



THE WATER COLOURS OF HITLER

RECOVERED ART WORKS
HOMAGE TO RODOLFO SIVIERO

ALINARI

The water colours of Hitler

Recovered art works
Homage to Rodolfo Siviero

with texts by
Enzo Collotti and Riccardo Mariani

ALINARI

The Comune di Firenze with the collaboration and patronage
of the Ministero degli Affari Esteri
and the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali

Centro Mostre di Firenze

Recovered art works - Homage to Rodolfo Siviero
The water colours of Hitler

With the patronage of the President of the Republic
Florence, the Palazzo Vecchio from 29th June, 1984

Executive committee

Alessandra Buyet

Laura Lucchesi

Pina Ragionieri

Sergio Salvi

Ada Tardelli

Preparation

Duccio Toti with the collaboration
of Gino Gambi and Cristina Falagiani

Press office and public relations

Pina Ragionieri

General consultant

Sergio Salvi

Exhibition Curators

Franco Sottani

Leonardo Sestucci

*Thanks are due for the collaboration of the Soprintendenza
per i Beni Artistici e Storici of Florence and Pistoia in the persons of*

Luciano Berti, Superintendent

Emma Micheletti, Vice Superintendent

Silvia Meloni, Director of the Catalogue Office and of the Photograph Department

Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, Inspector

Further thanks are due to the following

Giulio Carlo Argan, Pier Luigi Ballini, Lando Bartoli, Rinaldo Bausi,

Luciano Berti, Vincenzo Coltella, Gerardo De Donno, Elio Gabbuggiani,

Adriano Micciani, Riccardo Monaco, Antonio Paolucci, Alessandro Parronchi,

Roberto Salvini, Luigi Solari, Mario Ursino, Maria Liberatrice Vincentini.

Catalogue by

Fratelli Alinari Editrice

Director of Publishing

Claudia Beltramo Ceppi Zevi

Edited by

Amilcare Bardi

Designed by

Annalisa Angeletti

© Fratelli Alinari Editrice, Florence, 1984

Printed by Italia Grafiche, S. Piero a Ponti - Florence

ISBN 88-7292-054-X

The water colours of Hitler on show in the Palazzo Vecchio, in a special section of the exhibition of art works recovered by Rodolfo Siviero, should not be seen as a profanation of the collection of masterpieces taken away by the Nazis, often by the direct order of the Führer. Nor should the exhibition of this series of 'postcards' by a modest Sunday painter who was destined to commit the most dreadful crimes against humanity in any way offend the values being celebrated this year in Florence on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of the city from the Nazi-fascists. On the contrary, the exhibition of Hitler's paintings forms part of the homage being paid to Siviero who, on receiving them from Martin Bormann's wife, brought them to Florence with the idea of exhibiting them.

The water colours, apart from exciting an understandable curiosity, can offer food for thought. The introductory essay by Enzo Collotti offers some stimulating thoughts both on the aesthetics of Naziism directed towards the search for the classicism identified with the race ideal, (as seen in the Lancellotti Discobolus), and on the personal tastes of Hitler, obsessed, as can be seen from his banal series of views, by a sort of mania for the exact reproduction from life.

Lastly, we have the opportunity to reflect on Nazi politics regarding the acquisition or, more brutally, the theft and plunder of the artistic patrimony of Europe.

Rodolfo Siviero set himself against this plundering with results which may today be seen here in the Palazzo Vecchio. And the presence of Hitler's paintings is a symbol of the defeat of Naziism, not the German people as such-which, in memory of Siviero, we are celebrating today along with the reacquisition of freedom.

Giorgio Morales
Alderman for
Cultural Activities
Comune di Firenze

The exhibition of Hitler's water colours is at once difficult and stimulating. It is presented by the Comune di Firenze along with the works of art taken away by the Nazis during a decade of cultural rapport with Italy, and later recovered by Rodolfo Siviero in Germany at the end of the war. Both the difficulty and the stimulus to a necessary critical investigation of this exhibition lie in the painter himself, in the particular historical epoch during which they were painted, and in all the historical and political implications that the painter though not as such created and left in our continent and elsewhere.

Many studies have been written about the special rapport between interpreters of history and of painting, or better still of 'the concept of beauty'. From Charles X of Sweden who, in his raids on Poland, between one battle and another took possession of the entire patrimony of Renaissance manuscripts and classical texts from the royal library of the Jagellonidi at Cracow, to Napoleon in his military-artistic campaigns in Italy and Egypt, to the great Ottoman Sultans in their raids on Persia, there was always and ever a particular rapport of conflicting admiration and envy for what the people they oppressed had been able to create and offer in the field of art to their conquerers.

As regards the personality of Hitler in this context, a reading of the essays of Collotti and Mariani provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of the painter's character and of the particular historical epoch in which he worked.

Claudio de Polo
President
Fratelli Alinari Editrice

Blood and water colours

The water colours of Hitler fall undeniably into the category of genre paintings. This is evident from the technique used. Water colour is a singular technique, at once ingenuous and refined, and strongly associated with the amateur and the academic. It predetermines and limits the purpose and scope of the work to be executed. In Hitler's case it is evident above all in the choice of subject repeatedly executed with maniacal obsessiveness and neatness. They are all views, urban landscapes with the occasional awkwardly drawn figure passing in front of a background dominated by monuments reproduced with irreproachable accuracy.

Hitler's water colours are an illuminating and coherent preface to the official painting of the Third Reich to be established over twenty years later. We say this in view of the what came out for example, for the exhibition entitled 'Art under the Third Reich-documents of oppression' held at the Frankfurter Kunstverein in 1974.

Painting during the Nazi era was not only inspired by the ideas and reflections on art of Hitler and his collaborators but was also, as we have said, anticipated by Hitler himself as painter. According to the intelligent opinion of Berthold Hinz, the art of the Third Reich was essentially, at least in the field of figurative art-architecture, obviously, was a different matter-a sudden rehabilitation of genre painting in opposition to the degenerate (modern, avant guard) art produced by the bourgeoisie. It appears obvious that even genre painting itself was a product of the bourgeoisie-and of the most out of date taste. This is true of all genre painting 'used' by Naziism, taken and updated from every possible different source, from Dutch painting of the XVIIIth century and the provincial painting of Bavaria and the Tyrol of the XVIIIth century, to the style of Biedermeier, and even to some aspects of the Neue Sachlichkeit (even though this belongs to the opposite, fiercely combatted tendency), as was demonstrated by the suggestive examples hung in the Realism exhibition held at Beaubourg in 1981. With regard to this interference with some aspects of the 'New Objectivity' it should be said that so strange and brutal a coincidence of opposites, though in this case only in certain sectors, is present in the very roots of Nazi culture (as the bloody destiny of National Socialism demon-

strates on a political level). To take, for example, that strange 'Nazi' thinker, the Italian Julius Evola: whilst Hitler was painting his landscapes, Evola was active in Italy as a dadaist painter. And it is well known that Dadaism (which was perhaps the real linguistic revolution — in the field of art too — of our century) had the honour of being angrily and negatively cited in the very pages of *Mein Kampf*. This in the name of a brightening up plan for art which was to become 'calm' and 'relaxed' and disdain any change in fashion or style, any aggressive deformation. In fact, it would be, to say the least, an exaggeration to consider Hitler 'a grim Sunday painter' as he has sometimes been called.

Above all, Hitler was not really a Sunday painter, an amateur, but a small time professional painter working from Monday to Saturday: and then his water colours show that as a painter Hitler was anything but 'grim'. The expressionists were, much more so, Hitler was grim (though here the word is inadequate) as the author of the political programme described and announced by him at Rauschning as 'a great landscape painted on the backcloth of our stage' and not as the author of innocuous and trivial urban landscapes.

If anything, Hitler's water colours show the admired (even on a stylistic level), ingenuous, sentimental approach of an Austrian provincial (but also 'great German') to the capital, Vienna (and then to Munich), revisited almost as an 'inside' tourist in some 'sacred' places; a feeling of admiration mixed with envy and jealousy inasmuch as Hitler came from the country and considered himself close to the soil and roots of the nation, with the peasants diffidence towards the cosmopolitan city. Nevertheless, he was to fix with his water colours (the irony of destiny) some sublime moments in the life of the city as objectives which had to be overcome through the insurrection of a cultural 'rurality' the depositary of the true values of the race. He 'fixed' them using methods by now obsolete, once a product of the cosmopolitan city, later to be relegated to provincial art schools, methods which Hitler imagined to be perennial. The results were more *völkisch* than *völkisch*.

It is probable that Hitler copied from the picture postcards of the era. As a copyist he can be compared (if the reader will pardon the blasphemy) with another copier of postcards, this time an illustrious one, Utrillo. Leaving

strates on a political level). To take, for example, that strange 'Nazi' thinker, the Italian Julius Evola: whilst Hitler was painting his landscapes, Evola was active in Italy as a dadaist painter. And it is well known that Dadaism (which was perhaps the real linguistic revolution — in the field of art too — of our century) had the honour of being angrily and negatively cited in the very pages of *Mein Kampf*. This in the name of a brightening up plan for art which was to become 'calm' and 'relaxed' and disdain any change in fashion or style, any aggressive deformation. In fact, it would be, to say the least, an exaggeration to consider Hitler 'a grim Sunday painter' as he has sometimes been called.

Above all, Hitler was not really a Sunday painter, an amateur, but a small time professional painter working from Monday to Saturday: and then his water colours show that as a painter Hitler was anything but 'grim'. The expressionists were, much more so, Hitler was grim (though here the word is inadequate) as the author of the political programme described and announced by him at Rauschning as 'a great landscape painted on the backcloth of our stage' and not as the author of innocuous and trivial urban landscapes.

If anything, Hitler's water colours show the admired (even on a stylistic level), ingenuous, sentimental approach of an Austrian provincial (but also 'great German') to the capital, Vienna (and then to Munich), revisited almost as an 'inside' tourist in some 'sacred' places; a feeling of admiration mixed with envy and jealousy inasmuch as Hitler came from the country and considered himself close to the soil and roots of the nation, with the peasants diffidence towards the cosmopolitan city. Nevertheless, he was to fix with his water colours (the irony of destiny) some sublime moments in the life of the city as objectives which had to be overcome through the insurrection of a cultural 'rurality' the depositary of the true values of the race. He 'fixed' them using methods by now obsolete, once a product of the cosmopolitan city, later to be relegated to provincial art schools, methods which Hitler imagined to be perennial. The results were more *völkisch* than *völkisch*.

It is probable that Hitler copied from the picture postcards of the era. As a copyist he can be compared (if the reader will pardon the blasphemy) with another copier of postcards, this time an illustrious one, Utrillo. Leaving

aside subject and technique and comparing the results obtained, the aesthetic abyss which separates the two becomes apparent. It is precisely Hitler's greater technical expertise (in the scholastic sense) which renders his views totally flat and devoid of inner light or poetry, whilst the less 'technical' Utrillo's swerving from a bold infidelity to his humble models produce such valid and happy results on both an artistic and a technical level (for technique, especially in painting, should never be rigid).

One could, it is true, attempt a further paradox and credit Hitler with being a precursor of the type of painting, fashionable today and not without a certain curious validity, known as 'anachronism', 'hypermannerism' or 'quotation'. But Hitler recopied (too well and therefore badly) only postcards which had no permanent value. Or at least it appears that he copied them. And his quotations are therefore terribly weak just as all the genre painting of the Third Reich is terribly weak despite all the pomp of the era and the regime.

This exhibition of Hitler's water colours can therefore be looked at in an historical light and be seen as a sort of preface, ideal and entirely personal, to the series of official exhibitions on given themes which abounded in the thirties in Germany (the first modern example of the travelling and centralized collective show). Seen in this way it is a useful record.

'Urban landscapes of Vienna and Munich', then, can be seen as a prelude to such exhibitions as 'Wife and Mother', 'The Forest', 'The Sea', 'The German Peasant', 'The German Countryside', 'The Horse in Art', 'Factory work', 'War' and so weiter which took place in Hitler's Germany in the thirties. It should not be forgotten that much other oleography being produced in various countries, including our own, was also genre painting. And it is not necessarily the case that all of these efforts, to the shame of their formal common denominator, are only fit, as regards quality, to be thrown away. It is only very probable.

Sergio Salvi
Director of the
Centro Mostre di Firenze

Art and Naziism

Art and Naziism

Enzo Collotti

The cultural opposition of the Twenties: towards a specifically German art

To identify the aesthetics of Naziism with the tastes and ideas about art of Hitler would undoubtedly be both partial and inadequate. Nevertheless, the latter cannot be dissociated from the ideology and practice of art which assumed an official character under the National Socialist regime. If we wished to trace a definition of art in Hitler's first political manifesto we would only find a negative one: in *Mein Kampf*, at the same moment in which the 'Bolshevism of art' is defined as the only possible absolute expression of Bolshevism from a cultural and intellectual point of view, war on modern art, all modern art, is declared. Anticipating what is almost a constant in Hitler's ideas on the artistic currents of the time, the favourite targets are Dadaism and Cubism, none other than 'the morbid excesses of individuals who were perverted and out of their wits'. Such judgements already implicate the transformation of art from the expression of a free activity of culture, or as was to be said elsewhere, of hated liberal pluralism, into a function destined to be directly controlled by the State. Modern art is a degeneration and prostitution of culture; closely linked to the crisis of the Twenties and the consequences of the world war whose effects were manifest most particularly in the field of art through the fragmentation of old forms of communication and the search for new means of expression, and being incapable of placing these new ferments within the

centuries old course of artistic research, Adolf Hitler had few doubts on the place due to his artistic contemporaries who expressed the post-war crisis with greater inquietude: "Sixty years ago — he wrote — an exhibition of so-called dadaist 'experiences' would simply have been impossible and the organizers would have finished up in an asylum, whilst today they find themselves even presiding over artistic associations". But one day this scandal would come to an end because 'it is the job of the State to prevent people from falling into spiritual folly'.

The pretext of guaranteeing the spiritual health of the people, of the collectivity, is from now on implicitly or explicitly linked to bodily health: here, in fact, in these propositions, we can already see all the basic premises of racism. In its turn, the racist determinism of Nazi ideology is the fruit of a cultural determinism. 'Every race, in order to preserve its existence, acts on the basis of the energies and values which belong to it by nature. Only a man fit for heroism thinks and acts heroically, given that providence has furnished him with the appropriate requirements. "With these pronouncements, expressed to the culture session at the Nazi party congress in 1933 at Nuremberg, Hitler anticipated and in part confirmed the concrete lines of a cultural policy that had already been put into practice by the first months of the Nazi regime. The 10th March, 1933, had seen the ritual and symbolic burning of banned books destined to predetermine, again with a condemnation and ritual destruction, the lines of compatibility with the racist *Welt-*

anschauung of the regime, the "heroic doctrine of values of blood race and personality", imprinted, on the "eternal laws of selection". As history and culture were bent to the uses of the new racist *Weltanschauung*, cultural policy immediately became a point of selection of the interpretative canons. Racist conditioning of culture and art also predetermined the model, the only permissible model, the style. The heroic aesthetic of Naziism, set itself up as the heir to the ideals and beauty of the ancient races with their like ideas of "mass heredity" of pure blood. Nazi Neoclassicism, so false and rhetorical, came into being through the annexation to Arian-Nordic Neo-paganism of the Greco-Roman tradition, read not as a historical tradition but as an eternal model; if African art belongs only to Africa, Greco-Roman art does not belong to any one people because it belongs to everyone, it is art, its models of the ideal and of beauty are art itself. "In ancient and modern times Nordic-Arian man has always found the cogent synthesis between the task assigned him, the purpose and the given materials. It is therefore, not be wondered at that every politically heroic epoch immediately seeks in its art a bridge to an equally heroic past. Greeks and Romans thus become suddenly close to the Germans who are constrained to seek their roots in a fundamental race; for this reason the immortal achievements of the ancient peoples continue to exert their attraction on their racially linked descendants. Since it is better to imitate the good than to produce new ugliness, the intuitive creations of these peoples can still in terms of

style, perform even today their educative and orientating function". A clearer condemnation of experimentalism and innovative research is rarely to be found in the annals of modern culture. It is also understandable why a Breker or a Thorak should rise to the position of privileged artists in a State which even stole the Mirone Discobolus, placing on the same level, on the basis of a confused idea of Classicism, the models of Greek culture and a superficial imitation, making of what was a purely formal analogy an ethic and a *Weltanschauung* which had nothing whatever to do with Greek tradition.

There is one last aspect which completes the picture of art and the artist according to Hitler, and which he tried and in part succeeded to see realized in concrete terms under the Third Reich. The artist as a functionary of an ideology, something more than a simple propagandist. "Art is a sublime mission requiring a commitment even to the extent of fanaticism. He who is chosen by destiny to reveal to the world the soul of a nation, making it resound in music or speak through stone, suffers the violence of the omnipotent force which dominates him, will speak his language even if the world around him does not understand or want to understand, will tackle every difficulty rather than fail even once to aim for the interior star that guides him".

The symbiosis of art and racism expressed by Hitler was common to all the theorists of racism. *Race and Style* was the title of one of the best known texts (in 1926) of one of the most noted authorities on racism, Hans F.K., Günther³. Art and

race again occur as an inseparable unity in *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* by Alfred Rosenberg, custodian of the ideological patrimony of the NSDAP. "Art — writes Rosenberg — is always the creation of a particular blood, and nature linked to an art form can only truly be understood by creatures of the same blood: to others it says little or nothing⁴. This, however, is not a contradiction of the idea of a universal canon of beauty because the presupposition is the same: the racial conditioning of art, and since Greeks, Romans and Germans have a common racial basis, the identity between this area dominated by superior racial values and the pretext of providing formal models (and not only formal) of general validity is easily explainable. "It was on Greek soil that, in terms of universal history, the first great determinative battle between racial values was decided in favour of Nordic blood. From the day, from life man emerged into the light, from the laws of light and of heaven, from the spirit and will of the Father rose all that which we call Greek culture and which for us is the greatest inheritance of antiquity⁵. At this point it is useless to dwell further on the manipulation of history and tradition, or on the misunderstandings of romantic critical interpretation of which the hotch-potch racist bible of Naziism is full. What is important is to take note of such of these ideas as were or became political directives.

What, in substance, were the aesthetes of Naziism seeking in the classical representation of art? The race ideal expressed "in the absolute perfection of the physical

form of man or woman". For Hitler it was anatomical perfection which attested to purity and correspondance to the ideal of the race. "The image of man is the expression of the most sublime physical vigour and as such in exact conformity with his nature and his destiny as chosen for him by nature, just as the image of woman glorifies the maturation of life and the mother dedicated to her sublime purpose". The extreme of evaluation of beauty was thus represented by the fitness of the form in respect of the purpose for which man and woman were predestined, aptitude for war in the first case and an aptitude (or it would be better to say, the obligation) for procreation in the second.

Already in these citations can be found *in nuce* some key elements of the rapport between art (its racial basis), artists, (their public mission and function) and the consumer (a public which could not have liberty of choice but was the recipient of a cultural product intended to mould it as a race, to underline its cohesion as a racial collective).

It could be interesting to examine in depth the knowledge and tastes which inspired Hitler's choice of models for his aesthetic ideal, not for what this signifies from a personal point of view but for the consequences in terms of influence on the general direction of artistic policies. We shall look at some aspects of this later. It will be interesting now to take an anticipatory look at Hitler's predilection for the paintings of Biedermeier and for Bavarian provincial painting. From scattered notes of Hitler's so-called "monologues" of the war

years we can see clearly the scale of values according to which he classified painting: the more traditional, the more academic it was, the more he liked it and the less it disturbed him. He appreciates the young and academic Corinth but as soon as the latter shows a tendency to break with tradition he drops in Hitler's consideration: observing that this story repeats itself in the case of a number of artists, if not all of them we must draw the conclusion that in this field too the Jewish plot is at work: as soon as these people, too, get above themselves, and want to undertake extraordinary and ambitious works, following the bad example of the Jews, they end by producing rubbish".

This cheap philosophy and sociology of art of Hitler's reveals all the poverty of judgement and ideas of which this man was capable: unfortunately, even in this field his ideas anticipated cultural policy. Hitler held in the highest consideration painters of a very mediocre stamp, sometimes worthy enough of their type but always of little or no difficulty. At the beginning of the September of 1942 he confided to his most intimate collaborators: "My Spitzwegs: the most beautiful collection of Spitzwegs in the whole world!".

Or he took the opportunity of buying at a then very high price a Defregger (which makes one think that the tastes of the *Führer* also served to boost the art market). It is certain that what he liked about Spitzweg was genre painting, the peaceful provincial environment, the decorous bourgeois interiors, Biedermeier, in fact, a combination of honest mediocrity and phi-

listinism. In Defregger the countryside and mountains of Bavaria and the Tyrol, the oleographic feeling of picture postcards. In the notes themselves there is an observation which gives a clue to the way in which Hitler looked at art. It is of no interest to us that he wanted to attribute to the Germans, through Defregger, supremacy over the Italians in paintings of the *Campagna* (in Italian in the text); what is more significant is that he could exclaim about Defregger in exalting its merits: "Photography still didn't exist!"⁸ That was what fascinated Hitler. Not realism, nor naturalism as an artistic expression, but the exact reproduction of the real; someone who copied nature without a trace of imagination (it almost sounds like a biographical note), that was a real artist. Art as craft, one might conclude. And so it is not to be wondered at that he liked the static, de-sexed photographic women of Adolf Ziegler, a mediocre academic painter, president of the *Reichskammer* for the figurative arts, shown in the big annual exhibitions of German art based in the new Haus der Deutschen Kunst di Troost, a monument typical of Nazi architecture which survived and was reopened for exhibitions in the Bavarian capital, beginning with the tryptich of *The Four Elements* on show in the first exhibition, that of 1937, the same date as the exhibition of "degenerate art".

We have dwelt at some length on Hitler. But Nazi art couldn't and didn't end with the ideas or political practices of Hitler and Hitler alone. Hitler can be regarded as an extreme case within a cultural situation. Without taking into consi-

deration the wave of cultural reaction running through the Twenties, the post war situation and the Republic of Weimar it is impossible to realize the hold that Naziism had as a cultural phenomenon. One must go even further back and consider the unhappy rapport between art and politics before the revolution of 1918 under Kaiser Wilhelm, of the censorship of militarism, of the monarchy and the evangelical church against artistic, literary and dramatic expression, the interference of the Kaiser himself, another who thought he could dictate models of form and content inspired by an author by a nationalistic and militaristic rhetoric. The institutional limits of the passage from the Kaiser to the Republic of Weimar also expressed themselves in the continuity of the so-called *Heimatkunst*, of traditionalist and nationalist inspiration. Hildegard Brenner, the first scholar to examine the artistic policies of National Socialism¹⁰, pointed out the strong influence in the organization of the *völkish* cultural opposition to Weimarian artistic and literary life, from 1927 onward, of the National Socialist organization for *deutsche Kultur* promoted by Alfred Rosenberg and destined to become a channel of cultural reaction, anticipating in many ways the politico-cultural practices of the Nazi regime. It is sufficient to recall the declared aim of this organization, "the propaganda amongst the German people of the rapport between race, art, science and ethical and military values"¹¹, to find in its central nucleus of standing orders a close identification with the above citations from Hitler and Rosenberg.

On the cultural front however these anti-Weimarian ferments occurred more frequently than might appear from acritical accounts of the so-called golden years of the first German Republic. In reality the golden years were years of great creative splendour but also of fierce cultural and political conflict. The Groszens and Remarques encountered hostility, sometimes even physical, not only from declared Nazis but more often from a vast body of national-conservative opinion and from organs of State such as the tribunals who were only too often called in to intervene against writers, artists and publicists, protagonists of the desacration of so-called patriotic and military values. The significance of the Great War and the way it covered with a cloak of national values the rising complicity surrounding National Socialism has too often been underestimated. The rise to power of Naziism was also the revenge of the generation of "the front". But the symptoms of these developments were already all present and explicit in the cultural conflict on the Weimar scene. When in 1930 the first local government with Nazi participation was established in Turingia, the cultural policies of that *Land* anticipated all the characteristics of suppression and political and racist discrimination which was to be typical of the Nazi regime; degenerate art had its first *mise-en-scène* with the condemnation of the Bauhaus, its banishment from Weimar and the destruction of the great wall panels of Schlemmer.

Ms Brenner has demonstrated, too, the way in which the escalation of the cultural reaction to the Prus-

sian Academy of Arts whose purification was to be one of the first and most radical initiatives of Nazification within the cultural Institutions after January 30th, 1933, became a concrete fact at least from 1926 onwards. The claim for the representation of "art felt as specifically German and of the people" as opposed to "art of an international type"¹² is emblematic of the schematization of the fronts which divided German culture. The most recent studies, stimulated by reflections induced by the fiftieth anniversary of the rise to power of Naziism and the cultural barbarization which formed an integral part of that rise to power, tend to underline strongly the attack by public and institutional opinion, hostile to the break with values they considered traditional, on new expressions of Weimar culture, precisely those who in the field of art and literature made themselves the negative heirs of the Great War-pacifism and anti-militarism in particular¹³. From the aggressive satire of Grosz to the milder, more ironic and less scathing satire of Karl Arnold and "Simplizissimus" the image of germanic man typified by a mixture of arrogance and primitivism, was in itself an offence to the cultivators of the *deutsche Kultur* and of presumed national values.

Against "Degenerate Art": The reorganization of the German spirit

The coming to power of Naziism signalled the triumph of a provincial art. Art lost all its autonomy of expression, along with all other manifestations of culture, and was organized by the interior workings of

the State. Apart from the specific content which it was to assume and which was evidently indissolubly linked to the function attributed to it, it became nothing other than one of the channels of organization and conservation of consensus, by definition an instrument of social control like many others. The fight against artistic autonomy and pluralism, against the tumult of expressions which characterized the widely diversified panorama of the Weimar scene in which survivals of Expressionism and New Objectivity lived side by side, along with the harshness of the satires of Grosz and Heartfield, loaded with the residue of Dadaism, and the frozen enchantment of the painters of magial realism, outsiders like Otto Dix and Max Beckmann, the great sculptors, heirs to the expressionist tradition like Barlach and Kollwitz, was a battle for the re-establishment of order and authority extending itself to the field of art. Only by starting from this presupposition it is possible to understand the ferocity of the attack on modern art, on everything which even remotely broke with the canons of classical established art. The privileged position in Nazi official art accorded to the great masters of the classical tradition was not due only to the possibility that in them might be found the great masters of Germanic art; there was that, as we shall see, but there was also the fact that by now all the art produced before the break made by the avant guard starting from the second half of the XIXth century was in a sense a reassuring art containing no stimulus or gleam of imminent disruption. It was a consolida-

ted patrimony, it could be put to use in one direction or another, in one measure or another, but it contained no element of emotional mobilization, it did not provoke an involvement such as might cause a division of opinion or of language or the impetus to rebellion.

The scandal was supposedly caused by those desecrators who disputed the presumed national values, race, the national community, the armed forces and warlike attitudes. But the real scandal consisted in the existence of that contradictory urban culture, daughter of industrialization and the acceleration of the phenomena of urbanization, which was none other than an expression of the contradictions of a society of complex social stratification in which the old hierarchy of medieval society or of a society fundamentally rural had been profoundly upset and remixed. Modern art had criticized the city and the wretchedness that went with the new urban reality; but it had also treated of social aspects, of the transformation of the landscape, of the concentration of technical elements, of movement, and new dynamism, of the formation of new classes as a result of urbanization. The new art of the XXth century, especially in Germany, was essentially and prevalently urban; after the first world war which exasperated the condition of the entire social system and put directly on show in the city streets the phenomena of the crisis-inflation, unemployment, prostitution and also the external images of the behaviour of the new classes produced by increasing tertiarization, with mass entertainment, the use of mass communications systems

and so forth, this all-pervading character of the big city, meeting place and battlefield *par excellence* of the great contradictions of the epoch, in which occurred episodes involving anonymous multitudes and tragedies of infinite solitude, was connotative of the whole cultural life of the time. Painting was full of it, it was expressed in experimental architecture, it pervaded literature (it might seem banal to cite *Berlin Alexanderplatz*: but it is only one example), the cinema and even music.

The Nazi cultural reaction was above all a reaction against the city as an expression of all the evils of modern society. The analysis of the contemporary city, which had found in German sociology from the end of the previous century onwards one of the most fertile fields of analysis as a microcosm of the most complex social structures, is reduced in the criticism of the *völkisch* cultural opposition to criticism of the city as a purulent sore of contemporary society. Not the scientific spirit but romantic nostalgia is at the root of this desire to return to outmoded and archaic idylls typical of the ideals of society of Nazi propaganda.

The images of social groups transmitted to us through Nazi critical ideas and later their iconography oscillate between the unreal order of a farming village, of an agricultural landscape which in reality is much transformed but which in Nazi iconography preserves the immobility of long ago, and the equally unreal order, this time even spectral, of the city as barracks, stripped of all its contradictions and destined to express by the uniformity of its urban struc-

tures the spirit of hierarchy, order and authority which had been upset because of impetuous transformations. The symmetry of the movement of masses which Naziism desire in the realization of its rituals and choreographies is no other than a symbolic representation of the values and the hierarchy of the values — each in its place — on which the ordering of Nazi society must rest.

In the *völkisch* critique of the city the prevalent element seems to be of a biological character: the city as an instance of the dissolution of the best and healthiest hereditary substance: the unhealthy promiscuous character of the city with its higher mortality rate results in an attack on the substance of a rural aristocratic race which is what the germanic race is and must remain, an aristocracy of the soil. All other considerations of a sociological character, for example on the eradication of individuals who are removed from their natural and at the same time ideal environment which is the *Einzelhof*, the farm; or of a political character, inasmuch as the city as a densified urban mass tends to spread mistaken ideas about democracy, or worse still, proletarian hatred of healthy values, are only subordinate to the principal effects of denordification, of the corruption of the nordic racial stem, or of racial degeneration, according to the theorizations of one of the chief propagators of the fight against urbanization¹⁴. Naturally, the struggle for the de-urbanization of the German people, to be conducted with rigorous racial hygiene, in the name of the ideology of *Blut und Boden*, was not without pro-

blems from the point of view of industrial development, precisely because of its expansionist and imperialist ambitions. This contradiction was never to be resolved except on an ideological level where ruralism served to furnish a tranquilizing image to cover the much more solid reality of a war-orientated industrialization; the *Blut und Boden* ideology, then, worked with the purpose of mystification and manipulation; but we might also ask ourselves whether something of this ideology, with the diabolization of the city as the city of industrial work, is not to be found also in the idea and reality of the concentration camps, macabre caricature that they were of the industrial city with the damned from the soil constrained to forced labour as a first stage in their annihilation.

Hitler inaugurated the German House of Art on July 18th, 1937. Between the time of its coming to power and the year 1937, which marks a real watershed in the artistic policy of the Nazi regime, the regime had not been idle. Political and racial discrimination had already emptied Germany of most of her best artists. The creation of institutions for the regimentation even of artists and the purging of traditional institutions now bent to the uses of the Third Reich constituted in themselves factors of profound change in the artistic panorama of Germany. Even those artists who felt themselves strongly linked to German tradition, such as Barlach, and who would never have chosen to emigrate, were forced into silence and desperation by the obstinate desire of the new spiritual directors of the

Reich to sweep away any trace of what did not fit in with their ideas and to impose a uniform style. Barlach was not prejudicially hostile to the Nazis, in fact he tried to make some conciliatory gestures to demonstrate his loyalty to the new regime. The Barlach scandal was essentially linked to the removal from the cathedral of Magdeburg of the monument to the fallen which he had modelled at the end of the Twenties. Having already been the object of sharp criticism in the last years of Weimar from military circles and National Conservatives who did not recognize in it the heroic characteristics of the German warrior but instead accused the artist of having given the figures in the group features that were not clearly germanic, the piece was transported to the National Gallery of Berlin to remove it from the public eye in the Cathedral of Magdeburg and was later consigned to the museum store room "in the least ostentatious manner possible" as recommended by Rosenberg in the September of 1934, to avoid any further agitation being provoked by this work which had already been the object of so much polemic. Behaving almost like robbers, it came to be said, the Nazis gradually caused all Barlach's significant works to disappear from public places, and the artist himself was denounced as a *Kulturbolschewist*, Jew, oriental and so on. Barlach died on October 28th, 1938, having seen himself exposed to public ridicule in the "degenerate" art exhibition, together with other artists like Nolde who had had no preconceived hostility towards Naziism¹⁵.

The Barlach case well exemplifies

the fate reserved for anyone who, though not abandoning Germany, wanted to preserve a minimum of dignity and freedom of expression. But evidently this wasn't enough for the new rulers of art. Paul Schulze-Naumburg, in 1930 director of the Weimar school of architecture, the old Bauhaus, had denounced contemporary artistic currents as "cancerogenous"; Rosenberg, for his part, asked that museums should be prevented from transforming themselves into "art hospitals". The category of illness as an attribute of modern art serves to put down as pathological any form of expression not conforming to the canons, in any case indefinable, of "German interiorization". The transfer of the artistic capital from Berlin to Munich in Hitler's Germany was not accidental and nor was it due solely to the Führer's parochialism. In the Twenties Munich had been a stronghold of cultural conservatism after the reaction to the November revolution and to the experience of the council republic in Bavaria. Munich, which had been the cradle of Nazism, deserved this recognition as a sign of the repristination of "genuine German art", and of the healthy renewal of artistic life. The day after the inauguration of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst the exhibition of "degenerate art" opened in the gallery of arcades in the garden of the Residence. A glance at the two exhibitions can serve to establish the distinction between *geartete* and *entartete Kunst*, between permitted, or rather commanded art and prohibited art. We shall leave aside the pseudo-classicism of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst building itself with its

colonnades that were supposed to symbolize the "temple of art". The introduction to the catalogue of the first of the Great Exhibitions of German art to be held at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst defines the character of conservative restoration which National Socialism wished to attain. "It was revolutionary only in its sweeping away of the refuse of Marxist-materialism. From the point of view of cultural policy the real nature of National Socialism consisted in the repristination of the most profound sense of German values, in the reorganization of the German spirit and its objective of the organic development of the German cultural patrimony"¹⁷. An exemplification of the works on show shows clearly what Nazi art wanted to be. A portrait of Hitler and portraits of other Nazi dignitaries; portraits of exponents of the *Wehrmacht*; *The Four Elements* of Ziegler; landscapes of a romanticizing style; scenes of village life; paintings of the world of the peasant by Adolf Wissel and Thomas Baumgartner among the most noted stereotypes of Nazi iconography; scenes from military life (two canvasses entitled *kameraden* repeat one of the favourite motifs of military solidarity); portraits of aviators and SA men; the new urban landscape breaks out only with an oleograph representation of the new Nazi party buildings in Munich; the drawings oscillate between pallid imitations of Dürer and the composition of Weimarian political manifestos; *In the beginning was the word* is the title of a painting in the Nazi realist style of Hermann Otto Soyer which figures Hitler performing his first act of

proselytism; among the sculpture, busts of the Führer and Mussolini (Thorak) and then conventional figures of men and animals with vague classical overtones. For the following years the exemplification might proceed on similar lines, with the accent during the war years on militaristic and heroic iconography. The anachronistic significance of the repristination of genre-painting on the part of the Nazis has been sharply underlined by B. Hinz¹⁸.

Hyper-traditionalist and conservative in style, Nazi painting is defined essentially by its content: the representation of the race as a race of peasants and warriors is its prevailing connotation with the image of woman as an expression of fertility and maternity. In contrast to this, let us look at the aims and attitudes of the exhibition of "degenerate art". When he opened the House of German art Hitler had said: "From this moment on the German people will not accept 'works of art' which are not comprehensible in themselves but which to justify their existence require bombastic intrusions for their use", to continue in this way to the extent of posing this polemical and menacing question: "[...] my dear stuttering artists of prehistory. And what are you producing? Demented and malformed cripples, women who can only incite horror, men who look more like beasts than men, children who if they were like that in real life would be considered a divine curse! And these abominable amateurs dare to offer all this to our contemporaries as the art of our time [...] No, there are only two possibilities: either these so-called ar-

tists really see things in that way and so believe in what they represent: in that case it remains to us to inquire into whether their crossedness is due mechanical causes or is hereditary. In the first case we should feel profoundly sorry for these unfortunates, in the second case it would be important for the Ministry of the Interior of the Reich to see to the prevention at least of the further hereditary transmission of similar horrifying visual disturbances. Or else these people themselves do not believe in the reality of such impressions but use them for other reasons to bring disgrace on the nation: in that case the procedure becomes a question of criminal law"¹⁹.

The "Guide to the exhibition of degenerate art" grouped the works together in nine sections. Starting from the most general one intended to show "the barbarism of the drawing from a manual point of view", or rather the laceration of form and the "contempt for all the craftsmanship aspects of figurative art", even to the extent of denouncing "the absolute stupidity of the choice of subject", the exhibition reviewed works on religious subjects (in which there was a prevalence of the Jewish derision of every religious image); works which showed the political background of artistic degeneracy (including political and artistic anarchy and the class struggle); works of a clearly political tendency (the denigration of the German soldier; the anti-militarist works of Otto Dix are defined as "military sabotage in painting"); the moral aspect of artistic degeneration ("for the 'artists' represented here the whole world is evidently one great bro-

thel and humanity for them is composed only of prostitutes and procurers"); works of a Marxist-bolshevist influence which sought "the systematic destruction of the last residue of any racial consciousness", the representation of idiots, cretins and paralytics, seen alongside negroes as the ideal races of so-called 'modern' art, the section reserved entirely for Jews, culminating in a final section definable as "total folly" (Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Constructivism etc.)²⁰.

In conclusion, the triumph of provincial art on the one hand; condemnation and deformation of modern art on the other. But it wasn't so much a case of taking up an ideological position as a cultural policy measure destined to become operative. What it must have signified for many artists, was the loss of the possibility not only to exhibit but often even to work²¹; the dispersion of many works of art or even their pure and simple destruction²².

Plunder: the spiritual struggle against the enemies of the Reich

In discriminating against artistic currents and works of art the Nazi régime took upon itself the power and right to collect for itself all the best examples of classical art. The civilizing mission with which Germany invested herself and the racial reclamation of Europe became the basis for legitimizing the concentration within the Reich of all the best works of art to be found in the area occupied by the *Wehrmacht*. The phenomenology of the plunder is extremely complex as were the motives on which it was based. The products of 'degenerate

art' suffered a variety of fates; some of them were sold abroad for the purpose of obtaining precious foreign currency: the Lucerne auctions of 1939 and 1941 held on behalf of the German government had this aim²³. In Berlin, on March 20th, 1939, to clear out store rooms needed for goods more useful to the wartime economy, more than a thousand confiscated canvasses were burnt along with almost four thousand drawings and water colors²⁴. Rose Valland testifies to an analogous bonfire of modern art masters, from Léger to Picasso, from Mirò to Klee, five or six hundred works burnt in Paris at the Jeu de Paume on May 27th, 1943²⁵. This does not, of course, alter the fact that whilst ostensibly diabolizing modern art, for motives of profit or greed for plunder, or even personal vice that was not to become public virtue, the most rapacious of the Nazi dignitaries took possession of masterpieces of Impressionism such as on other occasions were auctioned or burnt. "Au cours de dix visites au Jeu de Paume en 1941 et de quatre en 1942, Goering se réserva dix Renoir, dix Degas, deux Monet, trois Sisley, quatre Cézanne et cinq Van Gogh"²⁶.

The first consequence of this discrimination in art was thus extreme discretion as regards the disposition of art works on the part of a group of powerful men who considered themselves the masters of the State and who identified state structures with their own personal fortunes. On the 11th January, 1943, Alfred Rosenberg, on offering fiftieth birthday greetings to Marshal Göring, paid homage to him in these terms: 'I would like to

pass on to you, a lover of figurative art, a Dutch painting as a small memento for your museum. The painting is by Jacob Adriaens Bellevois, painted in the XVIIIth century, and is entitled: *A stretch of sea*²⁷. Rosenberg again, on March 16th of the same year, for Hitler's birthday sent the Führer 'a portfolio with photographic reproductions of some of the most precious paintings taken into safekeeping by my operational group in execution of your orders in occupied territories of the West, part of the artistic patrimony of the Jews, by now ownerless'. This portfolio represents the integration of the 53 very precious art works already forwarded to your collection as a result of this operation. Even this portfolio gives but a pallid idea of the value and extraordinary quantity of the art works confiscated in France by my office and hidden safely in Germany'. At their next meeting Rosenberg expressed his intention of consigning to the Führer another twenty portfolios of photographs, 'in the hope — he added — that occupying yourself, however briefly, with the beauties of art so close to your heart will bring a ray of sunshine and joy in this moment of difficulty and greatness that you are attraversing at present'²⁸.

Two weeks before the capitulation of Stalingrad there is little doubt that Hitler had need of a ray of sunshine.

The two quotations are interesting again for the light they throw on the praxis of plunder and its personalization, and no less on the part played in it by Alfred Rosenberg, the ideologist of the Nazi party who never attained recognition as

official doctrinarian of the régime but who was always employed in low power operations because of his fanaticism, to the great advantage of the Reich or its rulers. The functions performed by Rosenberg give the measure of the plan for the systemic cultural impoverishment that the Great Reich intended to impose on the whole of Europe; the methods used by Rosenberg are significant of his servility and fanaticism together, with his unscrupulousness and the ambition, personal interests and total arbitrariness that were involved in these operations.

If, from 1938, the praxis already in use for years in confiscating and freely disposing of the products of 'degenerate art' and art objects belonging to the Jews was codified within the Reich, after the beginning of the invasion of Poland this praxis became general throughout Europe. Brenner, in her text which we have frequently cited here, underlined the capillary nature of this plundering in the two cases of most accessible documentation, Poland and France. But almost contemporaneously the Seydewitzes who had access to the archives of the Dresden Art Gallery, were able to document just how vast and territorially widespread was the work of selection from the European artistic patrimony, including the removal of works from Italy even before September 8th 1943; in fact, Hitler, in the choice of works destined for the setting up of the continental museum of Linz, used the director of the Dresden Art Gallery, Hans Posse as his consultant²⁹.

As can be seen from the first instructions given to Rosenberg, the

two conceptual categories of primary importance in legitimizing the sacking of invaded Europe's artistic patrimony were those of the Arianization of Jewish property and the recuperation to the germanic nation of works dispersed throughout Europe. It was not important to establish, especially as regards the latter, the historic exactitude of the claim; what was important was to affirm and impose it wherever there was anything that was or could be considered as 'germanizable'. 'Objective scientific research — says the official text edited for German administrative use of the general Governorship — has never nourished doubts that all cultural works of everlasting importance in the Vistula area owe their origin to the work of Germans... in this area no works of truly Polish ethnic origin have ever been produced. This is true in the field of painting, of architecture and of sculpture as of all the other fine arts and all branches of science'³⁰. As if this were not enough to indicate the role that the pillaging of cultural patrimony was to play in the destruction of the cultural and national identity of Poland, condemned to non-existence as an autonomous individual state, one need only consider the words with which the Governor General of occupied Poland, Hans Franck, Minister of the Reich, inaugurated the new state library in Cracow on April 4th, 1941: 'The purposes of this library cannot be measured only in terms based on the more or less transitory circumstances of the moment but on the indestructable primary foundation of German might. And if the garrisons in the town express

the will of the Führer that this territory should remain permanently integrated in the future within the German sovereignty, if the fundamental law of the Führer must be put into practice here so that this territory will never again be treated as occupied territory, but as an integral part, a contiguous territory (*Nebenland*) of the German Reich' cultural guidance and the spiritual inspiration breathed over this territory, too, cannot but come from the Germans. From this moment on, whatever is not German in this area shall be considered foreign to it³¹.

With these words a real and true process of national expropriation was announced and put into practice: artistic and cultural spoliation was not the last means used in the realization of this object. The story of the removal to Nuremberg of the altar of Veit Stoss from the Marienkirche at Cracow would in itself be a chapter sufficient to illustrate the methods and damages of the plundering.

The most authoritative and powerful figure in the Nazi hierarchy were involved in the looting under various titles. Hermann Göring, in particular, who was second-in-command to Hitler had no need of any specific title to authorize his intervention apart from his name' his personal interest as a collector and his notorious overbearingness. Secondly, Himmler, as leader of the SS, the racial élite of the régime and of the *Ahnenerbe*, as the instrument of racial research for the consolidation of the purity of the German race, was in a good position to participate in the confiscation of Jewish property to aid his 'researches'; lastly, Rosenberg to

whose *Einsatzstab* was entrusted the job of cultural (and racial) reclamation in occupied territories. Rosenberg worked with particular zeal in occupied France, but when he became the Reich's Minister for occupied territories in the East after the attack on the Soviet Union he was able to greatly enlarge his area of operations.

In the West, too, this complex plundering operation had the general aim of depriving diverse cultural environments of their specific values and underlining propagandistically, prior to the initiative's being carried to its conclusion, the assimilability — if not the complete homogeneity — of certain areas as regards the germanic character destined to predominate for the future according to the Nazi plan. In these terms, the country whose assimilation was most strongly insisted on was Holland, on the pretext that the deepest foundations of Dutch culture belonged to a common germanic origin, and with the accent on the idea that racially and spiritually the Dutch belonged to the western border area of the germanic ethnic community³². In France the propaganda of such theories was a great deal more difficult. In fact, the orders given to Rosenberg had rather a different tone. On March 1st, 1942, Hitler defined Alfred Rosenberg's task as follows:

"Jews, freemasons and the ideological enemies of National Socialism allied to them are presently making war on the Reich. The systematic spiritual struggle against these forces is a job which is a necessity of war.

I have therefore asked the *Reichsleiter* Alfred Rosenberg to carry

out this task with the chief of the Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht*. His operatives in occupied territories have the right to research the relative material, sifting through libraries, archives, lodges and cultural and ideological institutions and to confiscate it for use in the ideological work of the NSDAP and for future scientific work and research in the Senior School (of research and National Socialist doctrine). The same ruling applies to such cultural patrimony as is found to be the property of Jews, be it ownerless or of dubious ownership". The *Wehrmacht* High Command, for its part, had from September 17th 1940, onwards already determined that no opposition against the confiscation or transportation of goods to Germany would be recognized, given that Rosenberg was 'authorized to take to Germany and put into safe-keeping such of the cultural patrimony as he considered valuable', decisions on its ultimate utilization being reserved to the *Führer*³³. A story woven of multiple complications: diplomats (Ribbentrop and the Ambassador Abetz had a fundamental role in the sacking, not only of Jewish property, in France, the military (no big looting operation would have been possible without the *Wehrmacht*) the police, antiquarians, art experts and profiteers of every kind. Before the Lucerne auction of 1938 Göring took possession of 14 rare masterpieces, from Impressionism to Expressionism, from German museums in order to use them in exchange for classical masterpieces. The confusion of the authorities and various competent bodies competing to take possession of

the same loot must have been such that the German police authorities themselves felt constrained to ask that some order was put into the plundering procedure, given that otherwise any German soldier considered himself authorized to take any piece of art or furniture that interested him from occupied territory to furnish his home or office. It is not possible to go into the details of this story which often sounds like something from crime literature. The story has, in any case, been told for the most part, as we have said, by Brenner, Seydewitz and others.

It is more important, in concluding, to return to the aims which lay behind the whole operation. To clarify these even further we can cite one last document. On November 21st, 1940, Marsham Göring wrote a long letter to Rosenberg, chief of the already much mentioned operations group in France. In it, among other things, he wrote:

"As regards the cultural patrimony confiscated in France I wish to communicate briefly the following. After a great deal of effort I am very pleased to see that an office has at last been designated for the collection of objects, though it should be remembered that other offices have full powers conferred on them by the Führer in this respect, such as the Foreign Minister of the Reich, in the first place, who some months ago sent out a circular to all departments in which he has, among others, authority over occupied territory, informing them that the safeguarding of cultural patrimonies had been entrusted to him.

I further believe that the Ministry of Propaganda of the Reich also

has the job of certifying the documentation relating to such art objects as were at one time removed from Germany and still have to be brought back to Germany. But this is chiefly a question of objects found in the possession of enemy museums.

I have promised to give all possible support to the work of your collaborators and to put at their disposition all which has been lacking them before now, that is to say, transport and surveillance personnel, and the *Luftwaffe* is under instruction to offer maximum help. Further to this, I would like to inform you that I have been able to remove from their hiding places some particularly precious art objects which were the property of Jews, as for some time now I have been uncovering hiding places very difficult to find by bribing and employing French policemen and detectives. Work is still in progress, along with that of my authorities in charge of the search for foreign banknotes by creaming off safe deposit boxes in the banks. In both cases the result of the operations will be communicated to your *Einsatzstab* who will corner and collect the goods. The collaboration at present going on between your operations group and Mr Thurner's Paris office seems to me exemplary and exceptionally suitable and promising.

To prevent mistaken ideas from arising about the objects which I wished to claim for myself, and which in part I have acquired by purchasing, in part would like to acquire, I wish to communicate to you the following:

1) Thanks to purchases and exchanges I possess today what is

perhaps the most important private collection, at least in Germany if not in the whole of Europe. These are works which I summarize under the concept of proto-nordic masters, or proto-germanic, the earliest Dutch and Flemish, French Gothic, both painting and sculpture.

2) A fairly wide and highly valuable collection of XVIIth century Dutch.

3) A relatively small but very fine collection of XVIIIth century French, and lastly a collection of Italian masters.

The entire collection will be kept very worthily in the Karinhall and will later pass to the State as my legacy with the proviso that the Gallery must remain at the Karinhall. The Führer has looked upon my project with great favour and it has his support.

To integrate this collection I plan to buy a few works from confiscated Jewish property. These will be principally masters of whom I as yet possess no examples and works necessary for such an integration. From time to time I show the pieces to the Führer. Purchase is based on an examination of the objects by a French expert [...] The purchase price is deposited with a person of trust nominated by the German State [...].

As we are dealing with hundreds and thousands of paintings this is a very modest percentage. Up to now it comes to about fifteen paintings. But I maintain that this percentage is legitimate, if only because it is possible to demonstrate that I unearthed a large part of these works from their hiding places thanks to my own personal efforts. As regards the most valuable parts

of the collections, naturally the *Führer* has the right to decide their destination. But there still remains an exceptionally large number of objects, probably in the order of some thousands, which can be utilized to decorate party and state offices as well as to fill the museums³⁵.

Up to now we have heard the voice of Göring which renders as explicit as could be possible, the request for Rosenberg's complicity, the legitimacy of a rake-off from the loot and the destination of the works which were to enrich the Reich. Very little is said about Hitler's role. Hitler had an ambition to create at Linz, the capital of northern Austria, the region of his birth, one of the biggest if not the biggest museum in the world, or at least in Europe. 'Already today — he told his collaborators — the Linz Gallery, I believe, would bear comparison with any of the most modern American galleries³⁶. To make Linz into a world capital was the dream of a provincial who hated Vienna, the great city, and the cosmopolitan Viennese. It was the provincial ideal of Hitler coming to the surface again, only in this case it could only be fulfilled by pillaging throughout Europe, beginning with the confiscation of works from the Viennese Jews³⁷. In 1945 whole lists of works destined to go to Linz were found, among them was Leonardo's Leda which had been taken from Italy³⁸. Linz was further seen, in competition with Göring, as the museographic pole in southern Germany that could be set against the Karinhall as the chief centre for art works of northern Germany.

Once it had given vent to its anti-

modernism with the condemnation of 'degenerate art' and where possible with its commercialization, the Third Reich carried out a second operation, that of annexing to itself all the masterpieces of classical art by a sort of spiritual germanization. But as if all this were not enough it tried to despoil the whole of Europe and prevent any other country from possessing a bigger or richer patrimony of art works than the German one. Every cultural consideration was subordinated to this last objective, not an isolated case but a rare one in its systematization and its breadth, in the history of spiritual and material plunder of cultural patrimony.

Notes

¹ ADOLF HITLER *Mein Kampf*, München 1936, p. 283.

² The preceding quotations are taken from the text of a speech by Hitler reproduced in JOSEPH WULF *Die Bildenden Künste im Dritten Reich, Eine Dokumentation*, Reinbek 1966, pp. 64-68.

³ For a series of exemplifications of the vision of art typical to the *volksich* culture of the Twenties and Thirties see the above-mentioned work by J. WULF, *passim*.

⁴ ALFRED ROSENBERG *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*, München, 1934, p. 120.

⁵ A. ROSENBERG, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁶ From an article by Hitler of 1934, reproduced in J. WULF, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁷ cf. ADOLF HITLER *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941-1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims* Herausgegeben von Werner Jochmann, Hamburg 1980, pp. 399-400, to the date June 13th 1943.

⁸ A. HITLER *Monologe*, *cit.*, pp. 386-87, to the date September 3rd, 1942.

⁹ Among the many works which in recent years have treated of this problem it is enough to mention PETER PARET, *Die Berliner Secession. Moderne Kunst und ihre Feinde im Kaiserlichen Deutschland*, Berlin 1981.

¹⁰ HILDEGARD BRENNER *Die Kunstpolitik des*

Nationalsozialismus, Reinbek 1963; among the general works successively published on the subject a useful synthesis is REINHARD MERKER *Die bildenden Künste im Nationalsozialismus. Kulturideologie-Kulturpolitik-Kulturproduktion*, Köln 1983.

¹¹ I. BRENNER, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹² I. BRENNER, *Ende einer bürgerlichen Kunst-Institution. Die politische Formierung der Preussischen Akademie der Künste ab 1933*, Stuttgart 1972, p. 12.

¹³ A useful synthesis of documentation and studies of the argument is offered by the catalogue of the exhibition organized fifty years after the burning of prohibited books promoted by the Akademie der Künste of West Berlin: 'Das war ein Vorspiel nur...'. Bücherverbrennung Deutschland 1933. Voraussetzungen und Folgen, Berlin 1983; further considerations and bibliographical contributions on the argument can be found in E. COLLOTTI, *A cinquant'anni dalla Machtergreifung: nazionalismo tra storiografia e cultura politica*, in the 'Rivista di storia contemporanea' 1984, no. 1, pp. 1-41.

¹⁴ We quote one of the most significant texts on the argument, a true classic of its kind: HANS F.K. GUNTHER *Die Verstädtierung. Ihre Gefahren für Volk und Staat vom Standpunkte der Lebensforschung und der Gesellschaftswissenschaft*, Leipzig-Berlin 1934.

¹⁵ cf. ERNEST PIPER *Ernst Barlach und die nationalsozialistische Kunstpolitik. Eine dokumentarische Darstellung zur "entarteten Kunst"*, München 1983.

¹⁶ As documented, among other places, in the catalogue of the great exhibition set up by the Stadtmuseum *Die Zwanziger Jahre in München*, 1979.

¹⁷ *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1937 im Haus der Deutschen Kunst zu München*, Offizieller Ausstellungskatalog, p. 25.

¹⁸ cf. BERTHOLD HINZ, in *Kunst im 3. Reich. Dokumente der Unterwerfung*, Frankfurt am M. 1974, pp. 124-125 (catalogue of the Frankfurt exhibition of 1974). A more general work by the same author, see *Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus. Kunst und Konterrevolution*, München 1974.

¹⁹ From the text partially translated by this author in E. COLLOTTI, *Nazismo e società tedesca 1933-1945*, Turin 1982 pp. 228-230.

²⁰ cf. *Führer durch die Ausstellung Entartete Kunst*, Berlin undated (1937).

²¹ Apart from Brenner's work of a general nature, an indispensable though dated work is FRANZ ROH *"Entartete Kunst". Kunstbarbarei im Dritten Reich*, Hannover 1962.

²² On the consequences of discrimination

on methods of artistic production under the Third Reich two recent exhibitions offer important documentation: the first promoted by the Wilhelm-Lehmbruck Museum of Duisburg, *Verboten-Verfolgt. Kunstdektator im 3. Reich* (1983), the second by the Kusthalle of Hamburg: *Kunst unter dem Hakenkreuz in Hamburg* (1983).

²² F. ROH, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57; R. MERKER, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

²³ J. BRENNER *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus* (cit., p. 110).

²⁴ ROSE VALLAND *Le Front de l'Art*, Paris 1961, pp. 178-179.

²⁵ SARAH WILSON *La vie artistique à Paris sous l'occupation* at the Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris-Paris, 1937-1957, Paris 1981, p. 96.

²⁶ Text reproduced in J. WULF, *op. cit.* p. 443.

²⁷ Again in J. WULF, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

²⁸ RUTH and MAX SEYDEWITZ, *Die Dame mit dem Hermelin. Der grösste Kunstraub aller Zeiten*, Berlin (East) 1963; the title is taken from the celebrated Leonardo style portrait of Cecilia Gallerani which the Germans took from the museum at Cracow. Max Seydewitz became curator of the Dresden Art Gallery after the liberation.

²⁹ We quote from the work edited by MAX FREIHERR DU PREL *Das General-Gouvernement Würzburg* 1942, p. 141.

³⁰ cf. Staatsbibliothek Krakau, *Feierliche Eröffnung durch den Herrn Generalgouverneur Reichsminister Dr. Frank am 4. April* 1941, Krakau 1941, p. 19-20.

³¹ J. BRENNER *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus* cit., pp. 113 onward; R. u. M. SEYDEWITZ *cit.* in particular pp. 95-98.

³² An exemplary title, the spirit informing

the work, this, too official, edited by MAX FREIHERR DU PREL and WILLY JANKE *Die Niederlande im Umbruch der Zeiten. Alte und neue Beziehungen zum Reich*, Würzburg 1941.

³³ Text in J. WULF, *op. cit.*, pp. 411-413.

³⁴ Text in J. WULF, *op. cit.*, pp. 439-441.

³⁵ A. HITLER *Monologe*, cit., p. 156, to the date 23-24 December 1941.

³⁶ On the project for the Linz museum cf. J. BRENNER, *Die Kunstpolitik*, cit., pp. 154 onward; R. u. M. SEYDEWITZ, *op. cit. passim*, and J. DULFFER and others: *Hitlers Städte, Baupolitik im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, Wien Köln 1978.

³⁷ The circumstance had already been noted in J. BRENNER *Die Kunstpolitik* cit., p. 160 and almost contemporaneously by the SEYDEWITZES, pp. 66-67, well informed on the removal of art works from Italy.

**Mr Smith's water
colours**

Mr Smith's water colours

Riccardo Mariani

With an article entitled 'Art as the foundation of the creative force in politics' of April 24th, 1936, the *Völkischer Beobachter* announced the publication of a collection of water colours by Adolf Hitler, edited by Heinrich Hoffmann, official photographer of the Reich and personal photographer to Hitler himself. There were seven water colours, six printed in colour and a seventh in black and white.

In presenting these works, the commentator states that the German state has assumed quite naturally a particular artistic form under the direction of Hitler, 'artist, architect and builder of the National Socialist State'. Referring, among other things, to the Führer's artistic past, he says:

'Today we know that it was no mere accident that Adolf Hitler was not at one time numbered among the numerous pupils of the Viennese Academy of Painting. He was destined for higher things than becoming a good painter or perhaps a good architect. His gift for painting is not an incidental aspect of his personality but a fundamental trait which is part of the crux of his existence. There exists an intimate, unailing link between the Führer's artistic works and his great political works. An artistic nature is also at the root of his development as a politician and statesman. His artistic activities were not just a casual pastime of his youth, a side channel into which the political genius of the man could flow, but a fundamental condition of his creative idea in its totality. (...) The Führer has given the term politics a sense of construction, and he could not have arrived at this if it were not that his politi-

cal idea developed on a basis of an understanding resulting from his personal activities in the creative art field'.

In truth, there has been far too much written on this artistic past of Hitler's, much of it irrelevant, especially where a possible link is sought between his 'experiences' up to 1914 and the architectonic and general artistic achievements of the Third Reich. The opposite, rather, is the case in the sense that there exists a real fracture between Hitler's first pictorial experiments and the later indications given to the architect, Speer, concerning the design of various monumental works.

Speer himself in his memoirs gives an account of Hitler's cultural 'reformation' after the meeting with Troost.

'His attitude to Troost was almost that of pupil to master, and it reminded me of the uncritical admiration I used to have for Tessenow. It was an aspect of Hitler that I very much liked. I was amazed by the fact that this man, object of the admiration of his followers, could in turn be capable of such adulation. Considering himself an architect, he bowed before the genius of a master in this field. In the field of politics he would never have done it. Hitler recounted with great simplicity how when he saw Troost's work "the veil fell from my eyes". And he added: "From that moment I couldn't bear the things I'd designed up to then. What good fortune to have met that man!" Good fortune indeed-continues Speer-without Troost's influence Hitler's taste in architecture would have been something unimaginable. It was Hitler himself who once sho-

wed me his album of sketches which must have dated back to the early Twenties. They were rough designs of buildings 'representative' in the neo-baroque style of the Ringstrasse of Vienna, characteristic of the Nineties. A curious thing: mixed in with these architectural projects, sometimes on the same page, there were sketches of firearms and warships!

So much for the testimony of Albert Speer, an assiduous and privileged collaborator whose peremptory judgement is substantially negative as regards the dictator's artistic inspiration, enamoured of French and Austrian *fin de siècle* architecture. In fact, the buildings which were accorded Hitler's highest praise were those which had impressed him in his days as a young aspiring artist: the Paris Opera by Charles Garnier, which he only knew from illustrations, and the Vienna Opera.

Generally speaking, his cultural references were orientated toward certain mannerist productions, to the works of Helmer and of Fellner and likewise to certain XIXth century architects like Gottfried Semper, designer of the Opera and Art Gallery of Dresden and of the Palace and the Imperial Museums in Vienna.

'In the field of architecture — Speer testifies again — and likewise that of painting and sculpture, Hitler remained fixed in the world of his youth, the world between 1880 and 1914, the period responsible not only for his artistic tastes but also for his ideology'.

As is well known, Speer wrote his memoirs in the Spandau prison as a *beaten and imprisoned man*, and frankly, such a drastic condemna-

tion is surprising after such unconditional service. Not that Hitler was any better than Speer makes him out in these writings, but certainly Speer himself, and the point is worth underlining, was the docile instrument who knowingly encouraged the Führer in his progressive cultural involution, at least as far as architecture was concerned. Further, these contemporary judgements of his suggest a probable desire to condescend to the reader rather than make authentic and finally free critical judgements.

But us proceed by stages.

Hitler's water colours are one of the rare pieces of material evidence as to his cultural stance. A general criticism of them can be completely offhand like that of Speer and many others. They are, in fact, lightweight works which any young art student could have produced. Any young art student, that is, who was devoid of any exceptional gifts or any artistic talent. Thus may the matter be quickly disposed of. Nor, on the other hand, could it be otherwise; Hitler is what he is, as we all know him. Anything further such as we are about to say is idle reflection, 'degenerate' fantasy, or rather the taste for breaking down and reassembling according to a different logic, for its own sake, like an exercise in 'literary Cubism'.

These water colours have for their subject various urban environments of Vienna and Munich; cities with a strong cosmopolitan spirit, with nothing of the rural about them.

They give the impression of having been copied from photographs rather than painted at the easel in

front of the subject; the style and treatment are those of works edited at a writing desk. Some of the views are, in fact, repeated, maybe even falsified, maintaining the same optical axis but from a closer viewpoint. In these cases the close-up is an improvement, executed with a surer hand. The urban environment represented is almost always very complex; with a movement of volume, a multiplicity of planes, fragmentation of spaces, attempts at dynamic chiaroscuro etc. The attention to detail is considerable, the various building materials can be clearly distinguished as can the condition of the buildings, their decorative details, objects and street furnishings, posters on the walls, even to the dressing of the shop windows.

Some autographical XIXth century data affixed to the water colours, and above all the out of scale placing (particularly ungraceful) of the figures, confirms the hypothesis of works copied from old illustrations, prints or postcards. In other words, these views are in every way similar to thousands of others which served to illustrate many European cities at the beginning of the industrial revolution when great XIXth century buildings alternated with medieval and XVIIth century spaces.

It is, however, certain that in these pictures it is impossible to recognize the future client of Albert Speer. On the contrary! There is in these 'postcards' an ingenuous 'metropolitan' taste, infantile even, but far from the heavy and totalitarian taste of Hitler's Thirties and Forties style.

This implies at least two considerations: as long as the architect,

Troost, is alive — until 1934 — Hitler, subject to his ascendent influence, contains his own exuberance and accepts 'past orientated' design modified by a certain sobriety and style. Basically, Troost was part of a group of architects, among whom were Peter Behrens, Joseph M. Olbrich, Bruno Paul and Walter Gropius who up to the first world war had fought against the spread of the tinselly Jugendstil, opposing it with a design system in which a few traditional elements were mixed with the first experiments in 'modernism'.

After the death of Troost, his place was immediately given to Speer who became the faithful interpreter of the Führer's dreams, to the extent that, all cultural reserve removed, Hitler showed him some of his own sketches from the years 1925-26, and within a few days, with extraordinary diligence and speed, Speer produced drawings and models.

This was the case with the Berlin Arc de Triomphe, the Grand Auditorium, the Movement Column to be built in Munich and many other projects. Thus Speer was not the

architect of the Third Reich but, more simply, the assistant architect of Hitler. The latter, without any cultural impediment by this time, the sole judge of himself and of others, discovers himself, with tears of emotion each time, to be in his turn a 'great architect', just as party propaganda noisily claimed. Now, comparing the two periods, that of the water colours up to 1914, and that of the cyclopic projects, from 1925 onwards, no similarity or continuity can be found. There might be two different completely different personalities, or rather two entirely disassociated aspects of the same personality. So, the fact that Hitler had or hadn't tried an artistic career up until the first world war makes no difference; what counts is the fact that from a certain moment onwards, any and every critical presence having been destroyed, Hitler can be a genius in all things, but not really being one he can only 'play' with the exasperated elements of a language, however sure and deeply-rooted in the common sense of the masses: the facile monumental style, accepted, diffuse

and universally understandable.

At this point, the question posed by Elias Canetti becomes more pertinent and painful (*Potere e sopravvivenza*): 'Where is the historian who could trace the course of Hitler's disease? Even if today a particularly scrupulous history could manage once and for all to free itself from the admiration of power which is intrinsic to it, it might at least put us on our guard against a new Hitler. But since he would appear in another place he would also appear in another guise and the warning would be in vain.

For a real understanding of this phenomenon, new methods of study are indispensable. They must be sought out, taken and used wherever they offer themselves. No methods for such a research can exist yet. Here the rigour of specialist disciplines becomes mere superstition. What escapes the specialists is that which is really important. A non-fragmented vision of the phenomenon is the main presupposition. Any arrogance of concept, however useful in other cases, can only be detrimental here'.

Plates

1. Vienna, Michaelkirche



2. Vienna, Schottentor



3: Vienna, Neues Rathaus



4. Vienna, Parliament



5. Vienna, Parliament



6. Vienna, Palais Auersperg



7. Vienna, Palais Auersperg





9. Vienna, Karlskirche





II. Vienna, Paradeisgartl



12. Vienna, Michaelerplatz.



13. Vienna, Burgtheater



14. Vienna, Burgtheater



15. Vienna. Schottenkirche



16. Vienna, Kirke Maria am Gestade





18. München, Viktualienmarkt mit Peterskirche



19. Munich, Altes Standesamt am Petersbergl



20. Munich, Altes Standesamt am Petersberg



Water colours attributed to Hitler from the Siviero legacy an expert examination

Hermann Weiss

1. Object

At the request of the Department of Culture of the Comune di Firenze, on the 7th, 8th and 9th March, 1984, together with Professor Hartmut Ullrich, I examined in the Uffizi library twenty water colours attributed to Adolf Hitler with a view to clarifying whether, in fact, Hitler was their author, and to then preparing a report on our researches to be delivered prior to the proposed exhibition of the paintings to take place at the end of June.

The paintings were part of the legacy of the minister, Rodolfo Siviero, and have been for some time in the custody of the drawings department of the Uffizi, grouped in a number of sets. We received no information from the Italian side on the history of the paintings. We were told only that from 1943 onwards Siviero worked on the tracing of art works removed from Italy by the Germans and after the end of the war was officially entrusted with their retrieval. In carrying out this task it is probable that he came into possession of the above mentioned paintings. On request, we were also informed that the legacy contained no documents which might clarify the history of the twenty water colours.

2. Instruments of research

In our research we used the following sources:

1. *Adolf Hitler als Maler und Zeichner. Ein Werkkatalog der Ölgemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen und Architekturskizzen.* Edited by Billy F. Price, Zug, Switzerland 1983 (cited as Price and the number of the painting).

This catalogue which was the first attempt at certifying Hitler's production as painter and draughtsman must be used with caution not only because it also includes the forgeries of Konrad Kujau, since discovered, but also because of other imprecisions and errors.

2. Documents of the National Socialist Party Central Archives (NSDAP) in the NS 26 section of the Federal Archives of Koblenz (cited as BA with indications). The Federal Archives contain a series of photographic negatives, and sometimes also positives, made in the NSDAP Archives of all Hitler's paintings, which were bought back by the secretariat (Stab) of the Führer's representative (and subsequently by Hess's secretariat) or else they were lent temporarily to the Archives by their owners for the purpose of registering them. Above all, from 1938 and until the outbreak of the war these Archives developed a considerable activity on which were based a number of lists not subsequently completed: the following descriptions are contained in the enclosures:

Enclosure A - List of 23 water colours re-purchased.

Enclosure B - List of 10 water colours by Hitler in the possession of Dr. Alfred Detig, Vienna (with dimensions).

Enclosure C - Manuscript List of 14 water colours by Hitler from the Central Archives of the NSDAP of which the painter Fritz Mühlbrecht of Steinebach had made copies, partly on drawing paper, partly on specially treated photographic paper; on the upper right margin is the date 17th February 1939.

Enclosure D - Manuscript. List of 20 paintings by Hitler, the subjects

being mainly Munich, with dimensions and annotations relating to copies made by painters (among them photographic copies coloured by hand), to their owners, and to indications of the negatives preserved in the Archives.

3. The Paintings

In the course of an examination of the paintings in the Uffizi, they were put into what seemed to us to be a logical order based on merely external criteria, and classified with progressive numbers (cited as FI and the number of the painting). The following descriptions contain indications on the dimensions of the painting, previous owners etc., taken from the documents of the NSDAP Central Archives and Price's catalogue. After the description there follows a critical analysis of the information gathered to clarify the authenticity of the paintings.

We have analysed the following paintings:

1. *Vienna, Michaelkirche* (FI-1)

Title and signature: l.b. "Wien. Kohlmarkt/Michaelkirche & Dreilauerhaus./A. Hitler".
Size: 21×27.5 cm. (sheet 29×37 cm.);

Annotations: on lower margin of recto, in manuscript "Around same width on all sides 29 1/2-37"; on verso, manuscript "The picture has been frame by S. Morgenstern, WIEN IX, Lichtensteinstrasse 4. Last owner: fabbro Prager, Wien, Florisdorf/17. 8.38. Sch. Str." Sheet left loose in passepartout with title printed on the lower margin "Adolf Hitler/Wien Michaelkirche und Dreilauerhaus".

2. *Vienna, Schottentor* (FI-2)

Title: r.b. in gothic script "Alt Wien/Schottentor 1859"
Signed: l.b. gothic "A.H."
Size: 20×15.2 cm (Sheet 25×20 cm)
Annotations: verso, manuscript, same annotation as on FI-1 with printed title "Adolf Hitler/Wien Schottenthor".
PRICE n. 180 size 20×15.2 cm

3. *Vienna, Neues Rathaus* (FI-3)

Signed: l.b. "A. Hitler"
Size: 20.3×23.5 cm
Annotations: on retro in cubiform gothic characters: "According to a report by the Führer's A.D.C., SS-Brigadeführer Julius Schaub, the Führer and Chancellor has declared that this water colour is not by his hand. The Führer and chancellor denies being the author of this painting. Berlin, 10th May 1937. For the Reichsführer of the SS and chief of the German police at the Ministry of the Interior, signed 'Wolff' (manuscript) SS-Gruppenführer and chief of the personal secretariat of the Reichsführer-SS".
PRICE n. 250 size 20.5×23.5 cm
BA: Negative NS 26/213/12; NSDAP Central Archives record with indication of negative and size 20.5×23.5.

4. *Vienna, Parliament* (FI-4)

Signed: r.b. "A. Hitler".
Size: 26.5×41.6 cm
Annotations: verso "grande! (64×48)"
PRICE n. 248, size 27×41.5 cm
BA: Positive NS 26/43a/34 on the back of which is the stamp of the NSDAP Central Archives with the indication "213/12 (from Innsbruck)" and further, the annotation by hand "Parlamento and Rat-

haus in Vienna (second piece!) Size 27×41.5. Original bought for the Führer from the property of Franz Feiler, Innsbruck (May 1938)"

5. *Vienna, Parliament* (FI-5)

Signed: r.b. "A. Hitler"
Size: 26×41.3 cm. the painting is framed and under glass. Size of frame 52.3×67 cm
Annotations: verso r.b., manuscript, "2061"
PRICE n. 247 size 27×41.5 cm
BA: Negative NS 26/213/1; NSDAP Central Archives record with annotations "made on basis of reproduction/Viennese original".

6. *Vienna, Auersperg Palace* (FI-6)

Title: r.b., in gothic "Wien./Auersperg-Palais" Signed: l.b., cursive "A.H."
Size: 18.5×27 cm
Annotations: verso, manuscript "complete(?) 1 Gr"
PRICE n. 226, size 16×24 cm
BA: Negative and positive NS 26/213/13; NSDAP Central Archives record with size 18.5×26.5 cm
Particularity: On the lower left margin in front of a figure pulling a small cart there is a small smudge of colour which is also recognizable on the photograph PRICE n. 226).

7. *Vienna, Auersperg Palace* (FI-7)

Title: r.b. gothic, "Auersperg Palais"
Signed: l.b. gothic, "A. Hitler"
Size: 20.3×27.6 cm (Sheet 21×18.5)
PRICE n. 225, size 18×26 cm.
BA: Negative NS 26/213/18; NSDAP Central Archives record with size 20.5×28 cm.

8. *Vienna, Ratzenstadt* (FI-8)

Title: r.b. "Alt - Wien/Altenstadt"
Signed: l.b. "A. Hitler"

Size: 22×33.6 cm. The painting is framed and under glass

Size of frame 48.5×60.5 cm.

Annotations: verso, manuscript "2841".

9. *Vienna, Karlskirche* (FI-9)

Signed: r.b., underlined "A. Hitler"

Size: 25.9×17.5 cm and annotations on the existence of a negative n. 2060/1 in the Central Archives of the NSDAP (proof no longer available in the BA)

10. *Vienna, Schönbrunn* (FI-10)

Title and signature: l.b., gothic, "Wien/Schönbrunner Linie/A. Hitler"

Size: 14×20 cm (Sheet 15.5×1.5 cm)

Annotations: lower margin recto, manuscript, "1/2 Gr."

PRICE n. 290, size 18×28 cm.

BA: Positive NS 26/213/14; stamped on back NSDAP Central Archives with indication 213/14 plus positive of retro with an oval stamping difficult to recognize, probably the mark of the framer Samuel Morgenstern; NSDAP Central Archives record with size 14×20 cm.

11. *Vienna, Paradeisgartl* (FI-11)

Title: l.b., gothic "Wien/Paradeisgartl"

Signed: r.b., gothic, "A. Hitler"

Size: 14.1×19.5 cm (Sheet 29×37.5 cm)

Annotations: verso, manuscript, "Light of passepartout!/small (48×32)"

PRICE n. 288, no size.

BA: Negative and positive NS 26/213/23; Central Archives register NSDAP with size 15.1×20.1 cm and provenance "Prager, Wien".

Particularity: the last three letters of the title "Paradeisgartl" are covered by a smudge. (The smudge is

not visible on the photograph. (Italian translator's note)

12. *Vienna, Michaelerplatz* (FI-12)

Title: r.b., gothic, "Wien/Michaelerplatz. Dreilaufen/haus"

Signed: l.b., gothic, "A. Hitler"

Size: 25.5×18 cm.

Observations: the picture in its drawing is almost identical to PRICE n. 173. The anomalies occur in the disposition of the five figures in the square in front of the Michaelerkirche, in the lower windows of the bell tower, in the shadow on the church and in the two figures missing from the façade of the bell tower which are seen in PRICE n. 173.

13. *Vienna, Burgtheater* (FI-13)

Title: r.b., gothic, "Wien/Burg-Theater"

Signed: l.b., gothic, "A. Hitler"

Size: 14.2×20 cm (Sheet 16.6×21.8 cm)

PRICE n. 270 size 26.5×36

BA: Negative (size 14×20 cm) and positive NS 26/213/15;

NSDAP Central Archives record with size (incorrect) 18.5×26.5 cm.

14. *Vienna, Burgtheater* (FI-14)

Title: r.b. "Alt-Wien/Burgtheater (the upper line of writing is paler)

Signed: "A. Hitler (or Hitler?)

Cut and glued on passepartout, recto, with a fine pencil stroke, "10/XI/De (?)" (could perhaps be read as "10/X/De (?)"

15. *Vienna, Schottenkirche* (FI-15)

Title and signature: "Wien / Schottenkirche / A. Hitler"

Size: 21×28 cm (Sheet 29.8×33.4 cm)

Annotations: on the passepartout on the inside, in pencil "4855"

Observations: different from the other paintings in colour technique for the flat use (diffuse) of och-

re tones as the dominant colour; the figures are also striking being bigger and more fully drawn than in Hitler's other water colours (it is sometimes possible to make out their faces).

16. *Vienna, Kirche Maria am Gestade* (FI-16)

Signed: l.b. "A. Hitler"

Cut and glued on Passepartout: 27.2×18 cm

PRICE n. 289, size 17×9.5 cm

BA: Negative NS/213/21, positive in section NS 26/vorl. 65;

NSDAP Central Archives record with size 18×27.5 cm and indication of last owner Prager.

17. *Munich, Hofbräuhaus* (FI-17)

Title: l.b. "München/kl. Hofbräuhaus"

Signed: r.b. "A. Hitler"

Size: 21.8×28.3 cm (Sheet 32.2×45.5 cm)

PRICE n. 386, with an error in the inscription; size 21.4×28.3 cm;

Indication that the picture disappeared at an auction in 1976.

BA: Negative NS 26/213/25.

18. *Munich, Viktualienmarkt mit Peterskirche* (FI-18)

Title: r.b. "München / Viktualienmarkt / Peterskirche / 1914"

Signed: l.b. "A. Hitler"

Size: 30.4×33.5 cm the picture is mounted on paper and with this support glued on to cardboard.

PRICE n. 373, size 22×26 cm

BA: NSDAP Central Archive record with indication of negative B 182/1; the negative no longer available; size not indicated.

19. *Munich, Altes Standesamt am Petersberg* (FI-19)

Title: l.b. "München/Standesamt"

Signed: r.b. "A. Hitler"

Cut on passepartout: 38.2×25.4 cm; the picture is framed and under

glass; frame size 64.8×52.2 cm.

Annotations: on retro "2060"

PRICE n. 394, size 39×22 cm.

BA: Negative NS 26/170/3; NSDAP Central Archives record with size 26×39 cm, provenance (false) "Weinmüller" and description (false) "Petersberg II"

20. *Munich, Altes Standesamt am Petersberg I* (FI-20)

Title: r.b. "München/Standesamt"

Signed: l.b. "A. Hitler"

Size: Sheet 32.6×24.7 cm.

Sheet glued to openable passepartout.

4. Examination of the authenticity of individual paintings

All twenty water colours of the Siviero legacy are signed with the name of Hitler. Since not only in latter years but ever since Hitler became Chancellor, fake paintings in his name were in circulation, we have had to take into account the fact that in some cases we might have to examine old fakes, as is certainly the case with FI 3.

Our research was impeded by the fact that three of the paintings are framed and could not be opened (FI 5, 8, 19) and two others are glued to the passepartout so that it was impossible to examine the retro or establish the exact size of the painting or of the sheet.

As regards the problem of the falsifications of Hitler's paintings it can be said, above all, that this must certainly be excluded when the painting under examination is found among the documents of the department created for the collection and registration of Hitler's paintings at the Central Archives of the NSDAP or at Hess's secretariat, having there been judged to be authentic.

A further difficulty hangs on the fact that the only description of the painting contained in these documents is insufficient to identify it because numerous subjects, especially as regards Vienna and Munich, were painted several times by Hitler. Certain proof is, therefore, only possible where there exists a photograph and where the painting is presented as authentic in the correspondence and lists of the Central Archives of the NSDAP. Photographic documents of the Central Archives of the NSDAP exist for the following paintings whose authenticity can therefore be considered certain: FI 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16 and 19.

The indications contained in Price's catalogue, on the other hand, warrant little credence since, as we have already said, they include recent falsifications by Kujau and do not differentiate at all between genuine and dubious paintings (to the extent that the catalogue attributes to Hitler the painting FI 3 which was declared to be false by Hitler himself (PRICE n. 259).

Combining the information contained in the documents of the Central Archives of the NSDAP and various clues on the Florentine originals, one can, however, decide on the attribution of the remaining paintings even though there remains room for discussion on the degree of certainty in individual cases.

The authenticity of the paintings FI 1 and FI 2 is certified beyond doubt by the handwritten observations, certainly authentic, and initialled by the then Reichsamtsleiter Schulte-Strathaus, the last person responsible for the collection of Hitler's paintings at the secreta-

riat of Hess (a copy of the signature of Schulte-Strathaus is attached as Enclosure E). Further, the authenticity of FI 2 is also proved by its subject according to Enclosures A and C (respectively nos. 16 and 17) and that of FI 1 according to Enclosure C (n. 5).

The identity of the two Florentine paintings with those cited in the lists of the Central Archives of the NSDAP cannot be doubted, above all because in the two lists the subjects ('Kohlmarkt, 'Michelekirche, Dreilaufferhaus' and Schottentor') occur only once, and as regards n. 16 of Enclosure A (corresponding to FI 2 Schottentor) the previous owner is indicated as Prager himself. In the second place in Enclosure A the re-purchase date is established as August-September 1938 and the annotation by Schulte-Strathaus carried the date 17.8.38.

The annotation of forgery on the retro of FI 3 is undoubtedly authentic, even if for the identification of Karl Wolff's signature I must rely entirely on my memory as it was not possible to obtain a copy in order to compare them. However, this proves that the painting is a forgery, and stylistically, too, it differs from the water colours safely attributable to Hitler. As regards the subject of the "Ratzenstadt" of the painting FI 8, Price's catalogue gives four other examples of which at least one (PRICE n. 257), once in the possession of Hitler's photographer and confidant, Heinrich Hoffmann, may safely be considered authentic. Yet even if the same subject can be found in other works by Hitler there is no historical proof of the attribution to Hitler of FI 8. In this case absolute certainty could

only be reached through chemico-technical analysis and stylistic research. However, starting from our knowledge of the style of the authentic paintings, nothing, at first glance, goes against the attribution to Hitler of this painting.

The motif of the Viennese Karlskirche (FI 9) is documented 14 times in PRICE and is thus the subject most often painted by Hitler. The source cited by PRICE is old (Dr. Priesack) and is convalidated by the indications of the Central Archives of the NSDAP. Even though the photograph is no longer traceable in the Federal Archives we can consider this painting authentic on a basis of these indications but also because of its style. Very probably FI 9 corresponds to painting n. 12 of Enclosure A, the only painting of the Karlskirche by Hitler that could have been repurchased by the Hess secretariat (1939) and consequently registered in the Central Archives of the NSDAP.

In the case of FI 14 we can only make a few suppositions as regards its author. FI 14, like FI 13, is another painting of the Burgtheater, a motif listed five times by PRICE. The abbreviation "De" must surely refer to Detig, a surname which can, in its turn, be linked to the Central Archives of the NSDAP or rather to the Hess secretariat. In the list of Alfred Detig's collection (see Enclosure B) FI 14 does not occur. But this is explainable if one interprets the date written on the passepartout as the date of purchase. The motive for which the previous ownership of Detig might be considered doubtful can only be explained through suppositions. If one considers the date October/November 1941 as the da-

te of purchase by the Hess secretariat (or to be more precise, by Bornmann) in that case the painting registered as n. 12 in Enclosure C cannot correspond to FI 14 since this list (Enclosure C) was compiled in 1939. It is much more probable that it refers to FI 13, a painting that was reproduced by Mülbreach "from a copy of unknown provenance", on photographic paper and coloured by hand (cf. Enclosure C). Since in the case of FI 13 we have not been able to establish whether it was painted on photographic paper, this indication explains at least the inexactitude of the size indicated on the register of the Central Archives. The authentication of FI 14 can be made with certainty only by chemical and stylistic analysis. From a first, even superficial, stylistic comparison there is no notable difference between this and authenticated paintings, so that we can consider it, with some reservations, authentic.

The subject of FI 15, the Skottenkirche, cited twice in the PRICE catalogue, is not documented in the Central Archives of the NSDAP. Further, it does not correspond stylistically to Hitler's other works because of the monotone use of the colour ochre. The figures in the foreground, too, have come out bigger. Even allowing for the fact that in this case Hitler might have wanted to make an experiment with the colours on the figures, the convergence of both these stylistic anomalies as well as the similarity of the colours to those of the forgery FI 3 suggest that this painting, too, is a fake.

The case of F. 18 is problematical, a painting which, insofar as one can make out given the poor quali-

ty of the reproduction, is identical to PRICE n. 373. It is not possible to say with certainty whether the registration conserved in the Federal Archives, which refers to a negative B 182/1 lost in the Central Archives of the NSDAP, really appertains to FI 18 because of the lack of measurements of the photograph. Further difficulties arise from the registration in Enclosure D which under the indication 182/1 refers to a painting in oils on wood without the usual annotation on size. In this case, however, it may be supposed that the compiler of the list committed a material error, mistaking a line when transcribing the data of the pictures "Viktualienmarkt u. Peterskirche", "Der Abend", "Schliersee", and "Kochel". Actually, in Enclosure D this last painting is defined as a water colour although it is one of Hitler's few oil paintings. As regards the very different size of FI 18 as given in PRICE n. 373, it should be noted that out of at least a dozen cases where PRICE could have checked, he gives incorrect measurements four times (PRICE nos. 226, 270, 289, 294). Hence, in this case, too, the problem of authenticity must be resolved by an analysis of the style. Our examination revealed no significant differences of style in respect of the authenticated paintings.

In the case of the last painting, too, FI 20, in the absence of other criteria, the problem of authenticity can only be resolved by stylistic analysis. And in this case, too, we discovered no differences from the authenticated paintings.

5. Conclusions

As far as can be established by one

not an expert in art history, the paintings analyzed, with the exception of FI 3 and FI 15, constitute a stylistic unity which is not detached from other water colours by Hitler known to me. Ten paintings (FI 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 19) are identifiable through the photographs in the Central Archives of the NSDAP. They are recognized as authentic through their registration in what was conceived as a collection centre for Hitlerian paintings; the experts of the NSDAP had the possibility, in doubtful cases, of referring to Hitler himself. The same recognition of authenticity can also be attributed to the water colours FI 1 and FI 2, initialled by the person responsible in Hess's secretariat, Schulte-Strathaus.

The paintings of dubious authenticity, FI 8, 9, 12, 14, 18, 20 have subjects which are all found elsewhere in Hitler's work and in part also in the documents of the Central Archives of the NSDAP.

Even if the analogy of subject matter does not constitute a guarantee against forgery, it renders a stylistic comparison and the identification of forgeries easier. Forgeries may also be eliminated by use of the following argument: the copies at the official disposition of the Central Archives of the NSDAP by painters have in part been executed on water colour paper and in part on photographic paper. When copies were made of paintings not securely authenticated they were done without exception on photographic paper (cf. Enclosures C and D) and this is not the case with any of the Florentine paintings.

To conclude, 13 of the paintings examined can be directly linked to

the Central Archives of the NSDAP; among the remaining seven water colours those which correspond to numbers FI 8, 9, 14, 18 show some trace of checking on the part of this organization or some other contact with it. Thus only paintings FI 12 and FI 20 remain isolated.

If the rapport of almost all the paintings deposited in Florence with the Central Archives of the NSDAP, or rather with the Hess secretariat constitutes, on the one hand a guarantee of authenticity, it also, on the other hand, permits the supposition that the twenty paintings ended up in the hands of Siviero as a single package, and excludes the possibility that he collected them from different sources. This conclusion agrees with what I have heard from Dr. August Priesack who in his day was responsible for photographic copies of Hitler's paintings in the Central Archive of the NSDAP and who can also be considered the co-author of the PRICE catalogue.

According to this information Siviero received the twenty paintings from Mrs Gerda Bormann who was in the Alto Adige at the end of the war and died at Merano in March 1946. Gerda Bormann was the wife of Hess's successor as party minister, Martin Bormann. As such he was responsible for all the collaborators of the party office, the former secretariat of Hess.

Already in Hess's time, but also afterwards as his successor and as secretary to the Führer, Bormann was concerned in all Hitler's private affairs. He was certainly up to date on the collection of paintings by Hitler in the possession of the NSDAP and this is proved by a note

of Himmler's dated 27.10.1942. In it one reads:

"The three water colours supposed to be by the Führer's hand; Wien, Heiligenkreitzerhof, Wien, Kautnitzberg, Das Rathaus, were today destroyed by my orders following information received from the Führer (sent with letter of Reichsleiter Bormann, 24.8.1942)" (Source: BA, NS 19 neu/241).

So even during the war Hitler continued to concern himself with the authenticity of the paintings put in to circulation in his name and repurchased by the NSDAP. Bormann was certainly informed on the existence of about thirty paintings which, according to Dr. Priesack, were in the end collected, all the more so since this collection was kept in his offices, probably in the immediate vicinity of his room. The fact that the paintings, or some of them, came to be in the hands of Mrs Bormann occasions no surprise. Siviero probably possessed the same information as Priesack and passed the information on by letter to the German historian Dr. Böhne of Krefeld. It should therefore be possible to trace this information among his papers.

It is very probable that all twenty paintings come from the Hess secretariat collection and then from Bormann. It is also possible and logical that such paintings passed from the Hess secretariat to Bormann and from him to his wife and thus came to Siviero in Italy. This fact together with the stylistic similarities between the pictures, recognizable even to a non-expert and their full accordance with other works by Hitler already known to me, leave me in no doubt

that at least 18 of the paintings from the Siviero legacy can be attributed to Hitler.

Finally, as regards the date of the

paintings it may be affirmed that Hitler painted pictures of Vienna around the period between 1910 and May 1913 and the ones of Mu-

nich between 1913 and August 1914.

Munich 19.5.1984

Printed in July 1984 by
Grafica « Il Bandino » S. Andrea a Rovizzano - Firenze