

Art and the Third Reich

An essay by HERCRI President, Judith Jamieson

Current board members will know that my interest in the Holocaust stems at its source from my chosen profession in Modern German Studies. Additionally, as a dean of the evening school at Providence College, at the request of Rabbi Eliezer Y. Gibber, I initiated a collaborative program for his students at the New England Rabbinical College, beginning in the mid-1980's. This afforded me new insights into the Jewish culture and added impetus to further study both of the Holocaust and Judaism. This present essay reflects my particular interest in German cultural history. I have had the privilege of studying with art historians Vernon Bobbitt (Albion College), Ernst Scheyer (Wayne State University) and Kermit Champa (Brown University).

Let us begin with the term *Entartete Kunst*, almost eighty years later still in the public mind. Consider the 2014 long-lines exhibit at New York's Neue Galerie and this year's astounding discovery of a large collection secreted away in the Munich home of an aged, Hitler-connected art dealer, Cornelius Gurlitt, much of which confiscated from Jewish families and dealers in the 1930's.

Degenerate Art indeed has become an apt metaphor for the Nazi's own dysfunctional theories of high art. Initially the show title for the 1937 Munich exhibition of German Expressionist artists, and later a singularly popular traveling exhibit, it included now priceless works by Oskar Kokoschka, Emil Nolde, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and many others. Hitler's so wonderfully misfiring intention was to mock and censure this 'degenerate' element in the emerging Third Reich culture of his design. *Continued, next page.*



Max Liebermann,
*Strandszene
in Norwijk*



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the mission of the Holocaust Education and Resource Center of RI is to teach the history of the Holocaust in order to promote human dignity and justice, and to serve as a memorial to its victims.

Thank you to Bud & Ellie Frank for their continued support of the HERCRI newsletter.

Art and the Third Reich, cont'd.

Ironically, of the 112 artists only six were Jewish. But Hitler, with Joseph Goebbels, his highly effective propaganda minister, would force a continuing connection between the 'degenerate Jew' and this modernist, anti-Germanic art, called *Expressionism*.

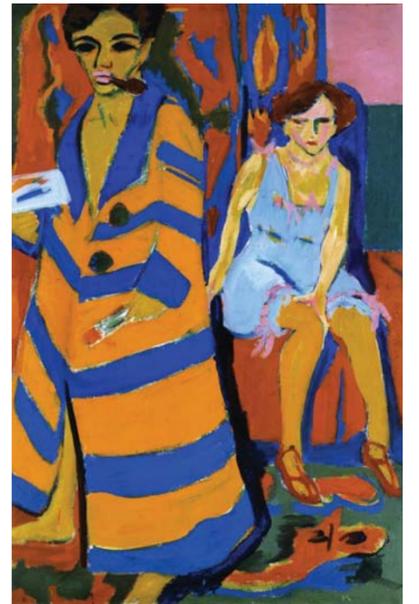
Examples in this brief essay include Germany's most well-known pre-Expressionist artist, Max Liebermann. Painting in the late 19th- and early 20th century, the Jewish Liebermann reflects a more Realist, and perhaps Northern, response to French Impressionism. With the art of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, we see the emotionally powerful, color-based impact that Expressionism brought to the western art scene. Kirchner, a founder of the 1905 Dresden artists' circle *Die Bruecke* (The Bridge), shows us a world not made comfortable or even recognizable in the traditional and didactic Volk-inspired themes which were the foundation of Hitler's cultural perspective. In Paul Padua's *Der Fuehrer Spricht*, we listen in on a private moment in the farm family's concentrated attention to a radio broadcast. Hitler speaks and every word is absorbed into national consciousness.

Kaethe Kollwitz stands alone and, in my opinion, above the fray of the art world's themes and labels. Born in 1867, she experienced the entire tumult and tragedy of the western world before her death in 1945. Her art—etchings, lithographs, prints, and sculpture—seldom veered from

its central themes of compassion, social anger, love, and the spiritual power within each of us. We, the viewers, can ignore neither her skill nor the power of her images, terrible and true and ever hopeful.

The best avenue to further viewing of these artists and others is with the website www.artnet.com/artists. *Art in the Third Reich* by Berthold Hinz and *Art of the Third Reich* by Peter Adam are the main sources in English I have found for a comprehensive analysis of a politically directed art movement, whose artists are often mundane but also disturbing.

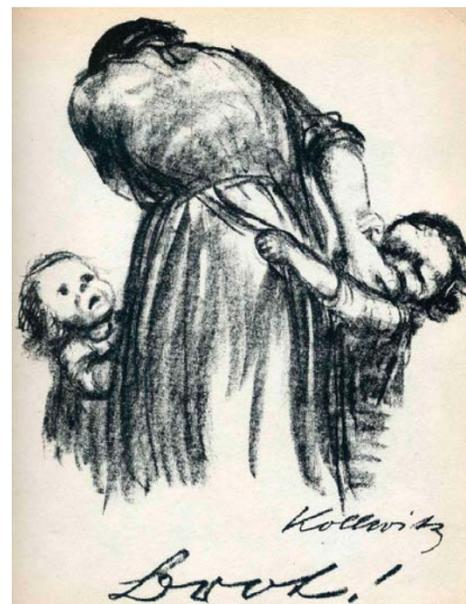
If space allows in our next newsletter, I would enjoy presenting further illustrations of German art in the late 19TH- and early 20TH centuries and its reflection on the history of its time.



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner,
Self Portrait with Model

Max Liebermann, *Beach at Katwijk*

Kaethe Kollwitz, *Bread*



Paul Matthias Padua,
Der Fuehrer Spricht



Little Known History: *Baseball's Moe Berg*

March 2, 1902 – May 29, 1972

When baseball greats Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig went on tour in baseball-crazy Japan in 1934, some fans wondered why a third-string catcher named Moe Berg was included. Although he played with five major league teams from 1923 to 1939, he was a very mediocre ball player. He was regarded as the brainiest ballplayer of all time. In fact Casey Stengel once said: "That is the strangest man ever to play baseball." When all the baseball stars went to Japan, Moe Berg went with them and many people wondered why he went with "the team"...

The answer was simple: Moe Berg was a United States spy working undercover with the CIA. Moe Berg had two loves: baseball and spying. Moe spoke 15 languages – including Japanese. In Tokyo, garbed in a kimono, Berg took flowers to the daughter of an American diplomat being treated in St. Luke's Hospital – the tallest building in the Japanese capital. He never delivered the flowers. The ball-player ascended to the hospital roof and filmed key features: the harbor, military installations, railway yards, etc. Eight years later, General Jimmy Doolittle studied Berg's films in planning his spectacular raid on Tokyo.

Berg's father, Bernard Berg, a pharmacist in Newark, New Jersey, taught his son Hebrew and Yiddish. Moe, against his father's wishes, began playing baseball on the street at age four.

His father disapproved and never once watched his son play. In Barringer High School, Moe learned Latin, Greek and French. Moe read at least ten newspapers every day.

He graduated magna cum laude from Princeton – having added Spanish, Italian, German and Sanskrit to his linguistic quiver. While playing baseball for Princeton University, Moe would describe plays in Latin or Sanskrit.

During further studies at the Sorbonne, in Paris, and at Columbia Law School, he picked up Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Arabic, Portuguese and Hungarian – fifteen languages in all, plus some regional dialects.

During World War II, he was parachuted into Yugoslavia to assess the value to the war effort of the two groups of partisans there. He reported back that Marshall Tito's forces were widely supported by the people and Winston Churchill ordered all-out support for the Yugoslav underground fighter, rather than Mihajlovic's Serbians.

The parachute jump at age 41 undoubtedly was a challenge. But there was more to come in that same year. Berg penetrated German-held Norway, met with members of the underground and located a secret heavy water plant – part of the Nazi effort to build an atomic bomb. His information guided the Royal Air Force in a bombing raid to destroy the plant.

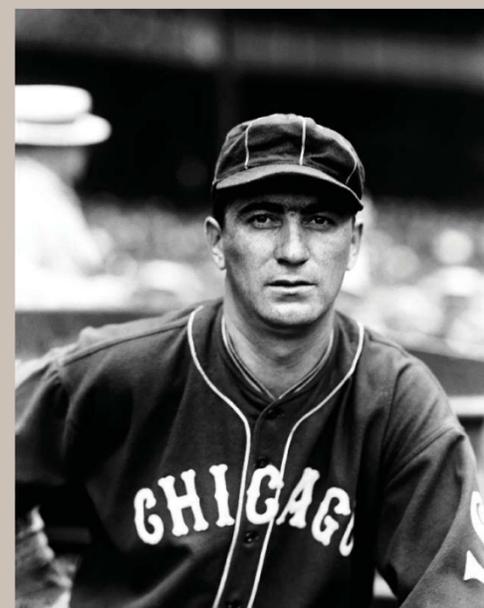
There still remained the question of how far had the Nazis progressed in the race to build the first Atomic bomb. If the Nazis were successful, they would win the war. Berg (under the code name "Remus") was sent to Switzerland to hear leading German physicist Werner Heisenberg, a Nobel Laureate, lecture and determine if the Nazis were close to building an A-bomb. Moe managed to slip past the SS guards at the auditorium, posing as a Swiss graduate student. The spy carried in his pocket a pistol and a cyanide pill. If the German indicated the Nazis were close to building a weapon, Berg was to shoot him – and then swallow the cyanide pill. Moe, sitting in the front row, determined that the Germans were nowhere near their goal, so he complimented Heisenberg on his speech and walked him back to his hotel.

Moe Berg's report was distributed to Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and key figures in the team developing the Atomic Bomb. Roosevelt responded: "Give my regards to the catcher."

Most of Germany's leading physicists had been Jewish and had fled the Nazis mainly to Britain and the United States. After the war, Moe Berg was awarded the Medal of Freedom America's highest honor for a civilian in wartime. But Berg refused to accept, as he couldn't tell people about his exploits.

After his death, his sister accepted the Medal and it hangs in the Baseball Hall of Fame, in Cooperstown, NY.

Moe Berg's baseball card is the only card on display at the CIA Headquarters in Washington, DC.



Upcoming Events

RI Community Commemoration of Yom Ha'Shoah

Wednesday, April 15, 7 pm at Temple Emanu-El

This year's featured speaker will be Dr. Bernd Wollschlaeger of Miami, Florida. Dr. Wollschlaeger was born in 1958 in the small German town of Bamberg. His father was a former Nazi tank commander and member of one of the elite units of the Wehrmacht, the German army, for which he was awarded the Knight's Cross personally by Hitler. As a teenager, young Bernd began to learn about the Holocaust, and when he inquired about it from his father, he was told that there was no such event. Bernd was curious and began to learn about Jews and Judaism and eventually went to visit in Israel. He returned to Germany to complete his medical degree, converted to Judaism and then returned to Israel to serve as a medical officer in the Israel Defense Forces.

Art & Writing Contest Awards Ice Cream Party

Sunday, May 31 at 5 pm
In the Alliance Social Hall

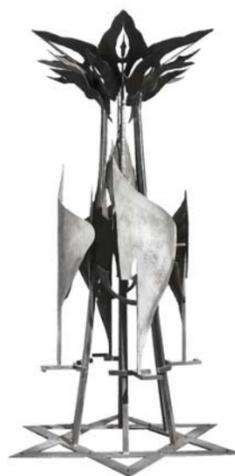
HERCRI Annual Meeting

Tuesday, June 16 at 7 pm
In the Alliance Social Hall

With keynote speaker, photographer Jonathan Sharlin. Jon will exhibit his photographs of local Holocaust Survivors, and will speak briefly about each one.

Jonathan Sharlin's work was recently exhibited in the group show, *Axis Mundi*, at the Hunt-Cavanagh Gallery at Providence College. Additionally, his work has been shown at the Photographic Resource Center in Boston, The Newport Art Museum, and at Grimshaw-Gudewicz Art Gallery at Bristol Community College.

Jonathan Sharlin lives and works in Providence.



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Lev Poplow, a marketing and public relations consultant has been staffing our social media committee in an effort to increase the public's awareness of HERCRI and the many programs we provide for the students, educators and community.

The Social Media Program has been generously funded through a grant from Ellie & Bud Frank.

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