Identification variety of primary sources and academic

Art & Culture, Art Movement

Identification and Evaluation of SourcesThe primary focus of this investigation will be " To what extent was degenerate art a departure of traditional Weimar/Nazi cultural values?" and will analyze how particular art movements digressed from the philosophical, racial, and political goals of the Weimar/Nazi period.

For this reason, Art as Politics in the Third Reich by Jonathan Petropoulos and Artists for the Reich: Culture and Race from Weimar to Nazi Germany by Joan L. Clinefelter were of important value when investigating. This is because of insight provided that gives multiple perspectives of German society, from the high up bureaucrats to the bohemian artist. It gives a more in depth view of the Weimar cultural spectrum. The variety of primary sources and academic evaluation of the Weimar period helps provide an accurate and dissected outlook. Art as Politics in the Third Reich. University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Questia Online Library, www. questiaschool. com/read/94820198/ art-as-politics-in-the-third-reich. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. Originating from Petropoulos, a professor in European History at Claremont Mckenna college, his purpose is to provide an analysis of the cultural aspirations of Nazi leaders by examining both their formulation of a national aesthetic policy and the content of their private collections.

His thesis is primarily historiography based on extensive research in primary sources concerning National Socialist Art policy throughout the globe. Petropoulos' content begins by tracing the evolution of official aesthetic policy, from the purges of museum staff and academics labeled as '

undesirable' in 1933 to the confiscation of Jewish-owned artworks in the late 1930s and the organized plundering of art from occupied areas during the war. He then reconstructs the collections of a dozen prominent Nazi officials–including Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Himmler, Speer, and Ribbentrop–and argues that their private holdings defined their relationships to one another within the Nazi hierarchy in addition to reflecting their racist and nationalist beliefs. According to Petropoulos, art collecting offered the political elite a way to achieve legitimacy and social standing, thereby providing a common cultural language for the leaders of the Third Reich. This analysis is so important to understanding the sentiment against the modernist art form because of the first person accounts describing how modernism itself was an attack to German values. His thesis supports how the roles of prominent Nazi officials and prominent figures in the art world itself had major influence on what was acceptable in this now transcending period of time were the progressive dirtiness of Weimar clashed with Nazism clinging onto dated heroic ideals. The book concludes with a wide array of bibliography, filled with primary sources, speeches, and secondary sources.

A limitation however, is that the book heavily relies primary sources from the Nazi's themselves, giving a limited view from the artists who were persecuted. Having a perspective from the artists could shed light on how the persecution affected their work and lives during said era. Clinefelter, Joan L. Artists for the Reich: Culture and Race from Weimar to Nazi   Germany. New York, Berg, 2005. Questia Online Library. Accessed 11 Dec. 2017.

The origin is from Clinefelter, Associate Professor of History at the University of Northern Colorado, the purpose providing an insight of artists who embraced traditional German art and Nazism, but argues that they were in fact instrumental in battling modernist art in defense of what they regarded as the German cultural tradition. This research is valuable because it gives a unique primary perspective of traditional German artists who did not leave Germany, giving the research the taste of actually being in Germany rather than other artists who were in exile. The content of this is valuable because it includes work focusing on the German Art Society, a völkisch artists' interest group established in 1920 that combated cultural modernism and promoted its vision of a racially pure German art. The Society offers the opportunity to analyze the connections between culture, race and art from the Weimar Republic through the end of the Third Reich.

The German Art Society also demonstrates that the right wing attacks against the avant-garde associated with the republic were not only against aesthetic modernism. The anti-Semitism and anti-democratic values that fueled the assault against Weimar's cultural pluralism were just one side of the culture wars. Right-wing, völkisch groups such as the Society also promoted a racialist interpretation of art and culture. The artists associated with the German Art Society termed this the ' German style of art'. This book is categorized with a number of primary sources, speeches, autobiographies and secondary sources. A limitation however, is it is written many years after, having to rely on many primary sources that may not have understood the complete gravity of the times they are living in and the sources

information may lean to a specific side because of overwhelming sentiment of popular opinion. Another limitation is the concentration on just one organization which may not provide a full picture where multiple could help support or counter opinions.

Investigation: World War I had come to a close, as the deadliest conflict in world history at this point in time. Germany had lost, and she would have to pay dearly for the losses in finances and territory. The Treaty of Versailles ensured reparations would be paid to Britain and France, amounting to 132 billion gold marks, along with loss of territories such as Alsace-Lorraine. This was a national shame, as Germany felt they were victims of the war and were given a carthaginian peace.

France was devastated by the war, as years of artillery bombardment, chemical warfare, and pure destruction of the countryside meant that never again such a national crisis would happen again. Wanting Germany to never regain its military and economic prominence it once had, France spearheaded the idea that a weak Germany would mean a safer Europe and more importantly a safer France. The new Weimar Republic would have difficulties repaying, as they were often occupied by an aggressive France wanting Germany to suffer. This discontentment and shame of being the whipping boy of Europe would eventually would be to much, as revolutionary ideas were being formed, both polarizing in their nature regarding each other; the Nazi Party and Modernist art. Starting at the outbreak of World War I and the years following, life was drastically altered for many Europeans.

The widespread devastation of farmland, destruction of cities, and traumatic experiences caused by years of intense warfare led to a cesspool of conflicted understanding of the world around them. Germany, now responsible for rebuilding a broken Europe along with itself, gave its' people a looming sense of dread and uncertainty. The result of this was Dadaism, an art form that rejected the logic, reason, and aestheticism of modern capitalist society. Dadaism values instead expressed nonsense, irrationality, and anti-bourgeois protest in their works. Otto Dix, a painter and printmaker, was known for his critical depiction of Weimar society and the horrors of war, had a painting in particular that exemplifies the disturbed side of human and cultural conditions of the modernist culture, Metropolis.

The left panel shows a crippled war veteran approaching a group of low class prostitutes. The central panel shows the interior of a nightclub with a brass band, a dancing couple and scantily clad women with visible jewelry, as well as one person of ambiguous gender. The right panel shows a group of high-class prostitutes dressed in furs, ignoring the war cripple they walk by. The art professor Marsha Meskimmon has written how the war veterans are " shown weakened in every way by the aggressive sexuality of Weimar women. Both the economic and sexual bargaining power rests with the demonized whores of modernity". This piece shows a common view of how society was corrupt and wilting on a variety of levels such as the unemployment, prostitution, and treatment of war veterans. The more drastic transformations of the post- 1938 period could not have occurred without the gradual radicalization of policy that began in 1936.

The crucial cultural event in this process was the Entartete Kunst Ausstellung (Degenerate Art Exhibition), which opened in Munich on 19 July 1937. The name was taken from a travelling exhibition mounted by the Nazi Party in 1937 to show modern art as ' sick' and ' decadent' – a view that fitted with Nazi racial theories. Art pieces were hung cluttered, with phrases such as " Insolent mockery of the Divine under Centrist rule, revelation of the Jewish racial soul, an insult to German womanhood" The exhibition was paralleled by the official Great German Art Exhibition to display officially approved artists. Arno Breker was one of these artists, creator of Die Partei, which embodied the ideal German man. Hitler considered Breker's the most beautiful work ever made in Germany. These art pieces were heroic and honored the German culture, praising rather than criticizing. However, five times as many people (more than 3 million) saw the former as the latter.

Artists condemned included Max Beckmann, Emil Nolde, Wassily Kandinsky, Henri Matisse, Ernst Barlach, and Pablo Picasso. As dictator, Hitler enforced his take on what art should be with the force of law to a degree never before seen. Only in Stalin's Soviet Union, where Socialist Realism was the mandatory style, had a modern state shown such concern with regulation of the arts.

In the case of Germany, the model was to be classical Greek and Roman art, regarded by Hitler as an art whose exterior form embodied an inner racial ideal. He himself was an attempted art student at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, having a taste for natural landscapes and architecture. These were beautiful, tangible things that the average person could see, which Hitler

was able to take advantage of and use politically to attempt to rally the German people against those he saw unfit in a utopian society. Hitler once said " Works of art which cannot be understood in themselves but need some pretentious instruction book to justify their existence will never again find their way to the German people" as way to justify the destruction and purges of non-Aryan art. The Nazis strived for regaining order and national pride that had been stripped from her people. The world was to be seen as straightforward and heroic, and Germany needed to be at its peak for this to happen.

Modernist art, especially that of German origin, saw the world as bleak and nonsensical. The abstract new world that faced Germany was reflected in its artwork, rejecting those who claim that all is right in the world. Both were fruits of a shattered Germany, one attempting to mask all the faults of society, while the other acknowledges this and tried to make sense of it. These two concepts can't coexist, as both vow to combat each other on cultural grounds of chaos and order. Only the German people themselves could chose the ultimate victor. Reflection: The process of this investigation definitely allowed me the opportunity to use and find a number of different research tools and methods that helped me understand the struggle of historians. The use of Art as Politics in the Third Reich by Jonathan Petropoulos gave a certain appreciation to all the work that goes into piecing together a perspective of a different time period. Primary sources will give you the facts without a historian's comments or interpretations.

They'll also relay glimpses of life back in the time period you're researching. A disadvantage to primary sources is they are often difficult to find and also don't give the benefit of a bigger picture with hindsight. Secondary sources are easier to find, and a historian usually already has made his interpretation, which you can utilize to get some ideas of your own. However, secondary sources may sometimes be filled with too many presumptions and not enough fact. The amount of information available about Nazi Germany is almost overwhelming, which to a degree can hurt a historian in narrowing down what information is relevant. Fact selection is essential when doing research. This selection however can make an historians investigation skewed in that one might find information more important while another may find that it irrelevant. I was aware of this while conducting my own investigation, as I chose what was necessary and what wasn't.

As my investigation highlights, German culture was in a shift while leaving the interwar period, as degenerate art clashed with Weimar and Nazi values because of the impossibility of both coexisting, simply because one rejects the current society while the other hangs onto the past. Bibliography: Petropoulos, Jonathan, Art as Politics in the Third Reich. 1996. Clinefelter, Joan L.

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