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Of 'Truths Impossible to Put in Words'

Max Beckmann Contextualized

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Introduction

The work of Max Beckmann is representative of a number of trends in the visual arts of the early twentieth century. Neither aggressively abstract nor classically representational, it has connections to expressionism, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new objectivity),[1] surrealism, and even academic art. Indeed, Beckmann swam outside both mainstream and avant-garde currents for most of his professional life, during which he synthesized and distilled powerful elements from experimental and traditional developments in his native country as well as in France and Italy. If his work is thus exceedingly difficult to categorize stylistically, it is likewise equally tricky to interpret. Though the imagery seems to invite iconographic analysis, the works, which are often referred to as 'hermetic', stubbornly refuse to yield coherent meaning. When asked to elucidate, Beckmann himself would speak obscurely of 'truths impossible to put in words and of which I was previously unaware'.[2] Or he would become irritated, and insist that the subject was but a secondary outcome of purely formal considerations. Sometimes he even discounted the content of his work entirely, arguing that 'it is not the subject that matters but the translation of the subject into

1 Among the most common translations for the German term *Neue Sachlichkeit* have been 'new objectivity', 'new concreteness', and 'new sobriety'; for a clear discussion of the problematics of the translations, see Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder, 1918–1924* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), xix. Because of the multiple ways in which the term has been translated, this anthology will use the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* throughout.

2 Beckmann to Curt Valentin, 11 February 1938, in *Max Beckmann: Briefe*, vol.3, ed. Klaus Gallwitz, Uwe M. Schneede and Stephan von Wiese with the assistance of Barbara Golz (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1996), 29.

the abstraction of the surface by means of painting'.[3] At other times he couched his pictorial practices in vague metaphysical terms, describing his quest in 1918 'to grasp the unutterable things of this world […] to capture the terrible, thrilling monster of life's vitality and to confine it […] with crystal-clear, razor-sharp lines and planes', or his belief in 1938 that 'space and space again, is the infinite deity which surrounds us and in which we are ourselves contained'.[4]

Yet however difficult to position historically or to interpret, the work of Max Beckmann has assumed new importance during these first years of the twenty-first century. In addition to a major retrospective at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Tate Modern in London, and The Museum of Modern Art in New York, other exhibitions focusing on a comparison of Beckmann and Fernand Leger, on the artist's watercolours and pastels, and on his drawings for Goethe's Faust, as well as several new books have brought renewed attention to this artist once viewed as outside the mainstream of twentieth-century modernism.[5] As this introduction will point out, Beckmann's innovations have taken on new power in recent years, as the discourse on

3 Beckmann, 'On My Painting' (1938), in *Max Beckmann: Self-Portrait in Words: Collected Writings and Statements, 1903–1950*, ed. Barbara Copeland Buenger (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 302.

4 Beckmann, 'Creative Credo' (1918) and 'On My Painting' (1938), in ibid., 183–4 and 302.

5 *Max Beckmann*, ed. Sean Rainbird (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2003); M*ax Beckmann, Fernand Leger: Unerwartete Begegnungen*, ed. Stephan Diederich and Paola Malavassi (Cologne: Museum Ludwig and DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag Köln, 2005); *Max Beckmann: The Watercolors and Pastels: Catalogue Raisonné of the Works in Color on Paper*, ed. Mayen Beckmann, Siegfried Gohr and Max Hollein (Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; Cologne: DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, 2006); *Max Beckmann: A Dream of Life*, ed. Tilman Osterwold (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006); *Max Beckmann: Zeichnungen zu Goethes Faust*, ed. Ursula Bongaerts-Schomer (Rome: Casa di Goethe; Bonn: Arbeitskreis selbständiger Kultur-Institute, 2007). Many of the above books began as exhibitions – two which did not should also be cited here: Olaf Peters, *Vom schwarzen Seiltänzer: Max Beckmann zwischen Weimarer Republik und Exil* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2005); and Françoise Forster-Hahn, *Max Beckmann in Kalifornien: Exil, Erinnerung und Erneuerung* (Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007).

modernism has metamorphosed into its present multi-dimensional status.

Beckmann's reception has fluctuated along with the changing definitions of modern art during the last century. Most historians would agree that the term 'modern', when used in reference to culture, refers to certain types of painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, film, photography and music made in the west during the period of industrialization. But there has been much less unanimity about which of the artefacts made in this era should be described as 'avant-garde', a term that for a number of years was used synonymously with the modern.[6] Some interpreters have stressed the importance of applying the term avant-garde only to artists who used their experimental innovations to foster awareness of class differences or to stimulate opposition to the dominant culture. Others have used the term in reference to the revolutionary style of modern artists, whether they were directly political or not. Within the past twenty years or so, definitions equating modernism with the conflicting products of change in an industrialized society – that is, with both the positive and the negative effects of industrialization – have become more predominant. Many art historians would echo Matthew Witkovsky's assessment in his 2007 catalogue, *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918–1945*, that cultural modernity involves 'a questioning, dissident attitude toward mainstream views and the governing structure of public life'.[7]

6 See, for example, Paul Wood, 'Introduction', in *Art of the Avant-Gardes*, ed. Steve Edwards and Paul Wood (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), esp. 2–3.

7 Matthew S. Witkovsky, *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe*, intro. Peter Demetz (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, in association with Thames and Hudson, 2007), 11. Witkovksy contrasts views of cultural modernity with western views of modernity 'in the domain of economics and statecraft', associating these views with 'faith in progress and optimism'. But recent interpretations in the realm of economics and the environment no longer reveal unbridled optimism; for a general discussion of this view see Paul Krugman, *The Great Unraveling: Losing our Way in the New Century* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003). For a provocative discussion of historiography, psychology and modernism, see Mark Jarzombek, *The Psych-*

Whether eliding the avant-garde with modernism or not, for much of the twentieth century, definitions of modern art were predominately francocentric. Even at the beginning of the century, German critics such as Julius Meier-Graefe praised the French impressionists and post-impressionists in his historic study, *Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst: Vergleichende Betrachtung der bildenden Künste, als Beitrag zu einer neuen Aesthetik* (Modern Art: Being a Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics).[8] But shortly before the First World War, when Beckmann was beginning to make a name for himself, definitions of the 'modern' were in flux. Around 1911, when modernism in France was equated with the 'isms' of fauvism and cubism, modern art in Germany began to be thought of as an international phenomenon, often referred to as expressionism. As used initially by German critics such as Wilhelm Worringer, Richart Reiche and Max Deri in their discussions of the Brücke (Bridge) and the Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider), the term was meant to signify innovations in the visual arts that drew not just on French sources but on world art, including primitive and Gothic art as well as the paintings of Michelangelo and Matthias Grünewald.[9] Later, as the war revived nationalistic identifications, expressionism grew to be equated more directly with German modern art.[10]

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ologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

8 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst: Vergleichende Betrachtung der bildenden Künste, als Beitrag zu einer neuen Aesthetik* (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1904); the English translation is *Modern Art; Being a Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics* (1908; New York: Arno Press, 1968).

9 See Wilhelm Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1911); Richart Reiche, 'Vorwort' (1912); and Max Deri, 'Cubists and Expressionism' (1912) in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, ed. Rose-Carol Washton Long (New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1993; paperback edition, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1995), 9–12, 16–20.

10 For discussion of the issue of internationalism and expressionism, see Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'National or International? Berlin Critics and the Question of Expressionism', in *Künstlerischer Austausch/Artistic Exchange: Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 521–34.

Historians point to Beckmann's own statements as contributing to critical assessments about his position in the history of modernism. When, for example, critics began to praise artistic groups such as the Blaue Reiter and the Brücke as *Expressionisten* (expressionists), Beckmann reacted by rebutting the essay 'The New Painting', written by the Blaue Reiter co-founder Franz Marc early in 1912.[11] Although he had joined Worringer, Marc, and others in 1911 to critique the nationalist attack on experimental painting in Germany for its purported adherence to French rather than German qualities,[12] here he disparaged the French artists whom Marc and others praised. With the exception of the work of Cezanne, Beckmann referred negatively to the 'new painting' as 'applied art', calling Matisse's work 'fabrics', Pablo Picasso's 'chessboards', and the works of Wassily Kandinsky 'Siberian-Bavarian posters'. According to Beckmann, these artists were neither 'modern' nor 'timely', phrases he used to emphasize his belief that only he adhered to Cezannesque principles of using time and place to communicate universal values.[13] After the First World War, when Beckmann began to be included in exhibitions and books discussing the significance of expressionism,[14] he continued to point out his differences from this movement and stress the importance of using concrete forms to suggest transcendental ideals. When *Neue Sachlichkeit* emerged as one of the dominant trends in Germany during the 1920s, Beckmann was more interested in registering his link to artists such as Picasso of the post-war period rather than to this new German model of modernism. Indeed, by consistently positioning

11 Excerpts from the Marc–Beckmann exchange are reprinted in *German Expressionism: Documents*, 96–101.

12 Beckmann, untitled statement in *Die Antwort auf den 'Protest Deutscher Künstler'* (Munich: Piper, 1911), 37.

13 Beckmann, 'Thoughts on Timely and Untimely Art' (1912), in *Max Beckmann: Self-Portrait in Words*, 115–17 (as in note 3).

14 See, for example, Gustav Hartlaub, *Die neue deutsche Graphik*, 3rd edn (Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1920), 79; Paul Fechter, *Der Expressionismus*, 2nd edn (Munich: Piper, 1920); and Paul F. Schmidt, 'Max Beckmanns "Hölle"', *Der Cicerone* 12 (1920): 841–7, and 'Lithographien der "Hölle"', *Feuer* 2 (1920–1921): 461–3. For an English excerpt of the essay that was published in *Der Cicerone*, see 'Max Beckmann's *Hell*' (1920), in *German Expressionism: Documents*, 152–3. See also the essay by Karen Lang in this volume.

his own work as distinct from that which was most up-to-date in the visual arts in Germany, Beckmann himself initiated a trend in the critical reception of his work.

Ironically, Gustav Hartlaub, the critic who coined the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, was drawn to what he perceived were the contradictory qualities of contemporaneity and universality of Beckmann's figurative expressionism.[15] As he explained in the catalogue essay for the famous 1925 exhibition at the Mannheim Kunsthalle, Hartlaub strove to present *Neue Sachlichkeit* as an outgrowth of expressionism. Stating that he was not taking a position against the earlier movement, he explained:

> If Expressionism should really be 'surpassed' as a 'movement,' a world view, and an artistic signature, we are not diminishing its accomplishments, its worth, or the character of those who gave it form. Any 'movement' bound up as it is with one generation, ages with that generation, stepping into the background at some point, perhaps later to be rejuvenated under different conditions.[16]

Expounding on the nature of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, he indicated two different directions taken by the painters he had chosen, delineating a 'left-wing' group as more realistic or 'verisitic' and another group as more 'classicist'. He also carefully enumerated what the artists shared, including an interest in timelessness and tangibility, as well as a 'common ground' (a term he had printed in bold) with other past movements such as expressionism, cubism and futurism. In other words, Hartlaub wanted to include artists in the exhibition who incorporated an element of anti-naturalism in their work but at the same time retained some physical realism. He had written to German critics, museum personnel, and dealers as he was arranging the exhibition, asking them to think of artists who were 'true to positive, tangible reality', including:

15 As early as 1920, Hartlaub recognized that Beckmann's transformation of nature was 'ultimately "expressionist"' since he felt this artist was able to present 'allegories of the radical-evil in our civilization, and also symbols for our longing for redemption'. See Hartlaub, *Die neue deutsche Graphik*, 79 and 82.

16 Gustav Hartlaub, preface to catalogue of the 'Neue Sachlichkeit' exhibition (1925), in *German Expressionism: Documents*, 290–1 (as in note 9).

> [T]he 'right' wing (neoclassicists, if one may say so), as exemplified by some things of Picasso, Kay H. Nebel, etc., as well as the left 'veristic' wing, in which a Beckmann, Grosz, Dix, Drexel, Scholz, etc., could be counted.[17]

In a slightly later discussion of verism, Hartlaub further explained that he wanted to distinguish the work of his artists from nineteenth century realism, which he connected to bourgeois society.[18]

Beckmann was key to Hartlaub's plans for the exhibition and, according to art historian Dennis Crockett, the curator did not feel he could have the exhibition without him.[19] In the exhibition essay, Hartlaub took great pains to emphasize that the works included sought to express 'the most profound upsets and wild fluctuations in our lives and values'.[20] With his past reverence for Marx as well as for theosophical transformation, Hartlaub was not a critic who can convincingly be labelled a reactionary.[21] Nonetheless, Hartlaub's concept of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and his endorsement of Beckmann has been interpreted by some art historians and critics throughout the twentieth century as evidence that both men were cynically resigned to the

17 Hartlaub to Eckard von Sydow, Wilhelm Hausenstein, Walter Cohen and Paul F. Schmidt, 18 May 1923, as cited in Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism*, 146 (as in note 1).

18 Hartlaub to Alfred H. Barr, Jr., 8 July 1929, as cited in Alfred Barr, 'Otto Dix', *The Arts* 17, no.4 (January 1931): 237.

19 See the citation from Hartlaub's letter to Beckmann, 17 May 1923, in Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism*, 146.

20 Gustav Hartlaub, preface to catalogue of the 'Neue Sachlichkeit' exhibition (1925), *in German Expressionism: Documents*, 291 (as in note 9). When asked by Alfred Barr in 1929 about fluctuating interpretations of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Hartlaub replied: 'Cynicism and resignation are the negative side of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, the positive side expresses itself in the enthusiasm for the immediate reality as a result of a desire to take things entirely objectively on a material basis'. See also Rosemary Haag Bletter, 'Introduction', in Adolf Behne, *The Modern Functional Building*, trans. Michael Robinson (Santa Monica, California: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1996).

21 Hartlaub wanted social change and was for a time involved with theosophy. See the introduction to *Die neue deutsche Graphik* (as in note 14).

problems of the Weimar Republic and should be aligned with advocates for the status quo or conservatism.[22]

By the late 1920s the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which Hartlaub had intended as a description of painting, began to be applied to other modernist cultural products, particularly to architecture and photography. As architectural historian Rosemary Bletter has discussed, the term *Sachlichkeit* was used with increasing frequency during the 1920s in relation to discussions of the *Neues Bauen*, the new architecture. Although Adolf Behne, one of the major interpreters of the new architecture, used the term in connection with terms such as *Zweck* and *Funktion* – that is, with the concepts of the functional and purposeful – he also intended it to have a communal or social flavour, writing in 1929: 'To build *sachlich* means to build socially'.[23] The discourse around developments in photography, particularly after the famous 'Film und Foto' (Film and Photo) exhibition of 1929, also associated concepts of *Sache* – concreteness, functionalism and purposefulness – with the new photographic vision. *Neue Sachlichkeit* thus began to be used alongside terms such as *Neues Sehen* (New Vision), which tended to occlude the utopian meaning the photographer and theorist László Moholy-Nagy envisioned for the medium as a way to open up and enhance understanding of the modern world.[24] By 1934, the theorist Walter Benjamin, who had praised the

22 For example, Mathew Eberle emphasized that the contemporary audience should disregard Hartlaub's characterization of Beckmann, writing: 'Today we would no longer list him among the Verists'. See 'Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany: A Brief History', in *Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s*, ed. Sabine Rewald (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press 2006), 22. For further discussion of the purported links between *Neue Sachlichkeit* and conservatism, see the concluding portion of this essay.

23 Adolf Behne, *Neues Wohnen – Neues Bauen* (Leipzig: Hesse & Becker, 1927), 34; quoted in Bletter, 'Introduction', 53 (as in note 20). See also Bletter's arguments, 49–57.

24 Witkovsky cites 1928 as the moment when the concepts of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and *Neues Sehen* became linked; see *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe*, 15 (as in note 7). By 1927, a second edition of Moholy-Nagy's 1925 treatise on photography, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, had been published in the Bauhaus book series. For discussion of Moholy-Nagy's theories, see Rose-Carol Washton

ideas and photographs of Moholy-Nagy, used the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* pejoratively to attack Weimar photographers such as Albert Renger-Patzsch for producing works that obscured the magnitude of problems within the former republic.[25] Hartlaub's concept of *Neue Sachlichkeit* was thus gradually distanced from progressive modernism, taking on the aura of conservatism that would surround Beckmann later in the century.

As critics were changing the original interpretation of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Beckmann's public statements from the late 1920s contributed to his image as an independent artist, beholden artistically and politically to no one except a transcendent God. Whether brief, as in the statement for his 1928 retrospective at the Mannheim Kunsthalle and for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (Frankfurt Newspaper), or lengthier and more messianic, as in his 1927 'The Artist in the State', Beckmann's essays purposefully stress his struggle with cosmological issues rather than with aesthetic or political questions about the direction of modernism.[26] By 1938, when he was in exile from the national socialist takeover of Germany, his speech in London at the 'Exhibition of Twentieth Century German Art' emphasized how painting allowed him to transcend the present world turmoil. In contrast to his positive view of communal activities written ten years earlier when his friend, the expressionist critic Kasimir Edchmid had published Beckmann's now famous 'Creative Credo',[27] he stated in the frequently reprinted speech of 1938 that 'collectivism' threatened

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Long, 'From Metaphysics to Material Culture: Painting and Photography at the Bauhaus', in *Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War*, ed. Kathleen James-Chakraborty (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 49–58, and esp. 51.

25 See Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer' (1934), in *Selected Writings*, vol.2 (1927–1934), ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 774–5, for this critique. For his citation of Moholy-Nagy, see 'Little History of Photography' (1931) in ibid., 523.

26 See Beckmann, 'Statement in the Catalogue of the Mannheim Kunsthalle Retrospective' (7 February 1928); 'Answer to *Frankfurter Zeitung Questionnaire about Politics*' (25 December 1928); and 'The Artist in the State' (1927), in *Max Beckmann: Self-Portrait in Words*, 294–5, 297 and 284–90 (as in note 3).

27 For Beckmann's 'Creative Credo' (1918), see ibid., 183–5.

humanity.[28] Without naming the countries, his oblique references to the politics of both national socialism and communism indicated his disdain for both. Although the exhibition in London was meant as a rebuttal to the 'Entartete Kunst' (Degenerate Art) exhibition in Munich, which had opened the day before Beckmann left Germany in July 1937, it had a paradoxical effect on Beckmann's reputation. On the one hand, it confirmed Beckmann's position as a victim of fascism by pointing to his works condemned by the National Socialists as decadent and degenerate. On the other hand, both the London and the Munich exhibition further affirmed Beckmann's work as German, which did not help to raise his place in the ranks of modern artists. In fact, the 'Entartete Kunst' show, while featuring a few international figures such as Piet Mondrian, Marc Chagall, and Jean Metzinger, predominantly displayed German artists, particularly those associated with expressionism and dada.[29]

Indeed, by the time Beckmann came to the United States in 1947, intense hatred for anything Germanic limited the appreciation of his work for many long years. To be sure, Beckmann did receive support in the United States from a small group of patrons, collectors and interested curators, and he was given his first exhibition in 1948 at the St. Louis County Museum. During the following years, Beckmann's supporters – like the German writer Stephen Lackner who had also emigrated to the United States – lent paintings to exhibitions, contributed essays to catalogues, and published personal accounts of Beckmann's life and work.[30] The artist continued to receive attention

28 Beckmann, 'On My Painting' (1938), in ibid., 305; see also Buenger's discussion in the annotation for this essay about the general apprehension of many exiles to refer to either fascism or communism, 299–300.

29 See Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, '*Entartete Kunst*, Munich 1937: A Reconstruction', in *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New York: H.N. Abrams, 1991), 44–81.

30 During the 1950s, Lackner lent some of his Beckmann collection to the Mills College Art Gallery in Oakland and to the Santa Barbara Art Gallery. He also published in American and German periodicals such as *Arts Yearbook* and *Das Kunstwerk*. See also Stephan Lackner, *Max Beckmann: Memories of a Friendship* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1969). Originally Siegmund Morgenroth, Lackner took his pseudonym in Paris before emigrating.

throughout the 1950s. Seminal works such as Peter Selz's *German Expressionist Painting* from 1957 linked Beckmann's work to expressionism,[31] and an untold number of exhibitions in the United States and books written in the English language continued thereafter to associate the artist with a movement from which he had distanced himself. Yet, insofar as expressionism was discussed by art historians as lacking 'any consistent direction' and having 'unregulated idiosyncracies' well into the 1970s and 1980s, Beckmann's association with this movement contributed to the lower status of his work compared to that of, for example, Picasso or even Fernand Leger, which continued to set the standard of mainstream – that is, French – modernism.[32]

Post-war privileging of abstraction also negatively influenced Beckmann's American reputation. The significant exhibitions 'Cubism and Abstract Art' of 1936 and 'Fantastic Art: Dada and Surrealism' of 1937 organized by Alfred Barr Jr., the first director of The Museum of Modern Art, had detailed the progression of abstraction from a primarily French orientation and allowed for figuration in connection with only a small number of surrealists.[33] Although Barr had included Beckmann in his 1931 exhibition on German modernism, calling

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Even in Germany after the Second World War, the first publications on Beckmann were also by contemporaries from the Weimar period. See, for example, Benno Reifenberg and Wilhelm Hausenstein, *Max Beckmann* (Munich: R. Piper, 1949).

31 Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting* (1957; Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1974), 284–7.

32 The quotes are taken from George Heard Hamilton's still useful survey, *Painting and Sculpture in Europe: 1880–1940*, rev. edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 180. See also Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Scholarship: Past, Present, and Future Directions', in *German Expressionist Prints and Drawings: The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies*, vol.1 (Los Angeles, California: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Munich, Germany: Prestel Verlag, 1989), 183–202.

33 Barr did mention the importance of Russian and Dutch constructivism as well as of Kandinsky's abstract expressionism, but he gave French modern art the most emphasis; see Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936; reprint, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1974).

German art 'second only to the School of Paris',[34] he did not include the artist in the 1936 and 1937 exhibitions. Nor did he include any other artists associated with German modern movements, with the exception of the non-Germans Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Max Ernst, whose surrealist connections from his years in Paris rather than his formative years as a Cologne dadaist were much better known at the time despite his German birth and education. Barr's de-emphasis of Germany in 1936 was certainly understandable in light of Hitler's attacks on modernism, Jews, blacks and other ethnic minorities; he and the trustees of the museum were concerned about potentially negative reactions in the United States to anyone associated with Germany. But Barr's new emphasis on abstraction and its stylistic evolution was not based on a rejection of national socialist policy alone. His disconnection of art from its religious, social and/or political context, while an outgrowth of rigorous formal training, was also related to his attempt to protect it from the hatred of the 'philistines', a term he used not only for the Nazis but also for those Communists who would prevent modern art from being seen.[35]

The negative attitude toward figuration in the post-war period was perpetuated by the American critic Clement Greenberg. According to Greenberg, the work of artists such as Picasso, Mondrian, Juan Miro, and even Kandinsky and Klee, could be considered 'pure' because it was uncontaminated by mass culture – i.e. kitsch – in

34 In the 1931 exhibition, Barr stated that Beckmann stood above all other painters in Germany for his 'strength, vitality, and breadth of feeling'. Nonetheless, his description of German art as romantic and emotional, as not emphasizing 'form and style', and not being 'pure', contributed to creating the aura that German art was inferior to French art. See A.H. Barr, Jr., 'Introduction', *German Painting and Sculpture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1931), 1, 12 and 14. Barr even convinced the Rockefellers to purchase a Beckmann painting, *Family Portrait*, of 1920, which was donated in 1935 to the museum; see Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: Missionary for the Modern* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989), 118.

35 Barr mentioned constructivist artists fleeing 'active Soviet philistinism' and wrote that his 1936 catalogue 'might well be dedicated to those painters of squares and circles (and the architects influenced by them) who have suffered at the hands of philistines with political power'; see Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 17–18.

capitalist, fascist and Soviet totalitarian systems. Stressing the origin of artists' ideas in the medium with which they were engaged, Greenberg derided figuration in his essay 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' of 1939, calling aspects of surrealism, such as the works of Salvadore Dali, 'reactionary' for returning to external subject matter, and describing folk art as 'the static survival of dead formal, aristocratic cultures'.[36] That essay and 'Towards Newer Laocoon' of 1940 created enormous theoretical support for abstraction.[37] Notably, as Greenberg's ideas became increasingly accepted at home, throughout the 1950s American abstract art was being exhibited abroad, bearing witness to the purported freedom within democracy to produce the kinds of cultural artefacts that had been banned by both the National Socialists and Stalinists. In these circumstances, figurative modernism had little chance.

The impact of Greenberg on art history was not, however, as definitive in Germany as in the United States. There, the focus on Beckmann as a solitary, creative genius in both painting and printmaking that had been established by the late 1920s only intensified during the 1950s and 1960s, partly due to the artist's untimely death in December of 1950 and, as well, to the continued tendency to separate German artists from the political and cultural issues that had dominated the 1930s and 1940s. German scholars trained in the pre- and post-war years have been the mainstay for the fundamental studies of Beckmann's oeuvre. Erhard Göpel, who, as a German administrator in the Netherlands during the Second World War, had assisted Beckmann when he lived there, began publishing his numerous studies on the artist. These culminated with the magisterial catalogue raisonné of Beckmann's paintings, edited jointly with his wife, Barbara Göpel. This compendium of 1976, filled with information about the artist's patrons, the subjects of his oil paintings, provenance, and exhibitions, has been the basis for much subsequent scholarship.

36 Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' (1939), in *Art and Theory: 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (1992; Oxford and Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 541.

37 Clement Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' (1940), in ibid., 529–41.

Other foundational studies, such as Stephan von Wiese's work of 1978, the Kunsthalle Bielefeld's of 1977 on the drawings, and Klaus Gallwitz's 1962 listing of the prints, also emerged from German scholarship.[38] A major iconographic interpretation by Friedhelm Willhelm Fischer was published in 1972; titled *Max Beckmann: Symbol und Weltbild: Grundriss zu einer Deutung des Gesamtwerkes* (Max Beckmann: Symbol and World View: Outline of an Interpretation of the Work), it related Beckmann's works to Gnostic and theosophical literature.[39] Beginning with the oil painting *Night* of 1918–1919, Fischer discussed how the themes of struggle in the artist's major oil paintings were intertwined with the actual process of distorting figure and space throughout his career. For Fischer, Beckmann's interrelation of theme and style derived from the artist's quest to communicate the secrets of the universe, and his voice continues to echo in Beckmann scholarship.

The hundredth anniversary of Beckmann's birth in 1984 saw numerous German museums initiate retrospectives of the artist at a time when a revival of interest in figuration in both Germany and the United States was underway. Only one, planned by Munich's Haus der Kunst and the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in conjunction with the Saint Louis Art Museum, travelled to the United States; it went to Los Angeles and St. Louis, though not to New York or any other east coast city. Nonetheless, the catalogue, jointly edited by the German curator Carla Schulz-Hoffmann and the American Judith C. Weiss, contained contributions by younger scholars such as Charles W. Haxthausen and Sarah O'Brien Twohig that focused on

38 Erhard Göpel and Barbara Göpel, *Max Beckmann: Katalog der Gemälde* (Bern: Verlag Kornfeld, 1976); Stefan von Wiese, *Max Beckmanns zeichnerisches Werk 1903–1925* (Dusseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1978); *Max Beckmann: Aquarelle und Zeichnungen 1903–1950* (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1977); and Klaus Gallwitz, *Max Beckmann: Die Druckgraphik* (Karlsruhe: Badischer Kunstverein, 1962).

39 Friedhelm Wilhelm Fischer, *Max Beckmann: Symbol und Weltbild: Grundriss zu einer Deutung des Gesamtwerkes* (Munich: W. Fink, 1972); see esp. 19 and *passim*.

the years before the artist's mature period.[40] The 1983 exhibition catalogue published by the Städtische Galerie in Frankfurt emphasized Beckmann's Frankfurt years of 1915–1933, which were also the subject of the compilation *Max Beckmann in Frankfurt* edited by Klaus Gallwitz, with its inclusion of reminiscences and other documents from the period; these texts elaborated on specific aspects of Beckmann's life but did not directly focus on the issue of Beckmann's relationship to modernism.[41] Other exhibitions examined works from Beckmann's formative period before the First World War as well as the late works produced in the United States. All contributed to focusing attention on Beckmann at a time when artists and critics in Germany and in the United States were looking for alternatives to abstraction.

Beckmann's centennial also coincided with a renewed interest in the relationship of the artist to the political. Many art historians, particularly those on a broad spectrum of the left, had become much more involved with the interaction of the visual arts and politics, and increasingly valorized artists who emphasized social or political goals rather than personal ones. Invigorated by the student protests of 1968 and by a determination to see cultural change as oscillating and elliptical, stylistic purity was no longer a central issue. Turning to theorists loosely associated with the Frankfurt School of Social Research such as Walter Benjamin, and also to French structuralists and poststructuralists like Roland Barthes, many young art historians began to celebrate artists such as John Heartfield and Hannah Höch who utilized mass media techniques (photography and/or photomontage) in their efforts to unmask the power structure of dominant institutions.[42]

40 *Max Beckmann: Retrospective*, ed. Carla Schulz-Hoffmann and Judith C. Weiss (St. Louis: St. Louis Art Museum in association with Prestel-Verlag, Munich, 1984); the German version is *Max Beckmann: Retrospektive*, ed. Carla Schulz-Hoffmann and Judith C. Weiss (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1984).

41 *Max Beckmann: Frankfurt 1915–1933*, ed. Klaus Gallwitz and Ingo Begall (Frankfurt am Main: Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut, 1983); and Klaus Gallwitz, *Max Beckmann in Frankfurt* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1984).

42 See the discussion of the impact of Benjamin on Rosalind Krauss, T.J. Clark, and their students in Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's*

These critics and scholars wanted the work of art to convey the contradictions of modern capitalism, and they asked how a work of art could be constructed to be both politically and aesthetically viable, involving the spectator as well as the artist in the means of production and the completion of the work. As a result, when those German artists referred to as neo-expressionists started to gain attention in New York, they were often attacked, not for their use of figuration per se but for being a-historical and self-reflexive, that is, for losing all contact with historical conditions and construction. For example, in a 1977 essay in which he sought to distinguish the painter Gerhard Richter from his German antecedents, the German-American critic and art historian Benjamin Buchloh restaged attacks on expressionism, such as those of the 1930s by George Lukács, when he referred to the new interest in expressionist painting as a 'sign of a general regression' and 'a loss of all objective reality'.[43]

German scholars who were interested in how modernism might have contributed to the development of fascism also began focusing on the Wilhelmine and Weimar years, not to articulate their differences from the national socialist era, but to identify explanations of and links to this period of totalitarianism. The architectural historian Wolfgang Pehnt, for example, argued in his 1973 book, *Expressionist Architecture*, that expressionist interest in craft and folk art fostered a return to fascist nationalism and that expressionist anti-materialism set the stage for national socialist posturing against commercialism.[44] Not

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Modernism and Bureaucratization of the Senses (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 349–51.

43 Compare Benjamin Buchloh's 1977 essay, 'Readymade, Photography, and Painting in the Painting of Gerhard Richter', in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), 389 and 390, with George Lukács's 1934 critique, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', in *German Expressionism: Documents*, 313–17 (as in note 9). Also see Pamela Kort, 'The Myths of Expressionism in America', in *New Worlds: German and Austrian Art, 1890–1940* (New York: Neue Galerie, 2001), 260–93.

44 Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture*, trans. J.A. Underwood and Edith Kustner (1973; London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 206. For further comments on Pehnt's point of view, see Rosemarie Haag Bletter, 'Expressionism and the New Objectivity', *Art Journal* 43, no.2 (1983), 109–10. See also the discussion

only was Lukács's indictment of expressionism freshly reiterated but, in addition, Benjamin's critique of *Neue Sachlichkeit* as superficial and commercial was given new vigour. A 1977–1978 essay on *Neue Sachlichkeit* by the cultural historian Jost Hermand, recapitulated again in 1994, presents one of the clearest statements of this point of view. According to Hermand, although *Neue Sachlichkeit* may have emphasized concrete and technical modernism, it had lost all connection to its utopian roots and was cynically committed to sales and profits, not to changing society.[45] For Hermand, the profiteers and the moneyed classes were the beneficiaries, and as a result the ethical longings of the underclass were left to be filled by the false promises of national socialism.

These debates about the role of the artist in cultural, social and political affairs had a direct impact on Beckmann scholarship. Writing in 1984, Hans Belting, for example, did not question whether Beckmann's works were modern, but rather asked what *kind* of modernism his approach represented. The subtitle to his book, *Max Beckmann: Tradition as a Problem in Modern Art*, indicates the complexity of his argument as he sought 'to establish Beckmann's place in the history of

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of the linking of expressionism to extreme nationalism in Long, 'National or International? Berlin Critics and the Question of Expressionism', 521–34 (as in note 10).

45 The essay was published first in English and then in German; see Jost Hermand, 'Unity within Diversity? The History of the Concept "Neue Sachlichkeit"', in *Culture and Society in the Weimar Republic: Festsschrift for R. Hinton Thomas*, ed. Keith Bullivant (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), 166–82; and Jost Hermand, 'Einheit in der Vielheit zur Geschichte des Begriffs "Neue Sachlichkeit"' in *Das literarische Leben in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Keith Bullivant (Königstein: Scriptor, 1978), 71–88. See also Jost Hermand, '*Neue Sachlichkeit*: Ideology, Lifestyle, or Artistic Movement?' in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed. Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1994), 57–67. For an overview of the leftist responses to *Neue Sachlichkeit*, see Maria Makela, 'Politicizing Painting: The Case of New Objectivity', in *Legacies of Modernism: Art and Politics in Northern Europe, 1890–1950*, ed. Patrizia C. McBride, Richard W. McCormick and Monika Zagar (New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave/MacMillan, 2007), 133–47.

modern art' along with Klee and Picasso.[46] Determined to avoid the controversies over figuration and abstraction, Belting emphasized Beckmann's construction of a mythical artistic identity. Relating Beckmann's remarks to what Belting believed was the key aspect of modern art in the twentieth century – the problem of the relationship between the individual and society – he included in his book three published essays from the 1920s and 1930s to support his argument, and added the little known 1927 statement 'The Social Stance of the Artist by the Black Tightrope Walker' as well as the more familiar 1948 'Letters to a Woman Painter'.

Belting alluded to the change in Beckmann's attitude that occurred in the mid-1920s, a period that several scholars had in fact already investigated. As early as 1974, Christian Lenz focused on one of the central images – *Martyrdom* – from the 1919 print portfolio *Hell*, and clearly discussed its relation to Beckmann's political thought.[47] Connecting Beckmann's Christian humanism to his hope for a communistically and communally oriented Republic, Lenz also found medieval Christian sources for a number of the images. Building on this focused strategy, Alexander Dückers contributed a study of the entire *Hell* portfolio in 1983, relating the images in it to the struggles of the young republic in 1919; he, too, found medieval as well as early northern Renaissance sources for the works.[48] In 1989, the American scholar Barbara Buenger published the result of her research about the implications of Beckmann's political connections in the early Weimar years.[49] Not only did she identify a number of intellectuals on the left whom Beckmann represented in his early prints, she also focused more on the iconographic impact of Beckmann's disillusionment with radical politics than on formal issues.

46 Hans Belting, *Max Beckmann: Tradition as a Problem in Modern Art*, trans. Peters Wortsman (1984; New York: Timken Publishers, 1989), 16.

47 See Christian Lenz, 'Max Beckmann – "Das Martyrium"', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 16 (1974): 185–210.

48 Alexander Dückers, *Max Beckmann: Die Hölle 1919* (Berlin: Kupferstichkabinett Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1983).

49 Barbara Buenger, 'Max Beckmann's "Ideologues": Some Forgotten Faces', *The Art Bulletin* 71, no.3 (September 1989): 458–78.

In 1990, the publication of James Hofmaier's two-volume catalogue raisonné of the artist's prints made many of the images discussed by Belting, Lenz, Dückers and Buenger more widely available while expanding considerably on Gallwitz's initial listing of 1962,[50] and throughout the following decade scholarship was further enhanced by the publication of numerous primary documents. Although portions of Beckmann's personal writings – his diaries and letters – had been published throughout the years, the three-volume *Briefe* edited by Klaus Gallwitz, Uwe M. Schneede and Stephan von Wiese,[51] along with publications from the Max Beckmann Archiv in Munich like the 1998 catalogue devoted to Minna Beckmann-Tube,[52] have greatly increased the ability of scholars to move beyond an emphasis on the artist's personal development of style and iconography.[53] In addition, the translation into English in 1997 by Barbara Buenger of Beckmann's collected writings and statements from 1903–1950 has made these documents accessible to English-speaking students of Beckmann's work.[54]

All of these publications have allowed scholars to pursue questions that have dominated the discourse on modernism in the last

50 James Hofmaier, *Max Beckmann: Catalogue Raisonné of his Prints* (Bern: Gallery Kornfeld, 1990); and Gallwitz, *Max Beckmann: Die Druckgraphik* (as in note 38).

51 *Max Beckmann: Briefe*, ed. Klaus Gallwitz, Uwe M. Schneede and Stephan von Wiese with the assistance of Barbara Golz (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1993–1996).

52 *Minna Beckmann-Tube*, Hefte des Bechmann Archivs, ed. C. Lenz (Munich: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen/Max Beckmann Archiv, 1998).

53 Essential other references include the publication by Peter Beckmann and Joachim Schaffer, *Die Bibliothek Max Beckmanns: Unterstreichungen, Kommentare, Notizen und Skizzen in seinen Büchern* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992) as well as the bibliographic listings compiled by the Max Beckmann Archiv in Munich. The first *Max Beckmann: Bibliographie 1971–1993*, edited by Felix Billeter, Alina Dobrzecki and Christian Lenz (Munich: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen/Max Beckmann Archiv, 1994), listed books, essays, individual exhibitions, exhibition catalogues and general references that were published between 1971 and 1993; it will soon be supplanted by a second edition.

54 *Max Beckmann: Self-Portrait in Words* (as in note 3).

fifteen years. The problematic relationship of the artist to society at large has become an integral part of recent research. Attitudes toward both the dominant powers and marginal groups are being investigated as increasingly relevant to an artist's themes and stylistic directions. Recent publications about Beckmann have moved in a multitude of directions, which have at times become intertwined. Placing Beckmann on the same level as major French modernists has resulted in such exhibition catalogues as the 1998 *Max Beckmann and Paris: Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Leger, Rouault* and the 2005 *Max Beckmann – Fernand Leger: Unerwartete Begegnungen*.[55] Emphasis on Beckmann as a master of twentieth-century modern art has also led to numerous analyses of his late years and contributed to the proliferation of studies that have focused on Beckmann in exile. These have stressed not so much the development of style as his reaction to his displacement in the wake of major twentieth-century cataclysmic events.[56]

Modernism's complicity in the catastrophes of the last century has been another trajectory in the discourse on Beckmann. Expanding in a lengthy book of 2005 upon an earlier essay, 'Max Beckmann, die Neue Sachlichkeit und der Werterelativismus in der Weimarer Republik', art historian Olaf Peters argued that the artist moved beyond the 'liberal-conservative volunteerism' of *Neue Sachlichkeit*

55 *Max Beckmann and Paris: Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Leger, Rouault*, ed. Tobia Bezzola and Cornelia Homburg (St. Louis: St. Louis Art Museum, 1998); and *Max Beckmann, Fernand Leger: Unerwartete Begegnungen* (as in note 5).

56 See for example, Barbara Buenger, 'Max Beckmann in Paris, Amsterdam, and the United States, 1937–50', and Keith Holz, 'Scenes from Exile in Western Europe: The Politics of Individual and Collective Endeavor Among German Artists', in *Exiles and Emigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*, ed. Stephanie Barron (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 58–67 and 42–56; and, more recently, Françoise Forster-Hahn, 'Reflections on Max Beckmann's Experience of his American Exile', in *Caught by Politics: Hitler's Exiles and American Visual Culture*, eds Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick (New York: Palgrave/McMillan, 2007), 17–31. A longer German version of this latter essay is *Max Beckmann in Kalifornien* (as in note 5).

toward the fascistic position of the 'conservative revolutionary'.[57] Connecting the artist's focus on autonomy as an artist and individual to the spiritual elitism and championing of the powerful during the 1920s that he believed contributed to the evolution of national socialism,[58] Peters highlighted *The Dream* (1921) to more clearly underline Beckmann's response to the cultural crisis of the 1920s as one of removal from the problems of the period. Emphasizing that Beckmann's involvement with mythic ideas and aristocratic power developed in the mid-1920s and lasted until his death, Peters, like Jost Hermand in his assessment of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, found disappointing Beckmann's response to the crises of his time through representation of nightmarish dreams rather than activist commitment, particularly to solutions of the left. Peters raised important questions in his study, which, like many critiques of modern art from the last quarter of the twentieth century, asserts that modern artists like Beckmann have been insufficiently politically radical and too concerned with commercialization. Notably, instead of being considered marginal to modernism, here Beckmann is investigated along with other artists, mainstream or not, whose work reflects the conflicts inherent in the ongoing modernization and industrialization of the world.

The position that Beckmann was aligned with conservative political and aesthetic circles has sparked much controversy and continues to engage art historians, as the collection of essays in this anthology will make clear. The first essay by Jay A. Clarke, 'Space as Metaphor: Beckmann and the Conflicts of Secessionist Style in Berlin', not only examines the artist's ambivalent attitudes toward modernism when he was involved with Secession activities before the First World War, but also discusses these attitudes from a feminist perspective by linking Beckmann's conflicts about modernism and the Berlin Secession to issues related to his attitudes toward women.

57 Olaf Peters, 'Max Beckmann, die Neue Sachlichkeit und der Werterelativismus in der Weimarer Republik', *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 61 (2000): 237–61; and Peters, *Vom schwarzen Seiltänzer*, esp. 89–90 and *passim* (as in note 5).

58 Peters's interpretation of Beckmann's detachment is reminiscent of the German Communist Party critique at the end of the 1920s of both the centre and socialist parties for being more dangerous than the racist, nationalist parties on the right.

Karen Lang, in 'Max Beckmann's Inconceivable Modernism', further examines Beckmann's relation to early twentieth-century French and German modernism by focusing on Beckmann's insistence on the significance of space and his use of Cezanne to support his particular interpretation of contemporary and 'timely' painting. Beckmann's antipathy to applied arts will be of special interest to those fascinated by the conflicting attitudes about the 'modern' before the First World War.

The third essay by Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Ambivalence: Personal and Political – Beckmann's Print Portfolios, 1919–1924', focuses on the recognition of Beckmann as a 'modern' painter and printmaker in the early and middle years of the Weimar Republic and how this designation became questionable. By examining Beckmann's relation to expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, the two movements thought of as 'modern' during those years, Long discusses how the themes and structure in three print portfolios – *Hell*, *Annual Fair*, and *Berlin Trip* – relate to contemporary political and social issues. In '"Painted Sounds": Music in the Art of Max Beckmann', Marsha Morton expands on Beckmann's ambivalent embrace of modernism by focusing on his love of both popular and classical music. Not only does she establish the context for the range of instruments that appear in Beckmann's works, but she also investigates the philosophical impulse behind his passion for both Brahms and Duke Ellington.

Barbara Buenger explores Beckmann's Frankfurt years in her contribution to the anthology, 'Some Portraits from Weimar-Era Frankfurt'. In her analysis of this important period in the artist's career, she relates several portraits that Beckmann made of key cultural and political figures to the artist's efforts to consolidate his personal, social and professional standing in Frankfurt and elsewhere. At issue, among other things, is his relationship to conservative ideology, as is also the case in James van Dyke's essay, 'Max Beckmann, Sport and the Field of Cultural Criticism', which examines the numerous links between protagonists of the modern artistic culture of the Weimar Republic and individuals associated with conservatism. Through a close analysis of Beckmann's programmatic painting *Rugby Players* of 1929 and of the artist's writings – in particular, of the 1927 essay 'The Artist in the State', published in Prince Karl

Anton von Rohan's *Europäische Revue* (European Review) – van Dyke explores Beckmann's concept of 'aristocratic bolshevism' and the political spectrum behind this concept.

In '*Titanic* Sinks, *Departure* Arrives: On Beckmann, Film and the Fall of History Painting and the Rise of the Historical Object', Peter Chametzky approaches the broader theme of the fate of history painting in the context of twentieth-century modernism. Drawing on newspaper criticism, press releases, and documentary photographs and film, Chametzky argues via careful analysis of one early and one mid-career painting by Beckmann that the artwork itself becomes an active participant in public discourse about historical events. Sabine Eckmann's contribution to the anthology, 'Max Beckmann: From Space to Place', also considers works that Beckmann made at different moments in his career, screening them, however, through the lens not of history painting but of spatial composition. She argues that while at home in the Weimar Republic, Beckmann made images of radical alienation by means of self-contained, hermetic spaces embodying the dystopian essence of contemporary life, while in exile he depicted concrete *places* of human experience, now full of possible passages between inside and outside, and of projections and reflections that link private realms and political worlds, individualistic self-absorption and collective group interaction. By imbricating human agency in his exile works at the very historical moment when the political forces in Nazi Germany completely cancelled it out, Beckmann, Eckmann suggests, thus established an aesthetic of intervention.

Other Beckmann works produced in exile are discussed in the last two essays in the anthology. In 'Imagining the American West: Max Beckmann in St. Louis and California', Françoise Forster-Hahn explores Beckmann's contradictory feelings about the condition of the exile and the exilic, as an experience of constant shift and complex interfacing of memories of the past, real and imagined. She delineates how the tension between the consciousness of the past and the present with its opportunities for renewal suffuses Beckmann's creative work in America. David Ehrenpreis 'Between Heaven and Earth: Max Beckmann's Last Representations of the Artist' carries forward Beckmann's confrontation with the exilic through his analysis of two paintings that Beckmann made in 1950, the last year of his life:

Falling Man and *Self-Portrait in Blue Jacket*. By exploring the historical context of these works and investigating how the artist repeatedly transformed the motif of a man falling through space, Ehrenpreis argues that these paintings represent both the infinite creative potential of the autonomous artist, a theme that had occupied him throughout his career, *and* the ultimate limitations of the human condition, now so palpable as Beckmann neared the end of his life.

The essays in this anthology thus relate Beckmann's art to the tangible circumstances of its production and reception, illuminating both moments and monuments in Beckmann's career as well as the cultural context in which it developed. It also addresses issues of historiography, in particular that of modernism and of Beckmann's position in this contested arena. The papers emerged out of a conference held in the summer of 2003 at the CUNY Graduate Center on the occasion of the Max Beckmann retrospective exhibition in New York. Co-sponsored by The Museum of Modern Art and the Historians of German and Central European Art and Architecture (HGCEA), the conference featured speakers from both museum and academic backgrounds who brought their interests in topics as diverse as contemporary music, philosophy, criticism, exile, theatre, history and sports to bear on the interpretation of Beckmann's work. The anthology is the first publication of HGCEA, which gratefully acknowledges Robert Storr, who, in his capacity then as The Museum of Modern Art's curator of the 2003 Beckmann exhibition, encouraged and helped to find support for the Beckmann conference that began this project; Steven Mansbach, then President of HGCEA; HGCEA member Matthew Witkovsky for his assistance in locating funding; the HGCEA Board for its continued aid; and Mayen Beckmann and the Beckmann Society for gracious assistance with reproduction rights and support of our enterprise. Thanks, too, to those who helped us with the technical aspects of the production of this anthology, especially Daniel Castro, John Gruver, Helena Sedgwick and Berhe Tekeste-Berhe, and, of course, to the editors at Peter Lang, Alexis Kirschbaum and Hannah Godfrey, who so ably shepherded the project along.