

through a montage; so does unplotted art. It's impossible to write anything without montaging, without juxtaposing; at the very least – it is impossible to write well.⁸

As with Eisenstein, Shklovsky's montage was a phenomenon present in Tolstoy as much as in Kuleshov. It was a way of seeing, a veil, a 'symbolic form'. It is essential, however, to indicate that it was more of a way of seeing for Shklovsky than for someone like Tolstoy, and this is something Stierli's book does well. Montage was an important way of seeing the world in the age of mechanical reproduction. But was it the dominant one? Or was it merely one 'non-hierarchical' and 'democratic' way of seeing among others – 'cinema', 'cubism', etc.? Is it simply a symptom of a more general 'structural shift', a way of seeing things through their relations rather than as static objects? The two books discussed do an admirable job in unpacking these but, undoubtedly, there are still several crises to be identified behind the shattered images of modernity, and space to montage together still dozens of interpretations of them. Surely, if we are to believe their implication that montage was indeed a new symbolic form of modernity, these two books should not remain the last montages on their various subjects.

Notes

- 1 Nikolai Tarabukin, *Iskusstvo dnia (The Art of The Day)*, Moscow, 1925, 122.
- 2 Quoted by Stierli, 248.
- 3 Viktor Shklovsky, *Energy of Delusion: A Book on Plot*, Springfield, IL, 2007, trans. Shushan Avagyan, 177–202.
- 4 Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, Minneapolis, 1984, 22.
- 5 Pierre Francastel, *Art and Technology*, trans. Randall Cherry, New York, 2000, 224. First published in French in 1956, 225. Strangely Stierli does not refer to Francastel at all, although he comes closest to a similar declaration of montage as a 'symbolic form'.
- 6 He gets as far as to an article in the Soviet constructivists' LEF journal in late 1923, which is actually not the first usage as the term had emerged already in the summer of 1923 in Mayakovsky's book of poems *Pro Eto ('About It')*, where Rodchenko is mentioned as the author of the 'photo-montage' for the cover and the illustration. (Jindrich Toman, *The Modern Czech Book: Photo/Montage in Print*, Prague, 2009, 117–118.)
- 7 Shklovsky, *Energy of Delusion*, 180.
- 8 Shklovsky, *Energy of Delusion*, 181.

The Expanded Field of German Art and the Holocaust

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Judenmord: Art and the Holocaust in Post-War Germany, by Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius with Sigrid Philipps, London: Reaktion Books, 2018, 407 pp., 200 col. and 30 b. & w. illus., hardback, £35

The Holocaust has stirred scholars in a wide range of disciplines to contemplate and analyse the limits of human brutality, the power of authoritarianism, and the toxic combination of racism with the modern industrial state. Art history is not an exception in spite of the market-driven and academic pressure on scholars to focus on the 'positive' stories of modernism with the occasional allowance of an historic sidebar dedicated to heroic resistance. In the last few decades, though, and in accounts of both the Nazi and post-war eras, the modernist stars of exile have been joined by a wider variety of artists as well as a diverse range of social and aesthetic affiliations. Art historians have needed to expand their studies especially in the case of memorialization because very few cultural monuments to the genocide were done by the canonical heroes of the Museum of Modern Art. In some senses, this means that debates about the cultural impact of the Holocaust are often isolated from the grander narrative of modern art history; in another way, though, these debates counter art history's own isolation as an elite and imperious discipline by tying cultural questions central to the field to political and social histories of broader import.

Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius' excellent and informative new book *Judenmord* enters directly into this field of debate by expanding the art-historical frame of reference as well as exposing a more complex artistic response to the genocide than scholars have previously assumed. She focuses particularly on the first two decades of the post-war years, a period of German art still largely under-researched. Her main goal is to highlight the reception of the Holocaust by East and West German artists in order to imbed iconographic choices within the changing political and social conditions. In this sense, the book refreshingly does not organize its chapters stylistically, with abstract

expressionists separated from minimalists and so on. Instead, by focusing on the variety of responses to the Holocaust, Hoffmann-Curtius necessarily points to the shared historical experience of post-war survival, memory, and/or German culpability as the real unifying factor behind these works. She claims with this approach an ethical stance, which is made explicit in the introduction: 'It still remains highly relevant to examine how artists reacted to injustice in a social situation where the majority stayed silent' (9). The dynamic between social silence and individual artistic response guides the text as a whole, making for a clear and unified work.

Hoffmann-Curtius' book has two foundational starting points, one in the historiography on art and the Holocaust and the other in German history. Initially, she was 'inspired' by the important work of Ziva Amishai-Maisel, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (1993). This book was the first to tackle the broad spectrum of post-

war artistic responses by artists in the United States, Europe and Israel and still serves as a starting point for analysing shared or individual approaches.¹ Along with Amishai-Maisel, Hoffmann-Curtius shares an interest in cataloging an extended field of artists and their particular approaches. Distinct from Amishai-Maisel, however, Hoffmann-Curtius has a laser-sharp focus on German responses from both the Federal Republic of Germany as well as the German Democratic Republic. Such a focus allows her book to be more politically and critically pointed as well as to draw on and complement a range of Cold War exhibitions and volumes that have examined art on each side of the Iron Curtain. The historical German core for her book is explicitly referenced in the extraordinary title of *Judenmord*, where she has eschewed the more commonly used 'Holocaust'. As she notes, that latter term became prominent in scholarship only after her period of study, and also, as an English term, it has allowed Germans to distance themselves from their relation to the Jewish genocide. One can only wonder how difficult it was for her to convince her publisher to approve this commendable critical title for a publication aimed at an English-reading audience.

I Horst Strempel, *Night over Germany*, 1946. Oil on sack-cloth, 150 × 168 cm (central panel), 150 × 178 (side panels), 79 × 166 (predella). Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie. Photo: © bpk/Jens Ziehe/SMB, Nationalgalerie/vg Bildkunst, Bonn.



From these starting points, Hoffmann-Curtius develops thematic chapters that are loosely chronologically organized. A 'prequel' chapter begins the volume with images by Jewish artists that attest to the long pre-National Socialist history of anti-Semitism, particularly with depictions of pogroms. This is followed by two chapters that highlight important characteristics of art that arose out of the Holocaust as well as its immediate post-war responses: the emphasis on the human figure and the tendency of artists to take up the topic through series. The former is marked particularly by an excellent iconographic analysis of German Communist Horst Stempel's *Night over Germany* (1946, plate 1) as well as the many images produced by Otto Pankok during and after the war. The latter chapter is dominated especially by the German-Jewish Communist Leah Grundig and her print cycle *In the Valley of Slaughter* (1944), a series she produced in exile in Tel Aviv. Grundig, as a powerful influence in the East German art establishment, looms large in other chapters of the book as well. Following the section on series, Hoffmann-Curtius turns to artists who responded with individual works, showcasing known painters like Hans Grundig and Dore Meyer-Vax along with lesser-known figures such as Henry Koerner and Hermann Bruse. Other chapters cover memory in the 1950s, important responses in the early 1960s, and, finally, the explosion of work that surrounded the Auschwitz Trials in Frankfurt am Main (1963–65). In addition, while all of these chapters feature artists attempting to engage critically with German culpability and Jewish persecution, Hoffmann-Curtius places one extraordinary two-page chapter in the middle of the book entitled 'A Confession', which features instead a former Nazi Party member painting his own guilt: Hanns Georgi's *Vision (Persecution of Bloodstained Hands)* (c. 1946–48).

Hoffmann-Curtius is at her best when analysing particular works, drawing into her critical assessment a variety of secondary and visual sources. For example, in one of the most extensive analyses in the book, she tackles the complex iconography of East German artist Werner Tübke's well-known series of paintings and drawings under the title of the *Memoirs of Dr. jur. Schulze* (1964–67). Focusing especially on paintings two and three of the series (the latter of which, in the National Gallery collection in Berlin, is particularly well known), she brings to bear important new sources, above all Gerhard Schoenberger's *The Yellow Star* (1960). Schoenberger's volume consisted of republished images from both Nazi and liberator photographers, and it became an explicit point of reference not only for

Tübke, but also for Gerhard Richter and many others, as Hoffmann-Curtius convincingly shows.² This book forms something of a leitmotif in Hoffmann-Curtius' text, occurring throughout with other photographic and filmic documentary sources to show the ubiquity and multi-media exchange between mass imagery and fine art throughout the period. Such a use of photography and film leads not only to a new detailed understanding of subjects in Tübke's paintings but also to a broader if implicit critique of art history in its traditional avoidance of such mass media. By bringing in film and photography, Hoffmann-Curtius' book widens our frame of reference but also makes the analysis more specific and grounded.

Still, her approach does leave some things wanting. The crisp analytical questions that she poses in her introduction are cast somewhat adrift in the broad standardized presentation of artist after artist in the body of the book. By the end, the reader is a bit numbed by the march of sub-sections of artists and works that guides the organization of the entire text. The repetition of the format blunts the chance for a more synthetic and critical argument. Hoffmann-Curtius herself appears to have run out of steam by the end. Following the very last section on Richter, the volume stops abruptly with a two-sentence paragraph tacked on as a rather unsatisfying conclusion. In this regard, the book is decidedly social in that it connects individual artists with historical social forces; but a social history of art it is not.

That said, the importance of the book should not be overlooked. We have long waited for a more comprehensive source that lays out the history of post-war German art in relation to the Holocaust. This book achieves that very goal. It is a satisfying contribution that helps us decentre the market-driven narrative (and one must say chiefly driven from the United States) of what constitutes worthy subjects of art in post-war art history. Thus, it should be a necessary reference for German specialists but, crucially, for anyone interested in the complex contours of art after the Second World War.

Notes

- 1 Ziva Amishai-Maisel, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts*, Oxford and New York, 1993.
- 2 Gerhard Schoenberger, *Der gelbe Stern. Die Judenverfolgung in Europa 1933 bis 1945*, Hamburg, 1960.