

First “Great German Art Exhibition”: “Works that are Setting the Direction of German Art” (July 18, 1937)

Abstract

On the day before the start of the “Degenerate Art” exhibition, Hitler officially opened the “Great German Art Exhibition,” which was on view in the House of German Art, a new museum designed by architect Paul Ludwig Troost (1873-1934). It was the first of eight annual exhibitions that aimed to define and display “German art.” The exhibited works were chosen in an open competition; artists Adolf Ziegler, Arno Breker, and Karl Albiker, all of whom were loyal to the regime, originally comprised the jury for the 1937 show. A few weeks before the opening, however, Hitler replaced them with his personal photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. Approximately 900 works were exhibited. These included nudes, genre scenes, still lifes, idealized landscapes, mythological scenes, images of workers and heroes, and above all portraits of “pure” and “Aryan” people.

The following illustrated report on the “Great German Art Exhibition” appeared in the July 22, 1937, of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* [*Berlin Illustrated Newspaper*]. As the title suggests, the featured works, all of which were included in the exhibition, were supposed to “set the direction of German art.” Each illustration is accompanied by a caption praising it according to Nationalist Socialist aesthetic and philosophical criteria. In terms of visitor numbers, the “Great German Art Exhibition” was nowhere near as successful as the “Degenerate Art” exhibition: during its four-month run, it drew an average of 3,200 visitors a day, whereas the “negative” show drew an average of more than 20,000 visitors a day during its time in Munich. Illustrations and Captions

Left page:

“Taunus Landscape” by Hermann Gradl (Nürnberg) (left)

This artist from Lower Franconia began his career as a craftsman, and the arts and crafts gave him his sense for craftsmanship, simplicity, and industriousness. The painting on display in the House of German Art, “Taunus Landscape,” is an example of the best that German landscape painting has to offer.

“Group of Famers“ by Adolf Wissel (Hannover) (right, top)

A painter of Germans, who – working in the spirit of the Old Masters – tells us the secrets hidden beneath the surface of the German countenance. Reich Farm Leader Walther Darré owns several paintings by the artist.

“Terpsichore” by Adolf Ziegler (right, bottom)

This painting by the President of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts is one of the artist’s characteristic works; it emphasizes his strong will to clear form.

Right page:

“Sailor” by Karl Leipold (Berlin) (left, top)

From early on, the endlessness of the sea drew him out into the world. He experienced the sea as the creative water of the world; they call him the “Viking with a Paintbrush.”

“The Last Hand Grenade” by Elk Eber (Munich) (left, bottom)

This head in a steel helmet is a shattering testimony to how the artist experienced and endured the great school of the First World War – out of which so many leading men of the new Germany emerged – and how he finally shaped it into a grand vision.

“The Führer” by Heinrich Knirr (München) (right, top)

The septuagenarian artist has provided an example of his portrait painting, which characterizes the good old Munich style of portrait art. The painting developed from portrait studies during sessions with the Führer and is now owned by the Reich Minister of War.

“Awakening” by Richard Klein (Munich) (right, bottom)

As with his plaques, many of which were lent to the exhibition in the House of German Art from the Führer’s private collection, this painting by Professor Klein also shows him to be a master of controlled form.

Source



Source: “Trendsetting works for German Art”. Print from: “Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung”, 1937, Vol. 46, No. 29, July 22, 1937.

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