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Image: Capa do Catálogo da exposição "documenta. Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts", Kassel 1955 (published by Prestl Munich).

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Nanne Buurman*

Abstract

As part of a larger study on *documenta as a Haunted Exhibition*, my article proposes a revision of the historiography produced by and about the recurring large-scale exhibition, founded in 1955 in Kassel. By rehabilitating a selection of the modern abstract art that was ostracized in the 'Third Reich' as 'Jewish-Bolshevist' degeneration, the early documenta editions contributed to the construction of a binary historiographic fairy tale of 'good' (i.e. democratic) abstraction vs. 'bad' (i.e. totalitarian) realism, which has often been discussed with regard to US-American cultural politics of reeducation in Germany. Taking a closer look at the biographies of documenta's founding fathers and the 'Germanic' genealogies of their historiographic practices, however, I seek to complicate this success story of documenta as an arbiter of democracy, whose makers were claiming a radical break with the Nazi past. Highlighting the show's continuities with German nationalism before, during and after the Nationalist Socialist regime, both on an ideological and a personal level, I will argue that documenta not only served as a 'weapon of the Cold War', but also as a washing machine for German (art) history, including the biographies of its historians and curators, who thus managed to camouflage their former Nazi associations by deploying abstraction as a detergent, whose capacity for political resignification allowed for its recuperation by different ideological regimes. The article traces the continuous attempts by a network of nationalist documenta co-founders to brand abstraction as something specifically German before, during and after the NS and discusses how this part of modern art's history in Germany was largely overwritten by the general perception of an 'Americanization' of abstraction after World War II. West Germany, in other words, was by no means a passive victim of American cultural propaganda. Rather, it matched the politics of Americanization by stressing the Germanic lineage of abstraction in exhibitions at home and abroad, thus countering the minimizing of these influences by critics such as Clement Greenberg.

Keywords

documenta. Transnational exhibition history. Historiography of abstraction. Nazi-continuities. Americanization. Werner Haftmann

Resumo

Como parte de um estudo mais amplo sobre a documenta como uma exposição assombrada, meu artigo propõe uma revisão da historiografia produzida pela e sobre esta exposição recorrente de grande escala, fundada em 1955, em Kassel. Ao reabilitar parte da arte abstrata moderna que foi condenada ao ostracismo no "Terceiro Reich" como degeneração "judeu-bolchevique", as primeiras edições da documenta contribuíram para a construção de um conto de fadas historiográfico binário de abstração 'boa' (i.e., democrática) versus realismo 'ruim' (i.e., totalitário), que tem sido frequentemente discutido em relação à política cultural norte-americana de reeducação na Alemanha. Olhando mais de perto as biografias dos pais fundadores da documenta e as genealogias "germânicas" de suas práticas historiográficas procuro, porém, complicar esta história bem-sucedida da documenta como árbitro da democracia, cujos criadores afirmavam uma ruptura radical com o passado nazista. Destacando as continuidades da mostra com o nacionalismo alemão antes, durante e depois do regime Nacionalista Socialista, tanto em um nível ideológico quanto pessoal, argumentarei que a documenta não só serviu como uma 'arma da Guerra Fria', mas também como uma máquina de lavar para a história (da arte) alemã, incluindo as biografias de seus historiadores e curadores, que assim conseguiram desviar a atenção de suas antigas associações nazistas ao implantar a abstração como um detergente, cuja capacidade de resignificação política permitiu sua recuperação por diferentes regimes ideológicos. O artigo traça as contínuas tentativas de uma rede de cofundadores nacionalistas da documenta de marcar a abstração como algo especificamente

alemão antes, durante e depois do NS e discute como essa parte da história da arte moderna na Alemanha foi amplamente substituída pela percepção geral de uma “americanização” da abstração após a Segunda Guerra Mundial. Em outras palavras, a Alemanha Ocidental não foi de modo algum uma vítima passiva da propaganda cultural americana. Pelo contrário, foi de encontro às políticas de americanização, ao estressar a linhagem Germânica da abstração em exposições nacionais e internacionais, contrapondo desta forma a minimização dessas influências por críticos como Clement Greenberg.

Palavras-chave

documenta. História da exposição transnacional. Historiografia da abstração. Continuidades nazistas. Americanização. Werner Haftmann.

Together with the Venice Biennale and the São Paulo Biennale, documenta may be counted among the oldest recurring large-scale exhibitions of contemporary art worldwide. To reevaluate its historical role from a contemporary perspective, it is important to situate the birth of the exhibition series in the social, political, and economic context of ‘Cold War’ Germany. Shortly after the country’s separation into the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1949, the newly independent FRG sought integration into the transatlantic West gaining its independence in 1955, the same year documenta first took place. “In this light,” Dorothee Richter and I wrote in the introduction to *documenta. Curating the History of the Present* (2017), “documenta initiator Arnold Bode’s dedication to primarily expressive modern art and art historian co-curator Werner Haftmann’s promotion of ‘abstraction as a world language’, a slogan devised for the second documenta [in 1959], may be read as an ideological affiliation of documenta with the [so-called] ‘free West’, where artistic liberation from naturalist representation was considered as expression of individualism, whereas (socialist) realist art was regarded as ‘unfree’ because it did not cut its ties to extra-artistic reality” (Buurman; Richter, 2017: 2). As we shall see, however, the depoliticized ideology of abstraction promoted in the early documenta editions as a sign of artistic autonomy and distance from politics cannot be explained by the exhibition’s function as a “weapon of the Cold War”¹ alone but also has to be understood as a “washing machine” for the (art) history of Germany’s compromised past (Buurman, 2020a) and thus was highly political.

In West Germany, the post-war repression of realist tendencies in the name of abstraction went hand in hand with a repression of Germany’s recent political realities, i.e. the Nazi dictatorship of 1933-1945. Already in spring 1955, artist Karl Hofer compared the promotion of abstraction and the devaluation of realist tendencies after World War II with “actions by the Nazi state” under changed political circumstances, claiming that there are already a “Gauleiter”, “SS”, a “Goebbels” and a “Führer” of this new art doctrine². Quite possibly he was referring to Werner Haftmann and his colleague Will Grohmann, who were among the most outspoken propagandists of abstraction³. These observations appear in a new light after the 2019 revelations of the NSDAP (Nazi party) membership of Haftmann (1912-1999) and other documenta founding figures, and the recent discovery that Haftmann, the chief ideologue of documenta, was also a member of the SA, the Nazi party’s violent paramilitary wing.⁴ Against this backdrop, the success story of documenta as an arbiter of democracy⁵, whose makers claimed a radical break with the Nazi past by staging documenta as a counter-exhibition to the Nazi’s so-called *Degenerate Art* exhibitions (1937-1941, with stops in Munich, Berlin, Leipzig, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Salzburg and Vienna) with the aim of rehabilitating the modern abstract art that was ostracized in the ‘Third Reich’ as “Jewish-Bolshevist” degeneration, should be revised with a critical eye to the show’s continuities with Nationalist Socialism (NS), both on an ideological and a biographical level.

I argue that by contributing to the construction of the binary historiographic fairy tale of good (i.e. democratic) abstraction vs. bad (i.e. totalitarian) realism⁶, documenta not only took sides in the so-called Cold War, but also helped to whitewash the ambivalent history of German modern art including the biographies of its historians and curators, who thus managed to distract attention from their former Nazi associations by deploying abstraction as a detergent, whose capacity for political resignification allowed for its recuperation by different ideological regimes (Buurman, 2020b and 2021b). After contextualizing the attempts at an 'Aryanization of Abstraction' by some of the documenta founders during the NS dictatorship and the 'Americanization of Abstraction' after World War II by juxtaposing them with the respective communist oppositions to these nationalist codings of abstract art, I will zoom in to discuss US-American presence at documenta in the section 'Pollock in Passing'. Abstract expressionism hardly played a role in the show's first 1955 edition but was featured prominently in the second edition (1959), after a number of documenta co-curators had taken part in cultural exchange programs that facilitated 'Transatlantic Transfers' between Germany and the USA. Despite the increasing recognition of American abstraction at *documenta II* and Haftmann's self-staging as a 'Disciple of Democracy', the art-historian continued to insist on the central significance German expressionism played in the development of "Abstraction as a World Language," a term he borrowed from Georg Poensgen and Leopold Zahn (1958). However, in his production of a narrative with cultural imperialist undertones hidden behind a veneer of declared internationalism, Haftmann was not alone. His chauvinism was shared by other documenta founding figures as well. In conclusion, I therefore call attention to the continuous activities of a network of patriotic art historians, who promoted German abstract tendencies before, during and after the Nazi dictatorship and argue that the 'd' in documenta stood for 'Deutschland' (Germany) as much or even more than for 'democracy' or 'denazification'⁷.

While this degree of national pride might not seem remarkable to international readers, in post-war Germany such an unbroken advocacy for the great accomplishments of the German character by former Nazis and Nazi supporters stands in stark contrast to their ongoing silence about those involved in the crimes and atrocities committed by Nazi Germany, including the Holocaust with its systematic exploitation, expropriation and extinction of the Jewish population that remains the exhibition's blind spot. Whilst documenta was celebrated for rehabilitating the art persecuted by the Nazis, it primarily featured works by German artists who had been denigrated due to their style but often managed to continue working in 'inner exile'. Works by Jewish or politically engaged modern artists, who were persecuted not so much for their work but for their political convictions or ethnicity, however, were largely missing. I will start by recalling the often forgotten fact that Nazi cultural politics was not as totalizing as it was later purported by German art historians, like Haftmann, who would reinterpret their advocacy for modern art within the NS as a sort of anti-Fascist resistance, turning themselves and the artists they chaperoned into victims and opponents of the Nazi regime that many of them were, in fact, supporting, thus once again excluding contributions by those who had previously been forced into exile or murdered⁸.

The Aryanization of Abstraction

A closer scrutiny of the biographies of the documenta founders and their entanglement in Nazi cultural politics brings to the fore the widely forgotten fact that in early years of the Nazi regime, some of its elite members – among them propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels – propagated the compatibility of expressionism, especially Nordic expressionism, with the ideology of German superiority, thereby antagonizing Alfred Rosenberg and his *Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur* (Batallion for German Culture) dedicated to *völkisch* realism (Brenner, 1962). The journal *Kunst der Nation* (Art of the Nation), for instance, was initiated by the Nazi Student Union to promote expressionism as the true German art, or to "nationalize the avantgarde", as Stefan Germer put it (Germer, 1990, my translation)⁹. Besides

contributions by Goebbels and Nazi art history professor Wilhelm Pinder, the journal also featured articles by the later documenta co-curators/founders Will Grohmann, Alfred Hentzen, Stephan Hirzel and Werner Haftmann¹⁰. While the journal had to close in 1935 and many of the artists, who were praised there, like Emil Nolde and Ernst Barlach, for example, were defamed as “Jewish-Bolshevist” in the so-called degenerate art shows starting in 1937 (despite their own nationalist, *völkisch*, and antisemitic sympathies), they still had their fans among the Nazi’s higher ranks. They were supported by networks of dealers and cultural mediators protected by Goebbels, who sold the so-called “degenerate art” confiscated from museums or Jewish owners not just to private collectors in Germany but also to museums and collectors of modern art abroad, thus at once saving it from destruction by the likes of Hitler and Rosenberg and securing foreign currency for the Nazi regime by expropriation (Hoffmann, 2020, Fischer-Defoy; Nürnberg 2013).

In the Nazi controversy around expressionism, some proponents used Wilhelm Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* (Abstraktion und Einfühlung, 1907) as a foil to stage expressionism as a specifically Germanic drive to abstraction by placing it in line with the Gothic art (whose abstract tendencies Worringer had explained by the northern people’s alienation from nature). This in turn triggered heated discussions over expressionism’s political legitimacy among German communists in exile, which climaxed in 1937/38 in the Moscow based journal *Das Wort* (The Word). In the communist controversy, Klaus Mann and Ernst Bloch took the side of expressionism due to its potential to express the contradictions of capitalism and the resulting cultural alienations (nodding to Worringer’s linking of abstraction and alienation), while George Lukács and Alfred Kurella denounced it on the grounds of its bourgeois compatibility with National Socialism, while Berthold Brecht and Anna Seghers tried to mediate between the opposing parties¹¹. As we know today, all attempts to advocate for the recognition of German expressionism as the official art of the Nazi state failed; in each of the debates its advocates had to surrender to realism as the official art doctrine within Hitler’s Nazi Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union, thereby turning the defendants of expressionism on the left and on the right into an involuntary *Querfront* (cross-front) of modern art.

In a chapter of *Heritage of our Time*, originally written in 1935, Ernst Bloch not only called attention to the fact that it was possible that “the Nazi heart had the cheek or the hypocrisy even to beat for Franz Marc” (Bloch, 1991: 64), but also remarked that National Socialism was successful precisely because it cleverly and eclectically appropriated communist ideas and symbols like the red flag:

First they stole the colour red, stirred things up with it. The first declarations of the Nazis were printed on red, this colour was enormously extended on the fraudulent flag. The posters gradually grew paler and paler so that they no longer frightened the financial backer. (...) But when an efficient worker cut the swastika out of it, there still remained metres of red appearance on the cloth. Only with a hole in the middle, gaping like a mouth and totally empty. (...) National Socialism, apart from clueless despair and rampant stupidity, also has many corrupt professors on its side, but no theory which could bring with it any other practice than deception and murder. Its stolen relationship between theory and practice (...). Thus the enemy is not content with torturing and killing workers. He not only wants to smash the red front but also strips the jewellery off the supposed corpse. The deceiver and murderer cannot show his face other than with would-be revolutionary speeches and forms of combat. (...) So the sham had to be replaced and to pass from social-democratic ‘socialism’, with nationalization committees, into the much more radical seeming illusion of the Nazi kind. But of course, not even this illusion would succeed, and the deception with it would not be necessary, if in fact a continuing revolutionary situation did not exist, which is prevented from becoming acute by the theft of its emblems (*ibidem*: 68).

To the initial dismay of the nationalist supporters of modern art like Werner Haftmann, who deemed it an inherently Nordic expression of German *Angst*, and to the relief of Bloch who took it as an expression of alienation from capitalist realities, abstraction was not one of those stolen emblems. Importantly, this fact would later become a saving grace and career advantage for the nationalist advocates of expressionism, who could use their defense of modern art to camouflage their Nazi pasts¹².

Due to its informal (l'informel) qualities, abstract art was able to shift its ideological shape and change its political color once more: after Germany was defeated, the chameleon of abstraction conquered not just Western Europe but was 'stolen' by the US (as Guilbaut claims in *How New York stole the Idea of Modern Art*), where abstract expressionism eventually became regarded as the expression of democracy and freedom. Yet, the 'Americanization' of abstraction, like earlier attempts at its 'Germanization', was not without obstacles either. To the contrary, it was confronted with yet another nationalist anti-communist witch hunt - the second Red Scare of McCarthyism¹³. Although many of the artists and theorists promoting abstraction in America originally identified with socialist and communist agendas, abstraction eventually emerged from the ideological battle as the ultimate epitome of capitalism and individualism.

The Americanization of Abstraction

As early as 1936, the German American artist and curator Hilla von Rebay organized an exhibition of Solomon R. Guggenheim's collection of non-objective painting in Charleston, South Carolina, and Alfred H. Barr staged *Cubism and Abstract Art* at the MoMA in New York. The same year, the leftist art journal *Partisan Review* published a special issue titled *What is American Art? A Symposium on Marxism and the American Tradition* (1936) to discuss the role of artists in cultural crisis¹⁴. Moreover, the First American Artist's Congress took place in New York as part of the international popular front against Fascism. Under the motto *Artists Against Fascism and War*, the participating artists critically discussed the idea of national art in a context where the label "American" primarily referred to regionalist realism (Guilbaut, 1983: 20-21). Together with Lynn Ward, the Marxist art historian Meyer Schapiro contributed a paper on "Race, Nationality and Art" that clearly tried to raise the artists' class consciousness by calling for a rejection of nationalism in the arts:

We have many appeals for an "American Art" in which the concept of America is very vague, usually defined as a "genuine American expression" or "explicitly native art" and sometimes includes a separation of American painters into desirable and undesirable on the basis of Anglo-Saxon surnames. In the face of this, we should recognize that the real basis for an emotional separation between the member of the tribe and the outsider is to be found in more or less obscure feelings of economic rivalry and insecurity; that this separation becomes an effective barrier to a valid solution of the problems that face all artists; (...) that finally the word "American" used in that way has no real meaning. It suspends a veil of fictitious unity and blinds our eyes to the fact that there can be no art in common between the Americans who own Rockefeller Center, the Americans in the Legion in Terre Haute, and the Americans in, as a symbol, Commonwealth College in Arkansas (Ward; Schapiro, 1936: 38-41 *apud* Guilbaut, 1983: 21).

A year later, Schapiro published "The Nature of Abstract Art" (1937) in *Marxist Quarterly*. In this critique of Alfred Barr's formalist historiography of modernism as an autonomous development towards abstraction that the latter had presented in *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936), the Marxist art historian reminds readers that all art, even abstract art, is situated within the conditions of its production. Against the geopolitical backdrop of the Moscow Trials (1936-38), however, left wing advocates of abstraction,

who, like Schapiro, were associated with the journal *Partisan Review*, eventually distanced themselves from communist party politics and changed their agenda to an anti-Stalinist position that art must be “free of all political interference” (Guilbaut, 1983: 28). Thus, Serge Guilbaut cites both the American Abstract Artists group (founded in 1936) and Clement Greenberg’s “Avantgarde and Kitsch” (1939) as examples of a “De-Marxization of American intelligentsia” (*ibidem*: 36). Despite these and other US-based modern artists’ insistence on an internationalist agenda closely aligned with the European avant-garde tradition, the *New York Times* critic Edward Alden Jewell warned against the risks of an “over-Americanization of American art” in his book *Have We an American Art?* (1939).

During the Nazi era and World War II, which the United States entered in 1941, artists from Europe arrived as refugees, many of them famously chaperoned by Peggy Guggenheim whose gallery *Art of this Century* opened in 1942. Many American ex-patriots also returned to the States from Europe, especially Paris, thus boosting the New York art scene, where the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art now competed for “cultural supremacy” (Guilbaut, 1983: 76). In the midst of this growth, Jackson Pollock would emerge after the war, fostered and promoted by gallerist-collector Guggenheim and historian-critic Greenberg, who, beginning in 1943, wrote a series of increasingly favorable reviews of Pollock’s work throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Soon after the war, the American struggle against right-wing fascism, which united the US during the war, morphed into a fight against left-wing communism and the denazification of Germany was no longer a priority of US foreign policy. The so-called Truman Doctrine (1947) and the Marshall Plan (1948) rather followed a politics of containing Soviet influence and communism in Europe with economic aid in reconstruction as well as hidden and overt propaganda for capitalist democracy. Theories of totalitarianism, which conflated Nazi fascism with Soviet communism, were used as justifications of Western liberalism, causing great political division in the United States¹⁵. In what became known as the ‘Cold War’, the US not only followed anti-communist agendas internationally. Leftist and communist positions in America, too, were suspected of being under the influence of Moscow with Senator Joseph McCarthy taking a lead in the persecution of cultural producers suspected of communism. In this context, the endeavor to promote autonomous art, particularly abstraction, as the artistic analogy to (capitalist) freedom and democracy, which was pushed by the Rockefeller sponsored MoMA and other privately funded agencies, had to face opposition by right-wing nationalist government members, who – like Michigan Senator George A. Dondero – preferred realistic American regionalist tendencies in art and suspected all modern art to be “communistic”.

The internationally travelling exhibition *Advancing American Art* (1946-47) organized by the Office of Information and Cultural Affairs within the State Department, for example, caused such a huge political scandal after McCarthy’s House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) revealed the communist backgrounds of a number of participating artists that, after successful showings in New York at the Met, and in Prague and in Havana, the exhibition tour was cancelled in 1947 by Secretary of State George C. Marshall and the State Department’s art program defunded. The American Artists Professional League, an organization of conservative artists and illustrators, argued that this art of former communists was “strongly marked with the radicalism of the new trends in European art” and thus “not indigenous to our soil”, (*apud* McComas, 2015; see also Littleton, Sykes, 2012) chiming with *völkisch* rhetoric of blood and soil. This difficult political situation of McCarthyism eventually caused the MoMA to take a quasi-official role in US cultural diplomacy abroad. Because modern and abstract art was criticized as “un-American” and “communistic” by conservative and right-wing politicians in the US, it could fulfill its diplomatic function as a “Weapon of the Cold War” only sponsored by private corporate agents, who had economic interest in fostering “capitalist freedom” and “creative free enterprise” worldwide (Cockcroft, 2000; Krenn, 2005). In 1949, the year he had acquired Pollock’s *Number 1, 1948* for the MoMA, the

museum's former first director (1929-43), Alfred H. Barr, wrote a letter to Henry Luce the publisher of the influential journals *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* to convince him that abstract art was an expression of "creative free enterprise" worth reporting on and that only totalitarian regimes, like Hitler's Germany or Stalin's SU, would attack. The agency consequently changed their attitude toward abstract art and *Life* published the article "Is he the Greatest Living Painter in the US?" making Pollock famous as an American hero of action painting¹⁶.

A few years later, in 1952, Barr used the same argument again in a *New York Times* article titled "Is Modern Art Communistic?", in which he stressed modern art's "love of freedom" and compared the anti-modernism of Senator Dondero and his ilk, as well as of President Truman who had called modern art the "the vaporings of half-baked lazy people", to Nazi and Stalinist anti-modernism (Barr, 1952). Eventually, Barr's arguments were picked up by the government when President Eisenhower took office in 1953: "As long as our artists are free to create with sincerity and conviction, there will be healthy controversy and progress in art," he said on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the MoMA. While his administration (1953-61) increased funding for international exhibitions as a means of cultural warfare abroad, ironically, Eisenhower continued to declare: "How different it is in tyranny. When artists are made the slaves and tools of the state; when artists become the chief propagandists of a cause, progress is arrested and creation and genius are destroyed" (*apud* Menand, 2015). This strategy of "repressive tolerance" (a term coined by Herbert Marcuse, who had advised the US in developing strategies of re-educating the German population after its defeat) that ostensibly integrated dissenting opinions proved to be highly successful as the 1967 revelation of the CIA's funding of left-leaning cultural activities testifies to: by supporting moderate leftist intellectuals and cultural producers, communist radicalization could be kept under control and freedom of expression demonstrated as the highest good in the USA.

Pollock in Passing

Against the backdrop of McCarthyism, many formerly communist or left-leaning artists like Pollock did not protest their deployed as symbols of American liberty abroad. It protected them against persecution as "un-American" during the Red Scare at home. Once again, there were discussions about whether there is an American art¹⁷, but this time, due to the dominant role the US was playing in European reconstruction and global politics, it was no longer merely a domestic debate. Indeed, those ten years between the end of World War II and the first documenta saw a strong presence of American abstraction in European exhibitions: in 1948 Peggy Guggenheim presented her collection in Venice in the Greek pavilion that remained unused that year. In 1950 Museo Correr showed a Pollock exhibition in the context of the Venice Biennale. In 1951 Willem Sandberg had the exhibition *amerikaanse abstracte kunst* (1951) in Amsterdam at the Stedelijk and the exhibition *Amerikanische Malerei. Werden und Gegenwart*, featuring works by Pollock, Motherwell, Tobey and Rothko, traveled to Berlin, Munich and Vienna. In 1952/53 the exhibition *Twelve American Painters and Sculptors*, curated by Andrew C. Ritchie of the Moma, premiered in Paris. In 1954 the MoMA bought the American pavilion in the Giardini of the Venice Biennale and continued to operate it (until it was sold to the US Information Agency in 1964). In 1955/56 the MoMA sent parts of its collection of abstract expressionism on a travelling exhibition *Modern Art in the USA* across Europe, with an edition in Frankfurt/Main not far from Kassel (Dossin, 2014: 98-101).

A look into the catalogue of the first documenta, however, surprisingly reveals that it featured only a few artists from the US¹⁸. Likewise, Werner Haftmann's 1955 picture volume of *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert* (*Painting in the Twentieth Century*) only mentions US-American art once, referring to Pollock merely in passing in the final section on "contemporary painting", even misspelling his name: "There are Americans like Pollok [sic], French like Mathieu, the tendency is reaching all over the Western cultural realm"

(Haftmann, 1955: 446, my translation). In the accompanying text volume that appeared a year earlier, in 1954, he dedicates five sentences to the “formless” automatism of “the American” Pollock and “the German” Wols, condescendingly noting about Pollock’s dripping that “these procedures stand on the brink of art and spill over to the liberating techniques that are practiced by lay people in circles interested in psychoanalysis” (Haftmann, 1954: 465-464, my translation). In *documenta* and his *Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts*, a book that appeared almost simultaneously and would become one of the standard works on 20th century painting in Germany, Haftmann’s focus was clearly on Germany, Italy and France as well as some other European countries, who, after their alienations and isolations from the world during the “catastrophes in the political sphere”, finally started “to feel more in tune with the modes of thinking and form of the[ir] time” (Haftmann, 1955: 438, my translation). This initial neglect of American positions seems to have been symptomatic of the German reception of US abstraction. As Catherine Dossin remarks, both the weekly *Die Zeit* and the monthly *Der Spiegel* also mentioned Pollock only “in passing”. The former in 1952 and 1956, before dedicating an article to him in 1958, the latter in 1959 (Dossin, 2014: 87 and 92). In sync with this belated media coverage, American artists like Pollock entered *documenta* only in its second edition (1959). Honored posthumously by a Europe travelling retrospective with stops in Hamburg and Berlin the year before (1958), he had died in 1956, one year after the first *documenta*. While the rest of *documenta II* ostensibly abandoned any geographical or national ordering to highlight its internationalism, US art was concentrated in the show’s only national section, selected by Porter McCray of the MoMA.

According to Eva Cockcroft, “McCray [was] a particularly powerful and effective man in the history of cultural imperialism” (Cockcroft, 2000: 149, 151). He had served in the distribution of Marshall Plan money in France before he became head of the MoMA’s International Council, founded in 1956 (one year after the first *documenta*) as an extension of its international programs.

In terms of cultural propaganda, the functions of both the CIA cultural apparatus and MOMA’s international programs were similar and, in fact, mutually supportive. As director of MOMA’s international activities throughout the 1950s, Porter A. McCray in effect carried out governmental functions, even as Braden and the CIA served the interests of the Rockefeller and other corporate luminaries in the American ruling class. McCray served as one of the Rockefeller’s main agents in furthering programs for the export of American culture to areas considered vital to Rockefeller interest: Latin America during the war, Europe immediately afterwards, most of the world during the 1950s, and – in the 1960s – Asia. In 1962-63, McCray undertook a year’s travel in Asia and Africa. Under the joint auspices of the State Department and MOMA (*ibidem*).

As Cockcroft points out, Barr and McCray belonged to a tightly knit network of cultural cold warriors whose biographies usually entailed work for both the MoMA and the US government’s diplomatic and intelligence services, with MoMA thus assuming a leading role in pushing the story of abstraction as the art of freedom until the CIA’s covert financing of cultural activities was revealed in 1967 (*ibidem*)¹⁹. This was the very year before *documenta* abandoned the “dictatorship of abstraction” after Haftmann as its ‘dictator’ had left the ship to become director of the newly founded National Gallery in West Berlin in 1967. In subsequent editions, American art increasingly dominated *documenta*: its fourth edition (1968) was dubbed “*documenta americana*” and *documenta 5* (1972) featured the highest proportion of US-American art in the history of the institution. The US-American contributions to these two latter editions, after Haftmann had left, however, reintroduced realist tendencies in the guise of pop-, minimal-, concept- and performance art.

And although the overall political context and the temporal coincidences that I reconstruct above suggest that there may have been more or less direct CIA involvement in documenta starting with the second edition in 1959²⁰, to my knowledge there is no explicit evidence of this yet²¹. Nevertheless, as a consequence of this US presence in West Germany's cultural field, at least in retrospect, the American take on abstraction, popularized by the likes of Alfred Barr and Clement Greenberg as an ideological weapon, seem to dominate the perception and theorization of post-War abstraction in Germany, thus overwriting the Germanic historiography of abstraction, whose spirits had found a new home in the first documenta thanks to the generous hospitality of Haftmann and Bode. In *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, Haftmann mentions Konrad Fiedler, Alois Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer as early theorists of abstraction (Haftmann, 1960: 129). In his book *Moderner Naturalismus und künstlerische Wahrheit* (1881), Fiedler declared art to be independent from the external reality and mimesis of nature with the truth of art residing in autonomous artistic creation that expresses pure visibility rather than referring to content. This 'anti-realist/naturalist' take is also picked up by Riegl, who leaves behind his earlier materialistic explanation of ornament in the book *Stilfragen* (1893), where he claims that a "Kunstwollen" (will to art/will to form) leads to an autonomous development of style, discussing flatness and spatiality. And, as we have already seen, in his book *Abstraktion und Einfühlung. Beiträge zur Stilpsychologie* (1907), Wilhelm Worringer explained the Germanic drive towards abstraction with the Nordic peoples' alienation from nature.

With his focus on the American appropriation of the French avant-garde traditions, the Canadian art historian Serge Guilbaut, however, does not mention the German lineage of art historical reflection on abstraction, primarily reconstructing how "New York stole the Notion of Modernism from the Parisians" (Guilbaut, 1983: 165-195)²². In a German reference book on the classics of art history, Ralph Ubl at least mentions that Greenberg "was familiar with the German art history of the turn of the century and owed it important inspiration" (Ubl, 2007: 172, my translation) but, like the rest of the book, he does not elaborate on the influence of German pre-war theories of abstraction on historians in the Anglosphere (like Greenberg, Barr or Shapiro), whose post-war theorization of abstraction has remained canonical until today²³. Remarkably, Greenberg described Pollock's relationship to New York City in a way that is reminiscent of the ways in which Worringer had framed Nordic man's relationship to unwelcoming nature as a root of his anxiety and creativity that is opposed to the Southerner's harmonic inhabitation of nature:

(...) the situation still opposes itself to the individual artist with an unfriendliness that makes art life in Paris or even London idyllic by comparison. (...) The American artist has to embrace and content himself, almost, with isolation (...). Isolation is, so to speak, the natural condition of high art in America. (...) Isolation, or rather the alienation that is its cause, is the truth-isolation, alienation, naked and revealed unto itself, is the condition under which the true reality of our age is experienced (Greenberg 1948: 82).

While these tropes of introspection, isolation, individualism can also be found in Haftmann's writing, for instance on Nolde's Nordic solipsism (Buurman 2020b), in the American tradition the state of alienation and the burden of freedom is no longer linked to Nordic character but to liberal capitalist democracy.

Transatlantic Transfers

While Greenberg only fully developed his famous take on flatness in the 1960 radio piece "Modernist Painting" that was commissioned by *Voice of America* as part of the self-representation of the free world, familiar arguments can already be found in Haftmann's elaboration on the "evocative image" in the final paragraph of *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert*, where "(...) they appear as a configuration of imaginary rapports on the colorfully accorded and dynamic picture plane" (Haftmann 1955: 447, my translation

from the German). Against this backdrop, Dossin's remark that for European audiences, abstraction was "neither new nor American" (Dossin, 2014: 102) seems to explain documenta's belated interest in American abstraction quite well. In fact, for many, including Haftmann, not just the art but also its theoretical framing by American scholars and critics must have felt quite familiar. In his book *Der Unbehauste Mensch* (The Unhoused Man, 1951), German literary scholar Hans Egon Holthusen, who would become head of the Goethe House in New York (1961-1964) despite his voluntary SS-, Wehrmacht- and NSDAP memberships, argued that "ironically, ideas that had moved into the world from Germany once, now re-entered the country declared as a 'dernier cri' of modern and advanced spirituality" (Holthusen, 1951: 141, my translation from the German)²⁴. While his nationalist polemic is primarily referring to French existentialism, American psychology and Russian Communism, this 'reimport' argument could be extended to American abstraction in the artistic realm, where – according to Greg Barnhisel – abstract art was 'Americanized' because many of its famous US representatives either were European migrants or had been taught by exiled European artists (Barnhisel, 2015).

Like the 'Christian existentialist' Holthusen, whose Nazi past did not prevent his remarkably successful post-war career in Germany and abroad, including the directorship of the NYC predecessor of the Goethe Institute, former NSDAP member Haftmann would participate in this transatlantic cultural exchange when it became geopolitically opportune to acknowledge the cultural importance of America. Two years after the first documenta (1955) and one year after the inauguration of the International Council of MoMA (1956), Haftmann travelled to the US: first in 1957 to give a speech at the opening of the MoMA show *German Art in the Twentieth Century* (for which he had served as an advisor and catalogue author) and a second time in 1959 (the year of the second documenta) to study American art in the library of the MoMA, assisted by Alfred H. Barr (Haftmann, 1960: 9). Since the MoMA's International Program was intensified during these years with the International Council's show *The New American Painting*, funded by the Rockefeller brothers and the United States Information Agency, touring Europe in 1958-1959 (the Berlin edition took place in the fall of 1958), accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue by Barr that – according to Cockcroft "exemplified the cold war propaganda role of Abstract Expressionist art" (Cockcroft, 2000: 152), it is quite possible that Haftmann's visits to the US were partially subsidized in some way by the CIA connection that also funded the anti-communist *Congress for Cultural Freedom* with its headquarters in Berlin.

According to Nancy Jachec, documenta co-founder Alfred Hentzen, since 1955 also director of the Kunsthalle Hamburg (and recently revealed as an ex-Nazi party member), had been a grantee of the Leaders and Specialists Grant Program (by the State Department) in 1952 and was among the curators for the travelling show *Jackson Pollock 1912-1956*, displayed in Hamburger Kunsthalle 1958 (Jaschec, 2003: 538, 540). In the catalogue, he and Arnold Rüdinger wrote that Pollock was introducing "a breath of freedom and limitlessness" that eluded his European counterparts" (*apud* Jachec, 2003: 549). The German critic Will Grohmann, who would join documenta as an advisor beginning with its second edition, was a 1954 leader grantee, who gave a lecture tour in the German *America Häuser* after his stay in the US, dwelling on his personal encounters there with Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Mark Tobey (*ibidem*: 539-40). Jachec concludes her article on "Transatlantic Cultural Politics in the late 1950s: the Leaders and Specialists Grant Program" by stating: "There remains, however, the question of complicity, the extent to which European curators were aware that they were cooperating in promoting the United States' objective of a European union with a strong American presence; or were unaware of, or indifferent to, the foreign policy agenda underlying these exhibitions; or simply forced to participate" (*ibidem*: 549-550).

Disciples of Democracy

In the foreword to his revised and extended English edition of *Painting in the Twentieth Century* that first appeared in 1960, Haftmann finally acknowledges the developments in England and the US that his German editions of the book and the first documenta had largely ignored – rather willfully, it seems, if one considers the strong presence of US cultural diplomacy and exhibitions of American art in Europe since the mid-late 1940s that he now retrospectively emphasizes (Haftmann, 1960: 353).

The work has been considerably expanded and modified for its publication in English. Unlike the original work, which dealt almost exclusively with the European continent and above all with France, Germany, and Italy, where the foundations of modern painting were laid, the present revised edition takes account of developments in England and the United States. Up to 1940 these developments, significant as they were, made little difference to the over-all picture. Since the Second World War, however, the contribution of England and America has not only been extremely important in itself, but has exerted an enormous influence on the art of the European continent. To disregard it would be to distort the whole picture of present-day art. Accordingly, I have been able in the first four books of Volume I to retain the general plan of the original edition, contenting myself with a few insertions and additions on the history of English and American art. But in connection with the developments since 1945, the necessary additions and changes proved to be so far-reaching that Book V of this edition may be regarded as a new product (*ibidem*: 9).

While Haftmann presents himself as an enthusiastic disciple of democracy and freedom, who keeps stressing the “liberating influence of American painting” (*ibidem*: 314) and whose arguments on totalitarian art resemble those of horseshoe theories (that assimilate right wing Nazism and left wing Communism as totalitarian) by American colleagues like Barr (*ibidem*: 305)²⁵, he remarkably keeps stressing that abstraction originated in Germany (*ibidem*: 365), how strongly American artists were influenced by their European counterparts. He even goes so far to maintain that it was the German born Hans Hofmann, teacher of many later famous US expressionists, who invented drip painting, not Pollock (*ibidem*: 348-350). While dropping concepts like “action painting” and “allover painting”, developed by his American colleagues Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg, whom he fails to cite, as we have already seen, Haftmann explicitly refers to a selective German lineage of art-historical reflection on abstraction, mentioning Fiedler, Riegl, Worringer but notably bracketing out his earlier 1930s role-model, Nazi art history professor Wilhelm Pinder, and attacking his former fellow contributor to *Kunst der Nation* Goebbels by comparing him to Stalin (*ibidem*: 303).

Compromising passages on the “occidental race” and the historical mission of Germanic people to realize abstraction, such as his declaration that “this Romantic idealism is a high quality of the German spirit and is always called upon whenever the yearning of the occidental race seeks enlightenment of the innerworlds, the images that enter the eye from within” (Haftmann 1954: 71, my translation from the German), were edited out. In a passage on Edward Munch, for example, Haftmann writes in the 1954 German edition: “this is the important aspect the Germanic element of Europe could contribute to this turn towards the world of expression. The other great master from this race, van Gogh, did similar things. The economy of history had given the Germanic people this mission. The Latin people took a different path” (*ibidem*: 89, my translation). In the English edition, this is abridged and softened as follows: “It was the most important contribution that the Germanic peoples of Europe could make to art during this transitional epoch, and herein Munch is related to Van Gogh. The Latins followed a different path” (Haftmann 1960: 61). Nevertheless, surprisingly many passages on the “Germanic spirit”, “Germanic mind”, “Germanic peoples” and German/ic character traits remain in the English edition (*ibidem*: 61-65) including assertions that “Solitude was the destiny of the North German” (*ibidem*: 83) or that Nolde is an

“expressionist rooted in the German spirit. Indeed, his art is the most Germanic of European Fauvism,” (*ibidem*: 85) or that the Germans with their “brooding minds easily fall prey to an extravagant romanticism,” (*ibidem*: 311) that the “Germans are basically too romantic” (*ibidem*: 341) for geometric abstraction or that “The stubbornness with which graphic elements assert themselves in [Hans Hartung’s] art, dissolving and keeping open the forms, may also have something to do with his German origins” (*ibidem*: 345).

For Haftmann, “the Nordic world of expression” (*ibidem*: 365) and “Nordic folklore” (*ibidem*: 355) are cherished influences on abstraction while he blames Nazi ideologues like Günther, Schultze-Naumburg and Rosenberg to be “crackpots drunk on Nordic mythology”, criticizing their ideas about the “Nordic superman”, “Nordic Homeland” and “Nordic spirit”, ideas that are – after all – not so far from the ideas he expresses himself (*ibidem*: 304). These revisions of his *opus magnum* and his research visits to the US happened between the first documenta 1955 and *documenta II* (1959), where the American representation was selected by the MoMA’s McCray and hung separately in the otherwise transnational installation, giving the US a specific emphasis, in a way re-nationalizing abstraction, this time as an American brand of freedom and thereby limiting Haftmann’s declaration of “abstraction as a world language” to be one of the capitalist West. While the project of Haftmann, Pinder, Goebbels and other disciples of expressionism during the early years of the Nazi regime had been to define selected examples of abstraction, especially Nordic expressionism, as a particularly Germanic art and to protect it against its defamation as ‘un-German’, ‘Bolshevist’ or ‘Jewish’, during the anti-communist McCarthy years in the US of the 1940s/50s, Barr, Greenberg, McCray and others aimed at defining abstraction as a specifically American art to promote US values of capitalist freedom abroad. Whereas the German attempts to define expressionism as the official national style during the ‘Third Reich’ remained unsuccessful because Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg preferred more realist tendencies, the US American attempt – despite objections by the likes of Dondero and Truman – eventually turned out to be highly successful in branding abstract expressionism as the American art par excellence, turning artists like Pollock into national icons and his paintings into flags of freedom²⁶.

d is for Deutschland

According to Nancy Jachec, the problem with the cultural imperialist explanations of “the bald conquest of Western Europe by American culture” is that they “generally assumed that Europeans were passive in the face of American cultural expansion” (Jachec, 2003: 533). If we look at the cultural activities of the documenta founders, however this idea of passivity has to be revised. As former members of the NSDAP and other Nazi organizations, who also participated in NS cultural politics in varying degrees, many of them were not only following racist, ethno-psychological ideas about the Nordic nature of abstraction, actively promoting abstraction as a specifically Germanic thing before, during and after the Nazi dictatorship, they also continued to advocate for the significance of German expressionism as the most important stepping stone for international abstraction after the war. And they did not only do this in the domestic context of Germany to twist the taste of the population in the context of reeducation and denazification (sometimes also cynically called renazification²⁷) with exhibitions like documenta, but also abroad.

The *Deutsche Kunst* (German Art Council), for instance, whose most powerful member was Kurt Martin, another former Nazi party member and documenta founder, who remained director of the Kunsthalle Karlsruhe from 1934 to 1956 and became co-founder of the ICOM (1946), more or less secretly influenced all exhibition project abroad by advising the *Auswärtiges Amt* (Foreign Office/Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in their exhibition policies (Schöne, 2016: 231-235). Founded in 1954, the council

usually advocated for a strong representation of pre-War expressionism at the cost of post-war practices (*ibidem*). In the exhibition *German Art of the XX Century*, that was first announced in 1954 (one year before the first documenta) and eventually took place at MoMA in 1957 (between documentas first and second editions), Martin was able to assert this agenda against the MoMA's curator's preference for a strong representation of younger artists (*ibidem*: 182-186). Instead of granting the American Andrew C. Ritchie his wish to work together with Will Grohmann, who shared an interest in artists of younger generations, Martin determined the selection by making sure that Ritchie would only be shown German expressionism, when he visited Museums in Germany in preparation to the show (*ibidem*). Moreover, in 1956, Martin nominated Haftmann and Alfred Hentzen as curatorial advisors and catalogue authors, who had been included into the planning of the first documenta in 1954 also due to his recommendation (*ibidem*: 192)²⁸. In the MoMA catalogue, they both argued for the genuinely German character of expressionism as a national specificity²⁹. But because Haftmann did not cite the compromised German art historians from whom he had inherited his ideas³⁰, Dorothea Schöne – who was not yet aware of the documenta founders' Nazi pasts when she published her study on the American support for Berlin Post-War Modernism – attributes these nationalist ideas in Haftmann's text to the less besmirched German-American Wilhelm R. Valentiner's and Alfred Barr's observations about the rootedness of expressionism in the German spirit (Schöne 2016: 197-98).

Schöne, to whom I owe the above cited insights on the German *Kunstrat* and its influence on *German Art of the XX. Century*, moreover writes that there are many reasons to believe that the initiative for this show came from the German side (*ibidem*: 176-83). According to a report by the German Embassy in Washington D.C. to the German Foreign Ministry in Bonn, the idea was to use the MoMA brand to initiate a shift in the perception of German art and enhance the reception of German expressionism (*ibidem*: 182), for which Barr had already paved the way with exhibitions like *Modern German Painting and Sculpture* (1931) or *New Acquisitions. Free German Art* (1942) (*ibidem*: 213). These earlier exhibitions had showcased pieces by the likes of Ernst Barlach and Emil Nolde – artists whose work was also prominently featured in the first documenta editions because they had been declared degenerate by the Nazis, despite attempts to nationalize them in *Kunst der Nation*. Their works often found their way to the United States during the Nazi era because networks of German critics, collectors and dealers, who happened to be collaborators of the Nazis and supporters of modern Nordic expressionism, among them documenta co-founder Stephan Hirzel, not only profited from selling their confiscated art but also tried to make sure it went into good hands. The 1957 show was promoted as “The Art Hitler Hated” and the German president, Theodor Heuss, himself educated as an art historian and practicing design theorist with ties to the *Evangelische Kunstdienst* responsible for the selling of looted art was quoted in *The Atlantic* saying

The result of his evil intentions was a curious good: he opened the world's doors to modern German art. Modern German painting is now much more fully represented in foreign museums than ever before. And judging by the interest aroused by various retrospective shows in the United States and England, it seems to me that curiosity about Germany's special achievements in this field (...) is beginning to extend to works of the past (*apud* Schöne 2016: 220).

To demonstrate the greatness of German art to the world, the German government aka the Foreign Office financed both the transport of works and the printing of the catalogue, thus financially supporting the exhibition to an unusual degree (*ibidem*: 195, 197). This is noteworthy also, because when the Foreign Office was refounded in 1951, due to the personal continuities with the NS foreign office, about 40 percent of the new staff were former NSDAP members, as was revealed in 2010 (Conze, et al.:

2010)³¹. In terms of cultural propaganda, *German Art of the XX Century* was highly successful on several levels. First it perpetuated similar (self-)victimizing narratives that documenta had promoted by turning Nazi artists like Emil Nolde into the regime's most prominent victims, who, by insisting on their artistic autonomy could be stylized as innocent civilian fighters for freedom, thus not only clearing the record of German artist of so-called inner emigration but also whitewashing their curators' biographies. Second, because the prices for German expressionism sextupled after the show (Schöne 2016: 236) and finally, because the show might also be regarded as a belated victory of German cultural imperialism some twelve years after the end of the 'Third Reich'. If we, for instance, take seriously Haftmann's earlier cited assertions that abstraction is an expression of the German spirit, then, the declaration he made in 1959 at the occasion of the second documenta, that "art has become abstract" and a "world language", in fact, implies that art has become Germanic and the German spirit has conquered the world. Thus, in conclusion one could say that the d in documenta not only stands for the goal of documenting art or for the shows declared ambitions to promote democracy, but also for *Deutschland* (German for Germany). The show's Nazi continuities that now finally receive more attention bear witness to an incomplete denazification that keeps haunting cultural institutions until today³².

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Notes

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¹ I adopt this expression from Eva Cockcroft, who speaks about abstract expressionism as a "Weapon of the Cold War". See Cockcroft (2000 [1985]: 147-154), reprinted from her article in: *Artforum*, vol 12, n.10, June 1974, pp. 39-41. See also Kozloff (1973) and Kimpel (1997: 124-139) for the ideological function of documenta as a "bulwark against socialist realism" due to its position close to the inner German border between East and West.

² Karl Hofer, "Zur Situation der bildenden Kunst", reprinted in Schultheiß (2018: 284). According to critic Franz Rohe (*apud* Schöne 2016: 219), Oskar Kokoschka also spoke about a "neue Reichskunstkammer" (new Reich's cultural chamber) under the leadership of Haftmann and Grohmann in 1955.

³ Grohmann wrote a response to Hofer's article in *Tagesspiegel*. For a contextualization of this controversy, see Schultheiß (2018: 279-288). He later joined documenta for its second edition.

⁴ For the recent revelations of the SA membership, see Bude; Wieland, 2021. For the NSDAP memberships see the contributions of Bernhard Fulda and Julia Friedrich to the journal *Historische Urteilskraft/Historical Judgement*, 02, published by the German Historical Museum Berlin in March 2020. Mirl Redmann also called attention to the NSDAP membership of several other documenta founding figures. See idem, "Das Flüstern der Fußnoten", *documenta studies*, n. 9, June 2020.

⁵ For a problematization of the idea of exhibitions as democratic, see Nanne Buurman (2021a).

⁶ For the complexities of cultural politics see also Hans-Ernst Mittag (1991) and Julius Redzinski (2019).

⁷ This article is part of a larger study with the working title *documenta as a Haunted Exhibition, or: A Ghost (Hi)Story of Abstraction*. For its first parts, see Buurman (2020a and 2020b). In her article "d is for documenta. Institutional Identity for an International Exhibition" Kathryn Floyd (in Buurman; Richter 2017) reads documenta's design in the context of the international style.

⁸ For Haftmann's whitewashing of Emil Nolde's Nazi affiliations, *völkisch* and anti-Semitic attitudes, see Buurman (2020a and 2020b).

⁹ It was closed down in 1935 when Rosenberg asserted his and Hitler's anti-modern tastes as official line of NS cultural politics.

¹⁰ Receiving a call from Munich to Berlin in 1935, Pinder was one of the leading art historians of the Nazi regime. His student Alfred Hentzen, NSDAP member and assistant of Ludwig Justi at the Nationalgalerie Berlin, curated the show *Die großen Deutschen im Bild* (Great Germans in Contemporary Portrait) in the context of the 1936 Olympic Games. After the war, he was responsible for rebuilding the Kestner Gesellschaft in Hannover, became director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle in 1955, and served as an advisor and curator for documenta. The architect and art historian Stephan Hirzel, who worked for the Reich Press Department in 1934 and for the Reich Ministry of Weapons and Ammunition during the war, is another documenta founder, who contributed to *Kunst der Nation*. Between 1948 and 1965, the former NSDAP member was director of the Werkakademie Kassel (today's Kunsthochschule Kassel), so it seems that a part of the network that later gave birth to documenta was already knit in the context of *Kunst der Nation*. Haftmann wrote for the Journal during his time as a student in Berlin (1932-35), got his PhD in Göttingen (1935-1939) and became assistant at the Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz Italy (1936-1940), working in military functions in Turin until he was taken prisoner of war there in 1945 by the Allied Forces. After the war, he worked as a docent and critic in Hamburg, as a co-curator of the first three documenta editions (1955, 59, 63) and took over the directorship of the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 1967.

¹¹ For an overview of the communist debate, see Schiller (2002).

¹² See my earlier footnote on their post-war careers in the art field.

¹³ In *The Crucible* (1953), Arthur Miller for instance fictionalizes the Salem Witch Trials (1692-93) as an allegory of McCarthyist persecutions of communists and left-wing liberals. It was influenced by Lion Feuchtwanger's *Wahn oder der Teufel in Boston* (1948).

¹⁴ "What is Americanism? A Symposium on Marxism and American Tradition", *Partisan Review* 3, 1936, 3, pp. 3-16. See Guilbaut (1983: 23).

¹⁵ Totalitarianism was originally used as a positive self-description by Italian and German fascists, such as Carl Schmitt. After the war, theories of totalitarianism were developed by Karl Popper (1945) and Hannah Arendt (1961), but it was Arthur Schlesinger's *The Vital Center. Politics of Freedom* (1949) that turned it into a foil for US policy.

¹⁶ "Is he the Greatest Living Painter in the US?", *Life Magazine*, August 8, 1949, *apud* Louis Menand (2015).

¹⁷ "Is there an American art?" was the question asked by the *Magazine of Art* in 1949, and the critics canvassed responded timidly but in the affirmative" (Guilbaut, 1983: 193).

¹⁸ It lists three, two of whom (Josef Albers and Kurt Roesch) were German emigrants and the other (Alexander Caulder) living in Europe. See Walter Grasskamp (2017).

¹⁹ On p. 150, Cockcroft illustrates the network of cultural cold warriors funded by the Rockefellers by the bio of Thomas W. Braden: "Before joining the CIA in 1950 to supervise its cultural activities from 1951 to 1954, Braden had been MOMA's executive secretary from April 1948 to November 1949". See also Frances Stonor Saunders (1999). She reckons that due to those networks and personal continuities there did not need to be explicit arrangements between the government and the museum.

²⁰ In this light, it is interesting to note that in preparation for *d4* (1968) there had been first ideas of including "the art of the African people" into the show (documenta archiv, *d4*, Folder 65, my translation from the German) only shortly after McCray, according to Cockcroft (2000:151) had undertaken travel to Asia and Africa in 1962/63, following the Rockefellers economic interests in this area.

²¹ In a book with the very suggestive title *The Artwar, The House of German Art, the documenta and the CIA-Moma Connection* (my translation from the German), Heiner Mühlmann (2014) merely refers to the research of Cockcroft and Saunders, but he does not provide any further historical grounding or evidence of CIA involvement in documenta, instead incorporating these scholars' findings in his argument about evolutionary history, cultural creationism and neuroscientific brainwashing by means of abstract art.

²² Thereby following the dominant narrative produced by Greenberg, who deliberately diminished the quality of German art and Germanic influence on American abstraction by stressing the significance of French art in his postwar writings. See Matthew Rohn (2007), who analyses this shift in Greenberg's work after his initial 1930s appreciation of Germanic and Nordic modernism. I am grateful to Kathryn Floyd who pointed me to Rohn's article shortly before this one went into layout.

²³ In the German handbook, the pre-war art historians, in contrast, were always situated with regard to their (mostly German or Italian) forerunners.

²⁴ During the NS, the later director of the Goethe House in New York City (1961-1964) and head of literature at the Berlin Academy of Arts had not just served the Wehrmacht as a soldier but voluntarily joined the SS in 1933, the NSDAP in 1937 and in those functions was fighting the "ideological enemies within arts and culture". His unwavering nationalism is echoed in the book, where he complains that a "German head" like Thomas Mann "tragically lost touch with his nation" (143) and that his *Doktor Faustus* was a "defamation" and "demonization of German history and the German soul in general" (142), my translations.

²⁵ Equating "Leninist-Stalinist stage of Bolshevism, Mussolini's Fascism, and Hitler's National Socialism" (303), Haftmann's chapter on "The Assault of Totalitarianism" culminates in the tautological slogan that "Totalitarian art is the uniform style of all dictatorships".

²⁶ As Rosalind Krauss remarks, Pollock was influenced by Greenberg "(...) whose entire critical vocabulary was that of rivalry and of American artists besting the Europeans, outwitting them in the battle for History" (Krauss, 1993: 283).

²⁷ See "Renazification", *New York Times*, December 2, 1949, and John H. Herz (1982: 28).

²⁸ For a detailed compare and contrast of the first documenta and the MoMA show, see Schöne (2016: 204-212).

²⁹ See their introductions in the catalogue *German Art of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Richtie (1957).

³⁰ For the Germanic genealogies of Haftmann's thinking see Buurman (2020b and 2021b).

³¹ The publication caused a huge controversy over the degree of the Office's involvement into the decision for and organization of the Holocaust. It would be worthwhile exploring the cultural policies of the notoriously Nazi contaminated ministry with particular attention to the NS biographies of those in charge and possible overlaps with the pre- and postwar networks of documenta's founders.

³² The MoMA is currently doing provenience research on works acquired after 1932 and created before 1946 whose acquisition may have been facilitated by Nazi art lootings.

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