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for the Deutsches Historisches Museum

documenta

Politics and Art



**DEUTSCHES
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Preface

When I came to the Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) in 2017, I was thinking about creating a show to examine the relationship between art and historical exhibitions. It struck me that a large and important part of the DHM collection consists of works of art. They were mostly added to the collection because they testify to historical events, changing attitudes, or the everyday realities of former times. But what does it mean when a work of art is displayed in a historical museum? What changes about the way we look at it and interpret it? Is it reduced to the level of a source? Do artworks enrich what we call history by giving us something to look at? What is the relationship between aesthetic and historical judgement?

Documenta is probably the most famous international art exhibition that has ever been held in Germany. To do justice to its historical significance in our own exhibition, I looked for a team that was capable of exploring and presenting the relationships between art, politics and history. It quickly became apparent that only an interdisciplinary team would be appropriate, and I was pleased to be able to bring curator and art historian Lars Bang Larsen and contemporary historian Dorothee Wierling on board to begin with, followed by the science and art historian Julia Voss. Dorlis Blume has overseen the exhibition as project manager, and Alexia Pooth served as research associate.

With the support of Christiane and Nicolaus Weickart, the DHM held an all-day symposium called 'documenta. History/Art/Politics' on 15 October 2019. The participants also discussed the exhibition "'Divinely Gifted': National Socialism's Favoured Artists in the Federal Republic', which is being curated by Wolfgang Brauneis and will be held in parallel with the exhibition about documenta. As a result of this discussion, it became, for the first time, quite clear to me that these projects were not antithetical to one another: on the one hand, the modern, pro-Western, formalist, democratic documenta; on the other hand, the continuing influence of Nazi-infused, reactionary, anti-modernist art. Julia Friedrich gave a talk in which she clearly brought out the continuities with the Nazi period that can be seen in documenta. On the one hand, the modern arts, revived and set against the backdrop of the ruined Fridericianum, were supposed to tie in with the pre-war avant-garde and, in so doing, bridge the rupture that separated the young Federal Republic from that era. On the other hand, they offered viewers an all-too-easy reconciliation, identifying the curators and their modern audience with the opponents and even the victims of the Nazis.

Another result of the symposium was that the artistic director of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation), Hortensia Völckers,

who had also attended the event, encouraged me to apply to the Kulturstiftung and request support for the two projects. Furthermore, the results of the symposium also persuaded Minister of State Monika Grütters that a closer examination would be made of the continuity of National Socialism with the cultural institutions of the Federal Republic, which was mostly unknown to the public at that point.

In 2021, a coincidence then led me to an even more disconcerting connection between the early days of documenta and Nazism: I was talking to historian Carlo Gentile about a new centre planned to deal with the subject of German war crimes in the years 1939–45 under the initial direction of the German Historical Museum, and he mentioned that Italian archives contained direct links to a central figure of documenta – Werner Haftmann. One of the most important sources of intellectual inspiration for documenta 1 to 3 had apparently committed serious war crimes in Italy during the Nazi regime. We cite the source for this information in the present catalogue.

During the first deliberations over the dual exhibition beginning in 2017, the two shows at first appeared to be simply polar opposites: at one end, the lingering echo of Nazi aesthetics in the public works of Hitler's and Goebbels' favourite artists, named on the list of the 'divinely gifted', who had been allowed to continue styling key areas of the Federal Republic after 1945. At the other end, the three vectors of the history of documenta: the fight against the Nazis' anti-modernist conceptions of art; against the GDR and the East bloc; and the orientation toward the 'West' in its sense as the political, moral and aesthetic counterpoint to the 'East'. This polarity became blurred, however, the more research we did, the closer we looked, and the more we discussed matters with colleagues – and not just at the symposium in 2019.

So this project has most definitely not resolved the question of the relationship between works of art and a historical museum. On the contrary, the issue has become even more differentiated. Our research and our experience with the history of documenta have shown the extent to which aesthetic judgements are in part determined by historical knowledge.

Raphael Gross

President of the Deutsches Historisches Museum



Prologue





III. 1 | Cat. no. 2

Friedrichsplatz at the time of the opening of d1, 1955

Documenta in its Times: A Chronology

DOROTHEE WIERLING

d1

1955 When the first documenta opened its doors in Kassel in mid-July 1955, ten years after the end of the war, the most important political processes leading to the period known as the Cold War had already come to an end. Early in the 1950s, following denazification, public officials 'with a clean record' were reinstated, drawing a line under the past. Throughout the Federal Republic of Germany, National Socialist rule and the Second World War had left their mark, and this also applied to the organisers of the first documenta. The Social Democrat Arnold Bode and former member of the Nazi party, Werner Haftmann, cooperated to achieve their mutual wish of reconnecting to modernism in art – and, towards this end, distanced themselves both from the art that had been propagated by the National Socialists and from the socialist realism fostered by Stalinism, that is, from 'totalitarian' art. This was in line with Cold War politics, which by the mid-1950s was in full swing. In January 1955, West Germany founded the Bundeswehr, the German armed forces. Then in early May, Germany joined NATO, and the ratification of the Paris-

Bonn conventions put an end to Allied occupation. As a result, the Federal Republic largely became a sovereign state again. On the other hand, during this period one event in particular became indelibly inscribed in the national narrative of the Federal Republic: Chancellor Konrad Adenauer negotiated with the Soviet Union over the liberation of the last German prisoners of war. The negotiations were successfully concluded in September, the same month in which the first documenta came to an end in Kassel. But these negotiations by no means provided the only backdrop for the exhibition of modern art. Parallel to the Cold War setting, life in the Federal Republic was becoming increasingly comfortable for more and more of the population: unemployment figures had halved since 1950, sinking to just 5.6 per cent, while gross domestic product had doubled since the currency reform in 1948. West Germans were greatly indebted to the generous reconstruction assistance provided by the United States through the Marshall Plan, but their own zeal and enterprise contributed to the positive developments too. In 1955, Germans worked 59.4 hours per week on an average; working hours had never been this high before in the post-



III. 12 | Cat. no. 32

Arnold Bode and Kurt Martin (front) in the Fridericianum before
Pablo Picasso *Mädchen vor einem Spiegel* (*Girl Before a Mirror*), 1955, d1

How documenta 1955 Almost Never Happened

The History of Events Leading to the Most Successful of German Art Exhibitions and How It Came About

JULIA VOSS

On 6 December 1954, three men travelled from Kassel to visit the Federal Ministry of the Interior in Bonn. As yet they were still only relatively minor figures in the art world. However, the goal they were pursuing was very ambitious. They wanted to convince the ministry to support an exhibition project in Kassel. At this point the title of the exhibition was the 'European 20th-Century Art Exhibition'.¹ The exhibition was to bring three hundred pictures together in combination with works of sculpture, architecture and stage sets.

Initially, no one beyond the perimeters of Kassel really credited the project with much chance of success. The greater the distance from this city, the less enthusiasm was mustered among both experts in the field of art and potential sponsors. The Kassel City Council agreed early to lend its support to the exhibition, while the State of Hesse's backing was subject to the proviso of the Federal Government providing funding. The latter was inclined initially to view the project as a poor relation of the famous Venice Biennale art exhibition. According to an expert consulted by Bonn, neither in Germany, nor internationally, would any museum agree to lend works to such a show. He likewise considered international interest improbable: 'Counting on a lot of visitors from abroad is unlikely because the Venice Biennale will always be the greater attraction'.²

It already became apparent how greatly the Federal Ministry of the Interior was mistaken in 1955. Arnold Bode and his fellow campaigners, among them Heinz Lemke and Herbert Freiherr von Buttlar, who presented the idea to the ministry, created a highly successful exhibition format. Since it was founded, the number of visitors to documenta has continually increased; it has long outstripped those of the Venice Biennale. All over the world, documenta has become not only Germany's most famous exhibition, but also the exhibition boasting the greatest audience nationwide. How did it come to this? How was it possible to overcome Bonn's scepticism? What kind of a setting was established in Kassel in 1955 so that people came in droves to provincial Hesse and so that the exhibition received international media coverage to such an extent?



III. 19
Heiner Georgsdorf as a security attendant at documenta 2, 1959

Futuristic Flair

Heiner Georgsdorf in an Interview with Julia Voss

Heiner Georgsdorf, born in 1939, visited the first documenta twice. The exhibition made a lasting impression on him. He enrolled as a student under Arnold Bode, and until 2005 taught art education at Kassel's art college. For documenta 2 he worked as an attendant and for documenta 3 he was Herbert von Buttlar's assistant.

Voss: In 1955, when documenta opened its doors in Kassel for the very first time, you were a teenager. What do you remember of the exhibition?

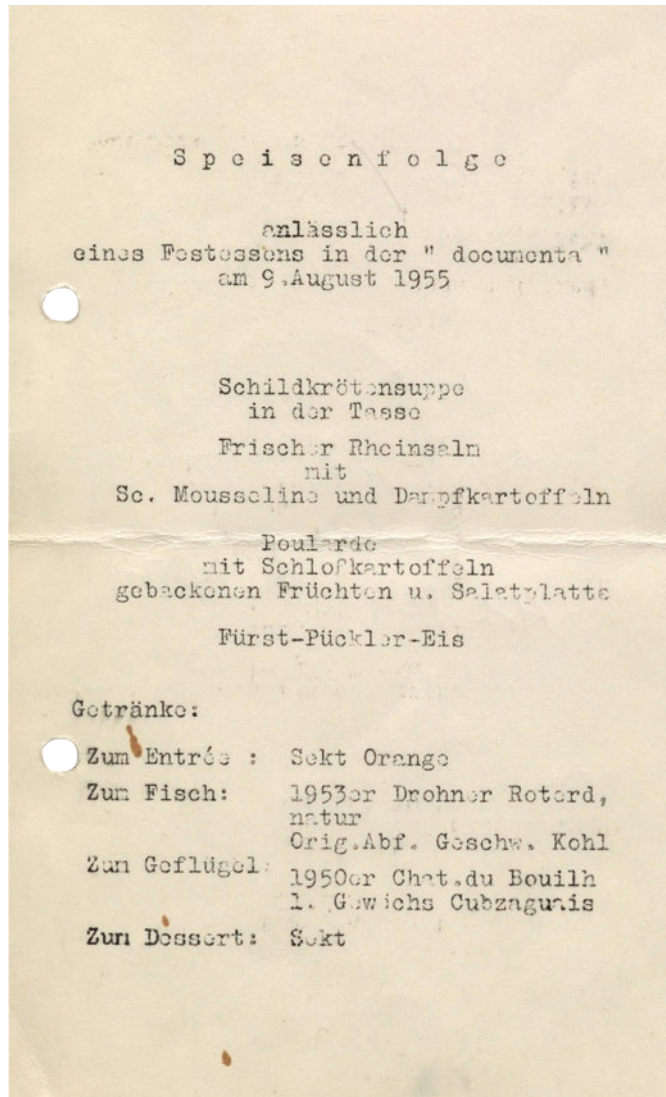
Georgsdorf: I still remember it as if it were yesterday. Probably Günther Becker's black-and-white photographs contribute to making it seem so present, and reading the many publications on the first documenta that are available in the meantime. I found the exhibition absolutely sensational and couldn't get enough of it. However, with the new trend of scrutinising the Nazi past of the makers of documenta, it almost seems, on looking back, like an excursion into German blood-and-soil ideology. Many things I experienced in a positive way back then have now been branded as deceptive constructs.

Can you describe in more detail what impressed you as really novel so much back then?

Before documenta, my only experience of white-washed brick walls was from my grandfather's goat pen. Those of documenta, however, in the mode of display known as white cube, would soon set a worldwide precedent. At the time, even on building sites, Heraklith boards would be speedily plastered over, just because they were so ugly. But by revealing the rough beauty of its structure, Bode transformed the pressed straw into aesthetic gold. Not to mention the stone slabs of the floor, laid in the way pavements are, from where they were actually sourced. And the rough cement floor fill. At the Fridericianum, all of this was suddenly the most natural thing in the world. But the massive use of floor-to-ceiling-high plastic sheets really trumped the rest in contributing to the overall spatial experience.

You are referring to Bode's famous 'Göppinger Plastics'?

Yes. However, it must be said that plastic did not have a negative image yet back in 1955, as it was not in widespread use at the time. So it was a magical material with a futuristic flair. Nylon shirts had just been introduced on the

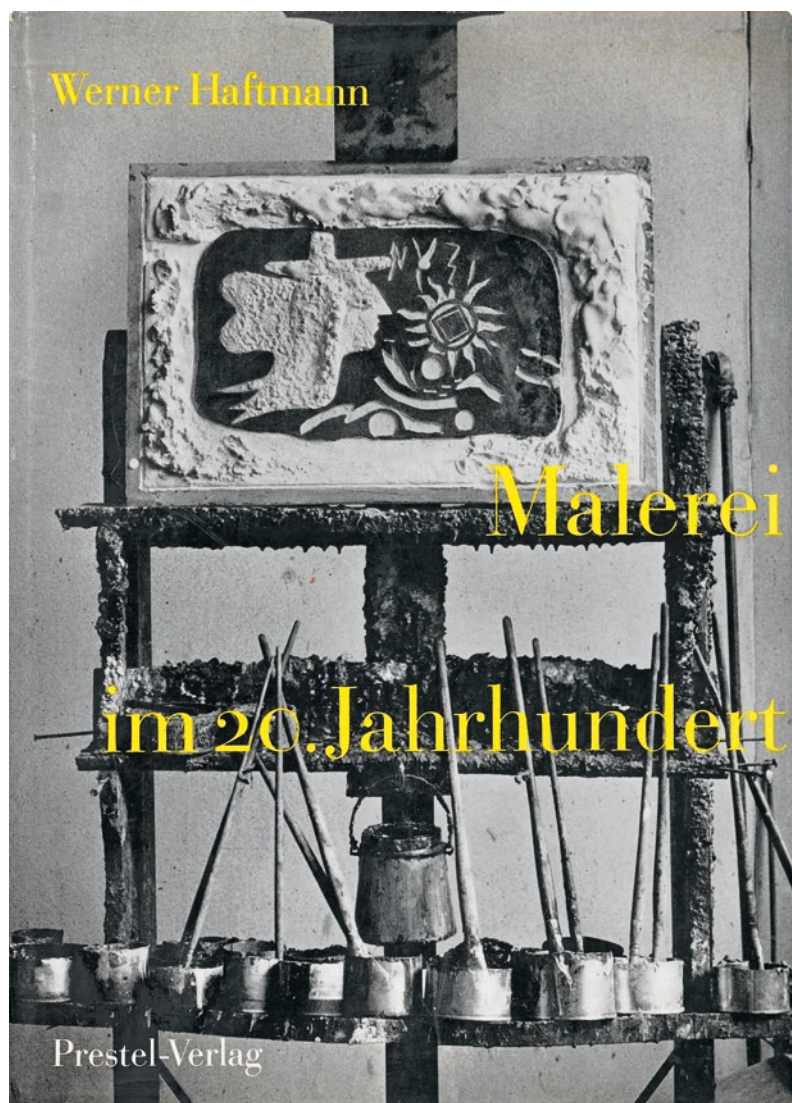


Cat. no. 48

Menu for a dinner reception at documenta, 9 August 1955

On 9 August 1955, turtle soup and Buck's fizz cocktails were served to the guests who came at the invitation of the modern art association Gesellschaft Abendländische Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts e.V. The formal dinner took place in the rooms that had been renovated for documenta in the ruins of the Fridericianum at Königsplatz. The members of the association were invited, among them Arnold Bode and his wife. The guests took their seats at 9 p.m.

There was every reason to raise glasses and make a toast: over 30,000 visitors had come to see the exhibition by this time and the catalogue was sold out. Although by no means unusual at the time, the courses and the beverages on the menu testified to the exclusive aspirations of the organisers. Turtle soup was considered a delicacy in post-war Germany until, in 1988, sea turtles were declared a protected species. **JV**



Cat. no. 33

WERNER HAFTMANN

Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert,

Munich: Prestel, 1954; trans. *Painting in the 20th Century,*

London: Lund Humphries, 1960

Arnold Bode was among the readers who were greatly taken by this book. Bode, after reading it, was intent on becoming personally acquainted with the author and recruiting his assistance for documenta, as Haftmann later related in an interview. The two met in Venice in a trattoria named Cicci in 1954. Haftmann agreed straight away to join the crew and provided the 'narrative' for the Kassel exhibition with *Painting in the 20th Century*,

for better or for worse. Those who Haftmann praised in the book were likewise celebrated by documenta. Those he ignored found no place in Kassel. The art historian did not think highly of socially-engaged figurative art and declared abstraction to be the ultimate state of modern art. During the Cold War decades, the book remained a sales success in the West with over 250,000 copies sold. **JV**

4.5.55

Sehr geehrter Herr Brecht,

in Kassel haben sich eine Reihe von Privatleuten zusammengetan, um während der Gartenschau, die soeben eröffnet wurde, eine Ausstellung "documenta, Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts" zu veranstalten. Für diese Ausstellung, die mit Mitteln der Stadt, des Landes und des Bundes finanziert wird und über die Ihnen die beigefügte erste Information Aufschluß gibt, steht im Museum Fridericianum ein großartiger Bau zur Verfügung. So ergab sich der Gedanke beinahe von selbst, in diesen Räumen, inmitten der Bilder, in einer Reihe von Vorträgen Überblick zu geben, über das, was in den anderen Künsten in den letzten fünfzig Jahren sich entwickelt hat und darzutun, daß die Probleme die gleichen sind und zwischen den Lösungsversuchen enge Beziehungen bestehen. Die Reihe soll eingeleitet werden mit einem Vortrag von Jean Gebser, der die philosophische Grundlage gibt und mit Weizsäcker, dem der naturwissenschaftliche Teil der Grundlegung zufiele. Über bildende Kunst werden sprechen Kahnweiler, Gideon, Read und Haftmann, über Musik Scherchen. Sie möchten wir nun bitten, das Thema Drama zu übernehmen und dabei im Besonderen die formalen, sprachlichen Gesichtspunkte zu berücksichtigen. Als Termin käme Anfang bis Mitte September in Frage, Ihre Bedingungen lassen Sie uns bitte mitteilen.

Wir wären Ihnen für eine Zusage sehr dankbar, denn wir versprechen uns gerade von Ihnen einen wesentlichen Beitrag zu einem heiß umstrittenen Thema, das die Menschen mehr bewegt als man gemeinhin annimmt, wie das Darmstädter Gespräch kürzlich wieder bewies. Zu dem gleichen Thema zu sprechen, haben wir auch Thornton Wilder aufgefordert, der sich im Sommer in Edinburgh aufhält. Wir haben aber weder von ihm noch von den übrigen Herren definitive Zusagen vorliegen. Die Einladungen sind eben erst herausgegangen.

Sollte es Ihnen möglich sein, zu uns zu sprechen, so empfinden wir es als sinnvolle Ergänzung, wenn Sie in Ihre Gastspielreise, die Sie in mehrere westdeutsche Städte führt, wie wir hören, auch Kassel einbauen könnten. Der Intendant des Staatstheaters ist grundsätzlich bereit, den Blauen Saal der Stadthalle, in der wir behelfsmäßig Theater spielen, für ein Gastspiel zur Verfügung zu stellen, sofern die Landesregierung keine Einwendungen macht. Bitte, schreiben Sie uns, ob es möglich ist, daß Sie mit dem "Kaukasischen Kreidekreis" nach Kassel kommen, wann es ginge und unter welchen Bedingungen. Indem wir Ihnen nochmals versichern, wie sehr wir uns freuen würden, Sie in Kassel begrüßen zu dürfen, verbleiben wir

Ihre ergebene
(Dr. Hilde Bergfeld)

Cat. no. 37

Invitation to the first documenta, sent to Bertolt Brecht, 4 May 1955

The most astounding invitation that was extended by the first documenta organisation team was to Bertolt Brecht. The author had returned from exile to the Russian-occupied zone after being refused permission to enter the Western sectors. In East Berlin, his theatre work shaped the Berliner Ensemble. In this letter to Brecht, it was emphasised that in Kassel they were looking forward to 'a substantial contribution on a controversial topic on his

part ... something that moves people more than is generally assumed'. This was alluding to the debate on the language of form, both in painting and in literature. Whereas painters who professed to be socialist were consciously omitted from exhibiting at documenta, in the field of literature an exchange of ideas and open discussion were openly sought. However, Brecht did not come to Kassel. **JV**

Arnold Bode

(1900–1977)

If documenta were to have a coat of arms, an image of Arnold Bode would have to be the heraldic figure. No one is more intrinsically interwoven with the idea and execution of the large Kassel exhibition than he. In early photographs, he appears more often than anybody else: planning, offering advice and opinions, taking Theodor Heuss on a tour of documenta – often with a cigarette between his lips. Documenta could only take place because a group of people came together to form a team. Bode stands out in the way he embodies the desire for a new beginning. Moreover, he had not belonged to any of the old Nazi elites.

Bode was born in Kassel in 1900, where he also studied painting and the graphic arts at the city's art academy. His artistic preferences took him on a study tour to France and motivated him to found the Kassel Secession in 1925. In 1929 he joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD); in 1930 he was appointed lecturer at the Städtische Werklehrer-Seminar in Berlin, an institution for teaching handicrafts. When the National Socialists came to power in 1933, Bode was dismissed from his position and he moved back to Kassel. In 1937, visiting the *International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life* in Paris, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* left a lasting impression on him. Together with colleagues, Bode played an important role after the war in launch-



III. 20

Arnold Bode during the installation of the first documenta, 1955

ing several institutions: the Kassel Kunstakademie in 1948, the Gesellschaft Abendländische Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts in 1953 and documenta in 1955. The epoch-making design of the first three documenta exhibitions is the result of his effort. He was the exhibition director for the first three editions and, up to and including documenta 6, he assisted on various committees. He died on 3 October 1977, one day after documenta 6 had closed its doors. JV



Cat. no. 74

RUDOLF LEVY (1875–1944)

Loggia des Palazzo Guadagni (Loggia of the Palazzo Guadagni),
Florence 1941; not shown at documenta

In this work by Rudolf Levy, the sky visible between the columns of the loggia glows blue. Open-air painting had been banned in Italy when the war broke out, so Levy seized the opportunity to capture the view from a roof terrace. The painting was created in 1941 at the Pensione Bandini in Florence, a boarding house on the third floor of the Palazzo Guadagni. Directly beneath the artist's feet was the famous Kunsthistorisches

Institut, a German institute of art history research, which the Jewish painter was not allowed to enter. The painting is a gauge of the restricted space remaining to Levy in exile: the view of the world outside, flowers on a table, and people who were willing to sit for a painting. Nevertheless, Levy created fifty-two oil paintings and twelve watercolours in three years. **JV**



Cat. no. 73

RUDOLF LEVY (1875–1944)

***Blick auf S. Spirito und die Kuppel von Sa. Maria del Fiore I*
(View of S. Spirito and the Dome of Sa. Maria del Fiore I) 1941;
not shown at documenta**

Rudolf Levy painted the Florentine church of Santo Spirito twice. The nave of the famous basilica opens onto the same square as the Palazzo Guadagni, where Levy used to go to paint. He bought fruit and flowers for his still lifes at the market held between the two buildings. The sunlit scene betrays no sign of his life-threatening situation: the Jewish artist had been in exile since 1933, and arrived in Florence in 1940. Every time

he climbed the stairs of the Palazzo Guadagni, he passed the Kunsthistorisches Institut. Werner Haftmann was employed there as an assistant until 1940. After that, the art historian regularly visited his former colleagues, as the institute's guestbook attests. It is possible that Levy and Haftmann crossed paths in the stairwell, but there is no record of it. **JV**



Cat. no. 109

EMILIO VEDOVA (1919–2016)

Dal ciclo della protesta '53 (Sedia elettrica), 1953, d1

The explosive pathos of Emilio Vedova's abstract paintings illustrated documenta's agenda of an essential relation between art and freedom. The artist was a freedom fighter. Thus Werner Haftmann, *spiritus rector* of the first three documenta exhibitions noted how Vedova had been a militant antifascist against Mussolini – but at the same time stressed this as a purely biographical fact: 'social protest [has] nothing to do with form'. However, Haftmann's formalism was contradicted

by the *ciclo della protesta* ('protest cycle') that Vedova showed at documenta 1. The painting *Sedia elettrica* ('electric chair') was a reference to the Jewish-American couple Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were sentenced to death for spying for the USSR in 1951. Vedova was also a confidante of Haftmann and Arnold Bode, whom he gave curatorial advice about Eastern European artists to invite for documenta II. **LBL**



Cat. no. 110

JACKSON POLLOCK (1912–1956)

***Number 32*, 1950, d2 and d3**

Jackson Pollock's *No. 32* took centre stage in the United States section at the 1959 documenta II. After touring Latin America and Western Europe, the painting arrived in Kassel with American glamour. The lifestyle magazines *Life* and *Vogue* had run articles on Pollock, and his death in a car crash in 1956 had made him 'the James Dean of modern art'. His gesticulating style expressed risk, affect and individuality – and clearly, the un-free

communist would be unable to create anything like *No. 32*: according to American Cold War ideologue Arthur Schlesinger, 'totalitarian man' was someone 'tight-lipped, cold-eyed, unfeeling ... as if badly carved from wood, without humour, without tenderness, without spontaneity, without nerves'. After documenta II, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, West Germany's unofficial national gallery, acquired *No. 32*. **LBL**



The 'East' as the Other of the Modern





Cat. no. 215

ADAM MARCZYŃSKI (1908–1985)

***Kompozycja (Composition)*, 1958, d2**

The note was short, but its message reverberated around the Federal Republic of Germany: 'Eastern Bloc too at documenta II'. However, anyone who hoped to see socialist realism in Kassel would end up disappointed. Only gestural works were on the list in 1959, such as *Composition* by the painter Adam Marczyński from Krakow. The focus on abstract art from Eastern Europe at the end of the 1950s was all the more potent for its proximity to the inner-German border: what better way could

there be of illustrating the cultural superiority of the 'free world' over the Soviet sphere of influence? In the person of Marczyński, an artist came to Kassel who represented Poland's departure from the party line of socialist realism after Stalin's death in 1953. His pictures had already caused a sensation at the Venice Biennale and in the *Twelve Socialist Countries* exhibition, held in Moscow in 1958. **AP**



Cat. no. 216

GABRIJEL STUPICA (1913–1990)

Flora, 1958, d2

Among the art from the East shown in 1959 was work by Gabrijel Stupica, one of Yugoslavia's most renowned artists. His figurative-abstract imagery, which is reminiscent of Paul Klee and of folk art, is evidence not only of personal creativity. Rather, his oeuvre exemplifies the discussion about the direction of the international relations cultivated by the non-aligned country. After Tito broke with Stalin, the People's Republic of Yugoslavia sought closer ties with the West. This also found expres-

sion in its art, in which international styles such as surrealism were combined with local motifs. New developments in Yugoslavian art were represented in Kassel on several occasions. Nevertheless, the broad lack of interest in Eastern Europe on the part of its organisers meant that at documenta, unlike the rest of the West German art world, the non-aligned state was often lumped in with the Eastern bloc owing to its geographical position. **AP**

Kokoschka }
Chagall } (antifaschistische Bilder)
Picasso }

Fougeron

Rivera

Guttuso

Sserow

Joganson

Muchina

Masereel

Nagel

Cremer

Diese sehr fragmentarische Liste will lediglich die Vielfalt der Möglichkeiten andeuten.

Wenn die Ausstellung ein internationales Ereignis werden sollte - und nur dann hätte sie Wert -, müßte die Auswahl aus vielen Museen und Privatsammlungen der Welt getroffen werden. Die Bestände der Tretjakowgalerie wären ebenso heranzuziehen wie die des Museum of modern Art usw. Außerdem wäre es nötig, in den Ateliers der noch lebenden Künstler Umschau zu halten. Die Ausstellung würde also einen sehr großen Aufwand an Arbeitskraft, Reisekosten, Transport- und Versicherungskosten usw. erfordern.

H. L.

(Heinz Lüdecke)

(Roselene Decho)



Cat. no. 224

PETER H. FEIST

35mm slides showing documenta exhibitions 2, 3, 4 and 6, 1959–1977

The slides show traces neither the controversy over 'Western degenerate art' nor the suspicion with which documenta was treated behind the Iron Curtain. The ninety or so photographs that the East German art historian Peter H. Feist took in Kassel between 1959 and 1977 seem matter-of-fact and unprejudiced. The objective character of the views hints at how little material that illustrated contemporary art from the West in neutral way

was available for study in the GDR. They also document the kind of person who received official permission to travel: Feist belonged to the 'travel cadres', not only as a recipient of the National Prize of the GDR, but also by virtue of office as a professor at the Humboldt University in Berlin, a member of the GDR Association of Visual Artists and head of the Institute of Art Studies at the GDR Academy of Sciences. **AP**



Cat. no. 241

BERNHARD HEISIG (1925–2011)

***Festung Breslau – Die Stadt und ihre Mörder (Fortress Breslau – The City and its Murderers)*, 1969, overpainted in parts after 1977, d6**

The works from the GDR at d6 were heterogeneous in terms of style, but it was precisely this variety that was supposed to demonstrate socialist realism's potential for expression. In order to present a high level of artistic quality and ideological superiority in Kassel, some of the paintings were on loan from museums. As is evident from Heisig's painting, which alludes to the artist's traumatic experiences in the Second World War, the selection of works gave a major role to the Nazi past

and the proclamation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as an anti-fascist state, but not exclusively so: the subjects ranged from the recent coup d'état in Chile to large private landowners and the conditions of life under state socialism. Manfred Schneckenburger brought the painters' works to Kassel because of their artistic qualities – simply 'because each one of them deserved it'. **AP**



Cat. no. 238

WOLFGANG MATTHEUER (1927–2004)

***Horizont (Horizon)*, 1970, d6**

The newspaper, the ear, the telephone: the painting *Horizont (Horizon)* by Wolfgang Mattheuer raises questions. Perhaps the strongest association is that with the reality of the painter's life in the GDR, under surveillance by the Stasi. The extant phone tapping transcripts testify that not only Mattheuer personally was under observation, but everyone connected with the participation of the four state-approved artists in documenta in 1977. Conversations between the painters, a photo

shoot for the Hamburg-based *Stern* magazine, even Mattheuer's comment to his family that d6 was a 'frightful jumble': everything was recorded in these illegally-made telephone intercepts. The inclusion of critical works such as *Horizont* was itself a political move, calculated to lend credence to Erich Honecker's motto of 'breadth and diversity' and use Kassel to polish the GDR's image as a tolerant society. **AP**

Brief von A.R. Penck (Ralf Winkler)
 an Michael Werner
 27.5.77
 WICHTIG Penck
 Lieber Michael
 Meine VORSTELLUNGEN Gehör
 dahin, daß im DOKUMENTA-KATALOG
 der Name angesetzt nicht mehr
 steht, dafür ein großer
Y. Ich halte das für
SEHR WICHTIG. DAS WIRD
 ZWAR NICHT IN DEINE "MEHR" KONVENTIONELLEN
 VORSTELLUNGEN PASSEN, ABER, WENN DU TIEF
 NACHDENKST, MÜSSTEST DU FINDEN, DASS DIESES EINE
 gute Fortsetzung ist.
 Wenn es überhaupt keine
 gute Fortsetzung oder
 Fortsetzung gilt!

Y
 geb. 1939 in Dresden und dort
freischaffend.

auf jeden Fall, wie Du Dich
 immer dazu stellst, werde ich
 den Namen Penck nicht mehr
 schreiben, außer diesem einem
 Mal noch. Y.

Das ist meine Antwort auf
 die Entladung von S. T. H.
 M. zur Dokumenta, meine
 Antwort für L.
 Ralf Penck

Cat. no. 269

Letter from Ralf Winkler, alias A. R. Penck, alias Y, to gallery owner Michael Werner in Cologne, received on 27 May 1977

The works by Dresden-based painter Ralf Winkler, alias A. R. Penck, that had been selected for d6 were also not hung in 1977. Did the gallery owner representing him, Michael Werner from Cologne, have the pictures removed owing to cramped space, or were documenta's organisers doing a favour to the GDR authorities? The archival material allows for different interpretations of Winkler's case, an artist who was excluded from the official art scene in the GDR. It is certain, as his letter to

Werner makes clear, that he did not agree with the participation of the GDR and its ulterior motive of earning hard currency. His response to Sitte (S.), Tübke (T.), Heisig (H.) and Mattheuer (M.) as well as the Aachen-based collector Peter Ludwig (L.) was 'Y'. The fact that the catalogue went to press early probably explains why his request for a name change was not met. Despite all this, Penck, alias Y, was still represented in the graphic prints section of the exhibition. **AP**



Cat. no. 271

'DISOBEDIENT PAINTERS OF THE GDR'

**protest in the Fridericianum at d6 with Siegmund Faust and Wolf Deinert
in front of pictures by Willi Sitte, 23 June 1977**

'Let art go free!' was the call repeated in West Berlin's *Die Welt* newspaper on 27 June 1977. The subject of the report was an open letter to Erich Honecker, written during d6 by a group of artists and intellectuals who had suffered persecution before moving to the West from the GDR. The aim of the protest, which took place in the rooms of the Fridericianum occupied by works from the GDR, was not to discredit the artists who had been officially invited, but to draw attention to

the plight of painters who, like A. R. Penck, were labelled 'disobedient' by the state. The demonstration against the unequal treatment of suppressed art in comparison to state art was short-lived: Manfred Schneckenburger banned the group from entering the building. Werner Tübke took one of their leaflets with him on his return to Leipzig, but it was confiscated at the border and the Stasi was notified. **AP**



Cat. no. 290

KOMAR & MELAMID (B. 1943 AND 1945)

***Yalta 1945*, polyptych, detail, 1986–87, d8**

Churchill and Roosevelt versus Stalin; cubism and abstraction versus socialist realism. In 1987, two Russian artists, Komar & Melamid, presented this reminder that the division of art went hand in hand with the political division of the world in 1945. The reference to the 'big three' at the Yalta conference is, however, only one aspect among many: at d8, the founders of Soz Art, as they styled themselves, filled an entire room with an

installation of 31 panels that offered a kaleidoscopic view of the close linkage between politics, art, world history and personal experience in a provocative and ironic manner. The conference in Yalta, held in the year of Alexander Melamid's birth, gives this polyptych of biography and history its starting point. It ends in 1977, the year in which the duo emigrated to the United States. **AP**



Cat. no. 292

**Second 'marathon talk' in Weimar, in preparation for documenta 9,
13–14 April 1991**

It was an event on a grand scale: the second 'marathon talk' in Weimar. As with the first round of talks, one year earlier in Ghent, the aim of this PR event was to provide official information on the status of the preparations for d9. Hoet saw the fall of the Wall as an opportunity to enter into dialogue with the 'East', now that the city of Kassel – and documenta – were finally free of the dead-end situation created by the inner-German

border. The event began with music played by the band of the 8th Guards Army of the Soviet Ground Forces. Slides of work by almost four hundred artists were shown. Hoet expressed disappointment, however, with the results of the conversation, in which Schneckenburger, Fuchs and Szeemann also took part: to his way of thinking, all of the 'good' artists had emigrated to the West before 1989. **AP**



Cat. no. 325

BAZON BROCK (B. 1936)

with participants at his Visitors' School, d4, 1968

In 1968, cultural scholar Bazon Brock offered at documenta 4 a Visitors' School for the first time. It was part of the exhibition programme and took place in the Fridericianum. Brock wanted it as a free event for the public. He taught the participants how art presentation was related to art theory. On the basis of short seminars, visitors were to receive guidelines for viewing and listen-

ing as orientation among the numerous works and diversity of art at documenta. To this end, he resorted to what he termed '*action teaching*' as well as normal teaching, in which the audience largely passively listened to what was presented. The theme of the first Visitors' School was 'Exiting imagery: Artists' environments as everyday environments'. **Martin Groh**



Cat. no. 332

JOSEPH BEUYS (1921–1986)

Ohne die Rose tun wir's nicht (We Won't Do It Without the Rose), 1972, d5

The image shows Joseph Beuys, known for his political performance art and happenings, in earnest conversation with a blurred, unidentifiable partner. At the centre of the picture is the rose, without which 'we won't do it'. 'It' refers to Beuys' campaign for a Federal Republic of Germany in which the people govern without political parties as intermediaries. In 1972, at documenta 5, a rose also adorned Beuys's Office for Direct Democracy,

where he held discussions with the public for ten hours a day – a process that he described as 'social sculpture'. The rose symbolised his commitment to activist politics that was not solely founded on the intellect as it explicitly integrated feelings and human relationships. This corresponded with his own goals, which see-sawed between Marxist-based, grassroots democracy and esoteric concepts. **DW**

menta 4 and still helped finance documenta 5, but stopped issuing new editions after 1968 and gradually decreased its activity until it was eventually dissolved in 1997.

The documenta foundation experiment was two-sided. While its editions genuinely aimed to open up the market to a new artistic genre and to facilitate wider access to art, in its actual dealings it ran into conflicts of interests that, from the 1960s onwards, neither the professional art world nor the public were willing to accept. In 1970, Hein Stünke declared that 'a feeling for art, economic understanding, and business acumen' were all prerequisites for a good art dealer.⁹ The documenta Foundation enterprise demonstrated that a keen ability to draw the limits between these fields was also essential in order to ensure that the exhibition organisation remain independent of the market.

1 Beaucamp, *Werner Schmalenbach*, 2011, 33.

2 Exhibition regulations for documenta, 1955. dA, AA, d01, folder 13.

3 Heinrich (Hein) Stünke (1913) had been deputy head of the cultural department of the Reich Youth Leadership based in Braunschweig, but he embarked on a new career after the war by founding, together with his wife, Der Spiegel art gallery in December 1945.

4 Handberg, 'The Shock of the Contemporary: documenta II and the Louisiana Museum', 2017.

5 Rathke, 'Ring frei in Kassel: documenta 1968', 1968, 10–13.

6 Open letter from Rudolf Zwirner/Galerie Zwirner to Hein Stünke, Cologne 5.4.1968, dA, AA, d4, folder 31, fol. 86.

7 'An Alle', leaflet with typed text dated 25 June 1968 and signed by students and professors of the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in Hamburg.

8 Jappe, 'Im Hintergrund der documenta: Gericht der Künstler und Boykott der Kunsthändler', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (13 May 1968).

9 Hein Stünke, interview by Eberhard Garnatz, 15 September 1970. ZADIK Zentralarchiv für deutsche und internationale Kunstmarktforschung, Fonds Galerie Der Spiegel, A1, VI, 2, p. 3.

'Trading Forged Contacts with the Visitors'

Rudolf Zwirner in an Interview with Julia Voss

Rudolf Zwirner, born 1933, decided to become an art dealer after visiting the first documenta. He initially worked as exhibition assistant for documenta 2 in 1959, then he opened a gallery and in 1967, together with Hein Stünke, founded the first world art fair, the legendary Kölner Kunstmarkt, later called Art Cologne.

Voss: In your autobiography *Give Me the Now* (David Zwirner Books) you recently told us how North American art made its grand entrance at documenta 2 owing to a mistake. What happened?

Zwirner: The notifications for the American loans came by mail and I looked through them: they listed Newman, Rothko, Pollock; they were all from different lenders. In my mind, paintings were solely in the formats like those used by Picasso or Wols, the largest by Soulages, which in those days measured no more than two metres. If I had been a little brighter back then I would have said: 'Mr Bode, they mean inches. We have to multiply the figures by two and a half'.

You first realised the difference between inches and centimetres when the paintings turned up. What were the consequences?

The only space adequate for the North Americans was on the first floor of the Fridericianum. That had actually been reserved for celebrating the abstract artists of the School of Paris. The big thing, however, was the group of twelve paintings by Pollock – they needed a room for themselves, and this became like a chapel. Originally, Adorno was scheduled to present a lecture at the Kunstverein. As soon as he stepped into the Pollock room, he declared, 'Zwirner, I will present the lecture today here'.

You introduced the art dealer Hein Stünke to the Kassel team. Stünke worked from 1959 to 1968 for the documenta exhibitions. Where did you become acquainted?

I was a trainee at Stünke's gallery in Cologne, Der Spiegel. It was the leading gallery in Germany – and by far most intellectual. Earlier, during National Socialism, he had been the deputy director of the academy for youth leadership in Braunschweig. My family lived closed by and we were acquainted.