

# Bruno Taut, Program of the “Arbeitsrat für Kunst“ (1918)

## Abstract

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The *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* [Working Council for the Arts] was founded in the wake of the November Revolution in late 1918. Modeled after the workers' and soldiers' councils which had played a crucial role in the success of the revolution, the group loosely connected more than one hundred progressive artists of the Weimar Republic. It disbanded in 1921, just three years after its foundation. Central tenets of its program reproduced here include calls for reducing state influence on the arts, for measures rendering them more accessible to all levels of society and for the removal of monuments of little artistic value. Several leading artists of the early Weimar years, such as soon-to-be Bauhaus-director Walter Gropius, the painter and sculptor Käthe Kollwitz, and Max Pechstein, member of the Expressionist artists' group *Die Brücke*, are among the signatories.

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### “Arbeitsrat für Kunst" in Berlin

Convinced that the recent political revolution must be used to free art from decades of domination, a circle of like-minded artists and art lovers has congregated in Berlin. This circle is striving to collect all scattered and splintered forces committed to moving beyond the preservation of one-sided occupational interests, in order to cooperate in rebuilding our entire art world. In close touch with the elected governments and with like-minded associations such as the Art Council in Munich, Dresden, etc., the Arbeitsrat für Kunst hopes to be able to succeed in its immediate goals in the near future. The goals are outlined in the following program excerpt.

Above all, this slogan guides us:

Art and people must form a unity. Art should no longer be the pleasure of a few but should bring joy and sustenance to the masses. The goal is the union of the arts under the wings of a great architecture. From now on the artist, as shaper of the sensibilities of the people, is alone responsible for the external appearance of the new nation. He must determine the boundaries of form from statuary down to coins and stamps.

On this basis, we **currently** make **six demands**:

1. Recognition of the public nature of all building activity, an end to public and private privileges enjoyed by civil servants. Uniform management of whole city boroughs, streets and housing developments, without encroaching on individual freedom. New assignments: community centers as distribution points of all arts to the people. Permanent experimental grounds for testing and perfecting architectural effects.
2. Dissolution of the Royal Academy of Arts, the Royal Academy of Architecture, and the Royal Prussian State Art Commission in their present form, replacement of these bodies along with a narrowing of their field of activity, with others created out of the community of producing artists itself without state influence. Transformation of privileged art exhibitions into free ones.
3. Freedom for all education in architecture, sculpture, painting, and crafts from government domination. Transformation of arts and crafts education from the ground up. Allocation of government funds for this purpose and for masters' education in teaching workshops.

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4. Vitalization of museums as places of education for the people. Establishment of constantly changing exhibitions, made accessible to all the people through lectures and guided tours. Withdrawal of scientific materials into buildings appropriate for them. Segregation of technically organized study collections for craftsmen working in artistic crafts. Fair distribution of government funds for acquisition of old and new works.

5. Elimination of all monuments without artistic value as well as buildings whose artistic value is disproportionate to the value of their materials, which might be made use of in other ways. Prevention of construction of hastily planned war monuments and immediate stoppage of work on the war museums planned in Berlin and elsewhere in the nation.

6. Organization of a government department to ensure promotion of art within the framework of future lawmaking.

The following signed this proclamation: Otto Bartning, Rudolf Bauer, W. C. Behrendt, Joseph Bloch, Theo v. Brockhusen, A. E. Brinckmann, Heinz Braune, Ewald Dülberg, Martin Elässer, August Grisebach, Walter Gropius, Wilhelm Hausenstein, Franz Heckendorf, Carl Georg Heise, Fritz Hellwag, Ernst Herzfeld, Willy Jaeckel, Walter Kaesbach, César Klein, Käthe Kollwitz, Leo v. König, Bruno Krauskopf, Mechtilde Lichnowsky, Paul Mebes, Hans Meid, Herbert Mueller, Julius Meier-Graefe, Heinrich Nauen, Wilhelm Niemeyer, Rudolf Oldenbourg, Karl Ernst Osthaus, Friedrich Paulsen, Max Pechstein, Friedrich Perzynski, Hans Poelzig, E. Pottner, Heinrich Richter, Chr. Rohlf, John Schikowski, E. E. Schlieper, Paul Schmitthenner, Hermann Schmitz, Rich. L. F. Schulz, Erik-Ernst Schwabach, Preuß. Finanzminister Hugo Simon, Milly Steger, Georg Swarzenski, Georg Tappert, Bruno Taut, Max Taut, Heinrich Tessenow, Arnold Topp, Wilhelm R. Valentiner, Hermann Voß, Ludwig Wolde, Wilhelm Worringer—Declarations of support are requested at the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, Berlin NW40, #19.

Source of English translation: Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism, Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 193–94.

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