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## Constraints on Art During the Nazi Era and the Shift to Modern Art After World War II

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# Constraints on Art During the Nazi Era and the Shift to Modern Art After World War II

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## Introduction

- The Nazi Party began influencing the production of art in the early 1920s
- The regime used anti-Semitism to control art
- Enforced many art regulations, which put many artists out of work
- There was a surge in modern art production in the late 1940s.

Research Question: Did the restrictions on art in the Nazi era cause a surge in abstract art pieces after the end of World War II?



Water Lilies by Ludwig Dettmann  
Traditional Nazi Art

Painting depicts German children sitting by a stream with a farm in the background. It shows the ideal German life.



German figures at the Berlin Olympics

The statues show the ideal Germanic body types for men and women. They were made to be a representation of superiority to other races. The figures are slender, muscular, and overall seem to be in ideal health.

## Nazi Artistry and Style

- The Nazi Party only approved of traditional art
- Traditional art had been taught for thousands of years, making it considered truly German
- Nazi art was created in the image of Greek and Roman art. The Greeks and Romans were seen as the original Aryans
- The party used traditional art as propaganda to show the idealized version of Germany
- The Nazis wanted Germany to seem superior, so they created realistic pieces to show their skill in the arts
- They created "Pure German" art museums, which were a collection of art propaganda.
- The rest of the world saw Nazi art as inferior due to its inability to follow the times. That was the opposite of what the Nazis intended.
- "True" German art depicted workers, mothers, and soldiers doing their duties as good German citizens
- Nazi art tended to be flat and mostly colorless
- The Nazis used art to control the citizens' views of the country

## Artistic Revolt Against the Reich

- The production of modernistic art surged after the end of World War II
- Germany shifted from creating traditional art to leading in abstract expressionist art.
- The citizens of Germany used art to connect with people across the world
- This type of art was considered "autonomous art", and it was art that was created to rebel against totalitarian regimes
- Modern art became a way to show emotions without words, connect countries, and avoid language barriers.
- World War II became the muse for artists across the world, but especially for German artists
- Artists fueled by years of creative oppression used their art to make statements against the regime
- Art became a uniter against oppressive governments, and it created more extreme art movements with brighter colors, skewed visuals, and intense symbolism.



"Tulb" by A.R. Penck, 1976

The painting depicts an eagle and the German word for blood. It is meant to symbolize the destruction caused by bad leaders. The eagle symbolizes the leaders, and the spastic strokes symbolize the lives lost by selfishness.

"White Woman" by Georg Baselitz, 1980

This painting shows a distorted figure. It is a woman in pain. The red and the black background symbolize the destruction of World War II. It is meant to invoke fear and questioning in the viewer. It is a prime example of the abstract expressionistic trend that happened after the war.



## Conclusion

- The restrictions the Nazis put on artistry led to an extreme boom in anti-Nazi style art in the 1940s
- Most of the artists that participated in the initial boom were modern artists prior to the war, and their art had been destroyed. They painted art Nazis would have despised as a revenge tactic
- The Nazis attempted to destroy German modern art, but ended up fueling the work of many modern artists through their oppressive actions
- The oppression of art and the terrible acts committed during the Nazi era led to the continuous creation of autonomous art well into the early 2000s

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## Detestment of Modernism

- Nazi Party saw modern art as a Jewish art form and considered it leftist and of the Weimar Republic
- Abstract art was "dirty" in the eyes of the Nazis
- Jewish art instructors lost their jobs
- Any German artist, even if not Jewish, was at risk for being publicly shamed and sent to concentration camps for creating art that wasn't approved.
- Art that depicted distorted figures, bright colors, asymmetry, or forms of abstraction were forbidden
- Modern German artists were people who had opposed the first World War, which intimidated the Nazis