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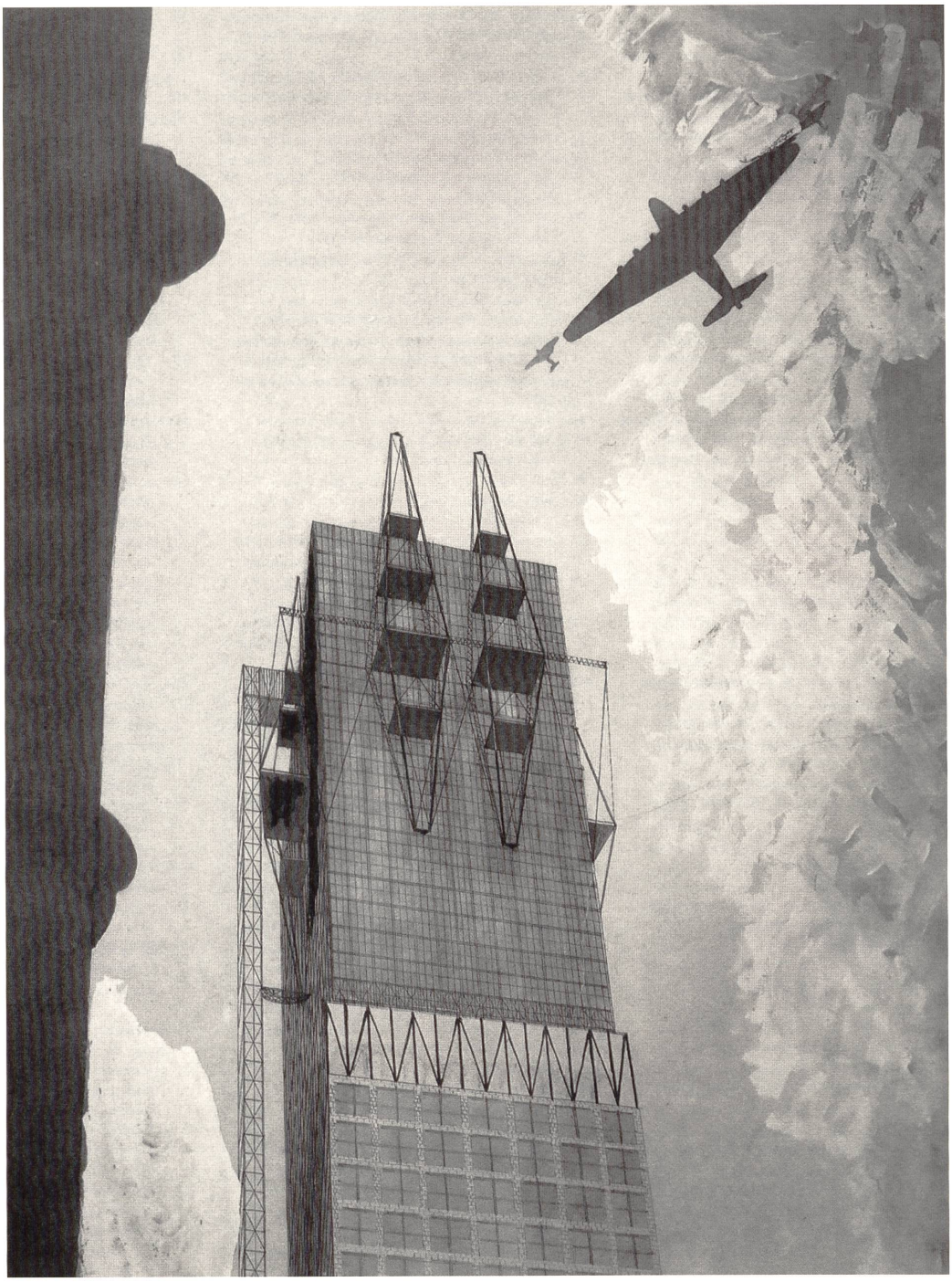


fig. 1: Ivan Leonidov, "Commissariat of Heavy Industry", Tower Perspective with Airplane, 1934.
In 1930, at age twenty-five, Ivan Leonidov one of the star students of the "Higher State Artistic Technical Studios", was appointed to a professorship at his own school almost immediately upon graduation. His premature prominence made him the target of a sustained campaign against functionalist architecture under the catchword 'Leonidovitis', so that in the following year he had to give up his teaching post.
In 1934 Leonidov was nonetheless invited to participate in the competition for the giant building of a Commissariat of Heavy Industry on Moscow's Red Square. Undeterred, he submitted a purely functionalist design with an open platform suitable, he asserted, for "new effects in military parades", only to be rejected once again.

Otto Karl Werckmeister

The Political Confrontation of the Arts

From the Great Depression to the Second World War, 1929–1939

I. Policies

I.1 Traditional Versus Modern Art

The history of European art from the French Revolution through the Second World War was conditioned by an increasing disparity between the relentless modernization of the capitalist economy and a traditional art of political stabilization, promoted by the State in order to proclaim its institutional legitimacy through a historic continuity with the past. Counteracting such a state-promoted art with ever-growing assertiveness was an art based on free market exchange rather than state support. It was styled 'modern' because it claimed to convey the social consequences of modernization, unbridled by the aesthetic standards of state art institutions and their underlying ideologies. In the decade of the Great Depression, from 1929 to 1939, this long-term disparity was exacerbated in a political confrontation of the arts which ran along the historic trajectory leading toward World War II. The confrontation did not coincide with that between political systems, however. Rather, it ran through all of them and unfolded on the polarity of traditional versus modern art.

During the two centuries before the French Revolution, the *querelle des anciens et modernes* had been a normal venue for the competition between traditional and modern art. It had always been adjudicated in an artistic culture conditioned to regulate itself through market competition and through art institutions supervised but not preempted by state government. After the French Revolution, however, artistic culture turned into a venue for the potential antagonism between state government and upper middle-class emancipation. It locked the "struggle between ancient and modern" as a vehicle for artistic innovation into a permanent disparity that could be temporarily suspended but never resolved. When the Depression deprived both traditional and modern art of much of their markets, artists vied more than before for state support. As a result, their competition became linked to the political dynamics of state intervention whereby European governments strove to overcome the economic slump, most deliberately in the newly-fashioned totalitarian states.

The key term of this two-track history of art was that of the avant-garde. It changed from its original significance as a trail-blazing expert group legitimized to chart the progress of society at large and become its leading elite, to the self-styled posture of a non-conformist minority in principled disagreement with prevailing culture and hardened to insist on radical alternatives. Once modern artists contested the institutions designed to anchor art in a social order where they found no place, they jeopardized the presumed transition from artistic avant-gardes to social elites. More often than not, however, their dissent was accommodated in a public culture of disparity that licensed them to dramatize their divergence from the norm. After the First World War, when European governments found themselves in a weakened position *vis-à-vis* their underlying societies, radical segments within the culture of modern art over-played the avant-garde posture in the public sphere to the point of claiming social or even political leadership (fig. 2, 3). From the start of the Depression onwards, however, they were curbed by a steady reassertion of state authority.

The political confrontation between traditional and modern art during the Depression was the result of a long-term convergence of the art market and the public sphere of political debate. This convergence had started in the time leading up to the French

Revolution and was intensified after 1848 in most constitutional European states, where economic, and hence artistic, freedom tended to exceed political liberties. It is through the ideological rhetoric of dissent voiced in such debates, rather than through any political alignment with socialist parties or the labor movement, that by the turn of the twentieth century modern art acquired an ideological complicity with the Left, either as a target for its adversaries or as a sign for its sympathizers. The Depression forced a fusion of ideology and politics in this long-term convergence of artistic and political culture. Totalitarian governments brought the competition between traditional and modern art under their control, while Popular Front movements, and eventually governments, in France and Spain sought to align them on their platforms of political activism.

The disparity between the social nonconformity of modern art and the economic privilege of its buying public was rooted in upper middle-class self-doubts about its own social codes and values. Modern artists' self-assumed postures of left-wing dissent lacked any backing in the labor movement and were easily called on their class limitation. After the First World War, the economic and political decline of the upper middle-class exposed modern art to a challenge from more powerful social constituencies with a stake in traditional culture, both Right and Left. These would draw on masses of traditional artists pursuing their trade to satisfy the demands of a general public with no aspirations to elite status. It is this discrepancy between modern art's claims to epochal standing and its class-based minority status in society that made it vulnerable to being put in its place. It was spurned by totalitarian regimes eager for an art with populist mass appeal and by conservative governments in democratic France abiding by the traditionalist art of the Third Republic.

As artists' organizations everywhere adopted political strategies, and political parties or pressure groups used art policies as propaganda platforms in their struggle for power, the ideological overdetermination of artistic culture rampant in the public sphere made competition between traditional and modern art into a part to mainstream politics. Governments were quick to exploit the ideological potential of artistic culture as a functional component of their conduct. They framed ambitious cultural policies that strove to magnify the political importance of the arts as one of the vehicles to overcome the social crisis brought on by the Depression.

When these governments felt in need of popular support exceeding their political mandates, they turned to populist art policies. They were acting on the premise that a viable state derives part of its legitimacy both from its care for the well-being of the arts and from artistic representation of its political culture. As a result, their art policies were aimed at majority acceptance on the part of both the artists' professions and the art public so as to ensure the economic and political viability of artistic culture. Alignment of the arts with mainstream aesthetic conventions became the precondition for this mutual reinforcement of public spending and ideological appeal. Totalitarian regimes were best equipped to pursue such art policies because they were at liberty to impose them through oppressive governance and forcible indoctrination. Democratic governments, on the other hand, were hard put to fashion a homogeneous artistic culture whose popular acceptance could override inevitable political opposition.

It is in the second phase of the Depression, starting in 1932, when austerity policies of deflation were discarded in exchange for state-guided deficit investment, that the two fundamental art-political initiatives of the decade—corporative organization of artists and planning of a representative state architecture—were undertaken in tandem. In the capitalist states, including the Italian and German dictatorships, new monumental building programs were initiated by means of budget shifts toward state expenditure to redress unemployment. In the Soviet Union, where unemployment was no issue, such programs were accelerated by the near-total state appropriation of the economy under the First Five-Year Plan. During the first phase of the Depression, from 1929 to 1932, state support for public works had been mainly targeted towards a modernization of urbanism and housing. After 1932 it was shifted from utilitarian to aesthetic and monumental objectives and aimed at exalting public works as a political mission *per se*.

Over and above political differences, the new art policies of the Depression proceeded from the premise that traditional art had to be restored to majority status in public culture over an undue prominence attained by modern art in the preceding decade. Although the underlying assessment addressed a de facto social imbalance of artistic culture, it was turned into a political doctrine to be implemented from above. The recondite appearance of modern art, sustained by the educational privilege of its upper middle-class clientele, became its most blatant liability for cultural policies aimed at majority support. At the same time, its post-war alignment with the production aesthetics of technical rationalization lost its cultural appeal once the Depression discredited machine technology as a source of productivity. For an art of political stabilization in the face of economic crisis, the relationship between the populist appeal of academic realism and the authoritarian appeal of the classical tradition became the primary issue to decide. The balance of the two was variably calibrated, depending on the extent to which art policy was framed in either populist or authoritarian terms.

I.2 Totalitarian Art Policies

When during the first four years of the Depression the totalitarian regimes of Italy and the Soviet Union, and eventually, of Germany, took decisive steps to tighten their authority over society at large, they embarked on art policies designed to fashion an artistic culture made to measure by maximizing state intervention. Such an artistic culture was not merely to suit their symbolic and aesthetic self-representation, but was also to embrace all functions of the arts in a society increasingly subjected to political control. Populist and dictatorial measures, advanced in tandem, were to make them into a functional paradigm of social and political cohesion. As a result, totalitarian art policy replaced the equitable political art management professed, if not regularly enacted, by democratic governments with a partisan state management. It operated on variable patterns of interaction between political leaders, party organizations and government art institutions on the one hand, and artists' corporations on the other.

Working through the forcible setup and supervision of artists' organizations, totalitarian art policies were implemented, not by government decree, but rather by a political regulation of the art market and a political dispensation of state patronage. By organizing artists according to corporative principles, totalitarian regimes channeled the competition within a politicized artistic culture into institutional structures under their control. Without imposing express programs, they narrowed it into advancing bids for political acceptance. To correlate the corporate organization of artists with the political objectives of state art was no straightforward administrative task, however. It was a drawn-out process pitting state or party agencies against an artistic profession eager to cooperate, but structurally resistant to being politicized to the point of outright service.

The newly-fashioned totalitarian artists' organizations did not exclude modern artists, but subjected them to the same corporative accountability as they did traditional ones. Placing them in the minority they were, they refused to honor their generic claims to an incommensurable alternative culture exempt from outside competition (fig. 1, 4). By way of more or less elaborate procedures of selection, adjustment, and even debates, they enabled the authorities to make a principled choice between the offerings from traditional and modern artists respectively. Only after 1936 did the Soviet and German regimes enforce political suppression of modern art by administrative means beyond legality, resorting, respectively, to pervasive NKVD control and to a nationwide confiscation drive. The Italian regime spared modern art such extreme measures.

That all three totalitarian states should have embarked on thorough reconstructions of their capital cities in the middle of the Depression was the determining feature of their artistic cultures, compared to those of European democracies. These capital schemes subordinated urban renewal to the erection of monumental government centers. On a par with world-historical precedents, the reconfigured totalitarian capitals were to reclaim millennial traditions of historic legitimacy from the past. They also projected a limitless endurance into the future for regimes whose ascendancy had been due to self-proclaimed 'revolutionary' upsets on the shortest of terms. The convergence of technical modernization and modern art forms, which in the preceding decade had dominated European urbanism, was ideologically unsuitable for such a task. The dynamics of incessant change inherent in modern artistic culture ran counter to the claims for historic finality made by all three regimes.

Planning and preparatory work for totalitarian capital schemes were aggressively pursued and publicized, and their completion dates set within one or two decades, even though their technical and financial feasibility remained hypothetical. These protracted building campaigns became political endeavors in their own right, staged to demonstrate the political will to go through with them no matter what the cost. They were incessantly displayed by way of models and films, and written up in the attendant propaganda literature. Even while still in the project stage, they were to highlight an energized artistic culture, germane to a society mobilized to work for distant goals, whose well-being was manifest in its aesthetic accomplishment. The Italian capital scheme, trained on Rome as the site of the 1942 World Exposition, was enacted in a more pragmatic manner than were its Soviet and German counterparts. These, despite their published target dates, lacked credible timetables for completion, recklessly betraying the hyperbolic character of totalitarian public policy.

The capital schemes of all three totalitarian regimes went hand in hand with the enlargement, purge, or rejuvenation of their party memberships in similar drives to homogenize the mass base of their popular support. It was for such newly-expanded mass constituencies that the reconstruction schemes were to fashion a politically functional aesthetic environment. As a setting for mass rallies, marches, sports events, parades, and military spectacles they staged the coordination of totalitarian societies for self-display, blending transitory with permanent features. Convergence of monumentality and mobilization transfigured deficit-funded public works into a political spectacle featuring the working people in the act of monumentalizing their submission to totalitarian rule.

For all their overbearing political management of the arts, as late as 1933–34 none of the three totalitarian regimes had any art policy written into their party programs. Nor did their state agencies in charge issue any substantive guidelines for the arts, not even for their capital schemes. Of the three totalitarian leaders, it was Mussolini and Hitler who were most closely involved in art policy. While Mussolini acted as the arbiter among competing artists' factions, Hitler personally charted the course of German art in his annual program speeches, and directly oversaw the planning of state architecture. Stalin, by contrast, stood back from any manifest intervention in the arts. For only in the Soviet Union did the party have authority to set policy, including art policy, for the government at large. In Italy and Germany, where party organizations had a more tenuous impact on the conduct of government, their art-political initiatives were often sidelined for being doctrinaire, with ensuing power struggles between cultural politicians on either side of the divide.

To align the two distinct initiatives of organizing artists and fashioning state art would have been the prime objective of totalitarian art policy. At least initially, all three regimes harbored an ambition to make artists produce totalitarian art out of their own creativity, if not their own conviction. To make artists' organizations produce a distinctive art of the regime depended on making them operate within the semblance of a self-propelling, self-adjusting totalitarian artistic culture that could function without orders from above. Indeed, all three totalitarian regimes fashioned such artistic cultures, complete with art schools and academies, competitions and debates, exhibitions and reviews. Structural differences between them account for the successes and failures in their management of artists' organizations in order to groom them for the new monumental tasks. From 1936 onwards, in the Soviet Union and in Germany, but not in Italy, they came under increased pressure to deliver and were eventually deemed to fall short.

When it dawned on totalitarian regimes that corporate organization of their artists' professions alone would not net them a representative art to suit their capital rebuilding schemes and their cultural propaganda drives abroad, they disowned the corporations in favor of small coteries of highly-paid elite artists privi-

fig. 2: Tato, "Futurist Portrait of Marinetti", 1930.
Tato was one of the neo-futurist painters whom Marinetti, with his "Manifesto dell'Aeropittura" of 1929, launched as a thematically focused exhibition group devoted to an aesthetics of airplane dynamics and airborne experience, a timely contribution to the Fascist drive for aircraft development. By copying three portrait photographs of Marinetti at two different distances over a concentric circle pattern, Tato positions him as if standing behind a whirring propeller. Training his gaze to the right, the writer appears to be moving forward from the depth. His imaginary position at the controls of an airplane conveys his leadership claim, and yet Marinetti's publicity campaigns on behalf of the "Aeropittura" painters never swayed the government to embrace their technologically updated version of Futurist form.

leged to work on state commissions. These new elite artists acquired their standing from personal sponsorship by government leaders and their immediate social networks, first in Italy, where some of them moved up to corporate leadership as well, and later in the USSR and Germany, where their ascendancy was to make up for corporative failure. Their supra-institutional pre-eminence revalidated artistic excellence as an equivalent of political leadership. It fitted the totalitarian regimes' own mutations from populism to autocracy .

1.3 Democratic Art Policies

Of all major European states affected by the Depression, France had the most thoroughly organized state administration of the arts, whose institutional continuity dated from the founding of the Third Republic in 1871. Calibrated between fast-changing governments and an enduring bureaucracy, the Fine Arts Direction prided itself on its even-handed fostering of artistic culture, and accordingly dealt with modern artists as a distinct minority. In stark contrast,

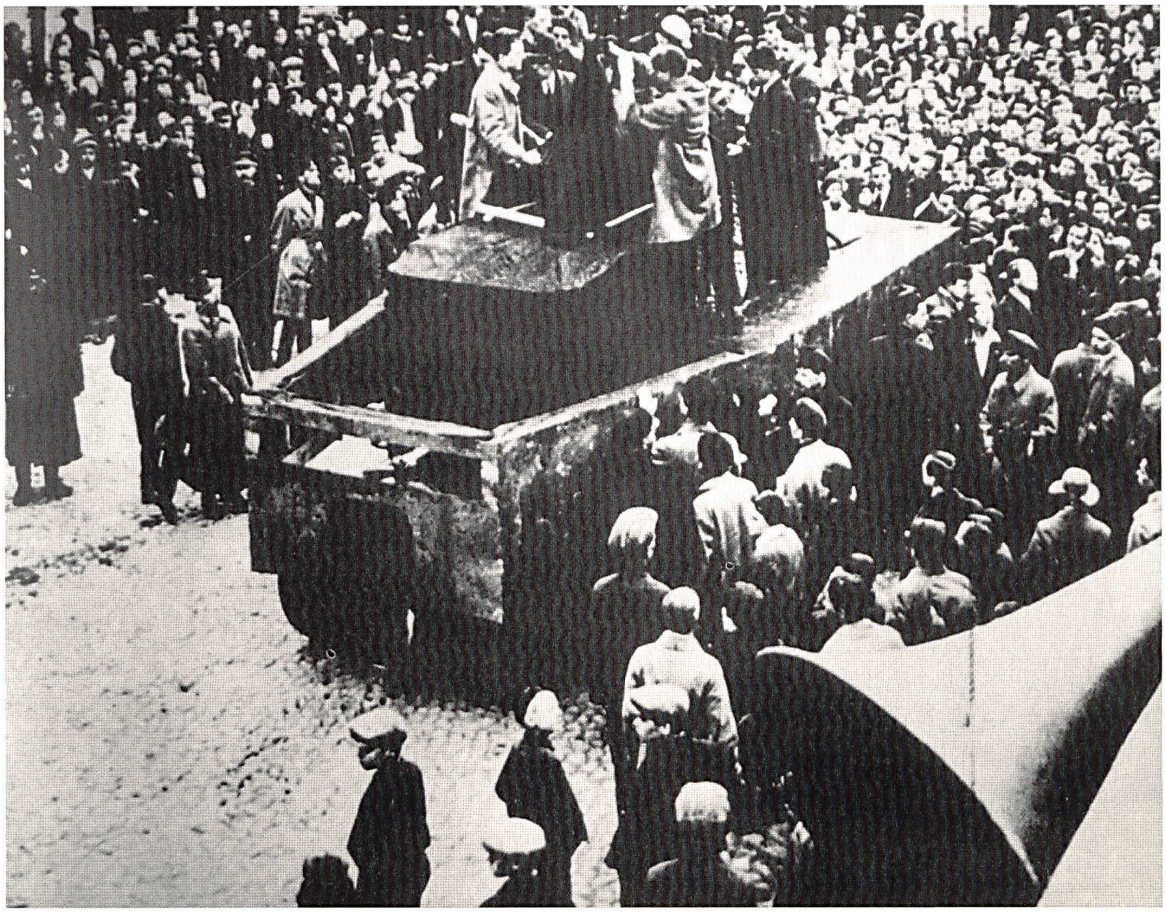


fig. 3: Vladimir Tatlin, "Mayakovsky's Funeral Hearse", 1930.
By 1930 Vladimir Tatlin, the most powerful artist, and Vladimir Mayakovsky, the most prestigious poet, of the early Soviet Union, had both lost their influence on cultural policy. When Mayakovsky, desperate about his life situation in general, shot himself on 14 April 1930, Tatlin and his students at the Moscow Technical Institute built a hearse for his funeral procession to the Novodevichii monastery, the resting place of Russia's literary elite. Tatlin designed it in the trapezoidal shape of a tank, with the catafalque taking the place of the command tower, thus making it into a military symbol of the trail-blazing avant-garde. The hearse recalled the tank onto which Lenin had stepped to harangue the crowd upon his return to Petrograd's Finland Railway Station in October 1917 to take charge of the Bolshevik Revolution, an often-represented scene.

the social democratic and liberal administrations of the Weimar Republic tended to privilege modern over traditional art. Stressing their reversal of the Wilhelmine Empire's one-sided support of traditional art, they enlisted modern art to showcase their internationalist commitment to modernization. Official neglect of traditional artists exposed modern art to the political instability of Weimar democracy. As a result, when during the Depression artists increasingly turned to state support, competition between traditional and modern art in France and Germany unfolded in reverse. In France it was modern artists, in Germany traditional ones who claimed to be disadvantaged by the state.

As long as modern artists in France did well on the private art market, political interventions on their part were confined to the Surrealist group, who harbored no ambition to be acknowledged by the Fine Arts Direction. These erstwhile anarchists attempted to side with the Communist Party, then a small extremist party under government surveillance, in calling for an anti-republican revolution from the Left. In Germany, conversely, the National Socialist

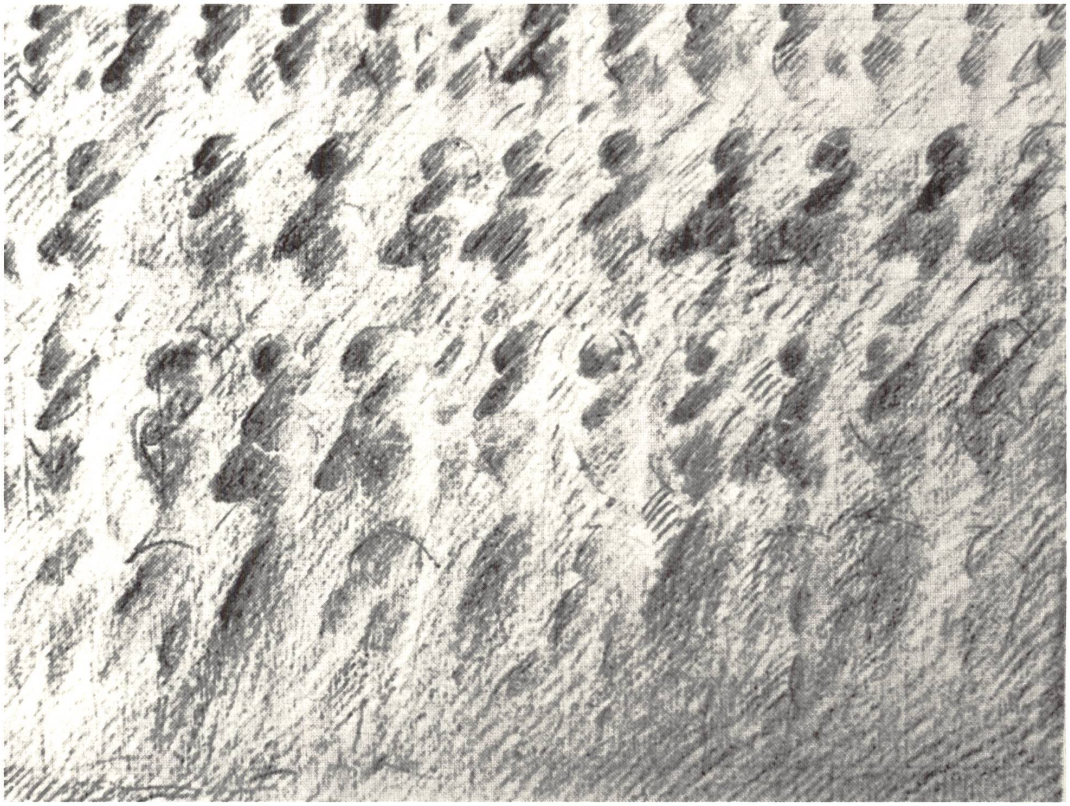


fig. 4: Oskar Schlemmer, German Museum Mural Project, 1934.
When Oskar Schlemmer was dismissed from his professorship at the Berlin Art Schools in 1933, he wrote a protest letter to Propaganda Minister Goebbels in which he maintained an equivalency between his rigorously architectural stylization of human figures and the order of the new totalitarian state. In a newspaper article of the same year he even called for "a state composition in the grandest style." Accordingly, in 1934 he submitted a design to the competition for a set of wall mosaics at the German Museum in Munich. The design includes a packed throng of people raising their arms in the Hitler salute. Despite its predictable rejection, Schlemmer remained convinced that of all participating artists he alone had "attempted to represent the people's community."

Party, since 1930 on a sustained electoral upswing, turned the disparity between majority constituencies and minority acceptance of state-supported modern art into an issue of its campaign to call democratic government on its failures. Here, to side with traditional against modern art became part of a revolution from the Right. The demise of democracy in Germany at the hands of Hitler's government after January 1933, and its persistence in France despite the right-wing coup d'état attempt in February 1934, mapped out alternative scenarios for the respective allocation of traditional and modern art in the political culture of democracy.

The change from radical to conservative governments in France after the riots of February 1934 entailed a corporative reorientation of art policy and a corresponding preference for traditional art in the planning of the World Exposition of 1937. In the competitions for the New Trocadéro and the Musée d'Art Moderne, this preference became controversial. Modern artists and their representatives rallied to publicly contest government art policy in public debates. Newly-energized cultural activities of the Communist Party provided an organizational forum for their professional disgruntlement to coalesce into a culture of political opposition. Thus, between 1934 and 1936, the challenge of modern to traditional art, to the extent that it acquired political resonance, turned from the subversive intransigence of a self-styled 'revolutionary' minority into a broad-based political culture that fed into the electoral campaigns of the Popular Front.

When in 1936 in France and Spain coalitions of socialist and radical parties ran for office with communist support, their cultural

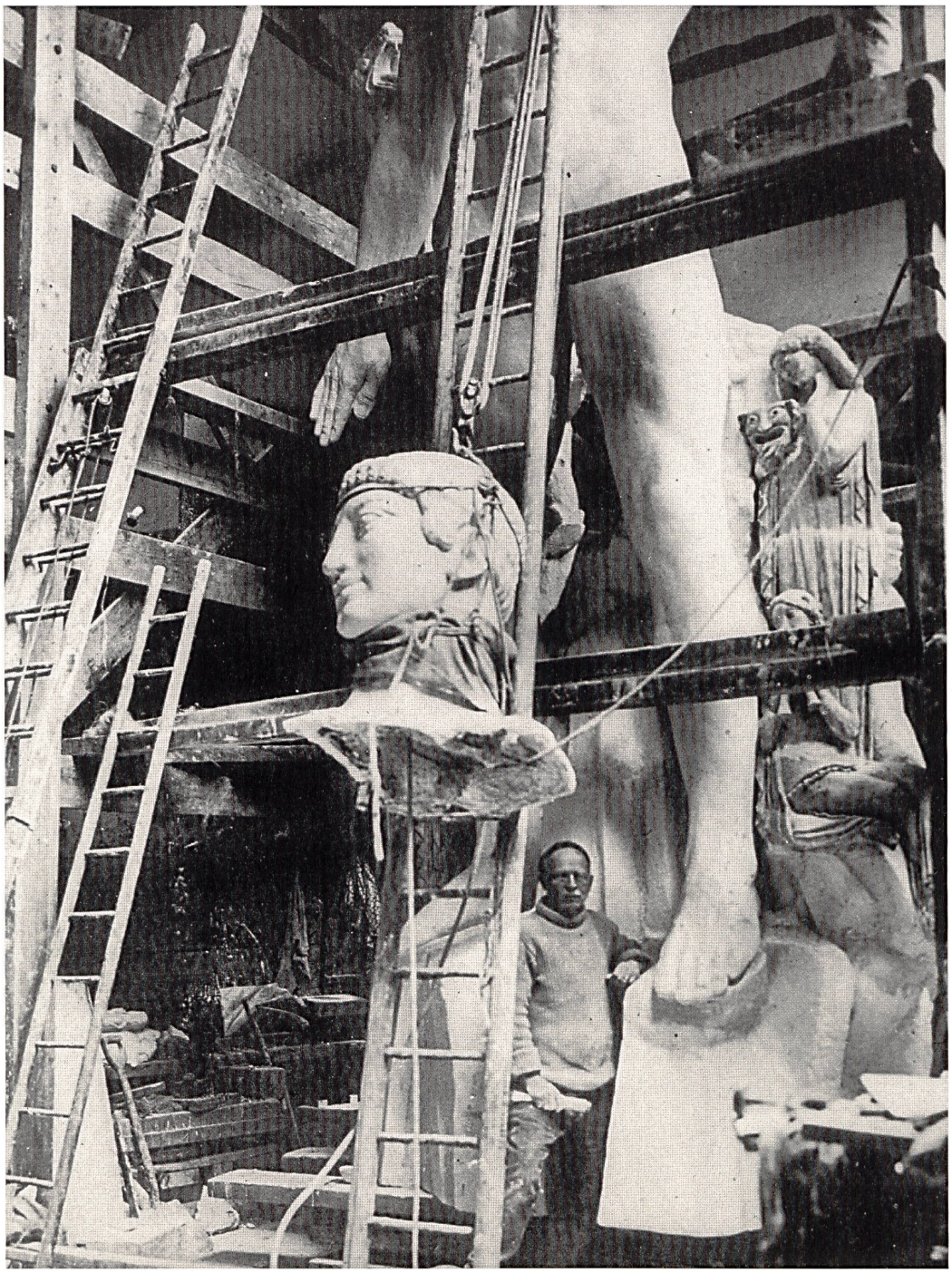


fig. 5: Henri Bouchard, "Apollo", Photo of Artist and Full Scale Model in his Studio, 1937. Financial shortfalls prevented Henri Bouchard, Professor at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and Academy member, from having the plaster model of his giant Apollo statue for the garden facade of the Palais Chaillot cast in bronze in time for the opening of the Paris World Exposition. All the public got to see was the publicity photograph showing him in his atelier with the model's separate parts mounted on a scaffold for display. Only in late summer of 1938 was the statue cast and installed on the site, but without the gilding Bouchard had envisaged to highlight it against the dark glass foil of the window.

fig. 6: Vera Mukhina, "Industrial Worker and Kholkhoz Farm Woman", Photo of hands hoisted into place, 1937.
Two powerful cranes hoisted the pair of hands holding hammer and sickle up and positioned it to be welded onto Vera Mukhina's giant steel sculpture atop the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition. A long-exposure photograph was taken at exactly the moment when the Soviet emblem appears to soar over the Eiffel Tower in the far background. The accompanying propaganda literature about the making of the separate parts at a Moscow steel plant and their subsequent assembly on site extols the sculpture as a product of heavy industry and as the collective achievement of artists, engineers, and specialists. Its timely completion redeemed the convergence of art and technology, the theme of the Paris World Exposition, more spectacularly than any contribution from another state.

organizations seemed to offer artists an alternative to the corporative setup that had thus far worked to their disadvantage in obtaining state support. Qualified acceptance of modern artists on the part of left-wing mass-parties was partly due to the cultural policy of the Comintern, framed since 1934, to reconcile traditional and modern art within an internationalist front against the National Socialist regime. It made the art of the Popular Front the only consolidated political challenge to 'fascism' ever mounted by artists during the Depression. In both Popular Front governments of France and Spain, it was the communist parties, although minority partners to the socialists and radicals, which took the lead in the politicization of artists on the Left. Through their conspicuous cultural organizations, spokespersons, journals, and public events, they dominated cultural policy beyond their share of votes.

Once it had formed governments in France and Spain in July 1936, the Popular Front translated its activism in matters of cultural policy into expanding and reorganizing state art agencies for new political missions. Departing from the politically neutral management of artistic culture to which previous governments had limited their interventions, those of the Popular Front intensified the convergence of artistic culture and public sphere that characterizes 20th-century art in democratic states. Animated by populist ambition, but constrained by constitutional governance, they were intent on framing a democratic answer to the totalitarian politicization of the arts. The ensuing political overdetermination of artistic culture tended to compromise republican equity. It went farther in Spain, where Communists were in government, backed up by Soviet tutelage, than in France, where they were not.

Incessant debates about the political mission of an art under conditions of democracy were the most salient feature of the Popular Front's artistic culture. Taking the forms of public discussions, press inquests, and entire congresses, they were framed by the alternatives of traditional versus modern art and of control versus freedom. Communists and their sympathizers tended to focus such debates onto the promotion of realism as a vehicle of popular accessibility and hence suitable for political mass appeal. Abiding by the Popular Front policy of accommodating the most conservative segments of any political coalition, they were eager to revalidate a class-transcending 'humanist' ethos over the exclusive claims of modern art. However, the balance between traditional and modern art on a shared political platform envisaged by such debates remained structurally elusive. Most ventures of state art were still assigned to traditional artists, while modern artists were drawn upon for the publicity value of their commitment .

The Paris World Exposition of 1937, launched in November 1929, and cancelled and re-launched in 1934, was the paramount French government program of architecture and public works designed to overcome the Depression by switching finance policy from deflation to deficit spending. The convergence of art and technology, a concept reserved for modern art alone during the preceding decade, was expanded to denote an aesthetic surplus value added to production at large, with manufacture pointing the way for industry. Fast-changing French governments of the day were confronted with deliberate efforts by all three totalitarian regimes to ensure the completion of their pavilions according to plan thanks to their forcible reorganization of the arts (fig. 5, 6). They in turn were constrained by parliamentary budget controls under the influence of disparate constituencies, and obliged to rely on the cooperation of private enterprise chafing from the slump. As a result, work on the Expo was hampered by political conflicts, financial impasses, and technical delays, all of which prevented a timely completion of the site.

Edmond Labbé, the new commissioner appointed after the Expo's re-launch in 1934, envisioned it as an integrated display of art and commodity production, unencumbered by industrial rationalization schemes. Drawing on the corporative organizations of all trades, his concept suited the new government's social policy of providing work for professional artists and craftsmen, even against the economic logic of modernization. Likewise, Jacques Gréber, chief architect of the Exposition site, devised guidelines for a monumental setting that blended the new buildings into the century-old monumental topography of the capital. The site was to display a balanced synthesis of classical grandeur and sober form, of French tradition and 'modern' sobriety. Both Labbé's and Gréber's essentially conservative policies entailed a pragmatic reliance on French corporative organizations and art institutions which tended to privilege traditional and academic artists. They provoked political opposition on the part of modern architects, artists and their representatives in the public sphere.

In 1936, the newly elected Popular Front governments of France and Spain made the World Exposition a top priority in a last-ditch effort to match, or even confront, their totalitarian counterparts in making their buildings into political propaganda ventures. For this purpose they drew on their new policies of featuring traditional and modern artists side by side. True to the traditionalist art policy of the labor movement, and heeding the drive for mass appeal from the communist-inspired defense of realism in art-political debates, government authorities commissioned traditional artists to elaborate thematic programs for conveying their ideologies to the Expo public. The habitual alignment of modern art with left-wing culture, on the other hand, was confined to a selective showcasing of modern artists' work in prominent spots. When both governments enlisted prominent modern artists for politically explicit, programmatic commissions, the propaganda value of modern art was put in doubt by the opposition their form encountered in the public sphere.

2. Ideologies

2.1 Art for the People

The issue of art for the people was the primary ideological vehicle for the reconfiguration of the relationship between traditional and modern art during the Depression. Enhanced state management made the arts more dependent than before on the popular support which all governments, regardless of their political systems, were claiming for their policies. Invoking a supra-constitutional mass base of legitimacy—the proletariat in the Soviet Union, the nation

fig. 7: Mikhail Nesterov, "Portrait of Ivan Shadr", 1934.
Beginning in 1930 Mikhail Nesterov, a realist painter of religious subjects from Tsarist times was trotted out from obscurity to become a living proof for the traditionalist credentials of 'Socialist Realism'. In one of his artist portraits from the thirties, he pictures the leading Soviet sculptor Ivan Shadr as he compares a sculpture he is working on with the plaster cast of the Greek Belvedere torso in the Leningrad Academy's study collection. Shadr appears to weigh the challenge of the classical tradition to his established, successful style, which infused Constantin Meunier's social realism with the expressive pathos of the First Five-Year Plan. Holding on to this style, he went on to lose competitions for the crowning sculptures of the Soviet Pavilions at the World Expositions of both 1937 and 1939.

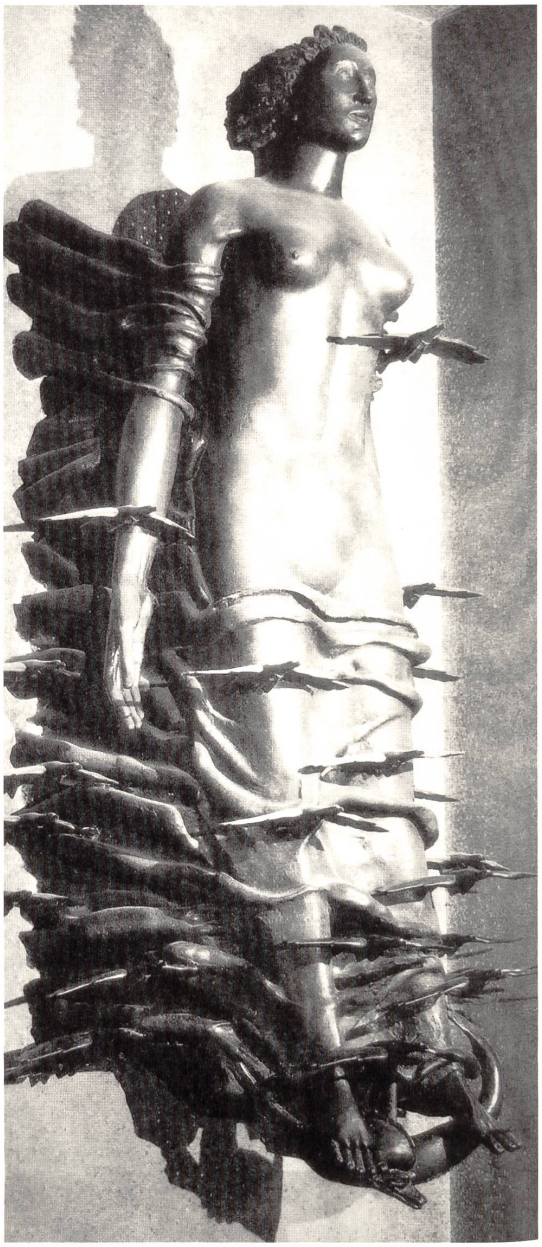


fig. 8: Arturo Martini, "Atlantic Victory", 1934.
After losing out in previous competitions, it was only in 1933 that Arturo Martini prevailed with his emphatic modernization of classical form for fascist sculpture. His bronze Atlantic Victory was commissioned for the 1934 Exposition of Italian Aviation to celebrate Italo Balbo's transatlantic flight. A swarm of stylized birds that look like airplanes seems to help the wingless victory figure land on the ground. At the Milan Triennial the same year, architect Giuseppe Pagano had it hung in front of a wall of aircraft photographs, and in the Italian Pavilion of the Paris World Exposition of 1937, made it dramatically hover before the plain marble wall of the entrance hall.

fig. 9: Paul Ludwig Troost, Munich Party Forum, "'Temple of Honor' for the Blood Martyrs", 1933–1935. Even though Hitler's Bavarian coup attempt of 9 November 1923 had been squashed, after his accession in 1933 it was celebrated as the revolutionary fountainhead of the National Socialist regime. For its twelfth anniversary in 1935, two open 'Temples of Honor' for reburial of the sixteen Party members shot dead by police on that occasion were erected on the newly-built Munich Party Forum. Two double rows of four bronze sarcophagi were sunk below ground level in each one. Wide open on all four sides, the 'Temples of Honor' served as the twin focus for a choreography of mass movements, orchestrated by built-in sound and lighting systems. On ordinary days, passers-by had to bare their heads and raise their hands in the Hitler salute before the dead.

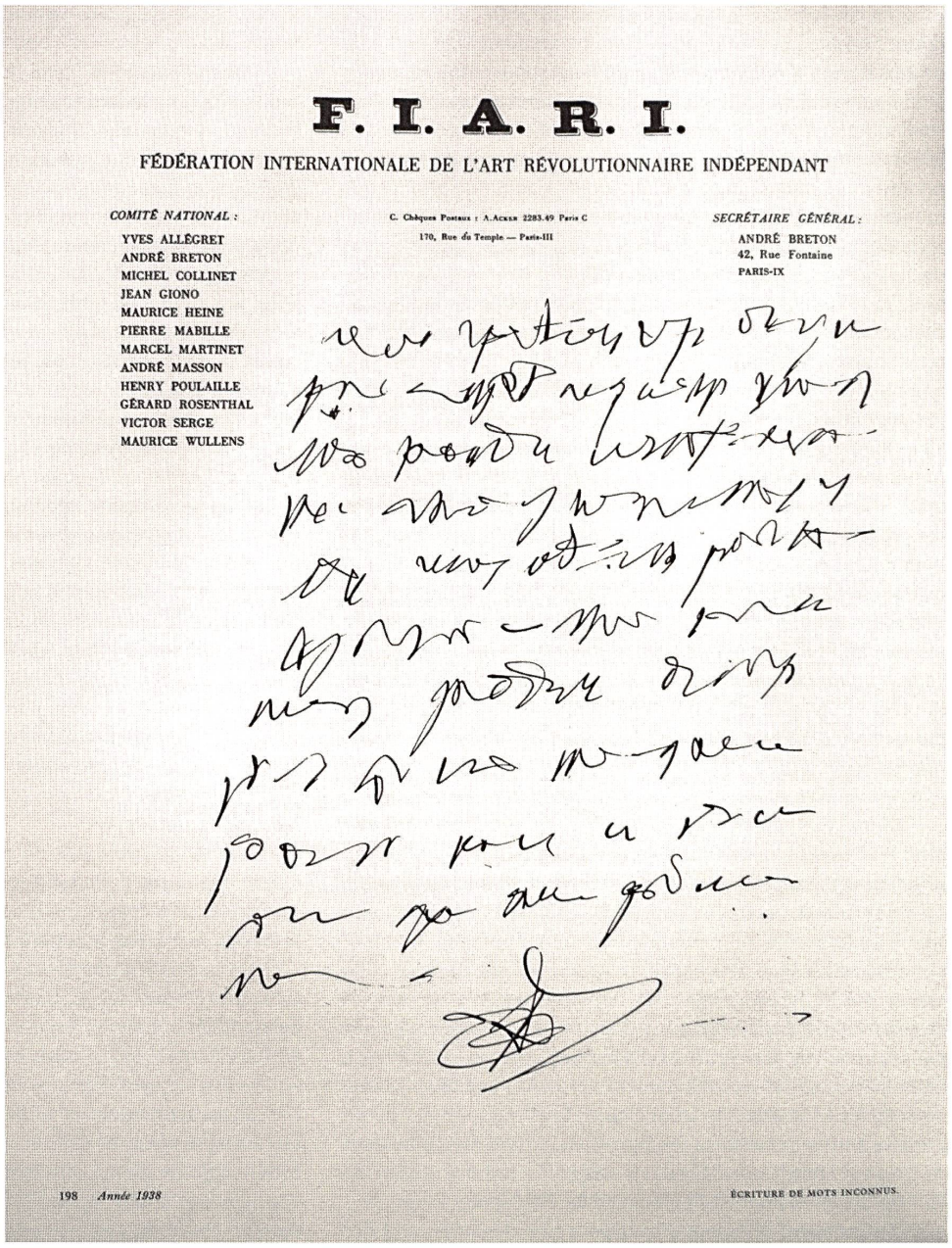
fig. 10: Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente, Ten-Year Anniversary Show of the Fascist Revolution in Rome, "Martyrs' Sanctuary", perspective drawing, 1932. This propaganda exhibition to celebrate Mussolini's 1922 March on Rome culminated in a circular inner "sanctuary" for the commemoration of 'revolutionary' militants killed during the civic unrest of the Fascist takeover. Here the Italian army ritual of commemorating soldiers killed in action by having their living comrades answer in their place during a roll call was congealed into a permanent visual spectacle. The dark blue circular wall was made transparent by a tight repetition of the illuminated letters forming the word "Presente", and a giant metal cross in the center radiated with the words "Immortal for the Fatherland!" A sound system played the Fascist hymn "Giovinezza" in a ceaseless loop of background music.

fig. 11: Jacques Carlu, Louis-Hippolyte Boileau, Léon Azéma, Paris, Palais de Chaillot: Inscription by Paul Valéry, 1937.
Director of Fine Arts Georges Huisman personally commissioned Paul Valéry, the most prestigious French poet of his time, and just appointed professor of poetry at the Collège de France, to write two programmatic mottoes for display in golden letters on the twin façades of the Palais de Chaillot. The inscription on the right declares artists to be embodiments of a creativity attainable to all, rather than operating on the margins of society. Its key line—"the artist creates consciously, his action engages all of his existence"—seemed to fit the self-understanding of modern artists, but was at odds with the deliberately traditionalist preference in the artistic makeup of the building.

in Italy, and the people (Volk) in Germany—, totalitarian regimes set out to challenge democracy on its own foundations. Fully-fledged ideologies of an art with mass acceptance pertained to the challenge. Precisely because democratic governments disposed of a politically-certified legitimacy, their art policies never promoted a monolithic art for the people as a whole that would have transcended their diverse constituencies. This is why French art administrations of the Third Republic in particular prided themselves on fostering a diversified artistic culture.

When during the first five years of the Depression totalitarian regimes embarked on reorganizing their artistic cultures, their demands for a popular art forestalled the ideologically overzealous bids from modern artists for acceptance. Only the Italian regime was able to rely on corporative self-regulation to ensure compliance with this demand and therefore to refrain from plebiscitary measures. The Soviet and German regimes, by contrast, at crucial junctions made the common people parade as arbiters of their more forcible art policies. The Popular Front governments of France and Spain, for all their attempts at embedding the mass appeal of art in their cultural policies of acculturation, never pretended to let the people in on art-political decisions. Their self-assurance of a government cultural policy with a democratic mandate precluded plebiscitary self-legitimation.

It was the revalidation of traditional over modern art in all states concerned which more than any other issue drew on the ideology of art for the people. The professional majority status of traditional art, its long-term popular appeal, and its proven capacity for political stabilization promised to suit art policies targeted at mass assent. The totalitarian regimes' promotion of traditional art as a populist device did not, however, take off until the second phase of the Depression, when they framed their artistic exaltation of state power and social achievement as if in response to popular demand. The kind of art to suit this purpose was designed for aesthetic enjoyment as much as for ideological accessibility. The French Republic had to wait for the Popular Front to make popular preference for traditional art an express tenet of art policy. The new left-wing government was thereby heeding the Comintern's historic policy change of 1934 which recognized the potential of traditional art as a medium of class-transcending coalition politics.



F. I. A. R. I.

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fig. 12: Pablo Picasso, FIARI Letterhead with illegible writing, 1938. Sometime in 1938 Picasso wrote an illegible made-up text on a piece of stationary of the Fédération Internationale des Artistes Revolutionnaires Indépendants (FIARI), the artists' branch of Trotsky's Fourth International, which André Breton had founded upon his return from Mexico that year. In a missive of 22 December 1938, addressed to Breton, Trotsky took pains to assure its adherents: "FIARI is not an aesthetic or political school and cannot become one. But FIARI can oxidize the atmosphere in which artists breathe and create." After having to accommodate his art to his commissions from both the French and Spanish Popular Front governments—the *14 July* curtain of 1936 and the *Guernica* mural of 1937—Picasso may have sympathized with Breton's politics of absolute artistic independence. Yet, rather than joining the FIARI, he used its letterhead to pen the ultimate statement about the hermetic character of the artist's political self-expression.

An ideological alignment of nationalism with the classical tradition pervaded European art during the second phase of the Depression—that of deficit spending. It made some of the monumental projects of democratic and totalitarian states appear essentially similar (fig. 7, 8). French conservative art policy since 1934 invested adaptations of the classical tradition with claims to an essential superiority of French culture with little if any political specification. In totalitarian states, by contrast, such adaptations were meant to reconnect state authority to earlier peak periods of national grandeur regardless of their autocratic pedigree. Over and above their specific reassertions of historic precedents, all three totalitarian regimes embraced the classical tradition to certify their claims to world-historical standing. Their pseudo-revolutionary origins were quickly made to pale before the self-styled time-transcending supremacy of their government systems.

In all European states, totalitarian and democratic alike, the nationalist revalidation of traditional art, in classical or any other form, was argued as an ideological defense against the self-professed internationalism of modern artistic culture, which was branded as alien to the national interest and subversive of the social order. In the Soviet Union the attack on the internationalism of modern art pertained to the ideological confrontation with the capitalist powers, supposedly out to sabotage Soviet economic development. In Germany and Italy it was anachronistically targeted, in reverse, upon Comintern cultural policies of world revolution pursued after the First World War but abandoned since. In France, nationalist assertions of artistic supremacy, exempted from any populist validation, were even upheld on behalf of modern art.

However, the belated efforts of French arts administrations after 1934 to reconcile democracy with nationalism in their recognition of modern art were defied by the strident internationalism of the anti-fascist Left. The Popular Front government's all-inclusive drive for a politically energized artistic culture was class-transcending rather than nationalist in character. Commissions to modern artists of foreign origin for national ventures, as well as programmatic art exhibitions featuring them, reasserted the internationalism of modern artistic culture. They provoked a right-wing nationalist backlash against modern art whose eventual success accompanied the Popular Front's quick fall from power. The aggressive anti-nationalism of the Surrealists, part of their principled rejection of French national culture as a whole, never shared in the anti-fascist internationalism promoted by the Popular Front.

Enforcement of a populist art policy by the Soviet and German regimes pertained to the totalitarian political strategy of incremental coercion, whereby initial majority support was turned into a semblance of unanimity admitting of no more dissent. The Fascist regime, for all its efforts at mass indoctrination, never construed the relationship between artistic culture and the populace as discrepant enough to require forcible adjustment. Soviet art policy was designed for a newly-ascendant party-educated intelligentsia, graduates of party schools, polytechnics, and military academies, who were to spearhead the two-pronged process of terrorist purge and fictitious democratization of the populace at large. National Socialist art policy, by contrast, addressed itself to diverse majority segments of an already acculturated but heterogeneous society that had shared familiarity with, and preference for, traditional art long before the regime's ascendancy.

When between 1929 and 1932 both Bolshevik and National Socialist parties embarked on campaigns for sweeping political change, they activated the populist dynamics of their art policies. In drawing on the arts for mass agitation, they both made modern art a target. While Soviet authorities deemed modern art to be ineffective for their promotion of the First Five-Year Plan, National Socialist politicians, still running for office, capitalized on popular aversion to modern art as part of their effort to delegitimize the Weimar 'system'. But while the Bolsheviks, with the cooperation of their modern artists themselves, fostered a multi-media realism as a constructive alternative to wanton abstraction, the National Socialists proved unable to draw on any kind of art for effective propaganda, and fell back on bleak denunciations of modern art as mere attack politics.

After 1932–33, with the early fulfillment of the First Five-Year Plan and the National Socialist accession to government, the issue of art for the people was turned from a propaganda device into a repressive policy for producing an art to contribute to a managed visual culture of popular assent. 'Socialist Realism', a style to span all media with its characteristic fusion of conformity and contentment, stood fully fashioned by late 1934. By contrast, it took the German regime until the summer of 1937 to admit that the populist art in traditional form it had thus far promoted was insufficiently politicized. From 1936 on, the shortcomings of their populist art policies became a matter of so much concern to both regimes that they subjected artistic culture to control, or at least surveillance, by the political police.

2.2 Revolutionary Art

Revolution was the second key ideological term for the political confrontation between traditional and modern art during the Depression. It marked the extreme of their long-term divergence. With not a moment's hesitation, modern artists rallied to the two foremost revolutionary regimes arising after World War I—first in Russia, then in Italy. In Germany and other states of Central and Western Europe, on the other hand, the quelling of communist uprisings discouraged their revolutionary aspirations. After the Fascist regime's arrangement with capitalist industry the ideal of revolutionary art became primarily a communist proposition. Soviet cultural policy abroad, enacted through the Comintern, encouraged modern artists to contribute to its schemes of foreign subversion. However, the government's international promotion of Soviet modern art stressed technological development as an index of political superiority.

During the first four years of the Depression, all three totalitarian regimes re-fashioned ideologies of revolution for cultural programs designed to promote a coercive restructuring of society from above. They used the catchword of revolution for aggressive schemes to tighten the political control of their populations and the dictatorial powers of their leaders (fig. 9, 10). The post-War alignment of modern art and technological modernization was drawn upon to propagate the increased labor effort required for accelerated industrial recapitalization. The National Socialist regime, by contrast, refrained from supporting any ideology of revolutionary

art, to the disappointment of modern artists eager to align themselves with the short-term revolutionary posture it took during its consolidation of power in 1933–34.

When in 1935 the Comintern changed its strategy from supporting world revolution to center-left electoral politics, it stripped the revolutionary self-understanding of left-leaning modern artists in France, who had never hesitated to disparage parliamentary democracy, of its political credentials. In Spain, it fell to communist artist Josep Renau, in his capacity as General Director of Fine Arts, to steer the switch of ideology from revolutionary change to defense of the Republic. Only Breton and his surrealist followers clung to a politically abstract ideal of revolutionary art which they publicly proclaimed with fierce defiance. In his Manifesto "For an Independent Revolutionary Art", written in the spring of 1938, at Coyoacán, Mexico, amended by Lev Trotsky, and co-signed by Diego Rivera, Breton exempted revolutionary art from any political specification.

Yet, in an ideological time lag, both sympathizers and adversaries of modern art throughout Europe kept linking its revolutionary claims to political opposition from the Left or to Bolshevik subversion, even though such claims had long been disowned by the cultural policies of both the Soviet government and Western European Communist parties. It was Hitler and his National Socialist Party who mounted the fiercest assault on modern art as a supposed vehicle of Bolshevik subversion, all the way from the Party's re-foundation in 1924 through the 1937 "Degenerate Art" show. The anachronistic specter of 'cultural bolshevism' served their earlier denunciation of Weimar democracy just as much as it did their later showdown with the Comintern.

Starting in 1935, totalitarian art was stripped of its newly-donned revolutionary trappings. At the same time, artists of left-wing persuasion in democratic France, inspired by the Comintern's new Popular Front policy, replaced their domestic revolutionary aspirations with mass democracy as the guiding theme of their political self-mobilization. Inconclusive debates about the mutual relationship of revolutionary and anti-fascist art tempered the revolutionary ideal with geopolitical strategies, subordinated the claim to freedom it entailed to party tactics, and blurred the divide between traditional and modern art as an ideological criterion.

Once totalitarian governments had discarded the ideal of revolutionary art for a monumental art of state stabilization, and when the Popular Front governments of France and Spain had reduced it to a propaganda slogan of populist democracy, self-styled revolutionary artists were left without a political venue. In their Manifesto "For an Independent Revolutionary Art" Trotsky and Breton opposed a discredited "socialist regime with centralized control" with an "anarchistic regime of individual liberty" that would include chance and psychoanalysis as soul-searching modes of political conscience. They defined revolutionary art in terms of its makers alone, with regard for neither political practicality nor even public impact. Breton thus came full circle to the alignment of modern art and anarchism inaugurated in the latter part of the nineteenth century, before modern art was drawn to the socialist movement. Now it re-surfaced as a response to the creeping dilution of the revolutionary ideal in socialist and communist cultural policies alike.

From the start, the revolutionary ideologies of all three totalitarian regimes stressed military combat values. After taking power they carried them over into an organization of state and society by command and discipline. When in the second phase of the Depression all of them embarked on large-scale rearmament, the historic memory of their military origins fed into an ideological equation between revolutionary fervor and readiness for war. In France and Spain, by contrast, the ideological turn from revolution to anti-fascist struggle made left-wing artists adopt a resolutely pacifist stance. Even when in 1936, the defense of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War became their prime concern, they stuck to anti-war imagery.

When in 1935 Italy and Germany started their drives toward military expansion, the revolutionary inflection of their militarist ideology was discarded for a war art monumental and populist at once. Their military support for the Nationalist insurgency in Spain prompted the Spanish Popular Front government in its war art to de-emphasize the revolutionary fervor of a people's war in favor of subordination to military discipline. Its speedy defeat in the Spanish Civil War discredited both anti-fascist pacifism and revolutionary warfare as viable ideologies for politically committed modern artists on the Left. Thus, by 1938, on both sides of the confrontation between democracy and 'fascism', war art and anti-war art were equally stripped of revolutionary connotations.

2.3 Ideologies and Policies

As the Depression affected the economic, social, and political systems of all European states, their artistic cultures were drawn into a three-way conflict between communism, 'fascism' (the common term used at the time on both the Italian and the German regimes by their foreign opponents) and democracy. The doctrinaire intransigence of artistic ideologies surpassed the long-accustomed convergence of political and artistic discourse, because it was exacerbated by the antagonistic public interaction of political systems on the European scene. Eventually the three-way political conflict overrode the more clear-cut two-way ideological polarity of Right and Left which until then had underpinned the antagonism between traditional and modern art. As artistic ideologies were adjusted to overriding political strategies, shifting alliances, and changing circumstances, they could no longer be taken at face value (fig. 11, 12).

For, cutting across the blurring ideological conflicts of state-based political systems was a fundamental confrontation between democracy and totalitarianism. The latter emerged as an ideologically neutral term to characterize the structural similarities first of the Fascist and National Socialist regimes, and later also of the Soviet. What totalitarian regimes had in common was their ascendancy from failing democracies through forcible replacement of parliamentary government with an ostensibly more efficient, populist form of dictatorial rule. They derived their compelling surface legitimacy from mobilizing masses for pseudo-plebiscitary demonstrations of popular assent. What totalitarian regimes also had in common was a deliberate art policy designed to put artistic culture on a viable economic footing, to anchor it in the political organi-

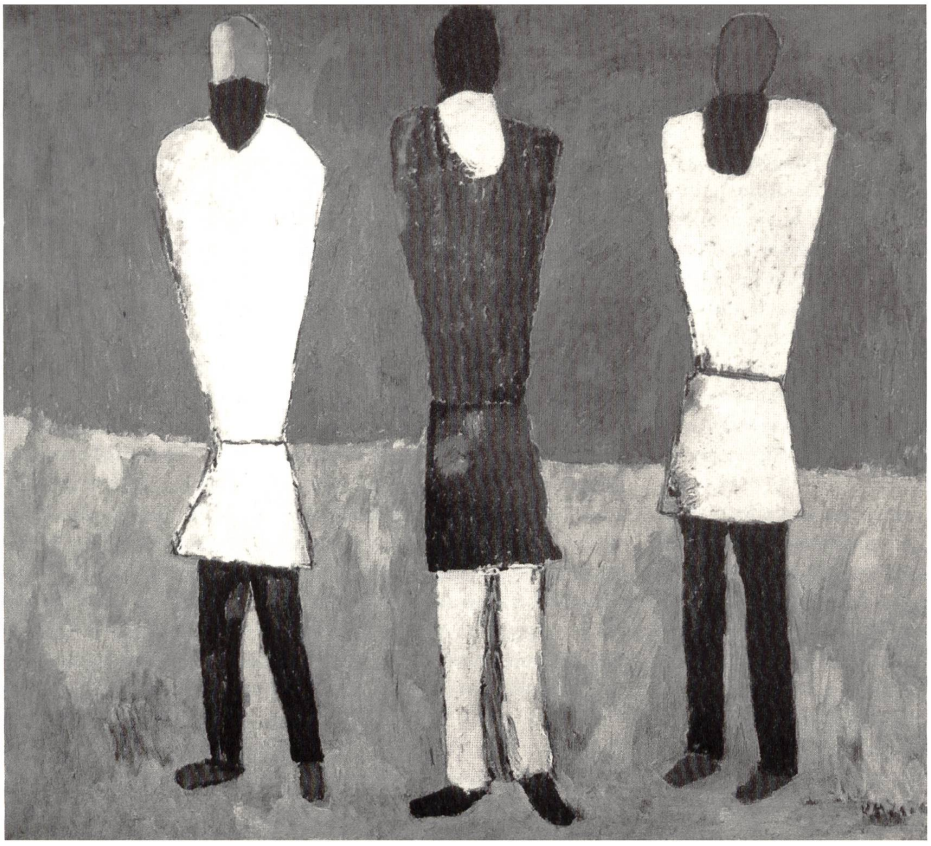

fig. 13: Kasimir Malevich, "Peasants", 1928–1932.
A celebrity on the international circuit of modern art for his theoretically-reasoned abstract painting, Kasimir Malevich, was ousted from his post at the State Institute for the History of Art in 1929. In 1930 he was detained and questioned, and in 1932 relegated to a small ,'experimental laboratory' at the State Russian Museum in Leningrad. In 1933, his paintings were removed from the Moscow venue of the Russian Artists' Federation fifteenth anniversary show. During this period of mounting disgrace, Malevich abandoned abstraction and resumed his pre-war peasant themes in a series of pictures showing faceless, armless men lined up before plain soils and skies. At a time when Soviet art was replete with propaganda imagery extolling the productivity of collectivized agriculture, such pictures ran the risk of being viewed as expressions of dissent, although no testimony confirms that they were meant that way.

zation of society at large, and to place it into service for the aesthetic enhancement of their rule. The seamless logic of this comprehensive political approach to art made the ideological disparities of its implementation appear all but coincidental.

Thus, eventually it was not the three-way ideological but the two-way political confrontation which determined the political history of art during the Depression. Never were Bolshevik and National Socialist art defined in opposition to one another, never was any commonality between 'fascist' art in Italy and Germany aspired to, and, most importantly, never was an art of democracy programmatically asserted against an art of dictatorship in any other terms than those of freedom. Rather, the confrontation of the arts was predicated on terms of tradition versus modernization that were constantly shifting. It ran through all political systems in their competitive efforts at redefining the relationship between economic modernization and political order.

fig. 14: Otto Dix, "The Seven Deadly Sins", 1933.
Dismissed from his professorship at the Dresden Art Academy and forced to resign from the Prussian Academy in Berlin in 1933, Dix painted the Christian allegory of the seven deadly sins in the privacy of rented atelier in Dresden as a moralistic judgment on the depravity of the times. The dwarfish personification of envy is wearing a mask that looks like Hitler's face—although the telltale moustache was painted in at a later time—so as to chastise political conformity as a ploy of artistic competition. Struck with a ban on exhibiting, Dix can at best have shown the painting to a few trusted friends. After moving to Randegg Castle in 1934, he left it stored in the Dresden atelier, perhaps in order to avoid the risk of having it discovered in a house search by police.

fig. 15a, 15b: Vera Mukhina, "Industrial Worker and Kholkhoz Farm Woman", profile views, 1937.
Paris-educated sculptor Vera Mukhina broke the dominance of her more established academic peers in winning the commission for the giant group atop the Soviet Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937, for which she was awarded the lucrative Stalin Prize two years later. A monument to the forcible industrialization of agriculture during the first Five-Year Plan, the sculpture shows the male industrial worker leading the pace of progress and the female kolkhoz worker catching up. Falling into lockstep from behind, she raises her sickle to his hammer to configure the emblem of Soviet power. Mukhina adapted the dash and fervor of the forward march from the Hellenistic sculpture of the Nike of Samothrace in the Louvre, an allusion appropriate to the Paris site of the commission.

As long as the Soviet and Comintern leadership judged that the Depression spelled a terminal crisis of world capitalism, they adjusted their promotion of Soviet art abroad from acting as a harbinger of world revolution to proclaiming the successful modernization of the socialist economy and its attendant lifestyle. Expressive exaltation of a working morale inspired by political allegiance made ruthless policy enforcement appear as the political will of the labor force. Stylized images of confident exertion and proud achievement, often based on pseudo-documentary photography, were to act as tokens of a social reality that transformed itself accordingly. Starting in 1933, however, with the enactment of the Second Five-Year Plan in a shambles, international exchange reduced, and repressive social policy pitched to the 'Great Terror', Soviet art renounced its international ambition as a paragon of modernization and recoiled upon 'socialist realism' as a domestic propaganda device.

The Paris World Exposition of 1937 championed the ideal of a modernized classicism that democratic states with conservative governments and totalitarian states with capitalist economies could share. It seemed to inaugurate a monumental style for all of Europe, an alternative to the style of Soviet modernity, no longer displayed in the Soviet Pavilion. In a similar vein, democratic states assented to the planning of the 1942 World Exposition in Fascist Rome, partly in response to Italy's aggressive propaganda of fascism abroad. Here the style of Fascist modernity found international acceptance as a common denominator for diverse national art programs. It appeared as a style to monumentalize the recovery of capitalist economies guided by strong government. However, when in 1938 Germany parted ways with Italy in its accelerated war policy, the international acceptance of a Fascist style to harmonize the arts for modernization came to nothing. It paled before the

fig. 16a, 16b: Arno Breker, New Reich Chancery, Relief in Round Room: "Party and Army", 1939.
Breker, who like Mukhina had worked in Paris before 1933, was an outsider to the top group of established German academic sculptors vying for commissions from the regime. After 1936 he developed from his understanding of Auguste Rodin an inordinate blend of physical strength and ideological buoyancy that caught Goebbels', and eventually Hitler's fancy. His pair of marble reliefs atop facing doors in the "Round Room" of Speer's New Reich Chancery re-enact the command-and-obedience relationship of Party and Army governing his pair of bronze statues in the "Court of Honor" of the building. The commanding half-nude woman adheres to the ancient tradition of female victory figures leading armed men to battle for exalted ideals. Yet, in an erotic turn of chivalric behavior, the woman's inspiring gesture restrains the warrior from breaking away.

German triumphalist overstatement of classicism and brutal vituperation of modern art, both unabashed expressions of readiness for war.

The constitutional setup of art policy under the Third Republic, spanning all short-term changes of government, was conceived to guarantee an equitable consistency of allocations to diverse artistic tendencies. It was structurally unsuited to match totalitarian ambitions of making traditional and modern art converge in one comprehensive ideology of style. France, its governments oscillating between Right and Left, was even less in a position to match totalitarian bids for cultural leadership in Europe on the basis of cohesive policy. On the contrary, art-political debates were affected by discrepant totalitarian paradigms and compromised by ideological repercussions of shifting foreign policies. Republican consensus presented no substantive ideological option. The specter of totalitarian cohesiveness abroad caused any art-political issue—the social topicality of realism, classicism as an expression of order, or modern art as subversive device—to be debated with an eye on its communist or 'fascist' connotations.

Art policies of all four states concerned stressed the aesthetic exaltation of the arts over propaganda service. As a result, the rampant politicization of the arts they were pursuing all the same was masked behind particularly categorical aesthetic propositions about quality and style. Yet, their constant policy shifts belied their quasi-transcendental pretense. Under totalitarian regimes, such ideological reorientations, no matter how vague their reasoning, were administered through artists' organizations or conveyed through decisions about commissions or inclusion in shows. In democratic France, by contrast, they had to be justified for reasoned concurrence, making their credibility ever harder to maintain.

fig. 17: Max Ernst, "Angel of the Home", 1937.
Starting in 1935, Max Ernst, who had lived in Paris since 1922 as a member of Breton's surrealist circle, assumed a leading position in the successive organizations of German emigrant artists in Paris. In 1938, he showed this painting in the International Exhibition of Surrealism under the title "Triumph of Surrealism", and later at a private gallery under its final title "Angel of the Home", a colloquial Spanish expression for 'housewife'. The monster child, who in another version of the painting vainly tries to catch up with his mother, has here grabbed one of her arms to restrain her, but merges with her body, is lifted off the ground and dragged along. The monstrous scene turned the theme of outraged women in Spanish Republican propaganda art of the Civil War into an aimless mythical performance in an empty space.

As long as Soviet foreign policy operated on the 'Third Period' expectancy of capitalism's terminal decline, modern artists, not only those who sided with the Left, found themselves ideologically lumped together on the 'Bolshevik' side. The subsequent inward turn of Soviet art policy three years into the Depression made them liable to be ideologically miscast wherever they might turn. The Popular Front's revalidation of a class-transcending cultural consensus for consolidating the anti-fascist struggle, cancelled the ideological antagonism between traditional and modern art on the Right-Left spectrum and left artists of all persuasions at a loss for any consistent ideological orientation. In 1936, finally, the Spanish Civil War replaced the pacifism of the Left, just energized by opposing German rearmament, with a flash of war enthusiasm in support of a just cause. It seemed to give a new lease on life to the revolutionary militancy of the avant-garde, but defeat was too quick in coming to respond with an art to match.

Despite a rampant ideological overdetermination of artistic cultures in all states concerned, the growing disparity between policies and ideologies unfolding through the Depression made it ever harder to link political systems to distinct artistic ideologies.

fig. 18: Max Beckmann, "Temptation", 1937.
After his dismissal from the Städel Art School in Frankfurt in 1933, Beckmann spent four years in Berlin trying to work out of the public eye. It took the shock of the "Degenerate Art" show in July 1937, with nine works of his on view, to make him precipitously emigrate to Amsterdam, where he had to work in even greater seclusion. The central panel of the triptych "Temptation", started in Berlin and completed in Amsterdam, shows a shackled artist sitting on the floor before a towering model, holding onto a framed but empty canvas on the easel without being able to work. The triptych served as a backdrop for his keynote speech at the opening of the London exhibition of German emigrant artists in 1938, where, admitting a precarious 'blindness' to political realities, he reclaimed a supra-political ideal of artistic freedom.

At the end of the decade, traditional art stood compromised as a monumental propaganda device for exalting state authority in its totalitarian extreme, even though democratic governments practiced it as well. Modern art, for its part, stood divested of its habitual allure of social dissent, its affinity to the politics of the Left, and—with the partial exception of Fascist Italy—its aesthetic equivalency to technical and industrial modernization. No longer consistently positioned either in its support by governments or as a politically relevant counterculture, it had to wait for the Cold War to be redefined as a paragon of democratic freedom.

3. Artists

3.1 Accommodation and Oppression

Since the latter part of the 19th century, formal and thematic self-determination had been part of the artistic prestige flowing from success on private art markets. Upper-middle class clienteles valued artistic achievement as the hallmark of an individualized personal identity strong enough to break free of institutional conven-

tions. After the First World War, however, modern artists stood exposed on the open market with less upper-middle class patronage than before. Their provocative quest for unaccountable singularity as a path to achievement met with hostility on the part of an anonymous non-buying exhibition public disinclined to accept artistic idiosyncrasy as a paradigm for any social ambitions of its own. Totalitarian regimes recognized that the 'bourgeoisie' had ceased to act as a market determinant. They worked to redirect art production toward a mass public liable to indoctrination for their ends, and politicized it outright by making their respective ideologies the measure of success.

When the Depression increased the dependence of artistic culture on state support and hence its exposure to state interference, artists were drawn into conflict-ridden political cultures. Faced with totalitarian enforcement of control or democratic power struggles, they were tempted or obliged to take position. A rampant encroachment of political upon artistic culture induced artists to foreground their political convictions as part of their professional standing or, conversely, to compromise them by adapting their work to political requirements. Whenever artists could rely on viable private clienteles, they tended to resist the ongoing politicization of the arts and maintain their stance of professional autonomy, aloof from politics, even if they did not shy away from conveying political opinion in their work. In all four states concerned, such artists incurred charges of indifference, irrelevancy, or provocative behavior.

It was easier for traditional than for modern artists to minimize the political compromises in working for government authorities, not only because these preferred them anyhow, but also because their professional self-understanding entailed a principled detachment of their work from their political opinions. Modern artists, on the other hand, faced a harder task, since most of them conceived of their work as a case of conscience not to be compromised by political expediency. As a result, they felt obliged to reason out any political accommodation as a self-motivated contribution. The ideological uncertainty of the fast-changing political environment put their choices of detachment and commitment equally at risk. It drove artists of all persuasions toward precipitous allegiances, ideological vacillations, or disappointed retreats.

For the enactment of their art programs, all three totalitarian regimes initially relied on established traditional artists with little express commitment to their ideologies. Since these artists tended to regard accommodation to their sponsors' preferences as a professional practice that did not touch upon their own convictions, they could delude themselves that they were not beholden to the political implications of their patronage. Totalitarian regimes tended to respect such an aloofness from politics as a professional prerogative. By contrast, competitive bids for acceptance advanced by modern artists, so long as they were allowed to participate in the organizational venues of totalitarian competition, took forms of ideological self-advertisement all the more strident as they often fought a losing battle.

The selection processes whereby art-political authorities of totalitarian regimes screened works by artists willing to conform were often hard to gauge. As a result, artists, modern artists most of all, but traditional ones as well, would unexpectedly see their professed conformity repudiated. The ideological regulation of totalitarian artistic cultures was not accomplished by substantive guidelines from above, but through a vociferous environment of internal or public debates. It maximized the common practice of altercations between artists and patrons, with the difference that rejection entailed a political censure. By 1936, however, only the Fascist regime in Italy continued to be satisfied with such policies of self-regulating artistic conformity, while the other two totalitarian regimes proceeded to severely discipline artistic culture by straightforward government or party control.

Forcible corporate organization of artists alone never accomplished thorough professional discrimination in totalitarian states. When, starting in 1936, the Soviet and German regimes had recourse to police terror or shows of public exposure, they practiced the totalitarian method of overruling institutional chains of command. However, while Soviet modern artists, in recognition of their untiring professions of political conformity, were merely reproached as misguided, their German counterparts were condemned as depraved beyond recovery. And while in the Soviet Union, with its oppressive but inclusive art policies, artists and art officials were arrested, imprisoned, and executed, in Germany, where modern artists were denounced as virtual enemies of the people, the authorities laid hands on no one. Between rhetoric and implementation political disciplining of artists took an inverse course.

Artists' resistance against totalitarian politics, to the point of expressing political dissent in their work, was conditioned by the different forms and severity of their oppression (fig. 13, 14). It was negligible in Italy, muffled into dissident communism in the Soviet Union, and dramatized to clandestine resistance in Germany. Some head-strong Soviet artists, clinging to a combination of autobiographical intransigence and ideological heterodoxy, cultivated their work as a secluded venue of critical opinion. They were sustained by closed communities of disciples and admirers, and incurred suspicion, surveillance, and harassment, but no outright suppression, from the authorities. It was in Germany that the combative politicization of artistic culture during the Weimar Republic perpetuated itself in formidable secret polemics against the National Socialist regime by a minority of modern artists, whose strong convictions never allowed them to share the majority's attempts at accommodation.

In Italy, the alignment of the arts, largely accomplished by 1932, included a measured accommodation of modern artists on their own terms, so that none of them left the country. In the Soviet Union, successful enforcement of a conformist artistic culture by 1932 for better or worse embraced most artists, traditional or modern. In Germany, on the other hand, inconsistent enforcement of art policy until 1937 prompted a hesitant but steady emigration of modern artists. Only those few who in the Weimar Republic had taken public stands on the Left felt threatened enough to leave at once. Most of the others, who considered their art to be non-political, harbored hopes of being tolerated, ignored public hostility, and only left when their professional situation had become untenable. The mindset underlying this protracted emigration was no awareness of modern art as a principled challenge to National

Socialist ideology, but the belief that National Socialist oppression of modern art was an undue politicization of the arts.

At first, German artists in exile hoped for access to the international art market, and had few if any professional reasons for focusing their work on politics back home. When these hopes were dashed, however, they enhanced their profiles as German dissidents by confronting the oppressive culture of the Hitler state. Eventually, some of them managed to position their art as an arguably anti-fascist alternative to the art, and a challenge to the cultural policy, of the National Socialist regime. They were helped by a growing international perception that the notorious German oppression of artistic culture heralded a menace to democracy. It took the new inclusive cultural policy of the Popular Front, starting in 1935, to energize the dissent of German exile artists as a group, where leftists were a small but active minority, and make it part of an anti-fascist platform. Here some German artists in exile rose to reclaim no less than an alternative presence of German art, rooted in 19th-century democratic tradition.

3.2 Service

Only in totalitarian regimes did artists rise to political power during the Depression. First they were called upon to lead their corporate organizations on the government's behalf. Later, they came to exercise a de-facto authority in artistic matters that was neither entirely founded upon the achievement of their work, nor upon any preeminence within Party hierarchies. Totalitarian artists' organizations were led by artists of proven loyalty, expected to ensure political conformity amongst a rank-and-file that did not lend itself to being managed in the way of a party organization, not even in the Soviet Union, where the Party maintained distinct 'cells' of members in their midst. The variable authority of such artists depended on how surely totalitarian regimes could count on allegiance rather than guidance for artists to suit their objectives.

Of the three totalitarian regimes, that of Fascist Italy bestowed the highest professional and political authority upon artists in office, because it exercised the least direct political control. The proven accomplishments of such artists, backed up by their prolific writings and keen engagement in debates, served to set substantive paradigms rather than mere parameters of political discipline. Through their decisions in shows, competitions, and commissions, they exercised a professional, not just administrative, authority. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, the authority of prestigious but second-rank artists in office was bolstered by Party appointments, channeled through organizational structures under Party control, and limited to the oversight of codified evaluation and commission procedures. In Germany, finally, artists in office were at first appointed because they combined a measure of professional standing with certified political assent. Lacking both the ideological determination and the artistic persuasiveness to make any noticeable impact, in 1937 they were replaced by hack artists of no distinction and with no authority over the newly-ascendant elite artists with a personal license from political leaders.

Artists in office were to implement the totalitarian policy of streamlining any professional activity to work for the regime without being run by the state. Such policies pertained to the populist rather than the dictatorial aspirations of totalitarian political systems. They worked best for the Fascist regime, for which the concept of totalitarianism, with its structural balance of populist and dictatorial components, was first devised. The Bolshevik and National Socialist regimes, on the other hand, in the course of their transition from mass-based to autocratic dictatorships eventually made the authority of artists in office irrelevant. When in 1936 both came to conclude that corporative organizations of artists led by their peers were structurally unsuited to deliver the high-quality art they wanted for their capital reconstruction schemes as well as their international self-representation, they went over these artists' heads.

Under French democracy, artists held no political office. The government's art institutions, commissions, and artistic ventures stayed under the control of politicians and, even more, political officials. It was these who worked for an ideologically-charged art of the state just as assiduously as did their totalitarian counterparts. Since the modern art scene had long cut loose from official Salon culture and operated on the private gallery and dealer system, it lacked the institutional standing required for working with the government on corporative terms. The persistent efforts of the modern art scene to gain a foothold in state-administered artistic culture made for a steady history of public controversy. But even the professed politicization of the arts under the Popular Front government was overseen, and contained, not by an artist but a critic turned official in the Education Ministry. In the Popular Front government of Spain, by contrast, the Undersecretary was an artist bent on fostering an all-out propaganda art.

When modern artists in France joined Popular Front electoral campaigns in order to contest official preference for traditional art, they overstepped the non-political, consultative role conceded to artists by the art administration of the Third Republic. Rather than abiding by the conservative guild traditions on which totalitarian artists' organizations were modeled, the newly-formed professional artists' groups of the Popular Front emulated organizational structures of left-wing parties and their allied labor unions, with the attendant rhetoric of democratic empowerment. Once the Popular Front had formed the government, it maintained administrative links with such artists' groups, encouraged them to continue their culture of public debate, but gave them no consultative influence on government decisions.

The surrealist artists, who at the start of the Depression had expressly abrogated democratic politics for the sake of 'revolution' as envisaged by the French Communist Party, strained the instant topicality of their political interventions to the breaking point of art and politics. Their mutual reinforcement of radicalization and disengagement eventually opposed them to Communism, 'Fascism', and Democracy in all but equal measure. Undeterred by internal disagreements and defections from the group, Breton arrived at a leave-taking from all organized politics as a precondition of the artist's self-empowerment as the ultimate, unerring arbiter of world history.

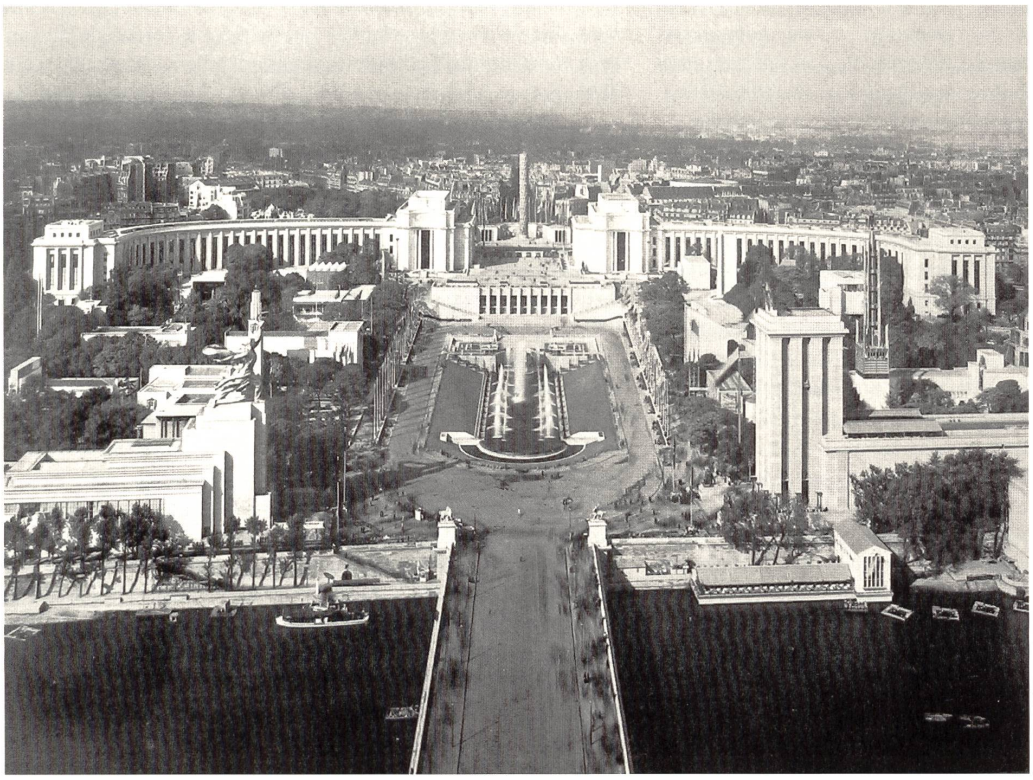

fig. 19: Paris World Exposition, photograph of Soviet and German pavilions in front of the Palais de Chaillot, 1937.
The perceived necessity of strong government for the recovery of national economies enhanced the political profiles of the Soviet and German pavilions at the Paris World Exposition of 1937. Both represented states that claimed to have overcome the pitfalls of a free market economy through drastic political measures. However, since mounting hostility between the two states determined their foreign policy, their pavilions were bound to be perceived as mutually antagonistic monuments heralding a potential war. While viewers on the political left could see the German pavilion as a projection of the threat the French alliance with the Soviet Union was to forestall, those on the right could see it as a bulwark of protection against communist encroachment.

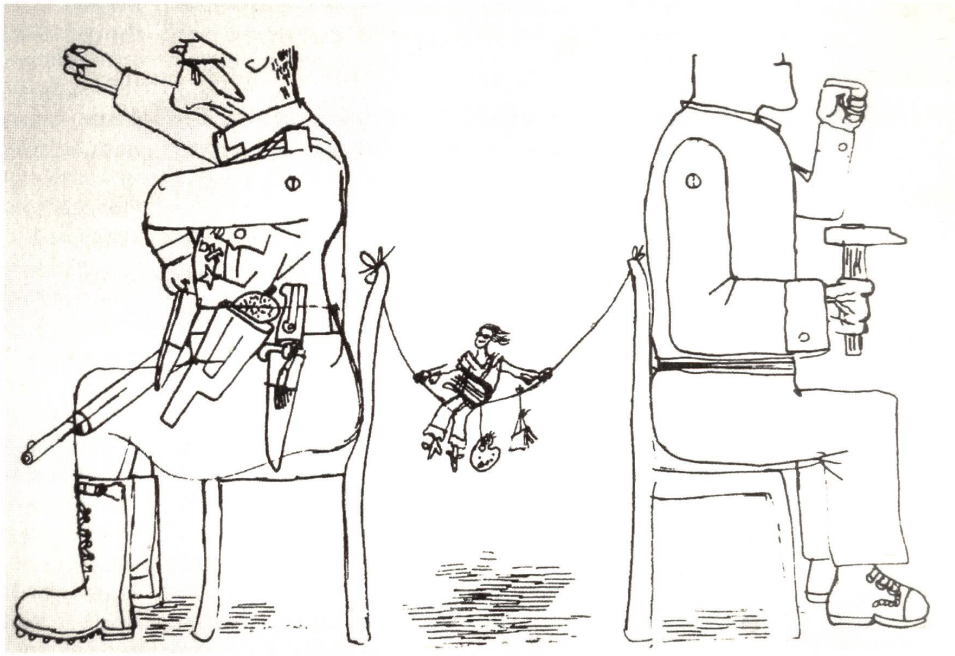

fig. 20: George Grosz, "Art is Eternal", from the Interregnum portfolio, 1936.
Exiled in the USA since early 1933, George Grosz in 1936 issued a collectors' box of 64 printed drawings, billed as a "pictorial record of modern Germany from 1924 to 1936", under the title "Interregnum", implying that Hitler's rule was but a passing phase. One of several self-deprecating slurs on artists' eagerness either to serve or to fight dictatorships, this one amounts to a self-refutation of its title. The artist, a minuscule puppet with a harp, palette, and book, all attached to his body, is sitting on a tightrope loosely suspended from two chairs on which two robotic giants are sitting back to back. One is an armed storm trooper raising his right hand to hail Hitler, the other an unarmed worker clenching his left fist in the Communist salute. Their symmetry suggests the new equation between the Soviet and German dictatorships under the catchword totalitarianism, which at this time began to be used for both regimes. Should they stand up, their chairs will flip back under the weight, however light, of the artist, whose glasses and silly smile suggest he is too shortsighted to be aware of his predicament. Beset by the illusion that art is exempt from historical contingency, he is swinging at an angle to the political dynamics of the time.

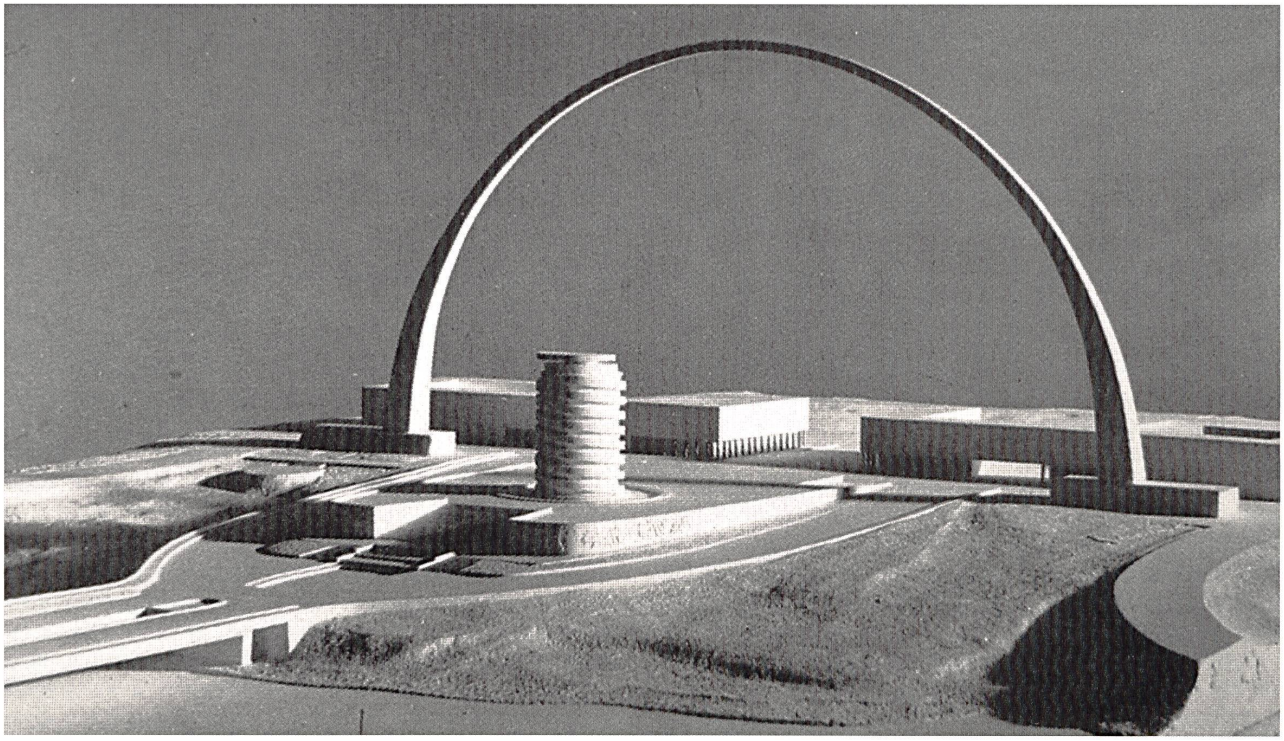

fig. 21: Adalberto Libera, "Arch of Empire" for E42, model, 1937–1941.
It took Adalberto Libera and his team of associated architects and engineers four years to work out the statics and materials for the giant arch that was to span the site of the E42 as a historic match for London Crystal Palace and Paris's Eiffel Tower, the trademark technological accomplishments of the 1851 and 1889 world expositions. Straddling the "Via Imperiale" that connected the city center to the Exposition site, it could serve as a "triumphal arch for large military and political parades" or simply as a "monumental entrance" without compromising its modern design. When the project was finalized in March 1941, it had outlived its purpose.

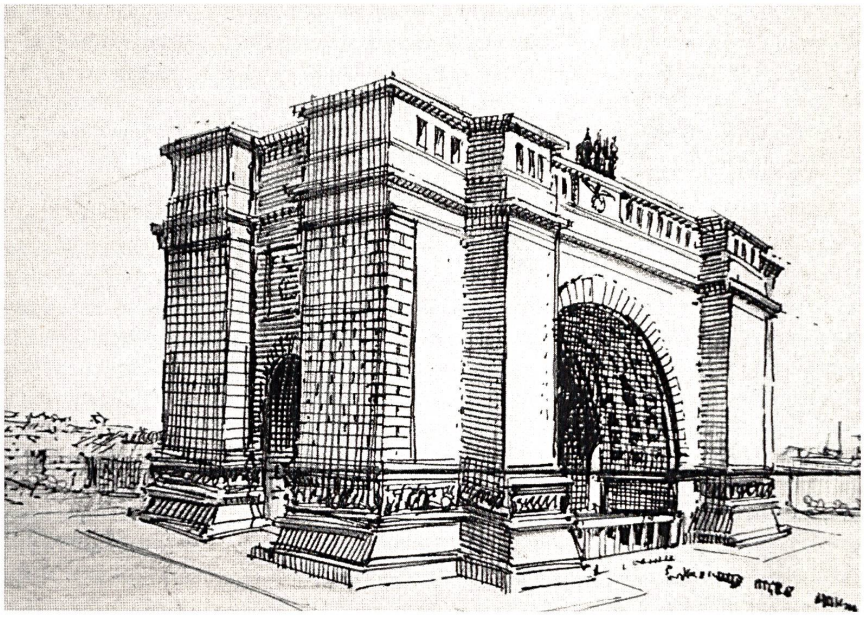

fig. 22: Adolf Hitler, "Triumphal Arch", sketch drawn at at the Landsberg fortress(?), 1925. A giant triumphal arch was to open onto the parade avenue leading from the Southern Railway Station to the Domed Hall in the government center of the reconstructed capital of Berlin. Hitler intended to have the names of each of two million German soldiers killed in World War I engraved on its inner walls. After the 1941 attack on the Soviet Union he ordered symmetrical pairs of captured heavy guns to be installed on the facing square, and symmetrical rows of captured tanks to line the parade avenue beginning on the other side.

The ascendancy of artists' elites above the corporative alignment of artists' organizations in totalitarian states was at variance with the transition from avant-gardes to elites envisaged by Saint-Simon in that this kind of elite status lacked any political empowerment, let alone political leadership. Mussolini and Hitler drew on the pre-modern European tradition of mutual recognition between political leaders and outstanding artists in matters of art alone. Soviet elite artists, on the other hand, even though exempt from organizational control, still submitted to party-certified selection processes. Marinetti's failed ambition to act as Mussolini's peer in leading modern artists committed to Fascism, Mayakovsky's inability to emulate Lenin's posture of inspiration, even Breton's last-minute resolve to work with Trotsky on seemingly equal terms were just so many futile bids to politically redeem artistic leadership claims on the terms of the avant-garde.

To secure top commissions in ventures of monumental art and architecture after 1936, elite artists under totalitarian regimes combined artistic ingenuity and political assertiveness to give the appearance of ideological fervor regardless of conviction. They turned self-confident artistic achievement into an expression of state triumphalism (fig. 15, 16). Exempted from having to prove their political allegiance, they obtained a political recognition of artistic self-sufficiency. Since they refrained from meddling in the fundamentals of art policy, they earned not just the admiration but also the trust of political leaders. With architects in the lead, they contrived ever more emphatic themes and forms to glorify their patrons' power proclamations.

Art administrations of Republican France, while sharing with totalitarian regimes some of the corporate art policies of the first Depression years, parted ways with them on the promotion of artistic elites, because their equitable art policies barred them from singling out any one artist to act as a leader or star of government art. That the Popular Front governments of France and Spain, overriding their policies of pooling artists for political tasks, should have enlisted Picasso for their most prominent public art projects—the *14th July* curtain of 1936 and the *Guernica* wall painting of 1937—constituted deliberate, one-time responses to the totalitarian culture of artistic elites. Otherwise, their lack of politically certified artists' elites is an index of their economic weakness, structural instability, and ideological disparity.

3.3 Engagement

To volunteer one's art for political engagement meant to transcend the functional, commercial, and aesthetic confines of artistic culture and enter the declarative arena of the public sphere on the assumption that ideological expressiveness flowing from artistic freedom could work as a functional contribution to politics. However, in the politically overcharged artistic culture of the Depression, artists who combined creative originality and ideological expression found out that the intended message of their works was at variance with its political reception, because they misjudged the significance of the arts for public policy. Such discrepancies between subjective intent and political response beset their efforts to have their ideological self-expression validated by the political authorities or movements they wished to embrace. These were ill disposed to grant them the initiative of devising a political art of their own design.

Of the three totalitarian regimes, that of Fascist Italy honored artist's engagement the most. Since it was the only one to maintain an anti-traditionalist art policy throughout the Depression, it welcomed artists who translated their political commitment into self-styled concepts of Fascist art. The Bolshevik regime, which could boast of the most celebrated modern artists joining its cause from conviction, nevertheless restrained them from promoting their personal visions of communist art over its policy-setting prerogative. The National Socialist regime, finally, which quickly saw through the expeditious efforts by modern artists in particular to gain acceptance with their makeshift ideological proposals, was left with the least important artists lining up from true commitment. It was thrown back on sponsoring politically lukewarm elite artists with no party standing to posture as truly National Socialist artistic personalities.

During the first four years of the Depression, artists in democratic Germany and France, long accustomed to a politically unaccountable ideological self-expression, were drawn into heated political struggles. The deceptive prominence of artistic culture in the public sphere of the Weimar Republic in particular encouraged them to volunteer their work for politics. But their efforts were seldom validated as political endeavors. That their most deliberate engagement should have veered toward the Communist Left betrayed the structural instability of German democracy. In the Third Republic, where the Fine Arts Administration minimized any institutional involvement of artists in politics, the most outspoken political engagement, that of the Surrealists, veered even more to the Communist Party. Their culture of public provocation took the form of a deliberate challenge to the accepted political culture of democracy.

Until 1936, sidelined Soviet modern artists of strong ideological resolve in the mold of Mayakovsky continued to resist official art policy with their Communism of conviction. By contrast, the National Socialist regime's unremitting condemnation of modern artists hardened their dissent into opposition by default. This structural difference in the uphill self-assertion of politically committed artists inside the two antagonistic totalitarian states went largely unperceived abroad. One of the reasons was that emigration of Soviet artists had ceased by then, while a steady stream of modern German exile artists denounced conditions in their home country. Moreover, the National Socialist regime made no bones about its oppressive policies, while Soviet artistic culture postured as an integrative venue for vibrant debate preceding political concurrence. As a result, political engagement on behalf of artistic freedom was framed as a matter of opposition to the National Socialist regime alone.

Thus, starting in 1933, the official repudiation of modern art in National Socialist Germany focused the political engagement of modern artists throughout democratic Europe on a sweeping anti-fascist ideology which overruled the mutual hostility between democratic and communist positions. Passing over the successful cooptation of modern art by the Fascist regime in Italy, as well as the German regime's express ideological disavowal of the term fascism, the term anti-fascism was cast as an ideological misnomer from the

start, beset by political vacuity and polemical overextension. Historically, anti-fascist engagement tied in with the diplomatic rapprochement of France, and even more of Spain, with the Soviet Union. In their common preparations for defense against the mounting threat of German aggression, Bolshevik oppression was ignored.

The anti-fascist sentiment cultivated by modern artists since 1933 put the autonomy of imagination, a hard-won principle of modern art, at risk. Could their willingness to stand up for artistic freedom against political oppression be validated, or even activated, for politically defined agendas without being compromised (fig. 17, 18)? Or could it be authenticated on the terms of subjective self-expression by engaging the historic challenge in the public sphere? It was in 1937, the year of the Paris World Exposition and the "Degenerate Art" Exhibition in Munich, that politically concerned modern artists, who had thus far shunned political engagement, created the ideologically most explicit works of their careers.

It took the advent of the Popular Front in France and Spain for the oppositional mindset of modern artists to harden into political partisanship. The movement channeled their habitual alignment with the Left into a culture of coalition democracy with a perspective on power. It even promised to reconcile the antagonism between traditional and modern art for the sake of a common political cause. The demonstration, parade, festival, and poster culture of the Popular Front built on the demonstration culture of the workers' movement, of trade unions and left-wing parties. It ultimately strove to recover the performative aesthetics of the French Revolution, as well as the government-sponsored 'Street Art" of the Soviet Union, including their ambivalence of populist enthusiasm and organization from above. Aware of artists' visceral opposition to enforced conformity in totalitarian art, even in the Soviet Union, Popular Front governments of both France and Spain fostered an elaborate culture of press debates, public forums, and congresses, focused on reconciling the freedom of individual allegiance with the need for programmatic alignment.

Artists' organizations of the Popular Front worked to maximize the long-term convergence of artistic culture and the public sphere. Detached from corporative artists' organizations, they were to be the democratic answer to totalitarian artists' organizations with their state-imposed conflation of professional and political missions. Artists, writers, and officials of communist conviction constituted the core of organizational activity, branching out to larger, sometimes fleeting agglomerations of adherents including some of the most prominent modern artists of the day. Such a constituency was impervious to any imposition of formal or expressive doctrine. Kept at arm's length from the art of government and union commissions with their streamlined programs and their optimistic or defiant messages, modern artists wallowed in this public culture of shows and debates, caught in the opacity of political culture at large.

The Surrealists' refusal to subordinate political conscience to operative guidance enabled them to take the most ascertained, most reasoned political stand attained by any modern artist on the Left. The Depression decade tracks the learning curve of their artistic and intellectual emancipation from an initial willingness to abide by Communist politics to their final intransigence, admitting of no compromise and hence of no engagement. Their two outstanding painters, Ernst and Masson, articulated this position in consistent bodies of work. However, collectively the Surrealists fell back on fancying themselves as a political group in its own right whose activities were never aimed at political concurrence.

4. Toward War

4.1 The Totalitarian Turn of Traditional Art

Over the course of the Depression, it became apparent that only the three totalitarian regimes were in a position to conceive and launch comprehensive programs of monumental art and architecture, classical in form yet open to modernization in technique, that could pass for distinctive expressions of their political systems. They alone seemed able to muster the political will and the ideological resolve to marshal their arts into a coherent self-representation. Their cultural self-assurance remained unmatched by any state art program conceived by short-term democratic governments in France, let alone in Spain. Since their speedier economic recovery from the Depression was in part related to their rearmament drives, all three totalitarian regimes tended to highlight their military power, consistent with both their militarization of domestic political culture and their foreign policy objectives.

By the end of the decade, for contemporary beholders, the political confrontation of the arts, when measured by the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy, seemed to have been decided in favor of the former, if not in terms of qualitative accomplishment, then certainly in terms of monumental scope. Through their widely-publicized capital reconstruction projects, the artistic cultures of all three totalitarian states stood triumphant. Each one could boast a distinct look not altogether at odds with international trends, and hence persuasive in visualizing a potential alternative to democratic modernization, to which the Third Republic seemed unable to oppose a political vision of its own. Behind this artistic display of totalitarian resolve, however, there loomed an uncertain political dynamic, since the mutual antagonisms between the three regimes appeared to herald an inescapable war, with few sure how it was going to unfold.

The French effort at a traditionalist architectural setting to insert the World Exposition of 1937 into the Paris cityscape was meant to anchor modernization in the neoclassical artistic culture of all revolutionary and post-revolutionary regimes of France, republican and imperial alike, based as they were on the precedents of both the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. This all-too sweeping classical ideal, spanning mutually contradictory political ideologies of freedom and autocracy, was uneasily shared by both sides of the French political divide. As a result, the Palais de Chaillot, centerpiece of the Exposition grounds, could be envisaged as a timely addition to the centuries-old string of public buildings exalting the state in whatever constitutional forms. Yet, by the time of the Depression, its attendant ideology was compromised, both domestically and internationally.

fig. 23: Horacio Ferrer, "Madrid 1937", 1937.
Horacio Ferrer's oil painting "Madrid 1937" was placed at the entrance to the art exhibition in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition of 1937. Commissioner José Gaos reported to Prime Minister Juan Negrín that the visiting public had rated it the Pavilion's most successful picture. During an air raid by German bombers on the residential districts of Madrid, three young mothers with their children are fleeing from the smoking ruins of their tenements. One, and the son of another, momentarily stop to raise their fists and curse the invisible enemy above. Ferrer's academic painting recalls Spanish 17th-century pictures of Christian martyrs professing their faith under torture in the face of death, their inviolate bodies highlighted to intimate their future resurrection. To evoke an art of national tradition in this way was one of the tenets of Popular Front cultural policy.

fig. 24: Pablo Picasso, "Guernica", 1937.
In a last-minute change of subject for his long-commissioned mural in the auditorium of the Spanish Pavilion, Picasso depicted a bombing raid on civilians, one of the two main themes the Spanish art administration had set for its artists working in the state ateliers of Madrid and Valencia. Taking up the challenge of the art from the home front, whose installation he watched as he was painting, he matched Ferrer's deliberately traditional depiction of the bombed civilians, figure by figure, with a pictorial fantasy developed from his own long-standing repertoire. The juxtaposition allowed him to publicly uphold his 'abstract' form and introspective creativity against the Popular Front's quest for both national tradition and popular accessibility. Although some Pavilion officials reportedly demanded Guernica's removal on those grounds, it quickly prevailed worldwide as the paramount rallying image of the Spanish Republic, albeit in defeat.

The Expo seemed to validate the international ascendancy of a monumental style combining advanced technology with classical form. This supra-political style conservative and dynamic all at once, was to visually override the conflict of political systems for the sake of their economic cooperation. It made the French ideal of a modernized monumentality appear compatible with the classicizing monumental surface of National Socialist Germany, of Fascist Italy, and, to a lesser extent, of the Soviet Union. Concurrent European rearmament disproved this deceptive semblance of an art embracing opposing types of political regimes at peace with one another. As a result, the classical tradition lost its ideological credibility and came to be tainted as a totalitarian sham.

The Expo's architectural planning bureau contrived the central plaza with the Soviet and German pavilions along the Seine quay on either side of the middle axis and before the backdrop of the Palais de Chaillot. This symmetrical, neo-classical ensemble encased the buildings of two mutually hostile political systems on a common ground of world peace. The topographical scenario was probably meant to align the two by analogy with one another. But it gave Soviet and German officials and architects a license to make the antithetical configuration into a propaganda contest. Contemporary as well as later critics interpreted the juxtaposition of the two pavilions with an ideological ambivalence that oscillated between a joint totalitarian challenge to democracy and an anticipated mutual conflict. At any rate it was suggestive of the uncertain lineup of both states in a potential war (fig. 19, 20).

The Spanish Pavilion was designed to canvass for the political, economic, and technical support of Europe's democratic states for the Republic's ongoing war against its Nationalist insurgents. Placed in proximity to the pavilions of the two major European states that were actively engaged on either front, it found itself in a precarious spot. The propaganda task at hand required a political balancing act. On the one hand, the Expo's diplomatic code forbade an open confrontation with Germany and Italy, invaders in the Civil War. On the other hand, the government wished to avoid any appearance of alignment with the Soviet Union, its major backer, of which capitalist democracies remained wary. Yet after the Guernica bombing pulled most of the stops out of diplomatic restraint, the Spanish Pavilion shattered the Expo's pacifist façade. With its unabashed propaganda for a people's war, it provided a preview on fundamental military, political, and humanitarian issues of European warfare in the offing.

The year before, in 1936 the International Bureau of Expositions had awarded the 1942 Exposition to Rome, barely six weeks after the proclamation of the Fascist 'Empire', and despite the League of Nations' economic sanctions against Italy for its annexation of Ethiopia. The award confirmed international acquiescence in Mussolini's geopolitical endeavor. It enabled the Fascist regime to synchronize the projected Exposition, postponed by one year from its original date, with the twentieth anniversary of the Fascist 'Revolution' as well as the fifth anniversary of the Fascist 'Empire'. The architectural alignment of the newly-constructed exposition site with the archaeological restoration of imperial Rome's monumental core projected fascist architecture at its most triumphant as the setting for a representative artistic culture of Europe at large.

Partly because the firm deadline for the E42 made completion of the capital reconstruction plan of Rome more urgent than those of Moscow and Berlin, partly because it was conceived as an addition to rather than a refashioning of the existing city, and partly because it was smaller in scale, the project might have been completed but for the outbreak of World War II. Its overall concept was predicated on the topographical polarity between the ancient city as the focus of Roman civilization and the ultra-modern Exposition site, called "Roma nuovissima", as its monumental extension. Their interconnection was to highlight Italian dominance of the Mediterranean on the ancient Roman precedent. Never had a world exposition been determined by such a deliberate historical, and art-historical, focus on a geopolitical design. Its didactic gesture posited the world-historical necessity of fascist modernization. This totalitarian resolution of the *querelle des anciens et modernes* reneged on the principled claim of modern art to turn a page on the past.

While the Paris Exposition center had been designed to fit into the core of the city so as to enhance its pre-existing classical topography, in Rome it was located at such a distance from the city that planners were free to envisage an uncompromising blend of monumental symmetry and modern surface. This forcible synthesis of classical and modern design was the end result of the cooperation between traditionalist and functionalist factions of the architects' corporation on equal terms. The leaders of both factions had tested it in their joint design of the Italian Pavilion at the Paris World Exposition, where a makeshift working model of the E42 was already on display. Thus the planning of the E42 capitalized on the conciliatory cultural policy vis-à-vis modern art that distinguished the fascist from the other two totalitarian regimes. The spectacle of a competitive artistic culture unfolding under the aegis of Fascism was to assure international observers that in its Italian version, totalitarian art policy could be inclusive.

4.2 Art Policy and War Policy

However, the prospect of a Europe-wide artistic alignment on Fascist terms was thwarted by the functional correlation of art policy and war policy in Germany, discernible since the reconstruction plans for Berlin were publicized on 30 January 1936. "Germania" was to be a capital of future conquest in both its geopolitical range and the resources it required in order to be built. The unabashed deployment of an architecture of aggression was accelerated in the breakneck planning and completion of the New Reich Chancellery in Berlin. Synchronous with Hitler's two-step annexation of Czechoslovakia in 1938–39, the first official act to be certified in the just-completed building, it was replete with triumphal military imagery. One year later, Hitler's vision of Berlin as a capital of conquest prevailed over that of Rome as the capital of a fascist-dominated Europe at peace, which Mussolini had to discard from one year to the next (fig. 21, 22). Germany's political predominance in the Axis alliance made its all-out war strategy outweigh the balance of military and political objectives underlying the Italian scheme.

From the start of his government in January 1933, Hitler, a keen if failed student of architecture, had largely assumed oversight of architectural policy nationwide. When in late 1937 German war prepa-

rations turned operational, he used his increasingly personalized enactment of leadership to correlate art policy with the incipient war effort. With the exception of the short-lived art of the Spanish Republic during its losing Civil War, only German art, in lockstep with German foreign policy, made the coming of war its manifest theme. Nowhere else in Europe—the other two totalitarian states included—was artistic culture as keenly synchronized with the historic turn of the times. Chief architect Albert Speer aligned architectural policy and war policy in his cooperation with the economic unit of the SS for slave labor to be procured through conquests in the East. By 1942 he would become so closely involved in war planning that Hitler appointed him Minister of Armaments and Ammunition.

Internationally, Hitler's policy of territorial expansion by diplomatic means under threat of war was flanked by a calibrated artistic demonstration of German military readiness. As the component of an ostensible peace policy his military posture appeared to keep warfare under restraint as an option of last resort. Domestically, the government faced the hard task of mustering public support for yet another war, barely twenty-one years after the last had ended. As a result, its art policy enhanced the propagandistic commemoration of World War I as an unsettled score for the German nation to redress and as proof of the common soldier's heroic tenacity. However, the corporately organized German art scene was poised to cash in on the new affluence of money flowing from the heated-up war economy with a conventional subject matter that ignored the war theme. Despite the mass public's disappointment and the government's concern, it remained largely unresponsive to its expected propaganda mission.

The next World Exposition after that of Paris opened in New York in the summer of 1939, less than two months before the outbreak of World War II. It featured a Soviet Pavilion even more triumphalist than in Paris, but with no German Pavilion to match. This asymmetry of representation went to show that the political confrontation of the arts was about to be superseded by that of war. Thus, even though the Italian Pavilion at New York still promoted the E42 as a fascist setting for European cooperation, the phantom of a monumental art embracing discordant political regimes had evanesced within two years. Now the art policies of the totalitarian states were drifting apart. The two that did participate in the New York Exposition, for all the generic militarism of their art, had, unlike Germany, no coherent war policy in place.

The establishment in 1937 of a new Ministry of Culture and Propaganda, headed by former Corporations Minister Giuseppe Bottai, and devoted to promoting the inclusive project of the E42, marks the increasing divergence of Italian from German art policy on the issue of traditional versus modern art as well as on the prospects of war and peace. Suggestive of prevailing policy was the restoration and public presentation of Emperor Augustus' Ara Pacis, encased inside a modern-style pavilion. It was to be counterpointed by the projected peace altar in the center of the E42, its modern extension. The relocation of the long-planned Fascist Party headquarters, the Palazzo de Littorio, from the center of ancient Rome to a sports complex at the outskirts of the city, and its substitution by the 'Danteum', a museum and library building devoted to the study of Dante, highlighted the shift from aggressive militancy to a revalidation of Italian culture for peaceful ends.

Consistent with the transient peace policy that flanked the Soviet rearmament drive, Soviet artistic culture appeared the least belligerent during the last three years before the war. It actually went back on the display of military readiness highlighted in the art of the First Five-Year Plan, which in any case had not been aimed at Germany alone. Economically, the absence of a viable war art in the Soviet Union at this time was due to the impossibility of sustaining monumental building along with large-scale rearmament. Politically, right after the Great Terror had been called off in 1938, the populace could not be roused to war enthusiasm. One year later, the Hitler-Stalin Pact confirmed that the Soviet Union was not yet ready to confront the German threat. Unable to sustain an artistic culture structurally tied to war anticipation, and intent on making up for its murderous political oppression, the government kept touting the higher living standards attained in the years before. All the way through the New York World Exposition of 1939, peaceful accomplishment prevailed as the theme of Soviet art.

In France, long-planned giant monuments to the defense effort of World War I, sponsored by conservative governments and designed by academic sculptors, were completed between 1934 and 1938. They conjured up a political will to face down yet another German aggression just at a time when current governments were bent on appeasement. The Spanish Republican government likewise relied on traditional artists for its vigorous art program to back up its defense against the insurgents. In their paintings and posters, these artists, too, emphasized fierce endurance in the absence of any cause for triumph. Thus, both democratic states were promoting a defiant, defensive war art of traditional form and conventional symbolism, which in monumental magnitude or dramatic realism was even more forthright than Germany's aggressive war art. But since their war art fell short of representing a war policy with a credible perspective on victory, it had an ideologically hollow look.

The Popular Front government of France, pacifist to the point of disengaging from the Spanish Civil War, and weary of the militarism of its right-wing opposition, never sponsored any art related to war policy. Its supporting cultural agencies, predominantly Communist, pictured war one-sidedly as part of the 'Fascist' menace. As a result, the culture of modern art in France, still in a minority position within artistic culture as a whole, and kept at a distance by governments preceding and following the Popular Front, was structurally unsuited to field any political response *vis-à-vis* the war threat, only an ideological response of all-but Manichean horror.

In the end, the most historically- grounded response to the German war threat came from George Grosz and Otto Dix, the most prominent anti-militarist painters of the Weimar Republic. One was working in U.S. exile since 1933, the other in Germany under clandestine conditions. In 1936 both produced major anti-war works of the utmost urgency but with no public resonance.

4.3 The Democratic Turn of Modern Art

The political alignment of modern art and democracy—taken for granted to-day—came about by a drawn-out process postdating the

acceptance of modern art by the market and the public by roughly thirty years. While market acceptance unfolded between 1890 and 1923, democratic validation started between 1936 and 1945, but was not accomplished until the Cold War. Modern art worked its way toward political democracy by shedding its one-sided ideological preemption by the political Left, which in the course of the Depression decade lost much of its appeal to freedom. The first stage of this transition was the Soviet repudiation of modern in favor of traditional art in 1933-34, which severed its ties to the perceived citadel of socialism. The second stage was its notorious oppression by the German government, which endowed it with a martyr's aura on behalf of democratic liberties.

In ideological terms, the synchronous repudiation of modern art in the Soviet Union and in Germany was mutually contradictory. While Soviet art policy delegitimized modern art's Bolshevik credentials against its own professions of allegiance, German art policy denounced it as Bolshevik against its own disclaimers. As a result, debates about its communist credentials or taints got mired in a deadlock of reciprocal arguments. Such debates were carried on with cynical or nostalgic anachronism, utopian hyperbole, or deliberate polemical distortion, all of which drained them of political logic and artistic substance. By the end of the decade, modern art in European democracies stood divested of any firm ideological connotation that would have corresponded to the ongoing confrontation of political systems. It was reduced to advocating a politically drained ideal of free expression.

In their "Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art", Breton, Trotsky, and Rivera called for an art exempt from any political agenda, and beholden to no political system, as the only one sufficiently intransigent to be true to their revolutionary ideal. Trotsky furnished Breton with a political theory to the effect that at the height of the Depression, the capitalist social order would no longer be able to muster the economic strength required to admit its culture of dissent, just as it could no longer gather the political will to abide by its democratic form of government. Yet, with their call for an art defined by the artist's political conviction, beholden to no audience, and exempt from political controls, they inadvertently anticipated the re-definition of artistic freedom as a generic antithesis of totalitarianism right and left which prevailed within the cultural institutions of capitalist democracy after World War II.

It was not until 1935, when the Comintern enjoined Communist parties in France, Spain, and elsewhere to desist from their revolutionary challenge to democratic governments and work from within parliamentary systems, that modern art became part of a democratic response to totalitarian art policy intent on upholding freedom of expression. However, both Popular Front governments of France and Spain were far from granting modern art an exclusive franchise on democracy on account of its unrestrained subjectivism. They assigned it no more than a supporting role alongside traditional art in a political culture shared by these diverse constituencies. Such a conditional accommodation was a two-way street, however, since it faced modern artists with political demands for an agitational art open to common understanding (fig. 23, 24). In the attendant debates, its hermetic idiosyncrasies were still being denounced as symptoms of 'bourgeois' self-indulgence.

It took the German "Degenerate Art" show of 1937 to boost the anti-fascist appeal of modern art beyond the political platform of the Popular Front. However, even now democratic governments did not sponsor modern art to any significant degree. It was on the art market that German oppression first enhanced its status in the public sphere, without investing it with any express political credentials. Democratic governments in France and, even more, in England put the brakes on its anti-fascist momentum, not only because of their steady vigilance toward the Left, but also because of their appeasement policies *vis-à-vis* the German war threat. With some of their conservative constituencies, German denunciations of modern art actually struck a sympathetic note. It was in the United States that modern art was most explicitly endowed with a democratic cachet on account of its National Socialist suppression, and had its public resonance enhanced as a result. Here more than in Europe, artistic freedom was ensconced as part of political democracy, even if it sided with the Left.

The most articulate invocation of democracy for a political validation of modern art came from the association of German exile artists in Paris. In 1938 they regrouped to form the 'Free Artists League' in order to gain recognition beyond the left-wing anti-fascist culture sponsored by the communist-directed Maison de la Culture, their initial meeting-place. When they elected Oskar Kokoschka one of three figurehead presidents abroad, they chose an apt celebrity to represent German artists in exile, for he had long publicly carved out an expressly democratic platform for his art. Their multi-panel project to present an alternative panorama of German history at the New York World Exposition of 1939 stressed the term democracy as the key value of a German liberal tradition.

However, faced with a totalitarian challenge on the precipice of war, democratic governments in Europe, apart from the two short-lived Popular Front governments in France and Spain, lost the initiative of re-asserting their political will with enough ideological assurance to make modern art stand in for their constitutional order. The variable roles of modern art in the cultural policies of the three rabidly anti-democratic regimes of Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union—ranging from adjustment to suppression—still made it hard to claim it for democracy on substantive grounds.

In the disoriented public sphere of democratic politics during the last two years before the war, strong-willed modern artists, disappointed by years of grappling with cultural institutions and art-political debates, found themselves thrown back on redefining their own reflexive self-orientation *vis-à-vis* the threat of war. From Braque to Beckmann, from Chagall to Klee, artists in Western Europe, citizens and emigrants, devised cryptic images of defiance. Working in isolation, no longer certain of adequate recognition, only interconnected by fragile networks of dealers, critics, and collectors, they raised their thematic urgency and expressive pitch in inverse relation to their public impact. Now the revalidation of myth spearheaded by the surrealist movement served as a visual mode of horrified detachment from an accelerating historical process whose short-term trajectory remained obscure. Sympathetic critics exalted the historic incommensurability of their mythical imagination as an apt response to troubled times.

That it should have been the United States which took the lead in the post-war alignment of modern art and democracy follows from its determining role in the outcome of World War II. Its art policy fed into the ensuing reconstruction of a European political culture that flanked the resurgence of capitalist democracy enabled by the Marshall Plan. Already during the Depression, the vibrant political culture of US democracy had subjected the main issues of the political confrontation of the arts—the conflict between traditional and modern art, the political relevancy of the avant-garde, the incommensurability of elite art and mass public, the artist's political engagement, and, above all, the untenable alignment of modern art with the Left—to searing clarifications. It was thus not the economic and military ascendancy of the United States as a victorious superpower after World War II alone, but the ideological preparation of its artistic culture to deal with the fundamentals of art and politics left in abeyance in Europe, which enabled it to set the terms for installing modern art as the representative art of democracy.