aimed to “bring together the documentation essential for future historians,” and curated by a member of the Resistance.[[196]](#footnote-196) The same afternoon, the Bayeux Tapestry, having narrowly avoided German export, was displayed at the Louvre, in Paris for the first time since 1804. As Army Officer James Rorimer said, “It is typical of the French that in the midst of all the confusion they could hold an exhibition and observe all of the protocol it demanded.”[[197]](#footnote-197)

But there was still all that property missing. As the Allies continued to fight a war of liberation, they were faced with the challenge of how also to rescue the cultural property the Nazis had effectively dropped into their laps. The campaign to bring back Paris’s culture happened through several dedicated individuals, through the extensive military and governmental bureaucracies of postwar Europe, and through the surviving victims and their families trying to piece together lives that had been scattered in a matter of years. Telling the complete story of the art the Nazis fixated upon and took from Paris necessitates following the art back home, or in too many cases, not back home. Art had played such a crucial role to Hitler’s war, that the Allies were obliged to address it in their liberation as well. They had to respond, and respond quickly. Ultimately, the Western Allies found and emptied more than one thousand repositories of all sorts of loot in southern Germany alone, and the process of restitution they conducted across the Continent would take six years.[[198]](#footnote-198) World War II’s victors inherited the daunting task of rectifying arguably the largest displacement of cultural property in modern history. How did they do it?

During the war, 18 governments, including the Big Three Allies, Greece, the French National Committee, the Union of South Africa, Canada and China signed the *Inter-Allied Declaration Against Acts of Dispossession Committed in Territories Under Enemy Occupation or Control* in London on January 5, 1943. The document served as an official acknowledgement of the Nazi looting in process, and although it did not actually set anything in motion, it made known that all transfers of property in occupied territory were considered null and void, whether “open looting or plunder” or “transactions apparently legal in form.”[[199]](#footnote-199) It provided the basis for future policy pertaining to the “roundup” of the Jewish collections after the war and legitimized the immediate return of all the property deemed stolen.

As early as 1942, civilians in the U.S. began brainstorming about how to protect the cultural monuments (buildings, artwork, libraries and records) of a European continent at war. The heads of the Archaeological Institute of America, the College Art Association, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art approached Chief Justice Harlan F. Stone with the idea of a governmental commission dedicated to the task. In December of that year Chief Justice Stone asked President Franklin Roosevelt for his support, and in April 1943 the request was approved. The American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in Europe thereby was formed to fulfill a two-part mission: firstly, during the war, to identify buildings that should be protected from the invading Allies and to compile lists of property looted by the Axis powers, and secondly, after the armistice, to ensure the restitution of public and private property to their rightful owners, wherever possible.

As no acronym could be devised from the Commission’s title, its moniker became the “Roberts Commission” after its Chairman, Justice Owen Roberts. It headquartered in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. with volunteer members from the leadership of the country’s major art museums, a former Librarian of Congress and the head of the U.N. Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. [[200]](#footnote-200) They had their work cut out for them. Ultimately, the Roberts Commission served as a clearinghouse of information on art looting and recuperation during and after the war. The Commission worked closely with the brand new Office of Strategic Services’ Art Looting Investigation Unit (ALIU), established in November 1944 to gather and share “information bearing on the looting, confiscation and transfer by the enemy of art properties in Europe.” The ALIU took charge of interrogating the Nazis, with the aim of facilitating restitution and prosecuting war criminals, and it and the Commission shared information throughout these interrogations. [[201]](#footnote-201) The Commission worked with the National Archives to develop a list of threatened archives worth protecting, provided information for the U.S. Office of War Information to publicize about the art and cultural monuments at risk, and shared much information with Embassies abroad, the State Department and the Customs Bureau to control the continued transfer of looted art. It also helped create and facilitate relationships between its counterparts in Belgium, France, Britain, and the Netherlands.

At first, the Commission prioritized getting literal military boots on the ground dedicated to protecting Europe’s culture as the Allies moved through the continent. The first officer tasked with inspecting monuments in the occupied territories was plucked from army duty and sent to Sicily to accompany the invading Allies in July 1943.[[202]](#footnote-202) The Commission chose Captain Mason Hammond for the job; the Harvard classics professor became the precursor to a group later dubbed the “Monuments Men.” Hammond was sent without practically any resources (he had to bring his own typewriter and hitch rides), no official orders, and until September when his British counterpart arrived, he was alone. For security reasons he had not even been allowed to study the region before deployment. His rogue and generally confused, pioneering venture would evolve into an official subcommission, the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program (MFAA), founded between the U.S. and Britain, administered by the Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories and primarily responsible to the British War Office.[[203]](#footnote-203)

By the end of August 1944 eight official MFAA men were on assignment. Two Americans and one Brit came to Normandy two weeks after the D-Day landings, still without equipment and their own transportation. A few days before the Allied invasion, General Eisenhower wrote that given the historically and culturally significant fighting locale,

It is the responsibility of every commander to protect and respect these [cultural] symbols whenever possible…. So, where military necessity dictates, commanders may order the required action even though it involves destruction to some honored site. But there are many circumstances in which damage and destruction are not necessary and cannot be justified.”[[204]](#footnote-204)

Thus, the Monuments Men’s assignments involved inspecting damaged monuments, conducting some emergency repairs, and intervening to prevent troops from using culturally protected buildings. In the end, these eight men inspected 3,145 monuments and archives in France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and Germany.[[205]](#footnote-205) As Monuments Man James Rorimer reported, within the American Zone alone, “a total of 1,240 sites and 597 towns were visited by an average of 2.5 MFAA officers in the field. This amounted to 125 sites and 60 towns per man per month.”[[206]](#footnote-206) By the end of the restitution operation almost 350 women and men would have served in the program.[[207]](#footnote-207)

The Monuments officers followed closely behind the liberating Allies and soon took on the task of gathering looted art from the repositories discovered as the Allies trekked across the continent. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 1945 German radio maintained this perspective on the process:

Like Hyenas the Anglo-American barbarians in the occupied western territories are falling upon German works of art and beginning a systematic looting campaign. Under flimsy pretexts all private houses and public buildings in the whole area are searched by art experts, most of them Jews, who “confiscate” all works of art whose owners cannot prove beyond doubt their property rights…. These works of art, stolen in true Jewish style, are transferred to Aachen, where they are sorted and packed and then dispatched to the U.S.A.[[208]](#footnote-208)

Lieutenant James J. Rorimer, curator of medieval art at the Metropolitan Museum in New York enlisted in the Army in 1943 and became the MFAA officer in Normandy, then in the Seine Section of Paris, and later with the Seventh Army in the U.S.-controlled Western German Zone. As the first Monuments man in Liberated Paris, which was for the most part architecturally intact, he prioritized facilitating interactions between the French trying to protect their cultural heritage, and the Allies liberating a city. Along the way he stumbled onto the problem of the looted art.

Arriving on the heels of the fleeing Germans in late August 1944, Rorimer reported sleeping in the same hotel beds Nazi officers had vacated not 24 hours prior.[[209]](#footnote-209) He was perhaps the only person in the American Army on the ground in Liberated Paris with a cultural mission. Rorimer thus strongly and solitarily protested the use of the Tuileries as a temporary campsite for the service troops. The military reached a temporary (albeit not ideal) compromise as a result: using the space as a parking lot. This unfortunate situation lasted only until Rorimer convinced his superiors to move the vehicles to the Esplanade of the Invalides to save the iconic Parisian landmark from further damage, and to save the Americans from needless French anger.[[210]](#footnote-210) Similarly, Rorimer intervened when news came that works of art from the museum and palace of Versailles had been taken to furnish General Eisenhower’s office. After initial failed attempts to reason with a “very proud” Army Captain in charge of the task, Rorimer ultimately argued to Eisenhower’s Headquarters Commandant that if word got out about this episode, it would mean drastic repercussions on international opinion of the liberating Americans. Despite pushback from his fellow Army officers, Rorimer succeeded in having the property returned to Versailles.[[211]](#footnote-211) While some of his colleagues evidently did not recognize the hypocrisy of such actions, Rorimer saw the diplomatic danger of Allied manipulation of art in the shadow of the Nazis own actions.

As becomes clear, an important component of his job was promoting relations with the French, which partially explains the beginnings of his relationship with Rose Valland. As Rorimer wrote himself,

Although my main purpose in Paris was to preserve buildings and to protect them and their collections from further abuse, it became increasingly apparent that I was in a position to gather intelligence for future operations in Germany in the course of doing my job. The one person who above all others enabled us to track down the official Nazi art looters and to engage intelligently in that aspect of the whole picture was Mademoiselle Rose Valland.[[212]](#footnote-212)

Valland, generally apprehensive of Paris’s new visitors, took some time before deciding to share the treasure-trove of information she had gathered. When Rorimer intervened to save the Jeu de Paume from Army use, she recognized someone who valued French culture, and in the final months of 1944 chose to share what she knew.

She first drew Rorimer’s attention to fifty-two railcars sitting in the Paris suburb of Aulnay. In the chaos of retreat, von Behr had ordered the remaining contents of the Jeu de Paume and the last loot of M-Aktion loaded into 148 cases destined for Germany on August 1. Valland had alerted Jaujard, who in turn alerted members of the French Resistance working on the railways. It took the train a week to actually leave the Aubervilliers station, and when it finally did, it encountered “mechanical problems,” forcing a delay. It later stopped again because of an alleged need for a new motor. [[213]](#footnote-213) In the end, thanks to the quick thinking of the French Resistance, it never left the suburbs. Valland’s tip proved legitimate, a major breakthrough leaving Rorimer wondering what other information she possessed.

As Rorimer wrote of Valland, “She wanted to appear a woman of shifting moods; at one moment difficult, scheming, making good use of all the feminine wiles and subterfuges—but at all times her absolute integrity and her devotion to France were only too obvious.”[[214]](#footnote-214) He eventually gained her trust despite her deep suspicion of military bureaucracy. As she told him, “You must go to Germany, James,” referring to the enormous task of gathering France’s art from German depots.[[215]](#footnote-215) Valland was invaluable in helping the Allies retrace the steps of the French art that had been taken from its homeland, and ended up actually taking a leadership role in the process herself. She lived in Germany from 1945-1954 as a Captain in the French Army and a governmental representative responsible for hunting for French art.

Thanks to Valland’s meticulous documentation, finding the ERR repositories was fairly simple. The Monuments officers needed only wait for them to be liberated, hope they were intact, and secure the manpower and resources to evacuate the loot. In mid-April Rorimer finally received the orders he had been awaiting to go east into Germany and investigate a reported salt mine repository in Heilbronn. As soon as he heard of American troops’ advance to the Neuschwanstein Castle he headed in the direction, following assurances from Valland that this was the central ERR repository. When U.S. forces took control of the castle, Rorimer received a tour from one of its local custodians. While it had been apparent that the Nazis had tried to empty the repository before Allied arrival, the place was literally filled with paintings, books, engravings, drawings, the Rothschild jewels, rare manuscripts, pieces of silver from the David-Weill collection, among others, as well as lots of ERR records and the group’s photo laboratory (PHOTO). As Rorimer reflected, “I passed through the rooms as in a trance, hoping that the Germans had lived up to their reputation for being methodical and had photographs, catalogues and records of all these things. Without them it would take twenty years to identify the agglomeration of loot.”[[216]](#footnote-216) As he discovered, Neuschwanstein had received 53 railcar loads of art objects from France in the year 1941 alone. And as would become a trend, it emerged that while the Nazis were meticulous to a degree, much escaped documentation and the process of restitution remains ongoing to this day.

Unlike the documented ERR repositories, finding Goering’s hoard was another story. Goering himself was captured days later, and under the heavy influence of drugs and alcohol the Reichsmarschall revealed that he had had his artwork in railcars of his special train when the SS intercepted him on April 23rd. (By that point, Hitler had denounced Goering as a traitor and ordered his arrest.) Goering reported that he expected the art would still be stuck in and around a tunnel near Untersteinach. And in fact, eight carloads of furniture and artwork were found.

While Goering had seemed candid, it would take more questioning and exploring to recover his entire collection. Other prisoners of war revealed the existence of a larger part of Goering’s collection hidden in a dangerously moist cement cave near Berchtesgaden. According to Rorimer, the “chance remark of one of the trainmen” led him to another discovery of tapestries, sculptures and about a hundred pictures in a barn. Ultimately, thirty-one truckloads of Goering’s belongings were recovered: 1,375 paintings, 11,000 books and pamphlets, 308 pieces of glassware, 1,135 pieces of porcelain, and 415 silver and gold plated items.[[217]](#footnote-217)

As with most stories, especially during wartime, this one is not entirely black and white. Art and cultural property played a role in the Allied liberation as well, albeit in a less strategic way than the Nazis. Allied forces did impede and often prevent the restitution of the cultural objects they found, sometimes due to sheer ignorance, sometimes in greedy search of souvenirs. As Rorimer put it, “You cannot teach the need for such care in Basic Training any more than you can preach the desirability of respecting private property when you brief a bomber crew or send men into battle to destroy the enemy.”[[218]](#footnote-218) The wanton scattering of papers and records throughout the territory during the process of Liberation hindered intelligence officers’ attempts to gather information. The Greek vases at the museum of the University of Würzburg were destroyed needlessly. Troops quartered in the castles of Prince Hohenlohe and other private homes did serious damage to the priceless art stored there, even taking knives to canvases. One German Baroness reported being forced at gunpoint by a U.S. sergeant to turn over the keys to her safe so he could walk away with her paintings and jewelry.

One resident of Ulm reported that under the orders of an Army Captain his house had been requisitioned and the extensive art collections he had been housing for his family and the Museum of Ulm were almost completely destroyed and looted, despite his protests. As he wrote to the Military Government in June of 1945, “Considering the high code of honour I have always believed to exist in the American Army, it seems inconceivable that such acts are approved of in responsible quarters…. I do not know, of course, if, as a German, I am allowed to make any complaint at all.”[[219]](#footnote-219) And in one more example, former Army officer Joe Meador was found in the 1980s to have successfully stolen and stashed a priceless jewel-encrusted gold and silver bound Bible and other medieval illuminated manuscripts from the cathedral of Quedlinburg at his home in Whitewright, Texas.[[220]](#footnote-220)

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin agreed that each power would independently deal with reparations in their zones with a larger Allied Control Council in Berlin. Looted property was all to be “impounded regardless of the ownership thereof” and “all reasonable efforts should be taken to preserve historical archives, museums, libraries and works of art.”[[221]](#footnote-221) The discussion left out tangible details though, so the only body organized and widespread enough to handle it, the military, ended up in charge of the task. Ultimately, the Allies agreed that all property “taken to Germany during the occupation would be presumed to have been transferred under duress and accordingly treated as looted property,” and that said property would be returned to the governments of their home countries, not to individuals.

As a result, the *Commission de récuperation artistique* (Commission of Artistic Recuperation or CRA) was established in France on November 24, 1944, headed by the vice president of the French National Council of Museums, Albert Henraux.[[222]](#footnote-222) It declared as its mission to “research the pieces of art in Germany and Austria, identify and repatriate them, and as far as possible, return them to their owners.” Valland assumed the role of secretary. Working directly with the Allied Commanders in Paris, the CRA ultimately processed claims for around 100,000 works of looted French art, while delegating the actual process of restoration to the Foreign Ministry’s Office de Biens et Intérêts Privés (OBIP). The OBIP would assume the duties of the CRA when it closed in September of 1949.

By May 7, 1945, approximately 350 known repositories of artwork had been found within the American Zone alone.[[223]](#footnote-223),At the end of the month, Assistant Secretary of the Navy John Nicholas Brown proposed the immediate “ad interim” restitution of the most famous works to their home nations. Pieces like the Ghent altarpiece, the stained glass windows of Strasbourg’s cathedral, Poland’s Viet Stoss altar, Michelangelo’s Bruges Madonna, and the most iconic of paintings went in some cases directly from their Nazi repositories to their homelands, to much acclaim and celebration. Eisenhower recommended that as much as possible be returned “in bulk,” a task delegated mostly to the MFAA men and women.[[224]](#footnote-224)

While the US Army had first established many temporary collecting points as they discovered repositories, a handful of Central Collecting Points for loot came into being: in Munich, Marburg, Weisbaden, and Offenbach. The Allied collecting points rapidly became the centers of movement, in both directions. The scale of their task even today seems incomprehensible, even with the Monuments men’s typical eighteen-hour days. By June 1946, Weisbaden, Munich and Offenbach remained, with their own "specialties." Weisbaden dealt with German-owned material in general, as well as property looted from Germans themselves. Its December 1950 summary claimed it had returned 340,846 items. However, considering that one “item” might mean a library of 3 million books, the number does not even begin to tell the full story.[[225]](#footnote-225) The Munich Central Collecting Point handled property primarily destined for restitution, and at its height it held more than one million objects at once. The Offenbach Archival Depot dealt mostly with Jewish religious items, books and archives, seeing about two and half million objects across its four years of existence.[[226]](#footnote-226)

Slowly, the military tried to extricate itself from the task of restitution. The Roberts Commission concluded its operations in June 1946, but the process of recovery continued without it. After the initial wave of obvious returns, the remaining MFAA officers often took on the roles of detectives, researching provenances, and tracking down missing works from thieves and collaborationists. One officer, Edgar Breitenbach who spoke fluent German actually traveled the Berchtesgaden region in lederhosen looking for items from the Goering collection in local homes.[[227]](#footnote-227) General Lucius Clay, Military Governor of the U.S. Zone of Germany tried to set a deadline for all claims on September 15, 1948, and all action ending on December 31. In reality, restitution would continue for three more years. When the Collecting Points finally closed down for good in September of 1951, about a million objects remained in limbo. Around three quarters of these were distributed outside of Germany, and the remainders were shared among German museums and organizations.

The Jewish religious property that had become ownerless throughout the war was given to the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) founded by the Military Government in New York in 1947. It and another organization, the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, worked to distribute the hundreds of thousands of objects to groups mostly in the U.S. and Israel. The process concluded in February of 1949.

In France, by 1950, 61,233 works had been found and repatriated, of an estimated 100,000 looted. According to the Ministry of Culture, more than 80 percent of the found works have been returned to their owners. When the CRA was dissolved, about 2,000 of the remaining unclaimed works deemed the most noteworthy were distributed to the guardianship of selected national museums until retrieved by their owners. The rest, about 13,000 were discreetly put up for auction, earning about 100 million francs in 1954.[[228]](#footnote-228)

On the side of the Jeu de Paume museum in Paris today is mounted a stone plaque honoring Rose Valland’s “act of courage and resistance” within its walls. She remains one of the most decorated women in French history as an officer of the French Legion of Honor and recipient of the U.S. Medal of Freedom and German Order of Merit, to name a few. But despite the exhaustive and admirable efforts of people like her to right the wrongs of the Nazi apparatus, the task could not be fully accomplished. As mentioned, thousands of works of art remain in the custody of museums around the globe, without owners or with owners unaware of their existence. And many works remain entirely unaccounted for, perhaps destroyed, perhaps scattered across the world’s attics and basements. But that so much was indeed found and returned remains a feat of incredible proportion.

The restitution efforts after World War II comprise an example of one army responding to another’s mess. Within the story though lie examples that indicate that some of the Nazi impulses that led to such tragic looting, notably of greed and egotism, are by no means unique. While the Nazi cultural campaign are far worse in comparison to the crimes of those in the Allied armies after the war, we see that cultural property and art play a fundamental role in war, regardless of overarching mission.

*Conclusion*

Hitler’s war of domination, much like Napoleon’s, was about more than just the control of human life. It was about domination of societies, peoples in their entirety, very much including their cultures. Simultaneously, he planned to exalt his own Reich and its culture, often through exploiting the cultural resources of others to elevate those of Germany. The story of the Nazi agenda to loot Parisian art is merely one example among many that demonstrates how culture and the control thereof can play a fundamental role in war and its corresponding politics. The reciprocal restitution campaign represents another. Events after the war, specifically involving the Soviets and Americans, also demonstrate the ongoing power of culture in wartime.

Given that the Soviets weathered the most casualties of all countries involved, they felt entitled to the most reparations and the most territory after the war. As a result, at the 1945 Yalta Conference they asked for ten billion dollars in compensation, a number to which the Allies ultimately agreed. Immediately thereafter, Stalin personally ordered the creation of a Special Committee on Germany, which organized “trophy brigades.” These groups of art historians, museum employees, restorers and artists in military uniform were in charge of finding and shipping the Soviet Occupied Zone’s fine art and culture to the east. Beginning in February 1945, their official mission comprised: “participation in selection and transportation to Moscow of trophy property for cultural organizations.” The Special Committee also organized ‘relieving’ German industry of agricultural products and German goods; ultimately employing some 60,000 German POWs to help load around 90,000 railcars destined for the U.S.S.R. [[229]](#footnote-229) Like Hitler’s, this campaign was very much about total domination, with an even stronger tone of revenge and entitlement to “spoils of war.”

While the trophy brigades were similar to the MFAA in terms of interest in culture, the likeness stopped there. In fact, given that the Monuments officers were trying to restitute and save art, their missions clashed. On June 18, 1945, President Truman approved a mission to remove as much loot from the soon-to-be-Russian territory as possible before the agreed-upon withdrawal of troops to the new postwar borders on July 1.[[230]](#footnote-230) A week after the Americans had liberated the Altaussee mine full of German-looted art, the Soviets learned from Otto Kümmel about Hitler’s private collection and its storage in the mine. To their dismay, they were too late. Even though Altaussee was in the Soviet Zone, the Americans had quickly and purposefully rescued it to save it from Soviet expropriation.

The fate of these some two million artworks housed in the former Soviet Union has been more difficult to resolve than anywhere else.[[231]](#footnote-231) In 1957, East Germany began the process of trying to get its artwork back from the Soviet Union. By this time though, the Soviet government had no memory of where it all was, so the Ministry of Culture accumulated a list. It ultimately identified 2,614,874 looted objects and 534 archeological items, about 100,000 of which were from private collections, and about 50,000 of which had unknown provenance.[[232]](#footnote-232)

However, there was a problem. The leading Soviet art historians did not want the government to give anything back to Germany without something in return. These experts argued that that the GDR’s museums were not ready to handle all the returned property, and they that nothing should be returned unless in exchange for looted Soviet property still in Germany. It had evidently been forgotten that the Americans had actually already returned this Russian artwork in 1947.[[233]](#footnote-233) Despite this protest, 1,569,176 “trophy objects” and 121 boxes of books and photographs were returned to the GDR by early 1959. However, the other million or so remained scattered around state offices and stored in secret depositories. These figures exclude the “unofficial” looting by citizens and soldiers, which reportedly had provided most of the Western European artworks in Soviet private collections.[[234]](#footnote-234)

Today, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, much of the German artwork remains in Russia, and the two sides remain unable to agree. A 1995 conference in New York ended in public anger from both parties and no productive conclusion. That same year, an exhibit at the Pushkin Museum was titled “Twice Saved: Masterpieces of European Art of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries Removed to the Territory of the Soviet Union from Germany as a Consequence of the Second World War.” As the Pushkin’s curator, Irina Antonova said at the time to the *New York Times*, “We are very happy to be able to show you these works…. Soviet troops saved these artworks while the fascists wrecked ours; we deserve some form of compensation.”[[235]](#footnote-235) The sense of vengeance remained strong half a century later. Interestingly though, a partial return of works of art from the Hermitage Museum was brokered by Sotheby’s auction house in 1993, to the heirs of their original German owner, with the help of the Minister of Culture. However, since there is no legal Russian framework for restitution, no one has the legal authority to carry out the return. The works remain in Russia, with no clear path out.[[236]](#footnote-236)

While to a much lesser degree, the U.S. also struggled after the war with how to properly handle all the German art it suddenly found in its control. The new President Harry Truman put Edwin Pauley, Democratic fundraiser and oil businessman, in charge of reparations talks with the U.S.S.R. and Britain after the war. Pauley and his small team including military governor of Germany, General Lucius Clay, had a different view of cultural property than the MFAA and Roberts Commission. As a Commission representative reported after meeting them, the group had concluded, “there is little in Germany that the United States wants unless it is art or cultural property. It is proposed, for instance, that an international trusteeship be established to take over the best items in German museums and collections until Germany has proven itself worthy of their return.”[[237]](#footnote-237)

At the Potsdam conference in the summer of 1945 to establish the guidelines of a postwar occupied Germany, General Clay proposed dividing what he considered the “greatest single collection of art in the world” now in U.S. hands into three categories.[[238]](#footnote-238) There would be Class A (works of looted art readily identifiable as publicly owned and those taken from private owners without compensation), Class B (those taken from private owners with some compensation), and Class C (those German works hidden in the U.S. Zone by Germany for security). Clay recommended that A and B be returned to their countries of origin. Class C however, “might well be returned to the U.S. to be inventoried, identified, and cared for by our leading museums…. held in trusteeship for return to the German nation when it has re-earned its right to be considered a nation.”[[239]](#footnote-239) Those present, including Pauley, Secretary of State James Byrnes, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson generally agreed. No MFAA personnel saw Clay’s July 17 memo until July 29, but when it did, the tone worried the Monuments men tremendously.

Outrage spread quickly, with Mason Hammond immediately asking a colleague to find out “whose bright idea it is to ship German art out to the U.S.”[[240]](#footnote-240) Another Monuments man, John Nicholas Brown vehemently objected personally to Clay, writing that removing German cultural property “under the questionable legal fiction of ‘trusteeship’ seems to the writer, and to his associates in the MFAA Branch, not only immoral and hypocritical,” but that it would “indeed be humiliating” to give truth to the German propaganda depicting MFAA actions as looting.[[241]](#footnote-241) Secretary of State Byrnes later tried to qualify that the U.S. should be clear that the works “will eventually be returned intact, except for such levies as may be made upon them to replace looted artistic or cultural property which has been destroyed or irreparably damaged,” but this did not appease the uproar.

The Roberts Commission members were of divided opinions. Francis Henry Taylor of the Met and the Archaeology Institute’s William Dinsmoor loved the idea. According to Taylor, “the American people had earned the right in this war to such compensation if they chose to take it…. I believe that we must have the courage to take our own good counsel and act in the best interests of a nation which has lavished its blood and treasure upon an ingrate Europe twice in a single generation.” His words eerily echo the sentiments of the Soviets. Others, like Sumner Crosby, former medieval architecture professor at Yale, were horrified.

Regardless, on September 26, 1945, the White House and National Gallery press releases announced the move “with the sole intention of keeping such treasures safe and in trust for the people of Germany or other rightful owners” as “expert personnel is not available within the American Zone to assure this safety.” This argument too, about adequate museum custodianship, paralleled that of the Soviet Union when it tried to avoid returning the looted art to Germany. The National Gallery’s Chief Curator ordered German exile, Hanns Swarzenski to prepare a list of Germany’s top masterpieces. He came up with two hundred fifty-four paintings, seventy-three sculptures, and thirty-nine *objets.*[[242]](#footnote-242)One Colonel Henry McBride traveled to administer and oversee the transfer, although he was met with anger and protest from the Monuments officers in Germany.

By November, thirty-two of the thirty-five Monuments officers remaining in Germany signed or supported a document of protest, known as the Wiesbaden Manifesto. They wrote:

We wish to state that from our own knowledge, no historical grievance will rankle so long, or be the cause of so much justified bitterness, as the removal, for any reason, of a part of the heritage of any nation, even if that heritage may be interpreted as a prize of war. And though this removal may be done with every intention of altruism, we are none the less convinced that it is our duty, individually and collectively, to protest against it, and that though our obligations are to the nation to which we owe allegiance, there are yet further obligations to common justice, decency, and the establishment of the power of right, not of expediency or might, among civilized nations.

James Rorimer agreed but did not sign. Instead he submitted a request to be relieved, which was denied.[[243]](#footnote-243) The chief MFAA officer at headquarters actually filed the Manifesto away in an attempt to protect his colleagues.

Janet Flanner had been in Germany researching and writing what would be some of the first work in the American press about the role of cultural property during the war for *The New Yorker*. The Monuments men expressed to her their concern about the proposed transfer, and in her November 17 piece the transfer was dubbed “already regarded in liberated Europe as shockingly similar to the practice of the ERR.”[[244]](#footnote-244)

Eventually, two hundred and two pieces were chosen by Colonel McBride, and made their way from Wiesbaden to Le Havre, en route to Washington. There was some delay thanks to a German train engineer evidently inspired by the French Resistance, but after the engineer was held at gunpoint, the shipment went on its way. Despite their efforts for secrecy, the arrival in Washington did not go unnoticed. A November 24 article in the *Washington Times Herald* stated that apparently “the preservation of German art treasures is considered more important than the fate of German women and children and the repatriation of war-weary G.I.s.”[[245]](#footnote-245) Many letters of protest arrived from the public and MFAA officers who argued that the German facilities were indeed very equipped to store the works allegedly in need of "saving."

As Edith Standen, a Captain in the MFAA wrote in 1947, she and her fellow officers worked in Germany despite two “severe handicaps:” “the indifference and even disapproval of their cultural activities by higher authority in Military Government” and “the presence in Washington of 202 German museum-owned paintings,” even suggesting that the transfer “proved almost fatal to the whole program in Germany.” Contextualizing the issue she said, “It continues to poison our relations with the Germans and quite obviously prevents us from taking any action in connection with the wholesale Russian removals—however different their motive. In all our relations with Europe today, it is not enough to be virtuous, we must also appear so.”[[246]](#footnote-246) She made the same point here that the ERR Revision report made to Rosenberg, and that Rorimer made to his colleagues looking for office decorations: the manipulation of cultural property has a tremendous capacity to undermine present and future diplomatic relations.

The uproar worked. Despite Clay’s disagreement, the Army and Roberts Commission decided that the pictures would not go on exhibition until an announcement of their return to Germany. That would take until January 1948 when Clay began making arrangements to turn control of Germany over to the State Department and agreed that the paintings be sent back to Munich and Wiesbaden. At the Army’s request, the National Gallery threw together a month-long exhibition to open on March 17, 1948. By the end of the first week an unprecedented 109,779 people had visited the exhibit. By the end of the exhibition, which was extended an extra week, its attendance reached an impressive 964,970. While the most fragile were sent back immediately, much of the rest made a slow tour around the U.S., to New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, Cleveland, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, and Toledo.

What the Soviets and Americans did when in control of foreign cultural property only draws more attention to the larger issues at work in this story. In war, there is traditionally a victor. And customarily, “to the victor belongs the spoils.” It is no coincidence that art and the control thereof has played a role in wars since the first known instance of art looting, when the Elamites conquered Akkadian leader Naram-Sin and stole an engraved stone slab in 1158 BC. But the truth of the matter is far more complex when the spoils comprise national heritage and are charged with power, reputation, legitimacy, and as a result, a control over both a people’s history and future memory. Decisions about what to destroy, what to sell and what to uphold serve as another arena on which political leaders can impose their schemas, beyond sheer economic gain. That being said, as we see in the Nazi looting of Paris, often these lofty political and military goals are supplanted by personal greed and bureaucratic opportunism. Nonetheless, even in the U.S.’s decisions about Germany’s patrimony, we see the strong temptation of control over a “loser’s” culture and feeble attempts to justify it.

Arguably, Hitler was correct in saying that “No people lives longer than the evidences of its civilization (*Kultur)*!”[[247]](#footnote-247) Any politician will tell you that a successful use of power and awareness of one’s legacy necessitates attention to self-presentation. Hitler’s incorporation of art into his agenda played into this simple fact. By struggling to rewrite cultural history he was attempting to secure a grand place for his Reich for generations to come. Similarly, by destroying the culture of certain peoples, he was planning to write them out of that future. Fortunately, he failed. As one German mayor wrote in protest of the shipment of art to the U.S. after the war: “We do not want to go without works of art in our ruins. They are our mainstay and foundation, here we can start again—they explain to us consolatory space, temporal existence, age and peacefulness…. We draw our strength from just these pictures and symbols. We need them as urgently as bread.”[[248]](#footnote-248)

Appendices

Appendix 2: “Day of German Art” Parade, Munich 1937

Appendix 1: *Haus der Deutschen Kunst*, Munich

Appendices



Appendix 4: “Tête,” Rudolf Belling, 1925, included in the Degenerate Art Exhibit



Appendix 5:

“Lady in White,” Titian, 16th c.



Appendix 3: “The Boxer Max Schmeling,” Rudolf Belling, 1929, included in the Great German Art Exhibit

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103. Franz Hoffman, letter to Joseph Goebbels, November 28, 1938 (ZStA, Best. 50.01-1020, B1. 19-21) quoted in Andreas Hüneke, “On the Trail of Missing Masterpieces” in *“Degenerate Art:” The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (New York: LACMA & Harry H. Abrams, Inc, 1991), 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Nicholas, *Rape of Europa*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
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